



Arms of Love
International

A home. A family. A future.

What to Expect When Coming to Arms of Love Philippines

In Preparation for Your Trip

Passports and Visas

If you are coming from America, Asia or Europe with a valid passport and either a return ticket or a ticket to another destination outside the Philippines, you may enter without a formal visa and stay for 21 days. If you wish to stay longer you must obtain a Visa Extension either before your trip from a Philippine Consulate or Embassy, or after your arrival from the Bureau of Immigration in Manila. Be sure to extend your visa prior to the expiration date to avoid penalties.

Airport Fees:

A terminal fee of P200 (\$4.15) payable upon arrival in Manila from US. Terminal fee of P200 paid upon departure for US in Tagbilaran City and P750 (\$16.00) in Manila upon departure for US.

Customs

Arrivals: Visitors to the Philippines are allowed to bring in duty free personal belongings.

Departures: Any antiques you may have acquired during your stay must be accompanied by a certificate from the National Museum. You may also not take more than P5,000 (five thousand Philippine pesos) out of the country.

Currency

The currency in the Philippines is the Peso (P) and the Centavo. 100 centavos = P1. Coin denominations are: 1, 5, 10, and 25 centavos, P1, P5 and P10. Bill denominations are: 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1, 000 pesos.

Foreign currency may be exchanged in most of the large department stores, airports, banks and authorized money changing shops.

In Manila, most large stores, restaurants, hotels and resorts accept major credit cards including American Express, Visas and MasterCard. Traveler's checks, preferably American Express, are accepted at hotels and large department stores. On Bohol, credit cards acceptance is less predictable. Personal checks drawn on foreign banks are generally not accepted.

It is advisable to exchange your US dollars when you arrive in the Manila airport as you will be needing pesos during your entire travels in the Philippines.

Weather

March to May is hot and dry (which is why they Filipinos refer to this as their summer season). June to October is rainy. November to February is cool. Average temperatures: 78°F to 90°F. Humidity is between 77%-90%. Bohol is below the typhoon belt but gets occasional monsoons.

Language

Filipino (also called Tagalog) is the national language. English is the business language and spoken widely in larger cities but less so on smaller islands and rural areas. Cebuano (also called Visayan) and Bol-anon are the dialects used in Bohol. A Visayan dictionary or phrasebook will be more useful than Tagalog since it is the language spoken by most people on Bohol.

Vaccinations

It is suggested that you be current with certain shots when travelling to the Philippines. Hepatitis A and B, typhoid and tetanus vaccinations are the minimum recommendations. Although malaria is not a high risk in the western part of the country, some people also elect to take medication to prevent malaria. Many people have adverse reactions to malaria medication, however, so you need to assess the risks carefully. The island of Bohol has no malaria risk according to the CDC. You can access the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel to determine their current recommendations for vaccinations needed in Philippines.

You can obtain vaccines through your doctor or hospital, health clinics at airports, or through your local health department. Travel clinics in the U.S. are becoming widespread, offering vaccinations, medications and travel information specifically for international travelers. This is often more convenient and less costly than a doctor visit.

Packing

The electrical outlets in the Philippines are not same as in the US. The Philippines uses 220v power so you will need special adapters or transformers to use your electrical appliances.

Most teams like to carry a second suitcase to bring sports equipment, craft materials and clothing for the children. Please check with your airline for weight and quantity of checked bags and carry-ons allowed since each airline's requirements are different and the rules change frequently. Many airlines will make a weight exception if you are carrying items for humanitarian use.

Necessities:

Bible, Passport

Toiletries:

Personal medication, cold & flu medication, Tylenol or Advil, anti-diarrhea medication, antibiotics (such as Cipro, for gastrointestinal and urinary tract infections—available through your doctor or travel clinic), triple antibiotic ointment, bandaids, deodorant, toothbrush/ toothpaste, skin lotion, soap & shampoo, hairbrush, sunscreen (at least SPF 30), hand sanitizer or isopropyl alcohol, insect repellent, towel and washcloth, wet wipes, hand mirror (no mirrors in the bathrooms!).

Clothing & Footwear:

Sturdy, comfortable sneakers or hiking boots, outdoor sport sandals, flip-flops (for showers), t-shirts, hat or sun visor, socks, jeans or lightweight long pants, shorts, swimsuit (one piece), lightweight long-sleeved shirt, plastic bag for wet clothes, underwear, sunglasses, bandanas, rain poncho.

Other:

MP3 player, books, pen, notebook & journal, flashlight & batteries, camera, battery-operated alarm clock, umbrella, name tags for all Luggage, personal snacks (powdered drink mix, candy, gum, protein bars, etc.), ground coffee & tea (there is a coffee maker but anything other than instant coffee or tea can be difficult to find locally). In general, Filipinos do not use many paper products like napkins, paper towels or toilet paper. Toilet paper will be provided at Arms of Love. Be prepared, however, to take your own napkins and TP when traveling to places other than large resorts or malls since they are typically not provided.

For longer stays, you can get restocked with snacks and personal items at grocery and drug stores in the city. Small department stores offer clothing and shoes as well. While they may not have brands that you are used to, you can usually find the necessities at far lower prices than in the US.

Theft is always a possibility when you travel abroad. Only pack necessities, do not pack for comfort. Do not pack anything that is a weapon or that looks like a weapon (i.e. toy pistols or knives).

Travel to Philippines**Flights to the Philippines**

The best way to get to Bohol is to first fly to Manila then take a connecting flight to Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Philippine Air is the most common carrier to the Philippines but there are other airlines that may be cheaper depending on the dates and circumstances. Tickets may be obtained directly through the airlines, a travel agent, or through internet websites such as Travelocity or Expedia. Mango Tours, found on the internet, has provided low rates in the past, as well as LBC, a company that specializes in travel and shipping to the Philippines.

Entering the Country

You will not need to apply for a visa prior to leaving for Philippines since you will obtain it when entering the country. Most airlines distribute the 2-page customs form while you are flying. Upon landing in Manila, you will prepare for your connecting flight to Tagbilaran City on Bohol—a one-hour flight. You will follow the signs to immigration where you will show the immigration officer your passport and completed visa paperwork to enter the country. The form you filled out on the plane will be stamped and immigration will keep the top form. Keep the bottom form with your passport. It gives you permission to stay in the country for 21 days. Do not lose it since you will need to present it to immigration at your departure.

After this you will pick up your bag and take it to “Customs Examination—Domestic Transfer Baggage” to be loaded onto your connecting flight. You will pay a terminal fee of P200.

Once in Tagbilaran we will arrange your transportation from the airport to Arms of Love, about 6 miles away.

While in Philippines

Accommodations

The cost is \$35/day per person which includes lodging and meals in the home. Meals eaten off-site are your own responsibility. The per diem costs are charged for each calendar day you are with us (even if you arrive late or leave early) and will not be reduced if you decide to eat off-site. The meals are typically a modified local dish prepared with the foreigners in mind. Keep in mind that white rice is a mainstay of the Filipino diet and you will eat a lot of it!

We will have bottled water for you since the tap water comes from a well on the property and is unsafe to drink or to brush your teeth with. It is fine for bathing, showering and laundry.

There are three separate rooms with a shared bathroom/shower (known as the CR, or Comfort Room, in the Philippines). There is also a bathroom upstairs in the office that can be used if necessary. The first room is the only room with an air conditioner. The other two rooms have electric fans. The first and second rooms sleep two people; the third room can sleep four people.

There are no washers and dryers at Arms of Love. All laundry is done by hand and staff is available to assist you.

Water and power outages are not infrequent. We have 220v power so converters are necessary.

One of the biggest challenges for American visitors is the high heat and humidity. Drinking plenty of water, keeping a wet bandana with you to cool your face, and napping in the afternoon can help fight fatigue caused by the climate.

Connection with the US

Your Team Coordinator will have a cell phone for emergencies and team coordination needs.

There is landline phone and internet connection at the main building, both wired and wireless. Weather conditions can greatly affect the internet connection.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Zolito Alaba – 011(+63)9295428823

Ivy Petallar, Director Arms of Love Philippines- 011(+63) 038 416- 0439;
(+63)9194663251

Kim Fisher, President Arms of Love International: 01-650-769-2940

Robert Benson, Chairman of the Board (only in extreme emergencies): 01-310 869-4379

Medical Facilities

Tagbilaran City has private and public hospitals along with a number of clinics. Keep in mind that this is a developing country so the standard of health care, particularly in Bohol, is not what it is in the U.S. Serious or critical conditions may require transport to Cebu or Manila.

Work Projects

We usually have a couple different projects going. One group may be working in the mango plants doing some cleaning and pruning. Another group might be painting. Still others could be mixing concrete or constructing walkways.

We suggest that teams bring a project donation equal to between \$50-\$100 per person. Please bring these funds with you. Just let us know in advance how much you plan to bring for projects so we can plan accordingly. We will try to have materials ready when you arrive. Any unused project funds by the team will go towards ongoing projects and maintenance of the facilities. Other projects include:

- Repair of all screen windows and doors of all homes
- Concrete fence at the back portion of the lot
- Organizing the library
- Painting and cleaning the clinic
- Helping with the piggery project
- Painting all homes inside and out
- Minor repairs on all homes
- General clean-up on property

- Working in the garden
- Building cow barn
- Fixing lights in basketball court
- Funding and building a small playground

Activities with the Kids

The children are in school from mid-June through the end of March, so they will be gone during the day Monday-Friday at this time. They also have Saturday classes once each month. Summer break is April through mid-June and there is more time to interact with the children.

The children would love to have you join them in basketball, volleyball and ping pong. They would also love for you to teach them new songs and games. Most of the kids can play the guitar and are excited to learn something new. Crafts are a favorite activity both boys and girls. The girls especially like beading and jewelry-making and, believe it or not, the boys really like small cross-stitch needlework projects that they can frame.

More than anything else, your presence at Arms of Love is what the children are most excited about. Visitors from overseas are a source of encouragement and joy for these kids. They will love to sit and talk with you about what life is like where you live, listen to you share about your likes and dislikes or your Christian walk. They love spiritual guidance and for you to pray with them. They also love being read to, although keep the stories simple when reading in English. Time, attention and a 'listening ear' are what's appreciated most. .

Special Events

Spending a day out with children would be a special treat, perhaps somewhere they have not visited yet such as the Danao Adventure Park. The park offers nature trekking, rappelling, caving and other outdoor activities. Also, Sagbayan Peak is a wonderful place for children, featuring a butterfly dome, swimming pool with slides, extensive flower gardens and a playground resembling a Disney theme park.

Another idea is a day at the park, with lunch delivered by the local fast food chain, Jollibee (a favorite of the children's that they don't often get). The prices are very reasonable (hamburgers are about 50 cents and a large full meal with drink is \$1.50-\$2.00) and the delivery is free.

Another suggestion is an overnight tent camp out with the kids and staff. Games, prizes, a camp fire and special food could be offered. This can be done inside the Arms of Love compound.

Donations and Gifts

The kids listen to Christian contemporary and worship music and would love new CD's. They enjoy watching wholesome movies as well (check with staff ahead of time to see

www.armsoflove.org**877-ARMSOFLOVE

what DVD's they already have). While the Arms of Love library is well-stocked with books in English, English is still difficult for many of the kids to understand well. Some books in Tagalog or Visayan would be greatly appreciated. Also, bibles in English would be treasured, since they like to learn bible verses in English as well as Visayan. Daily devotional books for children and teens are needed for the staff and houseparents to use with the children—English or Visayan. Books and bibles are much cheaper here than in the US, so if you would like to donate books it would be best to wait until you are here and make a trip to the bookstore. More board games would be a welcome addition (they already have Candyland , Chutes & Ladders and Hi Ho Cherry-O).

Other items the children would enjoy are balls of any kind, large or small; balloons and punchballs; small toys; cards or bookmarks with Bible verses, bracelets, hairbands and clips for the girls; school supplies, hats, t-shirts. A small amount of candy is fine, but we try to limit the amount of refined sugar they consume.

A craft kit for each of the 5 homes would be appreciated, containing a large pair of scissors, colored pencils and pens, scotch tape, crayons, construction paper, ruler, stickers, glitter, pipe cleaners, etc.

Clothing, shoes and socks in all sizes are an ongoing need. Keep in mind that the children are smaller for their ages than US children.

Church Attendance

The children attend a morning service at 9:30am on Sunday. Please let us know in advance if your group has any special skills such as evangelical dramas, songs or puppets so that we can make arrangements with the church for your presentation. This would be a welcome part of the service.

Sightseeing

Panglao Island

The best Bohol attractions for most visitors are the pristine white sand beaches and clear aqua-colored water. The most famous is Alona Beach, an 800 meter stretch of white powdery sand located at the south end of Panglao Island. Here you will find many full service beach and dive resorts at very low prices compared to the US. They also offer tours to Balicasag and Pamilacan Islands, famous for their beaches, diving and wild dolphins. You can rent a motorbike for about \$7.00/day to tour Panglao as well, and visit the Hinagdanan Caves or the Bohol Bee Farm—a lush, natural organic garden and resort/restaurant featuring handwoven native baskets, purses, hats and fabrics, as well as condiments and salads made from lettuce and herbs from the Arms of Love Farm!

Chocolate Hills

Bohol's most famous attraction, these mountains are named for their shape and color: numerous tall, rounded lumps rising abruptly out of the ground, covered in brown grass in the summer making them look like chocolate kisses. Climb the stairs to the lookout

area and you will be presented with a breathtaking view of these hills amidst the endless rice fields of Bohol.

Tarsiers

Several nature preserves fairly close to Arms of Love feature the tarsier, the smallest primate in the world and unique to the island of Bohol. Only a few inches tall, with large round eyes, these shy creatures can be viewed close up in their natural habitat.

Loboc River

Home of the famous Loboc Children's Choir, this wild and scenic river winds through southern Bohol. Take a river cruise on a floating restaurant and observe native dancing and singing—especially beautiful at night with twinkling lights along the shoreline.

Other

Bohol has many gorgeous rivers and waterfalls scattered throughout the island that are easily accessible. For those interested in history, there are also numerous old churches dating from as far back as the 16th century that are well-preserved and available to tour.

A good website for information on Bohol is www.bohol-philippines.com

Interpreters

You will find a wide range of understanding of written and spoken English by both the staff and children at Arms of Love—from very limited to fairly competent. The staff and children's first language is Visayan. Although the children are learning both Tagalog and English in school, many of them still have difficulty understanding English well and, along with some staff members, may be timid to admit they don't always comprehend what you are saying. It helps to speak slowly and not make sentences too long or concepts too complicated. A few of the office staff and older children who have a better command of English can help communicate. If you have talks, stories or Bible studies to present to the group, you will need to have one of the staff members who know English well interpret for you. The children especially love it when visitors learn a few Visayan words and try to speak their language.