

# TPB spotlight

A Quarterly e-Magazine of the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022

## PHITEX 2022

PHILIPPINE TRAVEL EXCHANGE  
Embracing Responsible Tourism

### All Systems Go for PHITEX 2022

Marga Nograles Takes Helm  
as New TPB COO

Philippines is TTG  
Travel Awards' 2022  
Destination of the Year

Mission accomplished  
at the 2022  
Virtuoso Travel Week



# spotlight

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COVER PHOTO:  
PHITEX 2022

In this issue, we put a spotlight on the numerous international wins of the Philippines, from travel awards and fairs to successful MICE bids, and how the local tourism industry is more vigorous in embracing a sustainable and responsible tourism model as it recovers in a post-pandemic setting

# ON THE SPOT

Barely two weeks in as Chief Operating Officer and I am in awe of what the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines has achieved in the past few months. Let these story-filled pages be a testament to the tourism agencies' hard work, immense dedication, and heart of excellence to position the country as a top-of-mind destination globally. Our collaborative efforts towards this has been recognized, the Philippines was awarded as Destination of the Year in the recently concluded TTG Travel Awards.

This 3rd quarter has brought about plenty and consecutive wins for the country. The World Travel Awards hailed the Philippines as Asia's Leading Dive Destination and Asia's Leading Beach Destination as well as having Intramuros reclaim the title of Asia's Leading Tourist Attraction. Another win was at the 2022 PTAA Travel Tour Expo, where TPB was awarded for Best Pavilion. In this expo, we took into account the use of eco-friendly material as we endeavor to promote sustainability. Lastly, in line with our agency's strategic thrust, Partnership as Pathways, we are set to host the 2023 International Womens Conventions and WORLDCHEFS Asian Presidents Forum to eventually spark interest of various international organizations to host more world-renowned meetings and exhibitions in the Philippines.

Indeed, much has been accomplished in a short span of time and I pray that we keep the momentum going until the year ends as we continue to support DOT's plans and programs for industry recovery under the leadership of Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco. Echoing what the Tourism Secretary Frasco said, "We stand ready to seize this golden opportunity to make tourism our country's greatest story yet." Hence, to be given this chance to co-author this story with TPB and our dear tourism stakeholders is an honor and privilege I am truly grateful for.

With the continuous success of our programs, I am blessed to be working alongside excellent public servants. This was evident when we celebrated the recent Taunang Parangal sa Bayaning Pilipino during the Civil Service Month in September. Thus, let us recognize the competency and efforts of these servant leaders who all the more increases my confidence that the only direction there is for us to market and promote the Philippine tourism industry is onward and upward.

That said, we are thankful for your continued support for we would not be where we are today without you.

Maraming salamat!

  
**Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Tourism Promotions Board Philippines





## MARGA NOGRALES TAKES HELM AS NEW TPB COO

## ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR PHITEX 2022

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines will take center stage to mount one of its institutional events, the Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) 2022, also known as the biggest government-organized travel trade event in the country, from October 18-24 at the Marriott Grand Ballroom, Newport World Resorts.

First established in 1996, PHITEX hosts qualified buyers from all over the world to participate in table-top business appointments with Philippine sellers and experience Philippine tourism destinations through pre / post tours with an end-goal of increasing tourist arrivals in the country.

This year's installment will open with the PHITEX Educational Program (PEP) Talk on October 18 featuring big industry names, such as Sandra Carvao, Chief and Tourism Market Intelligence of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); Arch. Felino Palafox Jr., Founder of Palafox Associates; Billie Dumaliang, the co-founder and Managing Trustee of Masungi Georeserve Foundation; and Nicky Gardner, Author of Hidden Europe Magazine, among others, who are set to share

significant information and updates to help enhance participant knowledge related to this year's theme, which is "Embracing Responsible Tourism - Making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit."

The PEP Talk will be followed by the main event, the opening of PHITEX 2022 on the 19th, headed by Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and TPB Chief Operating Officer, Maria Margarita Nograles, and the business-to-business (B2B) transactions that will return in hybrid format - happening simultaneously online and onsite at the Marriott.

Tours to Philippine destinations including Batangas, Siquijor, and Davao will also be offered for foreign sellers before and after the event. As of date, 117 buyers and 133 sellers have registered.

The PHITEX opening ceremony will be broadcasted live on the TPB Facebook Page on October 19, 2022, at 9:00 am. The closing ceremony will also be broadcasted on the same social page the following day at 7:00 pm.

**MANILA, Philippines** – The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, the marketing and promotions arm of the Department of Tourism (DOT), announced that Ms. Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles has officially assumed the role of Chief Operating Officer, 04 October 2022.

Nograles was appointed member of the TPB Board of Directors in an appointment letter issued by the Malacañang released on 15 September 2022. Following this, the said Board convened and officially elected her into office in accordance with the GOCC Governance Act of 2011 and Tourism Act of 2009.

A recognized entrepreneur in the local fashion and retail industry, Nograles is the owner and proprietor of Kaayo Modern Mindanao, a clothing and accessories brand showcasing a curated collection of traditional weaves created by artisan women in Mindanao.

Her love for culture and fashion combined made her realize a potent medium of advocacy to provide a sustainable livelihood for women and artisans and establish a creative platform to showcase the world-class weaving craftsmanship of the Philippines.

*"Kaayo Modern Mindanao has been my baby, my passion project, my heart, and my soul. It was not easy to make this decision but now given the opportunity to bring more of the Philippines to the world, it is with a humble and grateful heart that I step down as Creative Director of Kaayo and take on my new role - for the country,"* said TPB COO Nograles.

*"I am deeply humbled, honored, and blessed to have been appointed as Chief Operating Officer of the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines. I can only bow in profound gratitude and pray to God for guidance, wisdom, fair judgment, and inspiration to be able to discharge my duties in accordance with God's will and the tourism agenda of our country,"* she added.

Just like how she championed sustainable livelihood programs that uplift women and local artisans in Mindanao, Marga

Nograles as COO commits to forging meaningful partnerships, embracing responsible and sustainable tourism programs, and supporting stakeholders following the multidimensional tourism approach under the seven-point agenda of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

*"My fervent hope is to meet the expectations entrusted to me by DOT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, whom I shall support and work with diligently. May I be relevant as I learn from my mentors and may my heart & mind be focused on how promotions can best benefit our communities and the only country we call home!"* enthused TPB COO Nograles.

Nograles will lead TPB to implement strategic domestic and international marketing and promotional efforts to revitalize the Philippine tourism industry as a sustainable, dynamic, world-class tourism, MICE and investment destination.

Born in Davao City, Nograles spent her school years at the Ateneo de Davao University and graduated with a degree in AB Interdisciplinary Studies, Major in Management and Communications from the Ateneo de Manila University.

Since then, Marga has been involved in fashion and retail, with her being awarded the exclusive sub-distributorship of Havaianas in Southeast Mindanao in 2005 paving the way for her entrepreneurial journey.

In 2000, she worked on special projects with the Philippine Department of Tourism in New York, such as the "Balik Davao" campaign which featured a fashion show that highlighted Mindanao designers.

She is married to Atty. Karlo Alexei Nograles, the current Chairperson of the Civil Service Commission. Together they have three children: Karlos Mateo, Kristian Massimo, and Katarina Mikaelle.

Nograles succeeds Atty. Maria Anthonette Velasco-Allones who is now the Undersecretary for Finance and Internal Affairs at the Department of Migrant Workers.





# CALABARZON and Philippine Weaves in the spotlight at the 10<sup>th</sup> Regional Travel Fair



**F**ulfill your travel dreams at the 10th Regional Travel Fair (RTF) #DiscoverCALABARZON at the Ayala Malls Solenad III Activity Center in Nuvali, Sta. Rosa Laguna on 29-30 October 2022!

For this year's edition, #DiscoverCALABARZON takes the center of the regional stage, a burgeoning ecotourism destination that is the perfect choice for a quick weekend escape. Just a few hours from Metro Manila, the region offers all kinds of travelers a multitude of outdoor activities both on water and on land. Take your pick from beaches to hot springs, exciting adventures to relaxing staycations, and cultural trips to historical sites and religious shrines.

Organized by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, in partnership with the Department of Tourism (DOT) through its Regional Offices, the RTF is a 4-day event featuring tourism seminars, business-to-business (B2B) networking sessions, business-to-consumer (B2C) trade fair, and pre and post event tours within the host region.

Since 2018, TPB's Regional Travel Fairs have served as a venue for tourism stakeholders to promote and sell domestic tour packages, airline tickets, accommodations, and other tourism-related products and services where the public can get as much as 10% discounts.

While so much has changed these past two years, the RTF remains committed to bringing everyone back together

to deliver safe and responsible adventures, so that travelers can enjoy the breathtaking sights and sounds that the Philippines could offer.

Simultaneous with the conduct of this year's RTF, TPB will also launch the first Philippine Weaver's Tourism and Trade Fair (PWTF). Fifteen weaving communities from Mindanao and Maragondon, Cavite, and embroiderers from Lumban, Laguna will take advantage of the capacity-building and sustainability initiatives under the Habi program.

The RTF is the only government-initiated trade fair that strategically conducts its events in different areas of the Philippines. Due to the pandemic lockdowns, the RTF launched its virtual edition in 2020 and transitioned to a hybrid format in 2021, both with overwhelmingly positive responses from the industry stakeholders. For the 10th edition, the RTF brings back the full participation of representatives from DOT Regional Offices which will ensure complete and comprehensive tourism offerings to the public.

You can also access the fair online during the event dates by registering now at <https://rtf2022.tpb.gov.ph>. Registered participants will get a chance to win limited edition carry-on luggage and other freebies when they buy up to Php 5,000.00 worth of tour packages, hotel accommodation, and air tickets during the event!

# MEMBERS' CHAT

## Digitalization Moves Forward through TPB's Monthly Members' Chat

**M**embers of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines were apprised of leveraging digital marketing tools to enhance online visibility and potential to capture their target market during the second series of the Biyaheng Digiskarte: Angat Turismo Serye for the months of August and September.

The Biyaheng Digiskarte: Angat Turismo Serye, a joint undertaking of the TPB Philippines, Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc., and Union Bank of the Philippines, aims to assist TPB members and stakeholders to thrive in the digital economy through a series of learning opportunities targeted to build and hone digital literacy and competency.

In its session held on August 3, Ms. Amrei Dizon, ME, CPM, Managing Partner of Vitalstrats Creative Solutions, provided the fundamentals of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and how it works, noting that the key to being searchable online is to develop a quality content strategy that adds value to your customers.

Advancing the previous session topic on leveraging digital marketing tools, Mr. Jaypee Soliman, MSME Segment Head, Customer Experience Group, UnionBank, discussed integrating

tech products as solutions to the challenges faced by MSMEs particularly on e-commerce entrepreneurs where bookings are done online. He also shared product innovations developed by UnionBank, such as the MSME platform GlobalLinker that advanced digital banking services to MSMEs.

Meanwhile, during the regular Members' Chat session, Ms. Weng Rivera, Head of Travel, airasia Super App Philippines, shared AirAsia's journey towards digital transformation. The Super App, originally launched in 2002, only accelerated in 2020 when it was launched in Malaysia and in the Philippines the following year. "A travel-led lifestyle platform for everyone," the Super App envisions to provide an integrated ecosystem wherein users of the platform will be provided with everything that they might need for seamless travel.

Lastly, Department of Tourism (DOT) Region II Regional Director Fanibeth Domingo shared recent developments of the region's first-ever travel app – the FunTourism2 funded by TPB. The app serves as a tourists' complete guide to fun and safe travel in Cagayan Valley, and at the same time, a source of data for the region's tourism-related statistics.



*"Don't just focus on content that sells, we need to focus on content that inspires, entertains and educates."*

**Ms. Amrei Dizon, ME, CPM**

Managing Partner, Vitalstrats Creative Solutions



*"The FunTourism2 App is also beneficial to our tourism enterprises, particularly our DOT-accredited accommodation establishments because they will be able to market and promote their businesses online at no cost."*

**Ms. Fanibeth Domingo**

Regional Director, DOT Region II



**Ms. Weng Rivera**

Head of Travel, airasia Super App Philippines



*"Digitization means finding the sweet spot where technology can play a valuable role to your organization to hit your goal."*

**Mr. Jaypee Soliman**

MSME Segment Head, Customer Experience Group, UnionBank





# 31ST TTG TRAVEL AWARDS 2022 CEREMONY & GALA DINNER

TTG Publishing Travel Trade

CENTARA  
GRAND

Destination of the Year

TPB  
TOURISM PROMOTIONS BOARD PHILIPPINES



## Philippines is TTG Travel Awards' 2022 Destination of the Year

The 31st Annual TTTG Travel Awards recognized the Philippines as 2022's Destination of the Year during the awarding ceremony on 22 September 2022 held in Bangkok, Thailand.

This special honor, received by the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines on behalf of the country, is presented to the most outstanding destination for taking proactive steps and initiatives for the development and promotion of the travel industry.

"Being awarded as TTTG's Destination of the Year is a welcome validation of our collective efforts to rebuild the Philippine tourism industry. We share this recognition with gratitude to all our tourism partners, stakeholders, and Filipinos who have been instrumental in

helping us promote our country's attractions, products, and culture both here and abroad," said then TPB Officer-in-Charge Charles Aames Bautista.

This event has earned a reputation as one of the most influential awards in the Asia-Pacific, honoring exemplary organizations and individuals that raise the bar in travel and tourism. The Philippines previously received the coveted Destination of the Year Award in 2014 and the Best Marketing and Relationship Effort Award in the following year.

Organized by TTTG Asia, the prestigious TTTG Travel Awards was held annually since 1989 except for the years 2003 due to the SARS epidemic, and 2020-2021

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, some adjustments were made to the award categories to better recognize organizations and individuals who have come out stronger post-pandemic. This year, the event recognizes the dynamism of the industry in three categories: Travel Supplier, Travel Agency, and Outstanding Achievement.

Winners for each award were determined through voting by readers of TTTG Travel Trade Publishing's print and online titles for the travel supplier and travel agency awards. Meanwhile, the Outstanding Achievement Awards is a non-voting category with winners determined by TTTG's editorial team.

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED AT THE 2022 VIRTUOSO TRAVEL WEEK

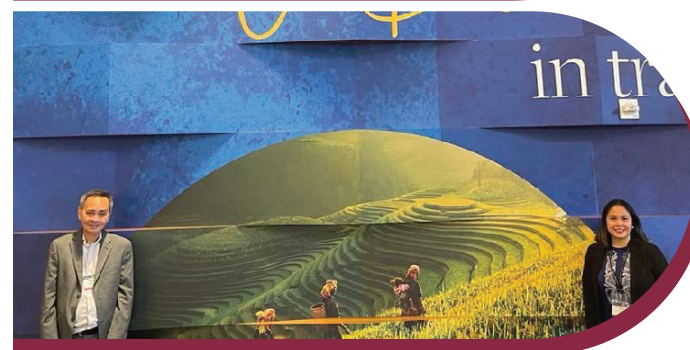
They say what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, but not when the Philippines is making its mark at The Entertainment Capital of the World.

Last August 15 to 18, 2022, the 2022 Virtuoso Travel Week took place in Las Vegas, Nevada where Philippine participation was supported by the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines and represented on-site by Mr. Francisco Hilario Lardizabal and Ms. Soleil Tropicales, Tourism Attachés of the Philippine Department of Tourism New York and San Francisco offices respectively.

Virtuoso Travel Week is an annual meeting that allows tourism boards and suppliers from all over the world to sit down for business-to-business (B2B) sessions and network with agency owners, managers, consultants, and travel advisors of Virtuoso, a by-invitation-only organization and the industry's leading luxury and experiential travel network.

The DOT Attachés successfully attended all 120 business meetings assigned to the Philippines and met with travel advisors from the US, Latin America, the Caribbean, Australia/New Zealand, and European countries including Eastern Europe, allowing them to reinforce the promotion of the country to the travel trade sector, obtain updated and relevant information regarding travel and market trends worldwide, and increase awareness of various markets regarding the tourism offerings of the Philippines to sustain the growth of tourism arrivals.

Apart from the networking sessions, the Tourism Attachés were also present during Virtuoso Week's Opening Ceremony where powerhouse speakers were on hand to deliver messages guided by the event's theme of, "We Believe."



For Mr. Lardizabal, the message of keynote speaker Alison Levine, a renowned polar explorer, expedition leader, and author, was one that stood out and must be shared for the world to hear: "Backing up is not the same as backing down," which puts emphasis on the need to continuously assess and reassess the environment instead of being fixed on a set game plan, a useful advice especially for a volatile industry such as tourism.

More importantly, the Philippine participation captured insights as to how the Philippines has to be promoted. According to the Tourism Attachés, it's about expanding our luxury product offerings, turning newly developed tourism circuits into tour packages, and underscoring the importance of authenticity, sustainability, and inclusivity because luxury travel is not necessarily about opulence but meaningful travels as well.

This year's Virtuoso Travel Week conference saw an audience of 5,000 luxury travel professionals coming from 100 countries. The turnout is an implication of how advantageous it would be for the Philippines to invest in the network's marketing and professional development platforms and strengthen its membership to gain a bigger market share. Given this, the DOT hopes that participation in succeeding Virtuoso Travel Week events will continue as the Philippines aims to reach new heights in a post-pandemic world.



# TPB WINS BEST PAVILION AT 2022 PTAA TRAVEL TOUR EXPO



The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines showcased eco-friendly Palochina wood and conducted engaging trivia games teasing travel experiences in the Philippines to earn the Best Pavilion recognition at the 29th Travel Tour Expo held on June 24 to 26, 2022 at the SMX Convention Center Manila.



TPB interpreted this year's expo theme, "Braving and Shaping the Future of Travel" by highlighting sustainable tourism as the path forward. It is the thrust of the agency to embrace destination stewardship and stress the importance of preserving the natural beauty of the country's 7,641 islands.

"We seize every opportunity to inculcate consistent efforts towards sustainability. Just changing the components of the booth to reusable materials can actually go a long way in terms of fostering a culture that is mindful of sustainable practices and ingraining them in the tourism industry. This is just one of the ways how the TPB contributes towards a stronger,

greener, and better Philippines and we hope that our partners and stakeholders can follow," said former TPB COO Maria Anthonette Velasco-Allones.

More than 32,000 attendees gathered to avail of exclusive travel deals from 142 exhibitors of the tourism industry such as airlines, travel agencies and tour operators, accommodations, and government and national tourism organizations among others.



The booth featured iconic attractions with tangible visual experiences from each major island of the country. Visitors took the pick of their preferred photo wall to either hop on an ATV with the Mayon Volcano in the background, channel their vibrant smiles while wearing Sinulog festival masks, or sit on an actual vinta in front of the pink-sand Santa Cruz Islands.

The booth's lounge area also included a collage of Filipino dishes displaying the Filipino culinary flair and El Nido, Palawan owing to its status as 2020's 9th Best Island Beaches

in the World: 2020 Reader's Choice Award by Condé Nast Traveler. In addition, a big wall was dedicated to DOT's "It's More Fun with You" campaign to encourage Filipinos to travel and safely explore the country again.



"I urge our stakeholders today to make sure we maintain and strengthen this culture of excellence in our hospitality industry. Let us also start to sow the seeds of sustainability and inclusivity so that future generations can say that the Philippines is not only hospitable, but we built a country that is greener and kinder," said TPB Deputy COO for Marketing and Promotions Charles Aames Bautista during his opening remarks for the expo.



Organized by the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA), the annual flagship three-day event was a hit with families and the youth-driven market with its experiential exhibits, affordable tour packages, and novel destinations to fill bucket lists and fulfill travel goals in the coming months. Last year, the 28th TTE was staged for the first time in a hybrid setup that featured 40 exhibitors and 3,434 attendees at the SM Megamall MegaTrade Hall in Mandaluyong.

# TPB, DOT SPEARHEAD PHILIPPINES PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM EXPO JAPAN (TEJ)



Tokyo, Japan – The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, together with the Department of Tourism (DOT), brought the Philippines to the Tourism Expo Japan (TEJ), the biggest travel trade fair in Japan held on 22 to 25 September 2022.

The country's participation in TEJ aims to reintroduce the country's new tourism products, sustain the presence of the country, and develop and renew business partnerships not only with the Japanese market, but also with other tourism stakeholders worldwide.

Jointly organized by the Japan Travel and Tourism Association (JTTA), Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA), and Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), the four-day exhibition started off with business-to-business meetings to strengthen partnerships among tourism industry practitioners. The expo site officially opened to the public on September 24 where visitors experienced tourism products from different countries.

This year's expo carried the themes "Taking on the New Era: Restart" for trade and "Hello New Journey" for the general public, and with this, visitors of the Philippines booth were treated to culture, adventure, and gastronomic offerings catering to the new and diverse trends of tourism and traveling. The Philippines highlighted its top tourist destinations such as Manila, Boracay, Cebu, and Bohol among others.

The country's delegation was headed by DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar H. Tamano and TPB Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Marketing and Promotions Charles Aames M. Bautista, together with private sector partners from Attic Tours Phils. Inc., Bai Hotel Cebu, Bohol Beach Club, Cebu Air, Inc., Gladex Travel Services, Herald Suites Hotels, Hotel 101 Manila, Philippine Airlines, Shangri-La's Boracay Resort and Spa, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, and Waterfront Hotels & Casinos.

"Tourism Expo Japan opens an avenue for every national tourism organization to stimulate demand for overseas and domestic travel. The Philippines has so much to offer with our 7,641 islands. This is an opportunity to showcase that beyond our amazing beaches, we get to highlight our adventure, culinary, wellness, and MICE offerings," said TPB DCOO Bautista.

DOT Undersecretary Tamano represented the Philippines as one of the panelists in the Ministerial Round Table Discussion to tackle "Climate Change – Tourism Stakeholders' Endeavors" and "Coexisting with COVID in the Post-Pandemic World – Solutions for the New Tourism Industry" with other tourism ministers and key representatives from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

TEJ received more than 244 thousand visitors with 1,018 exhibitors from 78 countries. The event has become a vital brand exercise for national tourism offices in Asia showcasing destination attractions and product offerings.



# Philippines wins bid to host the Worldchefs Asian Presidents Forum



The Philippines, through the efforts and collaboration between the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and the LTB Philippines Chefs Association, won the bid to host the Worldchefs Asian Presidents Forum in 2023.

World Association of Chefs Society (Worldchefs) Continental Director for Asia Chef Willment Leong made the official announcement on 06 August 2022, during the Philippine Culinary Cup awarding ceremony at SMX Convention Center.

Over the years, the national government, in partnership with private entities, invested heavily in improving Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, and

Exhibitions (MICE)-related infrastructure across the country, and with this, the Philippines is more than ready to host the event next year.

The Worldchefs Asian Presidents Forum is a three-day event that aims to foster camaraderie between chefs in the Asia Pacific region with programs such as presentations of the latest gastronomical trends, knowledge-sharing on sustainability practices, and culinary education sessions.

The forum will bring together around 3000 attendees, including 30 delegates from different Asia Pacific chefs associations and professional chefs joining the programs, competitions, and exhibits. Attendees will also have a chance to see the local markets in the Philippines and get a taste of the unique

dimensions and diversity of the country's cuisine and culture.

The Philippine MICE sector is poised to resume its dynamic business activities and rebuild its pre-pandemic vigor now that borders have reopened across the globe. As countries regain confidence in business travels, the country has bolstered its MICE readiness efforts, coupled with government programs to ensure a seamless and authentic travel experience for event organizers and business travelers.

The TPB's participation in the bid is part of the agency's Partnerships as Pathways strategic thrust which aims to strengthen partnerships with key industry players and with high hopes that this opportunity will open up more avenues for the Philippines to host bigger international meetings and exhibitions in the future.

# TPB JOINS MATTA FAIR TO BOOST TOURIST ARRIVALS

Tourism industry stakeholders are in high hopes as the Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA) Fair returned to the show floor of the World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the first time in almost two years last September 2 to 4, 2022.

Now on its 51st edition, MATTA Fair is Malaysia's biggest travel fair participated by over 270 organizations which includes National Tourism Organizations and State Tourism Offices, along with more than 248 exhibitors consisting of travel agents, tour operators and hotels, airlines, attractions, theme parks, and other travel-related suppliers.

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and its representatives, Ms. Micaela Ochoa and Ms. Gianna Añonuevo, the Acting Head of the ASEAN and the Pacific Division and Market Specialist III respectively of the agency's International Promotions Department, led the Philippine participation this year, enabling the TPB to provide relevant travel information to the Malaysian Travel Market and drive travel interest to the Philippines while also reconnecting with local travel product wholesalers, tour operators, and other stakeholders.

The Philippine booth, featuring the recently hailed World's Best Islands of Cebu and Palawan, received numerous inquiries related to Philippine tour packages, direct flight availability to Philippine destinations, and current travel restrictions not only from locals but also MATTA attendees from India, South Korea, Japan, and other Asian countries.

A market study conducted by the TPB delegation reported that out of 161 respondents, 73.3% have plans on visiting the Philippines in the next twelve months, while most have a high awareness of top tourist destinations such as Boracay, Cebu, Manila, and Palawan.

While Philippine booth visitors expressed great inclination to travel to the Philippines for vacation, factors such as the lack of availability of direct flights from Malaysia to popular destinations such as Boracay, Cebu, and Palawan, greatly affect their travel decisions.



"Booth visitors were elated to visit the Philippines but concerns on direct flight options to the island destinations were raised. Flights were limited due to the pandemic and airlines are still slowly recovering. Moving forward, the team and its hardworking Market Representatives will make representations and request support from airline companies if direct flight options to these destinations are possible to meet the demand of the consumers," Ms. Ochoa mentioned.

"With eased entry and quarantine restrictions, we are optimistic that Philippine tourism is highly on its way to recovery that is at par with its neighboring countries," she added.

The TPB has been participating in MATTA Fair since 2009 to strengthen its partnership with MATTA in promoting the Philippines as one of the top tourist destinations in the ASEAN region.



## TPB Taps Japanese Influencers to Promote the Philippines' Premier Tourist Destinations

To revitalize the Philippine tourism industry, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, in partnership with the Philippine Department of Tourism (PDOT) Tokyo, welcomed Japanese influencers to a six-day familiarization tour to two top-notch tourist destinations – Boracay and Manila – last July 29 to August 23, 2022.

The familiarization tour was participated by Fumiya Sankai, a Japanese vlogger, actor, recording artist, and influencer who gained fame when he became the first Japanese official housemate in the Pinoy Big Brother reality show; Kei & Aya, partner influencers who are popular with travel lovers; and video content creators Cotton and Shogo Kokubu who visited and explored the island of Boracay, which was recently hailed as one of the World's Best Islands, and the City of Manila, named among the world's best cities according to the data of the Time Out Index 2022.

The Boracay leg highlighted the world-renowned white sand beach as well as the spectacular Boracay sunset viewed while sailing in a *paraw* boat. Meanwhile in Manila, Japanese influencers got a glimpse of the Metro's business districts and urban lifestyle.

*"From a dazzling sunset paraw sailing experience to adrenaline-pumping water adventure activities, the tropical paradise of Boracay offers a precious retreat to all kinds of travelers. The warm welcome and hospitality of the locals also make for a worthwhile visit to the Philippines,"* said Japanese vlogger Fumiya Sankai.

TPB's hosting of the Familiarization Trip is part of the agency's SMARTourism Program that integrates innovation and digitalization in its operations by strengthening its digital presence in collaboration with well-known international influencers.

## THE PHILIPPINES WINS BID TO HOST 2023 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN CONVENTIONS

The Philippines' MICE readiness efforts are paying off with the announcement of another successful bid to host two international women's conventions in September 2023 during the Women Annual Convention of Global Trade Chamber (GTC) in London on 24-27 August 2022.

In collaboration with the Afro Asian World Events, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines welcomed the opportunity to host the UK-based Ladies of All Nations International (LOANI) Convention and the US-based GTC's 100 Successful Women in Business Annual Global Convention in the country next year.

*"The decision to hold these two international events in the Philippines came fast, and it is worth noting that the government and the country's MICE/meetings industry are positioned to cater to such demands with much agility. We are excited how the business is picking up quickly,"* said Afro Asian World Event's President, Ms. Angel Ramos Bognot.

As countries regain confidence in business travels, the country's MICE sector remains dynamic in its business activities to rebuild and surpass its pre-pandemic vigor, backed by government programs to ensure a seamless and authentic travel experience for event organizers and business travelers.

*"Over the years, the national government, in partnership with private entities, invested heavily in improving MICE-related infrastructure across the country. We are confident that we are more than ready to host these business conventions, especially as the Philippines is a champion of the advocacies that celebrate women that these organizations promote. We are very happy and honored to welcome the delegates to our country in the coming year,"* said TPB Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Marketing and Promotions Charles Aames Bautista.

The 6-day convention will bring together more than 200 foreign delegates from Europe, the Americas, and other parts of the world and will put a spotlight on the 100 Most Successful Women of the World. The event includes plenary and break-out sessions, special events, and mentoring sessions in business and entrepreneurship. LOANI's event, on the other hand, promotes inclusive women's development.

The Philippines has recently received accolades for hosting the prestigious World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Global Summit in April 2022 which is one of this year's biggest MICE events that happened in the Asian region. The same momentum is sustained when Manila, the country's capital, bagged the hosting rights for the World Chefs Asian Presidents Forum in 2023.

The TPB's participation in the bid is part of the agency's Partnerships as Pathways strategic thrust which aims to strengthen partnerships with key industry players and with high hopes that this opportunity will open up more avenues for the Philippines to host bigger international meetings and exhibitions in the future.



Photos by:  
M.S. LAB & Kazuki Kei Kiyosawa



## TOURISM PROMOTIONS BOARD PHILIPPINES PUMPS UP ITS MICE MOMENTUM AT IBTM AMERICAS 2022



The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines and the Philippine Department of Tourism (PDOT) in Los Angeles made a strong pitch for the country's MICE and Business Events sector at this year's edition of IBTM Americas held last 24 to 25 August 2022 at Centro Citibanamex, Mexico City.

IBTM Americas is one of the leading international trade shows that connects the meetings and events industry across the North and Latin American regions through a series of business meetings, networking, and sales presentations. The Philippine participation enabled the country to strengthen its foothold in the Latin American market and forge partnerships between Philippine suppliers and MICE consumers in the region.

"The Philippines was one of the few MICE destinations in Asia, including Japan and South Korea, willing to put business travel back on the exhibition floor, so it was a great opportunity to attend in person. From a strategic point of view, the Philippines was the only delegation from Southeast Asia to attend IBTM this

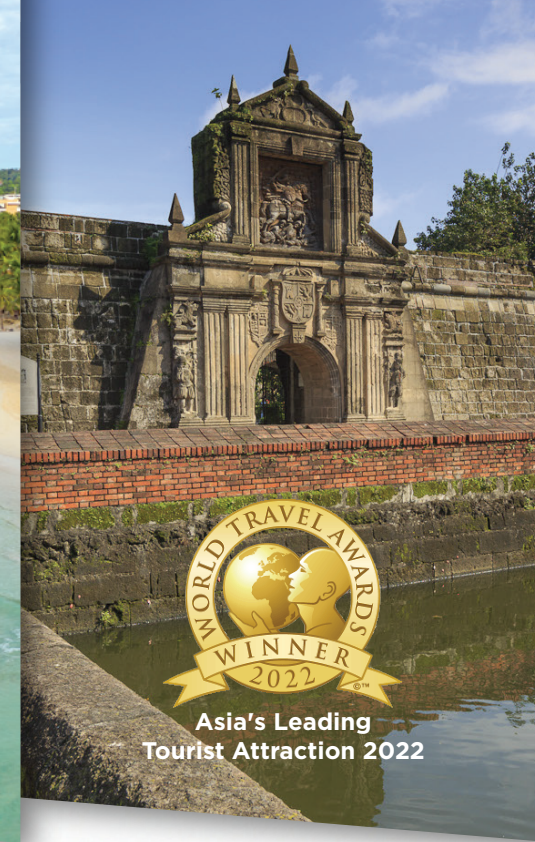
year," said TPB Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Marketing and Promotions Charles Aames Bautista. He added the need to invest and take hold of the Latin American market, particularly in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina which are the strongest economies in the region.

As of press time, the Philippine participation in IBTM Americas generated about 12 strong leads and estimated revenue of USD 83,501,550.00. In 2019, IBTM Americas had a total of 234 stands with 522 exhibitors, 54% of which were international. The Philippines' maiden participation in the Latin American show floor resulted in 50 sales leads with an estimated revenue of P405.8M and an 88% return on marketing investment (ROMI).

The Philippine delegation was headed by the TPB Philippines together with DOT-Los Angeles and three (3) private sectors namely, Destination Management Companies including Divaishnavi Int'l Inc., Travelite Travel and Tours, and Blue Horizons Travel and Tours.



WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS  
WINNER  
2022  
Asia's Leading  
Beach Destination 2022



WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS  
WINNER  
2022  
Asia's Leading  
Tourist Attraction 2022



WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS  
WINNER  
2022  
Asia's Leading  
Dive Destination 2022

## PHL SCORES BACK-TO-BACK WIN IN WTA ASIA: INTRAMUROS HAILED AS ASIA'S LEADING TOURIST ATTRACTION OF 2022

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco expressed her elation as The Philippines is recognized as Asia's Leading Dive Destination and Asia's Leading Beach Destination, while Intramuros reclaimed its title as Asia's Leading Tourist Attraction at the 29th World Travel Awards (WTA) 2022 held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on Wednesday (September 7).

"The Philippines is a beautiful country and you (WTA) having given these awards is such an affirmation to all of our tourism stakeholders and workers who have greatly sacrificed throughout the pandemic. We look to the future with hope that through our combined efforts under the Marcos Administration that has identified tourism to become a major pillar for economic recovery that not only will we survive the pandemic but we will thrive, we will endure and we will get back stronger than ever," said Secretary Frasco in a video message sent to the WTA organizers.

WTA awarded The Philippines for the sixth time as the Leading Beach Destination in Asia besting India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam, and at the same time, achieving Asia's Leading Dive Destination title for four straight years since 2019, edging Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Secretary Frasco noted that the dive citation from WTA only cements the premise of the DOT in hosting the Philippine International Dive Expo (PHIDEX) 2022, which is considered the country's largest platform to network and promote the dive industry. The Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD), an attached agency of the DOT in charge of

marine sports, has recently appropriated a budget of Php9.53 million for the first time by the national government for a more intensified dive tourism promotion and development.

WTA likewise hailed Intramuros Manila as this year's Asia's Leading Tourist Attraction, winning over other competitors such as the Angkor Temples of Cambodia; Borobudur Temple Compounds of Indonesia; Ha Long Bay of Vietnam; Sengan-en and Shoko Shuseikan Museum of Kagoshima in Japan; Taj Mahal of India, teamLab SuperNature of Macao, Great Wall, The Forbidden City, and Terracotta Warriors, all in China; Tokyo Imperial Palace of Japan; and Victoria Peak of Hong Kong.

"We are ready to receive you in the Philippines. We look forward to your visit and I invite each and every one of you to visit our beaches, our dive sites, and our tourist destinations," Secretary Frasco added.

Secretary Frasco emphasized the significance of the WTA accolades, saying that "may this recognition remind us that all of us have a shared responsibility towards the success of the tourism industry, not only in our country but in Asia and the world. We remain committed to purveying the Filipino brand of hospitality and to heralding the Filipino brand to the world".

Established in 1993, the London-based WTA acknowledges excellence in the travel and tourism industry in three tiers: country, regional, and world awards across different categories and is dubbed the "Oscars" of the travel industry.



# PHL TOURISM CHIEF PUSHES FOR INCREASED CONNECTIVITY, INTEROPERABILITY OF VAX CERTS, EQUALIZATION OF OPPORTUNITIES, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN APEC TOURISM MINISTERS' MEET



Increased connectivity, travel convenience, equal opportunities, and sustainable tourism.

These were the focus points of Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco in her presentation at the 11th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM).

Secretary Frasco led the Philippines' delegation to the 11th APEC TMM, joining Tourism Minister counterparts and high-ranking officials from APEC Member Economies including Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China (virtual participation), Hong Kong, Indonesia (virtual participation), Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, The Russian Federation, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, United States of America, and Viet Nam.

During the discussion that was facilitated by Thailand Minister of Tourism and Sports (MOST) and APEC TMM Chair Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn on the key strategies to accelerate the recovery of travel and tourism in the post-COVID-19 pandemic, Secretary Frasco shared some of the tourism recovery strategies of the Philippine government, which can be magnified and adapted on a larger scale in areas like the APEC region.

**Increased connectivity through infrastructure development, increased flights, and information digitalization.**

To increase connectivity with APEC Member Economies and the rest of the world, Secretary Frasco shed light on the Philippines' strategies to introduce improvements to infrastructure and transportation in order to provide an enhanced and affordable experience for visitors.

"Connectivity aims to ensure that our tourist destinations are accessible through improved transportation networks and affordable travel costs. Our approach is geared towards proactive and aggressive infrastructure development that provides quality access to roads, bridges, water systems, and various methods of transportation by land, sea, and air," explained Secretary Frasco.

The Tourism Secretary also disclosed the country's plans of partnering with airlines and airports in the reinstatement of flights and development of new routes in order to restore affordable, competitive rates for international and domestic travel.

"We shall facilitate partnerships with airlines and airports with the reinstatement of flights and the development of new routes with the end in view improving connectivity across economies within the APEC and across the globe and restoring affordable and competitive rates for international and domestic travel," announced Secretary Frasco.

As she communicated the commitment of the Philippine government through the Department of Tourism (DOT) to carry out measures that will introduce proactive and aggressive development in all aspects of tourism, Secretary Frasco also identified digitalization of access of information and booking services enhancement as one of the major strategies eyed to enhance end-to-end connectivity in the country.

"We are closely studying the development of a tourist life cycle app, a mobile application that connects tourists to accommodation, food, shopping, transportation and the like that will also enable us to monitor tourism intelligence data to better improve our tourism services," said the Tourism Secretary.

**Vaccine interoperability for a more convenient travel experience**

In terms of increasing travel convenience, Secretary Frasco advocated for the interoperability of vaccine certificates, uniformity of protocols, and establishment of tourism circuits across APEC Member Economies.

The Tourism Secretary had earlier stated the country's support for the interoperability of vaccine certificates after the presentation made by the APEC Policy Support made a presentation on its report titled "COVID-19 and Cross Border Mobility in the APEC Region: Addressing Uncertainties at the Border" during the morning part of the APEC TMM.

"To advance safe mobility, the Philippines supports the push for the interoperability of vaccine certificates. The Philippines is one with the tourism industry in supporting steps being undertaken to continue to open up our borders and facilitate seamless travel across destinations and economies in order to spur economic activity and people-to-people connectivity," said Secretary Frasco.

"Convenience may be spurred to ensure the uniformity of protocols and the interoperability of vaccine certificates across economies, as well as the development and updating of travel applications to make travel and destination information readily available," she added.

**Equal opportunities and sustainable tourism for all**

Given the unprecedented effects of the pandemic on the global tourism industry, Secretary Frasco also encouraged Member Economies to equalize tourism opportunities across underdeveloped destinations in order to spread economic benefits, a strategy that the DOT has commenced in its pursuit to spur national tourism recovery and fulfill the vision of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for the tourism industry to become one of the country's major economic pillars.

"With new market preferences emerging for more sustainable tourism products, there is now an opportunity for new tourism destinations and products to be developed, paving the way for more multi-dimensional tourism experiences that are immersive and reflective of the unique cultures of the various economies in APEC," said Secretary Frasco.

"The equalization of opportunities across underdeveloped destinations among APEC Member Economies is critical to spread economic opportunities to ensure that no one is left behind as we reboot and restart the travel and tourism industry," she noted.

Fully aware of tourism's propensity to have adverse impact on local communities and the environment if without proper regulation within the jurisdiction, Secretary Frasco strongly pushed for the prioritization of sustainable tourism practices, and coordination between APEC economies, as well as national and local governments.

"Since we've all envisioned the long-term success of the tourism industry, sustainable tourism paired with effective local and national governance and coordination spells the way forward. It is for this reason that we advocate for a close collaboration between APEC economies as well as national and local governments to prolong the life cycle of a tourist destination. Sustainable tourism policies need to be integrated within a wider economic, social, and environmental policy consideration within an overall sustainable development framework," said Secretary Frasco.

"We must therefore look at the basic elements of sustainable development as a guidepost in the revival and continued recovery of the tourism industry across our economies," added Secretary Frasco, who is the youngest among the heads of national tourism organizations present at the 11th APEC TMM.

The APEC TMM is the highest decision-making body in the APEC Tourism Sector. Hosted by Thailand, the 11th APEC TMM is the first time that Tourism Ministers from the APEC Member Economies have physically convened since the last APEC TMM that was held in Papua New Guinea in 2018.

Reference - DOT OPAA







# FRASCO LAYS OUT DOT PLANS AND PROGRAMS FOR INDUSTRY RECOVERY; LAWMAKERS BAT FOR HIGHER DOT BUDGET

**T**ourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on August 31, 2022 unveiled the new projects and convergence programs that the Department of Tourism (DOT) intends to carry out during the briefing with the House Committee on Appropriations on the proposed 2023 budget of the agency.

The DOT presented the budget of Php 3.573 billion for FY 2023 covering the Department's Office of the Secretary (OSec), Intramuros Administration (IA), National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), and the Philippine Commission on Sports

Scuba Diving (PCSSD)—which is currently transitioning as an attached agency of the Department.

The plans, according to Frasco will include the establishment of tourist service rest areas and information counters across the country, the development of a Tourist lifecycle app for tourists a Tourist Assistance Call Center, and the launching of a guest incentive system, among others.



## TOURIST SERVICE REST AREAS

Sharing her enthusiasm with the House Members, Secretary Frasco gave a preview of the tourist service rest areas that the DOT will ground break across the country, with at least ten (10) to be placed in strategic locations in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao within this year.

"These areas will serve the travelers in need of accommodation, information, safety, and security. It will also have a pasalubong center inside, displaying our local products, highlighting the Filipino artistry," Secretary Frasco said of the tourist service rest areas, which the DOT will implement through its Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), and with the support of the local government units (LGUs).

Further, to ensure ease of access for all, Frasco noted that the DOT will also provide persons with disabilities (PWD) facilities in the tourist service rest areas, as well as PWD ramps in national tourism sites.

## TOURIST LIFECYCLE APP

To ensure internet service availability and to build tourism intelligence that will provide necessary data and knowledge on how to improve the tourist experience, Secretary Frasco disclosed that the DOT shall develop a Tourist Lifecycle App.

Aside from serving as the DOT's needed data for tourism intelligence, such as tourists' spending and the length of stay in a destination, the app will have a tourist support feature and an e-commerce platform that will showcase Filipino products.

"We will create a Tourist Lifecycle App which will serve as a 'Super App' that aims to connect tourists to accredited tourism establishments for accommodation, food, shopping, rides to accredited transportation, tour operators, and tour guides," Secretary Frasco explained.

## IMPROVEMENT OF LAND AND SEA TOURIST FACILITIES

The DOT's immediate plans and programs to increase traveler convenience include introducing improvements to existing

land and sea facilities in the country to make these more efficient, aesthetically appealing, and reflective of the Filipino brand. To achieve this, the DOT shall incorporate distinct Filipino brands in the country's gateways through design, furniture, and uniform signages that will guide tourists and passengers regarding time and distance to boarding gates, and shall actively push for efficient service and reduction of passenger waiting time. According to Secretary Frasco, the DOT has identified Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 2, Davao International Airport, and Cebu City Pier 1 as the pilot projects for the gateway enhancement program which it will implement in collaboration with the Department of Transportation (DOTr).

The Department also plans to put up a Tourist Assistance Call Center and a One-Stop-Shop where tourists can get information and assistance with their travel-related concerns.

"At the moment if you are a tourist in the Philippines, and you encounter problems or scams, for some reason or the other, you simply do not know who to call or where to go. We plan to change that by providing a Tourist Assistance Call Center to serve as a One-Stop-Shop for our tourists, so that they may be able to obtain the assistance that they need so their experience in the Philippines will be memorable and that they feel safe and secure as they travel across the country," Secretary Frasco said.

## EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM-RELATED INDUSTRIES

On the aspect of addressing the country's shortage of tourism workforce and the huge demand for tourism employment among workers that got displaced due to the pandemic, the DOT entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) yesterday (August 30) to formalize the two agencies' partnership to generate employment in the tourism sector and allied industries. Through the MOU, the DOT and DOLE will simultaneously launch the "Trabaho, Turismo, Asenso!" Philippine Tourism Job Fair in Manila, Cebu, and Davao from September 22 to 24. More than 1,500 jobs will be available to jobseekers in the tourism sector.

## OTHER DOT PROGRAMS

The DOT, Secretary Frasco shared, is also working on mechanisms that will: improve tourism standards, product accreditation, and review of product audits to be at par with international tourism standards; identify and address gaps, and incorporate emerging standards that cater to the modern traveler's needs.

The DOT is also working on developing new regional tourism circuits and cultural and heritage hubs to give foreign and local tourists more choices in going around the country. At the same time, the Department is looking into introducing innovative tourism services such as hop on and hop off buses in key tourism destinations and international and local river cruises.

"Our country is rich in history, tradition, and culture and it is high time we pour more of our attention into capitalizing on these strengths of our identity. We will expand ourselves from the traditional portfolio and explore multidimensional tourism. The department is also working on developing new regional tourism circuits that will highlight nature-based tourism, film tourism, food and gastronomy, heritage and culture, farm and agri-tourism, health and wellness, and for the very first time, the arts are now identified as a priority tourism product portfolio," enthused Secretary Frasco.

"There is much work that needs to be done. Our greatest challenge now is not only to grow the industry back to its pre-pandemic level, which used to hold more than 12 percent of the country's total Gross Domestic Product but to exceed our previous position and take a primary tourism position in the ASEAN and globally as that is the birthright of every Filipino. We anticipate that with the gradual recovery of the tourism industry, this industry will once again become one of the major drivers of the national economy, and a major contributor to our gross domestic product," added Secretary Frasco.

Reference: DOT OPAA

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# Keep The Fun Going: Explore The Philippines Eco-Tourism Sites

The 7,641 islands of the Philippines are brimming with rich natural resources and breathtaking wonders: picture-perfect beaches, majestic mountains, stunning islands, and rich biodiversity. These destinations offer not only an adventure of a lifetime but also the opportunity to commune with nature, engage in sustainable tourism activities, and a chance to immerse with the locals. If you're planning your next adventure, head out to these eco-friendly destinations at the heart of nature.



## MASUNGI GEORESERVE (Baras, Rizal)

A popular destination for day tours and hikers, Masungi Georeserve is a conservation area and rustic rock garden dedicated to preserve and restore the area's threatened landscape. As the Philippines' first-ever nature conservation project, Masungi Georeserve has been globally recognized for its efforts to protect the forest from quarrying, land trafficking, and timber poaching. Discover Masungi Georeserve's unique forest trails and hike through karst terrain, hanging rope bridges, and high peaks to enjoy a panoramic view of the Sierra Madre and Laguna de Bay.

## PAMILACAN ISLAND (Baclayon, Bohol)

Nestled at the heart of the Bohol sea, Pamilacan Island is known for its dolphin and whale watching tours, white sand beaches, and magnificent dive sites. A haven to a diverse species of marine life, the waters off the island of Pamilacan used to be a prime fishing site for whale hunters. Thanks to marine preservation laws, community education and sustainable tourism activities, these majestic sea creatures were saved from commercial fishing. From being whale hunters, locals were trained to be the best whale guides advocating for marine conservation practice. Explore a myriad of sea creatures in the crystal-clear waters of Pamilacan Island in Bohol.

## BOJO RIVER (Aloguinsan, Cebu)

Embark on a motor-free boat ride adventure through the pristine waters of Bojo River. Locals who were former fishermen engaged in dynamite fishing were trained to provide educational tours of the river for environmental protection and sustainable livelihood. A multi-awarded model of sustainable tourism, the Bojo River Cruise made it to the list of UNWTO's Best Tourism Villages and was recognized among the Top 100 Global Sustainable Destinations from 2016 to 2018. Enjoy a tranquil scenery of nature in Aloguinsan's crown jewel.

## ULOT RIVER (Paranas, Samar)

Navigate the wild waters of Samar's Ulot River through a torpedo boat. Managed by the Tenani Boat Operators for River Protection and Environmental Development Organization (TORPEDO), the torpedo extreme boat ride offers tourists an exhilarating ride along the rapids of the Ulot River. From previously being illegal loggers and poachers, the local community members now serve as guardians of the river as they take guests to an extreme water ride adventure. Appreciate the raw and rugged beauty of Samar's rainforests and ride the rapids of Ulot River!

## LAKE SEBU (South Cotabato)

Explore Mindanao's prime ecotourism and adventure destination known for its lakes and majestic waterfalls. Lake Sebu is home to the indigenous T'bolis and Ubo tribes renowned for their traditional skills in weaving and handicraft. Discover the magnificent attraction of South Cotabato and help keep the traditions alive by supporting local products.

Explore the Philippine treasures while traveling responsibly. For a complete and updated travel guide to the Philippines, download the Travel Philippines App now!

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**JESSIE BUNYI VILLANUEVA**

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## WORLD TOURISM DAY: THOUGHTS ON PANDEMIC TRAVEL

In celebration of World Tourism Day, I look back on one of my most memorable international trips during the pandemic.

Last 2018, I wanted to travel more and explore the Philippines and the world. I worked hard and started saving so I can afford it. And when I finally did and was ready to see the world, COVID-19 happened, resulting in a global lockdown.

Though I had to prioritize my health and cancel all my plans, I still missed traveling as I've always enjoyed traveling with family, friends, or by myself. So when the Philippine government slowly started lifting travel restrictions and opening destinations for tourists, I welcomed the idea.

Since last year, I've been to Baguio, Boracay, Iloilo, Guimaras, Capiz, Bohol, Palawan, Zamboanga, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Davao. And just last June, I went to Gangwon, South Korea via Free Visa. Korea is actually part of my travel bucket list alongside England, Australia, Japan, and Canada.

With the help of FAMYA Travel Corporation, I managed to easily secure a free visa application. This was not my first trip abroad as I already traveled to Hong Kong, Japan, China, and Vietnam. But post-pandemic travel can be a bit nerve-racking, especially as we still need to follow safety protocols like wearing facemasks and social distancing. Luckily, Gangwon was very welcoming and wearing face masks was optional.

Gangwon-do, one of Korea's Eight Provinces during the Joseon Dynasty, derived its name from the principal cities of Gangneung and the provincial capital Wonju. Though it's surrounded by Taebaek Mountains, the weather was hot and humid with occasional rain during my visit. Our travel itinerary included some of Gangwon's famous tourist spots such as the Arte Museum Valley, YongPyong Ski Resort, and Youngjin Beach where we got to act out a scene from the Goblin series and pose at the location shoot for BTS's album cover.

One may ask why I'm risking myself again especially after getting COVID-19 once and that the pandemic is not yet completely over. My response is that I know how to travel safely and it feels good to help the economy recover. And traveling makes me happy. It lets me disconnect, recharge, and bring out fresh energy when I'm back to my regular activities.



I actually deserve to have this "break" since I've been working in a stressful online community and environment. Instead of suffering from burnout, depression, and anxiety, I choose to unwind in a different place and expose myself to new things. Also, getting older is an added factor why I choose to travel more now because if I don't do it now, it may be the last time, and I'll definitely regret it.





## OKADA MANILA TO HOST MAJOR EVENTS AT THE CRYSTAL CORRIDOR

Okada Manila, a Forbes 5-star integrated resort, recently announced its collaboration with major event organizers for two of the country's biggest events - the much-anticipated World Travel Expo (WTE) 2022 in October and the popular holiday bazaar, Noel Bazaar in November to be held at the expansive Crystal Corridor. This is part of Okada Manila's direction to partner with industry leaders in its bid to establish itself as the newest go-to place for trade shows and expositions. This will be the property's maiden events at the Crystal Corridor, an air-conditioned open area that surrounds Okada Manila's iconic The Fountain. These events will also showcase the property and its offerings to events' followers, especially during the holiday season.

### About WTE and Noel Bazaar

The World Travel Expo is an annual event well-known as a one-stop shop for travel enthusiasts in the Philippines. Now on its 6th year, the event will have 200 booths of those from travel and hospitality industries. On the other hand, the Noel Bazaar, is a long-standing annual holiday bazaar, which started way back in the year 2000. This well-established holiday shopping event is set to make a grand comeback post-pandemic with a 4-part series, which will kick-off in Okada Manila.

With these 2 major partnerships, the integrated resort demonstrates that it is much more than a premier destination for gaming, hospitality, and leisure—but that it is also a home for major trade shows and expositions, cultural celebrations, spectacle, and a destination of choice for diverse shoppers in the Philippines.

*The World Travel Expo 2022 will run on October 21 to 23, from 11 AM to 9 PM. Meanwhile, Noel Bazaar will be held from November 11 to 13, 6 PM to 12 MN.*

### About Okada Manila

Okada Manila is known for its top-tier facilities and services. A premier destination for hospitality and entertainment, the integrated resort has exceptional accommodations ranging from deluxe rooms to villas complemented by extraordinary amenities such as the Retail Boulevard, the one-of-a-kind Cove Manila, The Gardens by Manila Bay, an exciting array of dining options, a 3,000-sqm spa, and the world's largest multi-color dancing fountain.

It sets the new gold standard for five-star luxury with its many distinct innovations that combine advanced technology, top-class amenities, environment-friendly architectural planning, and world-class entertainment options, all delivered with the kind of exemplary service that personifies the unique blend of Japanese hospitality and Filipino warmth.



# Mysterious Experiences During Travel

Since Halloween is just around the corner, there's nothing like celebrating it early on with a few hair-raising travel tales. So we asked a few travel-lovin' folks to share their encounters with the unexplained. Traveling can be beautiful alright, but sometimes, it can also be strangely memorable.



"I stayed at a certain hotel during one of my trips up north. It was way past midnight when I heard an alarm sound. I thought it came from a cellphone. I traced where the sound was coming from and it led me to the door—which was open. I don't know how in the world it opened because I locked it. And even if it wasn't locked, how could it have opened by itself? When I closed the door, I returned to my bed and looked at the time—it was 3am. Suddenly, I heard a loud thud inside the room—like something fell on the floor. I tried to wake my roommate up but she was sleeping soundly. I couldn't sleep afterward because there was some strong presence in the room that I couldn't explain. Morning came and when my roommate woke up, I told her about what happened and that I tried to wake her up. She said, 'Actually I tried to wake you up, but you were asleep the entire time.'"

-Patricia Yulo

Information Officer III, TPB Philippines

"We went to an old mansion resort in Laguna. That night, we went out to buy ice. When we came back, there was someone trying to get our attention from the gate. We opened the outdoor light but we didn't see anyone but the dogs kept barking in the direction of the gate. It seems averagely creepy but there's something unusual about the resort vibes plus it's surrounded by trees. We didn't go out to check it out."

-Michael Evangelista

Senior Web Developer, Quantrics



"We had a teambuilding in a resort in Talisay, Batangas. It was late in the evening (or early in the morning) and we were all sleeping when, suddenly, we were awoken by heavy running footsteps in our room. It was so loud because the floors were wooden. But we didn't see anything when we opened the lights. It's also impossible because someone was also sleeping on the floor mattress. It was so weird so we discussed it in the morning. Apparently, there were also creepy encounters in the other room like running and knocking at the doors/walls. The experience was so distinct that I never returned to that resort anymore."

-Grace Alvarez

HR Rewards Manager, JTI Philippines

"Somewhere in Ilocos Sur, my brother and I were taking pictures when we saw two of our sister's friends going to the beach so we followed them at a distance. While we were about to catch up, someone called us from the back. It was the same two friends we were following and they asked us where we were going. So my brother and I looked back to the ones we were following, and there was no one. It was so creepy because the doppelgangers, we suppose, had the exact same clothes, hair, everything. When we went home, we shared it with our cousins. They said that early 2000s, there was a group of people that died on that road due to being salvaged."

-Dibs Leano

Creative Director, Mediamagnet Innovation Inc.





# Cuddle Weather Food: Pinoy Dishes to Eat During the Cold Weather Season



We have another excuse to stay at home during the cold weather season. These kinds of days make getting out of bed a bit challenging with the blankets enticing us to nestle under the sheets. Do you know what's also perfect during this season? Food. Nothing beats a nice bowl of warm soup that may instantly bring you joy and comfort despite the cold temperature.

Here are some Filipino dishes that will give you ultimate comfort during cuddle weather season.

-Batchoy-



-Nilagang Baka-



-Tinolang Manok-



-Kansi-



-sinigang na Hipon-



## TPB PHILIPPINES CELEBRATES CIVIL SERVICE OF THE MONTH; RECOGNIZES EXEMPLARY EMPLOYEES

In celebration of September as the Civil Service month with the theme "Transforming Public Servants toward Resiliency", the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines held its annual Taunang Parangal sa Bayaning Pilipino (TPBP) last 30 September 2022 at the Sheraton Manila Bay Hotel.

The event, spearheaded by the agency's Personnel and Human Resource Development Division, aims to provide an avenue for learning, fostering solidarity and strengthening ideals of all TPB personnel as public servants.

The event kicked off with a learning session with Civil Service Commission (CSC) Commissioner Ryan Alvin Acosta who highlighted the commendable achievements of public service

delivery in the new normal and provided a glimpse of the major changes the civil service industry will undertake in the coming years for sustainable recovery.

During the program, the agency also granted loyalty incentives to its longstanding exemplary employees who have served the government continuously and satisfactorily for at least a decade.

Moreover, under the Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE), the TPB PRAISE Committee awarded the Exemplary Behavior Award, the Zeal of Excellence Award, the Circle of Excellence Award, and the Wow Award to the following:

### Exemplary Behavior Award

#### "Dangal ng TPB"

Official: Roselle B. Romero  
Rank and File: Marivic M. Sevilla

### Zeal of Excellence Award

#### "Alab ng TPB"

Official: Janet W. Canoy  
Rank and File: Micka Anjella D. Calzado

### Circle of Excellence Award

#### "Katangi-tangi ng TPB"

Official: Eloisa A. Romero  
Rank and File: Grace C. La Rosa  
Group: Personnel and Human Resources Development Division (PHRDD)

### WOW AWARD "TPB Top Performers"

#### Official (JG-12 / SG-24 and Up)

##### Marketing & Promotions

- First Place: Nerissa Del Fierro-Juan
- Second Place: Janet W. Canoy

##### Corporate Affairs

- First Place: Marlito D. Rodriguez
- Second Place: Leah Marie C. Sy

##### Line Department/Office

- First Place: Atty. Venancio C. Manuel III
- Second Place: Wilson R. Suba

#### Rank and File Technical (JG-10 / SG-15 to JG-12 / SG-23)

##### Marketing & Promotions

- First Place: Jelline Jazel J. Cruz
- Second Place: Marrieta S. Santillan

##### Corporate Affairs

- First Place: Hazel G. Francisco
- Second Place: Irene U. Francisco

##### Line Department/Office

- First Place: Ryvet P. Cruz
- Second Place: Mariel Angelica A. Dimaano

#### Rank and File General Staff (JG-9 / SG-14 & below)

##### Marketing & Promotions

- First Place : Grace C. La Rosa
- Second Place: Rolando P. Rimas

##### Corporate Affairs

- First Place: Socrates G. Torres
- Second Place: Abelardo S. Dela Cruz

##### Line Department/Office

- First Place: Marcela M. Faustino
- Second Place: Edshi-Lee A. Cordero

##### Group

- First Place: Finance Department
- Second Place: Legal Department

The awardees received monetary rewards and certificates of recognition for the specific category for due acknowledgement of their exceptional service and achievements that inspire public service and uphold public interest among TPB officials and employees.

The TPBP was held in commemoration of the establishment of the Philippine Civil Service by virtue of Public Act No. 5 in 1900 (An Act for the Establishment and Maintenance of an Efficient and Honest Civil Service in the Philippine Islands) and to recognize all the workers of the agency and their commitment to the service.



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