

Philippines News: Island Nation Sees 9.7% Growth from North American Tourism

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Visitor Arrivals Increase for January, February 2008

After a record tourism year in 2007, the Philippines continues to attract an increasing number of visitors from North America. Despite the perceived economic slow down, visitors from the U.S. remain a sizeable share of the tropical archipelago's inbound tourism, posting a 7.1 percent increase during the first two months of 2008, surpassing figures from the same period last year. Canadian tourist arrivals contributed a staggering 18.7 growth percentage, bringing the total increase for North America to 9.7 percent.

The notable growth in tourism arrivals can be attributed to Philippine Department of Tourism's (PDOT) aggressive niche marketing strategy focusing on adventure, dive and spa & wellness travel, as well as the effective publicity and promotional activities generated by its North American tourism offices which are focused on strengthening linkages with travel agents and tour operators throughout U.S. and Canada.

According to Los Angeles-based Tourism Director Annie Cuevas, 'this upward trend shows no signs of slowing. We are likewise hopeful that the continued growth will be sustained with the coming of Hawaiian Airlines, which just launched its inaugural flight to Manila this month,' added Cuevas.

Under the trailblazing leadership of Secretary Joseph H. Durano, PDOT received kudos from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) which rated the country's tourism campaign as the best improved in Asia.

A record-breaking 3 million tourists visited the Philippines in 2007, with tourism revenue throughout the year estimated to have brought nearly US\$5 billion to the country's economy, much of which has been reinvested into infrastructure developments that will continue to improve tourism.

If the trend continues, PDOT will be well on its way of achieving its goal of 5 million visitors by 2010.

One of the Philippines' strengths is the diversity that exists across the 7,107 islands that make up the archipelagic nation. Boasting a wide range of ecology, the country sustains over 32 eco-tourism sites, including 27 protected areas such as Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park in Palawan, a Mecca for dive enthusiasts with two distinct reef systems separated by a four-mile channel.

Other hotspots, such as the legendary 'White Beach' of Boracay and the 'Chocolate Hills' of Bohol, remain a major draw for vacationers who continue to pour into the country in droves through international gateways in cosmopolitan Manila and the picturesque island-province of Cebu.

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