

A Wonderful Journey

Making the 2017 50 Best Dives
Guide Book for The Philippines

by Tim Rock

Beneath the waves, I was greeted by an immense school of bigeye jacks in shallow water and a sea floor of white, powdery sand. I looked ahead as they surrounded my diving buddy and she disappeared. What great fun as we swam in and out of this amazing shoal shooting both still photos and videos.

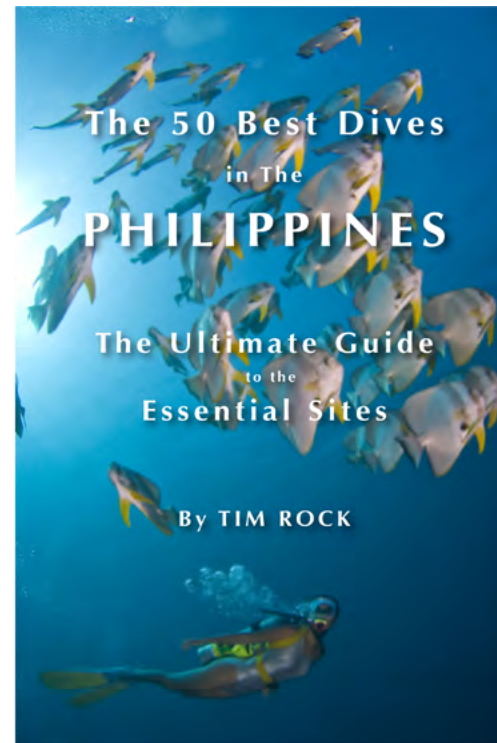
Then the sea floor below provided yet another surprise. A beautiful green sea turtle. It was so intent on munching sea grass it paid us no attention. I was diving on Dimakya Island off northern Palawan in The Philippines. As the sun started to go down we exited and walked up the beach just in time to see the golden sky fill with thousands of fruit bats. Like a Dracula movie it was. On this day we played with and admired nature above and below the sea. It certainly is, as they say, more fun in the Philippines.

I am a lucky guy. I live in Guam. This means I am only a short flight from Manila, the gateway to The Philippines and some of the greatest diving in the world. I found this out decades ago and have made repeated

trips to dive venues old and new in this amazingly diverse island nation. I also work as a photojournalist and I have written and photographed many magazine articles about the venues here as well as written a number of diving and snorkeling guides for Lonely Planet as well as other publishers. A natural studio, the beauty of The Philippines has always produced wonderful images and experiences for me.

Lonely Planet has gone through some restructuring in recent years and a couple of new owners and it is out of the diving guide book business. Nonetheless, I have continued making books on my own and have a publishing business of coffee table books and dive guides. The subjects included places like Belize, Bonaire, Fiji, Tonga, Palau, Bali, Raja Ampat, Guam and many others.

Earlier this year I started what I hope will be a great concept in identifying the 50 Best Dive Sites to hot diving regions. The 50 Best Dives of Micronesia, my home for 30 years, was released on Amazon and Apple in April. Diving the best of The



Philippines was a natural second book in the series. The idea is simple. Take a look at a country or region that is a hot diving destination. Figure out great sites that most people can see (advanced level divers and above). Make a book about it.

The Philippines has seen rapid growth and improvement with people from many walks of life enjoying dive sport. More Filipinos are getting certified and enjoying the wonders of their own country. And Manila and Cebu are worldwide hubs for flights full of enthusiastic visitors from the USA, Asia and Europe.

Thus, I figured The RPI is a



natural candidate. This book describes the very best of dive sites across the vast expanse of the 7,000+ islands of The Philippines.

It includes both popular and off-the-beaten-path sites, outer reefs, historic shipwrecks and remote atolls. It is fun to page through, log the sites the reader has visited and add new sites to every diver's bucket list. As an armchair reader, one can imagine the adventure of witnessing firsthand the amazing marine life and fabulous coral reefs. As an active diver, one can do it live and in person.

For instance, the Bohol coast is becoming a new dive area. In places



like Anda, limestone cliffs open up to sandy beaches and then give way to rock islands.

Under the sea the terrain is also special and the trained eyes of divemasters at dedicated resorts like Amun Ini showed me an array of wonderful macro critters, coral-covered walls and shoals of fish.

I took a sea safari to places like Apo Island, Balicasag and Cabilao. And just prior to the publication of the book, I was hosted by Atlantis resorts in Puerto Galera and Dauin/Dumaguete. Dauin is really the place to see rare frogfish and other muck denizens. And I got up at zero-dark-thirty to start the day with Sea Explorers to see the rare thresher sharks off Malapascua Island. And I visited Magic Island Resort in Moalboal to see the Skull Cave at Pescador Island and the huge sardine school along the Moalboal area coast.

In the course, in creating the book, I also talked



to many Philippine dive pioneers, shop managers, divemasters, tourism gurus and visiting divers to hear the latest and greatest about what is going on currently and what the future may bring. With conservation and safety in the forefront, it appears diving and exploration will continue to produce

some amazing results in this country.

And so, in July of 2017, we had a finished product. This book was not easy to do as The Philippines has many truly great dives. But it is my opinion that if you get to these areas and do these dives, you will have experienced an amazing marine world found nowhere else on the planet.

Sold on Amazon.com and Blurb.com as print books (and PDF format on Blurb) and on Amazon Kindle and Apple iBooks as ebooks, this look at the best Philippine sites has 225 color photos and maps plus tons of useful information in the inside of the 188-page volume.

Coming in November of 2017, I will team up with writer Simon Pridmore for The 50 Best Dives of Indonesia, The Ultimate Guide to the Essential Sites, which is sure to be an amazing journey. And in March of 2018, David Fleetham and I will combine talents for the Aloha State to release The 50 Best Dives of Hawaii, The Ultimate Guide to the Essential Sites.

Tim Rock

<https://timrock.photoshelter.com/index>



Amazon Link:

<https://www.amazon.com/50-Best-Dives-Philippines-Essential/dp/1973982188/>

Tim's Amazon Author Page:

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Blurb.com link:

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