

# TRAVEL TALK Asia

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

VOL 23 NO 02 2024 20 PGS



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# TRAVEL TALK

## Asia

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## Sri Lanka Tourism records steady growth in arrival numbers leading into 2024

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka Tourism, the third highest Foreign exchange earner in the country is seeing success in Tourism arrivals as never before even compared with Pre-Pandemic levels. 2018 was considered to be one of the best years for Sri Lanka Tourism in achieving Tourist arrivals but the current year with upwelling Tourist arrivals have made the Tourism Industry experiencing increase in revenue and also creating more employment opportunities. Increasing tourism attractions and initiatives implemented to encourage more tourists to Sri Lanka as one of the most renowned travel destinations in the world have resulted these accomplishments.



Chalaka Gajabara - Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau

attractions. Sri Lanka 's Pekoe Trail was listed as the National Geographic's best coveted 'Best of the World for 2024'. The Pekoe Trail, which starts from Kandy and ends up from Nuwara Eliya is an exclusive opportunity to witness Sri Lanka's beautiful Central highlands by passing remote villages and lush tea estates spawning over an area of approximately 200 miles. It was also recognized by the British Guild of Travel Writers at the International Awards UK where Sri Lanka was presented with the Pekoe Trail Award which was another achievement for Sri Lanka Tourism.

A replica of the award was presented by the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Lands, Sports and Youth Affairs, Harin Fernando at the Brand Launch held last year to the team which contributed a great deal to receive this accolade.

Further adding a few more feathers in Sri Lanka's cap the destination was also named as one of the best destinations to travel to in 2023 and as one of the best tourist hotspots by The Independent's list of best destinations to travel. The Forbes listed Sri Lanka as one of the 23 best places to visit in 2023. In February 2023 The Forbes magazine recognized Sri Lanka as a 'Top Wildlife Safaris Outside of Africa'. In addition, the country was ranked ninth in a list of the 50 most Instagrammable places in the world in 2023 based on Big 7 Travel social media data, whilst the destination was also ranked among the top 24 countries to travel in 2023 by Travel Triangle, a leading online holiday marketplace.

In order to rejuvenate the Tourism sector and encourage tourists to visit Sri Lanka without any hassle, Sri Lanka also introduced Visa free entry for tourists coming from India, China, Russia, Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand. This opportunity will continue till March 31st 2024, as a part of an initiative to boost the tourism Industry.

Cont on Pg 2

## OTM 2024 receives an overwhelming response from global tourism markets

Connects 35,000 travel professionals, 1600+ exhibitors across 60 countries and 30 Indian states/UTs

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

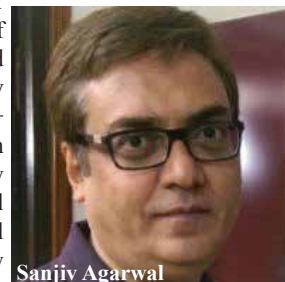
OTM 2024, the leading travel show in Asia, held from 08-10 February 2024 at the Jio World Convention Centre, BKC, Mumbai, brings together an impressive lineup of over 1600 exhibitors and more than 35,000 industry professionals from 60+ countries and 30 Indian States & UTs. Uniting new exhibitors and global destinations, the event will see the debut of new countries in the Indian market via OTM. Additionally, destinations that have previously been promoted in India are making a substantial impact by showcasing themselves with larger pavilions. The show size has grown by over 50 percent compared to its 2023 edition.

Amidst and post-pandemic, domestic travel became a crucial pillar for the hospitality industry, persisting as local travelers stepped in to compensate for the absence of international visitors. Following the reopening of international travel post-pandemic, Indian explorers displayed an insatiable appetite for new experiences. Despite facing visa obstacles and disruptions in some countries, their unwavering enthusiasm remained undiminished.

The journey of OTM mirrors India's remarkable surge in domestic and outbound travel. With a notable increase of 10 million outbound travelers in 2023 compared to the previous year, the Indian market demonstrated resilience and vitality. Analysts predict that collective spending on outbound trips will surpass \$42 billion by the end of 2024, solidifying India's position as one of the most lucrative outbound tourism markets globally. This significant growth sets the stage for OTM 2024, positioned to shape the future landscape of the travel industry.

This year's edition has already achieved a groundbreaking 95% sold-out exhibition space, a testament to its focus on

quality when it comes to networking and the overall trade show experience. Tourism boards and private stakeholders from more than 60 countries are expected to participate, showcasing a diverse range of global and domestic travel offerings across two separate exhibition floors of over 250,000 sq. ft., including 35+ country pavilions in the three-day expo.



Sanjiv Agarwal

The Leading Travel Show in Asia



The largest international pavilion at OTM 2024 will be from Saudi Arabia, with Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco, the Maldives, and Azerbaijan following suit. Among the Indian States, Uttarakhand takes the lead in size, closely followed by Kerala, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and others. In the private sector, some of the most substantial pavilions are from Travel Boutique Online, followed by NEOM and Tripjack. (List of participating countries at the end)

This year's edition of OTM, the most impactful one to date, is aimed to foster invaluable connections within the travel industry, offering a platform for exhibitors to engage with a varied audience comprising vetted travel agents, tour operators, MICE & corporate buyers, wedding planners, and film, TV & OTT producers. The event presents a unique opportunity for businesses to tap into the expansive Indian market, which represents a significant portion of domestic and outbound travel. In addition, OTM hosts over 300 qualified trade buyers nationwide, with 150+ attendees specifically hosted from Delhi NCR, showcasing the extensive reach and potential of the event. Travel trade buyers from across India have registered as visitors, set to engage with thousands of sellers during the three-day exhibition.

"98 percent of our exhibitors in 2023 stated that OTM effectively connects them with their desired business audience.

Cont on Pg 2



As Sri Lanka strides into the new year, its tourism industry has surged with a remarkable achievement: monthly tourist arrivals surpassing 100,000. This milestone signals a promising resurgence for the island nation's tourism sector, which has faced significant challenges in recent years.

The increase in arrivals reflects growing confidence among travelers in Sri Lanka's safety and stability. While a promotional campaign remains a key necessity, the continued PR activities and effectiveness of strategic initiatives by both the public and private sector are contributing factors to the growth in arrivals.

This upward trend bodes well for economic growth, however there is a need to retain trained and skilled staff in the hospitality industry. Mitigating the hospitality industry workforce migration is needed and the industry needs to work collectively to find solutions.

With the current momentum and the regular accolades and destination features in international publications, the nation is poised to capitalize on its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage, welcoming travelers from around the globe to experience the warmth and wonders of Sri Lanka.

Global trade shows have also played a significant role in generating awareness on the destination and the recently concluded OTM in Mumbai and the upcoming SATTE in Delhi will drive Indian visitor numbers to ensure India remains as the top tourism generating market. Sri Lanka remain a value for money destination and the seamless connectivity with a growth in seat capacity between India and Sri Lanka further strengthens the market viability

Two of Asia's flag ship carriers are resuming operations to Sri Lanka. Cathay Pacific Airways has commenced operations and Thai Airways commences daily flights from the 1st of April. Combined, these two national carriers will assist in increasing the arrivals from the Far East and facilitate the growing Chinese outbound travel market as well.



*Dinushka*  
Dinushka Chandrasena  
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## NEWS

Contd from Pg 1

### Sri Lanka Tourism records ....

In this way, Sri Lanka Tourism was able to give a positive answer to all speculations made regarding the Tourism Industry by doubling the numbers of tourist arrivals than expected in 2023 and showing the whole world that Sri Lanka is indeed a strong nation which has bounced back strongly.

The top ten source markets which played a pivotal role in sourcing tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka from January 2023 to December 2023 were, India, Russia, UK, Germany, China, Australia, France, US, Canada, Maldives and others. Out of these countries India as our neighbor has

been the number one destination with the highest number of tourist arrivals.

Sri Lanka Tourism started the New Year 2024 with a positive note creating a remarkable number of 208,253 tourist arrivals for the Month of January, 2024. India continues to be number one, with Russia and UK claiming the 2nd and 3rd places respectively. Sri Lanka Tourism is very confident that the set target of 2.3 million tourists in 2024 or even more can be achieved with all stakeholders working towards this objective.

Contd from Pg 1

### OTM 2024 receives ....

The event has emerged as the leading travel trade show in not only India but all of Asia in 2023. OTM 2024 has consolidated further on this lead, with the show growing approximately by 50% in the area and revenues.", said Sanjiv Agarwal, Chairman & CEO of Fairfest Media Ltd. (organisers of OTM).

He further added, "The pandemic shock and geopolitical shifts thereafter have put India on a sweet spot in both, domestic and outbound travel, which is reflected in the unprecedented growth of OTM 2024. World class facilities

at the recently opened JWCC have also helped immensely."

According to a survey recently conducted by Ipsos, the world's third-largest market research agency, OTM is voted the Leading Travel Show in India and across Asia in 2023. It surpassed its competition, with 62 percent of respondents acknowledging it as the top show in India and 50 percent recognizing it as the premier event in Asia. Additionally, 77 percent rated OTM positively, considering it equal to or better than some of the leading international exhibitions.

### Home of Luxury: Experience the world of luxury tourism

TTA BULLETIN

The Home of Luxury at ITB Berlin 2024 provides a first-class platform for the luxury travel industry. Three individually tailored exhibition areas create a unique atmosphere for product presentations, meetings and events. Luxury travel providers and buyers can register until mid of february.



This is where the world of luxury tourism meets: from 5 to 7 March 2024 the Home of Luxury at the World's Leading Travel Trade Show ITB Berlin will provide an exclusive business environment for luxury travel providers and buyers. On the exhibition grounds, the exhibition area at the Marshall Haus serves as a platform for luxury products, services, negotiating business, and events. The exhibitors taking part in the Home of Luxury will be presented here from end of January.

The Gallery. This is where luxury travel providers can present their company and products in a unique setting, meet luxury buyers in a secluded atmosphere, and conclude business deals. The Gallery is located next to a specially appointed lounge for handpicked members of the exclusive ITB Buyers Circle, to which only 1,000 senior buyers from the leisure, business travel and MICE sectors are admitted each year.

A comprehensive programme gives luxury travel providers and buyers an opportunity to exchange views on the latest developments in the luxury travel industry and take part in exclusive events. In addition to lectures, get-togethers, networking and speed dating events, the programme also includes a 'Meet the Media' event.

The 'Meet the Media' networking event gives luxury travel providers an opportunity to meet with media members covering luxury and lifestyle topics.

The Home of Luxury comprises three exclusive, individually tailored exhibition areas: The Garden, The Nest and

### FTTUR 2024 exceeds expectations and concludes its three professional days with more than 153,000 attendees.

TTA BULLETIN

The data from the initial estimate surpass the initial projections of 150,000 and rise to 153,000 professionals.

On Saturday, January 27, and Sunday, January 28, FITUR opens its doors to the public with a full agenda of activities and travel proposals, expecting 100,000 visitors.

Madrid, January 26, 2024 - The 44th edition of the International Tourism Fair concludes its three days exclusively dedicated to professionals, surpassing its forecast of 150,000 attendees with a total of 153,000 visitors. This is reflected in the initial attendance data at the IFEMA MADRID Exhibition Center, indicating the complete recovery of the tourism sector. These figures represent a 12% increase compared to 2022.

It is estimated that this influx of visitors to FITUR will generate approximately 430 million euros in revenue for the Madrid economy.

FITUR receives institutional support with official visits from all five continents.

As in every edition, in addition to the support of the tourism sector, FITUR has received strong institutional backing. After the official inauguration presided over by Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain on the first day, the Fair has had significant presences such as Daniel Noboa, President of Ecuador, which is this year's Partner Country of the International Tourism Fair. Additionally, it has received the official visit of the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, representatives from the World Tourism Organization, the Ibero-American General Secretary, and more than ten regional presidents of Spain. In total, the 44th edition of FITUR has recorded the attendance of nearly 400 authorities, including State Secretaries, Tourism Ministers, ambassadors, business envoys, mayors from different regions, and other political and institutional representatives.

The fair's growth and impact have been reflected in the extensive media coverage, with nearly 23,000 articles published in national and international media. In total, FITUR has accredited about 6,800 journalists (10% international from 53 countries).

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## Let's Go! Registration opens for IMEX Frankfurt 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Let's Go! is the rallying cry for the industry to connect, do business and make an impact at IMEX Frankfurt. Registration for the show, which takes place 14 - 16 May at Messe Frankfurt, is now open.

IMEX Frankfurt 2024 holds up the mirror to the big shifts and changes in the industry by bringing together event professionals, be they planners, buyers, sellers, influencers and everyone in between. Meeting face to face with a broad range of global suppliers means that finding new destinations, new venues, new partners, new technology or creative inspiration is straightforward and simple.

IMEX's Talking Point – Impact – is the backbone of the show's four-day education program plus many of the show-floor activations. A brand new education track, Impact, explores the Talking Point in more

detail with an impressive global roster of speakers, all with compelling stories to share about their own impact on the world and the events industry.

The learning program has been designed with specific focus on event marketing and AI to meet the growing appetite for information in these areas. The 'Event Marketing' tracks covers the full scope of the marketing discipline including a content expert from TikTok; the 'Technology and Innovation' track focuses on the next chapter for AI, and 'Trends and Research' showcases the best insights from global heavyweights including AMEX and industry groups such as SITE.

Specialist buyer events take center stage on Monday 13 May, with programs dedicated to buyers from the association and corporate sectors along with a newly designed agency program for senior leaders. All have collaboration at their heart, bringing together event professionals from the same areas of the industry to discuss current challenges and find solutions.

With staffing levels starting to improve, there's a renewed focus on building stronger relationships in order to work

more efficiently (according to Cvent's recent Meeting and Event Trends report). A new initiative helps event professionals balance the need to introduce new recruits to the sector while fulfilling day to day business demands. The Young Stars program, launching at this year's show, is a way for agencies to fast-track young talent with a tailored schedule of meetings, networking and learning packed into two days. Curated and organized by MICE Impact Founder and IMEX Brand Ambassador Tanja Knecht, the program is available for event professional 'newbies' in the early stages of their careers.

Among the agencies sending their new recruits is Interplan. Christine Hense, Member of the Executive Board, Director People & Operations at Interplan, explains: "Participation in the program gives our young employees valuable contacts, active communication and the integration of innovative ideas, which is a perfect complement to our training and further education measures. We look forward to the experiences and additional motivation that our young stars will bring back from IMEX Frankfurt."



Carina Bauer, IMEX Group CEO, says: "Our industry sees the value - more than ever - of face to face cooperation as a way to address the issues we're facing, from talent acquisition and development, to the climate crisis and advocacy. We've designed IMEX Frankfurt to help event professionals build powerful, global relationships and deliver wide-reaching business impact. Our rallying cry to our community – whether seasoned professionals or new faces is – let's go!"

Registration is live now – and the team has refined the process to make it even more simple and straightforward. IMEX Frankfurt takes place at Messe Frankfurt from 14 - 16 May 2024. The show ranks in the top 20% of global trade shows surveyed in Explori with a Net Promoter Score of 92% for overall visitor satisfaction.



## TAT highlights meaningful travel and sustainable tourism direction at ATF 2024

TTA BULLETIN

The ATF 2024's theme, "Quality and Responsible Tourism – Sustaining ASEAN Future", sings the same tune as the TAT's ongoing direction towards high-value and sustainable tourism, which reflects the overall mood and feel of the Thailand Stand at the ATF TRAVEX 2024.

The Thailand Stand was formally opened on 24 January. Present at the event were H.E. Morakot Sriswasdi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Lao PDR, Mr. Kittit Chaodee, Secretary to Thailand's Minister of Tourism and Sports, and Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor, as well as the TAT executives.

The Thailand Stand features a range of meaningful travel experiences that reflect Thai soft powers and sustainable goals, with Thai massage demonstrations reiterating the kingdom's well-established position as a world-class destination for health and wellness tourism. Jointly presented at the Thailand Stand are the Thailand Privilege Card, Thai Airways International, Bangkok Airways, and the Isan Tourism Industry Trade Association – all are leading players in ASEAN intra-regional tourism and connectivity.

TAT has also conducted the Thailand Media Briefing to provide an update on Thailand's tourism and its roles in ASEAN tourism promotion.



In 2023, Thailand welcomed over 28 million tourists, generating a revenue of 1.2 trillion Baht. Of the total arrivals, some 35% were from ASEAN countries. TAT has set an overall revenue target for 2024 in the best-case scenario at 3 trillion baht, comprising 1.92 trillion Baht from international tourism and 1.08 trillion Baht from domestic tourism. Tourist numbers are expected to include 35 million foreign arrivals and 200 million domestic trips.

The Thailand Tourism Awards and TAT's own Sustainable Tourism Goals (STGs) reflect Thailand's direction on high-value and sustainable tourism. In its latest edition in 2023, the Thailand Tourism Awards added two new categories, Low-carbon and Sustainability, to reiterate the country's commitment to low-carbon tourism and underline the direction towards high-value and sustainable tourism.

Meanwhile, TAT's STGs which was developed and implemented in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, classify Thai tourism industry in a Sustainable Tourism Acceleration Rating (STAR) system. Currently, there are 497 businesses with STAR certifications in Thailand.

## ITB BookAwards 2024: The winners have been announced

TTA BULLETIN

The awards ceremony will take place on Wednesday, 5 March at 6 p.m. on the Green Stage in Hall 3.1b. The LifetimeAward goes to the French author Sylvain Tesson (published by Éditions Gallimard, Penguin, btb, Rowohlt). Two publisher awards go to Verlag Coppenrath and the oekom publisher Jacob Radloff. Honours also go to Julietta Baums and Lorenz Töpperwien for their Oman travel guide, published by Trescher Verlag, and to Prof. Dr. Eric Horster for two tourism literature works on the same destination (Verlag Haufe and SpringerGabler).



2024. For the second time the new Alice category honours the best books on travel and interesting topics for young readers, setting a new standard.

Once again, ITB Berlin is partnering with Börsenverein Deutschen Buchhandels and the Frankfurt Book Fair for the Guest of Honour 2024 presentation (Italy). The ITB BookAwards do not confer prize money.

In 2024 the ITB BookAwards ceremony will take place on Tuesday, 5 March at 6 p.m. on the Green Stage in Hall 3.1b.

Every year ITB Berlin, which is taking place from 5 to 7 March 2024 in Berlin, recognises titles from Germany and other countries, mainly in German, but also in German translation. In doing so it honours outstanding publishing achievements – and aims to focus attention on the broad spectrum of important travel and tourism publications beyond national borders. The winners of the ITB BookAwards 2024 were chosen by an independent jury of experts on science, the relevant countries and from the media, publishing and bookstores. This year's main "DestinationsAward" category focuses on travel in Oman, the Official Host Country of ITB Berlin

Athesia Kalenderverlag (Heye); Julietta Baums, Lorenz Töpperwien; Marc Bielefeld; Braumüller Verlag; Dr. Ophélie Chavaroche; Copenrath Verlag; François-Régis Gaudry with Alessandra Pierini, Stéphane Solier, Ilaria Brunetti; Antje and Annina Gerstenecker; Prof. Pekka Hämäläinen; Prof. Dr. Eric Horster; Ulla Lohmann; Josephine Mark; Jessica Miller; Michael Müller; Risa Nagahama, Walter Britz, Joerg Lehmann; Prof. Dr. Werner J. Patzelt; Elisabeth Raffauf, Günther Jakobs; Jacob Radloff; Paolo Rumiz; Sylvain Tesson; Prof. Dr. Thomas Steinfeld; Michaela Vieser; Isaac Yuen; Prof. Peter White, Prof. Herman Shugart, Dr. Sassan Saatchi, Dr. Jérôme Chave; Heinz Zak



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## Sri Lanka Tourism collaborates with UL Korea GSA and influencers to promote the destination

### TTA BULLETIN

Saudi Arabia is on course to welcome an estimated 30 million overnight tourists this year, according to research conducted by Oxford Economics on behalf of ICAEW. Delegates from around the world are preparing to capitalise on this momentum and explore opportunities within the Kingdom's thriving tourism sector at Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2024, which will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from Monday 6 to Thursday 9 May.

Last year, Saudi Arabia's government revised its combined domestic and international 2030 visitor target upwards from the previous 100 million to 150 million. Amid sustained investment in its tourism, hospitality and leisure segments, as well as a slew of ambitious gigaprojects, the Kingdom aims to increase the economic contribution of its tourism sector to 10% of national GDP by the end of this decade.

Representing almost a 50% increase in KSA exhibitor participation, ATM 2024 will host a selection of high-profile exhibitors from

Saudi Arabia, including SAUDIA, flynas, NEOM, Dur Hospitality, AMSA Hospitality and the Royal Commission for AIUla. First-time exhibitors will comprise almost 17% of the total Saudi participation, which includes Cruise Saudi, Tabuk Investment and Tourism Co., Al Badiah Transportation, Sixth Gulf and Fairmont Mekka Clock Tower, among others. KSA will represent a key focus for attendees as policymakers, industry leaders and travel professionals from around the world share insights, forge new relationships and showcase cutting-edge innovations with the potential to drive further growth within this burgeoning tourism market.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market, said: "We plan to shine a spotlight on this exciting market at ATM 2024 with a dedicated Saudi Village, which will be highlighted on the exhibition floor and will consist of a full showcase of Saudi products. With significant interest in this market, there will be a range of panel discussions that will enable attendees to



identify and capitalise on new opportunities in the Kingdom."

Data released by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism highlights a surge in inbound visitors in the first half of 2023. The Kingdom welcomed 14.6 million tourists during this period, representing a 142% year-on-year increase. A pronounced uptick was also recorded in the country's domestic tourism segment, with a 16% rise in spending and an average stay length of 6.3 nights – up from 4.6 nights during the corresponding period of 2022.

Saudi Arabia's buoyant economy looks set to propel growth across the wider Gulf, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report. The country's

economy is expected to expand by 4.1% this year, contributing to an anticipated 3.6% rise in the combined GDP of GCC countries during 2024.

"The Kingdom is working diligently to diversify its economy in preparation for the post-oil era, and segments such as tourism, aviation and hospitality – not to mention leisure, entertainment and events – are playing a major role in this transition," Curtis added. "We are looking forward to welcoming a diverse range of exhibitors and delegates from Saudi Arabia to ATM 2024, and we know that industry leaders from around the world will be keen to gain further insights into this thriving market throughout this year's show."

## The country's first-ever Vegan Market by Mount Lavinia Hotel – "MLH Plant-Earth Market"

The Mount Lavinia Hotel, a renowned establishment in Sri Lanka, made waves on 25th January 2024 as it unveiled the "MLH Plant-Earth Market", the country's first-ever Vegan Market. This market will operate monthly on Poya days at The Terrace, coinciding with the Hotel's Vegan Buffet and Vegan High Tea.

Visitors to the "MLH Plant-Earth Market" were treated to a wide range of vegan products, all of which were "Good Market Approved". From vegan clothes to jewelry, musical instruments at the Drum House, arts and crafts, and household goods, attendees had access to an impressive selection of items. Meanwhile, the Hotel played host to the Vegan Lunch Buffet and Vegan High Tea. The market operated from 10 AM to 4 PM, providing ample time for attendees to explore and indulge in the vegan offerings.

This platform was more than just a market; it was a celebration of the vegan lifestyle and a way for like-minded individuals to connect. The Mount Lavinia Hotel aims to continue supporting veganism and local vendors of vegan products, recognizing the importance of this movement and

its positive impact on both individuals and the environment.

The "MLH Plant-Earth Market" drew not only locals from Mount Lavinia but also attracted foreigners. Its popularity is a testament to the growing interest and awareness surrounding veganism. Furthermore, the market is just the beginning. The Hotel has plans to educate the local community and promote a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

Mount Lavinia Hotel implemented the "Green Going Green" concept in 2010 during Mr. Anura Dewapura's tenure as General Manager. With his strong advocacy for environmental sustainability, it comes as no surprise that he has re-introduced these ideas upon his return as the Chief Operating Officer of MLH Group. Recognizing the Hotel's efforts, MLH received Bronze and Silver certifications for the EarthCheck Awards in 2010 and 2011 respectively. Building on these accolades, Mr. Dewapura aims to re-introduce and refine the existing sustainable strategies to align with the evolving global standards. He firmly believes that it is the responsibility of each individual to adopt a planet-saving approach for a more favorable future.

One of the noteworthy initiatives that Mount Lavinia Hotel is reintroducing is the concept of "Slow Food." Back in the day, the Hotel embraced this movement and actively encouraged and recognized local farmers. This approach garnered significant support from the corporate community in Colombo. Now, the Hotel has announced the return of slow food, with the first slow food event for the year scheduled for 2nd February 2024 - Slow Food Italia with Chef Riccardo.

The launch of the "MLH Plant-Earth Market" is a milestone for vegan enthusiasts in Sri Lanka. Mount Lavinia Hotel is reclaiming its position as a pioneer in green practices. Through initiatives such as the Vegan Market and other Vegan offerings, slow food, and partnerships with local communities, Mount Lavinia Hotel is leading by example and setting a new standard for the industry. As the Hotel continues to evolve and adapt to the ever-changing world, its commitment to a greener future remains unwavering, promising a more sustainable and responsible tourism experience for its Guests.





# CMB FRA

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REFER BELOW FOR THE SCHEDULE

SECTOR	FLIGHT NO.	DEPARTURE TIME	ARRIVAL TIME	FREQUENCY
CMB-DEL	AI 282	08:20	11:45	DAILY
DEL-FRA	AI 121	13:30	18:40	DAILY
FRA-DEL	AI 120	21:15	08:35	DAILY
DEL-CMB	AI 281	11:55	15:55	MON,TUE,THU,FRI,SAT,SUN
DEL-CMB	AI 281	13:50	17:20	WED

**CONNECTION TIME**

CMB-DEL-FRA: **01 Hr 45 Mins**  
 FRA-DEL-CMB: **03 Hrs 20 Mins**  
 FRA-DEL-CMB: **05 Hrs 15 Mins**

## Minor Hotels to Expand Luxury Anantara Portfolio in Oman With Upcoming Coastal Property

New Anantara Resort in Bandar Al Khairan, Muscat to launch in 2026

### TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, an international hotel owner, operator and investor with more than 540 hotels in 56 countries in Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, the Indian Ocean, Europe



and the Americas, announces the continued expansion of its luxury Anantara brand in Oman with the upcoming development of a new resort in Bandar Al Khairan, Muscat. Located on the rugged Omani coast just 45 minutes from the capital, the new-build 121-key property is slated to launch in 2026.

The resort in Bandar Al Khairan, to be operated by Anantara, will feature 51 guest rooms, 46 chalets, and 24 villas nestled along the mountain shoreline overlooking the crystal-clear water of the Gulf of Oman. Designed to offer contemporary luxury and set within a dramatic natural landscape, each generously sized guest room will be a stylish haven in the heart of the resort, while one and two-bedroom villas will be set separately among lush gardens for enhanced privacy. A selection of units will include private pools for exclusive relaxation and additional comfort throughout Oman's hot summers. A dedication to gourmet dining will be found across five restaurants and bars including all-day international dining, a speciality restaurant, a beach restaurant, a delicatessen café, and a rooftop bar with spectacular sea views.

The property will be owned by Musstir, the real estate acquisition and development arm of the MB Holding Company which also owns Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara on Oman's south coast. This exciting new connection between Musstir and Minor Hotels to develop a second Anantara in partnership, marks a strengthened bond for two dynamic and forward-thinking groups and the next step in the continued evolution of Minor Hotels as a leading operator in this rapidly developing country.

Further premium facilities at the new Anantara resort in Bandar Al Khairan will include an impressive infinity swimming pool and kids' splash pool, a kids and teens club lounge, meeting and events spaces, and a helipad. With a focus on wellbeing, the property will also feature an Anantara Spa and a fitness centre alongside a private stargazing majlis allowing guests to take in the beauty of the unspoiled night sky. The property's stunning seafront location is perfect for leisure guests seeking a complete escape in a premier wellness and marine discovery destination, or as a tranquil sanctuary for hosting unforgettable events and business occasions.

Dillip Rajakarier, CEO of Minor Hotels and Group CEO of parent company Minor International, commented, "The timeless

beauty of the Omani coast is a natural home for this upcoming new addition to our Middle East portfolio. Musstir are trusted partners who share our vision for the potential of this magnificent destination and our dedication to excellence across every element. Our team and I look forward to seeing this new Anantara come to fruition between the mountains and the sea."

Safana Al Barwani, the Managing Director of Musstir, said, "We are thrilled to grow our partnership with Minor Hotels and to add a new jewel to the crown of hospitality in Oman. The new Anantara Resort in Bandar Al Khairan will blend harmoniously with its striking natural surroundings to help showcase the graceful majesty of our incredible home and invite travellers of the world to experience it for themselves."

New openings in 2024, 2025 and 2026 will expand the already strong presence of Minor Hotels across Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The upcoming Anantara resort in Bandar Al Khairan will join the growing portfolio of luxurious Anantara properties in the Middle East region, which includes the two already established resorts in Oman - Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara and Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, in addition to ten properties in the UAE and one in Qatar.

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 40 stunning hotels and resorts located in Thailand, Maldives, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles, Mozambique, Zambia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Tunisia, Portugal, Spain, Hungary and Italy, with a pipeline of future properties across Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

For more information on Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas, please visit [www.anantara.com](http://www.anantara.com).

## Chef Dharshan Munidasa Awarded "The Order Of The Rising Sun, Gold And Silver Rays" And Announces Exciting New Plans For Nihonbashi Restaurant

### TTA BULLETIN

At a special event held recently, H.E. Mr. Mizukoshi Hideaki, Ambassador of Japan to Sri Lanka, conferred "The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays" on Chef Dharshan Munidasa, Founder of Nihonbashi and Ministry of Crab, in recognition of his notable contributions towards the promotion of Japanese cuisine and food culture in Sri Lanka.



"The Order of the Rising Sun" is awarded by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan to foreign nationals who have made distinguished contributions to enhancing friendly relations with Japan.

Drawing on his dual Sri Lankan Japanese heritage, Dharshan's culinary journey began with the introduction of his renowned Japanese restaurant Nihonbashi in 1995, and he has been a trailblazer in introducing inspired fine Japanese cuisine to Sri Lanka, familiarizing the Sri Lankan palate with the intricacies of Japanese gastronomy. Due to Chef Munidasa's dedication towards sourcing the highest quality Japanese ingredients and his commitment to upholding traditional Japanese culinary techniques, Nihonbashi became the first restaurant from Sri Lanka to be listed on the prestigious Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list. In 2011, his visionary

creation, Ministry of Crab, further deepened the Sri Lankan community's appreciation for Japanese food culture as the restaurant incorporates Japanese culinary philosophies such as the use of dashi when creating the signature mud crab and freshwater prawn dishes.

Ambassador Mizukoshi commended Mr. Munidasa not only for managing a Japanese restaurant but also for his longstanding contributions to the understanding, promotion, and dissemination of Japanese cuisine, "Washoku," recognized as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, both within and outside Sri Lanka.

Beyond his culinary endeavours, Chef Munidasa has actively contributed to the facilitation of Japanese-Sri Lankan relations through his unwavering commitment to cultural exchange, which further solidified the bond between the two nations.



Chef Munidasa also took this opportunity to reveal exciting new plans for his 29-year old restaurant, "This year Nihonbashi will move to a brand new location at Port City, Colombo. The evolution of Nihonbashi continues as this new space will be designed and built befitting of this recognition and of the responsibility and belief placed on me".

With this move Chef Dharshan is hopeful that Colombo will see a renaissance of Japanese Cuisine with Nihonbashi 2.0.



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# HOTELS

## Heritage Hotels & Resorts Unveils the 'Trails of Bawa' Tour, a Timeless Journey through Modern Tropicalism

TTA BULLETIN

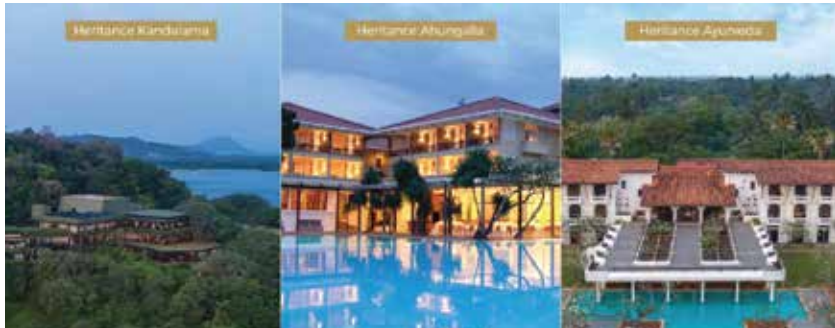
Heritage Hotels and Resorts, the premier flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, unveiled the Trails of Bawa Tour during the Galle Literary Festival held recently. This captivating journey was unveiled at the session titled 'Preserving and re-narrating modern Sri Lankan cultural histories', featuring the insights of Channa Daswatte, Sunela Jayewardene, and Johann Peiris, proudly sponsored by Heritage Hotels and Resorts.

The tour, Trails of Bawa, is an architectural odyssey through some of Sri Lanka's iconic spaces designed by Deshamanya Geoffrey Bawa, capturing the essence of Modern Tropicalism. It is a curated experience that immerses guests in the architectural brilliance of the Father of Modern Tropicalism in Sri Lanka. Spanning over four nights and five days, this journey would allow guests to explore five iconic spaces: Heritage Kandalama, Heritage Ayurveda, Heritage Ahungalla, Lunuganga Garden and No. 11, Colombo, the Geoffrey Bawa residence. Each stop during the trail is a testament to his genius, artfully showcasing elements of modern tropicalism and the innovative use of open spaces, natural light, and local materials, creating an ambiance

that embodies the essence of Modern Tropicalism.

Sharing her views on the Trails of Bawa Tour, Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings stated "Deshamanya Geoffrey Bawa's influence on architecture is immeasurable and we are delighted to present the 'Trails of Bawa' as a tribute to his architectural brilliance. The Trails of Bawa is more than just an ordinary tour, it's a curated experience to witness the texture, breathe in the scents, and hear the whispers of nature that inspired one of the most celebrated architects of the 21st century to create his timeless masterpieces. Heritage Hotels and Resorts proudly stands as the custodian of the largest portfolio of Bawa designed hotels in Sri Lanka, namely Heritage Kandalama, Heritage Ahungalla and Heritage Ayurveda and it is our duty to honor and perpetuate his legacy through such endeavors."

The Trails of Bawa is a journey that promises to leave a lasting impression on all those who partake in its captivating experience, providing a transformative exploration of design, art, and nature.



## Minor Hotels Targets 200+ New Openings as it Unveils New Details of Growth Strategy

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels is targeting more than 200 new openings globally within three years, as the Bangkok-based hotel owner and operator unveils new details of its dynamic commercial strategy for 2024 and beyond.

The target for new hotels would increase the group's global portfolio by almost 40% from its current count of 540 properties, as well as adding more than 30,000 rooms to its present inventory of almost 80,000.

The rapid acceleration of Minor's global growth ambition builds on record financial performance in 2023 and will be driven by a multi-pronged commercial strategy that will see the company enhance its portfolio of brands and overhaul its digital strategy, while pursuing a more balanced mix of management and franchise operating models.

Under its long-standing 'asset right' strategy, Minor Hotels owns or leases almost 70% of its global portfolio of 540 hotels. That percentage is expected to decrease to approximately 50% as the group pursues a more aggressive mix of management and

franchise agreement options. Notably, Minor is targeting more than 150 new management agreements over the next three years, which would grow its share of the overall operating model mix from 19% in 2023 to 38% by 2026. New franchise agreements are also being targeted, while Minor will continue to grow its hotel investment portfolio.

Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels, commented: "2023 has been a record year and the figures, both financial and regarding the group's expansion, confirm this. Looking ahead, we intend to increase this pace of openings, expanding our brands within our existing areas of operation and growing our global footprint into new regions in which we are not yet present."

Minor Hotels is also looking to shift its geographic mix, targeting a more balanced global distribution of hotels and resorts. Of the more than 200 openings targeted by the end of 2026, approximately half will be in the Asia region, while Europe and the Middle East are expected to add more than 50 properties each.

## Shangri-La Colombo Launches Tiki Bar: An Elevated Island Escape in the Heart of the City

TTA BULLETIN

Shangri-La Colombo announces the launch of Tiki Bar offering an elevated casual ambience with a tropical twist, inviting patrons to savour island inspired culinary delights and tropical beverages. Overlooking the Indian Ocean, Tiki Bar is set to become the ultimate urban oasis, providing an escape for both local revelers and tourists seeking novel nightlife adventures replete with music and an intriguing line-up of entertainment.

With both indoor and alfresco seating Tiki Bar is the perfect spot to watch golden sunsets slipping into the glistening sea. Tiki Bar adorned with lush greenery and an elevated yet laid-back tropical setting offers a retreat from the city's hustle, delivering an unparalleled dining and drinking experience perfect for after-work gatherings. The bar featuring skilled mixologists, presents a large range of 55 unique house made local arrack infusions featuring a variety of potent, natural ingredients found on our lush island from Beli Mal and Ranawana to Ginger Peel and Narang and a choice of mocktails and fresh juices which are a testament to Sri Lanka's rich natural abundance. Served in its trademark Tiki mugs the infusions are enjoyable with a twist of fun blended with tropical lushness and are a first of its kind in Sri Lanka.

Tiki Bar boasts a curated menu by Executive Chef Patrick Buttgerreit, featuring authentic dishes from islands across the world including, Japan, Hawaii, Cuba, The Caribbean islands, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, and



Indonesia. Utilizing premium ingredients and locally sourced produce, the culinary team ensures a unique and memorable dining experience. The design of Tiki Bar is a vibrant celebration of Sri Lankan culture, incorporating elements such as devil masks, medicine men, healers, and potions into the Tiki culture. The interiors showcase a fusion of contemporary elegance and traditional island design, featuring intricate wooden elephant carvings, a mosaic of Sri Lankan devil masks, embellished with fiery island sunsets.

The Tiki Bar experience ensures personalized service, meticulous attention to detail, and relaxing surroundings that transport guests to a tropical utopia. Operating from Wednesday to Sunday, 05:00 pm to 12:00 am, Tiki Bar will leave patrons satisfied and eager to return for more jungle potions and delectable island inspired cuisine paired with hypnotic jungle beats.

About Shangri-La Colombo Shangri-La Colombo, centrally located in the business district, offers premier accommodation, vibrant dining, and extensive conference facilities. Overlooking the Indian Ocean, the hotel embraces a culturally rich environment, providing guests with genuine smiles and heartfelt hospitality.

## Amari Bangkok Elevates Valentine's Day with Exquisite Dining Experiences

TTA BULLETIN

Amari Bangkok, renowned as one of Bangkok's premier hotels, invites couples to celebrate love in style with two exclusive Valentine's Day dining experiences. Nestled



within the vibrant heart of the energetic city, Amari Bangkok presents "Dinner under the Stars" in the 8th floor garden and "Dinner with a View" on the 32nd floor, each offering incredible views with different perspectives of the city skyline.

"Dinner under the Stars," a six-course culinary extravaganza, unfolds amidst the romantic ambience of the hotel's beautiful garden on the 8th floor – a tranquil slice of greenery amidst the metropolis, alongside the peaceful swimming pool. This meticulously crafted dining experience promises a feast for the senses, featuring an array of international flavours and delectable dishes that will undoubtedly tantalise taste buds.

Meanwhile, on the 32nd floor, couples can indulge in the enchanting "Dinner with a View" experience. This Thai-inspired set menu showcases a rich tapestry of flavours, including a traditional Khao Soi soup and the exquisite Thai-Spiced Grilled Lobster

Tail with a Green Curry Risotto. The stunning panoramic vistas from the 32nd floor add an extra touch of magic to this unforgettable evening, as the sun sets against the iconic Bangkok cityscape.

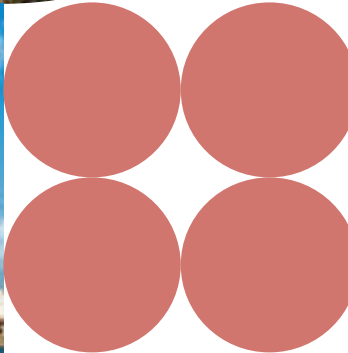
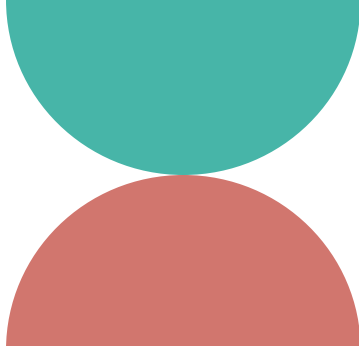
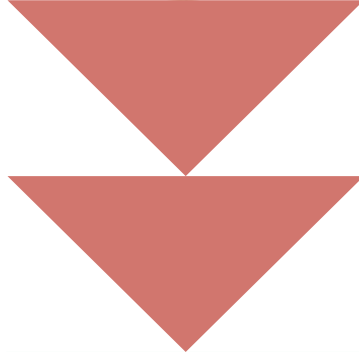
The 'Dinner with a View' Asian set menu on the 32nd floor is priced at THB 5,888 net per couple (approximately GBP 130) and includes two complimentary glasses of sparkling wine. For those opting for the 'Dinner under the Stars' Western set menu on the 8th floor, the package is available at THB 6,888 net per couple (approximately GBP 153), also inclusive of two complimentary glasses of sparkling wine.

Amari Bangkok, the flagship Amari property which forms part of ONYX Hospitality Group's, portfolio of hotels & resorts, serviced apartments and luxury residences, provides guests with an immersion into the dynamic energy and cultural opulence of the city. Nestled in the lively Ratchaprasong neighbourhood, Amari Bangkok offers a refined urban escape with its contemporary design, panoramic city vistas, and a comprehensive array of amenities.



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# HOTELS

## Galle Literary Festival partners with the city's iconic landmark, Jetwing Lighthouse, once again

TTA BULLETIN

Celebrated as the 'World's No. 1 Literary Festival' by Harper's Bazaar, the much-anticipated Galle Literary Festival once again graced the iconic landmark of Galle, Jetwing Lighthouse, offering an exhilarating journey of literature and culture. Since the festival's inception, Jetwing Lighthouse has proudly served as a partner, extending a warm welcome and steadfast support to literary luminaries from around the globe.

The opening event, Dinner & Arrack Tasting at the hotel's signature poolside restaurant "Nihal's", provided a captivating experience featuring Shehan Karunathilaka, acclaimed Booker Prize winner and author of *The Seven Moons of*

Maali Almeida, alongside Karan Gokani, renowned restaurateur and author of the 'Hoppers' cookbook.

Reflecting fondly on his visits to Jetwing Lighthouse, Gokani praised the property's idyllic setting and captivating ambience, stating, "What's not to love about Jetwing Lighthouse? I first came here as a tourist, when I was visiting Galle many years ago, and I came and saw this beautiful property. It's just the way it is set, it is almost created for this location."

Jetwing Lighthouse has had the honour of welcoming an impressive line-up of acclaimed authors and insightful speakers,



including British journalist and co-author of *I Am Malala*, Christina Lamb, Tom Parker Bowles, Yudhanjaya Wijeratne,

Nayomi Munaweera, Amanthi Harris, Kiran Millwood Hargrave, Mary Beard, Janice Pariat, Marguerite Richards, Sujit Sivasundaram, and Jeremy Lee.



Designed by the world-renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa, Jetwing Lighthouse encapsulates the charming essence of 'architecture and art' that lingers in every space, making it an ideal place to immerse in the richness of art and culture. Nestled on a rocky promontory along the picturesque Galle shoreline, this coastal haven comprises 85 luxury rooms and themed suites, two stunning swimming pools, and breathtaking vistas of the Indian Ocean, offering unparalleled spaces to experience the best of authentic Sri Lankan hospitality.

## Taj Bentota Resort & Spa Sets the Stage for a Blissful and Picturesque Valentine's Day Celebration

TTA BULLETIN

Taj Bentota Resort & Spa, Sri Lanka, unveils an exclusive collection of refined Valentine's Day experiences, tailored for discerning patrons who appreciate sophistication and luxury. On February 14th, 2024, the resort invites guests to indulge in a curated selection of romantic offerings, each designed to create lasting memories.

**Seaside Serenity at the Shack:** Immerse yourself in the epitome of romance as The Shack invites you to celebrate love amidst the enchanting vistas of the Indian Ocean. The experience begins with a luxurious champagne and caviar welcome, setting the tone for an unforgettable five-course seafood romantic dinner.

**Starlit Oceanic Soiree by the Pool:** Enjoy an enchanting Valentine's Day celebration with your loved one at The Poolside, where the Indian Ocean provides a breath-taking backdrop. Immerse yourself in the romantic ambience as you partake in a sumptuous seven-course dinner curated for this special occasion. Sip on the finest bubbly and signature cocktails, elevating your evening to a symphony of flavours and love.

**Immersive Activities for Love:** Apart from fine dining, Taj Bentota offers a range of immersive activities for an unforgettable Valentine's Day. Enjoy private yoga sessions, couple massages, and painting experiences. Take a leisurely cruise on the Bentota river to enhance the romance. Additionally, make your day extra special by booking immersive culinary lessons, cocktail making sessions, and exclusive wine & beer tastings—all on the house. Celebrate love with these unique and enriching experiences.

**Romantic Room Retreat:** Indulge in a romantic retreat with our special room prepared for Valentine's Day. Adorned with roses and delicate petals, this sensory experience includes a floral bath, an assortment of fine chocolates, a cosy candlelit dinner, and a bottle of exquisite champagne. Your luxury room stay is packed with surprises, ensuring lasting memories. Enjoy sumptuous and healthy breakfast served in the privacy of your room or by the tranquil beach before you leave.

**Champagne Breakfast Bliss:** Embark on a

day of love from its very beginning with Taj Bentota's champagne breakfast bliss. Immerse yourself in the intimacy of a breakfast served in the privacy of your room or by the tranquil beach. Delight in delectable morning bites complemented by a bottle of exquisite champagne, setting the tone for a day filled with romance.

**Masquerade Night Extravaganza:** Join Taj Bentota's Valentine's Masquerade at Tease Bar. Witness the Sri Lankan sunset as you enjoy bespoke moments infused with signature cocktail love potions, thoughtfully curated entertainment and a sophisticated selection of champagne. A lively masquerade party that celebrates the beautiful nuances of relationships will transform this day into a jubilant occasion. A memorable gift also awaits patrons at the Tease Bar.

These specially crafted packages reflect Taj Bentota's unwavering commitment to providing discerning guests with tasteful experiences marked by refinement. For those who appreciate the nuances of luxury, these Valentine's Day offerings promise a beautiful celebration of love and togetherness.

For more information, please reach out to [chandima.wickremasinghe@tajhotels.com](mailto:chandima.wickremasinghe@tajhotels.com).



# Valentine's Day at Mount Lavinia Hotel

TTA BULLETIN

The year is 2024, and love is in the air! As the most romantic day of the year approaches, there is no better place to celebrate love and romance than at the enchanting Mount Lavinia Hotel. This historic hotel, with its roots deeply intertwined with love stories of the past, is the perfect setting for an unforgettable Valentine's Day celebration. This year, lovers also have the opportunity to surprise their partner with a personalized invitation from the hotel that will sweep them off their feet and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Imagine the look of astonishment and delight on your loved one's face when they receive a card from the renowned Mount Lavinia Hotel, inviting them to meet you at Mount Lavinia Hotel on February 14th. This gesture will inject an extra dose of romance and excitement into your Valentine's Day celebrations, setting the stage for an enchanting experience at the picturesque hotel.

The hotel offers an array of exceptional services to ensure that your Valentine's Day

at Mount Lavinia Hotel is nothing short of extraordinary. From arranging bouquets of delicate roses to filling the air with the sweet scent of chocolates and gifts, the team at the Hotel are passionate about making your experience truly magical. The highlight of it all is the surprise card, lovingly crafted by the hotel, inviting your partner to meet you at the world-famous Mount Lavinia Hotel.

As they read the heartfelt words on the card, their excitement will soar, knowing that they are about to embark on a romantic



rendezvous with you in this gorgeous setting.

Whether you prefer a cozy dinner at the Governor's Restaurant or a private setup by the Paradise Beach, the hotel has taken every measure to ensure that your evening is filled with love, romance, and delectable cuisine.

Each dinner package comes with the option of a romantic and decorated room, adding an extra touch of enchantment to your Valentine's Day celebration. Balloons dance around the room, and the air is filled with the aroma of love. This romantic setting creates the perfect ambiance for you and your partner to ignite the flame of love.

A culinary journey that will tantalize your taste buds and leave you craving for more. Freshly caught seafood, expertly prepared by the hotel's talented chefs, will be served in abundance. As you savor each bite, let the love and passion that surrounds you fill your heart and soul.

If you're looking for a more intimate experience, the private romantic setup by the beach is the perfect choice. A table for two, adorned with candles and exquisite flowers, set against the backdrop of a mesmerizing sunset over the tranquil ocean. The sound of waves crashing against the shore creates a symphony that is uniquely romantic. As you clink your glasses and toast to your love, you will feel like the luckiest couple in the world.

The market offers an array of mouthwatering seafood delights, with the star of the show being the lobster – fresh, juicy, and cooked to perfection. A truly romantic and scrumptious experience – where you and your loved one would be strolling along the sandy shore, as the gentle sound of waves crash against the coastline, and the aroma of fresh seafood wafting through the air. This is the ultimate seafood extravaganza for lovers looking to indulge in a delectable feast.

But it's not just about the food or the ambiance. It's about the moments shared, the memories created, and the love that blossoms in this haven of romance. Mount Lavinia Hotel understands the importance of these precious moments and strives to make your Valentine's Day celebration truly unforgettable.

Meet your beloved at the Mount Lavinia Hotel and embark on a journey of love, romance, and enchantment. Close your eyes and let the winds whisper sweet nothings in your ears. Open your heart and let the love embraced within these white walls fill your soul.

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## Emirates Group breaks world record in Dubai desert

TTA BULLETIN

Two Sri Lankans were amongst the hundreds of Emirates Group employees that descended on the Dubai desert this week to successfully set a new Guinness World Records title for the Most nationalities in a yoga lesson. The event, designed to kick-start the new year with a unique wellness initiative, saw participants from 144 different nationalities take on the challenge at sunset.



The initiative showcased the rich diversity within the Emirates Group, which boasts a workforce of more than 110,000 employees. Beyond the UAE and wider Middle East, some of the farthest-reaching countries represented at the event included Chile, Peru, Mexico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Honduras, Mongolia, Tonga, and The Bahamas.

Located at the expansive Al Lisaili Camp, managed by Emirates Group brand Arabian Adventures, the event brought the world record attempt to the desert for the first time, offering a unique opportunity for participants.

The previous record was achieved in 2023 in New York City on the lawn of the United Nations headquarters, with 135 different nationalities.

Oliver Grohmann, Senior Vice President Human Resources at Emirates Group, commented: "Today we are celebrating the diversity of the Emirates Group. Dubai is a sought-after destination renowned globally for its appeal as a place to live, work and invest, and we are proud to represent a home-grown company that's truly multinational."

"At our record-breaking event, UAE nationals and Dubai-based expats represented various countries and roles within the Emirates Group. This included Emirates cabin crew, dnata airport

operations employees, safari guides at Arabian Adventures, dnata Travel experts, and many more. This event underpins our commitment to wellbeing for all Emirates Group employees. It is part of an ongoing journey to promote a culture of health within our organisation, with more to come in fitness, health, and overall wellbeing in 2024."

The record-breaking yoga lesson was held by Emirates Group staff also trained as yoga practitioners. With wellness at the forefront of the initiative, a Senior Counsellor at the Group's Psychology Unit and a certified mindfulness teacher also held a wellbeing session to encourage a healthy mindset for the new year. A member of the dnata Travel Group team also took to the decks to DJ at the event to offer chill-out music, alongside a colleague playing a 'tongue drum', often associated with meditation and healing.

Sustainable yoga mats created for attendees were made from biodegradable cork, whilst all staff were provided with reusable water bottles, as part of the Group's commitment to a zero-waste event.

To find out more about the Emirates Group, and its diverse range of opportunities, with hundreds of roles currently available across its multiple brands, access: [www.theemiratesgroup.com](http://www.theemiratesgroup.com).

## Sabre and Malaysia Airlines enhance long-standing relationship with launch of NDC content

TTA BULLETIN

S a b r e Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, today announced that Malaysia Airlines' NDC content is now available through the Sabre travel marketplace.



The new agreement builds on Sabre's valued relationship with Malaysia Airlines, enabling the carrier to expand its offer-and-order based retailing to travel sellers. By activating NDC through Sabre, travel agencies and other sellers can gain a competitive edge by maximizing access to Malaysia Airlines' real-time offers and rich content.

"We're thrilled to take the next step in our retailing evolution with Sabre," said Dersensih Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer of Airlines from Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG). "We are already successfully using a broad suite of technology solutions from Sabre, and we're excited to be adding our NDC content to Sabre's extensive marketplace. It's essential to us that we can provide travel sellers with the best omni-channel purchase experience when shopping for, and booking, our fares and offers. Joining Sabre's growing family of NDC airlines will enable us to effectively provide our enhanced offers and rich content to travel sellers so they can make the best decisions for travellers."

Sabre-connected travel sellers in key markets can now shop, book, and service Malaysia Airlines' NDC offers, alongside traditional content options, through Sabre's Offer & Order APIs, agency point-of-sale solution, Sabre Red 360, and

Sabre's corporate booking tool, GetThere. The carrier's NDC offers are now available through Sabre's marketplace in Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, with additional markets to follow.

"Sabre is at the forefront of the NDC evolution, and we're delighted to launch Malaysia Airlines' NDC content as we continue to drive collaboration, shape the ecosystem, and pave the way forward for the offer and order-powered retailing of the future," said Kathy Morgan, Vice President, Product Management, Distribution Experiences, Sabre. "It's essential that Malaysia Airlines has the capabilities it needs to get its content in front of the right travel sellers, as the carrier continues to ramp up services and introduce new products."

Malaysia Airlines and Sabre have worked together for more than 20 years, with the carrier already using an extensive suite of Sabre technology, including Sabre's GDS and a suite of network planning and optimization solutions. Sabre's NDC capabilities integrate and normalize multiple types of content, putting NDC offers at agents' fingertips alongside traditional options in Sabre points of sale. Thousands of Sabre-connected agencies in more than 150 countries around the world are already shopping, booking, and servicing NDC content through the Sabre GDS.

## Cathay Pacific resumes flights to Sri Lanka, ensuring a positive start for the Tourism Industry

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism officials in Collaboration with the Airport & Aviation officials gave an arousing welcome to the inaugural flight of Cathay Pacific Airways, CX 611 on the 1st of February, 2024, at the Bandaranaike International Airport. The Passengers and the crew were welcomed by Tourism Information Centre officials of the SLTPB and also Mr . Thisum Jayasuriya , Chairman , Sri Lanka Convention Bureau. The largest carrier of Hong Kong, with its Head office and main hub located at Hong Kong International Airport, resumed flights to Sri Lanka after

several years. The Airline recommenced passenger flight operations using an Airbus 330-300 aircraft and according to their new flight schedule, Flight operations will be carried out 3 days a week, including Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Cathay Pacific has been catering to Sri Lankan market for over 30 years, making it become one of the major and crucial Airlines contributing to Sri Lanka's Tourism Sector. The Airline temporarily stopped flight operations in March 2020 due to the Global Pandemic situation.

However as Pandemic relief, The Airline operated a Boeing 747 freighter carrying vital supplies including Covid Vaccines during the pandemic.

The newly resumed flight carried 253 passengers and they were very much impressed with the warm, colorful welcome they received and the cultural dancing performance organized by Sri Lanka Tourism at BIA. This will be a most important moment in history as Cathay Pacific is an Airline which currently operates to around 80 destinations in the world, and will be an asset to Sri Lanka's Tourism sector in bringing an increased number of tourist arrivals, promoting Sri Lanka as a top travel destination. This operation will benefit to attract passengers travelling out of far east countries, especially from China and Hong Kong.







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## Qatar Airways' Codeshare Partner, Garuda Indonesia, Announces a New Route to Doha

### TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways' codeshare partner, Garuda Indonesia, announces the commencement of its daily direct flight between Jakarta (CGK) and Doha (DOH) effective from 4 April 2024, with ticket sales starting on 6 February 2024. The new daily direct flight will be operated with state-of-the-art Boeing B777-300 aircraft in a dual-class configuration, featuring 26 high-end seats in Business Class and 367 seats in Economy Class.



unparalleled level of service in response to increasing travel demand, which will further boost tourism between the two countries.”

President and CEO of Garuda Indonesia, Irfan Setiাপutra, stated: “We are very pleased to be able to add Doha to our extensive global network. There are strong business, tourism, and cultural ties between Indonesia and Qatar, and we believe this new service will further boost those activities between the two countries, while offering easier access for travellers from Qatar to Indonesia, which is now one of the fastest-growing economic centres in the world. This new route marks a significant milestone for Garuda Indonesia as the national flag carrier of Indonesia, providing our passengers departing from Jakarta as the main hub of Indonesia with a convenient gateway to the largest city and financial hub in the Gulf area. This direct flight between Jakarta and Doha is also expected to attract Qatar tourists to explore other leading tourist destinations from Jakarta as the main gate to Indonesia's exotic destinations.”

Currently, Qatar Airways, offers three daily flights to both Jakarta and Bali, and has recently launched three weekly flights to Medan. With the new Garuda flight and codeshare partnership, passengers will benefit from seamless connections between the combined networks.

The launch of services from Jakarta to Doha symbolises the strong bilateral ties between Indonesia and Qatar, aimed at deepening economic cooperation between the two nations. It also stimulates benefits in the aviation and tourism sectors, including enhanced trade flows and commercial links. The daily flight to Doha will help cater to the increasing demand for direct flights between Jakarta and Doha, and provide wider preferences for travellers. The new route allows customers of the flag carrier of Indonesia to enjoy access beyond Doha to Qatar Airways' network of over 170 destinations, including cities in Middle East, Europe, and Africa. This will also provide Qatar Airways' passengers even more travel options for seamless connectivity to exotic destinations in Indonesia.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: “Qatar Airways welcomes Garuda's launch of its daily flight from Jakarta to Doha. Indonesia is a country that has great potential and is one of our most important markets within the Qatar Airways global network. With this new partnership, Qatar Airways and Garuda Indonesia provide an

## oneworld unveils its first-ever dedicated lounge experience in Seoul

### TTA BULLETIN

Breaking new ground in premium benefits and luxury air travel, the oneworld® alliance unveiled its first ever fully branded dedicated airport lounge in Seoul.

The new oneworld lounge opens as the world's leading airline alliance prepares to celebrate its landmark 25th anniversary later this year.

For the launch of its first branded lounge, oneworld collaborated with global aviation ground services provider Swissport and the team behind its award-winning ASPIRE Airport Lounges.

Situated in Terminal 1 of Incheon International Airport, the spacious new oneworld lounge stretches across 555 square metres and features stylish seating in a contemporary new setting for up to 148 customers. The bright new lounge is no more than a 10-minute walk from the furthest oneworld airlines' departure gates.

Incheon International Airport is served by seven oneworld member airlines: American Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways and SriLankan Airlines. Between them, these oneworld member airlines operate more than 60 weekly flights to Seoul, connecting the Korean capital with more than 900 destinations world-wide through the oneworld member network.

The new contemporary airport lounge experience provides oneworld customers with vibrant and calming space to recharge, relax, and dine before their flight.

Gerhard Girking, oneworld Vice President, Customer Experience, Delivery and Membership, said: “With oneworld celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2024, we are incredibly proud to be opening the very first oneworld branded lounge experience for our member airlines' customers.

## Emirates doubles its Premium Economy service in Melbourne

### TTA BULLETIN

Emirates, the world's largest international airline, will introduce an additional Premium Economy service between Melbourne and Dubai, available from the 1 February 2024 on EK408 and EK409.



The additional service follows the debut of Emirates' Premium Economy service from Melbourne in April 2023, when the new cabin was made available on the daily EK406 and EK407 services. This latest development means Emirates now offers close to 800 weekly Premium Economy seats between Melbourne and its Dubai hub.

The Premium Economy cabin offers a signature experience unmatched in the industry, offering plush cream leather seats and a wood veneer, a generous baggage allowance and an exceptional dining experience, staffed by a team of Cabin Crew dedicated to Premium Economy passengers.

The added Premium Economy service means that the airline will be serving Australia with close to 3200 seats, including two daily services from Sydney and two daily services from Melbourne, maintaining Australia's position as one of the key markets served with the airline's best-in-class Premium Economy cabins.

Since tickets for the Emirates Premium Economy service went on sale in Sydney in August 2022 and in Melbourne in April 2023, the new cabin class has exceeded expectations and forecasts with more than 90,000 passengers flying to and from Australia opting for the new cabin experience. Premium Economy seats from Sydney and Melbourne have averaged over 80 per cent load factors and the airline continues to anticipate consistently high demand for the new cabin class in Melbourne as consumer confidence and travel demand continue to accelerate in the new year.

Barry Brown, Divisional Vice President Australasia at Emirates, says “As one of the most important markets in our global network, we are committed to offering Australians not only greater connectivity but also more choice and differentiated offerings.

“With the extraordinary success of the Premium Economy cabin so far in Australia, the additional Premium Economy service in Melbourne will give more customers the opportunity to experience our unique premium products.”

The introduction of the additional Premium Economy service to Melbourne is part of Emirates' multi-million dollar retrofit programme, where a total of 126 aircraft, including 67 A380s and 53 Boeing 777s, will be fitted out with Premium Economy cabins. Currently, 22 A380s flying across the network have been fitted with our Premium Economy cabin.

On a four-class Emirates A380 flying from Melbourne or Sydney, the Premium Economy cabin is located at the front of the main deck with 56 seats laid out in a 2-4-2 configuration.

Onboard, customers are offered a quiet luxury, with each 19.5 inch seat designed to provide optimal comfort and support, with 6-way adjustable headrests, a footrest and a generous recline. Each seat has a 13.3 inch screen, one of the largest in its class, in addition to in-seat charging points and a walnut wood-finished side cocktail table. The décor is inspired by Emirates private jet service, with cream-coloured leather and a wood panel finishing similar to Business Class.

The Premium Economy dining experience includes a welcome drink served in fine glassware, and a selection of meals made with seasonal ingredients, served on Royal Doulton china tableware with stainless-steel cutlery. Premium Economy customers are also offered an extended beverage list that includes vintage wines from Emirates' Business Class list, including a sparkling Chardon and Chandon Vintage Brut 2016.

Boarding and leaving the aircraft offers a step up from Economy. Flying with Emirates on its flagship A380 and passengers even beat the Business and First Class passengers off with the Premium Economy cabin situated at the front of the lower deck meaning passengers can leave from the lower front door.

Premium Economy customers are provided with complimentary amenity kits made with sustainable and recycled materials and soft, alongside sustainably made blankets and a generously sized pillow, both designed uniquely for Premium Economy. On the A380, passengers also have greater bathroom access, with three restrooms dedicated to up to 56 Premium Economy travellers.

The Emirates A380 experience has long been taking passenger comfort to new levels, with an extensive suite of products that turn the journey itself into a destination, including one of the industry's largest screens for customers to enjoy the airline's award-winning in-flight entertainment system, ice.

Emirates currently operates 63 weekly services to Australia with the capacity to transport close to 56,000 passengers per week to and from its major cities.

## SriLankan Aviation College Joins Ranks of IATA's Regional Training Partners

### TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Aviation College, the training arm of SriLankan Airlines, has signed on to become Sri Lanka's only International Air Transport Association (IATA) Regional Training Partner joining ranks of a prestigious few training centers numbered to seven in all of Asia. SriLankan Aviation College will be offering the Safety Management Systems (SMS) for Maintenance and Repair Operations, IATA Competency-Based Training for Dangerous Goods Instructors and IATA Instructional Design programmes as a Regional Training Partner.

"We are thrilled to announce the expansion of our collaboration with SriLankan Aviation College, as they step into the role of an IATA Regional Training Partner, dedicated to providing a wide range of IATA Training programmes in Sri Lanka," stated Stephanie Siouffi-Vareilhes, Director of IATA Training. "As the aviation sector experiences a revival, it is of paramount importance to empower the next generation of aviation enthusiasts with the essential expertise and insights needed to meet the ever-evolving industry demands. Our partnership with SriLankan Aviation College will be instrumental in nurturing a talented pool of aviation professionals, not only within Sri Lanka but also within the region."

SriLankan Aviation College's history with IATA includes being recognized as a Top Performing Training Centre for six consecutive years and as one of its Ten Best Authorised Training Centres in the world in 2013. The College has also remained an IATA Approved Training Centre since inception, introducing several of the most sought-after programmes that IATA has to offer to Sri Lanka. This



includes the IATA Foundation in Travel and Tourism Diploma; IATA Travel and Tourism Consultancy Diploma; IATA/FIATA Cargo Introductory Diploma; and the IATA Airline Cabin Crew Qualification. Primal De Silva, General Manager - SriLankan Aviation College commented on the College's latest milestone by stating that, "We are extremely pleased to take our longstanding partnership with IATA to the next level by establishing ourselves as a Regional Training Partner. This will enhance our programme portfolio and status as an industry pacesetter in the region. Over the years, our close link with IATA has helped transform the SriLankan Aviation College to a globally competitive academy, with a reputation for producing high quality talent that go on to power the global travel trade."

With over 34 years of experience in aviation training to international standards, SriLankan Aviation College offers a wide range of training options to the country and the region on multiple aviation disciplines. The college is certified by EASA, IATA, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka, the Civil Aviation Authority of Pakistan and the Civil Aviation Authority of Maldives. It is also a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) and the European Aviation Maintenance Training Committee (EAMTC). The college collaborates with world-renowned institutions to extend comprehensive aviation and corporate training programmes.

## Qatar Airways Announces the Launch of Summer Flights to Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Qatar Airways welcomes the new route to its global network of over 170 destinations and connects travellers looking for an exciting destination in Central Asia

### TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways announces the latest addition to its summer schedule, launching four weekly flights to Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, starting 2 June 2024 and bookable now. Tashkent is located at the heart of Central Asia, a region known for its rich history and diverse cultures shared with the neighbouring countries of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

The destination is the second city served by the national carrier of the State of Qatar in the Central Asian market following Almaty, Kazakhstan. With the new service operated by an Airbus A320 aircraft, passengers can enjoy seamless global connectivity to Tashkent through the Best Airport in the Middle East, Hamad International Airport, to over 170 destinations worldwide.

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Thierry Antinori, said: "The launch of the new route to Tashkent is a testament to our commitment to continuously growing our network and expanding to new corners of the world. Tashkent provides our passengers travelling from Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas, with the opportunity to visit Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region, and explore the cultural wonders these destinations offer. Travellers flying with Qatar Airways can now avail the option to fly to Tashkent as their gateway to the region, and we look forward to future opportunities of growth in Central Asia."

Uzbekistan offers a unique travel



experience with its historical sites, stunning architecture and vibrant cultural experiences. Famous for its historical cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, travellers can explore and marvel at the Uzbek landscapes. This beautiful destination offers an authentic taste of hearty Uzbek cuisine, warm and welcoming local hospitality, and a unique blend of modern and traditional experiences.

Tashkent's connectivity to Central Asia plays a vital role in strengthening cultural and economic ties between countries in the region and beyond. This expansion further solidifies Qatar Airways' commitment to offering passengers as many seamless direct connections as possible.

Qatar Airways Privilege Club members will collect Avios on flights and can benefit from greater savings when paying for flights with a combination of cash and Avios, or Avios Max, when paying 100 per cent of the fare using Avios. Members can also spend Avios on shopping and dining at Qatar Duty Free, packages with Qatar Airways Holidays, cabin upgrades, and more.

## KrisFlyer Celebrates 25th Anniversary and Membership Milestone with Exclusive Promotions And Accelerated Mile Accrual Opportunities

### TTA BULLETIN

KrisFlyer is offering all members accelerated mile accrual opportunities and attractive miles and cash spending discounts in the coming months. This is to celebrate the Singapore Airlines (SIA) Group's lifestyle rewards programme's 25th anniversary in 2024, and to mark the milestone of crossing eight million members in January 2024.

Mr Dai Haoyu, Acting Senior Vice President Marketing Planning, Singapore Airlines, said: "Today, KrisFlyer is a market-leading lifestyle-centric rewards programme thanks to the strong support of our members, who enjoy wide-ranging accrual and redemption opportunities beyond flights to various needs in their daily life. We look forward to celebrating our 25th anniversary and KrisFlyer's membership milestone with these

wide-ranging promotions. We will continue to find ways to enhance the programme's value to our members in the coming years."

From 1 to 10 February 2024, KrisFlyer members will earn 50% more miles for all SIA flights booked on the SIA website or mobile application for travel between 1 July and 30 November 2024. In addition, members who use a Mastercard credit or debit card to book their flights are eligible to enter a lucky draw, with three prizes of one million, 500,000, or 250,000 KrisFlyer miles up for grabs.

From 1 to 14 February 2024, KrisShop will also give away 250 bonus miles for every S\$25 spent on its platform using a Mastercard credit or debit card. KrisFlyer members can also earn 2,500 bonus miles

with a minimum spend of S\$100 on a travel experience with Pelago.

From 5 to 25 February 2024, members can participate in a contest on KrisFlyer's Facebook and Instagram pages, where they can share their dream travel destination and one experience or item they would like to redeem with their KrisFlyer miles. The 10 most creative submissions will win 25,000 miles each.

From March to May 2024, PPS Club and KrisFlyer members will be able to earn PPS Value and Elite miles respectively for cash spending on Kris+, KrisShop, or Pelago. Members will earn 1 PPS Value for



every S\$3 spent, or 1 Elite mile for every S\$1 spent on non-flight activities. This is capped at 2,500 PPS Value or 5,000 Elite miles.

The PPS Value earned will count towards members' PPS Club status renewal or upgrades to Solitaire PPS Club membership. Elite miles earned will count towards KrisFlyer Elite status renewal or upgrades to KrisFlyer Elite Silver or Elite Gold tiers.



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