

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES PHILIPPINES – PALAWAN

TEN DAY TRIP WITH EIGHT DAYS SEA KAYAKING

The volcanic Philippines are a cluster of more than 7000 islands lying north of the Malay Peninsula in South East Asia. From north to south, the archipelago extends over nearly 1850 kilometers. Although many of the islands have an incredible assortment of wildlife, no other area has more to offer than the island province of Palawan. The province is dubbed the 'Last Frontier' because of the thousands of kilometers of tropical rainforest and huge expanse of marine wilderness. The entire province has been designated as a fish and wildlife sanctuary since 1967, preserving the incredible biodiversity of the area.

Our paddling trip follows a route along the northwest end of Palawan on the eastern edge of the South China Sea. A Managed Protected Area, our playground contains 45 limestone islands and countless powder-white sand beaches to explore. We mix "big wall" paddling with an intimate exploration of sheltered bays and lagoons. The marine life is incredible with lush coral gardens ten metres from our campsites. Above water, we are treated to excellent bird watching including Palawan hornbills, white-vented shama, edible nest swiftlets, sea eagles and stork-billed kingfishers. The 600 species of butterflies and a large assortment of mammals add to our viewing.

Our traditional banca support boat will carry our food, tents and camping gear so we can paddle lightly loaded kayaks. In adverse weather we can opt to use the banca to reach a more sheltered area. Camp is set up before we arrive amongst the tall marble cliffs enabling us to maximize our snorkeling time.

Midway through the trip we treat ourselves to a night in Miniloc resort before moving onto the seldom visited Malampaya Sound. Malampaya means 'rich in fish' and paddling through the maze of islets and shallow reef flats is ideal for spotting dugongs and Irrawaddy freshwater dolphins.

A new itinerary for 2012 and only two departures makes this trip a very special experience.

A QUICK ITINERARY

Day 1	Pre trip briefing and overnight at the group hotel in Manila.	D
Day 2	Flight to Puerto Princesa. Transfer to El Nido and campsite. Afternoon paddle.	BLD
Days 3-4	Kayaking Bacuit Bay. Camping.	BLD
Day 5	Kayak lagoons to Miniloc resort.	BLD
Day 6	Island hopping, visit Vigan village. Camping.	BLD
Day 7	Endeavor Strait. Camping.	BLD
Day 8	Final full paddling day, camp near Palawan mainland.	BLD
Day 9	Last paddle / snorkel, then transfer to Puerto Princesa. Overnight hotel.	BLD
Day 10	Morning flight to Manila. Trip concludes.	B

MEETING PLACE AND TIME

A Manila airport pickup and transfer to the group hotel is provided if you are arriving on Day 1 of the trip. Our guide will meet you at the hotel for a welcome dinner and general briefing on the evening of Day 1.

HOW TO GET THERE

Our trip starts and ends in Manila, The Philippines. Flights can be booked via the web or through your travel agent. Our trip includes a return flight from Manila to Puerto Princesa. Flight time from Manila to Puerto Princesa is approximately one hour and 20 minutes.



VISAS

Most visitors receive a visa upon arrival for a stay of up to 21 days providing they hold a current passport valid for six months beyond their stay and a ticket out of the country. Tourist visas for 21-58 days can be arranged at the Philippine Consulate in your country.

PADDLING EXPERIENCE

This trip is a kayak expedition designed for people with some previous paddling experience. However, active beginner paddlers are welcome. Our trip leaders are very experienced kayakers and professional guides. We generally limit our group to a maximum of 10 clients plus guides.

You do not have to be an expert paddler or know how to roll. However, you should have practiced a wet exit and assisted re-entry before the trip. This can easily be practiced in waist deep water at home, with a friend's help or under tuition. We are always happy to discuss your experience and can often suggest how beginning paddlers might gain the necessary experience at home to prepare for the trip. We require all participants to complete and return our "Experience Form" shortly after booking. All participants should feel confident in swimming.

We predominantly use single kayaks on this trip, but a few doubles are available. The kayaks are stable, efficient, easy to paddle and control. The degree of difficulty of the trip will depend on the weather we encounter. On most days, our paddling will take place in the morning, taking advantage of calmer seas and allowing time for exploration around the camps in the afternoons. We generally paddle between three to five hours per day.

It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members and recognize that the weather will influence greatly what we can and can't do. On Day 2 of the trip you will be given a thorough briefing on sea kayaking techniques with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with your kayak.

As with most activities, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling. It's a good idea to take some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming ahead of the trip. You should also include physical exercises that concentrate on the abdomen, lower and upper back muscles and the shoulder muscles. If you would like some kayak tuition before your trip we may be able to suggest a local operator near your home.

PROPOSED ITINERARY

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. **We are on an expedition and the weather conditions, currents and tides can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary.**

Day 1: Manila.

Arrive Manila. Transfer to hotel. Check in is normally after 2pm. Your guide will meet you in the lobby of the hotel (time to be confirmed) for a general trip briefing before a welcome dinner.
D...Accommodation: A-Venue Hotel Suites or similar.

Day 2: Manila to Puerto Princesa and on to El Nido.

A group transfer to Manila airport for the 8.30am flight to Puerto Princesa. From Puerto Princesa we travel by van to El Nido, a three to four hour drive. On arrival into El Nido, we transfer to our starting point on one of the remarkable white-sand beaches in Bacuit Bay. We will have an orientation, get introduced to our support staff and have a kayak and safety briefing. We will adjust our kayaks and set off for Bucal Island on the northeast side of Cadlao Island. Cadlao Island is the largest in Bacuit Bay and also boasts the highest peak (603m). We will do some snorkeling and hope to stop at NatNat Beach before continuing on to our campsite at Pasandigan Beach. The picturesque backdrop

of Bacuit Bay is the perfect setting for our first Palawan dinner. After dinner we will provide an overview on the general natural history of the Philippines with emphasis on Palawan and outline the next day's paddling. Overnight Pasandigan Beach.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 3: Bacuit Bay, El Nido; Cadlao, Inambuyod, Culasa Beach.

Depart Pasandigan Beach for Cadlao Lagoon for a snorkel before we make our crossing towards the outer island of Inambuyod and Matinloc. We lunch at Inambuyod Island and then a short paddle to Matinloc where we visit Hidden Beach, a protected bay whose entrance cannot be seen from the open water. A small, narrow channel is our doorway to this hidden treasure. Then we continue to our campsite, amongst the tall marble. Overnight Culasa Beach.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 4: Bacuit Bay, El Nido; Matinloc, Tapuitan.

An early start puts us in one of the most scenic areas in Bacuit Bay - Tapuitan Straight. Tapuitan Straight is a narrow channel between Matinloc and Tapuitan islands. We paddle the length admiring the incredible scenery as well as the shallow reef flats that front sheer vertical cliffs. We visit first Matinloc Shrine and then lunch at Corner Beach. Here we also snorkel the 'mini' walls that drop just a stone's throw from the beach. In the afternoon, we paddle to Secret Beach for a chance to snorkel inside a true marine lake. Overnight Culasa Beach.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 5: Bacuit Bay; Miniloc, Paglugaban, Big & Small Lagoon.

We begin the day with a very early wake-up call as we depart for Miniloc Island. We pass Tres Marias Marine Preserve, named for the three peaks that erupt from the water and proceed southwest along the backside of Miniloc towards Paglugaban Island. We hope to snorkel the narrow channel between Paglugaban and Simuzu Island as well as the steep walls that extend down from the shallow reef flat. After lunch, we'll cruise into paradisiacal Big and Small lagoon. These lagoons were formed by millions of years of erosion.

We finish the day paddling to Miniloc Resort where we spend the night. Dinner is at the resort.

BLD...Accommodation: Miniloc Resort.

Day 6: Bacuit Bay, El Nido; Pangulasian, Entalula, Snake Island.

After breakfast we paddle to Entalula Island and Pangulasian Island for a snorkel and then to Custodio Point for lunch. In the afternoon, we head towards Snake Island, named for the meandering natural sand bar that extends from the island to the mainland. We stop here for a hike to the summit for a bird's eye view of the sand bar and surrounding reefs and islands. We also visit Vigan Village and paddle amongst mangrove fringed shallow reef flats towards our camping beach.

Campsite Balacasada Beach.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 7: Endeavor Straight.

Today we use our support boat to access the northern entrance to Endeavor Straight. This area is rarely visited by tourists and remains not only a pristine environment but also an interesting example of village life revolving around fishing communities. We'll paddle through an amazing assortment of large and small islands with extensive variety of marine habitats including shallow reef flats, sea grass communities and tidal mud flats. We hope to have the opportunity to visit one of the villages and snorkel among sea grass habitats before returning to our campsite at Balacasada Beach.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 8: Cudegnon Cave, Pinisil Island, Danat River, Pinabuyutan Island.

We begin the day with a paddle to visit Cudegnon cave, one of the important caves that yielded artifacts of an ancient people dating to nearly 9000 years old. We explore Pinisil cave and

snorkel here on the shallow reef flats behind the island. Another 30 minutes of paddling takes us behind Lagen Island for lunch. In the afternoon we may make use of our banca to transport us to the mouth of the Danat River. Narrow channels lined with mangrove trees provide excellent cover from the afternoon sun. Our camping beach is close by and we paddle here for a chance to snorkel or just relax on our island paradise. Campsite Pinabuyutan Island.
BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 9: Depeldet Island, Corong Corong, depart El Nido for Puerto Princesa.

Our last morning of paddling. We head to Depeldet Island for a snorkel and then kayak the last stretch to Ipil Beach. We will have an early lunch and a chance for showers here before using the banca to transport us to El Nido. We board our van for the drive back to Puerto Princesa. Overnight at the group hotel in Puerto Princesa.
BLD...Hotel accommodation.

Day 10: Flight to Manila.

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for the 10.10am flight to Manila.
A transfer from Manila airport to the group hotel is included for those who have left luggage or are spending more time in Manila.
Trip concludes.

CLIMATE

Palawan is generally typhoon free. Warm weather (and little rain) prevails from February to June. The coolest months (but still little rain) are from December to February. Air temperatures range from lows of 22 deg C to 33 deg C while the water ranges from 24 to 29 deg C. Heavy rainfall is experienced during July through September accompanied by the Southwest monsoon.

TRIP ORGANISATION AND FOOD

The sun sets quickly in the tropics; so paddling days will start early to take advantage of cooler temperatures and lighter winds. It's a good idea to pack up before breakfast and prepare your personal items for the day so that loading for departure can be organised. We aim to arrive into camp mid afternoon. It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.

On the kayaking trip the food is fresh and based on a variety of foods available in the Philippines. Breakfast is buffet style with different combinations of hot and cold breakfast, lunches will vary from beach BBQ to cooked lunch or packed lunch depending on our itinerary for the day. Dinners will be three course meals. We serve meals inside a dining tent. We are happy to make appropriate arrangements for vegetarians and those who have special dietary requirements.

Meats are sometimes available but in general our menus will feature a variety of local and western dishes using primarily chicken, fish and other seafood, steamed vegetables, noodles, rice, and fresh fruits. If you have special dietary needs, please make sure you let us know at the time of booking. We also try our best to please every palate.

A small generator is available for battery charging.

EXPEDITION STAFF

Your trip is led by one of our senior Australian guides and accompanied by a local Philippine guide. The support staff and cooks are Filipino and have a great wealth of knowledge of local customs and history of the area. The guides' role is to coordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with local villagers on your behalf. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guide.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures is not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and Southern Sea Ventures will do its best to rectify the situation. Please understand that in this part of the world, delays and waiting may occur and whilst we do our best to keep to schedule it is not always possible. We are sure you will appreciate this and accept it as part of the whole Palawan experience.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident. Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim. We will require proof of your insurance prior to departure.

TIME & COMMUNICATION

The Philippines are Greenwich Mean Time plus 8 hours. Fax machines and telephones are available at most hotels. You will have access to telephones at Miniloc Resort and mobile coverage sometimes during the trip.

ACCOMMODATION AND CAMPING

Manila City: We stay at a convenient city hotel on Day 1. You can leave luggage at this hotel not needed in Palawan as we will provide a transfer back to the hotel on Day 10. You may choose to stay at the hotel on your return to Manila (not included in trip cost) but it may also be possible to connect with afternoon/evening flights on Day 10. Hotel details will be advised closer to trip departure.

Miniloc Resort: good quality accommodation.

Puerto Princesa: a good quality tourist hotel.

Singles will not be charged a single supplement if you are prepared to share a room with another client of the same sex. However, if you specifically request a single room, or there is no one suitable to share with, there will be an additional charge of US\$175.00 for the hotel/resort night stays.

Camping: You will be sleeping in spacious walk in tents during the trip. Our tents are mosquito proof, but you should bring a supply of insect repellent and consider the purchase of mosquito coils for when you are outside your tent. Mattresses, sheets and pillows, portable toilet and cold water showers are provided while camping.

Excess baggage not needed on the kayak trip can be either left at the Manila hotel or taken with you to Palawan. If taken to Palawan, luggage not needed while paddling will travel on the support boat and/or left at camp.

***Note: you will need to carry your passport on the trip.**

ELECTRICITY

Palawan is on the 220V, 60 Hz system. Sockets are usually the European variety. There won't be electricity when we're camping except on a limited basis for charging batteries.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is very important to behave in a respectful way towards both the people and their land. Whilst the Philippine people will never rebuke you for unknowingly offending them it is desirable to try to respect as many of their customs and beliefs as you can. Do not argue or criticize. Avoid public scenes.

Simple courtesy and a bit of sensitivity will satisfy most of the customs of village life. Although English is a second language, it should not be assumed that everyone understands or speaks it, particularly in smaller hotels, restaurants and in villages.

Some basic practices you should observe are:

- ask the locals if they mind being photographed or ask your Philippine support staff if it is okay.
- only wear bathing suits on remote beaches.
- accept that time flows at a different pace and that patience is often rewarded.

CONSERVATION

It has always been our motto that "we take only photographs and leave only footprints". We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person follows a policy of taking out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc. Your guides will further advise you.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The humidity is always high in Palawan and as we are paddling in a salt-water environment the delicate electronics in digital or film cameras can be damaged. You might consider a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of Silicon Packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries for a digital camera as there is no opportunity to purchase batteries or access electricity during our island stay. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged! If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it. It is inconvenient to find fault with the camera during a trip.

MONEY MATTERS

Your tour cost includes:

- Expert leadership and support personnel.
- Hotel/resort accommodation on a twin share basis for three nights of the trip.
- Flights between Manila and Puerto Princesa return.
- All internal land, sea and air transfers (except transfers from/to your international flights in Manila).
- All meals as noted including welcome dinner on Day 1.
- Kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment.
- Spacious tents, mattresses, towels, sheets and pillow.
- Shampoo and body wash during the paddling.
- Watertight bags for your personal clothing.
- Group first aid kit.
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Your tour cost does not include:

- International air travel to Manila.
- Insurance of any kind.
- Visas.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Airport taxes.
- Excess baggage charges.
- Cost of medical immunizations.

- Items of a personal nature such as postage, laundry, clothing, soft drinks, snack foods, etc.
- Tips – it is customary to tip the camp and boat staff that have assisted you on the trip. Trip members can contribute toward a group tip to be shared among cooks, camp staff and local guides. Your trip leader will give you more guidelines on tipping the staff and all tipping is, of course, at your own discretion and you are under no obligation to tip. A rough guideline would be between US \$7-10 per day.
- Accommodation on Day 10.

MONEY TO BRING WITH YOU

You won't need a great deal of money on the trip, but you should take enough for souvenirs, drinks and incidental items. This could vary from US\$100 to \$300 (bring the equivalent in pesos), depending on how much shopping you wish to do.

The Philippine peso is standard currency with the US\$ the most recognized international currency. Take some money in small denominations of traveler's cheques and cash. Traveler's cheques such as American Express, Citibank and Thomas Cook (in US dollars) are widely accepted in larger cities but not Palawan.

Credit Cards & ATM Cards

All major credit cards can be used in major cities and larger country hotels, lodges, restaurants and shops. ATM cards can be used at participating banks in the major cities. BUT there are no ATM;s accepting international cards in Palawan.

SECURITY

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline ticket and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them. All airline tickets, valuables, excess cash and travelers cheques can be secured on the support boat during the kayaking but you need to carry your passport on the trip. Theft is a consideration in Palawan (like at home) so it is always a good idea not to leave things unattended when in the towns or villages. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras, jewellery and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet.

Airline security is such that if you put locks on your bags, they may be removed. A good alternative is to use plastic electrical ties which you can replace and carry a small lock after flights.

MEDICAL MATTERS

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately.

Hygiene

Be conscious of hygiene. Regularly wash your hands, be wary of uncooked food and wash fruit or preferably peel it (with clean hands!).

Vaccinations

For entry into Palawan there are no statutory vaccinations at the time of writing. However you should check with your doctor or medical centre for current information. Standard recommended immunizations currently are: Yellow Fever (if you come from an infected area), Typhoid, Tetanus, Hepatitis A and Polio. We suggest you carry your International Certificate of Vaccinations with your passport as proof. Malarial prophylaxis is only recommended for a few isolated islands but you should check with your doctor.

Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your Group Leader know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.



Medical Supplies

On our trips into more isolated areas we carry a comprehensive medical kit. However, it is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SP15)
- Lip protectant
- Band-aid strips
- **Insect repellent - this is important for preventing insect-borne diseases**
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness
- A mild antiseptic soap

Dental

Due to the remoteness of the trip it is advisable to have a checkup before departure.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING - WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

This trip should be considered as a remote tropical kayaking and camping journey, you'll be exposed to sun, wind and salt water. We carry everything with us, so it's important to keep personal gear to a minimum. In your kayak, your clothing needed during the day is packed in waterproof bags which we supply. However, all your other clothing will be carried on our support boat. It is a good idea to bring your own small 5-10 litre dry bag for items you may need during the day while kayaking. You may like to bring a couple of garbage bags for wet or damp clothing. We supply a fresh cold water shower daily.

For Manila, we recommend casual clothes suitable for warm weather, preferably with a high content of cotton (which is cooler and breaths well). Light clothing is really all that is needed. Long sleeves are recommended for sun protection during kayaking and insect protection in the evenings. The list below should be used as a guide when packing.

Luggage

- A sturdy duffle or kit bag is recommended for your gear when flying from Manila.
- A small day pack is useful for your carry on baggage.
- Small waterproof dry bag is optional for personal items. You will be given a dry bag for clothes.
- Excess luggage that you do not want to take to El Nido can be stored at the hotel in Manila or taken with you to Palawan and looked after on our support boat.

GEAR LIST

- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, eg. straw, with a strap to put under your chin, is necessary. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Side flaps are a good idea, in particular the type that can be added to conventional sunglasses by slipping them onto the arms.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket.
- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not as comfortable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A lightweight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- Two-three T-shirts and long sleeved shirt for camp.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling.
- One pair of light weight, quick drying, full length trousers.
- Two pairs of shorts and swimwear.



- Skirt for women or sulu or sarong
 - A sweatshirt is sufficient for extra warmth in the evening. It is too warm for a fleece.
 - One pair of sport shoes. Teva style sandals are fine if you are used to wearing them in wet conditions.
 - Reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly.
 - Lightweight socks to wear with your sport shoes or perhaps your sandals if the sand is irritating your feet. Long enough that your pants can be tucked in if you encounter sand fleas.
 - Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal, or a medium sized hand towel).
 - Minimal toiletries. A bio-degradable soap that will lather in salt water is very useful.
 - A headlamp or small torch and batteries (batteries can be expensive and difficult to obtain).
 - 1 or 2, one litre water bottles. The type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
 - A small dry bag is good for holding things like sun screen, glasses, water bottle, etc.
 - Snorkeling equipment. Snorkeling is excellent so if you don't have your own equipment it can be rented in Palawan and we would recommend you have it during the trip.
 - ***NOTE: Please be aware that corals are extremely fragile so care should be used with fins.
 - Lightweight cycle gloves may prevent blisters if you are not used to paddling and protect from the sun.
- Optional items.
 - Camera, with waterproof container if the camera is not waterproof.
 - Book.
 - Binoculars.
 - 10 metres of lightweight clothesline.
 - Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.

RECOMMENDED READING

Playing With Water: A Passion and Solitude on a Philippine Island, James Hamilton-Paterson
 Vanishing Treasures of the Philippine Rain Forest, Jacinto Regalado, Jr. & Lawrence Heaney
 Culture Smart! Philippines, A Quick Guide to Customs and Etiquette, Graham Collin-Jones
 Birds: A Guide to the Birds of the Philippines. Kennedy, S.R., Gonzales, P.C., Dickinson, E.C.,
 Miranda Jr., H.C., Fisher, T.H., 2000. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-854668-8. 369 pp.
 Fish: Fish Identification Tropical Pacific. Allen, G., Steene, R., Humann, P., Deloach, N., 2003. New
 World Publications, Inc. & Odyssey Publishing. ISBN 1-878348-36-1. 457 pp

DELAYS OR PROBLEMS

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia on
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Guides Contact in Philippines: To be advised with your final trip details.

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