

Tourism slows down in Ilocos Region

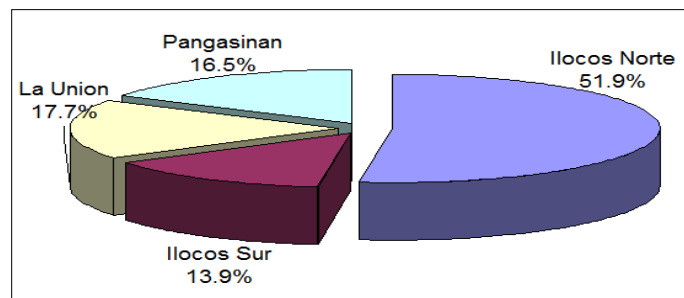
Data from the Department of Tourism (DOT) Regional Office 1 show that in 2008, the number of tourists in the Ilocos Region slightly increased by 0.6% compared to 2007 data, lower than the 4.4% growth rate registered from 2006-2007. The decelerated growth in tourism in the region was largely due to the slower growth of domestic tourists between 2006 and 2008. Domestic tourists, which account for majority of all tourists in the region, grew by 16.4% in 2005-2006, 9.0% in 2006-2007 and by 2.8% in 2007-2008. In addition, the continued decline in foreign tourist arrivals between 2006 and 2008 contributed to the decelerated growth of tourism in the region as a whole.

Tourists from recession-hit countries like Taiwan and China steadily declined between 2006-2008. On the other hand, Korean tourists steadily increased in the same period, which could possibly be attributed to the emergence of English teaching schools for Koreans in various areas in the region. Meanwhile, American tourists slightly increased despite the economic recession in the United States in 2008.

At the provincial level, the province of Ilocos Norte, with 183,220 tourist arrivals in 2008, catered to majority (51.9%) of the tourists in the region in 2008. On the other hand, La Union, Pangasinan and Ilocos Sur had a 17.7%, 16.5% and 13.9% share of tourist arrivals, respectively, during the same year.

Although the influx of foreign tourists steadily declined for the past three years, Ilocos Norte continued to be the favorite hub of foreign tourists in Region 1. This could be due to the presence of the

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Tourists by Province, Region 1, 2008



Source of Basic Data: Department of Tourism Regional Office 1

Table 1. Tourist Arrivals in Region 1, 2005-2008

	2005	2006	2007	2008	Growth rate (%)		
					2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
REGION 1							
Foreign	45,642	54,629	44,373	37,818	19.7	(18.8)	(14.8)
Domestic	241,941	281,582	306,803	315,442	16.4	9.0	2.8
Total	287,583	336,211	351,176	353,260	16.9	4.5	0.6
ILOCOS NORTE							
Foreign	35,238	36,481	27,253	20,457	3.5	(25.3)	(24.9)
Domestic	131,568	140,614	157,633	162,763	6.9	12.1	3.3
Total	166,806	177,095	184,886	183,220	6.2	4.4	(0.9)
ILOCOS SUR							
Foreign	2,130	2,994	3,984	2,073	40.6	33.1	(48.0)
Domestic	38,284	53,418	49,263	47,105	39.5	(7.8)	(4.4)
Total	40,414	56,412	53,247	49,178	39.6	(5.6)	(7.6)
LA UNION							
Foreign	3,559	6,823	6,187	10,561	91.7	(9.3)	70.7
Domestic	33,412	42,477	50,351	52,101	27.1	18.5	3.5
Total	36,971	49,300	56,538	62,662	33.3	14.7	10.8
PANGASINAN							
Foreign	4,715	8,331	6,949	4,727	76.7	(16.6)	(32.0)
Domestic	38,677	45,073	49,556	53,473	16.5	9.9	7.9
Total	43,392	53,404	56,505	58,200	23.1	5.8	3.0

Source of Data: Department of Tourism Regional Office 1

Note: 2008 figures exclude the figures from one tourist establishment which did not submit data the previous years.

Table 2. Top 5 Foreign Markets, Region 1, 2006-2008

RANK	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	2006	2007	2008	TOTAL 2006-2008
1	Taiwan	21,372	13,562	10,917	45,851
2	U.S.A	4,592	4,776	6,724	16,092
3	Korea	1,959	3,235	10,326	15,520
4	China	5,791	5,635	1,358	12,784
5	Australia	1,545	1,507	2,115	5,167

Source of Basic Data: Department of Tourism Regional Office 1

International Airport and tourist attractions in the province like the white beaches of Pagudpud. A total of 20,457 foreign tourists visited the province in 2008, which comprised majority of all foreign tourists in the region. Based on the same data set, the province had the most number (19 out of 50) of accredited tourist establishments in the region, consisting of resorts, tourist inns, hotels and pension/motels. The province also registered the highest average length of stay of tourists from 2006-2008 at 1.7 days, higher than the regional average length of stay of 1.2 days during the same period.