

# PHILIPPINES



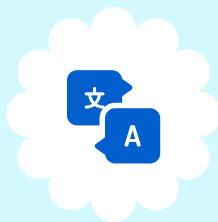
- ✓ With more than 7000 tropical islands to choose from, the Republic of the Philippines offers endless opportunities for intrepid travellers. The country can be divided into three main areas: Luzon (the largest, northernmost island, which includes Manila); a group of islands called the Visayas (including Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, Samar, and Masbate); and Mindanao, the second-largest island in the Philippines.
- ✓ The many centuries of Spanish colonial rule combined with the Chinese influences have created a one of a kind Asian-Hispano mixture. Add to that the indigenous tribes and rich Malay folklore, and you get one of the most intriguing and diverse places on earth.
- ✓ There's an island to suit everyone in the Philippines – from remote limestone karst islands with hidden lagoons for adventure seekers – to tropical paradises with dazzling beaches and excellent snorkelling spots for sun worshippers – to mega-islands for party people. Yet, venture off the coastline and you'll find elegant colonial towns, ancient rice terraces, misty mountains, jungle covered peaks and isolated tribal groups.
- ✓ Filipino food is heavily influenced by Spanish and native traditions so expect plenty of fresh fish, roasted meats and a plethora of addictive desserts, many utilising the vast array of tropical fruits on offer.



**Capital**  
Manila



**Population**  
104.9 million



**Language**  
English and  
Filipino



**Time Zone**  
GMT+8  
(Indochina Time Zone)



**Electricity**  
220 V – 60 Hz



**Currency**  
Philippine Peso (PHP)

## When to Go

### SEASONS

The climate of the country is divided into two main seasons: the rainy season, from June to the early part of October; and the dry season, from the later part of October to May.

### WEATHER

The climate is generally tropical maritime, with a relatively cool season from December to February, when the north-east trade winds prevail, and a hot, humid and rainy season from May to November, when the south-west monsoon prevails. Between March and May the temperature increases and reaches the highest levels of the year, especially in the centre-north and in the interior of the larger islands.



## WHAT TO BRING

Bring loose, comfortable clothes that will keep you cool when the humidity is high. Comfy walking shoes are a good idea especially if you are venturing inland, and a cover-up for visiting churches. And don't forget lots and lots of sunscreen!

## ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Rain isn't constant during the wet season (May to October) and rarely impacts on travel plans. There are still plenty of hot, sunny days along with the advantages of fewer crowds and lush, green scenery. Temperatures and rainfall do vary depending on which part of the Philippines you are visiting so check a detailed weather chart in advance.

## Customs & Traditions

### ART & ARCHITECTURE

Art and architecture has been influenced by China, India, Islam and most notably, the Spanish colonial period and the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church. In remote areas, tribal groups have preserved traditional art forms such as woodcarving, textile weaving, bamboo and rattan weaving, and metalsmithing.

### DANCE & THEATRE

The Philippines has a rich performing arts tradition – from folk legends to pagan practices to deeply religious celebrations influenced by years of colonisation. Epic Poetry dates back to the pre-colonial period, and singers have been known to perform for hours at a time. One of the most popular folk dances is the Singkil, a folk dance that originated from the Maranao people in Mindanao. The sarsuwela is a type of melodrama, usually in three acts, that uses alternately spoken and sung words.

### ETIQUETTE

- Filipinos have a sense of 'good behaviour', especially with elders and women. Those that don't speak English may answer your questions with a nod of the head – however, this could mean 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe'! Most Filipinos look down upon public displays of emotion, whether anger or tears. If you
- are invited to somebody's house it is customary and expected to take a gift.

### PEOPLE

People in the Philippines are collectively called Filipinos, with men also referred to as Filipinos and women known as Filipinas. Most Filipinos are of Malay descent (like Malaysians and Indonesians), with a sprinkling of Chinese, Spanish, American and Arab blood. Three hundred years of Spanish occupation left behind the Roman Catholic religion, and 75 years of American presence has left the English language. Despite this, Filipino culture and people have an identity that is very much its own, and the people on each island have their own distinct character.

### RELIGION

The major religion in the Philippines is Roman Catholic Christianity, followed by Islam and other types of Christianity. In the Philippines, all religions are protected by the law, and no one religious belief is given priority over any other.

