



Thanks and acknowledgements:

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 Philippines Department of Tourism.
 We would like to thank and acknowledge all the products, services, hotels, resorts and tour companies for photographic use and the contributors to articles within this publication.

Our Note: We have tried to be a little different with this brochure, as not only have we included many facts about the Philippines, but also included a number of articles and opinions by people who know the Philippines or have enjoyed being there.
 Prices are all up to date at time of printing and can be viewed on a separate booklet by print and is downloadable.
 This brochure is also downloadable from Pack Ya Bags site.

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What you need to know



On Arrival

Ninoy Aquino Airport (Manila) has 4 terminals. Check which terminal you arrive and depart from. An airport shuttle between terminals departs every 15 minutes. Other international airports are in Cebu and Clark.

Take only official, metered or pre-booked taxis. Do not accept rides from people that approach you in the terminal. A Meet and Greet and transfer service is recommended on arrival.



Getting Around

Travel throughout the Philippines is easy. Flights are regular, and usually inexpensive and service all points in the Philippines. However, sometimes flights are not available between islands. Cebu and Bohol are an example. Fast ferries are often used with frequent services to and between the popular destinations. Long distance bus services are very good with both air and non air conditioned buses. This is a cheap mode of transport. Check with Pack Ya Bags.

Languages

There are two official languages, Filipino and English. Filipino which is based on Tagalog, is the national language. English is widely used throughout hotels and resorts. Be aware when travelling through lesser known areas that English is less spoken. When leaving your hotel or resort make sure you have a written description of where you are staying to give to the taxi or bus driver.

Currency

Currency is the Peso. Most large stores, restaurants, hotels and resorts accept major credit cards.



Useful Airport Codes

Angeles City, Clark	(CRK)
Bacolod	(BCD)
Baguio	(BAG)
Busuanga	(USUJ)
Cagayan De Oro	(CGY)
Camiguin	(CGM)
Caticlan, Boracay	(MPH)
Cebu	(CEB)
Coron	(XCN)
Davao	(DVO)
Dumaguete	(DGT)
Ei Nido	(ENI)
Iloilo	(ILO)
Kalibo	(KLO)
Legaspi	(LGP)
Manila	(MNL)
Puerto Princesa	(PPS)
Tablas	(TBH)
Tagbilaran, Bohol	(TAG)
Taytay	(RZP)



Philippines Airlines

PAL's vision to re-establish itself as one of Asia's premier carriers, is still the matter of greatest importance and by having full confidence in the New Zealand and Australian markets has created a superb hub to not only the Philippines but to many destinations around the world. With the renowned friendliness of the staff to look after you the airline looks forward to being part of your dreams.

This is worth a read



A bit about the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelago that consists of 7,641 islands, and is the third largest English speaking country in the world. With Asian, European, and American influences, the culture is diverse, as is the wonderful variety of food. The Filipinos had a rich culture and were trading with the Chinese and the Japanese prior to the Spanish colonization in 1521. In 1898, after 350 years, the Filipinos, with leaders like Jose Rizal and Emilio Aguinaldo, succeeded in winning their independence.



How to say it

Try using these very simple phrases:

- Hello = Mabuhay.
- Thank you = Salamat.
- Please = Paki
- Yes = Oo.
- No = Hindi.
- How are you? = Kamusta
- I. Me = Ako.
- You = Ikaw.
- Delicious. = Sarap
- Sorry, excuse me. = Paumanhin.
- Farewell. = Paalam.

Here are three phrases you may want to try. Actually translates to Beautiful Morning and so on.

- Good Morning = Magandang umaga.
 - Good Afternoon = Magandang hapon.
 - Good Evening = Magandang gabi
- The Filipino language is phonetic so don't be shy and give it a go.



Other ways of getting around

There are lots of fun ways to get around in the Philippines, such as with the famous Jeepneys and the tricycles. A very cheap public transport system throughout the Philippines, the Jeepneys were originally made from left over jeeps at the end of WWII and are decorated in the most fantastic colours and designs. The Tricycle can carry around 4 persons but you will sometimes see them with many more passengers. They are great fun and cheap.

Metro Manila



Metro Manila:

Manila is the main entry point to the Philippines. Manila is just one of 16 cities that make up Metro Manila and the city is busy, hectic, bustling and frenetic. The secret to staying in Manila is to decide what you want to do and determine your budget. If it is merely a stopover before flying on to another destination, opt for something close to the airport in Makati or Pasay city. If it is nightlife or shopping, then Manila, Makati and Pasay are fabulous. All styles and levels of accommodation is available. From cheap and cheerful budget and backpacker hostels, through apartments and boutique hotels, to ritzy and luxurious internationally branded hotels. Manila is an international city and has the range of accommodation to suit.

Things to do:

Besides the shopping, eating and nightlife, Manila has some excellent day and overnight touring to be enjoyed. The former US Naval facility at Subic Bay, trekking the Taal Volcano, 4x4 adventure on Mt Pinatubo,

Hidden Valley with its warm volcanic pools, Pagsanjan Falls in a dugout canoe, coconut plantation visit, historical architecture and sites from the Spanish, Asian and ancient Filipino, dinner cruising on Manila Bay, exploring Ocean Park, Manila Museum and the old Manila centre called Intramuros and lots, lots more.

And then there is the shopping, Mall of Asia, Glorietta, Aura Premier, Robinsons, Megamall, Greenhills, etc, etc, etc. This really is a city where you can shop 'til you drop.

Getting there:

Ninoy Aquino Airport (Manila) has 4 terminals. Check the arrival and departure terminals as, when transferring between airlines, a different terminal may be required. There are no cross airport shuttles if travelling with an airline other than Philippine Airlines or Emirates, so you are required to take a taxi to the other terminal. This may take considerable time. Queues for domestic flights can be long and slow during holiday season.

Pack Ya Bags has hotels throughout Manila and the Philippines. Many are handpicked by us so as to give you the most comfortable stay. Prices vary from the budget to the luxury.



Makati

Wow. We are staying in a lovely 4*, boutique hotel in Makati. The rooms are large with old polished floors, a HUGE bed, large shower and l'Occitane bathroom products. (my favourites) We are a 2 minute walk from Greenbelt where the shopping, dining and entertainment options are full on. Already I have wandered into the shopping complexes and been wowed by the sheer variety, volume and quality of what is available.

Its Xmas time and only in Manila can you find a Father Christmas lip synching and doing a public karaoke. Its a Tuesday night and the place is packed. I am just starting to realise what a huge, world class complex the Greenbelt area is. You name the international brand, and it is here. We dine in a little restaurant with outdoor and indoor areas and the food is delicious. Salmon cakes in a pea sauce for me and croque monsieur with chips for Ray.

A couple of San Miguel light beers followed by ice cream and a banoffe pie and we are ready for a wee lie down. Its been a hectic day and we have an 8.30 start in the morning. I am looking forward to my stay in Manila.

My credit card may not feel so enthusiastic, but there are so many options it is just going to have to toughen up.

We spent our last day shopping for gifts and manage to make a couple of great buys as well as having another fantastic meal. We are picked up with plenty of time to get to the airport. Again, while the skyway is quick and relatively empty, getting off to make the final distance to the airport is slow and crowded. There is a film festival starting today and they have a parade on Roxas Ave. We have plenty of time so we sit back and enjoy the "long carpark". I love the jeepneys with their furious colours,

Some of them are longer versions and I am treated to the sight of a whole heap of them, parked up with one getting an extra coat of colour via a paint roller.... Only in Manila! Makati has surpassed all my expectations.

Getting There:

Yellow taxis are available at Manila Airport and the price agreed prior to leaving. Cost should be around 500 pesos to get to Greenbelt. Meet and Greet services are more expensive but good value as they wait for you to arrive, take you where you need to be and will help with check in requirements.

Suggestion:

A night on arrival and one before departure may be needed for your flight scheduling. Don't be disappointed. Enjoy a little shopping, try a local Filipino restaurant, take a day tour through Old Manila or to Lake Taal. There is so much to do, you will wish you spent longer.



Historical North



Calling all trekkers, hikers and walkers. If you have not discovered the Philippines northern region then it's time you did. This is the mountainous region of Luzon and is home to the Ifugao people. This ancient tribal area was home to headhunters and they fiercely resisted Spanish colonisation. Their ancestors built extensive rice terraces by hand which are used and maintained to this day.

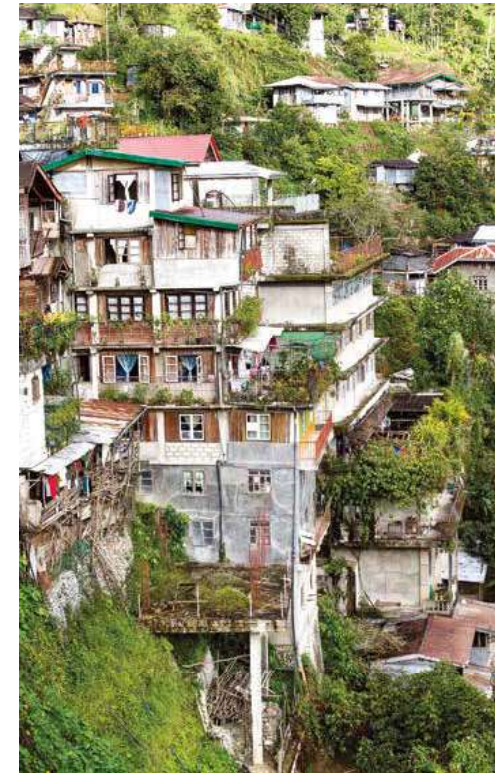
Trekking through this area is not along well worn trails but along the small paths and ridges between the rice terraces and through remote villages. The rice terraces stretch over mountainous areas, hundreds of meters high and are UNESCO World Heritage listed.

Staying in local guesthouses, visiting the hanging coffins around Sagada and viewing the amphitheatre styled terraces of Batad are truly memorable experiences.

Trekking through the rice terraces in the rainy season is not recommended as getting there from Manila may not be possible due to flooding, slips and storms. Many companies cease operations between July and October. Trekking between November and June is the good season while January to May is an adventure that all walkers should experience. It is suitable for all ages provided they have a reasonable level of fitness.

Travelling as a small group has definite financial advantages as departures for people travelling on their own are very limited.

A description of the north is not complete without mentioning Vigan. This is one of the few remaining 16th century Spanish towns in the Philippines. Cobble streets, colonial mansions, horse drawn carriages and carts are a fabulous backdrop to a fusion of Spanish, Filipino and Oriental cultures.



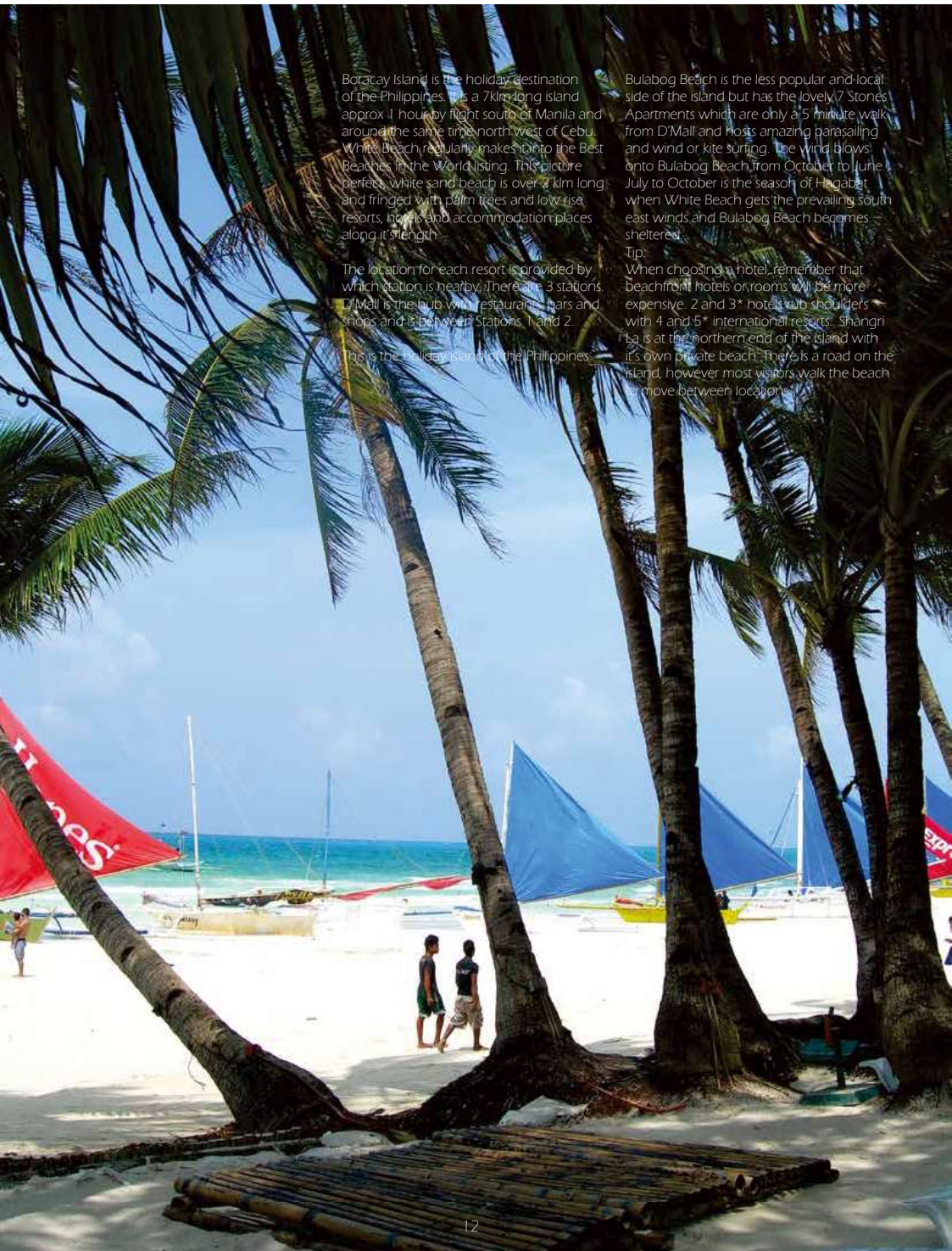
Getting there:

If short on time, flights into Laoag will speed the whole adventure up, however the most popular way is to take one of the public buses from Manila. These depart in the morning and overnight, as the journey to Banaue will take at least 9 hours while Baguio is around 6 hours. Trekking trips will include the journey from Manila in a private, air-conditioned car unless the budget option has been selected.

Suggestion:

Depart on one of our 5, 6 or 7 day journeys from Manila. Choose from the trekking or discovery options, depending on your desired level of activity. Add the Mt Pinatubo extension, the site of the world's largest volcanic eruption in the last 100 years. For serious walkers, trek for 8 or 10 days but definitely hire a local porter.





Boracay Island is the holiday destination of the Philippines. It is a 7km long island approx 1 hour by flight south of Manila and around the same time north west of Cebu. White Beach regularly makes it into the Best Beaches in the World listing. This picture perfect, white sand beach is over 2 km long and fringed with palm trees and low rise resorts, hotels and accommodation places along its length.

The location for each resort is provided by which station is nearby. There are 3 stations. D'Mall is the hub with restaurants, bars and shops and is between Stations 1 and 2.

This is the holiday island of the Philippines.

Bulabog Beach is the less popular and local side of the island but has the lovely 7 Stones Apartments which are only a 5 minute walk from D'Mall and hosts amazing parasailing and wind or kite surfing. The wind blows onto Bulabog Beach from October to June. July to October is the season of Hagabai when White Beach gets the prevailing south east winds and Bulabog Beach becomes sheltered.

Tip:
When choosing a hotel, remember that beachfront hotels or rooms will be more expensive. 2 and 3* hotels rub shoulders with 4 and 5* international resorts. Shangri-La is at the northern end of the island with it's own private beach. There is a road on the island, however most visitors walk the beach to move between locations.

Boracay

Getting there:

Flights are into Caticlan on the neighbouring island from where small bancas (boats) transfer everyone to the island. (around 10 minutes) On the island, tricycles take arriving people to their hotels. The transfers are generally arranged with the hotel at the time of booking.

Suggestion:

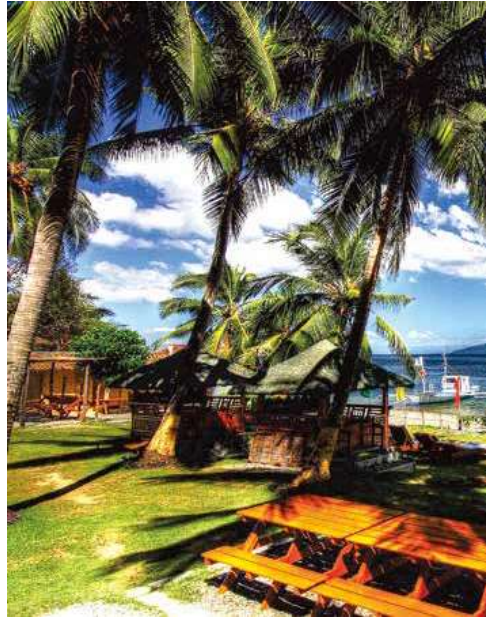
5 to 7 days on Boracay is perfect. Take a local paraw (sailing boat) ride, try some island hopping, learn to parasail or cook Filipino food. Of course there is diving, snorkelling, walking the beach and generally kicking back and relaxing. Have a few drinks in The Hobbit House located in D'Mall and for something totally unique, join the Mermaid School and learn to pose and swim with a tail or even become a mermaid instructor!!!



Paulo Violas



Batangas and Tagaytay



Luzon is an island with a lake. Inside the lake there is another island...with a lake. Inside that lake...there is another island. As complicated as that sounds, at some stage there will probably exist another lake... with an island. This is the Taal lake with its volcano. Trekking on the volcano is a popular day or overnight trip from Manila. There are even little fresh water, sandy beaches tucked around the shores of Lake Taal. These are perfect for a picnic or a lazy day. Funny little floating bamboo shacks on old drums are picturesque, making for brilliant photos and an insight into the local people's lifestyle.

Stay in Tagaytay overnight and explore the area. It is well worth it.

Mostly people rush through the Batangas region on their way south to catch a ferry to Mindoro and Puerto Galera, but those who wish to take a little longer, stop, experience and generally slow down will be richly rewarded. The Batangas is the province south of Manila and features the beautiful Lake Taal and some gorgeous beaches, particularly in the Anilao area in the south west. While the beaches are not the soft white powdery sand of other areas, the beaches are generally more local and less crowded with superb diving and snorkelling. First time divers may wish to try a discover scuba here. Those a little braver with a little more time can take a dive course and there is plenty to enjoy for experienced divers.

Getting there:

Batangas City is a 1 hr drive from Manila using the express and tollway. Coach, private transfer or air-conditioned bus are all available and Jeepneys, taxis and tricycles once in the area.

Suggestions:

Take a 2 night break from Manila and stay in Anilao. Indulge in a little island hopping, snorkelling or diving and take a trek to the top of the mountain. There are accommodation styles to suit most budgets. Just need a day away? Take the full day excursion from Manila and explore Lake Taal and the Taal Volcano. For a slower pace, stay in Tagaytay overnight.



Mindoro

including Puerto Galera and Pandan Island



By Penny Henderson

We had a busy schedule in Manila and decided that a little exploring along with a beach and a few cocktails would be a welcome break. Mindoro here we come! We are off to Puerto Galera on the north side of Oriental Mindoro. I have now learnt that Mindoro Occidental is the west and Mindoro Oriental is the eastern side of the island. Obvious really. From Manila we were transferred by shuttle to Batangas City and from there a 1 hour boat ride directly to Coco Beach Island Resort on Mindoro. What a beautiful sight as we arrived by sea. The traditional cottages are snuggled into the hillside, surrounded by tropical rainforest and winding pathways. Other resorts are dotted in the bays and all seem to have incredible views of the sea. Our cabana was up the hill, a real test of my fitness, however we could have chosen air-conditioned rooms on the flat.

The views, serenity, seclusion and cool evening breeze while relaxing on our private balcony more than made up for the little piece of compulsory exercise. This is not to say we didn't enjoy "happy hour" when cocktails were 2 for the price of 1, especially as we thought the price already a total bargain. This place boasts 101 things to do every day. Soap making from local coconut oil, weaving, spa, walks over the hill and into Puerto Galera, every imaginable watersport, day trips to all parts of Mindoro, cooking lessons, heaps of activities for kids, and don't forget the fine dining in the home-made revolving restaurant on the beach. It was exhausting just thinking about what was possible. I quickly decided that a couple of days was just not long enough to do everything so I settled for an excursion into town, a full body massage, a laze in the pool and cocktails on

the beach, followed by a very fine 3 course meal in that incredibly random revolving restaurant. Total bliss. I just love, love, love this island. Would I come back? In a heart beat, but next time I will come for at least a week and I might even think about bringing the children. **Getting there:** By road and ferry combination from Manila while the south side of the island is serviced by flights from Manila. Fly from Manila to San Jose Airport to get to the fabulous Pandan Island. **Suggestion:** Definitely 7 days at Coco Beach Resort. It is a great place to take the family. Or take the 4 day/3 night package on Pandan Island. It is a private island paradise and the closest island to Apo Reef. Perfect for snorkellers and divers



Busuanga

including Coron and Sangat



Busuanga:

is in the island group called Calamianes and they are north of Palawan and south of Mindoro. During WWII Japanese cargo and support vessels sought shelter in its sheltered bays and they were subjected to heavy aerial bombardment by the US Forces which resulted in Japanese gun boats, sub chasers, cargo and supply vessels, a sea plane tender and more joining other wrecks in Coron Bay. Now the wrecks are home to beautiful corals, thousands of fish, turtles, dugong, rays and are a paradise for divers. Not only is there wreck diving but Barracuda Lake has top layer of fresh water, a layer of

salt water and a geothermal hot water bottom providing for interesting lake diving with barracuda (of course), little crayfish, rabbit fish, grouper and catfish. Not a diver? Then there is still so much to enjoy. Snorkelling, secluded beaches, island hopping, wind surfing, paddle boarding, jet skis, hiking, rock climbing, natural hot springs, sunset cruising, shopping in Coron Township and heaps more.

Coron:

is a small fishing village in Busuanga and is the entry point to this beautiful part of the world.

Getting there:

A recently introduced 4 hour ferry service between Coron and El Nido is a great way to arrive or depart and enjoy a scenic cruise at the same time. There are also daily flights from Manila. Once in Coron, outriggers take you to your respective resort and holiday locations.

Our Suggestion:

You need a minimum of 3 nights here but we would suggest making it 5 or 7 nights. Maybe combine with another 3 or 4 nights at El Nido. Because of flight times, you may need a night either side in Manila.





Palawan

Palawan is the destination in the Philippines that the Filipino people aspire to visit and it is easy to see why. The Palawan archipelago of around 1,700 islands has a coastline of almost 2,000 kilometres in length and features the most stunning of coves, bays, secluded beaches and tiny, jungle clad limestone islets. This last ecological frontier contains over 100 differing species of birds, 5 species of endangered species of sea turtle, abundant tropical sea life in clear waters, coral reef fringed coastlines and lush tropical rainforest. Plus one of the 7 natural wonders of the World, the UNESCO World Heritage listed Underground River, is in Palawan, and is 8 kilometres long and navigable! And it's not all about the water.

Crocodile farm visits, local arts and crafts, historical Spanish buildings, hiking trails, ziplines through the tropical forest canopy and the Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Centre.

Palawan has been listed as one of the most beautiful places in the world. This has brought visitors from all over the world. Staying in one of the more remote resorts makes sure that the pristine beauty of this amazing place is still yours to enjoy. Personalised cruising on local outriggers lets you relax on private bays and beaches and enjoy the beauty of this place in your own way and in your own time-frame. turn. For those staying in El Nido, the nightlife is busy with cheap eats and bars and is very popular with backpackers and travellers.

The organised day trips from El Nido can be busy, but again, you are taken to the most glorious, beautiful, stunning and every other superlative you can think of, bays, coves, lagoons and beaches. The water is clear, the snorkelling incredible and you will not just be taken to one location, but multiple. This area has incredible scenery at every turn.

In the north, luxurious resorts feature over-water bungalows, forest dwellings, private beaches and romantic escapes. Alternatively, budget hideaways cater to the more adventurous and frugal travellers wanting to dive, snorkel, sea kayak, bird-watch, or just relax.



Palawan



The main city of Puerto Princesa is the departure point for the Underground River at Sabang, the live-aboard boats taking divers to the Tubbataha reefs and the glorious Honda Bay with its islands, dolphin watching and numerous water activities. This region is certainly stunning and families love the snorkelling and adventures to be experienced here. Don't forget to take your snorkels on the Honda Bay excursions. The water is crystal clear and there is so much to see. "Starfishes were everywhere. It's was like looking up at the stars at night but into the water with the daylight instead! So beautiful to look at. I almost drowned myself because the view was too beautiful for me to remember to get out of the water."(Calvin)

Getting There Information:

Flights to El Nido are from Manila. On arrival, small bancas take visitors to the islands and remote locations. Flights into Puerto Princesa are from Manila and Cebu plus a once weekly flight from Cataclan. There are no flights between El Nido and Puerto Princesa.

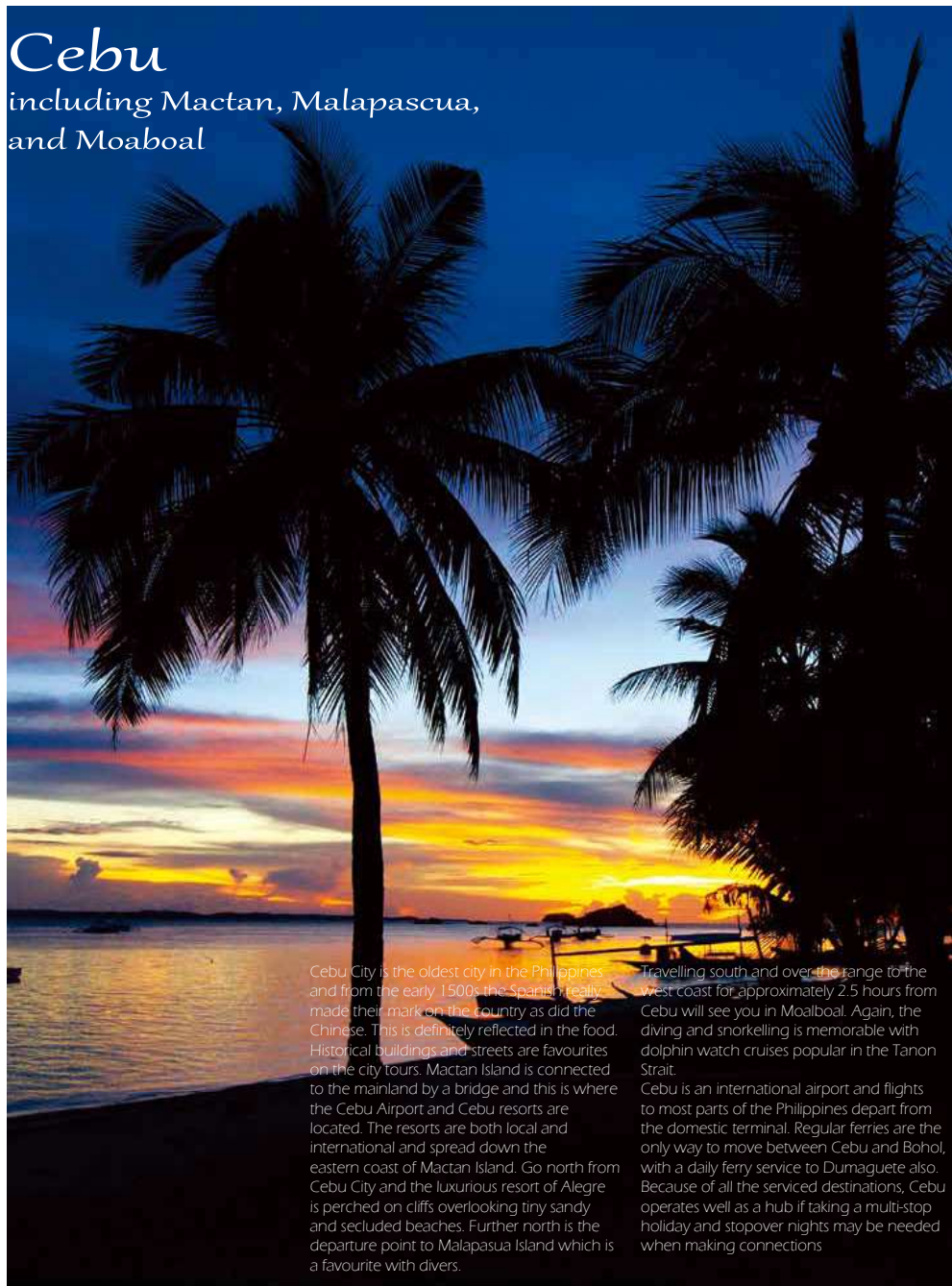
Travel times on Palawan tend to be slow with the journey between Puerto Princesa and El Nido available only by road and the best part of a day needs to be allocated to make this journey. (around 4 to 5 hours) If visiting Puerto Princesa between April and June, the sea is calm and the temperature is generally a wonderful 27 degrees...Perfect!

Suggestion:

Fly to Puerto Princesa and visit Honda Bay. Transfer to Sabang to visit the Underground River then take a private vehicle transfer to the north. Here your choices are luxurious resorts with overwater bungalows or local and charming accommodation. Either way, you have the opportunity to enjoy this amazing tropical destination. We suggest a minimum of 7 to 8 nights for this itinerary with longer recommended.

Cebu

including Mactan, Malapascua,
and Moaboa



Cebu City is the oldest city in the Philippines and from the early 1500s the Spanish really made their mark on the country as did the Chinese. This is definitely reflected in the food. Historical buildings and streets are favourites on the city tours. Mactan Island is connected to the mainland by a bridge and this is where the Cebu Airport and Cebu resorts are located. The resorts are both local and international and spread down the eastern coast of Mactan Island. Go north from Cebu City and the luxurious resort of Alegre is perched on cliffs overlooking tiny sandy and secluded beaches. Further north is the departure point to Malapascua Island which is a favourite with divers.

Travelling south and over the range to the west coast for approximately 2.5 hours from Cebu will see you in Moalboal. Again, the diving and snorkelling is memorable with dolphin watch cruises popular in the Tanon Strait. Cebu is an international airport and flights to most parts of the Philippines depart from the domestic terminal. Regular ferries are the only way to move between Cebu and Bohol, with a daily ferry service to Dumaguete also. Because of all the serviced destinations, Cebu operates well as a hub if taking a multi-stop holiday and stopover nights may be needed when making connections



Diving on Malapascua by Andrea Agarwal

Malapascua is the only place in the world that the legendary, beautiful and rarely seen thresher shark can be seen on a daily basis. So in 2003 I took the plunge and came for two days, hoping that would be enough time to get lucky.

I still vividly remember my very first dive on Malapascua as one of the best dives of my life. I rose at 5am, blearily admiring the fantastic sunrise and sipping the cup of coffee pushed into my hands by the boat crew. This is one of the earliest dives anywhere, but the thresher shark numbers are at their peak at this hour of the morning. The sharks are attracted from their usual home in deep water to the "cleaning stations" of Monad Shoal, which are like a carwash for fish: small fish called cleaner wrasse will pick the dead skin and parasites off the bodies of bigger fish.

As I set out on the 20 minute boat trip to Monad Shoal, I crossed my fingers, toes and everything else I could think of, hoping desperately to see these sharks about which I had heard so much. As we got closer and closer to the dive site, the adrenalin built up, pumped even harder by the tantalizing possibility of seeing mobula rays at the same time. Threshers and rays on one dive! I did not dare hope.



We swam around for a few minutes, and then, out of the darkness, the unique silhouette of the thresher appeared, its huge scythe-like tail swishing gracefully behind. It swam closer and closer, and soon it was within a few meters. Its silver body glistened in the early morning light, and its distinctive tail, almost half its body length, followed lazily behind. The shark circled several times and then swam off into the blue. Wow! We moved along the drop-off a little further and encountered another of these magnificent creatures.



We stopped and watched for 5 minutes as it circled in front of us. Then, I heard someone hollering underwater. People only holler when there is something really special. My head snapped to the side and what did I see but a huge devil ray headed straight in my direction! My breath caught as my heart melted at the sight of this gentle giant. My first ever devil ray. What a perfect end to a perfect dive. That dive was fourteen years ago and I still haven't left Malapascua. The diving has got me hooked, line and sinker!



Bohol

including Panglao and Cabilao Island

If white sand beaches, turquoise blue water and a beach lounge under a shaded coconut palm are your dream holiday combination, then Bohol and Panglao are definitely where you should be. Bohol airport is Tagbilaran and it also has a seaport.

The majority of resorts and hotels are on Panglao Island which is connected to the south of Bohol by a causeway. The resorts are sprinkled around the island and further south again is the tiny day trip island of Balicasag. This is a very popular day trip destination for diving and snorkelling as there is just so much fish life, beautiful corals and of course, turtles. Off the west coast of Bohol is Cabilao Island where the underwater photographer will never want to leave, particularly once they have found the pigmy seahorses.

For a day out on land rather than water, go north to the Chocolate Hills. These are weird round lumpy hills and are green in the rainy season but in the dry season they go brown and look like lumps of chocolate. This area is also where you can see the world's smallest monkey, the tarsier. They are nocturnal and just too cute with their great big eyes as they sit in the trees, snacking on small insects flying by. Tours into this area also generally include a cruise on the Loboc River with entertainment and local Filipino food and a visit to the Butterfly Park.

There are a number of excellent places to stay on various parts of Bohol such as Cabilao noted for its excellent diving and snorkelling and luxury resort such as the Amun ini Beach Resort to the east of the island.

Getting there information:

Flights to Bohol are from Manila only. If a Cebu, Dumaguete or Siquijor connection is required, then a ferry needs to be taken. These depart daily from Tagbilaran.

Suggestion:

Spend at least 4 or 5 nights on Bohol. Stay in a beach side resort to suit your budget and enjoy the beach, islands, scenery and wildlife. This area is quiet, relaxed and a perfect place to wind down. Combine with Siquijor or Dumaguete for a similar style of stay or Cebu for a busier alternative and little nightlife. If your international flight takes you to Manila then fly to one destination, ferry to the next, and fly back to Manila.



Dumaguete

including Apo Island and Dauin



Dumaguete:

Dumaguete is the main city to fly to explore the island of Negros. The city is nicknamed 'The city of gentle people'. It is not only a university city but also the gateway by fast ferry to the island of Siquijor, the 'enchanted island'.

The main marine parade at night comes alive and is vibrant with many cafes and restaurants, as well as local people eating from street vendors all along the parade. A complete meal in a restaurant here is around \$10 so great value. Good shopping will also keep you busy!

Negros:

Although we have described areas in Negros Oriental, the other part of this large island, Negros Occidental, offers a number of getaways from its resorts. Ask us for details.

Apo Island:

The waters around Apo Island are a marine sanctuary and have been since 1982. With more than 650 species of fish and 400 species of coral it makes the island very special for swimming, snorkelling and diving. The island is famous for the protection of Green Sea Turtles and it is rare indeed if you do not encounter these wonderful animals. The island lends itself to fantastic photo opportunities.

There are a number of walks on the island including a nice eco-trail, a little steep in parts but well worth the effort. The beaches are small but good.

Day trips from Dumaguete, Dauin and Siquijor are offered to the island and it is a day not to miss.

Dauin

Dauin, is a coastal town just 15 kilometers south of Dumaguete, Dauin is most noted for its reef system and Marine Sanctuary. If you are adventurous you can hire a motorbike to get around and explore a little. There are a number of excellent resorts along this coast from budget to upmarket. All have great facilities, Dauin is also home to beautiful coral reefs and sandy beaches but fishing activity is prohibited in several locations.

Suggestions:

The Colonial Church of San Nicolas is in Dauin, the oldest in the Negros Oriental. Along the beach you can explore the ruins of two dome shaped watchtowers. The local legends say that the watchtowers used to be a warning post to warn off pirates. Maybe a visit to the hot springs.





I Love Siquijor



Magical Siquijor

Camille Storm describes her perfect afternoon...

Some might say I'm biased, but if you visit, it's easy to understand why my home, Siquijor and Coco Grove Beach Resort, is my favourite place to be. I currently work overseas and find myself always dreaming of this place. This will always be my home and I shall return.

Picture this. You are floating on your back in the shallow waters near the most gorgeous beach you have ever seen. The sand is powdery soft and has an almost golden twinkle to its colour. You look up and the sky is as blue as ever, with white fluffy clouds ambling slowly across the wide stretch of space. The smells that surround you are a mixture of saltwater, fresh flowers and the waft of delicious barbeque aromas that have caught on the breeze. You feel a sense of peace. This is your getaway. It's how my perfect afternoon begins.

So what is it, that this paradise offers that is so different? Is it the people? I drive around in my memory and recall the smiling children as we hobble up the mountains in our jeepney. I recall the toothless lady at the market as she helps me choose the most fresh and thus most delicious fish I can cook for that night's dinner. I am swept back to a time, when I stood in the basketball court during fiesta, where dancing is a passion of everyone, even the oldest, got up to dance. Or is it the landscape? All kinds of environments seem to converge on this one island, with forests going on and on for acres, to caves as deep as one can imagine, and then to of course the beaches flanking the outer edges of the island. It seems to have it all. Could it rather, really be a magical ingredient that one cannot ascertain? A sense of peace. Of knowing. Of coming home.

Whatever it is, Siquijor is where I see having my perfect afternoon.

To get to Siquijor and Coco Grove Beach Resort, You can fly from Manila or Cebu to Dumaguete, or take the ferry from Bohol to Dumaguete. Once in Dumaguete, it is a ferry ride to the island and a jeepney transfer to Coco Grove Beach Resort.

Coco Grove Beach Resort is a 4* resort, spread along half a kilometre of sandy beach and with a range of accommodation options, and a huge range of activities including day trips to neighbouring islands to swim with turtles or whale shark. Because of the space and beautiful landscaping, this resort is suitable for families, couples and honeymooners while their function facilities are perfect for weddings or conferences.

A few images from Coco Grove

Photos by Packyabags



Davao and Surrounds

Davao

is located on the island of Mindanao, and is located furthest south of all the islands of the Philippines. Many flights per day depart from Manila and Cebu. There are many attractions in Davao. It is one of the fastest and exciting destinations in the Philippines. The highest mountain, Mt Apo is situated here.

Cagayan de Oro

This city is situated on the north west side of the island and is the gateway to a number of adventures, such as whitewater rafting with 14 rapids along the Cagayan de Oro River. The rainy months of September and October are good for intermediate and professional levels (class 3 to 4). Whitewater Kayaking is lots of fun and can be a great challenge.



Eden Nature Park

More than 80 hectares of trees, flowers, herbs and spices, all located at just below 1000 metres above sea level. The park includes lots of fun things to do such as the SkyRider, (riding a bike on a wire), Skyswing, swimming, fishing, horse riding, together with walks and eateries.

Philippine Eagle Centre

The Philippine Eagle Center is home and a conservation sanctuary to the Philippine Eagles. The centre is displayed in a tropical rainforest setting and eco system.

Museums:

There are number of unique museums including the fabulous D' Bone Collector Museum.

Adventure:

Wild water rafting is very popular on the Davao River. The 3 1/2 hour wild water rafting starts from Barrio Tamugan in Calinan, and then ends at the lowlands. The water course features some 30 rapids of varying degrees of difficulty in the 15 kilometers of rough water portion of the Davao River.

From Davao there are a number of excellent resorts and hotels to choose from including those with fabulous beaches found here and throughout the Philippines.

Please Note: A number of countries have an advice against travel to Mindanao. Please check with us for latest information as we do have staff based in Davao.





Bicol including, Legazpi and Donsol

The Bicol region has a wide variety of activities and sights. Bicol is awe inspiring with a huge amount attractions such as eco-tourism with highlights of natures formations, habitats, waterfalls, caves, and eco-parks. Add to this water sports, such as scuba diving and snorkelling and cultural art, food, weaving and pottery. Many old buildings are to be seen as well as the now famous Mayon Volcano, one of the world's most perfect volcano shapes.

Here are just a few things you can experience in this region.

Culinary Experience

When it comes to Filipino food, Bicol is definitely a region that will be top of mind to have among the best and most unique Filipino dishes. Try your hand at cooking for a couple of hours.

Mountain Bike Or Motorcycle Tour

Pick between a motorcycle or a mountain bike and travel roads less travelled with your guide. Get up into the heights so you can see the fantastic views.

Sorsogon

A trip to Sorsogon will take you to Paguiran Lagoon, San Benon Hot Springs, Old Barcelona Church, and Bulusan. Bulusan is worth a look as it includes a volcano, a rainforest, lakes, waterfalls and handcrafts all in one area.

Matnog

Matnog has some of the most pristine beaches of the Philippines with islands of powdery white sand and turquoise water. What makes Matnog most special are the beaches with PINK sand!

Mayon Volcano ATV and Trekking

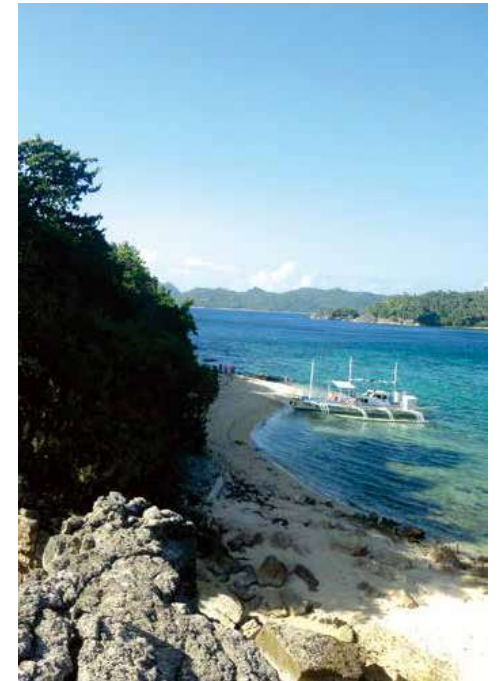
How about this one! Drive an ATV to the Lava Wall of Mayon Volcano. If you prefer you can trek this volcano with various trails including a 3 day walking tour. This region has no less than 7 volcanoes.

Bulusan Volcano Trekking

A jewel of the Sorsogon province, the Bulusan Volcano Natural Park was declared a National Park in 1935. You will find an active volcano, a virgin rainforest, waterfalls, springs, and crater lakes and flora and fauna endemic to the region.

Scuba Diving

From Ticao Island there are several dive sites. It is also from Donsol or Ticao where you can interact with whale shark from November to June. This is by snorkelling only. **Surfing** is also available in the region.



Pure Indulgence



If seeking understated opulence, seclusion, access by private plane only and breathtaking beauty for that one time splurge, a break for the super wealthy or a private and secluded getaway for the famous, then do we have the destination for you!

Top of the A list and a quiet favourite with millionaires and celebrities is Amanpulo on Pamalican Island. The hotel arranges it's own 12 seater flights from Manila or you can arrive in style in your own aircraft.

Private villas and beach casitas come with a designated "guest assistant" who will meet you off the plane and will be never more than a phone call away.

Private beach access will allow you to saunter

between your sunbed and the water and back again on repeat until it's time to trundle off in your private golf buggy to a different activity, a meal, a massage, tennis or just somewhere else. So while everyone else herds towards the better known spots like Cebu and Palawan, a real taste of the high life is a stay on Amanpulo.

But luxurious destinations in the Philippines are plentiful. El Nido Lagen, Miniloc, Apulit and Pangulasian resorts in Palawan's north, Shangri La on Boracay, Eskaya Beach Resort on Bohol, Alegre Resort on Cebu, Dedon Resort on Siargao, and so much more. At all, the service is impeccable with total discretion, the views are to die for and the understated luxury makes for exquisite holidays in stunning locations.

While most are a little remote, once there, the secluded locations are divine and the hospitality certainly makes the extra effort so worthwhile.

Getting there:

Many require charter flights but those on Cebu, Bohol, Boracay and Siargao are accessed via scheduled air services with private transfers once at the closest airport.

Suggestions:

For that significant celebration, or if the expense really doesn't matter, spoil yourself, take a week and relax and rejuvenate in barefoot luxury.



Diving in the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands situated in Southeast Asia and in the tropical region of the Pacific Ocean. The Philippines geography is very diverse and includes, without doubt, some of the best diving in the world and at a very attractive price.

The diversity of The Philippines is enormous. From the bustle of Manila with its history and culture, to the island experience, where you can relax on one of the thousands of beaches, sample some of the best diving in the world, soft and hardcore adventure, mix with the crowds, get away from the crowds, climb mountains, meet the helpful and friendly locals and eat great food.

Although we have well known diving and snorkelling areas there are many in the Philippines untouched by tourism and are well worth exploring for the adventurous. Sometimes many divers will be on the well known sites from all over the world but underwater you very rarely see other divers and the clarity of the water is usually excellent.

Places like Tubbataha Reef out in the middle of the Sulu Sea and a UNESCO protected site to Apo Island, a turtle sanctuary, Donsol to see whale shark, Moalboal for the sardine balls, Busuanga and Coron for WWII wrecks...and nice coral, Malapascua to see the fabulous thresher shark.

Some of the dive sites are but a drive from Manila and others short plane rides. You dive most sites from the local boats called banca boats. The dive companies we use are all very good, with excellent experienced staff and equipment.

There are many diving areas not mentioned here. We can only give a few suggestions. But be assured the Philippines has some of the most diverse and perhaps the largest range of diving sites in the world, from coral to wrecks. And to cap it off, the prices to dive fit everyone's pocket.

Our company has dived throughout the country and it certainly remains one of our highlighted diving destinations.



- Malapascua Island, North Cebu: (D)**
 Highlights: Famous for Thresher Shark, Mantas, Seahorse, Cuttlefish, Nudibranchs.
 Getting there: From Cebu 3 hours drive north to Maya then boat to Malapascua.
- Tubbataha Reef, Sulu Sea: (E)**
 Highlights: marine sanctuary, In top 10 sites in the world, World Heritage. Diving by liveaboard only from March to June. Fantastic Coral, Mantas, Hammerheads, and Gorgonia.
 Getting there: From Puerto Princesa to Reef. Liveaboard options available.
- Apo Island, Negros Oriental: (F)**
 Highlights: Famous for Turtle Sanctuary, huge Table Coral, Drop Offs. Great photography.
 Getting there: From Dumaguete to resorts around 30 minutes. From Siquijor around 1 hour.
- Moalboal and Pescador Island, Cebu: (H)**
 Highlights: Diving from the beach down to 35 metres. Caverns and overhangs, Gorgonia, Turtles and the occasional Whale Shark.
 Getting there: From Cebu 2.5 hours by road then ferry.
- Panglao Island, Bohol: (J)**
 Highlights: Black Coral, Nudibranchs, Dolphins. Good for novice and confident divers. Excellent photography.
 Getting there: From Bohol 45 mins to the island by road causeway.
- Cabilao Island, Bohol: (G)**
 Highlights: Big variety of dive site, with Sea Snakes, Hammerheads, Barracudas, Groupers, and the famous Pygmy Seahorse.
 Getting there: From Bohol 1 hour by road then short boat ride to the island.
- Donsol, Bicol: (K)**
 Highlights: Whale Shark, Mantas, Hammerheads, Caves. In view of the world famous Mayon Volcano.
 Getting there: From Manila to Legazpi and by road and boat or take the bus by road all the way around 9 hours.
- Batangas, Luzon: (L)**
 Highlights: Excellent for diving and snorkelling. Great macro photography, Blue-Ringed Octopus, Sea Gobins, Wrecks, Caves and Tunnels. Wide variety of Nudibranchs.
 Getting there: From Manila around 2.5 hours by road.
- Puerto Galera, Mindoro: (M)**
 Highlights: A Marine Sanctuary making it a well protected habitat for many tropical fish, and Pelagics. The canyons is a drift dive with fantastic life.
 Getting there: From Manila just 110km by road and boat.
- Palawan: (P)**
 Highlights: Diving throughout the island including the El Nido area. Don't forget to visit the underground river, one of the wonders of the world.
 Getting there: From Fly to El Nido or Puerto Princesa.
- Coron, Busuanga, Mindoro: (S)**
 Highlights: Concentration of Japanese WWII Wrecks with many intact. Many other dive sites with great underwater life.
 Getting there: From Fly Manila to Coron.



Liveaboards



Liveaboard Dive Boats:

Liveaboards give you an amazing flexibility to explore many areas of diving without leaving your accommodation. Placing you on top of the dive sites is the ultimate. If you are experienced or have never been on one before now is the time to do it.

The Philippines has a number of Liveaboards offering trips through various months throughout the year.

Trips such as 7 days to Tubbataha Reef, Apo Reef and Coron, Malapascua, Bohol Safaris. We even have one to Palau from the Philippines for 8 days.

Pack Ya Bags has all the information and prices you need and any questions you may have, just ask one of our experienced staff. There are set departures or charters.

Edited Article by Marg Howard Dolphin Underwater Club.

All I can say is how lucky are we. Pack Ya Bags invited us to join a dive trip to the Philippines.

We arrived in Tagbilaran on the Island of Bohol, for an interesting 1 hour trip north to board our boat to Cabilao, a magic place, and little known.

We checked out the dive shop and geared up, with good quality gear, and headed out to Light House 2 with Santi as our dive master guide, who was wonderful. First time I have seen frog fish, bright yellow and so hard to see on coral growth. Many colours of lion fish, sponges, soft corals and a deep drop offs. Santi even took a magnifying glass down with her to point out the tiny pygmy sea horses! How cool is that!

Most dives we saw turtles, sea snakes, and nudibranchs together with gorgonia and drop offs.

Next up, out on a very classy outrigger boat to travel to Balicasag Island and a turtle haven. This area attracted many divers from all over, for the fantastic diving as well as a beautiful island with white sandy beaches. From here we headed out to Apo Island where we saw a whale shark, apparently the first time one had been spotted off this island Apo is accessed from Dauin (Dumaguete) and Siquijor.

Turtles in the water on each dive, as they live in the sanctuaries and are protected. A nice dive on Sumilon Island again with so much to see and experience.

Weather around 30 degrees each day, and being pampered by the Filipinos. Everyone had one or more massage and the diving is amazing. This is diving at its best

Diving Packages Suggestions

Yours to explore



Ray Aucott:
I have dived throughout the Philippines and I just love it, for the variety of diving locations, the underwater life and of course the wonderful Filipinos, who take very good care of you. The Philippines offers some of the best diving in the world. If you want me to take you, just let me know!

7 nights dive package at Coco Grove Siquijor.
Includes:
7 nights accommodation
Transfers from/return Dumaguete
All Meals
Unlimited Diving (equipment hire extra)
Apo and other areas

7 nights dive package at El Rio y Mar Coron.
Includes:
7 nights accommodation
Transfers from/return Coron Airport
All Breakfasts
Unlimited Diving (equipment hire extra)
Dugong and wreck diving

9 nights dive package Malapascua/Moalboal/Dauin
3 nights Ocean Vida Resort Malapasua
3 night in Kasai Village
3 nights in Pura Vida Dauin
includes:
All transfers Cebu/Dumaguete
All Breakfasts
18 dive package

9 nights dive package Cabilao/Pangalao/Dauin
3 nights Ocean Vida Resort Malapasua
3 night in Alona Beach (Bohol)
3 nights in Pura Vida Dauin
includes:
All transfers Bohol/Dumaguete
All breakfasts
18 dive package

In the Dauin area(Dumaguete) we have packages from upmarket resorts such as [Atmosphere Resort](#) to budget style resorts such as [Liquid Dumaguete](#). Ask us for details.

Summer Abrahamson:
"I went to the Philippines last year to learn how to dive. What an amazing and safe place to do your Padi open water training. Sea Explorers in Dauin have awesome staff and they are all really helpful and patient. The dive sites they took us to were stunning with heaps of coral and sea life and was overall a great place to learn. I cant wait to go back and explore more of the underwater world"

7 nights Donsol dive package at Ticao Island Resort
Includes:
7 nights accommodation
Transfers from/return Legazpi
All Meals
Unlimited Diving (equipment hire extra)
Mantas and Whale Shark (Nov to Jun)
Snorkelling only with the Whale Shark

7 nights dive package at Sangat Coron
Includes:
7 nights accommodation
Transfers from/return Coron Airport
All Breakfasts
Unlimited Diving (equipment hire extra)
Coral and wreck diving
The Coron area is famous for its WWII wrecks of all kinds with great visibility to see them!

9 nights dive package Malapascua/Pangalao/Dauin
3 nights Ocean Vida Resort Malapasua
3 night in Alona Beach (Bohol)
3 nights in Pura Vida Dauin
includes:
All transfers Cebu/Dumaguete
All breakfasts
18 dive package

7 nights dive package at Atlantis Resorts
on either Puerto Galera or Dumaguete or a mixture of both
Includes:
7 nights accommodation
Transfer to/return Puerto Galera/Dumaguete
All meals
Unlimited Diving (equipment hire extra)
This will give you a good variety of dives

7 nights dive package at El Galleon and Asia Divers
Puerto Galera
Includes:
7 nights accommodation
Transfers from/return Manila
All Breakfasts
Unlimited Diving (equipment hire extra)

We can organise any type of dive and snorkelling trips for individuals and groups. Ray will work with you to make sure you get the the dive holiday you would like with the type of diving and experience level needed.



Adventure

including surfing, walking and out of the way places

Many visitors to the Philippines are familiar with its fabulous beaches, resorts and diving. What is less known is the type of adventure both soft and hard that can be experienced.

Following are a few suggestions but if you have a particular interest please get in touch with us and we can make it happen for you or your group.

Surfing:

Surfing can be done throughout the islands but perhaps the most famous is on the Island of Siargao the surfing capital, which lies north of Mindanao. During the season from October to May waves can average around 2 to 3 metres. Cloud 9 is the most well known which is a perfect barrelling right hand break. It is suitable for Intermediate to experts.

Ifugao:

A 5 day trip to the Ifugao region together with its people. Trips normally depart on a night bus and return on a night bus unless a private tour is requested. Famous for the Banaue Rice Terraces and natural beauty we can take you deep into the area meeting with the people and the culture in different villages.

Trekking:

There are many trekking tours available throughout much of the Philippines including the Ifugao, Palawan, Mindanao, Cebu and Bohol to name just a few.

Climbing and Caving:

From soft to hard adventure, we can cater for all tastes and pockets.

Kayaking:

Some great tours for sea kayaking such as circumnavigate the island of Coron or paddle around the El Nido area in Palawan. These tours are usually by camping so will give you a real experience of the wild country areas not always seen when staying in a resort.

White Water Rafting:

Always fun on the rivers from the tame to the more extreme. The Chico River is one such river to try this exhilarating sport.

Places to visit can also be more adventurous such as the Subterranean River, Calamian Islands, Maligcong, Sadanga, and Kalinga. With rainforests, reefs, unique flora and fauna, shipwrecks and more, what are you waiting for!



Festivals, Parades and Fiestas



With more than a 1000 Festivals and parades happening in the Philippines every year, somewhere in the country, they are absolutely spectacular. Some are religious based and some just carnival time. Famous ones such as the Sinulog in January, or the Vigan Town Fiesta also January, are well worth visiting. Maybe the fusion of fiestas of the 13 cities and 19 towns of Negros Occidental is worth spending the week.

Celebrating such events as racing between outriggers, festival of balloonists, gathering of ethnic tribes, arts and crafts, flower festivals, foundation of towns and cities, strawberry festival, re-enactments, fishermen's harvest, battle of Mactan, music and dance festivals, body painting festival, Food festivals, street dancers, mask making, Phew! Have I left anything out?



A few holiday suggestions

5 Days / 4 Nights Chill Out

With over 7,100 islands, the Philippines are spoilt with thousands of beautiful beaches. Choose a glorious one and relax. The hub is Manila and some can be joined with direct ferries or flights. 4 nights is a starting point. Choose from dozens of destinations including the popular Cebu, Bohol, Boracay, Palawan, Siquijor and Coron. La Puerto al Paraiso on Guimaras is very different.

4 Days / 3 Night Mermaids:

Stay on Boracay for 3 nights and learn how to be a mermaid. Complete with tail and hotos! This is just the BEST photo opportunity and totally recommended for groups of friends, wedding parties, family groups, party groups and anyone wanting to have a record of themselves in a totally different light!

5 Days / 4 Nights Ifugao

Depart Manila for sightseeing or trekking through the rice terraced region of the Ifugao people. Visiting Banaue, Batad, Bang-An, Cambulo, Sagada, Bontoc and Baguio. Extensions for longer trekking are available. Up to 8 days with 6 days trekking is perfect for experienced trekkers. Budget options are available using the overnight public bus. A 2 Day / 1 Night /Mt Pinatubo addition is certainly worthwhile.

7 Days / 6 Nights Mindoro

Depart Manila for the island of Mindoro by either road or flight (your choice) Enjoy both Pandan Island and Coco Beach resorts before returning to Manila. This journey is excellent for small family groups and the Busuungas is a great extension for a longer holiday.

6 Days / 5 Nights - Adventure Palawan

Palawan is exotic, even for Filipinos. Nowhere else in the country can you float down a river flowing through an 8 kilometre tunnel of karst or kayak amidst towering islands of sheer limestone walls that rise directly out of the sea. And yes, Palawan's beaches will make you wonder why you ever bothered with anything less perfect. Brilliant for small family and adventure groups.

10 Days / 9 Nights Cebu / Bohol / Siquijor Combo

Arrive in Cebu and enjoy 3 nights on Mactan Island. Take a local ferry transfer to Bohol and relax on the beautiful beaches of Panglao and visit the Chocolate Hills and the tiny tarsiers in the hinterland for another 3 nights. Take another local ferry to the witching island of Siquijor via Dumaguete and completely relax for another 3 nights. When it's time to leave you will be whisked back to Dumaguete. This is perfect for families and couples alike. Extra nights can be added as can the flight from Dumaguete to Manila.

8 Days / 7 Nights Babuyan Islands Adventure

The Babuyan Islands are as remote as they come, and simply getting to them is an adventure in itself braving the trip to the northern-most point of Luzon and the daily three- to four-hour roller-coaster boat rides on very rough Pacific Ocean waters.

Discover five islands, each isolated from the others by miles of ocean and distinct in its features.

Palau has foothills, mangroves and a marine sanctuary.

Camiguin has mountains at its center and humpback whales off its coast.

Dalupiri is a huge block of rock rising up from the sea with sheer walls.

Fuga is as flat as a pancake and has grasslands as far the eye can see.

Calayan is home to the most amazing cove in the Philippines.

This tour is not for everyone. Beds and plumbing are not part of the package. We sleep in tents, bathe in rivers and do our business in catholes. Given the unpredictability of the weather and ocean conditions, the itinerary is not fixed and getting stranded on an island for a day is a very real possibility. The boat rides are long, rough and oftentimes scary. If all this excites rather than discourages you, then sign up for this adventure.



3 Days / 2 Night Whale Shark Interaction

Starting from Legazpi, this quick adventure brings you up close to some of the most magnificent gentle giants of the sea world. Top it off with magnificent views of the Mayon Volcano, floating down Firefly River and swim in crystal clear lagoons. There are daily flights to Legazpi from Manila and Cebu.

9 Days 8 Nights – Visayas Dive Safari

Dive in seven world-class diving destinations: Malapascua, Moalboal, Pescador Island, Dauin, Apo Island, Panglao and Balicasag Island. See the richness and variety of the Philippines' islands, reefs and marine life. Starts in Bohol and concludes in Cebu. A supreme sample of diving for a small group of dive buddies.

Tastes of the Philippines

Philippine cuisine:

(Filipino: Lutuing Pilipino or Pagkaing Pilipino) consists of the food, origins from many areas of the world. The style of cooking and the food associated with it have evolved over many centuries from their Austronesian origins to a mixed cuisine of Malay-Indonesian, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and American. Food over the centuries has adapted to indigenous ingredients and the local Philippine taste.

A suggested selection to try:

Here are just a few of the popular dishes. If you would like any recipes for any dish in the Philippines just contact us on info@packyabags.com

Popular dishes include:

lechón (whole roasted pig),

longganisa (Philippine sausage),

tapa (cured beef),

torta (omelette),

adobo (chicken and/or pork braised in garlic, vinegar, oil and soy sauce, or cooked until dry),

kaldereta (meat in tomato sauce stew),

mechado (larded beef in soy and tomato sauce),

puchero (beef in bananas and tomato sauce),

afritada (chicken and/or pork simmered in tomato sauce with vegetables),

kare-kare (oxtail and vegetables cooked in peanut sauce),

pinakbet (kabocha squash, eggplant, beans, okra, and tomato stew flavored with shrimp paste),

crispy pata (deep-fried pig's leg),

hamonado (pork sweetened in pineapple sauce),

sinigang (meat or seafood in sour broth), pancit (noodles), and Lumpia (fresh or fried spring rolls).

Sinigang



Sinigang is a hot and sour soup with tamarind paste and calamansi (or Philippine lime) juice infused into the broth. Ingredients of Pork Sinigang are tomato, onion, garlic, water spinach, radish, taro, eggplant (talong), daikon (labanos), long chili pepper and string beans. Other variations include using fish, prawns, other meats, and bok choy, cabbage, broccoli, potato, carrot as alternative vegetable ingredients.

How to:

Boil water in a pot.

Add the pork liempo, tomato, onion, and tamarind sinigang soup mix.

Cover the pot and boil until the meat is tender.

Add the long chili pepper, radish, taro, string beans, and eggplant.

Cover the pot and continue boiling until the vegetables are cooked.

Add the kangkong leaves and simmer until the dish is done.

Adobo



Adobo is one of the most popular Filipino dishes and is considered unofficially by many as the national dish. It usually consists of pork or chicken, but you can add whatever is your preferred meat or fish.

Chicken-Pork Adobo Ingredients

1/2 kilo chicken; cut in serving pieces
1 kilo pork; cut in 1 1/2" square thick
1 head garlic; pounded
3 laurel leaves
8 tablespoons soy sauce
8 tablespoons vinegar
1 tablespoon ground black pepper
1 1/2 cup rice water

How to:

Place the ingredients together in a saucepan. Boil in medium fire until the chicken and pork becomes tender.

Simmer until a saucy consistency is achieved. Season with soy sauce if needed or according to desired taste.

Add a couple of teaspoons of oyster sauce to make it taste even better!

Crispy Pata



Tempura



Tempura: This traditional Japanese dish is very popular throughout the Philippines. A light batter is made of cold water and soft wheat flour, eggs, baking powder, starch, oil, and/or spices may also be added. Tempura batter is traditionally mixed in small batches using chopsticks for only a few seconds, leaving lumps in the mixture that, along with the cold batter temperature, result in the unique fluffy and crisp tempura structure when cooked. And its easy to make!

Ingredients:

3/4 cup cornstarch
1/4 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 cup water
1 egg, slightly beaten

How to:

In bowl mix first 5 ingredients; add water and egg and then stir till smooth.

This batter is enough for 4 cups vegetables or 1 pound of fish or meat cut up.

Arroz Caldo



Halo Halo



Halo-Halo is a famous cold refreshing dessert consisting of a mixture of fruits, beans, ice, and other types of desserts

Halo-halo ingredients (can be your choice)

Coconut gelatin (nata de coco);
Cooked tapioca pearl (sago)
Crispy rice (pinipig)
Grated young coconut meat
Purple yam (ube halaya)
Red mung beans(munggo); cubed
Ripe mango (manga); cubed
Sweet potato (kamote); cubed
Sweetened corn kernels (mais)
Sweetened plantain banana (saba)
Vanilla ice cream

How to:

Choose at least 5 of the basic ingredients. Place the ingredients of your choice in a tall glass in half full. Top with shaved ice. Pour evaporated milk until shaved ice is milky. Top with a scoop of ice cream. Stir the mixture repeatedly and carefully not to spill the ice. When mixture is thoroughly mixed, it's ready.

Buko Pie



One of the all-time favorite "pasalubong" is the Buko pie. This sweet and rich pie is made from young coconut meat which is locally known as "Buko" meat.

Crust:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup margarine or butter, cut into slices
1/4 cup shortening
5-6 tbsp. cold water
eggwash

Filling:

1/2 cup sugar
1/3 cup cornstarch
1 cup evaporated milk
1 cup buco water/juice
1 tsp. vanilla
2 cups grated buco (young coconut meat)

How to :

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Prepare an 8-inch pie plate.

Filling:

Combine sugar and cornstarch in saucepan. Add evaporated milk and buco water. Cook over medium heat until thickened. Add vanilla and grated buco meat. Cook for another 5 minutes and then set aside to cool.

Crust:

Combine flour, sugar and salt in a bowl. Cut in the butter and shortening until the mixture looks like coarse crumbs.

Add a tablespoon of water one at a time. Mix with a fork until the dough is smooth and does not stick to the sides of the bowl. Form into two balls, one of which should be bigger than the other.

Roll out the bigger dough to form a 9-inch circle that is about 1/4-inch thick. Fit this dough into the bottom and sides of the pie plate. Filled up with the buco mixture filling. Set aside.

Roll out the smaller dough into a circle, big enough to cover the top of the pie. To seal the sides of the pie, pinch the top and bottom crusts together.

Using a fork, prick holes on the top crust so that steam can escape the pie while baking. Brush the top crust with eggwash. Bake in the oven for about 30 minutes.