

PHILIPPINES AT A GLANCE

POPULATION: 104,256,076 (July 2017 est.)

LANGUAGES: Filipino (Tagalog), English, regional languages

PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS: Christian (Roman Catholic and Protestant), Islam

TIME ZONE: Twelve hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (New York City)

TELEPHONE CODES: 63, country code; 2, Manila city code; 32, Cebu city code; 82, Davao city code; 2, Luzon city code

The Philippines is full of natural beauty, including gorgeous beaches, hills that look like candy drops, amazing waterfalls, old rice terraces, and reefs full of marine life. However, visitors aren't likely to see such wonders unaccompanied, as the locals are very outgoing. They consider solitude-seekers an oddity — Filipinos prefer to have company.

Travelers to the Philippines will be included in *bayanihan*, the Filipinos' term for their communal spirit. The local jokes, smiles and laughter will be shared with their visitors — such friendly people are rare elsewhere. Travelers who care more about exploring a culture and making friends than visiting tourist sites will be pleased with the Philippines.

In rural areas and on some southern islands, travel can be a little hazardous, but most of the country is safe. The government has worked hard, and fairly successfully, to curb petty street crime, tourist scams and dishonest cabdrivers. Security is strong, especially in shopping areas and hotels — all people who enter such places are checked. It's wise, though, for visitors to stay aware while traveling in the Philippines.



COMPASSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Compassion's ministry in the Philippines began in 1972. Today, more than 70,700 children are served by more than 340 Compassion-assisted child development centers throughout the country. Compassion's church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in the Philippines. Under the guidance of caring Christian adults, children's pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.

WEATHER

November through February, temperatures are cool and pleasant (it's usually 15 degrees F / 7 degrees C cooler in the mountain areas). April and May are very hot and humid. June through September is the rainy season.

CURRENCY

The official currency of the Philippines is the Philippine *peso* (PHP). The best forms of currency to use are cash and credit

cards. ATMs are plentiful. Check to see if the ATM displays a Cirrus or VisaElectron sign, as only these will permit withdrawal of cash via a credit card. Be cautious, as foreigners who appear to fumble at an ATM may be offered assistance by a local. Express appreciation for the offer but insist on keeping the transaction private.

FOOD

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).

SHOPPING

Among the better buys in the Philippines are fabrics, handmade clothes, fiber cloth, embroidered cotton table linens, paintings, brassware, and wood carvings. Bargaining is expected in markets but not at department stores or supermarkets. Before purchasing anything, find out whether prices will be quoted in U.S. dollars or Philippine *pesos*. Don't buy anything made from objects that come from the sea — the marine life in the Philippines is acutely stressed from decades of overharvesting.



ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

The voltage used in the Philippines is 220V, and electrical outlets accommodate plug types A, B or C. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check whatplug.info and click on your destination country.) You may also wish to take a universal plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel sections of most big-box stores.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** expect to be engaged in conversation in social situations — silence may be interpreted as discomfort or dislike. Don't be alarmed if new acquaintances start asking you about your personal life. Filipinos can be chummy and talkative in a friendly way. The country is known for the warmth of its people. If you are uncomfortable, just redirect the conversation and change the topic.
- **Don't** point. Since pointing can easily be perceived as an insulting gesture, Filipinos rarely indicate objects or directions by pointing with their fingers. Instead, they indicate with a glance or by pursing their lips. To beckon someone, hold your hand out, palm downward, and make a scooping motion with the fingers. Beckoning someone with the palm up and wagging one finger can be interpreted as an insult.
- **Don't** be enticed to exchange money on the street. Use only licensed money changers.
- **Do** bring a cellphone. Most Filipinos use them because they are relatively inexpensive and more accessible than the nation's landlines.
- **Don't** be surprised by blackouts. Power shortages in Manila occasionally occur, especially during typhoons.
- **Do** keep in mind that the city streets can flood. A couple of hours of rain can block the underground sewage system, forcing the water to surface. This can cause traffic problems, and numerous people to be stranded.

- **Do** keep an eye out for potholes and the never-ending reconstruction and repair of roads and streets. This can be a nuisance, especially during rush hours.

DRESS

You can keep cool by wearing the sensible clothing and fabrics that Filipinos have developed to deal with the heat and humidity. For men, the *barong Tagalog*, or long-sleeved shirt, worn untucked, will get you through even the most formal occasions. The short-sleeved style, the polo *barong*, is even cooler. For women, maintain modesty and avoid outfits such as tank tops and body-hugging dresses. Filipinos are generally more conservative than their counterparts in developed countries. To manage the heat, bring or buy clothes made from 100-percent natural fabrics such as cotton or linen, as they are cooler. When in doubt, you may follow smart casual to a formal type of dressing (depending on the occasion). Carry a small portable umbrella. The weather in the archipelago is unpredictable, even during the so-called wet and dry seasons. Use it to protect yourself from either the sun or rain.

Women: Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

Men: Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

Both: Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

Shoes: Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION

Website: ph.usembassy.gov

Phone: (63 2) 301-2000

Address: 1201 Roxas Blvd., Manila, Philippines 1000

Cebu Consulate Phone: (63 32) 231-1261

We strongly advise you to contact the CDC (www.cdc.gov) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.

*All information taken from the World Factbook and
Compassion International.*

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

The official language of the Philippines is Filipino. The country's secondary language is English. Some common Filipino greetings include:

Hello	Hi/Hello
Good morning	Magándang umaga
Good afternoon	Magándang hapon
Good evening	Magándang gabi
Goodbye	Paalam
Thank you	Salámat po
You're welcome	Waláng anumán
Please	Paki
Yes/no	Oó/hindí
Yes/no (polite)	Opó/hindí po
OK	Sige
Good/well	Mabúti or mabúti rin
No problem	Waláng probléma
How are you?	Kumustá ka na?
Well, thank you, and you?	Mabúti, salámat, at ikáw?
What is your name?	Anóng pangálan mo?
My name is ...	Ang pangálan ko ay ...

How old are you?
I love you
You are very special
I don't understand
Too expensive
How much is this?
I'm just looking
Do you have any....?
Do you have anything cheaper?

Iláng taón ka na?
Mahál na mahal kitá
Napaká-special mo
Hindi ko maintindihan
Masyádong mahál
Magkáno itó?
Tumitingin lang akó
Ba kayong...? Mayroón
Bang mas múra? Ngayón