

El Nido & Coron (Palawan) 90-Day Survival Guide

The last limestone-and-lagoon frontier of the Philippines — two towns, one epic archipelago.

0. City Overview & Quick Facts

Attribute	Detail
Country	Philippines
Province	Palawan
Region	Mimaropa
Combined coastal population	El Nido ~51,367 (2024); Coron/Busuanga ~26,974–65,855 depending on municipal boundary
Elevation	El Nido ~5.5 m; Coron/Busuanga ~8 m; nearby peaks up to 957 m
Currency	Philippine peso (PHP)
Exchange rate used	58 PHP = 1 USD
Languages	Tagalog/Filipino, Cuyonon, Coronin/Busuanga dialects; English widely spoken in tourism
Time zone	UTC+8 (PST)
Calling code	+63 (0)48
Climate	Tropical; dry Dec–May, wet Jun–Nov (habagat / southwest monsoon)
Airports	El Nido (ENI / Lio Airport); Coron / Busuanga (USU / Francisco B. Reyes Airport)
Ferry link	El Nido – Coron ~3.5–4 hours, from ~PHP 1,760 (Montenegro Lines / Jomalia)
Tourist visa-free	30 days for many passports
First extension	+29 days; ~PHP 3,030
Long-stay options	SRRV (retirees), work visa, student visa, spousal visa
Emergency	911

El Nido & Coron in one sentence: Palawan’s twin lagoon towns are not

Bangkok or Bali — WiFi is slower, hospitals are smaller, and ferry schedules move with the weather — but the limestone karsts, empty beaches, shipwrecks, and forced slow pace make them unforgettable.

1. Landing — First 72 Hours

Getting In

Route	Cost	Time	Notes
Van Puerto Princesa → El Nido	PHP 600–900	5–6 hours	Budget overland; book ahead in peak season
Flight Manila/Cebu → El Nido (ENI)	PHP 2,500–8,000	1–1.5 hours	Fastest; limited seats, book early
Flight Manila/Cebu/Clark → Coron/Busuanga (USU)	PHP 2,500–6,000	1–1.5 hours	Coron direct
Ferry El Nido Coron	PHP 1,760–2,500	3.5–4 hours	Island link; weather dependent
Tricycle town pier/airport → hotel	PHP 50–300	5–20 min	Always negotiate

Cash on Land

Cash dominates El Nido and Coron. Few small restaurants and tricycles take cards. ATMs exist in both towns but can run empty on weekends; withdraw in Puerto Princesa or Manila if possible.

First Hotel

Area	Vibe	Typical Price
El Nido Town Proper	Walkable, noisy at night, tour boats	\$25–80/night
Corong-corong / Las Cabañas	Quieter, sunset beaches	\$40–120/night
Nacpan Beach	Rural beach escape	\$30–100/night

Area	Vibe	Typical Price
Coron Town Proper	Compact base for wrecks + lagoons	\$25–90/night
Coron resort zone	Resort strip south of town	\$60–250/night

Rule: Do not sign a 30+ day rental sight-unseen. Walk the street at night and test the Wi-Fi before committing.

SIM Card

Smart, Globe, DITO. Tourist SIMs cost ~PHP 150–400 with data. Signal is weaker on islands and in Nacpan; buy two networks if work depends on data. Tourist SIM registration requires passport, proof of local address, and return/onward ticket.

Move-In Checklist

- AC cold-test in the room for 15 minutes.
- Internet speed test — video calls need at least 10 Mbps stable.
- Hot water and shower pressure check.
- Confirm if generator backup exists — Palawan has outages.
- Mosquito netting or sealed windows.
- Written nightly/monthly rate and deposit terms.
- Check distance to pier, market and tricycle stand.

2. Visa & Immigration

Item	Detail
Visa-exempt entry	30 days for many passports including US, EU, UK, CA, AU, JP, SG
First 30-day extension	Apply at Bureau of Immigration Puerto Princesa or nearest BI office; fee ~PHP 3,030
90-day reality	Common path: 30 days + 30-day extension = 60 days; then exit and re-enter, or extend further
Long-stay options	SRRV (retirees), work visa, student visa, or spousal visa
Onward ticket	Airlines and immigration may ask; have a flight or ferry reservation

Item	Detail
ACR I-Card	Required once staying beyond 59 days; ~\$50

Where to Process Extensions

The nearest full-service BI office is in **Puerto Princesa**. Some travelers complete the first extension there, then manage subsequent extensions at other regional BI offices if staying longer.

Office	Address / Contact
BI Puerto Princesa	Puerto Princesa City, Palawan; check https://immigration.gov.ph/contacts/ for current address and phone

3. Money & Banking

Cards are accepted at mid-range hotels and some restaurants, but cash is king in Palawan. Budget an ATM run every week and keep a cash buffer for ferries and tours.

Bank / ATM	Notes
BDO / BPI / Metrobank	Major banks with branches in Puerto Princesa and larger towns
Palawan Pawnshop / M Lhuillier	Cash transfer and remittance points in El Nido and Coron
Wise / Revolut	Use for online bookings; withdraw at reliable ATMs

Local bank accounts are very difficult as a tourist; usually require a long-stay visa, local address proof, and ACR I-Card.

4. Neighborhoods & Housing

El Nido and Coron are small. The best long-stay deals come from walking in and asking for a monthly rate. Oceanfront rooms spike during Chinese New Year and Easter.

Option	Reality	Best For	Monthly Range
Budget hostel / hotel	\$15–40/night; no lease needed	First scouting days	\$450–1,200
Mid-range resort / hotel	\$40–100/night with AC	Short-term comfort	\$1,200–3,000
Monthly guesthouse deal	Negotiated in person	30–90 day nomads	\$400–900
Island resort long stay	With meals included	Work-cation in one place	\$1,200–3,000+

Move-In Checklist

- AC cold-test in the room for 15 minutes.
- Internet speed test — minimum 10 Mbps stable for video calls.
- Hot water and shower pressure check.
- Generator backup existence.
- Mosquito netting or sealed windows.
- Written rate and deposit terms.
- Distance to pier, market, and tricycle stand.

5. Transport

Mode	Cost	Notes
Tricycle (town)	PHP 20–50 per person	Shared or charter; negotiate
Motorbike / scooter rental	PHP 300–500/day	License + helmet required; checkpoints rare but real
El Nido Coron ferry	PHP 1,760–2,500	3.5–4 hours; weather dependent
Island-hopping tour	PHP 1,200–1,800/day	Includes lunch, guide, boat
Private boat charter	PHP 3,000–8,000/day	Split among group; flexible itinerary
Van Puerto Princesa El Nido	PHP 600–900	5–6 hours; book ahead in peak season
Flight from Manila/Cebu	PHP 2,500–8,000	Book early; limited seats

Ferries between El Nido and Coron can be rough during habagat (June–October). Tour boats rarely cancel for light rain but will cancel for a storm warning.

6. Food & Dining

Filipino food in Palawan is honest, cheap and filling. Tourist restaurants cover Italian, Thai and Korean cravings. The real treat is the seafood — eat it where the boats land.

Meal / Item	Where	Cost
Tapsilog / silog breakfast	Local carinderia	PHP 80–150 (\$1.40–2.60)
Adobo / sinigang meal	Carinderia / market	PHP 120–220 (\$2.10–3.80)
Grilled seafood plate	Beach restaurant	PHP 250–450 (\$4.30–7.80)
Pizza / pasta	Italian tourist restaurant	PHP 350–600 (\$6.10–10.40)
Island-hopping lunch	Included in tour	Usually free
Fresh coconut	Beach vendor	PHP 50–80 (\$0.90–1.40)
Coffee	Café in town	PHP 80–180 (\$1.40–3.10)

Must-Try Dishes

- Adobo — chicken or pork stewed in soy, vinegar and garlic
- Sinigang — sour tamarind soup with fish or pork
- Kinilaw — raw fish cured in vinegar, calamansi and chili
- Inihaw na isda — grilled whole fish
- Lechon / lechon kawali — roasted or crispy fried pork
- Pancit — stir-fried noodles
- Lumpia — Filipino spring rolls
- Halo-halo — shaved ice dessert

7. Groceries, Markets & Meat

Place	What it offers
El Nido public market	Fresh produce, fish, basics
Coron public market	Vegetables, seafood, meat
Sari-sari stores	Snacks, load, toiletries in every neighborhood
Pharmacies in town	Limited stock; bring prescriptions
Laundry shops	PHP 40–80/kg, usually same-day or next-day

Meat & Produce Norms

- Wet markets are cheaper for meat and vegetables than tourist restaurants.
- Supermarket stock is limited; bring specialty items from Puerto Princesa or Manila.
- Bottled or filtered water is standard.

8. Remote Work & Coworking

Palawan is not a remote-work powerhouse. Treat it as a 50/50 destination: work in the morning, boat in the afternoon. Do not rely on island Wi-Fi for critical calls.

Item	Detail
Internet in town	10–50 Mbps fibre in hotels; outages happen
Mobile data	Smart and Globe 4G in town; patchy on islands
Coworking	No dedicated coworking spaces; cafés and hotel lounges serve as offices
Power	220V; generators common; outages during storms
Best work rhythm	Take calls in the morning; tour in the afternoon

9. Healthcare

El Nido and Coron have small rural hospitals for stitches, infections and minor emergencies. Anything serious needs evacuation to Puerto Princesa or Manila. Carry travel insurance with medical evacuation.

Facility	Address / Phone	Notes
El Nido Community Hospital	Pasadena, El Nido; (048) 434-8339, (048) 434-2148, 0956 721 2002	Basic 24-hour public hospital
Coron District Hospital	Coron Town Proper, Busuanga; 0917 303 0000	Basic 24-hour government hospital
Puerto Princesa hospitals	Puerto Princesa City	Better-equipped; 5–6 hours from El Nido

Facility	Address / Phone	Notes
Medical evacuation	Manila / Cebu	For serious trauma or surgery — get travel insurance with evacuation

Emergency Numbers

Service	Number
National Emergency Hotline	911
Philippine Red Cross	143
Police	117
El Nido Community Hospital	(048) 434-8339
Coron District Hospital	0917 303 0000

Practical Notes

- Generics pharmacies are limited; bring prescriptions.
- Antibiotics may be available without prescription; use responsibly.
- Medical evacuation insurance is strongly recommended.

10. Dental

Basic dental care exists in El Nido and Coron. Major work is safer in Puerto Princesa or Manila. Standard travel insurance usually excludes dental.

Procedure	Typical Price (USD)
Cleaning + checkup	\$25–50
Filling	\$30–70
Extraction	\$40–100
Crown	\$250–600

11. Crime & Safety

Palawan feels safe, but the environment is wilder than Manila or Cebu. Most risks are environmental — sun, sea, mosquitoes, rough roads — not crime.

- **Boat safety:** wear the provided life jacket; storm warnings mean cancel, not argue.

- **Dengue and chikungunya** are present; use mosquito repellent especially at dawn and dusk.
- **Jellyfish season** can bring stinging species; ask locals before swimming in new spots.
- **Sun intensity** is extreme; reef-safe sunscreen and a hat are daily essentials.
- **Water:** drink bottled or filtered water; ice in restaurants is generally safe.
- **Dry bags:** keep devices in dry bags on tour boats; salt water destroys electronics fast.
- **Motorbike accidents** are the most common tourist injury; inspect brakes and avoid night riding.
- **Drugs:** possession of small amounts can mean long prison sentences.
- **Coral:** do not touch or stand on coral; fines and local bans exist in protected areas.
- **Indigenous land:** respect Batak and Tagbanua land-access rules on some islands.
- **Drones:** require CAAP registration; many island-hopping areas restrict drones.

12. Environmental Safety & Emergency

El Nido and Coron lie outside the main typhoon belt but can still be hit by passing storms. Boat crossings are the first thing to stop when seas turn rough. Habagat (southwest monsoon, June–October) brings afternoon rain and rough seas.

Environmental Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Rough ferry crossings	Check Coast Guard weather warnings before boarding
Sunburn / heat exhaustion	Reef-safe sunscreen, hat, hydration
Mosquito-borne illness	Repellent, long sleeves at dawn/dusk
Marine stings	Ask locals about jellyfish; wear rash guard
Motorbike injuries	Inspect brakes, wear helmet, avoid night riding
Salt-water damage	Dry bags for electronics

13. Weather by Month

Month	Season	Conditions
January	Dry / peak	Calm seas, sunny, highest prices

Month	Season	Conditions
February	Dry / peak	Calm seas, sunny
March	Hot dry	Hot and humid; best diving visibility
April	Hot dry	Hot and humid; best diving visibility
May	Shoulder	Transition; occasional rain
June	Wet / habagat	Afternoon rain, rough seas, lower prices
July	Wet / habagat	Afternoon rain, rough seas, tour cancellations
August	Wet / habagat	Peak monsoon; roughest seas
September	Wet / habagat	Rain and rough seas continue
October	Wet / habagat	Rain tapers; still rough
November	Shoulder	Improving weather, fewer crowds
December	Dry / peak	Dry season returns, holiday crowds

Best 90-day window: Arrive November–December or March–April for the best balance of calm seas and pricing.

14. Language & Local Etiquette

- **Tagalog/Filipino** is the national language; **Cuyonon** and local Coron/Busuanga dialects are spoken in Palawan.
- **English** is widely spoken in tourism.
- Filipinos are hospitable but indirect; raise concerns politely.
- Tipping is appreciated but not mandatory; 10% at restaurants is standard.
- Dress modestly in town centers and at religious sites.
- The local “come here” gesture is palm down, fingers sweeping downward.
- Respect local environmental rules: no touching coral, pack out trash, observe drone bans.

15. History & Culture Snapshot

Palawan is one of the Philippines’ most biodiverse provinces. El Nido and Coron sit on the northern tip, scattered across limestone karst islands and lagoons.

Key cultural and historical notes:

- Coron is famous for **WWII wreck dives** — Japanese ships sunk by U.S. air strikes in 1944.

- El Nido is known for the **Bacuit Archipelago**, a maze of lagoons, hidden beaches, and towering limestone.
- Indigenous **Batak** and **Tagbanua** communities live in the forests and islands; some areas require permits or guided access.
- Calauit Island hosts a wildlife sanctuary originally stocked with African species in the 1970s.

16. Tourism & Day Trips

El Nido Island-Hopping Tours

Tour	What it is	Cost
Tour A	Lagoons + beaches; full day	PHP 1,200–1,500 + PHP 400 ETDF
Tour B	Caves + Snake Island; full day	PHP 1,300–1,600 + PHP 400 ETDF
Tour C	Hidden Beach + Matinloc; full day	PHP 1,400–1,700 + PHP 400 ETDF
Tour D	Cadlao Lagoon + beaches	PHP 1,200–1,500 + PHP 400 ETDF

The El Nido **Eco-Tourism Development Fee (ETDF)** is PHP 400 per non-resident tourist, valid for 10 days. Pay once regardless of how many tours you book.

Coron Tours

Tour	What it is	Cost
Coron Ultimate Tour	Kayangan Lake, Twin Lagoon, Barracuda Lake; full day	PHP 1,500–1,800
Reefs + Wrecks	WWII wreck dives and coral; full day	PHP 1,500–2,500
Town tour	Mount Tapyas + Maquinit Hot Spring	PHP 500–700

Mount Tapyas is free to climb. Maquinit Hot Spring entrance is ~PHP 150–300.

Other Day Trips

- El Nido → Nacpan Beach and Calitang twin beach day (tricycle ~PHP 300–500)

- El Nido → Linapacan island chain multi-day expedition (weather permitting)
- Coron → Malcapuya, Banana and Bulog Dos island day
- Coron → Calauit Safari Park and Black Island full-day trip (~PHP 2,500–3,500)
- Coron → WWII wreck dives for certified divers (Irako, Akitsushima, Okikawa Maru)
- El Nido → Coron 4-hour ferry link; do the loop in either direction

17. Master Links

Resource	URL / Contact	Use For
Department of Tourism Philippines	https://dot.gov.ph/	Official travel info
Bureau of Immigration	https://immigration.gov.ph/	Visa extensions
Philippine Coast Guard	https://coastguard.gov.ph/	Sea-safety updates
El Nido Community Hospital	(048) 434-8339	Emergency
Coron District Hospital	0917 303 0000	Emergency
Montenegro Lines	https://phferry.com/operators/montenegro-lines	El Nido–Coron ferry
OceanJet	https://www.oceanjet.net/	Ferry schedules
2GO Travel	https://2go.com.ph/	Manila–Coron ferry
Wikivoyage El Nido	https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/El_Nido	Travel info
Wikivoyage Coron	https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Coron	Travel info

18. Final Budget Table

Monthly cost-of-stay estimates for El Nido & Coron, in USD, assuming **58 PHP per USD**. Figures combine the two towns and assume a mix of budget guesthouse/monthly deals and regular island tours.

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Room	\$400 (budget guesthouse / monthly deal, fan or basic AC)	\$800 (mid-range resort/hotel or better guesthouse)	\$1,800+ (upscale resort or island long-stay with meals)

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Food	\$250 (carinderias, market cooking, simple seafood)	\$450 (mix of local + tourist restaurants)	\$900 (daily restaurants, imported items, resort dining)
Transport	\$100 (tricycles, shared vans, occasional scooter)	\$250 (scooter rental, private tricycle, ferry hop)	\$500 (private transport, frequent ferries, boat charters)
Coworking	\$0 (cafés / hotel Wi-Fi)	\$0 (cafés / hotel Wi-Fi)	\$100 (premium hotel lounge or mobile hotspot backup)
Insurance	\$100 (basic travel insurance with evacuation)	\$150 (comprehensive travel insurance)	\$250 (comprehensive nomad insurance + evacuation)
Visa	\$60 (first 29-day extension + amortised fees)	\$80 (extension fees + ACR I-Card spread over stay)	\$120 (extensions, ACR I-Card)
Entertainment	\$200 (1–2 group island tours / week, local beers)	\$450 (regular tours, diving, weekend meals)	\$900 (daily private tours, diving, high-end dining)
Buffer	\$75	\$150	\$300
TOTAL / month	\$1,185	\$2,330	\$4,870
90-DAY TOTAL	\$3,555	\$6,990	\$14,610

19. Glossary of Local Terms

Term	Meaning
Adobo	Chicken or pork stewed in soy, vinegar and garlic
Bacuit Archipelago	The limestone karst island group around El Nido
Corong-corong	Beach area just south of El Nido town
ETDF	El Nido Eco-Tourism Development Fee (PHP 400 for tourists)
Habagat	Southwest monsoon; brings rough seas June–October
Halo-halo	Shaved ice dessert with milk, beans and fruit

Term	Meaning
Habal-habal	Motorbike taxi
Inihaw	Grilled
Kinilaw	Raw fish cured in vinegar and calamansi
Linapacan	Island chain between El Nido and Coron
Lumpia	Filipino spring rolls
Nacpan	Long beach north of El Nido
Pancit	Stir-fried noodles
Sari-sari store	Small neighborhood convenience store
Sinigang	Sour tamarind soup
Tagbanua	Indigenous people of Palawan
Trike	Tricycle taxi
Wreck dive	Diving on sunken ships, especially Coron's WWII fleet

20. Sources & Credits

- Bureau of Immigration Philippines — visa rules: <https://immigration.gov.ph/>
- Department of Tourism Philippines: <https://dot.gov.ph/>
- Philippine Coast Guard: <https://coastguard.gov.ph/>
- El Nido Community Hospital contact via [Palawan-divers.org](https://palawan-divers.org) and local listings (2026)
- Coron District Hospital: <https://www.yelp.com/biz/coron-district-hospital-coron>
- Montenegro Lines El Nido–Coron ferry fares and schedules: <https://phferry.com/operators/montenegro-lines>
- 2GO Travel Manila–Coron sailing schedule: <https://2go.com.ph/>
- OceanJet ferry schedules: <https://www.oceanjet.net/>
- El Nido Eco-Tourism Development Fee 2026: <https://www.elnidoparadise.com/el-nido-eco-tourism-development-fee/>
- El Nido population and geography: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Nido,_Palawan
- Coron/Busuanga population and geography: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coron,_Palawan
- El Nido tours and costs: <https://www.elnidoparadise.com/island-hopping/el-nido-tours/>
- Calauit Safari Park information: <https://coron-busuanga.com/calauit/>
- Maquinit Hot Spring / Mount Tapyas: TripAdvisor 2026 listings
- Wikivoyage El Nido: https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/El_Nido
- Wikivoyage Coron: <https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Coron>

PDF field guide verified July 2026. Confirm visa, ferry, and hospital details directly with official sources before travel.