

## Lion's Head in Baguio City, Philippines

*Considered as the “King of the Jungle,” the lion symbolizes fierceness and strength. The same is true for Baguio City’s iconic lion head, although its original meaning has been obscured by time.*

*Today, local and foreign tourists look at it as the majestic symbol of the country’s “summer capital.”*

Now let’s go back to the iconic lion’s head. It was actually the brainchild of some of the pioneer members of the Baguio City (Host) Lions Club. They wanted to create a symbol that would establish the presence of the group in the area.

Baguio City Lions Club members during the Annual Lions Multiple District Convention. Lion Fernando Chua (at center), Lions district representative from Taipei, Taiwan, has the distinction of being the only foreign delegate to the convention held in Baguio City in May 1964. Source: Baguio City Host Lions Club. *See picture below*

Lions Club is a service organization which aims to “*meet the needs of communities on a local and global scale.*” Founded in 1917 by Melvin Jones, Lions Clubs International (LCI) now boasts of 1.35 million members worldwide.

~~Source: <http://www.lionsclubs.org>, International Lions Club~~

### A Memorial of Good Deeds

From the 1950s up to the 1960s, the Baguio Lions had slowly spread Lionism in the area. Aside from recruitment, Lions Club members also led fund-raising activities for organizations like Philippine National Red Cross and the Baguio Police Department.

Baguio’s famous Lion’s head in 1973. Photo credit: Robert John Martin Gunabe via Flickr.

However, what literally put the Baguio Lions Club on the map were the various building and monument projects they spearheaded including the Melvin Jones Memorial Grandstand at Burnham Park, Baguio Lions Clubhouse in Governor Pack Road, Baguio War Memorial Monument, and of course, the giant Lion’s head along Kennon Road.

Baguio Mayor Luis M. Lardizabal. Source: Baguio City Host Lions Club.

The Lion’s head was first conceptualized by pioneer Baguio Lions Club members led by Luis Lardizabal who was the mayor of Baguio from March 1960 to December 1979.

Lardizabal, who was also Lions Club governor from 1969 to 1970, sought the help of Lion members, businessmen, and those who attended the state convention to finance the project.

Construction of the Lion’s head began in 1971 under Baguio Lions Club President and later, District 301-C Governor Robert John Webber. **They commissioned an Ifugao artist named Reynaldo Lopez Nanyac to carve out the Lion’s head from a limestone boulder.**

Installing iron railings around the Lion's Head limestone carving. Source: Baguio City Host Lions Club.

Symbolizing the influence of Baguio Lions Club in the area, the massive Lion's head was finally unveiled in 1972 under the supervision of club vice presidents Moises Cating, David Borja, and Arturo Santiago.

The Benguet icon Dangwa Bus and Lion's head at the historic Kennon Road. Photo credit: FromDBackwoods via Flickr.

### **The Lion's Head Over the Years**

The face of Baguio City was not spared from the wrath of a 7.7 magnitude twin quakes that hit the city on July 16, 1990. It suffered severe cracks made even worse by vandals.

The man-made Lion's Head in black coloration. Via Wikimedia Commons.

After providing assistance to those who had been affected by the [earthquake](#), Baguio Lions Club member Alfredo de los Santos, then District 301-C Governor Gloria Vergara, and Peter Go, third vice president of the Lions Club 1991-93, led the rehabilitation of the damaged Lion's head.

**The man-made Lion's Head and tourists.** Via Wikimedia Commons.

Since then, the iconic structure has slowly changed its appearance and color, to the point that it began to look more like an ape than a lion. Nevertheless, tourists still stop and have their souvenir photographs taken at the base of the Lion's head.

The iconic structure has also helped boost the local economy, as evidenced by several woodcarving and handicraft stores that have mushroomed near the Lion's head.

Wood carving replica of Lion's Head along Kennon Road. Source: Baguio City Host Lions Club

In early 2014, the Regional Technical Working Group has proposed a P50 million budget to give the Lion's head a major facelift. Included in the proposal is the construction of a wider view deck, murals featuring Baguio's history, and the transfer of souvenir stalls to a multipurpose building where a tourist information booth will also be available.

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