



Photo by Rex Features

## Destinations to watch in 2013

**PHILIPPINES** For travellers willing to go the extra thousand miles for a deserted beach, the **Philippines** has around 7,000 of the most heavenly islands in the world. It's still not the most obvious beach-holiday destination, but it soon will be.

It's becoming particularly popular among serious divers, who come for the incredible underwater life, unspoilt coral gardens with rainbow-bright fish, green sea turtles and dugongs. In **Bicol** you can swim with the biggest fish in the world, the whale shark. While fish-fans of a different nature can go deep-sea fishing in one of the deepest trenches in the oceans, not far from the little-known island of **Siargo**.

The archipelago of **Palawan** ticks all the boxes: palm-fringed white-powder beaches, crystal-clear turquoise waters, natural lagoons for wild swimming on Miniloc Island - all of it protected by UNESCO. Its **Bacuit Bay** is something like Halong Bay in Vietnam, only without all the tourists - for the time being, at least. There are just a handful of resorts, which are tasteful and deliberately low-key. Two of the newest are **Ariara Island** and **El Nido Pangulasian Island**, a private-island resort with palm-thatched villas, a spa, its own dive centre, and sea views to melt the heart.

Another super-stylish new opening is **Dedon Island**, on Siargao; it's owned and designed by contemporary furniture brand Dedon. And a perennial favourite is **Amanpulo**, yet another high-design private-island hotel on Pamalican Island. Or sail around them all in style on Alila's new boat, the **Phinsi**.

As the gateway to these private-island retreats, the Philippines capital of **Manila** is also having a moment. Among its new openings - another one in December 2012 - is the Fairmont Makati City.

Sorry, Maldives... We love you, but we've got a new flame.