

THE FIRST TRAVEL-BY-SEA
MAGAZINE IN THE PHILIPPINES

trip!

ALLURE ON
Apo Island

Jessy Mendiola

CORON

Ultimate Summer
Water Wonderland

DAVAO

Serenity in the
South Sea

LAGUNA

Quick Escape
to Nature

NEGROS ORIENTAL

Air of Luxury at
Atmosphere Resort & Spa

4TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

2GO
TRAVEL

≡ SUMMER ≡
SUNSHOWER

with

Jessy Mendiola

Text By
Joan Garcia and Allyn Baldemor
Photos By
Melson Bolongaita

PHOTOGRAPHER: **MELSON BOLONGAITA**
PHOTOGRAPHER ASSISTANT: **JOSEPH 'SEFI' CURADA**
STYLIST: **KIM SISON**
MUA: **MARBEN TALANAY**
HAIRSTYLIST: **ANTON PAPA**
COVER PRODUCER & LOCATION MANAGER: **IRISH MARCOS**

ON JESSY: COVER UP DRESS (3,999) BY **ELIZABETH ENRIQUEZ**
EARRINGS (1,699) AND FASHION CUFFS (980 EACH) BY **KIM SISON**
ON LOCATION IN **ATMOSPHERE RESORTS & SPA**



Her classic mestiza looks is befitting of her Instagram name, @señorita_jessy—porcelain skin with a tinge of tan, rosy cheeks and pink lips sans cosmetics. But the true allure of Jessie Mendiola is the empowered intellect and free-spirited soul that comes with the package. Last year, the 24-year-old, who played Maria Mercedes in the blockbuster telenovela of the same name, found herself an unwitting role model to young female fans who feel pressured by the media's unrealistic image of women. Around that time, Jessie herself was fending off the online bashers that came with being dubbed “sexiest in the country”.

Stardom opened new opportunities for Miss Mendiola but did little to change her endearingly genuine and refreshingly straightforward personality. “I used to go to the mall barefaced, with no makeup at all, just in jeans, a hoodie and sneakers.” That the celebrity admits to being ‘transparent’ and averse to superficiality is a bit of an irony. “When I don’t like something, it shows on my face, my actions. What I say is how I really feel about things.” Respect begets respect is a lesson she learned early on in her career. “Women should stop pulling and tearing each other down. Women are so strong, especially when we help each other stand up and be confident about ourselves.”

Mendiola’s first big break came when she landed the title role in the afternoon TV drama *Sabel*. She went on to become a mainstay for top-rating noontime show *ASAP* as one of the ‘Dance Quad’. With Dawn Zulueta, Richard Gomez and JC de Vera, she top-billed the romantic family drama *You’re My Home* in 2015. A year later, she won the Best Asia Pacific Star in the Asia Pacific Actors Network (APAN) Star Awards in South Korea. “It feels good to represent (the Philippines) and be recognized for your work. But in the end it’s not about winning or being better than everybody else. It’s about being able to do it and being pleased about your accomplishment.”

And with Miss Mendiola on the cover of the Apr-May summer issue, we were feeling pretty accomplished and pleased with ourselves. It was barely light, the air chilly when the outrigger moored. The tide was too low to get the boat ashore, so some of us gladly took a piggyback ride from the boatmen but Jessie waded through cold, chest-high water on her own. She perched on mossy and craggy rocks and fought against wind and waves in the heat of sun and sand. In between layouts, Jessie hung out with her glam team with whom she has come to be friends with, taking pictures and doing a little fashion shoot of their own.

ON JESSY: METALIC LONG DRESS (10,800) BY **MIA ARCENAS**. EARRINGS (1,399) BY **KIM SISON**. FOOTWEAR (1,199) BY **ROCK AND ROSE**. ON LOCATION IN **ATMOSPHERE RESORTS & SPA**

*I don't have rock-hard abs.
I don't have skinny legs. I don't
have thin arms. If I can be
chosen as the sexiest, then everyone
can be sexy.*

School's out by the time the shoot wrapped, and the word was out that Jessy Mendiola was on the island. A crowd of mostly elementary students queued for autographs, and she obliged them all. She ate (and went hungry) with us, sweated and had fun with us. "It was more like a vacation than work," she said with her thanks and goodbyes. For our fourth anniversary, trip! sailed Jessy and her glam team to Apo Island in Dauin, Negros Oriental, hoping for sunny skies and good vibes all around, all throughout. At the end of the day, everyone was basking in sweet sunshower, all aglow on a perfect summer day, thanks to the ray of sunshine that is Jessy Mendiola.

WHAT SHE DID LAST SUMMER

She was shooting the TV series *You're My Home* when Jessy's love affair with the sea began in earnest. "When we started filming I was so light-skinned, but towards the end of the soap I was really tanned." Last summer, Jessy Mendiola was the trending story on all fronts of social media. "I wasn't expecting that," she says about topping FHM's list. "I really didn't know I was on the list until someone told me I was in the running for number one." The actress says she has always escaped to the beach when she can, often posting pictures online, but for some reason the 'bikini shot' in Boracay stirred an online frenzy that would steer Jessy into becoming the country's Sexiest in 2016.


By summer's end, Miss Mendiola has portrayed the challenging role of a pole dancer in the TV drama *Maalaala Mo Kaya*. In the course of getting into character, her takeaways proved more than just a toned physique and a new skill. With the wave of publicity came a surge of haters and trolls. Jessy became the face of women empowerment, a voice speaking succinctly against body shaming and online bashing of women. "People might hate me for it, but someone has to get it out there." Jessy personally reads and sometimes responds to direct messages on her social page. "A girl thanked me for inspiring her to take better care of herself instead of wallowing in self-pity over a breakup." "Sexy goes beyond the physical. It's about the whole package. I don't have rock-hard abs, I don't have skinny legs, I don't have thin arms. If I can be chosen as the sexiest, then everyone can be sexy."

ON JESSY: SWIMSUIT (950) BY PEARLYPOP SWIM WEAR
LONG SUMMER DRESS (3,999) BY MIA ZARAH
ON LOCATION AT APO ISLAND





ON JESSY: SWIMSUIT (2,500)
BY **HEYBABESWIM**
ON LOCATION IN **ATMOSPHERE**
RESORTS & SPA



*Women should stop pulling
and tearing each other down.*

*Women are so strong,
especially when we help each
other stand up and be confident
about ourselves*

SEASON OF HER LIFE

Jessy first appeared on the screen in a TV commercial at age four and, between 2004 and 2016, has made at least 40 television shows and six movies. But her favorite roles are played off-screen, as a daughter and a sister. She is the second child of a Lebanese father and a Filipino mother, the middle child among three sisters. “We are a team,” she says, “what I bring to the table, we share as a family. It is motivation in itself to be able to provide for your loved ones, to work for something...pag may pinaglalaanan, mas gaganahan kang magtrabaho.”

The sisters have always been close-knit and supportive of each other. The eldest is currently in Bahrain with their father, preparing for her wedding. The youngest is taking up studies in interior design in Manila. “The middle child syndrome is not true.” There’s unabashed pride with the way Jessy talks about Megan, who the actress is supporting through college. “Her designs are just so good, I commissioned her for my condo. Getting good grades and really working hard in school, that kind of gratitude is reward enough for me.”

Asked to describe herself when she is not in the limelight, Jessy answers, “It doesn’t really feel that I’m in the spotlight. I work on every project like it’s my first, with the same effort and as much enthusiasm.” Jessy believes that each of us is the key to and totality of our own success. “When you do your best, you will have no regrets.”

HEAD UNDER WATER, FEET FIRMLY ON THE GROUND

“It’s a whole different world underwater,” says Jessy about the dive sites she’s been to in the past year. An avowed beach bum, Jessy has been taken by sea yet again. “I used to be afraid of the water because I’m not a strong swimmer, but since I took up scuba diving and I saw how beautiful it is down there, I realized there’s nothing to be afraid of.” Only recently, Mendiola received PADI certification and has set sights on a PADI Rescue Diver course. Jessy’s newfound passion was sparked by boyfriend Luis Manzano, who has been diving for 12 years.

*"It feels good to be recognized
for your work. But...it's
not about winning or being
better than everybody else.
It's about...being pleased
about your accomplishment."*

Diving has opened up a whole new world she can't wait to explore. "I'm a traveler. If I weren't in showbiz I'd probably be a pilot, so I could go to many places," Jessy quips. Recounting her 'graduation dive' at Cathedral Rock in Batangas, "We were between these huge rock formations, like an amphitheater under the sea, there was light from above, and in the middle was the cross [planted in 1983 by former President Ramos]."

Trips to Anilao have become a weekly date for Luis and Jessy, who are both itching to explore new dive sites. "We've been going to Batangas almost every weekend, to dive, to recharge. Every dive feels like the first time." And what's down the line, five years from now? "I've always wanted to be a housewife and a mom," she admits, almost sheepishly. "Getting married and having a family have always been in my plans. I love the idea of taking care of my husband and being hands-on with the kids." But for now, Jessy is pursuing yet another new interest, this time in fashion. She is taking up courses in pattern-making then dressmaking, toying with the idea of coming out with her own line of menswear with a modern-casual look ("Maybe soon, who knows?").

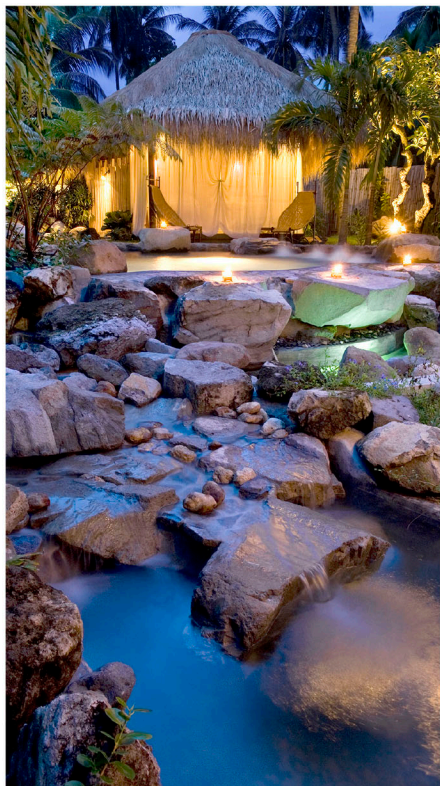
Among Jessy's favorite destinations are the beaches of Boracay, Cebu and Davao, which she says are comparable to those in Bali and other countries she has visited. "My whole life I've been in the Philippines but I feel like *ang dami ko pang hindi napupuntahan* (there are still many places I haven't been to)," says Jessy, excited about her upcoming first trip to Palawan. "It's not just the beaches and mountains that make the Philippines a world-class tourist destination, it's the people. Why would you want to go anywhere else when we have everything here?"



ON JESSY: SWIMSUIT (750) BY
PEARLYPOP SWIMWEAR
ON LOCATION AT APO ISLAND



The Right Atmosphere for a Great Escape



The Visayas boasts some of the best coastlines and dive sites in the world, and in these parts of Negros Oriental, Dauin stands out. There is an otherworldly magnificence just beneath the blue blanket of the sea. For one, Apo Island is home to over 400 corals, 650 species of fish and the majestic *Pawikan* (sea turtle). There are all sorts of accommodations on and around the island, but few come close to the luxury and comfort of Atmosphere Resorts & Spa, a sprawling beachfront property that is in and of itself a travel destination.

Once a coconut plantation, Atmosphere is now a luxe hideaway that includes 14 suites, eight garden apartments, four family suites and four penthouses set in a lush tropical landscape. The architecture allows the natural surroundings and spaces between buildings to set each other off—modern amenities in harmony with the great outdoors. What Atmosphere has created is a fusion of form and function, in keeping with the company's brand of understated elegance, according to Owner and General Manager Gabrielle Holder.

It is part of the resort's social responsibility to care for the environment and the people of Dumaguete. As such, it uses

environment-friendly products and promotes reducing, reusing and recycling with their glass and aluminum bottles, trash segregation and wrapper-free toiletries. The resort also has a soup kitchen, providing free lunch to 80 children, five days a week, all year round.

As a destination resort, Atmosphere ensures that its guests get the most of their vacation, whether it's adventure or relaxation. It is a PADI 5* Career Development Dive Resort and a wellness and relaxation sanctuary, at the same time. Just a few feet from the shore, one can snorkel and find an abundance of stunning corals and fascinating marine life. Whether sandbar- or island-hopping, whale shark- or dolphin-watching, the resort has provisions, including a luxury boat, much larger and more comfortably outfitted than the regular outrigger, complete with a chef and stewards.

Lauded as one of the best in Asia, Sanctuary Spa, meanwhile, is set in a tranquil tropical garden with streams and ponds, flowers and trees. There are four outdoor pavilions, each with its own private bathroom, and a heated pool for watsu (water shiatsu) treatments. Specialized services, including full detox programs, yoga, meditation and life coaching could also be arranged.

One of five food venues at the resort, Blue Restaurant is among the best in Dumaguete, serving everything from the freshest seafood to guilt-free organic meals. For a more intimate dining experience, a table could be set up on the beach or at the private Treehouse. As Holder puts it, "What sets us apart is that we tailor the experience to each individual. Every guest is a VIP (and for them) we go the extra mile to create an incredible memory."



APO ISLAND

Depths of Hope & Glory

Text By Allyn Baldemor

PHOTO BY TOMMY SCHULTZ



Bright saffron clownfish gliding in and out of deep green anemone, their white bands flashing in the light. Just below the surface of the clear bottle-green water, reefs teem with a kaleidoscope of corals, like flower gardens in full bloom. To the seasoned diver it is a welcome sight, an anticipated reward for daring the depths. But to the uninitiated, the apprentice snorkeler, the once-around-the-block diver, the curious summer vacationer, it might as well be magic.

The waters of Negros Oriental are a veritable underwater fantasyland of marine biodiversity, impressive for its beauty but more so, for the people's effort to preserve it. At the recent European Dive Show (Eudi 2017) in Italy, the Philippines names Apo Island among the 10 best dive spots in the country, which include Anilao in Batangas, Tubbataha Reef National Park in Sulu Sea, Honda Bay in Palawan and Blue Hole in Romblon.

Leaving Dauin at the crack of dawn, a kind of hush settles as the boat heads for Apo Island, its outline clearly visible from the shores of Maayong Tubig half an hour away. The sun is rising on the horizon, leaving a flame-colored trail, fast fading. In the early morning light the Baluarte emerges from the mist like the mythical giants of folklore; a sentry of limestone and volcanic rock as old as the island on which it keeps watch, perhaps older.

ACTIVITIES

Covering nearly 75 hectares, Apo Island is located off the southeastern tip of Negros Island south of Dumaguete City, and is one of 23 barangays in Dauin. There is a cove nestled at the foot of the cliff, its white-sand coastline curving softly, massive karsts shielding it from the rest of the island. The beach comes alive with tourists arriving in boats and locals setting off for the day's catch or the daily fare, passengers looking to go snorkeling or island hopping.

Less than two hours by boat is Oslob, the shallow bay of which is home to the whale sharks. An hour or so farther, the Manjuyod Sandbar sits charmingly in the middle of the bay facing Tañon Strait—home to several dolphin species, including the Bottlenose and Long-snouted Spinners. At the south end of Apo Island is Rock Point West, the most popular dive site in the area. About a hundred meters from the buoy, from a depth of 4 meters to 9 meters, the reef spreads out in a rich marine landscape; a feeding ground to the Hawksbill Turtle. It is not unusual to spot a sea turtle or two flitting across a meadow of sea grass a mere five meters below, not far from the beach.

The water around the island is almost transparent in its clarity, a blue-green filter magnifying an otherworldly scene that unfolds just a few feet from the waterline. On all sides of Apo Island are reefs breathing with 400 species of coral, including huge gorgonian sea fans and tiny bubble corals. Affording excellent visibility and a rich marine life, it is no wonder the island is a favorite among snorkelers and free divers, whether beginner or experienced.



Apo Island is the culmination of the people's hard work to give hope and glory to the place they call home.

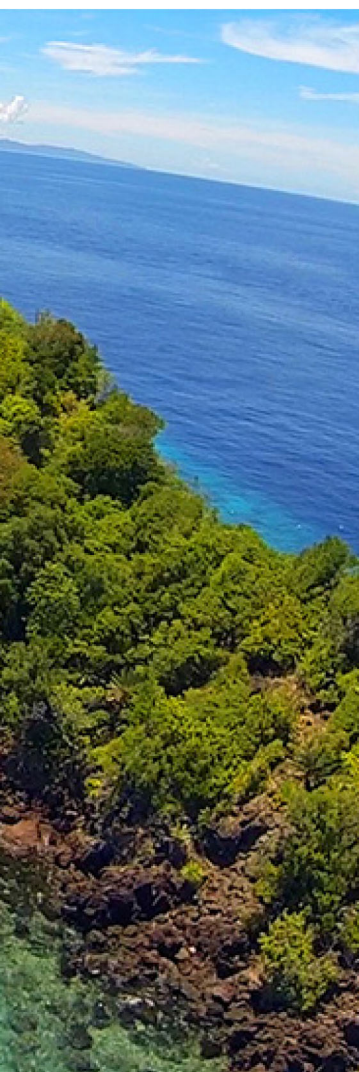
PHOTO FROM ATMOSPHERE RESORT & SPA



PHOTO BY LEAH OBRA



PHOTO BY ANATALIA ALMARIO



ACCOMMODATIONS

Most visitors to Apo Island are more interested in the sights underwater than on land, but it is also a favorite beach destination. There are two resorts on the island, one of which is Apo Island Beach Resort at the beachfront facing the Baluarte. Both establishments have rental rooms or cottages, restaurants and provisions for diving or snorkeling. Overnight camping is allowed in designated areas around the island, but all visitors must first register at the mooring area. A few of the local families offer homestays, as well.

There are at least two ways to get to Apo Island from Dumaguete: via ferry from Malatapay or a chartered outrigger from one of several resorts in Dauin, mostly upscale. The town of Valencia is less than an hour by land from Dumaguete City, but there is a different vibe to the place, which is closer to the mountains than the sea. There, the main attraction is the towering Casaroro Falls, which locals say is as deep as it is high; and Mount Talinis, the second highest mountain on Negros Island, which feeds the river.

The nature resorts in Valencia are a popular weekend getaway for locals, ideal for budget-minded backpackers and decompressing divers. Forest Camp, for one, is a “treesort”—guest cottages, a bar and restaurant, river-fed natural swimming pools, a mini zip line and wall-climbing facilities—covering a patch of mountain forest through which the river rushes. Meanwhile, in the heart of the city along Hibbard Avenue, The Flying Fish Hostel is “military bunker meets shabby chic” traveler dormitory with refreshing open-air common areas and a garden—set apart among others in the same price range by its cleanliness, attention to detail and efficient service.



PHOTO BY ANATALIA ALMARIO

ACCOUNTABILITY

Apo Island wasn't always the world-renowned hideaway destination and dive site it is today. Now sustaining more than 650 documented species of fish and more than two-thirds of the coral species in the Philippines, the marine ecosystem was almost decimated by dynamite fishing in the 1970s. Through the efforts pioneered by Silliman University, the aquatic habitat surrounding the island is now a marine reserve protected by the National Integrated Protected Area Act.

About a half-an-hour walk from the main docking area, the Apo Island Marine Sanctuary and Protected Seascape is a prime spot for scuba diving and snorkeling, a place where the most sightings of clownfish are reported, earning it the nickname Clownfish City. Visitors are required to pay fees, including those for entrance and docking, funds used for the upkeep and conservation of the island. No more than 15 divers at a time are allowed in the reserve to minimize the impact on the ecosystem. Apo Island has become the base of a community-organized marine sanctuary. Through the years, the people have reaped the benefits of taking ownership of and accountability for Apo Island; benefits that continue to cascade down to the entire community, helping pay for the power generator, elementary school and other community services.

On the way to the reserve, one cuts across the island on paved pathways and trodden footpaths, past the town hall, a billiards place and a basketball court, right through the heart of the community fighting fiercely to protect Apo Island—a humbling reminder of the respect owed to the people who have come together to give hope and glory to the place they call home.

HOW TO GET THERE



2GO Travel cruises once a week from Manila to Dumaguete. Book your accommodations: www.agoda.com | www.2go.com.ph

atmosphere

RESORTS & SPA • PHILIPPINES





Your luxury choice in Dumaguete

for bookings and enquiries:

atmosphere resorts & spa, maayong tubig, dauin, negros oriental 6217, philippines
cell +63 917 700 2048 | landline +63 (35) 400 6940

www.atmosphereresorts.com | enquiries@atmosphereresorts.com

 [atmosphere.resorts](https://www.facebook.com/atmosphere.resorts)

 [atmosphereresorts](https://www.instagram.com/atmosphereresorts)