



Consular Branch

CONSULAR SERVICES - TRAVEL ADVICE

PHILIPPINES

This advice has been reviewed. It contains new information or advice. The warning level has changed.

Last updated: 21 October 2002

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Threats against Australians and Australian interests in the Philippines are high, given possible terrorist action and civil disorder. Further bomb explosions are possible across the country, including in Manila. Australians in the Philippines should exercise extreme caution throughout the country, including coastal resorts, and should not travel to parts of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, where insurgent groups are active. Kidnappings have occurred in major cities and tourist destinations where kidnap gangs have specifically targeted foreigners.

Safety and Security

Threats against Australians and Australian interests in the Philippines are high, given possible terrorist action and civil disorder. Australians in the Philippines are advised to monitor developments that may affect their safety and maintain a high level of awareness. Australians should avoid demonstrations and street protests in the capital and other urban areas. In view of the ongoing risk of terrorist activity in the region, Australians should maintain a high level of personal security awareness at all times. Manila has experienced a series of bombing campaigns in recent years. A number of explosive devices were discovered in Manila earlier in 2002.

Further explosions are possible across the country, including in Manila. Australians should consult http://www.dfat.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/Terrorist_threat in conjunction with this advice.

Australians in the Philippines should exercise extreme caution, particularly in commercial and public areas known to be frequented by foreigners such as clubs, restaurants, bars, schools, places of worship, outdoor recreation events or tourist areas. Australians in the Philippines should monitor carefully developments that might affect their safety.

In light of the ongoing activities of insurgent groups in other parts of Mindanao, Australians should not travel to the Sulu Archipelago, Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudurat, the Zamboanga Penninsula (including Zamboanga City) and rural areas of South Cotabato. The security situation in other parts of Mindanao is uncertain and Australian travellers are strongly advised to seek further information from the Australian Embassy before travel.

Any travel to Mindanao is best taken in consultation with local government or business contacts or by those with up-to-date local knowledge or contacts. Australian travellers should follow any security advice given by local authorities. Australians in Mindanao should exercise extreme care, keep themselves informed of developments that might affect their safety and remain alert. They should avoid large crowds and public gatherings, keep a low profile, and vary routes and times of travel.

Australians should be alert to the dangers of kidnapping throughout the Philippines including in the capital Manila. Australians should exercise caution travelling to and around coastal resorts. The kidnapping of foreigners and local residents from a resort in Palawan in May 2001 demonstrated that kidnap groups, including the Abu Sayyaf group, have the capacity to operate in areas previously believed to be beyond their reach. Insurgents and kidnap groups continue to be active in some rural areas and larger regional centres. The activities of kidnap gangs in areas around Cotabato City, in Mindanao, are of concern. Travel after dark in rural areas should be avoided.

The Australian Embassy in Manila has received reports of criminal gangs who drug and rob unsuspecting tourists. The gangs are active in Manila, including the Makati central business district. Visitors should not accept offers of food, drink or transportation from strangers. There are also increasing reports of taxi drivers using threats to extort money from passengers. Visitors should be met at airports, use hotel transportation or make use of the taxi booking services in arrival halls wherever possible.

Caution should be exercised if travelling by ferry. Travellers should not embark on craft that are overloaded, lack necessary life-saving equipment or appear unseaworthy.

Health Issues

For information on prevalent diseases and inoculations, travellers should consult their doctor or a travel clinic. Contact details for travel clinics can be found in our 'Travelling Well' brochure available on the department's website.

Travel and Health Insurance

Travel and medical insurance is strongly recommended for all overseas travel. Travellers should check with their insurer to make sure that their policy meets their needs. Travellers should be aware that some insurance companies will not pay claims which arise when travellers have disregarded the Government's travel advice.

Consular Assistance and Registration

Australians are strongly advised to register their presence in the Philippines with the Australian Embassy in Manila. Consular assistance and more specific information can be obtained by contacting the Australian Embassy, 104 Paseo De Roxas, Makati, Metro Manila, telephone (63 2) 7502850 or 7546164 or facsimile (63 2) 7546268.

The department offers an on-line registration service, accessible via the internet, at <http://www.orao.dfat.gov.au>

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra may be contacted on telephone (02) 62613305.

NB: While every care has been taken in preparing this Travel Advice, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees including any member of Australia's consular staff abroad, can accept liability for injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

Consular Services, including information for travellers and Travel Advices are also available from the Department's Homepage on the Internet, address:
<http://www.dfat.gov.au>