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Protecting our oceans and marine life_the case of Serena Beach Resort & Spa

With over 70% of the earth's surface covered by oceans and approximately 94% of life on earth being aquatic, oceans play a crucial role in maintaining life on earth. Yet, this importance and marine life in general that they support is under severe threat due a wide array of factors, which include: climate change and rising water temperatures, destructive fishing practices, insensitive tourism operations and pollution among others.

There is global consensus among scientists for instance that plastic pollution has had devastating impacts on the marine life resulting in declines in populations of some species such as sea turtle. Plastic bags resemble jelly fish, a common food for sea turtles and some seabirds eat plastic because it releases a chemical that makes it smell like their natural food. After ingesting the plastics, their stomachs get filled with plastic debris, preventing them from feeding and eventually leading to their death. Abandoned or discarded fishing gear which are largely made of plastic has also been identified as another cause of death of marine life as they become entangled in them.

These examples are a clear reminder that our oceans and marine life are in peril and the time to act is now. In recognition of the need to change our relationship with nature, and create real and long-lasting positive impact, Serena Beach Resort & Spa has taken bold actions to protect the ocean and its marine life. The property has emerged as a role model of how responsible tourism can play an important role in addressing these global threats, not only for the benefit of the present generation but also future generations. This article highlights some of the measures they have implemented towards this end.

Turtle conservation

For the last 28 years Serena Beach Resort& Spa, one of the Gold-rated properties in Kenya has distinguished itself as a leader in sea turtle conservation. It is worth noting that sea turtle face extinction making their protection of great importance. The nesting success of sea turtles around Mombasa where the property is located is threatened by factors such as human activities, predators and tidal flooding. It is on this basis, that the facility initiated a turtle conservation project, where nest sites found in marine habitats in areas such as Shanzu Bay, Mtwapa, Kikambala and Kenemai are protected and hatched within the property. Hatching cages made of wood and encased with a light-gauge mesh have been placed on the beach lawn of the facility, and are monitored daily to protect the eggs, detect early hatching and ensure the cages are in good condition. The picture below is a turtle hatching tagged cages near the beach, with turtle eggs layered with the sand.



What started as a dream has become an important milestone in and microcosm of marine conservation. According to the company data, approximately 61,931 turtle hatchlings have been released into the Indian Ocean since the inception of the project accounting for 85% success rate, and 560 Green, Hawksbill and Olive Ridley nests have been reported and secured. To celebrate the success of the property in its involvement in this vital initiative, Serena Hotels has organized an event dubbed “Turtle Fest” starting on the 21st till 28th February 2021. The event entails turtle hatching and release, as well as the opportunity for guests to learn about the important role the company plays in protecting this endangered species.

Awareness creation

One of the tools that the Serena Beach Resort & Spa uses to promote marine conservation is the human-size chess board found near the beach within the premises. The chess that is themed around Marine Life Vs Life Cycle of a Butterfly is based on conservation projects that the property is running, that is butterfly conservation beside the turtle conservation highlighted above. The chess pieces have been made by Ocean Sole Foundation out of recycled flipflops that are found disposed on the beaches and other water sources such as rivers and lakes. It is estimated that about 2,512 flipflops were repurposed to make the chess board. In this way, the property is creating awareness about the impact of marine debris on the environment and the importance of conserving the marine life. The illustration below is a picture of the walk in chess board at the facility.



Elimination of single-use plastics

A plastic straw to use in taking our favorite drinks and a plastic water bottle to hold water that helps us quench our thirsts may seem very harmless, considering that these materials that are made primarily from fossil fuels are quite often than not disposed of right after use. However, in reality they come with a heavy 'environmental price' to pay as already highlighted above. The world's plastic addiction has had devastating impacts not only on the marine life but also on human health.

Although single-use plastic pollution is most visibly in the streets of our towns and cities like Nairobi, our water resources are affected even more. Litter can be the first stage in a waste stream that enters waterways as plastic disposed on the street, which is then washed away by rain ending up into our rivers, lakes and oceans. Like all the other Serena properties, Serena Beach Resort & Spa has taken steps to eliminate the use of single use plastics within its operations. This is by shifting from: use of plastic bottled water to glass bottled water, use of paper straws instead of plastic straws, and use of refillable dispensers for guest amenities (shampoo, shower gel, lotion) rather than the miniature single use bottles. This is in the knowledge that every single action, big or small is crucial in leaving our world a better place. The illustration below is a paper straw in use at the facility.



Protecting our oceans and the marine life should be at the heart of our actions today and in the years to come. The encouraging news is that eco-rated properties like Serena Beach Resort & Spa are leading the way in rising to this environmental challenge of existential proportion. However, not a single person or business can address these problems on its own. It requires a collective effort from all of us. Therefore, it is our hope that you too will be part of the solutions to secure the future of our planet!