Philippines

The Philippines are a world-known diving country! It was also the first intercontinental trip I ever went on, and I fell in love! The seas were crystal clear and the water warm. I saw my first seahorses and frogfish, I learned the joy of muck diving, and… I drowned my first camera. That was the only downside on this beautiful holiday of sea and sun.

The Philippines consist of more than 7000 islands. There are so many places where you can go diving. Palawan is famous for its wrecks, while Malapasqua has its tresher sharks. Decide what you want to see and book your trip. There is no need for liveaboards as everything is close by and the normal diving is just a day trip.

The Philippines are a tropical country and are prone to typhoons. From May to October, it’s rainy season and there is a good chance for a tropical storm. Diving will be limited or stopped during these periods, so be aware when booking your trips.

Puerto Galera

Puerto Galera is a dive city on Mindoro Island. I visited it years ago and I loved it! We were there in May, so the water was very warm. It also meant no sharks. But… there was tons of great stuff to see! Leaffish, ghostpipe fish, frogfish, electric clams. There are some tiny wrecks, there is muck diving and drift diving. You can do and choose whatever you want. If you ask nice, you can even go for a day dive trip to Isla Verde.

We stayed with Asia Divers and the El Galleon Beach Resort in Sabang, just outside of PG . The dive center is great, they had professional staff that knew what they were doing and a good apres-dive bar, but the resort was a bit shabby.   
Staff comes and pick you up at the Manilla airport. After a two-hour drive, you are brought to the resort by boat and you can start diving.

I loved the diving for sure but I did not like the town of Sabang. It seemed like my friend and me were the only western women around. The rest were all single (?) western men, looking for a friend for the day or week. So obvious lots of men go there only to get layed. The local women did not really like to see us walking around there too and we got lots of angry faces.

Malapascua

Malapascua is famous for its tresher shark diving! As tresher sharks are deep fish, the dives are made at a good depth. Having your Deep and EAN certification is not a bad thing when you want to go and see them. Although the sharks have been spotted shallower, you can’t really count on it. You can never count on seeing them anyway, but if you do stay around for a few days, you should get lucky at least once.

The treshers like to get cleaned of their parasites early in the morning, so they come up from the deep. It also means you’ll have to get up early. It is a unique spectacle in the world so just go for it.

Even if you missed out on the threshers, you won’t go home sad. Malapascua also has nice macro dives. Mandarin fishes, seahorses, ghostpipe fish… Plenty of little critters to watch. Go and get the camera out!  
If you’re still not happy, then you can go and dive on 3 close by wrecks.

You reach Malapascua by flying to Cebu. The dive center will come and pick you up and will bring you to the island.  
You can dive all year around but be aware of the tropical storms during summer. In winter, the visibility goes down but you’ll get more mantas instead. Also be aware that sharks don’t like hot water, so maybe May wouldn’t be the best month to go…

BOHOL

Bohol is on the rise as a dive destination. People like to combine it with Malapascua and go and dive the reefs and walls around this island. Also, on the nearby Cabilao Island, you can go and spot hammerhead sharks.

The water temperatures flux between 25C/76F in winter and 30C/86F in May. You can dive the whole year through but during the southwest monsoon, in summer, the water will be choppier. Dives can be limited or stopped when a tropical storm comes over. The visibility will go down because of the rainfall.  
Currents are slow if you dive around the islands, but you can go for a real drift if you dive in the channels.  
The best time of year to see the hammerheads is from December till June, on sunrise or sunset dives.

If you come from Manilla, you’ll want to fly to Tagbilaran, Bohol. From Cebu City, you can take the ferry or the fastboat.

CORON

Coron is a part of the Palawan province and is world-famous for its wreck diving! It all started on September 24, 1944, when a US squadron destroyed 24 Japanese warships in the Bay of Coron. When scuba diving became a popular sport, some of them got discovered and are now frequently dived on.

The ships are still in very good condition. You can see the artillery, the cabins, the guard rails and all the diverse marine life living on the wrecks.   
Even as an Open Water Diver, you can go and dive the sunken ships, but be aware of your depth. They are all kinda shallow, but as an Advanced or EAN diver, you have much more possibilities. You can enter several wrecks with a good guide and if you aren’t scared fast. Coron is of course a great destination to do your wreck specialty too!

If you’re tired of seeing all these manmade reefs, you can go and dive Barracuda Lake or the Cathedral!

You can dive in Coron the whole year round. During rainy season, in summer, you have to be aware that diving can be limited or stopped because of the rainfall or tropical storms coming over. Also, visibility will be less.

If you want to get to Coron from Manilla, you fly onto the Francisco B. Reyes Airport. There your dive center will pick you up. Travelling directly from Cebu is not possible anymore. You will have to take a layover in Manilla.