

Getting Started

There's no question that the Philippines is a little more challenging to visit than some other Southeast Asian countries. For starters, it's separated from the Southeast Asian mainland by several hundred kilometres of ocean. Then there's the somewhat chaotic scene that greets you at Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport (where most people enter the country). But for the traveller who makes the effort to get there, the Philippines is usually a very pleasant surprise. The people of the Philippines are as warm and friendly as you'll meet anywhere, and the island and mountain vistas are truly superb – some of the best in Southeast Asia. And with over 7000 islands in the archipelago, it's easy to get that off-the-beaten-track feeling, something that's getting harder to do in most other parts of Southeast Asia.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit the Philippines is in the typhoon off-season, from September to May. Beware of arriving around Christmas and New Year though, as this is when legions of overseas Filipino workers return to spend the holidays with their families: accommodation and transport tend to fill up during this period, so book well in advance. Holy Week (around Easter) presents similar problems.

The wet season falls between June and September. The dry season starts when the September rains let up, and from then until early April the weather is at its most travel-friendly. By May, the warm weather turns hot and you'll long for a sea breeze or the cool shade of the mountains. The most lively festivals fall between January and May.

Note that the wet season does not totally prohibit travel in the Philippines. Even in parts of the country where the wet season is most pronounced, like Palawan, it is still possible to travel right through this

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

Travelling light is the only way to travel, especially in the Philippines. Let's face it: unless you intend to engage in specialist activities like surfing or rock climbing, you can travel in the Philippines with a large knapsack. You really don't need a full-size backpack. And, if you decide that you really should have brought that chess set, ham radio or three-piece suit, well, you can always buy what you need in Manila or Cebu (and if it's just a T-shirt or pair of flip-flops, you can buy these just about anywhere). Thus, for travellers planning a trip to the Philippines, we recommend that you don't leave home without...

- A headlamp or flashlight (electricity is an on-again-off-again affair in the Philippines)
- A sarong (this will double as a sheet, beach towel, bag and so on)
- A fleece for air-con buses and ferries
- Earplugs (roosters are everywhere in the Philippines, and you'll also have to deal with karaoke, noisy boat engines and so on)
- A strong zip-lock bag or other fully waterproof container for your camera (useful on boat rides)
- Tampons
- Medication if you suffer from sea sickness
- Lightweight mosquito nets or netting (coils are available if you don't like nets)

For further details on weather in the Philippines see p435.

season, provided you are willing to accept delays and cancellations. Furthermore, it's not usually rainy or even cloudy all day. More commonly, thunderheads and rain clouds build during the day and rain falls in bursts during the afternoon. There are also several advantages to travelling in the wet season: lower accommodation prices, fewer people, and lovely sunsets.

COSTS & MONEY

The Philippines is a bit more expensive than Thailand or Indonesia, but still quite affordable by Western standards.

Once outside Manila and Cebu, budget travellers can get by for around P1000 per day, spending around P400 on simple accommodation in guesthouses and backpacker joints, P200 for food in basic local restaurants, P200 for travel and P200 for sundries. If you're staying put and bargain for long-term accommodation discounts, you may do significantly better than this daily budget.

Midrange travellers will come close to doubling the budget figure (say, around P1950 per day), spending around P850 on a reasonably comfortable hotel or simple resort accommodation, P500 for three decent meals a day, P300 for travel and another P300 for sundries.

Once you enter top-end territory, the sky is almost the limit: top-end accommodation prices will almost always be quoted in US dollars, and will average around US\$80 for a resort or standard hotel (though this can go much higher); meals at good restaurants can run to P500 or more per person; full-day car and driver hire will cost around P1000.

Of course, as far as prices go in the Philippines, location is the operative word. Prices in Manila or Cebu City aren't necessarily indicative of expenses for the rest of your trip. In particular, Manila's accommodation (especially midrange) tends to be pricey compared with the provinces. Likewise, the internationally famous resort Boracay is a lot pricier than most other islands, though bargains can be found even there. The season also plays a huge role in accommodation prices: in the off-season, you can ask for and expect to receive discounts on accommodation of between 20% and 40%.

Fortunately, no matter where you go in the Philippines, basic necessities are amazingly cheap all year round. Likewise, transport, with the exception of private boat and car hire, is also a great bargain, with airfares as low as you'll find in any other parts of Southeast Asia.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Playing with Water – Passion and Solitude on a Philippine Island is James Hamilton-Paterson's account of the time he spent on an islet near Marinduque. In addition to containing excellent descriptions of the underwater world, Hamilton-Paterson's book sheds light on the ways of a small Philippine barangay (village). This book should whet your appetite for a spell on one of the Philippine's many Robinson Crusoe islands.

Ants for Breakfast – Archaeological Adventures among the Kalinga, by James M Skibo, is a tasty work of asides and insights gleaned from fieldwork among the Kalinga people of the Cordilleras. While it is not among the classics of anthropology, Skibo's laid-back prose makes for an entertaining read.

Eye of the Fish is an interesting collection of essays by a Manila-born, New York-raised journalist by the name of Luis H Fracia. The book mixes accounts of his youth in the Philippines and subsequent trips back to the country as an adult, and is an interesting meditation on the Filipino

HOW MUCH?

City bus (air-con) trip	P7
City bus (ordinary) trip	P4
Film (36 exposures)	P180
Internet access (per hour)	P25
Jeepney trip	P7
Laundry (1kg)	P40
Meal (basic)	P80
One-day bangka (small boat) rental	P750-1500
Petrol (1L)	P33
Shampoo (bottle)	P30

See also Lonely Planet Index, inside front cover.

TOP TENS

Islands & Beaches

With over 7000 islands and a stunning tropical location, it's hardly surprising that the Philippines also boasts some of the world's best beaches. Your choices range from touristy and developed spots like Boracay, to desert islands where you can live out your own 'stranded in paradise' fantasy.

- **White Beach on Boracay** (p325) is the heavily made-up reigning queen of the Philippine resorts
- The **Bacuit Archipelago** (p424) is one of the world's most stunning seascapes
- The **Romblon Islands** (p335) are where natural wonders seem to be for your eyes only
- **Pagudpud** (p152) is known as the 'Boracay of the North' – without the people
- **Sipalay** (p292) is a remote town featuring idyllic Sugar Beach, the perfect beach retreat
- **Malapascua Island** (p249) is a laid-back diving resort on the verge of big things
- The **Calamian Group** (p427) contains some lovely Robinson Crusoe islands and great wreck diving
- **Coron Island** (p430) has some incredible lakes and great beaches along its coast
- **North Pandan Island** (p221) is a lovely island where the only thing to rival the diving is the glorious buffet
- **Camiguin Island** (p378) is a volcanic wonderland for X-Gamers and retirees alike

Thrills & Activities

Due to its great diversity of natural terrain, the Philippines is a natural venue for all sorts of outdoor and adventure sports. Indeed, only Indonesia can compete with the Philippines for the title of 'adventure sports capital of southeast Asia'.

- Paddle into the wonderfully weird world of Sabang's **Subterranean River** (p415)
- Snorkel with whale sharks at **Donsol** (p194)
- Surf the gnarly reefs around **Cloud Nine** (p375)
- Climb **Mt Apo** (p392) to be on the top of the Philippines
- Go subterranean in the caves around **Sagada** (p164)
- Dive the awesome **wrecks of Coron** (p430)
- Explore the uncharted caves and underground rivers of central **Samar** (p350)
- Trek **Mt Kanlaon** (p287), an active volcano with some of Negros' last woodlands
- Dive in **Moalboal** (p255), a self-contained budget dive and party town
- Ascend **Mt Halcon** (p217), the Philippines' most challenging climb

Festivals

Filipinos don't need much of an excuse to hold a festival, and it's well worth trying to schedule your travels around a few of the big ones. It's a great chance to see the people and the country at their most colourful. This list is our top 10; for a comprehensive listing of Philippine festivals, see p437.

- The **Ati-Atihan festival** (p322) rocks the streets of Kalibo in January
- Lose yourself in La Carlota's **Kabankalong Sinulog** (p286), a wild street party held on the second Sunday in January
- Witness Cebu City's **Sinulog** (p233), celebrated on the third Sunday of January
- The raucous **Moriones Festival** (p201) livens up sleepy Marinduque every Holy Week
- **Easter in San Fernando** (p132) features a crucifixion ceremony where volunteers are nailed to a cross
- The **Rodeo Masbateño** (p345) brings out the cowboy in Filipinos every April/May
- The waterborn **Pista'y Dayat Festival** (p142) takes place off the Lingayen coast every May
- During **Pahiyas** (p128) on 15 May, Lucban residents decorate their houses with fruit and vegetables and wild paper creations
- The **Kaamulan festival** (p385) each September celebrates indigenous tribal unity and culture in this little-visited region
- The **Peñafrancia Festival** (p187) in Naga draws hordes of people every September

identity. This book is a good introduction to the various issues facing the Philippines and its people today.

INTERNET RESOURCES

ClickTheCity.Com (www.clickthecity.com) ClickTheCity is a great site for the latest happenings and destinations in Manila.

INQ7.Net (www.inq7.net) Inq7 is the best Philippines online news site.

Lakbay.Net (www.lakbay.net) The Lakbay site has lots of useful Philippines links, as well as shipping and bus schedules, and an online air-ticket booking service.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) The Lonely Planet site has lots of information on the Philippines and travel in general.

Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) (www.dfa.gov.ph) The DFA's site lists Philippine embassies and consulates abroad, as well as foreign embassies and consulates in the Philippines. It also lists the latest Philippines visa info.

Tanikalang Ginto (www.filipinolinks.com) The vast Tanikalang Ginto Web directory is very catholic (with a small 'c') in its orientation – it offers useful links to nearly every topic under the Philippine sun.

WOW Philippines (www.tourism.gov.ph) The site of the Philippines Department of Tourism (DOT) has useful general info about the Philippines, as well as lists of DOT offices inside and outside the country.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

MANILA PLUS ONE

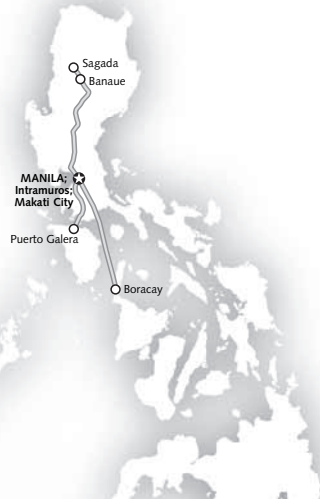
One to Two Weeks

Many visitors to the Philippines use Manila as a jumping-off point to more popular tourist spots, but the capital has plenty to offer to keep you occupied for a day or two. If you have a week to spend in the country, start off with two days in **Manila** (p69) doing a one-day tour of historic sights, such as **Intramuros** (p75), and another day for modern Manila as embodied by **Makati City** (p85) and other centres of contemporary urban development.

Having experienced a little of Philippine life in the big city, you could then head for one of the aforementioned destinations. **Boracay** (p325) is a popular choice and has both the natural attractions and nightlife to keep visitors entertained. A similar destination is **Puerto Galera** (p205), with its meandering coastline, innumerable coves, towering cliffs and lush vegetation.

With two weeks, you could do one of the **Manila-and-Boracay** or **Manila-and-Puerto Galera** itineraries, add a day to each of the stops, then head north to 'the eighth wonder of the world': the ancient rice terraces of **Banaue** (p170). If you've got time while in the Cordillera, you could tack on a trip to nearby **Sagada** (p162). With its cool climate and relaxed atmosphere, **Sagada** is a good place to chill out before returning to 'the real world'.

Check out the capital for a few days, then head to an easily accessible destination like **Boracay** (600km round trip from Manila) or **Puerto Galera** (250km round trip from Manila). This route takes about a week; add the **Cordillera of Luzon** (600km round trip from Manila) and it will take about two weeks.



NORTH-SOUTH TRAVERSE

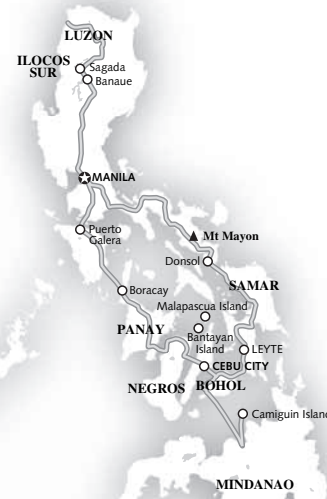
One to Two Months

Manila (p69) is the obvious place to start. After a couple of days exploring the capital, make your way north, to the **Ilocos region** (p145). Heading south from here, you could hit the **Cordillera region** (p153), stopping in **Banaue** (p170) to see the famous rice terraces, and **Sagada** (p162) to enjoy the cool mountain air. From Luzon, you can hop down to **Puerto Galera** (p205) on the island of **Mindoro**. If you don't already have it, you could get your diving certification here, opening up a whole range of underwater possibilities for the rest of your trip.

From **Puerto Galera**, you could make your way across **Mindoro** and down to **Boracay** (p325), for a few days of tropical indulgence on the white-sand beach there. From **Boracay**, you can make your way across **Panay** (p298), hop to **Negros** (p274), and then plunk down in **Cebu City** (p227) for some modern comforts. **Cebu** is a good jumping-off point for **Bohol** (p261), with its famous **Chocolate Hills** (p270), and the lovely islands of **Malapascua** (p249) and **Bantayan** (p247).

From **Cebu** or **Bohol**, adventurous travellers can head south to **Mindanao** (p367) to check out the great diving and outdoor activities there. Off the coast of **Mindanao**, **Camiguin Island** (p378) is a great spot to while away a few sun-filled days. If you don't want to visit **Mindanao**, you could head from **Bohol** to the eastern **Visayas**, starting in **Leyte** (p354) and then working your way up the scenic west coast of **Samar** (p347). Finally, you could cross the **San Bernardino Strait**, which would bring you back to the main island of **Luzon**. Here, if the season is right, you could see the whale sharks off **Donsol** (p194). Otherwise, you could check out **Mt Mayon** (p192), a 2462m volcano near **Legaspi**, before heading back by bus to **Manila**.

If you've got time and want to see a lot of the Philippines, start at the northern tip of **Luzon** and travel down to **Mindanao**, with the option of skipping **Mindanao** and exploring the eastern **Visayas**. You'll cover between 2000km and 3000km; the route takes from one to two months.



ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

THE LAST FRONTIER: PALAWAN

Two to Four Weeks

If you see nothing more in the Philippines than Manila and Palawan (p406), you won't feel short-changed. Indeed, Palawan packs more adventure and beauty into a small space than any other region of the Philippines. We recommend starting in Puerto Princesa (p410), which is accessible by boat and plane from Manila, and by plane from Cebu. Spend a day or two in Puerto (as it's locally known), setting your body clock to island time (and enjoying the great food on offer). Then, head up to visit Sabang and the Subterranean River (p415). The riverine cave here is one of the most bizarre and fascinating attractions in all of the Philippines and is not to be missed. If you'd like to do some island hopping, then a day trip to the Honda Bay islands (p414) is good for a quick beach fix.

From Puerto, head overland or fly up to El Nido (p421) to explore the fantastic Bacuit Archipelago (p424). Spend a few days here taking day trips around the islands, searching for that perfect bay or beach to call your own. From El Nido, take a boat or fly up to Busuanga Island (p427). Based in or near Coron Town (p428) on Busuanga Island, you can explore the fantastic lakes of Coron Island (p430), Makinit Hot Springs (p428), and the islands and beaches near Coron (p430). Of course, the real attraction here is wreck diving (p430), and there are few experiences that compare to descending into the depths and seeing a vast sunken hulk coalesce out of the gloom. From Busuanga, you can either take a ferry or fly back to Manila.

From Puerto Princesa up to Busuanga Island, take in Palawan's most stunning features: the Subterranean River, the Bacuit Archipelago, and the wrecks, islands and lakes of Busuanga Island. The route covers approximately 500km, not including the journey to and from Manila, and takes two to four weeks.



DOING TIME ISLAND STYLE

One Month

If you have a month to spend in the country, then an island-hopping tour of the Visayas is certainly one of the better ways to spend it, particularly if you're a diver or beach-lover. Fly into bustling Cebu City (p227), 'Manila Minor', but don't linger too long. Take the first convenient bus to the dive colony of Moalboal (p255). Once you've dived and partied to your heart's content, jump on another bus and check out the stunning coastal scenery on the road to Bato, the closest port to Negros. In Negros, enjoy the nightlife of Dumaguete (p274), and sample the many dive resorts just a short bus trip out of town. Then brace for a gruelling – but utterly worthwhile – six-hour bus journey to the remote beach retreats of Sipalay (p292). Leave some slack in your itinerary at this point because you'll probably want to stay an extra week.

From Sipalay, it's four hours by bus (thankfully along a paved road) to Pulupandan, from where the boat departs for Guimaras (p306), a gem of an island for lovers of postcard-perfect low-key resorts, as well as mountain bikers and mango connoisseurs. If you can muster the energy to leave, Iloilo City (p299), the second city of the Visayas, is a short ferry hop away. Take some time out for the happening music scene and gorge on the beachfront seafood buffets before grabbing a van north to the white sand, mixed drinks and water sports at Boracay (p325), the Philippines' answer to Cancun and Phuket. Before long you may be inspired to seek permanent-residency status, but if you find the beach-bum lifestyle too taxing take a vacation from your vacation by catching a ferry north to the island of Looc and then to either of the island retreats of Romblon (p339) or Sibuyan (p342) before returning to civilisation via Cebu or Manila.

Cut a swathe through the Visayas, enjoying superb diving at Moalboal and around Dumaguete and the beach resorts of Sipalay and Boracay. Sample the nightlife at Dumaguete and Iloilo City, or retreat to the peaceful islands of Romblon or Sibuyan. The total distance is 900km; allow at least a month.



TAILORED TRIPS

NORTH LUZON TREKKER'S TREAT

From Baguio, take a bus to Kabayan (p161). Spend the night there and set out early the next morning for the Akiki Trail, which leads up to the grassy summit of Luzon's highest peak, Mt Pulag (p162). Fast hikers will be back in Kabayan the following evening. Hike out of Kabayan to the Halsema Hwy (p165) via the mummies at the Timbac Caves (p161) and jump on a north-bound bus to Sagada, which is loaded with excellent day hikes (p164). The amazing amphitheatre-like rice terraces of Maligcong (p167) are your next destination. Either take a jeepney to Bontoc and explore these on a day trip, or better yet walk to Maligcong via Mainit (p167) from the town of Aguid near Sagada.



From Bontoc you have two choices. To get really off the beaten track, head up to Tinglayan (p168) and hike to see the last of the Kalinga headhunters. From Tinglayan, travel by jeepney or whitewater raft down the Chico River to Tabuk (p169). Your other option from Bontoc is to head to Banaue (p170) and Batad (p173), site of Luzon's most famous rice terraces. Hardcore trekkers should not miss the outstanding two-day trek to Batad from Barlig (p167), outside of Bontoc, via Mt Amuyao (2702m). The stunning hikes around Batad and Banaue will keep you occupied for days.

DIVER'S ODYSSEY

Starting in Manila, you could warm up with a few easy dives around Anilao (p123), or head straight south for the diving centre of Puerto Galera (p205) on Mindoro, where you'll want to try the wall diving off Verde Island (p210), considered by some to be the best in the Philippines. From Mindoro, head south to the Visayas (p225). Cebu City (p227) is a good place to begin your exploration of the Visayas. Near Cebu, you'll find good cave diving on Mactan Island (p242). On Cebu Island itself, Moalboal (p255) has some great beach dives. Moving over to nearby Bohol (p261) puts you in easy reach of the incredible reef diving around Balicasag Island (p269). Other Visayan possibilities include Apo Island (p281), with its large fish and healthy coral, and Malapascua Island (p249), with some good opportunities for shark sightings.



Heading south from the Visayas brings you to Mindanao (p367), which has its share of great diving. Near Davao, Samal Island (p391) has some good cave diving, while the reef dives around General Santos are some of the best in the archipelago. Finally, if you have the time, a trip over to Palawan (p406) is a must (you'll have to backtrack to Cebu and fly from there to Puerto Princesa). There is some fine diving in Palawan, and any divers worth their salt already know about Coron's nearby wreck diving (p430).

Snapshot

A meeting point of East and West; a Christian nation, yet home to a growing number of Muslims; a melting pot of ethnic and religious tolerance where visitors are generally welcomed with an open mind – the Philippines can seem like a highly accessible place to the first-time visitor. However, it takes some time and effort to come to grips with what's really going on here, and nothing is ever as simple as it seems.

One of the significant features of current Philippine society that might strike the visitor is the visible rise of women in the workforce. Middle management is now mostly in the hands of women, and it is not uncommon to also encounter women in senior positions as well as women entrepreneurs and business proprietors. This, however, should not come as a surprise. Long before women's lib in the West, Filipinas already enjoyed a strong position in local society, and as increasing numbers of the menfolk left home to work abroad, they filled up the spots vacated by men. It is a telling fact that in this young republic there have already been two women presidents!

The most recent of these women presidents, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, was recently involved in an election scandal that was the talk of Philippine society (for more on this, see p29). While it looks like Macapagal-Arroyo will weather this particular storm, it remains to be seen whether she will continue to be an effective leader, or if she will have spent all her political capital defending herself from charges of election fraud.

The visitor might notice a veneer of economic wellbeing in the country, particularly in Metro Manila and other recently developed major urban centres. This is especially noticeable with regard to the infrastructure (better roads and transport) and the retail and service sectors (high-end shops, hotels and restaurants offering higher-standard service).

Yet once you get out of these pockets of prosperity, life remains the same, almost unchanged, with masses still living in dire poverty around shantytowns. This image of destitution remains firmly fixed in the perception of many foreigners, who often think of Smokey Mountain, Manila's notorious trash dump, as exemplifying the country as a whole (the site has actually been closed down). It would, however, be a gross injustice to equate the Philippines with poverty. Though poverty continues to be a major problem, the social fabric has somehow managed to remain intact and free of the horrendous crimes encountered in some advanced countries.

The south, specifically the Muslim region of Mindanao, is still a trouble spot, and the visitor would be well advised to take note of travel advisories regarding the area. But strangely enough the situation hasn't deteriorated, despite rising tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in other parts of the world. Indeed, at the moment, it all seems eerily quiet on the southern front. And back in Manila, there has been a drop in the number of kidnap-for-ransom incidents. Thus it appears that, for the time being, it is a good time to visit the Philippines.

FAST FACTS

Population: 87.8 million
 Life expectancy: men 67 years, women 73 years
 GNP: US\$430 billion
 Unemployment rate: over 11%
 English literacy rate: 93%, the highest in Asia
 Number of islands: 7000, the world's second-largest archipelago
 Length of coastline: 36,289km, the world's third longest (almost twice that of the USA)
 Highest point: Mt Apo, at 2954m
 Asia's first: university (University of Santo Tomas, 1611); democratic nation (1896); commercial airline (Philippine Airlines, 1941)
 World's biggest producer of: coconuts, third-largest producer of bananas

The Authors



CHRIS ROWTHORN

Coordinating Author & Palawan

Chris is a Kyoto-based journalist who has spent the last 12 years in Asia. He travels several times each year in Southeast Asia and he considers Palawan to be one of his favourite places on earth. Chris is a keen diver, snorkeller and trekker, and is happiest when he's in the mountains or snorkelling on a tropical reef somewhere. In addition to being a writer and photographer, Chris is a published cartoonist whose work has appeared in King Features Syndicate's *New Breed* series in newspapers across the United States. When he's not writing for Lonely Planet, Chris runs tours of Kyoto, Tokyo, Manila and Palawan (www.philippinesprivatetours.com).

My Favourite Trip

My favourite trip in the Philippines is invariably a trip to Palawan. I fly into Manila (p69) and spend a day or two in the capital before flying down to Puerto Princesa (p410). I spend a few days in Puerto stuffing myself full of good Filipino food at places like KaLui (p413) and Kinabuch (p413). Then I head for Sabang and take a journey into the otherworldly Subterranean River (p415). From there, I make my way up to El Nido (p421) and spend a few days exploring the fantastic Bacuit Archipelago (p424), one of my favourite places. Then I fly up to Busuanga Island and spend a few days in Coron (p428), making day trips to the nearby islands, eating at Bistro Coron (p429) and diving on the wrecks (p430).



GREG BLOOM

North Luzon & Southeast Luzon

Greg's first impression of Manila when he moved there in 2004 was that it seemed like America's 51st state, oddly misplaced in Southeast Asia. It took him about a week to realise that the Philippines shared more characteristics with his previous home-away-from-home, Ukraine, than with his native United States. Feeling right at home, he quickly grew to love this land of a million smiles and its quirky culture. Formerly the editor of the *Kyiv Post*, Greg now splits his time between travel writing and editing technical reports for international organisations. When not banging computer keys he's usually off diving in the South China Sea or running around Manila's ultimate Frisbee fields.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the Internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.



MICHAEL DAY

Mindoro, The Visayas (Cebu, Camotes & Negros)

Michael spent five years at the Lonely Planet head office in various roles, including commissioning editor for Northeast Asia, before 'jumping the fence' to do his first authoring gig. He has travelled extensively in Asia but until the Philippines nothing had quite lived up to his first long trip – island-hopping around Indonesia. He now rates Negros among his all-time favourite islands. By the time this book is published, Michael and his family will be living in Istanbul, Turkey.



MICHAEL GROSBURG

The Visayas (Bohol, Siquijor, Panay, Boracay, Romblon, Masbate, Samar, Leyte, Biliran Island), Mindanao & Sulu

After a childhood spent in the Washington DC area, and with a philosophy degree in hand, Michael took a job involved with developing a resort on Rota island in the Northern Marianas, after which he left for a long overland trip through Asia. Following an exploration of the country of his birth, he went to South Africa and did journalism and NGO work. He then returned to New York City, attended graduate school in comparative literature, and taught literature and writing. Inspired by his trip to North Luzon for the previous edition of this guide, Michael sought the Philippine islands of the south this time around. Michael has worked on about 10 Lonely Planet books.



RYAN VER BERKMOES

Manila, Around Manila

Ryan grew up in California in a community that was popular with Filipino immigrants. As such he got to try authentic *adobo* at an early age and learned both of the horrors of WWII and the wild Filipino sense of humour. (He'd like to say he also learned about bad cover bands, but everybody seemed to like bad cover bands then.) He has spent a good part of the last 20 years in Southeast Asia and is glad to finally have a chance to write about the Philippines. A long-time journalist and Lonely Planet author, Ryan doesn't recommend breathing deeply in Manila but he does recommend you plunge in deeply: 'It's a carnival, a city and a collection of anecdotes all rolled into one.'

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Dr Trish Batchelor wrote the Health chapter. She is a general practitioner and travel-medicine specialist who works at the CIWEC Clinic in Kathmandu, Nepal, as well as being a medical advisor to the Travel Doctor New Zealand clinics. Trish teaches travel medicine through the University of Otago, and is interested in underwater and high-altitude medicine, and in the impact of tourism on host countries. She has travelled extensively through Southeast Asia.

Heneage Mitchell wrote the Diving in the Philippines chapter. He has lived and dived in the Philippines for more than 20 years, and in 1982 became the first foreigner to own and operate a dive centre in the Philippines.

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