



Far from ordinary

A gutsy
demolition makes
way for a tropical
refuge steeped in
eco-contemporary
stylishness

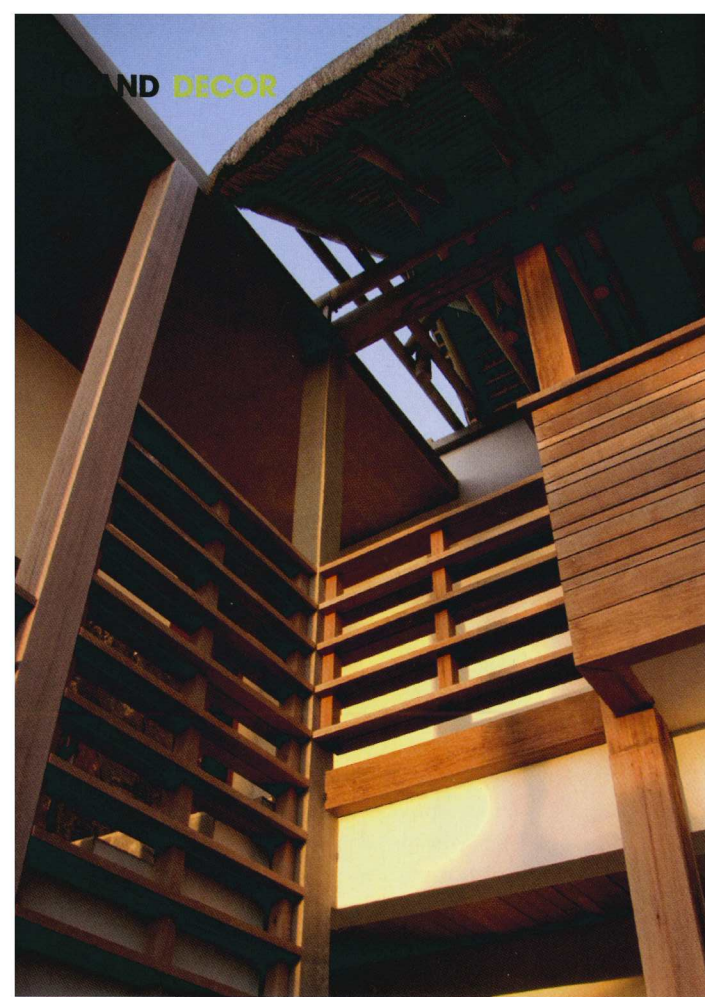
STORY NATALIE BORUVKA
PHOTOS
GUNTHER GRÄTER



OPPOSITE The reception area at Sun Resorts' latest Mauritian idyll, Long Beach, welcomes visitors with a contemporary urban elegance that resonates throughout the resort. Pioneering a state-of-the-art intelligent design, it employs the principles of passive ventilation and the latest technologies for conserving resources and energy, and minimising waste reduction. **THIS PIC** Long Beach offers two swimming pools of exceptional design maintained with sophisticated ozone and UV treatments. The one pictured here is cleverly elevated providing simultaneously an infinity view extending across the majestic expanse of the Indian Ocean and shelter for the fair-weather pool situated at its rear.



THIS PIC Occupying a 59-acre site on the Belle Mare Peninsula, which is on Mauritius' east coast, Long Beach boasts the longest and widest stretch of white-sand coastline of any Mauritian resort to date, with a spectacular beachfront 900 metres long and 40 metres wide.



TOP An integral part of making Long Beach a truly sustainable project involved building up an effective network of local contacts whose advice and input proved invaluable. Setting up a workshop on site, a group of local artisans were responsible for the beautiful slatted woodwork, a prominent architectural feature of the resort's design. **THIS PIC** Shores, a sophisticated cocktail and lounge bar, embodies the modern linear elements of a 20th Century pavilion.

LONG BEACH, A NEWLY-OPENED TROPICAL IDYLL on Mauritius' east coast, was born of a valiant and expansive vision. Sun Resorts' latest ambitious venture surfaced on the site of their once famously popular family getaway, Le Coco Beach where – identifying a change in market needs – all 344 rooms were raised to make way for 60 acres of contemporary-eco elegance fronting a prized beach 900 metres long and 40 wide. With a coastline of hotels the density of which competing only with that of the palm trees, it stands to reason that those involved were intent on creating the extraordinary. 'Our aim was to initiate a new generation of hotels that would in no way need to contend with the 110-strong market but,' explains general manager Nicolas de Chalain, 'serve rather as a forerunner that every other development wouldn't hesitate imitating.'

Besides the contemporary appeal of its design, the resort's impressive green credentials bear coveting. In support of the Sustainable Mauritius initiative which aims to achieve 65% energy independence by 2030, Long Beach ticked the boxes of a comprehensive set of energy-conserving criteria resulting in funding from the French government in the form of an AFD (Agence Francaise de Development) grant – a first for the island.

Remarkable lengths were pursued to ensure an environmentally sensitive construction. In some instances the measures implemented proved smartly resourceful: an on-site crusher produced 20 000 cubic metres of rubble that was reused as infill for the new build, reducing the quantity of material brought to site, as well as minimising the presence of invasive earth-moving equipment. Foreseeing the amount of dust that would ensue from the demolition, the effects of beach and ocean pollution were minimised by dampening of the site and the use of protective geotextile membranes.

The resort reveals an improbably lush density of palm trees, groundcover, shrubs and exotic colour-bursting terraces. Prior to building an astounding 3 000-plus resident plants were carefully removed to an on-site nursery where they were tended to until ready for replanting. Almost half of the total 500 000 shrubs and plants were propagated on site, the task of composing the natural landscape falling to the internationally acclaimed Bensley Design Studios whose completed canvas partners immaculately with the architecture. The appointment of South African-based Stauch Voster Architects was another in a series of bold moves. Despite having 68 years of commercial project experience, the firm had never before designed a resort hotel. It's a fact not in the slightest sense apparent. If anything, the design is a consummate spatial arrangement of private and social areas, striking yet sensitive to the natural locale.

Entered via an elevated airy block – screened by motorised aluminium shutters which, when opened, offer glorious views of an impossibly close ocean expanse – the complex spills out on both sides in a crescent-shaped composition intended to make the most of the sea views. Descending to beach-level, space convenes centrally on a piazza of geometric patterning bordered by four restaurants, a pavilion-style bar and a conference centre / night club.

'There's really nothing to do at a beach resort in the evening,' is Nicolas' frank admission. The idea was, therefore, to create an urban-inspired spatial element that would bring guests together and, at night, offer a hub of dining and entertainment options. 'It's a unique blend of modern and tropical architecture and landscaping that we believe meets the aspirations of the sophisticated and discerning consumer,' says Nicolas.

It may sound pretentious but it isn't. Distinctly exotic and local flavours pervade, providing at once a point of contrast and an unaffected complement to the acutely modern linearity of elements. Robust, angled walls clad in volcanic basalt removed from neighbouring cane sugar plantations recall a surprisingly-fitting Aztec aesthetic. Slatted Balau woodwork, a prominent detail in public areas as well as screening on each apartment balcony, celebrates the skill of local artisans, some of whom set-up a workshop on site.

The 255 suites are, however, unapologetically modern. Claiming a minimum of 109 square metres of beach space, they're also unabashedly spacious. Cape Town-based Keith Design kept the schemes simple in a swathe of cool white with alternating accents of sea green and turquoise, and coral hues. Each room is 'alive' in the sense that it is equipped with a motion and heat sensor that automatically adjusts the ambient temperature, maintaining a pleasantly comfortable 26 degrees. The interiors present subtle surface nuances and a rhythmic language of pattern that recall the exterior façades and it is in this fine detailing that Long Beach's aesthetics come to final triumph. It is an Eden where the only pressing concern is whether to linger longer outdoors or in. **TB**

For further information and reservations contact **World Leisure Holidays** on 0860-954-954 or go to wlh.co.za or longbeachmauritius.com



ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT The furniture and styling in each of the seven bars and restaurants is theme appropriate, ranging from relaxed beach chic to Asian simplicity.

RIGHT The sprawling fair-weather pool, a delight for children and adults alike, is serviced by a 142-seater restaurant specialising in fresh fish and a cocktail bar equipped with its own sugar cane crusher. Add the finest Mauritian rum and let your taste buds run rampant.





LONG BEACH in Numbers

255 rooms each with a minimum of 109 square metres of beach space

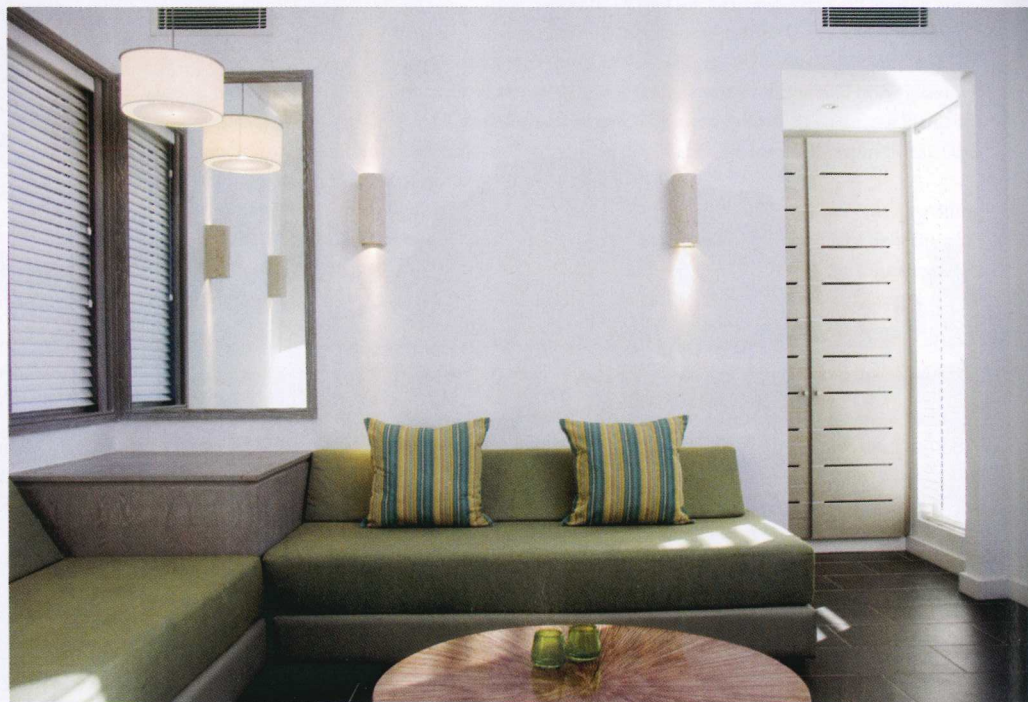
900 metre long
40 metre wide beach

20 000 cubic metres of demolished rubble used as infill

6 000 energy efficient bulbs installed

Total of 4 530 trees and palms and 500 000 plants, of which 26 species are endemic

3 400 plants removed and replanted





OPPOSITE PAGE AND THIS PAGE The suites offer understated contemporary elegance and an energy-saving resourcefulness with presence detectors regulating the energy use depending on the occupancy. Family rooms (below left) feature a separate room that can accommodate up to three children on sofa beds as well as a separate shower and bathroom.

