**Philippine Brief History**

The Philippines is comprises of over 7000 islands ranging from small unpopulated rocks to several hundred populated places. Some of the major islands are Luzon, Mindoro, Panay, Samar, Leyte, Cebu, Palawan, Negros, and Mindanao. Baguio is the Philippine’s summer resort located high up in the mountains accessible only by one treacherous road leading along water falls, rivers, and jungle. During rainy season, the road gets washed out quite frequently stranding people until repaired. Once you make it there it is a very idyllic place. The city is built along steep hills with primitive homes clustered along hills. Besides having a tempered climate, it’s the souvenir capital of the Philippines where most of the handicraft is produced. The U.S. military has a resort facility (Camp John Hay) where most of foreigners with travel orders can stay. One can find anything made from wooden sculptures, to coral statues, and ebony furniture. Aside form climactic differences, this place reminded him very much of Garmisch (a similar place near Munich), a traveler’s paradise in Germany. Looking for artifacts, those are a couple places renowned worldwide. There are other places worthy for the tourist.

Igorot is the general name for the people of north central Luzon Island. The Igorot form two subgroups: the largest group lives in the south, central, and western areas, and is very adept at rice-terrace farming; the other group lives in the east and north. They formerly practiced headhunting. The name Igorot is also used as a collective term for many of the warlike tribes of Luzon. As late as the 70s, the Igorot were known to practice cannibalism. During my visits at Clark air base several servicemen disappeared and were suspected to be killed by these mountainous headhunters. Investigations into these cases revealed a still active practice of cannibalism.

Bataan holds a WWII memorial and defense bastions located on Corregidor Island dedicated to the infamous death march forced by the Japanese invasion killing many Filipinos on the way. The Democracy Markerat the province’s boundary with Pampanga depicts the role of Bataan in the country’s fight for freedom.

Cavite is a quaint fishing town along Manila bay. Cavite, is the chartered city and seaport of the northern Philippines. It is located on Luzon Island, Manila Bay. The city has a fine harbor encircled by walls. The principal articles of trade include corn, rice, sugar, coffee, cacao, copra, bananas, and Manila hemp. On a narrow neck of land extending east into the bay are the remains of fortifications dating from Spanish colonial times and a former United States naval facility. Under Spanish rule Cavite was a naval base and following its capture by the American admiral George Dewey in 1898, during the Spanish-American War, it became the principal base of the U.S. Asian Fleet.

Makati is Manila’s business and shopping district. Makati, located east of Manila, is a mix of L.A.'s Beverly Hills and NY's Wall Street. Scene of high rise buildings, fancy condominiums, five star hotels, swanky shopping center, fine dining restaurants, and plush residential villages for the moneyed class. The Ayala Complex is a maze of shopper's malls and restaurants which cater mainly to the rich and middle class. A steady stream of buses rumble along Ayala Avenue connecting with North and South bound traffic leaving Makati. Experienced and adventurous travelers will enjoy riding in one of the swarm of Jeepneys darting through Makati traffic. Each Jeepney has its route displayed on the side; you simply jump on the next one going to, or past, your destination. Rental cars, with or without a driver, can be arranged through a hotel receptionist or at one of the many car hire offices but it is recommend renting the car with driver.

Another remarkable speck in Filipino history is the Nigrito tribe. These are true aborigines of the Philippine planes. The Nigritos inhabited an area located on Clark Air Base at the foot of Mount Pinatubo. The remnants of this culture can be seen by visiting the last remaining village right on base easily recognized by dilapidated shanty shacks made from plywood. The village looks more like a cluster of wooden boxes built on stilts along a main road lined by open ditches collecting sewage littered by refuse. The inhabitants had base privileges for life until the base was annihilated with the last volcanic eruption by.

Mount Pinatubo is one of the active volcanoes on the island of Luzon that erupted catastrophically in June 1991 after 460 years of inactivity. A thick layer of layers of ash completely covered Clark AFB and adjacent Angeles City. A heavy layer of ashes rained down for days as far as Manila covering most of the island in darkness. The air base covered by a layer of ash six feet deep collapsing rooftops was abandoned by the U.S. military forever with property under lease from the Philippines since 1943 returned to its owner. The town of Angeles City was rebuilt and repopulated once more thriving on tourist from Japan visiting historic WWII battle grounds. Because of atrocities committed during WWII Japanese were banned from visiting the Philippines until the mid 70s unless at their own risk of being killed.

There are numerous cases where visiting businessmen were killed by Filipinos still holding strong anti-Japanese sentiments. To overcome this hostility the Filipino government stepped in to prosecute anybody that posed harm to any visitor. It took many years for the general population to lose anti-sentiment feelings against the Japanese by realizing great business potential waiting. The main attraction for Japanese tourists is big game hunting. Filipinos are a very enterprising people. They came up with a clever scheme promoted through Japanese media to invite adventurous individuals for bug game hunting. Before long, hunters started to arrive in groups from Japan carrying powerful hunting rifles with promises for a kill. They expected to find elephants, tigers, and lions in the jungles of the Philippines but were surprised to only find an occasional tame buffalo owned by local farmers. For the right price, the farmers would let the Japanese hunters shoot one of their life stocks. Alex can contest to these accounts because he was member of the sporting planning committee with Filipino friends but never gained from any such enterprise since he left before the hunting fun began.

Manila can be an exciting place if one accepts chaotic traffic, pollution, heat, and noise. The city never sleeps unlike other places like Japan. Tokyo, for instance, rolls up the sidewalk after the last trains leave at midnight turning the city into a morgue until the first subway rolls out again at 5:00am. Manila’s population on the other hand stays awake through the night. One can hear street peddlers passing by outdoors every thirty minutes calling out Balu-uuut throughout the night.

The Balut is a Filipino delicacy imbibed mostly by men while drinking beer. Sooner or later the visitor will be called for the "naturalization baptism" or test to see if you are a real Filipino friend. The friends want to have their joke, gathering around observing the shock-experience with relish. The visitor gets a Balut as a normal egg. The forehead of the visitor begins to wrinkle up, when coming aware that the egg is a duck egg with a partially developed duckling. If the visitor is still hesitating to eat the egg, alcohol will be offered. Some resist the temptation and initiation rite for years. Cock-fighting, the production of Baluts is big business on the Philippines. The freshly bred eggs are taken away from the duck mother and tested for fertilization (candle test) and firmness of the egg shell. After this selection in the traditional procedure (no electrical incubators) numerous bags or layers of husk or hay are put on the top of the eggs, to stimulate the body temperature of the mother duck (42 °).

Not fertilized eggs are sold as fresh eggs or salt-cured eggs. A further test takes place after fourteen days. Fertilized but not developed eggs are cooked and sold as Penoy. Eggs with dead embryos have no market value and are discarded. In this phase no firm beak or plumage is yet developed, however, a partly developed body with weak bones and eyes, swimming in fluid. The Baluts are mostly offered in bags made of newspaper offered with a portion of gritty salt. Eating a Balut needs a little training, because there is still liquid in the egg. The egg is cracked open and shell membrane removed. Salt or vinegar is added to the lizard-like meat of the Balut for consumption. Experts recommend the novice to close eyes and nose while eating to keep from getting nauseated. What’s the taste of a balut? For some it is disgusting, other’s praise the taste comparable to crab meat. Baluts are considered an aphrodisiac or local substitute for Viagra. For observers depending on western medicine the continuous search for potency increasing drugs and corresponding myth-formation in Asia is somewhat an oddity. For some visitors it is a contrast of disgust and delicacy anticipated only during drinking sessions with natives.