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## What the Chicken Should Know About Crossing the Road in Manila by [Roger Starkey](#)

Honking, tire screeching, pedestrians dodging cars as they attempt to navigate non-existent crosswalks and cars, jeepneys, buses, tricycles, motorcycles and motor scooters ignoring all existing traffic laws. The only thing absent from Manila traffic is order. Getting around Manila is often an overwhelming proposition for the city's residents and can be downright unfair to its guests. Surprising to many first time visitors is that, for all the chaos one encounters getting around Manila, perhaps the most difficult thing to accomplish is crossing the street.

Bipedal transportation, in general, is anything but simple in the capital city of the Philippines. A person must learn when to walk on a sidewalk, if one exists, and when to yield the right-of-way on that sidewalk to a car. Another invaluable skill is being able to amble comfortably alongside the roads, mere inches from cars, rather than on sidewalks. These skills are obtained with surprising ease for most. What is not easily procured is a talent for street crossing.

Moving from one side of a street to another, in the Makati section of Manila, is facilitated, and therefore made boring, by the presence of subterranean or overhead pedestrian walkways near many of the busier intersections. Apart from these rare instances of pedestrian awareness, the remainder of the city is, at most times, a pedestrian free-for-all. The game of frogger was, no doubt, modeled after the inventor's own attempts to traverse the streets of Manila. Following are a few tips to assist the Manila newcomer on her or his quest to cross the road.

Minimize the number of street crossings that you will need to achieve during your excursion. It may be wise to make one seemingly unnecessary street crossing in order to reach the side of the street with the fewest intersections. Decreasing the number of intersections increases the possibility of arriving promptly and safely at your destination.

Don't look for pedestrian walk signals. Although a few intersections have them, a walk signal will rarely serve a purpose and will, most likely, never turn green. A green walk signal does not, at any rate, signify that it is safe to attempt a crossing.

Find the traffic control officer. This is a task that can only be accomplished during the morning and afternoon peak traffic periods and, even then, is not easy. If you are able to find one, make good use of the wonderful opportunity that you have been afforded. The officer will usually introduce a bit of decorum to the proceedings.

Don't strike out on your own; follow the locals. Much like a zebra crossing a crocodile infested river, you should take cover in numbers. The safest approach is to wedge yourself into a mass of locals as they negotiate the river of cars. Follow their actions closely and you will reach the other side unharmed.

For a measure of added safety, use the elderly and children as human shields. This may sound inhumane but, in reality, it is the exact opposite. If a driver sees an elderly person or a small child, they are more likely to apply the brakes rather than attempt to nudge the pedestrian along his way. Pedestrian nudging can lead to catastrophes. So, by properly positioning yourself for the crossing, you may be helping to avert a catastrophe and the young lady-that you just placed between yourself and the oncoming traffic-can now look forward to a long and successful life. Don't be surprised, though, if she doesn't turn to thank you, she most likely didn't even recognize your selfless act of humanitarianism.

If forced to perform a solo crossing, know the tricks of the trade. It is very likely that you will be forced to make a street crossing, at some point during your visit, in which you will not be able to rely on the assistance of a traffic control officer or the local population. In these situations, the first thing you should know is that it is not necessary to attempt a complete passage in a single run. The crossing is much more manageable if broken up into chunks. For example, the best approach to crossing a two-way street is to tackle the first half of the road, seek refuge in the middle, and then complete the trip when traffic permits. A lane-by-lane approach can be employed for the traversing of one-way streets.

One should also recognize that a huddle of cars clogging an intersection may be an annoyance to the drivers but it is an opportunity for pedestrians. All regard for traffic signals should be put aside, just as the drivers have done, and a crossing should be immediately undertaken. Weaving your way through static traffic is much easier than nudging your way through a crawling wave of cars.

Manila has many long streets. Therefore, walking all the way to an intersection to accomplish a street crossing is oft times impractical. Besides, performing a non-intersection crossing is often preferable to the intersection cross because it is only necessary to dodge traffic from one road rather than two. However, the higher speed of travel can make this type of crossing a little trickier.

The same principles of the intersection crossing should be applied to the mid-street crossing. There is, however, one additional trick that can help ensure safe passage. Upon entering the road, place your right arm at a forty-five degree angle from the pavement, turn your arm until your elbow and open palm are facing oncoming traffic and, finally, position your head so that you do not make eye contact with the drivers. The position of your hand and arm will indicate to the automobile conductors that you are requesting them to avoid hitting you and the position of your eyes will warn them that you are unable to see them and, therefore, jump out of the way of their vehicle if they choose not to comply with your request for safe passage. Even a Manila driver won't hit a defenseless person.

Armed with this knowledge, any able-bodied person, or chicken, should be able to accomplish one of the most difficult tasks in Manila, crossing the street. Now, go forth and cross.

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