

# MYRANGGO

MAGAZINE

YOUR HOSPITALITY HUB

Issue 3 • December 2020

## FERRA HOTEL

PUTTING SERVICE AT THE

HEART OF EVERYTHING

## SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRYAN MADERA



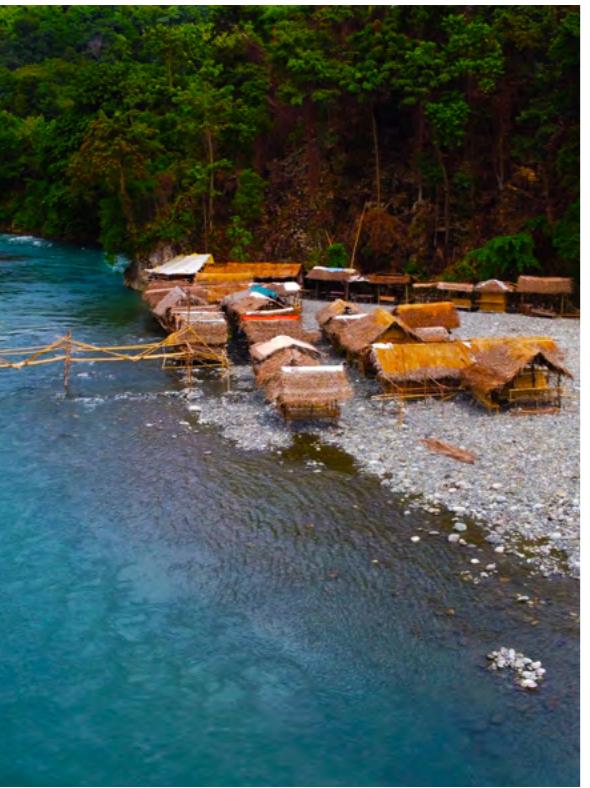
## BONGABONG

A PHILIPPINE GEM WITH UNTouched BEAUTY AND GROWING AGRI-TOURISM

FIND OUT MORE FROM MAYOR ELGIN MALALUAN

## 10 THINGS FRONT DESK AGENTS WISH THEY COULD TELL YOU

WHY MARKET NOW? THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SEEN ON SOCIAL MEDIA



## FEATURES

### 04 WHY MARKET NOW?

The Importance of Being Seen on Social Media



### 08 SERVICE BEYOND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Our Featured Public Servant  
Barangay Captain Alberto Rances



### 10 BONGABONG

A Philippine Gem With Untouched Beauty and Growing Agri-Tourism

### 18 FERRA HOTEL

Putting Service At The Heart Of Everything

### 22 SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT

An Interview With Bryan Madera,  
Environmental Advocate

### 28 FRONT DESK AGENTS

10 Things They Wish They Could Tell You



### 34 MY RANGGO SPOTTED

### 36 DITCHING PLASTIC

Managing Hotel Guests Expectations

# FROM THE EDITOR

It is my very great pleasure to welcome you all to this edition of MY RANGGO magazine. This is a special edition for us here in the MY RANGGO team as it has been forged in the horrible uncertain depths of 2020 and the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The last edition, and the last time we were all together, was such a great success. We celebrated the Hospitality Heroes with awards at a wonderful new bar, Verde. We all felt such a positivity about Philippine Tourism at that time. A matter of days later, the Hospitality Industry, as you are all too aware, changed dramatically. However not forever!!! True, it will be different when we emerge, but I am hopeful, having seen all the resourcefulness and repurposing, that we will emerge somehow stronger.

We are happy in this edition to feature articles from Mayor Elgin Malaluan Of Bongabong who has taken this time to really position his area ready for Tourism to re-open. We speak to Tiffany Somes Hotel Operations and Resort Manager Of Ferra Hotel and are inspired by the ethos the Hotel Group creates to make for happy teams and the best service for the guests.

We are very pleased to have spoken to Environmental Activist Bryan Madera about sustainability and hope he inspires you to make a change! MY RANGGO has useful resources on our site for those who wish to start to look at their own business impact (<https://myranggo.com/resources/sustainability-workbook/>).

You may notice a couple of cryptic messages in this edition from us. We have also been busy working on something really good for Hospitality staff and will be announcing some very cool, very new, MYRANGGO features soon. You are going to love it!

This difficult time is going to end and we have to look after ourselves, so that we can emerge healthy and ready for the hard work we will need to do to bring the industry back. Have a read of 'Tips for Coping in the Time of Covid' and our "Tips for Digital Marketing" and let us all Bounce Back Stronger!

Happy reading, and from all of us here at the MY RANGGO team, we wish you a very, Merry Christmas season.

Cheers,

Helen Atanacio  
Founder and Chief Executive



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## WHY MARKET NOW?

*The Importance Of Being Seen On Social Media*

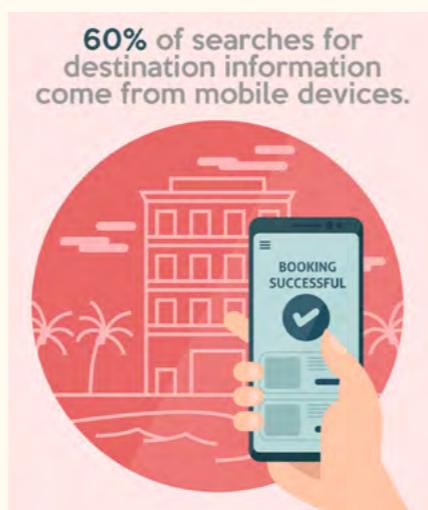


Across the Philippines Hotels, Restaurants, Bars, Travel Agents, Dive Centres and Spas have not bothered to update their social media accounts since ECQ was announced in March 2020. What's the point, right? The majority of businesses remain closed and possible countries the Philippines can form 'Travel Bubbles' with, to slowly open up the borders to International tourists, remain limited.

However, now is absolutely the right time to be promoting your business on Social Media.

We may not be able to fly to far-away destinations right now but it doesn't stop people from dreaming and planning for when travel resumes. "Stay at home, dream and wake up in the Philippines" is one of the Department of Tourism's most recent ad campaigns. And every time the Bureau of Immigration posts anything on their Facebook

page, it is littered with comments from travelers asking when the country will reopen its borders. Now is the time to update and refresh your social media accounts. Both Facebook and Instagram are driven by envy-inspiring FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) photo posts. Many people are using



their Lockdown time to plan their next holiday, based on the photos that they see right now.

People may be stuck at home but they are dreaming, planning and are itching to visit the Philippines.

### Social Media Tips For Getting Seen

#### Update your Profile/Business Pages

Make sure they are accurate; correct telephone number, website link or other social media account links, location address and pin on the map. Make sure your opening hours are correct too.

Many tourists and travelers search for



accommodation, restaurants, bars and activities by location on Facebook and Instagram. 48% of people with an Instagram Account use it to choose travel destinations for vacations and 35% use it to discover new places.

#### Quality Photos

Instagram's niche is high quality, photos and 30-second video's; getting the right image should be 70% of what you do when posting.

**Top Tip:** Upload Facebook photos and video posts from a computer; compression is applied when using a cell-phone and the result is poorer image quality.

### Instagram Image Sizing:

**Square Photo:** 1:1 square and 1080px by 1080px size.

**Portrait Photo:** 4:5 and 1080px by 1350px.

**Horizontal Photo:** 1.91:1 and 1080px by 1350px.

**Landscape photo:** 16:9 a border will be automatically added around the photo.

**Top Tip:** When uploading images which include text, such as quotes or discounted offers, save them as a PNG File, which formats better, retaining crisp text and lettering.

Use Facebook and Instagram Insights to check which past posts got the most engagement. Tailor your new posts to a similar style/subject or image. Remember FOMO! Beautiful, inspiring Images or video's so followers keep you in mind when it's time to book, buy or eat.



Use Lightroom Apps to achieve professional looking photos; Canva for montage images or images with text, Layout for montage images and Over for frames and layout.

#### Keywords & Hashtags

Keywords help with Social Media 'traffic'. Whenever someone uses the search functions in Facebook & Instagram, Graph Search trawls the apps for posts and pages with relevant location, URL or Account Name, hashtags and keywords. Using keywords gives you a greater chance of appearing higher during searches, and are how some of your 'spontaneous' customers are going to find you.

TrackMaven found that posts with 11+ hashtags get the highest amount of engagement. BUT DO NOT just keep re-using the same list of hashtags. This registers as 'spamming' by algorithms and will have the opposite effect. Posts will not rank highly and fewer people will see your post in their feed. Mix up the hashtags you use, and the order that you post them in. Don't create your own hashtags, unless you have a huge army of followers you can encourage to use it religiously until it gains traction.

**Top Tip:** Create Hashtag Folders or Lists and use a maximum of 5 hashtags from each category when posting, including from the Relevant list (relevant to your business type, product, location etc).

#### Always Complete Your Alt-Text

Too many people ignore the Alt-Text box. Alt Text serves as a voice function for visually impaired users; a traveler market that is often overlooked. Describe your image, include your business name and location. The Alt Text also affects algorithm rankings; a more complete image is ranked and shown ahead of others. Find Alt Description under Advanced Settings in the post set up.



#### Tag your post

Tag suppliers, partners, your models and influencers, and any of your other business accounts, but keep tags relevant to your post. This helps you grow your audience; followers of those accounts will see your post and hopefully like, follow and engage with it.

#### Share your post at the right time

Instagram: Wednesdays 11am-1pm and 7pm-9pm have the highest engagement levels. As well as Monday's and Thursdays at the same times.

Facebook: Saturdays and Sundays have the highest engagement levels. Thursday and Fridays are also good days, between 1-4pm. Tuesdays are the worst days to post.

**Top Tip:** Don't forget to use your Insights function to see when your followers are most active. And, if you're trying to attract new followers from other countries, post in their time zone.

#### Be Ready to Engage

Facebook and Instagram algorithms love 2-way engagement. Set aside 20-30 minutes after adding a new post, to react to comments. People liking and commenting on posts = more people being 'shown' it. If you reply to those comments, or when someone has shared your post, it will really boost your rankings. Instagram is Social Media at its finest, because it effectively rewards you for being social; engaging with your followers.

#### Building Communities/Relationships

Use the same 20-30 minutes to reply to your followers, and comment on posts you see from people in your niche, to build a community and relationships. Use the search function to find other businesses in your niche (they don't have to be in the same location) and click on photos/posts with lots of likes. Like and leave a comment e.g. I/We love what you do, you've inspired me to try this recipe etc. Give them engagement. Plus their followers may check your business page and become your followers. But don't spam their posts with links to your page, special offers etc - that's not cool!

#### Share Quotes

Foundr Magazine & SumoMe found using quote images regularly resulted in a huge jump in followers, and in a very short space of time!

Quotes can be funny, entertaining or educative. Hotels can share catchy or inspirational travel quotes. Restaurants or cafés can share foodie quotes.

#### Share Tips

Hotels or restaurants can post quick tips; creating the right ambience, recipes from our chef, activities tourists can do when they visit or how to style a bedroom to achieve a luxury hotel feel.

A 30-second Tip video will really get you seen; Instagram videos get over 2 times more engagement than Instagram photos.

#### Share Follower Content & Reviews

Comments and Reviews from guests can be a powerful tool to attract new followers and customers. Repost images of their review with a 'thank you' message, with relevant hashtags from your lists.

**Top Tip:** With Instagram, share the review as a Story, then create a Highlights Folder, label it 'Customer Reviews' and save all your Review Stories to that folder. Your reviews can then be found in one location; quickly accessible to followers and potential customers checking you out.

Travel Industry customers have moved with the social media-led times, and Hospitality and Tourism businesses need to move with them or face being left behind by their more savvy competitors. Gone are the days when Facebook was the lifeblood of 18-30 year olds. More than 50% of each age demographic is now actively using Facebook, across the World. Even grandparents!

\* Source - <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/facebook-statistics/>

If you're not already actively engaging with customers via Facebook, Instagram or other Social Media sites, you're missing out on potential customers.

# Service Beyond the Hospitality Industry

**Our Featured Public Servant Barangay Captain Alberto Rances**



While this publication mainly focuses on the hospitality and service industries, service does not actually stop there. This country also has dedicated public servants that deserve to be featured for providing their services to the people. MY RANGGO is happy to introduce Our Featured Public Servant, Barangay Captain Alberto Rances.

Captain Rances is on his 3rd term as Barangay Captain of Barangay Bukal in Sariaya, Quezon. He has undertaken many successful projects for the benefit of his constituents of over 1200 families. The changes and improvements since the start of his term have been significant.

Some notable projects during his terms in Barangay Bukal: Roads are now smooth and almost all rough roads have been eliminated. The water system and supply has been fixed. He has also managed to implement and maintain peace and order; he is proud to say that there has been no illegal drugs and gambling in his barangay.

Sariaya has seen its fair share of calamities however Captain Rances is grateful that the recent typhoons did

not cause much destruction in this area. His team still went around to ensure that the community had ample power supply, checking if anyone needed assistance.

He has a "Proyektong Pabayah" program in which his team finds means and ways to help their constituents with housing materials and costs. Whether they are able to assist partially or fully, Captain Rances and his team have managed to help a countless number of people with this program. He knows his constituents by name, even the children. Under his leadership, almost all the families in this barangay have been able to receive personal assistance.

Aside from being Barangay Captain, he is also part of the Sariaya Committee of Peace and Order, a

member of the Budget Appropriation Committee, and Vice Chairman of the Environmental Committee. Most importantly, he has also assumed the role of President of the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) in Sariaya.

Under his leadership in ABC, he ensures that all barangays are treated equally and fairly. Each barangay now has its own barangay ambulance. During the pandemic and quarantine, 43 barangays were assisted with care packages, and are still continuing to receive assistance at this time. He rejoices in the fact that the people of Sariaya follow the rules and guidelines of the quarantine properly.

Captain Rances hopes that the communities in Sariaya will continue to unify

against drugs and gambling, and other illegalities.

The presiding officers of Sariaya also make sure that their locals and residents are happy, safe, and well, through proper governance.

Although his term ends in 2022, it is too early to make any decisions on his next steps. He will entrust such decisions in God, his partner, and his family once the time comes.

Captain Rances is well known for his motto of "Always Ready", and he lives by this motto every single day as Barangay Captain.

Thank you for your service and for always going above and beyond, Captain Rances!

**Merry Christmas  
and  
Happy New Year**

**Congresswoman Helen Tan  
4th District, Quezon Province**



# BONGABONG

## A PHILIPPINE GEM WITH UNTOUCHED BEAUTY AND GROWING AGRI-TOURISM

### Where is Bongabong?

**Bongabong** is one of the biggest municipalities in the southern part of Oriental Mindoro; the latter of which is one of the largest islands in the Philippines, and is touted as the country's emerging eco-tourism destination. Bongabong is known for its vast farmlands, surroundings of mountain ranges, and boasts at least 4 big rivers.

This municipality is home to about 80,000 residents, of which at least 15,000 are Mangyans. Locals are dependent on farming and fishing, and the town is known to have the biggest and only certified organic rice farm in the Philippines.

### TOURIST SPOTS

Bongabong prides itself on unspoiled tourist spots such as:

**Sukol River** - the face of Bongabong, known for its calm waters and sheltered by mangrove trees.

**Organic Farms** - this includes the 15-hectare award-winning and DOT Accredited Gabutero Organic Farm, alongside other organic farms and innovative farming systems, which are highlighted in the Organic Training Center.

**Kuta Shrine** - built in the 17th century during Spanish Regime by the Augustinian Recollects.

**Tangisan Falls** - derived from the old Tagalog word "Tangis" which means "to cry", as this majestic and photo-worthy waterfall looks like a flood of tears from afar.

**Lisap River** - the largest river in Bongabong, which runs through many barangays, was originally known as "Binagao", a Mangyan word which means "Big Wave".



**Lisap Bridge** - this is the longest bridge in the province of Oriental Mindoro with a length of 365 lineal meters.

**Basyong and Fontiquila Caves** - accessibility to these untouched and unspoiled large caves, located at Sitio Hamindang, is currently being developed via road and trek.

### MESSAGE OF MAYOR ELGIN MALALUAN

Bongabong is a community with God-loving, well informed, healthy, self-reliant, empowered and vigilant citizenry. We live in a balanced, attractive and safe environment; a globally competitive, diversified and environment-friendly economy. We thrive under a firm decent, steadfast, progressive leadership with strong public-private partnership.

The priority thrust of the Platform of Governance under the Malaluan-Candelario Administration in the Municipality of Bongabong, province of Oriental Mindoro is centered around the Mayor's very own brainchild program, dubbed with the acronym HEARTS PO, which serves as a guiding principle of which his style of governance is founded upon.

HEARTS PO stands for:  
H - Humility, Housing, Health  
E - Education, Environment, Employment  
A - Agriculture  
R - Roads and Infrastructure  
T - Tourism, Transparency  
S - Social Services

P - Peace &  
O - Order

It has been his fervent hope for Bongabong to have continued growth in the economy, while providing the much-needed basic services to the people such as housing, health, education, public infrastructures, peace and order and other social services; without compromising the environment and with local tourism in mind, all while espousing a transparent and all-inclusive brand of government.

### INTERVIEW WITH MAYOR ELGIN MALALUAN

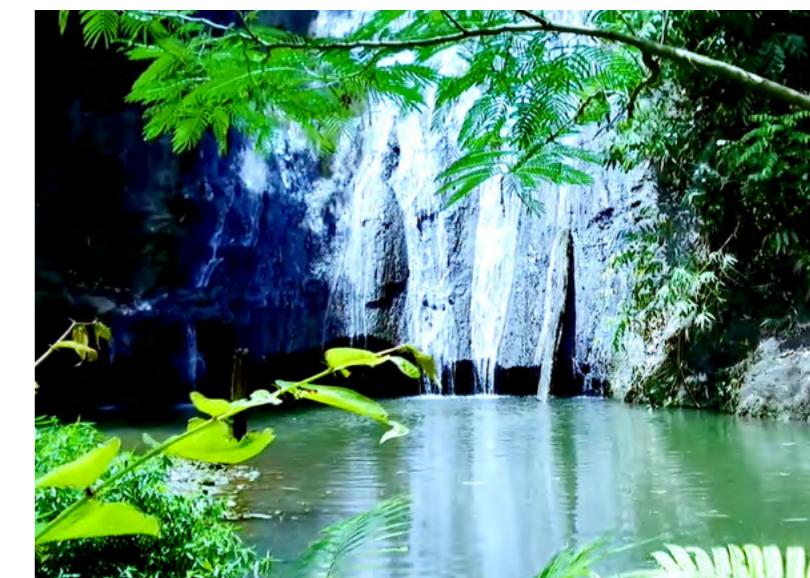
We have Dr. Elegio Asi 'Elgin' Malaluan, Municipal Mayor of Bongabong Oriental Mindoro for MY RANGGO International.

**MY RANGGO:** Bongabong po ay isa sa napapansin ng mga karamihan na isa sa mga pinaka progressive and mabilis na umangat na municipalities sa Oriental Mindoro. Ano po sa tingin ninyo ang rason sa likod nito?

*(Bongabong is noticed by many as one of the most progressive and fastest growing municipalities in Oriental Mindoro. What do you think the reason behind this is?)*

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Dahil din dun sa akin program na HEARTS PO. Una yung humility at transparency. Yun ang nakikita ng aking mga kababayan at mga nagbabayad ng buwis na alam nila na ang kanilang ibinabayad ay inilalagay sa tama. Syempre yung mga imbestor din, nagkakaroon ng tiwala sa pamahalaan.

*(It could also be credited to my HEARTS program, which is led by Humility and Transparency. Our countrymen and taxpayers see that their taxes are going to the right place. As a result, the local government also gains the trust of investors)*



**MY RANGGO:** Dahil po yun sa transparency po na pinapakita ng munisipyo.

(And this is because of the transparency shown by the municipality)

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Transparency yes.

**MY RANGGO:** Agriculture ang isa sa nangungunang natural resources ng Bongabong. Ano pong mga klaseng pagkain or produkto ang naproduce nyo?

(Agriculture is one of the leading natural resources of Bongabong. What kind of food and products are produced?)

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Ang Bongabong ay sentro ng organic farming sa Oriental Mindoro. Kasama dun ang ating mga vegetables, organic rice, banana, and coconut.

(Bongabong is the center of organic farming in Oriental Mindoro. We primarily have vegetables, organic rice, banana, and coconut)



**MY RANGGO:** Dahil ang Bongabong ay meron certified organic rice farms dito sa Pilipinas, kabilang po dito yung Gabutero Organic Farm, gaano po kalaki ito? May balak po ba tumulong ang LGU para mas mapadami ang produce nito or yung ani nito.

(Since Bongabong is known for certified organic rice farms in the Philippines, which includes Gabutero Organic Farm, how vast is this? Does the LGU plan to help in increasing produce and harvest?)

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Since tayo ang sentro, yun ang program natin, mapataas yung yield, ang ani. So gumagamit tayo ng mga bagong teknolohiya. At higit sa lahat yung mga farm machinery, dinadagdagaan natin at utay stay tayong nag-iinvest sa mga traktura, sa mga harvester, sa mga iba pang mga kailangan. At mga binhi ng palay na doble ang ani.

(Since we are at the center, we have programs in mind to increase the harvest and yield. We use new technology. We most especially use additional farm machinery. We invest little by little in tractors, harvesters, whatever else is needed. We also invest in the seeds of crops to double the harvest.)

**MY RANGGO:** This could be part of the Agri-tourism sa ating bayan. Sa tingin nyo po gaano kalaki ang potential ng Agri-tourism ng bayan ng Bongabong?

(This could be part of the Agri-tourism in our motherland. In your opinion how big is the potential of Agri-tourism in the Municipality of Bongabong?)



**MAYOR ELGIN:** Ngayon na may pandemic tayo ng COVID-19, yung mga mass gathering ay ayaw na ng mga tao na pumunta sa mataaong lugar. Kaya itong mga lugar na ito, ng malawak tayo, eto ay pupuntahan ng mga gustong mag invest, gustong bumili. Nag-iingat sila sa maraming tao.

(Now that we have the COVID-19 pandemic, people don't want to congregate in mass gatherings and crowded places. Our area and attractions here are wide and spacious. Those that want to invest and buy go here, as they take precaution in being around too many people)

**MY RANGGO:** Can you give us some examples of best tourism attractions dito sa Bongabong?

(Can you give us some examples of the best tourism attractions in Bongabong?)



**MAYOR ELGIN:** Yung ating natagpuan na pinakamalaking cave dito sa Oriental Mindoro at i-improve po natin yung daan, dapat maproteksyon ang lugar na yun. Mga tao ngayon ayaw na pumunta sa mga crowded na lugar gaya ng Boracay, Puerto Galera. Ang pupuntahan ngayon ng tao yung mga hinde gaano pang pinupuntahan. At yung lugar na yun dahil virgin pa, yung kalsada doon ay hindi pa nai-improve. Ang gagawin ko doon, hindi ko dederetsuhin yung kalsada dahil masasalaula nga, so meron kang hiking mga isang kilometro para pag punta mo dun may thrill.

(We discovered the biggest cave in Oriental Mindoro here, and we plan to improve on the access, as well as protect the area. Those that do not want to go to crowded places like Boracay, Puerto Galera, will prefer to go to unfrequented destinations. Since our area is still



*(unspoiled, the roads still need improvement. What I plan to do is not create direct road access to the falls to keep it preserved. There will be a kilometer or so of hiking to reach the destination, for added thrill.)*

**MY RANGGO:** One of the oldest Spanish Colonial fortifications in the country is the Fuerza de Bongabong or Kuta Bongabong. May plano po ba kayong i-restore ito? Ano po ang plano ng LGU for this?

*(One of the oldest Spanish colonial fortifications in this country is the Fuerza de Bongabong or Kuta Bongabong. Do you have plans to restore this? What are the plans of the Local Government Unit for this?)*

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Hinde pupwedeng i-restore yan dahil yun na yung original. So ang kailangan lang natin ay i-improve yung daan papunta doon, at lalagyan natin ng additional sa paligid para may makita din silang tourist attractions.

*(This can no longer be restored as it remains in its original, true form. What we need to do is improve access in getting there, and add additional tourist attractions around it)*

**MY RANGGO:** December is your Foundation Day. Anong pwedeng asahan ng mga turista during the Foundation Days of Bongabong?

*(December is your Foundation Day. What can tourists look forward to during the Foundation Days of Bongabong?)*

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Isa na yung Kuta Shrine at yung cave, at iba pang mga lugar dito katulad ng ating kayaking sa Sukol River. Maraming lugar na i-improve tayo, lalong lalo na yung sa Organic Training Center. Pwede natin sila ipadala dun dahil maraming mga vegetables doon na hindi pa nila nakikita sa ibang lugar.

*(One of the attractions is Kuta Shrine, as well as the cave, and other activities such as kayaking at Sukol*



River. There are areas which we have improved, such as the Organic Training Center. We can invite tourists to visit and see a lot of vegetables that cannot be found in other areas.)

**MY RANGGO:** Sa mga plano nyo sa turismo, sa tingin nyo ay sapat ang mga hotels, resorts, transient inn dito sa Bongabong?

*(With your plans for tourism, do you think that there are enough hotels, resorts, transient inns in Bongabong?)*

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Marami na po ditong hotel like Bongabong View, Presville at meron pang bagong tayo dyan sa Sagana, at meron pa sa Organic Training Center sa Labunan that can accommodate 40 persons.

*(We already have a lot of hotels, such as Bongabong View, Presville, new hotels in Sagana, and the Organic Training Center in Labunan can accommodate 40 persons)*

**MY RANGGO:** Ano pa pong mga iniisip nyo na plano para sa turismo ng Bongabong?

*(What other plans do you have in mind for Bongabong Tourism?)*

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Kailangan natin maisiguro sila na sila ay ligtas. Sigurado silang ligtas kasi yung inilagay natin sa Special Action Force dito sa bayan ng Bongabong. Syempre ang gusto ng mga turista na sila ay secure, may peace and order sa bayan at isang bayan na malinis.

*(We need to make sure that the tourists are safe. We know that they will be safe because of the Special Action Force that we have in place here in Bongabong. Of course, tourists want to be secure, have peace and order, and a clean municipality)*



**MY RANGGO:** What are your most proud achievements during your term as Mayor?

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Isa na dun yung humility, kababaang loob. Nakapag serbisyo tayo sa ating mga kababayan na wala tayong pinipili. At yung transparency na ating pinapraktis, namotivate natin ang atin mga empleyado sa bayan ng Bongabong.

At ang ating ginawang inauguration ang kauna-unahang building sa Oriental Mindoro na meron mga elevator, automatic thermal scanner, automatic sanitizer. Yun ang isa sa pinagmamalaki natin sa bayan ng Bongabong.



At maisiguro ko sa inyo na ang bayan Bongabong ay isang bayan malinis ang kapaligiran.

*(One of those is humility. I was able to provide a service to all my constituents equally, not choosing which ones to serve. We also practice transparency, which motivates the employed citizens of Bongabong.*

*We have also inaugurated the first buildings in Bongabong to have elevators, automatic thermal scanners, and automatic scanners.*

*I can also assure you that Bongabong is a municipality with clean surroundings.)*



**MY RANGGO:** Many of our subscribers po nasa mga ibang bansa, imbitahan nyo po sila to go to Bongabong and explore Bongabong.

*(We have a lot of subscribers from other countries, please invite them to explore Bongabong)*

**MAYOR ELGIN:** Sa aking mga kababayan na nag abroad na, at kahit sa mga hindi ko kababayan: Iniimbita ko po kayo sa Bongabong para makita nyo ang kagandahan ng bayan namin. Isa na po dito ang ating cave, na isang dump truck ay pwedeng pumasok sa loob, at meron lagoon sa loob. At makakasiguro kayo na kayo ay protected dito dahil ang mga mamamayan ng bayan Bongabong ay mapagmahal at hospitable.

*(To our countrymen abroad, as well as foreign tourists, I invite you to come visit our wonderful natural sights in Bongabong. This includes visiting our caves, one of which is so huge it can fit a dump truck, and you can find a lagoon inside the cave. You can be assured of safety and protection as well because the citizens of Bongabong are loving and hospitable)*



# FERRA HOTEL

PUTTING SERVICE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING



Ferra Hotel Boracay and Ferra Hotel and Garden Suites are two chic boutique hotels strategically located right in the heart of Boracay Island. The Ferra brand boasts a strong service culture and consistently wins Travel and Hospitality Awards.

These awards are testament to the hard work and importance given to customer service standards, led by the forward thinking and astute GM Dante Cruz, his Team and the hotel management group; Hospitality Business Group Inc.

MY RANGGO sat down with Ferra Hotels Operations and Resorts Manager, Tiffany Somes who joined the hotel in 2016, to talk about their approach.

**MR: Why do you think Ferra receives so many awards, specifically traveler voted awards?**

**Tiffany:** Most of our Awards come from traveler reviews. The two Boracay hotels have between them, been awarded a three-peat Travellers' Choice Award and three-peat Certificate of Excellence Award from TripAdvisor, a Guest Review Award from Booking.com

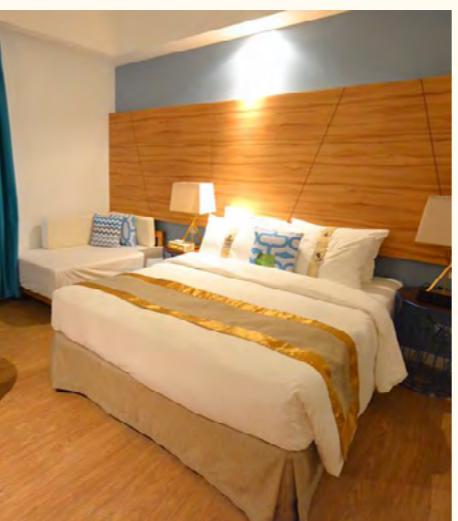
GM Dante Cruz with  
Ferra Hotel OJT's



and Customer Service Award from Agoda, and Loved by Guests Award from Expedia. The first Ferra Hotel was included in the Agoda Gold Circle Award for consistently receiving its Customer Service Award throughout its five year operation. There have been numerous other Excellence Awards for the hotels and restaurants.

The Ferra Hotels are beautiful. The rooms, studios and suites are well thought out and designed, and a lot of care is taken with the interiors such as complimenting wall and fabric colors, and furnishings. These things can make a beautiful hotel but they are only a part of making an award winning hotel.

We pride ourselves on a strong focus on a branded



Tiffany leading a  
General Meeting



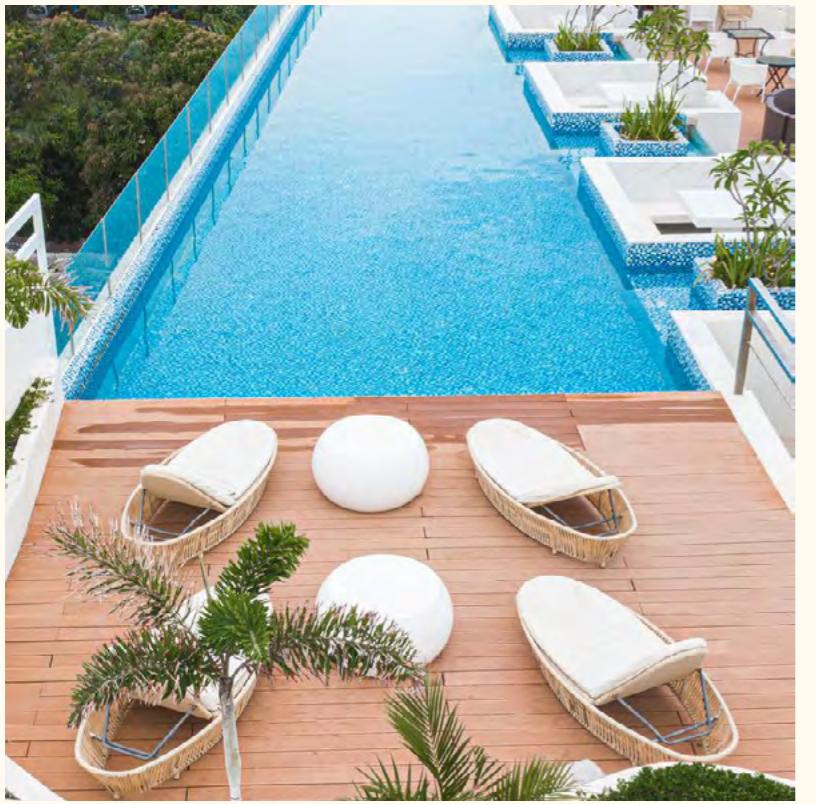
customer service and staff training.

**MR: What do you do that is different to other hotels; why does your customer service stand out?**

**Tiffany:** We start at the point of recruitment. Age or gender is not an issue. If a candidate has drive, vision and passion, we want them! We look for the right attitude and talent, regardless of hospitality experience or qualifications and just hone them to be the best they can be.

I was a Marketing Officer for a Café in Iloilo before joining the Ferra team in 2016. I was looking for a position that would give me experience in an international setting, in order to qualify to apply for a Masters course at Birmingham University, in England. I was recruited immediately at the end of my interview, despite having no hotel Industry experience or related degree. Within a month, after a lot of hard work and learning, I was promoted from Marketing Assistant to Marketing Officer.

GM Dante says that he just knows talent when he sees it, and when he sees it, he wants to bring them in to the



Ferra Family. He has guided and taught me how to identify talent too.

**MR: What's next after you've recruited them; you potentially have raw, sometimes unqualified, talent?**

**Tiffany:** The very first thing we do, with new recruits and our OJT's, is cover morals and values training, specifically Ferra's Mission, Vision and Core Values:

Friendly and enthusiastic

Excellence Driven

Responsible and trustworthy

Resilient

Adaptable

Initially OJT's are not sure why a whole day of induction training is given to this. But by the end of their 400 hours, and graduation, they understand.

Many contact us, after graduation, asking if there are any positions open. They value the training they received, a positive workplace and the friendships and family bond created with our team. Others have used the training and life skills to market themselves for other positions; one of

our OJT's went straight in to a position at Shangri-La EDSA after he graduated. Others have gone on to work on Cruise Ships and bigger hotel chains.

The training we give goes beyond work roles; it includes personal growth and development and, during this pandemic, many have used their Ferra training to start their own successful micro businesses to support themselves and their families.

Everything that I have learned from GM Dante, I have shared and passed on to my team.

**MR: What do you think is a key lesson?**

**Tiffany:** That high quality of customer service, or service as a whole, is vital.

At the time I joined Ferra the RUF Restobar, Ferra's rooftop restaurant, had



Tiffany and team mates, Boracay Basura Run 2018

slipped from its number 1 TripAdvisor ranking to 14. The Management Team was aware of some of the issues behind this and told the team that we had to get the restaurant back to its number 1 ranking. Personally, I took on the role of restaurant host; I attended to the tables, making sure the guests were happy with their food. We continued to observe areas of product and service that needed improvement and worked on improving them. The RUF was back in its Number 1 position on TripAdvisor within 5 months. It was a lot of hard work and we often worked late into the night to ensure everything was in order for the guests.

Personally, I've actually spent time in practically every department of the hotel and restaurants. Training and learning alongside our team; I've waited tables, made and served drinks, learned and tasted everything on our menus. I've done everything except actually cooking the food. I've worked in Housekeeping, Maintenance, Front Office, Food and Beverage Service back when I was the Assistant Hotel Manager and took on the role of Pollution Control Officer when this was required to re-open after Boracay's 2018 closure.

Knowing how each section or work area fits with others is key to ensuring excellent, and seamless, quality customer service. Everything I learned, I then shared with the team.

One of GM Dante's mottos is: Learn more to earn more. And we encourage our team and OJT's to do just that. It is all about raising your value; in yourself through your improved knowledge and skills, your work and your attitude towards it, and the influence and inspiration you give to other people.



GM Dante Cruz celebrating a staff birthday

**MR: How do you teach people how to value?**

**Tiffany:** Through our training program and also through our monthly General Meetings. Each meeting has a theme. Our last meeting before the pandemic lock-down was about love, because it was February and close to Valentine's Day. We encouraged everyone to think and talk about forms of love; love of the job, family, yourself and our team, most especially, our guests.

Our November 2019 General Meeting was all about the chances and choices we make and the January 2020 meeting was about Thanksgiving, focusing on giving back and awarding those who have given much to the team and rendered big sacrifices, especially in the aftermath of Typhoon Ursula.

It's about giving and sharing Life Lessons whilst injecting an operations and hotel angle to them. It is the essence of effective influence; speaking and acting in a way that it reaches your people's heart. That it shows you value your team too by taking time to stop and ask them "How are you and are you still happy in your job?" "What support do you need?" or "what's your dream?"

We celebrate staff birthdays, Mother's Day and Father's Day and other milestones as a form of valuing each other as individuals, as well as team mates. We give out awards and recognitions for the achievements of the staff, be it inside the hotel or outside (we award Cruise ship qualifiers, board exam passers and staff with consistent online reviews). You have to really open your heart, show care, concern and let them know you have their growth and best interest in mind.

*JenGroup Leisures Inc. together with the hotel management group Hospitality Business Group Inc. continues to expand the Ferra brand, with new hotels and resorts planned for Bohol and Siargao.*



# Sustaining the Environment

An Interview with Bryan Madera, Environmental Advocate



Even before hitting 30 years of age, Bryan Madera has already made an impact in the world of environmental sustainability, something that we all need to practice. Bryan was initially a Senior Wedding Coordinator for Boracay Weddings. He eventually followed his passion and earned a Master's Degree in Environmental and Natural Resources Management.

MY RANGGO interviewed Bryan to find out more about environmental sustainability, the projects he is part of, and what hospitality professionals can do to help preserve the environment.

## BACKGROUND

**MY RANGGO:** What prompted you to become an Environmental and Natural Resources Manager?

**Bryan:** When I lived in Boracay, I saw how tourism can be an economic driver and compromise the environment as well. Boracay was my eye opener to coastal resource management, or mismanagement. I wanted to be part of the solutions and the voice of the voiceless; the environment. Tourism can be a good thing as it brings jobs and livelihood, but the environment and

biodiversity are paying the cost for this.

**MY RANGGO:** What measures did you take to become the fully educated Environmental and Natural Resources Manager you are today?

**Bryan:** I studied Environmental and Natural Resources Management to learn the basic concepts, and majored in Coastal Resources Management to become an Environmental and Natural Resources Manager. But I do not consider myself an expert yet. During my travels, I take note of how



*Use your talent to promote sustainable lifestyle.*

destinations manage their tourism industry. I take note of the good practices and create strategies to address the detrimental practices, then I try to apply for funding to implement.

## ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

**MY RANGGO:** Why did you decide to join some of the specific groups you're working with?

**Bryan:** I started as a volunteer for

one month as a Social Media Officer. I volunteered as a Project Manager for the Sea and Earth Advocates (SEA) Camp in 2015 in Boracay, Zamboanga City, Subic, and Coron. The camp builds the capacity of Filipino's between the ages of 18-23, to be leaders in environmental conservation.

I helped with the survey of **Whale Sharks with the Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines (LAMAVE)**, taking

*Connect with others to make your community aware of the impact of plastic."*



or looking at photos of marine turtles and whale sharks, to help researchers. Whale sharks and marine turtles markings are as unique as our fingerprints.

**The Save Sharks Network Philippines (SSNP)** is a coalition of organizations in the Philippines' scientific, NGO, and tourism communities. Sharks play an important role in our biodiversity. They are slow growing and catching them without regulation and monitoring is not sustainable.

**The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI)** provides opportunities to youth leaders. Some examples are regional workshops in ASEAN, seed funding for projects, and study exchange programs in the United States. YSEALI has four pillars; education, environment, civic engagement and economic development.

**Plastic Battle (PB)** aims to reduce or eliminate single-use plastic bottles at the source by engaging with business establishments, such as resorts, cafés, hostels and restaurants, to

provide people the option to refill reusable bottles for a fee or for free. The Philippines rank third in marine litter contribution globally and this campaign aims to turn things around. The project started out in Siargao, in partnership with SEA Movement, promoting refilling behavior by mapping out existing water refill stations in Siargao island. We encourage sellers to reduce or cut bottled water from their shelves, and provide water refill station accessible to guests.

#### HOW HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS CAN HELP WITH ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**MY RANGGO:** What can hotels and restaurants in general do to help preserve and save the environment, as well as educate their guests to do the same?

**Bryan:** Build your hotel while considering the impact on the environment. Minimize reliance on single-use plastic items. Serve only sustainable seafood. Have your own waste water treatment or connect to one and use solar panels.

Tourism stakeholders should find the balance between environment, economy, and society. Tourists come to Philippines for its natural resources; white sand beaches and diving spots. If we do not take care of our natural resources its aesthetic value decreases, which in turn will lower the interest of the tourist.

Hotels can email their guests before arrival to ask them not to bring sachets and disposable items. Furthermore, guests can also be encouraged to bring tumblers or water containers, as well as reef-friendly sunblock. Make the guests aware of the laws that protect the environment and the initiatives of the hotel. Recommend green businesses to the guests (tour operators who conduct proper protocol and value the environment.)

Practice quality tourism over mass tourism. Know the carrying capacity and limit of acceptable changes, specifically in island destinations. Consult with specialist on how your business can be sustainable even before construction starts.



Train your guides well because they are the frontliners of tourism. They are a source of information for the tourists and play an important role for guests and the environment. Train them in sustainable practices and attitudes which they can share with guests.

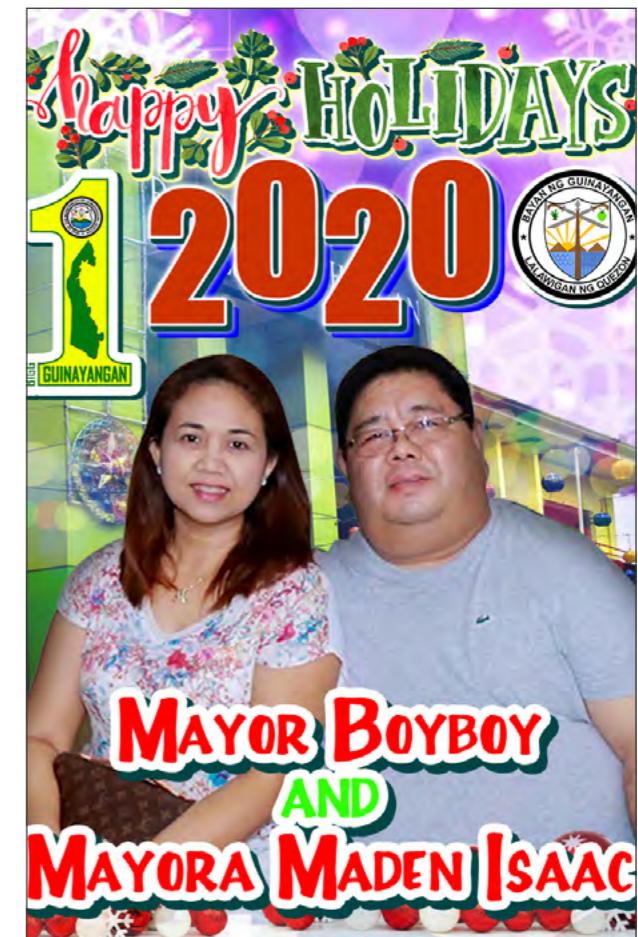
Sustainability should not only be part of corporate social responsibility (CSR); it should also be integrated in the core of the tourism industry. The tourism sector should always remember that guests come for the authentic or natural experience.

#### WHY THE ENVIRONMENT IS IMPORTANT

**MY RANGGO:** Why do you think we need to save and preserve the environment?

**Bryan:** Our environment is our only life support system. It provides goods and services, such as the air we breathe, food we need to survive. Mangrove forests and coral reefs can minimize the effect of calamities that cause tsunamis or storm surges. Whatever we do to the environment will impact us in return.

You can read the full interview on <https://myranggo.com/showcase/environmental-sustainability-interview-bryan-madera/>



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## Front Desk Agents 10 Things They Wish They Could Tell You



Front Desk, Direct and Face-to-Face Customer Service work must be one of the most challenging roles out there. Especially when you are so good at your job, so well-trained and experienced, that customers wrongly assume your Front Desk job is an easy one to do.

Angel Lam Ko (aka Facebook's Hugot Hotelier) has been working in the hotel industry ever since graduating from UP-Asian Institute of Tourism back in 2007.

Here she gives us 10 Things Front Desk Agents Wish They Could Tell You.

### 1. "Requested" does not mean "Guaranteed."

Yes, we know you requested for two beds and a pool view on a high floor. Rest assured that your request has been well noted on your profile.

However, as much as our Front Desk Team tries their very best to grant each and every request of all our valued guests, please do not yell at us if the requested room features are not available. After all, we can only do so much, depending on what is available the moment you check in. If the guest in your preferred room checks out early - well and good. We'll be more than happy to give you whatever your heart desires. But if not, please bear in mind that we probably looked at each and every possible room available that is closest to what you have requested, and that what we are offering you is the best that we have at the moment.



Let us try to come up with a win-win situation because shouting profanities at us will not make your preferred room type magically appear.

### 2. Even if you made your hotel booking three months ago or heck, even if it was a year ago, if you try to check in with us at 9:00 AM, we still would not have any rooms available for you.

Yes, we know you made the booking well in advance and yes, fully-paid and all.

Do not worry because your room accommodation is definitely guaranteed and in the system.

However, please understand that our check-out time is at 12noon. So no matter how early you made your reservation, our Front Desk Team will most likely still have no rooms to give you before the normal check-in time. Sometimes we may be able to do so if the hotel is not full, we will be happy to check you in earlier than usual.

However, especially if we just came from a fully-booked situation, please give us some time to clean the rooms and get them nice and ready for you. Rest assured you are prioritized and that your reservation is not lost or cancelled just because we told you "we do not have rooms available yet at the moment."

### 3. There is a nifty little feature in our system called "History"

Please do not try to trick us into believing that the Front Desk operative, who checked you in last time, upgraded you for free. Or that you did not have to give an incidental deposit last time. Or that we should give you preferential treatment because you stay in the hotel all the time.

We have access to every little detail of every



stay you ever had with us. We can see your past billings, your payment details, your room history, the names of your companions, your requests, the time you checked in and checked out, and how many times you've stayed with us.

**4. The ruder you are to us, the slower we will move.**

Tapping the counter in front of those of us on Front Desk, or snapping at us to "hurry up", will have the exact opposite effect on us.

The key-card machine will suddenly stop working, the printer will run out of paper, and the computer will freeze. All other rooms will disappear except for the smallest one with the view of the parking roof.

The Ruder you Are the Slower We Move: the system will go down, the copier will break .... So Sorry Sir!

For pleasant and patient guests, opportunities for room upgrades magically appear, the room with the best view suddenly becomes available and transactions run smooth as silk. After all, kindness really does have its magic.

**5. When we ask you for a credit card, please do not give us a debit card.**

It used to be so easy for Front Desk operatives to identify a Debit Card from a Credit Card, but these days the design has changed. An embossed card no longer automatically means Credit Card, and Debit Cards are not so easily identified anymore.

So when we ask you for a Credit Card upon check in, please do not give us a Debit Card or a Debit/Credit Card ("it works both ways"). We just want to hold a certain amount from your credit limit, not charge it outright, and when you give us a Debit Card and we do not notice, you also give us along with it a Memo, an Audit Finding, a Chargeback Transaction to take care of, an earful from our Manager and a huge headache. Please spare us all and give us a Credit Card, or just pay in cash.

**6. Please do not talk on your phone while checking in or out.**

While we understand you are a busy person, please grant us at Front Desk Five minutes of your precious undivided attention so that we can facilitate your check in or check out process quickly and accurately.

There are not a lot of things more frustrating than trying to verify reservation details, or settling



charges, with a person who won't stop talking on the phone long enough to finish the transaction. Please give courtesy to the people behind you on the queue, and please help us serve you faster.

**7. Adjacent ≠ Connecting**

Please be clear at the point of reservation what exactly it is that you need. Let us avoid unnecessary vocabulary discussions at Front Desk during check-in.

If you ask us for adjacent rooms, we will give you rooms that are beside each other or close to each other. It does not mean that you will get rooms that have a door inside that connects both rooms. If that is what you want, please ask for "connecting rooms".

Again, it would be best to note that these requests are subject to availability so better to indicate this well in advance so that your request will be prioritized.



**8. Please do not cover the smoke detector in the room, just so you can enjoy a cigarette.**

You will be surprised at how many people purposely commit this careless 'mistake'.

Not only are you endangering your own life, but also the lives of hundreds of other guests and employees, should a fire in your room go undetected because you put a condom or plastic bag over the smoke detector. Smoke detectors are there for a reason, and tampering with it is strictly punishable by law.

Please spare everyone the potentially life-threatening scenario and ask your friendly hotel staff where the nearest smoking area is.

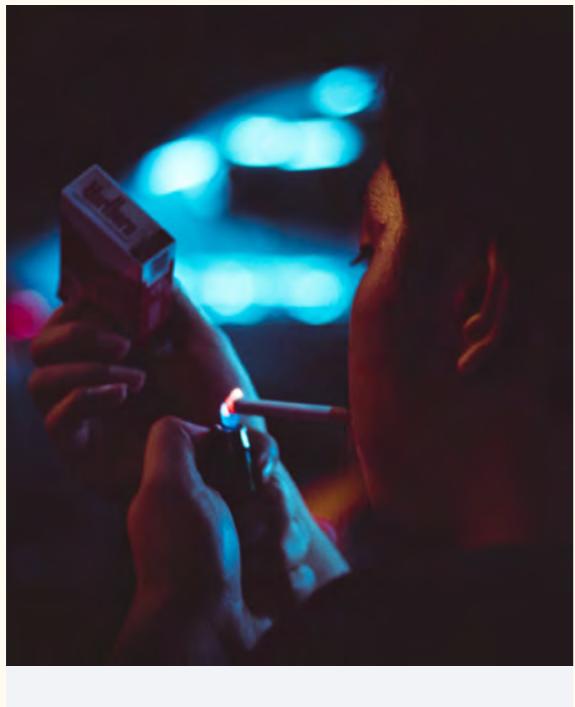
**9. Trust us when we tell you what time you should leave for the airport.**

It may be a surprise to you, but we know the local traffic conditions and the estimated travel time to the airport, better than you do. Not to mention the queuing time at the airport and any other potential hassles you may encounter before you can safely board your flight.

Trust us if we tell you to leave 2 hours, 3 hours, or sometimes even 5 hours before your flight, if the traffic condition is worse than usual. Please do not get angry at us, as if we are pulling these

**Warmest Wishes**

This Christmas Season to the  
people of Sariaya and the  
hospitality industry  
**Coun. Vince Alcala Banta**



If the room is Non-Smoking, don't cover the smoke detector to have a sneaky 'fag'.

numbers from thin air. We are not trying to get rid of you nor are we spewing out random numbers of hours. This is based on years of commuting and braving the city's horrendous traffic. We just want to make sure that you will make it to your flight safe and sound, and not come back to the hotel hours later with your luggage asking us to book you another flight.

#### 10. Be kind to your hotel service providers.

A little kindness goes a long way. Please bear in mind that while you may be on vacation, these people left their families at home to take care of your needs.

They may have been standing in their three-inch heels for eight hours and counting, and some of them probably have not yet had their lunch or dinner, if the hotel is really busy. They bend over backwards to give you a perfect stay, but they are not perfect human beings. They make mistakes,

they get emotional, they get tired and stressed too. They have to deal with guests screaming in their faces, calling them names, cursing at them and sometimes even throwing things at them.

Your room rate does not include their dignity. Please treat your hotel service providers with respect and kindness, and watch them repay you with all these and more.

We seek to give you the best stay!

Front Desk Agents are some of the most patient, most polite, smartest and friendliest people you will encounter on any trip to a foreign city. Make a new friend in them and they will definitely make your stay the best it can be. After all, all they really want is for you to have a memorable, hassle-free and enjoyable stay in your "home away from home." Respect, courtesy and appreciation of their work is all they wish, so that they can go home at the end of the day tired but happy, and fulfilled with a job well done.



*Trust us when we tell you what time you should leave for the airport.*

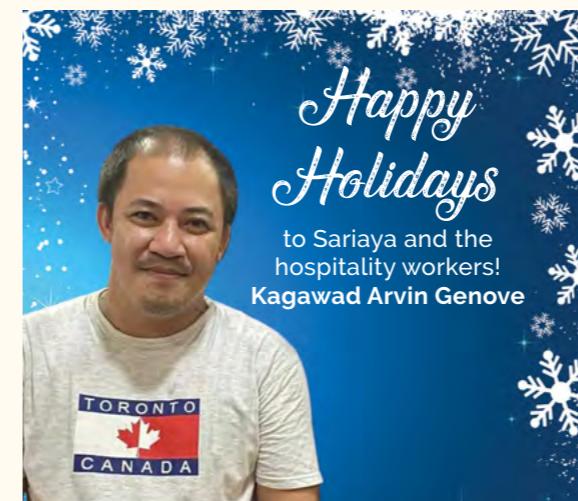
Angel Lam Ko started her now famous Facebook Page Hugot Hotelier as an outlet for witty posts, observations and meme's about the Hospitality Industry:

"I didn't want to flood the timelines of my fb contacts especially those who are not hoteliers and may not be able to relate. I believe we can always approach any negative situation with a sense of humor, instead of griping about it and spreading bad vibes. I just find that laughing about it with your colleagues lightens the load significantly".

Hugot Hotelier just expanded the "colleagues" part to a super huge, and fun, group of people sharing the same sentiments, and taking comfort in the fact that we are not alone in this hotel craziness.

Hugot Hotelier has over 18,000 followers to date and has the funniest memes that have hoteliers laughing, relating, sharing and discussing.

Do you work on Front Desk? Do you have any other items to add to Angel's list? Send us details at [info@myranggo.com](mailto:info@myranggo.com) and we can come up with a part 2 for this article.



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# DITCHING PLASTIC

## Managing Hotel Guests Expectations

The concept of providing 'added benefit' to hotel guests results in hundreds of mini plastic bottles, toothbrushes, razors, shower caps, house slippers, plastic coated sachets or plastic cartons ending up in our landfill every day. In the Philippines, where the average hotel stay is often 2-3 days, that is a lot of extra un-necessary waste plastic. Our World is telling us we can't sustain this behaviour.

### Why should we be greener and more ethical?

The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking The Future of Plastics Report stated that just 5% of plastics are being recycled. 40% of plastics end up in Landfill Sites and a

third end up in "fragile eco-systems", including our Oceans. National Geographic reported that a plastic grocery bag was found in the Mariana Trench, the remotest area of the Pacific Ocean and the deepest point in the ocean at almost 36,000 feet.

Our careless and lazy habits are polluting the World and plastics are now finding their way back in to our Food Chain. There is proven evidence of micro-plastics in salt sourced from America, Europe and China, and in tap water and beer; 81 % of tap water samples contained plastic debris, mostly in the form of microfibers. Plastic debris was

also found in all 12 brands of the beer tested.

All these things are leading to a change in public opinion about their convenience over the health of our Planet.

### It's time for the Hospitality Industry to play its part

For some guests the complementary mini-bottles of shampoo and conditioner remain an expected perk of their stay. But with a growing change in public attitudes globally, guest expectations are also changing and we may just be assuming they will miss the mini-bottles on their bathroom shelf!

With people becoming more aware about their impact on the world, especially during the COVID Pandemic, Hotels can capitalize on this, saving money and saving the planet:

**Ditch the mini Bottles in the bathrooms** - Install Dispensers or offer organic, locally made Shampoo/Conditioner Bars and Soap Bars large enough to last for 5 days. OR Don't offer Soaps or Shampoo's at all. Just ensure that your website Room & Rates Page and booking confirmation is clear that complementary toiletries are not provided.

**Ditch the complementary toothbrushes & toothpaste** - they're awful anyway, with bristle-shedding mid-brush! Provide Bamboo Toothbrushes Or ensure that your website Room & Rates Page and booking confirmation is clear they are not provided. You can always offer Bamboo toothbrushes from Front Desk at cost price.

**Ditch Single-Use Plastic items from your guest rooms** - Items such as Plastic-Stemmed Cotton Buds, Shower Caps, Throwaway slippers, Disposable Razors.

**Ditch the in-room mini bottles of water** - Have a Water Refill Station on each floor/on each corridor and a Water Jug/Bottle with lid in the room refrigerator for guests, as well as a set of glasses. OR offer logoed Water Bottles, which guests can fill at the Water Station before heading out; they'll double up as a marketing tool for your hotel. Guests can keep them on departure or they can be donated to local schools.

**Provide clearly designated waste bins in guest rooms and around the hotel** - Have bins for newspaper, paper & Cardboard, glass, aluminium and plastic in each room. Instead of lining each room bin with a plastic bag, have housekeeping empty them in to one large bin (per type) or bio-degradable bag, then clean and dry the room bins.

This practice will reduce the amount of individual plastic bags of rubbish being sent to local waste plants.

**Adopt a Linen Reuse Program** - Economically Sound reported that a 150-room hotel can conserve 72,000 gallons of water and 480 gallons of laundry soap every year, by implementing a Linen Reuse Program.

**Use green or reduced chemical cleaning products** - it's not just trash harming our environments but pollutants from cleaning and laundry products, seeping in to our water. Buy nontoxic, biodegradable cleaning, laundry and dishwashing products or make your own eco-friendly, organic cleaning products.

**Ditch Plastic Straws & Cocktail Stirrers** - Straws take between 50-200 years to break down in the environment. Have a Straw On Request Policy for those who need a straw to drink; young children, people with disabilities and people who've suffered a stroke. Or offer Paper, Bamboo or Metal Straws. Use metal cocktail stirrers, at the point of mixing and remove before serving, cleaning after each use.

**Ditch non-recyclable take-out boxes/"doggie bags"**

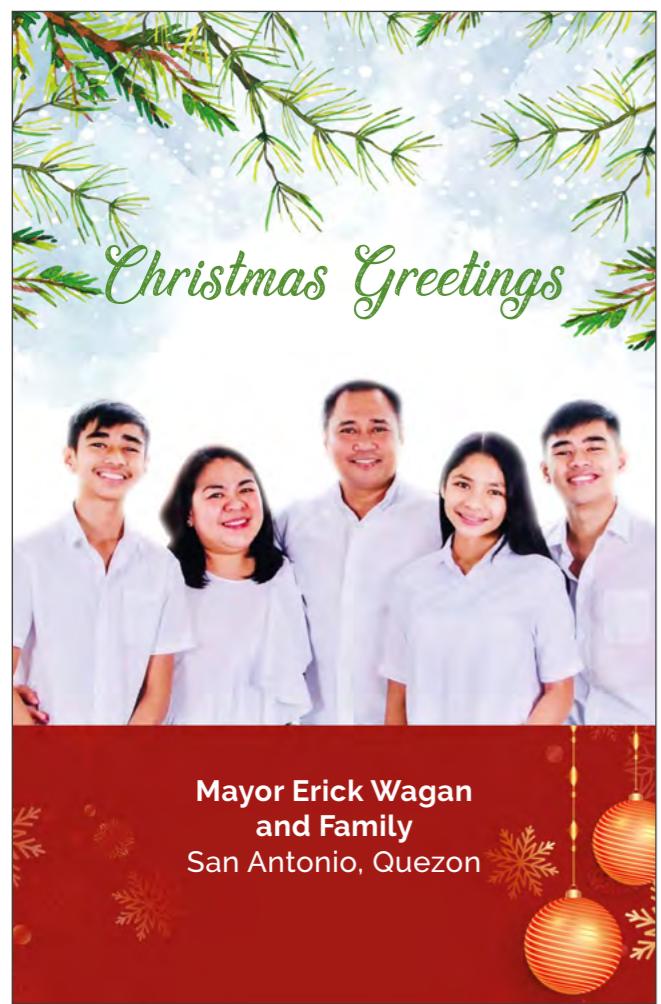
- Replace with compostable sugarcane or corrugated cardboard take-out boxes. Offer discounts on meals where customers bring their own containers.

### Managing Guests Expectations

Once you've made your changes your next move is to manage guest expectations. Have a clear Eco or Sustainability Statement or dedicated page on your website. But make sure it's on the right page! SEO Search Analysis may show that your least visited page is your Sustainability/ Eco-Friendly Statement. So consider having a statement on your 'About us' Page or your Room and Rates Page. Feature photos of your bathroom dispensers or your locally-made organic soaps, in the Room Photo Gallery. Make sure you pass all this on to your OTA's (Online Travel Agents) too!

Pre-empt guests concerns about the product brand or ingredients of the Soap, Shower Gel, shampoo or Conditioner, with information about the brand that you use or its content, in your website statement.

Or, you could consider including this information, alongside your Eco-Friendly Statement, in the Room 'Welcome Pack', as part of a Bedside notice or in a notice in the bathroom. Check out our article Hotels That Go Green: How Your Hotel Can Be Eco-Friendly Too, on [www.myranggo.com](http://www.myranggo.com) for more ideas.



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