

An alluring destination

INTERVIEW WITH H.E. ALAIN ST ANGE

MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE, REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES



ALAIN ST ANGE

was born in La Digue, the third largest island of the Seychelles. After formal education at Seychelles College on Mahé, the country's largest island, he left for France and Germany to obtain hotel management and tourism qualifications and worked in the hospitality industry in the UK, Australia as well as the Seychelles. He served as an MP before joining the Seychelles Tourism board as director of tourism marketing rising to become the director of that organisation, subsequently being appointed Minister of Tourism and Culture. He is a published author of several books.

Anse Lazio, Praslin, voted one of the world's most beautiful beaches

What do you believe are the chief factors behind Seychelles' increasing global popularity as a tourist destination?

I believe that the popularity of the Seychelles' brand has slowly been gathering momentum for several years. Popularity often does not happen instantly as it takes time for the word to get around and for reputations to gather pace.

Today, Seychelles is benefiting from a reputation that has taken years to build. One example is our strong conservation credentials of many decades have ensured that our environment has remained very much intact and, so, alluring to travelers. We live in a world that is getting grimmer by the day and if we wish our tourism product to succeed in a crowded market place, we need to stand out as offering something special. I believe in this context Seychelles has succeeded and today we are reaping the benefits.

I think that for quite some time we were guilty of sitting on the excellence of our product without aggressively promoting its true value. This is something we have worked on in recent years, realizing that we are living in a fast changing world with what seems to be a never-ending supply of new technologies that can be put to good use. The onus is on us to capitalize on this dynamic and this is something that we are constantly seeking to do via a suite of marketing

campaigns designed to work our traditional markets: France, Germany, Italy, the UK, etc., while striving towards maximum market penetration and market share in promising new ones in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas.

Seychelles is a country with limited resources and so it has been essential that we put those resources, both financial human and material to good use in achieving our goals. This has meant taking a hard look at our infrastructure, the way we operate and in particular the way we are represented in our offices abroad which are in the front line of our drive to have Seychelles' tourism recognized for what it is. We have done a lot of reorganizing and honing of the infrastructure to make it as efficient as possible and, once again, we are beginning to reap the benefits.

Also, we are continuing to look at our promotional materials to ensure that they fulfil the essential task of filling the knowledge gap about Seychelles, which is an essential component of our enhanced visibility and of making sure that we avail ourselves of social media to get the word out. We are currently working on a new destination video and full suite of niche market films and virals to be able to better promote our tourism products.

In our position, we have to be innovative and we have launched two programmes to help us get the brand to resonate worldwide and create awareness: 'Friends of the Press Seychelles' and 'Seychelles Tourism Ambassadors'. The former capitalizes on the loyalty of certain members of the international press to spread the good word about our islands while the latter taps into the network of Seychellois living abroad to help Seychelles in its marketing campaigns and other initiatives.

Tourism is an ongoing process and we need to be constantly adapting to meet its challenges while positioning ourselves to take advantage of the opportunities that come our way. I believe that we are making progress in these areas and that, in synchrony, they are contributing to the success of our tourism.

