

MARINDUK ISLAND IN THE PHILIPPINES FROM THE POSITION OF GEOGRAPHY OF TOURISM

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Abstract: The Marinduque Island, which is a part of the Marinduque province, is a small but densely populated island within the Luzon Islands Group. The island surrounded by the water of the Sibuan Sea, the island has an area of 959 square kilometers and a population of 245 000 people. Flat plains, low coasts, low slope plains, mangrove forests and hilly lands constitute the most important natural elements of the Marinduque Island. There are many bays, beaches, atoll, cliffs, capes, coral and mangrove forests on the coast of the island. In this study, the geographical location of the Marinduque Island and its general geographical features have been explicated, and the main tourism elements of the island have been briefly discussed. We have tried to examine the main physical and human characteristics of the island by identifying its tourism potential. Furthermore, the main accommodation facilities, beaches and hotels located on the east and west coasts of the island have been identified. The main purpose of this study is to introduce the tourism potential and natural beauties of this Philippine island, which is not well-known among the foreign tourists and to offer new holiday options for the inquisitive tourists.

Key words: Philippines, tourism, tourism potential, Marinduque Island, Marinduque Province

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippines, which is the most populated Christian country in the Asian continent, is the country with the most islands in the continent, along with Indonesia and Japan (Figure 1). Each island in the Philippines, whose numbers are as many as 7641, has its own demographic, cultural, economic and tourism characteristics. Even though thousands of foreign tourists visit one of these islands every year, the fact that the number of scientific works published on the tourism potential of these tropical islands is insufficient is the principal reason for putting pen to paper for this article. The Philippine Archipelago, which is a part of the Malay Archipelago, constituting the largest group of islands in the world, is divided into 3 large groups of islands. The islands in the northern parts of the country are in the "Luzon Group Islands", the islands in the central part are in the "Visayas Group Islands", and the islands in the southern parts of the country are in the "Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago" group (Atasoy and Atış, 2020).

In the present study, the tourism resources, geographical features and tourism potential of the Marinduque island, which is located in the "Islands of the Luzon Group", were examined multidimensionally. In this article, the main settlements, beaches, accommodation facilities, faith centers, touristic districts and tourism centers of the island as well as the characteristics of the small touristic islets located close to Marinduque, were all examined. In other words, the tourism potential of both the island of Marinduque and the small islets in its vicinity were exhibited in the study, thus it was aimed to create a tourist guide for the inquisitive tourists who would visit these islands. As a result, the primary

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purpose of this study focused on the tourism geography was to introduce the geographical features, touristic attractiveness, tourism potential, tourism advantages and disadvantages of Marinduque, one of the most important, but not very well-known islands of the Philippines (Andriesse, 2018). The island of Marinduque, located in the central part of the Philippines and in the Sibuyan Sea, is bordered by Luzon to the north and east, Mindoro to the west, Burias and Masbate to the southeast, and Banton, Simara, Tablas, Romblon and Sibuyan to the south. The Tayabas bay located between the islands of Luzon and Mindoro, to the north of Marinduque and the Mompog strait located to the northeast separates this island from Luzon. Nevertheless, the Tablas strait separates the islands of Marinduque and Mindoro. Catanauan, General Luna, Pitogo and Lucena, located on the island of Luzon, are the port cities closest to the island of Marinduque. The capital of the province is the town of Boac. Santa Cruz, Torrijos, Gasan, Buenavista and Mogpog are the other major settlements of the Island**. The district centers of the island are also the largest settlements of the island.



Figure 1. Location Map of the Marinduque Island (Source: Authors, 2022)

Marinduque is neither the most populous, nor the most densely populated, nor one of the most populated one amongst the Philippine provinces. The provincial population, which exceeded 51 000 in 1903, reached 82 000 in 1939, 114 000 in 1960, 173 000 in 1980, 217 000 in 2000 and 239 000 in 2020**. As is clearly illustrated in Table 1, in 2020, the Province of Marinduque had an area of 952.58 km² and a total population of 239,207, with an average of 251 people per km² in the territory of the province. In other words, the Marinduque Province constitutes 7.41% of the total population of the MIMAROPA Region, 0.38% of the total population of the Luzon Island Group and 0.22% of the national population of the Philippines**. The province of Marinduque, which is located within the Luzon Island Group and in the MIMAROPA Administrative Region, is comprised of 14 more islands as well as the island of Marinduque. There are 6 towns and 218 barangays within the borders of Marinduque province (Table 1). The town of Boac, located in the northwest of the island of Marinduque, is both the provincial capital and the most populated town on the island of Marinduque. The towns located in the Marinduque province are: Boac, Santa Cruz, Torrijos, Gasan, Buenavista and Mogpog. In fact, with an area of 959 km², the island of Marinduque is the 14th largest island in the Philippines**.

Table 1. Major Administrative and Geographical Features of the Marinduque Province**

| Name of the Town | Population of the Town (Year 2020) | Surface Area (km ²) | Population Density (Person/km ²) | Number of Barangays Embodied |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Boac | 57,283 | 212,70 | 269 | 61 |
| Buenavista | 26,043 | 81,25 | 321 | 15 |
| Gasan | 36,197 | 100,88 | 359 | 25 |
| Mogpog | 34,516 | 108,06 | 319 | 37 |
| Santa Cruz | 54,692 | 270,77 | 202 | 55 |
| Torrijos | 30,476 | 178,92 | 170 | 25 |
| TOTAL | 239,207 | 952,58 | 251 | 218 |

Since the shores of the island of Marinduque are not very indented, there are not many of peninsulas and gulfs. Ulan, Sayao and Calancan located on the northern coasts; Torrijos and Marlanga on the east coast; Balanacan, located on the west coast, are the largest bays of the island. Both the characteristics and sizes of the large and small islets around the island of Marinduque, as well as their geographical location, vary greatly (Table 2). The island of Solomaguí to the east of the island of Marinduque; the islands of Banot and Hakupan to the north; the island of Elefante to the south; the islands of Gaspar, Melchor and Baltasar (Tres Reyes Archipelago) to the southwest; the islands of San Andres, Atta, Agpisan, Natangco and Hidalgo to the northwest; the islands of Polo (Santa Cruz), Maniwaya and Mongpong to the northeast are all located. Almost all of these small islets surrounding the Marinduque mainland have no settlements or permanent populations. Daily visits are paid to these uninhabited islands generally for the purpose of sea tourism by boats from the island of Marinduque (Estoque et al., 2018). The Marinduque Island, located only 18 km to the south of the island of Luzon, has a humid tropical-monsoon climate. The average annual temperature of the island is 28.04 °C, and it is clear that it is 0.82 °C higher than the average temperature of the Philippines. The highest monthly temperature averages were established in May 29.47 °C and June 29.40 °C, and the lowest monthly temperature averages were established in January 26.41 °C and February 26.31 °C. As is clear, there is no great variation in the temperature values throughout the year, and there is only a 3-4 degree difference in monthly average temperature (Fabinyi, 2018).

Table 2. Primary Characteristics of the Provincial Island of Marinduque

| | |
|---|--|
| Group Islands Located: The Luzon Group Islands | Total Population (Year 2020): 240 000 |
| The Province: Marinduque | Arithmetic Population Density: 252 people/km ² |
| Surface Area: 959 km ² | The Largest Town: Boac |
| The Highest Point: Malindig (1157 m.) | The Largest Settlements: Boac, Santa Cruz, Torrijos, Gasan, Buenavista and Mogpog |
| The Longest River: Boac | The Largest Lake: Capayang |
| Number of Towns Embodied: 6 | Number of Barangays Embodied: 218 |

The average annual precipitation on the island is 2034 millimeters, and the humidity rate throughout the year has been established as 78% on average. The period between January and April receives less precipitation and the average monthly precipitation in this period varies between is 50 to 100 mm. More precipitation falls in the October - December period and the average monthly precipitation in this period varies between 200 to 250 mm. In other words, when the climatic characteristics of the island of Marinduque are examined, it is possible to assert that the most unfavorable period in terms of sea tourism is the period of October - December with plenty of rain. However, since there is precipitation throughout the year on the island, there can be no definite "dry season" and definite "rainy season". Therefore, both humidity and temperature averages on the island are high throughout the year. On the Marinduque island, it rains on average 229 days (63%) out of 365 days within a year.

Even though the Marinduque Island has a small area and a mountainous topography, it contains many rural settlements. A small part of these rural settlements, whose populations and places of establishment have kept changing, are located on the coast, and a large part is located in the interior part of the island (Salvacion and Magcale-Macandog, 2015). The common characteristics of the rural settlements on the Marinduque Island are that they are not scattered but grouped, they generally earn their living by fishing and agricultural activities, and they are comprised of poor families with low quality of life (Salvacion, 2020). In terms of transportation, trade, education and tourism, the villages of Balanacan, Guisian, Poras, San Antonio, Poctoy, Mogpog, Cabuyo, Ipil, Libtangin, Dolores, Taytay, Masiga, Cawit, Lipata, Marlanga, Malibago and Maligaya are the most important and most strategic rural settlements villages of the Marinduque island. More than 70% of the island population is Catholic Christian, more than 15% is made up of various Christian denominations and less than 5% is Muslim communities (Estoque et al., 2018; Fabinyi, 2018).

Marinduque is a mountainous and rugged Island, with less sloping land and flat plains only along the coastline and stream valleys. The major mountains of the island are Malindig (1157 m.), Gasan (745 m.), Tapián (698 m.), San Antonio (558 m.) and Catala (606 m.). In other words, Malindig (1157 m.) is the most famous and highest mountain of the island. The Malindig Mountain, which is the subject of folk tales and legends, is actually an active stratovolcano. The Marinduque Island has short and fast flowing streams. Boac, Libtangin, Bol, Mogpog, Tabionan, Tipó and Cabuyo are the longest rivers on the island. The Boac river is the longest river on the island. There are also shorter rivers such as Matandang Gasan, Pangi, Bangbang, Antipolo and Tigioun within the borders of the island (Figure 2). Water pollution, unregulated irrigation and sudden floods are among the most common problems observed in the rivers on the island. Tailing Pond and Gapayang are the largest lakes on the island, which is poor in terms of lakes. In recent years, mining activities on the lake basins affect the ecological environment very negatively (Lanot et al., 2020). Consequently, mining activities, unconscious agriculture, dumping of harmful wastes into water basins, illegal tree cutting and uncontrolled domestic waste create the biggest ecological problems of the lakes (Dmitriyev et al., 2021; Dmitriyev et al., 2022), seas and streams on the island; on the other hand, they do harm to the image of the island and undermine the tourism activities.

Tourism, agriculture, fishing and mining are the most developed economic activities on the island of Marinduque. Rice, corn and coconut are the most widely grown agricultural products on the island. Boac and Santa Cruz are the island's most important ports (Saguin, 2017). "Marinduque Airport", located between the cities of Boac and Gasan, is the only major airport of the island. It should also be noted that the geographical center point of the Republic of the Philippines is located in the Argao region, in the northwest of the Marinduque Island. In short, this interesting island is geographically located in the very center of the country (Figure 1, B).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This scientific study, which is part of the research program titled “The Republic of the Philippines from the Perspective of Political, Economic and Human Geography and Turkey-Philippines Interaction”, which was accepted by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey in 2020 within the scope of “2219-Overseas Postdoctoral Research Scholarship Program” and conducted by Emin Atasoy is one of its scientific outputs of this program. In the present study, the demographic, economic, geographical, economic and ecological characteristics of the Marinduque island was examined, and both the tourism advantages and disadvantages as well as the tourism resources of the island were attempted to be identified. The author conducted city surveys and geographical observations on the Marinduque island between 23 - 28 October 2022; as a result, he personally examined majority of the tourism centers on the island. The methodological basis of the study is the methods of a systematic scientific approach (Figure 3), comparative



Figure 2. Tourism Map of the Marinduque Island (Compiled by the Author in the ArcGIS program)

geographical, cartographic and expert assessment (Dunets et al., 2020; Berdenov et al., 2021; Dmitriyev et al., 2021; Suleimenov et al., 2022; Khazai en al., 2018; Ozgeldinova et al., 2017). One of the primary objectives of this study is to proclaim the great tourism power of this small island to the world and promote the island in terms of international tourism.

A comprehensive assessment of the tourist and recreational potential of the island based on the study included the following steps. First stage. Identification of parameters for assessing an object in the blocks "natural conditions and resources", "cultural and historical resources", "security of tourist infrastructure", "information security of tourism". Second stage. Collection of information necessary for the assessment. Processing of information from statistical documentation of local tourism management bodies. Study of hotels, sights, leisure and recreation infrastructure, transport support. Third stage. Bringing the obtained indicators of evaluation criteria to a single measurement system. The weighting coefficients are calculated. Further, the calculation of private indicators of the tourist and recreational potential is carried out: natural conditions and resources, cultural and historical resources, provision of tourist infrastructure, information provision of tourism.

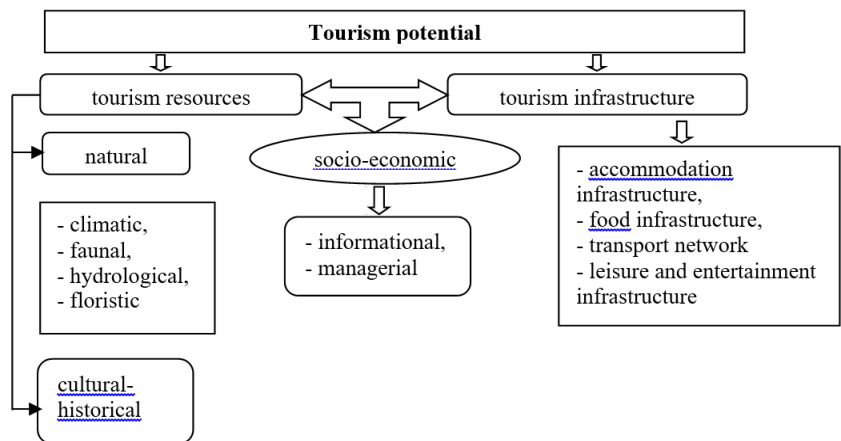


Figure 3. Blog diagram exploring tourism potential (compiled by the author)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Marinduque Island which is tucked between the islands of Luzon and Mindoro, is not one of the Philippines' most visited islands and most popular destinations, nor is it one of the busiest destinations for international tourist flows and foreign travelers. Therefore, those who visit the island are those who prefer quieter holidays, experienced divers engaged in water sports, and enthusiastic travelers who like to discover new geographical locations. For those who love mountains covered with tropical forests, healing springs, exotic and quiet beaches, picturesque caves and majestic waterfalls, historical churches and colorful festivals, this island has many tourist attractions to explore. The Marinduque Island offers good opportunities for diving and water sports enthusiasts, cockfighting spectators, local cuisine enthusiasts, those who collect ecological products in agricultural farms, those who fish in lakes and streams, those who

wish to swim in untouched coves or those who love trekking in nature. The Marinduque island is one of the Philippine islands where cultural and artistic activities, recreation and entertainment, sports activities and nature walks, fishing and sea holidays can be performed together. One of the most important features of this tranquil island is that it has many festivals and thousands of tourists take part in these cultural events every year. Since thousands of local and foreign tourists visit the island, especially in March – April (due to the Moriones Festival), the greatest intensity of activities and tourist flow happen during this period. The following summarizes the most important festivals on the island**:

- Moriones Festival (Marinduque Island, April),
- Haring Karabaw Festival (Santa Cruz, January),
- Kalutang Festival (February),
- Gasang-Gasang Festival (Gasan, Easter Sunday),
- Kangga Festival (Mogpog, May),
- Kalesayahan sa Gasan (Gasan, August),
- Bila-Bila Festival (Boac, December).

The most vivacious and most famous tourism activity on the Marinduque island is the famous Moriones Festival, which takes place in various cities in March - April. Thousands of local and foreign tourists take part in this colorful festival, which takes place in the cities of Buenavista, Boac, Gasan and Mogpog every year. Since the date of the Moriones Festival constantly changes depending on the month in which Catholic Holy Week is celebrated, there is actually no exact date of celebration. The Holy Week is usually observed in March or April. In this case, the Moriones Festival is also celebrated during these months. In the Moriones Festival, a cultural tradition from the Spanish rule, there are crowded and noisy celebrations, as well as parades with military clothes, interesting masks and dresses reminiscent of the Roman period. Men and women in costumes and masks replicating the apparel of Roman soldiers roam the town streets from the Holy Monday to Easter Sunday, scaring children or arranging interesting moves or surprises in order to attract attention. Therefore, the Moriones Festival is both a festival with historical and faith motifs, and a cultural tourism activity with deep roots. Another popular cultural tradition of the Marinduque Island is the famous cockfights, which have continued for centuries. Every weekend and usually on Saturdays, this engrossing event is held in specially prepared venues for these fights and is watched with interest by hundreds of spectators. Naturally, as expected, environmentalists and animal rights activists are actively working for the prohibition of long-term cockfights on the Island.

Natural Tourist Attractions of the Marinduque Island

Nature reserves, caves, waterfalls, beaches, small islets, natural parks, interesting hydrographic and geomorphological formations are among the most popular natural tourist attractions of the Marinduque Island. The most interesting and most visited natural tourism attractions in the Marinduque Island and its surroundings are (Figure 2):

- Nature reserves: Marinduque Wildlife Sanctuary, Capayang Man Made Lake Park Alan, Tres Reyes Marine Sanctuary, Lipata Baywalk Sunset, Carmen Eco-Adventure Park, Haribon Sanctuary;
- Touristic caves: Bathala, Duyay, Tarug, Ka Amon, Tablo, Bagumbungan, Piton, Talamban, Baltasar Sea Cave (Alviola et al., 2015);
- Touristic waterfalls: Paadjao, Ginaras, Tabag, Basud Hidden, Kawa-Kawa, Kabugsakan;
- Touristic beaches: Ipil White Beach, Palad Sandbar, Poctoy White Beach, Dapdap Beach, Silangan Beach, Amongon Beach, Seaman's Park Resort, Pinkys Taha Beach Resort, Polo Beach - Sta. Cruz Island, Gasgas Beach, Hakupan Beach, Gasan Public Beach, Kanossa Beach Resort, Beach Club Cagpo Resort, Duque Beach, Maligaya Beach, Pielago Beach And Resort, Ulong Beach, Aloba Beach, Bathala Beach, Gasgas Beach, Guisian Beach, Natangco White Beach, Borangi Beach, Vesita Verde Beach, Banot Free Beach, Mongpong White Beach, El Marinduqueños Island Resort - Mompong Island, Second Wind Resort – Mompong Island, Jovita's Paradise Beach;
- Touristic hydrographic and geomorphological formations: Malindig Volcano, Ungab Cliffs, Libtangin River, Mini Rock Formation – Maniwaya Island, Sunong Bato – Maniwaya Island, Mulawin Mountain, Tailing Pond Lake, Gasan Mountain, San Antonio Mountain, Gapayang Lake, Eli's Rock Formation – Mompong Island, Tapan Mountain, Boac River, Mount Catala, Mount Catubugan;
- Touristic small islets: Santa Cruz, Maniwaya, Mompong, Salomague, Elefante, Gaspar, Melchor, Baltasar, Hidalgo, Agpisan, Atta, San Andres, Banot, Ipil, Hakupan, Natangco, Polo, Botlao (Table 3).

Table 3. Top 10 Natural and Human Tourist Attractions of the Marinduque Island (Source: Authors, 2022)

| Top 10 Natural tourist attractions of the Marinduque island | Top 10 Human tourist attractions of the Marinduque island |
|---|---|
| Malindig Volcanic Mountain | Boac Cathedral |
| Paadjao Waterfall | Pulang Lupa War Memorial |
| Poctoy White Beach | Malbog Sulfur Spring |
| Palad Sandbar | Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa |
| Kawa-Kawa Waterfall | Balanacan View Deck |
| Bathala Cave System | Marinduque National Museum |
| Maniwaya Island | Marinduque Hot Spring |
| Bagumbungan Cave | St. Joseph Parish Church of Gasan |
| Marinduque Wildlife Sanctuary | Freedom Eco Adventure Park |
| Ipil White Beach | Gasas Butterfly Garden |

Divers paying a visit to the south coast of Marinduque island can watch the cute dolphins, exotic rays, colorful tropical ocean creatures and dangerous sharks under the sea. Those who dive on these shores can explore the picturesque underwater cave galleries. Inquisitive divers should definitely pay a visit to the Baltasar cave, which has a 20-meter-deep entrance and a 28-meter-deep exit. Nearby at the Baltasar Sea Cave, they can observe the underwater remains of the “Mactan” ferry that sank nearly 20 years ago. One of Marinduque's popular natural attractions is the Batala caves. This complex cave network, located in the Santa Cruz mountains, consists of long and interesting underground galleries (Alviola et al., 2015). Since the Batala caves are privately owned, they can only be visited with a pre-booked reservation and a small fee. In the Piton cave, which is famous for its interesting reptiles, many snakes that are not dangerous for humans can be observed.

In recent years, the Marinduque island has become one of the most popular diving destinations for experienced divers. Natural coral walls with steep slopes, wrecks of sunken ships, underwater caves of various depths and rich diversity of life invite thousands of inquisitive tourists to visit the diver centers of this island every year. The divers who come to Marinduque compare this charming island with the Great Barrier Reef in Australia (http://philippine.ru/marinduque_diving.html) for its colorful fish diversity, rich marine life and abundance of interesting dive sites. Therefore, water sports, beach holidays and diving are the most common tourism activities on the island. Furthermore, in a study conducted in 2013, the province of Marinduque was voted as the safest and calmest province in the country. In other words, it is possible to assert that Marinduque is one of the least dangerous provinces of the Philippines in terms of robbery, murder, theft, extortion, injury etc. In the following below, the main beaches, touristic districts and small islets in the vicinity of Marinduque island have been examined.

Human Tourist Attractions of the Marinduque Island

Historical faith centers, water parks, botanical gardens, agricultural farms, historical castles, museums, Catholic churches with picturesque architecture and spa centers are among the most popular human tourist attractions of the Marinduque island. The most exotic and most visited human tourist attractions on the Marinduque Island and its surroundings are:

- Churches and faith centers: Boac Cathedral, New and Living Way Baptist Church, Baluarte de Santa Cruz Historic Castle, Roman Catholic Church - Holy Child Jesus Parish, St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish, Cagpo Chapel, Matuyatuya Cathedral Church, Holy Cross Parish Church, St. Isidore Parish Church, Immaculate Conception Cathedral of Boac, Mary Help of Christians Parish, St. Raphael Archangel Parish Church of Cawit, Mary Mediatrix of All Graces Chapel, St. Joseph Parish Church of Gasan, St. Joseph the Worker Parish Church, Iglesia Filipina Independiente.

- Touristic farms, gardens and agro-tourism centers: WHS Butterfly Farm, Ma. Diosa de Jesus Farm, TIMBO Integrated Farm, Curba Farm Resort, Vilma's Garden, Lyra-Ysabelle Butterfly Farm, Celina's Farm & Resort, Tres Reyes View Park – Gasan, Taklobo Sanctuary Center, Gasan Butterfly Garden.

- Recreation centers and touristic park areas: Lupac Water Park, Freedom Eco Adventure Park, Guingona Park, Buenavista Seaview Park, Freedom Park, Carmen Eco-Adventure Park, Capayang Mining Site Park, Lupac Water Park, Earthly Delights Mini Garden, Puyog View Deck Mountain, Sawi Inland Fresh Water Canal, Mt. Baliis - Sea of Clouds, Gasan Nature and Butterfly Park.

- Hot springs and dam lakes: Marinduque Hot Spring, Malbog Sulfur Spring, Makulapnit Dam Basin, Buenavista Hot Springs.

- Architectural works, historical monuments and museums: Marinduque National Museum, Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage Parish – Balanacan, Paye Marker War Memorial, Pulang Lupa War Memorial, Station Balanacan (Geodetic Center of the Philippines), Municipal Government of Boac, Historillo Ancestral House, Bamboo House, Gasan Old House, Hinanggayon Mountain, Mirambil's Ancestral House, Poctoy Underwater Museum.

- Most Popular restaurants: Casa Don Emilio, Café Mamita, 10 Y.O. Cafe, Curba Bar and Grill, Kusina sa Plaza.

- The most prestigious hotels: “Balar Hotel and Spa”, “Marina Marinduque Hotel and Resort”, “Luxor Resort and Restaurant” and “Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa”

Historical churches and bridges, picturesque architectural works and war memorials, military forts and museums are the most popular cultural tourism centers of the Marinduque Island. There are more than 200 churches and faith centers within the borders of the Marinduque Island. “Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – Boac”, “St. Joseph Parish Church of Gasan”, “Mary Help of Christians Parish”, “St. Raphael Archangel Parish Church of Cawit”, “Boac Cathedral”, “St. Joseph the Worker Parish Church” and “Iglesia Filipina Independiente” are the most magnificent churches of the island and the most popular faith centers among the foreign tourists. “Church of the Holy Child in Buenavista”, “St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish Church in Torrijos”, “Holy Cross Parish in Santa Cruz” and “San Isidro Labrador Church in Mogpog” are the examples of other touristic faith centers on the Marinduque island. Another interesting tourist attraction of the Marinduque island is the Red Mountain, which has an important part in Philippines history. The Red Mountain, which played an important part in the bloody war between the Filipinos and the Americans near Pulang Lupa, has today turned into a national legend, a cultural tourist attraction and a heroic epic in war history. The Battle of Pulang Lupa (Filipino: Labanan sa Pulang Lupa, Spanish: Batalla de Tierra Roja) was a conflict between the forces of Colonel Maximo Abad and Devereux Shields on September 13, 1900, during the Philippine-US War. Filipino Abad's soldiers defeated the American forces and inscribed his name in gold letters on one of the most glorious military victories in Philippine history. In memory of the war won by the Filipinos, a magnificent memorial statue was built on the Red Mountain, and the tourists who pay a visit to this place can watch the magnificent natural view of Marinduque from this memorial square.

The number of four or five-star hotels in the luxury class within the borders of the Marinduque island is exceedingly insufficient. Budget hotels and hostels, as well as lodgings, rental villas and family businesses are the most common accommodation facilities on the island. “Hotel Zenturia”, “The Boac Hotel”, “Nine Balconies Island Stay”, “Tahanan sa Isok”, “Hotel Marinduque”, “Freedom Eco Adventure Park”, “Spencer's Transient Inn”, “Cavesera Residencia, Farm and Resort”, “Villa d' Arco Resort”, “Dewey Hotel & Restaurant”, “R Hotel Centro”, “Rico's Inn”, “Puente Family Dormitory”,

“Fun Island Regencia's Hotel & Resort”, “D' Classmate's Resort”, “Oromismo Hotel”, “Lihim na Paraiso” and “Sheila's Place” are among the most popular hotels on the island. (<https://www.booking.com/>; <https://www.trivago.com/>; <https://www.tripadvisor.com/>). Briefly, there are more than 120 accommodation facilities with different characteristics within the borders of the island. Most of the modern tourist establishments on the island are located in the town of Boac and its surroundings (Table 4, 5). “Balar Hotel and Spa”, “Marina Marinduque Hotel and Resort”, “Luxor Resort and Restaurant” and “Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa” are among the most prestigious luxury hotels on the island.

Tranquil and clean beaches, affordable accommodation facilities, peaceful and safe holidays, interesting natural beauties and hospitable locals are the most important touristic advantages of the province of Marinduque. The beaches, which are an indispensable element of sea tourism, draw attention with their tranquility and non-crowded natural environments, their suitability for camping, overnight stays with tents and for long-term holidays in the accommodation facilities. The most popular beaches in the Marinduque province are: “Poctoy White Beach”, “Hakupan Beach”, “Palad Sandbar”, “Ipil White Beach”, “Mongpong Island Beach”, “Aroma Beach”, “Natangco White Beach”, “Ulong Beach”, “Maniwaya Island Beach” and “Amoingon Beach”. The following below briefly describes the most popular beaches in the province of Marinduque.

Poctoy White Beach: The “Poctoy White Beach”, located in the northeast of Torrijos town, is the most famous and most visited beach on the island. The “Poctoy White Beach” near the town of Poctoy is famous for its karaoke bars, entertainment venues, seafood restaurants and budget hotels. The “Poctoy White Beach”, located in the southeast of the Marinduque island, is situated on the coast of the Sibuyan Sea, just northeast of the town of Torrijos. It is considered by the tourism experts to be the most famous and most popular beach on the Marinduque island.

The beach, which is more than a kilometer long, fascinates visitors with its pure white sands, pristine turquoise waters, majestic coconut trees, picturesque coastal rock formations and lush vegetation. In the background of the beach, the beautiful scenery of Mount Malindig, which is one of the touristic symbols of the island, and other mountain masses covered with tropical forests offers a romantic view. The tourists visiting the Torrijos town and “Poctoy White Beach” can enjoy snorkeling, sunbathing in a tranquil environment, diving into deep ocean waters and windsurfing. There are many beachfront accommodations in the area and cottages and rental villas are also available for day visitors, as well as the picnic and camping opportunities in the beach area. The “Poctoy White Beach” is a clean, tranquil and peaceful beach, even though it is a low-cost (about 30 Philippine Peso) public beach. The “Beach Club Cagpo Resort”, “Villa Briones Homestay Lodging”, “Joey's Crib Beach Hostel”, “Jovita's Paradise”, “Rosales Guest House”, “Rendezvous Beach Resort” and “Alia Water Station”, “Poctoy White Beach” are the major accommodation facilities situated in the surrounding area. The beach area, which is far from urbanization and crowded settlements, does not offer luxury 4 or 5-star hotels; therefore, it is possible to say that it is not suitable for tourists with high expectations.

Palad Sandbar: The “Palad Sandbar”, located in the east of Marinduque Island, within the Santa Cruz County borders and just northeast of Maniwaya island, is one of the most popular tourist attractions in both the Marinduque province and the Philippines. Essentially, the “Palad Sandbar” is more of a narrow and long coastal arrow formation stretching from land to sea rather than a classic beach. Since the beach area has shallow waters, it offers an ideal sea holiday for young children and non-swimmers, and is also suitable for SCUBA diving. During low tide, this small coastal arrow can be walked on and from afar it looks like you are walking on the sea. This beach, which is the most popular tourist attraction on the Maniwaya Island, can be accessed by boat from the port of Santa Cruz. Budget accommodations such as “Pielago Beach and Resort”, “Q Hostel Maniwaya”, “Islas Moriones Beach Resort”, “Wawie's Beach Resort”, “Palomaria Beach Sanctuary”, “Villa Atillana”, “Palomaria Beach” “Camp Resort”, “3 Brothers Beach” and “Cozea Beach Lodge”, situated close to “Palad Sandbar”, are all located on the Maniwaya island. The tourists paying a visit to Palad Sandbar should see interesting attractions such as “Sunong Bato Cliffs”, “Taklobo Sanctuary Center”, “Residencia De Palo Maria”, “Mini Rock Formation” and “Villa Atillana”, which are around the corner.

Table 4. Major Accommodation Facilities in the Northern Territories of the Marinduque Island (Source: Authors, 2022)

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Guisian Beach Resort | Guisian Cove Resort | R Hotel Centro |
| Dewey Hotel & Restaurant | Lihim na Paraiso | Erlinda's House |
| Puente Family Dormitory | Sayao Free Beach | Rico's Inn |
| D' Classmate's Resort | Oromismo Hotel | Pizarra's Home |
| Fun Island Regencia's Hotel & Resort | Sikatuna Resort Hotel | Bahay ni Queencel |
| Ulong Bay Beach Resort | Family Beach Resort | CSM Lodge |
| Shirley's Lodging House | Fergus Clouds Resort | Hilltop Hotel |
| Obando's Aqua Heaven Resort | Sadiwa Clan | Little Canaan |
| Aurora Beach Resort | Pyramid Beach Resort | The Boac Hotel |
| Lucky 7 Pension House | Abby's Place Hotel | Hotel Marinduque |
| Nine Balconies Island Stay | Tahanan sa Isok | Hotel Zenturia |
| Cely's Kitchenette And Lodging | Balar Hotel and Spa | Ocean View |
| Adis Resort Hotel and Restaurant | Chateau Du Mer | Villa Fernando |
| Freedom Eco Adventure Park | Spencer's Transient Inn | Casa Elisea |
| Mainit Hot Springs | Binunga Boac | Sheila's Place |
| Jlvcv Prayer Mountain | Montegrejo's Resthouse | Bahay ni Queencel |
| Marina Marinduque Hotel and Resort | Casa Al Mare Marinduque | A&B Coral Resort |
| 3E's Love Bay Beach Resort & Hotel | Ferguz Cloud Resort | Casa Blangca |
| Cavesera Residencia Farm and Resort | Villa Delia Resort | Eastpoint Hotel |

Table 5. Major Accommodation Facilities in the Southern Regions of the Marinduque Island (Source: Authors, 2022)

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Luxor Resort and Restaurant | Joey's Crib Beach Hostel | DJ Plaza Hotel |
| Ian's High Mountain Resort | Golden SunSet Resort | Legaspi Lot |
| Katala Beach Resort & Restaurant | Sunset Beach Resort | FMJ Hotel |
| Hidden Greenery Resort & Event Place | Beach Family Hotel | Villa Ribleza |
| Marinduque Hot Spring Resort | Southwest Bay Resort | Village Sunrise Inn |
| Villa Macaria Nature Resort | Dream'Home Resort | Jovita's Paradise |
| Tres Maria Boarding House | Rosales Guest House | Beach Club Cagpo |
| Blue Castle Beach Resort | Joepens Coco Beach | Jade Francisco |
| Praiseland Bible Camp | Curba Farm Resort | Jean Genie's |

Ulong Beach: The famous Ulong beach is situated in the northwest of Marinduque Island, within the borders of Mogpog County, just northwest of Mogpog town. It is a quiet beach surrounded by long sandy beaches and tall coconut trees. The clear and shallow sea coast has allowed families with children to prefer it as a priority sea holiday destination. Since there are no grocery stores, restaurants, markets or restaurants around the beach, tourists visiting the beach must bring their drinks and food with them.** To the south of Ulong beach are the less popular beaches of Maligaya and Balogo, and to the north are the beaches of Balanacan and Argao. All these beaches are situated in the northwest of the Marinduque Island and face the coast of Batangas of the island of Luzon. Scuba diving, fishing, boat trips, picnics and day trips are among the most common recreational activities on these beaches. The “Balanacan View Deck” with a magnificent scenery, the “Our Lady of Balanacan Statue”, which is the tourism symbol of Marinduque Island, and the “Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage Parish” Catholic Church, which has a magnificent and historical building, are the most famous tourism attractions of the region. There are very few accommodation facilities in the region. “Hilltop Hotel”, “Shirley's Lodging House”, “Family Beach Resort” and “Ulong Bay Beach Resort” are the examples of small and affordable accommodation facilities in the region.

Amoingon Beach: The Amoingon Beach, found in the north of "Roberto's Hideaway Beach Resort" public beach and south of "A&B Coral Resort" beach, is one of the most popular tourist attractions on the east coast of the Marinduque Island. Famous as the "Snorkeling Capital of the Marinduque Island", the Amoingon Beach is situated southwest of the town of Boac and within the county boundaries of Boac. Amoingon Beach offers great opportunities for water enthusiasts who love to watch the corals and colorful fish rather than hiking, sunbathing on the beach, picnics or grilling. The sea waters are so intertwined with wildlife that many refer to it as the snorkeling capital of Marinduque. The tourists visiting the Amoingon Beach can visit the Inagpatong ecological park, Tugos mountain, Blue Sea Resort beach, Historillo Ancestral House building, Kabugsakan waterfall, St. The visitors can also visit the Raphael Archangel Parish Church and the historical Paang Bundok place. For tourists paying a visit to the Amoingon Beach, there are many accommodation facilities in the immediate vicinity with different features and suitable for all budgets. “Freedom Eco Adventure Park”, “Eastpoint Hotel”, “Amsterdam (Kastilyo Inn)”, “3E's Love Bay Beach Resort & Hotel”, “Aplaya ng Amoingon”, “Adis Resort Hotel and Restaurant”, “Balar Events PlaceChateau Du Mer” and “A&B Coral Resort” are examples of affordable accommodation facilities in the immediate vicinity. The “Marina Marinduque Hotel and Resort” and “Balar Hotel and Spa” are among the top quality and most expensive accommodation facilities in both the Amoingon region and the entire Marinduque Island.

Major Tourist Towns of the Marinduque Island

There is no urban settlement with a population of more than 70 000 within the borders of the Marinduque Island, which has lands approximately twice as densely populated as the Republic of Turkey. The largest settlements within the island borders are the coastal towns and small cities, and Santa Cruz, Torrijos, Buenavista, Gasan, Mogpog and Boac are the major settlements (Salvacion and Magcale-Macandog, 2015). The Marinduque Island that is lacking crowded and noisy metropolitan cities has given the island more advantage than disadvantage in terms of tourism. There are 6 towns in total on the Marinduque island and the largest one in terms of surface area is Santa Cruz (270.77 km²) and the smallest one is Buenavista (81.25 km²) (Table 1). Furthermore, among these 6 towns, while Boac has the highest population (57,283 people), Buenavista is the town with the least population (26,043 people). Boac has the most Barangays (61), whereas Buenavista has the fewest Barangays (15) (Table 1). In the following below, the most popular touristic towns of the island and their main features are explicated (Gier et al., 2017).

The Town of Boac: The town of Boac is the economic heart of the Marinduque Island and is both the most populous town on the island and the town with the highest number of barangays on the island (Table 1). The town of Boac, located in the northwest of the Marinduque Island, is comprised of both 61 barangays and an area of 212.70 km². According to the 2020 census, the town of Boac's population is 57 283 people and its population density is 269 people per square kilometer. Only 23 settlements within the town borders have a population of more than 1000 people. Among the town settlements, only four of them (Santol, Laylay, Bunganay and Cawit) have a population of more than 2000 tourism attractiveness. There are many cultural and natural tourism attractions within the borders of the town of Boac. Duyay cave, Kabugsakan waterfall, Balogo Beach, Marinduque Wildlife Sanctuary, Freedom Eco Adventure Park, Inagpatong Mountain ecological park, Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Banudyo Cliff Hill, Tugos Mountain ecological park, Mt. Baliis - Sea of Clouds, Kabugsakan cave and Historillo Ancestral House are the most popular tourist attractions of this town. There is a rich variety of accommodation in the district, suitable for all budgets. “Marina Marinduque Hotel and Resort”, “Balar Hotel and Spa”, “A&B Coral Resort”, “Freedom Eco Adventure Park”, “Hotel Marinduque”, “The Boac Hotel” and “Hotel Zenturia” are among the most popular accommodation facilities in the district. The town of Boac, founded in 1579, is both the administrative center of the island and its largest urban settlement. The town, situated in the meandering valley of the Boac river with the same name, is the island's commercial, transport and tourist center. The most densely populated urban areas are Poblacion and the northwestern and southwestern parts of the town. The eastern parts of the town are generally sparsely populated. The tourists visiting the town of Boac, which is famous for the Moriones Festivals, mostly visit the tourism attractions such as "Boac Cathedral", "Casa Real Museum", "Laylay Harbor", "Boac Town Plaza", "Paye Battlefield", "Freedom Park in Bunganay", “Liwasan ng Kalayaan”, and “Kalayan” and “Marinduque Branch of the National Museum of the Philippines”. Furthermore, the enthusiastic tourists visiting the town of Boac should definitely see the “Villa Aplaya Beach Resort” hotel, which has a magnificent view by the sea and the Kabugsakan Waterfall with its magnificent.

The Poblacion area, located in the center of Boac, is called the "Boac Central Business District". The newly built two-story Town Market with approximately 100 shops is located in the heart of this commercial district. The “Boac Public Market” situated in the town center, is one of the town's landmarks. Vendors and local artisans sell food products such as fruit, vegetables, fish in four buildings (<https://marinduque.gov.ph/municipal/>). Shipping terminals near the Public Market

transport goods to other settlements on the island. Therefore, the "Boac Public Market" is considered both the commercial center and the "mini supermarket" of the Marinduque Island. "Dr. Damian Reyes Memorial Hospital", "Pablo N. Marquez Memorial Health and Diagnostic Center" and "Boac Rural Health Polyclinic" are the most important health institutions in the Boac region. The most important educational institutions in the town of Boac are as follows: "Marinduque State University", "Educational Systems Technological Institute" (ESTI), "Marinduque Institute of Science and Technology", "Marinduque National High School", "Ilaya National High School", "Cawit National Comprehensive High School", "Saint Mary's College High School", "MSC Laboratory High School", "Virgin Mary Private Catholic School" and "Marinduque School of Arts and Trades". Briefly, Boac is both the commercial, transportation and economic center of the island of Marinduque and the most important tourism, educational and cultural settlement of the island. The only airport of the island is located in the region of Masiga, just south of the town of Boac. Therefore, it is possible to say that domestic and foreign tourists visiting the island enter the Marinduque Island from this airport.

The Town of Santa Cruz: Santa Cruz is the most populous, most popular and tourist attraction of the Marinduque island. The county of Santa Cruz, situated in the northeast of the Marinduque Island, was established in 1609 and is composed of 55 barangays. The total area of the town is 270.77 km². The population of the town in 2020 was around 55 000 and the average population density is 202 people per square kilometer. The area of Santa Cruz town makes up 28.4% of the Marinduque Island and 22.8% of the island's population. Therefore, it is one of the largest and most important districts of the island, the National Statistical Coordination Board (<http://www.nscb.gov.ph>). Banot, Macupan, Polo and Mongpong islands, which are of great importance in terms of tourism, are also situated within the borders of the town. Small poor villages constitute the most common settlements of the town (Salvacion, 2020). The population of only 18 settlements within the boundaries of the town exceeds 1000 people. Among the district settlements in the town of Santa Cruz, Lapu-Lapu Poblacion (3276 people) is the most populated one. Agriculture, commerce, tourism, poultry farming, handicrafts and fishing are the most developed economic branches of the town. Rice, coconut and tropical vegetables are widely grown in the town, which has fertile plains. Interesting karst formations and caves, exotic tropical islands, historical churches and castles, rich geomorphological formations on the seaside, deserted beaches and quiet coves are the most important tourist attractions of the town of Santa Cruz. The historical Santa Cruz Catholic Church, the magnificent Kawa Kawa waterfall, breathtaking Carmen Eco-Adventure Park with its natural beauties, Eli's Rock Formation formed by the erosion of ocean waves, Palad Sandbar in Maniwaya island, the magnificent Holy Cross Parish Church, Sunong Bato cliffs, Paadjao waterfall in Mogpog county Villa Atillana, situated on the island of Maniwaya and attracting attention with its interesting architecture, Piton, Bagumbungan and Bathala caves, which have an eerie appearance, are the most popular tourism centers of the town. The "Ipil White Beach", "Wawie's Beach Resort" and "Mongpong White Beach" are the most popular beach areas in the town. There are hardly any luxury accommodation facilities within the boundaries of the town, whereas budget hotels, hostels, hostels and family accommodation businesses are common. "Wawie's Beach Resort", "Marikit-na Beach Resort", "Dewey Hotel & Restaurant", "Sikatuna Resort Hotel", "Fun Island Regencia's Hotel & Resort", "Cavesera Residencia Farm and Resort", "Villa d' Arco Resort", "Ka-Abling's", "Beachfront Resort", "Oromismo Hotel", "R Hotel Centro", "Rico's Inn", "Palomaria Beach Camp Resort", "Villa Atillana", "Cozea Beach Lodge", "Lihim na Paraiso" and "Palomaria Beach Camp Resort" are the most popular accommodations in the town of Santa Cruz.

The Town of Torrijos: The town of Torrijos, situated in the southeast of the island of Marinduque, has a total area of 178.92 km², a total population of 30 476 and an average arithmetic population density of 170 people/km². The Gulf of Marlanga and a large part of the island of Salamogue are also found within the boundaries of the town. This charming town with a total number of 25 barangays is not one of the largest nor one of the most important towns of the Marinduque Island, neither in terms of population size, nor in terms of economic potential. Of the 25 barangays in the district, only 14 have a population of more than 1000 people and only 4 of them (Buangan, Malibago, Poblacion, Tigwi) have a population of more than 2000 people. Malibago is the largest barangay of the town with a population of 3216. Poor villages, where agricultural activities predominate, are the most common settlements of the district (Salvacion, 2020). The Pulang Lupa War Memorial, Tabag Waterfall, Mount Malindig, Poctoy Underwater Museum, Ka Amon Cave, Poctoy White Beach and Freedom Park are the tourism symbols and constitute international promotion showcase of the town of Torrijos. Apart from these tourist attractions, Sibuyao Farms, Dugue Beach, Bonliw Loom Weaving, Matuyatuya Cathedral Church, Basud Hidden Falls, Torrijos Gospel Church, Exotic Island View Beach, The Flintstone House, Tabag Cliff and River, Duque Beach, Celina's Farm & Resort, Bangwayin Farm, Ma. Diosa de Jesus Farm, Exotic Island View Beach and Basud Hidden Falls are among the other popular tourist destinations of the county. The total number of all hotel and accommodation types within the boundaries of Torrijos town is not more than 20. Among the few accommodation centers, hostels, small family businesses, budget hotels and rental villas are the major ones. The main accommodation centers of Torrijos town are: "Beach Club Cagpo", "Ian's High Mountain Resort", "Villa Macaria Nature Resort", "Villa Ribleza", "Jovita's Paradise", "Tres Maria Boarding House", "Village Sunrise Inn", "Rosales Guest House", "Joey's Crib Beach Hostel", "Villa Briones Homestay Lodging" and "Montegrejo's Resthouse". There are many free public beaches within the boundaries of the town. "Poctoy White Beach", "Exotic Island View Beach", "Beach Club Cagpo", "Duque Beach" and "Makawayan Beach" are the most popular beach areas in the town.

Popular Tourist Islands Near Marinduque

The Philippine Archipelago covers 7,641 islands, of which about 2000 are inhabited and populated, while more than 5600 are uninhabited and unpopulated. Furthermore, more than 5000 islets within the borders of the town do not even have a name. There are many small islets in the immediate vicinity of the Marinduque Island, which are significant for sea tourism. Some of these islets, which generally do not have permanent settlements and permanent population, are very popular and are visited by thousands of local and foreign tourists every year. Located off the coast of Marinduque,

Natangco, Elefante, Mongpong, Maniwaya, Hakupan, Tres Reyes and Salomaguí are the most visited islets in the Marinduque province. The main features of these touristic small islands are briefly explained below (Ocampo et al., 2018).

Hakupan Island: Hakupan, situated on the northern coast of the Marinduque Island, to the northwest of the island of Banot, is a small islet without settlements and permanent inhabitants. Inquisitive tourists visiting Bagumbungan cave, Ipil White Beach and Banot Island usually also stop by the Hakupan Island. This small islet, located in Santa Cruz County and within the borders of Botilao Barangay, has an area of 4.5 hectares. Even though the highest point of this low and uninhabited island is only 31 meters, it fascinates its visitors with its clear turquoise sea waters, white deserted beaches and palm trees. The island's shores offer an ideal setting for snorkeling and scuba diving among the coral reefs. This small islet, which does not have economic activities, transportation routes and settlements, is open to daily boat visits and sea tourism activities all year round. The Hakupan Island, situated just 160 kilometers southeast of the capital city of Manila, is easily accessible by charter boat from the Botilao village. For those who choose to have romantic holidays, peaceful beaches and day trips, Hakupan is the right choice.

Maniwaya Island: Maniwaya, situated to the northeast of the island of Marinduque, within the county boundaries of Santa Cruz, is one of the province's most popular small islets. Located between Polo and Mompong islands, Maniwaya is one of the most visited sea tourism centers of this region. Among the islands in the immediate vicinity of the Marinduque Island, only the Maniwaya Island is permanently inhabited. Desolate beaches, hidden coves and white sandy beaches fascinate the tourists to the Maniwaya Island. This small island has around 10 beach areas on its low shores, all of which are free of charge to use. "Wawie's Beach", "Palomaria Beach", "Playa Amara", "Munting Buhangin", "Sunong Bato", "La Crispel Beach Resort", "Lorna's Place" and "Pielago Beach and Resort" are the most popular beaches of the Maniwaya Island. The tourists paying a visit to the Maniwaya Island are recommended to see the tourist attractions such as "Maniwaya Poultry Farm", "Palad Sandbar Shore Arrow", "Sunong Bato Cliffs", "Morion Statues", "Maniwaya Church", "Taklobo Sanctuary Center" and "Ungab Rock Formation". Especially the "Palad Sandbar Coastal Arrow" and "Ungab Cliffs" are among the most visited natural touristic places by the Inquisitive travelers. There are more than 20 accommodation facilities within the borders of the Maniwaya Island, which is famous for its productive coconut farms, budget vacation opportunities and clean beaches. "Residencia De Palo Maria" and "Villa Atilana" are among the most popular accommodation facilities with their picturesque architecture, landscaping and location. Other accommodation centers operating within the island borders are: "Pielago Beach and Resort", "Islas Moriones Beach Resort", "Wawie's Beach Resort", "Q Hostel Maniwaya", "Don Ruffael Beach Resort", "Donayln Beach Resort", "Residencia De Palo Maria", "3 Brothers Beach", "Cozea Beach Lodge", "Playa Amara" and "Palomaria Beach Camp Resort".

Tres Reyes Archipelago: The islands of Melchor, Baltasar and Gaspar, situated in the southwest of the Marinduque Island, form the Tres Reyes Archipelago. This archipelago, which is located within the borders of the Marinduque province and carries the name of "three kings", offers ideal natural environments for daily boat tours, diving sports, sunbathing and picnics. With the exception of Gaspar, there are no families living permanently within the borders of the archipelago and there are no permanent settlements and accommodation facilities (Sotto and Labay, 2012). Gaspar is the largest, most popular and most beautiful island in this archipelago. The Gaspar Island, found just in the west of the town of Buenavista within the borders of Gasan province, is famous for its incredibly clear turquoise waters and fine snow-white beaches. This small island, located in the Sibuyan Sea and with a great reputation among underwater archaeologists, can only be accessed by boats chartered from the town of Buenavista. This deserted island is a tropical paradise for those who long for a quiet and romantic holiday away from the crowds of tourists and the noise of bars and restaurants. Gaspar island has a short coral beach with clear blue-green waters ideal for picnics and snorkeling. The Melchor and Baltasar Islands, on the other hand, have steep coasts, high cliffs and underwater caves that are frequented by the deep-sea divers. The coasts of the archipelago are popular destinations for marine biologists and divers due to their rich flora and fauna. The Melchor Island is found between the Gaspar and Baltasar Islands and forms the smallest islet in the Tres Reyes Archipelago. The coastal area of the island is a bit high and rocky, so it is not very easy for the boats to dock, especially on rainy and windy days. Even good swimmers should not venture too far from the shore and swim into the sea because of the strong unpredictable sea currents that occur along the shores of Melchor. Beautiful cliffs, turquoise sea waters and rich species diversity magnetize the local and foreign tourists to this small island. Coconut crabs are very common on the shores of Melchor. The island of Baltasar has fewer visitors than the other islands, since it is the outermost part of the Tres Reyes Archipelago and the furthest from the Marinduque Island. With many diving spots and underwater caves, this islet offers great opportunities for those who wish to explore the sea creatures or those who are bitten by the underwater photography bug. There are no permanent settlements and accommodation facilities on the Baltasar Island, as is the case on the Melchor Island. Therefore, both islands are only available for daily excursions.

Natangco Island: "Natangco White Beach", one of the most beautiful beaches in the Marinduque province, is found in on the island of Natangco, within the borders of Mogpog town, at the northwest end of the Marinduque Island. With an area of eight hectares, this uninhabited island does not have a permanent resident population, nor does it have any accommodation center, market or restaurant. The Natangco Island, situated within the borders of Barangay Silangan, is located in the Gulf of Tayabas between the islands of Luzon and Marinduque. This small islet, found in a marine nature reserve, is famous for its steep and high coral reefs. One of the most popular places for diving on the Marinduque Island is the island of Natangco, at a depth of 40 meters and home to a Japanese torpedo ship from the Second World War. The steep sloped reef formations 30-40 meters deep on the west coast of Natangco Island offer excellent experiences for snorkelers or professional scuba divers. The Natangco Island is a privately owned area, but this island can only be reached by obtaining a special permit. The visitors who come to the island for a daily visit, diving sports or picnic are required to bring water, food and other supplies to meet their daily needs. For sea lovers and scuba divers, the corals of the island of Natangco offer great opportunities and views.

Elefant Island: Elefant, situated on the southern coast of Marinduque island, within the Sibuyan Sea and Buenavista province borders, is the most extraordinary island of the Marinduque province. This small islet is an ideal option for snorkeling,

quality accommodation and scuba diving. Many tourism experts compare the Elefant Island to the famous Greek island of Santorini. The main reasons for this similarity are the immaculate white buildings perched on the hills, international wealthy tourists, white-colored hotel facilities on the slopes, and the rugged terrains on both islands. The Elefant Island (Elephant Island), near Marinduque, is a very popular tourist destination among the divers, with its white corals, which are very rare in the world, and vertical walls that go as far as 80 meters deep. The “Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa” hotel, which is the most luxurious accommodation facility of the region, constitutes a large part of the island with its 20-hectare area. Therefore, tropical forests and hotel facilities cover almost the entire island. The Elefant Island, mostly serving the elite tourists, is known as the most privileged, prestigious and wealthiest island in the province of Marinduque. The Elefant Island is called “the island of magnificence with five stars” because it houses the five-star “Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa” hotel on its territory. The private helipad and luxury marina on the island of Elefant serve the wealthy tourists who wish to reach this privileged holiday destination throughout the year. As a result, the Elefant, one of the most famous islands of the Philippines, has become famous beyond the borders of the country for its fine white beaches, coral reefs, luxury accommodation and tropical forests.

Salomagu Island: The Salomagu Island, located on the east coast of the island of Marinduque, within the borders of Sibuyan Sea and Torrijos town, is an uninhabited, low-lying island with no permanent population. It is devoid of hilly terrain and mountains as the island's highest point reaches 74 meters. On the east coast of the Salomagu Island, there is a wonderful area of white beaches with 500 meters of fine sand filled with crushed coral. The low shores of the island offer a quiet ecological environment for day trips by boat, sunbathing, picnics and sea holidays, especially scuba diving. The island, which does not hold any accommodation, shopping centers and settlements, is ideal for those who love quiet and peaceful sea environments. The tourists visiting the Salomagu Island can also visit the nearby tourist attractions such as “Poctoy White Beach”, “Freedom Park”, “St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish Church”, “Angas Beach Lake”, “Ma. Diosa de Jesus Farm”, Duque Beach” and “Battle of Pulang Lupa Monument”.

CONCLUSION

The Philippines, which is the most populated Christian-populated country in the Asian continent, is one of the countries with the most islands in the continent, along with Indonesia and Japan (Efe and Atasoy, 2021). There are a total of 7641 islands within the borders of the Republic of the Philippines, and each of them has its own demographic, cultural, economic, geographical and tourism characteristics. In this study, the tourism resources, geographical features and tourism potential of Marinduque, one of the lesser-known islands of the country, came up for discussion. For the foreign tourists visiting the Republic of the Philippines, Marinduque is not a must-see island, nor is it one of the country's most beautiful and popular tourist destinations. The Marinduque island is undoubtedly as big as the Mindanao Island, as crowded as the Luzon Island, as famous as the Borocay Island, as interesting as the Bohol Island and not as popular as the Palawan Island, but it has some unique natural beauties and some unique tourism attractions. Even though Marinduque is not among the top five islands in the list of preferences chosen by the foreign tourists for the Philippines, the fact that there are many holiday options, the number of economical hotels and touristic facilities, the wide variety of recreational activities and tourism types, has led to a significant increase in the number of tourists coming to this island in recent years. The paramount tourism advantages that positively impact the development of tourism activities on the Marinduque island can be summarized as follows:

Geographical Richness and Tourism Diversity: One of the biggest tourism advantages of the Marinduque Island is that despite its small surface area, it has a very rich tourism diversity, quality accommodation facilities suitable for every budget and a rich variety of recreational activities at the same time. There are also mountaineers who come to this tropical island in order to climb volcanic peaks; there are botanists and ecologists who want to discover endemic plant species; there are patients who want to improve their health in the healing hot springs; there are divers who love to dive in deep ocean waters; there are also divers who come to attend one of the many cultural festivals on the island; and there are adventure lovers and also enthusiastic tourists who want to visit the interesting museums and historical artifacts. Even though the Marinduque Island does not have large dimensions, the geographical and historical-cultural diversity seen on the island has also led to the diversification of tourism activities on the island. Therefore, both rural tourism and faith tourism, health tourism and sea tourism, cultural tourism and thermal tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism, cave tourism and botanical tourism can be observed side by side in the same geographical places on the Marinduque Island. Consequently, the geographical, cultural and ecological diversity of the island has led to the diversification of tourism types.

Convenient Geographical Location and Easy Access Connections: The strategic geographical location and easy sea transport connections with the neighboring islands are one of the biggest tourism advantages of the Marinduque Island. The fact that the Marinduque Island is located in the center of the Philippine archipelago facilitates the economics, transportation and tourism connections with other islands. The Marinduque Island is located in the very center of its neighboring islands such as Luzon, Mindoro, Burias, Sibuyan, Banton, Masbate and Tablas and provides easy sea transportation between these islands thanks to the ferries. Furthermore, the fact that a regional airport serves within the borders of the Marinduque Island offers a great advantage for the tourists who prefer air transportation. Moreover, the fact that a regional airport serves within the borders of the Marinduque Island offers a great advantage for the tourists who prefer air transportation. The Marinduque Airport, located between the towns of Boac and Gasan, is the only airport of the island. Clearly, the island of Marinduque does not have many ports and sea cruise piers. Boac and Santa Cruz are the island's most important ports. It is only 18 km away from Luzon and only 150 km from the capital Manila, is the largest island of the Republic of the Philippines in terms of both population and surface area provides a distinct tourism advantage to the Marinduque Island. It should also be noted here that the geographical center point of the Republic of the Philippines is situated in the Argao region, in the northwest of the island of Marinduque.

The Prevalence of High Security and Ecological Protectionism: The Marinduque Island is one of the safest and most environmentally friendly islands in the Philippines. Numerous nature protection areas within the borders of the island play a major role in transferring the ecological richness of the island to future generations, while offering valuable opportunities for the development of ecotourism activities. The most important caves, waterfalls, valleys, volcanoes, forests, atolls, wetlands, reefs and lakes within the borders of the island are under protection by the state. Furthermore, the absence of terrorism and conflict events, the absence of security problems such as extortion, murder and theft have made Marinduque one of the safest islands in the Philippines. Marinduque is a very safe, peaceful and quiet island that has no terrorism problems and has largely solved its infrastructure problems. Moreover, since it does not have a very large surface area, it is a compact, easily navigable island, without serious traffic jam problems and easily accessible from everywhere. Consequently, being one of the Philippine islands with the lowest crime rate gives Marinduque a distinct tourism advantage.

Tourism Novelty of Small Islets in the Close Vicinity of the Marinduque Island: In the immediate vicinity of the Marinduque Island, there are more than 15 small-area islets that are generally uninhabited but with high tourism potential. Since daily boat excursions are organized to these clean, peaceful and interesting islands, they are of great importance in terms of sea tourism. The tourists who prefer deserted beaches, hidden coves, romantic holidays and white beaches usually pay a visit to the island of Maniwaya. For sea lovers and scuba divers, the corals of the island of Natangco offer stunning views. The Elefant Island that stands out with its luxury accommodation and tropical forests, generally serves the foreign tourists in the upper income group. The Tres Reyes Archipelago, with its many diving spots, majestic cliffs and underwater caves, offers great opportunities for those who wish to explore the sea creatures or have an interest in underwater photography. For those who prefer romantic holidays, peaceful beaches and day trips, Hakupan or Mompong make a good choice of island. In summary, the small islets located in the immediate vicinity of the island of Marinduque not only create a colorful, peaceful and different holiday alternative, but also strengthen the national and global tourism image of Marinduque.

Availability of Numerous Accommodation Facilities Suitable for Every Budget

As far as the population, area and touristic potential of Marinduque are concerned, it is possible to assert that the island has a sufficient number of accommodation facilities, restaurants, tourism offices, diving centers, restaurants and other touristic facilities. More importantly, most of these touristic facilities offer cheap services and economical prices. Therefore, the tourists who do not prefer popular but expensive islands such as Samal, Busuanga and Borocay visit Marinduque, which offers more economical holiday opportunities. There are more than 120 hotels, hostels, hostels and accommodation facilities on the Marinduque island, but only 15-20 of them are amongst comfortable and high quality accommodation facilities. Therefore, one of the biggest tourism problems of the island is the insufficient number of 4 and 5-star luxury hotels. It is clear that the hotels and touristic facilities throughout the island are concentrated in the Boac, Santa Cruz and Torrijos regions. The hotels providing sports and diving training, family villas and romantic honeymoon hotels, spa centers and spa hotels, cheap hostels and budget beach hotels constitute the highest number of accommodation facilities on the island. Another tourism advantage of the island is that almost all beaches on the coast are free of charge and open to the public for 365 days. The Marinduque island has numerous spa centers, artificial swimming pools and healing springs. Therefore, a sufficient number of SPA centers, spa hotels, sports and health tourism centers operate within the borders of the island. In conclusion, the Marinduque island, which has developed in the economic shadow of Luzon and Mindoro islands, is a candidate to become one of the most developed and popular tourism centers of the Philippines in the years to come.

Multitude of Interesting and Original Tourism Attractions: Marinduque, with its unique natural resources and interesting tourism attractions, has already proven itself to be a distinctive tourist island and a unique geographical location. It is possible to assert that distinction and originality are the greatest tourism trump cards of the Marinduque island. Rich historical-cultural heritage, economical accommodation opportunities and multi-choice holiday preferences are the other tourism advantages of the island. Even though Marinduque is one of the youngest, most peaceful, most environmentally friendly and calmest islands of the Philippines, it is one of the tourism centers that American and European tourists do not know much about and do not choose for vacation. Waterfalls and caves, stream and lake basins, hot springs and beaches, museums and faith centers, botanical parks and nature reserves within the borders of the island are waiting to be discovered by visitors from all over the world. Numerous water sports centers, agrotourism centers, botanical gardens and diving training centers operate within the borders of the island. The rich historical-cultural heritage, many interesting architectural monuments, as well as historical forts, statues, war memorials and Catholic churches from the US and Spanish era are the other tourism advantages of the Marinduque island. Furthermore, the fact that Marinduque has calm, clean and peaceful coasts away from big metropolitan cities and industrial facilities is another tourism advantage of the island. Nevertheless, in the long view, the magic concept called "time" will establish whether these geographical riches and tourism resources on the island will be sufficient for Marinduque to become one of the ecotourism centers of the Far East Asia. Even though the Marinduque Island has many positive features in terms of geographical, ecological and economic characteristics, it also has some negative features that restrain and undermine the tourism development. The major tourism disadvantages that negatively affect the development of tourism activities on the Marinduque Island can be summarized as follows:

- The rapid concretization of the sea shores, as well as unplanned construction and squatting has been turning into an increasingly common problem on the island.
- The insensible lumbering of natural tropical forests and the rapid reduction of forest lands, the opening of agricultural lands to settlement, the drying of swamps and other wetlands, the exposure of river and lake basins to anthropogenic activities, strong erosion and soil loss, the decrease in the number of plant and animal species day by day, illegal hunting, forestry and fishing, pollution of sea waters and fresh water resources are the major ecological problems on the island.
- The spread of regional environmental problems and the increase in soil, water and air pollution in some regions are the other burning problems of the island. It is possible to assert that the mining activities causing serious environmental

problems are the most common and most critical environmental problem on the Marinduque Island (Gigantone et al., 2015; Lanot et al., 2020; Carr et al., 2003).

- The inadequacy of modern sewerage and road transportation network, the absence of fast internet and telephone connections on the whole island, the lack of clean drinking water and uninterrupted electricity connections in all regions are among the other burning problems on the island of Marinduque.
- There are almost no modern cinemas and theaters, modern hospitals, equipped pharmacies and large shopping centers within the borders of Marinduque, as well as the inadequacy of banks and currency exchange centers are other important negativities that adversely affect the tourism activities on the island.
- Undoubtedly, the fact that these problems listed above could not be resolved in the forthcoming period will adversely affect the tourism activities on the island of Marinduque in the long run.

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