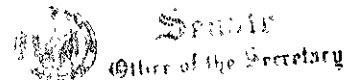


SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



15 OCT -5 P4:00

SENATE
S.B. No. 2981

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by: Senator Paolo Benigno "Bam" A. Aquino IV

AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF BATANES AS A RESPONSIBLE, COMMUNITY-BASED, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ECOTOURISM ZONE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As travelers journey across our archipelago, they find wondrous natural beauty and diverse indigenous cultures just waiting to be discovered.

It is no wonder that the number of tourists entering the Philippines has increased to over 2.6 million in the first half of this year (2015) and is set to surpass the Department of Tourism's (DOT) target of 5 million by yearend.

As we accommodate more foreign tourists and as more Filipinos decide to explore our own shores, it is imperative that we establish policies that seek to preserve our natural environment and foster our local, indigenous cultures, such as that of the Ivatans in Batanes.

For the past 230 years, local residents have safeguarded the Batanes Heritage Area. But with the increasing popularity of the province as a tourist destination in the recent decade, it is high time that we provide it with the well-deserved support.

Hence, the Batanes Responsible Tourism Act of 2015 endeavors to create a responsible, community-based eco-tourism zone to promote the rich Ivatan culture and the unique environment of the province.

The DOT and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) shall provide resources and programs that will promote and protect the heritage of the province.

Furthermore, the measure aims to develop indigenous tourism products and programs that will generate sustainable employment and livelihood for the locals, together with the local government and other agencies.

As we stay true on the path where every Filipino family experiences meaningful economic growth, let's ensure the development and preservation of the Ivatan heritage and the pristine beauty of Batanes with the Batanes Responsible Tourism Act of 2015.

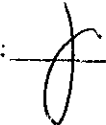
In view of the foregoing, the approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


Senator Paolo Benigno "Bam" A. Aquino IV

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**AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF BATANES AS A RESPONSIBLE, COMMUNITY-BASED,
CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ECOTOURISM ZONE**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 **SECTION 1. Title.** – This Act shall be known as the "Batanes Responsible Tourism Act."

2 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – The State recognizes, respects, and protects the rights of
3 indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and
4 institutions and the State considers these rights in the formulation of national plans and
5 policies. The State is further mandated to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically
6 sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable and equitable
7 for local communities.

8 Towards this end, the Province of Batanes shall be accorded priority development by
9 the Department of Tourism (DOT) as an eco-tourism zone and shall be subject to the rules and
10 regulations governing the development of tourism zones in promoting the following inherent
11 values and characteristics, which underlie the uniqueness of the Ivatan culture and the beauty
12 of the islands of Batanes in the development and management of the tourism industry in the
13 province: (1) the integrity of its ecology and environment; (2) the richness of its natural and
14 cultural heritage; and (3) the resilience of its indigenous social institutions.

15 **SEC. 3. Objectives.** – Pursuant to the above declaration of policy, the State shall
16 endeavor to accomplish the following objectives:

- 17 (1) Develop and promote responsible, community-based, ecological-cultural tourism
18 as the core management strategy in the development and growth of Batanes;
19 (2) Ensure the conservation of the bio-diversity and the preservation of the unique
20 heritage and culture of the province;
21 (3) Develop tourism products and programs that will generate employment and
22 livelihood for the local residents consistent with the preservation and
23 maintenance of local heritage and culture;
24 (4) Guarantee that the financial and economic benefits of the industry are equitably
25 shared by and distributed among the Ivatans and local residents by giving
26 preference to and support for community- and home-based tourism enterprises,
27 i.e. micro and small businesses like local inns, lodges and homestays; restaurants,

- 1 food and fruit stands, arts and craft shops and similar tourists-oriented industries
2 and businesses;
- 3 (5) Ensure that the quality of local tourism programs and activities are educational
4 and enriching for tourists and visitors with the provision of orientation,
5 educational and tour programs by local tour operators, Non Government
6 Organizations (NGOs), Local Government Units (LGUs) and the DOT;
- 7 (6) Guarantee that in the development and promotion of the local tourism industry,
8 the LGUs shall ensure that the needs of local residents and communities in the
9 areas of water supply, food, energy and local construction materials are first
10 secured and met.

11 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms.** – As used in this Act:

- 12 1) *Biodiversity conservation* refers to the practice of preserving the variety of
13 species, habitats and ecosystems and genetic diversity of the place, including
14 inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological
15 complexes of which they are a part of;
- 16 2) *Community-based Tourism* refers to a form of tourism where the local
17 community and its residents have substantial control over and involvement in
18 the development and management of the local tourism industry and a greater
19 proportion of the economic gains remain within the community;
- 20 3) *Cultural property* refers to all products of human creativity by which a people
21 and a nation reveal their identity, including churches, mosques and other
22 religious worship, schools and natural history specimens and sites, whether
23 public or privately owned, movable or immovable, and tangible or intangible;
- 24 4) *Ecotourism* refers to a form of sustainable tourism within a natural and cultural
25 heritage area where community participation, protection, and management of
26 natural resources, cultural and indigenous knowledge and practices,
27 environmental education and ethics, as well as economic benefits are fostered
28 and pursued for the enrichment of host communities and satisfaction of visitors;
- 29 5) *Homestay* refers to a system of tourist accommodation where a tourist stays
30 with local residents and experience the day-to-day life of Ivatans and their
31 communities;
- 32 6) *Indigenous social institutions* refer to the institutions that embody the unique
33 community orientation and cooperation pervasive in the way of life of the
34 Ivatans, who were compelled to depend on each other for common survival
35 because of the province's remoteness and harsh environment. This includes the
36 indigenous cooperative institutions in house construction, boat building and
37 fishing, agricultural cultivation, wake and burial practices, and public
38 infrastructure construction;
- 39 7) *Ivatan natural and cultural heritage* refers to the landscapes, seascapes, historic
40 places, sites and built environments of the province precisely delineated because
41 of their outstanding value from the point of view of science, conservation,
42 natural beauty, as well as biodiversity; and includes past and continuing cultural
43 practices, knowledge and living experiences of the Ivatans, which are important
44 foundations for the development of present and future generations;
- 45 8) *Landscapes* refer to historic, cultural, symbolic, vistas, and sight corridors of
46 cultural sites, inclusive of fixed/immovable structures and configuration of
47 structures with established relationship with each other;
- 48 9) *Responsible Ecotourism* refers to a form of sustainable tourism in which both the
49 tourism sector and tourists take responsibility to protect, respect, and conserve
50 the natural environment and the local culture and ways of life; and where
51 community participation as well as economic benefits are fostered and pursued
52 for the well-being of the local people and satisfaction of visitors; and

1 10) *Sustainable tourism development* refers to the management of all resources in a
2 way that simultaneously meets the needs of tourists and host regions, protects
3 the opportunities for the future, fulfills the economic, social, and aesthetic
4 needs, and preserves cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological
5 diversity and a system that supports and perpetuates life.

6 **SEC. 5. *Scope and Coverage.*** – This Act shall cover the same boundaries as provided in
7 Section 3 of Republic Act No. 8991, otherwise known as the “*Batanes Protected Area of 2000*”.

8 **SEC. 6. *Provincial Tourism Development Plan.*** – The Department of Tourism (DOT), in
9 coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the National
10 Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and the National Commission for Culture and the
11 Arts (NCCA), shall assist the Province of Batanes in the formulation of the Provincial Tourism
12 Development Plan that shall be complemented by a set of guidelines and standards for a
13 responsible, community-based ecotourism. The tourism development plan shall ensure the
14 preservation of the natural sites, the cultural and historic significance of the identified tourist
15 attractions, and respect for Ivatan culture and traditions and will include the following
16 components:

- 17 1) Carrying capacity of sites;
- 18 2) Specific site assessments;
- 19 3) Identification of strategic priorities;
- 20 4) Product development for local wealth generation;
- 21 5) Capacity-building for locals in managing economically viable responsible community-
22 based ecotourism business enterprises;
- 23 6) Support for the formation of local production groups and networks, including
24 marketing and pricing;
- 25 7) Marketing strategies that reflect the natural, cultural, social and environmental
26 integrity of Batanes.

27 The process of developing the Tourism Master Plan must be participatory, from the
28 bottom up, with the framework provided by DOT, DENR, NCIP, and NCCA, in consultation with
29 the Provincial and Municipal Governments.

30 **SEC. 7. *Formulation of Guidelines and Standards.*** - The Protected Area Management
31 Board of the DENR, the NCIP, and the local tourism council, in coordination with the LGUs, shall
32 assist in the formulation of local tourism standards in the context of environmental stability and
33 recommend guidelines to ensure that biodiversity conservation and environmental protection
34 are integrated in the development of heritage and ecotourism plans. The guidelines and
35 standards shall:

- 36 1) Raise the capacity of all stakeholders and ensure that best practice is followed;
- 37 2) Ensure optimal use of water and energy;
- 38 3) Reduce waste and pollution with encouragement given to recycling and
39 environmentally sound waste management disposal schemes, with a principle of
40 taking as much waste away from the site as possible; and
- 41 4) Encourage the use of local produce and services, and to favor the employment of
42 local people.

43 **SEC. 8. *Coordination with National Agencies.*** – The DOT shall closely coordinate with
44 the provincial and municipal governments of the Province of Batanes, as well as with the
45 regional and provincial offices of all relevant national government agencies, such as the
46 National Historical Commission, National Museum, Department of Labor and Employment,
47 National Commission for Culture and the Arts, National Commission on Indigenous People,

1 Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Transportation and
2 Communications, Department of Agriculture, Department of Environment and Natural
3 Resources, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Education, Department of
4 Trade and Industry, Department of Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Police,
5 Maritime Industry Authority, and Philippine Ports Authority in the implementation of this Act.

6 **SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – The DOT, DENR, and NCIP, in
7 consultation with the Provincial and Municipal Governments of Batanes, concerned
8 government agencies and stakeholders, shall, within sixty (60) days from effectivity of this Act,
9 promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

10 **SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid, the
11 remainder or any of this provision hereof not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

12 **SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, decrees, executive orders, presidential issuances
13 and other administrative rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this
14 Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

15 **SEC. 12. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at
16 least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

17 Approved,