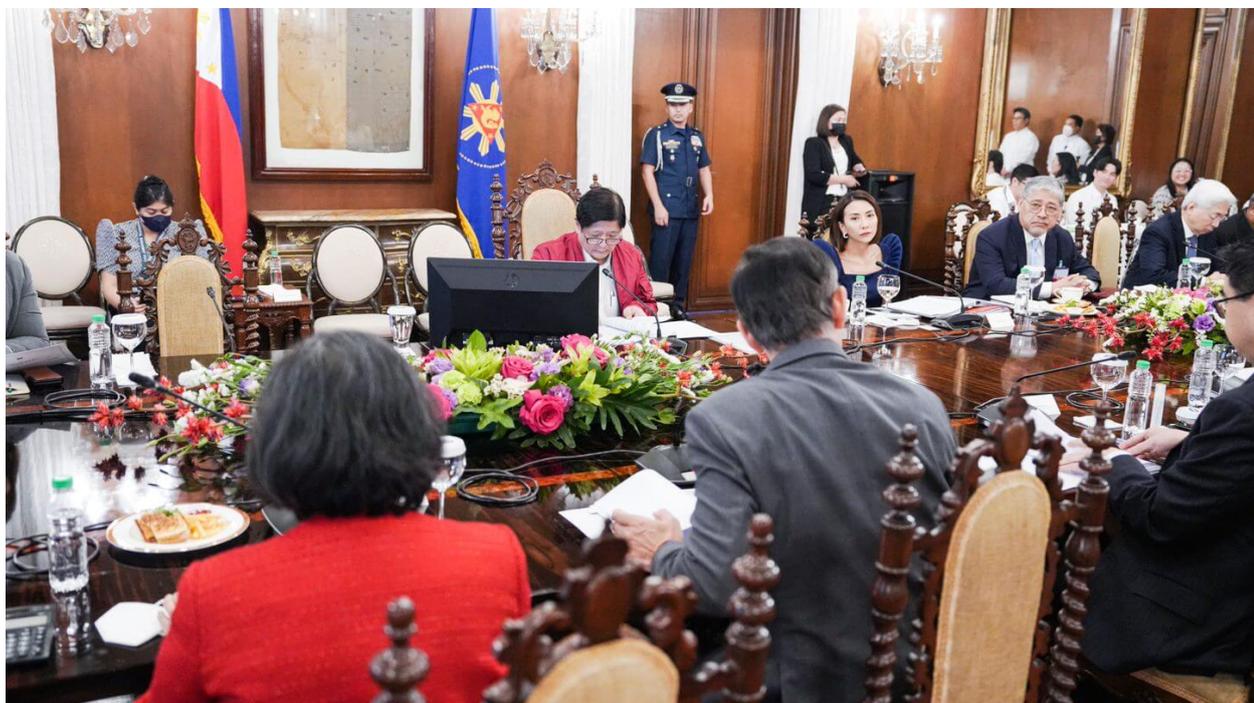


# President of Philippines signs off on VAT Refund Program



The implementation of the Value-Added Tax Refund Program for foreign tourists by 2024 is expected to boost tourist arrivals in the country

According to a news release published this week by the Presidential Communications Office of the Republic of Philippines, recommendations of the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) Tourism Sector Group, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has signed off on the implementation of the Value-Added Tax (VAT) Refund Program for foreign tourists by 2024. This is expected to boost tourist arrivals in the country.

Aside from the VAT) Refund Program for foreign tourists, other recommendations approved by the President include the rollout of e-visa by 2023, prioritizing China and India; and the removal of One Health Pass (OHP) or requirement of one form only for health, immigration and customs.

The revocation of outdated advisories and “loud-speaker announcements” in the country’s airports and the automatic inclusion of travel tax in all airline tickets were also among PSAC’s “Quick Wins” recommendations.

Palace officials said President Marcos will issue an executive order to implement the tax refund program, which is also being carried out in other countries.

The Quick Wins proposals, which were presented by PSAC to the chief executive during a meeting in Malacañang on January 26, are aimed at further boosting the country’s tourism industry, including improving airport infrastructure and operations, managing the national brand and image, as well as promoting tourism investments.

## **The importance of digitalization: e-Travel app**

PSAC officials also told the President that they are working on a mobile app called e-Travel, which

integrates information on immigration, customs, health and quarantine.

With the potential to go live this month, the app is being modified to allow users to easily and effectively input data. e-Travel's database will include tourist destinations, transport and hotel information, as well as traffic conditions.

Tourists can complete forms via the app pre-boarding or while onboard the plane.

### **By the numbers**

The Philippines recorded 2.65 million visitors from February to December 2022 (2.02 million foreign tourists and 628,445 Filipinos overseas). This figure is higher than the 2021 tourist arrivals of 163,879, but still significantly lower than the pre-pandemic level of 8.26 million.

This year, the Department of Tourism hopes to welcome 4.8 million visitors, which could generate P2.58 trillion in revenue.