

SMART LTE NOW IN BATANES

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PLDT wireless subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. (Smart) has fired up Long Term Evolution (LTE) in Batanes, bringing improved mobile data experience to tourists and residents in the Philippines' northernmost province.

"Smart is now the first operator to have LTE in the country's northernmost province.

This is part of Smart's

commitment to bring mobile internet to more than 90 percent of the country's municipalities by the end of this year," said Mario G. Tamayo, PLDT and Smart senior vice president for network planning and engineering.

"With Smart LTE now in Batanes, tourists and residents can now enjoy better mobile data experience that they can use to connect with loved ones across the country, as well as show the world sights and sounds from this picturesque province via social media," he added.

Batanes, home to over 17,000 Filipinos, receives around 4,000 tourists a month and is on the Unesco Tentative List for Inscription in the World Heritage List.

Made up of 29

barangays in six municipalities, the province is a mini-archipelago of 10 islands, including the main island Batan, the largest island Itbayat and Sabtang Island.

"Covering Batanes with LTE was a major challenge. To connect this province, we had to use multiple microwave hops, including the longest single microwave hop in the country at 128 kilometers," Tamayo said, adding that due to the province's rugged and mountainous terrain, Smart deployed special heavy equipment to transport and install the cell sites.

Getting to some relay stations also involved an eight-hour trek.

"This ramped-up rollout of LTE and LTE-Advanced in Batanes and other areas is part of Smart's commitment to deliver world-class internet service to more Filipinos, wherever they may be in the country," Tamayo said. "We are happy to partner with Batanes local government officials in getting Smart LTE up and running in their hometown."

LTE-A is available in Basco, the capital of Batanes, while the rest of the province is covered with LTE.

"In addition to this boost in tourism, improved connectivity also opens up opportunities for the people of Batanes, such as teachers looking to download additional educational materials for their students, or local businesses searching for tips on how to improve their own products and services," Tamayo said.