

# TRAVEL TALK Asia

#1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP - SRI LANKA'S ONLY TRAVEL TRADE MONTHLY

VOL 22 NO 08 2023 24 PGS



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER

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## Hilton opens new luxurious Yala Resort

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Located in Palatupana village, the luxurious Hilton Yala Resort was inaugurated by President Ranil Wickremesinghe recently. The property offers 42 family-friendly rooms, villas and suites.



The hotel is built by Melwa Hotels and Resorts, a real estate developer that has also built the 141-room Hilton in Negombo.

Speaking at the opening, President Ranil Wickremesinghe highlighted that the tourism industry stands as the paramount sector capable of swiftly advancing the country's economic objectives.

He said that the Government, under his leadership, has implemented numerous pivotal measures to foster its growth and that the Government is diligently working to provide necessary amenities for all stakeholders involved.

Minister of Tourism and Lands Harin Fernando, speaking at the event, commended President Ranil Wickremesinghe's new initiatives to bolster the tourism industry. He expressed optimism that these efforts could position tourism as a primary revenue source for the country.

"Under the guidance of the President, we have executed a range of initiatives aimed at boosting tourism. The outcomes are evident, with an increased inflow of tourists, particularly following the President's visit to India. Notably, India constitutes the largest source of visitors to our country, followed by China. Air travel to Sri Lanka has surged, with airlines like Qatar Airways now operating up to six daily flights"

Also, present to grace the occasion were Hilton Hotels Group Senior Operations Director (South East Asia) Jamie Mead, Senior Operations Director (Asia & Australasia) Josh Roberts, Sri Lanka Hilton Hotels Group Regional General Manager Manesh Fernando, Hilton Yala Resort General Manager Gitanjali

Chakravarthy, Melwa Hotels & Resorts Director Muruga Pillai and several other esteemed officials.

The Hilton Yala resort will be a boost to the tourism industry as the increase of the international brand footprint will undoubtedly assist in raising the profile of the destination giving it a global advantage when compared to its competitors in the region.

Some of the dining options at the Hilton Yala Resort consist of an all-day dining restaurant called Dhira; a Western cuisine restaurant called Sandali; Vanya, which serves coffee, meals and cocktails and Lanthaaruma, which offers a personalised dinner menu along with wine pairing options.

Guests at the hotel can enjoy a wide range of activities such as game drives, bush walks, village tours, kid's activities and more.

Among the other amenities at the property include a fitness facility, an outdoor pool and a spa.

The new hotel is a 20km drive from the nearest town, Tissamaharama and five minutes from Yala National Park.

Guests can also opt to visit nearby temples such as Kataragama and Sithulpauwa, as well as other attractions such as Bundala National Park, Weerawila and Kalametiya bird sanctuaries.

According to Melwa Hotels and Resorts director Muruganathan Pillai, the hotel has been developed with an investment of over \$16m.

Additionally, Melwa Hotels and Resorts signed deals for Hilton Hotels in Nuwara-Eliya, Kosgoda, Kandy and Colombo International Airport, bringing the total count to six

## ITB Asia 2023 Unveils Stellar Lineup of Speakers Under the Theme "Accelerating Growth"

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Exploring the forefront of travel innovation, the ITB Asia Conference 2023 takes place from 25 - 27 October in Singapore, alongside MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia. Spanning across more than 90 sessions and boasting 160+ speakers, including notable figures from BCD Travel, Changi Airport Group, Constellar, Expedia Group, Hilton, Oracle and more. The ITB Asia Conference brings together the most influential voices in the sector to explore the evolving landscape of travel and tourism.

As the travel industry evolves at an unprecedented pace, ITB Asia Conference 2023 emerges as the premier platform for staying ahead of the curve. Under the theme "Accelerating Growth: Paving the Way for New Opportunities in Travel & Tourism", its agenda promises a diverse range of sessions designed to inform, inspire, and innovate. Featuring three theatres, and more than 3,870 conference minutes, ITB Asia Conference is set to be a powerhouse of knowledge where 160+ industry leaders and innovators will share their insights and expertise in topics encompassing MICE, corporate travel, leisure, and travel technology.

The conference will be inaugurated by opening keynotes from Hermione Joye, Sector Lead, Travel and Vertical Search APAC at Google, and James Liang,

Co-founder and Executive Chairman of the Board at Trip.com Group Ltd.

"The conference theme aptly sums up the proactive stance that the industry must adopt. Navigating challenges and fostering rapid growth, ITB Asia Conference aims to uncover fresh possibilities that will shape the future of travel and tourism. With a lineup of renowned speakers, we will examine emerging trends, the future of travel, key industry concerns, and the ever-important aspect of sustainability", says Katrina Leung, Managing Director of Messe Berlin (Singapore), the organiser of ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia.

With travel and tourism rapidly bouncing back, longer-term outlook and projections for travel for the coming decade will be explored in the "APAC 2030 and Beyond: Travel Trends in the Next Decade", led by Michael Shoory, Lead Economist - APAC at Tourism Economics (an Oxford Economics Company).

"Aviation Landscape in the APAC Region" is the title of the session led by Lim Ching Kiat, Executive Vice President of Air Hub and Cargo Development at Changi Airport Group, who will provide valuable insights into the evolving aviation landscape in the APAC region.

## Melbourne Rebels team flies to Sri Lanka to promote Rugby and Sports Tourism

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and Agoal Rugby, has organized an exclusive Rugby tournament in order to promote Sri Lanka as a Sports Tourism destination and give an opportunity to young Sri Lankan Rugby players an opportunity to showcase their talent both locally and internationally.

Sri Lanka Tourism has always been a keen supporter of Sports tourism, and this will highlight Sri Lanka as an ideal destination to hold sports events with its diverse opportunities for any event.

The main purpose of this tournament is to assess the standards of the local women rugby players and offer overseas training /Scholarships to selected players.

The delegation from Australia who are expected to participate in this occasion includes the CEO of Melbourne Rebels, President of Rugby Victoria, and ex wallabies' player and coach Nick Stiles. This will be a great opportunity to promote Rugby among Sri Lankan Girls schools and create a talented second generation of players, as well as to get the exposure and coordinate with foreign professionals.

Global tourism is highlighting the importance of sustainability as a fundamental requirement in the industry.

Tourism often puts pressure on natural resources through over-consumption, often in places where resources are already scarce. Tourism puts enormous stress on local land use, and can lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, and more pressure on endangered species.

While having numbers is vital to the growth of revenue, it is more feasible to structure the product offering to bring in a higher yield traveler resulting in a slower growth in numbers but with less impact on environmental deterioration.

It is difficult to define the tourism industry, as unlike with other industries, there is not one clear product. It incorporates many industries, including accommodation, transport, attractions, travel companies, and more. In its broadest sense, tourism is defined as when people travel and stay in places outside of their usual environment for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business, health, or other reasons.

The government and the private sector need to work hand in hand to ensure long term sustainability of the country's tourism assets.

One of the biggest travel industry trends of 2023 will be off-grid, holistic experiences that offer transformative health. Whether heading to a digital detox retreat to disconnect from technology or immersing in the silent serenity of nature, distraction-free time will be a high priority for travellers

Sri Lanka has the band width to cater to this growing market and can offer a myriad of services which are in line with this niche segment.



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*Dinushka*

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## NEWS

# Wyndham Hotels & Resorts to be the Official Partner Hotel of ITB China for the third time

TTA BULLETIN

ITB China, the leading B2B exclusive travel trade show focusing on the Chinese travel market, announces its strategic partnership with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. For the third time, the world's largest hotel franchising company and leading provider of management services becomes the Official Partner Hotel of ITB China, which is set to take place in Shanghai from 12 – 14 September 2023.



With over 9,100 hotels and 24 established brands in over 95 countries, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts ("Wyndham") is appointed as the Official Partner Hotel of ITB China for the third time. The corresponding agreement was formally signed on 29 June at Wyndham's Shanghai Office, by Mr. Joon Aun Ooi, President of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts Asia Pacific, and Mr. David Axiotis, General Manager of Messe Berlin (Shanghai), the organizer of ITB China. The hotel industry franchising giant will once again have a strong presence at ITB China, introducing its brand-new products and innovative services to the industry, and delivering an inspiring speech at the opening session of the ITB China Conference, which will take place on the first day of the show, 12 September.

Signing Ceremony: Mr. Joon Aun Ooi, President of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts Asia Pacific, and Mr. David Axiotis, General Manager of Messe Berlin (Shanghai), at the Wyndham Office in Shanghai

Mr. Joon Aun Ooi, President of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts Asia-Pacific, stated that: "We are honored to be

the Official Partner Hotel of ITB China for the third time. As a professional B2B travel trade exhibition focused on the Chinese travel market, ITB China provides an effective communication platform for hotel operators, travel agencies, conference organizers, and corporate clients to explore potential business opportunities. This collaboration not only continues our long-term strategic partnership but also demonstrates Wyndham Hotels and Resorts' continuous commitment to China as an important strategic market. We look forward to showcasing our diverse brand portfolio of distinctive hotel products in the Asia Pacific region to all attendees at the exhibition in September."

Mr. David Axiotis, General Manager of Messe Berlin (Shanghai), said: "Throughout the challenges of the past years, ITB China remained committed and connected to the Chinese travel industry. Therefore, in this pivotal year for China's travel market recovery, ITB China is in the unique position to be spearheading that recovery offering its partners the right business platform at just the right time. Supporting them to once again unlock the full potential of the Chinese travel market. We are very proud and honored to be driving this recovery with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts by our side, heading this year's partner lineup as ITB China's Official Partner Hotel."

At the beginning of this year, with China fully opening its travel policy, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts recorded a significant return of business and leisure travelers with an exceedingly positive development over the past months.

## Destination Sri Lanka – Episode 2 Intra-university Knowledge Challenge

TTA BULLETIN

The preliminary round of "Destination Sri Lanka - Episode 2" the Intra-university tourism knowledge challenge organized by the Department of Marketing and Tourism Management of NSBM Green University in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO) concluded successfully on the 23rd of August at the University premises.



This competition was organized for the second consecutive year with the prime intention of uplifting the practical tourism knowledge base of the university's students pursuing their undergraduate degrees in Events, Tourism

and Hospitality Management. The challenge comprised of a question round based on tourism product attributes and a tour itinerary-building competition. 20 undergraduate teams representing tourism and hospitality programmes across the university participated in a riveting contest where two teams ultimately emerged victorious and qualified for the Grand Finale to be held in line with the World Tourism Day celebrations of NSBM Green University.

## Sri Lanka Convention Bureau To Accelerate MICE Capability Of Regional Hoteliers In The Southern Region

TTA BULLETIN

Keeping in line with the objectives stipulated in the Tourism Act, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) has been organizing regional MICE training programmes for the benefit of regional hoteliers and MICE professionals. Out of a series of training programmes scheduled for this year the southern region programme was held at Cinnamon Bey -Beruwela with the objective of raising awareness of the significance of Sri Lanka's MICE sector as a source of economic expansion. The programme was centered on "New Dimensions of MICE - Driving Sri Lanka with Sustainable Innovation" and was tailor made to suit the region.



Mr. Krishantha Fernando – General Manager SLCB, stated that ongoing training is its bid to establish a strong collaboration between entrepreneurs and MICE strategic partners from all sectors, who prioritize the concept and practice of sustainability and innovation thus strengthening two major pillars of the industry, efficiency & competitiveness.

A panel discussion on current status of MICE and new trends was conducted with the participation of Mr. Krishantha Fernando, Mr. Indika De Silva, Mr. Sisira Senaratne, Mr. Paul Sun and moderated by Mr. Imran Hassan.

A presentation on Reshaping of MICE – Technology and HR carried out by Mrs. Paddy Paul followed by Mr. Trevin Gomez on MICE from Hoteliers Perspective and Mr. Gihan de Silva on Experiential Marketing accompanying Mrs. Paddy Paul.

SLCB will continue to conduct these training programs covering the Cultural Triangle and the Northern region in order for all hoteliers to be fully geared up to serve MICE travelers in the upcoming seasons.

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## Sri Lanka celebrates its milestone surpassing 100,000 Russian arrivals through direct flights

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, in collaboration with Airport and Aviation Services organized a special ceremony to celebrate 100,000 tourist arrivals from Russian Federation through direct flights. This was held at the BIA on 17th July by welcoming the passengers and crew arrived by Aeroflot flight from Moscow. A total of 100,298 Russian tourists were brought in to Sri Lanka jointly by Aeroflot, Azur Air and Redwings since 10th October 2022. As of July, Russia has become the second highest source market for Sri Lanka. The visitors and invitees were given a warm welcome by Tourism Information Centre officials of SLTPB and were escorted to the Lotus lounge with a cultural performance by a traditional dance troupe, which was highly enjoyed by the Russian tourists. The distinguished guests at this occasion included H.E. Levan. Dzhangaryan, Russian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr. G.A Chandrasiri,

Chairman, Airport and Aviation Services Mr. Thisum Jayasuriya, Chairman, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, Mr. Udayanga Weeratunga, Former Sri Lankan Ambassador to Russia, along with Mr. Thilak Weerasinghe, (LSR), Mr. Rushan Fruard, (Exotic Holidays International), Mr. Kamal Deshapriya (Ceylon My dream) who contributed as Industry stakeholders for this direct flight operations. Captain Ermolaev Vladimir Vlaimirovich and crew of Aeroflot, together with Tourism and Aviation officials and Media attended this event.

Mr. G.A Chandrasiri, Chairman, Airport and Aviation Services made the welcoming speech and mentioned that with the increase of tourist arrivals from Russia to Sri Lanka, it shows that the hospitality, culture, and the traditional ways of Sri Lankan people are accepted by Russians. He thanked all the Tourism and aviation



officials, Industry stakeholders who supported in this endeavor, to make this effort a success.

Mr. Thisum Jayasuriya, Chairman, SLCB also spoke on the occasion, by highlighting that Sri Lanka can now see a considerable change in the influx of tourist arrivals which is received on a daily basis.

Captain Ermolaev Vladimir Vlaimirovich also expressed his thanks and gratitude to the hospitality shown by the Sri Lankans and how impressive Sri Lanka is as a travel

destination.

This initiative is seen as a positive outcome of the continuous efforts done by Sri Lanka Tourism to promote the Russian market, strengthening its Bilateral and Economical ties between the two nations, making Russia one of the most successful economic contributors in enhancing its Tourism. The positive message spread by the Russian passengers will further encourage more Russian tourists to visit Sri Lanka, for their next vacation.

## The 14th Global Eventex Awards now accepting entries

TTA BULLETIN

Eventex Awards, the world's most esteemed accolade in the world of events and experiential marketing, is proudly announcing its 14th edition. Eventex Awards 2024 follows a record-breaking 13th edition which saw a total of 761 entries from 49 countries worldwide.

To reflect and celebrate the industry recovery and return of in-person events, Eventex Awards is revamping its categories structure, introducing a brand new track to shine a light on Venues, Hotels, and Destinations. The Events track meanwhile has been enhanced with a Sports & Tournaments group bringing into focus the joy and competitive spirit of sporting events, and a group for Private Events & Weddings to provide a dedicated space for personal celebrations.

Eventex is also making its People's Choice Awards free to enter for everyone, regardless of whether they have an entry in another category.

These are just some of the changes set to mark the upcoming Eventex Awards 2024, along with personalized entry feedback from the Eventex team for every entry

submitted up to 1 month before the submission deadline — 23 February 2024.

Eventex Awards is also keeping its 5-for-3 promo that gives applicants the opportunity to enter more categories while paying for less. The competition will also continue to apply score normalization, a mathematical formula that ensures that every entry is scored based on the same set of standards, regardless of the number of judges evaluating it.

"We are excited to launch the next edition of Eventex Awards and again provide a platform to showcase the most outstanding achievements in the world of events and experience marketing. With the industry having recovered from the unprecedented challenges seen in the past few years, we can't wait to celebrate the magic of events in their full glory," comments Ovanes Ovanessian, Co-founder of Eventex Awards.

Founded in 2009 to celebrate creativity, innovation, and effectiveness in the industry, today Eventex Awards is the most esteemed international awards in the world of events and experiential marketing.

## IBTM World unveils 2023 edition with mission to empower events professionals to become culture creators

TTA BULLETIN

IBTM World has revealed first details of its 2023 edition, which will see an evolution in the show's culture creation campaign. Returning to its iconic home in Fira, Barcelona on the 28th to the 30th of November, every aspect of the event has been carefully curated to illustrate the influence of event professionals in shaping culture and driving the future of business.

IBTM World 2023 will include new and exciting elements and a targeted education programme to reflect the changing needs of attendees. Business culture thrives when we are together, and the event's mission is to provide a space for this culture to grow; especially important given our more isolated professional and personal lives. IBTM World will feature purpose-driven content to optimise attendees' time and ensure every moment is a catalyst for growth and inspiration.

Visitors to this year's event will find a reinvigorated education programme, with five distinct feature areas all serving different needs: the Main Stage, the Impact Stage, Workplace Revolution, ReFuel and the Associations Leaders' Forum, with the show's cultural theme embedded into each pillar.

The Impact Stage will make its debut this year, acting as the best-in-class showcase for the exciting work that destinations, hotels, and tech suppliers are doing across sustainability, D&I, experience design and more. Destination sessions will be curated by The Business Of Events, the Global Think Tank and Policy Platform for the business events industry, and will also feature the launch of the annual Global Destination Report. Sessions will be fast-paced and value-led, lasting no longer than 20-minutes and in the form of case

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studies and best-practice, allowing Hosted Buyers to glean maximum value between meetings.

Also new this year is Workplace Revolution - a welcoming space where attendees can make the valuable connections they weren't expecting. Here they can continue conversations in a relaxed setting with inspirational figures (including speakers from the Main Stage), dissect topics in greater detail and ask those burning questions. With amenities, comfortable seating and informal campfire-style atmosphere, this is the place for people to come together, connect and enjoy key aspects of business culture that they might be missing with the increase in working from home.

In recognition of the importance of wellbeing, especially at busy trade shows like IBTM World, and the increasing pressures that we all face in our daily lives, IBTM's wellbeing hub has re-branded to 'ReFuel'. A zen-like pod which allows attendees time and space to relax and recharge their physical and mental batteries, it includes a wellbeing bar, sound and aromatherapy healing and solo working area to provide respite from a busy show floor.

The Association Leaders' Forum (ALF) will be back on day one to help associations increase the impact of their gatherings around the globe and conquer challenges to achieve success in 2024 and beyond.



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## ITB China 2023 Joins Forces with Trip.com Group as Official Travel Service Partner

TTA BULLETIN

ITB China, the marketplace for China's travel industry, is thrilled to announce its collaboration with Trip.com Group, the leading global travel service provider for this year's highly anticipated event, taking place from 12 – 14 September 2023 in Shanghai.

Trip.com Group shows strong commitment to ITB China 2023 as a confirmed Official Travel Service Partner and will take center stage in elevating the ITB China experience for all attendees. The ITB China Conference sessions will be enriched with their latest market insights and forecasts, while the ITB China Cruise Night, co-host-

ed by Trip.com Group for the fourth consecutive time on the evening of 12 September, will provide unmatched networking opportunities.

Ms. Jane Sun, CEO of Trip.com Group, said: "The global travel and tourism industry's recovery is gaining pace, and many new travel-related jobs have been created in recent months. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is redefining the industry and Trip.com Group has been investing in cutting-edge technologies as part of our ongoing efforts to enhance the overall travel experience for our customers."

"Apart from technologies, new demands and trends have emerged in the past few years, and it is important for businesses to build resilience and agility, and adapt to the ever-changing needs of customers. We look forward to engaging and collaborating with our partners to bring this industry to new heights." Sun added.

Trip.com Group plans to deepen cooperation with global partners to better serve Chinese tourists, offer high-quality services to outbound travellers, and promote inbound tourism as an engine for economic growth. Cultural exchanges between China and the world will be

fostered through travel in both directions.

Trip.com Group is a leading global travel service provider comprising of Trip.com, Ctrip, Skyscanner and Qunar. Across its platforms, Trip.com Group helps travellers around the world make informed and cost-effective bookings for travel products and services and enables partners to connect their offerings with users through the aggregation of comprehensive travel-related content and resources, and an advanced transaction platform consisting of apps, websites and 24/7 customer service centres. Founded in 1999 and listed on NASDAQ in 2003 and HKEX in 2021,

## IT&CM Asia And CTW Asia-Pacific Returns With Enhanced Opportunities For Engagement And Collaboration

TTA BULLETIN

IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific 2023 returns as an in-person event in Bangkok, Thailand from 26 – 28 September 2023.

The coming 3-day in-person IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific promises a line-up of conferences and networking, curated for the diverse needs and interests of our delegates.

Calstas Jof the Director General of ICOM, Switzerland shared "I am ready for the business appointments, casual get-togethers, networking sessions and insightful presentations. Additionally, I aim to explore for partners who are able to build fruitful relationships with our organisation, and share the same visions with ours after the pandemic."

Here are some features attendees can expect:

- Opening Keynote – An immersive discussion on Connecting Minds, Supporting Communities presented by Khun Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, President of Sustainable Tourism Development Foundation and Adviser of Phuket Tourist Association. The opening keynote will highlight the positive impact tourism/MICE partnerships can have on local communities.

- Fireside Chat with TCEB and TICA – A fireside chat with TCEB and TICA officials on how business events can support the development of cities and the livelihood of the locals.

- Asian MICE Cruise Conference will discuss the post pandemic cruise comeback as well as exploring new ways to meet.

- Association Day Forum – International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) presents a session for thought leaders, industry experts and practitioners to connect, exchange ideas and chart a course toward a future of growth and association success.

- ASEAN MICE Forum – Proudly hosted by Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) and Kasetsart University, the forum aims to gather the industry experts and professionals to engage in insightful dialogues on subjects such as "What Corporations want versus what qualifiers want from Incentive Travel Experiences" and "Embracing Sustainability and Empowering Community".

- Opening Ceremony and Welcome Reception – Co-hosted by Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), the gathering marks the official commencement of IT&CM Asia and CTW APAC and offers yet another opportunity for attendees to get to know fellow delegates.

The show continues to see invaluable support from our Thai and international partners, trade associations and media affiliates who have played a vital role to the success of this year's show.

If you would like to procure, network and learn at IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific 2023, join us from 26 – 28 September at the Bangkok Convention Centre at Central-World. The leading MICE event is co-located with CTW Asia-Pacific – The Leading Corporate Travel Management Conference for the Asia-Pacific.

Co-located with CTW Asia-Pacific, IT&CM Asia is part of the IT&CM Events series organised by TTG Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media. IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific is Asia-Pacific's Only Doublebill Event in MICE and Corporate Travel. Both events have been co-locating since 2004, offering its delegates an unparalleled platform to do business, learn and network.



## Tourism Leaders Place African Focus On Global Challenges

TTA BULLETIN

The Conference on Rethinking Africa: Rethinking Tourism for Africa: Addressing global challenges; Promoting investment and partnerships brought expert African perspectives to global challenges, highlighting the need of investments towards a greener tourism sector and access to finance within the sector and the need to further strengthen public-private collaboration at every level.



resilience and inclusivity. UNWTO Executive Director Natalia Bayona opened the session with an overview of the tourism investment climate followed by presentations by Mr. Kevin Ramkaloan CEO Business Mauritius and messages from Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe,

Secretary General of The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Leila Farah Mokaddenm, Director General, Southern Africa Region, African Development Bank.

Reflecting the heightened relevance of tourism as a solution to a range of global challenges and pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Conference was structured around two thematic sessions with a ministerial panel on Addressing global challenges followed by a second one focusing on "Promoting Investment and Partnerships in Tourism for Economic Development. His Excellency Steven Obeegadoo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing, and Land Use Planning and Minister of Tourism for the Republic of Mauritius, and Vice-Chair of the UNWTO Executive Council joined Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals, African Union who delivered the keynote address.

A special Ministerial Panel Session focusing on global challenges featured contributions from the Ministers of Tourism of DR Congo Didier Mazenga Mukanzu, Minister of Tourism of Ghana Hon. Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Awal, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Kenya Peninah Malonza, and Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage of Zambia Rhodney Sikumba, as well as Ms Lisa Singh, the UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles and Prof Nazia M Habib, Head, Centre for Resilience and Sustainable Development at the University of Cambridge.

In line with UNWTO's priorities for the sector, the second session put the focus on the importance of building strategic relations and partnerships as well as the vital need for more and better-targeted investments in tourism, building tourism intelligence particularly in projects with the potential to deliver greater sustainability,

Botswana's Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Conservation and Tourism Philda Kereng, and Hon. Siandou Fofana, Minister of Tourism, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, also contributed their unique, expert insights into rethinking tourism investments and partnerships. They were joined by Ms. Amanda Serumaga – Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme for Mauritius and Seychelles, Ms. Michaella Rugwizangoga, Chief Tourism Officer, Rwanda Development Board and Mr. Mamadu Serifo Jaquite, Mamadu Serifo Jaquite, Commissioner in charge of the Department of Human Development of the West African Monetary and Economic Union

The conference culminated with the presentation of the Mauritius Declaration by the host country and UNWTO. The program of actions proposed in the Mauritius Declaration, aims to promote sustainable and resilient tourism ecosystems through multi-sectoral partnerships, ethical practices, investment promotion, nature-based solutions, decarbonization, coordination of public health, policy alignment and data-driven decision-making.

To enable this programme to be carried out under the best possible conditions, the Declaration also calls for the support, in accordance with their respective mandates, of the Member States of the UNWTO, the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities organizations, regional aviation institutions, banking institutions, the African Development Bank, international aid partners, donor communities and financial institutions.



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## Acorn Group Shines Bright at Glamorous Awards Night Celebrating Remarkable Achievements

### Elevating Excellence: Acorn Group's Awards Night Spotlights Achievement

#### TTA BULLETIN

Acorn Group, a distinguished conglomerate known for its diverse portfolio of businesses, hosted an elegant Awards Night on recently at the Courtyard by Marriott Colombo. The event was a resplendent affair, gathering industry leaders, stakeholders and over 200 employees from five countries to honor and applaud the exceptional accomplishments achieved across various sectors within the group.

The Acorn Group Awards Night was a splendid showcase of elegance, accomplishment, and festivity with the theme of the evening being 'Unstoppable'.

Malinga Arsakularatne CEO of Acorn Group, shared his sentiments about the event, stating, "The Awards Night serves as a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation across our

diverse ventures. We take immense pride in celebrating the outstanding efforts of our team members and partners who continue to drive the group's success."

The year 2022 brought unforeseen obstacles for the Acorn Group, testing the team's spirit and resolve. Political instability, historic protests, travel bans on the country, lack of fuel and the economic downfall led to few transactions.

"Despite the challenges the need to collectively rise again was eminent. The teams pivoted their strategies, reinvented their offerings and embraced technology in ways never before imagined. The resilience and adaptability of the Acorn family became the catalyst for a remarkable turnaround and a very profitable year for the Group" added Arsakularatne



Over 45 individuals and teams were recognized at the awards ceremony for their unwavering commitment and extraordinary achievement. The formalities of the Awards Night ended with the presentation of the two Pinnacle Awards – Spirit of Acorn and Ace of Acorn. –The award for Spirit of Acorn was won by Dilan Jayakody for personifying Acorn Values, working in a challenging environment, overcoming multiple constraints, and not being afraid to enter new spaces to get the job done.

The award for Ace of Acorn was bagged by Travel Services Maldives for delivering outstanding results only during its first full year of operations and far exceeding expectations.

The evening was filled with captivating performances, and an atmosphere filled with camaraderie. The event was a platform to acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of individuals, teams, and subsidiaries that have propelled the group to new heights of success.



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## ITB China 2023 Joins Forces with Trip.com Group as Official Travel Service Partner

#### TTA BULLETIN

ITB China, the marketplace for China's travel industry, is thrilled to announce its collaboration with Trip.com Group, the leading global travel service provider for this year's highly anticipated event, taking place from 12 – 14 September 2023 in Shanghai.

Trip.com Group shows strong commitment to ITB China 2023 as a confirmed Official Travel Service Partner and will take center stage in elevating the ITB China experience for all attendees. The ITB China Conference sessions will be enriched with their latest market insights and forecasts, while the ITB China Cruise Night, co-hosted by Trip.com Group for the fourth consecutive time on the evening of 12 September, will provide unmatched networking opportunities.

Ms. Jane Sun, CEO of Trip.com Group, said: "The global travel and tourism industry's recovery is gaining pace, and many new travel-related jobs have been created in recent months. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is redefining the industry and Trip.com Group has been investing in cutting-edge



technologies as part of our ongoing efforts to enhance the overall travel experience for our customers."

"Apart from technologies, new demands and trends have emerged in the past few years, and it is important for businesses to build resilience and agility, and adapt to the ever-changing needs of customers. We look forward to engaging and collaborating with our partners to bring this industry to new heights," Sun added.

Trip.com Group plans to deepen cooperation with global partners to better serve Chinese tourists, offer high-quality services to outbound travellers, and promote inbound tourism as an engine for economic growth. Cultural exchanges between China and the world will be fostered through travel in both directions.

Founded in 1999 and listed on NASDAQ in 2003 and HKEX in 2021, Trip.com Group has become one of the best-known travel groups in the world, with the mission "to pursue the perfect trip for a better world".  
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## Sustainability in the spotlight at IBTM World's Association Leaders' Forum

TTA BULLETIN

IBTM World has revealed the first details of its new-look Association Leaders' Forum, which will take place on day one of IBTM World and focus on how the association community can contribute to the ongoing debate around sustainability and the challenges that come with it.

Taking place at Fira, Barcelona, on Tuesday November 28th, 2023, and produced in partnership with the prestigious ESAE (European Society of Association Executives), the IBTM World Association Leaders' Forum highlights the power of event professionals to shape culture and drive the future of business. The programme has evolved into the annual meeting point for association leaders to exchange, learn and advance knowledge and best practices in a peer-to-peer setting.

High level presentations, lightning talks and interactive debates are part of a fresh new format designed to infuse energy and foster culture among participants, to replace that sense of community which may have been lost in the shift to home working.

The programme will open with a thought-provoking exploration of association trends for 2024 from Mike Morrissey, ESAE President, and CEO of the European Cancer Organisation. This will be followed by a speaker-led debate moderated by Mohamed Mezghani, Secretary General, UITP (The International Association of Public Transport). The debate will centre on travel and sustainability, with participants exploring the merit of carbon offsetting and the broader positive effects to society that a meeting or a conference can have. Following this, a selection of



high-profile association leaders will participate in a panel discussion on how associations can change the world for the better. The discussion will include incorporating ESG into decision making and operations, and explore topics such as DEI, Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility.

The afternoon's sessions will feature fast-paced lightning talks on hot topics including Artificial Intelligence, ESG and Impact vs Environment. There will be opportunities to network throughout the forum as well as networking drinks afterwards.

Mike Morrissey said: "When associations come together to share knowledge and ideas, we know they can really make a difference. This forum is a space for association and events professionals to debate the issues that are unique to them. We are delighted to be working with IBTM on the content for this important event and invite all association events professionals to join us, make connections and share their inspiration and ideas."

David Thompson, Event Director, IBTM World, said: "This engaging forum on the important topic of sustainability, incorporating environment, social and governance, is designed to fuel delegates' curiosity, inspire attendees to make a difference, and provide the stimulation delegates need to encourage culture to flourish. Business culture thrives when we are together, and the forum provides a space for this culture to grow."

## Voted Best Meeting & Incentive Destination (Asia) at M&C Asia Stella Awards 2023, Thailand on track to achieve triple-digit growth in MI arrivals

TTA BULLETIN

Thailand's ongoing efforts to develop a distinctive product portfolio for meeting and incentive visitors has again impressed industry stakeholders and meeting planners, who, for the third consecutive year, voted Thailand Best Meeting & Incentive Destination (Asia) at the M&C Asia Stella Awards 2023. The awards programme recognises outstanding performance in Asia's MICE industry. This year's winners were announced at an awards ceremony held at the Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore on August 16, 2023.

Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) President Mr Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya said: "I thank our industry colleagues, M&C Asia magazine, and its readers for recognising Thailand's distinction in meetings and incentive travel. This is the third consecutive year Thailand has won the Best Meeting & Incentive Destination (Asia) at M&C Asia Stella Awards and I believe Thailand's appeal as a top business and leisure destination will be further enhanced by this latest honour. This award will motivate all of us at TCEB as we work with our local and overseas partners to develop new destinations and products for MICE."

The award came at a time when MI arrivals in Thailand is rising sharply. Data from TCEB-supported groups show that up to July this year the number of overseas MI visitors had more than tripled compared to the same period last year. In the first seven months last year, TCEB supported 37 MI groups with a total of 17,694 visitors. This year, the numbers jumped to 138 groups with 60,568 visitors.



This momentum is expected to be sustained through the end of the year. The strong turnouts at TCEB's recent roadshows to India and China in July and August suggest that arrival numbers will continue to trend upwards. The India roadshow generated leads on 54 groups with an estimated 47,480 visitors. For China, the tally was 54 groups with 53,306 visitors. TCEB's participation in international trade shows in the last two years is also keeping Thailand fresh on the minds of business event planners worldwide.

Mr Chiruit added that, for the rest of 2023, TCEB is pressing on with efforts to develop new products for international MICE, especially in new destinations. It is working with provincial authorities, local businesses, and academic institutions to co-create new products that draw on the unique cultural and natural resources of a city or region. TCEB is also working with city destinations to attract or create events and festivals that would appeal to meeting and incentive visitors. The goal is to help planners deliver a most compelling and distinctive MICE experience in Thailand. For more information, contact TCEB at: [brand-pr@tceb.or.th](mailto:brand-pr@tceb.or.th)

## Qatar Airways Trade Partners networking evening

Qatar Airways hosted its top trade partners for an evening of networking and fellowship recently. The evening was hosted by Mr. Bennet Stevens (Regional Manager for

Qatar Airways Indian Sub Continent) and Jonathan Fernando (Country Manager for Sri Lanka & Maldives) together with other senior members of the team in Colombo.

Qatar Airways now operates 35 times a week to Colombo, connecting passengers to over 160 destinations worldwide





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## Dusit continues expansion in Japan with new luxury hotel promising 'a total Kyoto experience'

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, will continue its expansion in Japan this September with the opening of Dusit Thani Kyoto, a new luxury hotel in the city's vibrant Hanganji Monzen-machi district, only 850 metres from major transportation hub Kyoto Station, which offers seamless travel connections throughout Kyoto and to the rest of Japan.



Gilles Cretallaz

Building and expanding on the foundation set by Dusit's first hotel in the country, the lifestyle-oriented ASAI Kyoto Shijo, which opened in June, Dusit Thani Kyoto has been thoughtfully crafted to deliver distinctive and remarkable stay experiences for luxury travellers seeking authenticity, exclusivity, and enrichment in the utmost of comfort and convenience.

Located in a peaceful residential area, the hotel has been specially designed to reflect the rich cultural heritage and stunning architecture of Kyoto. Inside, the seamless design direction continues and includes references to another ancient capital – Ayutthaya, Thailand – with subtle nods to the magnificent chedis for which the city is renowned. This unique meeting of cultures further informs the interior design of the 147 meticulously appointed guest rooms, delivering a harmonious blend of timeless elegance and contemporary charm.

Set around a serene and beautiful courtyard, the hotel offers a wide range of facilities for business and leisure, including elegant event spaces for up to 240 guests, a well-equipped fitness centre, an indoor swimming pool, and a signature Devarana Wellness centre. Here, guests will find a unique fusion of ancient Thai massage therapies and traditional Japanese rituals, personalised wellness treatments, and bespoke well-being journeys specially created to help guests de-stress, detoxify, and enjoy deep restorative sleep.

Dining and imbibing at Dusit Thani Kyoto also promises to be an exceptional experience, with a range of enticing options, including a speciality Teppanyaki restaurant, a luxurious tea shop, a stylish basement bar, Den Kyoto, and extraordinary dining experiences crafted by acclaimed chefs Duangporn "Bo" Songvisava and Dylan Jones from Thailand.



Renowned for their commitment to authentic Thai cuisine created with seasonal and sustainable ingredients, Bo and Dylan earned global recognition, including a Michelin Star, at their former Bangkok restaurant, Bo.Ian. Their latest gastronomic concept, Ayatana, at Dusit Thani Kyoto, offers a one-of-a-kind, multi-sensory fine dining experience where the authentic flavours of Thai cuisine meet the finest Japanese traditions, creating unforgettable moments to savour. To complement this distinctive culinary journey, the couple has also created Kati, a unique dessert atelier that offers an innovative take on traditional Thai desserts.

To help guests connect with the culture and spirituality of Kyoto, Dusit's team is on hand to help arrange memorable excursions to nearby attractions such as Nishi Honganji and Toji temples (both UNESCO World Heritage Sites), as well as other popular destinations and hidden gems throughout the city. Swift and efficient travel from Kyoto Station ensures guests can maximise their time and easily explore everything this remarkable destination has to offer.

"With our commitment to impeccable service, exceptional wellness and dining experiences, and unique fusion of Thai and Japanese hospitality, Dusit Thani Kyoto is primed to be a haven for luxury travellers seeking a harmonious blend of cultural appreciation, culinary indulgence, and ultimate relaxation," said Mr Gilles Cretallaz, COO, Dusit International. "Our prime location near Kyoto Station ensures our guests can effortlessly navigate and discover the rich cultural heritage, iconic landmarks, and hidden gems that Kyoto offers. Whether it's visiting the revered Nishi Honganji Temple or venturing further to explore the serene bamboo groves of Arashiyama or the historic charm of the Gion district, we're delighted to provide a luxurious base for a memorable exploration of Kyoto's treasures, ensuring guests can make the most of their visit – and enjoy a total Kyoto experience."

To celebrate its opening, Dusit Thani Kyoto is offering exclusive room rates for members of Dusit's guest recognition programme, Dusit Gold, starting at JPY 56,925 (USD 400) per night, inclusive of JPY 5,000 hotel credit per person per stay.

This offer is valid for booking until November 30th, 2023 for stay dates between September 1st to December 28th, 2023. Complimentary enrollment to Dusit Gold is available at [dusit.com/signup](https://dusit.com/signup). For more information and reservations, please visit [www.dusit.com/thanikyoto](https://www.dusit.com/thanikyoto).

## Anantara's Ras Al Khaimah Resort to Launch in Q4

TTA BULLETIN

Bringing the concept of eco-luxury to the shores of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates, Minor Hotels shares an update on its new luxury resort scheduled to launch in the emirate later this year. Now in the final stages of development, Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort will open in Q4 and will be the brand's ninth property in the UAE.



Set along the Arabian Gulf coastline on Mina Al Arab Island in Ras Al Khaimah with a backdrop of the majestic Hajar mountains, Anantara Mina Al Arab is situated amid 1.5 kilometres of mangroves and lagoons in a natural reserve. The resort will be a 45-minute drive from Dubai International Airport and just 15 minutes from Ras Al Khaimah International Airport.

Designed to blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings, the new-build resort features 174 guest rooms, suites and villas, including the first over water villas in the emirate. All the accommodation has been built in a sustainable fashion, with furniture and fittings using eco-friendly materials such as sustainable wood and recycled fabrics and plastics. The resort will also feature a range of sustainable initiatives including greywater waste recycling, thermodynamics and solar panels for water heating and a water bottling plant.

All accommodation options will offer a balcony or terrace with sweeping views of the lagoon, sea or surrounding landscapes, with the peninsula and over water villas also with a private pool. The option of interconnecting rooms and extra beds will make the resort ideal for family getaways.

With unique views over the mangroves, lagoon and beach, the over water villas will deliver an unrivalled guest experience with luxurious living spaces including an expansive terrace for al fresco dining and relaxation. All over water villas will have access to a secluded private beach, each with its own private beach cabana with a la carte service. The large two-bedroom villas allow plentiful space for families to holiday together with ease.

Guests will be able to enjoy the impressive Anantara Spa, with seven treatment rooms catering for males, females and couples, along with a wet area and relaxation spaces. A menu of signature spa journeys inspired by Arabian and Turkish culture will be available, including hammam rituals.

A fully equipped fitness centre with lagoon views will provide state-of-the-art equipment for workouts indoors, combined with a regular programme of activities around the resort for keen sports enthusiasts, including padel tennis courts. Featuring its own sunken bar, a large outdoor pool is located just steps from the resort's beach, where motorised water sports such as paddle boarding and kayaking will be

available. A kids club will engage and entertain the younger guests.

A selection of dining options will include piquant journeys around Southeast Asia at Mekong, grilled fish and seafood at Beach House, and international specialities from breakfast through dinner at the all-day dining restaurant. In addition, a pool bar and a deli café will each offer light bites throughout the day, with a lobby lounge also serving Champagne, fine wines, and gourmet nibbles in the evening.

With its location amidst a mangrove lagoon, protected coastal wetlands and pristine natural beaches, the area is home to abundant wildlife, including turtles, dolphins, the rare dugong, and birds such as flamingos, ibis and migrating species passing through. A key priority for the resort will be to preserve and respect its local environment, which will be a focus of the sustainability initiatives.

The resort's unique location and surrounding landscapes, combined with its close proximity to Dubai, will make it the ideal venue for a range of meetings and events. Exclusive weddings and intimate celebrations can be hosted within the resort's versatile spaces and gardens, whilst the low-key ambiance will make it ideal for smaller meetings and team building.

Amir Golbarg, Senior Vice President Minor Hotels Middle East and Africa, commented, "We look forward to welcoming guests into sustainable luxury at the upcoming Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort. The stunning natural setting amid the mangroves, combined with the heartfelt service Anantara is known for, will provide guests with an unforgettable escape in this magnificent emirate."

Sameh Muhtadi, CEO RAK Properties, developer of Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort, also commented: "When RAK Properties developed Mina Al Arab, we wanted the island to embody the essence of Ras Al Khaimah, and to find partners that are truly aligned with our vision. Collaborating with leading internationally recognised hospitality brands is part of our strategy to bring high-quality investment opportunities to our beachfront developments. The Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort will enrich the island's offering with a luxury beachfront experience that also respects the natural and stunning beauty of its surroundings, and we're very excited for the vision to become reality at the opening."

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## Hotel Nikko Changshu to Partially Open August 1, 2023

TTA BULLETIN

Hotel Nikko Changshu has announced it will open on August 1, 2023, initially with a slightly limited range of facilities. The first Nikko-branded hotel in Changshu, in China's Jiangsu Province, Hotel Nikko Changshu is strategically located at the heart of the Changshu National New & High-Tech Industrial Development Zone. It is easily accessible via local highway infrastructure and is just a 25-minute drive from Changshu railway station and a 30-minute drive to downtown Suzhou.

The brand-new complex consists of 288 hotel guestrooms and suites, 197 serviced apartments, three restaurants and over 1,200 square meters of meeting and event space, making it the accommodation and rendezvous of choice in the city.

A stay at Hotel Nikko Changshu will be an intriguing experience of comfort, convenience, and a taste of fine contemporary design with Japanese aesthetics touches. Its guestrooms and suites are spacious and equipped with a full array of modern amenities, including high-quality linens and mattresses, 55" flat-screen TVs offering domestic and international TV channels, state-of-the-art bathroom amenities, switchable glass and automatic washlets as well as complimentary high-speed WIFI. Their floor-to-ceiling windows offer gorgeous views of the city.



The hotel has three restaurants that will provide gourmets with fine dining experiences of Chinese, Japanese and international cuisine, as follows:



The Lounge (Lobby Lounge) will be the perfect place to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea in the late morning, have casual meetings with friends during the day, or unwind with a glass of wine in the evening.

Serena is an all-day dining outlet that offers a variety of international, Japanese and local delicacies in the open kitchen. An à la carte menu featuring international cuisine will be available for lunch and dinner. The restaurant's four private rooms will also be an ideal venue for group dining and celebratory gatherings.

Toh-Lee is an exceptional Chinese restaurant featuring an ambience integrating traditional and modern décor and design concepts. Using quality seasonal ingredients, its talented chefs are ready to provide guests with a treat of authentic Cantonese cuisine and Changshu flavors.

In terms of recreational and leisure facilities, the Recreation Center will provide guests with a fully equipped 24-hour gym, a 22-meter heated indoor swimming pool, a Japanese hot tub, a kids' playroom, three additional rooms where guests can play cards or mahjong, and an outdoor roof garden connecting the hotel's serviced apartments with its public areas. Those who would like to explore the city can take a jog along Kuncheng Lake or go sightseeing at the Shanghu, Shajiabang and Yushan scenic parks nearby.

Hotel Nikko Changshu will participate in the One Harmony loyalty membership program for Okura Hotels & Resorts, Nikko Hotels International, and Hotel JAL City customers. Members can earn points and enjoy special services, benefits and awards with no membership or annual fees.

This offer is valid for reservations made during July 28, 2023 to December 31, 2023 for stays between August 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023.



For long-staying guests, the hotel will offer four choices of serviced apartments; studios, one-bedroom-, two-bedroom- and three-bedroom units. All are equipped with a comprehensive range of state-of-the-art house appliances.

For those organizing everything from conferences, seminars, and corporate hospitality events to wedding banquets and board meetings, Hotel Nikko Changshu will be the venue of choice in the city. On the second floor, there is a pillar-less Grand Ballroom, four function rooms, and a VIP room, able to accommodate events of any scale. All these facilities are fully equipped with state-of-the-art A/V technology. Experienced event planners will be on hand to provide advice and assistance.



## Anantara Veli Maldives Resort Kicks-Off its Best of British Michelin Series with Chef Gary Foulkes of Angler Restaurant

TTA BULLETIN

Known for its extensive culinary offerings set in a picturesque island surrounded by azure waters, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort ups its food game with a lineup of British Michelin-Starred chefs, starting with Chef Gary Foulkes this August.



Packing simple food and big flavours, Gary will be working with locally sourced seasonal produce from the Maldives, letting nature write the menu.

"Seasonal cooking is something I am passionate about wherever I am in the world, I'm really looking forward to getting to the Maldives and seeing what nature's bounty has to offer. I will base my menu around this, with a few surprises along the way," said Gary.

While many chefs recount stories of family recipes, Chef Gary shares of his accidental encounter with food when he spent a day on a school placement in the kitchen of a hotel. This led him on an unknown path into the culinary world, working under the tutelage of culinary greats like John Campbell, William Drabble, Gary Rhodes and Philip Howard – a man he credits for having a huge influence on his style of cooking.

In April 2016, Gary joined the Angler restaurant as Executive Head Chef, achieving a Michelin star in just five months, creating a new reputation for the restaurant with his unique and clean style of cooking. His food is inspired by travel, people and experiences, starting with a three-year travel across the globe accompanied by his wife. The trip began in a Volkswagen Campervan in Europe, and quickly became a food odyssey.

Their journey took them across Europe, Southeast Asia, Japan, Indonesia, Central America and South America. The ever-changing menu at Angler is inspired by travel and refined through many years of culinary experience – the use of ingredients such as wasabi, shiso and black garlic in the menu highlights the Asian influence in Gary's cooking.

At Anantara Veli Maldives Resort, Gary will be teaming up with the resort's culinary team, led by Executive Chef

Francis Purification. "We are excited to have such an amazing lineup in our kitchen. It will be a great experience for our chefs and there's no better way to learn than to cook with the best in the industry," said Chef Francis.

Following Chef Gary's debut at Anantara Veli Maldives Resort are four other British greats who will be making an appearance at the resort throughout the rest of 2023, including Singapore based Michelin-starred chefs, Steve Lancaster of Poise in September and Lewis Barker of Sommer in October.

Firing up the kitchen this 2nd and 3rd of August, Gary will be plating for an exclusive dinner with only eight seats in the wine cellar at Anantara Veli's Japanese restaurant, Origami. For more information about the dinner, email [velimaldives@anantara.com](mailto:velimaldives@anantara.com) or call +960 6644 100.

Anantara is a luxury hospitality brand for modern travellers, connecting them to genuine places, people and stories through personal experiences, and providing heartfelt hospitality in the world's most exciting destinations. The collection of distinct, thoughtfully designed luxury hotels and resorts provides a window through which to journey into invigorating new territory, curating personal travel experiences.

From cosmopolitan cities to desert sands to lush islands, Anantara connects travellers to the indigenous, grounds them in authentic luxury, and hosts them with passionate expertise. The portfolio currently boasts over 45 stunning hotels and resorts located in Thailand, Maldives, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles, Mozambique, Zambia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Tunisia, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Italy and The Netherlands, with a pipeline of future properties across Asia, the Middle East, Europe and South America.

For more information on Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas, please visit [www.anantara.com](http://www.anantara.com). Follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/anantara](https://www.facebook.com/anantara); Twitter and Instagram: [@anantara\\_hotels](https://www.instagram.com/anantara_hotels)







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# HOTELS

## Biodiversity Forest Oasis Surrounding Heritage Kandalama expands

TTA BULLETIN

In line with its long-standing commitment to environmental sustainability, Aitken Spence Hotels is proud to announce the expansion of Heritage Kandalama's biodiversity forest oasis. This significant enhancement which comes as a result of a 48-million-rupee investment sees an additional 13 acres of land added to the conservation forest area, which now spans 211 acres creating a secure forest bridge within the existing Forest Department nature reserves.



Embracing the spirit of nature's symphony, this expansion secures the longevity of the sanctuary's wealth of biodiversity creating a haven of ecological preservation amidst Sri Lanka's central province. The forest stands as a testament to Heritage Kandalama's dedication to protect our country's invaluable ecosystems and their myriad inhabitants.

Within the verdant expanse of the forest oasis, a symphony of life unfolds marked by remarkable diversity that thrives in harmony. Visitors will encounter a vibrant canvas of 128 species of native flora that form a colourful backdrop to the flurry of activity from the forest's inhabitants as 64 species of butterflies add a graceful dance to the landscape whilst the air resonates with the songs of 183 endemic and migratory bird species.

The sanctuary's recent expansion safeguards a habitat and roaming territory for 19 species of reptiles, some rare and endangered, and 17 mammals. The forest area is also home to rich birdlife and notable residents including the Grey Heron, Blue

Tailed Bee-Eater and the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher. The jungle also houses birds of prey such as the Changeable Hawk Eagle, Brahminy Kite and the Grey-headed Fish Eagle.

The sanctuary is crisscrossed by 11 protected natural streams that nurture the local ecosystem sustaining life throughout the landscape and feeding the Kandalama tank. These water sources contribute to the flourishing biodiversity and serve as vital lifelines for the myriad species within the forest.

"Heritage Kandalama's expansion of the biodiversity forest oasis is a shining example of our unwavering dedication to sustainable environmental stewardship. By investing in the preservation of this land, Heritage Kandalama continues to strike a balance between uniquely opulent hospitality and nature conservation, creating a model for sustainable tourism and eco-resort operation that inspires the industry at large", commented Ms. Stasshani Jayawardena, Chairperson Aitken Spence Hotel Management Pvt (Ltd).

The hotel warmly invites guests and eco-tourism enthusiasts to explore and appreciate the natural beauty and rich biodiversity of this expanded sanctuary.

## Handun Villas Celebrates 6th Anniversary

TTA BULLETIN

Handun Villas, the elegant and lush Villa located in Talalla celebrated its 6th years anniversary recently. The boutique hotel having opened its doors in June 2017 has worked towards creating memorable experiences for guests who wish to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city to the simplicity of coastal village life.

The villa brings together the perfect combination one could find in a star-class hotel and the comfort and privacy of a home. The eight stunning bedrooms are all equipped with luxury amenities. The property also includes a wellness spa, pool, driver's accommodation and 24-hour security. The staff is friendly and always happy to help arrange tours for guests who wish to visit heritage sites and wildlife parks. Families with kids are especially drawn to its expansive gardens where little ones can indulge in all sorts of outdoor mischief in safety.

"We are so proud to have reached this significant milestone. The support our guests and friends have shown throughout these past five years is tremendous, and it gives us great encouragement to better our operation. As we mark six years, we are not just celebrating our past but looking towards the future as we embark on our next chapter," said Nayomi Handunnetti, Co-founder & Executive Director, Handun Villas.

With its Dutch-inspired architecture and surrounding coconut estate, the boutique hotel has been sought after by tourists, both local and foreign alike, for its honest representation of Sri Lankan village life. Guests can expect a traditional warm welcome at Handun Villas where they may feast on home-cooked meals, engage in peaceful outdoor yoga sessions and plan

excursions to nearby heritage sites. With secluded beaches and an abundance of flora and fauna bursting with birdlife, Talalla and Handun Villas offers guests a quieter, more laid-back experience and offers the perfect setting to relax and rejuvenate.

And while Handun Villas continues to leverage on the opportunities it has to grow, the property has also made significant strides to support the community in which it operates. Although its primary function as a boutique hotel provides job opportunities and patronage for the inhabitants, and entrepreneurs of Talalla; Handun Villas goes the extra mile with its CSR and responsible travel initiatives. It has claimed many awards and certifications over the years and most recently they were placed amongst the top 20 awarded the title of suitability champion by The Tourism Alliance in collaboration with USAID Catalyze. This sustainability programme was introduced under The Love Sri Lanka Campaign to support individual tourism businesses in their sustainability journey and to reduce their environmental impact, improve the well-being of local communities and create a more resilient and sustainable economy. For more information on Handun Villas visit <https://www.handunvillas.com/>



## Minor Hotels Announces New Edition to the Anantara Brand in China With the Signing of Anantara Shaoxing Resort

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels and its joint venture partner in China, Funyard Minor JV Co., (China), announces the signing of Anantara Shaoxing Resort in northeastern Zhejiang Province. Perched on the slopes of Mount Kuaiji, the luxury resort developed in partnership with Shaoxing Lan Ruo Lake Real Estate Development Co., Ltd will be the first internationally-branded resort in the city of Shaoxing when it opens in 2024.

Anantara Shaoxing Resort will form the core of Taoyuanli Health and Wellness Town – an integrated mixed-use community featuring landscaped courtyards, playgrounds, world-class restaurants, organic supermarkets, communal dining, and comprehensive health and wellness facilities for all ages.

The design of the 120-key Anantara Shaoxing is inspired by a multi-deck luxury yacht, with clusters of low-rise buildings cascading towards the sparkling Lanruo Lake. In addition to modern guest rooms and suites, the property will feature an all-day dining restaurant, a tearoom serving some of China's best blends, a specialty restaurant, and a 700-square-metre banquet area. The

wellness-centric resort will promote health and wellbeing through natural immersion, with facilities ranging from a hot spring-fed outdoor swimming pool and a water landscape platform to Anantara Spa complete with yoga rooms and fitness centre. A special concert area, art gallery and secluded library will further add to the sensory experience.

Anantara guests will be able to spend time exploring local farms, hiking along scenic trails, as well as enjoying a spot of off-roading, wall climbing, or playing recreational sports. Guests can also visit the variety of clinics available in the Taoyuanli Health and Wellness Town, specialising in traditional Chinese and Western medicine and offers diagnostic tests, chronic disease management, lifestyle risk factor reduction, longevity, telemedicine services and much more.

"Eastern China has always been an important market for Minor Hotels. Shaoxing is blessed with rich cultural heritage and pristine nature, making it an attractive tourist destination," commented Mr. Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels. "Anan-



antara's reputation and know-how in creating meaningful, nature-integrated experiences for the luxury traveller is crucial to the successful development of the city and the region as a whole."

"Shaoxing is a key city for the integrated development of the south coast of Hangzhou Bay. It has a vital strategic position, with plans in place to link it up with Hangzhou, Ningbo and, eventually, Shanghai," said Mr. Sam Gao, President of Funyard Minor JV Co., (China). "The city's tourism industry is an important pillar of the province's economic development plans, and the arrival of Anantara fills a gap in the luxury hospitality and wellness segment and

ensures Shaoxing is on track to achieve broader development goals."

Anantara Shaoxing Resort along with the recently announced Anantara Anji Resort will join Anantara Guiyang Resort in Guizhou Province and Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort in Yunnan Province as the brand's fourth property in China, connecting guests to genuine places, people and stories through personal experiences, and providing heartfelt hospitality in the world's most exciting destinations.

For more information please go to <https://www.anantara.com/en/shaoxing>

## Hunas Falls signs BOI deal and embarks on USD 12 million upgrade

TTA BULLETIN

Hunas Holdings PLC has announced a \$ 12 million worth refurbishment initiative at Hunas Falls Hotel.

An agreement to this effect was signed with the Board of Investment (BOI) last week.

The refurbishment is expected to be completed within a time frame of 20 months. At present Hunas Falls Hotel has 28 Deluxe Rooms, and three suites.

In March this year, Hunas Holdings PLC announced a landmark partnership with Azotels, a company owned and managed by the 'Hotelier of the Century', Adrian Zecha.

The partnership will see Azotels developing the Hunas Falls Hotel into a high-end luxury hotel with villas, whilst also undertaking the management of the establishment, which is guaranteed to bring it in line with the best hotels in the world

## Fairway Colombo Hotel Host for Miss World Tourism 2023

TTA BULLETIN



Fairway Colombo Hotel, in collaboration with Ceylon Fashion Week, proudly hosted the esteemed Miss World Tourism 2023 pageant recently. The spectacular event took place outdoors on Hospital Street, the vibrant venue where the famous Fairway Street food festival is held every month.

The pageant attracted contestants from more than 30 countries, who dazzled the audience. With their grace and charm while showcasing exquisite Bridal wear, Swimwear, Evening wear, and Smart Casual wear.

The highlight of the evening was the crowning of the coveted Fairway Queen title, bestowed upon the deserving Kao Mangjung, who represented Taiwan. The prestigious honour not only recognized her beauty but also symbolised the celebration of diversity and cultural exchange among nations. This remarkable event was not only aimed at promoting tourism in Sri Lanka's captivating capital, Colombo, but also served as a platform to uplift the Sri Lankan fashion industry and promote talented local



designers on the global stage.

Fairway Colombo Hotel expressed its utmost delight in hosting this exceptional pageant, extending heartfelt gratitude to the organisers, local police, and other authorities for their support and cooperation, which played a vital role in making the event an overwhelming success.

Miss World Tourism 2023 will undoubtedly leave a lasting legacy, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and appreciation for beauty, fashion, and cultural diversity in the hearts of all those who were fortunate enough to witness its grandeur.

## New Beach Club at Reef Gardens, Polhena, Matara

TTA BULLETIN

Iconic resort in the south coast of Sri Lanka existence since early 70's is now under the management of Hotel Development & Management Company (Pvt) Ltd., an emerging company that ventures into investing and managing properties in Sri Lanka catering to both Sri Lankan and International traveller, opened an unique sea side restaurant and a bar for sun down entertainment and for great day spends by the side of the Polhena bay overlooking the blue oceans of the Sri Lankan seashores.



Reef garden with 20 rooms extensive Wedding, Meeting and conference facilities, and with fusion cuisines served

indoor, outdoor and by the beach is unique and affordable for a great holiday for all travellers.

## Emirates and Air Canada Expand Codeshare Partnership to Flights to and from Montréal

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has announced that its codeshare partnership with Air Canada has extended to include flights to and from Montréal, following the launch of services to Québec's largest city in July. Emirates customers will now be able to plan travel between 11 of the most popular domestic points beyond Montréal and destinations on Emirates' expansive network, utilising the services of both airlines conveniently on a single ticket.

The expanded network of Canadian points included in the codeshare partnership between Emirates and Air Canada now extends to 11 destinations via Montréal, with an additional 69 points accessible from the gateway, on an interline basis.

The codeshare partnership between Emirates and Air Canada enables customers to enjoy flexibility and choice with smooth connections via Canada's two largest cities to points such as Halifax, Edmonton, Ottawa and Calgary - perfect for leisure and business travellers or those visiting family or friends. From Toronto, Emirates' customers can travel to 19 points whilst enjoying codeshare benefits, and an extra 100, made possible through an interline arrangement.



Customers travelling from Canadian cities can easily connect to Emirates' services in Montréal or Toronto to travel to exciting destinations across Asia, Africa and the Middle East, via the airline's hub in Dubai. On its flights to and from Toronto, Emirates offers daily services to Dubai, onboard its popular flagship A380 aircraft. The world's largest international airline also operates seven weekly flights between Montréal and Dubai, utilising its other widebody aircraft - the Boeing 777 - enabling passengers to plan their travel itineraries to global destinations, with seamless connectivity.

Travellers with itineraries on Emirates' flights can plan their entire trip on a single-ticket and take advantage of hassle-free flight benefits including the airline's baggage allowance, in addition to convenient bag check-through to the final destination.\*

Furthermore, members of Emirates' frequent flyer programme, Emirates Skywards, can look forward to earning and redeeming miles on flights of both airlines, courtesy of the partnership.

## Qatar Airways, the Official Global Airline Partner of Formula 1® Unveils New Livery Ahead of FORMULA 1® QATAR AIRWAYS QATAR GRAND PRIX 2023

TTA BULLETIN

As the Official Global Airline Partner of Formula 1®, Qatar Airways is delighted to announce its title sponsorship of the highly anticipated FORMULA 1® QATAR AIRWAYS QATAR GRAND PRIX 2023 which will be held from 6-8 October at Lusail International Circuit. To rev up the excitement and reflect its commitment to motorsport enthusiasts worldwide, the airline is thrilled to unveil its new Formula 1® livery painted on a specially branded Boeing 777 aircraft.

Qatar Airways' leisure arm, Qatar Airways Holidays, is offering enthusiasts a unique experience at F1® races throughout the season, as well as the FORMULA 1® QATAR AIRWAYS QATAR GRAND PRIX 2023 through its exclusive Ultimate F1® Fan Package. The travel packages are designed to provide a seamless motorsport experience, with the inclusion of return flights, hotel accommodation, a wide range of passes including F1® Paddock Club and Grandstand race tickets, and much more.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive and Chairman of Qatar Tourism, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "The months of October and November will deliver a collection of world-class automotive activities dedicated to fans around the world. As the Official Global Airline Partner of Formula 1, we are honoured to host international visitors to Qatar; once again delivering our unparalleled hospitality and bringing the world closer together through



sport."

Mr. Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif Al Mannai, President of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation and Lusail International Circuit, said: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank Qatar Airways, our Official Sponsor, for their support. The partnership between Lusail International Circuit and Qatar Airways will play a pivotal role in bringing together global FORMULA 1® fans in Qatar. Our new state-of-the-art track will ensure we deliver a seamless and unforgettable experience for local, regional, and international spectators. We look forward to welcoming F1 fans from all over the globe."

From 20 September - 10 October on select flights, Qatar Airways passengers can enjoy delicacies inspired by the airline's partnership with Formula 1®. These branded menus reflect F1® themed desserts in Business and Economy Class, ensuring passengers' taste buds experience an array of exciting flavours.

The Ultimate F1® Fan Package offers unforgettable experiences of Pit Lane walks, a guided track tour, and special events with select F1® drivers, bringing motorsport lovers close to the high-octane action.

## SriLankan Cargo Named Best International Cargo Airline at India Cargo Awards 2023

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines Cargo was aptly named the Best International Cargo Airline at the recently concluded India Cargo Awards 2023, which has been dubbed the ‘Oscars of the Cargo Industry’ and determines winners via a transparent voting system. A tour de force with one of the most prolific flight schedules out of India by any international airline, SriLankan Cargo outranked other foreign carriers in key performance dimensions for the top title.

SriLankan Cargo offers direct air cargo services out of the nine Indian cities of

Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kochi, Trivandrum, Chennai, Trichy and Madurai, with connections to Colombo and beyond. With over 70 direct weekly flights from India, combined with worldwide logistics partner solutions, SriLankan Cargo offers easy connections for Indian shippers to a global network of cities, servicing popular trade routes between India and the Middle East and the Far East. During the past financial year alone, SriLankan Cargo transported nearly 10,000 metric tons worth of shipments from India.



Chaminda Perera, General Manager – Cargo of SriLankan Airlines expressed his delight at the win stating, “As excited as I am about this incredible honour from the Indian cargo trade, it did not really come as a surprise as I know my team’s commitment and the effort that they put in to deliver on our promise of a reliable service to the Indian market. India is very important to us, and we will ensure to build

on this momentum and keep raising the bar for our Indian customers.”

SriLankan Cargo has been providing connectivity across Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Far East and Australia. Leveraging on road and partner networks, SriLankan Cargo is able to provide customers the flexibility to move cargo beyond the points which SriLankan Airlines directly serves. With superior storage facilities and cargo handling equipment to manage customers every requirement, SriLankan Cargo is a one-stop solution for any type of consignment.

## Emirates Premium Economy shines in first year of full service with over 160,000 customers trading up to experience the cabin’s quiet luxury

TTA BULLETIN

After setting new industry benchmarks in Premium Economy travel, Emirates is celebrating a banner first year of full-service operations with the highly popular cabin class. Over 160,000 customers have traded up to fly in Emirates Premium Economy since it was introduced in August 2022, with strong demand momentum forecasted in the coming months. The airline is providing travellers more opportunities to experience its highly-acclaimed Premium Economy product which is currently available on flights to 11 cities, with the list growing to 13 cities by the end of the year, as more retrofitted aircraft with refreshed cabins roll into scheduled service.

Since Emirates debuted its Premium Economy Class, customer response has been overwhelmingly positive with demand exceeding expectations and bookings growing month on month, demonstrating its appeal to a broad range of traveller segments who want to try out its understated luxury and meticulously elevated experience at great value. Nearly half of customers flying in Emirates Premium Economy are solo travellers venturing off for holidays, while couples and families constitute the other half. More

than 60% of customers who booked to fly in Premium Economy in the last year were also loyal Emirates Skywards members and regular customers of the airline.

Emirates currently flies its A380s with the latest Premium Economy cabins to London Heathrow, Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, Christchurch, Singapore, Los Angeles, New York JFK, Houston, San Francisco and Dubai, with flights regularly registering full seat loads in Premium Economy. The airline plans to make Premium Economy available to customers flying to/from Mumbai and Bengaluru from 29 October, and additional cities will be announced soon. Emirates currently operates 20 aircraft fitted with Premium Economy, 14 of which were retrofitted in-house by the Emirates Engineering team in Dubai over the course of the last nine months.

Since August 2022, the airline has operated close to 4,500 flights with Premium Economy, traversing more than 36 million



kilometres around the globe. On those flights, over 192,000 meals from its carefully curated menus which include the finest ingredients were served to customers who enjoyed regionally inspired, generously portioned dishes. Unique touches include indulgent desserts garnished with edible gold leaf, among other signature offerings. Premium Economy menus are updated every month to ensure a diversity of flavours and dishes, especially for well-travelled customers. Over 126,000 pieces of chocolates were served to round off meals for Premium Economy customers. Emirates also served 6,700 kilograms of mixed nuts and 8,650 litres of complimentary fresh lemon and mint juices in Premium Economy. The airline’s robust beverage selection in Premium Economy includes a global exclusive for Emirates customers, Australian sparkling wine, Chandon Vintage Brut 2016, alongside a choice of a unique white and red wine.

The airline’s philosophy to constantly innovate and redefine service excellence through the introduction of Premium Economy has earned it numerous top

placings and accolades in the cabin category at the 2023 Skytrax Awards, Business Traveller awards, Airline Ratings Excellence Awards, and 2022 Business Traveller Middle East awards.

In May, Emirates launched a global campaign with Academy Award winning actor and philanthropist Penelope Cruz, which also featured her enjoying the spacious seats in Premium Economy. The airline has also provided a glimpse of its Premium Economy offering through guided tours of the new cabin class to media and influencers, trade partners, airport, tourism and government officials across cities like Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, Christchurch, Singapore, New York JFK and San Francisco.

The Premium Economy roll-out is a core component of the airline’s multi-billion-dollar retrofit programme which will see the interior upgrade on 67 Emirates A380 cabins, as well as 53 Boeing 777 cabins. By the end of the programme, over 4,000 Premium Economy seats will be installed, along with over 700 First Class suites and 5,000 Business Class seats refurbished with the latest interiors.

## Air Seychelles achieves a profit of USD 8.4 million in 2022

TTA BULLETIN

Air Seychelles, the national carrier of the Republic of Seychelles announces a profit of USD 8.4 million for the year 2022.

This was the first year of profit for Air Seychelles since 2016 when it reported a small gain of USD 425k.

After reporting a loss of USD 22.7m in 2021 and starting the year 2022 with a negative net asset position of USD 100.6m, the year 2022 was one of exceptional recovery for Air Seychelles. Prior to the start of 2022, the airline had suffered the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which included the shutting down of its key routes and the shrinking of its revenue streams.

Through the Company Reorganization (Administration) process, Air Seychelles paid the agreed settlement of USD 28.16m

owed to the Bondholders in May 2022. The payment was made from a USD 16.5m bank loan from Nouvobanq and USD 11.7m of Air Seychelles’ cash reserves. This marked an incredible achievement, closing the chapter on the USD 71.5m debt burden that the company had been carrying since 2015/16.

Air Seychelles successfully exited the Company Reorganisation in November 2022 and ended the year with a positive net asset position of USD 19 million. This is an improvement of USD 104 million from its net asset position of negative USD 85 million at the start of the Company Reorganisation process.

This remarkable restructuring success was further backed by an impressive upswing in the company’s operational and ongoing financial performance. Overall revenue

had recovered to 93% of 2019 levels for the year and even exceeded 2019 levels in the fourth quarter of 2022.

The company managed to almost fully utilise the international jet aircraft fleet, with one aircraft dedicated to ACMI operations while the other operated commercial scheduled flight operations. With borders reopened, scheduled operations were re-established to Johannesburg, Tel Aviv, Mauritius and Mumbai, with a seasonal Almaty operation launched in December.

By the end of 2022, the company had achieved an overall profit of USD 119.6m and, after excluding the debt write-off



gains from the debt discounts during the company reorganisation process, made a profit of USD 8.4m. This profit enabled Air Seychelles to make repayments on its debt obligations.

The Board of Directors and the acting CEO would like to extend their gratitude to all its employees, the Government of Seychelles, the Administrators, the creditors, its legal counsels, and the general public for their contributions and support provided to the company in achieving one of the greatest positive turnarounds in the history of Air Seychelles.

## Emirates unveils its stylish Bulgari amenity kits for the Autumn/Winter season

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates is unveiling its new collection of stylish Bulgari amenity kits for the Autumn/Winter season in First and Business Class. The range features new colour palettes and new fragrances, along with a keepsake mirror, and a myriad of thoughtful amenities for passenger comfort, initially on select routes and on long-haul flights.

In keeping with Emirates commitment to providing an exceptional customer experience onboard, the First and Business Class kit bags feature new trending pantones and designs, along with Bulgari fragrances encapsulated in bottles designed exclusively for Emirates. The new range presents eight different collectible bags across First and Business Class, in a classic tan and black fabric, contemporary silver with lilac, or understated black with lilac highlights.

Featuring one of 2023's most stylish

pantones – silver, the Business Class range offers two bag shapes, a pouch and classic toiletry bag silhouette, both made from vegan leather in a standout metallic silver shade with lilac accents. Each kit features several Bulgari products, including the iconic fragrance BVLGARI OMNIA Amethyste Eau de Toilette. The scent opens with the bright and citrusy facets of pink grapefruit and green sap accords, while the heart reveals rich Damascena Rose Absolute, accompanied by a warm, woody trail where the sweetness of a heliotrope accord melts into the vibrations of solar wood notes. Passengers will also receive a complementary Omnia Amethyste face emulsion and body emulsion to keep their skin hydrated, alongside a rich Bulgari lip balm, and some comfort essentials including a dental kit, double mirror made from a sustainable wheat straw material, deodorant, tissues and a foldaway hairbrush.

water lily, and guaiac wood blend flawlessly to create a soothing effect. Inspired by the same iconic scent, a complementary Bulgari after shave balm and body emulsion are included, alongside a Gillette razor, shaving foam, a dental kit, deodorant, tissues and a foldaway hairbrush made from sustainable wheat straw.

In First Class, the luxurious range features 4 individual collectible bags, two in black vegan leather with lilac accents, and two in a high-quality black fabric, some with tan vegan leather accents - both containing an array of personalised luxury products.

In the black and lilac kits, encased within a soft Bulgari pouch is the new engraved gold Bulgari mirror – a keepsake piece exclusively crafted for Emirates, alongside a 30ml exclusive bottle of BVLGARI LE GEMME Desiria Eau de Parfum. This rich and sophisticated floral rose scent features violet jade, magnolia and radiant rose petals. The fragrance is complemented by a matching face and body emulsion. The kit also includes a dental kit, refreshing cleansing towel, deodorant, tissues and foldaway hairbrush so that First Class passengers arrive to their destination fully refreshed.

In the black and tan kits, passengers will



enjoy a 30ml exclusive bottle of BVLGARI LE GEMME Gyan Eau de Parfum -a sophisticated, woody floral fragrance expressed through Patchouli and Jasmine Sambac. The scent profile reveals that 'patchouli embodies the velvety sapphires of Kashmir, while jasmine sambac is reminiscent of sumptuous Himalayan skies'. The kit also features a hydrating Bulgari Le Gemme Gyan after shave balm and matching body emulsion, cleansing towel, Gillette razor, shaving foam, dental kit, deodorant, tissues and foldaway hairbrush.

Onboard A380 aircraft, First Class passengers can also use the Onboard Shower Spa which offers a separate range of luxury products – organic and sustainable Voya, from Ireland. First Class passengers can also find a skincare set from luxury Swedish brand Byredo, in their private suites.

Economy and Premium Economy passengers can also look forward to new collectible amenity kits, to be launched towards the end of the year.



Two contemporary classic black fabric bags in varying shapes with tan vegan leather accents will appeal to those who prefer a masculine style. The fragrance included in these kits is BVLGARI POUR HOMME Eau de Toilette, a woody and floral musky scent in which notes of Darjeeling tea,

## Careers Take Off for SriLankan Aviation College Graduates with Industry Boom

TTA BULLETIN

Recent local graduates of the EASA PART 66 Basic Course in Aircraft Maintenance at SriLankan Aviation College have found employment with SriLankan Airlines as Aircraft Technicians following a competitive recruitment and selection process and are now on track to a coveted career in aircraft maintenance engineering. SriLankan Aviation College, the training arm of SriLankan Airlines, reintroduced the highly sought-after programme to the Sri Lankan market after a four-year break, giving local students a head start into the lucrative global aircraft maintenance industry, which is projected to employ over an additional 600,000 technicians in the next two decades.

The EASA PART 66 Basic Course in Aircraft Maintenance is accredited by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), and the Civil Aviation Authorities of Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Pakistan. Students following the course could opt to study in both Mechanical (B1.1) and Avionics (B2) streams. The Mechanical stream is predominantly associated with the mechanical aspects of an aircraft such as its structure and related systems. The Avionics stream is associated with electrical; indicating; recording; autopilot; and navigation and communication



systems of the aircraft as well as electronics used within other aircraft systems.

The course comprises 2,400 hours of learning, which includes 1,200 hours of theory sessions and 1,200 hours of practical sessions carried out on SriLankan Airlines' Airbus A330 and A320 aircraft, providing students with an unparalleled opportunity to learn in a live aircraft

maintenance setting. Students will qualify for employment in the aircraft maintenance and engineering field upon completing the programme.

SriLankan Aviation College is among the handful of EASA approved training institutes in the region. By reinitiating this course in Sri Lanka, the College hopes to provide local talent a chance to take advantage of the projected global career

wave in airline maintenance and help the industry meet its demand for skilled aircraft technicians at the same time.

In addition to local students, SriLankan Aviation College draws an international student body to its Katunayake-based college facility. Over 100 foreign students are currently enrolled with the college for the EASA PART 66 Basic Course in Aircraft Maintenance including from the Maldives, Pakistan, India, Oman, Nepal, Bangladesh and Tanzania.

With over 34 years of experience in aviation training, SriLankan Aviation College extends comprehensive training options to both students and working professionals. The college collaborates with world-renowned institutions such as Kingston University London, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Sir John Kotelawala University as well as aircraft manufacturers Airbus and Boeing Group. The college is also a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society and the European Aviation Maintenance Training Committee (EAMTC). For more information on the EASA PART 66 Basic Course in Aircraft Maintenance visit [www.srilankanaviationcollege.com](http://www.srilankanaviationcollege.com)

## Turkish Airlines seeking to bring more tourists from Asian nations

TTA BULLETIN

Turkish Airlines is working to attract more tourists from 10 Asian countries, including South Korea, Japan, China, Singapore and Malaysia to help give a boost to Türkiye's tourism revenues, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and Executive Committee Ahmet Bolat has said.

Travelers from South Korea, Japan and China differ from conventional tourists as they are mostly interested in cultural tourism, Bolat, who traveled to Seoul and Japan to attend events to promote Türkiye, told reporters on route.

"Around 75 percent to 80 percent of passengers on this plane are transit passengers, returning to their countries after visiting Europe. We should reverse this. Because transit passengers' contribution to the Turkish tourism industry is negligible," he said.

Bolat also noted that tourists from Far East countries are big spenders, saying that the tourists from those nations spend more than \$3,000 on average when visiting Türkiye.

"We have identified 10 countries as our target markets: Singapore, [South] Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia. In the west, the U.S. and Canada are on our radar. Australia also has a huge potential."

Türkiye should attract at least 1 million

tourists from each of those 10 nations, he added.

"We should aim to host 10 million tourists from those 10 countries and generate \$30 billion in revenues," Bolat said, recalling that last year 50 million tourists vacationed in Türkiye, and tourism revenues amounted to \$42 billion.

The number of Korean tourists visiting Türkiye declined from 200,000 in the peak years to around 90,000 to 100,000 in 2022 while at one point 200,000 Japanese tourists traveled to Türkiye but last year only 30,000 Japanese visited the country, Bolat noted.

"Some 30,000 tourists came to Türkiye from Singapore, which is a high-income country."

Turkish Airlines flies to 129 countries in five continents with a fleet of 421 jets from its hub in Istanbul and it will launch flights to Australia starting from December, according to Bolat.

He also said that the flag carrier is the largest service exporting company in Türkiye with its service export revenues totaling to \$15.5 billion. "This year's target for service exports is \$18 billion."

Turkish Airlines has flights to 47 airports in the Far East and Asia.

## Qatar Airways Saddles Up in Preparations for Races at Goodwood

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Goodwood Festival Sponsorship brings five days of world leading races that will be filled with glamour and adrenaline

Doha, Qatar – The award winning airline saddles up its horses and prepares for another chapter of Qatar

Goodwood Festival, in partnership with Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC). National guests of Qatar in London are invited to attend this year's edition of the prestigious race in Goodwood Racecourse from 01 – 05 August, 2023.

Enhanced with the charm of English countryside, Qatar Goodwood Festival is sponsored by Qatar Airways for the fifth time this summer. The airline is excited to welcome local horses and riders into one of the most prominent equestrian events.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "It brings us great pleasure to showcase our country's admiration for this noble sport by sponsoring the Qatar Goodwood Festival. Horseracing is embedded in our fibre, as it is a symbol of our history, passion and national culture. This festival brings a fusion of tradition and glamour, enhanced



by adrenaline that is suitable for all racegoers. I wish all participants of the equestrian races the best of luck."

Horseracing has been part of Goodwood since 1802 when the 3rd Duke of Richmond introduced the sport. Today, there are 19 unique race days including the Qatar Goodwood Festival.

Visitors of the Qatar Goodwood Festival can enjoy an unforgettable sequence of races, sponsored by the award-winning airline

As part of Qatar Airways' vision of bringing communities together through sports, the airline is also a sponsor for the Qatar Prix De L'Arc De Triomphe, which will take place in Paris Longchamp, in addition to other equestrian festivals, such as H.H. The Amir Sword Festival and the Qatar International Derby.

## 'Miles' more rewards with Cathay

Bringing corporate customers even more rewards with Business Plus

TTA BULLETIN

Business Plus just got "miles" more rewarding with a well-timed revamp of Cathay's corporate loyalty programme and travel management platform. Aimed at SMEs and growing businesses, Business Plus allows SMEs to manage their business travel in a self-service travel platform.

Cathay VP Global Sales Stephen Lawson said: "Cathay is committed to constantly enhancing our customer experience and product offering. As we come out of the pandemic, our customers' needs have changed, and we have acted quickly, investing even during the pandemic, to make sure we keep offering the best-in-class customer experience, especially for our important and valued corporate clients.

"It doesn't stop here. After this important upgrade, we have even more exciting enhancements that we will deliver progressively, not just for Business Plus,

but also for our Corporate Contracting clients as well to further enhance our corporate proposition. Corporate travel is returning strongly and we must ensure all our customers are taken care of."

The Business Plus revamp includes changes such as Revamp of the design to enhance the user experience, Business Plus members can now earn Asia Miles to their company Business Plus account. Business Plus members can then use the Asia Miles to redeem rewards such as Cathay Silver Membership and Lounge Passes which they can send to travellers to enjoy the prestige and comfort of Cathay Pacific's world-class service. Asia Miles can also be transferred to any employee's individual Cathay account, to be spent on thousands of rewards, from flights to hotels and so on. The programme also offers priority baggage and seasonal campaigns where members can earn extra miles, lounge passes, or even free upgrades.

## Air India's New Inflight Magazine 'namaste.ai' Takes off

TTA BULLETIN

Air India has launched its all-new inflight magazine, namaste.ai, taking another step towards enhancing customer experience along its ongoing transformation journey.

namaste.ai is now available on board all Air India domestic and international flights. A premium travel and lifestyle magazine, it reflects Air India's vision of becoming a world-class global airline with an Indian heart.

The inaugural edition of namaste.ai features an inspirational cover story on the legendary JRD Tata as a tribute to the 'Father of Indian Aviation' to celebrate his birth anniversary on 29th July. The legacy of JRD Tata's indomitable spirit of entrepreneurship and pursuit of excellence continues to inspire Air India to reclaim its position in the upper echelons of global aviation.

Campbell Wilson, CEO & MD, Air India, said, "The name namaste.ai comes from the Indian greeting. Apart from being a land of diverse geographies, people, and cultures, India is known for its warm hospitality. Through namaste.ai, we will attempt to give our guests a glimpse of all that and more. We want to enhance our guests' experience of flying with us even more pleasurable."

namaste.ai presents a selection of exciting content featuring travel destinations to explore near and far, as well as interesting lifestyle content from the worlds of technology, culinary arts, culture, and showbiz. It also features interesting updates from within Air India for guests to know more about the airline and its ongoing transformation initiatives.

## SriLankan Airlines Relaunches Flights to Jeddah

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has relaunched direct flights from Colombo to Jeddah with a thrice weekly service every Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday. SriLankan Airlines is currently the only carrier to offer a non-stop flight schedule between the two cities, opening a convenient gateway to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah for Umrah pilgrims in Sri Lanka once again.

SriLankan Airlines' flight UL 281 from Colombo to Jeddah departs at 1425hrs every Tuesday and Sunday and at 1415hrs every Wednesday and arrives in Jeddah on the same day at 1810hrs and 1800hrs, respectively. Flight UL 282 departs Jeddah at 1925hrs every Tuesday and Sunday and



at 1915hrs every Wednesday and reaches Colombo the next day at 0415hrs and 0405hrs, respectively.

The airline's flight history to Jeddah spans back to over 30 years, establishing an all-year round popular route among Umrah pilgrims and a preferred choice of travel for the more seasonal Hajj pilgrims in Sri Lanka. In addition to the ease of a direct flight, SriLankan Airlines also provides to meet the special needs of these travellers and extends extra assistance to those who need it such as passengers with mobility issues.

## Turkish Airlines to expand international network with new destinations

TTA BULLETIN

Türkiye's flag carrier plans to expand its international connectivity by launching flights to Detroit, Osaka and Australia, Ahmet Bolat, Turkish Airlines (THY) chairman of the board and executive committee, has said.

The carrier ranks first in the world by destination countries, Bolat told a group of journalists at a press gathering where he evaluated the company's performance and provided details of THY's plans.

Turkish Airlines this year has already launched flights to Palermo, Krakow and Lusaka, Bolat said, adding that the carrier is putting 10 countries on its radar in order to lure more tourists to Türkiye and to help the country generate more tourism income. "We are hoping to bring a total of 10 million tourists from Japan, Singapore, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Australia, Mexico, Canada and the U.S. in the next three years."

Some \$30 billion in revenues could be generated by attracting tourists from those

destinations, Bolat said.

As of June, Turkish Airlines was the world's eighth and Europe's second largest airline with a share of 2.6 percent in the market, according to the company's executive.

The carrier flies to 344 destinations in 128 countries with a fleet of 425 airplanes. "Our share in the global cargo market has more than tripled over the past 10 years to 5.4 percent," Bolat said.

Shares in Turkish Airlines have gained more than 200 percent over the past year, making it one of the top ten airline companies. The flag carrier has climbed 17 spots to become the eighth largest airline in the world in terms of market capitalization. Turkish Airlines' market capitalization has reached \$13.6 billion and the interest in its shares is growing, Bolat said.

"I believe our market capitalization will soon reach that of United [Airlines at \$17.5 billion], which presently ranks fifth."

## Emirates introduces onboard Meal Preordering Service

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates is taking the first steps in an innovative initiative of meal preordering, whereby customers will be able to preselect their hot main meal between 14 days and 24 hours in advance of their flight, ensuring they get their preferred meal choice every time, as well as helping to reduce food wastage.

The initiative will be rolled out from 25 July onwards in Business Class, on all flights between Dubai and London Heathrow, London Gatwick, and London Stansted, adding even more benefits to the Emirates customer experience, improving time management and adding another layer of insight into meal consumption onboard. Meal preordering will be added to the existing suite of AI-enabled customer preference tracking data and cabin crew reports, which facilitate menu planning and optimal food loading to deliver the premium 'restaurant in the sky' inflight dining experience.

Up to 14 days before a flight, passengers will be able to browse the onboard menu on Emirates.com or on the Emirates app and choose from a selection of regionally inspired dishes with locally sourced ingredients. Passengers can also pre-order special meals if required.



On the aircraft, cabin crew will use a custom-built application on a device to view the meal selection and serve the passenger their choice of hot dish. Emirates plans to expand the meal preorder initiative to more routes and classes in the near future and is closely monitoring customer feedback from the initial roll out phase.

The preordering meal service innovation is another addition to the convenience of digitally enabled journeys that Emirates passengers enjoy. As well as website check-in and app check-in, the option of digital boarding passes and itinerary management, passengers can also access digital menus in advance, join Emirates Skywards to immediately access free connectivity based on tier membership and class of travel, and spend time curating a playlist of favourite movies, TV shows and music available on ice, which they can synchronise from their app to their TV screen the moment they board. Emirates passengers are also invited to review all aspects of their flight in a quick digital survey that appears on the inflight entertainment screen, providing feedback and insights that ensure customers fly better with Emirates.



## Iberia Joins British Airways and Qatar Airways to Expand the World's Largest Airline Joint Business

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways, British Airways, and Iberia, the national carriers of Qatar, the United Kingdom, and Spain are joining forces. Together, Qatar Airways and British Airways already operate the world's largest airline joint business covering more than 60 countries. Beginning in July, Iberia is joining the partnership in a move that will transform connectivity for global travellers.

As a result of the joint business, Iberia will add a new daily service from its hub, Madrid Barajas International Airport, flights to Hamad International Airport (voted Best Airport in the Middle East for the 9th consecutive year by Skytrax), starting 11 December 2023. Passengers will be able to connect to more than 200 destinations through the three global airlines. Together, Iberia's and Qatar Airways' expanded service will operate three times daily on the route, providing unrivalled connectivity between the Iberian Peninsula and key markets in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

Iberia will operate the Airbus A330-200, with 288 seats in Business and Economy cabins. The partnership's expansion provides customers with more options than ever from a wide geographic range of destinations, flight schedules, fares, and seamless connectivity via Doha, London, and Madrid, as well as a larger selection of award-winning products, including Qatar Airways' Qsuite, Iberia's Business Class, and British Airways' Club Suite.

Whether for leisure or business, travellers from Spain and Portugal will be able to connect to a fantastic range of new destinations. Relaxing in the Maldives and Seychelles, adventuring in Tanzania and Nepal, cultural holidays in India and Oman, shopping in Singapore and Thailand, or visiting friends and family in Australia and Hong Kong, all become more reachable with more choices than ever.

Furthermore, customers from across the Middle-East, Africa, Asia, and Australia can enjoy seamless travel to Madrid, Lisbon, Ibiza, Malaga, Gran Canaria, and tens of other destinations across Spain and Portugal.

Marking a world first, members of British Airways Executive Club, Iberia Plus, and



Qatar Airways Privilege Club can collect and spend using their common currency, Avios. Loyalty members will be able to transfer Avios between accounts and combine their balances to claim rewards offered by each programme.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker said: "At Qatar Airways, we believe in connecting travellers to their destinations of choice and our recent enhancement to the highly successful joint business with British Airways, includes the addition of another oneworld member, Iberia. Our passengers will now have more opportunities than ever to connect to different destinations across the British Airways, Iberia, and Qatar Airways' networks. This collaborative effort comes as part of our commitment to continuously improve the offerings available to our passengers and provide them with the best in the industry."

British Airways' Chairman and CEO, Sean Doyle, said: "Last year we expanded our joint business partnership with Qatar Airways with the addition of 42 countries, and I'm so pleased to see it growing even further as we welcome Iberia on board. We're committed to offering our customers as much choice as possible, and working so closely with our partners in Madrid and Doha connects British Airways to more than 200 destinations globally."

Iberia CEO, Fernando Candela, commented: "Joining the QJB with Qatar Airways and British Airways is excellent news for our customers. We are really excited about the launch of our Madrid-Doha route. Through QJB hubs in London and Doha, we are building the much-desired bridge between Spain and more than 200 destinations in Asia, Australasia, the Middle-East, and Africa, and offering new opportunities for travelers in both directions. Our country is moving towards a new model of higher-quality tourism and, with the Madrid-Doha launching, we are making a breakthrough."

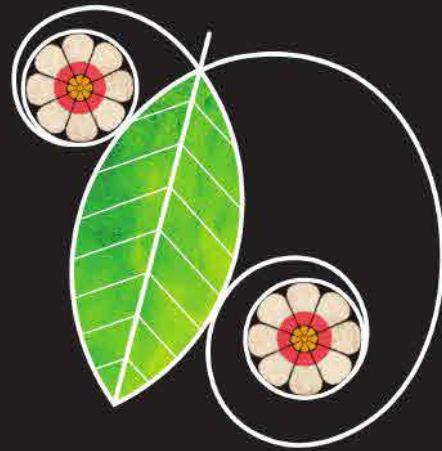
## The National Cricket Team of Pakistan Bats for SriLankan Airlines

TTA BULLETIN

The National Cricket Team of Pakistan opted to travel with the National Airline of Sri Lanka and received a friendly welcome onboard UL 154 from Lahore to Colombo on 17 August 2023. SriLankan Airlines delivered an all-out flight experience for Pakistan's cricket heroes who are visiting the island for Afghanistan's upcoming three-match ODI home series against Pakistan. The team is scheduled to leave Colombo on UL 185 on 27 August 2023 following the completion of the series.



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