



PRÍNCIPE ISLAND

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainability
Team work
Authenticity
Respect
Safety



SUNDY

PRAIA · PRÍNCIPE ISLAND



ROÇA

SUNDY · PRÍNCIPE ISLAND

Sundy Praia*** and Roça Sundy***** hotels
in Sao Tome-and-Principe
both by French architect and designer
Didier Lefort**

Hidden in the Gulf of Guinea, lays an unsung archipelago discovered by the Portuguese in the 15th century. Two volcanic islands, Sao Tomé and Principe, covered by such dense rainforests that from above they look like two emeralds floating on the Atlantic Ocean.

Both islands remained prosperous, until the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the cultivation of sugar cane, coffee beans and cocoa of which they are until 1913 the world's leading producer.

After the declaration of independence and the departure of the Portuguese in 1975, plantations were abandoned and the islands, forgotten. This was until a wealthy South African computer genius, Mark Shuttleworth, fell in love with the Principe Island and decided to give it a new momentum based on an ecological model by investing massively.

Airports, roads, schools, cocoa plantations, house restorations, turtle and forest protection... Life was brought back to Principe thanks to its generous patron who was nicknamed the "afonaut" after he became the first South African in space – and the second-ever space tourist.

The next step was to attract to this paradise a clientele concerned about the quality of the environment, in love with the sea and nature yet seeking for comfort and modernity.

To renovate the *Praia Bom Bom* Lodge, to entirely restore the former plantation on the heights *Roça Sundy* and to build a luxury hotel on the beach from scratch, Mark Shuttleworth called on French architect and designer Didier Lefort and his team from the Parisian agency D.L.2.A. of which he appreciated the creations.

Mark Shuttleworth's vision was purely ecological and social. His wish was to invest in an exceptional hotel made with innovative techniques and which would blend in with nature in harmony, almost invisible from the open sea. His other preoccupation was also to create jobs in this island lacking economy.

To minimize the impact on the ground and preserve the environment, Didier Lefort suggested an *avant-garde* process that consists in replacing traditional foundations with huge screws that support a wooden platform on which large masts are fixed that support an outstretched tent.

This tent is made of a very resistant double reinforced made in France fabric tailored for the tropical climate – wind and rain proof. Its light tint allows a soft and diffuse daylight in the inside, which even lets in the moonlight. A canopy bed provides sleepers with absolute darkness and muffles at night the sounds of the surrounding jungle.

The exterior walls are made of irregular wooden shingles, a nod to the houses of the island's fishing villages.

At the dawn of 2018, after 20 months of work, *Sundy Praia****** sees the light. The village, which consists of 24 villas-tents with large private terraces, has 8 tents of 75 m2 each, 5 suites composed of 2 tents each and 2 suites composed of 3 tents each with a private swimming pool. The "Out of Africa" style bathrooms have their bathtub carved in granite with a full view of the forest.

A pool bar surrounded by trees and a large infinity pool allows guests to have lunch by the beach.

Still with a view to sustainable development, the 100 seats restaurant was entirely built of 10-meter-long bamboos from Indonesia mainly assembled with natural ties but also with bolts at the key spots. Its shape is that of a huge fish which is more than 24 meters long, 11 meters high on one side and 3 meters high on the other, probably inspired by the whales swimming nearby in the open sea.

The rooms were decorated by renowned manufacturers such as Roda, Gervasoni and Pierre Frey, most of the furniture was designed by D.L.2.A. and manufactured in Portugal, yet local craftsmen were also involved with the braided lamps inspired by fish traps, the tiling and the basalt walls, the jars carved in tree trunks and the building of long pirogues to play explorers towards deserted beaches.

Mark Shuttleworth also leaves a former planter's house with D.L.2.A, called a *Roça* which means "countryside" in Portuguese. Located on the heights in Principe, *Roça Sundy***** only consists in 14 rooms and 1 suite which are allocated between the main house and a colonial annex called the *Superintendent House*.

Didier Lefort succeeded in renovating this mansion, which dates from the beginning of the 20th century, and in giving it a touch of modernity yet keeping its beautiful wooden stairs, its original cement tile flooring, its entire frontage and its loggia. He renovated the coffered ceilings identically and added the necessary level of comfort by redoing all the bathrooms, the lighting and the air conditioning. Didier Lefort kept a part of the original pieces of furniture which he blended in with a few more contemporary items.

Roça Sundy came back to life and regained its former charm. A bar was created, the living room was painted in a Nattier blue and the bedrooms's walls in different shades of grey.



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A chef was hired to imagine a modern cuisine menu based on local products from another neighboring plantation called Paciência which has become a large vegetable garden and is equipped with a laboratory that makes delicious jams among others.

The rooms, especially the ones on the ground floor, offers its guests a romantic scenery with its canopy beds, Venetian mirrors in the bathrooms among which one is equipped with an old-fashioned bathtub. Deep armchairs, writing desk with small drawers and illustrations by Portuguese artists bring a touch of glamor to this beautiful *Raça* of human size in which one quickly feels at home.

<https://sundyprincipe.com>

<http://www.hotelrocasundy.com/en>