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Maahas, Los Baños, Laguna 4030
arlarestaurant@gmail.com
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Bato Springs

522 Balagtas Blvd, San Pablo City
(049)562-2329/ 0905-339-5289
(049)562-0976/ 0926-582-2822
0928-323-2674/ 0915-227-4659

Café Angelica

Villa del Sol Commercial Complex
National Highway, Anos, Los Baños
(049)536-2919/ 0927-315-7807/
0906-365-2990
cafeangelicaresto@gmail.com

Café d'Aviano

Maharlika Highway,
Brgy San Francisco,
San Pablo City
0915-723-1634
cafedaviano@yahoo.com

Café Lago

Dagatan Blvd., Sampaloc Lake,
San Pablo City
0917-916-3800 or (049)573-7404

Calmarland

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www.calmarland.com

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0917-812-6687/ 0920-962-4083
www.casasanpablo.com
casasanpablo@pldtdsl.net

Cheapangga

Unit 1 G-Square Plaza,
Barieto cor Malvar Streets,
San Pablo City
(049)503-1118

Clydenjosh sa Lawa Restaurant

Sampaloc Lake, San Pablo City
(049)562-4401/ (049)800-0376

Colette's Food Incorporated

#52 San Rafael, San Pablo City
(049)562-6754/ Fax: (049)562-2137
colettes_bukopie@yahoo.com

Enchanted Kingdom

San Lorenzo South Village,
Sta. Rosa, Laguna
(632)846-6074 to 78
www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph

Faustina's Restaurant

10278 Ruby Street, Lola J Bldg
(20m from Raymundo Gate)
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(049)576-1028

Folcon Café

M. Paulino St., New Lasuerte Bldg.
San Pablo City
(049)800-4203

Forest Wood Garden

San Francisco Calihan,
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San Pablo City
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www.forestwoodgarden.com
forestwood-garden@yahoo.com

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kusinasalud@gmail.com

Los Baños Weekend Market

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0908-8619278/ 0917-8680175

Maria Paz Royale Garden Resort

Sta. Filomena, San Pablo City
(049)562-6488/ (049)800-2537
0917-816-0882/ 0910-835-6792/
0917-436-2511
Fax (049)800-2537
info@mariapazresort.com.ph

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0917-500-5006
elvigalicia@yahoo.com

Santa's Old Town Café

9167-A Lee-Muere Building
M. Leonor Street, San Pablo City
(049)562-701/ (049)573-1107
(049)562-1107/ (049)562-1101
0929-675-8182
Telefax: (049)562-2147

Sitio de Amor Farm Resort

Km 88.8 Maharlika Highway
San Pablo City
(02)552-7340/ 0918-927-4346
sitiodeamor@yahoo.com

Solomon Travel and Tours

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(049)800-3486

Sulyap Gallery Café

Brgy Del Remedio,
Cocoland Compound,
San Pablo City
(049)562-9740/ 562-9735

V Lounge Spa

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Los Baños, Laguna
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Street-dancing competitors at the Coconut Festival, 2009.
Photo courtesy of Dave Dwiggins

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LETTER from the EDITOR

It was bound to happen. We tried not to play favorites, but we're in San Pablo so often, it was only a matter of time before we had a whole issue dedicated exclusively to the city.

And yet, even as the way to this city becomes the road more traveled for us, even as our once-exciting "new" discoveries become favorite standbys, we find that there is so much more to San Pablo than we imagined. It is a veritable treasure trove of resorts, restaurants, spas and cafés. Some of these places are rough-hewn diamonds, others are well-polished gems; all are precious (or at the very least have potential).

For this issue, long-time San Pablo resident Dave Dwiggins offers us a glimpse of his beloved town (Serenity in San Pablo, page 4.) Our featured picks (Treasures of San Pablo) take center stage on page 10. And from our (admittedly limited) outsider's perspective, we chose The Best of San Pablo (page 13).

Come and join us, let's take the scenic route to San Pablo!



Team Alapaap



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
OFFICE OF THE CITY MAYOR
SAN PABLO CITY



SAN PABLO CITY'S COCONUT FESTIVAL


Everyone is invited to come and enjoy the glamour, glitch and pageantry of San Pablo City's Coconut Festival from January 8-15, 2010.

Now on its 15th year, the City Government of San Pablo with the help and participation of its various departments, public and private schools, NGO's, business establishments, the city's 80 barangays and the ordinary citizenry will exert all their efforts for the success of this celebration.

Major activities for the week-long festival include Search for Lakan at Mutya; Coco Trade Fair; Coco Sports Fest; Kasalang Filipino Bridal Fair and Fashion Show; Street Dancing Competition (January 13, 2010); Coco Cook Fest; and Float Parade/Coco Carnival Queen Parade.

So come and see the beauty of San Pablo City, the Only City in the Philippines with Seven Lakes.

For more information, contact Donnalyn Eseo of the City Tourism Office at 09204766416.


Vicente B. Amante
City Mayor





Serenity in San Pablo *Text and Photos by Dave Driggins*

Fr. Juan de Nicholas was appointed priest at San Pablo City in 1696 and soon launched a long-range program planting coconut trees. His devotion divided his religious responsibilities but he believed economically the future of San Pablo and the success of the church would depend on coconut trees. He believed the citizenry could prosper from its usefulness, be more apt to pay taxes and pay additionally to the church fund. Efforts of long ago are visible today as coconut groves blanket the jungles and mountain slopes.

Nearly forty years have elapsed since I took aim with a camera and captured my first photograph in the Philippines. The islands were half a world away from the culture I understood and the way of life could not have been more unique. Each scene was dear and personal and the fascination triggered an addiction to Asians, the mountains, lush jungles and scrumptious food.

Today, the adventure continues and a passion remains for those spectacular scenes, friendly faces and irreplaceable flavors of native cuisine. Around every turn is a new quest filled with an abundance of excitement and pleasure with San Pabloños always there to extend the Filipino hospitality.

Traveling east from Los Baños toward Bay, looking to the southeast are the impressive volcanic summits of Banahaw, San Cristobal, Nagcarlang, Atimbia, Lagula, Mabilog, Kalisungan and more. All except Banahaw are in Laguna Province. The centerpiece is San Pablo and her seven attractive lakes. Adjoin the lush grandeur of coconut and pineapple-filled slopes with volcanic lakes and you have tropical panoramas that are breathtaking and fit for canvas. Not even long-standing legends can offer words justifying the magnificence.

Whether a traveler prefers majestic slopes, stunning waterfalls, or dense jungle foliage they can find it all near San Pablo City. A traveler can enjoy a native Filipino serving in San Pablo and within minutes be encircled by the natural unscathed beauty of Mother Nature.

One extraordinary exploit is journeying by balsa across the deep green waters of Pandin Lake to view untouched Yambo Lake and surrounding peaks. Boatmen from Pandin are pleased to lend a hand for a few pesos.

At San Pablo's southern edge is Villa Escudero, a picturesque coconut plantation which offers a glimpse of Philippine culture plus a taste of native cuisine that is incredibly delicious. The native buffet is served to barefoot visitors who dangle their feet in the comfortable waters below the waterfall. During weekends and holidays a pleasurable cultural show is a popular attraction. Visitors enjoy the simplicity of carabao-drawn wagon rides while being

serenaded by charming Filipino artists singing lively tunes. The plantation is one of the biggest tourist destinations in the Philippines.

Every January, the second week is set aside as the town fiesta. The finale of the celebration is the thrilling street dancing competition. The streets are filled to capacity as cheerful students in brilliant costumes compete for top honors. If you can stand a little jockeying for position at curbside, this is an event you do not want to miss.

Aside from the "high fives" and "hey Joes" a foreigner will probably encounter, a memorable experience would definitely include a morning stroll around Sampaloc Lake, a favorite social event where everyone gathers for daily exercise. At day's end a romantic fervor seizes the moment when the sun slips gently behind the silhouetted crests to the west and couples embrace to watch the moon rise over Mt. San Cristobal.



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JANUARY 13, 2010

Street Dancing Competition
at the annual Coco Festival
San Pablo City

Want to be a travel writer? Have an interesting photo from the road? Alapaap welcomes contributions! Send your Laguna travel-related articles and photos to alapaap.travel@gmail.com. Please include your complete name and phone number.



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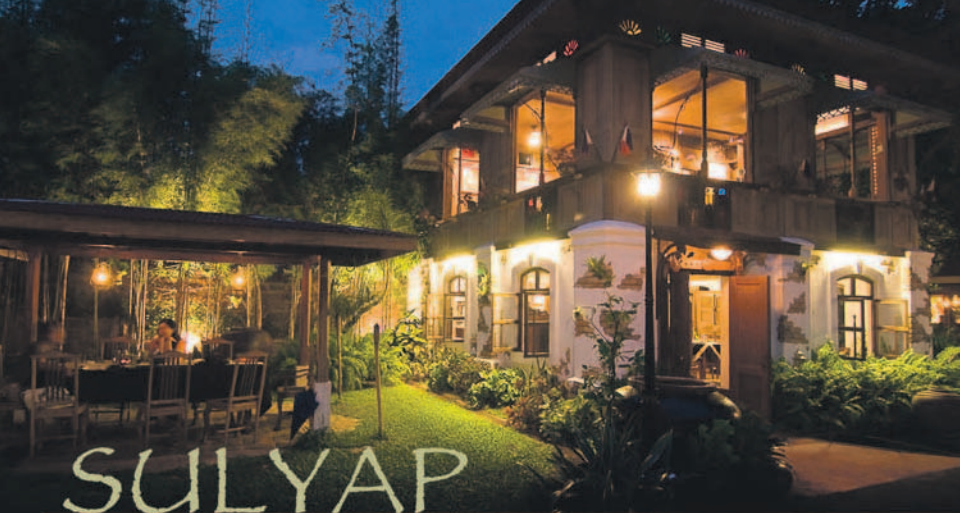
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Enduring favorite **Sulyap Gallery Café** is still the place to go for an evening out. Set in a charming *bahay na bato*, the restaurant is a step back into the past, with well-mannered waitstaff serving native Filipino dishes. Order first, then while waiting for your food, walk over to the museum/ gallery next door to look at their antique collection of furniture, housewares and memorabilia.

The ubiquitous **Colette's** originated (and is still based) in San Pablo City. This inventive and innovative company sells buko pie and variations such as buko pandan pie, buko langka pie, ube makapuno pie and assorted pastry products. Their **Caffé Curio** offers a place to sit and drink coffee for those who want to eat their pie *right now*.



LOCAL FAVORITES



BATO SPRINGS



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(049)562-2329/ 0905-339-5289
(049)562-0976/ 0926-582-2822
0928-323-2674/ 0915-227-4659

Walking to the main waterfall area in **Bato Springs Resort** is like stepping into a pristine, unsullied rainforest. The falls are manmade but were expertly designed to look as if Mother Nature herself made them.

Business is booming for **Folcon Café**, which recently opened its third branch at the G-Square Plaza. Their refrigerated cake display begs not the question "What should I get?" but rather "What should I get *first*?" Rice meals and pasta dishes are also available.

Named after St. Mark of Aviano (Marco d'Aviano in the original Italian), a Capuchin friar, the cozy **Café d'Aviano** also hosts poetry readings and art exhibits geared towards their young professional clientele.



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Treasures of San Pablo City

Cafe Lago

Located along the shore of beautiful Sampaloc Lake, Café Lago is one of the finer restaurants in the city. Dine in a private courtyard surrounded by tall trees and lush greenery.

The café offers a variety of home-cooked Southern Tagalog and foreign dishes. Lunch, merienda and dinner are served daily, and a delectable native breakfast is served on weekends.



Cafe Lago

Dagatan Blvd., Sampaloc Lake, San Pablo City
For reservations, call 0917-916-3800
or (049)573-7404



Rx Spa Health Farm

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0917-500-5006 (elvigalicia@yahoo.com)

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The function rooms and pavilions plus family- and dorm-type accommodations also make this an ideal place for private parties, retreats and company outings.

A variety of spa treatments and aromatherapy massages are available from P150 (back massage) to P500 (the two hour Royal Spa Package). Room rates from P1,500 (spa room for up to three people) to P3,500 (dorm type for 8-10 people).



Exploring a new city for the first time can be a daunting (not to mention hit-or-miss) proposition: Where to begin? What to do/see/eat? Where to stay? Allow us to break it down for you. Here are four sure-fire hits.



Sitio de Amor Farm Resort

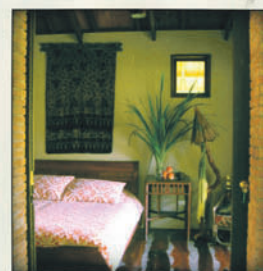
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(02) 552-7340; (0918) 927-4346
sitiodeamor@yahoo.com
Reservations required.

Sitio de Amor Farm Resort

Rustic but luxurious, unpretentious yet elegant, Sitio de Amor Farm Resort is the crown jewel of San Pablo resorts.

The sprawling 4.7 hectare orchard is a showcase for the seamless melding of nature and culture – the grounds were landscaped by Igorots, the infinity pool is accented with Bisazza tiles, the rooms are natively opulent.

Take a walk, ride a bike (or horse!), recline in one of the hammocks, write that novel, go stargazing, light a bonfire... the possibilities are as limitless as they are soothing to the soul.



Pandin Lake

Take a short break from the noise and pollution of the bustling metropolis.

Food for the soul is only two hours away from Manila. Bask in the serenity and beauty of San Pablo's pristine lake; swim in its crystal clear waters.

Aside from the main event – a ride on a covered bamboo raft, the Pandin tour includes free parking, a knowledgeable local guide, fresh buko and light-hearted conversation with a crew of six housewives/ oarsmen of the community. The tour costs P180/person.



Pandin Lake

For reservations, call Mr. Mandy Marino, 0917-501-6694 or Mang Tano of Pandin, 0929-978-9565

Best lake: Yambo.

Sampaloc may be the most popular, Pandin the most beautiful, but for its ineffable charm (plus the sense of accomplishment you get from overcoming the sheer difficulty of getting there), Yambo gets our vote. *Yambo is the twin lake of Pandin. See map of San Pablo on p. 15.*

Best bathroom: Sitio de Amor.

A bathroom can make or break a resort, which is why it pleases us to no end that the owners of Sitio would exert the same painstaking care in designing their bathrooms as they did on the rest of this beautiful resort. Mi amore! *See the feature article on Sitio de Amor on p. 11.*

Best-named boutique: Cheapangga.

Using the Filipino slang word for "cheapness" as its name, this elegant boutique looks anything but.

Best at following directions from picky customers: Palmeras Garden Restaurant. We ordered beef and broccoli ("Please cook and serve the broccoli separately") and chop suey ("No meat, seafood or fish sauce; and could you please add tofu?"). The food came fast, done the way we wanted, and most importantly, it was good.

Best water-themed resort: Bato Springs. Dense foliage forms an almost closed-canopy atop the manmade waterfalls, increasing the "wow" factor of this tropical paradise. *More on Bato Springs on p. 9.*

Best that is yet to come: Santa's Old Town Café.

It's still under construction, but we did manage a tour of the dental clinic next door (both are owned by the same family). And if the child-friendly clinic made me want to get a tooth pulled, I imagine I'd want to hang out here (with Santa!) all day long. *Santa's Old Town Café will open December 2009.*

Best buy: stainless steel utensils made from the by-product of the city's jeepney factories. There are a lot of roadside stands selling such items, so check several places before buying.

Best time to visit San Pablo: Now!

Whether it's for a day trip, a family outing or a weekend getaway, now is the time to come and visit. San Pablo awaits!

See directory for contact details.

Agree/ disagree with our choices?
Have a "best" nominee of your own?
Email us at alapaap.travel@gmail.com.

I would check into Sitio de Amor just to use this bathroom.

HOTSPOTS in the city



Palaisdaan Kamayan sa Ilog
Maharlika Highway,
Brgy San Ignacio, San Pablo City
(049)561-3164

Usually resorts have an in-house restaurant so their check-in guests won't have to leave for meals; the resort is the main draw. Putting a spin on that familiar concept, this restaurant has a resort inside. Eat lunch, then jump in the cool azure pool. Overnight accommodations are also available. But the real star here is the seafood. Try the house specialty, kamay-kamay, a huge serving of assorted seafood fresh from Dalahican.



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info@mariapazresort.com.ph

It's easy to see why Maria Paz Royale Garden Resort was voted one of the best resorts for two years running (2007 and 2008) by the Laguna Tourism Council and the Provincial Government of Laguna. The sprawling, well-tended lawn, the well-appointed cottages and rest houses, the crystal clear water in the pool — all contribute to the resort's over-all pleasing aesthetic. It's the ideal out-of-town getaway.



Clydenjosh sa Lawa Restaurant
Lutong Bahay at Yamang Dagat, Sampaloc Lake, San Pablo City
(049)562-4401/ (049)8000-376

Located right beside Sampaloc Lake, Clydenjosh is a favorite of locals and tourists alike. (The crowded main dining room during lunchtime is a testament to this.) It's hard to miss, with its all-bamboo exterior (and interior) plus a tree house up front. But what really sets this restaurant apart is its commitment to the local community and its proud promotion of Filipino values, culture and cuisine.



M E M O
To: The Editor, Alapaap Travel Guide
Re: Casa San Pablo

Dear Boss,

I know, I know! I'm so late with the review of Casa San Pablo you assigned me to write.

It's not my fault, I swear. I'm being a good reporter, like you want me to be.

It's just that the first time I went to Casa San Pablo, it was pouring rain. The place looked absolutely gorgeous, but I thought maybe the weather had altered my perception of it somehow. So I decided I had to see it again when it was sunny. You know, just to be objective.

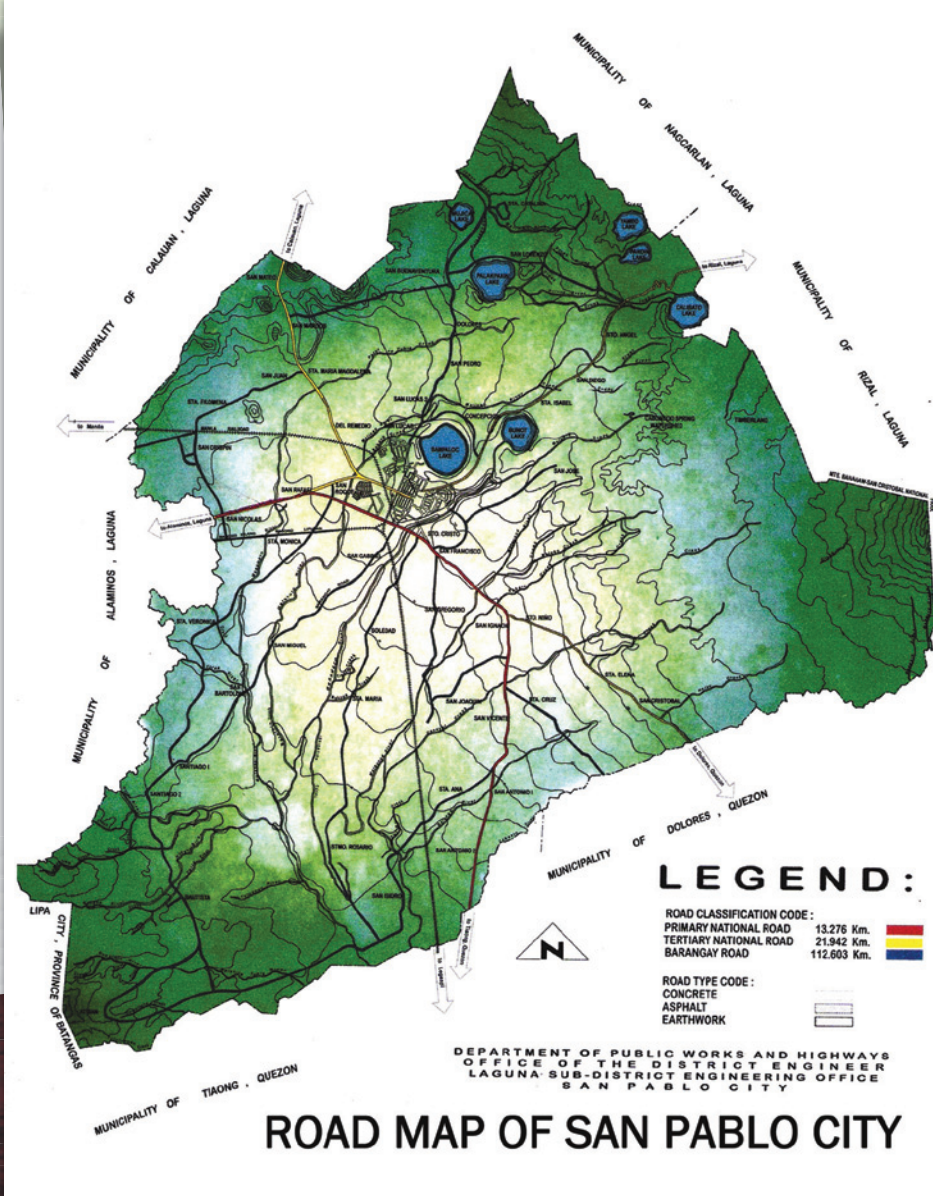
So I went again. And it was still gorgeous. The hammock-strewn lawn, the pine trees, the beautifully designed buildings and rooms. (You have to see it, boss. It's really, really beautiful.) I looked at all the rooms (gorgeous!), and decided to sleep over at Room No. 8, the one with the beautiful red bay windows. The next day I was supposed to check out, but decided to stay another day and sleep at Room 9 this time. (You told me to be thorough.)

There's something about this place, boss. Maybe we could have a workshop or a team-building activity here, so we could try out the main meeting hall and stay at the dorm-style casitas. You know, so we can say we tried all the facilities.

I am going to need more time to complete my review. There are hammocks I have not lain upon, rooms I have not tried, meals I have not eaten. Tonight I will stay over at Room 7. It has an alcove bed and a writing desk (I know! Perfect.) I hope you understand and extend my deadline. Also, thanks for the thesaurus; I'll use it so I won't have to use the same word over and over to describe something.

Manny

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The Good, The Bad, The Weird

I don't think we've ever left San Pablo City while it was still light outside. Even if we promise ourselves, *this will just be a quick day trip; we'll be back in Los Baños before dark*, we usually get back after nightfall. Whether it be just one more cup of coffee at Sulyap Gallery Café, or a bite of suman and some chitchat with Sir Mandy at Café Lago, we always find a reason to stay just a little bit longer.

Although sometimes we wish we were elsewhere. Having heard some good things about Café Soledad, we decided to have lunch there one day. The soup-of-the-day was more like *instant* soup-of-the-day. And no, not from a can, but powdered soup from a sachet mixed with water. The pastas we ordered were dry on top, as if they had been sitting out awhile. Maybe they were having an off day. We'll come back to check.



This sign always gets my goat. Is it a café for assassins? For anti-terrorists? For vigilantes? Sadly, we've never been brave enough to find out. If somebody out there knows the answer, please (*please!*) email me.

And then sometimes, even when we're not looking, we find unexpected things that make our San Pablo experiences truly extraordinary, like these kids sitting on a fence outside Rx Spa, or the way the light of the setting sun transforms Casa San Pablo from beautiful to simply magical. It's moments like these that make us say, *that was a day well spent*.



Team Alapaap: Aldo, Iyel and Cel at Casa San Pablo

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