

Long Beach, Mauritius - something for everyone



By [Rod Baker](#)

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Biz.Travel spoke to Nicolas de Chalain, the general manager of the new Long Beach Resort in Mauritius recently, about the Sun Resort group's new 'jewel in the crown'.



If this isn't inviting, then what is?

"Long Beach Resort is not so much a hotel or resort as a village - a village in which we set out to have something for everyone - to create a holiday destination to which guests will return, time and again," says Mauritian-born De Chalain, who was appointed general manager of Long Beach Resort in March 2010. He was previously GM of La Pirogue, one of the most popular resorts in Mauritius and has a long history with Sun Resorts, having joined the company in July 1997 as sales manager in charge of Groups, Incentives and Conferences. Five years later, he was appointed resident manager at Sugar Beach Resort, after which he returned to the regional office as regional sales & marketing manager.

In many ways, Long Beach has been his 'baby' since he was involved in the original concept for the resort and then involved in project managing its planning, design and construction - so he's been with it all the way.

New concept, new beginning

Says de Chalain: "Tourism is a fragile sector... people are not generally put off by natural disasters, but they are put off by bad service, bad facilities. One returns to a hotel, primarily because of its people, their kindness, the feel-good factor the hotel has bestowed upon them - 'A home away from home' feeling." Hence, for these reasons, there is great emphasis on service in the group's hotels.

As regards Long Beach, De Chalain says: "Sun Resorts invested in the site a number of years ago; there was a hotel already on it, but we did not purchase the hotel, but knew that the site was exceptional and could be used to its full potential in the future. We merely revamped the existing hotel, modified it, and created a Coca Cola-style club hotel with a strong concept called Le Coco Beach. It was in operation for 14 years before being demolished in April 2009.

"Then Sun Resorts, with the help of Mirage Ltd, (a development company in RSA) established teams of architects with a brief to think outside of the box... We needed a hotel with an attitude," says De Chalain.

"We paid a great deal of attention to the environment, both in the design and during construction. For example, where we had to remove trees, they were removed and nurtured and then replanted," says De Chalain.

The resort has been designed to make best use of the spectacular setting and as it is set on 60 acres - so there is plenty of space to 'escape the madding crowd', if you wish to be alone and enjoy the half a million-or-so plants (including a number of indigenous species) that have been planted throughout.

"Rubble from the Le Coco was used wherever possible in the new resort (to minimise the costs and carbon footprint of removing the rubble). In the design, we have used design features such as large windows, far larger rooms than the hotel norm, high ceilings - 3.5m - LEDs for all the lighting and a building management system to regulate every aspect of the resort - from controlling the water pressure to the use of ozone in the swimming pools to the use of solar power. It will all pan out to a saving of some 35% on our power bills - and that means the



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investment will be paid for in about three years," he says.

The Spot

Long Beach Hotel rests on the premise that everything must be done to ensure a balance between the natural and built environments, across all 60 acres. With 109m² of beach per room and vast landscaped gardens, this R582 million development is considered to have achieved three key objectives: it is a prime property, in a unique location, with a sense of contemporary design and development success.



High ceilings help to keep the rooms cooler, and make the resort even more environmentally friendly.

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It is also multi-functional. Long Beach caters to the needs of families with its interconnecting rooms and kids' and teens' facilities and activities. It is ideal for a wedding/honeymoon with its relaxed atmosphere, spa, and easy access to surrounding villages and towns. Moreover, it is perfect for conferences, incentives and group getaways, with a wide range of high-tech facilities and special extras.

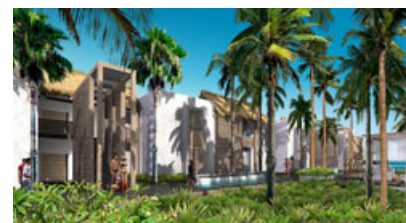
After its beach, which is the longest of any Mauritian hotel, one of the most striking aspects of Long Beach is its natural landscaping and indigenous and tropical plants.

"As mentioned earlier, we replanted trees that had to be removed during construction, but in addition to the half a million or so plants we have planted thus far, we will be planting a further half a million or so, many of them indigenous," says De Chalain.

Accommodation

There are 255 rooms arranged in three crescents. Every room has an ocean view and a minimum of 109m² of its own beach space.

The 42" LCD flat-screen television sets receive a host of international satellite channels. Rooms also have international direct-dial telephones, Wi-Fi web access (charged extra), iPod stations, digital clocks and radios, electronic room safes, hairdryers, individually controlled air-conditioning and electrical shaver points. All rooms have fully stocked mini-bars as well as tea- and coffee-making facilities.



There's a wide range of accommodation to suit every taste.

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Families and kids

Long Beach has been designed to cater for families, with 29 family units of 86m². Each has two bedrooms, two bathrooms and two TVs and is designed to be extremely family-friendly. There are also 140 inter-connecting rooms.

Restaurants and bars

"If you have a stay of 10 days or so, you won't want to eat at the same restaurant every day. Hence, unlike many if not most hotels and resorts that have one restaurant and one bar, we decided to offer our guests a choice - of three bars and five restaurants, each with its own distinct character and flavour," says De Chalain, adding: "It's all about giving our guests choice. That is in line with our aim to be a tourist destination for everyone - families, honeymoon couples, singles, the conference market..."



"Yes, we know Mauritius is in the middle of the Indian Ocean, but we budget for 12% of our clientele being corporate and we reckon that companies will find it worth while using Long Beach as a means to motivate staff and for conferencing," he says.

De Chalain says that the expected spin-off from this is that many of those company

There's space to mix, or be alone.

staff members will return later on with their families, on honeymoon, or simply to get away from it all and book in as a single.

Feeling fit?

For those for whom a holiday does not involve lazing on the beach and ogling the passers-by, Long Beach offers a wide range of activities and pastimes - from water sports and activities such as water polo and snorkelling (and a whole, lot more) to 'land-based' sports and pastimes from bocciball and golf to tennis, cycling - and again, a whole lot more. If you can't find a pastime or activity to keep yourself occupied well, then... I don't know...

Long Beach guests enjoy preferential access to Le Touessrok Golf Course, the par-72 championship course located on Ile aux Cerfs and designed by Bernhard Langer.



There's a wide choice of eateries...

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The Spa of Long Beach is designed around the theme of marine wellness via destination treatments. It has 12 treatment rooms, including doubles. Its outdoor spa pavilion is the ideal setting for massages overlooking the blue lagoon. Within the spa there is also a beauty parlour with a hair salon, a nail salon, a relaxation area and a shop.

Now to get down to business...

The resort offers complimentary function facilities to all resident groups. Bombora Nightclub is 190m² in size, with an adjoining 110m² function room, and the two - combined or separate - are designed to be ideal for smaller events, conferences or functions and have a full suite of conference facilities available.

What about CSI?

De Chalain is justifiably proud of the resort's record in the area of corporate social responsibility, and also in their staff policies; to deal with the former, first:

"In the hotel industry, as in every sector of business, staff is crucial - and a happy, well-trained, well-motivated staff is even more crucial. Hence, when we demolished Le Coco beach to make way for Long Beach, we redeployed staff wherever possible to our other hotels, and where we could not, we kept them on, on half pay, with a view to re-employing them once Long Beach was operational.

"To us this makes very good sense: we don't need to train new staff, the people we have are known quantities, and they know us and our procedures and standards," he says.

As regards CSI, in Mauritius all companies have to go the CSR/CSI route and by law 2% of profits have to be used on these programmes.

"It needs a concerted, holistic approach from everyone to alleviate poverty, and in our case, we have used our programmes to create creativity," says De Chalain.

In the case of Long Beach, ZEP schools are the core of the programmes...

"We look after the kids from primary school, up to tertiary; many of the children go to school without having had a meal, so we provide them with one, and then the aim is to inculcate into the children a love of learning. A tree doesn't grow straight without the right roots," he says... Unless a child has a firm grounding in the three 'R's, that child will have added challenges when it comes to high school and then tertiary education.



... and places to relax.

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"When we started out, the pass rate was 12%; it is now 50% - and that has been achieved in just two years," he says.

"In a way, we are developing our future staff: the children are helped in primary school and then when they get to secondary school, we identify those children of our staff who have the potential to go further and assist them in attending university. There is no bar on what courses they take, and although it is written into the contracts that they have to work in the group for a period after becoming qualified, that is not something we enforce at all," says De Chalain.

Supply and demand

De Chalain says Long Beach has what he calls a "good neighbour policy" - and that extends throughout the group.

"We have invested in 'green' as regards the design and construction of the resort, and we are also good neighbours when it comes to local suppliers. Hence, we will use suppliers from within the local community, and Mauritius at large, wherever possible, but there is no sacrifice when it comes to quality. If goods of sufficient quality cannot be sourced locally, then we bring them in," says De Chalain.

All in all, Long Beach has been designed to be as "green" as possible and as much a party of the community as possible.

For more information, go to www.longbeachmauritius.com/.

ABOUT ROD BAKER

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