

Palawan 'CAN'

CULTURE. The island province of Palawan has much to offer to those who want to get to the heart and soul of the Philippines. The more adventurous traveller can visit one of Palawan's indigenous people, the Batak, whose settlements are on the slope of Cleopatra's Needle. The Tabon and Palawan Museums with their displays of prehistoric artifacts from the Tabon caves and items from the Spanish era bring the areas' local history to life and are well worth exploring. There is an amazing variety of architecture from the famous Lighthouses at Poblacion and Brooke's Point, to the Fort at Cagayancillo and Culion Cathedral. For a more lively experience of Palawan culture, there are numerous colourful and exciting festivals held throughout the year featuring parades, processions, religious ceremonies and dance displays.

ADVENTURE. The opportunities for adventure in Palawan are endless. The province has some of the most exciting and challenging dive sites in the world with a myriad of marine life to view and photograph. Kayaking and rafting among the spectacular limestone cliffs and the extensive coral reefs provide exhilarating challenges with stunning backdrops. There is also sailing, fishing, and canoeing for those who prefer a slightly slower paced activity. Horse riding and inland trekking are 'must-do's' with the hilly terrains of Nagtabon Beach and the El Nido Cliffs ideal spots for both activities.

NATURE. The natural environment of Palawan is varied and breathtaking. From game and marine reserves to lakes and subterranean rivers, coral reefs and fabulous beaches there is much to experience. UNESCO has sited Tubbataha Reef and the Saint Paul Subterranean River National Park as World Heritage sites with good reason. There are numerous outstanding seaside areas to explore with Honda Bay, Meara Marina, Starfish Island and Snake Island, some of the most beautiful places in which to swim, snorkel and dive.



Palawan is 1,780 islands of pristine white beaches, dramatic rock formations, secret coves and underground mysteries. An untamed land, a nature lover's paradise and an adventurer's dream: Palawan certainly lives up to its image as the last frontier.

The island province has been declared a nature sanctuary of the world and for good reason. It is wrapped in a mantle of rainforests, outstanding dive sites, majestic mountains, primeval caves and shimmering beaches. It bursts with exotic flora and fauna and is surrounded by a coral shelf that abounds with varied and colourful marine life.

The long narrow strip of the main island, located southwest of Manila, is around 425 kilometres long and 40 kilometres at its widest. On both sides of a backbone of tall mountain ranges, an irregular coastline meanders in intervals of vertical limestone cliff and sweeping white sand. This unique topography provides a wealth of diverse pursuits for the traveller to its shores.

Palawan was also named "World's Best Island" by Travel+Leisure for 2013 and included in Condé Nast Traveller's "Destination to Watch in 2013."

Palawan

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A nature lover's paradise and an adventurer's dream

Getting there

Major Airport Gateways: Puerto Princesa, El Nido, Sandoval, Busuanga and Cuyo. Distance from Manila to Puerto Princesa is 306 nautical miles

Air Transport: Various domestic carriers fly to Palawan's major gateways from Manila (20+ flights daily), Cebu (flights 4 times a week).

Water Transport: Regular commuter ferries from Manila and Mindoro have scheduled stops to Puerto Princesa, Coron and Cuyo (Manila - Coron approximately 12 hours, Coron - Puerto Princesa approximately 12 hours).

Hotels and Resorts

Accommodations to suit all budgets can be found in all major municipalities, and cities and islands.

Puerto Princesa

The capital of Palawan, Puerto Princesa is acclaimed as the Philippines' cleanest and greenest city. It boasts of a multitude of tourist accommodation and facilities that can be used as a jump-off to a wide array of attractions, both within and around the capital.

From beaches to wildlife reserves, mountain lakes to underground rivers, Puerto Princesa is at the heart of nature at its very best. Within the city itself there are local markets selling exceptional native products and museums showcasing the historical and archaeological features of the province.

The city is readily accessible by plane from Manila and other major cities such as Davao, Cebu, Busuanga and El Nido. It is also the jump-off point for islands further afield, such as the mystical Cuyo island chain or the world-famous Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park.

Attractions around Puerto Princesa

- 1. Honda Bay** – consisting of several islets with beautiful beaches, Honda Bay is the ideal place to go for swimming, diving, snorkeling, island hopping and beach combing.
- 2. Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm** – the minimum-security inmates of this prison are not locked up but instead, live in dormitories with their families and work on one of the many agricultural projects located within the prison farm. Tourists can buy handicrafts produced by the inhabitants.



Fast Facts

Time Zone: GMT + 8

Visa: Only required if staying more than 30 days

Climate: Northeast Monsoon: November - Feb
Southeast Monsoon: June - October
Favourable for sea-travel: March - May

Rainfalls: June-December

Average Temperature Year-round: 24°C – 32°C

Attire: Light casual clothes all year round

Money: Philippine Pesos. Check with the local banks for current exchange rates. All major credit cards accepted

Water: Bottled water available in resorts, restaurants and convenience stores

Communications: International and direct dial phone and fax Internet cafes are widely available

What to Bring: Sun block, tanning lotions, insect repellent, personal medication, swimwear and accessories, etc.

Geography: 1,780 islands and islets



3. Palawan Wildlife Reserve and Conservation Centre – the centre is both a tourist attraction and research facility, with the aim of conducting studies on how best to preserve endangered species of crocodiles. It also has a mini-zoo featuring some of Palawan's unique endemic species of animals.

4. Vietnamese Village – this village was erected to house the "Vietnamese boat people" displaced by the Vietnam War, and who came to Palawan in the late 70s. Today, the residents are part of the local landscape and have integrated into the cultural fabric of the city. The village offers superb Vietnamese cuisine.

5. Butterfly Garden – tourists are surrounded by butterflies in this garden of exotic Philippine flowering plants. Occasionally, one can witness the emergence of a young butterfly and other unusual insects.

6. Mitra's Ranch – an ideal picnic spot overlooking Honda Bay and the soft breeze is refreshing after an entire day of being under the sun.

Attractions to the North of Puerto Princesa

7. Puerto Princesa Underground River National Park – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and New 7 Wonders of Nature featuring a spectacular limestone karst landscape alongside 8 kilometres of traversable subterranean river which leads into an underground cavern/lagoon commonly known as the "Cathedral."

8. Stanlake Island Tabon Bird Sanctuary – a bird refuge where a number of endangered species can be found. This bird watcher's paradise requires some traveling by land and sea. Roxas provides the jump-off to this remote island.

9. Batac Tribal Visit and Jungle Trek – an endangered indigenous mountain-dwelling tribe with a dwindling number of less than 500. En route to this remote village, one treks along virgin forests, untouched for centuries. Overnight stays in tents along the fringes of the village are possible.

10. El Nido Marine Reserve – situated in spectacular Bacuit Bay, many travelers have identified this corner of Palawan as the most beautiful place on earth. It is a popular nature spot boasting of extraordinary natural sceneries and ecosystems such as rainforests, mangroves, white sand beaches, coral reefs, and limestone cliffs. Visitors may even dive amongst the rare aquatic mammal, the Dugong.

Attractions to the South of Puerto Princesa

11. Tabon Caves – a 138-hectare complex of rugged cliffs and deep slopes. Known as "The Cradle of Philippine Civilization," the caves have yielded the fossil remains of the 22,000-year-old Tabon man. Of the 200 caves, seven are open to visitors, including Tabon Cave, which was used for habitation and / or burial sites by ancient peoples.

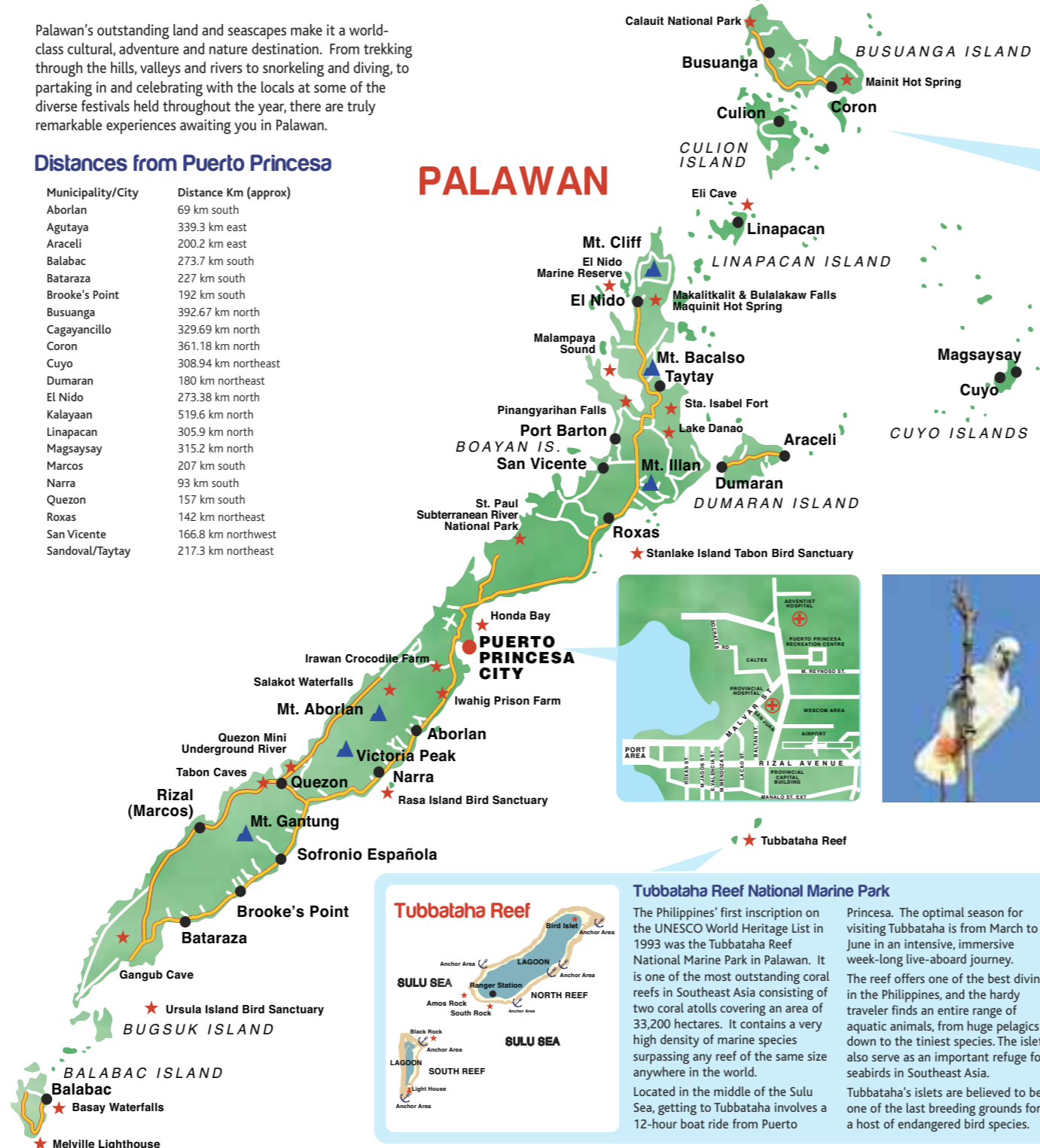
12. Rasa Island Bird Sanctuary – a spectacular island sanctuary that is home to 87 unique bird species, including the Palawan hornbill. Tours also include visits to waterfalls and mangrove forests.

Palawan's outstanding land and seascapes make it a world-class cultural, adventure and nature destination. From trekking through the hills, valleys and rivers to snorkeling and diving, to partaking in and celebrating with the locals at some of the diverse festivals held throughout the year, there are truly remarkable experiences awaiting you in Palawan.

Distances from Puerto Princesa

Municipality/City	Distance Km (approx)
Aborlan	69 km south
Agutaya	339.3 km east
Araceli	200.2 km east
Balabac	273.7 km south
Bataraza	227 km south
Brooke's Point	192 km south
Busuanga	392.67 km north
Cagayancillo	329.69 km north
Coron	361.18 km north
Cuyo	308.94 km northeast
Dumaran	180 km northeast
El Nido	273.38 km north
Kalayaan	519.6 km north
Linapacan	305.9 km north
Magsaysay	315.2 km north
Marcos	207 km south
Narra	93 km south
Quezon	157 km south
Roxas	142 km northeast
San Vicente	166.8 km northwest
Sandoval/Taytay	217.3 km northeast

PALAWAN



Calamianes Islands

The Calamianes group consists of 4 major islands – Busuanga, Calait, Coron, and Culion. Like the rest of Palawan, the Calamianes offers a plethora of activities for the adventure-hungry visitor, ranging from hiking, rappelling, diving, snorkeling, archeological exploration, kayaking/rafting, sport fishing, beach hopping, tribal encounters and more. In the case of this island chain, however, everything is within striking distance to one another – a mini-Palawan, so to speak.

Busuanga is the largest island in the Calamianes group and serves as the access-point to the rest of the chain. Regular flights land in Busuanga Airport from Manila, Puerto Princesa or Boracay. 45 minutes from the airstrip is the island capital Coron, providing accommodation to backpackers and adventure seekers at very affordable prices. Coron is a market town where travelers will find most of their needs before proceeding further afield.

Busuanga's charms are found all along its rugged coastlines and surrounding islets. Some of the most beautiful islands and resorts are found just a few minutes

offshore. The islands surrounding Busuanga offer some of the most diverse eco-systems in the country, and are considered to be among the best diving areas in the Philippines.

The islands' claim to fame are the world-famous Coron Wrecks, which are mostly found in varying depths within Coron Bay. During World War II, the area served as a secure anchorage for the Japanese Fleet. But on 24 September 1944, a US Navy strike force of fighters and dive-bombers attacked the Japanese supply fleet of up to 24 ships. This resulted in one of the most condensed spectacular wreck diving sites in the world.

Coron Island (not to be confused with Coron town) is also blessed with a wide range of dive sites, ranging from shallow reefs to spectacular underwater caves. Coron is also famous for its seven mountain lakes, which are indeed the main overland attractions that provide views of stunning limestone cliffs from the Jurassic era. Among them are Kayangan Lake, which has been adjudged as the cleanest in all of the Philippines, Barracuda Lake, which is a challenging dive for those in search of the

underwater Barracuda Cave and the Twin Lagoons which are connected by a small underwater passage where cool, fresh mountain waters mix with the warm and salty waters from the sea.

Most parts of the island are sacred ancestral lands belonging to the Tagbanua, a Northern Palawan tribe. Some areas are not open to visitors, but despite this, the parts that are open provide some of the most attractive landscapes in the entire region.

Between Busuanga and Coron Islands is a place called Siete Pecados – seven islets in a semi-circular string blessed with a shallow but stunningly beautiful coral garden. Nearby is the Maquinit Hot Springs, where visitors can rest tired bodies and limbs in therapeutic pools of hot volcanic water gushing into the open sea.

Calait Island became home to exotic animals from Kenya in response to an appeal by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to provide a sanctuary for endangered African wildlife. Today, one finds herds of giraffe, zebra and other African animals living side by side with the local species of animals, like the Calamian deer and the bearcat. The surrounding waters are also a refuge for sea turtles, giant clams and dugongs.

Culion, a leper colony in the early 20th century is now a first rate town possessing the best medical facilities in the island chain. It currently has a thriving research and medical community driven by its history to be at the forefront of medical developments.

The Historical Walk of Culion, which takes one to the Leprosy Museum, The Culion Sanitarium and General Hospital is well worth a visit as is the Church of the Immaculate Conception and the Plaza Avellana-Basa. For the more adventurous visitor, the interior of the island can be accessed either by trekking or by bicycle whilst the outer fringes of Culion are studded with untouched mangrove forests waiting to be explored.

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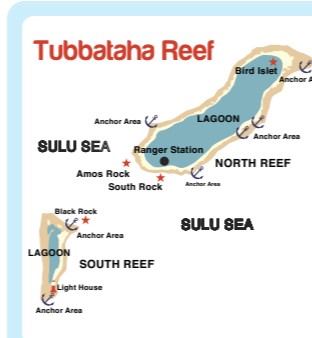
Useful Websites for the Region:

- Palawan <http://www.palawan.com/>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palawan>
- Honda Bay http://www.philippinecountry.com/philippine_beach/hondabay.html
- Puerto Princesa Underground River National Park <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/652>
http://www.pcsd.ph/protected_areas/stpaul.htm
<http://world.new7wonders.com/the-new-7wonders-of-nature/puerto-princesa-underground-river-philippines/>
- Tabon Caves <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1860>
- Iwahig Penal Colony <http://www.wirephoto.com/swallace/iwahig.files/iwahig.html>
- El Nido <http://www.elnidopalawan.com/>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5034/>
- Northern Palawan Calamianes <http://www.ddivers.com/>
- Coron <http://www.coronwrecks.com/sites.htm>
<http://www.philippinediving.com/sites.htm>
- Tubbataha Reef National Park <http://www.tubbatahareef.org/>
- All Regions www.itsmorefuninthephilippines.com/

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Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park
The Philippines' first inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993 was the Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park in Palawan. It is one of the most outstanding coral reefs in Southeast Asia consisting of two coral atolls covering an area of 33,200 hectares. It contains a very high density of marine species surpassing any reef of the same size anywhere in the world. Located in the middle of the Sulu Sea, getting to Tubbataha involves a 12-hour boat ride from Puerto Princesa. The optimal season for visiting Tubbataha is from March to June in an intensive, immersive week-long live-aboard journey. The reef offers one of the best diving in the Philippines, and the hardy traveler finds an entire range of aquatic animals, from huge pelagics down to the tiniest species. The islets also serve as an important refuge for seabirds in Southeast Asia. Tubbataha's islets are believed to be one of the last breeding grounds for a host of endangered bird species.