

# TOURISM REPORT

## 2024



2024 © Greg Volger

# PREFACE

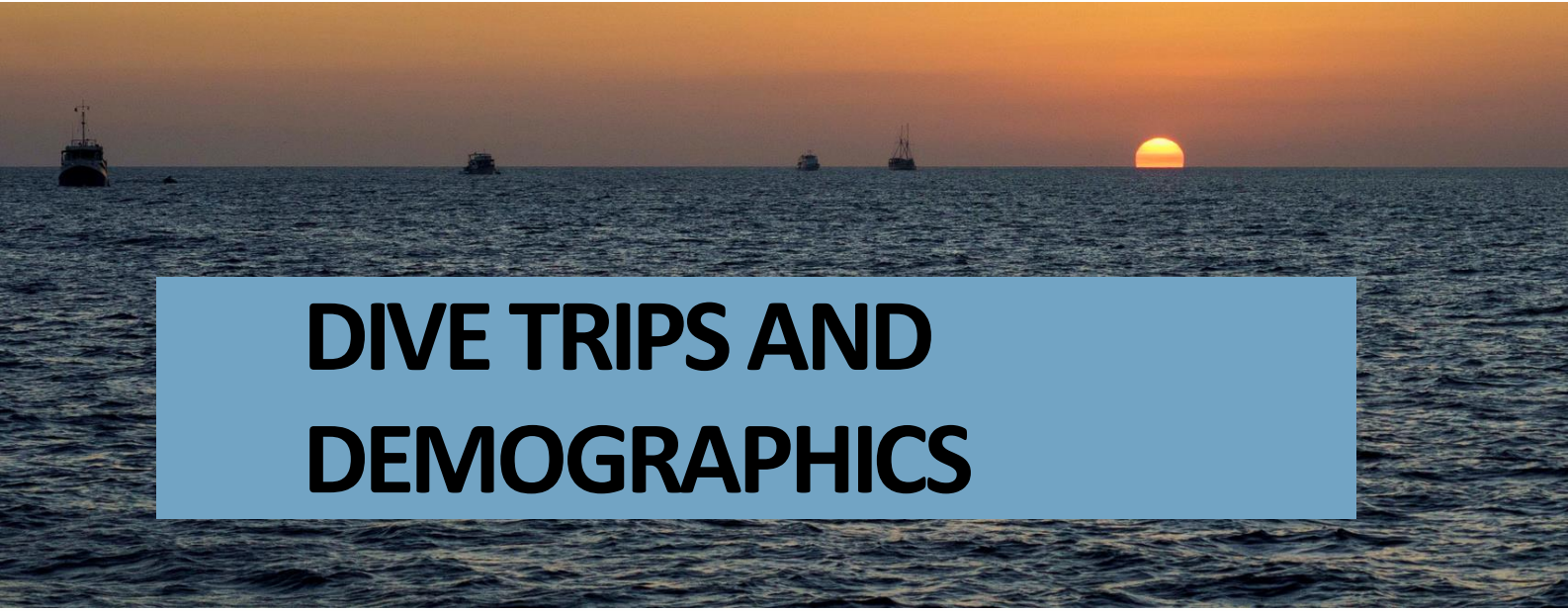


This report outlines the events relative to tourism that took place during the summer of 2024. It presents data on scuba diving operators and their operations, analyzes visitor demographics, and records the concerns of dive operators.

The report also addresses ongoing challenges and compliance issues within the industry, emphasizing the importance of upholding safety standards and sustainable practices. It calls for a rigorous compliance and enforcement strategy to ensure a sustainable future for tourism in Tubbataha.







# DIVE TRIPS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2024 dive season began with the entry of P/Y Almaroon Intrepid (Philippine Aggressor) on February 20 and ended with M/V Seadoors on July 29. Eighteen vessels planned to conduct trips, but two had to cancel abruptly due to boat problems. The season concluded with 217 trips, serving 3,686 visitors, matching pre-pandemic tourism numbers. Only four non-commercial vessels visited this season.

In 2019, Tubbataha recorded an unprecedented peak in tourist arrivals, with a total of 3,477 individuals. This year, the numbers have increased by 6%. The number of diving expeditions conducted within the park in 2019 was 210, while the current year shows a 3% increase. Financially, 2019 marked the highest income generation for the park, accruing 18.7 million pesos. This year, revenue stands at 19 million pesos, or an increase of 1.58%.

## Commercial Vessels:

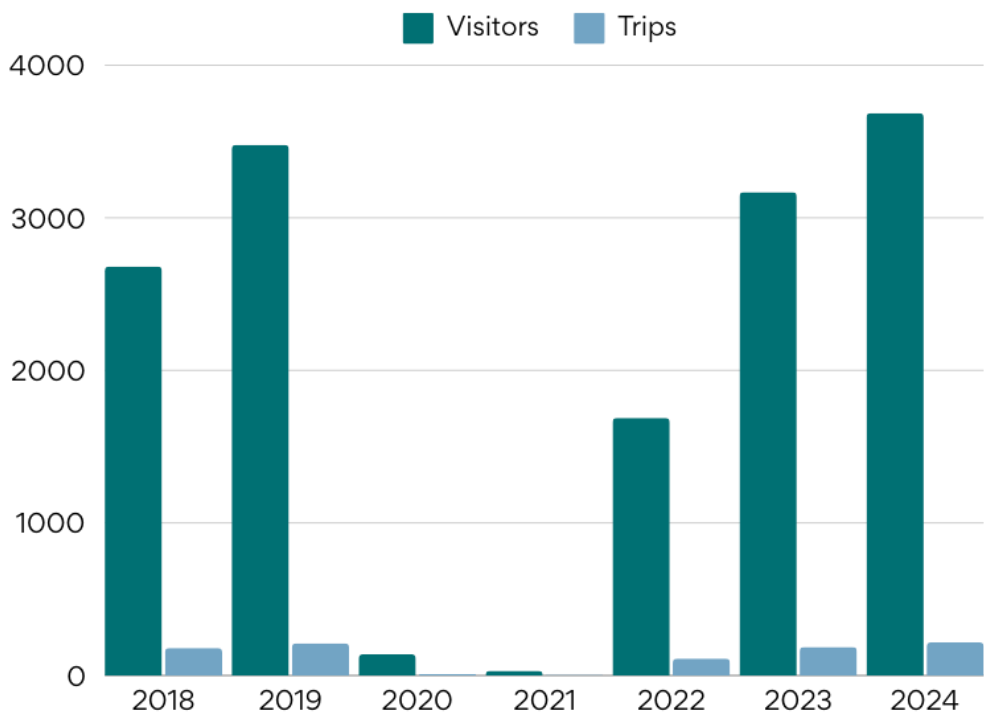
- |                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. P/Y Atlantis Azores       | 9. M/Y Oceana Maria Scuba |
| 2. M/Y Philippine Siren 2    | 10. M/Y Palausport        |
| 3. P/Y Almaroon Intrepid     | 11. M/Y Discovery Palawan |
| 4. M/Y Seadoors              | 12. M/Y Narayana          |
| 5. M/Y Stella Maris Explorer | 13. M/Y Zamerdius         |
| 6. M/Y Infiniti              | 14. M/Y Solitude One      |
| 7. M/Y Resolute              | 15. M/Y Gypsy             |
| 8. M/V Dolphin               | 16. P/Y Almaroon Explorer |

## Non-commercial Vessels:

1. M/Y Monsy
2. M/Y Anabella
3. M/Y Catharsis
4. M/Y Princess Iolanthe

# VISITOR AND TRIP SUMMARY

Summary of Visitors and Trips from 2018-2024



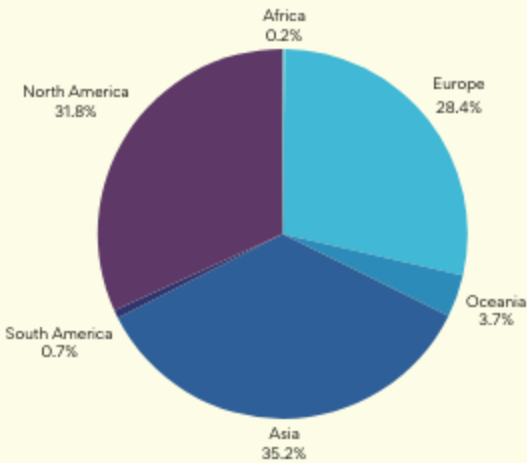
3,686 VISITORS

217 TRIPS

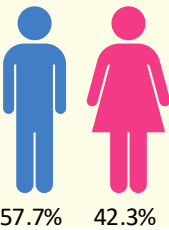
Top 3 nationalities



Demographics by Region

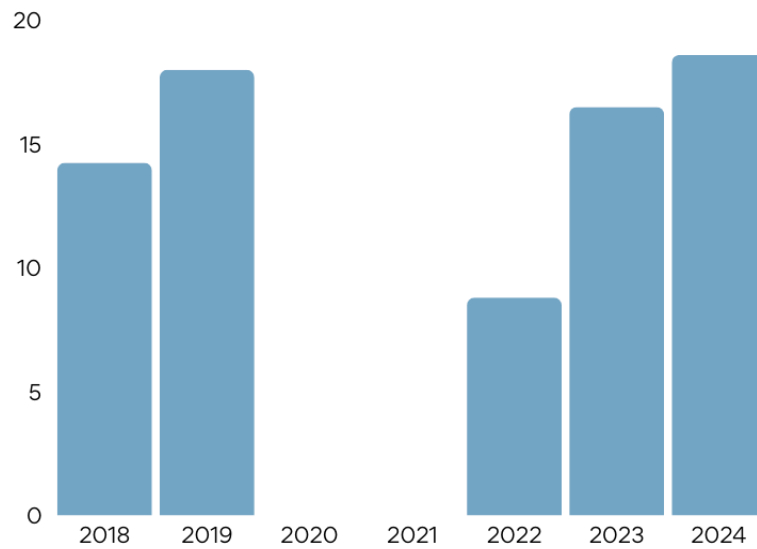


Gender Distribution





## Summary of Revenues from 2018-2024



2024 Revenue

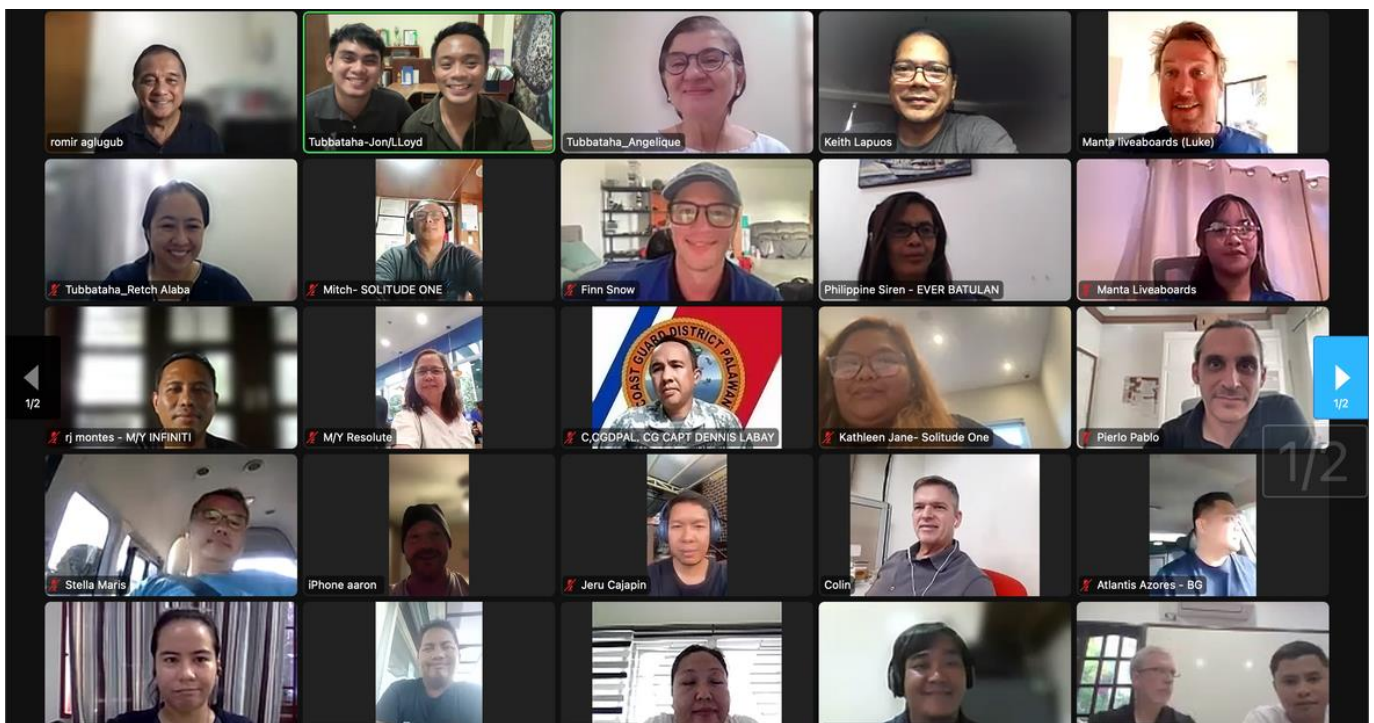
**₱19 M**

2019 Revenue (Pre-pandemic) / 210 Trips

**₱18.696 M**







# DIVE OPERATORS MEETING

The 2024 Pre-Season Dive Operators Meeting was held on 16 February 2024 via Zoom. It included Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) staff, dive operators, the Philippine Coast Guard, and a representative from Diver's Alert Network (DAN) Philippines. TMO reported the 2023 research findings and research plans for the season. The Philippine Coast Guard provided updates on vessel safety protocols, including the introduction of a radio clearance system and scheduled safety inspections. New administrative requirements were introduced, and a fee increase for the 2025 season was announced. The meeting emphasized the importance of compliance with safety and conservation guidelines to ensure a successful 2024 dive season.

Two Mid-Season Dive Operators' Meetings were held to address key concerns that may have arisen during the current season. Discussed were issues on mooring congestion due to non-compliance with designated moorings, and sightings of discarded fishing gear despite strict regulations. It was clarified that permits issued by TMO apply only to Tubbataha and do not include Cagayancillo. Proper incident management was emphasized, with a recommendation to appoint liaison officers for better communication during emergencies. Concerns over trash sightings in the park and ethical behavior among divers were also raised, stressing the need for proper waste management and respectful conduct. Lastly, adherence to "no wake zone" rules was reinforced to protect divers and the reefs. The meetings also allowed the dive operators and managers to meet during the season and discuss operations.



# CREW AND GUEST BRIEFINGS

## 75%

BRIEFINGS CONDUCTED



The target of TMO is to conduct face-to-face briefings on 75% of all dive trips originating in Puerto Princesa City. The aim is to inform visitors about park regulations before they enter the park in line with TMO's philosophy of preventive enforcement. Face-to-face briefings were conducted on 141 occasions out of the 187 dive trips that jumped off from Puerto Princesa.

Conducting these briefings is also crucial for informing divers about safety protocols, and environmental guidelines. These briefings help to minimize risks and ensure that both the natural environment and the divers are protected. By directly engaging with the crews and dive operators, TMO staff can address questions or concerns, reinforce the importance of compliance, and provide updates on the latest conservation efforts in the park.

These briefings not only ensured that visitors were fully informed about the park's regulations and safety protocols, but also served as an important platform for operators to communicate their concerns and submit reports regarding compliance issues. The briefings also helped foster a stronger connection between the crew, guests, and TMO. By addressing these concerns in a timely manner, the importance of following guidelines, which ultimately contribute to the preservation of Tubbataha's fragile ecosystems, was reinforced.



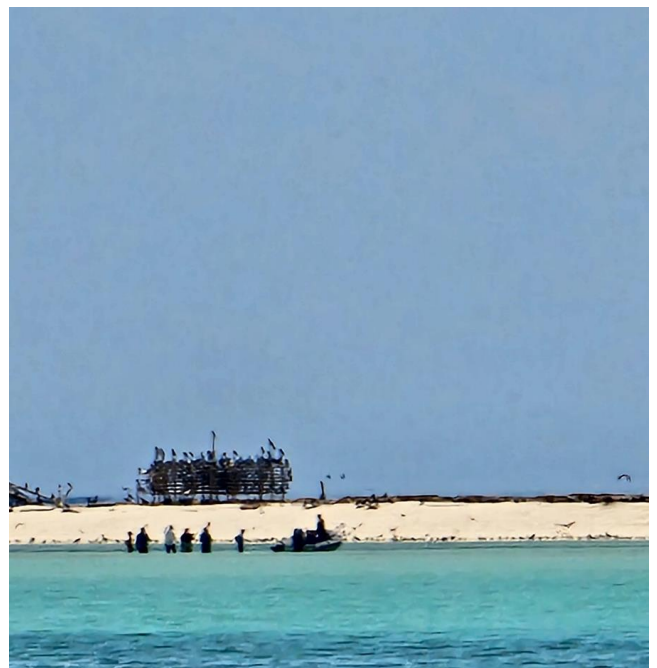
# INCIDENTS

On 24 March 2024, the P/Y Almaroon Intrepid reported a tragic incident involving an unconscious diver who was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital in Puerto Princesa City. On 7 June 2024, a medical emergency occurred aboard the vessel M/Y Seadoors when a crew member was diagnosed with appendicitis; the individual was promptly evacuated by the Philippine Coast Guard upon the vessel's arrival in the Puerto Princesa City area. Additionally, on 20 June 2024, a guest aboard the P/Y Atlantis Azores dislocated his hip and was returned to Puerto Princesa City, where he underwent surgery at the hospital.



In addition to the previously mentioned incidents, several other events occurred during the season. The vessel M/Y Azalea experienced boat damage and had to be rescued; fortunately, M/Y Resolute was able to assist and escort the damaged vessel back to the mainland. On 17 May 2024, the vessel M/Y Philippine Siren encountered an engine problem while en route to Cagayancillo. M/Y Solitude One came to its aid, toing the vessel back to Tubbataha, after which the Philippine Coast Guard provided further assistance and escorted them to Cagayancillo. On 1 June 2024, M/Y Resolute experienced an engine problem and was subsequently towed back to Puerto Princesa by a private towing company.

In addition to the incidents and rescues, some violations were encountered during the season. The vessel M/Y Palausport was cited for discharging wastewater in the park, which directly violated park rules. The dive operator waived the proceedings before the TAB and paid the fine. Furthermore, M/Y Philippine Siren 2 was reported for landing a boat on Bird Islet. Both dive operators waived the proceedings before the TAB and paid the fine. These violations highlight the ongoing need to continue engaging with dive operators, managers, and diving professionals to strictly enforce regulations and, in so doing, assist in preserving the integrity of the Tubbataha Reefs.





# THANK YOU



We express our deepest gratitude to all the vessels and their crews who have gone above and beyond to support our operations this season. Your generosity, cooperation, and willingness to assist in various capacities have been invaluable to our team and the preservation of Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park.

On many occasions, P/Y Atlantis Azores played a crucial role in sending merchandise and equipment to the rangers. Similarly, P/Y Almaroon Intrepid helped deliver personal packages to the rangers. M/Y Narayana's buoy donation and delivery of our communications equipment to the ranger station were greatly appreciated. M/Y Discovery Palawan transported supplies to the ranger station. M/Y Philippine Siren 2 facilitated a generous donation from their guests. Solitude One's support was invaluable, transporting our injured park ranger to Puerto Princesa City and providing medical assistance to our other rangers.

Your collective efforts have made a significant impact, and we are truly grateful for your unwavering commitment to our shared mission.