



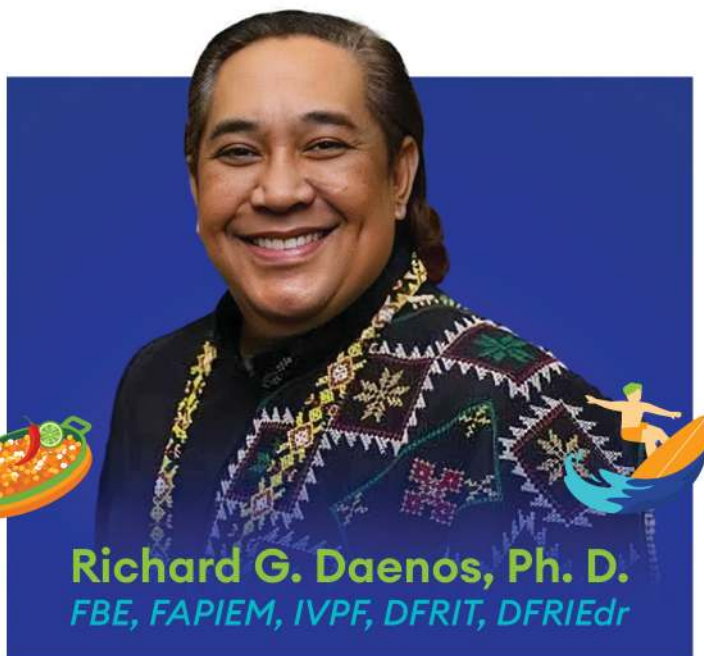
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Luminaire 2023

Department of Tourism - Region III
Accomplishment Report



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Message from the Regional Director

It is with profound honor and renewed commitment that I present the 2025 edition of *Luminare*, the official chronicle of the accomplishments of the Department of Tourism – Region III. Now in its third year, this publication commits to documenting our administrative undertakings as it continues to serve as a guide, illuminating the direction of tourism development in Central Luzon and affirming our collective pursuit of excellence.

The year 2025 stands as a testament to what can be achieved through unity of purpose and steadfast resolve. Amid the complexities of sustaining and advancing our tourism agenda, Central Luzon recorded a remarkable breakthrough, surpassing our tourism arrivals by 32.60% compared to the previous year. This milestone signifies renewed confidence in our destinations, strengthened partnerships across sectors, and the enduring resilience of our tourism industry.

The region's tourism landscape has evolved decisively—from a period of recovery to one that is characterized by sustained, strategic, and dynamic growth. Such progress is neither incidental nor individual. It is the result of deliberate collaboration among our local government units, national government agencies, private sector partners, members of the academe, and tourism stakeholders. This culture of cooperation has become the defining hallmark of DOT Region III.

Innovation has likewise shaped our trajectory this year. We introduced forward-looking tourism products aligned with emerging global trends and evolving traveler preferences. Faith Tourism was thoughtfully integrated with cultural and wellness experiences in preparation for the forthcoming Jubilee Year, offering pilgrims and visitors opportunities for meaningful and holistic engagement. Creative Tourism initiatives were strengthened to encourage immersive cultural participation and deeper appreciation of identity and heritage. Furthermore, the strategic integration

of Market (Palengke) Tourism with Culinary Tourism allowed visitors to gain greater understanding of our local food systems and their significance to community development.

In expanding our market reach, we undertook a strategic initiative to engage the Indian market through the development of Luxury Tourism, positioning Central Luzon as a refined and high-value destination. In coordination with our Central Office, we also laid the groundwork for Golf Tourism by preparing a comprehensive pro forma highlighting the region's premier golf destinations, thereby enhancing our competitiveness within this specialized segment.

Sustainability remained central to our mandate. In close partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, we advanced ecotourism development through a comprehensive blueprint of plans, programs, and projects anchored in environmental stewardship and long-term viability. We remain resolute in ensuring that tourism growth proceeds in harmony with the preservation of our ecological, gastronomic, and historical assets.

This year also brought significant recognition. Our region earned the distinction of Gawad Tagapagsanay ng Taon for two consecutive years, alongside numerous national and international accolades received by our stakeholders from esteemed award-giving institutions such as World Travel Awards. These honors affirm Central Luzon's standards of excellence in tourism governance and hospitality management.

Our marketing efforts were deliberate and far-reaching. We strengthened our presence in key domestic and international markets, including Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, and the United States, reinforcing Central Luzon's standing within the global tourism arena.

At the core of our achievements are our people. We accorded due recognition to our stakeholders through platforms such as the TRES Awards, Tourism Sustainability Awards, and PAMANA Awards. These recognition programs were guided by transparent processes and principled evaluation mechanisms, ensuring that integrity and merit remain paramount.

While we celebrate these accomplishments, we remain mindful that our work continues. We are steadfast in ensuring that tourism development yields tangible and equitable benefits for our communities. By advancing inclusive programs that extend to the grassroots, we affirm that the true measure of success lies in how tourism uplifts lives, empowers local champions, and safeguards the distinctive heritage of our seven provinces.

As we look ahead, we recognize that our narrative is still unfolding. Tourism is a dynamic continuum—constantly evolving, continually inspiring. In Central Luzon, where history and modernity converge, we invite all to rediscover the richness of our destinations and the warmth of our communities.

May this 2025 edition of *Luminare* stand as both a record of collective achievement and a renewed call to action as we continue shaping Central Luzon into a destination defined by excellence, resilience, and shared prosperity.

Love Central Luzon, Love the Philippines!

CENTRAL LUZON: PIONEERING TOURISM THAT CARES

Across Central Luzon, 2025 unfolded as a year of purposeful action toward a more sustainable kind of tourism. Guided by the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III, efforts throughout the region reflected a growing awareness that tourism must not only attract tourists, but also protect what makes each destination meaningful, from its natural landscapes to its cultural roots and local communities.

Over the course of the year, sustainability became an aspiration and a common direction shared by DOT Region III and its partners. From carefully planned initiatives to strong on-the-ground collaborations and the recognition of responsible tourism efforts, the region remained committed to fostering growth that is inclusive, mindful and learning.

Strengthening Ecotourism Governance

Since taking on the role as chair of the Regional Ecotourism Committee (REC) in 2024, DOT Region III has been steadily steering efforts towards a more grounded and collaborative ecotourism development. Now in its second year of chairmanship, it has placed greater emphasis on connecting plans with real, on-site experiences ensuring that strategies are shaped by the realities of the destinations themselves.

Held in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region III (DENR-III), the REC Meeting on October 28, 2025 served as a collaborative platform where stakeholders reflected on progress and aligned future directions for sustainable ecotourism in the region.

As part of this continuing effort, participants were brought to one of Central Luzon's protected areas, the Masinloc and Oyon Bay Protected Landscape and Seascape (MOBPLS) for an immersive site visit. Walking through the area offered a closer look at how conservation and tourism can work hand in hand.

Recognizing Sustainability Champions

Not all sustainability efforts happen in big programs or policies, many are driven by people and organizations working quietly but consistently behind the scenes. Now in its third year, the Tourism Recognition of Enterprises and Stakeholders (TRES) Awards remains DOT Region III's platform for recognizing tourism champions.

It is a way to highlight the stories behind their contributions to Central Luzon tourism. It honors partners, local government units, businesses, and individuals who have embraced practices that care for the environment, uplift communities, and preserve culture.

From eco-conscious accommodations to community-driven initiatives, awardees embody what sustainable tourism looks like in action. Categories such as the Most Outstanding Environmental Tourism Program and the Green Champion highlight efforts that go beyond compliance, showing genuine commitment to protecting natural resources while creating meaningful visitor experiences.



Empowering Communities Through Partnerships

Tourism thrives when communities are at its heart. On February 18, 2026, DOT Region III met with the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Porac, Pampanga, and leaders of upland communities to advance Community-Based Tourism (CBT).

The discussion went beyond policies. It was about people, land, and culture. Porac's ancestral domains, scenic landscapes, and rich cultural heritage were highlighted as key assets for responsible tourism. Attendees explored ways to develop nature-based experiences such as eco-trails, forest and mountain tours, and cultural immersion activities that celebrate local traditions, crafts, and indigenous knowledge.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to position Porac as a leading destination for nature-based tourism in Central Luzon. It's a vision where tourists can explore responsibly, communities can thrive economically and socially, and the environment is preserved for generations to come.

Fostering Dialogue and Innovation

Building on these achievements, DOT Region III led the Central Luzon Sustainable Tourism Summit 2025, launched on August 28, 2025, at Moonbay Marina The Villas in Subic Bay.

Held from September 10 to 12 at the Subic Bay Exhibition and Convention Center, the summit, themed "Building Green Legacies: Sustaining Nature, Celebrating Culture, and Empowering Industry," brought together government units, MSMEs, academe, and sustainability advocates in a space where ideas became action.

Over the next three days, participants joined workshops, and learning tracks, gaining practical tools for sustainable tourism. Post-summit field visits highlighted Central Luzon's eco-initiatives, including reforestation and mangrove conservation to farm-to-table dining, indigenous cultural trails, and heritage preservation, showing how tourism can protect nature, honor culture, and empower communities.

Through partnerships, recognition, and action, DOT Region III is proving that tourism can protect nature, celebrate culture, and empower communities. Central Luzon is growing as a destination and building a legacy for generations to come.

DOT REGION III, BATAAN PROVINCE IMPLEMENT BISITA BAYAN PROGRAM TO BOOST TOURISM ACCREDITATION

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III, in partnership with the Bataan Provincial Government, successfully conducted the Bisita Bayan Program aimed at strengthening tourism standards and compliance through DOT Accreditation.

The Department visited the eleven (11) municipalities (Mariveles, Bagac, Dinalupihan, Orani, Samal, Hermosa, Abucay, Limay, Pilar, Orion, Morong), and the City of Balanga. Through the Bisita Bayan Program, DOT Region III provided technical assistance, orientation, and guidance to tourism stakeholders to help them comply with national accreditation standards, ensuring quality service, safety, and competitiveness of local tourism enterprises.

This collaborative initiative enhanced coordination between the national and provincial governments, allowing a more efficient monitoring and evaluation process. Tourism establishments were informed of the requirements and benefits of DOT accreditation, encouraging wider participation and adherence to industry standards.

The initiative underscores the shared commitment of DOT Region III and the Bataan Provincial Government to promote quality standards, safety, and service excellence as key pillars of sustainable tourism development, and boost visitor confidence in Bataan as a premier tourist destination in Central Luzon.



DOT REGION III STRENGTHENS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING, ACCREDITATION, AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

The Tourism Regulation Division conducted a Knowledge Enrichment Training for tourism stakeholders, Business Permit and Licensing Officers (BPLOs), and Tourism Officers across the region as part of its continuing efforts to strengthen regulatory compliance, service standards, and sustainable tourism development.

The training sessions focused on key areas essential to tourism operations and local governance. Discussions on the Philippine Environmental Impact System or Presidential Decree No. 1586, Republic Act No. 11038, Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018, and its implementing rules and regulations emphasized environmental stewardship and compliance with existing laws and regulations for tourism-related establishments.

The session on Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP 344) underscored the importance of accessibility and the provision of barrier-free facilities to ensure inclusive tourism for differently abled individuals.

Participants were also oriented on cyber safety, focusing on protecting tourism businesses from digital threats, and highlighting the protection of digital platforms, data privacy, and responsible online practices in tourism transactions.

Moreover, the regulatory mandate of the agency was thoroughly discussed to guide stakeholders and local government units in strengthening the Tourism Accreditation, adhering to national standards, and improving the overall quality of tourism services.

As part of the Department's international cooperation and knowledge exchange efforts, the DOT Region III participated in the Korea Invitation Training Program in South Korea under the DURE Farm Tourism Development Project, a Korea-funded initiative that promotes sustainable, community-driven farm tourism. Through this training exchange, the region gained practical exposure to the DURE Tourism Model, particularly in destination development, community enterprise



building, and experiential tourism. These insights may be adopted and replicated in local farm tourism initiatives across the region, contributing significantly to strengthening Central Luzon's capacity for inclusive, community-based, and sustainable tourism development.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Regulation Division saw a 18.9% increase in accredited tourism-related enterprises, bringing the total to nine hundred and eighty (980), as a result of intensified efforts to strengthen industry standards in Central Luzon. A total of twenty six (26) Accreditation Caravans were conducted across the provinces of Region III, particularly in the Provinces of Aurora (Dilasag), Bataan (Mariveles, Bagac, Dinalupihan, Orani, Samal, Hermosa, Abucay, Limay, Pilar, Orion, Morong and City of Balanga), Bulacan (San Rafael, Sta. Maria, and City of San Jose Del Monte),

Pampanga (Angeles City, Porac, and City of San Fernando), and Zambales (Subic Bay, Masinloc, El Zamba Community, and LGU San Felipe). These caravans brought DOT services closer to tourism enterprises, facilitated on-site assessments, provided technical assistance, and encouraged compliance with accreditation requirements, thereby improving the quality and competitiveness of tourism enterprises in the region.

Overall, the conduct of the Knowledge Enrichment Trainings, participation in the DURE Farm Tourism Development Project, and the implementation of accreditation caravans significantly contributed to enhancing the capacity, compliance, and professionalism of the tourism sector in Region III, reinforcing DOT's commitment to sustainable, inclusive, and globally competitive tourism development.

RAISING THE BAR: DOT REGION III WINS IN TOURISM EXCELLENCE AND STANDARDS

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III achieved significant milestones in tourism excellence and quality assurance through multiple national and international recognitions. These accomplishments highlight the region's commitment to upholding high standards, inclusivity, and global competitiveness in the tourism industry.

DOT Region III earned recognition in the Philippine Tourism Awards, affirming the outstanding performance and dedication of tourism stakeholders and local government units in developing and promoting quality tourism products and services.

The region is proud of its distinguished finalists for the Tourism Industry Awards - Tourism Excellence. RESORT: Hilton Clark Sun Valley Resort; MICE VENUE: Quest Plus Conference Center Clark; DESTINATION - PROVINCE: Province of Bulacan; TOURISM FRONTLINER: Alexis John N. Aquino; REGIONAL GUIDE: Erwin "Tsunami" R. Valenzuela.

The awards underscored the region's continuous efforts in innovation, sustainability, and service excellence.

Further strengthening the region's international standing, Clark Marriott Hotel, Hilton Clark, and SMX Clark were conferred with the ASEAN Tourism Standards for MICE Venues (Meeting Room and Exhibition Venue) award, recognizing their compliance with regional benchmarks on facilities, services, and sustainability. This recognition confirms the region's strong standing as a competitive hub for MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) in Southeast Asia, boosting its appeal for business events and drawing more economic activity.

In line with promoting inclusive and culturally sensitive tourism, several tourism establishments in the region were awarded Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Certifications. The Aurora Subic Hotel, Mansion Garden Hotel, Emerald Manor, and Grand Harbour Hotel in Subic Bay Freeport Zone have officially been certified as Muslim-Friendly Accommodation Establishments (MFAEs). This certification reflects DOT Region III's proactive efforts to cater to the specific needs of the Muslim travel market, providing dedicated prayer facilities, Qibla direction indicators, and Halal food options.

Additionally, various accommodation establishments across the region successfully obtained DOT Star Ratings, signifying adherence to prescribed quality, safety, and service standards. Hilton Clark, Swissotel Clark, and Clark Marriott were awarded with five-star rating certifications. The star rating certifications further reinforce confidence and elevate the overall quality of accommodations by assuring guests of consistent service and facilities, improving the entire tourism experience and competitiveness in the region.

Collectively, these recognitions establish DOT Region III's strong commitment to excellence, inclusivity, and international standards, contributing to the sustained growth and competitiveness of the region's tourism industry.



DOT III-CDC PROJECT TOPS PHILIPPINE TOURISM INVESTMENT WORKSHOP, SET FOR INCLUSION IN THE UN TOURISM INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO



The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III, in collaboration with the Clark Development Corporation (CDC), earned top recognition for their joint project at the Philippine Tourism Investment Readiness Bootcamp, facilitated by the Department of Tourism and the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) for all DOT Regional Offices, Local Government Units, and Tourism Enterprise Zones.

The three-part Tourism Investment Portfolio Workshop, conducted from November to December 2025, guided participants through tourism investment fundamentals, project refinement, and investor pitching. DOT Region III first participated on November 17-18, focusing on project identification and initial packaging. The second session took place on November 27-28, where DOT Region III collaborated with CDC to enhance the project's financial structure and alignment with global investment standards.

In the final leg of the workshop on December 15-16, 2025, DOT Region III and CDC worked closely to finalize the investor pitch and presentation. Their joint effort was recognized with the Best Term Sheet and Presentation commendation under the Investor Pitching Track.

During the investor pitching, industry experts from Filinvest Hospitality, the Philippine Hotel Owners Association, Robinsons Hotels and Resorts, the Private Sector Advisory Council, and Leechiu Property evaluated the DOT Region III-CDC project, which bagged first place, outranking 17 nationwide proposals, and is slated for inclusion in both the Philippine Tourism Investment Portfolio and the UN Tourism (UNWTO) Investment Portfolio.



DOT-III STRENGTHENS LOCAL TOURISM GOVERNANCE THROUGH STRATEGIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III, through its Tourism Policy Formulation and Planning Unit, has continuously capacitated local government units and tourism stakeholders across Central Luzon. With a series of technical assistance initiatives, the department focused on enhancing tourism awareness, promoting data-driven decision-making, and advancing tourism planning competencies to ensure responsive tourism development at the local level.

Enhancing Tourism Awareness and Capability Building

Recognizing their vital role in the local tourism scene, DOT Region III convened the tourism officers from various local government units in the Province of Pampanga for the Tourism Awareness and Capability Building Seminar, held on September 23-24, 2025.

The seminar featured in-depth lectures on key tourism concepts complemented by interactive workshops that cover core industry principles. Participants explored innovative programs and environmentally responsible initiatives that aptly align with regional and national tourism objectives.

By equipping tourism officers with the necessary industry know-how, the seminar broadened their potential to improve the visitor experience in the Province of Pampanga and ensured the sustainable growth of tourism in Central Luzon.

Promoting Data-Driven Tourism Management

DOT Region III also collaborated with the DOT Statistics, Economic Analysis, and Information Management Division to conduct a Standard Local Tourism

Statistics System (SLTSS) orientation for the Angeles City Tourism Office and the Angeles City Tourist Information and Visitor Engagement Unit.

The session trained participants to utilize the DOT SLTSS forms to accurately collect, manage, and analyze tourism data from accommodation establishments, tourist attractions, and tourism enterprises. This will enable them to cascade standardized data generation and reporting practices to relevant stakeholders.

Emphasizing the importance of reliable statistics in local planning and policy formulation, DOT Region III aims to extend similar training to more stakeholders in the region, further institutionalizing data-driven tourism development.

Advancing Local Tourism Development Planning

The municipalities of Sta. Ana, Arayat, and Baler benefited from DOT Region III's Local Tourism Development Planning (LTDP) Workshops and Orientations in 2025.

The orientation in Sta. Ana, Pampanga, introduced the Local Tourism Development Plan as a blueprint for the municipality's tourism development. Attended by members of the local tourism council and representatives from non-government and academic sectors, the session prepared the locality to conduct research and stakeholder consultations that highlight its cultural and historical assets.

Naturally endowed with forested trails, scenic views, and a mountain, which is considered both a natural and cultural landmark, the two-day workshop in the myth-laden municipality of Arayat, Pampanga, focused on enhancing local stakeholders' ability to formulate sustainable tourism strategies. Participants engaged in vision development exercises that lay the foundation for a tourism development plan that balances modernization with the preservation of the locale's natural and cultural heritage.

The LTDP workshop in Baler, Aurora, gathered LGU department heads and tourism stakeholders to assess the municipality's current tourism landscape. With its established position as the Birthplace of Philippine Surfing, the discussions centered on addressing emerging tourism trends while ensuring a community-centered industry.



Through these initiatives, DOT Region III actively empowers local stakeholders to develop responsive and sustainable tourism development plans, reinforcing its commitment to advancing the seven-point agenda of the National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028 in Central Luzon.

REC TAKES ECOTOURISM PLANS TO PRACTICE

CONDUCTS SITE VISIT AT MASINLOC-OYON BAY

Against the backdrop of pristine coastlines and thriving mangroves, the Department of Tourism (DOT) - Region III, in its second year as chair of the Regional Ecotourism Committee (REC), partnered with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) - Region III to hold the REC 2025 second semester meeting on October 28, at the Masinloc and Oyon Bay Protected Landscape and Seascape (MOBPLS).

Building on the first semester meeting discussions which highlighted the ecotourism management plans of different protected areas throughout the region, a key accomplishment of this meeting was the guided site visitation—a first for REC gatherings. Participants visited ecotourism sites that exemplify the delicate balance between conservation and livelihood. These include Magalawa Island, known for its seagrass beds and mangrove ecosystems; Yaha Mangrove Islet Farm in Barangay San Lorenzo, a model for mangrove protection and restoration; and Taclobo Farm on San Salvador Island, celebrated for its community-based tourism initiatives.

These site visits enabled committee members to witness best practices firsthand and explore targeted ways in which DOT Region III and partner organizations can provide support, ranging from infrastructure improvement and destination marketing to capacity-building for regional tour operators and tour guides.

By combining comprehensive planning with on-the-ground practice, the DOT Region III reinforced its vision for the region's future: an ecotourism sector that is ecologically conscious and community-driven while poised for sustainable growth. These initiatives align with broader national efforts to develop the Philippines as a global leader in sustainable tourism.



DOT- III BOOSTS LGU COLLABORATION WITH PROVINCIAL PLANNING, ALIGNMENT SESSIONS

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III achieved a significant milestone in regional tourism management through successfully conducting a series of planning and alignment meetings with tourism officers from cities, provinces, and freeport zones in Central Luzon. These meetings served as a strategic platform to ensure that tourism development initiatives across the region are coherent, responsive, and aligned with established national tourism frameworks.

Aiming for a more focused and contextualized discussion that will enable the identification of province-specific concerns and priorities, the sessions were individually conducted in each of the following provinces: Bulacan on November 24; Tarlac on November 26; Zambales, Olongapo City, and Subic Bay Freeport Zone on November 28; Bataan on December 9; and Nueva Ecija on December 10.



During the meetings, the five units of the regional office presented their mandates, functions, and priority programs, offering comprehensive guidance on project implementation and timelines, resource requirements, available technical support, and coordination mechanisms. This fostered open dialogue and strengthened coordination between the regional and local tourism offices, while encouraging participating tourism officers to share successful practices and initiatives that can be adopted and replicated in their respective areas.

This undertaking solidifies the office's continuing thrust to realize the national tourism development goal of strengthening tourism governance by promoting stronger engagement and collaboration with local stakeholders, including local government units.



DOT-III CHARTS CENTRAL LUZON'S TOURISM FUTURE THROUGH RTDP FORMULATION

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III has officially spearheaded the formulation of the Regional Tourism Development Plan (RTDP), marking a significant milestone in advancing Central Luzon's long-term tourism agenda. Designed to set a clear and strategic direction for the region's tourism in the years ahead, the initiative is the product of a strong institutional collaboration between DOT Region III and the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), with technical guidance from Woodfields Consultants, Inc. and Positive Exposure Philippines.

Building a Shared Vision

Held from April 2 to 4, 2025, at the Widus Hotel Clark, the initial phase of the planning process gathered representatives from provinces, highly urbanized cities, and freeport zones across the region. The workshop convened key stakeholders to assess and analyze Central Luzon's current tourism landscape while identifying a shared vision for the industry.

DOT Region III played a vital role in steering discussions and guiding participants in translating this

shared vision into concrete goals, objectives, and measurable targets that will anchor the region's tourism development efforts.

From Vision to Strategy

Building on this momentum, a subsequent two-day formulation workshop, held on October 14 to 15, 2025, further deepened the planning process through situational assessment validation and strategy development. Updated data and regional tourism trends were presented and validated by stakeholders, ensuring that the plan accurately reflects both the present realities and future potential of Central Luzon's tourism sector. The strategy formulation process emphasized sustainable and regenerative tourism, anchoring growth in economic gains, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment.

With completion targeted in 2026, the successful orchestration of the RTDP's initial phases stands as a significant accomplishment for the Regional Office. By convening diverse stakeholders under a unified planning framework, DOT Region III has laid the groundwork for a cohesive tourism roadmap for Central Luzon.



DOT-III EARNs BACK-TO-BACK TITLES AT THE 8TH GAWAD TAGAPAGSANAY



2025 is another one for the books for the Department of Tourism Region III after attaining the coveted title of Tagapagsanay ng Taon at the 8th Gawad Tagapagsanay, held last December 8, 2025.

Gawad Tagapagsanay is an annual recognition of the efforts of different regional offices in upgrading and upskilling the tourism workforce in the country, with the highest accolade being the Tagapagsanay ng Taon.

The DOT Region III, which also won the Tagapagsanay of the Year from the previous year, bagged several other awards, namely: Sectoral Champion for Local Government Unit, and Sectoral Champion for Restaurant/Food; Cultural Tourism Advocate Award; and Overall Most Number of Trainings Award. The regional office was also honored with a special recognition of Gawad Pagkilala for the Bayanihan sa Bukas na May Pag-asa sa Turismo (BBMT) for the affected tourism workers in the Province of Aurora.

Through the generous and unwavering support of local government units and private stakeholders, DOT Region III was recognized for its drive in continuously upgrading the tourist experience in Central Luzon through tourism training programs, such as the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) and other skills training.

In 2025, several skills training sessions were conducted for the first time in the region to address the identified needs of stakeholders. Through the Basic Photography and Videography Workshop, participants learned how to tell stories through the photos they capture, evoking emotions through still images. In the Digital Marketing Campaigns and Graphic Design 101: Adobe Photoshop Workshop for Beginners, tourism officers learned how to create compelling marketing collateral for their respective localities. sPARKling underscored the value of product presentation. Culture and heritage were featured in the Cultural Tourism Development and Historical Tourism Development Trainings, continuing to preserve and promote local identities while empowering native communities.

It is through these various training endeavors that the DOT Region III remains steadfast in the Department's thrust to organize seminars, trainings, workshops, and other programs for industry stakeholders to upgrade the quality, competence, and excellence in tourism services, aiming for greater heights for Central Luzon and the Philippines.



PROVINCE OF AURORA RECOUPS THROUGH DOT TRAINING GRANTS

Filipinos have always been praised for their resiliency. This includes the people of Aurora Province. After the devastation that Typhoon Nika, Ofel, and Pepito left in their wake last November 2024, numerous infrastructures were compromised, and left a number of the tourism workforce without a source of income. Through the efforts of Bayanihan sa Bukas na May Pag-asa sa Turismo (BBMT) Program, in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), a total of 1,197 affected industry personnel were provided with financial aid and training grants to help the community recover from the aftermath.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., together with DOT Secretary Cristina Garcia Frasco, personally presented the emergency cash assistance and capacity-building initiatives to the affected tourism workers at the Baler Convention Center, held on September 1. The affected tourism workers were represented by the mayors of their respective municipalities in the Province of Aurora.

Among the training grants conducted last year was the pilot run of the Filipino Brand of Wellness in Central Luzon. The DOT Region III successfully conducted the Filipino Brand of Wellness Training: Introduction to Hilot on June 10 to 12 at Moreno Kabiran Lodge in Baler, Aurora, where BBMT beneficiaries from Baler were acquainted with Traditional Filipino Massage or hilot. Led by a

renowned expert in the field, the training highlighted the Filipino culture and hospitality in wellness practices, spotlighting wellness tourism and local traditions. Training kits were provided to the participants, consisting of pillows, banigs (woven mats), hand and body towels, coconut oils, bed covers, disposable massage sheets, and other essential materials to provide a source of income for the time being.

As the municipalities rose from the aftereffects of the typhoon, the DOT Region III conducted a series of Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) training for the Municipality of Dilasag, Dipaculao, and Baler from October 13 to 15. The program, aimed at enhancing the quality of service given to guests, grounded in Filipino hospitality, was intended to better serve the expected return of tourists in Aurora.

The affected tourism workers of the Municipality of Dingalan were trained in Tourism Awareness and Tourist Reception on December 3 to 4, in which they developed a better understanding of tourism and the art of storytelling for a well-rounded visitor experience.

The DOT Region III continues to spotlight the tourism workforce as the heart of tourism, and, through these initiatives, bolsters a sense of community and serves as inspiration to rebuild even after hardships.



FBSE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS IN 2025 10,000+ TOURISM FRONTLINERS TRAINED

The phrases “Mabuhay!” and “Salamat po!” have become synonymous with providing heartfelt service and experience through the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) Training. FBSE is a flagship program of the Department of Tourism, aimed at upskilling the workforce in providing globally competitive quality of service to their guests, rooted in Filipino values of hospitality, promoting the use of the Mabuhay and Salamat gestures. The Department of Tourism produced 142,860 FBSE-trained personnel in 2025, 10,474 of which were from Region III. This milestone would not be possible without the help of our partners and stakeholders.

The DOT Region III continued to make major strides in promoting the FBSE in Central Luzon through the adoption of this program in resolutions of the Municipality of Porac and the Provinces of Bataan and Nueva Ecija, introducing the Mabuhay Greeting as the official greeting. The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority also approved a board resolution for the institutionalization of the training program, which states that the FBSE is a core service training required for frontline personnel of the freeport area. The City of San Fernando, Pampanga, adopted the Mabuhay gesture as the official greeting through a city ordinance and has continued its efforts to promote the essence of the program through barangay ordinances under its jurisdiction.

The FBSE has continued to reach beyond the bounds of the tourism industry, promoting excellence in all our services in the country, especially in Central Luzon. Through an ongoing partnership with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Region III in the rollout of this training program, the DOT Region III was able to train multiple local government units of different provinces in the region, extending quality experiences to their constituents. A partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Region III resulted in a series of runs for their provincial offices, which received positive feedback from the participants. A memorandum of understanding was signed by the heads of TESDA III and DOT Region III during the conduct of the FBSE: Train-the-Trainers Course - Enterprise Level for TESDA-accredited learning institutions, incorporating the program in their modules.

Even medical centers embraced the FBSE Program in an effort to provide apt yet heartfelt services to those in need. Joni Villanueva General Hospital partnered with the Department of Tourism Region III to train its staff to align with their vision and mission of providing efficient and quality patient-centered healthcare. From doctors and nurses to cashier services, security guards, and custodians, the hospital embraced the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence as part of its customer service policies through several runs, garnering an impressive 100% of its workforce trained in FBSE. Mexico Community Hospital followed in this endeavor,

training their medical practitioners and workers, marrying principles of patient care with the core of Filipino hospitality.

Through these various efforts, DOT Region III has upgraded the quality of all services in Central Luzon to a globally competitive standard and shall continue this endeavor as the Philippines takes its steps to be recognized as the Tourism Powerhouse in Asia.



BULACAN, PAMPANGA CULTURAL HUBS ESTABLISHED AS VANGUARDS FOR CULTURAL TOURISM IN CENTRAL LUZON

Recent travel trends reflect a heightened global interest in immersive tourism experiences, with tourists ready to move away from the usual sightseeing and third-person experiences of destinations to more hands-on and authentic encounters with the culture and traditions of the places they visit.

The Leader of the Charge: Hiyas ng Bulacan Cultural Center

No one can deny that cultural pride is one of the Province of Bulacan's defining characteristics. Through the diligence and brilliance of its Provincial History, Arts, Culture, and Tourism Office (PHACTO), the province has enjoyed numerous programs that celebrated the destination's rich heritage and storied past.

Upon its official recognition as a Cultural Hub, Hiyas ng Bulacan Cultural Center further cemented its distinction as a bastion for cultural promotion and preservation. It became a home for activities

that augmented locals' Kundiman, Sayaw, and Balagtasan prowess, workshops that reintroduced traditional Puni Palm Weaving and Borlas de Pastillas to an evolving audience, and innovative avenues for cultural expression, such as contemporary art, vlog- and film-making, and creative writing, leading up to the province's celebration of their Singkaban Festival.

Strong and dedicated leadership, coupled with close collaboration between stakeholders, cultivated the makings of a sustainable Cultural Hub in Hiyas ng Bulacan Cultural Center, setting an uncharted precedent for the region.

The Diamond in the Rough: Santungan Ning Kulturang Kapampangan

Much like the Province of Pampanga in the wake of the 1991 Pinatubo eruption, the Sinukwan Festival, even with its fair share of challenges, has endured for 28 years primarily due to the stewardship of the Foundation for Lingap Kapampangan Inc. (FLKI), a non-government organization composed of advocates and philanthropists actively championing Kapampangan culture and heritage.

Having received numerous awards and honors for their outstanding volunteer work, FLKI has proven time and again the restorative and reformative impact of people united in a singular mission. This time around, the DOT Region III joined in the mission, extending financial and technical assistance to the organization.

From July to December 2025, FLKI, in collaboration with DOT Region III, utilized the SKK as a venue for workshops, competitions, and cultural exchanges that put Kapampangan traditions like Crissotan, cooking, pottery, and woodcarving, at the forefront of guests' experiences.

"We may start few, but there will come a time when we will become innumerable. We may start weak, but there will come a time when we will be strong," said FLKI President, Engr. Ferdinand Caylao during the organization's Partners' Appreciation Night on December 5, 2025, the public culmination of the SKK's 2025 Cultural Hub activities.

The spirit of community and the heart of volunteerism write the SKK's trailblazing story as a Cultural Hub—and it has only just begun.

These models of support provided managers and communities with autonomy over their cultural identities, co-creating their Cultural Hubs with DOT Region III. By the end of the year, both venues conducted fifteen multi-faceted activities that challenged and engaged over 1,800 participants, most of them youth who have taken a keen interest in learning local traditions.

These results have left both the SKK and the Hiyas ng Bulacan Cultural Center with a blazing hope for the future, where culture is not confined to the past or in the wrinkled hands and wizened hearts of community elders, but shared with travelers and tourists who crave to share in a slice of life in Central Luzon.



DOT-III LAUNCHES FAITH-BASED TOURISM CIRCUIT IN TIME FOR 2025 JUBILEE YEAR

Central Luzon heritage rests on an unshakeable foundation: faith—tried and tested by strife, crises, and natural disasters throughout its history. With a heavily Catholic population and living religious traditions, the region is a stronghold for the faithful who wish to reflect and renew, especially in light of the Catholic Church's celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025, themed "Pilgrims of Hope."

This exuberant religious heritage and the Jubilee Year inspired the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III to develop its newest tourism circuit, "Journey of Faith and Renewal for the Jubilee Year of Hope." The circuit was launched on April 29 to 30, 2025, with a validation tour that spotlighted religious and historic attractions in the provinces of Aurora and Nueva Ecija.

Tour operators, tour guides, and content creators were brought on a pilgrimage to seven designated Holy Doors in the Diocese of Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija; the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of St. John the Baptist and the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of Nuestra Señora de las Saleras in Aliaga; the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of St. Anthony Abbot in San Antonio; the St. Augustine Parish and Diocesan Shrine and Parish of the Immaculate Conception in Jaen; the Minor Basilica and National Shrine of La Virgen Divina Pastora in Gapan; the St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Peñaranda; and the St. Nicholas Tolentine Cathedral in Cabanatuan City.

Meanwhile, the Aurora leg of the tour revisited landmarks such as the Doña Aurora House, Baler Museum, and San Luis Obispo de Tolosa Parish Church, along with understated historical attractions like the ancient Baler Escape Tunnel and Ermita Hill.



The tour succeeded an initial product development workshop held on March 24, 2025, which brought together industry partners, including provincial tourism officers, tour operators, and tour guides. The workshop aimed to formulate locally rooted and thematic faith-based circuits that integrate religious heritage with province-specific tourism products, like gastronomy, culture, and health and wellness.

With the continued development of faith-based tourism beyond the Jubilee Year, the region further enriches and dignifies one of its longest-standing institutions— a venerated religious heritage that manifests not only through its magnificent old churches but also in its people's steadfast faith, fortitude, and hope.

DOT REGION III HONORS REGIONAL CULTURE BEARERS AT THE INAUGURAL PAMANA 2025

In an industry often measured by arrival figures and occupancy rates, one question remains quietly urgent: where does community empowerment stand in the tourism narrative?

This is the question the Department of Tourism (DOT) - Region III sought to address through PAMANA 2025, a landmark initiative that places people, heritage, and lived traditions at the heart of tourism development. While statistics may signal growth, DOT Region III emphasizes that a truly thriving tourism industry must also protect and nurture the cultural roots that sustain it.

The United Nations Tourism defines sustainable tourism as development that balances economic, social, and environmental impacts while addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment,

and host communities. In this light, tourism success must also be measured in the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage.



PAMANA, or Parangal sa Manlilikhang Natatangi ng Gitnang Luzon, is the brainchild of DOT-III Regional Director Richard G. Daenos and his marketing team. Conceived as a regional platform for recognition, PAMANA honors culture bearers who safeguard Central Luzon's intangible cultural heritage by continuously practicing, teaching, and passing on the knowledge and skills that sustain folk art and living traditions.

Inspired by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts' Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan (GAMABA), this regional counterpart undertook an extensive search to identify the most deserving honorees and awardees for its inaugural year.

The PAMANA Honorees represent master creators who have reached the highest level of excellence in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Their influence extends beyond their local communities, resonating nationally and even globally. Through discipline, mastery, and dedication, they have ensured the transmission of living traditions, inspiring younger generations to learn, value, and continue these cultural legacies.

For its first edition, PAMANA conferred this distinction to Kapampangan cultural icons Atching Lillian Borromeo for Traditional Cooking, Wilfredo Layug for Woodcarving, and Peter De Vera for Performing Arts.

Complementing the honorees are the PAMANA Awardees, culture bearers who actively keep traditions alive while excelling in their respective fields. They represent the present generation of practitioners whose work creates tangible and meaningful impact within their communities. This recognition celebrates their commitment to refining vital skills and acknowledges their potential to one day rise as masters of their craft.

What began as a call to action in June—during the declaration of Santungan ning Kulturang Kapampangan in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga, and Hiyas ng Bulacan in Malolos City, Bulacan, as cultural hubs of Central Luzon—culminated in an awarding ceremony in Clark Freeport Zone, marking a milestone moment for the region.

Through PAMANA 2025, DOT Region III affirms that tourism should be about the people who enrich the destinations with meaning. In honoring Central Luzon's unsung cultural heroes, the program redefines success, one that is rooted in heritage, pride, and shared responsibility for cultural continuity.



Visit Central Luzon: Where Endless Stories Begin

There have always been attempts to identify a single icon that could encompass the tourist's experience in Central Luzon with all its enduring heritage, exhilarating activities, picturesque landscapes, and vibrant culinary offerings. Time and again, these attempts have fallen short of the goal. The reality is that Central Luzon, with its seven provinces and two freeports, is far too diverse to be confined to a single symbol.

Embracing this diversity, the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III found a unique opportunity to position the region as a compelling canvas for multidimensional tourism, in congruence with the strategic goals and objectives of the National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028.

Improved connectivity further propelled this pursuit, connecting the region to more domestic and international travelers through more regular direct flights via Clark International Airport, convenient land access through expressways and major highways, and key seaports, opening the region to both domestic and international travelers.

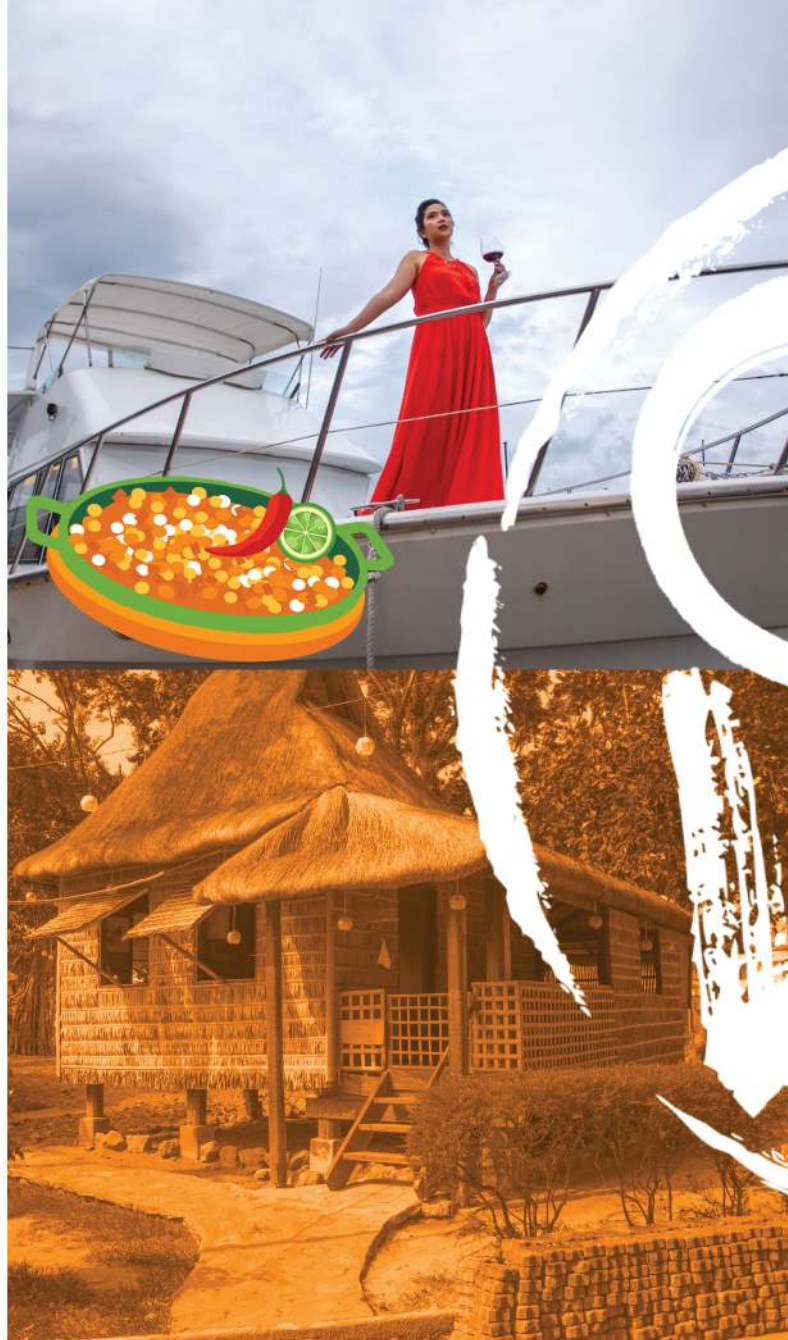
The DOT Region III reaffirmed its commitment to diversifying its tourism portfolio by revisiting its products, aiming to deepen tourists' experiences in the region with its extensive range of offerings that cater to tourists craving every kind of experience.

Dive and Cruise

Bound by the Pacific to the East and the West Philippine Sea to the West, Central Luzon's briny deep beckons travelers to cruise above the surface or explore the hidden world beneath its stunning blue waters. Aurora, Bataan, and Zambales have dive spots teeming with coral reefs and marine life, perfect for snorkeling, freediving, and scuba diving. Meanwhile, traces of Subic Bay Freeport Zone's storied past remain underwater, waiting for wreck divers to discover. Sunset and yacht cruises are also top experiences in the Freeport.

Sun & Beach

For those who prefer staying close to the shore, Central Luzon's sunny beaches offer equally captivating experiences. With coastlines from end to end, Aurora, Bataan, and Zambales beaches invite travelers to feel the sand beneath their feet, aboard a kayak, parasail, jetski, or island hop along coves, sea caves, and rock formations. Aurora is also home to Baler, the birthplace of Philippine surfing, where the World Surf League held its regional qualifiers from November 17 to 23, 2025, reinforcing its status as a premier surf destination.



Eco-adventure Tourism

Exciting escapades await thrill seekers looking for nature-based experiences. From trekking Mt. Pinatubo's lahar-laden trail in Tarlac to exploring rivers and caves in Bulacan, and engaging in hands-on agri-tourism experiences in Nueva Ecija, travelers can get lost in nature's allure. Wildlife also takes the stage here; guests can get up close and personal with Pawikan hatchlings in Bataan or witness various migratory bird species in Pampanga.

Golf & Leisure

Central Luzon remains a hub for golfers seeking to play against breathtaking backdrops. The venue for the launch of the national golf tourism development initiative, Philippine Golf Experience, and the Japanese Golf Digest Media Familiarization Tour in 2025, Clark Freeport Zone is especially popular with its verdant parklands paired with premium accommodations at the heart of an urban community. Those looking for more serene courses visit Bataan or Tarlac, each with its own charming fairways atop quiet, rolling hills. Visitors will never know boredom with the wide array of activities in the region: theme park visits, horseback riding, karting, gaming, shopping, and shooting. The region has it all.



Culture & Gastronomy

Culture and heritage sit at the heart of the Central Luzon experience, offering opportunities for tourists to fully immerse themselves in the region's narratives. Museums and heritage sites across the region tell stories of a prolific past while restaurants and hole-in-the-wall spots share classic, familiar flavors.

The DOT Region III's participation in the inaugural Terra Madre Asia & Pacific held in Bacolod City on November 19-23, 2025, highlighted the agency's commitment to promoting culture through the region's unique food heritage, local ingredients, and community-based culinary traditions to emerging markets.

Health, Wellness, & Retirement

Spaces to unwind and pamper oneself make the region a haven for rest, recovery, and long-term living. State-of-the-art health and wellness facilities in Clark Freeport Zone extend the best possible care with a touch of Filipino hospitality to clients. Meanwhile, retirement communities in Pampanga, Bulacan, Tarlac, and Subic Bay welcome foreign retirees with open arms. A site inspection in December 2025 revisited select dental,

medical, and wellness establishments to explore possible packages for promotion to domestic and foreign markets.

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE)

With Clark Freeport Zone's recognition as Asia's Leading Meetings and Conference Destination at the 2025 World Travel Awards, the region promises exceptional MICE experiences for foreign delegations. World-class facilities, complemented by seamless travel from Clark International Airport and a diverse selection of attractions to be explored in the area, beguile visitors with a dynamic mix of business and leisure experiences.

Education Tourism

Students from abroad come to the region to receive quality education in and out of the classroom, with plenty of opportunities and third spaces to study, rest, and immerse themselves in local culture. Surrounded by lively and deeply Filipino communities, reputable English as Second Language (ESL) and Aviation Schools thrive in Clark Freeport Zone and Angeles City. High-trusted institutions offering Hospitality & Tourism Management courses are also found across Central Luzon.

DOT-III MAKES WAVES IN LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL EXPOS

2025 marked great leaps in Central Luzon tourism with the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III's participation in various global and local travel fairs and expos.

In hot pursuit of market development and expansion, the agency maximized the global growth opportunities offered by the likes of Routes World in **Hong Kong**, Seatrade Cruise Global in **Miami**, Outbound Travel Market (OTM) and Roadshow in key **Indian cities**, World Expo in **Osaka**, Philippine Festival in **Tokyo**, and Taipei International Travel Fair in **Taiwan**.

Global Connectivity

Routes World 2025 in Hong Kong set the stage for one of the world's most prestigious aviation events, bridging airlines, airports, tourism authorities, and decision-makers in driving air connectivity, route development, and global economic growth.

On September 24 to 26, 2025, the agency joined the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), Luzon International Premiere Airport Development Corp. (LIPAD), and Clark International Airport Corporation (CIAC) in the efforts to position Central Luzon as a strategic aviation and tourism hub, highlighting Clark International Airport as a premier international gateway.



Similarly, the 40th edition of the Seatrade Cruise Global 2025 held in Miami, Florida, USA from April 7 to 10, 2025, convened over 10,000 cruise executives and professionals to discuss cruise technology and operations, infrastructure development, and service standards. The DOT Region III built vital connections with top industry players to reinforce Central Luzon's identity as a premier cruise destination in the Southeast Asian region.

Market Expansion

In its push to expand international arrivals, the DOT Region III promoted Central Luzon at the Outbound Travel Market 2025, held at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai from January 30 to February 1, 2025. Recognized as India's leading travel trade show, OTM gathers top outbound tour operators, buyers, and industry leaders from across Asia.

India ranked 13th among the Philippines' top source markets in 2024, recording 78,995 arrivals. Through sustained trade engagement, improved connectivity, and streamlined travel processes, DOT Region III aims to convert rising interest into increased visitor arrivals for Central Luzon.

Meanwhile, to strengthen its East Asian presence, the DOT Region III brought Central Luzon tour operators to the Taipei International Travel Fair in Taiwan from November 7 to 10, 2025, positioning the region before one of the Philippines' key source markets. The travel fair enabled local stakeholders to conduct business-to-business meetings with Taiwanese wholesalers, travel agencies, and online sellers, opening opportunities for packaged tours, incentive travel, and themed experiences tailored to their target market.

Beyond forging partnerships, the delegation gathered valuable insights from Taiwanese travelers' preferences, including demand for short-haul leisure trips, nature-based attractions, culinary experiences, and family-friendly itineraries. These market intelligence inputs will guide product development, marketing strategies, and trade collaborations to better align Central Luzon's offerings with evolving travel trends in Taiwan.

With Mumbai accounting for 60 percent of India's outbound travel market and serving as headquarters to major tour operators, the city provided a strategic platform to position Central Luzon among key tourism decision-makers.

Building on its OTM participation, DOT Region III also joined a post-OTM Roadshow across Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, and Bangalore from February 3 to 7, 2025, engaging destination management companies and key opinion leaders to gather market insights and promote the region as a must-visit destination. The initiative aligns with improved air connectivity between India and the Philippines, opening stronger prospects for growth.

Cultural Exhibitions

The DOT Region III, alongside the Provincial Tourism Office of Aurora, represented Central Luzon in the Philippine delegation during the Philippine National Day at the World Expo 2025 Osaka on June 7, 2025, in Osaka, Japan. The Philippine Pavilion was a hallmark of national collaboration, featuring panels woven using over 200 local patterns and techniques.

In the same mission, DOT Region III once again showcased the best of Central Luzon on November 29 to 30, 2025, during the Philippine Festival Tokyo in Tokyo, Japan. This time with the Angeles City Tourism Office, the regional display offered a glimpse into Central Luzon Christmas traditions, with a Puni de Malolos- and Pampanga Parol-decorated booth. Visitors also witnessed a live demonstration of the indigenous Kapampangan “Kulitan” script and sampled local holiday favorites, including the homegrown classic tsokolate batirol.

Both events piqued interest and boosted the region’s visibility in the Japanese market, which was drawn to the Filipino creativity, culinary legacy, and rich heritage spotlight at the cultural showcases.

Local Efforts

Parallel to strengthening international networks, the DOT Region III also stressed the importance of nurturing tourism awareness among Filipinos and opening travel opportunities through its participation in local travel events. The agency brought stories of artistry and heritage to numerous travel expos across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao as living reminders of national honor and pride.

North Luzon Travel Expo 2025 honored Tourism Champions and Culture Bearers of Northern and Central Luzon from October 3 to 5, 2025, in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. The region recognized Atching Lillian Borromeo, a legend in the Kapampangan culinary scene, who has dedicated her life to safeguarding heirloom recipes and traditional cooking methods. On October 17 to 19, 2025, Central Luzon’s festive Christmas-themed booth at the Mindanao Travel Expo in Dipolog City Boulevard, Zamboanga del Norte, featured live demonstrations of traditional lantern-making from Pampanga, as well as alternative therapy practices from Philippine Wellness and Alternative Therapies (PhilWATs). On these same dates, the region’s booth at the Association of Tourism Officers in Central Luzon’s NorthPhil Expo 2025 held in Clark Freeport Zone, featured unique cultural artistry through Kulitan script writing and a commitment to wellness through PhilWATs therapy experiences.

The DOT Region III also joined the 33rd Philippine Travel Agencies Association’s Travel and Tour Expo (TTE) on February 6 to 8, and the Philippine Tour Operators Association’s Philippine Travel Mart (PTM) on September 5 to 7, 2025. Two of the most highly anticipated and heavily attended travel events held in Metro Manila, the TTE and PTM, enticed hundreds of thousands of travelers, enterprises, and tourism professionals at the SMX Convention Center, Pasay, with exclusive deals and lucrative business engagements. These opportunities were not lost on the agency, which took to showcasing regional tourism offerings through

eye-catching marketing collaterals, exciting freebies, and samplers of local delicacies. The regional office also maximized this time to grow its network of industry professionals and enterprises, intent on cultivating the viability and success of its tourism products.

The agency also participated in the Central Philippines Tourism Expo on June 20 to 22, 2025, in Tacloban City, Leyte, sharing exclusive Central Luzon travel deals and packages.

Central Luzon was also the inaugural Terra Madre Asia & Pacific 2025’s unexpected showstopper. Held in Bacolod City, Negros Island, from November 19 to 23, 2025, the international Slow Food gastronomy event saw the legendary Kapampangan sisig and kilayin, as well as the traditional Aeta Binulu, captured the taste buds of visitors from over 20 countries. The agency’s participation in the Terra Madre marked a historic step in the development of gastronomy tourism in the country, set on inviting high-value visitors to enjoy uniquely local food experiences and the stories behind them.

Altogether, these strategic efforts anchored on cultural identity, hospitality, and inclusive growth aligned to aid the region’s growth in terms of market reach and tourist arrivals, both locally and internationally. By positioning Central Luzon across key global trade platforms, cultural showcases, and domestic travel events, DOT Region III has expanded economic and livelihood opportunities for its stakeholders while advancing sustainable tourism development, sharing with the world the endless stories to love in Central Luzon.



CLARK RISES AS ASIA'S LEADING MEETINGS AND CONFERENCE DESTINATION AT THE WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS 2025

Clark's transformation has long been in motion, but 2025 marked a defining moment in its journey onto the global stage after being named Asia's Leading Meetings and Conference Destination at the 32nd World Travel Awards, held in Hong Kong. The recognition marks a first for the Philippines in this category, signaling Clark as a serious contender in Asia's highly competitive meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions landscape.

The award was conferred during the World Travel Awards Asia and Oceania Gala on October 13, 2025, placing Clark alongside – and ahead of – long-established business events hubs in the region. Presented on an international stage, the distinction highlighted the destination's growing capacity to host world-class meetings and conferences on par with major Asian cities.

Clark's recognition reflects years of steady transformation. From a former air base, it has evolved into a master-planned destination equipped with modern convention facilities with a growing portfolio of upscale accommodations and seamless air and land connectivity. These elements have positioned Clark as both efficient and adaptable, qualities increasingly valued in today's global meetings industry.

Beyond infrastructure, Clark offers a well-rounded environment that supports both business and leisure. Premium hotels and integrated resorts, including internationally branded properties, complement purpose-built venues to create an ecosystem where professional gatherings are enhanced by comfort, accessibility, and experience. This balance has strengthened Clark's appeal to organizers seeking destinations that deliver more than functional meeting spaces.

The accolade also reflects a broader momentum for Philippine tourism in 2025, a year that saw multiple destinations gain international recognition across leisure and niche tourism segments. Within this context, Clark's win highlights the country's expanding footprint in high-value tourism sectors, such as MICE, where quality, service standards, and reliability are paramount.

Often regarded as the "Oscars of the travel industry," the World Travel Awards celebrate excellence across global tourism and hospitality. For Clark, the title affirms the collective progress made by stakeholders working toward positioning the Freeport Zone as a premier destination for international business events.

As Asia's Leading Meetings and Conference Destination for 2025, Clark steps into a new chapter with heightened visibility and expectation. The recognition highlights a destination that has learned to reinvent itself—one that continues to build momentum as a place where ideas converge, partnerships are forged, and the future of meetings and conferences takes shape.



DOT-III TAPS THE INDIAN MARKET WITH A DIGITAL CAMPAIGN FEATURING LUXURY TOURISM

In a strategic move to elevate Central Luzon's international tourism profile, the Department of Tourism (DOT) – Region III launched a digital campaign, targeting India's luxury travel market. The initiative, centered on a bespoke storytelling platform called The Untouched Map, positions Central Luzon as a refined destination for discerning Indian travelers seeking immersive, high-end experiences.

Partnering with JourneyLabel, a luxury travel company based in India, DOT Region III marks its first formal collaboration with an Indian travel brand, signaling a new era of outbound engagement with one of Asia's most dynamic tourism markets. The campaign blends curated itineraries with immersive digital content designed to showcase Central Luzon's diverse offerings beyond mainstream travel narratives.

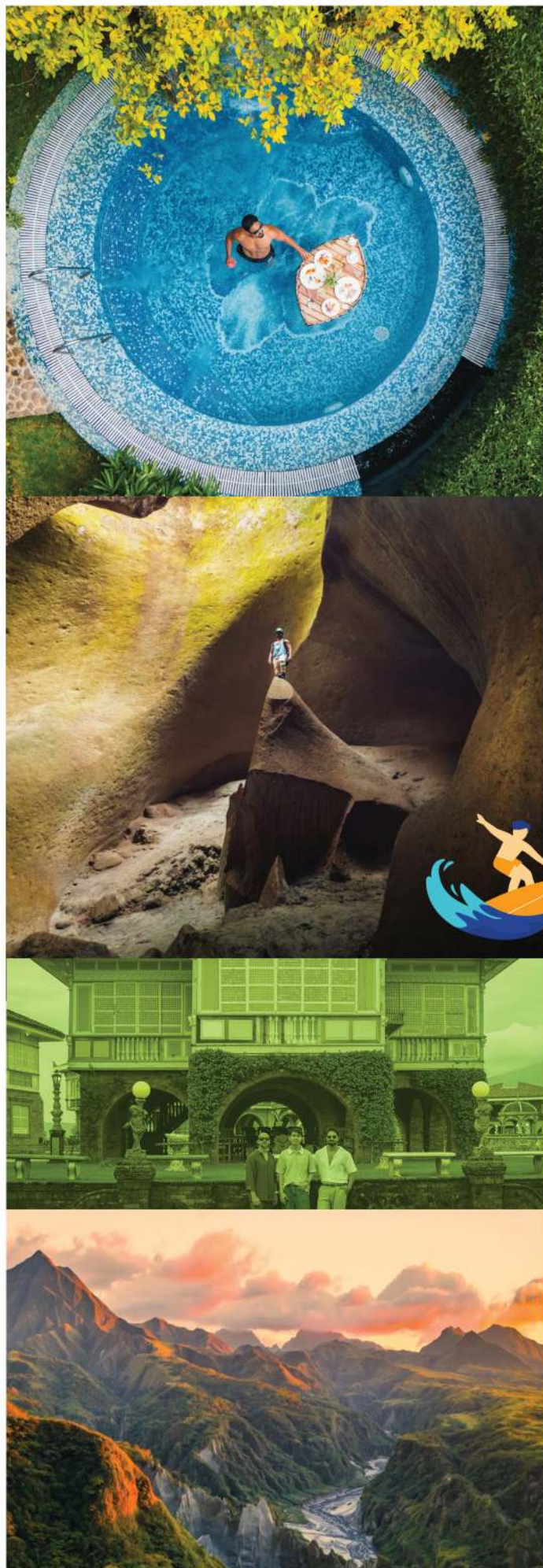
At the heart of The Untouched Map is an exploration led by a well-known Indian celebrity, Salman Yusuff Khan, whose journey through the region's cultural, natural, and lifestyle attractions anchors the campaign's narrative appeal. This celebrity-led angle aims to forge an emotional connection with prospective travelers by capturing authentic, soulful experiences that reflect both heritage and contemporary luxury.

The campaign highlights a suite of elevated experiences curated for the Indian luxury segment, blending history, nature, leisure, and wellness. They include stays at heritage sites, private maritime excursions, scenic golf rounds, volcanic landscapes, and opportunities for relaxation and rejuvenation—all framed through digital storytelling that resonates with experience-driven travelers.

This outreach taps into the growing demand from Indian tourists for bespoke and purposeful travel experiences, where authenticity and exclusivity are prized alongside comfort and service quality. By featuring Central Luzon's unique landscapes, heritage towns, and hidden gems, the campaign seeks to broaden travel aspirations beyond traditional Southeast Asian beach destinations and position the region as a meaningful addition to luxury travel itineraries.

The use of digital channels aligns with the travel planning behaviors of target audiences in India, where aspirational content and influencer-driven media increasingly shape destination choices. Through ongoing digital engagement, DOT Region III aims to build sustained visibility and interest in Central Luzon as a luxury travel destination in the global tourism marketplace.

In extending its reach to new international markets, DOT Region III's luxury tourism campaign reflects a broader strategic shift toward diversified source markets and value-oriented tourism. By combining curated experiences with innovative storytelling, Central Luzon is carving out a distinctive niche that celebrates cultural depth, natural beauty, and refined travel experiences for a new generation of global visitors.



DOT-III SPOTLIGHTS CULINARY HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE FOODWAYS AT FOOD TALKS 2025

At a time when food culture increasingly shapes travel experiences, the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III placed Filipino gastronomy at center stage with the third edition of Food Talks, a full day forum that celebrated the region's rich culinary identity and its role in tourism growth and sustainable development.

Held on April 25 at Holy Angel University, Food Talks 2025 brought together chefs, cultural practitioners, scholars, entrepreneurs, and creative voices from across Central Luzon and beyond to explore how food can act as a bridge between heritage, community resilience, and global appeal.

DOT-III Regional Director Richard G. Daenos, PhD, opened the forum with remarks emphasizing the strategic importance of gastronomy in crafting experiences that resonate with both domestic and international visitors. Esteemed culinary figures, such as chefs Jam Melchor, Claude Tayag, and Sau Del Rosario, shared evolving insights on the narrative power of the Filipino cuisine, while research perspectives from Dr. John Paolo Rivera enriched discussions on heritage and innovation.

Afternoon sessions expanded the conversation to include creatives and business innovators, from interdisciplinary artist Ruston Banal Jr. to digital content voices like Abi Marquez and local enterprise founders, reflecting the dynamism of food culture as both artistic expression and livelihood.

Food Talks 2025 also featured an immersive culinary showcase where audiences engaged directly with Central Luzon's diverse food traditions. A tasting area at St. Joseph Hall highlighted regional specialties – from Aurora's Alak at Pulutan to Pampanga's iconic sisig and Nueva Ecija's pandesal with kesong puti – offering sensory encounters that underscored local identity and pride.

Complementing the forum and tastings was the launch of the Kulitan Flea Market and Food Bazaar at Museo ning Angeles and Plaza Angel. The bustling marketplace opened with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, and attendees enjoyed live cooking demonstrations and abundant food stalls showcasing local craftsmanship and flavors.

Academic partners from Holy Angel University's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management collaborated in the event's execution, reinforcing Food Talks 2025's commitment to celebrating Filipino food while engaging future leaders in the gastronomy sector.

By linking culinary dialogue with experiential tasting and cultural exchange, Food Talks 2025 positioned food as a vehicle for community empowerment, heritage stewardship, and tourism competitiveness.



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, ADVANCING EQUALITY:

A YEAR OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN DOT REGION III (2025)

In 2025, the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III strengthened its dedication to inclusive growth and social equity by implementing a range of meaningful Gender and Development (GAD) initiatives. Guided by the principles of empowerment, participation, and gender responsiveness, these programs underscored the significant role of tourism in advancing not only economic development but also inclusive and sustainable community progress.

One of the key highlights of the year was the celebration of National Women's Month this March, which carried the theme of recognizing women as catalysts of change in the tourism sector. Activities included capacity-building workshops for women tourism workers in basic tour guiding, forum for tourism students in Pampanga State University (former Don Honorio Ventura State University), and recognition of outstanding women leaders across Central Luzon. These initiatives provided platforms for women to showcase their contributions while strengthening their roles in sustainable tourism development.

In support of its advocacy for inclusivity and social recognition, DOT Region III also conducted a Familiarization Tour for retired veterans from the provinces of Bataan and Tarlac. This initiative served as a meaningful expression of appreciation while promoting accessible and inclusive tourism. The activity showcased key destinations across the region and highlighted the importance of developing tourism experiences that cater to the needs of senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Further strengthening its commitment to gender awareness, DOT Region III actively participated in the nationwide 18-Day Campaign to End Violence Against Women (VAW). The campaign featured information drives, advocacy materials in tourist sites especially in Ulo ng Apo Monument, and partnerships with Local Government Unit of Olongapo City through the Olongapo Tourism Office and Gordon College and stakeholders to raise awareness on gender-based violence. Tourism frontliners were also engaged in the advocacy to better highlight

the responsibility to gender-related concerns within their areas of operation.

Beyond these major activities, DOT Region III integrated GAD perspectives across various programs throughout the year. This included mainstreaming gender sensitivity in tourism planning, supporting women-led enterprises, and ensuring equal opportunities in training and employment within the tourism value chain.

Through these initiatives, DOT Region III continues to uphold tourism as not only a catalyst for economic development but also a meaningful avenue for advancing gender equality and social inclusion. As the region progresses, it remains committed to fostering a tourism industry that leaves no one behind by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and promoting equal opportunities for all.



ENDLESS STORIES THAT HAIL BEYOND THE TRENDS

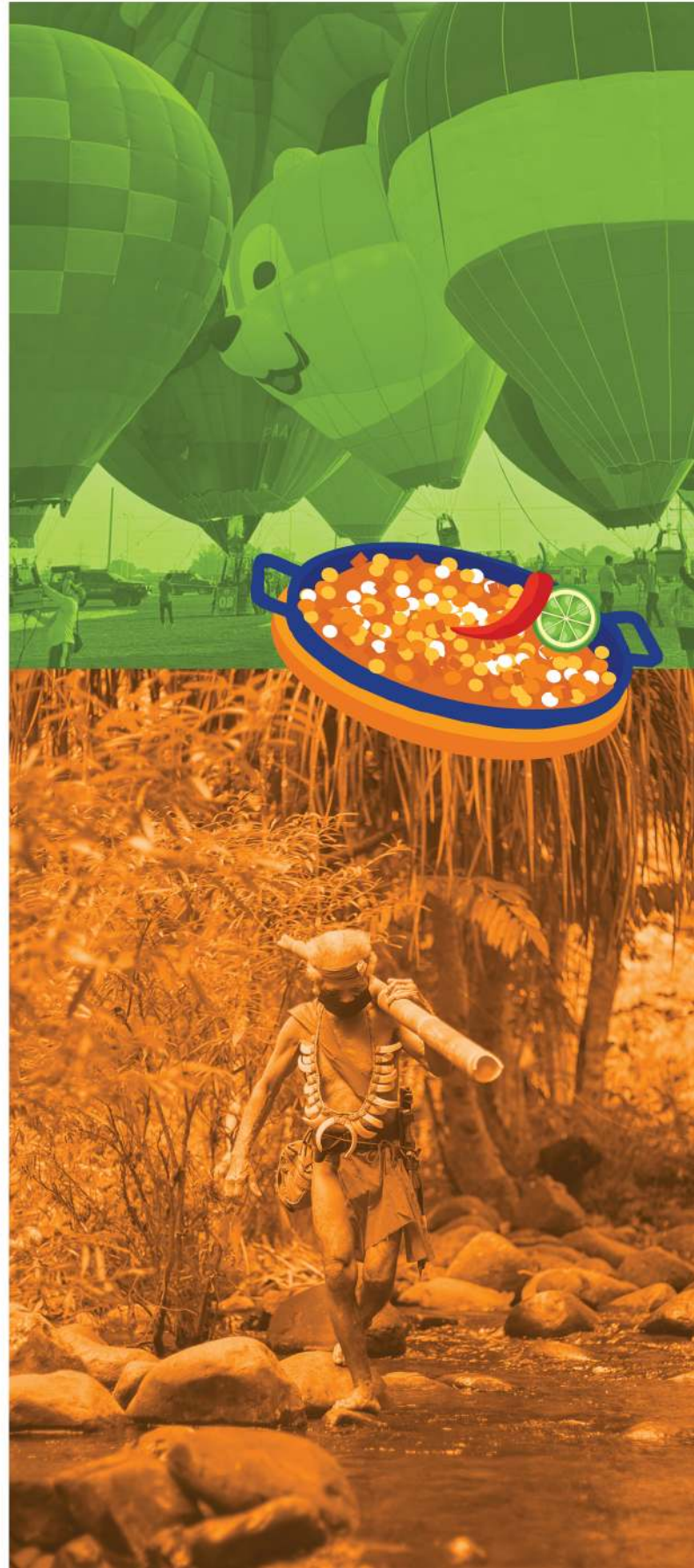
Central Luzon records a 32.60%+ increase in tourist arrivals from 2024, as more travelers discover stories that go beyond trends.

Central Luzon has once again proven that its destinations and numbers speak for themselves. A staggering 32.60% surge in tourist arrivals in 2025 construes a stronger and steadier tourism industry. This demonstrates Central Luzon's economic growth that stemmed from planning uncharted tourism products to marketing and promoting the prime ones.

Attaining 7,024,073 visitor arrivals this year, compared to the 5,297,001 arrivals from the previous year, enabled the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region III to optimize the potential of its units. The department carefully strengthened Central Luzon's existing tourism portfolios and planned for continuity by creating new products. The capacity-building efforts to equip the tourism workforce with quality-enhancing techniques spurred employment opportunities in far-flung areas and low-lying tourism communities. New and existing tourism-related enterprises are meticulously inspected and improved to provide excellent services, facilities, and amenities are provided to tourists. Events were launched to promote Central Luzon's endless wonders and unparalleled offerings. The synergy of both the public and private sectors worked in perfect harmony. These tourism industry sectors' collaborative efforts were instrumental to the region's feat.

All-encompassing strategic marketing tactics paved the way for the region's continuous growth. From revamping and redesigning DOT Region III's website and social media platforms to the production of printed and digital collaterals, these marketing strategies, activations, and campaigns heaved market engagements and reached new audiences, connections, and networks. The establishment of a regional brand, "Where endless stories begin," significantly determined Central Luzon's strength.

Numbers tell a story – and Central Luzon's rising tourist arrivals from 2024 to 2025 reflect the power of collaboration among tourism stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. Through shared efforts in strengthening destinations, enhancing visitor experiences, and promoting the region's unique heritage and hospitality, Central Luzon continues to grow as a vibrant and competitive tourism destination.





7,024,073
Visitor Arrivals in 2025

A Year of Triumph

CENTRAL LUZON'S BIG WINS IN 2025



ATOP: THE PEARL AWARDS 2025 GRAND WINNERS

Best Tourism Event – Religious Festival

Municipality of Obando, Bulacan
“Pistang Obando 2024: Sayaw ng Progreso”



Best Event Hosting – Local Event (Independent/Component City)

City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan
“Preserving and Celebrating Cultural Legacy:
The 42nd National Folk Dance Workshop and the 75th Anniversary
of the Philippine Folk Dance Society”



Best Tourism Promotions Brochure

Highly Urbanized City Category - Olongapo City
“Visit Olongapo: A Travel Companion”

Best Tourism Promotions Brochure

Component City Category – Clark
“Clark Maps: Pocket Journeys to Central Luzon’s #1 Tourist Destination”

FIRST RUNNERS-UP:

Best Tourism Month/Week Celebration – Long Celebration

Provincial Category - Province of Bulacan
“Singkaban Festival 2024”

Best Sports Tourism Event

Component City Category – Clark
“Clark Tourism Ride”

Best Event Hosting – Local Event

Component City Category – Clark
“Clark’s hosting of Philippine MICE Conference 2024”

SECOND RUNNER-UP

Best Cultural Festival – City Level

City of San Fernando, Pampanga
“Giant Lantern Festival”



POSTHUMOUS RECOGNITION

Dr. Eliseo S. Dela Cruz

Former Provincial Tourism Officer
Bulacan





WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS 2025

GRAND WINNER

Asia's Leading Meetings & Conference Destination 2025

Clark Freeport Zone, Philippines

RUNNERS-UP

Asia's Leading Regional Nature Destination 2025

Province of Aurora, Philippines

Asia's Leading Cultural City Destination 2025

City of San Fernando, Pampanga, Philippines



AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL (ACI) WORLD

Best Airports at Arrivals Award for 2025

Clark International Airport (CRK)



2026 ASEAN TOURISM AWARDS

MICE Venue Award (Meeting Room Category)

*Clark Marriott Hotel – Marriott Grand Ballroom
Hilton Clark Sun Valley Resort – Grand Ballroom*

MICE Venue Award (Exhibition Venue Category)

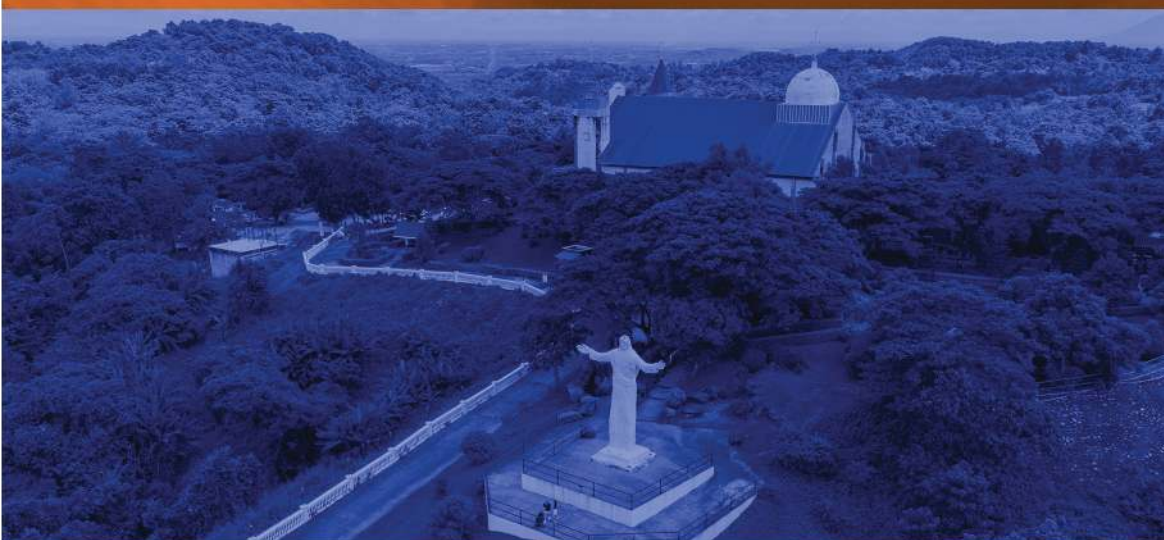
SMX Convention Center Clark – Halls 1-3



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