

Paseo de Coro

The Philippines as a retirement haven

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Cebu Daily News First Posted 07:09:00 05/04/2011

Filed Under: [Government offices & agencies](#), [Retirement](#)

We promote tourism to create more jobs and provide income to our people but tourists stay for few days only in the country. Not so with the foreign [retirees](#) who come to the Philippines to live for the rest of their lives to take advantage of our low cost of living, benign climate and the good nature of our people.

How much does a foreigner need to live and [retire](#) in the Philippines? A thousand dollars a month will do but many of them easily spend up to two thousand dollars or more a month from their [pensions](#) or past savings. Comfortably, I should say, especially if they choose to stay in the province away from the city and happily with a new family as many of them often do. Indeed, foreign retirees contribute a lot to the economy with their money spent here.

But there is a problem. Some of the foreigners who come to the Philippines to retire and avail of the incentives from the government through the Philippine Retirement Authority think the incentives are not encouraging enough. It could be true if we look around and see that some of our neighbors in Asia are attracting more foreign retirees than we do.

Anyway, my piece last week, "Hello, PRA," caught the eyes of the Philippine Retirement Authority general manager Veredigno P. Atienza himself and e-mailed to me his response. I thought that the general manager also has a point and so allow me to place here what he wrote.

"We thank you for giving this present leadership the opportunity to be heard.

"It's true that the interest rate on retiree's deposit is relatively low. Nevertheless, we wish to clarify that granting of the same rate is dictated by market forces. Neither the Philippine government nor the B.S.P. could intervene on behalf of the retirees.

"On the issue of investment, we would like to emphasize that our policy is not to restrict retirees on their choice of investment areas but to afford them protection being one of our contractual obligations.

"The policy requiring the presentation of T-C-T as a condition precedent before a retiree is permitted to lease a parcel of land is valid. Basic is the rule that every lease of real estate should be recorded in the Register of Deeds for the instrument to be valid and binding. Entering into a lease agreement on a property without the TCT exposes the retiree to future loss.

"We would like to reassure our retirees and applicants that with the introduction of the new "product mix,"—i.e., Smile, Human Touch, etc. PRA is not departing from its old scheme now labeled as "Classics." We shall continue to implement the existing SRRV program with certain

modifications.

“Lastly, rest assured there is no malice in our requirements. The visa deposit of USD10,000-USD50,000 is for the retiree’s end-of-term obligations (hospitalization, cremation, burial, repatriation and the like), so that neither the Philippine government nor his home country embassy will be financially burdened. In case, he wants to test if his visa deposit is intact—e.g., thru withdrawal, hopefully not demise—we will return his visa deposit. As for the so-called USD500 fee per annum in case he withdraws, there is no legal and intelligent basis why PRA would want to do this.

“It is hoped that this clarifies the issues you raised for the information of the reading public. Thank you for your time.”

So there you are. Thank you, General Manager Atienza.

Speaking of foreign retirees in the country, do you know that many of them have skills that when utilized could also help our people and the country a lot? There was one I befriended in the far south of Cebu who said that if given the chance he would like to help teach our young people geography. He told me that it is one of the most important subject taught in his country to their young people.

Do you know what “geography” is? How important is it as a branch of study? Here is what I find from Wikipedia about it.

“Geography (from Greek *geographia*, lit. “earth describe-write”) is the science that deals with the study of the Earth and its lands, features, inhabitants, and phenomena. A literal translation would be ‘to describe or write about the Earth.’ The first person to use the word ‘geography’ was Eratosthenes (276-194 BC). Four historical traditions in geographical research are the [spatial analysis](#) of natural and human phenomena (geography as a study of distribution), area studies (places and regions), study of man-land relationship, and research in earth sciences. Nonetheless, modern geography is an all-encompassing discipline that foremost seeks to understand the Earth and all of its human and natural complexities—not merely where objects are, but how they have changed and come to be. Geography has been called ‘the world discipline’. As ‘the bridge between the human and physical sciences,’ geography is divided into two main branches—[human geography](#) and physical geography.”

What is human geography and physical geography? That is a nice question. To answer this, however, already requires a [teacher](#) that my foreign retiree-friend would have been very happy to do. I met him in the mid 1990s. I do not know if he is still here or alive but this I know: Many of the foreign retirees here are skilled or knowledgeable in some field or another. More experienced too. What are we doing with this new valuable resource given to us? Don’t we need them? We need them but perhaps we just don’t know how to use them like what we do with the peace corps from the United States.

Ah, the peace corps but that is another story.