

TPB spotlight

A Quarterly e-Magazine of the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2023

PHITEX GENERATES OVER P300-M SALES



TPB WINS “BEST NTO” IN TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2023

12TH REGIONAL TRAVEL FAIR
in Ilocos reaches
over PHP 390M in sales

TPB-HOSTED WORDLCHEFS ASIAN PRESIDENTS FORUM 2023
a first for PH

spotlight

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COVER PHOTO:

In this issue, we put a spotlight on redefining the whole tourism industry and tourist experience with a seamless blend of tradition and modernity in the successful execution of PHITEX 2023 and the upcoming Travel Philippines app.

ON THE SPOT

This quarter marked the completion of my first year as the Chief Operating Officer of the Tourism Promotions Board, and what a memorable time it has been. My experiences were filled with significant transformations and meaningful accomplishments. They stand as a testament to the TPB team's continuous persistence, patience, and hard work, which earned us several recognitions and key milestones to look back on with pride.

We are thrilled to share major highlights that showcase our thriving tourism industry. The recently concluded PHITEX 2023 was a resounding success, generating over P346-M in sales. Equally exciting is the launch the upcoming Travel Philippines app which will serve as a comprehensive guide, enabling travelers to seamlessly explore our 7,641 islands.

The TPB and the Philippines have also received many international recognitions. We were named the Best National Tourism Organization during the 32nd TTG Travel Awards held in Bangkok, Thailand. We were also honored with the National Tourism Initiative of the Year for our conduct of the country's biggest government-organized travel trade event – the Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) in 2022 – by the Gov Media Awards in Singapore.

We've had incredible opportunities to showcase the best of the Philippines in numerous travel programs, spreading the beauty and richness of our culture and destinations both locally and worldwide. There was the TPB-hosted WORDLCHEFS Asian Presidents Forum, another first for the Philippines, along with our participation at M&C Asia Connections (MCAC) 2023 in Singapore, and the Philippine Roadshow in India where we successfully showcased our country as a premier MICE destination.

Reflecting on the goals we set for ourselves at the beginning of this year, I am pleased to announce that we are well on track to surpass all expectations. The remarkable progress we have made is a testament to the collective efforts of our government, tourism stakeholders, and the Filipino people. I express my deepest gratitude to each one of you for your continuous support and unwavering support and steadfast belief in our shared vision. As we move forward, I am confident that together, we will continue to soar higher and deliver even greater success.

May our journey towards creating a truly world-class tourism destination be filled with limitless possibilities and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles
Chief Operating Officer
Tourism Promotions Board Philippines



COMING SOON: TRAVEL PHILIPPINES APP

Travel Philippines is the official travel app of the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines. It provides up-to-date information on Philippine travel destinations and acts as a guide to discover our 7,641 islands. The app also allows tourists to create their dream trips and save important travel documents for a seamless travel experience.











SECOND PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT AND UPDATES

Travel Philippines supports the DOT's 7-point agenda to enhance the overall tourist experience, maximize domestic tourism, and strengthen tourism governance through close collaboration with LGUs and stakeholders, as well as aiming for cohesive and comprehensive digitalization and connectivity.

This support is apparent in the app's second phase of development with TPB working closely and collaborating with the Regional Directors of the DOT and allowing tourism stakeholders to offer their services digitally.

The second phase of development has also expanded Travel Philippines to include more features as it aims to become the digital "one-stop" shop for Philippine tourism.

THESE FEATURES ARE:

-  Profile management
-  Geo-targeting / What's near me feature
-  Travel updates carousel
-  Destination information from CAR to BARMM
-  Press Releases and featured articles
-  Tour guides
-  Facts and Trivia
-  Featured videos
-  Partners and LGU Directory
-  Deals and Promos

2023 PHITEX

GENERATES OVER P300-M SALES

The Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2023, organized by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, yielded over 300 Million Philippine Pesos in negotiated sales during its two-day tabletop meetings between international buyers and local stakeholders on September 20-21 at the Fili-NuStar Hotel, Cebu.

Showcasing the Philippines' finest tourism attractions, establishments, services, and products to a global audience, PHITEX 2023 brought together a total of 164 seller delegates from 119 Philippine companies and 88 buyers from 19 countries for the travel exchange event graced by

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and TPB Chief Operating Officer Marga Nograles.

Yielding PHP 59,671,600 on Day 1 and PHP 281,905,100.00 on Day 2, this year's edition of PHITEX generated a grand total of 346,879,232.00 Philippine Pesos (as of 05 October 2023) in projected income including proceeds from sponsorship and participation fees.

Secretary Frasco, the keynote speaker of the event, thanked the entire delegation. "Our gratitude goes to you for your continued belief in the potential of Philippine tourism and your love for the Philippines."

Frasco further emphasized the country's success in tourism recovery, citing the arrival record of over 3.8 million international visitors as of September 19, 2023 and over PHP 316.9 billion in estimated revenue. Noting that PHITEX was inclusive of international buyers, she expressed in her speech what makes the Philippines different as a destination: "The inclusivity of this program beckons international buyers to explore the rich diversity that our country has to offer. But what truly sets us apart as a tourism destination is no other than the best asset of Philippine tourism—the Filipino people."

This year, PHITEX embraced the theme, "Tourism Sustainability in the Era of Internet of Things (IoT)," putting a spotlight on the



country's digitalization and sustainability efforts to meet global demands. COO Nograles, in her opening remarks, emphasized the need to go beyond business transactions and highlighted TPB's efforts to arrange post-tours involving visits to diverse community-based tourist sites that will introduce participating international buyers to grassroots initiatives along with local textiles, culinary treasures, and other eco-tourism activities.

"Amid this transformative surge, the tourism industry must be poised for action. We must not only embrace this digital evolution but also guide the way, ensuring that tradition coexists harmoniously with modernization," Nograles said in line with the expanding IoT that is redefining the whole industry and the tourist experience.

Apart from B2B, PHITEX also functions as an innovative knowledge-sharing platform to local stakeholders and academia members in the field of tourism through its Philippine Educational Program (PEP) Talk. This year's installment, held at Jpark Island Resort and Waterpark in Lapu-Lapu City, covered the latest advancements in IoT, data privacy, and circular economies with speakers such as Maria Raisa Ysaac-Orbon, Chief Marketing Officer of Packetworx Inc.; Maricel Gatchalian-Badilla, PhD., Associate Professor of UP Asian Institute of Tourism; Atty. Francis Euston R. Acero, Vice President and Data Privacy Officer of Meralco; Barry Lim, Senior Director, Public Sector & Government Practice, Frost and Sullivan-Singapore; and Geoff Andres, Property President of the City of Dreams Manila, generously providing their expertise, competencies, and knowledge in line with the most current tourism trends and sustainability initiatives

that can be effectively implemented in the digital era. Promoting gender equality, empowerment and inclusivity was also discussed by Dawn Mendoza, Program Manager of the Philippine Financial & Inter-Industry Pride, in her talk on Exploring Gender Dynamics in Tourism.

The PHITEX 2023 event was organized in collaboration with NUSTAR Resort Cebu, Fili Hotel – NUSTAR Cebu, Destileria Limtuaco & Co. Inc., Uni-Orient Travel, Inc, The Muse Hotel Boracay, Wine Club and Charlton Trade, Cebu Pacific, 2GO, and Bigseed Public Relations and Events.

To commemorate the occasion, in-kind donations were provided by Engkanto, Angkas, and Barcino. Additionally, the guests were given a variety of giveaways and tokens of appreciation from Sunnies Studios, Klook, and Bench.

PHITEX 2023 was also supported by the Department of Tourism Region VII, Office of the Provincial Governor of Cebu and the local government units (LGUs) of Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, Mandaue City, Carcar City, Argao, and Talisay.

For more information about PHITEX, visit <https://www.phitex.ph/>





TPB'S PHITEX PROGRAM WINS NATIONAL TOURISM INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines was honored with the National Tourism Initiative of the Year-Philippines award in recognition of its conduct of the 2022 Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX), the country's largest government-organized travel trade event.

The Gov Media Awards, presented by Gov Media Magazine and held in Singapore, recognize the most outstanding government projects and initiatives in the Asia Pacific region. An elite panel of experts, including World Bank and ADB officials, evaluated this year's entries.

"We are one with the TPB in appreciation of this international recognition for PHITEX, which reflects the successful collaboration of government and the private sector under the shared tourism governance envisioned by the Marcos Administration," said Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco who is also Chairman of the TPB Board.

"This recognition is an honor for us at the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines and is a triumph that we dedicate to all

tourism stakeholders who continually work hard to contribute to the growth of the tourism industry and economy. This will only spur us in our commitment to making the Philippines a tourism powerhouse in Asia," said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

Gov Media stated that PHITEX was lauded for promoting responsible tourism and driving growth in the Philippine tourism industry.

Since its establishment in 1996, PHITEX has played a vital role in fostering business partnerships and showcasing the diverse array of Philippine tourism destinations. In 2022, PHITEX adopted the theme "Embracing Responsible Tourism" to emphasize the significance of safe, innovative, and sustainable travel practices. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, PHITEX successfully hosted over 116 foreign buyers composed of 53 physical attendees and 63 virtual participants from 32 countries and 206 Philippine sellers composed of 96 physical attendees and 110 virtual participants during the Travel Exchange (TRAVEX).

TPB wins "Best NTO" in TTG Travel Awards 2023

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines was recognized as Best National Tourism Organization (NTO) during the 32nd TTG Travel Awards ceremony and gala dinner held on 28 September 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.

In accepting the award, TPB's Chief Operating Officer (COO), Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles, expressed her gratitude to all members of the institution as well as its various tourism stakeholders, partners, and organizations for their participation and support of TPB's tourism projects and initiatives.

"My immense gratitude goes to everyone who continues to be part of our journey to put the Philippines at the summit of excellence. Your relentless support has determined our success in countless tourism expos and programs that we design with our unmatched dedication to the goal of constantly reminding the world that our beautiful country welcomes all with open hearts," said COO Nograles during her speech.

Taking the opportunity to highlight TPB's top priorities, Nograles mentioned that the country has the finest products and services to offer to travelers from around the world, and the agency's commitment lies in skillfully and genuinely showcasing the Philippines' beauty through its people, culture, natural resources, and destinations.

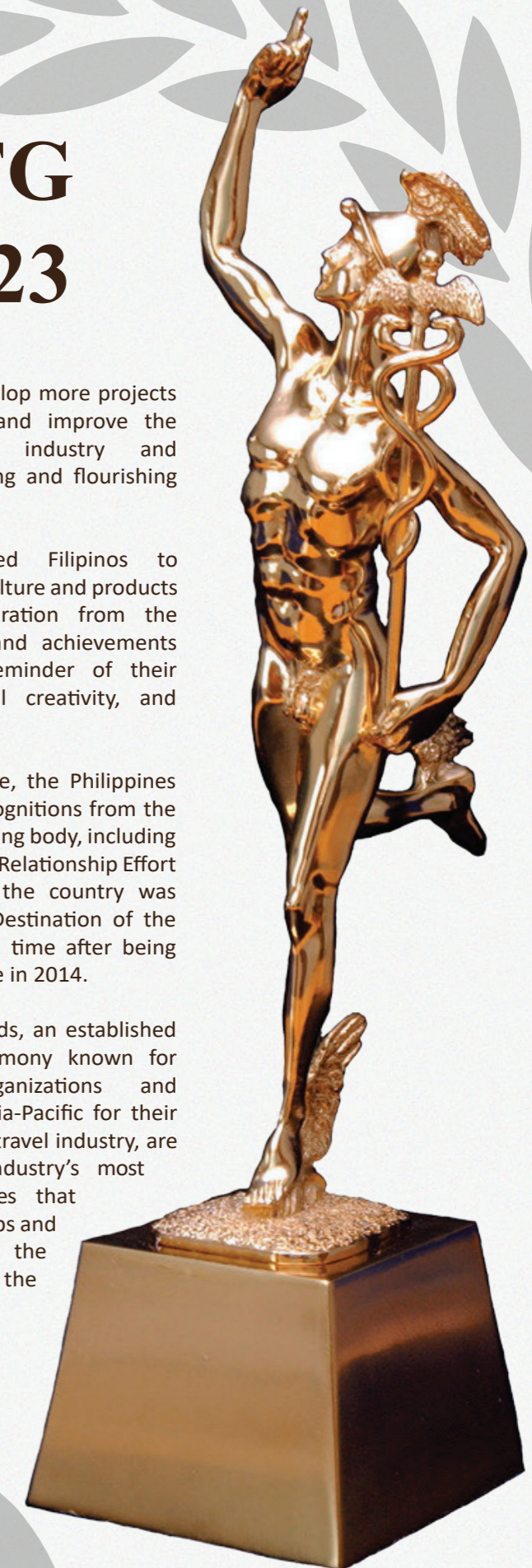
Nograles further expressed her intention to integrate sustainable tourism into the plans and promotions of TPB. She also envisioned that the award would further motivate TPB and other related

organizations to develop more projects that will promote and improve the country's tourism industry and contribute to a strong and flourishing economy.

Nograles encouraged Filipinos to embrace their own culture and products and to "take inspiration from the country's wonders and achievements that serve as a reminder of their heritage, exceptional creativity, and resourcefulness."

Over the past decade, the Philippines accepted various recognitions from the prestigious award-giving body, including the Best Marketing & Relationship Effort in 2015. Last year, the country was awarded the "Best Destination of the Year" for the second time after being granted the same title in 2014.

The TTG Travel Awards, an established annual awards ceremony known for acknowledging organizations and individuals across Asia-Pacific for their best practices in the travel industry, are attended by the industry's most acclaimed personalities that pioneer proactive steps and initiatives to the development of the tourism trade.





TPB GOES GREEN

THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES IN THE LA MESA NATURE RESERVE AND SIERRA MADRE MOUNTAIN RANGE

Strengthening its commitment to sustainable tourism, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines held its corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity on August 23-24, 2023 at the La Mesa Nature Reserve and in the Southern Sierra Madre Mountains.

The CSR program was done in partnership with Haribon Foundation, an environmental non-governmental organization that provided proper awareness training, educational sessions, and hands-on environmental activities for the participants. Content creator Cha Ocampo, one of the leading advocates for environmental awareness in the Philippines, also joined the program.

The program kicked off at the La Mesa Nature Reserve where a guided tour of the Petron Trail was conducted. The immersive activity served as an opportunity for participants to learn more about the native trees of the Philippines and understand their importance in sustaining biodiversity.

A community native nursery activity was also held in Tanay, Rizal to study how seedlings are correctly prepared for planting. Facilitators and community partners guided the TPB participants to increase their knowledge of forest restoration.

Apart from investing in environmental education, TPB also joined the Forest for Life Movement's Adopt-A-Seedling Program on August 24, 2023. Through this program, TPB was able to plant 1,250 native seedlings in the Southern Sierra Madre Mountain Range located in Brgy. San Andres, Tanay, Rizal. The program included community training and nursery establishment, livelihood incentives, site preparation, and maintenance and monitoring of the seedlings for three years.

These CSR activities are crucial to preserving the longest mountain range in the Philippines: the Sierra Madre. The Sierra Madre Mountain Range is not only a green tourism destination but also a water source and a barrier against strong storms for multiple cities. Thus, learning about native trees and planting native seedlings in the Sierra Madre Mountain Range can help preserve its beauty for future generations and also protect the lives of various Filipinos.

"These CSR programs are aligned with the Tourism Promotions Board's goal of making the Philippines a sustainable and uniquely diverse travel destination. It is important for our employees to immerse themselves in these conservation activities. TPB recognizes that the Sierra Madre Mountain Range plays a vital role in the local tourism industry and the everyday lives of Filipinos. Thus, we wanted to protect the country's longest mountain range by educating ourselves on conservation practices and planting native trees in the Sierra Madre," said TPB's Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

The native tree trek, community native nursery activity, and exclusive tree planting project are some of the CSR programs that TPB has engaged in since 2015. In fact, TPB already conducted 26 activities from Luzon to Mindanao for this year's CSR program. TPB will continue to take part in environmental and community-based initiative as part of its commitment to support green and sustainable tourism.



TPB TO SHOWCASE PHILIPPINES AS PRIME TOURISM HUB AT ITB ASIA 2023



The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines will be one of the exhibitors at the Internationale Tourismus Borse (ITB) Asia 2023, Asia's largest travel showcase. The event will be held on 25-27 October 2023 at the Marina Bay Sands and Expo Convention Centre in Singapore.

With attendees from 132 countries and regions, ITB Asia serves as the hub where international exhibitors and leading travel companies meet with top international buyers, travel websites and communities, journalists, influencers, and clients from the corporate travel market.

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and TPB Chief Operating Officer (COO) Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles will lead the Philippine delegation at the three-day event to promote the Philippines as a prime tourism hub and attract partnership opportunities that will strengthen the country's tourism industry.

TPB is all set to welcome approximately 13,000 guests at the Philippine booth. To entice visitors to drop by the booth, free ITB lanyards will be distributed and three roving ice cream kiosks will be set up during the event.

"We are confident that our annual participation at ITB Asia will reinforce the presence of the Philippines as one of the most preferred tourist destinations in Asia Pacific. Aside from promoting our country as a tourism destination, this expo is a good opportunity for players in our tourism industry to showcase how their businesses can provide tourists from around the world with the best Philippine travel experience," said TPB COO Nograles.

This year's Philippine delegation will be composed of 25 prime tourism enterprises from several industry sectors including six hotels, one tourism entertainment complex, seven tour operators, three travel agencies, five resorts, and two DOT attached agencies.

Companies that will be joining ITB Asia for the first time are Philippine Airlines, City of Dreams Manila, Grand Hyatt Manila, Okada Manila, Bai Hotel Cebu, Paradise Garden Boracay Resort Hotel & Convention Center, and Megaworld Hotels & Resorts (Richmonde Hotel Ortigas). For the resort category, first-time attendees include Ten Knots Development Corporation - El Nido Resorts, Lalaguna Villas Luxury Dive Resort and Spa, and Lihim Resort by Araw Hospitality Inc.

The Philippine booth will also feature travel agencies and tour operators such as Golden Sky Travel and Tours Corp (An'saya Holidays), Jeh Travel Services, GI Philippines Corp, Marlandair Travel Inc., Sole Destinations Travel, Bigson Travel and Tours, and Via Philippines Travel Corporation. TPB will also subsidize its attached agencies – the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) and the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA).

Meanwhile, Dusit Thani Manila, Uni Orient Travel Inc., Shroff Int'l Travel Care, Waterfront Hotels and Casinos, CTPH Lifestyle and Travel Services, and Jpark Island Resort & Waterpark will be joining the Philippine delegation at ITB Asia for the second time.





TPB-hosted WORDLCHEFS Asian Presidents Forum 2023 a first for PH

The Philippines played host to the WORDLCHEFS Asian Presidents Forum 2023, welcoming delegates and presidents from sixteen (16) member societies, two (2) associate member groups, as well as organizational heads of the World Association of Chef Societies (WORDLCHEFS). This marked the first time the event was held in the country, with the last one taking place in Bangkok in 2019.

Co-organized by the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) and LTB Philippines Chefs Association, the forum kicked off with an opening ceremony on July 31 at Conrad Manila. The event aimed to bring together culinary experts from all over Asia to share culinary heritage, industry best practices, and sustainability goals through knowledge-sharing sessions, competitions, and outreach programs scheduled throughout the weeklong conference.

Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco shared that the event was a good showcase of the country, saying that President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. “envisions the Philippines to have a more primary role in Asia in terms of being able to reintroduce itself to the world, not only on the aspect of fun and adventure, but most importantly, to allow you to get to know the heart and soul of the Filipinos that lies in our history, our heritage, our identity, and our living cultural traditions,

including and especially, our culinary traditions.”

“We are given a unique opportunity to listen and learn from experts about developments in the culinary field. The world is more connected, now more than ever, and this has vastly influenced and changed the way we look at food, especially in recent years. People from all over the world are constantly seeking new gastronomic experiences,” said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

Attending member societies included LTB Philippines, Association of Culinary Professionals Indonesia, Cambodia Chefs’ Association, Chefs Association of Pakistan, Chefs Guild of Lanka, Chefs Guild of Maldives, China Cuisine Association, Hong Kong Chefs Association, Indian Federation of Culinary Associations, Korea Chefs Association, Mongolian Chefs Association, Professional Culinaire Association of Malaysia, Singapore Chefs’ Association, Taiwan Chefs Association, Thailand Chefs Association, and The Saigon Professional Chefs’ Guild. The associate member groups of Penang Chef Association and Karachi Chefs Association were also present.



Following the opening of the forum, the World Food Expo (WOFEX), a long-running Philippine food trade show organized by PEPTarsus Corp., took place on August 2 to 5 at SMX Convention Center and World Trade Center. WOFEX hosts the only WORDLCHEFS-accredited culinary competition in the country, the Philippine Culinary Cup, which ran on August 5 along with the semifinals of the WORDLCHEFS’ Global Chef Challenge.

According to Chef Willment Leong, WORDLCHEFS continental director for Asia, the Global Chef Challenge itself amassed a record number of participants for the association, with 51 chefs from 11 different member countries engaging in this Philippine leg.

Leong also facilitated the launch of the WORDLCHEFS e-book “Food of Asia, Soul of Asia.” Available on the WORDLCHEFS website, the e-book features authentic recipes across the continent crafted by member association chefs.

THE PHILIPPINES IS IN GREAT DEMAND AT THE ROADSHOW IN INDIA

The Philippines proved to be a sought-after destination during the Four Cities Roadshow in India held on August 7-9 and 11, 2023. A significant sales lead of PHP79,849,981.00 was recorded during the four-day event organized by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and the Department of Tourism (DOT).

The Philippine delegation visited key cities in India including Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai to showcase the best of the country with the hope of maintaining its robust development in Indian visitor arrivals.

“This is only the Philippines’ second visit to India and we are delighted to have the Indian market’s interest. With substantial sales leads generated during our four-day visit, we can see the potential number of visitor arrivals from this nation and we are excited to have them experience the unwavering warmth of the Filipino people, our culture, and heritage, as well as our

world-renowned beaches,” said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

The Four Cities Roadshow was participated by sellers from various industries namely Ark Travel Express Inc., Bai Hotel Cebu, Department of Tourism Central Visayas, Dusit Hotels and Resorts, GI Philippines Corp., Lalaguna Villas Luxury Dive Resort and Spa, Okada Manila, Philippine Airlines, Philippine Retirement Authority, Plantation Bay Resort and Spa, Scoot, Shangri-La Group, Shroff International Travel Care, Inc., The Farm at San Benito, and Uni Orient Travel Inc.

The Philippines’ numerous popular and rising tourism attractions, as well as its desirability as a place for organizing Meetings, Incentive Travels, Conventions, and Exhibitions (M.I.C.E.) events were highlighted during this year’s roadshow. The effort, which also promotes the tourist tagline “Love The Philippines,” is part of TPB’s commitment to expanding its strategic initiatives to overseas markets.



Delhi



Kolkata



Mumbai



Chennai



11TH REGIONAL TRAVEL FAIR SURPASSES PRE-PANDEMIC PERFORMANCE HITS OVER PHP 110M IN SALES



The 11th Regional Travel Fair (RTF), organized by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, made a triumphant return to a full onsite event after the COVID-19 pandemic, generating over PHP 110 million in actual and negotiated sales during its three-day run on 21-23 July 2023 at the SM Seaside City Cebu. This surpassed the previous RTF sales figure by 32.97%.

TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles, who was present during the event, expressed her elation over the resounding success of this year's RTF, "We are thrilled to witness the overwhelming response and enthusiasm from exhibitors and visitors during the Regional Travel Fair. The outstanding sales leads signal a bright future for the tourism industry in the post-pandemic era and reaffirm travelers' confidence in the safety of their travels."

Other RTF attendees included Department of Tourism (DOT) Undersecretary for Tourism Regulation, Coordination, and Resource Generation (TRCRG) Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, Intramuros Administrator Atty. Joan Padilla, Assistant Secretary Rica Bueno, DOT Calabarzon Regional Director Marites Castro, Tourism Coordination and Regional Operations Director Judilyn Quiachon, Cebu City Mayor Michael Lopez Rama, TPB Deputy Chief Operations Officer for Marketing and Promotions Atty. Charles Aames Bautista, and TPB Domestic Promotions Department Manager Teresita Landan. The event was also attended by social media personalities Chuck Aquino and Joe Abad, popularly known as Chuck and Joe, and Marie Field Faith.

With the theme #VisitCentralVisayas, the annual trade fair provided a platform for over 70 exhibitors nationwide to showcase their offerings. Industry professionals took the opportunity to share emerging trends and best practices, innovate travel-related business operations, and expand networks through its engaging Business-to-Business (B2B) sessions. Tourism offices from Central Visayas,

including the Province of Cebu, Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, Siquijor, Boho, and Negros Oriental, presented their tourism product updates during the B2B session.

The fair also opened its doors to enthusiastic travelers during its two-day Business-to-Consumer (B2C) session held on 22-23 July 2023. Among the offerings were discounted tour packages to famous and emerging local destinations, airline tickets, accommodation, delicacies, and pasalubong items.

"We desire and aim to play a major role in shaping the future of tourism by creating a one-stop shop venue for industry collaboration and partnerships," said Undersecretary Tamano who delivered a keynote speech at the event on behalf of DOT Christina Garcia Frasco.

Meanwhile, TPB members, industry stakeholders, influencers, and media partners were also treated to a post-tour trip covering the heritage towns of Argao and Carcar for an immersive experience of southern Cebu's culture and culinary offerings.



Tourism Region VII, the Provincial Government of Cebu, and the City Government of Cebu. The event was also sponsored by partners from the private sector – SM Seaside City, 2GO, Jpark Island, Cebu Pacific, Air Asia, Philippine Airlines, NUSTAR, Fili Hotel, CAVA, Bluewater Maribago Mactan, and Marco Polo Cebu.

ISLA-ISLAHIN ANG PINAS WITH 2GO SAIL AND RIDE

Manila, Philippines, 12 April 2023 – 2GO Travel, the country's premier sea travel provider, gives travelers another reason to "sea" the Philippines' islands with 2GO's Sail and Ride. This is the perfect opportunity for gearheads and bikers planning long drives and discovering the Philippines on two wheels.

The easy, comfortable, and economical sea travel solutions provider bridges long-drive riders to 17 passenger ports across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Sail and Ride is 2GO Travel's unique service for passengers traveling with cars or motor vehicles on top of the vessel's cruise-like sailcation experience which includes spacious accommodations with fresh hot meals, a shopping experience from well-loved brands, and entertainment facilities to enjoy.

2GO recently supported the Philippine Motorcycle Tourism (PMT) by providing a round trip, free of charge (FOC), and discounted fare for the moto-vloggers and influencers who participated in the PMT-Western Visayas regional launch on September 2, 2023 in Iloilo City.

PMT, an institutional program of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), aims to promote the country's domestic tourism via two-wheels. PMT encourages organizing group ride trips for motorcycle riding enthusiasts to advocate for domestic tourism, road safety, courtesy, and community service. TPB's PMT program maximizes 2GO Travel's Sail and Ride service as part of its

long-term partnership to provide motorcycle riders a fantastic sailing experience using the Philippine Nautical Highway System.

"We at the Tourism Promotions Board are optimistic that more people will get to experience the joys of sea travel, particularly in the Western Visayas region, with our strategic partnership with 2GO, offering our motorcycle sports enthusiasts an ultimate sailcation experience and giving them more inspiration to showcase the immense beauty of our country," said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

"Through our partnership and collaboration, we can make a difference and contribute in strengthening our local economy through the power of Motorcycle Tourism. Isla-Islahin natin ang ganda ng Pilipinas," Nograles added.

To learn more about the Sail and Ride service, email 2GO_freight@2go.com.ph or visit the nearest pier ticketing office in your area to inquire about 2GO's Sail and Ride services.

Plan your routes today and start discovering the wonders of the Philippine islands with 2GO.





THE TRIUMPHANT 12TH REGIONAL TRAVEL FAIR REACHES OVER PHP 390 MILLION IN SALES

The 12th Regional Travel Fair (RTF) had a successful run generating PHP 396 million from estimated business leads as well as PHP 1.3 million in actual sales for nationwide tourism stakeholders and weavers in its three-day run last October 13-15 at Robinsons Ilocos. The sales leads for this edition of RTF surpassed previous records, particularly with the upcoming launch of direct flights by Philippine Airlines between Cebu and Laoag which is set to take flight on December 15.

Organized by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, aims to encourage the public to travel around the country and increase people's knowledge of local destinations. This particular fair is a milestone project for the organization, as it is one of the first national tourism events that the TPB held in the Ilocos region. "The Tourism Promotions Board brings this event to different

parts of our beautiful country, allowing host regions to shine, exhibit their local products, and showcase their unique destinations. This RTF is an opportunity for all of us to fall in love over and over and over again with the Philippines. Most importantly, this fair is your gateway to discover all that there is to love about the Ilocos region," said TPB COO Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

Around 70 sellers/exhibitors participated in the business-to-business (B2B) sessions to expand their networks and establish innovative travel-related offerings with buyers that have similar business goals. Local officials also shared insights on their current tourism situation so that interested stakeholders can discover the potential of the destinations within Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan.

The 12th RTF also helped interested travelers find their next destination within the country during the business-to-consumer (B2C) sessions held on October 14-15, 2023. Exhibitors from different parts of the country presented discounted tour packages, airline tickets, accommodations, woven products, and other local goods to the public.

Esteemed guests also graced the event, making it even more memorable for both tourism stakeholders and consumers. Present during the event were TPB COO Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles, Ilocos Norte Vice Governor Cecilia Araneta-Marcos, Laoag Mayor Michael Marcos Keon, DOT Regional Office I OIC Evangeline Dadat, San Nicolas Mayor Miguel L. Hernando, DOT Region 10 Regional Director Marie Elaine Unchuan, Provincial Tourism Officer of Ilocos Norte Xavier Ruiz, TPB Deputy Chief Operations Officer for

Marketing and Promotions Atty. Charles Aames Bautista, and TPB Domestic Promotions Department Manager Teresita Landan.

After the three-day affair, TPB members joined a post-tour trip that brought them to top destinations within the region. The members were given the opportunity to experience the rich culture and heritage of Baccara and Paoy or experience a thrilling adventure through a tour of Laoag.

The 12th RTF in Ilocos was made possible through the collaboration of the TPB, DOT Region I, the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, the City Government of San Nicolas, and the City Government of Laoag. The event was also made possible through the event partners of the TPB, which are Robinsons Ilocos, Cebu Pacific, and Philippine Airlines.





THE 34TH PHILIPPINE TRAVEL MART DRIVES GROWTH IN THE LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY

The Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) conducted the 34th Philippine Travel Mart (PTM) on 1-3 September 2023 at the SMX Convention Center, SM Mall of Asia Complex in Pasay City with the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines serving as co-presenter.

TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles joined Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, PHILTOA President Fe Ablang-Yu, Philippine Airlines President and Chief Operating Officer Stanley Ng, and Pasay City Mayor Emi Calixto-Rubiano's chief-of-staff Peter Eric Pardo in formally opening the event through a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Secretary Frasco welcomed the crowd by delivering the keynote message and discussing the role that the PTM plays in the growth of the tourism industry. "We have built the momentum for the tourism industry of the Philippines, and the Philippine Travel Mart is another driving force to push the tourism industry closer to its pre-pandemic levels and further to even exceed it," she said.

This year's PTM saw around 300 exhibitors from the 17 regions of the Philippines participating and providing travel deals

to the country's various destinations and giving attendees a chance to discover the newest attractions. The TPB also presented some of the country's best attractions through its pavilion that featured the historic 'Walled City' of Intramuros, the talented Panay-Bukidnon weavers from Capiz, and the top surfing spot, Cloud 9, in Siargao. Moreover, the TPB showcased the Bisita Be My Guest (BBMG) program wherein interested Filipinos can redeem discounts, special rates, and incentives from DOT-accredited enterprises whenever they invite foreign guests into the country.

"The Tourism Promotions Board recognizes that the Philippine Travel Mart is instrumental in deepening people's interest and love for the Philippines. The travel trade fair made it more accessible for people to go to their bucket list destinations and allowed people to discover new places that they can visit in the country," COO Nograles said.

The PTM continues to be one of the most important events in the local tourism industry. The country's longest-running travel trade exhibition started as an initiative of the DOT and has been spearheaded by PHILTOA since 1994.



TPB Holds Members' ThinkTalk Session on The ABCs of B2B Partnerships

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines conducted a ThinkTalk session for its members on 9 August 2023 in preparation for the Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2023. The ThinkTalk session aimed to hone the members' effective communication skills, relationship-building strategies, and professional etiquette to create strong business-to-business (B2B) partnerships during travel trade shows.

TPB COO Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles opened the session by welcoming the TPB members and emphasizing that it will discuss everything they need to know to conduct successful B2B meetings. "Let us then take full advantage of this day's learnings and opportunities so we can continuously perform at an exemplary level and offer only our best to the world," COO Nograles said.

The program commenced with a presentation from Mr. Joel Pascual, the President of PEPTarsus Corp, who talked about how to successfully build relationships by identifying the different types of B2B buyers and sellers joining events.

He shared that since each buyer comes from a market with its own language and culture, it is crucial to understand the kind of buyer one is interacting with. Through this, tourism stakeholders can effectively discuss their travel products and services in a way that resonates with their audience.

Aside from describing the different B2B markets, Pascual advised the members to create a unique selling proposition that can pique the interest of their markets. He reminded

them that they only have a few minutes to capture the attention of buyers during events like PHITEX, so they need to put their best foot forward in every B2B interaction.

The ThinkTalk Session also included a presentation on "Professional Etiquette in B2B Settings" headed by Ms. Rachele Estalilla, a corporate trainer from the Enderun Extension. Estalilla stated that etiquette is not just for special occasions but also for business events. "If you want your customers to love you, you need to practice etiquette," she said.

Emphasis was placed on proper business etiquette like standing up during introductions and being the first to hold out one's hand to create a good impression. By practicing these simple gestures, she stated that "you are showing your buyers that they are important."

Apart from serving those joining PHITEX 2023, these learnings are also beneficial to TPB members participating in another TPB project called the Philippines Digital Travel Fairs (PDTF). The agency partnered with Unique Event and Exhibition Pte Ltd. to implement these online travel fairs in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong this year. Since local destinations like Manila, Cebu, and Boracay are quite popular in the aforementioned foreign markets, the PDTF will make it more accessible for consumers from the said countries to purchase experiences, travel and tours, lifestyle products, and accommodations in these top destinations.

Very Important Pinoy (VIP) Tour is back in Action



In a campaign to encourage Filipino-Americans in the United States to expand their knowledge of the Philippines' tourism destinations, the Very Important Pinoy (VIP) Tour 2023 is back with an action-packed and fun-filled adventure.

"This tour's popularity—even at its 14th iteration—is a testament that through such collaborative efforts, we can create extraordinary experiences for Filipinos overseas to see our motherland in a new light and become our very own cultural ambassadors. I encourage each and every one of you, as Filipinos living in the United States, to embrace this role. Through your experiences, stories, and love for the Philippines, you have the ability to inspire others to explore the wonders of our nation. Let us become advocates for the Philippines in our respective communities", said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.



The VIP Tour 2023, originally known as the Ambassadors Tour, is a DFA and DOT joint project that began in 2005 and serves as the premier tourist program of the Philippine Foreign Service Posts (PFSPs) in the United States. The tour is presently in its 14th year after a two-year break due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The VIP Tour took place on 16-24 July 2023 with 300 participants experiencing the best of Iloilo, Boracay, and Manila. The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines hosted the dinner during the fun and networking night.

MCAC 2023: ENHANCING THE PHILIPPINES' MICE PRESENCE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

To bolster the Philippines' MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) presence on the global stage, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines participated in the M&C Asia Connections (MCAC) 2023 held on 16-17 August 2023 at the Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa and Marina Bay Sands in Singapore.

MCAC is a premier, invitation-only trade show that brings together Asia's top suppliers and global buyers in the business events industry. The event features pre-scheduled one-on-one appointments, in-depth expert education sessions, curated Familiarization Trip (for Buyers), and results-driven networking activities.

The Philippine delegation, composed of exhibitors from hotels and resorts, destination management specialists, and tour operators, generated 144 pre-scheduled business appointments. During its business-to-business (B2B) sessions, TPB showcased the Philippines as a premier MICE destination, highlighting the country's world-class facilities, experienced professionals, and a wide array of attractions.

The Philippine delegation successfully brought home 40 good business leads approximately valued at USD 3,157,351.00 or PhP 173,654,305.00 (should these leads materialize in the next 2-3 years) and established valuable connections.

MCAC 2023 served as a platform for uniting 54 Asian suppliers and 67 buyers from around the world to connect, network, and do business. This presented the Philippines with an opportunity to introduce its MICE brand while also actively engaging with international buyers.



PHILIPPINES



TPB Celebrates Back-to-Back Successes at IT&CMA 2023 in Bangkok

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines announced its triumphant participation at the Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings Asia (IT&CMA) 2023, held on September 24 to 29 in Bangkok, Thailand. This event is known to be one of the most influential MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) trade shows in the Asia-Pacific region, providing a vibrant platform for industry leaders to connect, collaborate, and explore promising opportunities.

The robust participation of the Philippine delegation resulted in valuable partnerships, substantial interest in the Philippines as a prime destination for MICE, and (partially reported) sales leads valued at USD 2,585,097.24 or PHP 144,765,445.44. These accomplishments stand as a testament to the Philippines' growing appeal in the global MICE market.

"We are thrilled with the outcome of our participation in IT&CMA 2023. The overwhelming interest shown by international stakeholders reaffirms the Philippines' position as a top choice for MICE events. We are committed to nurturing these partnerships and further enhancing our offerings to meet the evolving needs of the MICE industry," said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

TPB was also awarded the "Best National Tourism Organization" by the readers of TTG Asia Media—a

leading publisher and organizer of events in travel and tourism in the Asia Pacific region. The awarding ceremony was held during the TTG Travel Awards Gala Dinner on September 28.

Having been an active participant in IT&CMA since 2013, the TPB's presence at this prestigious event has consistently reinforced the Philippines' stature as a premier MICE destination. This year's showcase was marked by the Philippines' expanded booth, covering an impressive 150 sqm. and accommodating 24 exhibitors composed of tour operators, hotel/resort properties, an events management company, and an airline company passionately promoting the country's diverse offerings and seamless event planning services.

Joining the TPB at this year's IT&CMA were the following tourism partners: Baron Travel Corporation, Divaishnavi International Inc., GI Philippines Corp., Laging Balani Travel Services, Lifestyle Luxury Travel Corporation, Mooncake Educational Travel and Tours, Uni-Orient Travel, Inc., AJ Coffee and Bed / Kaulayaw Corporation, Crimson Resort and Spa, Boracay, Dusit Thani Manila, Fili Hotel Cebu, Grand Hyatt Manila, Jpark Island Resort and Waterpark Mactan, Cebu, Marriott Hotel Manila, Novotel Manila Araneta City, Okada Manila, Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu, Seda Hotels, White Breeze Palawan Hotel, Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, The Lind Boracay, Philippine Airlines, and Total Exhibit and Expo Solutions, Inc.

PHILIPPINES WINS "Asia's Leading Dive Destination" at prestigious World Travel Awards 2023

Solidifying its status as the ultimate diving destination in the region, the Philippines clinched for the fifth consecutive year the Asia's Leading Dive Destination title at the preeminent World Travel Awards (WTA) Asia & Oceania Gala Ceremony 2023.

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco announced the remarkable feat on 6 September 2023, following the WTA Asia & Oceania Gala Ceremony 2023 that took place at the GEM Center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

"The Philippines' fifth consecutive win as Asia's Leading Dive Destination further affirms the unparalleled beauty and mega biodiversity of our country loved by divers and tourists all over the world," enthused Secretary Frasco, who is a dive advocate and certified diver herself.

The tourism chief added that "this is a testament to the Philippines' commitment to sustainable tourism development and our strengthened collaboration with tourism stakeholders. From our ridges to our reefs, you will never run out of reasons to Love the Philippines!"

Elevating the Dive Tourism Portfolio

Under President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s administration, Secretary Frasco, who is a certified diver, has been leading the DOT in elevating the country's dive tourism industry.

The DOT created the first-ever Dive Committee that will align its dive product development and promotion thrusts with its attached agencies, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, and the Philippine Commission for Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD).

The DOT will likewise convene the country's national dive stakeholders in the first-ever Philippine Dive Dialogue in Cebu next week to consolidate all the efforts of the national government, local governments, and private sector partners. Moreover, the DOT, through its infrastructure arm, TIEZA, eyes the installation of additional hyperbaric chambers that will improve scuba diving safety standards in strategic dive locations, such as Dumaguete and Daanbantayan in Cebu, by 2024.

The agency has also launched its own dive expo brand, the Philippine International Dive Expo (PHIDEX), the world's only dive show that combines a dive travel exchange, a business-to-business (B2B) meeting program, dive conferences and seminars, exhibition booths, and familiarization tours to key and emerging Philippine dive destinations. The fourth edition of PHIDEX is scheduled for February next year.

The Department continuously hosts regional dive-centric events, including the DOT Office of Product and Market Development - Dive Team's Anilao Underwater Shootout in Batangas, the DIVE7 Festival series by the DOT Region VII office, the Davao Dive Expo by the DOT Region XI office, and the NorthMin Dive by the DOT Region X office—which opened yesterday (Sept. 6)—among others. The Department also extended its support to a multitude of diving initiatives, assessments, and expeditions, including the Cebu Travel Catalogue, the Bohol Loop Dive Expo (BHOLDEX), the 3rd MisOr Dive Festival, Samal Island Dive Seafari, Bay Deep Mati Freediving Festival, and numerous others.

2023 World Travel Awards

DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano personally received the WTA Asia's Leading Dive Destination 2023 trophy, which was awarded based on public votes and validation from the group's panel of travel professionals. Philippine private tourism stakeholders also bagged notable victories at the WTA Asia & Oceania Gala Ceremony 2023, being named in the following Asian and country categories: Okada Manila (Asia's Leading Casino Resort), Discovery Shores Boracay (Philippines' Leading Beach Resort 2023), Travelite Travel and Tours Co. (Philippines' Leading Destination Management Company 2023), and Seda Hotels (Philippines' Leading Hotel Group 2023), among others.

Regional edition awardees, along with runners-up and previous year's winners, are qualified for the WTA's World edition, which will have its grand awards night in Muscat, Oman in November 2023.

Established in 1993, the WTA is now globally recognized as the "ultimate hallmark of excellence" in the tourism and hospitality industries. The WTA encompasses country awards, regional awards, and world awards.

1ST PHILIPPINE TOURISM DIVE DIALOGUE UNITES DIVE INDUSTRY: 37 BILLION RAKED IN 2022

In a bid to further expand development of the country's dive tourism industry, the Department of Tourism (DOT) successfully mounted a nationwide convergence of hundreds of participants from the public and private sectors and the academe to tackle challenges and gain insights from industry experts and stakeholders for the inaugural Philippine Tourism Dive Dialogue (PTDD).

The event, held at the Fili Hotel at Nustar Cebu, featured important panel discussions that centered on Marine Environmental Protection and Conservation; Dive Niche Products: Free Diving, Scuba Diving, Black Water Diving, and Underwater Photography; Philippine Dive: Domestic/International Marketing Campaign; Safety, Standards, and Accreditation of Tourism-related Enterprises (TREs) for Scuba Diving; and Investment Opportunities in the Dive Industry.

The dialogue comes on the heels of The Philippines' fifth straight win as Asia's Leading Dive Destination at the prestigious World Travel Awards (WTA) 2023.

In an address, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco emphasized the importance of the two-day convergence of relevant national and local government agencies as well as the Department's partners from the private sector in sustaining the successes of the country's dive tourism industry and in fulfillment of the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. for the Philippines to attain a tourism industry that is "inclusive, where the benefits of tourism are felt far and wide across the countryside."

"The effort, therefore, requires the ability to listen, to understand the prevailing challenges that are present and require solutions that can only be reached with collaboration, convergence, and unity. That is why early on, in the Marcos administration, we, in the Department of Tourism, mandated the formation of the very first DOT Dive Committee," Secretary Frasco said.

The DOT chief, a certified diver, sits as the chair of the Department's Dive Committee which brings together the DOT and its attached agencies, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), and the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD) to support the needs of the dive industry and expand its current portfolio.



A revenue driver industry

The contribution of the dive industry to Philippine tourism was evident in 2022, with the country gaining an estimated PHP 37 billion in tourist receipts from international dive visitors, which constituted over 17.5 percent of the country's entire tourism receipts last year.

According to the tourism chief, the hosting of the first-ever Dive Dialogue in Cebu is also fitting given Central Visayas' status as the country's premier dive tourist destination, as it is home to a multitude of world-class dive spots and is the most-visited destination among overnight regional travelers.

But while Central Visayas saw the inaugural Philippine Tourism Dive Dialogue Secretary Frasco said that the event also puts the spotlight on many other key and emerging dive sites across the country.

"Hindi lang po yung Central Visayas 'yung fini-feature natin today. We have also invited our stakeholders from all over the Philippines in the effort to expand the dive tourism portfolio of the Philippines," Secretary Frasco explained in a media interview.

According to the Secretary, another goal of the DOT-led Dive Dialogue is to capture new tourist markets, specifically for diving.

"The focus of the Department of Tourism is to target various markets, whether that be families, solo travelers, luxe travelers, barkadas, and the like. And we have very specific programs that are targeted to

various niche markets specifically for dive. We have dive enthusiasts from all over the world and many jurisdictions including North Asia, as well as Europe, to whom dive has been a very strong product for the Philippines. We fully intend to capitalize on that and open up to new markets, especially in Europe in the Middle East by making sure that we can collaborate with the Department of Transportation to mount more flights coming into the country from these jurisdictions," she added.

To bolster the local dive industry, the DOT, through its infrastructure arm, Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), has provided hyperbaric chambers in dive sites across the country to ensure that scuba divers will have access to affordable treatment for decompression sickness.

The four operational hyperbaric chambers can be found in Mabini, Batangas; Panglao, Bohol; Mandaue, Cebu; and Puerto Princesa, Palawan. Additional hyperbaric chambers will be placed in Dumaguete, Boracay, Puerto Galera, and Daanbantayan Island, according to the Secretary.

Translating Love into Action

On the second day of the Dive Dialogue, Secretary Frasco led a coastal cleanup activity at the beachfront of the Mactan Shrine in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu.

Speaking before divers, local officials, representatives from various national government agencies, and tourism stakeholders, Secretary Frasco emphasized

the importance of "actualizing love" for the Philippines by doing small acts that would make a huge impact on the generations ahead.

"It is only right that the highlight of our very first Philippine Tourism Dive Dialogue is to actualize this love by protecting that which we love, our marine resources," the Tourism Chief said.

"Through this coastal cleanup today, we perpetuate not only the culture of conservation but also the culture of tourism, for conservation and tourism must go hand in hand if we are to preserve our beautiful and natural resources for the long run. Millions of lives depend upon our protection of the environment and our perpetuation of sustainable tourism. That is why any small act, including the picking up of debris from the coast, the underwater seas, does matter," she emphasized.

Secretary Frasco likewise wished for the protection of the environment, especially among tourists, to sustain the country's natural environment in the long run.

"It is my sincere hope that through our coming together—speaking, collaborating, finding solutions, and deepening our care for our coastal and underwater resources—through these acts, we would be able to begin opening up the minds of our fellow Filipinos as well as our tourists towards the imperative necessity of protecting and preserving our natural environment for now and for the future generations," she said.

Source: Department of Tourism



DOT RECORDS MORE INBOUND FLIGHTS TO PHL, INCREASE IN DOMESTIC AIR ROUTES

Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on 2 August 2023 bared favorable developments on air connectivity benefiting Philippine Tourism in line with the Marcos administration’s convergence efforts towards the development of the country’s tourism industry.

It can be recalled that in Secretary Frasco’s listening tours with tourism stakeholders since last year to get to know the most urgent needs and concerns of the industry, connectivity, and enhanced gateway access were among the urgent and recurring concerns raised by stakeholders.

Since then, the DOT entered into a convergence with the Department of Transportation (DOTr), and collaborated with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), and other aviation stakeholders in determining measures that will promote seamless travel experience, including the improvement of gateways, enhancement of infrastructure, and maximization of the country’s aviation hubs, among others.

The DOT also led route development initiatives, primary to this are meetings with top executives of international and local air carriers to promote the Philippines as a destination for these airlines and forge partnerships as far as the further development of the country’s tourism industry is concerned. Moreover, the DOT also promotes the country’s tourism destinations and gateways in key international aviation networking, and business-to-business (B2B) activities including the Routes Asia and Routes World, among others.

“In keeping with our National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028, we have been working with relevant government agencies such as the DOTr and CAAP, and aviation industry stakeholders, recognizing the urgent need to increase the number of flights into the country and increase overall accessibility for both our foreign and domestic guests, to convey that the Philippine government under President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos, Jr. is exhausting all means to open up the country to business and tourism,” Secretary Frasco said.

“We express our sincerest gratitude to DOTr Secretary Bautista, and the CAAP led by Captain Manuel Tamayo, and all our partners in the aviation industry including our airlines, who have responded to the needs of our tourists and traveling public through the resumption of flights that were halted due to the pandemic, as well as the institution new flights to reinvigorate the country’s tourism industry,” she added.

Additional International Air Seats

Based on the DOT’s Routes Development report for June 2023, eight of the country’s international gateways saw significant growth in terms of incoming frequencies and seats per week.

For instance, on a weekly average, compared to June 2022, Clark in June 2023 saw an increase of 180% in terms of incoming scheduled frequencies and 215% in terms of incoming seats, while Manila saw an increase of 75% in terms of incoming frequencies and 120% in terms of incoming seats.

In Visayas, Kalibo recorded a 640% increase in incoming frequencies and 409% increase in incoming seats, Cebu with an increase of 300% in terms of incoming frequencies and 297% in terms of incoming seats, and Bohol with an increase of 200% in terms of incoming frequencies and 128% in terms of incoming seats.

Davao saw a 50% increase in incoming frequencies, and a 38% increase in incoming seats. Meanwhile, Caticlan and Cagayan North recorded six frequencies from Taipei, and two frequencies from Macau, respectively.

Between June and July 2023, the country welcomed 58 new incoming weekly frequencies from various origin cities into the country’s international gateways.

Increase in Domestic Air Seats

In terms of domestic tourism, the DOT also noted a significant jump in domestic connectivity in the country’s tourism gateways. The industry gained from at least 17 city pairs, with about 83 incoming weekly frequencies that were launched between July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. This includes new domestic air routes that were instituted during this period, including flights between Cebu-Bagui (4 frequencies per week), Cebu-Borongan (2 frequencies per week), and Cebu-Naga (4 frequencies per week).

Among the domestic flights that resumed in the same period include Clark to Bacolod, Busuanga, Cagayan de Oro, Caticlan, Davao, Iloilo, General Santos, and Puerto Princesa and vice versa; Manila to Tablas, and Lal-o (v.v.); Davao to Bacolod, Cagayan de Oro, and Siargao, and vice versa; and Zamboanga to Cotabato (v.v.).

“With the DOT’s Philippine Experience Program and regional travel expos, we are optimistic that our stakeholders, particularly from the aviation industry will see the need to improve connectivity around the country to cater to the growing demands of our travelers,” added the tourism chief.

US-based United Airlines announces direct flights between San Francisco and Manila

Meanwhile, the DOT also expresses its elation following United Airlines’ announcements of its plans to mount nonstop flights connecting Manila with San Francisco starting October as part of its expansion in Asia. At present, United flies to Manila from Guam and Palau. Once the flights between Manila and San Francisco become operational, the airline will be the first American carrier to fly direct to Manila from the continental US in a long while.

Source: Department of Tourism





BREAKING RECORDS AND RESTORING SHORES: MORE THAN 3,000 UNITE FOR OCEAN CONSERVATION AT BELLEVUE BOHOL'S ICC 2023

Bohol, Philippines, September 2023 – In a resounding display of unity and dedication to the environment, The Bellevue Resort's International Coastal Cleanup 2023 set new standards with an impressive turnout of more than 3,000 volunteers. This marked the 6th consecutive year of the event, and the magnitude of participation underscored the growing momentum of environmental consciousness in the Bohol region.

The 5-star sanctuary and ASEAN Green Hotel awardee teamed up with Plastic Free Bohol, Cebu Pacific, Miss SCUBA Philippines, Selrahco, Island Living Channel, DENR, DOT, Provincial Government of Bohol, local government of Panglao, and partners from various organizations to protect and preserve the coastal ecosystems by effectively removing non-biodegradable waste from the pristine shores of Doljo Beach, Panglao. The enthusiastic coastal and underwater volunteers, embodying the spirit of environmental stewardship, came together to make a significant difference in safeguarding the oceans.

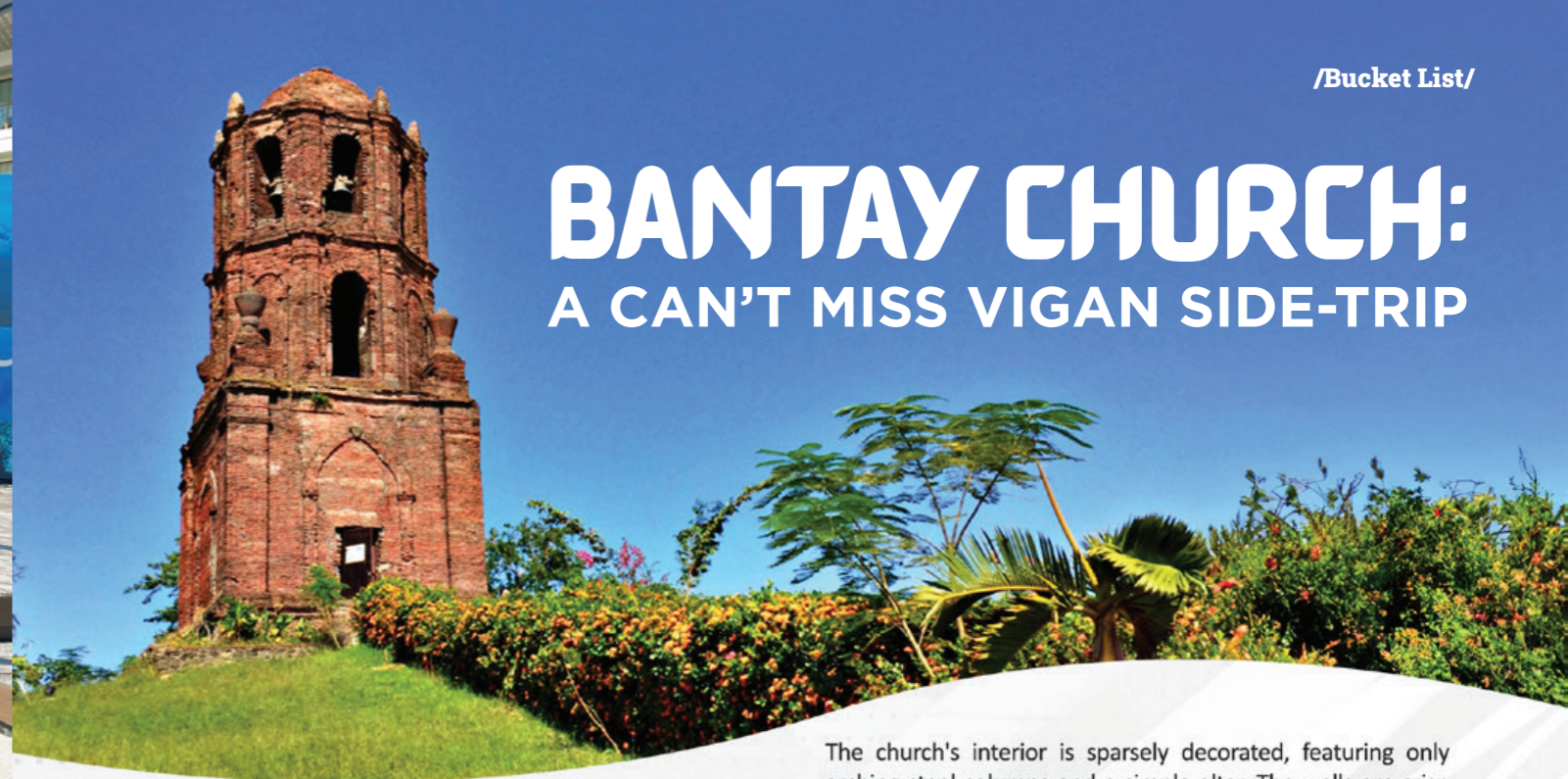
The relentless efforts of these dedicated volunteers culminated in a remarkable achievement: the extraction of 217 sacks of non-biodegradable trash with a total of 1,218.31 kilograms, consisting of plastic bottles, cellophane, sachets, styrofoam, cans, and rubber. Every piece of waste was diligently sorted and

categorized by Plastic Free Bohol team, ensuring a responsible and eco-friendly disposal process.

Expressing gratitude to the partners and volunteers whose unwavering support made this event a triumph, The Bellevue Resort emphasized the crucial role each participant played in making the International Coastal Cleanup 2023 an extraordinary success. The event not only set a precedent but also inspired hope for a cleaner, healthier marine environment for generations to come.

"We extend our heartfelt thanks to our partners and volunteers from various organizations for their indispensable contribution. Their enthusiasm and dedication have left an indelible mark on the success of the International Coastal Cleanup 2023, making it an event one for the books," said Mr. Andrew Fernandes, Resort Manager at The Bellevue Resort.

As the waves washed ashore, they carried with them a tide of transformation and responsibility. The International Coastal Cleanup event hosted by The Bellevue Resort in Bohol emerged as a guiding light, shedding hope on the journey toward a sustainable and ecologically balanced future. With initiatives like these, the Bohol community affirms its commitment to preserving the natural beauty of its coastal treasures.



BANTAY CHURCH: A CAN'T MISS VIGAN SIDE-TRIP

Even if the newly opened Starbucks branch inside one of the historic houses along the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Calle Crisologo has become a side-trip choice when you find yourself in Vigan, make sure not to miss the historical remnant that is the 16th century Bantay Church.

During one of my detours through Vigan many years ago, we stopped by the Saint Augustine Parish Church. Bantay Church, as it is more well known, was originally built at its current location in 1590. After suffering extensive damage during World War II, the current facade was rebuilt in 1950. The church is well-known not only for its Neo-Gothic design combined with pseudo-Romanesque features but also for the Belfry that stands a little further outside than in most churches.

Located in Bantay, Ilocos Sur, the Saint Augustine Parish Church is also referred to as the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de la Caridad and houses the image of the Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Charity—said to be a miraculous image crowned by Pope Pius XII as patroness of Ilocandia on January 12, 1956. Originally, the church was built and designed with Baroque architecture but was reinforced with thick buttressed walls after it endured numerous destructive earthquakes in the late 19th century. This method of strengthening old churches back then earned the Earthquake Baroque architecture label.



The church's interior is sparsely decorated, featuring only arching steel columns and a simple altar. The walls are crisp white, and the large windows allow ample natural light to flood the interior, creating a bright and airy atmosphere. Adjacent to the church is a small museum that showcases a collection of vintage photographs showing the rich history of both the church and the charming town of Bantay. Additionally, there is a lovely small courtyard that leads to a beautiful garden and an outdoor chapel, appropriately named Chapel by the Ruins.

Bantay Belfry, true to its name which means 'guard' in English, proudly stands on a hill, providing a commanding view of the charming town of Bantay. In the past, this structure was strategically built to serve as both a watchtower and a defense against pirate attacks. During World War II, the fort was manned by Filipino Guerilla Fighters and subsequently by retreating Japanese forces during the height of the liberation of the Philippines.

Today, if you look out from one of the Belfry's windows, you can see the pleasant view of the encircling trees and the piles of white crosses planted on multiple levels of graves laid over at the town's public cemetery.

We spent almost an hour just resting and enjoying the view from the Belfry's tower. If it weren't for the arrival of a couple of tourists, we would have stayed longer as we left a few minutes later to give the two of them some privacy. Plus, we were already famished and craving for Vigan bagnet and pinakbet already.

Full of history and charming architecture, the Bantay Church and Bell Tower are must-see attractions whenever you find yourself in Vigan, Ilocos Sur.

How to go to Bantay Church Bell Tower

Take either a slow but calming Kalesa ride or a faster tricycle ride to Bantay Church Bell Tower if you don't fancy taking a 20-minute walk from Vigan City.

Marky Ramone Go is a travel-junkie, writer and photographer based in the Philippines. www.nomadicexperiences.com

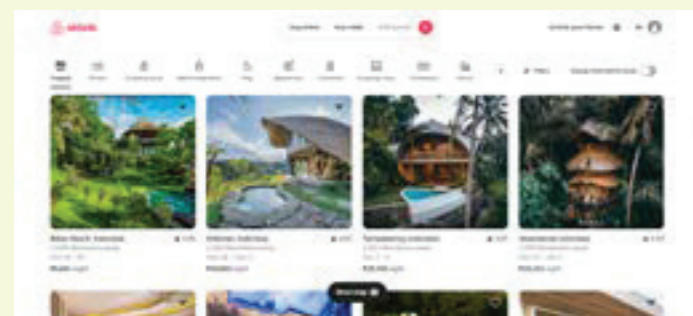
MY Go-To TRAVEL APPS

More and more people are able to pack their bags and explore thanks to advances in both travel and technology. Technology, in the form of numerous mobile apps, has made travel planning a breeze for tourists as more and more places teeming with history, culture, and mouthwatering cuisine are uncovered and added to the list of places to see.

However, with so much information available about a charming getaway spot, a must-try dish, a can't-miss quaint countryside, a cat café, and so on, we need to limit ourselves to only getting the ones we need when we're on the road. To achieve that, we need to have a dedicated travel app to provide data on specific things we want to know when traveling.

Thanks to this age when technology has become a huge part of tourism, these travel apps have become my go-to source of information when I'm on the road, providing what I need to know without causing information overload.

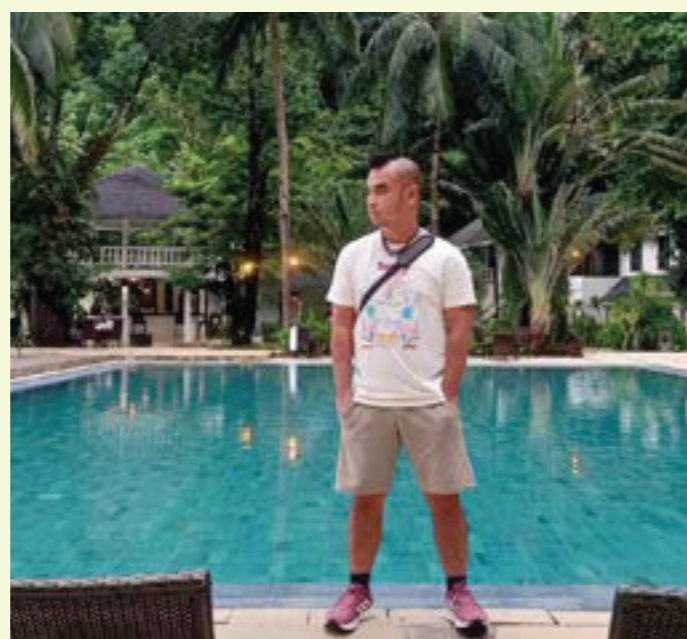
FOR BOOKING HOTELS AND ACCOMMODATIONS: Agoda and Airbnb



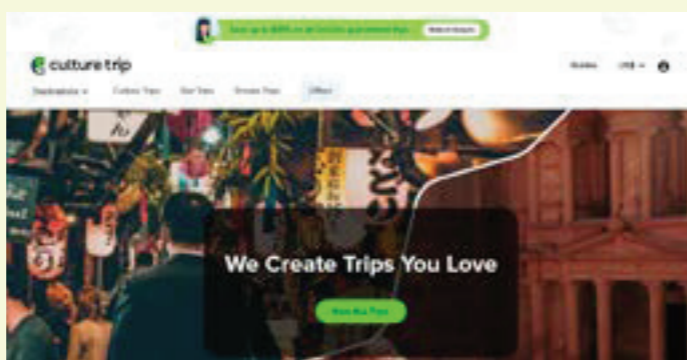
Although both Booking.com and Airbnb now offer other services than looking for a place to crash, such as tours and car rentals, I exclusively use these two just to find places to stay for a few nights since I don't like having to deal with a lot of info in one app.

Agoda comes in handy when it comes to next-day or same-day booking as it features properties that offer last-minute discounts on rooms that have yet to be booked. If you're lucky, you can score a room with a 50% discount.

Airbnb, meanwhile, features properties not usually seen on other booking platforms. These are mostly the quirky, pleasant, and artsy properties not too many people know about. When I travel as part of a couple, I book a place through Airbnb and look for a place that has a romantic ambiance to it.



FOR TRAVEL TRIPS AND INSIGHTS: Culture Trip



While Google and TripAdvisor are also great resource sites and apps, I find Culture Trip's library of travel guide articles really helpful. Although, like Agoda, Airbnb, Booking.com, and many more, it also expanded its services to offering tour packages, I use this app mainly for getting travel tips and insights about a particular destination.

Another top choice is Lonely Planet. Or you can read my travel blog Nomadic Experiences at nomadicexperiences.com

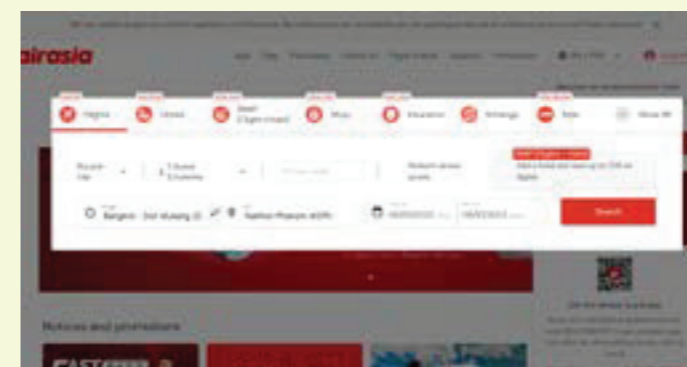
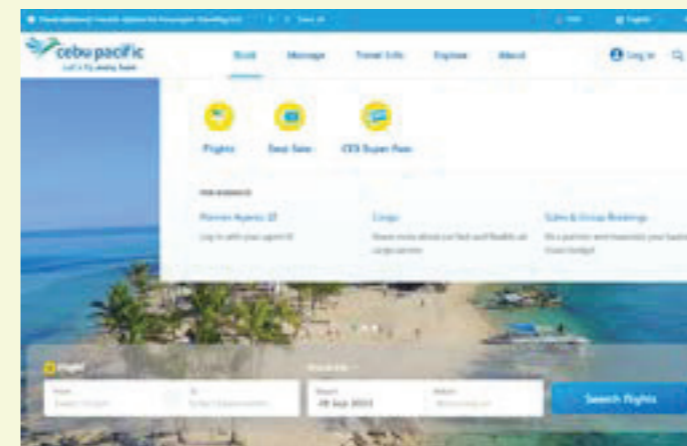
FOR BOOKING TOURS: Klook



This is why I am dismissive of other travel apps that offer similar services (tours and packages) because when it comes to booking for one, Klook is my number one choice.

Klook is a very straightforward app that allows users to discover and book good value deals for in-destination travel services. Its database lets you conveniently explore Asia's top destinations, from getting tickets to the most popular attractions to booking tours of off-the-beaten-path destinations. The app also offers discounts of up to 60% on many activities.

FOR BOOKING FLIGHTS: Cebu Pacific and AirAsia



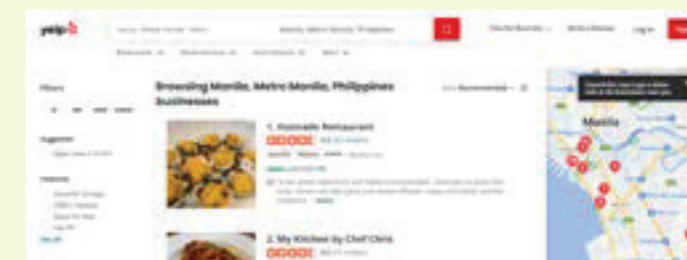
AI would normally use Skyscanner when looking for flights outside of Southeast Asia. However, because most of my travels so far have been primarily limited to the Philippines and Southeast Asia, I utilize the apps of these two low-cost airlines that have multiple hubs all around Southeast Asia when seeking budget-friendly flights. I guess, all of us have that Cebu Pacific Piso-fare notifications set to ON.

WHEN I AM GETTING LOST: Google Maps



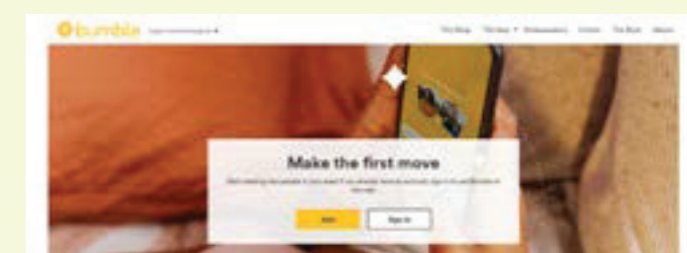
I don't think anyone can top this app when it comes to mapping and geo-tagging locations. Google Maps is a reliable navigation program that has stood the test of time. While most people use it to find the shortest route between two locations, it also allows you to make customized maps, mark your favorite hotels, restaurants, and other areas of interest with pins, and even share these map pins with friends and family.

WHERE TO EAT: Yelp



I'm sure there are other restaurant discovery apps that are just as useful as Yelp, but I've gotten accustomed to its user-friendly interface and the wealth of information it provides thanks to the ratings and reviews left by actual diners.

MEETING NEW PEOPLE: Bumble



If you're an extreme introvert like me who finds spontaneously meeting new people on the road a bit of a challenge at first, Bumble comes in pretty helpful. Travel to a new place, match with someone, break the ice over a brief chat, meet up, and viola. You got yourself a local expert who can accompany you to the hidden gems in the city — while having that "Before Sunrise" kind of date at the same time.

Other notable apps you might find interesting include Happy Cow, a vegan restaurant finder for vegans of course; Triplt, a travel organization app that gathers booking and travel schedules from your email and compiles them to create an easy to read itinerary; Google Translate, a must-have app until newer smartphones came up with their own language translation in their cameras; FlightAware, a live flight tracking app if you want to check a flight status; and PackPoint, a packing organizing app that's quite useful if you're a novice when it comes to packing for a trip.

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TPB TEAMS

Up with TikTok Philippines to Empower Employees in Digital Tourism Marketing

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines took a forward-thinking step by engaging its employees to learn about TikTok as a promotional tool through an in-house learning session entitled, “The Joy of TikTok: Empowering Creativity in Tourism” on 10 August 2023 at the Century Park Hotel Manila.

The initiative, attended by 32 TPB officials and employees, not only harnessed creativity but also demonstrated the organization’s adaptability and commitment to staying at the forefront of digital marketing trends.

“We gather here with a shared purpose — to explore the immense potential TikTok holds in revolutionizing tourism marketing and to discover how we can collaborate to showcase the true beauty of the Philippines,” TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles said in her welcome speech.

Facilitators from TikTok Philippines took the lead by discussing the importance of tracking the impact of TikTok campaigns through metrics like views, shares, and user-generated content.

Creating a successful TikTok promotion that goes beyond mere posting,
30 | September 2023

engagement strategies including the use of hashtags, duets, and challenges to reach a wider audience and drive user interaction were also emphasized. And since authenticity is key to connecting with an audience, participants were taught how to share personal experiences, genuine encounters, and unique insights to make their content relatable and trustworthy.



CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

OCT	09 - 19 OCT	MICE KOREA ROADSHOW South Korea	12 - 16 OCT	12TH REGIONAL TRAVEL FAIR Ilocos Region
	13 - 15 OCT	KOREA TRAVEL SHOW 2023 Seoul, Korea	15 - 21 OCT	PHILIPPINE DIGITAL TRAVEL FAIR 2023 Singapore
	18 - 23 OCT	TAIWAN VIP FAMILIARIZATION TRIP Davao City and Samal Island	22 - 27 OCT	TOURISM MARKETING EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR Tacloban City
	23 - 25 OCT	PHILIPPINE MOTORCYCLE TOURISM REGIONAL RIDE Ilocos Region	25 - 27 OCT	INTERNATIONALE TOURISM BORSE (ITB) ASIA Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore
	26 - 29 OCT	TOURISM EXPO JAPAN (TEJ) INTEX Osaka, Osaka Japan	27 - 30 OCT	HONG KONG SAR TRAVEL ASSOCIATION MEGA FAM TRIP Cebu and Bohol

NOV	03 - 05 NOV	INTERNATIONAL TOURISM AND TRAVEL SHOW Montreal, QC, Canada	03 - 06 NOV	TAIWAN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FAIR 2023 Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, Taipei Taiwan
	06 - 08 NOV	WORLD TRAVEL MARKET London, United Kingdom	12 - 17 NOV	TOURISM MARKETING EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR Cagayan De Oro
	13 - 23 NOV	AUSTRALIA AGENTS FAMILIARIZATION TRIP Palawan	20 - 25 NOV	MEET THE BIDDER Poland
	14 - 17 NOV	DEMA SHOW (DIVING EQUIPMENT AND MARKETING ASSOCIATION) New Orleans, LA, USA	19 - 24 NOV	TOURISM MARKETING EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR Tuguegarao City
	15 - 17 NOV	CHINA OUTBOUND TOURISM AND TRAVEL MARKET 2023 Beijing, China	28 & 30 NOV	PHILIPPINE BUSINESS MISSION (PBM) TO JAPAN Osaka & Tokyo, Japan

DEC	02 - 08 DEC	PHILIPPINE DIGITAL TRAVEL FAIR 2023 Hongkong	02 & 06 DEC	USTOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MARKETPLACE Los Angeles, CA, USA
	06 & 09 DEC	TAIWAN STAKEHOLDERS APPRECIATION EVENT 2023 Kaoshiung and Taipei, Taiwan	06 - 07 DEC	11TH ASSOCIATIONS SUMMIT (AS11) Manila
	15 - 17 DEC	DIVING AND RESORT TRAVEL (DRT) HONGKONG Hong Kong Convention Centre		





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