Batanes Islands in the Philippines joins the UNWTO Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

Madrid, Spain, 20 June 2023 – UNWTO has welcomed Batanes in the Philippines as the latest addition to its International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO).

Led by the Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Centre (BTHMC), in collaboration with the province and its local stakeholders, this observatory is committed to supporting the sustainable development of tourism based on evidence and a participatory approach. These commitments are instrumental in building a sustainable and resilient tourism sector that benefits the local people, the Ivatans, as well as visitors, while ensuring environmental and cultural conservation. The observatory joins UNWTO’s growing international network of observatories, all of which are dedicated to creating inclusive and healthy spaces for both visitors and host communities, while promoting the responsible management of tourism.

Inclusive decision-making

Through a participatory process, the Observatory has gained detailed insights into the key sustainability issues identified by the indigenous Ivatans and will continue to expand its measurement focus towards environmental and social areas in line with the INSTO Framework. This approach will help the Batanes Islands in managing tourism development responsibly and sustainably, by taking a holistic view and developing adequate, innovative strategies.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “For any destination, measurement is important as it provides a better understanding of where a destination stands and where it wants to go. For a destination like the Batanes Islands, such measurement work is even more relevant as it will help to preserve the uniqueness of the islands and build a responsible sector that benefits the local people and visitors alike. We are very pleased to welcome the Batanes Observatory as a new member of the INSTO network.”

The governor of Batanes, Ms. Marilou Cayco noted: “We are honoured to become the first member in the International Network of Observatories in the Philippines. Being part of this network will allow us to better assess the impact of the growing tourism sector in the Batanes Islands and provide us with the relevant evidence to inform future policies and decisions to ensure that tourism is sustainable and resilient”.

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About Batanes and its Observatory

Batanes is the northernmost province of the Philippines, located around 160km north of the mainland. An archipelago of ten islands, of which the three largest are inhabited, its capital is Basco and the province is home to the indigenous Ivatan people. The islands are also home to some unique plants and endemic animals, and serves as a sanctuary for migratory birds.

The Observatory is managed by a multi-disciplinary team from the Asian Institute of Tourism, the Department of Hotel Restaurant and Institution Management, and the Institute of Civil Engineering from the University of the Philippines Diliman. A technical working group composed of tourism stakeholders in Batanes work closely with the research team in managing the operations of the Observatory. In addition, a partnership with the Batanes State College and the Provincial Government of Batanes has been established for carrying out research activities.

About INSTO

The UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) was created in 2004 with the main objectives to support the continuous improvement of sustainability and resilience in the tourism sector through systematic, timely and regular monitoring of tourism performance and to connect dedicated destinations, helping them to exchange and improve knowledge and understanding. Through the systematic application of monitoring, evaluation and information management techniques, the initiative provides policy makers, planners, tourism managers and other relevant stakeholders with key tools to strengthen institutional capacities to support the formulation and implementation of sustainable tourism policies, strategies, plans and management processes.

Related Links:

INSTO Overview Observatories

Batanes Promotional Website

UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

INSTO Tools and Resources

UNWTO Measurement of Sustainable Tourism Initiative (MST)