

History



Bangtao Bay in the 1970s.



Bangtao Bay today.



Preservation of flora, fauna and ecosystems.

Environmental Rescue of Bangtao Bay

Introduction

For centuries, tin mining, along with the rubber and fishing industries, had made Phuket one of the wealthiest provinces in Thailand. By the late 19th century however, large-scale commercial tin mining operations had taken over and offshore dredging and land mining were destroying marine life and eroding the soil. After mines were depleted, the miners moved on, leaving many pockets of the island environmentally devastated.

When Laguna Resorts & Hotels took over the abandoned tin mine at Bangtao Bay in 1984, the site resembled a moonscape. The ground was pockmarked with craters and littered with piles of blackened soil, discarded machinery and ramshackle huts. The soil was so leached by chemicals it was thought the area would never sustain vegetation. In 1977 a United Nations Development Plan team surveying Phuket's tourism prospects, wrote off Bangtao Bay saying it was "too environmentally damaged to have any development potential."

The Revival

It took remarkable vision, determination and US\$200 million (then Phuket's largest ever single investment) to bring this ravaged wasteland back from the dead. Earth moving equipment levelled the tortured terrain and enormous quantities of fertilised topsoil were trucked in to allow replanting of hardy native plants, such as Casuarina and palm trees. Fruit and flowering trees were added to attract birds and wildlife whilst the lagoons, once mining craters, were stocked with marine life.

A sophisticated recycling system was built to handle refuse and sewage disposal and water treatment, eliminating the threat of pollution to the surrounding land and sea. And rather than tapping into Phuket's limited water supply, Laguna draws its water from several freshwater lakes to run through an onsite water treatment plant.

The low-rise hotels at the resort were designed to enhance the environment and reflect the beauty of Thai culture and heritage. Timber has been used effectively but sparingly to prevent further depletion of Thailand's limited forestry resources.

The Reward

Laguna Resorts & Hotels' environmentally responsible approach to tourism has gained worldwide recognition. In 1992 it received the prestigious International Hotel Association and American Express Environmental Award for its achievements as an international resort and hotel development project with a proven record of environmental conservation. The International Hotel Association is the world's only global hotel association, with more than 3,000 members in 145 countries.

In 2000 and 2002, Laguna Phuket was awarded the Outstanding Performance Award for Best Tourist Resort Accommodation in the Thailand Tourism Awards.

The Human Environment

Laguna Resorts & Hotels is not only concerned with the preservation of flora, fauna and ecosystems, but also what it calls the "human environment". The company has developed a donation program to sustain projects that bring direct benefits to residents of nearby communities. These projects include a free pre-school for 200 children of employees and local villagers, substantial educational scholarships and a community English language centre established to provide free English lessons for residents in the local community to help improve their employment options. In addition, Laguna Resorts & Hotels also hosts annual festivals and cultural events for the local community.

Comprised of representatives from all business units, the Laguna Phuket Social Committee is in charge of all corporate social responsibility efforts of Laguna Resorts & Hotels. A dedicated CSR team is also in place, headed by a CSR Development Manager and CSR Executives at each hotel, to work closely with the Committee.

Corporate Social Responsibility Mission Statement

Laguna is a community nestled within a community – a network of hotels, properties, restaurants, services and leisure facilities that provides a wealth of jobs and a consummate lifestyle for local, regional and international audiences. In delivering this service a focus on triple bottom line performance touches all our stakeholders in our quest to deliver environmental and social benefits alongside a corresponding increase in economic performance. Our integration with the local society creates memorable, vibrant experiences for guests and staff whilst synchronously developing relationships, security and a model for sustainable tourism.

Conclusion

Laguna Resorts & Hotels has addressed development as a total concept that includes the environment, culture, heritage, and social and human concerns. And through continued application of these concepts, it has gained worldwide recognition.

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Media Contacts

Tel: +66 76 324 060

Fax: +66 76 324 061

Robin Wilson

Director of Marketing
Communications and Events
robinw@lagunaphuket.com

Naravadee Swangridht

Public Relations & Advertising
Manager
naravadees@lagunaphuket.com

Debbie Dionysius

AVP of Destination Marketing
debbied@lagunaphuket.com

Online media centre at
<http://www.lagunaphuket.com/media-hub/>

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Note to the Editor

Laguna Phuket is Asia's finest destination resort – a collection of deluxe hotels and villas including Banyan Tree Phuket, Sheraton Grande Laguna, Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket, Laguna Beach Resort, Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas, Best Western Allamanda Laguna Phuket, and Laguna Holiday Club Resort - all sharing 1,000 acres of tropical parkland and three kilometres of beach frontage with the Laguna Phuket Golf Club, Canal Shopping Village, Banyan Tree Spa, four Angsana Spas, Laguna Wedding Chapel, Quest Laguna Phuket Adventure an on-site team building facility, and Latitude a unique stand-alone function venue.