

**AN EXAMPLE FROM THE GEOGRAPHY OF TOURISM IN THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES: GUIMARAS PROVINCE¹**

*FİLİPİNLER CUMHURİYETİ TURİZM COĞRAFYASINDAN BİR ÖRNEK:
GUIMARAS İLİ*

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ABSTRACT: Guimaras is located in the Western Visayas Region of the Republic of the Philippines. It is a young, small state with windy and sparsely populated populations, rarely preferred by foreign tourists for holiday. Guimaras is home to tourism attractions unique to this province, such as the Taklong Island National Marine Reserve, one of the country's most fascinating marine protected areas, and the "Trappist Monastery", the country's only Trappist belief center. In terms of administration and management, Guimaras Province consists of 5 districts and 98 Barangays and does not have any urban settlements. As famous as Palawan, as populous as Cebu and not as popular as Boracay, this small province is one of the least known and least visited destinations in the Philippines, but it also has a high level of tourism potential. The purpose of this research is to carry out the scientific promotion of this little-known and little-researched state in terms of international tourism by examining its geographical features and tourism potential. Guimaras, despite its unique charms, has not taken its rightful place in the national and international tourism market. In this study, the geographical location, natural and human geographical features of Guimaras State and the main tourism resources are discussed. The rich tourism resources, interesting tourism centers, historical attractions of this small province have been examined in detail and the tourism potential of the island and its portrait from the perspective of tourism have been revealed.

Key Words: Republic of the Philippines, Natural Resources, Human Resources, Guimaras Province, Guimaras Island, Tourism Potential

ÖZ: Filipinler Cumhuriyeti'nin Batı Visayas Bölgesi'nde yer alan Guimaras, yabancı turistlerin nadiren tatil için tercih ettiği genç, seyrek nüfuslu küçük bir eyalettir. Guimaras, ülkenin en büyüleyici deniz koruma alanlarından biri olan Taklong Adası Ulusal Deniz Koruma Alanı ve ülkenin tek Trappist inanç merkezi olan "Trappist Manastırı" gibi bu eyalete özgü turizm merkezlerine ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Yönetim ve idare açısından Guimaras Eyaleti 5 ilçe ve 98 Barangay'dan oluşmakta olup herhangi bir kentsel yerleşim

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yeri bulunmamaktadır. Palawan kadar ünlü, Cebu kadar kalabalık ve Boracay kadar popüler olmayan bu küçük il, Filipinler'in en az bilinen ve en az ziyaret edilen destinasyonlarından biri ama aynı zamanda turizm potansiyeli de yüksektir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, az bilinen ve az araştırılan bu devletin coğrafi özelliklerini ve turizm potansiyelini inceleyerek uluslararası turizm açısından bilimsel tanıtımını gerçekleştirmektir. Guimaras, eşsiz cazibesine rağmen ulusal ve uluslararası turizm pazarında hak ettiği yeri alamamıştır. Bu çalışmada Guimaras Eyaleti'nin coğrafi konumu, doğal ve beşeri coğrafya özellikleri ve başlıca turizm kaynakları ele alınmıştır. Bu küçük ilin zengin turizm kaynakları, ilginç turizm merkezleri, tarihi mekanları detaylı olarak incelenerek adanın turizm potansiyeli ve turizm perspektifinden portresi ortaya çıkarılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filipinler Cumhuriyeti, Doğal Kaynaklar, Beşeri Kaynaklar, Guimaras Eyaleti, Guimaras Adası, Turizm Potansiyeli

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Guimaras in the geographical terminology of the Philippines; It is the name of both a district, an island, a town, a strait and a state. The Sulu Sea is located in the south of Guimaras State, and the Visayan Sea is located in the north. Guimaras Strait, located to the east of Guimaras Island, separates it from Negros Island. The Iloilo Strait, located to the west of Guimaras Island, separates it from Panay Island and the city of Iloilo. Guimaras Province, located in the Visayas Group of Islands, includes both Guimaras Island and more than 60 small islands in its immediate surroundings. The total surface area of Guimaras Province, located in the Western Visayas Region as an administrative and political structure, is 604.57 km² and its total population in 2020 is 187,842 people. The surface area of Guimaras Province is larger than Guimaras Island, as small islets such as Inampulugan, Guiuanon, Panobolon, Tando, Taklong, Nagarao, Nalunga and Nadulao also form part of the province. Additionally, Guimaras Island alone accounts for more than 98% of both the state's territory and the state's population.

Guimaras is considered one of the best-preserved, most environmentally friendly and most pristine islands of land and marine ecosystems in the Philippines. Guimaras Province, which has a central location within the Philippine Archipelago; Being very close to islands such as Panay, Cebu, Negros and Bantayan provides a great advantage in terms of transportation, tourism and trade. The most rugged and highest areas of the state, which does not have high mountains and wide rugged lands, are the regions in the central parts of Guimaras Island. The highest point of Guimaras Province is Bontoc (271 m.) hill, located in the southeast of Jordan Town. The longest rivers of Guimaras, the 20th largest island of the Philippines, include Sibunag, San Lorenzo and Mantangigi.

In terms of administrative management, Guimaras Province consists of 5 districts and 98 Barangays (Neighbourhoods). Buenavista, Jordan, Nueva Valencia, Sibunag and San Lorenzo constitute these five districts. Economy of Guimaras Province; It is based on crop production, fishing, animal husbandry, lime production, mining, handicrafts, tourism and industry. Mango production is especially common on the island, and Guimaras mangoes are considered the most delicious and highest quality in the world. Therefore, Guimaras is also known as the mango capital of the Philippines. Guimaras Province is not one of the most famous tourism destinations in the Philippines, nor is it one of the most popular destinations among foreign tourists. More than 60 islands within the borders of the state are waiting to be

rediscovered by foreign tourists. Peaceful, clean and scenic beaches, economical accommodation facilities, interesting tourism attractions, easy transportation links, unique nature reserves, peaceful and safe holiday options are the most important touristic advantages of Guimaras Province.

Tourists visiting Guimaras Province can easily access many accommodation facilities suitable for every purpose and every budget. Although more than 110 accommodation facilities operate within the borders of the state, there are no four or five-star hotels among them. There is a shortage of luxury hotels in Guimaras Province, as seen in many Philippine provinces. Most of the modern tourist establishments in the state are located in the city of Jordan and its immediate surroundings and on the seaside of Nueva Valencia district. There are more than 10 tourist caves and more than 40 natural beach areas within the state borders. In fact, marine tourism is one of the most popular tourism activities in Guimaras Province, and the total coastline of the province reaches 470 kilometers.



Figure 1. Location Map of the Guimaras Province (Source: Authors, 2022.)

Guimaras can be described as a windy and sparsely populated, underdeveloped and small state that is rarely preferred by foreign tourists for holiday purposes. Guimaras has tourism attractions unique to this province, such as the "Taklong Island National Marine Reserve", one of the most fascinating marine protected areas in the country, the "San Lorenzo Wind Farm", the largest wind production process in the country, and the "Trappist Monastery", the only Trappist faith center in the country. Guimaras Province; It is famous for its

white sandy beaches, pristine seashores, vast mango plantations, unique agricultural farms, interesting caves and waterfalls, and uninhabited tropical islets. The main factors that negatively affect tourism activities are the fact that the state's territory is exposed to strong winds all year round, insufficient touristic promotion, and the fact that there are almost no 4- and 5-star accommodations of high standards.

The main purposes of writing this study are as follows:

- To introduce the geographical features, natural resources and regional differences of Guimaras Province to the readers.
- To present to the readers the tourism centers, tourism advantages and tourism disadvantages, natural beauties and tourism potential of Guimaras Province.
- To identify the main natural and cultural tourism attractions of Guimaras Province, to examine them and to announce them to both curious tourists and interested readers.
- To create a tourist reference guide for foreign tourists who will visit Guimaras, as well as to portray the multi-dimensional tourism portrait of the province and to scientifically promote the island from the perspective of tourism geography.
- Guimaras Province is a little known and not very popular Philippine province. Because; With this scientific research, the main purpose of the article is to reveal the tourism riches of the state and to announce its regional beauties to the whole world.

Although Guimaras is one of the least known and least visited provinces of the Philippines, it has high tourism potential. The main purpose of this research is to scientifically promote this little-known and under-researched province to Turkish readers and Turkish travelers by examining its geographical features and tourism potential. In this study, the geographical location of Guimaras Province, its natural and human geography characteristics and its main tourism resources are briefly discussed. By examining in detail the rich tourism resources, interesting tourism centers and historical attractions of this small state, the tourism potential of the island and its portrait from a tourism perspective have been tried to be revealed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Guimaras Province is located in the Visayas Group Island and encompasses both Guimaras Island and more than 60 smaller islands in its immediate vicinity (Roxas & Fillone, 2017; Añasco et al., 2021; Palma et al., 2023). Guimaras State, which is located in the Western Visayas Region, the total area is 604.57 km² (Añasco et al., 2021) and the total population in 2020 is 187 842 people. The total population of the province was only 21467 in 1903, 40697 in 1948, 57560 in 1960, 92382 in 1980, 141450 in 2000 and 187842 in 2020. In other words, between 1903 and 2020, the population of the province increased by about 9 times (Province of Guimaras, 2018; Philatlas, 2023; GOVPH, 2023). The Town of Jordan constitutes both the largest settlement and the administrative center of this state (Municipal Government of Jordan, 2023; CMCI & DTI, 2022). Guimaras was a district of Iloilo Province and became an independent province on May 22, 1992, (Palma et al., 2023: 84). Small islets such as Inampulugan, Guiuanon, Panobolon, Tando, Taklong, Nagarao, Nalunga and Nadulao also part of the province. Guimaras is considered one of the best-preserved, greenest, and most Virgin Islands of land and marine ecosystems in the Philippines. Guimaras Province, which is centrally located within the Philippine Archipelago; Its proximity to islands such as Panay, Cebu, Negros and Bantayan provides a great advantage in terms of transportation, tourism and trade. In addition, tourism is among the priority sectors to develop in the Philippines by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (ILO, 2018).



Photo 1: Baras Balabag Sand Bar - Province of Guimaras (Photo Emin Atasoy)

The largest island of the Province of Guimaras in terms of both population and surface area is Guimaras Island. Guimaras Island alone accounts for more than 98% of both the state's territory and the province's population. Stuck between Negros and the Panay Islands, Guimaras Island is mathematically located between 10°25'00"-

10°46'09" north latitude and 122°28'99"-122°28'40.53" east longitude (FLUP, 2019;

PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020). Guimaras in the geographical terminology; it is the name of a county, an island, a town, a sea strait, and a state. Guimaras Province is bordered by the Sulu Sea to the south and the Visayas Sea to the north. The Strait of Guimaras, located to the east of Guimaras Island, separates it from Negros Island. The Iloilo Strait, west of Guimaras Island, separates it from Panay Island and the city of Iloilo (Chirikov et al, 2008). Iloilo City is the main entrance gate to Guimaras in terms of transport links and is the commercial and industrial center that feeds this small province.

In terms of administration, Guimaras Province consists of 5 districts and 98 Barangays (Galia et al., 2018; FLUP, 2019; PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020). Buenavista, Jordan, Nueva Valencia, Sibunag and San Lorenzo make up these five districts (Table 1). Buenavista, the state's most populous district, has a population of 52 899, whereas Sibunag, the state's least populous district, has a population of 23162 (CMCI & TDI, 2021). Nueva Valencia is the largest district of the province with an area of 137 km², whereas San Lorenzo, with an area of 106 km², is the smallest district of the province (Municipality of San Lorenzo, 2023) (Table 1). The northern parts of the island are more densely populated, while the southern regions are more sparsely populated. Buenavista, the state's most populous district, is also the most densely populated in the province (458 inhabitants/km²). Sibunag, the province's least populated district, is also the most sparsely populated in the province (183 inhabitants/km²). In addition, the arithmetic population density of any district in the state does not exceed 500 people/km² nor does it fall below 150 people/km² (Table 1).

Table 1. Major administrative and geographical features of the Guimaras Province

Name of the Province	Population of the District (Year 2020)	Surface Area (km ²)	Population Density (person/km ²)	Number of Barangays Embodied
Buenavista	52 899	115,60	458	36
Jordan	39 566	126,11	314	14
Nueva Valencia	42 771	137,12	312	22
San Lorenzo	29 444	106,23	277	12
Sibunag	23 162	126,81	183	14
TOTAL	187 842	611,87	307	98

Source: (PhilAtlas. (2023). Guimaras. <https://www.philatlas.com/visayas/r06/guimaras.html> (accessed on 08.06.2023).

The province does not have high mountains and wide hilly terrains. The most rugged and highest areas in the central parts of Guimaras Island. The main elevations of Guimaras are; Bontoc (271 m.), Tigbi (243 m.), Dinulman (267 m.), Balacbacan (217 m.), Pandan (207 m.), Acdan (193 m.) and Jaljat (185 m.) (Table 2). The highest point in Guimaras Province is Bontoc (271 m.) hill, southeast of Jordan Township. Among the longest streams of Guimaras, the 20th largest island in the Philippines; Sibunag (28 km.), San Lorenzo (24 km.), and Mantangigi (17 km.) (Table 2) (Discover The Philippines, 2023).

Table 2. Primary characteristics of the Guimaras Province (Source: Authors, 2022)

Group Islands Located: The Visayas Group Islands	The Political Region: Western Visayas Region
Surface Area: 611 km ²	Total Population: 187.842 (Year 2020)
The Province: Guimaras	Arithmetic Population Density: 307 people/km ²
Number of Barangays Embodied: 98	Number of Municipalities: 5
The Great Gulfs: "Santa Ana", "Panay", "Igang", "Jordan", "Santo Rosario", and "Tacay".	The Major Rivers: "Sibunag", "Igang", "San Lorenzo", "Jordon", "Mantangigi", "Cabono", "Mangacap", and "Buluangan".
The Province Mathematics Position: 10° 23'- 10°45' northern latitudes; 122° 28-122°43' east longitudes.	The Largest Settlements: "Buenavista", "Jordan", "San Miguel", "Nueva Valencia", "Sibunag", and "San Lorenzo".
The Highest Point: "Bontoc" (271 m.)	The Largest City: Jordan
The Longest River: Sibunag	The Largest Gulfs: Panay
The Largest Ports: "Mac Arthurs", "Cabalagnan", "Guiwanon", "Inampulungan", "Parola", "Panobolon", "San Lorenzo", and "Jordan Port".	Highest Mountains: "Bontoc (271 m.)", "Tigbi (243 m.)", "Dinulman (267 m.)", "Balacbacan (217 m.)", "Pandan (207 m.)", "Acadan (193 m.)", and "Jaljat (185 m.)".
Big Islands: "Inampulugan", "Panobolon", "Nalunga", "Guiwanon", "Nadulao", "Lusonan", "Yeto", "Tiniguiban", "Taklong", "Tando", "Nalibas", "Pamancolan", "Nagarao", "Nauway", "Balud", "Bahol", "Unisan", "Balingasag", "Isla Margarita", "Magic Island", "Malingin", "Naburot", "Ususan", "Ave Maria", "Seraray", and "Kamungculan".	Largest Nature Protected Areas: "Taklong Island National Marine Reserve", "Inampulogan Wildlife Reserve Area", "Lombija Wildlife Park & Heritage Resort", "Marine Turtle Sanctuary", "Toyo Reef Fish Sanctuary", "Tumalintinan Fish Sanctuary", "Igang Bay Marine Sanctuary", and "JBLFMU Ecological Park Marine Sanctuary".

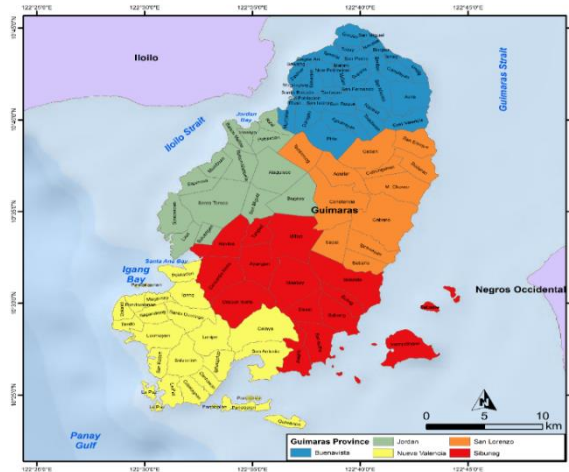
In the State of Guimaras, the humid Tropical Monsoon climate prevails and is characterized by two distinct seasons: the dry and rainy season. There is usually a dry season between November and April and a rainy season during the rest of the year. The province's average annual temperature is 28.2°C, which is 1.02 % higher than the Philippine average. The lowest monthly average monthly temperature occurs in February (24.2 °C), whereas the highest monthly average monthly temperature is in May (31.8°C) (FLUP, 2019). As can be seen, the temperature difference between the hottest and coldest months is only 7-8°C. The period when the northeast monsoon winds are effective is very humid and rainy, and there are frequent thunderstorms during this period. Some years, very destructive and very strong typhoons can occur in the September-November period (Monteclaro et al., 2018). The highest rainfall within the state is in July with 176 millimeters, and the lowest rainfall is in February with 15 millimeters. The Southwest Monsoon (called "Habagat"), which starts the rainy season, begins in June and continues until the end of September. Due to the frequent heavy rains, the period from June to September is not very suitable for tourist visits. The period from December to March is the best time to visit the State of Guimaras. In Guimaras, 42 % of the year is rainy and 58 % is arid. The average annual humidity rate is 77.5 % (Weather & Climate, 2023).

There are no large cities within the borders of Guimaras State. Villages and towns are therefore the most common settlements in the state. Buenavista, Jordan, Nueva Valencia, Sibunag and San Lorenzo constitute both the largest towns of the Province of Guimaras and the administrative center of the five counties (Table 2). None of these county centers, which constitute an exceptional example of the Philippines in terms of geographical location, are located on the coast (McDaniels & Trousdale, 1999; Discover The Philippines, 2023).

There are more than 60 islands and islets with a much smaller area. The most important feature of these small islands is that a large part of them are uninhabited and do not have permanent population and settlement. The geographical distribution of the islands in the state shows a great imbalance. Nueva Valencia has the most islands, while San Lorenzo has the fewest islands. The largest islands are: Inampulangan, Panobolon, Nalunga, Guiuanon, Nadulao, Lusonan, Yeto, Tiniguiban, Taklong, Tando, Nalibas, Nagarao, Nauway, Balud, Bahol, Unisan, Malingin, Balingasag, Naburut, Ususan, Ave Maria, Seraray, and Kamungculan (Table 2).

Figure 2. Guimaras Province Map

Source: (World Map. (2023). Guimaras map. <https://www.mapsofworld.com/philippines/provinces/guimaras.html> (Accessed on 14.08.2023).



The economy of the State of Guimaras; crop production is based on fishing, animal husbandry, lime production, mining, handicrafts, tourism, and industry (McDaniels & Trousdale, 1999; Parreno et al., 2014; Roxas & Fillone, 2017; Prieto-Caroline et al., 2018; Añasco et al., 2021; Palma et al., 2023). Mango production is particularly common on the island, and Guimaras mangoes are considered the tastiest, and highest quality in the world

(FLUP, 2019; Gomez, 2019). 8500 hectares of cultivated land in Guimaras Province are covered by mango plantations (Galia et al., 2018). For this reason, Guimaras Province is also known as the mango capital of the Philippines (NEDA, 2023). Every year, the famous Manggahan Festival is held on the island, which lasts about two months and ends on the feast day when independence was declared (PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020). In the region, the mango

economy contributes to tourism development, creating a synergy (Sacramento & Cuizon, 2020; Sacramento & Geges, 2020). Poultry, rice, cashew and coconut production, construction stone and construction lime production, food, textile and oil industry, pig and cattle breeding are among the other important economic activities of the island (FLUP, 2019).

Rice and mango are the most widely grown agricultural products in Guimaras State. In other words, more than 80 % of the agricultural land is grown either mango or rice. Sibunag and San Lorenzo are the districts where the most rice is grown. Numerous freshwater fish ponds operate, so Guimaras is one of the Philippine States where aquaculture is the most developed (Fabinyi, 2010).

The State of Guimaras is not rich in energy resources, but they can be considered rich in minerals. Very rich deposits of iron, gold, copper, limestone, clay and dolomite have been discovered on Guimaras Island. Some of these minerals are still operated today and contribute to the national economy. River floods, landslides, earthquakes, tropical storms, and flash floods are the most important natural disasters threatening the state (Babaran & Ingles, 1997; Adger et al., 2005; Yender et al., 2008; Espia & Fernandez, 2015; Uno et al., 2017; Province of Guimaras, 2018).

There are no active airports in the Province of Guimaras. Those who prefer air transportation can first reach Iloilo City by plane and then reach Guimaras Island by ferry. Since Guimaras Island is geographically located between Negros and Panay Islands, it naturally has the most intensive maritime transport links with these two neighbouring islands (Roxas & Fillone, 2017). There are regular ferry services between Pulupandan Port on Negros Island and San Lorenzo Port on Guimaras Island for 12 months. Sea access is also available all year round between Parola Port on Panay Island and Buenavista (Mac Arthurs Wharf Ferry Terminal) on Guimaras Island. In addition, sea transportation is provided on two different routes between Jordan Port on Guimaras Island and Iloilo City on Panay Island. The first ferry route runs between Jordan Port on Guimaras Island and Ortiz Wharf Port in Iloilo City. The second ferry route is between Jordan Port on Guimaras Island and Parola Port on Iloilo City, both of which operate regularly all year round (Roxas & Fillone, 2017). In summary, it is understood that tourists from Panay Island and Iloilo City who want to reach Guimaras Island have 3 different sea transportation options. In addition; Mac Arthurs Port, Cabalagnan Port, Guiwanon Port, Panobolon Port, San Lorenzo Port, Inampulungan Port, Parola Port, and Jordan Port are the busiest ports operating within the Guimaras Province (Table 2). It is worth noting that the presence of an effective transport network is an important parameter that will support the development of tourism in the region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The main scientific research on Guimaras Province and Guimaras Island is summarized below:

- Sari (2001), in his study on the development of coastal tourism in Guimaras; It has reached the conclusion that tourism is not developing in the region, superstructure investments should be increased and the tourism industry should be developed. Researcher; draws attention to the importance of intensifying promotional activities in order to obtain market share from tourism. In addition, it is stated that with the marketing activities carried out, the number of visitors to the region can be increased and therefore the opportunity to increase the tourism income can be seized and the way can be opened for increasing the quality of life in the locality.

- In their research Bucane et al. (2013), examined the Guimaras Island Tourism Portal. The researchers found that the portal designed for visitors; they found that it included detailed information about holiday opportunities, festivals and events in the destination, accommodation facilities and overnight fees. In addition; They concluded that the portal, in which both the booking and map modules were included, served as a tool for the promotion of Guimaras Island.

- Ganzon and Fillone (2013), on the selection of tourist attractions in the Province of Guimaras; They carried out a study with the objectives of "characterizing Guimaras tourists in terms of individual and travel characteristics", "determining destination choices", "assessing the factors affecting destination choices" and "assessing the possibility of Guimaras tourists incorporating agritourism destinations into their existing tours". Researchers; Through the Binomial Logit model, the factors influencing the decision of whether to add to the tourist's existing tour to the agricultural tourism tour package; They concluded that the purpose of the trip of the tour package offered with the current tour, the food budget in excess of the travel budget, the source of information about the province of Guimaras, gender, the frequency of holidays in a year and the budget and household income ratio were effective.

- Ganzon and Fillone (2015), in their study investigating the length of stay of tourists visiting Guimaras Province; They found that factors such as "marital status", "working status", "frequency of holidays during the year", "purpose of travel", "budget per hour" and "travel budget" affected the length of stay in Guimaras. The researchers concluded that there is a direct link between the travel budget and the length of stay, and that single tourists, who tend to stay in the region longer, should be considered as a market segment.

- Galia and other authors (2018), examined the efforts of a community organization to develop eco-tourism in Basyaw Cove, Guimaras. KAMAMADO's success and increasing ability to implement conservation programs; They found that

it turned into a rational organization for partnerships with various institutions and was successful in obtaining assistance from government agencies.

- Sacramento and Geges (2020) sought to identify the role of the Guimaras Mango Growers and Producers Development Cooperative (GMGPDC) in eco-agro tourism development. Emphasizing the vision of the region to become the eco-agro tourism capital, the researchers note that the producer cooperative in Guimaras is an important stakeholder in promoting products to the market in a way that benefits both the local economy and tourism development.

- Aujero-Blanza (2020) focused on the development of ecotourism in the Philippines. In his research, he participated in the 6th Phase of the National Ecotourism Strategy (NES). It concluded that the current state of ecotourism in the region (Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras and Iloilo) is satisfactory with an average score of 79.4. The researcher concluded that Guimaras' Destination Constructs (Physical Attributes [50 points], Ecotourism Products [10 points], Social Preparedness [14 points], Cultural Features [4 points], Ecotourism Services [6 points], Market [5 points], Accessibility [4 points], Pro Ecotourism Policies [5 points]) were superior with a total score of 98.

- Añasco and et al. (2021) examined the disaster resilience of Guimaras in sustainable coastal tourism and fishing. Researchers have found that a community presence with a resilient structure that is resilient to disasters has the potential to have positive effects on tourism. However, they have concluded that tourism as an alternative livelihood can both reduce pressure on over-consumed fish stocks and provide support for sustainable development.

- Palma et al. (2023) have demonstrated the contribution of various festivals held on Guimaras Island to the tourism industry. They concluded that the festivals organized at the provincial, municipal and Barangay level increased the number of visitors to the island. In line with the data of the last 5 years, respectively; They observed an increase in the number of domestic day-trippers, domestic tourists, foreign day-trippers and finally foreign tourists. However, researchers who examined monthly visitor arrivals concluded that monthly arrivals did not depend on the number of festivals held.

3. MATERIALS, AND METHODS

This study is the scientific output of the of the research program titled “The Republic of the Philippines from the Perspective of Political, Economic and Human Geography and Turkey-Philippines Interaction”, The project was accepted by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey in 2020 within the scope of “2219-Overseas Postdoctoral Research Scholarship Program”

In this study, the demographic, geographical, economic and ecological characteristics of the Guimaras Province was examined, and both the tourism advantages and disadvantages as well as the tourism resources of the island were

attempted to be identified. In parallel with this purpose, Prof. Emin Atasoy made land surveys, city surveys and geographical observations on the Guimaras Province between 21-30 April 2023; as a result, he personally examined majority of the tourism centers on the island.

This research was conducted using the case study method. Data and information obtained from document analysis and semi-structured interviews, as well as field observations, focus group discussion, participant observation, and expert interviews were used. Case studies are defined by many different names in different countries. A case study is one of the types of systematic design that involves steps such as gathering information, organizing, interpreting, and researching the information gathered, and achieving results, just like detailed planning in architecture. Case studies are a way to see what is actually happening in the environment, systematically collect data, analyze it, and draw conclusions. The result is a clear understanding of why things happened the way they did and what to focus on in detail for future investigations. In this study, “embedded single case study design”, in which there are more than one sub-unit of analysis, was used. In the planned research, both illustrative case studies, exploratory case studies and observational case studies were applied together.

The main objectives of this study are:

- To introduce readers to the geographical features, natural resources and regional differences of Guimaras State.
- To present the tourism centers, natural beauties and tourism potential of Guimaras Province to the readers.
- To discuss the tourism privileges, tourism advantages and tourism disadvantages of the State of Guimaras.
- To identify the main natural and cultural tourism attractions of the State of Guimaras, to examine them and to announce them to both curious tourists and interested readers.
- To create a tourist reference guide for foreign tourists visiting the Province of Guimaras.
- To paint the multidimensional tourism portrait of Guimaras Province and to make a scientific presentation of the island through the perspective of tourism geography.
- Guimaras Province is a not very popular and unknown Philippine state. Therefore; With this scientific research, it is the main purpose of the article to reveal the tourism richness of the province and to announce its regional beauties to the whole world.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Guimaras Province is not one of the most famous tourist destinations in the Philippines, nor is it one of the most popular destinations among foreign tourists. However, it is notable for its potential for nature lovers and adventure seekers (PSA, 2020). More than 60 islands within the borders of the state are waiting to be rediscovered by foreign tourists. Peaceful, clean and scenic beaches, budget accommodation facilities, interesting tourist attractions, easy transport links, unique nature reserves, peaceful and safe holiday options are the most important tourist advantages of Guimaras State (Roxas et al., 2015; Roxas & Fillone, 2017).

Table 3. Tourist spots in Guimaras Province by municipality

	Buevanista	Jordan	Nueva Valencia	San Lorenzo	Sibunag	TOTAL
Historical Attractions	7	2	2	0	0	11
Resorts/Accommodation	9	14	11	4	8	46
Natural and Other Attractions	4	8	6	3	0	21
Religious Attractions	2	3	0	1	0	6
Agro-Tourism Attractions	4	7	4	3	6	24
Number of Caves	2	7	1	0	0	10
TOTAL	28	41	24	11	14	118

Source: (Ganzon & Fillone, 2013; PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020).

The State of Guimaras is a privileged and unique tourist destination with its rich diverse ecosystems, interesting historical and cultural tourism attractions and unique natural beauty. But this small state has hardly managed to announce it to the world and prove it in the global tourism market. Although interestingness, diversity and originality are the biggest tourism trump cards of the islands in this province, it seems that the Philippine tourism authorities have hardly communicated this to both tourism experts and international tourism markets.

As can be seen in Table 3, there are a total of 118 tourist attractions in the State of Guimaras. In terms of the resources that make up the tourism potential; Jordan is understood to be the richest county with a total of 41 tourism attractions, while San Lorenz, with only 11 tourism attractions, is the poorest county. Within the territory of Guimaras Province, there are 10 Caves, 24 Agro-Tourism Attractions, 6 Religious Attractions, 21 Natural and Other Attractions, 25 Resorts/Accommodation and 11 Historical Attractions (Table 3).

The annual number of tourists visiting the Province of Guimaras in the period 2010-2020 varies between 50 000 and 103 000. But more than 90 % of them are native Filipino tourists (PSA, 2020). In other words, while domestic tourism is developing rapidly in the state, it can be said that international tourism is almost non-existent. The main reason why the number of visitors to Guimaras State is very low compared to neighbouring states is not inadequate tourist infrastructure or insufficient accommodation facilities. On the contrary, the main reason for this is

insufficient advertising and international publicity. For example, the annual number of tourists coming to Aklan Province, which includes Boracay Island, varies between 130000 and 700000. In other words, the number of visitors to Aklan Province is approximately 11-12 times higher than Guimaras (Ganzon & Fillone, 2013).

Tourists visiting the State of Guimaras have easy access to a large number of accommodation facilities for all purposes and budgets. Although more than 110 accommodations operate within the state's borders, there are no four- or five-star hotels among them. The shortage of hotels in the luxury class is experienced in Guimaras Province as well as in many Philippine states. It is possible to group the accommodation facilities within the borders of Guimaras State under 5 groups: The first group consists of hotels located on the seaside: for example, "La Puerta Al Paraizo Beach Resort", and "Cabugan Adventure Resort". The second group consists of its hotels, which are terrestrial and located in the forest: for example; "Little Tagaytay", and "Guimaras Mountain Resort". The third group consists of hotels where water sports, health and entertainment activities are predominant: for example; "Balay Tisa Inland Resort", and "D&D Nature Spring Resort". The fourth group consists of hotels on small islets far from settlements: for example; "Costa Aguada Island Resort", and "Nagarao Beach Resort". The fifth group consists of high-priced, high-quality hotels: for example; "Andana Resort Guimaras", and "Guimaras Mountain Resort"). Below is the major accommodations on the Guimaras Province in Table 4.

Most of the state's modern tourist establishments are located on the seafront of the city of Jordan and its immediate surroundings and the town of Nueva Valencia. "Andana Resort", "Raymen Beach Resort", "Red Doorz @ Marceily Point Resort", "Sole Vista Mountain Resort", "Nature's Eye Beach Resort" and "Guimaras Mountain Resort" are among the most prestigious and highest quality accommodation facilities on the island (Table 4).

Table 4. Major accommodations on the Guimaras Province (Source: Authors, 2022)

La Puerta El Paraizo Beach Resort	Raymen Beach Resort	Andana Resort
Jannah Glycel Beach House	Natago Beach Resort	Zemkamps Chalet
Nature's Eye Beach Resort	Cabaling Beach Resort	The Clara Beach
Camp Alfredo Adventure Resort	Sto. Nino Beach Resort	Kabukiran Resorts
Sole Vista Mountain Resort	Vilches Beach Resort	The Shirven Hotel
Kelapa Gading Beach Resort	Kenyama Beach Resort	Magic Island Resort
Cottage Road Beach House	Nagarao Beach Resort	Adela's Resto Inn
Marceily Point Inland Resort	The Seaside Beach Resort	Pagatpat Resort
Jannah Glycel Beach House	Cecel Beach Resort	Rancho Cacho
Costa Aguada Island Resort	Cabugan Adventure Resort	Yato Beach Camp
Rumagangrang Beach Resort	Guimaras Mountain Resort	Casitas de Palma
Natures Trail Camp&Resort	Villa Igang Beach Resort	Pagatpat Guesthouse
Valle Verde Mountain Resort	Abelardo's Beach Resort	Alobijod Cove Resort
Baluarte Shooting Range&Resort	Playa de Paraiso Resort	Czech Beach House
Cozy Vacation House in Guimaras	Balay Tisa Inland Resort	Little Tagaytay
Guimaras Mangrove Guesthouse	JM Backpackers Homotel	Pine Haven Hotel
Red Doorz @ Marceily Point Resort	Guimaras Sleepover Inn	Huge Home
Red Doorz @ Southern Suites	Lamurawan Beach Resort	Costa Lena
San Crest Resort&Convention Center	Sun Sea Beach Resort	JD Pension Inn
Daliran Spring Nature Resort	R.V. Garden Resort	Eco Pen Hauz
Love and Grace Guesthouse	Twin Feather Pension Inn	Frankies
California Coral Beach Resort	Bella Cove Resort	Nicolance Beach Resort
Clara Beach Resort and Guest House	Tahi Beach Resort	Mamaleys Resort
Dona Candida Beach Resort	Avista Grande Beach Resort	JL Pension Hauz
Mam Bukay Beach Resort	Side Walkers Pension	Caza Guest House
D & D Nature Spring Resort	Nagarao Island Resort	Bikers Hill Resort
An-An's Farm Guimaras	Botz Tree House	Nanda Natures Park

Table 5. Popular tourist caves and beaches in Guimaras State (Source: Authors, 2022)

Popular Tourist Caves		Popular Tourist Beaches	
Name of the Cave	Barangay and District	Name of the Beach	Barangay and District
Biri	Poblacion-Jordan	Tatlong Pulo	Sinapsapan-Jordan
Bucoy	Balcon Maravilla-Jordan	Gallopa's	Tando-Nueva Valencia
Buho Ramirez	Lawi -Jordan	East Valencia	Valencia-Buenavista
Bil-Ugan Tapi	Tacay-Buenavista	Baras	Lawi-Jordan
Capituguan	Balcon Maravilla-Jordan	Isla Naburot	Sinapsapan-Jordan
Daliran	Old Poblacion-Buenavista	Alubihod	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
Higante	Espinosa-Jordan	Guisi	Dolores-Nueva Valencia
Hurot-Hurot	Espinosa-Jordan	Tando	Dolores-Nueva Valencia
Kuweba Tudyong	Lucmayan-Nueva Valencia	Tinguiban Islet	Dolores-Nueva Valencia
Piratte	Lawi-Jordan	San Enrique	San Enrique-San Lorenzo
Baras	Lawi-Jordan	Nagarao Resort	Alegria-Sibunag
Secret	Lawi-Jordan	Kaliruhan	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
Taminla	Taminla-Buenavista	Casita	Sinapsapan-Jordan
Narai	Lawi-Jordan	Ave Maria Islet	Lawi-Jordan
Basyaw	Dolores-Nueva Valencia	Tambungan	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
Alobijod	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia	Balas Balabag	Tando-Nueva Valencia
Coral	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia	Kaliruhan	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia

In the Province of Guimaras there are many waterfalls, beaches and caves that can attract local and foreign tourists (Detourista, 2016). Table 5 summarizes the main tourist caves and tourist beaches most visited by tourists. There are 15 caves and more than 40 natural beach areas in the states. In fact, sea tourism is one of the most popular tourism activities in the Province of Guimaras, with the total length of the province's coast reaching 470 kilometers. On these shores, there are many natural beach areas with different characteristics. Some operate as free public beaches (for example: "Kaliruhan Beach", "Tambungan Beach", "Tatlong Pulo Beach" and "Nagarao Beach"), while others are operated by private hotels (for example: "Cabugan Adventure Resort", "Cabaling Beach Resort" and "La Puerta Al Paraizo Beach Resort"). Beaches in marine protected areas are usually allowed for a small fee. Although there are many beach areas in the state, it is one of the most popular among foreign tourists; "Alubihod Beach", "Casita Beach", "Natago Beach", "Tahi Beach", "Ave Maria Beach", "Kaliruhan Beach" and "Tatlong Pulo Beach" come (Detourista, 2023; Nouente, 2023). (Table 5).

Table 6. Major popular tourist recreation centers in Guimaras Province (Source: Authors, 2022)

Recreation Center	Barangay and District	Recreation Center	Barangay and District
Reyley Farm and Food Haus	Igcawayan-San Lorenzo	Bikers Hill Resort	New Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
Sunrise Valley Ocean View	Tangaw-San Lorenzo	Pedro's Farm	New Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
San Lorenzo Wind Farm	Poblacion-San Lorenzo	Suba Malawig Eco-Tour	Salvacion-Nueva Valencia
Windmills View Resort	Suclaran-San Lorenzo	Rennys Valley Resort	Sebario-San Lorenzo
Guimaras Adventure Park	Tamborong-San Lorenzo	Adel's Farm	Avila-Buenavista
Guimaras Wonders Farm	Tamborong-San Lorenzo	Martir's Garden Resort	San Roque-Buenavista
Geraldoy Family Auditorium	La Paz-Nueva Valencia	Roca Encantada	San Miguel-Buenavista
Punta Punting Beach Resort	Sabang-Sibunag	Dagsaan Eco-Park	Dagsa-An-Buenavista
Punta Blanco Target Range	San Roque-Buenavista	Heroes' Shrine Park	New Poblacion-Buenavista
Guimaras Capitol Grounds	Poblacio-Jordan	Nonoy Ang's Fishpond	Rizal- Buenavista
The Secret Place Garden	New Poblacion-Buenavista	Guimaras Town Map	Rizal-Buenavista
Labi-Labi Spring Resort	Daragan-Buenavista	Jordan Town Plaza	Rizal-Buenavista
Woodland Bike Park	San Miguel-Jordan	Sibunag Viewpoint	Ravina-ibunag
Sad-Sad Waterfalls	Santa Teresa – Jordan	Ambakan Falls	Poblacion-Jordan
Daliran Spring Nature Resort	Old Poblacion-Buenavista	Smallest Plaza	Poblacion-Jordan
Lombija Wildlife Park Resort	Napandong-Nueva Valencia	Suganog Residence	New Poblacion-Buenavista
JBLFMU Ecological Park	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia	Balaan Bukid Shrine	Hoskyn-Jordan

There are more than 50 interesting and entertaining recreation areas for domestic and foreign tourists (Sharpley, 2012). "Woodland Bike Park", "Labi-Labi Spring Resort", "Dagsaan Eco-Park", "Rennys Valley Resort", "Lombija Wildlife Park Resort", "Sunrise Valley Ocean View" and "Bikers Hill Resort"; are the most popular tourist recreation areas preferred by young people, students and families with children (Table 6).

Guimaras State also has very rich resources in terms of rural tourism and agrotourism (Sari, 2001; Sharpley, 2012; FLUP, 2019). "Oro Verde Mango Plantation" in Buenavista district, "An-An's Farm" and "Sebario Salt Farm" in San Lorenzo district, "Southern Orchard", "Christelle's Farm Products & Plant Nursery" and "Guimaras Bee Center" in Sibunag County, "Eli Sustituido Farm" and "Guimaras Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center" in Nueva Valencia district and "Guimaras Wonders Farm" in Jordan district are the most popular agrotourism centers in the Guimaras Province (Ganzon & Fillone, 2013).

Table 7. Major tourist faith centres and churches in the Province of Guimaras (Source: Authors, 2022)

Faith Center or Churce	Barangay and District
St. Michael Parish Church	San Miguel-Jordan
Navalas Church	Navalas-Buenavista
Trappist Monastery	San Miguel-Jordan
Jordan Parish Church	Poblacion-Jordan
St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
Balaan Bukid Shrine	Hoskyn-Jordan
Sto. Niño Catholic Church	New Poblacion-Buenavista
Mountainside SDA Church	Rosario-Buenavista
Holy Family Hills	Constancia-San Lorenzo
Most Holy Name Of Jesus Parish Church	Agsanayan-Buenavista
St. Isidore the Worker Parish Church	Navalas-Buenavista
Nueva Valencia Roman Catholic Church	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
St. John the Baptist Parish Church	Poblacion-Jordan
United Church of Christ in the Philippines	Dolores-Nueva Valencia
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish	Maabay-ibunag
Consolers of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	Alaguisoc-Jordan
Jordan Seventh-day Adventist Church	San Miguel-ordan
DFCCI Bulan-Bulan Church	Santa Teresa-ordan
Our Lady of the Philippines Trappist Abbey	San Miguel-Jordan
Calvary Baptist Church	New Poblacion-Buenavista

There are more than 120 churches and faith centers serving Catholic Christians in the Guimaras, "St. Michael Parish Church", "St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church", "Navalas Church", "Jordan Parish Church", "Balaan Bukid Shrine", "Holy Family Hills" and "Trappist Monastery", which have both historical, religious and architectural values, are the most visited religious tourism attractions by foreign tourists (Nofuente, 2023). (Table 7). Since the number of Hindu, Buddhist, Protestant and Muslim religious minorities within the borders of the state is very small, the number of faith centers that cater to them is also limited.

Table 8. The main tourist bars, cafes and restaurants in the State of Guimaras (Source: Authors, 2022)

Bar, Cafe and Restaurants	Barangay and District	Bar, Cafe and Restaurants	Barangay and Districts
Doña Candida Restaurant	East Valencia–Buenavista	Mine's Pizza	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia
Ceian Sea Foods And Resto	San Miguel-Jordan	Hacienda Justina	Alaguisoc-Jordan
Tambayan Sa Isla Restobar	San Miguel-Jordan	Cafè Maya	Rizal-Jordan
Olivia's Kitchen and Island Brew	San Miguel-Jordan	Nerak's Batchoyan	Poblacion-Buenavista
Kookoonips Bar - Resto	San Miguel-Jordan	Edith 1945	San MiguelJordan
Stop n' Dine Pizza Hauz	San Nicolas-Buenavista	Kansihan sa Dalan	Pina-Buenavista
Tita Mer's Refreshment	Poblacion-Buenavista	Hiraya Manawari	Cabano-San Lorenzo
Mango Terrace Bar and Cafe	San Miguel-Jordan	Isla by AVA	Ravina-Sibunag
Laguda Catering and Restaurant	Poblacion-Buenavista	Fusha Food House	San Enrique-San Lorenzo
Maria Gracias Samgyupsal	San Miguel-Jordan	Jollibee	San Miguel-Jordan
Blends Milk Tea & Snack Bar	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia	Mardy's Cake House	San Nicolas-Buenavista
Bikers Hill Resort Restaurant	Salvacion-Nueva Valencia	The Pitstop	San Miguel-Jordan
D&Js Cafe And Resto Bar	San Miguel-Jordan	Mc Lain Food Stop	Mclain-Buenavista
The Mango Island Cafe	San Miguel-Jordan	The Pitstop	Mclain-Buenavista
Bikings Bay Seafood Restaurant	Panobolon-Nueva Valencia	Island Foodpark	Pina-Buenavista
Cali & Nido's Snack Bar	Salvacion-Nueva Valencia	Kusina Ingan	Igang-Nueva Valencia
Armela's Coffee & Tea	Sabang-Sibunag	Super Meal Box	San Miguel-Jordan
Reyley Farm and Food	Igcawayan-San Lorenzo	Café Delizioso	Tastasan-Buenavista
Charles Floating Cottage	Poblacion-Nueva Valencia	Cafe Conchita	San Miguel-Jordan
Magic Island Restaurant	Lucmayan-Nueva Valencia	The Grillers	San Miguel-Jordan
Záhrada Food Place	Cabano-San Lorenzo	Cafe Sta. Hildegarda	San Miguel-Jordan
Fusha Food House	San Enrique-San Lorenzo	Dan Pines	San Miguel-Jordan
Stop n' Dine Pizza Hauz	San Nicolas-Buenavista	LM Batchoy	Old Poblacion-Buenavista

Main Natural Tourism Attractions of Guimaras State

Reflecting the rich culture of the Guimaras. 37 festivals are organized in different themes such as harvesting, food, religion, agriculture and animal husbandry, healing-treatment, special interest, sports and similar themes (FLUP, 2019; PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020; Palma et al, 2023). After all; faith tourism, agrotourism, cultural tourism, sea tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism, sports tourism, adrenaline tourism and festival tourism are the most common types of tourism in the province of Guimaras (Palma et al, 2023). In the following lines, the main natural tourism attractions, are summarized and explained.

• Taklong Island National Marine Reserve

In February 1990, "Taklong Island National Marine Reserve" was established in the area southwest of Guimaras Island to secure marine biodiversity. Preserving coastal and marine ecosystems and rich species diversity, as well as preserving unique coral reefs, white beaches and mangrove forests, are the primary reasons for the establishment of this marine protected area (Babaran & Ingles, 1997; PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020; Añasco et al., 2021). The Taklong Island National Marine Reserve has an area of 1143 hectares and is one of the largest among the 372 marine protected areas in the Republic of the Philippines. Less than one percent of the world's oceans are under protection. Therefore; Protected marine areas are of great importance and function in ensuring the world's sustainable marine life and, in particular, in conserving biodiversity (Hess, 1990). The Taklong Island National Marine Reserve, which constitutes the largest and most famous nature reserve of Guimaras State, includes 2 large islands and 37 small islets (Jon to the World, 2023). It is located in the southwest of Guimaras Island and in the Nueva Valencia county. This nature reserve is one of the state's most interesting and most visited natural tourism attractions (Nofuente, 2023). Tando and Taklog are the two largest islands of the nature reserve. All these islands are also called "South Point Islands". These islands have wonderful limestone rock formations, unique coral reefs, sea caves, interesting mangrove forests spread over 817 acres (PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020), white sandy beaches, interesting geomorphological shapes, a very rich variety of animal species, and numerous bays and gulfs (Galia et al., 2018). The "Balas Balabag Sand Bar" is the most famous tourist attraction of the marine protected area. Taklong Island has numerous ecotourism areas, interesting bays and woodlands. In addition to white sand beaches, sand embankments and eco-routes, there are also a few natural caves that visitors are allowed to enter. Taklong Island National Marine Reserve has 70 tree species, 77 seaweed species, 16 reptile species, 21 shrub species, 66 bird species and 26 mangrove tree species. All this points to the fact that the nature reserve is very rich in terms of both plant and animal species diversity.

• Alubihod Beach

Alubihod Beach is, without a doubt, the most famous beach and the most visited tourist attraction in the Province of Guimaras. Located west of Santa Ana Bay and north of the famous "Raymen Beach Resort" hotel, the beach may not have the powdery white sands of the beaches in the world-famous Boracay, but it has its own charm and enchanting beauty. With its pristine shores, virgin nature, clean sea waters, high cliffs, red pebbles mixed with white sand, Alubihod Beach fascinates its visitors as if it were something out of a Hollywood romantic movie (Nofuente, 2023). The beach and its immediate surroundings are ideal for picnics and sunbathing, as well as snorkeling and boat trips (Jon to the World, 2023). In addition,

tourists vacationing on Alubihod Beach visit the nearby beaches "Kaliruhan Beach", "Villa Corazon Beach" and "Rico Beach Resort". Alubihod Beach is a free public beach that is open to everyone. In the immediate vicinity for those who want to get accommodation service; Not very expensive, 2- and 3-star budget hotels such as "Alobijod Cove Resort", "Raymen Beach Resort", "Rico Beach Resort", "California Coral Beach Resort" and "Avista Grande Beach Resort" operate (Waypointsdotph, 2023).



Photo 2: Taklong Island National Marine Reserve - Province of Guimaras (Photo Emin Atasoy)

• **Ave Maria Islet**

To the southwest of Guimaras Island and Jordan Town is Lali, where Ave Maria, one of the state's most beautiful islets, is located. Ave Maria Islet, named after a rock formation resembling a cave; it has a beautiful, meandering and white

sandy beach interspersed with coral reefs (Nofuente, 2023). Visitors to one of the famous beaches such as "Lusay Beach Resort", "Kaliruhan Beach", "Punta Lawi Beach Resort" or "Baras Beach Resort" usually visit this small island by boat. In fact, since there are no hotels or other accommodation facilities on this island, it can be said that it is more suitable for day visits, beach pleasure or picnic (Jon to the World, 2023). For those who want to sunbathe and tan on deserted beaches, away from the crowded tourist attractions, the island is exactly the quiet romantic getaway they are looking for (Vigattin Tourism, 2023).

• **Sad-Sad Falls**

Sad-Sad waterfalls consisting of one main waterfall and 3-4 smaller waterfalls. 4-5 km from Jordan Town. These waterfalls to the southwest are within walking distance of the famous Trappist Monastery. Sad-Sad Falls are especially crowded with families and children having picnics on weekends, as well as during the festive holidays. The immediate vicinity of the waterfall; It offers ideal natural environments for picnicking, swimming in streams and natural pools, cooling off on hot and sweltering days, jumping off cliffs, or climbing in the immediate vicinity (www.localphilippines.com, 2023).

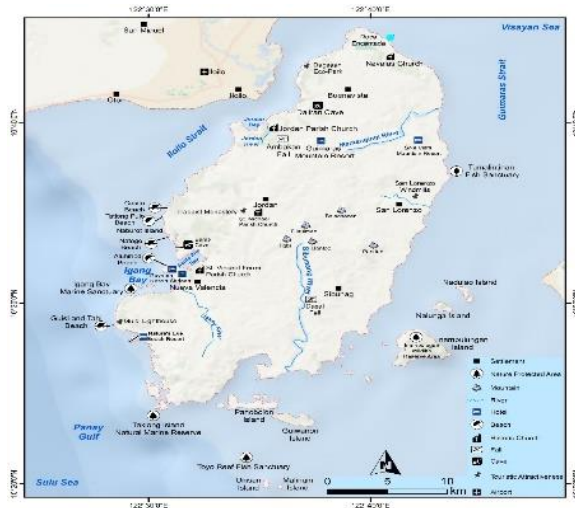


Figure 3. Tourism Resources Map of the Guimaras Province
Source: Authors

• **Tatlong Pulo Beach**

Tatlong Pulo Beach is located in the Sinapsapan Baranga and it is one of the most secluded, cleanest, quietest and most peaceful beaches of Guimaras (Jon to the World, 2023). The clear and azure waters and the view of the uninhabited islands directly opposite, the breathtaking sunset view make this beach unique

(Nafuente, 2023). this small beach is surrounded by dense rainforest and there is no tourist facility such as hotels and restaurants, nor is there any traffic noise or a busy mass of holidaymakers. This small beach attracts visitors like a magnet with its breathtaking views of the sea and islands and its enchanting sunsets. The beach is located in the east of Balingasag Island and 15-20 km from Jordan Town. This charming beach offers the ideal recreational environment for those who want to integrate with nature and are looking for romantic holidays (Guide to the Philippines, 2023a).

• **Baras Cave and Narai Cave**

Located in the immediate vicinity of Ave Maria Island, "Baras Cave" is the most popular and most interesting cave in the Province of Guimaras. This cave, which was formed by millions of years of erosion of sea waters, is a fascinating natural formation that can be accessed with a small boat. Baras Cave offers unique opportunities both for curious tourists who want to watch bats, stalactites and stalagmites, and for adrenaline junkies who want to swim in the small natural pool inside the cave. There is another popular cave 2-3 km from Lusay Beach Resort. Located to the north, "Baras Cave" is the southern neighbor of Narai Cave, A long and deep bay nestled into the interior of the land separates these two caves. There is no land access to "Narai Cave" and "Baras Cave". It is only possible to reach by sea via small boats. The lack of transportation and the lack of tourist facilities in the region have led to the fact that these caves are both protected from crowded tourist masses and little known.

• **Natago Beach**

On the west coast of Guimaras, southeast of Naburur Island, in the Sinapsapan Baranga, lies Natago, one of the most interesting beaches in the state. It is 5-6 km

away from Tatlong Pulo Beach and Baras Cave. This charming beach, located in the north, is a tourist showcase of the State of Guimaras. The proximity to both Jordan Township, the state center, and quality accommodations such as "Valle Verde Mountain Resort" and "Lamurawan Beach Resort" are the outstanding advantages of this beach. Although it is necessary to pay a small fee for the entrance to the beach, which has white and fine sand, shallow and clear sea waters, rich marine species diversity and interesting coral formations delight the tourists. Visitors are fascinated by interesting rock formations, breathtaking ocean landscapes, pristine forests, colorful coral reefs, clear turquoise waters (www.philippinebeaches.org, 2019; Nofuente, 2023).

• Isla Naburot

Isla Naburot, a small island, is one of the most privileged, interesting and beautiful islands in the Province of Guimaras. Located off the west coast of Guimaras Island, this small islet is located 5-6 km from Natago Beach. It is a private island because it is actually owned by a family, but it is one of the iconic attractions of the State of Guimaras. The island, which can only be reached by boats, is visited by tourists every year for a privileged sea holiday, albeit in small numbers. Small family business called "Isla Naburot Resort" provides accommodation and food and beverage services to curious visitors all year round. Due to the high prices of accommodation on the island, "Isla Naburot Resort" generally serves more of the rich and mysterious local tourists from the city of Iloilo, who prefer vacation away from prying eyes.



Photo 3: St. Michael The Archangel Parish Church –Jordan (Photo Emin Atasoy)

• Ambakan Falls

Ambakan Falls is located just 3 kilometers south of Jordan Sea Pier on the northwest of Guimaras Island (Nofuente, 2023). The waterfall, is 10 meters in height, actually discharges its waters from 4-5 places, so it creates the appearance of 4-5

waterfalls when viewed from a distance. The waterfall is surrounded by forests and attracts attention with its untouched, quiet and clean natural environment. Hundreds of tourists visit Ambakan Waterfalls every year to swim in the stream and cool off under the waterfall, have a picnic and take photos, relax and take a walk in nature. The fact that the waterfalls are located in close proximity to the state capital and sea

port, as well as within walking distance of the paved main road, has led to a growing number of visitors coming here (Travel to the Philippines, 2023).

Table 9. Top 20 natural and cultural tourism attractions of the Guimaras Province (Source: Authors, 2022)

Top 20 Natural Tourism Attractions in the Guimaras Province	Top 20 Cultural Tourism Attractions in the Guimaras Province
Taklong Island National Marine Reserve	St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church
Ave Maria Island	Dagsaan Eco-Park
Baras Cave	Guisi Lighthouse
Guisi Beach	Balaan Bukid Shrine
Sad-Sad Waterfalls	Daliran Spring Nature Resort
Alubihod Beach	Guimaras Museum
Daliran Cave	Guimaras Wonders Farm
Natago Beach	Holy Family Hills
Tatlong Pulo Beach	National Mango Research Center
Balas Balabag Sand Bar	Jordan Parish Church
Fairy Castle Rock Formation	San Lorenzo Windmills
Tatlong Pulo Beach	Sunrise Valley Ocean View Resort
Lusay Beach Resort	Holy Family Hills
Tando Beach	Trappist Monastery - Jordan
Malingin Island	Guimaras Adventure Park
Turtle Island	Lawi Marine Turtle Rescue Center
Ambakan Falls	<i>Navalas Catholic Church</i>
Naburot Island	St. Michael Parish Church
Unisan Island	Roca Encantada
Tambungan Beach	Labi-Labi Spring Resort

Major Cultural Tourism Attractions of the State of Guimaras

Sacred faith centers and Catholic churches from the Spanish colonial period, city parks and botanical gardens, interesting agricultural farms and tropical plantations, arts and sports centers, lighthouses and recreation centers, military forts and historical museums, windmills and interesting architectural monuments, war memorials and spa centers are among the most popular cultural tourism attractions of the State of Guimaras (Table 9) (Hicks, 2000). In the following lines, the main cultural tourism attractions, which are important for both domestic and international tourism and are located in the state of Guimaras, are summarized and explained.

• Navalas Church

"Holy Family Hills", "St. Isidore the Worker Parish Church", "Trappist Monastery", "St. Michael Parish Church", "St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church", "Navalas Church", "Jordan Parish Church" and "Balaan Bukid Shrine" are the most famous and most visited religious tourist centers of Guimaras Province. Navalas Catholic Church, which bears a strong resemblance to Jaro Cathedral in Iloilo City, is located in Navalas Town on the northeastern coast of Guimaras Island. This historic place of faith, dating back to the Spanish era, is the oldest Roman Catholic church on Guimaras Island and its full name is "St. Isidore the Worker Parish Church". Built between 1880 and 1885 by local residents, this sacred belief center is

notable for its large garden and interesting architecture. The façade of the Navalas Church, made of huge limestones and with a simple design, gave it the appearance of a medieval castle. In the high bell tower of the church are two large tablets with the Holy Ten Commandments, written in the local Hiligaynon language (PEMSEA and Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020).



Photo 4: Jordan Wharf Ferry Terminal - Province of Guimaras (Photo Emin Atasoy)

• **Guisi Lighthouse**

"Guisi Lighthouse", whose Spanish name is "Faro de Punta Luzaran", is one of the oldest historical-cultural tourism attractions in the Province of Guimaras, dating from the Spanish era (Jon to the World, 2023). Guisi Lighthouse" is located in the Dolores Baranga in Nueva Valencia County. The 3-star "Kenyama Beach Resort" is the only hotel in the region that offers accommodation. This lighthouse was built to assist fishermen and sailors who sailed their boats in Panay Bay in 1896. From the top floor of this historic lighthouse, a magnificent view of the Gulf of Panay and the breathtaking Sulu Sea fascinates visitors. This neglected and rusted lighthouse, covered with vines and plants; defying time and the past, it continues to carry the burden of history on its shoulders (Norris et al., 2008; Pearson & Pelling, 2015; PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020).

• **Dagsaan Eco-Park**

The "Dagsaan Eco-Park" area is located in the northwest of Guimaras Island, within the boundaries of Dagsa-An Barangay in Buenavista District. Iloilo City, Panay's largest metropolitan city, is just west of the park area, while Dagsa-An Village is just to the east. Overlooking the Iloilo Strait, the total area of the park is 133 hectares and it is located at an altitude of 117 meters above sea level (Municipality of Buenavista, 2023). "Dagsaan Eco-Park", which continues to claim to be the best ecotourism center of Guimaras State. It offers very suitable environments for picnics, hiking and water sports. Trying delicious regional dishes, watching the Iloilo Strait from the observation deck overlooking the sea, strolling in the forest with family members, swimming in natural pools, collecting fruits and flowers, watching the surrounding animals and plants are the most frequent recreational activities of tourists visiting the park area.

• **Trappist Monastery**

Located in the southwest of San Miguel Baranga, "Trappist Monastery" is the only male monastery in the Philippines (PEMSEA & Provincial Government of

Guimaras Philippines, 2020). It is 2 km from Jordan Township, the administrative center of Guimaras State. The "Trappist Monastery" is the only Trappist Monastery in the Republic of the Philippines that continues to operate today. It was founded in 1972 and this faith center today has around 35 monks. Small shops in the monastery area sell a large number of local products under the brand name "Trappist Monastic Products", including pineapple and mango jams, chocolates and confectionery, various gift products (Nofuente, 2023). It is located in the Church of "Our Lady of the Philippines Trappist Abbey". The site has monks' living quarters, rental tourist hostel rooms, woodlands, small outlets and the "Sta. Hildegarda Cafe" (OLP, 2023).

• **Daliran Spring Nature Resort**

It is located in the Buenavista district in the northwest of Guimaras Island. "Daliran Spring Nature Resort" is the most famous health tourism center of the state. It manages to combine the sea, forest and healing waters, is one of the most popular recreation areas of Guimaras State. This accommodation is the most popular health and wellness center of Guimaras Island with its own hotel, pool, restaurant and water sports services. Surrounded by slopes covered with green forests all year round, this tourist resort is located just north of the famous Daliran Cave. With its natural healing waters and large pool area, this is a health and sports complex.

• **St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church**

The "St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church" is one of the most popular and most magnificent Catholic churches in the Province of Guimaras. It is located in the southwest of Guimaras Island and in the Town of Nueva Valencia right next to Nueva Valencia City Hall. This famous church, along with the "Smallest Plaza", is the most popular tourist attraction in the town of Nueva Valencia. The church is located in the town center and has a spacious, bright and modern architecture. In the inner parts of the church; numerous precious paintings, sculptures, hand-embroidered artworks, glass stained glass windows and crystal decorations are featured. The "St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church" is the largest and most popular faith center of Nueva Valencia County.

• **Guimaras Provincial Monument and Museum**

The "Guimaras Provincial Monument and Museum" was opened in 2006 with the intensive efforts and initiatives of Juan Carlos Rahman, who was the Governor at that time. A political, touristic and cultural symbol of the state, this cultural monument encompasses an interesting museum, a large building and a tall statue. Located in the very center of Jordan Town, between the "Guimaras Provincial Capitol" and the "Jordan Water District" buildings, this interesting work was designed by Architect Hermecito Gotera and today; it is the tourist showcase of both Guimaras State and Jordan Town (PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020). National commemoration days, public holidays, regional cultural

events, music concerts and political gatherings with large participation are held in the large area in front of this cultural center.

- **San Lorenzo Wind Farm**

"San Lorenzo Wind Farm" or "Guimaras Wind", a pioneering renewable energy project of the Visayas Region, was established on the east coast of Guimaras Island with the aim of meeting the rapidly growing national economy and the growing regional energy demand (Detourista, 2023). the east coast of Guimaras Island; Since it is one of the windiest regions of the Philippines, it is one of the most accurate geographical locations to produce wind energy. The 54-megawatt "San Lorenzo Wind Farm", which became operational in 2014, is the first of its kind built in the Visayas Region. This wind farm consists of a total of 27 wind turbines, each at an altitude of about 123 meters and producing about 2 megawatts of power, and has the capacity to generate a total of 54 megawatts of renewable energy (Jon to the World, 2023). With all these features, "San Lorenzo Wind Farm" is one of the largest wind farms not only in the Philippine islands but also in all of Southeast Asia. It is well suited for hiking, organizing picnics, or watching huge wind turbines (Guide to the Philippines, 2023b). The training center for engineers serves as a place where visitors can rest. It hosts day visitors with giant windmills, cruising grounds and mango farms (Nofuente, 2023).



Photo 5: Jordan, capital of the province of Guimaras (Photo Emin Atasoy)

- **Roca Encantada**

On the northeastern coast of the Island of Guimaras, at the northernmost tip of the island, is located the "Roca Encantada", one of the most beautiful and most magnificent villas in the province.

Located just north of the Navalas and San Miguel Barangays, this magnificent house fascinates its visitors with its magnificent architectural design and interesting location. Built on a huge rock, this three-storey villa has a breathtaking view of the islands and an unobstructed view of the sea. This historic house has white walls, red roof and romantic steps; undoubtedly, it is the most popular and the most charming beach house that has become the symbol of Guimaras Island (Nofuente, 2023). The house has breathtaking views and both the northern part of the Iloilo Strait and "La Islas de Siete Picados" (the Seven Picados Islands) are visible from its spacious balconies. From a distance, it looks like an old villa located on the seashore. "Roca Encantada" was declared a heritage house by the National Historical Institute of the Philippines on August 14, 2002 and placed under state protection. The Lopez family

built this magnificent villa in 1910 in honor of Doña Presentacion Hofileña Lopez, on a hill also known as the “Magical Rock” (PEMSEA & Provincial Government of Guimaras Philippines, 2020).

Four different tourist tour routes are suggested for tourists visiting Guimaras Province in the following lines:

Touristic Travel Route 1:

Point of departure: Mac Arthurs Wharf Ferry Terminal Destination: Valencia

Main tourist attractions to be seen along the tourist route:

Buenavista Town Hall - Sto. Niño Catholic Church - Dagsaan Eco Park - Taminla Cave - Guimaras Isle Agritourism Park - Sulangan Beach - Roca Encantada - Navalas Church - The lazy Tiki - Playa De Paraiso Beach Resort - Vilches Beach Resort - Little Tagaytay.

Touristic Travel Route 2:

Point of departure: Jordan Wharf Ferry Terminal Destination: Sibunag

Main tourist attractions to be seen along the tourist route:

Smallest Plaza - Ambakan Falls - Guimaras Mountain Resort - Marceily Point Inland Resort - Miraval Estate - Windmills View Resort - Tumulintinan Point - San Lorenzo Wind Farm - Sunrise Valley Ocean View Resort - Balabago Beach - Rennys Valley Resort - Pandugan Islet - Nalunga Island - Costa Aguada Island Resort - Ususan Reef & White Sand Beach - Dasal Falls - Port of Sibunag.

Touristic Travel Route 3:

Point of departure: Jordan Wharf Ferry Terminal Destination: Sinapsapan

Main tourist attractions to be seen along the tourist route:

Jordan Wharf - Jesus Disciple Church - Hacienda Justina - Man Made Forest - Guimaras Provincial Capitol - St. Michael The Archangel Parish Church - National Mango Research and Development Center - Trappist Monastery - Woodland Bike Park - Valle Verde Mountain Resort - Baras Cave - Baras Beach Resort - Narai Cove - Secret Cove - Natago Beach - Isla Naburot Resort - Tatlong Pulo Beach - Casita Beach.

Touristic Travel Route 4:

Point of departure: Nueva Valencia Destination: Panobolon

Main tourist attractions to be seen along the tourist route:

Nueva Valencia Town Hall - St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Church - Andana Resort Guimaras - Alubihod Beach - Tambungan Beach - Guisi Lighthouse - Tajanlangit Coves - Magic Island Resort - Taklong Island National Marine Reserve - Baras Balabag Sand Bar - Bonsai Beach Resort - Isla Bali in Guimaras – Panobolon Island.

5. CONCLUSION

The Province of Guimarães is famous for its white sandy beaches, pristine sea coasts, extensive mango plantations, historic Catholic churches dating back to the Spanish period, unique agricultural farms, interesting caves and waterfalls, uninhabited tropical islets. Despite its small size, the state has rich tourism resources and a variety of tourism. The exposure of the state territory to strong winds all year round, insufficient tourist promotion, as well as the fact that there are almost no 4- and 5-star, high-standard accommodation venues, are factors that negatively affect tourism activities.

The main factors that positively affect tourism activities in the State of Guimarães are as follows:

The Province of Guimaras has a central geographical location within the Philippine Archipelago. In addition, the fact that it is neighboring the Panay and Negros Islands and has easy sea transportation links with these islands constitutes a great advantage in terms of tourism activities and regional transportation. The fact that the provincial territory is located very close to the Port of Iloilo, one of the four largest ports of the Philippines, and the Iloilo International Airport, one of the busiest airports in the country, and the use of these transportation centers all year round, gives Guimaras an important advantage.

In the state; the ecological and geographical structure, as well as the great diversity of natural and cultural tourism attractions increase both the tourism potential of the state and the diversity of tourism. In addition, the numerous tropical islands, natural park areas, colorful coral formation, interesting caves and waterfalls, touristic bay and beach, 9 Nature Protected Areas with ecological features contribute to the diversification of tourism resources and tourism types in Guimaras.

Guimarães is a very special geographical location because it has breathtaking natural beauties and unique geomorphological and hydrographic formations that are not seen in any province of the Republic of the Philippines. In addition, the rich historical and cultural heritage, a large number of interesting architectural monuments, historical castles, monasteries, statues, monuments and churches dating from the Spanish period are another tourism assets of the Province of Guimaras.

Most of the settlements in the state have water, electricity, telephone, road and internet connection (Detourista, 2016). Infrastructure problems, especially transportation in general, have been solved in the state.

All districts in the state offer both peaceful and safe holidays and have a sufficient number of affordable accommodation facilities. In addition, there is a great variety in the types of accommodation facilities in Guimaras, as well as holiday facilities suitable for every budget are offered.

The islands and coasts of the State of Guimarães have geographical, ecological and climatic features that are very suitable for water sports, diving, snorkeling and

surfing. In addition, the geographical and ecological diversity in the territory of the state has led to the diversification of recreational activities. Tourists visiting the state; they can participate in many different recreational activities such as bicycle tours, sea and river fishing, bird watching, motorcycle tours, mountaineering, paragliding, wildlife watching, sea surfing, camping, trekking, mountain climbing and sport diving.

There are no security, traffic and terrorism problems in the state. In addition, in all the islands within the borders of the state, the fact that social problems such as extortion, murder, assault and theft are not seen much is of great importance for the personal peace and security of foreign tourists (Johansen et al., 2016).

Guimaras, known as the mango capital of the Philippines, hosts tourism attractions that are unique only to this province, such as the “Taklong Island National Marine Reserve”, one of the most fascinating marine protected areas in the country, the “San Lorenzo Wind Farm”, the largest wind production facility in the country, the “Trappist Monastery”, the only Trappist faith center in the country. Guimarães attracts attention as a quiet, happy, environmentally friendly and peaceful province that has not yet been invaded by thousands of foreign tourists and has not yet experienced the devastating ecological effects of mass tourism.

The absence of both metropolitan cities and industrial activities that will pollute the environment on all the islands in the state constitutes a great advantage in terms of sustainable environment and sustainable tourism (Tan & Pulhin, 2012; Beller et al., 1990; McMillen et al., 2014). The lack of large industrial facilities and heavy traffic centers in Guimarães is of great importance for the development of ecological tourism (Freddie & Sylva, 2018; Kurniawan et al., 2016; Rampengan et al., 2014). The calm, peaceful and clean nature of the river and lake basins, bays and beaches, forest areas and coasts in all the provincial territories provides a great tourist advantage to Guimaras (Cutter et al. Jul., 2008; Farhan & Lim, 2010; Jackson et al., 2017; FLUP, 2019). Guimarães can be described as a tropical paradise where crowded tourist invasions have not started and deep ecological problems have not yet appeared; noisy cities and ugly concreting on the coasts have not become widespread; terrorist incidents and ethnic conflicts have not occurred.

Etik Beyan

Bu çalışmada “Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi” kapsamında belirtilen tüm kurallara uyulduğu beyan edilmiştir.

Etik Kurul Onayı

Araştırmanın etik kurul izni gerektirmeyen araştırmalardan olduğu beyan edilmiştir.

Çıkar Çatışması ve Finansal Katkı Beyanı

Yazarlar tarafından herhangi bir çıkar çatışması ve finansal katkı beyan edilmemiştir.

Yazarlık Katkı Beyanı

Çalışmanın tüm aşamaları yazarlar tarafından tasarlanmış ve hazırlanmıştır.

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