

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GREEN BUILDING

CHRISTOPHER CRUZ DE LA CRUZ

Email: ccdelaacruz@ccdelaacruz.com
 URL: <http://ccdelaacruz.com>

According to the Department of Tourism, international visitor arrivals to the Philippines hit a record high of 2.843 million in 2006. This year the number is expected to rise by 8-10 percent. At this rate, the industry has an immense impact on the economy. It is estimated that around Php 50,000.00 pesos is spent by every tourist when visiting the country and this roughly amount to around Php130 billion pesos on an average year. That amount helps create jobs for the Filipino.



Negros Oriental, Philippines

This renewed interest by other countries in the Philippines is largely due to our remarkable natural resources. With around 36,000 square kilometers of coast line, the Philippines is considered one of longest coastlines in the world. This natural feature offers a tremendous amount of opportunity for investors both foreign and local. Coastal tourism is considered to be one of the fastest growing areas of present-day tourism.

Hotels and restaurants are being developed along our coastlines in an effort to capitalize on the country's beautiful natural features. These developers will choose the location that best showcase the beauty of our coasts. Unfortunately, these developments have also caused negative impacts to the environment. The increased amount of tourists are exerting a significant amount of pressure on our coastal areas, along with existing residents in our coastal towns that are also relying on the sea for their daily sustenance. Our coasts are often the first to experience the detrimental impacts of tourism. Lack of enforcement of building and environmental regulations has accelerated the degradation of the coastlines. The tourism industry must ensure eco-friendly practices are in place to ensure sustainable growth. The beauty of the surroundings that attracts visitors may not be there in the future, potentially losing the income for the business community if the unsound building practices persist.

The introduction of sustainable tourism contributes to the conservation of our natural heritage. It allows the harmonious coexistence of business interests with our natural environment. Solid waste management, waste water management and cleaner production practices are essential tools to conserve and preserve our natural resources. Presently, several foreign funded organizations have introduced these tools to aid in the rehabilitation of the environment. But one tool is missing - "Green Building". It is widely known that buildings account for one-sixth of the world's fresh water consumption, one quarter of its wood supply and two-fifths of the material and energy resources. As hotels and restaurants are continually developed, with their close proximity to the sea, these structures should be prioritized in being designed and constructed in a sustainable fashion.

The major hotels, in an effort to remain competitive, regularly renovate older rooms to attract new visitors. In an area identified as a major development area, at any one time, almost every hotel has recently been renovated, is under renovation, or is waiting for renovation. Product innovation is considered a crucial and essential requirement in the hospitality industry. The positive forecasts by the Department of Tourism may encourage the expansion of existing hotels, the development of new restaurants, and the introduction of new investments. These activities may damage natural systems if its planning, development and operation are not properly managed.

The impact of ecologically unsound design and construction practices, continually exert pressure throughout the life of a building. Start your project right. Go green!