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Cebu

In spite of the city's maritime beginnings, its centre has shifted decisively inland. Locals now refer to the newer precinct around Fuente Osmena as 'uptown' and the older district around Colon St (the oldest street in the country) as 'downtown'. Uptown and downtown have such completely different characters as to almost seem different cities: basically, downtown is older, dirtier, more impoverished and more vice-strewn than uptown. Longtime residents of Cebu City will admit to have never gone downtown, and will profess no desire to ever visit.

But it doesn't end there. In recent years the area northeast of uptown, around the Cebu Business Park and Ayala Center, has become like a new uptown, exerting a similar gravitational effect on hotels and

businesses that Fuente Osmena once did. It's greener and more open than Fuente Osmena, has the best mall, the best business facilities and some of the best hotels, and isn't so blighted by girlie bars as Fuente Osmena. If you like a bit of quiet, it's a good place to base yourself. In the northern hills beyond the uptown area is the flash district of Lahug, where the Waterfront Hotel & Casino exerts a similar influence on its surrounds to the Ayala Center.

Cebu City has a long history of changing its street names, with many of the old names living on, either in the minds of taxi drivers or on street signs yet to be removed. If you find yourself squinting up at a street sign with black lettering on a yellow background, it's an old sign - and the name may have

since changed. Up-to-date signs are those with white, or reflective, lettering on a bright green background. There are also many streets, avenues, drives and boulevards using the same name, such as Osmena, or Ramos - often all that differentiates them is a first name or initial (eg J Osmena St, S Osmena St).

SIGHTS

Butterfly Sanctuary

One of the first places Cebu residents will take visiting relatives is the Butterfly Sanctuary, west of the downtown area. It's hardly a place you'd expect butterflies to hang around, but hang around they do - from branches and leaves all over the garden of Julian Jumalon's home. You will receive a lecture and tour showing you butterflies in various stages of their lifecycle, and butterfly collections and artworks made from damaged butterfly wings - even a presidential portrait!

off Macopa St, 3km W of Downtown W of Cebu City

To get there, catch a jeepney from N Bacalso Ave, which turns into Cebu South Rd, and hop off at Macopa St (after the second pedestrian overpass). Walk up Macopa St, and take the first left after Basak Elementary School. The sanctuary is on the corner at the end of this street.
tel: 261 6884

Fort San Pedro

Built in 1565 by Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, conqueror of the Philippines, Fort San Pedro has served as an army garrison, a rebel stronghold, a prison camp and the city zoo. These days, it's in retirement as a peaceful, walled garden and handsomely crumbling ruin. A perfect retreat from the chaos and madness of downtown Cebu, it also has public toilets.

*Osmenia Blvd
Downtown*

Taoist Temple

Perched high in the northern hills overlooking the city, the Taoist Temple is a symbol of the city's large and prosperous ethnic Chinese population. It's not one for temple aficionados; the architecture is functional and austere by Chinese standards. Nevertheless the trip here, past the gated mansions of exclusive Beverly Hills, is a good excuse to see how Cebu's wealthier citizens live, and the views over the city are noteworthy.

*4km N of Cebu City
Beverly Hills*

Basilica Minore del Santo Niño

This holiest of churches is a real survivor. Built in 1565 and burnt down three times, it was rebuilt in its present form in 1737. Perhaps it owes its incendiary past to the perennial bonfire of candles in its courtyard, stoked by an endless procession of pilgrims and other worshippers. The object of their veneration is a Flemish image of the infant Jesus, sequestered in a chapel to the left of the altar.

*Osmenia Blvd
Downtown*



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Magellan's Cross

Magellan's cross? Wouldn't you be if you'd sailed all the way from Europe only to die in a soggy heap on the island of Mactan? Ferdinand's Catholic legacy, a large wooden cross, is housed in a stone rotunda (built in 1841) across from Cebu City Hall.



Cebu

The crucifix on show here apparently contains a few splinters from a cross Magellan planted on the shores of Cebu in 1521.

*opposite Cebu City Hall
Downtown*

Casa Gorordo Museum

Downtown, in a quiet residential area, the Casa Gorordo Museum is one of the hidden gems of Cebu City. Originally a private home, it was built in the 1850s and purchased by the Gorordos, one of Cebu's leading families. The lower part of the house has walls of Mactan coral stone. The stunning upper-storey living quarters are pure Philippine hardwood, held together not with nails but with wooden pegs.

*35 L Jaena St
Downtown
tel: 255 5630*

DINING

Golden Cowrie Native Restaurant

This is a great place to try authentic native-style cuisine. The service is impeccable and the food, presented on a banana leaf, is simply delicious. Try the sizzling *bangus* (the Philippines' national fish) - we had two.

*Salinas Dr, Lahug
3.5km N of Cebu City
tel: 233 4243*

Persian Palate

This popular franchise dishes up generous helpings of reasonably authentic Indian and Middle Eastern food. It advertises spicy food, but even the 'hot' curries are quite mild. Its menu includes a rarity in Cebu City - a large vegetarian selection. There are also branches at Mango Plaza and on Gen Maxilom Ave.

*Ayala Center
Uptown*

Dish

This is one of the new breed of slick, designer cafés. With smooth tunes and polished service, enjoy generous serves of pan-Asian meals, including pad thai (around 85) and sensational coconut-currried prawns (around 160). Offers free use of DSL ports for laptop-carrying customers.

*Next to Century Plaza
J Osmeña St, Uptown
tel: 254 0567*

Sideline Garden Restaurant

Set beneath a large pagoda in a pretty little park, Sideline is a delightfully ambient restobar with cheap beers (San Miguel around 25) and decent Filipino food. A great place to sit in the afternoon and watch the world go by.

*Uptown
J Osmeña St*

Our Place

Upstairs, this is a favourite haunt of foreign blokes. It's a cosy, colourful, old-style place with wagon wheels on the windows, bumper stickers and licence plates on the walls, a well-stocked bar and a menu ranging from triple-decker pancakes (around 65) to hearty steaks 250 .

*cnr Pelaez & Sanciangko Sts
Downtown*

ENTERTAINMENT

Wineshop

Cheery, welcoming and unpretentious, with a mixed crowd of Filipino and foreign clientele, this Spanish-owned place is hands down our favourite Cebu City hangout. There's no videoke or blaring sound system, just the convivial hum of conversation. The kicker is the wine selection, including an eminently drinkable Spanish house red that goes for just around 60 a carafe. They also do reasonable set meals around 180 .

*51 Gorordo Ave
Uptown*

Casino Filipino

If highrolling's your thing, then Casino Filipino at the Waterfront Hotel is for you. If not, the place is still worth a look if only for the mechanical horse-racing machine, the fake night sky of the main gaming room, and the spellbinding ceiling mural in the foyer - a 50m-by-30m recreation of explorer Ferdinand Magellan's world map.

*1 Salinas Dr
Waterfront Hotel & Casino
tel: 232 6888*

Ratsky

A smooth bar where hip young things head to at night for a drink (San Miguel around 70) and to hear live music. Pasta, sushi, burgers and oysters are on the menu. Enter by the door 50m south of the corner of Mindanao Ave and Bohol St. If Ratsky doesn't do it for you, there are other bars in Ayala. Dress code applies and the admission price entitles you to one free beer.

*Ayala Center, Food & Entertainment Area
Uptown
tel: 234 2554*

HOTELS

Waterfront Hotel & Casino

Misleadingly named (it's more than 2km from the water), and beloved of taxi drivers because of its big-tipping guests, the Waterfront is Asian highroller central. It appeals to those charmed by the concept of a 24hr casino, countless food-and-beverage outlets, discos, gyms, piano bars etc.

*1 Salinas Dr, Lahug
3.5km N of Cebu City
at the end of Salinas Dr, this towering hotel can be seen from just about anywhere in town
tel: 232 6888*

Marriott Hotel

Well situated in parkland behind the Ayala Center, the Marriott is close to banks, shops and businesses. As you would expect, rooms are stylish and well-appointed, with most offering good views.

Generous-sized suites offer all the comforts of home and there's broadband access. Packages may include buffet breakfast.

*Cardinal Rosales Ave
Cebu Business Park, Uptown
from anywhere outside Ayala Center, look up to see the Marriott sign towering above you and follow your nose
tel: 415 6100*

FAST FACTS

Population

718821

Language

Pilipino (Tagalog)
English

Currency

Philippine Peso
PHP

Money and costs

There is no end of places where you can change money in Cebu City. The best banks are to be found around Fuente Osmeña and Ayala Center.

When to go

The water temperature is always pleasant no matter what the season, and the air temperature ranges from 25 C (77 F) to 30 C (86 F) year round.

Electricity

220V

Phone

country dialling code: 63

Local Cathay Pacific contact information

Reservation numbers: (6332) 2313747
Check-in counters: Mactan-Cebu International Airport, Cathay Pacific Check-In Counters



Asia Miles

