

PUERTO GALERA PHILIPPINES

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Literally meaning "Port of Galleons," Puerto Galera has been popular among seafarers ever since the prosperous years of the Spanish galleon trade. Considered to be one of the most beautiful and safest harbours in the world, Puerto Galera was regularly visited by merchant vessels sailing along the important trade routes of Southeast Asia. Today, things have changed a bit – the port still retains its popularity, but with a different breed of explorers: scuba divers, photographers and naturalists coming from all over the globe.

Puerto Galera is primarily famous for its splendid beaches, coral reefs teeming with marine life and exquisite dive sites. The region was declared a Marine Reserve by the United Nations in 1974, owing to its abundance of exotic fish species seldom seen elsewhere. Diving is possible all year round here with over two dozen prime sites in the area. There is much to offer divers of all abilities and levels of experience.

Given its lofty reputation as an underwater paradise, Puerto Galera is also the perfect gateway to some of the most unspoilt territories and national parks in the vast island of Mindoro. One will be lured to explore pristine lakes, rivers and waterfalls, meet indigenous tribes with their own stone-age hand-writing, or trek thru lush vegetations and forests.



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Freedom to explore and discover

Fast Facts

Time Zone: GMT + 8

Visa: Only required if staying more than 21 days

Climate: November to February – cool and mostly dry; March to June – warm and mostly dry; July to October – warm and mostly wet

Average Temperature Year-round: 24 C – 32 C

Attire: Light casual clothes all year round

Money: Philippine Pesos. Check with the local banks for current exchange rates. All major credit cards accepted

Water: Bottled water available in resorts, restaurants and convenience stores

Communications: International and direct dial phone and fax. Internet cafes are widely available

What to Bring: Sun block, tanning lotions, insect repellent, personal medication, swimwear and accessories, etc.

Getting There

From Manila and via Batangas pier, Puerto Galera is approximately 4 hours traveling time. Buses depart every 30 minutes from numerous bus stations in Manila (Cubao and along EDSA) for Batangas. From the pier, ferry services are available to Balatero, Sabang or Muelle on Mindoro Oriental.

Most resorts offer direct transfers from Manila and back as part of their package. Please check with your preferred hotel/resort facility beforehand.

Hotels and Resorts

There are plenty of establishments to accommodate both the hardy adventurer and the laid back vacationer wanting to relax. There are inland hotels and inns for those who are looking to explore more of Mindoro's vast jungles and mountains, and beachfront resorts for those who cannot wait to jump into the water to marvel at the sea's boundless beauty.

Eating Out and Nightlife

White Beach and Sabang offer the liveliest scenes in "honky-tonk" Puerto Galera. People literally flock to these places for the most famous parties they throw every night. As soon as the sun sets, the shores of these serene beaches come alive to the tune of booming karaoke machines and marathons of playing live bands and spinning DJs. There are rows of bars and pubs waiting to offer a party experience unlike anywhere else. Food and drinks are very inexpensive.

At daytime, clubs are either closed or moonlight as quaint cafes and restaurants, catering to the tired and lazy folk looking to relax or catch their breath after a weary dive into the beautiful waters of Puerto Galera.

Shops, Markets and Crafts

Shops are mainly concentrated near town centres and tourist attractions. Indigenous native handicrafts and delicacies are the best buys for souvenirs. Prices are unbelievably low.

Sports Activities and Exploration

Puerto Galera features a reef system that is home to a remarkable assortment of ocean life, which is ideal for diving. The variety of corals, anemones and underwater fauna is world-class. Visibility averages 70 to 100 feet (20 to 30 metres) all year round. Water temperature ranges from 80° to 90°F (25° to 29°C). The area offers beautiful beaches and excellent snorkeling as well, with lush coral gardens and abundant marine life close to shore.

At least 16 dive centres are located along the beaches of Sabang, Small La Laguna, Big La Laguna, Coco Beach and Encenada Beach. Local operators boast of at least 25 dive sites within 20 minutes of any dive centre.

For the non-diver, there is a multitude of adventure and leisure programs that one can enjoy. Countryside trekking tours, golf, beach-combing and island-hopping activities, snorkeling, sunset cruises and other leisure programs can easily be organized with the help of your resort hotel.

Attractions within the Region:

Oriental Mindoro

Oriental Mindoro is endowed with some of the Philippines' best naturescapes. While the province's foremost asset is, without doubt Puerto Galera, there are many more places that can fill your days and nights while in adventure mode in this magnificent region:

- 1. Tamaraw Falls** is a 423-foot waterfalls situated alongside the road. It is a great attraction to passers-by and is only two hours away from Puerto Galera.
- 2. The Excavation Museum**, located within Puerto Galera, houses several collections of Chinese and Siamese pottery from the 15th century. It also contains Ming Dynasty burial jars as well as a fine collection of shells.
- 3. Mt. Halcon** is the country's third highest peak at 8,488 feet above sea level. It is a favourite destination for nature tripping and mountain climbing. The jump-off to Mt. Halcon is Baco, two hours away from Puerto Galera.
- 4. The Mangyan Settlements**, where one can have intimate encounters with this ethnic group found only in Mindoro. The settlements are located in Barangay Dulangan, Baco, two hours away from Puerto Galera.
- 5. Tukuran River Tour** involves two to three hours of trekking through rivers and rice fields to view some of the most stunning sceneries in the Mindoro countryside. The tour begins and ends in Abra de Ilog, two hours by boat north of Puerto Galera.



6. Calapan is the capital of Oriental Mindoro and is an alternative entry point to the province and to Puerto Galera (three hours traveling time). The availability of undeveloped beaches nearby makes it ideal for future tourism development and investments.

7. Lake Naujan is a freshwater lake surrounded by hot mineral springs and free-flowing water. It serves as a wildlife sanctuary for various species of waterfowl and other migratory birds and supplies freshwater fish to the province as well as mainland Luzon. 40 kms south of Calapan.



Occidental Mindoro

Dubbed as "Marine Wonderland," Occidental Mindoro deserves the nickname primarily because of Apo Reef National Marine Park, as well as many other unexplored natural attractions and outlying islets along its extensive coastline. The mountainous interior of the province, on the other hand, is a challenge even to the most intrepid of trekkers.

- 1. Apo Reef National Marine Park** is acclaimed as the best in Asia and second largest in the world. It is a 40-square kilometre reef located 20 miles west of Mindoro Island. The waters are abundant with marine fauna and luxuriant coral growth represented by approximately 400-500 kaleidoscopic coral species. Marine life includes varieties of sharks, turtles, stingrays and manta rays. Apo Reef also includes the fascinating bird-populated islands of Binangaan and Caos del Bajo.
- 2. San Jose** is the commercial heart of Occidental Mindoro, and is accessible directly from Manila with daily flights. While San Jose can serve as an alternate jump-off point for Apo Reef, its main attractions are three sun-drenched islands with powdery white sand beaches and an array of aquatic sports and leisure activities (read items 3 to 5).

3. Ambulong Island abounds with white sand beaches, cliffs along pillars jutting out of the water, underwater caves, coral gardens and tropical fish and a fisherman's village at the sheltered side of the island.

4. Ilin Island is the biggest among the group of islands located near San Jose. It has a village of shell divers, being abundant in shells and coral reefs.





Useful Websites for the Region:

Oriental Mindoro Puerto Galera

www.puertogalera.net
www.puertogaleradive.com
www.puertogalera.biz
www.orientalmindoro.com
www.mangyan.org

Occidental Mindoro

Mamburao Abra de Ilog Apo Reef

www.elgu2.ncc.gov.ph/mamburao
www.elgu2.ncc.gov.ph/abradeilog/
www.whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5033/

Other Useful Websites for Nearby Regions:

Marinduque Romblon

www.elgu2.ncc.gov.ph/marinduque
www.elgu2.ncc.gov.ph/romblonprov
www.romblon.net

Useful Contacts:

Department of Tourism Offices: London

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infotourism@wowphilippines.co.uk
www.wowphilippines.co.uk

Manila

+ 63 (0) 2 525 2000 / 524 1969
lcjurilla@tourism.gov.ph

Airline:

Asian Spirit

+63 (0) 2 840-3811
www.asianspirit.com

Ferries:

MBRS Shipping Lines

+63 (0) 2 243-5888

M/B Island Cruiser

+63 (0) 2 523-8541 loc. 175

M/V Blue Eagle (Fast Craft)

+63 (0) 43 287 347

Montenegro Ma. Kristina (Ro-Ro)

+63 (0) 43 723-8294

Moreta Shipping Lines

+63 (0) 2 244-6440

SI-Kat Ferry

+63 (0) 2 521-3344

WG & A Superferry

+63 (0) 2 528-7979
www.wgsuperferry.com

Batangas Pier

+63 (0) 43 723-8243

Other Useful Contacts:

British Embassy Manila

+ 63 (0) 2 816 7116

British Consulate Cebu

+ 63 (0) 32 346 0525

Provincial Tourism Office (Tourist Information Service and Police Assistance)

+63 (0) 43 711-5003

Mindoro Oriental Provincial

Police Office

+63 (0) 46 288-4439

Photos courtesy of



5. White Island has a 1.5 kilometre-long powdery white sand beach which is ideal for swimming, scuba diving and fishing. Turtle eggs are occasionally found buried in the sand, and visitors are cautioned to keep them undisturbed.

6. Pandan Island is surrounded with great diving opportunities, fantastic jump-off point for Apo reef.

7. Mt. Iglit-Baco National Park is the sanctuary for the tamaraw, a rare and endangered species of dwarf buffalo found only in Mindoro Island. This 75,000-hectare game refuge provides a nice eco-tourism, trekking, or mountaineering alternative to beach/dive resorts.

Marinduque

East of Mindoro is the island province of Marinduque, where one of the most colourful Philippine festivals is celebrated in time with the Lenten season. It is the Moriones Festival, a re-enactment of the legend of Longinus, a Roman centurion whose blindness was cured by the blood of the crucified Christ. This miracle converted Longinus to Christianity and earned the ire of his fellow centurions. The re-enactment reaches its climax when Longinus is caught and beheaded. (Week-long from Palm Sunday to Easter).

The festival is characterized by colourful Roman costumes, painted masks (i.e., Morion), helmets and brightly-coloured tunics. It is sometimes referred to as the *Oberammergau* of the Philippines, though the Moriones is celebrated annually in all five major towns of the province.

Romblon

Recognized as the Marble Country of the Philippines, Romblon is famed for its rich marble deposits. Cobrador Island, the largest among the islets dotting the seas around Romblon, is reputed to hold deposits of rare black, gold and green marble. The other treasures of Cobrador Island are its beaches – the most prominent being the wide expanse of fine white sand about one kilometre long along its eastern side.

Much attention nowadays is being given to Carabao Island, where beaches are said to be similar to those of Boracay 20 years ago.



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