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A NEW DESTINATION IN TOURISM GEOGRAPHY: CATANDUANES PROVINCE (REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)

Annotation. Catanduanes, one of the eastern islands of the Philippines, is located in the southeast of Luzon Island and on the west coast of the Philippines sea. It is a little researched, sparsely populated, mountainous and rugged island. It is also known as the "island of howling winds" or the "island of harsh storms". In this study, the geographical location of the island of Catanduanes, its natural and human geographical features and the main tourism resources are briefly discussed.

The island's tourism potential has been tried to be explored by examining the important beaches, cities, hotels, waterfalls, caves, streams, nature preserve areas and historical-cultural attractions. Catanduanes across the Pacific Ocean is one of the least developed but happiest islands of the Philippines as well. For this reason, it is expected that tourism activities on the island will develop as Catanduanes gets infrastructure investments such as transportation, education, health, communication and sewage in the next half century.

Keywords: Philippines; tourism; Catanduanes Island; Philippine Islands; Eastern Visayas; natural attractions; island tourism development; sustainable tourism; cultural heritage.

Introduction

Catanduanes Island, situated in the southeast of the Republic of the Philippines, is located between 13°30' - 14°06' north latitudes and 124°01' - 124°25' east longitudes. Found in the southwest of the Philippine Sea, Catanduanes is located in the Bicol Region of the Philippines, north of Samar island and southeast of Luzon Island. The Macueda Strait separates the Catanduanes Island from the Luzon Island, whereas the Lagonoy bay separates it from the smaller islets such as Rapu Rapu, Batan, and San Miguel. There are many capes, coves, coral islands, gulfs, lagoons, peninsulas and mangrove forests on the indented shores of the island. Cabugao and Lagonoy bays are found on the south coast of the island, and the Gigmoto and Bagapayo bays are located on the east coasts. Catanduanes possesses an area of 1492 km² and is a mountainous island with 400 km of coastline (National Statistical Coordination Board - <http://www.nscb.gov.ph>; <https://www.philatlas.com>). In the northwest of the Catanduanes Island are found the islands of Porongpong (Palumbanes), Tignob and Calabagio within the borders of Caramoran province, all of which make up the Palumbanes Group of Islands. The tourists coming to Catanduanes can hire a boat from Caramoran or San Andres and organize a day trip to the hidden coves and tranquil beaches of the Porongpong Island. There are many islands off the east coast of Catanduanes Island, but of these only the islands of Panay and Lete are slightly larger, the other islands are all in the form of small islets, atolls or cliffs. The major examples of these small islets are: Manigil, Minaaso, Macalanhag, Pondanan, Daylaynay, Agutayan, Macarilan, Linampanan, Poro, Brillante, Bacalay, Zayao, Jumbit, Minabalay,

Maguinling and Cagaray. On the southeast coast of the Catanduanes Island, just on the east of Sakahon Beach and Poseidon Beach is the Locot group of islands, consisting of two small islets [1,2].

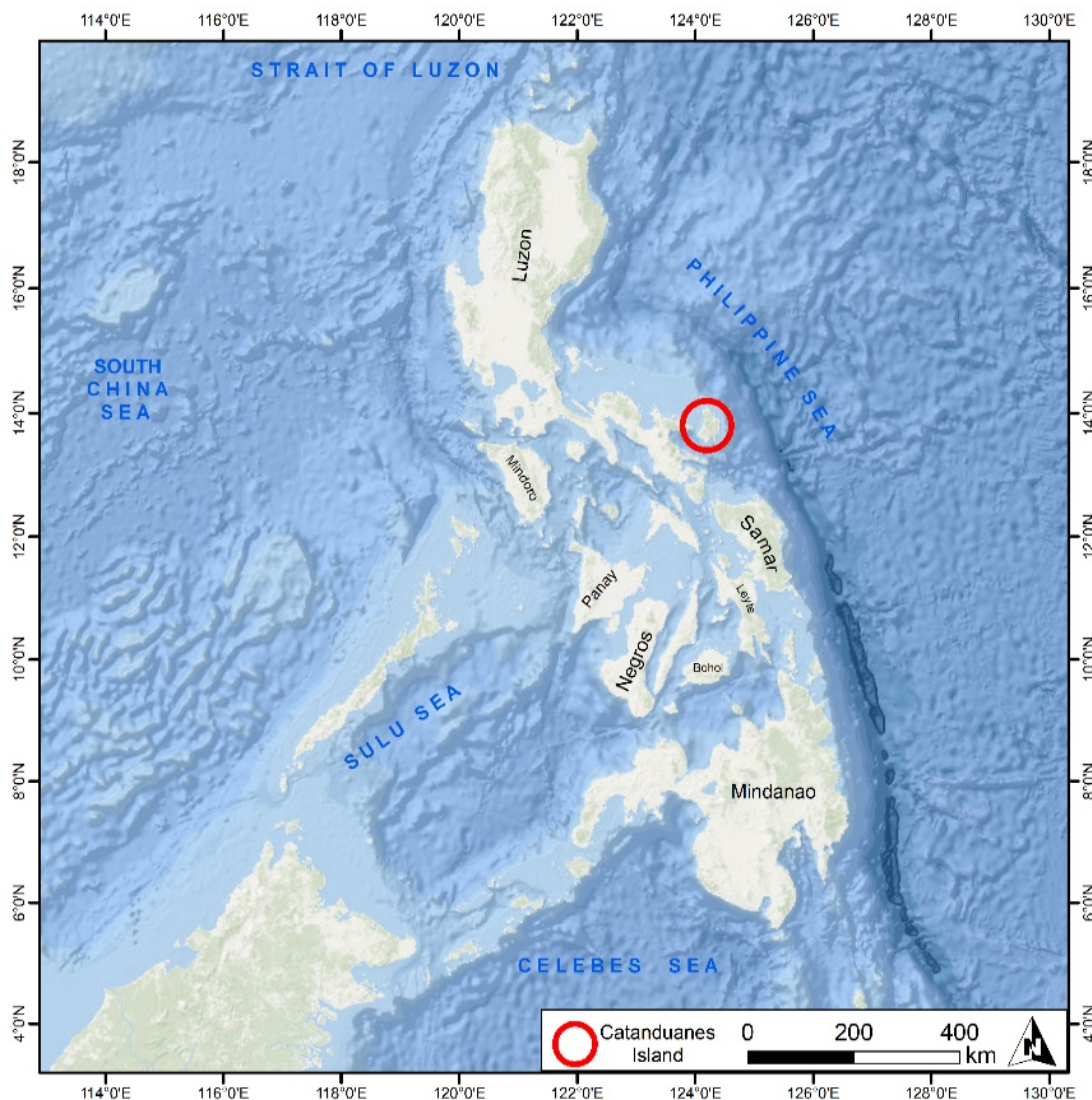


Figure 1. Location Map of the Catanduanes Island (Source: Authors, 2022)

The Province of Catanduanes, established on September 26, 1945, comprises both the Island of Catanduanes and the surrounding small islands. Virac, the capital of the Province of Catanduanes, which includes 11 districts, is also the only city in the province. There are more than 310 settlements in the Province of Catanduanes, the majority of which are rural settlements. Town-looking San Andres, Caramoran, Baras, Bagamanoc, Pandan, Bato, Gigmoto, Panganiban, Viga and San Miguel are the largest settlements on the island. Except for the city of Virac within the boundaries of the province, only the towns of Caramoran and San Andres have a population of more than 30000, making them the largest settlements in the province. In the province of Catanduanes, which does not possess any metropolitan city, a total

of 271879 people lived in 2000 and an average of 182 people per km² (National Statistical Coordination Board - <http://www.nscb.gov.ph>). It is apparent that the arithmetic population density is a little low compared to other provinces, because the forested areas, wetlands and rough lands cover a large area and also since there are very few people compared to its surface area. It appears that the population density is higher in the eastern and southern coasts of the island, while the central parts of the island and the western and northern coasts are less populated.

Catanduanes is an island which is rich in both groundwater and freshwater resources. The longest river on the island is the Bato River. Other major rivers of the island are the Oco, Pajo, Pandan, Gigmoto, Tambognon, Bonbon, Marbog, Alinawan and San Miguel rivers. It is common knowledge that these rivers contain high bed slopes and are fast flowing rivers that frequently cause floods. These streams, which are suitable for hydroelectric generation, are not suitable for river transportation [3]. While there is no large natural lake on the island of Catanduanes, more small lagoon lakes are present on the sea shores. Lake Hitoma, found on the island of Palumban with its breathtaking beauty, is both the largest lake in the province and the most popular one among the tourists.

Table 1. Primary Characteristics of the Provincial of Catanduanes (Source: Authors, 2022)

Group Islands Located: The Luzon Group Islands	Total Population: 271 879 (Year 2020)
The Province: Catanduanes	Arithmetic Population Density: 182 people/km ²
Surface Area: 1492 km ²	The Largest City: Virac
Number of Towns Embodied: 11	Number of Barangays Embodied: 315
The Highest Point: Mount Tamboo (696 m.) The Longest River: Bato The Largest Lake: Hitoma	The Largest Settlements: Virac, San Andres, Caramoran, Panganiban, Baras, Bato, Bagamanoc, Pandan, Gigmoto, San Miguel.
The Province's Mathematics Location: 13°30' – 14°06' northern latitudes 124°01' – 124°25' east longitudes	The Largest Nature Reserve: "Catanduanes Watershed Forest Reserve" "Pandan Mangrove Reserve" "Dela Rosa Mangrove Forest Reserve" "Protected Palms & Mangroves Area".

Both sloping lands and fertile plains suitable for agriculture on the island of Catanduanes make up less than 10% of the island's surface area and are generally located on the coastal areas of the island. The most important plains of the island include the Virac Plain, Viga Plain, San Andres Plain, Tambognon Valley, Pandan Valley, Pajo Valley and Bato River Flood Plains. The Oco – Alinawan delta and Panganiban and Bagamanoc are the island's largest wetlands [4,5,6,7]. In summary, the narrow coastal plains sandwiched between the mountains and the sea comprise the areas where both settlements, transportation and economic activities as well as agricultural activities are most intense. As you travel from the coasts to the inner parts of the island, the settlements and population density decreases in parallel with the increase in the forest areas and rough lands.

The highest point of the island, which is generally covered with tropical forests and hilly lands, is the Mount Tamboo (696 m.). In fact, there is no high peak exceeding 1000 meters on the island and there are only 5 mountain cults higher than 300 meters. Tamboo (696 m.), Baboy (621 m.), Conical Peac (531 m.), Sharp Peac (490 m.) and Round Peac (396 m.) are the samples of mountains with a height of more than 300 m. The island of Catanduanes contains



many gulfs and peninsulas, since it has very indented coasts. The wetlands, lagoon lakes, steep cliffs, coastal plains, mangrove forests, fluvial deltas and swamp areas are frequently found on the coastal areas. Sea coasts and river valleys are the most densely populated areas of the province of Catanduanes, because they have fertile agricultural land. San Andreas, Virac and Viga plains and Bato, Pajo and Oco valleys are among the most important agricultural production areas of the island. The Tuberous plains, important rice-producing lands and wide plains are mostly located in the southern parts of the island. Tropical cyclones and strong storms frequently occur on the island, where the humid tropical climate is present.

The island of Catanduanes, situated only 15 km east of the island of Luzon, has a humid tropical climate. A 12-month rainy climate prevails throughout the island, since the humidity is high and a certain amount of precipitation falls every month throughout the year. The average annual temperature of the island is 27.91°C and it is understood that it is 0.69°C higher than the average temperature of the Philippines. It was found that the highest monthly average temperature was in June (29.89°C) and the lowest monthly average temperature was in January (25.21°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 between the highest and lowest monthly average temperatures (<https://tcktcktck.org/philippines/catanduanes>).

It is apparent that there is a natural environment suitable for sea tourism for 365 days on the island, since the monthly average temperature varies between roughly 25°C and 30°C throughout the year. Depending on the altitude, the distance from the sea and geographical location, the average annual precipitation on the island varies between 1800 and 2600 millimeters and the annual humidity is 78.7% on average. The highest amount of precipitation falls in December (347 mm.) on the island, whereas the least amount of precipitation falls in April (55 mm.). In the period from February to August, the island of Catanduanes receives less precipitation and the average monthly precipitation during this period varies between 55 and 125 mm. More precipitation falls on the island in the September - January period and the monthly average precipitation in this period is between 130 and 350 mm. [8]. In other words, when the climatic characteristics in Catanduanes are analyzed, it is possible to claim that the most unfavorable period for sea tourism is the rainy September - January period. However, since the island receives precipitation all year round, there is hardly a distinct "dry season" and a distinct "rainy season". Therefore, both humidity and temperature averages are high throughout the year on the island. An average of 365 days a year on the island of Catanduanes experience 213 days (58%) with rain and 152 days (42%) without rain (<https://tcktcktck.org/philippines/catanduanes>).

Catholic Christians make up at least 97% of the population of the province of Catanduanes. Baptists, Methodists, Evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists and Protestants are the examples of other Christian denominations that live on the island as religious minorities. Muslims, Buddhists, Mormons and Hindus make up less than 2% of the total province's population. A small number of Spaniards, Americans, Australians, Chinese and Arabs live within the borders of the province [9]. The Bicolano community, the indigenous people of Catanduanes, are the province's most populous ethnic group. Therefore, it is natural that the Bicolano culture and Bicolano languages are also widespread in Catanduanes. In addition to Tagalog and English, the local languages such as "Northern Catanduanes Bicolano" and "Southern Catanduanes Bikolano" are also widely spoken.

The province of Catanduanes does not have a high population growth rate due to heavy immigration every year. The island population, which was 39410 in 1903, increased to 112121 in 1948, to 175247 in 1980, to 215356 in 2000 and to 271879 in 2020 (<https://www.philatlas.com/luzon/r05/catanduanes.html>). Agriculture, construction, fisheries, services sector, textile industry, forest products industry, mining and tourism are the most developed economic sectors on the island [8]. Souvenir manufacturing, lumbering, toy and



jewelry manufacturing also make contributions to the economy of the province. In the rural areas of the island, abaca and shelf production, copra and timber production, hat, bag and mat production, pig and poultry breeding, fruit and vegetable production are also widespread. Hats, fabrics, dresses and bags made out of natural products provide good income to the local families. Mud crab farming and aquaculture are also very common in the province of Catanduanes, which has the title of "the crab capital of the Philippines". It is famous as the "Abaca Capital" of the Philippines because of the very high quality "Abaca" produced in the Catanduanes Island. "Bananatex", which is obtained from the fibers of the "Abaca" banana plant, is widely produced on the island as a very useful, very economically priced and environmentally friendly textile product. Coconut, rice, banana, abaca, copra, maize, root and leguminous plants are widely grown on the island of Catanduanes. The Republic of the Philippines is one of the world's largest producers of Abaca fiber (Manila hemp) and the island of Catanduanes has played a major role in this national success. In conclusion, Catanduanes, which is commonly known as the province that produces both the highest quality and the most Abaca fiber in the Philippines, is famous as the "hometown of Abaca" since it alone produces 40 percent of the national Abaca fiber production [1,2].

The international tourism on the island, which is far from the crowded tourist masses, has only recently been developing in the last quarter century. The only airport on the island of Catanduanes, which does not have a rail transportation option, is the "Virac Airport", just west of the city of Virac. There are also regular ferry connections between the ports of San Andres and Virac and the port of Tabaco on the island of Luzon. The "Catanduanes State University", founded on 19 June 1971, is the only higher education institution on the island. The campus areas and educational institutions of the university are located in Virac and Panganiban. This university has a great role and function in the development of the island in the field of education, science and culture.

Catanduanes is divided into two geographical regions, "West Catanduanes" and "East Catanduanes". "West Catanduanes" is located in the western part of the island and consists of three districts (Virac, San Andres, Caramoran). "East Catanduanes", situated in the eastern part of the island, consists of eight districts (Bato, San Miguel, Baras, Gigmoto, Viga, Payo, Bagamanoc and Pandan). As is clear in Table 2, the province of Catanduanes includes 11 districts and 315 barangays. There are only 3 districts (Virac, San Andres and Caramoran) with more than 30000 people within the province borders and only 2 districts with less than 10000 people (National Statistical Coordination Board - <http://www.nscb.gov.ph>).

Table 2. Major Administrative and Geographical Features of the Catanduanes Province (Source: <https://www.philAtlas.com/luzon/r05/catanduanes.html>)

Name of the Town	Population of the Town (Year 2020)	Surface Area (km ²)	Population Density (Person/km ²)	Number of Barangays Embodied
Bagamonoc	11 086	80,7	137	18
Baras	13 484	109,5	123	29
Bato	21 748	48,6	447	27
Caramoran	32 114	263,7	122	27
Gigmoto	8 712	181,8	48	9
Pandan	21 473	119,9	179	26
Panganiban	9 713	79,9	121	23
San Andres	38 480	176,3	230	38
San Miguel	15 680	129,9	121	24



Viga	22 869	158,2	145	31
Virac	76 520	152,4	502	63
TOTAL	271 879	1 492	182	315

Therefore, the province's most populated district is Virac (76520), which also includes the province center and the least populated district of the province is Gigmoto (8712), located on the east coast of the island. Caramoran, the district with the largest area, is the only district of the province with an area of more than 200 km² with a surface area of 263.7 km² (Table 2). There are only 3 districts (Bagamonoc, Bato and Panganiban) with an area of less than 100 km² within the province borders. Thus, Bato, which has the smallest area, appears as the district with the highest arithmetic population density, together with Virac.

Consequently, Virac is the most densely populated district (502 km²) in the province of Catanduanes, whereas Gigmoto is the most sparsely populated (48 km²) district in the province (Table 2). The stream valleys, sea coasts and fertile plains, which are suitable for agricultural activities, are the most densely populated areas of the province, whereas the wet and forested lands and mountainous-rough areas constitute the most sparsely populated areas of the province. Naturally, large imbalances are observed in the distribution of the Barangay, as the districts in the province of Catanduanes have different areas and populations. The Virac district, which is the economic, cultural, tourism and commercial center of the province, has highest number of barangays (63), whereas Gigmoto, the province's least developed and least populated district, has the least number of barangays (Table 2).

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, geographical, economic and ecological characteristics of the Catanduanes 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 Catanduanes Island between 23 November 2022 – 12 January 2023; 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, comparative geographical, cartographic and expert assessment. 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.

This research was conducted using the case study method. Data and information obtained from document analysis and semi-structured interviews, as well as field observations, focus group discussion, participant observation, and expert interviews were used. Case studies are defined by many different names in different countries. A case study is one of the types of systematic design that involves steps such as gathering information, organizing, interpreting, and researching the information gathered, and achieving results, just like detailed planning in architecture. Case studies are a way to see what is actually happening in the environment, systematically collect data, analyze it, and draw conclusions. The result is a clear understanding of why things happened the way they did and what to focus on in detail for future investigations. In this study, “embedded single case study design”, in which there are more than one sub-unit of analysis, was used. In the planned research, both illustrative case studies, exploratory case studies and observational case studies were applied together.

The principle aims of this study are:



To introduce the readers to the geographical features, natural resources and regional differences of the island of Catanduanes.

To introduce the readers to the tourism resources, natural beauties and tourism potential of the island of Catanduanes.

To discuss the tourism privileges, tourism advantages and tourism disadvantages of the island of Catanduanes.

To identify and examine the main natural and cultural tourism attractions of the island of Catanduanes.

To create a tourist reference guide for foreign tourists visiting the island of Catanduanes.

To paint a multidimensional tourism portrait of the island of Catanduanes and make a scientific presentation of the island from the perspective of tourism geography.

Catanduanes is an unknown and unpopular island. Therefore, the main aim of this article is to reveal the tourism richness of the island with this scientific study and announce its regional beauties to the whole world.

Result and discussion

Catanduanes, which is one of the easternmost islands of the Philippine archipelago, is known as the "island of fierce storms" as it is isolated and vulnerable to the high waves of the Pacific Ocean. Strong winds throughout the year have made this island one of the favorite places for sea surfing enthusiasts. Every year, thousands of surfers from all over the world practice and improve their surfing skills on the choppy shores of this island. Catanduanes, facing the Pacific Ocean, is one of the least explored, most pristine and least polluted islands in the Republic of the Philippines. In other words, Catanduanes is the island with the most pristine nature, the most unexplored forests and the least explored lands in the Philippines and it is also the most suitable island for eco-tourism in the country. In the tropical forests of the inner parts of the island, there are many untouched lands where human feet have not stepped on until today.

While the locals living on the island call this adorable island "The Happy Island", foreign tourists describe it as a "hidden virgin island". Catanduanes, to some, is the first Philippine island to meet the Pacific waves and sun rays; to others it is the "hidden land of howling winds". Whatever the scientists and tourists call Catanduanes, this tropical island is waiting to be explored and examined in detail, as well as to welcome adventure-spirited tourists and adrenaline junkies. The eastern coast of the island, facing the Pacific Ocean, is one of the lands with the highest tourism potential in the Philippines. Therefore, as the administrators of the province of Catanduanes solve the transportation, education, health, electricity, internet, sewerage, communication and infrastructure problems on the island, tourism is expected to develop rapidly in the coming years. Interesting geomorphological formations, mysterious caves, hidden coves, majestic waterfalls, desolate coral islands, deep stream valleys and untouched tropical forests on the island are waiting to be explored by the nature lovers and adventurous tourists. Despite the frequent typhoons and tropical cyclones, between 120000 and 170000 domestic and foreign tourists visit the province of Catanduanes every year (<http://psa.gov.ph/>). the tourism types such as surf tourism, botanical tourism, agrotourism, forest tourism, extreme tourism, cultural tourism, sea tourism, rural tourism and ecological tourism is expected to develop even further in the coming years.

Natural Tourist Attractions of the Province of Catanduanes

Nature reserves, caves, waterfalls, beaches, small islets, natural parks, interesting hydrographic and geomorphological formations are among the most popular natural tourism attractions in Catanduanes. The most interesting and most visited natural tourism attractions in the province of Catanduanes are:

Nature reserves:



“Catanduanes Watershed Forest Reserve”, “Pandan Mangrove Reserve”, “Dela Rosa Mangrove Forest Reserve”, “Haribon Sanctuary”, “KATFC - Mabagsik Espi”, “Batalay Mangrove Eco Park”, “Protected Palms & Mangroves Area”.

Touristic waterfalls:

“Cambanasi Falls”, “Nahulugan Falls”, “Talahid Falls”, “Ba-Haw Falls”, “Hinik-Hinik Falls”, “Maribina Waterfalls”, “Gabaw Falls”, “Balongbong Waterfalls”, “Hicming Falls”, “Bontahiya Falls”, “Solong Falls”, “Paday Falls”.

Touristic beaches:

“Magnesia Del Norte Beach”, “Tubli Beach”, “Corewawan Beach”, “Talaga Beach”, “Agojo Beach”, “Ericsson Beach”, “Amenia Beach”, “Barefoot Beach”, “Mamangal Beach”, “Talisoy Beach”, “Batag Beach Resort”, “Marilima Beach”, “Batalay Beach”, “Sakahon Beach”, “Puraran Beach”, “Sioron Beach”, “Bitag Beach”, “Twin Rock Beach Resort”.

Touristic caves:

“Hawan Grande Luyang Cave”, “Sû-nog Sea Cave”, “Talisoy Beach Cave”, “Soboc Cave”, “Luyang Cave”, “Buyo Cave”.

Touristic small islets:

Locot Islands, Pulo (Macalanhog), Lete, Panay, Brillante, Porongpong (Palumbanes), Tignob, Calabagio, Balacay.

Touristic hydrographic formations:

“Tuwad Tuwadan Blue Lagoon”, “Tagbac River Eco Tourism”, “San Miguel River Park and Resort”, “Nupa Green Lagoon”.

Touristic ecological and geomorphological formations:

“Poseidon Rock Formation”, “Cagnipa Rolling Hills”, “Hiyop Highlands”, “Sabang Marara”, “Banquerohan Mangroves”, “Panaguican Mangroves”, “Tarahid Mangroves”, “Bonbon Mangroves Islet”, “Mangroves Fields”, “Bagamanoc Hollywood Sign”, “Buto ni Kuracog”, “Bantayaw Point”, “Mount Lantad, Luyang Cave Park”, “Ipit-Ipit Rock Formation”, “Nagngangang Buwaya Point”, “Carorian Adventures”, “Balacay Point”.

Human Tourism Attractions of the Province of Catanduanes

Historical faith centers, water parks, botanical gardens, agricultural farms, historical castles, museums, imposing lighthouses, Catholic churches with interesting architecture and spa centers are among the most popular human tourism attractions in Catanduanes. The most interesting and most visited human tourism attractions in the province of Catanduanes are:

Recreation centers, agrotourism centers and touristic farms:

“Paraiso ni Honesto”, “Delicia's Farms Agri Tourism Farm”, “Caramoran Cockpit Arena”, “Barangay Dariao Covered Court”, “Evangelista Leisure Farm”, “Tubli Barangay Plaza”, “Edzen Crab Farm”, “San Andres Street”, “Ceballo Residence and Agricultural Farm”, “Robert's Family Farm”, “Fish-Farm-Patot”, “Makawayan Nature's Farm”, “Twin Flame's Nature's Farm”, “Cristina's Strawberry Farm”, “Jaime's Garden”, “Manoy Badong & Manay Idi's Sunflowers”, “Yahay Farm”, “Ananong Farm Resort”.

Touristic human park areas:

“Pandan Catanduanes Seashore Park”, “Nipa Palm Fields Park”, “Viga River Park”, “Luyang Cave Park”, “Oceanview Park”, “Juan M. Alberto Memorial Plaza”, “Bagawang Pandan Catanduanes Park”, “Bato River Park”, “Bote Lighthouse”.

Major churches and faith centers:

“Virac Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception”, “St. Anthony of Padua Parish Church”, “San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila Parish Church”, “Pandan Catholic Parish Church”, “San Andres Chapel”, “Mabini Catholic Church”, “Datag Parish Church”, “Iglesia Ni Cristo - Lokal ng Datag”, “St. Joseph the Worker Parish”, “Our Lady of Assumption”, “San Pedro Calungsod Mission Church”, “Manambrag Catholic Church”, “Comagaycay Church”, “St. Andrew the Apostle Parish”, “Our Lady of Salvacion Parish”, “Bato Catholic Church”, “Baras Catholic

Church”, “St. John Paul II Parish Church”, “Saint Isidore the Laborer”, “Bugao Catholic Parish Church”, “Dororian Catholic Church”, “Saint Rafael the Archangel Church”, “Our Lady of Peñafrancia Grotto”.

Architectural works, historical monuments and museums:

“Old Capitol Building Museum”, “Museo de Catanduanes”, “Bishop Arnulfo S. Arcilla Memorial Center Museum”, “Tucan Hanging Bridge”, “Caramoran Municipal Boundary Marker”, “Andres Trampo Torres Memorial Bust”, “Dambana ng Batalay Historical Marker”, “Adarna Point Light Tower”, “Cor Hesu Adoration Chapel Museum”, “Virac Town Center”.

The most popular cafes, bars and restaurants:

“Blossoms Restaurant”, “Cafe de Au”, “Sea Breeze Restaurant”, “Buddy’s Mami House”, “Delfinos Diner”, “Daday Lugawan”, “E Lounge Resto Bar”, “Tandu Coffee”, “The Finn”, “Drunk Box Pub and Club”, “Ardci Skydeck Lounge”, “Annyeong Samgyupsal House”, “Thirstea Milk Tea Shop”, “Alley Café”, “Howling Tea”, “Big Boss Korean BBQ”, “Cathy’s Restaurant”, “Kape’t Tagpuan Sa Isla”, “R&M Hillside View”, “M. Manlangit Eatery”, “Nedan’s Pizza Virac”, “Fernando’s Asian Cuisine”.

Most popular hotels:

“Twin Rock Beach Resort”, “Catanduanes Halfway Resort Hotel”, “Manuria Beach”, “Terazzas De Ponti Mansions”, “Lucky Hotel and Resort”, “Catanduanes Midtown Inn”, “Rakdell Inn”, “ARDCI Corporate Inn”, “Kemji Resort and Restaurant”, “Queen Maricel Inn Hotel”, “E-Crown Hotel and Resort”, “Puraran Surf Beach Resort”, “Carangyan Beach Resort”, “Pacific Surfers Paradise Beach Resort”, “Emmalyn’s Paradise Resort”, “Rakdell In Hotel”.

Table 3: Top 20 Natural and Cultural Tourism Attractions of the Catanduanes Province
(Source: Authors, 2022)

Top 20 Natural Tourism Attractions of the Catanduanes Province	Top 20 Cultural Tourism Attractions of the Catanduanes Province
Puraran Beach	St. Andrew the Apostle Parish
Mamangal Beach	Museo de Catanduanes
Catanduanes Forest Reserve	Bato Catholic Church
Palestina Rolling Hills	Twin Rock Beach Resort
Tuwad-Tuwadan Lagoon	Lolong Point Lighthouse
Marilima Beach	Virac Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Binurong Point	Terrazas De Ponti Mansion
Panaguican Mangroves	St. Anthony of Padua Parish Church
Talisoy Beach	Pagasa Weather Radar Station
Amenia Beach	Viga Cold Spring
Hicming Falls	San Miguel River Park
Palumbanes Island	Pandan Catholic Parish Church
Balacay Point	Old Capitol Building Museum
Cagnipa Rolling Hills	Bishop Arnulfo S. Arcilla Memorial Center
Luyang Cave	Juan M. Alberto Memorial Plaza
Poseidon Rock Formation	Bote Lighthouse
Batag Beach	Pandan Seashore Park
Maribina Falls	Bagawang Pandan Catanduanes Park
Nahulugan Falls	Delicia’s Farms Agri Tourism Farm
Hawan Grande Luyang Cave	Virac Town Center

Table 3 illustrates the 40 most popular tourist attractions within the island borders that foreign tourists should go and see. There are many capes, coves, cliffs, mangrove forests and coastal formations such as lagoons on the Catanduanes Island and these are among the most interesting natural formations of the island. “Balacay Point”, “Tuwad Tuwadan Blue Lagoon”, “Binurong Point”, “Panaguican Mangroves”, “Nupa Green Lagoon”, “Nagngangang Buwaya Point”, “Mermaid's Pool”, “Poseidon Rock Formation” visited by thousands of tourists every year” and “Dela Rosa Mangrove Forest Reserve” are the examples of these interesting coastal formations, which are of great importance in terms of tourism (Table 3).

Since sloping and rough terrains are common on the island of Catanduanes, very beautiful and majestic waterfalls have emerged in the river valleys. “Maribina Waterfalls” located just east of Virac district, “Nahulugan Falls” just west of Gigmoto district, “Paday Falls” just north of Panganiban district, “Hicming Falls” just north of Virac district, “Talahid Falls” in San Andres county borders and “Balongbong Waterfalls” just north of Bato town are the most popular and most visited waterfalls of the Catanduanes island (Table 3). In addition to the caves, beaches and waterfalls, the island of Catanduanes has many natural tourism attractions created by the streams. Some interesting hydrographic and geomorphological natural formations located in the river valleys operate as "special protection lands" or "recreational park areas" in order to develop tourism activities. “Tagbac River Eco Tourism”, “Bato River Park”, “Panaguican Mangroves”, “Nipa Palm Fields”, “San Miguel River Park and Resort”, “Oco – Alinawan Delta Land”, “Viga River Park” and “Protected Palms” & Mangroves Area” can be illustrated as the examples of these interesting river formations of touristic importance (Table 3).

Table 4: Major hotels and accommodations in the province of Catanduanes
(Source: Authors, 2022)

Cabacungan Private Resort	Carangyan Beach Resort	Bonifacio Lodge
Majestic Puraran Beach Resort	Twin Rock Beach Resort	Villa Felina
Monte Karlo Waterfront Tourist Inn	Bahay Ni Kuya Romel	Angeles Homestay
Puraran Surf Beach Resort	Pandan Seashore Park	Le Solliel Cottages
Casa Remedios Bed&Breakfast	Villa Amacepia Resort	Jo Surf Inn
HB Homes and Gardens Antipolo	Winson Event Garden	Alon Surf Stay
Emmalyn's Paradise Resort	Cathy's Spring Resort	Chez Lita
Miguilas Inn and Resto Bar	Villa Amacepia Resort	Oco Kantil Resort
Hidden Paradise Waterpark Resort	Ma Belen Dela Cruz	Emerich Inn
Cabacungan Private Resort	Mamangal Beach Resort	Angeles Homestay
Mayon View Private Resort	Dayhagan Beach Resort	The Rezidence
Casa Remedios Bed & Breakfast	Amenia Beach Resort	Fleur De Liz
Wuppertaler Travellers Inn	Lucky Hotel and Resort	Rizal Ice Resort
Catanduanes Midtown Inn	Johnny's Beach Resort	Three Strand Inn
Sunset Coast Beach Resort	Twin Rock Beach Resort	Oliver's Riff Resort
Doña Emillana Margarita Magtagñob	Puraran Executive Suites	Blue Horizon Hotel
Putting Baybay Beach Resort	Kemji Resort - Restaurant	Bosdak Beach Resort
Ohlala La Mer Sea Residence Resort	Queen Maricel Inn Hotel	Majestic Puraran
Terazzas De Ponti Mansions	E-Crown Hotel And Resort	ARDCI Corporate Inn
Sarmiento's Boarding House	Renel's Travellers Inn	Avenue Plaza Virac
Villa Tolledo Travel Lodge	Liebe Max Beach Resort	Rhaj Inn
Alexandra's Hotel and Resort	Marem Catanduanes	Rakdell Inn
Catanduanes Halfway Resort Hotel	Maui Beach Resort	Toytoy Beach



In the province of Catanduanes, the number of four or five-star hotels in the luxury class is highly insufficient. Low-priced hotels, hostels, apartments, hostels, motels, rental villas and family businesses are the most common accommodation facilities. More than 90% of the hotels and accommodation facilities on the island are located in the coastal areas (Table 4). There are almost no accommodation facilities in the inner parts of the island covered with forested lands and especially in the hilly high parts. The disruption of infrastructure services such as transportation, electricity, internet and sewerage in these regions has also led to the disruption of touristic activities. The "Catanduanes Halfway Resort Hotel", "Twin Rock Beach Resort", "Emmalyn's Paradise Resort", "Catanduanes Midtown Inn", "Queen Maricel Inn Hotel", "Carangyan Beach Resort", "Terazzas De" are among the most popular and top quality hotels in the province. Ponti Mansions", "E-Crown Hotel and Resort", "Lucky Hotel and Resort", "Rakdell Inn", Monte Karlo Waterfront Tourist Inn" and "Puraran Surf Beach Resort" are hotel generating the highest revenues (Table 4). In conclusion, there are accommodation facilities with different characteristics and a total number of more than 80 within the borders of the province. Small hotels, apartments, hostels and cheap family businesses are the most common. Majority of the modern tourist facilities on the island of Catanduanes are found on the San Andres - Virac - Baras coastline (Table 4). The "Twin Rock Beach Resort", the island's only luxury hotel, is also the province's only four-star accommodation facility. There are no luxury accommodation facilities, modern hospitals and shopping centers, multi-purpose sports complexes, theaters and modern cultural centers on the Catanduanes Island. As a matter of fact, the service sector and infrastructure are not at the desired level on the island, where the tourism sector has just been developing.

Tourism Attractions of the Province of Catanduanes

The province of Catanduanes has hundreds of natural and human tourism attractions and a great number of tourist attractions. The following briefly describes the main tourist attractions in the province of Catanduanes.

Catanduanes Watershed Forest Reserve

The "Catanduanes Watershed Forest Reserve", covering the central parts of Catanduanes Island, has a surface area of 489 km² (48 924 hectares) and is the largest nature reserve on the island. It is known that this nature protection area undertakes the duties of protecting both terrestrial areas, inland watersheds, forest lands and flora and fauna. This nature reserve, which was officially established on June 22, 2018, has some parts that are almost impossible to reach as they are away from the main roads. Densely forested lands on the island are concentrated between 400-700 m altitude steps and these are generally old rainforests. All of the forested lands on the island cover an area of approximately 70,000 hectares, a significant part of which is found within the "Catanduanes Basin Forest Reserve". This reserve area provides great contributions to the island economy both in terms of clean drinking water and irrigation water supply and in terms of hydroelectricity production. The "Catanduanes Watershed Forest Reserve", whose lands are spread over 10 districts, is one of the richest places in the Philippines in terms of plant and animal diversity. There are many endemic plant and animal species in the protected area. There are many tourist attractions and tourism attractions within the boundaries of the nature reserve and the most important ones to visit are: The "Hnik-Hinik Falls", "Tagbac River Eco Tourism", "Robert's Family Farm", "Sabang Marara", "Delicia's Farms Agri Tourism Farm", "San Miguel River Park and Resort".

Surfers' New Capital: Puraran

The town of Puraran, situated on the southeast coast of Catanduanes Island, is one of the Philippines' most famous surfing destinations and one of the island's most popular tourist attractions. Therefore, an international sports competition called the "Majestic Surfing Cup" is held in Puraran every year, usually in October, where surfers from all over the world



congregate. There is also a big surfing festival held in Puraran every year in May. The “Puraran Surf Beach Resort”, “Putting Baybay Beach Resort”, “Majestic Beach Resort” and “Jo Surf Inn” located on the Puraran coast are among the most preferred accommodation facilities by the foreign tourists and surfers. Furthermore, the “Puraran English Language and Surf School” provides services in the region for people who want to combine sports, language education and surfing and improve their English language knowledge and skills. The peak surfing season on the Puraran coast generally lasts from July to October. “Balacay Point” and “Binurong Point” with breathtaking sea views; “Macutal Swimming Pool”, a favorite place for children; One of the largest and oldest churches in the region, “St. John Paul II Parish Church”; “Nupa Green Lagoon”, one of the most beautiful lagoon lakes on the island; The “Gabaw Falls”, which has a magnificent view, are the main interesting tourism attractions not to be missed in the Puraran region.

The Land of Majestic Falls: Catanduanes

There are at least 10 touristic waterfalls within the borders of Catanduanes. Some of them can be reached by asphalt road, while those that are not accessible can only be reached on foot with a difficult climb. The most popular, given its easily accessible location, is the Maribina Falls. This waterfall, found in the east of the city of Virac and just west of the town of Bato, is very close to the seaside. The cascaded waterfalls, ejaculating with breathtaking streams of crystal-clear water, are nestled amidst rustic surroundings and lush vegetation. The Maribina Waterfalls are about 5-6 meters high and the clear waters flowing over the giant cliffs fall into a natural pool with a loud noise. The multi-cascaded Maribina Falls are maintained by the Bato's local government and a small tourist fee is charged for entry. On hot and sweltering days, the local people and especially children love to swim and cool off in the waters of the waterfalls. 2-3 kilometers northeast of the Maribina Falls is the less popular “Balongbong Waterfalls”. This small waterfall, located in the Bato valley, is very close to the main road; therefore, it can be easily reached and visited all year round. The Balongbong waterfall waters falling from the hard cliffs has created a large natural pool here. Many children living nearby swim in this natural pool on the sweltering hot days.

The “Nahulugan Falls”, situated just west of the town of Gigmoto, is a hard-to-reach tourist attraction since it lacks road connections. Nahulugan, found in the Gigmoto stream basin and in the middle of tropical forests, is a three-step waterfall of breathtaking beauty. The immediate surroundings of the waterfall offer ideal natural environments for having a picnic, swimming in the streams and natural pools, jumping off the cliffs or climbing in the immediate surroundings.

The “Hicming Falls” found just 2-3 kilometers north of the city of Virac, is one of the most beautiful waterfalls on the island of Catanduanes. This waterfall is easily accessible by passing through the rainforests and small cove roads. The waterfall, surrounded by lush rainforest, is located just east of the village of the same name, Hicming. Even though the waterfall in the basin of the Pajo river does not attract the attention of foreign tourists, it is a popular picnic and recreation center for families and especially children in the immediate vicinity. “Guava Hills Resort” and “Edge Lodge” are the closest accommodation centers to this waterfall. The waterfall, consisting of several steps, is suitable for swimming, having a picnic and jumping into its cool waters. Even though “Hicming Falls” is located very close to the city of Virac, it is an unexplored natural gem that is not yet known enough, not popular enough.

The “Talahid Falls”, located north of San Andres Town and west of Cabungahan village, is a two-tiered waterfall with a very aesthetic appearance. It is a very tranquil and secluded place, as this interesting waterfall is rarely visited by the locals as well as the tourists. Since there is no road leading to this beautiful waterfall, it can only be reached after a 50-60-minute walk through forested and rocky lands. However, once one witnesses the majestic waterfall with a magnificent view, it is possible to claim that it deserves this challenging hike.



The lower part of the “Talahid Waterfall” is about 3 to 5 meters high and the upper part is about 10 to 12 meters high. One can enjoy swimming in the naturally formed pools both at the top and bottom of the waterfall. Even the locals in Catanduanes scarcely know about the “Talahid Falls”, as it is rarely visited.

The “Hinik-Hinik Falls”, situated in the northwest of the towns of Bagamonoc and Bugao and southeast of the town of Pandan, is a waterfall known by very few people and not visited by foreign tourists, but has a breathtaking view. “Hnik-Hnik Falls” is known locally as “Linampawan Falls”. “Hnik-Hinik Falls”, found within the boundaries of the “Catanduanes Watershed Forest Reserve”, is located in a very hard to reach rugged area surrounded by rainforest. The waterfall, which is accompanied by local tourist guides and generally followed by river valleys, fascinates its visitors with its 85 meters high. It is very risky and dangerous to go to the waterfall without guards, tourism experts or a tourist guide. However, the tourists who want to explore the wild tropical nature, dense rainforests, interesting plant and animal species can set out this challenging journey with a tourist guide. The “Hinik-Hinik Falls”, about 25 kilometers from Pandan town center, is one of the island's least known but most beautiful and most impressive waterfalls.

Land of Tropical Beaches: Catanduanes

The beaches on the Catanduanes Island have four things in common. The first common feature is that they are secluded and tranquil beaches without crowded tourist masses. The second common feature is that most of them are free of charge public beaches. The third common feature is that they are ecological beaches with clean sea waters, almost all of which do not contain any industrial and domestic wastes. The fourth common feature is that they provide uninterrupted service all year round, 365 days a year. There are more than 60 tourist beaches serving domestic and foreign tourists in the province of Catanduanes (Table 5). Since the monthly average temperature is above 20°C throughout the year on the territory of the province, these beaches serve uninterrupted sea tourism for 12 months. The “Talisoy Beach”, “Marilima Beach”, “Mamangal Beach”, “Poseidon Beach” and “Amenia Beach” located near the town of Virac, the province capital, are the most visited and most popular beaches in the province of Catanduanes (Table 5).

Since there are very few number of hotels, restaurants, bars and accommodation facilities around these beaches, it is possible to define them as quiet and not overcrowded beaches. The biggest negative feature of these beaches is that the sea is windy and wavy for most of the year. Examples of isolated, desolate and quiet beaches in the province of Catanduanes, far from the settlements and hotels, are the “Bitaog Beach” on the Porongpong island, the “Cloyd Beach” and “Lete Public Beach” on the Lete island, the “Dayhagan Beach Resort” on the Panay island, “Manuria Beach”, “Kuriyaw Beach”, “Cagnipa Beach”, “Minaabat Beach”, “Maui Beach”, “Sioron Beach”, “Toytoy Beach” and “Sugod Beach” on the Catanduanes island (Table 5). These beaches are always tranquil, quiet and clean and offer good opportunities for romantic vacationers as they are devoid of crowded tourist masses.

Table 5: Major beaches in the province of Catanduanes (Source: Authors, 2022)

Mamangal Beach	Carutan Beach	Soboc Beach
Corewawan Beach	Puraran Beach	Sugod Beach
Putting Baybay Beach Resort	Toytoy Beach	Igang Beach
Twin Rock Beach Resort	Poseidon Beach	Batalay Beach
Bosdak Beach Resort	Manuria Beach	Maui Beach
Magnesia Del Norte Beach	Sakahon Beach	Muraw Beach
Batag Beach Resort	Talisoy Beach	Mambang Beach



Elta Playa Casa	Marilima Beach	Cagnipa Beach
Pandan Seashore Park	Kuriyaw Beach	Sabang Beach
Sav Ace Beach	Bitagogan Beach	Pulo Beach
Legacy Lane by Coco Beach	Sakahon Beach	Pinta Beach
Rota Coco Resort	Cagdarao Beach	Tubli Beach
Kanlubi Beach Resort	Minaabat Beach	Manuria Beach
Magnesia Del Norte Beach	Siban Ban Beach	Sioron Beach
Batag Beach Resort	Talisoy Beach	Talaga Beach
Ericsson Beach	Barefoot Beach	Agojo Beach

There are more than 60 tourist beaches with different characteristics on the Catanduanes Island. Some are grand, some are small, while some others have accommodation facilities, some do not. However, majority of these beaches are unfrequented, safe and clean beaches, devoid of crowds of tourists and noise. The following briefly introduces the most popular beaches on Catanduanes Island.

Amenia Beach

The Amenias Beach, located 3 kilometers north of Mamangal beach, is just southeast of the town of San Andres and is undoubtedly one of the most popular beaches on the island of Catanduanes. Especially at the weekends, many picnickers and visitors from the city of Virac and the town of San Andres have fun and vacation with their families on this beautiful beach. The biggest touristic advantages of Amenias Beach are its easy accessibility, affordable accommodation, unspoiled natural environment, long cream-colored beaches and unpolluted sea waters. The “Ericsson Beach Resort”, “Blue Horizon Resort”, “La Playa Resort” and “Amenias Beach Resort” are the examples of modest accommodation options located around the beach. The tourists who come to the Amenias Beach generally visit the “Cristina's Strawberry Farm”, “Luyang Cave Park”, “Mamangal Beach”, “Canapino Restaurant”, “Twin Flame's Nature's Farm” and “Jaime's Garden”.

Mamangal Beach

The Mamangal beach, located about 3 kilometers south of Amenias Beach and 4 kilometers west of the city of Virac, attracts visitors with its unspoiled nature, cream colored beaches and pure beauty. The large beach, covered with cool and shady trees, is covered with fine white/cream sand both on the shoreline and in the swimming area. The beach area, which is likened to the “White Beach” on the island of Boracay with its deep blue waters and long white sand dunes, is surrounded by shady trees and offers an ideal holiday environment for relaxation, sunbathing, scuba diving, swimming and picnic. Scuba divers can dive to see the rich marine life off the shores of the Mamangal Beach. The “Mamangal Beach Resort”, “Sunset Coast Beach Resort” and “Oliver's Riff Resort” are the closest accommodation facilities to the beach area within the borders of Balite Municipality. Popular tourist resorts such as the “Batag Beach Resort”, “Marilima Beach” and “Kosta Alcantara Beach” are found just south of Mamangal Beach.

Talisoy Beach

The Talisoy Beach, located 1 kilometer southwest of the city of Virac, is considered the sacred sea place of the island of Catanduanes. Talisoy Beach, situated in a small cove surrounded by high cliffs, is also known as the “Jesus Face Beach” by locals due to its unique rock formation claimed to resemble the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it was adopted as the sacred beach of the island of Catanduanes. In addition to this unique feature, the incoming tourists can sunbathe on the fine white sand beach or swim in the deep blue sea waters. The seabed is a bit rocky, so those who wish to dive should be careful. The “Talisoy Beach Cave”,



located 400 – 500 meters from the beach, which has a very narrow area, is one of the most interesting sea caves on the island of Catanduanes.

The "Twin Rock Beach Resort", situated just east of Talisoy Beach, which is also called "Tampad Beach" by the local people, is the best quality hotel both in the region and on the whole island. The "Igang Beach", "Kasingsing Beach", "Ardi Beach" and "Tailan Beach" are the examples of other beach areas that are closest to the Talisoy Beach. The "Fleur De Liz", "Twin Rock Beach Resort", "Bosdak Beach Resort" and "Doña Emillana Margarita Magtagñob" are the main accommodation facilities located around the beach. The Talisoy Beach, also known as the "Jesus Face Beach", is visited by paying a small entrance fee. That's the reason why the municipally run beach has an entrance fee of 50 Philippine Pesos. The tourists who choose economical holidays can rent one of the bungalow houses around the beach.

Maui Beach

The Maui Beach, located within the district limits of Caramoran, is one of the most tranquil beaches on the western coast of the island of Catanduanes. The beach that is located just north of the town of Datag, has the "Sugod Beach" to the south and "Carutan Beach" to the south and the "Tubli Beach" to the north. Since there are not many hotels, restaurants, bars and similar touristic facilities around the beach within the boundaries of Maui Barangay, it attracts the attention of day visitors who generally do not stay overnight. It is possible to describe the "Maui Beach" as a desolate, clean and tranquil seaside tourist destination; however, it is an unpopular beach as there are no interesting attractions to see in the immediate vicinity.

Escape Route of Romantic Tourists: The Palumbanes Archipelago

The Palumbanes Archipelago, located in the northwest of Catanduanes Island, is located within the borders of Caramoran district and consists of a total of three islands: Parongpong (Palumbanes), Tignob and Calabagio. The inquisitive tourists who wish to visit and see these touristic places can reach these islands in 40-50 minutes by renting a boat from the Caramoran sea port. The islands, situated in both the Province of Catanduanes and the Bicol region, are located in the northern part of the Strait of Macueda. The beaches with wonderful dirty white sand, the pristine and quiet natural environment, the mysterious hidden coves, the untouched shores, the disconnection from the settlements and civilization are the greatest tourism advantages of this archipelago. There is neither internet, nor a restaurant or hotel, nor a polyclinic or market on the islands, which are 13 km away from the coastline of Caramoran district. Therefore, it is beneficial for those who visit the island for a picnic, beach holiday or a daily visit to come to the islands by taking their products, medicines and food that will meet their personal needs. These archipelagos of Tignob and Calabagio, known as the "fishing paradise of the north", do not contain settlements and permanent populations. There is only one small village on the Palumbanes Island that lives through with limited means. With no beach areas, Calabagio is the closest to the Catanduanes Island, but it is very seldom visited by tourists as it is a rocky, rugged and completely uninhabited island. The furthest from Catanduanes Island, Tignob is another bone-shaped uninhabited island with beautiful uninhabited beaches.

The Palumbanes Island, also known as Parompong Island, is the largest, most famous and most beautiful island of this archipelago. The inhabitants of the island live on crop production, poultry farming and fishing. For those looking for a sea break from the hustle and bustle of the stressful city life, the Palumbanes Island offers the perfect peace and quiet. For those who wish to spend their holidays away from the crowded beaches and noisy hotels, the Palumbanes Island is exactly the tropical paradise they are after. Those who plan to spend the night on this island can either spend the night watching the stars and the sky in the tents they bring with them, or stay in one of the simple cottages rented by the villagers. Even though small grocery stores operate on the island, which is often subject to power cuts, it is useful for tourists to come prepared and bring the necessary products with them. The Palumbanes Island is suitable for surfing, camping and having a picnic, as well as for swimming and sunbathing.



Before leaving this interesting island, it is a good idea to visit the “Parongpong Lighthouse” to see its surroundings from a bird's eye view. The breathtaking panoramic view of the Lighthouse mesmerizes the visitors.

The tourists visiting the Palumbanes island usually sunbathe on the cream-white sands of the Bitao Beach and take commemorative photos in the clear azure waters. In fact, the “Bitao Beach” and “Cuyabot Beach” are the most popular tourist attractions on the Palumbanes Island. In these beach areas, it is possible to do snorkeling and professional diving, as well as to explore the rich underwater world of coral reefs and breathtaking fish diversity. Hitoma, the only touristic lake in the province of Catanduanes, is one of the most popular recreation areas of the Palumbanes Island. The lake shores with turquoise clear waters are ideal for picnics, sunbathing or swimming. After resting on the shores of “Lake Hitoma”, tourists usually climb up the “Binanderahan Hill”. This bare hill has a stunning panoramic sea view and is the best spot on the island, especially for watching the sunset. In summary, one should not leave the Palumbanes island without snorkeling on the shores of Palumbanes, climbing up the “Binanderahan Hill”, sunbathing at the “Bitao Beach”, tasting the fresh fish cooked by the locals, swimming in the “Hitoma Lake”, and watching the breathtaking panoramic view at the Lighthouse.

St. John the Baptist Church of Bato

The Bato Church was originally built out of wood by the Franciscans in 1830, but the existing coral stone church building was completed in 1883. The oldest church bell still used by the Christian Congregation was donated almost a century ago in 1829. In other words, the construction of the historical church took 53 years to complete. This magnificent structure, located just at the northern entrance of the town of Bato, is one of the oldest Catholic faith centers on the Catanduanes Island. The church building, which has resisted wars, typhoons, floods, fires and earthquakes for many years, still stands firm today and serves the curious tourists and faithful Christians. This Catholic church, situated on a hill in the Bato river valley, has a magnificent view of the valley. Located on the island of Catanduanes, the Bato Church, which is the oldest religious artifact from the Spanish colonial period, is visited by hundreds of tourists every year with its magnificent architecture, breathtaking view and thick walls made of coral stones.

Binurong Point

The “Binurong Point”, situated on the southeast coast of Catanduanes Island, northeast of the Virac city and a few kilometers southeast of the Baras town, is one of the Philippines' most beautiful natural landscapes. This miracle of nature can be described as the “fascinating location” where high seaside cliffs, steep cliff coasts, eerie cliffs, deep valleys, lush meadows and breathtaking sea views meet. The “Binurong Point” is one of the most popular and scenic attractions in Catanduanes. While “Binurong Point” is one of the Philippines' most interesting natural attractions, these fantastic natural landscapes are neither well-publicized nor very well-known. Binurong has 4 tourist spots with different views and each one is more beautiful than the other. The best time to go to the “Binurong Point” is before dawn, so both the wet grass and the sunrise can be enjoyed. The foreign tourists have been flocking here in recent years in order to watch the sunrise. Therefore, the journey from the Virac city to the “Binurong Point” should start at 4:00 am. The journey from Virac city center to the starting point of the view takes approximately 1 hour. Some argue that the magnificent hills and lush meadows of Binurong are very similar to those of the Batanes region or even Ireland. In fact, there is no need for such a comparison; the “Binurong Point” truly has unique charm and beauty of its own. Tourists visiting these desolate shores will be enchanted by the natural green meadows, the waves crashing against the high shores and the magnificent ocean views.

Luyang Cave Park



The Luyang cave, located in the southwest of the island of Catanduanes and within the borders of San Andres county, is one of the most interesting geomorphological formations of the island. This cave system, found about 2 kilometers east of the town of San Andres, is one of the most striking karst formations in the province of Catanduanes. There are many stalactites and stalagmites in the cave area, as well as numerous bats and interesting rock formations. Since the cave visited with the help of a tourist guide is cold and wet, the tourists should generally be careful in choosing their clothes. There are no touristic facilities such as hotels, restaurants, bars around the Luyang cave, and there are no service utilities such as a bakery, gas station, pharmacy, market.

Hawan Grande Luyang Cave

The "Luyang Cave" near San Andres and the "Hawan Grande Luyang Cave" near the Virac city are often confused by the tourists due to the similarity in their names. The "Hawan Grande Luyang Cave", located approximately 2-3 kilometers west of Virac city, is the longest and largest cave system on the island of Catanduanes. Since the ceilings of the cave are very high and the interior width is very large, it can easily accommodate 120-140 people. Therefore, when a natural disaster occurs, a big earthquake or typhoon, the local people take shelter in this cave. Some indigenous Catholics often visit and worship this cave on the Holy Week days. For this reason, it is possible to say that this gigantic cave system has a sacred function and religious value as well as its touristic significance. The cave, which can be visited in about 20-30 minutes, is frequently visited by the local and foreign tourists.

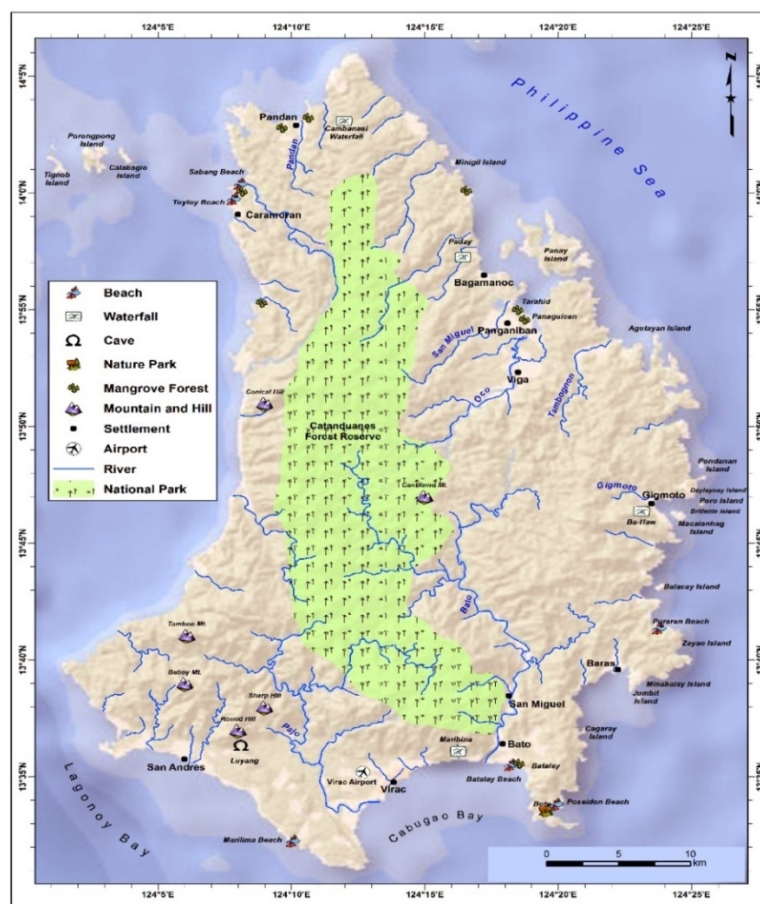


Figure 2. Tourism Map of the Catanduanes Island (Source: Authors, 2022)



Museo de Catanduanes

The Catanduanes museum, which was opened on October 24, 2011, maintains its activities as the only large multifunctional museum of the island. This museum, built and operated by the Catanduanes Provincial Directorate of Tourism, serves the locals as well as the tourists by protecting the historical, cultural and social heritage of the province of Catanduanes. The museum, located in the city center of Virac, undertakes a multifunctional cultural task where paintings, sculptures, archaeological remains and works of art are exhibited. The museum, which deals with the historical remains, handicrafts, folklore elements and artistic past of the province of Catanduanes, has also turned into a tourist attraction where photographs of important events on the island, local clothing, sacred religious artifacts and old household items are exhibited. This interesting Regional Museum is also home to rare fossil species called “Hamujong” or “Trumpet” shells discovered in Virac by a Japanese anthropologist.

Virac Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

The “Virac Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception”, situated in the center of the city of Virac, right next to “Plaza Rizal”, is undoubtedly the most magnificent and most beautiful Catholic church in the province of Catanduanes. This historical center of faith, which is also known as the “Virac Cathedral” or “Catanduanes Cathedral”, was founded in 1755. Today, the “Virac Cathedral” has been completely renovated, giving it an external appearance similar to the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. This imposing cathedral, which is the cultural heritage of the Spanish colonial period, impresses both the local and foreign tourists with its fascinating architecture. The Diocese of Virac (Dioecesis Viracensis), which was previously part of the Diocese of Legazpi in the province of Albay, was officially approved for separation as a separate diocese by Pope Paul VI on 27 May 1974. Thus, the administrative center of the newly created Virac Diocese became the “Virac Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception”. Therefore, the historical “Virac Cathedral” has a great moral value among the people of Catanduanes.

Pandan Mangrove Reserve

The town of Pandan, located in the northern part of Catanduanes Island, has very interesting natural beauties and tourist attractions. The “Dela Rosa Mangrove Forest Reserve”, “Pandan Seashore Park”, “Mambang Beach”, “Pandan Mangrove Reserve”, “Kuriyaw Beach”, “Tuwad Tuwadan Blue Lagoon”, “Hyopia Highlands” and “Pandan Catholic Parish Church” in Pandan area are the most popular tourist attractions to be visited. The tourists visiting the Pandan region can spend the night in one of the accommodation facilities such as the “Carangyan Beach Resort” and “Bonifacio Lodge”. Since there are not many big hotel options in the region, deciding on between one of 2-3 accommodation facilities reflects obligation rather than freedom of choice. The “Pandan Mangrove Reserve”, located 2 kilometers northeast of the town of Pandan, covers the best preserved wetlands of Catanduanes Island [4,5,6,7]. These wetlands, which have a rich diversity of fish, plants and animals, offer an environment suitable for different recreation and sports activities such as fishing, boat tours, rowing sports. The “Pandan Mangrove Reserve”, situated in the transition zone where land and sea meet, is one of the favorite haunts of botanists, zoologists, geographers and ecologists as it hosts both marine and terrestrial creatures. The Pandan wetlands, joining the Philippine Sea and the Carangyan Coast in the north, are home to a variety of fish and invertebrates such as shrimp, crustaceans, frogs and mollusks. If the visitors wish to feel the fresh sea breeze and admire the lush greenery, they can paddle in a boat and cruise through the lush forest, or walk the muddy mangrove floor to observe the wildlife. Early morning bird watching, canoeing and fishing are the main recreational activities that can be enjoyed in the wetland.

San Miguel River Park

The Bato river valley, which empties its water into the Cabugao bay, has many interesting tourist attractions and many recreational opportunities. Exciting activities such as



cooling off in the natural waterfall pool created by “Balongbong Waterfalls”, visiting the historical Bato Church, drinking freshly ground coffee in “Kape't Tagpuan Sa Isla” coffee shop, taking photos in “Bato River Park” are among those to be enjoyed in the Bato valley. However, there is no doubt that rafting in the Bato valley is the most enjoyable and exciting of these recreational activities. Rafting in “San Miguel River Park” with small canoes for a certain fee is one of the most interesting touristic experiences to be experimented on the Catanduanes Island. Some people visit the “San Miguel River Park” to swim and cool off, some others to picnic or camp by the stream, and some others to paddle with canoes. In conclusion, fighting against the undulating river waters in the meandering Bato valley and watching the natural beauties by the stream will be an unforgettable touristic experience for the foreign tourists visiting the region.

Conclusion

Catanduanes is the 12th largest island in the Republic of the Philippines and is separated from the Bicol Peninsula by the Maqueda Bay and Lagonoy Bay. Approximately 46% of this green tropical island is covered with forests; therefore, virgin rainforests, vast wetlands, rich freshwater springs and breathtaking coasts are the greatest natural wealth of this island. There are more than 20 small islets off the coast of Catanduanes and most of them are not permanently populated and inhabited. Catanduanes is called the “Land of Howling Winds” because of the frequent typhoons occurring each year. This stormy island is also known as the “Happy Island” because of its humble, peaceful, helpful, cheerful and positive people.

Essentially, when the Spanish colonists first came to the island, they called it “Isla de Cobos”, that is, “Kobos Island”. Today, it is famous as the “Abaca Capital” as it is one of the largest producers of Abaca fiber (Manila hemp) in the Republic of the Philippines (Morales, et al., 2014). Catanduanes, turning its face to the Pacific waters, is one of the most pristine and environmentally friendly islands in the easternmost part of the Republic of the Philippines. One of the features of this marginal island, which is intertwined with the Pacific Ocean, is that it has been little researched and studied scientifically and was discovered belatedly by tourism investors. The fact that the island has vast tropical forests and a large number of virgin lands has restrained its economic, demographic and cultural development. The fact that the country is away from the major metropolitan cities and main transportation routes, as well as its insufficient publicity of the island and tourism investments, have adversely affected the tourism activities throughout the island. Despite all these negativities, the expectations that the touristic facilities on the island will increase and the number of foreign tourists will increase in the coming years has been gradually increasing as well.

Catanduanes, which is a part of the Bicol Region, is a kidney-shaped island. Catanduanes Island is home to numerous wetlands, canyon valleys, majestic mountains, mysterious caves, deserted atolls, historical churches, natural mangrove forests, romantic beaches and magnificent waterfalls. “Maribina”, “Talahid” and “Nahulugan” are among the most beautiful waterfalls of the island. “Sû-nog Sea Cave” and “Talisoy Beach Cave” are the most interesting sea caves on the shores of the island. However, the “Luyang Cave” and “Hawan Grande Luyang Cave”, which are important in terms of tourism, are the largest terrestrial cave systems of the island (Table 3). “Tuwad-Tuwadan Lagoon” is the most beautiful natural lake of the island of Catanduanes and the best quality hotel is the “Twin Rock Beach Resort”. The “Binurong Point”, “Balacay Point” and “Poseidon Rock Formation” which are surrounded by high and steep natural cliffs, are the island's most magnificent geomorphological formations and have the most beautiful views on the island to watch the sunrise. The most interesting museums of the island are the “Old Capitol Building Museum”, “Bishop Arnulfo S. Arcilla Memorial Center” and “Museo de Catanduanes” (Table 3). “Bato Catholic Church”, which is of great importance for faithful Christians, “St. Andrew the Apostle Parish”, “St. Anthony of Padua Parish Church” and “Virac Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception” are the most magnificent Catholic churches on the island of Catanduanes. “San Miguel River Park”, “Twin Rock Beach



Resort”, “Viga Cold Spring”, “Bagawang Pandan Catanduanes Park” and “Plaza Rizal” are the most popular recreation centers of the island of Catanduanes (Table 3). For the tourists who love food & beverages, the island of Catanduanes is exactly the gourmet paradise they are after. The “Sea Breeze Restaurant”, “Blossoms Restaurant”, “Cafe de Au” and “Fernando's Asian Cuisine” on the island are among the places with the highest culinary quality. “Palestina Rolling Hills” and “Cagnipa Rolling Hills” are the most romantic places on the island with breathtaking natural views (Table 3).

The principal factors affecting the development of international tourism on the island of Catanduanes are as follows.

The fact that the island is located in a remote area far from the capital Manila and does not have reliable transportation connections with other islands except Luzon negatively affects the communication, trade and tourism activities on the island.

Mountainous, forested, desolate and rugged lands cover a large part of the island, negatively affecting both the mobility of tourists and the connections between the tourism centers. Furthermore, frequent electricity, telephone and internet cuts make the daily lives of both locals and foreign tourists difficult.

Until the end of the twentieth century, large tourism investments were not made on the island and multi-faceted tourism projects were not put into operation. Therefore, it is possible to claim that international tourism on the island has only recently started to develop in the twenty-first century. The island, which has very rich resources for the development of rural tourism, forest tourism, surfing tourism, festival tourism, ecological tourism and sea tourism, is expected to be the shining tourism star of the Republic of the Philippines in the years to come. It should be remembered that the social, cultural and economic development of the island and the sustainable development of tourism are parallel to one another and dependent elements.

The insufficiency of international bank branches, sports and art centers, cinemas and theaters, well-equipped hospitals and pharmacies across the island creates a great disadvantage for foreign tourists. Moreover, the inadequacy of luxury entertainment and shopping centers, luxury hotels and restaurants, currency exchange centers, theaters and cinemas throughout the island can be illustrated as a negative factor for the development of tourism.

The prevalence of virgin lands covered with rainforests in the interior parts of the island, in areas far from the sea coasts, virtually intimidates the foreign tourists. However, these natural lands and virgin forests generate a very favorable ground for the development of botanical and ecological tourism on the island. Typhoons, heavy rains, devastating earthquakes, flash floods and strong tropical cyclones, which are frequently seen throughout the year, are among the natural disasters that negatively affect the tourism activities. In conclusion, wild nature, virgin forests and natural disasters create advantages in terms of ecological environment and disadvantages in terms of development of tourism activities.

The island's lack of a fully equipped airport suitable for international flights, insufficient international publicity and the fact that it has not yet attracted the attention of global tourism companies and large hotel chain managers negatively impact the tourism development of the island.

Unplanned construction and squatting, which are widespread throughout the island, must be stopped and both the insensible cutting down of the forests and the conversion of forest lands into agricultural lands must be prevented by the local provincial administrators. Wetlands, lagoon lakes, rainforests, freshwater basins and the protection of sea coasts are vital for both sustainable environment and sustainable tourism.

It is possible to define the Catanduanes Island as a sparsely populated and tourist-friendly island covered with mountainous-forested lands that has failed to attract the attention of tourism experts and big tourism investors until the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that this rapidly developing, prospering and developing island in the last



quarter century has a huge tourism potential. The tourism advantages of this island, which does not contain any metropolitan cities, are undoubtedly much more than the tourism disadvantages. One of the primary reasons for implementing this scientific study is to prove and promote these findings.

The main types of tourism practiced in the Catanduanes Island in the first quarter of the twenty-first century are as follows: health tourism, historical tourism, rural tourism, marine tourism, ecotourism, river tourism, hunting tourism, adventure tourism, underwater diving tourism, cultural tourism, forest tourism, yacht tourism, sports tourism and botanical tourism. However, considering the geographical, cultural, demographic and ecological structure of this island, it is clear that it has favorable conditions for the development of cave tourism, gourmet tourism, youth tourism, extreme tourism, science tourism, faith tourism, festival tourism, agricultural tourism and ethnotourism activities. Furthermore, there are many types of tourism and holiday options for domestic and foreign tourists visiting the island, as well as a wide variety of recreational activities that they can participate in.

The most common recreational activities that can be applied throughout the island are: trekking, sea surfing, rafting, motorcycle tours, cave trips, freshwater fishing, river canoeing, mountaineering, paragliding, wildlife watching, bicycle tours, sea fishing, wetlands watching, camping, mountain climbing and sport diving.

The main factors positively affecting the development of international tourism activities on the island of Catanduanes in the twenty-first century can be summarized as follows:

The fact that it has preserved and protected its natural resources, tropical forests, ocean coasts, wetlands, natural vegetation and natural water resources for centuries provides both an ecological and a great touristic value to the island. Furthermore, having vast untouched forest lands, breathtaking river valleys, clean lagoon lakes and wide nature protection areas gives the island of Catanduanes a great ecological, economic and touristic advantage.

The island of Catanduanes possesses excellent seashores, turquoise lagoon lakes and numerous pristine coral reefs suitable for diving, snorkeling, and surfing. Moreover, the fact that this sparsely populated island has many natural mangrove forests, magnificent waterfalls, interesting caves, deep canyon valleys, white sandy beaches and uninhabited atoll islands has led to a great variety of tourism and rich recreational activity options at the same time. In other words, the geographical, cultural and ecological diversity on the island has paved the way for the diversification of tourism types and recreational activities.

Catholic churches from the Spanish colonial period, magnificent bridges, imposing lighthouses, extraordinary museums, historical castles and monasteries with interesting architectural features have led to the development of historical-cultural tourism on the island of Catanduanes in the last half century. Therefore, territories of the island have both unique natural and unique cultural tourism attractions.

Catanduanes is one of the most reliable, happiest, calmest and most environmentally friendly islands in the Philippines. The absence of security, traffic and terrorism problems for foreign tourists throughout the island, as well as the absence of social problems such as extortion, murder, attack and theft, make the foreign tourists coming to the island very happy. Furthermore, it is of great importance for the foreign visitors that the local people of the island are well-intentioned, modest and friendly, and hospitable and helpful towards the foreign tourists.

The fact that there are sufficient number of hotels and touristic facilities throughout the island and that accommodation facilities suitable for all budgets are readily available constitute a great tourism advantage for Catanduanes. Furthermore, the absence of intense industrial, mining and transportation activities, as well as high settlement and population density, which will adversely affect the development of tourism throughout the island, is considered a big plus for this tropical island. In conclusion, the absence of large tourist masses, heavy traffic and

tourist facilities in almost all areas of Catanduanes are extremely positive features for international tourism.

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НОВОЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЕ В ГЕОГРАФИИ ТУРИЗМА:

ПРОВИНЦИЯ КАТАНДУАНАС (РЕСПУБЛИКА ФИЛИППИНЫ)

Аннотация. Катандуанес — один из восточных островов Филиппин, расположенный к юго-востоку от острова Лусон и на западном побережье Филиппинского моря. Это малоизученный, малонаселённый, гористый и



труднодоступный остров. Он также известен как «остров воющих ветров» или «остров суровых штормов».

В данном исследовании кратко рассматриваются географическое положение острова Катандуанес, его природно-географические и социально-экономические особенности, а также основные туристические ресурсы. Попытка изучения туристического потенциала острова осуществляется через анализ его значимых пляжей, городов, отелей, водопадов, пещер, рек, природоохранных зон и историко-культурных достопримечательностей.

Катандуанес, расположенный в Тихом океане, является одним из наименее развитых, но при этом самых счастливых островов Филиппин. В связи с этим ожидается, что развитие туристической отрасли на острове будет усиливаться по мере инвестирования в его инфраструктуру, включая транспорт, образование, здравоохранение, связь и канализацию, в течение ближайшего полувека.

Ключевые слова: Филиппины; туризм; остров Катандуанес; Филиппинские острова; Восточные Висайи; природные достопримечательности; развитие островного туризма; устойчивый туризм; культурное наследие.

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ТУРИЗМ ГЕОГРАФИЯСЫНДАҒЫ ЖАҢА БАҒЫТ:

КАТАНДУАНАЕС ПРОВИНЦИЯСЫ (ФИЛИППИН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫ)

Аңдатпа. Катандуанес — Филиппиннің шығыс аралдарының бірі, Лусон аралының оңтүстік-шығысында және Филиппин теңізінің батыс жағалауында орналасқан. Бұл аз зерттелген, сирек қоныстанған, таулы және қол жетуі қиын арал. Ол «ұлыған желдер аралы» немесе «катал дауылдар аралы» деген атпен де белгілі.

Бұл зерттеуде Катандуанес аралының географиялық орны, оның табиғи және әлеуметтік-экономикалық ерекшеліктері, сондай-ақ негізгі туристік ресурстары қысқаша қарастырылады. Аралдың туристік әлеуеті маңызды жағажайлар, қалалар, қонақүйлер, сарқырамалар, үңгірлер, өзендер, табиғи қорықтар және тарихи-мәдени көрікті жерлерді талдау арқылы зерттеледі.

Тынық мұхитының бойында орналасқан Катандуанес Филиппиндегі ең аз дамыған, бірақ ең бақытты аралдардың бірі болып саналады. Сондықтан алдағы жарты ғасырда көлік, білім, денсаулық сақтау, байланыс және кәріз жүйесі сияқты инфрақұрылымдық инвестициялар жүзеге асқан сайын, аралдағы туризм саласының қарқынды дамуы күтіледі.

Кілт сөздер: Филиппин; туризм; Катандуанес аралы; Филиппин аралдары; Шығыс Висаяс; табиғи көрікті жерлер; арал туризмін дамыту; тұрақты туризм; мәдени мұра.