Eco byte Vol 2020_09_16

Greetings!

Solving the menace of single use plastic in tourism industry – the case of Angama Mara

Tourism is one of the major drivers of Kenya's economy. Over the years, communities living around tourist destinations in the country have derived a wide array of benefits such as: improvement of schools' infrastructure, increased access to health services, increased water supply and access to ready markets for their products such as beadworks among many others. Development benefits aside, tourism has also had adverse impacts on the environment and human health and safety in the form of increased waste generation, air pollution and water pollution. The onus is therefore on tourism industry players such as accommodations to adopt transformative approaches to minimize these impacts, and create real and long-lasting difference in sustainability.

The good news is that ecorated facilities are already leading the way in reducing their foot print on the environment. This week's article will focus on the menace of single-use plastics, and highlight the sustainable alternatives and measures that the Gold-rated Angama Mara has integrated in its operations to address this challenge.

Setting up of an in-house water bottling plant

Angama Mara has invested on an in-house domestic water Reverse Osmosis purifying system to ensure avoided reliance on plastic water bottles throughout the lodge, from guest areas and guest tents, to safari vehicles and even the back of house. The water is later filled into reusable/refillable branded glass water bottles for use in the guest area, guest tents and during safari. This investment has prevented the estimated use of 135,000 single use plastic water bottles by guests alone in the last 5 years. The numbers could rise higher as they do not include those that might have been used by the lodge's staff who are 130 in number and are equally served by the same Reverse Osmosis purifying system. The image below is an illustration of a Reverse Osmosis purifying system.



Source: https://angama.com/blog-posts/

Use of refillable toiletries

Angama Mara uses sizable branded glass refillable guest amenity dispenser containers for shampoo, body wash, conditioner and body lotion as opposed to the miniature single use plastic containers as a way of cutting on the single use plastic generated from the facility.

The EcoBrick project

An EcoBrick is simply a plastic water bottle packed so tightly with unrecyclable single use plastic materials that it becomes as hard as a brick and is later used for construction purposes. This project was started with an aim of repurposing all the inevitable plastic bottles and other single use materials that find their way to the trash or even the surrounding environment within which the lodge operates. By end of 2019, more than 1,700 EcoBricks had been made from this project with every 4 – 5 EcoBricks representing one full garbage bag of single use materials. With 500 EcoBricks already used in the construction of four raised beds at the farm, that equates to between 400 – 500 garbage bags worth of single use plastic wastes locked up in the four beds.

The EcoBricks are made by the Angama Mara's staff during free time or on their off days at home. Angama Mara then pays for each block regardless of its origin; this is aimed at incentivizing the staff for making the EcoBricks from Angama's waste and the waste in their home. In 2019, Angama Mara paid the staff for more than the 1,700 EcoBricks made.



Source: https://angama.com/blog-posts/

Further, there are plans to approach the local schools and share this idea with them so that the students can collect the single use plastic trash from the school and community at large to make EcoBricks, which later Angama Mara will use to complete a project at the school in collaboration with the students.

Use of paper straws

The lodge prefers the use of paper straw instead of the plastic straw as a way of cutting on the single use plastic waste it generates. The plastic wastes end up in the landfills and into the oceans causing harm to the marine ecosystems from coral reefs to animal species. It's estimated that annually, about 8.8 million tons of this plastic waste enters and pollutes our oceans. In addition, plastic debris constitutes marine pollution. Studies further show that several species worldwide have been affected by plastic ocean pollution, including sea turtle species, seabird species, and marine mammal species.

It's through such innovations that the industry as a whole can help tackle the big problem of single use plastic that ends up polluting the environment and the water bodies. We hope this article will help you learn new techniques on how to cut on your plastic wastes and in the long-term contribute to a cleaner earth.