

# PHILIPPINES

## DETAILED ITINERARY

## EXPLORATORY 28-DAY ADVENTURE

Jan 12/26



The Philippines is an archipelago of over 7,000 islands, in southeastern Asia between the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Its extensive coastline are dotted with white sand beaches and turquoise blue waters that are teeming with marine life, corals and lush foliage.

In Manila, we stay at the famous Manila Hotel, long-time home of General MacArthur and shorter stays by Nelson Mandela, Marlon Brando, King Charles, the Beatles, Sammy Davis Jr. just to mention a few. We journey to the north to seldom visited Banaue and Sagada, to get a glimpse into a more traditional way of life, where you find the original inhabitants of the Philippines. We travel from the stunning highlands with its steep rice terraces to the lowlands, including the UNESCO World Heritage town of Vigan. See the very active, conical Mayon volcano and learn to make the unique Filipino dishes “Laing” and “Bicol Express” the traditional way.

Witness, swim and snorkel with the world’s largest congregation of whale sharks at Donsol, see the giant sea turtles and dugong (manatee). Enjoy a night-time, fire-fly experience. Explore the UNESCO site

### FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 28 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Manila
- All meals included • Includes 7 internal flights • 10 days where we enjoy excursions by outrigger on the ocean • Experience the traditional way of life in Banaue • Hike in the stunning Hapao terraces • Visit the burial site and hanging coffins of Sagada • Explore UNESCO World Heritage town of Vigan • View Mayon Volcano and its near-perfect cone • Swim or snorkel with whale sharks, dugong (manatee) and giant sea turtles • Savor traditional flavors during your Filipino cooking experience • Visit the Chocolate Hills, known as the 8th Wonder of the World • Explore white-sand beaches, turquoise waters, coral reefs, and splendid limestone rock formations of El Nido • Enjoy a 2-day, 1-night majestic castaway camping experience under the stars • See tarsiers and flying lemurs in Bohol • Enjoy the smiles and hospitality of the one of the friendliest people on Earth!

### DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

<b>Mar 06 - Apr 02, 2026</b>	-	<b>\$10695 USD</b>
<b>Apr 06 - May 03, 2026</b>	-	<b>\$10695 USD</b>
<b>Feb 26 - Mar 25, 2027</b>	-	<b>\$10995 USD</b>

### Activity Level: 3

**Comfort Level:** • Walks on days 13 & 14 can be challenging, steep with inclines (but optional). Walking stick and/or helping hand is available • We have 10 days where we use traditional outriggers on the ocean with many opportunities for snorkelling. If windy causing bigger ocean waves, this could be more challenging for some.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Private bathrooms throughout except during the tented camping experience on Day 23 in solo tents with a mattress. Basic but nice accommodation in Sagada on Day 15.

# ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP  
**EXOTIC ADVENTURES**  
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

and largest underground river in the world in Sabang. Island hop around El Nido which is famous for its white-sand beaches, turquoise waters, coral reefs, and splendid limestone rock formations. For 2 days - 1 night, enjoy a 'castaway camping experience' on a pristine island where we sleep under the stars in our individual mesh tents.

ElderTreks 28-day tour of the Philippines offers perhaps the most in-depth experience of this incredibly beautiful, exotic and diverse country with possibly the friendliest people on Earth.

Please note: Much of our travel on water will be in traditional outriggers.

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## DAY 1 ARRIVAL MANILA

Upon arrival in Manila, you will be transferred to the hotel. We will have an orientation meeting followed by a welcome dinner.

Overnight in Manila.

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## DAY 2 MANILA CITY TOUR - US WAR CEMETERY; FORT SANTIAGO; INTRAMUROS

This morning we embark on our city tour of Manila with a drive to the US War Cemetery & Memorial. The largest overseas American cemetery is the final resting place for more than 17,000 American who lost their lives, mostly in New Guinea and the Philippines during WWII. We will also visit Ayala museum before stopping for lunch.

After lunch, we visit Fort Santiago built by the Spanish in 1571 and Intramuros, the old walled city. Some of the highlights we will visit include San Agustin church (UNESCO), Casa Manila museum and Manila Cathedral. Late afternoon, we will go to a rooftop restaurant in Intramuros for dinner with stunning view of Manila as we enjoy the sunset.

Overnight in Manila.







### **DAY 3 FLY TO BOHOL**

Today, we depart the capital and fly to the island of Bohol, where we will enjoy the many sites and wildlife of the island. We drive to our lovely resort on the ocean. Enjoy the palm-lined beach before dinner.

Overnight in Bohol.

### **DAY 4 TARSIER SANCTUARY; LOBOC RIVER CRUISE; CHOCOLATE HILLS; FLYING LEMURS**

Our full day starts with a visit to the Tarsier Sanctuary, which has the smallest primates that are mostly found in Southeast Asia — tarsiers. Enjoy a lunch cruise on the Loboc River before visiting the cool and shady manmade forest, with its white and red mahogany trees. It is part of a reforestation project started over 50 years ago. We visit the Chocolate Hills, which are a slight mystery to locals and visitors alike and sometimes called the Eighth Wonder of the World. We also visit a seldom-visited park with superb opportunities to see the flying lemurs. Techni-

cally they can't fly but they can glide great distances. Time permitting, we may visit Baclayon Church, the oldest Christian settlement in Bohol, sometime during the day.

Overnight in Bohol.

### **DAY 5 PAMILACAN MARINE SANCTUARY - DOLPHINS, TURTLES AND MARINE LIFE**

Our day starts early in the morning, as we make our way to Pamilacan Island. We can never guarantee wildlife but enroute to Pamilacan island, we will likely be accompanied by dolphins at play who often seem to almost show off at times. Pamilacan Islands is a community of former whale and dolphin hunters, who now operate as guides and guardians of the local marine life. Pamilacan is home to a diverse marine ecosystem, and is an excellent spot for diving and snorkelling. Pamilacan Island is most famous for its coral gardens and its marine turtle sanctuary, showcasing the rich marine biodiversity in Bohol's waters.

Overnight in Bohol.















## **DAY 6 FERRY TO SQUIJOR; CAMBUGAHAY FALLS**

We take an early morning ferry to Siquijor where we will check in to our next hotel. We'll enjoy an afternoon excursion to the stunning Cambugahay Falls, famous for its 3-tier waterfall with some of the most beautiful turquoise water you will ever see, hidden away in the dense green jungle. We will have time for swimming, hiking and relaxing.

Overnight in Siquijor.

## **DAY 7 ANCIENT BANYAN TREE, TRADITIONAL MYSTIC HEALING RITUALS; VIEWPOINT**

Today we embark on the Siquijor coastal scenic tour, which includes the 400-year old banyan tree (considered by many locals to be a mystical focal point on the island), and St. Isidore Church and Convent. We will also be able to visit a local bolo-bolo healer and a healing hut to see some of the local healing rituals of Siquijor. The rest of the Philippines will often refer to the ghosts and magic that exist on the island!

Overnight in Siquijor.

## **DAY 8 APO ISLAND MARINE SANCTUARY; TO DUMAGETE**

Apo Island, located off the coast of Dumaguete, is small 74-hectare volcanic island and the oldest community-run marine sanctuary in the Philippines. The island boasts of immense coral reefs and diverse marine life, but is most famous as a protected area for giant sea turtles. Sea turtles swim and graze leisurely all around the island's waters, unbothered by visitors. The marine sanctuary runs along 0.5 km of the island's southeast coast and has become a popular dive and snorkelling site due to the wonderful biodiversity found amongst its turquoise blue coastal waters.

Overnight in Dumaguete.

## **DAY 9 FLY TO LEGAZPI VIA CEBU OR MANILA**

Today we fly to Cebu (or Manila) and connect to our onward flight to Legazpi. The afternoon is free to decompress from a long day of travel. As we land in Bicol (or Legazpi) airport, you will have great opportunities to view the Philippines most active volcano, Mayon Volcano with its perfect cone shape.

Overnight in Legazpi.

## **DAY 10 SNORKEL WITH WHALE SHARKS; MAYON VOLCANO & FILIPINO CULINARY EXPERIENCE**

We get up early to drive to Donsol, which is the whale shark capital, known for its local community that offers sustainable and responsible excursions to see this magnificent animal. These massive, gentle creatures feed on plankton, so no worries, tourists are not on the menu! We will spend several hours in search of whale sharks and hopefully we will have several viewings. Once sighted, you will be instructed to get your snorkelling gear and told when to jump into the water. Sightings can be quick or for extended periods, especially if you are a strong swimmer. The whale sharks are quite slow moving and can grow to 50 feet in length, and it's not uncommon to see them between 5 and 10 meters or up to 35 feet. After our whale shark experience and lunch by the ocean, we return to Legazpi.

Our afternoon adventure includes a "Bikolinarya Culinary Experience" where you learn to make the unique Filipino dishes "Laing" and "Bicol Express" the traditional way. The Bicol region is most famous for two things – Mayon Volcano and its near-perfect cone, and its cuisine. Most notably its unrestrained use of spices combined with coconut milk that have become

its trademark. We can enjoy both simultaneously as we will have our cooking class near the base of the volcano.

Overnight in Legazpi.

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### **DAY 11 DONSOL; SNORKEL WITH WHALE SHARKS**

Today, you will have a second chance to see whale sharks. Donsol is one of the few places in the world that can offer almost assured whale shark sightings from November to June. The name Donsol has become synonymous to whale sharks as the world's largest congregation of whale sharks are found here. The whale sharks of Donsol stay in this natural environment longer than any other place in the world. With simple snorkelling equipment, you will have the opportunity to swim alongside these gentle giants.

Later in the day, we fly back to Manila where we will stay at our airport hotel.

Overnight in Manila.

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### **DAY 12 MANILA TO TRADITIONAL BANAUE; UNESCO RICE TERRACES**

After an early breakfast, we depart for a long drive (10-12 hours) to Banaue. We start out near sea level with a flat landscape but after some hours, we start to ascend into the mountainous region of Banaue. Banaue is a unique and breathtaking destination that offers a glimpse into a more traditional way of life in the Philippines. Upon arrival, we check into our hotel with stunning views where we can enjoy our dinner.

Overnight in Banaue.

### **DAY 13 BANAUE RICE TERRACES: BANGAAN TRADITIONAL VILLAGE**

After breakfast, we depart for Bangaan, with several stops at stunning viewpoints of rice terraces. At the end of our drive, we start our short but steep hike down to the traditional village of Bangaan. Here we can learn about their traditions, rice houses with their wood carvings, culture and spend time with the friendly locals. We may also have time to visit the local school.

This afternoon we will arrange a traditional dance at or near our hotel with its superb views over rice terraces. Dinner will follow the performance.

Overnight in Banaue.

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### **DAY 14 STUNNING TERRACES OF BATAD (UNESCO)**

After an early breakfast, we hop on a local Jeepney to visit the town market. From there, it's about an hour drive to the starting point of the short Batad trek to splendid viewpoints. The Batad rice terraces are a must-see experience for anyone visiting the Philippines, and possibly one of its most famous landmarks. The landscape is truly unforgettable (Everyone will walk 1.5 km to the viewing deck.)

We'll have lunch at a local restaurant, overlooking the terraces and trek back to the Jeepney.

Overnight in Banaue.

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### **DAY 15 TO SAGADA; BURIAL CAVE & HANGING COFFINS**

After breakfast, we'll take a 3 hour drive to Sagada, stopping along the way at the Banaue Viewpoints, Bayo Village, and Bontoc Museum. The Bontoc Museum was founded by Belgian nuns, whose goal was







to document and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Ifugao.

After checking into our hotel in Sagada, we will go to Burial Cave and then to lunch (unless timing warrants something else). After lunch, we'll stop in to a wonderful coffee shop, where you can enjoy a dessert and purchase some delicious coffee for home! We'll then make our way to a viewpoint of coffins before continuing on to get a closer look at the hanging coffins. The trail is not difficult, however there is a lot of steep inclines, as Sagada is up in the mountains, and the access to the burial sites are on lower levels. Steep steps lead down to an enormous, lichen-furred cave where more than 100 coffins are stacked at the entrance; the oldest coffin is believed to be about 500 years old.

Overnight in Sagada.

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### **DAY 16 HISTORIC TOWN OF VIGAN (UNESCO)**

We depart Sagada and ascend into a high peak before descending the many switchbacks until we finally reach the lowlands near sea level, all the while enjoying the breathtaking mountain scenery. We will have lunch enroute in the mountains. In Vigan, we will check into our classic hotel before walking down the main street to take in the beautiful architecture, horse and carriages and cobblestone lanes. We will get a chance to walk and stretch our legs on our way to a local restaurant, enjoying the street ambiance along the way.

Overnight in Vigan.

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### **DAY 17 COLONIAL TOUR OF VIGAN BY CALECHE**

After breakfast we will tour the UNESCO World Heritage town of Vigan by horse and carriage (caleche).

The Old Quarter of the city has remained generally untouched and offers a unique glimpse into the mixture of Spanish, Mexican, and Chinese architecture, brought together in a distinctly Filipino way. Aside from the historic Calle Crisologo, the heritage tour also includes the Vigan Cathedral, stops at a museum (former prison), and a pottery place with a very long oven. We'll enjoy lunch by the river and continue back to Vigan via its most famous street. You'll then have a free afternoon to explore or wander on your own, or you can go back to relax at our beautiful colonial style hotel. Dinner is at a restaurant in the square.

Overnight in Vigan.

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### **DAY 18 SITIO REMEDIOS, MARCOS SUMMER HOUSE, ST. AGUSTINE CHURCH (UNESCO); FLY TO MANILA**

After a relaxing morning and breakfast, we depart for the Crisologo Ancestral House/Museum. Afterwards we'll drive to Paoay to visit the UNESCO Heritage St. Augustine Church of Paoay (locally known as "Paoay Church"), famous for its distinctive architectural design – enormous buttresses that flank each side as protection against earthquakes. We'll have a quick visit to Laoag City before heading to the airport for the evening return flight to Manila.

Overnight in Manila.

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### **DAY 19 FLY TO PUERTO PRINCESA; KITU-KITO; FIREFLY WATCHING**

We take an early morning flight to Puerto Princesa. We have some time to freshen up at the hotel before departing for Kitu-KiTo for firefly watching and dinner. We will learn about the mangrove area that house the fireflies before setting out by boat to see them sparkle at night.

Overnight in Puerto Princesa.











## **DAY 20 UNDERGROUND RIVER NATIONAL PARK**

We have an early departure and a 1.5 hr drive to the Underground River National Park in Sabang.

We will take a small outrigger boat across the bay to the entrance of the river. The park features a spectacular limestone landscape with an underground river. One of the river's distinguishing features is that it emerges directly into the sea, and its lower portion is subject to tidal influences. The river is the longest navigable subterranean river in the world and is also a significant habitat for biodiversity conservation. We will learn the history and highlights of the river on our small paddleboat through a section of the cave.

We will have free time after lunch at our resort to enjoy the beach and the ocean.

Overnight in Sabang.

## **DAY 21 MANGROVE RIVER TOUR; DRIVE TO STUNNING EL NIDO**

After breakfast, we set out on our mangrove river excursion. We learn about the importance of mangrove forests and see some of the wildlife that make the mangrove forest home. After our excursion, we check out of our lodge and depart for El Nido. We will have lunch enroute at a local restaurant. We arrive in El Nido and check into our lovely resort. El Nido is famous for its white-sand beaches, turquoise waters, coral reefs, and splendid limestone rock formations.

Overnight in El Nido.

## **DAY 22 ISLAND-HOPPING IN PARADISE**

We spend the day island-hopping in paradise on our El Nido cruise to deep-blue lagoons and white-sand beaches. We visit the Big Lagoon, Entalula Island, Snake Island, Secret Lagoon, Seven Commandos Beach, and Shimizu Island. This will be a spectacular day traveling by outrigger, making several interesting and beautiful stops for swimming, relaxing, exploring, kayaking and enjoying lunch at one of the islands. We return to El Nido for dinner and sunset.

Overnight in El Nido.

## **DAY 23 LINAPACAN CASTAWAY EXPERIENCE - SLEEPING UNDER THE STARS**

Today we will set out for our castaway camping experience on the pristine island in the Linapacan area. We will have individual mesh tents for sleeping under the stars right on the beachfront. Each tent has a mattress, pillow, bed cover, and blanket. Enjoy a fully-staffed crew on the island including a chef, masseuse, and licensed boat crew for island hopping.

Overnight on an island in the Linapacan area.

## **DAY 24 ENCHANTING ISLANDS BY OUTRIGGER; TO EL NIDO**

We depart the Linapacan area on an outrigger boat for a 2 hour journey. Along the way, we stop at enchanting islands, where we have time for swimming, snorkelling and a delightful picnic lunch. This scenic and leisurely journey adds an extra layer of adventure to our travel day. Our final stop will be lunch near a WW2 shipwreck, with coral reef making much of the wreck its home. We can snorkel easily to the wreck, which is in relatively shallow waters. We arrive back in El Nido in the late afternoon for dinner and sunset.

Overnight in El Nido.

## **DAY 25 FLY TO CORON; BOAT TO ISLAND RESORT (CLUB PARADISE)**

After breakfast we have a morning flight to Coron on the large island of Busuanga. The area is an adventurer's paradise, filled with white-sand beaches, coral reefs, dense rainforests, mangrove swamps and crystal-clear lakes. Our island is home to massive fruit bats or 'flying foxes,' lizards and abundant birdlife. This is a beautiful resort and perfect place to end our incredible adventure before our return to Manila.

Overnight at Island Resort (Club Paradise).







## DAY 26 DUGONG (MANATEE) WATCHING

Dugong watching is a full-day excursion to several feeding grounds along the Busuanga coastline, and two turtle islands for skin and scuba divers. If a dugong is spotted (they surface every 4 to 5 minutes), we watch the animal first from the boat (like whale watching) then approach the dugong by snorkelling. Since this excursion is operated in a natural and sustainable way, to limit the intrusion into the habitats of the dugong, there is no way to absolutely guarantee a sighting, however with a sizeable manatee population (there are currently 30 living in the bay) the chances are quite good.

Overnight in Island Resort (Club Paradise).

## DAY 27 FLY TO MANILA

We travel by outrigger to the mainland, and drive to the airport for our flight from Coron to Manila. Upon arrival we check in to our hotel and have some free time to visit some local sites including churches and museums, or for last-minute souvenir shopping. Tonight we will have our farewell dinner.

Overnight in Manila.

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## DAY 28 DEPARTURE

We bid a fond farewell to the Philippines as we transfer to the airport for our flights home.















## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

### 2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), national guide and bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

### 3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas, travel insurance, photo and/or video fees, and public bathroom fees. Departure tax from the Philippines is not included in the tour cost.

### 4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit museums, national parks and reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of history, culture and nature. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are wandering through the streets of a small town.

### 5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We travel by small aircraft (7 flights), motorized boats, ferries, van or microbus, Jeepney (small mini bus) and by foot.

### 6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We stay in hotels, guesthouses and heritage inn’s with private bathrooms. We have 1 night of camping in solo tents with a mattress and bedding provided. Bathrooms are a short walk away, as are private shower stalls. Accommodation at Sagada (1 night) is family owned and simple with practical comforts. (Singles may need to share depending on how large the group is and how many singles are booked.)

### 7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

While there is regional variation in temperatures in the Philippines, expect temperatures of between 79°F and 93°F (26°C and 34°C) in March.

### 8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

### 9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is mandatory for this adventure. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

*\*Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

### 10. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local foods prepared in a wide range of settings.

### 11. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

### 12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

### 13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the adventure, please call our office for more details. A Trip Specialist will be happy to answer your questions. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.



