

Heritage-Related Resources in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines as Potential Heritage Tourism Sites

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is a fast-paced industry that necessitates the capacity to rapidly adapt to evolving tourist wants and demands. In the Philippines, the concept of heritage is well-known through its rich history. Considering all of the local heritage tourism sites evident in the country, indeed viewpoints with regards to heritage differ across regions. This study mainly identified heritage tourism-related resources in the town of Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, and determined the potentials of these in making the town become a heritage tourism site. A descriptive-qualitative research method was used. As for the data collection method, researchers used the interview method, document scanning and ocular visit. The potentiality of the town was described through the use of the UNESCO Criteria. Results indicate that Solano is home to more heritage resources. The town of Solano has met UNESCO Criterion 2 due to the presence of a unique cultural heritage known as the “perfect square” and is characterized by its preserved road distances, which adhere to the urban planning. The identified town’s natural, man-made landscapes and cultural treasures also serve as contributory factors for heritage and tourism-related reasons. Further, the proposed excursion itinerary can also enhance Solano’s entire heritage tourism services and be highly helpful for future plans for recognizing it as a heritage tourism site. Overall, this contributed relevant input to stakeholders on how the town can be maximized, such that economically and cultural-wise, the municipality may be positioned as a future heritage tourism site worthy of local as well as national and international visitors’ attention.

Keywords: Traditional heritage, history, historical preservation, landmarks, cultural legacy

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a fast-paced industry that necessitates the capacity to rapidly adapt to evolving tourist wants and demands, as customer amusement, stability, and delight are highly crucial to tourism organizations. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2022), tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. According to Fiji (2019), one of the vibrant and significant sectors that contribute to the growth of a nation’s economy is the tourism sector. Tourism has the power to foster stronger linkages between governments or companies, produce new leisure and entertainment options, and raise the worth of a currency. It may also create chances for cross-cultural contact, while benefiting visitors’ enjoyment, well-being, and education (Revfine, 2022).

One of the most significant types of tourism is heritage tourism. The growth of heritage tourism sites that are being discovered is inevitable considering the fact that history is a never-ending process, evident through the traces it makes that include sites. According to UNESCO (2022), “heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations.” Our heritage is an irreplaceable source

of life and inspiration. Ahmad & Ramli (2022) also added that understanding the local community's values and its authenticity aids in maintaining the rural areas' historic character. Furthermore, it demonstrates respect and love for the country where it is located (Rosario, 2020). Chauma & Ngwira (2021) likewise mentioned that in any tourism site, the local population is a crucial stakeholder, and recognizing their opinions on any local tourism activity setting is really important. Given this, Yu & Xu (2019) states that it is essential to develop a full understanding of the roles of specific cultural heritage elements.

Asia is the most diverse continent on the globe, from its cold climate to its island chains and mountainous regions. Southeast Asia is at its center, with multilingual, interfaith, and different traditions established by centuries of trade and geopolitical relations. In the Philippines, the concept of heritage is well-known through its rich history. Considering all of the local heritage tourism sites evident in the country, indeed viewpoints with regards to heritage differ across regions. The historic buildings of the Philippines show how creative the Filipinos are in adjusting to the environment and creating a viable system of living. Just like what was said by the PDOT Team (2021), we can explore Philippine culture through its heritage tourist sites. Due to the country's significant contribution to history, highlighting the Philippine heritage and culture is of great help to the increase of travel among tourists (Rocamora, 2022).

The gateway to the Cagayan Valley Region, also known as one of the most progressive provinces in the northern part of Luzon is the province of Nueva Vizcaya (PeoPlaid, 2019). As for having the title of being the commercial center is the municipality of Solano. When it comes to the municipality's road structure planning based on its observable features, the roads are quite wide providing a square-grid type road consisting of the six (6) center barangays where existing commercial and financial areas in the municipality are present. In addition, the town can also invest on the possible plans of the government in terms of developing it as a potential heritage tourism site to which this is supported by Seyfi, Hall and Fagnoni (2018) who mentioned that it is possible to investigate the varying viewpoints of many stakeholders toward the development of sustainable tourism, particularly heritage tourism sites.

According to Tsartas & Sarantakou (2017), they stated that the idea of tourism resources refers to natural and man-made tourist attractions, establishments, services, and circumstances that attract tourists and may contribute to the development of a tourism destination. On the other hand, heritage related resources include both natural and human resources and it revolves around objects and places with the intervention of past human activities, specifically present in sites, districts, and objects related to people, culture, and events that remain to inform the present and future communities (Stantec, 2013). The study primarily concentrated on the potential of the municipality of Solano on becoming a heritage tourism site due to its identified heritage related resources. Heritage related resources are those that have historical significance, evident in the article of Davies (2019) stating that heritage tourism related resources include and are not limited to the following: places of cultural significance, places to which living heritage is existent, historical settlements, graves and burial grounds, movable objects, archaeological and geological sites.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative type of research and utilized a face-to-face self-constructed and semi-structured interview and the researchers made interview guide questions using the UNESCO criteria as basis. The study identified the town's heritage tourism related resources and its features aligned to the criteria of being a potential heritage tourism site and determined courses of action for further developments. The study was conducted in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya. Purposive sampling method was used in selecting the research informants. (1) Former Tourism Council Member; (2) Co-chairperson for the Committee on Tourism, Culture and Arts; (3) Sangguniang Bayan Committee on Tourism, Culture and the Arts (4) Former People's Organization representative focusing on Indigenous Peoples; (5) Two Tourism representative from the academe; (6) Provincial Tourism and Culture Officer; and (7) One Social Science or

Araling Panlipunan Teachers from Department of Education; (8) Two Elderly People Representing the IPs.

The researchers considered these individuals as they have important perspectives that may potentially contribute to the future of Solano as a heritage tourism site. The researchers compiled the information from the data gathered and plotted it in a matrix of columns where the informants' code and answers to every question were encoded thematically. These were subjected to analysis and interpretation at the option of the university research analyst.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section 1. Heritage Tourism Related Resources in Solano

This section aimed to determine and describe the heritage tourism related resources in Solano and its cultural and historical significance.

Bangaan Rolling Hills



It is a tourist spot that was discovered last 2020 in Brgy. Bangaan, Solano, Nueva Vizcaya. Many tourists often called this a mini Chocolate Hill just like in Bohol because of its resemblance. If its popularity increases, more discoveries will also be supporting its overall potential, even of becoming a historic and cultural landmark.

Communal Falls



The site is located at Brgy. Communal in which the falls is also connected to the Pa-id or the Mighty Warren

Falls and the Uddiawan Falls. It is known for its natural beauty, further enriched by the involvement of an indigenous tribe also known as the Ayangans that contributes to its historical and cultural identity. Moreover, the discovery of a seashell fossils might also indicate a geological event related to the 8th criterion, further discussed in the following section.

Heroes Memorial Park



The Heroes Memorial Park is located in the center of Solano. This is where municipal events are actually conducted. It is also where people may encounter the renowned and illustrious Cannon Relic that the guerillas of the 25th Philippine Army Division employed against the Japanese Imperial Forces during World War II. Historically, there is the current existence of the iconic cannon. In a cultural sense, artistic works of Solanoans are also displayed in the site, such as the huge sculptures of heroes.

Pa-id or Mighty Warren Falls



It is located over an hour and a half's climb from the Barangay Communal center and roughly 17 kilometers from the Poblacion of Solano town. The site is protected by the locals and the local government unit to

preserve and maintain its natural beauty. The Ayangans are also part of its preservation. Thus, similarly to the Communal Falls and Uddiawan Falls, the involvement of the Indigenous People in the site is a contributory factor to its historical and cultural aspects.

Santol Rock Formation

The Santol Rock formations are a collection of various-sized stones that can be found in Sitio Santol of the barangay Uddiawan and in a river that runs alongside the famous Uddiawan Falls. They believe that it is a natural beauty and it is something that connects them from the past. These awe-inspiring creations have been shaped by the forces of nature over time, resulting in a captivating display of geological wonder. Thus, it reflects a geological history.

Singian Mountain



As a prospective tourist destination for the municipality, Singian Mountain is located between the barangays of Aggub and Concepcion. Based on the interview conducted, most of the informants that are well-informed of the Singian Mountain are the elderly and the indigenous people. Additionally, the responsibility of the site's sustainment has been delegated to the ancestors. With that, its history relates to the activities commonly done in the site, as their ways of practicing such activities have reference to the culture of the Gaddang people.

Spanish Bridge



This is a Spanish Era bridge made by the missionary named Fr. Juan Fernandez Villaverde located at Brgy. San Luis, Solano. The bridge was renovated in the year 2000 as part of the barangay's beautification project. This bridge holds significance as a remarkable landmark that has withstood the test of time. This bridge has

become an integral part of the historic and cultural fabric of the community, fostering a sense of identity and belonging.

The Shrine of the Black Nazarene



It's a sanctuary for people seeking solace and spiritual connection. The Shrine was built in October 2015. The existence of the Shrine of the Black Nazarene beside St. Louis Beltran Parish serves as a major driver for further religious events, which is why it is dubbed as the Quiapo of the North. Thus, contributing to the number of historic events in the town. As for the inclusion of the bell tower in the site, its three large bells are also historic in origin. Therefore, the site has great historical significance to the town.

Uddiawan Falls

It is located at upper Barangay Communal about 12 kilometers from Poblacion. The Uddiawan falls are part of the local community's ancestral domain. The government no longer has jurisdiction over those areas because they belong to their ancestral domain. This Falls also provides an opportunity for sustainable development that respects the cultural aspect of the area and it holds deep cultural and significance for indigenous communities residing in the town.

Section 2. Describe Solano as a Potential Heritage Tourism Site

In accordance with the UNESCO criteria, the following sections contain the responses gathered from the informants per criterion. The researchers maximized the use of the UNESCO criteria in gathering data to fairly describe the potential of the town in accordance with the elements that are present and required in each criterion. The informants were able to provide information effectively, aligned to their areas of expertise.

Criteria 1 – Solano is a town with a rich cultural history that has given rise to a number of gifted and extraordinary writers and artists. Even though not all of these people have received awards, they are acknowledged for their exceptional contributions to their respective domains.

Criteria 2 – Solano has undergone improvements and is ready for more development. The increase being discussed most certainly has more to do with commercialization than heritage growth.

Criteria 3 – In the town of Solano, distinct cultural traditions and ways of living are well observed and reflected in the municipality's history. The ideal urban planning of the municipality was highlighted, and is

currently part of the ongoing promotion of its cultural traditions.

Criteria 4 – The town of Solano does not have any outstanding examples of buildings and architectural structures that portrays the town’s history.

Criteria 5 – Traditional culture is still present in some of Solano’s rural barangays, although the town center has undergone significant modernization and has lost many old customs and dishes.

Criteria 6 – There are events and living traditions present in the municipality. However, there is no relevant evidence that the mentioned events and living traditions are of outstanding universal significance.

Criteria 7 – Sites of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance as well as cultural properties were identified in the town of Solano, but most of these only partially reflected the town’s cultural heritage because it had already undergone modernization. Moreover, there has been little to no progress in the practices for developing and preserving these designated tourist destinations and natural heritage tourism sites.

Criteria 8 – Although the municipality of Solano has developed landforms and significant geomorphic features, most of the stated natural features do not represent major stages of earth’s history.

Criteria 9 – Solano does not contain significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.

Criteria 10 – There are few extinct animals present in the town of Solano due to the possible reasons such as the lack of animal habitats, insufficient management, and limited conservation programs implemented by the government.

Section 3. A sample Excursion Itinerary and Tour Guiding Spiel for a Running Tour in Solano

This portion contained the sample excursion that the researcher’s have come up with and it is based on the heritage-related resources provided in the first section as this can also serve as the local government’s basis for extension purposes.

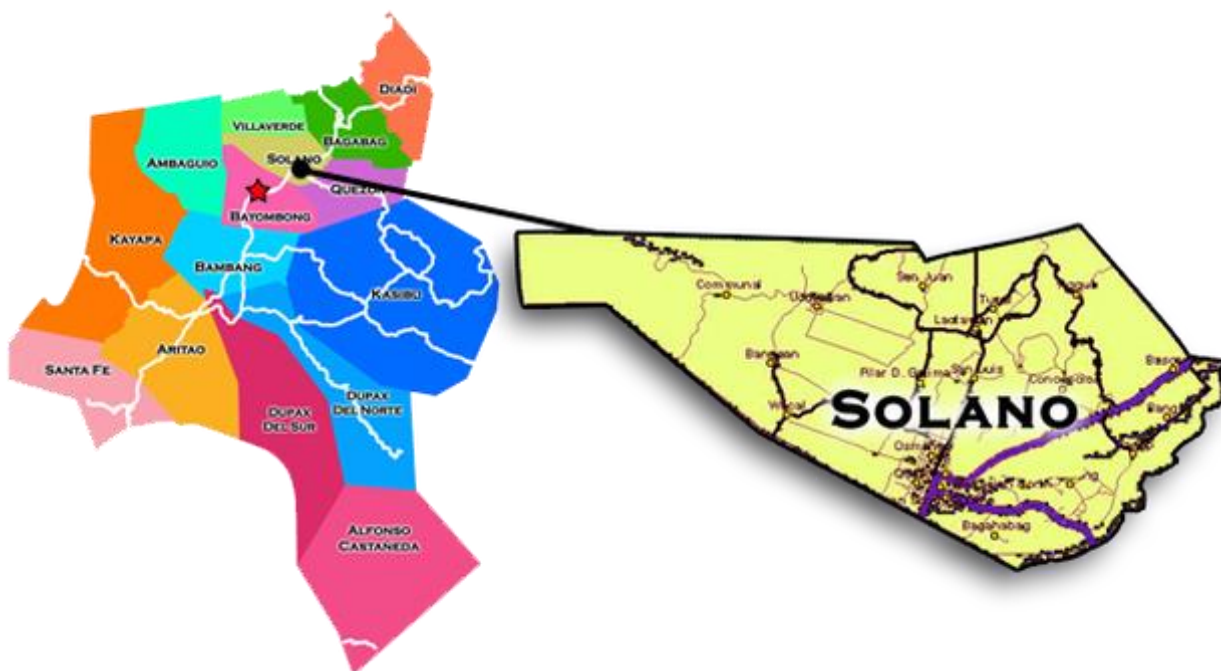


Table 3: Table for Sample Excursion Itinerary and Tour Guding Spiel in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya

7:00 – 8:00 AM	ETA	Spiel Guide
8:00 – 8:30 AM	Shrine of the Black Nazarene	<p>Good day, everyone! Welcome to the Shrine of the Black Nazarene. It is a remarkable landmark that was constructed in October 2015. It is also known as the Quiapo of the North. This place holds a special significance due to its location and striking resemblance to the famous Quiapo Church. As we enter the Shrine, you'll immediately notice the sense of tranquility that envelops this place. It's a sanctuary for people seeking solace and spiritual connection. You'll have the opportunity to offer a short prayer, reflecting on your own personal journey or simply finding a moment of peace.</p> <p>We'll continue our tour by visiting the Saint Louis Beltran Parish Church, which is conveniently located at the left side of the bell tower. This beautiful church is dedicated to Saint Louis Beltran, a Dominican friar known for his tireless efforts in spreading the faith and his deep devotion to God. Take a moment to appreciate the stunning architecture and the peaceful atmosphere within this holy place.</p> <p>Alright everyone, do you have any questions? If none, we shall proceed to our next destination.</p>
8:35 – 9:00 AM	Breakfast @ Rizal Park	<p>Our next stop is an iconic place that honors the memory of our National Hero, Dr. Jose Rizal. Here, we stand before the magnificent monument that pays tribute to his invaluable contributions to our nation's history and the ideals he stood for.</p> <p>Right in front of us is the impressive monument of Dr. Jose Rizal. As you gaze upon it, you'll feel a sense of pride and reverence for the man who dedicated his life to fighting for our freedom and shaping our nation's destiny. Take a moment to reflect on his profound impact and the values he instilled in our hearts.</p> <p>Now, here comes the exciting part – breakfast! The park is equipped with tables and benches, creating the perfect setting for you to enjoy your meal while immersed in the peaceful surroundings. Feel free to indulge in a delicious breakfast spread like the famous tupig, buko roll, and a hot freshly brewed coffee while basking in the glorious morning sunlight!</p>

<p>9:05 – 10:00 AM</p>	<p>Heroes MemorialPark</p>	<p>Now, we are at the heart of Solano, the Heroes Memorial Park. This park holds great historical significance and houses a famous and iconic relic: the Cannon. This Cannon was used by the guerillas of the 25th Philippine Army Division during World War II, as they bravely fought against the Japanese Imperial Forces.</p> <p>As we step into this hallowed ground, we are transported back in time to an era of courage and resilience. The Heroes Memorial Park stands as a testament to the sacrifices made by our heroes and serves as a reminder of the valor displayed during those tumultuous days.</p> <p>But that’s not all. Our visit to the Heroes Memorial Park goes beyond just witnessing history. You will have the unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the local culture and culinary delights. Adjacent to the park, there is a food bazaar where you can prepare and cook the famous tupig, a traditional delicacy of the town. Experience the joy of creating this mouthwatering treat yourself and savor its sweet and savory flavors.</p> <p>To complement your tupig experience, indulge in a taste of bugnay wine, also available at the food bazaar.</p> <p>Together, the preparation of tupig and the enjoyment of bugnay wine provide an unforgettable and immersive experience.</p> <p>Please gather your belongings, and let’s proceed to the food bazaar!</p>
<p>10:10 – 10:30 AM</p>	<p>Spanish Bridge</p>	<p>As we hop aboard the kuliglig, get ready to embrace the local way of travel. This open-air vehicle will allow you to experience the breeze on your face as we make our way to our next destination.</p> <p>(Arrival in the Spanish Bridge)</p> <p>This bridge holds significance as a remarkable landmark that has withstood the test of time. It has served as a symbol of connection.</p> <p>You will have the opportunity for a captivating photo opportunity with the historic bridge. Capture the essence of its architectural charm and the surrounding natural beauty as you preserve this moment in your memories.</p>

<p>10:50- 11:30AM</p>	<p>Santol Rock Formations</p>	<p>Welcome to the breathtaking Santol Rock Formations! As we stand here amidst the picturesque surroundings, take a moment to soak in the natural beauty that surrounds us.</p> <p>Before us lies a river adorned with stones and boulders of various sizes, forming the magnificent Santol Rock Formations. These awe-inspiring creations have been shaped by the forces of nature over time, resulting in a captivating display of geological wonder.</p> <p>Now, let's embrace the refreshing experience that awaits us. Feel free to take a splash in the fresh, clean waters of the river. Immerse yourself in its cool embrace, allowing the pristine water to invigorate your senses.</p> <p>Enjoy your time! I'll be right here if you need something. Feel free to ask questions as well!</p>
<p>11:40 – 1:00 PM</p>	<p>Lunch @ Uddiawan Falls</p>	<p>We have arrived at our next destination, the stunning Uddiawan Falls. This natural wonder boasts a breathtaking waterfall cascading down from a height of 3 to 4 meters, creating a picturesque scene that will leave you in awe.</p> <p>As we venture closer, you'll notice the inviting lagoon, spanning an area of approximately 100 square meters. This tranquil oasis is the perfect spot to cool off and enjoy a refreshing swim. With its ample space, it can comfortably accommodate around 15 to 20 swimmers, allowing you to immerse yourself in the beauty of the surroundings.</p> <p>Now, it's time to indulge in a truly unique dining experience. We have arranged a "boodle fight" type of lunch for you.</p> <p>Take a seat and savor the delectable spread before you, featuring local delicacies and flavors that will tantalize your taste buds.</p> <p>After lunch, it's time to further explore and embrace the wonders of this captivating location!</p>
<p>1:20 – 2:00PM</p>	<p>Bangaan Rolling Hills</p>	<p>The rolling hills, adorned with lush greenery, create a picturesque setting that will leave you in awe. Immerse yourself in the tranquility of nature and let the peaceful ambiance wash over you.</p> <p>Capture the beauty of the surroundings and the spirit of the town as you create lasting memories in this extraordinary setting. Let the vibrant colors and traditional elements enhance your experience and bring a touch of authenticity to your photographs.</p> <p>As you wander through the hills, take your time to appreciate the tranquility and immerse yourself in the natural beauty that surrounds you.</p>

2:30 – 3:30PM	Singian Mountain	<p>Ladies and gentlemen, we have reached our final destination, a paradise for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. This mountain offers a plethora of exhilarating activities, including mountain climbing, biking, and sightseeing, making it the perfect place to conclude our journey.</p> <p>We extend our deepest gratitude for joining us on this remarkable adventure through the town of Solano. We hope that the memories created and the experiences shared will remain etched in your hearts for years to come.</p> <p>May the adventures and beauty we have encountered on this tour inspire you to continue exploring, discovering, and embracing the wonders of the world. Thank you for your presence, enthusiasm, and openness to the unique experiences that Solano has to offer!</p>
4:30PM	ETD	

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions.

The following are the conclusions drawn from the analysis and interpretation.

1. The municipality of Solano is found to be rich in terms of heritage tourism resources given the existence of a variety of heritage related resources namely Bangaan Rolling Hills, Communal Falls, Heroes Memorial Park, Highlander Hotel and Resort, Pa-id or Mighty Warren Falls, Singian Mountain, Spanish Bridge in San Luis, The Shrine of the Black Nazarene and Uddiawan Falls. Based on the findings, it reveals that the town of Solano is home to more heritage tourism resources in addition to the ones that have previously been discovered. A broad road network and ideal urban planning have also been found, both of which were designed by a Spanish father by the name of Fr. Juan Villaverde, making Solano a potential heritage tourism site when it comes to urban planning. Additionally, there were also discovered intangible components, such as the Gaddang people’s traditions and customs. Other than this, the study also revealed the presence of various types of tourism in the municipality, all of which are significant given that it complies with the ordinance put forth by the previous municipal councilor addressing the kinds of tourism that is present in a particular location and may be a contributory factor to the determination of whether the town has the potential to be a heritage tourism site. Overall, the objective has been met provided that the town of Solano, specifically the informants, provided valuable insights and testimonies regarding the presence of heritage tourism- related resources in the town.
2. The town of Solano has an abundance of historical landmarks, attractions, and is home to a wide variety of tangible and intangible heritage tourism sites that correspond to various purposes. Given the town’s natural features, historical sites, and cultural landmarks, individuals as well as tourists can have a wide variety of heritage tourism experiences.

In support of the descriptions provided per each heritage tourism resource, it was therefore concluded that the town of Solano has the potential to be designated as a potential heritage tourism site given the existence of an array of resources present in the town which primarily draws tourists closer and encourages them to learn more about the municipality’s rich history. Overall, the town’s landscapes and cultural treasures, all of which have historical significance, serve as contributory factors for people to want to travel to the municipality for heritage and tourism-related reasons.

3. Based from the first objective regarding the heritage tourism-related resources available in Solano, the town was described as having the potential to be a heritage tourism site. Accordingly, it was determined that there is a significant chance that the town will boost tourism with the application of knowledge gained primarily about the stated heritage tourism-related resources present as it may be used in constructing a tour excursion. As the heritage tourism resources were seen that might be visited by visitors and tourists, a sample excursion that the LGU can assist was made. The sample excursion and tour guiding spiel for a running tour in Solano showcases a well-planned itinerary that includes significant tourist destinations that highlights the town's natural resources, traditions, and culture. The inclusion of relevant information on each destination can serve as a basis for a tour guide spiel, ensuring that the tourists will have a more engaging and informative experience. Moreover, the excursion also offers a variety of activities to suit the interests of the visitors. The sample excursion can, in general, enhance Solano's entire heritage tourism services and be highly helpful for future plans for recognizing it as a heritage tourism site.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend the following:

1. With the identification of heritage tourism-related resources in the town, the need to further develop Solano's heritage tourism resources must be given more attention as this can contribute and strengthen the tourism industry in the town.

For the LGU, it is recommended that together with the tourism sector in the town, it must continue finding possible heritage tourism sites that would add to the tourism inventory of Solano. Furthermore, it is highly recommended for the LGU to further conduct conservation efforts in order to increase Solano's potential for designation as a heritage tourism site and to protect and provide the town's cultural and heritage resources a high value. Additionally, research and documentation efforts are recommended to be intensified in order to provide comprehensive information and evidence of Solano's historical and cultural significance, which can better establish its potential to become a heritage tourism site. Lastly, as suggested by one of the key informants in this study, "the LGU has to take an active role in doing its research, cultural inventory and proposing programs and projects for culture and arts."

2. In determining Solano's potentiality to be a heritage site, one of the recommendations is for the study to be subjected for further validation by the local government unit in Solano, as it may also be assisted by other groups pursuing the same field of study. With this, it may lead to the pursuance of becoming a basis for formal identification.

For the LGU, it is recommended to integrate sustainable practices into fostering the development of heritage tourism sites. This entails implementing eco-friendly practices for waste management and environmental preservation. It may also encourage visitors to engage in ethical tourism by emphasizing the value of cultural awareness and environmental responsibility, all of which will eventually lead to the growth and development of the tourism element of the town, enriching its heritage aspect.

For the stakeholders, it is recommended to associate with the LGU to create a comprehensive plan for the protection and maintenance of Solano's heritage tourism sites. The approach should specify how to preserve and safeguard natural areas, cultural practices, and objects. Additionally, it needs to cover subjects like managing hazards and the adaptive restoration of historic structures.

For the future researchers, it is recommended to draw on the study's findings and broaden the research into Solano's heritage resources. Explore several aspects and dimensions of the town's history to learn more narratives, artifacts, and historical data that add to a thorough picture of Solano's historical events.

3. There are several suggestions to take into account in order to make the most efficient use of the excursion itinerary and tour guiding spiel, which is the primary output of this study.

For the LGU, it is recommended to consider enhancing the sample excursion and tour guiding spiel provided for the development of more tour packages that will showcase the town's natural resources, traditions, and culture. With this, it can help promote heritage tourism in the municipality and provide more opportunities for the town's residents to participate in the tourism industry. Furthermore, it is recommended to regularly monitor and evaluate the potential running tours to ensure that the standards of service delivery are consistently maintained and improved over time. Also, partnerships with the commercial sector and other parties are suggested because they may aid in bringing more tourists to Solano.

For the academe, the provided sample excursion and tour guiding spiel is also recommended to be used for instructional material and be utilized as a reference for further research related to the study. It is also recommended to consider incorporating the research outcomes and insights into the curriculum, particularly in programs related to heritage tourism, tour guiding, and tourism planning.

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