

Cordillera Eco Quest

The Cordilleras is an enchanting place where history, nature and culture merge. Very little is known of the Cordillera region of the Philippines and this mystery allures tourists from all over the world to explore this uncharted frontier. The civilization in the Cordilleras dates back over 2,000 years and its people continue to practice the traditions of its ancestors that were handed down from generation to generation.



The Cordillera region is divided into several provinces which include Ifugao, the Mountain Province and Benguet. Each province is distinct in its own way and offers tourists a truly unique experience.

Ifugao Rice Terraces

Carved into the mountains of the Philippines over 2,000 years ago, the rice terraces of the Philippines have become known as one of the man-made marvels of the world. This ancient irrigation system that was developed by the original settlers of the Philippines feeds natural spring water from the rain forests to the terraces. This makes it possible for the Ifugao tribesmen to plant rice in the mountains situated over 1,500 meters (4,000 feet) above sea level. The rice terraces spread over a land area of more than 1,030 square kilometers (400 square miles) meandering through several towns in the Ifugao region. Some of the most famous terraces are located through the towns of Banue, Batad, Bangaan, Hapao, Kiangan and Mayaoyo.



The **Banaue rice terraces** is by far the most popular rice terraces in the Philippines. Banaue serves as the hub to reach the other rice terraces in the region. There are several viewpoints from where you can view the rice terraces from different angles.

The **Batad rice terraces** are known to be the "amphitheatre" terraces. Batad is 16 kilometers from Banaue and about 12 kilometers of the way can be traveled by jeepney. The remaining four kilometers is a 1 to 1.5 hour trek down to the main view point of the Batad rice terraces. Take a walk through the terraces to reach the Tappiah waterfalls. The Tappiah waterfall is a phenomenal 70 meter waterfall with large natural pool at the bottom.



The **Bangaan village** is a native Ifugao village nestled amongst the rice terraces. Bangaan village is approximately a one and half hour jeepney drive from Banaue and an easy 20-minute trek down from the main road. The village is a classic example of a village life in the Ifugao region. Many of the people here still live in their native huts and survive on farming, woodcarving and weaving. Take time to speak with the village people to learn more about their traditional and cultural practices.



The **Hapao rice terraces** are some of the few original stone-walled terraces in Ifugao. It is believed that the terrace rice culture in Ifugao originated from this place. Hapao is located about 16 kilometers from Banaue. About a one-and-a-half-hour jeepney ride takes you there.

The **Mayaoyo rice terraces** are known to be the vastest stone-walled terraces in the Ifugao region. The dikes of the terraces are tiered with flat stones making it unique from the rest in the province. Houses are built along the terraces using the indigenous Ifugao architectural design of the Ayangan tribe. Also to be found here are the World War II fox holes that were built by the natives to hide from the Japanese soldiers. Mayaoyo is located 44 kilometers from Banaue and is accessible by jeepney.



Mountain Province & Benguet

Sagada

All around Sagada are limestone cliffs, waterfalls and numerous caves. Explore the three caves in Sagada: the Lumiang, Sumaging and the Balangagan. All three caves have beautiful stalactite and stalagmite lime formations and some of the caves even have underwater lakes. The three cave treks vary in difficulty and require the assistance of a local guide.

The "Hanging Coffins" are the most fascinating sight. Perched on high rock outcroppings, they are wedged in between crevices to make them inaccessible to wild animals.



Bontoc

The capital of the Mountain Province, Bontoc, still echoes the ancient traditions and way of life of the northern tribes. Near the town proper is the Bontoc village complete with an "ulog" – a crude version of a girls' dormitory and an "ato" – a village center for social, political and educational activities, including rituals.

When in Bontoc, make sure to visit the Bontoc Museum. This museum was originally established by the Belgian nuns to share and preserve the history and culture of the Mountain Province with tourists and locals alike.



Mount Data

The place is a paradise of beautiful tropical flowers and lush greenery. A lumber town nestles comfortably amidst the grand mountain scenery which is so often shrouded in mist. Mount Data is located about 3 – 4 hours from Baguio via Halsema Highway (Mountain Trail).



Mount Pulag

A favorite of mountain climbers and considered sacred by the natives is Mount Pulog which towers at 2,932 meters – the highest in Luzon – and offers a majestic view of the highlands and “the sea of clouds” from its peak. There are several trails to get to the peak; some of these require several days’ hike.



Kabayan

Located in Benguet, landlocked by mountain ranges and the sacred Mount Pulog, Kabayan is filled with strange and awesome sights. Among these are the mummy caves of Mt. Timbag and Banagao, and the Tenongchoi Burial Rock. The 500-year-old Ibaloi mummies have remained a

mystery to many anthropologists because of the peculiar manner of mummification. The mummies are not wrapped in gauze but are sealed naked inside wooden coffins carved out of tree trunks.



Baguio

Baguio was established as a city on September 01, 1909. It was originally designed to be the rest and recreational area for the American soldiers during the American regime. Baguio is the gateway to the wonders of Northern Luzon and serves as the center of business for the Cordillera Region.

Baguio is really the perfect place to unwind and relax. Baguio offers two world class golf courses and country clubs. Get pampered at the spas and hot springs of Baguio. And visit the numerous restaurants and bars.

Baguio is located approximately 250 kilometers from Manila and takes about six hours to reach by bus. There are buses to and from Manila every hour, making Baguio accessible to tourists all year round.

