

Michael's Philippines trip

Monday 7 to Tuesday 29 December 2026

Updated 22 October 2026

Trip at a glance

Michael lands in Manila on Monday 7 December, island-hops south with Julian for two weeks, spends Christmas in Digos, and flies home on Tuesday 29 December.

Arrival: Mon 7 Dec, 15:15, Manila NAIA Terminal 3, Thai Airways TG616

Meeting: Julian flies Davao to Manila on Sun 6 Dec and meets Michael at Terminal 3

Route: Manila, Cebu, Dumaguete, Siquijor, Panglao (Bohol), Siargao, then Davao and Digos

Christmas: Mon 21 to Tue 29 Dec at Julian's in Digos. He leaves early on Tue 29 Dec for his 09:05 flight.

Flying home: Tue 29 Dec: Philippine Airlines PR1812 from Davao to Manila (departs 09:05, lands 10:55 at Terminal 2), then Thai Airways TG617 to Bangkok (departs 17:15, Terminal 3)

The route

Fourteen nights over six stops before Digos, so there is room to absorb a disrupted flight or ferry. Times are approximate as of 21 October 2026, so confirm them when booking. Tap a travel line for backup options.

Mon 7 to Wed 9 December, 2 nights

Manila

Arrive and rest. Intramuros and Fort Santiago, Rizal Park, a Binondo food walk, Makati or BGC. A Grab or taxi from Terminal 3 to the hotel takes 30 to 60 minutes.

Wed 9 Dec: fly to Cebu, about 1.5 hours

Cebu Pacific, PAL and AirAsia all fly it, with many flights a day.

Wed 9 to Fri 11 December, 2 nights

Cebu

Cebu City: Basilica del Santo Niño, Magellan's Cross, Fort San Pedro. A day trip to Moalboal for sardine-run snorkelling, or Kawasan Falls.

Fri 11 Dec: fast ferry to Dumaguete, 4 to 6 hours

OceanJet or Cokaliong. Backups: a flight (about four a day), or a bus plus short ferry via southern Cebu (6 to 8 hours, the cheapest way).

Fri 11 to Sun 13 December, 2 nights

Dumaguete

Rizal Boulevard seafront, an Apo Island turtle-snorkelling day trip, Casaroro Falls.

Sun 13 Dec: fast ferry to Siquijor, about 1 hour

A short crossing from Dumaguete port, with several sailings a day.

Sun 13 to Tue 15 December, 2 nights

Siquijor

An island loop by tricycle or van: Cambugahay Falls, Salagdoong Beach, Lazi Convent and the old balete tree. Siquijor has two ports, Siquijor Pier and Larena, so pick the hotel with the ferry in mind.

Tue 15 Dec: fast ferry to Tagbilaran, about 2 hours, then a van to Panglao

OceanJet runs from Siquijor Pier. Apekoptravel sails from Larena Pier at 13:00 for PHP 750. The van or taxi from Tagbilaran to Panglao takes 30 to 45 minutes.

Tue 15 to Fri 18 December, 3 nights

Panglao, Bohol

Alona Beach and Balicasag Island snorkelling. A mainland day tour takes in the Chocolate Hills, tarsiers and a Loboc River cruise.

Fri 18 Dec: ferry to Cebu, then a flight to Siargao (a full travel day)

There is no direct link from Bohol to Siargao. Take a morning ferry from Tagbilaran to Cebu, then the Cebu to Siargao flight, which takes a little over an hour. If the ferry runs late, stay a night in Cebu.

Fri 18 to Mon 21 December, 3 nights

Siargao

The Cloud 9 boardwalk, island hopping (Naked, Daku and Guyam islands), Sugba Lagoon and the Magpupungko tidal pools.

Mon 21 Dec: direct CebGo flight to Davao, about 1 hour 15 to 1 hour 30

There is effectively one flight a day. The backup is a ferry to Surigao plus a bus, about 12 hours. From Davao airport to Digos takes 1.5 to 2 hours by pre-booked van or Grab, which Julian will arrange.

Mon 21 to Tue 29 December, 8 nights

Digos, Christmas with Julian

Eight nights at Julian's. Options include Davao City, a Samal Island day trip and the Mt Apo foothills. He leaves around 05:00 on Tue 29 Dec for the 09:05 flight.

Tue 29 Dec: fly Davao to Manila, 09:05 to 10:55

Julian sees Michael off at Davao. This is Philippine Airlines flight PR1812, which lands at Terminal 2. His Thai flight leaves from Terminal 3 and is on a separate ticket, so Philippine Airlines' own shuttle does not apply. He can use the airport authority's free shuttle for connecting passengers, which runs about once an hour (show the Thai ticket, and ask staff where it stops), or a Grab or taxi, which takes 10 to 20 minutes. He then checks in again, with hours to spare.

Tue 29 December

Manila, then home

Land at 10:55, collect the bags, take the airport's free shuttle (or a Grab or taxi) to Terminal 3 and check in for Thai Airways TG617 to Bangkok at 17:15, with a connection on to the UK.

Alternative routes

The route above is the main plan. These versions change the order of the stops, and each has my view on how it compares. Whichever route you pick, I will update the daily plan and the hotels to match.

Route A: the main plan

Manila 2, Cebu 2, Dumaguete 2, Siquijor 2, Panglao 3, Siargao 3. Davao on Mon 21 Dec.

My view: It works, but it is the one I would change. The Cebu to Dumaguete ferry takes 4 to 6 hours, and the day you leave Panglao for Siargao is a long ferry-then-flight day with no time in Cebu.

Route B: fly to Dumaguete, with Cebu in the middle

Manila 2, Dumaguete 2, Siquijor 2, Panglao 3, Cebu 2, Siargao 3. Davao on Mon 21 Dec. Dates: Dumaguete 9 to 11 Dec, Siquijor 11 to 13, Panglao 13 to 16, Cebu 16 to 18, Siargao 18 to 21.

What you gain: A direct flight from Manila to Dumaguete, about 1.5 hours, replaces a flight plus a 4 to 6 hour ferry. You pass through Cebu anyway on the way from Bohol to Siargao, so Cebu becomes a proper two-night stop and the long travel day disappears.

What it costs: No Cebu City at the start, and only two nights each in Dumaguete and Siquijor.

My view: This is the best balance if you arrive in Davao on the 21st. It has the least travelling for the time available, with a move every two or three days.

Route C: the same as B, arriving in Davao on Tue 22 Dec

Manila 2, Dumaguete 3, Siquijor 2, Panglao 3, Cebu 2, Siargao 3. Dates: Dumaguete 9 to 12 Dec, Siquijor 12 to 14, Panglao 14 to 17, Cebu 17 to 19, Siargao 19 to 22. That leaves seven nights in Digos instead of eight.

What you gain: An extra night in Dumaguete for Apo Island and the waterfalls, or you could give it to Cebu for a Moalboal day.

What it costs: A night at Julian's. The Siargao to Davao flight then needs a seat on the 22nd, and there is effectively one a day, so book it early.

My view: Worth it if Michael wants more time on the islands and is happy with a night less in Digos. Otherwise B is enough.

Route D: reverse it, starting in Siargao

Manila 2, Siargao 3, Cebu 2, Panglao 3, Siquijor 2, Dumaguete 2. Dates: Siargao 9 to 12 Dec, Cebu 12 to 14, Panglao 14 to 17, Siquijor 17 to 19, Dumaguete 19 to 21. On Mon 21 Dec he flies Dumaguete to Cebu and on to Davao.

What you gain: The islands end in Dumaguete, where Cebu and Davao flights run several times a day. That avoids the one-a-day Siargao to Davao flight, which is the most fragile leg in the plan. It also starts with a direct flight from Manila to Siargao.

What it costs: Michael would start in Siargao soon after the long journey from the UK. The last day is two flights and a road journey, so he would reach Digos late on the 21st. Check that Manila to Siargao flights run on 9 Dec.

My view: This is the one to look at if the single daily Siargao flight worries you. It is a little more tiring at the end, but it takes the biggest risk out of the plan.

Overall: I would choose B. If Michael wants more time, C. If you want to remove the one-flight-a-day risk, D.

Where to stay

The budget is up to £80 per room per night, in separate rooms for Julian and Michael. At rough rates that is about US\$105, or about PHP 6,000, so check the live rate. Scores and prices are from Booking.com, Expedia, Hotels.com and Kayak listings seen on 22 October 2026. Most prices are not December rates, and December is busy, so expect higher prices in Panglao and Siargao. Where I could not find a score I have said so rather than guess. The same hotels work for every route, and only the dates change.

Manila, Makati (Mon 7 to Wed 9 Dec; Julian from Sun 6 Dec)

- Citadines Salcedo Makati (Salcedo Village). Guest score 9 on Booking.com, with about 1,700 verified reviews on Kayak. Apartment-style rooms with a kitchen, a pool and free parking, about 700 metres from Greenbelt Mall. One listing showed about US\$108 a night, right at the limit, so check the December price.
- Astoria Greenbelt (Greenbelt). 767 verified reviews on Kayak and a short walk to Glorietta and Ayala Center. About US\$66 a night on one listing. I did not find a score.
- Somerset Valero Makati (Salcedo Village). About US\$87 a night on one listing, 0.8 km from Ayala Center. I did not find a score.
- Stretch: Ascott Makati. About US\$127 to US\$146 a night on listings, 0.2 km from Ayala Center. I did not find a score.

Cebu (2 nights)

- Quest Hotel and Conference Center (Cebu City). Rated excellent on Expedia from about 1,015 reviews, with a pool and free parking. Prices I saw ran from about US\$59 to US\$106 a night depending on the date.
- Toyoko Inn Cebu. A budget choice rated very good on Expedia from about 1,007 reviews. About US\$43 a night, with breakfast and an airport shuttle included.
- Stretch: Radisson Blu Cebu. Rated wonderful on Expedia from about 1,115 reviews. About US\$133 to US\$137 a night, so a little over the limit.

Dumaguete

Dumaguete is cheap, with an average hotel around £22 a night, so the limit is not an issue here.

- Hotel Dumaguete (Blanco Drive). Guest score 9.0 out of 10, wonderful, on Hotels.com. It has a pool and five restaurants, and is about 1.7 km from Rizal Boulevard. I did not find a price.
- The Bricks Hotel. Right on Rizal Boulevard, and the hotel that Hotels.com lists first for guests there. I did not find a price or score.
- Henia Hotel and Asia Novo Boutique Hotel. Both are near Quezon Park, from about US\$22 and US\$23 a night.

Siquijor

- Siquijor Summit Resort (Lazi). 10 out of 10 on Hotels.com, but from very few reviews, so treat it with care. Listed from about US\$45 to US\$63 a night.
- Siquijor Island Castle Resort (Lazi). A Booking.com guest calls it a must-stay. I did not find a price or score.
- Stretch: Coco Grove Beach Resort (San Juan). A Booking.com guest calls it the best place they stayed in the Philippines. It is likely to be over the limit, so check the price.
- Siquijor has two ferry ports, Siquijor Pier and Larena, so choose the hotel with the ferry in mind.

Panglao, Bohol (3 nights)

- Alona Vida Beach Resort. About US\$74 a night on listings, close to Alona Beach and its restaurants. I did not find a score.
- Cocotree Resort Panglao. About US\$73 to US\$83 a night on listings. I did not find a score.
- Stretch: Henann Tawala Resort. A 3.5-star beach hotel with breakfast included. Expedia showed about PHP 8,301 a night for 9 Dec, which is over the limit.
- Stretch: Henann Resort Alona Beach. 8.8 out of 10, excellent, on Expedia, with three pools on Alona Beach. Expedia showed about PHP 12,131 a night for 9 Dec, so it is well over the limit in December.

Siargao, General Luna (3 nights)

- Siargao Island Villas. 8.5 out of 10 from 1,230 Booking.com reviews. Expedia showed about PHP 6,474 a night for 2 Dec, which is right at the limit.

- The Hillside Resort Siargao. A 3.5-star hotel. Expedia showed about PHP 4,596 a night for 1 Dec.
- Highly rated, price to check: Kaimana Resort Siargao (9.3 from 207 reviews), Punta Punta Surf Retreat (9.3 from 202) and Kalipay Resort Siargao (9.2 from 169), all on Booking.com. I did not find their prices.
- December is one of the rainiest months in General Luna, so a hotel with a pool and a covered area is worth having.

Before you fly

Michael needs a UK passport valid to at least 7 June 2027 and a free eTravel registration before both flights, in and out of the Philippines.

- Visa: None needed. UK passport holders can stay 30 days for tourism, and this trip is 22 days. Keep the booking for the 29 Dec flight home to hand as proof of onward travel.
- Arrival eTravel: Register at etravel.gov.ph or in the eGovPH app within 72 hours of landing, so from the afternoon of Fri 4 Dec. Save the QR code on his phone before boarding in Bangkok.
- Departure eTravel: Register again within 72 hours of the flight home, so from the afternoon of Sat 26 Dec.
- Scams: Only use etravel.gov.ph. It is free, and any site that charges is not the official one.
- Cash: Foreign currency over US\$10,000 must be declared on arrival or departure.
- Power: Philippine sockets are 220 V, Type A, B or C, so bring a plug adaptor for UK plugs.
- Insurance: Take travel insurance that covers ferries and island activities such as snorkelling.

Source: UK government entry requirements for the Philippines, checked 21 October 2026.

Book these first

These fill up first in the week before Christmas.

- Manila hotel, Sun 6 to Wed 9 Dec (Julian from the 6th, Michael from the 7th)
- Siquijor and Panglao rooms
- Cebu to Siargao flight, Fri 18 Dec
- Siargao to Davao flight, Mon 21 Dec (only about one a day)
- A transfer from Digos to Davao airport for about 05:00 on Tue 29 Dec. Michael's Davao to Manila flight (PR1812, 09:05) is already booked

Ferry tickets are usually fine to buy a week or two ahead. For the key flights, pick fares that allow changes.

Weather and the way home

Weather. December is northeast monsoon season, and rough seas can cancel ferries at short notice. Typhoons are less likely but not impossible: Typhoon Odette hit this same region in mid-December 2021. Arriving in Digos on the 21st leaves a few days in hand before Christmas to absorb a delay.

Flying home. Julian sees Michael off at Davao on Tue 29 Dec. His Philippine Airlines flight PR1812 leaves at 09:05 and lands at Terminal 2 at 10:55. His Thai flight TG617 leaves Terminal 3 at 17:15. Because it is on a separate ticket, Philippine Airlines' own shuttle does not apply. He can use the airport authority's free hourly shuttle for connecting passengers, though the stop can be hard to find, or a Grab or taxi, and has hours to spare. The two flights are on separate tickets, so Thai would not rebook him if the Davao flight were badly delayed.

What has changed

- 22 Oct 2026 First draft.

- 22 Oct 2026 Updated for Michael's booked flight: Philippine Airlines PR1812, Davao to Manila on Tue 29 Dec at 09:05.
- 22 Oct 2026 Added the free shuttle bus between the Manila airport terminals.
- 22 Oct 2026 Corrected the Terminal 2 to Terminal 3 transfer: the Philippine Airlines shuttle does not apply to a separate Thai ticket.
- 22 Oct 2026 The Download the PDF button now makes the PDF from this page, so the PDF always matches the page.
- 22 Oct 2026 Added Alternative routes (Routes A to D) and Where to stay (hotel ideas for each stop).