



Guest Correspondent Tom W., Boston MA: Manila is the beautiful capital city of the Philippines, with historic architecture, parks, restaurants, friendly people and many other attractions. However, while tourism is flourishing in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore, Manila is still virtually ignored by American and other world travelers.

During my Navy career, I spent considerable time in Manila, beginning back in World War II. It was brutally damaged by retreating Japanese troops, but in the decades since, has rebuilt and returned to its former glory. I visited Manila several years ago, and some personal observations about the city may help other senior travelers who may consider visiting Manila. Philippine Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines offer direct flights to Manila's Ninoy Aquino Airport from various U.S. airports. Other airlines servicing Manila include Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, Delta, Air China, Qantas JAL and KLM.

University of Santo Tomas and Intramuros: Because my long-ago Navy base was next to the walled city called Intramuros, I often visit the historic area when in Manila. Santo Tomas was built by the Spanish in 1611. Its classic buildings and tree-lined lawns and walkways are quiet reminders of the past.

Manila Bay: This now peaceful oceanfront has been part of Philippine history since the Spanish landed in 1646. In 1898, U.S. Admiral Dewey defeated the Spanish fleet and claimed the islands for the U.S. In 1942, the island of Corregidor became famous as the last holdout of American forces before Japanese occupation.

In 1945, as World War II was ending, I was part of an underwater demolition team that brought up gold bullion stored there to prevent the Japanese from taking it. On several visits since, I've enjoyed riding along Dewey Boulevard's picturesque shoreline and watching the spectacular sunsets over the Pacific Ocean.

Hyatt Hotel and Casino: My first accommodations in Manila were during WWII in tents at the

USN Fleet Landing by the Pasig River. My current favorite is the five-star Hyatt, one the city's most luxurious hotels, close to the downtown business district, restaurants and cultural centers.

The hotel's casino, the largest in the Philippines, offers attractive diversions for travelers who enjoy gambling. Hyatt Hotel and Casino, 1588 Pedro Gil, Manila, PI, manila.casino.hyatt.com

Cafe Ilang Ilang, The Manila Hotel: The classic hotel still charms visitors today after 110 years. The posh restaurant means flower of flowers in the local Tagalog language. It offers six fresh-cooked buffet stations with Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Italian and Spanish food. Cafe Ilang Ilang, Manila Hotel, One Rizal Park, 0913, Manila, PI, chyngreyes.com