

Philippines

Awareness Trips



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Welcome

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. During a trip we want to reach across borders, learn from one another, and have fun. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, and for most, the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Trips are open to sponsors and non-sponsors. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome.

Trip Dates

January 27 - February 5, 2027

Note: You will not travel to Zamboanga City or the Island of Mindanao on this trip. Zamboanga sponsored friends will travel to Manila and visit with their sponsors there.

Sample Itinerary

On your trip, you'll be welcomed by the local staff who will be your hosts for the week. You'll visit the neighborhoods and communities of sponsored friends and learn about their joys and challenges while experiencing the beauty of the people.

A detailed schedule will be sent two weeks prior to departure. Unbound will make every effort to offer the opportunity to attend Mass on Saturday night or Sunday.

Days 1-2: Depart your home airport for Manila. Due to the distance and crossing of time zones, you'll arrive a day or two after your departure.

Day 3: Local staff will welcome you to Manila, the Filipino capital and largest city in the country. Enjoy a welcome dinner.

Days 4-5: Join staff and families at the grand welcome celebration! Meet your sponsored friends from Antipolo, Manila, Quezon, and Zamboanga. Visit communities where Unbound works in the metro-Manila area.

Days 6-7: Travel by bus to visit communities in our program in Legazpi. Visit Legazpi sponsored friends there.

Days 8-9: Return to Manila and visit families in the Antipolo, Manila, or Quezon regions. See firsthand what the families and staff have accomplished with the support of sponsorship. Be prepared for travel by bus, boat or jeepney between urban and rural communities.

Day 10: Begin your journey home from Manila. Most travelers will arrive home the same day, due to the crossing of time zones.

Costs You'll Need To Cover

Fees other than those set by Unbound are subject to change.

- Unbound trip fee: **\$2,300**
- Airfare: Make your airline arrangements only after your registration is confirmed and you receive the trip coordinator's written instructions for scheduling your flight. You can research airfares online or through a travel agent.
 - Roundtrip airfare between your home airport and Manila, Philippines (MNL): **prices fluctuate**
- Passport book (must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay, with a minimum of one blank (unstamped) passport page)
- Immunizations as recommended by physician: **costs vary**
- Travel health insurance: **costs vary**
- Personal expenses related to ending your trip following a COVID-19 diagnosis during the trip. For example, medical, lodging, food, and flight change expenses.

What We Provide

- The opportunity to meet your sponsored friend
- Lodging and transportation costs for your sponsored friend, chaperone, and local staff
- Planned group activities
- In-country ground transportation
- Lodging. While in the Philippines, you will stay in simple accommodations, typically in hotels. Couples and/or families will be assigned rooms together. Solo travelers will be assigned a roommate of the same gender. If a private room is desired, a single room fee may apply. While running water for showers is available, it might not be heated.
- Meals and bottled water. Since tap water is unsafe for drinking, we will provide ample bottled water throughout the trip. Alcoholic beverages are not included in the trip fee, but there may be occasions when you will have the opportunity to purchase them. Meals are eaten with the group and will be simple fare from the local cuisine.
- Interpreters. Unbound will provide interpreters throughout the trip.
- Memories that last a lifetime

Health & Mobility

Mobility: The ability to walk on wet and uneven terrain, walk up and down hills, and climb flights of stairs is necessary. In general, groups sometimes walk up to half of a mile at any one time. You will regularly encounter stairs, and some stairways will not have handrails. Also, an elevator may not be available at each place of lodging.

Air quality: During the trip, you will visit densely populated urban areas. Travelers with asthma or other respiratory illnesses should be aware that the urban air pollution in the Philippines has been known to exacerbate symptoms. Consult with your doctor to see if this will affect you. Please contact a trip coordinator with any concerns.

Motion sickness: Travelers have experienced motion sickness in the past due to the stop-and-go traffic in densely populated areas.

Weather and Climate

The Philippines is an island nation and enjoys warm weather and high humidity year-round. In late January, early February, you can expect highs in the upper 80s and lows in the mid-70s.

Immunizations

Consult your doctor or local health department for immunization recommendations based on your health history. Staff members of Unbound are not qualified to offer advice on immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/travel has country-specific recommendations. You can also contact them by phone at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). We recommend speaking with a medical professional as soon as possible, as some immunizations are time sensitive.

CDC recommendations may reference a specific area of a country or vary depending on the style of travel. An Unbound trip coordinator can answer questions about the areas of the country that might be visited, lodging, and other factors that you and a medical professional may need to know.

Safety While Traveling

Unbound cares about your safety and the safety of your sponsored friends and our staff. Local Unbound staff members are your hosts during the awareness trip and accompany the group. Our local staff are from the destination country and live there. Our social workers visit the neighborhoods, towns and countryside regularly and are aware of safety concerns. Because of their unique qualifications and background, our local staff is responsible for putting together the schedule of activities for your trip and choosing the locations you will visit. The members of the communities are excited to welcome sponsors.

Nobody can guarantee safety. International travel carries inherent risks, and we understand the realities in the countries where we work. We monitor current events, weather conditions, political situations, guidance offered by the U.S. State Department, and other available resources. We're in regular communication with our local staff members and stay current on security matters. We've cancelled trips when we've deemed it prudent based on local conditions.

All Unbound travelers are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct and other rules outlined in the Travel Agreement found in the registration materials.

Unbound is proud of our history of safe and enjoyable trips, and we look forward to having you join us!

Philippine Traveler Comments

Would you recommend an awareness trip with Unbound to others?

"Yes. I was in awe of the generosity and faith of other sponsors on the trip. The Unbound staff in the Philippines were wonderful in their duties and interactions with us. I was impressed by the amount of detail they went through in arranging the trip."

-Mary, sponsor for 9 years

"Yes. I feel a closer relationship with my sponsored friends. I think our letters will be more meaningful moving forward!"

- Amy, sponsor for 11 years

"Yes. I am personally more confident that the program is functioning well. I like the idea of building personal pride with those receiving help.... It has also given my sponsored youth pride in their parents for being involved. It feels less of a handout and more of a path out."

- Paul, sponsor for 20 years

How Do I Sign Up For A Trip?

All travelers are required to submit a registration packet. There are two registration packets, one for travelers 18+ years old and one for those who are 17 and younger at the time of the trip. You can download a registration packet from our website at www.unbound.org/trips, call our (800) 875-6564 number, or send an e-mail to trips@unbound.org to request that one be e-mailed or mailed to your home address.

Complete step-by-step instructions on how to register are included in the registration packet.

Space is limited! Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What do you do on an awareness trip?

A. Our local staff meet travelers at the airport and host our group for the length of the trip. Sponsored members and their families welcome travelers into their communities and homes, and activities and celebrations demonstrate the impact of our program to families living in poverty. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, but for most, the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful, and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Q. Will I meet my sponsored friend, and how much time will we spend together?

A. This is one of the primary reasons we offer trips, and we will do everything possible to make this happen! If you are a sponsor, you will spend a day during the trip with your sponsored friend, a member of their family, and a staff member. Your sponsored friend will travel from their area to meet you, and your time is often spent at a park or recreation area. In extremely rare circumstances, the ability to travel, health, or other unexpected situations prevent a visit from happening. For this reason, we cannot make guarantees.

Q. Who can go on an Unbound awareness trip?

A. Trips are open to both sponsors and non-sponsors, and our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome.

Q. Is airfare included?

A. Airfare is not included.

Q. Should I bring my friend a gift?

A. Sponsored friends and their families greatly anticipate these visits, and your presence is, in itself, a special gift. Exchanging gifts is common in many cultures. If you wish, you may bring simple gifts for your friend and for the family. Check the trip preparation guide included with your confirmation packet for gift ideas.

Q. I don't speak the language, is that an issue?

A. Don't worry, Unbound provides interpreters throughout the trip.

Q. How strenuous are the trips?

A. The days begin early and are filled with activities. The trip can be rigorous, as rest time is limited. You may travel long distances in a bus or van and may be gone all day visiting communities, sometimes in very warm weather. Participants should be able to climb stairs and walk on uneven terrain such as dirt paths or cobblestone. The amount of walking varies by trip. A trip coordinator would be happy to talk to you about any concerns you have about your ability to participate.

Q. Will my health insurance cover me in another country?

A. Consult with your medical insurance company prior to traveling to confirm whether your policy applies in a foreign country. If your policy does not cover emergency expenses including a medical evacuation, we urge you to consider the purchase of temporary travel insurance. Many insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover treatment outside of the U.S. You can obtain further information on travel insurance from a travel agent or through research on the Internet.

Unbound strongly urges travelers to have trip cancellation and trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs associated with isolation due to a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Q. What happens if a traveler tests positive for COVID-19 during the trip?

A. Travelers who test positive for COVID-19 during the awareness trip will not be allowed to continue to join trip activities and must end their participation in the trip. The traveler will be responsible for all additional expenses, which may include meals, additional transportation, medical expenses, and lodging. Unbound strongly urges travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. Travelers should also budget for or purchase trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs resulting from early departure from a trip.

- Note: Travelers cannot lodge at Unbound dormitories after testing positive for COVID-19. This is relevant to trips to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Unbound will transport the individual to a hotel near the airport, which accepts COVID-19 diagnosed guests.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. You may email your questions to trips@unbound.org or call a trip coordinator during business hours at (800) 875-6564.