

Mabua Days 1

Written by John Errol Loffler
Monday, 26 June 2017 19:43

Mabua Days at Native Garden

At the moment, I am managing a place called Native Garden Apartelle. It's in Surigao, a city mentioned in my ferry (fairy?) tale over the past few weeks. The hotel is small with just three rooms to let, although they are big rooms, 40 sq mtrs+ each. The usual – aircon, toilet/bath, queen bed, dining table, nice setting. Just 80 metres from the famous Mabua Pebble Beach. The waters are Butuan Bay running into Surigao Strait. Warm, crystal clear water and your white sand is a 10-metre wade from the shore line.

My mornings are rather arduous with an early rise to the usual cockaphony of a few fighting cocks, plus the added accompaniment of 'gobble, gobble, gobbles' from the turkeys next door which are all taken for a morning walk past my bedroom window, no kidding. Add a dog or two and some early morning karaoke. Yep, karaoke can get krackin' pretty early here. I throw on the bathers and my swimming shoes, stubby holders for the feet, they are. Need them to negotiate the pebbled beach. By the way, there are NO sharp stones to make you go 'ouch' with each step. Every stone has perfectly smooth, rounded edges. I wonder how many millions of years that took for the waves to create!

The shore is covered in fishing boats. If you took a walk along the beach you would be forced to make quite a few detours, a bit like a drunken swagger, to get around them. I've only done the walk to the end once where the small mountain meets the water. Mt Baragabon Beach Resort is nestled in there as well. There are areas where lots of beach cottages are on the shore. These are not free. Somebody went to the trouble of putting them up, so you have to pay anything from 100php a day to 350php. It all depends on the quality. Sadly, they all come with a power outlet so you can plug in the karaoke machine. And they do. Karaoke singers compete with each other from hut to hut. Festival holidays are ones on which to avoid the beach. Amongst a number of crazy frustrations in this country, one of the worst things in the Philippines is a bad karaoke singer. No peaceful lazing on the beach, either.

Back to my difficult mornings – I usually just walk into the water, three paces and it's up to your tummy, two more paces and it's almost over your head! I dive in, maybe I brought my snorkel or goggles to look at the occasional fish lounging about on the bottom, but the cooling, pristine waters without any fancy stuff is simply dip worthy on its own! As the temperature is already almost 30°C at 6.30am, no towel required.

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Sunnies on, I walk back to the hotel ignoring the stares of the locals. But I have been here about 3 weeks now, so they are used to me and I get lots of 'good mornings' now. I sometimes shower the salt water off, sometimes I don't. Breakfast for me, for the guests, and that's about it. Tough mornings, I'm sure you'll agree!

I spend my spare time creating a website for the hotel, fixing stuff on booking dot com that were wrong, adding pictures and improving descriptions. I mingle with guests at every opportunity and I have created an invoicing system, menus and fridge stock count sheets. I have added the property to AirBNB as well. I continue to write for websites, and an interesting one I had was providing the questions to robot customer service reps at Narita airport in Japan.

I provide all the content for superstructures.com.au, GCC Finance, Transpacific, Malaysia Forex, Australian Forex amongst other stuff. I'm an expert on psoriasis and gout as well.

Shopping in Surigao is a mixture of disbelief and lots of 'nil stocks', the catch-cry of every staff person you ask about whether they have something or not. You can't buy cheese...anywhere. But, there are 50 places selling pizzas. So, I went and purchased a pizza just to find out where they get their mozzarella. Dumb question. They didn't even know what that was. The stuff they use on their pizzas is called quick melt. Quick melt what you ask? I purchased some to make pizza as well. Here's what it says on the packet:

Ingredients – Cheese, water, vegetable oil, buttermilk powder, milk proteins, sodium citrate and disodium phosphate as emulsifying agents, maltodextrin, iodized salt, citric acid, and lactic acid as acidulants, modified food starch, carrageenan as a stabilizer, potassium sorbate and nisin as preservatives, flavour and colour.

That'll be a family sized supreme to take away, thanks. Hold the cheese!{jcomments on}