



SAGADA

Sagada is often called "A special place" and has enchanted thousands of tourist for years. It's like a small beautiful, rustic yet comfortable village which tourist sees as one huge park with accessible tourist spots- from terraces to caves, mountains and rivers and some preserved ethnic culture mixed with colonial America and present day Manila- within the same accessible area. It is also different from the other Northern Villages primarily because it was later developed by Anglican Missionaries during the American Occupation thus it has tribal features as well as American features. It's an eco-tour with traditional tourist accommodation. It is fast becoming the Baguio alternative during the Holy Week break, which is more of a dilemma than a blessing- years from now, it may no longer look like Sagada but more of a small Baguio- so much commercialized. However, some safety measures has been placed which we hope to arrest this rapid growth- only locals can own properties within Sagada. But who am I to impress my wish for the small town to remain as is - I may like it the way it is now, but the locals may wish for something better for them. Anyway, for mountaineers, this place is a good place to spend some vacation since it offers the same adventure activities but on a smaller and "leisurely" way. If Puerto Gallera lures people by the slogan- Hike, Climb and Dive, Sagada would have a long list for itself- Hike, RockClimb, Spelunk, Rappel, Bike, Off-road Drive, Swim, Explore and Learn. Personally, I consider it included on my own top ten best sites in the Philippines which includes Camiguin, Siargao, Guimaras and Palawan.

● WHEN TO GO

The best time to go is during the summer months. Beware though of going there during Holy Week since tourists flock the place like Baguio. However, it is also one interesting experience to go there during that week and watch those "outdoorsmen" wannabes touting their Ford Expeditions, F150s and Pajeros, completing their checklist of activities from one of the standard over the counter guide map. If you want to see more Caucasians, go there during the European breaks of September to November. The important thing to consider is, the more tourist, the more difficult to book for a room on an inn or eat in one of the popular restaurants. But I presume this will be of no hindrance to the sturdy backpackers.

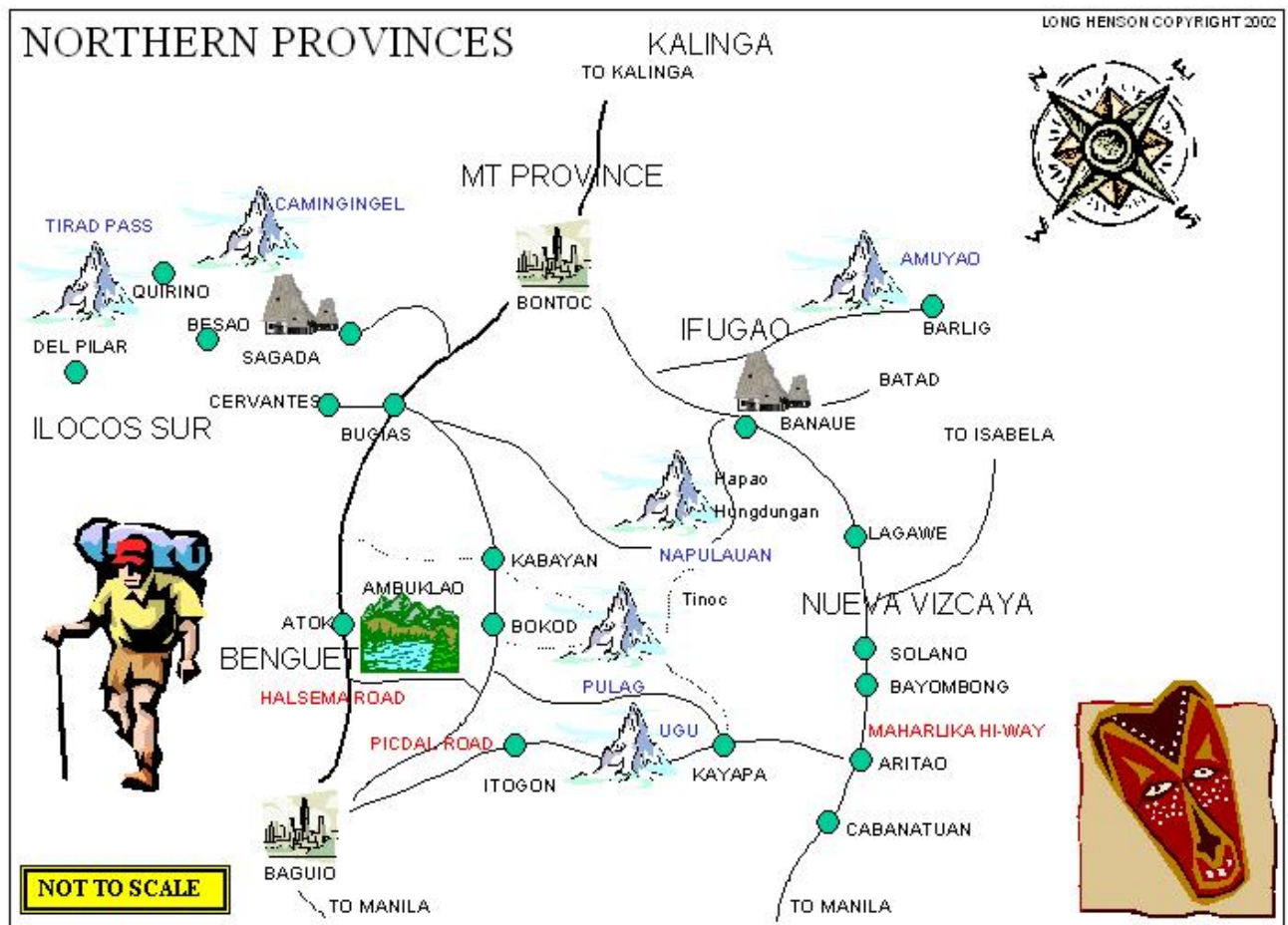
● HOW TO GET THERE

By private transportation.

The easiest route to Sagada is via Banaue. From Manila, take the North Express Highway and exit at Sta. Rita (with sign towards Tuguegarao). From Sta Rita, you will be passing by Plaridel, Baliuag, San Ildefonso, San Miguel before entering Nueva Ecija. Then in Nueva Ecija, you will be passing by Gapan, San Leonardo, Sta. Rosa, Cabanatuan, Talavera, Munoz and San Jose before starting your ascent to the fabled Dalton Pass. Then next province is Nueva Vizcaya, with Sta. Fe, Aritao, Bambang, Bayombong, Solano and Bagabag as your transit points. Finally, you will be passing by Lamut, Kiangan, Lagawe before a short stop over to the world renowned Banaue Rice Terraces. This first leg totals 10 hours including rest stops totaling 342 kilometers. You may travel at night but if you want safety and some sight seeing, leave Manila early morning say 5:00 AM then push towards Pulilan where it is advisable to have your first break at either Jollibee or Mc Donalds. You may have your lunch at San Jose where the familiar restaurants are also available though you may go to Mojo Jojo for a taste of Filipino dishes. Then you will arrive in Banaue by 4:00 in the afternoon. If you

leave by 5:00 PM, you will be in Sagada by 7:00 PM. From Banaue you will be passing by Bontoc before reaching Sagada.

The other route is via Baguio. After your standard 8 hours travel time to Baguio, take Halsema road straight to Sagada by another 8 hours. This is definitely the longer route but if you have time on your side, this is also one awesome driving experience. As an advice, you can take the Banaue route going to Sagada and the Baguio route on your way back (if you haven't seen Banaue Rice Terraces yet, its better to see it first before Sagada or you may feel short changed if you see Sagada prior to Banaue). But if you are only up to Sagada, just take the shorter route Banaue-Banaue back and forth. If you are up to further exploration, visit Bontoc and the outlying communities in between. A separate IT for Banaue is also available in this website. As a piece of advice: add additional 2 hours travel time when going there during peak season like Holy Week.



By commuting

Same route are available by commuting and also have the same travel time length. Though the via Banaue is shorter, it's easier to commute via Baguio. If bound via Banaue, take the Banaue bound buses like Autobus at Dimasalang. Or you can take Tuguegarao bound buses like Victory and Baliuag and transfer at Bayombong. From Banaue, take a jeep to Bontoc and from Bontoc, another jeepney ride to Sagada. You may also take Lagawe bound buses and take a jeepney towards Banaue. If you are traveling via Baguio, Buses are available early morning at Dangwa station. Remember that it leaves early morning so it is advisable to leave Manila by 10:00 PM to reach Baguio early the next day. Prepare 1000 Php for the trip (back and forth).

Coming from other points

Since this IT is basically for mountaineers, additional info in getting to Sagada via the usual climbing destinations :

- From Pulag- the Pacdal road passing by Bokod and Kabayan actually joins Halsema before the junction point to Sagada. Trips though are not regular.
- From Ugu- from Kayapa, go straight to Aritao where you can catch your bus going to Banaue. Another alternative is to go back to Baguio from Kayapa or Itogon but if you have your private vehicle, you can go towards Halsema via Kabayan after emerging from Ambuklao Dam.
- Napulauan and Amuyao- since they are near Banaue, same as travel route via Banaue.

● LODGING

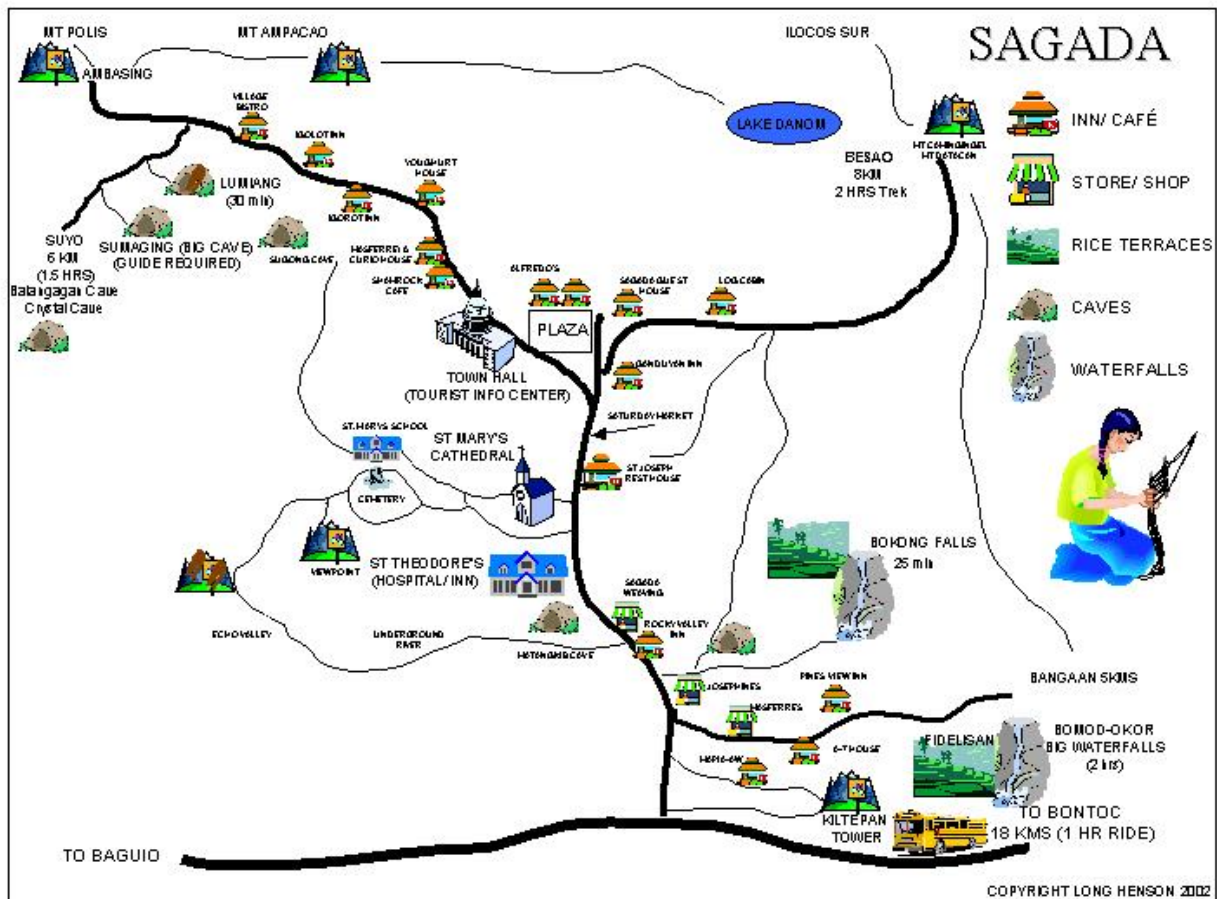
Due to the recent influx of tourists, a number of lodging houses mushroomed within Sagada. But be careful though since these lodges gets fully booked during the Holy Week season. It would be better if you can contact them in advance. If you don't have advance booking, you may end up on the hostels located outside the town proper, stay on one of the houses there who are offering lodging during peak season or camp and pitch your tent in one of the open fields within Sagada (you have to ask permission for this one). The latter is the usual option of mountaineers not only because it's "familiar" but it's also the cheapest way to enjoy Sagada.

● EATING

Sagada is one place where you can enjoy food different from the usual fastfood goodies you usually enjoy all over the country. This is due to the absence (so far) of these commercial food establishments. One warning though, during the peak season, you have to book your meal early since most restaurant has limited capacity and supply. They don't care about the profit opportunity and sometimes, even though you are the customer, you have to beg to get some slot in their table.

- Alfredo's - one of the newer restaurants. It serves Italian foods and pastries- and drinks of course. But as per our experience, they have unreasonable reservation rules that make you feel like investing for a new restaurant just to compete with them and show then a thing or two about customer service.
- Shamrock Cafe - The favorite place of the "alternative" people and foreigners. They serve the usual food but what makes it popular to the "alternative" youth, according to one source, is that it holds pot sessions during the evening. Not sure if it is still the same as of this date.
- Yogurt House - Famous for what else- its yoghurt. The capacity though is not that big so you have to make early reservation. For the rest of the food- I personally think it's over-rated.
- Masfere's - The "carenderia" in Sagada. During my first visit, circa 1996, they serve native foods which they cook as you order. But they are the first one to heed the call of commercialism.
- Ganduyan - it serves sandwiches and short order that is worth your money. One good thing about this place is that it is not that popular so it does not usually have the long queues.
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● Tourist Spots



● Souvenirs

● Other Information

Sights via Halsema Road

Sights via Banaue Route.

● Contact Information.

● Additional Reading Information :

1. Lonely Planet Guide to the Philippines

2. Action Asia Action Adventure Book

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