



Guide to Calaguas Island

Introduction

Calaguas Island is one of several islands off the coast of Camarines Norte in the Bicol region. Traveling from Manila can take up to 10 hours by land and sea, but once you get a glimpse of the island's clear blue waters and feel the power white sand between your toes, you realize it's all worth it.

How to get there

The popular jump off point to Calaguas is Vinzons, just an hour away from Daet. An alternative is the former gold town of Paracale, almost 2-hours from Daet. This is a great alternative as it is nearer Calaguas and the boat rental rates are cheaper. Since I have only tried going to Calaguas via Paracale, this option will be highlighted in this guide.

There are three airports in the Bicol region: Daet, Naga and Legaspi. The smallest of the three, Daet is the nearest to Paracale and Vinzons, but no commercial airlines fly there (Seair has discontinued their flights to Daet as of March 29, 2010). Naga is served by Cebu Pacific and PAL Express, as

is Legaspi. Naga airport is about 2.5 hours from Daet, while Legaspi is 3.5 hours away.

The easiest way to go to Paracale or Vinzons is by bus. There are a number of Bicol bound buses from Manila that you can ride going to Daet, but only two bus lines go straight to Paracale: Philtranco (from Pasay) and Superlines (from Cubao). However, the buses that ply this route are non-airconditioned and the seats are similar to the seats of commuter buses that congest EDSA. Fare is around Php 400 one-way for an 8-hour trip.

If you're not interested to totally rough it, you can take the airconditioned buses that go to Daet. Ask the driver to drop you off at the town of Talobatib, and from there, ride another bus to Paracale.

There are morning and evening departures from the Pasay or Cubao terminals. It's best to take the evening bus so you can have a full day in Calaguas Island. However, the evening bus would arrive very early in the morning in Daet or Talobatib, so be prepared to wait for 30 minutes to 1.5 hours for a ride to Paracale.

Ask the driver to drop you off at the fish port. Don't be surprised if he drops you off at a small alley. The fish port is at the end of this small path, and is quite disorganized. It's just a bunch of boats docked in the shore. Ask around for a boatman that can take you to Calaguas and back. Rate for the return trip should be around Php 3,000, but you can still haggle it down.

Don't be surprised if the boatman shows you a boat that has no roof and no seats. The area is still not geared for tourism, so the boats aren't really for passengers (often, they are used to transport fish). It's a two-hour ride in the hot sun, so be sure to slather on the sunblock before you get on the boat.

Accommodation

Mahabang Buhangin is the beautiful beach that you see in many blog posts about Calaguas. The whole stretch is pretty much deserted, save for a couple of families. One family living there is Bert Gonzales' family, who is the caretaker of the island. He has a cottage and a small gazebo that you can rent for Php 200 per night. He also charged us Php 150 each for admission (?!), but we managed to haggle it down to Php 100 each.

There is no electricity in the island, and no running water. There is, however, a deep well with a *poso* (ground water pump) that you can use for washing up, but not for drinking. Bert and his family are very accommodating. If you do not have a stove for cooking your food, you might be able to ask them to let you use their facilities. They also let us use their toilet.

Activities

There really isn't much to do in Mahabang Buhangin except to sunbathe, make sand castles, swim and frolick in the water. You can try walking to the other side of the island where there's a small fishing town. The main charm of Calaguas is that it is the perfect place to relax and get away from the stress of city living.

Things to bring

As mentioned, there is no facilities in Calaguas. Unless you're certain you will be able to rent Bert's small nipa hut, you would need to bring a tent. However, if the weather is fine, you can sleep right there in the sand. There are no stores in the island, so you would need to bring food and water from the mainland. You can either bring cooked meals from the *carinderia* (canteen) in Paracale, or bring a cooker and cook your own dinner and breakfast.

Packing list

- tent
- sleeping bag
- drinking water
- cooked/raw food
- cooker
- plates and utensils
- flashlight
- tissue (wet and dry)
- garbage bag
- hat
- sunblock

Money Matters

There is no ATM in Paracale, but there are several banks and ATM in Daet. Cost if living in Paracale and Daet are pretty low, so Calaguas can easily be done on a budget. To give you an idea of the costs, here's my detailed travel budget for my trip to Calaguas last March 7 - 9, 2010.

Calaguas Island March 2010

March 7 - 9, 2010

	Cost (per person)
Air Transfers	PHP 1,139.52
Manila Domestic Terminal Fee	PHP 200.00
Naga Domestic Terminal Fee	PHP 200.00
Taxi to and from Manila Airport	PHP 650.00
Taxi to and from Naga Airport	PHP 362.50
Accommodations	
Calaguas Island	PHP 50.00
Hotel Dolor, Daet	PHP 428.00
Transport	
Van to Daet	PHP 145.00
Van to Paracale	PHP 50.00
Calaguas boat rental	PHP 625.00
Van to Daet (from Paracale)	PHP 50.00
Apuau boat rental	PHP 250.00
Van to Naga	PHP 145.00

Tricycle	PHP 63.00
Jeep	PHP 20.00
Meals, snacks and drinks	PHP 912.00
Calaguas Island entrance fee	PHP 100.00
Internet	PHP 30.00
Total	PHP 5,240.02

Resources and Contacts

Here are some websites to help you on your research for you trip to Calaguas Island:

[Calaguas Island](#) from Lakwatsero.com
[Calaguas: Paradise on a budget \(A DIY Guide\)](#) from Lakwatsero.com
[The Virgin Beach of Calaguas Island](#) from BackpackingPhilippines.com
[The Search for the Virgin Beach](#) from PinaySoloBackpacker.wordpress.com
[Calaguas Island Guide](#) from EscapelIslands.com

Related posts on Justwandering.org:

[Calaguas, the beautiful](#)
[Maculabo Island and Apuao Grande Resort](#)
[Travel Budget: Calaguas Island](#)

To help you get started on planning your trip to Calaguas, you can try contacting the following to help you organize your trip:

In Paracale

Nelson Gomez (boatman) +639203179315
 Alex (boatman) +639089058489

In Mahabang Buhangin

Bert Gonzales (caretaker) +639282599100
 Richard Gonzales (caretaker)
 +639189244343

In Vinzons

Maning Austria (boatman) +639192579621