

PHILIPPINES



A photographers dream

The diving around Puerto Galera proved to be a fantastic for budding photographers – and there were plenty of those; G10 and Fuji cameras were pulled out quicker than pistols in a John Wayne movie. If you have photos from the trip you are proud of, link them to the Triton Facebook site, then we can all see

Philippines Trip Report - June 2011

We always knew it was going to be a good trip. This was the third trip that the club had made in the last 10 years and so we kind of knew what to expect. The only issue was the weather. It was the start of the rainy season - would we get flooded out, or would it be paradise

The journey started with some champagne at the dive centre and once again Strand motors turned up late. Are they trying to give me a heart attack. By the time he arrived England had already let in 4 goals and we thought it "was all over". With our football pride seriously dented we eventually arrived in pretty good time. Anyway we got there in good time, or so we thought, only to find that virtually every seat was taken. We were spread to the four corners of the plane but as it was late in the evening no one really cared.

The flight was pretty uneventful, except that Alistair was given his present by Moira and a lovely present it was as well, a brand new Fuji F200; and Alastair had the whole 11 hours to get to know how to use his new toy - well he would have done had the battery been in the box - doh! A quick skirt around Hong Kong airport didn't reveal a replacement. On the way in we flew past my old barracks to cries of

me saying, you can see my old house from here. - well you could!!

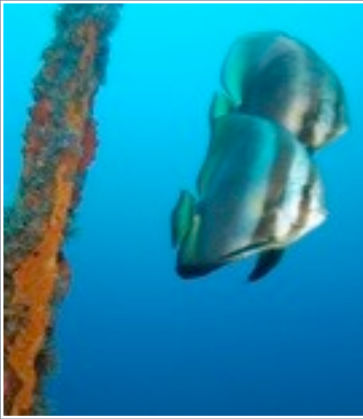
On arrival in Manila we were greeted with thunderstorms, and a text from Terry and Sue telling us they were sitting on the runway 59 miles north with no idea of when they were getting there. A very unhelpful Cathay misinformation desk changed their arrival time every hour, but eventually we all ended up in the same place. It was cloudy in the morning and we all rocked up to the dive centre bright and early, not really having a clue what time it was, or what time or bodies thought it was. A quick brief and a hello from Roscoe and his team at Action Divers and the diving got underway. Visibility was pretty good throughout the 2 weeks, helped by calm seas and bright sunshine. The gamble paid off; with the exception of a couple of evenings we had lovely weather throughout the trip.

Day 1 introduced Jason, Jules and the guys in Simon's boat to the amazing currents around the headland of Sabang that sticks out towards the Verde Channel. The concept of watching your bubbles go down while you went up was something that took some getting used to. Marine life didn't disappoint either, and although there was no really big stuff, with the exception of a few turtles, the diversity



Simon's Boat, minus Mark who was a bit slow

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..... was amazing. For the underwater photographer it was a wonderful destination and if it stayed still or didn't move too quickly, the chances are that myself, Jules, Jason, Paul or Chris would take its photo. The end of dive debriefings were actually opportunities to compare shots of the mantis shrimp or the ribbon eel. Even without the photographic opportunities the diving was excellent; the currents were challenging but enjoyable; the boats were always there to pick you up and the only hazards to speak of were the somewhat uncontrollable Koreans. You could always tell when they were coming. If you were lucky you would hear their rattles and have advanced warning of the invasion; unlucky and the first you knew of it was a group of 12 novices landed on your head.

The evening entertainment was reasonably subdued, probably due to the exhaustion of the diving during the day. We ate regularly as a group in either the Laguna Beach Club (Shogun Steaks to die for) or similar establishments. Remarkably Sue and Terry managed to secure their own white wine cellar in most of them!

About half way through the trip we had a trip to Verde Island. I had done this several times and the dives had always had a wow

factor - it did not disappoint this time. visibility was quite simply astonishing and the sheer colours of the coral and marine life was fantastic. The day included a barbeque on the island and the opportunity to take a dip - all in all very enjoyable.

There were a couple of milestones on the trip - Kathy passed her advanced course, Monika finished her open water course and got most of the adventure dives for her advanced finished, Moira had a birthday and 100 dives, and Sue and Nigel all seemed to have one reason to celebrate or another. I think it was just a good excuse to raid Sue and Terry's wine cellars; whatever the reason it was always good fun. On the final day we packed away our dive gear and boarded some "jeepnies" for an excursion. The first cloudy day we had. The waterfalls were closed(not sure how you close a waterfall) and White Beach wasn't white, but it was still great fun.

It was all over far too quickly, and although the "big stuff" did not rank with that found in Galapagos, or Belize, or Sipadan, it was still great diving and a fantastic trip. The Philippine people are friendly, the food and beer are cheap, the country is amazing and even having been there a few times now I would still go back any day.



Porcelain Crabs peered out from the anemones