

The Philippine ePassport

The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs began the issuance of the Philippine ePassport (electronic passport) on 11 Aug 2009.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is an electronic Passport?

A: An Electronic Passport or ePassport is a passport with an added integrated circuit or chip embedded in one of the passport pages. Such chip contains the data essential in verifying the identity of the passport which include the personal data found on the data page of the passport, the biometrics of the passport holder, the unique chip identification number, and a digital signature to verify the authenticity of the data stored on the chip. This chip is highly interoperable; meaning, it can be read by any standard border control machine worldwide. It is integrated with high security mechanisms in order to prevent any forceful scheming of data it contains, any cloning, and any remote reading.

Q: What is a Biometric?

A: A biometric is a unique and measurable physical characteristic of an individual that includes face recognition, fingerprints, and iris scan.

The Philippine ePassport utilizes the digital image of the passport photograph that can be used with face recognition technology to verify the identity of the passport holder. It also makes use of the fingerprints of the passport holder for identification using the Automated Fingerprint Verification System (AFIS).

Q: What are the special features of the Philippine ePassport?

A: The Philippine ePassport allows information stored on the chip to be verified with the information visually displayed on the passport. It also uses contactless microchip technology.

The Philippine ePassport also contains an integrated photograph of the holder, a digitized secondary photo, and an electronic print of the holder's signature. It also features overt and hidden security features such as Invisible Personal Information (IPI), letterscreen, microprinting, and UV reactive ink, among others.

Q: What is the difference between the existing maroon machine readable passport (MRP) and the ePassport?

An MRP is a passport which has a machine readable zone (MRZ) printed in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. It can be read manually and with the use of a machine. An ePassport, on the other

hand, has an embedded Integrated Circuit (IC) chip where the photograph and personal information of the bearer are stored in accordance with ICAO specifications. These information can be read by chip readers at a close distance. The ePassport also has an MRZ.

Q: What are the advantages of having Electronic Passport

A: The e-passport is highly secure, hence avoids passport reproduction and tampering. The ePassport database is enhanced with Automated Fingerprint Verification System (AFIS) that guards against multiple passport issuances to the same person and enhances imposter detection. It facilitates fast clearance of travellers at immigration checks. ePassports provide travelers benefits such as use of automated border clearance or "e-gates," automated issuance of boarding passes, and faster travel arrangement with airlines. For countries, the use of electronic passport also provides better border protection and security.

Q: Why do we have to use ePassports now?

A: The MRP is only the minimum ICAO standard in travel documents. The ePassport is the world standard in travel documents. As member of ICAO, the Philippines has an international obligation to enhance the security of its travel documents. The issuance of ePassports will allow the Philippines to offer world-class consular services to its nationals. Countries have greater confidence and acceptance of the ePassport since it is enhanced with biometric technology.

Q: How much does an ePassport cost?

A: The ePassport is available for \$60.00. The ePassport is relatively more expensive than MRPs because of the added security features. Comparative prices of ePassports from different countries, however, show that the cost of the Philippine passport is among the lowest in the world.

Q: Who can avail of the Philippine ePassport?

The ePassport is issued to Filipino citizens, by birth or naturalization, who can comply with the documentary requirements for application.

Q: Can an existing holder of the maroon MRP simply surrender their passport and have them converted to an ePassport?

As soon as the production of the ePassport comes into full swing, holders of MRPs can have their passport canceled and apply for an ePassport if they so wish.

Q: Where can I apply for an ePassport?

A: The Department of Foreign Affairs follows an appointment system for the ePassport. To secure an appointment online, simply log on to www.epassport.com.ph or www.passport.com.ph. This service is free of charge. The DFA advises public to file their passport applications at least 12 weeks before their intended date of travel. Filipino citizens can also apply for passports in the nearest Regional Consular Offices. There are also mobile passport services scheduled by the DFA-OCA with local government units.

Q: What other countries use ePassports?

A: ePassports are already being used in more than 60 countries worldwide. In ASEAN, five countries have already issued ePassports (Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia). In the future, all countries are seen to switch to the ePassport due to the increasing need for efficient and better border security.

Q: What is the ePassport logo and what does it mean?

A: The ePassport logo which appears on the cover of the ePassport is the international symbol for the electronic passport. This means that the passport has an integrated circuit or chip on which data on passport and passport holder is stored. The logo will alert border inspection lanes at all airports and transit ports with special data readers for ePassports that the passport is an ePassport.

Q: I have a previously issued passport. Can I use it for travel as long as it is still valid?

A: Yes. Previously issued passports (MRP and non-MRP) are valid until their expiry. We advise clients though to check their passports are still valid at least six months before intended date of travel to avoid any inconvenience.

Q: Will there be additional requirements needed for the processing of ePassports?

A: None. Essentially, the requirements for ePassport processing will remain the same as that for the MRP, although personal appearance is required for the taking of the biometrics (i.e., fingerprints, photo, and signature).