

PEARLS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Go Beyond Tour | 15 Days | Physical Level 2

Manila – Banaue – Bohol – Cebu – Puerto Princesa

Discover the Philippines, an extraordinary archipelago where dramatic mountain landscapes, colonial history and tropical paradise come together. From the ancient rice terraces of Banaue to Bohol's iconic Chocolate Hills and the pristine beauty of Palawan, this journey reveals the country's rich heritage, diverse cultures and spectacular natural wonders.

- Discover Manila's rich history, culture and iconic landmarks
- Visit Sagada's Hanging Coffins and burial caves
- Explore the Banaue Rice Terraces and experience Ifugao culture
- Discover Bohol's iconic Chocolate Hills
- Cruise Palawan's Underground River through limestone caves
- Island hop Honda Bay's crystal clear waters

TOUR MAP



PEARLS OF THE PHILIPPINES TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (from dinner on the day of arrival until breakfast on the day of departure)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditures e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, meals not included, early check-in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

GO BEYOND TOURS:

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime. These tours include:

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

PHYSICAL LEVEL 2:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Pearls of the Philippines' is rated as a physical level 2 tour. A good level of fitness is required as you need to be comfortable walking for 2-3 hours and covering longer distances. Travelling conditions may be more challenging in some areas.

- There will be periods of walking whilst sightseeing, potentially on steep and uneven ground.
- The Hapao rice walk takes approximately 3 hours and covers 3km along narrow rice terrace embankments and uneven stone steps, with a gentle ascent and descent of around 100m.
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance.
- There are some days of long driving of up to 4 hours.

Of course, our local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of the tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1-2: Fly to Manila Meals: D

Fly to Manila, the Philippines' lively capital. On arrival, meet your local guide or national escort and transfer to your hotel.



After check-in, enjoy time at leisure to rest or explore the surroundings before this evening's welcome dinner and briefing.

Please note: Early check-in is not included and can be arranged at additional cost.

Destination Information

Manila – Founded in 1571, Manila has long been a centre of trade and culture in Southeast Asia. Today, visitors can ride colourful jeepneys, explore centuries-old landmarks such as San Agustin Church, and experience its lively mix of history, markets and urban culture. From the walled streets of Intramuros to the modern skylines of Makati and Bonifacio Global City, it is one of Asia's most diverse and dynamic capitals.

Day 3: Discover Manila Meals: B, L, D

Discover the rich history and culture of Manila with a tour of the old walled city of Intramuros, home to colonial churches, plazas and historic landmarks. Visit the colourful Jeepney Museum to learn about the Philippines' iconic mode of transport before travelling to Las Piñas, one of the city's more lively districts.



Destination Information

Intramuros – Also known as the "Walled City," Intramuros is the historic heart of Manila and a striking link to the Philippines' Spanish colonial past. Built in the late 16th century, its stone walls still enclose cobbled streets, quiet plazas and beautiful old churches, including San Agustin Church, the country's oldest stone church.

Jeepney Museum – The Jeepney Museum offers a colourful insight into one of the Philippines' most iconic symbols of daily life. Celebrating the jeepney – the country's famously vibrant and uniquely decorated public transport – the museum showcases its history, evolution and cultural importance in Filipino society.

Las Pinas – Las Piñas is a district south of Manila, best known for the historic St. Joseph Parish Church and its remarkable Bamboo Organ, a unique 19th-century instrument still played today. It offers a glimpse of everyday Filipino life, with local markets, traditional neighbourhoods and a warm community atmosphere.

Day 4: Banaue Rice Terraces

Meals: B, L, D

Fly to Northern Luzon before continuing from Cauayan Airport by road to Banaue, a scenic journey through the spectacular landscapes of the Cordillera Mountains. Stop to admire the stunning rice terraces of Mayoyao, carved into the mountainsides over 2,000 years ago, before arriving at your hotel in Banaue.



Destination Information

Cordillera Mountains – The Cordillera Mountains in northern Luzon are a dramatic highland region of deep valleys, pine forests and terraced hillsides. Home to the Ifugao people, it is famous for its ancient rice terraces and remote villages, where traditional mountain life continues against a backdrop of breathtaking scenery.

Mayoyao – Mayoyao is a remote mountain town in the Cordillera, surrounded by spectacular rice terraces carved into steep hillsides by the Ifugao people over centuries.

Banaue – Banaue is a mountain town best known for its breathtaking rice terraces carved into the mountainsides over 2,000 years ago by the Ifugao people. Often described as the "Eighth Wonder of the World," the landscapes here combine dramatic scenery with centuries-old farming traditions still in use today.

Day 5: Ifugao Culture & Hapao Terraces Meals: B, L, D

Explore the beautiful Hapao terraces for a scenic, easy walk through the lush landscapes, with visits to village houses and local schools along the way. At the village houses, enjoy a community-led rice wine-making demonstration. For those who wish, the walk can continue to the relaxing Bogya Hot Spring, where you can soak in the natural thermal waters surrounded by peaceful countryside scenery.



Please note: The Hapao rice walk takes approximately 3 hours and covers 3km along rice terrace embankments and uneven stone steps, with a gentle ascent and descent of around 100m. If you prefer to skip this walk due to mobility concerns, you are welcome to enjoy some leisure time in Banaue at your own pace.

Destination Information

Hapao Terraces – The Hapao Rice Terraces are one of the most scenic parts of the Ifugao landscape, offering gentle walking trails through lush, stepped valleys. Hapao is best experienced on foot, winding past rice fields, small villages and everyday rural life.

Ifugao Culture – Renowned for their remarkable rice-terrace engineering, the Ifugao people have preserved a rich cultural heritage for centuries. A visit offers an insight into traditional customs, craftsmanship and a way of life closely connected to the mountains.

Bogya Hot Springs – Popular among locals for picnicking and relaxing, a soak in the Bogya Hot Springs is a nice reward after exploring the terraces and wider region.

Day 6: Sagada Meals: B, L, D

Drive approximately three hours this morning through the scenic highlands to Sagada, one of the Philippines' most fascinating mountain communities. Visit the mysterious Hanging Coffins, suspended high on the cliffs according to ancient burial traditions. After lunch, explore the region's atmospheric burial caves before returning to Banaue.



Please note: Visits to the Hanging Coffins and Burial Caves in Sagada are subject to local cultural practices, traditional burial ceremonies, and other community activities. As these are sacred sites, temporary closures may occur at short notice, with little or no prior notification.

Where possible, we will endeavour to reschedule the visit or make suitable adjustments to the itinerary. However, such closures are unfortunately beyond our control.

Please rest assured that should we need to make any changes that affect your itinerary, we will communicate these as soon as the information becomes available.

Destination Information

Sagada – Known for its cool climate, misty pine forests, and dramatic limestone landscapes, Sagada offers a stark contrast to the tropical beach destinations typical of the Philippines. The local community is predominantly composed of the Igorot people, who have fiercely preserved many of their ancestral traditions, weaving practices, and agricultural rituals despite centuries of foreign colonization.

Hanging Coffins – An ancient, fascinating funerary manifestation located in the sheer limestone cliffs of the Echo Valley, the Hanging Coffins are a unique burial practice that is a centuries-old tradition of the local Igorot people, specifically the Applai tribe. Instead of burying their deceased underground, high-ranking elders are placed inside carved wooden coffins and secured directly to the rock faces.

Day 7: Fly to Bohol Meals: B, L, D

Travel to Cauayan Airport today, a scenic drive of approximately four hours from Banaue, before flying via Manila to Panglao on the island of Bohol. Known for its luscious countryside, unique wildlife, and laid-back atmosphere, Bohol offers a tropical welcome as you transfer to your beachside resort.



Destination Information

Bohol – Sitting in the Central Visayas, Bohol is famous for its bizarrely shaped limestone hills and tiny, bug-eyed tarsiers, but its real charm lies in how easily you can pivot from trekking through dense inland rainforests to unwinding on a white-sand beach by the afternoon.

Day 8: Bohol Countryside — Meals: B, L, D

Explore Bohol's scenic interior, beginning with a visit to the famous Chocolate Hills, a striking landscape of over a thousand symmetrical limestone mounds that turn rich brown during the dry season. Continue with a relaxing cruise along the Loboc River, drifting past lush tropical scenery, palmfringed riverbanks and peaceful rural villages while enjoying lunch on board. Later, visit a sanctuary dedicated to the tiny Philippine tarsier, one of the world's smallest primates.



Destination Information

Chocolate Hills – The Chocolate Hills are Bohol's most famous geological marvel, consisting of over 1,200 nearly identical, cone-shaped limestone domes that erupt from the island's flat landscape. Formed over millions of years by the erosion of ancient marine coral reefs, these unique mounds earn their name during the dry season when their lush green grass dries out and turns a deep cocoa brown, making the entire horizon look like rows of giant chocolate drops.

Philippine Tarsier – The Philippine tarsier is one of the world's smallest primates, a fist-sized creature native to Bohol with massive, unmoving eyes that are literally larger than its entire brain. To compensate for their fixed eyes, these nocturnal mammals can rotate their heads a full 180 degrees to hunt for insects in the dark.

Loboc River – The Loboc River is a winding, emerald-green waterway that cuts deep through Bohol's lush jungle interior, lined with overhanging nipa palms and towering tropical trees.

Day 9: Chocolate Making & Cebu — Meals: B, L, D

Visit a local cocoa farm to learn about the journey from bean to bar, gaining an insight into traditional chocolate-making techniques and the cultivation of cacao. Enjoy a hands-on experience while discovering the flavours and craftsmanship behind one of the Philippines' most beloved products. Later, travel 4 hours by ferry across the Visayan Sea to Cebu, the historic heart of the Philippines.



Destination Information

Cebu – Cebu is a long, narrow island province that serves as the historical and economic heart of the Central Visayas. From the chaotic charm of its capital city to the rugged, waterfall-heavy jungles of the south and the blindingly white sandbars of its northern islands, Cebu packs the entire diversity of the Philippine archipelago into one easily accessible strip of land.

Day 10: Discover Cebu & Fly to Palawan — Meals: B, L, D

Explore Cebu City's colonial heritage, including landmarks linked to Ferdinand Magellan and the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines. Later, fly 1.5 hours to Puerto Princesa on the island of Palawan, famed for its pristine natural beauty.



Destination Information

Cebu City – Cebu City is the gritty, high-energy capital of the south, famously known as the oldest city in the Philippines. It is loud and bustling, where modern skyscrapers and massive shopping malls dwarf 16th-century Spanish fortresses and centuries-old stone churches. Beyond its colonial history, the city is a paradise for food lovers, celebrated for serving the country's best lechon (crispy roasted pig) and acting as the chaotic, fast-paced gateway to the region's hidden beaches and waterfalls.

Puerto Princesa – Puerto Princesa is the eco-conscious, jungle-fringed capital of Palawan, widely known as one of the cleanest and greenest cities in the Philippines. It is a sprawling coastal hub where low-key urban streets quickly give way to dense mangrove forests, massive underground cave networks, and quiet, mountain-backed bays.

Day 11: Underground River Meals: B, L, D



Travel to the spectacular Underground River, one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Set within a protected national park, this remarkable natural wonder winds beneath a dramatic limestone karst landscape. Board a small boat and cruise through the vast cave system, gliding past towering rock formations, cathedral-like chambers and intricate stalactites and stalagmites, while learning about the unique ecosystem hidden beneath the jungle-covered cliffs.

Destination Information

Underground River – The Underground River is a pitch-black, five-mile waterway hidden entirely beneath a dense tropical rainforest, cutting straight through a massive limestone mountain before emptying into the sea. Inside, you'll float past cathedral-like cavern walls, towering rock formations, and thousands of bats hanging overhead.

Day 12: Island Hopping Meals: B, L, D



Spend the day island hopping across the crystal-clear waters and idyllic islets of Honda Bay, with time to swim and relax on white-sand beaches surrounded by tropical scenery. Enjoy the laid-back island atmosphere as you explore coral-rich waters and peaceful coastal landscapes. Later, take part in a hands-on Filipino cooking experience, learning about local ingredients and traditional techniques before enjoying the dishes you have prepared. As evening falls, set out on a magical firefly-watching excursion along a mangrove-lined river, followed by dinner in a tranquil setting.

Destination Information

Honda Bay – Island hopping is the ultimate Philippine experience, and what better place to do it than in the bright blue, island-studded stretch of ocean known as Honda Bay. Home to tiny, postcard-perfect islets, enjoy the white sand or exploring its shallow coral reefs full of marine life.

Day 13: Fly to Manila Meals: B, L, D

Fly 1.5 hours to Manila today, where upon arrival, the rest of the day is at leisure. This evening, unwind with a refreshing drink at a stylish rooftop bar as you take in sweeping panoramic views of the glittering Manila skyline. Then, celebrate the end of your journey with a farewell dinner.



Day 14-15: Depart to New Zealand Meals: B

Any time before your flight is at leisure. You will be transferred from your hotel to Manila's airport, according to the departure time of your international flight.

Late check-out is not included. Additional nights before and after your tour can be arranged. Please contact our Reservations team to book.



PEARLS OF THE PHILIPPINES: TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

New Zealand passport holders are currently permitted entry to the Philippines without a visa for stays of up to 30 days. An online eTravel registration must be completed before entry – details will be provided in your final documentation.

Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN THE PHILIPPINES:

The cuisine in the Philippines is not as internationally recognised as that of other countries in South East Asia. However, there are some excellent local dishes worth trying and Western options are usually available. The cuisine has a mix of Chinese and Spanish influences with Filipino twists. Tasty curries, tapas, seafood, as well as lechon (suckling pig) make for some memorable meals.

The ice cream and smoothies in the Philippines are also refreshing and delicious.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES:

Although the Philippines is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities in some areas. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum.

We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your local guides.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a large rural hotel to a boutique-style beach resort. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all Western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and the Philippines. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning in the hotter regions, TV and a telephone.

If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at the time of booking, but can't be guaranteed.

TIPPING POLICY:

Local tipping isn't customary in the Philippines. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time.

For your convenience, with years of experience in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. However, in the Philippines – where roads are often narrow or steep – smaller vans or minibuses are required in some areas.

Depending on group size, in areas where large coaches cannot operate, the group may be split into separate vehicles. Roads in the Philippines have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only. Roads around Sagada and the Cordilleras region are of poorer quality than more populated parts of the Philippines.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class with reputable airlines.

EXCHANGING CASH:

It is recommended that you exchange sufficient cash before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, where exchange facilities may be limited. US dollars are generally the easiest foreign currency to exchange in the Philippines, while euros are also widely accepted. British pounds can usually be exchanged in major cities and tourist areas but may be more difficult to exchange in smaller towns and rural locations. The local currency is the Philippine Peso, although tipping can be done in US Dollars.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances, we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your doctor or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safe Travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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