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**Duterte orders 6-month closure of Boracay**

The closure to tourism of the popular beach destination starts April 26

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**Rappler.com**

MANILA, Philippines (UPDATED) – President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the closure of Boracay, a world-famous [tourist destination](https://www.rappler.com/science-nature/environment/95264-tourism-coral-cover-loss-boracay), for 6 months, starting on April 26.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque told this to reporters on Wednesday, April 4, as a Cabinet meeting was ongoing.

Duterte made his decision during the meeting.

The recommendation to close Boracay from tourists for 6 months – or until October – [came from the Department of the Interior and Local Government](https://www.rappler.com/nation/197271-dilg-boracay-environmental-crisis-probe-team). The Department of Tourism and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had also called for a "total" closure, according to Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Menardo Guevarra.

It was the suggestion of these 3 departments that finally got Duterte's nod.

"DENR/DOT/DILG proposal approved after an exhaustive discussion," Guevarra told Rappler.

Duterte wants funds devoted to assisting residents in Boracay whose livelihood would be affected by the closure.

"Calamity funds will be activated to tide affected workers over," said Guevarra.

What does Boracay's "closure" actually mean on the ground?

Guevarra had previously said this could mean non-residents would be physically barred from entering the island.

Upon Boracay's closure, Duterte said during the meeting that there should be "validation" of which among the establishments in the island are complying with environmental rules and regulations.

It is not clear, however, how these establishments would be treated differently from those found violating environmental policies.

**Other suggestions**

But the Department of Trade and Industry had suggested implementing the closure in phases.

Financial advisers in the Cabinet had also been concerned about the timing of the closure. April 26 is in the middle of the summer season, the busiest time of the year for Boracay.

But from June to August, tourism arrivals wind down because of the rainy season. This low season would thus be covered by the 6-month closure period.

[Duterte announced his intention to "close" Boracay](https://www.rappler.com/nation/195703-duterte-warning-close-boracay) last February 10, angered by environmental violations by commercial establishments that he thinks turned the popular tourist destination into a "cesspool."

Boracay stakeholders had said that closing the island for a year would take away the jobs of 36,000 people and would mean [foregone revenues of P56 billion](https://www.rappler.com/business/198718-boracay-temporary-closure-losses-jobs-revenues).

The National Economic and Development Authority, however, said a 6-month closure of the tourist area would have [minimal impact on the economy](https://www.rappler.com/business/199449-philippine-economy-boracay-closure). –**Rappler.com**

Task force recommends 6-month Boracay closure

***The Manila Times***

ON MARCH 24, 2018

AN interagency task force has recommended the six-month closure of Boracay island to allow the rehabilitation of the world-famous beach destination, a day after President Duterte said he was willing to support a one-year closure.

“In view of the recent developments and concerns surrounding the island of Boracay, [the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Interior and Local Government and Tourism]have decided to unanimously recommend the closure of the Island from entry of local and foreign tourists,” the task force said in a March 22 letter to President Rodrigo Duterte sent through Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Interior Undersecretary Eduardo Año and Tourism Secretary Wanda Teo recommended that the closure start on April 26.

In a speech on Tuesday night, Duterte said he would back a one-year closure of Boracay.

“If I find everything that is all right and in consonance with [the government’s plan to rehabilitate the island, then]let us go with it. [Año] said it will take about something like six months. I told him, ‘then do it.’ They ruined Boracay, not us,” Duterte said.

On Thursday, Palace spokesman Harry Roque, Jr. assured the public there would be no closure of the island resort during the Holy Week break.

Duterte formed the task force to rehabilitate the island after calling it a “cesspool” in a speech on February 9.

Boracay stakeholders had warned that about P56 billion in revenue would be lost while more than 17,000 people would lose their jobs if the island would be shut down for a year.

Boracay generates two out of three jobs in the Western Visayas region, according to the Tourism department.

Boracay has been in the top 25 of the TripAdvisor’s Travelers’ Choice Awards for the past two years.

The island was adjudged the top beach in the world in 2016, according to the Conde Nast Traveler’s Readers’ Choice Awards.

Reacting to the recommendation, Vice President Maria Leonor “Leni” Robredo said she hoped closing Boracay would not benefit a few, amid reports of the planned construction of a P26-billion joint casino venture project between Macau’s Galaxy Entertainment and its Philippine counterpart Leisure and Resorts World Corp.

“I hope that this closure is not a knee-jerk response. If closure is the only solution, then so be it. But we have to keep in mind that there are 36,000 people who would lose their jobs with this closure. If the big businesses won’t be affected by the closure, that would be unfair,” Robredo said in an interview after launching the Albay Provincial Library Gender and Development Section.

**Senate to probe casino permit**

The Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources will hold another hearing on Boracay’s environmental woes and the plan to build an integrated casino resort on the island.

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) on Wednesday released a provisional license to Galaxy Entertainment and Leisure and Resorts World to operate a mega-casino in Boracay.

Pagcor issued the license despite the planned closure of the island to give way to rehabilitation efforts.

“The environment department should closely study the plans and the impact of another large-scale infrastructure on the island’s land use and environment,” Sen. Nancy Binay said.

**PAL to retain some flights**

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) said on Friday it was ready to implement contingency plans ahead of the closure.

“Philippine Airlines will be ready to make the appropriate adjustments to schedules of flights to and from Caticlan (Boracay) airport and Kalibo International Airport,” PAL said in a statement.

PAL added it was “ready to assist passengers in rebooking, refunding and rerouting their flights in such a scenario.”

PAL also said it would “take into account the need to retain some flights to serve the residents and businesses in Kalibo and the rest of the Aklan province.”

Cielo Villaluna, PAL spokeswoman, said the Lucio Tan-led airline would help minimize any impact on tourism by redirecting flights to other routes where it could continue to promote domestic and international tourist travel for the Philippines during the temporary closure.

***RALPH U. VILLANUEVA, LLANESCA T. PANTI, JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA AND BENJIE L. VERGARA***

**Total Boracay closure eyed**

**Duterte to make fair decision on recommendation – Palace**

***Manila Bulletin***

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***By Analou De Vera***

An inter-agency task force formed to address the environmental problems Boracay Island is now facing has recommended a total closure of the world-famous resort.

The joint recommendation was announced during a meeting on Thursday, attended by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu, Tourism Secretary Wanda Tulfo Teo, and Interior and Local Government Officer-in-Charge Eduardo Año.

The inter-agency panel proposed to President Duterte the “closure of the Boracay Island as tourist destination for a maximum of one year effective one month after its declaration,”Cimatu said, as he read the joint recommendation of the three agencies.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said President Duterte is expected to make a “fair” decision devoid of any political consideration and keeping in mind the welfare of small businesses in the tourist destination.

“He will move because of his genuine concern on the need to protect the beauty of Boracay for the future generation,” Roque said.

Closing the island to tourists, Cimatu said, will give the inter-agency task force ample time for the undisrupted implementation of various measures that will be undertaken “to restore and eventually sustain Boracay Island as a prime tourism destination.”

**Proposed measures**

The following measures were recommended by the three agencies during the proposed closure of the island:

1. Upgrading of the sewerage system, including the sewer lines, to meet the requirement of the entire island as a major tourist destination;
2. Installation of all required solid waste management facilities and mechanisms in addition to full compliance with the provisions of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act;
3. Removal of illegal structures in forestlands and wetlands, easement areas and even geologically hazardous areas such as those with sink holes;
4. Road widening/construction, pipe laying and excavations; and
5. Rationalization of transport system.

The total closure will take effect 30 days after President Duterte declared a State of Calamity in the island. “We are recommending to the President the declaration of the State of Calamity and then after a month, declaration of the closure of Boracay,” said Año.

Sen. Joseph Victor “JV” Ejercito is open the proposal to close Boracay for a year. “That will be worth considering. Boracay has been abused and exploited through the years,” he said.

But other balked at the prospect of closing down the island.

“A one-year total closure may not be the best solution for the island and its locals,” said Senator Nancy Binay.

“Although we all agree that a moratorium on building construction be imposed, and we share the same observation that over-commercialization has created a serious environmental disaster,” Binay said.