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Making Good on Green Promises

Monaco is steadfastly stepping beyond its reputation as a playground for the rich and beautiful to take its rightful position as a leader in the global fight for a more sustainable and healthy planet. There is a storied and adventurous history behind its dedication to cleaner oceans and air, which is today available for all to see who enter the pristine seaside country.

Words Samantha Shankman



Prince Albert II founded the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation immediately upon taking his role to support public and private projects including limiting greenhouse gas emissions, developing renewable energies, protecting biodiversity, managing water resources and combating desertification.

The government is leading the way with a strong whole-of-a-city approach - that includes the entire Monegasque society and visitors in the major energy transition - which means adopting new habits and evolving as a society.

"The Grimaldi Dynasty has always been very involved in studying the environment to better understand the link between humanity and the planet. It started with Prince Albert I, who is internationally acknowledged as the father of modern oceanography, in the early 20th century. He created the Oceanographic Institute in Paris, the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco, and led many sea expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic region," explains Olivier Wenden, managing director of The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation.

The Foundation's efforts stand out for their ambitious targets – the Principality will need to cut emissions four times faster than the current rate to achieve its goals – as well as a commitment to achieving them with practical initiatives. Monaco's unique positioning is part of what makes it such a powerhouse in this area. Its sustainability efforts extend beyond the 2-km country itself; it has a global plan with a real sustainable vision.

"Monaco is one of the smallest countries in the world, but it has always been very open to the world, to the sea, to trade, and to different cultures. We are very blessed with our economic growth. The whole intention of the residents and government is to give back. It is a very natural path to follow, to give back not only for education, health, and society - but also the environment. We cover the whole scope of the environment in the [Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation] mission statement including the fight against climate change, the promotion of renewable energies, the protection of biodiversity at land and sea, and access to renewable water resources," says Wenden.

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAN

Although Monaco's efforts have a global impact, there are exacting measures being taken at home that even a first-time visitor will note.

Monaco banned the use of single-use plastic bags in 2019 and will ban the use of plastic straws, cutlery, and glasses from January 2020. It also became the first country to ban bluefin tuna from the Mediterranean after learning the species would become extinct within two years if action was not taken. Other countries involved in the International Union for Conservation of Nature refused to join, given the popularity of the rare fish.

"You have to understand the power of the market. We lost the case [to ban bluefin tuna among UN participants], but it caught the attention of media. The EU started to raise quotas to better monitor fisheries and serious work was done with the fisherman in the region. The stocks are back after five years," says Olivier.

Monaco also has one of the few marine-protected areas within its perimeter, which was formed in the 1970s. Only 3 percent of the Mediterranean is protected and 1.6 percent of that is due to principality's efforts.

The Principality has also been actively engaged in the fight against climate change through the ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and more recently the Paris agreement. Its efforts have shown considerable results: It is on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions of 50 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels and to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

Monaco has become a pioneer in the 'ecological transition' necessary for creating a world that people can live in and enjoy

for generations to come. It is vital to note how the country's efforts go far beyond the marketing initiatives and "greenwashing" that other destinations often prescribe to. It instead looks to involve every level of government, business, the local community and even visitors in reaching its ambitious but attainable goals through consistent change.

ACROSS THE WHOLE SUPPLY CHAIN

To further this deep commitment, the Monaco Convention Bureau launched a digital campaign this year to elevate awareness of its environmentally-conscious approach.

The campaign's tagline "Business is Green" helps to highlight the very tangible efforts happening across the principality and the environment that associations and business travelers can learn and interact with while there. There is a clear shift among business seeking cleaner and more responsible events that match their concerns around the environment, our planet's sustainability, and their role within that transition.

The sustainability of Monaco and commitment to its efforts is one of the most important factors in drawing associations to its shores today.

The attraction to Monaco's congress centre, the Grimaldi Forum, goes beyond the history, quality, affordability, stability and beauty of the destination. The venue has a strong sustainability policy where visitors seen the use of eco-friendly materials, photovoltaic panels on the rooftop, and sustainably-powered air conditioning at work. The majority of its 2,500 hotel rooms are certified by Green Globe, Green Key and Planet 21 by Accor, all while maintaining four and five-star quality of service.

Visitors can dine at the first 100-percent organic Michelin star restaurant Elsa, enjoy a tour of the organic urban gardens run by Terre de Monaco, or take a tour of the green efforts taking place throughout Monaco.

"As sustainability becomes more and more important to company's strategies, either to their shareholders or customers, they make the move to Monaco," concludes Wenden.

Contact

scamia@gouv.mc | www.monaconventionbureau.com

