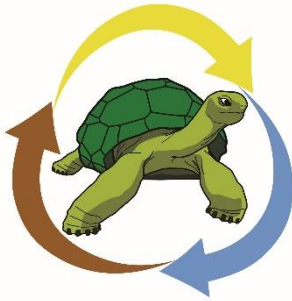


10 questions Sustainable Seychelles



Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label
Safeguarding Seychelles for Tomorrow

Mesmerizing, unparalleled beauty, these are just a few words used to describe the Seychelles islands.

With its award winning sandy white beaches, lush greenery, unique rock formations, abundance of exotic biodiversity, rich marine life and unique culture, the name itself invokes the image of paradise on earth.

Environmental protection and conservation features high on the government's agenda with over 50% of land and 30% planned marine space designated as protected areas, it comes as no surprise that the natural beauty of the islands remain intact.

In recognizing the need to protect and preserve our natural assets, the Ministry of Tourism is implementing the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL), a certification programme aimed at recognising hotels that incorporates responsible tourism within their operation. The SSTL has 21 hotels certified under its programme.

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort and Casino, Constance Ephelia Resort and Maia Resort are three of the hotels that have achieved SSTL certification. We sat down with the managers of the hotels, Mr. Norazman Chung, Mr. Stephane Duchenne and Mr. Markus Ultsch-Unrath and Mr. Lionel Ferrari respectively to share their experience with the SSTL.

1. Could you share a little bit of background on the hotel?

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort and Casino is one of the oldest hotels on Mahe dating back to 1972. The hotel has seen management changes over the years moving from being a state-owned hotel to form part of the Berjaya chain hotels & resorts. This international chain hotel owns and manages more than 20 hotels around the world. The hotel is recognised for its very active involvement in its community as well as at national level.

Unique by its location, Constance Ephelia Resort is situated within a protected environment and surrounded by the Port Launay marine park, making it ideal for touristic activities. The resort will be celebrating its 10th anniversary next year.

On the other hand, Maia Luxury Resort and Spa was one of the very first deluxe resort to be developed in the Seychelles back in 2006. The initial idea was to create a personalized service. Maia Luxury Resort and Spa has a concept of whatever, whenever and wherever, a very specific service catering to each of the guest's preference.

2. How long have the hotels been certified?

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino was one the first establishment to be certified back in 2012 together with Constance Ephelia Resort. Maia Luxury Resort and Spa has just been certified last month.

3. What prompted the move for SSTL certification?

Berjaya Group of Companies' journey towards sustainability began way before the launching of the SSTL. Caring for the environment had become a vital part of their 'Legacy of Care' by Berjaya, instilled by their founder and owner Tan Sri Dato Vincent Tan. As a team, they are committed to maintain the conservation activities ongoing in their properties as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to give back to Mother Nature. As green –consciousness grows, Berjaya group continues to identify new ways to enhance environmentally-friendly practices and encourage sustainability.

Since guest are becoming more environmentally aware, Constance Ephelia Resort felt the need and responsibility to embark on the sustainability journey. Ideally suited with its location and surrounding environment, Constance Ephelia Resort ensures that the day to day operations are within the guidelines of the label.

Moreover, Maia Luxury Resort and Spa strongly believes that sustainability is the core function of their business, it is also the main key in the decision making process of the resort. The guests are clearly aware of their carbon footprint, therefore, they make sure that their stay in the Seychelles is as sustainable as possible.

4. How has earning the label benefited the hotel?

Maia Luxury Resort and Spa's guests are intrigued by environmentally friendly practices that are ongoing at the resort. Maia ensures that they involve their guest as much as possible in their sustainable practices.

Through this label the Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay has benefitted in many ways such as looking at ways to improve waste, water and energy management. They became much aware of SSTL while drafting the policy documents that guided the hotel in the best steps to take towards sustainable tourism.

On the other hand, Constance Ephelia Resort expresses the benefit of having such label, which includes the type of clientele that they attract, since guests are looking for establishment that are environmentally conscious, and the establishment uses their label as form of communication with their guest.

5. How important is sustainability to Seychelles as a touristic destination?

As Seychelles is facing a lot of environmental issues, sustainability is really vital. Seychelles is a small island state and its ecosystem is really fragile and it should be a mandatory commitment for not only hotels but each and every one to preserve this precious environment. Sustainability has made the day to day operations at Constance Ephelia Resort more environmentally friendly. Besides, Seychelles is perceived as a green island destination and it is important to keep this perception, and it is a powerful promotional tool.

Furthermore, Maia Luxury Resort and Spa stated that there are two main reasons why people pay so much money to visit Seychelles. One, is the breath taking beauty of the Seychelles and two, the safety that Seychelles provides for its visitors. Additionally, as Seychelles is a micro climate, the little positive impacts made are seen as benefits directly to the environment.

Breathing clean air and living in a clean environment is the present motto in the world. As a touristic destination, Seychelles joins the rest of the world with sustainable living. Seychelles is one of the countries on the planet that is most reliant on tourism. It understands and appreciates nature at large. On that note, the country ensures that many resources are not wasted over the short term, but rather used wisely so that resources are available for future generation of Seychellois.

6. What are some of the sustainable practices being implemented at the hotel?

Maia Luxury Resort and Spa has been engaged in sustainable practices for many years. These practices include the removal of plastic bottles, the switch to inverter air conditioning, they use non chemical cleaning products, replaced all lights with LED energy saving light bulbs and the removal of plastic straws. They use wooden stirrers that are locally produced, master switch has been placed in all the villas and this has reduced the amount of electricity that the Resort consumes and recently they have been using the natural fibre bags instead of the plastic bags for landscaping.

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino implements these following sustainable practices; rain water harvesting, recycling of items, composting of green waste, reducing wastage, farm to table spice garden, vegetables and fruits leftovers fed to tortoises at the hotel's Tortoise Pen, left over bread fed to birds at the Bird Sanctuary. They are also stressing on banning of cling film, plastic straws and aluminium foil.

Additionally, Constance Ephelia Resort has various sustainable practices which includes, a management plan for the conservation of the mangroves sites. They have adjusted their daily operations for efficient use of energy and waste, the establishment is also energy and water self-sufficient, photovoltaic (PV) has been installed for solar energy to provide electricity throughout the establishment, rain water is treated for irrigation, a bottling plant has been installed whereby they bottle their own drinking water using glass bottles which reduces waste, they segregate their own waste, the food waste is given to local pig farm and they make their own compost.

7. How does the hotel support the local community?

Actively involved with the local community, firstly Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino has a well-established partnership with Beau Vallon Primary School through various activities and sponsorship of social, cultural and environmental events organised by the school in the district. At the school, the hotel had funded the creation of a spice garden, which was grown by the students and the produce was sold back to the hotel. Each year Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay supports the Old People's Home of the St Elizabeth Convent, Foyer de Nazareth, CARITAS Christmas Children's Party and Seychelles Deaf Organization.

Surrounded by the Anse Boileau community, Maia Luxury Resort and Spa works very closely with the Anse Boileau School and NGOs, whereby they do their utmost to create awareness, educate and involve people in the community about the environment. They also work closely with the school where they have taken the initiative to redo some of the classrooms. Moreover they collaborate with Wise Ocean for the Clean Up the World campaign each year to clean the Anse Boileau and Anse Louis beaches. This activity also involves the Anse Boileau School and is done twice a year.

Under their CSR, Constance Ephelia Resort has various activities such as supporting several projects in the Port Glaud district, they have funded beach kiosks and the bus terminal. They have assisted in the building of the boardwalks to the waterfall and have a very active presence in the local school in terms of donations, as well as also supporting the Presidents Village. During the festive season they host Christmas parties for both the elderly as well as the children from the President's Village.

8. What are the factors that are critical for the successful implementation of the hotel's sustainability efforts?

The engagement from the whole team from Maia luxury Resort and Spa has been one of the main factors for their success of the sustainable label. By creating awareness and educating the staff, it has helped them to push forward so many sustainable practices. This has also been a direct impact on their bottom line, as it has helped to reduce the resort's expenses.

Constance Ephelia Resort stated that they have a major role to play in terms of the responsibility towards the mangroves sites, therefore, they have invited various people from the community to help with the rehabilitation of these sites. They also have an educational tour which Mr. Markus is mainly leading to help individuals have an in depth understanding on the importance of preserving and protecting the mangroves.

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino has a continuous monitoring programme which is critical to contributing to the success for implementation. Hence planning and teamwork is essential.

9. What are the challenges you face to effectively be green?

Awareness is a key factor for conservation of the environment, therefore, educating and changing the perception of people is a challenge in itself. That is why they stress on the education, both inside and outside the hotel, and the understanding of the fragile environment surrounding Constance Ephelia Resort. There is a great need for staff training, again, to create more awareness, moreover to change their perception about the environment, so that they can appreciate it a little more. The difficulty of implementing certain projects due to Seychelles location, in terms of recycling, and availability of materials to facilitate these projects become a challenge.

Berjaya Beau Vallon Bay Resort & Casino stated that most of the green product and facilities are very costly for initial implementation. They are in the process of sourcing solar panels, lights and heaters.

In addition, Maia Resort and Spa's main challenge remains education and understanding. The environment is a fragile state and that all action subsequently has a reaction. Also, getting everybody on board the sustainable wagon to understand the negative impact of climate change on our small island state.

10. Any final comment?

Mr. Duchenne

"Sustainability is no longer an option, it should be everyone's responsibility to take care of their surrounding environment. More resorts should take this opportunity and get their establishment certified, this would be a benefit not only for the hotel but for the destination"

Mr. Ferrari

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Mathieu our Residential Manager and our intern Ms. Solana for all their efforts. It's a long journey and we have just began, it's all about small decision creating a big impact"

Mr. Chung

"The earth is what we all have in common. Let us all join together today to make a difference"

For its part, the Ministry of Tourism continues with its efforts to promote and encourage responsible tourism in the Seychelles not only for our visitors but for our people. We are tourism. The active support of all the players will ensure the destination tagline; the Seychelles islands; not just another place, another world!



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