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VOL 22 NO 09 2023 24 PGS



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ITB China 2023 wraps up with Record-Breaking success

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

The fourth ITB China marked its grand live- return, concluding its 2023 edition with impressive achievements in business meetings and Chinese and international dialogues. The event saw the active participation of around 10,000 attendees in total, with more than 700 top-level Buyers, and 360 exhibitors representing nearly 60 countries, fostering a dynamic exchange of expertise and cultivating invaluable connections.

This reinforces China's resurgence in outbound travel and solidifies ITB China's position as the premier B2B travel trade show in China.

According to recent insights from this year's ITB China, the increasing eagerness for outbound travel indicates a positive trend and both a promising return and outlook for the industry in the upcoming year. "After three years, the world comes together again at ITB China, and the timing for the event in September couldn't be more opportune as the Chinese travel industry stands at the brink of a positive future. This year's event buzzed with excitement over the return of in-person meetings. Engaging in numerous conversations and business meetings to re-establish connections, everyone could feel the optimism about the months ahead," said David Axiotis, General Manager of Messe Berlin (Shanghai).

The official kick-off, marked by the Grand Opening Dinner and the CEO Seminar, set the tone for this year's high-profile event

The CEO Seminar, one of many highlights of ITB China this year, saw nearly 20 senior executives from China's leading outbound and inbound travel companies delve into a thought-provoking discussion on "The Impact of Global Relations and the Economic Situation on China's Inbound and Outbound Tourism Market".

This robust dialogue provided strategic insights crucial to shaping the future of travel. "Meeting with numerous top executives from the industry after three years brings me immense joy and holds great significance. We engaged in a fruitful exchange of ideas on the opportunities and challenges in the recovery process of China's outbound and inbound tourism market. Platforms like ITB China play a pivotal role in swiftly connecting domestic tourism companies with international partners, broadening their business horizons," expressed Mr. He Yong, President of HCG International Travel Group.

The Grand Opening Dinner, attended by 450 distinguished guests, set the mood for the notable event profile on the eve of the trade show. Eminent speakers like David Ruetz, Senior Vice President at Messe Berlin, ShiJun Liu, Secretary General of World Tourism Alliance (WTA); and Alhasan Aldabbagh, President - APAC Markets, Saudi Tourism Authority, enriched the event with their invaluable insights.

The next ITB China 2024 is scheduled for 27 - 29 May in the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center.



David Axiotis



David Ruetz

Classic Destinations joins Internova Travel Group's International Network of Independent Travel Agencies

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Internova Travel Group, one of the largest travel services companies in the world, continues to strengthen its global presence in the corporate travel arena. Classic



Destinations, one of the best Global Destination Management Companies based in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Singapore, today announced it has joined the Travel Leaders International network of independent travel agencies, which is part of Internova's corporate travel division. Classic Destinations will remain locally-owned and will continue to service existing clients while anticipating new opportunities for expansion as part of the international network.

"We are excited about our new partnership with Classic Destinations and the opportunity to expand our servicing abilities in Sri Lanka," said Nigel Parkinson, Senior Vice President, International Network for Internova's corporate travel division. "Our company offers a comprehensive array of travel services, programs combined with innovative thinking and proven best industry practices, that will allow travel advisors at Classic Destinations to easily offer their clients additional services and global servicing abilities through our other international partners around the globe"

Classic Destinations is one of several travel management firms around the world that have signed on this year to be part of the Travel Leaders international network.

"Enhancing our reputation for offering exceptional services, this valuable partnership with a leading global travel company will enable us to offer more customized services to our international travelers," said Shiham Imamudeen, CEO/Director of Classic Destinations. "We can now leverage the benefits of the international network and its vast suite of technology solutions and other travel management tools to elevate our offerings for a one-of-a-kind value

proposition.."

As part of Internova Travel Group, Travel Leaders International's comprehensive suite of programs includes online booking tools, marketing tools, an international destination marketing company network, a vast array of education and training resources, and hotel inventory through our SELECT Hotels & Resorts and Worldwide Hotels programs. In addition, an end-to-end technology suite supports both international corporate accounts and local customers, including profile management, online trip authorization, data consolidation and analytics, meetings technology and customer reporting.

"Despite partnering with one of the world's largest travel organizations, we will retain the close bond with our customers and promise high attention to detail and exceed their expectations, which we delight in doing," stated Shiham Imamudeen.

"Classic Destinations will sustain its leadership by designing innovative travel options to make travel fun. By leveraging on new digital enhancements, we can enhance our service quality and standards even further when it comes to Corporate Services, M.I.C.E and Leisure. Moreover, our new international network affiliation will provide our customers with a proven level of unparalleled travel industry experiences and relationships that will further increase the array of travel options available to them, underscored by our signature service."

Internova Travel Group is among the top-ranked travel companies on Travel Weekly's Power List and Buying Business Travel's top travel management firms.



International tourism has continued to recover from the worst crisis in its history as arrival numbers reached 84% of pre-pandemic levels between January and July 2023, according to the latest data from UNWTO. 700 million tourists travelled internationally between January and July 2023, 43% more than in the same months of 2022

Sri Lanka tourism has seen a steady flow of arrivals and demand for the destination is showing signs of stability.

At the recently concluded annual general meeting of the Sri Lanka Association of Inbound tour operators, the Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau unveiled a glimpse of the much-awaited destination marketing campaign to be launched within the next quarter. The highlight of the evening was the presentation which was encouraging and one which would create the needed awareness that Sri Lanka is safe and open for business.

On a global scale the statistics look very positive. However, competition within the region remains challenging and there is a need for renovation and innovation. Sri Lanka tourism is facing yet another case of duality with the reinstating of the minimum room rate and a firm request to hold off on the same by the Destination Marketing companies.

The matrix must be viewed as a whole and a decision based on organic viability in terms of revenue generation vs demand for the destination has to be carefully analyzed. While the demand for Sri Lanka is on the rise, the movement from traditional markets is not as anticipated and more emphasis on emerging markets will bridge the gap in terms of increasing demands especially for off season periods.

While Sri Lanka remains a destination that can be sold all year round, the focus traditionally has been on attracting travelers from the Western hemisphere who ideally travel to the Asian region during the winter season. But the shift in trends has opened up non-traditional markets such as the Middle East, where travel is more predominant in the Summer months.

While arrival figures have generally been the measurement of tourism success, the need to ensure sustainability is the core of tourism development is of utmost importance. Over-crowding has posed a threat to the environment and a sense of mindfulness is imperative to ensure the longevity of the country's tourism offering.



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Dinushka

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NEWS

Humans must take leadership over machines to steer Artificial Intelligence towards common good

TTA BULLETIN

Ahead of the Web in Travel Singapore event on October 2-4, titled The Human Revolution, four travel leaders have reassured us that machines aren't set to take over humans anytime soon... unless we let them. Technologies like AI and machine learning are evolving rapidly, and we need to learn how to merge them with our human capabilities if we don't want them to take over, warn the experts.



explored as AI technology continues to develop."

We must make and use machines responsibly – "Machines are only as good as the programmers who build them and the users who leverage them," said Mary Li, Founder and CEO at Atlas. So, the real question is: How capable are we as humans of developing 'good' machines and using them responsibly?

Here are their top tips as to how this can be done. Firstly Humans must be in the leadership roles – "Whether we like it or not, humans and machines are joining forces," said Baidi Li, Senior Vice President Commercial, APAC at Go City. "To stay in control, humans must assume proactive leadership roles in this collaboration and need to take full accountability in the outcome. If we get this right, the possibilities are infinite – probably beyond my imagination. I'm super excited to see humans' abilities being supercharged on all fronts. We can all become superheroes in our field without the cape

"Machines can extend our own capabilities. They can help us scale and process tasks faster than we can on our own—calculate and analyze large volumes of data, leverage data to power new tools and solutions, expand our horizons, and free up our time.

"There is an opportunity for humans to employ our imaginative thinking, creativity, and life experiences to nurture relationships, enhance lives, support our children's growth, and make the world a better place. If we do so, then machines become powerful enablers, and the sky is the limit for us."

We need to understand all the risks – "The merging of human creativity and machine power is an exciting prospect that offers real potential," said Amy Read, Techsembly. "We are already seeing machines automate tasks that are currently time-consuming, freeing us up to focus on more strategic work. My own team has quickly adopted AI tools in their daily tasks, such as OpenAI, Google's Bard, and Midjourney. While the opportunities appear endless, I believe it is also important to highlight that the merging of human and machine capabilities is a complex issue with risks that will need to be deeply

We must focus on pushing humanity forward – "When you look back at history, it was always super intelligent individuals that dramatically pushed humanity forward – Einstein, Newton, Marie Curie and the likes," said Idan Zalberg, Chief Technology Officer, Agoda. "Imagine we could create a machine with those kinds of capabilities, our advancements in science, medicine, space exploration might grow exponentially. And, if that happens, while there are indeed things to be worried about I think there are far more things to be excited about"

Top Players of the Global Travel Market To Convene At ITB Asia 2023

TTA BULLETIN

ITB Asia, Asia's leading travel trade show, is pleased to announce its top exhibitors for the highly anticipated 16th edition, set to take place from 25 – 27 October 2023 in Singapore. Co-located with MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia, this year's event promises three full days of networking opportunities with international exhibitors, complemented by insightful conference sessions at the iconic Marina Bay Sands in Singapore.



The exhibitors' list offers a strong mix of all stakeholder groups. This includes top business players such as Aircalin, Air India, Banyan Tree Group, Berlin Brandenburg Airport, BWH Hotel Group, Club Med, EVA Airways Corporation, Finnair, Icelandair, NEOM, Philippine Airlines, Inc., Worldwide Hotels, Vietnam Airlines and Wyndham Hotels & Resorts; National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) including Visit Brussels, Croatian National Tourist Board, Czech Tourism Authority, Visit Finland, Visit Norway, Palestine Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, PROMPERU, Tourism Seychelles and more; as well as Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) such as Visit Berlin, Department of Tourism and Creative Economy of Jakarta, Taipei City Government, Zagreb Tourist Board and more.

"ITB Asia is putting together a strong representation from all travel segments. As the industry revives, we are enthusiastic to serve as a tried and tested platform for building new partnerships. The level of expertise provided by global tourism leaders will ensure Singapore is the place where we can shape the future of tourism," says Katrina Leung, Managing Director of Messe Berlin (Singapore), Organiser of MICE Show Asia, Travel Tech Asia and ITB Asia.

Among this year's exhibiting NTOs are Brand USA, Croatian National Tourist Board, Czech Tourism Authority, Japan National Tourism Organisation, Korea Tourism Organisation, Malta Tourism Authority, Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority, PROMPERU, Taiwan Tourism Bureau, Tonga Tourism Authority, Tourism Devel-

opment Support Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Tourism Seychelles, Vanuatu Tourism Office, Visit Estonia, Visit Iceland, Visit Jordan and Visit Norway.


National Tourism Organisations are supported by local and national governments' direct representation from Council of Indigenous Peoples, Taiwan, Municipality of North Greenland, Palestine Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, Shizuoka Prefectural Government of Japan and Taipei City Government.

In addition to the NTOs, the show also welcomes Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs), such as Daejeon Tourism Organisation, Guam Visitors Bureau, Gwangju Tourism Organisation, Gyeonggi Tourism Organisation, Gyeong-sangbuk-do Culture and Tourism Organisation, Ho Chi Minh City Tourism Promotion Center, Johor Economic, Tourism and Cultural Office (JETCO), Louisiana Office of Tourism, Marianas Visitors Authority, New Caledonia Tourism, Northern Norway Tourist Board, Penang Global Tourism, Phuket Tourist Association, Sabah Tourism Board, Sarawak Tourism Board, Saxony Tourism Germany, Suruga Marketing & Tourism Bureau, Tourism Association of Sarajevo Canton, Tourism Promotion Organisation for Asia Pacific Cities, Visit Almaty, Visit Brussels, Visit Oulu and Visit Rovaniemi.

This year's ITB Asia boasts an impressive line-up of sponsors, including Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Korea Tourism Startup Center, Sentosa Development Corporation, Penang Global Tourism, Busan Tourism Organisation, Visit Finland and Japan National Tourism Organisation.

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ITB China Conference 2023: Where visionary Insights and Practical Strategies Converge for Success

TTA BULLETIN

Leading travel organizations and tourism officials active in the Chinese market once again await a strong program of keynotes and panel discussions on cutting-edge topics at the ITB China Conference 2023.

The three-day conference, set to take place alongside the leading B2B exclusive travel trade show focusing on the Chinese travel market from 12 to 14 September 2023 at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition & Convention Center, will provide further up-to-date key insights on Destination Marketing, Hotel Tech and Distribution, Themed and Customized Travel, as well as Business Travel and MICE in the conference area. The ITB China Startup Award will return to acknowledge innovative young entrepreneurs, whose products will impact the future of the travel industry.

The opening keynote speeches of this

year's conference will be delivered by top speakers from ITB China's major partner line-up including official Partner Hotel Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and Travel Service Partner Trip.com providing striking insights into their growing businesses. Further keynotes will include Tourism Malaysia who, underlining its commitment to a swift market recovery through an extensive pavilion participation on the show floor, will be lining out its most relevant strategies for the Chinese market.

With a focus on destination marketing, panels on the opening day will revolve around how destinations can efficiently leverage new platforms and technologies like social media, mobile apps, the metaverse, and virtual reality to share captivating stories. Senior industry panel members will be answering pertinent questions such as "Since the past cannot be

recreated, how should China's outbound tourism market embrace the future?" or "How Can CHATGPT empower product innovation in the tourism industry?" among others.

The second day of the conference will offer a packed program full of valuable insights on two tracks. Themed and Customized Travel as well as Hotel Tech and Distribution related sessions addressing hotel operators regarding the role of distribution channels in enhancing hotel brand visibility elaborating strategies to improve marketing activities. These will include a keynote by Fliggy titled "How to build future-oriented super brands/destinations" as well as a panel on how to "Maximize brand exposure in various distribution channels to improve



conversion rate". Further panels will be revolving around the operational efficiency of Douyin (TikTok) as well as "The practice of sustainable tourism in China" among others.

The ITB China Startup Award will once again honor companies that have turned visions into viable business solutions with high market potential. During the award ceremony, experienced travel industry experts Michael Zhu, TravelDaily Guest Commentator & Hotel Digitalization Expert, as well as Leo Chen, Consultant of RationalAI, will select this year's ITB China Startup Award winner.

The Business of Events: IBTM World confirmed as latest partner

TTA BULLETIN

The Business of Events has announced IBTM World as its latest partner, marking a significant collaboration that promises to enhance the landscape of the business events industry on a global scale.



As part of the agreement, The Business of Events will take on a key role in coordinating the Destinations stream on the Impact Stage at IBTM World's Barcelona event, set to take place from 28-30 November 2023. Destinations and Convention Bureaux are actively encouraged to submit their content proposals for consideration on the Impact Stage.

IBTM World is the leading global event for the international events industry, a renowned annual event that connects event professionals and destinations from across the globe. With a history of over three decades, IBTM World is recognised as a premier platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and discovering the latest trends and innovations in the field of events.

The flagship event gathers event planners, suppliers, buyers, and industry leaders to engage in meaningful conversations, forge valuable partnerships, and gain insights that drive the evolution of the events industry. With its diverse range of exhibitors, educational sessions, and networking opportunities, IBTM World offers a comprehensive experience that fuels growth and innovation within the events sector.

The Business of Events will curate the Destinations stream on the Impact Stage, which is set to be a focal point where the most pressing topics concerning the role of events in shaping destinations and

economies will be explored. The stage will feature thought-provoking discussions, insightful panels, and engaging presentations led by industry experts, all contributing to the collective effort of enhancing the impact of events on destinations worldwide.

Vasyl Zhygalo, RX Portfolio Director, IBTM World, said: "The partnership between The Business of Events and IBTM World is a key collaboration aimed at further enriching the event management landscape. The Business of Events, known for its commitment to advancing and advocating the significance of events as a powerful economic driver, aligns seamlessly with IBTM World's mission to inspire and empower event professionals.

"We look forward to working with the team to build a comprehensive agenda of content for our Destination partners."

Martin Fullard, Director, News & Content, The Business of Events, said: "To have the support of IBTM World is vital for us to continue our work, and we are delighted to be able to collaborate to populate the Impact Stage in Barcelona.

"By combining our expertise and resources, both organisations will elevate the understanding of the influence of events on economies, cultures, and societies. This partnership underscores a shared commitment to fostering innovation, driving economic growth, and creating memorable event experiences that resonate far beyond the event itself."

The Business of Events and IBTM World encourage destinations to submit their content proposals. Please download this form.

Ticket Booking Opens for World Travel Market London as the Show Announces Exciting Changes

TTA BULLETIN

Ticket booking is live for the global travel community secure entry to the 43rd edition of World Travel Market London, the world's most influential travel & tourism event, which takes place between Monday 6th - Wednesday 8th November 2023 at Excel London.

Organisers are enabling visitors to book tickets well in advance of this year's show and have announced several new and exciting changes showing that the global travel community has the Power to Change travel.

After in-depth customer research carried out late last year, WTM London has announced a host of developments to improve the attendee experience and ensure that every member of the travel community extracts as much value from the event as possible.

This year, WTM London will open its doors earlier than usual – ready to welcome visitors from 09:30 am providing an additional hour for visitors and exhibitors to have spontaneous meetings.

Visitors are invited to make use of the new, open-for-all Community Hubs right in the centre of the show, and attendees can also look forward to an 'everyone's welcome' Networking Party that will take place within ExCel London on its first day, Monday 6th November from 5:30 pm-7:30 pm.

Developments include a new VIP badge to host senior industry leaders and a big-name, inspirational Closing Keynote on Wednesday, 8th November.

WTM Connect Me – the show's meeting booking platform – will return in 2023 and is available for Buyers, VIPs and Media. All attendees will also have access to the



official WTM App, which returns this year with exciting new enhancements.

The conference programme will cover eight themes over three different stages throughout the three-day event. The eight conference themes are Sustainability, Technology, Geo-Economics, Emerging Markets, Consumer Trends, Marketing, Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) and Experience and aim to help the global travel community succeed and thrive by informing, entertaining, and influencing their business decisions.

In response to the ever-increasing importance of influencers to the travel and tourism sector, on Wednesday, 8th November, content creators will be invited to a lunch with global destinations to support collaboration and networking opportunities.

In other changes the Ministers' Summit at World Travel Market in Association with UNWTO and WTTC, where dignitaries from around the world gather to discuss and ratify key tourism agreements, will return for its 17th year, and will take place on Day One, Monday 6th November.

The November show is set to launch its first Diversity and Inclusion Summit on Tuesday 7th, supporting WTM's belief that the travel sector has the power to evoke positive change in the world.

"We're pleased to be opening ticket booking ahead of the summer and are committed to ensuring travel professionals have the best three days possible."



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Travelex launches Travel Money Card in Japan

TTA BULLETIN

Travelex, a market leading foreign exchange brand, has introduced its prepaid foreign currency card to the Asian market with the launch of the Travelex Travel Money Card in Japan.

Designed exclusively for overseas use and available to customers aged 12 and above, the contactless-equipped card enables customers to load multiple currencies for use at any Mastercard®-affiliated shop or restaurant in more than 210 countries and regions worldwide. Customers that purchase more than 100K Yen can get a 2000 Yen discount in the three months after the card launch.

In addition to the Japanese Yen, the Travelex Money Card supports eight foreign currencies, including the US Dollar, Euro and Australian Dollar. When travelling to other countries, customers can load their card with Japanese Yen or other supported currencies and convert to the local currency when making a payment.

The card is not linked to a bank account, meaning the use of unauthorised access is minimized compared to a traditional credit or debit card. Furthermore, unlike many other foreign currency cards, the TMC does not require My Number verification documents, making it possible to purchase

the card quickly and conveniently, including on the day of departure.

The card can be purchased both in-store and pre-ordered online and picked up in-store, while the card's features can be managed through the Travelex Money App, which enables customers to add currency, check their balance, view their transaction history and pause usage in case of loss or theft.

The Travelex Money Card is already available to customers in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and replaces the existing Travelex Multi-currency Cash Passport that had been sold in the Japanese market.



Jun Otani, Director, Travelex Japan, said: "We are delighted to launch the Travelex Money Card in Japan, which is an enhanced version of the old Travelex Card we have become well known for in Japan. The card has proved to be hugely popular in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and through the card we are able to offer our customers greater convenience and security than ever before."

ATM 2024 to explore how entrepreneurship is empowering innovation in the Middle East's travel industry

TTA BULLETIN

Arabian Travel Market (ATM), the Middle East's leading event for inbound and outbound travel and tourism professionals, has unveiled its next theme: 'Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship.' The 31st edition of the show will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from Monday 6 to Thursday 9 May 2024.



Over the last 15 years, the travel and tourism industry has secured only 1 percent of total funding for startups across all industries, according to analysis from McKinsey. This is despite the fact that the sector accounted for more than 10 percent of global GDP in 2019. With exhibitors from the fields of aviation, accommodation, hospitality, attractions, technology and more, ATM 2024 will explore how innovators in the travel and tourism space are working to attract greater levels of funding to further increase the sector's overall contribution to global GDP.

The 31st edition of ATM will once again host policymakers, industry leaders and travel professionals from across the Middle East and beyond, encouraging them to forge new relationships, exchange knowledge and identify innovations with the potential to reshape the future of global travel and tourism. From startups to established brands, the upcoming show will highlight how innovators are enhancing customer experiences, driving efficiencies and accelerating progress towards a net-zero future for the industry.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market, said: "The Middle East's travel and tourism sector has demonstrated impressive resilience and growth in recent years, but we must continue to innovate and adapt in order to achieve the industry's long-term goals. Thanks to ATM 2024's theme, 'Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship', we have a golden opportunity to showcase expert insights, cutting-edge technologies and commercial opportunities with the potential to completely reshape the sector."

Building on ATM 2023's theme of 'Working Towards Net Zero', environmentally responsible travel will represent a key focus during the show's upcoming edition. Informed by the

UAE's Year of Sustainability and the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which will take place in Dubai later this year, ATM 2024 will explore how innovation can be leveraged to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by building a greener travel and tourism sector for future generations.

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

ATM 2024 will empower the global travel and tourism community to harness entrepreneurship, helping to catalyse innovation, increase revenues and maximise sustainability over the long term. The UAE aims to attract \$150 billion in foreign investment by 2030, making it the perfect environment for these activities. With an emphasis on technological innovation, the nation plans to strengthen its position as an international hub for start-ups – a focus that looks set to benefit entrepreneurs operating in the region's travel and tourism sector. By exploring the ways in which an entrepreneurial mindset can lead to positive change within the industry, ATM 2024 will enable attendees to identify strategies for growth across a range of key industry verticals.

"As a global leader in innovation, the UAE offers the perfect environment in which to explore these trends and identify new avenues for growth," Curtis added. "Following the record-breaking levels of attendance witnessed during ATM 2023, my colleagues and I cannot wait to welcome the global travel community to Dubai once again next year."

Updated Engagement Events For All Delegates

TTA BULLETIN



IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific is delighted to welcome new and returning destinations and brands, along with MICE, Association and Corporate Buyers from over 50 countries and territories. More than 1,000 delegates are expected over the 3 day event. IT&CM Asia and CTW APAC will feature a series of networking and education sessions designed to engage delegates, some of which are detailed below.

Asia Ability, the Creative Teambuilding experts, will run their popular ice-breaker, 'Knowing Me Knowing You.' This proprietary game will allow delegates to connect and familiarise themselves with each other. Open to all, from seasoned to first-time delegates, it presents an opportunity for network expansion, discovery of potential collaborations, and will hopefully create lasting connections.

Key brands and destinations such as Pattaya MICE City, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute & Economic Development Bureau of Hengqin, Taiwan Tourism Bureau, Korea Tourism Organisation, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines and Hong Kong Tourism Board will share the latest developments from their respective.

The CruiseXchange Keynote, The Big Cruise Comeback and the Outlook for MICE Cruises, will be presented by Diana Bloss, Co-Founder & Director of Operations, Worldwide Cruise Associates and Crystal Campbell, Corporate & Incentive Sales Manager, Worldwide Cruise Associates. The conference covers the post-pandemic revival of the cruise industry and the outlook for cruises in the coming years.

The Panel Discussion, A New Way to Meet, will be moderated by Karen Yue, Group Editor, TTG Travel Trade Publishing who will be joined by three panellists, Mona Foo, Head of Retail & Corporate Sales – Singapore & APAC, Royal Caribbean International, Thomas D. Hinton, President & CEO, CRI Global, LLC and Frankie Lie, Director, Tri Wisata Andalan. The team will explore how cruises can provide for creative meetings and incentives sessions through various engagements and support planners as well as collaboration between the cruise lines and land operators.

TCEB has a variety of activities for the delegates to experience Thailand, including Augmented Reality.

"In addition to support schemes we have prepared for customers, the pavilion presents visitors a real touch of Thailand. TCEB has invited a number of attractive high profiled city destinations, such as Bangkok, Phuket, Samui, Hua Hin, and Khao Lak, to showcase their service capability and product offerings in the pavilion. On top of that, we have Prachin Buri province, east of Bangkok as a new potential city destination putting a footstep in MICE sector for the first time. It offers venue amidst greenery and near the sites of eco-activities. By never ceasing to generate new choices for buyers, TCEB develops Thailand to become a fertile platform of MICE products that contribute to provincial capabilities in catering to business travel demands." said Mr. Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, President, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau.

Experience a taste of Taiwan at the event! Meet Taiwan invites delegates to their Taiwan Happy Hour at their booth to get the latest information from their MICE Professionals. Samples of Taiwanese treats will also be available.

All buyers at IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific 2023 have the chance to accelerate their networking through the Buyer Incentive programme. This encourages buyers to complete the highest number of business appointments, including both pre-scheduled appointments (PSA) and walk-in appointments, while earning the highest ratings from exhibitors. Top performers stand a chance to win a variety of prizes, including hotel stays, captivating tours, and more.

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

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Eventex unveils the top 100 event organizers and agencies for 2023

TTA BULLETIN

Eventex Awards, the world's most esteemed accolade in the world of events and experiential marketing, is proud to unveil the highly anticipated Eventex index covering the top 100 event organizers and agencies for 2023.

The ranking represents consistent excellence in the events and experience marketing industry over the last 3 years and is determined by the number of Eventex awards won during that period. For Eventex Awards 2023, a Platinum award is equivalent to 150 points, Gold means 100 points, Silver award winners get 50 points, and Bronze awards yield 30 points. For the 2022 and 2021 editions, Platinum winners get 75 points, Gold yields 50 points, and 25 and 15 points go for Silver and Bronze winners, respectively.

The country that has emerged as this year's undisputed champion is the US, accounting for as many as 24 agencies that made the list. The Netherlands is the runner-up, boasting 9 agencies, with Germany following close with 8. The UK and Poland round out the top 5 with 7 and 6 agencies, respectively. The total number of represented countries meanwhile



stands at 34.

WINK Creative Experiential Agency is at the top of the list, with a total of 3320 points based on 51 awards over the course of the three Eventex Awards editions under consideration. Qatar Vision Production Company comes in second, with 2675 points and 63 awards, while Media.Monks completes the top 3 with 2555 points and 41 awards.

"Being recognized as one of the "Top 100 Event Organizers and Agencies" shows not only outstanding creativity but also unwavering consistency in delivering stellar experiences and staying at the forefront of the industry. I would therefore like to congratulate everyone who made the ranking," comments Ovanes Ovanessian, Co-founder of Eventex Awards.

New Exhibitors Sign Up to WTM London 2023

TTA BULLETIN

World Travel Market London 2023, the world's most influential travel & tourism event, has signed up more than 14% new exhibitors, ranging from household names to specialist firms and niche brands.

They will make up around 4,000 exhibitors at ExCeL London (6-8th November) to exchange ideas, drive innovation and accelerate their businesses.

High-profile names debuting this year this year include Eurostar – the high-speed international rail service connecting the UK with mainland Europe – and ABBA Voyage, a live concert staged in London with virtual 'Abbatars'.

Also exhibiting for the first time is the Bermuda Tourism Authority, which is heading to WTM London to highlight its culture, heritage, cuisine, wellness and sustainability offerings.

Other tourism boards making their first appearance at WTM London come from destinations as diverse as Sabah – promoting travel to northern Borneo, in Malaysia – and Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan.

Other new exhibitors from Asia are Ayana Hospitality, which offers luxury resorts and



hotels in Indonesia, and Vietnam's Thien Minh Group, showcasing its wide range of services, such as destination management, hospitality, online solutions and aviation.

Rapidly growing global online travel agency Trip.com Group will be attending to target growth within the European market, while UK-based package holiday specialist HolidayBest will promote its worldwide range of destinations and vacation styles.

Other new exhibitors will be travelling from Turkey, such as the Turkish travel agency association TURSAB, and Salkantay Trekking will be visiting from Peru, where it is a leading tour operator offering treks and adventure tours to Machu Picchu.

Delegates in the technology zone will be able to meet new tech exhibitors such as search marketing agency Vertical Leap, and payments specialist flywire – which exhibited with WTM for the first time this year at WTM Africa and is now coming to WTM London.

International Tourism Swiftly Overcoming Pandemic Downturn

TTA BULLETIN

International tourism has continued to recover from the worst crisis in its history as arrival numbers reached 84% of pre-pandemic levels between January and July 2023, according to the latest data from UNWTO. The Middle East, Europe and Africa lead the global sector's rebound.



Tourism demand continues to show remarkable resilience and sustained recovery, even in the face of economic and geopolitical challenges. The new issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer tracks the sector's recovery over the course of 2023 up to the end of July.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "UNWTO data once again shows how tourism is recovering strongly in every part of the world. But as our sector recovers, it also needs to adapt. The extreme weather events we have witnessed over recent months as well as the critical challenges of managing increasing tourism flows underline the need to build a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient sector and ensure recovery goes hand-in-hand with rethinking of our sector."

These results show international tourism remains well on track to reach 80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023. Prospects for September-December 2023 point to continued recovery, according to the latest UNWTO Confidence Index, though at a more moderate pace following the peak travel season of June-August. These results will be driven by the still pent-up demand and increased air connectivity particularly in Asia and the Pacific where recovery is still subdued.

Persisting inflation and rising oil prices have translated into higher transport and accommodations costs. This could weigh on spending patterns over the remainder of the year, with tourists increasingly seeking value for money, travelling closer to home and making shorter trips.

At last, positive signals from China's outbound travel market again

TTA BULLETIN

ITB Berlin publishes IPK International's latest findings from a World Travel Monitor® survey on travel plans in China's outbound travel market

IPK's findings from its latest surveys reflect a distinctly positive trend: China's lust for travel is currently greater than in any of the two travel plan surveys carried out over the past two years. China's growing desire for more international trips over the next 12 months is laying a solid foundation for a strong recovery in 2024. That was also the message that emerged from ITB China which recently concluded in Shanghai. Following the break due to the pandemic, the event had gathered 10,000 attendees from the Chinese and global travel industry live in Shanghai.

Compared with 2019, Chinese outbound travel still lags massively behind globally, with no recovery in sight yet. Whereas in 2019 China was the world's fourth largest source market with around 70 million outbound trips, in 2022 it was overtaken by numerous markets with much better recovery rates. Sustained and tight travel restrictions have resulted in significantly slowing the recovery.

The findings of IPK's latest travel survey show that China's lust for travel is back: around 50 per cent of interviewees aim to travel abroad over the next 12 months, and if

possible more often than in the past. A further 44 per cent want to take as many foreign trips as they used to, while only single-digit percentages of respondents intend to take fewer outbound trips or none at all. Compared with previous surveys this represents a significant trend towards more outbound trips and reflects an increasing desire to travel in China's outbound travel market.

With regard to their travel plans over the next 12 months, Chinese travellers' preferred destinations are likely to be in Europe, followed by trips within Asia. Over the same period travel to America will remain a less frequent choice, due to a lack of flight options on the one hand and geopolitical reasons on the other. For six per cent of the interviewees trips within China are the only realistic choice. Compared with previous surveys there is a positive trend towards European destinations, whereas at the beginning of the year neighbouring countries topped the list. The main reasons for this are a longing for faraway destinations and the market catching up again after Europe was all but inaccessible over the past three years.





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SLAITO AGM: A Memorable Event Hosted at Shangri-La Hambantota

TTA BULLETIN

The Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO) successfully concluded its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 2nd of September at the Shangri-La Hambantota. The event brought together its esteemed members and industry leaders, reaffirming SLAITO's commitment to fostering growth and innovation within Sri Lanka's vibrant tourism sector.

The AGM provided a platform for SLAITO members to come together and discuss the latest industry trends, challenges, and opportunities. It also served as a forum to review the association's achievements over the past year and outline its strategic vision for the future.

President Nishad Wijetunga was re-elected and will continue as President for the year 2023/2024 together with Vice Presidents Bobbi Jordan Hansen and Nalin Jayasundera, whilst Nilan Wickremasinghe and Charith De Alwis were appointed Hon Treasurer and Secretary, respectively.



"During the past year, we have witnessed the power of unity within SLAITO. Our collaborative efforts to support sustain-

able practices, and promote responsible tourism have not only helped us overcome challenges but have also set a new standard for the industry. We have shown the world that even in the face of adversity, the tourism sector can be a force for positive change."

said Nishad Wijetunga President SLAITO. The President, also went on to say, "Looking ahead, as

we envision a brighter future for Sri Lanka's tourism industry, it is imperative that we continue to work hand in hand. Our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and excellence must remain unwavering. By fostering partnerships, embracing technology, and nurturing the talents of our workforce, we can

ensure that Sri Lanka remains a beacon of hospitality and cultural richness for generations to come."



The esteemed keynote speaker for the evening was the Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Chalaka Gajabahu who presented a glimpse of the much-anticipated Destination Marketing campaign and insights on the "next steps" and "way forward" for Sri Lanka Tourism.

SLAITO also recognized veteran industry professional and a Past President of SLAITO, Chandra Wickramasinghe for his dedicated and innovative contribution in the tourism industry with a "Lifetime Achievement Award".

Delivering the vote of thanks, Ms. Bobbi Jordan Hansen, extended SLAITO's

sincere gratitude to its sponsors OKLO (Pvt) Ltd, Sun Siyam Passekudah, Shangri-La Hambantota and Peacock Beach Resort Hambantota. "Your support ensured the success of the AGM and your insightful presentations greatly benefitted the membership", said the SLAITO Vice President, Ms. Hansen.

SLAITO extends its gratitude to all participants, speakers, sponsors, and attendees who contributed to the AGM's success. The association remains committed to its mission of promoting Sri Lanka as a premier inbound travel destination and enhancing the experiences of travelers visiting this beautiful island nation.

Elevating Excellence: Acorn Group Awards Night Spotlights Achievement

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





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SCAN TO REGISTER



Greece Showcases Sustainability at WTM London 2023

TTA BULLETIN

Greece will again have a high profile at World Travel Market London (November 6-8, 2023) – the world’s most influential travel & tourism event – as the destination will showcase their ambitious sustainability plans after renewing the sponsorship of the International Media Centre.

Adding to the significance of Greece’s participation, the newly appointed Minister of Tourism, Olga Kefalogianni, will be in attendance to actively promote the destination and attend the Ministers’ Summit at World Travel Market in association with UNWTO and WTTC on Monday 6th November at WTM London 2023.

Also, on Monday 6th November, the Minister will join the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) press conference in the International Media Centre to address an audience of journalists. The Press Conference will serve as an opportunity to unveil significant developments on Greece’s multifaceted commitment to sustainability, tourism priorities, trade advancements, diversity strategies, and accessibility projects.

On Tuesday 7th November, delegates will have the opportunity to explore the destination’s sustainability plans in more depth, as the 72 exhibitors on the GNTO stand – including Greek regions, hoteliers, associations, start-up companies, travel agents, DMCs and airlines – will be

showcasing their own eco-credentials through a series of short videos as part of a ‘Sustainability Marathon’.

Furthermore, Greece’s sustainability efforts will bolster WTM’s ‘Power to Change’ campaign, which highlights positive tourism initiatives around the world.

Also on Tuesday 7th November, the destination is organising a panel discussion in the International Media Centre on Women in Business in Greece.

Looking ahead to 2024, noteworthy events include the ceremonial lighting of the Olympic flame and the Olympic torch relay in Olympia on the Peloponnese peninsula, preceding the Olympic Games in Paris. Additionally, Thessaloniki will host the annual pan-European LGBTI+ event, EuroPride, in June of the same year, adding to Greece’s diverse and vibrant tourism calendar.

Eleni Skarveli, Director of the GNTO UK & Ireland Office, said the GNTO unveiled its sustainability hub, SustainableGreece.co.uk, one year ago, to shine a light on “incredible” initiatives, ranging from renewable energy and electric vehicles to cutting out single-use plastics.

“Greece is happy to support the Power to Change campaign, emphasising the critical challenges destinations face due to

climate change.

“The bell has rung many times, and it is in our hands to drastically encourage meaningful collaborations and partnerships towards a sustainable travel industry.

“The SustainableGreece.co.uk platform serves as a valuable tool for the British trade to discover Greece’s sustainable best practices and initiatives, aiding us on our sustainability journey.”

According to Skarveli, the challenges of heatwaves and forest fires showed the importance of finding solutions to the climate crisis.

Skarveli highlighted how mainstream tour operators had expanded their capacity and extended the tourism season – while smaller specialists are helping to open up smaller islands that can be reached via flights to larger destinations such as Rhodes and Kos.

Furthermore, the Greek tourism minister will be able to talk about diversity, equality, and accessibility in tourism. One key accessibility project is the development of Seatrac, which enables wheelchair users to swim in the sea at 280 beaches in Greece.

Juliette Losardo, Exhibition Director at World Travel Market London, said: “I am



thrilled that Greece will again sponsor our International Media Centre, especially as pioneering sustainability initiatives play such a vital part in its marketing.

“The GNTO has seen great returns from its previous sponsorship of the media centre at WTM London so we’re excited that it will again play a key role and amplify our ‘Power to Change’ messages.

“Having such a high profile among the world’s established trade and consumer journalists and top social media influencers, is essential for the Greek tourism trade to exchange ideas and drive innovation.”

WTM London is the world’s most influential travel & tourism event for the global travel community. The show is the ultimate destination for those seeking a macro view of the travel industry and a deeper understanding of the forces shaping it. WTM London is where influential travel leaders, buyers and high-profile travel companies gather to exchange ideas, drive innovation, and accelerate business outcomes.

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New Leadership Team at Jetwing Hotels

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Hotels Ltd., the management company of the iconic collection of Sri Lankan hotels and villas, announced changes in its leadership team effective 1st September 2023.

Shiromal Cooray will step down as Chairman of Jetwing Hotels Ltd., and will continue in her role as the Chairman and Managing Director of Jetwing Travels Ltd. Hiran Cooray will continue in his role as Chairman of Jetwing Symphony PLC, The Lighthouse Hotel PLC, and other privately held hotel-owning companies. Ruan Samarasinghe, a stalwart in the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka with an illustrious career of over 50 years, has been named Chairman of the Board of Jetwing Hotels Ltd. Ruan is a veteran hotelier who joined Jetwing's founder, the late Herbert Cooray, at the



Dmitri Cooray

tender age of 20. From his early years of managing operations in Negombo under the founder's guidance, to overlooking Jetwing's expansion in the last 5 decades together with Hiran and Shiromal, Ruan played a pivotal role in the development and success of the company. His vast experience will guide the future growth of Jetwing Hotels in the new age of travel and tourism in the paradise island. Ruan said "it is an honour to be given the opportunity to be at the helm of Sri Lanka's leading hospitality brand. I look forward to carrying on the good work of the company, from the time of our late founder, to his children, and now his grandchildren, together with our enthusiastic teams at every property."

Dmitri Cooray, representing the 3rd generation of the hotelier family, will be taking over all operational functions as Managing Director. Dmitri is a young, dynamic leader who has worked directly with Ruan and Hiran for close to a decade. With experience in working for leading hotels in both Singapore and Australia, Dmitri joined his family business in 2015, and has since contributed immensely in his previous roles as Manager - Operations and Deputy Managing Director of the group. Dmitri says "I am extremely humbled to be given the responsibility of taking my grandfather's legacy to greater heights, together with my brothers and all our dedicated team members around the island. We will remain committed to delivering our grandfather's promise of offering legendary hospitality and sharing the wonders of Sri Lanka with travellers from around the world."



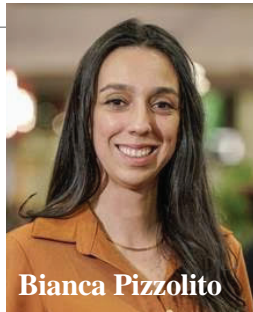
Ruan Samarasinghe

Hiran Cooray said "thanks to the current political stability and economic recovery, as well as the tireless efforts of all industry stakeholders and lovers of Sri Lanka from overseas, the industry is recovering tremendously and we are now approaching the volumes of 2018, which was the best year for tourism. Given this new era of economic growth in our island, I am proud to see the 3rd generation of our family business taking more responsibility and continuing our model of sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. I am confident that our young team will navigate through the challenges and opportunities in the years ahead, backed by the guidance and support of Ruan, my sister and myself, and our entire senior team."

Bianca Pizzolito is promoted to Event Leader of WTM Latin America

TTA BULLETIN

RX today announced the promotion of Bianca Pizzolito to Event Leader of WTM (World Travel Market) Latin America. With more than 14 years dedicated to the tourism industry, Bianca Pizzolito is called "home-grown" by the national and international teams at RX, where she has worked since 2013. She joined the company as a Sales Executive focusing on the Brazilian government.



Bianca Pizzolito

Over the years, Bianca was promoted to Commercial Manager, responsible for sales strategy, event marketing and management of the Sales team in Brazil and also for the Latin America region at WTM London. Graduating in Leisure and Tourism from the University of São Paulo (USP), with an MBA in Business Management by Saint Paul Business School, Bianca will lead WTM Latin America 2024's edition. She will lead and develop the strategy and deliver the event to the market. She also joins the WTM Portfolio leadership group.

Commenting on the promotion, Vasyly Zhigalo, WTM Event Portfolio Director at

RX Global, said: "Bianca has consistently demonstrated her dedication and commitment. More than that, she plays a key role in our events success, which made her rise a natural one and I'm delighted that she has agreed to take this new role in the company".

"Our team is truly global, working together in an integrated manner, with all our events in WTM's portfolio. With Bianca in position, we will further expand the results delivery in Latin America, thanks to the natural and expected growth of the event, and our excellent customer and exhibitor service. Our goal is to deliver the best possible experience for industry professionals."

Bianca said: "I am truly honoured to be taking this role. Our team is ready for these new opportunities and to work collaboratively with the global team and I am excited to grow our business and delight our customers in 2024."

Noor Ahmad Hamid appointed new PATA CEO

TTA BULLETIN

The Executive Board is profoundly impressed by Noor's illustrious track record in catalyzing organizational change within associations, elevating membership engagement and value, and executing strategic visions with precision. Without a doubt, PATA stands to reap the bountiful fruits of his talents as we embark on a journey to revitalize PATA, enhancing our association's relevance, efficacy, and efficiency as the leading voice of travel and tourism in the Pacific Asia region.

He began his career at the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, where he served for more than 16 years in various departments, including Public Relations, Marketing, Domestic Promotion, and Convention

He was also based in their Los Angeles, USA office for four years. Following this experience, Noor ventured into the corporate world, joining an events management company specializing in international sporting events.

He later joined a government-affiliated company focused on hospitality and tourism investment. In 2009, Noor joined

the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) as the Regional Director of Asia Pacific where he served for 11 years gaining enormous experience in the nuances of not-for-profit association management.



Noor Ahmad Hamid

During his tenure, membership in Asia Pacific grew substantially, resulting in the region being ICCA's largest. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Noor worked with the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau as Chief Operating Officer, playing a key role in the recovery of Malaysia's business events industry and helping to win major bids for Malaysia.

Noor is well-recognized for his contributions to the industry, both in the region as well as globally. In 2022, he was inducted into the Events Industry Council Hall of Leaders, the most prestigious award in the global business events industry.

Thapanee Kiatphaiboon New Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

TTA BULLETIN

Having been with the TAT in 1999 after earning a master's degree in science from the University of Surrey in the UK, Ms. Thapanee has held various positions within the organisation, including Deputy Governor for Tourism Products and Business, and most recently Deputy Governor for Domestic Marketing.



Thapanee Kiatphaiboon

In her most recent role as TAT Deputy Governor for Domestic Marketing, Ms. Thapanee initiated various tourism initiatives to help drive Thailand's economy. Among them included the workation in Thailand, faith and religious tourism routes, and solo travels - which helped stimulate 151.45 million domestic trips in 2022 - about 88% of the record year in 2019 - and generated 641.5 billion Baht.

In her role as Deputy Governor for Tourism Products and Business, Ms. Thapanee was recognised for her leadership in initiating the Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration (SHA) certification programme that enabled hotels and services to meet specific health and safety standards. The programme became a mandatory requirement for hotels seeking to register as quarantine facilities during the period of strict COVID-19 control measures and also received global recognition in alignment with the WTTC SafeTravels protocols.

She also initiated the Special Tourist Visa

(STV) scheme to promote the reopening of Thailand, which led to subsequent entry schemes, including Villa Quarantine, Yacht Quarantine and Golf Quarantine, as well as the Phuket Sandbox, which has been recognised internationally as the model for the country's reopening.

Recognised as a social media and technology savvy individual, Ms. Thapanee has played a key role in utilising technology and social media in the promotion and development of Thailand's tourism. Some of her outstanding achievements in this area have included the Google Street View project in cooperation with Google Thailand, and the 'Amazing Thailand' social media platforms.

As an advocate of Thailand's tourism, Ms. Thapanee has been instrumental in the development of various special interest tourism products, including health and wellness tourism, yacht and cruise tourism, and community tourism, as well as the "King's Wisdom for Sustainable Tourism" project, which won the PATA Grand Awards 2018 in the category of Education and Training.

In her earlier years with the TAT, Ms. Thapanee was widely recognised for her contribution towards the promotion and development of intra-regional travel within the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).

First Culinary Champions Competition in Kandy Concludes on a High Note

TTA BULLETIN



The first ever culinary competition to take place in the hill capitol just concluded with overwhelming success. Culinary Champions 2023 was held on the 15th and 16th of September at the Sahas Uyana in Kandy. Over 160 chefs participated in 12 categories competing against each other under the cool climate of the Hill Capitol in Kandy.

Organized for the first time by Lanka Exhibition and Conference Services (Pvt) Ltd, an award-winning event management company, with the endorsement and support from the Kandy Hoteliers Association, the Nuwara Eliya Hoteliers Association and the Cultural Triangle Hoteliers Association.



The Culinary Champions Competition was Judged by 4 renowned judges led by veteran competition organizer Chef Alan Palmer. The judges came all the way from Colombo to witness an extraordinary spectacle that surpassed any culinary competition held in this district. Professionally organized, the competition lasted two full days with around 25 hotels participating. There were 35 entries from students alone with participation from the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management branch in Kandy and Trinity College Culinary and Hospitality Club. The valuable knowledge and experience gained at this competition was immense and well appreciated by all. Some of these students even competed with experienced hotel chefs and became victorious by winning medals.

The most outstanding chef award won by chef H.M.C.M. Herath of Theva Residency, Kandy and the best culinary establishment

award won by Eagles Lagoon View Banquet Hall, Negombo who also took part. Lanka Exhibitions and Conference Services in keeping with its promise awarded the best chef a return air ticket and hotel stay to compete in next year's Hotel Asia International Culinary Challenge 2024 in Maldives.

The Competition was sponsored by Litro Gas Lanka Ltd, Delmege Forsyth & Co. Ltd, Rayin Food Products (Pvt) Ltd, Standard Holdings (Pvt) Ltd, Sola Chemical Company (Pvt) Ltd, Diamond Best Food Ltd, Nelna Agri Development (Pvt) Ltd, Oceanpick (Pvt) Ltd, Finagle Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Ellawala Horticulture (Pvt) Ltd, Yara Foods (Pvt) Ltd, Cargills Quality Foods Ltd

A culinary competition of this nature not only improves the skills and knowledge of the competitors, but also gives a boosting promotion to the trade with many visitors attending the event and experiencing culinary glamour. Many of these competitors participated for the first time in a competition and gained a valuable insight on culinary skills and know-how imparted by the judges and fellow competitors. They went away fully appreciative of this venture and promised to come in a bigger way for the 2nd Culinary Champions Competition next year. The categories for the competition were Hot Cooking – Poultry and Fish, Iced Mocktail, Ice Carving, Decorative Cakes, Hot Pasta, Bread and Pastry Display, Indigenous Ingredients, Contemporary Sri Lankan Cuisine, Students Category and many more.



Top Players of the Global Travel Market To Convene At ITB Asia 2023

TTA BULLETIN



Asia's leading travel trade show brings together the leading exhibitors in the travel and tourism industry. As the opening draws closer, the top exhibitors, sponsors, and buyer partners are announced.

ITB Asia, Asia's leading travel trade show, is pleased to announce its top exhibitors for the highly anticipated 16th edition, set to take place from 25 – 27 October 2023 in Singapore. Co-located with MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia, this year's event promises three full days of networking opportunities with international exhibitors, complemented by insightful conference sessions at the iconic Marina Bay Sands in Singapore.

The exhibitors' list offers a strong mix of all stakeholder groups. This includes top business players such as Aircalin, Air India, Banyan Tree Group, Berlin Brandenburg Airport, BWH Hotel Group, Club Med, EVA Airways Corporation, Finnair, Icelandair, NEOM, Philippine Airlines, Inc., Worldwide Hotels, Vietnam Airlines and Wyndham Hotels & Resorts; National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) including Visit Brussels, Croatian National Tourist Board, Czech Tourism Authority, Visit Finland, Visit Norway, Palestine Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, PROMPERU, Tourism Seychelles and more; as well as Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) such as Visit Berlin, Department of Tourism and Creative Economy of Jakarta, Taipei City Government, Zagreb Tourist Board and more.

"ITB Asia is putting together a strong representation from all travel segments. As the industry revives, we are enthusiastic to serve as a tried and tested platform for building new partnerships. The level of expertise provided by global tourism leaders will ensure Singapore is the place where we can shape the future of tourism," says Katrina Leung, Managing Director of Messe Berlin (Singapore), Organiser of MICE Show Asia, Travel Tech Asia and ITB Asia.

Among this year's exhibiting NTOs are Brand USA, Croatian National Tourist Board, Czech Tourism Authority, Japan National Tourism Organisation, Korea Tourism Organisation, Malta Tourism Authority, Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority, PROMPERU, Taiwan Tourism Bureau, Tonga Tourism Authority, Tourism Development Support Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Tourism Seychelles, Vanuatu Tourism Office, Visit Estonia, Visit Iceland, Visit Jordan and Visit Norway.

National Tourism Organisations are supported by local and national governments' direct representation from Council of Indigenous Peoples, Taiwan, Municipality of North Greenland, Palestine Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, Shizuoka Prefectural Government of Japan and Taipei City Government.

In addition to the NTOs, the show also welcomes Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs), such as Daejeon Tourism Organisation, Guam Visitors Bureau, Gwangju Tourism Organisation, Gyeonggi Tourism Organisation, Gyeongsangbuk-do Culture and Tourism Organisation, Ho Chi Minh City Tourism Promotion Center, Johor Economic, Tourism and Cultural Office (JETCO), Louisiana Office of Tourism, Marianas Visitors Authority, New Caledonia Tourism, Northern Norway Tourist Board, Penang Global Tourism, Phuket Tourist Association, Sabah Tourism Board, Sarawak Tourism Board, Saxony Tourism Germany, Suruga Marketing & Tourism Bureau, Tourism Association of Sarajevo Canton, Tourism Promotion Organisation for Asia Pacific Cities, Visit Almaty, Visit Brussels, Visit Oulu and Visit Rovaniemi.

A strong representation is also expected from destination marketing agencies with a strong focus on MICE promotion: Business Events Sarawak, Finland Convention Bureau, Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau, Gyeongju Hwabaek Convention & Visitors Bureau, Jeju Convention & Visitors Bureau, Kitakyushu Convention and Visitors Association, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, Northern Territory Business Events Australia and Suwon Convention Center.

This year's ITB Asia boasts an impressive line-up of sponsors, including Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, Korea Tourism Startup Center, Sentosa Development Corporation, Penang Global Tourism, Busan Tourism Organisation, Visit Finland and Japan National Tourism Organisation.

Co-located with ITB Asia and Travel Tech Asia, MICE Show Asia is where incentive travel, meetings and events industries come together to connect and build the future of MICE. This year's sponsor includes Mastercard.

Key exhibitors of MICE Show Asia 2023 include Alaska Destination Specialists, Business Events Perth, Guam Visitors Bureau, Kyoto Convention Bureau, Royal Caribbean International, Sapporo Convention Bureau, This is Athens, Visit Anchorage and Visit Monaco.

This year's Travel Tech Asia focuses the latest innovations and digital solutions targeting travel technology. With conference sessions by tech thought leaders, exhibitors from established tech brands and innovative startups, attendees are treated to a wealth of insights and inspirations to improve their business operations. This year's sponsors include Mystifly, Oxylabs, Trip.com Group, Korea Tourism Startup Center and Mize.

Get Fit in Paradise with Celebrity Trainer Shaun Stafford at Niyama Private Islands Maldives' Fitness x Wellness Week

TTA BULLETIN

Niyama Private Islands Maldives is introducing its first-ever Fitness x Wellness Week from the 11th-18th November 2023. The retreat will be hosted by resident Ayurvedic doctor Kannan Nettath and two-time World Fitness Champion and celebrity trainer Shaun Stafford.



Niyama's inaugural Fitness x Wellness Week offers the perfect balance of working hard and playing harder, along with training and recovery. Whether guests are a fitness fanatic or a first timer, the programme promises to push everyone to attain their personal best with confidence, all while having fun.

Niyama's twin islands, Play and Chill are the ideal setting for such a retreat with its long stretches of beach to jog; perfect waters to swim, ski board, surf or sail; a flood-lit tennis court and PUMP, the gym with a view to inspire and all the equipment needed for a next-level workout.

Each day of the retreat begins with a group workout led by Shaun Stafford. Shaun is a two time World Fitness Champion, celebrity trainer, social media influencer and a pro fitness model. He founded City Athletic in London and regularly tours the world hosting exclusive fitness retreats.

During the retreat, guests will benefit from one-on-one consulting and one-on-one coaching with Shaun, who will draw up a personalised six-week training programme which incorporates weight, strength and circuit training based on one's goals for them to continue with back at home. They will also consult with Ayurvedic doctor Kannan Nettath, who, based on the results of their epigenetic test, as well as their doshas, will advise simple lifestyle changes to adopt for optimal health and wellness.



Downtime includes a whole day of recovery with snorkelling, spa treatments and a movie under the stars. Throughout the retreat, guests can also enjoy unlimited use of the spa's hydrotherapy circuits or a Vitamin Therapy with Beverly Hills Vitamin Therapy, mingling over cocktails on the beach, and 3 course menu dinner in a modern fine dining located half a kilometre from shore at Edge or deep in the jungle by firelight at Tribal.

The Fitness x Wellness Week health package excluding room is priced at USD \$2,711net per person and is open to a maximum of 10 participants, with bookings required by 4 November 2023. There is also a programme for accompanying partners who wish to relax only priced at USD \$483net per person. For more information or reservations, visit www.niyama.com/en/offers/fitness-and-wellness-week-with-shaun-stafford or email reservations@niyama.com

Niyama Private Islands Maldives offers more than a luxury retreat in the Maldives. Going beyond conventional concepts of lavish accommodation, sumptuous cuisines, and personalised service, Niyama Private Islands Maldives presents every visitor with myriad opportunities to create their own exceptional island experience. With twin islands Play and Chill, Niyama Private Islands Maldives offers guests the true luxury of choice. Chill island is true to its name; offering new depths of relaxation at the Drift Spa, entertainment under the stars at the outdoor cinema, fine dining experience offshore at Edge and so much more. While Play island provides delightful diversions for those looking for more active pursuits. Whether it be feasting in the treetops, kayaking around the islands, or discovering why Niyama Private Islands Maldives is one of the luxurious surfing destinations, you will be spoiled for choice at Niyama Private Islands Maldives.



Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas Launches Stunning Scientific Based Book on the Island's Unique Coral Reef Ecosystem

TTA BULLETIN

After two years of extensive research and studies, Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas is launching the 'Wonders of Kihavah,' - a ground-breaking research-based publication unveiling the breath-taking beauty and rich biodiversity of the island's renowned house reef. This is the first time a resort in the Maldives has undertaken such an extensive reef assessment and scientific research-based study.



The publication, combining a scientific approach, compelling narrative, and stunning visuals, showcases the enchanting underwater world of Anantara Kihavah's pristine marine ecosystem which was recently crowned as the Best House Reef in the Maldives in the 2023 Travel + Leisure Luxury Awards Southeast Asia.

The study, led by Australian Marine Conservation Society's Director, Dr. Selina Ward, alongside fish and coral experts, Dr. Storm Martin and Dr. Hannah Markham, all who have conducted extensive research work on Australia's Great Barrier Reef, worked on the book highlighting the spectacular array of Kihavah's marine life and the delicate equilibrium of the reef and the urgent need for marine conservation efforts, especially in the age of global warming.

Regarding the hospitality industry's role, Dr. Ward stresses the utmost importance of urgently reducing carbon emissions to save coral reefs for the future. "In the period until emissions reductions become effective, we can work towards enhancing reef resilience, improving water quality, addressing land use impacts, removing threats such as overfishing and destructive fishing practices, and engaging in innovative restoration techniques for priority areas, such as beloved locations around resorts and essential regions serving as sources for coral and fish larvae. There are many innovative restoration techniques now that require the use of very small volumes of existing corals and targeted use of reared coral larvae."

Dr. Ward emphasises the severity of marine heatwaves as a threat to coral reef health and survival worldwide, causing bleaching events with potentially devastating consequences. Reef recovery is possible, but the frequency of heatwaves is critical for

their effectiveness. Intensified cyclones, sea level rise, and ocean acidification also damages and hinder reef growth.

Among the study's fascinating findings is the recording of an astounding 300 fish species on Anantara Kihavah's house reef, proving its status as the best for snorkelling, where guests can encounter different species every time they enter the water. The study also includes a comprehensive fish index, indicating the areas around the island where these species are found.

Another captivating aspect is that as many as 160 of these species can be observed from the resort's SEA Underwater Restaurant in a single day, providing non-divers with a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the mesmerising fish and coral sights. With different fish species being most active at various times throughout the day, diners are treated to an ever-changing display through the restaurant's windows, making dining at SEA an unforgettable bucket list experience.

The publication also features the reef's renowned Yellow Wall, a major attraction for divers and a contributing factor in making the reef a sought-after destination for diving enthusiasts in the region. Beyond the resort's shores, the Baa Atoll offers countless world-class dive sites, and the chance to swim with manta rays in Hanifaru Bay is a must-try, once-in-a lifetime experience.

By showcasing the beauty and fragility of Anantara Kihavah's house reef, "Wonders of Kihavah" aims to inspire budding conservationists and serve as an inspiration for ongoing marine conservation efforts, emphasising the need to protect the wonders of Kihavah and other reefs around the world for generations to come.

Anantara Kihavah offers a complimentary e-version of the publication for download on their website, while physical copies are exclusively provided for guests during their villa stay. Take-home copies are available for purchase at the resort, with a portion of the proceeds allocated to Anantara's 'Dollar for Deeds' programme, with the resort matching each donation to support marine and coastal protection, environmental education, and community welfare.



HOTELS

Reveal the Collection invites you to indulge in Mirissa's serene luxury

Discover exclusive access to one of the best beaches in Asia and unparalleled Sri Lankan hospitality.

TTA BULLETIN

In a realm where luxury and exclusivity meet shimmering waves, beautiful boutique villas of Reveal the Collection under the flagship of Browns Hotels & Resorts lie by the blissful picturesque shores of Mirissa Beach.



Mirissa, a coastal haven ranked as one of Asia's finest beaches by TripAdvisor in 2023, boasts turquoise waters, golden sands, and an ambiance that captivates the souls of wanderers. Four illustrious properties from the total of six luxury boutiques under Reveal the Collection; two Ubuntu Beach Villas, The Beach House, and Lantern Boutique Hotel are located in this idyllic paradise offering unparalleled personalized service, access to a private beach, and an artfully curated culinary experience.

With a total of 28 tastefully designed rooms across all four properties, including suites for intimate getaways and the option to book the entire villa for gatherings, each

abode at Reveal the Collection in Mirissa offers premium amenities. From floating breakfast in the pool, high tea by the beach, brunch to sundown cocktails, the villas under Reveal the



Collection in Mirissa promise a serene escape to luxury. Executive Chef Nilantha Dilruk ensures that each dish is a masterpiece with a well-crafted menu, from locally-sourced seafood delicacies to international delights infused with Sri Lankan flavors. Visitors staying at any of the four villas can indulge in bespoke gastronomy at 71 Lantern Bistro and Bar, Reveal the Collection's main restaurant located at Lantern Boutique Hotel.

Beyond the luxurious confines of Reveal the Collection, Mirissa unveils a treasure trove of attractions that beckon the adventurous soul. Mirissa whale-watching expeditions, surfing, traversing to Parrot

Rock, and visiting the Instagrammable hotspot Coconut Tree Hill are tropical excursions travelers can enjoy. The turtle hatchery at The Beach House is one of the key guest experiences which aligns opulence with purpose. Guests are invited to partake during the season from October to April to witness the miracle of life as tiny hatchlings emerge from their sandy nests and embark on their journey to the ocean.

"At Reveal the Collection, Mirissa's allure comes alive through our two Ubuntu Beach Villas, The Beach House, and Lantern Boutique Hotel. With an unwavering dedication to personalized service, we craft tailored excursions and delightful surprises, ensuring an unforgettable stay for every guest. Our properties embody refined elegance, offering a gateway to experience the magic of Mirissa's nature and charm. Let us be your orchestrators of remarkable moments." -Rajith Goonaratne, Resident Manager at Reveal the Collection in Mirissa –

Alongside the four luxurious boutique villas in Mirissa, the exquisite Reveal the Collection that falls under the flagship of Browns Hotels and Resorts, features two more stunning bungalows: The Lavender House in Pussellawa and The Stafford Bungalow in Ragala. Whether seeking adventure, serenity, secluded beaches, or hillside tranquility, Reveal the Collection is your gateway to unforgettable experiences.



Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Celebrates Sangeetha Liyanapathirana as the 2023 PATA Face of the Future

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts proudly announces that Sangeetha Liyanapathirana, Manager of Health, Hygiene, and Sustainability, has been recognised as the 2023 PATA Face of the Future—an esteemed recognition for young tourism professionals in the Asia Pacific region.



Sangeetha Liyanapathirana

will provide her greater exposure in Sri Lanka and throughout the industry, and I look forward to seeing her career develop as she works in line with PATA for the responsible development of travel and tourism in the region."

Sangeetha Liyanapathirana manages Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo's Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility activities, Health, Safety, Environmental Safety, Legal Affairs and Government Relations. In addition to her responsibilities, she leads Health and Safety based communications for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts.

Presented annually by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) to highlight its commitment to human capital development, this is an accolade that recognises exceptional 'rising stars' in the industry who exhibit outstanding leadership and commitment to the responsible development of travel and tourism of the Asia Pacific travel industry in line with PATA's mission.

Peter Semone, PATA Chair, commented, "This year we received a fantastic list of applicants who could all be worthy of this recognition, and it makes me extremely hopeful for the future of our industry. I would like to congratulate Ms. Liyanapathirana on winning the 2023 PATA Face of the Future award. It was inspiring to learn about her passion for sustainability and how she engages with the local youth community towards this goal. This award

Commenting on the industry recognition, Liyanapathirana expressed her gratitude by saying, "I am incredibly honoured and grateful to have received the PATA Face of the Future Award. This recognition symbolises my dedication and passion for the tourism industry. The journey to this achievement was challenging and took much hard work, but it's a testament to the power of perseverance. I am thankful to my team and mentors from Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, who believed in me, and to my family, who encouraged me."

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts recognises the integral role Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles play in its operations. Sangeetha Liyanapathirana's achievements align perfectly with the organisation's commitment to responsible tourism and sustainability. She has played a vital role in curating awareness sessions for secondary and tertiary-level students, nurturing the next generation of sustainable hoteliers. Her current project with the John Keells Foundation on the 'Pasal Diriya' program aims to bridge gaps while building a sustainable model to reduce child malnutrition, ensure higher school attendance and positively impact overall learning. Sangeetha's recent recognition includes winning a Silver Award for her volunteer activities from John Keells Holdings.

Minor Hotels Reports 120% Q2 Profit Growth as Global Travel Demand Surges

MINOR HOTELS

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels has more than doubled its year-over-year core profit in the second quarter of 2023, reporting growth of 120% on the same period last year.

The core profit of THB 2.6 billion for 2Q23 comes on the back of surging travel demand across all geographies, and continues a strong post-Covid financial recovery for the Bangkok-based hotel owner, operator and investor, which currently has a portfolio of more than 530 hotels and resorts in 56 countries.

A robust start to the high travel season in Europe contributed to the strong result, as leisure and business travel demand across all key customer segments led to an average occupancy rate of 72% and an 18% year-over-year surge in average daily rate

(ADR) for Minor Hotel's owned properties in Europe and Latin America.

Other key markets were also buoyed by continued travel demand recovery, led by Thailand with year-over-year RevPar growth of 62% for owned properties and 85% growth across all hotels in the country. The sustained upturn in global travel demand, together with implementation of Minor Hotels' dynamic sales and marketing strategy, resulted in 2Q23 RevPar growth of 21% year-over-year.

Dillip Rajakarier, CEO of Minor Hotels and Group CEO of Minor International, said he anticipates the strong results to continue in the second half of the year as demand in Asia picks up.

Taru Villas Pvt Ltd Expands Luxury Portfolio with Taru Villas Kandy

TTA BULLETIN

Taru Villas Pvt Ltd, a prominent name in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry, celebrated for its luxury properties, is delighted to announce the opening of its newest boutique hotel, Taru Villas Kandy, which welcomed its first guests on the 1st of September.



Nestled in the heart of the captivating city of Kandy, in the picturesque suburb of Katugastota, Taru Villas Kandy is a unique addition to the Taru Villas collection of luxury properties. This illustrious abode offers an enchanting blend of historic charm and modern comforts, making it the perfect destination for travellers seeking an authentic and luxurious experience.

Taru Villas Kandy is housed within an ancestral home once owned by a noble family in Kandy, a property that exudes a timeless elegance bestowed upon it by the esteemed King George VI. This rich history infuses every corner of the hotel, seamlessly merging with contemporary amenities to create a world of refined splendour.

Featuring nine meticulously designed rooms, each offering a unique and enveloping experience, Taru Villas Kandy promises guests an unforgettable stay. Every room is equipped with a private bathroom, ensuring convenience and privacy. Antique windows frame captivating views of the pristine pool and meticulously landscaped gardens, providing a tranquil backdrop for relaxation.

What sets Taru Villas Kandy apart is its commitment to honouring Kandy's rich heritage. The interiors of each room seamlessly blend traditional Kandyan elements with contemporary Sri Lankan interior design. Moreover, an impressive collection of contemporary art by renowned Sri Lankan artists adorns the walls, creating a canvas of cultural expression within each room. The result is an atmosphere of refined sophistication and relaxation, where every detail has been thoughtfully crafted.

"As a group dedicated to offering exceptional experiences, we are thrilled to introduce Taru Villas Kandy to our portfolio," said Alvin Jacobs, CEO at Taru Villas Pvt Ltd. "This historic property encapsulates the spirit of Kandy and is a testament to our commitment to preserving and celebrating the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. We look forward to welcoming guests to Taru Villas Kandy and providing them with an unforgettable journey through history, art, and luxury."

For booking inquiries and further information, please contact Sewwandi +94 765461461 or mail res@taruvillas.co.

Avani Hotels & Resorts Celebrates Venetian Debut with the Launch of Avani Rio Novo

TTA BULLETIN

Avani Hotels & Resorts, the upscale lifestyle brand of Minor Hotels, continues to expand its dynamic European portfolio with the launch of Avani Rio Novo Venice. Offering experiences aligned with the desires of remote professionals and millennial-minded travellers who like to mix work and fun, the Asian brand has mastered the balance between design and function, service and privacy and laid-back and lavish – a unique proposition that the brand is bringing to Venice.

Avani Rio Novo Venice makes exploring the city's cobbled alleys and ancient waterways easy with curated experiences, while quality workouts in AvaniFit style, convenient grab-and-go dining options that cater to dynamic lifestyles, and dedicated meeting spaces serve as extensive areas for dynamic company events.

Set against the charming backdrop of Dorsoduro with its ancient canals and centuries-old bridges, the 144-key hotel stands as a contemporary landmark with its sweeping glass façade. Avani Rio Novo offers a gateway to a neighbourhood renowned for its authentic eateries where moreish cicchetti snacks tempt the palate, and vibrant local bars beckon. The locale also boasts world-class art galleries, including the prestigious Gallerie dell'Accademia and the esteemed Peggy Guggenheim Collection, where cultural treasures await. The hotel is steps away from Campo Santa Margherita, a bustling hub that attracts students and locals alike.



Avani Rio Novo showcases Italian Rationalist architecture in its clean lines and geometric shapes. The interiors celebrate Venice's strong connection to the world of cinema, particularly due to the annual Venice Film Festival that attracts renowned figures from the global film industry. From stylish common areas and rooms dotted with cinema memorabilia to the signature restaurant hung with portraits of movie stars and a mini-library with magazines and books on the subject, the hotel is a love letter to Italian cinema. Calming rooms and suites in monochrome shades feature elegant parquet floors and full-height windows that let in Venice's enchanting light. They also provide panoramic views of tiled rooftops and occasional canal-side gardens, offering a glimpse into the city's daily life.

At 8 Millimetri Cicchetti & Wine, a cinematic-themed restaurant, film enthusiasts can relax amidst black-and-white photographs featuring Italian cinema icons or enjoy an espresso and a hearty breakfast. In true Avani style, the restaurant also provides grab-and-go options for coffees, pastries and light snacks.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker Honoured with Prestigious APEX CEO Lifetime Achievement Award

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker was celebrated by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) as the recipient of the CEO Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognises industry leaders for their dedication, efforts and commitment to enhancing passenger experience. The APEX/IFSA Awards Ceremony took place at APEX/IFSA Global EXPO in Long Beach, California on 20 September, where H.E. Mr. Akbar Al Baker also accepted three awards for the airline.



APEX is one of the world's largest international airline associations. This global non-profit advances passenger experience with the support of major airlines in conjunction with both the International Flight Services Association and Future Travel Experience.

The APEX CEO Lifetime Achievement Award has only been awarded six times in the organisation's five-decade history, including the latest award received by H.E. Mr. Al Baker. This prestigious award is selectively awarded to industry leaders and

visionaries who inspire progress across the aviation landscape while also elevating their brands.

Qatar Airways was also awarded with three more APEX Awards, solidifying the airline's status as one of the world's leading airlines. The following titles presented to Qatar Airways were based exclusively on certified passenger votes: 2024 APEX World Class Award, APEX Award for Best Entertainment in the Middle East, and the APEX Award for Global Best Food & Beverage.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "I am honoured to accept the CEO Lifetime Achievement Award from the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). Over the last decades, Qatar Airways has grown to become one of the most recognisable and trusted names in the industry, synonymous with customer service quality and luxury. It is owing to the dedication of our employees across the world that our award-winning airline continues to outperform at the highest level of our industry."

"I am also proud of the three awards Qatar Airways has received, granted by our passengers, taking home the Awards for best World Class Airline, Best Entertainment in the Middle East, and Global Best Food & Beverage. I would like to thank our passengers as well as the APEX team for their recognition and we aim to continue to surpass all expectations for Qatar Airways in the years to come."

APEX Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Joe Leader, said: "In honouring His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker with the CEO Lifetime Achievement Award, APEX celebrates a true pioneer in aviation. H.E. Mr. Al Baker's leadership at Qatar Airways embodies the spirit of innovation, marrying the grandeur of Qatari tradition with an unyielding commitment to passenger excellence. Whether it is the trailblazing Qsuite experience, an exceptional in-flight entertainment library, or the airline's unwavering focus on health during unprecedented times, his legacy paints a mosaic of dedication, foresight, and a relentless drive for perfection."

He continued: "Under his masterful



oversight, Qatar Airways has not just flown; the airline has soared, setting benchmarks that inspire our entire industry. As he receives this well-deserved accolade, we, at APEX, extend our deepest admiration for a leader who has truly redefined the skies."

Qatar Airways Group is a unique organisation which encompasses multiple subsidiaries and works in synergy to create the smoothest travel journey including airport ground services, onboard catering, private jet travel, and more. Qatar Airways continues to work in line with its promise to provide all passengers with the most seamless and luxury travel experience in the world, now adding an additional four prestigious awards to the multi-award-winning airline's accreditation.

Emirates launches 'out of this world' interview with astronaut live from space

TTA BULLETIN

Going to the ends of the Earth in a quest for the best entertainment is nothing new for Emirates ice, and this time the award-winning inflight entertainment system will feature a live interview with UAE astronaut Dr Sultan AlNeyadi, chatting about his 'inflight experience' in space - as he fearlessly floats 400 kilometres above our planet.



Sprinkling some stardust on the ice experience, the interview will be live on the Emirates World Channel from 1 September 2023, the same day the esteemed astronaut will begin his journey home to Earth, having completed a six-month science mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The journey home from space is expected to take up to 16 hours, just one hour shorter than Emirates' longest flight duration - 17 hours from Auckland to Dubai. The interview for Emirates ice was conducted from the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) Mission Control Centre, via NASA in Houston, through a space to ground communication link.

Interviewed by Emirates SVP of IFE & Connectivity - Patrick Brannelly, the discussion eclipses expectations as Dr AlNeyadi fondly describes his inflight meals, how he stays connected to family and the entertainment available onboard the spacecraft, with Patrick drawing parallels with the Emirates experience. At an incredible ISS altitude of 400 kilometres and an orbital speed of 28,000 kilometres per hour, the live footage is interspersed with Dr AlNeyadi enjoying his coffee in

microgravity, conducting experiments, and strapping in for his daily workout where he overlooks spectacular views of planet Earth and takes in the weather conditions of our world at a glance.

Emirates has gravitated towards the journey of Dr AlNeyadi, since he rocketed to fame as an Emirati astronaut and the first Arab to serve on the ISS for a 6-month mission, as part of Expedition 69, as well as being the first Arab Astronaut to perform a spacewalk. Emirates was honoured to connect with one of the UAE's national heroes and collaborate on this piece of history-making content on ice.

Launched onboard in 2003 with 500 channels, Emirates ice has been making a big bang for award-winning and world class entertainment for the last 20 years. The IFE system now offers more than 6,500 channels of on-demand entertainment, 80 Academy Award® winning films, over 2,000 movies, 650 TV shows, and 4,000 hours of music, podcasts, and audiobooks across 40 languages, in addition to unmatched content like exclusive interviews live from space. In this case, the sky is not the limit for Emirates ice.

The Tigers Onboard SriLankan Airlines

TTA BULLETIN

The National Cricket Team of Bangladesh, popularly known as The Tigers, became the latest international cricket stars to fly SriLankan Airlines. The team travelled from Dhaka to Colombo on UL 190 on 27 August 2023 to participate in the upcoming 2023 Asia Cup. SriLankan Airlines delivered a sixer in service for the special guests onboard, who delighted in the warm reception.

SriLankan Airlines currently operates daily between Dhaka and Colombo.



SriLankan Airlines Proves That Some Heroes Have Wings

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has become a hero to over 40 Sri Lankan migrant workers who are stranded in Dubai without the means to purchase an air ticket to return home, by coming to their rescue. SriLankan will be working closely with the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Dubai to help these Sri Lankans out of their predicament and back home to their loved ones by giving them a safe and highly affordable passage to Sri Lanka.



The stranded workers will be flown from Dubai to Colombo in groups. The first group arrived in Sri Lanka on UL 226 on 23 August 2023 and were overjoyed to reunite with their families.

"We saw no way out and felt hopeless, but then SriLankan Airlines and the Consulate General's Office in Dubai offered to help us, and I will forever be grateful to them. I

am so happy to be in Sri Lanka again," said one relieved returnee.

SriLankan Airlines' duty of service to Sri Lanka and its people runs deep. The airline has especially been persistent in lending support during times of crisis, often being the sole solution for Sri Lankans. SriLankan Airlines operated nearly 300 rescue mission charter flights from various locked-down international cities including Wuhan, flying over 70, 000 stranded Sri Lankans home during the pandemic, and the airline's promise to extend a wing if the future calls for it is a given.

Flyadeal takes delivery of milestone 30th Aircraft

Saudi Arabia's Leading Low-Cost Airline Welcomes Newest Airbus A320neo

TTA BULLETIN

flyadeal, one of the youngest and fastest growing low-cost airlines in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Middle East, has taken delivery of its 30th aircraft - an Airbus A320neo - at a special ceremony held in Toulouse.



The 'keys' to flyadeal's newest acquisition named Al Taj (The Crown), were handed over at the European aircraft manufacturer's delivery centre in southern France. Senior flyadeal management were joined by four lucky employees who were chosen in a prize draw and flown specially to Toulouse to join the delivery celebrations.

to expand the country's aviation industry, the A320neos enable us to open up new travel markets beyond the Middle East, Europe and Africa which we currently serve. The aircraft achieve operational efficiencies we always strive for, helping to keep our cost base low and to continue providing the travelling public with the promise of competitively low fares."

The aircraft, registration number HZ-FBD, later departed with the flyadeal delegation onboard for the five-hour inaugural delivery flight to Jeddah, one of the airline's operational bases. The 186-seat aircraft, in a 3-3 all-Economy Class configuration, is the latest of a 30 A320neo aircraft order placed by parent Saudia Group in 2019 earmarked for flyadeal operations.

flyadeal's current fleet is made up of the A320 family aircraft with an average age of just over two years old. With 19 A320neos already delivered from the 2019 order. The aircraft features optimum comfort and space enabling flyadeal passengers to benefit from the widest cabin of any single-aisle aircraft in the sky.

The airline operates 59 routes to a network of 35 domestic, international, and seasonal destinations.

Sanjiv Kapoor, flyadeal Acting Chief Executive Officer, said: "flyadeal is celebrating yet another significant milestone with our fleet reaching 30 aircraft, representing a great achievement made so quickly since our historic first flight on Saudi National Day almost six years ago. This is a proud moment for our airline, our employees, our parent group Saudia and long-standing partner Airbus coming just days before our anniversary.

flyadeal, which celebrates its sixth anniversary of operations later this month, has flown over 20 million passengers since its launch in September 2017.

"As we continue our exciting journey towards growing our fleet and route network in line with the Saudi Vision 2030

The A320neo is one of the most advanced narrow-body aircraft in the world. It has proven operational, economic and environmental performance thanks to the adoption of latest technology, including new generation engines, wing sharklets and aerodynamics, which together deliver 20% in fuel savings and reduction in carbon emissions compared with previous generation Airbus aircraft.

Emirates and Maldivian establish interline partnership

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates and Maldivian have announced an interline partnership, enabling Emirates customers to access 16 popular holiday destinations in the Maldives beyond Malé. The agreement successfully follows on from last year's signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two airlines, to explore opportunities for mutual cooperation.

The interline agreement will create more options for Emirates customers when travelling to the Maldivian archipelago, utilising both carriers' services and networks on a single ticket while also enhancing the customer experience throughout the journey.

Customers travelling to exotic island destinations in the Maldives will now be able to reap the benefit of flying into more popular holiday spots after connecting easily and seamlessly from Velana International Airport in the North Malé atoll. Emirates passengers will link to Maldivian's services to reach a choice of domestic points for their island getaway.

From 15 September, travel itineraries can be booked on emirates.com, the Emirates mobile app, or preferred travel agents, for

flights effective immediately.

Adnan Kazim, Emirates' Chief Commercial Officer said: "We are delighted to establish a partnership with Maldivian, to expand our reach into more points in the Maldives. By partnering with the Maldivian flag carrier, we are able to offer customers smooth connections when flying to a wide choice of islands within the country via Malé. By extending this added-value benefit, our customers from across the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Americas can plan their journey to the Maldives with the convenience of booking flights on a single ticket to reach their final destination."

Ibrahim Hamdhan Mohamed, General Manager – Commercial at Maldivian added: "We are excited to embark on this journey with Emirates, a global aviation leader. This partnership would enable us to increase the visibility of our extensive domestic network and it aligns perfectly with our objective of providing seamless connectivity to travelers. Customers will be able to plan and book their entire journey directly through the airline with ease. As the national carrier we always strive to make Maldives more accessible to

travelers from around the world and we believe the partnership with Emirates will strengthen our position as the leading airline in Maldives."

Emirates customers can fly to airports in a selection of the popular atolls via Malé including Dharavandhoo Island (DRV), Faresmathoda Airport (FMT), Funadhoo Airport (FND), Fuvahmulak Island Airport (FVM), Gan Island International (GAN), Kooldoo Island (GKK), Hanimaadhoo Island Airport (HAQ), Kulhudhuffushi Airport (HDK), Hoarafushi Airport (HRF), Kaadedhdhoo Island Airport (KDM), Kadhdhoo Island (KDO), Madivaru Airport (LMV), Maafaru International Airport (NMF), Maavarulu Airport (RUL), Thimarafushi Airport (TMF), and Ifuru (IFU).

Furthermore, customers spending their holidays at other resort islands can also enjoy the convenience of travelling to the closest point in the interline network and are within reach of their final destination with only a short ride, by seaplane or boat.

As the partnership between both airlines evolves, more benefits and conveniences will be added to enhance the customer



experience when travelling to the Maldives.

Emirates has supported the development and growth of tourism as well as trade in the Maldives for more than three and a half decades. The award-winning global airline commenced operations to Malé in 1987 and now operates 28 flights a week between Dubai and the Maldives. With a choice of four flights per day to Malé, customers from across Emirates' network of almost 140 points have the flexibility to choose flights and enjoy the convenience of minimal connection times.

Through its 29 codeshare, 11 Intermodal and 117 interline partners, Emirates boasts a global footprint that encompasses destinations far beyond its own network, offering increased connectivity and convenient options for travellers.

SriLankan Airlines Celebrates 44 Years of Soaring the Skies

SriLankan Airlines celebrated 44 years of soaring the skies together with the SriLankan Airlines family and loyal customers. Multi-religious ceremonies marked the special occasion for members of the SriLankan family who also paid it forward to the community with a blood donation drive. SriLankan's valued customers were meanwhile made a part of the festivities with incredible discounts of up to 44% off on airfares. Two lucky top tier members of SriLankan Airlines' frequent flyer programme, FlySmiLes, were also rewarded with 44,000 free miles each at the Bandaranaike International Airport, giving customers 44 plus reasons to continue flying SriLankan Airlines.



Qatar Airways Increases New York Frequency to Three Flights per Day

TTA BULLETIN

Effective 30 October 2023, Qatar Airways will increase frequency to New York (JFK) from two to three daily flights.



and to more than 80 cities across Africa, the Middle-East, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Offering new connections between New York and more than 80 destinations in the Middle-East, Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia, the new flights will conveniently arrive early morning and depart late evening from New York (JFK). Customers from across the U.S. will also benefit from the enhanced connectivity between JetBlue and Qatar Airways via New York. With 3 flights per day scheduled in the morning, afternoon and evening, seamless connections from Detroit, Raleigh-Durham, Orlando or Tampa, to Doha, Kathmandu, Bangkok or Johannesburg have never been easier. Members of both Loyalty Programs – Qatar Airways Privilege Club and JetBlue TrueBlue – can earn miles from each other's expansive codeshare flights.

Qatar Airways' strategic partnership with American Airlines also continues to expand with American Airlines launching flights from its Philadelphia hub to Doha, starting 28 October 2023. American Airlines' new Philadelphia – Doha services will provide customers with seamless travel options and benefits by connecting to more than 90 cities across North America, Caribbean and Central America,

Alaska Airlines and Qatar Airways will also offer customers from the West Coast improved connectivity with significant codeshare expansion and distribution enablement. During the coming weeks, guests will be able to book to more destinations beyond Doha on Alaska Airlines' website.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker said: "We continue to offer seamless connectivity to our passengers from the U.S. market and beyond with the support of our strategic partners. Our unwavering commitment to our longstanding U.S. partners, American Airlines, JetBlue and Alaska Airlines is built on our mission to connect the world through our hub to our 160 destinations and more. We look forward to building more connections and uniting global passengers from across the world."

Qatar Airways serves key destinations in the U.S. such as Atlanta (ATL), Boston (BOS), Chicago (ORD), Dallas Fort Worth (DFW), Houston (IAH), Los Angeles (LAX), Miami (MIA), New York (JFK), Philadelphia (PHL), San Francisco (SFO), Seattle (SEA), and Washington DC (IAD).

IndiGo to be the first Indian airline providing direct connectivity from Hyderabad to Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, India's preferred airline, is delighted to announce the introduction of new direct flights between Hyderabad and Colombo from November 02, 2023. IndiGo



is the first Indian carrier to provide direct connectivity between the two cities, reinforcing trade, economic, and cultural ties. This is part of IndiGo's strategic expansion in international markets, providing customers with seamless and efficient connectivity.

Mr. Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales at IndiGo, said, "We are delighted to introduce direct flights between Hyderabad and Colombo, Sri Lanka. As the travel landscape experiences remarkable growth, our focus remains on delivering exceptional services and meeting the evolving needs of our customers. This would serve as a catalyst for further enhancing business ties, trade as well as tourism between India and Sri Lanka. The introduction of these flights will not only enhance connectivity but also provide travellers with greater flexibility and convenience. We will continue to offer more flight options, adhering to our promise of on-time, affordable, courteous, and hassle-free travel experiences across our unparalleled network."

Colombo, the vibrant capital of Sri Lanka, serves as a bustling hub for both business and tourism. The city is well-connected to the international airport and offers easy access to the island nation. Colombo itself is a city of contrasts, where modern skyscrapers stand alongside colonial-era architecture. Travellers can explore a wealth of cultural and historical landmarks, including the Gangaramaya Temple and the National Museum. The city's scenic Galle Face Green promenade provides splendid views of the Indian Ocean and is a popular spot for leisurely strolls. For culinary adventure lovers, Colombo's diverse food scene offers a tempting array of flavors, from spicy curries to fresh seafood.

Hyderabad, a sought-after tourist destination, offers a variety of popular attractions, including Charminar, Golconda Fort, Salar Jung Museum, and more. The city is also renowned for its excellent medical services.

Customers who wish to plan their travel can book tickets via our official website www.goIndiGo.in. The introduction of these flights will further bolster the airline's international connectivity.

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Emirates achieves IATA Environmental Assessment (IEnvA) Certification

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has reinforced its commitment to environmentally responsible practices by achieving IATA Environmental Assessment (IEnvA) Stage One and the IEnvA Illegal Wildlife Trade module certifications.



The IEnvA system is an industry-leading and comprehensive environmental management system and Emirates has implemented Stage One of its core scope comprising flight operations, corporate activities, as well as an illegal wildlife trade module that supports Emirates' longstanding environmental commitment to preserving wildlife and habitats.

Sheikh Majid Al Mualla, Emirates' Divisional Senior VP, International Affairs said: "We are proud to achieve the IEnvA Stage One certification, which is a testament to our longstanding commitment to impactful environmental sustainability initiatives, while certification to the module on illegal wildlife trade reinforces our position as a global leader in the fight against the trafficking and exploitation of wildlife. In addition to initiatives such as our recent closed loop recycling programme and demonstration flight powered with 100% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), we are committed to robust environmental management systems and to driving real change both within our own operations and across the industry."

Marie Owens Thomsen, IATA's Chief Economist and SVP Sustainability said: "We congratulate Emirates on having achieved the IEnvA Stage 1 certification, a clear indicator of the airline's progress to full IEnvA Certification. Stakeholders, including governments, financiers and business partners will know that Emirates is not just meeting global standards and best practices on sustainability, but is committed to continuous improvements to stay at the forefront of sustainability. We look forward to working together with Emirates to achieve our common goal of reducing environmental impacts, fight against illegal wildlife trafficking and enhancing social responsibility."

Emirates is a global leader in the fight against illegal wildlife trafficking and exploitation, with the aim to protect the beauty and biodiversity of the natural world to serve as an inspiration for travel now and for future generations. The airline is a founding signatory to the Buckingham Palace Declaration and member of the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce, convened by The Royal Foundation.

Discover the beauty of Sri Lanka with Thema Collection
Your home away from home for authentic experiences



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C O L L E C T I O N

Different Themes, Authentic Experiences

