

Eastern Visayas Uncovered

Plan Leyte, Samar and Biliran at your own pace

A revised ExploreTraveler planning edition for travelers who want room for local stories, food, history and an unhurried day. Choose a practical base, verify the details that change, and carry a plan that still works offline.

This guide brings together destination ideas, three flexible trip shapes and printable worksheets. It is a regional guide to Eastern Visayas, rather than a guide to every part of the Philippines.

Free promotional edition | October 2026

Original partial draft: Maryjane Gadin, supplied to ExploreTraveler in 2016. New structure, planning guidance and worksheets prepared for ExploreTraveler in 2026.

Official sources reviewed on October 18, 2026. Access, schedules, prices and conditions still require a fresh check before a visit. This edition does not reproduce the old draft's hotel telephone lists or 2015 transport prices.

ExploreTraveler Philippines resources

<https://exploretraveler.com/philippines-travel-resources/>

Your Eastern Visayas, at your pace

Think beyond a checklist of stops. Choose the coastal, food or cultural experience you want, then give the journey enough room.



Hinunangan coast, Southern Leyte. ExploreTraveler original photograph from the travel archive.

01 / CHOOSE

Pick one base and two experiences.

02 / VERIFY

Check access, transport and current costs.

03 / SAVE

Keep your route and a backup offline.

Make it your own

What would make your Leyte or Samar visit memorable? Sketch one priority, a realistic base and a spare day or backup.

Original ExploreTraveler travel archive. Scenes are from recorded visits.

Continue planning at [ExploreTraveler.com](https://www.exploretraveler.com)

How to use this edition

Begin with the experience you want, then choose how much moving around you are willing to do. A food conversation, a historic place and enough time to return comfortably can make a better day than a list of distant stops.

A useful reading order

- Pages 3-4: understand the region and choose your base.
- Pages 5-12: shortlist places and questions for local hosts.
- Pages 13-16: plan food, outdoor activities, transfers and a realistic trip shape.
- Pages 17-21: complete your budget, route and offline worksheets.
- Page 22: return to the official sources used for this edition.

The recovered source was a partial manuscript written around 2015-2016. Its place ideas helped shape this edition, but its old prices, operator lists, broad cultural generalizations and claims that caves are suitable for beginners have been removed. The Biliran chapter, food planning and worksheets are new editorial material.

Historical ExploreTraveler stories remain useful for a sense of place. Read their publication context carefully. In particular, our Tacloban account of the aftermath of Haiyan describes a visit in December 2013; it is not a description of the city today.

This is an independently prepared planning publication, not an official tourism publication or a booking service. Official links help you verify details; they do not guarantee availability or the suitability of an activity for your group.

One region, several different trips

Eastern Visayas comprises six provinces: Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Samar and Southern Leyte. Samar can mean the large island or the province named Samar. Write the municipality and province on your plan so a place name does not send you to the wrong area.

The region is more useful to plan as a set of local clusters than as one checklist. A city and history visit around Tacloban and Palo, a Samar food and craft trip, a Biliran nature visit, and time in Southern Leyte call for different routes and different amounts of transfer time.

Make a short list before choosing transport

- History and city life: begin by researching Tacloban and Palo.
- Food and craft: explore Samar's provincial tourism programs and ask about current arrangements.
- Waterfalls and island ideas: start with Biliran's official tourism pages and a local access check.
- A slower coast or family visit: identify the exact town, host and return connection before adding another province.

Do not assume that places that look close on a regional map fit into the same day. Your real route includes reaching a terminal, waiting, changing vehicles, checking in, eating and returning. A short list makes those hidden pieces easier to see.

My first choice of province / municipality:

The experience I most want from this trip:

Choose a base that serves the trip

A base is the place where you sleep and begin most days. Choose it around your main purpose and confirmed connections. A cheaper room can become expensive in time and transport if every outing starts with a long journey.

Compare two bases using the same questions

- Can I reach it with my actual arrival time, including a delayed arrival?
- Which one or two experiences are realistically nearby?
- How will I return after the main outing? What is the fallback?
- Can my host explain local transport and any current access restrictions?
- Will the room suit my rest, accessibility and connectivity needs?

Ask for the full address, a map pin and arrival instructions. Confirm whether a quoted price covers your group, a room, a vehicle or one seat. Keep the answer and the date together. An old blog price is a lead to investigate, rather than a current offer.

If your trip has only a few full days, compare one base against a two-base plan before paying. Moving accommodation consumes part of a day even when the road journey itself looks simple. Add a second base because it supports an experience you value.

Base A / reason / unresolved question:

Base B / extra moving time / benefit:

Tacloban and Palo: start with stories

A first visit can pair the story of a city with one carefully chosen historical site. Leave space to read a marker, ask a question and understand what a place commemorates. Memorials and religious spaces deserve a different pace from a photo stop.

The National Historical Commission of the Philippines records the Leyte Landing site at Palo and General Douglas MacArthur's return on October 20, 1944. Use that documented history as a starting point, then confirm current visitor access, opening arrangements and local transport separately.

Build a day around one anchor

- Choose one main historical visit and check its current opening information.
- Ask a local host about a suitable meal stop and the practical return route.
- Treat another museum, church or city walk as optional until its access is confirmed.
- Keep an indoor alternative for a day when an outdoor plan is unsuitable.

ExploreTraveler's older Tacloban story was written around the aftermath of Haiyan. Approach that archive with care: it records a moment in people's lives. Do not use it to describe current damage, present-day services or how residents feel now.

My historical anchor / the question I want answered:

Opening information checked with / date:

Leyte: keep the nature day achievable

The old manuscript ranged from city landmarks to lakes, islands and mountain areas. Those are different kinds of outings. Choose the type of day first: a short local visit, a longer road excursion, or a boat-based trip with a weather-dependent return.

Names such as Lake Danao, Mahagnao and Kalanggaman can begin your research, but inclusion in an older manuscript does not establish current access or a workable route. Start with the regional tourism directory and the relevant local tourism office, then confirm with the operator who would actually take you.

Ask before committing to an excursion

- What exact location, meeting point and return point does the offer cover?
- Is access currently permitted, and is a guide or reservation required?
- What walking, steps, boat transfers or other physical demands are involved?
- What changes if weather or local instructions make the outing unsuitable?
- What is included in the total, and what is the cancellation arrangement?

Put your departure and return needs in the same message. A beautiful destination is not a complete plan until you know how the group gets back. If an outing depends on several uncertain connections, leave it for a trip with more time.

Nature outing to investigate / exact local authority or operator:

Fallback experience close to my base:

Southern Leyte and the Panaon idea

Treat Southern Leyte as a destination in its own right. A trip to a particular coastal town, island community or family host can be the center of the visit, rather than something squeezed into spare time after a distant city stay.

ExploreTraveler's Panaon Island feature offers an older introduction to the area. Use it to discover a question you want to pursue, then ask the current local tourism office or host about access and services. An archived feature cannot confirm today's accommodation, road conditions or boat arrangements.

Choose the town before the room

- Write the exact municipality and your reason for going.
- Check the complete journey from your arrival point, including the final local connection.
- Ask where meals, drinking water and routine services are available during your stay.
- Confirm how to leave the area in time for your next booking.
- If considering water activities, use a suitable local operator and ask about current conditions and required experience.

A slower stay works best when the ordinary pieces are clear. Know who expects you, how you will contact them and what happens if you arrive late. Keep at least one day flexible rather than making every morning depend on moving somewhere else.

My town / host / reason to stay:

The final local connection I still need to verify:

Samar: food, weaving and local hosts

The provincial tourism website is a useful starting point for Samar's Spark Samar, LARA and Secret Kitchens of Samar initiatives. These offer ways to begin researching food and craft experiences through the people and organizations that present them.

The province announced a Catbalogan installment of its Secret Kitchens food crawl for April 30, 2026, following the earlier Sta. Rita-Basey-Marabut circuit. This gives the revised guide a current cultural lead. It does not mean that a past launch event is a tour you can book today; ask the organizers about current dates and arrangements.

Turn an interest into a respectful visit

- Ask whether visits are public, appointment-based or arranged through an operator.
- For craft purchases, ask who made the item, what it is made from and how to care for it.
- Ask permission before photographing a maker, a kitchen or a private home.
- Discuss group size, ingredients, access needs and the full price before confirming.

Give the host room to explain the experience in their own words. Avoid arriving with a script about how all people in a province live or what they must serve. One thoughtful visit can tell you more than a hurried sequence of stops.

Food or craft interest / organizer to contact:

Question I want to ask the maker or host:

Caves, rivers and the value of a guide

Sohoton and the Calbiga cave area were prominent ideas in the recovered manuscript. They remain research leads in this edition, rather than blanket recommendations that every cave is open, beginner-friendly or suitable for every traveler.

A cave or river trip needs a different level of planning from a city walk. Ask the responsible tourism office and operator about current permissions, guide requirements, equipment, water conditions and the experience expected of participants. Do this before paying for transport to the starting point.

Questions that belong in the booking conversation

- What exact route or section will the group enter, and who authorizes access?
- Who leads the activity, what equipment is provided, and what must I bring?
- What conditions would cancel or shorten the trip?
- What are the physical demands, including confined spaces, wet surfaces or swimming?
- How does the operator handle an early return or a participant who cannot continue?

Do not use this guide to assess technical cave, climbing or water safety. Select an activity that matches the group and follow current local restrictions. If clear answers are unavailable, choose a different experience close to your base.

Activity / local authority / operator / date checked:

My reason to proceed, postpone or choose an alternative:

Northern Samar: one island idea at a time

Biri, Capul and the San Antonio area appear in the old source as distinct travel ideas. Begin with one rather than assuming a collection of island names makes a short island-hopping itinerary. Each needs its own verified access and return plan.

Research the whole connection

- Identify the exact mainland departure point and who operates the crossing.
- Check the current service, booking method, luggage limits and return options.
- Ask the local office about visitor rules and conditions at the site itself.
- Find out what changes when weather interrupts a crossing.
- Confirm where you can stay if the planned return does not operate.

An online photo often shows a place at one moment, tide or season. It does not tell you the conditions you will encounter. Ask local staff about the appropriate way to visit, where visitors may walk and whether any areas are currently restricted.

Keep a destination separate from its transport assumption. You may still want the same place after learning that it deserves an overnight stay or a dedicated trip. That is a useful result of research, not a failed itinerary.

One destination / why it matters to me:

Outward connection / return connection / fallback:

Eastern Samar: leave room for the coast

The recovered draft mentioned Guiuan, Calicoan, Sulangan, Homonhon and other coastal or island places. Use those names as prompts for a focused local conversation. This edition does not reproduce old resort lists or assume that every road, boat service or attraction operates as it once did.

Choose the experience you want: a town visit, a coastal stay, a heritage interest, or an activity arranged by a suitable operator. Then ask which base actually supports it. A road journey and a sea crossing are different commitments even when both appear as short lines on a map.

A coast plan needs a land alternative

- Confirm access and transport with the people providing the service.
- Ask about current local restrictions and the conditions expected during your visit.
- For an activity, agree on the route, equipment and cancellation decision.
- Keep a meal, town walk or other suitable land-based option in reserve.
- Avoid scheduling a weather-dependent outing immediately before a fixed onward connection.

Take local advice about where visitors may go, especially around working shorelines, religious places and private land. Ask before entering or photographing. A flexible day gives you more room to respond to the place you actually find.

My base / one main experience / land alternative:

Biliran: a new chapter for this edition

The partial source did not contain a completed Biliran chapter. This new chapter begins with the province's current tourism website, which lists Tinago Eco-Tourism Park, Higatangan Island and Sambawan Island among its destination ideas.

Choose between a land-based nature visit and an island outing before combining them. A waterfall visit still needs a check of the trail, local access and conditions. An island visit adds a crossing and the possibility that the return plan will change.

Use official information to ask better questions

- Start with the provincial tourism page for the destination and the current tourism-office contact.
- Ask which local authority or operator handles access on your dates.
- Confirm the approach, walking demands, facilities and any guide requirement.
- For an island plan, verify the departure point, current crossing arrangement and overnight fallback.
- Ask how cancellation or a local closure affects money already paid.

Give Biliran enough space in the trip to enjoy one kind of day well. A list of waterfalls and islands is an invitation to research, not proof that they fit into one day. Use a local host's current knowledge to narrow the choice.

Land-based choice / question to confirm:

Island choice / verified return or overnight fallback:

Food and culture: make a conversation

A market, a family recipe or a craft workshop can explain a place through everyday details. Begin with curiosity rather than a claim that one dish or one custom represents everyone in the region.

Samar's 2026 Catbalogan food-crawl announcement names tamaños and tahong barbecue among the dishes it highlights. Treat these as leads for a conversation with a current host or vendor. Recipes, availability and serving styles can vary.

Four questions that invite a useful answer

- What is this called here, and how is it made?
- Who taught you to prepare it, or where does the ingredient come from?
- How would you normally eat or serve it?
- May I photograph it and credit you if I share the story?

Discuss ingredients and dietary needs directly before ordering. A dish name alone cannot confirm what is in a particular serving. Ask about the full cost, portion size and whether a visit requires a reservation, especially for a small host or group experience.

Buy thoughtfully. An inexpensive item still represents someone's time and materials. Ask for the name of the maker, listen to the explanation, and avoid blocking a workspace while taking photographs. A modest purchase and a clear credit can support the story you came to learn.

Dish, maker or host / detail I want to remember:

Weather belongs inside the plan

Build an itinerary that can change. An island outing, a river activity and an ordinary transfer can all be affected by weather and local instructions. A monthly weather description cannot decide whether a particular trip should operate on your date.

Check at three moments

- Before booking: understand cancellation terms and which parts of the trip depend on weather.
- Before the travel day: check current PAGASA information and ask the operator about local instructions.
- Before departure: confirm that the actual service or activity is operating and understand the return decision.

Follow current notices from the relevant operator, local government and responsible authorities. Do not interpret a clear sky at your accommodation as evidence that sea, river or upland conditions are suitable elsewhere.

Keep essential contact details and your next accommodation available offline. Tell your host when you expect to return from a longer outing. If plans change, update the person expecting you. Leave enough flexibility that postponing an excursion does not force you to rush another connection.

Weather-dependent part of my plan:

Who decides whether it operates / where I check notices:

Suitable alternative / how I will notify my host:

A transfer is more than a timetable

Record the complete journey from one place you can identify to another. Include reaching the departure point, waiting, the main service and the final local connection. Quote the date and source beside every schedule or price you rely on.

Ask for one clear total

When discussing a transfer, state the number of travelers, the luggage, the date and the exact pickup and drop-off points. Ask whether the price is per seat or for the group, what fees are additional, and what happens if the incoming connection is delayed.

Journey piece	Confirmed detail / source
To departure point	
Main service / terminal	
Final local connection	
Latest workable return	
Alternative if disrupted	

Checked on / I will recheck on:

Do not stack an uncertain boat return against an essential onward departure. Compare the cost of extra time with the consequence of missing the connection. A room near the next departure point may be useful when your earlier journey is variable.

Three flexible trip shapes

A. One base, several stories

Use one base that suits your arrival. Give one full day to a history or town experience, another to a food or craft interest, and leave a flexible day for a locally confirmed outing. This suits a short visit when moving rooms would consume too much time.

B. Two bases with a clear purpose

Choose a first base for one cluster of experiences and a second for something you cannot comfortably reach from it. Keep the move as a travel day. Confirm the connection before making the second room nonrefundable. Add nights because the second area matters to you.

C. One focused outdoor visit

Choose one locally arranged activity and build the stay around its access, weather decision and return plan. Use the spare day for a suitable town or culture experience. This is more workable than promising several distant outdoor activities on consecutive tight connections.

These are planning structures, not scheduled tours. No particular route, duration, hotel or operator is included or guaranteed. Use the next pages to turn a structure into your own checked plan.

The trip shape that fits me / why:

The experience I will leave for another visit:

A budget with a source and a date

Use one currency throughout this sheet. Keep estimates and confirmed costs separate so you can see which decisions are still exposed to change. Leave space for a canceled outing, a different transfer or an extra night rather than assigning every unit of the budget in advance.

Dates / number of travelers / currency:

Expense	Estimate	Confirmed	Source / date
Travel to the region			
Accommodation			
Local transport			
Meals / water			
Guide / activity / entry			
Change-of-plan reserve			
Total			

Before paying

- Check the total for your actual group and dates.
- Keep the written inclusion and cancellation terms.
- Confirm the business and payment destination through a reliable contact.
- Keep payment and identity records securely, outside a shared worksheet.

Largest unconfirmed cost / next action:

Sketch three days you can actually use

Give each day one anchor, a realistic return plan and an optional extra. Fill in current transport details only after checking them. If a day needs too many uncertain connections, simplify it before making reservations.

Day	Main experience	Return / fallback	Optional
1			
2			
3			

Base / arrival details stored securely:

The fixed booking my plan must protect:

One part of the day I can drop without spoiling the trip:

If you have more days, repeat the structure rather than filling every hour. Add rest and ordinary errands, and keep the first day lighter when arrival times or energy are uncertain.

Keep a local information log

A useful answer includes who gave it, what they confirmed and when. Keep a short log so an old screenshot does not become your latest information by accident. Store private booking references and identity documents separately.

Question	Source / checked on	Answer / recheck
Visitor access or reservation		
Guide / activity arrangements		
Accommodation arrival		
Main transfer / last return		
Weather / local notice		
Food or culture booking		

A message you can adapt

Hello. We are planning to visit [place] on [date] with [number] travelers. Could you confirm current visitor access, how to reach the meeting point, the total price and what it includes? Please also explain the return arrangement and what happens if the service or activity is canceled. Thank you.

Replace the bracketed details in your own message. Use an official contact or the actual provider's verified channel. Do not send passport scans or banking information merely to ask an initial tourism question.

Rehearse an offline day

An offline copy is useful only if you can open it when you need it. Download this guide and your required maps, then test the setup in airplane mode before the outing. Links in this PDF require an internet connection.

- Open the downloaded PDF rather than relying on a browser tab.
- Check the saved map area and the exact return meeting point.
- Keep your accommodation address and essential local contacts available offline.
- Have a way to power the device you rely on for plans.
- Share the relevant day plan with your traveling companion.
- Keep identity, payment and booking records securely and separate from public notes.

My accommodation address / local contact:

The return point I can find offline:

Where my companion can find the day plan:

If the plan depends on a phone, decide what happens if it is lost or unavailable. A short paper note with the accommodation address and a suitable contact may be more useful than another screenshot you cannot access.

The final check before you go

A trip ready for real life

- I can name the exact area and municipality I am visiting.
- My first accommodation expects me and I have arrival instructions.
- My important transfers have a source, a date and a return plan.
- Weather-dependent outings have a suitable alternative.
- I know which access, guide or reservation details still need confirmation.
- My budget separates estimates from confirmed costs.
- My offline copy opens and my companion knows the plan.
- I have checked current official entry information applicable to my own journey.

For international travel, go to official Philippine entry and immigration sources and the relevant carrier for your actual route and nationality. This regional guide does not determine entry permission, work authorization or the documents required in an individual case.

The one unresolved question I will answer next:

Continue with Philippines stories and resources

<https://exploretraveler.com/philippines-travel-resources/>

A different planning exercise: Penang workbook

<https://exploretraveler.com/penang-workbook/>

Sources and edition notes

Official sources reviewed October 18, 2026. A source being online does not establish that every listed service is operating. Check the relevant page and the actual provider again before a visit.

1. Philippine Statistics Authority: Region VIII provinces

<https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/provinces/0800000000>

2. Provincial Government of Biliran: tourism

<https://biliran.gov.ph/tourism/>

3. Provincial Government of Samar: tourism initiatives

<https://samar.gov.ph/>

4. Samar: 2026 Catbalogan food-crawl announcement

<https://samar.gov.ph/samar-launches-second-skos-food-crawl-installation-in-catbalogan/>

5. NHCP: Leyte Landing historical registry

https://philhistoricsites.nhcp.gov.ph/registry_database/leyte-landing/

6. PAGASA: current weather and warnings

<https://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/>

Regional tourism directory: businesses and activities

<https://easternvisayas.ph/>

Official Philippine eTravel portal

<https://etravel.gov.ph/>

Archive source: Eastern Visayas Uncovered, partial draft supplied by Maryjane Gadin to ExploreTraveler in January 2016. This revised edition credits that source and adds new planning content. It is not presented as a restoration of a complete original book. No current prices, timetable guarantees or technical outdoor-activity instructions are supplied.