



FEELS LIKE HOME

Siargao's iconic Bayud Boutique Resort represents so much more

By MARELLA RICKETTS. Photography DOOKIE DUCAY

The first morning I spend in Siargao makes me feel like I am living in a dream: the breeze, the soft crashing of the waves, the picturesque beachfront with a gleeful four-legged friend rolling in the sand.

No, this is not a dream, I tell myself. This is just a typical morning at the cozy Bayud Boutique Resort, which is tucked away in the peaceful barangay of Malinao, General Luna.

With their rapid growth and strong online presence, it is surprising to imagine that Bayud was fully functional just a few years ago. "It was actually quite challenging when we first opened. In 2017, nobody knew about Siargao; we had only two flights a week," recalls the resort's owner, Nino Barbers. "We used to have rough roads and signal was inaccessible. But I think that's the charm of Siargao, its rustic side. We actually wanted to keep the roads that way but we had to change it to concrete two months ago, because of the rise in tourism," he says.

Bayud, which translates to wave in Suriganon, does not market itself as a high-end resort, but rather, a homey place that one can unwind in. They offer 20 accommodations, ranging from the two-bedroom Presidential Suite that we stayed in, the Deluxe Villa, the Seaview, the Superior Room, and Barbers' latest project, the Maharlika Garden View Rooms, which is perfect for a group of friends. The laid-back resort shows you a different side to Siargao, further from for its iconic surf spots and colorful night life. But of course, when the mood strikes, all these are just a quick 15-minute habal-habal ride away.

Ask anyone what their favorite things about the island and food will definitely be a part of their list. Bayud's in-house restaurant, The Surfing Pig, makes use of the freshest ingredients on the island. Just a note on how fresh their ingredients actually are: the day we arrive in Siargao, it was quite rainy, and Barbers informed us that some of their mains including fish wouldn't be available. The following day, when the weather proved better, he serves us the

largest fish some of us had ever had, an early morning catch. Additionally, at the resort's restaurant, guests can get their Filipino comfort food fix with dishes such as Lechon Kare-Kare, Garlic Butter Fish, Pinakbet and Sisig Tacos. If some of these dishes seem familiar, it is because the menu was created by Barbers' brother and co-owner of Bayud, Rainier Barbers, who also happens to be the chef of Topsy Pig.

It certainly is an understatement to say that word of Siargao spread like wildfire over the past few years. Barbers shares that just last year, around 300,000 new tourists landed on the teardrop-shaped island. While this initially was favorable for the island's tourism and for private business owners, it also has a negative side to it. "At this point, it's not about the business anymore," Barbers starts rather pensively. "Like any community, there are challenges. Siargao is beautiful but the government also has to understand the impending danger that comes with this rapid development. We have to preserve the beauty of this island by taking on problems like establishing a local hospital and segregating trash properly."

Barbers expounds on this as we spend time in The Surfing Pig, which overlooks Bayud's iconic beachfront view. I take a breath and observe my surroundings, trying to take a picture in my mind: the pastel-colored sunset, a child and her parents lazing around in the pool, one of

"IT'S A BEAUTIFUL, CHARMING ISLAND. IF YOU WENT HERE FIVE, SIX YEARS AGO, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES."



PICTURE PERFECT

One great thing about staying in Bayud Boutique Resort is its picturesque beachfront



MAKING WAVES

Bayud's Nino Barbers is passionate about the preservation of the island

my colleagues enjoying the resort's chilled buko juice. Barbers is right—for things to stay the same, something must be done. "It's a beautiful, charming island. If you went here five, six years ago, you wouldn't believe your eyes. I just feel lucky that I saw everything—the beginnings, the progress, the developments. There's no question that Siargao is still beautiful," he starts, pausing to ask, "But until when?" ■

Bayud Boutique Resort is located at Malinao General Luna, Siargao Island, Surigao Del Norte. For inquiries, e-mail bayudboutiqueresort@gmail.com or visit their Instagram page at [@bayudsiargao](https://www.instagram.com/bayudsiargao).