

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

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House Bill No. 1368



Introduced by HON. ELISA T. KHO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Masbate lies exactly at the center of the Philippine Archipelago between latitudes 11- 43' North and 123- 09 East and 124-5' East. It is bounded on the North by Burias and Ticao Pass, East by San Bernardino Strait, South by the Visayan Seas, and West by the Sibuyan Sea. Relative to mainland Bicol, the province faces the southwestern coasts of Camarines Sur, Albay and Sorsogon.

For its central location, it is undoubtedly a melting pot for culture and languages of the Filipino people.

It is said that the province got its name from a simple misunderstanding between some Spanish explorers and a couple making chocolate. When the visitors asked them the name of the place, the couple thought the former wanted to know what they were doing and answered "Masbati" meaning mixing vigorously, so the Spaniards recorded it as "Masbate".

Masbate is not only endowed with rich natural resources – *agricultural lands suitable to many crops; pastoral areas ideal for cattle raising and other livestock; coastal areas are rich teeming with fish of different varieties and other aquatic resources* – but with many and diverse tourism spots which hold a huge and promising potential for the province to become the central tourism destination of the entire archipelago in the coming years.

For so long a time now, it has become renowned for its spectacular scuba diving locations, cattle ranches and festivals, but there is certainly much more for those who have not trekked the myriad and beautiful destinations it offers.

These many and diverse tourism destinations are scattered in many parts of the province, and it will take more than a week of touring to visit all these places, and to name just a few:

1. **Limestone Hills**(Municipality of Aroroy). It is believed to have been first inhabited by the Kalanay people. These early inhabitants practiced jar burials.
2. **Kalanay Falls** (Municipality of Palanas). It is a beautiful scenery, found in Barangay Nabangig.
3. **Sombrero Island** (Municipality of San Pascual). It is a hat-shaped island with stretches of white-sand

beaches.

4. **Underwater Cave** (Municipality of Claveria). This cave is located within the jurisdiction of Barangay Boca Engano, the entrance of which is undersea. During high tide, it will take even an unskilled diver only a few seconds to enter the cave; it is neck-deep during low tide. Inside the cave are well-sealed human caskets carved out of solid wood believed to be 500 years old that still contain human remains.
5. **Mataba-Tinigban to Napayuan Island**. A five-kilometer stretch of white sand beach. At napayuan Island, the surrounding water is full of marine life. It is ideal for snorkel and scuba diving.
6. **Bat-ongan Caves** (Municipality of Mandaon). Found in this mole-like mountain, famous for its numerous chambers and beautiful rock formation towering at about 150 feet. The caves offer tourists a thrilling experience in steep rock-climbing up to the highest peak. They are said to be enchanted caves with three openings. One is at the base, leading to two stones naturally shaped like an altar and a pulpit, another at the center, and the last on top.
7. **Bat-ongan Underground River** (Municipality of Mandaon). About 120 meters away from the Bat-ongan Caves is an underground river. It is for daring and adventurous visitors. It is approximately 10 kilometers to Mandaon.
8. **Khokak Beach** (Municipality of Cataingan). It is the most picturesque beach in the province as it offers a clear vista of the provinces of Albay and Sorsogon as well as the island provinces of Samar, Leyte and Biliran. Leaning at a panoramic hilly landscape lush with various vegetation and coconuts, it has waters comparable to the famous beaches of Boracay and Puerto Galera.
9. **Cagpating Island** (Municipality of Monreal). It is noted for its crystal-clear waters and beautiful pebbles on one side and a deep rocky side that provides a panoramic view of Masbate Island.
10. **Tinalisayan Island** (Burias Island). It is an enchanting place ideal for sunbathing and swimming.
11. **Aroroy Beach** (Municipality of Aroroy). A fast-becoming attraction among excursionists. Its unspoiled natural beauty is the dominant feature.
12. **Colara Beach** (Municipality of Aroroy). Neat and white sands ideal for weekend excursions and picnics.
13. **Matangtubig Spring** (Municipality of Monreal). A unique spring with three sources. The spring comes out of a rock. Trees and lush vegetation gives shade in the area around the spring.
14. **Ki-Albay River and Beach** (Municipality of Claveria). This beach extends east-southeast from the town proper with an approximate length of one and a half kilometers of sandy and well-polished pebbles ending in KI-Albay River.
15. **San Isidro Beach** (Municipality of Claveria). This beach is located in Barangay san Isidro extending south to east from the barangay proper with an approximate and aggregate length of four (4) kilometers. Its fine and silvery white sand can easily accommodate over a thousand people. The bottom of the sea is clear and sandy extending some one hundred meters from the shoreline with a gradual depth of 5 to 7 feet during high tide. Further from the shoreline are beautiful and colorful coral reefs which are inhabited by a wide variety of fishes. The beach is lined with coconut trees.
16. **Catandayagan Falls** (Danao, Municipality of San Jacinto). One of the most beautiful falls in the province. It cascades from 60 feet to its base where a multi-colored fishes cavort. Lush vegetation, wild animals and exotic flowers surround its high, single-tiered shape.

17. **Talisay Beach** (Municipality of San Fernando). Famous for the rocks which serve as natural diving board for swimmers. Smooth, shiny pebbles of various sizes abound.
18. **Halea Park, San Miguel Island** (Municipality of Monreal). White sand beaches and its waters are ideal for wind-surfing and sailing.
19. **Magcaraguit Beach, Magcaraguit Island** (Municipality of Dimasalang). Pristine waters and white sand beaches famous for picnic and outings.
20. **Palani Beach** (Municipality of Balud). Quiet, laid-back and unspoiled beach for those who want to get away from their busy life.
21. **Bongsanglay Mangrove Reserve** (Municipality of Batuan). A protected mangrove reservation.
22. **Manokmanok Island** (Municipality of Esperanza). Pockets of white sand beaches, rock formations, view of surrounding islands and provinces.
23. **Dacu Beach** (Municipality of Mobo). A favorite site for picnics during weekends.
24. **Ubo Falls** (Municipality of Mobo). Known as "Little Pagsanjan Falls".
25. **Umoroy Beach**. Is a popular destination for excursions, picnics and get-together with its white sand beaches.
26. **Tagoron Waterfalls** (Municipality of Monreal). Located along the sea, found in the barrio of Tagoron. A good place for picnics and excursion. Cascading at a height of 60 feet, it offers a breathtaking view. Different species of varied-colored fishes swim at or close to the base of the waterfalls, add more excitement to the view.
27. **Deagan Island** (Municipality of Palanas). A scenic island off Palanas coast noted for its beautiful beaches and colorful fishes. It is a haven for yacht enthusiasts and skin divers.
28. **Putting-Baybay** (Municipality of Claveria). Famous for its wide beaches and white sand. Ideal for board surfers because of the Sibuyan waters.
29. **Isla de Paraiso**. A small islet covered with powder white sand and crystal water and a "breathtaking sunset." Mangroves cover the different sides of the islet.
30. **Bituon Beach Resort** (Municipality of Mobo). Ideal for group picnic, conferences and party.
31. **Punta Bugui Lighthouse** (Municipality of Aroroy). Located at Barangay Gumahaang, it was constructed during the Spanish era.
32. **Colorado Lighthouse** (Municipality of Aroroy). Believed to have been built during the Spanish era but renovated during the American regime.
33. **Jintotolo Lighthouse** (Municipality of Balud). Picturerisque in its 19th century architecture.
34. **San Pascual Church** (Municipality of San Pascual). Oldest existing church built by the Spaniards in the Bicol Region.
35. **Tacdogan Reef** (Municipality of San Jacinto) One of only two areas where the Manta Rays abound. The giant mantas come to the area to feed. The reef is a six (60 hectare shoal of coral formation 60 feet below

the surface. Proof positive of the thriving marine ecosystem in the area.

36. **Bontod Beach.** A coral island, noted for the immaculate white sand. Its beautiful surrounding water teems with exotic coral reefs. It is ideal for snorkeling and scuba diving.
37. **Villa Bayot.** This house was constructed in 1880. In its dining room, Spanish authorities enjoyed the best wines from Manila and Acapulco and the largest lobsters from Masbate Bay. During the Commonwealth period, President Manuel L. Quezon is said to have danced the tango in its halls and slept in its finest bedroom. The Japanese used it as their garrison. In 1944, the American liberators shelled and bombed the capital but the big house was spared. It came under guerrilla siege to dislodge the Japanese, but it remained unscathed. In 1946, President Roxas visited Masbate and stayed in this house briefly to dance the waltz. His hosts were Don Francisco Bayot and his granddaughter, 1937 Miss Philippines Chita Zaldarriaga.
38. **Bugsayon Marine Sanctuary.** A 50-hectare marine sanctuary located in Barangay B. Titong. It can be reached by sea through a motorboat or by land through motorbikes and jeepneys.
39. **Buntod Reef Sanctuary.** A 250-hectare white sandbar located in the middle of seawaters of Barangay Nursery and Barangay Tugbo.
40. **Pawa Mangrove Ecosystem and Wildlife Park.** Located at Brangay Pawa, it offers beautiful sight for bird watching, fishing and family picnic. It has also a 1.3 kilometer wooden bridge connecting Barangay Pawa and Sitio Daang Lungsod of Barangay Usab.

There are also many and famous festivals of the province namely the:

1. **Rodeo Masbate** (Masbate City). As cattle raising is a trademark of Masbate and a major source of livelihood for the province, the rodeo highlights the Masbate Livestock Week. It features a grand Rodeo Parade, Agro-Livestock fair and Individual/Group Competitions in Bull Riding, Steer Wrestling, Lassoing, Post Driving, calf Casting, food Chopping, Carabao Race and a host of other 'rodeo games' and traditional Filipino games. This is the Philippine version of rodeos in the American West and the only rodeo festival in the whole of Asia.
2. **Himag-Ulaw Festival** (Municipality of Placer). A celebration of praise and thanksgiving for the bountiful farming or good catch in fishing expressed through various forms of activities like street dancing, beauty competition, games and food fairs.
3. **Wacky Rodeo** (Municipality of Aroroy). An annual entertaining and amazing event during full moon of the month of May. The festival depicts the participant's skill in handling the crustaceans in various events which include crab tying, crab races and relays, crab hunting, crab retrieving and tetracathlon.
4. **Pagdayao Festival.** "Pagdayao" in the Masbateno dialect, loosely means the act of praising, of honoring and thanksgiving. It manifests the Masbate religiosity as a people, a trait most Bicolanos are noted for. The festival is held on June 11-12, and coincides with the annual fiesta of Masbate in honor of St. Anthony de Padua.
5. **Corn Festival.** A harvest rite among moncadistas in San Ramon, Municipality of Uson. Famous for people dancing barefoot on glowing embers. The celebration is a ritual for thanksgiving after a plentiful corn harvest.
6. **Candelaria.** A unique tradition in the town of San Jacinto where 2 to 7 year old children are blessed by the parish priest with mounted angel wings at their back. The children offer bread and eggs as a sign of prosperity. This religious activity is to set free children from various illnesses and diseases.

parish priest with mounted angel wings at their back. The children offer bread and eggs as a sign of prosperity. This religious activity is to set free children from various illnesses and diseases.

7. Lapay Bantigue Dance Festival. It is a local dance art festival that was organized from the graceful movements of hovering birds known as seagulls or the LAPAY, found abundant in Barangay Bantigue. Flocks of seagulls created a marvelous scenery and inspired the old folks to come up with a local folkdance that since then has existed and has become an important aspect of the local culture of the people of Barangay Bantigue and the entire province. The boats laden with abundant fish caught by small scale fisherfolks eagerly awaited by fish buyers and the LAPAYS makes an engaging portrait of the people's simple way of life everyday.

8. Kasadyaan sa Dagat Festival. This is celebrated as a thanksgiving occasion for the seas around Masbate which have always blessed its people with its myriad bounties. Originally celebrated as "beach meetings" or Bagat Dagat in the vernacular, families from all over Masbate annually flock and rendezvous in the scenic beach of Cataingan for picnics, games and revelry. The 3-day event coincides with the feast of St. John the Baptist and positions Masbate as a major tourism destination in the Bicol Region. Thousands of people come on foot and in horseback, many of them camping on the seashore of Khokak Beach, take part in various events featured in the festivities like Paraksian san Kiray, boxing, Subiran race, Juego de Toro, beach volleyball, horse racing. Nightly concerts, 3-cock derby, fishing expeditions and competitions, motocross, tug-of-war, acrobatic shows, suerto sa manok, and carambola as well as livelihood programs like castle dispersal for qualified Masbatenos.

9. Bantigue Feast. Every 10th of August, residents of Barangay Bantigue celebrate the feast in honor of Saint Filomena. People from other barangays of Masbate City and other municipalities of Masbate come to this barangay to visit the church, pray and dance to Saint Filomena. It is believed that Saint Filomena has miraculous intercession for those needing help or asking favors especially those who cannot conceive a child. This has become a significant tradition in Masbate City.

Masbate is indeed one of the hidden treasures of the Philippines with its many pristine and breathtaking natural beauties, wonders and festivals.

It is therefore imperative that the province be preserved and protected as an eco-tourism destination.

The urgent passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



HON. ELISA T. KHO
Representative, Masbate 2nd Congressional District

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. **1368**

Introduced by Hon. ELISA T. KHO

AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF MASBATE AS AN ECO-TOURISM
ZONE,
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. **State Policy.** It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote sustainable tourism industry. Towards this end, the country shall rationalize all efforts pertaining to the environmental protection and make the industry a major source of livelihood and an avenue for the generation of employment. Henceforth, aggressive measures seeking to restore the country's share in the Asian tourism market shall be consistent with the preservation of the existing ecosystem and natural environment.

Section 2. **Declaration.** Pursuant to public policy, the province of Masbate is hereby declared as an eco-tourism zone.

Section 3. **Creation of Eco-Tourism Task Force.** Within six months from the approval of this Act, there shall be created an Eco-Tourism Task Force whose governing boards shall be chaired by the Governor of the Province with the duly elected representatives of all its districts as vice-chairpersons. The membership of the Board shall be composed of representatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Health (DOH), the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the local government units.

Section 4. **Eco-Tourism Master Plan.** The DENR and the DOT shall prepare an eco-tourism master plan and promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to be approved by the President of the Philippines upon recommendation by the Board for implementation by the concerned government agencies and/or local government units.

Section 5. **Appropriation.** The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's Program the amount necessary for the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 6. **Separability Clause.** If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional, the other provision not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 7. **Repealing Clause.** All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, rules or regulation and issuances contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall be deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 8. **Effectivity Clause.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,