



GO BLUE

Sustainable holiday destinations are becoming increasingly popular, ones where you can relax with peace of mind knowing you're travelling responsibly.

The Seychelles is one such destination. By Iga Motylska

If you're a responsible traveller, the kind who chooses a destination or tourism product based on responsible and sustainable tourism practices, the Seychelles ticks all the boxes.

This archipelago of 115 islands is one of 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world. Forty seven percent of its landmass is protected nature reserves and marine parks. It is a sanctuary whose natural diversity is protected by conservation laws and is home to two UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites. The Seychelles is where you can find the jellyfish tree, Gardiner's frog, one of the world's smallest frog species, and the Coco de Mer – containing the world's largest seed. The islands have 13 species and 17 subspecies of birds that occur nowhere else in the world, like the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher and the rare Seychelles Black Parrot.

It's a sanctuary that's protected by various conservation laws that safeguard its natural diversity and protect its key tourism assets, especially as it's one of the most tourism-dependent countries in the world. In the Seychelles it's prohibited to touch corals and marine life, collect sea shells, seeds, rocks or pick flowers in nature reserves and marine parks, or to disturb or feed wild animals.

The island nation may seem small as it only covers 450km², but it's surrounded by 1.4 million km² of exclusive economic zone (EEZ). It embraces the blue economy concept, whereby economic growth is aligned to the responsible long-term management of the marine environment and resources, beaches and fisheries. It also supports efficient ports and maritime sea lanes, while trying to reduce sea level rise, ocean acidification, toxic

dumping and water pollution.

In September 2011 the Seychellois ministry of tourism established the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL) as part of its Seychelles Sustainable Development Strategy, on the back of Vision 21. It's a voluntary points-based tourism management and certification programme to regulate mainstream sustainability practices in the hospitality industry by inspiring more efficient and sustainable ways of doing business within the sector.

It consists of 105 criteria – some of which are

mandatory while others are voluntary – that are divided into eight categories: management, waste disposal, water usage, energy usage, staff, corporate social responsibility projects, conservation efforts as well as guest satisfaction. These criteria set standards and guide sustainability improvements in hotels. It also acknowledges that often, embracing sustainable practices are not just good for the environment, but good for the general ledger too in terms

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of cutting business costs.

The SSTL also signed a Mutual Recognition Agreement with Fair Trade Tourism in July 2015, ensuring all SSTL-accredited establishments are also marketed under the Fair Trade Holiday brand that represents global best practice in the responsible tourism sector.

Furthermore, it has also applied for recognition with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) – a leading organisation that manages global sustainable standards with the aim of increasing sustainable tourism knowledge and practices among public and private stakeholders.

If you're planning a sustainable holiday in biodiversity paradise, visit the Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label's website: www.sstl.sc. 