

Cebu to host UN eco-tourism confab

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About 400 delegates from 150 [member](#) countries and 400 affiliate organizations of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) will visit Cebu for the 5th World Eco-Tourism Conference this November.

“We will [learn](#) a lot from them and they from us. We are looking at first week of November for the event,” Tourism Asst. Secretary Rolando Canizal said in a press briefing yesterday at the Radisson Blu Hotel Cebu.

Lee Choon Loong, UNWTO regional vice president for Asia and the Pacific cited Cebu’s role as a key tourism destination as a factor in deciding to hold the conference here.

“Cebu being a key tourism destination we think is the best place to hold the event with Bohol, a trully ecotourism [site](#), also very near Cebu,” Lee said.

Canizal said Bohol tops the list of the four most popular eco-tourism destinations. They are followed by Palawan, Cagayan Valley and Davao.

Lee said Bohol is one key eco-tourism destination in the country that can be developed and promoted further to attract more visitors.

Before the Philippines, the conference was first held in Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and South Korea last year.

“On the average, we get 400 to 700 people and we are confident that the Philippines particularly Cebu can more participants to the conference because of its accessibility,” Lee said.

The three-day conference will consist of plenary sessions, business-to-business meetings, [research](#) symposia and a whole day technical tour in eco-tourism destinations like Bohol.

“We have no definite venue yet as to where the conference will take place here in Cebu. We are finalizing the hosting details with UNWTO,” Canizal said. The theme for this year’s conference is Marine Eco-Tourism.

“The conference will highlight the different best practices in other countries in marine eco-tourism which we can learn from like how to better manage and protect our marine wildlife,” Canizal said.

After the conference, the group will propose a Cebu Declaration on Eco-Tourism to be created and submitted to UNWTO.

Canizal said eco-tourism is now considered a growing trend in the global tourism industry which the country should pursue to [achieve](#) its 10 million foreign visitors target by 2016.

As of last year, there were already 4.3 million that visited the country.

This year the target is 5.5 million and as of April, arrivals showed a 10.12 percent growth compared to 2012 figures.