

Philippines

Mabuhay! The Philippines constitutes an [archipelago](#) of 7,107 islands with a total land area of approximately 300,000 square kilometers. The Philippines is the world's 12th most populous country, with a population of over 90 million. The islands are commonly divided into three island groups. The majority of Philippine people are descendants of Indonesians and Malays who migrated to the islands in successive waves over many centuries and largely displaced the aboriginal inhabitants. The largest ethnic minority now is the mainland Asians (called Chinese). As a result of intermarriage, many Filipinos have some Asian mainland, Spanish, American, Arab, or Indian ancestry. After the mainland Asians, Americans and Spaniards constitute the next largest minorities in the country. [Tagalog](#) and [English](#) are the official languages of the Philippines, but more than 180 languages and dialects are spoken. [Filipino](#) and [English](#) are both the official languages. The Philippines is one of two countries in Asia with Roman Catholic majorities; about 90% of Filipinos identify themselves as Christians. Approximately 5% of Filipinos are [Muslims](#), and are locally known as "Moros", having been dubbed this by the Spanish due to their sharing Islam with the [Moors](#) of North Africa. There are also small populations of [Buddhists](#), [Baha'i](#), [Hindus](#), [Sikhs](#), and animists. The culture of the Philippines reflects the complexity of the [history of the Philippines](#) through the blending of cultures of diverse indigenous civilizations with characteristics introduced via foreign influences.

[Spanish](#) colonization of the [Philippines](#) from Mexico, governed from [Spain](#), lasted for over three centuries; thus, there is a significant amount of Spanish-Mexican influence in many facets of Filipino custom and tradition. [Hispanic](#) influences are most visible in Philippine [folk music](#), [folk dance](#), [language](#), food, [art](#), and [religion](#). Although different in many ways, Filipinos in general are very hospitable and will give appropriate respect to anyone regardless of race, culture. Filipinos have unique [folk dances](#) like [tinikling](#) where assistants take two long bamboo sticks and rapidly and rhythmically clap them together while dancers artistically and daringly try to avoid getting their feet smashed between them. The Singkil dance is identifiable with the use of umbrellas and silk clothing.

Filipinos cook a variety of foods influenced by [Spanish](#) and [Asian cuisines](#). A typical Filipino meal consists of at least one viand (*ulam* in Tagalog) served with boiled or fried [rice](#) (*kanin*), which is eaten much like Westerners eat potatoes. Accompanying rice, popular dishes such as [adobo](#) (a meat stew made from either pork or chicken), [lumpia](#) (meat or vegetable rolls), [pancit](#) (noodle dish), and [lechón](#) (whole roasted pig) are served on plates. The [Chinese](#) have been settling in the Philippines since pre-colonial times and their influence is evident in the popularity of noodles (locally known as Mami) and the gambling games of [mahjong](#) and [jueteng](#). Some delicacies eaten by the Filipino people but which may seem unappetizing to the western palate include [balut](#) (boiled egg with a fertilized duckling inside); longanisa (a sweet sausage); and dinuguan (black soup made with animal blood).
