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DOT launches Tourism Champions Challenge

A nationwide campaign to incentivize tourism development among Cities and Municipalities has been launched by the Department of Tourism (DOT) with Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco enjoining the 1,400 member-Mayors of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines to propose tourism projects to spur economic development across the country's regions.

Speaking before mayors and other local government officials in the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) General Assembly at The Manila Hotel, Secretary Frasco unveiled the Tourism Champions Challenge, a tourism infrastructure program designed to help cities and municipalities in formulating, developing, and managing tourism projects by providing funds to noteworthy project proposals.

"My dear mayors I'm very happy to launch here and now at the LMP National Convention a very exciting program that we have come up with for city mayors and municipal mayors all over the country. We're calling it the Tourism Champions Challenge where we seek to empower communities to champion Philippine tourism. Through the Tourism Challenge we are inviting over 1,400 municipal mayors and over 100 city mayors to propose any tourism project that is in line with the 7-point tourism agenda of the administration," Secretary Frasco said.

According to the tourism chief who was a three-term mayor prior to being handpicked by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to lead the tourism industry, the Program shall have five (5) phases:

- Phase 1 - Proposal submission and evaluation;
- Phase 2 - Capacity building;
- Phase 3 - Presentation and ranking of project proposal;
- Phase 4 - Implementation of the project and MOA signing; and
- Phase 5 - Inauguration of the completed project.

"Having been a local chief executive I can relate all too well with the challenges and difficulties faced by mayors especially by municipal mayors all over the country. Especially when it comes to local projects that we

would like to push as far as the development of our respective towns. And therefore, I recognize the necessity of ensuring strengthened tourism governance among the national government in partnership with the local government units," Secretary Frasco said.

The funds, according to Secretary Frasco, will be sourced from the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) and the DOT will receive proposals starting March until May 2023.

"To entice our mayors to join the tourism champions challenge, I'm very happy to announce that we are devoting no less than Php180 million pesos for this project. We will be choosing 5 winners from Luzon, 5 winners from Visayas, and 5 winners from Mindanao. Among the 5, we will rank them, first LGU will get Php 20 million worth of tourism projects, the second will have Php 15 million, third Php 10 million, fourth Php 8 million, and the fifth with 7 million for a grand total of Php 180 million that we are devoting to our mayors, our municipalities, and cities to become tourism champions for the Philippines," Secretary Frasco said.

A project committee shall evaluate and select the best proposals from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Secretary Frasco, who previously held the position as national vice president for Visayas of the LMP was among the keynote speakers at the organization's General Assembly, an annual gathering of the policy-making and decision-making body in the local government level.

Throughout the two-day convention with the theme: Strengthening Municipal Capabilities Around Autonomy and Fostering Resiliency, the LMP featured guest speakers including President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Vice-President Sara Duterte, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Y. Loyzaga, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benhur Abalos, Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, Senator JV Ejercito, Senator Imee Marcos, and other notable members of the national and local government. **DOT**



PBBM, Tourism chief engage Japanese tourism stakeholders in high-level meet in Tokyo

TOKYO, Japan — Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco sees President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s working visit to Japan as a boost for the Philippine tourism industry, after Japanese stakeholders expressed optimism on the points of collaboration laid out by the President himself.

“We are very thankful to the President for making time for the tourism stakeholders of Japan because this demonstrates that tourism really is a priority under the Marcos administration and that the potential that the Philippines and Japan hold in terms of exchanges in tourism is something we have yet to fully maximize and will do so under this administration,” said Secretary Frasco, following the high-level roundtable meeting with Japanese Tourism Stakeholders initiated by the Department of Tourism (DOT).

Open for Business

The President made it known to the Japanese tourism stakeholders that the Philippines is open and ready to welcome more Japanese tourists into its shores, as he underscored his administration’s commitment to carry out aggressive infrastructure projects aimed at improving road networks, as well as the initiative to boost Internet connectivity in tourist destinations in order to attract more visitors.

“Under this administration, the tourism industry has shifted its gaze to becoming more than just a promotion arm of the government, but also to ensuring that travel is not only convenient, connected, and equal for travelers, but as well for locals who are living and preserving our invaluable key and emerging tourist destinations,” the President said, as he manifested his support to the direction set by Secretary Frasco for the industry.

“With this in mind, this government has set the direction to harness the development of tourism in key tourism destinations. Through this, we will make sure that hard and soft infrastructure is well developed from roads, bridges, to medical facilities and clean water supplies and readily accessible to tourists and locals alike,” the President added.

President Marcos Jr. also announced during the dialogue that the Philippine government will lobby for the “lifting or limiting” of Japan’s travel advisories against key travel destinations in the

Philippines, in order to revive the pandemic-hit tourism industry and further strengthen the friendship between Japan and the Philippines.

“With this, we are working on lobbying to the Japanese government for the lifting or limiting of its travel advisories against the Philippines’ key travel destinations,” said President Marcos Jr.

Capturing the Japanese visitor market

Prior to the pandemic, Secretary Frasco disclosed that Japan was ranked as the country’s fourth biggest international tourism source market, with visitor arrivals tallying 682,788 in 2019.

In 2022, with the progressive opening of borders, the Philippines received 99,557 tourists from Japan.

In her presentation, Secretary Frasco also shared the DOT’s intention to further develop tourism products that are popular among Japanese tourists, including diving, MICE, and education tourism, particularly, English as a Second Language (ESL).

“Over the years, the Japanese tourists have come to the Philippines for various reasons. The leading tourism products include general leisure and diving. The Philippines has also gained popularity as a preferred Education tourism destination for learning English and school trips. With the resumption of travel post-pandemic, and the growing interest in sustainable tourism, we are seeing new and innovative programs emerging in school trip modules offered in the marketplace. MICE is also a segment we would like to develop further,” explained Frasco.

The Philippines as a retirement destination

Frasco also noted that The Philippines is also a popular retirement destination for the Japanese. And as a first step leading towards that retirement decision, *“long stay programs to the Philippines are continuously being pushed”*.

The Philippines holds the largest Japanese diaspora population in Southeast Asia and the fourth in the world. The Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA), one of the DOT’s attached agencies, also reported Japan to be the sixth biggest retirement market for the Philippines. **DOT**

DOT holds first international launch of Bisita, Be My Guest Program in Tokyo

As part of the Department of Tourism's (DOT) newest tourism program, Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco enjoined members of the Filipino community in Tokyo, to participate in the Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG) incentive program.

During the pre-program activities of President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr.'s meeting with the Filipino community in Japan at the Belle Salle, Secretary Frasco underscored the important role that the Filipino diaspora hold in driving in more visitors to the country's tourist destinations.

A collaborative effort between the DOT, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), the BBMG program aims to enjoin all Filipinos, especially OFs and OFWs, to become tourism ambassadors including in Japan, where there are over 300,000 Filipinos workers and residents.

"The BBMG will allow our fellow Filipinos to invite guests, family, spouse, and friends to the Philippines. I'm sure na-mimiss niyo na po yung magagandang beaches, 'di ba? The rich and diverse culture of the Filipino and of course what we're known for in the whole world, the Filipino hospitality," Secretary Frasco said.

The Tourism Chief bared the many exciting incentives for Filipinos who will join the program and invite their foreign friends to visit the Philippines.

"The Bisita, Be My Guest Program will allow you to visit all of [these] destinations from Ilocos, Cebu, Davao, Palawan, Bohol, Boracay, baguio, Batanes, Bicol, Camiguin, Leyte and Siargao. The best part is if you avail of the Bisita, Be My Guest Program, you will have a chance to win raffle prizes," she shared.

According to Secretary Frasco, free holiday vacations to destinations including Ilocos, Cebu, Davao, Palawan, Bohol, Boracay, Baguio, Batanes, Bicol, Camiguin, Leyte and Siargao, air tickets, and a condominium await lucky winners.

"What are you waiting for? I invite all of you to join the Bisita, Be My Guest Program," enthused the Tourism Chief. **DOT**





Japan FilCom leaders briefed on Bisita, Be My Guest program

The Department of Tourism (DOT), and the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB), in cooperation with the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) invited Filcom leaders in Japan to a follow-through information session and dialogue on the Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG) program at the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo, Japan.

TPB Chief Operating Officer (COO) Marga M. Nograles, and top officials of the DOT, Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, and Assistant Secretary Rica Bueno led the dialogue and shared the specifics of the new guest incentive campaign of the DOT aimed at attracting more foreign visitors to come to the Philippines with the help of Filipinos, particularly the vast network of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

Represented during the session are the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) Japan, and various Filcom groups, including ASK PHIL-JAP, Filipino-Japanese Journal, Organization for the Development and Advancement of Negros in Japan (ODAN-J), and RDPU. **DOT**



DOT engages in bilateral meeting with Japan MLITT

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco engaged in a bilateral meeting with Japan Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism (MLITT) State Minister Mr. Ishii Hiro on the sidelines of the DOT's participation to the Working Visit of President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr. to Tokyo, Japan. The high-level meet focused on strengthening the bilateral tourism initiatives between the Philippines and Japan, such as in the areas of expanding air routes between the two countries, travel advisory improvement, as well as fostering mutual gains in cruise tourism, nature-based and wellness tourism, English as a Second Language (ESL), food and gastronomy, golf, and culture-based tourism. **DOT**



THE 26TH MEETING OF ASEAN TOURISM MINISTERS

4 FEBRUARY 2023, YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA



Philippines backs unified ASEAN tourism collabor-action

Yogyakarta, Indonesia — Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco declared the Philippines commitment to the collaboration and action towards the unified goals of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) forged during the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) from February 3-5, 2023.

“As a result of the discussions between the member nations of the ASEAN that recognize the potentials strength of this region as a cohesive and collaborative force to be reckon with in the world, should we effectively come together,” Secretary Frasco said during the Press Conference of the 26th meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers and related meetings.

Agreements on connectivity, relaxation of visa policies, cultural offerings, partnership among ASEAN and partner nations, and cruise tourism among others were forged during the four-day ATF 2023 concluded in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on Sunday, with the theme “ASEAN: A Journey to Wonderful Destinations”.

The high-level meetings and discussions were attended by National Tourism Organizations (NTO's) from the ten ASEAN member states, ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, and South Korea), India and Russia.



Inter-ASEAN connectivity

Secretary Frasco proposed the enhancement of connectivity between and among the ASEAN nations by adding more direct flights outside of the main gateways.

“We have agreed to increase first the connectivity between our countries and to concretize that by identifying the international and secondary airports that may be utilized for the purpose of expanding direct flights not only towards our key destinations but also to emerging destinations,” the tourism chief stated.

“We are very excited to partner with the other member nations to launch these flights, hopefully this year, whether it's a commercial or chartered as well as to the other nations outside of the ASEAN especially India, China, as well as Korea,” she continued.



Liberalization of visa policies

“The discussion on visas was also had especially as for certain countries including the Philippines this poses challenges in terms of attracting the markets of China and India,”

She continued, *“And therefore, we fully support the liberalization of visa policies and the seamlessness with which visas may be obtained into the region”.*



Cultivating regional cultural offerings

The DOT chief also commended the work of the NTOs as drivers for making ASEAN as a powerhouse destination in comparison with other regions in the world.

“Harnessing upon the strength of our cultural offerings, we are also very pleased to work with our fellow member nations in terms of offering tourism packages that jointly promote our member nations as well as to offer multi-destination travels to travelers all over the world”.

coming into the ASEAN region.”

“It really is only by way of the collaborative action that we can ensure that the recovery from the pandemic of the ASEAN nations is not only towards the positioning that it had prior to the pandemic but rather to exceed this position not only in terms of numbers but more importantly in terms of the focus on quality tourism as well as sustainable tourism,” Secretary Frasco added.

Calibrating cruise tourism

During the Forum, the tourism chief announced that the Philippines is expecting 139 ports of call to visit 46 of the destinations around the archipelago this year and is excited to connect drop off points with ASEAN neighbors.

“Considering the geographic locations of our member nations, discussions were also had on we can further explore cruise tourism to be able to link our countries together and to offer our nations as a one attractive tourism destination,”

She further expressed her gratitude for the inclusion of cruise tourism in the association’s work plan this year as well as recognize the massive potential to position ASEAN as a powerhouse cruise destination for tourism in comparison with other regions in the world.



Pursuing partnerships with ASEAN and partner nations

On the sidelines of ATF 2023, DOT Secretary Frasco met with her counterparts of the ASEAN member nations and partner countries to further promote collaborative action among these countries.

She met with Minister Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno of Indonesia’s Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Minister Suanesavanh Vignaket of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism of Laos, which is set to host the next edition of ATF, and Deputy Minister Doan Van Viet of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam.

Secretary Frasco also joined the meetings with the United States (US) - ASEAN Business Council, and the meetings with the ASEAN Plus Three namely China, Japan, and Korea as well as with key markets India and Russia.

Philippine ASEAN Tourism Awards

The ATF 2023 recognized outstanding tourism businesses and destinations in the region that have complied with the international association’s tourism standards.

The ASEAN Tourism Awarding Ceremony accorded four award categories to the Philippines, namely: ASEAN Homestay with five Homestay Providers; ASEAN Public Toilet with five recipients; ASEAN Spa Services with two grantees; and ASEAN Community Based Tourism.



The model public toilet award was conferred to Cordillera Convention Hall; William Tan Enterprises Inc. (Caltex Irawan); DEU 818 Corporation (High Ridge Restaurant); and Shell OGI at Northwalk 2, City Environment and Management Office (Botanical Garden and Wright Public Toilets).

The Palaui Environmental Protectors Association (PEPA) received the ASEAN community-based tourism citation, while Apricus Therapeutic Clinic at the Hilton Clark and Quan Spa at the Clark Marriott Hilton were named awardees of the ASEAN Spa Services.

Five homestays in the Philippines also received citations at the awarding ceremony, namely Inandako’s Bed and Breakfast, Gina’s Homes, Sid Homestay, Hide Away House, and Maryhilz Homestay as ASEAN Homestay awardees.

The DOT is set to recognize the local industry players who promote and fulfill the minimum requirements of the ASEAN Tourism standards in the country. The Ceremony will also honor the 2022 ASEAN Awardees of Green Hotel, MICE Venue (Exhibition and Meeting Room Categories) and Clean Tourist City and harmonize the standards in the country with the ASEAN countries.

Philippines’ best at ATF 2023

As part of the efforts to deliver the Filipino brand of service excellence to its Southeast Asian counterparts, the Philippines through the DOT and the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), led the Philippine-hosted luncheon for the forum’s delegates and dignitaries.

“In this luncheon, we aim to give you the best of the Filipino to remind you that while the Philippines continues to be a top-of-mind destination all over the world, there is also so much more to our beaches, our dive sites, our mountain ranges, and our underground rivers. There’s our food, our living cultural traditions, and many many components that give you a window into the soul of the Filipino,” she said.

Young Filipinos from Cebu also made the gathering meaningful as they showcased their creativity by performing the historic weapon-based martial arts “arnis” live in front of the guests.

With the goal to further promote the Philippines as a tourism powerhouse, 16 exhibitors from airlines, travel, and accommodation industries have joined together at the Philippine Pavilion in Yogyakarta, Indonesia for the ATF 2023 Travel Exchange (TRAVEX).

The exhibitors were present to banner tourist-magnet Philippine destinations such as Cebu, Boracay, and Palawan in the Southeast Asian region in time for the ATF. The Philippine Pavilion also featured a unique performance from the Lapu-Lapu Arnis De Abanico and coffee samples from Antipolo, Rizal’s famed Kaulayaw Coffee to highlight the best of Philippine culture. **DOT**

Frasco convenes first TCC meeting, forecasts full domestic recovery in 2023

MANILA — Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco convened the Tourism Coordinating Council (TCC) in a meeting held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), where she laid down the strategic directions that the Department will take in a bid to hasten the recovery of the pandemic-hit sector.

This is the first time that the council convened under the Marcos Administration, with the last meeting held in November 2020. Republic Act 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009 states that the Tourism Coordinating Council shall serve as a coordinating body for national tourism development efforts. The Tourism Secretary serves as the chairperson with heads of DOT attached agencies, heads of national agencies, and representatives of private and public sectors as members.

“I am looking forward to our exchange today as we lay out our plans for 2023 and onwards under the administration of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr.” said Secretary Frasco as she welcomed the attendees of the meeting.

The council is mandated to carry out functions deemed vital to the tourism industry such as the preparation of a five-year strategic plan to develop a culture of tourism, approved annual infrastructure program that shall promote access to and from airports and seaports, and tourism enterprise zones (TEZs) and other tourism destinations, as well as create committees and technical working groups in pursuit of its functions.

Presentation of Tourism Blueprint

Underscoring the critical role of tourism, Secretary Frasco provided the TCC with an overview of the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2022 to 2028.

“This National Tourism Development Plan for 2023 to 2028 envisions Transforming the Philippine tourism industry to becoming a tourism powerhouse of Asia, that is anchored in the Filipino identity, on sustainability, resilience, and global competitiveness, and that benefits the Filipino people,” she explained.

“The NTDP is framed by the strategic values of Philippine Identity, Sustainability, Resilience, and Global Competitiveness. Our programs should reflect these values

if we are to truly seize the opportunities for long-term growth for our industry. But these programs can and should be implemented through the strategic approaches of Convenience, Connectivity, and E-Quality, keeping in mind our collective duty to create positive experiences of our most important stakeholders – our travelers and the many tourism communities across the country,” the Secretary added.

The DOT targets to roll out the NTDP by March of this year.

“I’m glad that you did call a meeting because first of all, the newly-elected board of TCP would like to express our all-out support for the revised NTDP and we know that with everybody’s help, putting our heads together, we can easily make success out of the rebirth of our tourism industry,” said Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) President Roberto Zozobrado.

“Definitely, your National Development Plan is something that we will support. We see in your vision an integrated tourism development plan,” enthused Department of Transportation (DOTr) Undersecretary Roberto C. Lim.

Full Domestic Recovery in 2023

The Tourism Chief also outlined the programs and projects that are currently being implemented such as the establishment of Tourist Rest Areas across the country, the enhancement of airports and seaports, and incorporation of the Filipino brand piloted at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 2, as well as the provision of internet connection to at least 94 tourism destinations as part of the Memorandum of Agreement between the DOT and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT); and projects in the pipeline such as the creation of a Tourist Lifecycle App, establishment of a Tourist Call Center and the anticipated signing of agreement with the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) recognizing the necessity of ensuring peace and security in tourist sites.

With many of the projects already in full swing, Frasco made a fearless forecast of full domestic recovery this year.



“Even as the pandemic set back our gains, the momentum for recovery and growth is already here. We see domestic tourism recovering to 2019 levels this year, and international tourism next year,” said the tourism chief.

“You hear it; you see it; you feel it. The time of Philippines is now. The possibilities for Philippine tourism are endless. With your continued support we will accomplish our goals for a tourism industry that is a major economic pillar for our country,” Secretary Frasco said in her closing remarks as she rallied the support of all tourism stakeholders present.

Among the attendees of the meeting are National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) Executive Director Oscar G. Casaysay, Philippine National Police (PNP) Deputy Chief for Operations PLT Gen Benjamin Santos, Jr., OIC- Executive Director National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) Carmina Arevalo, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Assistant Secretary Gina Jamoralin, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) Vice President For Marketing Ricardo B. Faraon. Also present are heads of the attached agencies of the DOT. **DOT**

DOT leads grand welcome reception for cruise passengers, says 'PHL aims to be cruise hub in Asia'

MANILA — The anticipated 139 port of calls from top cruise lines signals the readiness of the Philippines to claim the position as one of the regional cruise centers in Asia.

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco made the pronouncement as she welcomed 317 guests and 415 mix of Filipino and foreign crew aboard the luxurious Silver Spirit at the Eva Macapagal Super Terminal, Manila South Harbor in a show of support to the boosting of the cruise tourism industry in the Philippines.

The DOT National Capital Region (NCR) Office ensured that guests experienced the world-renowned Filipino hospitality as well as the country's biggest colorful festivals, the Ati-Atihan of Kalibo, Aklan and the Higantes of Angono, Rizal, upon arrival of the passengers. The classic song "Hinahanap Hanap Kita Manila" was also played by the Banda Kawayan orchestra to give guests a memorable grand welcome reception in the Philippine capital.

They will be touring around the landmarks of Manila, including the Spanish-built and historic Walled City of Intramuros and outlying destinations like Tagaytay before the ship left for the country's marble capital-Romblon, then for Coron.

Silver Spirit is one of the luxury cruise ships of Silversea Cruises which prides itself with one of the highest space to guest ratios at sea, giving tourists a "superlative onboard adventure."

"The arrival of this cruise into this port in Manila signals the resurgence of the cruise tourism industry as it is one of the first cruise ships that has docked in the Philippines. This signals confidence as well in travel and tourism into the Philippines and we're very grateful for the support of the City of Manila to open up its harbor to our visitors from all over the world and we're hopeful that this arrival may signal many more in the year to come," Secretary Frasco said.

"We are very grateful to our President Ferdinand "BongBong" Marcos, Jr. for signaling to the world that the Philippines is open and ready for tourism and investments. With his policies geared toward making tourism a pillar of economic growth, we are more than ready and willing to support the operation of ultra-luxury cruise ships like the Silver Spirit," the tourism chief added.

Philippines as a regional cruise center in Asia

The anticipated docking of 139 cruise ships is a 36.27 increase compared to the 102 port of calls the Philippines received in 2019. Among the luxury cruise lines that are expected to visit the country include Seabourn, Silver Sea, Regent, MSC Cruises, Windstar Cruises, Heritage Expeditions, Carnival Cruise, Costa Crociere, Coral Expedition, Holland America, and AIDA Cruises.

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Citing the DOT's National Cruise Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan, the tourism chief said the goal of the Department is to increase cruise ship calls to various ports and islands throughout the country by creating excellent guest experiences and propelling economic benefits.

"Cruise tourism is one of our priority areas of development in the DOT as we look to expand our tourism portfolio to cater to all market segments," Secretary Frasco noted.

"Our vision is to make the Philippines an attractive and diverse cruise destination offering high levels of customer satisfaction and cost effective deployment for cruise lines operating from major home ports in Asia," she said.

And with the goal to expand the reach of the Filipino brand of service excellence (FBSE) across the world, the tourism chief added: "We will develop the Philippines as a major regional cruise center in Asia that supplies not only cruise ship experiences but also crew training, crewing, cruise line business outsourcing and cruise ship maintenance services in Asia."

Cruise ships, a generator of tourism employment for Filipinos

The Silver Spirit is the third cruise ship to arrive in the Philippines following the cruise calls of the Seabourn Encore carrying 512 passengers and 482 crew, and Silver Shadow with 320 passengers and 288 crew.

In an interview with the media, Secretary Frasco underscored that the arrival of cruise ships is highly anticipated for the tourism industry after long sea cruise voyages were halted by the pandemic for almost three years. Not only did it affect the revenue flows for the industry but also the jobs of hundreds of thousands of Filipinos working in cruise ships. Filipino seafarers and tourism frontliners made up about fifty percent of the three cruise lines that have arrived in the country.

"One hundred eighty-one of the over 400 crew in this cruise ship are Filipinos, signaling the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence that Filipino workers are known for all over the world and so we're very proud that this cruise that hosts different nationalities is being given a



memorable experience through the Filipino brand of hospitality," said Secretary Frasco.

"Nagpapasalamat din po tayo sa mga oportunidad na ganito dahil nabibigyan 'yung ating mga kababayan ng oportunidad na mabalik sa kanila yung lahat ng nawala dahil sa pandemiya at sa iba't ibang mga kalamidad. We're very proud and thankful also to our Filipino crew, our Overseas Filipino Workers who continue to be tourism ambassadors for the Philippines," the tourism chief added.

Revenues from Cruise Tourism

The expected Philippines cruise dockings across 46 island destinations, including Manila, in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, with around 117 thousand passengers arriving For Manila alone is estimated to rake in millions of dollars in revenues, according to Frasco.

"The average spend is 100 dollars per cruise call per person and this year, we're anticipating a minimum of 117,000 passengers across 139 ports of call. While these may be estimated revenues, this shows the downstream effect not only upon our national government revenues but also upon our local government revenues. We have several islands as well that they will be visiting including Apo Reef, Balabac Island, Biri Island, Bohol, Boracay of course our gem, Claveria, Capul Island, Cebu and Central Philippines, Coron in Palawan as well as Puerto Princesa," said the tourism chief.

Meanwhile, In Manila alone, 34 cruise ships are scheduled to arrive.

"It's a very great opportunity for the City of Manila, for all other people not only local tourists but also international tourists to rediscover different areas or destinations here in Manila.

Manila is the hub for history and culture in our country and it's about time that all areas in the city be discovered, not only Intramuros, Luneta, or even Binondo but all other areas. This is a way for the Department of Tourism and the City of Manila to work hand in hand so it's a great opportunity for us," said Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna who was present in the welcome reception for Silver Spirit passengers. **DOT**



New Flights from Clark to boost tourism, decongest NAIA

The Department of Tourism (DOT) welcomed local airlines' announcements on the reopening of direct flights from Clark International Airport (Clark) to the country's prime island tourist locations.

The tourism chief made the statement after Cebu Pacific confirmed boosting of the Clark hub with the combined 13 domestic and international routes. The airline also announced that three of their aircrafts will be based in Clark. The newly established flights will service Caticlan, Davao, Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod, General Santos, and Cagayan de Oro starting April of this year, while the Puerto Princesa route will commence in June. The international routes include Clark to Hongkong, Bangkok, and Singapore.

Meanwhile, Philippine Airlines has announced that they will start flying flights from Clark to Caticlan beginning April 1, while Clark to Busuanga flights will commence on April 2, both on a scheduled basis.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said that the newly reopened routes will surely boost the country's domestic and international tourism, as the routes provide added connectivity to the country's in demand tourist destinations.

"After months of our continuous discussions with relevant aviation agencies and stakeholders such as the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Cebu Pacific, and Philippine Airlines, we welcome these additional flights as it serves the Marcos administration's efforts to vastly improve tourism connectivity and spread economic opportunity nationwide" the tourism chief said.

"These flights will further invigorate the growing interest in our destinations among both domestic and international tourists, and further add to livelihood and employment opportunities for our tourism stakeholders and frontliners," added the DOT chief, who also cited that in 2022, the industry generated over Php 214 Billion in estimated revenues, and created 5.2 million tourism-related jobs.

Secretary Frasco noted that the reopening dates are very timely in order to meet market demand for flights to our key tourism destinations during the long Holy Week holidays.

In her first few months as Tourism Secretary, Frasco engaged in listening tours and discussions with various tourism stakeholders from the public and private sectors to align and properly act on the needs of the pandemic-hit industry.

The DOT, together with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), airline executives, and other concerned agencies, met last January 25 to discuss the enhancement of the utilization of the Clark International Airport. The purpose of the meeting was to identify ways to increase flights into Clark and establish it as a viable alternate airport and at the same time, help in the decongestion of the country's main gateway, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

Currently, the airport is only at 12 percent utilization, receiving only around 80,000 passengers a month despite its eight million annual passenger capacity.

"DOT has been working with the DOTr pushing for the maximization of the Clark International Airport with the goal of establishing it as a viable alternate airport so it will be utilized to its full potential. With the additional flights we meet a number of objectives: the decongestion of NAIA and minimizing crowding in other airports, as well as develop the region further and attract more tourism activities and businesses in the area," the tourism secretary emphasized.

Further, the DOT Regional Offices welcome the Caticlan-Clark and Busuanga-Clark Inbound Travel Exchanges, interest for which was manifested at the DOT's 1st North Luzon Travel Fair in November last year.

The event served as the venue for stakeholders from Regions 1, 2, the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), 3, 4-B, 6, National Capital Region (NCR), 11, and 12 to meet in one venue for one-on-one business sessions, and to network and discuss marketing and promotions initiatives for each region's tourism products and services. **DOT**





Frasco leads groundbreaking of new tourist pit stop to boost Palawan tourism

ROXAS, PALAWAN — Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco led the groundbreaking ceremony of the 10th Tourist Rest Area (TRA) in Palawan, which aims to enhance the overall tourist experience of both foreign and local visitors.

The TRA, a flagship project of the DOT that is among the priority programs of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., is a convergence point that foreign and local travelers could approach to: get information on tourism sites and attractions, activities, accommodations; report concerns related to safety and security; and gain access to other provisions necessary during their stay at a destination, such as a clean restroom.

It will also have charging stations and a pasalubong center that would help boost the livelihood of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

During the ceremony, Secretary Frasco was joined by Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Chief Operating Officer (COO) Mark Lapid, and Roxas Mayor Dennis Sabando, who all formally signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to build the new tourist facility in Roxas town in the Province of Palawan.

The signing event was witnessed by Palawan 1st District Representative Edgardo Salvame, and 2nd District Representative Jose Alvarez, who was the former governor of the province.

The facility will rise in between El Nido, Coron, and San Vicente, considered as the tourist magnets of Palawan, where bulk of its tourist arrivals come from.

"We have broken the ground on this tourist rest area in Palawan, particularly in Roxas. This is well-situated in between other LGUs in Palawan for the purpose of ensuring that we fulfill one of the objectives of the President and that is to enhance the overall tourism experience," the tourism chief said in a speech, citing that collaboration is essential for the recovery of the sector.

"Having been a local chief executive, we aim to strengthen tourism governance through close collaboration with our national government, our local government officials as well as public and private stakeholders. Tourism is not a one-man job. It is only by our collaboration between each other that we would be able to rise back in the industry stronger than ever," she noted.

For his part, the Mayor thanked the DOT for choosing Roxas as one of the recipients of the tourist pit stop.

"Ito po ay napakalaking tulong sa ating Bayan ng Roxas kaya ako po ay nagpapasalamat sa inyo," Mayor Sabando said.

Based on the MOA, the DOT through TIEZA, will fund the TRA and the local government unit (LGU) of Roxas will be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the tourist rest stop.

The tourism chief said the DOT, through its Regional Office, will actively monitor the TRA and will offer incentives to the LGU if found compliant of the criteria set by the Tourism Department.

Considered as an emerging tourist destination, the town of Roxas prides itself with a number of tourism wonders, including Banwa Private Island, Modessa Island Resort, Bat Sanctuary in Pagbo Island, Purao Island Beach, Kilala Campsite, New Rizal Waterfalls, Isla Kurabo, Willano's River, Kariyana's Field Madles Sandbar, Maoyao Sandbar, Johnson Sandbar, Alibanwa Falls, Cayasan Falls, Barbican River, Magara Garden, Mahogany Aisle, and Malatgao Falls.

The local officials emphasized that the project will surely boost Palawan's tourism.

The former Palawan governor even said that the goal of the province is to achieve the 5 million tourist arrivals, surpassing its pre-pandemic figures of 2.3 million.

"Let's work together to achieve that 5 million [tourist arrivals]. I will do my best together with our colleagues in Congress to increase the budget of tourism," Governor Alvarez said.

"Alam ko hindi po dito matatapos ang pagtulong ninyo [Sec. Frasco]. Magtutuloy tuloy po ang pagdevelop ng ating lugar," Congressman Salvame added.

Frasco underscored the "strength of domestic tourism to support the local economy," where she noted that the DOT is now pushing for aggressive initiatives for to further grow domestic tourism.

"How are we going to do that? That is through close coordination with our mayors, our governors, our district representatives, recognizing that none of these plans and policies will work without the help, the coordination, and collaboration of our local officials," she said.

"Therefore, gagawa po tayo ng cross-province tourism circuits kung saan yung ating mga well-known provinces, we will link them up sa mga lesser-known provinces to ensure na 'yung ating mga turista they will get to know other parts of the country as well."

"Yung goal po natin hindi na mabalik yung tourism numbers natin pre-pandemic. We have no interest in returning to that. But we are very interested in exceeding those numbers to finally allow the Philippines to take on a primary role in ASEAN and the world because we deserve nothing less," the tourism chief emphasized.

Known as the Philippines' last ecological frontier, Palawan has been accorded with numerous global awards—from the 8th Top Island in Asia to Most Desirable Island in the Wanderlust Travel Awards, to "one of the 40 destinations on its Go List for 2023. **DOT**



PHL bags back to back wins in Routes Asia 2023

CHIANG MAI — The Department of Tourism (DOT) was named winner in the Destination category of the prestigious Routes Asia 2023 held recently in Thailand.

The Philippines bested three other countries, namely the Japan National Tourism Organization, Ministry of Tourism Indonesia, and the Singapore Tourism Board for its persistence “in its efforts to partner with airports and airlines to reinstate discontinued routes and secure new air services. It has done this through marketing efforts locally and globally, regional travel exchanges and business-to-business meetings, joint campaigns, international roadshows, and familiarisation tours for agents and media,” Routes Asia announced.

“We are immensely delighted and proud of this award for the Philippines recognizing our government’s efforts at transforming our tourism industry through connectivity and

convergence,” said DOT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

“Under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the Department of Tourism has identified the enhancement of connectivity as an essential pillar to strengthen Philippine tourism as a whole. Thus, the effort has been towards collaborating with our key partners from the public and private sectors to ensure the resumption and addition of flights, the enhancement of gateways, and the improvement of the overall tourist experience,” added Secretary Frasco.

Meanwhile, the multi-awarded Mactan-Cebu International Airport Corporation (GMCAC) bagged another victory for the Philippines emerging as Asia’s Best Airport in the under 5 Million Passenger Category. According to Routes Asia, the GMCAC “has always taken a two-pronged approach to route development: airline marketing to

create supply and destination marketing to ensure the sustainability of its airline partners’ presence and address the demand for air services.”

Routes Asia is “the only route development event dedicated to Asia Pacific, the event will provide a platform for the region’s airlines, airports, tourism authorities and aviation stakeholders to meet, share best practice and come together to develop network strategies and ensure future air service development across Asia Pacific with over 600 new air services across Asia Pacific are connected to meetings at Routes events” per the Routes Asia website.

International air seats to the Philippines are projected by the Official Airline Guide’s (OAG) Database to reach 16.1 million by the end of the year comparative to the 20.5 million registered in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. **DOT**





INTRAMUROS

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PHILIPPINES

Asia's Leading Beach Destination 2023



PHILIPPINES

Asia's Leading Dive Destination 2023



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Asia's Leading Wedding Destination 2023



PHILIPPINE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Asia's Leading Tourist Board 2023



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PHL secures back-to-back nominations at the 2023 World Travel Awards

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco announced that the Philippines and two of its leading destinations, Intramuros and Cebu, have been nominated for major awards under the Asia category of the 30th World Travel Awards (WTA).

The Philippines is once again in the running as Asia's Leading Beach Destination at the 2023 edition of the WTA, after winning in the same category during the 2022 WTA awarding held September last year in Vietnam.

This year, The Philippines is also vying for the Asia's Leading Dive Destination title, an award it has earned for four years straight from 2019 to 2022.

"We are extremely elated upon receiving the news on these nominations at the landmark 30th anniversary of the World Travel Awards. These recurring nominations clearly manifest the growing global travel demand into the Philippines, one that we aim to sustain in the coming days through the initiatives we have laid out for the tourism industry's recovery and transformation post pandemic," Secretary Frasco said.

Cebu is nominated as Asia's Leading Wedding Destination, and meanwhile, after winning as Asia's Leading Tourist Attraction at last year's WTA, the Walled City of Intramuros is once again nominated for the same award category.

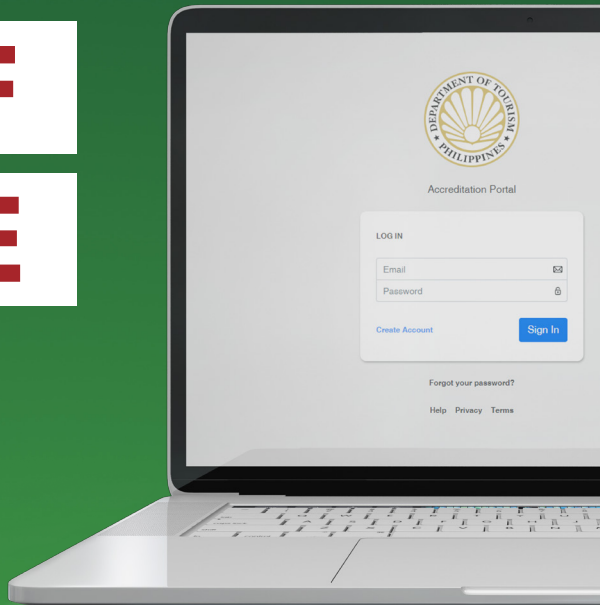
The DOT is likewise nominated as Asia's Leading Tourism Board at the 2023 WTA.

Open to travel professionals, media, and tourism consumers, voting for the 2023 WTAs various categories (including Asia) officially opened on 20 February 2023 and will be open until midnight of 23 July 2023.

"I invite my fellow Filipinos as well as our foreign friends to show some love and help keep the travel momentum for the Philippines. Sign up and cast your votes now," Secretary Frasco enthused. **[DOT](#)**

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DOT extends 'free accreditation' for tourism establishments

The Department of Tourism (DOT) on February 21, 2023 announced the extension of its Memorandum Circular (MC) 2022-001 which waives accreditation fees for tourism establishments.

According to Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, the DOT foresees the move as such that would assist tourism enterprises in their recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DOT MC 2022-001 or the Revised Interim Guidelines Governing Applications for Accreditation During The State of Calamity Due to COVID-19 is anchored on the Presidential Proclamation No. 57 s. 2022 which further extended the period of state of calamity in the Philippines until 31 December 2022.

"While the proclamation on the period of state calamity in the country has ended, we at the DOT discern the need to continue, for as long as essential, measures that will support our stakeholders in their process of recouping the devastating losses incurred in the almost three years that the tourism industry was brought to a standstill due to the pandemic," Secretary Frasco said.

In addition to the waived accreditation fees, the DOT MC 2022-001 contains salient points that were aptly aligned by the Department with the issuances of the national government's Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID). Among these include the streamlining of documentary requirements for accreditation as well as the conduct of virtual inspections in lieu of physical inspections.

Secretary Frasco noted, however, that pertinent updates were already made to some of the provisions in the Memorandum Circular that the Department released on 24 March 2022.

Additionally, the DOT also targets the resumption of new applications for Star Rating and Premium Accreditation—suspended under Section 6 under the Memorandum Circular—by next month.

Meanwhile, as applications for Basic Registration will remain discontinued, the DOT encourages enterprises with expiring Basic Registration to instead apply for a Regular Accreditation. **DOT**



Frasco: Panagbenga Festival touts Baguio's tourism resurgence

BAGUIO CITY — Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco lauded the highly-anticipated return of the Baguio City's Panagbenga Festival.

"After three years of hiatus because of the pandemic, Baguio is back, and what a beautiful return!" enthused the tourism chief.

"The vigor with which you have developed your city as a community, uniting it to celebrate your culture and traditions, reflects your undying passion to promote Baguio as a haven for arts and culture. Without question, the Panagbenga Festival, which started as a community endeavor, has evolved into a now world-class celebration. A major tourism driver in Northern Luzon, Panagbenga reflects a season of blooming. Since its inception in 1996, it has played a significant role in both the local economic and national tourism development of this city and our country," Secretary Frasco remarked.

During her speech at the Grand Float Parade on February 26, the Tourism Secretary also laid out plans for the Department's flagship program, the Philippine Experience, *"which aims to expose our tourists not only to the tourist destinations but also to the living cultural traditions of our regions."*

"And we cannot wait to bring the Philippine Experience here to Baguio so that people from all over the Philippines and all over the world can rediscover the beauty of Baguio," added Secretary Frasco.

"This grand float parade is more than just a stunning display of artistry. It is a testament to our collective identity. A statement of our resolve to stay true to our roots while embracing the future. It is a call to unite, to celebrate, and to create memories that will last a lifetime," shared Mayor Benjamin Magalong during his welcome remarks.

In 2022, Baguio, being among the first cities to reopen in the midst of the pandemic, has already welcomed a total of 1,042,309 travelers both domestic and international.

As of January this year, 57,241 local and foreign visitors had visited Baguio.

"Baguio City, with all its colors, its people, its tradition, and your history and heritage combined, indeed has made and will continue to make a lasting imprint on our visitors' memories and build a positive image of your city and our country. These aspects form part of the holistic approach the Department of Tourism wishes to pursue for tourism development. And we are very happy to find in Baguio a partner in this regard. You can rest assured that you have a partner in the Department of Tourism as we transform the tourism industry under the Marcos Administration," Secretary Frasco asserted.

Senator Lito Lapid, Senator Imee Marcos, Philippine National Police Chief Rodolfo Azurin Jr., Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary Kristine Evangelista, La Trinidad, Benguet Mayor Romeo Salda, Philippine Military Academy Lieutenant General Rowen Tolentino, Congressman Mark Go, Baguio Flower Festival Inc. Chairman Baguio Country Club General Manager Anthony De Leon, Chairman for Life Atty Mauricio Domogan, DOT officials including Undersecretary Ferdinand Jumapao, and Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Chief Operating Officer Mark Lapid, and delegations from Tibet, Yongsan-gu, Korea, and Cebu also graced the flower festival.

Baguio folks and guests can enjoy the remaining activities of the Panagbenga Festival, which include the Session Road in Bloom, the landscaping competition and exhibition at the Melvin Jones Football Ground, and the Market Encounter products and food fair at the Burnham Park Lake side.

The month-long festival, with the theme "A Renaissance of Wonder and Beauty" concluded on March 5 with a closing program and grand fireworks display. **DOT**





Frasco lauds Ilocos Norte's Tan-Ok festival as manifestation of the Philippine Experience'

LAOAG, Ilocos Norte — Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco lauded the celebration of Ilocano culture and tradition in the 205th founding anniversary of Ilocos Norte dubbed: Tan-Ok Ni Ilocano: The Festival of Festivals on Feb 24 at the newly-inaugurated Ferdinand E. Marcos Memorial Stadium in Laoag City.

In his welcome remarks President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. said that he personally made sure that the tourism chief was present at the February 24 event so she could witness the festivities as the program would help her in formulating unique projects that would highlight the diverse Filipino brand.

“I wanted her to see the traditional culture of the Philippines at ito’y nagiging mahalaga para sa kanyang pinapaano para ipagmalaki ang kultura ng Pilipinas, ipagmalaki ang mga Pilipino sa buong mundo nang sa ganon ay tayo’y matulungan sa ating pagaahon sa ating ekonomiya sa pamamagitan ng turismo,” shared President Marcos Jr., who previously served as Vice Governor and Governor of the province.

President Marcos Jr. added he hopes that programs like the Tan-Ok will help sustain the resurgence of Philippine tourism following more than two years of enduring unprecedented losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Beyond this event’s revelry, this event is expected to stimulate economic activity and support Ilokano families by driving tourism industry, sustaining local livelihood. I assure you that the government’s commitment to strengthen the domestic tourism industry remains a top priority and Ilocos Norte will play a very large part of that,” President Marcos Jr. continued.

Manifestation of “Philippine Experience”

On her part, Secretary Frasco lauded the festival which according to her is a manifestation of the Philippine Experience which the DOT hopes to highlight as part of the country’s cultural treasures.

“The Tan-Ok festival exemplifies what we at the Department of

Tourism strive to achieve in showcasing the unique Filipino identity,” Secretary Frasco said.

“We at the DOT will amplify our Philippine Experience caravans so that more Provinces, Cities, and Municipalities will have opportunities to be highlighted and more MSMEs will have a chance to showcase their products and services,” Secretary Frasco added

The Philippine Experience, which the DOT is rolling out summer this year, aims to highlight the Philippines’ heritage and culture to increase travel among Filipinos and foreign visitors. It would involve the development of caravans featuring culture, heritage, and arts unique to each region.

The Tan-Ok Ni Ilocano Festival

Thousands of Ilocanos came to the stadium carrying placards and messages of support for their respective dancers who will perform for their town’s glory.

Donning the story of their towns, from tobacco-themed costumes to seafood props, the Tan-Ok Ni Ilocano Festival celebrates the 205th founding anniversary of Ilocos Norte through a month-long calendar of activities featuring the province’s cultural heritage, history, and people.

For Ilocanos, Tan-Ok is a reminder of the town’s identity and heritage as well as a tourism driver for the province’s rich gastronomy and local livelihood.

Ilocos Norte Governor Matthew Marcos Manotoc expressed excitement on the event particularly noting that the stadium is now fully operational, this after the pandemic halted public gatherings for more than two years.

Meanwhile, Ilocos Norte first congressional district Representative Ferdinand Alexander “Sandro” Araneta Marcos III wished for more events like the Tan-Ok ni Ilokano “to remember the stories that made Ilocos Norte what it is today”.

Vice Governor Cecilia Araneta Marcos was also present to witness the festivities. **DOT**





Angkas partners with DOT-NCR for motorcycle city tours

Words and photo by DOT NCR

Filipino firm Angkas wants tourists and locals alike to experience Metro Manila's vibrant and culture-rich cities on board a Vespa motorcycle ala 'Emily in Paris'.

In partnership with the Department of Tourism - National Capital Region (DOT-NCR) Office the leading motorcycle taxi hailing app is pushing for a rolling tour that would showcase the best local hotspots in the Metro with Angkas bikers as tour guides.

Angkas CEO George Royeca said motorcycle city tours would allow people to see, experience, and appreciate a city in a different light, "We've been wanting to do this for a long time. Touring on a motorcycle

for me is very enriching. It's like becoming one with your surroundings. You lose yourself in the sights and sounds. You get to feel the wind and smell the air. It's one of those unforgettable experiences."

To ensure top-notch quality service, Angkas bikers and trainers will be undergoing the DOT's Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) training designed to help bring out the Filipinos' innate qualities that make us unique in the hospitality industry.

"We're building strong collaborations with our private and public stakeholders and making sure all these kinds of extensions and

assistance are given to them," said DOT-NCR Regional Director Sharlene Zabala adding that the partnership with Angkas is highly anticipated given how the transportation system is an essential component of tourism.

Angkas and the DOT-NCR are looking at Intramuros, Binondo, Poblacion, and BGC as its pilot areas for the motorcycle city tour ala 'Emily in Paris' the popular series available on the streaming service Netflix.

The project will be launched with a few bikers first to explore and examine how the process can be further developed to achieve maximum customer satisfaction. The DOT is also considering including the Angkas motorcycle city tour in its highly anticipated Hop On, Hop Off Bus Tours given how a number of our roads and streets are only accessible by motorcycles.

Angkas, a homegrown Filipino firm, has been known to help promote Filipino culture, traditions, and customs in its marketing strategies. According to Royeca, their thrust has always been to be a company for the Filipinos by the Filipinos. Royeca is hoping that the partnership with the DOT would help promote local tourism through safe, fast, and reliable transportation. **DOT**



Commemorative ride held to celebrate Philippine Motorcycle Tourism (PMT) Membership Program's first year

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, the marketing arm and attached agency of the Department of Tourism (DOT), held a commemorative motorcade for its Philippine Motorcycle Tourism (PMT) Membership Program in Parañaque City to celebrate its first anniversary on February 19.

The PMT Membership Program aims to encourage motorcycle riders to explore tourism destinations through group rides,

promote safe and responsible riding by requiring proof certifying that the rider attended a safety seminar, advocate for sustainability by initiating corporate social responsibility for the members, and introduce PMT to private stakeholders by identifying rider-friendly establishments.

Around 130 riders from different motorcycle groups joined the parade, which started at the Parañaque Fisherman's Wharf to DFA Aseana and vice-versa. **DOT**





DOT MIMAROPA and OPMD Pitched-in Mindoro Motorbike Loop

Department of Tourism Region 4-B (DOT MIMAROPA) in partnership with the DOT Office for Product and Market Development (OPMD) kicked off on February 20 a site validation trip entitled “Mindoro Loop Motorbike Experience”.

The activity aims to develop a tourist circuit that focuses on nature-based tourism and advocates motorcycle tours within Mindoro Islands. The project also looks forward to promote both existing and emerging tourism sites and activities for adventure, nature lovers, and domestic travelers alike.

Upon the participant's arrival at the Muelle port in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro through water taxis from Batangas City, the event officially started with welcome pleasantries at the Muelle Bay Cultural Heritage Park. The 5-day tour (February 20-24) traversed around the island of Mindoro starting in Puerto Galera before continuing to Baco, Calapan City, Gloria, Bulalacao, Sablayan and finally ending in San Jose, Mindoro Occidental, on the last day for the participants' return flight to Manila.

The Mindoro Loop's goal is to offer a holistic tourism experience that includes cultural heritage tour, farm visits and community

immersions, adventure and island hopping activities, as well as local cuisine tasting, among others.

The different local governments (LGUs) of Mindoro Oriental and Mindoro Occidental are very supportive and enthusiastic about the idea, and even have volunteered to include some of the LGUs' traditional as well as emerging tourist spots to be included in the validation tour such as: Muelle Bay Cultural Heritage Park, Iraya Mangyan Cultural Village, White Beach, Tamaraw Falls, Infinity Farm, Oriental Mindoro Heritage Museum, Twin Pantan Cave, Suguicay Island, Bato-ili Mangyan Community, Sablayan Adventure park and Pandan Island.

Participants to the validation trip have been selected by DOT MIMAROPA from among different tour operators and tourism stakeholders as well as social media content creators to evaluate the featured activities, itinerary, and overall viability of the program. Table-top business meetings among national and local tour and travel operators have likewise been conducted to facilitate and establish links among private stakeholders in the marketing and promotion of the visited tourist areas. **DOT**



Tourism chief leads opening ceremony of Musikahan sa Tagum Festival in Davao del Norte

Photos by DOT 10

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco graced 20th Musikahan sa Tagum Festival in Tagum City, Davao in celebration of the National Arts Month in the country.

With the theme “Truly Tagum, Inspirational City in Harmony”, the festival aims to bring together music artists, choral groups, string ensembles and contemporary show bands from all over the country, to promote peace and spread love to the world.

Around 10,000 Tagumenyos are expected join the festivities on top of the performers who are invited to perform in the music festival.

The event was also attended by Mayor Rey T. Uy, Vice Gov Oyo L. Uy, Tagum City Tourism, Arts & Culture President Alma L. Uy, DOT Regional Director Tanya Rabat-Tan and local government officials of Tagum City. **DOT**



Silver Shadow cruise ship welcomed in Eastern Visayas

Photos by DOT 8

A festive atmosphere and a native lechon to feast on an island made exclusive for some special guests—that’s how Silver Shadow, the first cruise ship to ever visit the Eastern Visayas region since the reopening of borders was welcomed on 10 February 2023.

Two hundred twenty-eight American and European tourists onboard the cruise ship from Papua New Guinea experienced the Filipino brand of hospitality at the beautiful shores of Kalanggaman Island in Palompon town, Leyte as the first of four destinations to be visited by the ship in the Philippines.

Silver Shadow is one of the luxury cruise ships operating under the Silversea Millennium Class of Silversea Cruises that is currently in an expedition across Asia.

According to the Department of Tourism-Eastern Visayas Regional Director Karen S. Tiopes, guests have expressed their happiness and gratitude to the warm and “best” welcome they have experienced in their destination country, the Philippines.

The ship arrived past 1 o’clock in the afternoon on Friday and stayed until 11 o’clock in the evening. Guests were served with delectable snacks and dinner catered by local chefs, while, at the same time, local artists serenade them with music. Their entire experience was made colorful with cultural dancers from the region.

Silver Shadow commenced its voyage in Bohol Island on February 11, then Romblon Island on February 12, and made its final stop in Manila on February 13 before its journey to Hong Kong.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco has earlier welcomed the docking of bigger cruise ships into the Philippines as she said, this will further boost the pandemic-hit tourism sector. **DOT**



DOT NorthMin launches the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence Program 2023

Words and photos by DOT 10

CAGAYAN DE ORO — The Department of Tourism Regional Office 10 (DOT-10), through the Tourism Industry Skills Program (TISP), launched the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) program and training at the Grand Caprice Restaurant and Convention Center on 22 February 2023.

Representatives from national government agencies, academic institutions, accommodation establishments, tourism stakeholders, and the private sector formed part of the 240 participants who graced the launch. The celebration aimed at providing training and techniques for delivering commendable customer service and attitude grounded on the unique Filipino values of Maka-Diyos, Makatao, Maka-kalikasan, Makabansa, Masayahin, May Bayanihan, and May Pagasa.

DOT-10 Regional Director Marie Elaine Unchuan, who welcomed the participants, recognized the FBSE as a distinguished and world-renowned hospitality found exclusively in every Filipino.

Quoting the words of Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, she reechoed that the *“DOT aims to purvey the Filipino brand of service excellence to the frontline tourism workers, recognizing the strength of the Filipino brand of service excellence as the core pillar of the tourism industry and in order to help the industry workforce become beacons of hospitality to our 100 million Filipino population, ready and willing to receive tourists from all over the world.”*

Director Unchuan looked forward to conducting FBSE trainings for 6,250 tourism frontliners to help upscale the overall tourism experience in Northern Mindanao and throughout the country. This is in response to Secretary Frasco’s call to train 100,000 tourism workers by 2024.

The event also acknowledged the FBSE partners throughout the years through the presentation of sectoral emblems from hospitality and accommodation, academe, transport, and the security sector, among others. It was followed by the cake lighting ceremony, signaling the start of the journey towards FBSE 6,250 and the road to 100,000 participants.

After the grand launching ceremony, the FBSE whole-day training concluded with the pinning ceremony of the trainees from Northern Mindanao. **DOT**





Nayong Pilipino, San Agustin Museum launch "Culture Contact: Augustinian Missions to La Montanosa" exhibit

Words and photos by Nayong Pilipino Foundation

MANILA — The Nayong Pilipino Foundation (NPF), an attached agency of the Department of Tourism (DOT), partnered with the San Agustin Museum in organizing an exhibit entitled "Culture Contact: Augustinian Missions to La Montanosa" on 23 February 2023 at the San Agustin Museum in Intramuros, Manila.

The said exhibit that will run until 23 April 2023, offers a story of interactions between the distant and the indigenous societies in the Cordillera, showcasing historical and ecclesiastical objects from the San Agustin Museum as well as Northern Luzon material culture collection from the NPF.

According to the curator, Mr. Victor Estrella, the exhibit aims to revisit the narratives of encounter between Spanish Augustinian religious missionaries and the indigenous cultural communities of the Cordillera from the 16th to the 18th century; to bring our attention to how indigenous cultural communities of the Cordillera maintained their freedom from Spanish colonial rule and Catholic influence; and provide a space for critical dialogue, allowing Filipinos to reflect on culture contact and cultural change.

In her speech, NPF Executive Director Gertie Duran-Batocabe emphasized the agency's commitment in bringing the agency's ethnographic collections

closer to the general public to engage Filipinos in understanding, appreciating, and committing to the preservation and dissemination of history, culture, and heritage of our forebears.

"Relics of the past like these artifacts remind us how these cultures thrived. Filipinos will be able to reflect on culture contact and cultural exchange through the exhibit, which will provide a space for critical dialogue," said Duran-Batocabe.

"We strive to keep our cultural heritage alive and vibrant, and we are dedicated to preserving it for generations to come," she added.

Present during the ribbon-cutting ceremony were Congresswoman Angelica Natasha, DOT Undersecretary Atty. Shereen Gail Yu-Pamintuan, DOT National Capital Region (NCR) Director Sharlene Batin, Intramuros Administrator Atty. Joan Padilla, National Museum of the Philippines Deputy Director-General Jorell M. Legaspi, San Agustin Museum Director Fr. Ricky Villar, and Very Rev. Fr. Fray Dante Morabe Bendoy, O.S.A of the Augustinian Province of the Most Holy name of Jesus.

The exhibit is also a celebration of the first Inauguration Anniversary of the Augustinian Province of the Most Holy name of Jesus in the Philippines and to commemorate the Anniversary of the liberation of San Agustin Church from the Japanese Forces, during

the liberation of Manila.

"One of the many artifacts included in our exhibit is the 18th century statue of St. Thomas de Villanueva from the diocesan museum of Diocese of Baguio. This statue is misidentified as St. Thomas of Aquinas. The attributes clearly show that he is St. Tomas de Villanueva, he has miter, he is a bishop, St. Thomas of Aquinas is not a bishop," said Fr. Ricky Villar.

"Allegedly, the statue was found in one of the chapels in Santo Tomas, Province of Benguet. For unknown reasons he was just identified as St. Thomas of Aquinas. Later you will find this statue and the 1723 map of the Augustinian mission in Cordillera," he added.

The exhibit is part of the "Traveling Museum" project of the NPF, which aims to bring the agency's ethnographic artifacts to the general public.

Last month, the agency launched its creative book reading activity "Mga Kwentong May Kwenta sa Bawat Sulok ng Bansa, may Pamana" which aims to teach young children about the Philippine ethnic groups as well as the culture and way of life of the Filipino people. The activity centers on the stories of the Manobos of Mindanao and Hanunuo Mangyan of the Mindoro Islands. **DOT**



TOURISM RELATED EVENTS



First General Membership Meeting of the Philippine International Air Transport Association (PIATA) Agents Travel Association



Induction of new Hotel Sales and Marketing Association (HSMA) International Board of Trustees



Induction of the newly elected officers of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies, Inc. (NAITAS)



Japan Fiesta 2023 Opening Day



Courtesy meeting with top officials of the World Bank



Courtesy meeting with Ambassador of Spain to the Philippines



Courtesy meeting with Ambassador of United Kingdom to the Philippines



Courtesy meeting with Ambassador of Ajara to the Philippines



Courtesy meeting with Ambassador of India to the Philippines



Courtesy meeting with officials of the Manila Ocean Park

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TO OUR MARCH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS

1 Sheila Calison	10 Mark Jael Hildawa	19 Joseph Lazaro	22 Rogelio Sanchez	27 Sharlian Carvajal
2 Rosario Santos	11 Verna Buensuceso	19 Joseph Ortega	22 Dharyl Iriarte	27 Diosel Lubrin
3 Marino Sarabia	11 Nestor Macababbad	19 Joseph Trilles	23 Cristina Chiuco	28 Sharlene Batin
4 Virginia Dela Rosa	11 Keith Purqued	19 Theresa Endaya	24 Katrina Duka	28 Loryna Fonacier
4 Mario Daga	12 Thomas Pinasen	20 Gwendolyn Batoon	24 Andrea Oca	30 Danilo David
4 Patricia Javier	13 Angelica Lapeña	20 Kim Menor	24 Chito Realosa	30 Victoria Rodrigo
4 Marjorie Mandate	14 Mauricio Angeles Jr.	20 Levy Supranes	25 Ma. Reda Astronomia	30 Alex Macatuno
6 Dakila Gonzales	14 Jem Micaiah Turla	21 Giovanni Perez	25 Gloria Punzalan	30 Ana Maria Matalog
6 Karen Nagtalon	15 Renato Ocampo Jr.	21 Res Bernardo	25 Cecille Tiantes	31 Evangelene Del Mundo
7 Vilma Cometa	16 Mikko Langbid	22 Joesel Bibal	25 Justine Rico	31 Joselito Gapasin
8 Ma. Teresa Fevidal	18 Noel Sedigo	22 Katrish De Goma	25 Catherine Alair	
8 Jennifer Jacobo	19 Jose Cabulanan	22 Wenceslao Galeza Jr.	26 Maricel Malalad	



SCAN TO REGISTER

<http://bbmg.philippines.travel>

Bisita, Be My Guest is an incentivized promotional campaign wherein Filipinos, specially Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW), Overseas and Former Filipinos who invite foreigners to visit the country will be entitled to a raffle ticket and have a chance to win special prizes.