

# Hola, Zamboanga!

*NYX MARTINEZ gives you  
tips on touring the feisty  
Zamboanga Peninsula.*



There's a  
woven bag  
that hangs on  
my shoulder:  
bright orange,

threaded with bits of red in-  
between, interspersed with bursts of yellow, then  
tassels flowing at just the right length. it's one of  
those prized possessions I own, where the place I  
bought it—and its memory—lingers in my mind  
as clear as the rift of music I heard playing the  
entire time I traveled there...

*...Zamboanga Hermosa...  
The precious pearl,  
The pride of Mindanao...*

It's a Yakan-weave bag, picked up in the  
Yakan village of Zamboanga, a stopover I was  
pleased to make, where the little old native lady  
sat weaving at her wooden beam. Using her entire  
body to rock back and forth as she toiled over her  
labor, patiently, thread by thread, completing an  
ingenious, distinct design.

The weave reminds me of the  
intertwined peoples of this place, Zamboanga.

They came from different tribal families, some  
known as the sea gypsies, others living in stilted  
houses, like the Malayan Badjaos and Samals,  
then the Tausugs and Yakans. Still others were  
descendants of the mixed Spanish race: the  
Chabacanos. To this day, you feel stark colors and  
contrasts on the city's streets, in its people, and  
tasted in their food.

The most succulent crustacean I have  
ever eaten in my life is a mix, too, of lobster and  
crab. It's the Curacha, served up in a heaping  
portion on my oversized China plate. In a  
perfectly lit restaurant, I dine overlooking the  
sea. Basilan Island is within my view, so close I  
think I can almost swim to it. But there's more to  
see here...

The elite, they say, once wine and  
dined here. I flip the pages of a book and see in  
black and white, the fading pictures—of ladies in  
their Sunday best. Except, it's not a Sunday. The  
laced collars and flowing vintage dresses are their  
everyday garb, for they are the country's fairest  
maidens, the upper-class mestizas, who primp  
and prance proudly with parasols in hand.



Perhaps they were the first to show off the pearls of Zamboanga, the first to make them fashionable to the rest of Spain and the world. Their luster is exceptional to this province; pearls from the South Sea shores. Cultivated locally and sold for half the price, the Orient's gems could not compete.

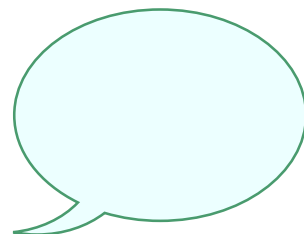
And so, my bag has transported me back to the beginning, when Zamboanga City was the main port of commerce, commercialism and trade, and also where a fort was erected to shield from pirate raids.

Now, bag in hand and barefoot, I walk the sands of the Sta. Cruz islands, known for their pinkish glow. In a panoramic view, I capture on camera a postcard-perfect shot. And I listen to Nature's silence for awhile.



**fun  
fact**

This is the best place to put into practice your Spanish 101. Common expressions include **Buenas dias** (good day) or **Quanto este?** (how much?) and **tiene pa rebaje?** (to ask for a discount). The spoken language here is Chabacano, a mix of Spanish and Cebuano grammar.



*FULL PAGE AD*



A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE?



Looking for quality pearls in Zamboanga City’s Barter trade market and seeing the thousands of stranded pearls can be daunting. Catrina Paulino, Retail Manager of Jewelmex’s, tells us how to select a good pearl.  
The value factors specific to Palawan South sea pearls are six in total:

**COLOR:** Palawan South Sea pearls are produced by the gold-lipped Pinctada maxima oysters and come in warm, natural colors that range from white, crème rose, champagne, and deep, rich gold.

**SHAPE:** Although rounds and semi-rounds are more popular, the Palawan South Sea pearls also come in different shapes including drop, oval, button, circled and semi-circled.

**SIZE:** South Sea pearls are the largest in the world with the diameter ranging from 8 to 11 millimeters on average to as big as 16 to 18 millimeters.

**SKIN PURITY:** While having a flawless surface is ideal, irregularities are part of a pearl’s natural characteristics that are used to authenticate them.

**LUSTER:** A Palawan South Sea pearl possesses a rich luster that is created by a combination of its outer sheen and surface brilliance.

**ORIENT:** For pearl experts, another more prized quality of the Palawan South Sea pearl is its unique Orient, or the inner glow of the pearl. The Orient is created by the refraction of light as it penetrates through layers of aragonite crystals, giving it a fiery rainbow-like effect.

LA CU-CURACHA!

What do you get when you cross a lobster with a crab? “Curacha”! It’s the tasty Chabacano crustacean found only in Zamboanga’s waters. Alavar Seafood Restaurant serves up this succulent specialty with their special red orange sauce.



If the sands of Zamboanga’s beaches could talk, they would fill in the details of my story, would speak of the wars that were fought here; would sing of the beauties that wore the Spanish Mascottas; would talk of the hardy fellows of the first Regatta, sailing the Sulu Sea. Maybe they would even whisper the remains of pirate treasures, and lead us to their hideaway.

But listen... the song of Zamboanga is still heard on little ripples of the sea foam, their melody as sweet as the first time it was sung...

 *PAL flies between Manila and Zamboanga three times daily. For more information, call PAL reservations office (+632 855 8888 and +632 855 7777) or log on to [www.philippineairlines.com](http://www.philippineairlines.com).*



FULL PAGE AD