

THE PHILIPPINES



The gateway to Asia aims high

With more than 100 million people and an **open business climate**, it's time to revisit the Philippines.

There was a time when the Philippines was, to many, simply a tropical outpost between the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, but that time is long gone.

Over the last four decades, the archipelago has been growing and producing at an exponential rate, to become ultra-competitive, forward-looking and a South-east Asian hub of activity.

Indeed, having avoided the fallout of the global financial crisis of 2008, the Philippines has emerged as an economic success story: a newly industrialised country that has one of the highest domestic-spending rates in the world and is now a global investment hotspot.

The country's current account has been in surplus since 2003, thanks to a substantial flow of remittances — more than 10% of the population lives overseas, some 200,000 of them in the UK — and huge growth in the services sector, particularly business process outsourcing (BPO).

Excellent human resources, a strategic position, and the political and business desire to push ahead will see the Philippines celebrate its 50 years of independence in 2017 at the top of its game.

At the same time, the country recently became the official chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Since President Rodrigo Duterte came to office in 2016, he has made headlines for his zero-tolerance approach to drugs and crime.

However, it is his focus on a pro-business climate that is making investors sit up and take notice, while his dedication to tackling social challenges makes him very popular in the regions.

First on his agenda is cutting red tape, as Ernesto M. Pernia, Secretary of Socio-Economic Planning, explains:

"We are continuing with the macroeconomic policies started by the Aquino administration, as these resulted in a very positive economic performance.

"We are however going to do a lot more work on building up the regional economy.

"The National Economic and Development Authority, headed by the President, will ensure projects are beneficial for the country and economy, not just for the department proposing them."

All this results in increased opportunity for the UK, with the key projects focused on transportation and infrastructure: airports, ports, railways, the decongestion of Metro Manila in terms of mass transport, a subway system, and rapid bus transit.

"We need more decongestion projects in Metro Manila but at the same time we need to get the investments out into the regions," Pernia says.

"We have a raft of public-private partnerships available and we welcome potential partners from a broad spectrum of countries. We are about clean government and the sanctity of contracts."

Today, Britain is one of the most important European foreign direct investors in the Philippines, with bilateral trade standing at £1.2 billion per annum — an amount that the UK expects to double by 2019.

The British Embassy in Manila, the UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the BCCP are working hard to increase the economic relationships between the two countries.

In addition, the Philippines and the UK are currently seeking to forge an "enhanced trade and investment" partnership in 2017, with the objective of increasing cooperation in in-

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Ernesto M. Pernia, Secretary of Socio-Economic Planning

frastructure, education and sustainable energy, among other sectors.

Addressing UK readers directly, Perfecto Yasay, the Philippines' Secretary of Foreign Affairs said: "In keeping with the global challenges of the time, our two countries have intensified cooperation in various fields.

"Our two nations continue to enjoy excellent trade and investment relations, with the UK one of our top trading partners in Europe.

"I hope that the strong part-

nership and enduring friendship will continue to deepen in the years to come."

British Ambassador to the Philippines, Asif Ahmad, explains how the UK's view of the Philippines is an outdated one.

"In the UK, most of the interaction with people from the Philippines is in the role of care workers and nurses, but in the Philippines, most of the people

even larger. This is a very dynamic economy and once companies start to get interesting, they attract others. It has a kind of multiplying effect.

"I came here more than 12 years ago and many of the buildings we see today were simply not here then. There are also more than 200 British companies doing business in the Philippines."

The bustling and cosmopolitan capital Manila is repeatedly listed among the top ten cities with the worst traffic in the world, which represents a huge economic cost for the Philippines and is a limiting factor for its competitiveness.

If the country wants to prosper and attract investment while strengthening its core industries, it needs to address this issue, with foreign partners welcome to assist in any way.

Infrastructure can be seen as a challenge, but also as an opportunity: with modernised infrastructure, the country would become more efficient.

"The need to improve the Philippines' infrastructure is a good opportunity for British engineering, software and construction companies, not to mention retail and renewable energy," Nelson adds.

heading up the multinational British companies are Filipinos.

"They have returned after working in the UK and then go on to Malaysia," he says. "The concept of the global Filipino is something people should understand."

Chris Nelson, head of the British Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines, adds: "Foreign companies have seen the opportunities here.

"The Philippines is a 100-million people market, and if you look at the demographics, you can see that it is set to become

Treasure islands really sparkle

A record net foreign direct investment of £5 billion flowed into the Philippines in 2016 and the prospects for 2017 are bright.

Among the countless business openings across the Philippines, the financial services sector has enjoyed tremendous growth in recent years on the back of rising levels of prosperity and a rapidly increasing middle class.

British Ambassador Ahmad explains: "With the growing prosperity in the Philippines, the traditional [financial] products are selling well. Basic insurance and investments are a huge success here for the UK.

"Each and every provider is growing at a rate that is unmatched in any other market they are in, which is a real sign of the way the people are thinking here.

"As people go from hand-to-mouth to actually having savings and surplus with investments, either in real-estate or other tangible assets, they can feel the growth.

"The other issue is not quite like the annuity situation in the UK. Here, employers tradition-

ally give employees a lump sum of cash on retirement, and there is the state pension as well. But that requires careful handling and management, and if they just deposit it in a bank and spend it as it goes, it won't last."

Turning to other competitive advantages offered by his new home, Ambassador Ahmad highlights the lack of language barriers and relative ease for businesses and investors to liaise with key figures in the public and private sectors.

"It's a place where access to decision makers is quite easy, whether it be in business or government. You'll get a fair hearing. The UK's reputation is good enough to secure attention; we'll not always get our way, but we are respected for our views."

In early 2017, the World Bank released a short report into the Philippines' macroeconomic performance that highlighted how the republic's unemployment rate in 2016 dropped to a

decade low as "robust economic performance fuelled job creation".

"The unemployment rate fell from 6.3% in 2015 to 5.5% in 2016, which is the lowest level since the country adopted the International Labour Organisation's definition of unemployment in the second quarter of 2005," the Washington DC-based institution noted.

"Robust activities in the services and construction sectors drove job creation. In particular, the services sector remained the largest contributor to employment, accounting for 55.6% of total jobs in 2016, up from 54.6% in 2015.

"Given the strong growth in the construction sector, the employment share of the industry sector increased from 16.2% in 2015 to 17.5% in 2016.

"In contrast, the contribution of the agriculture sector to employment contracted from 29.2% in 2015 to 26.9% in 2016.

"This reflected the relatively poor performance of the agriculture sector, which suffers from low productivity and vulnerability to weather-related events."

The World Bank report also underlined the significant 22%



The Wellness Centre at St Luke's Medical Centre.

yearly rise in net FDI inflows in the first ten months of the year to almost £5 billion.

"The sectors that most benefited from the infusion of equity capital were the financial and insurance activities industry, manufacturing, real-estate activity, and the construction sector," the fiscal group disclosed.

Another major financial institution to paint a glowing picture of the Philippines' economic performance and forecast a bright outlook is the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In late 2016, the ADB released a study where it noted: "The Philippines has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in Southeast Asia.

"Robust growth is set to continue [...] on the back of strong investment, private consumption, and the government plan to accelerate investment in infrastructure and human capital.

"The outlook for the Philippine economy remains strong amid buoyant investment and domestic consumption," said Richard Bolt, ADB Country Director for the Philippines.

Set up to help enterprises from the UK and elsewhere establish operations anywhere in the country is the Philippine Board of Investments (BOI), an agency attached to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The BOI is the lead government agency responsible for the promotion of investments throughout the country, in a broad range of sectors and industries.

These include agri-business, electronics, information technology (IT), business process outsourcing (BPO), mining and mineral processing, pharmaceuticals, renewable energies, shipbuilding, and garment and

footwear manufacturing.

By encouraging more economic activities that will take the country to a higher level of global competitiveness, BOI helps companies create new business opportunities that will generate more gainful employment for the people.

The agency also seeks to attract quality investments that will encourage technological innovations and provide support for industries to seize opportunities and overcome the challenges of global demands and competition.

Services available include due diligence assistance, information support, developing visit programmes

income tax holiday, additional deductions from taxable income and tax credits, exemptions from taxes and duties on imported spare parts, as well as exemptions from wharfage dues and export tax, duty, impost and fees, tax exemptions on breeding stocks and genetic materials.

Chris Nelson from the British Chamber of Commerce says: "Assuming you have got past that first barrier, I would say, Look, you have a market of 100 million people, you have no language barrier, no communication issues, and more importantly, a very easy way of doing business.

"I don't want to sugar coat this, because there are a lot

“The Philippines is a place where access to decision makers is quite easy, whether it be in business or government.”

Asif Ahmad, British Ambassador to the Philippines

and investment briefing, business matching, business registration facilitation, and networking with government agencies on pre-operational business requirements.

The BOI can also help to fast track registration procedures and assist with local government requirements.

In addition, a comprehensive aftercare service package includes a government network to respond quickly to concerns, and regular supervision and monitoring to reassure investors of all sizes.

Meanwhile, such robust support is well complemented by a multitude of fiscal incentives that give investors no excuse not to explore the abundant openings in the diverse and rapidly growing economy.

Such incentives include an

things to improve, but if as an investor you come here and see that people are warm and government officials are accessible, it is already a good start.

"From that standpoint, getting people and partners onboard is relatively easy. It is easy to integrate within the Philippine society. These days, I probably have more Filipino friends than British ones."

One entity making a huge impact is Philippines-based food giant Monde Nissin Corporation, which has operations in the UK, Germany and the US.

The manufacturer of instant noodles, baked goods, wafers and biscuits, among other things, has tapped into the Filipinos' love of convenience food, and aggressively expanded its portfolio in recent years.

The company recently ac-

Modern Maritime Gateway Connects Continents



Manila North Harbor, the fastest growing port in the Philippines, is a bustling world-class trade hub handling over 4,000 vessels a year following substantial investments in state-of-the-art port facilities.

Manila North Harbour Port, Inc.

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quired Quorn Foods from the UK's Exponent Private Equity and Intermediate Capital Group for £550 million in a determined attempt to capture a segment of the sustainable food sector.

As an alternative to meat, the mycoprotein Quorn is an important low-fat product that is healthy and tasty.

"The way we currently consume food is not sustainable, so food security will become a problem," says Monde Nissin's CEO Henry Soesanto.

portunity.

"People here are very receptive to new products, so we are being very, very bullish on this."

Quorn's chief executive Kevin Brennan says: "We have an ambition to be the world leader in meat alternatives."

"Monde Nissin's purchase represents a great step forward in this ambition."

"They share our belief in the potential of Quorn, and provide the capability to expand the brand into Asia."

The complementary expertise of the two companies is expected to contribute to the smooth operation and success of the highly promising joint venture.

Following the major deal, Monde Nissin handles marketing, sales, distribution, and logistics, while Malee is responsible for product development and manufacturing.

Along with the recent acquisition of Quorn Foods, the joint venture will expand Monde Nissin's product portfolio in line with its thrust to build a diversified global food business.

Malee's CEO and Chairman Chatchai Boonyarat says that the Philippine beverage market shows strong growth and that such a solid performance is expected to continue for the foreseeable future:

"We see a great opportunity in the Philippines. The drinks market there has fewer products than the Thai market, while the total value of its drinks market, excluding alcoholic drinks, is around 200 billion baht with an average annual growth of 8%," Boonyarat states.

Henry Soesanto is delighted with the deal, and believes the joint venture significantly strengthens both companies:

"While Malee has expertise in production and innovation, we have deep understanding of the needs of Filipino consumers along with strength in marketing, brand building, and distribution network nation-



From old cobble streets to 21st Century ICT superhighways, the Philippines is on the right path.

"Combining the UK's technology and our consumer insight will create interesting investment opportunity."

Henry Soesanto, CEO, Monde Nissin

"Quorn Foods is the market leader in the vegetarian food market in the UK and 15 other countries, including Australia, but it has zero presence in Asia."

"People, especially the young, affluent, well-educated and well-informed consumers whom we are targeting, are concerned about the environment and sustainability, so there is great potential in bringing this product into these areas," the senior executive explains.

"The UK is an excellent source of technology and innovation. We know the market here, so combining their technology and our consumer insight will create an interesting investment op-

Monde Nissin is recognised as having one of the widest distribution networks in the industry with the ability to reach and service the biggest modern trade account to the smallest traditional channel.

Monde Nissin also recently signed a joint venture agreement with Malee Beverage Public Co Ltd, a leading Thai juice and canned-fruit manufacturer, and Menora Foods, which is at the top of the fast-moving consumer goods industry in Australia.

Meanwhile, Malee has been in the business since 1964 and is renowned for its staunch drive in product development and innovation.

wide."

The company is keen to become a significant foods and drinks player in the Asia Pacific region.

Being part of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) will be a boon to Monde Nissin's growth.

"The AEC has transformed into a market of more than 600 million potential consumers," Soesanto states.

"We can see this transformation: we see investment coming in, we see cross-border production increase."

"Later on the benefit will be the increase in the value of products, and the lifestyle of the consumers, who are becoming the middle class. Everything is coming this way and this is very good for the development of the country and the region."

Monde Nissin is also a trail-

blazer for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with its numerous philanthropic actions making a difference to families, children, communities and the environment.

One of its most popular initiatives, Family Meal-time Matters, which aims to encourage families to share meaningful conversations over meals, has been a runaway success and used as a model elsewhere.



OVER THE YEARS, MONDE NISSIN HAS ACQUIRED A TASTE FOR BUSINESS.

From humble beginnings in the Philippines 35 years ago, Monde Nissin has emerged as one of the fastest-growing companies in South East Asia. Today, armed with a solid track record and strong determination to succeed, it is steadily making its presence felt globally.

Get a taste of how business instinct and entrepreneurial spirit will bring us to where we want to go. Get to know Monde Nissin.



Monde Nissin



THE PHILIPPINES |



Eskaya Beach Resort & Spa's infinity pool.

www.eskayaresort.com



M. E. Sicat, moving the Philippines forward through infrastructure projects.

Improving business connections

A new **landscape is emerging** to increase the Philippines' competitiveness.

With European economies suffering the impact of recession and austerity, it makes sense for the UK to diversify its exports and seek out new markets further afield. Within this context, the south-east Asian countries of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have become immensely attractive for foreign companies. With a combined market of more than 620 million, and a burgeoning middle class that will continue to drive growth, the opportunities are immense.

With almost all Asian markets no more than a four-hour flight away, the Philippines represents the perfect gateway to one of the fastest-growing regions in the world. And, given that it is one of the largest English-speaking countries in the world, with an expanding consumer base where Western goods and services are popular, the potential of the Philippines as a platform is huge.

Within this context, the Manila North Harbour Port (MNHP) is a ready partner for any British investor involved in regional or international trade.

MNHP offers state-of-the-art facilities and is ready to welcome the most demanding customers, who will undoubtedly play a very important role

in turning the country into the promised land for trade and investment.

Richard Barclay, the Bristol-born CEO of MNHP, explains: "We've been lucky to be able to count on very supportive shareholders; they have shown great confidence in the management team. Ramon Ang, who asked me to join the company, is a very dynamic person."

"Between 2010 and 2015, we went from handling 650,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) to more than 1.1 million, and we're doing it with modern systems and good productive output.

"Without doubt, it is our service level that gives us our leading edge, and we have done many things to improve it. We believe in the benefits of modernisation, because it has many advantages, but it is expensive to carry out.

"We ensure that we help our clients by improving their productivity, service level and the entire supply chain. We opened a new passenger terminal in 2013 and it is probably the best terminal in the Philippines today. Visitors love our facilities."

Barclay also emphasises the importance of upgrading the country's maritime connections: "To avoid congestion, ports have to be efficient and we lack that.

"We also need an elevated highway connected directly to the ports, and that is precisely what we are promoting."

Major infrastructure projects such as these have created a myriad of opportunities for construction firms and developers.

Collaboration brings results
Priding itself on offering creative solutions for every general construction quandary, M.E. Sicat takes a proactive stance on developing the Philippines.

Established in 1993, the Triple-A-ranked company has built a strong reputation for delivering excellence and high-quality projects in both the public and private sectors.

While its initial reputation was established by laying pipelines, M.E. Sicat has diversified into engineering, resource management, supply-chain solutions, building, pipeline services, civil construction and utilities, as well as water management. The company is managing a broad range of large civil-engineering projects, such as highways, drainage systems, buildings and bridges.

They include the creation of one of the largest sludge treatment plants in South East Asia, as well as drinking water, waste water and other sludge treatment plants.

By forming partnerships with design and water processing firms, M.E. Sicat created interdisciplinary teams that can build treatment plants to the exact specifications of clients.

"We take polluted water and return it back to the riv-

ers clean," says president and founder Michael E. Sicat. The senior executive is keen to highlight some of the many completed infrastructure projects that have contributed to the company's success and helped improve people's general living standards.

"We can provide pipelines and pump stations, and everything else needed to provide proper water treatment.

"Right now, only 12% of our water is clean. There is a lot to do and I am only talking about Manila, not the whole country.

"That's why I set up an office in Cebu. With the current level of demand, I won't have to worry about there not being enough work for at least ten years."

It's an enviable position to be in, but the logical result for a company that is run by highly-qualified and experienced engineers and managers who appreciate and understand the needs of their clients and staff.

"I have employees around the age of 25 able to buy their own houses," Sicat says. "I really enjoy making a difference to their lives and to the country in general."

This dynamism, matched with a firm belief in collaboration, may explain the company's exponential growth rate, which is currently between 20% and 30% per annum. As Sicat says, "It's a big challenge to grow from a small company to a medium-sized company, but now that we've done that and begun to mature, I expect the company to grow by 15% to 20% a year for the next five to eight years."

The bigger question, he says,

is keeping up with demand. "I do believe we need the bigger companies to help us with the larger construction work. It is important to partner with these companies and to gain from their know-how.

"A lot of companies don't like foreign players to be here, but we need them, in my opinion. If you are good at what you do, there is no reason to be afraid."

Because creativity is a core

the world.

In early October 2016, Amando M. Tetangco Jr, Governor of the IMF for the Philippines, gave a presentation to colleagues at the Washington DC-based institution's headquarters, in which he underlined some of the ongoing successes.

"Because we [the Philippines] are a small open economy, and subject to shifts in global market sentiment, we have fortified our

"Without doubt, it is our service level that gives us our competitive edge, and we have done many things to improve it."

Richard Barclay, CEO, MNHP

value of the company, M.E. Sicat relies on this key factor to design solutions for any construction needs clients might have.

The group collaborates with customers to ensure their visions become reality, and sees plenty of openings for growth. "The Philippines is a country of many smiles," Sicat continues, adding, "The people are friendly and warm. Businesses will grow here as there are many opportunities.

"I suggest foreign companies visit the Philippines so they can see that operating here is quite easy once you get to know the country."

With the support of global financial giants like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Philippines continues to punch well above its weight and outperform far larger economies elsewhere in the region, and in

domestic sources of economic growth and built the necessary domestic institutions to help ensure that our good growth performance is self-sustaining," he said.

"We have also remained committed to economic reform [...] and kept our own house in order.

"We believe these initiatives have helped to anchor positive sentiment among both domestic and foreign investors.

"Growth dynamics are supported by solid domestic demand, underpinned by strong private consumption and investment, continued productivity growth and favourable demographics.

"Consequently, the IMF and the ADB, in recent separate reports, have both raised their GDP growth outlook on the Philippines."



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The property game-changer

8990 Holdings brings **affordable homes** and financial literacy to Filipinos

Dedicated to helping those with little knowledge about property ownership get a foot on the social ladder, 8990 Holdings Inc. is closing the housing gap for some 5.5 million Filipinos, a number that is increasing at a rate of 5% per year. The company, set up in 2003, uses a holistic mix of construction technology, in-house financing and financial education to make home-buying accessible, and then sustainable, for the lower middle class, in a country that is seeing a massive shift in its demographic as increased economic growth yields a new generation of consumers.

Growing at compounded annual growth rates of 42% since 2011, 8990 Holdings Inc. is perhaps the most successful homebuilder in the Philippines today, and has launched 14 new projects across the country this year. Under the DECA Homes and the Urban DECA brands, 8990 Holdings is helping more and more people find the right plan for their new home. Working in partnership with financial institutions like the Home Development Mutual Fund and banks such as BDO, China Bank and Security Bank, the company is able to combine affordable housing finance with their fast, solid, good-quality homes constructed out of pre-cast panel technology.

8990 Holdings forecasts a growth of 20% a year, doubling its size and revenues by 2020.

CEO Januario Jesus Atencio explains the inclusive and highly-innovative business model: "We are an integrated service provider because we have planning, production, sales, loan documentation and housing finance under one roof," he says, "A large part of



Jesus Atencio
CEO, 8990 Holdings Inc.

our work is education. We teach our buyers that what they are purchasing is not just for shelter today, it is financial security in the future. When people realise that property ownership leads to prosperity, their perceptions will change.

"We are proud that we are the first and only property developer in the Philippines that requires buyers to undergo a four-hour financial literacy seminar before they can reserve a home. The seminar has three components: First we tell our customers the obligations and responsibilities of homeownership — the legal framework that protects their rights as well as the consequences of non-payment.

"Secondly, we tell them about the investment potential of property. For example, what you are buying from me now will make you a millionaire in the future because its value will go up into the millions over time. We also explain that buying a property and becoming a landowner in their own country will make them a better citizen, a better Filipino, a better parent and a better worker.

"The third step is how to pay: we organise a family budgeting workshop where we make the buyers see, through several examples, that not all expenses are alike. So treating the monthly amortisations as



Stylish shelter: One of the beautiful loft homes.

a savings and investment expense should be their priority."

Built in the space of just eight days, the standard townhouses are beautiful, functional and constructed to withstand all weathers, but there are other designs and specifications available. Atencio continues, "We are building communities. We have all sorts of amenities within our projects,

"We tell our buyers that what they are purchasing is not just shelter for today, but financial security for the future."

Jesus Atencio, CEO, 8990 Holdings Inc.

like wakeboarding parks, basketball courts and swimming pools. If you are up-to-date with payments, you can use any of our amenities nationwide for free. We offer all this, plus the financial literacy, the education. We have intermittent positive motivators such as distributing free water bottles each week.

With everything I am doing, it is interesting to note

how many collectors I actually need. The answer is in fact zero. The more you collect, the less effective the behaviour modification and financial literacy. Property ownership is one of the best things for you. Even when we required a lease down-payment, we had a very good collection efficiency rate of 96%.

"The policy programme must have reliable housing

information technology (13%), while some 24% are land-based overseas Filipino workers. They do not have savings, yet they know how to make money." Atencio is keen to partner with investors to increase the community building schemes more rapidly. "We are one of the Philippines' most profitable companies, not just in the industry, but on the Philippines Stock Exchange too," he says, adding, "There are two ways in: we can increase the number of shares and they buy those, or they join us for project-specific areas. This way we can pool our resources. So, if a London company wanted to join us in a high-rise housing project, we would split the equity of the project and become a partner in both. Garnering more inward investment has become a crusade of mine because mass housing has a lot of misconceptions and I want to see that change.

"This country is a legitimate emerging market; more than 50% of the pop-

ulation is young and we have an education system that provides quality education for Filipinos, so that the Filipino who is educated in the Philippines can find work in Europe, the US, Australia, the Middle East and other regions.

"You therefore have a market that is constantly growing, not only in its aspirations, but also in terms of economic foundation. This means that in order to be successful in anything, you have to catch the wave before it rises or you'll miss it. There are 104 million Filipinos and that is a huge asset."

8990 Holdings has become a strong and stable business due to its five pillars: competitiveness, competence, dependability, innovation and commitment. It is changing the game of mass housing by debunking the myths of shadiness, low margins and risky clients. As Atencio says, "We realised early on that mass housing is not about houses: it's about people."

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Making breakthroughs

The St Luke's medical team is **pioneering change** and excellence.

In recent years, the Philippines has enhanced its outstanding reputation as a world-class health tourism destination for patients seeking excellent standards of surgery and an unbeatable environment for rest and recuperation.

Available at a fraction of the price in their home countries, operations and clinical procedures are performed by friendly, highly-trained medical professionals in state-of-the-art facilities.

With over a century of tradition in medical excellence, St Luke's Medical Centre continues to be the benchmark in world-class patient care.

Its two state-of-the-art, well-appointed hospitals in Global City and Quezon City are staffed by the most highly qualified and experienced teams of healthcare professionals.

St Luke's provides a comprehensive range of industry-leading medical services, through massive investment in modern

technology and equipment, for departments such as medicine, dermatology, minimally invasive and robotic surgery, nuclear medicine, gynaecology and rehabilitation. In addition, its institutes provide world-class treatment in oncology, gastroenterology, cardiology, neurosciences, paediatrics, radiology, urology, aesthetic surgery, renal diseases, obesity and weight management.

The two hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) – one of the most prestigious international healthcare accreditation institutions in the world.

With the most recent accreditation awarded to its Quezon City hospital, St Luke's is also the first JCI accredited academic medical centre in the Philippines, one of only 68 such hospitals worldwide.

Both hospitals are also two of only five worldwide recognised as prime medical tourism destinations by German accrediting



Dr Arturo S. De La Peña
Medical Director, St Luke's
Medical Center-Global City

body Temos for excellence in medical tourism and quality in international patient care.

St Luke's Global City is headed by charismatic Medical Director Dr Arturo S. De La Peña, whose passion for high-quality healthcare complements his 30 years of surgical experience and position as administrator, educator and academic.

So, how has St Luke's become so successful? Dr De La Peña is only too happy to explain: "It started in the 1980s, when St Luke's decided to invest in the

best cutting-edge technology and use that to improve the quality and range of our services," he says.

"That strategy was a success; we got more patients and better clinical outcomes. Today, we are better equipped than 90% of the hospitals in the US."

Dr De La Peña hails significant investment in revolutionary technology as a key component to St Luke's success, "We are the only hospital in the Philippines that uses the famous Da Vinci Si robot," he reveals.

"Because of this substantial investment, our robotic surgery is the fastest growing in the region."

Founded in 1903 as a free outpatient clinic, St Luke's remains true to its roots with an admirable corporate social responsibility programme embedded within its DNA.

It continues to provide socialised medical services to financially challenged Filipinos and arranges medical missions.

"We reinvest in the hospital and deliver additional social services," Dr De La Peña continues.

"We also train people from other hospitals and countries who can make an impact in the

area where they practice.

"Additionally, during training we address some of the country's problems in workforce and expertise."

Given its exceptional reputation, St Luke's has become a magnet for medical tourists, and is ideally positioned to take advantage of this fast-growing and lucrative market, as people of all ages and backgrounds look to secure excellent medical care at a reasonable price.

The UK is the Philippines' leading European source of tou-

"Our expertise, cutting-edge medical technology and medical outcomes are comparable to the finest international hospitals. Our people are kind, the hospitality is great and everybody speaks English.

"We aimed to be an internationally recognised academic medical centre by 2020, but through all our actions and initiatives, we have already accomplished that feat."

In a clear sign of the outstanding success and enviable reputation of St Luke's, the world-

“Today, we are better equipped than 90% of the hospitals in the US.”

Dr Arturo S. De La Peña
Medical Director, St Luke's Medical Centre — Global City

rism, with British visitors ranked third in terms of per capita spending.

"There's huge potential for medical tourism here," Dr De La Peña states. "We offer healthcare services at a lower cost than developed countries and we can guarantee the quality, as we emphasise the qualifications of our staff.

class institution joined the Mayo Clinic Care Network in late 2016.

The prestigious network of independent health care providers works to benefit patients and their families, with the agreement making the latest Mayo Clinic knowledge available to St Luke's, and promotes collaboration among physicians.



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Destination Philippines: Your next stop

The South Pacific's most **striking** destination is a tourism hotspot.

New Secretary of Tourism Wanda Corazon Tulfo-Teo is determined to build on the strong work of her predecessor and take Philippines' tourism to greater heights. With so much to visit, see and do on the nation's 7,641 islands, there is huge scope for exponential growth in the sector. Teo is therefore focused on building and improving on infrastructure to make travel easier, and on training local communities on how best to serve the industry of the future. Last year, some 154,600 UK tourists left the grey skies of Britain to visit this tropical paradise.

"We have everything you could wish for in a holiday destination: beaches, dive sites, historical sites, festivals and shopping," Teo says, "Tourists always try to come back because we have so much to offer and there is always more to see."

There really is something for everyone. Visitors can relax on the beaches of the silkiest white sand, gaze at aquamarine waters, indulge in the occasional mango shake and have a massage, or dive with incredible marine life, including whale sharks and chaotic sardine runs.

They can chase breathtakingly beautiful waterfalls, drive ATVs around vegetative domes, explore old churches and ruins, hike up volcanoes teeming with greenery and

version of Tuk Tuks — while bright flowers and greenery are everywhere in this UNESCO Heritage Site.

Located in south-eastern Luzon is Albay province, where tourists can take in the perfectly formed cone of the Mayon Volcano. Surrounded by bright green fields and palms, the brave can scramble up to the crater while the less adventurous snap away at the view. Nearby are the Cagsawa Ruins, which house a lovely church bell and all that remains of an eruption in 1814.

Iloilo, with its famed Dinagyang Festival, showcases the colourful history, rich heritage, passionate devotion and fun-loving spirit of the Ilonggo people. The place offers exquisite heritage sites and historical buildings, delicious signature dishes, like La Paz Batchoy or Pancit Molo, and fresh seafood. Picturesque beaches stretch from the islands of Gigantes and Concepcion down to the marine sanctuaries in San Joaquin.

Just seven kilometres long and less than a kilometre wide at its narrowest point, Boracay is a treasure island of Vegas-style fun. From the stunning White Beach to 25 different dive sites, tourists can indulge in sports or get a massage. They can experience parasailing, water-skiing, cliff diving or explore on a paraw, then dance the night away,

“Relax on beaches of the silkiest white sand or dive with incredible marine life.”

wildlife, or embark on a shopping spree followed by dinner and cocktails at a sophisticated restaurant. Filipinos are invariably happy and hospitable.

In the bustling gateway city of Manila, visitors can enjoy a range of nightlife, munch on lechon and halo halo or try a number of cuisines. They can shop in cosmopolitan malls, book MICE events at one of the many luxury hotels, try their luck in the casinos, and so much more.

Situated in the northern part of Luzon is Ilocos Sur, a delightfully preserved slice of colonial Spain. Vigan, with its cobblestone streets and baroque architecture, combines its European roots with splashes of tropical colour and flair. Vintage horse-drawn carriages amble down the street alongside the ever-present tricycles — the Filipino side-car

wake up and do it all over again in the morning, or head to Puka Beach for tranquillity and relaxation.

Known as the fruit basket of the Philippines, Davao is skirted by the majestic Mount Apo, a large stratovolcano and one of the most popular climbing destinations in the Philippines. On the coast is a series of white-sand beaches and dive sites crowned by the gorgeous Pearl Farm Beach Resort. Adventurous activities in both the highlands and lowlands await the eager traveller.

Not far away is the rising jewel of the Philippines, Siargao. Home to the famous Siargao International Surfing Cup, the teardrop-shaped island has perfect barrels at Cloud 9 that attract surfers from around the world. The island is surrounded by perfect white beaches, diving spots,



Boracay's famous stunning White Beach is perfect for relaxing and is now the most popular tourism destination in the Philippines.

mysterious caves, enchanting lagoons, sand bars, rice fields, exotic wildlife, a mangrove forest reserve and other attractions.

Visitors can hop between Naked Island, Daku Island and Guyam Island for a perfect tropical delight in azure seas. Sugba Lagoon offers breathtaking views and the chance to paddle-board, snorkel or ride a boat. Bucas Grande, home of the unique Sohoton Caves, is just a day-trip away.

For sweet delights, organic food and some intensely beautiful eco-tourism, holidaymakers can also head to Negros Occidental. Bacolod City is filled with beautiful old houses such as The Ruins — the bones of an old mansion set in lush gardens, that was built for love after a tragedy. Driving further south, you eventually come to the Jewel of the Sugar Island, Sipalay.

Visitors can travel between the closest iconic islands via long swinging bridges, or venture to the others on a spider-sided boat under the watchful gazes of giggling local children. They can hop over to the hidden eco-paradise Danjugan Island, home to five lagoons, diverse wildlife, winding trails, a bat cave, and healthy coral reefs, sea grass and mangroves. This place really should not be missed.

Cebu offers wonderful restaurants, vibrant nightlife areas and beautiful historical sites. Beyond the city, tourists can hike to Osmena Peak, enjoy canyoning in the iridescent milky-turquoise



Blending breath-taking scenery with great hospitality and culture, the Philippines is a true paradise.

waters of Kawasan Falls, and explore the many beaches and small islands dotted around Cebu. Explorers can climb the Aguinid Falls and find solitude in a natural spa, surrounded by beautiful palm fronds, birds, butterflies and small frogs. They can splash in the Tumalog and Aso Falls, or dive with the whirling sardine run at Moalboal or thresher sharks in the only place in the world shallow enough to see them—Malapascua Island. They can see whale sharks at Oslob and jump on a boat across to Sumilon Island to enjoy a range of activities and watch spectacular white sandbar.

Neighbouring Bohol is the place to roam the beaches of Panglao Island or sample a wide

range of activities. Visitors can tour the Chocolate Hills in an ATV, visit the tiny frog-eyed tarsiers in their quiet sanctuary, jump on a zipline and see spectacular views. They can kayak through palm-fringed rivers at night where the trees twinkle with fireflies, island hop to see dolphins at dawn then snorkel or scuba-dive at Balicasag Island, crack a coconut on the strip of white sand of Virgin Island, lie in a hammock of their choice at the Bohol Beach Club and gorge on delicious seafood.

Finally, there is Palawan, a truly special place defined by its seascapes

with towering green-covered limestone-cast cliffs that meet crystal-clear aquamarine waters.

The sublime Bacquit Archipelago and Busuanga Island are a checklist of beautiful sites and memories to be treasured. There is relaxation, coupled with exploring and adventure around hidden coves, secret beaches and mountain lakes. Visitors can enjoy Puerto Princesa Subterranean River, the longest of its kind in the world, and the National Park, then head back into the sunshine and sea to swim with remarkable marine life.

