

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS

www.pioneerexpeditions.com



The Philippines is a fragmented archipelago of thousands of tropical islands, populated by diverse peoples from many ethnic groups. The majority of Filipinos are sternly catholic but some small tribal groups retain their pre-Christian beliefs, adding to the colourful tapestry of Filipino life.

We explore part of what is known as the "Last Frontier" of the Philippines, the group of 1768 islands that make up the Palawan Province. Stretching out into the South China Sea towards the tip of Borneo, the main island consists largely of mountainous jungle. At 2086m, Mt Matalalingajan is the highest mountain, whilst Cleopatra's Needle stands at 1585m. These extraordinary islands and superb landscapes provide the perfect setting for this expedition.

5TH - 22ND NOV 2006 • 18 DAYS • 17 NIGHTS • £2450
PALAWAN • PHILIPPINES



2006 TOUR DOSSIER

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

- A pioneering swim across Lake Danao
- Boat trip along the longest underground river in the world
- Trek through tropical rainforests
- Dive and snorkel wrecks and pristine dive sites
- Search for the rare and unique dugong

» Manila to Manila (land only)

Join Manila on Sun 5th Nov
End Manila on Wens 22nd Nov

To book your place on this trip, please telephone us on 0845 0047 801 to check availability, complete a booking form and return it to us. You should include a cheque for your deposit of £300 with your booking form. On receipt of your booking form, we will send you a booking acknowledgement, along with your joining instructions and all other information relevant to this trip. If you have any further questions regarding this trip please contact us. You can liase with your expedition leader regarding all aspects of the trip pre-departure. Clients booked on this land only itinerary should make their way to the joining point in Manila. Please refer to the separate joining instructions for the name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with your expedition leader.

“ I was struck by Palawan's raw natural beauty... It has incredible offshore islands, unimaginable coral reefs, great beaches, virgin rainforest and very friendly locals. A total logging ban since the late '70s and strict fishing laws have preserved a unique wilderness. Its jungles, isolated by the sea, harbour flora and fauna found nowhere else on earth! Examples include the Palawan bearcat, stink badger and Palawan anteater. The province's forward thinking environmental protection and lack of commercialisation give its islands a true primeval beauty rare in today's world. Palawan's underwater world is phenomenal for both the diver and snorkeller. The range of seafood means you could eat a different fish dinner every day.



Adrian Gray, Director, Pioneer Expeditions Worldwide Ltd.

BOOK YOUR PLACE:

t: 0845 0047 801

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LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Day 1 Manila

Sunday 5th Nov. Arrive Manila and check into our hotel. Rendezvous with expedition leader as per joining instructions.

Overnight hotel with breakfast.

Day 2 Fly to Puerto Princessa, Palawan

We have the rest of the day to relax in this small bustling town situated on a deep, sheltered harbour. Known as the cleanest city in the Philippines, there is plenty to do. Browse for hats, machetes, sarongs and tropical produce at the exotic local market, which covers a whole block, visit the butterfly farm, penal colony and cemetery.

Wander the waterside as the fisherman bring in their colourful catch or explore on a tricycle.

Overnight hotel with breakfast.

Day 3 To Sabang

An early start in our private jeepney takes us along rugged dirt roads through tangled virgin rainforest to Sabang, near St Paul Subterranean National Park (supported by the WWF). We then trek for 2 hours to the small cove containing the concealed entrance to St Paul Cave. Here we transfer to outrigger canoe for guided trip and penetrate the mountain on the underground river, home to swiftlets and eight species of bats, fantastic rock formations, huge caverns, towering columns and enormous stalactites. After a picnic lunch we board our outrigger to Cacnipa Island.

Beach chalet with breakfast.

Day 4 Back to nature



Relax, island style.

The perfect place to acclimatise. This densely vegetated, natural tropical island has a beautiful palm fringed white sand beach

with crystal clear waters supporting abundant marine life over mature coral gardens. Within 20 metres of the beach, in just a few metres of water it is possible to see turtles, reef sharks and a huge array of colourful tropical fish. Although 3 kilometres across, there are a few good trails. We can therefore take the opportunity to road test our trekking equipment and try to traverse the island. We will break new ground where necessary and take a banca back to our traditional style chalets.

Beach chalet with breakfast.



Cacnipa Island

Day 5&6 In and around Port Barton

In the morning a short boat trip to this small beachside village, where we can take a leisurely walk to a series of waterfalls and an unusual banca trip through the coastal mangrove forest, home to the yellow striped mangrove snake, large lizards and monkeys. It is possible to take a trip to snorkel or dive on the nearby coral reefs and explore the outlying islands. In the evening we can enjoy a sundowner in a hammock and sample the incredible local seafood. For the adventurous an overnight stay on a tiny tropical island in native huts (complete with beautiful beach and warm shallow waters) can be arranged.

2 nights beach resort with breakfast.

Day 7&8 Trek to Lake Danao

We make an early start and drive to the start point for our trek up to Lake Danao. With everything we need for a 2 night stay in the rainforest, we set out with our local guides and porters up the mountain to the southern edge of the lake. As this route has not been tried before, although the area has been reconnoitred, it is hard to predict how arduous or easy the terrain will be.

Although not a great distance, the trek may involve some ascents and it is possible that we shall blaze our own trail for part of the way. With local knowledge though we anticipate trekking for 4 hours a day. Sleeping in 2 man tents, we can enjoy the sights and sounds of the rainforest at night. On the second night we camp at the water's edge ready for our pioneering swim across the lake.

2 nights jungle camping with all meals.

Day 9 Swim across the lake and proceed to Taytay

Lake Danao is an irregularly shaped freshwater lake set among the northern hills, with an approximate area of 700 hectares making it the largest lake on Palawan. Four major rivers drain directly into the lake, which has a variable depth ranging from 1-15 metres.

Water in the lake is mainly derived from rainfall and from rivers surrounding the area. No outlet has been found draining the lake, hence the level of the water rises and falls according to degrees of rainfall and evaporation. We aim to swim across the narrowest point of the lake from its southern shore supported by a motor boat, resting at two small islands if necessary.



Boat to El Nido

TO BOOK: t: +44 (0)845 0047 801

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Coron Bay



Yet another tropical sunset!



Friendly Dugong

Picture - Andrew Gray

This distance varies from under 1km up to 2.5 km. Depending on the size of the lake at the time of our attempt, the swim should take 2 or 3 hours at an easy pace. After completing the swim we shall either trek or boat back to an access trail. It may be necessary to wade part of the way if the valley is flooded.

The evening is spent in the ancient capital Taytay, with its 17th century fort and 300 year old church. We shall enjoy a celebratory meal before the coming week of island hopping, extraordinary sights and beautiful beaches. *Overnight hotel with breakfast.*

Day 10&11 El Nido

El Nido is the gateway to the spectacular Bacuit Archipelago, a muddle of limestone karst islands rising out of crystal clear waters, some to almost 600 metres in height.

Bizarre shapes, hidden lagoons, palm-fringed white sand beaches, giant rock faces, snaking sand bars and impressive coral reefs teeming with life are all part of this fabulous marine area. We stay in a superb island resort, making the most of its existing natural beauty. *2 nights beach chalets with all meals.*

Day 12 Fly to Busuanga and Coron Bay

Today we take a short flight by light aircraft to the Calamian group landing on the largest island, Busuanga. After a bumpy ride across the island we board an outrigger to an island resort which will be our base for next 5 days. During our time in Coron Bay there is plenty to do, and you can choose to spend your time as you wish.

You may want to be dropped off on a deserted island for the day with a picnic, make use of the dive centre facilities and explore the many wrecks and coral reefs or take one of the activities mentioned below. *Beach chalet with all meals.*

Day 13 - 16 In and around Coron Bay

We stay on a beautiful island 4 kilometres south of Busuanga at the heart of Coron Bay. It is a very special place consisting of dozens of tropical islands all with their own distinct character and attractions. The sea in this area is renowned for its first class snorkelling and diving with incredibly clear water, huge coral reefs just below the surface, steep drop offs, a myriad of marine life, big fish and sunken wrecks.

For 250 years Spanish galleons sailed the Philippine seas, laden with silver coins, gold, pearls and precious stones. More than 30 of these vessels were lost. In 1944 seven Japanese ships went down in the small-protected Coron Bay, where the wrecks now lie in shallow water. We can hike to hidden mountain lakes with their warm geothermal waters or relax in natural hot springs. There is also rock climbing, bird watching and trails to explore into the thick jungle.

The Calauit Game Sanctuary was established in the late 70's to provide a protected home for 8 endangered species from Africa and the endangered species from the Calamianes Group. Here you can see giraffes, zebras, impalas, bushbucks, waterbucks and elands (optional). The original stock of 104 exotic animals now numbers over 500.

We will search for the exotic dugong, also known as the sea cow. These sirenians can grow to three metres in length and can weigh 400 kilograms. The name sea cow refers to the fact that they graze on the sea grasses, which form meadows in sheltered coastal waters. Whole plants are uprooted as they feed and a telltale feeding trail is left.

Coming across a dugong whilst out snorkelling or diving is an unforgettable experience of a lifetime. We can stay overnight on one of the many deserted islands, camping under the stars on the beach. There are no facilities, but with amazing sunsets and a roaring fire it is a truly magical experience. *4 nights with all meals.*

Day 17 Fly to Manila

We travel to Busuanga to take a flight to Manila, where there is time for sightseeing and shopping. *Overnight hotel with breakfast.*

Day 18 Tour ends Wednesday 22nd Nov

**Pioneer Expeditions
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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Entry Visas NOT required by UK, Aust, NZ, USA, CAN citizens for a stay of up to 21 days only. Other nationalities should consult their travel agent or consular office. All nationalities require a full passport valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay.

FLIGHTS

International flights are not included. If you require information regarding airlines and routes please contact us. Airport Transfers in Manila are included so it is important that we have all your flight details.

VACCINATION AND PROTECTION

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Malaria, Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis against Malaria (e.g. Paludrine, Chloroquine, Mefloquine and Doxycycline etc.).

INSURANCE

Adequate travel insurance is mandatory for everyone who participates in a Pioneer expedition. Please bring a copy of your insurance policy and contact numbers to give to your expedition leader in case of illness.

ACCOMMODATION

When possible we will stay in first class and excellent quality accommodation. However, the jungle camps are primitive and some traditional chalets are basic, so please do not expect all accommodation to be of a luxurious standard. Based on twin occupancy we use a variety of accommodation, which is

often dictated by what is available and most suitable. Single occupancy is available at some locations at an extra cost.

ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION

If you require additional accommodation either before or after the trip, we can book this for you (subject to availability) provided you notify us at the time of booking. Payment for this must be made to us, for up-to-date prices please contact our office.

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You will need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price (see meal plan), other optional excursions, souvenirs and items of a personal nature. AMEX travellers cheques and cash are widely accepted.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

Diving from £20 per dive, multi-dive deals available. Snorkelling equipment hire £3, although we strongly recommend that you bring your own mask and snorkel. Calaut Game Sanctuary £18.

MEAL PLAN

Local food and drink: Meals not included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveller. You should calculate for buying 6 lunches and 9 dinners. Some approximate comparative costs are given below:

	UK	PALAWAN
Soft drink	£0.50	£0.20
Bottle of beer	£1.50	£0.30
2 course meal	£15.00	£5.00
3 course meal	£22.00	£10.00

EXPEDITION TEAM

Maximum group size is 8 plus expedition leader, English speaking local guides, drivers and, where appropriate, local experts.

TRANSPORT

We use a number of different modes of transport. Overland travel will be in private jeepney, minibus or 4-wheel drive. We use a number of different boats varying from small kayaks to large sea-going outriggers. We have internal flights from Manila to Puerto Princessa, El Nido to Busuanga and Busuanga returning to Manila.

BAGGAGE

Take as little as possible as there is a lot of moving from one mode of transport to another in remote places. There is a 10 kgs luggage allowance for internal flights. We recommend one main piece of waterproof luggage (preferably a rucksack or strong soft bag) which can be stored, and a large waterproof day sack for trekking.

Note: While our intention is to adhere to the day to day route as printed overleaf, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary and night stops may vary from those suggested. The day to day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. We cannot guarantee that the expedition will run exactly according to the proposed itinerary. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions and difficulties with transportation, can lead to enforced changes. The expedition leader will make any changes where necessary.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

Clothing

This is the tropics so pack for hot conditions and remember to travel light!

- On our overnight trek take two sets of clothes, one to trek in which will get wet due to the humidity and a dry set to change into at night
- A long sleeved shirt and long trousers for protection against insects at night. Light cotton clothing is best
- A very lightweight breathable poncho or waterproof to protect from showers
- A warm top in case it gets cool while camping
- Don't forget your swimming costume
- A sarong has a multitude of uses from a towel to a headscarf
- Sports sandals
- Good lightweight, well worn-in walking boots or trainers

Equipment

- A head torch is useful for St Paul Cave and necessary for our nights in the jungle
- A large (2 litre) water bottle or water bag & iodine tablets for trek
- Snorkel and mask (fins can be hired if necessary)
- Insect repellent (at least 30% Deet content is best)
- A bar of biodegradable soap (not widely available in Palawan)
- Sports towel
- Binoculars and fast camera film (useful in the jungle)
- A sleeping bag liner or sleeping sheet for our nights in the jungle and camping on deserted islands
- Sunblock (15+), sun hat and sunglasses
- Small first aid kit with your own supply of plasters, aspirin, diarrhoea tablets, blister kit & antiseptic