

## Summary of Smartraveller Social Media (Facebook/Twitter) updates regarding travel advice for the Philippines (1 January 2020 – 6 March 2020)

<i>Date/Time</i>	<i>Platform (Facebook/Twitter)</i>	<i>Link reference</i>	<i>Content</i>
9/01/2020 10:49am	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1215057923497312258">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1215057923497312258</a>	#Philippines: Feast of the #BlackNazarene will take place in #Manila on 9 January. Expect road closures, major traffic disruptions and increased security. Be aware of your surroundings and follow the advice of local authorities. #BeInformed #BePrepared <a href="https://t.co/fsmS2IFtIO">https://t.co/fsmS2IFtIO</a> <a href="https://t.co/BRoEwxAh24">https://t.co/BRoEwxAh24</a>
9/01/2020 10:53am	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2831549566912447/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2831549566912447/</a>	#Philippines: Feast of the #BlackNazarene will take place in #Manila on 9 January. Expect road closures, major traffic disruptions and increased security. Be aware of your surroundings and follow the advice of local authorities. See our travel advice for more: <a href="http://smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/philippines">smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/philippines</a> #BeInformed #BePrepared
12/01/2020 20:30pm	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1216291450490474501">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1216291450490474501</a>	#Philippines. Increased activity at @TaalVolcano: 1 kilometre-high ash plume and volcanic tremors. @phivolcs_dost recommends evacuating Tass Volcano, Agoncillo, Laurel, and Batangas areas. Monitor media and follow advice of local authorities.
12/01/2020 20:47pm	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2838998206167583/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2838998206167583/</a>	#Philippines. Increased activity at the Taal Volcano: 1 kilometre-high ash plume and volcanic tremors. The Philippine Institute of Vulcanology and Seismology (@phivolcs_dost) recommends evacuating Tass Volcano, Agoncillo, Laurel, and Batangas areas. Monitor media and follow advice of local authorities.
13/01/2020 0:16am	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1216348257753817088">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1216348257753817088</a>	#Philippines. PHIVOLCS have raised status of @taalvolcano to Alert Level 4 (Hazardous Eruption Imminent). Residents in the Batangas towns of Talisay, Balete, and San Nicolas are being evacuated. Avoid the area, monitor media and follow advice of local authorities.
13/01/2020 0:21am	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2839359519464785/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2839359519464785/</a>	#Philippines. PHIVOLCS have raised the status of Taal Volcano to Alert Level 4 (Hazardous Eruption Imminent). Residents in the Batangas towns of Talisay, Balete, and San Nicolas are being evacuated. Due to the ash fall, flights to and from Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) have been cancelled as of 730 PM.

Date/Time	Platform (Facebook/Twitter)	Link reference	Content
			Avoid the area, monitor media and follow advice of local authorities.
14/01/2020 12:25pm	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2842666755800728/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2842666755800728/</a>	#Philippines: #Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January. Follow advice from local authorities and any evacuation orders. Check with your airline/tour operator if there are disruptions to your travel plans. #beinformed #beprepared <a href="http://smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/philippines">smartraveller.gov.au/destinations/asia/philippines</a>
14/01/2020 12:26pm	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1216894261041385472">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1216894261041385472</a>	#Philippines: #TaalVolcano, in the southern Luzon province of #Batangas, erupted on 12 January. Follow advice from local authorities and any evacuation orders. Check with your airline/tour operator if there are disruptions to your travel plans. <a href="https://t.co/fsmS2lFtIO">https://t.co/fsmS2lFtIO</a>
1/02/2020 22:44pm	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1223572801652551680">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1223572801652551680</a>	#Philippines : A case of novel #coronavirus has been confirmed. Flights between China and Philippines have been disrupted. Arriving passengers may be screened and possibly quarantined. Subscribe for updates. #beprepared #be informed <a href="https://t.co/ik5ceAHxJH">https://t.co/ik5ceAHxJH</a>
1/02/2020 22:45pm	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2880504695350267/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2880504695350267/</a>	One case of novel #coronavirus was confirmed in the Philippines. Flights between China and the Philippines have been disrupted. Airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving in the Philippines maybe undergo medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined. All travellers to or from the Philippines should check with their airline or travel provider.  <a href="http://smartraveller.gov.au/Philippines">smartraveller.gov.au/Philippines</a>
3/02/2020 0:13am	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1223957676863844352">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1223957676863844352</a>	Due to the novel #coronavirus, the #Philippines will refuse entry to foreign nationals who have been in China in the previous 14 days. Additional screening is in place and you may be quarantined if you have symptoms. Subscribe for updates. <a href="https://t.co/ik5ceAHxJH">https://t.co/ik5ceAHxJH</a>

Date/Time	Platform (Facebook/Twitter)	Link reference	Content
3/02/2020 0:16am	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2882694808464589/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2882694808464589/</a>	Due to the novel #coronavirus, all foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry to the #Philippines. Airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined. Subscribe to Smartraveller for latest updates. <a href="http://smartraveller.gov.au/Philippines">smartraveller.gov.au/Philippines</a>
13/02/2020 14:19pm	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1227794283186417664">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1227794283186417664</a>	#Philippines: Due to the #COVID-19 outbreak in China, if you've travelled to #China, #HongKong, #Macau or #Taiwan in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. If you've a respiratory illness contact your doctor before travelling. <a href="https://t.co/ik5ceAHxJH">https://t.co/ik5ceAHxJH</a>
13/02/2020 14:21pm	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2904815709585832/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2904815709585832/</a>	Philippines: Due to the #COVID-19 outbreak in China, if you've travelled to #China, #HongKong, #Macau or #Taiwan in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. If you've a respiratory illness contact your doctor before travelling. <a href="http://smartraveller.gov.au/Philippines">smartraveller.gov.au/Philippines</a>
28/02/2020 22:41pm	Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2937684639632272/">https://www.facebook.com/300467140020715/posts/2937684639632272/</a>	Due to the #COVID19 outbreak entry restrictions are in place in the #CookIslands. If you travel from or transit through China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam within the 14 days before travelling to the Cook Islands, you will be denied entry. Check with your airline or tour operator to confirm you meet all entry requirements. #Subscribe for updates. <a href="http://smartraveller.gov.au/cook-islands">smartraveller.gov.au/cook-islands</a>
28/02/2020 22:42pm	Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1233356923866497025">https://twitter.com/Smartraveller/status/1233356923866497025</a>	Due to the #COVID19 outbreak, if you've travelled or transited affected countries you may be denied entry to the #CookIslands. Monitor media for updates and read the #traveladvice. #Subscribe for updates. <a href="https://t.co/ifqeg72t8s">https://t.co/ifqeg72t8s</a>

Published 2 December 2019 4.04pm

## Philippines – Current Advice on 1 January 2020

### Latest update

We've reviewed our travel advice for the Philippines.

### Advice Level summary

We haven't changed our level of advice.

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.

### Advice levels

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall due to crime and terrorism.

See [Safety](#)

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#)

Pay close attention to your personal security and the current health situation. Monitor the media for new and existing risks.

[Reconsider your need to travel](#) to Mindanao.

Reconsider your need to travel to Mindanao due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping. See [Safety](#)

[Reconsider your need to travel](#)

Avoid non-essential travel. Do your research and check that your insurer will cover you. If you do travel, take extra precautions to protect yourself from security and health risks.

[Do not travel](#) to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

Do not travel to:

- central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula
- the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area

due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping.

See [Safety](#)

[Do not travel](#)

If you're already in this location, you should consider leaving if it's safe to do so. If you do travel, get professional security advice. Your travel insurance policy might be void. The Australian Government may not be able to help you.

## Overview

### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)

### Health

- Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.
- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.
- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.

- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

#### Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

#### Travel

- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).
- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.
- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

#### Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

#### Full advice

##### Safety

##### Terrorism

Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system
- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## **Mindanao and the southern Philippines**

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

## **Martial law**

Martial law is in place in Mindanao until 31 December 2019.

Authorities have increased powers to:

- detain suspects
- put in place curfews and checkpoints

Monitor media reports. Do what local authorities say.

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

## **Recent terror attacks**

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.

- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

**More information:**

- [Terrorism](#)

**Kidnapping**

Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula
- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros
- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.



If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

Civil unrest and political tension

Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

Crime

**Violent crime**

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

### **Petty crime and scams**

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.

[Scams](#) including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

### **Swimming safety**

Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

Climate and natural disasters

The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#) including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## Typhoons

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter
- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available
- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

#### **More information:**

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## **Earthquakes and volcanoes**

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)

- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above

## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

Health

Travel insurance

Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

## Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up

- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

**More information:**

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

Medications

Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)

Health risks

**Measles**

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

**Polio**

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

**More information:**

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

**Insect-borne illnesses**

[Malaria](#) [dengue](#) [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#) and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.

If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

**More information:**

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

**HIV/AIDS**

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## Other health risks

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## Fish poisoning

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

### More information:

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)

## Bird flu (avian influenza)

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms



When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

Medical care

## Medical facilities

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

Local laws

Local law

You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

### Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

#### Australian laws

Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)

#### Local customs

Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

#### Dual citizenship

The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

### More information:

- [Dual nationals](#)

#### Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

#### Visas

You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

Arrival formalities

Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave
- amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
- this covers all forms of currency, not only cash

Departure formalities

You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

Passport

## Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

## Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

Money

The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.

Local travel

## Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

### More information:

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

## Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.

### More information:

- [Driving or riding](#)

## Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

## Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

## Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

### More information:

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

## Sea travel

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

**More information:**

- [Travelling by boat](#)

**Air travel**

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

**More information:**

- [Air travel](#)

Local contacts

Emergencies

Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

**Fire and rescue services**

Call 911.

**Medical emergencies**

Call 911.

**Police**

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

Tourism

Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

Consular contacts

Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

### **Australian Embassy, Manila**

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

### **24-hour Consular Emergency Centre**

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia

Travelling to Philippines?

### **Sign up to get the latest travel advice updates.**

Be the first to know official government advice when travelling.

[Get notified](#)

Published 7 January 2020 11.23am

# Philippines

## Latest update

We've reviewed our travel advice for the Philippines.

## Advice Level summary

We haven't changed our level of advice.

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.

## Advice levels

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall due to crime and terrorism.

See [Safety](#)

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#)

Pay close attention to your personal security and the current health situation. Monitor the media for new and existing risks.

[Reconsider your need to travel](#) to Mindanao.

Reconsider your need to travel to Mindanao due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping. See [Safety](#)

[Reconsider your need to travel](#)

Avoid non-essential travel. Do your research and check that your insurer will cover you. If you do travel, take extra precautions to protect yourself from security and health risks.

[Do not travel](#) to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

Do not travel to:

- central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula
- the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area

due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping.

See [Safety](#)

[Do not travel](#)



If you're already in this location, you should consider leaving if it's safe to do so. If you do travel, get professional security advice. Your travel insurance policy might be void. The Australian Government may not be able to help you.

## Overview

### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)

### Health

- Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.
- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.
- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.

- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

#### Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

#### Travel

- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).
- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.
- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

#### Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

#### Full advice

##### Safety

##### Terrorism

Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system
- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## Mindanao and the southern Philippines

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

### **Martial law**

[Martial law is in place in Mindanao until 31 December 2019.](#)

[Authorities have increased powers to:](#)

- [detain suspects](#)
- [put in place curfews and checkpoints](#)

[Monitor media reports. Do what local authorities say.](#)

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

## Recent terror attacks

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.

- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

**More information:**

- [Terrorism](#)

**Kidnapping**

Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula
- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros
- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.

If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

Civil unrest and political tension

Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

Crime

**Violent crime**

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

### **Petty crime and scams**

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.

[Scams](#) including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

### Swimming safety

Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

Climate and natural disasters

The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#) including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## Typhoons

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter
- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available
- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

#### **More information:**

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## **Earthquakes and volcanoes**

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)
- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above



## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

Health

Travel insurance

Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

## Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

**More information:**

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

Medications

Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)

Health risks

**Measles**

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

**Polio**

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

**More information:**

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

**Insect-borne illnesses**

[Malaria](#) [dengue](#) [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#) and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.

If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

**More information:**

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

**HIV/AIDS**

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## Other health risks

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## Fish poisoning

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

**More information:**

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)

## Bird flu (avian influenza)

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms

When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

Medical care

## Medical facilities

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

Local laws

Local law

You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

### Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

#### Australian laws

Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)

#### Local customs

Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

#### Dual citizenship

The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

### More information:

- [Dual nationals](#)

#### Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

#### Visas

You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

Arrival formalities

Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave
- amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
- this covers all forms of currency, not only cash

Departure formalities

You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

Passport

## Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

## Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

Money

The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.



Local travel

## Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

### More information:

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

## Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.

### More information:

- [Driving or riding](#)

## Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

## Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

## Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

### More information:

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

## Sea travel

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

**More information:**

- [Travelling by boat](#)

**Air travel**

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

**More information:**

- [Air travel](#)

Local contacts

Emergencies

Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

**Fire and rescue services**

Call 911.

**Medical emergencies**

Call 911.

**Police**

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

Tourism

Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

Consular contacts

Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

### **Australian Embassy, Manila**

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

### **24-hour Consular Emergency Centre**

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia

Travelling to Philippines?

### **Sign up to get the latest travel advice updates.**

Be the first to know official government advice when travelling.

[Get notified](#)

Published 14 January 2020 12.14pm

# Philippines

## Latest update

~~We've reviewed our~~ [Taal Volcano](#) in the southern Luzon province of Batangas erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (4 out of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. Local authorities have increased the exclusion zone to 14 kms from the volcano's crater. Follow the instructions of local authorities including any evacuation orders. Contact your airline or tour operator to determine if the situation will disrupt your travel ~~advice~~ [for the Philippines plans](#).

## Advice Level summary

We haven't changed our level of advice.

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.

## Advice levels

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall due to crime and terrorism. See [Safety](#)

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#)

Pay close attention to your personal security and the current health situation. Monitor the media for new and existing risks.

[Reconsider your need to travel](#) to Mindanao.

Reconsider your need to travel to Mindanao due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping. See [Safety](#)

[Reconsider your need to travel](#)

Avoid non-essential travel. Do your research and check that your insurer will cover you. If you do travel, take extra precautions to protect yourself from security and health risks.

[Do not travel](#) to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

Do not travel to:

- central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula
- the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area

due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping.

See [Safety](#)

### [Do not travel](#)

If you're already in this location, you should consider leaving if it's safe to do so. If you do travel, get professional security advice. Your travel insurance policy might be void. The Australian Government may not be able to help you.

### Overview

### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- [Taal Volcano in the southern Luzon province of Batangas erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\) has raised the alert level to four \(4 out of 5\) meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days.](#) Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes, [volcanic eruptions](#) and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)

### Health

- Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.
- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.

- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.
- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

#### Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

#### Travel

- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).
- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.
- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

#### Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

## Full advice

Safety

Terrorism

Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system
- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## Mindanao and the southern Philippines

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

## Recent terror attacks

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.

- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

#### **More information:**

- [Terrorism](#)

#### **Kidnapping**

Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula
- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros
- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.



If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

Civil unrest and political tension

Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

Crime

**Violent crime**

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

### **Petty crime and scams**

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.

[Scams](#) including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

### **Swimming safety**

Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

Climate and natural disasters

The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#) including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## Typhoons

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter
- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available
- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

#### More information:

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## Earthquakes and volcanoes

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- [Taal Volcano in the southern Luzon province of Batangas erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\) has raised the alert level to four \(level 4 of 5\) meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. As a result residents within 14 kms were advised to evacuate and ash clouds travelling over Manila affected both international and domestic flights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport \(NAIA\).](#)
- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)
- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above

## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

Health

Travel insurance

Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

## Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

**More information:**

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

Medications

Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)

Health risks

**Measles**

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)

- [Australian Department of Health](#)

## Polio

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

### More information:

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

## Insect-borne illnesses

[Malaria](#) [dengue](#) [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#) and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.

If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

### More information:

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

## HIV/AIDS

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## **Other health risks**

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## **Fish poisoning**

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

### **More information:**

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)



## Bird flu (avian influenza)

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms

When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

Medical care

### Medical facilities

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

Local laws

Local law

You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

## Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

Australian laws

Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)

Local customs

Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

Dual citizenship

The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

### More information:

- [Dual nationals](#)

## Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

## Visas

You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

## Arrival formalities

Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave

- amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
- this covers all forms of currency, not only cash

## Departure formalities

You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

## Passport

### Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

### Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

## Money

The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.

## Local travel

### Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

#### More information:

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

### Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.

#### More information:

- [Driving or riding](#)

### Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

### Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

### Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

### **More information:**

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

### **Sea travel**

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

### **More information:**

- [Travelling by boat](#)

### **Air travel**

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

### **More information:**

- [Air travel](#)

Local contacts

Emergencies

Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

### **Fire and rescue services**

Call 911.

### **Medical emergencies**

Call 911.

## Police

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

## Tourism

Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

## Consular contacts

Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

## Australian Embassy, Manila

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

## 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

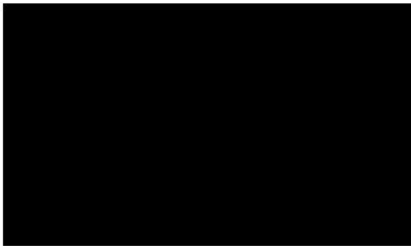
- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia

Travelling to Philippines?

## Sign up to get the latest travel advice updates.

Be the first to know official government advice when travelling.

[Get notified](#)



## Latest update

**Still current at:** 01 February 2020

**Updated:** 01 February 2020

**Latest update:** On 30 January 2020, the Philippine Department of Health confirmed one case of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in the Philippines. Flights between China and the Philippines have been disrupted. All airlines are disseminating health declaration checklists on disembarkation. Authorities are closely monitoring all ports of entry. Passengers arriving into the Philippines maybe subject to further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined.



**We haven't changed our level of advice.**

**Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall.**

**Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.**





## Advice levels

What does this mean? | >

Exercise a high degree of caution  
in the Philippines overall.

Reconsider your need to travel  
to Mindanao.

Do not travel

to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

## Overview

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### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (4 out of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)



### Health

- On 30 January 2020, the Philippine Department of Health confirmed one case of the [novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#) in the Philippines. Flights between China and the Philippines have been disrupted. All airlines are disseminating health declaration checklists on disembarkation. Medical

facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.

- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.
- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.
- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

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## Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

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## Travel

- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).
- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.

- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

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## Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

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## Full advice

### Safety

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#### Terrorism

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Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system
- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## Mindanao and the southern Philippines

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

### Recent terror attacks

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.
- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

#### More information:

- [Terrorism](#)

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## Kidnapping

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Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula
- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros

- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.

If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

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## Civil unrest and political tension

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Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

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## Crime

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## Violent crime

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

## Petty crime and scams

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.

[Scams](#) including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

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## Swimming safety

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Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

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## Climate and natural disasters

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The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#), including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## Typhoons

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter
- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available



- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

**More information:**

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## Earthquakes and volcanoes

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (level 4 of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. As a result, residents within 14 kms were advised to evacuate, and ash clouds travelling over Manila affected both international and domestic flights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).
- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)
- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above

## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

## Health

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### Travel insurance

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Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

### Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

**More information:**

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

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## Medications

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Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)
- 

## Health risks

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### Novel coronavirus

On 30 January 2020, the Philippine Department of Health confirmed one case of the [novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#) in the Philippines. Flights between China and the Philippines have been disrupted. All airlines are disseminating health declaration checklists on disembarkation.

Authorities are closely monitoring all ports of entry. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may be subject to further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined.

All travellers to or from the Philippines should check with their airline or travel provider.

**More information:**

- [Novel coronavirus \(Philippine Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(Australian Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(World Health Organization\)](#)

### Measles

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

### Polio

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

**More information:**

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

### Insect-borne illnesses

[Malaria](#), [dengue](#), [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#), and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.

If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

#### **More information:**

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

## **HIV/AIDS**

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## **Other health risks**

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## Fish poisoning

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

### More information:

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)

## Bird flu (avian influenza)

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms

When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

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## Medical care

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### Medical facilities

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

## Local laws

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### Local law

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You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

## Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

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## Australian laws

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Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)

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## Local customs

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Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

## Dual citizenship

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The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

### More information:

- [Dual nationals](#)

## Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

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## Visas

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You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

## Arrival formalities

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Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave
  - amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
  - this covers all forms of currency, not only cash
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## Departure formalities

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You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

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## Passport

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### Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).



## Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

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## Money

The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.

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## Local travel

### Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

**More information:**

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

### Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.

**More information:**

- [Driving or riding](#)

### Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

## Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

## Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

### More information:

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

## Sea travel

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

### More information:

- [Travelling by boat](#)

## Air travel

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

### More information:

- [Air travel](#)

## Local contacts

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## Emergencies

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Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

## Fire and rescue services

Call 911.

## Medical emergencies

Call 911.

## Police

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

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## Tourism

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Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

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## Consular contacts

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Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

### Australian Embassy, Manila

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

### 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**



## Philippines

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### Latest update

**Still current at:** 02 February 2020

**Updated:** 02 February 2020

**Latest update:** Two cases of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) have been confirmed in the Philippines, with one death. All foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined.



**We haven't changed our level of advice.**

**Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall.**

**Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.**



## Advice levels

What does this mean? | >

Exercise a high degree of caution  
in the Philippines overall.

Reconsider your need to travel  
to Mindanao.

Do not travel

to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

## Overview

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### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (4 out of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)



### Health

- Two cases of the [novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#) have been confirmed in the Philippines, with one death. All foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival.

- Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.
- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.
- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.
- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

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## Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

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## Travel

- Due to the novel coronavirus, all foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantine.
- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).



- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.
- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

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## Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

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## Full advice

### Safety

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#### Terrorism

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Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system

- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## Mindanao and the southern Philippines

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

## Recent terror attacks

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.
- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

### More information:

- [Terrorism](#)

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## Kidnapping

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Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula
- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros
- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.

If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

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## Civil unrest and political tension

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Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

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## Crime

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### Violent crime

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

### Petty crime and scams

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.

[Scams](#) including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

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## Swimming safety

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Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

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## Climate and natural disasters

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The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#) including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## Typhoons

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter

- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available
- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

**More information:**

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## Earthquakes and volcanoes

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (level 4 of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. As a result, residents within 14 kms were advised to evacuate, and ash clouds travelling over Manila affected both international and domestic flights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).
- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)
- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above

## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

## Health

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### Travel insurance

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Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

### Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

#### More information:

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

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## Medications

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Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)

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## Health risks

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**Novel coronavirus**

Two cases of the [novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#) have been confirmed in the Philippines, with one death. All foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on disembarkation. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines maybe undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined.

All travellers to or from the Philippines should check with their airline or travel provider.

**More information:**

- [Novel coronavirus \(Philippine Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(Australian Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(World Health Organization\)](#)

**Measles**

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

**Polio**

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

**More information:**

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

**Insect-borne illnesses**

[Malaria](#), [dengue](#), [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#), and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.



If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

#### More information:

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

## HIV/AIDS

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## Other health risks

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## Fish poisoning

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

**More information:**

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)

**Bird flu (avian influenza)**

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms

When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

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**Medical care**

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**Medical facilities**

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

**Local laws**

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**Local law**

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You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

## Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

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## Australian laws

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Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)

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## Local customs

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Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

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## Dual citizenship

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The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

**More information:**

- [Dual nationals](#)

## Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

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## Visas

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You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

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## Arrival formalities

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Due to the novel coronavirus, all foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantine.

Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave
- amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
- this covers all forms of currency, not only cash

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## Departure formalities

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You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

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## Passport

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### Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

### Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

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## Money

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The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.

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## Local travel

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### Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

**More information:**

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

### Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.

**More information:**

- [Driving or riding](#)

### Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

### Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

## Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

### More information:

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

## Sea travel

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

### More information:

- [Travelling by boat](#)

## Air travel

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

### More information:

- [Air travel](#)

## Local contacts

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### Emergencies

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Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

### Fire and rescue services

Call 911.

## Medical emergencies

Call 911.

## Police

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

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## Tourism

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Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

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## Consular contacts

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Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

### Australian Embassy, Manila

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

### 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia





**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

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# Philippines

## Latest update

Two cases of [Due to](#) the novel coronavirus (2019-COVID-nCoV19) [have been confirmed outbreak](#) in [the Philippines](#) [China](#) with one death. All foreign nationals who have [if you've](#) travelled [into China, Hong Kong, Macau](#) or [from China and its Special Administrative Regions within Taiwan in](#) the previous 14 days [will you'll](#) be refused entry. [All airlines are handing out Expect additional](#) health [declaration checklists on arrival](#). [Authorities are closely monitoring all screening at](#) entry [ports](#). [Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments points](#). If [you have symptoms authorities suspect you're infected](#), you may [be hospitalised need to stay in hospital](#) or [be](#) quarantined. [Talk to your doctor before travelling](#). [Monitor your health and follow the advice of local authorities](#).

## Advice Level summary

We haven't changed our level of advice.

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.

## Advice levels

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#) in the Philippines overall.

Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall due to crime and terrorism. See [Safety](#)

[Exercise a high degree of caution](#)

Pay close attention to your personal security and the current health situation. Monitor the media for new and existing risks.

[Reconsider your need to travel](#) to Mindanao.

Reconsider your need to travel to Mindanao due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping. See [Safety](#)

[Reconsider your need to travel](#)

Avoid non-essential travel. Do your research and check that your insurer will cover you. If you do travel, take extra precautions to protect yourself from security and health risks.

[Do not travel](#) to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

Do not travel to:

- central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula

- the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area

due to the very high threat of terrorism and kidnapping.

See [Safety](#)

### [Do not travel](#)

If you're already in this location, you should consider leaving if it's safe to do so. If you do travel, get professional security advice. Your travel insurance policy might be void. The Australian Government may not be able to help you.

### Overview

### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (4 out of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)

### Health

- [Two cases of the novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\) have been confirmed in the Philippines, with one death. All foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival.](#)

- [Multiple cases of the novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\) were reported in the Philippines in early 2020. If you've travelled to China including Hong Kong Macau or Taiwan in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. Expect additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. If you have symptoms of respiratory illness contact your doctor before travelling.](#)
- Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.
- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.
- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.
- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

#### Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

#### Travel

- [Due to the novel coronavirus, all foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantine.](#)
- [Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in China if you've travelled to China including Hong Kong Macau or Taiwan in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. Expect](#)

[additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. Talk to your doctor before travelling.](#)

- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).
- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.
- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

## Full advice

Safety

Terrorism

Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system
- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## Mindanao and the southern Philippines

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

## Recent terror attacks

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.
- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

### More information:

- [Terrorism](#)

### Kidnapping

Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula

- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros
- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.

If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

Civil unrest and political tension

Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

Crime

**Violent crime**

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

**Petty crime and scams**

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.



[Scams](#) including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

Swimming safety

Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## **Tours and adventure activities**

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

Climate and natural disasters

The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#) including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)

- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## **Typhoons**

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter
- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available
- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

### **More information:**

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## **Earthquakes and volcanoes**

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (level 4 of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. As a result, residents within 14 kms were advised to evacuate, and ash clouds travelling over Manila affected both international and domestic flights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).
- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)
- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above

## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

Health

Travel insurance

Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

## Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

### More information:

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

### Medications

Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)

Health risks

**Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Two Multiple cases of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) have been confirmed COVID-19 were reported in the Philippines, with one death in early 2020. All foreign nationals who have if you've travelled into China, including Hong Kong, Macau or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within Taiwan in the previous 14 days will you'll be refused entry. Expect additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on disembarkation. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines maybe undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined.

Contact your All travellers to or from the Philippines should check with their airline or travel provider for the latest update.

**More information:**

- [Novel coronavirus \(Philippine Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(Australian Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(World Health Organization\)](#)

**Measles**

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

**Polio**

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

**More information:**

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

**Insect-borne illnesses**

[Malaria](#) [dengue](#) [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#) and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.

If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

**More information:**

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

**HIV/AIDS**

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## Other health risks

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## Fish poisoning

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

**More information:**

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)

## Bird flu (avian influenza)

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms

When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

Medical care

## Medical facilities

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

Local laws

Local law

You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.



### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

### Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

Australian laws

Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)

Local customs

Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

Dual citizenship

The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

### More information:

- [Dual nationals](#)

Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

Visas

You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

Arrival formalities

Due to the novel coronavirus, all foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantine.

Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave
- amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
- this covers all forms of currency, not only cash

Departure formalities

You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

Passport

## Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

## Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

Money

The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.

Local travel

## Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

### More information:

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

## Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.

### More information:

- [Driving or riding](#)

## Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

## Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

## Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

### More information:

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

## Sea travel

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

**More information:**

- [Travelling by boat](#)

**Air travel**

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

**More information:**

- [Air travel](#)

Local contacts

Emergencies

Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

**Fire and rescue services**

Call 911.

**Medical emergencies**

Call 911.

**Police**

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

Tourism

Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

Consular contacts

Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

### **Australian Embassy, Manila**

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

### **24-hour Consular Emergency Centre**

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia

Travelling to Philippines?

### **Sign up to get the latest travel advice updates.**

Be the first to know official government advice when travelling.

[Get notified](#)



# Philippines

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## Latest update

**Still current at:** 17 February 2020

**Updated:** 17 February 2020

**Latest update:** Due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in China, if you've travelled to China, Hong Kong or Macau in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. Expect additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected, you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. Talk to your doctor before travelling. Monitor your health and follow the advice of local authorities.



**We haven't changed our level of advice.**

**Exercise a high degree of caution in the Philippines overall.**

**Higher levels of advice are in place for some parts of the country.**



## Advice levels

What does this mean? | ➤

Exercise a high degree of caution  
in the Philippines overall.

Reconsider your need to travel  
to Mindanao.

Do not travel



to central and western Mindanao, including the Zamboanga Peninsula, and the Sulu Archipelago and southern Sulu Sea area.

## Overview

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### Safety

- Terrorist attacks could occur anywhere in the Philippines. Possible targets include public transport, hotels, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, events, places of worship and tourist areas. Be alert to possible threats.
- The threat of kidnapping and piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially in coastal resorts, coastal waters and isolated locations. Kidnappers may target popular tourist areas. If you travel to the southern Philippines, despite our advice, get professional security advice. Ensure your accommodation has proper security measures. Don't travel by boat.
- Protests can turn violent. It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Avoid large public gatherings.
- Violent and other serious crime is common. Many crimes involve guns. Gunfights between criminals and police are common. Gangs often drug tourists before robbing or assaulting them. Pickpocketing, bag snatching and scams are common. Don't leave food or drinks unattended. Don't use public transport. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places. Only use ATMs in secure locations.
- Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including in popular resorts. Some swimmers also get ill from pollution. Get local advice before swimming. Don't swim where there are red flags on the beach.
- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (4 out of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. Philippines experiences typhoons, tropical storms, flooding, landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis. These may disrupt essential services. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan. Monitor the media and follow the advice of local officials.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)



### Health

- Multiple cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) were reported in the Philippines in early 2020. If you've travelled to China, including Hong Kong or Macau in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. Expect additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected, you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. All airlines are handing out health declaration

checklists on arrival. If you have symptoms of respiratory illness, contact your doctor before travelling.

- Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and remote islands. Ensure your travel insurance covers medical evacuation.
- There are measles and polio outbreaks across the country, including in Manila. Get vaccinated before you travel.
- Malaria and dengue are common, especially in many provincial areas. Zika virus is widespread. Other insect-borne diseases include Japanese encephalitis and filariasis. Consider taking anti-malarial medication. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent. Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.
- Foodborne, waterborne and other infectious diseases include cholera, typhoid and hepatitis. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Don't swim in lakes or rivers.
- Bird flu occurs in farm birds. Don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms. Cook all poultry thoroughly.
- HIV/AIDS is a risk. Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high. Take precautions if you engage in high-risk activities.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

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## Local laws

- If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished. These can take a long time, sometimes years.
- Don't use or carry illegal drugs. Penalties are severe and police are strictly enforcing laws. Mandatory sentences are common for possessing small amounts of drugs.
- The Philippines has strong laws against child sex crimes and human trafficking. You can also be charged under Australian law for child sex crimes committed overseas.
- Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights. Consider avoiding public displays of affection.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

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## Travel

- Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in China, if you've travelled to China, including Hong Kong or Macau in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. Expect additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected, you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. Talk to your doctor before travelling.

- You won't need a visa for business or tourist trips of less than 30 days. If you're travelling for another reason or staying longer, get a visa from your nearest [Philippines embassy or consulate](#).
- Keep your visa up-to-date or risk lengthy detention for overstaying or violating your visa.
- Carry proof of your onward or return ticket. Immigration officials may ask to see it.
- You can drive for up to 90 days using an Australian driver's licence. After that, get a Philippines licence.
- Roads are often congested. Drivers often break the road rules. Stick to national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night. Always wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle as accidents are common.
- Use rideshare apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.
- Avoid ferries if you can. If you must travel by ferry, use a ferry service with a good reputation and well-maintained vessels. Take your own life jacket.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

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## Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- For consular help, contact the [Australian Embassy in Manila](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

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## Full advice

### Safety

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#### Terrorism

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Terrorist attacks, including bombings, are possible anytime, anywhere in the Philippines. This includes Manila.

We continue to receive information indicating terrorists may be planning attacks in the Philippines.

Possible targets for future attacks include places travellers and expats visit, such as:

- transport hubs and the metro system
- hotels, shopping malls, clubs, restaurants, bars and markets
- schools
- places of worship
- outdoor recreation events
- other tourist areas

## Mindanao and the southern Philippines

These areas have a high threat of:

- terrorist attacks
- [kidnapping](#)
- [piracy](#)
- violent crime
- violent clashes between armed groups

If you visit central or western Mindanao despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- have effective personal security measures in place

## Recent terror attacks

Recent terror attacks include:

- On 7 September 2019, a bomb blast in a public market in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao injured 7 people.
- On 28 June 2019, several soldiers and civilians were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance to a military base at Indanan in Sulu, Mindanao.
- On 30 January 2019, a grenade attack at the Mahardika mosque in Zamboanga City, Mindanao killed 2 people and injured others.
- On 27 January 2019, a bomb attack at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, Mindanao, killed more than 27 people and injured many more.
- On 31 December 2018, a bomb exploded at the South Seas Mall in Cotabato City, Mindanao killing 2 people and injuring 28 others. Authorities found another bomb at the same shopping mall, and carried out a controlled explosion.
- On 6 September 2018, a military operation in Sultan Dumalondong, Mindanao, killed 6 people.
- On 2 September 2018, an explosion in Isulan town in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao, killed 2 people and injured at least 14.
- On 31 July 2018, a vehicle bomb attack in Basilan, Mindanao, left 11 people dead and others injured.
- In April 2017, Philippines police and military clashed with heavily armed people in Inabanga, Bohol, Central Visayas. Casualties occurred.
- In December 2016, a bombing at a boxing tournament at Plaza Rizal, Hilongos, in Leyte injured several people.
- In November 2016, terrorists planted a bomb near the US Embassy in Manila.

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

### More information:

- [Terrorism](#)

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## Kidnapping

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Business or criminal-related kidnapping can happen anywhere in the Philippines. The threat is highest:

- along the Zamboanga Peninsula
- in the Sulu Archipelago

Both locals and foreigners, including Australians, have been kidnapped in central and western Mindanao and in eastern Malaysia. They may target popular tourist areas in:

- southern Palawan
- Bohol
- southern Negros
- southern Cebu
- Siquijor

Kidnappers sometimes hold victims for a long time, sometimes for years, before releasing them. They sometimes kill their captives.

Criminals also kidnap commercial seamen from cargo vessels in the area.

The Australian Government has a longstanding policy is that it doesn't make payments or concessions to kidnappers.

The threat of piracy in the southern Philippines is very high, especially at coastal resorts and isolated coastal locations.

If you travel to the southern Philippines despite our advice:

- get professional security advice
- arrange personal security measures
- check your accommodation has appropriate security measures
- avoid isolated coastal locations, especially after dark
- avoid travelling by boat, especially in the Sulu Archipelago and between Sabah, Malaysia, and Palawan in the Philippines
- check the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre

**More information:**

- [Kidnapping](#)
- [Travelling by boat](#)

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## Civil unrest and political tension

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Public protests and events that draw large groups of people are common and can turn violent.

It's illegal to take part in political rallies if you're not Filipino. Authorities may deport Australians or cancel their visas for being involved.

Armed clashes often occur between security forces and militants, especially in Mindanao and remote areas of northern Luzon.

The New People's Army (CPP-NPA), which is associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines, operates throughout the Philippines. They are often involved in attacks targeting Philippine security forces.

Authorities suspect CPP-NPA militants were behind bomb attacks in Antipolo City and Masbate City in 2018.

In Mindanao, armed clashes between rival clans and other armed groups are also common. Sometimes clashes result in deaths and injuries.

If you see a confrontation between police and criminals or between rival groups, leave the area straight away.

**More information:**

- [Demonstrations and civil unrest](#)

## Crime

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### Violent crime

Violent and other serious crime is a big problem in the Philippines.

Gangs are active in Manila, including in the central business district of Makati, and provincial resort towns.

Gangs can drug, rob or assault tourists.

To avoid drink spiking:

- never accept food or drinks from strangers or leave drinks unattended
- if you aren't sure if a drink is safe, leave it
- stick with people you trust in bars, nightclubs and taxis

Gun ownership is widespread and poorly regulated. This adds to the high rate of violent crime.

Gunfights between police and criminals are common, including in tourist areas in Manila. People are often killed or injured, including bystanders.

Insurgent groups are sometimes involved in violent criminal activities operate in rural areas. They target business interests, including mining projects, for extortion.

Several Australians have died after property disputes turned violent.

Armed criminals sometimes rob and kill or injure people on:

- buses
- the metro
- jeepneys

Avoid travel on these forms of transport.

### Petty crime and scams

Pickpocketing and bag snatching are common. Be careful in crowded shopping malls and other public places.

[Scams](#), including those involving business ventures, credit cards and ATMs, are common.

To protect yourself from scams:

- undertake due diligence when entering into business ventures
- only use ATMs in secure locations such as banks, shops and shopping centres
- always keep your debit and credit cards in sight

To protect yourself from crime:

- always keep your personal belongings close, especially in crowded areas
- monitor local sources for information about new security risks

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## Swimming safety

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Swimming off coastal areas is risky.

Severe currents and rips are common in coastal areas. Many travellers have drowned, including at popular resorts.

Lifeguards are rarely available.

A red flag means you shouldn't enter the water.

If you plan on swimming:

- take extra care when swimming off coastal areas
- never swim after dark or after consuming alcohol
- don't swim where there are red flags
- get local advice before swimming

## Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes for adventure activities such as diving.

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

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## Climate and natural disasters

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The Philippines experiences frequent [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#) including:

- [typhoons](#)
- [volcanic eruptions](#)
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

To protect yourself during a natural disaster:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor news and other weather information sources such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- take official warnings seriously and follow the advice of local authorities
- have a plan of what to do
- keep in touch with friends and family

Identify local sources of support and advice that can help you after a natural disaster.

If you're visiting after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator to check if services are affected.

## Typhoons

Typhoons usually occur between late May and December. Many people die during typhoons.

Tropical storms, flooding and landslides are also common during this period.

The direction and strength of typhoons can change with little warning.

Typhoons may disrupt telephone, internet and communications.

If you're travelling during typhoon season:

- know your accommodation's evacuation plans
- identify your local shelter
- check the latest typhoon information at the [Joint Typhoon Warning Centre](#)

If there's a typhoon:

- adequate shelter may not be available
- flights and ferries could be delayed or suspended and travel could be unsafe
- available flights and ferries may fill quickly
- ports could be affected

Contact your airline for the latest flight information.

**More information:**

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council](#) (NDRRMC)
- [Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration \(PAGASA\)](#)

## Earthquakes and volcanoes

The Philippines is located on the Ring of Fire. [Earthquakes](#) and volcanic eruptions are common. It may take some time for full services to resume.

- Taal Volcano, in the southern Luzon province of Batangas, erupted on 12 January 2020. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has raised the alert level to four (level 4 of 5), meaning an "explosive eruption" could happen in the coming hours or days. As a result, residents within 14 kms were advised to evacuate, and ash clouds travelling over Manila affected both international and domestic flights at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).
- In April 2019, a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck the northern Luzon region. It damaged infrastructure and disrupted essential services, including transport.

Monitor media reports and follow the advice of the local authorities.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) has set up permanent danger zones (PDZ) around the summits of several volcanoes:

- Mayon volcano in Albay Province has an 8km PDZ
- Bulusan volcano has a 4km PDZ
- the entire volcanic island of Taal is a PDZ

Avoid areas around all of these volcanoes.

Volcanic activity may increase with little or no notice. It may disrupt flights in the region. Individual airlines make their own decisions about flight operations. Contact your airline or tour operator for up-to-date information.

If there is any major volcanic activity:

- monitor warnings from [the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology \(PHIVOLCS\)](#)
- follow the advice for all natural disasters listed above

## Tsunamis

Large and destructive tsunamis can happen.

If there's a tsunami warning:

- check the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre](#) website regularly
- follow the advice of local authorities

Move to high ground straight away if:

- you feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up
- you feel a weak, rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- you see a sudden rise or fall in sea level



- you hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for official warnings. Once on high ground, monitor local media and weather services.

## Health

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### Travel insurance

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Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical expenses overseas or medical evacuation costs. This can be very expensive and if you're not insured, you may have to pay many thousands of dollars up-front.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

If you travel to central and western Mindanao despite our advice, you'll probably need a specialised insurance policy that covers travel to high-risk destinations. Most Australian policies won't cover you for travel to these areas.

### Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

If you need counselling services while overseas, contact the Australian Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 and ask to speak to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

**More information:**

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

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## Medications

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Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to bring medication, check if it's legal in the Philippines. Take enough legal medicine for your trip.

Always carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medicine is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use only

**More information:**

- [Medicine](#)
- 

## Health risks

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### Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

Multiple cases of the COVID-19 were reported in the Philippines in early 2020. If you've travelled to China, including Hong Kong or Macau in the previous 14 days you'll be refused entry. Expect additional health screening at entry points. If authorities suspect you're infected, you may need to stay in hospital or be quarantined. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on disembarkation. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may be undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantined.

Contact your airline or travel provider for the latest update.

**More information:**

- [Novel coronavirus \(Philippine Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(Australian Department of Health\)](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(World Health Organization\)](#)

### Measles

There is currently a [measles](#) outbreak throughout the Philippines, including Manila.

In 2018, the Philippines reported more than 17,000 cases of measles. The rate is increasing and causing deaths.

Get vaccinated against measles.

**More information:**

- [Philippine Department of Health](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)

### Polio

On 19 September 2019, the Philippines Department of Health reported a polio outbreak. The local authorities are taking measures to limit the spread of the disease.

Polio is an infectious disease that can spread rapidly and mainly affects young children. It can cause muscle weakness, paralysis and, on rare occasions, it can be fatal. Make sure you're vaccinated against polio.

**More information:**

- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

## Insect-borne illnesses

[Malaria](#), [dengue](#), [Japanese encephalitis](#), [filariasis](#), and other insect-borne illnesses are increasing in Manila and neighbouring provinces.

These illnesses are more common during the rainy season between May and December.

Get vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis before you travel.

The [Philippines Department of Health](#) has declared a national dengue fever epidemic following an increase in case cases in the first half of 2019. There's no vaccination or specific treatment available for dengue.

[Zika virus](#) is widespread in the Philippines. There's no vaccination for it.

If you're pregnant, the Australian Department of Health recommends that you:

- discuss travel plans with your doctor
- consider deferring non-essential travel to affected areas

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing
- consider taking medicine to prevent malaria

### More information:

- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Dengue Fact Sheet - WHO](#)
- [Dengue cases snapshot - UN](#)

## HIV/AIDS

[HIV/AIDS](#) is a risk for travellers.

Take precautions if you engage in activities that expose you to risk of infection.

Transmission rates between men who have sex with men are high.

Condoms may be difficult to find outside Manila.

## Other health risks

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common, including:

- [cholera](#)
- [typhoid](#)
- [hepatitis](#)
- [tuberculosis](#)
- [meningitis](#)
- [rabies](#)

Serious outbreaks can occur.

Lakes and rivers can contain waterborne diseases, such as:

- [bilharzia \(schistosomiasis\)](#)
- [leptospirosis](#)

Risks are highest after flooding, and continue after floods recede.

Swimmers in coastal resort areas have also reported illness from pollution.

To reduce your risk of illness:

- drink boiled water or water from bottles with sealed lids

- avoid ice cubes
- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads
- don't swim in fresh water sources
- always check with local authorities before swimming in waters
- don't go near dogs and other mammals

If you're bitten or scratched by an animal, seek medical help straight away.

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

## **Fish poisoning**

[Ciguatera fish poisoning](#) from eating reef fish can be a hazard.

### **More information:**

- [Queensland Health ciguatera information](#)

## **Bird flu (avian influenza)**

[Avian influenza](#) occurs in farm birds.

To protect yourself from avian influenza:

- stay away from live poultry
- don't visit live bird and animal markets, including 'wet' markets and poultry farms

When preparing food, handle poultry properly. Make sure you thoroughly cook all parts of the poultry.

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## **Medical care**

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### **Medical facilities**

Medical facilities are adequate in major cities. However, facilities are limited in country areas and on remote islands.

Major private hospitals, particularly in Metro Manila, are well-equipped and internationally accredited.

There are decompression chambers in:

- Makati City
- Cebu City
- Batangas City
- Subic
- Quezon City

Most hospitals need up-front payment or guarantee of payment before they'll treat you. Treatment can be expensive.

If you become seriously ill or injured, you may need to be evacuated. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

## **Local laws**

## Local law

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You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

If you're accused of a crime, authorities may not let you leave the Philippines until investigations and legal proceedings are finished.

The justice process can take a long time. Some court cases take years.

Australians accused of crimes have experienced financial and other difficulties while waiting for their cases to finish.

## Drugs

Penalties for drug offences are severe.

A major clampdown on drugs - the war on drugs - has been underway since 2016. There are mandatory jail sentences for possessing even small amounts of illicit drugs. Thousands have been arrested and a large number of people have been killed in drug-related violence.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

## Other laws

The Philippines also has strong laws against [child sex crimes](#) and human trafficking. Authorities have arrested and prosecuted a number of foreigners, including Australians, for these offences.

It's illegal to take photos of official buildings for publication.

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## Australian laws

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Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

### More information:

- [Staying within the law](#)
- 

## Local customs

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Local laws don't protect LGBTI rights.

Locals generally tolerate the LGBTI community. However, open displays of affection between same-sex partners may offend.

**More information:**

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

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## Dual citizenship

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The Philippines recognises dual nationality.

Always travel on your [Australian passport](#).

**More information:**

- [Dual nationals](#)

## Travel

Every country or territory decides who can enter or exit through its borders.

Make sure you meet all entry and exit conditions. If you don't, the Australian Government can't help you.

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## Visas

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You won't need a visa if you plan to:

- visit for tourism or business
- stay less than 30 days

You'll need a visa if you're:

- staying for longer
- visiting for another reason, such as work or study

Ensure you keep your visa up to date. Failure to do so may result in you being:

- arrested
- detained in immigration detention
- deported back to Australia at your cost
- blacklisted from future travel to the Philippines

Detention conditions in the Philippines do not compare with Australian standards and deportation processes can be lengthy.

You can apply to extend your tourist visa (visa waiver) through the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) and pay the appropriate fees.

Entry and exit conditions can change at short notice. Get further details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules from:

- the nearest [embassy or consulate of the Philippines](#)
- [the Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website

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## Arrival formalities

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Due to the novel coronavirus, all foreign nationals who have travelled in or from China and its Special Administrative Regions within the previous 14 days will be refused entry. All airlines are handing out health declaration checklists on arrival. Authorities are closely monitoring all entry ports. Passengers arriving into the Philippines may undergo further medical assessments. If you have symptoms, you may be hospitalised or quarantine.

Immigration authorities may ask for proof of an onward or return ticket.

Children under 15 years of age may need a Waiver of Exclusion Ground if they're:

- not accompanied by a parent
- coming to meet a parent or parents in the Philippines

Declare any:

- local cash of more than PHP50,000 to Bureau of Customs officers at the airport when you arrive or leave
- amounts of more than \$US10,000 or of the same value in a different foreign currency
- this covers all forms of currency, not only cash

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## Departure formalities

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You may need an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) before you leave the Philippines if you have stayed in the Philippines for more than six months.

Children born in the Philippines who are leaving the country for the first time on a foreign passport will need an ECC.

You must pay any outstanding visa fees or fines or risk not being able to depart the country. You may be detained by the Philippine Government and subject to a lengthy deportation process.

You must have no outstanding legal issues or court cases. You need to contact the relevant court or the Bureau of Immigration to confirm that you do not have any travel restrictions (Hold Departure Order; Watchlist and Blacklist).

Check the [Philippines Bureau of Immigration](#) website for more detailed information.

If you're leaving the Philippines from Mactan-Cebu International airport, you need to pay a departure tax.

If you leave via Manila International airport, there's no departure tax.

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## Passport

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## Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

## Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If you lose your passport on arrival into the Philippines, before passing through Immigration, you'll be refused entry to the Philippines. You'll be sent back to your port of origin by Philippine Government and the Australian Government is unable to help.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

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## Money

The local currency is the Philippine peso (PHP). You can easily convert AUD for PHP at airports, banks, shopping centres, tourist locations, in major cities and towns.

ATMs are widely available. International credit cards are generally accepted in hotels, restaurants and higher-end shops, particularly in cities and larger towns. However, it is advisable to keep some cash. Card skimming occurs.

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## Local travel

### Driving permit

You can use an Australian driver's licence for up to 90 days after you arrive. After that, you need to get a Philippines licence.

#### More information:

- [Land Transportation Office](#)

### Road travel

Roads are generally congested and often in poor condition. Drivers often break the road rules.

Avoid driving off the national highways and other sealed roads, especially at night.

You're 2 times as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident in the Philippines than in Australia.



**More information:**

- [Driving or riding](#)

## Motorcycles

Certified helmets are mandatory when riding in major cities. Accidents are frequent.

Check if your travel insurance policy covers you when riding a motorbike and if any exclusions apply. You might not be covered if you don't have a valid Australian motorcycle licence.

## Taxis

Use ridesharing apps and Grab taxis sourced from hotels. They're more reliable than taxis hailed on the street.

## Public transport

Public road (bus, jeepneys) and rail transport is widely used throughout the country but should be avoided due to safety and security. See [Safety](#).

**More information:**

- [Transport and getting around safely](#)

## Sea travel

Sea travel in the Philippines can be hazardous.

Avoid ferries if you can.

If you must travel by sea:

- use a ferry service with a good reputation
- don't use ferries that are overcrowded and appear poorly maintained
- take your own lifejacket

[Piracy](#) and kidnapping occur in Philippine waters. See [Safety](#)

**More information:**

- [Travelling by boat](#)

## Air travel

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

Check the [Philippines' air safety profile](#) with the Aviation Safety Network website.

**More information:**

- [Air travel](#)

## Local contacts

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## Emergencies

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Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

## **Fire and rescue services**

Call 911.

## **Medical emergencies**

Call 911.

## **Police**

Call 117 for the Police National Operations Center hotline.

Or contact your nearest Philippines National Police (PNP) station.

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

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## **Tourism**

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Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

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## **Consular contacts**

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Read the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular help, see contact details below.

### **Australian Embassy, Manila**

Level 23  
Tower 2  
RCBC Plaza  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, 1200, Philippines  
Phone: (+63 2) 7757 8100  
Fax: (+63 2) 7757 8344  
Website: [philippines.embassy.gov.au](http://philippines.embassy.gov.au)

Check the Embassy website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

## 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia



**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

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## Cook Islands

### Latest update

The Cook Islands [authorities have](#) [has](#) implemented new entry measures in response to the [2019 novel](#) coronavirus ([2019COVID-nCoV19](#)). If you [travel](#) [travelled](#) from or [transit](#) [transited](#) through China, [Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam](#) within the 14 days [before](#) [of](#) travel to the Cook Islands you will be denied entry. Check with your airline or tour operator to confirm you meet all entry requirements. For updates go to the Cook Islands Ministry of Health website.

### Advice Level summary

We haven't changed our level of advice:

[Exercise normal safety precautions](#) in the Cook Islands.

### Advice levels

[Exercise normal safety precautions](#) in the Cook Islands.

Use common sense and look out for suspicious behaviour, as you would in Australia.

[Exercise normal safety precautions](#)

Exercise common sense and look out for suspicious behaviour, as you would in Australia.

### Overview

#### Safety

- The Cook Islands' crime rate is low. Thieves sometimes target tourists, especially at the beach. Watch out for your belongings. Don't leave valuables in motor scooters or motorcycles.
- Cyclone season is November to April, but severe storms can happen at any time. Know your accommodation's evacuation plan and your nearest shelter.
- Earthquakes and tsunamis occur in the Cook Islands. Rarotonga has tsunami alert signs. If there's an alert, follow the advice of your host or hotel and local officials. Move to higher ground if you're near the beach or low-lying areas.

Full travel advice: [Safety](#)

#### Health

- Insect-borne illnesses include dengue and chikungunya. Ensure your accommodation is insect-proof. Use insect repellent.
- The Cook Islands has reported cases of Zika virus. If you're pregnant, discuss your travel plans with your doctor.

- Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are common. Drink only boiled or bottled water. Avoid raw or undercooked food.
- Medical facilities are limited, especially on outer islands. If you're seriously ill or injured you'll need medical evacuation to New Zealand or Australia. Check your travel insurance covers this.

Full travel advice: [Health](#)

#### Local laws

- If you're driving, monitor your alcohol intake.
- Same-sex sexual activity or 'acts of indecency' between men is illegal in the Cook Islands. Penalties include prison sentences of up to 7 years.
- The Cook Islands' standards of dress and behaviour are modest. Be careful not to offend, especially outside resort areas. Ask locals if you're unsure of customs.

Full travel advice: [Local laws](#)

#### Travel

- The Cook Islands authorities have implemented new entry measures in response to [the 2019 novel coronavirus \(2019COVID-nCoV\)19](#). If you travel from or transit through [China Hong Kong Macau Taiwan Cambodia Indonesia Iran Italy Japan South Korea Laos Malaysia Philippines Singapore Thailand or Vietnam](#) within the 14 days before travel to the Cook Islands you will be denied entry. Check with your airline or tour operator to confirm you meet all entry requirements. For updates go to the [Cook Islands Ministry of Health website](#).
- If you're a tourist, you don't need a visa to stay up to 30 days. For other types of visits, get a visa before you travel.
- The Cook Islands has 2 official currencies: the Cook Islands Dollar and the New Zealand Dollar. You can't exchange Cook Islands dollars outside the country. The airport has a currency exchange bureau.
- Most shops and hotels accept credit cards. There aren't many ATMs outside Rarotonga and Aitutaki. Have several ways to access money.
- Plan your trip carefully. To enter the country you'll need an onward or return ticket. You'll also need to show you have enough money and accommodation booked.
- Carry your Australian driver's licence. You can use it to drive in the Cook Islands for up to 6 months. Only drive vehicles covered by your licence.
- You can get a temporary motorcycle or motor scooter licence in the Cook Islands. Apply at the police headquarters in Avarua. Check your travel insurance covers motorcycles before you apply.

Full travel advice: [Travel](#)

#### Local contacts

- The [Consular Services Charter](#) details what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.
- Australia doesn't have an embassy or consulate in the Cook Islands.
- For consular assistance, contact the [Australian High Commission in Wellington](#).

Full travel advice: [Local contacts](#)

## Full advice

Safety

Crime

## Petty crime

The crime rate is low in the Cook Islands. However, sometimes thieves target travellers. Watch your belongings.

Thieves target items:

- on the beach
- left unsecured, such as valuables stored in motor scooters or motorcycles

Occasionally, travellers are [assaulted](#). Look out for suspicious behaviour.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a threat worldwide.

## More information:

- [Terrorism](#)

Tours and adventure activities

Transport and tour operators don't always follow safety and maintenance standards. This includes:

- tours and travel between islands
- adventure activities, such as scuba diving

If you plan to do an [adventure activity](#):

- check if your travel insurance policy covers it
- ask about and insist on minimum safety requirements
- always use available safety gear, such as life jackets or seatbelts

If proper safety equipment isn't available, use another provider.

Swimming safety

Some swimmers have died because of strong tides and breaks in the reefs.

Ask local residents and tour operators about safe areas for swimming and water sports.

There are no lifeguards on beaches.

Climate and natural disasters

The Cook Islands experiences [natural disasters](#) and [severe weather](#), such as:

- [cyclones](#) and tropical storms
- [earthquakes](#)
- [tsunamis](#)

If there's a natural disaster or warning:

- secure your passport in a safe, waterproof place
- monitor local media such as the [Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System](#)
- follow the advice of local authorities
- keep in touch with your friends and family

If you're travelling after a natural disaster, contact your tour operator or airline to find out if services are affected.

## **Cyclones and severe weather**

Cyclone season is from November to April. Tropical storms and cyclones can happen in any month.

The direction and strength of cyclones can change suddenly.

Tropical storms and cyclones can:

- cause flooding and landslides
- disrupt essential services, such as water, electricity and communications

If there's a cyclone or severe tropical storm:

- you may get stuck in the area
- flights could be delayed or suspended
- available flights may fill quickly
- adequate shelter may not be available
- ports may close

Monitor weather updates and warnings:

- [Fiji Meteorological Service](#)
- [World Meteorological Organisation Severe Weather Information Centre](#)

If a cyclone is approaching:

- know the evacuation plan for your hotel or cruise ship
- identify your local shelter
- stock up on bottled water

### **More information:**

- [Surviving cyclones: Preparation and safety procedures](#)

## Earthquakes and tsunamis

The Cook Islands can experience earthquakes and tsunamis.

Evacuation signs in Rarotonga will direct you if there's a tsunami alert.

If there's an earthquake or a tsunami alert:

- take directions from your host or hotel
- follow the advice of local authorities
- monitor the [Pacific Tsunami Warning Center](#) and local sources
- move to higher ground if you're near the beach or in a low-lying area

## Health

### Travel insurance

Get comprehensive [travel insurance](#) before you leave. Your policy needs to cover all overseas medical costs, including medical evacuation. The Australian Government won't pay for these costs.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel. This applies to everyone, no matter how healthy and fit you are.

If you're not insured, you may have to pay many 1000s of dollars up-front for medical care.

Confirm:

- what activities and care your policy covers
- that your insurance covers you for the whole time you'll be away

### Physical and mental health

Consider your physical and mental health before you travel, especially if you have an existing medical condition.

See your doctor or travel clinic to:

- have a basic health check-up
- ask if your travel plans may affect your health
- plan any vaccinations you need

Do this at least 8 weeks before you leave.

### More information:

- [General health advice](#)
- [International travel and health](#)

### Medications



Not all medication available over the counter or by prescription in Australia is available in other countries. Some may even be considered illegal or a controlled substance, even if prescribed by an Australian doctor.

If you plan to take medication, check if it's legal in the Cook Islands. Take enough legal medication for your trip.

Carry a copy of your prescription or a letter from your doctor stating:

- what the medication is
- how much you'll take
- that it's for personal use

#### **More information:**

- [Travelling with medication and medical equipment](#)

Health risks

#### **Insect-borne diseases**

The [Cook Islands Ministry of Health](#) declared a [dengue](#) outbreak in February 2019.

Cases of disease spread by mosquitoes include:

- [dengue](#)
- [chikungunya \(World Health Organisation\)](#)
- [Zika virus](#)

Serious outbreaks sometimes occur.

To protect yourself from disease:

- make sure your accommodation is insect-proof
- use insect repellent
- wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing

If you're pregnant, discuss travel plans and health risks with your doctor before you travel.

#### **More information:**

- [Infectious diseases](#)

#### **Other health risks**

Waterborne, foodborne, parasitic and other infectious diseases are found in Cook Islands.

To protect yourself from illness:

- drink boiled water or bottled water with sealed lids
- avoid ice cubes

- avoid uncooked and undercooked food, such as salads

Get medical advice if you suspect food poisoning or have a fever or diarrhoea.

Medical care

## Medical facilities

Medical facilities are limited, especially on outer islands.

Treatment can be expensive. Hospitals and medical facilities may ask for payment before treating you. Check the [Health services fee schedule](#).

You may need to be evacuated to New Zealand or Australia if you become seriously ill or injured. Medical evacuation can be very expensive.

No hyperbaric or decompression chambers are available. If you need to be treated for decompression sickness, you'll be evacuated to the nearest treatment centre in New Zealand.

Registered dive companies carry basic treatment equipment to meet Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) standards.

### More information:

- [Ministry of Health](#)

Local laws

Local law

You're subject to all local laws and penalties, including those that may appear harsh by Australian standards. Research local laws before travelling.

If you're arrested or jailed, the Australian Government will do what it can to help you under our [Consular Services Charter](#). But we can't get you out of trouble or out of jail.

## Drugs

Penalties for carrying or using even small amounts of illegal drugs are severe. They may include fines and prison sentences.

### More information:

- [Carrying or using drugs](#)

## Other laws

Same-sex sexual activity or 'acts of indecency' between men is illegal in the Cook Islands. Penalties include prison sentences of up to 7 years.

### More information:

- [Advice for LGBTI travellers](#)

#### Australian laws

Some Australian criminal laws still apply when you're overseas. If you break these laws, you may face prosecution in Australia.

#### More information:

- [Staying within the law and respecting customs](#)

#### Dual citizenship

#### More information:

- [Dual nationals](#)

#### Local customs

Standards of dress and behaviour are modest.

Be careful not to offend, especially outside resort areas.

Ask for local advice if you're unsure of any customs.

#### Travel

#### Visas

### Visa-free travel for short stays

You don't need visa for a tourist visit of up to 30 days.

In other situations, you'll need a visa.

Entry and exit conditions can change. Contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration on +682 29 347 for the details about visas, currency, customs and quarantine rules.

#### Other formalities

To enter the Cook Islands, you'll need to show proof of:

- an onward or return ticket
- enough money for your stay
- arranged accommodation

### **COVID-19**

The Cook Islands authorities have implemented new entry measures in response to [the 2019 novel coronavirus \(2019COVID-nCoV\)19](#). If you travel from or transit through [China Hong Kong Macau Taiwan Cambodia Indonesia Iran Italy Japan South Korea Laos Malaysia Philippines Singapore, Thailand or Vietnam](#) within the 14 days before travel to the Cook Islands you will be

denied entry. Check with your airline or tour operator to confirm you meet all entry requirements. For updates go to the [Cook Islands Ministry of Health website](#).

Passport

## Validity

Some countries won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for 6 months after you plan to leave that country. This can apply even if you're just transiting or stopping over.

Some foreign governments and airlines apply the rule inconsistently. Travellers can receive conflicting advice from different sources.

You can end up stranded if your passport is not valid for more than 6 months.

The Australian Government does not set these rules. Check your passport's expiry date before you travel. If you're not sure it'll be valid for long enough, consider getting [a new passport](#).

## Lost or stolen passport

Your passport is a valuable document. It's attractive to people who may try to use your identity to commit crimes.

Some people may try to trick you into giving them your passport. Always keep it in a safe place.

If your passport is lost or stolen, tell the Australian Government as soon as possible:

- In Australia, contact the [Australian Passport Information Service](#).
- If you're overseas, contact the nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#).

Money

Cook Islands has 2 official currencies:

- Cook Islands Dollar (CKD)
- New Zealand Dollar (NZD)

Cook Islands dollars can only be exchanged in the Cook Islands.

The bank at the airport can change currency.

Most shops and hotels accept credit cards.

ATMs are limited outside Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

Before you leave, ask your bank if your cards will work overseas.

Local travel

## Driving permit

You can use a valid Australian driver's licence for up to 6 months.

You can only drive vehicles covered by your licence. For example, with an Australian car licence you can drive a car but not a motor scooter.

If you're staying longer than 6 months, you can get a Cook Islands driver's licence from the Cook Islands Police Department in Rarotonga.

## Road travel

Driving can be dangerous, particularly at night.

Hazards include poorly maintained roads, line markings and street lighting.

If you plan to drive in the Cook Islands, check local traffic laws and practices.

### More information:

- [Driving or riding](#)

## Motorcycles

Motorcyclists are hospitalised after many traffic accidents.

You can get a temporary motorbike or motor scooter licence in the Cook Islands. To apply, you must:

- sit a practical test at the police headquarters in Avarua
- show your current Australian driver's licence and passport

Queues can be long. Be prepared to wait.

Always wear a helmet.

If you don't follow the local laws, your insurance policy may not cover you.

If you want to ride a motorbike:

- check that your travel insurance covers it
- learn local laws
- don't drink alcohol and ride

## Taxis

Only use registered taxis and authorised limousines. Arrange one through your hotel or resort.

## Public transport

Limited buses are available on Rarotonga.

[Public transport](#) is limited on other islands.

## Sea travel

Travel by boat can be dangerous.

Passenger ferry services can be overcrowded and cancelled at short notice.

To reduce your risk on boats:

- use your own life jacket
- carry an emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) and satellite phone
- avoid single-engine boats
- travel in a group of boats that are no more than half full
- tell someone you trust about your plans, including when you expect to return

**More information:**

- [Travelling by boat](#)

**Air travel**

DFAT doesn't provide information on the safety of individual commercial airlines or flight paths.

**More information:**

- [Air travel](#)

Local contacts

Emergencies

Depending on what you need, contact your:

- family and friends
- travel agent
- insurance provider
- employer
- airline

**Emergency services**

Call 999.

**Fire and rescue services**

Call 996.

**Medical emergencies**

Call Rarotonga Hospital on 22 664 or email [MOHsupport@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:MOHsupport@cookislands.gov.ck)

**Police**

Call 22 499 or email [enquiries@police.gov.ck](mailto:enquiries@police.gov.ck)

Always get a police report when you report a crime.

Your insurer should have a 24-hour emergency number.

Tourism

Contact your provider with any complaints about tourist services or products.

Consular contacts

Check the [Consular Services Charter](#) for what the Australian Government can and can't do to help you overseas.

For consular assistance, contact the Australian High Commission in Rarotonga. The Australian High Commission will be co-located with the New Zealand High Commission. As the High Commission is currently operating from interim premises, please contact us by phone or email to make an appointment.

### **Australian High Commission, Rarotonga**

Phone: +68 2 73379

Email: [ahcrarotonga@dfat.gov.au](mailto:ahcrarotonga@dfat.gov.au)

Website: [cookislands.highcommission.gov.au](http://cookislands.highcommission.gov.au)

The Australian High Commission in Rarotonga does not issue Australian passports or provide notarial services. For Australian passport or notarial services contact the Australian High Commission in Wellington, New Zealand.

### **Australian High Commission, Wellington**

72-76 Hobson Street

Thorndon, Wellington

New Zealand

Phone: +64 4 473 6411

Fax: +64 4 498 7103

Email: [nzinbox@dfat.gov.au](mailto:nzinbox@dfat.gov.au)

Website: [newzealand.highcommission.gov.au](http://newzealand.highcommission.gov.au)

Facebook: [Australia in New Zealand](#)

Check the High Commission's website for details about opening hours and any temporary closures.

### **24-hour Consular Emergency Centre**

In a consular emergency, if you can't contact an embassy, call the 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- 1300 555 135 in Australia

Travelling to Cook Islands?

## **Sign up to get the latest travel advice updates.**

Be the first to know official government advice when travelling.

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