

ONE WAY AMERICA

Your Guide to Philippines

TELEPHONE: Country code (+63). Area codes vary depending on the location. Mobile numbers generally begin with 9 after the country code.

STANDARD TIME: GMT +8 hours. The Philippines does not observe daylight saving time.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES: Metric.

ELECTRICITY: 220v AC, 60Hz. Electrical outlets may accept Type A, B and C plugs. U.S. appliances may physically fit some Philippine outlets, but the Philippine supply is generally 220v rather than the 120v supply used in the United States. U.S. appliances designed only for 110–120v will require a suitable step-up transformer or voltage converter. Dual-voltage appliances labelled 100–240v can normally be used with the appropriate plug configuration.

INOCULATIONS/VACCINATIONS: No routine vaccination is generally required for travellers arriving directly from the United States. A yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required for travellers arriving from countries where yellow fever is a risk or who have recently transited through such countries. Routine vaccinations should be up to date and current health advice should be checked before travel. U.S. Travel Information

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: The Philippines has regular national holidays as well as special non-working and special working days. Major holidays include New Year's Day, Chinese New Year, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor), Labour Day, Independence Day, National Heroes Day, Ninoy Aquino Day, All Saints' Day, Bonifacio Day, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Christmas Day and Rizal Day. Additional special non-working days and the dates of Eid'l Fitr and Eid'l Adha may vary from year to year. For 2026, the official holiday calendar is established under Proclamation No. 1006. Judiciary eLibrary

OFFICE HOURS: Traditionally Monday to Friday, approximately 8.00am to 5.00pm, although hours vary considerably between businesses and organisations. Many private companies operate flexible working arrangements.

BANK HOURS: Generally Monday to Friday during normal business hours, although individual bank branches may have different opening hours. Some branches in shopping centres and major commercial areas operate extended hours or open at weekends.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 911 – National Emergency Hotline. Police, fire and ambulance services can be contacted through the national emergency system. U.S. Travel

U.S. EMBASSY IN THE PHILIPPINES:

U.S. Embassy Manila
1201 Roxas Boulevard
Manila, Philippines 1000
Telephone: +63 2 5301 2000
Emergency after-hours: +63 2 5301 2000
Website: U.S. Embassy Manila

The U.S. Embassy provides consular services and assistance to U.S. citizens living or travelling in the Philippines, as well as U.S. visa and other U.S. government services. U.S. Travel Information

The United States also maintains a U.S. Consular Agency in Cebu City.

PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN THE UNITED STATES:

Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines
1600 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
USA
Telephone: +1 202 467 9300 / +1 202 467 9363
Duty Officer: +1 202 368 2767
Website: Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, D.C. Department of Foreign Affairs

The Philippines also maintains Consulates General in several major U.S. cities, providing consular services to Filipino citizens.

Part 1 – Background

Information on the Philippines

Background

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago in Southeast Asia comprising thousands of islands in the western Pacific.

The Philippines has a long and diverse history shaped by indigenous cultures and communities, Spanish colonisation, American administration and its development as an independent republic.

The country became an independent republic on 4 July 1946, following a period of U.S. administration. The date of Independence Day was subsequently changed to 12 June,

commemorating the 1898 declaration of independence from Spain.

Today, the Philippines is one of Southeast Asia's major economies and has strong cultural, commercial and historical ties with the United States.

The country has a large English-speaking population and a significant overseas Filipino community, including many Filipinos who have lived and worked in the United States.

Geography

The Philippines is an archipelago located in Southeast Asia between the Philippine Sea, the South China Sea and the Celebes Sea.

The country consists of numerous islands grouped broadly into three major geographical regions: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Luzon is home to Manila and the country's largest concentration of government, commercial and financial activity.

The Visayas includes major cities and islands such as Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod and Bohol.

Mindanao is the country's second-largest island and includes major centres such as Davao City.

The Philippines has extensive coastlines, tropical forests, mountains, agricultural areas and numerous islands.

Population

The Philippines has a population of more than 110 million people.

The population is relatively young and highly urbanised in major metropolitan areas.

Metro Manila is the country's principal commercial and administrative centre, while Cebu, Davao and other regional cities are important centres for business, education, tourism and industry.

The Philippines also has one of the world's largest overseas populations, with millions of Filipinos living and working abroad.

Climate

The Philippines has a tropical and maritime climate characterised by relatively high temperatures, high humidity and abundant rainfall. The country's average annual temperature is approximately 26.6°C. PAGASA

The country generally experiences wet and dry seasons, although the exact timing varies by region.

The Philippines is also exposed to tropical storms and typhoons, particularly during the western Pacific typhoon season.

Heavy rainfall, flooding, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic activity can occur in different parts of the country.

Families relocating from the United States should consider the local climate carefully when selecting housing, particularly in areas exposed to flooding or severe weather.

Economy

The Philippine economy is diversified and includes services, manufacturing, electronics, business-process outsourcing, information technology, tourism, agriculture, construction, retail, financial services and remittances.

The country has become a major international centre for business-process outsourcing and shared services, supported by its large English-speaking workforce.

Manufacturing and electronics are also important components of the economy.

Remittances from overseas Filipino workers and the wider Filipino diaspora make an important contribution to the economy.

Major commercial centres include Metro Manila, Cebu and Davao.

Language

Filipino and English are the official languages of the Philippines.

English is widely used in government, education, business, law and professional services.

Numerous regional languages are also spoken throughout the country, including Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon and Waray.

For U.S. expatriates, the widespread use of English can make everyday communication considerably easier than in many other Asian countries. Philippine Mission in Geneva

Religion

The Philippines is predominantly Christian, with Roman Catholicism being the largest religious denomination.

There are also significant Protestant, Iglesia ni Cristo, Muslim and other religious communities.

Islam is particularly prominent in parts of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

The country's diverse religious traditions influence public holidays, festivals, family life and local customs.

Education

The Philippine education system includes early childhood, elementary, secondary and higher education.

English is widely used as a language of instruction alongside Filipino.

There are government-funded public schools as well as private schools, international schools and universities.

International schools are available in Metro Manila and several other major cities.

Families relocating from the United States should investigate international and private schools well in advance, particularly if they require an American or International Baccalaureate curriculum.

Higher education institutions are concentrated in major urban centres, including Manila, Quezon City, Cebu and Davao.

Healthcare

The Philippines has both public and private healthcare systems.

Major cities such as Manila, Cebu and Davao have private hospitals and specialist medical facilities that provide a range of modern healthcare services.

Healthcare facilities and specialist services can be more limited in rural areas and smaller islands.

U.S. citizens relocating to the Philippines should ensure they have appropriate international or local private medical insurance.

The U.S. Department of State notes that healthcare facilities are available throughout the country, but rural facilities may have more limited resources and patients may sometimes be required to pay medical costs upfront. [U.S. Travel Information](#)

Currency

The currency is the Philippine peso (PHP or ₱).

The peso is divided into 100 centavos.

Banknotes are issued in denominations including ₱20, ₱50, ₱100, ₱200, ₱500 and ₱1,000.

Coins are issued in various denominations including centavos and pesos.

Major credit and debit cards are widely accepted in cities and commercial areas, although cash remains useful for smaller businesses, markets and more remote areas. Philippine Mission in Geneva

Utilities

The Philippines generally uses 220v AC, 60Hz electricity.

Both U.S.-style flat-pin outlets and other socket configurations may be encountered.

Although some U.S. plugs may physically fit Philippine outlets, the voltage is generally higher than the 120v supply used in the United States.

U.S. appliances labelled only 110–120v should not be connected directly to a Philippine 220v supply.

Check all electrical appliances before shipping.

Equipment labelled "100–240v, 50/60Hz" is generally dual voltage and can be used with the appropriate plug adapter.

Television and Electronics

U.S. televisions and other electronic equipment should be checked for voltage compatibility before shipping.

Television broadcasting standards, streaming services and subscription arrangements can differ between the United States and the Philippines.

Modern laptops, tablets, phones, cameras and chargers are frequently dual voltage, but the manufacturer's specifications should always be checked.

Transport

The Philippines has a mixture of private cars, taxis, buses, jeepneys, tricycles, rail services and ride-hailing services.

Metro Manila has an extensive road network but can experience significant traffic congestion.

Domestic air travel is particularly important because the country is an archipelago, with flights connecting Manila, Cebu, Davao and other major islands.

Ferries and other maritime services also connect many islands.

The Philippines drives on the right-hand side of the road, as in the United States.

Part 2 – Philippines Import Customs Regulations

The following information provides general guidance for U.S. residents relocating to the Philippines with household goods and personal effects.

Philippine customs requirements differ according to the status of the person importing the goods.

Returning Filipino residents, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and Overseas Filipinos may qualify for specific conditional duty and tax exemptions under the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA).

U.S. citizens who are moving to the Philippines for the first time do not automatically receive the same privileges as returning Filipino residents and should have their shipment assessed before shipping.

Returning Filipino Residents

The Philippine Bureau of Customs defines a Returning Resident as a Philippine national who has stayed in a foreign country for at least six months.

Returning residents may qualify for conditional duty and tax exemption on eligible personal and household effects.

The goods must generally:

- Be for personal or household use.
- Not be in commercial quantities.
- Not be intended for barter, sale or hire.
- Accompany the returning resident or arrive within 60 days after the owner's return.
- Fall within the applicable value limits. Bureau of Customs+1

The current value limits are:

- PHP 350,000 for a returning resident who has stayed abroad for at least 10 years and has not used the privilege during the preceding 10 years.
- PHP 250,000 for a returning resident who has stayed abroad for at least 5 but not more than 10 years and has not used the privilege during the preceding 5 years.
- PHP 150,000 for a returning resident who has stayed abroad for less than 5 years and has not used the privilege during the preceding 6 months.

Amounts above the applicable threshold may be subject to duties and taxes. Bureau of Customs+1

Overseas Filipino Workers

Overseas Filipino Workers may qualify for the same returning-resident privileges and may also receive an additional duty and tax exemption for certain home appliances and other durables.

The additional exemption is subject to the applicable value and quantity restrictions.

The Bureau of Customs states that qualifying OFWs may bring one of each kind of eligible home appliance or durable once in a calendar year, subject to the applicable value limits. Bureau of Customs

Overseas Filipinos Resettling in the Philippines

Filipino citizens, former Filipino citizens and their families who have become residents or citizens of other countries and are returning to settle in the Philippines may qualify for conditional duty and tax exemptions.

The privilege can cover eligible professional instruments, tools of trade, wearing apparel, domestic animals and personal and household effects, subject to the applicable conditions.

Vehicles, vessels, aircraft, machinery and similar goods used for manufacturing are excluded from this particular privilege. Bureau of Customs

Balikbayan Boxes

Filipino residents, OFWs and certain Filipinos living abroad may send balikbayan boxes containing personal and household effects to the Philippines.

The Bureau of Customs states that qualifying balikbayan boxes can be exempt from applicable duties and taxes provided the conditions are met.

The exemption is generally subject to a maximum FCA value of PHP 150,000 and may be used up to three times in a calendar year.

Amounts above the applicable limit may be subject to duties and taxes. Bureau of Customs+1

Documentation

Documentation for a household goods shipment may include:

- Passport.
- Detailed packing inventory.
- Bill of Lading or Air Waybill.
- Packing list.
- Proof of residence or relocation.
- Employment or immigration documentation where applicable.
- Personal and Household Effects Declaration (PHED), where applicable.
- Tax Exemption Indorsement (TEI), where applicable.
- Original invoices or receipts for new goods where required.
- Supporting permits or clearances for regulated goods.

Returning residents and qualifying OFWs may need to complete the Bureau of Customs Personal and Household Effects Declaration Form and obtain the appropriate Tax Exemption Indorsement. Bureau of Customs+1

General Importation of Household Goods

If a shipment does not qualify for a specific duty and tax exemption, imported goods may be assessed applicable customs duties and taxes.

The Bureau of Customs states that imported goods are generally subject to customs requirements unless a specific exemption applies.

A detailed and accurate inventory is therefore particularly important for household goods shipments.

New Furniture and Household Goods

Newly purchased furniture, appliances, electronics and household goods should be clearly identified and supported by invoices where available.

Large quantities of identical new items may be regarded as commercial rather than personal goods.

Goods intended for resale are not normally treated as personal effects.

Food Items

Food products are regulated imports in the Philippines.

Depending on the product, permits, clearances or other requirements may apply.

Food products, particularly meat, dairy products, agricultural products and other animal or plant products, should not be included in a household shipment without checking the current requirements.

The Bureau of Customs identifies food products among regulated importations that may require approval from the relevant government agency. Bureau of Customs

Alcohol

Alcoholic beverages may be subject to customs duties, excise taxes and other requirements.

They should not be included in a household goods shipment without confirming the applicable regulations.

Special treatment may apply depending on the importer's status and the quantity and type of alcohol.

Tobacco

Tobacco products are regulated and may be subject to duties, taxes, quantity restrictions and other requirements.

Cigarettes, cigars and tobacco products should not be included in a household shipment without checking the current regulations.

Motor Vehicles

Motor vehicles are generally treated separately from normal household effects.

Vehicles are specifically excluded from the ordinary duty and tax-free privilege available to returning residents and are also excluded from the relevant personal-effects exemption for Overseas Filipinos. Bureau of Customs+1

U.S.-specification vehicles may also be subject to Philippine import, registration, emissions and technical requirements.

Anyone considering shipping a vehicle from the United States should obtain a full customs and registration assessment before shipment.

The total cost can include:

- Customs duties.
- VAT and other taxes.
- Customs fees.
- Port and storage charges.
- Inspection.
- Registration.
- Insurance.
- Compliance or modification costs.

Firearms and Weapons

Firearms, ammunition, explosives and certain weapons are restricted imports.

They should not be included in household goods without obtaining all necessary permits and approvals before shipment.

The Philippine Bureau of Customs specifically lists firearms, ammunition, explosives and weapons of war among restricted imports. Bureau of Customs

Drugs and Narcotics

The Philippines has strict laws concerning controlled drugs and narcotics.

Marijuana, including cannabis products, CBD products and other controlled substances, should not be included in a household shipment.

The Bureau of Customs lists marijuana, opium, heroin and other narcotics or synthetic drugs among restricted imports. Bureau of Customs

U.S. citizens should not assume that a product legally available with a prescription in a U.S. state is legal to import into the Philippines. The U.S. Department of State specifically warns against bringing marijuana, including CBD oil, hemp-derived products, edibles and vape cartridges into the Philippines. U.S. Travel Information

Prescription Medicines

Prescription medicines should be kept in their original packaging and accompanied by appropriate medical documentation.

Certain medicines and controlled substances may require additional approvals.

Before shipping medication, the specific medicine and quantity should be checked against current Philippine requirements.

Pets

Dogs, cats and other live animals are regulated imports.

The Philippine Bureau of Customs states that an international veterinary health certificate and a Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) from the Bureau of Animal Industry are required for the importation of pets and other live animals. Animals arriving without the required documentation may be seized, confiscated or refused admission. Bureau of Customs

Pet owners should begin preparations well in advance of their move because veterinary certificates, vaccinations, permits and airline requirements can affect the timing of the shipment.

Plants and Plant Products

Live plants and plant products are regulated imports.

An international phytosanitary certificate and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance from the Bureau of Plant Industry may be required.

Plants arriving without the required documentation may be seized, confiscated or refused entry. Bureau of Customs

Do not include soil, plants or seeds in household goods without confirming the applicable requirements.

Endangered Species and CITES

Wildlife and products made from endangered species are subject to strict international and Philippine controls.

Items such as ivory, certain animal skins, feathers, coral and other wildlife products may require CITES documentation or may be prohibited.

Old pianos and antiques can sometimes contain ivory components, so specialist advice should be obtained before shipping older items.

Prohibited and Restricted Goods

The Philippine Bureau of Customs divides goods into regulated, restricted and prohibited categories.

Regulated goods may require permits, licences or clearances from the relevant government agency before importation.

Restricted goods can only be imported where authorised by law or regulation.

Prohibited goods cannot legally be imported. Bureau of Customs+1

Examples of controlled or restricted goods can include:

- Firearms and ammunition.
- Explosives.
- Narcotics and controlled drugs.
- Food products.
- Plant products.
- Animal products.
- Certain medicines.
- Used motor vehicles.
- Electrical appliances.
- Telecommunications equipment.
- Tobacco products.
- Certain chemicals and hazardous materials.

The Bureau of Customs recommends checking with Customs or the relevant regulatory agency before importing goods where there is uncertainty. Bureau of Customs+1

Counterfeit Goods

Counterfeit and intellectual-property-infringing goods are prohibited imports.

Do not include counterfeit branded products in a household goods shipment.

Cash and Currency

Travellers entering or leaving the Philippines with foreign currency or other monetary instruments exceeding the applicable declaration threshold must make the required customs declaration.

The U.S. Department of State currently advises that amounts greater than US\$10,000 or its equivalent must be declared to Philippine Customs.

Philippine pesos above the applicable threshold are subject to separate Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas requirements. [U.S. Travel Information](#)

Valuable Items and Jewellery

Valuable jewellery, precious metals, artwork, antiques and other high-value possessions should be clearly described on the inventory.

Supporting purchase receipts, valuations and ownership documents should be retained where available.

Wooden Packing Materials

Wooden crates, pallets, dunnage and other wood packaging used for international shipments may be subject to phytosanitary requirements.

Where applicable, wooden packaging should comply with the relevant ISPM 15 international standards.

Your packing company should ensure that all wooden packing materials used for a U.S.-to-Philippines shipment meet the current requirements before loading.

Customs Inspection

Household shipments may be examined by Philippine Customs.

Incorrect, incomplete or vague descriptions can result in delays, additional examination and potential charges.

The Bureau of Customs advises importers to ensure that import documentation, including invoices, packing lists, Bills of Lading or Air Waybills and other supporting documents, is complete and consistent. [Bureau of Customs](#)

Disclaimer

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in this Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date, One Way America cannot accept liability for any inaccuracies, omissions or changes in Philippine, U.S. or international regulations.

Customs, immigration, tax, health, vehicle, pet, food, plant and import requirements can change without notice.

Anyone relocating from the United States to the Philippines should confirm current requirements with the Philippine Bureau of Customs, the relevant Philippine government agencies and their customs or relocation agent before shipping household goods.

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More info on our website: <https://onewayamerica.com>.