



Philippines



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Itineraries



2 WEEKS **Manila & Panay**

Start off with two days in **Manila** doing a one-day tour of historic sights in Intramuros and nearby museums, and another day in Chinatown and modern Manila as embodied by Makati City. Bars, clubs and all manner of nightlife can keep you busy until dawn if you choose.

Having experienced a little of life in the megalopolis, fly to **Iloilo City** on the island of Panay to experience a more manageable version of urban Philippines. Check out the city's colonial architecture and revitalized Smallville. A short boat ride away is **Guimaras**, a gem of an island for lovers of postcard-perfect low-key resorts, as well as for mountain bikers and mango connoisseurs.

Then bus and boat it quickly to **Boracay**, the Philippines most happening island, and White Beach, the party and nightlife capital. Before long you may be inspired to seek permanent-resident status, but if you find the lifestyle too taxing take a vacation from your vacation by catching a ferry north to the island of Looc and then to either of the island retreats of **Romblon** or **Sibuyan** before returning to civilization via Cebu or Manila.



North-South Traverse

The following trip cuts through all three of the Philippines' main island groups: Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao and requires at most one flight.

Spend your first three days in **Manila** getting acclimated, reserving one day for a journey outside Manila – climbing moon-like **Mt Pinatubo**, whose eruption shook the world in 1991, would be our first choice (pre-dawn departure from Manila notwithstanding). Scenic **Tagaytay**, which has some of the best restaurants in the country, is a mellower option.

Next, take a night bus (or fly) to the Bicol region in Southeast Luzon. This is the Philippines' adventure capital, with surfing, wakeboarding and volcanoes on offer. Around Legazpi you can snorkel with the whale sharks off **Donsol** or climb the symmetrical cone of **Mt Mayon** (if it's not erupting).

Proceeding south, cross the San Bernardino Strait to the rugged islands of Samar and Leyte in the eastern Visayas. Along the way, have the spelunking adventure of a lifetime in **Catbalogan**. Stop off in **Tacloban**, Imelda Marcos' hometown and the city most devastated by Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Typhoon Yolanda); rebuilding will be well underway. Head to nearby **Red Beach** for a dose of WWII history. Then take a ferry to the Visayas' gritty capital, **Cebu City**, for modern comforts and nightlife.

You'll be approaching week three of your trip by now, and possibly ready for some serious beach time. Take the route less travelled into Bohol, boarding a slow ferry to **Talibon**, then meander down the east coast to **Anda** for some serious chill time on the sand. Once you're sufficiently unwound, move south and catch another classic back-door ferry: 3½ hours from Jagna, Bohol, to **Camiguin Island**.

Camiguin can keep both adventurous travellers and beach bums satisfied for days. Spend at least several here, then hop over to mainland Mindanao by ferry or fly from Camiguin to Siargao via Cebu. This means for your last few days you'll be choosing between **Cagayan de Oro**, a university town with white-water rafting, and **Siargao**, the Philippines' top surf spot and an idyllic island with lagoons and mangroves galore.

MICHELE FALZONI/GETTY IMAGES ©



Top: Mt Mayon (p176)
 Bottom: Children at
 Malasag Eco-Tourism
 Village (p346)

TOM COOKREM/GETTY IMAGES ©





Voyage to the Visayas

Kick things off in **Cebu City**, soaking up some history during the day before partying it up at night. Then it's time to hit the islands: divers will want to head straight to **Malapascua**, where you've a good chance of encountering thresher sharks; while beach bums can catch some rays on laid-back **Bantayan Island**. A day or three should do you fine, before it's time to skip across to neighbouring island Negros by ferry.

Bus it to **Silay** for a fascinating journey through haciendas and sugar-cane plantations. Spend a night in one of its ancestry homes and dine on Spanish food in the ruins of a grand 1930s mansion. An hour's journey south takes you to **Bacolod**, where you can revel in great food and bar-hopping and go volcano-trekking to **Mt Kanlaon**. Then leg it down the coast for more beach action at the delightfully relaxed **Sugar Beach** – a divine sweep of fine white sand. Continue along the coast to the southeast for the university town **Dumaguete**, which is all about promenading on its scenic boulevard, great seafood and rowdy nightlife. From there you can reach tiny **Apo Island**, one of the Philippines' top underwater destinations.

Say goodbye to Negros, catching the ferry to the mystical island of **Siquijor**. Two or three days here is perfect, allowing you to take in a visit to one of its famed folk healers, laze on some stunning beaches, maybe try a dive or some caving, and absorb its mellow island vibe.

Bohol, a favourite of many travellers, is next. Spend a night in **Tagbilaran**, its lively capital, and take an evening kayak trip to see fireflies, before joining the crowds at **Panglao Island** for fantastic diving and boozy nights on Alona Beach. For a change of scenery take a trip into Bohol's jungle interior. Get an early start to catch the **Chocolate Hills** at dawn minus the crowds. Then of course there's the tarsiers: one of the world's smallest primates, these freaky, adorable critters are best seen at the Tarsier Research & Development Center.



1 MONTH North Luzon

Head north on a non-stop bus from Manila to **Baguio**, the Philippines 'summer capital' and gateway to the Cordillera. A few of the city's museums provide worthwhile introductions to the region's fascinating ethnographic makeup.

From Baguio, take a bus to relatively untouched **Kabayan**, centre of Ibaloi culture and base for hikes in Mt Pulag National Park. Next, **Sagada** beckons. This tranquil, backpacker village has cool temps, a laid-back vibe and top notch hikes.

The amphitheatre-like rice terraces of **Maligcong** are next. Take a jeepney to **Bontoc** and explore on a day trip or overnight in nearby Mainit. Several days can be spent on side trips to Kalinga villages where the contemporary world feels far away.

From Bontoc head to **Banaue** and **Batad**, site of Luzon's most famous rice terraces. Stunning hikes will keep you busy for days. Try to spend at least a night or two in a homestay.

With a little R&R in mind, catch a bus south to San Jose (you might have to overnight here) to connect to another bus to the surfing town of **Baler**.

2 WEEKS Water World: Palawan

Puerto Princesa, the capital and transport hub of this long slender island, is the most convenient place to begin. Spend an evening checking out the city's culinary scene and a day exploring the surrounding countryside on a motorcycle. From Puerto, organise a ride to **Sabang**, a laid-back beachfront village and the base for trips through a darkened riverine cave.

From Sabang, hightail it further north to **El Nido**, a town sandwiched between limestone cliffs and the fantastically picturesque **Bacuit Archipelago** filled with secret lagoons, beaches and rocky landscapes. Several days (at least) can be spent island hopping, kayaking to isolated stretches of white sand and downing drinks at beachfront restaurants at night.

From El Nido, take a boat that winds its way through a maze of islands up to **Coron Town** on Busuanga Island. From here, venture out to the striking lakes of **Coron Island** and some of the best wreck diving in the world. Flights and ferries are available to usher you back to Manila and reality.

Caramoan peninsula, immersing herself in Ivatan culture and (sort of) mastering wakeboarding. Anna also wrote the Diving in the Philippines chapter for this guide.



Paul Stiles

[Boracay & Western Visayas](#) When he was 21, Paul bought an old motorcycle in London and drove it to Tunisia. That did it for him. Since then he has explored 60 countries. With a passion for exotic islands, he's covered Madagascar, Borneo, and five Hawaiian Islands for Lonely Planet, and lived for four years at the base of El Teide, the tallest volcano in the Atlantic Ocean. For this book he happily overdosed on islands, covering 14 of them in five

weeks. Paul also wrote the Environment essay for this guide.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Michael Grosberg

Coordinating Author, Palawan, Mindanao This is the 5th edition of the Lonely Planet *Philippines* guide that Michael has worked on – the 1st was also his very first Lonely Planet assignment. Combined with other trips for work and pleasure, he's traversed much of the country from Batanes in the far north to General Santos in the south. At the end of every trip he's exhausted, sunburned and usually sustaining an injury (this time, a strained rotator cuff from a motorbike accident) but always itching to return. His most cherished experiences travelling in the Philippines involve unexpected moments of warmth and hospitality from people he meets along the way.

Michael has worked on more than 35 Lonely Planet guidebooks and lives in Brooklyn when not on the road.

Read more about Michael at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/michaelgrosberg



Greg Bloom

Mindoro, Cebu & Eastern Visayas Greg divides his time between Phnom Penh and Manila, writing, editing, taking photos and dispensing travel advice. This is his fourth stint on Lonely Planet's *Philippines*. He has also written the Philippines chapter for Lonely Planet's *Southeast Asia* guide, as well as working on many other titles. His 10-plus years of covering the Philippines have brought both highs (diving Apo Reef) and lows (being ejected from a jeepney in Palawan). When

not writing about Southeast Asia, Greg might be found snoutling around Russia or patrolling Asia's ultimate frisbee fields. Greg also wrote the Welcome To and Top 15 chapters and the People & Culture essay for this guide.

Read more about Greg at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/gbloom4



Trent Holden

Manila, Around Manila As a huge fan of energetic, gritty, chaotic megacities, Trent feels right at home whenever he visits Manila and is convinced it's Asia's coolest city. So it was with great delight that he got to tackle it and unveil its hidden charms for Lonely Planet. A Melbourne writer based in London, Trent has worked on 20 guides for Lonely Planet, covering destinations across Asia and Africa. It's his second time covering the Philippines. You can catch him on Twitter @hombreholden. Trent also

wrote the Outdoor Activities chapter.



Anna Kaminski

North Luzon, Southeast Luzon During this particular Pinoy venture Anna has been very lucky. Her wallet had been lost and found, she managed to avoid every single typhoon while travelling in typhoon season and she'd travelled further than ever before – as far as the remote Batanes. Six weeks and countless jeepney, bus, tricycle, bangka, RORO, fastcraft and motorbike rides later, her most treasured experiences include overnighting with Kalinga tribespeople, exploring the pristine

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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