

# About the Philippines

## Languages

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Two official languages --- **Filipino** and **English**. Filipino which is based on Tagalog, is the national language. English is also widely used and is the medium of instruction in higher education. Eight (8) major languages spoken by majority of the Filipinos: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon or Ilonggo, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, and Pangasinense.

Filipino is the native language which is used nationally as the language of communication among ethnic groups. Like any living language, Filipino is in a process of development through loans from Philippine languages and non-native languages for various situations, among speakers of different social backgrounds, and for topics for conversation and scholarly discourse.

There are about 76 to 78 major language groups, with more than 500 dialects. Adopt to local customs; accept local differences. The Filipinos are divided culturally into regions a total of 16, at present, each with its own distinct traits and traditions.

## Currency

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The currency in the Philippines is the Philippine Peso (PhP) and the Centavo. 100 centavos = P1. Coin denominations are: 1, 5, 10, and 25 centavos, P1, and P5. Bill denominations are : 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1, 000 pesos.

Foreign currency may be exchanged at your hotel, and in most of the large department stores, banks and authorized money changing shops. Exchanging money anywhere else is illegal and the laws are strictly enforced.

Most large stores, restaurants, hotels and resorts accept major credit cards including American Express, Visa and MasterCard. Traveler's checks preferably American Express are accepted at hotels and large department stores. Personal checks drawn on foreign banks are generally not accepted.

Tipping is expected for many services. The standard amount is 10% of the total bill. Tipping is optional on bills that include a service charge, which is often 10% as well of the total bill.

## Unit of Measure

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The Metric System is used in most trade and legal transactions.

## **Electricity**

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220 volts a/c is the common standard. 110 volts a/c is also used, especially in major hotels.

## **Weather and Clothing**

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People in the Philippines dress for the weather. Casual attire during the day for women are light blouses and shorts. For men collared T- shirts worn over jeans or slacks. In the evening skirts are substituted for shorts and the T-shirts are tucked in. Casual clothing is acceptable inside churches and business offices. Dining establishments and hotels impose no dress code but shorts and slippers are deemed improper.

Light clothing is ideal year-round, and absolutely during the hot and dry months from March to May. Temperatures average from 78°F/25°C to 90°F/32°C. Mean humidity is at 77%. November and December are cool and dry months.

For Men: If you expect to have to attend any occasion which would usually require a jacket and a tie, there is a wonderful substitute. You may go to a department store and buy a Barong Tagalog. It is an embroidered shirt that is considered a formal dress. It will cost around Php1,500-2,500, but it is worth every centavo.

## **Water**

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Water supply in Metro Manila and in all the other major cities are considered potable. Bottled purified water, spring water or mineral water is often supplied by hotels and resorts, and sold in all grocery stores.

## **Telephone and Mobile Phone**

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Telephone service is modern and you can direct dial anywhere in the world.

- Globe Telecom - One of the leading mobile phone companies in the Philippines
- PLDT/Smart - One of the leading telecommunication companies in the Philippines

NOTE: It is advisable to always have the telephone number and address of your embassy or consulate with you.

## **Business Hours**

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Most businesses are open from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM weekdays and 8:00 AM till noon Saturdays. Most banks are open from 9:00 AM till 4:00 PM Mondays through Fridays. When banking in the Philippines, it is advisable to have your passport with you for identification.

The post offices are open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM weekdays only. Stamps for postcards are frequently available from the Concierge Desk at most major hotels. The Philippines uses ZIP codes, please include them in addressing local mail.

NOTE: The Standard lunch hour is noon to 1:00 PM. Most businesses and government offices are closed at this time.

## **Time Difference**

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Local time is GMT +8 hours.

## **Airport Taxi & Fees**

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Passenger Terminal Fee is levied on all passengers embarking for:

1. International travel : Php750.00
2. Domestic travel: Php200.00

Place of payment: Airport of departure.

Exemptions:

1. Children under 2 years of age.
2. Transit passengers remaining in the transit area and not leaving the airport.
3. Crew members.

## **Anti-Smoking Law in Public Places**

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Section five of the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 (Republic Act 9211) prohibits the carrying of any lighted tobacco product in public vehicles, schools, health centers, elevators, cinemas, malls and in places where fire hazards are present.

Smoking is also banned in recreational facilities for minors. Fines imposed on violators of this section range from P500 to P10,000.

## **Some Useful Words and Phrases**

While practically every Filipino is able to speak and understand English, they appreciate and love it when foreign guests try to speak Filipino. To help you get around and win new friends, try learning some Filipino words and phrases. Click on this link: [http://www.tourism.gov.ph/useful\\_words.aspx](http://www.tourism.gov.ph/useful_words.aspx)

For more information on the Philippines, visit [www.philippines.travel](http://www.philippines.travel).