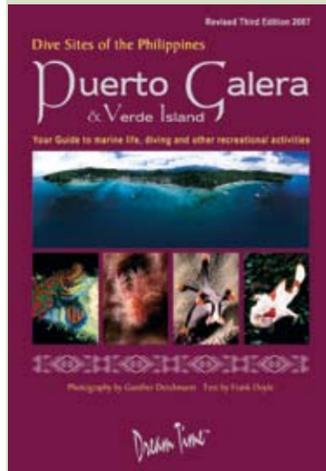




These guidebooks are such well-rounded storehouses of knowledge that they deserve a place on anybody's desk or bookshelf or in our travel bags—us travelers, laymen, and photographers all.

Travel by Sea, Air, or Armchair Paradise Pair: Palau and Puerto Galera



Puerto Galera & Verde Island: Your Guide to Marine Life, Diving and Other Recreational Activities; photography by Gunther Deichmann, text by Frank Doyle; 5.5 × 8.5 in., soft cover, 132 pages, full color.

FILIPINOS HAVE it worse. People everywhere joke that men never ask for directions when traveling, but at least most male travelers bring maps and guidebooks. Not us Filipinos, who deem it too much trouble to be constantly checking maps and guidebooks on the road, or find the space in our bags better consigned to light snacks.

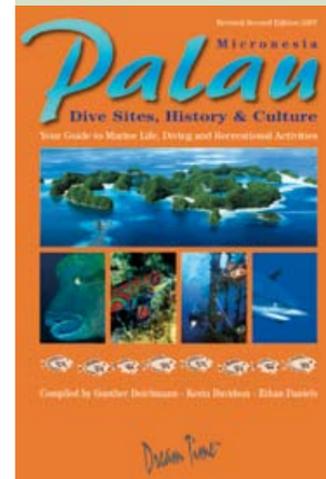
Gunther Deichmann, himself well-traveled and a diligent researcher of his destinations, wants to change our ways. He regularly publishes travel guidebooks generously illustrated with photographs taken by him and other photographers. These guidebooks are such well-rounded storehouses of knowledge that they deserve a place on anybody's desk or bookshelf or in our travel bags—us travelers, laymen, and photographers all.

If all you check before a trip is the weather, you're already lost before you step out of the house. In our interview with Gunther in Issue 5 (copies still available directly from imgaphoto.com—Salesman Ed), he said he never went to a place without first researching it on the Internet and in books.

No photographer should ever come to a place cold, a total stranger. Familiarizing oneself with the history, culture, character, and topography of a destination helps not only in discovering hidden alleyways but also in producing photographs that mean something.

Looking at the ruins of a house or town, the well-informed photographer will see a rich history and project that in his pictures; the ignorant photographer will see nothing but rocks and fungus growth—something he could just as well have photographed at home.

Here we offer a sampling of two of Gunther's guidebooks on dive sites. Even if you don't dive or engage in marine recreation, you'll find these books incalculably useful for giving you a detailed "lay of the land."



Palau: Dive Sites, History & Culture; text and photographs by Gunther Deichmann, Kevin Davidson, Ethan Daniels; 5.5 × 8.5 in., soft cover, 156 pages, full color; both books published by Dream Time, Manila; www.deichmann-photo.com.

Puerto Galera

If you only recently discovered Puerto Galera for its beaches, you're a thousand years too late. Sailors and traders old and new treasured the Philippines for its strategic location, making it an ideal gateway to the East and West. Puerto Galera, too, was prized for its strategic location within the archipelago, and as early as the 10th century it was a hub of commerce for Chinese, Malay, and Indonesian traders, and a midpoint "refueling station" where travelers could replenish their provisions.

During the Spanish occupation of the islands, Puerto Galera became one of the earliest Spanish settlements and provided sailors a haven where they could wait out a storm.

Thus begins Dream Time's guidebook on Puerto Galera and Verde Island. Because it is essentially a guide for divers and marine sportsmen, most of the photographs are of undersea denizens, natural formations, and shipwrecks. The undersea photographs are fascinating to anybody who has ever sat mesmerized before a nature documentary on National Geographic TV.

The first chapters take you around the islands, pointing out must-see landmarks, ideal dive sites, available dive centers where you can hire instructors and equipment, trek trails, and camp sites. You can, of course, sign up for organized day trips, but this guidebook is primarily beneficial to the independent traveler who wishes to set out at his own pace and time.

For non-divers and other vacationers, there are other recreational activities, such as kayaking, water skiing, windsurfing, snorkeling, short and long hikes that offer views of Batangas Bay and the Verde Passage, biking along beaches and waterfalls.

Of course the greatest lure of Puerto Galera is below the waves. This area of the Philippines has been hailed as having the richest, widest diversity of underwater fauna in the world. Diving in this area is like reading—and experiencing—a complete textbook on marine biology.

Not all activities are water-based. There are resorts with international restaurants and night entertainment, a museum, yacht club, and vehicles for hire.



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Interspersed throughout the book are detailed descriptions of the topography and directions for navigating underwater: "...you reach the edge of a wall that drops down to 55m/182ft. The wall comes to a huge rock corner, where on the northwest face you find a large crack which you can navigate through. You enter it at 51m/168ft, and after a few meters it bears left and daylight can be seen through a smaller opening, which is your exit from the tunnel." Like a road map, only underwater!

Palau

Setting foot on Palau, a group of small islands east of Mindanao and north of Papua, the uninformed photographer-traveler will be impressed by the deep-blue waters, verdant tropical forests, and clean blue skies, nothing more. The photographer who has Gunther's guidebook in hand will feel he has stepped back in time, retracing the footsteps of Spanish, British, Polish, Irish, German, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean adventurers, traders, and miners.

Filipinos might even be titillated to know that the islands were once known as the New Philippines, among other names. The book tell us that from 1696 to 1710, Spanish Jesuits and sailors from the Philippines made several attempts to reach the islands.

As in the Puerto Galera guidebook, Gunther and his co-authors cram this book with detailed travel directions, tips, and place descriptions—just the kind of knowledge Gunther brings with him on his travels and now shares in his guidebooks.

Interested in the geological formations of a tropical paradise? Read about the limestone atolls, the volcanic-rock island of Babeldaob, the caves, lakes, and coral reefs.

How about the fruits of creation? You'll find them all "under one roof": trek and bike trails, over 140 species of sea, land, and wetland birds, over 1500 species of fish, over 700 species of coral.

For recreational activities, there's controlled fishing, hiking and biking, treks across forests and waterfalls, along beaches, and into caves and mines; kayaking, banana boat rides, sailing, and, of course, diving.



Filipinos might even be titillated to know that the islands were once known as the New Philippines, among other names.

By sea, air or armchair

Informative, generously illustrated guidebooks like these two are highly recommended not only to real travelers and divers but also to armchair travelers. Sometimes it takes a blast of green and blue—unspoiled forests and clean seas—to make city slickers swear off air conditioned malls, rush-hour traffic, and their tech toys, if only for a week. Nature doesn't need a salesman, she markets herself very well on her own.

Gunther Deichmann, an internationally recognized and published photographer based in Manila, travels at least twice a year to exotic destinations and stays no less than two weeks. He researches his destination diligently before a trip, and never travels with an organized tour group, preferring the less-traveled paths and back doors. His work, known for their strong colors and graphic qualities, has appeared in *Stern*, *Time*, *National*

Geographic, *German Geo*, *French Geo*, among others. A 360-page book, *Journey Through Color and Time*, gathers images taken in over twenty countries from 1976 to 2006. He began diving twenty-five years ago.

In preparing these guidebooks, he had able assist from co-authors Frank Doyle, Kevin Davidson, and Ethan Daniels, experienced divers/diving instructors all. Ethan is a biologist (BS and MS), Kevin is a licensed diving instructor and sea captain, and his underwater video footages have appeared in CNN/NHK Japan, BBC/Discovery, and Disney Channel/Hongkong TV. Frank is a trained technical instructor, Redbreather instructor, Nitrox and Trimix gas blending instructor, and has done over 6,000 dives in Puerto Galera where he has been based since 1988.