**Philippines Hop-on Hop-Off (HOHO)**

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco led the launch on Thursday (06 July) of the Department of Tourism’s (DOT) Philippines Hop-On-Hop-Off (HOHO) in the country’s capital introducing Manila’s “Cultural Hub” tours. Joining Secretary Frasco were officials of the City Government of Manila led by Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna, and tourism stakeholders.

Dubbed as “the country’s first ever hop-on, hop-off bus tour program,” the Manila Cultural Hub links it with Makati’s “Financial Hub,” which Secretary Frasco and tourism industry stakeholders launched last 28 May.

Speaking before guests, Secretary Frasco said the flagship program elevates the tourism offerings of the country by providing convenience and digitalization saying, “Our President envisions a tourism industry that is able to compete shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors in Asia as well as the rest of the world. And that is why we introduced tourism to the digital age through this Hop On, Hop Off Bus Tours that allows tourists to book through an app, curate their experiences, and travel at their own convenience,” she said.

Secretary Frasco expounded on global changing travel trends and the growing desire of travelers for more immersive experiences. “Travel trends continue to change, and it is incumbent upon us in the national government and local government to adapt. It is time for us to evolve and to truly understand the necessity of ensuring that we are not left behind in the post-pandemic world,” she said of the project’s rosy prospects for visitors to explore and experience the different tourism hubs in the urban jungle.

“With the launch of the Philippine Hop On, Hop Off Bus Tours here in the City of Manila, we aim to give opportunities to reintroduce Manila to our fellow Filipinos and to introduce foreign tourists to this beautiful gem of a city, to expose them to your heritage, your culture, the arts and most importantly, the story of the City of Manila,” the Tourism Chief added on how the Bus Tours, with its hassle-free, seamless, contactless and convenient option, will play a pivotal role in improving the tourism experience in Manila.

“In the life of every nation as in the life of every city, feeding one’s culture is tantamount to feeding one’s soul. And that is why through the PH HOHO Bus Tours, we aim to partner with the City of Manila in your vision to make sure that this continues to be the Cultural Hub of Metro Manila,” the Tourism Chief shared about Manila’s wellspring of culture and heritage.

Meanwhile, Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna cited the importance of developing the City’s cultural aspect of tourism.

“Facing the challenges of urban mobility, this will truly maximize any visit in exploring our attractions and experience a Manila that you’ll keep coming back to. The Department of Tourism and the City of Manila curated the attractions to be visited and made sure that this initial run will truly reflect the character of our city. As the HoHo progresses, we will make sure to incorporate other parts of our eight tourism hubs which is the core of our tourism development plan,” the local chief executive added.

According to DOT’s National Capital Region (DOT-NCR) Director Sharlene Z. Batin, the Cultural Hub will have nine stops which will round up Robinsons Manila – Raja Sulayman – Rizal Park Luneta – National Museum – Malacañang Heritage Tours-City Hall – Escolta – Binondo – Intramuros.

With the launch of the Cultural Hub, tourists can now conveniently and leisurely stroll Manila’s historic and vibrant culturescape one bus stop at a time. They can choose from curated and do-it-yourself itineraries with the option for private and guided tours. Introductory price for the HOHO Manila Cultural Hub tour starts at Php1,000 per person.

The Philippines HOHO features a dedicated website with all essential information, a reloadable EMV-capable card, and to complete the tourist experience, a mobile app for booking tours, making cashless payments, GPS networked-bus arrival monitoring and video guides, as well as information on hotels, food, and tourism merchants.

Earlier, Secretary Frasco, Mayor Lacuna and Tourism Promotions Board Chief Operating Officer Margarita Nograles stood as witness to the signing of a certificate of commitment between the City of Manila and leaders of tourism stakeholder associations comprising the Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) President Fe Abling-Yu, Philippine Travel Agencies Association President Patria Chiong, Hotel Sales and Marketing Association International President Loleth So, National Association of Independent Travel Agencies President Racquel Sabucido, and Marinel Barquin Lee CEO of Positive Exposure, the project integrator and tech-provider for the Philippines HOHO bus project.

In 2022, NCR recorded a total of 5.3 million overnight tourists in NCR, with Manila ranking fourth at 710,275 arrivals, while Makati City ranks one slot higher with 969,927 arrivals, tailing behind Pasay and Parañaque which took the first and second spots, respectively. Meanwhile, Manila tops the same-day arrivals with 7.4M recorded in the same period last year per the DOT’s record.

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