



The Philippines are divided into three major island groups: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Manila, the capital, was the seat of Spanish colonial rule in Asia and is located on Luzon, the major northern island. In the Cordillera Mountains of northern Luzon live tribes who make propitiatory offerings to rice gods and whose way of life has barely changed since they first settled there around 500BC. One of the few concessions they have made to modernity is to give up head-hunting.

The middle cluster of islands, the Visayas feature tropical beaches and exotic wildlife. For connoisseurs of beaches, the central Visayan region is an island-hoppers' paradise, with white sand everywhere and unspoiled fishing barrios. Discovering quiet islands around Cebu and Bohol it is not hard to find your own deserted tropical beach.

The southernmost group of islands, Mindanao, features a diverse population, where grand churches and imposing mosques mingle in towns known for speaking "Chabacano", a unique mixture of Spanish and ethnic dialects. Here we will explore Davao, Zamboanga, and Cagayan de Oro.

Palawan is a sanctuary to an amazing variety of fauna and flora found nowhere else in the world. It is blessed with incredibly awesome landscapes that astound even the most experienced travellers. Discover the amazing scenery of skyscraping dark cliffs, thick green forests, white-sand beaches with sparkling water at El Nido. Palawan presents a visual feast not only above the ground but also below it; discover caves filled with filigree-like sculptures formed by stalagmites and stalactites at the St. Paul flow the Underground River, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Philippines is a big country in a small package. It is the second-largest archipelago in the world (after Indonesia), with 7107 islands, sixty percent of them uninhabited, and 58,390km of coastline, all in a land mass no bigger than Arizona and the friendly Filipinos refer to it as their string of pearls.

Ref.: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfSMoGpgfCM>