

# THERE'S MORE TO PHILIPPINES THAN BORACAY, TOURISM EXECS SAY

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CEBU CITY— As the six-month closure of the country's top tourists' drawer, Boracay Island, loomed, the tourism department is scrambling for alternative tourism sites that would prevent tourists from taking a detour to other tourism sites in Southeast Asia.

Shalimar Tamano, regional director of the Department of Tourism (DOT) in Central Visayas, said regional tourism offices across the country were drawing up promotion plans on alternative tourism sites to stop tourists from leaving.

"We were asked to submit destinations and emerging ones," Tamano said. "Cebu and Bohol were identified as alternatives," he added.

## Lessons from Boracay

He said Boracay's sewage and pollution issues should serve as lessons for Cebu and Bohol.

"What happened to Boracay is saving all of us," Tamano said.

Describing the country's premier tourism destination as a cesspool, President Duterte ordered Boracay closed to tourism for at least six months to allow the rehabilitation of the 1,032-hectare island.

Local government units in Eastern Visayas started positioning themselves as alternative sites for tourists who would have been drawn to Boracay.

The Samar provincial government launched its "Spark Samar" tourism campaign in Manila to showcase tourist destinations in the province like Sohoton Natural Bridge National Park in Basey town.

The Northern Samar provincial government presented rock formations on Biri Island and the pink beach of San Vicente town as tourism destinations.

## Competition

The Leyte provincial government said several beaches in the province could compete with Boracay.

Helen Catalbas, DOT director for Western Visayas, said the DOT hoped to attract the 130,000 tourists who visit Boracay every month to other destinations.