A traveler to the Philippines knows the drill too well. You check into a hotel that advertises Wi-Fi. Turns out it’s only available in the lobby, and only in the daytime. Then you learn of a freak service outage in the lobby. When you do eventually connect, no websites come up. On better days, each website takes a minute or two to load. Yes, come to think of it, any kind of device.

The Philippines is Asia’s outlier for Internet sloth, but why?

Occasionally the answer is local. Your host might be afraid of keeping the router going :}
guestrooms. But more common explanation in the Southeast Asian country popular with foreign tourists are linked to economic development pains and awkward relations among providers. Obviously the issue isn’t limited to tourists. Gum in the Internet slow business for the nation of 102 million people. Oh, and apparently help is not on the way.

Here’s a schematic of how things don’t work

The Philippines is made up of about 7,100 islands, making fixed networks particularly hard to build. Permits may be issued only at the smallest level of local government, and one by one. The government also charges “high fees,” a deterrent to any start-ups or foreign investors in broadband, said Fiona Vanier, senior media analyst with market research firm IHS Technology. Dominant broadband provider Philippine Long Distan Telephone Co. controls much of the infrastructure, allowing it to charge fees higher than elsewhere in Asia despite a relatively poor population. The phone company goes on to charge other providers.
Most fixed-line Internet users still use old systems such as xDSL rather than newer fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) technology, reducing speeds, says market research firm IDC’s Southeast Asia senior telecom research manager Alfie Amir. Last year, IDC says, just 2% of fixed Internet connections in the Philippines were FTTH, compared to 33% across Asia excluding Japan.

High-speed service costs about $57 per month, more than in the United States, estimates Manila-based software technology entrepreneur Valenice Balace. After food, rent and education, that Internet bill “seems like a luxury,” she says. “Clearly, price would be the number one barrier for availing good internet speeds in the Philippines, since more people can’t afford it.”
Slow. Most subscribers stick to 2G and 3G networks, Amir said, with just 1% on LTE networks despite the Asia average of 12%. Again there are big guys on the block. Philippine conglomerate San Miguel Corp. wants to enter the market and was assigned 90% of an "attractive," available 700 megahertz spectrum, IHS senior research analyst Seth Wallis-Jones says. But the country's two current wireless providers, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Globe Telecom, oppose that allocation. They are vying for a share of that spectrum "through the courts and by lobbying the president, which is adding some uncertainty and delay," he says.

Finally come the flukes and scams. Pockets of the capital Manila cannot get Internet speed upgrades because providers for their addresses simply don't offer it, Balace says. Villages that comprise the Puerto Galera coastal tourist area, the installer of landlines "actually put in wireless connections to routers on the landline on the nearest main road," one frustrated off-the-road resort operator says. “Within a very few years they took these ‘landlines’ away anyway and so there are virtually no landlines in Puerto Galera,” the operator says.
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