



○ discovering the Philippines

Much of the country is mountainous and prone to earthquakes and eruptions from around 20 active volcanoes. It is often buffeted by typhoons and other storms. The Philippines – a Spanish colony for more than three centuries and named after a 16th century Spanish king – was taken over by the United States in the early 20th century after a protracted rebellion against rule from Madrid. Spanish and U.S. influences remain strong, especially in terms of language, religion and government.

The country is an archipelago made up of more than 7,007 islands, over 4,000 of them unnamed. Most of the Filipinos live on 11 islands within three main areas: Luzon in the north, Visayas in the center, and Mindanao in the south. The capital city, Manila, is located in Luzon.

Although the country has remained a democracy, it has enjoyed little stability. On the southern island of Mindanao, rebels have been fighting for a separate Islamic state within the mainly-Catholic country. Sporadic violence has continued despite a 2003 ceasefire and peace talks, which again resumed in December 2009. The radical Islamist Abu Sayyaf group on the island of Jolo, which is reputedly linked to Al-Qaeda, has a history of violence towards hostages, and the government has declared all-out war on it.

The proportion of the population living below \$1.25 a day in 2006 was 23 percent or around 20 million people. At the same time, about 44 percent or over 40 million Filipinos were living on less than \$2 a day. While the Philippines was able to reduce poverty incidence from as high as 30 percent in the early 1990s, the actual number of people living in poverty has increased over the last two decades. The global food and

Note: Recognizing that information on the Philippines is readily available on the Internet, we encourage you to learn as much as you can about the political background, history, geography, economics and culture of this amazing country. This document provides a general overview, with some specific information that will help short-term teams appreciate the Philippines even more and understand our work. Going to the Philippines as part of a short-term team is different from a leisure trip or traveling for business. The information provided here can help you prepare for a potentially life-changing experience. Sources used for some country facts include CIA: The World Factbook and BBC News.

fuel price crises in 2007 and 2008, and the global economic crisis that followed, are estimated to have pushed even more people into poverty. The economy took a further hit in late 2009, as the worst typhoon season in 40 years devastated Metro Manila and the agricultural heartland of the country.

Even during periods of stronger economic growth, such as 2004–2008, poverty continued to rise. Various factors have contributed to the lack of progress on poverty reduction in the Philippines. Some of these are:

- An agriculture sector that has performed weakly and failed to raise the incomes of the rural poor.
- Growth that is primarily based on consumption and not creating employment opportunities for the poor.
- High population growth, which averaged 2 percent annually over the past decade, and places additional strain on the cost of household living and demand for basic services.
- Income inequality, which increased in the 1990s and remains relatively high—the poorest 20 percent of the population accounting for only 5 percent of total income or consumption.
- Inability of the government to provide sufficient basic services, especially to people in poorer remote regions.
- Vulnerability of poorer communities to natural disasters and civil unrest, which adversely affects livelihoods.

QUICK FACTS

Full Name: Republic of the Philippines

Population: 93.6 million (UN, 2010)

Capital: Manila

Area: 300,000 sq km (115,831 sq miles)

Major Languages: Tagalog, English (both official)

Major Religion: Christianity

Life Expectancy: 71 years (men), 75 years (women) (UN)

Monetary Currency: Philippine peso

GNI Per Capita: US \$1,790 (World Bank, 2009)

WEATHER

The Philippines is typically tropical – hot and humid year-round. Although the weather pattern is fairly complex, it can be roughly divided into the dry season (January to June) and the wet season (July to December).

January is usually the coolest month, and May the hottest, but the average temperature is usually around 77 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the year.

Southwest monsoons bring rain and high temperatures from May to October. Between March and May, hot and dry weather prevails. Temperatures in Manila range from 70 to 90 degrees, with an average annual temperature of 81 degrees. Annual rainfall is heavy but varies widely throughout the Philippines, ranging from 38 inches in some sheltered valleys and the southern tip of the island of Mindanao, to 197 inches along the mountainous east coasts of the islands of Luzon, Samar and the northern tip of Mindanao. The Philippines lies astride the typhoon belt and experiences 15 to 20 typhoons a year from July through October, of which five or six may cause serious destruction and death.



PASSPORT / VISA

A passport is required for all travelers to the Philippines. All information regarding obtaining a passport can be found at the U.S. Department of State's National Passport Information Center: www.travel.state.gov/passport. This site will detail current fees, acceptable forms of identification, downloadable applications, and passport acceptance facility locations. It takes approximately 6 -10 weeks for processing. Please allow additional time for gathering necessary documentation (photos, birth certificate, etc.).

For an additional fee, the process can be expedited. Information can be found on the above website on "How to Get Your Passport in a Hurry." For those who already have a passport, be sure that the passport is valid six months beyond the intended stay in the Philippines.

In addition to a passport, some countries require a visa for entry. A visa is a special permit issued by a country's government to allow a foreign citizen into the country. At this time, a visa is not required for Americans traveling to the Philippines. If you have a passport from a country other than the U.S., you may need to take extra measures to ensure smooth entrance into and exit from the Philippines. Consult the host country consulate to find out what measures need to be taken. For the most up-to-date information about travel from the United States to any foreign country, please visit the Department of State's website at www.travel.state.gov.



Did You Know ...

- The Philippines is the texting capital of Asia.
- Filipinos eat six meals a day (breakfast, snack, lunch, snack, dinner, snack).
- Jollibee is the Philippines' equivalent of McDonalds.
- Most people spend a minimum of two hours sitting in traffic each day.
- Going to the mall and window shopping are popular hobbies.
- Two words: bucket shower

VACCINATION INFORMATION

In addition to applying for a passport, you will also need to research vaccination requirements for your trip well in advance as some vaccinations take time or need to be given in a series to be effective. The best advice regarding vaccinations and any other medications can only come from a qualified physician. Please make an appointment with your family doctor and share with him/her where you are going, how long you will be there and what activities you will be participating in. In consultation with your doctor, you can decide which vaccinations and/or medications will be best for you.

To better familiarize yourself with travel health, please visit the Center for Disease Control's website at www.cdc.gov/travel prior to your visit with your doctor.

LUGGAGE

Luggage should be limited to one checked bag and the allowed carry-on for each team member. While most airlines will allow two checked bags, large amounts of luggage are difficult to transport while in-country. Any extra bags should be used to transport ministry supplies. Please refer to your teams training materials for a packing list.



CULTURAL TIPS

In addition to learning a few words in the native language, paying attention to a few cultural clues can help you build a foundation for a wonderful cross-cultural friendship. These tips are like a map for you during your time in the Philippines. They will not give you the answers to all situations, but they may help you understand why people behave the way they do.

Greeting Gestures: Handshaking is the common custom, with both men and women shaking hands in a friendly and informal fashion. Filipinos may greet one another with the “eyebrow flash,” which is merely a quick lifting of the eyebrows.

Touching Gestures: Generally speaking, Filipinos are a touch-oriented society. People of the same sex may be seen holding hands in public places, which is simply a gesture of friendship. Don’t worry about a bit of pushing and shoving when in public; Filipinos seldom queue or observe orderly lines.

Beckon Gesture: Instead of pointing to an object, Filipinos will shift their eyes toward it, or purse the lips and point with the mouth. To signal someone, the palm faces downward and the fingers are moved in a scratching motion. Never curl your index finger back and forth because that is considered insulting.

Other Nonverbal Gestures: It is considered rude to stare. Prolonged direct eye contact is considered impolite and even intimidating. Respect is always shown to elderly people. Among the Filipinos, laughter is used to convey both enjoyment and pleasure, but also to mask embarrassment over another person’s misfortune. Speaking in a loud voice is considered ill-mannered and rude.

Table Manners: Wait to be asked several times before moving into the dining room or helping yourself to food. Wait to be told where to sit. There may be a seating plan. Do not start eating until the host invites you to do so. Meals are often served family-style or are buffets where you serve yourself. A fork and spoon are the typical eating utensils. Hold the fork in the left hand and use it to guide food to the spoon in your right hand. Whether you should leave some food on your plate or finish everything is a matter of personal preference rather than culture-driven.

CLOTHING

Our dress code is a sign of respect for the people you will be working with, as well as to convey a conservative Christian lifestyle. In the Philippines, the general rule of thumb for dress is conservative. Wearing appropriate clothing will open the door for establishing good relations with the community.

While in the community and during tourism days, team members should wear long pants and loose-fitting T-shirts. (Capri pants are okay.) If the team is attending a church service, women should wear long skirts and loose-fitting blouses, and men should wear long pants and collared shirts. Except when in the hotel, team members should always wear close-toed shoes.

Out of respect for cultural sensitivity, we request your cooperation in submitting to FH’s policy in regard to piercings, tattoos and radical haircuts. For more details about this topic, please talk to your team leader.

Please do not bring the following:

- Shorts
- Tight or revealing clothing (pants, jeans and shirts)
- Low-cut shirts (scoop neck or V-neck)
- Tank tops
- Excessively low-rise jeans or excessively baggy pants
- Shirts that reveal the midriff
- Clothing that has inappropriate or questionable words or pictures
- Clothing with rips, holes or stains

ELECTRONICS

You may bring cameras (disposable, standard or digital), iPods, cell phones and other small electronic devices; however, you assume all risks of damage, loss or theft of your belongings. Keep in mind that you will be kept quite busy, and there will not be a lot of time to use many electronic devices. Also, electricity may not always be available to recharge electronic equipment, including cameras and camcorders. Please bring extra batteries. When in public, don't display expensive electronic items or any items that may just appear expensive.

PHOTO POLICY

All photos or videos should be taken with utmost discretion. Upon arrival in the country, your Team Coordinator will explain the country's photo policy. Some considerations:

- Make sure the focus is on relationships and the ministry, not pictures.
- When possible, ask before taking pictures.
- Designate a photographer. Rather than taking the same picture on 12 different cameras, take the picture with one or two cameras and share when you get back.
- Be sure that any picture you take conveys dignity for the person in the picture. If you will not remember the names of the people in the story or the significance of the photo, re-consider the need for taking a photo.



FOOD

Your Team Coordinator will have arranged breakfast, lunch and dinner for your team.

You will have the opportunity to sample a variety of food while in the Philippines, both traditional dishes and some American favorites. While some dishes may be unfamiliar, please come with an open mind and be willing to try new foods prepared for you. You are welcome to bring additional food for between-meals snacks.

Avoid eating foods that have not been provided or approved by Food for the Hungry staff. Eating something from a local vendor or street market could lead to sickness. If you have any food allergies or special dietary needs, please communicate those to FH/US ahead of time. Our field staff will need time to arrange other options for you.

Your Team Coordinator will also have a supply of bottled water for your team. Only drink the bottled water. The bottled water will also need to be used for brushing your teeth and taking any medicines. Please do not drink anything but bottled water. If you are served ice in a drink, please verify that the water is okay but consulting with your Team Coordinator.

TRANSPORTATION

Your Team Coordinator will have arranged transportation the entire time your team is serving



with Food for the Hungry. In the Philippines, most travel is done by private minibus. Generally, FH teams do not use public transportation.

Driving in the Philippines may be a new experience for you. The roads are likely to be bumpy and winding. You may feel that the vehicle you are in is uncomfortably close to the vehicle or pedestrian beside it. Streets may seem overwhelmingly crowded. Traffic signs may not always be followed. Remember that you are in good hands. Your driver is a professional and used to the traffic conditions.

Keep your hands, feet and belongings inside the vehicle at all times. If you experience carsickness, sit in the front or take an appropriate medicine for motion sickness.



COMMUNICATION

You will likely be without telephone and/or e-mail access during your time in the Philippines. While these services may be readily available, especially in large cities like Manila, your schedule will be packed with activities. This will help you to focus your energy and attention on the transformative work of the Lord and to help maintain a cohesive group dynamic. We encourage you to leave your cell phone at home and inform your family and friends that you will be unavailable until you return to the States.

If there is an emergency in the country or community where you are serving, your Team Coordinator will contact your family and appropriate people at your home church. Before you leave the U.S. you will be given a U.S. phone number and other details, which you will pass on to your family and close friends. If there is an emergency in the U.S. while you're on the field, your family member or friend may call that number. Your Field Liaison will assess the call and facilitate communication with you or the field staff as necessary.

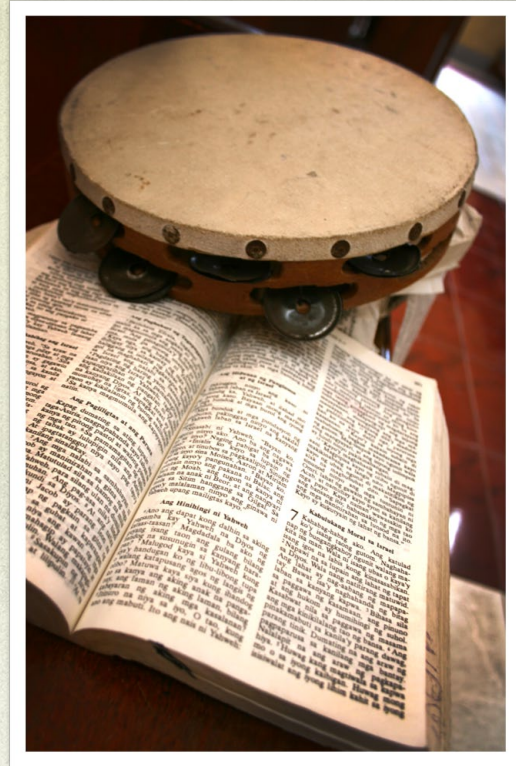


MONEY

While with Food for the Hungry, all transportation, food, lodging and water are covered by FH. You will only need money for souvenirs and shopping you will do in-country and while traveling. A suggested amount for this purpose is \$100 to \$200. It is advisable to bring cash as U.S. dollars are widely accepted. Bring bills no larger than \$20 and be sure that the bills are crisp and new (no more than 5 years old) to ensure acceptance. Traveler's checks can be used, but they can only be exchanged in limited locations and extra fees always apply.

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY / PHILIPPINES STRATEGY

- Child-focused Community Transformation (CFCT)
- Reaching and impacting the most vulnerable communities.
- Heart and mind transformation through biblical worldview and initiatives such as education, health and nutrition, church development and livelihood development.
- Churches, leaders and families meeting the critical needs of children.
- Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Adaptability
- Quick relief assistance in affected communities.
- Churches, leaders and families equipped to reduce vulnerability of disaster-prone communities.
- Increased partnerships with organizations responding to disasters.
- Poverty Alleviation
- Transformation of unbiblical belief systems that are at the root of poverty.
- Seeing relationships restored among families and communities.
- Creating opportunities for the poor through literacy, skills training and livelihood development.
- Resource Development and Partnership
- Mobilizing volunteers
- Increasing the number of locally supported projects
- Partnering with other organizations that will support CFCT.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for the expansion of FH ministry to other provinces.
- Pray for sponsors to continue their support to the ministry of FH/Philippines.
- Pray for FH's activities in the country, that God would use these outreaches to lift Filipinos out of physical and spiritual poverty.
- Pray that our staff would have compassion, wisdom and sensitivity so they can effectively reach out to the poor and most vulnerable in the Philippines.

