

TRAVEL TALK

Asia

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

VOL 23 NO 01 2024 24 PGS

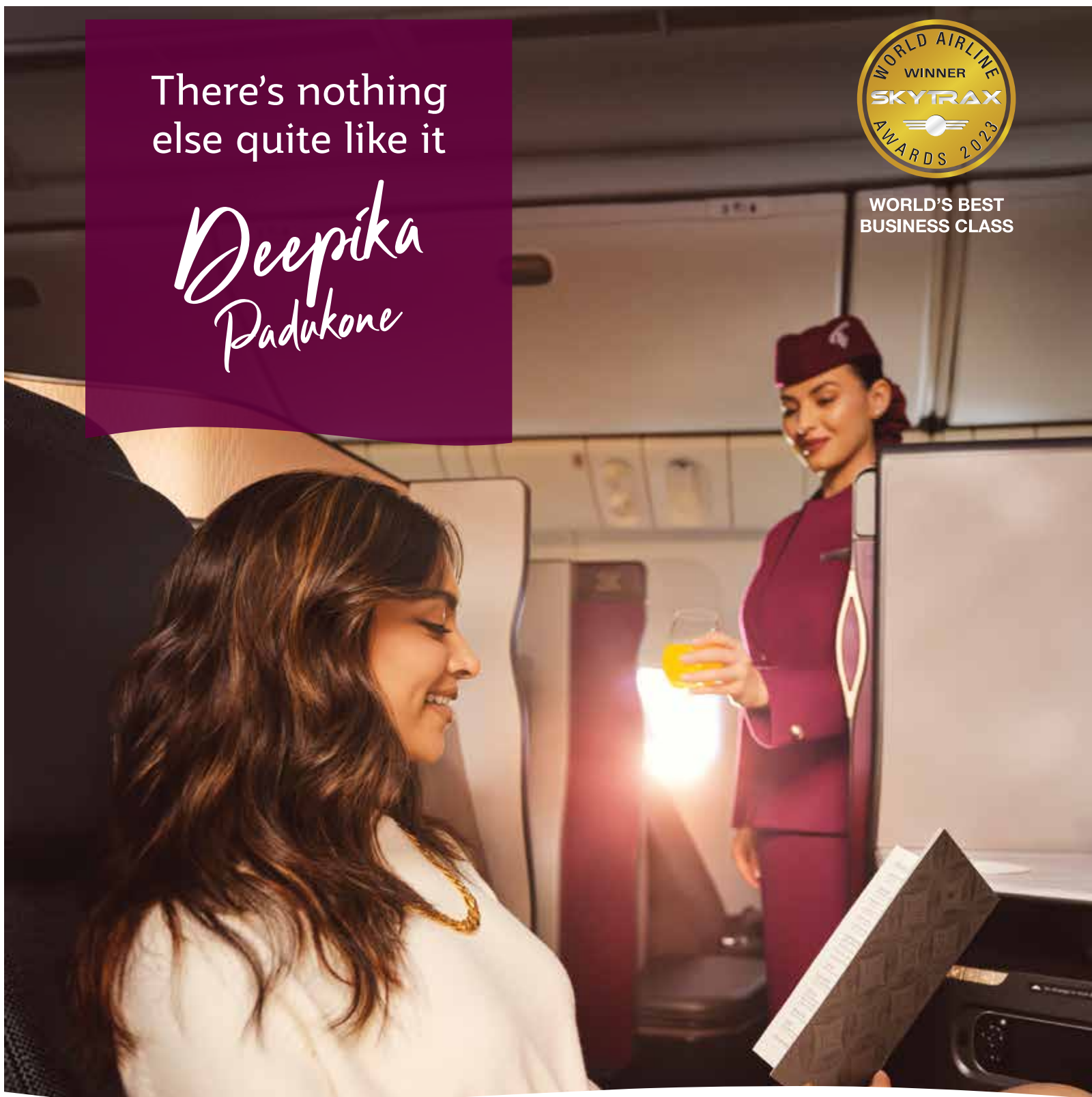


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SLYCAN Trust unveils 'Plant-Based Gastronomy in partnership with Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts'

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

SLYCAN Trust, a non-profit organisation committed to sustainable development, announced the launch of 'Plant-Based Gastronomy: Tales of Sri Lanka's Cultural Heritage' in collaboration with Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts, Colombo recently.

This groundbreaking initiative seeks to celebrate

Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage through a unique culinary journey that highlights the essence of plant-based cuisine to promote culinary tourism in Sri Lanka.

The official launch event took place on 17 January at the Atrium, Cinnamon Grand Colombo, bringing together esteemed guests and sustainability advocates to witness the unveiling of this exceptional project. 'Plant-Based Gastronomy: Tales of Sri Lanka's Cultural Heritage' is an innovative exploration of Sri Lanka's traditional culinary practices, emphasising the vibrant array of plant-based ingredients deeply rooted in the country's cultural heritage.

This collaboration between SLYCAN Trust and Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Colombo aims to promote ethical, sustainable, and climate-friendly dining choices while showcasing the diverse flavours and culinary traditions of Sri Lanka.

Key highlights of the initiative include: Expanding plant-based food range: Introduction of a dedicated plant-based food corner at the buffet at Plates restaurant at Cinnamon Grand Colombo. This progressive move is designed to cater to the evolving preferences of guests seeking diverse and sustainable dining options. The plant-based food corner hopes to have a carefully-curated selection of culinary delights that celebrate the vibrant flavours and cultural richness of Sri Lanka.

World-class plant-based culinary experiences: Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Colombo hopes to host a world-class vegan chef this year, adding a layer of



sophistication and innovation to the initiative, elevating plant-based gastronomy to new heights. Their culinary prowess will ensure that the dishes are not just substitutes for traditional non-vegetarian options but stand on their own merit as delectable creations that appeal to a wide audience.

SLYCAN Trust, through its EthicalX: Climate & Innovation Hub and Meatless Mondays Sri Lanka initiatives, is committed to promoting ethical, sustainable, and climate-friendly food systems. Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Colombo and SLYCAN Trust will work together in creating awareness on food systems work that directly connects with Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality industry to promote and scale up awareness and engagement across the island. Both parties will partner in awareness creation activities.

SLYCAN Trust Global Executive Director Vositha Wijenayake, expressing enthusiasm about the project, stated: "As part of this venture, we will be building partnerships with key stakeholders for promoting ethical, sustainable and climate-friendly food options.

Among these plant-based food will be one of our priority areas, including plant-based culinary experiences aimed at enhancing the market for locally-sourced plant-based food as well as promoting Sri Lanka's culinary heritage. We are extremely happy to partner in this endeavour with Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Colombo, and contribute to achieving common objectives."

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Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle hosts Opera Weekend as Part of the "Galle Concerto 2024"

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

In an illustrious showcase of musical splendour, Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle, recently hosted an enchanting musical weekend as "A Prelude to the Galle Literary Festival". This distinguished opera event, woven into the fabric of "Galle Concerto 2024", unfolded over two magical days designed to cater to the most discerning culture connoisseur.

The event featured an ensemble of world-renowned international opera virtuosos, including the captivating voices of Carlos Conde-González, Jorge Echeagaray, Chrisni Mendis, and the incomparable Barbara Segal. Alongside these global luminaries, the stage was graced by the exceptional talents of local musical sensations Anosh Ismael, Manoj Sanjeeva, Subuddhi Lakmali, Madhawa Bandara, and Ridmi Weerasinghe, seamlessly blending together in creating an unforgettable weekend.

"We are delighted to witness the astounding success of this event and we strive to continue organizing events of this calibre to encourage high-end discerning visitors to Sri Lanka and to our resort while contributing to the rich cultural landscape of Sri Lanka" said Roberto Simone, General Manager of Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle.

Distinguished guests who attended the event were the esteemed HRH Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, Mr. Sagala Ratnayaka, Chief of Staff to the President of Sri Lanka and National Security advisor, Italian Ambassador to Sri Lanka Damiano Francovich, state Minis-



ter of Foreign Affairs Tharaka Balasuriya and other dignitaries, graced the event.

The Opera and Operetta, directed by the talented Barbara Segal, unfolded on the 19th at the picturesque Il Mare Italian restaurant at Anantara Tangalle, creating an ambiance of unparalleled artistic finesse. A grand crescendo followed this, resonating through the "Symphony by the Seashore" concert. The Gustav Mahler Orchestra of Colombo, conducted by the maestro Srimal Weerasinghe and comprising 40 instrumentalists, delivered a brilliantly symphonic masterpiece that echoed along the shores of Tangalle as they accompanied the sensational operatic vocals of the singers.

Notably, these international maestros, who captivated audiences on both event days and were sponsored by Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort, will be generously sharing their musical wisdom through three complimentary masterclasses, enriching the talents of emerging local opera singers.



This resounding success of "A Prelude to the Galle Literary Festival" exemplifies Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle's steadfast commitment to enhancing the cultural tapestry of Sri Lanka, fostering tourism, and nurturing the nation's blossoming musical talent.



The new year kicked off on a high for Sri Lanka Tourism with the forecasted figures for 2023 exceeding anticipated numbers and the industry seeing some of the best occupancy levels since 2021.

The Galle Literary Festival saw an influx of literary fans heading to the south and patronizing the arts, culture and music that Sri Lanka has to offer. Under the mandate of the President Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe, to attract a wider demographic of travelers, events such as these are the key to highlighting the diversity of the island.

Sri Lanka also welcomes Royalty from the UK and this will undoubtedly be a boost as the United Kingdom has traditionally been one of the largest source markets and continues to be within the top 3 tourism generating markets for Sri Lanka.

Internationally, there has been an increase in tourism to almost all markets. According to the first UNWTO World Tourism Barometer of the year, international tourism ended 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals. The unleashing of remaining pent-up demand, increased air connectivity, and a stronger recovery of Asian markets and destinations, are expected to underpin a full recovery by the end of 2024.

International tourism is expected to fully recover pre-pandemic levels in 2024, with initial estimates pointing to 2% growth above 2019 levels. This central forecast by UNWTO remains subject to the pace of recovery in Asia and to the evolution of existing economic and geopolitical downside risks.

The positive outlook is reflected in the latest UNWTO Tourism Confidence Index survey, with 67% of tourism professionals indicating better or much better prospects for 2024 compared to 2023.

The airline industry is also seeing an increase in capacity and more travelers are looking at diversity in terms of service providers offering multiple levels options in terms of pricing and product development.

The industry remains positive and hopeful as we enter 2024 that tourism will keep the same momentum and prepare to welcome a new generation of travelers while welcoming back our returning visitors to experience the best of Sri Lanka.



Dinushka

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NEWS

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SLYCAN Trust unveils ...

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Colombo Area Vice President and Cinnamon Grand Colombo General Manager Kamal Munasinghe added: "Partnering with institutions promoting culinary tourism, supporting evolving markets, and aligning with those elevating plant-based cuisine in Sri Lanka, we are delighted to collaborate and contribute significantly to the success of this initiative."



"Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Colombo, underlining sustainability and local heritage, work closely with partners to enhance ethical practices and cultivate sustainable consumption experiences. We're

not just fostering a vibrant culinary scene but also catering to the changing preferences of the market," he added.

ITB China Travel Trends Report: Unraveling the Latest Demands and Trends in China's Tourism Market

TTA BULLETIN

ITB China partners with Trip.com for the annual Travel Trends Report 2024/25, providing key insights into emerging trends, Chinese traveler behavior and opportunities in the booming tourism market. The report will be released concurrently with the trade show.



Sun Bo

ITB China, the leading B2B exclusive travel trade show focusing on the Chinese travel market, will launch the ITB China Travel Trends Report (TTR) 2024/25 during ITB China 2024, set to take place from 27 to 29 May 2024 at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center. Published annually by the organizers of ITB China, the report provides global strategists and decision-makers with first-hand insights into the latest trends in the Chinese travel market, enabling them to adapt their business operations to the rapidly evolving environment.

Partner of ITB China for the TTR 2024/25 is Trip.com - the leading online travel agency (OTA) and holder of extensive tourism data resources on China's travel market, which will be made available for comprehensive analysis, in-depth insights and future forecasts.

Sun Bo, Chief Marketing Officer of Trip.com Group and Executive Vice President of China Tourism Association, says: "After steady recovery, China's outbound travel

market is poised for rapid growth. By leveraging our platform advantages, Trip.com offers firsthand Chinese market tourism data to overseas destinations and travel suppliers, assisting them in adapting to changes in the Chinese tourism market and enhancing competitiveness. We are pleased to partner with ITB China to provide global industry operators with business inspiration and industry insights through the Travel Trends Report."

Alongside the data from Trip.com, the report's findings are based on a unique and proprietary analysis obtained through buyer surveys from the ITB China Buyers Circle, which comprises representatives from China's travel companies and agencies covering all business types. In parallel, a series of executive interviews with destinations, associations, leading travel agents, top industry newcomers, corporate buyers, MICE buyers and key opinion leaders will be conducted to provide a profound industry perspective.

ITB China offers global suppliers a highly efficient and productive platform with personalized matchmaking, extensive networking opportunities and in-depth information from key market players about the latest industry trends.

UNWTO at FITUR 2024: Investments, Sustainable Tourism and Collaboration

TTA BULLETIN

With Ecuador as the official partner country, FITUR International Tourism Trade Fair (Madrid, 23-26 January) will serve once again as a platform for global tourism innovation and collaboration.



At the first major tourism event of 2024, UNWTO will emphasise fostering investment opportunities and strengthening international partnerships during the event.

Investment: UNWTO will host key investment forums, including an "Invest in Zambia" event, and, in collaboration with the Investment Bank for Latin America (CAF) officially launch its "Investment Guidelines for Ecuador", shedding light on tourism investment prospects in these regions.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action: A Meeting of the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability will address sustainability challenges in the global tourism sector. UNWTO will host a meeting of signatories of the Glasgow

Declaration, highlighting the shared commitment to addressing climate challenges in the tourism sector.

Coordination and Collaboration: UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili will hold a number of bilateral meetings with Ministers of Tourism from all world regions to foster collaboration and strengthen partnerships to advance tourism for sustainable development.

UNWTO's yearly presence at FITUR underscores its commitment to driving positive change within the sector. The Organization remains dedicated to fostering sustainable practices, encouraging responsible investments, and facilitating global partnerships. UNWTO invites all stakeholders, industry professionals, and the public to join in the dialogue at FITUR 2024.

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Exhibition World Bahrain and IAPCO Partner to Position Bahrain as a Global MICE Leader

TTA BULLETIN

Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB), the Middle East's newest and largest exhibition and convention centre, has signed a partnership agreement with the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO), the world's leading association for professional congress organisers.

The new partnership agreement was signed on the sidelines of the 62nd annual ICCA Congress, held in Bangkok, Thailand. The signing ceremony was held in the presence of HE Dr. Nasser Qaedi, the CEO of Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), Dr. Debbie Kristiansen, the General Manager of EWB, Sarah Markey-Hamm, the IAPCO President and Mr. Martin Boyle, the CEO of IAPCO.

Under this new partnership, EWB will utilise IAPCO's global network of professional congress organisers (PCOs), knowledge exchange and training programmes, and the development of new business opportunities. In addition, EWB will be able to instil its position as a leading international exhibition and convention venue, while IAPCO's members will have access to EWB's state-of-the-art facilities and professional expertise. IAPCO's network will provide

EWB with a robust approach to a wide range of potential clients, including international organisations, associations, and corporations, tapping into new businesses from around the world.

Commenting, HE Dr. Nasser Qaedi, the CEO of BTEA, stated: "This significant agreement will support EWB's endeavour in driving the development and promotion of business tourism throughout the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Middle East efficiently. IAPCO's membership will certainly serve to champion the Kingdom as a dynamic global MICE leader and a key hub for supporting, developing, and growing businesses in vital sectors by drawing more world-class events in line with Bahrain's tourism strategy (2022-2026) objectives to achieve tourism product diversity and elevate inbound tourism substantially for years to come."

Dr. Debbie Kristiansen, the General Manager of EWB, added: "We are delighted to join IAPCO's high-profile list of prestigious members worldwide. This prominent membership will further strengthen the leading position of Bahrain as a preferred destination for hosting international events. We will work closely with IAPCO to highlight various events and exchange knowledge to lead business

events growth, which in turn boosts our core business in organising, planning, and managing local and international events, conventions, exhibitions, congresses and more. Thanks to its ultramodern amenities and cutting-edge capabilities, EWB is well positioned to attract the most well-known events across the globe."

Ms. Sarah Markey-Hamm, the IAPCO President, stated: "IAPCO is excited to form this partnership with Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB), a significant milestone that reinforces IAPCO's commitment to fostering global collaboration in the meetings industry. This collaboration not only expands our global network but also presents tremendous opportunities for our members to tap into the rapidly growing business events market in the Middle East. Through this alliance, we look forward to sharing knowledge, promoting professionalism, and bringing training and business opportunities to the region, contributing to the success of Bahrain as a premier destination for international events."

Mr. Martin Boyle, the CEO of IAPCO, said: "We are thrilled to ink this new partnership agreement with the Middle East's newest exhibition and convention



centre, which holds huge potential to become the leading MICE player in this vibrant region for professional congress organisers. IAPCO will offer a variety of knowledge exchange and brand exposure opportunities for its new partner, EWB. This will help EWB's staff improve their skills and knowledge, which will benefit EWB's clients, and identify new markets and develop new products and services."

In addition, EWB is now a proud member of 12 international organisations and associations specialising in the MICE and business tourism sector, including the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC), the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), and the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO).

Sabre and IAG expand partnership with multi-year distribution agreement including NDC content

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider to the global travel industry, has entered into a multi-year distribution agreement with International Airlines Group (IAG) that will expand their existing partnership and further promote modern travel retailing practices.

The agreement will allow Sabre-connected travel buyers and agencies to sell traditional EDIFACT content as well as having competitive access to NDC offers from British Airways, Iberia, Aer Lingus and Vueling – including Additional Price Points and ancillaries – through the Sabre travel marketplace globally. This enhanced content will provide travel agencies with a wider range of options to compare and shop for, while travellers will benefit from an improved experience with more choice and transparency. Sabre and IAG's airlines are working closely together and will communicate as NDC content is rolled out to Sabre-connected travel agencies on a carrier-by-carrier basis.

The agreement between Sabre and IAG underscores the industry's shift towards modern travel retailing, where airlines can differentiate their offerings and provide more personalised experiences to travellers. Both Sabre and IAG are committed to advancing the NDC standard as a key component in the industry's evolution towards modern airline retailing enabled by offers and orders.

Colm Lacy, British Airways' Chief Commercial Officer, said: "We are on a journey to A Better BA and we continue to invest across the business as part of that commitment. Not only are we improving the experience of those customers who fly with us, but also the way we work with our valued travel agent and travel buyer partners. We understand how valuable retailing is to them, and IAG's partnership with Sabre allows us to make a wide range of attractive offers available even further across the globe."

This agreement is another milestone in the IAG strategy to embrace digital retailing practices and offer more opportunities for customers to access NDC content.

The partnership with IAG demonstrates Sabre's continued commitment to driving value and serving the diverse interests of the global travel ecosystem.

"We are very excited about what's ahead. The travel industry is entering a new era of personalised retailing that will bring better experiences for travellers and new revenue opportunities for airlines and travel agencies," said Roshan Mendis, Chief Commercial Officer, Sabre Travel Solutions. "It's fantastic to work with a strong, forward-thinking partner like IAG that is just as committed as we are to driving the industry forwards."

Eventex Awards announces 2024 Events Industry Trends Report

TTA BULLETIN

Eventex Awards, the most esteemed accolade in the world of events and experience marketing, has released The Eventex 2024 Events Industry Trends Report, which comprises and elaborates the insight of the events industry's most prominent individuals and influencers about the trends that will shape the sector in 2024 and beyond.

The report includes several groups of contributors, namely the esteemed Eventex Awards 2024 jury members, Eventex Awards participants and winners, as well as other significant industry figures. As many as 59 event professionals from 25 countries all over the world contributed to the report, for a truly global events industry representation.

Some of the top trends mentioned in the report include the advent of Artificial Intelligence, the growing importance of sustainability, as well as increasing demand for personalization and immersion in events, among other trends.

"The events industry is at a crossroads. While emerging from the global



pandemic more resilient than ever, the sector is facing another major challenge — embracing new technologies and AI in particular, while preserving the human connection that is behind the magic of every event. This report will help everyone prepare for the challenges ahead — and turn them into opportunities. We at Eventex Awards will be here to celebrate the outcome, as the events industry professionals once again prove that no challenge is too big for their unparalleled creativity and innovation," notes Ovanes Ovanessian, Co-founder of Eventex Awards.

Founded in 2009 to celebrate creativity, innovation, and effectiveness in the industry, today Eventex Awards is the most esteemed international awards in the world of events and experiential marketing. Every year, the awards highlight the best agencies, events, tech, and suppliers from the world of events.



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TAT and TAGTHAi sign MOU to bolster Thailand tourism

TTA BULLETIN

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and Thai Digital Platform Social Enterprise Co., Ltd. signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to further raise awareness of TAGTHAi, the all-in-one Thailand application, as the must-have 'Super Aggregator Platform' for local and foreign tourists exploring Thailand.

The MOU was signed between Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor, and Mr. Kalin Sarasin, Chairman of the Management Committee of Thai Digital Platform Social Enterprise Co., Ltd., the owner and developer of TAGTHAi travel application. Mr. Kalin is also the Honorary Chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand.

The MOU places emphasis on Thailand's national development plan, "Thailand 4.0", which seeks to enhance the access of technology and the public-private data to drive the country's competitiveness and tourism industry. The TAGTHAi travel app is set as a platform for local businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, to promote their products and services.

Launched in 2019, TAGTHAi, pronounced "Tak-Thai" and means "greetings" in Thai. The all-in-one travel application is a collaboration platform between public and private agencies in Thailand that pooled



their resources to develop the app. Under the MOU, TAT will promote TAGTHAi via its marketing activities and publicity channels as well as share insightful information on popular and upcoming tourist attractions and tour routes. In exchange, TAGTHAi will provide data intelligence on tourist's travel preferences in Thailand, through analysis of user's activity. This will enable effective data-driven connections between TAT's online platforms and TAGTHAi.

TAT and TAGTHAi have already worked together through the TAGTHAi Pass – a Thai digital tourism pass, which allows tourist to make just one payment to access selected tourism-related services, especially by locals, including tourist attractions, workshops, restaurants, and spas.

Currently available are the City Pass for Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, and Ayutthaya, as well as travel experience passes including the Massage Pass, ONESIAM Pass, Golf Pass, and Elephant Lover Pass. In the pipeline are the expansion of the City Pass and Golf Pass to more destinations.

Tourists can download the TAGTHAi app via the App Store or Play Store. Visit <https://www.tagthai.com>

FITUR TALENT will be addressing human development in the digital context

TTA BULLETIN

FITUR Talent, a section organised by FITUR in collaboration with EDUCACIÓN 3.0, returns once again to the International Tourism Trade Fair being organised by IFEMA MADRID from 24 to 28 January 2024. With a focus on people, talent, education and professional training, this monographic space, which was launched at the 2020 edition, will take place on Thursday 25 in Hall 10 and will feature authoritative voices from organisations and companies who will discuss the role played by artificial intelligence in the selection and management of human resources, its opportunities, benefits and challenges, as well as everything related to talent in the tourism sector.

Under the title 'The human factor in the tourism industry: talent in times of Artificial Intelligence', the FITUR Talent section has the sponsorship and participation of leading companies which will be hosting different talks in order to analyse the sector. This section receives Premium Sponsorship from ManpowerGroup Spain, ZITHS (Zambia Institute of Tourism & Hospitality Studies) and ESIC, to give visibility to talent challenges and opportunities. The event is also supported by Basic Sponsorship from UIB, HTL, GEHOCAN, Hotelbeds and ASETUR.

ManpowerGroup Spain will be presenting how -in a context of talent mismatch and

changing priorities of professionals- companies in the tourism sector are forced to rethink their attraction, selection and loyalty strategies and how they need to adapt. For its part, ZITHS will be developing the key elements of the 'Africa Travel, Hospitality & Tourism Education' Summit, a space to promote tourism with a focus on human development in African countries, explore innovations and showcase ongoing trade and investment in industrial education. ESIC Business & Marketing School will talk about how to work in the luxury tourism industry and will explain from his point of view what are the keys to success.

The University of the Balearic Islands will be exploring the change in worker profiles in the tourism industry and will be providing the vision of adaptation of the entities dedicated to training with new programmes and projects. Also participating at the event will be spokespersons from the Faculty of Tourism, the cluster of IT and Communication companies applied to Tourism (Turistec), and the firm Direct Beds, which will be presenting its success story for the integration of students into the job market.



Aitken Spence Travels welcomes the inaugural flight from Uzbekistan for Winter 2023/24 Season

TTA BULLETIN

Aitken Spence Travels, the foremost destination management company in Sri Lanka, welcomed the inaugural special charter flight from Uzbekistan for the Winter 2023/24 season to the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA) recently. Operated by 'Uzbekistan Airways', the national carrier of Uzbekistan, the flight brought nearly 200 Uzbek holidaymakers to Sri Lanka.

Throughout their stay, the visitors could enjoy the golden sandy beaches of the southern belt and explore the country via different excursions. From luxurious 4 and 5 star accommodation options to charming boutique properties along the coastal area, guests are expected to experience the true essence of Sri Lankan hospitality.

Managing Director of Aitken Spence Travels Mr. Nalin Jayasundera, stated that "The operation was made possible through our strategic partnership with the leading Uzbekistan tour operator after conducting several meetings. During these visits we held comprehensive destination presentations to educate and enhance agents' product knowledge. Further familiarisation tours to the agents to experience and enjoy the exotic diversity of Sri Lanka as a true holiday

destination has been provided to help promote the country".

Commenting on this significant flight arrival to MRIA, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Deputy Managing

Director of Aitken Spence and Head of Tourism & Leisure for the Group, Stasshani Jayawardena said, "We are delighted to tap into this emerging source markets and be able to operate charters to grow visitor numbers. This shows our partner's confidence in our ability to deliver a quality service and our ability to manage all logistics towards this special flight operation commencing in December 2023".

Uzbekistan is an emerging market for Sri Lanka and as we step into the third season of this venture, the flights are anticipated to continue operations until end of April 2024. With over forty-five years of crafting unforgettable memories in inbound tourism, Aitken Spence Travels remains steadfast in its commitment to expanding horizons and earning the trust of agents in new territories. We will continue to contribute to the growth and sustenance of tourism and build a positive impact in our operators and stakeholders' mindset for the progress of the destination.





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MOVEMENTS

Stuart De San Nicolas Appointed Cluster General Manager for Three Minor Hotels Properties in the Maldives

TTA BULLETIN

Stuart De San Nicolas has been appointed as the new Cluster General Manager for Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas, Avani+ Fares Resort and NH Collection Maldives Havodda, effective from 23rd December 2023. With over 30 years of hands-on industry experience, gained from an impressive career that has taken him to locations as diverse as Europe, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, Stuart is well-equipped to lead this new management role.



Stuart De San Nicolas

resorts in the Maldives. Anantara Kihavah is truly the definition of paradise and I look forward to guiding this award-winning resort into the next chapter together with our incredible team, Mr. De San Nicolas commented. "With the recent introduction of the Avani+ and NH Collection brands to the Maldives, Minor Hotels has such a strong footprint in the market bringing the finest world-class standards to all sectors of this popular tourist destination."

With 80 luxurious villas and residences on an island within the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Anantara Kihavah is one of Minor Hotels' flagship properties. Guests at the resort can indulge in a diverse culinary journey at six restaurants and bars, including the legendary SEA Underwater Restaurant. The resort also boasts an array of leisure facilities, including an outdoor cinema, a kids club, a water sports centre, and a dive centre. For ultimate relaxation, guests can rejuvenate at the Anantara Spa, which offers Asian therapies, aesthetic treatments, immunity-boosting Medi-spa, and ancient ayurvedic wellness treatments.

Another tropical haven situated on the western edge of the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Avani+ Fares Resort is an upscale, family-friendly resort showcasing 176 stylish villas and residences, along with pavilions, seven bars and restaurants, world-class diving facilities, a water sports centre, an AvaniFit gym, and a contemporary AvaniSpa. The AvaniKids and Teens Club buzzes with daily programming and exciting outdoor adventures, creating a vibrant hub for young guests.

Nestled on a private island in the Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll, NH Collection Maldives Havodda boasts a mix of 120 beach and overwater villas, each offering a home-away-from-home experience with modern amenities and breathtaking views. The resort features three restaurants and two bars, providing guests with sensational culinary experiences. Beyond dining, NH Collection Maldives Havodda offers extensive leisure facilities, including an outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre, spa, all-purpose court, kids' club, water sports and dive centre, as well as the opportunity to obtain a scuba diving license.

A native of Spain, Stuart joins Minor Hotels from Conrad Bora Bora Nui, where he helped to elevate the resort's luxury offerings through his position as General Manager. Having begun his hospitality journey in 1993 at the Hyatt Regency group in France, Stuart went on to take various roles in the front office and food and beverage departments of hotels around the world as he developed his hospitality expertise.

For more than 20 years, Stuart has held the position of General Manager in such prestigious hotels as Altapura in France, Dinarobin Beachcomber Golf Hotel & Spa in Mauritius, Marriott Islamabad, Pik Palace and Park Chalet, both part of Marriott's Autograph Collection in Azerbaijan, Hotel Paracas, a Luxury Collection Resort in Peru, The St. Regis Mauritius, and Le Meridien Bora Bora.

With his well-seasoned leadership style, Stuart has also enjoyed considerable success at leading and motivating large teams with a steadfast commitment to delivering five-star experiences for guests. Demanding nothing short of excellence in the daily operations of the resorts under his charge, Stuart has a strong track record of consistently surpassing guest expectations.

"We are delighted to welcome Stuart to the Minor family and to our leadership team in the Maldives. With his extensive experience and passion for excellence in service, we are confident that he will continue to enhance Minor Hotels growing presence within in the region," said Dillip Rajakarier, Chief Executive Officer of Minor Hotels and Group Chief Executive Officer of Minor International.

"I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to lead three of the best luxury

Sunil Dissanayake Appointed as Visiting Faculty – University of Jaffna

TTA BULLETIN

Sunil Dissanayake - Retired DG of BMICH and Hospitality / MICE & HR Professional has been appointed as a Visiting Faculty Member for Business Administration Honors Degree in Tourism & Hospitality Management effective November 2023, by the Vice Chancellor, University of Jaffna.

He has also been appointed as an Advisor to the Northern Province Tourism Association by the Executive Committee.



Sunil Dissanayake

Travel Bridge brings exclusive AmaWaterways cruise operator to Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Travel Bridge Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of Expolanka Holdings, introduces upscale river cruise vacations to the discerning Sri Lankan traveller, through AmaWaterways. Building on mutual synergies as a part of the Expolanka Leisure Cluster, this new opportunity comes through the global travel agency network community, Travel Leaders Network International, which assists millions of leisure and business travellers annually as one of the largest sellers of luxury travel, cruises, and tours in the industry.

AmaWaterways has received many prestigious travel industry awards including USA Today's Readers' Choice for Best River Cruise Line in 2018 and continues to commandeer a top spot amongst other operators in this category, winning four awards at the 2023 ASTA Global Convention notably for River Cruise Partner of The Year and Supplier Medal of Excellence. It is the only cruise line on Europe's rivers to be a member of the prestigious international gastronomy organizations La Chaîne des Rôtisseurs and Tables et Auberges and the first river cruise line to have 20 of its European ships receive Green Awards for sustainabil-



Kristin Karst, Farah Mannan and Raiza Saldin

ity. Raiza Saldin, Head of Sales, and Farah Mannan, Head of Operations, jointly commented on this exciting launch, saying, "Travel Bridge is truly excited to introduce AmaWaterways to the Sri Lankan market. With their award-winning ships, world-class cuisine, and impeccable service, we are confident that this unique way of experiencing destinations will greatly appeal to new and seasoned travellers. One of the key drivers behind the increased demand for river cruises is the hassle-free and seamless travel experience it offers, allowing guests to visit up to five countries during an eight day period and eliminating the need to pack and unpack at every port of call. AmaWaterways' river cruises visit over 32 countries and guests who opt to reserve their spacious, signature twin balcony staterooms will enjoy spectacular views as they cruise along some of the world's most famous rivers. AmaWaterways' full range of luxurious river cruise and land packages will be available for bookings through any local travel agent."

Sabre appoints Samuel Machado as Managing Director to spearhead agency business growth across India and South Asia

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, is pleased to announce the appointment of Samuel Machado as Managing Director to oversee Sabre's agency business across India and South Asia. With a wealth of technology experience and a proven record of success across the travel ecosystem, Sam is uniquely positioned to drive exceptional customer experiences and insightful innovation in this dynamic region.



Samuel Machado

world's fastest-growing travel markets and customers are relying on Sabre to drive innovation and shape the future of travel. Sam brings a technology-centric approach with rich expertise in sales, account management and customer experience, both in India and internationally. We're paving the way for accelerated growth across India and South Asia, and Sam's strategic vision and relentless focus on customer success and innovative technology solutions will differentiate Sabre in the marketplace."

Sam is returning to Sabre, having previously joined Sabre Hospitality Solutions in 2011 as head of account management in India, progressing through varied roles before moving to Singapore to drive sales for the Asia Pacific region. He began his career in the travel and hospitality industry with renowned brands such as Jet Airways and Starwood Hotels & Resorts, now part of Marriott International. Most recently, Sam, who holds a master's in management studies and a degree in mechanical engineering, was Senior Vice President, Business Development, Travel & Hospitality (APAC), at Teleperformance, a global digital business services company.

"We're delighted that Sam is re-joining our Sabre family," said Brett Thorstad, Vice President of Sabre Travel Solutions, Agency Sales, Asia Pacific. "India is one of the

"I'm honoured and excited to be returning to India and South Asia, a region where I began my journey with Sabre back in 2011 and have forged lifelong friendships," said Samuel Machado. "India's travel sector is dynamic and rapidly growing, and I look forward to driving further growth and development for Sabre across this important region. I'm excited to be working with the talented Sabre team and our travel partners to drive digital transformation, enhance customer experiences, and unlock new opportunities for growth in India and the wider South Asia marketplace."

Sam will be based in Mumbai. He and his team will be focusing on supporting both online and brick and mortar agency customers, reinforcing Sabre's commitment to its customer-centric and industry leading technology-driven approach.

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Strong representation from the Kingdom expected at Arabian Travel Market 2024 as Saudi Arabia increases its 2030 visitor target to 150 million

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."

In line with its theme, 'Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship', the 31st edition of ATM will once again host policymakers, industry leaders and travel professionals from across the Middle East and beyond, encouraging them to forge new relationships, exchange knowledge and identify innovations that can reshape the future of global travel and tourism. From startups to established brands, the upcoming show will highlight how innovators enhance customer experiences, drive efficiencies, and accelerate progress towards a net-zero future for the industry.

Building on ATM 2023's 'Working Towards Net Zero' theme, environmentally responsible travel will represent another key focus this year. Informed by the UAE's Year of Sustainability and the most recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which took place in Dubai last year, ATM 2024 will explore how innovation can be leveraged to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), creating a greener travel and tourism sector for future generations.

More than 40,000 travel trade professionals, including 30,000 visitors, attended the 30th edition of ATM in May 2023, setting a new show record. The exhibition attracted more than 2,100 exhibitors and representatives from over 155 countries, providing a global platform for the unveiling of ATM's net-zero pledge.

Held in conjunction with Dubai World Trade Centre, ATM 2024's strategic partners include Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Destination Partner; Emirates, Official Airline Partner; IHG Hotels & Resorts, Official Hotel Partner; and Al Rais Travel, Official DMC Partner.

ONYX Hospitality Group Unveils Signature Scents for its Amari and Shama Brands, Infused with South-east Asian Essence

TTA BULLETIN

ONYX Hospitality Group, the prominent management company in Southeast Asia specialising in hotels & resorts, serviced apartments and luxury residences, embarks on a new sensory journey with the launch of signature scents for its distinct brands, Amari and Shama.



These bespoke fragrances, meticulously crafted around the tagline "Freedom to Explore" for Shama and "Brighten Your World" for Amari, promise to transport guests to a world of fragrant harmony from the moment they step into the welcoming lobbies.

"Explore Bliss by Shama": Evoking the spirit of discovery and boundless exploration, "Explore Bliss by Shama" unfolds with a vibrant medley of crisp green and citrus notes, reminiscent of lush landscapes. This invigorating opening gives way to a harmonious dance of jasmine, lily of the valley, and ylang-ylang, delicately laced with rosemary and ginger. The scent culminates in a warm embrace of musk and woody base notes. The vibrant scent evokes purity, transparency, warmth and cosiness, crafting an enchanting and enduring sensory journey for all of Shama's guests, further enhancing the home away from home experience.

The Shama brand is renowned for its commitment to providing contemporary, stylish, and spacious serviced apartments, where vibrant community thrives in a cosy homely haven. At each Shama property, a true sanctuary of belonging is created – strangers become family, greeted with open arms and a sense of home.

The Shama foundation is built on community, fostering heartwarming connections. Whether a brief visit or settling in for an extended stay, everyone is embraced as part of the Shama family. Spaces are thoughtfully curated to encourage residents and neighbours to relax and connect, inviting them to uncover hidden charms of the neighbourhood with the freedom to explore. Shama embodies tranquillity, echoed in the brand's rippling logo representing lively local cultures and daily experiences.

"Amari Thai Twist": Embracing the spirit of joyful connection and cultural vibrancy, "Amari Thai Twist" captivates with a modern interpretation of Thai heritage. Top notes of exotic Champaca flower, blend seamlessly with citrus and fruity nuances, painting a picture of sun-drenched beaches and tropical delights. The middle notes reveal a delicate interplay of jasmine tea, freesia, and osmanthus, showcasing a refined sweetness. Finally, the fragrance rests on a foundation of musk and woody amber, adding depth and sophistication.

"Amari Thai Twist" is an elegant fragrance, a modern design of complexity yet simplicity, to create a delightful and memorable olfactory journey for all Amari guests. The combination of Champaca, which is the backbone of the European

"Joy" fragrance that has been famous for more than 80 years, together with the traditional Asian subtlety of the Osmanthus Flower, suggests a vibrant organisation proud of its Asian roots but with a strong multicultural and forward-thinking outlook, reflecting the values of the Amari brand. Amari stands as the centrepiece within ONYX Hospitality Group's diverse portfolio, embodying the warmth and dynamism of a continually evolving modern Asia. With properties spanning Thailand, Malaysia, the Maldives, and beyond, every Amari location serves as a vibrant reflection of its unique setting, offering contemporary spaces brimming with energy and local menus crafted for shared experiences with family and friends.

Amari's dedication to enriching every delightful moment goes beyond typical hospitality. Every facet, from architecture to design, art, cuisine, and service, reflects the distinctive essence of its locale. From picturesque coastlines to dynamic city centres, Amari cherishes guests' moments of joy, merging local heritage with vibrant experiences, with the aim of achieving the brand's tagline: 'Brighten Your World'. Always forward-thinking and attuned to the needs of guests, Amari provides personalised warmth at every guest interaction, ensuring every stay is a celebration of contemporary luxury rooted in tradition.

At the heart of both scents lies jasmine, a blossom deeply woven into the cultural tapestry of Southeast Asia. This fragrant choice not only pays homage to the region's heritage but also subtly infuses the atmosphere with the flower's well-known wellness benefits, known to boost mood, promote relaxation, enhance focus, and even assist with enjoying a peaceful deep slumber.

The creation of these signature scents represents ONYX Hospitality Group's dedication to enriching the guest experiences at every touchpoint. By capturing the essence of the Amari and Shama brands and weaving in the richness of Southeast Asian culture and wellness, the signature scents are designed to evoke a sense of belonging, discovery, and joy whilst evoking memories to last long after the guests have returned home. The scents will become unforgettable beacons welcoming back returning travellers.

The "Explore Bliss by Shama" scent will be gradually introduced throughout 2024, while "Amari Thai Twist" is already welcoming guests across Amari properties.



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HOTELS

Slow Food is Back at Mount Lavinia Hotel

TTA BULLETIN

Slow food, a concept that emphasizes the importance of locally sourced ingredients and the connection between food and the environment, is making a comeback at the prestigious Mount Lavinia Hotel. Known for hosting a variety of slow food events in the past, the hotel is set to dazzle guests with a series of twelve slow food events this year, each highlighting a different cuisine every month.



Anura Dewapura



Riccardo

MLH has gained a reputation for its commitment to the slow food movement. Previous events have showcased exquisite cuisines such as Indian, Puerto Rican, Swedish, French, Swiss, and many more. This year, the hotel will take it a step further by dedicating this once-a-month event to a specific cuisine. From Italian to Swedish, and Puerto Rican to French, this exciting lineup promises to delight food enthusiasts and ignite their passion for slow food.

The upcoming event; SLOW FOOD - ITALIAN is scheduled for the 27th of January 2024 at the Horizon Rooftop of Mount Lavinia Hotel. The evening will feature a family-style dinner, accompanied by a selection of carefully curated beverages.

Anura Dewapura (Chief Operating Officer - MLHG) is a strong advocate for the slow food concept and describes it as "a collected thought of tastes, tradition, and consciousness or an endorsement of that strong link between plate and planet". During his tenure in 2010 as the hotel's General Manager, he introduced the concept of slow food to Mount Lavinia Hotel and the city of Colombo. His efforts were met with enthusiasm by the corporate community, leading to a greater awareness and appreciation for slow food. Now, with much excitement, Mount Lavinia Hotel reintroduces this beloved concept to its patrons.

The philosophy behind the slow food

movement lies in the concept of farm-to-table dining. It focuses on using local ingredients to create fresh and flavorful dishes that not only satisfy the taste buds but also promote sustainability and support local farmers. It's a culinary approach that has gained popularity worldwide, with many corporates endorsing the fact that Slow Food, or eco-gastronomy, is the way forward in the culinary world.

The slow food events at Mount Lavinia Hotel is a meeting ground for like-minded individuals and businesses that embrace sustainable culinary practices. This year's series of events will attract renowned corporates who have recognized that slow food and eco-gastronomy are the way forward in the culinary world. By joining forces with the hotel, these corporates will endorse the principles of slow food and contribute to a growing movement that aims to create a sustainable future for the food industry.

The return of Slow Food to Mount Lavinia Hotel is a testament to the hotel's commitment to providing exceptional culinary experiences. By embracing the farm-to-table philosophy and supporting local farmers, the hotel is not only satisfying the discerning palates of its guests but also playing a vital role in promoting sustainability and responsible dining.

As the event draws near, food enthusiasts and connoisseurs alike eagerly anticipate the flavors that await them. It's a celebration of cuisine, community, sustainability, and the connection between food and the planet.



Heritage Hotels and Resorts Announces Strategic Partnership with Galle Literary Festival

TTA BULLETIN

In alignment with its commitment to preserving Sri Lanka's cultural identity, Heritage Hotels and Resorts, the flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, proudly announces its collaboration with the Galle Literary Festival (GLF) 2024. This partnership takes the form of a captivating discussion led by esteemed architects Channa Daswatte, Sunela Jayewardene, and Johann Peiris. As a crucial component of the festival's extensive lineup, this session focuses on the preservation and re-narration of Sri Lankan cultural histories, establishing a meaningful dialogue that resonates with the rich heritage of the island.



Stashani Jayawardena

Heritage Hotels and Resorts champions and actively contributes to the dialogue on cultural and architectural preservation. The concept of Tropical Modernism in architecture often reflects a connection to cultural histories in tropical regions. Deshamanya Geoffrey Bawa often drew inspiration from local traditions, materials, and climate to create designs

that were both modern and rooted in the cultural context and are represented in some of his iconic works such as Heritage Kandalama, Heritage Ahungalla and Heritage Ayurveda. This fusion aims to address practical needs while preserving the identity of the place within the tropical environment.

This collaborative initiative seamlessly connects with the ethos of Heritage Hotels and Resorts, where the essence lies in the harmonious blend of heritage and inheritance. By intricately weaving these cultural facets into its architecture, design, and experiences, Heritage Hotels and Resorts contributes to preserving Sri Lanka's identity and its origins. The collaboration with the Galle Literary Festival serves as a tangible expression of Heritage's commitment to promoting and celebrating the diverse cultural tapestry of Sri Lanka.

Sharing her views on this strategic partnership, Stashani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings stated, "In the backdrop of the Galle Literary Festival, this collaboration takes on profound significance. It underscores Heritage Hotels and Resorts' commitment to preserving and aligning with the enduring narrative of our past. Moving beyond the confines of hotels, this signifies a dedicated effort to intricately weave our past into an inspired future; it is a shared endeavour to preserve and thoughtfully re-narrate the intricate cultural histories of Sri Lanka".

As a custodian of Geoffrey Bawa's legacy,

Minor Hotels Announces Upcoming Debut of Luxury Anantara Brand in Austria

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, the parent company behind luxury hotel brands Anantara, Tivoli and Elewana Collection, is pleased to announce an exciting



upcoming addition to the Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas portfolio in the Austrian capital of Vienna. As part of the group's strategic expansion across Europe, Anantara Palais Hansen Vienna Hotel will launch in March 2024.

The hotel is situated in the heart of Vienna on the renowned Schottenring, part of the city's Ring Boulevard, and occupies a listed palace built in 1873 by Theophil Hansen for the occasion of the Vienna World's Exhibition. Over the years the palace has served as various municipal offices and cultural venues, before being transformed into a luxury hotel in 2013, currently operating as Palais Hansen Kempinski. Many of Vienna's cultural and artistic attractions can be found in close proximity to the historically listed 150-year-old building, while a nearby U-bahn station connects with the rest of the city.

To be launched under the Anantara flag in March next year, the rebranded property will feature 152 classically decorated guest rooms and suites on three floors, including a 270-square metre Presidential Suite, the largest in the Austrian capital. Dining options will include a Michelin-starred restaurant, regional cuisine at the Wintergarten, an elegant Lobby Lounge & Bar and Cigar Lounge.

Ten function rooms spanning the ground floor and mezzanine level make the hotel a popular location for meetings and events, while the ballroom can host gala dinners, weddings and conferences for up to 265 people. Leisure facilities will include an indoor swimming pool, fitness centre and spa.

Anantara Palais Hansen Vienna Hotel will undergo a significant renovation, during which the full suite of Anantara hallmarks and experiences will be introduced. Starting later in 2024 and continuing throughout 2025, the refurbishment will include guest rooms and suites, the lobby, meeting spaces, restaurants and ba



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HOTELS

Cinnamon Colombo Hotels & Streets of Colombo Unveil 'Discovery': A Captivating Photography Exhibition Showcasing a Unique Perspective of the City of Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Colombo, a vibrant metropolis pulsating with the energy of over 750,000 residents and ever-expanding horizons, is a city whose heartbeat resonates in the warmth of its people and their unparalleled hospitality. Behind its bustling facade lies a treasure trove of secrets, patiently awaiting discovery. In an ode to the city's allure, a dynamic group of young photographers has embarked on a mission to unveil Colombo's multifaceted charm through a fresh new perspective.



Manager-Cinnamon Grand Colombo, delivered poignant opening remarks, inviting all to embark on a transformative journey of exploration, uncovering the hidden gems and untold stories that weave a narrative celebrating the essence of this extraordinary city and embracing its ever-evolving tapestry.

In a visionary collaboration, Cinnamon Colombo Hotels joined hands with Streets of Colombo earlier this year to embark on a one-of-a-kind project, a visual narrative that would eloquently tell the tales of Colombo through the artistry of photography. The inaugural chapter of this extraordinary campaign unfolded at the Atrium, Cinnamon Grand Colombo, where a press conference marked the commencement of a journey destined to capture the city's essence. This platform for emerging talent received over 500 submissions, each a unique expression of Colombo's spirit. Today, amidst anticipation, 52 outstanding works were unveiled, curated by a distinguished panel of judges—Dominic Sansoni, Luxshman Nadarajah, Sarath Perera, and Panduka De Silva—adding a brilliant chapter to Colombo's visual legacy.

As this captivating photography exhibition unfolds, it is accompanied by a series of mini events, including exclusive workshops featuring the esteemed Alfredo D'amato, a luminary in the world of photography. Renowned for his profound visual storytelling, Alfredo's work has graced the pages of prestigious international newspapers and magazines. His impactful collaborations with UNHCR, UNICEF, and various NGOs in Europe and beyond underscore his commitment to using photography for meaningful change. A laureate of accolades such as the Observer Hodge Award and the UNICEF Photo of the Year, Alfredo's expertise will illuminate the workshops, offering participants a rare opportunity to learn from a master storyteller and award-winning photojournalist.

At the heart of the grand launch ceremony, a distinguished panel discussion unfolded, featuring luminaries such as Alfredo D'amato, alongside esteemed judges Dominic Sansoni and Luxshman Nadarajah. Joining this lineup were the visionary Founder of Streets of Colombo Johan Latiff and co-partner David Blacker, both celebrated photographers and ardent street photography enthusiasts. Guiding the discourse with finesse, the panel was expertly moderated by Azara Jaleel, Editor-in-Chief of the renowned ARTRA Magazine. Setting the tone for the evening, Kamal Munasinghe, Area Vice-President – Cinnamon Colombo Hotels and General

In 2018, the inception of Streets of Colombo marked the passionate collaboration of a group of visionaries dedicated to capturing the singular charm embedded in the streets of Colombo. Evolving from a handful of enthusiasts, the group has blossomed into a vibrant community of like-minded individuals, embarking on weekly city walks to unravel the hidden mysteries scattered throughout Colombo's diverse landscapes. As the collective spirit thrived, the initiative transcended geographical boundaries, welcoming enthusiasts from picturesque locales such as Kandy, Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Galle. Streets of Colombo has become a dynamic tapestry, weaving stories from every corner, narrating the unique tales that echo within the heart of Sri Lanka's urban and cultural landscape.

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, steadfast in its commitment to championing arts and culture, continues to foster a deep connection with creativity. Embracing the vibrant pulse of Colombo, the project unfolds as a testament to this enduring relationship, casting the city in a captivating new light through the lens of its own residents. In this collaboration with Streets of Colombo, the metropolis becomes a canvas, revealing the diverse tapestry of its inhabitants and offering visitors a panoramic glimpse into this multifaceted city.

Heritage Ahungalla Triumphs at The Great Indian Food Festival in Singapore, Clinching Top Honors

TTA BULLETIN

Heritage Ahungalla, part of the Sri Lankan premier hospitality chain Aitken Spence Hotels, has achieved a resounding victory at The Great Indian Food Festival held in Singapore. The esteemed event, organised by the Indian Chef Association, witnessed Heritage Ahungalla representing Sri Lanka securing the coveted first place in the 'three-course Indian menu' category.



Representing Sri Lanka with culinary finesse, Heritage Ahungalla emerged triumphant among strong contenders, surpassing India, who secured the second position, and Japan, clinching third place. The victory underscores Heritage Ahungalla's commitment to culinary excellence and innovation, showcasing the depth and authenticity of Sri Lankan flavours on an international platform.

The Great Indian Food Festival, held on 9 December as part of a 14-day celebration highlighting the richness of Indian culinary heritage, brought together a plethora of flavours, from traditional favourites to innovative reimaginings of classic dishes. This esteemed gathering showcased trendsetting creations by local and regional chefs, celebrating the diverse and rich tapestry of Indian cuisine.

Two exceptional chefs from Heritage Ahungalla including Executive Chef Kamal Surendrajith proudly represented Sri Lanka at the festival, exhibiting their expertise and mastery in crafting a delectable three-course Indian menu that captivated the taste buds of the esteemed judges and attendees alike.

Speaking about this momentous

achievement, Aitken Spence Hotels Jt. Managing Director Susith Jayawickrama expressed, "We are immensely proud of our team at Heritage Ahungalla for this remarkable win. Their dedication to showcasing their skills representing our island nation on an international stage has been truly exemplary. This victory reinforces our commitment to delivering unparalleled culinary experiences and celebrating the diverse flavours that our properties have to offer."

Aitken Spence Hotels Ambassador for Heritage Cuisine/ Chefs & Culinary Art Development and Asst. Vice President of Food and Beverage Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe was also invited as an esteemed judge for The Great Indian Food Festival, however, refrained from judging the category of the aforementioned win.

The success at The Great Indian Food Festival is a testament to Heritage Ahungalla's culinary prowess and dedication to presenting exceptional dining experiences to its patrons. As a part of Aitken Spence Hotels, Heritage Ahungalla continues to set benchmarks in the hospitality industry through its innovation, creativity, and commitment to excellence.

Amari Raaya Maldives Celebrates Dual Victory at LLM Readers' Travel Awards 2023

TTA BULLETIN

Amari Raaya Maldives proudly announces its outstanding achievement in clinching two prestigious awards at the esteemed LLM Readers' Travel Awards 2023. The luxury resort, nestled in the pristine Raa Atoll of the Maldives, emerged victorious in the categories of "Best Beach/Coastal Hotel" and "Best Hotel for Romance."



The Maldives stands as one of the world's most romantic destinations, and Amari Raaya Maldives epitomises a romantic paradise, offering an idyllic escape for couples seeking to transcend the ordinary and reconnect. From the moment of arrival, the resort's natural beauty, luxurious accommodations, attentive service, and a plethora of romantic experiences capture the hearts of couples. Whether it's a private candlelit dinner on the beach, a serene couples' spa treatment at the resort's maai spa, a romantic sunset cruise, or simply strolling hand-in-hand along the picture-perfect white sandy beaches, Amari

Raaya Maldives curates moments that etch everlasting memories for couples, fostering intimacy and connection amidst breathtaking surroundings. Additionally, the resort's expansive island provides ample seclusion and acres of beachfront for intimate weddings and private moments.

The LLM Readers' Travel Awards, now in its sixth illustrious year, stands as a beacon in recognising excellence across the global travel industry. Showcasing the finest hotels, top-tier airlines, cruise lines, exotic destinations, and exceptional tour operators, the awards celebrate a realm of unparalleled luxury and hospitality.

Amari Raaya Maldives distinguishes itself as a haven for travellers seeking a unique and immersive experience in the Maldives. With its sprawling island, the resort offers an array of activities both on and off the crystal-clear waters, catering to couples, families, and friends alike.

Ravana Pool Club Ella Sri Lanka revered with three World Luxury Awards

TTA BULLETIN

Nestled within the breathtaking landscape of Sri Lanka's hill country, the Ravana Pool Club was recently awarded three outstanding awards at the 17th annual World Luxury Awards held in Athens Greece. The Gala awards ceremony was hosted by Grand Hyatt Athens, Greece.

between the man-made oasis and the untouched beauty of the surroundings. The project concept was to be a "beach club" in the mountains with the contrast of offering an expansive mountain and valley view but with the ambiance and feel of a traditional beach club.



The Ravana Pool Club was named Luxury Entertainment Restaurant in the Asian Continent, Best Panoramic Views in the regional category under South West Asia and Outstanding Architecture also in the regional category under South West Asia. The Ravana Pool Club offers a slice of paradise that seamlessly combines luxury, nature, and relaxation. As the sun casts its warm glow over the misty hills, the Ravana Pool Club beckons guests to experience a unique blend of opulence and tranquility. Let's delve into the allure of this exclusive retreat and discover why it stands out as a gem amidst the lush greenery of Ella.

Perched on the verdant hills of Ella, and affiliated with the renowned 98 Acres Resort & Spa, this pool club provides a stunning backdrop, surrounded by tea plantations with a panoramic view of the famous Ella Gap, Little Adams' Peak and Ella Rock

The exquisite Balinese-inspired architecture invites you to bask in a harmonious blend of elegance and relaxation. Conceptualized by renowned Australian architects from Bali, the designers have skillfully integrated the pool club into the natural terrain, creating a seamless harmony

The use of bamboo was key for this project allowing us to create a unique organic design that creates a relaxed tropical feeling for the guests. Bamboo as well as being very sustainable and an eco-friendly natural material provide the opportunity for a biophilic design. The use of bamboo allowed the building to mirror its stunning location and fit into the surrounding environment without looking unnatural and out of place. The superstructure and roof are 100% bamboo using 12 metre long columns 200mm in diameter to create dramatic spaces and bamboo shingles as roofing which allows a variety of roof pitches and shapes. All the bamboo for the project was imported from Bali Indonesia and constructed by skilled Bamboo Artisans.

The Ravana Pool Club is more than a club concept; it's an immersive experience. The infinity pool, seemingly suspended between the sky and the valley below, offers guests an unparalleled panoramic view. Whether you're lounging by the poolside on a day bed with a refreshing cocktail or taking a leisurely swim, every moment is a sensory delight.

As the day unfolds, the Ravana Pool Club



transforms into a venue for captivating sunset soirees. Guests can unwind with live music, savoring gourmet cuisine and handcrafted cocktails as the sun dips below the horizon. The entertainment provided by in-house DJ's encompasses a chilled out vibe as the poolside ambiance takes on a magical quality, making every evening a memorable affair.

The Ravana Pool club is ideal for all ages. An example of some of the most popular features is the "Kids MasterChef camps". This has been a sought after activity for the teens and pre-teens while the Sunset pool parties caters to those both young and young at heart. For thrill seekers, the daring 'Ella Swing' is located adjacent to the pool club and offers the perfect adrenaline experience.



The delectable fusion menu serves up a range of culinary delights offering the best of East and West ranging from a hearty breakfast to high tea and smoking grills. A unique cocktail and bar menu has been designed by Indika De Silva of Toddy Tapper in Cologne Germany using local and residue ingredients to bring a variety of global and local favourites under one roof. The Ravana Pool club offers guests the ability to embark on a culinary journey which heightens the senses in every possible way.

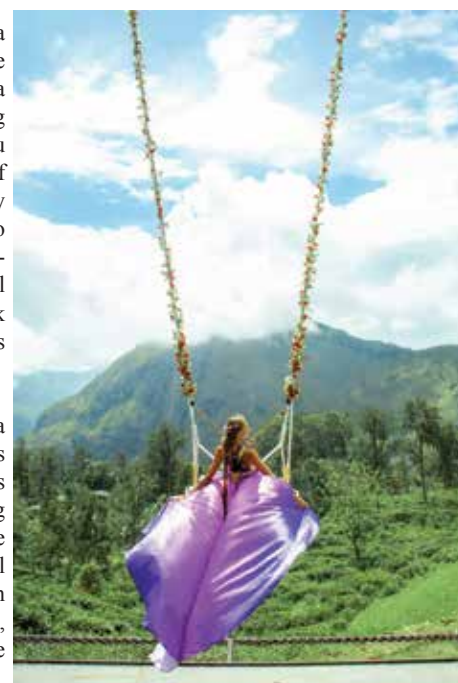
Beyond its aesthetic allure, the Ravana Pool Club at 98 Acres embraces eco-friendly practices. The resort is committed to sustainability, ensuring that guests can revel in luxury while minimizing their environmental footprint. This commitment adds an extra layer of depth to the experience, allowing guests to connect with nature responsibly.

Located on an area of 2620 m², one of the highlights is the strategic location of the club, adjacent to the iconic 98 Acre tea plantation and a mere 10-minute drive from the heart of Ella.



The Ravana Pool Club at 98 Acres Resort in Sri Lanka is not merely a destination; it's a retreat that harmoniously

blends natural beauty with refined luxury. As guests immerse themselves in the serenity of Ella's hills, the Ravana Pool Club offers an unforgettable escape, inviting them to unwind, rejuvenate, and create lasting memories in this idyllic corner of paradise.



HOTELS

The Dry-aged Steak Guy Returns Home for London Grill Take-Over

Founder of the Clubhouse Steakhouse in London Chef Azam Riyard is set to create a unique dining experience at Cinnamon Grand Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Grand Colombo is set to tantalise the taste buds of Colombo's meat lovers and grill aficionados with a unique dining experience at the iconic London Grill, featuring the renowned "Dry-aged Steak Guy," Chef Azam Riyard. The event will take place from 10th to 21st Jan 2024, showcasing Chef Azam's expertise in dry-aged steaks.

Chef Azam Riyard, the Founder of the Clubhouse Steakhouse in London, is a self-taught, old-Trinitian with a passion for creating exceptional culinary experiences. Having made a name for himself in the UK and across Europe, Chef Azam is returning to his roots in Sri Lanka, bringing his skills and unique approach to the London Grill at Cinnamon Grand Colombo.



Chef Azam

elevates his culinary creations.

As Chef Azam returns to Sri Lanka, London Grill guests can savour the intricate flavours of dry-aged meats and seafood featured on the exclusive a la carte menu. The menu, curated by Chef Azam and the award-winning culinary team of Cinnamon Grand Colombo, promises a mouth-watering experience that showcases the best of East and West.

This collaboration marks the beginning of Chef Azam's journey to bring the best of the West and the East to Sri Lanka, celebrating the country's rich culinary heritage. The London Grill take-over promises a culinary spectacle that will delight and captivate discerning palates.

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts is a diverse chain of hotels spanning Sri Lanka and the Maldives and a member of John Keells Holdings PLC, one of the largest listed conglomerates in Sri Lanka, with diverse interests in sectors ranging from Leisure, Transportation, Property, Consumer Food & Retail, Financial Services, Information Technology, and Business Process Operations to Plantations.

This pioneering hotel chain was launched at the World Travel Market in London on 14 November 2005. Since its launch, it has come to represent a uniquely Cinnamon experience and has steadily risen to become the leading choice for travelers in Sri Lanka. The Cinnamon brand boasts a portfolio of vibrant and modern hotels, colourful and inspiring, unswerving, hospitable, and committed to satisfying our patron's varied and discerning needs.

Located in the heart of the city, Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo offers tranquil getaways in its unique offering of a 'Resort in the City' with expansive lakefront and garden views. Unveiling elegance and grandeur is Colombo's most luxurious, modern, and truly 'grand' city hotels, Cinnamon Grand Colombo, located near Colombo's Galle Face Green, overlooking views of the majestic Indian ocean and upcoming Port City. Completing the Colombo city collection is the first of its kind in South Asia, Cinnamon Red Colombo. Walking distance to shopping centers, historical sites and nightlife precincts of Colombo, this pioneering addition to the Cinnamon Colombo Hotel collection embodies the 'Lean Luxury' concept. Inspired by the arts and modern design, panoramas of Colombo's cityscape and of course the innovative food and beverage options within the property, Cinnamon Red is the popular choice for urbanites and tech enthused travelers.

Chef Azam's culinary journey started at Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo followed by Cinnamon Grand Colombo, where he had a stint as a Receptionist and later moved into Sales. Influenced by his family's home-cooking traditions, Chef Azam developed a love for flavours, aromas, and ingredients, leading him to become a pit master renowned for his exceptional BBQ meats.

In the UK, Chef Azam identified a market void for halal steaks and embarked on a journey to perfect the art of aging beef. This led to the establishment of the Clubhouse Steakhouse, a premium destination for dry-aged steaks, unique sauce blends, and the only steak restaurant in Europe that dry ages halal beef in-house.

Upon his return to Sri Lanka, Chef Azam is enthusiastic about sharing his culinary expertise with the local gastronomic community. His ambition revolves around establishing a Steakhouse in Colombo, where he plans to infuse traditional Sri Lankan ingredients into his dishes, creating a culinary fusion that bridges the gap between Western, Eastern, Mediterranean and Asian culinary traditions. In addition to his culinary venture, Chef Azam has aligned himself with renowned international catering equipment brands, serving as an ambassador and brand specialist. Through these partnerships, he showcases how collaboration enhances and

Heritage Kandalama Tops LMD's Customer Excellence Survey 2023

TTA BULLETIN

In a resounding triumph for Aitken Spence Hotels, Heritage Kandalama claimed the #1 spot in the prestigious LMD Customer Excellence Annual Survey 2023 under nationwide hotels, with managed hotel Earl's Regency making it to the top 15.

The Customer Excellence survey by LMD is conducted over a three-month period, and serves as a benchmark for evaluating the satisfaction levels of customers in Sri Lanka.

Expressing her views on the remarkable achievement, Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings commented, "This recognition underscores our steadfast dedication to delivering exceptional customer experiences, and we feel honoured to be acknowledged in the LMD Customer Excellence survey. This serves as a validation of the unwavering commitment of our team and the high



standards of service we consistently provide. Heritage Kandalama's recognition as the number one brand in the nationwide hotels category reflects a sustained commitment to excellence. The Company expresses sincere gratitude to the customers who actively participated in the survey, contributing valuable insights that fuel our continuous pursuit of improvement."

Aitken Spence Hotels is part of the Sri Lankan blue-chip conglomerate Aitken Spence PLC. Aitken Spence Hotels owns and operates 17 hotels and resorts across Sri Lanka, Maldives, Oman and India. The Company's owned hotels are reflected under the Heritage, Adaraan and Turyaa brands, popular around the world for its exceptional service and undisputed product and curated lifestyle experiences. The Company's Sri Lankan portfolio includes eight hotels and resorts spread across the island of which five are Heritage properties, whilst the Maldives resorts totals to five (with one Heritage resort), three in Oman and one in India.

Elite Havens marks 25 years at the forefront of the luxury villa rental business in Asia

TTA BULLETIN

Elite Havens, Asia's leading luxury holiday experience provider and a subsidiary of Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, marking a significant milestone in the company's journey from a Bali-based business to a renowned curator of extraordinary escapes across the most coveted destinations.

To mark this milestone, Elite Havens' CEO, Ms Maya Rigg, has penned an anniversary article, "The changing face of luxury travel – A 25-year retrospective," which delves into the transformative trends that have shaped the travel industry, emphasising the role the company has played in pioneering new experiences for discerning travellers worldwide.

From the birth of travel tech to the rise of travel bloggers, Elite Havens has consistently



adapted to changing consumer preferences and technological advancements. Notably, Elite Havens played a pioneering role in nurturing the trend of peer reviews, leveraging guest feedback to continuously enhance services and guest experiences, setting the benchmark for service excellence within the industry.

Today, Elite Havens offers a curated portfolio of nearly 300 private luxury villas and chalets across India, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. More locations are in the pipeline.

"We are incredibly proud to celebrate 25 years of providing exceptional luxury holiday experiences," said Ms Rigg. "Throughout our journey, we have embraced technological innovations while maintaining the human touch that sets us apart. Our commitment to delivering bespoke, unparalleled experiences remains unwavering as we continue to cater to the evolving needs of today's luxury travellers."



The Maldives' Only Jungle Dining Experience Returns as Nest Re-opens at Niyama

TTA BULLETIN

Niyama Private Islands Maldives reopens its Asian restaurant, Nest, with reimagined jungle dining reinforced with bold, new flavours.



Located within the deep heart of the island of Play, Nest brings dramatic flair to Asian fine dining, with a unique setting of wild, indigenous flora that envelops guests in the surreal and transports them to another world.

The experience begins with a stroll along the meandering boardwalk through the jungle's overgrown vines. The magic of Nest then reveals itself under the canopy of a banyan tree decades in the making. On the ground floor, tribal, thatched-roof huts centre around the showcase teppanyaki, where fiery flavours await. Alternatively, guests can ascend the spiral staircase, then cross the bridge to their dining platform suspended six metres in the air.

The original design of Nest was conceived in 2013 by Poole Associates and landscape architect Drew Anderson of TOPO Design. They envisioned a multi-level treehouse connected by a labyrinth of wooden walkways and bridges that appears then melts back into the trees.

After a decade of operation, Niyama unveils an enhanced setting, with denser, more dramatic landscaping by the resort's chief engineer Michael Selvin to envelop each table more fully in nature and exclusivity. At night, the trees shimmer with hundreds of lights, and hints of red

add an element of the exotic, reminiscent of the neon glow of the streets of Saigon, Tokyo or Bangkok.

A new menu has also been revealed, with flavours of the avant garde by new Executive Chef Thierry Vergnault. Highlights include the wagyu and sea urchin tataki (Japan), sizzling bo lok lak (Vietnam), and chilli reef lobster from local waters (Singapore).

With a relentless pursuit of the novel and intriguing, Chef Thierry's creations combine the freshest, high-quality ingredients with unexpected culinary techniques and innovations. Hard-to-find Asian herbs and spices come from the island's own garden, which also inform the experimental cocktail list by consultant Mathew Atkinson of Bruff Drinks.

"We are thrilled to unveil the new Nest", says Hafidh Al Busaidy, General Manager of Niyama Private Islands Maldives. "The reimagined concept, coupled with Chef Thierry Vergnault's culinary brilliance, promises to take our guest experience to another level, and we invite the adventurous from around the world to come experience the magic of Nest for themselves".

Unveiling the JAO Ping River Cruise by Anantara Chiang Mai Resort

TTA BULLETIN

Anantara Chiang Mai Resort expands its luxury cruise offering, with two boats and four different itineraries. Each departs daily from the resort's private pier on the banks of the Mae Ping River.



At Anantara Chiang Mai, the Mae Ping River is very much part of the resort experience: morning yoga, breakfast under the bodhi trees, lazing by the pool, sunset cocktails on the rooftop – all take place overlooking the city's ancient lifeline. Now, with the addition of its private pier, signature Anantara experiences extend to the river itself.

JAO Ping, meaning "king of the river", offers daily cruises for both individuals and groups, guests and visitors. Its fleet consists of two hand-carved teak boats, the Nam Jai, a scorpion-tail for up to eight passengers, and the Nam Jit, a larger pontoon complete with a bar, dining area and dedicated facilities on board to host up to 24 seated passengers or 40 passengers on a private charter.

As part of the Anantara brand promise to immerse its guests in the real destination, the JAO Ping morning cruise visits the nearby Wat Ket Karam, one of Chiang Mai's oldest communities. Guests will have the opportunity to tour the unique neighbourhood of Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs living side by side, as well as make merit. They can then refuel at what was once the city's best kept secret, but now is in the Michelin Thailand guide – the roadside Lung Kajohn with its delicious bite-sized dumplings.

The Nam Jai also drifts through the city at twilight, under iconic bridges, past small temples and into lush green. As the sky stills, the river glitters gold, and the banks come to life with thousands of lights, guests enjoy free-flow canapés and cocktails.

Unwind in a Masterpiece; Thaala Bentota by Browns Hotels & Resorts

TTA BULLETIN

Thaala Bentota, the scenic coastal retreat by Browns Hotels & Resorts is where the rhythm of hospitality, nature and luxury blends seamlessly—a coastal sanctuary choreographed by the genius architect Geoffrey Bawa, known as the father of Tropical Modernism.



Thaala Bentota is a place where you can embrace island life on a golden beach beneath swaying palms, knowing the city buzz is never far away. It's a coastal haven where warm smiles welcome you and culinary adventures are enhanced with exceptional service.

Thaala Bentota embodies the universal concept of rhythm, brought to life through its timeless architectural design. For those seeking serenity, from morning yoga accompanied by the whispers of waves to those craving adventure, Thaala Bentota offers exciting experiences, such as watersports, mangrove cruising in Madu Ganga that is teeming with biodiversity, neighborhood touring to explore culture, and paramotoring above the beautiful Bentota beach.

"At Thaala Bentota, we place a premium on service to ensure a seamless and



immersive guest experience. As custodians of a rich legacy, being one of the Bawa designed properties, our guests not only enjoy a unique retreat but also experience the unmatched service standards of Browns Hotels & Resorts across its iconic properties in Sri Lanka. Our dedicated team, attuned to the needs of each guest,

strives to create a personalised and unforgettable stay." - Channa Ekanyake, General Manager of Thaala Bentota Resort

Experience the epitome of luxury with the Bawa Villa and Thaala Suite, converging tropical elegance with modern comforts, boasting private jacuzzies, distinct dining and lounge areas and spacious balconies with dreamy ocean views. As the day transitions to evening, guests can indulge in a special high tea experience at the Loft, accompanied by an exquisite sunset serenade. The all-day restaurant, Breeze, offers an international buffet, ensuring a culinary journey that satisfies every palate. For a more laid-back atmosphere, the Chatters Bar invites guests to unwind with expertly crafted cocktails and tongue-tantalising tapas.

At Thaala Bentota, you'll find that where there's rhythm, there's life—a symphony of serenity and indulgence awaiting your arrival!



AIRLINES

Global Launch of SriLankan Airlines' NDC Agents Portal SriLankan Direct Connect Begins in India

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has begun the global roll out of its New Distribution Capability (NDC) agents booking portal SriLankan Direct Connect starting with India enabling travel agents, convenient direct access to the airline's reservation system and an array of other benefits.

The NDC platform is a breakthrough travel industry-supported program by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) that sets the pace to digitally transform the journey for airline distribution. Adopting the technology via SriLankan Direct Connect allows SriLankan Airlines to form a powerful, direct retail and communication channel with agents and bypass traditional, intermediary Global Distribution Systems to provide richer content, ancillary services and personalised offers.

"We are excited to become one of the first airlines in South Asia to introduce IATA's NDC technology and enhance the overall booking experience for our agents. SriLankan Direct Connect is an intuitive application that will strengthen our direct distribution channel and bring value to travel agents and empower them to provide a superior service to our passengers," stated Chief Executive Officer of SriLankan Airlines, Richard Nuttall.



"The launch of SriLankan Direct Connect is a milestone moment, qualifying SriLankan Airlines for the prestigious Airline Retailing Maturity Certification by IATA. SriLankan Direct Connect will help us expand our distribution network and optimize savings and efficiency and transform the way in which we do business all at the same time," added Head of Worldwide Sales & Distribution of SriLankan Airlines, Dimuthu Tennakoon.

Agents who register for SriLankan Direct Connect will have at their fingertips, private fares, guaranteed lowest fares, fare families and other promotional fares; ancillary products; free date changes; and an incentive scheme for flown segments among other exclusive benefits.

First launched in Sri Lanka in August 2023, SriLankan Airlines will be progressively extending SriLankan Direct Connect across its network in the coming months following the global kick off in India. Agents can sign up for SriLankan Direct Connect using the Agent Registration link on the home page of www.srilankan.com

Emirates ramps up Seoul operations to 10 weekly flights

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates, the world's largest international airline, will reinforce its commitment to South Korea by ramping up its operations in Seoul with three additional weekly flights starting 19 February 2024.



The new flights will operate as EK324/EK325 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Operated by a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, Emirates' flight EK324 will depart Dubai at 0445hrs, landing in Seoul Incheon International Airport at 1805hrs. The return flight EK325 will depart Seoul at 2200hrs, arriving in Dubai at 0315hrs the following day.

Emirates' additional services will increase the capacity on flights between Dubai and Seoul by more than 1,000 additional seats per week, helping to alleviate the suppressed demand for international travel to one of the most popular East Asian destinations and supporting South Korea's inbound and outbound tourism. The airline's ramped-up operations will further serve the need for adding more flights between UAE and Korea, in line with the strong bilateral relations between the two nations.

Through the three weekly Boeing 777 flights, Emirates will provide 45 tonnes of additional cargo capacity between Dubai and Seoul, boosting the trade and economic ties between South Korea and

the UAE as well as through Dubai and beyond to more global destinations in Emirates' network, further contributing to Korea's economy and facilitating convenient air connectivity for the Republic's imports and exports.

Emirates launched services to Seoul in 2005 and currently operates a daily Airbus A380 service from Dubai. With the additional services, the airline will serve Seoul with 10 weekly flights operated by a mix of its signature Airbus A380 and Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, guaranteeing more flexibility and choice for its customers to and from Dubai, as well as beyond to its global network of over 130 destinations.

Travellers flying with Emirates can enjoy the best experience in the sky with an unmatched culinary experience, regionally inspired multi-course menus developed by a team of award-winning chefs complemented by a wide selection of premium beverages. Customers can sit back and relax with up to 6,500 channels of carefully curated global entertainment content including Korean movies, TV shows, music and more with ice, Emirates' award-winning inflight entertainment system.

Emirates reveals its 'vegan vault' of 300 recipes as demand for plant-based cuisine increases by 40%

TTA BULLETIN

As global interest peaks in Veganuary - an initiative that has highlighted the benefits of a vegan diet for the last decade, Emirates has noted a surge of 40% in customer demand for plant-based meals. To meet this demand in 2024, Emirates will introduce an array of new vegan dishes onboard and in lounges later this year, adding even more dishes to its 'vegan vault' of more than 300 curated plant-based recipes.



tofu cheesecake or a smooth and satisfying raspberry parfait with a pop of orange compote.

In Business class, a range of elegant and creatively curated dishes are offered including roasted cauliflower with ancient grains, caramelised pear and lovage pesto or a warming ragout of Asian tofu and shitake mushroom with glass noodles. Customers who have room for dessert can feast on a tropical coconut pineapple cake or indulge in a chocolate cheesecake accented by a dark chocolate cigar and strawberry compote.

In First class, customers will be treated to exceptionally elevated vegan cuisine like creamy polenta cake with thyme mushroom ragout, sautéed spinach drizzled in a rich root vegetable jus. Dishes offering a burst of sophisticated flavours include aubergine curry with charred rice and turmeric potato, with a dash of coconut and mint chutney. Decadent desserts feature curated contrasts including the tartness of rhubarb tempered with strawberry charlotte, Chantilly cream and raspberry tuille, or a tempting warm chocolate fondant, dashed with salted caramel sauce and whipped cashew cream.

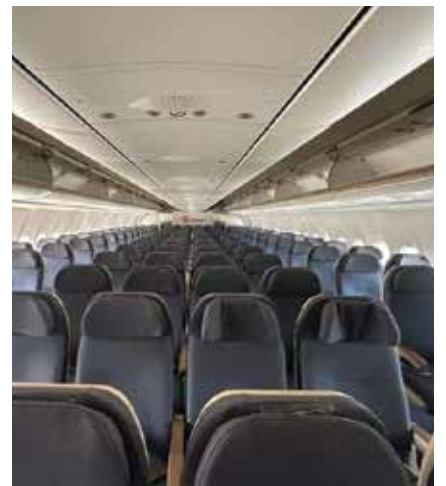
In Economy class, Emirates customers can enjoy moreish dishes like chickpea crepe stuffed with carrot, peppers, mushroom and tomato concasse, experience a textured pumpkin frittata, tuck into a tofu tikka masala or enjoy a hearty chickpea kale stew with parsley pilaf rice and baby spinach. Scrumptious vegan desserts in Economy include a coconut mousse with mango compote, moist banana cake with chocolate crumble or luscious chocolate pudding with cocoa soil.

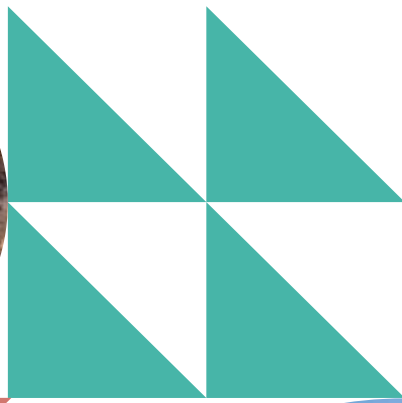
In Premium Economy class, customers choosing vegan cuisine will be served nutritiously delicious dishes like jackfruit curry with basmati rice, or a rich squash chestnut stew followed by a light chocolate

SriLankan Airlines Welcomes Another Aircraft to its Fleet

TTA BULLETIN

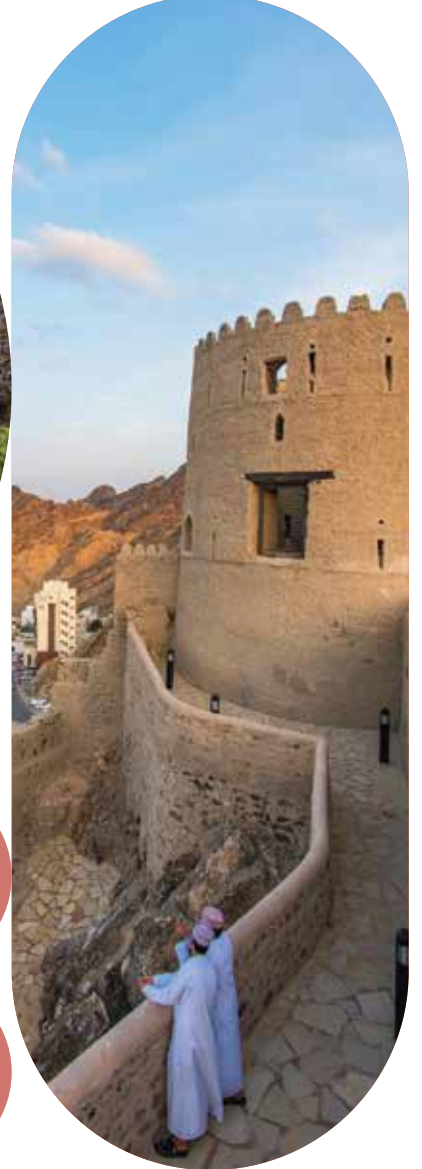
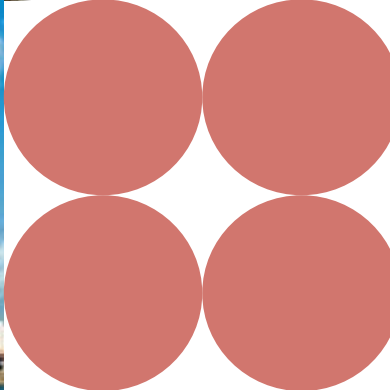
SriLankan Airlines recently welcomed the arrival of a wide-bodied Airbus A330-200 aircraft wet-leased from Air Belgium, giving a further boost to its fleet. The aircraft has 22 Business Class and 240 Economy Class seats and is scheduled to operate on the Frankfurt, Dhaka and Dubai routes with effect from 29 December 2023. A second aircraft from Air Belgium is due to join the SriLankan fleet in mid-January 2024.





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Singapore Airlines Attains IATA CEIV Fresh Re-Certification For Three More Years

TTA BULLETIN

Singapore Airlines (SIA) has attained the International Air Transport Association (IATA) global re-certification for its handling of perishable products via its Singapore hub. The re-certification is valid for three years, starting from 1 February 2024.

This certification is based on IATA's Perishable Cargo Regulations, which combine regulatory and operational inputs from government and industry experts. It validates SIA's continuous efforts to meet the air freight industry's highest standards for food safety, and prevent food waste along the supply chain.

With this, SIA's customers can be assured that their time- and temperature-sensitive cargo will be transported with speed and reliability via SIA's THRU-FRESH service.

THRU-FRESH features dedicated cold chain services such as priority uplift and handling, quick ramp transfers and cold room facilities to safeguard the integrity of perishables, as well as dry ice top-up at Changi Airport for transshipments.

Partnering leading terminal operators and ground handlers in the world, SIA established quality corridors within SIA's cargo network in 2021 to ensure the product integrity of perishable shipments at each step of the journey, in accordance with IATA standards. Nine SIA stations - Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Frankfurt, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong

SAR, Hyderabad, Singapore, and Zurich - are currently certified under the quality corridor network. More information can be found [here](#).

Mr Marvin Tan, Senior Vice President Cargo, Singapore Airlines, said: "At Singapore Airlines, we are committed to delivering the highest level of service to our cargo customers. The IATA CEIV Fresh re-certification is an affirmation of the stringent safety and quality standards that we adhere to when transporting perishable cargo."

Mr Nick Careen, Senior Vice President Operations, Safety and Security, IATA, said: "We congratulate Singapore Airlines on achieving the IATA CEIV Fresh re-certification. Coupled with their investment in products and services to mitigate perishable product damage and waste, it is a testament of the airline's commitment to serving their customers by consistently delivering fresh, high-quality products worldwide. This high standard in transporting perishables and commitment to upholding and surpassing international standards sets the airline as among the leaders in the industry."

In 2021, SIA became the first airline in South East Asia to receive the IATA Centre of Excellence for Independent Validators in Perishable Logistics (CEIV Fresh) certification. It remains the only airline in the region with this certification.

IndiGo expands its international network with daily direct flights between Hyderabad-Bangkok

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, India's preferred carrier, has announced daily direct flights between Hyderabad and Bangkok, effective from February 26, 2024. These flights will further enhance direct connectivity between the two cities, providing a seamless travel experience between the two major tourist hubs and accessibility across Southeast Asia.

IndiGo will become the first Indian carrier to connect Hyderabad to Bangkok. With this, IndiGo will connect 14 international destinations with Hyderabad, an increase from 8 connected destinations a year ago. IndiGo currently connects Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Bhubaneswar to Bangkok.

With the addition of these new flights from Hyderabad, IndiGo will now operate 37 weekly flights between India and Bangkok, and Hyderabad will be the 6th Indian city connected to Bangkok.

Mr. Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo said, "We are extremely pleased to announce our operations from Hyderabad to Bangkok, in-line with our vision to enhance accessibility across Southeast Asia. With the introduction of this new route, IndiGo now



offers 57 direct flights a week to Thailand from 6 cities in India (37 flights to Bangkok & 20 flights to Phuket). The new route not only signifies our commitment to expanding connectivity but also serves as a bridge between two culturally rich destinations. As India's leading carrier, our aim is to continue delivering on our promise of providing affordable, on-time, courteous, and hassle-free travel experiences."

Bangkok, Thailand's capital, is well-known for its tourism attractions. Many people visit the city because of its famous culinary delights, exciting nightlife, and shopping centres. Bangkok's economy is dominated by manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism. The city is also popular for its spectacular palaces, skyscrapers, museums, and markets. Floating Market, Safari World, Siam Ocean World, Chao Phraya Dinner Cruise, and Siam Park City are among the few attractions in Bangkok.

Emirates readies to recruit 5,000 cabin crew from six continents in 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates is celebrating the new year and the imminent arrival of its spanking new fleet of Airbus A350s with a global cabin crew recruitment drive with a difference. The 5,000 new joiners will ensure the airline's commitment to offering the world's best inflight experience maintains a steady course.

The recruitment drive is designed primarily for those who will soon or have recently stepped into the world of work. The airline is inviting fresh graduates with internships or part-time jobs on their résumés, those with a year or so of hospitality or customer service experience, and individuals keen to embark on an exciting career travelling the globe. The new recruits will be a part of the world's largest international airline and one of the most iconic brands, plus they will learn hospitality and life skills from the best trainers in the business.

What's more, they will travel the world across more than 140 cities in 76 countries and enjoy the entire gamut of benefits working as Emirates' cabin crew. [Click here](#) for the eligibility criteria.

In 2024, Emirates' recruitment team will host open days and assessments in more than 460 cities across six continents, reflecting the span of the airline's network and the diversity of its cabin crew team, while flying the flag for living and working in dynamic Dubai.

In 2023, Emirates hired a staggering 8,000 cabin crew and held recruitment events in 353 cities as the airline ramped up its services post the pandemic. In August 2023, the airline's cabin crew numbers crossed the 20,000 milestone and are now 21,500 strong.

The new cabin crew recruitment drive comes as Emirates begins to take delivery of its eagerly anticipated A350s from mid-year and the Boeing 777-Xs starting in 2025. The airline has 65 A350s and a mix of 205 777-9s and 777-8s in its order book. The new aircraft will expand the airline's reach and provide flexibility to add new routes to its network.

All new cabin crew recruits undergo an intense eight weeks of training in delivering the highest standards of hospitality, safety and service that Emirates' customers have come to expect over the years. Trained in Emirates' state-of-the-art facility in Dubai, cabin crew learn invaluable transferable skills that include a knack for communications, initiative and leadership qualities. They develop the ability to work effectively in a multicultural team, the focus to stay mentally strong and calm under pressure, becoming bastions of hospitality and exceptional service, and ambassadors of an iconic brand. Cabin crew also have access to the latest training programmes and LinkedIn courses.

Ane Monego Castagna from Italy, who joined May 2023 said: "Sometimes you've



got to chase your dreams, other times the dream chases you. In April last year, I received the 'golden call' that changed my life. During training, I was amazed by the knowledge and skills imparted to us and what it took to become an Emirates cabin crew. The opportunity to make friends for life, be super confident and to fly with the airline is priceless. Thanks to Emirates, the life I live today is better than anything I have ever dreamed of!"

Robyn Clark from the UK, who joined in February 2023 said: "Working for Emirates is a job like no other. From the day I got the call to boarding every flight, I feel so proud of what I've accomplished. Putting on the iconic Emirates uniform every morning is a feeling I can't explain - this really is a dream come true. I will always be grateful to Emirates for the memories I've made, the amazing experiences I've had travelling the world, and being able to come back from my journeys to Dubai - one of the safest and most vibrant cities globally - that I now call home."

Emirates' multicultural cabin crew team hail from more than 140 nationalities and speak a staggering 130 languages - which is why customers can always expect to converse with a warm, friendly voice in their own lingo. Crew form lifelong friendships and close-knit bonds within the community, fostering better teamwork, a common sense of purpose and a shared service philosophy.

Cabin crew experience excellent career progression, including upgrading to higher cabin classes, and becoming a cabin supervisor, purser or trainer. Today, the airline has 1,180 pursers who have climbed the career ladder after successfully completing exacting training and assessments. Crew also have the opportunity to apply for internal vacancies throughout the Emirates Group.

Emirates' cabin crew lead a cosmopolitan lifestyle in vibrant Dubai, living with 200 nationalities in a city renowned for its hotels, restaurants, food scene, leisure activities and for being one of the safest in the world.

Emirates' cabin crew enjoy a competitive, tax-free salary and flying pay, eligibility for profit share, hotel stays and layover expenses, concessional travel and cargo, annual leave, annual leave ticket, furnished accommodation, transportation to and from work, excellent medical, life and dental insurance coverage, laundry services and other benefits. Friends and family enjoy deeply discounted flight tickets, and travelling with their loved ones creates lasting memories for crew.

Cathay Pacific's first ferry lounge at Shenzhen's Shekou Cruise Home Port opens

TTA BULLETIN



Cathay Pacific is delighted to announce that its first-ever lounge outside of an airport is now open to guests at the Shekou Cruise Home Port in Shenzhen. This new ferry lounge further enhances the intermodal travel experience for our customers and elevates sea-to-air connectivity between Hong Kong International Airport and the whole of the Greater Bay Area.

To mark the occasion, Cathay Group Chief Executive Officer Ronald Lam and Cathay Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau were joined by guests of honour, Deputy Director of the HKMAO of the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government Li Lirong, Director of the Shenzhen Liaison Unit of the Hong Kong SAR Government Grace Lai Sui-king, Division Director of the Tourism Marketing & Promotion Division of Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism and Sports Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality Zhang Zhenyang, Deputy Division Director of the Port Customs Administration Office of Office of Port of Entry and Exit of Shenzhen Municipal People's Government Fan Weiqing, and General Manager of Shenzhen China Merchants Shekou Cruise Home Port Lv Rufu at the opening ceremony on 18 January.

Cathay Group Chief Executive Officer Ronald Lam said: "As Hong Kong International Airport continues to strengthen its sea and land connections with neighbouring cities in the Greater Bay Area, we are excited to open our brand-new Cathay Pacific lounge at the Shekou Cruise Home Port to our customers travelling from the region. We are committed to continuing to invest, and delivering a more comfortable and convenient travel experience for our customers.

"We are very grateful to the Shenzhen Government and China Merchants Shekou Cruise Home Port for their support. We look

forward to welcoming our Greater Bay Area customers to our new Shekou lounge with our signature Cathay Pacific service and helping them move forward in life."

Cathay Pacific has the ambition of becoming the leading premium airline of choice for international travel to and from its extended home market of the Greater Bay Area. Central to achieving this goal is providing a wide range of reliable and convenient intermodal services, including air, sea and land options, for Greater Bay Area customers to connect with their Cathay Pacific flights at Hong Kong International Airport.

Cathay Pacific customers can enjoy effortless transfer using its codeshare ferry services to go directly from the Shekou Cruise Home Port to the SkyPier Terminal at Hong Kong International Airport. Currently, there are 11 round-trip ferry services per day between the Shekou Cruise Home Port and the SkyPier Terminal. The ferry journey only takes about 30 minutes and customers can collect their ferry tickets, boarding passes, and through-check their luggage onto their Cathay Pacific flights to destinations around the world.

The lounge embraces the signature design language created by London-based Studioilse that is used in Cathay Pacific lounges around the world, allowing customers to rest and relax before boarding their ferry service. They can also enjoy a breathtaking 270-degree view of the surrounding area, including a glimpse of Hong Kong in the distance.

All Cathay Diamond and Gold members, as well as First and Business class customers, Cathay Silver members, and relevant oneworld members travelling on Cathay Pacific flights are welcome to visit the Shekou lounge.

Qatar Airways Touches Down its Inaugural Flight in Medan, Indonesia

TTA BULLETIN



Qatar Airways' inaugural flight from Doha to Medan has touched down at Kualanamu International Airport on Monday, 15 January 2024, marking Medan the airline's third destination in the Republic of Indonesia. The new direct service will complement the award-winning airline's over 40 weekly flights to Jakarta and Bali. His Excellency the Minister of State President of Qatar National Library Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kawari represented the State of Qatar at the inaugural event, which was organized by the award-winning airline in collaboration with the 'Years of Culture' to mark the successful completion of the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture.

Qatar-Indonesia sought to deepen the understanding of Qatar as a hub for arts and culture, tourism, education, and sports while celebrating the unique aspects of Indonesian culture and building sustainable partnerships through more than 50 programs across both countries.

The new route to Medan solidifies the ties between both nations as the The Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture comes to a close. During the inaugural event, passengers were greeted with cupcakes and music at the departure gate of Hamad International Airport (DOH). Onboard the inaugural flight, QR966 carried esteemed officials and were welcomed at Kualanamu International Airport by water cannon salute and high-ranking government officials and dignitaries. The official Gala dinner was also attended by officials and dignitaries from both countries, The Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Indonesia, H.E Ms. Fawziya Edrees Salman Al-Sulaiti, Indonesian Ambassador to Qatar, H.E Ridwan Hassan, Medan Mayor Mr. Muhammad Bobby Afif, and Secretary General for Years of Culture Steering Committee & Director of Executive

committee, Ms. Sara AlMohannadi.

The Minister of State, H.E. Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kawari, said: "The success of the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture laid the groundwork for the launch of the new route between Doha and Medan, which will strengthen the people-to-people connections that were established last year. Thanks to the enduring spirit of cooperation between our two nations spearheaded by the wise leadership His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Qataris and Indonesians can now unlock exciting new destinations and the diverse beauty of each. I would like to thank Qatar Airways for its unwavering commitment to excellence and connectivity and for helping send a powerful message of cultural cooperation as the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture comes to an end."

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said: "We are delighted to announce the expansion of our global network with the introduction of our new operations to Medan. Our commitment to enhancing connectivity and offering passengers in Indonesia world-class travel experiences continues. We look forward to enabling travellers to experience the best of what Medan has to offer while seamlessly connecting them to the most popular destinations around the globe through our multiple-award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport."

Qatar Airways Senior Vice President – Eastern Regions, Mr. Marwan Koleilat delivered a speech during the gala dinner and stated: "We are pleased to welcome Medan, our third gateway in Indonesia, into our extensive network comprised of over 170 destinations worldwide.

Flyadeal celebrates a year of historic milestones

TTA BULLETIN

flyadeal, one of the youngest and fastest growing low-cost airlines in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Middle East, has rounded off 2023 by celebrating 12 months of historic milestones and achievements.

From significant fleet growth and route expansion to record number of passengers flown and the launch of a national industry first during 2023, flyadeal enters 2024 with a pledge to deliver even more highlights.

In September, flyadeal took delivery of its milestone 30th aircraft – an Airbus A320neo – one of five new planes acquired in 2023 that took the airline's fleet size to 32 maintaining an average age of just over two years old.

flyadeal surpassed two passenger milestones during the past 12 months, carrying 20 million and 25 million travellers cumulatively since the airline's launch in 2017.

flyadeal launched its first-ever dedicated Hajj flights carrying pilgrims from India, Thailand, and cities in the Middle East to Saudi Arabia using widebody aircraft for the first time.

flyadeal became the first airline in Saudi Arabia to launch a pioneering diploma course aimed at encouraging young Saudi women to take up a career as cabin crew. The initiative was launched in conjunction with Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman

University in Riyadh, the world's largest female-only university.

flyadeal signed a ground-breaking agreement with Saudi Tourism Authority to embark on joint promotional activities across the Kingdom and around the world in support of Saudi Vision 2030 to increase inbound visitor numbers.

Abdulrahman Ajabnoor, flyadeal Chief Financial Officer, said: "2023 will be remembered as a year of exceptional milestones and achievements thanks to travellers' confidence in choosing to fly with flyadeal, and the commitment of our employees to deliver high levels of service that our customers expect.

"Our expansion and achievements continued on all fronts and 2024 promises to be even more exciting as we accelerate our growth, prepare to launch diverse new destinations and increase our international footprint beyond the Middle East and Europe to give customers even greater choice and more travel options at highly competitive low fares.

"With the Kingdom's determination and drive to develop a dynamic aviation ecosystem under the umbrella of Saudi Vision 2030, flyadeal continues to deliver on its mandate to be an integral part of this buoyant industry."

Qatar Airways Commemorates Network Expansion in Saudi Arabia with Special Ceremony in AIUla

TTA BULLETIN



Qatar Airways proudly announces the success of its inaugural journey to AIUla, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, marking the airline's commitment to providing unparalleled travel experiences across over 170 destinations worldwide. The meticulously curated trip showcased AIUla as a new and exciting destination, offering travellers a unique blend of history, culture, and luxury.

The VIP delegation included His Excellency Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, Minister of Culture of the State of Qatar who attended the inaugural flight, His Highness Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al-Saud, Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, Acting Chief Executive Officer Royal Commission for AIUla, Abeer Al Akel, and Phillip Jones Chief Tourism Officer, Royal Commission for AIUla.

The VIP delegation started the itinerary with a visit to the heart of the city's Old Town. The tour showcased the revitalised Old Town, a historical gem with ancient traditional architecture revamped with a modern touch.

The journey continued with an exploration of various sites, highlighting a synergy of modernity and history, notably a visit to the sustainable and biodiverse district, Oasis, as well as to multiple publishing houses, providing a deeper understanding of the local culture and its affinity to literature.

The pinnacle of the trip was the significant visit to the Kingdom's first UNESCO Heritage Site, Hegra, where His Highness Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al-Saud, Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, received the VIP delegation for a photo opportunity which included a remarkable backdrop of the Tomb of Lihyan Son of Kuza.

Qatar Airways, the Best Airline in the Middle East, hosted a stunning outdoor lunch at one of AIUla's most sought-after luxury desert resorts, Our Habitas AIUla. The mix of natural landscape and luxury provided the airline's VIP guests with a unique and unforgettable experience, while indulging in delectable Arabic cuisine. Qatar Airways added a touch of its signature excellence to the luncheon by complementing the gathering with Qatari

cultural performers presenting an authentic traditional experience in a breath-taking setting.

Minister of Culture of the State of Qatar, H.E. Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad bin Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, highlighted that this inauguration is a testament to the success of the Culture, Tourism, and Entertainment Committee of the Qatari-Saudi Coordination Council. H.E. additionally expressed his appreciation for the contributions of H.H. Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al-Saud, in making this achievement a reality.

Furthermore, H.E. emphasised the importance of investing in archaeological sites and developing their accessibility to enable the exploration of the rich cultural heritage of AIUla. Underlining heritage protection and preservation as one of the most important goals of cultural work, H.E. further elaborated on the ability of historical and heritage landmarks to attract people from the region and around the world, recognising the impact these sites have due to their cultural diversity, thus presenting a positive image for cultural dialogue. H.E. also expressed his pride in the Qatari-Saudi relations, which are strengthened by culture, affirming the fundamental role culture plays in consolidating the ties between the intellectuals of the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "As a destination, AIUla embodies the blend of history, culture, and luxury making it a must-visit city in the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia. We are delighted to expand our network in Saudi to 10 destinations with this new addition, and to serve our key market with diverse travel options across the world. Qatar Airways looks forward to offering travellers in Saudi Arabia an unparalleled experience onboard our leading airline and through the Best Airport in the Middle East, Hamad International Airport."

Travellers can expect to enjoy AIUla's immersive tours which unveil the city's hidden treasures, archaeological sites, art installations, and more, leaving visitors in admiration of the city's diverse richness.

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.

"The new oneworld lounge is an exciting next step in our vision to making travel bright. Together with ASPIRE, we have combined refined fixtures and finishes, digital technologies, and warm and ergonomic settings to create smart and memorable travel experiences.

"Our new Incheon lounge resets the benchmark for contemporary travel and will serve as the blueprint for future oneworld lounges in select airports around the world."

David Collyer, Swissport International AG Global Vice President Executive Lounges, said: "We are thrilled to collaborate with oneworld on our first joint lounge concept and are very pleased with the result.

"Leveraging our expertise as the go-to partner for airlines to outsource their complex hub and large base operations, Swissport and our ASPIRE team are



committed to bringing the same standard of excellence to oneworld's new lounge business."

The new lounge is open daily between 7:30am and 11:45pm (apart from Monday and Saturday when it opens earlier at 4:30am), for eligible oneworld Emerald and Sapphire customers departing from Seoul on oneworld flights, as well as First and Business Class customers travelling with oneworld member airlines.

Jochem Straatman, D/DOCK Art Director, said: "It was exciting to transform the highly dynamic but digital oneworld brand into a tangible and elegant and sophisticated 3D space for the first time.

"We have created an engaging lounge with its own distinct oneworld identity which has been designed as a vibrant integration of smart digital technologies to boost connectivity and fun."

Tatiana Otani Nishi, D/DOCK Interior Designer, said: "Through careful design, with features reflecting its South Korean location we have delivered a modern and original premium lounge experience which makes travel feel easy, comfortable and enjoyable."

Featuring the alliance's bold Travel Bright branding presented in a sophisticated and welcoming way, the design cleverly incorporates subtle nods to South Korean culture, capturing the colourful Lantern Festival in mesmerising glass art and the 'Gat' hat in a welcoming bar, mixing traditional and contemporary aesthetics.

The lounge features a wide choice of distinct zones and spacious comfortable seating areas with relaxing, private or more sociable spaces in which customers can unwind, work or dine.

Customers can easily navigate their way through the lounge, to find a space to suit their mood, and discover the lounge's signature 'mood light', changing its colour depending on the time of day.

Careful attention to detail, and the use of unexpected and bespoke materials throughout the new lounge, has created a new and exciting space in which oneworld customers can enjoy a new interpretation of luxury, with a futuristic twist.

Airline alliance members can continue to access more than 600 airport lounges around the world via their oneworld Priority Tier Benefits.



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

