

# Sustainable Seychelles certification

## Operators' Manual



**SUSTAINABLE SEYCHELLES**  
Safeguarding Seychelles For Tomorrow

Tourism Department

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. UNDERSTANDING THE SSTL</b>	<b>3</b>
Why do you need a sustainable tourism label?	3
What does “going green” involve?	4
<b>2. SUSTAINABLE SEYCHELLES CERTIFICATION CRITERIA</b>	<b>7</b>
Must criteria	7
Frequently asked questions	7
<b>3. UNDERSTANDING THE CRITERIA</b>	<b>9</b>
Theme 1. Management	9
Theme 2. Waste	11
Theme 3. Water	12
Theme 4. Energy	12
Theme 5. Staff	13
Theme 6. Conservation	13
Theme 7. Community	13
Theme 8. Guests	13
<b>5. FURTHER RESOURCES</b>	<b>14</b>



# 1. UNDERSTANDING THE SSTL

Congratulations for choosing to be a part of the Sustainable Seychelles certification!

A sustainable tourism label process is designed to evaluate the performance of your business against a set of agreed-on sustainable tourism practices. The Sustainable Seychelles certification provides an assurance to travelers, travel providers, meeting planners, employees, and residents that an enterprise is implementing sustainable tourism practices.

The Sustainable Seychelles certification has been developed through research, stakeholder discussion, and local piloting. The criteria used in the assessment are international standard, but their development has drawn on local knowledge.

## **What is a Sustainable Business?**

A sustainable business is one that uses its resources today in such a way that the business can continue to be productive in the future. Sustainability is about the natural environment, but also includes consideration to the human and economic resources on which future success depends.

## **What is the Sustainable Seychelles certification?**

The Sustainable Seychelles certification is a sustainable tourism management and certification program designed specifically for use in Seychelles. It is voluntary, user-friendly, and designed to inspire more efficient and sustainable ways of doing business. The Sustainable Seychelles certification is applicable to tourism enterprises of all sizes.

## **Why do you need a sustainable tourism label?**

The beauty of the natural environment and the friendliness of the Seychellois people form the core of the Seychelles' tourism product. Careful stewardship of these key tourism assets is essential to the sustainability of tourism and to the integrity of the island ecosystem.

The purpose of the Label is to provide a set of standards to encourage and guide operators to do their part to increase the sustainability of tourism in Seychelles.

The Sustainable Seychelles certification is voluntary, user-friendly, and designed to inspire more efficient and sustainable ways of doing business.

## **Benefits to your enterprise**

Being part of the Sustainable Seychelles certification offers a number of benefits to participating tourism enterprises. These primarily relate to marketing and cost-cutting.



## Marketing

- Certification will provide operators with a competitive advantage over uncertified enterprises
- Certified properties will be highlighted in the Tourism Department stay guide
- Certified properties will be listed on the Sustainable Seychelles certification website
- Guest satisfaction is likely to increase with the communication of sustainability achievements of the enterprise

## Cost savings

- Utility costs are likely to decrease due to increased awareness, monitoring and use of improved technology
- Staff replacement costs are likely to decrease as research shows sustainability initiatives build staff motivation and increase retention rates

For Seychelles, sustainable tourism is particularly important due to the country's high biodiversity and economic reliance on tourism. Future generations' prosperity relies on the ability of present generations of Seychellois to use their resources with care.

### What do Certified Operators Say?

- In the UK, businesses reduced operation costs by 10% to 30% by going through the certification process
- A survey of green certified business in New Zealand found that 67% saw a recognizable increase in staff motivation
- A survey of 670 label users in Germany found the key benefit of an eco-label was the information it provided about how to implement sustainability

## What does “going green” involve?

It is relatively simple to take the first steps towards running a green tourism business operation.

- ▶ Make a conscious decision to go green
- ▶ Develop and implement a sustainability policy
- ▶ Monitor energy, water, and waste over time
- ▶ Take steps to conserve resources
- ▶ Promote local and small-scale businesses
- ▶ Treat staff fairly and be in compliance with all laws and regulations
- ▶ Contribute to community development and conservation activities



## Getting certified

The Sustainable Seychelles certification is a third-party assessed, points-based certification scheme. In order to achieve the Label you need to demonstrate that you have adopted a minimum number of sustainable business practices. Some practices are required for all businesses while others are optional.

There are three basic criteria that a participating enterprise must meet to achieve the Sustainable Seychelles certification. They must:

- Fulfil all the 22 “must” criteria
- Achieve a minimum score for each theme, 5 points for small enterprises (1-24 rooms), 6 for medium (25 to 50 rooms), 7 for large (51+ rooms)
- Score an additional six points in any area

Small enterprises need 46 points to be certified out of 173 points

Medium-sized enterprises need 54 points to be certified out of 173 points

Large enterprises need 62 points to be certified out of 173 points

Some enterprises choosing to participate in the Sustainable Seychelles certification will have no difficulty in meeting all the criteria. For others, sustainability will be a longer journey. The criteria have been designed to be inclusive and encourage an incremental approach to sustainability.

### Sustainable Tourism Can Result in Substantial Business Savings

- Investing \$85 per shower to reduce flow can save \$70 in water bills per shower each year
- Investing \$10 per light bulb can save \$10 per bulb each year
- Shutting down appliances when not in use saves \$15 per appliance each year
- Turning towel rails off when guests are not in the room can save \$36 per room each year
- Setting computers to standby can save \$45/year
- In-room recycling and reducing waste by buying in bulk and can save \$270/year

Source: TRC (2010) *Saving Money by Being Green: Advice for Motels*

## Preparation

The Sustainable Seychelles certification is designed to be simple to understand and inexpensive to achieve, but it is important that you take the time to prepare for your assessment.

In order to prepare for your assessment, you should check off the following:



- Refer to the “Must” criteria described in Table 1. and ensure that you are successfully meeting all the required criteria. Your assessor will want to know that you have achieved these criteria before arranging to undertake your assessment.
- Review all the other criteria in the self-assessment form. With the cooperation of your staff work out which practices you are already undertaking. Check your approximate total against the minimum points needed in each section to see if you are ready for assessment
- If you do not have enough points for certification with the Sustainable Seychelles certification, it is important that you undertake some additional practices prior to being assessed to ensure that you are successful. If you feel you need more help to reach the right level, the Sustainable Seychelles certification Secretariat can assist you with a list of third party certified assessors that can provide technical assistance at a fee. Depending on your size, this assistance can be provided by the Section for free.

## The assessment

The Sustainable Seychelles certification Secretariat will be in touch with you to arrange a time for your assessment. It is important that you and your staff be ready for this assessment.

The assessment will begin with an interview with a senior staff member. After this, you and the assessor will go through your remaining practices in the order that they are listed on the assessment form.

You will not receive your score on the day of the assessment. Scores and notes need to be checked by the Sustainable Seychelles certification secretariat. In some cases you will be asked to

### Label process checklist

- ✓ Contact the Sustainable Seychelles certification secretariat of the Tourism Department to receive a manual and self-assessment form
- ✓ Complete self-assessment and return it to the Sustainable Seychelles certification secretariat within the Tourism Department. You will need to pay the assessment fee within two weeks.
- ✓ The Sustainable Seychelles certification secretariat will contact you to arrange a time for your assessment. The assessment will take between half a day and three days, depending on the size of the property.
- ✓ Prepare for the assessment by having all your policy and monitoring documentation ready for review.
- ✓ Await the results of the assessment. The assessors’ results are checked by the Sustainable Seychelles certification Secretariat and then reviewed by a multi-stakeholder Awards Panel. This process takes not more than two months from the date of assessment.
- ✓ Successful businesses will be recommended for an award. The award includes a package of marketing and other benefits such as the right to use the Label on your website and marketing materials, and listing on the Sustainable Seychelles certification website.



undertake a “corrective action” in a particular area, to ensure you get sufficient points to be certified.

## 2. SUSTAINABLE SEYCHELLES CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

### Must criteria

It is important to prepare for the assessment by carefully reviewing all the “must” or required criteria. Achieving these criteria alone is not enough to qualify for certification, but these are the basics every business needs to put into practice, regardless of its size. There are 22 must criteria spread throughout the eight themes of the standard. Use the Sustainable Seychelles certification assessment form to check off which ones you think you already comply with and highlight those you need to work on.

### Frequently asked questions

#### How does the Label account for different sized businesses?

The Sustainable Seychelles certification is designed for all sizes of enterprise. It is recognized that some parts of the Standard will be easier for larger business than smaller businesses. Consequently medium (25 to 50 rooms) and large (51+ rooms) businesses are required to get more points than small enterprises (1 to 24 rooms).

#### What if you are undertaking practices not described in the Criteria?

While the Sustainable Seychelles certification Criteria contain many of the practices that you associate with sustainability, it is also possible that your business is doing some great sustainability practices that the Sustainable Seychelles certification has not thought of.

We would like to learn from you and give you credit for good ideas. For this reason, each theme has points set aside for “other” practices.

When seeking recognition for “other” practices, note down what you are undertaking under the appropriate theme. The assessor will award a tentative score for your additional practices, which will be confirmed after your assessment by the Sustainable Seychelles certification manager.

#### How are points awarded for individual practices?

The number of points allocated to each practice has been determined by considering both the *impact* of the practices being undertaken, and the *effort* involved in achieving the criteria goal. Each of the Label’s criteria has been assigned a value from zero to three.

- ▶ *Zero* is for the must practices. These must be done by all businesses, so no points are gained for these.



- ▶ *One* point is allocated for practices requiring a **moderate** amount of effort.
- ▶ *Two* points are for criteria that require **significant** effort.
- ▶ *Three* points are for an **outstanding** level of effort.

As a guide, practices that are awarded more than one point are likely to involve both a significant investment of time or money, as well as a significant impact on the sustainability of the enterprise being assessed.

Table 2 shows the total possible points, and total required points under each theme and section.

**Table 2: Minimum Points Required**

Total possible points (black) and total required points (in red) by section and size of enterprise			
Standard, by themes	Small (1-24)	Medium (25-50)	Large (51+)
<b>Theme 1. Management</b>	5	6	7
Section 1: Policy	15	15	15
Section 2: Monitoring	5	5	5
Section 3: Health and Safety Standards	6	6	6
<b>Theme 2. Waste</b>	5	6	7
Section 4: Waste water	2	2	2
Section 5: Reducing Waste	15	15	15
Section 6: Recycling Waste	6	6	6
Section 7: Avoid Harmful Chemicals	12	12	12
Section 8: Other waste practices	3	3	3
<b>Theme 3. Water</b>	5	6	7
Section 9: Conserving Water	8	8	8
Section 10: Reusing Water	7	7	7
Section 11: Other Water Conservation Practices	3	3	3
<b>Theme 4. Energy</b>	5	6	7
Section 12: Conserving Energy	10	10	10
Section 13: Renewable Energy	6	6	6
Section 14: Greenhouse Gas	7	7	7
Section 15: Other Energy-Related Practices	3	3	3
<b>Theme 5. Staff</b>	5	6	7
Section 16: Staff Pay and Opportunities	2	2	2
Section 17: Staff Working Conditions	11	11	11
Section 18: Staff Training	7	7	7
Section 19: Other staff-related practices	3	3	3
<b>Theme 6. Conservation</b>	5	6	7
Section 20: Conserve Habitats and Species	3	3	3
Section 21: Garden and Design	10	10	10
Section 22: Other Conservation Practices	3	3	3
<b>Theme 7. Community</b>	5	6	7
Section 23: Community Relations	4	4	4
Section 24: Community Economy	5	5	5





Total possible points (black) and total required points (in red) by section and size of enterprise			
Standard, by themes	Small (1-24)	Medium (25-50)	Large (51+)
Section 25: Other Community Practices	3	3	3
<b>Theme 8. Guests</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Section 26: Guest	14	14	14
<b>TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>TOTAL Required points</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Total additional points</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TOTAL to be certified with Sustainable Seychelles certification</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>62</b>

If you are running a small business, you need just 46 points to earn the Label. These must include at least five points in each theme area. For a medium size enterprise 54 points are needed with six each theme. For a large business 62 points are needed with seven points in each area.

This spread of points ensures that certified businesses achieve a minimum standard across all areas of sustainability as well as allowing businesses to excel in particular areas such as energy conservation, or recycling.

From time to time, in recognition of improved industry standards, it will be necessary to increase the minimum score needed for certification. Sustainable Seychelles certification will provide advance warning of any changes to the minimum scores and give operators the opportunity to comment on any changes to the criteria.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING THE CRITERIA

#### Theme 1. Management

The Management Section includes policy, monitoring, and health and safety. This section requires some sustainability documentation. Some businesses, especially smaller ones, may be sceptical of the benefits

Of paperwork and sustainability policies and plans. But these can help your business in a number of ways. They can:

- ▶ Ensure your sustainability initiatives are undertaken systematically
- ▶ Monitor your progress over time and identify opportunities for further improvements
- ▶ Communicate your sustainability practices to **your staff, guests, and other stakeholders.**



By doing this, you will raise the overall awareness of sustainability and create a positive impression

### What are formal/documented sustainability practices?

Tourism operators often associate sustainability with operational ('day-to-day') practices like recycling and energy conservation. Formal sustainability practices are equally as important and are simply those that are written down. Examples include: operations manuals, housekeeping checklists, and staff induction materials, plans for reducing waste.

Other formal practices might include your Sustainability Statement and Action Plan, energy or water monitoring paperwork, a list of your suppliers (and to what extent sustainability plays a part in their business), and any other paperwork relating to sustainability.

Monitoring is the process of measuring your energy, water, and waste-related resource use regularly, over time. **This information becomes much more relevant when it is calculated relatively to your occupancy rate. This way you can track your progress towards increased efficiency per visitor e.g., energy, waste, or water per bed night.**

If you choose to monitor your energy use, you can do so by getting regular billing information from your electricity supplier, or by monitoring your energy meter yourself. Monitoring water use usually requires a similar approach. Monitoring waste can either focus on the amount of 'solid waste' or the amount of recycling that is being undertaken. Monitoring waste can involve weighing the waste produced or simply counting the number of bins that you fill.

How you communicate depends on the audience, but you can display your Sustainability Statement where people can see it (e.g., on your website, in your foyer, or in your guest folders). The statement can also be provided to your wholesalers and any other organisations that are interested in your sustainability measures.

Health and safety practices are legislated by external agencies, so most of these practices are compulsory.

Food safety management is important for both staff and guests. On average, worldwide, one in ten tourists returns home from an international holiday with digestive problems. Although it is not the role of the Sustainable Seychelles certification to police food hygiene, the basics have to be in place to create a healthy business environment. The most important issues to consider and address are known as the four Cs: cleaning, cross-contamination, cooking, and chilling.



## Theme 2. Waste

Waste has a number of potentially serious environmental impacts. The most obvious one is the waste that is sent to a landfill. On a small island, landfill waste toxins can easily leach into the soil and eventually back to the sea. Another good reason for reducing waste is that the more you throw out, the more you will need to buy. Reducing waste is an effective way of cutting your business costs.

**On average, a hotel creates around 1kg of waste per guest per night.** This adds up if you multiply it by the number of guest nights per year. Often about 30% of the hotel's solid waste can be sorted for recycling. Calculate and monitor your annual trash. Then reduce it by 30%. Here is the A-B-C Method

### Method for Monitoring Waste

A	B	C	A x B x C
Volume of trash cans (litres)	Number of trash cans full per week	Number of removals per year	Annual volume of waste (litres)
65	4	104	27,040
		<b>Total volume of waste</b>	<b>27,040 litres</b>

A simple rule of thumb for dealing with the issue of waste is that for anything you use in your business, you should explore opportunities to reduce, reuse, or recycle, in that order.

**Reduce** the amount of energy and water you use, and the amount of waste you produce by exploring ways to be more efficient; invest in energy and water conservation; look carefully at the products you use and consume in your business.

**Re-use** water through irrigation and grey-water schemes. Phase out single-use, disposable products in your business.

**Re-cycle** as much of your waste as possible.

Waste reduction is a widely understood and visible form of sustainable practice and therefore presents a good opportunity to foster support from guests, staff, and the community.

Hazardous materials also need careful attention for Sustainable Seychelles certification. Your business may be using materials that are hazardous to human health such as toxic paints, fertilizers, and chlorine. These substances must be handled, stored, and disposed of carefully and replaced with less hazardous alternatives where possible.



### Theme 3. Water

The broad aim of water-related practices is to reduce the amount of fresh water used by your enterprise. This reduces your impact on fresh-water supplies as well as your potential for water pollution. As with waste, the first step is to reduce water use through conservation and rainwater collection, and then to explore options for water reuse and recycling. Each of these practices receives points in Sustainable Seychelles certification.

#### How Much Water?

The quantity of water you use will depend on the type of hotel and your scale of operations. A luxury (four to five star) hotel in a tropical location typically uses 0.6 cubic meters to 1.4 cubic meters per guest night. If your hotel uses <0.8 cubic meters you are doing well. If you use >1 cubic litre per guest night you could be doing much better.

Look for leaks. Fit a plug. Involve staff in water saving programmes. Install sub- meters to see where most water is being used. Conduct regular inspections of faucets. **A leaking toilet can waste up to 750 litres a day.** This costs money and can cause difficulties in times of drought.

### Theme 4. Energy

Energy typically comprises up to 50% of a hotel's utility operating costs. **Reducing energy use is the area that is likely to have the most significant financial benefits to your enterprise.** Energy reduction practices can consist of 'management' practices that change staff and/or guest behaviour in order to reduce energy use. Examples include staff turning out lights and guests choosing not to have their towels laundered so frequently. There is also a range of practices that require investment in appliances, insulation, heating, or other energy-efficient technology. These investments often pay for themselves in the medium term.

	Standard incandescent	New Generation Halogen	Compact Fluorescent
Watt	100w	70w	20w

#### Fluorescent or Incandescent

Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as they use less energy and save money. They last about seven times longer than incandescent light bulbs and use about 60% less energy. CFLs do not get as hot as incandescent lamps—an important advantage in tropical climates, in terms of energy usage and reducing the risk of fires.

Be careful when installing or removing CFLs. They do contain tiny amounts of mercury and should be disposed of as hazardous waste.

Source: [www.rightlight.co.nz](http://www.rightlight.co.nz)

### Greenhouse gas emissions

Climate change and sea level rise are a serious threat to Seychelles. It is estimated that the earth's temperature will rise 1.8° C to 4.0° C by the end of the 21st century. Greenhouse gases are the



major contributor to global warming. Tourism is responsible for about 5% for all carbon emissions globally. Consequently, it is important that all sectors of the industry takes steps to reduce their carbon footprint. Monitoring greenhouse gas emissions is the first step towards increased awareness of the problems. There are many different online calculators that can be used to help you calculate your carbon in a step-by-step manner using your monitoring results.

As with waste, energy, and water, once you know how much you produce, you can set goals for reducing your carbon footprint. You might also want to consider participating in a carbon offset program.

#### **Carbon Offsetting**

One way to compensate for your greenhouse gases and support local conservation projects is to buy carbon offsets or encourage your guests to do the same. Carbon offsetting a voluntary financial contribution to a project designed to compensate the tree planting and renewable energy projects in proportion with the amount of carbon used in a particular activity such as a plane trip or a night's stay in a hotel.

### **Theme 5. Staff**

Staff and guest-related practices are of significant importance to the sustainability of your enterprise and of tourism in the Seychelles. The Staff criteria aim to recognise fair treatment of staff and staffing opportunities given to local people.

### **Theme 6. Conservation**

Most sustainability practices focus on reducing the negative impact of a business on the environment or the community in which they operate. The community and conservation criteria reflect the fact that an important part of sustainable tourism is to make a *positive* contribution to the local community and to local conservation activities.

### **Theme 7. Community**

If you wish to get recognition for your community and conservation practices, you will need to keep a record of your activities in this area. **This may include receipts or letters of gratitude from community groups, photos of conservation work, or testimonials from community members.**

### **Theme 8. Guests**

The Guest criteria recognise the importance of guest satisfaction to the sustainability of the business. Satisfied guests go home and recommend Seychelles to their friends. Word of mouth is one of the most effective forms of tourism marketing.



## 5. FURTHER RESOURCES

If you want to learn more about sustainability, there are many useful publications and websites available. Try:

New Zealand Ministry of Tourism Best Practice Guides:

<http://www.tourism.govt.nz/Info-For-Businesses/Sustainability-Best-Practice-Guides/>.

Sustainable Travel International Eco-Certification

<http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/sustainabletourismcertification.html>

International Tourism Partnership Environmental Management for Hotels

<http://www.tourismpartnership.org/Publications/Publications.html>

