

Tourism remains key sector in generating jobs amid global financial crisis—PGMA

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—Even in the midst of the global economic crisis, the tourism industry remains a key sector in generating jobs and various opportunities across the nation, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said last March 3.

“Tourism is one of the sectors we have to strengthen as our response to the global meltdown. We have done it today. We should continue to push it to provide jobs and vast opportunities to our people,” she said.

The President arrived in Boracay from Iloilo at 2pm today and immediately proceeded to the five-star Shangri-La Boracay Resort and Spa together with Tourism Secretary Ace Durano, Trade Secretary Peter Favila and Press Secretary Cerge Remonde.

She was welcomed by Gov. Carlito Marquez, Malay Mayor Ciceron Cawaling, Shangri-La general manager Andre Kretschmann and Shangri-La chief operating officer Greg Dogan.

The President said her administration has persistently pushed various tourism-related projects to create jobs and open livelihood opportunities, resulting in the industry’s unprecedented growth during the last four years.

She pointed out that the Philippines has a lot to offer to tourists, domestic and foreign alike, as amply demonstrated by the continuing increase in visitors arrivals. Tourist arrivals in Boracay alone rose by more than five percent from last January’s 48,000 to 51,000 this month.

“There are still many things that we have to accomplish but we will continue to promote Boracay as well as other destinations to ensure that tourism continues to be our flag bearer in economic progress and development. 10.6 percent annual average growth for the past four years! The best performance in 20 years of tourism history,” the President said.

But she pointed out that tourism should not be promoted at the expense of the environment. The government is aggressively promoting and carrying out environmental awareness and solid waste management programs to ensure the cleanliness and beauty of the country’s tourist destinations.

To make Central Philippines the country’s tourism beltway under her Super Regions concept, the President has ordered the upgrading of various airports in tandem with the improvement of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway (SRNH) system with the opening of new roads, bridges and roll-on, roll-off (Ro-Ro) ferry routes to spur inter-island trade, improve the distribution of basic goods, reduce travel time and transportation costs, and promote domestic tourism.

Investors have put up almost 7,000 new hotel and resort rooms of international classification worth P550 billion, “of which 2,000 will open this year, employing 3,000 Filipinos.”

“We will not stop. We will not be covered by

the global crisis. The government, this administration, will continue to be a strong partner of the tourism industry as we promote our nation and its natural beauty,” the President said.

After issuing her statement, the President convened the joint Cabinet-National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) group meeting at the Boracay Terraces Resort where she was further briefed by Durano on various accomplishments of the country on the tourism front.

Durano informed the President and the Cabinet members that last year Central Philippines cornered 33 percent of the total tourist arrivals in the country. This pales in comparison with the 14.5 percent increase in tourist arrivals recorded in 2005.

He said that close to six million domestic tourists alone visited Central Philippines last year.

In recent years, Durano said the number of foreign tourists who visited the country has increased further following the opening of direct flights between the Philippines and three destinations in Russia—the airports in Moscow, Vladivostok and the Lkhovitsy.

He said Taipei has also opened flights to Kalibo and Cebu, while the best connection to Europe is through the Qatar Airlines direct flight from Doha to Cebu.

Durano said flight frequencies also increased between the Philippines and Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Korea.

On the domestic front, Durano said that flights from Cebu to Siargao; Cebu to Legaspi City, Boracay, and Puerto Princesa City were opened this month.

Boracay now has flights to Busuanga and Puerto Princesa, both in Palawan.

In Central Philippines, Durano added that 32,696 hotel rooms are now available, with 6,600 more of international classification under construction.

He also said that among the noteworthy airport projects completed were the New Iloilo Airport, Bacolod Silay Airport and Busuanga Airport. The biggest road project, he said, was the completion of the 260-kilometer circumferential road in the island of Bohol, which is famous for its beaches, Chocolate Hills, tarsier and whale watching.

Big-ticket tourism-related projects to be completed soon are the Bicol International Airport and Sibulan Airport. The two airports will greatly reduce travel time to the whale-watching areas of Donsol, Sorsogon, he said.

The other vital air terminals include those in San Vicente and Puerto Princesa City both in Palawan which will provide easier and faster access to the famous Tubattaha Reef Natural Park, a UNESCO nature heritage site; and the 8.2-kilometer Underground River which are both top contenders in the worldwide search for the New 7 Wonders of Nature. (www.gov.ph)

Balikbayan Traveling Tips

From Page 4

Adventure tour packages include scuba diving, kite boarding/ kite surfing, windsurfing, surfing, skydiving, game fishing/ sports fishing, white water rafting, mountain hiking, ultra light flying, airplane flying and sailing.

1. On Getting Around

Commuting is quite difficult to master in the Philippines, if you’re not familiar with the place. It is best if you have a relative or friend with you as you go around. Do consider renting a car and hiring a driver to drive you all over the city. Traffic is heavy and slow in most parts of Manila, and it would be better and easier for you to kill time in the comfort of your own car.

Roads spread among the islands, with highways on the Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon island groups. Driving off the main highway at night is dangerous and should be avoided. There are bus services between the towns and also widely available jeepneys. Taxis are available in the cities and in many towns. Make sure meters are used, as some taxi drivers will set an exorbitant and arbitrary rate. Car rentals are available in Manila and in major cities. Documentation required for you to drive the car rentals are: at least 18 years of age, with an International Driving Permit, together with a national driving license.

In Metro Manila, a number of bus routes are operated by Metro Manila Transport using conventional vehicles, including double-deckers. Most journeys, however, are made by jeepneys, of which there are an estimated 30,000 in Manila alone. The Metro Railway Transit (MTR) connects North Avenue in Quezon to Taft Avenue in Pasay City, traveling the length of Epifanio delos Santo Avenue (EDSA). The Light Railway Transit (LRT), a light rail transit link, runs from Baclaran terminal in the south to Caloocan terminal in the north. The LRT 2 runs from Marikina to Recto, passing thru the University Belt.

Plan your route in advance. Bring a road map if necessary. Make advanced reservations in accommodations. This lessens the burden of looking for a place to stay upon your arrival. It saves you time as well.

Don’t hesitate to ask people for directions or any other form of help when you’re troubled about anything. Filipinos are known for being warm, hospitable, approachable and friendly to tourists so there’s no need to feel shy.

2. On Safety

Hygiene standards may be lower than you are used to. Be cautious about consuming unpurified water and street foods unless your tummy can handle it, otherwise you may get sick.

Be mindful of your valuables at all times. Protect your valuables especially shoulder bags and cameras. Keep your shoulder bag in front of you where you can see it all the time. When sitting, keep your arm through a strap. Avoid losing sight

or leaving your documents unattended. Avail of a hotel’s safety deposit box facility if available.

Just bring money enough to buy what you need. As much as possible, keep that money inside a buttoned pocket.

Do not get isolated in remote areas, especially after dark.

Be alert and do be on guard against robbers, pickpockets and bag-snatchers especially in shopping malls.

When you reach your destination, lock your cars and keep valuable things out of sight before leaving.

Be confident. Act as if you are a resident of the place. Don’t show signs of being lost and vulnerable.

3. On Money Matters

Do make sure that you exchange your currency with that of the Philippines (Php) as there are only a few shops and establishments which accept foreign currency as payment. There are a lot of money exchange establishments all over the city so no need to worry that you’d have a hard time exchanging currencies.

People usually leave 10 percent for tips. The relatively low cost of eating out in the Philippines makes it easier for foreign visitors to be generous.

Many Filipinos plan on buying a property in the homeland where they plan to retire.

Many Fil-Ams who have spent long years away from the homeland admit that they developed their patience when they visited the Philippines. Those who are used to the hectic pace of life in America find it difficult adjusting to the slower lifestyle pace in the country. Punctuality is not one of the Filipinos’ virtues so if you are meeting someone, be prepared and take some newspapers, magazines, your favorite book or your laptop to keep you busy while waiting. Some may show up on time, others 15-30 minutes late but very few will arrive 15 minutes early. If you are filing documents with a government agency or extending your visa, take someone to talk with or something to read if the procedure will take only several minutes, else set a next day appointment for pick up, if you’re busy. And if you’re going somewhere, always allot time for traffic.

As you plan for that memorable *balikbayan* trip, it’s good to have an agenda of what you want to see and do everyday, but leave yourself some room for pleasant surprises. If you are unexpectedly invited to a mouth-watering fiesta out-of-town, or you fall in love with a beach holiday and spend two more days there, don’t be afraid to modify your plans. After all, it’s not often that you get to enjoy being a *balikbayan*! If you find something you’d love to do, but didn’t plan on—do it! Who knows, it may end up being the most wonderful part of your trip. ☐

tdrz productions, inc.

presents

V-Day 2009: Filipinas

One-Night Only Benefit Performances Of
“A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer”

Writings to Stop Violence Against Women and Girls

& The Vagina Monologues

Until the Violence Stops

Benefitting “Bantay Bata” and The Center for the Pacific Asian Family

Both Performances
SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2009

The Aratani Theater

244 South San Pedro Street • Los Angeles, Ca. 90012

A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant & A Prayer



Dante BASCO Dion BASCO Bernardo BERNARDO



Esperanza CATUBIG Becca GOODINEZ Goldo INQUITO



Fran de LEON Liza del MUNDO Sonny SESON



Antonette TAUS Minerva VIER

Tickets Available at WWW.TIX.COM
“A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer” \$10 - \$20
“The Vagina Monologues” \$15 - \$35
Special \$100 Tickets in Bash Shows and VIP Reception
(after The Vagina Monologues)
Visit www.vday2009.org For More Information



The Vagina Monologues



Edelyn AUBREY Melody BUTU Alison de la CRUZ



Proy de la CRUZ Nia PEEPLES Janelle SO



Leslie Lewis SWORD Tamlyn TOMITA Giselle TONGI



Ezeonor ACADEMIA Carmel VELASCO

All Photographs by Tina Gaudin



Binalonan Association of Southern California

invites you to the

2009 Induction Ceremony of Officers Dinner/Dance

Olympic Collection

11301 Olympic Boulevard

West Los Angeles, CA 90064

April 18, 2009

6:00 pm

\$50 per person

Semi-formal

Reservations and payments must be completed by April 4, 2009.

For more information, please call
Amelia Arichea at (818) 348-5899
Ludy Ganzon at (818) 994-0561
Mila Tadina at (818) 635-2554

