

The Philippines

Once you've traveled to the Philippines, you'll almost certainly fall in love with the country and wonder why it's so far off the beaten path. In the Philippines, English is widely spoken, the people are friendly, and the scenery is spectacular. The fact that the Philippines is underappreciated by tourists and misrepresented by the media is the Philippines' misfortune and your good luck. A rich literary tradition (the national hero, Jose Rizal, was a martyred novelist) makes it the perfect destination for Authors At Large, but this only for the hardy traveler, not the tourist who expects to be pampered and requires an efficient and smooth tourist infrastructure. Flexibility and patience are the watchwords here.

The following program is preliminary and subject to change, but is a reasonable representation of the schedule of events. Internal transportation within the Philippines (unless otherwise noted, or travel separate from the group) is included in the ground fee as well as some meals (noted in schedule). Accommodations, also included in ground fee, will be clean but fairly basic, for the most part. Visits to museums or other institutions, public transport, lunches and dinners are not included except where specified in the program.

Wednesday, May 10

Arrive in Manila. Make your way via airport taxi to Adriatico Arms at the cost of about 10-12 dollars.

Thursday, May 11th Day 1/Night 2

8:30 a.m.,

Breakfast on your own, but may we suggest the Adriatico Arms Hotel. Great Filipino breakfasts and mango shakes! After we're full, we'll sit in the Adriatico Arms restaurant and talk about the writing process and what we all hope to achieve for our own work. Sign ups for manuscript consultations for those participants who have applied to do so. All authors will be present.

10 a.m – 11:30.

An informal talk/discussion on the contemporary literary and cultural landscape of the Philippines both in its local, intra-Asian, and colonial context by Rowena Torrevillas and Robin Hemley.

12:00

Lunch on your own – suggestions: Café Havana (Cuban, of course), Casa Armas (killer paella), Bravo (great pizza).

2:00

Robin and Rowena will accompany those interested to La Solidaridad Bookstore, owned by one of the Philippines' most famous writers, Francisco Sionil Jose. If Frankie is in, we'll have a chat about Philippine literature in context of the country's colonial past and its place in contemporary Asia. If not, we'll stock up on Filipino literature. Note: La Solidaridad is perhaps a fifteen minute walk through the districts of Malate and Ermita. Robin will conduct a tour as we go.

The rest of the afternoon is yours to recover from jetlag, do some writing on the fly, grab a cup of coffee at Starbucks (yes, Starbucks has invaded the Philippines, too) and or go browsing at Robinsons' Mall, one of Manila's many malls. The air conditioned mall is where you can find many Filipinos throughout the day, and do some great people watching.

5:00

We'll reconvene for a stroll along Manila Bay. Not as restful as one might think, this promenade has become of late a place buzzing with activity: music, food, and shopping.

Dinner is on your own as more likely than not you'll be wiped out from a long trans-Pacific flight and will probably want to turn in early. Resist jetlag if you can and as long as you can!

Friday, May 12th Day 2/Night 3

8:30

Breakfast on your own.

9:30

Travel to Intramuros, the old walled Spanish city where we'll visit Ft. Santiago and the Jose Rizal shrine. Lecture on Rizal, the novelist and national hero of the Philippines who was executed by the Spanish in 1897. Take in ancient Spanish churches of Intramuros.

12:00

Lunch on your own, but a strong suggestion would be Cafe Ilustrado in Intramuros.

1:00

For those interested, Robin will lead the group to one of the best craft and antique stores in the Philippines, steps away from Café Ilustrado.

Back to Malate and Adriatico Arms for Flex time.

4:00

Travel to University of the Philippines for reception and reading by some of the country's leading authors.

7:30

Dinner on your own, but may we suggest, Trellis, specializing in local Philippine cuisines. Most likely, the authors you've met at the reception will continue to schmooze with us.

10:00

Karaoke for the more adventurous.

Saturday May 13th Day 3/Night 4

9:00

Breakfast followed by flex time

12:00

Lunch with Philippine publishers at Bistro Remedios, another restaurant specializing in Filipino fare. Covered in ground fee (drinks not included).

Afternoon free to explore Manila. Suggestions: Travel to Green Hills "Mall," a mall the likes of which you've likely never seen. Much of the mall is given over to small booths of crafts men and women selling cloth, semi-precious stones, pirate videos, and most notably pearls sold mostly by Muslim women from the Southern Philippines.

Or visit the Ayala Museum and its rather stunning display of miniature dioramas of Philippine history.

Or visit the National Museum and view some of the national treasures of the country, from paintings to recovered shipwrecks.

6:00

We'll travel via van to Green Belt Three, the upscale section of Manila, to see and be beautiful people. We'll return to Malate at 10, 11, or 12, depending on consensus of the group. But we'll most likely have two vans, so early to accommodate early birds and night owls alike.

Sunday, May 14th. Day 4/Night 5

Much earlier than you'll appreciate: we'll caravan to the domestic airport and fly to Dumaguete in the Visayan region (the middle) of the Philippines. Here, there will be opportunities aplenty to share your own work and hear the work of other writers. Note: Roundtrip Airfare from Manila to Dumaguete is included in ground fees, but you must pay your own airport tax.

You will also most certainly want to catch a meal or two or three at Lab-As seafood restaurant.

Our sojourn in Dumaguete will also be the perfect opportunity for you to meet for manuscript consultations as well as to write.

Monday, May 15th Day 5/Night 6

9:00 am

Attend the National Writers Workshop of the Philippines

Afternoon free to explore. Lunch on your own. Perhaps rent a van to take you into the mountains to the jungle or take a dip in a mountain spring.

8:00 pm

Cross-cultural reading of participants in the National Writers Workshop and Authors at Large on the lovely campus of Silliman University. Reception afterwards. Covered in ground fees.

Tuesday, May 16th Day 6/Night 7

Travel by pumpboat to Siquijor, the Philippines' fabled enchanted isle, replete with sorcerers who practice a form of voodoo.

Tour of the island and swimming before returning to Dumaguete.

Optional swimming on white sand beach in Siquijor – (parking and entrance fee extra) OR go into town and visit a local shop specializing in potions, etc. If we have two vans, we can split up or follow the consensus of the group. Food and magic potions on your own.

Wednesday, May 17th Day 7/Night 8

Overnight trip to lovely Sumilon island, a 24 hectare paradise owned by the government. Swim and snorkel, eat, read and share our work at night in a pavilion by the sea! Not to be missed.

Thursday May 18th Day 8/Night 9

Return to Manila and the Adriatico Arms. Dinner together – what's known as a *despedida* (a going-away party) included in ground fee, excluding drinks.

Friday, May 19st

Authors At Large participants in the Philippines go their separate ways. You'll need to arrange with hotel for your own transportation to airport.

