

TPB spotlight

A Quarterly e-Magazine of the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines

APRIL-JUNE 2024

MICECON 2024 IN CLARK A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

“MICE PHILIPPINES: WE TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO HEART” -- A NEW ERA IN GLOBAL MICE COLLABORATION

PHILIPPINE TRAVEL EXCHANGE (PHITEX) 2023: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE ERA OF INTERNET OF THINGS EARNS GOVMEDIA AWARD

THE TOURISM PROMOTIONS BOARD PUTS LOCAL WEAVERS AT THE FOREFRONT IN LIKHA 3

SUSTAINABILISEA: TPB'S INITIATIVE IN TAYTAY, PALAWAN



spotlight

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ON THE SPOT

If there's anything that this quarter has taught us at the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, it's that innovation is the key to success.

The TPB Philippines achieved multiple triumphs over the past three months, filling my heart with so much gratitude and joy. First, the Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2023, an institutional program of TPB, won the Philippines' Public Sector Initiative of the Year during the 2024 GovMedia Conference and Awards in Singapore. This feat truly underlines the importance of our efforts to push for sustainable tourism in this technologically advanced era. Second, MICECON 2024 had a victorious run, proving Clark's readiness as a MICE destination. This year's MICECON proved that we take businesses to heart by providing activities that resonate with diverse groups from the MICE industry.

On top of that, we at the TPB also improved our ways of working through our move to the Five E-Com building in Pasay. This big shift shows our willingness to embrace change in pursuit of collaboration and efficiency. Our commitment to innovation was also highlighted in our Corporate Social Responsibility program, which was done in partnership with the Save Palawan Seas Foundation. The participating employees propagated corals, learned about marine conservation, planted trees, and distributed solar street lights in Taytay, Palawan, making TPB a source of positive change within the community.

I am confident that all these great transformations won't stop here. The TPB Philippines will continue to flourish in the second half of the year, as we take to heart our commitment to continuous progress.

Sincerely,


Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles
Chief Operating Officer
Tourism Promotions Board Philippines



TPB PHILIPPINES MOVES TO MODERN OFFICE AT FIVE E-COM CENTER

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines has recently relocated its office from Legaspi Towers 300 to Five E-com. This move marks a significant milestone for the organization, reflecting its commitment to enhancing operational efficiency and promoting a more collaborative working environment. Situated in the bustling Mall of Asia complex, Five E-com offers state-of-the-art facilities and strategic accessibility.

The new TPB office is located at the 6/F, Five E-com Center, Harbor Drive, Mall of Asia Complex, Pasay City, 1300.



Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2023: Sustainable Tourism in the Era of Internet of Things Earns GovMedia Award

TPB's PHITEX Wins GovMedia Award for the Second Consecutive Year

The Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2023 continues to be celebrated to this year, proving that the Philippine tourism industry is embracing the digital age while preserving its rich heritage. This flagship program of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines bagged the Philippines' Public Sector Initiative of the Year - Tourism award at the 2024 GovMedia Conference & Awards in Singapore.

This recognition adds to PHITEX's impressive track record. Last year, the program received the National Tourism Initiative of the Year Award at the GovMedia Awards 2023, underscoring its consistent excellence in driving sustainable growth and development in the Philippine tourism industry.

"We are honoured to receive this recognition from GovMedia," said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles. "Awards like this fuel our passion to craft purposeful and meaningful travel into our 7,641 islands. Under the leadership of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, we will continue to harness technology and prioritize sustainability to elevate our tourism promotion efforts and showcase the best of the Philippines and our people to the world."

PHITEX is the Philippines' biggest government-organized travel trade event that facilitates meetings between qualified international buyers and local sellers through tabletop business appointments. In 2023, PHITEX returned to Cebu after 16 years, marking the first fully on-site event since the pandemic.

PHITEX 2023 set a record-high PHP 341.5 million in negotiated sales leads over two days of travel exchange

sessions. These productive business-to-business meetings showcased the Philippines' finest tourism attractions, establishments, services, and products to a global audience, bringing together 88 buyers from 19 countries worldwide and 164 seller delegates from 119 Philippine companies.

Apart from business sessions, PHITEX served as an innovative knowledge-sharing platform through its PHITEX Educational Program (PEP) Talk, featuring insightful discussions on the theme, "Tourism Sustainability in the Era of the Internet of Things." Local stakeholders and academic members engaged in meaningful dialogues, learning from a distinguished roster of speakers who shared their knowledge on the latest advancements in IoT, data privacy, circular economies, gender equality, empowerment, and inclusivity.

Meanwhile, the pre and post-tours program of PHITEX showcased TPB's dedication to weaving sustainability into the fabric of meaningful travel experiences. The pre-tour highlighted Cebu's rich culture and heritage through city and countryside tours. While the post-tour introduced buyers to grassroots initiatives, local textiles, culinary treasures, and other eco-tourism activities in destinations such as Manila-Rizal, Cagayan de Oro-Bukidnon-Davao, Coron, Palawan, Boracay-Romblon, Cebu-Dumaguete, Pampanga-La Union, and Ilocos Norte and Sur.

Looking ahead, TPB is gearing up for the upcoming PHITEX 2024 in Metro Manila this September. To know more about PHITEX and how to participate, visit <https://www.phitex.ph/>



M.I.C.E. CON 2024

in Clark a resounding success



The Philippine MICE Conference (MICECON) returned to Clark after ten years to host MICECON 2024. With the theme M.I.C.E. XD: XPERIENCE DIVERSIFIED, the three-day event, held from July 10 to 12 at the SMX Convention Center Clark was a combined effort of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, Clark Development Corporation (CDC), and various partners from the private and public sectors.



TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles stated that the agency has always been fostering new opportunities for networking, benchmarking, and learning through institutional events, like MICECON. "Our theme embodies our dedication to embracing new ideas, technologies, and practices that will shape the future of the MICE industry," Nograles said.



With 836 delegates in attendance, MICECON 2024 treated participants to a diversified conference experience, starting from their accommodations, the main conference venue, unique and themed social functions, and creative dress codes for the sessions.



In full support during the opening ceremony was the Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco. The Tourism Chief stated that "Clark's selection as the host of MICECON 2024 is a recognition of its readiness and potential as a premier MICE destination. The Clark Freeport Zone's accessibility, state-of-the-art conference venues, and comprehensive support services are very well prepared to welcome all the participants of MICECON 2024."



All about the three-day conference

Ahead of the official opening of MICECON 2024, a select number of delegates were able to participate in four corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. There was also a MICE market at the SM City Clark Event Center which featured tourism packages, local crafts, food products, and other MICE-related businesses within Pampanga.



Brilliant young minds from five universities also competed in the MICE Youth Challenge, where students from the University of the Cordilleras emerged as champions for their proposal to mount a four-day conference on spices, SPICECON: Malembo Pampalasa. Meanwhile, first-time delegates for MICECON 2024 joined an interactive onboarding session that challenged them to design creative pitches for popular Filipino dishes, allowing them to experience a reimagined way of being oriented for a business convention.



A welcome dinner held at the new terminal gates of the Clark International Airport treated delegates to a showcase of Kapampangan culture and highlighted the new terminal's capacity to be used as an event space. The dinner was graced by

the presence of the former President of the country and current Representative of the 2nd District of Pampanga, Hon. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; incumbent Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra; and Pampanga Vice Governor Lilia "Nanay" Pineda, alongside executives from DOT, TPB, and CDC.



Several broad and focused discussions were held simultaneously in the last two days of the conference facilitated by speakers who are experts in the field. This gave delegates a chance to choose MICE and tourism-related tracks that best suited their field in the industry, such as artificial intelligence (AI) technology, crisis recovery and reputation management, inclusive event planning, balancing digital marketing with the appeal of in-person experiences, and training and upskilling the tourism workforce.

The triumphant event served as proof that the future is looking bright for the MICE industry—not just in Clark, but in the Philippines as a whole.

PHILIPPINES NAMED SUSTAINABLE DIVE DESTINATION AT ASIA DIVE EXPO, GENERATES OVER PHP 197 MILLION IN SALES LEADS

The Philippines' participation in Asia's largest and longest-running dive expo—Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) Singapore, was a resounding success, generating Php 197,219,062.09 in combined negotiated sales leads and actual bookings after the three-day event. This year's negotiated sales leads are 300% more than 2023.

In addition to this feat, the country was named the Sustainable Dive Destination of the Year in recognition of its unwavering commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable practices in dive tourism.

"This recognition, alongside our long list of accolades celebrating the beauty of our nation, underscores our steadfast commitment to sustainable tourism practices," said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles. "Participation in trade fairs like ADEX provides us a platform to promote the Philippines' diverse tourism products and experiences. Moving forward, we will continue to work hand in hand with local communities and dive operators to ensure sustainable practices are followed so that our country's treasures will still be enjoyed by future generations in the years to come."



During the expo, the Philippine stand showcased the country's top diving spots. The 90-square-meter booth space featured some of the country's finest dive sites such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in Palawan, the famed sardine run of Moalboal in Cebu, and the marine and natural park of Apo Reef in Mindoro.

The Philippine delegation, led by the TPB, is composed of 16 exhibitors from the dive industry, accommodation, and tour operators, including Laguna Villas Luxury Dive Resort and Spa, Thresher Shark Divers, Infiniti Liveaboard Inc., El Galleon Resort/Asia Divers, Scandi Divers, M.Y. Resolute, Kasai Village Dive Resort, Logon Fish Buddies Diveshop, Earth Explorers Travel and Tours, Aiyandar Beach and Dive Resort, Fun & Sun Dive & Travel, Boracay Adventures Travel N Tours/Fisheye Divers, Sea Explorers Philippines, Atmosphere Resorts & Spa, Bohol Beach Club, and Atlantis Dive Resorts and Liveaboards, who offered dive and liveaboard packages in the top and emerging dive destinations in the Philippines.



In a series of talks and panel discussions, Ram Yoro, a renowned underwater photographer, cave diving expert, Filipino scuba instructor, and author of Guide to Anilao, shared insights on the Best of Philippine diving to further establish and sustain the country's reputation as one of the world's best diving destinations. Other Filipinos also represented the country on several panel stages including renowned underwater photographers, Bo Mancao and Alex Santos, and distinguished sustainability advocates, Cat Trivino and Antoinette Taus.

The Philippines, through the TPB, has been participating in ADEX for more than a decade now. This only shows that TPB values the importance of maintaining the presence of the country in Singapore and sustaining efforts in imprinting a positive view of the Philippines.



Philippines acclaimed the "BEST DIVE SITE PROMOTION AWARD" at DRT show Taipei

The Philippines received the "Best Dive Site Promotion Award" at the Diving, Resort, and Travel (DRT) Show Taipei last 19-21 April, 2024 at the Taipei Flora DOME Expo, Taipei, Taiwan. The Philippine delegation garnered up to PHP 22.4M in sales leads from the show, as a result of their promotion of the country's dive destinations.

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and the Philippine Department of Tourism (PDOT) Taiwan participated in the DRT Show's installment through the three days of dive seminars, workshops, presentations, and other promotions. One of the main highlights of the event is the presentation of awards where the Philippines was hailed as the "Best Dive Site Promotion Award" among other diving sites in Asia. Upon receiving this, TPB COO Margarita Nograles expressed her appreciation, "We are honored to be recognized as the best dive site promotion, as this truly captures the heart of what we are

proud to do here at the TPB— showcasing our world-class sites for travelers to choose the Philippines, and love the Philippines." The accolade recognizes the collective allure of the country's sites divers love to explore, with Anilao, Coron, Puerto Galera, Moalboal, and Malapascua among the highlighted sites.



Spanning the three days, TPB, PDOT and the Philippine sellers made waves in the event by presenting the country's top dive destinations and hosting a session by dive instructor and photographer Ms. Peggy Chiang who highlighted Philippine marine treasures. Moreover, the DRT Show fostered engagement among travelers and the global diving community through activations, sales programs, package promotions, and exhibitions.

As Asia's largest diving exhibition, the DRT Show is committed to their efforts of promoting the top diving destinations and industries across Asia since its pilot last 2010 in Hong Kong. This 2024, Taiwan was the second DRT Show joined by the Philippine delegation, and they are set to return to the anticipated DRT Beijing in August, where they'll share even more reasons to love the diving sites of the country.



PHILIPPINES MAKES A SPLASH AT THE 32ND MARINE DIVING FAIR

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, along with the Philippine Department of Tourism (PDOT) Tokyo, made waves in the international diving community by participating in the Marine Diving Fair held in the Sunshine City Convention Center in Tokyo last April 5-7, 2024. The Philippine delegation yielded a staggering increase of 41.6% in generated sales leads compared to 2023, reaching a total of over 50 million pesos. This translates to a projected economic impact of over 900%.



Considered among the biggest of its kind, the dive and travel fairsaw over 200 exhibiting companies from 50 countries and regions across the globe. More than 50,000 guests also attended the event to discover the latest dive products, tours, and packages that exhibitors had to offer.

“The Marine Diving Fair is a key platform for showcasing the Philippines as a world-class diving destination,” said TPB COO Margarita Nograles. “Our participation this year not only generated significant sales leads but also fostered valuable connections with the Japanese travel industry. We are committed to continuously creating exceptional dive experiences that will surely make every guest discover all the reasons to love the Philippines.”

The TPB was joined by the DOT, the Congress, and private tourism stakeholders in promoting diving destinations in Anilao, Puerto Galera, Cebu, Bohol, Palawan, Romblon, and Dumaguete. To maximize their marketing reach, the TPB and PDOT Tokyo organized strategic online media promotions, engaging booth activities, on-stage presentations of Philippine dive products, and a special networking dinner.

The special networking dinner held at the Sunshine Cruise Restaurant provided a platform for building relationships with key industry players. The event also saw remarks and speeches from Her Excellency Mylene De Joya Garcia – Albano, Ambassador of the Philippines to Japan; Mr. Masao Okuyama, President of Marine Creatives; and Ms. Marivic M. Sevilla, Acting Head of the International Promotions Department in the TPB.

With the annual event set to push through again in Tokyo in May 2025, the TPB aims to return to create greater success. Catering to the Japanese dive and travel community by strengthening partnerships with Japanese agents, translating dive maps, and simplifying sales lead forms are among the key strategies. Maximizing media promotions, customizing more tokens and giveaways, and securing bigger booth spaces were also highlighted.

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Connections Luxury 2024 Showcases the Philippines as a Luxurious Escape in Asia



In a bid to establish the Philippines as a luxury travel destination in Asia, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) successfully hosted the Connections Luxury 2024 in the idyllic island of Boracay on 19-22 May 2024. The event welcomed 37 luxury buyers from TPB key markets including APAC, GCC, India, North Asia, UK & Ireland, Germany and USA making it possible for them to engage with 35 local suppliers in the travel trade and hospitality industry. This gathering is expected to generate a significant US\$17,250,000.00 or PHP 1,000,500,000.00 in bookings over the next year.

Connections Luxury is a world-leading community for decision makers in the travel industry with a focus on luxury, wellbeing, adventure, and weddings. The group takes pride in introducing vetted suppliers with qualified high-caliber agencies allowing the enterprises to provide first class products and services to their respective high-net-worth clientele.

In its second installment in the Philippines, Connections Luxury featured over 560 curated one-on-one meetings infused with vibrant Filipino culture. Highlights included experiencing the Ati-Atihan festival dance, newspaper dance performance, fish house-making demonstrations, Distileria Barako’s liquor tasting, and invigorating coffee scrub, among other activities.

“We are honored to host the Connections Luxury in the Philippines for the second consecutive year. Our breathtaking landscapes and seascapes set a perfect

unforgettable experiences,” said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles. “We eagerly await welcoming the world’s leading luxury travel professionals to our shores, where they will discover the unparalleled beauty and hospitality of the Filipino people.”

Nograles was joined by Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and DOT Undersecretary Shereen Gail Yu-Pamintuan, who both emphasized the importance of the international luxury market to the Philippines.

The event included familiarization tours to renowned destinations like Metro Manila, El Nido, Cebu and Bohol, so that the buyers can experience the diverse and unique offerings of the Philippines. These tours showcased the country’s culinary delights, cultural treasures, and natural splendor.

According to a survey, buyers were impressed by the Philippines’ stunning beaches, vibrant culture, and bespoke experiences such as private island retreats and yacht cruises in crystal-clear waters. The country’s unique value for money, coupled with excellent service, luxurious resorts, and unmatched hospitality, solidify its appeal as a premier luxury destination.

The success of Connections Luxury Philippines 2024 was made possible with the support of event partners Shangri-La Boracay, Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay, Sharp Travel Service, and El Nido Resorts.

The TPB Philippines Puts Local Weavers at the Forefront in LIKHA 3



The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines championed local weavers in the Likha 3 Program held in PICC last June 6-11, 2024. TPB COO Margarita Montemayor Nograles opened the Government Agencies' Talk on June 7 by discussing how the institution's Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Program champions the weaving industry. This initiative of the TPB is similar to Likha, due to their shared mission to promote and preserve traditional arts.

During the talk, COO Nograles explained that the CBT fulfills its mission by organizing capacity-building sessions that can help weavers succeed in the tourism industry. This includes holding marketing workshops that help local artisans develop their competencies in digital marketing, product branding, and sustainable packaging. She also added that the TPB brings influencers and media practitioners to the communities, as part of the CBT program. Through this practice, the area's potential as an attraction and tourism site can be increased. Finally, TPB connects the weavers with tourism stakeholders who can craft immersive tour packages that can attract travelers to the area.

"We imbue the spirit of destination stewardship so we can collectively work towards generating livelihood, spurring local employment, and improving the socio-economic well-being of our local artisans," said TPB COO Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

Aside from contributing to the Government Agencies' Talk, the agency also prepared a booth that displayed woven textiles and brochures featuring various local destinations. These displays allowed attendees to learn more about the communities supported by the CBT Program. Additionally, the booth also served as a way for local artisans to connect with TPB regarding the said program.

The Tourism Promotions has actively been supporting the program since 2023, in solidarity with the Office of the First Lady's initiative to promote Filipino arts and crafts. The Likha Program does not just promote the talents of textile weavers, but also supports basket makers, potters, stone and wood carvers, and other artisans in the Philippines.

A Successful 2nd Philippine Tour Guides Conference 2024 in Tacloban City

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, in partnership with the Department of Tourism (DOT) Eastern Visayas and the Philippine Federation of Professional Tour Guides (TGFed), held the 2nd Philippine Tour Guides Conference 2024 from 09 to 12 June 2024 in Tacloban City.

Attended by over 200 DOT-accredited regional and community tour guides, the conference highlighted the value of the Filipino brand of quality and service, provided key insights on tourism marketing in both existing and emerging markets in the Philippines, and offered updates on digital tools and marketing platforms as alternative economic activities.



"You're not just holding the keys to our destinations; you're the storytellers, the cultural ambassadors who breathe life into each landmark, story, and tradition. By sharing your unique insights and passions with our tourists, you leave indelible marks on the hearts and minds of those you encounter, shaping memories that last a lifetime," said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles during the opening ceremony.

With passionate and skilled guides, this conference represents a significant step in improving tourists' travel experiences and positioning the Philippines as a top tourist destination, aligning with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s vision of becoming a tourism powerhouse in Asia.

The conference was timely, taking place just before the celebration of National Tour Guides Day observed every third Monday of June as proclaimed by Proclamation No. 574, 2023. Following the conference, the Philippine Tour Guides Caravan 2024 visited untapped destinations in the Bicol Region, Eastern Visayas, and CARAGA. This initiative intensifies the Philippine Experience from Luzon to Mindanao through immersion programs and activities geared to refine skills, deepen knowledge, and enrich experiences—ensuring every tourist leaves with a smile and a desire to return.





PHILIPPINE MOTORCYCLE TOURISM RIDES TO GREATER HEIGHTS THROUGH BACK-TO-BACK EVENTS

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines geared up for a double celebration with the National Federation of Motorcycle Clubs of the Philippines (NFMCP) on April 26-27, 2024, and with Vespa Pilipinas on May 24-26, 2024.



The agency joined both activities through an institutional program called Philippine Motorcycle Tourism (PMT). This program regularly works in cooperation with various motorcycle associations and clubs to encourage more people to travel around the country on two wheels. PMT aims to boost domestic tourism and the local economy by collaborating with riders who promote Philippine destinations, local businesses, and tour operators during their trips.

“Over the past few years, we witnessed how influential motorcycle enthusiasts are in promoting domestic tourism. The Tourism Promotions Board aims to empower motorcycle associations and clubs through the Philippine Motorcycle Tourism Program, so that we can encourage more people to safely explore our wonderful country,” TPB COO Margarita Montemayor Nograles stated.

To strengthen motorcycle tourism in the country, the PMT extended its support to the 27th annual motorcycle convention of NFMCP at the Subic Bay Exhibition and Convention Center. The thrilling event celebrated the gathering of multiple riding enthusiasts through fun live music performances and social activities.

Attendees were also able to deepen their passion by learning all the latest trends in the world of motorcycling during the event. Furthermore, businesses displayed motorcycle gear, accessories, and innovations, enabling the participants to increase their knowledge and even get their hands on the latest gears.

A month after the NFMCP’s annual convention, the PMT program also provided support to the 2nd Philippine Vespa Days Conference held in Bagac, Bataan. Around 1000 participants from different parts of the Philippines went to Bataan to gather and ride with fellow Vespa owners and enthusiasts.

The attendees also travelled around Bagac on two wheels to explore the entire town and went to the town of Pilar to reach the beautiful Mt. Samat, as part of the conference. Aside from exploring the local towns, the riders also gathered to educate one another on the upcoming Vespa World Days in 2025 to give the Philippines a chance to win the bid for the event. The Vespa World Days 2025 is expected to gather around 10,000 enthusiasts from all over the world, making the Bataan conference crucial for the Philippines’ bid.

The Philippine Motorcycle Tourism Program will continue to assist in organizing and promoting the national events of various federations to fulfill its mission of reviving domestic tourism.



The TPB Supports the 36th Joint Meeting of UN Tourism Commissions in Cebu



The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines demonstrated its commitment to increase the global recognition of the Philippines by hosting a reception dinner during the 36th Joint Meeting of the UN Tourism Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UN Tourism Commission for South Asia on 28 June 2024.

The TPB organized the Philippines Reception in Sheraton Mactan, Cebu, in support of the Department of Tourism (DOT)’s efforts to champion the country’s landscapes, culture, and gastronomy through the UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Asia and Pacific. This initiative shows the TPB’s dedication to strengthening the status of the country’s tourism sector in international markets.

Around 250 delegates from thirty countries across the globe attended the event. Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, Tourism Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, Hon. Junard Chan, Hon. Cynthia “Cindi” Chan, and Hon. Vincent Franco “Duke” Frasco also graced the hosted dinner.

In the program proper, the attendees were treated to a feast of local culinary delights to promote cuisine from different

regions of the country. The food stations were decorated with local woven baskets, tropical designs, and even street food ornaments to give the guests an authentic Filipino gastronomic experience.

“This hosted dinner serves as a celebration of our rich culinary heritage. This engaging showcase allows delegates from all over the world to discover why Filipino food is gaining recognition worldwide,” said TPB COO Margarita Montemayor Nograles.

The event is part of the Philippines’ hosting of the first UN Tourism Regional Forum on Gastronomy Tourism for Asia and the Pacific, which kicked off on 26 June 2024 at The Marquee of Shangri-La Mactan. The event was co-organized by the DOT, UN Tourism, and the Basque Culinary Center.

The forum aims to boost gastronomy tourism within the region by bringing together experts and from UN member-states, affiliate members, and tourism stakeholders. The Philippines had the honor of being the host of the inaugural UN Tourism Regional Forum, underlining the DOT and the TPB’s efforts to strengthen tourism promotions in international markets.



Clark is Calling

All kinds of adventurers, come along!

There's no need to go too far from the metro when you want a quick trip that covers all bases—from exhilarating and informative activities to Instagrammable spots and rewarding meals. Located about two hours north of Manila, the Clark Freeport and Economic Zone offers unique experiences that will surely tickle your fancy.

Get ready to frolic and sign yourself up for these Clark activities:

MEET AND GREET DIFFERENT WILDLIFE



Bring your loved ones to Clark Safari and Adventure Park, where bears, lions, and tigers, and over 1,500 wildlife species await. This family-friendly attraction is a treat for any animal lover or curious visitor. Why not join safari tours to get up close and personal with these incredible creatures?

REV UP A WORLD-CLASS TRACK



Buckle up and head to Clark International Speedway, where you can speed down straights and take on demanding corners! The track's exceptional layout can fuel your drive to race towards the checkered flag. If you're not quite ready to hit the pedals, watching from the grandstands is equally thrilling.

COOL DOWN AT A CAFE



A good cup of coffee is sure to brighten your day. Make your way to VG Bakery + Bistro if you need a break from exploring the bustling Clark. Indulge in global flavors, comfort food, freshly made pastries, and of course, refreshing beverages. Aside from a delectable menu, the restaurant has warm and charming interiors, perfect for your Instagram post!

DAY TRIP AT A MASSIVE WATERPARK



Get ready for some exciting water action at Aqua Planet. This 10-hectare waterpark has over 38 attractions, including spiral slides, raft slides, and wave pools, making it fun for all ages. If the galvanizing speeds and turns start to get to you, drift away on the lazy river or get some refreshments.

RELAX AT CLARK PARADE GROUNDS



Play your favorite sport, hit your go-to workout routine, or stroll the sprawling Clark Parade Grounds. If you want to chill, this open area is also ideal for picnicking, so bring your favorite snacks when you go!

LEARN CLARK'S STORIED PAST



If you'd rather stay indoors, Clark Museum and 4D Theater showcases artifacts, dioramas, photographs, and other displays that tell Clark's rich history. Don't miss the documentary film played at the 4D theater for a one-of-a-kind experience witnessing the Mount Pinatubo eruption in 1991.

DISCOVER THE DINOSAUR WORLD



Transport yourself further back in time with a visit to Dinosaurs Island. From dinosaur skeletons to animatronic versions of these prehistoric animals, you will surely get more insight about them. Feel like a movie star when you ride the Jurassic Jungle Safari, where dinosaurs seemingly chase you.

FEAST ON KAPAMPANGAN FOOD



Your visit to Clark in Pampanga, the country's culinary capital, isn't complete without a sample of the local cuisine. Make a beeline for Binulo Restaurant to taste comforting and authentic Kapampangan dishes that both locals and tourists vouch for.

Whatever your travel preference is, Clark is a beautiful backdrop for creating long-lasting memories.

Plan your trip and discover Clark by downloading the Travel Philippines app.

Photo Credits: Department of Tourism Region III and Clark Development Corporation



M.I.C.E. PHILIPPINES

We Take Your Business to Heart

A NEW ERA IN GLOBAL MICE COLLABORATION

On the opening day of MICECON 2024, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines proudly unveils “MICE Philippines: We Take Your Business to Heart,” a transformative program and message designed to position the Philippines as a premier global destination for meetings, incentive travel, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE).

“Today is just the first of many activations to show the world the new MICE Philippines. With this initiative, we are poised to attract more local and international MICE organizers to our shores,” said TPB Chief Operating Officer Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles. “A Global MICE with a stronger sales force, an empowered private sector and the full support of the government all embodied in the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence.”

Turning vision to reality

The TPB is preparing a dynamic and empowered sales team within its ranks to actively promote the Philippines as a top-tier MICE destination. This dedicated team will ensure that the Philippines remains at the forefront of the global MICE industry, attracting significant international events and conventions.

The Philippine Association of Convention/Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, Inc. (PACEOS) plays a pivotal role in initiating efforts that aim to increase the level of professionalism and development of our local MICE Industry. The publication of the 2nd Edition of the Professional Event Management book by the Philippine MICE Academy in partnership with PACEOS highlights their dedication to enhancing industry standards and knowledge.

Other associations of the tourism industry such as the Philippine Association of Convention / Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, Inc., Hotel Sales and Marketing Association International, Inc., Philippine Council of Associations and Association Executives, Tourism Congress of the Philippines, Center for International Trade Exhibitions and Missions, Meetings, Incentive Travel, Exhibitions / Events Philippines, Philippine MICE Academy, and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry have always been staunch partners of TPB not just in promoting the country

as a prime MICE destination, but also serve as Counselors of TPB’S MICE Advisory Council.

Additionally, the TPB is offering various incentives for large groups, ranging from airport assistance to hosting themed dinners and entertainment, to further boost the appeal of the Philippines as a MICE destination. This support has been extended to groups from 200 to 2,000, enhancing the overall experience for MICE participants and organizers.

Backed by government

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos has consistently encapsulated this vision, stating, “Under this administration, the tourism industry has shifted its gaze to becoming more than just a promotion arm of the government. We are committed to ensuring that travel is convenient, connected, and equitable for travelers and locals alike, enhancing key and emerging tourist destinations with robust infrastructure and essential services.”

First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos’ initiative to construct the Philippine International Exhibition Center in Pasay City marks a significant milestone for the MICE industry. This forthcoming landmark is set to become the ultimate hub for MICE activities, providing state-of-the-art facilities that will elevate the Philippines’ standing in the global MICE arena. More convention centers are also set to rise throughout the country, one of which is the biggest SMX convention center, set to open in Cebu in 2026.

A Promising Future

Data presented by Grand View Research values the Asia-Pacific MICE market at USD 183.47 billion last year and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10.0% up to 2030, making it crucial to strengthen the MICE industry in the Philippines.

Ending her opening speech at MICECON, Nograles emphasizes that, “with MICE Philippines: We Take Your Business to Heart, our goal is clear: We will establish the Philippines as a premier MICE destination known for its world-class experiences, top notch facilities and unparalleled hospitality.”

Balud, Masbate:

TRAVEL GUIDE 2024 TO ADVENTURES AND DESTINATIONS

BY THE KAMPANGAN TRAVELLER



My Bicolano blood always ignites my wanderlust interest in my next hometown region – Bicol Region. Housing two mini-archipelagic provinces of Catanduanes and Masbate, I am imagining many shorelines with promising tourism potential. Came the town of Balud in Masbate Province. Through the Domestic Tourism Invitation Program with the Tourism Promotions Board, we set foot in the promising land of Balud.

Taking the Legazpi-Pilar-Masbate route, we arrived at the newest Bicol International Airport with the Mt. Mayon at its full glory and splendor. A quick side trip at Daraga Church and a Bicolano breakfast led us to the famous homegrown food chain – Biggs. Momentarily, we transiting to Pilar Port to whisk us to Masbate Island via Montenegro Fast Ships. In less than 2.5 hours, we docked at Masbate City where the coaster bus is already waiting for us. About 1.5 hours of land travel is between us and the white sand beaches of Barangay Panubigan.

Catching some quick snoozes during the transit, we arrived at Beatriz Rafaela Resort – a luxury beach resort. We were welcomed by Balud Tourism OIC Ms. Aida and led us for a quick snack, soon – checking in with our beloved sanctuary for 4 days. We never skipped the opportunity to marvel at Balud’s secret – the grand sunset. I dived on one of their colorful bean bags and watched the golden disk slowly sink at the horizon. It is truly a great sunset, I can, one can challenge that of Boracay’s.

The next days in Balud are filled with awe and wonder because of the natural splendor that awaits us. Taking the half an hour van ride to Calumpang Port, we set sail to Jintotolo Island not only to have a grand welcome akin to heroes, but we enjoyed the splendid beaches, the quaint landscape, witnessed a dance presentation and ultimately capped with the rustic features of the Jintotolo Lighthouse Tower. The island itself itself is a destination. The Alegria Aplaya Beach Resort boasts its own fine white sand beaches and clear turquoise waters sans the crowd.

THE MAGIC OF JINTOTOLO ISLAND

After mooring, the locals, young and adults bearing flags warmly welcomed us as if we were

celebrities. How lovely to see the children’s smile and laughter as one by one we set foot officially at Jintotolo Island. A dance performance by elementary students ensued to begin our tour. After which, we were whisked to Barangay Jintotolo proper where a simple yet heartfelt program set by their Barangay Executive Head to welcome the team. Dancers, Majorettes and a Drum and Bugle team roared alive as we alighted from our respective vehicles. Fresh Coconut Juice were served and delightful glutinous rice delicacies were calling us to devour, all of these happening under the thick canopy of large Talisay Trees, unknowingly, with their underwater paradise about 20-30 meters away from us.

A quick stop at Alegria Playa Beach Resort of Barangay Cantil led us to enjoy its crystalline turquoise waters. Imagine Boracay at its primitive state. Fine White Sand beach and native huts plus the gentle sea breeze that serenaded us as we saunter around this promising beach resort.

More than stunning landscape and seascape, it is the quiet and relaxing ambiance that stood out for me. The long commute is worth it and an overnight stay is highly recommended to somehow give justice on your Jintotolo Island experience.

SOLITUDE AT ITS FINEST

The Lighthouse trip itself exudes a different character. Most centuries old lighthouses are closed to guests, but this one, you could access through its spiral staircase until you reach its observation deck. Careful as you should since the rusty and craggy staircase gets steeper as you reach the top. The ascent is quite challenging for a couch potato, like me, however, the reward is breathtaking and captivating. Not located on the core of the island, but on the highest hill where we the surrounding seas, the main island of Masbate, the towering Mt. Guiting Guiting of Sibuyan Island in Romblon, and the distant peaks of Panay Island are in full view.

It was all but serene at Jintotolo Island. Unforgettable. Remarkable. Gentle. Therapeutic. Loving. Surprisingly awesome!

To know more about Balud, Masbate, you may visit: <https://kapampangantraveller.com/2024/06/18/balud-masbate-travel-guide-2024-to-adventures-and-destinations/>.

TPB MEMBERS BOLSTER SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS WITH ANOTHER CSR INITIATIVE IN ZAMBALES

Twenty-four representatives from the TPB Membership Program headed to Zambales from June 5 to 7, 2024, for a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity. This initiative is a core part of the program, which aims to foster the development and sustainability of the businesses of its stakeholders and the local tourism industry.

"Sustainability is a key part of tourism because this practice ensures that our destinations and the communities governing them will be protected for the years to come. By involving our members in CSR programs, we can enlighten them about creative strategies that enable us to promote attractions without negatively impacting our people and our environment," TPB Chief Operating Officer Margarita Montemayor Nograles said.

Stakeholders from the TPB Membership Program showed their commitment to sustainability by returning to the partner communities involved in last year's CSR program. The first stop was Sitio Yangil, San Felipe, Zambales where participants toured the village, learned about archery activities and their medicinal plants, and joined a traditional dance called Talipi. They also continued the reforestation efforts by planting over 600 seeds of jackfruit and kupang, which are a great addition to the calamansi seeds they had previously planted in the area.

The participants also returned to Alon and Araw Club in Capangan, Zambales, to see how the club engages the local youth in beach clean-up, sports, and learning opportunities. In addition, they participated in plastic sorting and washing activities to learn how to prepare single-use material for recycling. They also discovered creative ways to reuse the washed material as they stuffed the plastics into pillows.

Aside from continuing the previous sustainability efforts, the TPB members went to Sambali Beach Farm for the first time to help clean up the shores of Botolan, Zambales. During their time on the farm, agricultural expert Mr. Philip Camara taught them how to make biochar, a carbonized biomass recycled from coffee pulp, cogon grass, pinecones, driftwood, and other wastes from organic materials. Camara explained that this recycled organic material is useful in agriculture to boost plant growth, enhance soil fertility, and retain water.

The TPB members further showed their support to the partner communities in Zambales by providing livestock, gardening tools, school supplies, clothes, and monetary contributions.



Discovery Samal

Davao's Newest MICE Destination

Imagine the convenience of holding your next conference or convention in a tropical paradise, just a quick boat ride away from Davao City. Discovery Samal, nestled in the beauty of Samal Island, offers both business and leisure. It is easy access and a tranquil escape from the urban hustle and bustle, making it an ideal destination for bleisure. With a diverse range of accommodations, world-class facilities, impeccable service and breathtaking landscapes, Discovery Samal provides a conducive environment for productivity, creativity and relaxation.

Discovery Samal takes pride in its array of conference facilities designed to cater to gatherings of all sizes. The venues are tailored to your needs, from intimate boardroom meetings to large-scale conventions. Its luxury function rooms, Hugyaw, Pangapog, Madayaw and Kaputian, names inspired by the island, are equipped with cutting-edge technology, high-speed internet and audiovisual equipment. If you need a cozy space for a bleisure meeting, its boardroom, IGACOS, is perfect.

For grand celebrations and momentous occasions, the Caracoles Convention Hall can accommodate up to a thousand persons and with breathtaking views of Davao Gulf. Its state-of-the-art conference rooms and event spaces ensure seamless presentations and communication. Whether you prefer a beachfront setting or a traditional ballroom, Discovery Samal has the perfect

venue to elevate your event to the next level.

After a day of meetings or conference sessions, attendees can unwind and recharge in the resort's luxurious accommodations. From our Junior Suites which keep your company just a door away, to our Villas which provide a tranquil and private environment after a long day of doing business, Discovery Samal offers a wide range of accommodation options that provide comfort and convenience. Discovery Samal also offers curated packages for conference attendees, including special room rates and exclusive amenities to enhance the overall experience.

If you're planning to host a conference or convention, Samal Island is an excellent choice because of the numerous recreational activities available. Attendees can participate in team-building exercises or outdoor adventures to explore the island's natural wonders. If you prefer land-based activities, you can also go hiking or visit cultural attractions.

With its pristine beaches, lush rainforests and vibrant marine life, Samal Island provides the perfect playground for unforgettable experiences outside the boardroom, ensuring a well-rounded and enjoyable experience for all. During your stay on Samal Island, don't miss the chance to explore its many attractions and landmarks.



L-R: Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Chief Operating Officer Mark Lapid, Philippine Hotel Owners Association (PHOA) President Arthur Lopez, Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, Philippine Tourism and Hotel Investment Summit 2024 Organizing Committee Chair Francis Gotianun, and PHOA Executive Director Benito Bengzon, Jr.



Secretary Frasco reported that tourism investments in 2023 totaled ₱509 billion, reflecting an impressive growth of over 34 percent compared to 2022, and surpassing the 11.7 percent growth of the entire Philippine economy. The accommodation sector was the largest contributor, accounting for 51 percent of the total investments.

DOT CHIEF HIGHLIGHTS "PHENOMENAL PERFORMANCE" OF PHILIPPINE TOURISM AT INVESTMENT SUMMIT

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco underscored the outstanding accomplishments of the Philippine tourism industry during the inaugural Philippine Tourism and Hotel Investment Summit 2024.

The event organized by the Philippine Hotel Owners Association, Inc. (PHOA) at the New World Makati Hotel on Friday (June 21), gathered key industry leaders, stakeholders, and investors.

"Since the onset of the pandemic, metrics for tourism performance and success have evolved. Globally, tourism performance is measured by visitor receipts, as it is the spending of our tourists that ultimately benefits our economy and provides livelihood to Filipinos. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, Philippine tourism is performing phenomenally," Secretary Frasco declared, highlighting a decisive shift from traditional metrics such as tourist arrivals.

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"The power of tourism to improve the lives of Filipinos through job creation rests on two critical and interdependent drivers of tourism growth: tourism expenditures and tourism investments," Secretary Frasco stated.

Frasco emphasized the significant growth in both domestic and inbound tourism expenditures in 2023, which contributed substantially to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and job creation. The sector employed over 6.21 million Filipinos, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

In a strategic move to expand the country's hotel infrastructure, Secretary Frasco hinted the launch of the Philippine Hotel Industry Strategic Action Plan (PHISAP) in partnership with PHOA.

"Through this summit today, we look forward to further collaborations with hotel owners, investors, and developers to expand their projects in the Philippines, make new investments,

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thereby increasing room inventory and enhancing our global competitiveness," she remarked.

Secretary Frasco also discussed the seven Strategic Goals and Objectives under the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028, the flagship Tourism Enterprise Zones (TEZs), tourism investment through the CREATE law, and the revision of the National Accommodation Standards (NAS) for Hotels, Resorts, and Apartment Hotels.

She announced the DOT's issuance of expanded guidelines for Muslim-friendly accommodation establishments.

Concluding her address with optimism, Secretary Frasco said, "We have laid the groundwork through the National Tourism Development Plan, tourism enterprise zones, as well as our partnerships with all of you. The vision of our President needs your continued support, for it is only through our continued collaboration that we can truly usher in a golden era for tourism, where the Philippines rises to its rightful place as the next tourism powerhouse in Asia."

The summit also featured insights from industry experts such as UN Tourism Coordinator of the Innovation, Education, and Investments Division Peter Jansel and Smith Travel Research (STR) Area Director for Asia Pacific Jesper Palmqvist. Panel discussions with leading developers and hotel entrepreneurs provided diverse perspectives on the future of hotel investments in the Philippines.

TIEZA Chief Operating Officer Mark Lapid and PHOA President Arthur Lopez welcomed the delegates, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and investment in driving the future of Philippine tourism.

Distinguished attendees included Malaysian Ambassador to the Philippines Dato Abdul Malik Melvin Castelino, Vietnam Ambassador to the Philippines Lai Thai Binh, PHOA Executive Director Benito Bengzon, Jr., and other officials from DOT and its attached agencies, tourism stakeholders, hotel and accommodation executives, and aviation heads.

The summit showcased a variety of hotel brands, tourism enterprises, and supplier partners through exhibitions.



Global Summit 2024

PH RECOGNIZED AS EMERGING MUSLIM-FRIENDLY DESTINATION A NEW; DOT CHIEF VOWS TO FURTHER EXPAND HALAL TOURISM

For the second straight year, The Philippines has been recognized as an Emerging Muslim-friendly non-Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2024.

The citation was announced at the Halal in Travel Global Summit held on Thursday (May 30) in Singapore.

The Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) is an annual report benchmarking destinations in the Muslim travel market.

In its 2024 results, the GMTI described the Philippines as an "Emerging Muslim-friendly non-OIC Destination" focusing on building capacity to welcome tourists through various initiatives. These include Halal food across the destination and integrating Muslim-Friendly amenities at major tourist spots. Tourism authorities have placed Halal tourism high on their priority agenda, evidenced by their action to enhance the Halal tourism portfolio and raise awareness among tourism stakeholders about the values and practices important to Muslim travelers."

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco was elated with the recent citation noting that this is an affirmation of the Marcos Administration's commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

"The Philippine Department of Tourism recognizes the significance and potential of Halal Tourism in contributing to the growth and diversity of our tourism industry. As a country known for its warm hospitality, rich cultural heritage, and breathtaking natural

attractions, catering to the needs of Muslim travelers through the development of Halal Tourism is crucial in ensuring that we raise our competitiveness in the global tourism market," enthused Secretary Frasco.

"Halal Tourism presents a rapidly growing market segment. By prioritizing this, we not only demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity but also open up opportunities to attract more Muslim travelers from around the world, while expanding markets for our tourism stakeholders and creating more livelihood and employment for our fellow Filipinos," added the tourism chief.

Beefing up Halal Tourism in the Philippines

The summit coincided with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s state visit to Brunei Darussalam, where Secretary Frasco inked a tourism cooperation agreement with her counterpart in a bid to further develop Halal Tourism in the Philippines, among others.

To recall, Halal Tourism is a priority product under the recently approved National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023 to 2028.

On the sidelines of the recently held Arabian Travel Mart (ATM) 2024 attended by Frasco, the DOT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Megaworld Hotels and Resorts, committing all their properties to be Muslim-friendly.

The Philippines also signed an MOU with the State of Qatar in April this year, aiming at strengthening cooperation, particularly in the aspects of mutual development and growth of tourism and business events.

"Adapting to the changing needs of Muslim travelers by offering Halal-friendly accommodations, dining options, prayer facilities, and other services not only enhances the overall visitor experience but also showcases our respect for diverse cultural and religious practices. This, in turn, fosters goodwill and strengthens our reputation as a welcoming and inclusive travel destination," stressed Secretary Frasco.

Positive Recovery rate in arrivals from GCC Countries

According to DOT data, arrivals from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC Middle East) have posted a recovery of 115 percent.

In 2019, arrivals from the Middle East region accounted for 68,562. Visitor arrivals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reached 43,748, followed by UAE with 10,192 tourists, and Kuwait with 6,309. Meanwhile, tourists from Bahrain totaled 3,296, while Oman and Qatar had 2,526 and 2,491 visitors, respectively.

In 2023, foreign tourist arrivals from the GCC have overtaken the 2019 figures, reaching 79,041 and posting a 115.28 percent recovery rate. UAE led the surge of tourist arrivals to the Philippines with 33,769, followed by Saudi Arabia (19,311), Qatar (10,438), Kuwait (6,915), Bahrain (5,886), and Oman (2,695).



My Hometown

Luzon

Sherile Guinto, a digital creator who produces food, lifestyle, and travel content, reveals the best food and must-visit places in her hometown, Quezon.

Q: Where is your home town?

A: I am from Lopez, Quezon.

Which accommodations would you recommend for tourists in your hometown?

I would recommend for tourists to go to Agatha's Hotel, Rospan, and Kopitel.

What food should they definitely try to eat?

We have variety of food to try in our province but we're proud to offer our very own: Pinangat (one of the ingredients can only be found in town), our local tikoy, and our cacao products are definitely a must-try - choco spread, tablea (for champorado and hot chocolate), and many more products to choose from. We also have different coconut products including spreads and snacks. I also love the pilipit na malagkit. It's a glazed rice flour twists.

We are also proud of our high-end local steakhouse, "Smokehauz ni Mang Kulas".

Which activity/ies should they try when they visit?

If they're looking for a quiet spot to relax, Lost Villa is the perfect place.

For activities, we have events annually where our elders teach our guests on how to weave a pamaymay during the celebration of Pamaypay festival (an almost month-long celebration) and watch traditional competitions like streetdancing, singing, and pageant.

They can also stroll in the booths - the pamaypayan booth where we offer local products, kalye tsibugan to showcase the small food businesses in Lopez, and also a booth where they can shop for souvenirs.

During local days, they can visit the Mangrove walk in Pansol Beach or even experience a local "jetski" in the Calantipayan river. They can also do fishing in Lalaguna Marshland and explore the beauty of farm life in Santino's farmville.



Visayas

A proud Cebuana, Jaja Chiongbian-Rama, shares everything that tourists must try when visiting the Queen City of the South.

Q: Where is your home town?

A: My hometown is in Cebu City, the "Queen City of the South" and a UNESCO City of Design.

Which accommodations would you recommend for tourists in your hometown?

In the city, NUSTAR is an integrated resort that combines luxury shopping, world-class dining, and well-appointed accommodations with sweeping views.

In Lapu-Lapu City, Mactan island, one can find perennial favorite Shangri-La Mactan with its stretch of beach and family-friendly facilities, and the relatively new Sheraton and Reef resorts among many others.

What food should they definitely try to eat?

Cebu Lechon with Pusô (hanging rice wrapped in a woven pouch of palm leaves), dimsum steamed rice (Cebuano nostalgic comfort food, a local version of fookien rice), and Linarang (fish stew).

For an array of local flavors, visit Sugbo Mercado, Cebu's 1st and biggest food market at IT Park, a food destination for local foodpreneurs to share their specialties and showcase the Cebuano food culture.

For special occasions and fine dining, I highly recommend Mott 32. Meanwhile, locals eat in specialty restaurants like CUR8 (whose dragonfruit kinilaw I recommend), The Pig & Palm, Tales and Feelings, Tavolata, and Anzani, plus all day breakfast and bakery Abaca Baking Company, Dimsum Break, and Cafe Sarree. Family favorites are Ginza Japanese Restaurant, a 44 year old family favorite, Olio. On top of that, "Europe" is a new dining destination that's a must-try.

Finally, the restaurants that are popular for tourists include House of Lechon, Hukad, Balay sa Busay, and Cafe Laguna for local eats.

Which activity/ies should they try when they visit?

Where to even begin? With a caveat first.

With 44 towns and nine cities located in the island, this is by no means an exhaustive list of things to see and do in and know about Cebu. Recommendations here are limited to establishments within my hometown, the city of Cebu, and neighboring cities. There will always be so much more to explore around the main island from swimming with the whale sharks, canyoneering, trekking through mountains and to waterfalls, and discovering the pristine white sand beaches (Bantayan, Malapascua, Camotes) located off the coast.



Cebu City:

Check out the newly transformed Tops – for that bird's eye view of the city.

Drive through the 8.9 km longest bridge in the country, CCLEX, coming from the side of Cordova Mactan, for that incomparable view and vista of sea, city, and mountains that make up Cebu's unique DNA and epitomize its multi-facetedness nature. We Cebuanos always say we can go island hopping during the day, head to the mountains for sunset / dusk, and be back in the city for dinner and a night out - "all in one day".

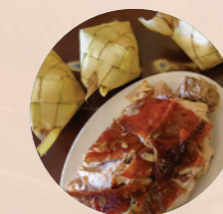
Do a tour of furniture and accessories showrooms - Neil Felipp, Obra Cebuana, Vito Selma, Kenneth Cobonpue.

Hit the bars- From the north, south and middle pass sandbars you can reach within an hour or two of island hopping (tides permitting) to the city's vibrant bars from speakeasies Cava, The Vault Room, Lost Unicorn, Dosage; Silk Road and Fiddler's for live bands and 80s / 90s music; Maya Mexican Lounge, rooftop bar Verified, and clubs like Trademark, Barrio, Proof and Core for the Gen Zs and Gen Zs at heart.

Check out the National Museum of Cebu located in what is known as the cultural district of Cebu where you can visit Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu, Magellan's Cross and other historical and cultural landmarks.

Book a sunset cruise under Cebu's three bridges.

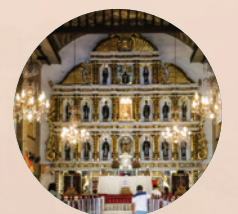
Visit during November to catch the Visayas Art Fair and the third Sunday of January for the annual Sinulog Festival and Grand Parade.



Cebu lechon with puso



Nustar Hotel and Casino



CEBU Basilica Minore del Sto. Nino



My Hometown

Mindanao

Events host **Aziza Navarro Mondoñedo** dishes on the accommodations, food, and activities that travelers would enjoy in her hometown of Siargao.

Q: Where is your home town?

A: I grew up in Alabang, but my grandfather was from Siargao. We would spend part of our summers there way before there was electricity or regular flights.

Which accommodations would you recommend for tourists in your hometown?

There are so many nice resorts to choose from. Las Palmas, Siago, Bravo, Siargao Bleu, Bayud, Isla Cabana, Havana, Kalinaw.

What food should they definitely try to eat?

Kilawin na saang (conch). It's a delicious shellfish that can be prepared many different ways, but my favorite is kilawin with gata. The gata in Siargao is also much sweeter than the gata in Manila.

Which activity/ies should they try when they visit?

I know Siargao has become popular for surfing, but there are so many other things to do there. You can go snorkeling and see a lot of beautiful fish and corals. Hiking in some of the islands gives you beautiful views. Driving through the lowlands, you will see beautiful rice fields.

You can also explore the island on bikes and stumble upon hidden beaches. Some rock pools and caves get exposed during the low tide and it's fun to see what is exposed when there's no water. You can also kayak at night in the mangroves and see fireflies, which are signs of a healthy ecosystem.

Then there are also a number of great restaurants that serve several different cuisines from local to continental. Just take your pick.



TPB MINI SPORTS FEST 2024:

EMBRACING THE AVATAR SPIRIT

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines recently wrapped off its vibrant mini sports fest for 2024, which occurred from May 17 to June 10. With the inspiring theme "AVATAR: Achieve Victory And Triumph with Athletic Resilience," the event featured a variety of sports that fostered camaraderie and resilience among the TPB employees.

A thrilling lineup of games including basketball, volleyball, darts, table tennis, badminton, bowling, chess, and the popular e-sport Mobile Legends were this year's highlighted sports. There was intense but friendly competition, showcasing the athletic skills and teamwork of each TPB personnel.

This year's AVATAR theme resonated deeply with participants, as it emphasized the importance of perseverance, strength, and unity in achieving success both on and off the field. The sports fest not only provided a platform for athletic excellence but also strengthened bonds within the TPB community.

An awards ceremony honoring the players' exceptional accomplishments and sportsmanship along with a presentation of each group's finest muse/avatar brought the tournament to a successful close. The TPB Mini Sports Fest 2024 has set a high anticipation for future internal events of the agency, leaving participants excited for next year's competitions.





Sustainabilisea: TPB's Initiative in Taytay, Palawan

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines partnered with Save Palawan Seas Foundation (SPSF) for its 2024 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, entitled SUSTAINABILISEA: SPSF x TPB Create Hope: Bridging Sustainable Tourism with Environmental Welfare and Community Empowerment. The program took place from June 5 to 7, 2024, in Taytay, Palawan.

The program was held in Sitio Calabugtong and Barangays Casian and Batas. These areas, which face challenges in accessing essential utilities like power and water, greatly benefited from the initiative. By working together, both organizations marked an important step towards promoting sustainability, protecting the environment, and supporting local communities.

To cope with the problem of limited access to power, approximately 600 houses in the coastal towns of Barangay Casian—namely, Sitios Calabugtong, Dinnet, Calampasio, and Sitio proper—received 40 units of solar street lights. Additionally, the TPB provided school materials to students and teachers in these sitios and organized a soup kitchen during the activity.

The next day included coral propagation activities and marine conservation awareness. The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) held a seminar in the SPSF sanctuary

to provide attendees with practical instruction and direction from marine professionals. The participants planted around 200 coral fragments.

Additionally, CSR participants also carried out a nature trek and a tree-planting event at Taytay, Palawan's Lake Manguao, a freshwater lake nestled within the lush forests. It is home to many bird species and has become a haven for birdwatching enthusiasts. The recent activity demonstrates TPB's commitment to supporting sustainable practices for Lake Manguao's conservation and protection, and assisting in maintaining the lake's natural ecosystems.

This initiative also included planting 1,000-2,000 mangrove propagules in Brgy. Batas and coastal clean-up in Sitio Calabugtong. This was a noteworthy effort because mangroves shield the land from the damaging effects of harsh weather events. Coastal cleanup is equally important since it protects marine life from harmful waste. This is highly beneficial to the island's coastal communities.

This collaborative effort between TPB and SPSF underscores the importance of collective action in promoting sustainable tourism, environmental protection, and community empowerment. By working together, TPB has demonstrated its commitment to sustainability, environmental conservation, and community support.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS JULY- OCTOBER 2024

MONTH OF JULY Domestic Tourism Invitational Program - Negros Island, Siquijor	21-22 AUGUST Incentives, Business Travel & Meetings Americas	26-29 SEPTEMBER Tourism Expo Japan 2024	10-14 OCTOBER Tourism Marketing Educational Seminar - Roxas City
02-04 AUGUST DRT Show Beijing	03-05 SEPTEMBER Philippine Travel Exchange	27-29 SEPTEMBER 13 th Regional Travel Fair - General Santos City	11-13 OCTOBER Bacolod Maskara and Unity Ride - Bacolod
07 AUGUST TPB Members' Thinktalk Session 2 (Online)	06-08 SEPTEMBER 35 th Philippine Travel Mart 2024	27-30 SEPTEMBER Regional Ride - Cagayan de Oro	17-19 OCTOBER 14 th Regional Travel Fair - Roxas City
18-24 AUGUST Domestic Tourism Invitational Program - Camarines Sur - Catanduanes - Camarines Norte	13-16 SEPTEMBER Regional Ride - Cagayan Valley	01-04 OCTOBER	20-23 OCTOBER 63 rd ICCA Congress
21-22 AUGUST IBTM Americas	24-26 SEPTEMBER Incentive Travel & Conventions Meeting Asia (IT & CMA)	09 OCTOBER Thinktalk Session 3 (Online)	23-25 OCTOBER Internationale Tourism Borse (ITB) Asia

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