



# have fun. help people.

## Philippines

**Bayanihan Experience: Working Together towards sustainable community development**

### About your Program



*“There comes a point in a person’s life when you start asking yourself: what difference am I making in this world? I decided to put my time into something worthwhile.”*

- Gayle Harrod

# Philippines Experience

## Introduction to the Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines is an island nation in Southeast Asia comprised of 7107 islands, and are collectively known as the Philippine Archipelago. Under Spanish colonialism, the country was named “Las Islas Felipinas” after King Philip II of Spain. Colonial rule lasted for the centuries and ended after the Philippine Revolution of 1896. The Philippines was ceded to the United States in 1898 in the wake of the Spanish-American War, after an unrecognized attempt at independence. Following World War II, the US granted independence to the Philippines on July 4, 1946 via the treaty of Manila. However, it was as late as 1992 that the US finally closed its last military bases on the islands and left the Philippines for good. The capital city of The Philippines is Manila.



Filipinos, the term by which the people of the Philippines are known, descended from various Austronesian-speaking migrants who came in droves over a thousand years ago from South-East Asia. There are various ethno-linguistic groups that Filipinos are divided in to. The three major groups are the Sisayans, the Tagalogs, and the Ilocanos. They are genetically related to the Taiwanese aborigines, Malays of Indonesia and Malaysia, and the Polynesians.

The Culture of the Philippines is very diverse. There is the native Melanesian and Austronesian culture, which is most evident in language, ethnicity, architecture, food and dances. On top of that, there is a heavy colonial influence from Mexico and Spain, such as in religion, food, dance, language, architecture and ethnicity. Filipino mestizos, a term referring to those who are of mixed indigenous heritage and Spanish (or other foreign ancestry), form an economically and politically important minority. Later influence from the US can also be seen in the culture. There are some 120 to 175 languages in the Philippines. The two official languages are English and Filipino, with Filipino relying heavily on the Tagalog dialect to form a common national language.

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## Community

Cabanatuan City is located in Nueva Ecija, a beautiful province of the Philippines which is known as the largest producer of rice in the country. It is often referred to as the ‘Rice Bowl of the Philippines’. The vast geographical differences in the province make for beautiful scenery, including; mountains, plains, and rivers, Nueva Ecija was one of the first provinces to revolt against Spain, and one of the first provinces to declare independence in 1898. Poverty was the only reason why Nueva Ecija was not given recognition as a separate country from the Philippines. The people of this community are neglected and marginalized in terms of social development. As a result, many people live well below the poverty line. The women, children and disabled in particular bare the effect of poverty, and is why we focus our efforts on them.



Volunteers will work and stay at Cabanatuan City where we support the efforts of a local grassroots organization and school called the College of Immaculate Conception. While Globe Aware is not religiously affiliated, we recognize that Catholicism is a large cultural part of the country, and students of this school have a large community service effort that creates a great opportunity for Globe Aware to work side by side with them.

## Cultural Nuances

Remember every country has different customs. Some of the terms colloquially used in the Philippines may not be considered “politically correct” in the U.S. and are completely acceptable in the Philippines. Bodily functions such as burping after a meal are not offensive to anyone.

Filipinos are incredibly respectful to authority figures, foreigners and elders. This may make you feel uncomfortable but know that this is a regular occurrence throughout the country. Refusing food or help may be offensive to your hosts. “Po” or “Sir” are common ways to refer to people who Filipinos respect. Mano or Pagmamano is a gesture used in Filipino culture performed as a sign of respect to elders and as a way of accepting a blessing from the elder. Similar to hand-kissing, the person giving the greeting bows towards the offered hand of the elder and presses his or her forehead on the elder’s hand. Usually performed with the right hand, the person showing respect may ask “Mano po” to the elder in order to ask permission to initiate the gesture. Typically someone may mano to his or her older relatives upon entry into their home or upon seeing them.



The word “mano” is Spanish for “hand” while the word “po” is often used in Filipino culture and language at the end of each sentence as a sign of respect when addressing someone older. Put together, “mano po” literally translates to “your hand please” as the greeting initiates the gesture of touching the back of the hand of an elder lightly on one’s forehead. An identical tradition is followed in neighboring Indonesia and Malaysia, called ‘salim’, suggesting that the Mano po tradition dates to precolonial times.



A really unique aspect of this country are the “Jeepneys” used for transportation. Make sure you experience riding one! Your coordinator may be able to arrange this for you.

## Projects and Expectations

We understand your desire to know as much as possible about the projects you will be working on. It is important to understand that some flexibility is necessary in this type of program, as there will be factors such as what supplies are available, how many volunteers are in your group, weather conditions, the changing priorities of the community, etc. Therefore it’s best to approach the experience with an open attitude knowing you’ll be working approximately 4- 6.5 hours a day during the week days, usually concentrated earlier in the day, and you’ll have a couple of hours of unstructured free time every day. There are usually three to four planned but optional leisure and cultural activities throughout the week. Communicate with your coordinator. If you find the work level is too much, or not enough, he or she will do as much as possible to work with you.

Our program seeks to promote “Bayanihan”, a Filipino value of working together towards sustainable community development through volunteerism. Our work projects center mainly around a few core activities:

- Volunteers have the opportunity to provide education assistance to disabled children. In the Philippines, one of the main groups who are neglected in terms of education and basic human rights are people with disabilities (locally referred to as PWDs). Very few children with disabilities have access to basic services

Bayanihan is a Filipino value of working together towards sustainable community development through volunteerism





- Volunteers may be involved with the repair and/or construction of houses for the families of the disabled.

- Small-scale reforestation projects. Deforestation is a major problem in the Philippines. This is a community-based project, where volunteers alongside local community members, will plant trees and the community will manage and care for long term. Reforestation efforts help with problems stemming from climate change and natural disasters such as mudslides, erosion, etc. This project will only be available during the months of June to October due to weather.

- Volunteers may be involved with the construction of sanitation buildings. Many people with disabilities or living in extreme poverty do not have access to sanitary restroom facilities. This project will help eradicate sickness that may be attributed to unsanitary living conditions.

## Leisure Activities

Volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of leisure activities while in Nueva Ecija.



- Tour Cabanatuan City, Gapan City, and San Isidoro: Volunteers will take a tour of important historical sites of each of these cities. This is an evening activity and takes about 3-4 hours and ends with a stop at Filipino spa to get a break from the heat.

- Volunteers will have the opportunity to try their hand at making some traditional Filipino dishes in a class like setting. The class will be followed by dinner, where volunteers will get to try out all of their creations.



- There will also be an organized volleyball game between volunteers and the students of the College of the Immaculate Conception (CIC). This is a light-hearted event and not to be taken too seriously. Students will have a chance to practice their English and volleyball skills with our volunteers.

- Cultural exchange is a large part of every program Globe Aware offers. Volunteers will have an opportunity to meet the different tribes who are living in Bacao. This is a great way to partake in new food, dance, and culture.



- Volunteers will explore the Minalungao National Park for hiking and swimming in the calm, clean river.

## Packing Information

Our program location is very humid and often muddy. Pack light with mostly very casual and quick drying clothes. Your work clothes may be ruined with paint, cement, or mud. You may want to bring hiking boots or comfortable and sturdy work shoes. Expect narrow, muddy, and uneven trails. You might even consider bringing rubber rain boots for the mud if you come in the rainy season. We recommend bringing work gloves and a few snacks in Ziploc bags. Strong insect repellent is essential. You should not need to do laundry for a weeklong trip but if necessary laundry services are available on site for a fee.

Please note that the packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can't live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn't bring, weren't on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items.

- Work gloves
- Sunscreen
- Layered clothes for winter months
- Sun hat
- Pants for working and relaxing.
- Towel
- Wet wipes
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Toilet paper / tissues or wipes (available locally but if you feel you need a particular kind)
- Toiletries and any prescription medication needed
- T-shirts
- Umbrella or rain poncho (may not be necessary - check the weather before you go!)
- Socks and plenty of underwear
- Day pack / Small backpack
- Strong money belt
- Camera / memory cards / chargers
- Money / credit cards for personal expenditures
- Lip balm
- Travel charger
- Electrical converter (most modern electronics come with AC adaptors that accept from 100 to 250, but you will still need an adaptor to fit the sockets - see our Electricity section.

You may enjoy bringing games or books for free time.

Blankets, towels or a sleeping bag may help you be more comfortable, as the bedding or linens may not be what you are accustomed to. The vast majority of volunteers find the sheets and blankets completely satisfactory and feel that taking up extra luggage space isn't worth the cost or effort, though this is a personal decision. Others have brought "travel blankets" or "sleep sacks" which are much easier to pack.

## Gifts / Donations

At the end of your stay, you might feel inclined to give something to community hosts who have been particularly helpful or courteous. In the past, volunteers have given an empty journal decorated with a child's name, or written them a thank you note, sung them a song, etc. People also enjoy seeing simple tokens from home, such as postcards of your hometown, or photos of your family.

Please be aware that bringing donations can also be awkward. In some instances, receiving donations can effect the recipients' pride negatively. This is not always the case. Do try and consider when donating used clothes, particularly those used during the program, if you feel the local community members would actually want them. It is best to discuss donations with the coordinator for these reasons.

There are cases that donations are more readily accepted, however there are often still local cultural nuances that can make the act of giving complicated. In order to preserve pride, please discuss how your donations can be presented with the coordinator. **Please note you are not expected to bring anything.**

While bringing donations is by no means necessary for volunteers traveling with Globe Aware, some wish to bring along items that the community are in need of. If you are so inclined, in the Philippines we ask that you bring donations that support long-term sustainability. Materials for educational purposes are most useful. We discourage the donation of candy, and other non-essential items. You may also want to leave behind the items you used during the week - clothes, towels, linens if you brought them.

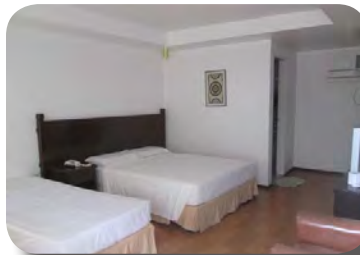
We discourage giving any more money than you are already giving to the program and community via your program fee. Globe Aware funds are spent on program expenses, as opposed to giving cash donations -- this helps ensure that the money is being spent in meaningful ways. We understand the good intentions of our volunteers. Giving cash out to community members contradicts the goal of promoting sustainability, promotes expectations that foreigners are 'made of money' and can create an atmosphere that begging may solve a community's challenges.

We discourage cash donations and distributing money in all of our communities.

However, if you feel like giving a gratuity to your coordinator this will be very appreciated though not necessary.

## Accommodations

Volunteers will be staying in a mid range hotel in Cabanatuan City with hot running water, western style flushing toilets, electricity and nearby internet access.



## Electricity



Electricity in the Philippines runs on a 220V system. While the style of outlet is the same as a two-prong outlet in the United States, it is important to note that you will need a converter and possibly an adapter if requiring a three prong US outlet. Universal adapters can be found at the airport or in most stores with a travel department.

## Laundry

You should not need to do laundry on a week long trip but if necessary laundry services are available nearby for a fee.



## Food



Cabanatuan City is home to delicious, diverse Filipino delicacies. It includes a mix of Malay, Spanish, Chinese, and Latin influences. Dishes like paella, spaghetti, omelets, chicken, noodles, and abundance of fresh vegetables and fruit are available. Bottled water is provided at meals and at work sites.



## Weather

Cabanatuan has a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons and year-round warm weather. It is touted as one of the hottest cities in the country with March-May being the hottest of the months. The rainy season starts in June and lasts through October with strong typhoons possible. The coolest months are generally October to February.

**Global warming has made conditions less predictable (and more weather extremes) so it is always a good idea to double check the expected weather online before you go.**

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## Money



Philippine currency is called the Peso. The best way to get currency is either to use an ATM or to exchange US dollars at a currency exchange. Please note that when exchanging currency, it is important that your bills are free of tears or marks, as these bills might not be accepted. It is advisable to carry small bills, as most merchants will not have change for larger ones. ATMs are widely available in the city of Cabanatuan. Our program fee covers all of your food, accommodations, and related expenses during the course of the program. Items not included are souvenirs, snacks, etc.

**\*\*Also, a note for all program locations – it is a good idea that you call your bank and credit card companies before you depart and notify them of the country you will be traveling to and the dates of your travel so that they will allow charges and/or withdrawals internationally.**

## Phone and Internet

Please do not plan to spend a lot of time on the phone or internet during your short volunteer week. You may make calls and check email during your free time, though you may find it is not all that convenient.

Many US phones will work in the Philippines, though roaming charges can be extremely expensive. Be sure to check with your cell phone provider before you leave so that you can arrange for data, cell and text while traveling and depending on your plan, you may need to pay for the entire billing cycle. The safest way to avoid a high cell phone bill when you return is to turn your cell phone off or use only on Wi-Fi where available.

Wi-Fi is sometimes available near the accommodations where we stay. However, service can be spotty so it might be more feasible to not count on regular internet access. It does have a low download limit and you should not count on using it for facetime or streaming - even uploading and downloading photos may be hard.

There are internet cafes in the area though again, they may not have great service or speed.

## Health

There are no vaccine requirements to enter the Philippines. Refer to the CDC's website for more information and recommendations on preventative measures: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/philippines>

Please keep in mind that the Philippines is a very warm and humid place. Remember to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Your coordinator will provide drinking water at the work site.

## Your Fellow Volunteers

You will receive a Fellow Volunteer Report attached to our “Ready, Set, Go!” email about 3 weeks before the program starts. It will include information on your fellow travelers, as well as their email so that you can start to get acquainted with them before you leave.



### Your Coordinator: Kent Gementiza

Kent is part time coordinator that you may be working directly with during your time in the Philippines. He currently works in the community development department at the College of Immaculate Conception. He is currently working on his Master’s degree in education with a focus in counseling. He is a dedicated lifelong volunteer, spending every Saturday teaching basic English to street children who cannot afford regular schooling. We are excited to have Kent as part of our team in the Philippines and know you will enjoy working alongside him.



### Your Coordinator: Bessie Galang

Bessie is also an employee of the College of Immaculate Conception and works directly with communities in need through the school of Social Work. Bessie helps organize projects for Globe Aware volunteers, as well as her students by arranging different community projects throughout the year. Bessie holds a degree in Social work and is passionate about volunteering in her free time. Much like Kent, her weekends are spent giving back to those in need in her community. We know you will have a great time getting to know more about Bessie on site and share in her passion of volunteering.

## Arrival and Meet-Up / Entry Requirements



A valid passport is required to enter and depart the Philippines. We always recommend having at least six months of validity and a couple of blank pages remaining. Depending on your nationality, a visa may be required. For U.S. citizens, a visa is not required for stays under 30 days.

Pick-up will be at 12:30 pm on Saturday. If volunteers would like to arrive the night before, it is best that they book a hotel near the airport for ease of pickup. Please inform the Globe Aware office if not being picked up directly from airport. For departure from the Philippines, please do not book flights leaving before 2 p.m. the last Saturday of your trip. Travel time from Cabanatuan to Manila airport can take up to 4 hours, so please keep in mind when booking return flights.

Volunteers will fly into the capital city of Manila and will be met by our Globe Aware coordinator at the airport. For volunteers needing an overnight stay in Manila due to late night arrival prior to our Saturday pickup, we recommend the following options near the Manila airport:

- Manila Airport Hotel (Budget Hotel) <http://manilaairporthotel.com.ph/>
- Hyatt City of Dreams (Mid-Range Hotel) <http://cityofdreamsmanila.hyatt.com/en/hotel/home.html>

The drive to Nueva Ecija, our program site, is approximately 4 hours by car. Nueva Ecija is located in a beautiful province of the Philippines and is the largest producer of rice in the country. It is often referred to as the ‘Rice Bowl of the Philippines’. The vast geographical differences make for beautiful scenery, including; mountains, plains, and rivers.



## Insurance Information

**A**s a Globe Aware participant, you are automatically enrolled in the CORE Travel Medical Insurance program while you are on your Globe Aware trip. There is also trip cancellation benefit, though it will only cover part of your program fee and not your airfare.

You may upgrade your insurance option beyond the core benefit package to suit your preferences. There are four different types of upgrades. You can choose a coverage plan with more valuable benefits, get higher limits of trip cancellation coverage, add baggage insurance and purchase extensions of coverage. Extensions allow you to be covered for international travel you might want to do it immediately before or after your Globe Aware program. To review your coverage, information on benefits and upgrading, you may log on to the Core Travel Insurance website here: [www.coretravelinsurance.com/login/](http://www.coretravelinsurance.com/login/)

You will need to enter your First and Last Name, Date of Birth and under Organization list Globe Aware. If you should have any issues logging in, please contact our office at 1 877 588 4562 or (214) 824 4562.

The way International Medical Insurance works is in most instances the patient covers the medical expenses, and then submits the receipts for reimbursement as a claim once you are back in the United States. If the expenses are higher than something you can cover at the time, our insurance agents may be able to assist in getting you pre qualified but normally overseas health care is not as expensive as in the United States.

## Safety and Security

**T**he Philippines is a very rich in culture, customs and traditions. The majority of the inhabitants of Nueva Ecija speak Tagalog, and also English. Volunteers should not have any difficulty communicating when exploring on their own. Use your volunteer coordinator as a source of information. They will tell you the best places to change money, places worth visiting within Cabanatuan, places to avoid, etc. There are many hospitals within the city that are more than capable to handle any problem or sickness, should the volunteer experience any health issues. Use common sense and do not carry large amounts of money, passports and bankcards and an easily accessible area.

**Never take photos of people at close proximity without their permission.**

## Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

**T**he Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service provided by the U.S. government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency, keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in case of an emergency. The link to STEP is <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

## Global Entry

**G**lobal Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Global Entry approved travelers are able to use the automated kiosks at immigration to reduce wait times considerably. For more information, visit <http://www.globalentry.gov/>

## In Case of Emergency

**Globe Aware's 24 hour phone line Please note our email is not attended all day every day so if you have an emergency please use this phone number : (214) 824 4562**

United States Embassy :  
1201 Roxas Blvd, Ermita, Manila, 1000 Metro Manila, Philippines  
Telephone: +63 2 301 2000

**Further Readings** While no further reading is required, we think it is always nice to have a travel guide book with you to read about the area. Lonely Planet, Eyewitness, Frommer's, Budget Travel, Rough Guides are some of the titles we have recommended in the past.