

WANDERLUST, WITH PURPOSE

When you think of sustainable travel, trips such as orangutan trekking in Borneo, perhaps, or a sojourn in a remote biosphere reserve in Mexico, or even a luxurious stay on an island sanctuary, embraced by lush tropical palms and giant granite peaks in Seychelles spring to mind.

While there aren't definitive statistics on the percentage of the business protecting and investing in valuable areas, such as national parks and wilderness areas, there are indications that it is on the rise. Many recognise that although sustainable use of natural resources can sometimes be prohibitively difficult, protected areas can present a plethora of business opportunities, both intrinsic and in commercial value.

"The majority of professionals in the travel industry now understand that the future of the tourism industry must be sustainability," Bruce Simpson, managing director of North Island, a luxury private island resort in Seychelles' conserving ecosystem, tells *Debonair*. "More than being environmentally green, it's about social responsibility and helping maintain culture, heritage and people."

A rapidly growing tourist base — 1.6 billion people by 2020, according to the World Tourism Organisation — accentuated the need for business, which has long been seen as a barrier to the sustainable use of natural resources, to explore investing in nature to protect the bottom line.

Assigning economic value to conservation, The Long Run, with 31 members in 21 countries, through its nature-based tourism businesses collectively protect 5.6 million acres of nature, more than 30,000 species — of which 276 are endangered or threatened. "Caring for nature makes business sense," says director Delphine Malleret King.

"A simple example is that the less resources a business consumes — water, energy, waste — the less its environmental footprint, the lower its costs, and the better its profits. Similarly, there's no healthy tourism profit in the long term without healthy wildlife, wilderness, engaged communities and diverse cultures."

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