



NUVANCE HEALTH
Global Health Program
LARNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE



BICOL UNIVERSITY

CHARACTER

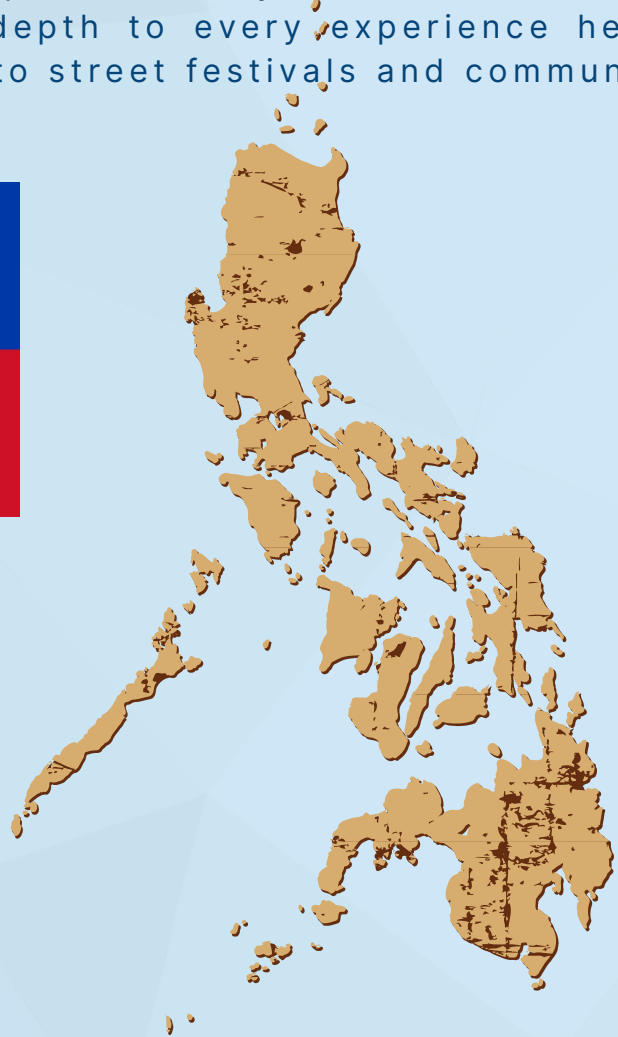
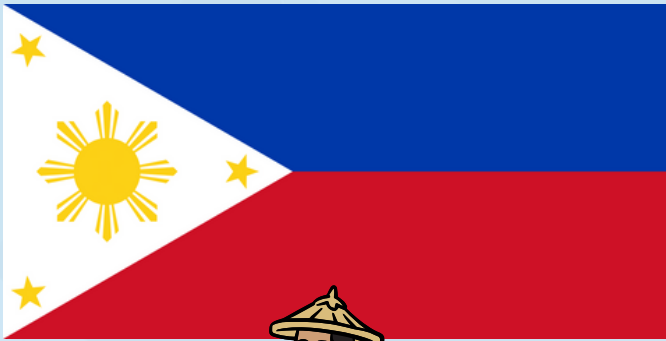
STUDENT'S GUIDE **in Bicol Philippines**



About the Philippines

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE PHILIPPINES: A NATION OF HISTORY AND DIVERSITY

The Philippines is more than just a tropical destination—it's a country shaped by a rich and layered history, diverse cultural identities, and a deeply resilient spirit. For any student or visitor, understanding this context adds depth to every experience here, from conversations in a classroom to street festivals and community life.



A History of Confluence

The Philippines has been at the crossroads of global influences for centuries. It was a Spanish colony for over 300 years, which explains the widespread use of Spanish surnames, colonial churches, and Catholic traditions. In 1898, it was ceded to the United States, ushering in a new era of public education, democratic governance, and English language instruction. The country finally gained full independence in 1946, and today it blends Asian roots, Western institutions, and Indigenous heritage into its national identity.

About the Philippines



About the Philippines

A Mosaic of Cultures

Comprising over 7,600 islands and more than 110 ethnolinguistic groups, the Philippines is a true archipelago of diversity. While Filipino and English are the official languages, you'll hear dozens of regional tongues like Cebuano, Ilocano, Waray, and Bicolano spoken in daily life. Each region boasts its own festivals, cuisines, and traditions.

From the Muslim communities of Mindanao to the Cordillera's indigenous rice terrace farmers, Filipino culture cannot be reduced to a single narrative—it is a living mosaic of indigenous knowledge, colonial legacy, and modern innovation.



About the Philippines

Culture of Warmth and Celebration

Filipinos are known for their hospitality, community spirit (bayanihan), and love for celebration. Whether it's the colorful Sinulog in Cebu, the Ati-Atihan in Aklan, or the Pahiyas Festival in Quezon, you'll find music, dance, and food woven into national life. And yes, karaoke is practically a national sport.



Resilience and People Power

Despite facing natural disasters, political upheavals, and global challenges, the Filipino people are admired worldwide for their optimism, resilience, and unity. The 1986 People Power Revolution is a defining moment in modern Philippine history—proof of a nation's commitment to democracy and peaceful change.

In short, to know the Philippines is to understand a country that is complex, compassionate, and constantly evolving. For exchange students, this means not just visiting a place—but witnessing the story of a nation that embraces its past while shaping its future. Let me know if you'd like this reformatted as a pullout box or condensed into bullet points for visual layouts.

About the Philippines

THE PHILIPPINES AS A STUDY EXCHANGE DESTINATION

For many international students, academic exchange is more than just a study period abroad—it's an opportunity to live, learn, and engage in a completely different cultural and academic setting. Increasingly, students from Europe, East Asia, and beyond are choosing the Philippines as their exchange destination. And for good reason.

English-Based Instruction in an Accessible Setting

One of the most compelling reasons for exchange students to consider the Philippines is its English-based education system. As one of the few countries in the region where English is both widely spoken and used as the medium of instruction, it offers a seamless transition for students from Europe and Asia who may not speak the local languages.

This linguistic accessibility not only enhances the learning experience in class but also makes daily life easier. Exchange students often find it easy to interact with locals, navigate public transportation, and participate in academic group work and extracurricular activities, without the need for an interpreter or intensive language training.

A Global Classroom with Local Relevance

Philippine universities are increasingly global in outlook. For exchange students, this means participating in classroom discussions grounded in local realities yet framed within global contexts. Whether studying education in rural communities, business development in emerging economies, or coastal resource management, students gain insights that textbooks alone cannot provide.

But what truly makes the Philippines stand out is the way it bridges global academic themes with deeply rooted social, historical, and cultural perspectives. It is a country shaped by its complex colonial past, dynamic democracy, and enduring spirit of community, giving students the chance to analyze real-world issues in a uniquely pluralistic and resilient context.

About the Philippines

Cost-Efficient Living, Rich Experience

While tuition fees are waived under exchange agreements, the cost of living remains an important consideration. Fortunately, life in the Philippines is generally affordable. There are budget-friendly housing, food, and transport, which are often at a fraction of the cost in more traditional exchange destinations.

This affordability opens up more opportunities for exchange students to travel domestically, participate in cultural festivals, and engage in community immersion programs that complement their academic work. The Philippines also offers geographical diversity that few countries can match. From bustling megacities to quiet university towns, from mountains and rice terraces to coral reefs and white-sand beaches, the natural and cultural landscape here is as varied as it is inspiring.



What sets the Philippines apart from other countries is not just its language advantage or affordability—it's the human connection. Here, learning goes beyond lectures. It's in the conversations over home-cooked meals, the shared jeepney rides, the meaningful community visits, and the realization that knowledge is most powerful when it is lived.

For exchange students ready to move beyond the typical study-abroad destinations, the Philippines offers a genuine, grounded, and enriching alternative. It's a place where education is personal, culture is alive, and every day brings a chance to learn something new, both in and out of the classroom.

About Bicol



The Bicol Region, officially designated as Region V of the Philippines, stands as a captivating destination where natural beauty, rich heritage, and the indomitable spirit of its people converge. Located in the southeastern part of Luzon, Bicol comprises six provinces: Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Sorsogon, Catanduanes, and Masbate. With Albay as the regional center, it is both a geographical and cultural gateway to the Pacific.

About Albay

Albay is a province located in the Bicol Region in the southeastern part of Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines. Known for its breathtaking natural landscapes, rich culture, and resilient people, Albay has long been recognized as one of the country's most distinct and picturesque provinces. Its capital, Legazpi City, serves as a regional hub for education, commerce, and tourism. The province's most iconic landmark is Mayon Volcano, world-renowned for its perfect cone shape. Standing majestically over the Albay landscape, Mayon is not only a tourist attraction but also a cultural symbol deeply embedded in the local folklore and identity.

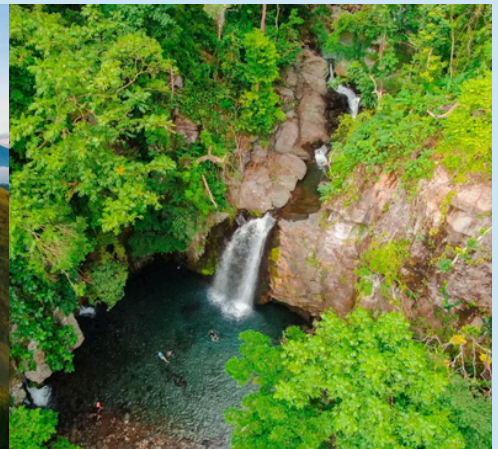


Historically, Albay has played a significant role in the colonial and revolutionary periods of the Philippines. Originally known as "Ibat," the province was renamed by the Spaniards after the word "Albaybay," meaning "by the bay." During the Spanish era, Albay was a center for Christianization and economic activity. Over time, it grew into a province known for its active participation in resistance movements, especially during the Philippine Revolution and the Japanese occupation in World War II. These historical experiences helped shape the character of its people, who are known for their bravery, hospitality, and strong sense of community.

About Albay



Albay's economy is diverse, with agriculture playing a central role. The province produces rice, coconut, abaca, and pili nuts, which are among its most well-known exports. In recent years, tourism has also become a major economic driver. Visitors flock to the province to witness the stunning beauty of Mayon Volcano, relax on the black sand beaches of Sto. Domingo and Tiwi, and explore ecotourism sites such as Cagsawa Ruins, Lignon Hill, and Vera Falls. Albay is also a gateway to nearby islands and natural wonders, making it an important stop in Southern Luzon's tourism circuit.



About Albay

Culturally, Albay is rich in tradition and heritage. The province is home to colorful festivals like the Magayon Festival, which celebrates local legends, arts, and the natural beauty of Mayon Volcano. Albayano cuisine is also worth noting, with dishes such as laing (taro leaves in coconut milk), pinangat, and bicol express highlighting the region's love for coconut milk and chili. Local arts, crafts, and religious traditions are kept alive through community events and the strong influence of the Catholic Church in daily life.



About Albay

CLIMATE AND WEATHER IN ALBAY

Albay experiences a tropical climate that is hot, humid, and rainy for most of the year. It only has two seasons:

Wet Season - June to December

Frequent rainfall, occasional typhoons, and strong winds.

Students should bring umbrellas, raincoats, waterproof shoes, and protect their electronics from moisture.

Dry Season - January to May

Generally sunny and hot, with peak temperatures in April and May.

It is recommended to wear light clothing, apply sun protection (such as hats and sunscreen), and stay hydrated.

Average daily temperatures range between 25°C and 32°C (77°F to 90°F). It can feel hotter due to high humidity, especially during the dry season.

Typhoons

Albay is part of the typhoon belt of the Philippines.

Typhoon season peaks between August and November.

Classes may be suspended, and students should stay updated with local advisories (PAGASA, LGU announcements).

Volcanic Weather Influence

Albay is home to Mayon Volcano, an active stratovolcano.

While Mayon occasionally emits ash or minor eruptions, authorities closely monitor its activity.

Students are advised to follow evacuation protocols if alerts are raised.

Tips for Students

- Always check daily forecasts from PAGASA or weather apps.
- Familiarize yourself with the local disaster preparedness protocols.
- Be cautious of landslides and flooding in mountainous or low-lying areas during heavy rains.
- Bicol University is located in a safe area, which is not usually affected by flooding or volcanic eruptions. The campus has disaster preparedness systems in place and maintains coordination with local authorities to ensure student safety.
- Despite the rain, Albay remains lush, vibrant, and scenic year-round—so bring a camera and enjoy responsibly!

About Albay

PUBLIC COMMUTE

Jeepney

The most common mode of transport the student will encounter is the jeepney. These colorful, long-bodied vehicles follow fixed routes and are a staple of Filipino commuting culture. Riding a jeepney costs around PhP10 to PhP20, depending on the distance. Each one has a route sign displayed on the windshield, but if the student is unsure, they should not hesitate to ask the driver or conductor politely if it will pass their destination. If a student is headed to Bicol University, they can simply mention "BU Main," "BU Daraga," or "BU College of Education," and most drivers will understand where student wants to go.



Tricycle

For shorter distances or areas not covered by jeepneys, tricycles are the go-to option. These are motorcycles fitted with sidecars and can be flagged down almost anywhere. Tricycle fares usually range from PhP15 to PhP30. The student can ride solo for convenience or share with others to save on fare. They're especially useful for reaching specific places like boarding houses, dormitories, or barangay roads that jeepneys don't cover.



About the Bicol University



The Bicol University, a state university in Region V, was created on June 21, 1969 through the passage of Republic Act 5521 but was institutionalized on September 22, 1970 by virtue of Resolution No. 1 of its Board of Regents. Section 2 of the aforementioned Act mandates that the following schools comprise the University: the Bicol Teacher's College (BTC) with its Laboratory School (BTCLS) at Daraga Albay, the Daraga East Central School also in the same municipality, the Albay High School in Legazpi City- all of which have become the College of Education with its Laboratory School; the Bicol Regional School of Arts and Trades (BRSAT) in Legazpi now the College of Engineering and the College of Industrial Technology; the Roxas Memorial Agricultural School (RMAS) at Guinobatan , Albay which now is the College of Agriculture; and the School of Fisheries at Tabaco Albay, now the College of Fisheries otherwise known as the " Bicol University Tabaco Campus". These academic institutions most of them founded for more than half a century formed the matrix of Bicol University.

About the Bicol University

Through the leadership of historian-lawyer Dr. Ricardo A. Arcilla, who, as Bicol University's first president, has been given charge over the institution for its decade of existence, the developmental path of BU was charted. Unity and harmony was considerably attained among the initial constituents within the units of the University. Policy making was systematized. To engender powerful forces of forward movement in education and research, Graduate Education was offered in June 1972 with its first batch of enrollees in the Master of Arts and Education Program. In the same year, the College of Arts and Sciences was established, followed by the College of Nursing in 1973.

The ensuing decade of university existence was marked by a period of linkages with several organizations and agencies, rapid growth, and new spectra of activity such as the Center of Cultural Studies, Computer Center, Audio-Visual production Center, including a number of community and extension projects. With Judge Aquilino B. Bonto running the cogwheels of the university, the decentralization of the administrative and financial management of the University was realized; thereby endowing the colleges with more autonomy.



About the Bicol University

It is to his merit that a Medium-term Development Plan of BU was plotted. In 1981, an externally funded program supported by the World Bank was organized – the Regional Institute of Fishery Technology in the College of Fisheries that aimed to give a strengthened Diploma in Fisheries Technology Program. This diploma program remained even after the World Bank's support ended on December 31, 1988.

The year 1987 was significant to the BU College of Agriculture (BUCA) for it was the time when the institution was chosen as one of the implementers of the Agricultural Training Institute of the Agricultural Technology Education Program by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Financed by an Asian Development Bank loan, BUCA served as a pilot provincial Technological Institute in Agriculture.

Five years later, two more achievements were put on line; the rise of the BU Institute of Communication and Cultural Studies (BUICCS) to give way to the Bachelor of Communication Arts curriculum, and the hosting of the Regional Science Teaching Center of the Department of Science and Technology in Region V (DOST). Owing to Dr. Patria G. Lorenzo, the third president who is a multi-awarded educator and leader, infrastructure development was carried out. However, cultural and value transformation was rendered of paramount importance.

The increasing number of enrollees and the changing demands of the times paved the way for the establishment of the BS Forestry Program in 1993; hence the College of Agriculture was renamed “College of Agriculture and Forestry.” Likewise, the College of Fisheries was restructured to be the BU Tabaco Campus. The following year, the Science Teaching Center hosted by BU was made a component unit of the University. Within a span of three years, the BU Gubat Campus was converted into a Bicol University Extension Program, similar to that of Camp Crame. In 1995, the Computer Science Institute was born in response to the extreme mobility of Communication and Information Technology.

About the Bicol University

Its founding went hand in hand with the renaming of the School of Arts and Trades as “College of Industrial Technology,” and the shaping of the Institute of Physical Education, Sports and Recreation to manage PE classes and Sports and Recreation programs of the University. All these would not have materialized if not for Dr. Lylia Corporal-Sena, the fourth University president who took that bold step to expand BU's academic, research and extension endeavors.

From 1999-2003, the decentralized administrative and fiscal system in the University was fortified. Remarkable leaps in the information and Technology programs were achieved, and the drawing of a Comprehensive Development Plan was done. Under the presidency of Dr. Emiliano A. Aberin, the University, likewise, integrated the School of Philippine Craftsmen in Polangui, Albay. The unit is known at present as the BU Polangui Campus.

Bicol University continues to forge viable ways to be in the forefront of service to the region and the nation. Under the first two-year stewardship of Dr. Susana C. Cabredo, the sixth president of the University, the blueprint of the Comprehensive Development (ComDev) Plan had finally taken shape. It had paved the way for the restructuring of the University's academic courses that gave birth to at least four new colleges: the College of Arts and Letters (CAL), the College of Science (CS), College of Business, Economics and Management (CBEM), and the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (CSSP). Dr. Cabredo had also issued administrative issuances aimed at achieving the very essence of the ComDev Plan, which included the deployment of personnel and faculty members, clustering of administrative and academic workforce, and designating officials to new posts.

The establishment of a medical school in Bicol University was part of the University's Comprehensive Development Plan 2004-13. Support for this undertaking was made through the Regional Development Council in its 2009 and 2012 resolutions, and some political leaders. On July 27, 2010, the Academic Council of BU approved the curriculum of the Doctor of Medicine Program crafted by an ad-hoc team composed of the Vice Presidents and BU-College of Nursing faculty who did benchmarking of some medical schools in the country.

About the Bicol University

On September 3, 2012, the BU Board of Regents approved the proposal to open the College of Medicine. A week later, a three-person team of the CHED's Technical Panel for Health Professional Education and the Professional Regulation Commission visited BU and recommended that the medical school heed the worldwide call for transformative education to develop five-star physicians.

In June 2014, 62 students were admitted to the pioneer batch of the College of Medicine. As of the school year 2018-2019, there have been 320 students from first year to fifth year.

In 2015, Dr. Arnulfo M. Mascariñas succeeded Dr. Fay Patria M. Lauraya as the 8th President of Bicol University. His development plans were geared towards his vision of transforming BU into a "world-class" university. In March 4, 2019, he was confirmed for his second term as SUC President IV of Bicol University. (Bicol University Student Handbook, 2019)

In 2023, Dr. Baby Boy Benjamin D. Nebres III was elected as 9th Bicol University President. His vision is to make the university a university for humanity characterized by productive scholarship, transformative leadership, collaborative service and distinctive character for sustainable societies.

Visa and Special Study Permit

Application of Special Study Permit

- Prior to travel to the Philippines, student should apply for a Philippine Visitor's Visa in their home country. This is valid for 59 days.
- On top of the valid tourist visa students shall also apply for Special Study Permit from the Bureau of Immigration.
- On the first week of the student's arrival at Bicol University, the International Relations Office will assist the student in the application of Special Study Permit. (subject to change without prior notice)
- Departure from the Philippines should be at least 3 days before the Philippine Visitor's Visa expires.

Sample Timeline:

- 10 January 2026– Arrival in the Philippines
- 12 January 2026– Enrollment as Exchange Student
- 13 January 2026– Application of Special Study Permit
- 12 January 2026 to 27 February 2026 – Study Period (48 days)
- Departure from the Philippines should at least be 3 days before 10 March 2026.

Accomodation

Personal Health and Safety

IN CASE OF ILLNESS

When a student falls ill while studying in Albay, especially at Bicol University, knowing what steps to take can provide reassurance and support. Health issues, whether minor or serious, are part of life—and it's important for students to know that they are not alone.

If a student begins to experience symptoms such as fever, cough, stomach pain, or general fatigue, it is best to inform a responsible contact person immediately. This could be a dormitory adviser, classmate, faculty member, or a representative from the International Relations Office (IRO). In a tropical environment like Albay, certain symptoms should be taken seriously, as conditions like dehydration, heat exhaustion, or even dengue fever are possible.

Bicol University maintains a University Infirmary, where students can receive initial medical care. The infirmary offers basic health services including consultations, first aid, and health assessments. If the illness requires more advanced care, the university staff can assist with referrals to nearby hospitals.

In Legazpi City, there are several accessible and reliable hospitals, such as:

- Bicol Regional Hospital and Medical Center (BRHMC) – a government-run hospital with complete medical facilities.
- Tanchuling Hospital – a private institution that offers outpatient, inpatient, and emergency care.
- Estevez Memorial Hospital – a centrally located private hospital also trusted by locals and students.

Students needing hospital care should bring their student ID and are advised to coordinate immediately with the IRO or College of Medicine staff, who can help coordinate hospital visits and provide necessary documentation or assistance.

To avoid illness, students are encouraged to drink clean water, maintain a healthy diet, and get adequate rest. During stressful periods like exams or the rainy season, self-care becomes even more important. For mental health and emotional well-being, Bicol University offers free and confidential counseling services, which students can access upon request.

Program Outline

First-Day Orientation & Student Mentor Program

Upon their arrival at Bicol University, students will participate in an orientation program on their first day to help them familiarize themselves with the campus, academic expectations, and local culture.

Additionally, each student will be assigned a student mentor who will provide guidance and support throughout their stay.



The poster features a central orange triangle with the text "Hello BU!" in a blue script font, followed by "FIRST-DAY ORIENTATION PROGRAM" in bold blue capital letters, and "for International Exchange Students" in a smaller blue font. At the top right are three logos: a colorful circular logo, a stylized "BU" logo, and the Bicol University seal. A vertical timeline on the right side lists the program's activities, each marked with a black dot. On the left side, additional details are provided for several activities. In the bottom left corner, there is an illustration of a blue graduation cap with an orange flame rising from it.

Activities:

- Welcome Greetings
- Getting to Know You!
(Students will introduce themselves individually)
- Meet your BU Student Buddy
- Courtesy Visit with the University President
- Campus Tour
- Closing and Reminders

Additional Details:

- Introduction to Bicol University**
- Academic Life in BU**
- Let's Chat!**
(Quick informal dialogue among international exchange students, student buddies and IRO staff.)
- Courtesy Visit with the Dean**

FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)