

Southern Leyte, The Visayas, and Malapascua, Philippines

10 nights Itinerary

- **Meeting point for embarkation:** Marina Seaview Restaurant, Mactan Island
- **Embarkation time:** 13:00
- **Disembarkation:** 10:00

Transfers between Cebu Airport or local hotels and Marina Seaview Restaurant are provided free of charge on embarkation and disembarkation day.

Transfers to hotels and resorts outside of the Cebu City area can be arranged for an additional charge.

Marine Park & Port Fees: 155 USD per person (payable onboard only)

PLEASE NOTE: *Marine park fees are subject to change without notice.* The applicable amount at the time of departure will be added to your onboard extras to be paid before disembarkation.

Minimum dive certification and experience

Diving conditions in and around the Visayas are generally suitable for all levels of divers although some sites can be challenging for inexperienced divers due to currents.

Divers wishing to join this itinerary are advised to have Advanced Open Water certification*, or equivalent, with a minimum of 10 logged dives and experience in strong currents.

*PADI Advanced Open Water certification can usually be completed on board if requested and confirmed in advance.

Guests who do not fulfil the minimum certification and experience requirements may be denied participation in some or all dives.

It is a mandatory requirement for all divers to have insurance which covers scuba diving activities, including emergency evacuation and recompression chamber costs.

Itinerary Details

Participation in this liveboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our Terms & Conditions as outlined here: www.masterliveboards.com/terms-conditions.

Number of scheduled dives: Up to 32

This itinerary involves some long-distance travel and, whilst we attempt to ensure the number of planned dives is fulfilled, bad weather and sea conditions can affect the boat's ability to reach a specific dive site in good time and may impact on the number of dives that are possible.

Safety and dive briefings are conducted in English. If you, or any of your group, do not speak or understand English, please contact us.

The following is an example of the day-to-day itinerary.

Day 1: Embarkation at 13:00 followed by lunch and briefings. If time allows there may be a check dive scheduled but *diving on embarkation day is not guaranteed*.

Day 2-9: Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and a sunset or night dive. A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 3
- Snack
- Briefing for Dive
- Dinner

Day 10: Usually 2 morning* dives before Philippine Siren commences the cruise back to the marina.

Day 11: Following breakfast on board, disembarkation is scheduled for between 09:30 and 10:00.

*We kindly request that guests check their flight departure times to ensure that they leave a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and the departure of their flight.

Following is a sample of the dive sites which we may visit during your time aboard Philippine Siren.

The safety of our guests is paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternate locations, should we be unable to visit those sites listed below.

Guests are welcome to suggest preferred dive sites to the Cruise Director who will be happy to accommodate guests' wishes where possible and the schedule allows for it.

PLEASE NOTE: Strobes and flashlights are NOT permitted at locations where thresher sharks or whale sharks are present.

Reef Hooks are not permitted at Kimud or Monad Shoals.

Malapascua

Malapascua Island and the surrounding area offer a wide variety of dive sites and potential marine life encounters. The shy and elusive thresher sharks* are one of the main attractions for many divers although there are plenty of other shark species to be seen along with sea snakes, rays, turtles and much more. The reefs directly off the shores of Malapascua Island are relatively shallow with patches of coral and some great 'muck' sites. In contrast, the outer reefs offer stunning walls, pinnacles and plateaus with plenty of colourful corals and an abundance of marine life.

Gato Island

Located Northwest of Malapascua Island, Gato is a marine reserve and sea snake sanctuary which hosts a diverse range of marine life and stunning underwater topography. The small rocky island features a 22 metre deep, 30 metre long 'tunnel' that cuts right the way through the island where whitetip reef sharks can usually be spotted hiding in the caves or hanging around the exit. Gato is also a breeding location for sea kraits as well as boasting a plethora of macro delights, crustaceans and corals.

Kimud Shoal

Located southeast of Malapascua Island, Kimud Shoal is a small sunken island with a top covered in patches of hard coral at depths of 12-16 m (40-52 ft) and steep sides extending downwards to more than 200 metres. The endangered, pelagic thresher shark regularly visits this area to be cleaned by several species of cleaner wrasse. It is also known for occasional, but rare sightings of hammerhead sharks which visit the area between December and May. Other pelagic visitors include mobulids and tuna while the coral and overhangs provide hiding places for a variety of shrimps, moray eels and frogfish.

Chocolate Island

The topography of this little island is typical of the area surrounding Malapascua with shallow reef tops full of soft corals and algae that are home to a variety of nudibranchs as well as eels and sea snakes. The shallow bottom (16 m/50 ft) around the island is the perfect place to find odd-shaped bottom dwellers such as bearded scorpionfish, devil scorpionfish and dwarf cuttlefish as well as different kinds of sea stars, sea urchins with urchin clingfish inside, black velutina snails and ringed pipefish.

Southern Leyte

PLEASE NOTE: Scuba diving is NOT allowed at the locations that are frequented by the whale sharks. Therefore, those sites will be offered as a snorkelling option only.

Whale sharks have been visiting the coast of Pintuyan for decades. Small-scale community-run ecotourism started in 2007 out of Son-ok village through a local people's organisation called KASAKA. In 2009, the municipality passed an ordinance to regulate ecotourism activities and minimise potential disturbance to the whale sharks, so ensuring a long-term sustainable livelihood for the community of Son-ok.

KASAKA are responsible for the overall management, control, supervision and maintenance of both the whale shark interaction tours and the protection of the Son-ok Fish Sanctuary. One of their main duties is providing spotters and tour guides for the whale shark watching tours that visit the area.

The whale sharks come to Pintuyan and Liloan to forage on zooplankton blooms that happen close to shore. If there is enough food for them, the whale sharks tend to stick around for a while; Some of them even stay for the entire season (that can last for 1 to 6 months) while others migrate in and out during the season.

Sogod Bay

Napantao Fish Sanctuary, San Francisco

Arguably, this is one of the best dive sites in the Philippines. This long-established (since 1996), community-enforced marine protected area hosts a rich selection of marine life. Hard and soft corals make up the slope to the reef wall. The wall drops down to about 50 metres. Large quantities of fish of all colours can be seen here; anthias, damsel fish and various kinds of wrasse.

Moreover, there are hunting trevallies, some resident hawksbill turtles, giant frogfish, white-tip reef sharks under big coral structures, and occasionally, whale sharks swim by the wall during their season in the area.

Santa Paz Sanctuary

This rocky and dark sand muck dive is full of critters. Robust pipe fishes, ornate ghost pipefish, and hairy frogfish are found here in the dark sandy substrate. Although cephalopods can be seasonal, coconut, mimic and wunderpus octopuses can be found here. The last one is a night predator so keep an eye out for them on a sunset or night dive.

Son-ok Point, Pintuyan

Son-ok Point is located 15 km south of Napantao and is rich in soft corals although some hard coral cover can still be found. The currents can be strong during tidal changes, but when there is a current, fish are swarming everywhere. Frogfish and hawksbill turtles are found here along the reef's edge at 12 - 15 m. Like in Napantao, when it is the season, you may be lucky enough to witness whale sharks in their natural habitat.

Padre Burgos

Maureen's Place

A small banca (traditional Filipino boat) wreckage can be found in the shallow waters whilst the reef slopes down to a whip coral-covered wall where schools of snappers and bannerfish hang out in the gentle currents. Different coloured pygmy seahorses can be found in the Gorgonian fans and stingrays can be seen hiding beneath the table corals.

Padre Burgos Pier

At just 6 metres, divers could spend hours at this wondrous site and still not find all of its hidden gems; Freckled frogfish, stargazers, seahorses, ghost pipefish, blue ring octopus, pleurobranchus, nudibranchs all muddle together on the soft coral and sponge laden pier supports. Juvenile batfish can also be seen mimicking leaves in the shallow water, and at sunset, the mandarin fish come out to play; definitely a spot for the weird and wonderful.

Limasawa Island

History was made on this island. In 1521, it was here that the first Catholic Mass was held in the Philippines following the arrival of the Portuguese explorer and conquerer, Ferdinand Magellan. We can organise a visit to the island to see the historic site.

Gunter's Wall

Covered with corals, sponges and sea fans, the wall here is a great place to spot nudibranchs and crustaceans such as pink squat lobsters. Turtles and sea snakes are also common and the shallow coral gardens are a superb place to hunt for leaf fish, robust ghost pipefish and seahorses.

Adrian's Cove

Similar to Gunter's Wall, Adrian's Cove features a coral-covered wall with a swim-through and shallow reef top which is teeming with brightly coloured reef fish. Xeno-crabs can often be found clinging to sea whips at this dive site, as well as many sand-dwelling fish such as gobies, jawfish and moray eels.

Lighthouse

A small, relatively shallow wall around the Northern tip of Limasawa Island where hundreds of fire urchins provide housing to Coleman shrimps and zebra crabs and on the sandy bottom. The top of the reef is adorned with gorgeous hard and soft corals; a nice and easy drift dive along the margin.

Limasawa Pier

The area around the pier at Limasawa is a superb location to find small macro species such as frogfish, cowries, crabs, shrimps and nudibranchs. Whale sharks sometimes come into this area at night to feed on plankton.

Balicasag Island

The small island of Balicasag, just off the tip of Panglao and Bohol Island is characterised by its many turtles, coral gardens and steep walls which provide overhangs, cracks & crevices in which to search for a variety of marine species. This area has been a marine protected area since July 2017 and allows two dives per day only with valid permits.

Divers Heaven

One of the big attractions of this aptly named, beautiful dive site is the hawksbill and green sea turtles that can often be seen here. The shallows comprise a sandy area covered with seagrass which the turtles come to graze on and also has plentiful coral formations, reef fish and macro species. The coral coverage becomes denser and more extensive as you progress further down the steeply sloping reef which reaches depths of 40+ metres and features many ledges and overhangs with lots of soft corals, gorgonians and sponges. Goldband fusiliers, Big-Mouth mackerel, Midnight snappers, Redtooth Triggerfish, Angelfish, Barracuda, Bluefin trevally and Bigeye trevally are just some of the fish that you are likely to see in large numbers along the reef. Leaf scorpionfish are another delight that can be found in this aquarium-like environment as well as numerous nudibranchs, eels and anemone fish.

Black Forest

Named for the proliferation of black corals that can be found at depths that extend beyond recreational limits, Black Forest is well known for its biodiversity and beauty.

Often dived as a drift, the reef forms a steep slope with a wide variety of corals and marine life. Damsel fish, anthias, chromis, scorpionfish, wrasses, turtles and more can be found going about their business in and around the corals; in the blue, schools of jacks, blue-dash fusiliers and barracuda are common sightings as well as Titan triggerfish and Napoleon Wrasse.

Bohol Island

The Anda region along the eastern shore of Bohol offers diving mostly along gorgeous walls, Bohol features some amazing dive sites.

Coco White

Coco White is an extensive wall that is often defined as two dive sites, namely Coco White North and Coco White South. Dropping steeply from 4 metres to 25+ metres, the entire length is richly covered in corals and alive with fish and macro life. Seafans provide camouflage for pygmy seahorses, Mantis shrimps creep out for rocky holes, turtles feed on soft corals, orangutan crabs nestle in the lobes of bubble corals, frogfish pretend to be sponges and Spanish dancers and blue-ringed octopus may be found hiding in crevices.

Snappers Cave

This dive site comprises a vibrant, steep wall reaching down to 30 metres which features a wide cave near the bottom. Crevices and overhangs conceal a plethora of delights including blue dragons, banana nudibranchs and leopard shrimps. Groups of reef squid and banded sea kraits can also often be seen here as well as turtles and a variety of colourful reef fish.

Paradise Gardens

Another beautiful wall dive that starts as a shallow slope adorned with healthy, colourful hard and soft corals, sponges and crinoids. The vibrancy of the reef top is enhanced by the rainbow of fish that weave around them and the turtles that use it as a breeding ground. The wall is no less rich in life with schools of Moorish idols, snappers, and jacks being just some of the large fish you can encounter. Search for seahorses at around 20-30 depth and scour the nooks and crannies for nudibranchs, eels, shrimps and other small creatures.

Cabilao Island

There are many interesting and colourful walls and coral gardens around the island of Cabilao; we usually choose from the following:

Gorgonian Wall

Starting at 5 metres and extending to a depth of 60 metres, this 100-metre-long wall is awash with giant gorgonians, corals and sponges. Also featuring many overhangs and small caves, fish activity is plentiful and hidden wonders are waiting for the eagle-eyed to find including pygmy seahorses, frogfish and rare nudibranch specimens.

Lighthouse

So named because the site is in front of the lighthouse on the northwest tip of Cabilao Island, this is a sloping wall covered with seagrass and corals which is often frequented by green turtles. Amongst the corals and sponges, you are also likely to find frogfish, cowrie snails, ghost pipefish, stargazers, Pegasus seamoths, a variety of crustaceans, and electric file clams.

Talisay Tree

Along the northern shore of Cabilao, Talisay Tree is another gorgonian-covered wall with a shallow seagrass garden interspersed with elephant ear and barrel sponges. The site offers some fantastic wide-angle and macro photo opportunities with bubble corals playing host to their commensal shrimps and orangutan crabs.

Cambaquiz

Cambaquiz is a favourite location for a sunset or night dive. Comprising a gentle sandy slope dotted with clusters of soft corals, sea pens and seagrass there is an abundance of delights to be discovered here by torchlight. Stargazers lie camouflaged in the sand while an array of crabs and shrimps can be found hiding in the corals and grassy patches along with seahorses, pipefish and wunderpus to name just a few.

Should you have any questions regarding the dive sites or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team at dive@masterliveboards.com who will be pleased to assist and advise you.