

# TRAVEL TALK

## Asia

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

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## Hunas Holdings PLC and BCC Corporation Japan Forge Strategic Partnership to Revolutionize Hospitality Industry

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Hunas Holdings PLC, a leading player in the investment and hospitality sector, recently announced a strategic partnership with BCC Corporation Japan, a renowned innovator in technology, hospitality and real estate solutions. Together, they are introducing a groundbreaking advancement poised to transform the way hotel accommodations are booked and managed. The collaboration introduces an innovative platform, using Block chain and Non-Fungible Token (NFT) technology while enhancing flexibility and investment opportunities for travelers and stakeholders alike.



Mr. Dhanuka Samarasinghe – Chairman Hunas Holdings PLC and Mr. Nagata Tetsuji – President BCC Corporation Japan.

This partnership marks the inception of a new era in the hospitality industry, leveraging cutting-edge technology to address common challenges faced by travelers and hotel operators. At the heart of this collaboration is the introduction of a pioneering platform that offers unprecedented flexibility and investment potential: Nafutel Platform

The Nafutel platform, developed jointly by Hunas Holdings PLC and SBCC PTE LTD, a subsidiary of BCC Corporation Japan, presents a multifaceted solution that caters to the diverse needs of travelers and investors. At its core, the platform enables travelers to book hotel nights with the assurance that they won't lose their money if their plans change. In the event of unforeseen circumstances preventing them from utilizing their booked dates, travelers have the option to sell their room reservations on the platform, effectively recouping their investment.

In addition to offering flexibility to travelers, the Nafutel platform introduces an innovative investment opportunity for individuals and organizations. By purchasing hotel room nights ahead of time, investors can capitalize on the fluctuating demand in the hospitality industry, strategically upselling their

reservations during peak seasons for maximum returns.

"At Hunas Holdings feel the time is apropos to join forces with BCC Corporation Japan to introduce this game-changing technology to the hospitality industry," said Dhanuka Samarasinghe, Chairman Hunas Holdings PLC. "We are committed to innovation and customer satisfaction. Through the Nafutel platform, we are empowering travelers with unparalleled flexibility while offering a lucrative investment avenue for discerning stakeholders."

Mr. Nagata Tetsuji, President, BCC Corporation Japan, added, "We confident that Hunas Holdings PLC will drive this pioneering transformative technology in the market. The Nafutel platform represents the convergence of innovation and opportunity, providing a seamless solution for travelers and investors alike. Together, we aim to set new standards of excellence in the hospitality industry."

The strategic partnership between Hunas Holdings PLC and BCC Corporation Japan underscores their shared commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and sustainable growth. By harnessing the power of technology and collaboration, they are poised to reshape the landscape of the hospitality industry, offering unparalleled value to all stakeholders involved.

## ITC Group Ventures Beyond Borders with opening of ITC Ratnadipa Colombo

The ITC Group India makes its landmark debut with the opening of the first international property in the heart of Sri Lanka's commercial capital

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

ITC Ratnadipa, a luxurious addition to the local hospitality landscape, recently opened its doors in the heart of the city adding exuberance to the evolving Colombo City skyline. This eagerly anticipated entry into the Sri Lankan market marks the debut of the esteemed Indian-based luxury collection hotel in the country.



Sanjiv Puri

A standout feature of ITC Ratnadipa is its 100-meter suspended sky bridge, a first for hotels in Sri Lanka, showcasing two infinity sky pools offering breathtaking views of the Indian Ocean, Beira Lake, and the vibrant city below.

A Luxury Collection Hotel, ITC Ratnadipa Colombo, was officially inaugurated on the 25th of April 2024 by His Excellency, Ranil Wickremesinghe, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, in the presence of Honourable Dinesh Gunawardena, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Santosh Jha High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka and Mr. Sanjiv Puri – Chairman & Managing Director, ITC Limited.

ITC Ratnadipa is located in the commercial capital of Colombo and is just a 40-minute drive from the Bandaranaike International Airport. Offering unrivalled views of the Indian ocean, Beira lake and the bustling city, the hotel is conveniently located for business and leisure travelers alike.

Boasting 352 elegantly appointed rooms, suites, and service apartments, ITC Ratnadipa sets a new standard for spaciousness in the city, with each accommodation featuring large private balconies. Reflecting the vibrancy of Colombo, every floor of this modern marvel showcases unique elements of Sri Lankan culture, providing guests with an immersive and unforgettable experience from the moment they step inside.

Headquartered in Kolkata, India, ITC Limited boasts a diverse portfolio spanning across multiple industries including FMCG, hotels, software, packaging, paperboards, specialty papers, and agribusiness. With a presence in 90 countries and a reputation for excellence, ITC Limited's venture into Sri Lanka signifies its first foray outside of India for a hotel project of this caliber.





Sri Lanka Tourism has recorded over 100,000 arrivals during first half of April which is a boost to the industry. Provisional data indicates that the country has welcomed over 100,000 tourists in the initial 20 days of the month, contributing to a year-to-date (YTD) figure of 740,000.

This surge in arrivals signifies a promising year ahead for the tourism sector, which has been gradually recovering from various challenges in recent years.

The opening of ITC Ratnadipa Colombo will undoubtedly enhance the tourism product offering. The Colombo city landscape is enhanced by the 100-meter suspended sky bridge, a first for hotels in Sri Lanka, showcasing two infinity sky pools offering breathtaking views of the Indian Ocean, Beira Lake, and the vibrant city below.

Hunas Holdings has forged a strategic partnership with BCC corporation Japan to introduce a revolutionary hotel booking platform using Blockchain and Non-Fungible Token (NFT) technology, poised to transform the way hotel accommodations are booked and managed.

International policymakers and industry leaders are preparing to gather in the UAE for Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2024, where they will examine how entrepreneurship and innovation are reshaping the global tourism industry. The 31st edition of the exhibition will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from Monday 6 to Thursday 9 May.

Over 200 speakers will participate in more than 50 sessions during the course of the four-day event. Experts from around the world will take to ATM's Global Stage and Future Stage (formerly the Travel Tech Stage) to address some of the sector's most pressing issues, including the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI), the future of aviation, how to stand out in the luxury segment, retail tourism, and sustainable travel.

The Sri Lankan travel trade prepares to highlight the island as a premier tourism destination to the Middle East market which has grown considerably in the past year.



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## NEWS

# Official Unveiling of Nihonbashi's New Home at Port City Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Chef Dharshan Munidasa's flagship Japanese restaurant marked its relocation to Port City Colombo with an official unveiling held recently. H.E. President Ranil Wickremesinghe graced the occasion, cutting the ribbon to mark the restaurant open.

Since its inception in 1995 at Galle Face Terrace, Nihonbashi has been at the forefront of the 'washoku' wave in Sri Lanka, boasting 29 years of rich history and expertise in Japanese cuisine. Literally translating to "Japan-Bridge" Dharshan's intention was to build a culinary bridge between Sri Lanka with Japan, bringing pure and unadulterated Japanese cuisine to Colombo. This led to Nihonbashi becoming the first restaurant from Sri Lanka to be featured on 'Asia's 50 Best Restaurants' list, ranking consecutively from 2013 – 2018. Nihonbashi has also been an incubator for many other restaurants such as Ministry of Crab, Kaema Sutra and Carne Diem Grill; which all have strong influences of Japanese culinary philosophies. In his relentless pursuit of promotion and dissemination of Japanese cuisine and the principles of 'washoku' Dharshan was conferred "The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays", one of the highest honours granted by the Japanese Government.

The evolution of Nihonbashi continues as it moves to its new home at Port City Colombo: a visionary master-planned city development that aims to set a world-class standard for dynamic lifestyle, investments, and services, whilst being positioned to be the gateway to South Asia. The restaurant takes great pride in sourcing most of its ingredients locally, given the access to the best fish markets, reserving imports for those exceptional ingredients not found in Sri Lanka. Similarly, Dharshan designed Nihonbashi at Port City Colombo applying the principles of prioritising local materials, championing local sourcing and the use of sustainable materials. Of this process, he says "As a chef would walk the shoreline and farms in search of ingredients, I walked the quarries and bamboo forests to reverse engineer this 'Japanese design by DNA' restaurant.



Dharshan Munidasa

We handpicked stone boulders, quartz sand, bamboo and local timber with great care, to create this space that celebrates "和 - Wa" (the same "Wa" found in washoku and wagyu, meaning Japanese). This space is an ode to Japanese design, Japanese philosophy and to the beauty of perfect imperfections: Wabi-Sabi."

The restaurant features 8 private dining rooms with a mix of Japanese tatami style seating and western style seating: Chikurin (Bamboo Forest), Bonsai, Ikebana, Samurai, Whiskey, Wine, Sake room and Tachinomi Bar, drawing inspiration from Dharshan's Japanese heritage. The location exhibits an outdoor bar concept, along with what is possibly the largest Yakitori Grill in the world. "There is no restaurant like this that exists anywhere around the world, not even in Japan, simply because of the thought

process that goes into creating such a restaurant, where we wrote the menu first, designed the kitchen accordingly and used predominantly Sri Lankan materials to build it", quotes Chef Dharshan Munidasa, Founder of Nihonbashi and Ministry of Crab.

The menu will feature a combination of traditional Japanese cuisine and modern Japanese cuisine, ranging from A5 Japanese Wagyu, Sushi, Sashimi, Tempura, Teriyaki and Nabe to a wide selection of yakitori, as well as Dharshan's original dishes such as

Olive Oil Kake Tai Cha, Foie Gras No Teriyaki, Karapinchu Tempura and Tensabi Temaki.

Nihonbashi at Port City Colombo is set to elevate the local dining scene and will be a space associated with global collaborations with renowned chefs and bartenders from around the world, to continue to create memorable experiences for local guests as well as tourists visiting Colombo.



## Eventex Awards 2024 finalists unveiled

TTA BULLETIN

Eventex Awards, the world's premier awards for events and experience marketing, have lifted the veil on the finalists for the awards' 14th edition. This edition has been marked by outstanding creativity from all over the world, with in-person events back in full swing.

The awards' 14th edition has also smashed last year's submissions record, with a massive 1207 entries from 62 countries all over the world. This also marks the first four-digit entry number in Eventex Awards' history.

Other notable statistics include:

- 540 finalists, from 47 countries all over the world, with the United States, Qatar, and Poland boasting the biggest number of finalists — 65, 56, and 45, respectively.

- The most in-demand categories this time around include Corporate Event, Celebration Event, and Brand Activation.

- Among the Eventex Awards finalists are some notable brands such as Disney, Volvo, the Financial Times, FIFA, Nike, and Lufthansa.

"This edition is setting new records for Eventex Awards — the sheer number of entries and represented countries is absolutely remarkable. The participants meanwhile have



wowed us with their exceptional creativity that shines through every project. The events industry continues to set new standards, and surpasses them, outdoing itself time after time," comments Ovanes Ovanessian, co-founder of Eventex Awards. "Congratulations to all finalists for their outstanding and inspiring work!"

The Eventex Awards 2024 winners will be announced on May 7th, 2024, at 14:00 CET.

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 events, brand experiences, technology, suppliers, and venues from the world of events.



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## Layards Wharf by Food Studio opens its doors with exclusive dining experience for guests

Food Studio proudly introduces its third food court at Havelock City Mall, offering a distinctive concept and international scale ambiance

### TTA BULLETIN

Layards Wharf by Food Studio was opened to the public on the 1st of March 2024, at the newly opened Havelock City Mall, promising a unique experience that goes beyond merely serving food and drinks. This is the 3rd food court opened under Food Studio (Pvt) Ltd., Sri Lanka's pioneer Food Court Management Company and culinary innovator, with its predecessors already established at the two other high-end shopping malls of Colombo's most prestigious mixed-use development projects – Colombo City Centre and One Galle Face.

“Layards Wharf transcends the conventional notion of a food court,” said Nadeem Rajabdeen, Co-Founder & CEO of Food Studio (Pvt) Ltd. “From the moment patrons step foot inside, they are greeted by a captivating market-style layout, with specially designed areas and thematic installations that honour the rich tapestry of the locale's heritage and flavours.”

Situated on the historical grounds of the former Welawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills, adjacent to the Wellawatte canal (aka Layard's Folly), a creation of Briton C. P. Layard in 1872, Havelock City embodies a legacy of cultural convergence which transformed the local area into a thriving industrial hub. “Embracing this legacy, Layards Wharf by Food Studio pays homage to Havelock's multicultural roots, serving as a melting pot of global cuisines inspired by Sri Lanka's rich trading history,” he explained.

From Mediterranean delights to South Asian flavours, East Asian delicacies, Fresh & Healthy options, enticing grills, and tantalising pastries, Layards Wharf offers a gastronomic adventure for every



palate. Jesse Aston, Co-Founder & CEO of Big Studio Inc., the culinary innovation arm and subsidiary of Food Studio (Pvt) Ltd., emphasised, “There's something for everyone at Layards Wharf.”

Distinguished as a cashless venue, Layards Wharf streamlines transactions through debit/credit cards, with cash transactions facilitated via a QR code issued at a central cashier point, ensuring seamless convenience for patrons.

Recently, the venue held an exclusive event for guests who were encouraged to indulge in the menu offering. As a gesture of hospitality, guests were provided with fully paid for QR codes, granting them unlimited access to the culinary delights on offer.

Naveed Cader, Co-Founder & Vice Chairman of Food Studio (Pvt) Ltd. said, “At Food Studio, our ethos is rooted in fostering a farm-to-table community that unites local and international F&B stakeholders, fostering collaboration to deliver unique, diverse, and affordable dining experiences across Sri Lanka. We are truly proud of how far we have come today. Within a mere 5 years since inception, we have become a leading force in Sri Lanka's culinary landscape, boasting 3 thriving food courts within the country's premier mixed developments and a diverse portfolio featuring 14 dynamic restaurant brands.”

Layards Wharf by Food Studio was designed and architected by Kanishka Perera of The Pollen Studio whilst the branding concept and design was handled by Studio Nice One.

## Mission Accomplished: Celebrating the wrap up of IT&CM China and CTW China 2024

### TTA BULLETIN



IT&CM China and CTW China 2024 delivered an unforgettable in-person event over its 3 days (26 to 28 March, 2024). Aside from business and knowledge components, this year's programme featured a wide array of activities and entertainment by major pavilions, networking sessions with the different exhibitors and knowledge sessions.

The show is delighted to have more than 250 exhibitors from Abu Dhabi, Hainan, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, Malaysia, Nanjing, New Zealand, Perth, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, amongst others. Along with that, there were more than 400 MICE, Association and Corporate Buyers from 23 countries/territories, who took advantage of the bountiful procurement and networking opportunities.

IT&CM China and CTW China opened with welcome remarks, an opening keynote, and panel discussion. Given that the MICE industry remains a pivotal barometer of economic vitality, the forum looked at the ways governments, as the foremost administrative bodies governing the local business meeting and incentive sector, could efficiently harness their influence and manage resources pertinent to the MICE industry with the keynote speaker, special researcher of counsellors' office of the state council, Dr Sun Weijia. The discussion was moderated by Ms Alicia Yao Hong and supported by four panelists, Ms Rebecca Zhu, Mr Joost de Meyer, Mr Lisa Xu and Ms Yu Dandan.

Destinations and organisations also displayed experiential elements at their booths with activities, giveaways, and entertainment. Saint Petersburg Convention Bureau invited musicians to perform a series of wonderful melodies at their pavilion; a food-tasting event from Hong Kong Tourism Board in which they distributed popular snacks and milk tea from Hong Kong SAR to delegates.

The Events' Brand Showcases also allowed presenting exhibitors to share their unique offerings to the delegates, thereby familiarising them with the presenters' products and services. Initial delegate feedback indicated that the multiple networking and education opportunities combined with targeted pre-scheduled

appointments (PSA) were a key highlight for many. The expanded appointment sessions allowed delegates greater flexibility and time to visit the different knowledge sessions, brand showcase presentations as well as the various exhibitors' booths.

TTG Asia Media's Managing Director, Mr. Darren Ng, stated that, “We are extremely pleased to return with a fully in-person event this year, after a particularly difficult period for our industry as a whole. We look forward to growing the shows while at the same time providing a platform for the industry to rebuild and reconnect as we move forward in this post-pandemic recovery period.”

IT&CM China has established itself as China's leading international Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) business, education and networking event, dedicated to “Promoting China to the World and the World to China”.

Bringing together Chinese and International MICE exhibitors and buyers in one dynamic marketplace. IT&CM China is the platform for international and leading Chinese players in the MICE industry to explore business opportunities on all fronts – inbound, outbound and domestic.

Co-located with CTW China as China's Only Doublebill Event in MICE and Corporate Travel, IT&CM China is part of the IT&CM Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media. This event is co-organised with CTG MICE Service Company Limited.

CTW China is the market's answer to the proliferation of corporate travel management activities, including business travel & entertainment (T&E) as well as Meetings & Events (M&E), for Chinese-grown companies and multi-national corporations based in China. This market-driven event is thus dedicated to raising the sophistication of Chinese professionals who manage the wide and varying scope of corporate travel related needs for their organisations.

## Official Announcement of Rebranding to “Nyne” by Nayantara Fonseka

### TTA BULLETIN

Nayantara Fonseka (fondly known as Taru) has formally announced the rebranding of certain properties previously under the brand “Taru Villas”. Effective April 1st 2024, the following properties, namely Rock Villa - Bentota, Muse - Bentota, Lake Lodge - Colombo, Leela Walawwa - Induruwa, and Mayur Lodge - Yala, will henceforth operate under the brand name “Nyne Hotels”. This announcement was made at an official gathering held at Lake Lodge - Colombo on March 26, 2024.

The rebranding to “Nyne Hotels” signifies a strategic repositioning and dissociation

of these properties from the “Taru Villas” group.

“Nyne Hotels” is the sole brainchild of Nayantara Fonseka (Taru) and signifies her direct management and operational involvement in these entities going forward. The “Nyne Life” brand commits to upholding and surpassing the highest standards of hospitality, providing world-class



Nayantara Fonseka

accommodation, service, food and beverage and a sensory-driven experience to its guests, striving to reach the epitome of hospitality in Sri Lanka.

By November 2024, Nyne Hotels shall open properties under management in six more locations namely, Kandy, Habarana, Mirissa, Pamunugama, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya.

This is in addition to her plan for making Bentota the forties hub for tourism with three new properties nearing completion on the beach in Warahena.

Nayantara Fonseka confirms her non-association with Taru Villas and the company known as Taru Villas (PVT) Limited. Whilst she expresses goodwill towards Taru Villas a brand she founded with her partner Leana Pieris twenty-two years ago, she will now endeavour wholeheartedly on the development, expansion, and elevation of the “NYNE” brand.

A POCKET OF *wonder* IN THE MISTY HILLS



A name that resonates with over 150 years of heritage and elegance, Broomfield by Jetwing is a charming bungalow that once stood as the montane home of the prominent Bandaranaike family. Nestled in the heart of Nuwara Eliya, it gazes out over the serene Gregory Lake, and just beyond its doors lies a mist-laden city, waiting to be explored.

Featuring six lavishly decorated bedrooms, each a sanctuary of timeless luxury and comfort, a welcoming lounge to unwind, and a verdant lawn that invites you to breathe in the crisp mountain air, Broomfield by Jetwing is the perfect hill country getaway to experience the warmth of our authentic Sri Lankan hospitality in the misty hills.



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## Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts appoints Palak Shah, Vice President of Sales to strengthen Indian Market Growth

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, a leading hospitality name in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry that is committed to excellence, is proud to announce the appointment of Palak Shah as the Vice President of Sales for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. Palak brings 24 years of unparalleled hospitality experience, especially in India and Southwest Asia. In his new role at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Palak will lead its strategic sales initiatives, particularly focusing on accelerating growth in key source markets and India. He will also oversee the Global Sales Office initiatives and efforts set up in these markets.

As the former Regional Director Sales – Southwest Asia at Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) – Global Sales Office in Mumbai, Palak is a recognised dynamic sales and marketing professional, having been honoured as the GSO Person of The Year in 2023 and awarded the Salesperson of The Year at the AMEA award in 2013. His leadership, astute market insights and execution of sales strategies that transcend conventional boundaries saw him achieve unprecedented milestones, surpassing revenue targets and elevating IHG's stature in the fiercely competitive Indian market.

Commenting on this appointment, the Chief Commercial Officer of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Radhey Tawar, said, "We are thrilled to welcome Palak to the Cinnamon family. His appointment underscores our commitment to enhancing our sales culture and driving strategic



Palak Shah

growth within the organisation. Palak will be key in aligning our efforts towards driving commercial success for Sri Lanka's first and South Asia's largest integrated resort - Cinnamon Life, set to open later this year. His focus on accelerating business growth

in our key source markets, particularly India will further strengthen our position as a hospitality leader. Additionally, Palak will lead and oversee our Global Sales Offices across India, China and the United Kingdom."

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts strategically established Global Sales offices in India in 2022 to strengthen the brand's market presence. The dedicated team currently based in Mumbai and Delhi includes experienced Indian hospitality professionals who facilitate engagement from the trade and consumer segments and expand Cinnamon's strategic partnerships with existing and new Indian carriers.

Palak Shah commented on his new role as Vice President of Sales for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, "I am honoured to join Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, an iconic brand in Sri Lanka. India presents immense opportunities for growth and expansion and I am committed to leveraging our collective strengths to drive strategic initiatives, foster long-term partnerships and deliver exceptional experiences to our guests of all segments. I am truly excited to collaborate closely with the Cinnamon Life team and in playing a key role in reshaping the tourism industry of the country."

## Unlocking success: Sri Lanka Convention Bureau hosts educational session on connecting digital marketing for MICE/Business events

TTA BULLETIN

The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) hosted a transformative educational session aimed at bridging the gap between digital marketing strategies and successful MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and Business Events on 27 March at the auditorium of the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Led by esteemed industry experts Mr. Umair Wolid : President of the Digital Marketing Association of Sri Lanka and the CMO of Meta Asp at Roar AdX and Mr. Udara Dharmasena: Vice President Client Success Meta Asp at Roar AdX, the session covered the background of digital marketing in detail, providing attendees with invaluable insights into global trends and innovative strategies tailored specifically for the events industry.

Mr. Wolid and Mr. Dharmasena captivated the audience with their comprehensive overview of digital marketing's evolving

landscape and its vital role in shaping the success of modern-day events. Through engaging presentations and interactive discussions, attendees gained a deeper understanding of how to leverage digital platforms to enhance event visibility, engagement, and overall impact.

"We are pleased to have hosted this kind of an educational session focused on the connection of digital marketing and event management," said Ms. Kumudu Henedige, Manager Research, and Development & Training at the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau. "The enthusiastic participation highlighted the industry's growing recognition of the importance of mixing digital strategies into event planning and execution. We extend our sincere gratitude to Mr. Wolid and Mr. Dharmasena for their invaluable contributions and look forward to continuing to empower industry professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to thrive in today's competitive landscape."

## Sabre strengthens APAC team with the appointment of seasoned industry leader Rajiv Bhatia

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry today announced that experienced industry leader Rajiv Bhatia has joined Sabre to help advance its growth strategy in Asia Pacific.



Rajiv Bhatia

Rajiv, formerly of Bird Group, joins as Executive Director, APAC Market Expansion and will be instrumental in further expanding Sabre's footprint in key growth markets, including India, one of the world's fastest growing travel marketplaces. With extensive experience in the travel space, Rajiv brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record of success to Sabre's dynamic, customer-centric team. He began his career working for renowned airlines Gulf Air and Thai Airways. Most recently, he was Chief Commercial Officer of Bird Group's India GDS business, where he served for 16 years.

"With over 40 years of experience in the travel industry, we're confident Rajiv will help us to accelerate growth in India and other key markets across the wider APAC region," said Brett Thorstad, Vice President, Agency Sales & Airline

Distribution, Asia Pacific. "We are focused on fostering strategic partnerships and delivering exceptional value to our customers, and Rajiv shares this vision. Our partners will benefit from his wealth of knowledge and experience."

"This is a great time to be joining Sabre's enthusiastic team as they look to drive further growth across APAC," said Rajiv Bhatia. "Sabre's commitment to innovation and strong focus on customer success is something I admire. At this point in my career, I'm excited to be shifting my focus to advising on broader, strategic initiatives and helping build key customer relationships across India and other growth markets."

"I'm thrilled to welcome Rajiv onboard," said Sam Machado, Managing Director, India and South Asia. "He has significant experience in building customer relationships and a stellar reputation in the marketplace. Sabre is building momentum in India and South Asia and I look forward to leveraging his experience and customer focus as we continue our rapid growth in these markets."

## Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo Welcomes Nazoomi Azhar as its new General Manager

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo proudly welcomes a new era of leadership with the appointment of Mr. Nazoomi Azhar as its new General Manager. With over 25 years of experience managing renowned hotels in the United Kingdom, Mr. Azhar brings a wealth of expertise to strengthen the hotel's legacy with a fresh perspective and commitment to excellence.



Nazoomi Azhar

Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo. His belief that successful business operations hinge on teamwork, determination, humility and with his approachable disposition, we are able to create a positive and collaborative work environment within the Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo family."

Mr. Azhar's extensive industry tenure includes notable roles such as General Manager for Grange Hotels and Director of Operations for a UK-based boutique hotel group, where he spearheaded the establishment of the Hospitality Division. His proficiency in strategic planning, team development, and guest satisfaction aligns with Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo's commitment to delivering excellent and memorable experiences.

Commenting on the recent appointment, Area Vice President of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts for Colombo Hotels, Mr. Kamal Munasinghe, expressed confidence in Mr. Azhar's leadership, "We are confident that Nazoomi's wealth of knowledge and experience will significantly contribute to the continued success and growth of

Returning to his homeland and commenting on his new role, newly appointed General Manager for Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, Mr. Nazoomi Azhar, said, "I am deeply honoured to assume the role of General Manager at Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo and looking forward to the journey of upholding the legacy of this property. I am excited for the collaborations with our talented teams and further our commitment to supporting initiatives that benefit our local communities, both socially and environmentally that resonate with the values of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts".

A proud alumnus of Trinity College Kandy, Mr. Azhar is not only a passionate cricket aficionado but also extends his passion to promoting social inclusion among children and youth in marginalised communities.



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## Tourism leaders from around the world will explore how entrepreneurship and innovation are transforming the global travel sector at ATM 2024

The sold-out Travel Tech space at this year's edition of ATM will be 56% larger than in 2023, with sector participation growing by a third, year on year

### TTA BULLETIN

International policymakers and industry leaders are preparing to gather in the UAE for Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2024, where they will examine how entrepreneurship and innovation are reshaping the global tourism industry. The 31st edition of the exhibition will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from Monday 6 to Thursday 9 May.



sessions dedicated to premium offerings, healthcare meetings, global business travel, sustainable procurement, sporting events and more.

Over 200 speakers will participate in more than 50 sessions during the course of the four-day event. Experts from around the world will take to ATM's Global Stage and Future Stage (formerly the Travel Tech Stage) to address some of the sector's most pressing issues, including the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI), the future of aviation, how to stand out in the luxury segment, retail tourism, and sustainable travel.

ATM 2024 will host a selection of regional and international policymakers, including His Excellency Issam Kazim, CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), His Excellency Salem bin Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism in Oman; Teodora Marinska, Head of Public Affairs, European Travel Commission; Basmah Al-Mayman, Regional Director, Middle East at the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); and Lindsay Bowman Fraser, Leading Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE), Sport and eSport, Qatar Tourism.

As the Middle East's leading exhibition for inbound and outbound travel and tourism professionals, ATM 2024 will build on last year's record-breaking 30th edition with its theme: 'Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship'. Exhibitors and attendees will have the chance to explore new market opportunities, the benefits of collaboration and connectivity, how to attract investment and more.

Speakers at ATM 2024 will explore a series of emerging and established market segments, such as experiential, accessible and multi-generational travel, highlighting opportunities for growth, transformation and disruption. Delegates will also consider the implications of advancements in fields such as AI and how these technologies are impacting the Middle East's travel industry.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said: "The future of the global travel industry will be shaped by innovators and entrepreneurs, which is why we are so excited to shine a spotlight on the latest insights and technologies at ATM 2024. From startups to established brands, this year's exhibition will showcase fresh thinking on how the sector can enhance customer experiences, drive efficiency and deliver positive economic impacts across the Middle East and beyond."

"With less than a month to go before the international travel community converges on Dubai, we are looking forward to welcoming our biggest-ever cohort of exhibitors and guest speakers," Curtis added. "For more than 30 years, ATM has provided a forum in which participants can share insights, overcome challenges and seize opportunities, and the 2024 edition will be no exception."

Exhibitor participation is expected to be 23% higher than last year, making ATM 2024 the largest edition in the event's history. Growth is expected across all show verticals, including regional year-on-year upticks for the Middle East (19% larger), Europe (32% larger), Asia (20% larger) and Africa (28% larger). The exhibition's sold-out Travel Tech space will be 56% greater on the show floor, with products from the sector demonstrating 33% growth year on year. Hotel participation, meanwhile, is projected to be 21% higher than last year.

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.

This year's edition will once again enable attendees to move beyond traditional leisure travel by exploring opportunities related to luxury, business, and meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). ATM 2024 will feature an array of discussions on these subjects, including

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

## Exhibitor registration at ITB Berlin 2025 opens earlier than ever

Exhibitors can register online now for ITB Berlin 2025 and already plan attending the World's Largest Travel Trade Show in Berlin. Early Bird rates apply until 1 July

### TTA BULLETIN

Starting now, interested companies, regions and destinations can secure their stand online at ITB Berlin 2025 and begin preparing even earlier to attend the World's Largest Travel Trade Show. From 4 to 6 March 2025 the global tourism industry and actors from the entire value chain will be coming together on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds.



"Following the huge success of the last ITB Berlin and the positive feedback from exhibitors and trade visitors, we are pleased to give exhibitors the opportunity for the first time to plan much earlier for ITB Berlin 2025", said Christina Freier, Head of Sales & Administration at ITB Berlin. "We advise customers to register as soon as possible in order to take advantage of our Early Bird rates and secure the best location for their stand."

The registration deadline is 1 September 2024, after which the team of ITB Berlin will plan the halls and successively inform exhibitors of possible stand locations. Exhibitors will subsequently receive official order confirmation from ITB Berlin.

The exhibitor portal of ITB Berlin 2025 is the place to head to take part in the show. After registering for a stand, main exhibitors can enter co-exhibitors and from this autumn can book supporting event services.

Taking part in ITB Berlin gives companies an opportunity to present their products and services to expert international audiences and senior decision-makers alike. Exhibitors can make contact with the leading actors of the global tourism industry from the entire value chain and conduct efficient networking. They can also gain important information on all aspects of a constantly changing travel market.

The early bird catches the worm: companies wishing to take part in ITB Berlin 2025 have until 1 July 2024 to secure Early Bird discounts and reserve space at the regular fee for this year's ITB Berlin. A stand fee calculator and additional details can be found on the website of ITB Berlin: ITB Berlin stand registration.

Despite ITB Berlin's size and a wide range of products and services from over 180 countries and territories, the halls are easy to navigate. In addition to a geographical layout by destination the halls are divided up by market segment under the most important tourism headings. They include Business Travel, MICE, Hospitality, Travel Technology, Cultural Tourism, LGBTQ+ Tourism, Adventure Travel, Responsible Tourism, Medical & Health Tourism and Luxury Travel.

## Unleashing Culinary Brilliance: Cafe 2024

### TTA BULLETIN

Brace yourselves for an epic culinary extravaganza as the 21st edition of the Culinary Art Food Expo 2024 (CAFE), spearheaded by Chefs Guild Lanka (CGL), descends upon Colombo! Taking place from June 7th to 9th, 2024, at Sirimavo Bandaranaike Memorial Exhibition Centre (SBMEC), this event promises an international sensation, showcasing the very best of Culinary Artistry.

innovation in the hospitality industry. Exhibitors and clients from around the globe converge here to unveil groundbreaking products and services, making CAFE the ideal and profitable stage for all participating stakeholders.

CAFE 2024 with its pinnacle of culinary excellence offers a comprehensive showcase of food products and services. From the journey of food processing, spanning from plantation to table and consumption, every aspect of culinary art will be celebrated and explored. CGL is assisted by the event partner, CDC Events & Travel who are currently finalizing the arrangements for the event.

CAFE is thus a celebration of Sri Lankan cuisine and culinary talents. The event features culinary competitions, trade stalls, food festivals, cookery demonstrations, and cooking classes, showcasing the true international flavors in an exhilarating competition known as the 'Battle of Chefs.' Under the watchful eyes of internationally renowned WACS-approved judges, chefs from around the world will compete across various categories to showcase their culinary prowess.

With the participation of esteemed international Food & Beverage and Hospitality brands, CAFE has cemented its status as the ultimate platform for

The event also features the Tea, Coconut, and Spice Festival, highlighting Sri Lanka's expertise in these signature products and attracting a plethora of relevant stakeholders.







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# HOTELS / FAMILY ALBUM

## Jetwing Hotels increases reliance on solar power with an investment of USD 1 million in 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Hotels, a pioneer in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry for over five decades, remains dedicated to fostering positive change for people and the planet. In line with this commitment, Jetwing Hotels has invested over one million USD to expand its solar photovoltaic (PV) installations by 1.6 megawatts (MW) by the end of July 2024. Installation work commenced in December 2023 and has made significant progress, currently standing at 65% completion.

Jetwing Hotels has been at the forefront of integrating renewable energy into its hotel operations since 2010, when a 20-kilowatt (kW) system was installed specifically for guest room lighting at Jetwing Blue in Negombo. In the past 14 years, Jetwing Hotels has strategically implemented solar PV systems amounting to 925kW across its various properties along with the corporate office (Jetwing House) in Colombo which features its own solar PV system with a capacity of 40kW. In 2023, Jetwing Hotels generated 1,069-megawatt hours (MWh) of solar energy across its properties; equivalent to providing power for 13,490 households and

mitigating the release of 608 metric tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

The forthcoming solar PV system installations will enhance the current capacity up to 2.6 MW, achieved by incorporating new installations and expanding existing systems. Jetwing Hotels currently meets 8% of their electricity requirement through solar PV installations. The new expansion will triple that contribution, resulting in 24% of their total electricity usage being covered through solar power.

While most systems are roof-mounted, certain properties of Jetwing are embracing innovative approaches to PV installations. At Jetwing Vil Uyana, nestled in the heart of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle, and Jetwing Kaduruketha, situated amidst the serene countryside of Wellawaya, solar PV systems will be integrated into the roof structures of the car parks, effectively utilising the available space. Furthermore, Jetwing Kaduruketha and Jetwing Surf will feature systems capable of generating surplus energy beyond the hotels' day-time requirements, with excess power being exported to the national grid.

Situated on the outskirts of the Yala National Park, Jetwing Safari Camp is set to showcase its commitment to sustainability with the installation of a 120kW roof-mount solar PV system. This solar PV system will play a pivotal role in mitigating the hotel's carbon footprint. The emissions avoided from the total electricity generated are projected to surpass all Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions; emissions produced directly from the facilities, and indirect emissions from the energy purchased and utilised by the hotel, respectively. This endeavor not only underscores Jetwing Hotels' dedication to renewable energy but also exemplifies its proactive approach to environmental stewardship.

Jetwing Hotels' investment demonstrates its alignment with Sri Lanka's commitment to sustainable and green development. By contributing to the nation's ambitious plans, Jetwing is supporting Sri Lanka's goal to primarily meet its electricity needs through



renewable energy sources by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. With recent expansions, 66% of Jetwing Hotels' energy demand will be met through self-produced renewable sources; including biomass boilers, innovative steam-powered vapor absorption chillers that are used in four hotels, solar thermal systems, and biogas digesters that convert food waste into fuel used at associate kitchens across the chain.

Jetwing Hotels is guided by meticulous Environment Management Systems that are periodically vetted under the ISO 14001 standard and continuously tracks Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions across all operations. In 2016, Jetwing Hotels became the first hospitality company in Sri Lanka to verify its greenhouse gas inventory under the ISO 14064 standard. In line with its commitment to reduce GHG Emissions through the introduction of sustainable practices to its operations, the latest installations will result in an emission reduction of over 1,200 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually.

## Taj Bentota Resort and Spa: A sublime Sri Lankan escape for your upcoming Eid gateway

TTA BULLETIN

Surrender to the tranquil harmony of an island retreat - a place where the outside world fades away and solace is found in the unhurried pace of beach life.



Perched along the renowned 'Gold Mile' by the mesmerising Indian Ocean and overlooking breathtaking stretches of palm-fringed beaches, Taj Bentota Resort and Spa, Sri Lanka, is the epitome of tropical paradise. Located 90 km from the airport, the resort is a scenic 62 km drive from Colombo down south. Alongside European-styled living spaces, a high-energy bar, a rejuvenating J wellness circle, and an array of restaurants, a stay here is an invitation to immerse yourself in the tapestry of local culture and to drift away to the untouched beaches whenever your heart whispers.

Be enveloped in the sheer extravagance of your newly renovated rooms - a dream turned reality. Lounge in your own private balcony as the natural beauty of this coastal paradise seamlessly weaves its spell around you. With earthy tones mirroring the pristine sands and lush greenery framing your private balcony, the nightly ocean sunsets become your evening ritual. As you sink into plush comforts adorned by Sri Lankan wood framings, a surreal narrative unfolds where luxury and nature waltz together, creating an enchanting masterpiece.

Savour a romantic meal with your beloved at S.H.A.C.K. and be enticed with the freshest seafood catch. As the Indian Ocean stretches out to you, delight in each bite that explodes with a symphony of flavours in your mouth. And when night falls, under the starry sky, find yourself enchanted by the candlelit dining in the warm company of your loved one, as the soothing sounds of the sea waves serenade you.

Embark on a magical journey as your day

unfolds amidst the enchanting Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where whispers of the Dutch era come alive. Explore the time-honoured mysteries of the 12th-century Galapatha Vihara temple, where intricate carvings transport you to the Kanyadan period. Be enthralled by the immersive experience of crafting a mask at Ambalangoda's enchanting Mask Museum, as you unlock the hidden artistry within. The journey continues as you discover an exquisite array of local handicrafts, a testament to Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage, making your visit nothing short of an artisanal adventure. Then, let your imagination set sail in Galle's gentle embrace, with binoculars to behold playful dolphins and the majestic blue whale, the largest creature on Earth. For an effortlessly serene interlude, glide through the tranquil waters of the Madu River on a blissful boat safari, surrounded by the lush embrace of mangrove forests. As the day wanes, surrender yourself to the soothing embrace of J Wellness Circle, where pampering becomes an art, and relaxation a timeless ritual.

Our resort, with the help of Paathya, has embraced a holistic approach to sustainability, focusing on energy efficiency and responsible waste management. Our dedication to sustainability is highlighted by the Earth Check Platinum Certification for 2022-2023 and government-issued licenses and permits. Our resort is devoted to ensuring an exceptional guest experience and has been honoured with the prestigious SATA award for being the foremost beach resort in South Asia.

## The Awurudu festivities at Pegasus Reef Hotel

The Awurudu festivities at Pegasus Reef Hotel were a heartwarming occasion, filled with cultural vibrancy and joy on the 13th and 14th of April. These two days were not just ordinary events, but a celebration of unity, bringing together a beautiful mix of locals, tourists, and guests to honor Sri Lanka's traditions in a grand, inclusive way. The celebrations included a delicious Awurudu buffet that pleased taste buds with a variety of traditional dishes. From sweet treats to savory dishes, the buffet was a culinary joy, providing a taste of Sri Lankan flavors that left everyone content and delighted.

The festive spirit of Awurudu was evident in the various games and activities that brought joy and laughter to people of all

ages. Timeless games like 'Wasana Mutti' and 'aliyata asne' added a sense of nostalgia and excitement to the atmosphere, making it a truly unforgettable experience for everyone. A major attraction of the celebrations was the engaging drama performance that transported the audience to a traditional game shop. The talented performers infused the scenes with humor and skill, captivating the audience and providing an immersive and entertaining experience that will be remembered for a long time.

The New Year festivities at Pegasus Reef Hotel were not just a sequence of activities; they were a joyous celebration of community and culture, highlighting the rich traditions of Sri Lanka in a truly memorable manner.



# WHERE TIME SLOWS DOWN

Amidst the gentle sway of palm trees and the soft murmur of waves, discover a sanctuary that celebrates indulgence as an art form. Escape to your Sri Lankan haven, where every moment is an ode to serenity.



BENTOTA RESORT & SPA  
SRI LANKA

## A Magical Easter Celebration at Pegasus Reef Hotel

A Magical Easter Celebration at Pegasus Reef Hotel" Picture this: a stunning location with top-notch service, where every second is a precious memory. That's exactly what guests enjoyed at Pegasus Reef Hotel during its recent Easter celebration, a magical event that captivated both local patrons and travelers from afar. The vibe was electric as families and friends gathered for a day of indulgence and fun. The hotel's diverse international buffet was a true delight, serving up a mouthwatering variety of dishes to please every palate. And the best part? The price was budget-friendly, making sure everyone could join in on the festive fun.

Strolling through the hotel felt like

walking through a lively paradise, with charming Easter decorations around every corner. The highlight of the experience was definitely the large eggs on display, adding a whimsical touch to the atmosphere and bringing joy and wonder to all who saw them. "We aimed to create unforgettable memories for our guests," said Mr. Renuke, the hotel's General Manager. "Seeing families and friends gathering to celebrate filled us with happiness." The Easter festivities at Pegasus Reef Hotel went beyond a simple event; it showcased the hotel's commitment to providing exceptional experiences. As guests said their goodbyes, they took away not just memories of a delightful day, but a piece of the magic they had experienced.



## Minor Hotels and The Cavaliers Group Sign Hotel Agreement to Debut South Africa's first NH Collection

NH Collection Sandton to be launched in Africa's richest square mile  
TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, an international hotel owner, operator and investor with more than 540 hotels in 56 countries in Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Africa, the Indian Ocean, Europe and the Americas, is pleased to announce the signing of a strategic partnership with The Cavaliers Group to manage a hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. The signing represents the upcoming debut of Minor Hotels' NH Collection brand on the African continent.



with the intention to partner together on future hospitality opportunities throughout the African continent.

From July 1st 2024 the group will manage the hotel in Sandton, the financial district of South Africa's largest city. The 329-key property will first operate as NH Sandton and subsequently, following an extensive refurbishment of the property, will be rebranded as NH Collection Sandton.

This iconic hotel, spanning 30 years of successful operation, is located in Sandton, Johannesburg, approximately twenty kilometres from O.R. Tambo International Airport. NH Sandton will offer a selection of guest room categories including lead-in rooms, suites, one-bedroom suites and the 145 square metre Royal Suite. Facilities at the property will include two restaurants and two bars, an executive lounge, conference facilities, in addition to a gym and large outdoor swimming pool.

The Cavaliers Group was established in South Africa in 1926, with the property arm being established in 1967 by the late Cosmas Cavaliers (Founder and Chairman), led by Penny Cavaliers (Chief Executive Officer) and Alexi Cavaliers (Head of International Acquisitions). The Cavaliers Group is one of the largest privately-owned property groups in South Africa, with its core business being the investment and development of data centres, commercial, industrial, hospitality and retail properties, both locally and internationally, and is a leading and respected member of the local and international property industry, having assembled and growing a portfolio of institutional-quality assets.

This profound partnership between Minor Hotels and The Cavaliers Group secures the opportunity for Minor Hotels to pioneer their inaugural venture in South Africa, which is recognised as the second largest economy on the continent in terms of GDP and is a country which the hotel group is targeting for future development. Both Minor Hotels and The Cavaliers Group plan to foster a strong relationship,

William Heinecke, Chairman and Founder of Minor International, parent company of Minor Hotels, commented, "We are thrilled to sign this strategic partnership with The Cavaliers Group to launch NH and soon NH Collection in South Africa and with it launch our first property in the country. This property will join our growing portfolio of hotels in Africa, where our Anantara, Avani and Elewana brands are already present. We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership with Penny and the Cavaliers team."

Penny Cavaliers, Chief Executive Officer of The Cavaliers Group, also commented, "The decision to partner with Minor Hotels for our Sandton Hotel and Africa was legendary for The Cavaliers Group. We, as a Group, identified certain asset classes within the property sector which we will aggressively pursue, hospitality being one with exponential growth into the African continent. Over the past three years we have engaged with all international hotel groups and concluded and recognised that Minor Hotels' history, speed and culture is synonymous with our core Group values. We are currently considering several hospitality opportunities across the continent and have commenced our due diligence process."

Minor Hotels currently operates 27 hotels and resorts in eight countries in Africa, across its Anantara, Avani and Elewana Collection brands, with a further pipeline of future properties.

NH Collection has an existing portfolio of over 90 properties worldwide and can be found in top city locations across Europe and the Americas, with the first properties launched last year in the Middle East, on the Palm Jumeirah in Dubai, and in the Maldives. The brand will debut later this year in Asia with the opening of NH Collection Chiang Mai in Thailand, with further properties to launch this year including in Finland and Qatar.



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# THE CLARKS

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## Explore Sri Lanka, amidst nature

Villas & Suites by The Clarks brand caters to the boutique and luxury homestay segment, appealing to adventurous individuals seeking enriching experiences. "Villas & Suites by The Clarks" are strategically located in exotic settings, offering authentic local cuisine and personalized services for a relaxing and rejuvenating experience. This marks the beginning of a transformative journey that enhances travel experiences both within India and abroad.

Albatross Villas & Suites By The Clarks stands as a splendid Boutique Villa Resort in Kandy, Sri Lanka, representing the inaugural property of The Clarks Hotels & Resorts in the country. Situated within walking distance of the Victoria Golf Course, it rests atop "The Coconut Hill" with a backdrop of the Pidurutalagala Peak. The property is conveniently close to an 18-hole Golf Course, offering breathtaking views of the hills and the Victoria Reservoir. Centrally located near the Temple of the Tooth Relic in

Kandy and the Pallekelle International Cricket Stadium, it features magnificent suites with private balconies, jacuzzis, rain showers, and butler service, along with other modern amenities. The in-house bar serves strong and exotic mocktails and cocktails, while the multi-cuisine restaurant offers Indian, Sri Lankan, and international cuisines.






The Clarks Hotels & Resorts proudly introduces its second property in Sri Lanka, nestled in a picturesque environment amid tea plantations – "Celestial Hills Villas & Suites by The Clarks", Kandy. Surrounded by lush greenery and breathtaking mountain views, Celestial Hills comprises 11 individual villas, including 9 single-room villas and 2 family villas, each with 2 rooms.

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### Corporate Office

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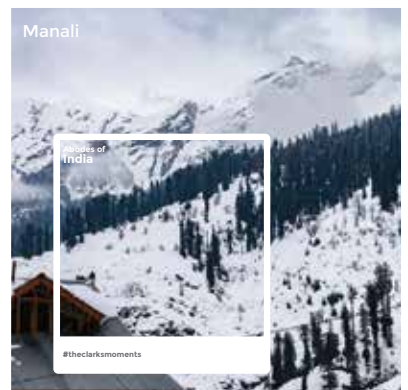
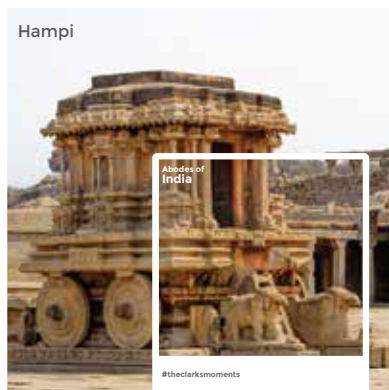
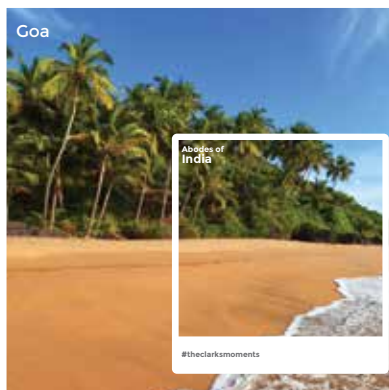
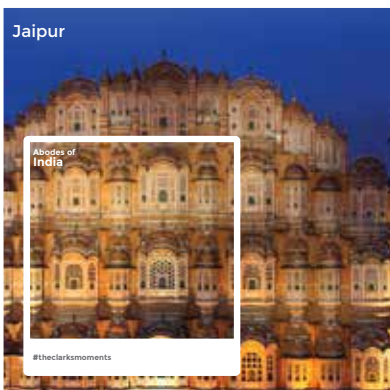
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# HOTELS / FAMILY ALBUM

## Much More than a Summer Stay: An Immersive Journey with Heritance Hotels and Resorts

TTA BULLETIN

Named as the number one destination for solo female travellers in 2024 by TimeOut and ranked fourth among Forbes' Top Solo Travel Destinations for the year, Sri Lanka beckons discerning travellers seeking more than just a summer escape. The island nation promises diverse and immersive experiences awaiting exploration.

Heritance Hotels and Resorts, the premier flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, unveiled its Summer Campaign for the year, inviting explorers to immerse themselves in a myriad of experiences across the hill country, the coast, and lush greenery. Every stay at Heritance Hotels and Resorts guarantees an immersive experience, making every getaway so

much more than a stay.

At Heritance Kandalama, architecture and nature combine in Geoffrey Bawa's iconic creation. It's not just the property one can explore, but the extended eco-park, which is home to 138 species of native flora, 183 species of birds, 19 species of reptiles and 64 species of dragonflies and butterflies. Being at the epicentre of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle, it also offers an ideal stay for cultural exploration.

Step back in time at Heritance Tea Factory, nestled amidst the picturesque tea plantations of Sri Lanka. This 19th-century tea factory exudes colonial elegance. Guests can witness the area with tea plantations and engage in tea-plucking sessions with local experts or embark on scenic cycling tours through lush tea estates, discovering iconic landmarks such as Ella and its renowned Nine Arch Bridge. Embrace the colonial charm of a bygone era while exploring the rich heritage of Sri Lanka's tea country.

For those seeking hiking adventures, the Pekoe Trail, the country's first long-dis-

tance walking route, named one of National Geographic's 20 Coolest Travel Destinations for 2024, is located hours away from Heritance Tea Factory.

Indulge in coastal tranquillity at Heritance Ahungalla, where Geoffrey Bawa's architectural brilliance meets the serene beauty of the sea. As guests continue to enjoy the breeze, they can navigate mangrove cave river safaris or engage in turtle conservation efforts, immersing themselves in the rich biodiversity of Sri Lanka's coastal ecosystems. Experience the harmony between comfort and environmental stewardship while discovering the coastal wonders of Sri Lanka.

Discover the historic charm of Negombo, a Must-Travel City according to the New York Times, while enjoying the comfort at Sentido Heritance Negombo, where vibrant city life meets serene coastal vistas. Explore the city's rich heritage and bustling markets or unwind on pristine beaches overlooking the Indian Ocean. Discover the perfect blend of historic allure and coastal beauty while experiencing the vibrant energy of Sri Lanka's west coast.



Embark on a journey of rejuvenation and transformation at Heritance Ayurveda, nestled along the tranquil southern coast of Sri Lanka. Guests can indulge in traditional wellness treatments amidst the region's natural beauty, exploring iconic landmarks like the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Galle Fort, and pristine beaches. Here, holistic healing and spiritual renewal intertwine, offering guests a serene escape along Sri Lanka's southern coast.

At Heritance Hotels and Resorts, every stay transcends the ordinary, offering guests an immersive journey through both the property and its surrounding destinations. This summer elevate your holiday experience and create memories that linger long after your departure.



## Taj Samudra Colombo 40th Anniversary Celebrations

Taj Samudra Colombo recently celebrated its momentous 40th anniversary, marking four decades of unparalleled hospitality, exquisite experiences, and cherished memories. Area Director Taj Maldives & Sri Lanka Samrat Datta and the team hosted an evening of cocktails at the Grand Marquee.





# THE JEWEL IN COLOMBO'S SKYLINE

ITC RATNADIPA – A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL, COLOMBO. NOW OPEN.

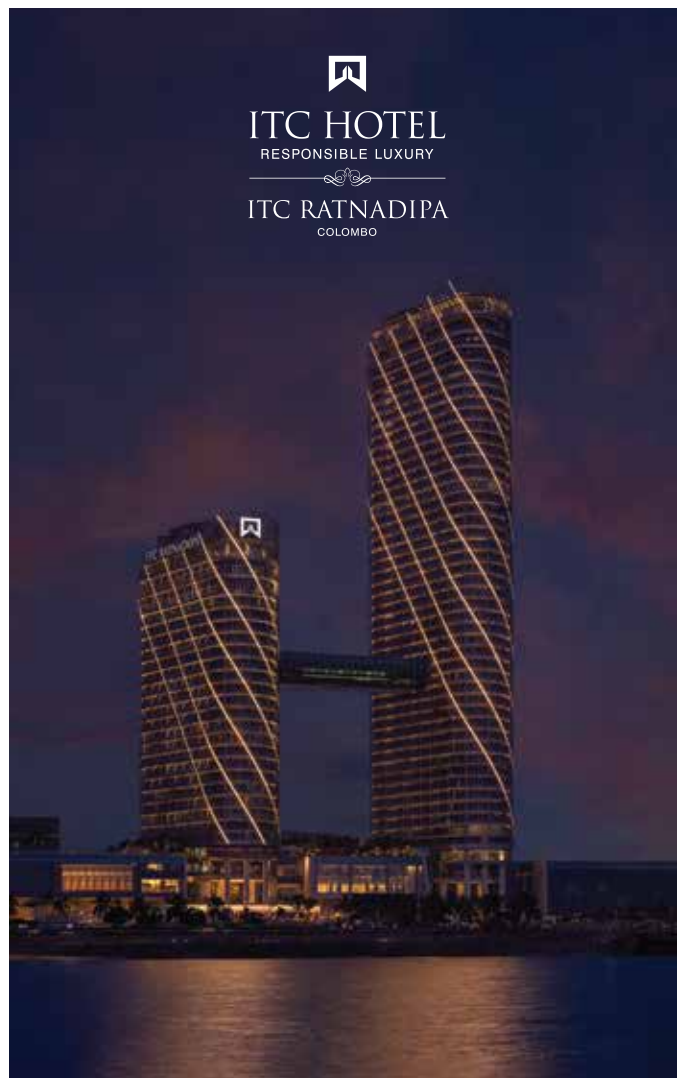
## A LIVING CULTURAL EXPRESSION OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

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## MEETINGS & SOCIALS

With 15,000 sq.ft. of pillar-less banqueting space, a ceiling height of 24 feet and designated pre-function areas, the breathtaking floor-to-ceiling windows of the Sangam ballroom showcase sweeping views and is just one of the many unbeatable features. This beautiful ballroom can accommodate over 800 guests (reception), while the Panorama Deck welcomes over 500 guests for enchanting outdoor weddings in Sri Lanka.

ITC Ratnadipa, 21, Galle Face Centre Road, Colombo - 01, Sri Lanka.

[www.itchotels.com](http://www.itchotels.com)

## Introducing 'Waraka Udawalawe' by Thema Collection: A Luxurious Sanctuary in the Heart of Sri Lanka's Wilderness

TTA BULLETIN

Get ready to experience the ultimate blend of luxury and nature at Waraka Udawalawe, Thema Collection's newest eco-luxury boutique hotel nestled in the stunning landscapes of Udawalawe. Just a short 20-minute drive from the renowned Udawalawe National Park, famous for its captivating wildlife and majestic elephants, Waraka offers an unforgettable escape amidst Sri Lanka's untamed beauty.

Waraka's concept, inspired by the majestic jackfruit, symbolizes abundance and rejuvenation, creating a luxury haven nestled amidst lush jack trees. This tropical paradise invites guests to unwind and reconnect with nature. Its dedication to eco-consciousness is evident in every detail of its design and operations. With 12 deluxe rooms and 2 exquisite suites, each meticulously crafted to blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings, guests can enjoy contemporary comforts while immersing themselves in the breathtaking scenery.



Waraka's restaurant invites guests on a luxurious culinary voyage, where the flavors of Sri Lanka mingle with international delicacies, promising a truly indulgent dining affair. The attentive staff curates a personalized experience, ensuring all guests' preferences are met with exquisite attention to detail. For those seeking rejuvenation, Waraka's Ayurveda spa offers a range of revitalizing treatments tailored to individual needs, from luxurious herbal oil therapies to invigorating facials. The expert therapists provide a bespoke experience, catering to each guest's desires for a blissful and unforgettable journey of relaxation and wellness.

Sustainability is at the heart of Waraka's ethos, as the hotel focuses on local empowerment, biodiversity conservation, and community engagement. Through eco-friendly practices and the use of upcycled materials, waste is minimized, preserving the natural beauty of the surroundings while actively supporting initiatives that nurture the local economy. Additionally, Waraka proudly backs 'Eth Athuru Sevana,' Asia's first Elephant Transit Home, rehabilitating vulnerable young elephants for release into national parks, thus contributing to wildlife conservation and ecosystem preservation.

Guests at Waraka can enjoy a variety of experiences, from guided elephant safaris

to village tours and canoeing adventures, curated by the hotel's naturalists to offer personalized insights into the region's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage. Waraka Udawalawe extends a warm invitation to travelers to immerse themselves in a journey of exploration where luxury and eco-consciousness intertwine seamlessly within the raw allure of Sri Lanka's wild landscapes.

Thema Collection, a proud family-owned company in Sri Lanka, comprises boutique hotels, resorts, and retreats across Sri Lanka, all of which showcase the island's rich cultural heritage and unparalleled biodiversity through a diverse array of attractions and experiences. Among its esteemed properties are Aliya Resort & Spa in Sigiriya, Maalu Maalu Resort & Spa in Pasikuda, Kithala Resort in Tissa,



Mountbatten Bungalow in Kandy, Tea & Experience Factory in Mandaramnuwara, and Scottish Planter Bungalow in Nuwara Eliya, Parangi Weligama Bay, Vis Ta Vie Mirissa, Wild Glamping Gal Oya, Wild Glamping Knuckles, Ayurvie Weligama, and Ayurvie Sigiriya. Thema Collection is also committed to making a positive impact on both the local community and the environment, ensuring that every stay with them contributes to a sustainable and responsible future for all.

## Anantara Celebrates with Two Hotels on the T+L It List

Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel and Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas both named on the 2024 list

TTA BULLETIN

Anantara is delighted to announce that two of its recently launched properties have been named on the 2024 Travel + Leisure It List. Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel in Italy and Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas in Thailand have both been selected for this year's list, which is determined annually by discerning magazine editors.

The coveted 'It List' is a result of months of research on hundreds of new and renovated properties around the world. The 100 selected hotels span 37 countries across six continents, with the list honouring the hard work, dedication and creativity that goes into opening and operating a world-class hotel.

Launched in April 2023, Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel is situated in a 13th-century cliffside Capuchin convent in one of Italy's most popular getaway destinations, and has been selected as one of the "Most Luxurious New Hotels of 2023". The restoration of the 800-year-old building carefully preserves historic features including ornate cloisters and an on-site Baroque church. The



property has 52 guest rooms and suites – many of which were first built as monks' quarters. The Suite Del Priore, named for its setting in the convent's priory, boasts frescoes above the bed and views of the cloisters, while the Suite Dell'Eremita, the hermit's suite, offers a sanctuary of privacy and aromatic romance in its own tranquil lemon grove.

Tucked away in a travertine-clad space overlooking the sea, the property's Anantara Spa offers healing journeys inspired by the monastic rituals of centuries old residents. An al fresco Fitness Centre features TechnoGym equipment for ocean-breeze-cooled workouts, alongside a newly refurbished cliffside swimming pool. Dining celebrates the region with offerings curated by Italian masters. Executive Chef Claudio Lanuto introduces a convent kitchen concept at Dei Cappuccini using fresh seasonal ingredients grown in the convent garden, whilst La Locanda Della Canonica Pizzeria By Gino Sorbillo serves authentic Neapolitan pizza from a third generation pizza maestro.

Unique experiences guided by local experts include historical tours led by the last Franciscan Friar in the region, hiking the Path of the Gods and vintage car or tuk-tuk tours along the iconic coastline, stopping in Positano and Ravello. Guests can also enjoy private helicopter flights for bird's-eye views of Positano and Sorrento's architectural wonders or coastal cruises with sunset views over Capri.

The second Anantara hotel on the 'It List' is a stunning and secluded hideaway located on an untouched island in the middle of Thailand's Phang Nga Bay - Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas was named one of the "Best New International Resorts of 2023".

The 27-acre site occupied by Anantara Koh Yao Yai sits between a wooded hill and a turquoise bay dotted with jungle-clad limestone islets. Unfolding over a kilometre of golden beach, the exquisite resort is the height of tranquillity, spaciousness and luxury, just a 45-minute boat ride from Phuket and 20 minutes from Krabi.

Anantara Koh Yao Yai's 148 suites, villas and penthouses feature striking contemporary design, with a layer of Thai heritage adding local charm. One- and two-bedroom villas hug the shoreline and offer private butler services, complimentary bicycles and direct beach access. Generously spaced suites for families provide creatively designed bunk beds plus a terrace either with pool access or a sea view. The resort's eight butler-attended Sea View Pool Penthouses are 366-sqm cocoons of luxury and the Wellness Lagoon Pool Villas offer seclusion amid soothing landscaping and lagoon views.

The resort offers multiple dining options serving a wide range of cuisines including



the signature Beach Restaurant, Pakarang, serving contemporary Thai dishes, and omakase enthusiasts will find plenty to love at the Japanese restaurant with panoramic ocean views. Meanwhile, the swim-up Pool Bar, Family Bar and Beach Bar cater to all, from milkshakes and sundaes to sundowners.

Koh Yao Yai is still wonderfully undeveloped. Guests can choose from a range of inspirational excursions and immersive experiences, such as vintage sidecar tours to a rubber plantation, batik-making, tie-dye classes, island-hopping, mountain climbing and scuba diving. Onsite activities include stand-up yoga and paddle boarding (SUP), mountain biking, nature walks and more.

Anantara Koh Yao Yai has one of Thailand's largest kids' clubs and an exquisite Anantara Spa, with five treatment rooms and one of the biggest hydro pools and hammams in the country. Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas places great emphasis on environmental preservation and the nurturing of the abundant natural beauty found on the island.

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# Minor Hotels Unifies Global Corporate Identity with NH Hotel Group Rebranded to Minor Hotels Europe & Americas

TTA BULLETIN

NH Hotel Group, part of Minor Hotels, will now operate as Minor Hotels Europe & Americas following a vote by NH Hotel Group's shareholders to change the company's registered name at its Annual General Meeting held last Friday.

By adopting the Minor Hotels Europe & Americas name, NH Hotel Group strengthens its integration with Minor Hotels, fostering a single, recognisable corporate identity for stakeholders, accelerating Minor Hotels' global growth. Moreover, this strategic move strengthens the global commercial and operational structure, benefiting industry professionals, customers, and shareholders.

Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels, said, "Adopting the Minor Hotels Europe & Americas name represents an important milestone in how Minor Hotels has become a globally recognised organisation, now under one corporate identity. Together, our

Minor Hotels team's shared passion and relentless pursuit of excellence will be instrumental in unlocking new business opportunities to achieve our ambitious growth targets in the coming years."

Since 2019, Minor Hotels and NH Hotel Group have unified their global portfolio of eight brands – Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas, Avani Hotels & Resorts, Elewana Collection, NH Hotels & Resorts, NH Collection Hotels & Resorts, nhow Hotels & Resorts, Oaks Hotels, Resorts & Suites and Tivoli Hotels & Resorts – introducing them into new markets around the globe.

The collaboration between the groups has to date led to the introduction of two of NH Hotel Group's trademarked brands (NH



Dillip Rajakarier

and NH Collection) into markets in Asia, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, with further expansion in the pipeline, and strengthened Minor Hotels' position in the upscale and luxury segments in Europe and the Americas through openings of Anantara, Avani and Tivoli branded properties. Today, Minor Hotels Europe & Americas is responsible for more than 350 properties in 30 countries across Europe and the Americas.

Minor Hotels Europe & Americas plans to grow across all segments, with a focus on its upper-upscale and luxury brands. Of the 200 properties Minor Hotels aims to add globally by the end of 2026, the company targets more than 50 in Europe, and the Americas will also see new openings across the Minor Hotels brand portfolio.

NH Hotel Group opened its first establishment in 1978 with the NH Ciudad de Pamplona Hotel. After becoming one of Spain's first hotel chains, it successfully expanded across Europe and the Americas. In October 2018, NH Hotel Group became part of Minor Hotels following Minor International's (MINT) acquisition of 94.1% of the company through a mandatory public acquisition offer. MINT has since increased its stake in NH Hotel Group to 95.9% as of 2023.

MINT, the Thailand-listed parent company of Minor Hotels, was founded in 1967 by William E. Heinecke. Minor Hotels' first hotel venture, the Royal Garden Resort in Pattaya, Thailand, also opened in 1978. Minor Hotels has grown from a single property in Thailand to one of the world's largest global hospitality groups, with over 80,000 rooms spread across more than 540 hotels in 56 countries and a collection of related businesses.

## Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita presents an exclusive partnership with MyBlend skincare

The resort strengthens its commitment to wellbeing and sustainability through this collaboration

TTA BULLETIN

Set along one of the island's most pristine and largest natural lagoon, Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita extends through the impossibly turquoise waters on the east coast, offering a natural wonderland for wellness seekers. Here, the overwater spa with its free-standing treatment villas, lends itself naturally to holistic healing at waters' edge. "Our treatments reflect the spirit of Africa and the Indian Ocean," says Martin Dell, general manager. "The spa's gardens are home to an abundance of tropical plants and trees such as aloe vera and lemongrass, which are cultivated for use in treatments to harness their natural healing properties," adds Joelle Jennepy, senior director of spa. Expressing the local healing traditions, the spa menu offers a glimpse into the diverse cultures on the island with signature therapies like the Mauritian Fusion Massage and Indian Bliss Massage, besides the luxurious pampering highlighted by the Coconut and Aloe Island Ritual.

Innovation is at the heart of the spa and more recently, Joelle is proud to highlight the exclusive partnership with MyBlend range of skincare products to offer elevated restorative treatments. "This advanced selection of MyBlend beauty products include premium nutri-cosmetics and derma-cosmetics from the skincare specialist Dr Olivier Courtin," she explains. Collaborating with a spa on the island for the first time, this cutting-edge brand is now available in Mauritius exclusively to guests staying at the resort. "Bringing an intervention level experience to skincare, each MyBlend session incorporates specific techniques and products to relieve tension and oxygenate tissues," she shares.

MyBlend has perfected the art of holistic skincare with its intuitive approach to

treatment. Their award-winning innovative antiaging technology follows three simple steps: nourishment from within with food supplements rich in vitamins and nutrients, taking care of the skin with highly concentrated and clean skincare products, and finally, maximising the effects with the use of a full-face LED mask. "By blending cosmetic agents with LED masks and food supplements, they deliver a comprehensive healing programme that is guaranteed to achieve lasting efficacy and care," says Joelle. Just a little help goes a long way with wellness; sometimes all one needs is to give the body a little boost to help rejuvenate and respond to the treatment. "With MyBlend the effects are almost immediate and you can witness how your skin responds to each session," she confirms, "From the Express (30-minute session) to the Essential and Signature treatments, each of the sessions offered at our spa has been carefully crafted to transform your skin through lifting massages and concentrated formulas."

From its recyclable packaging to clean formulas, MyBlend's products strike a chord with the resort's robust sustainability programme. "Luxury is no longer about appearance, it's about respect," Martin comments on the choice of this partnership, "Each guest who experiences a transformational MyBlend treatment is supporting 'La Maison des Femmes', an organisation that provides care and assistance to women who have endured domestic, psychological or sexual abuse." Besides its social responsibility, the brand has already made changes to its product range. "17 ingredients have been blacklisted, including volatile silicones, MIT, BHA and 8HT, mineral and petrochemical oils and sulphated surfactants," shares Joelle

## Dusit Thani Bangkok rewards early-bird bookers with exclusive perks ahead of its September reopening

Dusit's iconic flagship hotel celebrates its return with special reopening offer starting 1 May 2024 – only on [dusit.com](https://dusit.com)

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit Hotels and Resorts, the hotel arm of Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, has confirmed that its iconic flagship Dusit Thani Bangkok hotel will reopen on 27 September 2024 following its stunning transformation as part of Dusit Central Park – a landmark mixed-use development opposite Lumpini Park in the heart of Bangkok – and it is beginning its celebrations early by launching a special reopening offer.

Starting 1 May 2024, eager guests can secure their bookings for the new Dusit Thani Bangkok exclusively on [dusit.com](https://dusit.com). Early bookers will be rewarded with a nightly credit of USD 75 (THB 2,700 net) for dining and spa treatments, along with other enticing perks. Rates start at an attractive USD 330++ per night (THB 12,000++). Bookings for this special offer can be made until 31 October 2024 for stays between 27 September 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Promising to deliver a fresh interpretation of its predecessor's illustrious heritage, the reimagined Dusit Thani Bangkok is poised to offer a luxurious sanctuary for discerning travellers from around the globe.

Guests can expect unparalleled comfort in the 257 exquisitely crafted guestrooms, including elegant suites designed by the internationally acclaimed André Fu Studio. Starting at a spacious 50 sq m, each room boasts uninterrupted views of Lumpini Park through expansive floor-to-ceiling windows complemented by stylish seating nooks. The



Adrian Rudin

unique floorplan ensures every room offers this breathtaking vista.

Beyond the luxurious rooms, the reimagined Dusit Thani Bangkok elevates the guest experience with several exciting offerings. This includes a unique urban wellness concept, curated

dining experiences crafted by renowned chefs, and a chic multi-level rooftop bar created in collaboration with award-winning mixologists. For meetings and events, the hotel boasts over 5,000 sq m of expansive banqueting and meeting facilities. This includes one of Bangkok's largest grand ballrooms, featuring an impressive eight-metre ceiling and panoramic park views. Additionally, a diverse selection of meeting spaces caters to both intimate gatherings and large-scale events.

The new Dusit Thani Bangkok also doesn't forget its roots. Its renowned predecessor's signature golden spire, meticulously preserved, now adorns the new building. Precious artworks by renowned local artists and handcrafted teakwood décor from the original property also find a new home within the reimagined space, ensuring a seamless connection to the hotel's rich legacy.

"We are thrilled to unveil the new Dusit Thani Bangkok and countdown to our opening this September," said Mr Adrian Rudin, Managing Director, Dusit Thani Bangkok. "This is not just a rebuild; it's a rebirth. We've woven our rich legacy into the fabric of contemporary design and cutting-edge experiences"



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# HOTELS / FAMILY ALBUM

## Occidental Paradise Dambulla: A Pristine Retreat Amidst Nature's Splendour

TTA BULLETIN

Nestled amidst the captivating jungles of Dambulla, Occidental Paradise Dambulla by Browns Hotels & Resorts beckons discerning travellers in search of a serene and enchanting escape. This idyllic retreat offers the perfect setting to unwind and awaken to the melodic symphony of birdsong, engulfed by the lush greenery that surrounds it.

Travellers can embrace a myriad of experiences, conveniently located just a few minutes from the hotel. One can delve into history by visiting iconic sites such as the majestic Sigiriya Rock and the revered Golden Temple of Dambulla. Nature enthusiasts can enjoy scenic nature trails, whilst observing migrant birds and endemic flora and fauna. For those seeking adventure, Occidental Paradise Dambulla offers an exciting in-house adventure trail tailored for both adults and children. Activities like the Adeline zip line, Burma bridge and Tarzan rope are sure to get one's adrenaline pumping. It's a perfect blend of cultural exploration, culinary experiences and thrilling escapades.

Embark on an enchanting journey at Occidental Paradise Dambulla, where every moment is an adventure waiting to be discovered amidst the breath-taking landscapes of Dambulla. Imagine oneself witnessing the sky ablaze with the hues of the setting sun from the majestic Pidurangala Rock or uncovering the serene beauty of the Kalu Diya Pokuna. Travellers can wander through verdant paddy fields aboard a traditional bullock cart, glide



across the waters on a catamaran framed by stunning rock fortresses and treat their taste buds to the authentic flavours of a village-style lunch. It's a tapestry of experiences that seamlessly weave together nature's wonders and cultural delights, promising an unforgettable journey at Occidental Paradise Dambulla. From the serenity of nature's surroundings to carefully crafted experiences, this place is a true slice of heaven for travellers seeking a touch of magic in their holiday. Come discover the essence of bliss at Occidental Paradise Dambulla, where every moment is a symphony of nature's beauty paired with curated experiences.

Aligned under the expansive framework of Browns Investments (BI), the investment arm of LOLC Holdings PLC, Browns Hotels & Resorts is part of the most diversified conglomerate, the Browns Group. Browns Hotels & Resorts (BH&R) stands as a beacon of luxury and hospitality with a distinguished portfolio comprising some of Sri Lanka's most enchanting properties: Club Hotel Dolphin, The Calm Resort & Spa, Hotel Sigiriya, Thaal Bentota Resort, Dickwella Resort, Occidental Eden Beruwala, Occidental Paradise Dambulla, and the Reveal Boutique Collection

## Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Event in Melbourne Draws Australian Dignitaries and Enthusiasts

TTA BULLETIN

Thema Collection and Connaissance De Ceylan, in collaboration with Sri Lankan Airlines, hosted an exclusive tourism promotion event on the 26th of March 2024 at Upali's Melbourne, captivating the attention of over 75 Australians. This event aimed to spotlight Sri Lanka as an attractive destination for holidays, cricket tours, and wildlife expeditions.

The event unfolded with a series of captivating presentations, with Mr. Maxime Wickramasinghe, Director of Marketing and Business Development at Thema Collection and Connaissance De Ceylan delivering insightful insights into the tourism prospects of Sri Lanka. Mr. S.P. Mohan, the country head of Sri Lankan Airlines, further enriched the audience's understanding with a comprehensive overview of insights into the ease of travel and the diverse offerings available through Sri Lankan Airlines.

What made the event truly memorable was the warmth and hospitality extended by Johann Jayasinha, David Cruse, Cathy Cruse, and the dedicated committee behind the scenes. Attendees were treated to an unforgettable dining experience, further enhancing the ambiance of the evening.

The climax of the evening arrived with the announcement of two lucky winners, who won two amazing prizes—a complimentary return ticket to Sri Lanka and a luxurious 7-night stay at Thema Collection hotels.

As the event came to an end, it left an indelible mark on all those present, reinforcing Sri Lanka's position as a premier tourist destination. With its rich heritage, diverse landscapes, and warm hospitality, Sri Lanka beckons travelers from around the globe to experience the magic it has to offer.



## Cinnamon Colombo Hotels Elevates Appreciation Event to Reinforce Commitment to Guest Safety and Experience

Cinnamon Colombo Hotels recently hosted an exclusive appreciation event to celebrate the invaluable contributions of its vendors, wedding concierge services and banquet-associated partners. The event was a significant opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the support received from its partners and its ongoing commitment to elevating the guest experience and safety standards.

In an era where hospitality norms continuously evolve, ensuring guests' safety, comfort, and satisfaction, the attendees were also presented with Cinnamon Colombo Hotels in-depth safety standards and guidelines implemented throughout the three properties. In ensuring a seamless and secure experience for all its guests, knowledge was shared through a panel discussion led by industry leaders, which delved into the dynamic hospitality landscape and the critical need to adhere to

robust safety standards and guidelines. The panellists shared insights on adapting to changing standards while maintaining a harmonious relationship with protocols to enhance the overall guest experience and safety.

The event provided a platform for collaboration and appreciation and reinforced Cinnamon Colombo Hotels' commitment to excellence in the hospitality industry and to guest safety.



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## Qatar Airways and Aer Lingus Launch New Codeshare Partnership

TTA BULLETIN

Starting 13 March 2024, the codeshare gives customers greater access to more destinations across the UK and Ireland



The move further strengthens Qatar Airways' ongoing partnership expansion with Aer Lingus' parent company International Airlines Group (IAG)

Doha, Qatar – Qatar Airways and Aer Lingus (EI) are launching a new codeshare partnership beginning 13 March 2024. The codeshare will give customers greater access to more destinations across the UK and Ireland, and benefit passengers across the globe – including in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Middle East and New Zealand.

Qatar Airways will add its codeshare on flights operated by Aer Lingus (EI), the national carrier of Ireland, and Aer Lingus Regional, in a move which further strengthens Qatar Airways' ongoing partnership expansion with International Airlines Group (IAG). Once implemented, Qatar Airways will have codeshare coverage with all IAG carriers, including British Airways, Iberia, Vueling, and Aer Lingus, solidifying its position in the European market.

This new codeshare will enable connections between Qatar Airways and Aer Lingus (EI) flights through Dublin, London, and Manchester. Customers will

be able to travel between Irish and UK destinations including Aberdeen, Belfast, Cork, and Glasgow, through Qatar Airways' extensive global network via Doha's hub at Hamad International Airport.

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Thierry Antinori, said: "Our new codeshare partnership with Aer Lingus demonstrates Qatar Airways' commitment to its customers, who will benefit from a wider choice of global destinations. The move also builds on our long-term strategic relationship with IAG as we expand our codeshare coverage even further. It is an exciting opportunity to extend our exceptional service to even more travellers through this partnership."

Aer Lingus Chief Strategy and Planning Officer, Reid Moody said, "We're pleased to launch our new codeshare partnership with Qatar Airways, offering their customers a great choice of routes and destinations on Aer Lingus' extensive network of flights across the UK and Ireland. Customers can expect a warm welcome and friendly service and we look forward to welcoming them on board."

This follows the recent expansion of the strategic alliance between Qatar Airways, British Airways and Iberia, which offers global connectivity between more countries than any other airline joint business.

## SriLankan Airlines Elevates Ground Handling with State-of-the-Art Equipment Upgrade

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines, the exclusive ground operator at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), has initiated a phased upgrade of airport ground support equipment to accommodate the rising influx of flights and travellers transiting through the airport. Recently, the airline



acquired three state-of-the-art passenger apron coaches, ensuring optimal comfort for passengers during transfers between the terminal and remote stands.

With airport traffic steadily increasing and nearing pre-pandemic levels, acquiring modern ground support equipment has become an urgent priority for SriLankan Airlines. This investment aims to ensure a seamless end-to-end travel experience for customers.

"It is an exciting time for Sri Lanka's tourism industry; the number of visitors has doubled over the past year. We are delighted to introduce these modern apron coaches, along with other new ground support equipment, to our services at Colombo airport during this pivotal point. Our commitment to providing our passengers and the passengers of our

customer airlines with a reliable and effortless travel experience remains steadfast, as does our dedication to supporting the national tourism strategy. With these incremental advancements, we anticipate substantial transformation in our operations," stated Senior Manager Airport and Ground Services of SriLankan Airlines, Deepal Pallegangoda.

The passenger apron coaches, and ground support equipment were procured following a comprehensive and transparent competitive bidding procedure, consistent with all procurement exercises of the airline. The coaches, sourced from China International Marine Containers, represent the latest in comfort and technology. These operational enhancements will empower SriLankan Airlines to elevate both the standard of ground support services and the comfort of passengers at the airport.

## Etihad Airways explores new horizons in the Middle East with the launch of its newest destination

TTA BULLETIN

In a move to broaden its network and enhance connectivity within the Middle East, Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, today announced the addition of Al Qassim, Saudi Arabia, to its growing list of destinations, increasing its total number of Saudi gateways to four.

The airline is set to expand its footprint by launching flights to one of Saudi Arabia's most captivating regions. Beginning 24 June 2024, Etihad will link Abu Dhabi's Zayed International Airport directly with Al Qassim's Prince Naif Bin Abdulaziz International Airport (ELQ) with four weekly flights.

Reflecting on the new service, Arik De, Chief Revenue and Commercial Officer at Etihad Airways, said: "Launching the new service to Al Qassim this year is not just about introducing a new destination; it's also a celebration of Etihad's 20 years of connecting Abu Dhabi with the rich culture and economic opportunities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

"This move is aligned with our mission to deliver extraordinary experiences and the opportunity to explore the unique allure of both Abu Dhabi and our new destinations, like Al Qassim. We're proud to expand our services within the Kingdom and look forward to welcoming passengers to experience our renowned hospitality and service."

"Furthermore, the exceptional experience awaiting them at Zayed International Airport – Terminal A, our new home, redefines the benchmarks for travel comfort and service excellence, ensuring a

memorable journey from start to finish."

Al Qassim celebrated for its lush date palm groves, rich cultural heritage, and lively markets, offers a perfect blend of traditional Saudi culture and contemporary attractions. This new route is designed to meet the demands of both business travelers seeking new ventures and tourists desiring an authentic exploration of Saudi Arabia's historical and cultural wealth.

Starting 15 June, Etihad is increasing its service frequency to a number of key destinations, and also starting flights to Antalya and Jaipur which were announced in February.

The weekly flights to Thiruvananthapuram and Amman will be increased by three, totalling 10 and 14 respectively. Additional services include three more flights to Cairo for a total of 24, Karachi increasing to 17, and Colombo to 20 weekly flights.

The latest expansion contributes to an overall 33 per cent increase in Etihad's total weekly flights, growing from 642 last summer to 855 in 2024, and extends Etihad's reach from 65 to 76 destinations, significantly enhancing worldwide connectivity.

The updated schedule and the new routes have been developed to optimise the travel experience for passengers, who will benefit from greater connectivity and a broader range of travel options, alongside the opportunity to experience the sophisticated amenities and customer-focused services provided at the newly inaugurated Terminal A at Zayed International Airport Abu Dhabi.

## Turkish Airlines to commence operations to Turin, Italy

TTA BULLETIN

Turkish Airlines, one of the world's leading airlines renowned for its exceptional service and extensive global network, is thrilled to announce the commencement of operations to Turin, Italy. With this exciting development, Turkish Airlines further solidifies its commitment to providing travelers with unparalleled access to the world's most captivating destinations.

Nestled in the picturesque Piedmont region of Italy, Turin beckons travelers with its rich history, cultural heritage, and stunning landscapes. As the capital of Piedmont, Turin boasts a wealth of attractions, from majestic palaces and historic museums to vibrant piazzas and delectable cuisine.

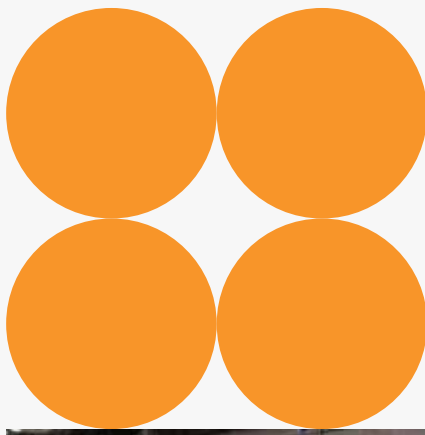
Commencing 10th July, Turkish Airlines will offer 7 direct flights a week to Turin from its hub in Istanbul, providing travelers with convenient and comfortable access to this enchanting city. Whether you're planning a leisurely city break or an adventurous exploration of the Piedmont region, Turkish Airlines' flights to Turin promise to be the perfect way to start your

journey.

"We are delighted to announce the launch of our operations to Turin, Italy," said Fatih Bozkurt, Country Manager Sri Lanka and Maldives for Turkish Airlines. "Turin is a destination rich in culture, history, and natural beauty, and we are excited to offer travelers the opportunity to experience all that this enchanting city has to offer. With our world-class service and modern fleet, we look forward to welcoming passengers aboard our flights to Turin and providing them with an unforgettable travel experience."

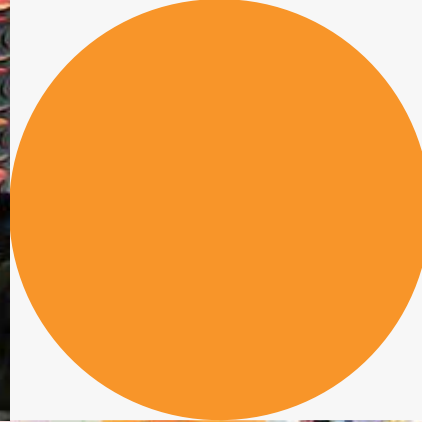
Turkish Airlines' decision to add Turin to its list of destinations underscores its ongoing commitment to expanding its global reach and enhancing connectivity between Turkey and the rest of the world. With its renowned hospitality, modern fleet, and extensive global network, Turkish Airlines continues to set the standard for excellence in air travel, ensuring that every journey is an unforgettable experience from start to finish.





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# AIRLINES

## Qatar Airways GCEO Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer Outlines Vision for the Future of Qatar Airways

TTA BULLETIN

A new era of innovative growth including exciting product reveals are in the pipeline

In a major development, the GCEO said a new First Class cabin will be introduced by Qatar Airways

His strategy for Qatar's national carrier includes pioneering innovation in digital technologies, products, fleet growth and employee engagement as Qatar Airways continues its global expansion

DOHA, Qatar – Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, has revealed several major new developments in line with his vision for the future of Qatar Airways. Designed to invigorate the global airline and its group of businesses, his roadmap for success includes innovation as the key pillar, which is reflected in Qatar Airways' upcoming products and services – including the introduction of new First Class cabins on some of its fleet.

In an exclusive interview with CNBC – his first since being appointed Qatar Airways' Group Chief Executive Officer in November 2023, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer stated: "This is a new era."

The far-ranging interview touched on the overall positive outlook for the Group as Engr. Al-Meer detailed his approach to developing a high yielding concept for Qatar Airways' new First Class cabin.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, stated: "Based on the demand from certain sectors, we see a high demand for First Class, and as such, have decided to introduce a newly-designed First Class cabin unique to Qatar Airways. No one can develop a First Class cabin better than us – we are combining the experience of flying commercial and executive jets to develop something new. We are 70 to 80 per cent ready and are only finalising colours. We are hoping to announce it soon."

## SriLankan Airlines Treats Passengers to a Sumptuous Array of Sweetmeats on the Sinhala and Tamil New Year

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines treated passengers to a traditional feast of sweetmeats at the Serendib Lounge in Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in celebration of the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. The unique menu featured festive delights such as Mung Kavum, Kokis, Dodol, Aasmi, Aluwa, Unduvel, Kavum, Athirasa and seasonal classic, Kiribath with accompaniments. In keeping with tradition, the 'Kavili' table was beautifully decorated with flowers and beetle leaves, extending a heartfelt invitation to all to immerse themselves in the vibrant culinary tapestry of Sri Lanka's Sinhala and Tamil New Year festivities.



set to debut at the Farnborough International Airshow in July 2024. Qatar Airways' award-winning Qsuite Business Class challenged industry norms when it was launched in 2017, and continues to be a benchmark for the aviation industry.

Qatar Airways GCEO also stated that the competitive aviation landscape in the GCC region is helping raise the bar when it comes to customer experience. He stated that the pressure is on for potential rivals, and he welcomes any challenge for Qatar Airways. He remains confident in Qatar Airways continuing to hold onto its market leading position in the future to outshine any competition.

He also underlined the ways in which digital innovation is helping drive organisational efficiencies, as the airline continues to announce exciting new routes in growth markets including China and India, further enhancing Qatar's position as a gateway to the world.

Qatar Airways currently serves over 170 global destinations, and will soon launch inaugural flights to Hamburg and Tashkent, and resumed flights to Lisbon and Venice. Qatar Airways will also resume several summer seasonal routes, including Adana, Antalya, Bodrum, Marrakesh, Mykonos, Sarajevo, and Trabzon.

Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer was appointed Group CEO in November 2023, and he immediately focused on introducing innovative programmes to benefit both passengers and the airline's global 60,000 strong workforce. In his first message to employees, he stressed the importance of cultivating trust and empowerment in the work culture. Under his leadership, various workplace initiatives have been successfully introduced that continue to improve employee satisfaction.

## Air Seychelles and SriLankan Airlines announce codeshare partnership

TTA BULLETIN

Air Seychelles, the Republic of Seychelles' national airline and Sri Lankan Airlines, the flag carrier of Sri Lanka, have announced a new code-sharing partnership, expanding the number of destinations accessible to customers from the paradise islands flying between Mahe and Colombo.



Over 20 destinations are included in the partnership, which includes much requested ones such as Sydney and Melbourne in Australia as well as other popular stops in India, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. SriLankan Airlines' Passengers will also be able to fly from Colombo to Mahé with the activation of the codeshare partnership.

This new codeshare agreement will allow Air Seychelles and SriLankan Airlines to place their codes on each other's flights and enable passengers to continue their journey conveniently using a single booking and with their baggage checked in all the way to the final destination. It also means passengers can book their travels with both airlines, through online travel agencies, as well as with local travel agents.

In June last year, when Air Seychelles launched the Colombo service, the two airlines signed an initial interline agreement that introduced multiple cities within the south-east Asia region to the

local market's choice of destinations.

Sandy Benoiton, Air Seychelles' Chief Executive Officer shares "now that we have been flying to Colombo for over 9 months, the twice-weekly flights have proven successful. The next step to solidifying our relationship is with this code-share, allowing even more passengers the convenience of a single ticket to more points served by our partner in Asia and Australia.

Richard Nuttall, Chief Executive Officer of SriLankan Airlines stated, "We are pleased to boost our codeshare network and presence in the African region through this new partnership. We look forward to working with Air Seychelles to provide our customers even more African destination options in the coming years."

Flights under the codeshare agreement are available to book now and will begin operating in April 2024.

## Bangkok Airways eyes further growth through renewed network planning and optimization deal with Sabre

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry today announced a renewed agreement with Bangkok Airways, as the airline eyes further industry growth, investment and partnership.



This extended deal marks the third renewal between the two companies, and means Bangkok Airways will continue to deploy a comprehensive suite of Sabre's network planning and optimization solutions to create profitable routes and enhance passenger choice. The carrier is using Sabre's Cloud-enabled Schedule Manager, Slot Manager and Codeshare Manager.

"We've been working together with Sabre for almost a decade. In that time, Sabre's technology has become imperative to both our day-to-day operational efficiency and our longer-term growth strategy," said Mr. Chulin Kocharoen, Vice President - Network and Product Development, Bangkok Airways. "We're absolutely thrilled that this renewed agreement will enable us to continue to benefit from Sabre's advanced, intuitive solutions to optimize our flight schedules, enhance route planning, and respond swiftly to evolving dynamics in our regional markets."

Bangkok Airways, known as Asia's Boutique Airline, flies from Thailand to more than 20 regional destinations, including Singapore, the Maldives, Cambodia, China, and Laos. The carrier, which is based out of Suvarnabhumi Airport, has recently announced new interline agreements with Air India and a codeshare deal with Singapore Airlines to streamline travel experiences further and improve connectivity for passengers, bringing its codeshare agreements managed through Sabre's Codeshare Manager to 28.

"We're delighted that, through this deal, Bangkok Airways has signalled continued confidence in our technology," said Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions, Airline Sales. "The set of network planning and optimization solutions that Bangkok Airways continues to choose from Sabre come together powerfully to enable them to automate and execute profitable schedules, proactively manage slots, and broaden their network while, ultimately, improving customer choice and satisfaction."

## Emirates Skywards is not just a loyalty program; it's a gateway to a world of luxury, convenience, and unforgettable experiences

The award-winning loyalty programme of Emirates and flydubai has more than 30 million members worldwide, and still growing!

### TTA BULLETIN

In the vast expanse of the aviation world, where loyalty programs vie for travelers' attention, Emirates Skywards stands out with its unparalleled levels of excellence and offerings to its loyal members. Over the past two decades, the loyalty programme has evolved and grown to become one of the most recognized and valued loyalty programs in the world.

In an era where frequent flyers seek not just rewards but experiences, Emirates Skywards leads the way with pioneering initiatives, innovative product offerings, and more than 150 brand partners. Emirates Skywards has successfully redefined the loyalty experience in the aviation industry; both in the air and on the ground.

At the heart of Emirates Skywards lies a simple philosophy – rewarding loyalty

generously. Members earn Skywards Miles not just through flights with Emirates but also through a vast network of partner airlines, hotels, car rentals, and retail partners worldwide.

What this means is that there are many opportunities to earn and accumulate Skywards Miles even without flying; Emirates Skywards Hotels offer 400,000 hotels in more than 900 destinations worldwide to stay in and earn Miles; and there are 40 plus financial services partners; more than 3,000 retail and lifestyle partners; 15 car rental partners; and more than 15 airline partners.

This flexibility ensures that every aspect of a traveler's journey contributes to their mileage balance, swiftly propelling them towards their desired rewards.

The best part about earning Skywards Miles is deciding how to spend them, and it won't take you long to reach exciting rewards.

What truly sets Emirates Skywards apart is its commitment to offering experiences that transcend ordinary expectations. From complimentary access to airport lounges renowned for their lavish amenities to exclusive invitations to world-class sporting and cultural events, Emirates Skywards members are treated to a life of privilege at every turn.

Emirates Skywards Platinum and Gold members can also enjoy complimentary lounge access for themselves and a guest at renowned airport lounges worldwide. From gourmet dining and signature cocktails to tranquil spa treatments and business facilities, Emirates Business and First Class Lounges provide a sanctuary of comfort and

relaxation amidst the hustle and bustle of the airport.

While attracting more than 120,000 members per month, Emirates Skywards members come from more than 180 countries, including: 3.9 million members in the United Kingdom, 3.5 million in the United States, 2.3 million in the United Arab Emirates, 2 million in Australia and 2.3 million in India. Around 129,200 Sri Lankan nationals and residents are enrolled in Emirates Skywards.



Members can earn Tier Miles when travelling with Emirates and flydubai.

## Air China scheduled to start operations to Saudi Arabia

### TTA BULLETIN

Air China has become the third Chinese airline to schedule flights to Saudi Arabia, following China Eastern Airlines and China Southern Airlines.



**AIR CHINA**  
中國國際航空公司

The carrier plans to introduce its first regular flights to the kingdom starting May 6, operating three times per week between Beijing Capital International Airport (PEK) and Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport (RUH). Airbus A330-300 aircraft will be deployed on the sector.

The move comes as counterpart China Southern prepares to inaugurate its first route to the Middle East country on April 16, linking Beijing Daxing and Riyadh twice a week using A330s. Flights from Guangzhou and Shenzhen are set to follow later this summer.

Additionally, China Eastern will make its debut in the Saudi Arabian market on April 27, providing a nonstop connection between its Shanghai Pudong International Airport hub and RUH. The 4,509-mi. (3,918-nm) sector will be served three times per week using A330-200s.

Air China, China Eastern, and China Southern—alongside Xiamen Airlines—have offered flights to the kingdom in the past, but each have been limited-time services specifically designed to accommodate religious traffic.

The surge in capacity between China and Saudi Arabia is being supported by the Saudi Air Connectivity Program, set up to enhance air connectivity to unserved and underserved markets. It hopes to make China one of Saudi Arabia's top three source markets for tourists by 2030.

According to OAG Schedules Analyser data, Saudia is currently the only airline offering nonstop flights between Saudi Arabia and China, with a total of four routes. Saudia serves Guangzhou from Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport (JED) and RUH, flying 3X-weekly and 2X-weekly, respectively. Saudia also serves Beijing Daxing from JED and RUH twice a week.

O&D traffic between Saudi Arabia and mainland China reached approximately 300,000 two-way passengers in 2019, Sabre Market Intelligence data shows, marking a 19% increase from the previous year. Preliminary figures for 2023 show O&D traffic of around 283,000 two-way passengers.

In a separate move, China Eastern has scheduled the launch of a new European service. Flights between Shanghai and Vienna are slated to begin on June 22, operating three times per week. The SkyTeam alliance member offers 14 routes to Europe at present, flying to 10 cities including Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid, and Rome.

Additionally, China Southern Airlines has confirmed that it will also add flights to Budapest this summer. Service from Guangzhou will start on June 27, operating four times per week using 787-8s.

"This announcement introduces our fifth Chinese destination for passenger flights, and we are confident that our new partnership with China Southern Airlines will contribute to strengthening ties between our two regions," Budapest Airport CCO Balázs Bogáts says.

## Elevating the dining experience – Cathay unveils new Cathay Dining brand

Exemplifying Cathay's commitment to delivering unparalleled service to its customers

### TTA BULLETIN

Cathay announces the rebranding of its catering business as Cathay Dining, reinforcing its vision to become one of the world's greatest service brands. For nearly six decades, the subsidiary formerly known as Cathay Pacific Catering Services (H.K.) Ltd. ('CPCS') has consistently delivered tailored, high-quality inflight and catering cuisine solutions to customers in Hong Kong and across the globe.

The business continues to expand its expertise, which marks a significant milestone in Cathay Dining's journey and reaffirms its dedication to curating exceptional experiences through high-quality catering solutions for Cathay Pacific and other esteemed airlines. Additionally, it reinforces Cathay's commitment to forging thoughtful dining partnerships and offering expert restaurant recommendations to its esteemed Cathay members.

This change aligns with Cathay's overarching premium travel lifestyle proposition as a group. It exemplifies Cathay's relentless pursuit of excellence and its commitment to delivering unparalleled service to its valued customers.

Introducing the new brand, Cathay Chief Operations and Service Delivery Officer, and Cathay Dining Chair, Alex McGowan said: "We have invested heavily over the years to transform Cathay Dining into a



world-class provider of dining solutions and experiences. The new brand reflects this and underlines the important role that dining plays in helping Cathay achieve its vision of becoming one of the world's greatest service brands."

Cathay Dining has two key lines of business, providing inflight dining solutions to Cathay Pacific and other major airlines flying to and from Hong Kong, as well as providing catering services to businesses outside of the aviation industry. Cathay Dining operates the principal aviation catering business in Hong Kong, last year producing more than 19 million meals.

Cathay Dining Chief Executive Officer Agatha Lee said: "At Cathay Dining, we are committed to quality food and solutions. From our inflight cuisine to bespoke catering services, we take great care and pride in designing carefully crafted dining experiences that are enjoyed by customers travelling around the globe."

The rebrand to Cathay Dining follows the group's global rebrand to Cathay in September 2023. The Cathay Dining brand will begin to roll out across customer-facing channels starting this month.

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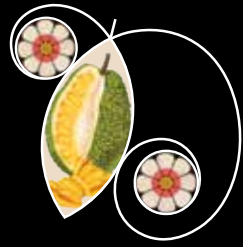


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Welcome to 'Waraka,' an eco-luxury boutique hotel in Udawalawe, surrounded by lush tropical greenery and offering stunning views of a tranquil waterway. Inspired by the jackfruit, symbolizing abundance and rejuvenation, the hotel offers tranquility and modern comforts. At 'Waraka', guests can indulge in a range of experiences, including canoeing adventures and thrilling safaris, while savoring authentic Sri Lankan and International cuisine. Every moment at 'Waraka' promises genuine Sri Lankan hospitality and unforgettable memories.

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