

Sustainable Destination Award Good Practice Story

Nature conservation at Felicite Island

On the island of Felicite, we are running three main conservation projects. We have one land project, 1) the Island Habitat Restoration Project and two marine conservation projects, 2) the Reef Restoration Project and 3) the Turtle Monitoring Project. All projects are currently undertaken by Six Senses Zil Pasyon via collaborations with local NGOs.

1) Various species of exotic plants and trees were introduced in Seychelles during the beginning of colonization over 250 years ago. Native forests were cut down in order to establish coconut plantations, resulting in soil erosion. Native vegetation has been displaced by the highly invasive coco plum, which was originally introduced to combat the eroding soil. During the restoration process, adult Coco Plum bushes are removed and the soil cleared of all seedlings. Rare and endemic species are then planted in their place. 30% of Felicite Island is now cleared of invasive Coco Plum and restoration work is actively underway. When the habitat restoration is complete, we will implement the re-introduction of the endemic bird species, long since lost from Felicite due to environmental degradation.

2) Coral reefs are facing global decline due to a range of stresses including climate change, fishing, coastal development, sea urchin predation, etc. Meanwhile, these habitats provide essential ecosystem functions as well as tourism value.

The coral reef restoration program involves collecting fragments, growing them in a coral nursery, then transplanting those to a restored coral reef. This requires monitoring and maintenance, and also involves managing human factors in the area such as fishing and marine tourism activities. Over a one year period we grew 1,800 corals and recorded an average rate of growth of 200%. After transplanting all the corals we will establish a new coral nursery and continue our project exploring new techniques and educating tourists and the local community.

3) In Seychelles turtle poaching is illegal but is still practiced by local people, even if on a small scale. Cases of poaching have been reported to Seychelles National Park Authority on Felicite Island, in particular on Anse Takamaka, the beach the most difficult to monitor due to the limited access. The island has always been a nesting site for turtles, making it particularly vulnerable. A detailed protocol for nesting and hatchling management is in place now and data is shared at a country level. Local and tourist education is in place.