

SEPTEMBER 18-19, 2010

# TRAVEL ADVISORY AND PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MANILA



5<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE  
OF LAWYERS IN  
ASIA-PACIFIC



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# About the Philippines and Filipinos

The Philippine Archipelago is composed of 7,107 islands with three major islands – Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Its capital is Manila located in the island of Luzon. (Maps of the Philippines and of Metro Manila are included in the conference kit.)

There are only two seasons in the Philippines –dry and wet. People usually call the dry season as “summer” even if the season is not exactly within the definition of the word “summer”. The temperature usually ranges from 26 to 36 degrees Celsius in the lowlands but may be moderate in mountainous regions.

In general, January to February are the coolest months in the Philippines, March to May are the hottest and June to August and sometimes up to September the wet months. These are also the months when the Philippines is frequented by typhoons. September to December are “cooler” months. Recently though, this pattern is changing as we experience a global climate change.

The Philippines has magnificent and diverse flora and fauna, splendid beaches and coral reefs. It is also rich in natural resources like minerals and metals.

A long history of Spanish and American colonialism made an impact on Filipino culture. Most festivals, celebrations, and processions are closely linked with religion through the Roman Catholic Church. Overall, the Philippines has a rich, diverse and

colorful culture, tradition, and music.

The Philippines is dubbed as the only Christian nation in Southeast Asia since 90% of Filipinos are Christians. The other 10% come from other faiths like Islam, Buddhism, nature worship, etc.

The Philippines is also home to a number of indigenous peoples whose ancestral domains are scattered all over the archipelago, each with their own tradition, culture and language.

The official language of the country is Filipino, which is mainly derived from Tagalog though a large population speak Cebuano. Tagalog is widely spoken in Central Luzon, Manila and South Luzon.

Most Filipinos understand and speak English especially those living in the cities. Those who studied in a university are more or less fluent with English – oral and written. Some understand simple Spanish since a lot of words in Filipino are Spanish in origin.

The Philippines has a republican form of government with executive, legislative and judicial branches. The Executive branch is headed by a President with a Vice President and department secretaries. The legislative branch employs the bi-cameral system – the House of Representatives (lower house) and the Senate (upper house), collectively known as the Congress.

The highest court in the land is the Supreme Court with a Chief Justice and 14 other justices. Down the line is the Court of Appeals, the Regional Trial Courts and the Metropolitan or Municipal Trial Courts. The Philippines has a population

of about 50,000 lawyers who are compulsory members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). Various voluntary lawyers' organizations exist, including pro-bono or public interest lawyers belonging to the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL).

Filipinos are known for their hospitality and graciousness being friendly, warm and welcoming. Part of Filipino culture is that we often do not say "No" directly.

Visitors must be patient and understanding of a generally long-standing cultural trait of not being punctual. But this is earnestly and consciously being avoided especially in major international activities and events. Also, visitors must expect a balanced interplay between flexibility and faithfulness to specific schedules and plans.

So aside from these traits, delegates must take into account the erratic traffic situation in many parts of Metro Manila and are advised to give an additional allowance of at least 30minutes for unusual traffic conditions in going and coming from the venues and for meetings and appointments.

The Philippines is a beautiful country and the Filipinos are a beautiful and smiling people, with a high and even peculiar sense of humor. But the country is also a place of ironies, conflicts and struggles.

## Expected Climate in September

1. September is considered as part of the rainy season. Temperature may range from a high of 78 F to a low of 46 F (**approximately 32 C to 24 C**). Humidity can reach a high of 80%.
2. Delegates are advised to bring umbrellas or raingears as September is still the typhoon season and it rains usually in the afternoons and evenings. Or they can just purchase them here at very cheap prices.

## Clothing and Dress Codes

Wear comfortable clothes. We recommend:

- 1) **Casual** clothing during rest and recreation and solidarity night/dinner.
- 2) **Semi-formal** wear for other meetings and for visits or attendance at other events.
- 3) **Formal** wear/business attire for the COLAP V conference proper and visit or meetings with government officials like the Justice Secretary. (The Filipino delegation would wear their own formal Filipiniana attires.)

***(The COLAP V Programme and the other events are included in the conference kit.)***

## Health Concerns

1. As much as possible, bring your personal medicines although there are many pharmacies that are open 24/7.
2. As a general rule, it is recommended that you stay away from city tap water and rural river water. We recommend that you take bottled or distilled water.
3. There are reliable hospitals should you encounter a major injury or illness. Your hotels normally have their own medical services. Health workers provided by the organizers are also on standby for the delegates.
4. There is a high incidence of dengue attacks in places where there are colonies of mosquitoes. They are a new strain and attacks during the day. When struck with a high fever and when in doubt, please ask for expert professional medical advice immediately. But the conference venue and hotels are of course very safe.

## Security

1. As in all major populated and tourist cities, pickpocketing, snatching and theft are not uncommon. It is best to leave expensive items and valuables at your hotel. If you have to bring valuable items (e.g., camera, mobile phones, laptops), please mind them, secure them properly and never leave them unattended.

**2. As much as possible, delegates must avoid travelling alone outside the conference venue.**

3. Photocopy your passport and, whenever available, just leave your original passports at the hotel's safe.

**4. A COLAP V Identification Card will be required for ingress and egress to the conference site, plenary hall and the workshop rooms.**

## **Personal Items, Gadgets and Equipment**

1. The common electrical current is 220 volts at 60 cycles.

It is always safe to check the voltage requirements of your equipment before plugging.

2. Electrical sockets are usually for 2 flat parallel-pronged plugs.

If your gadgets have a different plug (e.g., rounded, 3-pronged) and you foresee a need to charge them, please bring a socket adapter, although they are easily available in shops.

3. The Philippines is said to be the texting (SMS) capital of the world. You can purchase a local SIM card at very cheap prices here (about 1 US Dollar or 1 Euro).

## **Currency and Exchange Rates**

1. The Philippine currency is the peso. There are 1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, and 20 peso notes; 10, 5, 1, 0.25, 0.10, and 0.05 coins.

The exchange rate, as of this writing, fluctuates between Php 44.00 - 46.00 per US dollar. The Euro is equivalent to between Php 57.00-59.00.

2. There are money changers around the city and in shopping malls. Traveler's checks may be cashed at any bank.

3. There are automated teller machines (ATM) should you need to withdraw cash from your bank accounts. If you need to withdraw more than \$500.00, you need to transact directly with the bank teller. Most banks are open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Some banks close later depending on the bank and branch.

4. Not all establishments (like most fastfood restaurants) accept credit cards but most major establishments do so such as supermarkets, boutiques in malls and restaurants. To make sure, just ask the sales representative before making your purchase.

5. It is recommended that you exchange your currency at the airport for your taxi fare to the venue, approximately US\$15.00.

6. Tipping is customary in many services and is left to one's discretion. No tips are necessary if this is included in the bill as a "service charge."

# Registration

1. The corresponding registration fees are in the COLAP V brochure and in the website (www.colapv2010.net).
2. Personal or group registration and payment (for those who opted to pay in Manila) will be on **SEPTEMBER 17 at 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the SMX 2nd floor, Room 2**. This will be continued on the same day at the nearby Microtel from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Duly authorized and identifiable members of the COLAP V Secretariat will be on hand to receive payments and assist you.
3. Delegates are urged to list down at the registration what Workshops they will attend on the first and second days so that the Secretariat can advise the venue organizers and the caterer of the number of participants per workshop room and also to check on the numerical balance of the simultaneous workshops. ***(A separate Workshop Guideline will be issued and included in the conference kit.)***
4. Only those who have paid the proper and corresponding registration fees will be issued COLAP V identification cards and whenever applicable, the conference kit.

## How to Get to the Venue

***Venue: SMX, Mall of Asia, Pasay City, Metro Manila***

1. The venue is in the heart of Manila by the bay. Without any unusual traffic situation, it can be reached by taxi from the

airport normally in half an hour.

2. For delegates who are billeted at the Microtel and the Orchid Garden Hotel, shuttle service pick-up from the airport is available upon prior request and arrangement. This costs between Php 550.00 to Php 650.00 and are the most convenient and safest.
3. For delegates who are billeted at other hotels, please make arrangements with your hotel.
4. Another option is to take the ACCREDITED taxis immediately after the Customs area and immediately after stepping out of the Airport Terminal Building (NOT outside the airport's perimeter). They are safe as they issue receipts and are monitored by the company's communications radio. They cost a little less than the hotels' shuttle services.
- 5. It is not advisable for arriving travelers to take a public taxi outside the perimeter grounds of the airport premises.**
6. Again, delegates must give an additional allowance of at least 30minutes for unusual traffic conditions in going and coming from the venues during weekends and one hour during weekdays.

7. Delegates who will be arriving late at night may, upon prior request and arrangements with the COLAP V Secretariat, be picked up by representatives of the latter.

8. Please make sure that the COLAP V Secretariat and your hotel has your flight information.

9. Kindly contact the members of the COLAP V Secretariat when you have arrived at the airport. Public phones are available at the airport

## Language, Translations and Documents

1. The official language of the COLAP V is English. Japanese delegates would bring their own translators. French speaking delegates will be assisted by volunteer translators and will be grouped together.
2. The conference documents (including the plenary speeches and workshop papers submitted on time) will be placed in a CD and included in the conference kit.
3. Papers not submitted on time will be posted at the COLAP V website after the conference. These will be endeavored to be translated subsequently in French.
4. A video CD of the conference proceedings will be endeavored to be given out to the representatives of the country delegates at the end of the 2nd day.

## Filipino 101

There are many languages in the Philippines. The three most commonly used are Tagalog, Ilocano (commonly spoken in the Northern part of the country) and Cebuano (spoken in the Visayas and Mindanao).

Though people may understand you or speak English albeit broken, it is good to know a few Filipino words and phrases. Using the language of the people you are visiting will make them feel appreciated and will most likely give you an easier time establishing rapport.

### **PRONUNCIATION**

In Filipino, there are no long vowel sounds; only short sounds. This makes it very easy to pronounce Filipino words. There is an "ng" in the Filipino alphabet and it commonly occurs at the end of a word though at times it may be at the beginning or the middle. It has a nasal sound similar to the sound you hear at the end of a word ending in "-ing" such as singing or dancing.

### **GREETINGS**

Filipinos commonly say "Hi" or "Hello" or "*Kamusta*" (How are you?) as a form of greeting, especially among close friends. When parting ways, it is common to say "*Ingat!*" (Take care!)

However, when a person meets another person she/he knows in the street, the greeting "hi" or "hello" is not usual. Usually, one will say "*Saan ka galing?*" (Where have you been?) or "*Saan ka pupunta?*" (Where are you going?). To Filipinos, this is only a way of greeting and not an encroachment on the other person's private life. The person asking does not really need to know exactly where one came from or is going to. Thus, the reply is usually, "*Diyang*" or "*Diyang lang*" ("There" or "Just there", indicating a place that is near) or "*Doon*" or "*Doon lang*" ("Over

there” or “Just over there”, indicating a place a bit farther).

Thus, do not be offended when they meet you in the street and ask you where you are going or where you came from. They are not being nosy but is only a way of greeting.

Use of “po” or sometimes “ho” in a phrase is considered polite. It is also a gesture of respect for the other person and it is especially used to address an older person. Using the “third person” is also considered polite and formal.

Activists and progressive individuals usually shout “*Isang Bagsak!*” in unison while banging the table at the same time to conclude a meeting, to show appreciation for a speaker (instead of clapping), or to signify that a consensus or agreement has been reached on a point or issue.

Below are common phrases you might find useful:

Greetings and Responses:

Formal/Polite	Informal	Translation/Note
Magandang umaga po.	Magandang umaga.	Good morning.
Magandang tanghali po.	Magandang tanghali.	<i>“Tanghali” is loosely translated as noon. But for Filipinos, “tanghali” is not strictly 12:00 noon. People use this greeting around lunchtime (between 11:00 a.m and 1:00 p.m.)</i>

Formal/Polite	Informal	Translation/Note
Magandang hapon po.	Magandang hapon.	Good afternoon.
Magandang gabi po.	Magandang gabi.	Good evening.
Kumusta po kayo?	Kumusta ka?	How are you?
Mabuti po naman.	Mabuti naman.	I’m fine.
Salamat po.	Salamat.	Thank you.
Maraming salamat po.	Maraming salamat.	Thank you very much.
Wala pong anuman.	Walang anuman.	You are welcome.
Opo.	Oo.	Yes.
Hindi po.	Hindi.	No.
Hindi ko po alam.	Hindi ko alam.	I don’t know.

**Should you have any further questions, please let the COLAP V Secretariat or Philippine Organizing Committee know:**

**Secretariat:**

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References:

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