

# Claveria, Cagayan: Discovering the Coastal Paradise of the North

## A report by Shella`s Ecovillage - April 2025

### I. Introduction: Unveiling Claveria, Cagayan – The Coastal Paradise of the North

Nestled in the far reaches of Northern Luzon, where the mountains meet the sea, lies a destination whispered about by travelers seeking authenticity and natural splendor. Often initially misidentified due to its proximity to the Cordilleran highlands, the place in question is not "Claveria Apayao," but the distinct and captivating municipality of **Claveria, Cagayan**.<sup>1</sup> This clarification is crucial, setting the stage for exploring a town that, while bordering the mountainous province of Apayao<sup>2</sup>, carves its own unique identity along the shores of the Babuyan Channel.<sup>4</sup>

Claveria proudly bears the moniker the "**Coastal Paradise of the North**"<sup>5</sup>, a title that hints at its stunning seascapes, pristine beaches, and the tranquil rhythm of life by the water. Located in the northwestern portion of Cagayan province, it sits approximately 185 kilometers from the provincial capital of Tuguegarao City and over 600 kilometers from the bustling metropolis of Manila.<sup>6</sup> Its geographical position is pivotal, not merely coastal but also serving as a crucial link to the adjacent interior province.

#### Geographical Context: Claveria's Connection to Apayao

Claveria's relationship with Apayao is one of immediate proximity and historical interaction. The municipality shares a border with Calanasan, the northwesternmost municipality of Apayao province.<sup>2</sup> This direct adjacency makes Claveria a natural point of passage, earning it the description of a "**Gateway to Apayao**".<sup>5</sup> This role suggests more than just a shared boundary; it implies a functional connection for travel, trade, and cultural exchange between the coastal plains of Cagayan and the rugged Cordilleran landscapes of Apayao.

This gateway status has deep historical roots. During the 18th century, the Spanish colonial administration recognized the strategic value of Claveria's location (then known as Cabicungan). They established a military garrison there, not only to guard the vital mountain route connecting to the Ilocos region but also specifically to launch expeditions against the unconquered Isneg tribes residing in the Apayao highlands.<sup>1</sup>

This historical function, though rooted in conflict and control, firmly establishes Claveria's long-standing role as a frontier settlement, a point of interaction and projection towards Apayao. Its identity, therefore, is intrinsically linked to this position – a coastal town looking out towards the sea, yet simultaneously acting as a threshold to the mountainous interior. Understanding this dual nature is key to appreciating Claveria's unique character and development.

This report aims to delve deeper into the essence of Claveria, Cagayan. It will journey through its historical evolution, uncover the enduring local legends whispered on the sea breeze, explore its soundscape, showcase its natural and cultural attractions, illuminate the life of its community, and ultimately understand why this coastal paradise holds such a cherished place in the hearts of locals and visitors alike.

## II. Echoes of the Past: The Shaping of Claveria

Claveria's story is etched by waves, migrations, and the ambitions of empires. Its journey from a nascent mission settlement to a recognized municipality reflects the broader currents of Philippine history, shaped by faith, resilience, and the ever-present influence of the sea.

### From Mission to Municipality: The Genesis of Claveria

The earliest documented roots of Claveria reach back to the Spanish colonial era. On April 17, 1633, it was officially established as a Spanish mission named **Cabicungan**.<sup>1</sup> The name itself likely derived from the Cabicungan River that winds through the area.<sup>1</sup> An alternative origin story suggests the name evolved from "Kabakungan," meaning "where the bakungs are," referring to lilies or fishes found abundantly near the river where the first settlers established their community.<sup>5</sup>

For centuries, Cabicungan remained a mission outpost. Its elevation to a civil town occurred much later, marking a significant step in its administrative identity. Sources indicate this happened on March 9, 1865<sup>1</sup>, although another account specifies that Kabikungan officially became a town (pueblo) on June 5, 1865, following a decree granted after residents petitioned the Governor General.<sup>6</sup> This petition highlighted the need for a separate municipality from the mother town of Pamplona, citing the considerable distance and the desire to provide a better resting place for travelers journeying between Ilocos and Cagayan.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the precise date, the 19th century brought a pivotal change: the renaming of the town to **Claveria**. This was done in honor of the incumbent Spanish Governor-General, **Narciso Clavería y Zaldúa**.<sup>1</sup> Several factors contributed to this dedication. Governor Clavería had undertaken a significant trip throughout the Cagayan Valley in 1846 to understand and address the region's challenges.<sup>5</sup> More crucially, his leadership resulted in successful campaigns against marauding pirates that plagued the coastal communities, a feat achieved around 1848 which earned him the "Grand Cross of San Fernando" from the Queen of Spain.<sup>5</sup> His visit to Cabicungan, coupled with the perceived benefits of his humanitarian policies and his success in bringing greater security to the region, led the grateful residents to adopt his name for their newly established town.<sup>6</sup>

## The Ilocano Imprint: Early Settlers and Cultural Foundations

The cultural fabric of Claveria owes much to its founding populations. Historical accounts consistently trace the town's origins to **migrants from the province of Ilocos Norte**, specifically from the towns of Pasuquin and Vintar.<sup>5</sup> These early settlers, predominantly Ilocanos, brought with them not only their language – which remains a primary language in Claveria today <sup>1</sup> – but also their distinct cultural traits.

They were known for being **industrious, frugal, and deeply religious**.<sup>6</sup> These characteristics undoubtedly shaped the community's ethos, fostering a strong work ethic and a foundation of faith that influenced Claveria's development. An early point of discussion within the nascent community reveals the interplay between livelihood and faith: many settlers, being fishermen, desired to move closer to the seashore for easier access to their fishing grounds. However, Spanish missionaries initially resisted this move, prioritizing the established stone church as the center of community life and faith.<sup>6</sup> This detail offers a glimpse into the early dynamics between the settlers' practical needs and the influence of the colonial religious authorities.

## Trials by the Sea: Pirate Raids and Spanish Fortifications

Life on the coast, while offering sustenance through fishing, also presented significant dangers. Claveria's early history was marked by the terrifying threat of **marauding pirates, identified as "Tirongs,"** who periodically descended upon the settlement. These raids involved plunder, the burning of homes, and other forms of violent attack.<sup>6</sup> This persistent insecurity was not merely an inconvenience; it was a major catalyst that shaped the community's trajectory and its relationship with the Spanish administration.

The constant threat spurred the Spanish officials to take defensive measures. A **military fort or garrison was established in Cabcungan** to counter the pirate menace.<sup>1</sup> This fortification served a dual purpose: protecting the local inhabitants and safeguarding travelers who journeyed along the coast by land or sea.<sup>6</sup> As mentioned earlier, by the 18th century, this garrison also played a strategic role in guarding the route to Ilocos and projecting Spanish power towards the Apayao highlands.<sup>1</sup> A church was also reconstructed in Nagsimbaanan (now Ponton) to serve the spiritual needs of the Christian community amidst these turbulent times.<sup>6</sup>

The period of vulnerability to pirate attacks ultimately reinforced the community's desire for stability and stronger governance, leading to the petition for township status. Governor Clavería's subsequent success in suppressing these raids around 1848 <sup>5</sup> was thus deeply appreciated, directly contributing to the decision to name the town in his honor. The very geography that offered the promise of livelihood through fishing also exposed the settlers to peril. Navigating this inherent tension between coastal opportunity and coastal threat was

fundamental to Claveria's origins, driving community consolidation and fostering a reliance on colonial authority for security, ultimately paving the way for its formal establishment.

### III. Whispers on the Wind: The Enduring Legends of Claveria

Claveria's dramatic coastline is not just a landscape of physical beauty; it is imbued with stories, legends passed down through generations that explain the origins of its most striking features and impart timeless moral lessons. Central to this folklore are the imposing rock formations that stand sentinel over the waters.

#### The Tale of Lakay-Lakay and Baket-Baket: Guardians of the Coast

The most prominent legend revolves around the twin rock formations situated near Taggat Lagoon.<sup>12</sup> These are known affectionately in the local Ilocano dialect as **Apo Lakay-lakay (Venerable Old Man or Husband) and Apo Baket-baket (Venerable Old Woman or Wife)**.<sup>12</sup> The story, though varying slightly in details across different tellings, carries a consistent core narrative.

It begins with a couple who attained great wealth through fishing but allowed their prosperity to breed greed and selfishness.<sup>12</sup> One day, they were approached by a figure in need – sometimes described as a single starving old beggar<sup>14</sup>, an elderly couple<sup>12</sup>, or an old man and an old woman separately<sup>16</sup> – asking for a share of their abundant catch. Blinded by avarice, the couple refused, laughing off or angrily rejecting the plea for help.<sup>12</sup>

This act of profound uncharitableness brought dire consequences. As a punishment, sometimes explicitly attributed to an angered sea god<sup>14</sup>, their most precious possession, their only young son, was tragically turned into stone.<sup>12</sup> Discovering their loss, the couple was consumed by grief and anguish. In their despair, or perhaps before they even had a chance to repent, they too were transformed into the massive rocks that now bear their names, forever fixed in the landscape.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Stone Child: Ubung-Ubung of Sentinela Cove

The legend extends beyond the couple. A third rock formation, known as **Ubung-ubung (Child)**, is located some distance away, typically associated with the eastern coast or Sentinela Beach/Cove.<sup>12</sup> This solitary rock represents the couple's beloved son, the innocent victim of their transgression, turned to stone as part of the curse.<sup>12</sup> Some interpretations depict Apo Ubung-ubung as standing patiently, forever waiting for his parents' return across the waves.<sup>15</sup>

## Cultural Significance and Beliefs

These legends are far more than quaint folktales; they are deeply woven into the cultural consciousness of Claveria. The rock formations of Lakay-Lakay and Baket-Baket are widely considered **sacred** ground by the local community.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the narrative often evolves beyond mere punishment. The couple, once symbols of greed, are frequently described as having become **guardians of the fishing village**, their imposing forms now believed to protect the community and its fisherfolk from storms and the perils of the sea.<sup>14</sup> This suggests a transformation in the collective imagination, integrating the cautionary figures into a protective cosmology for the town.

The living relevance of the legend is evident in traditional practices. It is said that local fishermen, when needing to navigate near the sacred rocks, must make **offerings** – perhaps food floated on a piece of wood, or coins tossed into the water – to appease the spirits and ensure safe passage, lest their boats capsize or be dashed against the rocks.<sup>14</sup> This demonstrates a direct link between the folklore and the daily lives and precautions of those who depend on the sea.

Furthermore, local elders and residents often share cautionary tales, warning visitors to treat the area with respect. Stories circulate about tourists who, having failed to show proper reverence, allegedly suffered misfortunes, ranging from poisoning to even death.<sup>14</sup> Whether literal or metaphorical, these warnings underscore the profound respect and belief surrounding these natural landmarks.

Ultimately, the interconnected legend of Lakay-Lakay, Baket-Baket, and Ubing-Ubing serves as a powerful cultural anchor for Claveria. It embeds fundamental moral lessons about the dangers of greed and the importance of generosity directly into the physical environment. By associating these values with prominent, enduring natural features, the legend reinforces community ethics, provides a mythical explanation for the landscape, and continues to shape how locals interact with and perceive their coastal world – a world where nature is both provider and potent spiritual force.

## IV. The Sound of Claveria: Music, Anthems, and Regional Melodies

The soundscape of Claveria, like its culture, resonates with echoes of its heritage and its place within the broader region. While specific songs praising the town itself may not be widely documented in the available materials, music clearly plays a role in local identity and expression.

### The Claveria Hymn: An Official Song?

Evidence points to the existence of an official or recognized town anthem. YouTube videos bear the title "**Claveria Hymn (Ilocano Version)**" <sup>19</sup>, strongly suggesting a specific composition dedicated to the municipality. Further supporting this is a mention of "Logo & Hymn" under the organizational details of the Claveria Grassroots Multi-Purpose Cooperative on their website.<sup>20</sup> This implies that an official hymn, likely the Ilocano version referenced online, is recognized within the community, potentially used during flag ceremonies or other official functions.<sup>19</sup> However, beyond its title and language (Ilocano), specific details about the hymn's lyrics, composer, or precise context of its performance are not provided in the available sources.

### **Regional Rhythms: Ilocano Songs and Cagayan Pride**

Given Claveria's historical settlement by Ilocanos from Ilocos Norte <sup>6</sup>, it is unsurprising that **Ilocano music** features prominently in the cultural milieu. Numerous sources reference the popularity of Ilocano songs, often presented as medleys or non-stop playlists featuring old favorites and love songs.<sup>21</sup> Specific genres like "Balse" (waltz) are mentioned <sup>22</sup>, alongside titles appearing in medley tracklists like "Pamulinawen," "Biag ken Bileg," and "Sabong Ni Lirio".<sup>21</sup> The song "Sirarag-o Siraragsak" is also featured with lyrics against the backdrop of Sentinela Beach.<sup>25</sup> This prevalence indicates that Ilocano music forms a significant part of the everyday auditory environment and cultural expression in Claveria.

Beyond the town and its Ilocano roots, Claveria also shares in the identity of its province, Cagayan. This is represented musically by the **Cagayan Provincial Hymn**, also known as the "Cagayan Song".<sup>27</sup> Penned by Dr. John Henry Manning Butler, an American educator who arrived in the Philippines in 1902, this anthem holds considerable significance throughout the province. It is reportedly sung regularly in schools, seminars, and various civic and religious gatherings by Cagayanos.<sup>27</sup> Recognizing its importance across the diverse linguistic landscape of the province, the hymn has been translated into Ilocano and Ybanag, in addition to the original English.<sup>27</sup> Its lyrics evoke affection for the Cagayan valley ("smiling land of beauty," "dabbun nga cacastan niacan" - land dear to me).<sup>27</sup> While not exclusive to Claveria, this provincial anthem connects the town to the larger regional identity.

### **Music in Context**

The available information suggests that music in Claveria often serves as an accompaniment to the visual experience of the place. Many online videos pair Ilocano song medleys with footage of road trips through the area, showcasing the scenic drives, beaches like Sentinela, and sunsets over the landscape.<sup>21</sup> This pairing creates a strong association between the regional music and the atmosphere of Claveria – evoking feelings of nostalgia, romance, or the simple pleasure of travel through the province.

Therefore, while a specific town hymn exists, the most readily apparent musical identity reflected in the sources is deeply connected to Claveria's **Ilocano cultural heritage** and its belonging within the **province of Cagayan**. Rather than a large body of songs explicitly composed to praise Claveria's specific landmarks or people, music primarily functions as a cultural backdrop, an expression of regional identity, and an enhancement of the town's evocative atmosphere.

## V. Exploring Claveria's Treasures: A Coastal Paradise Beckons

Claveria's allure as the "Coastal Paradise of the North" is anchored in its wealth of natural attractions. From secluded coves and dramatic rock formations to refreshing waterfalls and culturally significant eco-parks, the municipality offers a diverse tapestry of experiences for visitors.

### Beaches, Coves, and Lagoons: Jewels of the Coastline

The shoreline of Claveria is dotted with captivating spots where land meets the azure waters of the Babuyan Channel.

- **Sentinela Beach/Cove:** For those seeking tranquility away from crowds, Sentinela Beach offers a perfect escape.<sup>13</sup> Characterized by its fine sand framed by impressive rock formations, it exudes a "rugged beauty vibe".<sup>13</sup> The cove is ideal for swimming in cool waters, enjoying spectacular sunsets, and finding a sense of peace amidst the sound of waves crashing against the rocks.<sup>13</sup> Its natural scenery is frequently noted <sup>28</sup>, and it holds legendary significance as the location of the Ubing-Ubing rock formation.<sup>14</sup>
- **Claveria Cove / Boulevard:** This broader area encompasses the famous Taggat Lagoon and the legendary Lakay-Lakay rock formations.<sup>12</sup> Driving along the

Claveria Boulevard is itself highlighted as a pleasant activity, offering scenic coastal views.<sup>7</sup>

- **Taggat Lagoon:** More than just a picturesque spot, Taggat Lagoon serves a practical purpose as a natural sanctuary, shielding moored fishing boats from the force of large waves and typhoons.<sup>13</sup> It's a favored swimming destination, particularly for children, as the surrounding natural rock barriers create a calmer, basin-like enclosure.<sup>17</sup> A vibrant fisherfolk community resides along the coast of this cove <sup>13</sup>, and adventurous visitors can engage in rock climbing to gain elevated perspectives of the lagoon and the surrounding cove.<sup>13</sup>
- **Blue Lagoon:** While technically located in the neighboring municipality of Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte <sup>14</sup>, Blue Lagoon is often included in Claveria itineraries due to its proximity (approx. 25 km away <sup>28</sup>) and fame. Described as a beautiful beach <sup>14</sup>, it also serves as a departure point for passenger boats, including those heading to the Calayan islands.<sup>14</sup>
- **Other Beaches:** Claveria's coastline offers other stretches of sand, including the white sand coasts associated with Claveria Beach Resort <sup>18</sup>, the serene **Manong R** beach with its fine



golden sand (though noted for having few amenities <sup>28</sup>), and the beach accessible from **El Dia Beach Resthouse**.<sup>28</sup>

## Iconic Landmarks and Natural Wonders

Beyond the beaches, Claveria and its immediate vicinity boast several remarkable natural and man-made landmarks.

- **Lakay-Lakay & Baket-Baket Rock Formations:** These twin geological marvels are arguably Claveria's most iconic symbols. Their visual dominance and the compelling legend associated with them make them a focal point of the coastline.<sup>12</sup> They stand as natural monuments, shaped by time and tide, regarded locally as sentinels of the fisherfolk.<sup>17</sup>
- **Pata Lighthouse:** Perched atop a hill at the northeastern edge of Claveria, near the boundary river separating it from Sanchez Mira, the Pata Lighthouse offers panoramic views.<sup>13</sup> Standing 20 meters above sea level, this historic structure <sup>28</sup> is accessible via a 200-meter uphill trek from the road's end.<sup>13</sup>
- **Waterfalls:** The municipality is blessed with refreshing waterfalls. **Macatel Falls** is noted for its crystal-clear waters that flow abundantly throughout the year.<sup>18</sup> **Portabaga Falls** (likely the same as Porta Baga Falls mentioned elsewhere) offers cold waters originating from mountain springs.<sup>18</sup> Nearby attractions include **Kabigan Falls** (approx. 15 miles away), reached via a scenic trek.<sup>32</sup>
- **Caves:** Cave explorers can find interest in the **Camalaggaon Caves**, associated with rocky formations within Claveria.<sup>18</sup> In nearby Pagudpud, the **Bantay Abot Cave** presents gorgeous rock formations popular for photo opportunities.<sup>28</sup>
- **Claveria View Deck:** A designated viewpoint, the Claveria View Deck provides travelers with stunning vistas overlooking the landscape. It may also feature amenities such as a souvenir shop or restaurant, making it a convenient and rewarding stop.<sup>28</sup>

## Eco-Tourism and Cultural Hubs

Claveria is also developing sites that blend natural beauty with cultural experiences.

- **Sta. Maria Eco-Tourism Park:** This initiative represents a conscious effort to interlace culture and heritage with the natural environment, centered around the Cabicungan River.<sup>13</sup> Known also as the Sta. Maria Culture-Based Rural Tourism (SM CBRT) project, it facilitates cultural exchange and highlights Marian Devotion.<sup>13</sup> The park has become a popular pit stop for motorcycle riders and bikers, as well as a favored venue for local gatherings like reunions, picnics, and celebrations.<sup>13</sup> It offers a valuable opportunity for visitors to commune with locals and learn about their way of life.<sup>7</sup>
- **Other Potential Sites:** The region offers broader opportunities for immersing in nature, including hiking through lush trails with coastal views <sup>30</sup>, enjoying scenic rice fields <sup>34</sup>,



exploring rivers and valleys <sup>34</sup>, bird watching <sup>8</sup>, and potentially visiting the Agamatan National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary located in the adjacent municipality of Calanasan, Apayao.<sup>35</sup>

**Table: Key Attractions in and near Claveria, Cagayan**

To provide a clear overview, the following table summarizes the main points of interest:

Attraction Name	Type	Brief Description	Location	Relevant Sources
Lakay-Lakay & Baket-Baket Rocks	Natural Landmark, Legend	Iconic twin rock formations, subject of local legend, considered sacred guardians	Claveria (Taggat)	12
Taggat Lagoon	Lagoon, Swimming Area	Natural harbor, calm swimming area protected by rocks, fisherfolk community	Claveria (Taggat)	12
Sentinela Beach/Cove	Beach, Cove	Fine sand, rock formations, "rugged beauty," less crowded, site of Ubing-ubing rock	Claveria	13

Pata Lighthouse	Landmark, Historic	Lighthouse on a hill near Sanchez Mira border, accessible via hike	Claveria (Pata)	13
Sta. Maria Eco-Tourism Park	Eco-Park, Cultural Site	Culture/heritage project on Cabicungan River, popular stop, local interaction	Claveria	7
Macatel / Portabaga Falls	Waterfall	Natural waterfalls with flowing crystal/cold waters	Claveria	18
Claveria View Deck	Viewpoint	Offers panoramic views, potential amenities	Claveria	28
Blue Lagoon	Beach	Famous beach in nearby Pagudpud, often visited from	Pagudpud	14
		Claveria		
Patapat Viaduct	Landmark	Scenic coastal bridge near Claveria	Pagudpud	28
Bantay Abot Cave	Cave, Natural Landmark	Cave with rock formations near Claveria	Pagudpud	28

This diverse range of attractions underscores Claveria's appeal, offering something for legend enthusiasts, beach lovers, nature trekkers, and those seeking cultural immersion.

## **VI. The Heartbeat of Claveria: Community, Culture, and Coastal Lifestyle**

Beyond the scenic vistas and legendary landmarks, the true essence of Claveria resides in its people, their way of life, and the community spirit that shapes this coastal town. Life here unfolds at a different pace, deeply connected to the rhythms of the sea and rooted in a rich cultural heritage.

### **Life by the Babuyan Channel**

Claveria is fundamentally defined by its relationship with the sea.<sup>1</sup> Fishing is not just an industry but a cornerstone of the local identity and economy, a tradition brought by the earliest settlers<sup>6</sup> and sustained by generations of fisherfolk who live along its coves.<sup>13</sup> The town's importance extends beyond its own needs; it is recognized as a **Regional Fish Supplier**<sup>5</sup>, highlighting the bounty of its marine resources and its role in the wider Cagayan Valley economy. The development of the **Claveria Sea Port** is anticipated to further enhance this maritime connection, potentially boosting trade and economic opportunities for the municipality.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ilocano Roots and Local Character**

The enduring influence of the town's **Ilocano heritage**<sup>6</sup> is palpable. The cultural traits associated with the early migrants from Pasuquin and Vintar – **industriousness, frugality, and religiousness**<sup>6</sup> – are often cited as characteristic of the local population. This heritage contributes to a community known for its resilience and strong values.

Perhaps one of the most frequently noted characteristics is the **hospitality** of the Claveria people. This warmth and welcoming nature are mentioned in historical accounts praising the town<sup>6</sup> and echoed in contemporary visitor experiences. Anecdotes, such as a helpful van driver familiar with local families<sup>14</sup> or the kindness of a host family<sup>14</sup>, paint a picture of a community where visitors feel readily accepted. Locals are described as approachable<sup>17</sup>, contributing to the town's inviting atmosphere.

Overall, Claveria projects an image of a **modest, peaceful, and quiet town**.<sup>14</sup> It offers a sense of solitude and retreat from the frantic pace of urban life.<sup>17</sup> The lifestyle is often described as simple, uncomplicated, and unfussy<sup>17</sup>, where the natural world – the waterfalls, the beach – feels intimately accessible.<sup>17</sup>

## Commitment to Environment and Community

Claveria's designation as a "Coastal Paradise" appears to be more than just a marketing slogan; it reflects a genuine commitment within the community to preserve its natural assets. The town has garnered recognition for its **cleanliness**, having potentially received awards such as being a National Winner for "Malinis at Masaganang Karagatan" (Clean and Bountiful Ocean) <sup>5</sup> or being adjudged one of the "Cleanest and Greenest" towns in past evaluations.<sup>8</sup> This reputation is backed by tangible efforts in environmental governance and community action.

The municipality demonstrates a **strong stance against illegal fishing**, recognizing the importance of sustaining the resources of the Babuyan Channel, a prime regional fishing ground.<sup>8</sup> This includes enacting specific fisheries ordinances, such as imposing closed seasons for catching 'ipon' (Goby fry) and regulating the harvest of barnacles and shrimps, as well as the operation of fish aggregating devices ('payao').<sup>8</sup> Mechanisms for fisherfolk and boat registration were reportedly in place even before national programs mandated them.<sup>8</sup>

Waste management is another area of focus. Claveria has developed an Ecological Solid Waste Management Plan (ESWM) and implemented relevant legislation like anti-littering laws and a "no segregation, no collection" policy.<sup>8</sup> Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) are established in the barangays, complementing a central waste processing facility.<sup>8</sup> High levels of household sanitation, with nearly all homes having sanitary toilets (and the local government providing for those without), further contribute to public health and environmental cleanliness.<sup>8</sup>

Conservation efforts extend to terrestrial ecosystems as well, with regular **tree planting activities** conducted in upland areas in collaboration with government agencies, planting hundreds of thousands of seedlings of various species which can also serve as a source of livelihood.<sup>8</sup>

Crucially, these efforts involve community participation. The Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council (MFARMC), composed of local stakeholders, actively assists in implementing fisheries laws and programs.<sup>8</sup> Initiatives like the institutionalized search for a model Barangay encourage broader participation in clean and green programs.<sup>18</sup> This collective effort suggests that Claveria's identity as a "paradise" is not passively inherited but actively constructed and maintained. It is the result of deliberate choices and actions by local leadership and the community to manage resources responsibly, protect the environment, and preserve the very qualities that make Claveria special.

## VII. Voices of Affection: Why Claveria is Cherished

What is it about Claveria that captures the hearts of its residents and leaves a lasting impression on visitors? The affection for this coastal town stems from a compelling blend of its natural endowments, the character of its community, and the unique quality of life it offers.

### Appreciation for Natural Beauty and Serenity

Overwhelmingly, Claveria is cherished for its stunning **natural environment**. Descriptions abound of its clear blue waters, impeccable beaches stretching along the coast, lush forests covering the hillsides, and the picturesque backdrop of the Cordillera mountains.<sup>8</sup> Travelers recount being captivated by breathtaking views<sup>28</sup> and the dramatic beauty of sunsets painting the sky over rice fields during the journey there.<sup>14</sup> The Cagayan Provincial Hymn itself refers to the region as a "smiling land of beauty"<sup>27</sup>, an sentiment easily applied to Claveria's specific charms.

Beyond the visual spectacle, Claveria offers a profound sense of **peace and tranquility**. It is lauded as a place to find solitude<sup>17</sup>, described as quiet and serene<sup>14</sup> – a perfect antidote to the noise and stress of the "tiring metropolis".<sup>17</sup> Visitors find it an ideal location to unwind, relax<sup>30</sup>, and escape the pressures of modern life. Some even suggest it as a suitable place for retirement or a long-term retreat.<sup>17</sup> Personal accounts reflect this allure: travelers speak of realizing the town's beauty unexpectedly upon arrival<sup>39</sup>, feeling captivated by its daytime charm<sup>14</sup>, or simply enjoying the fresh, cool, unpolluted air.<sup>17</sup> Its romantic ambiance is even noted, calling it a "Perfect Place for Lovers!".<sup>41</sup>

### Local Pride and Hospitality

A strong sense of **local pride** permeates descriptions of Claveria. Official narratives boast of its "exquisite beauty" being an "object of praise and admiration from near and far," attracting visitors who leave satisfied with its progress and the warmth of its people.<sup>6</sup> This pride is echoed in the comments of those with personal ties to the town, proclaiming "Mabuhay Claveria... The place where i was born&grew up. Proud to be full blooded Claveriano"<sup>26</sup>, or fondly identifying it as their hometown or birthplace.<sup>14</sup>

This pride is complemented by the renowned **hospitality** of the Claverianos. The welcoming nature of the locals<sup>17</sup> is a recurring theme, exemplified by stories of helpful drivers and gracious host families.<sup>14</sup> This contributes significantly to the positive experience of visitors, making them feel not just like tourists, but welcomed guests.

### The Allure of the Simple, Authentic Life

Claveria also appeals to a desire for a more **simple, authentic, and grounded way of life**.<sup>17</sup> The ease with which one can access nature – the beach and waterfalls being "just there

somewhere" <sup>17</sup> – contrasts sharply with the complexities of urban living. Visitors appreciate the opportunity to **"immerse in rural life"** <sup>34</sup>, witness scenic rice fields <sup>34</sup>, experience the local Ilocano-influenced culture <sup>7</sup>, and reconnect with both the natural world and the local community.<sup>34</sup>

Enjoying **local food**, particularly the abundance of fresh seafood harvested from the surrounding waters <sup>7</sup>, is another integral part of the Claveria experience. This connection to local produce and traditional ways ("a very Ilocano approach in living life" <sup>17</sup>) adds to the feeling of authenticity.

In essence, Claveria's cherished status arises not from a single attribute, but from a powerful synergy. It is the combination of its breathtaking natural setting, the visible results of community dedication to cleanliness and environmental preservation, the genuine warmth embedded in its Ilocano-influenced culture, and the pervasive atmosphere of peace that offers a genuine escape. It is this holistic appeal – nature, community action, culture, and tranquility working in concert – that defines Claveria's unique charm and draws deep affection from those who know it.

#### **VIII. Conclusion: Claveria's Enduring Charm – Where Coastline Meets Culture**

Claveria, Cagayan, emerges from this exploration not just as a point on a map, but as a place with a rich soul, shaped by history, legend, and the enduring spirit of its people. Its journey began centuries ago as the Spanish mission of Cabicungan, a

frontier settlement defined by the opportunities and perils of the coast. Populated by industrious Ilocano migrants and tested by pirate raids, it evolved under Spanish rule, eventually taking the name of a Governor-General credited with bringing security to its shores.<sup>1</sup>

Today, Claveria embodies its title as the "Coastal Paradise of the North".<sup>5</sup> Its identity is a captivating blend of elements: the stunning physical beauty of its coastline, marked by serene beaches like Sentinela, the protective embrace of Taggat Lagoon, and the dramatic, legend-laden rock formations of Lakay-Lakay and Baket-Baket.<sup>12</sup> It is a place where folklore lives on, embedding moral lessons and a sense of the sacred within the landscape itself.<sup>14</sup>

Its heart beats with a resilient community spirit, rooted in Ilocano heritage and known for its hospitality and quiet strength.<sup>6</sup> This spirit is manifest in a tangible commitment to preserving the environment that sustains it, evident in recognized cleanliness, robust waste management systems, and dedicated efforts towards sustainable fishing practices.<sup>5</sup> Claveria's paradise is not accidental; it is actively nurtured.

Ultimately, Claveria's enduring charm lies in this unique confluence. It offers visitors more than just picturesque scenery; it provides a connection to a living history, a vibrant local culture, and a cherished way of life defined by tranquility and a deep respect for the natural world. It is a place where the rhythm of the waves meets the warmth of the community, truly earning its reputation as a coastal haven where culture and coastline converge.

We hope you enjoy your stay,

Peter and Shella.

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