

# Philippines



## Islands of the Philippines

13 days Manila to Bohol

Explore the hidden secrets of The Philippines, from the magical mayhem of Manila to the mysterious mountains of northern Luzon and the beaches of Bohol.

The seven thousand, one hundred and seven islands of the Philippines stretch for nearly two thousand kilometers through the Pacific and encompass everything from volcanoes and lofty mountain peaks to idyllic tropical beaches. The people of these islands are as diverse as the geography, but one thing they all seem to share is a broad smile.

Our journey is designed to offer a blend of unique local culture, spectacular scenery and wildlife. We'll hike through some of the most incredible rice terraces on the planet, visit cave burial sites and hanging coffins, climb a volcano, drive over the highest pass in the Philippines, come face to face with the world's smallest mammal, spend the night at a bee farm, and have time to mull it all over on a picture perfect tropical beach. Mabuhay!



## Itinerary

### Day 1 | Manila

The tour starts today and people will be arriving at different times throughout the day. In the late afternoon we'll all get together for an introduction to the trip and a delicious local dinner.

### Day 2 | Baguio

Today we set off early on the beautiful drive north into the mountains to Baguio, gateway to the Cordillera.

### Day 3 | Sagada

After a brief visit to a local artists enclave and a weaving school in Baguio, we make the long, windy and often bumpy drive into the Cordillera. Sagada is an idyllic village, nestled in a dramatic limestone valley, 1400m (4,600ft) up in the mountains. Accommodation in Sagada is basic and we stay in the best place in town, which is clean and charming, but simple.

### Day 4 | Sagada

Today we explore the rugged countryside around Sagada, past hanging coffins and burial caves nestled in the cliffs and valleys of this remote mountain hideaway.

### Day 5 | Banaue

Today we drive to Banaue via the small town of Bontoc which has an excellent museum detailing the lives of the region's earliest inhabitants, some of whom were headhunters. In the afternoon we'll get our first glimpse of what are often described as the eighth wonder of the world, the incredible rice terraces of Banaue.

### Day 6 | Banaue

Today we'll take a short, bumpy drive deeper into the Cordillera to a trailhead where we begin our hike to a small village engulfed in rice terraces.

### Day 7 | Manila

Today it's a long day of travel back to the warmth of Manila.

### Day 8 | Tagaytay

After a free morning we'll make the short drive out to Tagaytay which sits on the crater rim of a giant volcano and offers spectacular views down to the lake and the beautifully formed Taal volcano.

### Day 9 | Tagaytay

Early this morning we'll drive down into the crater and then take a boat ride across the lake to the volcano, and there's the chance to make the short, steep climb up to the rim. After a local lakeside lunch we'll return to our hotel on the old crater rim for a free afternoon.

### Day 10 | Bohol Bee Farm

After a short drive we'll board a flight south to Tagbilaran, from where we transfer to the fascinating Bohol Bee Farm. In the afternoon we'll have a guided tour of the farm, including its herb and lettuce gardens, weaving center, and, of course, the beehives. Dinner is at the farm's acclaimed organic restaurant.



### Day 11 | Alona Beach

After breakfast we'll head to the Tarsier Research and Development Center to try and spot these endangered tiny cuddly critters in the wild. From here we continue to the Loboc River where we'll take a boat ride through the jungle. After disembarking we'll drive to the other worldly Chocolate Hills, and we'll also visit a butterfly farm. We end the day at beautiful Alona Beach.

### Day 12 | Alona Beach

Today is a free day to relax on this beautiful beach, go snorkeling or diving, or just get a massage. In the evening we'll meet for a final beach dinner to mark the end of our adventure through the Philippine archipelago.

### Day 13 | Tour Ends

The tour ends after breakfast. Taxis for the 30-minute ride to Tagbilaran are readily available, and from here there are flights to Manila ([www.philippineairlines.com](http://www.philippineairlines.com) or [www.cebupacificair.com](http://www.cebupacificair.com)), or boats to Cebu, both of which are served by international carriers. If you want to have more time to relax at the beach we can book extra nights at our Alona Beach resort hotel – please specify at the time of booking.

## Tour Details

### Style

Adventure travel tour.

### Inclusions

Accommodation, flights Manila to Tagbilaran, private vehicle and driver throughout, boat trips and farm tours as detailed, guides as detailed, all entrance fees as detailed, Grasshopper tour leader.

### Group Size

Minimum 4, maximum 12

### Food

12 breakfasts, 3 Lunches, 7 dinners

### Accommodation

10 nights comfortable hotels, 2 nights in simple mountain cottages

The standard of accommodation in the Philippines varies from modern and comfortable in the cities, to simple in the countryside. We select hotels throughout the trip which offer clean, comfortable rooms and a decent location, and character where possible. The two nights in Sagada are in clean, comfortable cottages, with occasional hot water but no heating.

### Single Room Supplement

On Grasshopper Adventures single travellers do not have to pay extra to join our trips – we will match you up with another same sex, single traveller. However, should you wish to have your own room we are happy to book you a single room for you for the duration of the tour. We should also point out that on occasion single rooms may not be available and in these instances you may need to share for a night or two – we will refund part of your single supplement in these cases.

### Additional Accommodation

We can book additional accommodation before the tour in Manila or after the tour in Alona Beach at competitive rates. Please book extra nights when you book your tour.

### Arriving in Manila



Please make your own way from the airport to our Manila tour hotel, details of which will be advised to you upon booking. The easiest way from the airport to the hotel is to take a registered taxi from the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank you reach as you turn right out of the arrivals hall. The first rank usually doesn't have a queue as they charge PHP510 into the city, whereas taxis at the second rank operate by the meter and should cost no more than PHP250. On arrival, check in under your own name. Your tour leader will be there to meet you in the lobby at 5pm on day 1 and will need to see your trip voucher, insurance details and passports. There will then be an introduction to the tour and we will go out for a Filipino meal.

### Transport

All transport listed is included in the trip price. This trip starts in Manila and finishes at Alona Beach on Panglao Island, Bohol, which is a one-hour flight from Manila, or a two-hour ferry ride from Cebu.

## Travel Details

### Visas

Travelers of most nationalities can obtain a 21-day visa on arrival, although regulations are subject to change and it is a good idea to arrange one in your home country before your departure. Please check with your local embassy for the most up to date visa information

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

If you are looking for an insurer we can recommend World Nomads - visit [www.worldnomads.com](http://www.worldnomads.com)

### Flights

Both Manila and to a lesser extent, Cebu airports are served by international flights. Philippine Airlines ([www.philippineairlines.com](http://www.philippineairlines.com)), is the national carrier and operates flights to the US and Canada as well as within Asia. Coming from Europe, Manila is served by KLM ([www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com)) through Amsterdam as well as by a number of Middle Eastern airlines (via their hub) including Emirates ([www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)), Gulf Air ([www.gulfair.com](http://www.gulfair.com)) and Qatar Airways ([qatarairways.com](http://qatarairways.com)). Coming from Australia Qantas ([www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)) flies from Sydney. Coming from within Asia, Cebu Pacific ([www.cebupacificair.com](http://www.cebupacificair.com)) offers budget rates from destinations throughout Asia, whilst Jetstar ([www.jetstar.com](http://www.jetstar.com)) and Tiger Airways ([www.tigerairways.com](http://www.tigerairways.com)) have cheap flights from Singapore, and Air Asia ([www.airasia.com](http://www.airasia.com)) has discount tickets from Malaysia. Cathay Pacific ([www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com)) flies from Hong Kong and Thai Airways ([www.thaiairways.com](http://www.thaiairways.com)) from Bangkok.

### Money

The official currency of the Philippines is the Philippine Peso (PHP), which is used for most transactions, although US dollars are also popular, particularly in tourist locales. At the time of writing the exchange rates were as follows: US\$1=45 pesos. The Philippines has a reasonably modern banking system with ATMs and money changers in all major centers. When coming to the Philippines it is possible to use Visa/Mastercard or Cirrus/Maestro cards to access cash with an ATM. It is also advisable to bring some travelers checks and US\$ as backup.

### Costs

We recommend that you allow approximately US\$25 for food and general living costs per day. Shopping money should be considered extra to this amount. It is customary to tip the guides and drivers in the Philippines. You should allow approximately US\$100 per person for tips. Note: this is a guide only, feel free to tip more or less (or nothing) depending on your satisfaction.

### Electricity

The Philippines works on a 220 volt system and generally uses a US-style flat 2 pin plug.



## Packing

You will be required to carry your own luggage at times during this tour and you'll need to be able to load it on and off buses and up and down stairs at hotels. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack or small suitcase. You should consider bringing the following items:

<p><b>Personal Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptor plug</li> <li>• Alarm clock</li> <li>• Business cards</li> <li>• Camera (Film &amp; Memory cards, charger)</li> <li>• Comfortable hard wearing shoes or sneakers/runners</li> <li>• Earplugs</li> <li>• Fleece</li> <li>• First Aid kit and basic medicines</li> <li>• Flashlight</li> <li>• Hat</li> <li>• Insect repellent</li> <li>• Lipbalm</li> <li>• Lightweight pants</li> <li>• Phrasebook or dictionary</li> <li>• Photocopies of your important documents</li> <li>• Pictures of home (to show people you meet)</li> <li>• Plastic ziplock and garbage bags</li> <li>• Pocket knife</li> <li>• Reading material</li> <li>• Rubber sandals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sewing kit</li> <li>• Shorts</li> <li>• Small padlock</li> <li>• Sunglasses</li> <li>• Sunhat &amp; Woolen hat</li> <li>• Sunscreen</li> <li>• Swimming Costume</li> <li>• T-shirts or light cotton shirts</li> <li>• Waterproof jacket</li> </ul> <p><b>Travel Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport (with at least six months validity after the end of your trip and spare pages)</li> <li>• Flight Tickets</li> <li>• Money – cash/credit cards/traveller's cheques</li> <li>• Insurance Policy</li> <li>• Tour Voucher</li> <li>• Photocopies of all of the above kept separately from the originals</li> </ul> <p>NB – Remember to put any blades, scissors, lighters or liquids in your hold luggage when flying.</p>
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## Health

In order to make the most of your holiday, the healthier you are the more you will enjoy it! For a list of vaccinations we recommend that you seek advice at a travel clinic prior to departure. Our group leader will have first aid training and will travel with a first aid kit, however, for legal reasons he/she cannot administer any kind of drugs including pain relief tablets, antibiotics etc. For this reason it is also recommended that individual travelers have a basic first aid kit with any personal medical requirements. This said, pharmacies are widespread in the Philippines and, as long as you have the generic drug name, you should be able to buy what you need here. Include the following: plasters, dressings, bandage, calamine lotion, oral rehydration treatment, insect repellent, insect sting relief, antiseptic cream and antiseptic wipes.

## Climate

The Philippines has a tropical climate with generally warm to hot days and warm nights, however, in the north it can get quite cold in the mountains during the cool season. The coolest months are December to February – during this time in the mountains daytime temperatures peak at around 15-20 degrees Celsius, and drop as low as 10 degrees at the dead of night. In the plains daytime temperatures peak out at around 28-30 degrees Celsius, and the evenings are a few degrees cooler. This is the dry season in the north, but there is rainfall year-round in the south. May to November is the typhoon season in the Philippines and we do not operate regular group tours during this period.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Manila, Luzon</b>												
Max (oc)	30	30	31	33	34	34	33	31	31	31	31	31
Min (oc)	21	21	21	22	23	24	24	24	24	24	23	22
Rainfall (mm)	23	23	13	18	33	130	254	432	422	356	193	145



<b>Tagbilaran, Bohol</b>												
Max (oc)	31	31	32	33	33	33	32	33	33	32	32	31
Min (oc)	23	23	23	24	25	25	25	25	25	24	24	23
Rainfall (mm)	55	63	89	54	62	96	93	85	75	118	124	112

### Safety

Your leader will be present on all included activities, staying at all the same hotels, guesthouses and of course travelling with you the whole time. During free time, should you choose to participate in any optional activities that are not part of our itinerary, please note that we cannot give any representations or guarantees about the safety of the activity, the standard of the operators running them or the equipment that they use.

Whilst the Philippines is generally a very safe and friendly place to travel, the disparity between rich and poor gives rise to opportunistic crime, and in the big cities pick-pocketing is common. For this reason we recommend that you keep your valuables in the hotel safe or deposit box where available, and at other times, keep them in a neck wallet or money belt.

Abu Sayyaf, an Islamic militant group, is based in the southerly island of Basilan, and whilst their activities have largely been contained, travel to some parts of Mindanao is not advised. The areas we will visit in this tour are removed from this troubled part of the Philippines, and we keep a close eye on the security situation. Most national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel and we recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest information before departure.

### Communication

You will be able to access email, phone, fax and post offices almost everywhere on this trip. You should leave you family or friends your tour leader's local cellphone number or Grasshopper's Taiwan office number in case of an emergency. Our office staff will be able to get in touch with us in an emergency.

## Positive Impact

An integral part of traveling is to have a positive impact on the country that you are visiting. On this trip there are a number of things you can do to have a positive impact on the communities that we visit.

### Dress

Generally speaking Filipinos are very relaxed in their style of dress and, especially in the cities, it seems like anything goes, but in churches and rural areas things are still more conservative and it is appropriate to cover your shoulders.

### Poverty

The Philippines is a poor country and you will be confronted with this throughout the trip. In the cities you will see shanties and beggars, and in the countryside, many people still struggle to fill their ricebowl as the population continues to grow. In spite of their tough living conditions, the spirit of the Filipinos, mean that even in the harshest conditions you will be greeted with smiles. We do not recommend giving money to beggars as not only does it perpetuate this dependence, but frequently beggars are controlled by gangs. Instead we recommend giving to organizations which are working to alleviate this poverty. Your Tour Leader will be able to provide more information about this.

### Language



English is widely spoken in the Philippines which facilitates meeting the locals, however a few words of Tagalog never go unappreciated, and your tour leader and guides can fill you in on the basics. If you want to really interact with the locals in their lingo we recommend bringing a phrase book.

## Recommended Reading

\*F. Sionil José *Ermita* (Solidaridad)

\*James Hamilton-Paterson *America's Boy: The Rise and Fall of Ferdinand Marcos and Other Misadventures of US Colonialism in the Philippines*

\*José Rizal *Noli Me Tangere* (Bookmark)

### **Important**

All information in these tour notes is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures.

