



Philippines Discovery Dossier

Go Beyond Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 3

Manila - Pampanga - Banaue - Baguio - Vigan - Laoag - Bohol - Cebu

This 14-day adventure takes you through the highlights of the Philippines; exploring the magnificent nature and intriguing culture of the stunning archipelago. Journey from the rice terraces of the northern highlands to colonial Vigan and the sand dune of Laoag before finishing on the beaches of Bohol.

- Explore the captivating rice terraces of Banaue
- Learn about the local culture of the northern highlands (cordilleras)
- Marvel at the natural beauty of the Chocolate Hills
- Wander the charming streets of colonial Vigan
- See the hanging coffins and burial caves of Sagada
- Spot tarsiers in Bohol – the smallest primate in the world



Philippines Discovery tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.

Classic Tours:

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destination away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime.

Physical Level 3:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Philippines Discovery' is rated as a **physical level 3** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time in vehicles rather than hiking or travelling to remote locations. You'll be getting on and off coaches, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time often on uneven surfaces
- Most overland journeys are comfortable but there will be a few transfers on mountainous (but safe) roads.

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Country Profile: The Philippines

The Philippines is one of the lesser visited jewels of Southeast Asia; offering a wealth of wonderful sights and experiences. This archipelagic country consists of approximately 7,641 islands and is blessed with stunning highlands, colonial towns and world class beaches. It is an outstanding cultural destination with a fascinating history where English is widely spoken, allowing for great local interactions. Begin your tour in the bustling capital of Manila before heading north to the rural heartland of Luzon, exploring volcanoes and beautiful rice terraces. After visiting the old Spanish town of Vigan, fly south to the island of Bohol where you can discover the wondrous Chocolate Hills and see tarsiers. Your tour ends in the pleasant town of Cebu.

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to Reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in Manila and end the tour on Day 13 in Cebu. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

Itinerary – Philippines Discovery

Day 1: Fly to Manila

Fly to Manila today with an evening arrival and transfer to your hotel in the cosmopolitan area of the city. You will have a welcome meeting at your hotel.



Destination Information

Manila – Manila is a rapidly developing city with a fascinating history and an up and coming culinary scene. This city is fast paced with multi-cultural influences and a vibrant nightlife.

Day 2: Manila – Pampanga

This morning enjoy a rolling tour of Intramuros; the historic centre of Manila. The old walled city was mostly destroyed in WW2 but rebuilt in a colonial style, featuring an original baroque church. Later, you will head north to the hills of Pampanga where you can experience a cooking class before arriving at your accommodation in lush green surroundings.



Destination Information

Intramuros – Literally translated as “within the walls”, is the former centre of ecclesiastical and commercial power. Shielded from the rest of the city by perfectly preserved high walls, Intramuros is a quiet area and is home to colonial heritage of great interest including Fort Santiago, Casa Manila and San Agustin Church – the latter of which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Pampanga – Pampanga is the culinary capital of the Philippines located in the shadow of Mount Arayat. Sitting on the wide plains of Central Luzon, it is known for its hot air balloon and lantern festivals, as well as its strong Christian traditions.

Day 3: Mount Pinatubo

Early this morning you transfer one hour to the base of Mount Pinatubo to hike to the crater lake at its summit. The hike duration is typically three hours uphill on a gentle incline and two hours back down. On the descent from the crater, visit Taruken Village, settlement of the Aetas of Capas, who are among the 12 million indigenous peoples in the Philippines. For those not keen on the volcano hike, there are lovely nature trails available for walking around the Green Canyon nature resort where you are staying.



Destination Information

Mount Pinatubo – is an active volcano in the Cabusilan Mountains. The eruption of this volcano in 1991 was the second largest in the 20th Century and led to the evacuation of 20,000 people and great damage to the local communities. A decade or so later, the indigenous population returned to their ancestral lands to start rebuilding.

Day 4: Banaue

Today you will be on the road, transferring to the northern highlands (cordilleras) and gateway to the rice terraces of Banaue. En route visit San Guillermo Church in the town of Bacolor.



Destination Information

Bacolor – This small town on Pampanga was restored following the eruption of Mount Pinatubo and is known for the iconic San Guillermo Church.

Banaue – This highland region is the centre of Ifugao culture and home to dramatic rice terraces. The region features ancient mud walled and stone walled terraces surrounded by incredible mountain scenery.

Day 5: Hapao Rice Terraces

This morning board an 18 passenger jeepney and drive further up into the highlands. Enjoy a largely flat trek through the Hapao Rice Terraces. At the top of the terraces, arrive at a hot spring where you can bathe in the stream and in the warm rockpool. Afterwards have lunch at the Native Village Inn with fantastic views over the valley. There is an alternative easier trek which may be possible to arrange, or guests can remain at the Banaue Hotel to enjoy the pool and facilities there.



Day 6: Sagada

Sagada is located two hours drive from Banaue via beautiful mountain passes. In this region you will find the famous burial caves as well as the hanging coffins suspended on rock faces. Enjoy a full day tour before returning to the Banaue Hotel.



Destination Information

Sagada – This quaint region consists of breathtaking cloud covered mountains, magnificent caves and dramatic waterfalls. The limestone cliffs and caves served as burial grounds for the native residents. The town is known as a quiet refuge and home to indigenous communities.

Day 7: Baguio

Today you will travel to the pleasant city of Baguio which has several places of interest including a presidential mansion, market area, weaving workshops and the municipal park.



Destination Information

Baguio – Baguio is a university town which presents a welcoming blend of hill tribe culture and urban dwellers. It serves as a nice stopping point between the highlands and the coast.

Day 8: Vigan

Head to the coast today and arrive at the charming colonial settlements of Vigan – a UNESCO World Heritage town. Wander the cobblestone streets visiting colonial houses, museums and a pottery workshop.

**Destination Information**

Vigan – Vigan is the oldest surviving Spanish colonial city in the Philippines that brings images of antiquated houses, cobbled narrow street and friendly faces. A stroll through Vigan is like experiencing a place where time has stood still, and the thoroughfare of Crisologo Street is a wonderful spot to enjoy the local empanadas or ice cream.

Day 9: Laoag & Fly to Manila

Continue north to the city of Laoag for some sightseeing in this fascinating town. First stop is Bantay Church and Bell Tower which also houses the Chapel of Ruins. Later we visit St Williams Cathedral and the Sinking Bell Tower before visiting its coastal sand dunes. Later this evening you will fly back to Manila.

**Destination Information**

Laoag – Laoag is a northern city with some history behind it, known for its nearby sand dunes and UNESCO church.

St Williams Cathedral & Sinking Bell Tower – First built in 1612, the church is known for its Italian Renaissance design. The bell tower is said to be sinking at a rate of an inch per year because it was built on sandy foundations despite its size and mass.

Day 10: Fly to Bohol

Take a morning flight to the beautiful island of Bohol and explore Panglao Island including Hinagdanan Cave and the lovely Bohol Bee Farm where you can enjoy organic ice cream. Arrive at your hotel mid-afternoon.



Destination Information:

Hinagdanan Cave – A karst cave made of limestone accessible from two small holes on the ground. The tiny entrance leads to an underground cavern with a cold pool that has become a swimming spot for locals and visitors alike.

Panglao Island – This island connected to Bohol by a road bridge and known for picture perfect beaches including the vibrant Alona Beach which is a great spot for a cocktail.

Day 11: Chocolate Hills

Today you will take a leisurely drive through the scenic countryside of thick palms, coconut plantations and mahogany forest to the town of Carmen and the best point to view the stunning Chocolate Hills. Later we will also have lunch cruising along Loboc River before visiting the Tarsier Sanctuary.



Destination Information

Chocolate Hills – This is a world class scenic attraction; a geological formation with at least one thousand round hills spread over an area of more than 50 square kilometres. They are covered in green grass that turns brown during the dry season, hence the name.

Tarsier Sanctuary – As the smallest primate in the world, tarsiers are intriguing creatures with large round eyes and long fingers. The sanctuary is essentially a large forest run by the Philippine Tarsier Foundation and dedicated to the conservation of the endangered animals and their habitat.

Day 12: Cebu

Take a ferry to Cebu and enjoy a tour finishing with great views overlooking the city and bay. Places of interest here include colonial downtown, modern uptown, the Roman style Temple of Leah and a flower farm. Cebu is also known as the best place in the Philippines to try the local delicacy lechon (roast suckling pig).



Destination Information

Cebu – Commonly called the ‘second city’ in the Philippines, Cebu is a bustling commercial centre, with well-regarded universities drawing students from across the country as well as internationally. Known as a hub for local Philippine delicacies, this city has lively bars, eateries and shopping opportunities to offer its visitors.

Day 13 - 14: Cebu to Australia

After breakfast this morning, today is at your leisure until it is time to transfer to the airport for our flight back to Australia. Due to flight schedules, you may arrive home on the following day.



Philippines Discovery Travel Information

Visas

Australian passport holders do not require a visa for entry into the Philippines if they are travelling for less than 30 days for tourist purposes. You will need to ensure that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Eating in the Philippines

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. The Philippines in particular, have some excellent local dishes worth trying such as tasty curries, fresh seafood dishes and lechon (suckling pig), mechado (beef) and afritada (prok or chicken prepared with vegetables).

The cuisine here typically has a mix of both Chinese and Spanish influences with unique Filipino twists that make for some memorable dining experiences. Like many other Asian nations, rice is a staple and usually prepared at most meals. The Philippines is also known for its desserts as the ice cream and smoothies are famous for being both refreshing and delicious.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure.

While western options are usually available, they may be prepared differently than what we are used to in Australia. Passengers with any dietary requirements should advise our Reservations Team at time of booking so that arrangements can be made.

When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. Please refer to your Travel Guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a large rural hotel to a boutique style beach resort. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and The Philippines. All group tour hotels have

private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning in the hotter regions, TV and telephones. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Smaller minivans and jeepneys are used for excursions in the highlands. Roads in the Philippines have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only. There may be sections of road where the surface is comparatively bumpy, but our drivers will do their best to lessen the impact.

Seatbelts: Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Southeast Asia and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Air: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors.

Development in the Philippines

Although the Philippines is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities in some areas. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

The Philippines public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Philippine Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Tourist attractions will be open but may be crowded. Lunar New Year 12th February 2021, Bataan Day is on 9th April every year, Philippines Independence Day is 12th June and Bonifacio Day is celebrated on 30th November 2021

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides only.

Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at workshops or factories which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Packing list and Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

Exchanging Cash

The local currency in the Philippines is the Philippine Peso (PHP) It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling outside of the main cities. Australian Dollars and US Dollars are easily exchanged in the Philippines, provided notes are undamaged. ATM are widely available and international credit cards are generally accepted, though we do suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as these along with exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of **AU\$250.00** per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at many of the sites involve climbing quite a number of steps. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and oftentimes without handrails. You sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Cultural Difference

The Philippines has a mix of local religions; the most prevalent being Christianity. Please be considerate of the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

Appropriate Dress

When visiting churches, temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout Southeast Asia – for Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice along with a link to our website where you can find your visa information (if applicable) and other important information. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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