



Protecting Biodiversity Galley Bay Style

There is a constant debate about whether tourism and sustainability can really go hand in hand. In small island developing states such as Antigua and Barbuda, the main economic driver is tourism. It is important that sustainability be factored into each organization's operations. Many of our visitors come for the sun, sea and sand and conservation of biodiversity is not always a major selling point. But can tourism and sustainability go hand in hand?

In our corner of the globe, there are some hotels that try their utmost best to support tourism initiatives and to promote conservation initiatives within the realm of the tourism product. International certification programs for the travel and tourism industry like Green Globe 21 are there to support and guide environmental initiatives within the hospitality arena. There is no doubt that there is a delicate balance between satisfying guest needs and environmental best practices; between providing luxury and conservation. One such organization that has been making strides in balancing sustainability along with delivering a quality tourism product is the EAG's Gold sponsor, Galley Bay Resort and Spa, Antigua. The resort has been going "green" long before it was trendy to do so and sustainability has been cemented into the hotel's mantra.

Wetlands, Mangroves & Eco-Systems



Its rustic ambience and location within a wetland and marine ecosystem makes it an excellent sanctuary for a variety of birds and other wildlife. Guests who stay at the property can enjoy breathtaking views of birds in flight at dusk and dawn. They make use of the binocular rentals and partake in bird watching activities in the comfort of the hotel property. Apart from the stunning beach and location within a wetland, Galley Bay boasts an excess of 45 species of birds including the endangered Whistling duck, the Antillean Crested Hummingbird, the Yellow Warbler, the Night Crowned Heron, the White cheeked Pintail Duck and a variety of other migratory birds. The hotel takes these bird species seriously and there is special signage to describe the resident and migratory birds on the property. Bird charts and other types of literature on the flora and fauna are also accessible at the resort through one of the hotel's friendly representatives. There are also informational signs indicating the endemic flowering and fruit plants on the property.



Organic Gardens & Farm to Table



Guests can enjoy the aroma of fresh herbs and spices on their nature walk, which is held on a weekly basis. These herbs and spices are used regularly in the hotel's restaurants, bringing freshness to the plate. The resort is located in one of the country's wetlands and all four mangrove species can be seen. Periodically, guests are taken on mangrove tours so that they can learn about the importance of these very valuable ecosystems.

Bio-Diversity & Education



For Earth Day Celebrations the resort devotes a month of activities to the topics of biodiversity and waste management, including the participation of guests, staff and primary school students. These events include tree planting and waste management presentations at the local community schools, Golden Grove and Five Island primary schools and mangrove tours and bird watching with guests.

Training is very important before sharing information and knowledge. The staff at Galley Bay Resort and Spa have received a significant amount of training in biodiversity conservation. The hotel's Environmental, Health and Safety Coordinator Christine Young says, "It is important for hotel and tourism entities to not only allow our guests to enjoy the sun, sea and sand but to enlighten them about our natural environment and ecosystems so that they can understand how they can play a role in environmental preservation." As gold corporate members of the Environmental Awareness Group, Galley Bay has received significant benefits from the organization to educate staff and guests about its diverse ecosystems.

For more information on EAG and Galley Bay, please call or email The Environmental Awareness Group at 462-6236 or email us at eagantigua@gmail.com / Galley Bay Resort & Spa christineyoung@galleybay.com.