

# 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 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 night dive
- 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.

## 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. Diving with Nitrox is recommended to enjoy extended bottom time. Please be advised it is not allowed to use strobes and/or flash lights here.

## Chocolate Island

This little island has the typical topography around Malapascua area. The shallow tops full of soft corals and algae are home for different kinds of nudibranchs. The shallow bottom of maximum 16 m (50ft) around this island is the perfect spot for odd shaped

bottom dwellers like bearded scorpionfish, devil scorpionfish and dwarf cuttlefish but also many different kinds of sea stars, sea urchins with their urchin clingfish inside, black velutinid and ringed pipefish can be found.

**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. Minimum depth is 12m (40ft).

## Gato Island

The island of Gato located less than 2 hours away from Malapascua provides a diverse range of marine life; cuttlefish can be seen performing their mating rituals when it is the right season. 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. Whip coral shrimps which cling to the colourful whip corals adorn the overhangs of this Alley.

**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 flabellinas.

**The Tunnel** – 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.

## Moalboal, Cebu

The main attraction of Moalboal is the millions of sardines hanging out in the shallow waters. Other than that the beautiful diving around Pescador Island is just 30 minutes away.

**Panagsama Beach** – Along with the millions of sardines, performing an underwater ballet, giant frogfish might be found together with reeftop pipefish and ringed pipefish.

**Tongo Point** - Schools of razorfish, crocodile needle fish, purple and threadfin anthias are to be found while reef squids and spade fish are making their way home. Green sea turtles and hawksbill turtle are also commonly seen here.

**Turtle Bay** - This site is often dived during the night dives where we can spot sleeping turtles along with different kinds of crabs and shrimps.

**Dolphin House** - Crocodile needle fish, drummers, milkfish and yellowtail barracudas are living just under the surface while zillions of damsels and anthias are darting around the coral reef top.

## Pescador Island

Just 30 minutes away from Moalboal this island is a perfect place to explore the dramatic steep walls and the colorful and lively reeftop. Zillions of damsels, anthias and chromis are darting around while schools of fusiliers, red tooth triggerfish, surgeonfish, long jawed mackerel, juvenile convict fish and big eyed trevallies are filling the blue. Pescador Island is also home for a couple of giant frogfish. The big cave on the northwest side of the island is a nice gimmick to the dives.

## Oslob

The whale shark encounter, where the whale sharks get hand fed, can be done by diving or snorkeling, subject to additional fees payable at destination. Please be advised it is not allowed to use strobes and/or flash lights here.

## Apo Island

Apo Island Marine Reserve is one of most successful marine sanctuaries established in the Philippines. Reef hooks and gloves are not allowed and night diving is unfortunately not permitted. 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. Along the way giant trevally, blackfin barracuda, big school of big-eyed trevally and plenty of sea snakes can be encountered.

**Rocky Point West** – Just beyond the chapel opposite the marine park warden's office, Rocky Point West offers some of the most stunning hard corals to be found in the region with endless patches of leather corals on the top. 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.

**Cogon** – The colourful bottom divided by sand channels is the place to find a big school of big-eyed trevally, huge brown marbled groupers and sea snakes.

## Dauin, Negros

Dauin, with its black volcanic sand, is famous for muck diving. Depending on the season different types and sizes of octopuses, sea horses, (baby) frogfish, different kinds of ghost pipefish and flamboyant cuttlefish can be found.

**The Cars** – Between 25-30m (80-100ft), car parts as an artificial reef are attracting porcelain crabs and different kinds of shrimps amongst the many weird and wonderful creatures found at this site.

**Secret Corner** – This dive site contains sand and pebbles only and is the perfect habitat for the smallest, weird and unexpected creatures as cockatoo waspfish, short fin lionfish and snake and garden eels.

**Ceres** – They named this dive site after the local bus company that donated its tires to create artificial reef, which attract schools of reef fish. Different kinds of shrimps like to live on this reef together with juvenile reef fish.

**Mainit** – This dive site is a mix of coral boulders with soft corals and black volcanic sand. Probably due to the current, all fish are very active which makes this dive very lively and exciting ending in an area with hot sand at the bottom, hence the name Mainit meaning ‘hot’.

**San Miguel** - Another critter wonderland! When it’s the right season, this is the place to find all your favorites.

## Balicasag Island

The small island of Balicasag, just off the tip of Panglao, 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 become a marine protected area since July 2017 and allows two dives per day only with valid permits.

**Divers Heaven** – The main attraction of this beautiful dive site is the green sea and hawksbill turtles in the shallow waters. The reeftop edge is a nice habitat for schools of colorful damsels and anthias and when lucky also for giant frogfish.

**Black Forest** – Once famed for its black coral is where we encounter schools of jacks, long-jawed mackerels, red tooth triggerfish and different kinds of fusiliers.

## Cabilao Island

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

**Gorgonian Wall** – Provides a gentle drift along a fantastic coral reef with schooling fish and plenty of macro life in the shallow water, including the possibility of spotting a Denise’s pygmy seahorse.

**Lighthouse** – Sloping walls full of sponges and gorgonian fans. This is a great place to dive with large green turtles. Also being seen are giant frogfish which can be spotted resting on sponges and numerous cowries hiding amidst the stunning hard coral garden.

**Talisay Tree** – Beautiful wall with gorgonians where bubble coral shrimps and orangutan crabs can be found in the bubble corals. The shallow grassy garden with its elephant ear sponges and barrel sponges is a perfect spot for wide angle photography.

**Cambaquiz** – A fantastic spot where we often make night dives. A gently sloping reef and sandy bottom to 20m – soft corals and sea pens can be found dotted over the sand; also a great site for sightings of bottom dwellers. The grassy top is a favourite crab hide out.