

EXPLORE!

North Philippines Explorer

13 days

Philippines - Trip code PIP



North Philippines Explorer

Our Philippines adventure focusses on Luzon, the largest island of the archipelago. We explore the whole island discovering contrasting landscapes which include the incredible 2000 year-old Banaue rice terraces of the indigenous Ifugao people within the central Cordillera Mountains; the sand dunes of Laoag in the north, and tranquil Pandin Lake surrounded by lush green coconut trees in the south. We have the opportunity to hike to the crater lake of Mount Pinatubo volcano as well as explore the teeming megacity of Manila and enjoy the charm of UNESCO-listed colonial Vigan by horse-drawn carriage.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Manila** - Explore the historical quarter of the city and bustling Chinatown
- ★ **Banaue rice terraces** - Wonder at the 2000-year old terraces built by the indigenous Ifugao people
- ★ **Sagada** - Discover mysterious burial caves and ancient hanging coffins
- ★ **Vigan** - Explore the UNESCO-listed Mestizo district on foot and by kalesa (horse-drawn carriage)
- ★ **Volcano walks** - Visit Taal, one of the world's smallest volcanos, and hike Mount Pinatubo

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Manila

Located on the eastern shores of Manila Bay, Manila lies at the heart of Spanish activity in the Far East during the 16th century. Once known as the 'Pearl of the Orient', the city went on to witness several Chinese insurrections, a British occupation and a Sepoy mutiny, a war against the Spanish and the Americans and some of the most bitter fighting of World War II. Today it is the capital of the Philippines and one of the most populous cities in the world.



Accommodation: Bayleaf Intramuros Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - In Manila: explore the old town; free afternoon

This morning we take a tour of the city by bus visiting Rizal Park and the historic walled city of Intramuros, where we find San Agustin, the oldest church in the Philippines and a UNESCO World Heritage site. In nearby Binondo, one of the first Chinatowns in the world, we explore the network of alleys and side streets that lead us to Binondo Church, Santa Cruz Church and the old commercial district of Escolta where we'll see art deco structures, such as the Perez-Semanilio building, that survived World War II. The afternoon is free. The bus will return to the hotel, however you may wish to stay in Chinatown for lunch and further exploration of this colourful area, visiting one of the Taoist temples or mingling with the locals in the street markets, returning independently by taxi.



Accommodation: Bayleaf Intramuros Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 3 - Drive to San Pablo City for rafting on Pandin Lake; drive to Tagaytay

We depart Manila this morning and head south to San Pablo City in Laguna Province, where we find ourselves amongst tropical foliage and coconut trees, scenery typical to rural part of the Philippines. We board a large bamboo raft on Pandin Lake and paddle across the tranquil waters. Those wishing to swim are welcome to take a dip. We enjoy an included lunch in traditional Filipino style - using our hands to eat food served on a banana leaf. Afterward we drive on to Tagaytay for an overnight stay.



Accommodation: View Park Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - From Tagaytay visit Taal Volcano; drive to Manila and fly to Laoag

This morning we drive to nearby Taal Volcano, one of the smallest in the world. The volcano itself is located on Taal Crater Island within a lake, a caldera formed by prehistoric eruptions, and is still active. We enjoy a boat trip across the lake to the island, where we trek up to the crater to be rewarded with beautiful panoramic views of the caldera lake. You may wish to treat yourself to a fresh coconut drink as you enjoy the scenery. We make our way back to the mainland where we will stop for a lunch break before driving back to Manila for our late afternoon flight north to Laoag. Total walking time is around three hours with a climb of 300 m.



Accommodation: Java Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - In Laoag; free time with optional excursion to the beach for the day

We have a full free day to enjoy the many activities available nearby. Optional activities include an excursion to Paoay Lake and the Baroque 18th century UNESCO Paoay Church, otherwise known as the Church of Saint Augustine - famous for its unusual architecture and bell tower built with coral stones; a Walk across the coastal La Paz sand dunes or an excursion to the tropical palm fringed sandy beaches of Pagudpud on the northern coast of Luzon, around an hour and half from Laoag.



Accommodation: Java Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Drive to the colonial city of Vigan; free afternoon

We spend the morning driving south to the charming town of Vigan. One of the few Hispanic towns left in the Philippines. Vigan's historic heart was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1999. The best-preserved example of a Spanish colonial town in Asia, it is home to cobbled streets, colonial villas and the imposing grandeur of a 16th century cathedral. This afternoon is free for you to relax or head out and get a feel of the city ahead of our full day's sightseeing tomorrow.



Accommodation: Hotel Felicidad (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - In Vigan; full day sightseeing by horse drawn carriage and on foot

This morning we discover Vigan by kalesa (horse-drawn carriage). We see well-preserved old stone houses made from hard adobe stones such as the Syquia Mansion, a former presidential residence. We also visit the Burgos museum, a small ethnographic museum. Later we take a short drive to a pottery workshop known locally as Burnayan, where we learn about the ancient tradition of pottery making, dating from the 16th century. Here we can also browse shops that showcase hand woven fabrics and antiques. We head back to the city and on to Calle Don Mena Crisologo where we sample famous Ilocano delicacies such as the longaniza (sausage), empanada (meat pie) and bagnet (deep fried crispy pork crackling).



Accommodation: Hotel Felicidad (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Drive to Sagada; discover burial caves and hanging coffins

After an early breakfast, we drive to Sagada, arriving in the early afternoon. We visit nearby Echo Valley to see the mysterious hanging coffins and Lumiang cave, a burial cave. The indigenous population have been burying their dead in coffins perched high on cliff faces for over 2000 years. No one knows exactly why this practice started but it is believed to both keep the preserved bodies safe from wild animals and take them one step closer to heaven.



Accommodation: Masferre Country Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel

DAY 9 - Drive to Banaue Rice Terraces; visit Bontoc Museum en route

We make our way this morning to Bontoc, a bustling market town and former capital of the Cordillera region. We will visit its small museum that has a number of interesting exhibits about the region's indigenous communities. We continue on to Banaue (1300 m). Carved into the mountains of Ifugao province, the 2000-year old rice terraces that occupy these high, fertile landscapes are considered by Filipinos to be the Eighth Wonder of the World. Our destination is the town of Banaue, our gateway into the remote villages of the Cordilleras. The Banaue Rice Terraces and recognised as a National Culture Treasure along with the rice terraces that are found in Mayoyao, Batad, Bangaan, Kiangan and Hungduan. It is believed that if these ancient terraces were laid end to end they would reach halfway around the planet! This afternoon we take a local jeepney (a converted jeep/bus) and drive out towards Banga-an village, from where we walk up to a viewpoint overlooking the terraces. Returning to the town's public market, we have a chance to mingle and barter with friendly locals before returning to our hotel later today. Total walking time is around 30 minutes.



Accommodation: Banaue Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - In Banaue; visit Hapao Rice Terraces

This morning, we ride a jeepney to Sadel, the starting point of our trek to Batad rice terraces. This afternoon we drive through the mountains, enjoying some spectacular views of the Cordilleras as we pass through a series of deep gorges and canyons to the Hapao Rice Terraces where we are rewarded with spectacular scenery of terraced rice fields cut through by the clear waters of the Hapao River. Total walking time is around two hours.



Accommodation: Banaue Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Drive to Mabalacat; free late afternoon in rural surrounds

Today sees an early start for a full day drive to Mabalacat, our base for climbing Mount Pinatubo tomorrow morning. Located in the mountains that separate the central plains from the west coast of Luzon Island, Mount Pinotubo volcano was the scene of the second largest terrestrial eruption of the 20th century when, on June 15, 1991, it erupted with an intensity that was ten times that of the Mount St Helens volcano, a decade earlier. On arrival in Mabalacat later on today we have the opportunity to rest in tranquil rural surroundings.



Accommodation: Abes Farm (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Climb Mount Pinatubo; drive to Manila

This morning we leave quite early for the drive to the Santa Juliana station, where we take 4x4 jeepneys to drive to the foot of the trail head , from where we trek to the volcano's crater - a relatively easy walk of usually around two hours each way, although in the months of March to May when there may be some erosion of the path due to rainfall, the roads are manually paved to allow access, making the jeepney drive longer and the trek shorter. After a lunch break we return by road to Manila for our final night. Total walking time is around four hours.



Accommodation: Bayleaf Intramuros Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Tour ends in Manila

Our tour ends after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

The Philippines have been listed in the Top Ten destinations to travel to by the Lonely Planet in 2015 and we believe this trip showcases the diversity of the landscape and culture of the island of Luzon. This trip is ideal for reasonably fit and adventurous travellers as there are a few early starts and some long days on the road as well as plenty of activity - including a volcano climb and walking amongst rice terraces. All in all this holiday is an unforgettable trip to one of the less visited South East Asian destinations.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
4WD
Boat



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Philippines Holidays & Tours

Climate

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. For up-to-date information on the weather worldwide please visit www.bbc.co.uk/weather. The central and northern islands of the Philippines have a tropical monsoon type of climate with a single season of heavy rain. In most areas the wettest time is from July to October with rainfall being particularly heavy in the period August to October, when much of it comes from tropical typhoons in the South China Sea. Temperatures remain fairly high throughout the year (late 20's Celsius) except in the mountains which will be cooler.

Time difference to GMT

+8

Plugs

2 Pin Flat

Religion

Catholicism

Language

Filipino

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Full day excursion to Pagupud Beach from Laoag 30US\$ pp (minimum 4 pax)

Clothing

The region is tropical (humid) and days can be very hot although evenings in the Cordillera mountains will be cooler. Casual, loose fitting clothes are the most practical. We recommend shorts, lightweight trousers and skirts, lightweight shirts and T-shirts. An umbrella is excellent in sticky, tropical conditions and a sunhat is essential.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes for the Mount Pinatubo and Banaue rice terrace walks. Trainers and/or sandals for other sightseeing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Binoculars, torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor suncream (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses and a lip salve with sun protection.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US\$40.

International Departure Taxes

If you're leaving the country from Cebu Mactan airport you must pay a departure tax of 750 pesos in local currency or the equivalent in US dollars. From 1 February, there's no longer a departure tax at Manila airport.

Country Information

Philippines Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£4

Dinner price

£6

Beer price

£1.00 - 3.00

Water price

£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Peso

Recommended Currency For Exchange

USDollars

Where To Exchange

In all major towns and cities

ATM Availability

In all major towns and cities

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants and shops

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Boat

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Philippines: Citizens of the UK, EU, Australia, US and Canada may enter for 21 days without a visa. However, you will need to provide a valid flight ticket to show that your return journey is within this time. All passports must have at least 6 months validity remaining on exit from the Philippines. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

Philippines Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Although not compulsory travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.
