

## Filipino etiquette and behaviour



The traditional Filipino introduction of 'mano'

The people of the Philippines are extremely warm and welcoming, and visitors will be made to feel right at home as they explore this richly diverse nation. While Filipinos usually make allowances for the different cultural practices of visitors, it is always best to use the correct etiquette when interacting with others, and special practices dictate behaviour in most situations. However, the customs of the Philippines are easy to pick up.

Many of the social customs in the Philippines have been inherited from the Spanish and are similar to those in the Western world. However, there are a few distinct differences.

Correct etiquette and behaviour in the Philippines

Filipino people are natural hosts, and visitors will often be invited to join in meals and celebrations. It is best to accept snacks during visits and festivals, although it is possible to politely decline to join in meals.

Showing respect is important in the Philippines, especially regarding older people and women. When greeting someone older than you it is customary to take the person's hand gently and place it palm downwards on your forehead in a gesture known as '*mano*'.

Those who wish to be particularly polite and respectful should say '*opo*' or '*po*' instead of yes. Manners are important in the Philippines, and visitors should give up their seats on buses and trains for the elderly as well as women, children and the handicapped.

Proper etiquette for business and introductions

People should be addressed by the formal titles of Mr or Miss followed by their surname, unless invited to do otherwise, while those who have a special title such as Dr or Secretary such be referred to in this way. People generally greet each other with handshakes or a friendly pat on the shoulder.

While it is not considered rude to be a few minutes late for social gatherings, strict times must be observed for business meetings.

Gifts should be brought along to social gatherings such as birthday parties and weddings, and food is generally considered to be a good gift. It is common to be up to half an hour late, although those who turn up more than an hour after the stated time will be looked down on.

Generally speaking, older people have higher statuses than those who are younger than them, and should be deferred to in social situations. Formal introductions carry a lot of weight in the

Philippines and should not be skipped under any circumstances. Men are usually introduced to women rather than the other way around, and visitors should pay respect to the host before leaving a party or any other form of social event.

#### Avoiding social taboos in the Philippines

While there are few social taboos in the Philippines compared to other Asian nations, the authorities and the elderly are respected and failure to show the correct level of reverence is sure to cause offence. It is best to avoid openly criticising the authorities in public, even in the form of jokes.

Filipino people are careful to respect other people's space when in public, and it is considered rude to talk loudly and act out while in public places such as parks and on the street. While it is common to see couples holding hands and hugging, it is best to avoid displaying too much affection openly in public.

While this may all seem like a lot to take in at first, most customs in the Philippines can be picked up easily enough by those who are observant and demonstrate respect for others.

Ref.: <http://www.1stopphilippines.net/culture/etiquette>