

**MFS REPORT****Name****Year and term for exchange**

Erik Readwin

Year 3, period 4

**Country for the project**

The Philippines

**Degree programme**

Energy &amp; Environment

## MFS project about soil contamination in the Philippines

### Before departure

I applied for MFS since I heard from older students in my program that it is a fantastic opportunity to go travelling and gives you valuable real life experiences of working with engineering in the field. We chose the Philippines because we heard it is a very beautiful country and the available project there was interesting to both me and my thesis partner. Before the trip we had to do a lot of planning such as flight tickets, accommodation, visa application, signing documents between the partner universities back and forth etc. We also needed several vaccines for local diseases.

### Upon arrival

We arrived two weeks before our project begun because there was an Easter holiday so we went to a different province for a short vacation. It was very beautiful and fun! After that the project begun. We had an official welcoming at the university as well as many meetings to plan the field study. After a couple of weeks we were ready to conduct work in the laboratory and do analysis related to the project. After that, what was left was to write code to analyse the results with statistical analysis as well as connecting it to the broader context. After that, we did a short trip with our research team to an island related to the project and interviewed locals etc.

### Financials

The Philippines is much cheaper than in Sweden. However, accommodation was surprisingly expensive still. In order to have a good study environment, having a good apartment was crucial. That was however, quite expensive. We were able to save money by living cheaply while actually studying since there isn't much more you need than a stable Wi-Fi connection. We saved money for when there were opportunities to travel instead.

### Accommodation

We found accommodations through Agoda. We were offered assistance but the suggested accommodations were a bit too expensive for us and also didn't suit our needs. The housing conditions were okay. Not the biggest space and sometimes the Wi-Fi would be bad. However, the ac would always work and water was accessible. Sometimes we had a kitchen as well but it was very limited. We would save money by buying local food and the supermarket and cooking it at home.

### Project

The project was aimed to find a correlation between soil colour and metal concentrations across 180 soil samples from an island province that experienced a mining disaster in the 1990s. We analysed 180 samples that had already been collected from the island and compiled the data in a code that we wrote which applied Pearson correlation to find if there was any significant correlation between the two factors. The evidence shows that a correlation exists in some cases. Further studies may look into this further to use this correlation to easily detect soils of high risk within the island province.

## **Country**

The Philippines and Sweden have many cultural differences. The first thing we noticed is how friendly Philipinos are. They are often very accommodating and may hold your shoulder and such. This is also very common between friends. The sense of hierarchy is much more prominent and saturated throughout the culture which is very unlike from Sweden. In the Philippines, a boss, elder, or even guest at a restaurant is treated with the utmost respect. Sometimes it even felt like people thought we were strange when we helped collecting the plates from the table in the restaurant as opposed to letting the waiter/waitress do it for us. The Philippines also have a lot of meat in their food which was difficult for me and my thesis partner being vegetarian/vegan. The Philippines also have a lot of influences from other countries due to colonialism from the Spanish and long ties with the United States. Therefore, even the local language is highly influenced by Spanish and English. Philipinos were also not shy to show interest in me and my thesis partner. We were always looked at and people would sometimes ask for selfies (or not even ask). Sometimes we would even sense people would be romantically or sexually interested which was uncomfortable at times. This is likely to do with us being non-asian and often assumed to be very wealthy.

## **Leisure and social activities**

Before the project begun we spent ten days in Palawan, a common destination for backpackers in southeast asia. It was great fun and beautiful with pristine beaches, mountain islands and night life. Unfortunately we got a serious food poisoning which led to a fever and diarrhoea. We were kind of expecting something like that at some point however. At the end of the project, we went to the island province that was connected to the study.

There was a lot of leisure activities there as well. We travelled around the whole island in a day and got to take beautiful pictures and experience local culture.

After that, we flew to Bali, Indonesia for two weeks and were able to avoid high visa fees in the Philippines. Bali was pretty much amazing. Despite being very touristy, it was very cheap, slightly cooler wheather than in the Philippines, the food was honestly better and more vegan friendly. We stayed at hostels in different areas of the island and got to go surfing, clubbing, watching local dance shows, seeing sunsets on the beach, beautiful temples, meet new friends on day trips and at the hostels, diving, snorkelling etc.

After Bali we spent a few days in the Philippine capital Manila again and waited for our partners to come and go on yet another vacation. Those few days we spent some time with the international students from the university and went out eating and clubbing with them. When our partners arrived, me and my thesis partner went our separate ways for a couple of weeks to meet up at the end of the trip. My girlfriend and travelled to Siargao in the east of the Philippines. Siargao is known for great food, stunning views, rivers and lagoons and especially surfing. We got to do it all and travelled around the island on a moped. My thesis partner and her boyfriend had been to a couple of other islands for diving and snorkelling. They came to Siargao at the end and we had one night together before going back home to Sweden.

## **Sustainability**

It was very difficult to travel sustainably. Any time we wanted to go somewhere far it required a flight. If it was to a nearby provinces it usually meant travelling by car (not electric) and sometimes ferry. Due to this and also the fact that animal products in food were almost impossible to avoid, we cannot really claim that we lived sustainably.

## **Other recommendations and observations**

Try to be aware of your needs before selecting the country and project that is most suitable for you. For example, if we knew it would be difficult to find vegan food, we might have chosen to go to e.g. Thailand instead. There are of course many other things we are happy with, such as the proximity to other destination for short holidays like Palawan, Siargao and even places in other countries like Bali.