MEDIA RELEASE
08 May 2012

“IT’S MORE FUN IN THE PHILIPPINES” ON TARGET FOR 2012, HITS 1.148M TOURIST ARRIVALS IN Q1

Visitor arrivals to the Philippines hit an all-time high of 1,148,072 during the first three months of the year (January-March 2012), posting an increase of 16.03% versus last year’s arrivals of 989,501 for the same period.

“During this period, visitors to the Philippines increased by 16 percent to hit almost 1.15 million. From this record, we have now achieved 25 percent of our international visitor target of 4.6 million for this year,” Tourism Secretary Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr. said.

“The world is now starting to see that ‘It’s More Fun in the Philippines’ is not just a bunch of words on a streamer. It is a competitive argument for choosing the Philippines as one of the world’s top tourist destinations. Philippine tourism is poised to surge forward as we receive a steady increase of tourist arrivals, as seen in the first quarter of this year,” beamed Secretary Jimenez.

This strong tourism outlook was recently highlighted during the 45th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the Philippines when the Department of Tourism (DOT) convened foreign and local delegates in a forum on “Harnessing the Growth Potentials of Tourism” at the SMX Convention Center to showcase the developments and investment opportunities in the country’s tourism industry.

In that tourism forum, Tourism Undersecretary Daniel G. Corpuz presented the recently completed National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) highlighting the country’s growth potentials and investment opportunities available to the private sector, investors, bankers, fund managers and local government units. The NTDP is a product of the most thorough inventory of tourist attractions in the history of the Philippines. It divides the county into 20 clusters and identifies the key gateways that will be the focus of massive development in the next four years.

“This forum is just the beginning of various road shows to inform partners, as well as encourage investors and funding institutions to support the implementation of the
NTDP. There is much more to be done to make the Philippines more fun than it is now,” Jimenez told the participants.

Still remaining as top five tourist-generating countries are Korea, USA, Japan, China, and Taiwan. The Korean market maintained its big lead over the other producers, contributing 265,031 visitors for a share of 23.08% of the total tourist arrivals during the quarter. This is a 16.04% increase compared to last year’s arrivals of 228,398 visitors.

The US market captured 15.64% of the total arrivals or 179,561 visitors, growing at 6.35% compared to last year’s figures of 168,847 during the same period. Meanwhile, visitors from Japan numbered at 104,558 or 9.11% of the total visitors, an increase of 3.85% from last year.

The fourth and fifth biggest generating markets are China and Taiwan, which consequently got the biggest double-digit growth rates of 77.53% and 37.49% respectively, comparing to last year’s figures. China and Taiwan registered 96,455 and 57,745 visitor arrivals this year compared to last year’s figures of 54,332 and 42,000 visitors respectively.

“Our international exposure on CNN, promotional efforts in key markets, policy reforms to ease entry and enhance market access, and ongoing improvements in road and airport infrastructure will help bring in more warm bodies. Therefore, we see no reason why we won’t hit our target of 4.6 M this year,” Secretary Jimenez added.

Other fast-growing markets include Australia with 47,651 arrivals for a share of 4.15%, Canada with 36,517 arrivals at 3.18%, Singapore with 35,975 arrivals at 3.13%, United Kingdom with 31,700 at 2.76%, Hongkong with 28,800 at 2.51%, Malaysia with 24,327 at 2.12%, and Germany with 21,106 at 1.84% share.

Overseas Filipinos contributed 4.65% to the total tourist traffic at 53,404 arrivals. This segment grew by 4.98% compared to last year’s volume of 50,871 visitors.

What sets the Philippines apart, Jimenez enthused, is that “the Philippines is about the Filipino, the Filipino and his infectious love of the things that the world tends to forget: family, friends and the communion with God’s beautiful earth.”

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