



Five adventurous getaways from Manila

Manila's fast pace and heavy traffic can try anybody's patience, but there are ways to escape the madness. Whether you prefer sea-based or land-based activities, cultural diversions or adrenaline-pumping adventures, you have plenty to choose from if you're looking to get out of town for a day. Here are five spots that will make the chaos of the capital seem like a distant memory.

Antipolo

You don't have to venture far out of Manila for a complete change of scenery. Set in the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains just 20km from central Manila, Antipolo is an enclave of creativity. The town is awash in quirky little galleries and cool restaurant concepts like Burrow Cafe. But the highlight is surely

the Pinto Art Museum, which features six spacious, semi-open-air, modern-art galleries, a lovely cafe and originally landscaped grounds dotted with contemporary sculptures. Also on the grounds: viewing platforms with spectacular views of the Metro Manila skyline.

East of the museum, near the border of Antipolo and neighbouring Tanay, is the brilliantly conceived Masungi Georeserve. It's a thrilling two-hour hike and scramble through a karst-studded protected area, navigating a web-like network of rope canopies, bridges and ladders. Contact the reserve well in advance to join a group tour. Outdoor lovers can also check out Mt Purro Nature Reserve, an eco-resort with hiking trails, natural playgrounds, pools, great birdwatching and a restaurant serving organic delicacies sourced from the surrounding forest.

Mt Pinatubo

When Mt Pinatubo in central Luzon's Zambales range blew its top in 1991, the whole world felt the effects. It rained ash in Manila, which lies about 80km south of the volcano, while temperatures dropped across the globe. Locally, the relentless cascade of lahar (volcanic mud) rerouted rivers, inundating entire towns under newly formed lakes.

Today the volcano is interesting both for its historical significance - the eruption hastened the withdrawal of a long-standing American military presence in the Philippines - and for its austere beauty. Touring the volcano involves a two-hour jeep ride from the village of Santa Juliana, followed by a short (15-30 minute) hike up to what is surely one of the most stunning sites in the country: a crater lake nestled amid stark gray massifs, its hue fluc-