



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM INITIATIVES

Mermaid Hotel & Club has embarked upon the following programmes to ensure responsibility towards social, cultural, economic and well being of our society and of our environment.

Education

It is a known fact that people living in the coastal belt are more violent and more easily agitated as compared to people living in the interior of the country. Most hotels on the coastal belt have undergone a series of problems from their inception stages.

The hotel commenced operations in 1983 and one of our primary objectives was to build a strong relationship with the village in order to gain their respect and support in the business that we were engaged in. An ideal way to approach the village was to support children's activities in areas of education, personal development and creating a joyful childhood. Furthermore, it was vital to educate the parents the need and the importance to create an environment for the upbringing of their children.

With a view of creating better citizens to the nation, it was imperative to change the mentality of people in the Mahawaskaduwa area and educate the village about tourism. Therefore, we decided that grooming the children educationally and mentally would be the most important factor considering these children would be the adults in the years to come, and our dealings will be with the new generation. A scholarship programme was introduced in 1983 at Sri Subuthi Vidyalaya in Mahawaskaduwa for students in grades 6 - 11, and today 19 scholarships are offered annually.

For an ideal upbringing of the youth, a psychological approach was required as parents of the village did not have the capacity or knowledge of creating the ideal environment for children. With the assistance of a local organization involved in village development, we were able to locate a competent person capable of handling "Problem Children". Mr. S.L.D. R. Ratugama, currently the Principal of Wadduwa Central College and former Director-Education of the Education Ministry, had a proven record of accomplishments of communicating and dealing with "Problem Children" with his psychological approach.

In February 2007, a lecture was arranged for the students of Sri Subuthi Vidyalaya in Mahawaskaduwa about the importance of behavior, respecting parents and elders, obeying rules, cleanliness and leading life in the best possible manner. A book titled "Sara Dharma Surakimu" was donated to all students in grades 8 to 11; this was followed by another lecture conducted by Mr. Ratugama. Today the Sri Subuthi Vidyalaya follows sections of the book "Sara Dharma Surakimu" as a part of their daily readings.

In addition, a lecture was arranged in November 2007 for parents of students attending Sri Subuthi Vidyalaya and parents of the village, highlighting the importance of the development of children, creating the ideal environment to raise children in and setting an example, which would make them respectful citizens of the country. Two more lectures were held in March and July 2008 and another review lecturer was arranged in June 2009.

The level of English education the village children receive at school level is not sufficient to meet the requirement of future employment. We recognized the need to educate the village youth in English language and therefore the hotel has been fully sponsoring a weekly English class for children of grades 5 to since July 2009. The classes are held at the hotel conference center and about 50 students attend.

These activities have enabled us to approach the village people and improve our relationship with them, as we genuinely care for the people of the village.

Community Service

Joyful Childhood

Mahawaskaduwa village children are invited annually in two batches to a special children's Christmas Party and Sri Lankan New Year Party.

Village Drainage System

In 2006 and 2007, the hotel funded the construction and laying of an underground storm-water drain in the village; this helped improve the drainage system during the rainy season.

Almsgiving for Elders Home

Since 1987, a monthly almsgiving is arranged at an elders' home that is located in the vicinity of the hotel.

Convex Mirror at an Unprotected Railway Line

In 2010 the hotel purchased and installed a convex mirror near an unprotected railway crossing near the hotel. Our village community, tour representatives and motorists were complaining about the danger of crossing as they found it difficult to access the train movements until they reach the railway track. The installation of the convex mirror has helped many people in this area including tourists, tour representatives and drivers to as they can visibly access the train movements before crossing railway track.

Local Community

Creating Financial Opportunities in the Village

Local food & flowers are purchased for use in the hotel. Vegetables are purchased from the Sunday Pola. We encourage our guests to visit the nearby local places of interests.

We believe that the local community should financially benefit from tourism. The standard of living in the village has improved drastically between 1983 and now. A community, which was entirely dependent on fishing and toddy tapping, has changed in to a business community selling hires, handicrafts, gems, tailoring services and ready-made garments etc.

Acceptance of Beach Boys and Improving Relationships

Since the inception of the hotel, we have managed to gain the respect of the traders on the beach. We have had constant dialog with them at regular intervals in order to have a better understanding of our needs. Although this was a tough process in the 80's and 90's we have now educated them up to an extent where they understand the tourism business well, and also the repercussions if misused or exploited.

The Hotel together with the Tourism Development Authority embarked on a project to train and develop them in professional skills. A series of training programmes were organized by the Tourism Development Authority. The very first training was held in the October 2008 followed by a written exam and the candidates who passed were officially licensed as "Beach Operators". An additional secession was held in July 2009 for the candidates who were unable to receive the license.

We assisted them to form an association and elect their own managing committee. The association of the beach boys, "The Mermaid Praja Haula" consists of 42 members today.

Turning the Beach Boys Liability to an Asset

The beach boys in general were always identified as undisciplined persons who hassle tourists and the hotels. They used stay at the entrance to the beach hanging on the

hotel fence. They followed tourists to canvass business and simply could not accept rejections; when services were refused they abused tourists, threw sand and continued to hassle them even more. They failed to understand that tourists have spent a substantial amount on a holiday to enjoy their annual beach vacation. This was a continuous battle between the Hotel Owners and Managers with Beach Boys.

Mermaid looked at the problem 'differently' and understood them whilst other hotel Owners and Managers continued to believe they were a menace and believed they could never be changed. Our approach was different and we believed that we can change them. We understood that we have moved into their lands and that we have to live in peace with them. We recognized that there are a large number of unemployed and underemployed youth who are looking for an income. Gradually, we built up a relationship with them. We guided them, advised them, taught them what is good and what is bad and convinced them to always do good things to benefit tourists. They trusted us and listened to us and today we are very proud we have made a significant improvement to their lives personally. One of the main attraction at Mermaid are the beach boys and the great services rendered by them.

There are hardly any bad comments from guests. In comparison there are a large number of very good comments and you may visit TripAdvisor and click on http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/UserReview-g304136-d316671-m11765-Hotel_Mermaid_Club-Kalutara.html. Today Mermaid Beach Boys provide two very good services; a unique Sri Lankan village experience by inviting them to their houses and offering a typical Sri Lankan home cooked meal and offering personalized tours with a friendly guide service at competitive rates.

We are now working on the final stages to get them to do business like true professionals.

Cultural

The annual village Sri Lanka New Year celebrations were fully financed during 2009 and 2010 until they found other funding sources. Effective 2011 the hotel only partly sponsors the event as they have sufficient funders.

The hotel sponsors the certificates of the Annual Cultural Arts competition held by the Kalutara Pradeshiya Sabha for the children.

Environment

We believe in living in harmony with and preserving the environment around us and we encourage this practice in our resort. We encourage our guests to use bed linen for three days. From its inception the hotel has conformed to national environmental regulations and we do not discharge waste water to the sea.

Air conditioners

All our air conditioners are set to 24°C which is considered a comfort temperature and advise our guests accordingly. At this temperature the guests can have a comfortable rest at night without the use of blankets and hence blankets are not provided on the beds but are available on request for guests who prefer a lower temperature. We find that less than 15% of our guests make use of this facility. Thus a considerable reduction in electrical energy is achieved.

Energy Saving Measures

In an effort to support the national cause of saving energy, our staff are educated regarding the importance of energy saving and its impact to the environment. The awareness prompted them to request CFL bulbs as a gift for all staff members for the 2008 staff party. We have placed notices in all staff areas requesting staff members to switch off all unused lights/fans. We have rescheduled the usage of equipment and furthermore equipment is used in a planned manner in order to save energy. Shower heads in guest rooms were changed to save on water consumption and the energy consumption for heating; this is explained under "Water Saving".

Water Saving

All shower heads in guest rooms were changed to Grohe Shower Rose heads. The water flow rate of the old shower rose could not be adjusted and had an estimated flow rate of 6.5 liters per minute, where as the new Grohe Shower heads were adjustable. We found that a flow rate of 4.5 liters per minute was a sufficient flow rate for a shower. It is estimated that an average person takes two showers per day and each shower time is about 6.5 minutes; we estimate a saving of 26 liters per person per day by changing the shower heads. This has not only helped us save water, but will considerably save the energy consumption for water heating.

Economic

Employee Relations

Since year 2005 a medical insurance scheme was introduced for all categories of staff; these include in-door and out-door coverage and staff can include their family members to the scheme.

The average salary per employee in non-executive grades were increased by 15% from 2010 to 2011.

An “Excellence in Performance” reward scheme was introduced in 2003. Salary increases, promotions, excellence in performance rewards, etc are based on employee performance. A fine-tuned well-thought-out evaluation scheme was developed by our group’s executives and is used across the board. Under the “Excellence in Performance” scheme a total of Rs. 1’342’000/= was distributed to our employees in July 2011.

We employ staff according to the best labour standards and human rights, treating them as individuals in their personal fulfillment, career progress and expression of their wishes on organizational matters.

Fair Competition

Our one “rate per market” policy has created a high level playing field for all our partners. The hotel mainly depends on wholesaler business. The three key, generating segments are the British, German & Russian/Eastern European markets and we ensure that our partners in each country are provided with a uniform pricing in each market.

Customers and Suppliers

Our commitment to “delighting the customers” is embodied in our Mission statement.

We settle all our suppliers before the end of the following month

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