

TPB spotlight

A Quarterly e-Magazine of the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines

JANUARY - MARCH 2021

TPB ROLLS OUT 2021 PROGRAMS TO ENSURE SAFE AND FUN TOURISM RECOVERY

TOURISM & TECHNOLOGY FORUM

OPENS NEW
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
THE PH TOURISM
INDUSTRY

THE 'FUN' CONTINUES:

PHILIPPINES JOINS DIGITAL ITB
BERLIN

FAST FACTS:

2021 QUINCENTENNIAL
COMMEMORATIONS
IN THE PHILIPPINES

spotlight

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ON THE SPOT

It is summer! — our conventional peak season for trips to the country's diverse and pristine beaches is very much felt around us, although we are soaking in sweat from the humid afternoons instead of our bountiful sunshine across our islands. Pre-pandemic, this month is also the time when we immerse ourselves in shared observance of Lenten practices, including Visita Iglesia, and we prepare to journey through the fiestas and all sorts of festivals come May.

But yes, it is also community quarantine season, year 2, as we navigate through the COVID-19 surges in NCR+ areas with notable surfacing of variants of the virus.

So how do we move forward with our planned tourism recovery initiatives for this year?

For one, we are pursuing our plans and programs, with greater mindfulness and agility to adapt and tweak them as the situation requires, hoping that these contribute to the overall strategy for our tourism industry to gradually restart and recover. We highlight in this issue the ways on how the TPB gets on board the "Have a Safe Trip, Pinas" campaign to ensure a safe and fun travel in the new (if not better) normal.

Second, we deepen and expand our initiatives harnessing technology to pave greater ease and effectiveness in achieving our strategic goals for tourism. The COVID-19 virus has compelled us to pivot and adopt digital information and communication technologies, not just to enable us to improve organizationally, but to also hopefully better serve our tourists. We share in this issue, key updates on our recently-held Tourism and Technology Forum last March 17-18, 2021, as we also remain grateful for the key take-aways from the Forum which continue to guide us in this endeavor.

Finally, I hope that the bits and pieces of positive news and features on many activities like our efforts to continue our strong presence in our global source markets by joining the first virtual ITB Berlin, or our share of triumphs in bagging destination awards, stories about our 500th anniversary commemoration of Christianity in the Philippines, among others, will spark hope and sustain us through these dark days.

After all, don't we say that summer is year-long in the Philippines? And I pray we hold on to such thought as we steer through our challenges now and in the days ahead. Happy reading.

Are Allones
MARIA ANTHONETTE C. VELASCO-ALLONES

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TPB ROLLS OUT 2021 PROGRAMS TO ENSURE SAFE AND FUN TOURISM RECOVERY

Speedy recovery of the Philippine tourism industry? We are getting there.

Earlier in March, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) streamlined local travel protocols not only to ensure the safe reopening of tourist destinations but also to make traveling in the new normal more convenient. Indicative of the strengthened collaboration between the government and private sector, the move is vital in encouraging domestic travel and ensuring public safety and well-being, leading to the much-needed reboot of the Philippine tourism industry.

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines is also staying on track as it bolsters its three key strategic objectives - SMARTourism, Partnership as Pathways, and Safe Bangon Turismo - through various programs including:

TOURISM AND TECHNOLOGY FORUM 2021

The forum, held on March 17-18, provided a venue for tech giants to share insights on maximizing the use of technology for the benefit of the tourism industry.

TPB'S ULTIMATE BUCKETLIST ADVENTURE AND TRAVEL BINGO CHALLENGE

The goal of these consumer engagement programs is to restore the public's confidence in traveling within the country by encouraging safe and fun travel while getting the chance to win prizes and incentives.

PHILIPPINE WEAVERS TOURISM AND TRADE FAIR

Apart from providing livelihood opportunities for the weavers and uplifting the local economy, TPB's staging of the 1st Philippine Weavers' Expo puts a spotlight on the different weaving traditions of various regions to give a meaningful travel experience.

MICECONnect LITE

A new installment of the institutional MICE Convention will be virtually staged, this time through pre-scheduled appointment sessions to generate business leads and build partnerships within the MICE sector.

ISLAND PHILIPPINES CARAVAN

The TPB will collaborate with the Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) to generate domestic travel by encouraging the public to avail of discounted tours.

E-RESOURCE PORTAL

A web-based portal for local and foreign tourism offices and partner stakeholders will be developed to provide content such as digital brochures, photos, and videos for promotions and marketing.

Meanwhile, TPB will augment some of its existing programs this year.

The TPB Membership Program will continue to provide tourism stakeholders benefits such as information access, marketing, networking, capacity-building, and business development opportunities. The MICE Plus Program, on the other hand, will be enhanced to provide support to events with buyer programs, bidding, and assistance to domestic and international events held in the country.

The country's official Progressive Web Application, Travel Philippines, will be expanded in terms of its capabilities and features to provide a personalized experience for users to fully enjoy the Philippine experience under the new normal. This platform will also continue to provide the latest information on reopened destinations, products, and policies including local health and safety protocols that will enable accessible and convenient travel.

Other programs and initiatives that will push through include the 4-day online Regional Travel Fairs, promotion of safe and fun motorcycle tour rides under Philippine Motorcycle Tourism or the PH Moto Turismo, assessment of sites that conform to the ASEAN Sustainable Community-Based Tourism (SCBT) guidelines and the rediscovery of Philippine tourism destinations' existing and emerging tourism products in terms of their readiness for marketing and promotions to both domestic and international travelers.



Photo Credit: Henz Austria (HB Moto), United Rusi RFI Philippines (MotoTurismo PH)



Tourism Marketing Educational Seminars will also be conducted to provide local government tourism officers up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the latest tourism trends, marketing approaches, and best practices in the new normal.

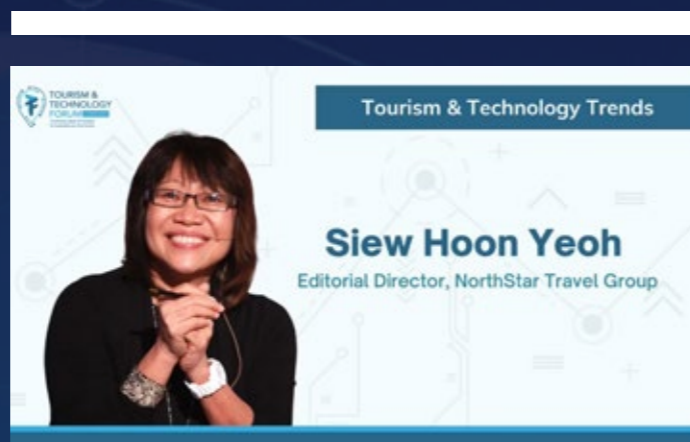
In its international sector, the TPB will boost its online presence to ensure the continued presence of the Philippines in its various source markets. This includes staging consumer activations and tactical ad campaigns in websites and social networking sites by producing content to stimulate tourist interest and ensure the inclusion of the Philippines in future travel plans.

Continuous participation is also expected in travel trade events and consumer fairs involving international markets such as the TPB institutional program Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2021, ASEAN Tourism Forum 2022, PATA Travel Mart 2021, ITB Berlin, World Travel Market, Expo Dubai 2020, Philippine Business Missions and special consumer events/activations in existing and emerging markets, among others.

The plans and programs of the TPB have either been newly-formed or revised owing to the world's new normal. Travel may now look different than it did pre-pandemic as movement is more restricted, but at least for the Philippines, 2021 is turning out to be one of its most significant years to set its roots in diversifying, investing in new technologies and amping up sustainable and responsible business models.

As anti-COVID vaccinations begin, the country embarks on a new chapter for the tourism industry.

TOURISM & TECHNOLOGY FORUM OPENS NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PH TOURISM INDUSTRY



The first Tourism & Technology Forum (TTF), organized by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, forged a new path for the country's travel industry as it continues to face the ongoing pandemic.

The 2-day hybrid event was held in Okada Manila and simultaneously broadcasted live online. TTF convened top international and local speakers who, aside from sharing insights on how to make technology work for businesses, presented tech-related opportunities and solutions to equip local travel and tourism stakeholders with the right tools for a contactless and digitalized future.

One product featured was Smartcity from Multisys Technologies Corporation, which functions as an end-to-end application enabling contactless and cashless transactions as presented by its Founder and CEO, David Almirol, Jr.

Another platform was Masungi Georeserve Foundation's VISITA app, showcased by its Project Manager, Pamela Valle. The app aims to assist nature-based destinations in implementing health and safety protocols while ensuring sustainability.

For travel authority management, Department of Science and Technology Undersecretary for Scientific and Technical Services, Renato Solidum, Jr., took the stage to introduce S-Pass, a system that allows travelers to obtain travel authority passes online.

Globe Telecom and Smart Communications were also onboard on the last day, offering business opportunities

to travel and tourism players as they embark on the road to recovery.

"The biggest lesson from Covid is humans cannot function without tech," said Siew Hoon Yeoh, the founder of Web in Travel (WiT), a Singapore-based media and events platform, in her "Lessons After a Year of No Travel" talk. "And in some cases, we actually perform better with tech. In other words, it's about what we humans do with tech that counts," she added.

TPB COO Maria Anthonette Velasco-Allones echoed Ms. Siew Hoon's remark when she concluded the event and emphasized the need to be open to technological changes.

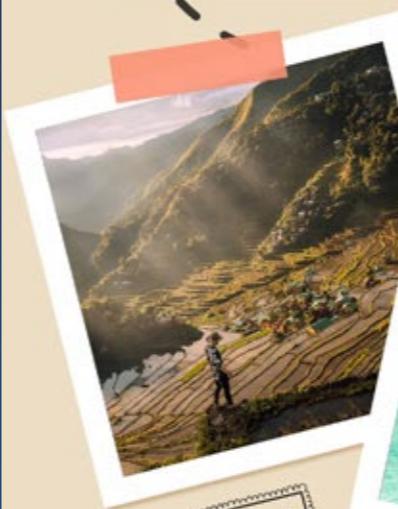
"We should be able to dance with the different steps that technology brings us and in fact, we should be five steps ahead," said COO Allones. "Technology is neutral, but it has its huge potential, its positive value depending on how we harness technology. And how customer needs are met should be the common motivation that drives all of us," the COO added.

The TTF is part of a series of forums that TPB is organizing this year as part of its strategic and pivotal response to the growing needs of the Philippine tourism industry during this time of pandemic. The event aims to provide a learning platform for discussing trends, advantages, opportunities and explore optimal options to enable our stakeholders and public sector partners to leverage on digital technologies in pushing for our tourism development agenda.

Complete your travel bucket list and win a free trip to any Philippine destination

Domestic travelers who want to see and safely explore more of the Philippines can now fulfill their travel dreams through The Ultimate Bucketlist Adventure program of the Tourism Promotions Board. Local tourists will get a chance to win a travel voucher worth PHP 90,000.00 for a trip to any reopened Philippine destination including:

- Luzon
- Metro Manila, Tagaytay, Batangas & Puerto Galera
- Visayas
- Boracay Island, Cebu & Bohol
- Mindanao
- Surigao del Norte, Cagayan De Oro & Davao



Additional open destinations will be published from time to time on the TPB website (<https://tpb.gov.ph>) or the Travel Philippines app, which can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play.

The promo is open to all Filipino residents and foreigners, 18 years old and above, who have been residing in the Philippines for at least three years. Participants must also visit at least three (3) travel destinations listed in the Ultimate Bucketlist from 01 May until 26 December 2021 and stay for at least two (2) nights in the destination per visit.

Here's how to join:

1. Fill out the online registration form available at <https://tpb.gov.ph> from 05 April until 30 June 2021.
2. Prepare your itinerary or book a trip through any DOT-accredited tour operators or travel agents.
3. Once confirmed, you're now ready to travel. Aside

from following safety protocols while in the destination, don't forget to take photos and videos of your adventures and post them on your social media platforms using the following TPB hashtags:

#bucketlistchecked #tpbgovph #itsmorefuninthe philippines.

Social media posts must be made public.

Registration and submission of entries and the program's duration will be posted soon on the TPB website. To claim the travel voucher, successful entries shall be required to submit proof of travel such as round-trip air ticket boarding passes, transportation, hotel accommodation guest folio, and other proof of travel documents to this email address: ultimatebucketlist@tpb.gov.ph.

To know more about the program's mechanics and criteria, visit <https://tpb.gov.ph>, and for other concerns, email TPB through ultimatebucketlist@tpb.gov.ph.

THE BEST OF THE BEST

THE PHILIPPINES BAGS THE WORLD'S LEADING COUNTRY TOURISM DESTINATION AWARD



With 1,733 online votes worldwide, The Philippines was hailed as the World's Leading Country Tourism Destination at the 10th Uzakrota Travel Awards by Uzakrota, the leading Turkish travel news organization for the travel industry that conducts the annual "Best of the Year" competition. The 45 categories of the Awards received over 182,475 votes cast globally with the Philippines dominating Category 36.

Another prideful moment came when the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines won third place as the World's Leading Tourist Board.

The Uzakrota Travel Awards registration ran from 18th to 24th January 2021 and voting commenced on 25th January until midnight of 5th February 2021.

The Uzakrota Travel Awards is the global initiative to recognize and reward excellence in travel and tourism. Founded in 2010, Uzakrota publishes news, reports, and marketing recommendations for the travel industry.

Uzakrota organizes the Uzakrota Travel Summit, one of the biggest conference and foyer areas for online travel agencies, airline companies, hotels, travel agencies, travel tech startups, hospitality investors, venture capitalists, tech companies, and distribution tech companies.



Picture Perfect Destinations

The Philippines is the Second Most Instagrammable Place In The World



Tommy Schultz

The Philippines was named the 2nd Most Instagrammable Place In The World for 2021 by Big 7 Travel, a renowned travel and tourism website that features socially-shared photography and videos of the most exciting places in the world.

"Home to incredible natural wonders like an underground river and tranquil rice terraces in addition to a vibrant culture and history spanning several millennia, and over 7,500 islands—the Philippines as a whole are extremely Instagrammable. From the bustling capital of Manila complete with colorful colonial streets to the absolute oasis of Boracay, the gram opportunities here are endless," the website read.

According to Big 7 Travel, winners and the final list of destinations were chosen based on a scoring system that analyzed the number of hashtags per destination, survey results from its social audience, and inputs from the editorial team.

The TPB, together with the DOT and millions of Filipinos worldwide, celebrated the inclusion of the Philippines.

The hashtag #itsmorefuninthephilippines garnered 5.5 Million entries while hashtag #Philippines has over 22 Million entries to date.



Bangkóta Philippines Pavilion to Promote Tourism, Trade and Investments at Expo 2020 Dubai



Set to be one of the biggest global events of the year, Expo 2020 Dubai is the first World Expo to be held in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) region and the largest event ever to take place in the Arab world with over 190 confirmed country participants.

This World Expo edition will also have the largest Philippines pavilion to date. Named after the old Tagalog word for coral reefs, the Bangkóta Pavilion is designed by Architect Royal Pineda of Royal+Budji Architecture + Design and is built on a 3,163-sqm. area within the Expo's Sustainability District.

With the lead agency Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at the helm, the Philippines Pavilion will position the country as a creative and compassionate nation—promoting trade, investment and tourism through Business-to-Business (B2B) activities, trade exhibitions, and consumer events.

Bangkóta perfectly communicates the Filipino's embrace of permeability in spatial and social systems. The Pavilion design and overarching theme emphasize cultural, more than environmental, sustainability through a physical structure and tightly curated exhibit spaces that allow for

multiple expressions of a tenacious culture that spans 4,000 years.

Visitors to the Pavilion will be drawn by the fusion of design, art, and architecture with history and culture. The Philippines' superiority in artisanal objects, as well as the complexity of its cuisine form part of the Pavilion narrative, and are added attractions to the visiting public. The Philippines' superiority in artisanal objects and the complexity of its cuisine form part of the Pavilion narrative and are added attractions to the visiting public.

With over ten million* Filipinos worldwide in various professions, 700,000 of whom live and work in the United Arab Emirates, the Philippine Pavilion is an awe-inspiring platform for Global Filipinos to tell the story of their ascendancy role in the global economy.

Initially planned to run from 20 October 2020 to 10 April 2021, the Expo 2020 Dubai was postponed to 01 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 to allow participants to safely manage the impact of COVID-19.

*<https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/dfa-releasesupdate/26909-dfa-pays-tribute-to-ofws-on-migrant-workers-day>



2021 is a milestone year for the Philippines as it commemorates the 500th anniversary of three main events: the introduction of Christianity in the country, the Philippines' part in the first circumnavigation of the world, and the victory in Mactan. The National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) is spearheading the year-long celebration through the 2021 Quincentennial Commemorations in the Philippines with the theme "Victory and Humanity."

A nationwide flag raising and wreath laying ceremony will be held simultaneously on April 27, 2021 in plazas and public places dedicated to our heroes and martyrs who displayed bravery and patriotism in the face of the enemy. But before the grand celebration takes place, here are a few things you need to know:

1

The 2021 Quincentennial Commemorations in the Philippines does not celebrate the discovery of the Philippines or the arrival of Magellan in the Philippines. Rather, it commemorates the anniversary of the first circumnavigation of the world as the Philippines was one of the stopovers in the Magellan-Elcano voyage, which started in 1519 and ended in 1522. And of course, it remembers the victory of the Philippine warriors against the Spanish forces in the Battle of Mactan.

2

The Battle of Mactan, however, was never part of the plan. When the Portuguese, Ferdinand Magellan, arrived in the Philippines, he had a mission to introduce Christianity and convert the locals. Though he was able to convert Rajah Humabon of Cebu, his mission was rejected by LapuLapu, which led to the fateful battle.

3

Our childhood history books depicted LapuLapu as a brawny warrior killing Magellan in an epic one-on-one battle, but this may not be the case at all. Yes, LapuLapu was a wise chieftain and led a team that won the battle against the invaders. But according to testimonies, he was said to be in his 70s when the battle took place and most probably watched it unfold from the sidelines.

4

So, who exactly killed Magellan? We will never know. But we can't sweep aside LapuLapu's leadership because it was the reason for the victory, making him the most deserving hero to grace the face of the 5000 Pesos Banknote and Medal. The banknote, launched by the The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on 18 January 2021, features a portrait of the young LapuLapu, the Battle of Mactan, and the Karakoa, which is an ancient warship. The medal, on the other hand, features the Mactan Shrine.

For more information about the Quincentennial celebration, please visit:

[facebook.com/nqc2021](https://www.facebook.com/nqc2021)

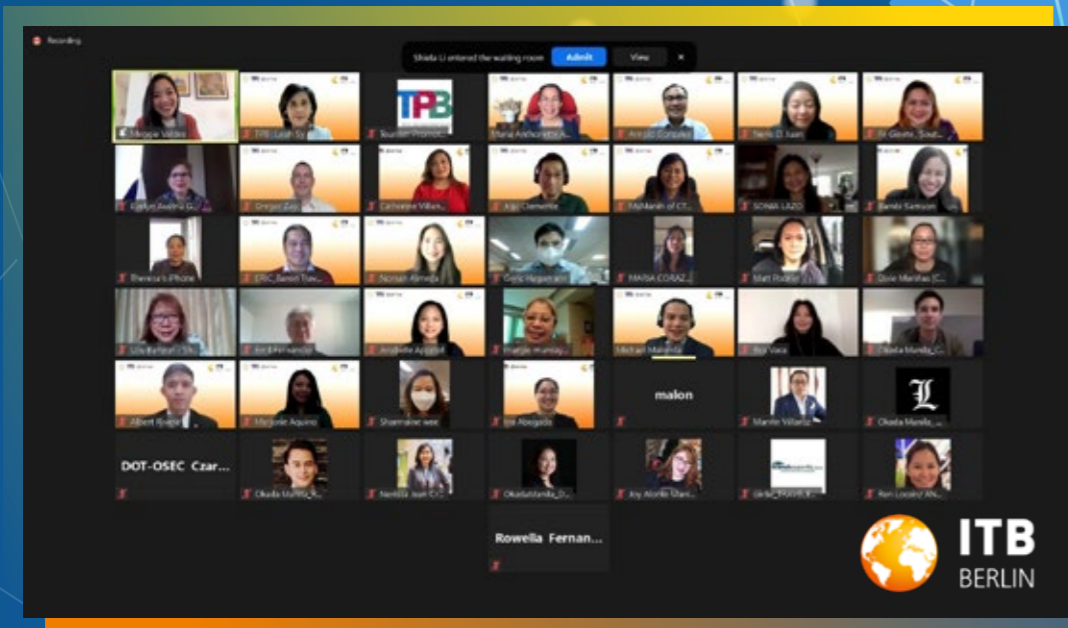
www.nqc.gov.ph/en

twitter.com/nqcphilippines

[youtube.com/channel/UC3CDpUE1fCc3pABpfU9o5Yw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3CDpUE1fCc3pABpfU9o5Yw)

[instagram.com/nqc2021](https://www.instagram.com/nqc2021)

THE FUN CONTINUES: THE PHILIPPINES JOINS DIGITAL ITB BERLIN



The Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines joined the ITB Berlin Now! 2021: "The Digital Meet-up of the Travel Industry. Anytime. Anywhere.", the online edition of the World's Leading Trade Show, ITB Berlin, last March 9 to 12.

Held entirely virtual for the first time due to the COVID-19 pandemic and current travel restrictions, the event provided a platform to more than 3,500 exhibitors from 120 countries to network, exchange ideas, stay well-informed and negotiate business with market players and tourism service providers from all over the world.

This year's ITB Berlin featured digital networking, high level panel discussions and lectures, a virtual exhibition area, video streaming, virtual cafes and an intelligent matchmaking tool, which provides an innovative opportunity for businesses.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat and TPB COO Maria Anthonette Velasco-Allones led the Philippine delegation, together with 25 tourism stakeholders from travel agencies and hotel/resorts, in highlighting the country's latest tourism developments and product offerings.

"Our continued strong presence at the ITB Berlin sends a signal to the global travel industry that the Philippines is ready for international tourism as soon as the situation allows it. Our WTTC-recognized safety protocols are in place and the beauty of our destinations and the warmth of our people remain," said Puyat.

The Philippines' participation in this year's virtual ITB Berlin aims to regain international tourist arrivals to the Philippines once travel resumes and positions the country as an attractive and competitive destination.

"Today, we show the world that the Philippine tourism industry is resilient, that we remain in business and should continue to be an important part of the global tourism community's consideration for travel," Puyat concluded.

Annually, ITB Berlin welcomes 10,000 exhibitors from more than 180 countries and over 1,000 qualified top buyers. In 2019, the event attracted 160,000 visitors, of which 110,000 were buyers and 50,000 were consumers.



RIZAL PARK AND PACO PARK ADJUST VISITING HOURS, REMAIN OPEN FOR PHYSICAL EXERCISE

To support the efforts of local government in curbing the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Metro Manila, the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC) is adjusting visiting hours to Rizal Park and Paco Park. Starting Friday, March 19, 2021 and effective until further notice, both parks will limit operating hours from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and will only be open to park goers ages 18 to 65 years old who are engaging in physical exercise.

In accordance with the guidelines issued by the IATF and the Department of Tourism, visitors must wear their face masks and face shields to be permitted entry inside the premises. These personal protective equipment may only be removed during intense physical exercise and if able to maintain a distance of six (6) feet from others. Park goers are also highly encouraged to download and register to the StaySafe.

PH mobile application to enable contactless contact tracing prior to entry to Rizal Park and Paco Park.

All would-be park goers are reminded to refrain from going to the park if they are feeling unwell, exhibit signs and symptoms of COVID-19, or if they have come in close contact with a person who has tested positive for or is suspected to have COVID-19. Marshals are also present on-site to assist park-goers if they begin to feel unwell within the premises.

The NPDC looks forward to the cooperation of the public so that it can continue to provide a safe space for park goers to exercise at Rizal Park and Paco Park, and help them maintain their physical and mental wellbeing amid the ongoing pandemic.

Source: DOT MEDIA / www.tourism.gov.ph

DOT Statement on BIATF measures for Boracay

The Department of Tourism (DOT) welcomes the approval of the saliva RT PCR test as an alternative to the nasopharyngeal swab RT PCR as one of the entry requirements to the island.

The Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF), in its March 18 meeting, approved the saliva test with the provision that it should be administered by the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) and other testing laboratories that have been approved and accredited by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Health (DOH).

The DOT expressed willingness to support funding for an RT PCR or gene expert machine as the local government unit (LGU) of Malay may propose.

The Department likewise has recommended to the IATF that persons below 15 and above 65 years old traveling from Manila to Boracay should not be restricted from going to the airport and flying since Boracay is under Modified General Community Quarantine (MGCQ) as long as the passenger has a valid plane ticket.

The DOT reminds tourists and stakeholders of the need to still strictly ensure minimum health and safety protocols such as wearing of a mask and face shield, physical distancing, hand sanitizing, and booking or operating in DOT-accredited establishments, among others, to protect both the tourists, tourism workers and the residents of host communities.

The DOT presses for stricter monitoring and implementation of protocols by concerned LGUs and agencies.

Source: DOT MEDIA / www.tourism.gov.ph



DOT'S STDP PROGRAM TO ENHANCE RESILIENCY OF PHL DESTINATIONS - PUYAT

Source: DOT MEDIA/ www.tourism.gov.ph

The Department of Tourism (DOT) endeavors to ensure the tourism resiliency of the country's prime destination, El Nido, Palawan, through the full implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Development Project (STDP) this year.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat made the statement on Friday (March 5) as she visited El Nido for the Awarding of Certificates to beneficiaries of the Cash-For-Work and Financial Assistance Program between the DOT and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

"Like all initiatives of the DOT, it will need the cooperation and collaboration from our partners in government and the private sector to ensure its success. I hope that the DOT can continue to count on your support to power our common journey to recovery and realize a better normal for the tourism sector, not only in Palawan but throughout the nation," Puyat said of the project collaboration among the DOT, the Provincial Government of Palawan, the Municipalities of Coron and El Nido, and the Asian Development Bank.

The tourism chief shared that the STDP, an initiative under the DOT's Transforming Communities Towards Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Tourism (TouRIST) program, aims to make El Nido's tourism development more sustainable and inclusive, with projects focusing on improvements to the town's Drainage; Solid Waste (Landfill Development); Ecosystem-Based Tourism Site Management; and Enterprise and Skills Development from 2021 to 2026.

During her visit, Puyat recalled her first trip to El Nido on July 3, 2020, to pilot test the health and safety protocols in El Nido Resorts, one of the first tourism establishments in the town to secure authority to operate and reopen to visitors from outside the province through a travel bubble strategy.

The tourism chief returned to El Nido in late October 2020 to finalize details of the expansion of the province's travel bubble to accommodate more domestic tourists, and to attend a dialogue with Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koji Haneda to discuss a possible travel bubble between Japan and El Nido.

Later on November 30, 2020, El Nido finally announced its formal reopening to domestic tourists.

"I am happy to say that El Nido has been very cooperative in implementing the minimum health and safety standards recommended by the Department of Health and the DOT. I would like to commend the stakeholders who have understood and prioritized the safety of tourists even during this crisis, enabling them to pass the DOT's accreditation standards," the tourism chief shared, adding that a total of 63 accommodation establishments passed the health and safety standards of the Department and have been duly accredited as of February 15, 2021.



Puyat said that the DOT shall continue its close coordination with other national government agencies such as the DOLE to fulfill provisions of the Bayanihan To Recover As One act or BAYANIHAN 2 and to provide sustained COVID-19 response and support to heavily affected tourism stakeholders in destinations like El Nido.

"Masaya ako na maraming nakakuha. Una, noong nagsimula ito last year, ang kasama lang ay employees ng DOT-accredited at LGU-licensed, pero hiningi talaga namin sa DOLE na i-expand. Kasi ang ibang tao hindi nila naiintindihan ang turismo, akala nila ang turismo ay ang mga nagtatrabaho lang sa hotel. Gaya nito, masaya ako na madami ay tricycle drivers, massage therapists. Hindi nila alam na ang communities gaya ng El Nido at San Vicente, lahat nagkaka-trabaho dahil sa turismo. Kaya dapat lang na bigyan kayo lahat ng Php5,000 financial assistance," the tourism chief stressed.

The DOT has endorsed a total of 20,621 tourism workers in MIMAROPA for the Cash for Work Program conducted in partnership with DOLE. As of March 02, 6,846 workers in Palawan have received financial assistance amounting to P34,230,000, 1,315 of which are from El Nido.

The tourism chief disclosed that with the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine in the country, the DOT is optimistic that tourism workers in destinations like El Nido, Palawan will be prioritized in the government's vaccination program, after medical frontliners and senior citizens.

"Dumating na ang vaccine natin, Finally. Ang inuuna syempre, mga doctor at mga matatanda o elderly. Pero noong cabinet meeting naming with Presidente last Wednesday, hiningi talaga namin na maging priority ang tourism frontliners. Kasi ang tourism, kahit hindi nag tatrabaho sa quarantine hotels, kayo pa rin ang frontliners. Kayo ang humaharap sa mga tao. So pinangako nila, as soon as matapos na yung mga doctors at mga elderly, mauuna na yung turismo," she shared.



DOT SUPPORTS RIZAL TOURISM CIRCUIT ON FOOD, FAITH, ART, ADVENTURE AND NATURE

The Department of Tourism (DOT) banks on the Green Corridor Initiative (GCI) in Rizal as one of its key strategies to hasten tourism recovery in the new normal.

This, after Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat on Wednesday (March 10) visited Rizal to help address the needs of the local executives and industry stakeholders. Puyat also expressed support for the proposed tourism circuit called Rizal Faith, Food, Art, Adventure and Nature (FFAAN) Experience under the GCI.

"The GCI is a domestic tourism program for tourism recovery in the new normal, designed to encourage more travelers to visit the multi-faceted province of Rizal, a place that abounds with nature, adventure, arts and culture, and, of course, food," Puyat added.

Among the activities and sites experienced by the tourism chief include pottery demonstration at the Crescent Moon Cafe and Studio Pottery in Antipolo; tour in the ancestral home of National Artist for Visual Arts Carlos "Botong" Francisco in Angono; a portrait session with the local artists of Nemiranda Art Gallery in Angono; the Balaw-Balaw Restaurant and Art Gallery in Angono; St. Clement Parish Church

in Angono, and Blanco Family Museum in Angono.

Like the other circuits under GCI, the FFAAN Experience in Rizal can be tailor-made to fit one's preference, as long as the activities and attractions are in Antipolo, where pilgrimage sites can be found; in Angono or the "Art Capital of the Philippines"; in Taytay or the "Woodworks and Garments Capital," and in Cainta, where native rice cakes such as bibingka and kalamay are top favorites.

Puyat has earlier visited some establishments in Rizal, including the Burrow Cafe at Antipolo Beehouse, Pinto Art Museum in Antipolo, and the ArtSector Gallery and Cafe in Binangonan.

"It was just a small but eye-opening sampling of what Rizal really has to offer," she said.

Rizal is the top contributor of the 2020 overnight tourism arrivals, sharing 395,364 or 36 percent of the total number of the region's total tourism arrivals. The province is also the top contributor of the 2020 same day tourism arrivals, sharing 7,200,454 or 60 percent of the total number of the region's total tourism arrivals.

Source: DOT MEDIA / www.tourism.gov.ph



DOT WELCOMES ASEAN AS A SINGLE TOURISM DESTINATION



The Department of Tourism (DOT) lauds recent developments to ensure Southeast Asia's competitiveness as a single tourism destination and to bolster the recovery of tourism in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

At the 24th meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Tourism Ministers hosted by the Ministry of Tourism of the Kingdom of Cambodia through video conference on Thursday (February 4), Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat expressed her support of initiatives under the updated ASEAN's Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025.

New priority programs identified at the meeting include the adoption of measures and initiatives to support the digitization of ASEAN Tourism, the strengthening of data and information networks, and the conduct of activities to promote connectivity and facilitate travel to and within the region.

Also topping the agenda at the Tourism Ministers' meeting was addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Collectively, ASEAN member states suffered a decline of approximately 75.8 per cent in tourism receipts, while international arrivals declined by approximately 80.5 per cent. Both factors contributed to significant declines in related industries, such as the accommodations, tours, and tourist transport sectors.

"We can only successfully recover from the pandemic if we do so in unity, guided by data and information that lead to effective planning," Puyat said in her remarks.

Puyat also stressed the importance of pursuing activities centered

on community-based tourism developments, thereby enhancing the sustainability and resiliency of the tourism value chain throughout the ASEAN. Proposed initiatives under this direction includes supporting tourism micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); contributing to programs geared toward reskilling and upskilling tourism workers; and promoting greater inclusivity to generate more jobs for local communities, women, youth, indigenous peoples, minorities, and other vulnerable groups.

"As we implement our plans and programs, it is always prudent to be reminded that the soul of the tourism industry lies with the people we serve and whose lives we aim to uplift through tourism. We must ensure that our workers are covered during these times, especially that we have good policies and mechanisms such as the Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) that help promote recovery and growth," she added.

At the meeting, Puyat acknowledged the support extended to the region by the various partner international organizations of the ASEAN. She stressed that the current emphasis on promoting domestic tourism, supporting tourism product development, and enabling local governments is in accordance with the recommendations for the tourism industry recovery.

While the Philippines has pivoted toward domestic tourism to mitigate the pandemic's impact, Puyat reiterated that the country remains committed to strengthening the partnership among ASEAN member states, in line with its shared vision for a better tourism industry in the region.

Source: DOT MEDIA / www.tourism.gov.ph

6 REASONS

IT'S STILL MORE FUN IN THE PHILIPPINES

Plan ahead and pin all these places in the Philippines for your next vacation.

Source: Travel + Leisure Asia

IMAGINE WALKING ON A PRISTINE stretch of white sand, where you can view spectacular sunrises and sunsets. Picture gradient azure waters as far as the eye can see from one of the world's best islands. Think of verdant mountain ranges enveloping breathtaking landscapes of all shapes and sizes. Indulge in the prospect of gastronomic

pleasure as balmy tropical air wraps around you. That's only a peek of what the Philippines has to offer for all sorts of people, from all walks of life. With 7,641 islands, the warmest people on Earth and a multitude of activities for every sort of traveler, there's so much to discover in this safe and fun Southeast Asian destination.

1 Play in the Philippines' vast aqua playground

White sands are often top-of-mind in vacation planning, but beautiful beaches come in all hues, and the Philippines has them in an array of colors to suit your preference. White, gray, brown, black, pink – they're all within reach for your travel to this destination. Enjoy laidback island vibes and surf the Philippine waves in Baler and Siargao. Ready your diving gear and explore the breathtaking underwater wrecks in the Tubbataha Reefs in Palawan, or do a sardine run in Moalboal, Cebu. Make sure you have enough days to get the most out of all the



Erwin Lim

2 Go on an epic outdoor adventure across the archipelago

Ready to explore the outdoors? Up in Northern Luzon, create amazing memories and take those Instagrammable shots against the backdrop of the 2,000-year-old man-made Banaue Rice Terraces, commonly described as the "Eighth Wonder of the World." In the Visayas, nature lovers and adrenaline buffs will have the best time conquering Bohol's Chocolate Hills, a geological wonder in every traveler's bucket list. Meanwhile, down south in Davao City, have the thrill of your life by scaling the country's highest peak, Mt. Apo, and get the chance to meet the Philippine eagle, one of the world's largest raptors.



Hannah Reyes

3 Relax or shop, take that sweet escape on your trip

Give yourself a treat in Manila, which serves as the international gateway to countless adventures. Explore its dynamic cosmopolitan side or jaunt off to the many inviting pocket destinations surrounding it. Top-notch shopping with premier international brands, thriving art scenes, world-class entertainment, relaxation and holistic wellness programs all await you in the capital of fun.



Eric Beltran

4 Join the grand festivities that take the fun to another level

Add color to your next vacation with parades, street dancing and lots of food! Filipinos love to party and, by nature, treat their community as family. This shines through most brightly in its festivals, where tables are filled with incredible home-cooked meals and everyone is invited to celebrate.



Hannah Reyes

5 Let your taste buds travel, too, with great Filipino dishes

Give yourself a treat in Manila, which serves as the international gateway to countless adventures. Explore its dynamic cosmopolitan side or jaunt off to the many inviting pocket destinations surrounding it. Top-notch shopping with premier international brands, thriving art scenes, world-class entertainment, relaxation and holistic wellness programs all await you in the capital of fun.



6 Feel at home with some of the warmest people on Earth

One of the Philippines' biggest draws is its people. Known the world over as one of the warmest societies in the world, Filipinos take great pride and find much joy in making everyone feel like family when in their company. So while you indulge your inner sun-seeker at the beaches and excuse your diet with a food crawl, you'll find yourself right at home with Filipinos' genuine smiles and caring temperament.



Kevin Evora

No matter what type of adventure you're looking for, and in whichever island group you land – Luzon, the Visayas, or Mindanao – this Southeast Asian archipelago is sure to give you the best time on this side of the globe in the new normal. As the world slowly recovers, the Philippines continues to work towards ensuring future travelers a safe and memorable journey. Plan that trip and see for yourself that it is, still indeed, more fun in the Philippines!

BELLEVUE BOHOL ROLLS OUT FREE COVID-19 RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING TO EMPLOYEES

SAFE, FUN, FIVE STAR STAYCATIONS AT OKADA MANILA

OKADA MANILA SECURES HEALTH SECURITY VERIFICATION FROM FORBES TRAVEL GUIDE AND SHARECARE

There's no need to leave Manila if you're looking to have a fun, safe, and relaxing time. While the past months have been challenging, safety remains everyone's utmost priority. At Okada Manila, guests can have a fun, worry-free staycation thanks to the industry-leading protocols that are being implemented at Manila's grand icon.

Staycationers can expect the same five-star service they have come to love when they visit Okada Manila. In addition to world-class amenities and exceptional service, guests can rest easy knowing that there are safety measures in place at the integrated resort. These include thorough disinfection of all areas, deployment of sanitizing robots, and antigen testing for guests, among many others. Antigen testing is available at a family-friendly rate and is done in-house. Guests will have their results in just 15-minutes, giving them more time to enjoy their staycation!

To prove that Okada Manila is a safe haven for domestic travellers, the integrated resort recently announced its official status as a Sharecare Health Security VERIFIED® destination. Together with Forbes

Travel Guide, digital health leader Sharecare awarded the VERIFIED® certification badge to the Forbes five-star integrated resort.

physical distancing, administration, and proper communication with guests and employees.

Okada Manila remained committed to guests' convenience and welfare, so it launched the "True Clean. True Safe. True Heart." (3T) campaign in June, ensuring guests of safe and satisfying stays. Since then, the resort has consistently improved its approach to protect not just its guests but also its team members from potential exposure to COVID-19. Also, in September, Okada Manila introduced its roster of state-of-the-art disinfection robots to keep the resort free from harmful elements. All of these contributed to the resort's Sharecare commendation.

Okada Manila joins an impressive list of 161 VERIFIED® hotels and resorts worldwide. It is one of only three integrated resorts in the Philippines to secure this certification. Just recently, Asia's largest ultra-luxury integrated resort received its second consecutive Five Star rating from Forbes Travel Guide, proving that it is indeed one of the world's best hospitality destinations.

This accreditation further verifies that Okada Manila is equipped with comprehensive safety protocols that prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Guests can stay in the resort with complete confidence, allowing them to enjoy five-star experiences in the safest possible manner. The assessment covered the following sections: health and hygiene protocols,

To know more, follow [f](#) [i](#) [t](#) [@okadamanila](#)



Dr. Yul Lopez, Provincial Spokesperson of the Bohol Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) personally turned over the purchased FDA approved COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test Kits to The Bellevue Resort and gladly receive by its Resort Manager, Mr. Doer Escoto.



The Bellevue Resort continues to heighten its safety measures to ensure its employees and guests will have a safe environment and comfortable stay. The Bohol's five-star resort proactively started rapid antigen testing of its employees, primarily for their protection and assurance for a safe working environment – complementing the government's thrust to help curb the spread of COVID-19.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), Rapid antigen tests detect viral proteins (known as antigens). The test samples are collected from the nose and currently authorized to be performed on nasopharyngeal or nasal swab specimens. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted emergency use for antigen tests that can identify COVID-19. Rapid Antigen Tests are immunoassays that detect the presence of a specific viral antigen, which implies current viral infection.

Forthwith, the resort conducted its mass testing for employees with company trained health professional and Provincial Health Officer supervised the entire process to ensure that the samples are processed properly and the results are interpreted correctly. The Bellevue Resort employees are delighted to received clearance certificates with negative results proving they are all safe and healthy.

As a priority, The Bellevue Resort perseveres to take care and extend support to its employees – providing them free accommodations and full board meals in the resort for the duration of their work roster complying with the resort's stringent safety and precautionary protocols to protect its employees, their loved ones and all their guests against the virus. The company likewise distributed hygiene kits and personal ballpen to employees as part of its initiatives to reduce the risk.

The Bellevue Group also invest and diligently working to rollout vaccines to all their employees as a safe and most effective way to prevent disease and save lives – this is to ensure its employees remain protected and the people around them.

The Bellevue Resort – Bohol is a luxury resort perched on the serene Doljo Beach in Panglao Island, Bohol.

For more information about the resort, visit www.thebellevue.com or call (038) 422-2222

Exploring and Rediscovering Your Own City: A Safe Trip in Manila

Carol RH Malasig / Almost Diplomatic

Travel in 2021 is often perceived in two ways – reckless and selfish or supportive of the local industries and brave. I lean towards the latter, granted that systems to keep travellers safe are in place and that said travellers are following safety protocols. The world, after all, cannot be held in a standstill forever nor can we keep hiding – cowering in our homes – in fear of a virus.

I recently got the chance to visit key sites in Manila which included the City Hall and Intramuros, a good week before the Intramuros Administration opened museums and the famed Fort Santiago to visitors. Together with a group of diplomatic spouses currently stationed in Manila, we went on a tour that introduced the capital, not only through its history but with how it's currently being rehabilitated.

After a tour of the City Hall where an exhibit featuring artifacts from the Battle of Manila was on-going, we walked over to the Bonifacio Shrine for a history lesson on the father of the Katipunan then crossed the city's oldest underpass – the Lagusnilad. Both sites were practically unrecognizable to me. Before we left Manila in 2014, these places were often referred to as crowded, dark, and dirty, flocked with vendors and the homeless. There was hardly any place to walk. With the people relocated and

after a major cleanup, you now have a wide-open space surrounding the monument. The Lagusnilad is now bright, airy, and features art on its walls. A couple of stalls remain but are reserved only for local products made by artisans.

Intramuros is still the city's main historical site and a place I have such deep appreciation for that I get easily irked when I hear Filipinos tell foreigners to skip Manila when they visit the Philippines. It may be a little rough around the edges but there is so much history and culture that can easily counter bad press. If only it is given more chances to prove itself.

The Walled City has made efforts to keep its visitors safe. From churches like San Agustin and the Manila Cathedral providing distancing markers for worshippers and travellers to restaurants focusing more on their outdoor dining spaces. For their re-openings, Fort Santiago and the museums have also decided on reduced capacities.

Walking around Intramuros and Fort Santiago and listening to stories about the country's colonial past gave the diplomatic spouses a better understanding of the local culture. For me, as a Filipino who has been away for some years, it felt like being reintroduced to the capital – a place

that definitely feels like home but somehow, with all the changes it went through, feels new and exciting.

Despite the growing number of people venturing outdoors, it's hard not to feel safer here compared to when we were living in Europe just a few months back. Seeing people diligently wearing their masks and face shields despite the heat and humidity and having signs everywhere to remind everyone to keep them on, gives a sense of security as you take each step and meet strangers. Temperature checks and hand sanitizing before entering each establishment also lessens the anxiety of being out and about during a pandemic.

We may be constantly reminded of our predicament every time we go out but such reminders are essential to keep everyone safe. After all, we cannot fight this virus as individuals. We must act as a collective. More islands have yet to open but that doesn't mean we cannot support the local travel industry and the small businesses in our own cities. If you can, go out and rediscover Manila. It has so much to offer and may renew a love affair with the city.

A huge thank you to the City of Manila for the warm welcome and the tour.

<https://www.instagram.com/almostdiplomatic>



Season of Lent 2021

The Philippines is one of the predominantly Catholic nations in the world. Filipinos are known to be devoted to their faith and practice religious traditions especially during Lent. Lent or Kwaresma in Filipino happens once a year wherein Catholics remember Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection.

While we are still adjusting to the new normal, here's a glimpse of the country's various places of worship:



The Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mosque or the Grand Mosque of Cotabato is an Islamic architecture masterpiece built in 2011. Currently managed and operated by the Bangsamoro regional government, the mosque is the largest in the country and one of the most visited sites in Cotabato City. It welcomes all visitors and can accommodate up to 15,000 people.

Photo by: Aris Aglupus



Completed in 1874, the Jaro Cathedral is a historical landmark and the seat of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Jaro in the province of Iloilo. This Marian Church was also declared as the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Candles (Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria) and the second national shrine in the Visayas and Mindanao.



The Kamay ni Hesus Shrine is a pilgrimage site featuring a 50-foot statue of the ascending Jesus Christ. Constructed in 2012, this holy ground in Lucban, Quezon is known for its healing masses.



The Manila Cathedral or The Minor Basilica and Metropolitan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is located within Intramuros in the City of Manila. It was officially established in 1571 and is now considered the episcopal see of the Archbishop of Manila. It is also considered to be the Mother Church of the Philippines.

Photo by: Jacob Maentz



The Santo Tomás de Villanueva Parish Church or the Miagao Church completed in 1797 serves as a strong foundation of the Christian faith in the municipality of Miagao, Iloilo. It is one of the country's architectural gems because of its façade of coralline limestone and intricate ornaments. The image of the town's patron saint, St. Thomas of Villanueva, carrying the Child Jesus on his back, is also carved above its wooden door entrance.



The Saint Augustine Church, known as the Paoay Church located in Paoay, Ilocos Norte, was built in 1710. It was declared as a National Cultural Treasure in 1973 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. Known for its Baroque architecture, Paoay is one of the most visited religious sites during Holy Week.

Photo by: Marc Go



The Peñafrancia Minor Basilica or the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Peñafrancia in Naga, Bicol is one of the largest Marian Pilgrimage sites in Asia. Completed in 1981, this Basilica houses The Image of Our Lady of Peñafrancia. It is also a popular destination for pilgrims, especially during the Peñafrancia Festival.



San Agustin Church or the Archdiocesan Shrine of Nuestra Señora de Consolacion y Correa (Immaculate Conception Parish) is located inside the walled city of Intramuros in Manila. Known as the oldest Church in the Philippines, its construction began between 1587 and 1606. It is famous for its architecture and beautiful interiors.

Photo by: Roberto Po



Photo by: Marc Go



The Taluksangay Mosque in Zamboanga is known as the oldest mosque in Western Mindanao and the first masjid in the Zamboanga Peninsula. It was completed in 1885 and became known as the first place in Zamboanga where Islam propagated. It has undergone several expansions and can currently accommodate around 3,000 worshippers.

Photo by: Claire Madarang

2021 National Women's Month Celebration

In support of:



WE MAKE CHANGE WORK FOR WOMEN



TPB Holds Online Forum for National Women's Month

The 2021 National Women's Month, spearheaded by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), was celebrated by the TPB following the multi-year theme of "We Make Change Work for Women".

TPB launched #PURPLEMONDAYS, an activity in support of women's rights and gender equality that seeks to put an end to gender stereotypes, gender-based violence and discrimination against women.

TPB employees, especially those who were physically reporting to the office, were encouraged to wear purple-colored clothing on all Mondays of March to show solidarity with the PCW and every Juana in the agency and society. An online forum was also organized by TPB on 26 March 2020 to increase awareness on practices, gaps, challenges and commitments in pursuing gender and development (GAD) and to strengthen implementation of the Magna Carta of Women.

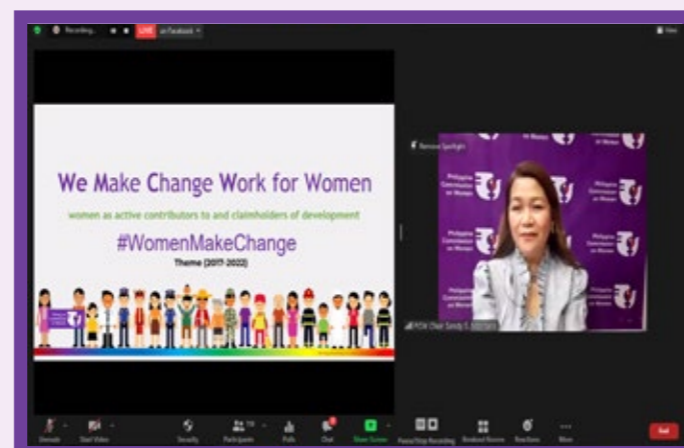
The forum tackled topics about the environment, health, and the issues faced by women and girls during this pandemic. Esteemed speakers Dr. Paulyn Rosell-Ubial,

Ms. Sandra Montano and Ms. Sef Carandang shared their knowledge to TPB employees and invited personnel from DOT and its attached agencies.

Former Health Secretary Dr. Paulyn Rosell-Ubial and current PCW Chairperson Ms. Sandra Sanchez-Montano also depicted how women and girls are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of health and overall safety and the responses of the government in addressing those issues.

Meanwhile, Managing Trustee and Adviser for Community Development and Gender for the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation (PRRCFI), Ms. Sef Carandang, highlighted in her presentation the importance of partnering with women stakeholders from local communities in preserving our natural resources through sustainable endeavors.

The National Women's Month is celebrated annually in the month of March pursuant to the Presidential Proclamation Nos. 224 and 227 and Republic Act No. 6949, with March 8 as National Women's Day.



I Heart Myself: Ways to practice Self-love

Self-love is about appreciating one's self. It means loving every part of your being. It's accepting your mental, physical, and emotional state regardless if you're at your best or at your worst. It also means knowing your worth and not settling for less than what you deserve.

Self-love varies from one person to another as we use different ways to take good care of ourselves. So during Women's Month, we asked empowered women how they practice self-love this 2021. Here are some of their responses:



Ms. Luisa Llave

Position: Administrative Officer, DOT-Taiwan

"The pandemic actually made me realize the importance of physical and spiritual health to cope with loneliness and depression.

So this year I will continue attending online mass, go hiking to commune with nature and to hopefully lose some weight, eat good food, treat myself with regular manicure, pedicure, and massage. I will also endeavor to have a complete medical check-up. Lastly I hope to travel again to see my daughters."



Engr. Jermaysa "Mice" Tin

Position: General Manager, Earth Explorers Travel and Tours

"Self love for 2021 is to wake up everyday being grateful for everything especially the blessing to survive all the challenges in life. Spending more quality time with my daughter, keeping myself fit, having time to explore underwater and outdoors activities with friends. Also, those simple things like watching sunrise and sunset make my soul wonderful and be more positive in life."



Ms. Fay Lena Castro

Position: Administrative Officer, DOT-Los Angeles

"2021 brings a lot of hope and loving myself is a top priority. It means I accept all that I am, my flaws, my weaknesses and not giving in to negative energy. This year, I am prioritizing my needs. I take full control of my life, taking care of my mental, emotional and physical state. I make sure that I have time to reflect and have a quiet moment in a day. I focus on my spiritual side and giving gratitude to God and the universe for everything that I have. Spending quality time with family and friends, achieving work-life balance and pursuing my goals are things that matter most to me. And that for me, is self-love."

HAVE A SAFE TRIP, PINAS

Traveling this summer may be limited due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic but there are things that are still in your control. Be assured that the strict health and safety protocols implemented by hotels, transport services, and other tourism operations are there to keep guests safe and observing them allows us to appreciate the special moments without the worry.



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