

## Tourism

The province of Bataan is strategically located at the middle of the region's growth quadrant (Freeport Area of Bataan, Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Clark Freeport Zone and National Capital Regions or NCR). It also has economic zones and industrial estates (Hermosa Special Economic Zone and Industrial Park, Bataan Technology Park, Inc., PNOC Alternative Fuel Inc., DND Arsenal and FAB). These make Bataan an ideal place for business and investments bringing positive impact on the economy of the province by creating more job opportunities.

But the province has more to offer than just business opportunities. Bataan is now being promoted as a tourism hub because of its natural wonders – the picturesque mountains for trekking and biking and its pristine beaches of Bagac, Morong and Mariveles.

Bataan is also a promising getaway for history enthusiasts. Local and foreign tourists enjoy the historical markers and monuments that pay tribute to the valiant soldiers that fought during World War II.

The annual celebration of the “Araw ng Kagitingan” at Mt. Samat is the most significant event in the province of Bataan. It commemorates the heroism and bravery of both the Filipino and American soldiers during WW II who offered their lives to defend our freedom and democracy from invading Japanese forces. The Mount Samat National Shrine in Pilar Bataan consisting of a towering 92 meter memorial cross situated at 555 meters above sea level was dedicated to these soldiers. There is also an esplanade, a colonnade, and a museum where artifacts can be found.

Bataan Day is a weeklong festivity highlighted by series of activities. Mountain Bike Circuit Race, Galing Bataan Trade Fair, Cultural Presentation, History Quiz Bee, Reenactment of the Battle of Pockets, Foot Parade, Parade of Floats, Tribute to War Veterans, Drum and Lyre Competition, Bataan Day Celebration held at the Shrine of Valor at Mount Samat lead by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Tourist, both local and foreign, can take a walk back to the Spanish colonial era at Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar in Bagac. This heritage park provides visitors an opportunity to explore and learn about Spanish colonial period houses. These houses, some of which were severely neglected, were transported from its original location. These were then carefully reconstructed using some, if not all of its original parts and brought back to its original splendor.

The Pawikan Conservation Center leads the conservation of pawikans (sea turtles), an endangered marine animal, nesting in the coast of Nagbalayong, Morong. At the Center, turtle eggs gathered from the shore are kept to protect from poachers and released back into the sea once they hatch. To create awareness and draw out support for the saving of the pawikans, Pawikan Festival is being held every last Sunday of November. It is highlighted by different activities like street dancing, walk for a cause, nature's camp, sand sculpture, paddle painting, beach concert, night patrolling and mural painting joined by conservationists, environmentalists, tourists and various organizations from private and government agencies. Releasing of pawikan hatchlings to the sea highlighted the two-day celebration.

Another great place to see is the Balanga Wetland and Nature Park. Bird watchers and enthusiast will surely enjoy hundreds of exotic migratory water birds that temporarily thrive in Balanga City's thick mangroves and wetlands.

Above all these, the real tourism charm of the province are its people – the warm, hospitable and beautiful Bataeños.