Bouncing Back Bravely: TPB Thrives Amid COVID-19 Crisis

Bangon Turismo: The Philippine Domestic Tourism Game Plan

WTTC Outlines The "New Normal" For Future Travel

Explore Palawan: The "Last Frontier"

Phitex and MICECon 2020 Go Virtual
In this issue, we start the spotlight on our resilience as a people, as tourism destination, and also TPB as an organization. The adverse impact of this health problem is felt across the world, but our spirit of perseverance and unmitigated optimism constantly leads and reminds us of our country’s boundless potentials and unique features. As the pages in this Issue honor our narrative of grit and growth through the time of COVID-19, the advertisement for innovation, creativity and technology that fuels my continued commitment to promote our country at the forefront in destination, so long as it is clear and transparent, leaves me confident that our future is bright.

With this in mind, I hope you will enjoy our inaugural issue of TPB’s e-magazine for the year, and our new COO, took “Headlines” to lean more towards sharing news, and discussed with the TPB team how news can stay relevant when we release the magazine every three months. And so, after a series of virtual discussions and polls through the community quarantine period, SPOTLIGHT is here to hopefully feature updates and share information in a more fun format.

Welcome to the SPOTLIGHT of the Philippines spearheaded by its Marketing Communications Department. Enerio april_enerio@tpb.gov.ph. Contributors will be acknowledged accordingly. *Articles are edited to suit length and style parameters.

PHILIPPINES TURISMO The Philippine Domestic Tourism Game Plan.

D
If you notice that the new name?"...

On The Spot...
Bouncing back bravely: TPB THRIVES AMID COVID-19 CRISIS

When President Rodrigo Duterte placed the Philippines under a State of Calamity on 16 March 2020 in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the declaration entailed a nationwide travel ban and the enforcement of community quarantine. As a result, the tourism industry took a massive blow as travel came to a standstill.

Despite the seemingly bleak portrait of the tourism industry, "It's More Fun in the Philippines" temporarily made way for "We Heal As One," encouraging all Filipinos to unite in battling the dreadful disease and the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) made sure to heed the clarion call.

In support of Republic Act No. 11469 (or the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act”), a law created under President Duterte’s Administration to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the TPB redirected current program thrusts to fully support efforts and initiatives in response to the crisis.

TPB has committed the total amount of PHP 23,287,460.00 of its PHP 87,000,000 2020 Special Contingency Fund (SCF) in support of the various initiatives of DOT such as the sponsorship of 18 sweeper flights, provision of 5,000 travel essential kits to stranded tourists and OFWs, facilitation of 1,677 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and vitamins for Frontline Tourism Airport Personnel, and the procurement of the services of a research / survey company to conduct market and stakeholder research studies on travel and tourism during and after the pandemic, among others.

Meanwhile, to convey support to the private sector, TPB waived participation fees for industry partners joining in selected international trade, MICE and consumer fairs and business missions this year.

The much-awaited solution to COVID-19 has yet to surface but despite the disease’s repercussions, TPB’s operations remain unhampered as the agency continues to conduct dialogues with stakeholders, hold virtual meetings and roll out programs related to recovery and adaptation in post-COVID-19 conditions.

TPB will also continue to provide updates on its social media channels and ensure that its personnel are well-compensated to face the daily challenges stemming from this disease. All these while the world awaits a cure.

TPB WAIVES MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM REGISTRATION FEES

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), as approved by the Department of Tourism (DOT), has waived its Membership Program registration fee of Php 10,000.00 for Fiscal Years (FY) 2020-2021.

The move was made to extend marketing and promotional support to private sector stakeholders and aid them in controlling costs and mitigating economic losses as the industry recovers from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, the 103 existing members who have paid the registration fee for FY 2020-2021 will be exempted from paying the annual fee in 2022 to offset their previous payment.

The TPB Membership Program aims to provide marketing services and benefits to its members through various areas of activities that promote, advocate, and represent the interests of its members for the benefit and sustainable development of their businesses and the tourism industry as a whole. The program also supports DOT’s progressive accreditation scheme for tourism-related establishments.

To know more about the TPB Membership Program, please visit www.tpb.gov.ph/membership/. For other membership inquiries, interested parties may get in touch with the Industry Relations and Services Division of the TPB Domestic Promotions Department at tpbmembership@tpb.gov.ph.

PHITEX AND MICECON 2020 GO VIRTUAL

Human interaction is an important aspect of life. But the emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) limited its capacity to virtual means, resulting in great challenges for the tourism industry that significantly values actual communication.

Despite this setback, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines has vowed to proceed with two of its biggest institutional events this year, though in a virtual environment.

The Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2020 will hold its first virtual edition this 22-24 September 2020, allowing local suppliers to engage with foreign buyers through a digital platform. The travel trade event will also feature webinars tackling marketing strategies during a crisis and interviews with key tourism players.

Meanwhile, The Philippine MICE Conference (MICECON), initially scheduled this October in Davao City, will also be converted into a virtual conference.

The virtual MICECON or MICECONline will continue to feature plenary and breakout sessions focused on revitalizing all sectors of the MICE industry and provide industry updates relevant to the “new normal” scenarios faced by the industry.

Both events are expected to draw hundreds of international participants despite the absence of face-to-face meetings, and TPB is set to exhaust all efforts while upholding health and safety measures for their success.
I it is any consolation to the Filipino people, the COVID-19 pandemic has reignited the human spirit of unity and camaraderie. It has given birth to unsung heroes and courageous souls who have been toiling to keep the nation on its feet since day one.

Within the tourism sector, the regional offices of the Department of Tourism (DOT) have become the torch bearers in assisting distressed tourists. No time was wasted from the moment President Rodrigo Duterte announced that the entire Philippines would be put under a state of calamity due to the pandemic. With flights cancelled and borders closed, the women and men of DOT quickly gathered their resources to assist each and every tourist that needed their help.

Within a week of the announcement, safety information as well as notices, bulletins and emergency hotlines were released for tourists to address their questions and to receive updates. Accommodations and essentials were provided in partnership with local government units (LGUs) and tourism stakeholders, and repatriation flight schedules were posted online.

By May 22, approximately 35,502 tourists, of which 26,550 are foreign and 8,952 are local, have been assisted by the DOT. Sweeper flights were arranged from various islands and cities such as Tacloban, Siargao, Puerto Princesa, Davao and Iloilo. Philippine Coast Guard boats were used to ferry tourists stranded in the islands of Negros, Bohol and Siargao to Cebu City. Special international flights to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Canada, New Zealand and Australia were also provided.

In an uploaded Facebook video, a stranded German national in Buguey, Cagayan was all praises for the DOT after being safely ferried to Manila for his repatriation flight back to Germany. “I’m very impressed because they helped me from the very beginning,” he said. “They never left me alone.”

The Netherlands Embassy also relayed a message saying, “We are immensely grateful for the dedication that these Philippine organizations have shown to getting people on their way to their homes in Europe.”

Apart from ground assistance, DOTs regional offices have also been busy promoting online initiatives that encourage viewers to stay home. DOT Eastern Visayas, for one, has been releasing videos with a “Choose to stay @ Home” message that emphasizes viewers to remain in their homes and travel once the pandemic is over. DOT Region III also released a cooking video while DOT Region 6 posted a webinar for the Western Visayas tourism industry to learn about adapting to the new normal.

As COVID-19 enters the second half of the year, the DOT regional offices remain steadfast in their quest to ensure tourist safety. The tasks at hand coupled with daily challenges may seem daunting for these unsung heroes, but they soldier on and stand by their mandate, with a smile. Kudos!
The Philippines bagged the top spot as the “Best Diving Area, Overseas” in this year’s “Marine Diving Awards”, based on votes by subscribers of The Marine Diving Magazine, one of Japan’s leading dive magazines.

The Marine Diving Awards started in 2000 and since then, the Philippines has always been a favorite, landing within the top three every year. But this year marks the first time that the country was able to grab the top spot.

Tiki Tiki Divers in Moalboal, Philippines also took the top spot as the “Favorite Dive Operator, Overseas” while the Emerald Green Diving Center in Malapascua, Good Dive Shop in Bohol, Sea Lion Cebu, Marine House Seasir Cebu and Blue Coral in Malapascua landed on the 11th, 14th, 15th, 17th and 18th spots respectively.

Blessed with unspoilt natural wonders, the Philippines has so much to offer as a premier dive destination. Without a doubt, the country will capture divers from all over the world once we are ready to travel again, post-pandemic.
The face of travel, as we know it, is now changing fundamentally. This was the focus of the latest webinar entitled “The Future of Travel: A World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Exclusive Panel” hosted by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, in partnership with the WTTC, held on May 19, 2020.

Moderated by Ms. Anita Mendiratta, Founder & President of Anita Mendiratta & Associates, the webinar featured experts from major tourism segments of aviation, tourism investments, and accommodations who discussed the current challenges in the international travel and tourism arena and how the industry stakeholders can respond, recover and prepare for the future of travel.

In her opening remarks, DOT Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat expressed her confidence in rebuilding the local tourism industry with the help of WTTC. This was supported by Ms. Gloria Guevara, President and CEO of WTTC, who discussed a globally coordinated approach to re-establish effective operations, remove travel barriers and re-open borders. Guevara also noted that it is imperative to combine health components with the latest technology, necessary protections, and protocols to help rebuild travelers’ confidence.

Bouncing back, however, may take time, as expressed by Mr. Gary Chapman, President of the Group Services and DNATA-Emirates Group, who forecasted a three to four year recovery period for the aviation industry.

Ms. Shirley Tan, CEO of Rajawali Property Group also saw major uncertainties in global capital flows and reminded investors to secure new investments while ensuring asset management, capital preservation, and liquidity management at the same time.

Moreover, Mr. Craig Smith, President and Managing Director of Asia Pacific for Marriott International who lauded the bullish travel and tourism industry in the Philippines for the past five years, shared his optimism that the industry will “certainly recover”, and that Asia will recover faster than any other part of the world so long as strong collaboration remains between private and public sectors as the world heads toward the new normal.

“The concept of tourism is deeply embedded in our consciousness,” said Secretary Puyat. “And I would like to believe that this is what makes our industry resilient from all the challenges, even the toughest one that we are about to overcome.”

It will take time, yes, but the tourism industry will recover.
WTTC outlines what “the new normal” will look like as we start to travel

London, UK: The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has outlined what the “new normal” will look like as countries begin to end their COVID-19 lockdowns and ease travel restrictions.

“Travelling in the New Normal” is part of WTTC’s plan which includes critical steps and coordinated actions, including new standards and protocols, which offer a safe and responsible road to recovery for the global Travel & Tourism sector as consumers start planning trips again.

For the last few weeks, WTTC, which represents the global Travel & Tourism private sector, has been marshalling the efforts of the private sector, sharing best practices from different regions around the world to work on the path forward.

Public-private collaboration between business and governments is vital to develop new health protocols which will form the travel experience and also provide people with strong reassurances when travelling.

WTTC says the sector will face a gradual return to travel over the coming months as a “new normal” emerges before a vaccine becomes available on a mass scale, large enough to inoculate billions of people.

Travel is likely to return first to domestic markets with staycations; then to a country’s nearest neighbours before expanding across regions, and then finally across continents to welcome the return of journeys to long-haul international destinations.

WTTC believes younger travellers in the 18-35 age group, who appear to be less vulnerable to COVID-19, may also be among the first to begin travelling once again.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: “It is vital for the survival of the Travel & Tourism sector that we work together and map out the road to recovery, through coordinated actions, and offer the reassurance people need to begin travelling once again.

“We have learned from past experiences that when the protocols from the private sector are taken into account and we have a coordinated approach the recovery time frame is significantly reduced, so the private-public sector collaboration is crucial.

“We should avoid new, unnecessary procedures that create bottlenecks and slow down the recovery. However, a quick and effective restart of travel will only happen if governments around the world agree to a common set of health protocols developed by the private sector, such as those we’ve outlined.

“These must provide the reassurance travellers and authorities need, using new technology, to offer hassle-free, pre-vaccine ‘new normal’ travel in the short term.”

The new protocols and standards are being defined following feedback and multiple conversations with WTTC Members, as well collaboration from associations who represent the different travel sectors.

This includes the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Airport Council International (ACI), Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), United States Travel Association (USTA), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Travel Commission (ETC) and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

IATA, ACI and ICAO are pooling their crucial expertise and are working closely to define the best protocols to keep travellers and employees safe to enable the aviation sector to recover. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and other health experts have also contributed by providing their experience from various global medical crises.

To offer world-class cleanliness, improved hygiene standards and ensure guest safety, hotels are developing protocols based on learnings from offering free rooms to frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 crisis.

There will be new protocols for check-in involving digital technology; hand sanitiser stations at frequent points including where luggage is stored; contactless payment instead of cash; using stairs more often than lifts where the 2 meter rule can be harder to maintain; and fitness equipment being moved for greater separation among other examples.

Cruise operators will take further measures to ensure ships are free of COVID-19 including staff wearing gloves at all times which are then frequently changed; and more frequent room cleaning.

Travellers at airports will find themselves tested before they fly and upon arrival at their destination airport. They can expect to see social distancing measures at the airport and during boarding, as well as wearing masks while onboard.

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The protocols, which have been developed using experience from China’s initial recovery and from new successful standards used by retailers, will be fully announced in the next two weeks and shared with governments globally, so there is a coordinated approach to travelling within the COVID-19 world.

There are positive signs of the first green shoots of recovery. Research by travel data and analytics expert Cirium shows that over 30% of domestic capacity has returned to the Chinese aviation market in the last two months.

Domestic flights have also resumed in some countries, such as in Vietnam between Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, with Vietnam recording relatively few coronavirus fatalities.

To speed up the global recovery WTTC will continue to work closely with the G20, EU, international organisations and governments around the world to help translate the new protocols into easily adopted public policies by each country while adhering to common global standards.

WTTC says the Travel & Tourism sector is now facing over 100 million job losses worldwide due to the coronavirus pandemic, at a cost of up to US$2.7 trillion of GDP.

In 2019, Travel & Tourism contributed 10.3% of Global GDP, was responsible for generating one in four of the world’s new jobs and, for nine successive years, had outpaced the growth of the global economy.

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Tourism Industry up to Tough Challenges on Path to Recovery

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Bernadette Romulo–Puyat said the tourism industry is ready to face the reality and daunting challenges of the “new normal,” referring to new standards and protocols for safe and responsible tourism that will direct its path to recovery.

To guarantee the visitors’ primary concern for safety, the DOT Chief said measures will be implemented including: re-training of tourism practitioners, reducing the capacity of air and land transport units, the distribution of hygiene kits to tour participants, mandatory temperature checks at airports, hotels, and other attractions, and ensuring food safety, among others.

The DOT is also proposing the following measures: a) Regular sanitation and disinfection of tourism accommodation and transport services; b) provision of sanitation/disinfection devices, including PPEs for tourism workers; c) regular inspection of tourism establishments by agencies in relation to health and safety standards; d) development of online systems that can facilitate tourism-related transactions such as applications for accreditation, training modules, and even retail.

"There is no going back to the way things were and we have to accept the tourism landscape that will emerge after the COVID–19 pandemic.

Unless a vaccine is developed, the threat of another outbreak is always a possibility so safety will be the paramount concern of most of our visitors,” said Puyat.

She also took the opportunity to appeal to the public for support as the tourism industry adapts the stringent measures required to survive, thrive and stay resilient under the new normal.

“With your support, open-mindedness, and cooperation, the tourism industry can once again prosper while setting the bar with new standards for hospitality, sustainability, health and safety, and guest satisfaction,” Sec. Puyat added.

The tourism chief stressed the government’s inclusive approach to finding solutions to the challenges identified as the most pressing, such as: the need for soft loans for working capital; payment of loans; deferment of tax payments; wage subsidies; and health and safety of tourism workers.

She said the DOT, in cooperation with national government agencies and stakeholders through the Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP), is currently formulating the Tourism Response and Recovery Plan (TRRP), which will serve as the masterplan to get the industry back on its feet.

"There is no going back to the way things were and we have to accept the tourism landscape that will emerge after the COVID–19 pandemic.

The Philippines tourism industry suffered a great hit when the country was struck with the COVID-19 pandemic early this year, and it took another blow with the passing of former Tourism Secretary, Ramon Jimenez Jr.

Sec. Mon was considered to be one of the pillars of the Philippine tourism and advertising industries. He was the visionary behind the viral "It’s More Fun in the Philippines" campaign, which showcases the wonderful destinations of the country and the fun-loving heart of the Filipino people. Under his leadership, the Philippines set foot on the global travel stage and welcomed six million tourists by the end of his term.

As the "It’s More Fun in the Philippines" campaign continues today, we will forever be grateful to Sec. Mon for his incomparable contribution to the Philippine tourism industry and, most importantly, for leading the people behind the promotion of the Philippines with integrity, creativity and innovation. His passion and commitment as a public servant as well as the legacy he left behind are testaments to his love for country.

Thank You, Sec. Mon. It was a great honor and privilege to have worked with you. You will be greatly missed.
DOT, ATTACHED AGENCIES PROMOTE DIGITAL TOURISM

With the hampered travel movement brought about by the COVID–19 pandemic situation, work and play are inevitably done online. The evolving crisis and in anticipation of other challenges, the Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agencies are making sure that Philippine tourism remains competitive, adapts well and takes advantage of the digital revolution.

"The DOT will continue to optimize the role of technology to promote tourism and digital learning to provide new opportunities across the tourism sector," Puyat said.

The DOT joins the international trend in going digital, utilizing inspirational strategies to maintain market presence worldwide.

A series of promotional videos encouraging tourists and non-tourists alike to “Stay at home, dream, and wake up in the Philippines” featuring breathtaking sceneries and memorable activities in the country were recently released by the Department. One-minute videos highlighting the different regions including Central Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Cordillera Administrative Region, Bicol and MIMAROPA Region were also produced, accessible at philippines.travel/wakeupinph.

The DOT furthermore encourages the public to “travel from home” by providing virtual backgrounds of some of the most popular travel spots in the country for video conferencing platforms. The photos for morning, afternoon, or night video calls can be downloaded from philippines.travel/fromhome for free.

Meanwhile, the Intramuros Administration (IA), an attached agency of the DOT responsible for the restoration and redevelopment of the historic Walled City of Manila, also turned to technology operating an online museum, and managing Vista Iglesia Tours and online learning sessions.

The DOT earlier launched DOT Online Learnings, a series of free online training via video-conferencing as an alternative to the regular training programs being conducted by the Office of Industry Manpower Development (OIMD). All webinars are recorded and may be accessed through the DOT Facebook page: DOT Trains (tinyurl.com/y8vvqktf).

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), on the other hand, mounted a webinar in partnership with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) to apprise local and international tourism stakeholders with the current trends and updates on the industry. The DOT through the TPB, is also keen on exploring the possibility of virtual Meetings, Incentive, Conventions, and Exhibitions (M.I.C.E.) events.

Moreover, the DOT also launched the online leg of the Philippine Harvest trade fair in partnership with Stores Specialists Inc. (SSI) in an effort to continue promoting and giving access to fresh produce and local food products. Interested consumers may support this endeavor through the official Facebook page at facebook.com/PhilippineHarvest.

Today, the DOT introduced its online virtual presser to keep the media partners, tourism stakeholders, and general public abreast of the latest updates in the industry.

Article from the Department of Tourism
As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to restrict travel, we find ourselves constantly dreaming of breathtaking beaches and exhilarating adventures. One destination that evokes these experiences is Palawan. With its fine white sand beaches, towering limestone cliffs sprouting out of turquoise waters, sprawling lagoons, and exotic wildlife, it’s no wonder why we all look forward to visiting or experiencing once again this “Paradise on Earth.”

Let’s take a closer look at the Philippines’ Last Frontier, and we hope you’ll find yourself delighting in its beauty soon.

**PUERTO PRINCESA**

Puerto Princesa is the capital of Palawan, a bustling sea and land port just 1.5 hours from Manila by plane. Although most tourists arrive via the Puerto Princesa Airport en route to other Palawan destinations, Puerto Princesa stands on its own with its vibrant food scene, numerous resorts and natural attractions.

- Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park is an 8.2-kilometer underground river and one of the longest navigable underground rivers in the world. The National Park houses remarkable karst formations and intact complex mountain-to-sea ecosystems, considered to be one of the most important in Asia, making it a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the New Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

- Tubbataha Reef is a 97,030-hectare marine and bird sanctuary located in the Sulu Sea. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tubbataha Reef is composed of the North and South Atoll and a relatively small Jessie Beazley Reef. The reef contains one of the highest diversities of marine flora and fauna and is a popular diving spot in the world.

- Ugong Rock is a 23-million-year-old, 75-feet karst limestone located in the far-off barangay of Tagabinet, an hour and a half north of Puerto Princesa. Tourism in this area is manned locally, with farmers serving as tour guides during the farming off-season. Hike, trek, spelunk and climb your way to the top of the rock to enjoy the pastoral view of the surrounding rice fields and rappel or take a zip line down from Ugong Rock.

**EL NIDO**

More than five hours away from Puerto Princesa lies one of Palawan’s tourist gems.

- One of the most visited places in Palawan, the Bacuit archipelago is composed of 45 limestone islands and islets. Its sprawling beaches, alluring lagoons, karst formations shooting out of the sea and teeming marine life make the Bacuit archipelago a popular island-hopping destination for tourists.

- El Nido Marine Reserve Park is a wildlife sanctuary covering an area of 96,000 hectares of land and 54,000 hectares of water. Its lush forests and coral reefs support various ecosystems and are habitats to endangered and endemic wildlife.

**CALAMIAN ISLANDS**

Calamian Islands, composed of Busuanga, Coron, Culion, Calauit, Malcapuya, Banana, Pass, Calumbuyan, and several minor islets, occupy almost 1.800 square kilometers of crystal waters northeast of Palawan.

- Coron is famous for its stunning geological features, beaches, lagoons and dive sites filled with wildlife and sunken shipwrecks best explored by island-hopping. Coron is also famous for its brackish lakes. Kayangan Lake is considered to be the cleanest lake in the Philippines and can be accessed after a 10-minute climb. On the other hand, Barracuda Lake is not brimming with marine creatures. But its allure comes from its thermocline - cold fresh water on the first 4 meters and warm to hot saltwater as you go deeper into the lake.

- In Busuanga Island, a 30-minute bicycle ride away from Coron town proper is Maquinit Hot Springs. Best visited after an exhausting day of exploring, relax your adventure-wearied bones in one of the few saltwater hot springs in the world.

- Calauit Island - Calauit Wildlife Sanctuary - the entire island of Calauit is a 3,700-hectare nature reserve with endemic and foreign wildlife creatures. Visitors will encounter South African animals like giraffes, antelopes and zebras. Local animals are also cared for at the sanctuary including the Calamian Deer, Palawan Bearded Pig, Philippine Crocodile, Philippine porcupine, Binturong (bearcat), and the Philippine mouse-deer.

Named after the edible nests of swiftlets found in the area, El Nido boasts not only of exotic cuisine but also of luxurious private resorts and stunning islands and seascapes.
REDUCING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF QUARANTINE:
A TRAVEL BLOGGER’S JOURNAL
BY LEVY AMOSIN OF HUGGING HORIZONS
As a travel blogger and a news socmed writer for AM radio, I’ve always been living a productive lifestyle. But the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of the Enhanced Community Quarantine led the Philippines to adapt to the stress of confinement.

Suddenly everything stopped, causing everyone to bid their old lives goodbye. The local travel industry got extremely affected, especially bloggers whose lives revolve around traveling.

The stress of confinement is real. In the first week of quarantine, I cried myself to sleep. And just like everyone else, I had a hard time focusing too. But I eventually took hold of my emotions when I did these three major steps:

ACCEPT
By opening my mind and understanding the circumstances, I have learned to ‘accept’ our current reality.

ADAPT
I embraced a routine, such as:
1. Praying and meditating: The moment I wake up, I make it a point to pause and thank God. I also end the day with a prayer as it reminds me that Someone greater is in control.
2. Making my bed: Making my bed immediately after waking up makes me feel accomplished and focused.
3. Cooking and preparing meals: I experiment with different types of ingredients for various dishes to keep my creativity flowing.
4. Yoga and staying fit: Staying fit is one way of staying sane. My daily exercises include cardio, arm workouts and yoga. I do yoga in the morning or at night to help me focus and boost my mood.
5. Planting and gardening: Being surrounded by plants and nature improves my mood, prolongs my attention span and removes anxiety.
6. Decluttering: Clearing overcrowded places reduces stress and improves sleep.
7. Finding my work space: There will always be a part of our home where we’ll feel the most productive.
8. Taking long baths: This improves the health of my heart as it makes breathing easier and balances hormones.

SURVIVE
After learning to adapt, I became slowly immune to the situation. I became less moody, more compassionate and understanding.

“Giving up” is not an option. Feeling sad and helpless? Look for a way to donate to someone in need. Missing someone? Be the first to dial that number and ask how he/she is doing.

Hang in there, remind yourself that the world was never under your control to begin with, yet you made it this far. Stop worrying, you’re braver than you think!

MANNY O’S HOPE NOW PHILIPPINES FOUNDATION, INC. AND MOVENPICK HOTEL MACTAN ISLAND CEBU DONATE FOOD PACKS TO 20,000 FAMILIES
In line with his mission to help the community amid COVID-19 crisis, Cebu-based philanthropist, Manny Osmeña (better known as Manny O.), mobilized the distribution of food donations to 20,000 families in Barangay Punta Engaño and Barangay Mactan in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. This “Operation Ayuda” is a banner project of Hope Now Philippines Foundation, Inc. in collaboration with Mövenpick Hotel Mactan Island Cebu, Ibiza Beach Club and Manny O. Wines—four divisions under the Manny O. Group of Companies—and with Conching Bread.

The food packages included essentials such as rice, bread and Vitamin C to help disadvantaged families. The team underwent meticulous planning and coordination meetings with barangay officials to ensure the success of their door-to-door distribution which began in April 2020.

In addition to the community drive, Mövenpick Hotel Mactan Island Cebu heeded the call to help healthcare workers by providing boxes of shower caps to be used as added Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Batches of packed lunch and other essentials are also given out to frontliners.

The team is also awaiting delivery of 500 Protective Body Suits, to be donated to medical professionals.

“We want to send a message of hope and solidarity, especially in this time of adversity. We will all rise and heal by helping others,” says the hotel’s General Manager, Max Huber.

All these relief efforts take after the philosophy of Manny O., who carries out his Christian mission through relentless philanthropic work and finds inspiration in a Bible passage in Matthew 25:40, Jesus said: “In as much as you did it to the one of the least, you did it to ME.”

Hope Now Philippines Foundation, Inc., the charity arm of the Manny O. Group of Companies, was founded in 2014. With its vision of giving hope to people who have lost their hope due to circumstances beyond their control, the thrust of the foundation is to advance the well-being of disaster victims and vulnerable people through medical relief and community rehabilitation projects. Aside from turning over 200 homes to calamity survivors in 5 affected communities, Hope Now has also provided sustainable livelihood, as well as rehabilitation and mentoring programs.

Source: Article from the Mövenpick Hotel Mactan Island Cebu
With the country under the State of Public Health Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines has boosted employee welfare schemes. Improved health measures and guidelines were implemented to ensure and promote personnel well-being and workplace safety.

**LEARN FROM HOME MODULES**
During the quarantine period, TPB provided employees with weekly learn-from-home modules to spur self-improvement among personnel. Module topics ranged from government administrative topics such as procurement planning to socio-political awareness like gender sensitivity. Links for tourism-related webinars as well as health and psychosocial interventions were also shared among TPB employees.

**PERSONNEL SAFETY PROTOCOLS**
Basic health measures are also observed such as physical distancing, frequent hand washing and proper cough etiquette. All TPB personnel as well as guests will undergo temperature checks using thermal scanners before being allowed to enter the office premises. Hand sanitizers and rubbing alcohol are placed in strategic areas to encourage frequent hand disinfection.

The Personal Care Kit (PCK), which includes 25 pieces of surgical masks, 25 pairs of surgical gloves, and 30 pieces of Vitamin C as well as a 500ml bottle of rubbing alcohol and a face shield, is distributed to all TPB personnel every first working day of the month. Aside from the PCKs for employees, TPB was also able to provide 1,077 Personal Protective Equipment and vitamins for Frontline Tourism Personnel.

**SNAPSHOTS: WAKE UP IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Nothing can stop you from dreaming. As we wait for the day to travel once again, discover the wonders that await you in our 7,641 islands from the comfort of your home. Stay at home, dream, and wake up in the Philippines.

**TPB SAFE WORK PRACTICES**

- Dispose used tissues and personal hygiene products in enclosed bins.
- When driving, use your car vents to get fresh air.
- Put dirty clothes in a separate bag from your personal one.
- Sanitize hands after removing work clothes and before touching/changing into clean clothes.

**WHERE IN PUBLIC PLACES**

- Avoid wearing jewelry and other non-essential accessories.
- Always use appropriate face mask when going out.
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 1-2 meters.
- When driving, use your car vents to get fresh air.

**HYGIENE**

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use 70% alcohol-based hand rub.
- Practice proper etiquette when sneezing or coughing.

**AT THE WORKPLACE**

- Provision of Personal Care Kits (face shield, mask, gloves and alcohol).
- Have your temperature checked with no-touch thermometers.
- Sanitize hands before and after using biometric scanner.
- Clean and disinfect work stations, office tools and frequently used areas regularly.

**WHEN YOU ARRIVE HOME**

- Do not wear work shoes inside your house.
- Wash hands after handling dirty work clothes and shoes.
- Take a shower before interacting with your family/housemates.
WORK FROM HOME
HAS NEVER BEEN THIS FUN!

As Covid-19 continues to affect thousands of people in the Philippines, work from home (WFH) has become the new norm. Various parts of our humble abodes have been turned into work spaces and most of us no longer have to don actual business clothes. It’s a fact that we may still be living within our comfort zones, but there will always be struggles – and most of them end up as silly memories. So we asked different private sector professionals to submit entries of their funny “work from home” experiences and the results are hilarious!

“One time I was on a video call with our Japan Office and cooking at the same time. In the middle of the video call, I told my colleague to give me a minute since I will just check the dish I was cooking. When I returned to my work station, my youngest son and daughter were talking to my colleague about dragons, dinosaurs and unicorns. My colleague said he enjoys talking to my kids more than talking to me about numbers and strategies. From then on, every time the Japan Office calls, they ask for my kids first before talking to me.”

NAME: Shonna Almazar
POSITION: Sales Manager
COMPANY: Airs Dream Corp. / KN1 Manila

“Bayanihan is an integral part of Philippine culture and it pertains to helping others without expecting anything in return. Filipinos are, of course, known for this trait, and it has been impressively practiced during this time of pandemic. Despite COVID-19 putting leadership, compassion, and patriotism to the test in all parts of the globe, bayanihan has been evident in the Philippine setting with individuals, private, and public companies, including the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and the Department of Tourism (DOT), coming together to help the country. Strong camaraderie was mainly exemplified during the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) when stricter guidelines in movement of any form of transportation whether by land, air, or sea were imposed, resulting in a significant number of stranded tourists.

TPB and DOT responded to this ordeal by providing repatriation flights, accommodation facilities, and travel essential kits. Hygiene items including 5,000 pieces of shampoo, soap, sanitizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, alcohol, toilet paper, wet wipes, bath towel, and bottled water were also procured, packed and distributed to various hotels in Metro Manila where the distressed tourists were billeted.

A simple act of kindness is, indeed, highly appreciated in these trying times. The COVID-19 pandemic may be a colossal challenge, but it became an opportunity for each and every one of us to be heroes in our own little way.

NAME: Mikeyl Camacho
POSITION: Director of Business Development
COMPANY: Mikael Shosang-Le

“One of the perks of working from home is that any comfy spot would be an ideal workspace. Unfortunately, I have a “roommate” that makes my workspace his comfy spot.”

NAME: Joaquin Carlos U. de Jesus
POSITION: Marketing and Communications Manager
COMPANY: The Lind Boracay

“But while on a video call meeting, my little Genie and her Achi Charlie were playing shop, and I could hear their conversation in the background:

Charlie: Pabili po! (Can I have one?)
Genie: Yest!
Charlie: Are po maganda? (Is it good?)
Genie: Wel,

Most of the story: in all scenarios, confidence is everything.”

NAME: Melissa Ferrer-Lita
POSITION: Marketing Communications Manager
COMPANY: The Lind Boracay

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NAME: Marky Ramone Go
POSITION: Travel and Freelance Writer
COMPANY: Freelancer

“On one of my experiences, I was always the culprit by our poor internet connectivity. With slow connection and three persons working from home, it cannot be helped that sometimes, my facial expressions during video call meetings are caught in rather unfaltering or awkward moments. There are times when I would speak and my face seems to be stock, and for my officemates, it looks as if I am rolling my eyes or my mouth is left hanging open! #WhatAGoon I also feel nervous because of the high volume of voices of my companions at work as well as the unending crowning of roosters of our neighbors. It’s so embarrassing! However, with safety and health as our top priorities, these small inconveniences, though stressful at first, are nothing compared to our bigger desire for us to survive and surpass this challenging time. The key indeed is to take things lightly and just find a way to look at the brighter side of things.”

NAME: Sharon Ross
POSITION: Accredited Tour Guide
COMPANY: DOT Region X

“Extending a Helping Hand in the Time of COVID-19
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POSITION: Marketing and Communications Manager
COMPANY: The Lind Boracay

“Survival Mode of a Tour guide... I am now ready to embrace the new normal and practice “safe distancing protocols” away from my refrigerator. My saving grace which comes in a form of intervention away from my delicious cooking was the DOT online training. Thank god for the internet. Now I miss my tours... sigh.*

*I’ll then, see you all at our learning conference forums everyone.
Will make an effort to resist wearing just my pajamas and I hope that this experience can help bring us closer as one family under the DOT umbrella. Stay connected, stay healthy, and stay home. STAY STRONG... I whispered to my WiFi signal.”

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YOUR INSIGHTS MATTER TO US AS WE NAVIGATE THE PATH TO TOURISM RECOVERY.

PLEASE JOIN THE ONLINE COMMUNITY PANEL SURVEY FOR TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS

For interested participants, download the consent form at, bit.ly/tourismstakeholders-consentform

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