

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

In this book, we divide accommodation into the following categories (prices are per double, per night): budget (in Manila and Boracay up to P1200; elsewhere up to P800), midrange (in Manila and Boracay from P1200 to P2500; elsewhere P800 to P2500), and top end (over P2500). Prices listed are for the high season (roughly November to May, with some regional variations). Room rates in some tourist hot spots decline by up to 50% in the low season, but may double or even triple during the 'super peak' periods of Holy Week (Easter) and around New Year's. Prices in cities usually

PRACTICALITIES

- **Newspapers** English-language national dailies run the gamut from the conservative *Manila Bulletin* to the critical *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and the feel-good *Philippine Star*. The best of the lot may be two competing business dailies, *Business World* and *Business Mirror*; both have strong national news coverage and Friday entertainment sections.
- **Magazines** The once weekly, now quarterly *Newsbreak* is the best news magazine of the lot. It's connected to the **Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism** (www.pcij.org). A variety of international magazines and newspapers are also widely available.
- **TV & Radio** Manila rock/pop stations worth listening to are Jam 88.3 and Nu Rock 107.5. National TV stations broadcast both English-language and Filipino programs.
- **Video** The Philippines uses the NTSC video system.
- **Electricity** It's 220V, although some top-end hotels have both 220V and 110V outlets. Plugs are of the US-style flat two-pin variety.
- **Weights & Measures** The Philippines is metric, but inches, feet and yards (for textiles) are common in everyday use for measuring things. Weights are normally quoted in kilograms and distances in kilometres (see the conversion table on the inside front cover).

remain uniform throughout the year, with a spike during a city's fiesta week.

Hotels often offer 'promo rates' that they won't tell you about unless you ask. So always ask.

Bookings & Prices

As the Philippines becomes more popular, it becomes more difficult to just walk in and find a room in certain smaller resort areas

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

and touristy towns like Vigan. Booking ahead is a good idea in the high season, essential in 'super peak' season and entirely optional during the low season.

Many resorts, especially at the top end, require a deposit – often a 100% deposit! Annoyingly, they rarely accept credit-card deposits, forcing you to wire or direct-deposit the money into a Manila bank account. More annoying still, 50% to 100% of your deposit is usually nonrefundable if you cancel less than two weeks before you're scheduled to arrive.

Circumvent this Draconian practice by choosing another resort! If you must visit, consider just showing up without a reservation. Call the resort a few days ahead to see if they have vacancies. If they do, chances are you'll be able to walk in with little problem (if you try this have a backup resort in mind just in case).

BUDGET

Budget accommodation usually consists of small hotels or simple guesthouses offering a mix of fan-cooled and air-con rooms. Rooms in the P200 to P350 range are generally fan-cooled single 'broom closets' with

a shared bathroom, and rooms in the P400 to P550 range usually have fans and private bathrooms. Anything higher should have air-conditioning and hot water.

On the beach, budget accommodation takes the form of basic, fan-cooled nipa (palm leaf) huts, or one- or two-storey concrete blocks. The cheapest rooms are usually off the beach, although on less touristy islands like Siquijor and Bantayan you can find beachfront nipa huts for well under P800. In mountain zones like the Cordillera almost all accommodation is of the budget variety.

Budget accommodation is harder to come by in Manila and in trendier beach resorts like Boracay and Alona Beach, although there are a few hostels to fill the budget void in Manila. Hostels are rare elsewhere.

MIDRANGE

If you're not on a rock-bottom budget, you can find exceptional midrange value in the Philippines. Paying P1000 to P1500 at a mid-range hotel in a provincial city usually nets you a spacious double with air-con, cable TV, hot water, a reasonably attentive staff and decent food. You'll have to pay a bit more than that – say P1500 to P2000 – for a similar level of quality at most seaside resorts (and a little more still at the trendiest beaches).

TOP END

Value at the top end fluctuates wildly. The big five-star hotels in Manila and Cebu are second to none in terms of quality and can be great value to boot – often under US\$150 for a double if you latch onto a 'promo rate'. In the rest of the country it's hard to find a room

BEST TOP-END HOTELS & RESORTS

The Philippines' top resort is ultra-luxurious **Amanpulo** (☎ 02-759 4040; www.amanresorts.com/amanpulo/home.aspx; bungalow in low/high season from US\$655/880; ✉ 📧 📞 📺), which has one of the remote Cuyo Islands off Palawan all to itself. The only way to get there is on the resort's private plane from Manila. The island is ringed by a ribbon of fine white sand, and everything is exquisite, from the scenery and diving to the swanky private bungalows and the nonpareil service. Mere mortals who can't quite afford Amanpulo's astronomical rates might consider the following:

- Pansukian Tropical Resort, Siargao (p379)
- The Farm at San Benito, Lipa City (boxed text, p123)
- Friday's Boracay, White Beach (p291)
- Makati Shangri-La, Manila (p98)
- Pearl Farm Beach Resort, Davao (p385)