



BAMBOO TRAILS

Roads less travelled...

ISS International School
Tour Notes 2015

Camp Cebu 2015

The seven thousand, one hundred and seven islands of the Philippines stretch for nearly two thousand kilometers through the Pacific and encompass everything from volcanoes and lofty mountain peaks to idyllic tropical beaches. The people of these islands are as diverse as the geography, but one thing they all seem to share is a broad smile. Our trip focuses on the stunning and geographically diverse region of Moalboal on Cebu's west coast, traditionally a fishing community, where low-key tourism and typical Philippine rural poverty now sit uncomfortably side by side. We will take in a diverse range of activities which will challenge the students both mentally and physically, and will give them an understanding of the social and environmental issues that face the Philippines today.

Day 1 | Panagsama Beach

Today starts with your arrival at Cebu International Airport, where you'll be met by a Bamboo Trails representative before heading to a nearby hotel for some breakfast. We'll then drive across the mountains to the west coast, stopping to hike up to some impressive caves and swim in natural springs before reaching Panagsama, our base for the rest of the week. On arrival we'll have an orientation walk before dinner.

Day 2 | Panagsama Beach – School Feeding Program

Today we'll visit Tuble Elementary School where we'll have the unique opportunity to operate a feeding program to provide lunch for 400 students. This mammoth task will see us preparing and cooking over open fires, before serving food to each and every last student. As well as the opportunity to engage in a meaningful works project, our visit also allows the students to meet local children, sing songs together, and see school as it is for kids in the rural Philippines.

Day 3 | Panagsama Beach - Mangrove Planting

Today we focus on the natural environment, and will spend the day planting new mangroves, a task whose hard work will ultimately benefit local wildlife and the people who live in this vulnerable coastal environment. We'll start with short drive to the planting site, and will then have an introduction to the mangrove habitat before donning protective clothing and beginning planting.

Day 4 | Panagsama Beach – Trail Clean-Up, River Tracing & Beach BBQ

Today we'll drive south to the Matutinao River where we'll start the day by cleaning up litter from a jungle trail. Once we've completed the clean-up we'll negotiate our way down a beautiful mountain stream, with the chance to swim in plunge pools, maybe spotting monkeys and monitor lizards along the way! After our exhilarating adventure we'll enjoy lunch before heading back to Panagsama. In the afternoon we'll head to a stunning white sand beach where we'll have time for some games and swimming before enjoying a beach BBQ to mark the end of our adventurous week in Cebu.

Day 5 | Tour Ends

We'll start the day with an early morning dolphin-spotting trip in the Tanon Strait. We'll also have the chance to snorkel out into the big blue, to get an idea of the rich diversity of marine life to be found in Philippine waters. We'll then say goodbye to Panagsama and head to beautiful Mantayupan Falls where there's chance for one last swim before returning to the airport and your flight back to Singapore.

NB. The itinerary is subject to change without notice in the case of extreme conditions.



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Accommodation

This year we'll be using one larger hotel to accommodate the whole group and we will have the whole hotel to ourselves. Rooms will be on twin, triple or quadruple basis and come equipped with a/c, bathrooms and fridges. There is also a swimming pool, restaurant and dive center at the resort.

Activities

This trip combines a variety of different activities aimed at enabling students to get an understanding of life in the Philippines, challenging themselves both mentally and physically.

School Feeding Program – *Organization, motivation, stamina and teamwork*

This fantastic project sees the group providing lunch for nearly 400 students at Tuble Elementary School. This mammoth task will see us preparing and cooking over open fires, before serving food to each and every last student. This project is a great help to both the school and local families, and the hard work is ultimately rewarded not only with the knowledge of having made a positive contribution to the school, but also in the smiles of the students receiving the meals.

Mangrove Planting – *Hard Work, Stamina, Teamwork & Environmental Understanding*

Historically mangroves were seen as dead land, and were cleared to provide easier access to the coastline, but it is now recognized that they are a critical part of the ecosystem, supporting many unique species, but also that they play a crucial role in protecting the coastline from typhoons. Our re-planting work is part of a huge project that ultimately hopes to re-establish many of the Philippines mangrove habitats, and that will contribute to improved biodiversity as well as affording natural protection from the storms which wreak havoc on the archipelago each year. Students will wear protective clothing to safeguard against the spiky mangroves.

Matutinao River Climbing – *Climbing skills and teamwork*

Traveling down the beautiful Matutinao River valley will challenge students physically, testing both their self-reliance as well as their teamwork skills. Students will be carefully supervised by a team of experts who have been leading these trips safely for nearly 20 years. Students will be equipped with lifejackets and instructed on how to negotiate the river. If there has been heavy rain we may choose to schedule an alternate activity.

Marine Environment – *Experiencing the diversity of marine life, understanding the problems confronting this environment and making a positive contribution*

After an introduction to the marine environment, students will then have the chance to experience this magical wonderland in a variety of ways including dolphin-spotting, and snorkeling on one of the most important marine ecosystems, a coral reef.

About Bamboo Trails

Having worked in tourism for a long time we know there are plenty of companies out there that run the same trips with such regularity that they have lost their true connection with the destination. Then there are the other



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companies that just grab an established tour company brochure and replicate what already exists. That's not us. We carefully craft every tour we offer, making sure that we are not compromising on our goal of getting you out into a country to truly experience everything that makes it tick – the good the bad and the smelly!

This year's trip and team will be led by local expert **Simon Foster** who first started tour leading in the Middle East in 1997 and has subsequently led groups all over the world. He now lives in Taiwan with his wife Tot, two daughters and dog and when he's not leading tours he writes guidebooks, including the Rough Guide to the Philippines and soon to be published Rough Guide to Taiwan.

Positive Impact

Dress

The Philippines is a tropical country hot and in the cities you'll see similar styles of dress as you might in a European, North American or Australasian city. As well as trainers for hiking, students will need to bring footwear suitable for river climbing: trainers are fine as long as students don't mind getting them wet, but tevas or other durable rubber strapped sandals are also appropriate. Make sure students have a change of footwear for when trainers are wet. Students will also need swimwear for the river, springs and beach activities.

Poverty & Donations

The Philippines is a poor country with many families living on just a few dollars a day. Families struggling to make ends meet sometimes don't have the small contribution necessary to send their kids to school, whilst schools in poorer barangays lack funds themselves. During our time in the Philippines we will visit a local elementary school and Bamboo Trails will make a donation on behalf of the group, but students are also encouraged to bring items to donate. Old clothes, English books (especially educational books) and sports equipment are all warmly received.

Travel Details

Visas

Travelers of many nationalities can obtain a 21-day visa on arrival. **Some nationalities are required to obtain a visa in advance.** Please refer to the Philippine Consul (T2823-8550; www.philcongen-hk.com/visas/main.htm) for details of nationalities. Parents of students who are under 15 on the date of departure will also need to obtain an **Affidavit of Consent** from the Philippines Consul. Those who need to pre-arrange a visa (see above) should **first secure the affidavit** and will need to get a **WEG (Waiver of Execution Ground)** in Cebu. This costs PHP3120 is easily granted on arrival at the airport providing the student has an Affidavit of Consent.

Indemnity Waiver

For this trip parents or guardians are required to sign an Indemnity Waiver in order for the students to be able to participate in all of the activities.

Money & Costs

The official currency of the Philippines is the Philippine Peso (PHP), which is used for most transactions, although US dollars are also popular, particularly in tourist locales. At the time of writing the exchange rate was approximately US\$1=45 pesos. The Philippines has a reasonably modern banking system with ATMs and money changers in major centers, however there are no ATMs in Moalboal. Therefore students should come with enough pocket money in pesos, or change money on arrival at Cebu International Airport. As all meals and excursions are included in the price of the tour students will only need a little extra money for snacks, drinks or gifts – US\$10 per day is plenty unless students plan to buy lots of souvenirs.



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Electricity

The Philippines works on a 220 volt system and generally uses a US-style flat 2 pin plug.

Packing

You will be required to carry your own luggage at times, so we recommend packing lightly. The rainy season doesn't begin until later in the year, but nonetheless, showers are possible, so a **waterproof jacket** is a good idea. Likewise a **hat** can come in handy at any time of year, whether to insulate from the cold or to protect against the sun. The following might be of help as a basic checklist:

Personal

- Adaptor (110V with two flat prongs)
- Alarm clock
- Camera (Film & Memory cards, charger)
- Clothes (shorts, trousers, t-shirts, long-sleeved sweatshirts, underwear, socks)
- Comfortable hardwearing shoes or sneakers
- Rain boots (essential for mangrove project)
- Rubber sandals
- Earplugs
- First Aid kit and basic medicines
- Flashlight
- Hat
- Insect repellent
- Lipbalm
- Photocopies of important documents
- Pictures of home (to show people you meet)
- Plastic ziplock and garbage bags
- Reading material
- Small padlock
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Swimwear
- Towel or sarong
- Waterproof jacket

Travel

- Passport (with at least six months validity after the end of your trip and spare pages)
- Money – cash/credit cards

NB – Remember to put any blades, scissors or liquids in your hold luggage when flying.

Health

In order to make the most of your holiday, the healthier you are the more you will enjoy it! For a list of vaccinations we recommend that you seek advice at a travel clinic prior to departure. You should carry a well-stocked First Aid Kit and any personal medication with you when you travel. This said, pharmacies are widespread in the Philippines and, as long as you have the generic drug name, you should be able to buy what you need here. All Grasshopper Adventures tour leaders are First Aid trained, but they are not permitted to dispense any medication.

Emergencies

In case of minor emergencies there are small hospitals within an hour of Panagsama, but for more serious problems, Cebu, the Philippines' second city, which has large, modern hospitals, is less than three hours drive. In



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the event of a student being hospitalized, the parent or guardian will be contacted as soon as possible.

Climate

Cebu has a tropical climate with generally warm to hot days and warm nights. On the coast daytime temperatures peak out at around 30 degrees Celsius, and the evenings are a few degrees cooler. Although this is the dry season, in the Philippines rainfall can occur at any time of year.

Emergency Contact Details

Bamboo Trails Head Office: (+886) 975776275 (24hrs)

Simon's Cellphone: (+886) 970-782-393

Important

All information in these tour notes is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Bamboo Trails..