

Location

[Countries, Philippines](#)



Location The Republic of the Philippines in the western Pacific Ocean, made up of the Philippine Islands and a part of the Malay Archipelago. It is at 13 degrees North and 122 degrees East. Situated about 750 mi (about 1210 km) east off the coast of Vietnam, the Philippines is separated from Taiwan to the north by the Bashi Channel. The country is made up of 7100 islands, and only about 460 are more than 1 sq mi (2.9 sq km) in area. Eleven islands have an area of more than 1000 sq mi (more than 2600 sq km) each and have a huge amount of the population. These islands are Luzon, Mindanao, Samar, Negros, Palawan, Panay, Mindoro, Leyte, Cebu, Bohol, and Masbate. The total area of the Philippines is about 120,000 sq mi (about 300,000 sq km). Manila is the capital and largest city of the Philippines.

Physical Characteristics The Philippines are the most northern group of islands in the Malay Archipelago, extending about 1150 mi (about 1850 km) north and south between Borneo and Taiwan, and the eastern and western size is almost 700 mi (almost 1100 km). The islands are of volcanic origin. In general the Philippine mountain ranges extend north to south. Earthquakes are common in the islands, which includes about 20 active volcanoes. On the smaller islands the mountains form a backbone. The larger islands have more geographical features, with broad plains and level fertile valleys in the interior. In the southeast peninsula it is a mountainous region with some volcanoes. Mayon Volcano, an active volcano that erupted without warning in February 1993, is on this peninsula just north of Legaspi. Dormant for about 600 years, Mount Pinatubo, a volcano located in central Luzon, erupted in late June 1991 and again in July 1992. Large rivers, some of which are passable, pass through the principal islands of the Philippines. The longest

river on Luzon is the Cagayan; other important rivers on the island include the Chico, Abra, Pampanga, and Bicol. The Mindanao and the Agusan are the principal rivers of Mindanao. The Philippine Islands are within the Tropics and have an annual temperature of about 80°F (about 27°C). Rainfall averages about 80in (about 203cm) a year in the lower lands. In most of the Philippine Islands the rainy season occurs during the summer monsoon, from May to November, when the wind blows from the southwest. The dry season occurs during the winter monsoon, from December to April, when the wind blows from the northeast. From June to October the Philippine Islands are sometimes struck by typhoons, which sometimes cause great damage. The Philippines have very many mineral and forest resources. The principal minerals are gold, copper, iron, chromite, manganese, salt, and coal. Other minerals found here include silver, lead, mercury, limestone, petroleum, nickel, and uranium. Forests cover 23% of the Philippines. Some of these trees are the banyan, many different kinds of palm, and many indigenous trees with extremely hard wood such as apitong, yacal, lauan, camagñan, ipil, white and red narra, and mayapis. Bamboo, cinnamon cloves, and pepper plants grow wild, and so does many other kinds of orchid. One of the most valuable plants is the abaca, a plantain, and the fiber that is used to make cordage, textiles, and hats. Mangrove trees and nipa palms grow in coastal swamps. Considerable areas of the uplands are covered by coarse grasses, of little value, for cattle. Few mammals are found on the islands, but there are many reptiles. The islands also have 556 species of birds. Coastal waters are filled with marine life, mainly mollusks, which the Philippines are well known for. There are huge amounts of pearl oysters around the Sulu

Archipelago. About 32% of the land is farmland. In the northern islands the soils are mainly originated from volcanic rock. Coral limestone is an important part of the soils in the southern islands. In general the soils of the islands are poor in quality.

Cultural Characteristics The term 'Filipino' originally stands for a person of Spanish descent born in the Philippines and this was comparable to the 'Creole' in the Spanish-American colonies. Since the 19th century it has been used to refer to the Christianized Malays who are the majority of the Philippine population. The native people of the islands are primarily black. During the prehistoric period Malayan people invaded the islands beginning about 200 BC. The present Filipinos, mainly descendants of the Malay invaders, are divided by language and religion. People of Spanish and Chinese descent make up the majority of the non-Malay groups. In the southern part of the islands, particularly in western Mindanao, is Moro Muslim groups. Mestizos, people of mixed Filipino and white or Chinese decent, form a small minority. The Philippines had a population of 60, 703, 206 in 1996. The average population density is 657 people per sq mi (254 per sq km). Where people actually live is uneven. Large areas are practically uninhabited, while others have a pretty high population density. The nation was about 55 percent urban in 1996. In 1997 the annual population growth rate was 2. 1 percent. Of the Philippine population, about 84 percent are Roman Catholics, about 4 percent are Muslims, and about 10 percent are Protestants or of other denominations, including the Philippine Independent Church, or Aglipayans. The national language of the Philippines is Filipino. Only about 55 percent of the population speaks Filipino, however, and English is commonly used for

educational, governmental, and commercial purposes. Spanish, formerly an official language, is spoken by a declining minority of the population. About 80 languages and dialects are spoken in the islands. Education in the Philippines is free and required for children ages 7 through 13. Although Filipino is taught and, in the lower grades, local dialects are also used, English is the main language for teaching. About 95 percent of the adult population is literate. In the 1995-1996 school year 11.5 million pupils were enrolled in elementary schools, and 4.8 million students attended secondary schools. Approximately 1.8 million students attended universities and colleges. The number of different languages, dialects, and religious traditions means that the Filipinos don't have a real defined national culture. Many centuries of Philippine history has been concentrated in their area, with influences from China, Malaysia, Europe, and the United States. Traditional sports include 'arnis', a kind of fencing with wooden sticks, and 'sipa', a game much like volleyball, except that the players use their feet. Sports like 'cockfighting' and 'boxing' are very popular, and American influence is seen in the popularity of baseball and basketball. One of the most famous characteristics of the Filipino society is the tradition of strong family loyalty. This is shown in the absence by there being no retirement homes or orphanages. Since before European settlements Filipino women have high positions in the society, and today many businesses are ran by women.

Movement The labor force of the Philippines is 29.6 million people. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing employed 46 percent of the labor force; manufacturing, construction, and mining, 15 percent; and services, 39 percent. Gross domestic product (GDP) was \$83.8 billion in 1996.

Agriculture, forestry, and fishing contribute to 21 percent of GDP. The most important crops are rice, corn, cassava, and sweet potatoes. Copra, bananas, and pineapples are the major commercial crops. Other crops are sugarcane, oranges, mangoes, and papayas. Livestock on farms are water buffalo, cattle, chickens, goats, horses, and hogs. Forests in the Philippines have valuable hardwood trees that are a good resource, although lots of logging has caused major deforestation. The government passed an export ban on hardwood logs in the 1980s, even though the ban has been difficult to enforce. Lumber products remain a major legal export. Also, bamboo and rattan were cut for use in making furniture, baskets, and other products. Marine fishing is an important industry. Shrimp exports to Japan are a huge source of foreign trade. The mining industry is an important part of the economy of the Philippines. Main products include gold, silver, copper, nickel, salt, and coal. And the manufacturing part has expanded greatly since 1950. In 1996 manufacturing was 23 percent of the GDP. Processed food, textiles, tobacco products, and other goods continue to make up the largest part of the manufactured goods. The production of other items, especially furniture, electrical and electronic items, non-electrical machinery, and transport equipment, has brought some money in. Other major products are refined petroleum, chemicals, construction materials, and clothing. Since the 1970s the Philippines have developed a range of energy resources, including oil reserves, geothermal resources, hydroelectric power, and coalfields. Production of energy, however, is insufficient to meet the energy needs, and the country still depends on imported petroleum. Human-Environment Interaction A new constitution was ratified by the nation in

February 1987. Voting is universal beginning at age 18. The head of state and chief executive of the Philippines is a president, elected directly by the people, to a single six-year term. The vice president may serve no more than two repeated six-year terms. Under the Philippine constitution, the bicameral legislature consists of a Senate of 24 members, serving six-year terms, and a House of Representatives with a maximum of 250 members, serving three-year terms. The highest court in the Philippines is the Supreme Court, made up of a chief justice and 14 other justices, all appointed to four-year terms by the country's president. Other judicial bodies include a court of appeals, courts of the first instance, and municipal courts. The Philippines is divided into 73 provinces, each headed by a governor, plus the National Capital Region. Four southern provinces in Mindanao form the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, headed by a governor with limited executive power. Additional local administrative units include 60 chartered cities and more than 1500 municipalities. Region In northern Luzon the valley of the Cagayan River is a plain about 50 mi (about 80 km) wide, surrounded by the mountains of the Sierra Madre on the east, the Cordillera Central on the west, and the Caraballo Mountains on the south. To the south of the Caraballo Mountains is the Central Luzon Valley, which extends from Lingayen Gulf to Manila Bay, and Laguna de Bay, the largest lake of Luzon. The plain is drained by the Agno River in the north and by the Pampanga River in the south. On the southwestern coast are the Zambales Mountains. Luzon has a narrow, mountainous extension to the southeast called the Bicol Peninsula. On Mindanao, the largest island of the Philippines after Luzon, the Diuata Mountains border the Pacific coast, and west of them lies the valley of

the Agusan River. In southwestern Mindanao is a large lowland area, the valley of Mindanao. One of the southern Mindanao ranges contains Mount Apo (2954 m/ 9692 ft), which is the highest point in the Philippines. The coastlines of all the islands are extremely irregular, measuring 22, 550 mi (36, 290 km) in length.