



REFRESHING DIP: Visitors to Kayangan Lake in Coron, Palawan, can't get enough of the cool waters of what is believed by many as the cleanest lake in the country.

CORON: FIVE-DAY TRAVEL GUIDE

Search the world's best beaches, most intimate islands, and diving trenches. Chances are, nothing compares to Coron. **CECILY MABASA** tells us why.

Coron, part of Palawan's Calamianes group of islands, is a magical place where nature remains intact. Home to the indigenous Tagbanua tribe, these beautiful marine sanctuaries haven't lost their character. You'll need a few days to get to know Coron, and we guarantee you'll be back for more.

DAY 1: CORON TOWN TOUR

Take the morning flight to Busuanga for an early start. Vans are lined up at the airport to shuttle passengers straight to Coron town. First-timers should get acquainted with the plaza and markets. The town is quite simple, and really just a jump-off point to your big adventure.

Hungry? Everything is in walking distance, so head to **Bistro Coron**. Delicious Filipino and European dishes come at reasonable prices (I recommend their calamares sauteed in garlic and basil, their *kilawin* or local ceviche, or pizzas). For grills and barbecues, try

Kawayan Grill House. Also notable are their tasty chicken barbeque and mango shakes.

Then trek the 700+ steps to the **Mount Tapyas View Deck** for a spectacular sunset view of Coron Bay. Of course, tricycles are always an option—just make sure you're there before the sun goes down. Viewing that sweeping sky and coastline is a moment you won't soon forget.

Finally, de-stress with a relaxing dip in the **Maquinit Hot Springs**. On a quiet day, you'll enjoy tranquil views of mountain and ocean in the distance while your tired body bathes in warm spring water.

DAY 2: ISLAND TOUR

Before heading to the ocean, you'll want to rent snorkels and fins from the shops in town. Here are some ideas where to go with your gear:

The **Siete Pecados Marine Reserve** feels much like swimming in a giant aquarium! The reserve

Who's Who

Meet some of the people who helped promote the islands of Coron.

Letty Fernandez is one of the founders of the Calamianes Association of Tourism Establishments. She also helped tourism by creating accommodations like the Darayonan Lodge.

Al Linsangan III is Coron's eco-expert and was the president of the Calamianes Association of Tourism Establishments in 2008. He also spearheaded the restoration of the Sietes Pecados Marine Park.

Jerry Barracos is the acting mayor of Coron. He extends full support in maintaining the Eco-tourism philosophy of Coron, preserving the beauty of the islands.



CAMERA CLUB: Coron's picturesque landscapes, including limestone rocks jutting out of the emerald waters, never fail to fascinate local and foreign tourists.



HARVEST TIME: Local villagers hauling the day's supply of edible seaweeds.

boasts magnificent corals and a great number of fish species, which you can feed by the hundreds.

Arrange a picnic lunch at **Banol Beach** and have the boat staff grill fresh seafood. You'll be tempted to climb the coconut trees to get your own refreshing island drink!

Hire a kayak and row to **Kayangan Lake**, or reach it with a *banca* (outrigger boat). Remember that most-photographed spot in Palawan? You'll reach it here with a slight trek through the caves, before approaching the lake. And you'll want to have your camera ready.

If there's still more time, try to visit **Twin Lagoon** and **Barracuda Lake** where crystal-clear water waits.

DAY 3: CALAUIT SAFARI TOUR

Don't miss the 3,700-hectare **Calauit Island Wildlife Sanctuary**, home to endemic animals and African wildlife. On good days (but rarely all at the same time), you can spot giraffes, zebras, impalas, waterbucks, bushbacks, gazelles, elands, topis, Calamian and mouse deer, bearcat, Palawan peacock, sea turtles, and the Philippine crocodile. The animals usually come out from 6 to 10 a.m., so arrive early in the morning. Accessible by both boat and car, allot

WHERE TO STAY CORON



CORON ECO-LODGE

Tel.: +63906 4556090 or +63919 2048824 • inquiry@myhometelphilippines.com, www.coronecolodge.com



TWO SEASONS

Malaroyroy, Bulalacao Island, Coron
Tel.: +632 410 2075 to 80
www.twoseasonsresorts.com/coron
rsvn@twoseasonsresorts.com



ASIA GRAND VIEW HOTEL

Jolo, Barangay 5, Coron
Tel.: +632 400 6261
www.asiagrandview.com

4 hours if you choose to travel by sea from Coron town proper, or 2–3 hours if you opt traveling by land.

DAY 4: DEEP-SEA DIVES!

While in Coron, don't miss the chance to dive, even if you've never done it before. Its waters are some of the world's best sites for wreck diving. Sign up for a beginner's lesson—introductory diving courses here seem to be cheaper than most places in the Philippines. You'll see remnants of World War II-era Japanese ships. If you opt to

snorkel, however, you'll still have fun. There's so much living color to see, and all just inches underwater.

DAY 5: GO OFF-ROAD

Rent a motorbike or a bicycle and explore the land. You'll get some great views of the islands facing the South China Sea. For *pasalubong* shopping, buy cashew nuts, dried fish, or hand-woven baskets and bags at the market. Coron and the other Calamianes islands are extraordinary, and so will be your memories here. ■

MUSICAL ROOTS: TRIBU CALAMIANEN

If you're a first-time visitor to Coron, Palawan, and you chance upon the Tribu Calamianen leisurely jamming with handmade, indigenous musical instruments, do stop and listen.

Composed of artists with various inclinations, the Tribu Calamianen is headed by environmental photographer and ecotourism operator Al Linsangan III. Together with his friends and family—Anthony Maligaya, Danilo Paredes, Felix Pagua, Jhong Sijera, Jay Sijera, Johnlee Linsangan, and Marvhin Acoy—Linsangan is promoting the richness of the Calamianes culture to the rest of the world.

Palawan's indigenous group, the Tagbanua, allowed the musicians to observe and take part in their rituals and traditions, specifically in matters dealing with music. One recording took place in the middle of a forest during a full moon with tribal elders.

Featuring indigenous sounds that tell stories of local life, you'll hear songs such as "Kingking" (a bird's name), which dates back to more than 200 years. The CD *Amus Taren* is filled with catchy tunes sung in both the local Calamianen dialect and Tagalog. The song "Kasadyaan" has a pulsating percussion beat, akin to people stomping their feet and clapping their hands in warm welcome.

Local youths have also taken notice of Tribu Calamianen's distinct sound. Whereas before, they only sang Western and hip-hop songs, village youths are now performing their own



PROUD PINOYS: Tribu Calamianen's "Pilipinas," the official song of the Philippine National Football Team (the Azkals), effectively is a fusion of traditional Filipino music and Pinoy rock that serves as a hymn to the Filipinos' passion and *joie de vivre*.

traditional music in fiestas and other public gatherings. Clearly, the Tribu Calamianen sound is taking root. The best part of this advocacy? Part of the proceeds from the sales of the album goes to the Tagbanua community.