

Bintan resort finds a cool way to go green

Ice blocks to power air-con is 'socially responsible, makes financial sense'

By JACQUELINE WOO

FOR Dr Marc van Loo, who owns eco-resort LooLa Adventure Resort in Bintan, running a "green" business makes as much financial sense as it does in terms of social responsibility.

Its two new luxury eco-villas, for instance, will run on air-conditioning systems that are powered by huge blocks of ice when completed next week.

The ice blocks are frozen dur-

ing the day in a process that uses just solar power.

"These systems pay themselves back rapidly," said the 51-year-old Dutchman in a recent interview with The Straits Times.

One such system, which costs about \$50,000 to build, would be able to bring in savings for a Singapore household in less than 10 years' time, he said.

The entire resort of 14 rooms and four dormitories, each with more than 75 beds, is powered by

70 solar panels which were installed last year. This is expected to save the resort more than \$10,000 a year in electricity costs, said Dr van Loo.

There are also rainwater collection systems which provide the toilets with water.

"It was an economical no-brainer for us as a business to put in these systems," he said. "If we do this right, for one thing, we won't have to buy water any more."

LooLa Adventure Resort has garnered several accolades for practising responsible tourism, including the Sustainable Business Awards last year.

The resort, which opened in 2000, has a head office in Singapore which plans and manages trips there for Singapore-based schools, small company groups, as well as private travellers.

A three-day trip could cost about \$200 per person.

Beyond housing environmentally friendly features in its resort, LooLa also organises community projects for its guests to "give back" to the local community in Bintan.

It runs more than 50 different types of projects, such as building roads, constructing wastewater processing systems and planting trees.



The air-conditioning systems of the new villas will be powered by blocks of ice which are frozen in the day using solar power. PHOTO: LOOLA ADVENTURE GROUP

The resort's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint have helped to draw in the customers, because they "appreciate what we do", said Dr van Loo.

"In order to be successful as an enterprise, all its participants must be happy. They must be in constant mutual respectful consultation and ready to contribute to a

common goal, which should be beneficial for everyone involved, including the local community in Bintan," he added.

The company, which employs three staff in Singapore and more than 50 local Bintan staff in Indonesia, drew in revenue of more than \$1 million last year.

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