

Filipino customs and behaviour in Manila, Philippines



Christmas is very important in Manila

Filipinos are easily the most hospitable and friendliest people you will ever meet. Visitors are welcomed with open arms into Filipino homes. But proper etiquette and social behaviour should be observed when interacting and relating with locals, whether you are in a business gathering, a simple get-together, in the presence of a family or in public places. But don't worry as culture and etiquette in the Philippines is not difficult to decipher.

Filipinos are accommodating by nature. If you happen to walk in on them while they are dining, expect an invitation to join. Declining the offer is sometimes more polite, so as not to appear overbearing. However, declining an offer to eat during fiestas is a faux pas as you would be 'shying away from a blessing'. When offered a snack during a visit, it is only polite to accept.

Proper etiquette and behaviour in Manila

Visitors should show respect for other people, especially for women and older citizens, if they are to have a pleasant stay in Manila. The elderly are normally greeted with a polite '*mano*' (a respectful gesture where you ask for an elder's hand and bring it palm down to your forehead).

'*Opo*' is a respectful way to say yes, and should be used - along with its shortened form '*po*' - especially when talking to older people. A chivalrous and gentlemanly attitude is also expected especially when using public transport. It is but proper to offer a seat to the elderly, the handicapped, women and children.

Table manners are very important and good posture is always expected. When eating out, splitting the bill is common especially among young people, although older adults will often vie for the honour and the prestige of paying for everything. If a friend is buying you a meal, he is supposed to order before everyone else. It is also impolite to order something extremely expensive. Tipping is

also customary, although you don't always have to give 10 per cent. In many cases, P50 pesos for casual restaurants and about P100 to P150 for fine dining establishments is enough.

Proper Manila etiquette for business and introductions



Suits may be uncomfortable in meetings

When doing business, acquaintances should be addressed as 'Mister' or 'Miss' followed by the family name. Proper status indications like Doctor, Secretary and Attorney is the respectful way to address someone of such rank, unless asked otherwise. Handshakes are also a polite way to greet an acquaintance or close a conversation, although Filipinos may also use other assuring and friendly gestures like a pat on the shoulder.

The popular Filipino time (being fashionably late) only applies on social gatherings like birthday parties, when it's okay to arrive a few minutes after the agreed time. In formal businesses however, tardiness is frowned upon and is considered unprofessional.

When invited to a social gathering - like a birthday or a wedding, perhaps - it is customary to bring a token or a gift, whether it be food or any kind of appropriate item. Hosts will find it rude when guests seem reluctant to socialise or appear ungrateful for being invited. Arriving 30 minutes late to a party is acceptable as this is a fashionable custom, especially when you don't want to appear overly eager to attend. Arriving more than an hour late, however, is considered rude.

Proper introductions are given much emphasis. Elderly folks are recognized and introduced to younger folks first, and males to females. An individual should also be introduced to a group first. In any situation, do not forget to make an introduction.

Be respectful when attending funerals. Brightly collared clothes – especially red - should never be worn. Stick to muted tones and earth colours to show sympathy. Gifts like flowers, prayer cards, and money are also given to the family in honour of the deceased. Never leave a gathering - whether it be a party or a funeral - without paying respect to the host.

Avoiding social taboos in Manila

Filipinos are also very submissive to authorities – a custom rooted on their respect for the elderly. The fire of patriotism is very much alive here, so respect items of national importance. People here have the ability to laugh at their own problems and always maintain great dispositions. Jokes are welcome, but offensive ones about poverty and disrespectful remarks about women are frowned upon.

When in a public place, respect for others' personal space is expected. Talking and laughing loudly in public can be considered annoying and crass, especially for women. Too much public display of affection like passionate kissing is still a taboo, although it is impolite to make a scandal out of it – it is best to just ignore the couple. It's common for couples to hold hands, hug or give each other light kisses. The Philippines also has a wide range of religious denominations, and each one respects the other.

It is not hard to get accustomed to the various traditions and habits of Filipinos. Spending some time with a local family would make it a lot easier to understand these kinds of norms and ways.

Ref.: <http://www.1stopmanila.com/culture/etiquette>