

# The Eco-Cultural Tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur: A Chronicle

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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed to chronicle the eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur. It sought answers to the questions: 1. What is the demographic profile of Ocampo? 2. What is the eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo and its significance, in terms of infrastructure, landmarks, natural resources, habitats, and festivals? What reference material may be developed based on the findings of the study?

This study focused on the nine recreational areas, including farms, resorts, eco-parks, view decks, and campgrounds. The research gathered information from owners, caretakers and some local government representatives. Using a qualitative research design, the study employed structured questionnaire and interview to gather information. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts cultural mapping form was used as a research instrument to document data related to eco-cultural tourism in Ocampo.

The findings revealed that: 1. Ocampo comprises 25 barangays with various resorts and agricultural farms across different barangays. 2. Ocampo, feature diverse recreational areas that contribute to the municipality's income and economic development thus significantly helping in the preservation of the environment and conservation of culture. 3. A tourism guidebook was developed

It can be concluded that: 1. Ocampo, Camarines Sur, is a landlocked municipality with a population of 51,073 across 25 barangays, each contributing to the region's rich cultural, social, and economic diversity. The municipality's varied demographics shows societal dynamics, which are integral to its identity and community structure. 2. Ocampo is positioning itself as a sustainable eco-cultural tourism destination, exemplified by recreational areas.

These areas emphasize sustainable practices such as organic farming, environmental conservation, and eco-friendly infrastructure. Key landmarks and natural resources, along with cultural events like the Himuloan Festival, further enhance the tourism experience, promoting ecological balance, community livelihood, and cultural appreciation. 3. The tourism guidebook, "Discovering Ocampo: Eco-Tourism and Cultural Treasures", was developed.

**Keywords:** Eco-Cultural, Tourism, Chronicle

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of tourism has evolved beyond leisure and adventure-seeking activities to encompass a deeper appreciation for ecological and cultural sustainability. This paradigm shift has given rise to the emergence of eco-cultural tourism, suitable within the tourism industry that seeks to preserve and promote the natural environment and cultural heritage of a destination while providing enriching experiences for visitors. Ocampo, situated in the province of Camarines Sur in the Philippines, stands as a prime example of a locality endowed with rich logical and cultural treasures waiting to be discovered.

Ocampo has a diverse range of ecological attractions. These natural wonders not only serve as magnets for tourists seeking break from urban life but also play a crucial role in maintaining the municipality's ecological

balance and supporting local livelihoods dependent on eco-cultural tourism activities. It is known that for tourism to be realized and sustained, further improvement and development should be done.

As mandated by the law, specifically the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 (RA 10066), “to protect and conserve the national cultural heritage through its affiliated agencies such as National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).”<sup>1</sup> Through sustainable tourism in Ocampo, it can be assured that Ocampo tourism will be able to contribute to the economic development of the municipality to fund its needs and of course further improve the tourism endeavor of the municipality just like the success of the Balanga Wetland and Nature’s Park which was granted the RA 11365 also known as, “The Balanga Wetland and Nature’s Park Act”, declared as a responsible, community-based ecotourism zone. And it appropriates funds for its development and preservation.”<sup>2</sup>

However, as Ocampo embraces tourism as a driver of economic growth and community development, it faces challenges related to sustainability, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. The rapid entry of tourists, inadequate infrastructure, and improper waste management practices pose threats to Ocampo's fragile ecosystems and cultural integrity, necessitating careful planning and sustainable management strategies.

This Study would also like to make sure that the Tourism activities in Ocampo is in accordance with the mandates of the government in Republic Act No. 9593 which is the, “The Tourism Act of 2009” where it encourages ecologically sustainable, culturally sensitive, and economically viable tourism while contributing to the objective of the law which is to develop Philippine tourism for and by Filipinos, conserving and promoting heritage, and create a favorable global image of the country.”<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop, this research endeavors to explore the dynamics of eco-cultural tourism in Ocampo, Camarines Sur, examining the opportunities and challenges inherent in its development trajectory. By engaging with local stakeholders, community members, and tourism practitioners, this study seeks to identify best practices, policy interventions, and community-based initiatives aimed at fostering development while ensuring the preservation of its natural and cultural resources.

As an Araling Panlipunan or social science teacher, the researcher identifies a critical need to undertake this study to integrate practical, real-world examples into the academic curriculum. This research is vital for demonstrating to students the importance of sustainable development and environmental conservation within the framework of local cultural heritage. The findings from this study will serve as an educational resource to elucidate the impact of tourism on community development and environmental stewardship.

By embracing a holistic approach that balances economic prosperity with environmental stewardship and cultural preservation, Ocampo has the potential to emerge as a model destination for eco-cultural tourism, where there is the coexistence of nature, culture, and community thrives for generations to come. Through the guidance of the legal frameworks mentioned the researcher is guided about the “how’s” of providing necessary foundation for promoting responsible and eco-friendly tourism practices, hence, this study.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This research aims to chronicle the eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of Ocampo, Camarines Sur?
2. What is the eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur and its significance in terms of:
  - Infrastructure
  - Landmarks
  - Natural resources and habitats

- Festivals

3. What reference material may be developed based on the findings of the study?

### Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study is focused on evaluating the eco-cultural tourism sector of Ocampo, Camarines Sur, with particular emphasis on infrastructure, landmarks, natural resources, habitats, and festivals. There were 10 key informants to realize the conduct and result of the study. The key informants of the study included engineer, tourism officer, caretakers, owners, of the recreational areas in Ocampo, Camarines Sur. The research was conducted over a period from December 2023 to July 2024 encompassing various key locations identified for their eco-cultural tourism potential.

The study is delimited to the nine (9) recreational areas of Ocampo, Camarines Sur, which are: Alicia's Farm Resort of Gatbo, Aquasan Spring Resort of Salvacion, Belay's Eco Park of Cagmanaba, Dong Valenz View Deck Café of Villaflorida, Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism & Family Farm of New Moriones, The Palm Resort of Hibago, Valerosa Farm Adventure Resort of May-Ogob, Villa Atara Farm Resort of Villaflorida and Yanna's Campsite of Villaflorida

### Review of Related Literature and Studies

This section presents relevant literature and studies that the researcher considered to strengthen the importance of this study. The reviewed literature and studies were taken from theses, dissertations, books, journal articles, and web resources.

Eco-cultural tourism in the Philippines is an important strategy for promoting local development and conserving natural resources and heritage assets, (Brillo L. and Li Y., 2021).<sup>7</sup> The country has an abundance of natural-cultural attractions that have the potential for ecotourism development (Reyes J and Catan D., et.al., 2022).<sup>8</sup> However, the development of ecotourism in the Philippines has been hindered by the lack of conservation efforts and the unsustainable nature of some current ecotourism ventures (Ziegler J. and Araujo G., et. Al (2021)).<sup>9</sup> It is crucial for the government and stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry to engage in effective conservation practices and define ecotourism objectively when implementing national strategies.

The studies discussed provide comprehensive insights into the dynamics of eco-cultural tourism, dealing the crucial relationships among cultural heritage preservation, tourism advancement, and environmental sustainability. Yu et al. (2023) shed light on the adaptive evolution of cultural ecosystems along the Silk Road, advocating for a delicate balance between tourism growth and safeguarding cultural heritage.<sup>10</sup> Sun and Shu (2023) address the demand for cultural tourism while tackling issues such as commercialization and authenticity, aiming to enhance destination management strategies.<sup>11</sup>

Cheng et al. (2022) explore into the influence of tourism experiences on environmentally responsible behavior, emphasizing the role of cultural attachment in shaping tourists' attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Pollard et al. (2023) discovers the organizational culture of ecotourism, using WWOOF Australia as a case study to underscore the efficacy of clan culture in fostering sustainability.<sup>13</sup> Chung et al. (2018) explores the intricate interaction between tourism and ecosystem services in Qinghai Province, advocating for tailored management approaches to mitigate adverse impacts.<sup>14</sup> Li et al. (2022) delves into tourists' perceptions of authenticity in nature and culture, emphasizing its positive influence on destination image and satisfaction.<sup>15</sup>

Chung et al. (2019) investigates the impact of eco-innovation in museums, demonstrating how green technology elevates visitors' perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR).<sup>16</sup> Arts et al. (2018) scrutinize representations of biocultural diversity in nature-based tourism, uncovering persistent social inequalities and advocating for stakeholder engagement to foster sustainability.<sup>17</sup> Persada et al. (2023) analyze factors shaping tourists' behavioral intentions towards ecotourism, revealing the significance of subjective norms, destination image, and biosphere value as influential factors.<sup>18</sup>

Romero-Brito and colleagues (2016) conduct a systematic review of NGO partnerships in utilizing ecotourism for conservation, emphasizing the pivotal role of community-based initiatives and stakeholder collaborations for project success.”<sup>19</sup> Together, these studies advance sustainable practices and policies in eco-cultural tourism, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, innovation, stakeholder engagement, and conservation endeavors. These studies contribute significantly to unraveling the complexities of eco-cultural tourism, offering valuable insights for fostering sustainable development and management practices in cultural and natural heritage sites.

The literature review encompasses a range of topics within the realm of ecotourism, cultural tourism, and sustainable development. The study of Picazo (2015), seeks to promote eco-tourism and cultural tourism for sustainable growth and would identify good practices like volunteer travel and community-owned activities.”<sup>20</sup>

The study contributes to advancing theoretical knowledge, identifying best practices, and informing evidence-based interventions for sustainable tourism development in eco-cultural destinations. It can be concluded that Eco-cultural tourism in the Philippines has the potential to contribute to economic, cultural and environmental conservation, and the development of local communities.

### **Synthesis of the State-of-the-Art**

The literature and studies on eco-cultural tourism emphasizes a consensus on its importance in promoting local growth while conserving natural and cultural assets, as emphasized by Brillo and Li (2021) and Reyes and Catan (2022). Common themes include challenges in conservation efforts (Ziegler and Araujo, 2021) and the necessity of community engagement in ecotourism initiatives (Rebuya, 2020; Brillo & Peria-Simondac, 2021).

Differing viewpoints arise in tourism management strategies, conservation approaches, and evaluation methods, with some focusing on balancing tourism growth with heritage preservation (Yu et al., 2023) and others on responsible behavior and community-based initiatives (Cheng et al., 2022; Romero-Brito et al., 2016).

### **Research Gap**

There are many reviewed related literature studies that have bearings and relevant to the present study, yet there is a gap in understanding its dynamics about eco-cultural tourism in Ocampo, Camarines Sur and its significance in terms of Infrastructure, Landmarks, Natural Resources and Habitats. While studies in other municipality’s provide broad perspectives, none is focused specifically on Ocampo. This study addresses this gap by exploring local perceptions and experiences.

### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>Republic Act No. 10066 (lawphil.net)

<sup>2</sup>Republic Act No. 11365 (lawphil.net)

<sup>3</sup>R.A. No. 9593 (lawphil.net)

<sup>4</sup>Conflict Theory in Sociology (simplypsychology.org)

<sup>5</sup>Functionalism & Functionalist Perspective and Theory (thoughtco.com)

<sup>6</sup>Ong, L. (2014). Paradigm of Agro-Ecotourism Program for Sustainable Development of Iriga City

<sup>7</sup>Brillo, B. (2021, December 01). Initiation and establishment of ecotourism development: Pandin Lake of San Pablo City and Tayak Hill of Rizal, Laguna, Philippines. *GeoJournal*, 86(6), 1–14.

<sup>8</sup>Reyes, J. R., & Catan, D. (2022, December 22). A webpage development of ecotourism destinations in a Philippine province. *Journal of Tourism Destination and Attraction*, 10(2), 133–146. (Open Access) A webpage development of ecotourism destinations in a Philippine province (2022) | Jennifer Rojas Reyes

- <sup>9</sup>Ziegler, J. A., & Araujo, G., et. al (2021, July 01). Can ecotourism change community attitudes towards conservation? (Open Access) Can ecotourism change community attitudes towards conservation (2021) | Jackie A. Ziegler | 14 Citations
- <sup>10</sup>Yu, J., & Safarov, B., et. Al. (January 30, 2023). The Adaptive Evolution of Cultural Ecosystems along the Silk Road and Cultural Tourism Heritage: A Case Study of 22 Cultural Sites on the Chinese Section of the Silk Road World Heritage. Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)
- <sup>11</sup>Sun, S., & Shu, P. W. (April 28, 2023). Exploring the development of cultural and creative tourism under the perspective of ecological theory of tourism destination management. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*. Published by Sciendo.
- <sup>12</sup>Cheng, Z., & Chen, X., (January 5, 2022). The Effect of Tourism Experience on Tourists' Environmentally Responsible Behavior at Cultural Heritage Sites: The Mediating Role of Cultural Attachment. *Sustainability*, 14(1).
- <sup>13</sup>Pollard, W., & Rajendran, D., et. al., (February 1, 2023). Organizational culture and effectiveness in ecotourism: The case of World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms Australia (WWOOF Australia). *\*Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 28\*(2), Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
- <sup>14</sup>Chung, M. G., & Pan, T., et. al (December 1, 2018). Complex interrelationships between ecosystem services supply and tourism demand: General framework and evidence from the origin of three Asian rivers. Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).
- <sup>15</sup>Li, Y. (2022, January 01). Implementing an effective ecotourism strategy for the Philippines (pp. 23–45). *Implementing an Effective Ecotourism Strategy for the Philippines (2022)* | Yueqing Li
- <sup>16</sup>Chung, N., & Tyan, I., et. al (October 17, 2019). Eco-innovative museums and visitors' perceptions of corporate social responsibility. Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).
- <sup>17</sup>Arts, K., & Rabelo, M. T. O., et. al (October 11, 2018). Online and offline representations of biocultural diversity: A political ecology perspective on nature-based tourism and indigenous communities in the Brazilian Pantanal. *Sustainability*, 10(10).
- <sup>18</sup>Persada, S. F., & Prasetyo, Y. T., et. al. (January 12, 2023). How Tourists Reacted to Ecotourism during COVID-19: Insights on Its Sustainability from a Multivariate Analysis Based on the Case of Banyuwangi. *Sustainability*, 15(2), 1440. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021440>.
- <sup>19</sup>Romero-Brito, T. P., & Buckley, R. C., et. al. (November 28, 2016). NGO Partnerships in Using Ecotourism for Conservation: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *PLOS ONE*, 11(11), e0166919. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166919>.
- <sup>20</sup>Picazo, O. (2015). Green and Gold: Promoting Eco-Adventure and Cultural Tourism for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth. (2015). *Research Papers in Economics*. <https://typeset.io/papers/green-and-gold-promoting-eco-adventure-and-cultural-tourism-r5qeovzigx>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, key informants, data gathering tools and ethical considerations the researcher employed in the conduct of this study.

### Research Design

Creswell's study served as a widely used resource that explored various qualitative research approaches, guiding researchers in choosing the most appropriate qualitative design for their study, considering factors such as the

research question, purpose, and philosophical stance (Creswell, J. W., 2013).<sup>1</sup> Patton's work suggested a comprehensive guide to qualitative research and evaluation methods. It covered a range of qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, emphasizing the integration of theory and practice in qualitative research (Patton M., 2015).<sup>2</sup> This study employed qualitative-descriptive method research design.

The qualitative research method utilized interviews and the use of structured questionnaires. The researcher employed the use of structured questionnaires to gather information from several informants to meet the data needed with each target. The NCCA cultural mapping form was used as a research instrument to document the data about the eco-cultural tourism of the Municipality of Ocampo.<sup>3</sup> The qualitative phase elucidated the intricacies of the participants' experiences.

### **Key Informants**

The informants of this study were the owners, caretakers of the tourism spots, and LGU representatives such as tourism officer and engineer. To prove the objectivity of the study, the researcher employed a total of 10 informants related to the conduct of the data gathering.

The criteria in selecting the key informants were as follows: inclusion of local government official/s, tourism and environmental expert/s, and caretakers/owners who possess in-depth knowledge of local culture and ecology in the recreational areas. Informants should be accessible, willing to participate, and capable of effectively communicating their insights.

### **Data Gathering Tools**

The study employed the following data gathering tools to collect comprehensive and nuanced data.

**Questionnaire.** The use of structured questionnaire in the study offered a practical and efficient means of collecting qualitative data, enabling easy descriptive analysis, and providing valuable insights into the eco-cultural tourism experiences in the targeted community.

**Preparation of the Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was crafted aligned to the research objectives and to the NCCA Cultural Mapping forms and gathered comprehensive information regarding the Eco-Cultural Tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur and its significance. It consisted of qualitative questions, encompassing aspects related to infrastructure, landmarks, natural resources and habitats, and festivals of the area.

**Administration and Retrieval.** The questionnaire was administered through a systematic approach. Copies were distributed to the selected informants, specifically the residents, private, or public owners in the identified barangays with recreational areas in Ocampo. The distribution process ensured clarity of instructions, and informants were given ample time to provide thoughtful responses. Retrieval was organized efficiently, with follow-ups conducted to maximize response rates.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The researcher obtained the needed permit from the Local Government Unit of Ocampo (LGU-Ocampo) before initiating the study. This approval was specifically granted by the Tourism, Culture, and Arts Office. In addition to securing the permit, the researcher requested and received pertinent documents essential for the research.

Following the approval and document submission, the researcher engaged with key informants who held significant roles in the areas under investigation. These interactions were crucial for discussing the objectives of the study and soliciting their cooperation in data collection. The informants provided invaluable assistance, facilitating access to relevant data and insights within their respective domains.

This collaborative approach ensured a comprehensive and accurate collection of information necessary for the study's success.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications. (PDF) Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches* (3e éd.). London: Sage. *Approches inductives*, 2015, Hakim Ben Salah, Note de lecture: 1-4. (researchgate.net)

<sup>2</sup>Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice - Michael Quinn Patton* - Google Books

<sup>3</sup><https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/ncca-cultural-mapping-program>

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered through qualitative method using the adapted cultural mapping form of NCCA to determine the Eco-Cultural Tourism of Ocampo, Cam. Sur. The results were based on the various data obtained from primary and secondary sources through interview-questionnaire.

### The Demographic Profile of Ocampo, Camarines Sur

The history of the name Ocampo can be traced back to the time of the colonization of Spanish people. It was initially served as Sitio of Pili and named Mabatobato in 1735 due to the presence of "Bato," or rocks, which came from the eruption of Mt. Isarog. In 1800s people from neighboring areas convert the land into agricultural land. Due to the initiatives of the people, it separated from Pili and became a parish in the year 1922 and began its journey in 1949 as an independent municipality through the executive order signed by former President Elipidio Quirino under Executive Order number 243. It was renamed Ocampo in honor of Don Julian Ocampo, who was the Governor of Camarines Sur in the 1930s. It officially began as an independent municipality on August 10, 1949."<sup>2</sup>

The municipality of Ocampo is situated within the Luzon Island group, specifically in the Bicol Region of the Philippines. This municipality is identified as Camarines Sur and is characterized as landlocked, with no access to marine water bodies. It comprises 25 barangays and has a postal code of 4419. The area of Camarines Sur, as of 2013, spans 118.33 square kilometers (45.69 square miles), with an estimated population of 51,073 inhabitants as of 2020. This yields a population density of 432 individuals per square kilometer (1,118 per square mile). The coordinates of Camarines Sur are approximately 13° 34' North latitude and 123° 22' East longitude, placing it on the major island of Luzon. Additionally, the municipality's estimated elevation above sea level is 55.4 meters (181.6 feet)."<sup>3</sup>

Ocampo is an agricultural municipality. With this, most of the occupation of the people is farming. This is because of the loam soil existing in the land of Ocampo, which is good for farming. Loam is considered ideal for gardening and agricultural uses because it retains nutrients well and retains water while still allowing excess water to drain away (Lerner, 2017)."<sup>4</sup> With these, the people of Ocampo can have a bountiful harvest from their plantations. This can be observed if ever someone happens to visit the markets of Ocampo. There are lots of different fresh vegetables and fruits displayed in the markets. The municipality of Ocampo comprises 25 barangays, each contributing to the community. These barangays include Ayugan, Cabariwan, Cagmanaba, Del Rosario, Gatbo, Guinaban, Hanawan, Hibago, La Purisima Nuevo, May-ogob, New Moriones, Old Moriones, Pinit, Poblacion Central, Poblacion East, Poblacion West, Salvacion, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose Oras, San Roque Commonal, San Vicente, Santa Cruz, and Santo Niño. Each barangay brings its own unique characteristics and contributions to the municipality, contributing to its cultural, social, and economic landscape.

The municipality of Ocampo values the education of its people. This is why there are elementary schools present in most of its 25 barangays. To sustain the needs of the constituents for literacy there are growing developments in terms of secondary education entails for allowing private schools to operate to cater the needs of the people

for comfortable and efficient education. There are three public high schools in the Municipality namely Hanawan National High School, Ocampo National High School and Malate-Olos High School which offers affordable but quality education as well. The people of Ocampo can be said to be happy people because of their slogan, "Maogmang Ocampo." Despite the challenges of day-to-day living, the people of Ocampo remain positive and are always ready to face challenges in life. These positive attributes of Ocampo people help maintain not only their healthy beings but also their social beings, which entail having good relationships with each other.

The people of Ocampo love to celebrate small wins, love to sing songs through video, and love to do outings like hiking, swimming, and some other recreational activities. With the characteristics and attributes of Ocampo people, the existence of recreational areas such as resorts, adventure farms, eco-parks, view deck cafés, and some others was realized. People or tourists who happen to visit people in Ocampo can notice these attributes because their attitudes reflect these people being heartwarmingly hospitable.

Ocampo, located in the Bicol Region of Luzon Island, presents a diverse cultural and social landscape across its 25 barangays, with a population of 51,073 and a density of 432 individuals per square kilometer."<sup>5</sup> This demographic profile aligns with eco-cultural tourism principles that integrate ecological and cultural dimensions to promote local development while conserving resources and heritage (Brillo & Li, 2021; Reyes & Catan, 2022)."<sup>6</sup> The division into barangays provides a strong foundation for community-based tourism initiatives, which are crucial for sustainable development and social conservation (Rebuya, 2020; Brillo & Peria-Simondac, 2021)."<sup>7</sup>

Effective conservation practices are essential, especially given Ocampo's landlocked nature, to mitigate environmental impacts and preserve cultural heritage, thus enhancing its appeal as a sustainable tourism destination (Ziegler & Araujo, 2021)."<sup>8</sup> The role of organizational culture in promoting sustainability is emphasized, advocating for community values and cooperation to ensure long-term success (Pollard et al., 2023)."<sup>9</sup> Ocampo's demographic structure supports eco-cultural tourism, which can drive economic growth, environmental conservation, and local development (Cajee, 2014; Rana, 2023)."<sup>10</sup>

However, challenges such as managing commercialization and ensuring authenticity must be addressed through careful planning and tailored management approaches (Sun & Shu, 2023; Chung et al., 2018)."<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, leveraging Ocampo's unique cultural and ecological attributes, coupled with effective community engagement and conservation efforts, will be key to realizing its potential as a sustainable eco-cultural tourism destination.

### **The Eco-Cultural Tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur and its Significance**

Ocampo, being an agricultural municipality, has an abundant presence of ecology. Different kinds of plants and animals exist in the various barangays of the municipality. The factors that are linked to ecology play a major role in the cultural aspect of the Ocampo people. With the people of Ocampo being happy people, they initiated recreational activities for relaxation, which later became businesses.

This is why there are recreational areas in the municipality that attract tourists. With these, the people of Ocampo can showcase not only the beauty of the people but also the beauty of its culture and the municipality. Ocampo, Camarines Sur, has diverse recreational areas that significantly contribute to the promotion of its culture while still maintaining the beauty and function of the ecology.

The initiatives of the owners of these recreational areas not only help them earn a living but also contribute to the economic development of the whole municipality. Among these are Alicia's Farm Resort and Aquasan Spring Resort, which offer both locals and tourists opportunities for relaxation and leisure.

The Belay's Eco Park, for instance, provides a wonderful environment for visitors. Ongoing developments complement attractions such as The Palm Resort, enhancing the municipality's appeal. Initiatives like Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism and Family Farm reflect a commitment to sustainable tourism practices and the expansion of leisure options. Yanna's Campsite underscores collaborative efforts to develop recreational spaces for the benefit of the Ocampo, Camarines Sur.



## Infrastructure

The Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism and Family Farm at New Moriones, Ocampo, Cam. Sur. The name of the farm came from the surname of the owner, Mr. Jun Iriola. Mr. Iriola was not raised with a silver spoon. When he grew up, he was luckily employed in the United Nations, where he saw how beautiful agriculture is and how it is helping the country. He got inspired, and when he decided to retire in 2017, he started agriculture.

According to Mr. Iriola's wife, one of the missions of the farm is to hire young individuals who are aggressive to learn and be trained to be more knowledgeable in farming so that they can later take over farming from their parents when the latter are no longer capable of doing so."<sup>12</sup> According to Abegail S. Acusar, an on-the-job trainee at the farm, Pasto de Iriola holds historical and socioeconomic significance as it reflects the longstanding agricultural traditions of Filipinos, rooted in the Philippines's landscape.

The purpose of the farm is to integrate sustainable agriculture, maintain the natural function of the ecology, and reflect the culture of the Filipinos with tourism, serving as a model for eco-friendly infrastructure development within Ocampo. Spanning a total land area of 10.2 hectares, the farm was able to conserve the land for farming, helping preserve the natural beauty of the environment where plants and animals exist.

The farm operates as an integrated facility, housing meat-type goats (boar, Angno Nubian, and Kalahari breeds), meat-type chickens (Rhode Island Red and Barred Plymouth Rock breeds), swine production, and dragon fruit cultivation. In its commitment to conservation efforts, the farm utilizes goat manure for fertilizer production and employs fish amino acids and fermented plant juice, thus contributing to the farming practices and environment.

The practice of the farm contributes to the conservation of culture, which is farming, socialization among locals and visitors through its transactions, providing education to the young farmers, and providing raw food for local cuisine. The establishment of the farm holds TESDA accreditation, serving as farm school, and it also holds accreditation from the Agricultural Training Institute, serving as a training site for agriculture focus on organic production.

With free entrance, the farm offers a diverse range of outdoor activities, such as ATVs available for rent in the amount of 250 pesos, Kubotel for visitors who want to stay overnight, camping, and kite flying. From the location, visitors can enjoy viewing Mt. Isarog, Mt. Asog, and Mt. Mayon. The farm plays a role in economic development by generating employment opportunities for the locals.

Valerosa Farm Located is at May-Ogob, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Valerosa Farm Adventure Resort is in May-Ogob, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Valerosa being known to its neighboring municipalities and tourists coming from different places, the popularity of the barangay where it is located also emerges. The name of the barangay, "May-Ogob," originates from the tree of Ogob, otherwise known as Og'og. The barangay has a lot of Ogob trees, which is why it was called May Ogob, meaning there are Ogob trees existing in the area. Ogob trees look like jackfruit trees. It is being cooked to be a delicious dish. It can be cooked through "ginataan" or "ogob fried."

Valerosa is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Ilarde. The lush estate of 3 hectares where Valerosa is situated was inherited by the family from the parents of Mr. Jerry Ilarde. The name of the farm resort comes from the parents of the owner, whose names are Valerio and Rosa. According to Atty. Joyen Melca I. Jimenez, Marketing Manager and daughter of the owner, Valerosa, started its operation in 2015 and was originally a retirement house of her parents' and a vacation house for their whole family.

The reason there is adventure in the name of the farm resort is because before, there were mud slides available in the vicinity of the farm resort. The structure of Valerosa started with native structures, which were washed out by Typhoon Glenda and later replaced with semi-permanent buildings. The structure was just recently renovated in the months ranging from January to March 2024. Valerosa is historical as it serves as one of the pioneers or first few resorts to be built in Ocampo.

According to Atty. Jimenez, Valerosa, vows to its commitment of preserving its nature-inspired vibes and consciously taking measures to advocate for the environmental event despite constant innovations and modernizations.

The farm resort promotes environmental sustainability and nature preservation as the owners are making sure, that the natural environment will still be the same as they are still managing rice fields located around the farm resort's structure. Excess water from the pool goes directly to the rice fields, benefiting the rice planted there. The source of water at the farm resort is natural, as it came from the underground. The main source of the water coming out of the shower falls at the resort is the soundproof irrigation covered by the mini cave. With this, Valerosa is mobilizing natural resources from its surroundings.

The owners are members of the UCCP, a Christian church where Valerosa sometimes serves as a venue for worship, water baptisms, and other religious events. With this, the farm resort contributes to the preservation of culture, specifically in the aspect of religious traditions. Because of these practices, other tourists or visitors to Valerosa can witness that culture, thus promoting not only the culture in the area but also the culture of the Filipinos, who are known to be religious people. The farm resort ensures both traditional and modern comforts for guests. The farm resort has 1 adult pool (4-5 ft.), 1 kiddie pool (2-3 ft.), 2 common restrooms, 10 air-conditioned rooms, open cottages, a 150-person capacity hall, an office/business center, a view deck, etc., situated in a fenced perimeter. The resort's infrastructure exemplifies synthesis of human development and environmental preservation, establishing a benchmark for eco-cultural tourism facilities in the barangay.

The Villa Atara Farm Resort is located at Villaflorida, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. The Villa Atara Farm Resort is still under construction and is just about to make history. This is only an indication that the municipality of Ocampo is developing, as it is capable of initiating development. Despite this progress, owners such as Ms. Letisha Abio, owner of Villa Atara, are still making sure that preservation and conservation of the environment are present throughout the process. According to the caretaker, Ms. Angelika Antipolo, while they are constructing the said tourist destination, preserving nature is still a must, as they are not cutting down trees but rather planting more trees to preserve the environment and maintain the beauty of nature while enjoying the place.

With this, the initiatives being taken by owners contribute to the balance of ecosystems, helping to alleviate the effects of global warming. If there are a lot of people with the same mindset, these people will not only be the ones benefiting but also the insects and animals in our surroundings. The greener the environment, the fresher the air we will breathe, the lesser the heat waves, and we could avoid possible erosion, landslides, and the like.

The design of facilities will harmonize with the natural environment, offering guests an experience that shows the interaction between humanity and nature.

The Yanna's Campsite is located at Villaflorida, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Yanna's Campsite was named after the owner's daughter, Kianna. This is owned by Ms. Sofia Llagas, who is also the owner of the well-known Vianni Farm Resort located at Kilantao, Sitio Tarubog, Sangay, Cam. Sur. According to the caretaker, Ms. Mary Jane Villavilla, the main purpose of the establishment is for business purposes.

The campsite offers essential for travelers while seamlessly integrating with the natural landscape. Its infrastructure demonstrates a commitment to sustainable hospitality, addressing the needs of visitors while preserving the area's inherent beauty. The structure is mostly made up of live materials to maintain an eco-friendly vibe. It is a true scape to the overwhelming heat brought to us by global warming, especially during the summer. The campsite is also giving value to the role of animals in nature, as it is currently taking good care of some rabbits within its vicinity.

Because of the beauty and refreshing ambiance of Yanna's campsite, a person will be able to appreciate the natural beauty of the environment and will realize that preserving and conserving the natural landscape and cultural heritage sites is a must so future generations can also enjoy what we have now. Before reaching the campsite located above the road, a person must walk to the stairs going up. This can relate to the challenges in the life of a person.

Before we can reach freshness, comfort, and happiness, we must first walk through stairs because, just like in a campsite, there is no elevator in life. We must undergo challenges and struggles for us to be able to reach the top. These reflect the values and traditions of the Filipino people, which are resilient. Whatever struggle in life we experience, we will be able to overcome it and sooner achieve our goals in life. Just like visiting a campsite, despite the knowledge that before we could reach the campsite there were stairs, we were willing to walk through them.

The campsite has seven cottages accommodating 2–10 people, with prices ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 pesos. The mini store provides essentials such as water, noodles, and other common camping foods. Entrance fees range from 50 to 100 pesos. Yanna's campsite practices proper waste management and is making sure that there is no littering in the surroundings to avoid toxic materials that might affect the plants living in the area. The campsite has the initiative to actively contribute to environmental conservation by maintaining the natural beauty of the surroundings and utilizing decomposed grass as fertilizer.

The Dong Valenz Café is located at Villaflorida, Ocampo, Cam. Sur. The Dong Valenz View Deck Café, which was established in 2021 and structured on 200 sq m of land, is owned by Ms. Therese Samantha Pahuyo. The purpose of the establishment is to become the retirement home of the owner's parents and later become a restaurant business. According to Ms. Berthilda Valencia Pahuyo, the name of the café was coined from the name of the owner's uncle, whose name is Dong Valencia.

The café offers not only viewing but also delicious food showcasing Filipino delicacies. During data gathering, the researcher and her husband tried to experience the menu at the café and were able to taste their delicious cuisine, such as rice with beef steak, avocado, and mango shake. The restaurant also offers main courses such as rice meal and fish dishes, which are T-Bone Steak, Liempo, Porksilog, Sisigsilog, Bangusilog, Spamsilog, Rice, Rice Platter, and Balbacua Soup; Grilled/Fried Tilapia; Grilled/Fried Hito; and Tanguige Steak, respectively. The price ranges from 20 to 750 pesos. The café also has short orders such as Pansit Guisado, Bihon Guisado, MikBihon, Sotanghon Guisado, and Tuna Sandwich, in which prices range from 85 to 900 pesos. The café also offers snacks, refreshments, and hot beverages.

These delicacies only show the food culture practices of the Filipino people, specifically the people of Ocampo. One of the cultures of the people of Ocampo is that they are fans of eating, and cooking also follows. With the love of eating and cooking, making made-up cuisines has also been a culture in the area. Just like with the Fried Og'og mentioned a while ago. The café's infrastructure underscores a commitment to sustainability and cultural appreciation, serving as a tranquil retreat where guests can immerse in landscapes and cuisine.

With the practices of the café, they are not only showcasing their restaurant but also promoting and helping in the preservation of culture. The reason why people are fans of eating is because they believe in the slogans and terms "Food is Life," "Food Trip," "Eat Out," "Picnic," etc. The people of Ocampo also believe that whatever food they have on the table for as long as they are with their family eating all together is delicious. This reflects the culture of the Ocampo people mentioned above: being happy people.

Just like the typical Filipino family, the people of Ocampo tend to be united because of food. They talk while they eat. This only shows that communication really brings peace and harmony, which have been part of our lives ever since, and this is true for all Filipinos.

Aside from its contribution in a cultural sense, the café also participates in the conservation and preservation of the environment. They made sure that during the establishment and for the future, the café will remain respectful of nature by not cutting down trees but rather planting more trees, as they have been doing all along. They are also collaborating with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for seed support. The café adheres to responsible waste segregation and disposal practices by making a compost pit for the biodegradable and properly disposing the non-biodegradable.

Aside from the plans for further improvements, such as adding a swing for visitors' unique experiences, Ms. Berthilda also plans on bringing her old books to the café so that customers or tourists who love books can enjoy them while eating food and sipping coffee or drinks. These future initiatives, specifically the conservation of

books, contribute to the preservation of the traditional culture of the Filipinos, which is the use of books for different purposes, may it be for entertainment, leisure, or the seeking of knowledge.

The café also has sayings posted everywhere, and one notable among those is the one displayed beside the big chair that is shown in the picture above. The saying goes like this: “Pagbilang ko ng tatlo, wala na tayo, isa, dalawa, dalawa, dalawa.” This saying reflects that people living in Ocampo are loving, patient, and hard to let go of in the name of love which reflects their values.

The Palm Resort is located at Hibago, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. The Palm Resort is structured on 2.3 hectares of land owned by the Ramos family. According to Mr. Michael Angelo V. Taduran, caretaker of the resort, the resort was initially a ranch of the Ramos family and was serving as a vacation house at the same time as they had a resthouse constructed there until they decided to convert it into a resort for business purposes and to help the locals have job opportunities. The resort was established in 2020, so it has been in business for almost 4 years already. The name of the resort comes from the trees existing on the land, which are palm trees.

Mr. Taduran notes the owners' commitment to local employment, which they have been doing through ongoing expansion plans that include additional rooms, boats, and fruit-bearing trees. Furthermore, the resort actively contributes to environmental conservation efforts by continually planting trees to preserve and enhance its natural surroundings. It has also been mentioned that the farm is experiencing challenges with the poultry nearby due to the flies that are spreading during the harvest season.

Palm trees play a significant role in the ecological aspects of the resort, thus contributing to the community. Palm trees serve as a filter for the smell of the poultry nearby, helping to eradicate air pollution by providing more oxygen, which balances the atmosphere and reduces the impact of global warming. Palm trees strengthen the soil by not giving a chance for possible flooding and erosion in the area. It serves as a windbreaker since the resort is kind of windy, and it could be a protector when an unexpected typhoon. The resort is also the home of several kinds of fish, as it has a fishpond there.

Culturally, the palm trees symbolize a lot, such as protection, growth, peace, and hope. Aside from the tree protecting and balancing the environment, it also symbolizes growth in life, showing that we will never be the same all the time because growth is always there. What is important is that we are not only growing physically, but we are also developing in almost all aspects of life.

The Palm Resort is preserving the tradition of the Ocampo people, who love peace and relaxation. The resort offers 2 swimming pools, one for adults (3-5 ft.) and another for children (1-3 ft.), activities such as swimming, ATV rides, archery, kawa baths, trampolining, and camping. It also serves as a venue for various events, including weddings and christenings which reflects culture.

The Alicia's Farm Resort is located at Gatbo, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Alicia's Farm Resort's humble beginnings were a deep well located in the area where the structure was constructed. The resort is constructed on 1.6-hectare land, occupying a definite portion of 3,000 sq m. According to the owner, Ms. Marwil Maldea, she wanted to preserve the water flowing from the well, which is why she decided to make a swimming pool and later convert it into a resort so that other locals could also benefit from it by not going far just to swim, especially nowadays that swimming is a necessity given the heat brought to us by summer. The locals in the area are also allowed to fetch water from the well. Excess water is flowing on the rice fields surrounding the resort, and it has become a continuing source of water, thus contributing to the local farmers. The name Alicia was coined after the owner's mother, whose name is Alicia.

With an entrance fee ranging from 40 to 100 pesos, the resort offers a retreat for tourists seeking relaxation and leisurely pursuits. Its infrastructure includes 2 swimming pools, 9 cottages ranging from 300 to 1,500 pesos capable of accommodating 10–20 persons, and event spaces, providing guests with a peaceful sanctuary to unwind and connect with nature. The resort not only operates as a business but also aims to create job opportunities for residents and share the blessings of its abundant water resources.

The resort emphasizes contribution to the ecological aspect through practices such as avoiding deforestation, engaging in tree planting, and utilizing excess pool water for irrigation in nearby rice fields. Ms. Marwil said

that during the construction of the resort, they did not cut any trees but rather transferred them to other areas in the vicinity to be organized.

The establishment of the resort only shows the cultural values of the Ocampo people, and one these is the “Sharing is caring,” because the owner herself unselfishly offers the flowing water from the well to her neighboring households and other people who came to visit the resort for relaxation. The accommodation of the people managing the resort also proves the hospitality of the people living there because they wanted their visitors to feel at home, emerge themselves in nature, and enjoy the cultural landscape that can be experienced in the resort.

The Belay’s Eco Park is located at Cagmanaba, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Belay's Eco-Park was not an eco-park before. It was a land with a rice field that was for sale by the owner, Ms. Ma. Lourdes C. Sarmiento. During the sale of the said property, the owner faced challenges as there were informal settlers residing on the land. What the owner did was make an agreement with the settlers to vacate the land and transfer it to her other land located outside the property for sale.

The property has gone through a lot of waiting to be sold, but it has never been. There were two prospective buyers who attempted to buy the land, which came to the point where the land was almost done with the process of purchase, but the transaction kept on failing. Until such time that Architect Navales, with whom the owner is affiliated, suggested converting the land into an eco-park instead, it was established to become a resort in 2019. It was initially an eco-park, but later the owner decided to structure pools to attract people to visit.

Named after the main owner and the Sitio where it resides, Belay's Eco-Park embodies a triple mission of promoting not only local tourism and supporting community livelihoods but also conserving nature and preserving culture. Mr. Rael Brinas, caretaker of the resort, emphasizes the park's commitment to conservation of the ecological aspect of the land through initiatives like planting 500 giant bamboos, mahogany, and narra trees in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture for seed support. The Park also contributes to economic growth by providing job opportunities for locals.

The Park is also the home of native pigs, which helps in the conservation and promotion of culture. Having native pigs brings back the traditional culture of taking good care of this kind of pig by our ancestors. We are reminded of the history of the Filipinos during hunting and gathering practices. With the presence of these pigs, the eco park really is serving its purpose and is functioning in accordance with its name, eco, which means ecological. It also promotes culture through the establishment of the different infrastructures located inside, one of which is the chapel, where visitors could use the park as a venue for celebrations or ceremonies such as christenings, weddings, etc.

The Park features two swimming pools, complemented by recreational facilities such as biking trails, basketball and volleyball courts, and a chapel for spiritual contemplation. The Park also serves as a venue for various events, such as intimate weddings, reunions, etc.

The Aquasan Spring Resort is located at Salvacion, Ocampo, Cam. Sur. Aquasan Spring Resort started with one swimming pool only, which is intended for family use. The structure is constructed on ½ hectare of land. According to the caretaker, Mr. Aljay Borja, it was later established for business purposes, not only for commercial purposes but also to help the locals have job opportunities. The resort was named after Alona Sysanta, the youngest son of its principal owner. The principal owner is Mr. Avelino Borja. The resort is helping in the protection of the environment by practicing the “No Littering Policy.”

The resort values the ecological aspect of society as it recycles the wheels and tires of vehicles by recycling and converting them into chairs that can be seen in the resort. This recycling practice not only promotes the conservation of the natural environment but also reflects the culture of the Ocampo people, which is resourceful. For as long as we can still have a benefit from a thing, we won’t give it up but rather think about the possible purpose of that thing. This promotes and showcases the culture of the people living there. The initiative is also a contributing factor in eradicating water and land pollution by removing non-biodegradable waste from the environment.

Just like with the initiatives of the recreational areas mentioned above, this resort is also letting the excess water flow into the rice fields, benefiting the farmers. They are also planting trees, contributing to the eradication of the effects of global warming by producing more oxygen in the vicinity. Mr. Arjay Borja underscores the owners' dual commitment to providing comfortable accommodations and supporting the local community by creating employment opportunities in Ocampo. The resort has two swimming pools and nine cottages with a capacity of 15–35 people. The resort caters to a range of guests with entrance fees between 40 and 60 pesos and cottage rates varying from 400 to 2,000 pesos, ensuring accessibility while contributing to the ecology and culture.

### **Landmarks**

Saint Bernard Abbot Parish of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Caceres serves as a landmark for people going to Aquasan Spring Resort. This landmark in the centro of Ocampo was established in 1735.”<sup>13</sup> The Parish Fiesta is celebrated every 20th day of August wherein the Himuloan Festival is being celebrated. The church plays a significant role in the celebration of the said festival.

The Saint Peter Baptist Parish of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Caceres was established in 1996. It is in Brgy. Old Moriones. The Parish Fiesta is celebrated every 6th day of February.”<sup>14</sup> Saint Peter Baptist Parish Church serves as a significant landmark for those navigating their way to Pasto de Iriola.

In Zone 1, May-Ogob, Valerosa stands as a notable landmark as well. As one of the pioneering resorts in the area, it symbolizes environmental sustainability and nature preservation within the barangay. The barangay hall of Barangay serves as landmark for those visitors going to Villa Atara, Yanna’s Campsite and Dong Valenz Vew Deck Cafe.

The barangay is an iconic one as the road across it serves as passageway going to either Naga, Goa, Iriga or part of Tigaon. The ward Hanawan means to wash hands which also reflects to the culture of the people of being clean. These landmarks not only guide visitors but also underscore the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Ocampo, enriching the eco-cultural tourism experience in Ocampo, Camarines Sur.

The barangay hall of Hanawan serves as a landmark on the route to Yanna’s Campsite, guiding travelers to this retreat. While the campsite may not be a traditional landmark, its location and accessibility enhance its significance within the eco-cultural tourism landscape of Ocampo. Nearby natural attractions such as Hibiscus and Consocep Falls further augment the area's appeal as a destination for eco-cultural tourism.

The prominent PAGCOR building in Ocampo serves as a landmark directing visitors to the Palm Resort. Although not a natural landmark, its presence marks the entrance to the tranquil oasis of eco-cultural tourism offered by the resort.

The ricemill, or molinohan, facing the cemetery of Ocampo Centro serves as a landmark guiding visitor to Alicia’s Farm Resort. While unconventional, its presence signifies the gateway to the serenity and relaxation provided by the resort. Alicia’s Farm Resort has become a landmark, symbolizing community empowerment and environmental stewardship through its commitment to responsible tourism practices.

The Cabariwan Community School, situated along the highway, acts as a landmark for travelers heading to Belay’s Eco-Park. This recognizable landmark directs visitors to turn towards the park, whether coming from Goa or Naga. The school not only aids in wayfinding but also embodies the integration of education and community within the eco-cultural landscape of Ocampo, Camarines Sur.

### **c. Natural resources and habitats**

Ocampo, Camarines Sur, is home to a variety of agricultural and eco-tourism sites that emphasizes the area's natural resources and commitment to sustainability.

Pasto de Iriola Agri-Tourism and Family Farm, located in New Moriones, Ocampo, spans 10.2 hectares. It integrates sustainable agriculture with eco-friendly practices, conserving the land for farming while maintaining its natural beauty. The farmhouses meat-type goats (Boer, Anglo Nubian, and Kalahari breeds), meat-type

chickens (Rhode Island Red and Barred Plymouth Rock breeds), swine production, and dragon fruit cultivation. Conservation efforts include using goat manure for fertilizer and employing fish amino acids and fermented plant juice.

Valerosa Farm Adventure Resort in May-Ogob is renowned for its lush environment, situated on a 3-hectare estate filled with Ogob trees. The farm, operational since 2015, integrates nature preservation. The resort promotes environmental sustainability through rice field management and the use of natural water sources from underground irrigation. Valerosa also supports local religious traditions, serving as a venue for worship and baptisms. Villa Atara Farm Resort, under construction in Villaflorida, emphasizes preserving nature by planting trees instead of cutting them down. This initiative aims to balance the ecosystem, mitigate global warming effects, and prevent erosion.

Yanna's campsite maintains eco-friendly practices, such as using decomposed grass as fertilizer and caring for local wildlife like rabbits. It provides a refreshing escape, promoting the conservation of natural landscapes and cultural heritage. Dong Valenz View Deck Café, established in 2021, is set on 200 square meters of land and offers a tranquil retreat with Filipino cuisine. The café promotes environmental conservation by planting trees and collaborating with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for seed support. The café's infrastructure and waste management practices reflect a commitment to sustainability.

The Palm Resort, located in Hibago, spans 2.3 hectares and is characterized by its numerous palm trees, which play a significant ecological role. The resort supports local employment and environmental conservation through ongoing tree planting initiatives and features a fishpond, contributing to biodiversity. Alicia's Resort in Gatbo began with a deep well and now spans 1.6 hectares. The resort supports local agriculture by allowing excess pool water to irrigate nearby rice fields. It emphasizes community support by providing water. Belay's Eco Park in Cagmanaba, established in 2019, integrates conservation, local tourism, and cultural preservation. The park features tree planting and native pigs, promoting traditional agricultural practices. It also offers recreational facilities and serves as a venue for community events. Aquasan Spring Resort, in Salvacion, operates on ½ hectare of land and practices eco-friendly initiatives like recycling vehicle tires into chairs. The resort supports local agriculture by directing excess water to rice fields and engages in tree planting to combat global warming. It also provides job opportunities for the locals.

These establishments in Ocampo, Camarines Sur, collectively showcase the area's dedication to environmental sustainability, conservation of natural resources, and preservation of cultural heritage, contributing to both local economic development and ecological balance.

## **Festivals**

In Barangay New Moriones, home to Pasto de Iriola, the annual fiesta is celebrated on June 12-13. Unlike some other local festivities, this celebration does not honor a designated patron saint. However, the neighboring tradition in Moriones, which pays homage to St. Peter the Baptist every February 5-6, enriches the municipality's cultural landscape. During the fiesta, Barangay New Moriones transforms into a hub of cultural activities and festivities, creating an atmosphere that attracts both locals and visitors. These events showcase the municipality's rich traditions, culinary delights, and artistic expressions, offering a deeper insight into the area's cultural heritage. Additionally, the Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism & Family Farm capitalizes on this festive spirit by organizing special events that shows agricultural practices and seasonal festivities. This integration of cultural and agricultural elements enhances the eco-cultural tourism experience in Ocampo, providing visitors with understanding of the local way of life and fostering a deeper connection to the land and its people.

In Barangay May-Agbo, the annual fiesta is a highly anticipated event held every May 15 in honor of the patron saint, San Isidro Labrador. This celebration underscores the communities deeply rooted religious traditions. Valerosa Resort, located in this barangay, periodically hosts religious events such as water baptisms.

Barangay Villaflorida celebrates its fiesta every February 13-14, coinciding with Valentine's Day, adding an extra layer of joy to the festivities. This dual celebration presents local tradition with the universal theme of love and affection. Popular recreational spots like Dong Valenz View Deck Café, Villa Atara Farm Resort, and Yanna's Campsite enrich the eco-cultural tourism experience, fostering relaxation and adventure in nature. These

venues promote cultural exchange and community involvement, contributing to the socioeconomic growth of the area.

They also offer immersive experiences that celebrate the fusion of nature, culture, and culinary craftsmanship, encouraging visitors to participate in environmental conservation efforts and embrace cultural traditions.

In Barangay Hibago, the Palm Resort is the focal point of the annual fiesta held every May 13-14 in honor of Patron San Isidro Labrador. The resort embodies the essence of cultural celebration and community engagement, providing adaptable event spaces for diverse gatherings such as weddings and birthdays. Barangay Gatbo is a home to Alicia's Farm Resort, celebrates its fiesta every October 22-23. Alicia's Farm Resort stands as a beacon of community engagement and cultural celebration, preserving local heritage and offering a space for various events, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

In Barangay Cagmanaba, Belay's Eco Park is at the heart of community celebrations, with its fiesta observed every April 29 in honor of Cristo Rey. This eco-conscious haven serves as a versatile venue for events ranging from intimate weddings to joyous reunions, facilitating cultural exchange and fostering community bonds. In Barangay Salvacion, Aquasan Spring Resort hosts its annual fiesta every May 9-10. Although no specific patron is honored, the resort's dedication to hospitality and continuous improvement ensures guest satisfaction. Aquasan Spring Resort creates an inclusive and engaging atmosphere, inviting visitors for a transformative journey of rejuvenation and connection with nature.

### **Himuloan Festival**

The The Himuloan Festival, a prominent event in the municipality of Ocampo, is a celebration held annually on August 20th. It was founded and first celebrated in 2008, making it the 16th celebration of this year. Himuloan comes from the word "Himulo," which means sharing of rice harvests with the owner of the rice field by the person or people who planted rice in the meantime, depending on the agreement.

This festival serves as an expression of gratitude for the bountiful harvests that sustain the community, symbolizing the enduring bond between the residents and their agricultural heritage. It honors St. Bernard for the blessings conferred upon Ocampo's populace, resonating with a profound sense of reverence and appreciation for nature's generosity.

Inspired by the parish church of Ocampo, the Himuloan Festival is celebrated with energy and excitement, drawing both locals and visitors into its colorful festivities. It acts as a unifying force, transcending social barriers and fostering a sense of communal solidarity. In the midst of lively music, dances, and feasts, participants revel in the spirit of togetherness, creating unforgettable memories that shows of Ocampo's cultural heritage.

The eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur, presents substantial academic value across several dimensions. The integration of agricultural festivals like the Himuloan Festival with the Ocampo's tourism initiatives illustrates a model of sustainable tourism that leverages local traditions and natural resources. This approach not only boosts the local economy but also promotes cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. The festival provides a case study in community-based tourism, where local participation and cultural authenticity enhance the visitor experience and contribute to the socio-economic development of the area. Through these celebrations, Ocampo exemplifies how cultural heritage can be a catalyst for sustainable tourism and community empowerment.

### **Significance**

The resorts and recreational facilities such as Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism & Family Farm, Valerosa Farm Adventure Resort, Alicia's Farm Resort, among others, constitutes pivotal infrastructure for eco-cultural tourism. These establishments exemplify integration of modern touch with natural landscapes, thereby setting benchmarks for sustainable tourism practices within the municipality. Beyond serving the needs of tourists, this infrastructure plays a critical role in bolstering local economic growth through job creation and revenue generation.



Landmarks such as Dong Valenz View Deck Café and the PAGCOR building not only serve as navigational aids for visitors but also symbolize the visual and cultural identity of Ocampo. These landmarks underscore the interconnectedness of various tourism destinations.

Ocampo's rich natural resources and diverse habitats, exemplified by destinations like Belay's Eco Park and Aquasan Spring. These sites not only offer visitors opportunities for nature-based recreation but also underscore the importance of conservation efforts. These festivities commemorate local traditions, cuisine, and arts, thereby enriching the culture of eco-cultural tourism in Ocampo. They provide visitors with insights into community heritage and foster interactions between tourists and residents. The eco-cultural tourism offerings in Ocampo, Camarines Sur, represent a significant academic subject due to their contributions to economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability.

Theoretical insights show the interplay between cultural heritage, tourism growth, and environmental sustainability (Yu et al., 2023; Sun & Shu, 2023). Studies emphasize environmentally responsible behavior influenced by cultural attachment (Cheng et al., 2022) and the role of organizational culture in sustainability (Pollard et al., 2023). Additionally, perceptions of authenticity in tourism enhance destination image and satisfaction (Li et al., 2022), while stakeholder engagement is crucial for addressing social inequalities (Arts et al., 2018).

Factors such as subjective norms and biosphere value shape tourists' behavioral intentions towards ecotourism (Persada et al., 2023). Successful eco-cultural tourism also depends on community-based initiatives and partnerships (Romero-Brito et al., 2016). Local insights reveal the importance of community involvement and diverse ecotourism approaches for sustainability (Ziegler & Araujo, 2021; Rebuya, 2020).

### **Discovering Ocampo: Eco-Tourism and Cultural Treasure**

This tourism guidebook shows the destinations that await visitors in the municipality, each contributing uniquely to the area's eco-cultural tourism landscape. The guidebook underscores the role of sustainable practices and community engagement in fostering successful eco-cultural tourism. Academic research emphasizes the critical balance between tourism development, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental sustainability. It shows the importance of community-based initiatives and responsible tourism practices in promoting economic growth while ensuring the conservation of cultural and natural resources. By integrating sustainable practices, Ocampo's eco-cultural tourism not only enriches the visitor experience but also plays a crucial role in preserving the community's culture and environment for future generation.

### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.com/maps>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocampo,\\_Camarines\\_Sur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocampo,_Camarines_Sur)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.philatlas.com/luzon/r05/camarines-sur/ocampo.html>

<sup>4</sup> Lerner, R (2000) "What is Loam?", Purdue University Consumer Horticulture, Retrieved 5 March 2017.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.philatlas.com/luzon/r05/camarines-sur/ocampo.html>

<sup>6</sup> Brillo, B. (2021, December 01). Initiation and establishment of ecotourism development: Pandin Lake of San Pablo City and Tayak Hill of Rizal, Laguna, Philippines. *GeoJournal*, 86(6), 1–14.

<sup>7</sup> Rebuya, N. R. (2020). REALMS OF VISITORS' EXPERIENCE TO ECOTOURISM IN BULUSAN VOLCANO NATURAL PARK, PROVINCE OF SORSOGON, PHILIPPINES. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 25(2), 153–180. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol25no2.8>

<sup>8</sup>Ziegler, J. A., & Araujo, G., et. al (2021, July 01). Can ecotourism change community attitudes towards conservation? (Open Access) Can ecotourism change community attitudes towards conservation (2021) | Jackie A. Ziegler | 14 Citations

<sup>9</sup>Pollard, W., & Rajendran, D., et. al., (February 1, 2023). Organizational culture and effectiveness in ecotourism:in ecotourism: The case of World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms Australia (WWOOF Australia). \*Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 28\*(2), Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

<sup>10</sup>Cajee, L. (2014). Eco-Cultural Tourism: A Tool for Environmental, Cultural and Economic Sustainability (A Case Study of Darap Village, West Sikkim). SHS Web of Conferences, 12, 01029. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20141201029>

<sup>11</sup>Sun, S., & Shu, P. W. (April 28, 2023). Exploring the development of cultural and creative tourism under the perspective of ecological theory of tourism destination management. Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences. Published by Sciendo.

<sup>12</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3ohzVDqvhI>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.theoldchurches.com/philippines/camarines-sur/ocampo/st-bernard-abbot-church-ocampo/>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.parishph.com/2022/01/saint-peter-baptist-parish-ocampo.html>

## SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

The study attempted to chronicle the eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur and its significance depicting/showing the Eco-Cultural Tourism in Ocampo, Camarines Sur. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of Ocampo, Camarines Sur?
2. What is the eco-cultural tourism of Ocampo, Camarines Sur and its significance terms of:
  - Infrastructure
  - Landmarks
  - Natural resources and habitats
  - Festivals
3. What reference material may be developed based on the findings of the study?

The study focused on the nine recreational areas in Ocampo, Cam. Sur including farms, resorts, parks, and campgrounds. The research gathered information from owners, caretakers, employees, and local government representatives involved in these tourism spots. Ten informants were involved in data collection to ensure objectivity. Using a qualitative research design, the study employed interview and structured questionnaire to gather information. The NCCA cultural mapping form was used as a research instrument to document data related to eco-cultural tourism in Ocampo. The qualitative phase aimed to understand the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

## Findings

Based on the conduct of data gathering and document analysis, the study came up with the following findings:

1. The demographic profile of Ocampo, Camarines Sur reveals a landlocked municipality comprising 25 barangays, situated within the Luzon Island group in the Bicol Region of the Philippines. With an estimated population of 51,073 inhabitants as of 2020 and a population density of 432 individuals per square kilometer, Ocampo demonstrates a diverse community shaped by its various barangays. Each barangay contributes distinct characteristics to the municipality's cultural, social, and economic landscape.
2. a. **Infrastructure.** Ocampo, Camarines Sur, is emerging as a sustainable eco-cultural tourism destination, with natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic development. Recreational areas like Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism and Family Farm, Valerosa Farm Adventure Resort, and Belay's Eco Park exemplify sustainable practices, such as organic farming, environmental conservation, and responsible infrastructure development. Initiatives like Alicia's Farm Resort and Aquasan Spring Resort emphasize local employment, cultural preservation, and eco-friendly facilities. These establishments not only offer leisure and relaxation with its surroundings but also shows its commitment to sustainable tourism, promoting ecological balance, community livelihood, and cultural appreciation, making Ocampo a model for eco-cultural tourism.  
  
b. **Landmarks.** Key landmarks in Ocampo guide visitors to eco-cultural tourism destinations and contribute to the municipality's identity. Landmarks like the Vianni Resort and the Cabariwan Community School serve as reference points for attractions like Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism & Family Farm and Belay's Eco-Park. Structures like the molinohan facing the cemetery and the barangay hall of Hanawan signify entry points to leisure spots like Alicia's Farm Resort, Villa Atara, Yanna's Campsite and Dong Valenz View Deck Café.  
  
c. **Natural Resources and Habitats.** Ocampo has diverse natural resources and habitats that enrich the eco-cultural tourism experience. Destinations like Belay's Eco Park and Aquasan Spring Resort offer opportunities for guests to immerse themselves in lush landscapes. Conservation efforts by establishments such as Pasto de Iriola Agri-tourism & Family Farm demonstrate a commitment to preserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable tourism practices.  
  
d. **Festivals.** Festivals like the Himuloan Festival and barangay fiestas play a vital role in enhancing the eco-cultural tourism experience in Ocampo. These celebrations showcase the municipality's cultural heritage through festivities, fostering community engagement and offering visitors insights into local traditions and customs. Fiestas and Festival contribute to the vibrancy of the tourism landscape, providing visitors with a deeper understanding of Ocampo's cultural identity.
3. A tourism guidebook can be developed based on the findings of the study.

## Conclusions

From the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. Ocampo, Camarines Sur, is a landlocked municipality with a population of 51,073 across 25 barangays, each contributing to the municipality's rich cultural, social, and economic diversity. The municipality's varied demographics emphasizes societal dynamics at play, which are integral to its identity and community structure.
2. Ocampo is positioning itself as a sustainable eco-cultural tourism destination, exemplified by recreational areas. These areas emphasize sustainable practices such as organic farming, environmental conservation, and eco-friendly infrastructure. Key landmarks and natural resources, along with cultural events like the Himuloan Festival, further enhance the tourism experience, promoting ecological balance, community livelihood, and cultural appreciation.
3. The tourism guidebook, "Discovering Ocampo: Eco-Tourism and Cultural Treasures", was developed to raise awareness among the readers and appreciate the Ocampo Eco-Cultural Tourism.