

# SOUTHERN LEYTE CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROJECT

PROJECT SUMMARY

December 2018

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Venture provided by Coral Cay Conservation (a trading name of Adventure Lifesigns Ltd) to the British Standard BS8848: Specification for the Provision of Visits, Fieldwork, Expeditions and Adventurous Activities outside the UK (independently assessed)

**This document provides a summary of important information specific to the Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project. The information is intended for use in conjunction with the *CCC Expedition Guide*, which provides detailed information relevant to all CCC expeditions. Please ensure that you read this document thoroughly and make sure your parents/guardians know the emergency contact number.**

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## **1. The Project**

CCC has worked to survey and safeguard reef and rainforest areas in the Philippines since 1995. Project locations have included Palawan, Danjugan Island, Luzon and Negros.

The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project was initiated in September 2002. The project is based at Sogod Bay in the province of Southern Leyte, Eastern Visaya. Following the completion of accessible surveys from the previous sites near Padre Burgos and Malitbog, the project is now based in the municipality of San Francisco, Liloan on Panaon Island which lies on the south-eastern side of Sogod Bay.

Our survey effort is currently focused on establishing and assessing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Surveys are conducted both inside and outside MPAs in order to assess their biological state and help inform future management decisions. This data collection is conducted alongside community education and capacity building programmes.

CCC is working in Leyte at the invitation of the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte.

In April 2017 CCC established a coral nursery on its house reef, with a view to starting a new coral restoration project. The objective of this project is to produce a replicable and cost-efficient methodology that can be adopted by local stakeholders and community members, further building capacity within the area. Staff and experienced volunteers will be part of the team maintaining the coral fragments, by preventing algae growth and the onset of disease.

## **2. Philippines Customs and Culture**

The Philippines is a Southeast Asian nation and Filipinos are extremely friendly, hospitable and considerate people, with their own unique culture and customs.

CCC works in the Philippines under the invitation, auspices and guidance of the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte and the local communities within the project area, and as such, we are guests in the Philippines. As guests, we therefore have a duty to ensure that we behave accordingly and conduct ourselves with every due respect, courtesy and consideration to our hosts. Upon arrival at the expedition base, volunteers will be briefed on local culture and customs, and will be expected to conduct themselves with the care and consideration that they themselves would expect of any guest in their own home.

CCC reserves the right to terminate the expedition of any volunteer whose behaviour is deemed to be offensive to our national hosts and detrimental to the excellent relationship CCC has with our local partners.

### **3. Expedition Base**

Volunteers will be based in Napantao Dive Resort, Napantao, San Francisco, Sogod Bay. Coral Cay has exclusive use of the resort building. This accommodation has been generously provided by the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte.

Up to 40 volunteers and staff can be accommodated, and a 24hr electricity supply (240v) is available, although it should be noted that the Philippines is subject to occasional brown outs. There is a good supply of fresh water for bathing, either by bucket shower or using the screened shower outside, and drinking water is brought in. Being located within Sogod Bay, the expedition base is ideally situated for coral reef training and research activities. The reefs directly in front of the base contain some of the most beautiful and biologically diverse hard coral colonies in the world.

Sleeping accommodation is in shared, single sex dormitories. Each dormitory has its own small wet room, with a bucket-flushing toilet. Each volunteer is provided with a bunk, mattress and bed linen, and all beds are protected with mosquito netting. A small number of snacks and cold beverages are available, but this is at an extra cost.

Volunteers, over the age of 18, will be permitted to leave the confines of the expedition site at their own discretion on the condition that this does not interfere with the day's schedule.

NB: Once volunteers leave the confines of the expedition site, CCC will be in no way responsible or liable for them

Volunteers spending longer than seven weeks on an expedition will be given the option to leave the expedition base for an optional 3-day long-weekend break.

### **4. Catering**

Breakfast and lunch are prepared by volunteers and staff on a rota and everyone will be expected to take their turn in producing communal meals. Evening meals are prepared by local catering staff. Meals are based upon local cuisine and seasonal availability of locally grown ingredients. Meals are served in the communal area and mealtimes are fixed in order that the day's survey activities can be effectively managed. Vegetarians are catered for on all expeditions. Fresh fruit and vegetables, while mostly available, are seasonal and availability will vary.

### **5. Communication**

The expedition base is fully equipped with satellite and radio-telecommunications to provide 24-hour communications cover. However, routine use of this facility is limited

to project management and operations, and volunteers are not at liberty to use these facilities for personal use other than in an emergency.

International mobile/cell phone roaming for 3G/4G is available throughout most of the Philippines, and there is acceptable coverage at the expedition base. Before arriving in the Philippines volunteers should check with their service provider whether their service will allow international roaming, and the costs involved, as these can be extremely high. Volunteers who wish to go online are advised instead to buy a Globe SIM in country, your phone must be unlocked or 'Open Line' to accept these. Volunteers can get a free traveller's GLOBE SIM at Manila airport, just past luggage collections, or they can be bought easily and cheaply in most towns. You will need to purchase some 'load' too, 100 will be enough to see you to site.

For those that choose not to purchase a SIM, or whose phones are locked, there is a WIFI dongle on site for volunteer use. The cost of which is split between whomever is using it (approx. £1.50 a week for 2GB of data).

Volunteers should be aware that the Philippines is subject to occasional brown outs and internet access is **not guaranteed**.

The postal service within the Philippines is neither swift nor reliable and mail to or from the expedition base commonly takes many weeks to arrive. For your information the address for the expedition site is:

**Coral Cay Conservation  
Napantao Dive Resort  
San Francisco 6613  
Southern Leyte  
Philippines**

Please note: CCC UK cannot accept any items for transportation to the Philippines on behalf of volunteers or staff for security and liability reasons.

## **6. Travel Planning**

All volunteers must rendezvous at the Arrivals Hall, Tacloban Airport, no later than **13:30** hrs. on the published start date of their expedition. The airport is very small so any flight arriving until 13:15 is fine.

### **Visas**

Volunteers staying less than 30 days: British and Irish passport holders may enter and stay in the Philippines for 30 days without having to apply for a Visa in advance. This is provided they hold valid tickets for their return journey out of the Philippines, and that their passports are valid for at least 6 months beyond the intended period of stay in the Philippines. Please put your reason for travel as 'Tourism'. Many other nationalities also have this right; please check with your local embassy for the most up to date information.

Volunteers staying longer than 30 days (or those not covered by the above allowance) must apply for a standard 59-day Tourist Visa at the Philippine Embassy

before they travel. This can either be applied for in person or by post, please note the latter option will require that you have your application stamped by a notary public (UK residents can search here <https://www.thenotariessociety.org.uk/> for their closest registered notary). Volunteers staying for longer periods can then organise extensions in Tacloban, a process which the CCC Field Staff will be happy to explain on site. Volunteers will need a set of 4 passport photos for any in country visa extensions, these can be easily obtained in country.

When completing the Philippine Embassy Visa Application Form, please specify your reason for travel as 'Tourism' and insert the following information in the section where you are required to supply a contact name and address whilst visiting the Philippines:

Sir Nedgar V. Garves  
Provincial Tourism Officer  
Provincial Government of Southern Leyte  
Maasin City  
Southern Leyte  
Philippines  
Tel: (6353) 570-8300

Volunteers staying in the Philippines for longer periods will need their visas extended in country. The cost for extensions is quite substantial and requires the purchase of an ID card for the first extension. This cost will need to be covered by the volunteer and is not included in the expedition fee. Costs are as follows:

For volunteers who get a 30-day visa upon arrival in the Philippines, the first extension will be for 29 days to bring you up to the 59-day visa which is available to purchase before leaving the UK. This extension will cost 3,100 PHP.

For volunteers who arrive with the standard 59-day tourist visa there will be a choice of extending in increments of either 30 days or 59 days. 30-day extensions will cost 3,200 PhPs whereas the 59-day extension will cost 4,090 PhP.

Please note that any extension after spending 59 days in the Philippines will require the purchase of an ID card costing 4,000 PhPs on top of the extension fees above.

NB: The above stated prices vary and so this is only a rough guide.

Due to the way the visa extension system operates volunteers may need to extend their visas on more occasions than originally anticipated. This is because visa extension applications are valid from the date of processing rather than the date of expiry of the previous visa.

NB: For all those individuals staying for over 6 months in the Philippines, please be advised that some Filipino airports will charge a departure terminal fee and travel tax (from 500 - 3000 PhP). Please ensure that you check with your airline/travel agent to find out whether you will be subject to this.

### **Flights and Travel**

Volunteers will need to fly to Manila and take an internal flight to Tacloban. At present, only Philippine Airlines runs direct flights from London Heathrow to Manila,

although these are relatively infrequent and usually more expensive than indirect flights. Flight routes can be found with airlines such as BA via Hong Kong, Qatar Airways via Doha, and Emirates via Dubai to name a few. The flights usually arrive in the evening meaning a stay over in Manila will be necessary, catching a morning flight to Tacloban the following day.

Upon arrival at Manila Airport volunteers will be required to collect their bags and clear Immigration and Customs. Upon entering the Arrivals Hall at Manila International Airport, look for the Nissan (Metered) Taxi Service booth (located directly outside the main exit doors from the Arrivals Hall, just across the road) and book a taxi to your accommodation. This will be more expensive than on a metered taxi but is on a set rate. Past volunteers have recommended staying in Malate – a relatively safe area. The hostel [Malate Pensionne](#) is in this area and has been described as being cheap and clean with a friendly atmosphere.

Another hostel which has been used by volunteers is [Our Melting Pot](#) which is a slightly more expensive option, but again is clean, safe and the staff team are friendly. There are many hotels and hostels along Adriatico Street in Malate and so finding a suitable place should not be an issue. For those who do not wish to go into Manila, there are also hotels available near the airport although these are more expensive

There are numerous flights per day with Philippines Airlines, Air Asia and Cebu Pacific leaving from the domestic airport in Manila to Tacloban. The **rendezvous time is 13:30 in the Tacloban Airport arrivals hall** so any of the morning flights will get you there in good time. Volunteers should check-in to their flight at least one hour prior to the scheduled departure time (as stated on their ticket), as most domestic airlines in the Philippines operate a strict policy on late check-in (check-in desks usually close at least 40 minutes prior to the scheduled flight departure time).

Once volunteers have booked their flights they should email the Operations team ([info@coralcay.org](mailto:info@coralcay.org)) their arrival date and time into Tacloban airport.

Manila is notoriously congested with traffic and volunteers should allow at least one-hour travel time from their hotel to the airport (if staying in the Malate region). Taxis are readily available from outside many hostel reception desks at reasonable prices, Volunteers should either agree a price before getting into a taxi or insist that the driver turns on the meter (keep an eye on the meter in case it suddenly increases in price). In summary: volunteers should be checked out of their accommodation and sitting in a taxi heading to the Manila Domestic Airport at least two hours prior to the scheduled departure time of their flight to Tacloban Airport.

Upon arrival at Tacloban Airport, volunteers need to collect their luggage and exit the building. We use a local mini-van firm and volunteers will be met outside the terminal by a CCC representative who will be wearing a Coral Cay T-shirt. Volunteers will then be taken to the expedition base (approx. 3-4hr journey).

Volunteers are required to pay for the cost of the transfer to and from the project site. The taxi costs 4000 pesos and may be split between whoever is in the taxi, if volunteers are on their own they will need to pay the full fare. Sometimes the driver may ask for 1000 pesos for gas (petrol) this will then come off the taxi bill when volunteers arrive.

**Important:** This journey time is important to bear in mind when booking the return Tacloban to Manila flight, as only afternoon/evening flights will be feasible.

**Volunteers must rendezvous at the Arrivals Hall, Tacloban Airport, no later than 13:30 hrs on the published start date of their expedition.**

Due to the poor postal service to the Philippines, volunteers may be asked to carry additional items in their luggage for site use (PADI manuals, medical equipment etc.). HO will confirm size and weight with the volunteer so that they can make an informed decision as to whether they can assist. These items will be sent to the volunteer so that they can be inspected before packing.

Wherever possible, volunteers should try to book **flexible or changeable flights**. This is so that should a volunteer want to extend their expedition, or choose to stay on longer in country post expedition, they can arrange to do so with relative ease

### **Travel Insurance**

Travel insurance is essential. Any policy must cover the following:

- All medical costs associated with scuba diving, including decompression chambers and unlimited diving to a depth of 30 metres.
- Dive training (where applicable)
- Helicopter Rescue.
- Light manual labour.
- Medical emergency repatriation must be covered from any remote location in the world given the intended destination of the trip.

Once purchased please email details of the name of the insurance company, policy number, dates of cover and the emergency contact number of the insurance company to the Operations team at [info@coralcay.org](mailto:info@coralcay.org). Insurance policies taken out by volunteers should cover cancellation of their trip. This is in case unforeseen circumstances force CCC to close the project or a volunteer is forced to withdraw prematurely from their expedition.

CCC also recommends that volunteers bring a credit card for emergency use as many insurance companies will not pay for bills upfront and so initial payments may be needed.

## **7. Travel Health**

Travellers should be aware that the Philippines is a tropical country and as such is liable to occasional outbreaks of tropical diseases such as dengue fever. Please visit Fit for Travel at <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/asia-east/philippines> for more information. If medical care is needed the nearest medical facilities are as follows:

Medical clinic – Liloan Community Hospital, Liloan  
Decompression Chamber – Cebu

## 8. Personal Expenditure

During a CCC expedition, volunteers will require funds for in-transit expenses and personal expenditure, such as bar refreshments, etc. A budget of approx. £350 to cover in-transit expenses from London to/from the expedition base, and a budget of approx. £90 per month for personal expenditure during the expedition is usually adequate. A **rough** guide to help you plan personal expenditure whilst in-transit to/from the expedition and during the course of the expedition is given below:

### A Rough Guide to Planning Personal Expenditure

Item	PhP	Comments
<b><u>Outward in-transit expenses:</u></b>		
Taxi: Manila International Airport- Accommodation	600	Metered taxi would be approx. 300Php although this would be dependent on traffic
Accommodation Manila	500	
Meals	500	
Taxi: Accommodation-Manila Domestic Airport	600	Or approx. 300Php by metered taxi
Terminal Fee: Manila Domestic Airport	200	
Taxi: Tacloban Airport – expedition base	4,000	This will be shared by all the volunteers travelling to the expedition site
<b>Sub-total:</b>	6,400	
<b><u>On-site expedition expenses:</u></b>		
Personal expenses per month	5,000	
Initial visa extension (59 days) & ID card fee (see Visa section above for further extension costs)	8,350	Only for stays of over 7 weeks
Sub-total:	13,350	
<b><u>Return in-transit expenses:</u></b>		
Taxi: Expedition base -Tacloban Airport	4,000	Shared between all volunteers leaving on the same date.
Tacloban Airport Departure Tax	30	
Taxi: Manila Domestic Airport- Accommodation	600	Or approx. 300Php by metered taxi
Accommodation Manila	500	
Meals	500	
Taxi: Accommodation-Manila International Airport	600	Or approx. 300Php by metered taxi
Terminal Fee: Manila International Airport	550	
<b>Sub-total:</b>	6,780	
<b>Total PhP:</b>	26,530	

The exchange rate for the Philippine peso (PHP) fluctuates constantly – a rough conversion guide is approx. PHP 69: GB £1).

We recommend volunteers bring most of their personal money in the form of Philippine pesos, preferably with a good proportion in smaller denomination notes. Exchange rates in Manila airport are usually relatively competitive but you may find that there is less variety of note denominations.

The only guaranteed opportunity volunteers have to exchange currency during their expedition, will be upon arrival at *Manila International Airport*, where a number of currency exchange counters are located in the Arrivals hall.

Volunteers should exchange sufficient cash (pesos) for in-transit expenses and to cover other personal expenses for the duration of their expedition. Cash withdrawals from credit cards can often prove very problematic in the Philippines and volunteers are advised against planning to use credit cards for cash withdrawals. Traveller's cheques are not recommended.

Important - For volunteers spending less than seven weeks on an expedition, the only opportunity they will have to make further currency exchanges will be at the end of their allocated expedition stay. Volunteers spending longer than seven weeks on an expedition will be given the option to leave the expedition base to withdraw cash and exchange money during their optional 3-day long-weekend break. Volunteers should therefore consider carefully how much foreign exchange they plan to carry as cash for the duration of their expedition.