

# PHILIPPINES PLAN TO LURE TOURISTS TO VOLCANOES



The Republic of the Philippines plans to transform some of its volcanoes into an eco-tourism spot. The volcanoes are interesting not only because of their eruptions but also for its rich biodiversity. According to the officials from the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), volcanoes can attract visitors interested in endemic flora and fauna as well as climbers or adventurers.

“A volcano doesn’t erupt every day. Therefore, we can promote these as tourist attractions. And biodiversity is part of the attraction,” PAWB director Theresa Mundita Lim said. There are 16 volcanoes across the country—active ones, potentially active and inactive—that have been designated as protected areas by the DENR.

Among the interesting creatures and plants we can mention is e.g. the freshwater snake at Taal volcano, the Waling-Waling orchid on Apo volcano, the hornbill and bleeding heart pigeon on Kanlaon volcano and the cloud rat on Bulusan volcano.

The officials think that eco-tourism zones can be easily created here. Naturally, there will be some “strict protection zone” where the development will not be allowed. Perla de los Reyes of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology has mentioned that any developer should consider volcanic hazards before developing any part of a volcano into a tourist spot. “Make sure that there are no settlements in the permanent danger zone, or in areas identified as prone to volcanic eruptions and its hazards,” she said.

The scientific director of European Volcanic Park, François-Dominique de Larouziere, offered his help to the country. “If the Philippines decide that this might be useful, it will be very good pleasure if I come back and help them elaborate the concept, and help them make something,” he said. Mr. De Larouziere, however, warns Philippine officials not to make a replica of the European Park of Volcanism, which cost €118 million. “To make a clone of Vulcania, I don't think it's the best way. What's important is first to speak of the volcanoes in the middle of volcanoes because people want to have a connection between the object and the reality,” he said.

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