

## Lifestyle | Travel

Friday, December 21, 2018

tuating between ice blue and emerald green according to the whims of the sun and sky.

Organised day trips to Mt Pinatubo from Manila depart as early as 3am and arrive in Santa Juliana around 6am. They do not let groups up the mountain after 8am or so; be sure to call the Santa Juliana Tourism Council ahead to announce your arrival.

**Anilao**

Located in Batangas Province about a 2.5-hour drive south of Manila, Anilao is the birthplace of scuba diving in the Philippines. The area is best known for rich corals and macro (small) organisms - colourful nudibranches, frogfish, cuttlefish, clown fish and mini-shrimps. If small creatures don't get you excited, don't worry, larger reef creatures such as parrot fish, barracuda, moray eels, trevally and sea turtles also patrol the area.

Dive resorts are strung out for 13km along a beautiful, sunset-facing stretch of coastline. Some of the best snorkeling and dive sites are right offshore, or you can hire a bangka (Philippine outrigger boat) and head out to dive sites around nearby Maricaban and Sombrero islands. For daytrippers, we recommend Arthur's Place; it has been around since the advent of scuba diving in Anilao - the late owner was a dive pioneer - and it has some of the best snorkeling on the peninsula out front around 'Arthur's Rock.'

**Tagaytay**

Meandering serpent-like along the giant maw of an ancient crater, this breezy Manila suburb offers a blissfully oxygenated escape from the steamy capital. Tagaytay is best known as a giant platform for viewing the unique Taal Volcano, which peeks out of Taal Lake several hundred metres beneath the town's 15km ridge road. Dozens of eateries along the ridge road are strategically positioned to optimise those million-dollar views.

At 600m above sea level, Tagaytay brims with nurseries and fruit stalls, and is a Mecca for spas, detox centre and delightful garden restaurants like Antonio's. Activities such as horse-riding and ziplining will keep the kids happy, or you can descend to Taal Lake, hop in a boat and zip out to 'Volcano Island' to hike up teeny-weenie but still quite active Taal Volcano. The climb only takes 45 minutes, or you can ride up on a pony. Warning: it's a hot, dusty ascent. Try later in the day when the crowds have dissipated.

**Clark Freeport and around**

This former US military air base two hours north of Manila is now a recreational 'freeport' full of family-friendly theme parks, duty-free shops and restaurants. For splashy fun, head to Aqua Planet, a giant water park with scores of slides and a wave pool (keep in mind it gets busy on weekends). Golf, casinos, spas and museums are other attractions in the freeport.

Beyond the freeport, the mountains of surrounding Pampanga Province are a playground for adrenaline junkies. Driving up from Manila, you can't miss craggy-topped Mt Arayat (1026m), centrepiece of Mt Arayat National Park, looming to the east. You can climb this extinct volcano in a half day, starting at the park office San Juan BaOo, where there are also hot springs and swimming pools. Or skip the climb and head to the Angeles Flying Club, where 30-minute tandem flights in an ultralight cost about £47GPB and soar right over Mt Arayat.



Back in the freeport, budget a few hours to try wakeboarding at the Decawake Clark. There's a beginner's area, or you can test your mettle on the main oval. Pampanga is the Philippines' food

capital so definitely enjoy an authentic Kampampangan meal at Matam-ih Restaurant before heading back to Manila. ([www.lone-lyplanet.com](http://www.lone-lyplanet.com))

