Care for an Adventure?
Ride a Habal-habal!

Are you kidding? Me, ride a habal-habal. I just can't imagine myself riding one of the popular way to get around in the land the Philippines.

You see, I am not your adventurous kind of person. I get scared of heights. I get scared of the deep waters (okay, I don’t swim) and I never learned how to ride a bike either. So it doesn’t come as a surprise that riding a motorcycle doesn’t appeal to me.

I remember when my husband took me for a ride on his motorcycle. Mind you it was a Kawasaki 900 (yes, that was long time ago they don’t make those bikes anymore). He insisted it would be fun. Well it wasn’t. But if I were to pick between my husband’s motorcycle and the “habal-habal” there’s no ifs and buts about it, I would pick the Kawasaki 900.

Habal-habal...What On Earth Is That?

A single motorcycle modified using a plank here and a plank there to carry 3 – 4 passengers excluding the driver. The goal here is to extend its capability to carry additional passengers.

It is the popular means of transportation in the hinterlands where the jeepney, taxi and bus don’t dare go because of road conditions – unpaved, rocky, muddy, full of mud holes or just too narrow for a 4-wheel vehicle.

So, for the mountainous areas in Iligan, these modified motorcycles for hire come to the rescue! Yes, in this case it is preferred because there is no other choice.
But how do you seat 3 or 4?

Well, you sit very close to each other. One sits in front of the driver on top of the gas tank. Yes, on top of the gas tank and no, I’m not kidding. You have the view of the road right in front of you. And the worst part there is nothing for you to hold on to or to balance yourself with.

Surprisingly I don’t see the motorcycle riders clung to each other even with the speed the motorcycle is going on a rough terrain. Mind you habal-habal drivers rarely travel below full speed.

It’s Scary to Travel This Way, But What Option Do They Have?

A friend of mine told me she took a ride on one to visit her family - a mountainous village in Iligan. She had to endure an hour of bumpy ride. Or trek the rugged roads for hours. She said she couldn’t wait till the ride was over.

Picture her zooming across the trees beside the road trying to miss mud holes along the way. Getting off the habal-habal was all she could think of.

When you compare the fare to the jeepney, taxi or bus, the habal-habal isn’t cheap. These drivers charge a fixed rate. But in areas where this is the only means of transportation, it will come out cheap as your other option is to trudge kilometers and kilometers. It’s good if you’re not carrying anything.

...and now the Skylab...check this out!

To cater to the needs of passengers with cargos, the genius Juan de la Cruz invented what locals call the “skylab”. It is the same single motorcycle but with a plank of wood placed across its rear body to act as a baggage hold. Amazing, isn’t it?

Hmm...do you think it can hold a balikbayan box? Well I haven’t seen it yet, but it just might!

Ref.: http://www.iligantoday.com/habal-habal.html