



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

WELCOME TO THE PHILIPPINES



WELCOME LETTER

Dear AFSer,

Mabuhay from The Philippines!

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in an AFS Program. We are very excited to share with you this once-in a life time opportunity!

We, the whole AFS Philippines, would like to express our warm welcome as you have chosen our dear country for your exchange program. We are very delighted that with over 80 destinations, you have chosen to unlock new adventures with us. You have finally decided to open your doors to learn and keep up with another culture – which might be close or way different from yours.

As an AFS Participant, you serve as an ambassador/ambadress of peace from your home country. Come out of your shell and connect your life with your host school/CPO, community and family, and share your culture, too!

So go on, start expanding your horizon, and see for yourself what it takes to be an AFSer.

See you here in the Philippines!

Sincerely,

Your AFS Philippines Family



TIPS ON HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Dear AFSer,

Mabuhay from The Philippines!

“Being an exchange student is awesome!”

“I had the best year of my life.”

“I learned so much about myself.”

That is what students told us about their exchange year in the Philippines during their End of Stay Orientation. They told us about how wonderful it was, and how the exchange experiences have changed them forever. We were truly inspired by their energy, and the passion they had, and we were so curious about how will be your year in the country would teach you your “life lesson”.

And now here you are. You will be living with another family, live in a strange town, and new school. You will found a lot of friends we bet, and we are coming to believe that in a couple of months you will be the exchange student telling everybody how your exchange year changed your life.

However, being an exchange student is not always easy. To help you to be successful this year, the following are some suggestions of things to do during the first phase of your program.

- Write down your host family’s work and home telephone numbers. It is advisable to write the name, address and telephone numbers of members of your host family and to always keep them with you. This is important during the first month when you are just familiarizing yourself with the places and in case of an emergency.



- Sleep. Although exhausted, you keep on going because everything is new and exciting. However, precisely because everything is new and exciting, you need more sleep. For example, trying to understand someone who speaks in a different language is very tiring. Your family will understand if you sleep a lot, just don't forget to communicate to them always what you are going through.
- Go to school. By the time you arrive in the country, you will already be late by about a month. Thus, you are expected to go to school during your first week of arrival. Ask your family about your school. You will also have the difficult task of learning current lessons as well as catching up on the old lessons. This will keep you very busy during your first month.
- Get to know your neighborhood. Familiarity with your neighborhood will make you feel less strange in your new home and community.
- Keep a diary, journal or vlogs. Write down or take a video of your observations and feelings. It will help you understand your new surroundings. Years later you'll enjoy reading or watching your journey.
- Think positively about your experiences! Everything you see that is different is a chance for you to learn a little more about the Philippines, about your home country and about yourself.

Having your own adventure will prove that anything is possible and that you can do anything. Yes, it can be the best time of your life if you will follow these tips and teach yourself to dive in and adapt.

All the best,

Your AFS Philippines Family





HOST COUNTRY

Information

INTRODUCING PHILIPPINES



The Philippines is defined by its emerald rice fields, teeming megacities, graffiti-splashed jeepneys, smouldering volcanoes, bug-eyed tarsiers, fuzzy water buffalo and smiling, happy-go-lucky people.

The Philippines is a land apart from mainland Southeast Asia--not only geographically, but also spiritually and culturally. The country's overwhelming Catholicism, the result of 350 years of Spanish rule, is its most obvious enigma. Vestiges of the Spanish era include exuberant town fiestas (festivals) like Kalibo's Ati-Atihan, unique Spanish-Filipino colonial architecture, and exquisite, centuries-old stone churches lording over bustling town plazas. Malls, fast-food chains and widespread spoken English betray the influence of Spain's colonial successor, the Americans. Yet despite these outside influences, the country remains very much its own unique entity.

The people are, simply, Filipinos – and proud of it. Welcoming, warm and relentlessly upbeat, it is they who captivate and ultimately ensnare visitors.

The Philippines consists of more than 7000 islands, and at certain times of the year it will feel like you have them all to yourself. The typical island boasts a jungle-clad, mountainous interior and a sandy coastline flanked by aquamarine waters and the requisite coral reef, but you'll find plenty of variations on this theme, from marooned slicks of sand in the middle of the ocean to sprawling, overpopulated mega-islands like Luzon and Mindanao.

The Philippines isn't just about finding an isolated beach and getting catatonic. From trekking in the mountains of North Luzon, to getting airborne on a kite board in Boracay, to spelunking in the cave systems of Samar, the Philippines can capably raise any adrenaline junkie's pulse. Much of the action in the Philippines naturally takes place in and around the water. Kitesurfing and windsurfing are big in Boracay and in Daet, Bicol. While surfers are just catching on to the tasty waves that form on both coasts at certain times of the year, divers have long been enamoured of the country's underwater charms. You need only know how to snorkel to go fin deep with the gentle butanding (whale sharks) in Southeast Luzon.

Freshwater pursuits include rafting, kayaking and wakeboarding. On terra firma, the rice terraces around Banaue are most popular for trekking, but there are peaks--including many volcanoes--to be bagged across Luzon, the Visayas, Mindoro and Mindanao.



Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/philippines#ixzz2uDajUew9>



DURING THE WORKSHOP

Arrival Orientation

WHAT TO BRING

Cultural Attire and/or Artifacts

WHAT TO WEAR

Establishments in the Philippines are mostly air-conditioned. While it can be warm and humid outside, the conference rooms will be air-conditioned. For this, we recommend that you bring with you light scarf, sweater, shawl or jacket.

As you will be going out on an excursion, we suggest that you bring with you comfortable clothing and a pair of sneakers or sandals. Hat, shades and sunblock will also go a long way to save you from possible sunburn.

ELECTRICITY

The voltage in the Philippines is 220 volts alternating at 60 cycles per second. If you are traveling with a device that does not accept 220 volts, it is safe to bring with you a voltage converter.

Outlets in the Philippines generally accept 2 plugs:



INTERNET SERVICE

Internet connection will be available in the guest rooms, conference rooms and secretariat.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the Philippines, you will see armed security guards and military personnel guarding buildings, offices and even shopping malls. The National Police force patrols streets watch over the general public's security. They also sometimes assist traffic aides in controlling the traffic. If the police or other civil authorities stop you for any reason, you should show respect and respond to questions politely. If you do not understand what the police is saying, you may tell them so.





ARRIVAL

AIRPORT

Ninoy Aquino International Airport Manila, Philippines

Terminal 1:

Air China, Air Niugini, Asiana Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Etihad, Eva Air, Gulf Air, Japan Airlines, Jeju Air, Jet Star Asia, Korean Airlines, Kuwait Airlines, Malaysian Airlines, Oman Air, Qantas Airlines, Qatar Airways, Royal Brunei, Saudia Airlines, Thai Airways, Tiger Airways, Turkish Airlines, United Airlines, and Xiamen Airlines

Terminal 2

PAL Express and Philippine Airlines

Terminal 3

Delta Air Lines, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Singapore Airlines, All Nippon Airways, Emirates Airlines and AirAsia Phils.

International and Domestic flights:

Cebu Pacific Air

Domestic flights:

PAL Express

Terminal 4

Tigerair Philippines, Air Asia Zest, and Skyjet Airlines

Reminder to our guests that a terminal fee of PHP550.00 for all international departures is collected/charged at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) upon your departure/exit, payable in PHP and USD.

AFS staff/volunteer will pick up the participants at Terminal 1, 2, 3, 4. The AFS staff/volunteer will be wearing an AFS shirt and or bringing a placard with the AFS logo on it in order to be easily recognized.



GENERAL SECURITY & SAFETY REMINDERS

Dear AFSer,

Mabuhay from The Philippines!

Maintaining the safety and security of the participant is our number one priority at AFS and maintaining your own personal safety should be a high priority for you too! In order to help accomplish this, please read the general safety & security recommendations below and discuss any additional questions or concerns you may have with your host family or AFS contact/volunteer. It is your responsibility to make smart, informed decisions in order to keep yourself safe.

AFS Philippines recommends you to follow advises below for your personal safety:

- Take seriously any concerns/safety instructions/guidelines that your host family and volunteer/s have expressed and follow their advice.
- Keep your host family informed of your whereabouts. When you are travelling, call home periodically to let host family members know you are safe.
- Always stay with people you trust. Do not go anywhere with a stranger – even during the day.
- Stick to well-lighted main streets and public areas.
- Stay away from areas where there are demonstrations and protests. It always causes traffic jams- be careful!
- Be extra mindful when using public transport.
- Carry your charged cell phone at all times. If you feel you are in danger, call your host family, volunteer or AFS Philippines emergency hotline: [+63977 843 4845](tel:+639778434845).



· Do not ignore your own” instinct” in any given situation or feel you have to compromise your own personal behavioral values and beliefs. These are valuable resources in making decisions about what to do.

We hope that you found these “Safety & Security Tips” useful. For further information, please revisit your AFS Philippines Participants Guidebook.

We always wish your safety and security.

Sincerely yours,

Your AFS Philippines Family



OTHER MATTERS

Tipping

In the Philippines, giving of tips highly depends on the services provided. It can range from P50.00-P100.00 when dining in restaurants or when in hotels. Some restaurants incorporate service charge (SC) in the bill. If you check your receipt (OR) and SC is charged, then giving tip is optional.

Stores

Shopping Malls open from 10:00am-10:00pm. There are, however, several 24/7 convenient stores and fast food chains that can be found around the metro. Food deliveries can also be availed 24/7. Contact information can be requested from the front desk.

Traffic

The traffic is left-sided.

It is safe to take metered cabs/taxis for tourists. It is an inexpensive commonly used public transportation next to trains and jeepneys. The flag down is as at P40.00 and P3.50 for every 300meters.

Shopping

Shopping is one of the things tourists love in the Philippines. One of Asia's cheapest and largest bargains are found in the Philippines. Bargains in the Philippines are cheaper compared to the bargains in Singapore and Hong Kong. Prices of the goods for Philippine bargains are comparable to the ones in Thailand and in China.

Greenhills Shopping Center in San Juan is one of the biggest "organized" markets in Manila, selling everything at light prices that can still be haggled down. For the rock bottom prices, Quiapo, Baclaran and Divisoria have the biggest and best markets where you will even find lovely little knick knacks for your home.

Tesoros and Balikbayan Shop on Pasay road will have an array of products from across the Philippines. Also SM's Kultura store showcases local artistry and craftsmanship, bringing together specialties from all over the Philippines for a unique shopping experience.

What to Buy in Manila

Handicrafts, shell work, pearls, and wooden artifacts are popular purchases for visitors shopping in Manila.

Baskets with a variety of functional and decorative uses are retailed around the city. For something quirky, pick up the locust baskets or fish traps. They'll be quite the talking point in your living room back home. Another fun Manila souvenir is the miniature jeepney replica.

Art aficionados may also like to take home a work of art or two by local painters. Galleries run regular shows and international names like Sothebys too have been snapping up works by Filipino artists.

