

# Atmosphere Dive Sites



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# Coastal Dive Sites

## Straight off the beach

### **Atmosphere House Reef | max depth 30m**

#### *Reef and muck*

Only a step away from Atmosphere and one of the largest coastal sanctuaries, the house reef offers splendid underwater life. The reef covers a very large area and is often done as two or three separate dives.

In the shallows, the sand eventually makes way to the reef at around 6-7 meters depth. There is a large reef area just in front of the resort, where soft and hard coral mix with sponges down to around 25 meters. The area has plenty of macro life, including mantis shrimps, frogfish and nudibranchs, as well as the occasional big fish and jawfish sticking their heads out of the sand. If you come during mating season, you might be lucky to see them while they guard their eggs in the mouths. Turtles often reside here, as does a large solitary barracuda. Towards north you will find a few sandy and grassy areas where pipefish and cuttlefish often hide, and further along another large reef area. Towards the south, there is a mix of sand with interesting bottom dwellers and reef patches with healthy stag horn corals and a myriad of fish such as sweetlips and snappers. Deeper down you will find lush carpets of soft coral and sponges to a depth of about 30 meters. The House Reef is a great dive for fish identification, photography and macro lovers.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Atmosphere Containers | max depth 30m**

#### *Muck and artificial reef*

In the spring of 2011, three large shipping containers were sunk between 18 and 30 meters depth on the sand, on the north side of the House Reef. Atmosphere wanted to provide an artificial reef for its divers as well as make a home for critters and corals between two reef patches. We expect them to attract many critters and corals in the future. The containers allow for swim-throughs and have lots of interesting critters hiding in the sand around them, as well as a school of batfish and often seahorses by the deeper container.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Atmosphere House Reef Night Dive | max depth 18m**

#### *Reef and muck*

The Atmosphere House Reef at night is very different from the day. You will see sleeping fish, hunting fish and lots of crustaceans: Hermit crabs, box shrimps and hinge beak shrimps, sponge crabs, decorator crabs etc. The sandy bottom can be covered in tiny ghost/skeleton shrimps, we often see squid and cuttlefish as well as sleeping turtles. In the very shallow water you can come upon bobtail squid and other tiny creatures who only venture out at night. During the night, the colours appear more vivid and many corals let out their polyps at night to feed, looking like blooming flowers.

Atmosphere also offers “**Fluoro Night Dives**” which allow you to really experience the nightly magic of our corals and underwater animals. With the help of fluorescent light and filters you will see how the corals and fish give off their own light in the dark.

## North to South

### **Mainit | max depth 20m**

#### *Reef*

Mainit can be an exhilarating drift dive but it is also an excellent dive when the current isn't running. Due to the currents, there are frequent sightings of large schools of barracuda and fusiliers but there is also a lot of macro life. The boat will drop you on one side and pick you up on the other, so there is no need to swim against a current – instead you can just let the drift pull you along while you watch the scenery. The dive site starts with a sandy slope that gives way to soft and hard coral, as well as a lot of colorful sponges. If you look closely at the barrel sponges in particular, you will see that they all grow in the same direction along the bottom, a result of the current almost always running one way. Turtles and blue spotted stingrays as well as other larger fish are common. “Mainit”, in the local language, means “hot”. At the end of the dive you will pass an artificial reef of car tyres and then enter an area with sulphur-rich yellowish sand. Placing a hand in the sand will allow you to feel the heat coming from underneath, in some places so hot that you will burn your fingers, indicating the volcanic nature of the area.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Lipayo | max depth 20m**

#### *Reef and muck*

The Lipayo sanctuary comprises of a large artificial reef of car tyres and a natural reef, an area often too big to cover in one dive. The artificial reef is made up of around 100 car tyres, overgrown with both hard and soft corals and very colourful, a school of yellow snappers is always seen here, along with the odd sighting of flamboyant cuttlefish, spearing mantis shrimps, ghost pipefish and nudibranchs. Crossing from the car tyres and you head into the reef sanctuary on a gentle slope with a maximum depth of 20 meters. Sea moths, shaded batfish and frogfish are also common as well as pygmy pipehorse in the shallow seagrass area.

### **Sahara Reef | max depth 20m**

#### *Reef*

Ranging in depth from 5-18 meters, this is a gentle sloping reef which also has interesting things to see in the sand (hence the name!). There is the wreck of a small speedboat and many lion fish, red snappers and fusiliers reside here. A large school of yellow snappers can be spotted on top of a substantial area of lettuce coral, where you will also find different kinds of sweetlips. Turtles, shrimpfish and puffer fish are often seen around the shallows and there are a few resident marbled groupers which let you come quite close before they hide under the coral. Whilst the reef is not large, the diversity of life makes for a great coastal dive.

### **Secret Corner | max depth 25 m**

#### *Muck*

On a sandy slope where two currents meet, near “The Cars” dive site, an amazing array of macro life can be found with a bit of luck. Prone to strong currents, this dive site can only be enjoyed at certain times of the day depending on the tides. On a sandy slope with what appears as nothing but sand and the occasional bottle or coconut, you can encounter several members of the octopus family (mimic octopus, hairy octopus, oscillated octopus, wonderpus, blue ringed octopus) as well as frogfish, ghost pipefish, common seahorse, cockatoo waspfish, flamboyant cuttlefish and several types of shrimp etc. This can be a challenging dive, mainly suitable for photographers and keen macro lovers.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Shallow Cars | max depth 18m**

#### *Muck*

Just next to Dauin North Reef is a sandy slope where some of the world’s most unusual critters have decided to make home. It is a dream-come-true for the macro photographer or anyone who’s a fan of crazy creepy crawlies. Starting in about 5 meters with a sandy plateau which is a great place to look out for sea horses, frogfish, cuttlefish, spiny devilfish, box crabs and garden eels, the slope continues down to about 25 meters and among the debris, tree trunks, concrete sinkers and coconut shells you’ll find small cuttlefish, robust and ornate ghost pipefish, flamboyant cuttlefish and small frogfish. It is well worth staying on the sand and not head for the reef, since there is a lot to see here even if the area isn’t what you would call pretty. Many divers spend the whole dive on the 5 meter shallow plateau, because there is so much to see.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **The Cars | max depth 30m**

#### *Muck and artificial reef*

This is the deepest of the coastal marine sanctuaries and the only one that doesn’t comprise of a reef. 'Cars' is an artificial reef with the remains of two old cars, a series of oil drums, a cement mixer and some other bits and pieces. The car wrecks are overgrown with coral but more than anything else they have become the home of lots of fish. It is a great place to look for moray eels, juvenile emperor angelfish, shrimps, snappers, colourful wrasses and groupers. The most spectacular feature though is the dozens and dozens of huge lionfish who never seem to leave the area. They have filled up the car wrecks inside and out but can also be found suspended in the water throughout the whole dive site. Snake eels, saddleback anemone fish in their leather anemone, ringed pipefish and flounders are also very common. A fantastic dive for photographers.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Dauin North Reef | max depth 25m**

#### *Reef*

This reef covers quite a large area and is situated close to the small Dauin beach and you will often find snorkelers in the shallows. It is a gentle sloping reef with soft corals in the deep, beautiful hard corals in the middle and mixed corals in the shallows, most notably large areas of hard lettuce coral, potato coral as well as table corals. Turtles are often present and it is a vibrant reef with lots of small reef fish, anthias, parrotfish, scorpion fish, anemonefish

and much more. Large potato groupers have their home here as do quite a few large batfish and rabbitfish. In the shallows we often find leaf fish hiding in the coral. This dive site is suitable for all divers since there is generally no current and the reef begins in very shallow water.

*\*Also great for snorkeling*

### **Dauin South | max depth 25m**

#### *Reef*

A sandy channel separates Dauin North from Dauin South and just like its other half, Dauin South is a very healthy coral reef with a mount of hard corals that gives way to softer corals deeper down. There are two huge families of garden eels in Dauin South, one in the shallows and one at 20 meters, with the eels reaching one meter off the ground as long as you don't get too close. The reef has a few resident turtles and is also known for its many giant clams and big marbled groupers. Blue ribbon eels are also frequently found here.

*\*Also great for snorkeling*

### **Ginamaan | max depth 20m**

#### *Muck and Artificial reef*

This dive site is good for the photographer or the macro enthusiast. It is an artificial reef made of car tyres and only covers a very small area but with lots to see. It begins on top of the slope in sea grass in about 10 meters and ventures down the sandy slope to the tyres - the dive site requires patience but you may be rewarded with sightings of pipefish, nudibranchs, juvenile frogfish, filefish and scorpion fish, as well as many crabs and shrimps. Take your time spotting critters, there is no set route to follow so find a place to settle down and quietly observe the marine life around you.

### **Richard's Point | max depth 25m**

#### *Muck*

A sandy slope with a few scattered coral patches, this is another great macro site suitable for photographers and critter lovers. Nudibranchs, pipefish, frogfish and cuttlefish all fight for the diver's attention. Tigershrimp and flamboyant cuttlefish have been sighted here and nobody will ever forget the one time when two blue ringed octopus were spotted here, mating.

### **Masaplod North | max depth 25m**

#### *Reef and muck*

This dive site is often done as a drift dive from one side of the marine sanctuary to the other. It has more schooling fish and pelagic than any other dive site along the coast and is also the oldest marine sanctuary in the area.

A long sandy slope is home to many blue spotted sting rays and occasional barracudas, as well as schools of surgeon fish. On the reef, which is divided into two parts by a sandy channel, you will find big staghorn, potato and lettuce coral formations and a resident school of big eyed jacks will encircle divers whilst you look for creepy crawlies on the bottom. Turtles are quite common here and don't forget to look for juvenile critters. Some of those white flecks on the sand could be baby frogfish, scorpionfish and flounders. At the end of the sanctuary you will find a couple of big orange black coral bushes that often have big schools of shrimpfish surrounding them.

### **Pyramid | max depth 27m**

#### *Reef and muck*

The dive site name "Pyramid" comes from the large metal pyramid shaped structures scattered in this area between 15 and 25 meters depth. They have attracted an unusual number of thorny seahorses, but also other exciting critters such as saw blade shrimps hiding in the black coral, tiger shrimp, razor shrimps, soft coral spider crabs, arrow crabs, candy crabs and frogfish, as well as ghost pipefish, spiny devilfish, sea moths and ringed pipefish etc.

In the shallows, you will find black corals, fallen tree trunks as well as some very rocky areas where large groupings of sea urchins are common, as well as many species of juvenile fish. The dive site is prone to current so make sure to dive it in good conditions, it is a good dive for all divers with a lot to see.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Blue House | max depth 20m**

#### *Reef and muck*

A sandy gentle slope with coral in the shallow area as well as around 20 meters, here you'll find critters that like the soft coral and colorful sponges, such as soft coral spider crab, orangutan crab, soft coral cowries and many types of shrimp. The sand will hide flounders, cuttlefish, ghost pipefish and spearing mantis shrimps. A dive site with generally very little current, it is excellent for photographers.

### **Masaplod South | max depth 25m**

#### *Reef and muck*

After a grassy slope, the reef begins at around 8m where there is also a small area of artificial reef constructed of car tyres. A sandy slope leads to an area of soft corals, stag horn corals and where periodic boulders litter the shallows. This is a great dive site for macro and critters, and is suitable for all levels of divers. Often seen in the area are ghost pipe fish and nudibranchs, shrimpfish and frogfish. Shrimps and crabs are everywhere. Masaplod Sur is also one of the dive sites where crab-eyed gobies can be found.

### **Bahura | max depth 18m**

#### *Reef*

Just around the corner from Atmosphere sits Bahura reef, an easy dive with a lot of marine life and a reef that starts in very shallow water. On a boat dive, you begin the dive on a big lettuce coral colony, continue down a slope with lots of colorful and odd-looking sponges and reach a reef teeming with life. Giant groupers are often spotted here, as are turtles, moray eels, mantis shrimps and snakes. Occasionally there is a current in the area and the Dive Master will sometimes plan the dive with the current and exit on the shore just in front of Atmosphere.

*\*Also great for snorkeling*

### **Mandarin Fish Dive | max depth 7m**

#### *Reef*

On the same reef as above (Bahura), lies the home to many mandarin fish which are so shy in nature they only venture out at dusk. Entering into the water from the shore shortly

before sunset and heading to a maximum depth of 7m, you can hang out and hover over the lettuce coral colony to watch for the mating rituals of the stunningly colourful fish. Watch the males compete for the females and if you are lucky you will witness the little 'dance' as they join together and swim upwards from the protection of their home for their brief interlude. This is truly a photographer's dream. Also seen around the dive site are leaf scorpion fish, pipefish, moray eels and mantis shrimp.

### **The Point | max depth 18m**

#### *Reef and Muck*

A short walk or boat ride down the beach takes you to Atmosphere Point at the end of our beach, a macro dive which is also often struck by currents if not dived at the right time of the day.

The area consists of a sandy bottom with coral patches and rubble, lots of fish cages, tree trunks, ropes and the occasional car tyre. The marine life is exciting – robust and ornate ghost pipefish, spiny devilfish and flounders in the sand, moray eels and scorpion fish hiding in the coral heads, as well as the occasional barracuda and spotted stingray passing by.

### **The Pier | max depth 15m**

#### *Muck*

A proper muck dive, this dive site consists of sand, rocks and rubble only. Because of its proximity to a small river, it has attracted many critters which makes it worthwhile despite its lack of colorful beauty. Named “Frogfish City” by some of the Atmosphere dive masters, there is a great variety of small painted frogfish in different colors, squat lobsters, estuary seahorses, nudibranchs and if lucky, perhaps even blue ring octopus and wonderpus.

### **Unity Point | max depth 22m**

#### *Reef and Muck*

We like to consider this dive an exploration dive. A dive site often struck by currents, this site should be dived when the current is not running and by individuals who wish to search for small critters. Look out for the red tooth trigger fish, schooling banner fish and moorish idols playing on the coral heads. Red snapper, yellow striped snapper and turtles also fight for the diver's attention. There is a vast expanse of sand mixed with coral heads. In the shallows, there is sea grass where you can find nudibranchs, juvenile batfish, pipefish and snake eels. You will notice many fish traps in this area, due to it not being a protected marine park, which means that fishing is allowed.

### **Guinsuan | max depth 30m**

#### *Reef*

Guinsuan is a colourful drift dive which can be dived as one when the current is strong or as two separate dives when the current is slow or not running. It is a long extensive reef which begins and ends with a sandy slope. Lots of schooling fish – look out for the barracudas – turtles, snakes, wrasses, groupers, triggerfish, surgeonfish, milkfish, you name it! In the sand, snake eels are often spotted sticking their heads out of the sand, and giant frogfish and peacock mantis shrimps are common. Also spot the countless colourful feather stars sitting atop the coral formations. Both soft and hard corals are abundant here and the amount of teeming fish is very impressive, like an aquarium.

Atmosphere often dives Guinsuan on Wednesdays as a half day trip, with a visit to the Malatapay market in-between dives. The market is a local food and live stock market where divers can experience the Filipino barter system before going back under water again.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*



# Apo Island

## **Cogon | max depth 30m**

### *Reef*

Cogon is named after the Filipino 'cogon' grass that lines the shore in front of the dive site. This dive site is known for its sometime fierce currents and is therefore only recommended for advanced divers with drift diving experience. The dive site starts on a sandy slope and progresses to a coral slope with amazing colours and a vast array of soft corals and sponges. Look out for the family of bump head parrot fish that sometimes frequent this area as well as the occasional giant trevally. As the dive site progresses you head into a sandy channel where you can hide from the current and watch the fish play above you. Eventually the topography changes to a wall dive with big coral boulders and outcrops. The current ensures there is a variety of marine life in evidence, and keep an eye open in the blue for the huge schools of big eye trevallies.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

## **Mamsa | max depth 30m**

### *Reef*

Mamsa is the local word for 'Jacks' and often there is a large school of Jacks to be seen at this dive site. Again prone to strong current, this is also a drift dive for the more experienced diver. Starting on a steep slope the topography is quite unique as it turns into a host of underwater boulders which later joins a steep wall covered in soft corals. Drift along and keep your eyes open for the occasional hawksbill turtle.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

## **Rock Point East/West | max depth 30m**

### *Reef*

Rock Point is separated into 2 different dives sites - East side and West side - both are situated on the southern tip of the island. The dive site starts on a steep wall and tapers towards a plateau at the point with interesting ragged rock formations that reach up to the surface. Suitable for divers of all levels this is an impressive dive site for the marine life. Commonly seen in the area are turtles, potato groupers, scorpionfish, black and white snapper, batfish, butterfly fish and many varieties of pufferfish. Also look out for the banded sea snake! Macro lovers can look in amongst the corals to see a wide array of nudibranchs, flatworms, gobies and anemone shrimps.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

*\*Also great for snorkeling*

## **Katipanan | max depth 30m**

### *Reef*

Katipanan is named after the small cowrie shells often seen on this site. Situated on the Southern side of the island this is an easy dive site with little or no current. It is a gentle to steep slope with soft corals and a step down to a sandy slope and can be dived in the direction of Rock Point West or towards Chapel Point. Look out for turtles!

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Chapel Point | max depth 30m**

#### *Reef*

From this dive site you can see Apo Island's only chapel, hence the name. It starts on a steep white sandy slope that closely resembles a ski slope and joins a dramatic wall that drops down to 30, 40 and 50+ meters. The wall has many nooks and crannies and large cave like overhangs which are great for exploring. Chapel Point can be dived as a very easy shallow dive if one stays on the hard coral plateau above the wall or a deeper dive with a bottom beyond recreational dive limits. The wall has a vast quantity of sea fans, soft corals and anemones. Look out for the numerous garden eels in the shallows, blue and yellow ribbon eels which are frequently spotted in the overhangs, nudibranchs, scorpion fish, sea snakes and the odd turtle sitting on top of the wall.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

### **Boluarte | max depth 18m**

#### *Reef*

This is a dive site so unique that the volcanic nature of the island can be seen as steady streams of bubbles erupt from the sand, shimmering as they catch the sun light. This is an easy dive site with a varied topography. A little wall dive, followed by a slope littered with coral heads and joining back on a fringing reef.

*\*Also great for snorkeling*

### **Largahan | max depth 18m**

#### *Reef*

This dive site starts on a sandy steep slope which joins a small but steep wall and then goes back to a gentle slope again. Largahan is a beautiful diverse dive site with lots an unusual amount of macro life for Apo Island, such as nudibranchs, flatworms and frogfish to look out for. In one area, volcanic bubbles come out of the sand, shimmering as they catch the sun light. The sand, which is usually white in Apo island, is dark in many areas of Largahan.

### **Coconut | max depth 30m**

#### *Reef*

This dive is for the experienced diver who likes fast drift dives. Because of its location on the tip of the island, the currents can be fierce - down- and up-currents are not uncommon and the divers might find themselves in something resembling a washing machine. In the shallows, the fish life is extraordinary with a rainbow of colourful reef fish blocking the view to the surface. Look out in the blue for schools of big eyed trevallies, turtles, wrasses and other big fish.

*\*A great dive on Nitrox*

# dive sites

atmosphere

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