



MEDIA RELEASE

15 February 2013

DOT and Puerto Princesa City launch New Online Booking System for Underground River

The Department of Tourism (DOT) and the City Government of Puerto Princesa, Palawan have teamed up for the launch of a new online booking system for local and foreign tourists visiting the Puerto Princesa Underground River (PPUR).

Last 7 February 2013, the DOT turned over the system to the City Government of Puerto Princesa for the site's operation and management as provided by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn, in his acceptance message, shared how tourism has anchored the city's sustainable development paradigm, particularly in managing the ecosystems that tourism in-flows demand.

"We worked very hard for Puerto Princesa's tourism. And we could not be happier that it, indeed, worked and flourished. But the demand was quite overwhelming. It eventually caused us more problems than rewards. We had more than what we can handle, and we weren't prepared for it," Mayor Hagedorn added. He looks forward to a renewed fun in Puerto Princesa especially now that an online booking system and more efficient payment modes are in place. He expressed his assurance to the public assured that this program will continue beyond his term of office.

Tourist influx to Puerto Princesa surged after the underground river was declared one of UNESCO New 7 Wonders of Nature, yielding an increase of 45 percent in arrivals since 2011. The increase in traffic has caused confusion in securing permits from the PPUR office and the city government's crowd control or restriction of access to the site due to environmental concerns. The automated booking system will hopefully help ease tourists before they book their hotels and flights to the city. It can also be accessed by travel agencies all over the country and even abroad.

“Puerto Princesa City is a perfect example of a local government unit that works hand-in-hand with the national government. We, in the department, are enablers of tourism. The active participation on the ground is what makes things happen, as it is always done on the people’s behalf. More importantly, we are assured that sustainability is responsibly shared and prioritized by the local government. This is merely the beginning of our efforts together and one of the measures that will help ensure that the world-famous attraction’s carrying capacity is not compromised,” Tourism Secretary Ramon Jimenez Jr. enthused.

“We should be thanking Puerto Princesa more obviously for the efforts of its people in making *fun* a real and palpable experience in the country. The Department is proud to be a part of this success,” Secretary Jimenez added.

Earlier in February, the new online system was also presented for comments to the officers of the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) and the Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA). Prior to this, a series of meetings were made with the tourism stakeholders in Puerto Princesa to begin the public consultation phase of the project.

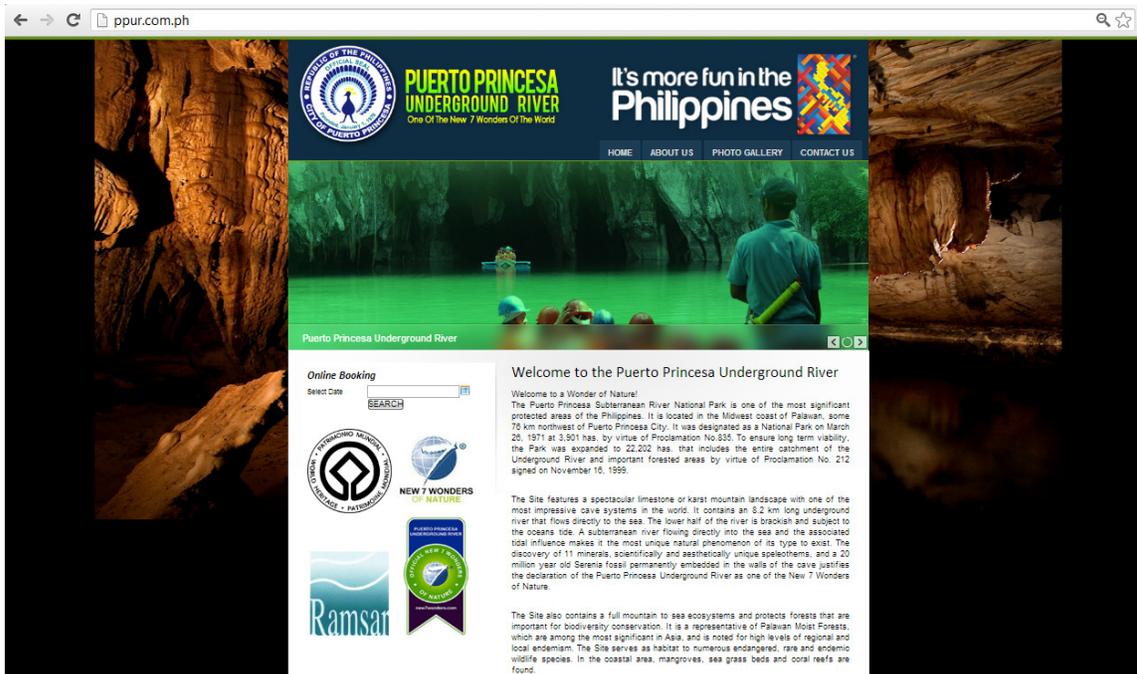
Also present during the MOU signing and turnover were DOT Undersecretary Ma. Victoria V. Jasmin of the Tourism Regulation, Coordination, and Resource Generation, who also served as Chairman of the Technical Working Group for the online booking system development; and Rebecca V. Labit, Puerto Princesa City Tourism Officer.

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MOU signing for the PPUR On-Line Booking System (L-R): DOT Region IV Director Louella C. Jurilla, DOT Undersecretary Ma. Victoria V. Jasmin, DOT Secretary Ramon R. Jimenez, Jr., Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn and Puerto Princesa City Tourism Officer Rebecca V. Labit.



Screenshot of the new online booking site <http://ppur.com.ph/>. Successful bookings will receive an email notification which will serve as a digital invoice that needs to be printed and presented upon visit to PPUR.