



The Republic of the Seychelles has benefited from its tourist industry for years, but now the government wants to attract visitors interested in its environment.

The lush, green mountains and quiet, pristine beaches of Mahé Island – the largest in the Seychelles archipelago – can only be described as breathtaking. While the country is a popular location for holidaymakers, some local organizations want visitors to see the country as an eco-tourism and cultural destination. On January 16, Peace Boat participants visited Kot Man-Ya exotic flower garden and Le Jardin de Roi spice garden, both just outside the capital city of Victoria.

Marc Marengo started Kot Man-Ya after returning from the United States in 2001 – where he served as Ambassador to the United Nations for 14 years – and taking a position with the Ministry of Tourism to develop the Seychelles’ eco-tourism industry. “As chairman I had to set the example and to do something so as to build awareness and understanding as to what eco-tourism is all about and how the community can benefit if they do something that could be attractive to the tourism industry.



Marc Marengo spent nearly all of his free time creating a habitat for unique plants at Kot-Man Ya.



All in the name: No need to explain the use of the bright, red lipstick fruit.

He took a hectare of family-owned land in the district of Anse Royale, where for eight years he cultivated and developed the grounds into a sanctuary for some of the world’s most beautiful plants. His crop, which he sells to hotels and restaurants, includes heliconias, anthuriums, and a variety of colourful ginger plants, but most of what he grows isn’t native to the Seychelles.

Even though he had a passion for gardening since he was a child, visits to Hawai'i and other tropical regions helped him develop his love of rare and beautiful flowers. "I wanted to bring something different. The Seychelles is very green," he says, "Plus I'm in love with that kind of jungle atmosphere." At Kot Man-Ya, many species come from the Amazon where they are endangered: his goal is to preserve these unique plants, in a climate similar to their native grounds.



This bizarre-looking species of ginger is known as the self-peeling banana.



While strolling around the gardens, Doris Mancienne and IFL partners shared their knowledge of the medicinal and therapeutic qualities of spices and fruits.

Participants navigated the labyrinth of foliage and blooms with the help of Peace Boat's long-time partner in the Seychelles, the International Friendship League (IFL). It was the first time for many participants to visit a see the ornamental flowers used for ikebana (Japanese flower arrangements) in a natural environment and to taste fruits, such as bananas and passion fruit, fresh off the tree.

Before heading to a feast of Seychellois Creole food, the group explored Le Jardin de Roi – the King's Garden – located on the grounds of an old colonial estate, high above the beaches of Anse Royale. Owner Micheline Georges' sprawling family property is home to dozens of fruit and spice producing trees: vanilla, cinnamon, guava, star fruit and many more.



At Le Jardin de Roi, participants got to sample some familiar ingredients from their spice racks, such as curry leaves.



Peace Boat participants and IFL members took a few moments to place new saplings in the ground, near trees planted during a previous visit.

“Both of these gardens contribute enormously to the rapid development of the country’s eco-tourism (industry).” Peace Boat regularly docks in Port Victoria and has developed a strong relationship with IFL over the years. As in previous visits, IFL members and 68th voyage participants planted trees along Anse Royale beach, both in commemoration of the day’s activities and as a symbol of appreciation and protection of the Seychelles’ stunning environment.