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### **1. Official name of Philippines is Republika ng Pilipinas (Republic of the Philippines)**

The Philippines consists of 7,107 islands that are categorized broadly under three main geographical divisions: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Its capital city is Manila while its most populous city is Quezon City; both are part of Metro Manila.

To the north of the Philippines across the Luzon Strait lies Taiwan; Vietnam sits west across the South China Sea; southwest is the island of Borneo across the Sulu Sea, and to the south the Celebes Sea separates it from other islands of Indonesia; while to the east it is bounded by the Philippine Sea and the island-nation of Palau. Its location on the Pacific Ring of Fire and close to the equator makes the Philippines prone to earthquakes and typhoons, but also endows it with abundant natural resources and some of the world's greatest biodiversity. At approximately 300,000 square kilometers (115,831 sq mi), the Philippines is the 64th-largest country in the world.

The Philippines has a tropical maritime climate that is usually hot and humid. There are three seasons: *tag-init* or *tag-araw*, the hot dry season or summer from March to May; *tag-ulan*, the rainy season from June to November; and *tag-lamig*, the cool dry season from December to February. The southwest monsoon (from May to October) is known as the Habagat, and the dry winds of the northeast monsoon (from November to April), the Amihan. Temperatures usually range from 21 °C (70 °F) to 32 °C (90 °F) although it can get cooler or hotter depending on the season. The coolest month is January; the warmest is May. The average yearly temperature is around 26.6 °C (79.9 °F).

Sitting astride the typhoon belt, most of the islands experience annual torrential rains and thunderstorms from July to October, with around nineteen typhoons entering the Philippine area of responsibility in a typical year and eight or nine making landfall. With climate change, the Philippines is experiencing more frequent strong typhoons such as Yolanda/Haiyan in November 2013 which killed more than 10,000 people.

Because of its location on the western fringes of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity. The Benham Plateau to the east in the Philippine Sea is an undersea region active in tectonic subduction. Around

20 earthquakes are registered daily, though most are too weak to be felt. The last major earthquake was the 1990 Luzon earthquake.

There are many active volcanoes such as the Mayon Volcano, Mount Pinatubo, and Taal Volcano. The eruption of Mount Pinatubo in June 1991 produced the second largest terrestrial eruption of the 20th century. Due to the volcanic nature of the islands, mineral deposits are abundant. The country is estimated to have the second-largest gold deposits after South Africa and one of the largest copper deposits in the world. It is also rich in nickel, chromite, and zinc. Despite this, poor management, high population density, and environmental consciousness have resulted in these mineral resources remaining largely untapped. Geothermal energy is a product of volcanic activity that the Philippines has harnessed more successfully. The Philippines is the world's second-biggest geothermal producer behind the United States, with 18% of the country's electricity needs being met by geothermal power.

## **2. History/Background**

The history of the Philippines is believed to have begun with the arrival of the first humans using rafts or primitive boats, at least 67,000 years ago as the 2007 discovery of Callao Man (in northern Philippines) showed. Indigenous Negrito tribes first inhabited the isles. Groups of Austronesians later migrated to the islands.

Eventually various groups confederated, separated into hunter-gatherer tribes, warrior societies, petty plutocracies and maritime-oriented harbor principalities which eventually grew into kingdoms, rajahnates, principalities, confederations and sultanates. These were greatly influenced by Hindu religions, literature and philosophy from India. Pre-Hispanic states included the Indianized Rajahnate of Butuan and Cebu, the dynasty of Tondo, the august kingdoms of Maysapan and Maynila, the Confederation of Madyaas, the sinified Country of Mai, as well as the Muslim Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao. These small maritime states flourished from the 1st millennium. These kingdoms traded with what are now called China, India, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The remainder of the settlements were independent barangays allied with one of the larger states.

The first recorded visit by Europeans is the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan. He sighted the island of Samar Island on March 16, 1521 and landed the next day on Homonhon Island, now part of Guiuan, Eastern Samar. Spanish colonization began with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition on February 13, 1565 who established the first permanent settlement in Cebu. Much of the archipelago came under Spanish rule, creating the first unified political structure known as the Philippines. Spanish colonial rule saw the introduction of Christianity, the code of law and the oldest modern university in Asia (University of Sto. Tomas).

Spanish rule ended in 1898 when the Philippine Revolution against Spanish colonial rule which begun in 1896, culminated in the Philippine Declaration of Independence and the establishment of the First Philippine Republic on June 12, 1898. The Philippine declaration of independence was never recognized by Spain and the USA. With Spain's defeat in the Battle of Manila Bay and the Spanish–American War, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States of America. The Philippines then became a colony of the United States with fierce opposition by Filipinos. The Philippine–American

War ensued, with extensive damage and Filipino deaths. The US strong military and colonial power were able to subdue the Filipino revolutionaries and were able to establish the American Insular Government to rule the Philippines. In 1907, the elected Philippine Assembly was convened as the lower house of a bicameral legislature and in 1916 the U.S. Federal Government formally promised independence in the Jones Act. The Philippine Commonwealth was established in 1935, as a 10-year interim step prior to full independence. During World War II, Japan occupied the Philippines and committed many atrocities and war crimes against Filipino men and women such as the Bataan Death March and the Manila massacre that culminated during the Battle of Manila. After the end of the war, the US granted the independence of the Philippines on July 4, 1946, through the Treaty of Manila.

Philippine presidents were elected every 4 years in national elections from 1950 to 1972. In 1972, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law to perpetuate himself in power. Following massive protests after the assassination of Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino (father of the current Philippine president) on Aug. 21, 1983, Marcos held snap elections in 1986 and subsequently was flown out of the country by the US military during the People Power Revolution which installed Corazon "Cory" Aquino as president and reestablished democracy.

In the 21st Century, the Philippines is the 12th most populous country of the world. The nation's large population size and economic potential have led it to be classified as a middle power. It is a founding member of the United Nations, World Trade Organization, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and East Asia Summit. The Philippines is considered to be an emerging market and a newly industrialized country, which has been transitioning from being one based on agriculture to one based more on services and manufacturing. In 2015, the Philippines has outpaced India to become the global leader in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. Nearly 10 million Filipinos (10% of the population) work abroad as overseas Filipino workers, notably in the USA, the Middle East, Hongkong and Singapore. The economy is heavily reliant upon remittances from overseas filipinos, which surpass foreign direct investment as a source of foreign currency. Remittances have peaked in 2010 at 10.4% and 8.6% in 2012 of the national GDP.

Goldman Sachs includes the country in its list of the "Next Eleven" economies. Goldman Sachs estimates that by the year 2050, it will be the 20th largest economy in the world. HSBC also projects the Philippine economy to become the 16th largest economy in the world, 5th largest economy in Asia and the largest economy in the South East Asian region by 2050.

### **3. Population**

The people of the Philippines are known as Filipinos. The Philippines has a population growth rate of 2.04%, one of the highest in Asia. According to the 2010 Census, the population of the Philippines was 92,337,852. As of July 27, 2014, it reached more than 100 million. The population of the Philippines was first estimated in 1830 to be 2.5 million people.

The majority of Filipinos came from various ethnolinguistic Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian ethnic groups, closely related to indigenous Malaysians and Indonesians. Many of these groups were Christianised during the 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, particularly those living in lowland-coastal areas, and adopted many foreign elements of culture, particularly Spanish, American and Chinese. There are more than 100 minority indigenous groups in the Philippines such as the Igorots, Mangyans, Lumads, Aeta, etc.

#### **4. Religion**

The Philippines is a secular nation with a constitutional separation of church and state but the Catholic Church wields a strong influence in socio-political life. As a result of Spanish colonial influence, Christianity is the main religion, with Roman Catholicism making up the majority of the population. The Philippines is one of two predominantly Roman Catholic countries in Asia, the other being East Timor, a former Portuguese colony. More than 90% of the population is Christian: about 80.6% belong to the Roman Catholic Church while about 9.5% belong to Filipino established Iglesia ni Cristo church and Protestant Christian denominations, such as Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Members Church of God International, the Philippine Independent Church, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Lutheran Church, Methodist Church and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Other religions include Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and those with no religion. According to national religious surveys, about 5% of the population of the Philippines is Muslim; the National Commission of Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) disputes this and claims the adherence of about 11% of the total population. Most Muslims live in parts of Mindanao, Palawan, and the Sulu Archipelago – an area known as Bangsamoro or the Moro region. Some have migrated into urban and rural areas in different parts of the country. Most Muslim Filipinos practice Sunni Islam according to the Shafi'i school. There are some Ahmadiyya Muslims in the country. Philippine traditional religions (animism, folk religion, and shamanism) are still practiced by an estimated 2% of the population, made up of many minority indigenous tribal groups. Buddhism is practiced by 2% of the populations, and together with Taoism and Chinese folk religion it is dominant in Chinese communities. There are smaller number of followers of Hinduism 1%, Sikhism, and Judaism and Baha'i. Less than one percent of the population does not belong to any religious group.

#### **5. Language**

The 1987 Constitution declares Filipino, which is largely based on the Tagalog language, as the national language of the country. Filipino and English are the official languages, with the recognition of around 12 regional languages as auxiliary official languages in their respective regions, including Aklanon, Bikol, Cebuano, Chavacano, Hiligaynon, Ibanag, Ilocano, Ivatan, Kapampangan, Kinaray-a, Maguindanao, Maranao, Pangasinan, Sambal, Surigaonon, Tagalog, Tausug, Waray-Waray, and Yakan. Additionally,

there are between 120 to 170 distinct indigenous Philippine languages. Both Filipino and English are used in government, education, print, broadcast media, and business.

Spanish was the national and official language of the country for more than three centuries under Spanish colonial rule, and became the lingua franca of the Philippines in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1863 a Spanish decree introduced universal education, creating free public schooling in Spanish. It was also the language of the Philippine Revolution, and the 1899 Malolos Constitution effectively proclaimed it as the official language of the First Philippine Republic. Spanish was spoken by a total of 60% of the population in the early 20th century as a first, second or third language. Following the American occupation of the Philippines and the imposition of English, the use of Spanish declined gradually, especially after the 1940s. Up to the 1970s, Spanish was a required course in colleges and universities in the country.

## **6. Cultural Do's and Don'ts**

Majority of Filipinos understand English, including the ordinary person in the street, and many signs are in English.

Filipinos are generally hospitable, welcoming and generous towards visitors, making the Philippines one of the most tourist-friendly countries in the world.

Like any other country, the Philippines has its own unique culture, traditions, and etiquette. Knowing and practicing these customs lets you become more familiar with the Filipino mindset and values. With these guidelines, you can make your visit all the more enjoyable and memorable.

### **General Filipino Etiquette**

Filipinos like to say hi, and they appreciate it when visitors reciprocate. Handshakes are the usual way to greet people. "Beso-beso" or cheek bussing is also commonly done, especially among ladies and friends.

Do show respect to anyone regardless of their social class or age. Saying "sorry" and "excuse me" is appreciated. In Philippine culture, the elderly are given particular respect. Using the proper words (such as the polite "po" and "opo" when speaking to elders) is a sure way of endearing yourself to Filipinos. Although tipping is not institutionalized as a custom, do leave something on the table or in the spa.

Do come in appropriate clothes when the occasion calls. Although the Philippines is a walkable country, not all places would welcome you in your flip-flops and shorts. Churches, government institutions and some restaurants require proper attire.

Do take the time to smile and don't forget to laugh. Laughter is used very frequently in the Philippines: to break tension, to relieve moments of awkwardness, and to put people at ease. On the rare occasion that laughter is at someone's expense, it is usually done good-naturedly. A good sense of humor is definitely an asset in the Philippines.

Don't lose your temper. It's easier to get Filipinos on your side if you approach situations in a calm and composed manner. Filipinos are more willing to help if you don't embarrass them in public.

Do recognize that Filipinos tend to be indirect. Even if they mean to refuse, they will avoid actually using the word "No" in conversations, and instead will use other ways to get their message across.

#### Inside the Filipino Home

Do expect to be invited to the homes of Filipinos. They will invite you to help yourself to everything and anything on their dining table, and they would appreciate it if you partook of the food offered. If you happen to show up during meal time, an extra chair will be made available to you. In short, do eat when you're offered food. Don't offend your hosts by refusing outright.

Do be sensitive to household customs. If you happen to see shoes or slippers outside your host's abode, you may be asked to leave your footwear outside also. They will offer you house slippers, or if they don't, the house floor is most likely clean.

#### Doing Business

Do use honorifics such as Ma'am or Sir. Titles are very important and it is best to use them when addressing people and business partners.

Do help your partners save face. Filipinos place a premium on harmonious interpersonal relationships, so it is best to avoid confrontational behavior such as hard selling and direct pressuring, since these may lead to conflict.

Do keep in mind that time is viewed flexibly in the Philippines; many Filipinos place less of an emphasis on strict adherence to schedules.

Do present and receive business cards using both hands. Upon reception, examine them with interest.

Do wear appropriate clothing for business, especially during initial meetings. Denim jeans or business casual attire are not recommended.

#### While Traveling

Make sure your stomach can handle the street food. Don't eat street food unless you know it was prepared safely and clean.

Don't show off your valuables and gadgets. Flashing your jewelry, electronic items and other valuables may attract the attention of criminals.

Don't give alms to the poor on the road. Mendicancy and alms-giving are offenses in the Philippines. If you wish to exercise your charity, there are many private and government institutions that will gladly accept your donations. On a related note, don't open your car window to street children. Lock your car doors always.

Don't be too trusting of the people you meet for the first time. It's best to be vigilant and to rely on common sense wherever you may be.

Do use the thumbs-up sign for "OK!". The other common version, using the thumb and index finger, means "money" in the Philippines. Don't beckon or point with your index finger when calling someone. Calling someone by name, using "sir" or "miss", or beckoning with your palm held downwards is preferred.

## **7. Food**

Philippine cuisine is a mix of Malay, Spanish, Chinese, and American cuisines, as well as other Asian and Latin influences adapted to indigenous ingredients and the local palate. The style of cooking and the food associated with it have evolved over many centuries from its Austronesian origins. Dishes range from the very simple, like a meal of fried salted fish and rice, to the elaborate paellas and cocidos created for fiestas of Spanish origin, and spaghetti and lasagna of Italian origin. Popular dishes include: lechón (whole roasted pig), longganisa (Philippine sausage), tapa (cured beef), torta (omelette), adobo (chicken and/or pork braised in garlic, vinegar, oil and soy sauce, or cooked until dry), kaldereta (meat in tomato sauce stew), mechado (larded beef in soy and tomato sauce), puchero (beef in bananas and tomato sauce), afritada (chicken and/or pork simmered in a peanut sauce with vegetables), kare-kare (oxtail and vegetables cooked in peanut sauce), pinakbet (kabocha squash, eggplant, beans, okra, and tomato stew flavored with shrimp paste), crispy pata (deep-fried pig's leg), hamonado (pork sweetened in pineapple sauce), sinigang (meat or seafood in sour broth), pancit (noodles), and lumpia (fresh or fried spring rolls). Filipinos share with Vietnamese, Cambodians and Thais, the fondness for balut or duck egg with an embryo inside. It is usually boiled and eaten with salt and vinegar.

Unlike many of their Asian counterparts, Filipinos do not eat with chopsticks; they use Western cutlery. However, possibly due to rice being the primary staple food and the popularity of a large number of stews and main dishes with broth in Philippine cuisine, the main pairing of utensils seen at the Filipino dining table is that of spoon and fork, not knife and fork. The traditional way of eating with the hands known as *kamayan* is seen more often in less urbanized areas.

### **Common dishes**

As with most Asian countries, the staple food in the Philippines is rice. It is most often steamed and served during meals. Leftover rice is often fried with garlic to make sinangag or fried rice, which is usually served at breakfast together with a fried egg and cured meat or sausages. Rice is often enjoyed with the sauce or broth from the main dishes. In some regions, rice is mixed with salt, condensed milk, cocoa, or coffee. Rice flour is used in making sweets, cakes and other pastries. While rice is the main staple food, bread is also a common staple.

### **Breakfast**

A traditional Filipino breakfast might include pandesal (small bread rolls), kesong puti (white cheese), champorado (chocolate rice porridge), sinangag (garlic fried rice), and meat—such as tapa, longganisa, tocino, karne norte (corned beef), or fish such as daing na bangus (salted and dried milkfish)—or itlog na pula (salted duck eggs). Coffee is also commonly served particularly kapeng barako, a variety of coffee produced in the mountains of Batangas noted for having a strong flavor.

### Merienda

Merienda is taken from the Spanish, and is a light meal or snack especially in the afternoon, similar to the concept of afternoon tea. If the meal is taken close to dinner, it is called merienda cena, and may be served instead of dinner.

### Breads and pastries

In a typical Filipino bakery, pandesal, monay and ensaymada are often sold. Pandesal comes from the Spanish pan de sal (literally, bread of salt), and is a ubiquitous breakfast fare, normally eaten with coffee. It typically takes the form of a bread roll, and is usually baked covered in bread crumbs. Pandesal is not particularly salty as very little salt is used in baking it. Monay is a firmer slightly denser heavier bread. Ensaymada, from the Spanish ensaimada, is a pastry made using butter and often topped with sugar and shredded cheese. It is sometimes made with fillings such as ube (purple yam) and macapuno (a variety of coconut the meat of which is often cut into strings, sweetened, preserved, and served in desserts). Also commonly sold in Filipino bakeries is pan de coco, a sweet roll filled with shredded coconut mixed with molasses. Putok, which literally means "explode", refers to a small, hard bread roll whose cratered surface is glazed with sugar. Kababayan is a small, sweet gong-shaped muffin that has a moist consistency. Spanish bread refers to a rolled pastry which looks like a croissant prior to being given a crescent shape, and has a filling consisting of sugar and butter.

### Main dishes

Adobo is one of the most popular Filipino dishes and is considered unofficially by many as the national dish. It usually consists of pork or chicken, sometimes both, stewed or braised in a sauce usually made from vinegar, cooking oil, garlic, bay leaf, peppercorns, and soy sauce. Bistek, also known as "Filipino beef steak," consists of thinly sliced beef marinated in soy sauce and calamansi and then fried in a skillet that is typically served with onions.

Some well-known stews are kare-kare and dinuguan. In kare-kare, also known as "peanut stew", oxtail or ox tripe is the main ingredient and is cooked with vegetables in a peanut-based preparation. It is typically served with bagoong (fermented shrimp paste). In dinuguan, pig's blood, entrails, and meat are cooked with vinegar and seasoned with chili peppers, usually siling mahaba.

Paksiw refers to different vinegar-based stews that differ greatly from one another based on the type of meat used. Paksiw na isda uses fish and usually includes the addition of ginger, fish sauce, and maybe siling mahaba and vegetables. Paksiw na baboy is a paksiw using pork, usually pork hocks, and often sees the addition of sugar, banana



blossoms, and water so that the meat is stewed in a sweet sauce. A similar Visayan dish called humba adds fermented black beans. Both dishes are probably related to pata tim which is of Chinese origin. Paksiw na lechon is made from lechon meat and features the addition of ground liver or liver spread. This adds flavor and thickens the sauce so that it starts to caramelize around the meat by the time dish is finished cooking.

In crispy pata, pork knuckles (the pata) are marinated in garlic-flavored vinegar then deep fried until crisp and golden brown, with other parts of the pork leg prepared in the same way. Lechon manok is the Filipino take on rotisserie chicken. Available in many hole-in-the-wall stands or restaurant chains (e.g. Andok's, Baliwag, Toto's, Sr. Pedro's, G.S. Pagtakhan's), it is typically a specially seasoned chicken roasted over a charcoal flame served with "sarsa" or lechon sauce made from mashed pork liver, starch, sugar, and spices.

Mechado, kaldereta, and afritada are Spanish influenced tomato sauce-based dishes that are somewhat similar to one another. In these dishes meat is cooked in tomato sauce, minced garlic, and onions. Mechado gets its name from the pork fat that is inserted in a slab of beef making it look like a wick (mitsa) coming out of a beef "candle". The larded meat is then cooked in a seasoned tomato sauce and later sliced and served with the sauce it was cooked in. Kaldereta can be beef but is also associated with goat. Chunks of meat are cooked in tomato sauce, minced garlic, chopped onions, peas, carrots, bell peppers and potatoes to make a stew with some recipes calling for the addition of soy sauce, fish sauce, vinegar, chilies, ground liver or some combination thereof. Afritada tends to be the name given to the dish when chicken and pork is used. Puchero is derived from the Spanish cocido; it is a sweeter stew that has beef and banana or plantain slices simmered in tomato sauce.

## **8. Money**

The currency of Philippines is Philippine peso. One US\$ is equivalent to 43- 44 Philippine peso.

## **9. Visa Information**

The visa policy of the Philippines is governed by Commonwealth Act No. 613, also known as the Philippine Immigration Act, and by subsequent legislation amending it. The Act is jointly enforced by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Bureau of Immigration (BI), although visas are issued under the sole prerogative of the BI. Generally, foreign nationals who wish to enter the Philippines require a visa unless:

He/she is a citizen of a member state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

He/she is a citizen of a non-ASEAN member state whose nationals are allowed to enter the Philippines visa-free

He/she is a balikbayan and is only returning to the Philippines temporarily

### **Types of visas**

The Philippine Immigration Act prescribes fourteen different visas grouped into two broad categories

Section 9 visas (non-immigrant visas), for temporary visits such as those for tourism, business, transit, study or employment

Section 13 visas (immigrant visas), for foreign nationals who wish to become permanent residents in the Philippines

Special visas have been introduced to groups such as retirees, investors and entrepreneur

by subsequent laws or proclamation of the President .

The Philippine visa waiver program is governed by Executive Order No. 408 signed on November 9, 1960 by President Carlos P. Garcia, and by subsequent executive issuances amending it. In principle, nationals of countries which maintain diplomatic relations with the Philippines and whose nationals are not classified as restricted nationals by the DFA are allowed to enter the Philippines without a visa. Eligible nationals availing of visa-free entry must possess passports valid for at least six months beyond their contemplated period of stay. On July 1, 2013, the BI began implementing an extended visa waiver for covered nationals from 21 to 30 days, which the Philippine government hopes will boost tourism. The program had been fully implemented since August 2013.

Visa exempt foreign nationals may extend their stay two months per extension but not exceeding the maximum period of two years. Foreign nationals who require a visa may extend their stay one month per extension but not exceeding the maximum period of six months and must have a ticket valid for onward travel. In March 2015 it was proposed to extend the visa exemption to citizens of China and India. Holders of passports of the following 157 jurisdictions do not require a visa for Philippines

### **10. Country Information Websites**

<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/rp/>