



Focus On the Philippines School Program

The Philippines, Asia's only predominately Catholic nation, was the continent's first democracy (est. 1946). Approximately 5,000 of its 7,107 islands are uninhabited, but each year more typhoons, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are recorded in the Philippines than in any other country. Because Filipinos were once ruled by foreigners, first by the Spanish and later by the Americans, their laws and culture reflect a jumble of influences. English, for instance, is one of two official languages. (The other is Tagalog.) Like other Asians, Filipinos deplore displays of anger, they're scrupulous about saving face, and they try never to say "no" except by saying "yes" with a slight hesitation. But like European Latinos, they are also proud and take offense at any sign of disrespect. Even so, Filipinos are warmly optimistic, gregarious, hospitable and openly curious about strangers. And they are passionate about almost everything — especially music, basketball and cockfighting — though never about hurrying.

AFS & Your Experience

AFS started in 1956 with the annual sending of Filipino students to the United States for a one-year high school exchange scholarship program and in turn hosting American high school students for the summer until 1979. To keep the AFS spirit alive, grantees of the exchange program formed the FILAFSRE or Filipino AFS Returnees Association in 1977 which is now known as AFS Returnees Foundation Philippines, Inc (ARFPI). With more than 100 active members out of almost 2,000 former Filipino AFS returnees, AFSRFPI hopes to undertake its own follow-up exchanges and to provide services to its members and to the community as well.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

AFS Activities

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Philippines will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) and talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in the Philippines, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization or local chapter of AFS-Philippines. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

Spending Money

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility.

Safety and Support

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Filipino. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Philippines may have additional rules.

Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for the Philippines (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

Program Prices

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement

with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

Country Information

Geography and Climate

The Philippines has a tropical marine climate dominated by a rainy season and a dry season. The summer monsoon brings heavy rains to most of the archipelago from May to October; the winter monsoon brings cooler and drier air from December to February. Manila and most of the lowland areas are hot and dusty from March to May. Even then, however, temperatures rarely rise above 37° C, though mean annual sea-level temperatures rarely fall below 27° C. Annual rainfall measures as much as 5,000 millimeters in the mountainous east coast section of the country, but less than 1,000 millimeters in some of the sheltered valleys.

Population

84,619,974 (July 2003 est.). Christian Malay 91.5%, Muslim Malay 4%, Chinese 1.5%, other 3%.

Language

Filipino (based on Tagalog) and English are the country's official languages. Eleven languages and eighty-seven dialects are indigenous to the archipelago.

Government

The Philippines is a democratic republic governed under a 1987 constitution. This constitution is modeled on the commonwealth constitution of 1935 that set up a governmental system similar to that of the United States. It includes many restrictions on term lengths and presidential powers as a way to safeguard against authoritarian rule.

Religion

The Philippines has the only predominantly Christian population in Asia, reflecting Spain's colonization of the islands in the 16th century. About 84% of all Filipinos are Roman Catholic. Another 10% belong to other Christian denominations, most notably the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (Philippine Independent Church), an independent Catholic church whose adherents are known as Aglipayans. About 5% are Muslims, and the remainder are Buddhists, animists or nonbelievers. The Muslim population of the Philippines lives mostly in the southern islands of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

Launching Your AFS Experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key English and Tagalog words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the local languages.

To familiarize yourself further with life in the Philippines, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about the Philippines and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to the Philippines. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living as a Filipino. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS-Philippines will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Filipinos will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience!

Curiously Filipino

- "Yo-Yo" means "come back" in Tagalog, the native language of the Philippines. The original yo-yo was a long strip of plant fiber or animal hide tied to a rock. It served as an easily-retrieved weapon.
- The flag of the Philippines is the only national flag that is flown differently during times of peace or war. A portion of the flag is blue, while the other is red. The blue portion is flown on top in time of peace, and the red portion is flown in war time.
- The largest pearl in the world was found in the Philippines. It is the size of a tennis ball.

How to Apply

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student age (upon arrival)	16y to 18y	
Country data	Size	299,000 sq km
	Population	84,619,974

	Official Language	English, Tagalog
	Government	Democratic republic
Currency	Philippines peso	
Useful website		
AFS Philippines website		

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>