

## Philippines Feb 2026

**A journey through island beauty, warm smiles, and unforgettable moments—here’s what my first Philippines trip truly felt like.**

### Day 1 Sydney to Manila

After an 8-hour direct flight from rainy Sydney, we finally landed in vibrant Manila and were welcomed with a lovely meet-and-greet service. Immigration queues tested our patience (a good hour!), and what should’ve been a short drive turned into another hour thanks to Manila traffic — but hey, we made it!

We’re staying at the beautiful and centrally located Dusit Thani Manila, which has three fantastic restaurants, including the Michelin-recognised Thai restaurant Benjarong.

Dinner tonight was at The Pantry — the perfect way to unwind after a long travel day. Today we explored the local area and wandered through the massive Ayala Center, which connects to five other shopping centres — shopper’s paradise! Of course, I couldn’t let the day end without a relaxing stone massage.

Stay tuned as am really excited to see what the next few days in Manila have in store ✨



### Day 2 Manila ✨

With over 1.8 million people in the city (and 13 million across Metro Manila), the Philippine capital is a vibrant mix of old and new. Long before Spanish rule was established here in 1571 by Miguel López de Legazpi, Manila was already a thriving settlement and trading centre.

A city shaped by Spanish, American and Asian influences — layered, lively, and full of stories waiting to be discovered.

Today, the history lives on in Intramuros, blending beautifully with the city’s modern skyline, shopping hubs, and energetic street life.



### Day 3 in Manila Escape to Tagaytay 🌿 🚗

Just 60–65 km (about 1.5–2 hours) south from Manila, Tagaytay is the perfect quick getaway. We left at 9 AM and arrived by 11 AM to cool breezes and stunning views of Taal Volcano — one of the Philippines’ most active volcanoes, uniquely set on an island within a lake formed by an ancient caldera.

A peaceful stroll through Palace in the Hills, a delicious Filipino lunch overlooking the volcano at Balay Dako, and a slow drive back (Sunday traffic!) had us home by 7 PM.

Ended the day perfectly with a relaxing massage at Salt & Stone Spa wellness Spa at Glorietta , Makati Shopping complex before bed. (My fav wellness spa in Manila)

The ideal mix of nature, history, food, and relaxation — all so close to the city. ✨



**Day 4 Perfect day trip north of Manila! 🚗 🌞** About 100 km away, the scenic drive through lush countryside was a refreshing escape. Highlights: a special behind-the-scenes look at Clark International Airport, fun at Aqua Planet, and exploring New Clark City with its clean, wide streets and green spaces.

The very special highlight, behind-the-scenes inspection of Clark International Airport for us travel agents — so insightful! The airport handles both domestic and international flights, and for travellers connecting to Ninoy Aquino International Airport, there’s a shuttle service that takes around 2 hours.

Clark is easy, fun, and totally worth a day trip! 🌿 🚗



**Day 5 Manila to Puerto Princesa** Today started bright and early as we said goodbye to our wonderful 5-night stay at Dusit Thani Manila. The staff, service, rooms and food were exceptional — and the team even set up a coffee station and packed breakfasts at reception for our group as we departed before the 5.30am breakfast service. Truly thoughtful hospitality ✨

After a short drive to the airport, we boarded a 1-hour flight with Cebu Pacific to Puerto Princesa — the gateway to Palawan and known for its crystal-clear waters, island hopping adventures and the world-famous Underground River. Puerto Princesa offers the perfect mix of nature, relaxation and soft adventure, making it ideal for couples, families and groups alike.

From the airport, we headed straight out on an island-hopping tour in Honda Bay. First stop: Cowrie Island — fantastic for families with swimming, water sports, massages, henna tattoos, beach huts and bars. A delicious Filipino lunch was included and beautifully catered for vegetarians and guests with nut and seafood allergies.

Next was Luli Island, just a 20-minute boat ride away — perfect for swimming, snorkelling or simply relaxing in a hammock (my pick!) with fresh coconut water in hand 🌴

Our final stop was Pambato Reef, a must for snorkelling enthusiasts.

By 4.30pm we were transferred to our hotel to freshen up — some enjoyed the 2-for-1 happy hour, others opted for a relaxing massage before a lovely dinner at the restaurant.

An exciting, seamless and memorable day — Palawan truly delivers! 🌊 ✨





**Day 6 – Puerto Princesa to El Nido (260 kms and takes around 5 hours)**

Today's city tour of Puerto Princesa included the 🦋 Palawan Butterfly Eco Garden and Tribal Village, where we discovered beautiful local butterfly species and learned about indigenous traditions. We stopped at Baker's Hill for sweet treats and views, enjoyed a traditional weavers' handicraft demonstration, and visited Mitra's Ranch, a hilltop favourite offering sweeping panoramas over Honda Bay with activities like ziplining and horseback riding.

After lunch and a hotel inspection we continued on the scenic coastal journey which was absolutely spectacular — winding roads alongside turquoise waters, charming rural villages, and lush farmland filled with sugar cane, mangoes, pineapples and bananas. As the sun began to dip, the sky turned brilliant shades of gold, orange and pink, casting a magical glow over the mountains and sea. Arriving just after sunset made the already breathtaking drive even more memorable. 🛒



**Good morning from El Nido, Palawan, Philippines**

Breakfast with stunningly views of some of the islands off El Nido  
Great destination for views, relaxation, water sports, island hopping and more.



## Day 7 – El Nido, Palawan 🌴🌟

Waking up in El Nido to uninterrupted ocean views and limestone islands scattered across the horizon... pure magic. Breakfast with a million-dollar view set the tone before we headed off on the famous island hopping adventure.

Our 5-island tour took us to Big Lagoon, Secret Lagoon, Shimizu Island, Seven Commandos Beach and Payong-Payong Beach — with time to kayak, swim in crystal-clear waters, relax on powdery sand and enjoy a delicious lunch. Kayaking through Big Lagoon was definitely the highlight for me... gliding over turquoise water surrounded by towering limestone cliffs was simply spectacular.

Yes, the ocean can be a little choppy and hopping in and out of the boat is all part of the adventure — but the crew take such great care of you that it's absolutely worth it. I'd do it again in a heartbeat!

We also inspected two fantastic properties:

A perfect ending? A relaxing massage at the Wellness Spa followed by dinner in paradise.

If El Nido is on your bucket list, let me design the perfect island escape for you 🌍✈️



## Day 8 Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park

An early start from El Nido today, travelling approx. 200 (around 4 hours by road) to Puerto Princesa — but the journey was all part of the adventure. We stopped for an early lunch at a lovely traditional Filipino restaurant tucked away in the forest before continuing on to the coast.

The breathtaking Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park is proudly listed as one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature.

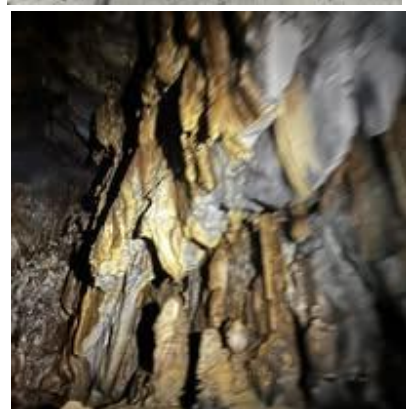
After a few cancellations due to strong waves, the skies finally cleared, the port reopened... and it was absolutely worth the wait 😊

This incredible underground river flows directly beneath a dramatic limestone mountain range and stretches over 8km, making it one of the longest navigable underground rivers in the world. Floating silently through the cave in a paddle boat felt surreal — towering rock formations, cathedral-like chambers, shimmering mineral deposits and fascinating stalactites and stalagmites shaped over millions of years. It's dark, peaceful and completely awe-inspiring.

The surrounding national park is just as impressive, home to wildlife including playful monkeys, monitor lizards and diverse birdlife — nature at its best.

Drifting through the cave was so serene and pure magic ✨

Another unforgettable experience I can't wait to share with my clients.



### Day 9 – Hello Boracay Island 🌴

We flew from Puerto Princesa via Cebu with Cebu Pacific and said goodbye to a couple of our group who didn't continue on — we missed them 💔

Boracay is a stunning 7km-long island in Aklan with around 35,000 residents, famous for its powdery white sand and incredible sunsets.

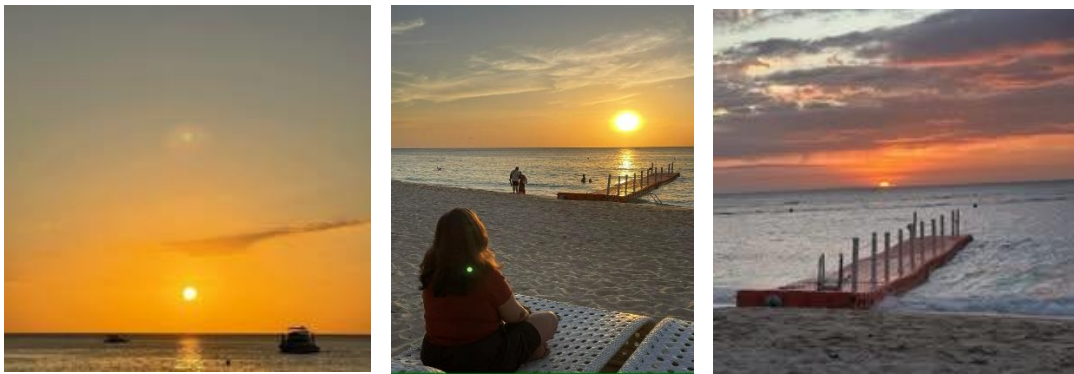
We're staying at Mövenpick Resort & Spa Boracay on the quieter side. Our first sunset from the private beach was magical 🗝️ — and there was even a wedding celebration at the resort. A beautiful start to our Boracay stay.





### Golden hour hits different in Boracay 🛍️👉

Front-row seats to nature's nightly masterpiece.



### Days 10–13 ✨ Boracay Bliss ✨

Sun-soaked days on Boracay — where powdery white sands meet crystal-clear turquoise waters and sunsets truly steal the show. Home to around 37,000 locals, this small island delivers big on beauty, energy and that relaxed beachside charm. 🌴🌀

From the famous White Beach and buzzing D'Mall, to island hopping and endless water activities, there's something here for everyone.

While in Boracay, we also managed a few hotel inspections — always making the most of every destination for our clients. Just a short transfer from Caticlan, this island paradise continues to impress. 🛍️

### From First Visit to Forever Memories: My Philippines Trip Takeaways (Feb 2026)

Having spent a wonderful fortnight exploring the Philippines, it truly exceeded all my expectations. The places we visited included 5 nights in Manila, 2 nights in Puerto Princesa, 2 nights in El Nido and 3 nights in Boracay.

- Out of 7,641 islands of tropical diversity, we visited 11 (so 7630 to go 😊)
- Over 115 million people nationwide with around 14 million in Manila
- Around 300 volcanoes (approximately 24 active!)

From energetic city life to raw, untouched island beauty, this destination offers serious variety.

## Top Insights

😋 The food is sooo delicious, flavour-packed local dishes and generous portions!

😊 The warmth of the locals is next level. Their happiness is genuine and contagious. Service comes with heart.

🌴 Island hopping is a must. Especially in places like Palawan — limestone cliffs, turquoise lagoons, hidden beaches... postcard perfection.

☀️🌧️ Build in flexibility. Weather can impact boats and tours, particularly in island regions. Always allow buffer days.

🛍️ Shopping lovers — don't skip Manila. End your trip with 1–2 nights in Manila and explore some of Asia's biggest malls.

💰 Great value for money. Accommodation, food, massages, and tours are very affordable compared to many other island destinations.

🎵 Filipinos love their music. 80's love ballads, live bands, karaoke, heartfelt song dedications — it's joyful and unforgettable.

👨‍👩‍👧 Perfect for mixed travellers. Couples, families, groups, honeymooners — there's something for everyone.

☀️ Expect tropical heat. Lightweight clothing and hydration are essential!

The Philippines isn't just a beach escape — it's culture, colour, music, adventure, and heart all wrapped into one unforgettable destination.

And honestly? It's one of those places that surprises you in the very best way. 🌴✨

So, if you are looking for a new exciting destination, let's start planning your next holiday.

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