

# TRAVEL TALK

## ASIA

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## Port City Colombo Celebrates The Groundbreaking Of The Luxury Marina Development

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA



Port City Colombo celebrated the groundbreaking of the Marina Development at Port City Colombo with a special ceremony held on 10th January 2025. The occasion was graced by Chief Guest, Hon. Vijitha Herath, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism. Also present at the event were H.E. Qi Zhenhong, Ambassador, Embassy of the People's Republic of China; Mr. Harsha Amarasekera, Chairman, the Colombo Port City Economic Commission; Mr. Ishara Nanayakkara, Chairman, Browns Investments PLC and Deputy Chairman, LOLC Holdings PLC; Mr. Kapila Jayawardena – Group Managing Director/CEO, LOLC Holdings PLC; Mr. Kamantha Amarasekera – Director, Browns Investments PLC; Mr. Wang Gang, Managing Director, China Harbour Engineering Company, and Mr. Xiong Hongfeng, Managing Director, CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt) Ltd.

The occasion served to showcase the project's progress and readiness for investment, whilst also marking a significant milestone for marine tourism in Sri Lanka and South Asia. The luxury Marina Development at Port City Colombo is being undertaken as a joint venture between Browns Investments PLC (BI), the strategic investment arm of the LOLC Group, and China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC). It is noteworthy to mention that BI was one of the first Sri Lankan companies to invest in Port City Colombo and to date, is currently the largest investor. Browns Investment PLC has invested in six land plots, of which this development includes four plots in the Marina District.

“As the first developer in Colombo Port City, Browns Investments PLC takes immense pride in spearheading this groundbreaking initiative. This project aligns seamlessly with BI's commitment to pioneering ventures that transform industries and contribute to the nation's economic progress,” said Mr. Ishara

Nanayakkara, Chairman, Browns and Company PLC and Deputy Chairman, LOLC Holdings PLC.

He added, “The Marina Development represents a unique opportunity to redefine the luxury tourism landscape in South Asia. Located at the crossroads of international maritime routes, Sri Lanka is ideally positioned to become a hub for luxury yachting. This development will not only elevate the country's appeal as a premium travel destination but also symbolise the island's resilience and ambition to rise as a global contender in the tourism and maritime industries.”

Spanning a total land area of 33,776 sqm, the Marina Development will feature state-of-the-art facilities, including sunset bars, seaside restaurants, retail outlets, and entertainment spaces, creating a vibrant and sophisticated environment for visitors. Designed to cater to a global clientele, the Marina will offer berthing space for up to 200 mid-to-large-sized vessels, filling a critical infrastructure gap in the region.

“With a total investment of USD 120 million, the Marina Development is slated for completion by 2027,” said Mr. Kapila Jayawardena, Group Managing Director/CEO LOLC Holdings PLC. “This project underscores Sri Lanka's potential to lead in luxury tourism while stimulating significant economic activity and positioning Colombo as a hub for maritime excellence.”

Capitalising on Sri Lanka's natural beauty, historical significance, and strategic location, the Marina Development will establish the island as a crucial stopover for yachts traveling between the Red Sea, the Maldives, and the Far East. Sri Lanka's year-round favourable climate and proximity to key maritime routes makes it an attractive alternative to regional peers.

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## Amba Yaalu Kandalama: Sri Lanka's First Women-Led Hotel Redefines Hospitality

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA



Thema Collection has once again raised the bar in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry with the opening of Amba Yaalu Kandalama, a groundbreaking resort nestled within a serene mango plantation on the banks of Kandalama Lake. This innovative property, the first hotel in Sri Lanka to be entirely operated and managed by women, represents a bold step forward in addressing gender disparities within the industry while offering an unparalleled guest experience.

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Sleeping Soldier Mountain, Amba Yaalu Kandalama is inspired by the beloved Sri Lankan novel Amba Yaluwo (Mango Friends) and the golden age of Sri Lankan cinema. Its design blends cultural heritage with modern luxury, creating a tranquil retreat that harmonizes with its natural surroundings. With a palette of greens and blues reflecting the surrounding landscape, the resort's architecture establishes a seamless connection to nature, offering a serene escape for travelers.

The 33-room property combines elegance and local charm, with panoramic views of the Kandalama Lake, the lush mango garden with 457 TJC mango trees, and the majestic Sleeping Soldier Mountain. Each room immerses guests in Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage through thoughtful design. The resort's dining options include a Main Restaurant featuring diverse flavors, a dedicated Vegan Restaurant, and the signature Yaka Bar, which serves cocktails infused with Sri Lankan ingredients. Guests can also unwind with Ayurvedic treatments at the Ayurvedic Spa, yoga sessions on a scenic terrace, or a swim in the infinity pool overlooking the picturesque surroundings.

Adventure seekers can indulge in curated experiences such as boat rides on the tranquil Kandalama Lake, birdwatching, E-bike rides, hot air ballooning, and village walks, all of which showcase the local culture and natural beauty. Sustainability is at the heart of Amba Yaalu Kandalama, with its TJC Mango Farm educating visitors on sustainable farming practices and biodiversity conservation. Additionally, the resort has embraced renewable energy with 157 solar panels generating 140.40 kW of power, significantly reducing its carbon footprint.

The resort's all-women leadership and operational model underscore its commitment to empowerment and inclusivity, marking a pivotal moment for Sri Lanka's hospitality industry. By creating opportunities for women in a traditionally male-dominated sector, Amba Yaalu Kandalama exemplifies the potential for meaningful change within the industry.

Amba Yaalu Kandalama is the latest addition to the Thema Collection, a family-owned portfolio of boutique hotels, resorts, and retreats that highlight Sri Lanka's cultural heritage and biodiversity. The collection includes renowned properties such as Aliya Resort & Spa in Sigiriya, Maalu Maalu Resort & Spa in Pasikuda, and Wild Glamping Gal Oya, among others, all designed to provide unique, sustainable experiences.

The opening of Amba Yaalu Kandalama signals a new era of hospitality in Sri Lanka, where empowerment, sustainability, and a deep connection to nature come together to create a truly unforgettable experience. With its innovative approach and stunning location, the resort is set to make a lasting impact on the country's tourism landscape.



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Sri Lanka's tourism industry is poised for a new chapter, buoyed by international accolades and a government committed to prioritizing tourism as a key economic driver. The island nation is steadily regaining its place as a must-visit destination, blending cultural richness with unique experiences.

India continues to lead as Sri Lanka's top tourism-generating market, accounting for a significant share of visitor arrivals. Recognizing the importance of this market, Sri Lanka Tourism is gearing up for two major trade shows in Mumbai and Delhi in the coming weeks. These events aim to capture the imagination of the Indian traveler, showcasing the country's unmatched offerings while cementing ties with a vital source market.

However, the focus is shifting from sheer numbers to quality, with a strong emphasis on attracting high-value travelers. This strategic pivot underscores the industry's need for long-term sustainability, moving away from mass tourism to an approach that preserves Sri Lanka's natural and cultural assets.

This past month also witnessed two milestones that reflect the evolving landscape of Sri Lankan hospitality. Thema Collection made history with the opening of Sri Lanka's first all-female-run property in Kandalama – A'Amba Yaalu', a testament to the industry's commitment to empowerment and inclusivity. Meanwhile, Browns Leisure broke ground at Port City Colombo for the country's first Marina hotel development, signaling a bold step toward upscale, luxury-driven tourism.

As Sri Lanka Tourism charts its course forward, the balance between innovation and sustainability will be key. With the right partnerships and a shared vision, the industry stands ready to inspire the world, welcoming travelers to experience the magic of the island.



*Dinushka*  
Dinushka Chandrasena  
Editor

**DoubleDee**  
PUBLICATIONS

**Editor / Managing Director**  
Dinushka Chandrasena

**Directors**  
Firoze Munzeer  
Dinesh Chandrasena

**Head of Marketing**  
Anoj Tillekeratne

**Digital Marketing & Communication**  
Lakshini Wanigesinghe

**Lead Designer**  
Eshan Perera

**Digital/ Website Associate**  
Navodh Jayasundara

**Website Design**  
Antyra Hospitality

**Printing/ Publishing**  
Printage (Pvt) Ltd

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15A, Swarna Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka  
Phone / Fax: +94-115345346  
Mobile: +94-777756726,  
+94-777756762,  
E-mail: Dinushka@doubleddee.lk  
Anoj@doubleddee.lk  
Web: www.traveltalkasia.com

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## Port City Colombo Celebrates....

TTA BULLETIN

Furthermore, the development addresses an untapped market opportunity by catering to the growing number of high-net-worth individuals in neighbouring India, who represent an expanding segment for luxury maritime services.

"The groundbreaking of the Marina Development at Colombo Port City marks a significant milestone for Sri Lanka's maritime tourism industry," stated Harsha Amarasekera, Chairman of the Colombo Port City Economic Commission. "This project positions Sri Lanka to become a leading destination for luxury yachting in South Asia, attracting high-net-worth individuals and making a substantial contribution to the nation's economic growth. The Colombo Port City Economic Commission is

proud to support this project and eagerly anticipates witnessing its transformative impact on Sri Lanka's tourism and maritime sectors. We are confident that this development will significantly contribute to establishing Colombo Port City as a regional business hub."

As Sri Lanka targets 3 million tourists and USD 5 billion in revenue by 2025, the Marina Development at Port City Colombo is another significant step towards realising the vision of establishing Sri Lanka as the preferred destination for luxury tourism in South Asia. Beyond its tourism appeal, the project is expected to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs, attract foreign investment, and strengthen Sri Lanka's position on the global map.

## Antyra Solutions Celebrates a Decade of Digital Innovation and Success

TTA BULLETIN

Antyra Solutions, an integrated digital marketing agency with a presence in Sri Lanka, Singapore, and the USA, celebrates its 10th anniversary this January 2025. Founded by Niranka T. Perera and Rohan Jayaweera, Antyra has grown from a local startup into a regional powerhouse, serving as a testament to Sri Lanka's potential in the global digital economy.

From its inception, Antyra Solutions set out to offer a holistic, consultative approach to digital by seamlessly integrating creativity, technical expertise, and data-driven insights. Today, the company operates under three core service pillars: web and software, digital marketing, and creative services. This multidisciplinary approach has enabled Antyra to deliver impactful results for over 500 clients across diverse industries, helping brands navigate the rapidly evolving digital landscape with confidence.

Antyra specializes in the fields of travel and hospitality, finance, insurance, e-commerce, fashion, and education, servicing clients in 14 countries, including many of Sri Lanka's leading corporate entities. The company's portfolio includes a number of award-winning projects, with accolades such as Best in Class at the Web Awards, a Grand Winner Award at the NYX Marcom Awards, two Platinum Awards at the Vega Digital Awards, as well as SLT Zero One and SLIM DIGIS. Notably, Antyra's design work has been featured in multiple prestigious international publications including Communications Arts Magazine, the world's largest international trade journal for visual communication.

Reflecting on the company's journey, Co-Founder, Chairman, and CEO Niranka Perera said, "When we founded Antyra Solutions a decade ago, our goal was to build a company that could not only compete but lead in the regional digital landscape. Today, as we celebrate this



milestone, I am proud of how far we've come - thanks to our team's unwavering dedication and the trust our clients have placed in us. This journey is a testament to our commitment to innovation and excellence, and we're excited for the next chapter as we continue to deliver impactful solutions in more markets."

Antyra's dedication to excellence has been recognized on numerous occasions, with the agency being named a 2024 Google Premier Partner - a distinction that highlights its performance-driven approach and technical capabilities. From search engine optimization and social media marketing to comprehensive performance marketing strategies, Antyra continues to set benchmarks in the digital marketing industry.

Over the past decade, Antyra has not only grown its client portfolio but also contributed significantly to Sri Lanka's digital workforce. With over 200 employees having been part of the Antyra family since its founding, the company has nurtured talent, fostered innovation, and created opportunities for professionals to excel in their careers.

The journey from a local startup to a regional player is a story of resilience, creativity, and a relentless focus on delivering value. Antyra's ability to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing industry has been key to its success. As the company marks this significant milestone, it remains focused on the future, with plans to expand its global footprint and continue investing in cutting-edge solutions for its clients.

## FiturNext 2025 kicks off its four days dedicated to sustainable food management in tourism

TTA BULLETIN

FITURNEXT, FITUR's Sustainability Observatory dedicated to promoting good tourism practices, is launching its sixth edition, held in partnership with Aqualia, a benchmark brand in integrated water cycle management. Over the course of four days, from 22 to 25 January at the Madrid International Tourism Trade Fair organised by IFEMA MADRID, the Observatory will highlight the positive impact of tourism initiatives that contribute to more sustainable food management, promote zero surpluses and apply innovative technologies and circular systems.

One of the most important aspects of the inauguration will be the presentation of the report 'Towards sustainable food management through tourism', a document that includes the analysis, carried out by the Observatory throughout this edition, of projects and programmes in the private and

public sector that promote food sustainability. Francisco Rodríguez, Head of Tourism at Ideas for Change, the entity that developed the research, was in charge of explaining the keys to the report and the research, highlighting that 'replicability makes it easier for other actors to adapt something that already exists, to take advantage of the road already travelled and has a multiplying effect'.

The winning projects of this sixth edition are the protagonists, especially during the awards ceremony and the special mention to the finalist initiatives. The inauguration was attended by the Secretary of State for Tourism, Rosario Sánchez Grau, Adela Moreda, member of the FiturNext Advisory Board and Lucas Diaz, Aqualia's Director for Spain.

# 7

## PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS!

AITKEN SPENCE HOTELS HAS PROUDLY ACHIEVED A HISTORIC MILESTONE AT THIS YEAR'S SRI LANKA TOURISM AWARDS!



*Best Ayurvedic Hotels*  
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**TCK 6685 Fine Dining**  
**Heritage Tea Factory, Kandapola**



*Best Four-Star Resort*  
**Heritage Tea Factory, Kandapola**



*Best Five-Star Resort*  
**Heritage Kandalama**



*Best Sustainable Practices in Hotels*  
**Heritage Kandalama**



*Special Recognition Award - Outstanding Culinary Contribution*  
**Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe**



*Digital Tourism and Marketing - Best Traveler Focused Solutions - Hospitality*  
**Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings PLC**

## OTM 2025 is All Set to Bring Travel, Tourism, and Business Together

TTA BULLETIN

OTM, the leading travel trade show in India and Asia, is all set to return this January promising to be bigger and more impactful than ever! The show will take place from January 30 to February 1, 2025, at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai.

This year, OTM will host over 2,100 exhibitors and tourism boards from more than 60 countries and 30 Indian states and union territories. With over 40,000 qualified buyers from the travel industry, the grand event will offer travel brands unparalleled access to the fastest-growing travel market in the world—India. From leisure and luxury weddings to MICE, OTM connects global destinations with the Indian travel trade. The 3-day event will also welcome over 1,000 handpicked top buyers from India's Tier 1, 2, and 3 cities and feature new exhibitors alongside global destinations. Mumbai, which contributes to more than 60% of India's outbound travel and is the country's primary departure point, is the perfect city to host OTM.

In this edition, OTM will host esteemed VIPs from around the globe, including Hon'ble Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Shri Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, H.E. Mr. Haim Katz, Minister of Tourism, Israel; Mr. Kittipong Prapatpong, Deputy Governor for Digitalisation, Research, and Development, Thailand; Mr. Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Malaysia; Ms. Maia Omiadze, Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration; and many more distinguished guests.

Moreover, it will also attract top corporate buyers from across India, including leading travel managers, MICE planners, and corporate procurement heads from India's largest corporate houses, like Reliance Industries, Godrej Industries, Pidilite Industries, Raymond, and Tata Capital, among others.

As a platform where industry leaders, visionaries, and experts come together, the OTM Forum will address critical trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the global travel landscape. The Forum will kick off with a fireside chat between the Hon'ble Tourism Minister of India, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and Kamiya Jani of CurlyTales, recipient of the Best Travel Creator National Award in 2024. The WeddingSutra Engage on Day 2 will bring together top wedding planners to explore the latest trends and opportunities in destination weddings and luxury celebrations. Some notable speakers at the event include Amanpreet Singh, General Manager of India & Southeast Asia, Airbnb, Neel Ghose, Country Manager & GM, India Skyscanner, Santosh Kumar, Country Head of Indian Subcontinent & Indonesia,



Booking.com, Sanjay Pai, Vice President, Facilities, Corporate Travel, Hospitality & Director Aviation, Larsen & Toubro, Devendra Saraiya, Head, Travel & Procurement, Deloitte, and many more.

Expressing his views on the upcoming three-day event, Mr. Sanjiv Agarwal, Founder & CEO, Fairfest Media, Organisers of OTM, said 'India is emerging as the future growth engine for global tourism. This year, OTM will bring together participants from over 60 countries and every corner of India. Many, if not most, of these global destinations, exclusively participate in OTM and no other travel show in the region. With stronger than ever participation from Indian states and global destinations alike, OTM is truly the meeting place for India and Asia's travel industry.

Countries participating exclusively in OTM and no other major travel show in the region include Georgia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Cambodia, Cayman Islands, France, Korea, Maldives, Uganda, Tanzania, and Visit Sarajevo. Apart from these countries, the event will also have official participation from several popular destinations like Azerbaijan, Brussels, France, Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius, Moscow, Pattaya, Peru, Qatar, Sri Lanka, St. Petersburg, and Thailand, just to name a few.

OTM 2025 will be offering a diverse mix of exhibitors that includes leading hotels, airlines, national tourism organizations (NTOs), destination management companies, and travel tech providers. It is a one-stop platform to explore, network with tourist boards and destination representatives, and collaborate with industry leaders from every segment of the travel ecosystem.

OTM Mumbai is the leading travel show in Asia. Each year, OTM brings together India and Asia's travel community under one roof. Tourism Ministers, CEOs of travel brands, and businesses from over 60 countries and all Indian States attend OTM each year.

Fairfest Media Ltd., Incorporated in 1989, is the leading travel trade show in Asia and India. Each year, it brings together a global network of exhibitors, buyers, and travel industry professionals to connect, showcase innovations, and generate business opportunities. Fairfest Media also organises TTF-branded travel shows in 7 Indian cities, making it the largest travel trade show organiser in India. As the leading travel show organiser in the region, Fairfest continues to shape the future of travel in the world's fastest-growing market.

## Blue Lanka Tours Achieves Landmark of 2,500 TripAdvisor Reviews, Setting a Benchmark in Sri Lankan Tourism

TTA BULLETIN

Blue Lanka Tours has become the first Sri Lankan tour operator to achieve 2,500 reviews on TripAdvisor, maintaining an extraordinary record of 5-star ratings. This milestone reflects the company's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional and personalized travel experiences for visitors to Sri Lanka.

Despite the significant challenges faced by the country's tourism industry from 2019 to 2022, Blue Lanka Tours has remained resolute in its dedication to customer satisfaction. Founder Dinesh N. Perera attributes the company's success to a customer-centric philosophy that prioritizes creating unforgettable travel memories.

"It's a simple concept executed with passion and dedication by our team," shared Perera. "Our goal is for every traveler who books with us to enjoy an enriching journey and leave Sri Lanka with cherished memories. We focus on every detail to craft perfect itineraries, treating our clients as explorers seeking authentic, extraordinary experiences. We also aim to showcase the remarkable aspects of Sri Lanka—the landscapes, the culture, and most importantly, its people."

In addition to providing high-quality travel experiences, Blue Lanka Tours is deeply committed to social responsibility. Through initiatives such as Blooming Smiles and Island Sanctuary, the company actively supports education and wildlife conservation across Sri Lanka. The Island Sanctuary program focuses on animal welfare by collaborating with communities, organizations, and service providers to protect wildlife and improve animal well-being.

Blue Lanka Tours plays an active role in supporting wildlife corridors, elephant bypass electric fence projects, wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centers, habitat restoration, and anti-poaching initiatives. These efforts demonstrate the company's vision to contribute positively to Sri Lanka's natural and cultural heritage.

This achievement solidifies Blue Lanka Tours' position as a trailblazer in Sri Lanka's tourism industry, showcasing how a commitment to excellence and responsibility can inspire trust and recognition from travelers worldwide.

## ITB Berlin Convention 2025: Comprehensive programme with exciting innovations to guide a travel industry in transition

TTA BULLETIN

This year, the world's leading trade event for the tourism industry will once again present an extensive programme with renowned experts, top-class presentations and exciting debates. Under the motto "The Power of Transition lives here", participants will explore ideas and insights for a travel industry in transition from March 4 to 6.

For convention participants from around the world, the Berlin Exhibition Grounds will once again serve as an essential platform for knowledge transfer and exchange of experiences. More than 400 international experts and speakers will provide insights into current projects, analyse key trends, and discuss various future scenarios in over 200 sessions across 17 theme tracks. The programme, along with details on additional tracks, is now available online at the ITB Berlin 2025 Convention Programme.

To help navigate the extensive offerings, four stages will host the numerous sessions, which can be attended onsite or, for the first time, streamed live via the ITB Navigator. Later, they will also be available on ITB Berlin's YouTube channel. The ITB Navigator, as the central event platform, offers detailed information on the exhibitor list, convention and event programmes, and hall maps. Access to the ITB Berlin Convention is included with exhibitor,

trade visitor, and media accreditation tickets for ITB Berlin.

On the Orange Stage in Hall 7.1, speakers will explore developments in marketing and sales as well as the long-term sustainability of the industry. The WTCF (World Tourism Cities Federation) is Stage Sponsor of the Orange Stage. The Future Track, Marketing & Distribution Track, and Responsible Tourism Track offer valuable insights on topics like sustainability and climate impact assessments. Highlights include presentations by Mitra Sorrells (Senior Vice President Content, Phocuswright) and Zoritsa Urosevic (Executive Director, UN Tourism). Microsoft Advertising is Track Sponsor of the Future Track, Google is Track Sponsor of the Marketing & Distribution Track, and Studiosus is Session Sponsor of the Responsible Tourism Track.

Also in Hall 7.1, the Blue Stage provides a vital platform for tour operators, airlines, tourist boards, cruise companies, hoteliers, and other industry players. Tracks such as the Tour Operator & Travel Sales Track, Carrier & Cruise Track, Destination Track, and Hospitality Track deliver diverse perspectives and strategies. Among the featured speakers are Dimitrios Buhalis (Bournemouth University) and Vicki Miller (Visit Scotland), who will discuss the role of AI in destination marketing.



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## Yandex Ads Appoints Archipelago Digital as Authorized Partner for Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Yandex Ads, one of the world's leading technology companies, has announced the appointment of Archipelago Digital as its authorized partner for Yandex Direct in Sri Lanka. This strategic partnership marks a significant milestone in expanding digital advertising opportunities for Sri Lankan businesses in the global market.



Junfeng Wang



Rukmankan Sivaloganathan

Through this collaboration, Sri Lankan companies will gain direct access to Yandex Direct - a comprehensive suite of advertising solutions, enabling them to reach over 90 million users across Yandex Ads' diverse platforms. Archipelago Digital will serve as the official representative, providing local businesses with expert guidance, support, and strategic insights to optimize their advertising campaigns on the Yandex network.

"This partnership with Archipelago Digital represents our commitment to the Sri Lankan market and our recognition of its growing digital potential," said Junfeng Wang, Head of Partnerships, APAC at Yandex Ads. "We are confident that Archipelago Digital's extensive local market knowledge and digital expertise will help Sri Lankan businesses maximize their advertising success on our platform."

Rukmankan Sivaloganathan, CEO of Archipelago Digital, commented, "We are proud to be appointed as Yandex Ads' authorized partner in Sri Lanka. This

collaboration will open new avenues for Sri Lankan businesses to expand their reach and tap into new markets through Yandex Direct. Our team is ready to support local companies in leveraging these opportunities effectively."

The partnership will provide Sri Lankan businesses with:

- Direct access to the Yandex Direct advertising ecosystem
- Local support and expertise for campaign optimization
- Advanced targeting capabilities across multiple markets
- Comprehensive training and certification programs
- Dedicated account management services

Yandex Ads is a technology company that builds intelligent products and services powered by machine learning. Our products and services help millions of users better navigate the online and offline world. Since 1997, we have delivered world-class, locally relevant search and information services.

## MTS Globe Expands Horizons: Welcoming Sri Lanka Into Its Global Tourism Network

TTA BULLETIN

H.O.T. Tourism Sri Lanka has officially partnered with MTS Globe, the largest independently owned incoming travel company, with a portfolio of over 12,000 selected hotels across 38 countries and 117 destinations, serving more than 10.6 million customers annually. This partnership marks a significant step in enhancing Sri Lanka's tourism landscape, positioning the destination to attract a wider range of international travelers.

"This is a proud moment for MTS Globe as we add Sri Lanka to our destination portfolio," said Samir Tabbah, CEO of MTS Globe Middle East and Indian Ocean. "Our network has successfully driven significant growth in destinations like the UAE, Oman, Maldives, Qatar, and Mauritius. Leveraging the distribution power of MTS Globe and the expertise of our local partners, we are confident that Sri Lanka will thrive as a premier destination for international travelers."

Sri Lanka's inclusion in the global network of the MTS Globe Group will significantly enhance the visibility of local hotel inventory across global source markets, connecting it with a multitude of tour

operators from diverse source markets. This partnership will also introduce Sri Lankan hoteliers and service providers to advanced booking solutions and valuable market insights, empowering them to refine their strategies and achieve sustainable growth

For tour operators, adding Sri Lanka to their portfolio opens up a destination renowned for its diverse appeal—from lush tea plantations and ancient temples to pristine beaches and vibrant culture. The destination offers a unique opportunity to attract a wider range of travelers, from adventure seekers to families and luxury holidaymakers, enriching their offerings and increasing market competitiveness.

As the local partner for MTS Globe in Sri Lanka, Nalin Malwenna, Managing Director of H.O.T. Tourism Sri Lanka, brings invaluable expertise and regional insight to this partnership.

With the support of MTS Globe's established network and strategic leadership, Sri Lanka is set to benefit from increased international arrivals and robust growth throughout the tourism sector.

## ATM 2025 to address soaring growth within the aviation sector as connectivity takes centre stage

TTA BULLETIN

Several leaders from the international aviation sector are expected to participate in the 32nd edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), which will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from 28 April to 1 May 2025, discussing some of the most pressing topics in the industry.

Several sessions are slated to take place throughout the four-day event, covering a variety of trending topics, ranging from sustainable aviation and new technology to the return of corporate travel and the rise of airport entertainment, under the show theme, 'Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow's Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity'.

One particular topic expected to garner attention is the anticipated increase of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), which, according to the latest findings from the International Aviation Transport Association (IATA), has seen SAF production double in 2024 to 1 million tonnes, with production expected to top 2.1 million tonnes in 2025.

Regionally, Emirates and Etihad have significantly reduced CO2 emissions using SAF on routes including Singapore Changi Airport, Amsterdam, London Heathrow, Paris, Lyon, Oslo, and Japan.

New technology will also be addressed due to its increasing role in supporting airports and airlines to drive operational efficiencies and reduce costs. Artificial intelligence (AI), for example, supports aviation industry professionals in various ways, from streamlining the customer journey to tracking weather, optimising routes, and even undertaking predictive maintenance. It has become an integral tool for the aviation industry, analysing scenarios to determine potential disruptions and providing data-driven decisions that minimise risk.

Leading examples include London Heathrow Airport's pilot AI-assisted air traffic control system, the Japan Airlines AI-powered baggage management system, and Gatwick Airport's AI-powered smart-stand technology, developed to enhance how aircraft turnarounds are managed.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said: "At ATM, we recognise the critical importance of addressing the latest trends and innovations shaping the aviation industry. New technology and the increased use of sustainable fuels will be a game-changer for the sector, with far-reaching benefits for years to come."

The sector's growth is a topic anticipated to create substantial discussion on the show floor. In 2025, industry revenues will surpass US\$1 trillion for the first time,

according to IATA. In addition, traveller numbers are expected to hit 5.2 billion, up 6.7% compared to 2024, exceeding the five-billion mark for the first time, with the number of flights expected to reach 40 million.

Business travel will feature high on the agenda, particularly as part of ATM's new feature, IBTM@ATM. According to Flight Centre Corporate, business travel is set to increase in 2025, with 40% of businesses planning to increase travel from July to June, and 42% of corporates are forecast to spend more than in 2024.

Another trend for 2025, which has already become prominent in several airports in the Middle East, is the 'gate escape'. For modern travellers, particularly Gen Z and millennials, the airport is transitioning to a hub for entertainment, luxury and relaxation.

According to Booking.com's annual travel prediction research, 43% of Gen Z and millennials consider destinations based on their airport, opting for indulgent experiences, including sleep pods (37% Gen Z, 35% millennials) and spas (31% Gen Z, 29% millennials) to Michelin star restaurants (22% Gen Z, 24% millennials).

This year, ATM will welcome several new and returning exhibitors from the aviation sector, including Emirates, flydubai, flynas, flyadeal, Air Charter Service, and Mayfair Jests. In 2024, 4.5% of exhibitors were from the aviation sector, occupying 10% of the show's space, with significant growth expected in 2025.

Sessions already confirmed include the Global Stage's Connecting the Future of Travel: Aviation, Cruise & Rail, the next steps in enhancing tourism offerings. There, an expert panel will take a deep dive into how advancements in aviation, cruise, and rail enhance connectivity regionally and internationally by discussing sustainable developments, transformative projects, and the future of integrated networks.

"Through dedicated sessions, we are bringing together thought leaders, innovators, and industry stakeholders to explore how cutting-edge technologies and sustainable practices can redefine air travel. By fostering dialogue and collaboration, ATM continues to serve as a vital platform for advancing the future of aviation and global connectivity," added Curtis.

Held in conjunction with Dubai World Trade Centre, ATM 2025's strategic partners include Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Destination Partner; Emirates, Official Airline Partner; IHG Hotels & Resorts, Official Hotel Partner; and Al Rais Travel, Official DMC Partner.





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## Lanka Exhibitions (LECS) Organisers Jaffna International Trade Expo in January

TTA BULLETIN

The iconic Jaffna International Trade Fair (JITF) that has been held consistently in the Northern peninsula for the past 14 years hosting over 300 stalls and thereby strengthening a range of small and medium enterprises island-wide, will once again showcase its 15th edition at the Muttraweli grounds. Organized by Lanka Exhibition and Conference Services (LECS), a renowned exhibition organizer, this international trade event is to be held this year from 24th to 26th January, transforming the northern district into an arena of unparalleled opportunities for businesses,

products and services ranging from sustainable energy solutions, construction, consumer products, travel and tourism, food and beverage, packaging, information and communication technology, education, automotive, agriculture, apparel, hospitality, financial services, holistic wellness, and healthcare. The JITF is seen as one of the key brand awareness launchpads which assist new start-ups to obtain exposure and facilitate older companies to mature into more recognition

The platinum sponsor is Diesel & Motor Engineering (DIMO) while the gold sponsors are Adrian Solar Green, Nippon Cement, House of S-Lon while the silver partners include 4rever Skin Naturals, Ceylon Biscuits Limited (Munchee), Deen Brothers Imports Pvt. Ltd. (DBL), Evolution Auto, Ferentino, Maxies, Hayleys Solar, FINE, LH Consortium, Phoenix, Super PVC, Sun Match Company Pvt Ltd (Soorya), Ruhunu Foods, MAK Lubricants Sri Lanka, Rhino, Sola, Ellawala Horticulture Pvt. Ltd (TJC Mango), which is supporting the JITF with the Silver sponsorship. The official partners for the event include the Uthayan Publishers, Tilko City Hotel Jaffna, Capital Television, and Maha Mini Sound.

“The LECS, in association with the CCIY is exceptionally keen to launch its latest edition of the JITF this year as Sri Lanka heralds a new era of political leadership that champions equality and national unity,” Aasim Mukhtar, CEO of LECS stated. He emphasized that one of the aims of the JITF as a carefully curated trade celebration is that it attempts to bridge economic disparities across the provinces. With over 100,000 visitors anticipated, this edition promises to be one of the largest and most vibrant yet, he noted.

The Chief Operating Officer of LECS, Husnie Rauf tracing back the roots of the JITF narrated as follows: “This Jaffna-based event started in 2002 when the peace process between the government and the LTTE was ushered in, where we had 150 companies going in from Colombo. After this initial stage, we could not continue the event because of many constraints, and the Jaffna Trade Fair could re-commence only in 2010, a year after the complete cessation of the conflict. This event was re-themed as the Jaffna International Trade Fair because of the



renewed interest in Sri Lanka by the international community in terms of development and rebuilding the country as well as investment and re-introduced in 2010.”

“This trade fair played the role of an icebreaker bridging the North and the South at a time when feelings were still wounded soon after the end of the hostilities. Through this event, the companies from the South were able to garner the confidence to showcase their products in the North and expand their markets. It also gave the necessary exposure and boost for those in the North who wanted to develop their products and get the leveraging they needed internationally. We have had several success stories through this event. For example, there was a lady making Northern sweetmeats, and one of the leading hotels in Sri Lanka came and asked her to supply their hotel with her products. Similarly, there was a soft toy maker, and after just two years of participation, he got a collaboration with Canada. For the first ten years of this event, from 2010 to 2020, we have been working with the Jaffna Chamber of Commerce, offering free stalls for small and medium enterprises in Yalpanam. Today, looking back, we are happy that many of the small-scale business ventures are now high-scale in production and market reach. Thus, we hope the foundation for the next major contributions that the JITF will unfold will commence this year as the 2025 JITF unravels in Jaffna,” the LECS COO said.

We are pleased to announce the launch of a special CSR initiative in Jaffna, ‘JITF: A Plastic Neutral Event’, aimed at promoting a plastic and polyethylene-free environment. This initiative seeks to reduce plastic waste by fostering a cleaner, more sustainable future. The project will be implemented during the JITF 2025 exhibition with the theme, “Recycle Right, Make an Impact!”.

As part of this initiative, we will establish waste management stations and offer engaging, gamified activities to encourage responsible waste disposal and raise awareness. In addition to collecting waste generated at the event, we invite the public to bring their plastic waste to the exhibition site during the event days, contributing to a greener, more sustainable environment. All collected waste will be properly disposed of for recycling and upcycling purposes. Through this project, we aim to create a meaningful impact and promote a culture of environmental responsibility in our community. Please visit [www.jitf.lk](http://www.jitf.lk) for more information.

## SATTE 2025 makes waves with exclusive Curtain Raiser Golf Tournament

TTA BULLETIN

SATTE 2025, Southeast Asia’s largest and most influential travel and tourism exhibition, marked its grand prelude with an exclusive Curtain Raiser: Golf Tournament at the prestigious Qutab Golf Club in New Delhi. This one-of-a-kind event combined friendly competition with a unique networking opportunity, building the buzz for the highly anticipated event, SATTE 2025, scheduled from February 19 to 21 at Yashobhoomi, India’s International Convention & Expo Centre, New Delhi.

Celebrating 32 years of empowering the travel business, SATTE has been a launchpad for innovative ideas and niche tourism segments. With a spotlight on golf tourism, a rapidly growing segment with immense potential, the tournament brought together 75+ golfers along with over 150 stakeholders from diverse industries and sectors such as diplomacy, tourism boards, airlines, and ministries.

The event provided a vibrant platform for fostering connections, exchanging insights, and driving collaboration within and beyond the travel industry. Following the spirited tournament, participants gathered for an informal networking evening, encouraging deeper conversations, idea sharing, and potential partnerships.

Congratulating SATTE team, Suman Billa, IAS, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, “The SATTE Golf Tournament is a commendable initiative that exemplifies the perfect blend of networking, collaboration, and innovation with the charm of a sporty setting within the travel and tourism industry. Events like these go beyond the usual, fostering camaraderie and offering a dynamic platform for industry leaders to exchange ideas while collectively envisioning the future of tourism. I extend my heartfelt wishes for the tournament’s resounding success and applaud SATTE for consistently inspiring excellence in the industry.”

Expressing his delight at the success of the event, Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali, Director - New Delhi office, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, shared, “We consider SATTE to be one of the most important travel fairs, especially for India and the northern region. For SATTE 2025, we will bring 60 of our partners from Malaysia to promote the country as a prime destination

across India. I think SATTE is one of the best and a must-attend event. Last year, Malaysia welcomed over 1 million Indian tourists, thanks to the efforts of travel agents in India and our airline partners. Don’t forget to visit us at SATTE!

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, shared his views stating, “Year after year, we’ve seen SATTE grow and improve continuously. I expect SATTE 2025 to be even better at its new venue. SATTE has been instrumental in helping our members, both in the outbound and inbound sectors, secure business and organize meetings. I’m hopeful that these interactions will further drive business growth. I wish the team all the very best.”

Rajan Sehgal, Chairman, Public Relations Council & Member Managing Committee, Travel Agents Association of India, expressed, “I have been associated with SATTE since so many years! It’s the biggest show in India and Asia, and this is the face of tourism, when this show happens, the entire world looks upto this show. Year by year, this show is growing. The best thing about SATTE that it is a two-way show, both inbound and outbound traveler, as this industry is a two-way industry. The event brought together people from ministries, diplomatic missions, corporate world, airlines and hotels and enabled exchange plenty of ideas.

Delighted with the success, Pallavi Mehra, Senior Group Director & Publisher of Travel Trends Today, Informa Markets India, remarked, “The Curtain Raiser Golf Tournament reflects our commitment to innovation and to creating dynamic opportunities for stakeholders to connect. It exemplifies our mission to promote emerging tourism segments like golf tourism and explore avenues, while celebrating the spirit of collaboration that defines SATTE. We eagerly anticipate another remarkable and successful edition of SATTE next month.”

As SATTE 2025 gears up for its showcase in February, the success of the Curtain Raiser underscores its role as a trendsetter in the global travel and tourism industry. By blending innovation with exclusivity, SATTE continues to set benchmarks, inspiring new ideas and collaborations that drive the industry forward.



# BENTOTA Thaala



## Bawa's Rhythm on the Golden Mile

At Thaala Bentota, life flows to its own rhythm. Designed by the celebrated Geoffrey Bawa, the resort brings his iconic concept of Tropical Modernism to life along Bentota's famed Golden Mile. This coastal haven effortlessly blends architectural elegance, heartfelt hospitality, and the soul-stirring allure of island life, framed by breathtaking sunsets.

Discover spaces where nature and design converge seamlessly. Whether in the exclusive Bawa Villa, the Thaala Suite, or the spacious Deluxe Rooms with sweeping ocean views, every moment is thoughtfully curated to enrich your stay. Embrace the serenity of yoga to the soothing rhythm of the waves, the exhilaration of watersports, and the delight of meals crafted by expert chefs using the freshest ingredients, inspired by Sri Lanka's vibrant flavours.

Unwind in this masterpiece, where every moment echoes with rhythm and life.



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## Tourism Malaysia Showcases the Wonders of Malaysia at the UK's Premier Travel Show: Destinations 2025

TTA BULLETIN

Tourism Malaysia is thrilled to announce its participation in Destinations: The Holiday & Travel Show 2025, the UK's largest and longest-running travel event, held in association with The Times and The Sunday Times. This premier event will take place at Manchester Central from 16th – 19th January 2025, and at Olympia London from 30th January – 2nd February 2025.

Destinations is commemorating its 30th anniversary in 2025, marking three vibrant decades of inspiring travellers to explore the world. With over 600 travel brands taking part, visitors will have the unique opportunity to connect with hundreds of experts who can tailor-make and book the perfect getaway.

With 2025 marking the lead-up to Visit Malaysia Year 2026, Tourism Malaysia is seizing the opportunity at Destinations 2025 to highlight the country's unique appeal and inspire travellers to uncover its hidden gems. Showcasing the incredible diversity of Malaysia's sights, cultures, landscapes, and wildlife, the exhibition aims to cement Malaysia's place on every traveller's bucket list.

From the serene, turtle-rich beaches of the East Coast to the vibrant food scenes and historic charm of cities like Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia offers something for everyone.

Visitors to Destinations 2025 can connect with the knowledgeable Tourism Malaysia team, ready to guide them through the myriad attractions and help plan a truly unforgettable adventure.

### Engaging Experiences and Exciting Giveaways

Visitors to the Tourism Malaysia stand will have the chance to learn about the country's diverse attractions, from lush rainforests and pristine beaches to vibrant cities and the rich cultural heritage. To further captivate attendees, Tourism Malaysia will be hosting interactive experiences, including Henna art at the London show on Saturday, 1st February, offering a glimpse into Malaysia's cultural traditions.

Tourism Malaysia will be joined by key partners, including Malaysia Airlines, YTL Hotels, Borneo Adventures, and Odyssey World Tour Operator, who will offer expert insights into travel options, diverse accommodations, and tailored tours to create a Malaysian adventure perfectly suited to every traveller's preferences.

Adding an extra touch of excitement to the events in Manchester and London, Tourism Malaysia is thrilled to announce an exclusive giveaway that promises an extraor-

dinary Malaysian getaway. Visitors to the Tourism Malaysia stand at both destinations will have the chance to enter and win an incredible holiday to Malaysia, courtesy of Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airlines, and YTL Hotels, including:

Two Malaysia Airlines return Economy Class tickets from London Heathrow to Terengganu. Experience true Malaysian Hospitality onboard with a spacious cabin, delicious meals, the latest in-flight entertainment and free Wi-Fi. Enjoy a 5-night stay at Tanjong Jara Resort and a 2-night stay in a Deluxe Room at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, including breakfast.

Tourism Malaysia, officially known as the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, operates as an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia. Tasked with the comprehensive promotion of Malaysia as a prime tourism destination, Tourism Malaysia has established itself as a prominent entity within the global tourism landscape. Its efforts have borne fruit, with Malaysia attracting a significant influx of tourists, registering an impressive 26.1 million arrivals in 2019 alone. This places Malaysia firmly among the ranks of the world's leading tourism destinations.

## A Taste of Fortune and Flavour: Chinese New Year Festival at Long Feng, Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo

The Chinese New Year festival at Long Feng, Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, began with resounding success on 20th January, offering an unforgettable evening of cultural splendour and culinary mastery. Partnering with the Embassy of China in Sri Lanka, the event welcomed the esteemed Mr Zhu Yanwei, Deputy Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Charge d'Affaires, as the Chief Guest, adding an air of prestige to the celebrations.

Guests were captivated by the traditional lion dance, a mesmerising performance steeped in history and meaning. Originating over a thousand years ago, the lion dance is a quintessential Chinese tradition that symbolises strength, good fortune, and the warding off of evil spirits. Its vibrant energy and rhythmic drumming

marked a jubilant start to the festivities.

Adding to the cultural immersion, the evening featured a graceful Chinese tea ceremony that showcased the art and mindfulness of this ancient practice, alongside dynamic martial arts performances that demonstrated strength and discipline.

At the heart of the festival was a feast of flavours that delighted the senses. The culinary team, led by an acclaimed guest chef and the talented chefs of Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, presented an array of authentic Chinese delicacies. Signature dishes included the bold and aromatic Spicy Sichuan Crab, freshly steamed Dim Sum bursting with flavour, the crisp richness of Peking

Duck, and the bold aromas of Sichuan cuisine. Each dish was crafted with care and precision, offering a symphony of tastes that left guests in awe.

The opening day of the festival was a spectacular celebration of Chinese culture and cuisine, setting a high standard for the days to come. "For those unable to attend the enchanting festivities on January 20th, there is no need for concern. The festival will continue January 21st and 22nd, presenting additional opportunities to partake in this extraordinary celebration. Join us at Long Feng, Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, as we welcome the Year of the Dragon with a celebration that combines fortune, flavour, and festivity."







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## Gonzalo Aguilar Takes Office as Chief Executive Officer at Minor Hotels Europe & Americas

TTA BULLETIN

Gonzalo Aguilar has assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer at Minor Hotels Europe & Americas, effective 1 January 2025. Aguilar joined Minor Hotels in October 2024 and succeeds former CEO Ramón Aragonés, who retired at the end of 2024 and continues to serve as a member of the Board of Directors and Non-Executive Vice President.



Gonzalo Aguilar,

‘asset right’ strategy which drives sustainable growth through an optimised balance of ownership, management and franchise models.

Aguilar expressed his enthusiasm for the role, stating, “Joining this forward-thinking

hospitality group is an opportunity I embrace with great enthusiasm. I look forward to collaborating with our talented teams to build on the company’s excellent performance. With our globally recognised brand portfolio and ambitious expansion plans, we are well-positioned to achieve continued success in the most profitable segments of the market.”

Aguilar’s appointment will be formalised at the Ordinary General Shareholders’ Meeting, scheduled before June 30, 2025. During his onboarding, he worked closely with Aragonés to ensure a smooth leadership transition.

Minor Hotels is a global hospitality group operating over 560 hotels, resorts and residences in 58 countries, pursuing its vision of crafting a more passionate and interconnected world.

With over 30 years of hospitality experience—including his most recent senior leadership role as Chief Operating Officer for Europe at Marriott International—Aguilar brings a proven track record in driving growth and profitability to the Minor Hotels team. His leadership was instrumental in integrating the AC Hotels brand into Marriott and achieving significant corporate milestones throughout a career, which has seen him rapidly rise through the ranks from his start as a restaurant manager in Colorado.

At Minor Hotels Europe & Americas, Aguilar will focus on strengthening international integration of Minor’s brand portfolio and accelerating hotel openings in key markets, particularly in the luxury and resort segments, under the company’s

## Mabrian Launches AILA: The First Gen AI-Based Assistant Designed to Enhance Tourism Management Efficiency

TTA BULLETIN

Mabrian, the global travel intelligence platform, announces the launch of AILA (acronym for Artificial Intelligence Live Assistant), a Generative AI-based virtual analyst designed to optimise tourism planning and management. AILA, the first Gen AI tool in travel & tourism designed with a business-to-business perspective, is able to respond, in real time, to questions and requests (prompts) related to tourism trends, using as source Mabrian’s world-class, exhaustive, verified, and updated travel intelligence database.

AILA has been deployed in the seven types of data modules available in Mabrian platform (Air Capacity, Traveller’s Behaviour and Sentiment, Accommodation, Spending, Telecommunications, Mobile Data, and Sustainability), ensuring that the resulting outcome, responses, and recommendations are relevant, up-to-date, and contextualised for travel and tourism industry.

One of AILA’s main features is its ability to customise and frame requests and prompts based on the specific needs of each user, which improves users’ experience by refining the analysis and recommendations, ultimately allowing destinations and tourism companies to address their challenges with an informed and strategic perspective.

AILA is designed to structure, analyse, interpret, and propose potential courses of action in real time, delivering precise and personalized insights. Interaction with AILA occurs through natural language, in any language, making it accessible and easy to use for professionals from diverse fields, regardless of their experience or expertise in data analysis or AI.

The initial version of AILA functions as an assistant, simplifying data interpretation and analysis. However, Mabrian is already developing successive versions to evolve the tool into an advanced agent capable of analysing and interrelating multiple data layers, making predictions, prescribing measures, and even executing specific action plans with varying levels of automation. This advancement will mark a significant turning point in the strategic management capabilities of destinations and tourism companies worldwide.

With the launch of AILA, Mabrian—part of The Data Appeal Company-Almawave Group—reaffirms its 10 years leadership in innovation and the development of advanced travel intelligence solutions tailored to meet the needs of tourist destinations, enabling them to operate more efficiently, sustainably, and resiliently in an increasingly dynamic and demanding environment.

# A Glittering Start to 2025 at Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort

Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort welcomed the new year in grand style at the picturesque Poolside Lawn

Guests were treated to a sumptuous buffet

spread, featuring a mix of international and local delicacies, followed by high-energy performances by live DJs, captivating dance acts, and a breathtaking fireworks display at midnight.

Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort continues to be a prime destination for vibrant events, offering world-class hospitality and idyllic settings for unforgettable celebrations.



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For centuries, the epic tale of the Ramayana has held a special place in the hearts of people across India. Now, SriLankan Airlines invites you to walk through the sacred pages of this timeless story with our exclusive Ramayana Trail package, designed especially for Indian travelers. This experience will immerse you in the places where Lord Rama, Sita, and Hanuman's adventures unfolded, set against the lush backdrop of Sri Lanka. The Ramayana Trail takes you to 20 significant locations in Sri Lanka, each deeply woven into the Ramayana story. Visit Seetha Amman Temple, where Sita is said to have prayed during her captivity, and stand in awe at Rumassala Hill, where a piece of the Himalayas is believed to have landed, dropped by Hanuman. Every stop is a connection to your spiritual heritage, bringing the stories of the Ramayana alive.

SriLankan Airlines, Chief Executive Officer, Richard Nuttall said, "We are pleased to make a grand comeback in the India market with this exclusive range of Ramayana Trail excursions which is guaranteed to inspire travellers to explore destination Sri Lanka like never before. India is our single largest market in terms of number of cities connected and flight frequencies. We are certain that this endeavour will further strengthen our future expansion strategies whilst portraying Sri Lanka as a destination that is closely connected to their devotion and culture.

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau, Chairman, Buddhika Hewawasam said, "India has been the prime source market for Sri Lanka's inbound tourism. Travellers from India hold a very special place in our hearts, as they have always been the first to arrive in our shores signalling the end of difficult times. This trend has been visible in the context of all unprecedented challenges that we faced recently as a country. We are proud to collaborate with the National Carrier, SriLankan Airlines in its latest strategic marketing drive, 'Ramayana by SriLankan,' which will continue to inspire discerning travellers from India to explore the charms of old ages blending seamlessly with modern day travel." Experience the power of faith as you walk in the footsteps of Lord Rama and Sita. From the cave where Ravana hid Sita to the lake where Lord Rama defeated Ravana, these ancient sites provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to connect deeply with your roots. The highlight, of course, is the legendary bridge built by Lord Rama's Vanara army to reach Lanka, a symbol of resilience and devotion.



"At SriLankan Airlines, we ensure that your journey is as comfortable as it is spiritual. With stays at the finest 4- and 5-star hotels, along with the services of expert guides who narrate the rich history and mythology of the Ramayana, you'll travel in utmost comfort. Our direct flights from major cities in India make this pilgrimage not only spiritually fulfilling but convenient and stress-free " added Mr Nuttall

The Ramayana Trail is more than a tour; it's an opportunity for self-discovery. As you reflect on the values embodied by Lord Rama—honor, loyalty, and perseverance—you'll gain new insights into your own life. The connections you forge with your fellow travelers, inspired by shared faith, will create memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

No visit to Sri Lanka would be complete without embracing its vibrant culture. From vibrant festivals and colorful temples to mouth-watering local dishes like hoppers and kottu, you'll experience Sri Lanka's warm hospitality, echoing the famous Indian "Atithi Devo Bhava" spirit. Sri Lanka's close-knit relationship with India makes it the ideal destination for this spiritual quest. With its exclusive packages, competitive pricing, and easy booking options, embarking on the Ramayana Trail has never been simpler. SriLankan Airlines offers convenient flight schedules from cities across India, making it an accessible and hassle-free journey. Whether you're traveling with family or seeking a solo spiritual retreat, we have a package to suit your needs.



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# HOTELS

## Citrus Waskaduwa – A Luxurious Getaway

TTA BULLETIN

Nestled along Sri Lanka's western coastline, Citrus Waskaduwa offers travelers an unforgettable blend of luxury, relaxation, and cultural discovery.

With 150 elegantly designed rooms, including 140 Superior Rooms, 7 Suites, an Executive Suite, and a Presidential Suite, this beachside resort ensures that every guest experiences world-class comfort. Each room boasts breathtaking sea views from the rooms and private balconies, making it a perfect retreat for couples, families, and solo travelers alike. The resort is located just 37 Km from the commercial capital of Colombo and 78Km from the Bandaranaike International Airport.

Indian travelers seeking destination weddings or grand celebrations will find Citrus Waskaduwa an exceptional choice. The resort features three sophisticated indoor venues—the Mandarin Shore Grand Ballroom, the Blue Orchard Ballroom, and the SkyLime Beach Lounge—each accommodating both intimate and large gatherings with the option for both in-door and outdoor. With its expansive garden and 8.2 acres of

beachfront, the resort is also ideal for outdoor celebrations, offering picturesque settings for unforgettable moments.

To cater to honeymooners, Citrus Waskaduwa offers exclusive packages, combining luxurious accommodations with personalized services to create cherished memories. Guests can unwind at the Asian-inspired spa, where skilled Balinese therapists provide rejuvenating treatments blending Eastern and Western techniques.

Adding to its appeal, the resort has partnered with Pearl Bay, a premier waterpark and karting track located just 16 kilometers away. This collaboration provides guests with thrilling adventures, including water rides and high-speed karting, ensuring a mix of relaxation and excitement during their stay.

"Indian travelers are at the heart of our hospitality vision. From culinary delights to curated experiences, we ensure every guest feels at home while exploring the beauty of Sri Lanka" said Chandana Talwatte – CEO Citrus Leisure.

## Cinnamon Grand Colombo Welcomes Renowned Chef Jay Taylor for an Exclusive Culinary Collaboration

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Grand Colombo is thrilled to announce a special partnership with Chef Jay Taylor, the celebrated Australian chef known for his innovative culinary techniques and dedication to fresh, seasonal ingredients. Beginning January 21, Chef Taylor will bring his signature style to Sri Lanka, working alongside the culinary team at Cinnamon Grand Colombo to introduce a unique dining experience that showcases the rich flavors of Australia in the heart of Colombo.



bold flavors.

Following the exhibition, Chef Taylor will elevate the dining experience further at the iconic London Grill with a premium Australian Meat and Wine Promotion starting February 1. This special event will

showcase the finest cuts of Australian meat, paired with exceptional Australian wines. The carefully crafted menu will highlight the richness of Australian cuisine, offering guests a dynamic and unforgettable culinary journey.

In addition to the exquisite food, diners will have the rare opportunity to engage directly with Chef Taylor in an interactive setting. He will share insights into the inspiration behind his dishes, his approach to Australian cuisine, and his expertise in pairing meats with wines to create the perfect balance of flavors.

Chef Jay Taylor's partnership with Cinnamon Grand Colombo promises to be a must-attend experience for food enthusiasts and lovers of exceptional dining. Whether enjoying the curated menu at Cheers or savoring the premium meat and wine offerings at London Grill, this exclusive collaboration is set to leave an indelible mark on Colombo's culinary scene

With over two decades of experience across prestigious kitchens in Australia, Canada, Vietnam, and beyond, Chef Taylor has earned a global reputation for his ability to transform seasonal produce into bold and innovative creations. His visit to Cinnamon Grand Colombo marks an exciting opportunity for local and international guests to experience the vibrancy of Australian cuisine.

The collaboration kicks off with a three-day culinary exhibition at Cheers from January 24 to 26, coinciding with Australia Day Week celebrations. Guests will be treated to an exclusive selection of Australian-inspired dishes curated by Chef Taylor, reflecting his passion for fresh, sustainable ingredients and his commitment to balancing simplicity with

## Kandy Myst by Cinnamon Opens for Pre-Bookings

TTA BULLETIN

Kandy Myst by Cinnamon, the latest addition to Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts' portfolio, is now accepting advance bookings. As the property with the largest room inventory in Kandy, this eagerly anticipated hotel is set to open soon, redefining hospitality in Sri Lanka's hill capital.



Strategically located on Kandy Katugastota Road, Kandy Myst by Cinnamon offers urban convenience with proximity to Kandy's iconic attractions making it an ideal choice for both leisure and business travellers. Boasting 215 contemporary rooms—the highest room count in the city—the property features modern amenities tailored to both leisure and business travellers.

Guests can look forward to a variety of dining experiences, including Grains Dining, an all-day buffet restaurant; Kosmos Skybar, a chic rooftop bar adjacent to the infinity pool; and Terra

Lounge, a lounge and coffee shop ideal for casual meetups or unwinding with signature drinks alongside amenities such as an infinity heated pool, a well-equipped gym, and a spacious car park.

With the official opening set to take place soon, guests are invited to secure their reservations and be among the first to experience the unique blend of modern luxury and authentic cultural immersion at Kandy Myst by Cinnamon. Set in the heart of Kandy, the resort is poised to attract both local and international travellers, offering an elevated experience that seamlessly combines contemporary comfort with rich cultural heritage.

## Celebrate Love with Hilton's Exclusive Wedding Campaign Across Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton Hotels in Sri Lanka is delighted to announce the launch of its unique wedding campaign, 'Enchanting Beginnings,' designed to make dream weddings a reality. Running throughout January 2025, this campaign offers couples an exceptional opportunity to celebrate their love with premium wedding packages and exclusive benefits across Hilton properties in Colombo and Weerawila.



Hilton Colombo invites couples to celebrate their love with an exclusive wedding package available throughout January 2025. At the heart of the celebration is the Grand Marquee, a spacious and elegant venue designed to accommodate up to 300 guests. Perfect for both lunch and dinner receptions, the Grand Marquee offers packages starting from Rs. 12,000 nett per person for lunch and Rs. 13,000 nett per person for dinner (terms and conditions apply). Fully air-conditioned for maximum comfort, this stunning venue provides breathtaking views of the iconic Beira Lake and the Lotus Tower, creating an enchanting backdrop for your special day.

don't have to end. Couples and their guests can seamlessly transition to SunsetBlu, Colombo's first day and night club, located just a few steps from the Grand Marquee. This vibrant venue provides the perfect atmosphere to relax and revel in style, creating memories that last well beyond the wedding celebration.

At Hilton Colombo Residences, weddings are elevated to a new level of elegance, thoughtfully designed to reflect intimacy, sophistication, and heartfelt celebration. For couples planning a memorable event, the venue provides an exclusive wedding package starting at just Rs. 8,200 nett per person for a minimum of 150 guests, offering exceptional value for an unforgettable experience (terms and conditions apply).

Hilton Colombo offers couples the convenience of on-site access to the renowned Ramani Fernando Salon, one of Sri Lanka's most recognized salon chains. With expert stylists at hand, couples can prepare for their big day with professional care and expertise, ensuring they look and feel their best. The property also features picturesque locations perfect for wedding photography, allowing every magical moment to be beautifully captured against stunning natural and architectural backdrops.

The venue combines modern technology with a touch of timeless charm. State-of-the-art audio facilities ensure every word and every note resonates perfectly. Drop-down multimedia screens, plasma displays, smartboards, and kiosks allow cherished memories to take center stage, while a customizable lighting system creates the perfect ambiance with a palette of colors tailored to the couple's vision. For Islamic weddings, the ballroom offers flexible partitioning options, ensuring inclusivity and comfort for every guest.

As the day turns to night, the festivities



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SRI LANKA TOURISM AWARDS 2024

# HOTELS

## Jetwing Saman Villas recognized as "Best Boutique Hotel" at Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Following a six-year hiatus, the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards returned, celebrating industry excellence under the theme "Towards an Inclusive Tourism Economy." Among the esteemed winners, Jetwing Saman Villas, a trailblazer in Sri Lankan luxury boutique hospitality, was awarded the prestigious "Best Boutique Hotel."

Organized by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), the awards aimed to elevate service standards, promote best practices, and foster a culture of excellence within the tourism sector. The SLTDA emphasized the importance of recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of individuals and organizations that contribute to the sustainable growth and development of the industry. This year, over 300 applicants competed for 76 prestigious awards, making the selection process highly competitive; with a rigorous evaluation process conducted by six expert judging panels, each specializing in a specific area of the tourism industry.

Perched dramatically on a cliff top overlooking two pristine golden sand beaches on either side, Jetwing Saman Villas, Sri Lanka's first luxury boutique resort, has captivated discerning travelers since its inception nearly three decades ago in 1995. A visionary endeavor by hotelier Daya Ratnayake, the resort pioneered a new era of refined hospitality in the country. Meticulous refurbishments throughout the years have ensured a seamless blend of contemporary amenities and enduring luxury. Each suite now boasts state-of-the-art technology, while thoughtful aesthetic enhancements elevate the guest experience to new heights. Guests can indulge in the privacy of their suites, each featuring a free-standing marble bathtub, and many boasting inviting plunge pools and sun-drenched decks for the ultimate coastal escape. Furthermore, the exceptional service at Jetwing Saman Villas is constantly enhanced and redefined to meet and exceed the expectations of the modern traveller, with a 24-hour personalized butler service that offers a bespoke experience to all its guests.

At Jetwing Saman Villas, guests can indulge in a culinary journey featuring exquisite local and international dishes artfully crafted and presented amidst a backdrop of artisanal creations and handcrafted lighting. Diverse dining options are available including the relaxed beachfront Verandah and celebratory feasts at the Pool Pavilion, offering breathtaking ocean views, menus featuring fresh seafood and international favorites, and an overall dining experience that is truly exceptional. However, the Rock Dining platform elevates the guest experience to new heights. Available exclusively at Jetwing Saman Villas, this unique experience allows guests to savour their meals seated at the edge of the ocean.

As part of the Jetwing Hotels portfolio, Jetwing Saman Villas adheres to a comprehensive sustainability strategy. The resort's open architectural layout maximizes the remarkable cliff-top, sea-side location, while a 40kW solar PV system contributes to the hotel's electricity requirements, while an effluent treatment plant treats wastewater. The resort also minimizes plastic consumption by using glass water bottles. Dedicated to uplifting local communities and the economy, the resort employs young men and women from economically challenged backgrounds through the Jetwing Youth Development Project (JYDP) and prioritises local sourcing across its operations. This commitment to excellence is reflected in the prestigious "Best Boutique Hotel" award at the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024.

With a legacy spanning over half a century in the tourism industry, Jetwing Hotels has established itself as a pioneer in curating unique experiences and offering legendary Sri Lankan hospitality. As a family-owned brand, Jetwing continues to be a leading advocate for sustainability and responsible tourism, with ongoing initiatives focused on community upliftment, environment conservation, and resource efficiency. The brand's diverse portfolio includes a range of luxury hotels and villas, each offering a unique perspective on Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.



## Galle Face Hotel Triumphs as the Only Hotel to Win Three Awards at Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Galle Face Hotel is proud to announce its outstanding success at the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024, securing multiple accolades that highlight its enduring legacy, culinary excellence, and commitment to world-class hospitality.

The hotel was recognized as the Best Heritage Hotel. South Asia's leading Grande Dame, the Galle Face Hotel, is testimony to both Sri Lanka's colonial past and its independent present. Celebrated within the hospitality world, it blends historical splendour with crafted modernity to form a new model for heritage properties. International guests are immersed in the Galle Face Hotel's rich traditions and compelling stories, while Colombo society perceive the hotel as the most prestigious, desirable destination in the city for memorable dining and special events.

Furthering this recognition, Chef Rukmal Samarasekera, the hotel's Director of Culinary, was honoured with the Best Chef of the Year Award for his exceptional creativity and dedication in elevating the culinary excellence of the Galle Face Hotel and showcasing Sri Lanka's gastronomic talent on the global stage.

Additionally, the hotel's signature fine dining venue, 1864 Limited Edition, was awarded the Best Contemporary Fine Dining restaurant, acknowledging its innovative approach to blending Sri Lankan artistry with gastronomic finesse.

These accolades are a reflection of the visionary leadership of Group Chairman of the Galle Face Hotel Management Company, Sanjeev Gardiner, whose unwavering commitment to preserving the hotel's rich heritage while ensuring its continued relevance in the modern hospitality landscape has been a cornerstone of its success. Under his leadership, Galle Face Hotel has remained an enduring symbol of Sri Lanka's history and culture, while continually setting benchmarks in the industry. Furthermore, his support has been pivotal in making Sri Lanka a sought-after unique destination for experience-seeking travellers through culture, art, culinary, and fashion.

Rohan Fernandopulle, General Manager of Galle Face Hotel, expressed his pride in the recognition: "These awards are a

celebration of our commitment to excellence and our passion for showcasing the best of Sri Lanka's heritage and hospitality. From the unique architecture to our culinary innovations, we strive to offer guests experiences that are truly unforgettable. This success would not have been possible without the dedication of our exceptional team."

Galle Face Hotel has also secured 1st place in the "Rest of Asia" category at the Condé Nast Traveller Reader's Choice Awards 2024: Best Hotels in Asia. This prestigious accolade is a reflection of the hotel's enduring excellence, as voted by discerning travellers who recognize the exceptional experiences Galle Face offers. As one of the oldest hotels east of the Suez, Galle Face Hotel has stood as a beacon of luxury and hospitality for 160 years. Since its founding in 1864, the hotel has woven itself into the fabric of Sri Lanka's rich history, serving royalty, celebrities, and global icons while offering guests a unique blend of heritage and modernity. Today, it remains an iconic landmark that upholds its proud tradition of world-class service, sophistication, and elegance.

Adding to these accolades, Condé Nast Traveller has named the Travellers' Bar at Galle Face Hotel as one of the best bars in Colombo. This recognition highlights the bar's exceptional atmosphere, impeccable service, and its role as a sophisticated haven where guests can unwind while enjoying expertly crafted cocktails and an unparalleled view of the Indian Ocean. The Travellers' Bar continues to be a favourite destination for both locals and international visitors seeking a unique and memorable experience.

The hotel extends its heartfelt gratitude to its loyal guests and dedicated staff, whose continued support has been integral to these achievements. As the hotel celebrates its 160th anniversary, this recognition cements its legacy as a global leader in luxury hospitality. Galle Face Hotel remains steadfast in its mission to deliver exceptional hospitality while celebrating Sri Lanka's cultural and culinary heritage. It is committed to offering an unparalleled experience that reflects the best of Sri Lankan culture and hospitality, inviting guests from all over the world to be part of its timeless journey.





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HOTELS & RESORTS

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# HOTELS

## Indian Food Festival at Excel World: A Sensorial Journey Through Flavours and Culture

TTA BULLETIN

Excel World proudly hosted its inaugural Indian Food Festival from 11th to 14th January 2025, marking the beginning of a delightful culinary celebration. The event was graced by esteemed Chief Guest, Prof. (Dr.) Ankuran Dutta, Director of the Indian Cultural Institute under the Indian High Commission, along with Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels and Resorts. The event featured vibrant ethnic performances, including Bharatanatyam, Kathak and a captivating traditional Tamil drumming performance. Guests had the opportunity to engage in immersive interactive activities, including mouth-watering cooking demonstrations and artful henna stalls, further enhancing the entire aesthetic experience.

The four-day festival featured Chef Chindhu Thankachan, a talented Banquet Chef and Chef Sanjib Jana, a seasoned Senior Chef de Partie specialising in North Indian Cuisine from the renowned O by Tamara, Trivandrum, India. With years of expertise and a strong foundation in regional Indian cooking, both chefs brought an unmatched level of expertise to the celebrations. Together, they introduced a delicious array



of traditional Indian dishes, showcasing the diverse culinary heritage of India. Guests enjoyed live cooking stations, regional cuisines, delectable desserts and traditional Indian beverages—all prepared by chefs who had travelled from India to present their skills.

For the first time at Excel World, a fiesta such as this brought together the best of authentic Indian cuisine, vibrant culture and captivating entertainment hosted in a family-friendly space while offering an exceptional dining journey for guests of all ages. The event additionally featured a Thai Pongal celebration, adding a lively ethnic element to the festivities making it the perfect destination for guests seeking a memorable and immersive experience.

## Minor Hotels On Track to Surpass 850 Properties by 2027

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels is stepping into 2025 on a strong growth trajectory, underpinned by a robust pipeline of almost 300 new hotels slated to open over the next three years. This expansion puts the international hotel owner and operator on track to pass a milestone of 850 properties by the end of 2027, positioning it among the world's largest hospitality groups.

With more than 560 properties and 81,000 keys already in operation worldwide, Minor's latest figures show a three-year pipeline of over 285 new hotels and almost 47,000 keys, underscoring the group's ambitious global strategy and revealing a focus on global market diversification. While more than 50% of Minor's existing portfolio is currently concentrated in Europe, the addition of more than 100 properties in Asia, more than 60 in the Middle East & Africa, and 40 in Australia and New Zealand will lead to a more balanced global portfolio distribution.

Minor Hotels is also looking to expand its presence in several priority markets, especially in North America and North Asia. Markets such as Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey have also been identified as priority destinations for entry, while efforts continue to accelerate momentum in the priority market of India following the recent opening of Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur Hotel.

Luxury and upscale remains a driving force in Minor Hotels' expansion, with one-third of the three-year pipeline categorised in the Luxury segment, encompassing the Anantara, Tivoli, and Elewana Collection brands, and a further third in the Premium segment across NH Collection, Avani and

now. The group is also investing heavily in uplifting many of its luxury properties, including significant renovation works at the original Anantara property in Hua Hin, Thailand.

Minor Hotels has also been undertaking an in-depth optimisation of its brand architecture as part of a new-look masterbrand strategy, with the outcomes set to roll out in 2025. These include the upcoming planned launch of two new hotel brands, broadening the group's scope and creating fresh opportunities for owners seeking distinctive brand options—particularly for conversion properties.

Conversions and brownfield developments make up a significant portion of the pipeline at 38%, with the remainder consisting of greenfield projects.

Minor is also focusing on wellbeing as a cross-brand strategic priority, highlighted by the recent opening of destinations such as Layan Life by Anantara in Phuket. It will continue to emphasise hotel projects that take an integrative approach to wellbeing that combines medical technology and local cultural insight to deliver maximum benefits to guests.



## Graze Kitchen Presents "Timeless Taste of India" – An Exquisite Indian Culinary Showcase

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton Colombo's renowned Graze Kitchen invites guests to indulge in India's vibrant and diverse flavors at its exclusive Timeless Taste of India Buffet, available until 19 January 2025. Presented by celebrated Indian culinary experts Chef Chandan Das and Chef Umesh Rathour, this buffet promises an unforgettable journey through the culinary landscapes of the subcontinent.



Guests can savor a meticulously curated menu featuring signature dishes like Rogan Josh, Butter Chicken, and a variety of fragrant Biryani's, alongside popular street food favorites such as Pani Puri, Dahi Bada, and Kathi Rolls. Vegetarian delicacies, including Palak Paneer, Dal Makhani, and Chana Masala, complement the lineup with freshly baked Naan, Roti, and Paratha prepared live at the tandoor station. To round off the feast, guests can indulge in traditional Indian desserts such as Gulab Jamun, Rasmalai, and Jalebi, paired with

refreshing beverages like Masala Chai and Mango Lassi.

The buffet is available daily alongside the international buffet from 7:00 PM to 11:00 PM, with prices set at Rs. 8,888 nett per person from Sunday to Thursday and Rs. 9,388 nett per person on Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call +94 11 2492 492 or visit [shop.hiltoncolombo1.com](http://shop.hiltoncolombo1.com) and avail a 10% discount on your purchase.

## ONYX Hospitality Group Expands the Amari Brand with Exciting New Openings Across Sri Lanka, Laos, and Thailand

TTA BULLETIN

ONYX Hospitality Group, Thailand's leading hospitality management company, is delighted to announce the opening of its latest property and unveil upcoming additions to its Amari portfolio for 2025. The new properties in Sri Lanka, Laos, and Thailand exemplify Amari's dedication to enriching guest experiences, offering distinctive design, exceptional service, and a deep connection to local culture and stories.

Known for its vibrant warmth and contemporary style inspired by Thai roots, the Amari brand continues to redefine luxury by blending modern elegance with authentic cultural charm.

Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka – Now Open – A Gateway to Sri Lanka's diverse culture and stunning landscapes

Amari Colombo has proudly opened its doors in the vibrant heart of Sri Lanka's capital, offering a perfect fusion of modern comfort and the rich heritage of traditional Sri Lanka.

With 167 spacious rooms, the property caters to both leisure and business travellers, serving as a gateway to Sri Lanka's vibrant culture, beautiful landscapes, and hidden gems.

Key highlights of Amari Colombo include a stunning rooftop pool that offers panoramic views of the vibrant cityscape, dynamic dining options such as Ahāra, which features sustainable seafood prepared with innovative flair, and Prego, the celebrated Italian restaurant making its debut in Sri Lanka. The hotel also features premium lounges and bars like The Chancellor,

known for its exquisite mixology, and Club Pahana, an exclusive executive lounge delivering exceptional culinary and beverage experiences.

Amari Colombo is ideally located for those eager to explore the cultural richness of Sri Lanka's capital. Positioned near the stunning Gangaramaya Temple and vibrant Victoria Park, guests can easily access some of Colombo's most iconic landmarks. This prime location perfectly complements the warm, inviting Amari hospitality, making it an ideal base for those looking to immerse themselves in the city's dynamic atmosphere whilst creating unforgettable moments.

Amari Vientiane, set along the serene banks of the Mekong River, is poised to become a standout destination for travellers seeking luxury and cultural immersion.

The hotel features 248 meticulously designed rooms and suites, blending modern Lao and Thai aesthetics to create a sophisticated and inviting retreat. Each space offers breathtaking views, whether of the tranquil Mekong or the dynamic cityscape, setting the stage for relaxation and exploration.

Conveniently located just 4.8 kilometres from Wattay International Airport, Amari Vientiane ensures seamless access for leisure and business travellers alike. Guests can delight in an array of world-class amenities, including a rooftop restaurant, the signature Breeze Spa, and the highest executive club lounge in the capital offering stunning panoramic views.

## Amba Yaalu Kandalama: Sri Lanka's First Women-Led Hotel Redefines Hospitality

Thema Collection has once again raised the bar in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry with the opening of Amba Yaalu Kandalama, a groundbreaking resort nestled within a serene mango plantation on the banks of Kandalama Lake. This innovative property, the first hotel in Sri Lanka to be entirely operated and managed by women, represents a bold step forward in addressing

gender disparities within the industry while offering an unparalleled guest experience.

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Sleeping Soldier Mountain, Amba Yaalu Kandalama is inspired by the beloved Sri Lankan novel Amba Yaluwo (Mango Friends) and the golden age of Sri Lankan cinema. Its

design blends cultural heritage with modern luxury, creating a tranquil retreat that harmonizes with its natural surroundings. With a palette of greens and blues reflecting the surrounding landscape, the resort's architecture establishes a seamless connection to nature, offering a serene escape for travelers.



# HOTELS

## Jetwing Hotels Unveils Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa: An all-suite boutique villa in Rambukkana, Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Nestled in the picturesque town of Rambukkana, Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa stands as a testament to Sri Lanka's rich heritage and hospitality. Originally built in the 1870s, this all-suite boutique villa, once a grand residential mansion, has been meticulously restored to preserve its architectural splendor while offering modern comforts.

The term "walauwa" translates to "large house" and historically referred to the residences of the local aristocracy. Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa embodies this legacy, with its grand entrance, elegant furniture, intricate woodwork, and exquisite art that echoes the artistry of a bygone era. The villa features four grand suites and two additional suites, each adorned with traditional Sri Lankan craftsmanship and contemporary amenities.

The suites boast four-poster beds and luxurious ensuite bathrooms, with the Grand Suites offering spacious living areas that epitomize regal living. A dedicated personal butler ensures that every need is met, providing a seamless experience of comfort and care.

Dining at Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa is a culinary journey that celebrates both local and international flavors. The open-style dining room provides a delightful setting for gourmet meals crafted from the freshest ingredients. Whether dining in the elegant dining room or enjoying a private meal in your suite, each moment is designed to be extraordinary.

Beyond the luxurious confines of Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa, Rambukkana and its surroundings offer a wealth of off-the-beaten-track activities. The region is home to numerous hidden gems, including lesser-known hikes, temples, and cultural sites. Visitors can embark on scenic hikes through lush landscapes, discovering tranquil spots and breathtaking views that



are often overlooked. The area is dotted with ancient temples and historical landmarks, each with its own unique story and architectural beauty. For those seeking a deeper cultural experience, the local villages provide an opportunity to engage with traditional Sri Lankan life. From exploring artisanal crafts to participating in local festivals, there are countless ways to immerse yourself in the rich cultural tapestry of the region.

After exploring the cultural wonders of the region, guests can unwind by the inviting pool, surrounded by the soothing sounds of nature. The villa's lush surroundings offer a serene escape, allowing guests to bask in moments of pure bliss.

Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa invites you to immerse yourself in regal luxury and explore the hidden treasures of Rambukkana, where every detail is thoughtfully crafted to ensure an experience that is unique and unforgettable.



## Climate Friendly Travel; Jetwing Hotels Leading the Way

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Hotels hosted an insightful panel discussion on climate-friendly travel at their city hotel, Jetwing Colombo Seven. Moderated by Sashika Kaluwahewa, Manager of Sustainability at Jetwing Hotels, the panel featured distinguished guests, including Mr. Buddhika Hewawasam, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB); Mr. Harsha Wickramasinghe, Deputy General Director of the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA); Mr. Sampath Jayawardena, Senior Director of Climate Change and Sustainability Services at Ernst & Young; and Mr. Hiran Cooray, Chairman of Jetwing Symphony PLC and The Lighthouse Hotel PLC.

This illustrious gathering brought together the public and private sectors to explore the future of sustainable and responsible tourism in Sri Lanka; driven by the escalating demand for eco-conscious travel experiences. The conversation was enriched by insightful questions from a diverse audience comprising public sector officials, media representatives, academics, travel industry partners, and representatives from development agencies.

Hewawasam advocated for a collaborative approach, emphasising the critical need for all stakeholders – from hoteliers and travel agents to suppliers and local communities – to work in unison. He stressed the importance of resource sharing and knowledge exchange to foster a truly integrated and sustainable tourism ecosystem. The Chairman of SLTDA and SLTPB alluded to a comprehensive marketing strategy designed to showcase Sri Lanka's diverse offerings, effectively positioning the nation as a premier travel destination.

Wickramasinghe outlined a vision for Sri Lanka to achieve carbon neutrality in the near future, contingent upon strong public-private sector collaboration. He highlighted existing and forthcoming regulations, alongside available climate financing mechanisms to support industry transition.

Jayawardena underscored the urgency for businesses to abandon traditional, unsustainable practices, warning of the dire consequences of inaction. He emphasised the evolving regulatory landscape, particularly in key markets like the European Union, and stressed the imperative for Sri Lankan businesses to embrace climate action to maintain relevance and competitiveness.

Veteran hotelier, Cooray, championed the positioning of Sri Lanka as a global leader in sustainable travel, with a unique focus on luxury and experiential travel. He

highlighted the tourism industry's pivotal role in driving sustainable development while showcasing the nation's rich cultural and natural heritage. He also underscored the importance of Destination Management Companies (DMCs) in promoting "slow travel" and encouraging exploration of lesser-known destinations within the island. Amidst growing global uncertainty regarding climate commitments, Cooray stressed the opportunity for Sri Lanka to emerge as a beacon of climate action.

The event celebrated several key milestones in Jetwing Hotels' sustainability journey, including the recent investment to expand their solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity by 1.6 megawatts (MW) across their hotels in 2024. Since introducing its first 20-kilowatt (kW) solar PV system in 2010, Jetwing Hotels has steadily grown its renewable energy footprint to 925 kW across its properties and corporate office. The recent investment boosted the company's solar PV capacity to 2.6 MW, tripling its solar energy contribution to 24% of total electricity consumption. This significant achievement brings Jetwing Hotels closer to its goal of reducing its carbon footprint and aligning with Sri Lanka's ambitious renewable energy targets. Jetwing Hotels' renewable energy strategy extends beyond solar power, incorporating biomass boilers, innovative steam-powered vapor absorption chillers, solar thermal systems, and biogas digesters into its operations which has enabled the company to generate 66% of its energy demand from renewable sources.

Jetwing Hotels' recent solar PV expansion has garnered international acclaim, receiving accolades from both the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and the International Centre for Responsible Travel (ICRT) for their climate action initiative. The global achievement from ICRT follows regional recognition within the Indian Subcontinent, further solidifying Jetwing's position as a leader in sustainable tourism. These accolades not only enhance the brand's reputation but also elevate Sri Lankan tourism and the nation's image on the global stage.

With a legacy spanning over half a century in the tourism industry, Jetwing Hotels has established itself as a pioneer in curating unique experiences and offering legendary Sri Lankan hospitality. As a family-owned brand, Jetwing continues to be a leading advocate for sustainability and responsible tourism, with ongoing initiatives focused on community upliftment, environment conservation, and resource efficiency. The brand's diverse portfolio includes a range of luxury hotels and villas, each offering a unique perspective on Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.







Voyzant (Pvt) Ltd was established in Sri Lanka in 2023 and its legacy from Voyzant Inc., Canada. As Canada's largest, fastest-growing wholesale travel provider established in 2014, Voyzant has since expanded operations into the United States, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, UK and Latin America.



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## Antyra Solutions Celebrates a Decade of Digital Innovation and Success

Antyra Solutions, recently celebrated a decade of Digital Innovation and success with long-service recognition awards and an evening of appreciation for trade partners at the Cinnamon Grand in Colombo

Founded by Niranka T. Perera and Rohan Jayaweera, Antyra has grown from a local startup into a regional powerhouse, serving as a testament to Sri Lanka's potential in the global digital economy.





**Browns**

HOTELS & RESORTS

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Set along Sri Lanka's stunning southern coastline, Occidental Eden Beruwala offers a luxurious beach escape for 2025. With its tranquil beaches, clear azure waters, and exceptional service, the resort is the perfect destination for relaxation and indulgence. Guests can unwind in spacious, elegantly designed rooms and treat themselves to rejuvenating spa treatments, all the while enjoying views of the beautiful Indian Ocean.

The resort features a refreshing pool, ideal for lounging and leisure, complemented by world-class dining and bespoke experiences. Whether you are exploring the local culture, soaking in the natural beauty, or simply enjoying the comfort and luxury of the resort, Occidental Eden Beruwala provides a refined and unforgettable coastal retreat.



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# HOTELS

## Blue Orbit by Citrus - Dining with a View

TTA BULLETIN

Located at the top of the iconic Colombo Lotus Tower, Blue Orbit by Citrus stands out as Sri Lanka's tallest and only revolving restaurant, offering a 360-degree panoramic view of the cityscape and beyond. Whether you're a local diner seeking an elevated culinary experience or an international traveler exploring Colombo, Blue Orbit is the perfect venue to indulge in diverse flavours and stunning vistas.

The restaurant's extensive buffet features over 300 dishes spanning global cuisines, including Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indian, Sri Lankan, and Western. Signature dishes such as Beijing Peking Duck Pancakes, Butter Chicken Masala, and Dim Sum Corner are complemented by unique offerings like the Make Your Own Pasta and Pizza Station and Chocolate Kottu Station for dessert enthusiasts. The bar serves a range of signature cocktails, creating an ideal pairing for any meal.



Blue Orbit is not just a dining destination; it's a versatile venue for special occasions. With a seating capacity of 225 and ample parking, the restaurant can be reserved for private celebrations, corporate gatherings, or business networking events. Guests can enjoy a sophisticated atmosphere paired with exceptional service, making it a standout experience for both locals and tourists.

As Blue Orbit celebrates its one-year anniversary, the management of Blue Orbit shared, "Our vision is to create a dining experience that transcends borders, blending Sri Lankan warmth with global flavours to cater to every guest who walks through our doors."

## Minor Hotels Expands China Portfolio with Anantara Xiling Snow Mountain Chengdu Resort

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a global hospitality group that owns and operates hotels, resorts and residences in 57 countries, has entered into an agreement with Sichuan Dexinhousheng Enterprise Management Co., Ltd to develop Anantara Xiling Snow Mountain Chengdu Resort. Slated to debut in October 2025, Anantara's first property in Sichuan province will provide access to a host of nature-based experiences in the heart of Western Sichuan's Golden Tourist Route.

Located in Dayi County, an hour's drive from Chengdu city, the 111-key luxury resort will leverage the unique national and cultural assets of the National 5A Tourist Attraction-designated area, the highest distinction awarded by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Surrounded by pristine nature, guests can enjoy world-class skiing at Xiling Snow Mountain and the therapeutic benefits of the ancient Huashuiwan Hot Springs. Only twenty minutes from the resort lies the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, a popular destination for both local and international travellers.

Led by the global hospitality design firm Cheng Chung Design (CCD), the interiors of Anantara Xiling Snow Mountain Chengdu Resort will frame the area's spectacular panorama, letting the scenic outdoors in. Guest rooms and suites, ranging from 100 to 500 square metres, will provide access to piped hot spring water, complementing the resort's expansive leisure facilities such as a serene swimming pool, an Anantara Spa, wellness centre, and an entertainment centre.

After an invigorating day on the slopes or relaxation at the hot springs, holidaymakers can explore an array of culinary

offerings, including a Chinese restaurant with eight private dining rooms, an all-day dining venue and a specialty restaurant. Meanwhile, delegates in town for events will have 800 square metres of sophisticated banquet and meeting space at their disposal.

"We are honoured to collaborate with Sichuan Dexinhousheng Enterprise Management to bring the first Anantara to Sichuan, a destination where innovation and traditional charms coexist harmoniously," said Eddy Tiftik, Vice President of Operations and Development for Greater China at Minor Hotels and a board member of Funyard Minor Hotels China, a strategic partnership established in 2021 to bring Minor Hotels to China. "Anantara guests expect a blend of local heritage and modern luxury wherever they are in the world, making this prestigious project the perfect fit. Together, we look forward to bringing new opportunities for sustainable tourism development in the region."

"Joining hands with Minor Hotels will inject new vigour into China's regional tourism and bring more possibilities to Sichuan's high-end tourism market," said Zhou Jinguang, Chairman of Sichuan Dexinhousheng Enterprise Management Co., Ltd. "Chengdu is one of the country's natural and cultural gems, and Anantara's expertise will help us showcase the region's beauty in a way that celebrates local culture, respects the environment and immerses guests in unforgettable experiences."

Anantara Xiling Snow Mountain Chengdu Resort is the third resort to launch in China under the Anantara Hotels & Resorts brand after Anantara Guiyang Resort in 2017 and Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort in 2013.

## Aitken Spence Hotels Triumphs at Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024 with seven prestigious wins: Highest number of awards

TTA BULLETIN

Aitken Spence Hotels grabbed seven prestigious awards at the recently held Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024 organized by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). The ceremony celebrated the remarkable accomplishments of organizations and individuals who have shown exceptional dedication to elevating the tourism experience. Aitken Spence Hotels triumphed with seven accolades, securing the highest number of awards. This impressive achievement contributed to a total of ten awards for Aitken Spence companies, making it the top award-winning company.



Notable achievements were, Best Five-Star Resort for Heritage Kandalama, Best Sustainability Practices in Hotels for Heritage Kandalama, Best Four-Star Resort for Heritage Tea Factory, Best Themed Cuisine Restaurant for TCK 6685 at Heritage Tea Factory, Best Ayurvedic Hotel for Heritage Ayurveda, Best Traveler-Focused Solutions - Hospitality for the Summer Campaign of Aitken Spence Hotels, and Outstanding Culinary Contribution for Chef Dimuthu Kumarasinghe.

Sharing her views on the accolades, Stasshani Jayawardena, Joint Deputy Chairperson and Joint Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings PLC, stated, "These awards are a testament to our commitment to shaping the tourism landscape in Sri Lanka. Our resorts are designed to showcase the country's natural beauty, heritage, and culture while maintaining global standards in hospitali-

ty. This recognition reflects the dedication of our teams, who have consistently contributed to the development of tourism by creating exceptional experiences for travelers while fostering sustainable practices and offering the best of our paradise island."

Adding his thoughts, Susith Jayawickrama, Joint Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotels, said, "These achievements underscore our unwavering focus on sustainability and guest satisfaction. Each of our properties represents a blend of local charm and international excellence, making a significant impact on Sri Lanka's tourism industry. Winning these awards highlights the collective effort of our teams to set new benchmarks in the hospitality sector and reaffirm our leadership in the industry".

Aitken Spence Hotels oversees a diverse collection of 18 hotels and resorts across Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Oman, and India, through its varied collection of brands - Heritage Hotels and Resorts, Adaaran Resorts, and Turyaa. Heritage Hotels & Resorts, the flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, is known for its portfolio of Bawa-designed hotels in Sri Lanka, adding a touch of architectural distinction to its rich offerings.

## Ceylon Curry Club - A Culinary Tribute to Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Located in the historic Dutch Hospital precinct in Colombo, Ceylon Curry Club celebrates Sri Lanka's rich culinary heritage while adding a contemporary twist

Ceylon Curry Club gained international recognition when it catered to one of the largest Indian celebrity pre-wedding celebrations in Jamnagar, India, in March 2024. Following this success, the team was invited to cater for another function for the same celebration the next day. The restaurant further showcased its expertise at a grand Sangeet ceremony in Mumbai, serving over 3,000 guests. These milestones highlight its reputation as a trusted ambassador of Sri Lankan cuisine on a global stage.

The thoughtfully curated menu is divided into sections like Tasty Titbits (Bites), Appetite Arousers (Appetizers), Punchy

Mains (Mains), Authentic Ceylon Curry, A Taste of Tradition and Final Flourish (Desserts). Signature dishes include Negombo Lagoon Crab Cart, Pot Lamprais, and Mutton Kottu, each crafted to tantalize the taste buds. The restaurant also offers unique Ceylonese cocktails, such as the Arrack Mojito and Karapincha, adding a spirited touch to any meal.

Ceylon Curry Club's versatility extends to catering services for events across Sri Lanka. The restaurant can be booked for private gatherings, accommodating up to 130 guests in its charming ambiance.

The management of Ceylon Curry Club noted, "We strive to provide a dining experience that is both authentic and innovative, ensuring every meal is a memorable celebration of Sri Lanka's culinary heritage."



## IndiGo solidifies presence in Sri Lanka: Becomes the largest foreign carrier out of the country

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, India's preferred airline, proudly stands as the largest foreign carrier out of Sri Lanka. IndiGo currently operates 54 weekly flights to 2 cities in Sri Lanka - Colombo and Jaffna from 4 cities in India - Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. These direct flights between India and Sri Lanka are integral to IndiGo's long-term growth strategy, underlining its commitment to expanding its global presence.



this increased connectivity facilitates easier access to Sri Lanka, a popular destination for Indian tourists. This could potentially boost tourism, fostering cultural exchange and mutual understanding. On the other hand, Sri Lanka will gain economically, with Indian tourists contributing significantly to its tourism revenue. Sri Lanka saw a surge in tourism with 200,000 Indian visitors in early 2024, providing a substantial boost to the local economy.

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. For culinary adventure lovers, Colombo's diverse food scene offers a tempting array of flavours, from spicy curries to fresh seafood.

Jaffna, a city located in the northern province of Sri Lanka, is a destination that boasts a rich history and cultural significance. Its vibrant Tamil heritage is reflected in its traditions, festivals, and historical landmarks, showcasing the resilience and diversity of its people. Visitors can explore iconic sites such as the Jaffna Fort, which serves as an architectural testament to the region's colonial past, and the Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil, a revered Hindu temple that holds both religious and cultural importance.

Mr. Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales at IndiGo, said, "As the leading international carrier operating from Sri Lanka, with connections to four Indian cities, we are proud to mark this milestone, which underscores our commitment to strengthening India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations. By enhancing air connectivity, we aim to stimulate tourism and foster economic growth. Our direct flights provide increased travel options and enhanced flexibility and convenience for our customers. We remain dedicated to delivering punctual, cost-effective, and seamless travel experiences across our extensive network."

The Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, said, "I warmly congratulate IndiGo on becoming the largest foreign carrier out of Sri Lanka, a remarkable milestone that reflects its commitment to enhancing connectivity and strengthening ties between our nations. IndiGo's increased frequency, including its operations to Jaffna, highlights its dedication to the development of the Northern Province, fostering economic growth, tourism, and cultural exchange. I also commend Acorn Aviation, IndiGo's GSA partner in Sri Lanka, for its over 30 years of active contribution to promoting tourism and aviation in the Sri Lankan market, playing a vital role in driving progress in these industries."

The enhancement of connectivity between India and Sri Lanka is set to yield significant benefits for both nations. For India,

## Hainan Airlines selects Sabre's fares optimization technology to maximize revenue from international sales

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider powering the global travel industry, today announced a new long-term agreement with Hainan Airlines. The carrier, which is one of the largest in China, will use Sabre's Fares Manager and Contract Manager to efficiently manage and optimize international fares, helping to ensure competitiveness in the global market.



As a prominent Chinese airline, which has been awarded the SKYTRAX 5-Star Airline for 13 consecutive years since 2011, Hainan Airlines is expanding its international footprint. Sabre's advanced technology

will play a pivotal role in supporting these growth plans by enhancing the airline's ability to monitor and adjust fares dynamically to maximize revenue opportunities.

"As we resume routes and launch new ones, having the right fare structure across our global network is crucial to our growth strategy," said Zhu Li, General Manager of the International Department, Hainan Airlines Marketing Committee. "We're pleased to expand our partnership with Sabre, whose advanced technology solutions are supporting our growth strategy and helping us to effectively manage and optimize our fares."

## Qatar Airways Group Embarks on Annual Safety and Security Campaign

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways Group today launched its annual safety and security awareness event which aims to reinforce the culture of safety across all of its business operations.

Under the theme 'It Begins With You and Continues With Me', the event was launched earlier today at The Plaza Doha, by Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer.

Hosted in collaboration with multiple partners from across Qatar, including the Ministry of Interior, Mowasalat (Karwa) and Hamad Medical Corporation, the event is supported by a number of Qatar Airways Group divisions, subsidiaries and companies, including Qatar Aviation Services, Qatar Aircraft Catering Company, Qatar Duty Free, Discover Qatar, Hamad International Airport, and Oryx International School.

During his opening address, Engr. Al-Meer expressed his gratitude to Qatar Airways Group employees and the participating organisations.

"Collaboration remains the most important approach to advancing sustainable safety and security. Today's partnership approach underscores our country's shared vision and dedication to achieving a common goal of offering a safe and secure air transport network," he said.

The event features exhibition booths that will be open daily between 11am and 3pm

on 12 January, and 8am and 2pm on 13 and 14 January. The event offers engaging activities including staff quizzes, live demonstrations, games as well as team contests, competitions, and recognition awards.



Qatar Airways Group Chief Risk Officer, Mr. Ashish Jain, said: "When it comes to safety and security at Qatar Airways Group, we continually explore new and innovative ways to deliver and meet objectives. I am proud of the collaboration that has taken place between our divisions, subsidiaries and companies, and our external partners to produce an exceptionally successful event for all Qatar Airways Group employees."

Among the exhibition booths, the Ministry of Interior's display highlights the work of its various sections, including the General Directorate of Civil Defence, General Directorate of Drug Enforcement and General Directorate of Traffic while Karwa Academy, a Mowasalat entity, showcases safe driving initiatives highlighting traffic safety. Hamad Medical Corporation presents its highly successful Kulluna Healthy Heart campaign.

Qatar Airways, the Skytrax 2024 World's Best Airline winner, flies to more than 170 destinations from its multi-award-winning home, Hamad International Airport.

## Emirates boosts Madagascar flights to meet robust travel demand

TTA BULLETIN

Following Emirates' successful launch to Madagascar in September 2024, the airline will introduce additional flights to the island nation, boosting its schedule from four to six-weekly services, starting 2 April 2025. The move reinforces the airline's commitment to support Madagascar's tourism ambitions to accommodate more leisure visitors and promote the island destination to global audiences.

The boost in operations, in response to strong demand for its passenger services between the capital city and Dubai, was announced at a press conference held by Madagascar's Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Tourism, and Emirates in Antananarivo today.

Since flights commenced last year, Emirates has witnessed tremendous demand for its passenger services, both inbound and outbound, between Antananarivo and Dubai. With the current four weekly flights operating at near full capacity, the significant uplift to the number of seats offered on the route will support Madagascar's efforts to increase visitor arrivals into the country, while also providing more choice and convenience for travellers to plan trips to and from the popular Indian Ocean destination.

Announcing the expansion of Emirates' services to the island at the press conference, Essa Sulaiman Ahmad, Emirates' Senior Vice President of Commercial Operations for West Asia and Indian Ocean said: "We are pleased to boost our services to Madagascar by offering two additional flights per week in line with soaring demand for travel since the start of operations. Our growing flight schedule to the island means better connectivity, more choice and convenient options for travellers. Enhancing services will also strengthen the economic ties between Madagascar and the UAE, by supporting more inbound and outbound leisure and business travel to the island and bolstering trade lanes with additional cargo capacity. As tourism to Madagascar flourishes, local businesses thrive, generating a ripple effect that benefits the local communities. We would like to thank the authorities, the Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Tourism for their support, and we look forward to strengthening our connections and supporting the nation's development as it looks towards the future."

To meet seasonal demand, Emirates recently increased its services for a temporary period, from four to five weekly flights and the new frequency represents a significant boost to its operations and capacity on the route.

## Hahnair to join Visa Cash App RB Formula 1 Team

TTA BULLETIN

Visa Cash App RB is pleased to announce that, as from next year, it will enjoy a multiyear agreement with Hahnair, a leading executive charter airline, that joins the team as its Official Private Aviation Partner.



With another 24 Grands Prix calendar on the way in 2025, all of it squeezed into just nine months, time saved travelling across continents is an important component of a team's state of readiness to race. With a commitment to quality and attention to detail, Hahnair will play a critical role in optimising the team's logistics throughout the season.

Hahnair is renowned for its tailored charter flights that cater to the unique needs of its passengers, running a modern fleet, with the very latest technology ensuring maximum energy efficiency. As from 2025 it will use SAF (Sustainable Aviation Fuel) to further reduce its environmental footprint, aligning with Formula 1's own investment in SAF as part of the sport's commitment to reach Net Zero by 2030.

"We are excited to partner with Hahnair as we navigate through this extensive racing

calendar," said Laurent Mekies, Team Principal of VCARB. "Their specialised services will greatly support our logistical capabilities, ensuring that our team operates at peak efficiency throughout the season."

Peter Bayer, CEO of VCARB further adds "The partnership will enable the Team to efficiently manage travel logistics, not only between races but also addressing the challenges posed by the distance between our aero engineers based in the UK and our factory in Italy."

"As we embark on this partnership with the VCARB Team, we look forward to providing exceptional travel solutions that meet their unique logistical demands," said Daniel Rudas, General Manager & COO at Hahnair. "We will ensure that the Team can focus on their core business while we handle their challenging travel needs."

## Air India launches AI-driven eZ Booking for faster reservations

TTA BULLETIN

Air India, India's leading global airline, has rolled out an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven feature eZ Booking whereby customers can complete their reservation on its website in fewer steps than currently available by just texting or talking to the AI Agent their detailed travel itinerary.

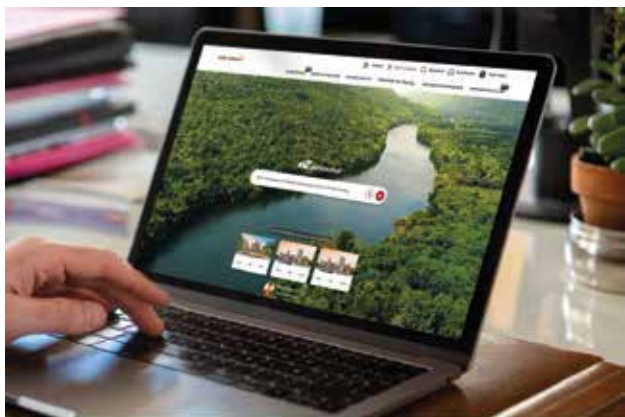
Currently available exclusively for members of Maharaja Club, Air India's loyalty programme, the innovation helps customers book their ticket on the Air India website, airindia.com, by eliminating a number of commands and without having to navigate multiple screens. eZ Booking is another step in Air India's endeavour to give its customers an enhanced and seamless experience.

eZ Booking is powered by intelligent 'Agentic AI' tools and simulates the role of a travel agent by listening to the customer's requirement and generating a customised itinerary. 'Agentic AI' helps users complete

complex tasks with minimal human intervention utilising machine learning, natural language processing, and automation technologies to take decisive action.

The reservation journey on digital channels for airline customers involves navigation through multiple screens to enter travel details, make selections from available choices, feed in information about travellers, etc. before making the payment and getting the ticket. eZ Booking aims to streamline the process to fewer clicks and pages by eliminating multi-step navigation on the website.

"In our pursuit of developing technologies to elevate customer experience and provide them a seamless and intelligent digital interface, we have introduced eZ Booking on our website, initially for our loyalty programme members. This is an industry-leading initiative and we are taking early steps in deploying the emerging 'Agentic AI' capabilities across all our digital footprint. We hope our guests will enjoy the ease-of-use, speed and convenience of eZ Booking, that further enriches our strong digital channel presence," said Dr. Satya Ramaswamy, Chief Digital and Technology Officer, Air India.



## Magical Mediterranean: Qatar Airways Returns to Malta with Four Weekly Flights this Summer

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways, the World's Best Airline as voted by Skytrax in 2024, is resuming operations to Malta with four weekly flights from 2 July 2025. The resumption to Malta will expand Qatar Airways' network to nearly 50 destinations in Europe.



approval, will also boost connectivity.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer,

said: "Qatar Airways is delighted to announce the resumption of our flights to Malta, which marks a vibrant addition to our robust European network. Qatar and Malta enjoy staunch economic ties, and our operational relaunch to the country only furthers our relationship."

The Renaissance city of Valletta – the capital of Malta and a UNESCO World Heritage Site – is an open-air museum itself. The city centre comes to life with Baroque architecture, contemporary nightlife, and 450 years of history through its winding streets.

The old capital of Malta, Mdina, offers a journey into its history of 4,000 years with its mix of Rococo and medieval architecture. Mdina has served as the filming location for the King's Landing from one of the most popular TV shows of all time, Game of Thrones.

Bookings are now open for travellers from Australia, China, India, Japan, and the Philippines seeking the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Passengers can plan their summer holidays with Qatar Airways to travel through Hamad International Airport, the World's Best Airport as voted by Skytrax in 2024, to Malta International Airport and visit the capital city of Valletta – a UNESCO World Heritage Site; and Gozo and Comino – the sister islands of Malta.

Similarly, travellers from Malta can benefit from Qatar Airways' extensive network of more than 170 global destinations, including Australia, where it currently operates 42 weekly flights. Qatar Airways' proposed partnership with Virgin Australia, pending final regulatory

## Emirates set to become the world's first Autism Certified Airline™

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has launched an inspiring journey to officially become the world's first Autism Certified Airline™, inviting customers with autism and sensory sensitivities to experience Emirates' seamless services and personalised hospitality, making travel more accessible for all. The inaugural designation is set to be formally awarded by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) in the coming months, when more than 30,000 Emirates cabin crew and ground staff will have completed the initial training. Emirates also plans to roll out new standards and services that will improve the on ground and inflight travel experience for both customers on the autism spectrum and their families and companions, to be announced later in the year.



What is the Autism Certified Airline™ designation (ACA)?

Driven by its commitment to creating a welcoming travel experience for all

customers including individuals with autism and those with sensory sensitivities, Emirates worked collaboratively with IBCCES, a leading organization in autism and neurodiversity training and certification, to conduct an onsite review and comprehensive audit.

As part of a vast research endeavour, IBCCES surveyed more than 14,000 people with a variety of disabilities, including people with autism, those with sensory sensitivities and their families and caregivers. The survey data was collated alongside numerous interviews, an International Air Transport Association (IATA) industry survey, and feedback from 1,200 industry professionals - helping develop the most beneficial standards for both passengers and airline staff. In addition to the feedback collated, IBCCES experts also conducted several Emirates flight audits on both long and short haul routes.

The collation of detailed data ensured input from key stakeholders including the lived experiences of people with autism, global thought leaders, industry professionals and healthcare experts - combined to create new industry standards that accommodate passengers with autism and sensory sensitivities during air travel.

For many members of the global autism community, international air travel is a highly challenging experience, or something to be avoided completely, due to the high level of sensory stimuli that can be involved. A survey on AutismTravel.com revealed that 78% of families are hesitant to travel or visit new locations, and that 94% of respondents would take more vacations if they had access to places where staff are autism-trained and certified. As part of Emirates' mission to make travel more inclusive and accessible for all, this significant step also supports Dubai's ambition to become the most accessible destination in the world.

## Strengthening Sri Lanka-Malaysia Aviation and Tourism Cooperation

TTA BULLETIN

In a significant step towards fostering stronger ties between Sri Lanka and Malaysia, His Excellency Badli Hisham Adam met with Mr. Santhush Udumalagala, General Manager of GSA (Jetwing Air), Mr. Iroshan Edussuriya, Country Manager of Malaysia Airlines, and Mr. Navaoda Bandara, Sales Manager of GSA Malaysia Airlines, along with the First Secretary of the High Commission of Malaysia.



Jetwing Air reiterated its commitment to deepening relations between Sri Lanka and Malaysia, recognizing the vital role of cross-tourism promotion in bolstering economic ties. This collaboration aims to unlock new opportunities, increase connectivity, and encourage cultural exchanges, ultimately contributing to the prosperity of both countries.

The meeting underscores a shared vision of closer cooperation in aviation and tourism, reflecting the dynamic partnership between Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

The high-level discussion focused on enhancing aviation cooperation, promoting tourism, and developing strategies for future growth. Both parties emphasized the mutual benefits of strengthening their relationship to enrich the travel experience for passengers between the two nations.

## Climate Friendly Travel; A panel discussion with Jetwing Hotels

Jetwing Hotels hosted an insightful panel discussion on climate-friendly travel at their city hotel, Jetwing Colombo Seven. Moderated by Sashika Kaluwahewa, Manager of Sustainability at Jetwing Hotels, the panel featured distinguished guests, including Mr. Buddhika Hewawasam, Chairman of the Sri Lanka

Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB); Mr. Harsha Wickramasinghe, Deputy General Director of the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA); Mr. Sampath Jayawardena, Senior Director of Climate Change and Sustainability Services at Ernst & Young; and Mr. Hiran Cooray, Chairman of Jetwing Symphony PLC and The Lighthouse Hotel PLC.



## Qatar Airways Expands Global Network with New Destinations in South America: Bogotá and Caracas

TTA BULLETIN

The World's Best Airline welcomes Bogotá and Caracas as its 15th and 16th destinations in the Americas, launching its second longest flight to the Americas



DOHA, Qatar — Qatar Airways proudly announces its latest expansion into the Americas with the launch of two new weekly flights on Wednesdays and Sundays, starting early summer 2025. These flights will connect Hamad International Airport (DOH) in Doha to Bogotá El Dorado International Airport (BOG) in Colombia, and then continue to Caracas Simon Bolivar International Airport (CCS) in Venezuela. The return flight from Caracas will operate non-stop to Doha.

This new service makes Qatar Airways the first and only airline to offer non-stop flights from the Middle East to Colombia and the only Middle Eastern carrier operating in Venezuela. With the addition of Bogotá and Caracas, Qatar Airways expands its Americas network to a total of 16 destinations, joining major cities like Dallas, Miami, New York City, São Paulo, and Toronto.

Operated by Boeing 777-200LR aircraft equipped with 42 Business Class seats and 234 Economy Class seats, the new Bogotá and Caracas services will provide travellers from two of South America's busiest cities with convenient access to the Middle East and beyond, owing to Qatar Airways' strong global network reaching over 170 destinations.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "The launch of flights to Bogotá and Caracas marks a transformative moment for Qatar Airways and for travellers to South America. As the first airline to offer nonstop service from the Middle East to Colombia and the only Middle Eastern carrier flying to Venezuela, we are creating new opportunities to connect people, cultures, and commerce.

"Passengers can look forward to experiencing Qatar Airways' world-class in-flight hospitality as we continue to reach new heights in long-haul travel with our second longest flight into the Americas. These routes embody our commitment to pioneering travel experiences and redefining global connectivity with our award-winning service."

The World's Best Airline, as voted for an unprecedented eighth time by Skytrax in 2024, is as committed as ever to bringing its award-winning service to new markets. By expanding to Colombia and Venezuela, Qatar Airways aims to amplify its presence in South America, providing travellers across the region with exceptional connectivity, comfort, and service.

## Emirates Group gears for growth, unveils future-fit career and employee lounge

TTA BULLETIN

The Emirates Group, one of the largest employers in Dubai, has unveiled a futuristic lounge at its iconic headquarters to serve global candidates, new joiners, employees, their families, and retirees, reflecting Dubai's drive to attract, retain, and cultivate the best talent from around the world.

Wejhaty, meaning 'my destination' in Arabic, was officially opened by HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive Emirates Airline and Group, in the presence of executive leaders and employees.

HH Sheikh Ahmed said: "The Emirates Group's next era will witness unprecedented global growth, right here from our Dubai hub. Powered by the sharpest minds and the latest technology, we're reshaping and redesigning our organisation to gear up for this growth. Our focus is firmly on our own people, who are our biggest brand ambassadors and advocates. Their safety, security, career development, professional wellbeing, and personal journeys are top priorities for us. Wejhaty will set new signature standards of service and



excellence in people experience – for our employees, their families, new joiners, and those aspiring to be a part of the Group."

Spread across a sprawling 22,770 sq.ft. space, Wejhaty is no ordinary employee lounge or one-stop shop. The space can serve 500 people at any point in time, 1,200 a day, and it aims to create an inspiring and welcoming space that reflects the Group's people ethos. The focus is on elevating employee experience with streamlined solutions, advanced technology, and seamless, highly responsive services.

A personal touch is central to customer-focused organisations like the Emirates Group, which is why visitors to Wejhaty will be greeted, served and guided by friendly, supportive concierge service attendants.



# Amba Yaalu

K A N D A L A M A

The first women-led hotel in Sri Lanka

Tucked away amidst a stunning mango plantation with 457 TJC mango trees, Amba Yaalu Kandalama rests peacefully on the serene banks of Kandalama Lake, offering panoramic views of the majestic Sleeping Soldier Mountains. Drawing inspiration from the novel Amba Yaluwo (Mango Friends) and the golden era of Sri Lankan cinema, this unique property is proud to be Sri Lanka's first hotel entirely managed and staffed by women.



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