

Saigon Times
TOP 40 Respecting forests and nature

By Binh Nguyen in HCMC

Choosing timber as a material for construction is not new to the resort developments around the globe, particularly in the tropical Southeast Asian hideaways, but the concept of using sustainably managed hardwood for this purpose is still alien to many developers in Vietnam.

The concept was brought into life in Vietnam just a few years ago, and so it is not easy for resort developers to find sufficient supply of legal quality hardwood from the forests in this Southeast Asian country. For this reason, the developers have to count on timber suppliers abroad and this pushes their costs higher.

Despite the high cost for sustainably managed hardwood in Vietnam, Indochina Capital and the world-acclaimed hotel, resort and spa firm Six Senses still opt for legally-exploited hardwood as one of the primary materials for a luxury resort project in the little known but visit-worthy island Con Dao in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province.

Gilbert D. Mironos, project director of Indochina Land Project Management, says that part of the project vision is that these materials are sourced legally and certified by the Vietnam Department of Forestry

Main sponsor:



as well as timber inspectors.

"When we select these materials we ensure that we are in compliance with environmental requirements and these materials are planted and managed. They are renewable resources," Mironos says.

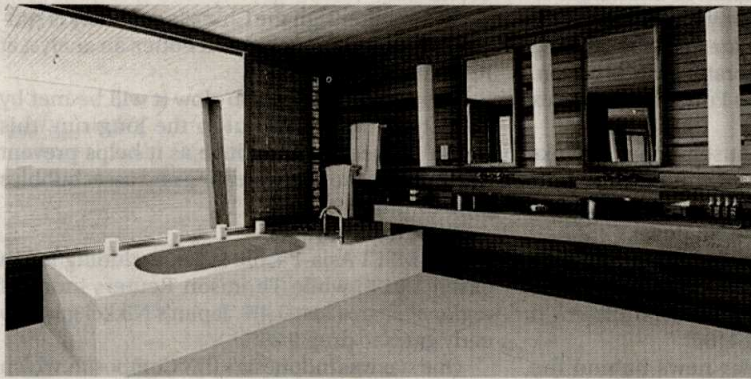
The major concept for the Six Senses Con Dao is to harmonize and beautify its design, lay-out, scale and texture of all the buildings with the natural beauty of the environment, and thus providing continuous breath-taking views for the resort and the island haven.

As legal quality timber is still in short supply in Vietnam, staff of the Con Dao project's owner Indochina Capital have traveled a long way to get to Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia and New Zealand to seek suppliers whose materials can help the resort harmonize with the surrounding landscape of Con Dao.

The high cost Indochina Capital and Six Senses are paying has been rewarded as Six Senses Con Dao Resort has been recognized as Green Globe Design Benchmarked Accommodation and has secured the right to display the Green Globe Benchmarked Design logo.

"To be benchmarked, an operation annually supplies measures of the relevant indicators to Green Globe who then forward the information to benchmarking assessors, Earthcheck, to produce a benchmarking report, which indicates the operation's current standing," Mironos explains.

Green Globe is the global sustainability benchmarking program established in Australia set green criteria for the travel and tourism industry. Mironos names the numerous criteria for being benchmarked by Green



A villa of Six Senses Con Dao Resort is made from the timber of sustainably managed forests
Photo: Courtesy of Indochina Capital

Globe 21 and World Wide Fund for Nature as sustainable travel and tourism company and green office with environmental management system.

The company is committed to practicing sustainable ethics for design and construction; conserving nature and mitigating climate change; motivating employees to respect and reserve environmental values; using eco-labeled products and suppliers; recycling used paper; and re-using the reverse side of printed paper.

The company also invests much in on-site waste separation and recycling, composting facility to produce organic fertilizer for the resort plantation, environmental impact assessment for construction, landscape management for terrestrial and aquatic habitats, wetland and hydrological monitoring, and use of native plants and fruit trees.

Equally importantly, the company is required to generate jobs for locals as well as use local suppliers and products.

The Six Senses Con Dao Resort has met the criteria months ahead of its soft opening set for late this

year. Some US\$33 million is going to development of this 13-hectare resort of 35 hotel villas with complete amenities, 15 luxury residential villas and tropical wellness Spa.

Around US\$100,000 has been planned for the initial installation of a composting and fertilizing station, equipped with a shredder and chipping machine. This facility will be used to produce compost, fertilizer, bio char and bio fuel from a mix of landscape waste and collected resort waste from kitchen and offices.

"With our Six Senses ECO Centro 'waste to wealth' concept and zero waste discharge of both liquid and solid waste, all our waste will be collected, separated, treated and used for the next lifespan and usage," Mironos says.

He says the Six Senses Con Dao Resort will collect and treat both wastewater and rainwater at its sewage treatment plant for irrigating 10,000 square meters of landscaping and planting. The resort will utilize wind power from other service providers on the island.

"Six Senses Resort and Spas has a

strong environment and nature and habitat program. We are committed to protecting the plants, animals, land and sea with corral and marine life," Six Senses Technical Director Juergen Seidel says.

Seidel says Six Senses Resort and Spas has social environmental responsible fund (SERF) initiatives covering all sectors, and sets guidelines and rules for each resort in order to ensure a minimal footprint impact on the environment in areas where Six Senses presents and operates.

"Once the resort (on Con Dao) is opened the SERF funds drive these initiatives," Mironos says. He adds the employees, local communities and guests would be the key focus of the program, whose aim is to provide them the knowledge and platform to act as a responsible individual and respect the environment.

Mironos says a 'responsible' resort operation does need to have responsible leaders who drive its plan, system and structure as well as strong will and commitment to make the site and the community in which it operates better and to contribute to preserving the world.

"Every single step and measure will add up and making a difference," he says.

The Saigon Times Daily

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