

# Tubbataha & More

## The 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.

#### **Please note the following:**

In Tubbataha, diving conditions are not suitable for beginners: strong currents, wall dives, etc. Therefore, we recommend all divers to have logged a minimum of 20 dives. Furthermore, it is not allowed to bring or fly drones in the Tubbataha Natural Park.

For trips starting from Puerto Princesa, pick up time is 12.30 PM at Hotel Centro. Latest embarkation time is 13:00 PM due to departure to reach Tubbataha on time to dive the first dive next morning. Once on board, lunch will be served then there will be a mandatory briefing from the Tubbataha Management Office and a check conducted by the coastguard. Guests are advised that the briefings and checks can only be conducted once all guests are on board, and the Philippine Siren will not be allowed to leave port until these have been carried out. Crossing time from Puerto Princesa is between 12 - 16 hours and any delays to departure due to late arrival of guests may result in dives being missed.

For trips starting from Mactan - Cebu, embarkation time is at 13.00 PM from Marina Seaview Restaurant, Mactan Island, Cebu.

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive.

A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 3
- Snack
- Briefing for Sunset or Night dive (no night dives in Tubbataha: due to strong currents!)

- Dinner

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

## **Tubbataha**

Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park comprises North Atoll, South Atoll and Jessie Beazley Reef. Dive sites consist mainly of vertical walls or near drop offs rising out of great depths. The shallow reef tops are teeming with local reef fish; in many places stingrays, marble rays, spiny lobsters and juvenile reef sharks are common. The angelfish, butterfly fish, rainbow runners, moorish idols, fusiliers, jacks, snappers and sweetlips follow you around. Large trevally, tuna and barracuda as well as grey reef sharks and white tip reef sharks can be spotted patrolling the reefs on the majority of the dive sites, whilst manta and eagle rays are occasional visitors.

There are several species of turtle known to inhabit the waters of this gigantic natural park; the most commonly sighted being green and hawksbill. Groupers and wrasse flourish here and sightings of hammerheads and silver tip sharks have been amongst the large elasmobranchs spotted by guests of the Siren Fleet during our cruises. This really is an amazing dive destination and rated by those who have been fortunate to dive it as one of the world's best.

### **Dive sites include:**

**Delsan Wreck** - One of the best dive sites in Tubbataha with big schools of big-eyed trevally, yellowtail barracuda, great barracuda, dogtooth tuna, giant trevally together with grey reef sharks and white tip reef sharks.

**Black Rock** - There is so much to explore at this dive site that we will often spend the whole day diving here. Schools of surgeon fish, rainbow runners and sweetlips are a common sight. White tip and nurse sharks are found resting under huge table corals and scribbled filefish, box fish and leaf fish add to the colour and spectacle of the stunning reefs; a great site for spotting spiny lobster too!

**Washing Machine** - All manner of colourful reef fish form schools here. From big-eye jacks to tiny orange & purple anthias all creating a welcoming atmosphere. Spot the tiny creatures including cowries wedge themselves amidst the leather corals. It is a great site for turtles, and whale sharks have also been spotted here.

**North East Wall** - Adorned with stunning sea fans and colourful soft corals. This wall is super for wide-angle photography. Schools of bannerfish hover in the blue, turtles bumble along the wall and from the sandy bed garden eels and gobies emerge.

**Shark Airport** - Many white tip reef sharks resting at the shallow plateau form a typical sighting; hence the name Shark Airport. Dog tooth tuna, schools of trevally, marble rays,

eagle rays, nurse sharks and batfish all add drama to the stunning reef. Turtles and moray eels are a common sight but divers should watch out for the triggerfish.

**Amos Rock** - Moorish idols, sweetlips and snappers all form large schools here, also commonly seen are white tip reef sharks, great barracuda and giant trevally. When lucky, pygmy seahorse can be found in the gorgonians.

**Staghorn Point** - Golden, pinnate and longfin spade fish all form schools along this fan encrusted wall, meanwhile clouds of purple anthias hover over the fields of staghorn corals in the shallow reef top. Also this is a good site to spy turtles, snow flake morays and spiny lobster.

**Jessie Beazley Reef** - Huge schools of surgeon fish and unicorn fish hover over the reefs, where we commonly see numerous grey reef sharks and huge Napoleon wrasses.

**Malayan Wreck** - This reef is the habitat for different trevallies, barracudas, bump head parrotfish, juvenile grey reef sharks with the usual suspects darting around. Marbled stingrays can sometimes hang out here.

Moreover, you will have the opportunity to visit the ranger station on the North Atoll to learn more about the marine protection of the area.

## **Cagayancillo**

This scarcely dived destination with its healthy hard and soft corals along with massive sea fans and plenty reef fish is a perfect pit stop in our long journey.

## **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 is 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.