



# car

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION PHILIPPINES

# CHINA *by Backpack*

OUTDOOR  
LIFESTYLE  
*Special*

Bohol  
Family Paradise

Iloilo & Guimaras  
The Churches, Beaches and Turtles

Driving Cebu  
A Different Love Story

FIA's Jean Todt  
visits Manila for Road Safety



## TEST DRIVES

LEXUS CT200H • BMW Z4  
JAGUAR XKR • CHRYSLER 300C CRD



# Change is Powerful

The force of the Dual VVT-i engine is now found in all variants of Toyota Corolla Altis.

The new Toyota Corolla Altis throws in a staggering change that will definitely blow you away – all variants boast of a Dual VVT-i engine that will surely give you higher power, exceptional fuel efficiency, and lower exhaust emissions that can harm the environment. Not to mention, its revamped look and modified interior will definitely leave you in awe. Change is always exciting. Experience the thrill first hand, experience the new Toyota Corolla Altis.

**Dual VVT-i Engine for all variants**

Engine Speed (1/min)	Dual VVT-i (PS)	Standard (PS)
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2000	120	150
3000	130	140
4000	135	130
5000	130	120
6000	120	100

High performance DOHC gasoline engine with Dual Variable Valve Timing-intelligent technology delivers smooth power in a wide RPM range. It varies timing of both intake and exhaust valves, providing greater engine flexibility, more power and torque and improved fuel efficiency.

**Super Continuously Variable Transmission-intelligent (Super CVT-i) for 2.0V**

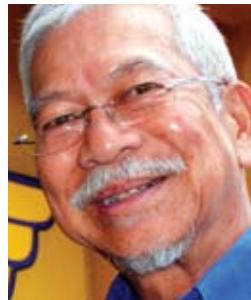
Paddle Shift with 7-speed-like feeling for 2.0V

Bluetooth for 2.0V and 1.6V variants

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THE NEW **COROLLA  
ALTIS**

**DUAL  
VVT-i**



**Gus Lagman**  
**AAPPRESIDENT**

# Road Signs

**I**F you've driven along US freeways, or even along its surface roads, then you know that even without the aid of a GPS device, for as long as you have complete directions on how to get to your destination, you won't get lost. That's because road signs will guide you to at least the general area of your destination. They will tell you where you're at and where you're heading. They might also tell you how much farther you have to go.

Road signs will also tell you how fast you can go and will warn you when there are dangerous curves ahead, when the roads are slippery when wet, when there are detours. They will tell you when you're approaching a hospital, or a school, or where there might be animals or equipment crossing.

But then you might say that that's well and good because the road signs are in English and therefore Filipinos won't find any difficulty following them.

The truth, however, is that in Europe, where almost every country you enter would have a different language, there are more than enough international road signs to guide the car traveller. For example, as you approach a town, you'll see a road sign giving the name of the town. That's pretty standard. But in some European countries, as you leave that same town, you might see a sign showing the name of the town with a diagonal line crossing the name – which means that you are, at that point, already leaving town. It sort of warns you that if you still have some business to take care of in that town, you better turn back.

Road signs and other road devices are meant to communicate with the traveller. If they do not achieve that, then they should not be there. Otherwise, they will merely distract the drivers. As some would say, if the sign or device has no redeeming value, then it should not exist at all.

Let's take the case of rumble strips. In Europe, they appear, once in a while, along long stretches of road in order to wake up drivers who might be feeling drowsy. That is their only purpose. In Philippine roads, however, they are used presumably to tell the driver to slow down. Slow down to what speed, they don't say. Which somehow makes their presence senseless. In fact, often, the driver speeds up a bit in order to somewhat reduce the vibration that's caused when one goes over these rumble strips. Some drivers even go counter-flow in order to avoid them.

My position is that if the intention is to slow

down passing vehicles at certain areas, then they should put up a road sign stating the speed limit for that section, after which they should put up another sign, so the driver knows that he can revert to his original speed.

If a driver ignores the speed limit, then he should be apprehended and given a ticket. Now, I agree – this is where we fail. Traffic cops do not enforce traffic rules! But installing rumble strips and imposing them on all drivers is not the solution to the cops' failure to enforce the rules on the few erring ones.

But there's hope. The Road Board, which is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways, has designated AAP to be the lead in setting up the standards for the deployment not only of rumble strips, but also of cats' eyes, hazard markers ("chevrons"), and guard rails. Work has started on this and completion is expected in a month or so.

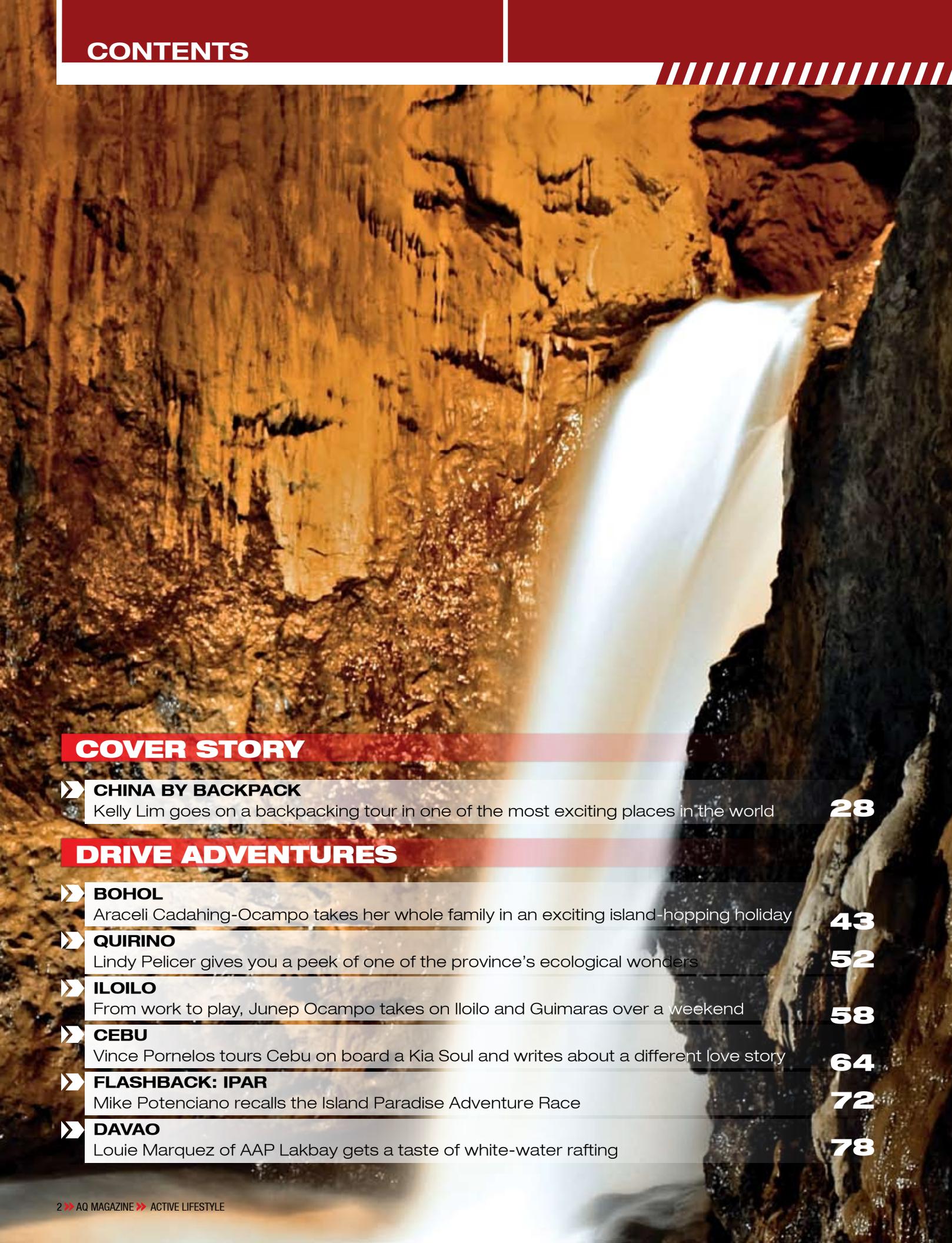
Road signs are scarce in the Philippines. What's funny is that where they sometimes are, they are overdone. In the Tagaytay-Alfonso area, for example, every bend has a set of "chevrons". Where three or four would suffice, there would be 12 or 16. Either the salesman for these markers was super-good, or money changed hands.

Inside cities and towns, you hardly notice the road signs because they are often surrounded by commercial signs and billboards. Worse, the road signs themselves are sometimes covered with commercial posters. The sidewalks should be freed of the clutter of useless and distracting signs.

This has to change. We need to install correct road signs at the right places in order that drivers would be properly guided. Tourists, particularly, are very dependent on road signs. Many of them would rather drive to tourist destinations, but are discouraged because they are afraid of getting lost.

Happily, change seems to be just around the corner. AAP is hopeful that under the new administration and its slogan of *Daang Matuwid* (Straight Path), motorists would finally be guided properly when driving on Philippine roads.

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A circular map of a car's interior, divided into sections representing different activities and locations. The sections include: On the way up the country's tallest mountain, Catching the latest flick, Teaching son to parallel park, Dropping by for a drink, Picking up dinner, Practicing my backhand, Biking a rugged trail, Navigating dirt roads, Taking the kids on their first camping trip, Wakeboarding with the wife, Slowing down to admire the sunset, Drive-thru with the kids, Tee-off time, and a central section labeled "On the road". A compass rose is in the top left corner.

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Visit your nearest Mitsubishi Motors dealer and test drive one now!

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Having been in radio for more than 25 years, Lindy has been called by many as radio goddess. She came from one of the oldest families in Cebu City. In this issue, she provides a glimpse of Quirino province.



**Mike Potenciano**  
A veteran rally and slalom driver, Mike is now into TV and radio hosting, with special focus on motorsports events. His column Turbo Time debuts in this issue of AQ along with his take on the Island Paradise Adventure Race.



**Araceli Cadahing-Ocampo**  
A journalism graduate who chose to be a teacher, Cel, as she is called by friends, is also an avid traveller. In this issue, she writes about Bohol as a perfect family getaway..



**Kelly Lim**  
Going places is what Kelly truly loves to do. She hails from Pangasinan but has been to so many places already. She knows various languages, too, including Mandarin, Taiwanese, and three more. In this issue, she recalls her tour of Southern China.

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- Describe what you think is the problem of your vehicle

Always appoint a representative to ride with the ERS team while the vehicle is being towed. If you are able to start your vehicle before the arrival of the ERS team, please call to cancel your service booking.



Aida Sevilla Mendoza  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Sustainable Mobility and Sustainable Tourism

**R**ECENT national disasters caused by extreme weather conditions – massive flooding in Australia, deadly mudslides in Brazil, blizzards paralyzing airports in Western Europe, to mention a few – dramatize the urgent need to address the worldwide onslaught of climate change. Since greenhouse gases emitted by motor vehicles are considered a major contributor to global warming, automobile manufacturers are scrambling to develop zero-emission or at least lower-emission vehicles. And as the price of oil remains wildly volatile, consumer demand for fuel-efficient wheels is surging – which is good, since a car that sips less fossil fuel leaves a smaller carbon footprint.

No wonder the unveiling of environmentally friendly “green” concept cars – plug-in electric hybrids, all-electric cars, hydrogen cells that spew zero or less carbon dioxide – has been the trend at international auto shows for some years now. Following the sustainable mobility path pioneered by Toyota in 1997 with its gasoline-electric hybrid Prius, several of these concept cars have progressed to commercial production, such as the all-electric Nissan Leaf and the Chevrolet Volt plug-in hybrid. At the North

American International Auto Show in Detroit this January, Ford Motor Co. displayed its new, fully electric Focus compact car while Porsche stole the show with the Porsche 918 RSR hybrid race car and Mercedes-Benz attracted crowds with its SLS AMG E-Cell gull wing super sports car.

### DRIVE TOURISM

Here in the Philippines, where a hybrid car like the Toyota Prius is priced beyond the reach of most consumers and high-tech green cars like the Nissan Leaf and Chevrolet Volt are nowhere on the marketing horizon, smaller, more modest steps are being taken towards sustainable mobility. One step taken by the Automobile Association Philippines (AAP) is to link

sustainable mobility with sustainable tourism in two ways: 1) by promoting Drive Tourism implemented mainly via the AAP Caravans and AAPlakbay's Just Go! website; and 2) by supporting responsible tourism through the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST) founded by former Tourism Secretary Mina Gabor who is a member of the board of directors of AAP and the chairman of the AAP Tourism Committee.

As a member of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the Paris-based federation of 227 national motoring and sporting organizations from 132 countries, AAP is tasked to provide information on tourist destinations, including road maps, road conditions and attractions along the way, to AAP members and foreign and local tourists alike. In 2008, AAP formed AAPlakbay, Inc. with Lakbay.net to launch JustGO! Philippines, a free online motoring and trip planner website that promotes Drive Tourism, encouraging AAP members and other motorists to visit and explore the country's historical and cultural sites in the freedom of their own cars.

Drive Tourism, in other words, is domestic tourism on the road. It is sustainable tourism since less energy is consumed by taking land transportation instead of taking an airplane to a tourist destination in another country. It also provides an opportunity for family bonding since parents can bring along their children. As the saying goes, the family that tours together, stays together.

### AAP CARAVANS

After conducting a demo tour of Bataan and the Isuzu Family Day Tagala Heritage Tour of Laguna and Quezon together with Isuzu Philippines Corp., AAP followed up its promotion of Drive Tourism by organizing AAP Caravans spearheaded by Mina Gabor.

The first AAP Caravan took place in May 2010, co-organized by the Clark and Subic Bay Freeport Zone authorities and the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport with Total, Aeromed and Whites and Green as sponsors. One hundred participants in 30 cars motored in convoy to the historical, cultural and ecological points of interest in Clark and Subic. Ms Gabor welcomed and joined the caravan participants in Subic, where her International School of Sustainable Tourism is under construction.

The second AAP Caravan last November saw participants in a convoy of 26 cars visiting the Museo



The unveiling of environmentally friendly concept cars has been the trend in international auto shows. One example of these vehicles is the Porsche 918 hybrid race car which debuted at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit last January.

De La Salle and the Geronimo Berenguer de los Reyes (GBR) Museum in Cavite, the Taal Heritage Village, San Nicolas town in Batangas and the Batangas Provincial Capitol. The second AAP Caravan was powered by Petron Blaze 100 and sponsored by Aeromed and Microtel Hotels-Resorts with the DOT, the provincial governments of Cavite and Batangas, the municipal governments of San Nicolas and Taal and Taal's Casa Punzalan Hotel as co-organizers.

The next AAP Caravan is scheduled for May 2, 2011 with Lukban and Sariaya, Quezon as destinations in time for the colorful Pahiyas festival.

### INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Since Subic Bay has the biggest forest reserve and beach areas in Luzon, it is the perfect site for the three campuses of the International School of Sustainable Tourism (ISST) that was founded in 2009 by Ms Gabor and a group of professionals with extensive experience in tourism. The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority's (SBMA) goal -- to develop the Freeport Zone as a “green” destination-- works hand in hand with the mission/vision of the ISST.

A private, non-stock and non-profit corporation, the ISST is dedicated to the education and technical training of manpower to advocate, promote and practice sustainable tourism in the Philippines and other ASEAN countries. The ISST aims to uplift the lives of the people in communities with ecological resources that need to be preserved and can be sustainably used for tourism, thereby empowering the people to visibly manage their communities so that it will earn for them

income/livelihood for tourism. The school helps to inculcate in tourism stakeholders and visitors the values of responsible tourism, where people interact with nature in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Aside from the SBMA, the ISST has among its partners the UN World Tourism Organization, Florida State University, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Silliman University and TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.) AAP is supporting the ISST as a collaborator together with the DOT, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. (DENR)

The importance of institutions like the ISST in the light of rapid and massive environmental and cultural losses cannot be denied. By blending economic, ecological, community, social and governance perspectives to build capacity for sustainable tourism, the ISST promotes responsible and green tourism – one that cares for the welfare of people now and the future generations.

AAP members and other motorists would be pleased to know that the ISST offers a course on Road Safety aside from courses on ecotourism planning and development, green cuisine and bartending, green housekeeping, basic and advanced ecoguiding and eco-entrepreneurship. Indeed, the ISST is the first of its kind, a world-class and internationally competitive trainors' training facility that will improve the quality of tourism, human resources, environmental and cultural conservation here and in other ASEAN countries.



**Drive Tourism,  
in other words,  
domestic tourism  
on the road. It is  
sustainable tourism  
since less energy is  
consumed by taking  
land transportation  
instead of taking an  
airplane to a tourist  
destination in another  
country.**



## Report Road Hazards Immediately!



**Tito F. Hermoso**  
COLUMNIST



**We've crowded our  
holidays with even more  
'must' things to do.  
And somehow we end  
up overachieving and  
overpacking...**



## The Good Ol' Days

**T**HE '60s to the '70s -- the good old days. We never tire of hearing it (or saying it). In Manila, traffic was mostly caused by AC's or Auto Calesas (shortie Jeepneys) on Escolta and Avenida, but then traffic cleared within an hour. If one lived in Makati, driving home for lunch was the norm. Out of town, the major traffic jams were during Easter and when town fiestas clogged the main road. But really nothing to incite one to rage and certainly not furious rebellion. There was some rush hour traffic on Highway 54, but it was being widened and reconfigured for future economic growth and anticipated congestion.

There were a lot less roads, a lot less cars, a lot less people and, seemingly, a lot less things to do so there seemed a lot more time. Global warming was unknown. Air conditioning was an aftermarket add-on and was even taxed as a luxury. Mirrored stick-on tint was mainly for buildings. Driving to the provinces or even along Manila Bay, with all car windows down, was part of the experience of being ventilated by fresh air. Vehicle exhaust was just a malodorous inconvenience during "heavy" traffic.

Still venturing out into the provinces was already fraught with the unpredictability of town traffic: townsfolk wandering aimlessly, livestock sauntering and children playing on pavement. Street lighting can only be expected in rich cities. That's why the first limited access expressways, called Diversion Roads were welcome.

Cars of the era were also far more simple. Their emergency roadside repair and maintenance was highly dependent on the patchy experience of mechanics and vulcanizing shops along the main roads. If roads were bad, motorists just didn't travel. If the weather was bad, journeys were postponed. If the trip was long, in-car provisions was a must as one cannot trust the variability of the hygiene of local refreshment stands along the way, if any. If you wanted

regional specialities, you could only trust relatives as the only form of safe fast food in the provinces: tinned food and soda pop. Travelling in the dark was to be avoided. Moreover, tales of highway men, whether inspired by any anti-establishment ideological beliefs or plain banditry, abounded.

Roads and signs varied in style and condition from place to place. White, broken center lines faded quickly and road edge lines were unheard of. Crash barriers were unyielding concrete. Most of the highway network, though narrow, had high, banked curves and snake-like road approaches for railroad crossings as there still was a functioning railway system in Luzon. Speed limits were so low no one followed them.

Today, we have more cars, more people and more roads. Making people and building cars are faster than building roads. Making money to make roads even slower. Today, our roads out in the country are beginning to look like roads in the developed world. Where available, road illumination is more common and consistent. Road barriers yield on impact. Road markings are reflectorized, abrasion resistant and are visible even under water. Our roads are now wider and paved with asphaltic concrete, although the sharp banking of old are gone. As cars get better, roads get better, we drivers have to catch up as more of us share limited road space.

Despite all the congestion today, technology has helped us do many things faster and as a result we want more things to do. Planning and preparing don't take as much time as they used to. Gourmet food, five-star resorts, wifi, cell sites, GPS navigation and extreme sports are no longer exclusive to the urbanized. But we've crowded our holidays with even more "must" things to do. And somehow we end up overachieving and overpacking for holidays that are as busy deadly deadline work days.

In 1986, Carlo Petrini established the Slow Food movement, a revolt against the rushed and tiring culture of fast food. One of its aims is to make us relaxed in our dining. With technology on our side we are better off than we ever were. With so much at our disposal, travel, like food, should be easier for us to enjoy. As we travel, can't we do with less so we can enjoy more? Slow travel movement, anyone?



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# Getting There



Andre Palma  
COLUMNIST

**T**RAVEL is a most misunderstood experience. Countless arguments have been made about what getting up and going places are all about. Is it all about the destination? Maybe it is about the journey itself? Sometimes it might even be about what gets us there, in however simple or exotic a manner. Perhaps, the true epic journey combines all of the above?

Only one thing is for sure. You only start to get the answers once you decide to pack your bags and go somewhere. It is just then that we begin to understand.

Most times we decide to fly the coop, we focus way too much on getting to the destination. In fact, human beings have been known to suffer conditions that would make cattle complain, just to get to where they want to go.

You've been there, as I have. Thirty hours into a supposed 20-hour trip, an extra airport because of an uncooperative jet engine and all one can do is endure. But remember, we persist like this because we want to get to our happy place.

In my case, it is noteworthy what the prospect of a proper bowl of chicken soup with matzo balls and a pastrami sandwich the size of your head can do. Without any sort of aspiration at the end of such trial by travel, it is a wonder why we as a species even consider transoceanic flight reasonable.

Then there are those trips as well that focus solely on the moving around. Not just once, but a couple of times, I've set off from Manila, put my feet in the sand in Ilocandia and, one blur of a drive later found myself staring off a pier in Bicol wondering if I could see across the San Bernardino Straits to Samar. Amazing what happens when someone wants to figure out how far you can go on a single tank of unleaded petrol.

Yes, these drives up and down the length of Luzon took wanderlust to the extreme, but all that liberty to roam in such a short period of time did have its downside. Sad, that to this day, all the places, sights, smells and tastes of those drives are a confused haze to me. Maybe I should have stopped and smelled the cogon somewhere, anywhere on that thousand plus kilometer route. The regret

**GF**  
**You only start  
to get the answers  
once you decide  
to pack your bags  
and go somewhere.  
It is just then  
can we begin to  
understand.**

**GF**



## AAP to cap 80th anniversary celebration with Decade of Action for Road Safety launch

**T**HE Automobile Association Philippines (AAP) is preparing for a grand celebration of its 80th anniversary in May 2011.

Details are still tentative but AAP members can expect three consecutive days full of motoring-related activities capped by the launching of the Decade of Action for Road Safety.

AAP kicks off the celebration on May 8 with a Concours d'Elegance exhibit of vintage cars at the Philippine Trade and Training Center (PTTC) in Pasay City and a motorcade of new cars from Luneta to the Mall of Asia. On May 9 in the afternoon, AAP's Annual General Membership Meeting will be held at the PTTC, followed by the annual AAP Motor Sport Awards Night to honor the 2010 champions of six motor sport disciplines and Hall of Fame awardees.

On the third day, May 10, AAP plans to complete the local implementation of the FIA Foundation's Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative (GHVI) by distributing 500 helmets to children in Morong, Rizal who ride tandem on motorcycles going to and from school. The school children will receive motorcycle helmets that comply with international safety standards to help them develop a lifetime habit of wearing helmets whenever they ride two-wheeled vehicles. The "Helmet Vaccine" project in the Philippines, co-organized by AAP, the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Injury Prevention Foundation, was launched in May 2010 when Hollywood movie actress Michelle Yeoh, now the Make Roads Safe Global Ambassador of the FIA Foundation, arrived in Manila to lead the distribution of helmets to schoolchildren from various Metro Manila public elementary schools.

Also on the last day of the 80th anniversary celebration, AAP's new main office at EDSA in San Juan City will be blessed and inaugurated if its renovation is completed by then.

May 11, 2011 is reserved for the Philippine launching of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 that has been declared by the United Nations and that will be simultaneously launched worldwide by FIA member clubs in over 100 countries.. A telethon involving show business and sports celebrities will be held wherein Philippine Global Road Safety Partnership (PGRSP) stakeholders headed by AAP and including the Departments of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Philippine National Red Cross plus leaders of the private business sector and civil society will call in to pledge their support to the Decade of Action. Tags bearing the Wear, Believe, Act slogan of the Decade of Action will be distributed.

On the same day, the H2O project (Helmets and Headlights On Always) promoting the use of helmets and headlights by motorcyclists on the road will be launched. AAP also plans to distribute free DVD copies of the safe driving seminars that AAP and the University of the Philippines National Center for Transportation Studies have been conducting for public utility vehicle drivers with the sponsorship of Toyota Motor Philippines and in coordination with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board of the DOTC.

The final details of these events will be published in the next issue of AQ and the April 2011 supplement of AAP in the Philippine Daily Inquirer. **AQ**

## 9th Triple Crown for Toyota

**T**OYOTA Motor Philippines (TMP) finished 2010 strong with year-end sales of 56,855 units capturing 33.7% market share. TMP has once again proven its stance as the No. 1 automotive company in the country after posting the highest number of vehicle sales in the entire history of the automotive industry. In addition, it has also outperformed itself after achieving record-breaking yearend sales, which is a fitting complement to its 9th consecutive Triple Crown Title.

According to the report of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines, Inc. (CAMPI), total industry sales for 2010 reached 168,490 units. This translates to an astounding 27.2% growth compared to the same period of last year. "2010 has been another banner year for Toyota. We started the year on a strong note achieving record-breaking sales from January to October and then finally capping the year with 5,623 units in December. This is the highest monthly sales we have posted since the start of our operations in 1989. Also, we have remained consistent in being the leader in Passenger Car Category, Commercial Vehicle Category and Overall Sales, now for the 9th consecutive year," expressed Yuji Goto, TMP Executive Vice President. "We are also pleased that TMP was able to respond to the robust market performance in 2010, with our locally manufactured Vios and Innova models as the country's top-selling vehicles," Goto added. **AQ**

## NEW SPARK DEBUTS IN RP

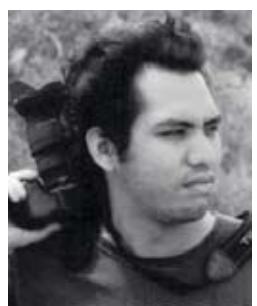
**C**HEVY recently held the Chevy Motorama at the SM Mall Of Asia Music Hall. This time around, The Covenant Car Company Inc (TCCI) has pulled out all the stops to make sure there is a lot more for public to look forward to.

Making its debut is the all-new Chevrolet Spark, the brand's new subcompact hatch. As shared by Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director of Chevrolet Philippines – TCCI Atty. Albert Arcilla, "We'd like to describe the all-new Spark a small but with massive attitude because of the big things it can do for your life and driving pleasure. With its stylish design, solid handling and fuel-efficiency, you're guaranteed to spark some fun in your every drive."

Motorama attendees were also treated to live performances by singer/performer, Karylle with Beatbox Gor and a special guest appearance of Chevrolet Brand Ambassador, Ryan Agoncillo.

Customers purchasing a new Chevy car also get that Chevy prestige, as Chevrolet Philippines-TCCI add a few extras to further sweeten the deal. For every purchase of a Chevy Cruze L or LT or Chevy Aveo LT, get your iPad or iPod Touch for FREE on top of Chevy accessories Great Coupons (GC), Microtex Professional Car Care Kits, or Fuel Cards that you will be eligible to get. **AQ**

## The Case for Casas



Iggy S. Roces  
COLUMNIST

**A** friend of mine from the car industry once told me, "When you buy a car from us, it's not the end of the deal, it's the start of a partnership." Many car buyers and owners see it this way but that view is rarely shared by dealers and service staff. We've all heard horror stories of car casas. Simply browse a car forum and you're bound to run into one or two of them.

Car buyers can't be blamed for believing some of them. After all, the car in itself is an expensive purchase. Just the news of a consumer being overcharged or repeatedly returning to a casa for a botched job is all it takes to frighten a customer away. Nevermind sticking around to confirm it.

I have to admit, some of those stories have persuaded me to be more diligent with car care, out of fear of having to make that eventual trip to the casa, should something go wrong.

For some years now, I've been carefully maintaining my passed-down '02 Sentra Exalta on my own and with the help of some small shops from time to time. I've kept oil changes on schedule, changed a few parts when they were due, all without setting foot in a casa once. I even started rotating my tires on my own after hearing about one guy who had it done in a casa only to be disappointed. He had marked the inside of each tire's rim and checked them all after servicing only to find out that they hadn't moved. Needless to say, there's a story or two for every part of a car that can be replaced. The sheer number of them seems to stack the odds against the casa.

Of course, no matter how careful you are, problems will arise. My Dad always said that a car is the worst investment in the world, and he's a car lover. My ever faithful Sentra began having transmission problems. It was rare at first and began to get more frequent over time. After consulting some car experts, I was told a transmission fluid flush would fix it. I did so, but the problem surfaced as soon as I pulled away from the shop. I changed the filter and flushed it again. The problem was still there.

**Just the news of a consumer being overcharged or repeatedly returning to a casa for a botched job is all it takes to frighten a customer away.**



I figured it could be electronic and took it to another shop that specializes in those matters. Unfortunately, the car, being a uniquely ASEAN model wasn't registered in its database. Another shop wouldn't even touch it. I was faced with the inevitability of bringing it to a casa.

The first time I brought it in to Nissan Quezon Ave, I went through the motions. Waited in line, mentioned the problem and headed home with a receipt, awaiting a diagnosis. They called and told me they test drove it and had to go through a process of elimination to find the problem. At first, they said it was a loose bolt. I had serious doubts it was as simple as that, but gave them the benefit of the doubt anyway. A few days later, the problem resurfaced and I returned to the casa for a backjob. Thankfully, they continued where they left off, trying to find out what else it could be. I was out of town when they called me on my cell. It seems the speed sensor was the culprit and needed to be replaced. It rang up a quite a bill, but still lower than the transmission overhaul I was fearful of. I held my breath for the next couple of days, but thankfully, the problem never returned.

In hindsight, I may have let the stories get the better of me. Contrary to what I heard, my casa experience turned out pretty pleasant. The service advisor took the time to explain to me the process of elimination they had to do. They gave the estimates of the repairs and labor too. Every single scratch on my car was documented (it took a whole hour because my car had so many), and its contents too. I was also updated daily, on their own initiative. Finally, the car was spotless (not counting my thousands of scratches prior of course) when it was released. Even the interior seemed cleaner than when I brought it in. And to ensure that I kept my car in running conditions, I was given a list of recommended repairs should I decide to return, many of which I hadn't thought to check despite my diligence.

I was beginning to think I had it wrong all this time, passing judgment on these casas without even giving it a try. Before this experience I was thinking of some upgrades. Now, it seems to have stirred a new love for my old clunker, and a renewed resolve to keep it stock.

At the end of the day, it all boils down to that partnership I mentioned. They can't do their job if you don't do yours. A little preventive maintenance goes a long way. And a little good faith helps it go further.

## Volvo Cars launches S60 app

**V**OLVO Cars is launching an app for the iPhone and iPad containing plenty of inspiration and information about the new Volvo S60. For instance, the user can style a Volvo S60, watch videos, read news, find a Volvo dealer and order a test drive.

The S60 app (application software) along with an S80L version in certain markets is now being launched by Volvo Cars and additional apps will be presented this spring.

"Many customers use mobile phones and Internet tablets to search for information. Now we're simply ensuring that we are where our customers are, opening a window into the company," says David Holecek, responsible for Volvo Cars' digital strategy.

Among the functions included in the app, is a search tool that uses the mobile phone's built-in GPS function to locate and specify the route to the nearest Volvo dealer.

It is also possible to book a test drive, and a configurator allows the user to build his or her own S60. These new functions are linked to the local market site and offer access to the latest news from Volvo Cars.

"We've integrated a number of unique features, such as using the mobile phone's built-in gyro to look around inside the car. If you turn the phone, the image viewed moves too, creating the impression that you're actually sitting inside the car," explains David Holecek.

### MORE TO COME

More apps will be rolled out for additional Volvo models in conjunction with the Geneva motor show, which gets under way in early March. The target group consists of both potential and existing customers.

"In some countries, we already offer iPhone and Android apps that control the car's heater for customers who subscribe to the Volvo On Call system, and we are also testing a digital instruction manual in the form of an app," reveals David Holecek.

An iPad app containing Volvo Cars' customer magazine, LIV, will also soon be launched. This app will provide access to some of the magazine's content along with a variety of bonus functions such as extra graphic image and film material.

All Volvo Cars' apps will be available for free downloading from the Apple App Store.

Some descriptions and facts in this press material relate to Volvo Cars' international car range. Described features might be optional. Vehicle specifications may vary from one country to another and may be altered without prior notification.

In Manila, Viking Cars, Incorporated is the official distributor of Volvo cars. The Volvo Makati office, showroom and Customer Service Center are located at 2272 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City. Volvo Cebu



is located at A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City. The 2011 Volvo automobile line includes the nimble C30 Sports Coupé, the versatile All-New C70 Coupé-Convertible, the compact All-New S40 and V50 Sportswagon, the flagship All-New S80 luxury sedan, the ruggedly refined All-New XC70 Cross Country, the groundbreaking Volvo XC60 with City Safety as standard and the award-winning XC90 AWD. Now available in the Philippines is the All New Volvo S60 with world first Pedestrian Detection technology with Full Auto Brake system. For details and inquiries, please call 893-6621 to 22 or 637-0414 to 15.

For more information, please contact, Loi Concepcion-de Guzman, Marketing Services Assistant Vice President: 893-6621 local 429; loi@volvophilippines.com Join Volvo Philippines in Facebook



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# How To Go Racing Around The World



Mike Potenciano  
COLUMNIST

**R**ACING around the world has always been a dream for a lot of us and is the best way to gauge yourself against all the champions out there. However, this dream can easily turn out to be a nightmare that will make you mad, cry and/or bury you deep in debt. Here are just some of my tips which hopefully, may help you avoid the many pitfalls on your way to achieving your dream.

Once you have practiced, practiced and practiced and have won, won and won (notice the emphasis on training and competing locally), and are now set to represent the country in international competitions, you must now sit down and plan everything.

Your local race knowledge would have opened your eyes as to what things you will need, your physical conditioning, the right people to help you and most especially, the finances you will need to go abroad.

Most of the things you will need are now available on the Internet but it is always better to be hands on with regard to the preparations, most especially when you are dealing with possible sponsors for your team.

The sponsors' requirements are so huge that they ask for at least 2-3 months lead time to prepare for an event and that is if you get to pass the approval stage. Believe it or not, some of the sponsors don't even know what motorsports is and its hard to ask them for money for something they haven't even heard of.

The next thing is to get in touch with organizers of the event for all the requirements that you will need. You will see that aside from the event regulations, some of the organizers will have suggestions for transport, hotel accommodations and clearing of equipment from their port. These are the better ones and they are used to having international competitors in their races. A prime example of this is the Asian Festival of Speed organizers headed by David Sonenscher.

Some insider tips can also be given by the racers and mechanics who have attended them. A lot of my old MP Turbo mechanics are already working in different international racing teams and I regularly ask them what's happening in the races abroad. I know that some Filipinos are also managing tracks abroad (like rally driver Rikki Dy-Liacco in Zhuhai, China) and can provide vital information in their local scene.

There will also be a lot of local regulations that you will have to fulfill especially if you intend to ship out cars for racing or rallying. A good broker will be a blessing, and an endorsement from the Philippine Sports Commission will help. We almost missed a rally long ago when Customs people were giving us a hard time bringing out our Lancer for the Hong Kong Rally.

There are almost the same requirements to bring a

car out as to bringing it in. You have to give at least two weeks for Customs preparations and then at the same time, coordinate with the shipping company for the best deal possible. The shipping lines are usually vacant leaving Manila and you can get good deals from them.

The local organizers that can help with the release of your equipment will usually have a broker that will be paid extra from the organizer's fee. Clear this point early on and be prepared for this fee to be paid when the equipment comes out.

Local transport is essential and the best way is to get a local van with a dependable, trustworthy driver. He should be well-versed on the local establishments like hardware stores, auto supplies, hospitals and travel agencies in the area. The best discount can be taken if you contract him for the duration of the event. If budget is tight, you can ask organizers and teams if you can hitch with them to and from the track. Some are more than willing to help a racer in need and just be generous with feeding them in return.

With some of our local competitions not at par as regards safety requirements for racing, it's best to sort out your helmet, suit, gloves, shoes and underwear for racing. Head and neck restraint system is required in formulas and fireproof socks and underwear, too. However, these requirements are relaxed in rallying especially in long, endurance type of events.

If you are able to get sponsors, make sure you deliver on what you promised. Be sure to decorate your car and paddock ahead of time with the sponsors' logos and document it with video and pictures. Also, keep the Philippine press happy by furnishing them with the latest news and hopefully, they will publish it or even put your videos on TV. Just make it very accessible for them to get the news and always remember those who helped you in the end.

Another essential item to bring, aside from all the racing and travel documents, will be a family member, best friend, team manager or any local partner that can help you in times of need or emergencies. You can never prepare for all contingencies and it's always good to have someone that can help decide on what to do. Also remember that racing has a lot of mental challenges also and having someone conditioning and supporting you will definitely help you win.

There are still a lot of tips that cannot fit in the space I'm limited to but the best tip is to not be afraid to chase your dream no matter what and always dedicate it to Him. Godspeed and good luck!

PS-For any comment or suggestion, please email me at [mpturboph@yahoo.com](mailto:mpturboph@yahoo.com) or send a message to my facebook account. Thank you in advance for your comments!

**T**HE Asiatype Group of Companies has been in the cartography business since 1995. Its team of GIS (Geographic Information System) specialists has since then been gathering and updating data using GPS technology and advanced software, making Asiatype the country's leading publisher of folded maps under the brand Accu-map.

Today Asiatype introduces Vector, its very own portable navigation device that employs electronic maps, route plotting and rerouting, and turn-by-turn voice directions designed to help motorists easily find their way in and around the city. Already a mainstream gadget all over the world, the portable navigation device is on its way to becoming an essential lifestyle product. And Vector, packed with local map data and updates, a friendly user interface, and fun multimedia features is out to do just that: become an indispensable convenience that says goodbye to days wasted on traffic, getting lost, and draining the gas tank from going in circles. Don't believe us? Think it's too niche? Too "up there"? Not really a necessity?

Didn't they say the same thing about the cell phone?

## THE VECTOR ADVANTAGE

It's true what they say, "If you can survive driving in the Philippines, you can drive anywhere." Never mind the traffic. That's old news. Add to that two-way roads that suddenly become one-way; u-turn slots that move without warning; street signs that disappear; street names that get renamed... again; or just the thousands of side streets that merge, diverge, then converge into the tiniest back alleys you don't know if you're still on the road or on someone's driveway.

Now, imagine never having to worry about getting to a place you've never been to before. Like following to the reception venue from a church wedding. Or visiting a friend's private resthouse in Batangas.

Anyone who's ever had to do so knows well enough that those stick-figure "maps" sometimes help little. And that trying to get directions over the phone is not only hazardous but prone to several exchanges of "What? Huh?"

Turn where?" It's been proven that with Vector, one completely unaware of the directions can get to the chosen destination as though he knew his way around.



## Where would you like to go today?

Vector Portable GPS Navigation takes care of getting you there. Driving in the Philippines has never been this hassle-free.

Imagine finally being able to indulge fantasies of spontaneity by going on a "wherever the road takes me" kind of adventure out of town, yet still feeling in complete control behind the wheel. Imagine almost never having to ask for directions. Or getting a ticket for that no-left-turn you didn't know was there.

Imagine being able to choose an alternate route in the face of imminent traffic jams on major thoroughfares. Imagine having choices on the road. Powered by more than 15 years of mapping data, local updates, and a tried-and-tested mapping software, Vector takes the edge off driving and gets you where you need to be in the quickest possible way. And here's why:

- **Tried and Tested Software.** Software comes from NDrive, a leading European provider of navigation services to mobile platforms in over 50 countries worldwide (customers include prominent brands such as HP, Samsung, HTC, and Toshiba).

- **Local Knowledge and over 38,000 Points of Interest.**

Vector's map data are produced by local cartographers and GIS specialists who get constant feedback and regularly update points of interest in and around the city, so map and software updates are continuous. You can search through an exhaustive list of points of interest (POIs) in from different categories

and can even add your own POI to your device.

Quarterly updates are free for one year from date of purchase.

- **Premium on Accuracy, Not Just Coverage.** Vector's maps have an accuracy rate of +/- 3 meters (industry standard is +/- 15 meters). While coverage of the entire Philippines is still underway, Vector already has complete street-level coverage of Metro Manila, Batangas, Laguna, Cavite, Pampanga, Baguio, Bulacan, Bacolod, Cebu, Tarlac, Rizal, Subic, and Olongapo, with almost 38,000 points of interests as of October 2010. Nationwide mapping is slated to be completed in a few months. Simply make a search among Vector's 38,000 points of interest and find a restaurant, hotel, hospital, or gas station nearest you.

- **Competitive Pricing.** SRP is Php13,900.

- **Continuous After-Sales Support.** Local after-sales support is available through e-mail, phone, and web forums.

- **Fun Extra Features.** Vector comes packed with games, multimedia functions, and other features that make it an all-around lifestyle must have. Packaged in a sleek, scratch-proof casing, this nifty pocket-sized road guide keeps you entertained during pit stops

## Shell customers get P20 off

**T**WENTY pesos can mean a cup of hot coffee to wake a driver up in the late hours of the night or a bag of chips to satiate the hunger pang of a yuppie stuck in traffic. If accumulated, a working mom can buy chocolate bars for her son waiting at home while a car enthusiast can buy a litre of oil for his treasured car.

Indeed, P20, on its own or added up, can go a long way. This is why Pilipinas Shell is showing its gratitude to its customers through this promo.

"We want to thank our customers for their continued support and patronage with a simple but nevertheless well thought out token," says Pilipinas Shell Retail General Manager Bong Fadullon. "We are ready to serve our customers in our stations across Luzon and we want to enrich their refuelling experience with this promo."

Every P1,000 single or accumulated purchase of Shell's Quality fuels entitles you to P20 worth of products from Shell Select or Shell Shop. Just present the original receipts at any participating Luzon Shell station to get your reward. Promo runs from February 15 to March 31. Fleet, bulk and PO customers of Shell are also eligible for the promo.

This initiative has been a huge success among motorists in the past and Shell is bringing it back to welcome and thank Filipino motorists who are among the millions who choose Shell in 44,000 fuel stations in 80 countries worldwide.

"At Shell, we don't just give our customers Quality fuels, but also meaningful, relevant and useful value added services and activities," adds Fadullon.





# The Belle of the Ball ➤ JAGUAR XKR

STORY and PHOTOS by  
Jaguar Philippines  
and Iñigo S. Roces

**A**N automotive brand's anniversary is usually a gleaming affair. Food and drinks are bountiful and guests are dressed in their very best. Many take this occasion to reveal a brand new model. Test drives around the block are provided to give the media a brief experience of how it drives. Performers light up the stage, and of course, there's the all important key note speech and toast to how far the brand has come.

You'd expect a typically conservative brand like Jaguar to do the same. Just having their cars parked indoors is enough to draw a crowd. Yet for the 75th Anniversary of the Jaguar brand, Jaguar Philippines decided to do something a little different.

## A Different Affair

We were whisked away far from the city, early in the morning to the Subic International Airport for their celebration. No, we weren't about to fly to Britain. Though, we were offered the closest thing to flying a Jaguar can deliver.

Strewn out in the tarmac were a series of cones and the very latest of the Jaguar line-up. Despite the vehicles' multi-million peso price tag, Jaguar staff encouraged us to sign up for a whole day of flooring, braking



and sliding their cars around in the airport's vast taxiways. No need to worry about incoming flights spoiling the fun. They've all been put on hold as even the main landing strip would be utilized.

The itinerary involved a number of exercises to get us up to speed. The first was taking off with one wheel on a soap slick

surface. The second was panic braking and steering around obstacles at the same time. The third was a dry run on the landing strip and back, allowing us to reach a high speed of 200 km/h. All of this was done in a variety of XF petrol and diesel models, not shy of burning some rubber despite their propensity for cruising.

## The Belle

As enjoyable as it all was, everyone still had their eye on the most elusive of the Jaguar line, the XKR sports car. With almond eyes, sexy shoulders and a classic silhouette that all instant classics seem to have, you can bet she was the belle of the ball. And why not? The wide oval grille seemed to pout ever so slightly. A 5.0 liter supercharged engine lay in wait under the bonnet. Broad rear wheels and a six speed automatic could take it to 100 km/h in just 4.8 seconds. To top it off, its start stop button begins beating as soon as you enter, seemingly calling you to give in to temptation.

## The Ball

Perhaps a bit out of character and slightly surprising, Jaguar Philippines willingly obliged, handing over the keys to the XKR for the glorious top speed run. With a gentle press, the awakening began, a Jaguar logo briefly flashing in its center LCD, the engine burbling to life and the drive selector rising out of the center divider. A few twists of the knob put the car into drive, sport mode. A gentle nudge lets you know it's in gear. And upon flooring the throttle, the nearly inaudible burble of idling quickly turns into a thunderous roar. The tires chirp from surprise and your head is shoved back as the car rapidly makes it way to 100.

A few turns on the way to the start of the strip allowed for a quick sampling of its handling. Despite the mounds of power at its rear wheels and the uneven tarmac surface, the car kept its composure well, seemingly egging you on to push it some more. Pour on the throttle mid corner and the back squats to grab some more road, and lunge forward even harder. Having built up some speed, the start of the strip went by in

flash, and I found myself staring down the runway in just a few short moments. Your eyes move further down the horizon, trying to look farther than your eyes can see as the car quickly gains speed. 200 km/h came by quickly and subtly as the car's suspension and isolation do well to mask the speed and sound. At 250 km/h, everything in your periphery is just a blur. The mountain at the other side of Subic's bay seems to be rolling toward you and the internal self preservation instincts tell you to grip the wheel tighter and carefully control each input. In a matter of seconds, it was all over as a gigantic "BRAKE NOW" sign placed by the organizers zoomed past. And just a blink after, the end of the runway was beginning to reveal itself. The warning was placed with ample allowance, allowing me to slow down without straining the brakes.

A broad U-turn allowed me to turn into the taxiway and have another stab at it if I wished, although this time, with an even more conservative braking point. Yet I opted to take it slower to enjoy the car, and trying to see just how much longer it would take had I stuck to a speed limit. Even with milder manners, it seemed all too easy to accelerate to 160 km/h again, without even trying. The massive engine only needs the slightest of efforts to get there. The "exit" so to speak came by in a hurry, and I foolishly took on the sharp turn at 140, hardly realizing it because of the car's coddling nature. Nevertheless, it took on the series of esses just as easy as it accelerates; the broad and long car showing just how light on its tires it was despite its imposing stance.

## The End Too Soon

With a foot barely resting on the brake, the car came to a gentle stop. It was hard to believe the dance was over so quickly. I took the moment to take it all on, the 



comfort, the power, the alluring interior, the unforgettable experience. Already I could see the others impatiently awaiting their turn. Alas, I had to alight. The five minutes went by so briefly, even though when I play it back in memories now, seems to stretch out longer.

And that was Jaguar Philippines' anniversary celebration. There was no tipping of hats, nor clinking of wine glasses. Half of the guests were in shirts, jeans and rubber shoes. The smell of sea air filled the area rather than the rich aroma of exotic entrees and desserts.

For those who wonder why men willingly part with such large sums of money to possess such cars. The secret lies in the way Jaguar makes an introduction. It's all about that first impression, that dance to 250 km/h and the end of the affair that comes all too soon.

They say men aren't romantics. I beg to differ. For that event had all the magic of a King's Ball.



## SPECIFICATIONS:

PRICE:	POA
ENGINE:	5.0 liter supercharged V8
POWER & TORQUE:	510 hp / 461 lb-ft.
DRIVETRAIN:	Rear-wheel drive
TRANSMISSION:	6-speed A/T
SEATING:	2 passengers
0-100:	4.8 seconds
TOP SPEED:	300 km/h

# The Roadster Redux

**► BMW Z4 3.0i SDrive**

STORY and PHOTOS: Tito Hermoso



## Looking like a sports car

Long hood, short deck, seats two, low roof. Coined in the 60's, it is the quintessential definition of a sports car. The America of the muscle car and pony car slavishly followed this formula, establishing de facto. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

## The truth is something else

The original sports cars were small, short of wheelbase and rather low. It was also lighter than a sedan of the same size, as sports cars then, eschewed the metal roof in favor of a lighter folding canvas one. Think 60's MG and Triumph. But MG's, Austin-Healey's and Triumphs needed the stamina

of triathletes and the indestructibility of a POW to drive them, survive them, never mind enjoy them. We have the celebrity superstar Jaguar XK-E to thank for changing the notion of the sports car into today's car with a long hood, short deck and low headroom.

## Party popper

There was a time when convertibles and sports cars, considered more as toys rather than transport, almost went the way of the dinosaur. In the Ralph Nader inspired consumer protectionist late 70s, a slew of crash safety, fuel economy and pollution limiting statutes in the world's biggest auto nation were threatening to take the fun out



or motoring. Cars were to become tools for transport and having fun was bad for the health.

## The Savior

After a generation or two of lack luster motoring, Technology successfully reconciled all the conflicting priorities of safety, emissions, economy with fun. Once relegated to museums, the quintessential post-war open top English sports car was, in balmy California, reincarnated as the Mazda Miata in 1989. It was like a seminal spring as long hibernating passions for sports cars and open top motoring came alive again.

The roadster continues to have its appeal, though sometimes decried as

diminished, with the sports car purists; as if they had no other choice. Young blades, enamored with the vintage and romantic notions of freedom and style were the usual suspects. But the biggest "new" generation for the roadster were the Baby Boomers entering into mid-life. They were the first of the car generation who can afford to live or re-live their youth today, without abandoning retirement's creature comforts that their aging joints and bones depend on.

## The latest

We look at the latest Z4 as a refinement and perhaps, retirement of what the 1997 Z3 stood for. While the Z3 was an entry level sports car with a basic fabric roof in the

tradition of the purist English sports cars, the Z4 with folding metal roof today is a far bigger, more refined, luxurious and far more powerful a car, even if it just barely ticks the right boxes of what defines a sports car. It's more SL Mercedes than SLK.

## New again

The latest generation of the Z4 is again completely new. If the first Z4 was a sports car with a comfortable ride, the latest takes it further – in the comfort stakes. Again, it does not lack for individual style even if the front kidney grille had to be restyled, along with the rest of the car, to accommodate new EU regulations for pedestrian safety. As in BMW's motto of Joy through Expression, the interior appointments are tasteful but not vulgar over the top. The exterior's flowing flutes and curves are pure and they never give you the impression that it was designed by a dysfunctional committee under the dictates of cliché.

## Back to the reality of illusion

On a typical sports car road – empty, winding and appropriate for some wind in the hair – the steering/suspension revolves around your bum as responses do not suppress a keen driver's appreciation for the intuitive laws of physics – which make it thoroughly enjoyable. Seating only two, roadsters are, by definition selfish in their pleasures. So is the Z4 an ideal mix between an out and out sports car and a cruiser capable muscle car? Perhaps. Still, one has to drive to derive full utility of its suspension and electronic dynamic aids. But onlookers have one advantage over the driver. Those onlookers can enjoy admiring the looks, even if it's just for a moment. ☺



# Saving the Best for Last

 Chrysler 300C CRD

STORY and PHOTOS: Tito Hermoso

**A**s you read this, the latest 2011 Chrysler 300C's are already in the North American showrooms and doubtless, some loaded on ships docked in Long Beach CA, headed for the Port of Manila. It will be the first major revamp of the 300C since its launch in 2005. It comes with the new horizontal chrome slatted grille and tail treatment, no doubt the imprint of its new foster parents, FIAT and the Federal Government. Naturally, it comes with the latest iPod, iPhone, iP-whatever electronic handshake "syncronycity" for life in the 2nd decade of the 21st century.

## The passing of an era

Once betrothed to Daimler, Chrysler was an overseas American spouse that gobbled money and resources like a concubine. Like it or not, the 300C, despite its Mercedes rear wheel drive platform, revived and redefined the American car at a time when it began to look like the American truck. American sedans were relegated to airport rentals and livery/taxis, including intermediates like the Taurus or Impala. But then Honda and Toyota made better American cars in the form of Camrys and Accords. American cars became a cultural curiosity, headed for oblivion.



## Imperial legacy

To those steeped in Chrysler's 100-plus years of heritage, it's the hint of the prestige Chrysler Imperial egg crate grille and fin-like tail lamps that gives it the right to stand shoulder to shoulder with Bentley's and Rolls Royce's. Named after the C-series of the mid 50's, the Chrysler 300C harked back to the days when performance in America meant horizon gobbling carrier deck hoods. The 2010 300C was available with the HEMI V-8 in front and in the rear, an in-trunk release handle, for a botched Mafioso rub-out victim's escape.



## Alimony

Call it an alimony payment from the Daimler-Chrysler divorce, the 2010 Chrysler 300C CRD has Daimler's pride and joy: the OM 642 engine, a 3-liter crdi turbo diesel V-6 shared with Mercedes-Benz's top rung models. It may not have the brutal take-off of a HEMI, but a HEMI will try very hard, consume far more fuel to convincingly leave the CRD in a drag race. Numbers? 0-100km/h in 7.6 seconds, only 1.2 seconds slower than the HEMI. With the Mercedes suspension, the 300C is adhesive and neat on long sweepers, something wallowing American cruisers cannot accomplish with aplomb nor sustain in determined velocity. Big bumps are smothered, with some perceptible bounce back. Still, it's the 300C's nostalgic styling details – Imperial grille, slot windows and finned tail lights – that always draws attention. As a diesel, it has no malodorous aroma and it purrs rather than clatters. FIAT is making no promises to retain a diesel variant for the new 2011 300C. A pity as the "old" 300C has kept the best for last. 

# Smooth Operator

► 2010 Lexus IS 300

STORY and PHOTOS:  
Vince Pornelos



**I**N the class of compact executive cars, the Lexus IS is really the new kid on the block. It is no secret that the BMW 3-series and Mercedes C-Class are continuous class leaders, but with the entry of Lexus in the market in 2009, perhaps the IS300 can prove to the big boys that it has what it takes to play with them.

The first thing you really notice about the IS, or any Lexus, is the paint job. It's just gorgeously painted, with the metallic, pearly paint shimmering in any light condition. While I do like the "L-finesse" design on the front and rear, the IS300 could really do with feature lines on the side, as it is quite plain to look at.



Inside, it's definitely one of the sportiest designs in the class, with everything being very driver oriented. Quality is the key here, and everything you touch just feels great. The rim of the steering wheel feel great to the touch, same goes paddles behind it. Ergonomics are top notch, but I do wish they did more with the controls (like the wiper and headlamp stalks) to distinguish the Lexus line from the Toyota line.

Beneath that beautiful sheet metal is a 3.0 liter V6 from Lexus, producing a decent 228 horsepower and 300 newton meters of torque. Honestly, the IS300 won't be blowing many cars away on the road, but it provides decent acceleration from zero to 100 km/h in 8.0 seconds and tops out at 235 km/h with the 6-speed automatic transmission. What I love about the IS's powertrain is its seamless power delivery, with a smooth, gradual pull right from idle all the way to the edge of the tachometer. Where the powertrain needs a little work is on the fuel economy side, as an average consumption of 9.4 kilometers to the liter of mixed driving is relatively low given the way Mercedes's new ultra-efficient CGI engines while BMW and Audi focus on their respective diesels.

On the highway, it's one of the smoothest, most comfortable cars I've driven, especially when compared to its German contemporaries like the 3-series and the C-Class. The seats are perfect for highway cruising, something that I can't say for the BMW and the Merc, and the noise and harshness suppression is one of the best in the class, if not so already.

Driving it up in the mountains, having that smooth, predictable power curve gives the driver so much extra control of the car. The car turns very well for such a comfortable car, though the handling feel is typical of Lexus: a little numb, as suppressing much of the world around you does come with the drawback of diluting the driving feel a bit.

Overall, the IS300 is a great new offering in the class, and approaches the category dominated by the 3-series and the C-Class with Lexus's take on what a small executive sedan should be. For driving feel and excitement, maybe the Merc and the BMW will be better choices, but for a highly comfortable ride and drive, at any speed, the Lexus is really the best in the breed. **AQ**





# Right Car, Right Time

## ► 2011 Toyota Corolla Altis 1.6V

**S**TYLISH, efficient, practical and comfortable, the Altis has always been the standard setter for the class to follow. Now, after a mid life refresh, the Toyota Corolla Altis is ready for the challenge of the new year.

From the outside, they've made a few significant changes to the look of the car. A more aggressive, sportier front bumper takes the place of the old, docile one, while sharper, more prominent headlamps finish off the new look. In the back there's a new rear bumper, along with redesigned taillamps and chrome embellishments, all of which are complemented by new 16 inch wheels.

Inside, it's very similar to the outgoing model, though with some improvements on fit and finish and equipment. A new steering wheel replaces the old one, making it more reminiscent of the Camry's. Behind the new steering wheel is a pair of paddle shifters, while the old glossy faux wood panels have been swapped out for a set of classier matte faux wood, giving a better quality feel. Some

may say that being one of the two range topping models of the Altis that this one should have leather seats, but personally I prefer the fabric ones in our tropical temperatures.

Features wise, this 1.6V has pretty much everything you need. The AM, FM, CD, MP3 stereo system gets an auxiliary-input port, and has 6 speakers for full audio, while for maximum comfort there's a fully automatic climate control system to keep the cabin temperatures in check. For convenience, Toyota outfitted the Altis with a full suite of motorized features with power windows, locks and mirrors, a smart key transponder (for push start convenience), steering wheel audio controls as well as a Bluetooth handsfree compatibility.

At the heart of the new Corolla Altis is a new range of powerplants. When I tried out the first version of this Altis, launched in 2008, I've always remarked how much the 1.6 liter model feels better than the original 1.8 liter version. This particular version has the new 1.6 liter engine which, when

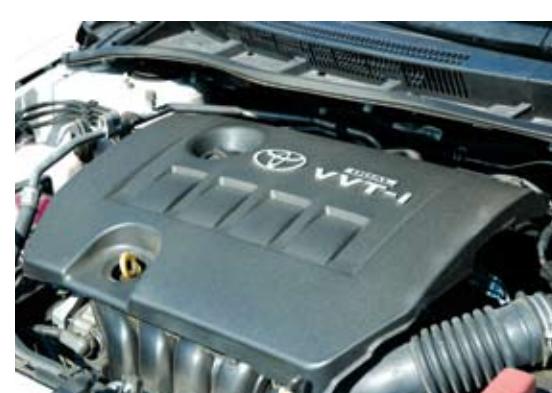


**STORY and PHOTOS:**  
Vince Pornelos

combined with the new Dual VVT-i system, is now capable of 122 horsepower and 154 Nm of torque.

The only mark for improvement that I feel the 1.6V needs is the new 6-speed CVT that debuted with the 2.0L model, as the old 4-speed automatic just feels okay amongst the rest of the competition, most of which offer better and more efficient transmission choices. Besides, the paddle shifters would make more sense with 5 or more gears to choose from. Another possible improvement should be focused on tire noise, as it can get a little noisy at highway speeds or less-than-desirable road surfaces. As it stands, the 1.6V returns 10.5 km/l in city driving (light to moderate traffic) and 15.4 kilometers per liter on steady highway driving (100 km/h average), pretty good figures considering how much fuel is nowadays.

With these and more, the Altis 1.6V is still the great car it is. There is still some areas for improvement, but at PhP 970,000, it's still every bit the attractive buy as it was before. **AQ**



### SPECIFICATIONS: ►►►

MAKE:	Toyota
MODEL:	Corolla Altis 1.6V
ENGINE:	1.6L DOHC 16-valve Inline-4 Dual VVT-i
MAX OUTPUT:	122 PS @ 6000 rpm
MAX TORQUE:	154 Nm @ 5200 rpm
TRANSMISSION:	4-speed A/T
RATING:	4-stars

# China by Backpack

STORY and  
PHOTOS:  
Kelly Lim

**O**UR trip to South-Southwest China began when we crossed the Vietnam-China at Lao Cai in Vietnam. My sister and I had spent 16 days travelling the length of Vietnam, starting from Ho Chi Minh City, and ending it by hiking through the minority villages in Sapa.



Crossing the border at Lao Cai was a very interesting experience. Lao Cai was a small frontier town. After crossing the bridge on foot, we found ourselves in the busy port of Hekou, with all the cargo boxes of products going to and from China. It was interesting to note that on one end of the bridge people were talking in Vietnamese, and on the other end, Chinese, a totally different language.

We took the bus to nearby Gejiu, a three-hour bus ride away from Hekou. We were expecting a small town with an authentic Chinese "flavor" so were really surprised to see skyscrapers and tons

of lights in Gejiu. Best way to describe the place? Gejiu looked like Hong Kong circa early '90s. It was quite surprising to find a city like this in the province of Yunnan, one of the more remote provinces in lightning-fast progressing China.

For me, Gejiu was Chinese economic miracle city. The main attraction was the lakefront promenade, with view of the commercial district of the city, which they would light up at night.

From Gejiu, another three-hour bus ride took us to the town of Jianshui. We stayed at a charming hotel right across the bus station for RMB70 a night. The room can be compared to some 2- to 3-star

hotels in the Philippines. Yes, roughly 500 pesos a night.

Jian Shui has that more authentic Chinese flavor in the sense that the city features preserved ancient Chinese architecture and cobblestone streets. Sadly, though, even this charming town hasn't escaped commercialization, which is evident in the construction of tall buildings.

We spent a lovely couple of hours hanging out with the locals in the park right next to the Old City Gate (Chao Yang Lou). I dare say this is the highlight of our stay in Jian Shui. The locals were so friendly, and it was really relaxing to watch, chat and listen to the retirees.

It was also here that we had one of the cheapest but yummiest meals we've had in our trip!

For 200 pesos, we had two big bowls of steamed rice, one liter of cold red iced tea, two sticks of clam meat, two sticks of stuffed fish rolls, two ji rou chuan (seasoned chicken meat), one stick of something seafood (I couldn't understand what the lady said -- cuttlefish, I think -- but she assured me it was neither pork nor beef since I don't eat either) and two big slices of pork!

That spicy red powder-plus-soy sauce combo was HEAVEN! I can still taste that fiery sauce!

The next morning we took a short bus ride and a tricycle ride from Jianshui to Tuanshan Village. It is one of the very few remaining medieval, fortified villages in southwest China. Hard to believe that people still live here!

In 2006, this Ming Dynasty village was listed on the World Monument Fund's 100 Most Endangered Places.

The courtyard house here, Zhang Jia Hua Yuan (Zhang Family Garden), is the grandest of all the courtyard houses in the village. The building on the center is the main hall. The one on the right is where the private quarters are, and the balcony on the left building (where I stood when I took this picture) is where the women come knit and read.

At first glance, Kunming is another Chinese economic miracle city. We hang out for a couple of days in their restos and bars, talking to the locals to get the vibe of the place. Compared to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and other big cities, it has that more

relaxed vibe. The expats call Kunming the Chicago of China.

We took different buses to explore the city, and by happy accident, ended up in this theme park they call The Minority Village. I say happy accident because we got into the wrong bus returning to the city, ending up at the place close to 6 p.m. and paid one-third of the ticket price. Lesser crowds, too!

The park is huge, and it is divided into small villages that featured the minorities around Yunnan province, and their way of life (marriage rituals, costumes, etc, etc.)

The entire park was beautifully built and definitely interesting. I think it's an excellent concept, but unfortunately, the place turned out to be rather carnival-ish.

Of course, it would certainly take a lot more time and resources if you were to go around Yunnan and visit the different villages.

All in all, it was an interesting experience. A must-do if you're in Yunnan for only a couple of days.

Another one of the nice places we stumbled upon during a misadventure is the Jiuxiang Scenic Park

So my sister and I decided to get out of Kunming and explore its outskirts. We decided to go to Jiuxiang instead of the famous Shilin (Stone Forest), which a lot of people are saying is overpriced and overrated. Plus, Jiuxiang was a lot closer, one and a half hours, so the front desk manager at our hotel told us.

Thinking it was pretty close by, we set out before midday. Que horror! It took us three bus changes and a little over three hours to get to this place. We arrived a little after 3:30 p.m., and found out the LAST BUS back to the city was around 5:30 p.m. That left us less than two hours to explore the place.

We fervently hoped it was worth the trip and the 90 RMB ticket.

And it was! The park was GORGEOUS, with its karst-limestone caves, falls, rivers, forests.

One of the most beautiful scenes in the park was the Waterfall Cave. After climbing down hundreds of slippery steps, you come to this huge underground river and two waterfalls. They call it Male and Female Waterfalls. Together, the two "give birth" to the river.

While spelunking through these caves, I was constantly





reminded of Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth. I can easily imagine that these were subterranean falls and rivers we were passing through.

Happily, we were able to go through the entire park, and met this Korean tour guide and his group (pleasant little old Korean ladies) who chivalrously allowed us to hitch back to Kunming with his private bus, and treated us to dinner as well.

Moral of the story? Sometimes it's better to just let go, go with the flow, and see where it takes you.

Next was Dali in Yunnan province, a supposedly three- to four-hour bus ride from Kunming, which turned into five and a half hours of bumpy mountain roads because the highway was being repaired.

There are two Dalis -- the Dali Xia Guan (Dali New City) and Dali Gu Cheng (Dali Old City). The place you want to go to is the latter, which is a huge walled city (kinda like Intramuros) where Old China is preserved. The New City is just another city with Walmart, McDonalds and tons of buildings.

The bus stopped at the New City, we took a 20-minute taxi to the Old City and checked in into this place called Jim's Guesthouse and Peace Cafe. The owner is half-Tibetan, so it has faux Tibetan ethnic decorations.

We tucked in into a yummy dinner of Tibetan goulash- broccoli, cauliflower, mushrooms, chickpeas and rubing (goat cheese, yum!) before retiring to our cozy bedroom.

It's pretty "bundok" here in Dali Gu Cheng (Dali Old City). Amazing since it's only 20 minutes away from Dali Xia Guan. I say "bundok" because there's water and power shortage in the place. Also, the atmosphere is lovely, mild in summer.

We set out to explore the Old City. The old city is actually a small place, a two- to three-hour walk through the place. I should say "old" city, because the buildings are relatively new, but built to look old. It's a charming place, a bit too touristy for my taste, though, with all these souvenir stalls and travel agencies littering the area.

We chartered a van for the whole afternoon, for about 350 pesos. Our driver was from the Bai Minority, a chatty, plump fellow. Very nice guy, gave us an extra discount at the end of the day. First he took us to San Ta (Three Pagodas), which is the official symbol for Dali. The entrance ticket to the park was insane - 150RMB (roughly a thousand pesos) just to see the three golden pagodas. Unless you really want a very, very good shot of these pagodas, you can take a picture of them right across the street, where there's a sort of rotunda with cement blocks you can climb up on.

Next we went to the Bai Minority Village in Xizhou (which used to be the military base during the Nanzhao Kingdom). It was a typical cultural/minority-scripted village with the singing and dancing programs, and tea drinking sessions. It was an OK experience, not as carnival-ish as the Minority Village we went to in Kunming. Tip. The Gui Hua tea is so good, mainly sweet with a

A good traveler has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving. -- Lao Tzu



tangy after taste. Very informative place to learn about the Bai people and rituals, and to learn more about Chinese tea.

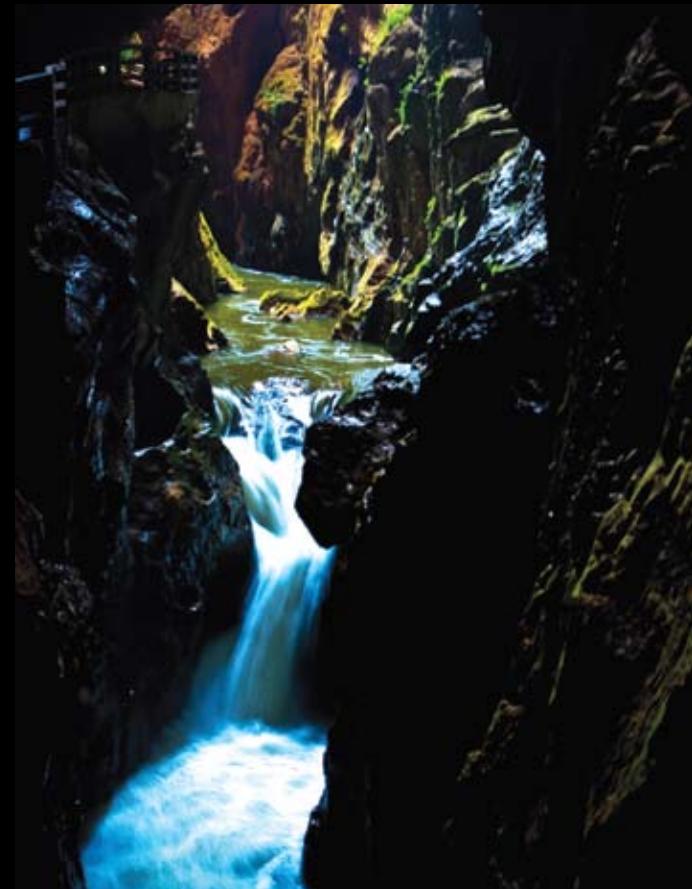
The biggest san he yuan (three-side courtyard house) in the park belonged to the rich old guy where Pu'Er tea originated from.

What I found most endearing about the Bai Culture are the silly little traditions like you have to drink the tea in three gulps. One or two gulps is considered impolite. Four gulps or more will earn you a Bai husband! We've never drank so much tea in our entire lives!

Next stop was Shang Guan Hua Park. The cave inside the park is where they film kung fu series. There was a bigger studio erected at the foot of the mountain called Cang Shan. I'm giving the studio a miss, though. Wandering around the sets definitely is not worth the price they're charging. If one is into nature photographs, though, Cang Shan is worth a go. Be prepared to hike though. There's a cable car service there to take tourists up and down the mountain, but it's definitely better to do it on foot.

Day 3 in Dali, we booked a tour with Jim, the owner of the guesthouse we're staying in. After breakfast, we went to Wei Shan Gu Cheng in Wei Shan county. Now this is an authentic gu cheng. It's what Dali would look like if it weren't a tourist spot. It used to be the capital of the Nanzhao Kingdom. The buildings are old and crumbling. The place is a trading town along the Silk Road (Jim speaks pretty good English, so I got a history crash course) where horses and tea were sold. Mostly Chinese Muslims live here now and I was able to try a delicacy: fried bark and leaves from the Xiang Chun Tree (Fragrant Spring Tree). It tastes really good, kind of like slightly burnt chicharon.

We visited a siheyuan (four-sided courtyard house) of a rich family during the communist era. Beautifully preserved. Shared tea and had a nice chat with the caretaker there. Very interesting old dude, with pretty interesting stories to tell about the communist era,



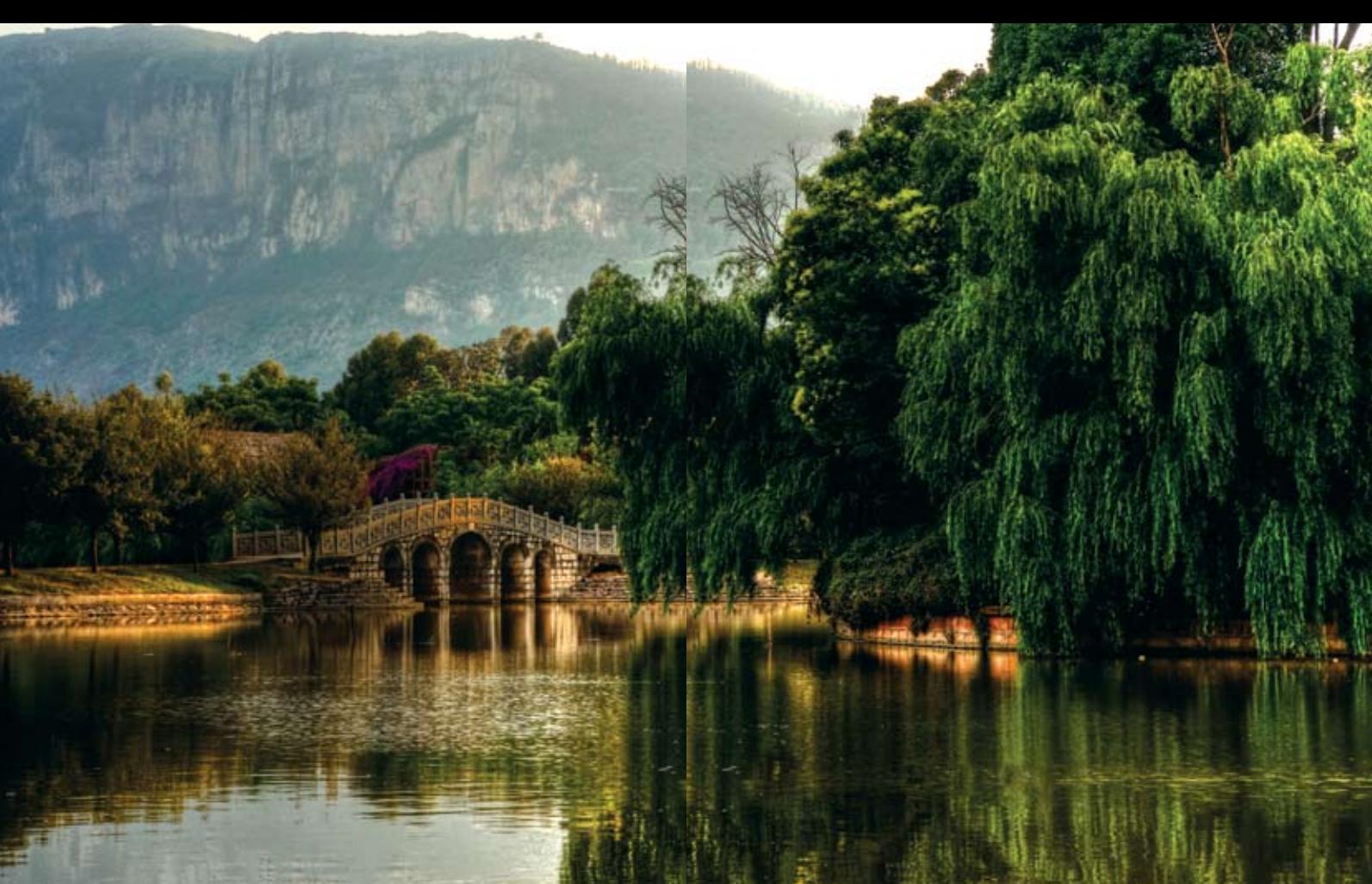
and lectured about Confucius' teachings.

Next, we went to a 400-year-old temple in the middle of nowhere with the 500 lohans and lots of Buddha and Guanyin statues. The temple was made purely out of wood and the statues of marble. Then we had lunch at this small Muslim settlement near the temple. Most of the dishes they serve are vegetable dishes, and it was the best veggie lunch I've ever had. I never thought I would enjoy gulay that much. Spicy too.

After that, we trekked up the mountain to visit a Yi minority village. This is an authentic one. Jim says the minority people are even poorer than the beggars in the city! The main source of income of the people here is rice, and it's like a mini Banaue Rice Terraces, with the farmers' houses built on the terraces.

One more place we didn't go to was Er Hai, the famous lake in Dali. The entire time we spent in Dali, it was sort of cloudy and foggy since it was raining, and locals say if you go to the lake on a foggy day, you wouldn't be able to see your hand right in front of your face.

After breakfast of Day 4 in Dali, we got on the bus towards Lijiang. There are two kinds of buses, one that runs on the highway and takes three and half hours, and one that runs on the "old road" and takes four and half hours. We took the latter one because it was more scenic. We passed by many small villages and hamlets, and the view of the verdant countryside and mountains with fog and snow on top was just BREATHTAKING. It was much cheaper, too, almost half the price.



Like Dali, Lijiang is also separated into city and walled city. The walled city (Lijiang Gu Cheng) is the one you want to go to.

When we were in Dali, a lot of tourists were saying that Lijiang was too touristy, and it wasn't as good as Dali. I suppose this would depend on the traveller's tastes. While both Dali and Lijiang are tourist stalls and bars and cafes, Lijiang is bohemian heaven, the street littered with artists -- indie musicians, painters, poets, craftsmen from all over the world, all colors, all sizes. They've got that whole indie-artsy-fartsy scene going on which I ABSOLUTELY love! This is the kind of place where you can just chill out and slowly explore. And once you get to Lijiang, it's like you're in a totally different place. Both locals and tourists are just so relaxed and friendly, everyone can just talk to everyone. They have a saying that literally translates to, "In Lijiang, you read today's newspaper tomorrow."

No wonder tourists end up staying for months on end, and a lot eventually open their own businesses and settle down in this place.

One place I heartily recommend is the Black Dragon Pool. It's a beautiful park where you can see gorgeous views of Jade Mountain by the lake. The clear water reflects the snow-capped mountains. Great for nature photographers.

Word of warning to night owls: all the clubs close down by 11:30 p.m. by rule, since it's a pretty small place and the clubs and guesthouses are all packed together.

We were supposed to head on to Shangrila which was about three hours away. But since we enjoyed Lijiang so much and overstayed a couple of days, we did not have much time anymore. Thus we took a train straight to Nanning in Guangxi Province, another Chinese city near the border between China and Vietnam, which took around 24 hours.

Nanning is a dusty, frontier city. And HOT. The reason why we passed by Nanning was the Detian Waterfalls, which were located in Daxin, about three hours bus ride from Nanning. We've booked our trip back to Manila from Macau and made a detour to Nanning instead of going straight to Guangzhou.

The falls were gorgeous. No other word for it. What a sight! Nine or 10 waterfalls in one place. It's so close to Vietnam too. The roads right across the raging river are actually Vietnamese territory already.

From Nanning, we took an overnight train (roughly 12 hours) to Guangzhou. Compared to Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces, the prices were exorbitant. Guangzhou is like a grubbier version of Hong Kong, without the sights. Although to be honest, Guangzhou cuisine is the best. One place to point out is Shamian Island, where the British and French used to live. Really small island. What's interesting is, one MTR ride, cross a tiny bridge, and you're in this amazingly relaxing place, away from the hustle and bustle and dirt and grime of Guangzhou.

We only stayed a day and a half in Guangzhou, then took the train to Hong Kong.

Ah, Hong Kong! One could never get tired of Hong Kong, with great buys, great eats, great nightlife. After roughing it for almost two months, we stayed a couple of days in Hong Kong to splurge and relax a bit. Ah, civilization at last!

After we felt human again, it's off to Macau. Yes, most people come to Macau for the glitz and gambling, but this time, we decided to take in more of its Portuguese roots.

We stayed along the Rua da Felicidade – Street of Happiness – named so as it used to be Macau's red light district. Nowadays, it's a street lined with budget hotels, restaurants, bakeries and tapa stores.

Almond cookies. Egg tarts. Noodles. Dimsum. Meat Buns. Yep, happiness is here indeed!

Macau is famous for its walking tours. What we did, instead of hiring a guide, was get a map of walking tours (can be downloaded on several sites on the Internet as well) and embark on a one-day journey on foot through the different Portuguese landmarks all over the city, starting from the famous Ruins of St. Paul College all the way to the Guia Fortress.

Then it was back to good old Manila for us. It's certainly not everyone's style of travelling, but

compared to set tours, backpacking really is an affordable and fun way to travel. What I really love is meeting new people and getting into adventures. And it provides one a better glimpse into how locals live, given that you're travelling at your own pace, and it's not so touristy (in the sense that you're being dragged from stall to stall to purchase souvenirs, as is often in guided tours).

To quote Lao Tzu, "A good traveller has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving." **AQ**



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# Hybrid Theory

2011 Lexus CT200h

LEXUS is getting ready for something new. A car company known more for its silence, refinement, and comfort (except for a few spurts of high performance brilliance like the LFA and ISF) is now ready to break into a new market segment with the CT200h sport compact... in hybrid form.

STORY: Vince Pornelos  
PHOTOS: Dux Carvajal





It's the brand's way of stepping out of their comfort zone, but does it work?

The car measures 4320mm long, 1765mm wide and 1430mm tall, making CT200h is Lexus's first compact hatchback. All Lexus cars in the past have always been either sedans, coupes, convertibles or SUVs, and the CT200h is the first one to break out of the mold, aiming to compete with the likes of the BMW 1-Series, Audi's A3, the Volvo C30 and the Mini Cooper.

On the design front, the CT200h is derived from the LF-Ch concept that Lexus unveiled at the Frankfurt Auto Show 2 years ago. It marks a new, sporty evolution of the L-finesse design philosophy with a sharp edged look, with more aggressive front end compared to the rest of the Lexus line up. It has a very distinct profile, a long flowing roofline and the signature Lexus slingshot window graphic. I like the details with the car, especially the headlamps (with daytime LEDs) and taillamps, though it seems that the CT should be a 3 door hatchback instead of a 5 door, as it does look slightly odd from certain



angles, given the proportions.

Open the door and you're greeted by a different type of Lexus interior, blending tactile, soft touch surfaces and metal trimmings. The driving position is low, keeping up with the car's performance inclinations. There's a large instrument binnacle with twin dials. Carlo, our good friend from Lexus, was eager to point out some of the cool design details, especially the change in lighting when the driver toggles Sport or Normal mode, changing from red or blue ambient lighting, respectively. In typical Lexus fashion, designers and engineers have refrained from using some kind of unified control system (i.e. Mercedes's COMAND APS, BMW iDrive), instead using the more classic style of having a buttons for pretty much every function.

For interior room, the CT200h keeps up with the industry standard. There's room for 5 adults, though it leaves a little wanting for rear legroom, especially if you have a really tall driver or front passenger. The trunk is very reminiscent of the Prius, as the spare tire and batteries do consume quite a big chunk of space. Carlo, however,



**“ All Lexus cars in the past have always been either sedans, coupes, convertibles or SUVs, and the CT200h is the first one to break out of the mold... ”**

**“ Time will tell what we actually think of the new CT200h, but given what we've seen and tried out so far, the CT has a lot of promise... ”**



guarantees that the CT200h's trunk, by virtue of some clever engineering, can accommodate a set of golf clubs.

When we popped the hood, I was surprised to see the engine. What I mean is that it's the first engine in a brand new Lexus that you can actually see, as the rest of the lineup (IS300, LS460, etc) all have engines fully concealed by large slabs of ABS plastic for a clean, uncluttered look. The engine is the same as the one found in the Prius, generating 98 horsepower and 105 foot pounds of torque from a 1.8 liter, Atkinson cycle engine. It doesn't sound like much for sport-branded hatch, but when matched with the electric motor and the NiMH batteries, the engine has a little extra electrical help, especially when it comes to torque.

Technically speaking, this particular example of the

Lexus CT200h has already been spoken for, hence, we were not actually allowed to take it for a spin to test its handling and performance. But, after a quick, brief ride, there is some decent power there, though there is a bit of droning from the hybrid drive system, just like the Prius. Time will tell what we actually think of the new CT200h, but given what we've seen and tried out so far, the CT has a lot of promise, especially since the powertrain is reported to return 28.6 kilometers per liter in the city and 30 km/l on the highway.

I don't think it can compare as yet to the BMW 1-Series or the MINI in terms of driving fun out of the box, but on its own, the CT200h gives a different way to enjoy hybrid technology. **AQ**



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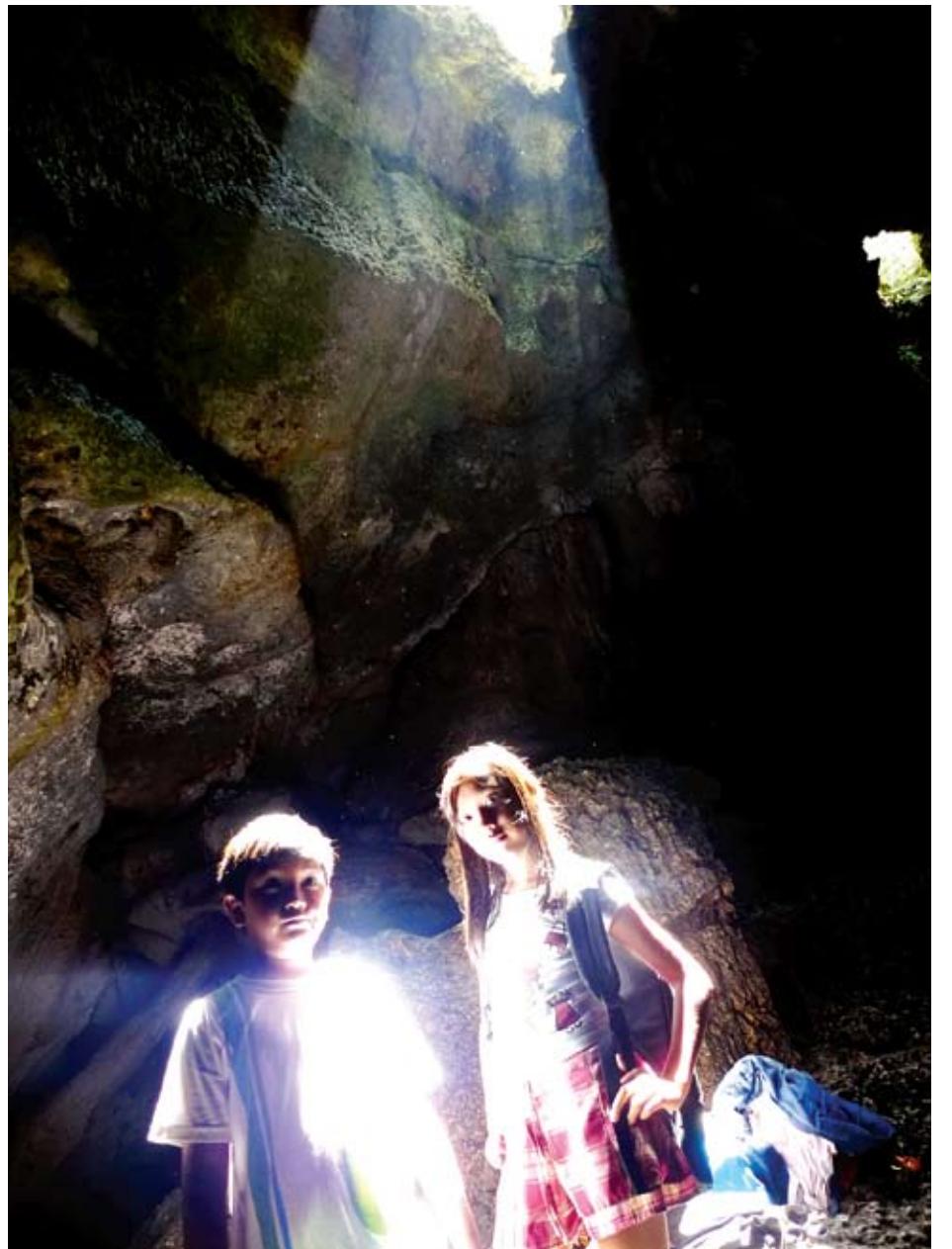
**B**OHOL is the perfect destination for a family summer vacation. The place offers not just breathtaking beaches in Panglao island but also boasts of other attractions that can excite not just the moms and dads but even the teens, tweens and tots.



The powdery sands of Dumaluan beach in Panglao island is something the whole family will enjoy in Bohol together with the awesome Virgin island whose sandbar turns into a sprawling kiddie pool during high tide.

# Family Paradise

Text: Araceli Cadahing-Ocampo • Photos: Junep Ocampo



The province has a Yoda-looking primate, incredible geological formations, a romantic river, historic churches, mysterious caves, theme parks for x-gamers and bee lovers, and many more. The list can go on, but we'll make things simple for you by giving you a trouble-free guide to enjoying what this family paradise in Central Visayas offers.

#### FOUR DAYS

An overnight stay is definitely not enough to relish all the attractions of Bohol. While most tour operators offer three-day-two-night packages, our experience proved that families need at least four days to appreciate the place. Resorts and hotels abound all over Panglao island, with varying rates—from the most expensive (at least \$1,000 per night) to the most family-friendly (P1,800 for a group of four).

Staying in a beachfront resort definitely puts you in an advantage; the children have all the time to enjoy the powdery sand and clean waters of Panglao. During low tide, kids may even find several kinds of starfish on the beach or catch various aquatic life forms in shallow pools.

But what makes Panglao more attractive to parents is the absence of pubs that come alive when the sun sets. At dusk, parents and children can still play games on the shore, free from night clubs' strobe lights, roaring music and sometimes rowdy crowd.



The tarsiers are afraid of loud sounds and tend to commit suicide if the environment gets too noisy. Opposite page shows children inside the Hinagdanan cave, the author and husband at the Chocolate Hills view deck and one of the churches in Bohol



This bridge is not for tourists but for locals living on the other side of the river. The tourists just discovered it and found it perfect for photo ops. Other attractions of Bohol are the butterfly garden, dolphin-watching, and the Loboc river cruise.

#### ISLAND HOPPING, SNORKELING and DOLPHIN-WATCHING

Panglao is just a portal to even more amazing islands in the area. The most impressive of them is probably the Virgin island, a crescent-shaped piece of paradise whose beach runs for several kilometers. During high tide, the island looks like one huge kiddie pool where water doesn't go higher than the waist of an average teenager.

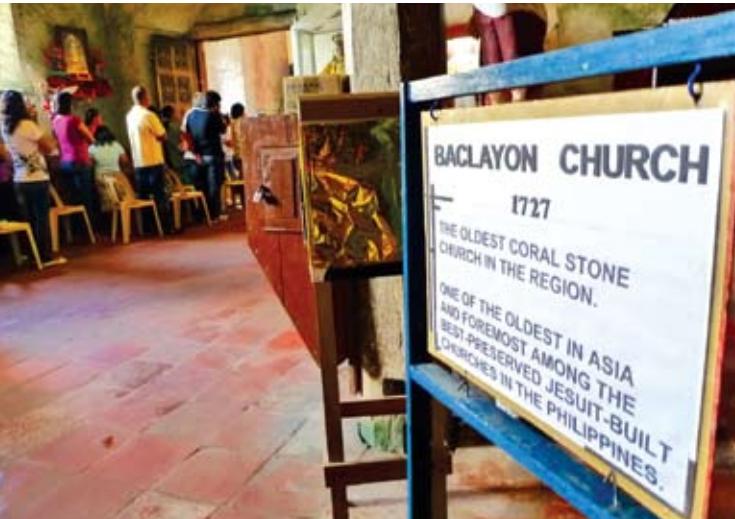
Because of Bohol's strict adherence to environmental protection, whale- and dolphin-watching has become main attractions. If you get lucky, you will get a free show from juvenile dolphins who, according to boat guides, are the ones which love to impress. The older ones would just swim around but, nevertheless, be generous enough to thrill tourists with their presence.

Snorkeling is another favorite family activity in Bohol. Balicasag island is the place for this. However, the corals and the number of fish you would see in Balicasag may not be as impressive as those in Palawan. They're worth seeing, though, and it is always exciting for kids to swim with the fish in their natural habitat.

#### ROAD TOUR

The best thing about Bohol are the attractions beyond the beaches. Bohol is best known for the Chocolate Hills and one of the world's smallest primates, the Tarsier. These, coupled with a visit to the Baclayon Church and its museum, a trek down Hinagdanan Cave and a cruise on Loboc River are more than enough for a whole day.

Those who are more adventurous may also take a quick dive in the pool inside the Hinagdanan Cave and be refreshed by its cold water. If you want to see the museum in Baclayon



Church, make sure you go on a weekday. But if you have your tour on a Sunday and you plan to start it with a Mass in the church, be very sure that you come properly dressed (no sleeveless shirts and blouses, short pants or miniskirts) or the old maids of the church would rush to you with their blankets.

The tarsiers are sensitive nocturnal creatures, hence visitors are advised not to create a lot of noise when having their pictures taken with them. Their caretakers explain that once irritated, tarsiers eventually commit suicide. Of course you do not want this to happen so tell your kids to just lower their voices.

There's not much you can do in Chocolate Hills except wonder at the unbelievable sight of almost 2,000 hills that appear like

giant Kisses. If you want your family portrait taken with the hills in the background, be ready to jockey for position. During peak season, the view deck gets very crowded. A better idea is to ask one of the photographers in the area to take your picture for a fee; he can bully his way to make sure you get to the best spot.

With all the hoopla about the Loboc River cruise, the actual experience of the tour may disappoint you. The river and its banks are definitely scenic. What's not so good, however, are the floating restaurants that take you there. With a promise of a buffet lunch, you look forward to a festive meal while enjoying the view but you might be disheartened by severely depleted food trays waiting to be replenished. The song-and-dance performance of local children along the river banks more than make up for it, however.





#### BEES, DANAQ AND BOHOL'S BEST KEPT SECRET

If you want to make your summer vacation a real educational, bring your kids to Bohol Bee Farm where well-trained guides explain the importance of protecting the environment, the advantages of eating healthy food and, of course, the role of the bees in our ecosystem. Your kids will have fun tasting the herbs planted around the farm or helping the guide look for the queen bee.

Eating ice cream in the farm is an adventure on its own. Where else can you find ice cream with exotic flavors such as Spicy Ginger, Malunggay, Lemon Grass and Tisa (or Chesa)? Even the supposedly traditional flavors like Chocolate, Ube and Buko-Pandan taste differently in more exciting ways. The ice cream cones are made from kamote (sweet potatoes).



**Do you want a summer vacation that will satisfy every member of your family? Wait no more and book a flight to Bohol.**



But for the brave, Bohol offers you the Extreme Danao Adventure. If you include this in your itinerary, dedicate at least a whole day as Danao is about 55 kilometers from Panglao. Danao is famous for its Plunge, described as a canyon swing adventure mounted over a 200-meter-high and 300-meter-wide gorge. A person would have to do a 45-meter free fall before being launched on a pendulum swing measuring 100 meters. The Plunge is different from bungee jumping as it allows you to swing instead of just fall.

Aside from the Plunge, Danao also has the Suisslide, Wall Climbing, River Trekking and a lot more activities reserved to the fearless.

Surprisingly, what created the greatest impact among the teens, tots and adults with us was an assuming garden beside a church in Panglao, the Lady of Assumption or simply known as Dauis Church. The church is known for the miraculous water from a well at the foot of its altar. The water has been tested and declared potable. Bottles of the miraculous water are available at the back of the church. It's not for sale but donations are welcome.

In the garden behind the church is a huge acacia tree surrounded by wood planks which serve as a platform around the tree. Next to the garden is the river. In the horizon you would see the mountains of Bohol. The sight is picture-perfect. Our tour guide said the garden is even more stunning at night when all the lights hanging from the tree's arching branches are on. The place is a favorite spot for wedding receptions and other special events.

If you want to see Bohol's best-kept secret, make sure to inform your guide to take you to Dauis church.

Do you want a family summer vacation that will truly satisfy everyone in the family?

Then wait no more and book a flight to Bohol. 

Low tide and sunrise in Panglao island are picture-perfect. The island is home to lots of marine life, including starfish. Photos on the opposite page shows scenes from the Bohol Bee Farm, including the exotic ice cream.



# Quirino Province: Middle EARTH

STORY and PHOTOS: by Lindy E. Pellicer

**Quirino has ecological wonders that make you feel you are in Helm's Deep in the movie Lord of the Rings**



**W**HAT could be so enthralling about a place with no coastlines or beaches? Where you can only take dips in rivers and lakes that are few and far apart? Where you would see nothing but corn and banana plantations and just land, land and more land! For a girl like me who grew up by the ocean, it could only spell B O R I N G. But don't take my word for it. Let me tell you this story first and you decide.



My partner, Mike Potenciano, and I were invited by Toti and Joy Cua-Alberto to cover the PANAGDADAPUN 2010 event last September 6 to 10, 2010 in Cabarroguis, Quirino. The weeklong celebration aimed to gather the Quirinians as a way of giving thanks for the many blessings they have received and pray for peace, unity and progress in the province.

Indeed, they do have many things to be grateful for.

The evening trip by land took about eight hours. The Chevy Captiva was just the right vehicle for our action-packed days. It normally takes about five to six hours on a "normal" day but since Dalton Pass was being repaired, the trip felt like an endurance race.

We arrived in Cabarroguis town at 3 a.m. It was like

a ghost town, with only one decent hotel which, sadly, was fully booked.

We found the resthouse where we were booked by the gracious Cua family. We woke up rested and refreshed to homecooked breakfast by the caretaker of the house.

Mike and the boys of MP Turbo (Ed, Neil and Henry) were tasked to cover the motocross races that day while I was accompanied by the tourism officers of Quirino Province to places I never thought existed.

On the agenda for that day was the Aglipay Caves. And, oh, my claustrophobia was tested to the max! I managed to squeeze myself in and out of the really tight spots and crevices of those caves.

The Aglipay Caves are located 10 kilometers from



Cabarroguis, at Barangay Villa Ventura. It is a series of 37 caves, eight of which have been developed for tourists. Located in the middle of bulging hills and fertile forests, it has well-preserved stalactites and stalagmites and underground springs, looking and feeling pretty much like the Helm's Deep in the movie Lord of the Rings. They are interlinked and run to a depth of 20 meters. The source of the subterranean waterfalls of Cave 6 still remains a mystery. The caves and their surroundings were made the province's Forest Park and Campsite on May 3, 1999 by virtue of a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Administrative Order.

We spent the whole day just trying to walk inside the caves. We did all forms of walking, including the duck walk

that we had to do in several parts of the caves because the ceilings were really low. There were areas where we crawled on all fours, using our elbows and knees, and got out all wet and muddied.

The following day, our tour guides, Au and Emerson from the Tourism department, picked me up in their van and took me to the town of Nagtipunan, a first class municipality. Nagtipunan may be the youngest town in the province yet it is number one in terms of population growth and development. According to the latest census, it has a population of 20,443 people in 3,484 households. As the largest municipality in the province, it occupies a land area of 1588.92 square kilometers, nearly half of the province itself.

The municipality is known for its natural beauty, thus,



it is dubbed as the tourism capital of the province of Quirino. When we say natural, we mean it in all the sense of that word. Since Quirino has no coast line whatsoever, the gods got creative and built a boat-like lime stone as majestic as the Titanic. Called the BINMAPOR, it is a rock formation similar to a sunken ship, of which only the upper decks protrude from the ground. It looked eerie for a while, but as I thought of it, I realized that it's probably a stark reminder of what the world looked millions of years ago.

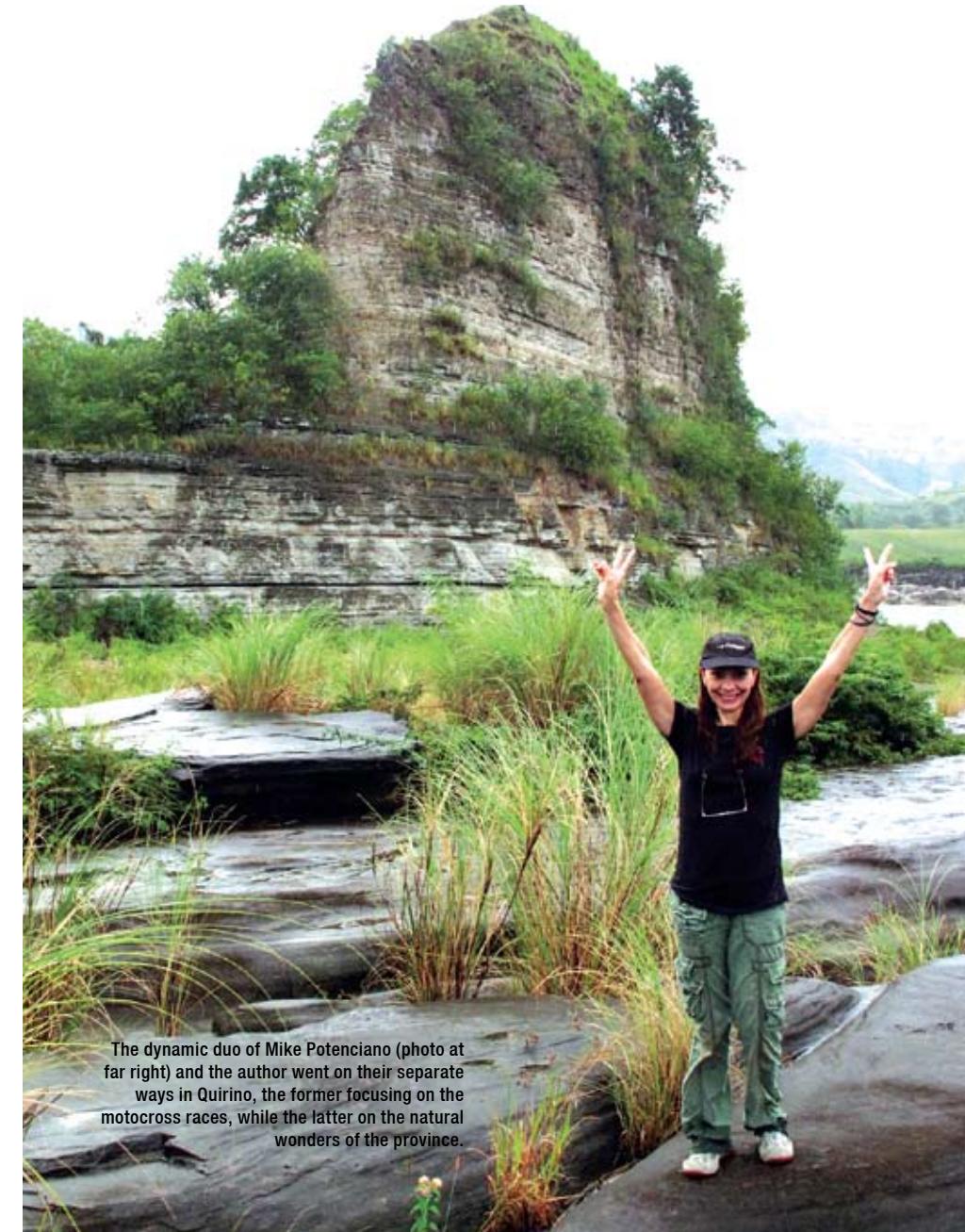
On our last day, I was taken to Governor's Rapids. Governor's Rapids are a part of a tributary of the Cagayan River, also known as the Rio Grande, which runs through the region of Cagayan Valley. It is home to the Curilao fish. The rapids lie in Barrio Bisangal, Divisoria Sur, in the municipality of Maddela.

Here I got trigger- happy with my camera. The day was extra hot, the sun was so intense. But it was a picture-perfect day. As we rode the bangka down the river, I felt a sense of eerie calm... dead calm in fact.

My imagination was going for a wild ride... imagining what lay underneath. True enough, our guide told me the story of how the rapids got its name. Governor's Rapids was named after a Spanish Governor who drowned and lost his life while traversing the swift and clear waters. Then, back in 2005, a regional technical director of the DENR also drowned there. How can something be so beautiful and breathtaking be so deadly?

We may have been invited to cover the motocross races which were very successful as usual but I emerged the winner after the places I've gone to. The trip made me really want to discover more of the Philippines. Our country is really beautiful and has so much waiting to be explored.

Our trip back to Manila was quicker than our trip to Quirino -- five and a half hours. Mike Potenciano was certainly in his element for that evening drive on a reliable SUV that is the Chevy Captiva, with good '80s music playing in the background. **AQ**



The dynamic duo of Mike Potenciano (photo at far right) and the author went on their separate ways in Quirino, the former focusing on the motocross races, while the latter on the natural wonders of the province.

**Since Quirino has no coastline whatsoever, the gods got creative and built a boat-like limestone cliff as majestic as the Titanic.**



# The Churches, the Beaches, and the Turtles

**“My daddy is in Oilo-oilo.”**

**T**HAT'S not a typo error. That's just what my 4-year-old daughter tells her playmates every time I go to Iloilo for work.

I manage a newspaper and a magazine in Iloilo City. Thanks to the magic of mobile phones and the Internet, I am able to oversee reporters, photographers, editors and layout artists who put together daily issued of *The News Today*, and monthly issues of *Mezzo* magazine. I go there twice a month for meetings.

But Iloilo City, for me, is more than just a place for work. Every chance I get, I go around and see things, meet people, try out restaurants, and experience what the city has to offer.

Early February, I decided to take my family with me on their first trip there. I timed the trip with Dinagyang so my wife and kids would not feel out of place as there would be many tourists in the city that weekend. We stayed in the house of our good friend, Rommel Ynion, and requested *News Today* chief photographer, Leo Solinap, to give us a quick tour of the city.

## OLD CHURCHES

There are plenty of old churches in Iloilo. In the city alone are at least six churches that are older and grander than the Manila Cathedral. The city actually is perfect for Visita Iglesia.

We went to the Jaro Cathedral, a unique church with a separate belfry across the street. We lit some candles to its patroness before proceeding to the St. Vincent Ferrer seminary, the oldest in the country which produced famous priests like Jaime Cardinal Sin. If not for the traffic of Dinagyang, we would have gone to at least one more church, the Molo Cathedral, which is actually older than the one in Jaro and more elaborate. Historians say Dr. Jose Rizal visited this church on his trip back to Manila from Dapitan before he was executed.



Iloilo is a place for worship and eating out. Main photo below shows the façade of the Jaro Cathedral. Far left, young people light up candles inside the church. Left photo shows the La Paz public market where the La Paz batchoy was invented.

**STORY and PHOTOS:**  
Junep Ocampo



**The best beaches of Guimaras are those in the numerous islets that surround the main island. We loved the pocket beach in what they call Turtle Island**



#### BIGGEST BURGER

From the seminary, we took a side trip to Perry Todt's, a hole-in-the-wall restaurant that serves the biggest burger in town. We ordered two regular burgers for take-out and, indeed, they were BIG – about 10 inches in diameter. They are probably the only burgers that come with plastic knives when you take them out.

Costing P110 each, those regular burgers were tasty. Next time, we'd try the premium burgers, which cost double, and the baby back ribs.

#### GUIMARAS

Our family loves the beach but, unfortunately, no decent beach exists in Iloilo City. It's a good thing, however, that the island of Guimaras is just across the strait and can be reached in 20 minutes by outrigger boats.

We were welcome at the Jordan port by the driver of Lali Nava, wife of Guimaras Gov. Felipe Nava. He took us to one of the resorts that lined up Alibuhod beach. From there we took a boat to go island-hopping.

The best beaches of Guimaras are those in the numerous islets that surround the main island. We loved the pocket beach of Turtle Island. Its sand was white and fine and less than



The La Puerta el Paraiso resort (top photos) is a haven for city dwellers looking for some quiet moments. Far left, a teener poses with Perry Todt's giant burger.



Guimaras and Iloilo offer nature- and culture-lovers some priceless experiences. The photos on this page show children playing with the turtles of Guimaras. On the opposite page, the same children are treated with "Ati" culture and a private musical performance by the legendary Kabayao family in their house in Molo, Iloilo.



100 meters away were corals that hosted colorful marine life.

The boatmen also took us to the Turtle Sanctuary, a place where they took care of injured giant turtles. The experience was a lot better than going to the zoo as the kids were able to see the turtles in their natural habitat.

A visit to Guimaras is never complete without trying out the island's world-famous mangoes. Although it was still off-season, we were able to order fresh mango shake at La Puerta el Paraiso. The resort, although still not finished, is in our list of places to stay in for our return trip to Guimaras. Surely, a day trip is never sufficient to experience the place.

#### DINAGYANG

Our Iloilo trip was capped by picture-taking with members of "Ati" tribes who performed during that Dinagyang weekend. "Ati" means "natives" and "Dinagyang" means to "make merry." The festival is Iloilo's way of throwing out a party.

We did not watch the Ati performances as our flight was scheduled the morning of Sunday, which was the culmination of the festivities.

But we will surely go back. I, for one, has gone back to the city for work. But again, I really want to go there again with the whole family for a holiday.

I told my little girl on the way to Manila, "Don't worry, we'll go back to Oilo-oilo soon." **AQ**



# A Different Love Story In A Different City

Touring Cebu by Soul

**H**ONESTLY, I'm a little scared right now. Here I am, driving the new Kia Soul in Cebu, and I feel like I'm a student driver learning the ropes all over again... and I've got six days here to do it.



STORY: Vince Pornelos

PHOTOS: Author, FG Reyes and Lindy Pellicer

**Day 1**

Wind the clock back 24 hours, and I had just landed in Mactan Airport, the Queen City of the South's main air hub. My girl was waiting just outside, and we headed off to Gateway Motors, myself eager to get behind the wheel of the new Soul and tour Cebu.

Making our way to Gateway Motors along Gorordo Avenue, I was surprised to see the state of the dealership. Kia in the Philippines has not been as successful as their fellow Korean cousins, Hyundai, but in Cebu, it's a different matter. In Cebu alone, there are three Kia dealerships, all owned and run by Gateway Motors. In a conversation with Boyet Villalino, it's their trade in program that has yielded them much success in their province, accepting all makes and models regardless of condition, making it attractive to buy a Kia to prospective customers. All well and good, as what would be rare finds in Manila streets like the Forte Koup and Soul are common sights in this city's streets.

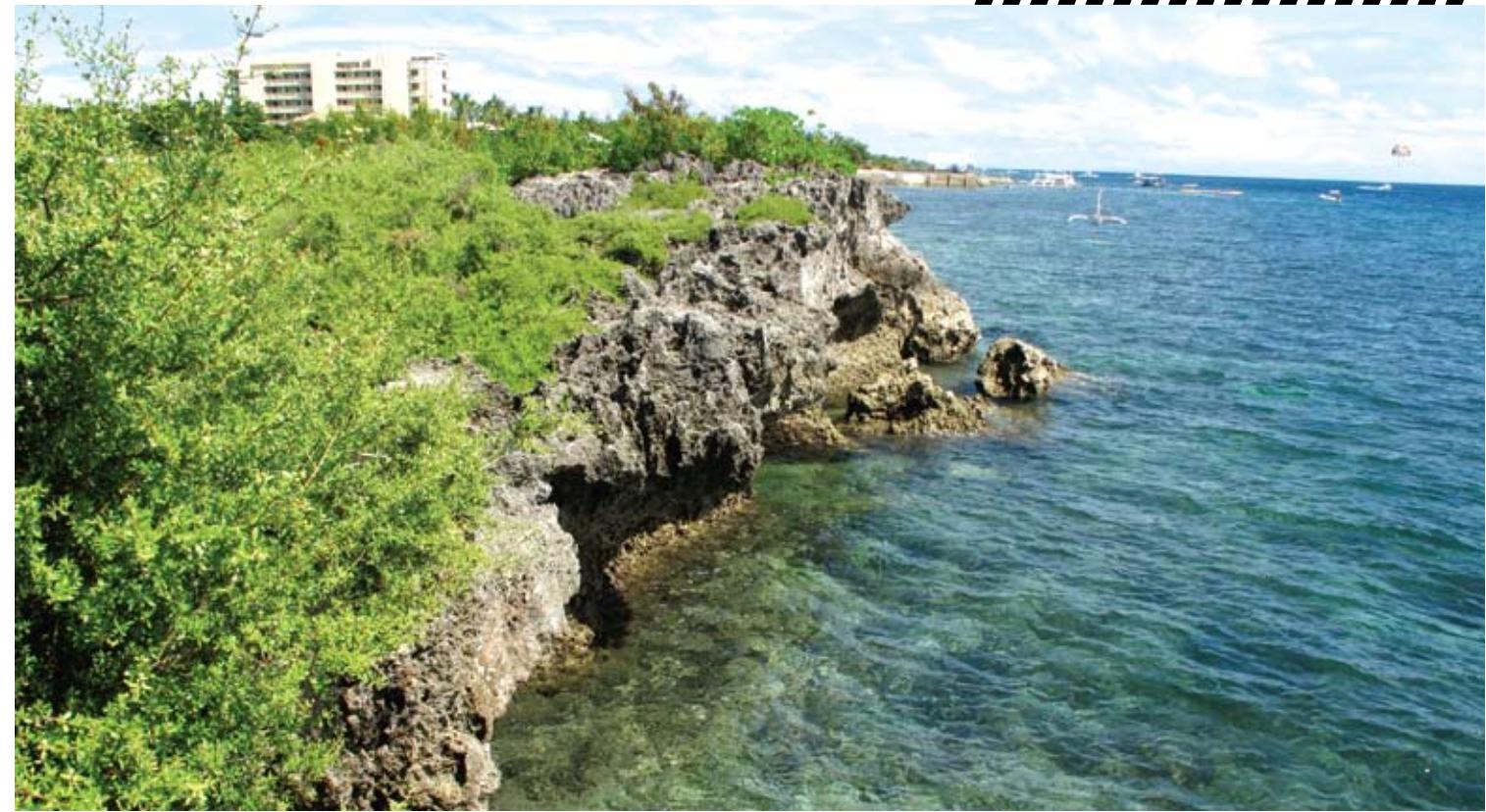
I hop into the red Kia Soul, and things feel a little different. I've driven the Soul before, but that was a top of the line 2 liter model which, at PhP 1.3M, is priced very, very high considering the car's size.

This one, a Soul 1.6 liter, does something about it.

As a semi-base model, you would expect that quite a few things have been omitted. With the Soul EX that we tested

over a year ago, the only real differences are the absence of the 18 inch wheels in lieu of smaller 16-inch rolling stock, as well as the lack of the chrome fuel tank lid. The design is every bit as striking as before, with the aggressive front, detailed headlamps and a poised, boxy demeanor. Oddly enough, I do miss the cool body kit and decals of the first Soul I got to try out, but those decals are optional on every Soul for that funkier look.

Driving off, we begin searching for decent accommodations. I know what you're thinking, it's crazy to just go to Cebu and look for a hotel on the spot, but the city is littered with many hotel-style pension houses of varying rates that it's actually easier (with a car in hand) to just drive around the Capitol area and canvass around



for one rather than base your decision on professionally designed web pages with professionally taken photos of the facility... something that my parents would find out the very next day.

**Day 2**

Waking up on day 2 wasn't a very nice experience. The hotel we stayed at, Gran Tierra Suites, was just the right price and admittedly, it's a very nice place. It's new and very well maintained, but I just don't agree with the hard, orthopedic bed. Well, it's my

back that's doing the talking at this point.

What I would learn about Cebu is that food here is really, really cheap. In Manila, you should expect to shell out something short of 1000 pesos for a decent dinner for two, more if you're feeling generous. In Cebu, 500 pesos is more than enough, so on Day 2, we made our way to Casa Verde at the heart of the city. A charming old restaurant, Casa Verde, I was told, caters more to students from nearby schools with very affordable meals. A rack of good, barbecued pork ribs cost 180 pesos only.



was a gift from Magellan to Queen Juana during the baptism of King Humabon back in April 14, 1521. Today, many devotees praise the divinity of the Sto. Nino, and commemorates the feast on the third Sunday of January.

Right across the Basilica is Magellan's Cross, housed in a small chapel of its own. The original cross, as described by the plaque below, is encased by wood to protect it from the elements and Father Time.

Proceeding from the center of the City, we headed out to the island of Mactan to see my parents, who, incidentally, wanted to have a short vacation in Cebu. Soon, however, I realize that all the things I have been told and experienced about Cebu's drivers are very true.

It's not my first time here, but from what I remember, the city's driving environment is infamous for its unforgiving nature, with drivers that notoriously slash their way into your lane nor would not budge if you wanted to make a left turn. Many have commented that Manila is unforgiving too, but that's from a tourist's standpoint, but from someone who grew up driving in Manila, Cebu is even worse. Where you would normally expect maybe 1 in 5 drivers to give you way if you signal left, in Cebu the ratio is more like 1 in 20. It's that aggressive.

To spare me from the frustration of Cebu's driving environment is the interior of the Soul. Much has changed over the 2.0L EX that I drove before, as the interior panels are predominantly black, whereas the higher models have body contrasting colored panels. The center subwoofer will be missed as will the driver-side armrest and sunroof, though the ricey LED lighting effects on the speakers won't be. The audio system is the same as the top of the line model, and thankfully, it retains the iPod compatibility that makes listening to your playlists much easier.

### Day 3

When I landed here, I had several visions in my mind. Cebu has always been known for clear skies and perfect beach weather, but for some reason, it's been dark and rainy so far. Just my luck.

So, instead of heading for the beaches like Moalboal or my original plan of driving up to Bantayan Island, I chose to take on Cebu's Transcentral Highway, as suggested by our good friends Jason and Anton, hoping to get to know the Soul a little better.

The 1.6 liter CVVT engine pumps out a healthy 124 metric horsepower, only 20 horsepower behind from the 2 liter version.

Matched with it is a new 4 speed Shiftronic transmission and, for performance enthusiasts, now has a manual mode that allows you to shift manually, something that the 2.0 liter Soul didn't have. On the uphill, there are some misgivings about the 124 horsepower engine, but that's expected, as the 1.6L version was really meant more for city streets than high octane driving uphill. On the downhill, it's just right, and the manual mode really comes into play.

The highway cuts through the center of Cebu Island, bridging the southern coast with the north. The Soul comes alive here, as the roads wind from one corner through another, carving its way up through the mountains. Along the way, we encounter what we would soon call to be the most nonchalant dogs ever, sunbathing on the road and oblivious to everything. Horns included.

At the very top of the mountain range is a small adventure park, complete with

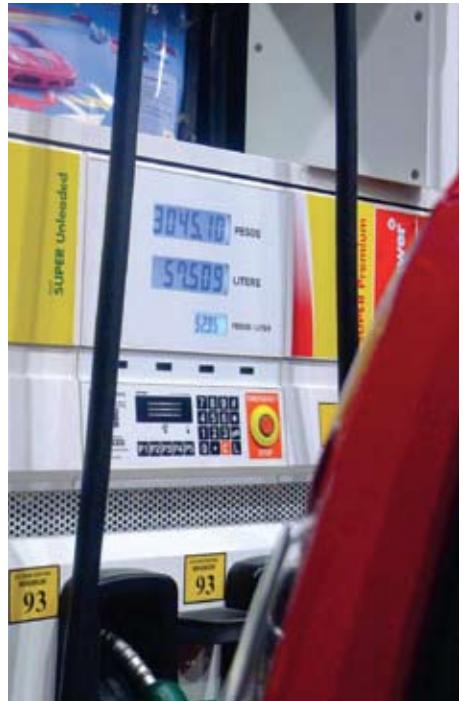


cable cars, ziplines as well as other high altitude sports and activities. From this vantage point, we should be able to see what locals call "The Island in the Sky", a description of Negros's highest point peeking through the clouds. I say "should" as again, my poor luck comes into play – thanks to thick clouds and fog, preventing us from viewing anything other than the white thickness around us. Nevertheless, hopefully on a good day, this would be a breathtaking sight.

### Day 4

Finally, the sun has come out, and I decide to get the Kia Soul its first car wash. It just looks great in red, and washing all the much off from the first 3 days definitely let the cool looks of the car shine through.

For brunch, we decided to take on the dimsum feast at Ding Qua Qua. If there was one criteria I set from the onset of this trip, it was that we will never visit any McDonald's,



Jollibee, or any other branch of fastfood and eat only at places found in Cebu and not in Manila. So, our list of restaurants include Sunburst Chicken (awesome Chicken Skin Chicharon), Casa Verde (for their ribs), Bigby's, Bo's Coffee Club (which does have branches in Manila, but started in Cebu) and The Corner Table (a small restaurant run by a culinary school), and hung out in places like The Outpost, Maya and Forno. DQQ however, stands out for the dimsum fan, as nowhere else have I seen a dimsum buffet for only 198 pesos per head.

Afterwards, we took the Soul out for a drive to Plantation Bay, where my parents were spending their vacation time. Plantation Bay, a 5-star facility in Mactan, is a sprawling resort that has various restaurants, activities and manmade sea and freshwater lagoons. The place makes my choice of hotel very meek, but it is rather remote and far from the activities of the city.

But, as if on cue, it begins to rain, dampening the whole atmosphere and worse, the car. So we make our way back to the city, and it has to be said, the traffic situation is just bad. Ditto for the roads, as Cebu's streets are just incredibly bumpy and absolutely riddled with potholes of all shapes and sizes. Even an S-Class's suspension must be completely overwhelmed here. The best road in the entire city has to be the SRP (South Road Properties), and gave a better benchmark for the Soul's ride comfort. It's better than the 2 liter model, owed mostly to the wheel and tire size, as the top of the line model has 20 inch wheels compared to this one's 16 inchers.



### Day 5

Today is my last full day in this city, and this time I choose to explore the roads of Cebu with no plan, route or destination in mind.

For car lovers, Cebu is kind of a dream and a curse. Having a more open gray market, Cebuanos can enjoy a huge variety of four-wheeled transport options. Want a Mitsubishi Evo? Cebu is literally littered with them. Over the course of the last few days, I've seen various Lancer Evolutions, from I to VI, along with several Nissan Skylines from R32's, R33's, R34's and even an R35 GT-R. Corvettes and other muscle cars are, oddly enough, a common sight, and the same goes for Honda's coveted NSX, either as the standard model or the rare NSX-R. All of these rides can be bought relatively cheap,

thanks to the gray market here, and you needn't worry about being stopped by the cops as you would expect in Manila.

However, if you choose to own a high performance car in Cebu, you would also get a curse, in a manner of speaking, as Cebu's fuel prices are significantly higher than Manila. Where a liter of unleaded was around 45 pesos at the time, Cebu's prices were 8 pesos more, retailing at 53 to a liter. The Soul's full tank cost 3000 pesos, and it's not that large of a tank either. Thus, I made sure I maximized the fuel economy of the car, and it yielded 9.3 kilometers per liter in Cebu's moderate to heavy traffic conditions.

Another common sight in the city has to be the "No Left Turn" signs, making navigating Cebu just a little trickier than



### Day 6

As I reflect over the 6 days I've been here, I realized that this has been more than just a vacation for me. It's been an adventure.

The town, the drives, the food, the atmosphere and, most importantly, the cars, have all been great. And as I finish this story, sitting here at the Mactan International Airport for my flight back to Manila, looking out the window at the sun that has finally decided to show itself, I just know that I'll be back in this city that I've fallen in love with.

Sinulog 2012, anyone?



By Mike Potenciano

# Flashback: The Great Island Paradise Adventure Race



## "I Know What You Did Last Summer."

Taking a cue from that thriller film, the summer of 2005 was a time I will never forget. It's not because of a corpse lying around somewhere but because of this innovative and huge race called the Island Paradise Adventure Race.





The grand nine-day race of the Department of Tourism was conceived to promote local tourism and take some heat off issues on the credibility of the local elections and the security threat posed by terrorists. IPAR traversed North Luzon's Maharlika highway with three man-teams in their own vehicles who carried all they needed including equipment for possible river crossings.

The event combined the "Amazing Race" style with the "Sampaguita Rally" format, wherein clues were given at the start and we tried to find the best way to get there at the proper time indicated. Some of the checkpoints required the teams to perform challenges, physical or mental, with bonus points awarded to the best team. What made it very tempting and definitely worth the effort were the prizes: P1 Million pesos to the winner, 300k for second place and 100k for third.

Our team was composed of the Gonzales brothers, JT and Brian, who would take care of the challenges, and myself handling the on-time, all-the-time driving. Toyota lent us their new Hilux pickup with a 3.0L turbocharged D4D engine and automatic transmission. Goodyear threw in their superb Wrangler Tires and GSM Blue provided drinks for the parties during the rest halts. With everything in place, off we went to the greatest adventure race ever.

The flag-off ceremony was held at the Luneta Park in front of the Bulova Clock, Zero Kilometer post. With much fanfare, DOT Undersecretary Oscar Palabyab flagged off the first car at 0700 and we took off in 9th place. The initial clue instructed us to go to a church in Bulacan where the First Philippine Republic was inaugurated. After we phoned friends who knew the answer to the clue, we were confident that it was the Barasoain Church.

After getting two demerits for being late and a short stop for the clue, we then had to find the caves that Aguinaldo used as headquarters for the revolutionary government. This led us to the Biak-na-Bato caves in Plaridel, Bulacan after making more phone



calls.

We arrived on time and Brian had to swim inside the caves to find the clue to our next stop. The birthplace of the first President of the Commonwealth government will be the next stop and we confirmed that it was Manuel L. Quezon in Baler, Aurora.

After a hat weaving challenge on the way, we finally got to Baler. There were still problems with synchronizing our time with the marshals, so we ended the day with five demerits and 3rd overall. With a fantastic reception given by the province of Aurora, we were delighted to see that Baler was such a beautiful place and truly deserving to be called a surfing paradise.

We started the second day with a hike to the small island in Baler's Lukso beach where the clue told us to go to the dam in Nueva Ecija. We used to compete in rallies near the Pantabangan hydroelectric dam during the late 80's but now, there was a new irrigation dam. The roads were mostly paved this time and it didn't resemble any of the dirt roads we rallied before.

We got lost for 15 minutes when the town folk pointed us to the irrigation dam instead of the hydroelectric dam. After JT rappelled down the dam, we couldn't help but notice the very low water level. The dam hadn't operated for a long time and part of the reason was that its watershed forest wasn't preserved. Another lesson learned in this adventure race and definitely worth our effort to start helping this area.

The huge Central Luzon State University in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija was the next stop for a carabao milking contest. After the

first few teams, the carabaos were definitely irritated and the teams had to milk what they could in very anxious conditions.

The second day's pit stop was the Eighth Wonder of the World -- the Banaue rice terraces. The scenic drive up Banaue, the below 20 degree Celsius weather and the great cultural show of the Ifugaos at the Banaue Terraces Hotel made our plunge to 13th overall (after a lot of delays) less painful.

The third day saw the hardest challenge yet when we had to go to the Battad Terraces and Tappiyan waterfalls in public transport. At the drop-off point, we did an hour and a half of hiking downhill on very rough terrain but the scenic rice terraces on the way kept us entertained all the way. Upon seeing the falls, we felt that the hardship of the long trek was really worth it. We trekked another two and half hours going back up and it was pure torture!

Back in Banaue, we ate some local delicacies, found local goods and took pictures of the local populace for the town's challenges. After much regret, we had to leave for the Cagayan Valley and planned for a return to the Cordilleras.

We chased clues in the old churches around Cagayan and





then ended up in the memorable Callao Caves of Peñablanca, Tuguegarao. The well-preserved, seven-chambered cave, with a chapel inside to meditate in, had natural lighting that made it inviting to explore. A paddle boat trip along a clean river connected the caves to the rest halt and the adventurers took advantage by swimming the whole way. A surprise on the way home was the appearance of thousands of noisy bats that came out at dusk looking for food. The Callao Caves are a must to include in your itinerary if you travel up north.

On the fifth day, we proceeded to the Ilocos region for the raft paddling challenge in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte. The good road networks were a dream to drive and seeing the long, white beaches there made us want to just stay behind. We gained 5 bonus points from the challenge that brought us up to 10th place. We passed the Bangui Wind Mills going to the next checkpoint and it would have been nice to see them up close.

The next clue led us to the Cape Bojeador Lighthouse in Burgos. The site of the gigantic structure is one of the best reasons to travel all the way up the western tip of Luzon. The view was spectacular on top of the lighthouse and we could actually see the horizon arcing on both sides far into the South China Sea. What was unbelievable was that it was still operational even though it was first lit in 1892. A well documented museum was on the lower floor with the old tourist guide/caretaker having inherited his job from his own parents.

This stop saw another team misinterpreting the clue given and being penalized for arriving late since they hitched a ride going up the one kilometer path. They subsequently withdrew from the race and we consequently moved up a place to 6th overall. We now went to the rest halt in Laoag where the local

government hosted a warm dinner party for us weary racers.

The sixth day's first challenge was in Fort Ilocandia, the first class resort hotel in Ilocos where the facilities have been recently upgraded and refurbished. The contest called for the three-member relay race to drive a mini quad around the beach front and post the best time possible. Since our team had the most motorsport experience, we got the best time and now squeezed into 6th place. After trips to the late President Ferdinand Marcos' birthplace and museum, we saw how Ilocos is still very proud of their native son leader.

We then headed south to the finest, most well-preserved Spanish town in North Luzon, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. The challenges were to drink a huge bowl of their local spicy soup, ride a calesa to get around town, dig in muddy backyards for bonus points and then run a sack race around the premium example of Spanish houses. Even though we won enough points that brought us up to 4th place, we felt much more privileged just to see this historical town as we rested at a seaside resort for the night.

Day 7 brought us to The Botanical Garden in San Fernando, La Union for a mental challenge. The huge garden was helpful in showing us the different species of the plant kingdom, how we can pick the right plants for our gardens and all the medicinal herbs that our ancestors relied on to cure their illnesses. The Garden is situated on top of a hill where the road is one of the best routes for a hill climb races.

We passed the Agoo basilica on our longest drive to Alaminos, Pangasinan for the most stinking challenge of them all, the "Bagoong" Challenge. Bonus markers were hidden inside big vats of smelly bagoong or fish/brine sauce and to reach the bottom you had to push your upper body into the vat. I guess the challenge added more flavor to those vats afterwards!

The Hundred Islands tour opened the penultimate day with a boat ride to the biggest island in the harbor. The islands and the beaches offered great swimming and snorkeling opportunities which we plan to take up soon. We then drove another long way to Iba, Zambales for the mango eating challenge. We had to eat those ripe mangoes with the skins still intact to post a good time.

Zambales also has the ancestral home and museum of the president of the masses, Ramon Magsaysay,. We finally ended up in Subic Base in Olongapo City where the first racetrack in the country was based. We maintained 4th posititon and had to win a couple of challenges the next day to get into the top three.

The final day started with the fire contest in the Pamulaklakin Forest Trails maintained by the local Aetas. They give tours around the rainforest and even train soldiers on how to survive in the forest. Using only bamboo sticks and special bark cuttings, we had to start a fire using the Aeta's method. We won the contest amidst stiff competition and this was enough to get us to 2nd place with one more challenge to go.



In San Fernando, Pampanga's Cultural Village, the challenge was to scale the prefabricated wall and the fastest climber would be given bonus points. The fiberglass wall though was so hot under the afternoon sun and our man, JT, just couldn't get a good grip. Nevertheless, the team that won the challenge wasn't fighting for the top standings so we headed back to Metro Manila tied for 2nd place.

The finish of the event was in Eastwood, Libis, Quezon City where we were all greeted with tremendous hoopla by the DOT including Secretary Joseph Ace Durano. A big awarding ceremony in the center of the plaza was attended by many people and family members. In the end, we lost in a tie breaker against the Vudu-Edge Team for 2nd place and the Iguana team won first overall. They were now part of history as the first IPAR Northern Luzon winners and were P1 million richer.

The jovial atmosphere was interrupted when one team quarreled with another team over the event's penalties. It was a bitter end to such a fun-filled, unforgettable race. My goal now is to try to bring back this race and share what we experienced with a new generation of adventure racers. **aq**





# White Water **Rafting** in Davao

By Louie Marquez, AAPlakbay

## Wipe Out in the South

THE last thing I needed was an adrenalin rush. Yet here I was in Davao, a white water junkie, if you please.

Out of shape and short of breath, I thought, what was I doing on a raft? Huddled with 'children' trying to beat the heck out of this river?

Youth escaped me eons ago. Joint pain has come, went away and came back again, persisted, will go away, I hope. Bills piled up, got paid and piled up again in an unending cycle. Got a child to raise and educate, a family to feed and a job to secure.

I used to go for outdoor adventure. The open sea breeze, the calm of the forest, the loneliness of mountain terrain...they're like dreams to me now, swept under layers of a married life. But one day, I plucked out a breather off those layers and found myself in Davao for a whitewater rush.



## Million bucks

The river stared at me. The waters steadily flowing, mocking me. It was tricking me that the ride would be smooth. I knew better. At the bend I could hear a rush forming. Whitewater. When water hits water or a hard object, it throws out white foam. Our raft approached the bend, a gradual descent. I gripped the oar like it was worth a million bucks. When you're sitting at the raft's rear end, the bend looks deeper.

## Ready to snap

We ran past it with ease. More bends ahead. This time, deeper. The raft hugged each bend. Sometimes with little trouble. Often, mimicking an overstretched rubber band ready to snap any time. Free fall gripped my stomach. The question came back at me. Why was I here again?

Before an answer hit me, white water smashed the raft. Just as the wave retreated, another was assaulting us. More waves coming our way, waiting their turn to pounce. Hungry lions. We're the prey. With a zebra's instinct, I kept one step ahead. One paddle ahead lest the lions catch me. Then, smooth water again. Laughter. We did it!

I did it.

Who needs aix-pack abs to regain youth? Give me a raft and a paddle and white water, please.



## WHAT TO EXPECT

The difficulty of whitewater rafting is categorized according to the speed of the rapids, water volume and drops at grades 1-6, with 1 being the easiest. Depending on their experience, tourists are normally assigned only to categories 1-3; while 4 and above are reserved for professionals. In Davao, tour operators usually meet the tourists at the Crocodile Farm or another popular spot in the city proper. A shuttle brings the tourists to Davao River outside the city proper. Before plunging into the river, a brief orientation on safety, paddling and mechanics is conducted. Each raft carries 4—6 persons plus a professional navigator. The run covers about 13 kilometers and 30 drops. A pit stop along the river is made for a packed lunch break.

For inquiries contact Davao Whitewater Adventure, Inc.. Landline Numbers (+63 82) 301-2020 / (+63 82) 286-1055; E-mail Address: davaowildwater@yahoo.com; Website: <http://waterrafting.psdgroup.com>. 

# Around the World for Road Safety

**H**E travelled to 54 countries last year. Now, Jean Todt, president of the International Automobile Federation (FIA), is circling the world again to promote road safety.





Mr. Todt was in Manila early January to jumpstart another globe-trotting year to promote the Decade of Action for Road Safety. He has 45 countries in his list this time, most of them developing nations and considered most vulnerable when it comes to road crashes.

Todt told Filipino journalists at the Dusit Hotel in Makati that he would have wanted to stay longer in the Philippines to get to know the country better but his tight schedule would not allow him.

"I really want to see your countryside and experience your world-renowned beaches. Unfortunately I still have a long list of countries to visit. Maybe I would come back next time, not for work but for holiday," he said.

Todt noted that he could not yet rest, no, not until the Decade of Action for Road Safety has been fully implemented.

The Decade of Action is an FIA and United Nations campaign that seeks to lower the number of road crash victims by half, or about 5 million in 10 years. As FIA president, Todt has taken it as his personal mission to educate people about the dangers of drunk-driving, of not wearing helmets when riding motorcycles, and distractions to driving like the use of mobile phones.

"Driving is a very big responsibility and we must all take it very seriously," he said.

It was Todt himself – and wife Michelle Yeoh, the Malaysian actress of James Bond fame – who convinced the UN in March last year to unite the all nations in the name of road safety. The couple are banking on campaigns for safer roads, safer vehicles and safer road users to achieve their goals.

Todt considers road crashes worse than AIDS since it claims an estimated 1.3 million lives a year, mostly in countries like the Philippines.

AAP Vice President Johnny Angeles, who is chairman of the association's Road Safety Committee, said Todt's visit will definitely help prepare the stage for the formal launching of the Decade of Action for Road Safety in the Philippines on May 11, 2011, in time for the AAP's 80th anniversary.

"We are lining up numerous activities for May and Mr. Todt's visit will surely help us get the ball rolling," he said.

AAP President Gus Lagman said the national auto club was very much honoured by Todt's visit. "His inputs will be most helpful for our ongoing and upcoming campaigns for road safety," he said.

AAP directors accompanied Todt to the Department of Transportation and Communication during his one-day visit. 

#### DID YOU KNOW? //

- That Jean Todt is a son of a Polish Jew who fled to France during World War II
- That Jean Todt started his motorsports career on the Mini Cooper of his father which he entered in a rally
- That it was in Jean Todt's time that Ferrari recruited Michael Schumacher and became the most dominant team in Formula One



# WHEELING and DEALING

## The AQ Magazine Dealership Review

Buying a car is more than just buying the actual car. It's starting a relationship not just with the car, but the dealer and service network as well, one that will last for the next few years at the very least.

For this issue of AQ Magazine, we take a look at some of the best dealers in the country and see not just what the cars offer you, but what the dealership itself can do from sales to service.



## MINI Mini Global City

5th Ave., cor. 26th Street,  
Bonifacio  
Global City, Taguig

**I**T took a while to arrive, but Mini is now a well established presence in Manila, with a new dealership in Bonifacio Global City.

The iconic, funky British car brand is under the custodianship of Willie Tee Ten and his Autohub Group. The new company made to handle the MINI brand is British United Automobiles (BUA), and are probably the perfect people to do so, given their success in handling a multi-brand dealer network with Hyundai, Nissan and Ford dealerships under their belts.

Mini Global City is located at 5th Avenue corner 26th Street, adjacent to the Hyundai dealership that the Autohub Group also owns and runs. The dealership is one of the few to be painted black, allowing the funky design MINI to come to life.

Under the custodianship of Willie Tee Ten and the Autohub Group, the new Mini dealership in Bonifacio Global City is now the most fun and funky dealership to be in. The dealership offers an extensive MINI line, from the standard Cooper to the Cooper Clubman S, to even special editions like the John Cooper Works (JCW) and Mayfair models. Mini Global City is also set to launch models like the MINI One and the upcoming MINI Countryman SUV.

The showroom is where the customers get a feel for what the MINI brand has to offer, especially in the style department, as the showroom has the various accessories made for MINI like full size tub roofs, carbon fiber accessories and other bits and pieces. The dealership is the only one around with a full size mirror so that the prospective buyer can see how he or she looks with the MINI. Where the dealership shines is in the test drive department which, as Ralph Reyes, Marketing Manager for BUA comments: "Once I get a customer to test drive the car, I know I've already made a sale".

Towards the back, of the dealership is the service area, with several service bays for MINI models. The dealer has also started a new program called the MINI Fast Lane Service, which is a by-appointment service that allows for quick servicing of your MINI. **QQ**



**LEXUS**  
**Lexus Manila,  
Incorporated**

8th Ave., cor. 34th Street,  
Bonifacio Global City,  
Taguig

LIKE MINI, it took a while for Lexus to officially arrive. When Toyota Motors Philippines did bring in their luxury sister brand, they made sure that cost was no object when they established their first dealership, Lexus Manila, Incorporated.

Situated at Bonifacio Global City, LMI has set the standard by which all luxury car brand dealerships are measured. The facility was designed by Yuji Hirata of Nomura Design, and cost PhP 280 million to complete. Excellence in design was matched with maximized functionality. The showroom floor contains much natural light, and housed 6 models at the time. The center atrium features a garden courtyard, while unconventional furniture fill in the different areas such as the lounge, the coffee shop, and the meeting area.

The releasing area for Lexus customers is a large space with a lounge where the sales representative can thoroughly brief the customer on his new car and test its features. There is even a function room available for Lexus customers should they need a meeting room in the Global City area.

For service, the Lexus Manila dealership is one of the few around that has its service area on the second floor, and features CCTV oversight so that the customer can always see what is being done to his car.

All these and more await the fortunate who are in the market for a Lexus, cars that are truly in pursuit of perfection, and its just fitting that the dealership follow the same example. 



## BMW Premier Cars

Jose Abad Santos  
Ave., City of San  
Fernando, Pampanga

**U**NLIKE the other dealers here, Premier Cars BMW is one of the few luxury dealerships that is actually outside of Manila.

Located at San Fernando Pampanga, Premier Cars offers the entire range of BMW vehicles, from the 1-Series to the X6, to those who live north of Manila. The dealership itself, opened in 2003, is one of the most modern BMW showrooms and facilities in the country.

Its complete facilities, designed entirely in German fashion, provide an aura of exclusivity set against a countryside backdrop, being located on the ground floor of the LausGroup Building, which is the parent company of Premier Cars.

The dealer has a complete suite for servicing BMWs, as well as a fully trained staff and the best equipment available to do the job. **AQ**



## VOLVO

### Volvo Makati

Chino Roces Ave.,  
Makati City

**F**ROM Scandinavia comes the brand known for having some of the safest, most sensible cars in the market: Volvo.

The local distributor of Volvo has been in the market for a while now, and in Manila, they established their dealership along Makati's automotive row in Pasong Tamo. The Volvo Showroom design concept speaks of Volvo Car's brand values, providing an opportunity to enhance the customer's experience. It brings the Volvo brand to life, a brand that builds on Scandinavian heritage, honest family values, commitment to innovation and great design.

Walking into the dealership, you know you've arrived somewhere special. A uniformed butler greets you and takes care of your needs, while Customer Service Officers are on hand to take you around the various Volvo models in the showroom. High ceilings and big windows provide natural light during the day and gives off warmth that Volvo customers love. The showroom carries elements of Scandinavian design with elements of light wood and white surfaces. The general look is clean, sleek and stylish.

Clients can watch Volvo videos on the LCD TV Screens or share a cup of coffee at the Volvo Cafe. Wi-Fi access is also available at the showroom and at the Customer Service Reception Area.

The service area is towards the back of the building, where fully trained and equipped technicians make sure that the customer's car receive the very best of care. **aq**





**MITSUBISHI**  
**Diamond Greenhills**

169 EDSA,  
Bgy. Wack Wack,  
Mandaluyong City



MITSUBISHI, as a brand, is on the rise again. After facing the hardships of a decade past, a wave of new products, much improved quality control, design and performance, the diamond star brand from Japan is back on track.

To match the re-growth of Mitsubishi, Diamont Motors Greenhills recently underwent a move from its old facility along Ortigas avenue to a new, larger full service dealership along Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue. The new dealer, called Diamond Greenhills Inc., stands on a 2,340 square meter lot, and has a 6-car showroom that occupies 265 square meters. The new design is far more modern than the old facility, and serves to take the Mitsubishi brand into the new decade.

To cater the many, new Mitsubishi owners, Diamond Greenhills has a huge service area for various servicing needs. The new service area can accommodate up to 30 cars, and is staffed by highly skilled and experienced vehicle technicians. **aq**



## HYUNDAI Hyundai Alabang

235 FMW Bldg., Alabang-Zapote Rd., Muntinlupa



If there's one brand that is on the definite rise, it's Hyundai, and with the increase in demand for Hyundai's latest models comes the need for a larger dealer network.

Opened last August, 2010, Hyundai Alabang is one such dealer. Situated along Alabang Zapote Road, the new Hyundai Alabang dealership caters to customers south of Manila with a full service facility; from sales to accessories to service.

Upon entering the dealership, the prospective Hyundai customer is greeted by a staff of well trained sales representatives. The interior of the dealership features the latest in design and quality, and houses several of Hyundai's best selling models. There are consultation desks where customers and sales reps can discuss the new car and the many payment options available to them. Customers can also visit the virtual showroom, where professional videos of Hyundai's models can be viewed to showcase the many features of Hyundai's cars.

There is a lounge for them to wait in comfort while customers have their car serviced. The facility is also equipped with the very latest in servicing tools and equipment, and has a complete line of all the genuine Hyundai parts, to make sure their cars have the very best in care. 





## AUDI Audi Terminal

Westgate Center,  
Alabang,  
Muntinlupa



**F**OR German luxury, customers can turn to one of the best in the business: Audi.

Locally, the Audi Brand is distributed by PGA Cars, Inc., under the initiative of Robert Coyiuto Jr., Chairman and CEO. PGA Cars also handles the distribution of Porsche in the Philippines.

Audi has two centers in the Philippines, the first one being in PGA's main facility along EDSA in Greenhills. It is the first car dealership in the country to offer several amenities all in one roof, housed in a 7 storey building located in the heart of the metropolis adjacent to the Ortigas Center. The Audi Greenhills full-service dealership also has a restaurant and bar, called the Carrera Café, on the third floor.

The other showroom is Audi's first

dealership in the south of Metro Manila: Audi Alabang which opened in Dec 2008. Called the Audi Terminal because of the striking structure that embodies Audi's design philosophy of combining dynamism, asymmetry and transparency created to engage consumers in the brand, it showcases the latest in Audi's showroom concepts. The design of the building adheres to the exact and strict Audi AG Corporate identity and design guidelines. The Audi Alabang showroom has been cited by Audi AG as the ideal prime example of the stand alone Audi terminal concept.

The Audi Terminal is located in the heart of the Westgate Center located inside the Filinvest Corporate Center. Its distinctive façade of glass and aluminium can display up to 11 Audi cars, along with a

Reception and Sales area where Customers are entertained and transactions are handled. There is a Vehicle Hand Over area where new owners receive their brand new Audi vehicle. Other amenities include a communication platform, a Business Center, an Audi Exclusive area that lays out available options for customers to choose from.

Lastly is a service facility to compliment the Audi Terminal with two service bays to service the needs of the customers in the Alabang area, which will become fully operational by the end of the year. From the automatic glass sliding door to the metal halide light fixtures, imported homogeneous floor and advance showroom concept furnitures, the Audi Terminal has been specially designed to impress and be a fitting showcase for every Audi model. **QQ**

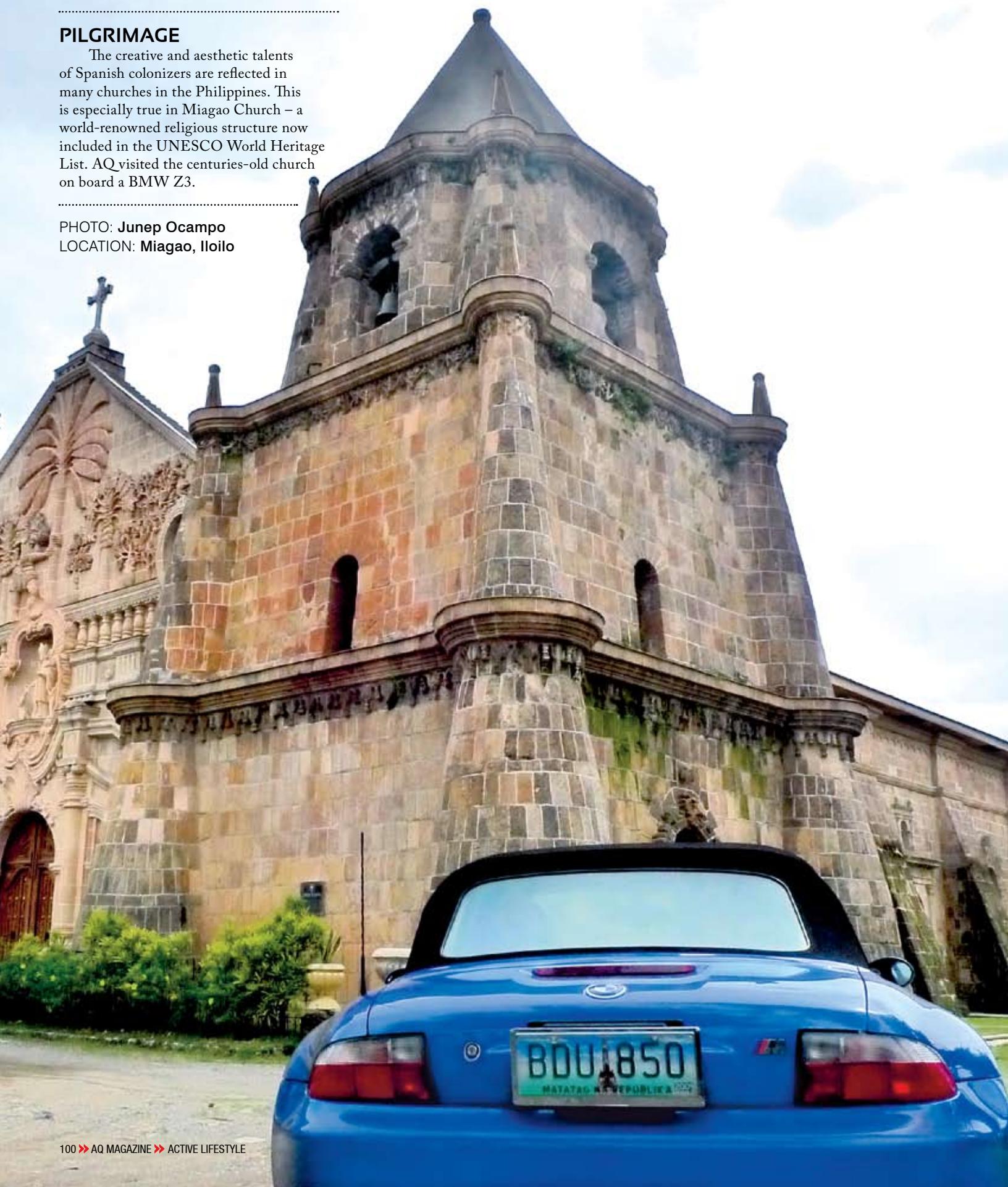


## PILGRIMAGE

The creative and aesthetic talents of Spanish colonizers are reflected in many churches in the Philippines. This is especially true in Miagao Church – a world-renowned religious structure now included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. AQ visited the centuries-old church on board a BMW Z3.

PHOTO: Junep Ocampo

LOCATION: Miagao, Iloilo



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