

Tourist (Visitor) Visas

Should you apply for one for your girlfriend/fiancée from Philippines?

Every week I get emails which start from one of a few scenarios:

1. I want to apply for a tourist visa for my girlfriend to come to Australia and visit me and my family. I want to see if she likes it here first.

or

2. We applied for a tourist visa for my girlfriend to come to Australia, and they refused it. I was hoping she could come and visit so I can see if she likes it here before we go any further

or

3. We applied for several tourist visas, and each one was refused.....

This is normal, unfortunately. Visitor visas are for the purposes of tourism, or visiting family and/or friends....full stop! They are not for any other purpose. Yet they're seen as being the simple-and-cheap visa to apply for, therefore they're often the first thing people go for.

Not an unreasonable or silly thought! **Most** countries have a very easy visa process. Many don't require visas at all. Go to the Philippines, and you get an automatic 21-day visa by simply showing your passport. Want a longer one? Simply apply for it and you get it.

And if you were applying to come to Australia from a wealthy and stable first-world nation, it's a bit of a formality too. Same conditions apply, ie. no working, studying or overstaying. But if you come from Japan or UK, they assume you'll probably want to go back home after your trip.

However, the Philippines (like many other poor countries) is the source of a large number of overstayers, or potential overstayers. If you earn P3,000 per month (currently AUD\$78) per month working as a housemaid (or maybe P10,000 as a company accountant, AUD\$263 per month!), then Australia is fairly appealing. Earning 8 to 10 times what an accountant earns working as a cleaner or labourer in Australia becomes fairly appealing! Hungry families provide strong motivation!

So it's into this reality that your girlfriend's application goes, and the Case Officers have to try to work out if she intends having that holiday, or skipping out on you and ending up working as a cleaner in Blacktown with a former school-mate who gave her the idea! Therefore they will look at whether she has a strong reasons to return to the Philippines after tasting the good life in Australia.....and if those reasons appear to override reasons to overstay in Australia.

What this means is that unless your girlfriend is the holder of a great job (and I mean **really** great), owns substantial property, a stable business or other assets, then her chances of success are fairly weak.

And before you get offended that they would think this about your girlfriend, or about you and your potential gullibility, remember that they don't know you from a bar of soap! You're just another application form on their desk.....one of many thousands which they have to make decisions on. And the more overstayers from the Philippines, the more it reflects on them and their efficiency at weeding-out fraudsters. So when in doubt, they will refuse! Whether you write an impassioned letter offering to pay all her expenses, or whether you're a fine and upstanding citizen or not....this won't

help. If she wants to run away and disappear, your letter won't stop this happening. And don't even **think** about padding out her bank account with \$5,000 "show money", because they'll see right through this. Empty bank accounts (or non-existent ones) that suddenly fill-up overnight....it's all a bit obvious!

By now you've probably worked out that this Jeff Harvie bloke is a bit blunt and direct? Well, no apologies for this. It's driven by a standard of honesty that is part of the *Code of Conduct* for Registered Migration Agents in Australia which all agents **should** abide by. Some agents will be more "morally-flexible" than others. We don't flex at all. We would rather you took your money elsewhere than to take on applications that we know will fail. And visa application refusals stay in the records and can be referred-to later when more permanent visa applications are made!

So, why this tourist visa in the first place?

If you haven't been to the Philippines, you may not know how tough life is there for the average person. We live here ourselves, but we do **not** live and struggle like your average battler.

If you **have** been to the Philippines, please stop and reflect on what you've already seen. Life is **tough**. Comforts are few. It's often crowded, smelly, and many things simply don't work.

Life in Australia is a breeze!

And you probably will have noticed there's a remarkable quality to Filipino people. Real character. Real substance! Those with so little, they seem to manage a generosity of spirit that you have to search long and hard for in Australia. Those with so little, they seem to be extremely happy and grateful for whatever they have. The smiles come easily and the hearts are open.

And when a Filipina gives her heart to a man truly, she gives it for life....for better for worse. For richer for poorer. In sickness and in health, 'til death us do part! If she loves you, she will follow you to the ends of the earth. She would live with you in a shack in the bush, and would make a wonderful home out of it for you. *But don't you dare try to plonk a good woman in a shack in the bush, or we won't deal with you!* I'm sure you get the idea, though? You **really** don't need to find out if she will be happy in your nice and comfy suburban home. If she's the right woman, it's **you** she loves!

In short? Getting her to check out your surrounds and your home is really the least of your concerns.

What do we suggest?

If you haven't met her yet, then you **have** to meet her! If you plan on marrying her or bringing her to Australia as your fiancée, then you have to meet....full stop. The cliché of the mail-order-bride that you ordered from the catalogue, it's not only rather insulting, it's also in defiance of the Migration Law. You **must** have personally met.

So given that it's (a) very difficult, and (b) fairly unnecessary for her to come to Australia? We suggest that you get the next available flight for the Philippines. Go and meet her and stay with her. If you can stay with her family, then this is even better. You'll get to know her better if you get to know her in her element, and Filipinas and their families go together. If you understand her family, and if her family are close to you, then your relationship will be better.

Bring your commonsense with you. And bring your sense of humour! It's a lovely place, but there's a complete lack of western logic and orderliness.

Spend as much time as you can spare. See her family and where she comes from. Go and see the cities and the sites. There are many beautiful places to see and experience. Go where the ordinary people go as well as where the tourists go. You're there to meet and get to know a special lady, so make this your priority. Try to learn a little of the language. Eat the local food. Get to know the family.

And leave the tourist guidebooks behind. This is **her** country. She knows how it works. And she will do everything she can to keep you safe, healthy and comfortable. Don't assume you know better.

And keep lots of records of your travel. Photos, receipts, boarding passes, etc etc. And keep records of your communication history. Don't delete your emails!

If you want to take things further?

If you and she decide you want to make the big commitment? Then contact us and we'll go over all your options with you.

And don't ask us to organise a visitor visa with you, unless you still think she has a good chance??