

GENERAL INFORMATION

Getting There

Travel to the Philippines is easy using a number of airline services from Europe, such as Emirates, Cathay Pacific Airways, Gulf Air, Singapore Airlines, Qatar Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Kuwait Airways, Lufthansa, Thai Airways, Korean Air and Etihad. Manila and Cebu are the primary international gateways. Special charter flights can also operate using other international airports situated in Laoag, Subic, Clark and Davao.

Philippine Airlines has the biggest domestic air network, but other carriers also fly to numerous local destinations at regular intervals. Some of these are Cebu Pacific Air, Asian Spirit, Seair, Laoag International Airlines and Air Philippines.

Major cruise liners call on the port of Manila.

Entry Regulation

Valid passport. Except for stateless persons and those from countries with which the Philippines has no diplomatic relations, all visitors may enter the country without visas and may stay for 21 days provided they have tickets for onward journey. Holders of Hongkong and Taiwan passports must have special permits. Visas and special permits may be obtained from Philippine embassies and consulates.

Health Regulations

A certificate of vaccination against yellow fever is required for travellers coming from infected areas.

Airport Information

Airports and Facilities: Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) is 7 kms from city centre while the Manila Domestic Airport is 1 km from the NAIA. The international airports have adequate traveller facilities: duty-free and souvenir shops, meet and assist personnel at the tourist information and assistance counters, hotel and travel agency representatives, car rental services, banks and automated teller machines, postal service, national and international direct dial telephone booths, medical clinics and baggage deposit areas.

Customs

Visitors are advised to fill in the Baggage Declaration Form before disembarking to facilitate Customs examination. The following are allowed duty-free: reasonable quantities of clothes, jewelry and toiletries; 400 sticks of cigarettes or two tins of tobacco; two bottles of wine or spirits of not more than one litre each.

Porterage

Baggage carts are available free of charge. Porter services are also free. Tipping is optional though traditional.

Airport Transfers

Visitors are advised to avail of accredited fixed rate or metered taxis at the NAIA's Arrival Area. At the Manila Domestic Airport, accredited transfer services are available on pre-paid coupon basis. Other airports are served by metered taxis. All airports have counters for hotel transport and car rental service.

Dining Out

Filipino food is an exotic, tasteful fusion of Oriental, European and American culinary influences with a wide variety of fresh seafood and delectable fruits. First-class restaurants offer gourmet specialties as well as Filipino cuisine.

Entertainment and Culture

Metro Manila is the centre of entertainment and cultural activities. The premier venue for the performing arts, the Cultural Centre of the Philippines, features excellent performances by local and international guest artists. Museums located in Manila and in some parts of the country offer a glimpse of Philippine history and culture. Art galleries exhibit the works of the country's leading and promising visual artists.

Metro Manila's nightlife is one of the most vibrant in Asia, reflective of the Filipinos' inherent musical talent. The hubs of nightlife activities at the Remedios Circle in Malate, Ayala Centre and Fort Bonifacio Global City in Makati, Timog and Tomas Morato Avenues in Quezon City, Ortigas Center in Mandaluyong and Pasig Cities, and Eastwood in Libis, Quezon City, Clubs, music lounges, pubs and sing-along bars feature Filipino bands and singers known for their exceptional musical talent. Deluxe hotels offer a variety of live musical entertainment. Concerts and stage plays form part of the country's entertainment scene.

For visitors who want to try their luck at the gaming tables there are casinos in Metro Manila and in the cities of Angeles, Olongapo, Tagaytay, Cebu, Davao, Bacolod and Laoag.

Airport Fees

P550 for international departure and P100 for local departure (paid in Philippine peso only). Departing passengers for international destinations are advised to check with airport or tourist information counters (tel. 524-1703; 832-2964) for prevailing departure fees that may change without notice.

Duty Free Shopping

Duty-Free Philippines near the NAIA is the country's largest duty-free outlet carrying quality imported items and select Philippine export products.

What to Wear

Light, casual clothes are recommended. Warmer garments are needed for mountain regions. When visiting churches and temples, propriety dictates that shorts and scanty clothes are avoided. Formal occasions require dinner jackets and ties (or the Philippine barong tagalog) for men and cocktail dresses or long gowns for women.

Currency

Unit of currency: Philippine Peso (Php) 1 = 100 centavos, Bank notes: P10, P20, P50, P100, P500, P1000. Coins 5c, 10c, 20c, P1, P5, P10

Tipping

Tipping is expected for many services. The standard is 10% of the total bill. Tipping is optional on bills that already include a 10% service charge.

Local Transport

By air, Philippine Airlines (tel. 855-9999), Air Philippines (tel. 855-9000), Cebu Pacific (tel. 636-4938) provide daily services to major cities and towns. Asian Spirit (851-8888), Laoag International Airlines (tel. 551-9729) and Seair (tel. 891-8708) service the missionary routes. There are also scheduled chartered flights to major domestic destinations serviced by smaller commuter planes.

By sea, inter-island ships connect Manila and Cebu to major ports. Ferry services connect the smaller islands. For the more adventurous, travelling from island to island may be done through negotiations for non-commercial outrigger fisher boats.

By land, regular bus services connect Manila to all major regions of the country. Metered and fixed rate taxis are widely available in key cities nationwide. *Jeepneys* and buses are inexpensive ways to get around most places. In Metro Manila, the fastest way of commuting is via the Light Rail Transit (the LRT presently operates 2 lines) and the Metro Rail Transport (MRT - 1 line).

Language

Filipino is the national language. English is the business language and widely spoken.

Accommodations

In Metro Manila and in key cities and towns throughout the country, a wide selection of deluxe, first class, standard, economy and pension type accommodations are available. In island destinations, a variety of resorts ranging from deluxe to special interest category are also available.

Shopping

Visitors can choose from an exciting selection of great buys in a country known for export-quality items at reasonable prices: South Sea pearls, hand-woven clothes, embroidered fineries, fashionable ready-to-wear and haute clothes, terracotta, and porcelain, coral and mother-of-pearl home accessories. Artcrafts, pineapple fiber shirts, pre-historic jars, native handicrafts, and footwear are interesting items, too. The Philippine also produces fine furniture, basketry, fresh and processed fruits, exquisitely crafted jewelry and gift items made of shell, wood and stone.

Big Malls are located in major cities of Metro Manila, while handicrafts, antique and curio shops abound at the Ermita District in Manila and in other nearby towns.

Business and Banking

Private and government offices are open either from 8 am to 5 pm or from 9 am to 6 pm. Some private companies hold office on Saturdays from 9 am to 12 noon. Most shopping malls, department stores and supermarkets are open from 10 am to 8 pm. There are 24-hour convenience stores and drugstores.

Banks are open from 9 am to 3 pm, Mondays to Fridays with automated teller machines (ATM) operating 24 hours.

Credit Cards

International credit cards such as Visa, Diners Club, Mastercard and American Express are accepted in major establishments.

Electricity

220 volts, A.C. 60 cycles. Most hotels have 110 volts outlets.

WOW PHILIPPINES



Banawa Rice Terraces



Makati Skyline



Philippine White Sandy Beaches



Philippine Diving Heaven

Water

Bottled water is available in many hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and convenience stores.

Communication Facilities

The country has international and national direct dial phone and facsimile service, mobile phone sites, internet and e-mail facilities and worldwide express delivery services. The postal system is efficient.

Most national dailies are in English. Foreign publications are sold at major hotels, malls and bookstores in Metro Manila and key cities. 7 national television stations broadcast mainly in Filipino. Cable and TV are available in many hotels in Manila and in many parts of the country.

Convention Facilities

Manila, the pioneer convention city in Asia, has played host to a number of prestigious international events. The Philippine International Convention Centre is equipped with modern convention facilities and services. It can accommodate 4,000 delegates in its Plenary Hall and 5,700 persons in its Reception Hall. The World Trade Centre near the PICC can hold huge exhibitions and events. Smaller meetings can be held in hotels and other establishments. Out-of-town hotels and resorts are alternative convention sites.

Tour and Special Interest Activities

Tour packages, from day trips to 5-day program are special ways of discovering the Philippines and its wealth of culture. Special interest activities include golfing, game fishing diving, white-water rafting and other aquasports, trekking, spelunking and safari trips.