



Diving near Dumaguete.

**WHY GO**

# THE SWEETEST SEAPORT

Dumaguete has the laid-back charm of a university town and the beaches of a castaway paradise. Here, five reasons to pack up your swimsuit and your sweet tooth and go now.

**Because it has a heroic stamp of approval.**

Walk in the footsteps of Philippine national hero José Rizal, who passed through the city before heading to Dapitan, and take a leisurely stroll on the palm-lined boulevard named after him. Rather than ponder life-in-exile as he did, indulge in the many street-food stalls that slowly open up as the sun sets. Enjoy living in the past? Dumaguete is home to several colonial churches and historic buildings—pass by the Belfry and visit the City Hall.

**Because this is tropical campus life at its finest.**

There is a young energy in this seaside university town, and it's best exemplified by the tasty cheap eats, inexpensive beer and vibrant nightlife. Head to longtime favorite **Hayahay Treehouse Bar & Viewdeck** (Flores Avenue, Piapi Beach; 63-35/225-3536; dinner and beer for two P700) for char-grilled bigger-than-your-head lobsters, washed down by some cold brewskies before channeling your inner Marley and letting loose to some reggae beats.

**Because dessert is more than a course here; it is a lifestyle.** You are in sugar country, there is no getting around it. Don't fight the craving, succumb to it, and all roads will lead you to **Sans Rival Cakes & Pastries** (1 San Jose St.; 63-35/225-4440; P125 for a box of 10 silvanas). Although famous for their namesake cashew, buttercream meringue cake, make a beeline for the *silvanas* instead, the frozen cookie version of the Sans Rival cake. That's right: frozen buttercream, crisp chewy meringue and melt-in-your-mouth crumbs. It truly is the sweet life.

**Because the snorkeling is sublime.** The waters surrounding Dumaguete are teeming with marine life with some very accessible prime dive spots, notably the waters surrounding **Apo Island** (apoislandresort.com; one boat dive inclusive of

tanks, weights and guide P1,400 with Apo Island Beach Resort). Take a day trip to dive in sparkling clear depths filled with more than 650 documented fish species and 400 types of coral. From the easy snorkel to the advanced deep dive, you'll definitely find more than just Nemo.

**Because even the spa treatments sound like a sugar rush.** If your laid-back living needs a good dose of luxury, head down to **The Sanctuary of Atmosphere Resort & Spa** (atmosphereresorts.com; day spa packages start at P5,395) to get a skin-brightening coconut-and-ginger scrub, followed up with a massage, then a papaya-and-pineapple body mask... and to top it all off you'll be wrapped up in banana leaves. It is your chance to shine as the star ingredient of a tropical fruit salad.

—STEPHANIE ZUBIRI



Clockwise from top left: Deserted beaches await; Reggae Wednesday at Hayahay; *silvanas* at Sans Rival Cakes & Pastries; tropical treatments at The Sanctuary of Atmosphere Resort & Spa.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KRISTOFFER LARSEN; COURTESY OF HAYAHAY TREEHOUSE BAR & VIEWDECK; COURTESY OF SANS RIVAL CAKES & PASTRIES; COURTESY OF THE SANCTUARY OF ATMOSPHERE RESORT & SPA; KRISTOFFER LARSEN