



Naval: Home to the amazing Higatangan Island

Naval is the capital town of Biliran Province, the smallest among the six provinces of Eastern Visayas. It is also the seat of the provincial government.

The quaint municipality is the center of education, trade and commerce, and also religion, where the Cathedral of the Diocese of Naval is situated covering the entire province and some other five municipalities of Leyte island.

Naval is home to the amazing Higatangan Island, famous for its moving sand bar and rock formations.



Higatangan Island, Naval, Biliran

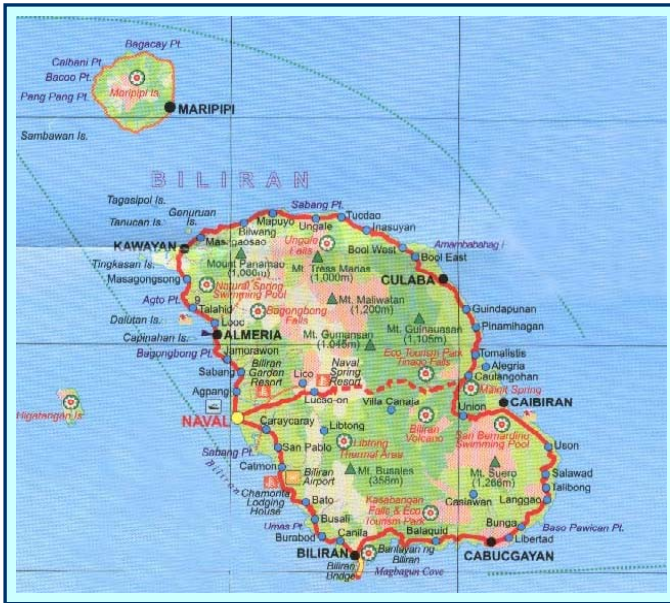
Naval plays a very important role in the local tourism industry. The locality primarily caters to services for inns, dining cafes and restaurants, on transportation, shopping and entertainment.

Demography The capital town registered a total population of 44,288 in the 2007 Census of Population. Its population density of 409 persons per square kilometer is the highest among the 8 municipalities of Biliran Province. The people are predominantly Roman Catholic and Cebuano speaking.

History According to the old folklore, the original settlers of Naval were Cebuanos, coming from Danao, Cebu through the efforts of Padre Inocentes Mangco Garcia during the later half of the 18th century. Padre Garcia used to pass by Naval during his trips from Biliran to Almeria. Astounded by the plains and the fertility of the place, he invited over his relatives from Cebu and eventually settled there.

Even before the area was inhabited, the place was already called "Bagazumbol". The original words came from the Samareño word which means somewhat pointed. As he traveled from Biliran to Almeria, the late Padre would always say he is heading for a place beyond "Bagazumbol".

The next wave of settlers came from Bohol, Panay and Negros. The land was divided among the Cebuanos, Boholanos, and the Ilongos. Cebuanos were given the land south of the settlement stretching towards Caraycaray. The Boholanos occupied the land just beyond the canal at Calumpang stretching to the mountain. Ilongos settled on the north, towards the Anas River.



Geography Naval is located on the west coast of Biliran Province and is bounded on the north by the municipality of Almeria, on the northeast by Culaba, on the east by Caibiran and Cabugayan, while down south by the municipality of Biliran. On its west is the Biliran Strait, and adjacent is the tip northern part of Leyte and going beyond is the Visayan Sea.

It has the biggest land area of 108 square kilometers among the 8 municipalities, and is composed of twenty-six (26) barangays.

Topography The municipality is characterized as a plain coastal lowland where human habitation is concentrated. Rolling hills dominate the eastern part of the town, with two high mountains, Campoding and Sayaw, elevated above sea level at 437 meters and 900 meters, respectively. There are three other mountains in common boundary location with Caibiran and Culaba.

Climate September is the municipality's most rainy month with an average of 336.6 millimeters precipitation while April is the municipality's driest month with an average of 74.3 millimeters precipitation. The municipal climate is healthful and invigorating having an average temperature of 27 degrees centigrade.

Financial Resources Naval is classified as 2nd class municipality with an average annual income of P50.58 million from 2004-2007. The Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) of the municipality amounted to P55.9 million in 2009. This translates to an IRA per capita of P1,261, the smallest among the eight municipalities due to its big population.

Education As the center of education, Naval has a total of 27 government elementary schools, 4 government secondary schools, 3 private elementary schools, and 2 private secondary schools in SY 2009-2010. It has also the lone tertiary school serving the whole province.

Health Naval has 1 government hospital with 25 bed capacity, 3 barangay health centers, 25 physicians, 32 nurses, 2 dentists, 12 midwives, and 221 barangay health workers catering to medical and health care needs of the populace.

Socio-Economic Activities Naval is an agricultural town with rice as the primary product. With its vast rice fields, the local produce is more than enough for local consumption. Copra is also abundant in the locality, but with the absence of a local processing plant, this product has to be transported to the nearby cities of Tacloban and Cebu. Horticulture is now an emerging business in Naval as the demand is significantly increasing. The town is also rich in marine resources, with Biliran Strait and Visayan Sea as major fishing grounds.

Higatangan Island Naval's well-kept treasure is Higatangan Island, famous for its shifting sand bar extending about 200 meters to the sea, studded with giant clamshells and other exotic seashells. The island showcases pristine white sand beaches with crystal clear blue seawater with a wide array of coral reefs. Higatangan Island also takes pride of its astonishing rock formations carved through time by the Visayan Sea. Cavintong Cave is situated far north, which is home to many bats.



The island is about 30 to 45 minutes motorboat ride from Naval to Mabini or Libertad Port. Although Naval is the most convenient access point, the island can also be reached via San Isidro, Leyte and Maya or Tapon, Cebu through special/private trips. Higatangan Island Beach Resort offers a fast motorboat available for pick up services.



Accommodation Facilities Naval plays a very important role in the local tourism industry. The locality primary caters to services for inns, dining cafes and restaurants, on transportation, shopping and entertainment. List of hotels/resorts include Biliran Garden Resort, Higatangan Island Beach Resort, Marvin's Seaside Inn, Brigida Tourist Inn, TJ Lodge, V&C Lodge, Rose Marie Apartelle, Rosevic Executive Lodging House, and D' Jan Dell's Cabin.

Getting There Naval can be reached both by land and sea travel. It is 122 and 88 kilometers away by land travel from the cities of Tacloban and Ormoc, respectively. Travel time from these two cities would only take an average of about 2 hours in shuttle vans or regular buses. Scheduled trips going to and from Tacloban has an interval of 30 minutes starting at 4 o'clock in the morning until 5 in the afternoon. By sea, three cargo/passenger vessels ply the route between Naval and Cebu City daily, except Mondays and Saturdays, with a travel time of about 10 hours. Travelers from Cebu may opt to take the daily trips of a fast ferry plying between Cebu and Ormoc that only takes about 2 hours. From Ormoc, a daily scheduled trip is available with an interval of about 2 hours.

References:

- Department of Education, Biliran Division
- Department of Budget Management, Regional Office VIII
- Bureau of Local Government Finance, Regional Office VIII
- Leyte & Biliran Islands Brochure, Department of Tourism, Regional Office VIII
- 2008 Municipal Socio-Economic Profile, MPDO Naval
- 2009 Regional Social and Economic Trends for Eastern Visayas, NSCB
- <http://www.leytetravel.com>
- Photos courtesy of the Department of Tourism, Region VIII

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