



TRIP OVERVIEW

The province of Palawan, in the western Philippines, features over a thousand islands. At its centre is the Bacuit Archipelago which features around 45 jagged limestone outcrops wrapped by clear aquamarine waters and idyllic reefs. The islands themselves feature plunging sea cliffs, lagoons and sinkholes. Here you'll find some of the best swimming opportunities in Asia, with waters that are home to a variety of wildlife including dugongs, long nosed dolphins, manta rays, sea turtles and hundreds of different types of fish.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is designed for those who want to combine spectacular swimming amongst karst islands with an awe-inspiring, brightly coloured backdrop in a largely untouched environment. Swims include a mix of stunning reef and coastal swims. Swimmers should have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average daily swim distance of around 5 km (split over a minimum of two swims) prior to the start of the trip.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Miniloc Island

Centrally located within the Bacuit Archipelago, Miniloc Island is one of the most visually stunning and is a great base for our SwimTrek trip. The Miniloc Island Resort is set within a secluded bay featuring its own inhouse reef. Jackfish that can grow up to 1.5-meter swim up close to the resort. The island is a gateway to discovering some of the best local natural sites to be found, as it features three of the most stunning lagoons in the area, all of which can be accessed by swimming.

Matinloc Island

Like a submerged crocodile, Matinloc snakes some 8kms along the western fringes of the Bacuit Archipelago. This island has some of the most pristine coral reefs in the area along with the neighbouring Tapiutan island. On the western side of the island lies the secluded Secret Beach, which can only be accessed by swimming through a small gap in the limestone wall.

Cadlao Island

Featuring some of the region's best beaches, this uninhabited island offers up your classic idea of a remote island escape. Its west coast features steep limestone cliffs interspersed with mesmerising beaches. Ubugun Lagoon is a wonderful place to while away some time as you swim over the coral reef below.

Palawan Island

A mix of jungles and mountains descending to the sea, Palawan has a bit of everything for the adventurous swimmer. It is home to nature reserves on both land and in the water, with gardens of giant clams nesting on white sand beaches, over 600 species of butterflies and lush palm forests.



TRIP SCHEDULE

Start Point	El Nido Airport, Palawan, Philippines
Start Time	14:15 on Day 1
Finish Point	El Nido Airport, Palawan, Philippines
Finish Time	11:30 on Day 7

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

On arrival into El Nido Airport you will be met and transferred to Miniloc island and your accommodation. Once checked in to your room at Miniloc Island Resort we hold our welcome meeting and safety briefing, before hopping into the stunning waters that characterise the Bacuit Archipelago for a refreshing acclimatisation swim over the resort reef. This is an excellent chance to familiarise yourself with the local conditions before we head back for our first dinner of the trip.

Day 2

Following breakfast on our first morning, we head straight out from our resort and take a coastal swim to the first isthmus at Payong-Payong Beach with its striking white sand before heading round to the Secret Lagoon which is only accessible through a cave.

After lunch and a subsequent break back at the resort, we head to Dilumacad Island which is rich in vegetation and boasts a thick, dense rainforest for a coastal swim. Its imposing bare cliff face rises sharply out of the deep blue sea and provide a fantastic backdrop to our swim as our first full day draws to a close.

Day 3

Today we head out to the western end of the Bacuit archipelago to the islands of North & South Guntao, two quiet islets that are rarely visited. They are separated by a 400 metre wide strait of shallow reef, providing an ideal swim crossing option. On reaching South Guntao, we carry out a coastal swim taking in the fringing reef which offers stunning views of the island's densely forested interior, home to Palawan hornbills and macaque monkeys.

The afternoon is given over to a coastal swim around the northern section of North Guntao Island. It's the most remote island of the Bacuit Archipelago, with the next nearest land west of here being Vietnam over a thousand kilometres away across the South China Sea. For this afternoon's swim, it's possible to see the sea floor all the way along here.



Day 4

Today we travel south to Lagen Island, where there are some wonderful swims underneath the cathedral like cliffs that dominate the skyline. Like an iceberg, a lot of the cliff face is below the water too and makes for some incredible swimming that is quite different from most of our other routes. Thanks to the island's proximity to the mainland, there is a vast array of wildlife both above and below the water to see as we complete our swim.

Following lunch at the resort, you have an opportunity to relax for the rest of the afternoon and enjoy the resort's facilities. Alternatively you may choose to hike into the centre of Miniloc on one of the walking trails.

Day 5

Today we head north towards the neighbouring islands of Matinloc and Tapiutan, which form the Tapiutan Strait and whose walls house some of the best reefs in the archipelago. As well as carrying out a crossing between these two islands, we'll also undertake a coastal swim alongside each of them. Exquisite beaches can be found here, along with something rather special; the rocky shore in the western wall has cracks that can be swam through to reveal the occasional secret beach. Add in the stunning white sand beaches and the abandoned Matinloc Shrine and it makes for a great day of swimming.

Day 6

On our last full swimming day, we head east to the isolated islands of Cadlao and Cavayan. These islands are characterised by high peaks and small bays, which make ideal stop off points during our swims. Cadlao Island enjoys a stunning central lagoon, with a wonderfully clear, aquamarine shallow pool of water at its centre, perfect for endless snorkelling amongst the corals. We'll swim along the quieter, northern coasts of the islands for these swims, as they offer stunning views of the remainder of the archipelago. Take the time here to look out for seahorses, ghost pipefish, frogfish and cuttlefish. If we're lucky we might spot whale sharks, manta rays and even Bryde's whales which are known to roam sporadically in these waters.

As we head back to our accommodation, we have a last chance to take in the outstanding scenery that surrounds us. It's a wonderful way to finish off a fantastic week of swimming around this beautiful part of the world.

Day 7

On our final morning, there is a chance for an early morning swim along the Miniloc Resort reef and coastline before breakfast. We then transfer you back by boat back to either the Palawan mainland or to El Nido Airport where you can continue your journey within the Philippines or make connections to your international flights home.



TRIP INFORMATION

Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

✓	ITEM	✓	ITEM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Costume (x 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater / Fleece
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Goggles (x 2)*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Jacket
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walking Shoes / Sandals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Sun Cream	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aqua Shoes / Sandals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Daypack	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insect Repellent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lycra Skin or Rash Vest

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

Please note that SwimTrek will supply swim hats and provide water and electrolyte drinks in shared water bottles on your safety boat. If you prefer to use your own drink bottle, please feel free to bring one along. If you would like to use a wetsuit, lycra skin, rash vest or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you.

Swimming Distances

Swim	Distance	Swim	Distance
Miniloc Island Coastal	2½km	Dilumacad Island Coastal	2km
North-South Guntao Island	3km	South Guntao Circumnavigation	2km
Lagen Island Coastal	3km	Tapiutan Coastal	2km
Matinloc - Tapiutan	3km	Cavayan Coastal	2km
Cadlao Northern Coastal	2½km		

Temperatures

Month	Water Temperature*	Air Temperature*
October	28-30°C / 82-86°F	28-30°C / 82-86°F

* Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only.

Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience, however you should be aware that certain marine life such as jellyfish, sea lice, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however, if you suffer from anaphylaxis, please consult the office prior to booking.



Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

Group Size

This trip has a maximum group size of 15. The group will be split into a maximum of three groups, based on speed, with each group being accompanied by their own safety vessel/escort.

Boat support on this trip includes support watercraft crewed by local pilots and your SwimTrek guides. Please note that this boat support is subject to change without notice and cannot be guaranteed.

GETTING THERE

Flights into the Philippines are widely available from most international destinations. Due to its remote location, upon arrival in the Philippines, a domestic flight is usually required to reach Palawan.

As our recommended option, the fastest and most direct way to reach the start of your trip is to fly into Manila airport before catching an onward flight to El Nido Airport. You will be met at El Nido Airport on Day 1, in time for the road and boat transfer to our accommodation on Miniloc Island.

Alternative international routes include flights into Cebu. Domestically you can fly into Puerto Princesa airport on Palawan island. Then make your own way to the El Nido Resorts Jetty Lounge where you can join the boat transfer which is included in your trip price.

While we have outlined various travel options below, they are subject to change and should be used as a guide only. We suggest that you use [Skyscanner](https://www.skyscanner.net) to search for alternative flight options for this trip. Whichever route you choose to take, we recommend confirming your flights and other travel arrangements as early as possible in order to avoid price rises and availability issues.

Flights to Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila

To search for available flights into Manila look for Ninoy Aquino International Airport (MNL), Commonly known as 'NAIA', please visit www.skyscanner.net.

Flights to El Nido Airport, Palawan

Airline 'AirSWIFT' offers daily flights from Manila to El Nido, Palawan. Travel time is approximately 55 minutes using a 48/72-seater aircraft. Light aircraft have strict luggage allowances so you should ensure you are familiar with these and stay within these limits.

In order to arrive for the SwimTrek welcome meeting we recommend to choose a flight that will arrive by 14:15. Please visit www.air-swift.com for further information on direct flights from a number of airports in The Philippines (including the main international airports - Manila and Cebu), into El Nido. To book, please contact AirSWIFT directly. You can do this by email addressed to Denise Bautista at Bautista.denise@air-swift.com.



Transfer from El Nido Airport to Miniloc Island

On Day 1 there are transfers departing El Nido Airport, also known as Lio Airport (ENI), to coincide with each flight up until 14:15. Arriving after this will mean that you miss the welcome meeting in resort and may have to make your own way to the island resort. Upon arrival at El Nido Airport, you will be welcomed by the resort's airport representative and will be guided to the terminal exit. It is a 10-15 minute drive to the El Nido Resorts Jetty Lounge, where we catch a boat across to Miniloc island which will be a 30-45 minute boat ride, depending on tide and weather conditions. The total journey time from El Nido Airport to our resort is approximately one hour. Please note that this transfer is **included** in the price of your trip. In the case of a delayed flight or late arrival, a private transfer can be arranged at your own expense. You must provide SwimTrek with your expected time of arrival at the jetty no later than 14 days prior to your trip.

Return SwimTrek Transfer to El Nido Airport

At the end of your trip, you will be transferred back to El Nido Airport, where your trip ends. Please note that this transfer is **included** in the cost of your trip. We suggest that you do not arrange to depart Miniloc Island Resort before 10am. The return airport transfer takes around 1 hour so your flight should depart no earlier than 11:30.

Travel Via Puerto Princesa International Airport, Palawan

As an alternative to flying via Manila, it is possible to fly direct into Puerto Princesa International Airport on mainland Palawan, from a handful of international and a wide range of domestic destinations. Please note, SwimTrek will not be operating a transfer from Puerto Princesa to Miniloc Island. There are various land and boat travel options from Puerto Princesa to El Nido, however this involves a considerably longer journey (approx. 6 hours).

For those who are not taking AirSwift flights, you can still take advantage of the boat transfer to our resort. This boat departs the El Nido Resorts Jetty Lounge located at the Lio Tourism Estate and/or Sala de Apulit in Taytay. You should plan to arrive one hour prior to the scheduled boat departure. You must provide SwimTrek with your expected time of arrival at the jetty no later than 14 days prior to your trip.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

Miniloc Island Resort in El Nido, northern Palawan, is the perfect holiday destination for the young and young at heart in search of a fun and vibrant holiday. The resort is tucked in a beautiful cove with a stunning backdrop of sheer limestone cliffs. Reminiscent of a coastal village, Miniloc Island Resort's quaint charm is enhanced by its crystal clear waters teeming with vibrant marine life. From your doorstep, long dock guests can swim alongside 1.5 meter giant trevallies and hundreds of sergeant majors, damselfish, fusiliers, and other multi-coloured tropical fish. Between swims there are non-motorised water sports equipment available for use, at no extra charge, including paddle boards, windsurf boards, kayaks, snorkelling equipment as well as escorted tours by kayak and for snorkelling.



Meals

All breakfasts, lunches and evening meals are included for the duration of your stay at Miniloc Island Resort on Day 1 until breakfast prior to departure on Day 7. Brewed coffee and tea are included at the Clubhouse Restaurant and fruit juices are included at breakfast.

Extra Expenses

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as drinks, entertainment & souvenirs, etc. The local currency in the Philippines is the Philippine Peso (PHP). While USD are widely accepted, the conversion rate when in the Philippines is not as favourable then using local currency, so you may prefer to exchange some PHP before you travel. Debit and credit cards are not widely accepted in the Philippines and it is suggested that you carry enough cash with you for your daily expenses.

Eco-Tourism Development Fee: All visitors to El Nido are required to pay an environmental fee of 200PHP per adult for the duration of stay. This fee is collected by the Municipality of El Nido for various conservation projects and is paid at the resorts upon check-out.

Integrated Protected Area Fund: All visitors to the big and/or small lagoons are required to pay a fee of 200PHP per person, per lagoon visit for the Protected Area Office (PAO) of El Nido-Taytay. The funds collected will be utilized solely for the conservation and management activities of the islands in Bacuit Bay & the protected areas involved, and is paid at the resorts upon check-out.

Passports and Visas

Non-residents of The Philippines require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay. Visitors can enter the Philippines without a visa for an initial period of **30 days**. If you are intending to stay longer, it is possible to obtain a tourist visa from the Philippine Embassy before you travel, which will allow an initial 59 day stay. Please note that visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.

Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to The Philippines, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Travel Plugs & Electricity

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/.