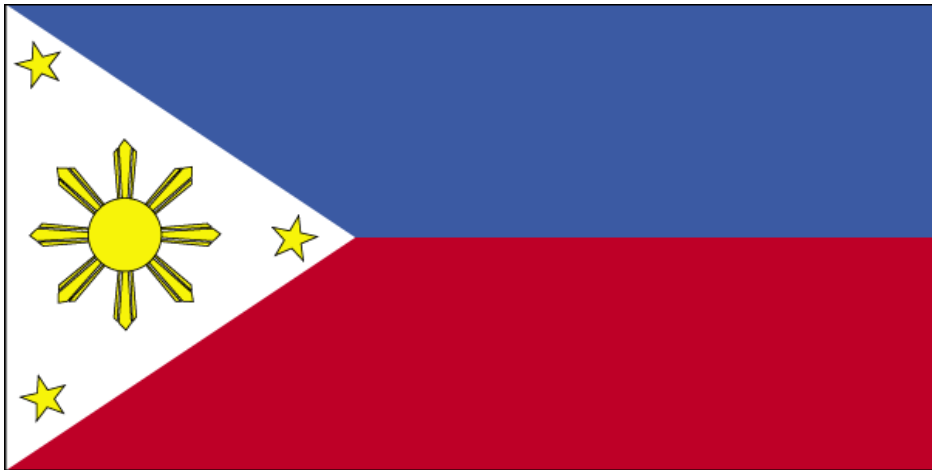


# Philippines

Pilipinas



NAME: Republic of the  
Philippines  
CAPITAL: Manila  
LANGUAGE: Tagalog & English  
RELIGION: Catholic & Others  
CURRENCY: Philippine Peso

## Getting Started

### When to Visit

What the [Filipinos](#) call their "Cold Season" may be laughable to most foreigners, but their hot and rainy season are definitely as advertised. Hot season runs from about March to May as temperatures are regularly in the 80s-90s°F (30-35°C) and have high humidity, although the mountains may be 10-20°F (6-10°C) cooler. The rainy season (June-November) is also very humid, but it rains more, as temperatures remain fairly consistent with those of the hot season. The Cold Season rarely experiences temperatures lower than TEMP (25 C) except in the mountains when they are again 10-20°F (6-10°C) degrees cooler. During this time humidity remains high so it still feels hot. Manila has an average low of about 70°F (21°C) in the cold season, but with high humidity most people still feel hot.

The busiest times for tourists in the [Philippines](#) are during local Catholic holidays when the locals travel and during Chinese holidays when the [Chinese](#) (who consist of the majority of tourists to the Philippines) travel. This basically means the Christmas-New Year week along with days like Easter (which changes each year) to Chinese New Year.

A final point to consider before planning your travel is local holidays or festivals. Holidays can make travel either more attractive, such as for large festivals, or less attractive due to tourist site closings and more expensive transportation options, so make sure you look into this before booking your trip. Here is a list of the [Philippines's Holiday Schedule](#).

### Weather

Although weather can be generalized based upon years past, for more up to date weather patterns and predicted future weather patterns, visit

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weather websites like [weather.com](http://weather.com); many local news sources also have information for international weather forecasts.

## **Tours & Cruises**

If you're looking for a pre-arranged trip, that involves little effort on your part, then you should consider going on an organized tour or cruise. Organized tours and cruises vary from all expenses included to only daily tours and perhaps hotels included in the price, but all the options below will help you arrange all the details so you don't have to worry about finding the best deal or right hotel.

[Gap Adventures](#): Known best among young adults, Gap Adventures provides local transportation, housing, and food, which cuts costs and introduces the local culture, but can also be challenging for those seeking luxury.

[Gecko's Adventures](#): Active in "responsible" tourism, Gecko's Adventures provides local transportation, housing, and food in small group settings.

[Intrepid Travel](#): Boasts more "off the beaten track" destinations; do your research though since some tours are very adventurous and involves camping and local hotels.

[Road Scholar](#): For older adults, Road Scholar offers tours with an educational emphasis; formerly known as Elder Hostel.

[Philippines Department of Tourism](#): This governmental body has a listing of accredited local tour companies, home stays, and more.

## **Guidebooks**

If you are just traveling on business and have little free time or are already familiar with the [Philippines](#), you may not need anything more than this guide! However, if you need more detailed and up to date

information, there are a couple guidebooks available for travel in the Philippines.

[Lonely Planet](#): Great maps and updated often with comprehensive housing information, restaurants, & transportation options. Backpackers and adventurers love these guidebooks.

[Rough Guides](#): Cover various aspects of travel from culture to getting by on the cheap.

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# Culture

## Personality, Culture, & Identity

The Filipinos are warm and generous people, but economic prosperity has not been so kindly distributed, creating a rift in the country. Like every country, there's a widening gap between rich and poor, but in the [Philippines](#) it seems more striking. Most people struggle to survive day to day, while almost always nearby there is a beach filled with tourists who enjoy the seemingly perfect water and sand beneath the trees.

With poverty and disease ever-present the [Filipinos](#) seek opportunities, but there are few available and those that are seem to be reserved for others. None-the-less, the Filipinos, no matter their economic class, are kind and outgoing people who believe in kindness and rely on faith. Primarily a Catholic country, these people put their trust and faith in God, not in their government or political system.

Today most [Filipinos](#) identify as such. Historically, the islands were home to numerous ethnic groups and each identified by their ethnicity, language, or religion, but this has changed and today they identify by this nationalistic term. This term essentially means that the person is Catholic and a citizen of the Philippines (although the term was originally used to refer to a Spanish person born on the islands). There are still some minorities that don't identify as being "Filipino;" this primarily consists of the religious minorities, most noticeably the people of Mindanao, who are Muslim.

## History

The [Philippines](#) today is a mix of dozens of ethnic groups; many of whom intermarried, while others remained somewhat isolated. Although people have been living on the island that today consist of the Philippines for thousands of years, the first great outside influence came in the 300s with Malays, [Indians](#), and others venturing inland as

trade expanded into this region. This influence came slowly as the people first just arrived and left for trading purposes, but later became more permanent as their influence rubbed off on the locals, particularly in the form of Buddhism and Hinduism being introduced.

Until the centuries later the islands remained isolated and unique as most outside influences were contained to a particular region or island. During this time, particularly beginning in the 900s, a number of islands rose up to regional power. Today's Manila bay was a major trading hub to both [Japan](#) and [China](#) as rulers in various other regions, such as Cebu became quite powerful.

This isolated trend continued for centuries, proven in the 1400s with the introduction of Islam to the southern islands, in particular Mindanao. This religion took strong hold in Mindanao, but failed to spread beyond these southern islands.

In 1521 Ferdinand Magellan arrived on his round the world expedition and, although he was killed in the [Philippines](#), he claimed the islands for Spain. This led to colonization of the islands, which was a relatively simple feat considering each island was isolated from the next so there was no unifying force of resistance. It was during this time that the islands became known as the "Spanish East Indies" or "Filipinas," after King Philip II of Spain and hence the name "Philippines" was born.

The Spanish introduced Catholicism and education among other changes. Both were well received by the locals and today the country remains primarily Catholic. From the Spanish perspective, though the islands were not profitable. Perhaps only because the islands were needed as a stronghold in Spain's wars with the Dutch and [British](#) did they maintain control over the Philippines.

Throughout the 1700s and 1800s the Spanish continued their emphasis on education, religion, infrastructure, and communication on the islands. Although many view Spanish rule as mostly positive, in the late 1800s independence movements were arising.

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The Spanish-[American](#) War ended in 1898 with Spanish defeat and the United States' takeover of the islands. The [Filipinos](#) fought this, but the US was too powerful and wanted to maintain control over the islands. After a brief war and much debate, the US decided to grant the Philippines independence over a long transition period, ending with complete freedom in 1946. Unlike the Spanish, the Americans' focus was on economic development and they made the Philippines a bigger player in the Far East's economic markets.

Before gaining full independence (although they had partial independence in 1935), the [Philippines](#) were attacked by the [Japanese](#) during World War II (WWII). This attack came quickly and a united resistance movement within the archipelago nation quickly fell to the Japanese. Despite this, there was much guerilla warfare among the locals and they continued to fight and attack Japanese military outposts throughout the war. Due to this, the Filipinos were never completely defeated, but the constant battle over the duration of the war caused immeasurable damage and loss of life on the country.

At the conclusion of the war, the [Philippines](#) was granted full independence, but with independence and after recovering from the war, the political situation was disjointed and parties fought each other for power as some even resorted to guerilla movements. This inconsistency and fast political turnover continued through the 1960s.

The 1970s saw further protests, until the country was locked down under Martial Law. This worked for some time, but they didn't appease the people's demand for change. For the next decade or so, tensions continued and varying groups fought for different issues. There were constant attempts to overthrow the government and political stability was non-existent.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s tensions have decreased. Muslim groups seeking independence have stopped much of their violence and the constant string of attempted coups has trickled to an occasional coup attempt now and again. The people still accuse the government of corruption and the economy is still stagnant, but the country seems to

be heading in the right direction according to most observers and Filipinos.

## **Dress & Behavior**

There are few dress or behavioral restrictions in much of the [Philippines](#). The only issue to be aware of in most of the country is that, unlike many beaches in [Europe](#), nakedness and women going topless is generally restricted so check local rules or ask a local.

On the southern island of Mindanao and some small nearby islands however, most of the population is Muslim. In this area, where most of the population is Muslim, there are a number of religious laws which should be obeyed by everyone, including tourists.

In these Muslim areas it is considered inappropriate for women to leave their hair uncovered, while this rule isn't even followed by all locals, follow the local's lead and cover your hair if the locals do.

Both women and men are expected to cover their legs and shoulders in Muslim areas; showing your knees can be offensive. 3/4 length pants, like Capris and short sleeve shirts are only looked down upon by strict Muslims, however wearing full length pants and long sleeves at all times is the best course of action in these areas. The rest of the country however wears short sleeve shirts and pants regularly.

Islamic law forbids pork products and alcohol. In Mindanao, drinking alcohol is not completely unheard of, but public drinking or intoxication is strictly forbidden. Pork products are difficult to find in Mindanao since there is little market for pork. Avoiding these foods is easy due to its inaccessibility in Mindanao. To learn more about dining etiquette in the [Philippines](#), continue reading below.

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# Food

## Dining Etiquette

It is a rare opportunity to be invited into a [Filipino](#)'s house as it is more common to be invited out to a restaurant. If you do meet at a restaurant, get your vocal cords ready as karaoke seems to be the country's national past time and if in a karaoke restaurant you may be asked to sing and are expected to accept. If there's a scoring apparatus on the karaoke machine, you gain extra points for volume, as opposed to quality.

If you are lucky enough to dine at someone's house be sure to bring a sweet as a gift, compliment their house, and don't be afraid to bring your spouse or a guest; the locals regularly show up with uninvited guests as any guest is always welcomed, even if not verbalized. Whether dining at a local's house or in a restaurant the etiquette rules are similar.

Arrive to a meal 15-30 minutes late, this time frame is the common schedule for the [Filipinos](#) who lived under the notoriously late Spanish for years and seem to be too relaxed to stress out about arrival times. Once at the restaurant or house, decline everything at least once; your host (don't use the word "hostess" as this is not a very flattering term), will insist you eat, eat more, drink, or drink more and declining on the first offer is very polite.

Once at the dining table, keep your hands above the table so they can be seen at all times. You will most likely be offered a fork and spoon, the spoon should be held in your right hand and the fork in your left; use the fork to push food onto the spoon and eat from that. However, food in the [Philippines](#) is variable and if the main course is [Chinese](#) or [Japanese](#), chopsticks may be offering in place of a fork and spoon. If [Indian](#) is the cuisine of choice, there may be no utensils at all, as the Indians generally eat with their right hand.

Once it is finally about time to eat, wait until you are invited to begin eating. You may also be faced with alcohol, although it is more commonly served after a meal. The [Filipinos](#) do expect you to accept a beverage if offered, but they view getting drunk as rude, so the amount offered should be limited and if not, be careful to limit your intake to maintain sobriety.

If eating at a restaurant, the person who initiated the meal is expected to pay for all those in attendance, and remember that number may double as each person invited may bring a spouse or guest and they should feel welcomed. If eating at a local's house, send a thank you note the next day.

## History & Influences

More than most [Far East](#) countries, the [Philippines](#) has an incredible diversity in their diet, which is primarily the result of foreign influences and immigrations. This diversity begins with the diversity of the country itself. The Filipinos are an ethnic combination of [Chinese](#), [Japanese](#), Malay, Polynesian, and Melanesian among others. With each group came new foods.

The historic diet of the people that live in the [Philippines](#) years ago was what was available and that consisted of water buffalo, chicken, and some local fruits and vegetables. Additionally, bananas and fish were grown locally as were root crops and each of these were a staple of the historic Filipino diet (although the name "Filipino" is a much more recent introduction to name the people).

With each new ethnic group came new foods. The [Chinese](#) immigrants brought many traditional Chinese food and ingredients as even today rice, noodles, and soy products are commonly found in [Filipino](#) dishes. Heavily spiced foods influenced by [India](#) and coconuts arrived with the arrival of immigrants to the Philippines from Malaysia and Indonesia.

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The next group to arrive in the islands, the Spanish in the 1500s, didn't settle, but still strongly influenced Filipino cuisine. The [Philippines](#) rarely traded with Spain itself, but the Philippines became a major trading partner with Spain's American colonies, in particular, [Mexico](#). This trade led to the introduction of tomatoes, potatoes, and corn, along with a number of spices. All of these ingredients continue to be commonly found in the Philippines today.

Under Spanish rule, the [Philippines](#) became a trading hub and were very open to new foods as it became a destination for culinary influences from all over the world. Pastas and sauces from [Italy](#) were introduced while fresh uncooked fish grew in popularity when in contact with the [Japanese](#).

Today the country's cuisine is a result of all these influences and still changing. The most recent changes to the diet have come in the past century under [American](#) rule. Processed foods have become more common as have fast foods and American favorites like pizza. Due to their adaptable past, there is little doubt [Filipino](#) cuisine will be open and adaptable to future introductions.

## Staple Foods

**Rice:** a common base or side in the Philippines

## Regional Varieties & Specialties

**Adobo:** pork and/or chicken stewed in vinegar, oil, garlic, and spices; often considered the national dish, although there officially is none

**Bistek:** thinly sliced beef marinated in soy sauce then fried in a skillet; typically served with onions

**Mindanao:** food from this region is generally heavily spiced, similar to Malaysian or Indonesian food and since many people here are Muslim, pork is forbidden

**Stews:** a very common dish, served in a wide variety of options

## Drinks

While all drinks, including tea and coffee are common in the [Philippines](#), a local specialty that can be found nearly everywhere are fruit shakes. These drinks consist of fruit, ice, and cream, but be careful as the ice can sometimes be contaminated.

Beers, brandies, and rums are the most common alcoholic beverages in the [Philippines](#), a sign of their past under both Spanish and [American](#) rule. The most authentic alcoholic beverage in the Philippines is *tapuy*, which is a clear wine made from fermented rice and tends to have a sweetener added.

# Practical Information

## Visas

Many foreign nationals need a visa to enter the [Philippines](#), however the requirements for citizens of different nationalities varies. To learn more about who need visas, what type of visa is needed, what requirements are needed to obtain a visa, and visa costs, please visit the [Official Website of the Philippines's Department of Foreign Affairs](#) or your nearest Filipino Embassy.

## Health & Insurance

Every part of the world has different health concerns and diseases, including the [Philippines](#). Before traveling, consult with a physician to learn more about your destination and what steps you can take to prevent illness. At the time of writing, visitors were required to show proof of having received a Yellow Fever vaccination upon arrival to the Philippines. This proof is not always checked, however to return to your home country or travel onwards, most countries require that you show proof of having been vaccinated. Additionally, a number of other immunizations are strongly recommended, so visiting your physician prior to travel to the Philippines is essential.

Many health insurance providers don't cover health care that is provided outside your home country. Before going abroad check with your health insurance to see if they cover international care. If not, consider purchasing an international medical insurance option, preferably from a company that specializes in international medical insurance.

## Transportation

Unless you're on an organized tour or working with a travel agent, you will have to arrange some transportation. The below links can greatly

help you start your planning, first by finding a flight to the [Philippines](#), then with domestic airlines and car rental agencies. If you don't know where to begin, try the "Flight & Rental Car Search Sites" to learn competitor's prices during your trip.

**Largest International Airlines:** [Air France](#), [American Airlines](#); [British Airways](#); [Cathay Pacific](#); [China Southern Airlines](#); [Delta](#); [Emirates](#); [KLM](#); [LAN](#); [Lufthansa](#); [Qantas](#); [Singapore Airlines](#); [United Airlines](#).

**Largest Filipino Airlines:** [Cebu Pacific Air](#) & [Philippine Airlines](#)

**Largest Rental Car Agencies in the Philippines:** [Avis](#); [Budget](#); [Europcar](#); [Hertz](#); & [National](#).

**Flight & Rental Car Search Sites:** [Expedia.com](#); [Farecast.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

## Housing

Housing options are numerous in most tourist destinations, but every individual seeks out something different when it comes to housing. The below links should help you get started, with low- to high-end hotels, hostels, and camping options.

**Popular International Hotel Conglomerates:** [Accor Group](#) (various price ranges); [Choice Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range); [Hilton](#) (various price ranges); [Hyatt](#) (high-end to resorts); [InterContinental Group](#) (mid- to high-price range); [Marriott Family](#) (various price ranges); [Starwood Hotels](#) (high-end); [Wyndham Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range).

**Hotel Search Sites:** [Expedia.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

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**Hostels:** Although there are many hostel websites, some of the most popular and reputable include [hostels.com](http://hostels.com), [hostelworld.com](http://hostelworld.com), & [hostelbookers.com](http://hostelbookers.com).

**Camping:** Camping is still a foreign concept in the Philippines. Currently there are few organized and official options, plus there are few parts of the country that camping is safe.

## Opening Hours, Expenses, & Tipping

The [Philippines](#) is on a similar time schedule as much of southern [Europe](#), but hours are more sporadic and many people work six days a week. Shops tend to open at about 9:00 am and close between 5:00-8:00 pm. Weekends in the Philippines are Saturdays and Sundays, but the country's most popular attraction is their beaches, which are obviously always available.

The [Philippines](#) is a fairly inexpensive country, especially in relation to much of [Europe](#). Hostels can cost as little as 400-900 pesos (\$10-20), and up to 8,000 pesos (\$175) for a nice hotel in Manila or a resort catering to tourists. Food is similar, with local restaurants serving food for as little as 30 pesos (\$1), but mall food and western restaurants are perhaps a little safer and a little more expensive, starting at about 90 pesos (\$2.50) for local dishes and up to 1,300-2,100 pesos (\$30-50) for western food. Transportation also offers numerous options with *jeepneys*, buses, and even taxis fairly reasonably priced, while air travel is similarly priced to much of Europe.

Tipping is growing in popularity, especially in western restaurants and hotel. However, many of these places automatically add a 10% service charge, so before tipping, check to see if this service charge has already been added; if not, tip up to 10%.

## Crime & Safety

The [Philippines](#) is not an extremely safe destination. Petty theft is common, but more importantly kidnappings for ransom are not

unknown, especially at times of political instability. Violence has been known to erupt in the southern islands, particularly Mindanao when tension between the government and the local Islamic extremist groups rises. Also, showing your wealth has led to both locals and foreigners alike to be attacked so showing any signs or wealth are not wise. Before going to the Philippines check with your country's foreign (state) department to learn if the country is safe or if there are any areas to avoid.

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