

These are some e-mail excerpts between my self and co-workers, during the preparations for coming here. I've edited to keep some stuff private, hopefully they won't mind what I let out. The comments in blue tend to come **after** my comments in black.

Hi Mark,

I'm glad to hear you arrived safely. It appears I'm following your schedule. I've done absolutely no packing, have a million small errands to run, and am starting to get overwrought at the thought of leaving my dog for 3 months (don't you DARE make fun of that last comment). Other comments inline...

At 06:24 PM 8/29/2003 -0400, you wrote:

Liz,

Got here late last night. Went for a walk this morning, here's a list so far:

Did you feel safe walking by yourself?

- Bring a bottle or two of water with you. For brushing your teeth and drinking until you get money converted, buy some and/or get your water purifier set up. Pam cautions against getting the tap water even in your eyes or mouth during showers, at least for the first couple weeks. She says every one coming here, including herself, has suffered some bout of diarrhea sometime during their first three weeks, either from food or water. The food cause will probably be unavoidable, since at some point you'll eat native food, unless you stay at McDs, Starbucks, Shakey's Pizza, etc. Incidentally, those three are within 1-2 blocks of here.

Love how the worst aspects of American culture have infiltrated every pore of other societies. In that same breath, I will probably crave a Starbucks Latter shortly upon arrival.

- Bring phone cards from there, that you can use to call from here to there. At least until the phones get set up, which may take some days. I can only make local calls from this apartment right now, I couldn't even call Martel to say I got here okay. Stuck with e-mail for now.

Was your apartment all arranged and were you able to stay there the night you arrived?

- VERY SWEATY. Get ready for it. Bring something to wipe you face when outside.

- If you get an ATM, it should be CIRRUS or MasterCard networks. I broke down and got one. It's a STAR or PLUS network. I went to 4 ATMS this morning, none of them accept it, all of them accepted

CIRRUS, MasterCard, or American Express. There's an AMEX Bank a couple blocks away, I'm going to see if I can use my AMEX card as an ATM while I'm here. Hopefully so, that would solve lots of problems.

I have a MasterCard ATM which is from my spare money local checking account so that works out well for me.

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[Responses inline...](#)

At 01:52 PM 8/31/2003 -0400, you wrote:

Liz,

You may want to bring a small travel iron or steamer. I have a steamer, no iron. John bought one here. Getting your laundry done is the norm, John says his runs about 15 USD each week. That's wash and iron, for whatever. Your performance may vary, example is with a professional driver on a closed course.

He also says his electricity runs about 100 a month.

The laundry we can't expense, but the electricity we can, Along with all the other utilities (phone, gas, water, yes we pay our own water, TV cable bill). The per diem was only for food and any stuff we normally would not expense if on a trip in the states. This is the understanding that John had with Terry when we came over. I'm not sure what Pamela is working from.

So what does ITI pay for? Rent, electric, phone, gas, water, and cable TV. Is that correct? But I do have to pay for my own laundry? In our Employee Handbook, it says "Laundry/dry cleaning costs are reimbursed only if the trip exceeds 5 days, or you are taking back-to-back trips without time in between for dry cleaning." Why does it not apply here? I think ITI should pay for everything while I am there. That is how most companies operate. Anyway, I was just thinking of a small iron today when I was reviewing my list of things to get. I am glad you mentioned it. Do you have cable TV? How much is it?

My apartment is going to cost 25000 pesos each month, with an additional month for deposit. You get that back after you're back in the states, and they've deducted the last month's utilities, and paid for the TV you threw out the window. And that's due pretty much right away. I'm paying mine today, since I got here late Friday night I got a reprieve until the next working day. My apartment owner is taking US cash, so at least I don't have to convert it into 100,000 pesos, I'd need a bank bag to carry it. At the current exchange rate it comes to about 1820 dollars or so.

The airport seemed safe enough, and Fred (Pam's driver) will pick you up right outside. I would try to come with 2000 USD cash, the rest travelers checks if you want. There are ATM machines everywhere, many with armed guards on duty. But there's armed guards on duty everywhere anyway, especially after the little "Coup-De-Jour" recently. Most major stores have people searching your

purse, bags, etc whenever you enter, and for guys they feel the small of your back for hidden weapons.

Or maybe that's just a Black thang...

Anyway, it's hot, bring all your light stuff. And you will definitely stand out. I've seen only three African faces since I've been here, and one was a cartoon on a TV commercial. But I'm more a curiosity than an obvious American target. I've seen a few dozen expat types, all European (German, British, straight Cauc, Italian, etc), but only two other live Blacks, perhaps Carib or African.

When do we get to meet the Australian and New Zealander consultants? Pamela told me I would be working with them as well as Nepalese and Philippino consultants. Of course, the mention of that made my ears perk up. Mmmmm....Australians (preferably male, preferably single, and preferably heterosexual).

And all of this is based on just my being in the 4 block area surrounding the apartment. Lot's of stores, malls, money, flash, designer clothes, literally restaurants everywhere (at least 40 within 2-3 blocks, all types of food). But this is supposed to be unique to this Makati area of Manila, and John assures me that later this morning when we head to work, the scene will quickly change to something more representative of how the other 95% live in Manila. "Sketchy" areas as you call them.

We'll have to explore!

More news at 11...

Mark