

# TRAVEL TALK Asia

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

VOL 22 NO 12 2023 24 PGS



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## Sri Lanka Tourism launches global campaign with new tagline - Sri Lanka- You'll come back for more"

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka Tourism launched its global campaign, "Sri Lanka – You'll come back for more" at a grand ceremony held at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo recently. The event was held under the patronage of the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Lands, Sports and Youth Affairs Harin Fernando, along with Sri Lanka Tourism officials and key line agencies and Tourism Industry Stakeholders of Sri Lanka, including Ambassadors representing Diplomatic missions, local and International Media correspondents. The ceremonial moment



Hon. Minister  
Harin Fernando



Chalaka Gajabahu



Priantha Fernando



Sudesh Sundhara

unveiled as Mr. Chalaka Gajabahu, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, welcomed the participants by mentioning the purpose and the significance of the occasion, and how Sri Lanka Tourism has moved forward despite its various challenges in restoring the Tourism sector back to normal. The importance of the 360-degree marketing campaign was highlighted as Sri Lanka Tourism has not initiated a global campaign for a considerable time. He further added, if you look at last year and what we have achieved up to today, it's an amazing development. Last year we ended up with 720,000 and we are already at 1.3 million, which is an amazing achievement.

The colorful setting for the event was arranged in order to represent all four provinces of the country – Northern, Southern, Eastern and western Provinces, also including a wide variety of culinary choices iconic to all four provinces. The setting for the event was tastefully created in order to represent all the tourist attractions of all the provinces, which will be promoted in key markets. Sri Lanka Tourism is on a steadfast and positive journey ahead with its rapid increase of tourist arrivals each month, recently passing the target of one million

tourist arrivals. As a result of increase in arrivals compared to year 2022, there has been a considerable increase in tourism revenue to the country. With this progress, the anticipated total of 1.5 million does not seem far – by the close of the year.

Sudesh Sundhara Moorthy - CEO Ogilvy, explained the way forward concept and strategy in this highly anticipated campaign. "We immediately wanted to develop a campaign which was called the "Check In" campaign which communicates that Sri Lanka is safe, and ready to welcome tourists, thus without any hassle from North to the South and East to the West, and this campaign we developed as an interim campaign. After this our most important task was the brand positioning strategy and the brand campaign. The three pillars which we looked at was, that Sri Lanka was a compact island, and that was taken as an advantage. Secondly, Sri Lanka has a diversity of experience and though we are an island, we give much more than Sun, Sea and sand. It was specifically mentioned that Sri Lanka should not be a bucket list destination. The third was, that our experiences are so authentic. No other island of this size can match what we can offer.

Cont on Pg 2

## Two industry leaders honored at the 58th AGM of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Hiran Cooray and Srilal Miththapala were honoured with "Lifetime Awards" for outstanding and dedicated service to the Hospitality industry at the recently concluded annual General Meeting of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka



The Hotel Association of Sri Lanka, known as the apex body in the country's hotel industry, significantly contributes to the promotion of tourism and hospitality. Its mission revolves around fostering tourism for the advancement of commerce and economic development in Sri Lanka.



Hiran Cooray served as president of THASL from 2005 to 2008 and again from 2014 to 2016.

The AGM was graced by the HE the President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickramasinghe together with the Minister of Tourism, Lands, Sports and Youth Affairs Hon Harin Fernando, Secretary Ministry of Tourism Mr. H M PB Herath, officials from the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka and a host of dignitaries in the industry.

The Lifetime Awards for the services rendered to the tourism Industry was presented by HE the President to Mr. Hiran Cooray, Chairman of Jetwing Group, and Mr. Srilal Miththapala, Tourism Consultant to the Asian Development Bank in Sri Lanka, former CEO of Serendib Leisure Management

Walking in the monumental footsteps of the late Herbert Cooray, his father and the visionary behind Jetwing, Hiran carries forward a legacy that transcends mere business. It's a legacy deeply rooted in a genuine desire to share the very best of authentic Sri Lankan hospitality with the world, always mindful of the impact on the environment and local communi-

ties—a guiding principle woven into Jetwing's identity since its inception fifty long years ago.

HE the President shared his vision Sri Lanka's tourism industry going forward and stressed on the importance of fostering innovation and collaboration in the industry to secure long-term growth. There was a clear mandate given to the hospitality industry to be competitive and go beyond the present framework. Competition is on the rise and destinations such as the Vietnam and the Maldives are relatively new comers to the tourism sector but have clearly captured a large share of the travel market and raking in double of Sri Lanka's annual visitor numbers.

The President's vision revolves around improving the tourism sector and he emphasized the need for specialization and foreign investment. He encouraged the industry to explore the untapped potential of Sri Lanka with a focus on some of the niche tourism products which will attract the experiential traveler who is looking for more than sun, sea and sand.



Sri Lanka tourism looks to exceed visitor targets and close the year on a high note. The industry which faced numerous challenges post covid have shown resilience and aims to bounce back bigger and better in 2024.

The launch of the much-awaited destination Marketing campaign will shed new light on Sri Lanka as a prime tourism destination with the new campaign targeted to reach a large audience focused on both traditional and non-traditional markets.

The increase in arrivals will also bring in the much-needed foreign revenue and aid in the economic recovery process. However, the growth of Foreign Direct Investment has not been as rapid as desired and there is a need to maintain socio, political stability in order to attract more investment not only in tourism but all industries.

International tourism is on track to recover almost 90% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of this year. According to the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), an estimated 975 million tourists travelled internationally between January and September 2023, an increase of 38% on the same months of 2022.

International tourist arrivals hit 91% of pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter, reaching 92% in July, the best month so far since the start of pandemic.

Sri Lanka tourism is optimistic about the closing figures for 2023 and hope to reach the desired targets in a sustainable manner.

The tourism industry also felicitated two prominent tourism personalities at the recently concluded THASL Annual General meeting. Both Hiran Cooray and Srilal Miththapala are known for their leadership and drive to ensure Sri Lanka tourism is on the global map with emphasis on sustainability and long-term success.

The team at TTA would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers, advertisers and supporters a very blessed and joy filled Christmas Season and blessings for a successful new year ahead!



*Dinushka*

**Dinushka Chandrasena**  
Editor



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## NEWS

Contd from Pg 1

### Sri Lanka Tourism launches ....

We also wanted to look at what the travelers were looking for, and the perspective of the potential traveler' he explained. His presentation as further emphasized by playing two promotional videos which had been specially created for this initial campaign.

The Hon. Minister Harin Fernando addressed the distinguished gathering with his valuable thoughts at this occasion. "Sri Lanka has done so well on its own, thanks to the industry who have spearheaded all the campaigns on their own but I think Sri Lanka Tourism has done a well thought campaign. What we have to realized is that all of us have to play a role to get people to visit Sri Lanka and to ensure the experience is such they will come again. Sri Lanka has much more to offer than what people know about Sri Lanka" Minister further stated, that though we are an island we have so much to offer and with wide diversity.

The function was used as an opportunity to recognize the Pekoe Trail award that was presented at British Guild of Travel Writers at International Awards as part of the WTM which was held in early November this year. Mr. Priantha Fernando, Chairman, Sri Lanka Tourism Development



Authority made a brief note about the award which was presented to the audience. He thanked those who supported in this endeavor. A replica of the award was presented by the Hon. Minister Harin Fernando along with Ministry Secretary and Ministry Officials to the team which contributed a great deal for the project.

Sri Lanka Tourism has seen this success during the year 2023 with its continuous promotional efforts, improving air connectivity, and developing the infrastructure, capacity accordingly. As a result, the new tagline, Sri Lanka – "you'll come back for more" clearly highlights the amazing travel and holiday experiences this island paradise has to offer, as Sri Lanka Tourism gears up for the upcoming year with more new initiatives for the development of the Tourism sector.

### Thailand waives tourist visas for Russia, India, and Taiwan

TTA BULLETIN

Thailand is extending a temporary visa exemption for tourists from Russia, India, and Taiwan as part of the government's quick-win policy to boost tourism during the high season.

From today until 30 April 2024, holders of Russian passports or travel documents will be entitled to a tourist visa exemption for a 90-day stay in Thailand, up from the original 30 days.



Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom

For Indian and Taiwanese citizens, they will be granted a temporary visa exemption for a 30-day stay on tourism purpose in Thailand, effective from 10 November 2023 until 10 May 2024.

The latest stimulus visa schemes for tourists from Russia, India and Taiwan followed the temporary tourist visa exemption implemented for tourists from China and Kazakhstan, effective from 25 September 2023 to 29 February 2024.

### Seychelles retains its title as the World's Most Romantic Destination in 2023

TTA BULLETIN

Seychelles, an island republic in the western Indian Ocean comprising over 115 islands, has been awarded the world's most romantic destination for the fourth year in a row at the renowned World Travel Awards 2023. This year's ceremony, honouring the award's 30th anniversary, took place on December 1st, 2023, at Dubai's famous Burj Al Arab. A testament to its enduring appeal, Seychelles beckons couples looking for a romantic trip, offering beautiful beaches, crystal-clear oceans, lush surroundings, and exquisite lodgings.

Renowned as a paradisiacal haven for romance, the archipelago's natural splendour provides a tranquil and picturesque backdrop for couples yearning to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The exquisite beaches, flanked by swaying palms and lapped by crystal-clear turquoise waters, are ideal for romantic strolls, picnics, and sunset strolls. Seychelles provides various opportunities for couples to spend quality time together, whether in a private cove or on a busy beach.

Beyond its stunning beaches, Seychelles boasts verdant landscapes that are a feast for the senses. Couples can explore the island's nature reserves, national parks, and botanical gardens, immersing themselves in the vibrant colours and fragrant scents of the tropical flora. A hike through the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers the chance to see the rare coco de mer palm and encounter unique bird species.

Seychelles stands out with some of the world's finest accommodation, making it an ideal romantic holiday location for couples. From private villas to premium resorts, the options provide unrivalled solitude and indulgence. Many service providers cater to couples with specific packages and services, such as candlelit dinners on the beach, couples'

massages, and romantic excursions. Seychelles provides lodgings to suit every taste and budget, whether you want a cosy hut overlooking the ocean or an elegant penthouse with your own personal infinity pool.

Mrs Bernadette Willemin, Destination Director General for Destination Marketing, expressed gratitude for receiving this award for the fourth consecutive year. She praised the partners for their unwavering commitment to offering exceptional service.

"Truly Another World, Seychelles definitely calls for escapism in romance! Our small paradise, where blue waters whisper love stories and a soft breeze conveys a romantic tune. It is without a doubt that whoever experiences the destination would uncover the chapters of their love story."

In addition to securing the title of the most romantic place in the world, Seychelles' national airline, Air Seychelles, earned the prestigious recognition as the World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean 2023. This honour demonstrates the airline's commitment to service excellence and offering a smooth travel experience for its passengers. Air Seychelles assures that couples travelling to Seychelles have a seamless and delightful voyage from start to finish with its contemporary fleet, luxurious accommodations, and attentive crew.

Seychelles' title as the world's most romantic destination for the fourth consecutive year is well-deserved. With its stunning natural beauty, luxurious accommodations, and warm hospitality, Seychelles offers couples a truly unforgettable romantic experience.





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## Mega Travel Influencer 'Nas Daily' join-hands to promote Tourism in Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), under The Ministry of Tourism and Lands welcomed World's Top Travel Influencer Nusier Yassin also known as "Nas Daily" to promote Sri Lanka as One of Best Travel Destinations in The World to Travel. As part of this exclusive social media-based campaign with Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Nas Daily social platforms where they have over 67 million followers base worldwide, will be posting various destination promotional posts, videos and stories to inspire social media savvy global travelers visit Sri Lanka within upcoming seasons.

Making a statement on Sri Lanka Tourism's collaboration with Nas Daily, Minister for Tourism and Lands Mr. Harin Fernando stated, key focus of this campaign is to promote destination Sri Lanka via mainstream social media platforms by reaching out to millions of international social media users and creating an excitement and influencing to visit the island within upcoming seasons. Also, this campaign expects to create multiple unique reasons to visit destination Sri Lanka and encourage travelers to come back for more.

Living in the era of digital media, travel influencers have emerged as powerful

storytellers by inspiring billions of social media users around the world. Unlike traditional advertising campaigns, influencers marketing campaigns have become a game-changing strategy for destination promotions. Influencers create greater impact on inspiring modern-day travelers by acting as Digital Word of Mouth, while generating long lasting publicity for destinations. Their genuine and personal social media channels provide insights that traditional advertisements can't replicate, making them a trusted source for travel recommendations.

Having average of 500 million views combinedly on social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Tik Tok) Nas Daily reaching up to 3.2 % of global population with 20 billion video impressions and generate 100 % organic views for their creative content. Nas Daily -social media content focused on incredible people, amazing places, unique inventions and impactful initiatives. Nas Daily platforms have over 67 million followers from worldwide. While maintaining over 30 + localize social media channels in different international languages, Nas Daily engage with vast diversity of social media users around the world, including: English, French,

Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Portuguese, Turkey, Thai, etc. Having such a massive global follower base with major focus on segments such as travel, cultural exploration, current affairs and ability in reaching out to geographically diverse regions with different languages and cultures make Nas Daily is exceptional and stand out of all the other social media influencers in the world.

As part of the destination campaign with Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Nas Daily will be creating three unique tourism & related investment focused videos about Sri Lanka along with multiple other social media posts and stories. Over the 4 days compact filming schedule in Sri Lanka SLTPB's International Media Team has taken Nas Daily Filming Crew to areas covering, Tea Plantations in Nuwara Eliya, Ella, Galle, Hikkaduwa and Colombo.

This campaign expects to generate a massive global attention towards Sri Lanka, by highlighting the country as a "Must Visit Destination in The World".



Visiting The Island for the 5th time, Nusier Yassin stated that "Sri Lanka is like my second home. I had a great time here in Sri Lanka and definitely coming back for more". On his last day in Sri Lanka, Fans' Meet & Greet was organized at the BMICH and over 500 die-hearted Nas Daily fans were appeared in the afternoon to meet Nusier Yassin with gifts and Sri Lankan flags.

Chairman SLTPB, Mr. Chalaka Gajabahu stated that "bringing Nas Daily to Sri Lanka is a great achievement for us on 2023 and this campaign expect a greater promotional milage to our tourism industry as well as to the island as an immediate outcome. This is a part of our integrated tourism promotional campaign where digital media will be paying a grater role by addressing to millions potential travelers in the world".

## Richard Branson's Virgin Voyages picks Sri Lanka for its maiden call to Asia with Aitken Spence Travels

TTA BULLETIN

In a monumental stride for Sri Lanka's tourism sector, Aitken Spence Travels is delighted to announce the arrival of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Voyages' newest ship, the Resilient Lady, making her maiden call to Asia and to the Colombo Harbour on the 13th of November 2023. This historic event marks a significant contribution to the global recognition and confidence of Sri Lanka's tourism industry.



Spence Travels. 'In the next two months we will be catering to nearly 10,000 cruise passengers who would be visiting the country through some of the well-known cruise ships such as Azamara Journey, Marella Discovery 2, Mein Schiff 5 and many more that holds a significant place in our hearts. We are happy to state that the first turnaround operation for the season will also be handled commencing November, bringing in three flights to Colombo for disembarking cruise passengers. Further another new cruise ship that will be making its maiden voyage to the Sri Lankan shores in December will also have a turnaround operation in Male, Maldives stated Mr. Jayasundera.

The positive effects of these cruise calls are far-reaching, benefiting a wide spectrum of stakeholders, from transporters and hoteliers to national parks, jeep service providers, excursion providers, cultural show artists, guides, and much more.

As the leading DMC in Sri Lanka, we are committed and dedicated to promoting the destination and contributing to the development of the industry.

The Resilient Lady, a marvel of modern maritime engineering began her maiden voyage in May 2023, and boasts a passenger capacity of 2,770 passengers across 1,404 cabins & suites. Inspired by superyacht design, the vessel exudes glamour and elegance, with interiors crafted by world-renowned architects and designers such as Tom Dixon and Concerte Amsterdam.

Aitken Spence Travels promises to unveil the diverse tapestry of Sri Lanka's landscapes and culture during the shore excursions of The Resilient Lady. The team has drawn up exciting excursions to provide visitors with extraordinary and uniquely Sri Lankan experiences for the guests when they are on land.

'This maiden call by Virgin Voyages is one of many international cruise liners lined up to grace Sri Lanka's ports - Colombo, Hambantota and Trincomalee during this year's cruise season' commented Nalin Jayasundera, Managing Director of Aitken

## PATA and WTCF Sign MOU to Promote Win-Win Cooperation in BRI Cultural Tourism Industry

TTA BULLETIN

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) is pleased to announce a new organisational partnership with the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF), a global international tourism organisation with tourism cities as its focus.



The agreement aims to establish a strategic partnership for constructive cooperation in areas of mutual interest based on the principles of organisational development and mutual benefit.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by PATA Chair Peter Semone and WTCF Secretary-General Yang Shuo on October 18, 2023, during the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as the "Forum") at the event's Thematic Forum on Sub-national Cooperation in Beijing, China.

"As global travel continues to accelerate and recover from the pandemic, PATA has renewed its focus on the People's Republic of China and its domestic, inbound and outbound tourism portfolios. Our partnership with the World Tourism Cities Federation comes at the right time. WTCF has a superlative network of cities across the globe and is a leading voice for tourism in China, and PATA is finding ways to support the next wave of China's tourism growth. We look forward to working with WTCF in the coming years for mutual success." said Mr Semone.

The MOU was included in the List of Practical Cooperation Deliverables of the Forum, a list incorporating a series of practical cooperation projects and bilateral cooperation agreements

agreed upon by national governments, financial institutions, local governments, and enterprises. It emphasizes the important roles of the international tourism organisations in promoting the development of the tourism industry.

On signing of the MOU, Mr. Yang stated that "the agreement fully leverages the role of WTCF as a platform. As the initiating and headquarters' city, Beijing actively promotes the construction of a win-win tourism and cultural industry under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It demonstrates its exemplary and leading role as a BRI hub city, narrates the story of Beijing's high-level openness to the world, and has ushered into a new stage of high-quality joint construction of the Belt and Road."

Mr. Yang also pointed out that "in the future, WTCF will work closely with PATA, fully leverage their respective advantages, implement the practical content of the MOU, and jointly promote the prosperous development of the tourism and cultural industries of the Belt and Road, to ensure that the practical results will benefit more global tourism cities."



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## China's Only Doublebill Event in MICE and Corporate Travel

TTA BULLETIN

Incentive Travel & Conventions, Meetings (IT&CM) China and Corporate Travel World (CTW) China is China's Only Doublebill Event in MICE and Corporate Travel. Both events have been co-locating since 2015, offering its delegates an unparalleled platform to do business, learn and network with industry players from around the region and beyond.



Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media. It is co-organised by CTG MICE Service Company Limited.

Established in 2015, this market-driven event is thus dedicated to raising the sophistication of Chinese professionals who manage the wide and varying scope of corporate travel related needs for their organisations. By localising best global practices and cultivating a sustainable expert and peer-sharing knowledge support network, CTW China is at the helm of enabling local influencers, planners and decision makers of corporate travel functions to get the most of their corporate travel management decisions. The event is part of the CTW Events series organised by TTG Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media. It is co-organised by XIN MICE (Beijing) Co., Ltd.

Since 2007, IT&CM China has established itself as China's leading international Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) business, education and networking event, dedicated to "Promoting China to the World and the World to China". Bringing together Chinese and International MICE exhibitors and buyers in one dynamic marketplace, IT&CM China is the platform for international and leading Chinese players in the MICE industry to explore business opportunities on all fronts – inbound, outbound and domestic. The event is part of the IT&CM Events series organised by TTG

## ITB Berlin Host Country for 2025 revealed

TTA BULLETIN

A huge stage for an ambitious country: Albania and ITB Berlin have just announced a close collaboration for the year 2025. At a ceremony held on 3 November 2023 in Berlin, both sides signed a memorandum of understanding. As a result, the Southeast-European country will be the Official Host Country of ITB Berlin 2025, which will take place from 4 to 6 March 2025 as a pure B2B show.



The memorandum of understanding was signed by H.E. Vilma Bello, Deputy Minister of Tourism, and by ITB Berlin Director, Deborah Rothe. In addition, Herida Duro, Director of the Development of Tourism Programs, and Edlira Zyfi, Advisor to the Minister of Tourism, and the ambassador of Albania in Germany, H. E. Mrs. Adia Sakiqi attended the ceremony.

"As the World's Leading Travel Trade Show for the tourism industry, ITB Berlin is an exceptional platform that brings together stakeholders from numerous countries in the German capital," commented Deputy Minister Vilma Bello on the signing. "Albania has exceedingly great plans in the coming years and decades. The partnership will certainly give us an invaluable boost and bring us closer to a wide audience."

"ITB Berlin has always had its finger on the pulse and it recognizes trends and the potential of countries and regions," Dirk Hoffmann, COO Messe Berlin, commented. "Albania is a nation with this very potential and we are very pleased to jointly lift the country's great treasure and provide it with an international stage."

"A few months ago, I had the honour of personally experiencing Albania's great

hospitality and ambitious spirit on site," added ITB Berlin Director Deborah Rothe. "I am all the more pleased that our talks are now bearing fruit. The host country Albania will certainly enrich ITB Berlin 2025 enormously and win over numerous new enthusiasts for the country."

Albania has seen remarkable increases in guests in the recent past and is enjoying ever-increasing popularity. With its colourful and lively capital Tirana, the country scores as well as with the sea, turquoise bays and its authentic and unspoiled backcountry. Furthermore, Albania is very popular with travellers who have a passion for hiking. With all its advantages, Albania also offers an exceptionally good price-performance ratio.

As the Official Host Country of ITB Berlin, Albania will be presenting itself to the B2B audience in several ways. To kick off the trade show, Albania will host the festive opening gala in the CityCube Berlin on the eve of ITB Berlin, on Monday, 3 March 2025. Among other things, it will present its traditional folklore and culinary offerings to guests. During the trade show, Albania will have an extensive stand on the fair ground. Last but not least, the country is also expected to play an important role in the program at the ITB Berlin Convention, which will take place parallel to the trade show.

## Celebrating Excellence: Aitken Spence Hotels' Bags Multiple Awards and Accolades

TTA BULLETIN

Premier Sri Lankan hospitality chain, Aitken Spence Hotels reiterated their commitment to unparalleled service excellence in the hospitality industry with a stunning succession of accolades in the last month. The Company's properties in Sri Lanka, India and Oman and the Maldives have been recognised for their distinctive experiences and steadfast dedication to quality at various esteemed platforms, further cementing their reputation as leaders in travel and sustainable tourism.

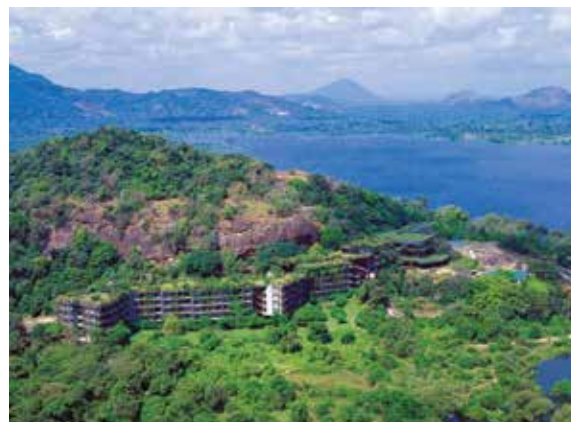


At the prestigious South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) 2023, Heritance Hotels and Resorts stood out with a sweep of prestigious awards. Heritance Kandalaru was distinguished as the 'Leading Eco-Friendly Resort' in Asia, attesting to its profound commitment to environmental stewardship. Our resort in the hills, Heritance Tea Factory bagged the award of 'Leading Designer Hotel/Resort' for its unique tea destination concept, whilst Heritance Ayurveda was acclaimed as 'Leading Wellness and Spa Resort' for its authentic and holistic wellness offering. The resort within the city, Heritance Negombo was awarded as 'Leading Luxury Hotel/Resort' reinforcing its promise of comfort and serenity by the sea.

recognitions, Heritance Aarah was honoured with the SHe Travel Club Gold, celebrating the resort's commitment to empowering women within the hospitality sector, a testament to the brand's progressive policies and inclusive work environment.

The picturesque Adaaran Select Meedhupparu was honoured with the Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Award 2023 as well, an acknowledgment from the world's most discerning travellers that places the property among the upper echelons of global travel destinations.

Adding to the quarter's success, Aitken Spence's Omani resort, Desert Night Resort received the Luxury Lifestyle Awards for the second year running, spotlighting their unique offering of authentic desert experiences wrapped in indulgence and comfort, providing guests with memories of timeless adventure under the stars.



"This series of awards showcases Aitken Spence Hotels' continuous pursuit of excellence across different facets of the travel and hospitality industry - from sustainability and design to wellness, gender equality, and unparalleled guest experiences. These diverse recognitions highlight the group's ability

to innovate and excel, promising guests not simply a stay, but a journey filled with comfort, culture, and care for the environment," said Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings.

Turyaa Chennai was recognized as the 'Leading Meeting and Conference Hotel/Resort', a nod to its state-of-the-art facilities and service excellence in hosting events and business gatherings.

In addition to these impressive SATA



recognised for their outstanding contributions in these categories. Recognition of this nature inspires us to continue delivering exceptional experiences to our guests while maintaining our commitment to environmental responsibility and cultural preservation".





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## Dusit International appoints Adrian Rudin as Managing Director of its returning flagship Dusit Thani Bangkok hotel

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, has appointed Mr Adrian Rudin as Managing Director of two highly anticipated properties in Dusit's esteemed portfolio – the reimagined flagship Dusit Thani Bangkok hotel and ultra-luxury Dusit Residences.



Adrian Rudin

Dusit's rich legacy, and promises to offer a seamless fusion of luxury, comfort, and convenience for residents when it opens in early 2026.

Mr Rudin, a Swiss national, brings over three decades of experience in leading luxury hotels under renowned banners such as Shangri-La and Kempinski Hotels.

Pivotal positions he has held in his career include, amongst others, Hotel Manager of Shangri-La Singapore, General Manager of Traders Hotel in Singapore, and Opening General Manager of Shangri-La properties in Abu Dhabi and Beijing.

Before joining Dusit, he served as General Manager of Sindhorn Bangkok Kempinski and Vice President of Operations for China and Southeast Asia at Kempinski Hotels, where he skillfully managed the operations of 25 Kempinski and NUO Hotels, while providing invaluable support for new ventures.

With his appointment as Managing Director of Dusit Thani Bangkok and Dusit Residences, Mr Rudin will play a crucial role in shaping the success of both new properties, including securing future MICE business ahead of the hotel's grand opening next year.

"Being entrusted with the stewardship of these prestigious Dusit properties is both a privilege and an honour," said Mr Rudin. "I look forward to working with our exceptional teams to breathe vibrant life into Dusit's storied legacy as we curate unparalleled guest experiences, continue to redefine hospitality's highest standards, and deliver one of the most impressive venues for memorable meetings and events in Bangkok."

Mr Rudin holds an Advanced Certificate in Hotel Management from SHL (Schweizerische Hotel Fachschule Luzern) and an Executive Education certificate from Cornell Hotel Management School at Cornell University, New York.



Currently under development opposite Lumpini Park in the heart of Bangkok, where the iconic original Dusit Thani Bangkok hotel once stood, both properties are integral components of Dusit's most significant project to date – Dusit Central Park – a visionary mixed-use development that will also encompass a state-of-the-art office tower, a high-end shopping mall, and a sprawling public rooftop park.

Set to make its grand debut in mid-2024, the new Dusit Thani Bangkok represents a contemporary transformation of the original hotel, which first graced the Bangkok skyline in 1970 as the city's grandest and tallest edifice, famous for housing Bangkok's most elegant ballroom. As a testament to this storied legacy, the revitalised hotel has been meticulously designed to elevate Dusit's standing on the world stage while redefining its heritage through a modern lens.

Set over 49 floors and crowned with an iconic golden spire, the new Dusit Thani Bangkok will be a multifaceted destination offering an array of dining, wellness, and event facilities. This includes a breathtaking elevated ballroom affording panoramic views of Lumpini Park. Each of the hotel's 257 spacious and exquisitely designed guest rooms and suites will also provide captivating vistas of this expansive green oasis in the heart of the city.

Drawing inspiration from Dusit's unique brand of Thai-inspired gracious hospitality, the neighbouring Dusit Residences is also dedicated to embracing

## Minor Hotels Welcomes Sandie Johannessen as New Group Director of Spa and Wellness – Asia

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a Bangkok-based hotel owner, operator and investor, is delighted to announce the appointment of Sandie Johannessen as Group Director of Spa and Wellness – Asia, effective October 2023.

In this role, Sandie will oversee Minor Hotels' spa and wellness operations, development, and brand standards across all hotel brands in Asia. She will also be responsible for strategic spa, wellness and medical partnerships including VIVID by Verita Health, Clinique La Prairie, VLCC and BDMS Wellness Clinic.



Sandie Johannessen

Sandie brings over 20 years of experience in the spa and wellness industry, having worked with some of the world's most prestigious luxury brands in Asia, Europe, Middle East and Africa. She has a proven track record of delivering exceptional spa services and creating innovative wellness programmes, which have received numerous accolades from industry authorities such as Condé Nast Traveller and World Spa & Wellness, as well as establishing strategic partnerships with leading medical experts. Prior to joining Minor Hotels, Sandie was Health and Wellness Director at Zulal, a wellness resort by Chiva-Som in Doha, Qatar.

"I am honoured and excited to join Minor Hotels as the Group Director of Spa and Wellness – Asia. I have always admired the company's vision and values, and I look forward to contributing to its growth and success. I have a deep affinity with Thailand, as it is the homeland of my grandparents. I feel privileged to be able to work in this beautiful country and share my passion for spa and wellness with our guests and colleagues." Sandie Johannessen, Minor Hotels Group Director of Spa and Wellness – Asia

Trained to be a dietary analyst and educator in Middlesex University, UK, Sandie holds a Bachelor in Yogic Science from Bangalore University, India. She is passionate about holistic wellness and nutrition, and incorporates these elements into her spa, medical and wellness programmes. The Danish national is also an avid writer, speaker, and panellist on spa and wellness topics, as well as an official judge for prestigious awards and an active member of VL Business Club, which comprises leading executives from the Scandinavian business community.

"We are thrilled to welcome Sandie to our team. She is a visionary leader with extensive experience and knowledge in the spa and wellness industry. As Minor continues its expansion in the region, Sandie's expertise in developing and implementing comprehensive wellness programmes will play a key role in enhancing our spa and wellness offerings across our portfolio of brands in Asia. We look forward to working with her to deliver memorable and meaningful experiences for our guests" Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO Minor International and CEO Minor Hotels

## ITB China 2024: Seizing new opportunities in a transformed and high-demand market

TTA BULLETIN

The stage is set for global travel industry players to make new connections with handpicked top buyers from across China from 27 to 29 May at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center. The upgraded show and conference program will make sure reinforced, sought-after segments will stand out and help identify evolving travel behaviours and trends. The new ITB China brand campaign highlights the role of bringing people together.

China's outbound tourism market has experienced continuous growth since the beginning of 2023. According to data from Alipay and UnionPay, the average spending of Chinese outbound travellers during the Chinese National Day holiday in October surpassed 2019 levels, highlighting the promising revival of China's outbound tourism and its

significance in driving global tourism and offline consumption.

"China's latest measures to boost tourism consumption and improve the tourism industry, adopted on 27 September, include the resumption of international flights and an increase in their frequency," says David Axiotis, General Manager of Messe Berlin (Shanghai). "This provides a robust foundation for the continued recovery of China's international travel business. Set against the backdrop of the flourishing Chinese travel market, ITB China 2024 will offer unparalleled opportunities for growth and collaboration. Suppliers can nurture existing business ties and forge new partnerships with Chinese buyers", he adds.

As the premier platform for the Chinese travel



market, ITB China 2024 will once again reflect the entire travel trade spectrum, with suppliers from around the world covering Leisure Travel, MICE, Business Travel, and Travel Technology.

An exclusive and well-rounded buyer program brings together a carefully selected group of buyers from a variety of companies and travel agencies, including OTAs, package tour operators, themed & customized travel planners, corporate buyers, MICE buyers, luxury travel buyers, travel management companies, travel tech buyers and more. Notably, 30% come from East China, 30% from North China, while 25% and 10% represent South and West China respectively, alongside a curated selection of international

buyers for the China Inbound segment. Over 85% of buyers attending the 2023 edition were founders, C-level executives, directors, and senior managers from renowned companies and travel agencies, underscoring the high quality profile of buyers participating in the event.

With buyer demand on the rise, MICE will gain prominence as a spotlight in 2024, with more in-depth presentations and discussions featured on stage. The China Inbound Tourism segment will be relaunched next year. The surging popularity of Custom-themed Travel in the Chinese market, coupled with the profound impact of Travel Technology, guarantees a wealth of content sessions, activities, and awards, complemented with the insights of seasoned travel professionals and forward-thinking influencers.



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# NEWS

## ITB Asia 2023 Marks a Major Success With a 42% Growth in Attendance, Paving the Way for a Promising Show in 2024

### TTA BULLETIN

Asia's leading travel trade show concluded today, boasting a remarkable 42% surge compared to 2022. With over 1,838 exhibitors and more than 1,300 top-tier industry buyers, ITB Asia 2023 served as a platform for over 35,000 business appointments, fostering long-term cooperations in the global travel industry.



ITB Asia, Asia's leading travel trade show, came to a successful end today. Thousands of industry experts came together to celebrate travel and forge new connections at ITB Asia, co-located with MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia, and enriched by a multi-track conference.

"The 2023 edition of ITB Asia sent a clear signal – the global travel industry is back on track. We were happy to see so many new players, so many fresh faces – that's the guarantee of a sustainable future for the entire industry. I hope a lot of them will join the ranks of recurring ITB Asia guests, as we are starting preparations for the next year already", says Katrina Leung, Managing Director of Messe Berlin (Singapore), the organiser of MICE Show Asia, Travel Tech Asia and ITB Asia.

The rich conference agenda augmented the experience that attendees could get in the busy exhibition halls. Adopting the motto "Accelerating Growth: Paving the Way for New Opportunities in Travel & Tourism", the ITB Asia Conference gathered global

thought leaders from the entire industry, sparking lively discussions on topics critical to the future of MICE, corporate travel, leisure travel and travel technology. Over 160 speakers delivered more than 4,000 minutes of speeches in over 100 sessions spanning 3 days in 3 conference theatres: the Knowledge Theatre, MICE Show Asia, and Travel Tech Asia.

The preparations for the next year's show are underway, with the 17th edition of ITB Asia scheduled on 23 – 25 October 2024 in Singapore. The booth registration for ITB Asia 2024 is open online, with Super Early Bird rates available till 31 October 2023.

ITB Asia, Asia's leading travel trade show, is organised by Messe Berlin (Singapore) Pte Ltd and supported by the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau. The annual B2B trade show and convention will feature hundreds of exhibiting companies from the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East, covering not only the leisure market, but also MICE and corporate travel, with the most important players in the region.

## The 100 Most Influential People in the Events Industry for 2023 announced

### TTA BULLETIN

The Eventex team is proud to announce The 100 Most Influential People in the Events Industry for 2023. The index comprises the most exceptional individuals from around the globe who have made an impact with their creativity, vision, and capacity for innovation and is entirely curated by the events community, which both nominated and voted to determine the final list. This year, Eventex is also recognizing the most influential individuals by sector and region, with several smaller indices together with the main top 100 index.



In addition to The 100 Most Influential People in the Events Industry, Eventex is also announcing The 50 Most Influential Event Professionals, The 50 Most Influential Event Technology Professionals, The 50 Most Influential Venue Professionals, and The 50 Most Influential Wedding Professionals. Last but not least, Eventex is also celebrating industry professionals with regional significance, unveiling The 50 Most Influential People in the following regions — Asia and the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand, Europe, the UK, and the US and Canada.

This edition of The 100 Most Influential People in the Events Industry index saw as

many as 830 nominations from 56 countries, and a massive 21,787 votes cast. The top 3 countries represented in the index include the US with 31 individuals, followed by the UK and Poland with 11 each. Some of the most notable companies that made the list by virtue of their employees include Bayer, Bizzabo, Cvent, Google India, Kenes Group, Media Monks, Philips, VOK DAMS worldwide, and Wink.

"The Eventex index of the top 100 event superstars shines a light on some of the most deserving individuals whose creativity, innovation, and achievements keep inspiring and raising the bar for the rest of the industry. This year, we're also celebrating the industry's versatility by recognizing the most influential individuals who have been shaping every facet of the industry, as well as those working in a specific region," comments Ovanessian, Co-founder of Eventex Awards.

## Sri Lanka Tourism lights up Colombo

### TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism will blitz the city of Colombo this festive season by lighting up key streets and areas for a second consecutive year, following the success of last year.



The month of December marks the start of the country's peak tourist season, and the city light up project by Sri Lanka Tourism aims to add to the festivities and the overall holiday experience of visitors, as they enjoy a variety of events, sites, and the hospitality of Sri Lankans.

during this season in cities to add sparkle to the holiday mood.

Sri Lanka Tourism's newly launched destination tagline 'Sri Lanka – You 'll come back for more' is focused on every aspect of a traveller's experience during their stay in the country, that makes both the little and big moments memorable, magical, and momentous, giving strong motivation for them to keep coming back to the country.



The Light-up Colombo Project by Sri Lanka Tourism will burn bright from the 15th of December to the 2nd of January 2024. The project will see Festive decorations for different zones. Zone A : From Kingsbury Hotel passing the Presidential

Making Colombo an attractive and festive destination during this season is part of Sri Lanka Tourism plan of enhancing the urban city experience for travellers. Sri Lanka Tourism aims to light up the city, adding a dash of wonder and excitement for travellers visiting or passing by much like other tourist focused destinations do

Secretariat, Shangri-La Green Area towards the Galle Face Roundabout. Zone B : From Galle Face Roundabout, passing Cinnamon Grand Hotel, and Temple Trees towards to the Colpetty Junction. Zone C: From Liberty Plaza through Duplication Road towards Bambalapitiya.



Sri Lanka Tourism hopes the project will add to the festiveness and celebratory mood of travellers expected to visit Colombo, both foreign and local and aims to continue it as an annual attraction.

## Marella Discovery 2 cruise liner calls on Colombo

### TTA BULLETIN

The luxury cruise ship M.V. Marella Discovery 2 of Marella Cruises with 1,800 passengers and 755 crew on board will make her maiden call at the Port of Colombo on the 7th of December 2023 and depart on the 8th of December. Aitken Spence Shipping is the local agent to facilitate the cruise liner whilst Aitken Spence Travels is the shore excursion provider offering excursion services in Colombo and Hambantota.



The Marella Discovery 2 will carry out a turn-around at Colombo wherein 900 passengers will disembark and a further 900 passengers will embark vessel during her stay in Sri Lanka. Marella Cruises has chartered 3 flights for this turn-around operation at Colombo.

cinema, a rock-climbing wall, a mini-golf course, a five-story atrium, a fully equipped fitness centre and two magnificent pools –indoor and outdoor. The ship also has 7 bars and 8 restaurants to cater to all the passengers' culinary preferences. This luxury liner has 918 cabins on 11 decks, with a capacity to accommodate 2,000 passengers, with a crew of 750-770.

The vessel that cruises under the flag of Bahamas will call Colombo from Mormugao, India while Georgetown, Malaysia is her next port of call.

Marella Discovery 2 is one of their biggest ships, with highlights like an outdoor





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SCAN TO REGISTER



# HOTELS

## Let's come together this Festive Season @ Harpo's Cafes & Restaurants

TTA BULLETIN

It's time of the year that combines Christmas with year-end festivities but in the midst of all the parties, festive outfits, and holiday shopping, festive food takes focus as the important part of holiday celebrations.

In keeping with the festivities, Harpo's cafes & Restaurants bring in a month of festive food, for all to enjoy. For all the foodies out there and visitors from overseas and others who love traditional festive food, we have it all covered.

The annual Charity now in its 18th year will be for 60 kids at the Community Concern center in Dehiwala, to share the joy of the season with the less privileged.

Commons coffee house – never disappoints with a full range of festive specials with chef Manjula and Mgr Prasanna offering quality food and service. There's the delicious festive

coffees, Kids activity along with the ever popular rotti cart, hopper varieties bringing in the "simply local" touch to the seasonal entertainment. Commons also offers a selection of exceptional festive catering menus for the season and Festive Goodies for special orders.

"The season is all about friends and family getting together, and in keeping with this theme we unfold an exceptional selection of menus, catering to all. While looking forward to welcoming you at our restaurants I wish to thank all who have supported us through the year and continue to be with us during the season. Wishing all a happy and peaceful Festive season" Harpo

The Bayleaf Restaurant is aglow with festive lights, and chef Sarojs delectable Italian festive specials from Dec 1- 23rd and special Christmas menu from 24 to 30th with a tantalizing 3 course menu for

New Year's Eve for all who wish to usher in the New Year in an elegant setting. There are Festive goodies for special take away orders to entertain at home. The Bayleaf Garden is an ever popular venue for elegant entertainment. It also offers a selection of exceptional menus for Home catering for 10 pax or festive buffet and cocktail menus for 25 pax and above.

Colombo Fort café at the Dutch Hospital is now a favorite with overseas visitors, tourists and the office goers who wish to enjoy a break. A special Seasonal menu from 1 till the 20th, daily Happy hour, Sundown deals, Christmas menu from Dec 20th – 30th and a New Year's Eve menu is offered at the Colombo Fort café. All can be enjoyed in A/C comfort or alfresco dining under the stars at the Dutch hospital complex.

Harpo's Pizza & Pasta offers 2 Festive pizzas, delicious thin crust homemade



freshness with Pork loin Pizza with toppings and BBQ chicken pizza to enjoy. The hot favorite is the gigantic Party (19:") Pizza and the only 22" Square party Pizza for family and friends to share. Delivery available on 4869000 or Uber and Pick me.

Harpo's Marketplace- retail products are available at Commons coffee house and at Harpo's Pizza & Pasta restaurant, in ethul kotte with a choice of homemade fresh selection of pasta, sauces & infused oils. All retail products are also available in leading supermarkets in the city.

## Sri Lanka's Pekoe Trail wins prestigious British Guild of Travel Writers Award

TTA BULLETIN



Sri Lanka bagged the prestigious British Guild of Travel Writers Tourism Award for the Best International Tourism project in the Wider World for The Pekoe Trail, at the Annual Gala Awards held in London. This is the first time Sri Lanka has secured an International Tourism Award at the renowned British Guild. The award was announced and presented to Hon. Harin Fernando, Minister of Tourism who attended the event as a guest of honor.

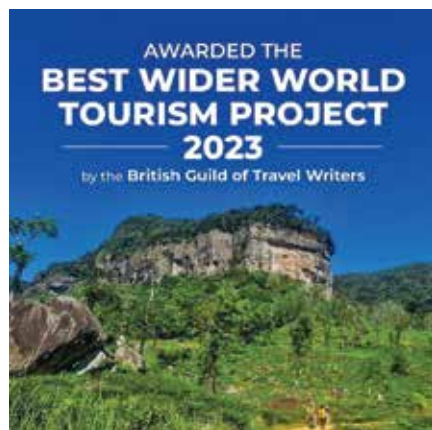
Receiving the award, the Minister of Tourism remarked that "We are thrilled and humbled to receive this accolade for Sri Lanka. It validates our efforts to revive the tourism industry in our country, after a few challenging years, by innovating and celebrating authentic travel, in a way that resonates with and attracts

travelers keen to explore and discover the real Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has high potential for nature based, wellness tourism and transformative travel, and The Pekoe Trail is spearheading new immersive experiences in this segment."

The Pekoe Trail has won the award beating 04 other major projects nominated under the wider-world category. Sri Lanka Tourism has also partnered with the British Guild this year to host the International Tourism Awards segment exposing new tourism branding Sri Lanka -you'll come back for more to an audience of 300 high-profile media who attended the event last night.

Sri Lanka Tourism extends gratitude to the founder of the Pekoe trail Miguel Cunat, European Union and the U.S. Agency for International Development for funding the project and thank journalists Petra Shepherd and Jessica Vincent for nominating Sri Lanka for this award and for featuring wonderful stories about the trail, and to all the other numerous travel writers and journalists that have written so many wonderful things about the trail and Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Tourism is all set to announce this major win at the WTM Opening Ceremony on 06th November at Excel, London to emphasize the destination's commitment for sustainable Tourism initiatives.



## Elite Havens expands its presence in India with 32 stunning handpicked properties in Goa

TTA BULLETIN

Elite Havens, Asia's premier luxury villa rental company, has expanded its curated selection of more than 300 private luxury villas and chalets across Asia's most awe-inspiring locations by introducing 32 stunning new properties in Goa, India.

Signed in collaboration with India's leading luxury vacation home rental company, Lohono Stays by Isprava, the new properties each feature a pool and expansive living spaces with restored heritage furniture, offering exclusivity, privacy, and the warm hospitality India is renowned for.

Lauded for its long coastline, lush countryside, vibrant culture, and laid-back lifestyle, Goa beckons discerning travelers seeking exceptional experiences. With a dedicated team committed to crafting immersive local experiences, Elite Havens seamlessly links guests with an array of must-do activities – from the exploration of historic cathedrals and ancient forts to delighting in the rich flavours of local delicacies and meandering through fragrant spice plantations.

"Goa's charm as a holiday destination lies in its accessibility and its capacity to cater to diverse tastes and preferences, making it a destination of choice for those seeking a tantalizing food scene, cultural fusion, and a climate that promises a diverse and enriching experience," said Ms Maya Rigg, Chief Executive Officer of Elite Havens. "We are delighted to continue our thriving collaboration with Lohono Stays to offer discerning travellers access to Goa's most exceptional holiday homes, ensuring they can experience the many wonders of this beautiful destination in the utmost comfort and convenience."

Each villa in the collection was thoughtfully curated by Ms Rigg together with Elite Havens' Cluster Manager for Indonesia,



India, and Sri Lanka, Mr Alan Porteous.

On the new additions, Mr Porteous said, "These exclusive villas represent the pinnacle of comfort and sophistication, each a masterpiece of architectural design and elegance. From the moment you step into Villa Athena, a two-storey contemporary masterpiece, Estate de Alta Palmiera, offering lakehouse living, or Glasshouse on the Bay, a one-of-a-kind home built right on the edge of the water, you are enveloped in opulence and refinement that mirrors the grandeur of Goa's cultural heritage. Each property in the collection has something special to offer discerning visitors."

Mumbai serves as the major international entry point to India for Elite Havens' core guest markets, including UK and Middle Eastern guests. Upon arriving in Mumbai, guests can take a brief domestic flight to reach the vibrant shores of Goa.

Elite Havens' commitment to exceptional service includes offering comprehensive information to guests to help plan their journey, including booking private transfers and ongoing transportation throughout the stay.

"In a country known for its vibrant colours and warm hospitality, we invite everyone to explore the remarkable contrasts that make India truly unique, and we have everything in place to ensure visitors can see India in a different light," said Ms Rigg."





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# HOTELS

## 'Vis ta Vie' by Thema Collection opens in Mirissa – "Live your Life!"

TTA BULLETIN

Introducing "Vis ta Vie - Mirissa" by Thema Collection – "Live your Life". Uncover the allure of Mirissa at this exquisite villa, surrounded by stunning beaches, crystal-clear waters, and picture-perfect sunsets.

These villa offers tranquility and luxury with five opulent chambers and a lavish suite. Relax in elegant rooms with plush furnishings, modern amenities, and balconies overlooking the Indian Ocean. Explore elegant spaces like the cozy lounge and charming terrace with an infinity pool surrounded by white sands with views of the Mirissa beach.

The luxurious 'Vis ta Vie' Villa was declared open by Her Grace the Dutchess of Rutland, Emma Manners along with the



Directors of 'Vis ta Vie' Vajira & Nihal Mendis and the Chairman of Thema Collection Chandra Wickramasinghe. This event marked the culmination of meticulous planning and dedication, bringing to life a simply elegant haven in the heart of Mirissa.

The visionary behind the Villa 'Vis ta Vie',

holds a deep personal involvement and an unwavering passion for creating the ultimate luxurious experience for guests. With a genuine love for the ocean and a profound appreciation for nature's beauty, Mrs. Vajira Mendis embarked on a journey to bring this unique villa to life. Indulge in the captivating oceanfront lifestyle. The interior design exudes simplicity and reflects the enchanting marine surroundings of Mirissa.

Discover the stunning Mirissa Beach, which offers thrilling activities such as surfing and snorkeling. Elevate your beachfront vacation experience by embarking on a memorable whale and dolphin-watching excursion, conveniently accessible by boat from Mirissa Harbor. Mirissa is famous for its rich marine life in the Indian Ocean. Don't miss the enchanting turtle-watching experience as adorable hatchlings head to the sea from Mirissa's golden shores between January and April. At our beachfront, you can also catch a glimpse of turtles laying their eggs along the shore and carefully burying them in the soft, white sand. These precious eggs are expertly preserved in a turtle hatchery until they hatch and are returned to their natural habitat. It's truly a beautiful experience that adds to your stay.

Traveling to Mirissa from Colombo or the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) via the southern expressway is a seamless experience, with a travel time of just under 3 hours. Mirissa stands out among other destinations in Sri Lanka due to its strategi-



cally advantageous location, guaranteeing convenience and easy access for travelers.

"Authentic, luxury meets stunning nature at our boutique hotels, villas, bungalows, resorts, glamping, and ayurvedic wellness properties" said Chandra Wickramasinghe, Chairman Thema Collection. "We welcome you to experience the epitome of luxury and tranquility at Villa 'Vis ta Vie'

Thema Collection is renowned for its authentic experiential luxury wild glamping sites, ayurvedic wellness retreats, and hotels that cater to travelers seeking authentic Sri Lankan experiences. Thema Collection stands at the forefront of the hospitality industry, particularly in luxury boutique hotels, pioneering an unmatched experience for discerning travelers.



## Shangri-La Colombo Brings Christmas Stories to Life as it unveils an Enchanted Festive Season

TTA BULLETIN

Shangri-La Colombo is thrilled to unveil its enchanting festive season celebration under the theme "Bring Your Christmas Stories to Life." This immersive experience promises to transform the hotel into a magical backdrop for guests to create and share their cherished holiday tales. Shangri-La invites guests to immerse themselves in the joy of the festive season, bringing their Christmas stories to life at Shangri-La Colombo. Let every moment be a chapter in their holiday tale as they find their Shangri-La.

General Manager, Herve Duboscq expressed the hotel's excitement for the upcoming festivities, saying, "This season, we want to invite everyone to bring their Christmas stories to life at Shangri-La Colombo. We've meticulously designed every detail to spark the spirit of the season and provide a canvas for our guests to write their own magical tales with the ones they love."

The hotel lobby will serve as the picturesque setting for this holiday narrative, adorned with Nutcrackers, swan Lake Ballerinas, Hummingbirds and Rudolph, reflecting the theme to perfection. Twinkling lights, Larger than life Storybooks, and glittering embellishments will envelop visitors, inviting them to immerse themselves in the warmth of the season.

Culinary delights take center stage with a specially curated festive menu that brings classic holiday flavors to life. Shangri-La Colombo's culinary experts have crafted a gastronomic journey featuring seasonal delights and innovative creations, ensuring a memorable dining experience for guests eager to add new chapters to their holiday stories.

To enhance the festive cheer, Shangri-La has planned a series of special events and entertainment that align with the theme. Live musical performances, themed celebrations, and interactive experiences will be part of the lineup, creating moments that guests can weave into their own unique Christmas stories.

"We've poured our hearts into creating an atmosphere where our guests can truly bring their Christmas stories to life. It's about making memories, sharing laughter, and experiencing the magic of the season together, and creating unique and magical stories that can be retold for years to come" emphasized Herve Duboscq.

The "Bring Your Christmas Stories to Life" festivities at Shangri-La Colombo will alight on the 28th of November and extend throughout the holiday season. Guests are encouraged to reserve their spots in advance to ensure they don't miss out on

this extraordinary celebration.

Unwrapping the Magic: Festive Hampers and Customized Delights:

Elevate the joy of giving with Shangri-La Colombo's exquisite Festive Hampers, starting from LKR 39,000++. Each hamper is a carefully curated assortment of traditional Christmas treasures and local delicacies, embodying the true spirit of the season. For a personalized touch, explore the Customized Hampers, elegantly presented in signature packaging, starting from LKR 39,000++. Perfect for sharing the festive cheer with cherished loved ones or esteemed business partners.

Sweet Temptations by Shangri-La: Festive Goodies to Delight: Step into a world of enchanting delights with Sweet Temptations by Shangri-La. From whimsical gingerbread men to red-nosed delights, savor the Nutcracker's kingdom of confections. Available daily from 1 – 26 December 2023, these festive goodies are crafted to make Christmas stories come to life in every delectable bite.

Seasonal Lunch Buffet at Central: Indulge in a symphony of flavors as we unwrap the much-awaited seasonal lunch buffet at Central. Starting 1 December 2023, Monday to Friday from 12.00 p.m. to 3.00



p.m. | LKR 4950++ per person, Weekend Brunch from 12.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. | LKR 6950++ per person

Capital Bar & Grill: A Culinary Journey Inspired by Christmas Classics: Experience the magic of Christmas with Capital Bar & Grill's Christmas Eve Dinner on 24 December 2023. Priced at LKR 19,950 ++ per person, indulge in a bespoke 4-course set menu inspired by cherished Christmas tales, expertly crafted by Executive Chef Patrick and his team. Throughout December, savor the elegance of Swan Lake with Festive Cocktails, or bid farewell to the year with an exquisite five-course New Year's Eve Dinner, priced at LKR 29,950 ++ per person.

Central: A Feast for the Senses: Central invites guests to indulge in the wonder of the season with a Christmas Eve Dinner Buffet on 24 December 2023, priced at LKR 12,950 ++ per person. Continue the celebrations with a Christmas Day Brunch and Christmas Day Dinner Buffet, creating heartwarming memories around a splendid feast. Throughout December, experience the joy of the season with Festive Weekday Lunch Buffet, Festive Dinner Buffet, Regular Dinner Buffet, New Year's Eve Dinner Buffet, and New Year's Day Dinner.



## Jetwing Vil Uyana: Among the World's 60 Most Incredible Hotels

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Vil Uyana, Sri Lanka's leading eco-luxury resort, is delighted to announce its inclusion in the esteemed 2024 Fodor's Finest Hotels List. This exclusive recognition, curated by Fodor's editors and their extensive global network of independent writers, shines a spotlight on 60 of the world's most extraordinary hotels, with Jetwing Vil Uyana standing as the sole Sri Lankan resort on this prestigious list.



benefiting the regional water table.

The resort's transformation into a man-made wetland habitat and reforested land has led to a significant resurgence of diverse flora and fauna. Among the thriving biodiversity at the resort, the story of the elusive Northern Grey Slender Loris stands out as a highlight. Discovered on-site in 2010, in an area initially earmarked for expansion, the presence of these fascinating creatures prompted the management to make a conscientious decision to forego the development plans, instead declaring the area a dedicated Loris research and conservation site.

Jetwing's commitment to sustainability extends beyond environmental preservation to community empowerment. The Jetwing Youth Development Project, which educates local youth to provide them with industry knowledge, as well as the award-winning employment initiative Second Careers, which provides work opportunities for middle-aged women to achieve financial independence, stand as prime examples of community upliftment.

This man-made wetland sanctuary was also recognised as one of the 15 best eco-hotels in the world earlier this year by Condé Nast Traveller, among other local and international accolades, reaffirming its position as the finest eco-luxury resort in the island. Jetwing Vil Uyana continues to set the benchmark in sustainable tourism, offering immersive and unforgettable experiences replete with the best of Jetwing's authentic Sri Lankan hospitality.

Drawing inspiration from the Barnes Wetland on the outskirts of London, Jetwing Vil Uyana's remarkable journey began in the early 2000s. The mission was to transform 28 acres of abandoned paddy land into a thriving wetland teeming with life. This visionary project, led by the extraordinary environmental architect Sunela Jayawardene and supported by the expert team at Jetwing Hotels, aimed to establish itself as a pioneering regenerative tourism initiative on the island.

The name "Vil Uyana" translates to "garden of lakes," and this remarkable resort certainly lives up to its name. Offering five distinct types of dwellings—garden, marsh, water, paddy, and forest—Jetwing Vil Uyana, located mere minutes away from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sigiriya, provides guests with a unique and intimate connection to its absolutely tranquil surroundings. Each of the 36 meticulously designed luxury dwellings features personalised butler service, with most of them boasting private plunge pools.

Seamlessly blending luxury with sustainability, the resort was intricately designed ground up to be a flourishing sanctuary. From the resort's innovative architectural design, which harnesses natural light and ventilation, to the natural material including thatched roofing and bamboo wall panelling, used in its creation, help minimise its environmental footprint. Furthermore, Jetwing Vil Uyana's man-made lakes are entirely replenished by rainwater, avoiding any reliance on local water sources and

## Celebrate The Most Wonderful Christmas at Galle Face Hotel: A Season of Splendour and Joy

TTA BULLETIN

Galle Face Hotel invites you to experience the enchantment of Christmas with a series of captivating events and culinary indulgences throughout December.



SCAN ME

ling the arrival of the joyous season.

Indulge in a sumptuous Christmas Eve Brunch from 11:30 am to 3:00 pm, priced at LKR 9,500. Later in the afternoon, savour the festive delights of Christmas Eve High Tea from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, priced at LKR 4,500 (with Bubbly at LKR 6,000).

As evening descends, delight in the Christmas Eve Dinner from 7:30 pm to 11:00 pm, also priced at LKR 9,500. For an exclusive experience, enjoy the curated 5-course menu by Chef Rukie at 1864 Limited Edition, at LKR 19,000.

Beginning on December 1st, the Christmas Goodie Hut welcomes guests to a treasure trove of festive delights, open from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Discover an array of seasonal treasures, perfect for sharing the joy of the season with loved ones.

On December 3rd, join us for the International Christmas Charity Bazaar from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, embodying the spirit of giving and sharing in the true essence of Christmas.

Mark your calendar for December 6th, as we illuminate the Christmas tree in a dazzling ceremony from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, signal-

Galle Face Hotel promises an unforgettable celebration, filled with warmth, exquisite flavours, and the spirit of the season.

## Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts records a milestone in eliminating 65% of single-use plastic usage across its portfolio

TTA BULLETIN

In its commitment to eliminating single-use plastics from its operations, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts records a total reduction of 65% single-use plastic usage



that sustainability is not just a goal but a continuous journey at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, in ensuring an exceptional and responsible hospitality experience for

our guests." across its hotels and resorts in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. With that same goal in mind, Cinnamon Bentota Beach and Cinnamon Grand Colombo will be eliminating 100% of its PET water bottle usage with reusable glass bottles. This latest partnership with NORDAQ, an internationally patented water filtration system, the two properties would be the first in Sri Lanka to include patented filtration technology to provide mineral water, through an in-house purification and bottling facility.

Since the launch of its sustainable journey in 2020, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts has made significant strides in reducing plastic waste across its properties. These efforts include the implementation of glass bottles instead of PET bottles at all its Maldives properties, the use of ceramic bathroom amenity bottles, wooden cutlery, cloth laundry bags, cloth wristbands and eliminating plastic pens in guest rooms offering numerous environmental benefits, including recyclability and reducing landfill waste.

Commenting on the milestone of reducing single-use plastic and its commitment to sustainability, Chief Executive Officer of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Mikael Svensson, said, "This is a remarkable milestone for the company and as one of the leading hospitality brands in the Country, this establishes our unwavering commitment to sustainability, guest satisfaction and environmental responsibility. This industry-first partnership with NORDAQ demonstrates

our guests." In its initial implementation phase with NORDAQ, Cinnamon Bentota Beach targets to eliminate 92% of single-use plastic and another 59% at Cinnamon Grand Colombo. This initiative eliminates the use of more than 300,000 PET water bottles annually. To further sustain the environment-friendly bottling process, the reusable glass bottle is made with 80% recycled glass and the aluminum cap with 100% recycled content. NORDAQ's patented water filtration system purifies tap water into a perfectly neutral result, without taste, smell, or impurities. It removes unwanted flavours while retaining the water's natural salts and minerals – an environmentally friendly solution for premium water. In compliance with Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Health & Safety practices, the water is tested periodically through independent testing laboratories, adhering to international standards.

"NORDAQ is delighted to partner with Cinnamon Bentota Beach and Cinnamon Grand Colombo in their quest for environmental sustainability. Our innovative technology aligns perfectly with their vision of delivering exceptional guest experiences while reducing their environmental impact. Together, we are raising the bar for sustainability in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry," commented Chief Executive Officer of NORDAQ, Johanna Mattsson.

## Chef Ralf Vogt to Elevate Culinary Experience at Grand Hotel Nuwara

### Eliya

TTA BULLETIN

The Grand Hotel Nuwara Eliya is set to welcome a culinary maestro to its team, as Chef Ralf Vogt, a distinguished Director of Kitchens and Senior Executive Chef, prepares to join us as a Culinary Consultant in December.



Chef Ralf Vogt

Chef Ralf, a qualified Master Chef from Germany, brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the Grand Hotel. With an impressive background in the international 5-star hotel trade, he has previously served renowned groups such as Crown Ltd, Hilton International, and Intercontinental Hotels. His culinary journey spans across various cities and resorts in Germany, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, South Korea, and Australia.

Chef Ralf is already a well-known name in the Sri Lankan gastronomy scene having worked for several years at Mount Lavinia Hotel Group, the Hilton Colombo and Hilton

Colombo Residences. He is also a judge for the Chef's Guild and on the committee of the Bocusse d'Or and Chaîne des Rotisseurs, Sri Lankan chapter.

Notably, Chef Ralf is recognized for his creative and innovative culinary skills, coupled with an in-depth knowledge of Asian and European cuisines. His desire is to capture the rich colonial history of the Grand Hotel and combine this with a modern culinary flavour in an exciting, unique and delicious food experience.

Here at The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya we are eagerly looking forward to the positive impact Chef Ralf is sure to make, enriching the gastronomic journey for visitors and residents alike.



# HOTELS

## Minor Hotels Signs Deal for Visionary Safari Experience in Zambia

Anantara Kafue River Tented Camp to launch in 2025 in Kafue National Park

### TTA BULLETIN

Currently in the early stages of development, Anantara Kafue River Tented Camp will be located on the banks of the Kafue River – a haven fully suspended 3.5 metres above the ground, ensuring unbridled access to the



bush and river for the wild inhabitants. With just 12 spacious tents, including a 600-square metre Presidential Villa offering unbridled exclusivity, the camp promises an intimate and exclusive retreat, epitomising luxury in the wild. The camp is bookended by two islands which will accommodate a spa and wellness area with a swimming pool, a restaurant and bar, a lounge and a traditional African boma.

Anantara Kafue River Tented Camp is owned by Agro Safari, a division of a stalwart Zambian company with a legacy spanning generations. The partnership with Minor Hotels signifies a commitment to crafting the ultimate safari experience and brings to life a vision shared by both entities, blending Agro Safari's extensive land holdings with Minor Hotels' expertise, underscored by the prestigious Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara.

When it launches in early 2025, the new camp will immerse guests in the heart of a national park populated with majestic wildlife. Each luxury tent, strategically spaced for privacy and to maximise immersion in the bush and surrounding landscapes, comes complete with its own plunge pool and use of a boat and skipper. Nature-centric experiences will include canoeing, fishing, birdwatching, boat safaris, and encounters with wildlife, all curated to elevate the guest experience in the African bush in an entirely unforgettable way.

Kafue National Park is located in the centre of Western Zambia and is one of the largest reserves in all of Africa, covering a staggering 22,400 square kilometres. The park is home to a fantastic diversity of wildlife and birdlife and much of it remains largely unexplored and untouched. The new camp will be located approximately a three hour drive from Victoria Falls or the capital Lusaka, or a short helicopter ride.

Anantara Kafue River Tented Camp will stand as a beacon of sustainable practices, an oasis where luxury harmonises with nature. The resort will embrace eco-friendly features, from harnessing photo voltaic energy to employing parabolic collectors and sustainable woods, ensuring a delicate equilibrium between development and the preservation of the natural environment.

More than a luxury safari camp, Anantara Kafue River Tented Camp will also stand as a community-driven endeavour. The Community Culture Infusion is a pledge to infuse indigenous elements into the very

fabric of the camp, befitting the ethos of the Anantara brand. From engaging local businesses in the supply chain to employing a majority Zambian staff, the camp is set to become a beacon of community empowerment and cultural celebration.

Dillip Rajakarier, CEO Minor Hotels and Group CEO of parent company Minor International, commented, "We are really excited to announce this partnership with Agro Safari to develop and launch an exclusive tented camp in Zambia under our luxury Anantara flag. This represents a unique opportunity to offer unparalleled experiences to discerning travellers looking to explore outside the more well known African parks and we look forward to working closely with our partners to bring this camp to fruition."

Anantara already has a strong presence in Southern Africa with The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Hotel by Anantara in Zambia and two small island resorts in Mozambique – Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort and Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort. In addition the group has joint venture ownership of Elewana Collection, a portfolio of luxurious camps and lodges in East Africa, including Elewana Elsa's Kopje in Meru, Kenya and Elewana Serengeti Pioneer Camp in Tanzania, hence has significant expertise on delivering exceptional safari experiences.

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, The Netherlands, Hungary, Italy, Ireland and France with a pipeline of future properties across Asia, the Middle East, Europe and South America.

## Take the Party Home this Season with Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo

### TTA BULLETIN

'Tis the season of joy, love, laughter, and celebrations. No party is complete at this time of the year without a delectable collection of canapés paired with the perfect beverages. But, entertaining at home or office can be a cumbersome task. So, why not leave that part of the party to the award-winning culinary team of Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo.



delectables like Salmon Bagels with Horseradish Sauce, Croissant filled with Turkey Ham, Grilled Peach & Caramelized Onion, Georgian Cheese Bread topped with Basil & Garlic Marinated Cherry Tomato, Swirled Garlic Herb Bread with Ricotta, Nuts, Olives, Avocado, Parma Ham & Raspberry Yogurt, Vegetable Taquitos, Strawberry, Blueberry or White Chocolate

Mousse cups, and mini-Doughnuts to name a few.

Introducing the specially curated Cocktail Box packed with hot and cold canapés served with a range of dips, sweet delights that melt in your mouth and so much more. Specially designed for entertaining at your preferred location, the Cocktail Box comes in two sizes of 100 or 50 pieces priced at 60,000 LKR and 30,000 LKR respectively.

Orders for the curated designer canapé box can be made through <https://flavours.cinnamonhotels.com/> from anywhere in the world or by calling +94112 491000. A 24-hour notice period is required for orders and pick-up is open from 7am-8pm at Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo.

The designer box comes in tiers packed with

## ONYX Hospitality Group Expands Its Presence in Southeast Asia with Amari Vientiane in Laos

### TTA BULLETIN

ONYX Hospitality Group, a prominent player in the Asian hospitality industry, has achieved a significant milestone with the signing of Amari Vientiane in Laos, marking the group's second Amari brand property in the country, complementing Amari Vang Vieng. The signing ceremony took place on 16th November 2023 at Tang Chareon (TCR) Group's office in Laos, with Mr. Houa Sengaroun, Chairman of Tang Chareon (TCR) Group, Mr. Pheutsapha Phoummasak, President of Asia Investment, Development & Construction Sole Co., Ltd., and Mr. Yuthachai Charanachitta, CEO of ONYX Hospitality Group, reaffirming ONYX's commitment to expanding its presence in Southeast Asia.



Amari Vientiane, scheduled to open in 2024, promises an impressive array of world-class facilities, including all-day dining, 248 well-appointed rooms, a rooftop executive lounge, a specialty rooftop restaurant, rooftop bar, extensive banqueting facilities including a ballroom and meeting rooms, a state-of-the-art gym, Breeze Spa, a main pool, a children's pool, a kids' club, and ample parking. Notably, this exceptional property's location is a mere 4.8 kilometres from Wattay International Airport, ensuring unparalleled convenience for travellers and making it an ideal choice for those seeking a seamless and stress-free arrival experience.

Mr. Yuthachai Charanachitta, CEO of ONYX Hospitality Group, emphasised the significance of this expansion, stating:

"Our signing of Amari Vientiane represents an exciting leap forward in our cluster expansion strategy across Laos and the broader Southeast Asian region. We remain dedicated to creating exceptional hospitality

experiences for our guests, and this new property underlines our commitment to that mission. As we continue to expand our footprint in Southeast Asia, our aim is to provide diverse and captivating destinations for travellers to explore."

Headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand, ONYX Hospitality Group has earned a renowned reputation in the Southeast Asian hospitality industry over five decades. With a brand promise of 'A Tailored Approach to Hospitality,' ONYX aligns its business with local market expectations and partner goals, focusing on three key pillars for sustainable growth: Corporate excellence, Owner partnerships, and Product standards. This approach enables them to effectively expand businesses, deliver internationally recognised standards, and cultivate long-term relationships with visionary partners.

As ONYX Hospitality Group continues to expand its portfolio of hotels, resorts and serviced apartments across Southeast Asia, they are poised to operate over 50 properties by 2025. This expansion includes the recent opening of Amari Raaya Maldives and the upcoming launch of Amari Colombo Sri Lanka. Furthermore, properties under brands such as Amari, OZO, and Shama are in the pipeline, solidifying ONYX's commitment to offering diverse and exceptional experiences to travellers.





## The Vietage by Anantara Unveils All-New Luxury Railway Journey

TTA BULLETIN

The Vietage by Anantara today announces the introduction of a second railway carriage, which will operate a daily return journey between Nha Trang and Quy Nhon commencing its first journey on 15th May 2024.



journeys to Vietnam.

Reservations for the new route between Nha Trang and Quy Nhon will open on 1st February 2024.

The Vietage by Anantara will reveal more details soon on its exciting new route.

The Vietage by Anantara operates two 12-seat reservation-only carriages on daily return railway routes between Da Nang and Quy Nhon and Nha Trang and Quy Nhon in South Central Vietnam, offering luxury train travel experiences for guests exploring Vietnam.

Building on the resounding success of the existing carriage running daily between Da Nang and Quy Nhon, the second carriage aims to capture the international hub of Nha Trang served by Cam Ranh International Airport and connect the central coast of Vietnam offering opportunities for visitors to explore more of the stunning country in luxury.

At a signing ceremony this morning at the Saigon Railway Transport JSC (SRT) Head Office in Ho Chi Minh City, The Vietage by Anantara's General Manager, Erik Billgren, thanked the Vietnam Railways Corporation (VNR) and the SRT for their commitment and support over the last three years since the launch of the initial carriage and looks forward to the ongoing partnership in bringing luxury railway

## Cinnamon Colombo Hotels Lights Up for the Season and Welcomes You to the Christmas Destination in the City

TTA BULLETIN

There's nothing quite like the Christmas feeling, and as the City of Colombo adorns itself in twinkling lights, the air gets chillier and there is a tangible sense of festivity in the air, Cinnamon Colombo Hotels ushered in the most joyous time



of the year. Cinnamon Colombo Hotels is "Your Christmas Destination" in the city this year, and a host of events have been planned at each of the three properties to encourage patrons to truly find their own version of the Christmas fantasy within our walls.

Cinnamon Grand Colombo's festivities kicked off on the 1st of December with a tree lighting ceremony that also coincided with the Master Table with Gary Mehigan. The tree lighting ceremony also featured a performance by the juniors of the Soul Sounds Academy. The enchanting lights that overhang the entrance to Cinnamon Grand Colombo and the traditional Christmas tree were both lit up simultaneously by Area Vice President – Cinnamon Colombo Hotels, Kamal Munasinghe. In keeping with the theme of "a Grand Ol' Christmas", the hotel has much to offer this season including a goodies market at the Lobby, scrumptious dinners on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and an exciting record attempt at the Longest Yule Log.

On the eve of 1st December, Cinnamon Red Colombo lit up for the season amidst staff, friends and guests led by General Manager Terrence Fernando. The property, known for its lean luxury concept and

minimalism has adopted a similar theme for its Christmas décor with holographic stars, fairy lights and subtle tributes to old traditions taking centerstage. Flavoured, the signature restaurant at the property will also host traditional events but the highlight of the season is the Christmas-themed High Tea served at Cloud Red, one of the highest bars in the city overlooking the breathtaking views of Colombo.

December 2nd marked the opening of the season for Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo together with the junior choir of the Umara Singhawansa Music Academy, and a special visit from Mrs. Claus who has taken up abode at the property for the season. Although Santa does miss her presence at the North Pole, guests at our resort in the city get to enjoy a goodies market packed with secret recipes, 4-days of musical magic under the moonlight, Christmas festivities, and a Masquerade to end the year on the highest note.

Commenting on the seasonal activities at all three properties Kamal Munasinghe noted, "Christmas is such a special time of the year, and this season we truly see Colombo celebrating. Cinnamon Colombo Hotels as the Christmas Destination this season truly promises to take every Christmas wish you can think of and make it into reality at one of our properties. One of the key highlights for us this season is also focusing on how to truly celebrate while concentrating on the environment, and those less fortunate around us.

## Aitken Spence Travels welcomes three cruise ships in a single day to the port of Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Aitken Spence Travels, Sri Lanka's premier destination management company, welcomes simultaneous arrivals of three cruise ships—Vasco Da Gama, Mein Schiff 5, and MS Seven Seas Navigator on the 10th of December 2023, at the port of Colombo. Vasco Da Gama and Mein Schiff 5 will dock at the Colombo port by 7.00am and MS Seven Seas Navigator will dock at 1.30pm with approximately 4,000 passengers from all three vessels on a single day.



The cruise season began last month with the arrival of 'Resilient Lady' from Virgin Voyages, a part of Sir Richard Branson's renowned group. The visit of Marella Discovery 2 that arrived in early had special significance, marking its first return to Sri Lanka post-Covid and the first turnaround operation in the country. Operated by TUI, this cruise brought three flights to Colombo for disembarking cruise passengers.

Notably, the Vasco Da Gama cruise marks its maiden call to Sri Lankan shores allowing its passengers an opportunity to immerse themselves in the vibrant city of Colombo before continuing their voyage to the Trincomalee port. They will explore the wonders of Minneriya, Dambulla, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, and the enchanting sights of the East Coast. Further, this cruise will have turnaround operation in Male, Maldives.

The seamless arrangement of hosting three cruise ships at the same time all in one day is a testament to Aitken Spence Travels' exceptional ability to cater to the diverse desires of large groups of concurrent visitors.

As the month progresses, the company looks forward to the arrival of MS Nautica on December 17th. This vessel is set to navigate the waters of Sri Lanka for three days, making stops at the ports of Colombo and Hambantota.

Aitken Spence Travels is committed to providing an extensive array of curated excursions, inviting all visitors to indulge in the diverse landscapes and rich culture of Sri Lanka. The lineup of 14 cruise calls

to the ports of Colombo, Hambantota, and Trincomalee with the various cruise agents will continue till the end of December 2023 bringing in seas of tourists to the country.

Commenting on this significant achievement Mr. Nalin Jayasundera, Managing Director of Aitken Spence Travels stated that "We are hoping to serve over 10,000 cruise passengers throughout these two months. We are delighted that all these cruise operators are selecting Sri Lanka as part of their cruise itineraries. We have been aggressively promoting the destination and continuously working with the operators to build confidence on the destination for them to pick Sri Lanka. This is not an easy task as we need to be competitive, offering our prices almost twelve months ahead. Once this happens, we cannot revise our rates for any reason despite our operating environmental changes such as taxes, increased entrance fees etc. Our focus is to popularise the destination to attract more cruises".

Ms. Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence and Head of Tourism and Leisure for the Group, commented that "We are hopeful that the Government would develop infrastructure of the Colombo port to be a cruise hub enabling us to compete with international ports in the region and attract a greater number of cruises contributing to the growth of Sri Lanka's tourism sector. We are confident and grateful to the Government, Dept. of Immigration & Emigration Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Sri Lanka Customs, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, the Tri forces and the Port Agency Services along with all other stakeholders that were supportive and instrumental to help our clients get the best guest experience in Sri Lanka".



The company's commitment towards cruise calls will continue until the end of April 2024. The positive impacts of these cruise calls are benefiting a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including transporters, hoteliers, wildlife parks, jeep drivers, excursion providers, cultural show artists, guides, and much more contributing to the industry positively.



## Qatar Airways Becomes the Official Global Airline Partner of Italian Giants FC Internazionale Milano

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways, the national carrier of the State of Qatar, welcomes top-tier Italian football team FC Internazionale Milano (Inter) to its sport sponsorship portfolio. At the Dubai Airshow



2023, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Al Meer joined hands with Inter's executive team as the new Official Global Airline Partner of the club.

In a group-wide partnership, the multi-year agreement will incorporate branding, hospitality, and marketing rights, including tailored travel solutions for all Inter fans. The cooperation supports Qatar Airways in strengthening its footprint across Italy and Europe – a region of utmost importance to the airline.

To celebrate this partnership, on the second day of the Dubai Airshow, Engr. Badr Al Meer hosted members of the Inter executive team with a tour of the Qatar Airways aircraft on display. Inter Legend, FIFA World Cup™ champion, and UEFA Champions League winner, Marco Materazzi, also made a surprise appearance to commemorate what is anticipated to be an outstanding sports partnership with Qatar Airways Group.

The Inter delegation explored the Business Class suite onboard the Boeing 787-9, the award-winning Qsuite on the Airbus A350-1000, and the state-of-the-art Qatar Executive private jet, the Gulfstream G650ER. The delegation presented Qatar Airways with Inter jerseys printed with the number "7" to commemorate the airline's seven times title of "World's Best Airline".

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Al Meer, said: "Qatar Airways' relationship with Milan goes back to 2002 when we announced Milan as our first service city in Italy from Doha. Partnering with the football sensation, Inter, brings our relationship full circle with this vibrant city. Italy is one of Qatar Airways' most valued markets and this partnership will help deepen our relationship with not only Milan, but all markets across Europe and Asia where Inter has a huge following. We look forward to working with the club to chart a new era of success, both on and off the pitch."

"We're so proud to welcome Qatar Airways to our family as a global partner," explained Alessandro Antonello, FC Internazionale Milano CEO Corporate. "This agreement confirms the ever-growing appeal of our brand, which is now linked to one of the leading airlines in the world that shares our unwavering commitment to forge connections between places and people the world over. Thanks to this partnership, Qatar Airways will be

granted access to our main touchpoints: our fanbase, which is made up of over 400 million supporters all over the globe, our illustrious history, our values and our unwavering connection with the city of Milan will support our new partner with its business development."

To celebrate the partnership, Qatar Airways Privilege Club will be offering Inter fans discounts of up to 12 per cent on flight fares to witness the legendary Italian team compete at the San Siro Stadium.

Qatar Duty Free (QDF) is set to elevate its standards of luxury through this distinguished sponsorship. Renowned as the unrivalled beacon of sophistication, Qatar Duty Free was recently recognised as the 2023 "Airport Retailer of the Year" by the Frontier Awards. The partnership with Inter leverages QDF's prestigious status and presents a transformative milestone for customers and VIP stakeholders alike.

The illustrious agreement with Inter will also comprise extending rights to Qatar Tourism, ensuring a well-rounded partnership with Qatar. This extended partnership underscores the shared vision between both entities, paves the way for strong relations between Italy and Qatar, and supports the implementation of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Symbolising excellence in the world of aviation and football, the partnership enables Qatar Airways to connect the team to exciting overseas tours and competitions as its key travel partner. The airline will also increase its visibility in Milan with Qatar Airways' branded LED signage around Inter's San Siro Stadium.

Inter is a club steeped in a rich history of success and has consistently achieved greatness on both the domestic and international stage. With 19 Serie A, three UEFA Champions League, and eight Italian Cup wins, Inter has truly etched its name in football history. The club's motto, "We are brothers and sisters of the world", encapsulates their passionate fan base – the 'Nerazzurri' faithful, and aligns with Qatar Airways' mission of uniting the world through the power of sport.

The airline currently operates from two airports in Italy, with three daily flights from Milan Malpensa and 18 weekly flights from Rome Fiumicino. From January 2024, flights to Rome will also increase from one to three daily flights.

## Emirates headlines the ULTRAs 2023 Awards as "Best Airline in the World"

Double win for the Dubai-based carrier as it also took home "Best Airline in the Middle East."

TTA BULLETIN



Emirates took centre stage at the ULTRAs 2023 Awards, taking home two coveted accolades. Crowned "Best Airline in the World" and "Best Airline in the Middle East" – the world's largest international airline won the votes of thousands of global travellers, thanks to its world-class products, unmatched services, and superb value for money offerings.

Thomas Ney, Divisional Senior Vice President Service Delivery at Emirates, accepted the awards at a ceremony held in Dubai at the Nikki Beach Club. The ceremony was also attended by other notable guests and leading members in the travel industry.

Adel Al Redha, Emirates' Chief Operating Officer, commented: "We're delighted to be recognized again as one of the world's best providers of luxury travel experiences. Emirates is renowned for always setting the bar high, and the past year has been no exception. We rolled out 10 A380 from our retrofit programme with completely new cabin interiors and Premium Economy seats; and expanded our global network to more than 140 destinations. We remain committed to continuously introducing innovative solutions and products to enhance our customers' journey. Thank you to our loyal customers for always choosing to fly better with us – and we look forward to raising the bar even higher!"

Nick Perry, Chairman of Ultratravel, added: "As air travel among luxury travellers has returned in force after the pandemic, the competition at the top end of the market is continually increasing. The quality and quantity of choice available to affluent flyers is at its highest

- so the achievement of Emirates to be voted the World's Best Airline in 2023 is truly impressive. Emirates can be justly proud to retain top position for another year."

Emirates continues to invest in product and service enhancements to ensure customers have the best travel experience in the air and on-ground. The airline recently launched a new city check-in facility at Dubai International Financial Centre; expanded its global network with a new route launch to Montreal; rolled out a meal pre-ordering service for customers to select their meal options in advance of travel; and offered free onboard Wi-Fi for all Emirates Skywards members.

The accolades stand as a testament to the idea that "travel is not just about the end destination, it's also about how you get there" – a concept brought to life in the airline's brand advertising campaign featuring Hollywood actor, Penelope Cruz.

Emirates recently won the 2024 APEX World Class Airline for delivering outstanding customer service, and for showcasing the highest global standards of safety and well-being, sustainability, and service-guest experience. The airline also scooped a 2024 IFSA award for 'Best Onboard Amenity,' in recognition of the airline's sustainable Economy Class amenity kit.

Emirates operates the world's largest fleet of wide-body Boeing 777 and Airbus A380 aircraft, offering spacious cabins and iconic inflight features such as its A380 Shower Spa and Onboard Lounge. The airline recently announced a record half-year performance for 2023-24, carrying more than 26 million passengers across its extensive network.

Customers on-board will also enjoy the warm hospitality of the airline's multinational crew of more than 160 nationalities, regionally gourmet cuisine, and award-winning inflight entertainment system – ice – offering up to 6,500 channels of the best movies, TV shows, podcasts and more.





## Flyadeal Joins Arab Air Carriers' Organisation (AACO)

TTA BULLETIN

flyadeal, one of the youngest and fastest growing low-cost airlines in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Middle East, has joined the Arab Air Carriers' Organisation (AACO) — the region's leading aviation industry body.



flyadeal's parent company Saudia Group, whose Director General His Excellency Eng Ibrahim Al-Omar is Chairman of the AACO Executive Committee, is currently hosting AACO's 56th Annual General Meeting in the Saudi capital Riyadh. The membership agreement between flyadeal and AACO was officially signed during the conference.

Beirut-based AACO, which represents 36 Arab airlines in the Middle East and North Africa, together with industry stakeholders across the aviation eco-system, interacts with regional and international organisations, and regulatory bodies to support members' interests. These cover, among others, environment, aero-political affairs, operations, security, emergency response planning and future distribution strategies.

Sanjiv Kapoor, flyadeal Acting Chief Executive Officer, said: "Since launching

in 2017, flyadeal has grown into one of the most popular low-cost airlines in the GCC region. As we move from being a domestic focused airline to one with a growing international foot-print, it was only natural to become part of the AACO family given its influence as a single voice on industry affairs within, and beyond, the Arab world. Through our new membership, we look forward to working with AACO and its leadership on the many areas and issues that collectively impact our industry."

Abdul Wahhab Teffaha, AACO Secretary General, added: "I am pleased and honoured by flyadeal's decision to join AACO, the trade association of airlines in the Arab region. By joining AACO, its 36 members, five partner airlines, and more than 60 industry partners, flyadeal brings with it tremendous value by adding its vitality, energy, and growth potential to the aviation community of the fastest growing region in the world. AACO is also proud to assist flyadeal in its growth plans through the multitude of areas it covers, particularly in its joint projects, advocacy activities, awareness, and networking, and in analytics, that help the airlines deal with the ever-changing dynamics of the air transport industry."

## Emirates and Boeing partner to advance aircraft maintenance with digitally focused solutions

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates and Boeing have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to leverage advanced digital technologies and accelerate improvements in maintenance operations.



Efforts will focus on key areas including: drone assisted aircraft inspections, sharpening the precision and effectiveness of maintenance tasks through use of virtual and augmented reality, in addition to next generation prognostic and predictive maintenance.

Ahmed Safa, Divisional Senior Vice President Emirates Engineering said: "Our partnership with Boeing will enable us to maximize the benefits of advanced technologies and digital excellence to improve operational reliability, minimize disruptions and ensure our fleet operates at the highest standards, ultimately providing our customers a better travel experience. Whether its drones conducting inspections with meticulous agility or AR visualisations that help engineers see behind panels or inside ducts to locate potentially defective components not visible to the naked eye, without having to dismantle them, we're taking significant steps to optimize aircraft maintenance to its full potential on our fleet of Boeing 777s."

"Supporting our customers on their digital transformation journey is about more than just enhancing maintenance operations," Brad Surak, Vice President of Digital Aviation Solutions, Boeing Global Services said. "It's about applying innovation to ensure their needs for optimum operations are met today and long term."

The integration of drone technology for maintenance tasks represents a leap forward for the airline, helping speed up exterior inspections on wide-body aircraft utilizing ultra-high resolution cameras with the capability to reach every angle of the aircraft to detect surface imperfections. The imagery and data collected becomes the basis of highly detailed reports, allowing far greater precision and helping with audits of future inspections.

Mixed Reality and the use of augmented reality and virtual reality visual tools means engineers can investigate the innermost workings of any part of an aircraft and other intricacies. These technologies promise to deliver more precise and comprehensive aircraft inspections, reduce the risk of human error, and significantly cut down the time aircraft spend out of service – optimizing fleet availability and performance.

## Qatar Airways Introduces its Next Phase of Digital Transformation by Empowering Cabin Crew with Smart Onboard Functionality

TTA BULLETIN

The newly launched digital project equips 15,000 Cabin Crew with the digital tools to access real-time flight and customer updates to deliver a personalised experience on board



Qatar Airways has introduced an in-house application that enables Cabin Crew to deliver personalised experiences to passengers. In its initial phase, the application offers real-time insights on flight information, and customer and service information. This allows Cabin Crew to view passengers' profiles, including privilege club members and oneworld members, as well as all special service requests and preferences for a more personalised and integrated journey with the award-winning airline. The application also empowers Cabin Crew by providing access to up to date digital training materials.

In the coming months, Qatar Airways will have reached the first milestone in this phase of digital transformation by providing Cabin Crew with more than 15,000 mobile devices. The airline will complete the roll-out of the new project in multiple stages, with plans to expand its scope to Hamad International Airport and overseas airports and lounges, integrating passengers' unique itinerary and requirements across all touch-points.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr Badr Mohammed Al Meer, said: "We, at Qatar Airways, are incredibly

excited to introduce a new phase in the airline's digital transformation, especially one that will enhance our world-class onboard experience. As leaders in industry innovation and digital adoption, Qatar Airways excels in identifying and responding to emerging trends for the comfort and convenience of our passengers and this project is a defining step towards a more connected and insightful interaction between our customers and staff."

By embracing digital solutions, the airline is not only streamlining processes but is also demonstrating a commitment to reducing paper waste and taking a step towards more sustainable ways of working.

Qatar Airways has taken major strides in its digital transformation this year, including its collaboration with Google Cloud to explore data analytics and artificial intelligence solutions for enhanced customer experiences and sustainability.

## Air Astana calls on Sri Lanka on its inaugural flight, impressed with its unique hospitality

TTA BULLETIN

Air Astana is the latest addition to the international Aviation family, and resumed flights to Sri Lanka recently. This was a



plus point for Sri Lanka for its recognition as a world class travel destination. The passengers and crew of the aircraft were warmly welcomed by the Tourism Information Centre officers (TIC) of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau. (SLTPB). They were also given souvenirs to mark this inaugural visit and posed for a group photograph with the TIC staff as well. They seemed to be very much impressed with the warm welcome they received which was a memorable experience, showcasing the real Sri Lankan hospitality which it is world renowned for.

Air Astana is an airline and the flag carrier of Kazakhstan. The airline group is headquartered in Almaty, Kazakhstan. It



The Ground Handling is done by Lanka Sportreizen (LSR), and they will continue with regular flights to Sri Lanka to ensure smooth air connectivity with Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka.



## Qatar Airways and Hamad International Airport Welcome Iberia to Qatar

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways welcomed Iberia's first non-stop flight to Doha, Qatar from Madrid, Spain. This addition, further cements the Skytrax "Best Airport in the Middle East", Hamad International Airport (DOH), as a gateway to the world. Iberia's new daily service complements Qatar Airways' two daily flights between the capital cities of Spain and Qatar and three daily flights between Barcelona and Doha. These services expand on our commitment to the Spanish market and support our joint ambition to expand the world's largest airline joint business between Qatar Airways, British Airways and Iberia.



the airport caters to all passenger profiles, ensuring a personalised and enjoyable visit. Offering a plethora of dining and shopping options to numerous spaces for relaxation, including lounges, hotels, and sleeping pods, the airport is designed to exceed expectations. Adding to the allure are unique experiences such as the ORCHARD, the airport's stunning indoor tropical garden, and captivating art installations. Hamad International Airport not only connects destinations but crafts an immersive and memorable travel experience for every traveler passing through its gates.

Passengers can also turn one holiday into two, availing themselves of incredible stopover packages to Qatar, the perfect destination for a taste of local culture, desert adventures, world-class shopping, fine dining, and much more. Stopover packages include tours for passengers with over four-hour layovers or even overnight stays from one to four nights.

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Thierry Antinori, said: "With the launch of Iberia flights, our valued customers including corporates and trade partners, can capitalise on the additional capacity between Madrid and Doha. The schedules complement each other and provide unparalleled access to hundreds of destinations across both networks.

The partnership also offers members of the airlines' loyalty programmes the benefit of a common currency - Avios. Members of Qatar Airways Privilege Club, Iberia Plus and British Airways Executive Club are able to collect and spend Avios on flights with all three airlines.

Through Madrid, London and Doha, the three strategic partners offer unparalleled connectivity to more than 200 destinations in Asia, Australasia, the Middle-East and Africa, with the most efficient transfers through their five-star hubs. Whether travelling from Madrid to Bali, Sydney to Ibiza, Lisbon to Maputo, or Doha to Malaga, the combined networks will provide fast and reliable itineraries to all passengers.

"As part of the unique partnership between Qatar Airways, British Airways and Iberia, passengers can enjoy the best service on the ground and in the air, while seamlessly connecting to their favourite destinations. The unique partnership between Qatar Airways, British Airways and Iberia offers more customers even greater flexibility, choice and value, and today's inaugural flight reinforces Qatar as a destination of choice in the region, and Hamad International Airport as a global gateway."

Passengers transferring through Hamad International Airport are treated to a vast array of offerings that transform the transit experience into a seamless journey. Serving as a diverse lifestyle destination,

## Classic Travels retains the Gold Award for 5th consecutive year for being the premier travel agent of Singapore Airlines



Classic Travels won the Gold Award for the 5th consecutive year for being the premier Travel Agent of Singapore Airlines at the Top Agents awards ceremony held recently in Colombo.

Chai Woo Foo- Regional Vice President West Asia Africa for Singapore Airlines presented the award to Sabry Bahaudeen –

Director Classic Travels at the awards ceremony.

"We are delighted to receive this prestigious award for the 5th consecutive year and look forward to a continued success in the coming years". A group of leading gents and distinguished personnel attended the ceremony.

## Behind the scenes filming with Emirates brand ambassador, Penélope Cruz

TTA BULLETIN

As the Emirates and Penélope Cruz ad campaign plays on TV screens across multiple countries in English and Spanish, Emirates has released an exclusive behind the scenes video showcasing the vast production required for a TV campaign shot on a huge aircraft, as well as Emirates Cabin Crew embracing the opportunity to interview Cruz.



Academy Award winning actor and philanthropist Penélope Cruz flew to Dubai for a week to film the campaign, a polished series of ads showing Cruz sampling all the exclusive luxuries that Emirates First and Business Class customers experience, from a crafted beverage in the A380 Onboard Lounge, to an indulgent shower above the clouds, cheering for a football game shown on live TV, to enjoying generous helpings of luxury caviar. The new behind-the-scenes footage features two Emirates Cabin Crew discovering how it all comes together, with some exclusive comments about the experience from Penélope herself.

Watch now to reveal what Penélope really thinks about Emirates.

An Emirates production takes a huge amount of work and a team of hundreds of experts to make it all happen. Here are some impressive facts about the filming process:

1. More than 160 people were involved on the ground in the filming of these ads – 36 international crew and 125 local crew and cast.
2. Penélope Cruz was filmed inside of Emirates signature aircraft – the iconic 'double decker' aircraft, the A380.

3. The shoot was planned and organized in record time and totalled 1,488 production manhours – which equates to around 165 working days.

4. Because the filming took place on a real aircraft at the airport, all 160 people needed special permission from the UAE authorities to access the restricted and highly secure area.

5. 10 large trucks were needed to carry all the catering items and filming equipment.

6. Emirates built a designated Green Room in the hangar for cast to wait in while off set.

7. For security reasons, every piece of filming equipment had to be unloaded, scanned, checked and loaded on airside trucks, and stored in a hangar nearby the aircraft.

8. To create 'cinematic lighting' inside an A380, it was essential to create lighting platforms using 8 scissor lifts and boom lifts.

9. The lucky cabin crew who got to meet and interview Cruz were Doyle Kim from Australia and Alessandra Piper from the UK.

10. Each of the new TV spots were directed and brought to life by Robert Stromberg, a double Oscar-winning Hollywood director while production house Ridley Scott Associates also supported the series of TV spots, and Framestore – the multi award-winning creative studio for special effects.

## Alii Palau Airlines launches operations with the help of Drukair

TTA BULLETIN

Alii Palau Airlines (KB) is the latest airline in Palau. The newcomer has commenced operations with the help of Drukair.



At Alii Palau Airlines, we believe in the power of dreams, and we've set out to transform them into reality. Our journey began with a vision to connect The Republic of Palau to world cities and also to put this breathtaking paradise on the global economic map. Alii Palau Airlines and Changi Airport Group on November 23, 2023 announced a new route directly connecting Singapore to Koror, Palau, which will be operated by Royal Bhutan Airlines (Drukair) - the national carrier of the Royal Government of Bhutan. This service will connect three destinations - Bhutan, Singapore and Palau - and is testament to the cooperation between nations.

From November 23, 2023, our dream takes flight as Alii Palau Airlines, operated by Drukair, introduces direct flights from Singapore to Palau. But it's not just about

reaching your destination; it's about the journey itself. With a flight time of 5 hours, we've redefined convenience and connectivity for those seeking to explore this pristine paradise located in the western Pacific Ocean.

The launch of the new service follows the signing of an open skies agreement in October 2022 between Singapore and Palau. With the new direct service, travellers can now experience the beauty of Palau, "Nature's Paradise", in just five hours. Flying from Bhutan via Singapore Changi Airport to Palau, Drukair will connect Singapore to two of the world's most pristine destinations.



## Qatar Airways Renews Longstanding Partnership with FIFA, Extending Through to 2030

TTA BULLETIN

One year from the unforgettable FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, Qatar Airways is delighted to announce the renewal of its longstanding partnership with FIFA until 2030, as the Global Airline Partner.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer joined FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, for the signing ceremony on the one year anniversary of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™. The extended partnership was announced at the award-winning, Hamad International Airport, against the backdrop of the airline's Boeing 787-8, as well as the Airbus A350-900.

The agreement will cover significant FIFA tournaments, including the FIFA World Cup 26™, FIFA Women's World Cup 2027™, and the FIFA World Cup 2030™, as well as all youth men's and women's tournaments, commencing with the FIFA U-17 World Cup™ in Indonesia.

Since May 2017, Qatar Airways has been an integral part of FIFA's global initiatives, and with this renewed partnership, will continue to play a vital role in the development of football worldwide.

The announcement comes on the heels of the immense success of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, which captivated audiences around the globe with its incredible stadia, unmatched hospitality, and pure on-the-pitch drama – culminating in a Final for the ages.

As FIFA's Global Airline Partner, Qatar Airways will be able to engage with fans on a deeper level, both at the tournaments and through various digital platforms.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive



Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "We are excited to extend our partnership with FIFA as the Global Airline Partner. As an airline, we are committed to connecting the world, and this partnership allows us to reach millions of football fans. Football has the power to unite people across cultures and continents, and we are proud to continue to be part of this incredible journey. We eagerly anticipate the upcoming tournaments and look forward to creating unforgettable experiences for fans around the world."

FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, said: "Today I am very proud to announce the renewal of our partnership between Qatar Airways and FIFA. It is a great partnership that has brought a lot of success to FIFA, and of course as well to Qatar Airways."

"My thanks to Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, the GCEO, and to the whole fantastic team of Qatar Airways. One year after the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, here we are again to celebrate."

As Qatar Airways takes the next step in its FIFA partnership, the airline is thrilled to announce that football fans will soon have facilitated access to exclusive travel packages including match tickets, flights, and accommodation for select FIFA tournaments, through a dedicated Qatar Airways platform.

## Etihad Airways unveils its summer 2024 schedule

TTA BULLETIN

Etihad Airways, the national carrier of the United Arab Emirates, has revealed its exciting Summer 2024 schedule, underlining its ambitious plans for growth.

Highlights of the network changes, which are available for sale now, include new non-stop flights to the French Riviera destination of Nice, and direct services to the Greek holiday hotspots of Mykonos and Santorini.

As guests have loved Etihad's new flights to Copenhagen so much, it has been made a year-round destination.

The timetable further enriches connectivity with additional frequencies across the network to destinations including Ahmedabad, Athens, Bangkok and Colombo.

Malaga, Spain will enjoy a three-weekly service for Summer 2024.

Mykonos, Greece will be served by two



flights per week during the summer, with Santorini, Greece also getting two weekly flights.

Nice, France will be served by two non-stop weekly services from June 2024.

Bangkok, Thailand will benefit from three more flights a week from February to 17 a week.

Colombo, Sri Lanka enjoys a frequency increase to 10 weekly flights from January rising to 14 from May, and an adjusted schedule for even better connectivity to European destinations.

The fresh summer schedule comes on top of new destinations already announced for 2024, including Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram on the Indian Subcontinent, Boston in North America, and Nairobi in East Africa.

## Have yourself a merry little Christmas with Emirates

TTA BULLETIN

Dilmah's Christmas iced tea will be among an extensive array of festive beverages and traditional fare that one million Emirates customers will experience throughout December across international lounges, in addition to a host of delights that will be served inflight to ensure they fly better throughout the festive season.



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas at Emirates Lounges in Dubai, where passengers jetting off to greet family and friends for the holiday season can pause to indulge in some festive fare before boarding. First and Business Class lounges will be serving roasted turkey breast doused in jus and cranberry sauce with glazed chestnuts, Brussels sprouts and delicious new potatoes. First Class lounges will have an array of winter desserts – traditional stollen, scrumptious mince pies dished with vanilla sauce, red currant cheesecake, and melt in the mouth cinnamon profiteroles. In Business Class lounges, Christmas dinner will also be served, alongside tempting desserts of sour cherry confit, Christmas fruit cake, ginger-spiced pear and chocolate praline cake, spiced citrus mandarin confit cake, and a tart and refreshing cranberry sorbet. Visitors to the lounges can warm up with some apple pie and gingerbread ice cream or get cosy with gingerbread lattes or a toffee nut mocha. Customers can also relax with Dilmah's Christmas iced tea, cocktails and mocktails, or Emirates own mixology with Holly Jolly Christmas, Red Nosed Rudolph and Jack Frost, alongside festive flavoured waters from Evian and Perrier. Customers can also choose to get the holidays off to a sparkling start with Moët ice Imperial and Moët ice imperial Rose. Around the globe, Emirates Lounges will be offering festive treats too, with local favourites taking centre stage.

For the entire month of December, Emirates will serve festive meals and snacks in all cabins on select routes. First, Business and Premium Economy Class customers can indulge in classic Christmas dishes, from lemon and herb marinated king prawns in marie rose sauce, to cured salmon gravadlax with ginger, candied orange and Sevruga caviar. A full festive main course with all the trimmings will be available in all four classes– roasted turkey with classic jus, glazed chestnuts, braised red cabbage, roasted pumpkin, steamed Brussels sprouts and creamy potato gratin. Desserts include a variety of delectable dishes - Christmas pudding with a generous dollop of crème anglaise, white chocolate cake with raspberry curd, or a spiced cranberry cake in the shape of Santa's belt. Economy Class passengers will also have a moreish Christmas meal featuring roasted turkey or chicken roulade with chestnut stuffing, roasted potatoes with parsley, a medley of seasonal vegetables, followed by a sumptuous fruit cake and orange sauce.

For the month of December, customers in First and Business Class will be offered the Emirates spiced strawberry welcome drink, and First Class customers will also get a miniature Santa Claus creatively crafted from strawberries and white chocolate cream. From 17-26 December, customers in all classes will be offered a festive hot

chocolate heaped with melting marshmallows and First Class customers can opt for aromatic mulled wine. From the 24-26 December, Emirates will be offering mini gifts of pistachio and raspberry profiteroles, dark chocolate truffles and gingerbread cookies, across the various cabin classes.

In the A380 onboard lounge, customers departing Dubai can relax with some fragrantly spiced mulled wine or hot chocolate and munch on some mince pies, stollen, panettone, Christmas pastries, as well as traditional mandarins and chestnuts, biscotti and candy canes. This year, customers visiting the onboard lounge can also grab a Christmas sandwich stuffed with turkey, roast beef, cheddar cheese, cranberry sauce and chilli tomato relish.

From 20 Dec - 8 January, Emirates will also celebrate Orthodox Christmas on flights from Russia, Egypt and Ethiopia to Dubai and back. Customers in First Class will be treated to salmon gravadlax with ginger and candied orange or King prawn cocktail, followed by roasted duck with orange thyme jus, fondant potatoes and steamed broccolini, and a dessert of classic Christmas pudding with crème anglaise or traditional bread and butter pudding. Business Class customers will also enjoy a roasted duck main course, with starters of Olivier salad, and desserts of white chocolate and cranberry cake or spiced cranberry cheesecake. Economy Class customers will enjoy starters of Russian potato salad followed by a turkey roulade or beef stroganoff, finished off with a dessert of moist fruit cake soaked in zesty orange sauce. On 1 January, customers will also be offered creamy hot chocolate or mulled wine, along with some Emirates festive treats.

This Christmas, Emirates customers have a choice of 39 holiday season movies onboard the award-winning inflight entertainment ice, with new movies such as How to Ruin the Holidays, Christmas with the Campbells and Mistletoe Ranch, alongside all-time favourites Last Christmas, The Holiday, Elf, The Polar Express and even Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer from 1964. There is an array of 19 Christmas TV shows and holiday specials, including The Office Christmas Special, Mariah Carey: Merry Christmas to All!, Dolly Parton's Mountain Magic Christmas and The Great Christmas Bake Off. Kids can enjoy How To Train Your Dragon: Homecoming, Merry Madagascar, Kung Fu Panda Holiday and The Doc McStuffins Christmas Special. For those who wish to get into the holly jolly rhythm, there are 26 albums of Christmas music from artists such as Ariana Grande, Andrew Bocelli, Micheal Bublé, Sia, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Ella Fitzgerald and more.





# Thema

COLLECTION



Maalu Maalu - Pasikuda

Welcome to Thema Collection: unique properties with true local Sri Lankan flavour which will make you fall in love with our paradise island, from its white sand beaches to its misty mountains.

Located among breathtaking vistas, each property is conceptualized by our founder Chandra and the Thema team around a particular theme that will bring out the culture, nature & history of the region.

We are always committed to the sustainable development of society and encompass some key impact areas of the tourism industry; such as environment, employment, local community, local culture & heritage.

All initiatives in this regard have been curated to suit the resorts' environment, adding value to enhance guest experiences.

Introducing the most recent additions to our distinguished travel portfolio: "Vis Ta Vie" in Mirissa, a charming beachfront haven, and the eagerly anticipated opening of "Waraka" in Yala, scheduled for the upcoming year.

Our ideology has always been to deviate from the traditional "hotel chain" concept and present ourselves as a distinctive property collection which offers a "Thematic & Experiential" accommodation option.



Aliya - Sigiriya



Mountbatten - Kandy



Wild Glamping - Galoya



Ayurvie - Weligama



Scottish Planter - Nuwara Eliya



Tea & Experience - Mandaramnuwara



Parangi - Weligama



Kithala - Tissa - Yala

Different Themes, Authentic Experiences

