New Consul General—Russel Brown

Russel Brown arrived in Manila in September, 2016 to serve in the position of Consul General at the United States Embassy. Prior to this posting, he served as Consul General and Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Canada. Mr. Brown joined the Foreign Service in 1992. Throughout his career, Mr. Brown has held various positions in Washington D.C. and abroad, including Baghdad, Kabul, Frankfurt, Zagreb, Munich, and Lagos. From 2008-2011, Mr. Brown was the Director of the Consular Training Division at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington D.C.

New American Services Chief—Tonya Gendin

Tonya W. Gendin arrived in Manila in July 2016 to serve as Chief of American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy. She joined the U.S. Department of State in 2004. Ms. Gendin’s previous postings include Manila, Kyiv, Chennai, Tashkent, and Washington DC. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Ms. Gendin worked for the Social Security Administration and as an international educator at several colleges and universities.
Passport photos: No eyeglasses allowed. Please visit the link for more information. https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/news/no-glasses.html

Effective October 1, 2017, a Social Security number (SSN) will be required for all passport applications, unless the applicant is applying for an SSN at the same time.

Website: http://ph.usembassy.gov Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/manila.usembassy
**UPCOMING HOLIDAYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOLIDAY</th>
<th>LEGAL DATE</th>
<th>CLOSING DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. President’s Day</td>
<td>Monday, February 20</td>
<td>Monday, February 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maundy Thursday</td>
<td>Thursday, April 13</td>
<td>Thursday, April 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Friday, April 14</td>
<td>Friday, April 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippine Labor Day</td>
<td>Monday, May 1</td>
<td>Monday, May 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Memorial Day</td>
<td>Monday, May 29</td>
<td>Monday, May 29</td>
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Mark your calendars! U.S. Embassy Manila Outreach Dates

- **Laoag City** March 2  8a.m.-11a.m.
- **Bacolod City** March 16 and **Iloilo City** March 17  8a.m.-11a.m.
- **Angeles and Olongapo** (in **April**, Details to follow)


Paralytic Shellfish poisoning (PSP), or red tide poisoning, is a life-threatening condition associated with eating contaminated shellfish. The contamination comes from high concentration of algae that causes harm to both living organisms and the environment. In humans, ingestion of the toxins causes neurological symptoms that can be felt in 30 minutes or less. The symptoms may be tingling sensation in different parts of the body, followed by nausea, headache and dizziness. Depending on the amount of toxin ingested, severe poisoning has been fatal in several cases.

What seafoods are **UNSAFE** to eat from red tide affected areas?

Shellfish, particularly:

- **CLAMS**
- **OYSTERS**
- **MUSSELS**
- **SCALLOPS**
- **KRILLS**

Whelks, moon snails, and other univalves that feed on shellfish may also be dangerous.

What seafoods are **SAFE** to EAT?

**FISH, SQUIDS, CRABS and SHRIMPS can be EATEN.** However, the gills, viscera, and internal organs of fish must be removed before cooking.

Since there is no antidote for paralytic shellfish poisoning, the public is warned against consumption of shellfish from areas with shellfish ban. Cooking does not destroy the red tide toxin so be extra careful. The Bureau of fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the Philippines is monitoring contamination in affected areas, prevents the shellfish from reaching the market, and issues bimonthly bulletin for updates. BFAR warns everyone to avoid consuming all types of shellfish and alamang (krill) gathered in areas positive for paralytic shellfish poison: the coastal waters of Daram Island, Irong-Irong, Cambatutay, Maqueda and Villareal Bays in Western Samar; Matarinao bay in Eastern Samar; coastal waters of Leyte and Carigara Bay in leyte, Biliran province, Gigantes islands in carles,Iloilo; Dausis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; and Balite Bay in Davao oriental.

Manila Bay, Cavite, Las Pinas, Paranaque, Navotas, Bulacan and Bataan coastal waters are **FREE** from toxic red tides. More information at [bfar.gov.ph](http://bfar.gov.ph).

*Source: Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippines*
TIPS FOR TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES

A trip requires careful planning. Listed below are important steps U.S. Citizens can take to prepare for a safe trip to the Philippines or anywhere outside the United States.

Learn About Your Destination

The State Department’s Office of American Citizens Services and Crisis Management (ACS) administers the Consular Information Program, which informs the public of conditions abroad that may affect their safety and security. Country Specific Information, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings are vital parts of this program.

The State Department provides Country Specific Information for every country of the world. You will find the location of the U.S. embassy and any consular offices, information about whether you need a visa, crime and security information, health and medical considerations, drug penalties, localized hot spots and more. This is a good place to start learning about where you are going. Go to the travel.state.gov website and type in your destination at the "Learn about your destination" prompt.

Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens living overseas or planning to travel abroad to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). When you enroll in STEP, we can update you with important safety and security announcements. Enrolling will also make it easier for the embassy or consulate to contact you in the event of an emergency. It is particularly important when you enroll or update your information to include a current phone number and e-mail address.
What is STEP?

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Benefits of Enrolling in STEP

- Receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
- Help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency.
- Help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.

Stay Informed, Stay Connected, Stay Safe!

www.travel.state.gov/step/
Do You Have All Required Travel Documents?

Most U.S. citizens must use a U.S. passport to travel overseas and reenter the United States. A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies your identity and citizenship. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to issue U.S. passports.

Most foreign countries require a valid passport to enter and leave. Some countries may allow you to enter with only a birth certificate, or with a birth certificate and a driver’s license, but all persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air, must present a valid passport to reenter the United States.

What about your children? Some countries have instituted requirements to help prevent child abductions and may require travelers to present proof of relationship to the children and evidence of consent from any non-accompanying parent(s). Visit our child abduction country information pages for information about your destination.

When does your passport expire? Some countries require that a traveler’s passport be valid for at least six months beyond the dates of the trip. Contact the embassy of your foreign destination for more information. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found in our Country Specific Information pages.

What Are the Entry, Exit, and Visa Requirements for Your Destination?

You may find out more about requirements on the Country Specific Information page for your destination at travel.state.gov.

U.S. citizens may enter the Philippines for purposes of tourism without a visa if they present their valid, unexpired U.S. passport and a return ticket to the United States or an onward ticket to another country. It is your responsibility to maintain the validity of your U.S. passport while traveling in the Philippines. If you plan to stay longer than 30 days, you must apply for an extension at the Philippine Bureau of Immigration and Deportation's (BI) main office at Magallanes Drive, Intramuros, Manila, or at any of its provincial offices. Once in the Philippines, you can apply for a twenty-nine day extension. If you know you will stay in the Philippines for more than 30 days, you can obtain a fifty-nine (59) day visa at the Philippine embassy or consulate closest to you before traveling to the Philippines.

If you are coming to the Philippines for purposes other than tourism, please check the Embassy of the Philippines website for visa requirements. You may be denied entry or be fined if your purpose for entry is other than tourism and you do not possess the correct visa.

U.S. citizens may obtain a multiple-entry transit 9(b) visa to permit travel from one country to another via the Philippines. Travelers must obtain a transit visa from a Philippine embassy or consulate prior to traveling to the Philippines; transit visas are not issued upon arrival in the Philippines.

Persons who overstay their visas are subject to fines and detention by Philippine immigration authorities. Please remain aware of your visa status while in the Philippines and strictly follow immigration laws and regulations. Visit the Embassy of the Philippines website for the most current visa information.

Certain foreigners must apply for an Emigration Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the Bureau of Immigration before they may depart the Philippines. For more detailed information on how this applies to many temporary visitors and to certain immigrants, please visit the Bureau of Immigration’s website.

Are You Prepared for an Emergency?

Make sure you have the contact information for the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you are going. Consular duty personnel are available for emergency assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas and in Washington, D.C. Contact information for U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas may be found in our Country Specific Information pages.
Learn about local laws and customs

While traveling, you are subject to the local laws even if you are a U.S. Citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own and it is very important to know what's legal and what's not. If you break local laws while abroad, your U.S. passport won't help you avoid arrest or prosecution, and the U.S. Embassy cannot get you out of jail.

Your Health

Do You Need Any New Vaccinations?

Vaccinations Are Required for Entry to Some Countries. Some countries require foreign visitors to carry an International Certificate of Vaccination (aka Yellow Card) or other proof that they have had certain inoculations or medical tests before entering or transiting their country. Before you travel, check the Country Specific Information and contact the foreign embassy of the country to be visited or transited through for current entry requirements.

Does Your Health Insurance Cover You Outside the U.S.?

Learn what medical services your health insurance provider will cover overseas. Although some health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for a medical evacuation back to the United States, which can easily cost up to $100,000, or even more, depending on your condition and location. Regardless of whether your insurance is valid overseas, you may be required to pay for care when you receive it.

If your insurance policy does not cover you abroad, consider purchasing a short-term policy that does. Many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

Are You Taking Any Prescriptions or Other Medications?

If you take prescription medication, pack enough to last your entire trip, including some extra in case you are unexpectedly delayed. Carry your medications in their original labeled containers, and pack them in your carry-on bag since checked baggage is occasionally lost or delayed. Ask your pharmacy or physician for the generic equivalent name of your prescriptions in case you need to purchase additional medication abroad.

We also recommend that you get a letter from your physician in case you are questioned about your carry-on medication. Some countries have strict restrictions on bringing prescription or even non-prescription medications into the country without proper medical documentation.

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

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Website: ph.usembassy.gov
Emergencies: For emergencies after office hours, please call (63) (2) 301-2000 and ask for the Duty Officer.

Website: http://ph.usembassy.gov  Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/manila.usembassy