

An aerial photograph of the Manila skyline at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. Several high-rise buildings are visible, some with lights on. The foreground shows a street with cars and buildings, some of which are illuminated.

THE FIRST 24 HOURS IN MANILA

What to expect when you first arrive in
this bustling metropolis

COMPILED BY DEREK ACKARY

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Introduction

G'day all. My name is Derek, but you can call me Dezza. I'm an Aussie who has been living full time in the Philippines since 2003. I have traveled all over the Philippines and have been to almost thirty countries around the world (at the time of writing). I know from personal experience that arriving in any new country for the first time can be an overwhelming and challenging experience, none more so than arriving to the hustle and bustle of Manila, the capital city of the Philippines.

When I first arrived here on holiday back in 1997, the first thing that struck me was the air. It wasn't so much that the air was smelly per se, it was just that the air was so thick and humid, I could barely breathe. It was my first time to visit a tropical country so I wasn't quite prepared for the first encounter of being smashed in the face by the thick, almost impossible to breathe, air. However, once I escaped the madness of Manila, my eyes were opened up to what an absolutely amazing and beautiful place the Philippines is, especially in the provincial areas where spectacular beaches, waterfalls and volcanoes are.

The air is one thing, but there are a few challenges to overcome when you arrive in the Philippines, especially Manila, for the first time. So what really happens in your first 24 hours after arriving in Manila? How do you negotiate this crazy, overwhelming place

“The purpose of this eBook is to bring awareness to some of the experiences you may encounter in the first twenty four hours of your arrival, particularly for first time visitors, and inexperienced travelers, so that hopefully, you can minimize or avoid any potential pitfalls”

that hits you between the eyes the moment you step off the plane? In this eBook, I will run through some of the things that you need to take into consideration not only before you arrive, but also what to expect and what you should look out for once you arrive here.

Before I start, I would also like to take this opportunity to say that the purpose of this eBook isn't to focus on the negatives of the Philippines, as every country, in one form or another, has its shortcomings and the Philippines is no different. The purpose of this eBook is to bring awareness to some of the



The family and I in 2005 during one of our first family holidays in the Philippines.

experiences you may encounter in the first twenty four hours of your arrival, particularly for first time visitors, and inexperienced travelers, so that hopefully, you can minimize or even avoid any potential pitfalls.

I'm very conscious of first time visitors having a bad experience when they visit the Philippines, and as a result, never coming back. This would be a real shame, as this is a fantastic country that offers so much to experience and enjoy. It is my hope that sharing my experiences and observations will help to minimize the chances of problems occurring, so that your visit to the Philippines will get off to a good start, and the rest of your time here will be so much more enjoyable.



Chasing waterfalls with the family in Rizal, just outside of Manila.

Anyway, let's get started! I hope you enjoy this eBook and that you are able to learn from it in more ways than one. If you do make it to this amazing country, look me up and let's go and have a beer!

Cheers,

Dezza

Chapter One

Preparing to visit the Philippines

Passport Check

The very first thing you need to make sure of when traveling to the Philippines, or any country for that matter, is that your passport has at least six months validity on it from your final date of travel. So for example, if you were planning to come to the Philippines from March 5, 2020 to March 19, 2020, the expiry date on your passport should be no earlier than September 19, 2020.



If your passport doesn't have at least six months of validity, your trip to the Philippines could be over before it even begins.

This is actually an international requirement for most countries but is strongly enforced in the Philippines and the rest of Asia. I have had a few mates caught out on this, so you really need to be mindful of your passport's expiry date, especially if you have been on an extended overseas jaunt prior to arrival.

Entry & Exit Requirements

Secondly, as a tourist, you will more than likely have an air ticket to also fly out from the Philippines. This might not necessarily be a return flight your place of origin, but just a flight anywhere out of

the Philippines. You will be required to present this air ticket in order to demonstrate that you aren't planning to settle here in the Philippines for an extended period of time in which case, you would need the appropriate visa. If you don't have a ticket to fly out, then when you're at your airport of origin, they may not permit you to take the flight to the Philippines. There are a number of people I know, including myself, that have been caught out on this and it can be a major hassle as it can impact further connecting flights, costs etc. So, if you are planning on utilizing a tourist visa, always make sure you have the tickets for your flight out of the Philippines handy upon pre-departure. If you do get caught out on that, the cheapest option in the interim is to buy a ticket from Manila to Hong Kong online. This brings us to the next section - tourist visas.

Visa Requirements

Assuming you have met the passport validity and ticketing requirements, the next step is your visa to enter, and legally stay, in the country. Nationals of over 150 countries do not require a visa for the Philippines if you are planning to visit for less than 30 days (when you arrive at the airport, you will receive a visa waiver good for 30 days). The only real requirement is to have a passport that has a validity of at least 6 months.

If you plan to stay for longer than 30 days you can apply for an extension. This is good for 29 days. Once you have reached 59 days in the Philippines, you can apply for extensions beyond this. These extensions are good for 2 months at a time. If you really are planning to stay for a year or more, you can apply for extensions that are good for 6 months at a time. After the first six months, you will need to apply for a Tourist ACR-I Card (Alien Certificate of Registration). In the long-term, this can save you money rather than apply for a series of 2-month extensions. This can be arranged through a travel agency, or you can go direct to Bureau of Immigration, with the best office being the recently opened satellite office at SM Aura Shopping Mall in Fort BGC, Taguig. Check out www.immigration.gov.ph for more info.

“If you plan to stay for less than 30 days, then you have no other requirements other than to have your passport stamped upon arrival, in which case, you automatically receive 30 days validity.”

Insurances

One other thing that should seriously be considered before coming to the Philippines is making sure you have health and/or travel insurance. I'm not an expert on what the best policies are, and what levels of cover or packages you should have, but the one thing I do know is that hospitals here can be expensive, depending on the treatment required. In Manila, the quality of health care is actually very good so that's not really a problem, but as I said, the problem is, it's not cheap. If you are planning to go to the provinces to experience the beautiful beaches or chase after some adventure, you might be more at risk of requiring a hospital, so having some sort of health or travel insurance should be a major consideration. Then, of course, other things can happen like luggage getting lost or stolen, among other things, so it's wise to even just have some bare minimum travel insurance in place for that, which in some cases, can cover certain hospital treatment.

Vaccinations

Another level of protection for yourself is to check with your local physician about the need for vaccinations before coming to the Philippines. One thing that is specific to the Philippines that I must touch on is Dengue Fever, which is transmitted by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes love stagnate water, and during the wet season in the Philippines, there is plenty of water around and therefore, more mosquitoes. There are no vaccines available overseas for Dengue Fever so if you happen to get it, although unlikely, you could be

hospitalized depending on how bad it is. Not everyone that gets Dengue Fever needs to be hospitalized, so don't panic. The only precaution you can take for this is to make sure you use insect repellent or wear long sleeves or pants and of course, be mindful of where you're sleeping for example, with windows open, particularly near to rivers, canals, open drains etc. I don't want to scare you on this matter, as you would have to be seriously unlucky to contract Dengue Fever, so don't freak out if you get bitten by a mosquito. If you do get bitten by a mosquito, this doesn't automatically mean you will get Dengue Fever, as not all mosquitoes carry it, but you really do need to be aware of the potential danger.

Other Bits n' Pieces

One of the things which is also pretty important in this day and age, with all the electronic devices we have, is making sure you have the right power plug converter/adaptor. Like most people, one of the first things you will want to do when you get chance is charge your phone or whatever electronic devices you bring. In the Philippines, the power



outlets are like the American system, with two prongs, known as "Type A". The standard voltage is 220 volts.

One final note on pre-departure - and although fairly obvious, it still needs to be mentioned. It would be diligent to leave info with family and/or friends on where you're going or staying. Not everyone is on Facebook or Instagram or other social media platforms, so just make sure you leave at least an itinerary with some trusted people, just as a precaution.

These days, there are universal travel adapters that suit power outlets across the world, so if you don't have one, get one!



What Have We Learnt?

- **Checking the expiry date of your passport before arrival is critical or you might not be able to enter the Philippines**
- **If you are planning to stay on a tourist visa, regardless how long for, you will need to show that you have an air ticket to leave the Philippines. One way tickets to the Philippines are not accepted**
- **You will receive an automatic 30 day visa upon arrival. Extensions beyond this are available and come at an extra cost**
- **Although not absolutely compulsory, it would be diligent to make sure you have some travel or health insurance in place, and at least check what vaccinations you may need before traveling**
- **We can't live these days without our electronic gadgets, so make sure you bring a universal power plug adapter so you can charge your items.**

Chapter Two

What happens when you arrive at the Airport?

Manila Airport

So now, it's onto the next phase - arriving at the airport and then getting to your hotel, or wherever it is you're staying. After you have your passport and air ticket sorted, your insurance in place, your vaccinations up to date (if required), and your universal power plug adapter, you will of course arrive in the Philippines. Like any airport, the first step after actually landing is passing through immigration and having your passport stamped for entry into the Philippines (I have covered the visa requirements in chapter one).

There has been much negative press written about the airport in Manila, known as Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). However, since my time living here, there have been vast improvements in a number of areas, particularly with the complete opening of Terminal Three in 2014. NAIA is made up of three international terminals, and one domestic terminal. Depending on the airline you fly with, that will determine which terminal you arrive at. Terminal two is exclusively for Philippine Airlines (PAL), both domestic and international flights, and Terminals One and Three are for other international airlines (some domestic flights also leave from Terminal Three). Terminal Four is purely for domestic flights.

“NAIA is made up of three international terminals, and one domestic terminal. Depending on the airline you fly with, that will determine which terminal you arrive at.”

As a rule of thumb, the Asian regional airlines like Korean Air, Japan Airlines, EVA Air and the more budget type airlines like Tiger Airways, Dragon Air and Jetstar fly into Terminal One. Qantas also flies into Terminal One. The bigger, long haul type airlines like Singapore Airlines, Emirates, KLM, Delta and Cathay Pacific fly into Terminal Three, including the Philippines second largest carrier, Cebu Pacific.

So once you have your passport stamped and have passed through immigration, assuming you have check-in luggage, you will then collect your luggage from the baggage carousel, pass through customs and if you have nothing to declare, then exit from the terminal. This is where all the fun begins!

Transport from the airport

Once you exit any of the three international terminals, you will then be either going to your hotel (or wherever it is that you are staying), or taking a connecting flight to another place in the Philippines. Firstly, we will cover getting to your hotel (assuming you don't have friends or family picking you up). This is where it can get tricky, so I will try and simplify this as much as possible.

To help you prepare for what to expect when you exit from the airport terminal, expect to be confronted by a wall of noise and activity - there will literally be hundreds of people, there will be car horns blaring, there will be people blowing whistles and screaming out, and you will get smacked in the face by the hot, humid air - it really can be overwhelming. Therefore, it's important to have some sort of plan in place to make sure you get to where you want to go with the least amount of stress as possible. Here are the options available:



This is what you are confronted with at Terminal Three before you even exit the terminal.

Option One – Grab Car:

Grab is the Asian version of Uber and is probably one of the more cheaper and safer options available. All four terminals do have free Wi-Fi, but it can be frustratingly unreliable. If you don't have data roaming, you can possibly still use the Wi-Fi to try and order a Grab Car.



Airport taxis are regulated and readily available. These airport taxis are at Terminal Three.

Option Two – Airport Taxi:

Each of the four terminals has an airport taxi service. The airport taxis are pretty clearly marked (yellow and white in color), and there is a counter in which you can order one. They don't have a meter and charge a set fee which will depend on where you are going. They should also provide a receipt so you have some sort of record of the journey. At least you know up front how much you will be paying and all but eliminate the chances of being ripped off.



The Airport Bus Service is a good option depending where in Manila you are staying, and your arrival time.

waiting for you with a name placard which can save you a lot of time ordering a Grab or Airport Taxi. Then of course, you will find your hotel without any problems. If time is really is a concern, prearranging with your hotel to have you picked up is a good option.

Option Five – Regular Taxi:

If you do not wish to avail of any of the above transport options and decide to take a regular taxi, there are a few things that you need to be mindful of. Taxis have a terrible reputation for ripping people off, especially tourists. They will try every trick in the book from engaging you in conversation so they can conveniently “forget” to turn on their meter, right through to demanding a higher set rate. And the worst taxi drivers tend to frequent the airport. If you really have no choice but to take a regular taxi, then you really need to be mindful of their scams.

Internal connecting flights

If you have a connecting flight to another part of the country, and you aren't part of a prearranged package tour, you will need to be mindful that the terminal in which you depart from, might not be the same as the one you arrived at from your international flight. So how do you get from one terminal to the next?

Option Three – Airport Shuttle Bus:

If you are heading straight into Manila, there is a bus service available called UBE Express. This will take you to most of the key points around Manila. It also services some of the major hotels. This service is available from Terminals 1, 2 and 3 and departs every 30 minutes for the cost of P300/person.

Option Four – Hotel Taxi:

While not the cheapest option, this is probably the easiest and most convenient. You will have someone



This is the counter just outside Terminal Three where you can order an airport taxi. The rates and destinations are published just next to the counter.

Transferring Between Terminals

Each airport now has free air-side transfer buses between all four airport terminals. These depart every 15 minutes and all you need to avail of the service is a valid a ticket from the day you arrived or the following day. Make sure you allow yourself plenty of time for transferring to your connecting flight, especially if you have to go to another terminal.

As I mentioned earlier there are three international terminals (terminal one, two which is for PAL domestic and international, and three). However, depending on the carrier, there is also terminal four, exclusively for domestic flights, but not for all airlines as some fly out of Terminal Two (PAL) and also Terminal Three (Cebu Pacific).

As a consequence of the above, just be mindful of the time it will take you to get from one terminal to the other if you need to transfer terminals to catch an internal flight. I won't go into all the variables, but to keep it simple, I would allow up to an hour as you also need to factor in the traffic which can be horrendous, once again, depending on the time of day/night or even the day of the week or time of year!

Words Of Warning

If you're Caucasian, you will obviously stand out more and therefore, become an easy target for scammers. It's fairly likely you will be approached by these seemingly helpful people offering all sorts of help from carrying your luggage, to getting a taxi or car. This can actually be quite overwhelming for first time visitors and can catch you off guard when you are tired from flying and least expecting it.

However, in this case, if someone doesn't have any ID or uniform, you simply have to just keep walking past these people as just about everyone that is offering help of some description, is not necessarily there to help you. They are there to help themselves by trying to make money from you. Do NOT take a taxi from these people and do NOT accept their assistance for anything. If you are in any doubt at all, make sure you approach one of the uniformed guards to ask for assistance. There are plenty of them around so are easy enough to find, and they all speak reasonable English.



If you are going to engage the services of someone to assist you, make sure they have the necessary ID and uniforms like these guys.

Currency exchange

Each of the three international terminals do have ATMs in the arrivals area, but you can't depend on these in case they are offline, which is sometimes the case, or there may be an issue with cards issued by foreign banks. ATM cards with the "Cirrus" logo tend to work best. Most of the time it's fine, but if you do have trouble using an ATM, you can change money at the airport, but you won't need more than say P1,000 (approx USD20), to get you from the airport to the hotel or to another terminal. Like any country, the exchange rate offered at the airport is usually pretty poor therefore, don't change all your home currency or cash when you arrive at the



The Philippine peso has some notes in very similar colors. Therefore, it's important that you are aware of exactly how much you are giving and particularly, receiving.

airport or hotel. The best rate you will get is actually from an ATM, so my advice is to pull the money out at an ATM when you get the chance. The maximum you can withdraw at an ATM per transaction is P10,000 (approx USD200), and the maximum you can withdraw per day is P25,000. I

Please note that Terminal Four (domestic terminal), doesn't have an ATM so it's best to make any cash withdrawals when you arrive at any of the international terminals previously mentioned.



What Have We Learnt?

- There are three international terminals and one domestic terminal in Manila, and it's important that you know which one you are flying into as this can impact any internal connecting flights you are taking, and also transportation to your hotel or wherever you're heading
- There are a few transport options to get you to wherever you want to go, but if you take a regular taxi, be very careful they don't rip you off
- If you are Caucasian, be wary of people offering taxi rides or to assist with luggage as these may well be scammers. Make sure people offering any assistance have a uniform and ID before accepting their help
- Connections between each of the airport terminals is not as efficient as other countries, so you need to allow enough time so you don't get caught out.
- It is best to try and withdraw money from one of the ATMs at the airport, as opposed to exchanging your home currency. Cash is king so either way, at least make sure you have some Philippine currency on you.

Chapter Three

Avoiding scams and rip offs

At the risk of sounding like a scaremonger or killjoy, or focusing solely on the negatives, it is important that I cover some of the scams in which foreigners become the target of. Just like any country you travel to, even Australia, there are always unscrupulous people trying to take advantage of the weary traveler who lacks “local” knowledge. Developing countries are particularly notorious for this so it's important to be aware, and equip yourself with some local knowledge before arrival. Once again, we don't want your holiday, and what should be happy times, getting off to a bad start. Following are some things to be aware of:

Avoiding Scammers

Once you have negotiated your way through all of the above, and you have checked into your hotel and freshened up (or wherever you're staying), your phone is charged, and you have some cash from the ATM - then it's time to get out amongst it for something to eat and drink! While most likely taking a bit of a walk to get a feel for the place, the first thing you will most likely run into is scammers and or beggars. Let me start off first with scammers.

As mentioned earlier, particularly if you're Caucasian, you will feel a bit like a rock star as you will have people being very friendly to you (beyond the rock star welcome you probably received from the hotel staff when you checked in). Unfortunately, out on the street, some of these people will be scammers and are being friendly for a reason. Taking this into consideration, you may have Filipinos approach you claiming to know you from the hotel or whatever, to try and win over your trust. As Filipinos generally speak very good English, this can lull you into a false sense of security and make you feel welcome and trusted.

“Unfortunately, out on the street, some of these people will be scammers and are being friendly for a reason.”

Don't get me wrong here as generally, Filipinos are fantastic people and are by nature very friendly, which is one of their great strengths and one the things I really love about this country. However, and rather unfortunately, some of these friendly people

use their "friendliness" to take advantage of you. These particular people are professional scammers and are very good at it, and very convincing. Their obvious intention is to scam money out of you somehow, maybe by offering to show you around, or take you some place. If a stranger is being over friendly to you, or overly persistent, this should set the alarm bells off. It's important that you just politely ignore these people and walk on by - they are not your friends and you owe them NOTHING!

Avoiding Beggars

Aside from the scammers who try and engage you, and win over your trust, you will have people on the street who are just flat out beggars and will just come up to you with their hand out, and not even speak to you. Some of these people will be young children, women with babies, people with serious deformities – it's all very confronting and will certainly tug on your heart strings. My suggestion is to develop thick skin and politely ignore these beggars, at least for the first 24 hours, as this will allow you to get a better appreciation of the environment and culture. The other aspect of this is that beggars are often pick pocketers, so that's one of the main reasons to just stay clear and move on as they can use the guise of begging as a distraction so they can pick pocket you. These people generally don't act alone. You will be approached often enough for it to start to become annoying, so from your first day in the country, you need to learn to ignore them – don't even make eye contact!

Getting Around Town

So once you have made it past the scammers and beggars, the next thing will be catching a taxi to go for a meal, or to visit somewhere you have been reading about or have been told about. The next "scam" is one of my personal pet hates - getting a taxi .



The real trick with taxis is making sure the driver turns on his meter before you commence your trip.

this by distracting you with friendly conversation and start driving without turning on the meter. This isn't necessarily the end of the world, and won't cost you hundreds of dollars, but it's the principle of the matter that frustrates me.

As mentioned earlier, if you are able to get a Grab car, that is your absolute best option. If not, taxis in the Philippines are very cheap and plentiful and you can get yourself from one side of town to the other for less than USD6. A large majority of taxi drivers are fine but some can get under your guard, especially when they sense you are new to the country. Unfortunately, as a result of this, there are some taxi drivers that will try to take advantage of you and they will usually do

The best way to avoid this is, do not get into the taxi until you have established if the driver knows where you want to go, and is willing to turn his meter on. If not, then simply wave him on and get another cab and follow the same process. When you're negotiating with a taxi driver, the usual response you will get is that it's "very traffic" so that they can try and justify not turning on the meter and therefore, charging you whatever they want. So, you need to always insist that they turn the meter on, but also let them know you will give them a tip (normally you might tip say P20-P50 depending on the total fare). If the fare is say P85, you might just give them P100 (approx USD2) and tell them to keep the change, for example. That's fine.

“...do not get into the taxi until you have established if the driver knows where you want to go, and is willing to turn his meter on.”

Tipping

Speaking of tipping, one thing to be aware of is that tipping is a massive thing in the Philippines. In Australia and Europe for example, we don't have tipping at all so it's a new concept to us whereas for Americans, it's standard practice.

“Filipinos will expect to be tipped for just about any type of service, regardless of whether or not they have actually done a good job.”

Tipping is purely subjective, however - Filipinos will expect to be tipped for just about any type of service, regardless of whether or not they have actually done a good job. For example, you will walk into say a hotel lobby or bar toilet, and there will be someone there who will hand you a tissue or towel to dry your hands after washing them, and of course, he will expect a tip for simply doing this. In isolation, you might think what

the heck, and throw him some loose change once you see the puppy dog eyes, but believe me, after a couple of days, you will be surprised at how many times you will be asked for a tip or be expected to give one, and after a while, it does become annoying. Don't feel bad about not giving a tip at every single occurrence. If someone has earned their tip for good service, sure, go ahead and tip. If not, then you are not obligated.

ATM's and Cash

When withdrawing money from an ATM, I strongly advise to try and find an ATM that is located indoors, like in a shopping mall or hotel lobby, as there is less chance of it having been tampered with, and the security is usually better. As mentioned earlier, please be aware that you can often find ATMs offline, or there may be an issue with cards issued by foreign banks, so it's important to plan ahead when you need to use an

ATM to save time and frustration. Ultimately, although pretty obvious, cash is king so make sure you have cash with you at all times and of course, protect your cash and other valuables from pick pocketers.

Other Bits n' Pieces

When on the street, you will often have people approaching you in a friendly manner offering everything from guitars and feather dusters, through to Viagra and cigarettes. Once again, particularly if you are Caucasian, you become an obvious and persistent target and of course, the price of these items increase quicker than your annoyance levels, so it is best to politely say no and move on.



What Have We Learnt?

- Beware of scammers and beggars who are trying to take advantage of you. Most of them will be really friendly and nice, and it can be hard to ignore them but as our parents taught us – don't talk to strangers!
- Make sure taxi drivers turn on their meters! Whenever a Caucasian takes a taxi, the driver seems to always forget to turn the meter on!
- Tipping is a huge part of Filipino culture on so many levels and for all sorts of transactions from service staff in restaurants and bars, through to taxis and car park attendants. If you want to give a tip, by all means, go for it but just remember, in most cases, its not obligatory.
- You will need to learn to develop a thick skin and not only say no to people, but ignore them completely. It can be hard when people are being friendly, but unfortunately, it is necessary.
- Cash is king but don't carry more than you need to. Also be aware that in provincial areas, ATM's are harder to come by so make sure you have enough cash to get you by, and make sure you have it secure at all times.

Chapter Four

The news isn't all bad

So there you have it, a brief introduction of what to expect in your first 24 hours in the Philippines. I have written this eBook to help first time travelers to the Philippines, particularly those who are less experienced with travel in Asia, or other developing countries. Unfortunately, there are always things we don't know about a country we are visiting for the first time, even if you are an experienced traveler. This could be anything from understanding local law and customs, logistics and transport, scams and rip offs - these, and more situations, happen everywhere and can work against you.

Of all the things I have highlighted in this eBook, please don't expect that every single one of these things will happen to you when you arrive, particularly the bad experiences. If it was that bad, would I still be living here? I'm pretty much writing this information to highlight the absolute worst case scenario, at least during your first 24 hours in Manila – and arguably, beyond. Through this, if one or more of these scenarios do arise, you are prepared and equipped to handle it.

“I have written this eBook to help first time travelers to the Philippines, particularly those who are less experienced with travel in Asia or other developing countries.”

It's imperative that you always have to stay on guard in the Philippines. Don't be left wondering how did that kid steal my phone? How did I end up forgetting to tell the taxi driver to turn on his meter? Why did I just pay \$100 for something worth only \$20 that I will never use? Why didn't I take out bloody travel insurance? How did that guy off the street scam me out of \$75 for a birthday cake for his sick daughter? Like a heavy weight boxer that has battled his way through to the final round, you need to constantly keep your guard up, or you will find yourself asking these questions to yourself.

Unfortunately, like anywhere, there are a few bad apples that spoil the bunch and as a result, there is a lot of negative press about the Philippines. However, I have to say, in the whole time I have been living here, I have not had anything major happen to me. The worst that has happened to me is that I have been pick pocketed twice, both times resulting in stolen phones (and on one of those occasions the police actually got my phone back!). For me personally, that's really about as bad as it has got, which isn't bad for a country of over one hundred million people! Maybe I'm lucky as I do know friends and others who have been pick pocketed or scammed much worse than I ever have. I have an Aussie mate who has been living here longer than me who recently had a laptop stolen from his back pack in the middle of the day as he was walking in a busy part of town, while actually wearing the back pack on his back! However, that really is a rarity. The point is, it does happen, and I don't want it to happen to you, which is why I have written this eBook.



The thing that really does make the Philippines such an amazing country is the people. No matter where you go, no matter how little the people have, they always manage to raise a smile. As mentioned throughout this eBook, if you're Caucasian, you do stand out a lot more. The positive side of this is that sometimes you can feel like the Pied Piper with children following you down the street just because they wanna be seen with you and it's something different for them to have a "white person" around, especially in the provincial areas. I have always felt welcome here and I know a lot of foreigners do also, which is why we continue living here. Don't let all the negative press keep you from coming here as this really is an incredible place to visit. Like any country, just take the right precautions and you will have a great time!

About the author

As mentioned earlier, I have been living in Manila since 2003, and having visited nearly 50 of the 81 provinces in the Philippines, I have just about seen it all. Even now, almost every day, I still see something new that blows my mind - for better or worse. However, I want to break the negative perception of this country whilst also addressing the reality of what does happen here, hence feeling compelled to write this eBook. As mentioned, if my tips can help visitors have a more comfortable and enjoyable stay here, then I feel I have done my duty as a fellow human being.

Initially, I wrote this eBook with the focus being on what to look out for when you first come to the Philippines, and what to expect quite literally, in the first 24 hours. However, I have since decided to expand on this and have added a section on my website that offers “survival tips” . This goes into a lot more detail about the Philippines and covers everything from the history and culture, through to food and natural disasters. This can be found here www.deztreks.com/survival-tips/

Please stay subscribed to my website and blog www.deztreks.com where I share information related more to traveling around the Philippines, including some amazing destinations, with tips on how to get there, when to go there, and why to go there. The website also contains a blog section so that I can interact with my audience in a more real time environment, so please jump on and feel free to check it out and send me a question or comment.



This is the best way to enjoy the Philippines and hopefully, my tips in this eBook allow it to happen with minimal complications.

I hope to see you in this amazing country soon, and I hope to hear from you via my website and blog. Until then, safe travels and cheers!