

Lami kaayo!

Salamat!

Lugar lang!

CEBU · BOHOL · NEGROS ORIENTAL · SIQUIJOR

“Maayong buntag!”

Bisaya

Phrasebook

Everyday Cebuano for jeepneys, markets, carinderias and ferry ports, with simple pronunciation and a cut-out pocket card.

A little Bisaya goes a *long* way

Bisaya, more formally **Cebuano** or **Sinugbuanon**, is the everyday language of Cebu, Bohol, Negros Oriental and Siquijor, and much of Mindanao. Boholanos have their own accent and some words of their own, but you will be understood.

English is widely spoken, especially in cities and tourist areas. So the point of this guide isn't to get by without English. It's the smile you get when you say *salamat* to a tricycle driver or *lami kaayo* to the cook.

HOW TO READ "SOUNDS LIKE"

Say the syllables in **CAPITALS** a little louder: **sa-LA-mat**. Stress in Bisaya shifts from word to word and place to place, so treat the guide as a close approximation. Locals will understand you either way.

FIVE SOUNDS TO KNOW

- a** as in "father"

- i / e** as in "machine". The two often sound alike.

- o / u** as in "go" or "put". These blend too.

- ng** as in "singer", even at the start: *ngalan*

- a short catch in the breath: *kan-on, sud-an*

POLITE FORMS OF ADDRESS

- Nong** an older man (from *Manong*)

- Nang** an older woman (from *Manang*)

- Dong** a younger man or boy

- Day** a younger woman or girl (from *Inday*)

The Tagalog *po* isn't part of Bisaya. Here, respect comes from your tone and these forms of address. *Sir* and *Ma'am* are fine too.

*If you learn
only three*

Salamat

sa-LA-mat

Thank you

Lugar lang!

lu-GAR lang

Stop here, please

Tagpila ni?

tag-PI-la ni

How much is this?



Greetings & basics

A greeting goes a long way. People often answer in English, but they warm up quickly when you try.

BISAYA	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH
Maayong buntag	ma-AH-yong BUN-tag	Good morning
Maayong udto	ma-AH-yong UD-to	Good day (around noon)
Maayong hapon	ma-AH-yong HA-pon	Good afternoon
Maayong gabii	ma-AH-yong ga-BI-i	Good evening
Kumusta ka?	ku-MUS-ta ka	How are you?
Maayo ra ko, salamat.	ma-AH-yo ra ko, sa-LA-mat	I'm fine, thanks.
Daghang salamat	dag-HANG sa-LA-mat	Thank you very much
Walay sapayan	WA-lay sa-PA-yan	You're welcome
Palihug	pa-LI-hug	Please
Oo / Dili	OH-oh / DI-li	Yes / No
Pasayloa ko	pa-say-LO-a ko	I'm sorry
Agi lang	A-gi lang	Excuse me (passing through)
Taga-asa ka?	ta-ga-A-sa ka	Where are you from?
Amping!	AM-ping	Take care! (saying goodbye)

Try it out

YOU Maayong buntag, Nang!

VENDOR Maayong buntag! Taga-asa ka?

YOU Taga-Manila ko. Amping!

Good morning, ma'am! · Good morning! Where are you from? · I'm from Manila. Take care!



Getting around

Jeepneys, buses, tricycles and boats are where Bisaya helps most. Learn “Lugar lang” before anything else.

BISAYA	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH
Asa ang ...?	A-sa ang	Where is ...?
Asa ang pantalan?	A-sa ang pan-TA-lan	Where is the port?
Muagi ba ni sa ...?	mu-A-gi ba ni sa	Does this pass by ...?
Pila ang plete?	PI-la ang PLE-te	How much is the fare?
Lugar lang!	lu-GAR lang	Stop here, please! (on a jeepney)
Para!	PA-ra	Stop!
Diri lang.	DI-ri lang	Just here.
Layo pa ba?	LA-yo pa ba	Is it still far?
Duol ra ba?	du-OL ra ba	Is it close?
Tuo / Wala	tu-O / wa-LA	Right / Left
Diretso lang	di-RET-so lang	Straight ahead
Naa pa’y biyahe?	na-A pay bi-YA-he	Are there still trips?
Unsang orasa ang last trip?	un-SANG o-RA-sa	What time is the last trip?
Hinay-hinay lang, palihug.	HI-nay HI-nay lang	Slowly, please.

Try it out

YOU Nong, muagi ba ni sa Colon?

DRIVER Oo, sakay na.

YOU Lugar lang, Nong!

Sir, does this pass by Colon? · Yes, get on. · Stop here, please, sir!

Watch out: *wala* means “left”, but it also means “none” or “nothing”. Point when you say it.



Eating out

Carinderias, barbecue stalls and seafood grills are easier with a few words. Pair this chapter with the Food Passport.

BISAYA	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH
Gigutom ko.	gi-GU-tom ko	I'm hungry.
Giuhaw ko.	gi-U-haw ko	I'm thirsty.
Kaon ta!	ka-ON ta	Let's eat!
Unsay lami diri?	UN-say la-MI di-RI	What's good here?
Lami kaayo!	la-MI ka-A-yo	Really delicious!
Usa pa, palihug.	U-sa pa, pa-LI-hug	One more, please.
Tubig, palihug.	TU-big, pa-LI-hug	Water, please.
Kan-on	KAN-on	Cooked rice
Sud-an	SUD-an	The dish you eat with rice
Dili halang, palihug.	DI-li ha-LANG	Not spicy, please.
Busog na ko.	BU-sog na ko	I'm full.
Pila tanan?	PI-la ta-NAN	How much for everything?

Try it out

YOU

Unsay lami diri, Day?

SERVER

Ang sugba nga isda!

YOU

Sige, usa, ug duha ka puso.

What's good here, miss? · The grilled fish! · OK, one, and two puso.

On the menu

Sugba

grilled

Tuwa

soup or stew

Kilaw

raw, cured in vinegar

Puso

rice cooked in woven leaves



Shopping & bargaining

Bargaining is normal at markets and souvenir stalls, but not in malls or at food stalls. Keep it friendly and smile.

BISAYA	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH
Tagpila ni?	tag-PI-la ni	How much is this?
Mahal kaayo!	ma-HAL ka-A-yo	That's too expensive!
Pwede mahangyo?	PWE-de ma-HANG-yo	Can you give a discount?
Naa moy ...?	na-A moy	Do you have ...?
Wala na.	wa-LA na	None left. / Sold out.
Tan-aw lang ko.	TAN-aw lang ko	Just looking.
Kuhaon nako ni.	ku-HA-on na-KO ni	I'll take this.
Gamay / Dako	ga-MAY / da-KO	Small / Big
Barato	ba-RA-to	Cheap
Sukli	suk-LI	Change (money back)
Pasalubong	pa-sa-LU-bong	Gifts you bring home

Try it out

YOU Tagpila ni, Nang?

VENDOR Singkwenta.

YOU Pwede mahangyo?

VENDOR Sige, kwarenta na lang.

How much is this, ma'am? · Fifty. · Can you give a discount? · OK, just forty then.



Numbers, money & time

Bisaya has two sets of numbers. People use the native ones for counting things, and the Spanish-derived ones for prices and telling the time.

	COUNTING	PRICES & TIME
1	usa	uno
2	duha	dos
3	tulo	tres
4	upat	kwatro
5	lima	singko
6	unom	sais
7	pito	siyete
8	walo	otso
9	siyam	nuwebe
10	napulo	diyes

BIGGER AMOUNTS

20	beinte	30	traynta
40	kwarenta	50	singkwenta
100	siyento	1,000	mil

So ₱50 is *singkwenta*, and ₱150 is *siyento singkwenta*. Many vendors just say prices in English.

TELLING THE TIME

Unsa nang orasa?	What time is it?
Alas otso sa buntag	8 in the morning
Alas tres sa hapon	3 in the afternoon
Alas siyete sa gabii	7 in the evening

Karon
now / today

Unya
later

Ugma
tomorrow

Gahapon
yesterday

Buntag
morning

Gabii
night

Prices I was quoted practise the numbers out loud



Help, health & weather

These are the phrases you hope not to need, plus the ones that matter when the sea turns rough and boats stop running.

BISAYA	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH
Tabang!	ta-BANG	Help!
Nawala ko.	na-WA-la ko	I'm lost.
Wala ko kasabot.	wa-LA ko ka-SA-bot	I don't understand.
Kabalo ka mo-English?	ka-BA-lo ka mo-ING-lish	Do you speak English?
Asa ang CR?	A-sa ang see-AR	Where's the toilet?
Kinahanglan ko ug doktor.	ki-na-HANG-lan ko ug DOK-tor	I need a doctor.
Asa ang botika?	A-sa ang bo-TI-ka	Where's the pharmacy?
Init kaayo!	i-NIT ka-A-yo	It's so hot!
Ulan / Bagyo	U-lan / BAG-yo	Rain / Typhoon
Dako ang balod.	da-KO ang BA-lod	The waves are big.
Naa ba'y biyahe karon?	na-A bay bi-YA-he ka-RON	Is there a trip today?
Kanselado ang biyahe.	kan-se-LA-do	The trip is cancelled.

Try it out

YOU

Naa ba'y biyahe karon?

PORT STAFF

Wala, dako ang balod.

YOU

Ugma?

PORT STAFF

Basin. Balik lang ugma.

Is there a trip today? · No, the waves are big. · Tomorrow? · Maybe. Just come back tomorrow.



Words you'll hear

You may not say these yourself, but you will hear them at every stall and terminal. Recognising them makes conversations easier to follow.

Sige

OK / go ahead / bye. You'll hear it all day.

Lagi!

Of course! / Exactly!

Ambot

I don't know (sometimes: who cares)

Unsa man?

What is it?

Bai

Buddy, mate (casual, between friends)

Kapoy

Tired

Ganahan ko

I like it

**Gwapa /
Gwapo**

Pretty / handsome, often a friendly way to call you over

Ingna lang ko

Just tell me

Basin

Maybe

SIGNS YOU'LL SEE**AYAW PAGLABAY UG BASURA**

Don't throw rubbish here

HINAY-HINAY LANG

Slow down

BAWAL MANIGARILYO

No smoking

AYAW PAG-IHI DIRI

Don't urinate here

Words I heard and what I think they meant

Your pocket card

Print this page, cut along the dashed line and fold it in half. Sixteen phrases cover most of a weekend away.



Bisaya *pocket card*

Maayong buntag Good morning

Salamat Thank you

Palihug Please

Oo / Dili Yes / No

Tagpila ni? How much is this?

Pwede mahangyo? Discount, please?

Lugar lang! Stop here!

Pila ang plete? How much is the fare?

Asa ang ...? Where is ...?

Asa ang CR? Where's the toilet?

Lami kaayo! Delicious!

Dili halang Not spicy

Naa pa'y biyahe? Any trips left?

Wala ko kasabot I don't understand

Tabang! Help!

Amping! Take care!

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PRACTISE OUT LOUD

Try saying a full exchange before your trip: *"Maayong hapon, Nong! Pila ang plete padulong sa pantalan?"*, which means "Good afternoon, sir! How much is the fare to the port?"



FROM CEBU, WITH SALAMAT

Ren Calago

Ren Calago Blog covers Cebu, Dumaguete, Negros Oriental and the islands around them, with practical guides to routes, budgets, food and the places past the usual tourist stops.

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