

Iloilo

With its rich history that dates back from pre-Spanish times and its heritage where the east and the west meet, Iloilo is definitely a province that is worth exploring. Not only does it offer its colourful history and culture to travellers, but also its treasure chest full of natural wonders such as pristine beaches, unspoilt forests, thunderous waterfalls and mysterious caves. Add the warm and cheerful disposition of the Ilonggos and you've got one perfect holiday experience.



Fast Facts

Time Zone: GMT + 8

Visa: Only required if staying more than 30 days

Climate: November to February – cool and mostly dry; March to June – warm and mostly dry; July to October – warm and mostly wet

Average Temperature Year-round: 24°C – 32°C

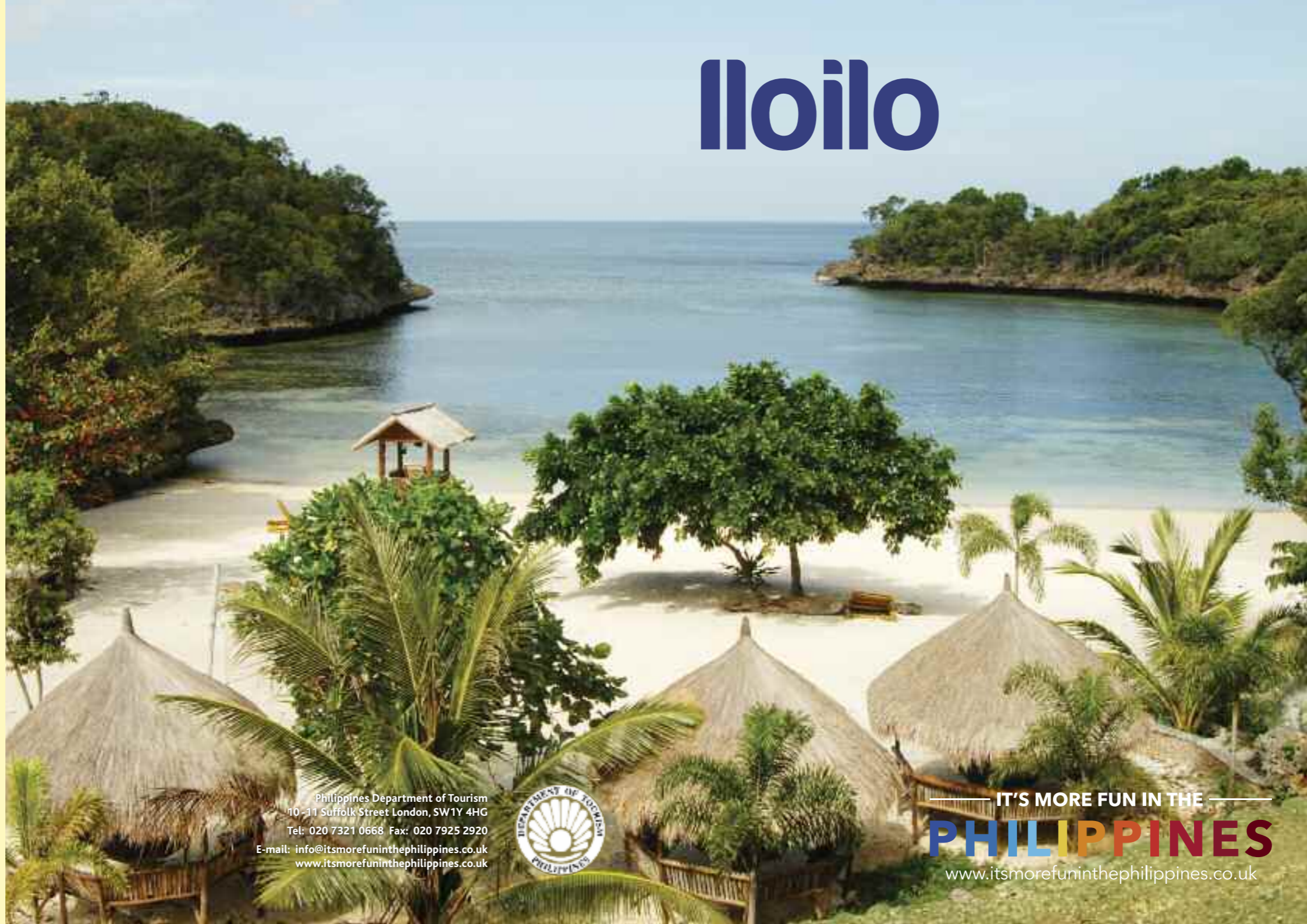
Attire: Light casual clothes all year round

Money: Philippine Pesos. Check with the local banks for current exchange rates. All major credit cards accepted

Water: Bottled water available in resorts, restaurants and convenience stores

Communications: International and direct dial phone and fax. Internet cafes are widely available

What to Bring: Sun block, tanning lotions, insect repellent, personal medication, swimwear and accessories, etc.



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ILOILO – In the Heart of the Philippines

Getting There

Major Airport Gateway:

New Iloilo Airport, 30 minutes away from Iloilo City, the capital of Iloilo province.

Air Transport:

From Manila (MNL), Iloilo is just 55 minutes away by plane. Domestic carriers such as Air Philippines, Cebu Pacific, Philippine Airlines and Zest Air have daily flights to Iloilo. If you're coming from Cebu City, a few domestic carriers also fly daily to Iloilo and the travel time would just be 25 minutes.

Water Transport:

There are a number of ferries departing from Manila to Iloilo from Mondays to Saturdays. Travel time is approximately 20 hours. Daily boat trip from Bacolod is about an hour; 14 hours twice weekly from Zamboanga or Cagayan; 12 hours daily from Cebu.

Hotels and Resorts

Accommodation is not a problem in Iloilo – standard hotels, resorts by the beach and quality pension houses are available throughout the province. Most of the standard hotels may be found in the province's capital, Iloilo City. Ilonggos are also known for their hospitality and warm smiles, so you know you will be taken care of superbly in Iloilo!

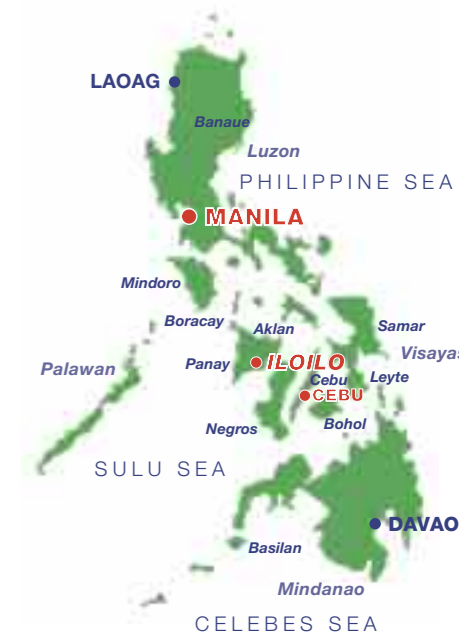
Eating Out and Nightlife

The Ilonggos have always been identified with food. The unique blend of Chinese, Spanish and American flavours in their dishes speak not only of their cuisine but also of their rich culture.

Local restaurants are readily available if you want to get a taste of Iloilo's signature native dishes. Several restaurants serve both local and international cuisine. Fresh seafood restaurants also abound the province to the delight and convenience of seafood lovers.

Any visitor should try *La Paz Batchoy*, a noodle soup that originated from the province way back in the 1930s. There is also *Pancit Molo*, called the "sophisticated" wonton soup, a specialty of Molo, a well-know district of the province.

Nightlife in Iloilo is usually hanging out with locals and travellers and having a "good time."



Shops, Markets and Crafts

If you're looking for souvenirs, handicrafts and other products made of local materials like *abaca* or *piña* (pineapple), the perfect shopping place for you would be the Iloilo Central Market and the Tinukib House of Ilonggo Products. Both places offer tourists the best of the local products for affordable prices.

Hand-woven fabrics with intricate embroideries, unique handicrafts and antique pieces are a few of the interesting finds in the local stores and shops in Iloilo. Local pastry shops and neighbourhood bakeries sell different kinds of bread and biscuits that the Ilonggos love to munch on, be it for breakfast or *merienda* (snacks), such as *galletas*, *biscocho*, *torones*, *bañadas*, *barquillos*, etc.

Sports Activities and Exploration

Iloilo prides itself of its many things and places to discover. Historical landmarks are found all around the place. Old but beautiful churches, parks, ancestral houses and buildings which have been erected way back during the Spanish colonization in the country still boast of their beauty, each with interesting stories to back them up.

Apart from the many historical attractions Iloilo offers, it is also famous for its beautiful golf courses. The oldest golf course in the whole of Southeast Asia is found in Iloilo – the Sta. Barbara Golf Course. Until now it is a major attraction among golf enthusiasts.

Diving

Iloilo is a paradise to divers. It has many islands that provide excellent diving spots. The Cataan Cove in San Joaquin can be singled out as an ideal and perfect place for divers. Still there are other marvellous diving spots all throughout the country for divers to discover.

Attractions Within the Region

NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

1. Bulubadiangan Beach, "Sandbar Island" (Concepcion, 108 km from Iloilo City)

Bulubadiangan Beach gives its visitors the clearest waters in the island, a fantastic view of the horizon, and a sandbar, an amazing 0.5 km stretch of white sand that shifts depending on the tide and the wind. There are a few inexpensive resorts in the island which cater to travellers and are not commercialised, so as to complete the whole laid-back package that the Bulubadiangan Island offers.

2. Agho and Tambaliza Beaches (Concepcion, 108 km from Iloilo City)

Agho and Tambaliza are two nearby islands in Concepcion that are very accessible by boat from the town proper. You can choose from a wide range of water activities, diving and snorkelling are a few of the favourites. These beaches both have native cottages that can provide comfortable and affordable accommodation to tourists.



3. Cataan Cove (San Joaquin, 60 km from Iloilo City)

The Cataan Cove in the town of San Joaquin has more than just caves to boast of, it is also considered one of the best diving sites in Iloilo because of its marine garden and the diverse marine life that can be seen underneath its cool waters. Other beautiful beaches like the Basang Basa and the Bugtong Bato Beaches can also be found in the town of San Joaquin.

4. Waterfalls

Waterfalls are abundant in Iloilo. Worth seeing are the Nadsadjan falls, located in the town of Igbaras, just 39 km from Iloilo City; the Nagpana Falls in Barotac Viejo; the Darangkulan Waterfalls at the foot of the mountain with the highest peak in Iloilo, Mt. Manyakiya in the town of Anilao; and the Imoy Falls in Leon.

5. Mountains

Iloilo is also blessed with good mountains with lush greeneries and majestic views. Hiking and trekking these mountains would definitely be awesome things to do while in Iloilo: Mt. Manaphag (also known as Mt. Pan de Azucar) and Mt. Napulak.

6. Caves

When you think you've seen all of the natural attractions that Iloilo has to offer, you discover the caves that keep the province's mysteries. The Bulabog-Putian Natural Park in Dingle, Iloilo offers a lot of caves waiting to be explored and enjoyed.

HISTORICAL ATTRACTIONS

1. Calle Real

Now called J.M. Basa St., Calle Real was once the centre of trade in Western Visayas. Its proximity to the Muelle Loney port made it a convenient site for



offices of wealthy barons as well as Chinese and European traders. For most of the locals, Calle Real holds many sentimental memories of the glorious business activities of the past.

2. Museo Iloilo

The Museo Iloilo is the provincial museum where artefacts from the pre-colonial times are kept safe and available for public viewing. The exhibits showcase the Ilonggos' culture throughout history. Some religious relics can also be seen here.

3. La Villa Rica de Arevalo

Named by Governor-General Ronquillo in 1580 after his birthplace Arevalo in Avila, Spain, it is in this municipality where the third oldest image of the Sto. Niño in the country and a replica of the crown given by Spain's Queen Isabela can be found.



This area today is known as the "flower village" of Iloilo, as houses' gardens bloom with flowers all year round.

RELIGIOUS ATTRACTIONS

1. San Joaquin Church

- is the only church in the Philippines sporting bas relief of a historic battle between the Christians of Spain and the Moors of Tetuan.

2. St. Thomas of Villanova Parish or the Miag-ao Church

- was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1993. Located in the municipality of Miag-ao, 40 kms away from Iloilo, the church was built in 1786 with two dissimilar bell towers. It boasts of its baroque architecture, its intricately carved façade and the beautiful stone images of its patron saint, St. Thomas of Villanova, the Pope and St. Henry.

3. Molo Church

- is Gothic Renaissance church built in the 1800s made of massive white coral rocks which have been glued together with a mortar made from egg whites mixed with sand. The church is dubbed as one of the most beautiful churches in Western Visayas making it a famous landmark in Iloilo.

4. Pavia Church

- was inspired by the design of the Romanesque Basilica of Pavia in Italy. Byzantine Architecture dominates the style and central structure of the church. It is Iloilo's only red stone church made of red bricks and coral windows cases.

5. Santa Barbara Church

- declared as a National Landmark by the National Heritage Institute in 1991, the church has been a significant part of history as it served as the general headquarters of Iloilo's revolutionary forces against Spanish rule during the late 1800s.

Festivals

Whatever time of year you visit Iloilo, you'll find a packed programme of events and festivals. Most popular is the Dinagyang, which features the beauty and talent of its residents. Colourful costumes and the beating of drums highlight this joyful event, a unique way of honouring their patron saint – the Santo Nino. Held every 4th weekend of January, it is a "must see" celebration.

Other Festivals worth seeing in Iloilo:

Fireworks Display and Contest (Arevalo, 3rd week of January)

Lanot Festival (Janiuay, January)

Candelaria or Feast of the Candles (Jaro, 2nd day of February)

Iloilo Paraw Regatta Festival (Iloilo City, 3rd week of February)

Pintados de Pasi (Pasi, 3rd weekend of March)

Bantayan Festival (Guimbal, March/April)

Paghukom (Calinog, March or April)

Saad Festival (Leganes, 1st week of April)

Katagman Festival (Oton, 1st week of May)

Carabao Carroza Race (Pavia, 1st week of May)

Tinuom (Cabatuan, 1st week of September)

Cry of Sta. Barbara and Kahilwayan Festival (Sta. Barbara, November)

Christmas Lights Festival (Pototan, 3rd week of December)

Tultugan Festival (Maasin, 4th week of December)

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Useful Websites for the Region:

Iloilo www.iloilocity.gov.ph
www.exploreiloilo.com
www.iloiloboard.com
www.westernvisayastourism.com.ph

Other useful Websites for nearby Regions:

Bacolod <http://www.bacolodcity.gov.ph/>
Guimaras <http://www.guimaras.gov.ph/>
Boracay <http://www.boracay.com/>
Negros Occidental <http://www.negros-occ.gov.ph/>
Aklan <http://www.aklan.gov.ph/>
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