

Hidden Beach, El Nido

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Most visitors to Palawan fly into Puerto Princesa City and use it as a jumping-off point for exploring the islands as a whole, although it's worth exploring in its right – the least densely populated city in the Philippines, it's also been acclaimed as its greenest and cleanest, and offers an array of beach resorts and seafood restaurants.

GETTING TO AND AROUND

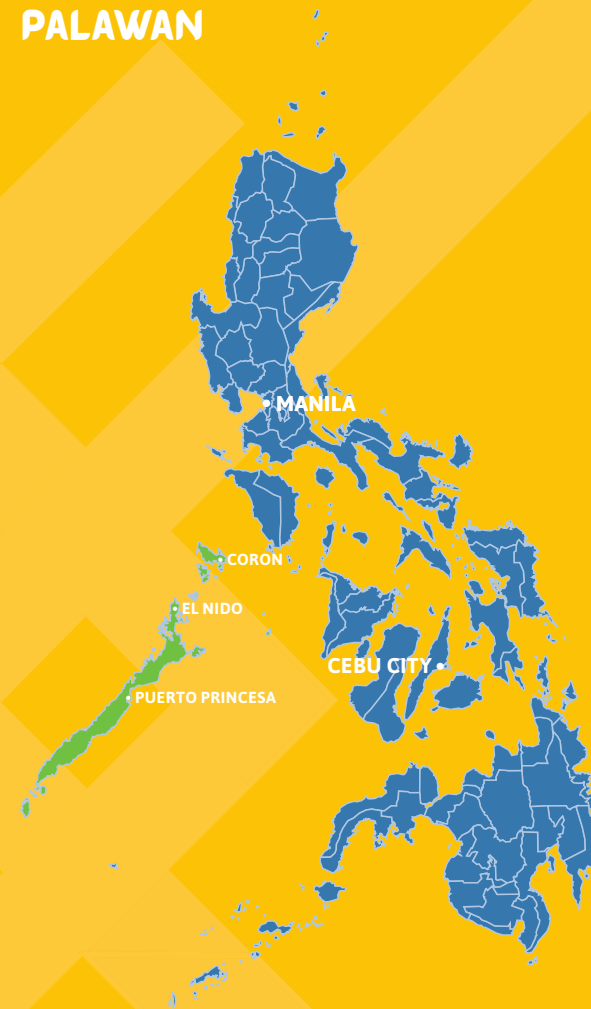
Domestic flights serve Puerto Princesa, Busuanga and El Nido from Manila and/or Cebu. Manila or Cebu to Puerto Princesa each takes about 70-90mins. From Busuanga (Coron) to Puerto Princesa it's around 3hrs 10mins. There are also ferries and other boats; a ferry from Manila to Palawan (around 800km) takes about 24hrs. Onward journeys can be made by bus, jeepney, mini-van or tricycle taxi, and there are ferries from El Nido to Coron; fast ones take 3-4hrs.

WHERE TO STAY

Free of mass tourism and large-scale development, Palawan itself offers mainly highly affordable, locally run lodgings with gorgeous ocean views, although there are also luxury resorts on the smaller, more secluded islands. For those arriving into Puerto Princesa, the city has an array of simple, clean hotels and hostels. El Nido has mainly five-star hotels with secluded beaches and private jetties, although there are also luxury resorts on the smaller, more secluded islands. Coron mixes it up, with luxury international hotels, contemporary mid-range options and hip hostels.

Palawan claimed No. 1 spot in 'Best Islands In The World 2020' by readers of Travel & Leisure

PALAWAN



CLIMATE

Tropical to subtropical, with two main seasons – rainy from June to October and dry season from November to May. The average annual temperature is 29°C.

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PALAWAN

The UNESCO World Heritage listed
Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park



WELCOME TO PALAWAN

Dubbed the Philippines' 'last ecological frontier' for its plant and wildlife biodiversity (15–20% of its plant species are endemic), this stunning archipelago-province was the true inspiration behind Alex Garland's blockbuster novel and movie *The Beach* – but he didn't name it because he wanted to keep it a secret.

Palawan's best-known spots are **El Nido** and **Coron** with their spectacular dive sites, but there are also more off-the-beaten-track locations such as **Port Barton**, **Taytay**, **Roxas**, **Brooke's Point** and **San Vicente** to discover, with their promise of authentic food and local experiences including wildlife sanctuary visits.

Meanwhile, the capital **Puerto Princesa City** is a great place to soak up some history at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral and WWI site **Plaza Cuartel**, as well as to shop and eat.

"A regular on our list of the world's best islands, Palawan is home to the otherworldly Puerto Princesa Subterranean River, a UNESCO World Heritage Site worth the trip alone. Many make El Nido and its blue lagoon their base, though, to explore the Bacuit Archipelago."

– Condé Nast Traveler



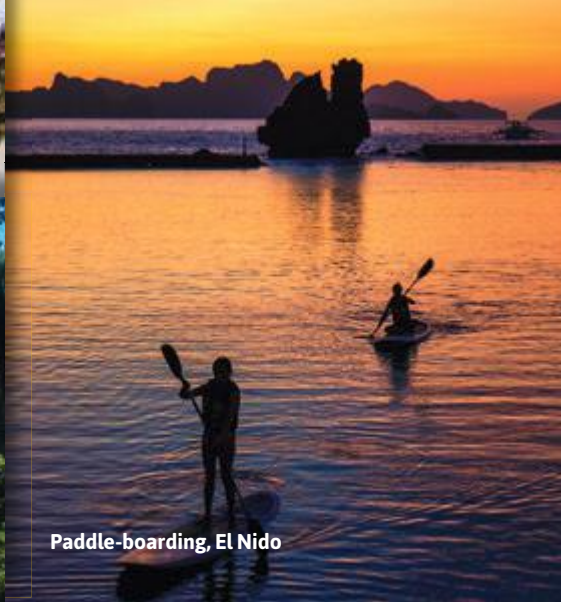
Pinagbuyutan Island



Seaside lunch, El Nido



Coron



Paddle-boarding, El Nido

Men from the Batak tribe showing their tribal war dance Sa-Ad with wooden bolos or swords



CULTURE AND FOOD

With a history beginning with prehistoric settlement (seen in the ancient tribal artworks of the Tabon Caves) and proceeding through Malaysian migration, Spanish colonisation, American rule and Japanese invasion, Palawan is much more than its blissful white-sand beaches and incredible natural resources. This is also a province where around 70 cultures live together in harmony, with different languages and dialects (more than 50), beliefs, festivals, art forms and tribes. The best places to get a handle on this heterogeneity are the National Museum and Palawan Museum in Puerto Princesa.

WHY IT'S MORE FUN IN PALAWAN

With its beaches, lakes, waterfalls, mineral springs, rivers and creeks, Palawan is a place where activities in the great outdoors take on a new and magical dimension. Diving is a big deal here – expect to see spotted manta rays, green sea turtles and nocturnal marine creatures including seahorses, shrimp and cat sharks. Meanwhile, waterfall-swimming and hiking, jungle trekking and cave boat-trips are among the array of other stand-out pursuits on offer. And don't miss birdwatching at some of country's best sites, where migratory birds are joined by 15 species endemic to this province.

Palawan also has a rich food culture into which all these influences have fed. Among local treats to seek out and sample are super-fresh seafood including *tamilok* (a shell-less saltwater clam, served ceviche-style or fried), crocodile *sisig* (a sizzling minced-meat dish), *lato* seaweed salad, *hopia* bread (a sweet flaky pastry best eaten at Baker's Hill in Puerto Princesa), *danggit lamayo* (dried rabbitfish) and *chao long* (Vietnamese-inspired noodles). Foodies should also make a beeline for San Jose Market in Puerto Princesa.



The UNESCO World Heritage listed Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park



Traditional weave



El Nido

TOP 10 ACTIVITIES

- Dive in the **Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park**, named one of the world's best dive sites by CNN Travel, and explore the dive sites of El Nido, including **Dilumacad's underwater cavern** and **Bacuit Bay**.
- Kayak under the stars in **Iwahig Ecotourism and Wildlife Park**, and visit Iwahig's rehabilitation 'prison without walls.'
- Cruise down the **Puerto Princesa Subterranean River** – New7Wonders of Nature.
- Go island-hopping and snorkelling in **Honda Bay**, discovering **Starfish Island** and others.
- Go wreck-diving off **Coron** or neighbouring **Busuanga Island**.
- Venture into the **Tabon Caves**, where some of the oldest-known human inhabitants were found.
- Relax on **El Nido's** beaches: **Secret Beach**, **Nacpan**, **Pangalusian** and **Las Cabanas** among them.
- Go climbing, zip-lining, spelunking and jungle trekking at **Ugong Rock** located in Baranggay Tagabine near **Puerto Princesa**.
- Visit **San Vicente** and explore the country's longest white beach.
- Explore more of the MIMAROPA region with its scenic spots including **Bathala Cave**, **Balanacan Bay** and **Tres Reyes Islands** (Marinduque province), **White Island** (Mindoro), and **Fort San Andres**, **Mount Guiting-Guiting** and **Bonbon Beach** (Romblon).

TOP EVENTS & FESTIVAL

- **Arawedan Festival, Port Barton, January** – a showcase for the area's beaches, marine reserves, parks and culture.
- **Kulambo Festival, El Nido, March** – street dancing in kulambo (mosquito net) costumes.
- **Puerto Princesa City Foundation Day, 4th March** – culture, sports, markets, singing, dancing and food.
- **Pasinggatan Festival, Taytay, April and May** – regional street dances and a food festival.
- **Baragatan Festival, Puerto Princesa, June** – song, dance, parades and markets.