

3.3.5 Schedule at Stairway

The following schedule is an example of what a normal day is for the children:

5:30-	Wake Up
6:00-	Morning exercises
6:30-	Cleaning
7:00-	Breakfast
8:00-10:00	Academic Classes (Weekdays) General Cleaning (Saturday) Mass/Outdoor Game/Environmental Exposure (Sunday)
10:00-10:15	Merienda
10:15-12:00	Academic Classes (Weekdays) General Laundry (Saturday) Environmental Exp./Outdoor/Indoor Games (Sunday)
12:00-1:00	Lunch Time
1:00-3:00	Music/Arts/Computer/Crafts/Creative Exp. (Weekdays) Personality Dev/Therapeutic Group /Self Eval (Weekend)
3:00–3:15	Merienda
3:15–4:00	Sports Activities
4:00 -5:30	Laundry (MW) / Beach time (TTHFSS)
5:30–7:00	Wrap Up Session (MW)
7:00-	Dinner
8:00-	Tutorial (MW); Music time (T); Story telling (Th); Movie (F, Sa)
9:00 /10:00	Lights out

4. Useful Information

4.1 Address

Stairway Foundation, Inc.
Brgy. Aninuan, Puerto Galera 5203
Oriental Mindoro, Philippines
Tel. +63 (917) 843-1922
Email: stairway@stairwayfoundation.org
Homepage: www.stairwayfoundation.org

4.2 How to Get to Stairway

For transportation from Manila Airport to Puerto: take a taxi from the airport to the PNR Buendia bus terminal. This should cost around 300-400 pesos. Here is a map of the Manila Airport and surrounding areas: <http://www.manila-airport.net/Map.cfm>. At the Buendia bus terminal, the buses will have signs on the front of them listing the different cities they go to. You will get on a bus

that has 'Batangas Pier' on it. You can always ask one of the terminal workers which bus to get on. In general, they are very nice and helpful. The bus ride should cost about 167 pesos. At Batangas Pier, look for the Minolo Shipping Lines booth. Tell them you are going to Stairway Foundation. They will give you a discount for boat fare. It should cost 160 pesos. You'll also have to pay a 50 peso 'environmental fee' and a 28 peso 'terminal fee' (all at different booths). The terminal helpers generally walk people through this process. The boat will take you to Muelle pier in Puerto Galera. If you get motion sick at all, you will want to bring Dramamine with you. The boat rides can be pretty rocky! Once you arrive in Muelle, you will take a tricycle (motorcycle with passenger side-car) to Aninuan (the Barangay or town where Stairway is). The tricycle drivers should know us if you mention Stairway. If they don't, just tell them Tamaraw Beach Resort (we are right across the street from Tamaraw). The tricycle ride should cost 30 pesos. They will try and charge you 150 pesos. Once you get to Stairway, just walk onto site and tell the first person you see that you are a volunteer at Stairway. They will walk you to the main office.

4.3 Accommodations

During your stay, you will be housed either in our guest facility or in one of our on-site cabins. Where you are housed depends on the time of year and availability of accommodations. At times, you may be asked to change accommodations, based on the need of Stairway. The guest facility rooms are equipped with beds, a fan, and a CR (comfort room or bathroom) with a shower. The cabins are small but quaint. There may or may not be a shower in the CR. If there isn't a shower, buckets and water scoops (tabo) are used to bathe.

Plumbing is tricky in the Philippines and many places lack a proper sewage system. Also, toilet paper is not frequently used. If you do happen to use toilet paper, it is to be thrown in a waste basket rather than flushed down the toilet. Many public CR's do not have toilet paper. In this case, buckets of water and tabos are used to cleanse one's self (or you can always carry a supply of toilet paper with you). Many toilets do not have a system to flush. For these, you manually flush down the water and waste by dumping a bucket of water into the toilet.

Laundry is done by hand and is hung outside (or inside when rainy) to dry. Most volunteers wash clothing several times throughout the week to avoid wasting big chunks of free time on laundry.

There are many buildings at Stairway and oftentimes many stairs to climb in order to get around. There are also a lot of insects (mosquito's, flies, moths, beetles, etc.), lizards, birds, bats, and snakes at Stairway. Snake sightings are infrequent, but they do occur.

4.4 Health / Medical Care

For your health concerns, there are plenty of local clinics and doctors' here in Puerto Galera. We have a small, local clinic in White Beach for general, non-emergency medical care. The cell phone# is: +63 (917) 562 0011. For greater medical needs or emergencies, there is a hospital in Calapan (the nearest major city to Puerto Galera - 1 1/2 hours drive) called Maria Estrella General Hospital. The phone# is: +63 (43) 286 7386. In addition, there are plenty of pharmacies where you can get most medicines.

As a health and safety precaution, you should always have tetanus, diphtheria and hepatitis A vaccines before you arrive. Furthermore, if you are planning to travel around the Philippines you should consider malaria prophylaxes. For your protection, we have mosquito nets available for your use while at Stairway.

4.5 Food and Diet

While here, you will receive 3 meals and 2 snacks per day. Rice is served at every meal and is the staple food in the Philippines. Meat protein will come in the form of fish (served at least once a day), chicken, pork, and once in awhile, beef. Fish here is served differently than it is in the Western countries. The fish are de-gutted, but not de-boned. The head and tail of the fish are left intact. Vegetables are served daily; fruits several times throughout the week. The fruits and vegetables in the Philippines are plentiful and delicious. Depending on how long you will be here, it is probably a good idea to bring a supply of multi-vitamins and calcium supplements to help your body adjust to a different diet.

In general, water is unsafe to drink unless it is filtered, bottled, or boiled for at least 15 minutes. At Stairway, we have 3 faucets that give filtered water. Bottled water is available in grocery stores and via vendors.

4.6 Weather

There are 2 seasons in the Philippines: dry and wet. The dry season runs from December to June and the wet season from July to November. The dry season is very hot and humid. Summer (when kids are out of school) is April – May. The children at Stairway graduate at the end of March and we get a new batch of children in June. The summer months are filled with a variety of camps for local community groups (deaf, developmentally disabled, etc.).

The wet season produces a lot of rain, and the temperature remains very warm and humid. A jacket is rarely needed here. Typhoons are common and can lead to fierce storm conditions and flooding. The Philippines has an average of 6-7 typhoons per year. Typhoons are categorized into 4 different groups, depending on wind speed. Level 1 is the mildest, and level 4 is known as a super typhoon. The news stations are good about notifying the public about the typhoon categories. Local government units will organize evacuations as needed.

4.7 Budget

The general rule is that volunteers contribute to their own food and accommodation. The amount is around \$10 dollars per day. Apart from this, your budget will be very individualized. Things to budget for are personal toiletries, snack food, going out to restaurants for special occasions (or for fun), cell phone load, and any other side travel or entertainment you may want to indulge in (scuba diving is big here in Puerto). As Puerto Galera is a touristic area, there are several grocery stores that cater to foreign tourists; you will be able to find most things that you need or want. In general everything here is quite cheap compared to the Western part of the world. A full meal including drinks can easily be bought for less than 100 pesos (less than 2 USD). The average monies spent for volunteers can be between 5,000 – 10,000 pesos per month (\$100 - \$200).

4.8 Communications

Communications in the Philippines is primarily through cell phones / texting. Most volunteers that bring their own cell phones are able to switch out their SIM cards to a local service provider (Smart or Globe). If this doesn't work for you, SFI has an extra cell phone that a prior volunteer donated. This cell phone would be available for you to use during your stay here. Cell phones are operated by buying 'load'. Load is available via purchasing a load card or by purchasing load from an e-load provider. Both cards and e-load are available for purchase at Tamaraw Beach Resort, which is

across the street from SFI. Receiving a text is free. Sending a text to a phone within your network (Smart or Globe) is 1 peso. Sending a text to a different network is about 2.50 pesos. Local phone calls are 6 pesos a minute.

Stairway has internet (via wifi) and computers available for you to use email and to stay in contact with your family and friends. Some volunteers bring their own laptops, which is okay. Just keep in mind that we are not liable for theft, loss or damages to any of your belongings.

Electricity in the Philippines runs at 220 volts. If you have a device that does not accept 220 volts at 60 hertz, you will need a voltage converter. The most common plug outlet accepts plugs with 2 flat blades. If your electronic device has a different shape, you will need to bring a plug adapter with you. Most electronic devices work just fine here (unless you plan on bringing a hair dryer or curling iron – which we don't recommend).

4.9 Credit Cards

In Puerto Galera (7 km. from Stairway) it is possible to withdraw cash using foreign credit cards at the Alliance Bank ATM. The bank serves cards on the Plus, Megalink, and VISA networks. In addition, you can exchange your US dollars to Pesos in several establishments in Puerto Galera.

The office at Stairway has a safe that can be utilized to store your passport, monies, and other valuables as needed.

4.10 Things To Do

Puerto Galera is a popular tourist destination. Filipino's like to vacation in nearby White Beach, while Sabang brings both local and international scuba divers. There are many places to snorkel and dive and many companies offering boating and diving excursions. A lot of the local resorts offer water sports such as wave-running, para-sailing, para-surfing, wind-surfing, banana-boating, etc. There are also a variety of waterfalls to hike to, many within walking distance of Stairway, and a local 9-hole golf course. White Beach hosts a night life with live music, dancing, videoke, and fire dancers on the beach. There are many things to do here!

4.11 Suggested Packing List

Clothing:

5-7 pairs of shorts (include board shorts for swimming)

5-7 t-shirts / tank tops

1-2 nice outfits (for celebrations, events, going out)

7-10 underwear

2 bras / 1 sports bra

1 pair of long pants (for milder weather and/or mosquito relief)

1 hoodie / jacket (for milder weather and/or mosquito relief)

2 swimsuits / swim trunks

2 pair of socks

Athletic shoes (for hiking)

Flip flops

Toiletries:

Travel size shampoo / soap

Toothbrush / toothpaste

Brush/comb
Hair accessories (to put hair up)
Bath towel (2)
Disposable razors
Bandana / washcloth (for wiping sweat)

Misc:

Sunglasses
Hat (to protect from sunburn)
Sunscreen (or can buy here)
Mosquito repellent (or can buy here)
Camera
Flashlight
Ear plugs (for light sleepers)
Umbrella
Prescription Meds
Dramamine (if needed)
Multi-vitamins / Calcium supplements

5. Basic Language

There are many languages spoken in the Philippines; however, Filipino (based on Tagalog) is the national language and is at least understood by most Filipinos. English is taught in schools and is used for governmental, commercial, and educational purposes, and can also be found on most signage.

While the staff at Stairway both understand and speak Basic English, many of the children here do not. To help you communicate with the children and the local community, here are some common words and phrases:

Oo. Opo.
(Yes. Yes sir / ma'am).

Hindi. Hindi po.
(No. No sir / ma'am)

Magandang umaga, po.
(Good morning, sir/ma'am).

Magandang hapon, po.
(Good afternoon, sir/ma'am).

Magandang gabi, po.
(Good evening, sir / ma'am).

Kumusta ka?
(How are you?)

Mabuti! Ikaw?
(Fine. You?)

Ingat!
(Take care)!

Salamat po.
(Thank you, sir / ma'am.)

Walang anuman.
(Your welcome).

Ate
(Sister)

Kuya
(Brother)

Nanay
(Mother)

Tatay
(Father)

Magkano?
(How much?)

Walang pera.
(No money).

Kain ka na!
(You eat now!)

Masarap!
(Delicious!)

Busog ako na.
(I'm full now).

Pagod ako na.
(I'm tired now).

Magandang tulog.
(Sleep well).

Merienda, tubig, gulay, prutas, tinapay
(Snack, water, vegetable, fruit, bread)

Ano, saan, kelan, sino, ilang
(What, where, when, who, how many)