



1st Mindanao Tourism Expo touts readiness of Minda regions to receive tourists- DOT Chief

DAVAO CITY - The successful launching of the very first Mindanao Tourism Expo in Davao City signals the readiness of the region to further reopen its doors for international and local travels, Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said last January.

The first of its kind, Frasco said the regionalization of the highly anticipated tourism expo in a new era of tourism development in Mindanao.

The tourism chief graced the inaugural event touted as the largest three-day tourism gathering that brought in a total of 69 booths with 41 exhibitors from public and private sectors and other tourism allied services held this year in Mindanao.

In her keynote address, the tourism chief emphasized the importance of bringing tourism expos to the regions.

"One of my very first remarks when

asked about plans for tourism was reopening Mindanao for tourism," she said.

"Since then, the effort has not only been to concentrate on what the Department of Tourism has been doing in the past few years but also to expand the reach of the traditional mandate of the Department to look into the necessary pillars of true tourism development to take a long hard and honest look at what needs to be changed and improved on to recover our losses from the pandemic and come back stronger than ever," she said.

Frasco noted that the marching order of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. since he assumed office was not only to continue to promote and develop the country's key destinations but also to allow the benefits of tourism to reach as far as possible countrywide.

(continue on page 3)



PHL breaches 2.6M arrivals for 2022; DOT chief bullish of 2023 projections



PHL, CHINA ink tourism implementation deal



Chinese tourists receive warm welcome from PHL; DOT foresees swifter tourism recovery with Chinese outbound group tour



Tourism chief affirms DOT's support to PH Dev't Plan 2023-2028

DOT Regional Directors hold meeting to amplify BBMG, FBSE, others



The Department of Tourism (DOT) Tourism Regulation Coordination and Resource Generation Sector (TRCRG) conducted its first Regional Directors meeting this year at Cebu City last January.

The activity aimed at tracking and aligning the implementation of the 2023 programs and activities of the Department's regional offices and other sectors including the Tourism Standards and Accreditation; Trainings and Manpower Development; Product and Market Development; and Disaster Management.

Part of the agenda was the discussion of the priority programs of the Tourism Secretary, namely the Bisita, Be My Guest

program, the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) Trainings, and the Philippine Tourism Experience following the pronouncements of the DOT to double the achievements made from 2022 such as the tourist arrivals, tourism receipts, and jobs generation.

The meeting was led by Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, Assistant Secretaries Ma. Rica C. Bueno and Engr. Christopher Morales, with OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso of Tourism Development, Director Reynaldo Rosas of Internal Audit Service, and Ms. Arlene Alipio of Office of Industry Manpower and Development as speakers. **DOT**

on the DOT: Staff

On the DOT is published by the
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
AND ADVOCACY

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Czarina Zara-Loyola
Edwin S. Martin

Editor-in-Chief:

Rae Marrie L. de Mesa

Managing Editor:

Charles Adonis C. Usi

Associate Editor:

Mikee Denise P. Pascual

Graphics/Layout Artist:

Reselda C. Bernardo,
Kyla Marisse B. Valdez

Writers:

Hanah Lee B. Tabios,
Darenn G. Rodriguez

Photographers:

Larry D. Moran,
Denison G. Manuel

Production:

Ma. Teresa C. Esguerra,
Ramon T. Rebulado,
Daniel R. Cruz,
Ely V. Aldea,
Abe B. Valencia Jr.



Department of Tourism,
3rd Flr., DOT Bldg., Sen. Gil
Puyat Ave., Makati
Email: dot_media@tourism.gov.ph
Website: beta.tourism.gov.ph

/DepartmentOfTourism
 @TourismPHL
 @Tourism_PHL

1st Mindanao Tourism Expo touts readiness of Minda regions to receive tourists- DOT Chief



(continued from page 1)

As this year's regional tourism expo zeroed in on the "Colors of Mindanao", she said that it clearly justified how beautiful the region was, citing that the diversity in culture and tradition now prompts its readiness to receive tourists not only from the Philippines but all over the world.

"So we are doing our very best to spread tourism development to the countryside, and that includes initiatives such as this that bring the potential of our cities, municipalities, and provinces of Mindanao to tourism development."

"Mindanao is vital and essential in terms of tourism development because it is a hidden gem that has yet to be fully discovered and developed," she said.

Meanwhile, Director Tanya Rabat-Tan of DOT-Region 11, the host of the expo, noted that it is the right time to experience Mindanao, primarily its untouched natural wonders.

"The time has finally come for Mindanao with this very first Tourism Expo. For years, the ever passionate stakeholders of Mindanao tourism industry have been doing their best efforts not just to bring out the best in their respective regions but also to persuade visitors to go and visit them," she said.

Fifteen other tourism regional directors were also in attendance for them to fully grasp the offerings of the region which will be

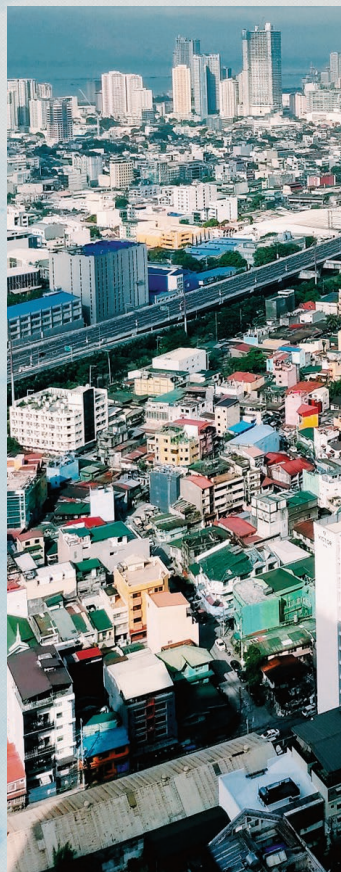


incorporated to the Department's "The Philippine Experience" program which took inspiration from Cebu's iconic "Suroy Suroy Festival," according to Frasco.

Meanwhile, the event gathered diplomats, including Malaysia Consul General Deddy Faisal Bin Ahmad, China Consul General Li Lin, Indonesia Consul General Achmad Djatmiko, Myanmar Consul General Anna Te, Hungary Consul General Mary Ann Montemayor, Austria Honorary Consul Dr. Peter Faisteur, Denmark Honorary Consul Rowena Vida-Lisbon, China Deputy Consul General Liu Qian, and China Consul of Commerce Ji Jun.

Other officials present at the event were Davao Oriental Governor Corazon Malanyaon; Davao Council Al Ryan Alejandre who represented Mayor Sebastian Duterte; Samal Mayor Al David Uy; and Davao City Councilors Bernie Al-ag and Myra Ortiz; and Davao Occidental Board Member Brett Bautista. DOT Undersecretaries Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, Ferdinand Jumapao, Myra Paz Abubakar, Assistant Secretary Verna Buensuceso, Directors Ronald Conopio and Roberto Alabado III also attended the event.

The Mindanao Tourism Expo ran from January 27 to 29, 2023 at the SMX Convention Center in SM Lanang, Davao City. It was made in partnership with Cebu Pacific and Davao Visitor Destination Hub (DVDH). **DOT**



PHL breaches 2.6M arrivals for 2022; DOT chief bullish of 2023 projections

The holidays have delivered further gains for the Philippine tourism industry as it breached its 1.7 million target by year-end with 2.65 million international visitor arrivals as of December 31, 2022, translating to P173.67 billion tourism revenue.

The new record has nearly one million additional visitors entering into the country than the year-end target.

This was based on the monitoring conducted by the Department of Tourism (DOT) from time the country has reopened its borders for all types of travelers in February until December 31, 2022, where Filipinos abroad were expected to flock back to the country for the annual Christmas and New Year celebrations as well as visits from foreign tourists who chose the Philippines as their holiday destination.

Of the total 2.65 million international visitor arrivals last year, 628, 445 were returning Filipinos while the bulk of 2.02 million tourists were foreigners from the country's top tourist markets from the United States (505,089), South Korea (428,014), Australia (137,974), Canada (121,413), the United Kingdom (101,034), Japan (99,557), Singapore (53,448), India (51,542), Malaysia (46,805), and China (39,627).

In her New Year's Eve message, the tourism chief expressed her elation on the achievements made by the administration of President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr. just six months after assuming office. She said this clearly showed the gains of the Marcos administration's support for tourism and the hard work of the entire tourism industry towards recovery amid the setbacks from the unprecedented crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"On behalf of the Department of Tourism, we wish you all a New Year filled with abundance, optimism and hope. Moments of great difficulty are also moments of great opportunity. In the past, we

have overcome a global pandemic, survived various calamities, and thrived through a host of many other challenges, yet, the Philippine tourism industry has managed to exceed expectations and our tourism partners and frontliners continue to offer the best of Filipino grace and hospitality to the world," the tourism chief said.

Frasco also thanked President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. for his continuous support to the tourism industry as one of the drivers for economic recovery.

She noted that the efforts made by the Department, together with its partners, were part of the current administration's vision for it to be a catalyst for the Philippines' economic resurgence not only in terms of job opportunities but investments as well.

"Therefore, we welcome 2023 with gratitude and excitement for Philippine Tourism to bounce back stronger than ever. We shall welcome with warmth and that distinct Filipino smile visitors from all over the world as they visit our award-winning beaches, experience the richness of our culture, and enjoy our world-renowned Filipino Brand of service excellence," she said.

Meanwhile, the previous year has generated an estimated 5.23 million tourism-related jobs. There were also 11,989 DOT-accredited tourism enterprises as of December 29, 2022. A total of 25,770 tourism stakeholders have also been trained.

Last year, Frasco revealed to the media that the DOT is targeting 4.8 million international visitors in 2023 as its baseline but she remains hopeful that the Department will again surpass its targets just like the achievements done in 2022.

"We look forward to the continued convergence and collaboration of our tourism stakeholders—travelers, tourism players, national agencies, local government units, and host communities—in propelling our industry to the heights of becoming a tourism powerhouse in Asia," the tourism chief enthused. **DOT**

PHL, CHINA ink tourism implementation deal

BEIJING, China - The Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) and its counterpart Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China have signed an Implementation Program on Tourism Cooperation last January to push for the bilateral tourism cooperation between the Philippines and China.

Philippine Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco signed the Implementation Program (IP) on Tourism Cooperation together with People's Republic of China Culture and Tourism Minister Hu Heping in the presence of Philippine President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr. and PRC President Xi Jinping.

The ceremonial signing was one of the highlights of the three-day state visit of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. in the Chinese capital Beijing, where Frasco is one of the Cabinet officials who joined the President.

"We are grateful for China's commitment and interest in partnering with the Philippines as we usher in this new era of tourism focused on building the industry into a stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient economic pillar for the country's transformation into a tourism powerhouse in Asia," Frasco said.

"This Implementation Program with China will generate massive employment opportunities and investments across all sectors of tourism throughout the Philippines. Our governments will work together on increasing tourist arrivals, resuming and adding direct flights to key and emerging destinations, joint promotional activities, and inviting tourism investments in infrastructure, among others," explained Secretary Frasco.

The Implementation Program aims to realize the goals stated in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Philippines and China back in September of 2002.

Under the five-year cooperation, both countries have agreed to encourage and support the exchange of their respective administrators and tourism professionals in order to strengthen the mutual development in the field of hotels, resorts, cruise, port, tourism products, and other related industries and competency standards.

It also covered the cooperation on tourism safety where both parties will make joint measures to guarantee the rights, interests, and safety of tourists visiting each other's country.

Local tour operators and travel agencies will also take part in the IP by jointly advertising both the countries tourist offerings through promotional materials by highlighting significant attractions and destinations as well as enhancing public information exchange.

Collaborative workshops and training sessions will be conducted which will cover topics including cruise/port development, tourism products and lake development, understanding the tourism market and industry, search and rescue operations for first-aid measures as well as security



measures.

Both the Philippines and China are expected to support each other's tourism departments and enterprises in holding travel fairs, tourism exhibitions and other promotion initiatives, to inform the traveling public about their products and services, at the same time, cultivate awareness of environment protection and sustainable development in the growth of their respective tourism industries.

"Also among the salient points of this Implementation Program is to advocate the best practices and knowledge in sustainable tourism which includes the promotion of eco-friendly products and services. We will also encourage investments in tourism infrastructure and support tourism enterprises of both countries to cooperate in the development of tourism projects in accordance with the current laws and regulations in each other's countries," enthused Secretary Frasco.

A technical working group composed of officials from the DOT and China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China will meet at least once a year or whenever necessary to further discuss the implementation covered in the agreement.

In 2019, the Philippines recorded an 8.26 million international visitor arrivals where China placed second as the country's top tourist market with a total of 1.74 million arrivals. **DOT**

Lunar New Year Message of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco

Xin Nian Kuai Le (新年快乐)! Mabuh!

As we welcome the Year of the Rabbit, I send the warmest greetings of the Department of Tourism for a happy and prosperous Lunar New Year.

The rabbit symbolizes longevity, peace, and prosperity. As we usher in this New Year with hope and optimism for the tourism industry, we look forward to a stronger partnership and collaboration with the Chinese community and stakeholders the year ahead.

We are grateful for the commitment to the continued pursuit of fruitful and productive Filipino-Chinese interactions. This longstanding friendship dating back to our forefathers is a testament to our common values and aspirations for the prosperity of our families and communities.

The recent signing of the Implementation Program for tourism cooperation between the Philippines and China during the state visit of Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. at his meeting with the People's Republic of China President Xi Jinping emphasizes further the importance with which we view people-to-people relations and cultural exchanges between our two nations, and will only serve to enhance our mutual goals for tourism development.

China, with its storied history, tradition, and culture has in many ways intertwined with the Filipino way of life. We value this unique bond as we incorporate our culture and heritage as part of our agenda in tourism enrichment and development.

We look forward to the significant contribution of the Chinese market to the recovery and resurgence of the Philippine travel and tourism industry. We gladly welcome back our Chinese friends to the Philippines' award-winning and emerging tourist destinations.

We embrace with enthusiasm the continued convergence and collaboration of our tourism stakeholders - travelers, tourism players, national agencies, local government units, and host communities - in making the Year of the Rabbit a truly prosperous year for Philippine tourism.

Xiexie nimen! **DOT**



Chinese tourists receive warm welcome from PHL; DOT foresees swifter tourism recovery with Chinese outbound group tours

MANILA - The Philippines mounted a warm welcome reception for arriving Chinese tourists last January in celebration of the Chinese New Year and the continuous influx of Chinese visitors, following the easing of outbound travel restrictions of China.

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco personally welcomed the batch of visitors arriving onboard Xiamen Airlines flight MF819, together with China's Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian, and Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) General Manager Cesar Chiong, Xiamen Air General Manager of Manila Office Yan Tan, in time for the celebration of the Lunar New Year.

The party made sure the guests, about 190 passengers who departed from the Chinese City of Xiamen past 2:00pm and arrived at the country's main gateway Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 1 at 4:55pm, were greeted with the world-renowned Filipino hospitality.

The visitors were presented with leis and gifts from the DOT, MIAA, the Embassy of China in the Philippines, and a Filipino-Chinese private stakeholders organization.

The welcome ceremony was made even more colorful and lively by Filipino bamboo orchestra musicians.

"The arrival of Chinese tourists to the Philippines signals a very auspicious start to the New Year and indicates a positive result of President Bongbong Marcos Jr.'s state visit to China to further the relations between our countries," Secretary Frasco said. *(continue on page 7)*



Chinese tourists receive warm welcome from PHL; DOT foresees swifter tourism recovery with Chinese outbound group tours

(continued from page 6)

“We anticipate even more Chinese tourists to arrive which will greatly help us in our efforts to transform and to recover the tourism industry as our intention is not only to regain our pre-pandemic numbers but to exceed it knowing how the relationship between the Philippines and China will only further improve in the years to come with the stance of both our governments,” the tourism chief added.

The early batch of Chinese visitors made the Philippines the latest country to welcome their return for inbound travel after China lifted restrictions to outbound travels of its nationals. Such a move is seen to positively impact economies as China remains one of the world’s top sources of foreign tourists with high visitor spending.

“We believe that with the development of our tourism cooperation that there will be a growing number of Chinese tourists coming to the Philippines to enjoy the beauty of this country,” remarked Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian.

“The recent state visit of President (Ferdinand Marcos) to China, both presidents of China and the Philippines have agreed to make people to people exchanges as one of the four already areas of cooperation and of course during the visits, our tourism cooperation was actually signed so I think that today’s event is also one of the measures to implement the agreement reached by our two leaders,” Ambassador Xilian added. (continue on page 8)





Chinese tourists receive warm welcome from PHL; DOT foresees swifter tourism recovery with Chinese outbound group tours

(continued from page 7)

Meanwhile, the country is among the 20 nations identified by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism to be part of its pilot areas for outbound tourism group tours, including its neighboring ASEAN nations Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Laos, as well as Sri Lanka, the Maldives, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Russia, Switzerland, Hungary, New Zealand, Argentina, Cuba, and Fiji.

"I would like to express my gratitude to the government of the People's Republic of China for identifying the Philippines as one of the first 20 countries where group tours are allowed. The Philippines is open and ready to welcome our friends from China as we continue to improve the relationship between our two nations which spans millennia. We welcome you to the Philippines and we cannot wait to let you feel the warmth of the Filipino people and to enjoy our award-winning beach destinations and all our nature-based offerings. The Philippines is a country blessed with many islands, a wealth of cultural offerings, wonderful food, and the warmth of the Filipino people. And we look forward to all of you visiting our country," Secretary Frasco remarked.

At the time when the Philippines recorded an 8.26 million all-time high international visitor arrivals in 2019, China ranked as the second country with the most number of visitors brought to the Philippines amounting to over 1.7 million visitors next to South Korea.

But as the Chinese government imposed lockdown measures, outbound Chinese tourists declined over time.

The upward trend of arrivals is now seen where as of January 24, 2023, China earned the 10th spot in terms of international tourist arrivals with 6,673 visitors with almost half or 45.68 percent visiting the country for holiday or pleasure. **DOT**



DOT Chief hails successful Suroy Suroy Sugbo

Photos By: Cebu Provincial Government

CEBU - Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco lauded this year's successful edition of "Suroy Suroy Sugbo" last January.

Secretary Frasco graced the concluding ceremony of Suroy Suroy Sugbo held in Liloan, Cebu and attended by some 900 participants including House Deputy Speaker Duke Frasco and DOT officials Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, Undersecretary Myra Abubakar, OIC Undersecretary Secretary Verna Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Rica Bueno, and all DOT regional directors.

Fifteen local government units (LGUs) were also in attendance, including Capitol, Consolacion, Compostela, Carmen, Tobogon, Daanbantayan, Medellin, San Remegio, Santa Fe, Madridejos, Bantayan, City of Bogo, Borbon, Sogod, Catmon, and Liloan.

"Suroy Suroy Sugbo", a Cebuano phrase which means to go around and visit Cebu, is a flagship tourism program of the tourism chief's mother, Governor Gwen Garcia, that has seen its success over the years since its implementation in 2005 by giving each town the opportunity to showcase their unique tourism offerings, including destinations, festivals, food, and products through a preview of the towns prepared by the LGUs and local tourism stakeholders and residents.

In her visit to her hometown where she was formerly the mayor, Frasco was joined by the regional directors for them to personally experience one of Cebu's grandest events which will now be replicated as a national tourism program by the DOT called "The Philippine Experience."



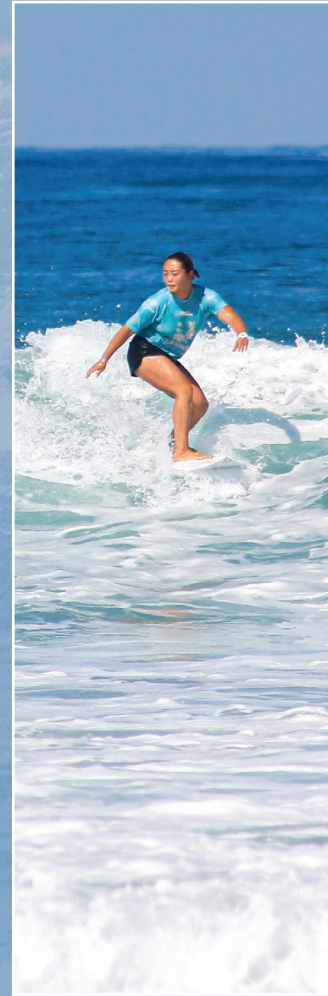
"I am sure that you have seen with your own eyes, tasted this in the food that has been prepared, and feasted on it with the festivals, you have felt the love of all Cebuanos for their culture and their willingness to welcome you into their homes," the tourism chief said in her speech.

"For me, Cebu's Suroy Suroy Sugbo is the best representation of why there is reason to hope in the prosperity of tourism in the Philippines," she emphasized.

Taking inspiration from Suroy Suroy Sugbo, the Philippine Experience will highlight the Filipino brand and identity in all aspects of the travel and tourism experience which will facilitate cultural tourism circuit development focused on heritage, culture, and arts to enhance current tour and domestic circuit offerings, which include thematic experiences on Food and Gastronomy, Pilgrimage and Wellness, Festivals, Living Cultures and Heritage, and the Arts.

It will also link key destinations to lesser-known destinations and expand the country's tourism portfolio that includes sun and beach offerings, nature-based tourism, diving, food, education, health, MICE, and farm tourism. **DOT**





DOT hails World Surfing League in La Union 2023

LA UNION - With the country's tourism activities already in full swing after limited travel brought by the pandemic, the Department of Tourism (DOT), through DOT Region 1 and the local government of La Union, heralds its first largest international surfing competition in Urbiztondo, La Union.

The World Surf League (WSL), a global organization that holds surfing events worldwide and developed the international ranking system for surfing, staged the World Surfing League La Union International Pro 2023, a 7-day tourney from January 20-26, 2023 at 'The Point' in Urbiztondo Beach. DOT, the local government of La Union, and several private sector partners co-sponsored the event which drew international surfers from different parts of the globe.

DOT Undersecretary Ferdinand "Cocoy" Jumapao said that La Union is not just a normal surfing town, but can also be considered a home to many surfers and travelers because of the relaxed vibe and friendly community.

"It is but high time that La Union takes a prime position as a surfing destination. With its natural waves, which cater to different levels, from the beach goers, to learners, and the better surfers, La Union has it all." Undersecretary Jumapao said in his speech at the closing ceremony on behalf of Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco Garcia. *(continue on page 11)*

DOT hails World Surfing League in La Union 2023

(continued from page 10)

Undersecretary Jumapao also underscored the significance of this international event of this scale considering that San Juan is the only popular surfing town in La Union and hopes that the activity will encourage other towns to develop their coastline for the development of new surf spots.

"There is so much room for development in Philippine sports tourism, and it is our hope in DOT that this summit would serve its purpose beyond sheer sports, but as a call to action on our shared responsibility in the national government, the private sector and the local government", USec. Jumapao said.

The event was cosponsored by private sector stakeholders Next Gen Philippines and through this convergence was able to invite WSL and the United Philippines Surfing Association (UPSA) to stage the event in the province. WSL Tour Director for Asia Pacific Region Ty Sorati saw the potential in holding the event in La Union as he saw the waves were perfect for surfers.

"The waves here in La Union is actually well-suited for longboarding and shortboarding and it's a popular surfing town. We hope to do more events here by next year." Sorati said.

Competition winners

Local favorite Rogelio "Jay-R" Esquivel, emerged as the champion for the Men's Longboard Division while Natsumi Taoka from Japan bagged the top prize for the Women's Longboard Division. Esquivel however failed to make it to the finals in the Men's Shortboard category as he fell to Indonesia's Oney Anwar in the semifinal round. Indonesian surfer Ketut Agus eventually claimed the top spot for the shortboard category for the men's division.

"Sobrang saya kasi first time ko manalo sa WSL event at dito pa mismo sa hometown ko. Hindi ko maexplain gaano kasaya and ayun syempre nagpapasalamat ako sa lahat ng



sumuporta sa mga laban ng filipino mas pinalakas nyo loob namin." Esquivel said.

Aside from Esquivel, Benito Nerida, also a native of La Union, garnered an equal third place with Deni Pirdaus from Indonesia. Another Filipino competitor for the Women's Longboard Division Daisy Valdez also got an equal third place finish with Sakura Inoue from Japan.

For the Women's Shortboard Division, Shino Matsuda from Japan bested three other finalists to win the top prize. Overall, a total of 131 competitors competed in the tourney coming from different parts of the world including: France, Japan, Indonesia, Sweden, Taiwan, and Thailand.

"This is my best result on the QS - I'm so happy," Matsuda said. *"I was injured last year, so I didn't get any good results, so this win gives me confidence going forward. I like this wave and going on my backhand, so it felt great to have these waves to compete in. La Union is a fantastic place, with good food and great people. They're all so supportive. My board caddy was Filipino, and I think that helped me get this win."*

Surfing has been the province's top attraction as La Union's coastline faces the West Philippine Sea with waves that can reach up to 8 to 10 feet on a good swell. WSL only solidified La Union's standing as one of Asia's top surfing hub as thousands of surfers and tourists flock to the northern province to ride the waves during surf season.

"Sobrang malaking tulong ito sa turismo ng Pilipinas especially sa mga surf spots kasi nadidiscovers ng mga pro surfers yung ibat ibang klase ng surf spot dito and yun mas pupuntahan pa tayo ng ibang mga tao." Esquivel said.

The seven-day event included side events such as the opening ceremonies (January 20), La Union Surf Festival & Travel Fair (January 19 to 26), and the closing program which was attended by La Union local government officials Gov. Raphaelle Veronica "Rafy" Ortega-David, Vice Governor Mario Eduardo Ortega, San Juan Municipal government Mayor Arturo Valdriz, and Vice Mayor Manuel Victor Ortega Jr. and DOT officials, namely: Usec. Jumapao, Regional Director Joseph Francisco "Jeff" Ortega, and Director for Product Market and Development Paolo Benito Tugbang. **DOT**



Sinulog Festival

In-person Sinulog festivities finally resume after its two-year hiatus amid COVID-19 restrictions as ocean of devotees and tourists flock to Cebu province's biggest and busiest streets to witness the long solemn foot procession of the image of the Sr. Santo Niño de Cebu last January. *(continue on page 13)*



Sinulog Festival

(continued from page 12)

Long-time devotees Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco and her husband House Deputy Speaker Duke Frasco joined the Augustinian friars of Basilica Del Sto. Niño in leading the procession at their home province.

Sinulog is one of the Cebu's top tourist-generating events.

Last year, South Korean organization International Events and Festivals Association (IFEA) named Sinulog as one of the biggest celebrated festivals in Asia.



The participants of this year's Sinulog Grand Parade donned colorful costumes as they competed for the ritual showdown and danced to the rhythm of the drums.

Festival floats adorned with lights, flowers, and paintings also joined the grand parade. **DOT**

Tourism chief affirms DOT's support to PH Dev't Plan 2023-2028

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco last January 30 affirmed the Department of Tourism's (DOT) commitment to take an active role in the realization of socioeconomic policies, strategies, and programs enclosed in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 of the Marcos Administration.

"While the tourism industry is just coming out of the pandemic that ravaged through all of the sectors of this vibrant industry that contributes a lot to our economy, the gargantuan challenges are somehow made more manageable by the fact that our President, President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos, Jr., has clearly identified tourism to be a priority under his administration," noted Secretary Frasco, lauding the President's signing of the Executive Order on the adoption of the plan.

"The past few months, he's made great efforts and waves as well to convey an openness to the global community in terms of receiving investments and tourists. And this has put the Philippines in a very good position as far as the efforts towards recovery," she added.

To recall, the President had approved important proposals aimed at spurring tourism activities and increasing travel convenience in the country, among which is the promotion of Holiday Economics, which moved holidays that fall on a weekend to the nearest weekday in order to boost tourism spending; Relaxation of entry protocols and travel restrictions to and within the country in order to encourage more tourists to visit and for the country to be at par with its ASEAN neighbors; Voluntary wearing of face masks in indoor and outdoor settings, except in specific settings; and the replacement of the One Health Pass with a more convenient E-travel platform.

More recently, President Marcos Jr. approved the VAT-refund program for foreign tourists starting 2024, and the extension of the e-visa for Chinese and Indian nationals- two of the country's important source markets in terms of visitor arrivals pre-pandemic.

The Tourism Secretary served as one of the panelists during the first-ever Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 Forum: From Plan to Action, alongside Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Manuel M. Bonoan, Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Secretary Ivan John E. Uy, Department of Energy (DoE) Secretary Raphael Perpetuo M. Lotilla, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual, and Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) President George Barcelon and Private Sector Advisory Council Mr. Henry R. Aguda.

During the plenary session on economic transformation, Secretary Frasco noted the DOT's steadfast efforts improving enabling mechanisms for tourism development in the Philippines, outside of its "traditional mandate" to promote tourist destinations.

Digitalization in tourism

According to the tourism chief, through the partnership with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the DOT endeavors to improve connectivity in at least 94



tourist key destinations in the Philippines, and develop a Tourist Lifecycle App that will "provide tourists connectivity in each and every single aspect of their journey, from booking airline, to the hotel, transport services, as well as all other related services."

Tourism human capital and social development

In terms of the tourism industry's contribution to the promotion of human and social development, Secretary Frasco also bared the DOT's initiatives that are anchored on harnessing the strength of the Filipino brand of hospitality and the DOT's goal of training 100,000 Filipino tourism workers across the country in the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence.

"The idea also being that harnessing upon the strength of the Filipino people in terms of hospitality that the Philippines would become the Center for Hospitality Excellence in Asia and the world. We recognize the necessity of human capital development and the necessity of providing social protections upon our tourism workers," she explained.

Whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach

In the effort to equalize tourism promotions across the country, Secretary Frasco said that the DOT's offices in the country's 16 regions would pursue close coordination with local government units (LGUs), particularly on the aspect of identifying the sectors needing the most assistance in terms of tourism development.

Also in close cooperation with LGUs, the DOT also seeks to introduce a Tourist Assistance Call Center and a Tourist Concierge to ensure a positive experience for tourists throughout their stay, as well as strengthen the safety and security of tourists through an upcoming tripartite agreement with the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), recognizing peace and security as a bedrock to success.

(continue on page 15)



Tourism chief affirms DOT's support to PH Dev't Plan 2023-2028

(continued from page 14)

Further, the Tourism Chief also shared on the DOT's ongoing conduct of due diligence in tourist destinations to pinpoint areas needing assistance in increasing the accessibility of emergency services and improvement in health facilities.

Expressing her optimism in the DOT's attainment of its programs and plans for the industry, Secretary Frasco echoed the President's call for a strengthened cooperation between local and national government, and boosting the partnership between government and private sector.

"We have a lot of programs and plans in place for the year to come. And we are hopeful that with the partnership of our international partners, in person of the diplomatic community, as well as our private sector, and most especially our local government units, we would be able to give the Philippines a fighting chance at not only reclaiming its position pre-pandemic, but more importantly, into transforming the Philippines into a tourism powerhouse in Asia," Secretary Frasco enthused.

The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028

The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 serves as the national government's "overall guide in development planning for six years. It reflects the government's socioeconomic policies, strategies, and programs in support of and consistent with the socioeconomic agenda of the President and is geared towards the attainment of development goals and objectives in the long-term development plan."

Organized by NEDA, the forum held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) is the first of the stakeholder discussions and roadshows on the implementation of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. **DOT**





New PTAA officers sworn in, DOT hopeful to maintain momentum

The newly elected officers and trustees of the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) took their oath before Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco last January at the New Coast Hotel Manila.

The tourism chief was the guest of honor and inducting officer at the induction ceremony of the national travel agencies' association.

In her address, Secretary Frasco thanked the stakeholders from the private sector for their continued collaboration with the DOT, citing that their sacrifices and efforts even during the height of the unprecedented crisis and other natural calamities that have paralyzed the industry have been very helpful for its recovery.

"Daghan kaayong salamat for the courage, tenacity, and perseverance that you have shown in these past few years that have been the most difficult for the tourism industry. Thank you to all of you for staying the course and for continuing to believe in the potential of Philippine tourism," she said.

"We would not have been able to breach our tourism targets last year had it not been for your partnership and collaboration," she added.

Last year, the Department has breached its target of 1.7 million tourist arrivals with 2.65 million international visitors, of which 75 percent constitute international travelers. This translated to over P208 billion in visitor receipts, clearly a huge economic gain for the Philippines.

Secretary Frasco noted that the partners from the industry have been very instrumental in achieving such figures.

With the DOT pronouncing yet new ambitious goals this year, she said: *"We asked for your continued collaboration with the DOT as we view you to be our essential partners in ensuring that we continue the gains that we have already had and that the Philippines continues to recover at a much faster pace than originally expected."* **DOT**



ON THE GROUND NEWS

Regional News Updates



Isabela's tourism circuit acquires its brand name

By: DOT-2

The Department of Tourism, Region 2 (DOT-2) successfully concluded the three-day tourism marketing and branding workshop for Isabela's Culture, Heritage, and Tourism (CHAT) Circuit at Gamu, Isabela last January.

Tourism officers from the various cities and municipalities in the circuit were taught marketing and branding concepts and tactics over the course of the three-day event.

What emerged as the brand name of this tourism circuit is "Majestic Isabela: Your Journey to a Glorious Past". The circuit brand encompasses the whole spectrum of tourism products offered by the destinations. The brand name was a product of the collaborative efforts of the tourism officers that are part of this circuit.

DOT-2 Director Troy Alexander Miano praised the efforts and assistance provided by the participants which laid the ground for the fruitful development of the circuit brand. He also emphasized how crucial it is for local government units to prioritize and support tourism-related activities to promote the growth of the industry in the province and in the region.

It is envisioned that this tourism circuit will be launched on a national stage at the forthcoming Travel and Tour Expo on February 3-5, 2022, after undergoing a tour packaging workshop and readiness assessment next week.

The CHAT Circuit will promote Philippine Tourism Experience and will enable our tourism industry stakeholders to engage with our tourists and guests. This is in line with the priorities of the current administration to recalibrate tourism products centered around the country's "Filipino-ness" and its unique and defining cultural attributes as a nation. **DOT**





MOTOURISMO: Rides Recharge Caraga Year 3

By: DOT-CARAGA

"MOTOURISMO" is a Motorcycle Tourism Caravan geared towards rediscovering the country's sights on two wheels. The safe yet thrill-seeking adventure on wheels aims to restore the confidence of the public to travel in the countryside and help the tourism industry bounce back from the impacts sustained from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Caraga successfully initiated this year's run of its MoTOURismo campaign dubbed as MOTOURISMO: Rides Recharge Caraga Year 3 graced by no less than Undersecretary Myra Paz Valderrosa Abubakar. Usec. Abubakar expressed her appreciation to all rider and non-rider participants for their overwhelming support to the activity.

A total of 150 riders from all over the region made their way to Butuan City last December 2022 to join the motorcycle campaign right at its jump-off point. The throng of riders representing the Local Government Units (LGUs), regional line agencies, motorcycle clubs and individual riders rolled their motorcycles at the sound of the gun start around 4am at the Robinsons Mall Butuan.

This year's ride compassed a total of 400 kilometers traversing Butuan City, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Sur,

Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Norte. Riders were able to do stopovers in identified tourism attractions of the respective LGUs to name a few - Rotunda Eco Park, Bayugan City, Vicente L. Pimentel, Sr. Boulevard, Tandag City, Hanging Bridge, Bacuag, Surigao del Norte, Mahucdam Adventure Park, Tubod, Surigao del Norte, down to CASOCES - Gabaldon Bldg., Cabadbaran City as its last stretch before the riders head back to Butuan City.

Through the years the MoTOURismo campaign has successfully engaged the participation of local bikers in helping promote the fun and diverse experience in Caraga likewise opening opportunities for local attractions to be showcased and discovered.

Local riding (bicycle, motorcycle, boat) is being encouraged as among the travel options in the new normal as it has significantly contributed in the development and promotion of potential tourism circuits reachable by bicycle and motorcycle in the country. Moreover, the campaign also created opportunities for tour operators to initiate new tour programs thereby creating a ripple effect in helping create job opportunities, jumpstart small businesses and generally serve as a platform to advocate on safe travels. **DOT**



DOT BEYOND BORDERS

Foreign Offices Updates

Salon de la Plongee 2023

By: DOT-Frankfurt



The Paris International Dive Show (Salon International de la Plongee Sous-Marine) is considered the biggest dive consumer show in France and is an important venue for Philippine diving operators to touch base with the French dive travel trade and consumers.

The participation of the Department of Tourism' (DOT) seeks to reinforce the image of the Philippines as a top-of-the-mind and must-dive destination for the French market, communicate the Philippines' readiness to accept international tourists and capitalize

on the momentum from the reopening of international borders and the French divers strong desire for revenge travel and translate these to confirmed dive trips to the Philippines; support Philippine private sector stakeholders and provide a cost-effective avenue for them to network, meet, and partner with main players in the Region; and reconnect with the French dive travel trade, media, and consumers and provide updates about the latest dive tourism developments in the new normal. **DOT**

OATH TAKING OF DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM OFFICIALS FROM CENTRAL OFFICE, REGIONAL OFFICES AND ATTACHED AGENCIES

Officials from the Department of Tourism (DOT) central and regional offices took their oath before Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco last January at the DOT office in Makati City.

The tourism chief congratulated the officials on their appointment and expressed her gratitude for heeding the call of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to make tourism a pillar of economic resurgence amid the setbacks experienced due to the pandemic.

"We must not limit ourselves in promoting our country to the world. More importantly, we must look inward to have an honest self-examination of what we need to change and improve on. That is the direction of our President--to not leave the work of the Department of Tourism on the surface alone but really to go to the grassroots, to go to the heart of tourism services," she said.

"This year, the DOT has set ambitious goals which include multiplying the tourist arrivals achieved in 2022 and making the Philippines known not only through the award-winning destinations but by introducing the Philippines as the Hospitality Center of Asia and eventually the world," added the tourism chief. **DOT**



Roberto P. Alabado III
Director for Office of the Secretary



Warner M. Andrada
Director for Office of Tourism Development Planning,
Research and Information Management



Annave E. Bacomo-Lapitan
Director for Office of Special Concerns



Czarina Zara-Loyola
Director for Office of Public Affairs and Advocacy



Virgilio M. Maguigad
Director for Office of Tourism Standards and Regulation



Reynaldo M. Rosas
Director for Internal Audit Service



Judilyn S. Quiachon
Director for Tourism Coordination
and Regional Operations



Milagros Y. Say
Director for Planning Service
and Financial Management Service

OATH TAKING OF DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM OFFICIALS FROM CENTRAL OFFICE, REGIONAL OFFICES AND ATTACHED AGENCIES



Paulo Benito S. Tugbang

Director for Office of Product and Market Development and Director for Medical, Health, and Wellness Tourism



Jovencio M. Zaragoza

Director for Administrative Service



Sharlene Zabala-Batin

Regional Director for National Capital Region



Jovita A. Ganongan

Regional Director
for Cordillera Administrative Region



Joseph Francisco R. Ortega

Regional Director for Region I (Ilocos)



Troy Alexander G. Miano

Regional Director for Region II (Cagayan Valley)



Richard G. Daenos

Regional Director for Region III (Central Luzon)



Marites T. Castro

Regional Director for Region IV-A (CALABARZON)



Azucena C. Pallugna

Regional Director for Region IV-B (MIMAROPA)

OATH TAKING OF DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM OFFICIALS FROM CENTRAL OFFICE, REGIONAL OFFICES AND ATTACHED AGENCIES



Herbie B. Aguas
Regional Director for Region V (Bicol)



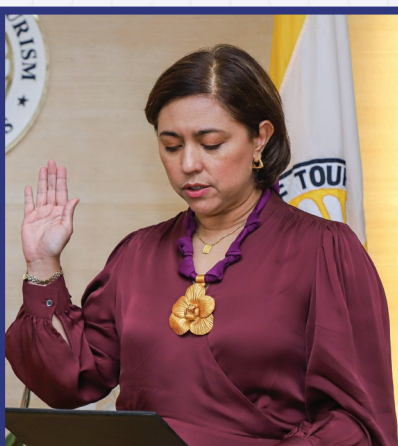
Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez
Regional Director for Region VI
(Western Visayas)



Dara May L. Cataluña
Regional Director for Region IX
(Zamboanga Peninsula)



Marie Elaine S. Unchuan
Regional Director for Region X
(Northern Mindanao)



Tanya Virginia P. Rabat-Tan
Regional Director for Region XI (Davao)



Nelia R. Arina
Regional Director for Region XII
(SOCCSKSARGEN)



Ivonne B. Dumadag
Regional Director for Region XIII (CARAGA)



Atty. Joan Masilang Padilla
Administrator, Intramuros Administration



Atty. Bienvenido K. Chy
General Manager,
Philippine Retirement Authority

TOURISM RELATED EVENTS



Speakers' Synergy and Appreciation 2022



Courtesy Call of Manila Hotel Executives



Courtesy meeting
with ASEAN Business Advisory Council Philippines



Courtesy meeting with incoming
Philippine Ambassador to Argentina



BDO Night at Isabel, Leyte



Wayfinder Signages Project Launching in Badian, Cebu

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TO OUR FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS

1	Maria Fe Santos	10	Pacifico III Dolfo	21	Aimee Laurice Escandor
1	Junesther Jean Iway	11	Mary Lou Escullar	22	Dennis Barrogo
2	Roman Bersamira	11	Berniedel John Papna	25	Ronell Alicante
2	Rey Jean Almazan	11	Alexyl Regalado	25	Jean Lisette Isibido
2	Trina Joy Quesa	13	Darlene Hazel Serran	25	Robin Pagurigan
3	Monina Rañeses	13	Kristine Angelica Piguerra	25	Ayra Lovelle Nginit
3	Ardee Buenaventura	14	Juan Carlos Valentino Baclig	26	Malonzo Julieta
4	Ruth Tizon	15	John Paul Almoneda	26	Edison Cunanan
5	Ana Liza Lucas	15	Shaira Joy Medel	26	Marie Elaine Unchuan
6	Thyjiacynth Ylla Mvourneen De Ocampo	16	Charles Adonis Usi	26	Patricia Godsgrace Alfonso
9	Ariel Villaflor	16	Brena Mae Membrere	27	Maritess Castro
9	Marielle Lucencio	17	Joseph Abaloyan	27	Nelia Moran
9	John Torres	18	Gerry Negrete	28	Mary Jane Garcia
10	Maria Alma Almazan	19	Racris Templanza	29	Helen Grace Somera
		19	Joselito Romo		

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

On behalf of the Department of Tourism, I wish you all a New Year filled with abundance, optimism and hope.

Moments of great difficulty are also moments of great opportunity. In the recent past, we have overcome a global pandemic, survived various calamities, and thrived throughout a host of many other challenges, yet, the Philippine tourism industry has managed to exceed expectations and our tourism partners and frontliners continue to offer the best of Filipino grace and hospitality to the world.

Therefore we welcome 2023 with gratitude and excitement for Philippine Tourism to bounce back stronger than ever.

We shall welcome with warmth and that distinct Filipino smile visitors from all over the world as they enjoy award-winning beaches and islands, explore our mountains and cityscapes, experience the richness of our culture, enjoy our world-renowned Filipino Brand of service excellence, and delight in the joy, taste and feel of being in the Philippines - the World's Leading Country Destination for Tourism.

In fulfillment of President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr.'s vision for tourism to be a catalyst for the Philippines' economic resurgence, we will continue to establish synergy and work hand in hand with other government agencies as well as the private sector in bringing you a more vibrant Philippine Tourism industry with programs, promotions, and campaigns that highlight the best of the Philippines, honor our heritage, and showcase to the world our vast and diverse portfolio of tourism products and services, including an abundance of key and emerging destinations.

We look forward to the continued converge and collaboration of our tourism stakeholders— travelers, tourism players, national agencies, local government units, and host communities— in propelling our industry to the heights of becoming a tourism powerhouse in Asia.

Mabulhang Bag-ong Tuig kanatong tanan!

CHRISTINA GARCIA FRASCO
TOURISM SECRETARY