
Tourism Structure Plan of Busuanga and Coron, Northern Palawan: Comprehensive Development through Tourism

Michael V. Tomeldan¹
mvtomeldan1@yahoo.com

Abstract

Comprehensive Development Planning is undertaken at different scales (i.e. national, regional, provincial, and city or municipal levels) that consider several issues in different sectors. Comprehensive Development Plans or Multi-sector plans, therefore, consists of several sector plans (i.e. economic plans, social development plans, economic plans, institutional plans, infrastructure plans, environmental management plans, and land use plans) that are interrelated and harmonized.

In an effort to decentralize governance and to transform Local Governments Units into self-reliant communities, the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160) was enacted by the Congress of the Philippines. The Local Government Code devolved many of the powers, authority, responsibilities and resources to the Local Government Units (i.e. cities and municipalities). Among the responsibilities transferred to the LGU is the formulation of a "Comprehensive Development Plan" that has come in the form of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). The land use plan, as the physical translation of the LGU's vision, goals and all sector plans, is considered the centerpiece of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

In the CLUPs of most cities and municipalities, tourism is considered an economic activity and therefore merely incorporated as a sub-sector in the economic plan. Tourism, however, is recognized as a major economic activity that contributes significantly to GNP and creates tremendous employment and livelihood opportunities. Many sub-regions and LGUs have tourism as their main economic activity and many more have resources and potentials for major tourism development. Such LGUs or areas should pay more attention to planning their tourism development.

Tourism Planning is a specialized field that is also comprehensive in its approach looking into structure planning, environmental management, land use planning, tourism marketing, tourism product development, human resource development, community

planning, etc. Tourism Planning should be undertaken correctly to support comprehensive and sustainable development.



Figure 1: Islands in Northern Palawan - identified tourism area

Introduction

1.1 Tourism and Economic Development

Fifteen to twenty years ago, Comprehensive Development Plans considered tourism as a minor economic activity and therefore incorporated it as a sub-sector or a mere "footnote" in the economic plan. Tourism has since become a recognized major economic activity that contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creates tremendous employment and livelihood opportunities. The Philippines completed its first national tourism master plan called the 1991 - 2010 Tourism Master Plan (TMP) in 1991 to guide tourism development throughout the Philippines. The 1991-2010 Philippine TMP became the bases for all regionally significant tourism master plans and developments in the Philippines. By 1998, more detailed regional tourism master plans were formulated for almost all the administrative regions.

In 2002, tourism contributed 8.7 percent of National GDP and created about five million jobs and livelihood opportunities. Moreover, the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan identified tourism as one of the pillars of the country's economic program and it is this stature that made it imperative that the 1991-2010 Philippine Tourism Master Plan's (TMP's) main goals were attained. The main goals of the TMP are:

¹ Michael V. Tomeldan earned his BS Architecture Degree from University of the Philippines (UP) in 1982 and his Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning also in UP in 1986. He has been a practicing Architect since 1984 but has excelled in the specialized field of Urban and Regional Planning. After earning his master's degree in 1986, Tomeldan joined the UP College of Architecture as a faculty member where he continues to teach.

Tomeldan is a partner in the architectural and planning firm Tomeldan, Alli, and Molina (TAM) Planners Co. His various planning involvements in the past 21 years include work with both local and foreign consulting groups in public and private sector projects.

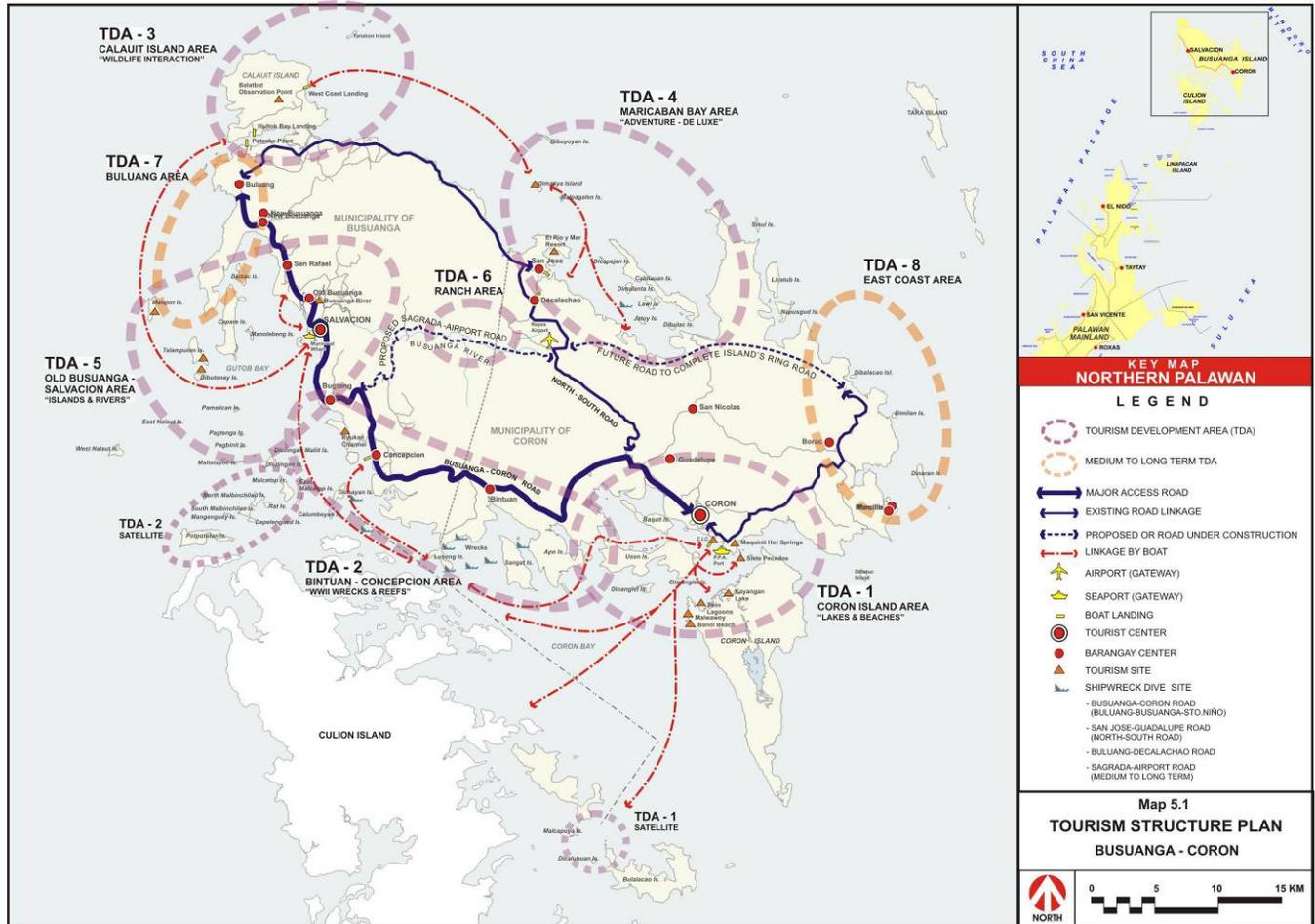


Figure 2: Tourism Structure Plan of Busuanga, Coron

- Optimize the contribution of tourism to economic growth at the national and regional levels,
- Enhance and contribute to social cohesion and cultural preservation at the local level,
- Develop tourism on an environmentally sustainable basis, and
- Develop a diversity of destinations, attractions, and markets to minimize exposure to external threats to the tourism industry.

It can be observed from the objectives of the Tourism Master Plan that tourism is an endeavor that is not limited to its economic dimension but one that cuts across other sectors such as socio-cultural and environmental management.

1.2 Tourism Should Also Be Planned Comprehensively

As a major driver of economic development, tourism has to be planned and given full support in its implementation. The 1991 Philippine Tourism Master Plan (TMP) pushed for the diversification of destinations, attractions, and products to expand the resource base and the market. The TMP prompted the drafting of crucial national policies on air transport, infrastructure, environmental management, land

use, historical and cultural preservation to support the tourism initiative. Many of the Tourism Areas identified by the TMP and the regional tourism master plans, however, were presented in broad strokes that needed further detailing once planning and development were being considered in more specific sites (sub-regional level, provincial level, municipal level, tourism estate level, etc.).

One of the sub-regions identified by the 1991 TMP was Northern Palawan, which was designated as Area 3. The Northern Palawan Area benefited from further tourism planning in the last ten years and the latest tourism plan is known as the Sustainable Environmental Management Project in Northern Palawan (SEMP-NP). The SEMP-NP provides a more detailed tourism plan for the municipalities of Busuanga, Coron, and El Nido as first priority areas and Culion and Taytay as second priority areas. This paper presents the structure planning of the municipalities of Busuanga and Coron in the Calamianes Group of Islands to illustrate the application of tourism planning principles. The municipalities of Busuanga and Coron were planned jointly since many tourism developments or activities crossed into each other's administrative boundaries. It was also clear that any major tourism developments in either municipality would influence tourism in general in both municipalities.

The Tourism Development Plan for Busuanga-Coron was comprehensive in approach, considering transportation planning, environmental management, land use planning, tourism marketing, tourism product development, human resource development, community planning, etc.

2.0 The Tourism Structure Plan of Busuanga-Coron

The Tourism Structure Plan for Busuanga-Coron considered vital transport infrastructure, environmentally sensitive areas (ECAN Zoning), existing and potential tourism sites, tourism service centers, and their linkages. Based on these considerations, several Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) were identified for the Busuanga-Coron Area. A Tourism Development Area (TDA) is a cluster of Tourism Sites (TSs) that have geographical proximity and/or common thematic attributes. Tourism Sites (TSs) are more specific places that may have natural and cultural significance, attractive landscape, where activities take place, or are suitable for tourism development. Extensive field work has identified over 30 potential TSs. Some of the themes that were believed to have unique selling qualities and became the bases for the delineation of some TDAs are the following:

- Limestone landscapes - the steep and protruding limestone cliffs and spires are associated with many of Northern Palawan's tourism attractions including Coron Island, Malajon Island and other sites. The indigenous Tagbanua culture present in these sites also constitutes a site-specific attraction.
- From reefs to wrecks - Busuanga Island and its bays offer a very peculiar combination of relatively rich coral reefs (notably in Siete Pecados, Bintuan-Sangat, etc) and the famous 12 Japanese World War II shipwrecks.
- Wildlife and forested areas - The Calauit Game Reserve and Wildlife Refuge obviously is a major tourist destination for wildlife interaction, but wildlife can be noted all along the island. Some trails present good forest cover, such as the beach forest in Barangay Old Busuanga and the rich mangroves in Bugtong, Sagrada, and Concepcion.
- Islands and Beaches - The Busuanga - Coron Area has dozens of islands and beaches with a wide range of qualities. Although, many beaches have white sand, most are narrow which limits the amount of activity and their appeal. The islands, on the other hand, offer some of the best settings for resorts, water sports, and adventure tours.

Based on the considerations cited above and other qualities observed in the Study Area, the identified Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) were further classified according to levels of priority. Categorizing the TDAs according to their regional significance or level of priority logically determines where vital transport infrastructure,

support facilities, human resources, and private investment should be directed. The TDAs that were classified as medium-to-long term have the potentials for tourism development but because of their relative inaccessibility or undeveloped state will only be ready in 5 to 10 years. There are six first priority TDAs of which four are considered Primary TDAs and two as New TDAs. The Primary TDAs have a regionally significant Tourism Site (TS) or theme that seems to overshadow or influence tourism activities in the other TSs. The New TDAs are relatively newer in the sense that they don't have a Tourism Site that is regionally significant or established but have the potentials to develop such. There are two Medium-to-Long Term TDAs where it was felt that significant tourism development would only be realized in seven to fifteen years.

2.1 The Primary Tourism Development Areas

The four Primary Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) in Busuanga-Coron espouse but are not limited to ecotourism themes, namely: TDA-1 - The Coron Island Area, TDA-2 - The Bintuan - Concepcion Area, TDA-3 - The Calauit Island Area, and TDA-4 - The Maricaban Bay Area. These established TDAs have some of the best if not the best Tourism Sites in their respective categories not just in the country but even in the rest of Southeast Asia. It is for their uniqueness in a regional context that they have become the main destinations of Busuanga-Coron even before the National Tourism Master Plan (considered the first initiative for planning tourism in Northern Palawan) was completed in 1992. In spite of the dominance of some Tourism Sites within the Primary TDAs, there are other TSs that have the potential to contribute to the overall attraction of the TDA. The four Primary TDAs and the summaries of their distinct physical characteristics and strategic importance are as follows:

a) TDA-1: The Coron Island Area

Coron Island's majestic presence just off the coast of a tourist service center (Poblacion of Coron) and its accessibility to the two gateways (Reyes Airport in YKR and the PPA Seaport in the Poblacion of Coron) make TDA-1 a major tourist destination. As the largest mass and as the home of Kayangan Lake, several lagoons, limestone cliffs and the rich Tagbanua culture, Coron Island is undoubtedly the "must see" destination in TDA-1. It has enough sights and activities (e.g., beach, snorkeling, kayaking) within the island to sustain interest for a whole day. Other attractions (e.g. Siete Pecados, Maquinit Hot Springs, CYC Beach, Uson Island) in this area have been incorporated into existing tour packages that offer Coron Island as the main attraction. Developing secondary Tourism Sites (e.g., Tapias Hill, Mount Tundalara, Mabentangen Watershed) into tourism products would further strengthen this TDA.

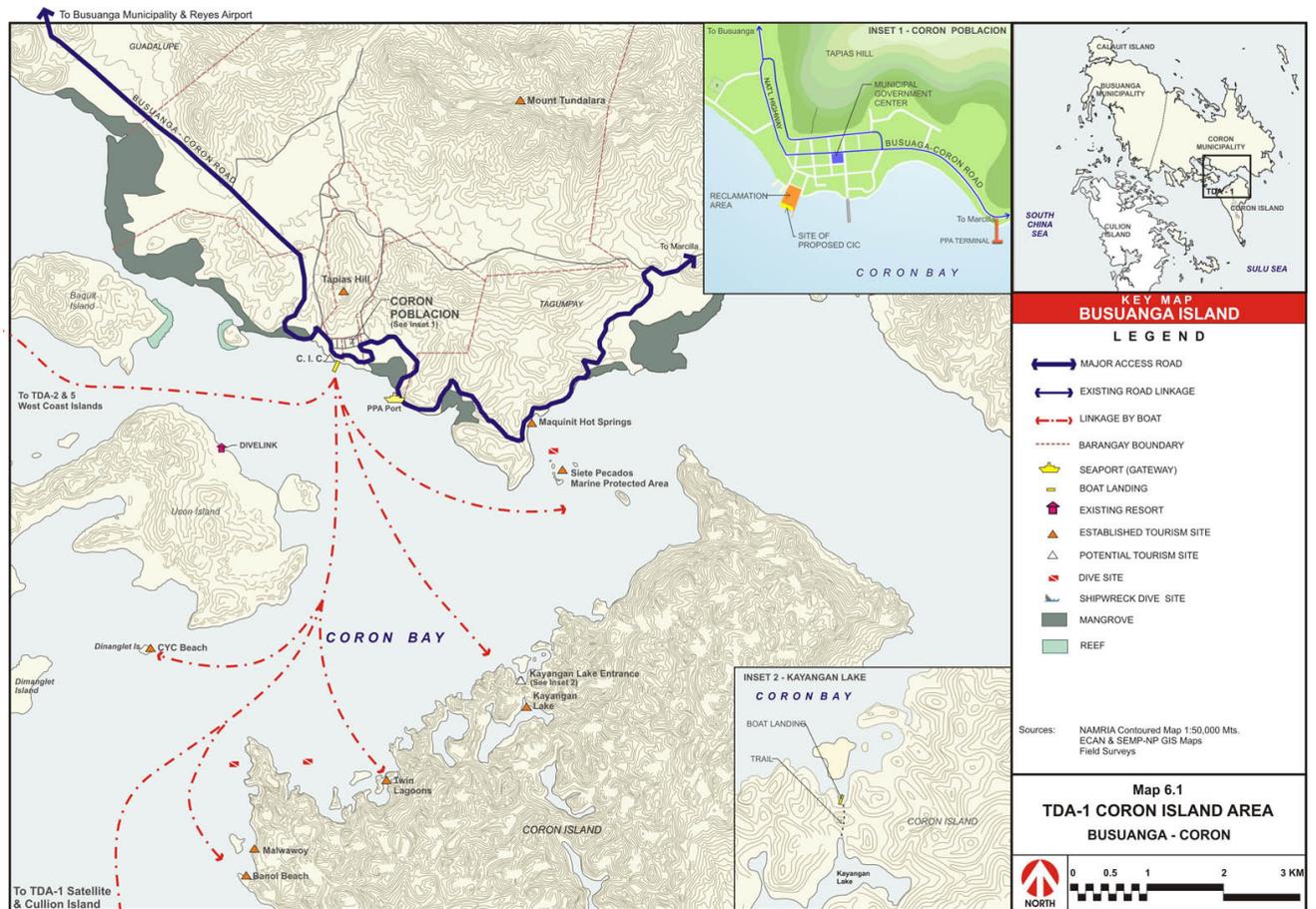


Figure 3: TDA-1 Coron Island Area

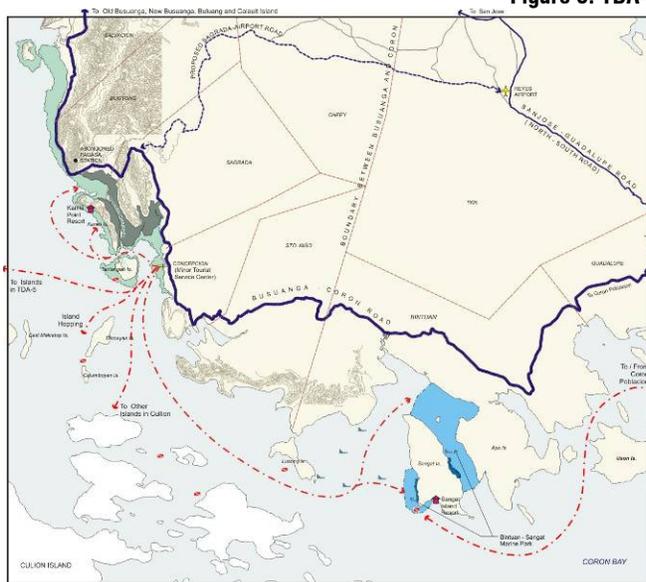


Figure 4: TDA-2 Bintuan-Concepcion Area

b) TDA-2: The Bintuan – Concepcion Area

Although, the quality of corals has diminished in the last few years, the Busuanga-Coron Area still boasts of many excellent diving spots to view the marine ecosystem. With so

many beautiful sites for diving in the whole Philippines, Busuanga-Coron can distinguish itself from the rest with its world-renowned World War 2 sunken Japanese warships in TDA-2 (The Bintuan – Concepcion Area). Diving in ship wreck dive sites cater to a “special interest” diving market. Having a collection of Japanese World War II ship wreck dive sites is of regional importance which makes TDA-2 the “crown jewel” of diving in the southwest coast of Busuanga Island. Many of the resorts (e.g., Sangat Island, Sea Dive, Dive Link, Coral Bay) and dive shops thrive on this market alone. Moreover, several interesting reefs add interest to diving in this area. Since this has always been a special interest market (divers) that requires special equipment and skills, a strategy that expands the interest to a wider market should be pursued. With most of the dive shops and dive resorts situated in the islands or in the Poblacion of Coron, a marine interpretive center or even an upscale resort may be introduced closer to the World War 2 Wreck dive sites.

c) TDA-3: The Calait Island Area

On the northwest tip of Busuanga Island is Calait Island, a unique wildlife reserve established in the mid-1970’s that is home to both endemic and African exotic species of fauna. Notwithstanding its appeal to mostly domestic tourists, this wildlife reserve has the potential to draw foreign tourists with the right packaging and improvement of access (both

riding, and ecotourism tours are some of the outdoor activities that may be developed. The Reyes Airport, a main gateway to Busuanga-Coron, is located within TDA-6. As a gateway, the Ranch Area and its wide cattle ranges offer a unique introduction to the Busuanga-Coron experience.

2.3 Medium-to-Long Term Tourism Development Areas

For the Medium-to-long Term TDAs, their “second priority” designations were mainly based on their present state of readiness for a significant level of development.

a) TDA-7: The Buluang Area

Because of its poor accessibility and infrastructure, the Buluang Area (TDA-7), consisting of Barangays Buluang and New Busuanga is considered a Medium-to-Long Term TDA. Barangay Buluang and New Busuanga is quite far from the island’s gateways and although, the area can now be reached through the Buluang-Coron Road (Busuanga-Coron main spine) and the Buluang to Decalachao Road (via the north coast), these roads remain unpaved. The Buluang Area has some stretches of beach but most are narrow and short. The beaches, mangroves and other offerings of TDA-7 are at best similar to the more accessible TDAs (TDA-5, TDA-2, TDA-1) and are therefore, not considered “must see” destinations.



Figure 8: Buluang Area (TDA-7)

b) TDA-8: The East Coast Area

The East Coast Area (TDA-8) is another medium-to-long term Tourism Development Area on the eastern side of the municipality of Coron. The area is also considered inaccessible because of its distance from the Reyes Airport and the poor condition of the roads leading to it. However, it has potentials for beach development (e.g., Marcilla), island activities (e.g., Dibalacao Island, Dimilan Island, Dinaran Island) and as a tourism expansion area for the Coron Poblacion.

3.0 Strategic Initiatives to Support Environmentally Sustainable Tourism

3.1 Strengthen the Primary Tourism Development Areas (TDAs)

The four Primary Tourism Development Areas (TDA-1, TDA-2, TDA-3, AND TDA-4) in Busuanga-Coron with its diversity of products and developed markets (both mass appeal and niche) should be the main engines to move

tourism forward in Busuanga-Coron. They are the biggest TDAs at the moment in terms of geographical size and regional importance.

With the four Primary TDAs fortuitously spread out throughout the island, they could serve as the anchors of the spatial framework for tourism development. Building on the established destinations is adopted as a spatial strategy to rationalize transportation infrastructure and to develop new tourism sites and products. The dispersed location of Busuanga-Coron’s Primary TDAs provides opportunities for a more equitable distribution of the benefits of tourism but it also underscores the fact that necessary infrastructure and services have to be in place to support their growth.

3.2 Develop New Tourism Development Areas (TDAs)

The New Tourism Development Areas (TDA-5: The Old Busuanga-Salvacion Area and TDA-6: The Ranch Area) are expected to complement the four Primary TDAs in the short-to-medium term period. The success of these New TDAs will still mainly depend on the increased visitation of the Primary TDAs, longer visitor stays, and the improvement of accessibility. The New TDAs will only gradually develop its own market by initially drawing some of the tourists that are already in Busuanga Island to visit the primary TDAs. Other Tourism Sites may also be developed in the identified Medium-to-Long Term TDAs but this will take longer in view of the limited infrastructure in place.

3.3 Improve External and Internal Accessibility

Access to Busuanga Island can be improved with the upgrading of the main gateways (i.e., the Reyes Airport, PPA Sea Port in Coron) and the subsequent response by air transport and water transport companies to increase passenger capacities. Upgrading of the gateway infrastructure alone will not be enough without the matching efforts of transport service providers to provide better and more efficient services. For air transport services, the fielding of 50-passenger planes to replace some of the 19-seaters would boost tourism. For ferry boat transport between Manila and Busuanga-Coron, perhaps one more trip to supplement the weekend trip during the peak tourism period may be provided.

Internal accessibility or mobility within the island (i.e, upgrading of existing and construction of new roads and bridges, improvements in local ports/ jetties, better bus services, more organized boat service) has to be improved as this will extend visitor stays and allow the spread of the benefits of tourism throughout the Busuanga-Coron Area. The existing roads that connect the four prime TDAs (Busuanga-Coron Road and the North-South Cross Road connecting Barangay Guadalupe with Decalachao and San Jose at Maricaban Bay) have to be upgraded to all-weather roads in anticipation of increased tourism traffic between the gateways, main tourist attractions, and the service centers.

3.4 Provide the Necessary Utilities and Services

Many tourism sites in the TDAs including the tourist service centers (staging area) of Salvacion in Busuanga have inadequate or non-existent power and water services. These utilities have to be improved immediately for tourism to grow in Busuanga. Utilities in isolated areas (e.g., islands, TDA-3, TDA-5, TDA-6) may be introduced independently from local government initiatives but this will entail tremendous cost to the private investors and developers. Investing in independent utility systems will only be considered by private developers if the tourism potentials of the area and the opportunities for business are good. Green Technology or environmentally-sensitive systems (i.e., generation of renewable energy, rain water collection and treatment, water recycling, and recycling of solid waste) may be worthy investments for isolated Tourism Sites.

3.5 Enhance the Fiscal, Legal, and Policy Support Framework

The Busuanga-Coron Area also needs to have a sound Fiscal, Legal, and Policy Support Framework to encourage investment and tourism development. With so many tourism resources, a system of selecting the best Tourism Sites for tourism development had to be formulated. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of Tourism Sites will help investors to decide on where to develop. Policies to facilitate the participation of local governments and the private sector have to be introduced to encourage public-private partnership in tourism development.

3.6 Strengthen the Tourist Service Centers (Poblacions)

Tourist Service Centers play important roles in the overall tourism development in Busuanga-Coron. The two "poblacions" (town centers) of the two municipalities are considered staging areas or tourist service centers as they provide overnight accommodations, vital tourist-oriented services and local transport connections to the Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) of Busuanga-Coron. Aside from having relatively better utilities (e.g., power, water, communication), amenities (e.g., lodging facilities, restaurants, stores), and services (e.g., banking, photo shops, repair shops) than the rest of their respective municipalities, the poblacions also serve as gateways since they host their municipal seaports or piers or are often the first stops after arriving at Reyes Airport. They are often the first and last impressions of Busuanga-Coron and should therefore, project positive images of the whole area.

4.0 Concept Plans for Specific TDAs

One of the purposes of the Tourism Structure Plan is to expand tourism activities in the less developed, emerging, and newly identified Tourism Sites in the municipalities of Busuanga and Coron. This can be achieved by building on

the strengths of the four Primary TDAs – the Coron Island Area (TDA-1), the Bintuan-Concepcion Area (TDA-2) known for its wrecks and reefs diving, the Calauit Island Area (TDA-3), and the "adventure-deluxe" resorts of the Maricanan Bay Area (TDA-4) and linking the new Tourism Sites to them. It is expected that such a product-led approach to planning this sub-region will bring about development in the short-to-medium term TDAs (the Old Busuanga-Salvacion Area and the Ranch Area) as well as the medium-to-long term TDAs (the Buluang Area and the East Coast Area).

This section presents more detailed concepts for the development of the specific TDAs and the Tourism Sites within them. Although tourists are expected to move between Tourism Sites (TSs) within specific TDAs, movement between TSs in different TDAs will also be encouraged through the improvement of inter-TDA linkages (transport infrastructure and services). Some Tourism Products were conceptualized as tours based on certain themes and will involve several Tourism Sites that may be in different TDAs. Concept Plans are prepared for five (out of eight) of the TDAs that are considered either quite established or ready for a higher level of tourism development.

4.1 The Coron Island Area (TDA-1)

The Coron Island Area (TDA-1) consists of the Coron Poblacion and its immediate surroundings on the mainland, Coron Island, Uson Island, Baquit Island, other smaller islands, and the marine resources around them. TDA-1 will have a series of unique products that will be very different from the other tourism areas throughout Northern Palawan and the Philippines and will be much more in keeping with sustainable tourism development and future demands of the markets. The centerpiece of the Coron Island Area (TDA-1) is Coron Island itself which can showcase the rich Tagbanua culture amid the backdrop of enchanting limestone cliffs, lakes and beaches.



Figure 9: Coron Bay, Coron Island, The Poblacion, Uson Island

4.1.1 Coron Island

As the largest land mass in TDA-1, Coron Island is a dominant sub-cluster of Tourism Sites (TS) that includes Kayangan Lake, Barracuda Lake, Twin lagoons, Skeleton Wreck, Banol Beach, and other pocket beaches on its western side. These Tourism Sites that are all accessed by boat offer a wide range of activities (and products) that includes swimming and snorkelling, kayaking, and Tagbanua-themed tours. Most of the offerings may be experienced in

one or two days on the average. All proposed tourism activities will be low density and low impact as Coron Island was designated as a core zone in the ECAN Zoning prepared by PCSD.

The Tourism Sites of Coron Island may also be visited in combination with other attractions in TDA-1 like the CYC Beach in Dimanglet Island, Maquinit Springs in the Poblacion, and the seven islets known as Siete Pecados between Coron Island and the mainland. Overnight accommodations for visitors will mostly be in the Coron Poblacion which performs the role of a service center not only for TDA-1 but for other TDAs as well. Other overnight accommodations may be availed of in other resorts such as Dive Link Resort on Uson Island (TDA-1), Sangat Island Resort on Sangat Island (TDA-2), Club Paradise on Dimaquiat Island (TDA-4).

4.1.2 Siete Pecados and Maquinit Hot Springs

Two Tourism Sites located north of Coron Island are the seven islets collectively known as Siete Pecados (7 Sins) and the Maquinit Hot Springs. The main attractions of Siete Pecados are the underwater coral gardens between the seven islets which are ideal sites for snorkelling. Visitors to this Tourism Site usually originate in the Poblacion (boat landing at the Public Market site), although they may also be reached from the Maquinit Hot Springs. The SEMP-NP, the LGU, and the local community collaborated in 2004 to establish Siete Pecados as a Marine Protection Area which ensured its conservation as a coral garden and its promotion as a Tourism Site for snorkelling. Anchoring buoys were set up to prevent boats from throwing their own anchors that risk damaging corals.



Figure 10: Maquinit Hot Springs in a mangrove setting (TDA-1)

The Maquinit Hot Springs on the mainland of Coron Poblacion, on the other hand, offers hot springs in a unique setting of mangroves, seashore, and hills. The Maquinit Hot Springs may be reached by land or by boat from the center of the Coron Poblacion. This particular Tourism Site may be developed further into a resort with some rooms, spa, a jetty and a docking area for boat tours to Siete Pecados and Coron Island. Both Siete Pecados and the Maquinit Hot Springs are currently offered as part of tours together with other attractions in Coron Island.

4.1.3 Uson Island, Dinanglet Island, and Dimanglet Island

There are several popular island destinations in Coron Bay just off the coast of the Coron Poblacion. The biggest island

is Uson Island where the Dive Link Resort is located. The Dive Link Resort is one of very few resorts around Coron Bay set in a natural (or a non-urbanized) environment. The Dive Link Resort also offers adventure tours to Tourism Sites within TDA-1 (e.g., Coron Island, Siete Pecados, Maquinit Hot Springs), in TDA-2 (e.g., diving in reefs and WW II ship wrecks, island hopping in TDA-2 satellite), and in TDA-3 (e.g., safari tours in Calauit Island).

The Dinanglet Islet just south of Uson Island is a popular island hopping stop because of its white sand beach called CYC Beach. Many boats (outrigger boats known as bancas) dock at CYC beach where passengers swim, snorkel, and picnic. This beach needs better zoning management to prevent littering and to institute some zoning of activities on the beach. Minor facilities such as toilets, picnic huts, and a jetty would certainly enhance the experience on Dinanglet Island.

4.1.4 The Poblacion As A Service Center

As the “tourist service center” of TDA-1 (also TDA-2 and TDA-3), the Coron “Poblacion” (town center) provides overnight accommodations, vital tourist oriented services and local transport connections to several Tourism Sites (TSs) in TDA-1, TDA-2, and TDA-3. Hence, most tourists stay in the overnight accommodations of the Coron Poblacion but spend most of the day in the tourist destinations of Busuanga-Coron. The SEMP-NP recommended the setting up of a Calamianes Resource and Cultural Center to be located in the Poblacion to inform and educate visitors and to help them organize their activities.

The Poblacion of Coron has relatively better services to offer than Salvacion in Busuanga but is slowly slipping into urban decay largely because of the absence of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) to guide its development. Since the Coron Poblacion needs concept plans to rehabilitate itself, the SEMP-NP also prepared a Concept Plan to help guide its future development.

4.1.5 Malcapuya Island, Dicalabuan Island, and Bulalacao Island (TDA-1 Satellite)

About 30 kilometers south of the Coron Poblacion and east of Culion Island is a sub-cluster of islands that includes Malcapuya Island, Dicalabuan Island, and Bulalacao Island. These islands have some of the best white sand beaches in the whole Calamianes but are considered quite distant from the gateways (Reyes Airport, PPA Port) and Tourist Service Center (Coron Poblacion). The sub-cluster of islands, however, has become a frequent stop of cruise boats (e.g., Coco Explorer, Lagoon Explorer) for its beaches and waters for snorkeling. Because of their inaccessibility, the islands and their surrounding waters have remained quite undeveloped and as a consequence also well-preserved. Among the islands, Malcapuya Island has the better attributes because of a longer white sand beach on its southern shore, a narrower beach on its western side, and another shoreline on its northern side. Views from Malcapuya Island as in the other islands in the TDA-1 Satellite are excellent.

A concept of integrating resort developments in three or more islands (Malcapuya Island, Dicalabuan Island, and Bulalacao Island) would create a major attraction in this part of the Calamianes. Such developments would require the cooperation of the owners of the islands or parts of the islands and probably even the sharing of the resources or even facilities. Water is always a precious commodity in the construction and operation of resorts on the islands. Malcapuya Island is fortunate to have a water source on it. The other islands will either have to set up desalination plants or will have to regularly bring in water by water tanks on boats. Like all small islands, the other utilities and functions such as power, solid waste management, and telecommunications will also have to be taken care of independently.

4.2 The Bintuan – Concepcion Area (TDA-2)

The Bintuan-Concepcion Area (TDA-2) boasts of diving in its world-renowned World War 2 sunken warships and reefs but also offers other tourism products that complement its more popular and established wreck dive sites. Several scenic islands (Sangat Island, Tantanongan Island, Kaniki Island), coves and mangroves (Ryukan Channel) add appeal and variety to TDA-2.

4.2.1 World War II Japanese Sunken Warships as Dive Sites

The twelve World War II Japanese sunken warships that are mostly in Bintuan Bay (off the coast of Barangays Bintuan and Concepcion) make TDA-2 a major wreck diving site in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia. Many resorts in TDA-2 (e.g., Sangat Island Resort, Coral Bay, Evergreen Resort) and dive shops located in Coron Poblacion offer diving trips to these wreck dive sites. Many of the international diving enthusiasts visit Busuanga-Coron specifically to dive in the dive sites of TDA-2. Barangay Concepcion in the municipality of Busuanga is an alternative jump-off point to the dive sites and islands of TDA-2 but its services and facilities are still way below the standards found in the Coron Poblacion.

4.2.2 Sangat Island, Lusong Island, and Apo Island

Most of the WWII Japanese warships sunk around the waters of Sangat Island, Lusong Island, and Apo Island. The most significant tourism development in this cluster of islands is the Sangat Island Resort situated on the south shore of Sangat Island. The resort's cottages with their vernacular design themes and its proximity to the WWII wreck dive sites make it an attractive Tourist Site in TDA-2. The SEMP-NP has recommended that the waters between Sangat Island and Apo Island and the waters off the western shore of Sangat Island be declared as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The terrain of the three islands is predominantly rugged and mountainous which limits the number of land sites that can be developed for tourism.

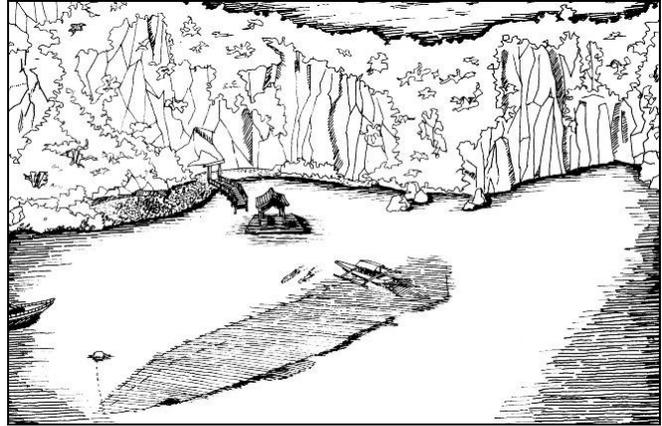


Figure 11: Bintuan-Sangat Marine Protected Area

4.2.3 Barangay Concepcion, Kaniki Island and Tantanongan Island

The center of Barangay Concepcion on the mainland has the potential to become a major jump-off point to the TDA-2 Tourism Sites. At present, it has limited overnight accommodations and facilities to entertain tourists. It has a jetty where boats may be taken to island and diving destinations. It is recommended that a new road that shortens land travel between Barangay Concepcion and the Airport be designed and constructed in the short-to-medium term period to make it a more viable staging area for tourism trips.

One of the nearest islands to the mainland of Barangay Concepcion is Kaniki Island. It currently has a small resort (Kaniki Resort) on its west shore that also offers diving to its guests. It is estimated that 25 to 50 rooms (one or two resorts) can still be accommodated on the island. The island has a long but narrow white sand beach on its western shore and a good water source. On Kaniki Island's west shore are mangroves that line the Ryukan Channel. Mangrove tours on kayaks or outrigger boats (bancas) can be offered in the future once there are enough visitors in this sub-cluster.

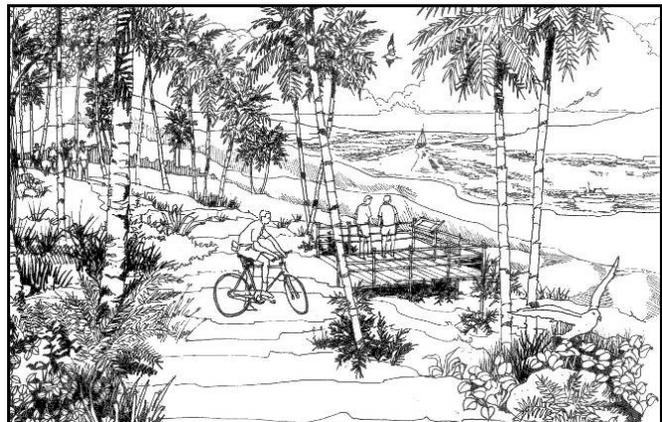


Figure 12: Tourism Trails in TDA-2: The Bintuan-Concepcion Area

There is another cove south of the jetty (Boat Landing) of Barangay Concepcion that meanders into smaller lagoons

surrounded by mangroves. This cove may also be utilized as a site for boat tours, rafting and kayaking. The area around these coves may also be used as a stop for nature interpretation tours. Nature trails and bicycle trails may be developed in this area.

4.2.4 The TDA-2 Satellite: Potpototan Island and Other Islands

To the west of the World War II ship wreck dive sites is a sub-cluster of charming islands designated as a satellite of TDA-2. These islands add variety to the offerings in TDA-2 and offer potential sites for future island resorts. The biggest island in this sub-cluster is Potpototan Island which already has a resort with residential villas called Coral Bay and another resort called Evergreen Resort on its western shores. Swimming, snorkelling and diving within TDA-2 (as well as other dive sites) are some of the activities offered by the two resorts on Potpototan Island. The other islands in the TDA-2 Satellite have not developed any resorts of any substantial scale or value.

4.3 The Calauit Island Area (TDA-3)

The Calauit Island Area (TDA-3) is on the northwest tip of Busuanga Island. The focus of this TDA is Calauit Island itself which has wildlife interaction (African and endemic species) as its main draw. The Calauit Island Area provides a product of national importance with an emphasis on environmental management and good quality recreational activities.

It was in 1976, when a Presidential Proclamation declared Calauit Island into a Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary. In 1977, 104 animals of eight African species were brought to Calauit Island through an arrangement between the national governments of Kenya and the Philippines to jointly contribute in the effort of protecting what were then endangered species. The wildlife sanctuary (island and Marine Zone), which total about 282 square kilometres, is now under the management of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD).

4.3.1 Calauit Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary (CGPWS)

Managing Calauit Island and its resources has increasingly become difficult because of the growing number of illegal settlers which now compete with the African and indigenous animals for space. Other observations are as follows:

- Although Calauit Island is a well-known wildlife reserve, it has not reached its full potential as a tourism product. The main reasons are because of its lack of accessibility, land tenure problem, and outdated mandate that prevents it from using its revenues to improve or even maintain its facilities.
- TDA-3 is situated in the far north-western tip of the main island of Busuanga and therefore, suffers from lack of accessibility from the main gateways (Reyes Airport and PPA Seaport). Travelling to the sanctuary

from the gateways is demanding and at some points perilous.

- The absence of decent lodging facilities anywhere near TDA-3 has also discouraged longer stays or even visits to Calauit Island.
- The PCSD has conducted a study on the existing situation and has come up with recommendations for the improvement of the Calauit Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary (CGPWS). The SEMP-NP team has incorporated most of PCSD's recommendations and through its own surveys has prepared concept plans for the improvement of the CGPWS. Some of the recommendations to improve CGPWS are as follows:
 - Improve Calauit Island's gateways at Illultok Bay and at the Ponda Station (east gateway of Calauit Island for visitors coming from TDA-4);
 - Improve facilities and grounds of the CGPWS Central Station (Administration Office). The grounds here is one of several sites being considered for a camping site;
 - Develop and use alternative trails to reduce the wear on vegetation along the trails and to increase the number of tour groups that may go around simultaneously;
 - Plan and develop the lookout point at Balatbat Hill for orientation and interpretation;
 - Marine flora and fauna tours on the north coast (Abanaban WS) and on the west coast (Cadyes WS) can be developed and promoted as new tourism products;
 - Explore linkages with other research institutions that may be interested in setting up research stations on the island as this will help establish CGPWS as a science research facility;
 - Reduce the number of informal settlers on the island;
 - Raise standards by image-building (e.g., designing uniforms for wardens and tour guides, designing information signage, improve facilities and equipment);
 - Improve land access from Coron municipality and Salvacion in Busuanga municipality;
 - Consider developing an upscale low-density resort in the medium-term at the western shore of Calauit Island for initially about 15 to 30 rooms.



Figure 13: Proposed Camp Site at Calauit Island

4.4 The Maricaban Bay Area (TDA-4)

Owing to the presence of the AA-rated Club Paradise in Dimaqui Island and the El Rio y Mar Resort on the mainland's north coast, the Maricaban Bay Area (TDA-4) has established itself as an area for deluxe resorts using Maricaban Bay as a playground for soft adventure and ecotourism. There are other islands and beaches in the Maricaban Bay Area that may be developed into low-density resorts but this may have to wait until key infrastructure has been improved (airport apron, the San Nicolas to San Jose Road or North-South Road) and better transport services are provided.



Figure 14: El Rio y Mar Resort on Maricaban Bay Area (TDA-4)

4.4.1 Port Calton, Dimaqui Island, and Other Islands

Club Paradise in Dimaqui Island and El Rio y Mar at Port Calton (in the north coast of Busuanga Island), which are both owned by one private corporation, have helped open up the northern part of Busuanga-Coron to tourism. These two resorts offer higher standard rooms in island and beach settings and soft adventure activities not just in the Maricaban Bay Area (TDA-4) but also in Calauit Island (TDA-3) and Coron Island (TDA-1). Mainly because of its relative proximity to Calauit Island (compared to the Coron Poblacion) and higher standard accommodations, many of the upscale visitors of CGPWS originate from the two resorts of TDA-4. The landing area on the east coast of Calauit Island (Ponda Warden Station) receives boats mainly from the two resorts in TDA-4 (the Maricaban Bay Area).

The other islands near Dimaqui Island (Diboyoyan Island and Malpagalen Island) are Tourism Sites that are utilized as activity areas by Club Paradise and El Rio y Mar Resort.

Diboyoyan Island, in particular is quite an attractive island with its long white sandy beach, vast coralline area and dense forest inhabited by endemic flora and fauna. Diboyoyan Island is known for its various tropical fishes, monkeys, monitor lizards and its marine turtle nesting grounds.

The islands of the Maricaban Bay Area may be reached by taking a boat from San Jose or when the tide is high, also at Decalachao. The boat landings at these two points can be described as makeshift and inadequate to handle the number of visitors to the islands of Maricaban Bay. A jetty at San Jose is recommended to facilitate movement between the islands and the mainland.

The road between San Jose and Barangay San Nicolas should also be upgraded into an all-weather road as this is the main access between TDA-4 and the Reyes Airport. The San Jose-

San Nicolas Road is also the linkage between TDA-4 and the other TDAs (TDA-1, TDA-2, and TDA-5) on the west coast of Busuanga Island.

4.4.2 Cabilauan Island and the Surrounding Islands

The biggest island in TDA-4 is the Cabilauan Island which is east of San Jose and the El Rio y Mar Resort. It has numerous narrow beaches on its western side which can be developed into beach destinations for excursionists in the interim and perhaps small resorts in the future. Cabilauan Island is surrounded by several smaller islands of which one or two have private beach developments. This collection of islands may be planned as an integrated tourism sub-cluster of resorts, beaches, and swimming/snorkelling areas.

4.5 The Old Busuanga – Salvacion Area (TDA-5)

The Old Busuanga – Salvacion Area (TDA-5) is a tourism cluster that includes the site identified by the ESTDP-NP (known as the South Coast Resort), the Busuanga River system and the islands on Gutob Bay. With three existing resorts, the coastal area of Barangay Old Busuanga can be revived using the Busuanga River system as an area for ecotourism tours, sight seeing, cultural experiences, adventure, and other tourism activities. As an area quite accessible from Salvacion (Poblacion of Busuanga Municipality), it is also an ideal staging area for tours to the islands of TDA-5 in Gutob Bay and the Calauit Island Area (TDA-3). The Old Busuanga – Salvacion Area (TDA-5) is situated along Busuanga-Coron's main spine, the Busuanga-Coron National Road, between the southeast TDAs (TDA-1 and TDA-2) and the northwest TDA (TDA-3). Its strategic location makes it quite accessible to tourists but just as important it has the opportunity to bridge the distance between TDA-1 (The Calauit Island Area) and the other Primary TDAs (TDA-1 and TDA-2) on the west coast. Thus, Tourism Sites in the different TDAs may be packaged into tourism circuits that allow the tourists to appreciate them more and induce them to stay longer.

4.5.1 West Beaches of Old Busuanga

The stretch of beach measuring at least 3 kilometers in Barangay Old Busuanga at the mouth of the Busuanga River is the longest beach in Busuanga Island's west coast. The west beach of Old Busuanga never developed to the magnitude projected by a previous tourism study called the Environmentally Sustainable Tourism development Plan for Northern Palawan or ESTDP-NP (1997) and will perhaps take another 5-10 years before it can even reach 200 rooms. In fact, only three beach resorts have developed since 1997, and two of them are now closed. It was also observed that the existing resorts in the site failed to consider the behavior of the natural elements and as a result, are now undertaking remedial measures to control shifting sand bars and receding beaches.

As the tourism industry picks up, the resorts will require some re-planning and renovation to be able to respond to the needs of the market. The west beach of Old Busuanga, although a bit narrow, is still an attractive setting for a resort and a good site for beach activities. The resorts that have been built on this site are considered standard or economy at best but are still better than any lodging facility in Salvacion.

4.5.2 Barangay Old Busuanga and the Busuanga River

A community close to the mouth of the river, which is known for weaving handicrafts, is worth considering for development into a handicrafts village or a souvenir shopping area. The community can also serve as the source of skilled labor and services essential to the continued operation of tourism activities. Improved road access, and the provision of power and water should be one of the municipality's priorities for this Tourism Site.

The Busuanga River can be the means to tell the story of the river ecosystem and the culture of the local community. A boat tour or a kayak tour along Busuanga River can provide interpretation, adventure, and experience. Other Tourism Sites along Busuanga River may be developed to make a river adventure tour more interesting. Some of the other Tourism Sites/ stops that will be included are: Chichibacan Lagoon, Mangrove Walks, Crafts Village, and an Eco Lodge/ Restaurant further upstream close to the National Road (Steel Bridge). The Eco Lodge will only have a few rooms and a restaurant that specializes in local cuisine utilizing crabs, oysters, shrimps, and other seafood that are locally available. It may also have a souvenir shop showcasing the handicrafts that are produced by the Old Busuanga community.

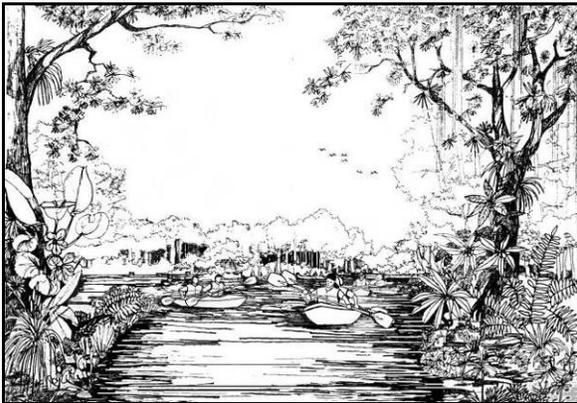


Figure 15: Proposed Kayaking Tours at Busuanga River (TDA-5: Old Busuanga-Salvacion Area)

The Poblacion of Busuanga Municipality is called Salvacion. Since the Municipal Hall and most of the commercial establishments are located in Salvacion, it has become the tourist service center for TDA-5. A survey of lodging facilities in Salvacion revealed that there were only two or three lodging facilities offering rooms to tourists. Sadly, these rooms were not even up to minimum standards. This prompted SEMP-NP to initiate a Home Stay Program that involved organizing homeowners who were willing to offer

rooms for guests. The program required the setting up of standards and the raising of funds that would be made available for the improvement of participating homes through loans.

4.5.3 Salvacion as the Tourist Service Center

The Poblacion (Salvacion) of Busuanga has not yet reached the level of blight of the Coron Poblacion mainly because of the smaller local population and visitor arrivals. Nonetheless, it was deemed necessary that a Concept Plan be prepared to be used by the municipal government and the local community as a guide for tourism development in the service center.

4.5.4 Talampulan Island, Dibutonay Island, and Malajon Island

TDA-5 has quite a number of islands on Gutob Bay that can be developed as Tourism Sites. One such example is the sub-cluster of islands that includes Talampulan Island, Dibutonay Island, and Malajon Island. The three islands collectively offer a wide array of activities that can be designed into tour packages. Talampulan Island is the biggest and most developed among the three islands. It has a port which constantly receives fishing vessels that either unload their catch or pick up supplies and a thriving fishing community called Barangay Panlaitan. The wharf can also receive bigger passenger boats should tourism grow in this sub-cluster. In contrast to the eastern coast of Talampulan Island which is quite built up and populated, the western shore is relatively undeveloped. Talampulan Island's western shore has about 2 kilometers of white sand beach, an abandoned US Naval Station, and good views of Malajon Island. Accommodations may be initiated through a homestay program in Barangay Panlaitan or a low-density resort on its western shores.

To the northwest of Talampulan Island is Malajon Island (a.k.a. Black Island). Malajon Island has limestone cliffs, some caves, a white sand beach on its eastern side and is inhabited by Tagbanuas. These features contribute to the island's appeal which often draws excursionists who picnic, snorkel, swim, tour the caves, and rock climb. Malajon Island is a popular stopover for the long journeys between TDA-1 (The Coron Island Area) and TDA-3 (The Calauit Island Area). The island can be one of many islands in Gutob Bay which can be offered as an "island adventure" stop for the "2 days-1 night" packages of the Product Development Plan.

A short distance to the south of Talampulan Island is Dibutonay Island, a smaller and unpopulated island endowed with a water source, white sand beaches, beautiful views, and relatively intact coral gardens. Since this island also has a land title, it has good potentials for a resort development of about 20 to 50 rooms.

There are other islands near each other in Gutob Bay that can be sub-clustered into activity areas. All these islands contribute to make TDA-5 a major tourism area.