



**SIREN FLEET**

# Malapascua & the Visayas, Philippines

## Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary of dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard cruise with the Philippine Siren. We wish to show you the very best diving possible, however, a number of factors determine which route the yacht takes and which dive sites we visit. Weather, tides, currents and the number of other dive vessels at a particular site all play a part in the Cruise Director's decision of where the Philippine Siren is heading to. This itinerary involves some long distance travel. Whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specific dive site in good time. The safety of our guests on board is paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternate locations, should we be unable to visit those sites listed below.

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a 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 Sunset dive (no Night dives: strong currents)
- Dinner

Generally, we schedule 2 dives on your final dive day in order to allow enough time for off-gassing. To remain on the safe side, we kindly request our guests to check their own flight times and ensure that they leave a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and their return flight. Guests are welcome to suggest preferred dive sites to the Cruise Director. He/she will be happy to accommodate guests' wishes, providing it is possible and the schedule allows for it.

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### Malapascua Island

**Monad Shoal** - is one of the few dive spots in the World where the shy pelagic thresher sharks may be seen on a daily basis. Divers rest at approximately 25m (90ft) on the sandy bottom to watch the sharks approach and be cleaned. Other visitors to the shoal include manta, devil and eagle rays. Diving with Nitrox is recommended to enjoy extended bottom time.

**Kimud Shoal** - close by to Monad Shoal and running along the same outer reef ridge is another superb site to spot for thresher sharks and a variety of rays, but the main draw is the opportunity to see hammerhead sharks that visit the waters here between December and May each year. Other pelagic species that frequent the area include tuna, white tip reef sharks and dolphins! Minimum depth is 12m (40ft).

**Bantigi** - a shallow reef with sandy bottom at just 12m (40ft) provides a macro lovers delight, where all manner of benthic species can be found; mantis shrimps, fire urchins with resident zebra crabs, frogfish and moray eels. Mimic octopus and hairy frogfish have also been spotted along the sand here.

There are numerous shallow reef sites dotted around the island at which we make our afternoon and night dives. Commonly sighted are a variety of anemone fish, flamboyant cuttlefish, seahorses, frogfish, ghost pipefish, cowries, porcelain crabs and even schools of batfish.

### Gato Island

A Marine Reserve and sea snake sanctuary, the island of Gato provides a diverse range of marine life; cuttlefish can be seen performing their mating rituals whilst white tip reef sharks seek shelter under bommies and a plethora of macro critters command the sea floor. There are several sites around the small island and we choose from the following:

**White Tip Alley** - as the name suggests provides an almost guaranteed sighting of white tip reef sharks that enjoy their rest on the sand tucked under rocks and coral bommies. Other species found here include scorpion fish and seahorses. Pygmy seahorses may also be found too as well as whip coral shrimps which cling to the colourful whip corals adorning the overhangs of the island.

**Nudibranch City** - rubble, rocks, sponges and corals provide a perfect habitat and create an "Undersea City" for a wide variety of nudibranchs and flatworms. Blue dragons, chromodoris, hypselodoris, and plakobranchs,

**The Cave** - running through Gato Island, divers can take a journey to the other side! Keeping a look out for resting white tip sharks or use your light to search for lobsters and crabs that like to dwell within the cavern. Currents need to be navigated to ensure a timely exit and inexperienced divers are recommended to stay on the outside where juvenile white tips are also found resting.



### Malapascua Wrecks

**Dona Marilyn** – Resting on her starboard side at a depth of 32m (110ft) this 100m (300ft) long passenger ferry is now a haven for marble and blue spotted stingrays and home to schools of sweetlips. Covered with corals and the remains of fishing nets she gives an eerie vibe to divers – not least because of the many people who lost their lives during her sinking more than 20 years ago. Guarding the wreckage is a resident giant moray eel and also commonly seen are large scorpion fish, lionfish and cuttlefish. Minimum depth is 18m (60ft).

**Tapilon** - a Japanese cargo vessel sunk during WWII, is now covered in bushes of black corals and home to a wealth of macro life including tiny skeleton shrimp and squat lobsters.

### Moalboal, Cebu

**Kasai Wall** – is where we see many turtles – both hawksbill and green turtles are attracted to the reef here. **Dolphin House Reef** – the shallow reef top hosts pipefish and many varieties of nudibranchs. Along the slope we see bannerfish and trevallies, trigger fish and snappers. Turtles are another common sighting.

**Tongo Point** - yellow tail barracuda, shrimp fish hovering in schools, and schools of big mouth mackerel make for an interesting dive. Add crocodile fish, scorpion fish, sea snakes & turtles for an awesome dive site.

**Turtle Bay** - makes for an awesome night dive with juvenile pinate batfish, white snout pipefish, soft coral crabs and so many species of nudibranch- far too many to list!

**Serena House Reef** - a superb spot for a sunset dive to see mandarin fish mating.

### Pescador Island

The tiny offshore island of Pescador attracts large schools of sardines, just seeing the wall of fish is spectacular in itself but these sardines have also been known to bring some larger friends with them! Fortunate divers have been lucky enough to see whale sharks and thresher sharks here. Other large pelagic fish include dog tooth tuna, potato groupers & yellow-tail barracuda. Oceanic triggerfish, midnight snappers and bluelined fusiliers, as well as trumpet fish, box fish, turtles, angle fish and batfish are commonly seen. The walls themselves are adorned with gorgonian fans, soft and hard corals provide the perfect places for white-eyed morays to lurk.

### Sumilon Island

Sumilon Island is where black tip and white tip reefs sharks are known to frequent the waters. The sanctuaries also support numerous fish species and healthy coral growth.

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Sightings of tuna, batfish, trevally & unicorn fish are common and there is also a wide variety of crustaceans. We typically make two dives here before crossing the strait to Balicasag Island or moving to Pescador Island.

Dependent on our guests' wishes we offer the option to substitute dives for whale shark snorkeling at Oslob, subject to additional fees payable at destination (snorkeling costs 20 Euro and diving 30 Euro).

### Apo Island

Apo Island Marine Reserve is one of most successful marine sanctuaries to be established in the Philippines. Night diving is unfortunately not permitted however a sunset dive at The Chapel provides a superb opportunity to watch mandarin fish mating. The order of dives will be based on the currents and conditions of the day choosing from:

**Coconut Point** - An often fast paced drift brings divers over the sloping coral reef wall. Giant trevally, hump head parrotfish and marbled groupers are seen off the reef along with schools of banner fish. Turtles cruise effortlessly in the currents and nembrotha nudibranchs can be seen munching on tunicates.

**Rock Point West** - Just beyond the chapel opposite the marine park warden's office, Rock Point offers some of the most stunning hard corals to be found in the region. The steep reef walls support numerous colourful reef species – pyramid butterfly fish and red-toothed trigger fish are here in their hundreds, frogfish, cuttlefish, banded sea snakes and hawksbill turtles are amongst the common sightings.

**Boluarte** - Marbled groupers, batfish & snowflake morays are to be expected, perhaps attracted by the hot bubbles emerging from the dark sand from the active volcano.

### Dauin, Negros

Your Cruise Director will choose sites based on where the most interesting critters are being seen, these sites include:

**The Cars** - Between 25-30m (80-100ft) 2 Volkswagen are sunk as an artificial reef and attracting schools of lionfish. Nudibranchs, porcelain crabs & ghost pipe fish are amongst the many weird and wonderful creatures found at this site.

**Dauin North** - The sanctuary just to the left of The Cars, offers a shallow sloping reef, however it is the sand patches to the right of the sanctuary that really capture our attention. Seahorses, minute frogfish, ghost pipefish, flying gurnards, waspfish, devil scorpion fish, pipefish and octopus are all to be found scurrying over the sand. The sand itself appears to be moving as hundreds of skeleton shrimp bounce their way across. Tiny pygmy pipehorses can also be seen on the shallow shelf during a safety stop – expect to spend a long time here!

**Ginama-An** - A typical dark sand dive with small out-croppings in which to hunt for octopus, frog fish and scorpion fish, with the occasional turtle cruising by.

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**Ceres** - provides a mix of marine life from schools of snapper, banner fish and fusiliers to tiny bubble coral shrimp and squat lobsters. An assortment of anemone fish can be seen including spine cheek and skunk varieties. Demon stingers and smashing mantis shrimp can be seen scurrying along the bottom and robust ghost pipefish can be spotted bobbing about.

**Atlantis Sanctuary** - offers a dark sandy slope with a collection of sunken tyres that provide an artificial reef in which seahorses and pipefish, moray eels, lion fish and nudibranchs can all be found. San Miguel another critter wonderland! Painted frogfish, varieties of ghost pipefish, cockatoo waspfish and flamboyant cuttlefish are just a few of the most commonly seen species. Occasionally, we see up to 4 flamboyants in one dive!! During night dives coconut octopus can be seen creeping about with their shells and bobtail squid quickly scurry under the sand.

### Balicasag Island

The small island of Balicasag, just off the tip of Panglao, is characterised for its many turtles, coral gardens and steep walls which provide overhangs, cracks & crevices in which to search for a variety of marine species. Sanctuary a steep coral wall covered in soft corals and gorgonian fans. A great place to find frogfish & leaf fish and as you end the dive you can be surrounded by schooling jacks in the shallows.

**Divers Heaven/ Cathedral** - two dives in one along this stunning wall complete with crags and overhangs. Sponges, sea fans, soft corals and cup corals provide a haven for many tiny critters such as warty frogfish and porcelain crabs. Also seen are schools of pyramid butterfly fish and banner fish, titan triggerfish moray eel and clown anemones.

**Rico's Wall** - makes for an interesting dive with shallow swim throughs and gaps in the craggy wall, at sunset turtles can be spotted coming into the reef to rest.

**Black Forest** - once famed for its black coral is where we encounter schools of jacks, meanwhile leaf fish are often seen resting on the rough coral ledges. Turtles are a common sight in the shallow sea grass garden- a perfect place for your safety stop.

### Cabilao Island

There are several interesting wall and coral garden dives around the island of Cabilao and we choose from the following:

**Cambiquiz** - a fantastic spot with a gentle sloping reef and sandy bottom to 20m - soft corals and seapens can be found dotted over the sand; also a great site for sightings of bent stick pipefish and Pegasus sea moths.

**Paradise Wall** - provides a gentle drift along a fantastic coral reef with schooling fish and plenty of macro life in the shallow water, including odd shaped plakobranks and leaf fish.

**Lighthouse** - sloping walls full of sponges and gorgonian fans. This is a great place to look for pygmy seahorses and to dive with large green turtles. Also being seen are giant

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frogfish which can be spotted resting on sponges and numerous cowries hiding amidst the stunning hard coral garden.

**Talisay Tree** - Pygmy seahorses hang on the huge gorgonian fans that adorn the steep wall. In the shallow coral gardens robust ghost pipe fish attempt to blend in, whilst bubble head shrimps and orangutan crabs are often seen resting on bubble anemones.

**South Point** - offers you the opportunity to look for white tip reef sharks that hang out in the caverns within the steep coral wall. Huge tube sponges support giant frogfish, whilst leaf fish and many scorpion fish can be found resting in the crevices.

### **Olango Island & Mactan**

**Talima Reef Wall** - has soft and whip corals where small critters like to hide. The wreckage of a banca (typical boat from the Philippines) can also be found along the sandy reef shelf – a great place to find grouper and sweetlips; whilst jacks and batfish school above you.

**Shangri-la House Reef** - The topography is diverse with a wreck, white sand a mini wall, sea grasses and plenty of healthy coral. Schooling fish can be seen and a few treats such as giant clam, jacks, and batfish put in an appearance.

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