

ASIA · ISLANDS · BEACHES · DIVING · ADVENTURE · CULTURE

 Philippines

The Philippines has more than 7,600 islands, and the best trips string a few of them together: Palawan's limestone lagoons, Bohol's Chocolate Hills, Siargao's surf and the rice terraces of the northern Cordillera. English is widely spoken, food is hearty and cheap, and Filipino hospitality is famous, but island-hopping takes planning around flights, ferries and the typhoon season.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Philippines.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 15 July 2026.

 CAPITAL Manila	 CURRENCY Philippine peso (PHP) £1 ≈ ₱84.28	 LANGUAGE Filipino, English Cebuano	 BEST TIME Dec–Apr
 DAILY BUDGET £35–£170 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type A, B, C 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 14h direct ~£600–£1,150 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+8 standard time

The archipelago splits into three main groups: Luzon in the north, the Visayas in the middle and Mindanao in the south. Most first trips fly into Manila, spend a day in Intramuros, then head for the islands: Palawan for El Nido, Coron and the Underground River, and the Visayas for Bohol, Cebu's dive sites and Siquijor. With more time, add Siargao's surf breaks or travel north into the Cordillera for Banaue's rice terraces and on to colonial Vigan. Plan the route around domestic flights, as linking islands by ferry eats days.

Costs are low by British standards, with simple beach rooms, jeepney rides and plates of adobo all cheap, though resorts in El Nido and Boracay and daily island-hopping tours add up. English is an official language, so getting around is easy, and Filipinos are warm, funny and devoted to karaoke. Expect travel to run late: flights are delayed, ferries are cancelled by weather, and Manila's traffic is notorious. Christmas, Holy Week and Chinese New Year bring domestic crowds and price peaks. It suits beach lovers, divers, surfers and anyone happy to slow down to island time.

Top 5 highlights

1

BEACH

El Nido and Bacuit Bay

Limestone islands rise sheer from Bacuit Bay in northern Palawan, hiding lagoons, coves and white-sand beaches. Join an island-hopping tour from El Nido town for the Big and Small Lagoons, or kayak in early before the boats arrive.

2

NATURE

Chocolate Hills

More than 1,200 grass-covered limestone mounds stud central Bohol, turning chocolate brown in the dry season. Climb the viewing deck at Carmen, then visit the tarsier sanctuary at Corella and cruise the Loboc River.

3

CULTURE

Banaue Rice Terraces

Carved into the Cordillera by the Ifugao people, the terraces are at their most spectacular at Batad, a steep hike from the road, where a UNESCO-listed amphitheatre of paddies surrounds the village. Overnight buses run from Manila.

4

ARCHITECTURE

Vigan

Asia's best-preserved Spanish colonial town, Vigan's cobbled Calle Crisologo is lined with stone-and-timber mansions and clattering kalesa horse carts. Try Vigan empanada and longganisa sausage at the evening food stalls.

5

ADVENTURE

Siargao

This teardrop-shaped island off north-east Mindanao is the country's surf capital, centred on the Cloud 9 break near General Luna. Non-surfers island-hop to Naked, Daku and Guyam islands or swim in the Magpungko rock pools.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Manila

≈ 13.5 million people

Spend a day or two on Intramuros's walls and San Agustin Church, food crawls through Binondo's Chinatown and the National Museum, then move on to the islands.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Davao

≈ 3.3 million people

Mindanao's main city is the base for climbing Mount Apo, the country's highest peak, and for seeing Philippine eagles at their breeding centre; durian is the local obsession.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Cebu

≈ 3.2 million people

The country's oldest city has Magellan's Cross, the Santo Niño basilica and the best lechon, plus quick links to Bohol, Moalboal's sardine run and Malapascua's thresher sharks.

2020 census figures for the officially defined metropolitan areas. Metro Davao's boundaries take in distant towns; measured by continuous built-up area, Cebu is the larger of the two.

When to go to Philippines

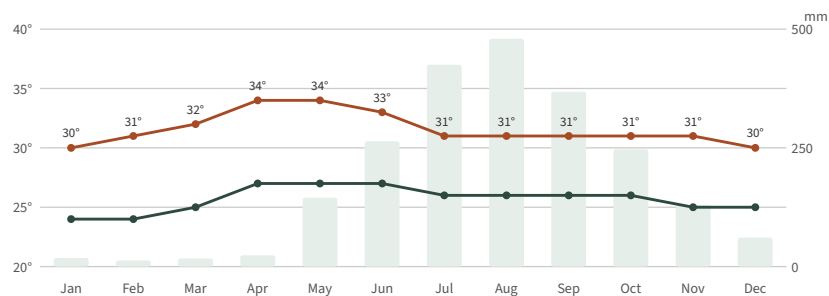
Best time: **Dec–Apr**.



■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Manila

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan	Sinulog Held in Cebu City on the third Sunday of January, Sinulog honours the Santo Niño with a huge street parade of drummers and dancers in costume, plus days of parties.
Feb–Mar	Panagbenga Baguio's month-long flower festival peaks in late February or early March with flower-covered float parades and street dancing in the cool mountain air.
Oct	MassKara Festival Bacolod's October festival of smiling masks fills the streets with dancers in colourful costumes, music and food stalls, peaking around the city's charter day on 19 October.

How much does Philippines cost?

SHOESTRING £35 per person / day ≈ ₱2,950 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £80 per person / day ≈ ₱6,742 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £170 per person / day ≈ ₱14,327 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Adobo Chicken or pork braised in vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, bay leaves and black pepper until sticky and tangy; every family claims the best recipe.	Sinigang A sour tamarind soup packed with pork, prawns or fish and vegetables such as water spinach and radish; comfort food eaten with rice.	Lechon Whole spit-roasted pig with crackling skin; Cebu's version is stuffed with lemongrass and garlic and needs no dipping sauce.
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Getting around

Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific and AirAsia link Manila, Cebu and Clark with dozens of island airports, the only sensible option for long hops. Fast ferries such as OceanJet cover shorter routes like Cebu–Bohol. On land, ride jeepneys, tricycles and air-conditioned vans; Grab works in Manila, Cebu and Davao. Vans link Puerto Princesa and El Nido in about five to six hours.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE  A B C 220V — bring a UK-to-A/B/C adapter	EMERGENCY NUMBERS Telephone: 911 (ambulance, fire, police) Source: FCDO “Getting help”
DIALLING CODE +63	TIME ZONE UTC+8 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Many restaurants add a 10% service charge; if not, leave about 10%. Tip boat crews, guides and drivers, and round up Grab and tricycle fares.

ETIQUETTE

Add 'po' to sentences to show respect to elders, keep complaints calm and friendly, as losing your temper causes loss of face, and dress modestly in churches.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Ninoy Aquino International Airport (MNL), Manila; Mactan–Cebu International Airport (CEB), Cebu; Clark International Airport (CRK), Clark

Visas & entry for Philippines

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit the Philippines without a visa for tourism or business for up to 30 days.

You must have a QR code to show that you have registered on the e-travel system within the 72 hours before your arrival in the Philippines. Some airlines will not allow you to board your flight to the Philippines if you cannot show the QR code.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Japanese encephalitis

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

Low risk of malaria

- There is a low risk of malaria in rural areas of the Philippines below 600m and on the islands of Luzon, Mindanao, Mindoro, and Palawan: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Philippines

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Mon 2 Nov 2026	All Souls' Day
Mon 30 Nov 2026	Bonifacio Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Thu 24 Dec 2026	Christmas Eve
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Wed 30 Dec 2026	Rizal Day
Thu 31 Dec 2026	New Year's Eve
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sat 6 Feb 2027	Chinese New Year
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Maundy Thursday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Black Saturday
Fri 9 Apr 2027	Day of Valor
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Sat 12 Jun 2027	Independence Day
Sat 21 Aug 2027	Ninoy Aquino Day
Mon 30 Aug 2027	National Heroes Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Filipino

ENGLISH	FILIPINO	SAY IT
Hello	Kumusta	koo-moos-TAH
Thank you	Salamat po	sa-LAH-mat poh
Please	Pakiusap	pa-kee-OO-sap
Excuse me	Mawalang-galang po	ma-wa-LANG ga-LANG poh
How much is this?	Magkano ito?	mag-KAH-no ee-TOH

Know before you go

- Typhoons can strike from June to November and routinely cancel ferries and flights, so build in spare days and buy insurance that covers weather disruption.
- Carry plenty of small notes: tricycle drivers and island shops often cannot change ₱1,000 bills, and ATMs in El Nido, Siargao and smaller islands can run dry.

Island-hopping tours and environmental fees are often cash only; in El Nido, Coron and Siargao, book through your accommodation or registered operators rather than touts.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.