

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES

PHILIPPINES – PALAWAN, THE LAST FRONTIER

TEN DAY TRIP WITH NINE 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 island has more to offer than the island province of Palawan. Dubbed the 'Last Frontier' because of the thousands of kilometers of unexplored forests and coastlines, this narrow archipelago, located between the South China Sea and the Sulu Sea, is the 3rd largest island in the Philippines. The entire province has been designated as a fish and wildlife sanctuary since 1967, preserving the incredible biodiversity of the area.

After a short charter flight from Manila to El Nido we start paddling in picturesque Bacuit Bay. Our 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 10 metres from our campsites. Above water, we are treated to excellent bird watching including Palawan hornbills, white-vented shama, peacock pheasants, edible nest swiftlets, sea eagles and stork-billed kingfishers. The 600 species of butterflies and a large assortment of mammals add to our viewing.

Luxury camping is the theme, with all food, tents and camping gear carried aboard the traditional banca support boat. Camp is set up before we arrive amongst the tall marble cliffs enabling us to maximize our snorkeling time. Watching the sunset and eating 5-star chef cooked meals is hard to beat!

Midway through our trip we treat ourselves to a night in Miniloc resort before moving onto the rarely 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.

Naturalist Lee Goldman guides us on this remarkable tropical adventure. A brand new itinerary and only two departures... so don't miss out on this one!

A QUICK ITINERARY

Day 1	Pre trip briefing and overnight in a Manila city hotel.	D
Day 2	Flight to El Nido, kayak orientation and paddle.	BLD
Days 3-4	Kayak through island chain. Camping.	BLD
Day 5	Kayak lagoons to Miniloc resort.	BLD
Day 6	Paddle the western side of Palawan. Camping.	BLD
Days 7-9	Kayak Malampaya Sound. Camping.	BLD
Day 10	Transfer to El Nido and flight to Manila. Trip concludes.	BL

MEETING PLACE AND TIME

Manila airport pickup and transfer to our hotel is provided on Day 1. If you arrive earlier you can meet at the hotel. Our guide will meet you for a welcome dinner and general briefing. The hotel will be confirmed closer to the departure date. Excess baggage not wanted on the kayak trip can be stored in Manila either at the hotel if you stay there on your return, or at the guides' base. Accommodation is on a twin share basis. Hotel single supplement charge is approximately US\$130.



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 charter flight from Manila to El Nido (430 km).

VISAS

Most visitors receive a visa upon arrival for a stay of up to 21 days providing they hold a current passport valid for 6 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. 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 3 to 6 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 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: Our representative will meet you at the Manila airport just past customs and transfer you to our group hotel. Check in is normally after 2pm.

Your guide will meet you in the lobby of the hotel (time to be confirmed). Over a welcome dinner, the guide will conduct a trip briefing. Dinner is included on this day. Accommodation: A Manila city hotel.

Day 2: Our journey begins with a 7:30am flight leaving from a private terminal near the international airport. We fly 430 km southwest (about a 1.5 hour flight) to El Nido and then transfer to our campsite in Bacuit Bay. Camp and kayak orientation followed by a paddle to Mitre Island and our first of many snorkels. Dry bags provided. Natural history talk this evening.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.



Day 3: This morning we paddle to Cadlao Island with its 600 metre peak. We carry on to Inambuyod Island and finally to our camp amongst the marble cliffs on Matinloc Island. Lagoon snorkeling and lush coral gardens tempt us through the day.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 4: An early start takes us through one of the most scenic areas in Bacuit Bay, Tapuitan Strait. We paddle down a narrow channel leading through vertical cliffs and with shallow reefs below. We then paddle to the seldom visited SW corner of Tapuitan Island with its many hidden bays.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 5: Rising early we'll head towards Miniloc Island. We paddle past Tres Marias marine reserve and on towards Paglugaban Island. After a snorkel at Entalula Island we head for twin rocks and enjoy the serenity of Big and Small Lagoon with their towering cliffs and shallow reefs. There will be time for another snorkel before our final stretch towards Miniloc Resort. We will stop on a beach near the resort for dinner. It is a short distance along the shore to our one night of luxury!

BLD...Accommodation: Miniloc Resort.

Day 6: We paddle to Pangulasian Island for a snorkel and then after lunch head into open water around the western side of Palawan towards Endeavour Strait. We pass by the stunning Rocky Is, Ragged Is, Dangerous Point and Saddle Is before reaching camp.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 7: Paddling south down Endeavor Strait we reach the outer Malampaya Sound. This area is rarely visited and remains a pristine environment and an example of village life in local fishing communities. We enjoy fantastic paddling and exploring among the amazing array of islands. Shallow reef flats and sea grass communities provide a different habitat for wildlife viewing.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 8: Today we explore the inner reaches of Malampaya Sound, mangrove communities and sea grass beds. Several large rivers empty into the inner sound and we are on the lookout for the rare Irrawaddy freshwater dolphins.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 9: This is our final paddling day so we make the most of exploring the maze of tiny islets. We visit some local fisher folk as they tend their 'baklad' or fish -pens. Tonight is our last dinner and a great time to reflect on the wonderful and diverse face of Palawan.

BLD...Accommodation: Tent camping.

Day 10: We transfer by van back to El Nido for our afternoon charter flight back to Manila. Trip concludes.

BL...Accommodation is not included for this night.

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

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. Local and international dishes are prepared by fully qualified chefs. Four course dinners and breakfast buffet style will ensure you don't want to go home! We serve meals inside a 37 sq mesh screen tent and are happy to make appropriate arrangements for vegetarians and those who have special dietary requirements. If you have special dietary needs, please make sure you let us know at the time of booking. A small generator is available for battery charging.

EXPEDITION STAFF

Your trip is led by Lee Goldman. Lee is a professional kayak guide with extensive experience in tropical areas all over the world including a decade living in the Philippines. Lee is a marine biologist and expert in the marine and terrestrial environment. Lee is accompanied by local Philippine support staff and chefs. The guides' role is to coordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. He 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

Please pack as lightly as possible and take only the essentials. **There are strict limits on how much your luggage can weigh on the domestic flight (10 kg in total for checked baggage and carry on together). The airline staff will weigh both bags. Small camera bags are usually not included in the weight count but any other carry on will be added to your checked baggage. Extra baggage is charged at approximately US\$1.50/kg over 10 kg so there is availability to pay for some extra baggage.**

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

Manila City: We stay at a convenient city hotel before the trip. You may choose to stay at the hotel on your return to Manila but it may also be possible to connect with your outward flights. Hotel details will be advised closer to trip departure.



Miniloc Resort: good quality accommodation.

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. Queen sized mattress, sheets and pillows, portable toilet and cold water showers are provided while camping.

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.
- 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 accommodation on a twin share basis for the nights listed on the itinerary
- Flights between Manila and El Nido return
- All internal land, sea and air transfers (except transfers from/to your international flights in Manila)
- All meals as noted including welcome and farewell dinners on Day 1 and 9
- Kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment
- Spacious tents, sheets and pillow
- Watertight bags for your personal clothing
- Group first aid kit

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.

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 and be mindful of the weight restrictions between Manila and the islands. In your kayak all day clothing 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.

You will not need a lot of clothing for Manila, one change should suffice. 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. The list below should be used as a guide when packing.

Luggage

- A sturdy duffel or kit bag is recommended for your gear when flying from Manila and we suggest a size no larger than 90 cm.
- A small day pack for your carry on baggage as it will be weighed with your checked bags.
- 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 in Manila. In Palawan any excess luggage will be 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.



- 1 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.
- 2-3 T-shirts or short sleeved synthetic shirts for camp.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling.
- 1 pair of light weight, quick drying, full length trousers.
- 2 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.
- 1 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 mask and snorkel. Please don't bring fins – they are not necessary, they destroy the reef, and take up valuable space in your kayak.
- 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 +61 2 8901 3287.

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