

Philippines: Feb 27th—March 13th 2010

Join GLUG on our Island-hopping Adventure to the Visaya Islands of the Philippines.

The 7,107 islands of the Philippines are home to stunning beaches, pristine reefs, and a diverse marine ecosystem—not to mention some of the finest Dive sites in the World.

If you enjoy searching out the “little critters” - nudibranchs, sea-horses, Spanish dancers, and frogfish (to name but a few), then this is definitely the trip for you!

We'll be visiting three of the best-known locations in the Visayas, and since the transfers between the resorts are carried out by Diveboat (weather permitting), we'll be maximising the diving, without losing out on the variety of divesites.

Read more about each location below...

Dauin

15Km South of Dumaguete, the coast of Dauin offers excellent scuba sites, with both Coral Reef and Muck-diving opportunities. This area is a Macro photographer's dream, with a huge variety of Seahorses, Nudibranchs, Starfish, Shrimp, and more.

Seven Kilometres offshore, the tiny island of Apo has one of the oldest Marine Sanctuaries in the area. If you're tired of the small stuff, then a Dive on Coconut Point will reward you with large schools of Jacks and Barracuda—and a fast drift dive! Elsewhere around the island are beautiful reefs, and a Marine sanctuary with “Clownfish City”, Giant Clams, and occasionally Crocodile fish.

The Resort is the *Pura Vida Beach Resort*, a Swiss-owned resort, with 12 spacious deluxe rooms, along the beach and around the pool. All rooms have aircon, fan, cable TV, and hot showers. Wifi Internet Access is also available. The Beach Restaurant serves a variety of Asian and Western food, and the *Vida Spa* offers Asian massage after those tiring days under the water!



The on-site Gold Palm PADI 5-Star Sea Explorers Dive Centre has a mix of European and Local Dive instructors and guides. Diving is mainly from “Banca” outrigger boats, holding 8-12 divers each, although there is one small speedboat as well. The Dive Centre

also offers a full range of PADI courses, and they also have Nitrox available.

The Pura Vida Housereef was established as an artificial reef many years ago, and consists of several small wrecks, tyres, concrete blocks, and a steel pyramid where you can find lionfish, seahorses, stingrays, snapper and batfish, as well as hairy frogfish and ghost pipefish now and then.

A short walk away is one of Dauin's Marine Sanctuaries—Luca. A great combination of coral, sand, and seagrass areas with a remarkable biodiversity. Alongside schooling fish, you can also find stingrays, large groupers, morays, frogfish, and flamboyant cuttlefish, as well as colourful crabs and shrimps.

Five minutes up the coast is Sarah's Place—renowned for Mandarin fish, which emerge in late afternoon.



What's Included:

- **14 nights accommodation in Deluxe Air-conditioned rooms (Dauin: 5 nights; Siquijor: 4 nights; Alona Beach: 5 nights)**
- **Breakfast each day**
- **A minimum of 30 Boat dives, plus up to two Shore dives/day on the excellent House Reefs. (All dives are guided)**
- **Transfers to/from Cebu airport**
- **Transfers between Resorts**
- **All Marine Sanctuary Fees**

What's not:

- **Flights**
- **Lunch and Dinner (allow £15-20/day, including drinks)**
- **Drinks (except at breakfast)**
- **Excess Baggage charges (on ferries to/from Cebu City)**
- **Surcharges for longer day trips**
- **Nitrox (£21 for 10 fills)**
- **Equipment rental (£11/day for full set, excluding Computer; Computer rental £5/day)**

Price:

Divers: £1200

Non-Divers: £600

Itinerary:

February 27th: Arrive Philippines. If arriving in Manila, then transfer via Domestic flight to Dumaguete airport (own cost), and then via Resort transport (30 mins) to *Pura Vida Beach Resort*.

If arriving at Cebu/Mactan airport, then transfer via road & ferry (3h30mins) to Dumaguete, and then by Resort transport (20mins) to *Pura Vida Beach Resort*.*

February 28th-March 3rd: At Dauin. 2-3 Boat dives each day, plus shore diving on the House Reef. Day trip to Apo Island.

March 4th: Short transfer via Dive Boat to *Coco Grove Beach Resort*, stopping to make a couple of dives along the way.

March 5th-7th: At Siquijor Island. 2-3 Boat dives each day, plus shore diving on the House Reef

March 8th: Transfer by Dive boat to *Alona Vida Beach Resort*, Pangalao Island, stopping to dive (possibly at Apo Island) along the way.

March 9th-11th: At Alona Beach. 2-3 Boat dives each day, plus shore diving on the House Reef. Possible Day trip to Cabilao (extra cost).

March 12th: Pre-flight day. Possible morning dive. Option for day trip to Chocolate Hills (no—they're not really Chocolate!)

March 13th: Transfer by bus to Tagbilaran airport or ferry port (30mins), for flight to Manila (own cost) or Fast ferry (1h40mins) to Cebu.

***NB:** If arriving at Cebu airport, your flight must arrive before 1530 Local time, otherwise you will need to spend the night in Cebu City before transferring the next morning.

Alona Beach

Across the channel from Cebu is the beautiful island of Bohol, known for its pristine white sand beaches, and great diving.

Alona Beach on Pangalao Island has great coral gardens near the surface (ideal for snorkelling too, if you're bringing a non-diving partner!), as well as steep walls complete with caves, overhangs, and crevices teeming with fish and invertebrates. The House reef in front of Alona Beach slopes down to 20 metres, and is excellent for orientation and night dives, and there are many other excellent dive sites nearby, including Arco Point, with a colony of Sea Snakes, and a dive through tunnel starting at 8 metres and exiting at 18 metres. You're also likely to see schools of Glassfish, Moray Eels, Snake Eels, and Frogfish here.

A little further afield is the beautiful island of Balicasag, one of the top Philippines Dive sites. There's a Marine Sanctuary here, with a wall to 40m, a "Black Forest" with giant black corals, and "Diver's Heaven", with Schooling Jackfish and barracudas, turtles, sponges, anemones, and soft and hard corals.



The Resort here is the Alona Vida Beach Resort, a Swiss-managed resort with eight deluxe air-conditioned rooms in two two-story buildings. The resort is in the centre of Alona Beach, with plenty of bars and restaurants nearby. All rooms have aircon, fan, cable TV, and Wifi Internet access. There's also a small swimming pool.

The on-site Sea Explorers Diveshop is a PADI 5-star Gold Pam centre, with a Swiss manager, and several Filipino Dive guides. They have two "Bancas" - outrigger boats holding up to 12 divers, as well as a smaller Speedboat which takes up to six. Nitrox is available here too.

Siquijor

Siquijor is considered by many Filipinos to be a mystical island, full of witches and other supernatural phenomena. The Spanish called it *Isla del Fuego*, due to the eerie glow it gave off as galleons passed in the night (The glow was actually due to fireflies in the trees!)

The *Coco Grove Beach Resort* is located on the South West side of the island, around 4Km from the town of San Juan. It has 29 spacious bungalows, all with aircon, veranda, warm showers, and mini-bar. There are two swimming pools and three bars, as well as a restaurant.

The Sea Explorers operation here is a little smaller, but as with the other Resorts, it's a PADI Gold Palm 5-star Centre. Diving is from an 8-person speedboat, or, for larger groups, from a hired Banca. 10,12, and 15 litre tanks are available, but note that there is no Nitrox at this resort at the time of writing.

The House Reef here is a Marine Sanctuary, with over 170 different types of hard coral, large schools of unicorn fish, parrotfish, razor fish, an occasional Sea Turtle, plenty of nudibranchs and over 15 giant clams. It's also excellent for snorkelling.

A short boat ride away is Maite Point, a great sunset dive, where Mandarin fish can often be seen, as well as pipefish, ribbon eels, Spanish Dancers, and other nudibranchs. For more experienced divers, the Paliton Wall drops to 36 metres, with a spectacular cathedral starting at 30m, containing Black Coral, and Lionfish. Golden Sarjeants, Fusiliers, and Big mouth Mackerel cruise along the wall.

Inexperienced divers are also catered for at several dive sites, including "Sawang" - the max depth here is 18m, but there are small canyons and a swimthrough for added interest!



What you may see:



Mating Nudibranchs



Blue Ribbon Eel



Banded Sea Krait



Hawksbill Turtle



Pipefish



Anemone Crab



Schooling Jacks



Mantis Shrimp



Mandarin Fish



Crinoid Shrimp



Star Puffer



Sunset from Pangalao Island

The Small Print

1. While Sea Explorers normally try to arrange transfers by Dive Boat, with diving along the way, this is not guaranteed, since it is subject to boat availability and weather conditions. If transfer by Dive Boat is not possible, Sea Explorers will arrange alternative transfers by bus and ferry.
2. Sea Explorers guarantee a minimum of 30 dives over the 12 diving days that we are there. Additional guided dives (up to a total of 4 per day) can be made on the House Reefs at no extra charge.
3. Marine Sanctuary Fees (between US\$3 and US\$10 per day) have been included in the price, and will be paid locally by the trip leader.
4. All participants are responsible for settling their own accounts (for meals, drinks, Nitrox, etc.) on departure from each Resort.
5. All monies paid are non-refundable in the event of you cancelling, unless the space can immediately be refilled from a waiting list, or unless you provide a substitute. Note that you will be liable for any alteration fees incurred (e.g. Charges made by Sea Explorers for altering a booking).
6. It is a requirement of the trip that divers have Personal Medical/Travel Insurance that covers Scuba to the depth you plan to dive to. Non-divers must also have appropriate Medical/Travel Insurance, although it obviously doesn't need to cover Scuba.
7. There is no refund for unused Dives.
8. In the event of delayed arrival at Cebu, an overnight stay in Cebu City may be required. Sea Explorers will arrange transfers the next morning, but will not refund unused nights at the Resorts. The Overnight hotel would be at your own expense.
9. Each trip participant is responsible for organising their own flights—see box below.
10. The price for this trip has been calculated based on an Interbank Exchange rate of 1 Pound Sterling = 1.13 Euros (Sea Explorers quote their price in Euros). Provided that the Interbank Exchange rate is at least 1.03 Euros on the Payment dates, no additional fee will be payable. If the Exchange rate drops below 1.03 Euros on the Payment Dates, a surcharge will be payable. Should the Interbank Exchange Rate rise above 1.23 Euros on the Payment Dates, the Excess Euro amount will be used to offset the next payment, or each individual's account at the dive resorts.



One of Sea Explorer's Banca Dive boats

Flights

Participants are responsible for organising their own International flights. Should Domestic flights from/to Manila be required, assistance can be given with this, but it is at extra cost, and ultimately the participant's responsibility.

Several airlines fly internationally to Cebu/Mactan airport (CEB), including Philippine Airlines and Cathay Pacific. Transfers to & from Cebu airport are included in the price, but you should be aware that transfers are by Fast Ferry. Should the flight arrive after the last ferry of the day, you will need to either arrive a day earlier, or spend the night in Cebu City, and transfer the next morning. Likewise, flights departing Cebu before 11am may require you to transfer the previous evening.

The alternative is to fly to Manila, and then take a domestic flight to Dumaguete. On the return journey, the flight is from Tagbilaran back to Manila. Note that at the time of writing, the last flight from Manila to Dumaguete is at around 1440 Local time, and the first flight from Tagbilaran arrives at Manila at 0900.

Domestic flights are quite cheap (£30-£40 per leg), but check the luggage allowance—sometimes it's as little as 15Kg, and excess baggage can be anything from £1/Kg to £5/Kg.

Which option you choose will probably depend on the availability and times of your International flights.

Useful Websites:

www.skyscanner.net
www.cathaypacific.com
www.philippineairlines.com
www.cebupacificair.com
www.sea-explorers.com
www.pura-vida.ph
www.cocogrovebeachresort.com
www.alonavida.com

The following websites have information about the Philippines:

www.scubadivephilippines.com/SCUBAdestinations.shtml
diveshoppe2003.wordpress.com/2008/10/19/diving-dauin
www.divephil.com
www.scubatransel.co.uk/philippines/phildive.html#Apo

Payment Schedule:

On Booking:

£200 deposit

Due Sept 1st 2009:

50% of balance (£500 for divers, £200 for non-divers)

Due Jan 1st 2010:

Final payment (£500 for divers, £200 for non-divers)

Payments must be made by PayPal, or by Bank Transfer.

