

# TRAVEL TALK

## Asia

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

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## Sri Lanka Tourism wins the "Best Tourism Board" accolade at the Global Tourism Awards New Delhi

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA



Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) won the "The Best International Tourism Board" accolade at the Global Tourism Awards 2024 held in New Delhi, India. The Global Tourism Awards is an annual event organized by Travel World Online (TWO) which serves as a platform to honor and celebrate organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the Tourism Industry shaping its landscape and driving positive change. This year's event was particularly special as it comprised of various categories and a large number of applicants across the world, selected by a prestigious jury, headed by Mr. Nakul Anand, former Executive Director of ITC.

This award was presented to Mr. Chalaka Gajabahu, Chairman, SLTPB with the presence of Hon. Harin Fernando, Minister of Tourism, Lands, Sports and Youth Affairs who graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. Commenting on this award, Mr. Nalin Perera, Managing Director SLTPB said, "We are grateful to the Jury for selecting Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau for this prestigious award considering its dedication and commitment through its continuous promotional efforts towards showcasing Sri Lanka to the world as one of the best tourism destinations."

He further said that many accolades and international endorsements received by Sri Lanka Tourism in the recent past from various media publications and travel influencers who visited Sri Lanka would have also contributed towards this prestigious moment. He thanked all the Travel Industry stakeholders for their continuous support towards this success.

Sri Lanka Tourism has attracted 1,198,059 tourists up to 31st July 2024, which is 56% increase over 2023 and is confident of accomplishing its target of 2.3 million tourists this year.

## Acorn Leisure Soars to New Heights through a Game-Changing Alliance with NDB Capital Group and Sunil Fernando & Associates

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA



Malinga Arsakularatne



Manju Fernando



Senaka Kakiriwaragodage

Acorn Leisure, a subsidiary of the Acorn Group, has taken a significant step toward expansion by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NDB Capital Group and Sunil Fernando & Associates.

The partnership is designed to create a powerhouse in leisure management, providing additional and crucial value additions such as innovative funding opportunities, leisure investment related service and leisure real estate advise, to drive sustainable growth in Sri Lanka's tourism sector. As the industry continues to recover and evolve, this alliance is also expected to set new standards in hospitality, offering resort and villa owners cutting-edge solutions tailored to the demands of a rapidly changing market.

The Acorn Group, renowned for its leadership across multiple sectors—including aviation management, inbound and outbound tours, resort and villa management, and freight and logistics—operates from eight global offices. This new alliance marks a pivotal moment in the company's ongoing mission to redefine excellence in hospitality management.

This collaboration with NDB Capital Holdings and Sunil Fernando & Associates represents a significant milestone for Acorn Leisure. By leveraging the financial expertise of NDB Capital Group and the real estate acumen of Sunil Fernando & Associates, we are confident of tapping into unique opportunities and drive substantial growth in the hospitality sector. Through this partnership we can better contribute to the growth of Sri Lanka Tourism and provide unparalleled opportunities and value to our stakeholders," said Malinga Arsakularatne, Chief Executive Officer of Acorn Group.

NDB Capital Group, the country's premier capital market conglomerate, brings its formidable financial expertise to the partnership. "This partnership represents a perfect alignment of expertise and vision, allowing us to tap into the vast potential for growth in the hospitality sector alongside Acorn Leisure. We are confident that this collaboration will unlock new opportunities, deliver

exceptional value to our stakeholders, and facilitate potential investment options for the growth of Acorn Leisure," said Senaka Kakiriwaragodage, Chief Executive Officer of NDB Capital Holdings Limited.

With over 50,000 clients and LKR 350 billion in assets under management, NDB Capital extends its influence beyond Sri Lanka to regions such as Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Africa. Their comprehensive suite of services, including investment banking, wealth management, and private equity management, is set to bolster Acorn Leisure's expansion plans.

Sunil Fernando and Associates, a pioneering valuation and advisory firm with a 24-year legacy in Sri Lanka, also plays a crucial role in this collaboration. Known for their in-depth real estate insights and extensive network, the firm will enhance Acorn Leisure's capacity to deliver unparalleled value to resort and villa owners, both domestically and internationally.

Commenting on the partnership Manju Fernando - Managing Director, Sunil Fernando & Associates said "our collaboration with Acorn Leisure is a testament to our commitment to excellence in real estate advisory. Together, we will elevate the standards of resort and villa management in Sri Lanka, combining our industry-leading insights with Acorn Leisure's dynamic approach."

Since its inception in 2020, Acorn Leisure has demonstrated remarkable growth, driven by an innovative hotel operations model that emphasizes transparency and strong governance. The signing of the MOU signifies a strategic alignment of strengths, combining Acorn Leisure's industry expertise with NDB Capital's financial acumen and Sunil Fernando & Associates' real estate advisory prowess.

This MOU underscores Acorn Leisure's unwavering commitment to excellence, innovation, and growth in the hospitality industry, positioning the company at the forefront of Sri Lanka's tourism revival.



Sri Lanka's tourism industry, a vital pillar of the nation's economy, finds itself at a critical juncture. The recent visa scandal has cast a shadow over what has otherwise been a year of remarkable achievements and milestones. In 2024, the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) was honored with the Best Tourism Board award at the Global Tourism Awards in New Delhi, a testament to the country's enduring appeal and strategic efforts in attracting global travelers. Furthermore, the Acorn Group's signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NDB Bank and Sunil Fernando Associates marks a significant step towards driving sustainable growth in Sri Lanka's tourism sector.

However, these positive developments are juxtaposed against the backdrop of a deeply concerning visa scandal that threatens to undermine the industry's progress. The Department of Immigration & Emigration's abrupt decision to replace the long-standing service provider, Mobitel, with a foreign consortium has not only raised serious questions about transparency but also led to exorbitant visa fees that could deter potential tourists. With tourism accounting for nearly 12% of Sri Lanka's GDP, the ripple effects of this decision extend far beyond mere numbers. The hospitality industry, local businesses, and the broader service sector, all of which are heavily dependent on tourist inflows, could suffer considerable losses as a result of reduced visitor numbers.

As the country grapples with this scandal, it remains to be seen whether accountability will be upheld and whether Sri Lanka can reclaim control over its crucial public services. The tourism industry, already strained by external factors such as global economic uncertainty and competition from neighboring destinations, now faces an additional challenge that could impede its recovery and growth.

While it is essential to celebrate the successes of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and the Acorn Group, it is equally crucial to address the underlying issues that threaten the sustainability of Sri Lanka's tourism industry. The path

forward requires a delicate balance of transparency, effective governance, and a commitment to safeguarding the nation's economic interests.



*Dinushka*  
Dinushka Chandrasena  
Editor

**DoubleDee**  
PUBLICATIONS

**Editor**  
Dinushka Chandrasena

**Directors**  
Firoze Munzeer  
Dinesh Chandrasena

**Head Of Marketing**  
Anoj Tillekeratne

**Lead Designer**  
Eshan Perera

**Web Designer**  
Navodh Jayasundara

Traveltalk Asia is a Monthly publication  
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15A, Swarna Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka  
Phone / Fax: +94-115345346  
Mobile: +94-777756726,  
+94-777756762,

E-mail: Dinushka@doubledee.lk  
Anoj@doubledee.lk  
Web: www.traveltalkasia.com

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## NEWS / MOVEMENTS

# Sriyangani Dhanapala Appointed As The First Female Resort Manager At Cinnamon Bentota Beach

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts is thrilled to announce the appointment of Sriyangani Dhanapala as the first female Resort Manager of Cinnamon Bentota Beach. She took on the role, becoming one of the youngest and the first female Resort Manager within the group.

In her new role as Resort Manager, Sriyangani will oversee all operations at Cinnamon Bentota Beach, ensuring the highest standards of service, enhancing guest satisfaction, and driving the resort's growth and innovation. Her leadership is expected to elevate the resort's reputation as a premier destination in Sri Lanka.

"We are delighted to welcome Sriyangani Dhanapala to Cinnamon Bentota Beach," said Johan Aschan, General Manager of Cinnamon Bentota Beach and Area Vice President of Sri Lanka Resorts of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. "Her extensive experience and passion for excellence align perfectly with our commitment to providing unparalleled experiences to our guests. We are confident that under her leadership, Cinnamon Bentota Beach will continue to thrive and set new benchmarks in the industry."

With over a decade in the hospitality industry, Sriyangani began her career in Brand Marketing for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. She has managed diverse marketing projects, strategic research, and long-term business planning. Collaborating with global travel and tourism experts, she enhanced her expertise and network. Driven by her passion, she transitioned into operations, focusing on Brand Quality Assurance and Development to improve customer experience. In eight years, she advanced to leadership roles, including Director of Brand Development for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and Assistant Vice President at the John Keells Group.

Sriyangani Dhanapala expressed her enthusiasm for her new role, stating, "I am honoured to join the team at Cinnamon Bentota Beach and to be part of such a prestigious Resort. I



Sriyangani Dhanapala

look forward to working with our talented team to create memorable experiences for our guests and to contribute to the continued success of this beautiful resort."

Cinnamon Bentota Beach, located on the stunning southern coast of Sri Lanka, is renowned for its luxurious accommodations, breathtaking views, and world-class amenities. The resort offers a perfect blend of relaxation and adventure, making it a preferred destination for travellers from around the globe.

Sriyangani holds a BSc in Business Management (First Class Honours) from the University of Wayamba Sri Lanka and a Master of Business Administration (First Class Honours) from the Postgraduate Institute of Management. She is also a certified trainer, dedicated to building soft skills capabilities among youth.

Nestled amidst the scenic beauty of Bentota Beach and the tranquil Bentara River in Southern Sri Lanka, Cinnamon Bentota Beach stands as a premier luxury resort. Offering a harmonious blend of thrilling water sports and enriching cultural experiences, it caters to a wide array of interests. Guests can immerse themselves in activities such as serene canoe rides along the river, exhilarating jet skiing and windsurfing, or simply unwind by the natural rock formation pools. The resort also boasts a dedicated Kids' Club for the entertainment of young guests, ensuring a delightful stay for families. Culinary delights await at Ottimo Restaurant, Sea Meats Spice Restaurant, Drench pool bar, and Fuze lounge bar, catering to diverse palates. For couples seeking romance, the resort offers intimate Destination Dining experiences at four enchanting locations. Designed by the esteemed architect Geoffrey Bawa, the resort's vibrant interiors pay homage to the local artistic heritage, featuring elements like intricate batik ceilings and captivating stone sculptures. With 159 guestrooms, including 16 suites, each adorned with unique themes and showcasing local artwork.

## EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave – A Digital Marketing Conference for the Hospitality Industry

TTA BULLETIN

EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave is set to spearhead digital transformation for the hospitality industry. This premier conference, tailored for hospitality professionals, marketers, and technology enthusiasts, will provide insights into the latest trends and best practices in digital marketing.

Scheduled for August 6, 2024, at the Shangri-La Colombo, the conference will tackle the dynamic changes and challenges facing the hospitality industry. Key topics include online traveller insights, digital trends, maximizing online visibility, and driving revenue growth.

Attendees will benefit from an enriching experience with over 15 sessions, 20+ local and international speakers and 6 breakout sessions. The event will explore innovative technologies such as AI-powered tools, advanced data analytics, and effective digital marketing strategies with a focus on case studies and success stories, where attendees will gain invaluable insights into successful digital marketing campaigns. As the conference progresses, it will transition into dynamic breakout sessions covering essential topics like SEO, social media marketing, and content marketing, offering attendees the opportunity to dive deeper into these critical areas.

This exclusive, invitation-only conference brings together



industry leaders, decision-makers, and experts for networking and learning. With 80+ leading hospitality brands and 200+ delegates all engaging with each other in one versatile space, the conference is expected to foster a

day full of knowledge-sharing and insightful discussions.

This event is being hosted by eMarketingEye, a digital marketing agency specializing in the travel and hospitality industry with over 17 years of experience and clients spanning 45+ countries. The conference will be enhanced by partnerships with industry leaders such as Sabre, Lighthouse, and IDEAS.

TV Derana joins as the Official Electronic Media Partner, Prime Residencies as the Official Real Estate Partner, NH Collection Colombo as the Official Hospitality Partner, English Tea Shop as the Official Beverage Partner, Sampath Bank PLC as the Official Banking Partner, Travel Talk Asia as the Official Trade Media Partner and Daily FT as the Official Print Media Partner.

As the hospitality industry evolves, staying ahead is crucial. EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave offers a unique platform for delegates to redefine the future of hospitality and collectively elevate the industry as well.

<https://levelup.emarketingeye.com>



## Skål International Colombo Hosts 70th EGM: Insights on Port City Colombo's Role in Boosting Tourism and Investment

TTA BULLETIN

Skål International Colombo recently hosted its 70th Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), featuring guest speaker, Radika Obeyesekere, Director of Investment Promotion and Marketing for Port City Colombo, CHEC. The event brought together prominent leaders and professionals from the tourism and hospitality industry, focusing on the future of Colombo as a premier hub for both tourism and international commerce.

In her keynote address, Radika provided an in-depth look into the transformative potential of Port City Colombo. She highlighted how this groundbreaking development will elevate the city's global appeal, attracting tourists and investors alike. As the most ambitious project in Sri Lanka's history, Port City Colombo is set to redefine the landscape of Colombo, positioning it as a world-class destination.

Radika also emphasized that Port City Colombo will significantly enhance the city's infrastructure, offering state-of-the-art facilities and attractions that cater to the needs of both business and leisure travelers. From a luxury Yacht Marina to a convention center and luxury hotels, the development



promises to be a magnet for international visitors, boosting tourism and driving economic growth.

The EGM underscored the crucial role of collaborations between the public and private sectors in realizing the vision of a thriving Colombo. Attendees were encouraged by the prospects of Port City Colombo, recognizing its potential to contribute to the growth of the tourism industry and to solidify Colombo's status as a leading destination in South Asia.

Skål International Colombo President Ahintha Amarasinghe expressed gratitude to Radika Obeyesekere for her valuable insights and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to promoting sustainable tourism and fostering international business relationships.

## Thailand MICE One Stop Service VISA for MICE Max 90-Day Stay for MICE Visitors, Max 1-Year Stay for MICE Organizers

TTA BULLETIN

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and 3 alliance organisations jointly announced their aligned measures to provide easier access to Thailand for overseas MICE travelers under TCEB's umbrella initiative "Thailand MICE One Stop Service".

The 3 alliance organisations are the Department of Consular Affairs, Airports of Thailand (AOT) Public Company Limited and Immigration Division 2. The announcement was made during the press conference TCEB held last week at the Hyatt Regency Sukhumvit Bangkok Hotel. The joint announcement is in response to the government's policy to make Thailand a preferred destination of exhibitions and global festivals, thus, measures to facilitate entry of overseas travelers.

It is also in preparation for attendees and visitors at bid-won events to be held in a few years, for example, IDF Diabetes World Congress 2025 in Bangkok, IMF and World Bank Group Annual Meeting in 2026 in Bangkok, Global Sustainable Tourism Conference 2026 in Phuket and International Horticultural Expo 2026 in



Udon Thani, concluded Mr. Chiruit, TCEB President.

The Department of Consular Affairs Department was headed by the Director-General, Mr. Worawoot Pongrapapant, while Airports of Thailand (AOT) Public Company Limited was led by its President, Mr. Kerati Kijmanawat. Immigration Division 2 was represented by its Commander, Pol Maj Gen Choengron Rimpadee, while TCEB was led by Mr. Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, the President.

Established in 2004, Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (Public Organization) or TCEB – the government agency under the supervision of the Prime Minister – has been assigned a role to promote, support and develop business events industry – corporate meetings, incentive trips, conventions, exhibitions, mega events and world festivals. Serving as a strategic partner, TCEB helps deliver creative ideas and solutions to bring success and fulfill the requirements of business events. The overarching goal is to drive Thailand to become a global MICE and mega events destination that can drive the country's strategic industries and national economy.



## Acorn Prime Destinations Rebrands with a Renewed Vision for Personalized Travel

TTA BULLETIN

Acorn Prime Destinations, formerly known as Prime Destinations, has announced a strategic rebranding initiative as part of its commitment to evolving with the needs of modern travelers. This move is aimed at enhancing the customer journey and elevating the travel experience offered by the company.

"We have consistently adapted to meet the changing preferences of today's travelers," said Suranjith De Fonseka, Managing Director of Travel at Acorn Group. "Our transition to Acorn Prime Destinations reflects our dedication to providing bespoke travel experiences while staying true to our core values of personalized service and exceptional quality."

The rebranding comes with a fresh visual identity that captures the essence of exploration and discovery, resonating with travelers who seek authentic and immersive holiday experiences. This change is more than cosmetic—it represents a renewed focus on creating tailor-made travel packages that offer unique, unforgettable experiences for clients.

Acorn Prime Destinations has positioned itself as a leader in the leisure travel market, with a team of seasoned travel experts who craft customized itineraries. These range

from luxurious accommodations and private transportation to exclusive access to hidden gems, all meticulously designed to meet the individual tastes of each client.

Victoria Seneviratne, Senior Vice President at Acorn Prime Destinations, emphasized the importance of this personalized approach: "Our team's deep destination knowledge ensures that every journey is thoughtfully curated to provide a truly exclusive travel experience. Whether it's a luxury getaway or an adventure-filled exploration, we make every effort to turn our clients' travel dreams into reality."

In an era where travelers are increasingly seeking meaningful connections with their destinations, Acorn Prime Destinations distinguishes itself by working closely with global partners, ensuring access to a wide range of options that fit any budget while maintaining high service standards.

This rebranding marks a new chapter for Acorn Prime Destinations, reinforcing its position as a trailblazer in the travel industry. With an experienced team and a clear vision, the company is set to continue providing exceptional travel experiences that stand out in the competitive market.



Suranjith De Fonseka



## Minor Hotels Appoints Judd Rabbidge as New General Manager of Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels is pleased to announce the appointment of Judd Rabbidge as the new General Manager of Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort. Effective July 2024, Rabbidge will lead the upscale lifestyle resort in the Baa Atoll, applying his passion for delivering exceptional guest experiences, as well as strategic acumen, to drive results.

An Australian national, Rabbidge brings a wealth of experience to his first General Manager posting. Most recently, he served as the Hotel Manager at W Sydney, overseeing the pre-opening phase of the world's largest W Hotel and an emblematic landmark in Sydney's cityscape. From 2018 to 2022, Rabbidge held the position of Director of Sales and Marketing at W Bali – Seminyak, establishing the resort as a sought-after destination for luxury travelers. His tenure also included managing operations at two other Marriott properties in the region, where he achieved remarkable guest satisfaction scores and drove profitability. Earlier in his career, Rabbidge held various senior management roles with Mantra Group, a leading Australian accommodation operator.



Judd Rabbidge

Stuart De San Nicolas, Cluster General Manager for Minor Hotels in the Maldives, expressed his confidence in Judd's leadership: "We are thrilled to welcome Judd Rabbidge to the Avani+ Fares Maldives team. His track record of success and deep understanding of the industry

make him an excellent fit for this role, and his background in sales and marketing will be instrumental in driving revenue growth and enhancing brand visibility in this highly competitive market."

Commenting on his new position, Judd Rabbidge said, "An upscale resort catering to families with an eye for aesthetics, Avani+ Fares Maldives occupies a distinctive niche. This unique positioning offers a very appealing combination, giving my team and I plenty of opportunities to firmly put the resort on the map."

Rabbidge holds a Bachelor's degree in Applied Hospitality, Tourism and Business Management from the Pacific International Hotel Management School in New Plymouth, New Zealand.



## Travel Tech Asia 2024 records highest exhibition space sold and unveils stunning line of bellwether speakers

TTA BULLETIN

Travel Tech Asia has already sold more exhibition spaces than last year's show with a stunning line up of exhibitors and speakers. With its dedicated hall space at Level 1 of Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Travel Tech Asia 2024 is the ultimate platform where established tech giants, experts, and innovative startups converge to share their expertise and latest digital trends.

This year's Travel Tech Asia brings together key tech exhibitors including Agoda, which is this year's Official Sponsor of the Travel Tech Asia delegate bags. Other key companies showcasing their products and solutions include Hotelbeds, TBO Holidays, Go Global Travel Ltd, Archipelago International, Convergent International Travel Development Co., Ltd, LY.com, SiteMinder, STAAH, DerbySoft, Juniper Travel Technology, Korea Tourism Startup Center, Travel Compositor, YeePay, Guangdong Qiyouji International Travel Co. Ltd, CRUISEHOST Solutions, GroundK Co., Ltd, Airalo and many more.

"Participating in Travel Tech Asia 2024 allows HBX Group to connect with leaders and innovators in the travel technology sector. The event offers a unique opportunity to showcase our expertise in leveraging technology to offer travel solutions and engage with a diverse

audience of industry professionals. It provides a platform for us to connect with forward-thinking partners, share insights on the latest industry trends, and explore new opportunities for collaboration. We look forward to forging new relationships and driving the future of travel technology together", says Pippa Williamson, VP Commercial APAC, HBX Group.

Some of the key discussion topics include: "Travel Technology 2025: The Next Essential Ingredient for the Future of Tourism" explores future innovations. "Embracing the Digital Era: How Technology is Transforming the Future of Travel" examines the digital revolution's impact. "Overcoming Challenges in Travel Tech Adoption – Bridging the Digital Divide" tackles tech integration barriers and solutions. Lastly, "Transforming Travel in the World of Mobile, Data, and AI" delves into how mobile tech, big data, and AI are revolutionising travel experiences.

Industry leaders speaking at Travel Tech Asia 2024 include Amy Read, Vice President of Innovation at Sabre Corporation, who will discuss strategies for unlocking the full potential of mobile payments in her talk titled "Beyond Conventional Transactions: Strategies for Unleashing the Full Potential of Mobile Payments."

## 2nd Chance Travels opened their state-of-the-art office in Melbourne

TTA BULLETIN

2nd Chance Travels, one of Sri Lanka's largest outbound travel agencies recently opened their state-of-the-art office in Mulgrave, Melbourne. The relocating of this branch office to the Mulgrave area was in line with the company's commitment to having office locations that are easily accessible to their valued customers. The

new office will offer a wide range of travel and travel-related services and will be complemented and supported by the company's 24-hour call center,

The opening ceremony was graced by key Airline representatives and the leadership team of the company.



## Downtown Duty-free Mall At Port City Colombo Geared Up For Opening As Operators Get Bsi Status

TTA BULLETIN

Port City Colombo announced that China Duty Free (CDF) and One World Duty Free (ODF) have been granted status as Businesses of Strategic Importance (BSI) by the Sri Lanka Cabinet of Ministers, according to an official Cabinet media statement released on 10th July 2024. This approval paves the way for the commencement of travel retail operations at the upcoming Downtown Duty-Free Mall.

Discussing the significance of this milestone, Mr. Xiong Hongfeng, Managing Director, CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt) Ltd said, "We are pleased to announce that our duty-free partners, China Duty Free and One World Duty Free, have successfully obtained BSI status and received approval from the Cabinet. Our partners are now empowered to operate within the Colombo Port City Special Economic Zone, allowing for the

eagerly anticipated opening of the Downtown Duty-Free Mall to go ahead before the close of Q3 2024. We look forward to this, and to many other important developments in due course, with many prospective global investors ready to invest in Sri Lanka through Port City Colombo."

Being the pioneering duty-free mall concept in Sri Lanka, the Downtown Duty-Free Mall at Port City Colombo is set to feature world-renowned travel retail operators. Capitalising on the city's prime location and connectivity to the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), the Downtown Duty-Free Mall will showcase unparalleled convenience and a diversity of brands that will appeal to the modern-day traveller. The Downtown Duty-Free Mall promises to transform Colombo into a leading travel retail hotspot in the South Asian region, which will emulate the success of other competitive duty-free markets including Singapore, Australia, and China.

China Duty Free and One World



Duty Free, both acclaimed global travel retail giants, will soon begin operations at Port City Colombo, further bolstering the project's emergence as a tourism hub. China Duty Free, in particular, is ranked as the world's number one travel retailer, having recorded a revenue of USD 9.3 billion in 2023, according to a recently released Moodie Davitt Report.

The forthcoming opening of the Downtown Duty-Free Mall is anticipated to draw increased tourist traffic, showcasing a unique shopping experience with its upscale travel retail offerings and competitive pricing strategy. Along with CDF and ODF, a third international luxury duty-free brand is set to explore a collaboration at this revolutionary duty-free mall concept, providing

travellers arriving in Sri Lanka significantly more choice.

The Downtown Duty-Free Mall will also be complemented by a curation of duty-paid brands and dining experiences, including Nihonbashi by Dharshan, Spa Ceylon, Café Chill, and so forth.

These developments underscore the swift pace of progress at Port City Colombo, heralding a new era of economic growth and international appeal for Sri Lanka. Port City Colombo's strategic location, combined with the introduction of premier travel retail establishments such as CDF and ODF, is thus set to redefine the shopping and tourism landscape in South Asia.





A POCKET OF *wonder* IN THE MISTY HILLS



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

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



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TRULY THE HOME OF AUTHENTIC SRI LANKAN HOSPITALITY.



# FAMILY ALBUM

## Best Western Elyon Colombo celebrating a decade of hospitality reflects on resilience and future growth

Best Western Elyon Colombo, Sri Lanka's first-ever Best Western Hotel, proudly celebrated its 10th anniversary recently, marking a decade of exceptional service, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the future of Sri Lanka's tourism industry. Best Western Elyon Colombo is part of the globally acclaimed Best Western Hotels, the 5th largest hotel chain in the world that boasts approximately 4,300 hotels in over 100 countries and territories worldwide.







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## World Travel Awards to stage first ceremony in Philippines

TTA BULLETIN

World Travel Awards (WTA) has unveiled plans to hold its first ever ceremony in the Philippines. Capital Manila will welcome travel and tourism figureheads for the red-carpet WTA Asia & Oceania Gala Ceremony 2024 on 3 September. The red-carpet reception will take place at City of Dreams Luxury Resort.



WTA's debut reflects the buoyancy of the travel and tourism economy in the Philippines. International visitor arrivals in the first quarter of 2024 rose 15 per cent year-on-year, echoing significant investments in tourism infrastructure and improvements in land, sea and air connectivity.

The bustling metropolis of Manila is a global hub for both business and leisure travellers and the platform to experience Philippine culture, history, shopping and nightlife. Visitors can experience everything from exploring the ancient walled city of Intramuros to discovering artisan markets and Manila's thriving arts scene.

City of Dreams Luxury Resort features



three hotels: Nüwa Manila, Nobu Hotel, and the Hyatt Regency Manila, City of Dreams. An iconic egg-shaped dome houses luxurious VIP and exclusive gaming areas. A leisure destination, it is renowned for its distinctive restaurants, bars and luxury shops. The resort is also home to DreamPlay, the world's first DreamWorks-inspired family entertainment centre.

Graham Cooke, Founder, World Travel Awards, says: "I am honoured that World Travel Awards will be heading to the Philippines for the first time, reflecting the significant strides the nation's tourism sector is making. Manila is one of Asia's most exciting emerging destinations, and I look forward to welcoming travel industry leaders from across Asia and Oceania to experience its many charms."

Other regional ceremonies on the WTA Grand Tour 2024 include Berlin (Germany), Dubai (UAE), Saint Vincent & The Grenadines, and Diani Beach (Kenya). The winners of these regional ceremonies will progress to the Grand Final in Madeira (Portugal) at the end of the year when the winners of the prestigious World categories will be unveiled.

## Travel Agent's Cocktail Event at Pegasus Reef Hotel

Celebrating Partnerships and Looking Forward to the Future

TTA BULLETIN

On the evening of July 19th, the Pegasus Reef Hotel hosted a spectacular Travel Agent's Cocktail event, welcoming over 300 guests to a night of celebration, appreciation, and entertainment. The event was set against the stunning backdrop of the hotel's coastal setting, offering a breathtaking view of the Colombo Port City at night, with the gentle sea waves adding to the ambiance.

Guests were welcomed into a beautifully decorated venue, highlighted by a colorful welcome arch and a huge marquee adorned with fairy lights. The theme for the evening was Hawaiian, complemented by vibrant decorations that created a festive and inviting atmosphere.

The night began with a warm welcome from the General Manager, Mr. Renuke Coswatte, who expressed heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support and collaboration of the travel agents. He highlighted the hotel's luxurious accommodations, exceptional dining experiences, and extensive leisure facilities, emphasizing the hotel's commitment to providing a memorable stay for every guest.

The evening's program featured lively dance acts and a unique 360-degree photo

experience, allowing guests to capture memorable moments. A cozy bonfire and a dazzling display of fireworks added to the enchanting evening, while a captivating band performance kept the energy high throughout the night. The culinary team at Pegasus Reef Hotel delighted the guests with an array of delicious dishes, showcasing a variety of flavors.

The event hosted consecutively for the second year by Pegasus Reef, Wattala is fast becoming an unmistakable event anxiously awaited by the inbound travel fraternity of Sri Lanka. Undoubtedly this was possible by the warm hospitality and efficient organization of the Pegasus Team who were instrumental in creating a seamless and enjoyable experience for all attendees.

The Travel Agent's Cocktail at Pegasus Reef Hotel was not just a celebration of partnerships but also a testament to the strength and resilience of the travel industry. The event concluded on a high note, leaving guests with delightful memories and a sense of optimism for the future.

Pegasus Reef Hotel: Where Every Stay is a Memorable Experience

## Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort Marks World Environment Day with Ambitious Reforestation Initiative

TTA BULLETIN

In celebration of World Environment Day, Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort proudly announces its collaboration with the Thuru Replanting Project in Deniyaya. Under the innovative "Two Trees per Room: Embracing Nature's Bloom" initiative, the resort aims



to plant 172 native plants, doubling last year's commitment and reflecting the number of rooms at the resort. This initiative underscores our dedication to Marriott's Serve360 and Nurturing Our World sustainability platforms, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to environmental conservation and community resilience.

"We are thrilled to embrace this year's slogan, 'Two Trees per Room: Embracing Nature's Bloom,' which beautifully reflects our commitment to environmental sustainability," said Sheraton Kosgoda Human Resources Manager Thilina Chandrasekara. "This initiative not only enhances the natural beauty of our surroundings but also strengthens our bond with the local community and environment."

The Thuru Replanting Project, known for its large-scale reforestation efforts near the Sinharaja Rainforest, is the perfect partner for this ambitious project. Thuru has partnered with LOLC Finance PLC, Mathurata Plantations, and Vibhawa Solutions Private Limited to replant endangered and endemic species in degraded natural forests and private lands. The project covers a fifty-acre area belonging to Mathurata Plantations, including a five-acre Miyawaki forest and Butterfly Garden.

"Our collaboration with Thuru and LOLC Finance is a natural fit, given our shared commitment to reforestation and environmental preservation," Chandrasekara explained. "The Deniyaya ecosystem, with its rich biodiversity, provides the ideal location for this initiative, and we are excited to contribute to the restoration of this vital habitat."

The tree planting will take place in the Miyawaki forest area and other designated sections of the reforestation site, aiming to restore forest cover in the region. This effort not only supports the local ecosystem but also fosters a sense of community and environmental stewardship.

"By planting 172 native plants, carefully selected to match the local climate and soil conditions, we are creating a sustainable habitat for numerous endemic species," Chandrasekara emphasised. "This initiative is vital for maintaining the natural balance and ensuring the survival of native wildlife."

This reforestation project aligns seamlessly with Marriott's Serve360 and Nurturing Our World platforms, which focus on sustainability and social impact. Serve360 aims to

do good in every direction, with goals such as achieving 15 million volunteer hours by 2025 and investing in natural capital.

"Our tree planting activity is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to Marriott's core values of 'Serve Our World' and 'Doing Good in Every Direction,'" said Chandrasekara. "Through this initiative, we are nurturing our world and making a meaningful impact on the environment and local communities."

The journey to Deniyaya was not without challenges. "The stream crossing was an unexpected adventure, especially with the aggressive water flow and slippery conditions," Chandrasekara recalled. "However, our team's enthusiasm and determination saw us through, and we successfully planted 172 native plants despite the obstacles."

This initiative promises to bring significant benefits to the local community in Deniyaya, which has been affected by deforestation and logging. The reforestation efforts will help mitigate landslides, enrich the soil, and restore the degraded ecosystem, providing a safe haven for numerous species.

"The reforestation project will not only protect the local environment but also support the community by creating a healthier and more stable ecosystem," Chandrasekara noted. "By engaging with local villagers and conservationists, we are fostering a strong sense of community and shared responsibility for environmental conservation."

Looking ahead, the Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort envisions this project as a catalyst for broader environmental efforts and a model for sustainable hospitality.

"Our goal is to create a thriving pop-up jungle within 20-30 years, restoring the natural habitat and conserving biodiversity," Chandrasekara explained. "We hope to inspire other businesses in the hospitality industry to adopt similar initiatives and contribute to a greener, more sustainable future."

Through this initiative, Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort aims to send a powerful message about the importance of environmental conservation and community engagement.



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# HOTELS / FAMILY ALBUM

## Occidental Eden Beruwala: A Summer Oasis in Paradise

TTA BULLETIN

Discover the pinnacle of luxury at Occidental Eden Beruwala, the ultimate destination to pamper oneself on summer vacation. Located along Beruwala's pristine beaches, the hotel invites guests to unwind and revitalise amidst its Eden-like beauty, making it the perfect retreat for a mid-year escape.



The property's luxurious rooms not only offer breathtaking ocean views but also serve as a haven encompassing modern conveniences and sprawling balconies paired with sun-kissed surroundings. As the sun dips below the horizon, indulge in a unique high tea experience by the beach, accompanied by a spectacular sunset serenade that adds a touch of enchantment to the evening.

At The Garden of Eden, culinary enthusiasts can embark on a gastronomic journey with an international buffet, catering to a variety of tastes and preferences while ensuring a memorable dining experience for all. For those desiring a more laid-back atmosphere, Champs Bar beckons guests to unwind in style with expertly crafted cocktails and delectable tapas, creating the perfect setting for relaxation and socialising. Occidental Eden's most recent culinary innovation includes 'Sippi,' a refined A la carte restaurant. Here, guests can



experience a modern take on dining culture, rooted in experimental dishes with a global flair and bursts of island flavour, while exploring Sri Lanka through a variety of inspiring cuisines.

For thrill-seekers, Island Adventures offers a range of water sports activities, from exhilarating jet ski rides to kayaking through the mangroves, providing an exciting way to invigorate one's vacation.

Browns Hotels & Resorts, the leisure arm of Browns Investments, presents a distinguished portfolio of properties, including Thaala Bentota, Club Hotel Dolphin Negombo, The Calm Resort and Spa Pasikuda, Hotel Sigiriya, Dickwella Resort and Spa, luxury boutique villas under Reveal the Collection and associate hotels Sheraton Kosgoda, Occidental Paradise Dambulla and Occidental Eden Beruwala.

## Green Globe Certification across Aitken Spence Hotels' Maldives Resorts

TTA BULLETIN

Aitken Spence Hotels has achieved a remarkable milestone in sustainable tourism with all five of its Maldives resorts receiving the prestigious Green Globe Certification. This accolade highlights the Company's unwavering dedication to sustainability stewardship and its leadership in responsible tourism practices within one of the world's most pristine marine environments.

The five resorts under Aitken Spence Hotels, Heritance Aarah Maldives, Adaaran Prestige Vadoo, Adaaran Select Meedhupparu, Adaaran Select Hudhuran Fushi, and Adaaran Club Rannalhi, have each been certified with the Green Globe standard 1.7, achieving scores surpassing 86%, exemplifying the exceptional commitment to sustainability across all operational facets.

Heritance Aarah stands as the first LEED Gold certified property in the Maldives, setting a new standard for sustainable building practices in the region. Aitken Spence Hotels has implemented comprehensive initiatives across all its Maldives

properties to minimize environmental impact. These efforts encompass the eradication of single-use plastics, the establishment of rainwater harvesting systems, and the use of native plant landscaping to preserve local biodiversity, and coral restoration projects.

Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings shared her views stating, "In achieving the Green Globe sustainability certification for all our Maldives properties in 2024, we underscore our steadfast commitment to integrating sustainable practices across our operations. The achievement of this tourism-specific sustainability standard for all Maldives properties validates our commitment to sustainability and reinforces our role as a responsible steward of the Maldives' pristine environment. At Aitken Spence Hotels, we are dedicated to setting a benchmark in sustainable tourism, ensuring our guests enjoy transformative and immersive experiences while preserving the natural beauty and biodiversity of all the destinations we operate in."



## Shangri-La Colombo Unveils 'Flavours of Türkiye' in Collaboration with Turkish Airlines

Shangri-La Colombo, in collaboration with Turkish Airlines, hosted an exclusive prelude to 'Flavours of Türkiye'. This gastronomic celebration offers an exquisite journey through the rich and diverse flavors of Turkish cuisine, curated by two renowned Turkish chefs Chef Salih and Chef Mehmet Ali from Shangri-La, Bosphorus, Istanbul.

The evening was graced by the presence of His Excellency Semih Lütü Turgut, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Fatih Bozkurt, Country Director Sri Lanka and Maldives for Turkish Airlines, with host Mr. Herve

Duboscq, General Manager of Shangri-La Colombo. This collaboration underscored the importance of this cultural and culinary exchange between Sri Lanka and Türkiye.

Guests at the prelude were treated to a special preview of what the 'Flavours of Türkiye' event will offer, enjoying expertly crafted cocktails that reflected the authentic taste of Türkiye. In addition to the culinary delights, attendees were given insights into Türkiye as a vibrant and diverse travel destination, showcasing its rich history, breathtaking landscapes, and unique cultural

experiences.

The 'Flavours of Türkiye' event will be at the Central, Shangri La Colombo and is set to be one of Colombo's premier culinary events, bringing together food enthusiasts, cultural aficionados, and those with a passion for travel and exploration. The collaboration with Turkish Airlines and the expertise of the chefs from Shangri-La, Bosphorus, Istanbul ensure that each dish will be a true representation of Türkiye's rich culinary heritage, offering a rare opportunity to experience authentic Turkish flavors without leaving Sri Lanka.

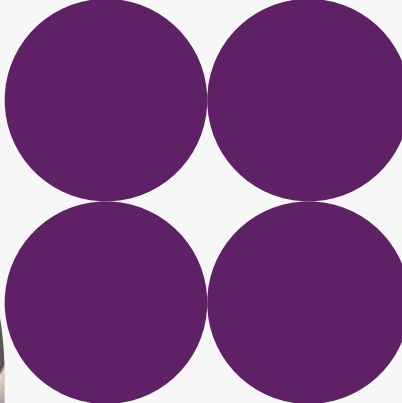






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# HOTELS

## SHOULDERS by Harpo's offer a new concept with Greek infused cuisine

TTA BULLETIN

SHOULDERS by Harpo's, opened in Nov 23, stands as a contemporary Cocktail Bar & Restaurant, blending modernity with a rustic charm. It offers an extraordinary menu inspired by Greek cuisine and a distinctive approach to crafting cocktails. Conveniently situated at level 1 of the Havelock city promenade, with easy access and ample parking..



experience with each visit.

SHOULDERS is a part of Harpo's vision for opening new dining concepts and is ably managed and operated by Harpo's Cafés & Restaurants, ensuring quality service and exceptional food and drinks that it has made a name for.

The menu pays homage to the rich flavors of Greek cuisine, enhanced with the vibrant essence of Sri Lankan ingredients to deliver an unforgettable dining experience. Kudos to the Executive Chef Shehan Setunga (aka Juppe) where each dish is a masterpiece that is expertly crafted by him. Shehan has made a name for himself in Melbourne Australia as a renowned Sri Lankan chef, and is now one of the partners at SHOULDERS and has dedicated himself to ensuring memorable dining

There is a special lunch and dinner menu including great starters such as flaming saganaki cheese, cheesy garlic pita bread, taramasalata with whipped cod roe dip, lunch with SOUVLAKI BAR (GREEK WRAPS) with a choice of flaming chicken, zucchini, pork belly, mutton or lamb and a Lunch Board. The mains include Moussaka and other exceptional Greek favorites. The dessert selection will keep you mesmerized with the flavors and creativity.

The cocktail bar is an adventure for your palate with a range of signature cocktails. Offers a perfect blend of creativity and craftsmanship to enjoy with an exceptional range of snacks and starters that transcend the ordinary.

## Occidental Paradise Dambulla: Where Leisure Meets Adventure in Serene Splendour

TTA BULLETIN

Explore the natural beauty of Sri Lanka at Occidental Paradise Dambulla, nestled amidst the lush greenery and located in one of Sri Lanka's most historic towns. This exquisite and iconic destination offers visitors a serene holiday getaway surrounded by nature's ambiance.



Occidental Paradise Dambulla, from pampering at the Balinese or Ayurveda spa for ultimate relaxation to enjoying the serene swimming pool that overlooks the natural beauty of Dambulla, the perfect harmony of comfort and nature for a memorable holiday experience.

At Occidental Paradise Dambulla, the property's 67 rooms are tailored to cater to every guest's needs. Luxuriously comfortable and fully-equipped with all modern amenities, the hotel provides a haven for complete relaxation amidst nature's impressive biodiversity, bringing one's body and mind into complete harmony; from arrival to departure.

The sprawling garden with its hidden nooks at Occidental Paradise Dambulla is a great space for kids to have an adventurous time during their holiday. For the thrill-seekers, in-house adventure sports such as the 90-meter Zip line, Burma bridge, balancing log and Tarzan rope offer exciting activities for kids and adults-like-kids.

Each room at Occidental Paradise Dambulla offers one its own bespoke experience; be it indoors or outdoors. Wake up to the melodious sounds of diverse village and migrant birds creating a symphony of nature outside the window, enjoy a cup of uplifting Ceylon tea from the picturesque terrace or indulge in the warm interior of the hotel's rustic rooms. What's more, the Superior Duplex Family rooms are perfect for families seeking a home away from home experience, with its spacious split-levels, wooden floors, cosy rooms and breezy layouts, offering a quality retreat for all.

The hotel's Pizzeria Al Forno is a delightful spot where kids can relish fresh pizzas and even try their hand at making their own with guidance from the chefs. Occidental Paradise Dambulla additionally arranges a scenic breakfast picnic atop a rock formation, a short hike away from the property, offering a tantalising culinary experience paired with breathtaking views.

Occidental Paradise Dambulla promises a holiday experience like no other, blending nature's beauty with exciting activities and culinary delights. It's a place where relaxation, adventure and family fun come together seamlessly, creating unforgettable memories for all guests.

Upon stepping out of the room, one will find a plethora of activities to indulge in at

## Jetwing Hotels honored once again with a Presidential Environment Award

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Kandy Gallery shines at the Presidential Environment Awards 2024, securing the sole gold award in the hospitality category. Organized annually by the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) under the guidance of the Ministry of Environment, these awards recognize outstanding environmental practices by organizations and individuals, in the areas of green management approaches, sustainability reporting and disclosure mechanisms, pollution control, solid waste management and carbon emissions management.



Jetwing Kandy Gallery, nestled in Haragama a few minutes away from the bustling city of Kandy, offers panoramic views of the Mahaweli River and the riverine habitat beyond. The property pays homage to the peaceful coexistence of man and nature that long existed in the island's historic capital, with a number of sustainability initiatives in place.

data-driven approach empowers the team to make informed and timely decisions, optimizing performance and guest experiences.

While prioritising environmental stewardship, Jetwing Kandy Gallery also champions local community empowerment and engagement, with many associates at the property hailing from the surrounding communities, having participated in Jetwing's award winning Jetwing Youth Development Programme.

Jetwing Hotels operate under a unified sustainability framework, allowing each property to tailor its practices to best suit the six key areas outlined in the strategy: energy and carbon, water and waste, biodiversity, family, sourcing and production, and community and culture. This localized approach ensures environmental initiatives effectively address the specific needs of each location.

Jetwing Kandy Gallery stood out amongst a highly competitive field at this year's ceremony. Following a rigorous selection process, beginning with desk evaluation of over 900 applications and followed by on-site verification visits conducted by a distinguished panel of judges, representing the CEA, academia, and government institutions, the process ensured a comprehensive and unbiased evaluation. The hotel was the sole recipient of a gold award within the hospitality sector, joining 22 other gold awardees across various industries.

At Jetwing Kandy Gallery, the solar photovoltaic system in place significantly contributes to the hotel's energy needs, supplying over 40% of its daily electricity requirements. An on-site effluent treatment plant effectively treats 100% of the wastewater generated during hotel operations; and is then responsibly reused for irrigation purposes, minimizing reliance on freshwater resources.

Jetwing Kandy Gallery adds its name to the prestigious list of Jetwing Hotels' winners of the Presidential Environment Awards, joining Gold Awards for Jetwing Lagoon and Jetwing Lake, Silver Awards for Jetwing Vil Uyana, Jetwing Yala, Jetwing Lighthouse, and Jetwing Kaduruketha, and a Bronze Award for Jetwing Blue in previous years.

Jetwing Kandy Gallery leverages a comprehensive waste management system to ensure that all food waste is processed within an onsite biogas digester, producing biogas fuel used for cooking purposes, garden waste is composted and used as a soil enhancer for the hotel's garden, and any plastic waste is responsibly recycled. Jetwing Kandy Gallery maintains an onsite organic garden, prioritizing the cultivation of local herbs and vegetables, irrigated with treated water, with the produce being used to create delectable meals for guests.

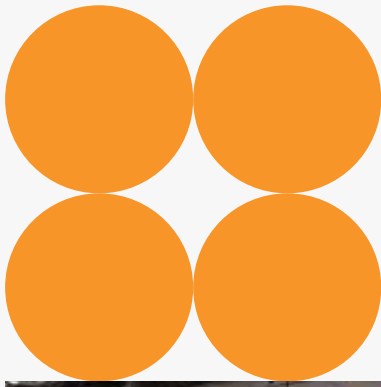
These awards serve as a testament to Jetwing Kandy Gallery's steadfast dedication to sustainability and encourages the company to continue advancing their environmental conservation efforts in the years ahead. With a legacy spanning over half a century in the tourism industry, Jetwing Hotels has established itself as a pioneer in curating unique experiences and offering authentic 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

Through meticulous monitoring and evaluation of every operational activity, Jetwing Kandy Gallery fosters continuous improvement across all areas. This



of luxury hotels and villas, each offering a unique perspective on Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.





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# HOTELS

## Lost In Translation: Colombo's Newest Hotspot At Port City

TTA BULLETIN

Lost In Translation (LIT), the city's newest bar is now open, sharing a space with Nihonbashi by Dharshan at Port City, Colombo. Offering stunning sunset views of the Colombo cityscape, LIT features innovative Japanese-inspired cocktails and bar snacks, making it an ideal spot for pre-dinner drinks or a casual evening with friends.

Our vibrant young team of mixologists serve up a range of signature cocktails that feature house-made syrups and Japanese elements at our 'rocking' bar counter made with giant stone boulders. Satisfy your cravings with our snacks ranging from okonomiyaki to sushi boxes to karapincha tempura and



the signature Nihonbashi burgers.

You can also enjoy weekly jams and events, aking every night a memorable one. From local bands to DJ nights and themed events, there will always be something exciting happening

Lost in Translation is open from 5 PM to 11 PM Sunday to Thursday and from 5 PM to 1 AM on Fridays and Saturdays. Whether you're looking to kick off your night in style or simply relax after a long day, Lost in Translation is the place to be!

## Pegasus Reef Hotel and Girithale Hotel Shine at Kandy City Center

TTA BULLETIN

On June 28, 2024, Pegasus Reef Hotel and Girithale Hotel captivated visitors at Kandy City Center with a dynamic sales promotion event. Held in a vibrant open area adorned with impressive LED walls, the event showcased the unique offerings of both hotels and appealed to all ages.

A highlight of the event was the Kids' Art Zone, where over 100 children participated in creative activities. The area featured an engaging backdrop where young artists used pastels, chalks, and stencils to create colorful artwork. Each child had the opportunity to have their art displayed and photographed against the hotel-themed backdrop. They also received gift bags filled with delightful surprises, leaving with big smiles and cherished memories.

Pegasus Reef Hotel, located in Wattala, boasts a stunning seaside location and family-friendly amenities. It is perfect for relaxing family vacations near Colombo, promising a picturesque retreat.

Girithale Hotel offers a tranquil escape in nature-rich Girithale, ideal for those seeking peace and natural beauty.

## Iconic Dusit Thani Bangkok hotel confirms reopening on 27 September 2024 with a stunning new look and elevated guest experience

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, has confirmed that its reimagined flagship Dusit Thani Bangkok hotel will officially open to guests on 27 September 2024, signalling an exciting new chapter for the company in Thailand and internationally.



Natapa Sriyuksiri

Dusit Thani Bangkok, which was the city's tallest, grandest building when it first opened in 1970.

"For over five decades, the original Dusit Thani Bangkok was a beloved landmark, a true ambassador of Thai hospitality for global travellers," said Ms Suthumpun. "As we embarked

on its reimagination, we were committed to honouring that legacy while exceeding the expectations of today's sophisticated guests. This meant meticulously preserving elements of the original hotel and seamlessly blending them with a fresh, modern design. Throughout this process, we stayed true to the vision of Dusit's founder, Thanpuying Chanut Piyaoui, and owner, Mr Chanin Donavanik, to showcase Thai culture, art, and gracious service in a way that resonates with contemporary travellers and adapts to evolving preferences. Sustainability remains a core focus for Dusit, and this commitment is also reflected in the new hotel's design and operations. Ultimately, we aim to deliver an unparalleled guest experience while preserving the warmth and service that have always been synonymous with the Dusit Thani name."

Ms Natapa Sriyuksiri, Managing Director – Dusit Estate and Group Creative Strategy, Dusit International, said that the main challenge in designing the new Dusit Thani Bangkok was capturing the essence of the original hotel's warmth and character while ensuring a fresh, modern aesthetic.

"The original Dusit Thani Bangkok had a soul all of its own, and our goal was to translate that spirit into a contemporary space equipped for the future," said Ms Sriyuksiri. "We started by reinterpreting the original hotel's unique design elements through a modern lens. This involved studying the hotel's distinctive interiors and architecture to identify patterns we could modernise or reference in new creations."

Envisaged by Architects 49 International Limited and OMA Asia Hong Kong Limited, a division of the esteemed Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), renowned for its groundbreaking contributions to architecture and urban planning, the new hotel's architecture pays homage to the unique style of its predecessor. Its elegant interiors, exquisitely crafted by internationally acclaimed Asian interior design firm, André Fu Studio, seamlessly blend the original hotel's rich heritage with contemporary Thai aesthetics, incorporating warm colour tones and subtle traditional motifs for a modern interpretation of classic Thai artistry and craftsmanship.

Further honouring the hotel's storied past, a signature 'Heritage Floor' designed by Thai interior design firm P49 Deesign & Associates Co. Ltd captures the spirit of the original property. This floor is adorned with exclusive artworks by local artists, each inspired by the hotel's legacy.

The reimagined Dusit Thani Bangkok goes beyond design to celebrate its heritage. The original hotel's iconic golden spire, a



beloved landmark, has returned and is now contained within a new, three-times-larger spire. Guests can also admire paintings and murals from the original hotel's Benjarong Thai Restaurant, including the restaurant's meticulously preserved main pillars, which were carefully removed and reinstalled in the new hotel's main lobby. The intricate carved teak ceiling from the same restaurant has also been meticulously reassembled and given a new life within the new hotel.

"By reimagining elements from the original Dusit Thani Bangkok and focusing on exquisite craftsmanship throughout the entire design process – from architecture to décor to furnishings – we've woven a connection between the hotel's past and present, creating a timeless harmony guests will experience throughout the entire new hotel," said Ms Sriyuksiri.

The four key pillars of Dusit Graciousness – Service (personalised and gracious), Locality (uniquely linking guests to the local community), Well-being (delivering wellness experiences beyond the spa); and Sustainability (social, economic, and environmental) – that inspire the guest experience at Dusit Hotels and Resorts worldwide also influenced the new hotel's design.



## Battle of the Reef Event Sparks Excitement with Sports & Music

On July 27th, the Battle of the Reef event burst into action at 4:00 PM, transforming the beach into a bustling center of activity and enjoyment.

The event brought together participants and spectators for an evening filled with competitive sports, delectable food, and live music.

The festivities commenced with an array of energetic sports competitions. Parti-

pants showcased their skills in tag rugby, engaged in a spirited tug of war, and battled it out on the beach volleyball courts.

The high stakes of the event, with significant cash prizes at stake, fueled a spirited atmosphere as teams vied for victory.

As the sports concluded, attention shifted to a diverse array of food stalls set up along the beach.

Attendees were treated to an impressive selection of culinary options, from fresh seafood to international delicacies, ensuring that everyone's taste buds were satisfied.

The beach came alive with the sounds of live music, creating a vibrant backdrop for the evening's festivities and encouraging attendees to dance and enjoy the lively atmosphere.

As night fell, the beach offered a perfect blend of serenity and excitement. The combination of competitive sports, delicious food, and engaging music provided a memorable experience for all who attended.

The Battle of the Reef event proved to be a significant success, highlighting the community's enthusiasm for fun and entertainment.





# HOTELS

## Mount Lavinia Hotel Hosts Unforgettable Caribbean Sunset Soirée

SRILAL MITHTHAPALA

On the evening of July 30, 2024, Mount Lavinia Hotel delighted its corporate friends, travel agents, wedding & event planners, media partners and other guests with an enchanting Caribbean Sunset Soirée. The event, held at the picturesque Paradise Beach, was a celebration of enduring partnerships and a testament to the hotel's commitment to fostering relationships with those who have supported them over the years.

The night unfolded beneath a canopy of stars, embodying the vibrant essence of a Caribbean night. Guests were transported to a tropical paradise with the venue's meticulously crafted decor, which included colorful accents, and Caribbean-themed decorations that created an immersive experience. The lively music resonated through the evening, setting the perfect backdrop for an unforgettable celebration.

"We are thrilled to have hosted a memorable event and to have had the opportunity to celebrate with those who have been integral to our journey," said Anura Dewapura, Chief Operating Officer, Mount Lavinia Hotel Group. "The Caribbean Sunset Soirée was more than just a party; it was a heartfelt expression of

our gratitude and a reaffirmation of our commitment to nurturing our longstanding relationships."

Attendees were treated to a selection of exquisite Caribbean-inspired cocktails and mocktails, each crafted to perfection and reflective of the region's rich and diverse flavors. The culinary experience was equally impressive, with a menu featuring an array of Caribbean dishes that captivated the taste buds and complemented the evening's ambiance.

The Caribbean Sunset Soirée not only provided a delightful evening of fun and fellowship but also served as a reaffirmation of the hotel's strong relationships with its partners. The night's festivities underscored the mutual appreciation and commitment between Mount Lavinia Hotel and its valued partners, paving the way for continued collaboration in the future.

As the night drew to a close, guests departed with renewed enthusiasm and a deepened connection to Mount Lavinia Hotel, eagerly anticipating future endeavours and collaborations.



## Minor Hotels to Debut the Tivoli and NH Hotel Brands in Northwest China

TTA BULLETIN

In a significant development for the hospitality sector in Northwest China, Minor Hotels (China) is announcing the official signing of a Tivoli and NH dual-branded property in Yining, Xinjiang. This marks the debut of the luxury Tivoli Hotels & Resorts and upscale NH Hotels & Resorts brands in Northwest China. Upon opening in 2026, the project is expected to welcome guests from around the globe.

Yining, a bustling city on China's western border, historically served as an essential trade hub on the Silk Road and now plays a crucial role in connecting Central Asia with Europe. Known for its picturesque natural landscapes and rich ethnic cultures, Yining boasts numerous attractions like the Kazak Folk Tourism Area and Six Star Street, making it a popular destination for domestic and international tourists.

The Tivoli and NH hotels are strategically located near local tourist attractions and the central business district. The ease of access via highways, high-speed trains, and flights enhances its appeal. The project, covering 1.6 million square meters, will offer diverse functionalities and include 200 guest rooms for each of the Tivoli and NH brands, as well as a commercial zone, a cultural performance centre, and residential areas. Notably, the cultural performance centre will host regular music and dance shows, while the commercial area, inspired by the ancient Silk Road design, aims to create an exotic shopping and leisure venue.

"We are excited to announce our first dual-branded property of Tivoli and NH Hotels in Northwest China," said Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels. "With such high profiles and strong



reputations throughout Europe, we are confident that the Tivoli and NH brand offerings will appeal to both Chinese and international travellers."

"The establishment of Tivoli and NH hotels in Yining is expected to significantly improve the local hotel industry landscape, attracting more visitors and contributing meaningfully to the economic development of Yining and the entire Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture," concluded Eddy Tiftik, VP of Operations & Development for Minor Hotel (China).

Founded in Portugal in 1933, Tivoli Hotels & Resorts has earned loyalty and admiration from celebrities and royalty worldwide for their unique designs and unparalleled experiences across dining, accommodation, and leisure activities. Tivoli's journey from Portugal to countries like Brazil, Qatar, China, The Netherlands, Italy and Spain continues to bring the Mediterranean's warmth and elegance globally to discerning travellers seeking refined lifestyles.

Originally from Spain, NH Hotels & Resorts opened its first property in 1978. It currently operates over 230 hotels and resorts in destinations across Europe and the Americas and is expanding its footprint into other regions. With thoughtfully designed rooms that ensure comfort and practicality, NH commits to providing reliable services and experiences, ensuring every journey with NH is always a pleasure.

## Galle Face Hotel and The Leela Palace Bengaluru, Along with Dean With Us, Announce "Heritage Crossroads": A Historic Culinary Collaboration

TTA BULLETIN

The Galle Face Hotel is delighted to announce an unprecedented collaboration with The Leela Palace Bengaluru, along with Dean With Us (Rupali Dean and Akanksha Dean), marking a historic first between two world-renowned hospitality giants. This unique event, aptly named "Heritage Crossroads," will feature a series of three-day showcases at each hotel, celebrating the rich culinary traditions of Sri Lanka and India.

Highlighting this gastronomic celebration, The Leela Palace Bengaluru's esteemed chefs, led by Chef Jashbeer Singh, with 18 years of culinary experience, will bring exquisite Indian cuisine from their award-winning restaurant 'Jamavar,' named after Kashmir brocades, embodying 'Atithi Devo Bhava'—where guests are revered like gods, to the Galle Face Hotel's 1864 Limited Edition restaurant from August 9th to 11th. Guests will experience an authentic journey through the tastes and aromas that define Indian cuisine, presented by culinary

masters from one of India's most iconic hotels.

Guests at 1864 Limited Edition can look forward to a curated menu that blends traditional techniques with contemporary flair, offering a unique dining experience that captures the essence of Indian cuisines. Anticipate indulging in royal delicacies like Meen Moilee, Murg Saagwala, and Khumb Ki Galawat, to name a few, as you celebrate Indian culinary grandeur. In addition to the culinary showcase, the event will also feature opportunities for guests to interact with the chefs.

Heritage Crossroads aims to highlight the unique flavours and traditions of Sri Lankan and Indian cuisines, fostering cultural exchange and enhancing the gastronomic experiences of guests at both esteemed hotels. This collaboration offers a rare opportunity for guests to experience the best of both culinary worlds, celebrating the deep cultural ties between Sri Lanka and India.

Heritage Crossroads goes beyond simply showcasing the culinary expertise of both countries; it is a celebration of the profound cultural bonds between Sri Lanka and India. Through this event, the Galle Face Hotel seeks to introduce the rich culinary heritage of Sri Lanka to the Indian market and reciprocally promote Indian flavours to Sri Lankans. This initiative seeks to foster a mutual appreciation for each other's traditions and culinary delights.

In alignment with Mr. Sanjeev Gardiner's vision—Chairman of the Galle Face Group—to promote tourism through culinary arts, fashion, and culture, Heritage Crossroads exemplifies this mission by intertwining cultural appreciation with gastronomic excellence.

The culmination of this collaboration will see Galle Face Hotel's culinary team, led by Chef Rukmal (Rukie) Samarasinghe, heading to The Leela Palace Bengaluru for

their showcase in India on September 6th, 7th, and 8th. The team will present contemporary cuisine at the prestigious Le Cirque Restaurant, offering guests in Bengaluru a taste of Sri Lanka's culinary prowess.

This gastronomic celebration is curated by Dean With Us; Akanksha Dean, a distinguished Food & Travel writer, Independent Chef, and Events Specialist trained under the renowned Massimo Bottura in Modena. Recipient of the 'F&B Concept Curator of The Year,' her travels shaped her unique culinary innovation and cultural insights alongside Rupali Dean, an accomplished Journalist, Food & Travel Photographer, and Events Specialist. Recognized for innovative culinary experiences, notably awarded 'Best Food Writer' and 'Culinary Event Curator of the Year,' their expertise and vision have been instrumental in bringing this collaboration to life, ensuring a truly memorable experience for all attendees.



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## Best Western Elyon Colombo's 10th Anniversary showcases resilience and optimism in Sri Lanka's tourism sector

TTA BULLETIN

Best Western Elyon Colombo, Sri Lanka's first-ever Best Western Hotel, proudly celebrated its 10th anniversary recently, marking a decade of exceptional service, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the future of Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

Best Western Elyon Colombo is part of the globally acclaimed Best Western Hotels, the 5th largest hotel chain in the world that boasts approximately 4,300 hotels in over 100 countries and territories worldwide.

To mark the important event, the Hotel hosted a series of special events, promotions, and packages including a celebratory evening.

Commenting on the achievement, Presantha Jayamaha, Managing Director, Best Western Elyon Hotel said "Our journey has been marked by resilience and untiring commitment. During this decade we have scaled many milestones and also overcome numerous challenges; emerging stronger each time, thanks to our dedicated team,

business partners and loyal guests. Today, we celebrate these relationships that have made this journey possible". Jayamaha also further stated, "We are excited about Sri Lanka's potential as a world-class destination and our new project under development in Tangalle reflects our confidence in the industry' potential and invite all stakeholders to join us in continuing to showcase the best of Sri Lanka to the world."

The Hotel's steadfast commitment to excellence is evident in the frequent accolades & awards, including multiple TripAdvisor Certificates of Excellence, which highlight its high standards and exceptional guest satisfaction including authentic hospitality. Throughout the past ten years, Best Western Elyon Colombo Hotel has continuously embraced innovation, seamlessly integrating modern technologies, and enhancing services to meet the evolving needs of guests. At the heart of this success story lies the unwavering dedication of the Hotel's staff and the loyal patronage of its guests. Ajith Gurugala, General Manager, of the Hotel, stated, "Through service and guest experience innovation, we aim to set new standards and position Colombo as a must-visit destination within Sri Lanka. Our pledge is to provide excellent hospitality and be a benchmark in Sri Lanka's tourism industry."

As Best Western Elyon Colombo's extraordinary journey continues, visitors are invited to experience the exceptional hospitality that has defined the Hotel over the past decade.

Best Western Elyon Colombo has 60 tastefully designed contemporary rooms, a range of modern facilities, including a stunning rooftop bar.



From Left to right - Ms. Roshi Lokuge - Head of Sales, Mr. Presantha Jayamaha - Managing Director, Mr. Nilantha Rupasinghe - Director, Mr. Maurice Jega - Director, Mr. Ajith Gurugalla - General Manager, Wijith Prasanna - Financial Controller

Jayamaha concluded, "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our guests, team members and business partners who have been part of our journey. With optimism and enthusiasm, we embrace the future, committed to excellence and innovation in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry."

## A Journey into Culinary Timelessness: The Cave Dinner Experience at Heritance Kandalama

TTA BULLETIN

Heritance Kandalama, located in Sri Lanka's cultural triangle, is renowned for its unique blend of heritage, natural beauty and stands as an architectural marvel. Within this eco-retreat lies a hidden gem: the Cave Dinner experience, an immersive culinary adventure unlike any other.

Step into a natural cavern resonating with history, where ancient fishermen once sought

refuge under starlit skies after a day on Kandalama Lake. Today, this cave transforms into a captivating dining venue. Whether you are a guest of the resort or visiting the Cultural Triangle, the Cave Dinner at Heritance Kandalama welcomes you to indulge in an evening of culinary and cultural immersion.

Amidst flickering candlelight and the



echoes of local melodies played by a traditional flutist from a nearby village, tables are artfully set against the backdrop of rugged cave walls adorned with tales of antiquity. Each dish presented during this six-course gastronomic journey is crafted by award-winning culinary artists. Menus are customizable, offering a choice between vegan, vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. Drawing from fruits

and vegetables sourced from the resort's own garden and locally purchased ingredients, this dining experience not only tantalizes the senses but also empowers nearby communities. It is a celebration of the region's rich agricultural heritage, ensuring every bite resonates with authenticity and flavour.

Heritance Kandalama invites guests to embark on a journey through flavours and history, where every meal becomes a celebration of local culture and creativity. Discover the magic of dining where past meets present and immerse yourself in an evening that promises memories as timeless as the landscapes that surround it.



## Minor Hotels Announces First NH Collection Property in Thailand

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a leading hospitality group, has announced the upcoming rebranding of Peace Resort Samui into NH Collection Samui, marking the arrival of NH Collection – an upscale brand synonymous with European refinement – to Thailand. From 1st January 2025, following a property upgrade, the resort will start operating as NH Collection Samui.

The 122-key property enjoys a prime location directly on Bophut Beach, nestled along the northern shore of Koh Samui at the foot of a lush hill, offering privacy and tranquillity while remaining conveniently close to shopping and entertainment. Originally established in 1977 by the Pupai-boon family, the property has been independently operated ever since, becoming a popular holiday destination for generations of Thais and international guests.

The resort is strategically positioned within easy reach of the vibrant Fisherman's Village that is home to numerous restaurants, bars and shops. A mere 400 metres from NH Collection Samui, a sister property, Anantara Bophut Koh Samui Resort, offers a host of upscale leisure and dining options, suggesting an opportunity for shared facilities and additional benefits.

Catering to a wide variety of travellers, from solo vacationers to extended families, NH Collection Samui offers a mix of deluxe rooms, bungalows and villas, some with private swimming pools and direct beach access. The all-day-dining restaurant serves local and global flavours alongside ocean views; the bar pours passionate drinks from its strategic position between the pool and the beach; and the lobby-side Indigo Lounge is



an elegant haven of tea and cakes. Seafood and meat lovers can also request a private in-villa BBQ experience.

Recreational facilities abound, including a fitness centre, water sports centre, and kids' and teens' facilities ranging from cinema and indoor play area to a shaded outdoor playground. For necessities, there is a thoughtfully stocked retail shop, while flexible meeting and event spaces will showcase NH Collection's signature blend of intuitive service, top-range technology and unexpected design touches.

"We are thrilled to partner with the esteemed Pupai-boon family to bring the first NH Collection hotel to Thailand as part of the brand's expansion outside of Europe and Americas," said Mark O'Sullivan, Vice President of Operations - Bangkok, Samui, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. "Our joint vision for the beloved resort includes potential further development down the line, including stand-alone villas or branded residential units for sale to meet a growing demand for upscale holiday homes and investment properties. I look forward to welcoming guests to this exceptional addition to our collection of resorts in Thailand."

Samui Airport is approximately 15-20 minutes by car. Nathon Pier, which connects Koh Samui to Bangkok, Phuket, Koh Phangan and other popular destinations, is a 25-minute drive away. NH Collection Samui joins Minor Hotels' portfolio as the fifth property on the island and over twenty in Thailand.



## The Great Elephant Gathering: Discovering Nature's Majesty at Heritance Kandalama

TTA BULLETIN

Heritance Kandalama, nestled within Sri Lanka's cultural triangle, the resort provides a serene retreat where modern comfort meets the island's rich heritage. Located near the tranquil Kandalama Lake with the iconic Sigiriya Rock Fortress in view, this eco-resort, designed by Deshamanya Geoffrey Bawa, offers a tranquil escape amidst nature's embraces.



backdrop of the park's natural splendor, witnessing these majestic creatures is a captivating experience that showcases Sri Lanka's diverse wildlife.

Heritance Kandalama provides guided tours that prioritize wildlife conservation, allowing guests to responsibly witness the awe-inspiring Elephant Gathering. Located just 50 minutes from the resort, Minneriya National Park, and an hour away, Kaudulla National Park, offer not only a wildlife spectacle but also a scenic route that enhances the overall experience. Whether capturing moments on camera or immersing themselves in the tranquil surroundings, guests depart the resort with a profound appreciation for Sri Lanka's natural wonders and the unique wildlife that surrounds it.

Nearby, Minneriya and Kaudulla National Parks are renowned for hosting one of the world's most extraordinary natural events, the Elephant Gathering. Recognized globally and listed by Lonely Planet as one of the Top Ten Wildlife Spectacles in the World, this annual phenomenon unfolds from July to October. Central to this spectacle is a sprawling reservoir, built centuries ago by King Mahasen, now a sanctuary where wild elephants converge during the dry season.

Known simply as 'the Gathering', this mesmerizing event draws herds of Asian elephants, sometimes exceeding 200, who come to graze on the lush grasses and bathe in the replenishing waters. Against the

## ONYX Hospitality Group Showcases Portfolio at 'Destination Representation' Events, Targeting Regional Agents in the UK

TTA BULLETIN

ONYX Hospitality Group, a prominent hospitality provider in the Asia-Pacific region, proudly participated in a series of 'Destination Representation' events held across the UK in July 2024. The events were designed to enhance and expand travel industry partnerships across regional UK locations, showcasing ONYX's diverse portfolio of properties to a broad audience.



as Born 2 Travel, Designer Travel, Spa Travel, Arundel Travel, and Travel Counsellors. They had the opportunity to engage directly with Andrea Hogg, Director of Global Sales for the UK & Ireland at ONYX Hospitality Group, and experience a detailed presentation on ONYX's properties.

"The series of 'Destination Representation' long-haul events were incredibly successful. I was thrilled to network with key players in the UK travel industry and have the opportunity to make new connections in different regions," said Andrea Hogg. "It was fantastic to meet with dedicated travel agents who are passionate about promoting long-haul travel. The enthusiasm and interest shown in our properties were truly inspiring. These interactions will undoubtedly help us to enhance our visibility in the UK market and strengthen our relationships with valuable partners. The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive, and I am excited about the potential collaborations that will emerge from these events."

The UK remains a crucial market for ONYX Hospitality Group, with UK room night sales for the first half of the year up by 47% year-on-year and revenue up by 63%. Forward pacing for the rest of the year also looks strong.

Held in Wetherby and Aylesbury, the industry gatherings featured networking opportunities, presentations, and quizzes with exciting prizes. Organised by Destination Representation, a market leader in UK travel industry event management, the objective was to connect agents with a wide range of travel suppliers specialising in worldwide holidays with a focus on long-haul.

These events provided an ideal platform for ONYX Hospitality Group to build key relationships within the travel trade and educate agents about its extensive range of hotels and resorts, encompassing the brands Amari, OZO, Shama, and Oriental Residence.

ONYX's participation aimed to provide agents with comprehensive knowledge about the unique features and offerings of its properties, ensuring they are well-prepared to inspire and facilitate holiday bookings for their customers.

Attending agents, all qualified long-haul travel sellers, represented companies such

## Wild Glamping Gal Oya by Thema Collection Receives 'Outstanding Sustainable Concept Award': A Testament to Responsible Tourism

TTA BULLETIN

In a world where sustainability is increasingly becoming a focal point, Wild Glamping Gal Oya stands out as a beacon of responsible tourism in Sri Lanka. Recently honored with the prestigious 'Outstanding Sustainable Concept Award' at the Sustainable Tourism Certification Awards 2024, organized by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) in partnership with United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the National Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme (NSTCS), Green Destinations, and the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN). In addition to this award, Wild Glamping Gal Oya, alongside two other Thema Collection properties, Wild Glamping Knuckles and Mountbatten Bungalow, earned the Green Destination Good Travel Seal certification for their dedication to sustainable tourism.

Nestled in the heart of "Rathugala," a picturesque village surrounded by majestic mountains, Wild Glamping Gal Oya offers a unique experience of glamping amidst the natural beauty of Sri Lanka. Constructed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, Wild Glamping Gal Oya was built by the indigenous community using locally sourced, eco-friendly materials. Drawing inspiration from the architectural heritage of the indigenous Veddah community of Sri Lanka, the resort's design echoes the traditional homes of the Veddahs, incorporating their expertise and traditional knowledge into every aspect of its construction.

From upcycled materials to locally sourced resources, every detail of the resort reflects a commitment to minimizing environmental impact and supporting the local economy. This dedication has earned Wild Glamping Gal Oya the prestigious Platinum Certification from the Green Building Council of Sri Lanka, highlighting its outstanding commitment to environmental sustainability and eco-friendly practices.

However, sustainability at Wild Glamping Gal Oya extends beyond just environmental

conservation. The resort is deeply invested in uplifting the local community, particularly the Vedda people who are indigenous to the area. By providing employment opportunities and actively involving the local community in the resort's operations, Wild Glamping Gal Oya ensures that its success translates into tangible benefits for those who call Rathugala home.

One of the most compelling aspects of Wild Glamping Gal Oya is its good practice agriculture farm spread across, a 30-acres bordering Rambakan Oya. Utilizing a concept of integrated farm management, the farm operates in harmony with the surrounding ecosystem. In addition to sustainable farming practices, Wild glamping Gal Oya implements other green initiatives such as electricity generation via solar power, drip irrigation system, and compost-making techniques, demonstrating their commitment to environmental conservation. The involvement of aboriginal farmers from Rathugala village provides guests with a unique opportunity to learn traditional farming techniques and immerse themselves in the indigenous community's way of life.

In essence, Wild Glamping Gal Oya offers more than just a luxurious retreat amidst nature. It is a testament to what can be achieved when sustainability and community empowerment are at the forefront of tourism initiatives. As travelers seek meaningful and authentic experiences, places like Wild Glamping Gal Oya serve as an inspiration, proving that responsible tourism can be both enriching and rewarding.





# AIRLINES

## Qatar Airways Elevates to Principal Partner with Serie A Champions FC Internazionale Milano

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways is furthering its partnership with FC Internazionale Milano (Inter) as the Official Main Training Kit Partner, as well as remaining Inter's Official Airline Partner. This enhanced collaboration symbolises a commitment to



excellence and performance, starting with the essential pre-season preparations for the current Serie A and Italian Supercup champions.

The Qatar Airways logo will now be prominently featured on all training apparel and warm-up jerseys at all competitions, including Serie A, Coppa Italia, FIFA Club World Cup 2025™ and UEFA Champions League. The expanded partnership extends across all teams, including Inter Women and the Inter youth sector, and encompasses all business units from the existing Qatar Airways agreement, including:

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "As we commemorate our deepening alliance with Inter as the Official Main Training Kit Partner, it reflects the shared

successes during our first season together. We have witnessed the team achieve the status as the best team in Italy, while we also took the position of the World's Best Airline this year. We hope to build on this joint success together on the pitch and in the skies while remaining committed to uniting Inter fans, and are excited to support the team prosper in another exciting year of football."

FC Internazionale Milano Corporate CEO, Alessandro Antonello, said: "We are thrilled to announce this upgraded partnership with Qatar Airways, which is a reflection of how successful our relationship was last season. During our first year together, Qatar Airways became fully integrated within the Inter family, sharing the joy of our Scudetto triumph and running a series of unique initiatives for our fans. As our Official Main Training Kit Partner, Qatar Airways will now become an even more integral part of our club, accompanying our players in every training session and enjoying global visibility during the team's pre-match warm-ups. We hope to be able to achieve new and exciting goals with Qatar Airways."

## Cathay Pacific unveils its new inflight safety video with the pulsing energy of Hong Kong

TTA BULLETIN

Cathay Pacific is delighted to reveal its new inflight safety video that takes customers through important inflight safety procedures set against the dynamic backdrop of Hong Kong.



Told through the electrifying energy and vibrancy of the airline's home city, the video was developed in close collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to embody all necessary safety protocols while educating customers in an informative and engaging way.

With its deep roots in Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific strives to promote Hong Kong as a favoured destination and gateway to travellers from all over the world. The safety demonstrations in the video are interwoven with the unique charms of Hong Kong, capturing the city's iconic landmarks, bustling happenings, world-class arts and cultural attractions, natural landscapes and more.

To mark the launch of the video, Cathay Pacific held a preview event at The Sky Lounge, The Upper House on 26 July, hosted by Cathay Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau and attended by distinguished guests including Hong Kong Tourism Board Executive Director Dane Cheng and Commissioner for Tourism Vivian Sum.

Cathay Pacific's Lavinia Lau said: "At Cathay Pacific, safety has always been at the heart of everything we do, and this new video embodies our commitment to keeping our customers informed and prepared, while fostering our Move Beyond spirit. We wanted to put our own spin on the video and create something truly memorable that resonates with our global audience and showcases the true essence of our home city on the move."

Hong Kong Tourism Board's Dane Cheng expressed his delight in the partnership: "HKTB and Cathay Pacific have been long-time partners in promoting Hong Kong's tourism excellence to visitors worldwide. We are excited to join hands to showcase Hong Kong's vibrant, diverse and unique east-meets-west experiences through this video, which reaches millions of travellers from all around the world every year."

Replacing the current inflight safety video introduced over seven years ago, the new version will be progressively rolled out across Cathay Pacific flights from 1 August 2024 onwards.

## IndiGo Expands International Network with New Daily Flights from Chennai to Jaffna

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, recently announced the launch of a new international route, connecting Chennai to Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Starting on September 01, 2024, this new daily non-stop service will be IndiGo's second destination in Sri Lanka after Colombo, and will mark the airline's 34th international and 122nd overall destination in its rapidly expanding 6E network.



passengers flying this route in just nine months last year. The introduction of IndiGo's direct flight is expected to further boost this resurgence, offering seamless connectivity that taps into a key market for Sri Lanka's tourism revival.

This strategic expansion underscores IndiGo's commitment to enhancing connectivity between India and Sri Lanka, two nations with deep-rooted cultural and trade ties. These ties have been further strengthened over the years through cooperation in various fields such as commerce, infrastructure development, and most importantly, air connectivity.

India has long been the top source market for international tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka. In June 2024 alone, Indian tourists accounted for 25.2% of all international arrivals to Sri Lanka, with over 28,631 travelers visiting the island nation. This marks a steady increase from June 2023, where 26,830 Indian tourists made up 26.7% of the total arrivals. Given the growing interest in travel to Jaffna, IndiGo's new route is well-timed to meet this demand, offering enhanced accessibility and complementing the airline's existing services to Colombo. The new connection will provide travelers with an alternative gateway to Sri Lanka, particularly appealing to those looking to explore the less-traveled northern regions of the country.

The demand for travel between Chennai and Jaffna is apparent, with over 21,000

India and Sri Lanka share a rich legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious, and trade relations spanning over 2,500 years. This new route serves to further cement these ties, offering a convenient travel option for those looking to explore the cultural and historical connections between the two countries.

Jaffna, located in the northern province of Sri Lanka, is a destination known for its rich history and cultural significance. The city's vibrant Tamil heritage is evident in its traditions, festivals, and historical landmarks, reflecting the resilience and diversity of its people. Travelers to Jaffna can explore iconic sites such as the Jaffna Fort, a testament to the region's colonial past, and the Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil, a revered Hindu temple that holds both religious and cultural importance. The community's resilience, coupled with its cultural treasures and unique culinary delights, makes Jaffna a must-visit destination for those seeking an authentic and enriching travel experience.

IndiGo's new Chennai-Jaffna route not only enhances travel convenience but also serves to strengthen the cultural and economic ties between India and Sri Lanka. This new flight offers travelers an exciting opportunity to explore the rich heritage of Jaffna while enjoying IndiGo's signature service and reliability.

## UAE Women's National Cricket Team Aboard SriLankan Airlines

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines recently had the privilege of flying the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Women's National Cricket Team from Dubai to Sri Lanka for Women's Asia Cup 2024, scheduled to take place in Dambulla from 19 July to 28 July 2024. The 19-member team received a warm welcome from SriLankan Airlines, ensuring that their

entire journey was on form from start to end. For many of the members, this was their first visit to Sri Lanka. SriLankan Airlines guaranteed that their first experience of the country began right onboard the flight, offering them the best of Sri Lankan hospitality and the island's culinary traditions.





## SriLankan Airlines Introduces Eco-friendly Amenities in Business Class

TTA BULLETIN

Comfort meets sustainability in Business Class as SriLankan Airlines introduces new eco-friendly pillow covers and headrest covers (antimacassars) made from recycled PET plastic (rPET). This progressive move underscores the airline's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint as a sustainability-forward organization, while continuing to provide customers with the highest standards of quality.



The new amenities are sourced from Procurall Solutions, a leader in designing and developing comfort and care solutions for the world's top airlines. The pillow covers and antimacassars are made entirely from sustainable polyester, created from recycled PET plastic. This not only helps reduce plastic pollution but also conserves natural resources. Additionally, the production process of rPET is more energy-efficient, providing an added environmental benefit.

Beyond the significant environmental benefits, the new pillow covers and antimacassars also feature a luxurious design, offering both style and comfort at 30,000 feet. Made from soft, durable and breathable fabric, they ensure maximum comfort and relaxation for passengers.

The switch to rPET amenities demonstrates SriLankan Airlines' enduring commitment to promoting sustainable operations for a greener future. These new items will complement the eco-friendly carpets introduced onboard a few months ago, as the airline takes gradual steps towards converting to fully sustainable cabins.

## Emirates SkyCargo orders 5 Boeing 777Fs, for immediate delivery in FY 25/26

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates SkyCargo, the cargo arm of the world's largest international airline, has announced a firm order for an additional five Boeing 777 freighters, with immediate delivery between 2025 and 2026. The US\$ 1billion order will take the airline's total order book to 315 wide-body aircraft.



Emirates SkyCargo performance throughout Q1 of its current 2024-25 financial year has been exceptional, with consistently high load factors and tonnages surpassing 2019 figures. Once the new aircraft enter in service, available main deck cargo capacity will increase by 30%, allowing the airline to deploy much-needed space into key markets, and better serve global customers.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates airline and Group said: "Demand for our world-class product and services is growing exponentially, further amplified by Dubai's Economic Agenda which aims to double foreign trade and reinforce the city's position as a global trading hub. This investment in additional Boeing 777 capacity enables us to cater to customer demand and marks a step forward on our long-term strategic growth plan.

The next phase of our strategy will include a full assessment for our future freighter fleet reviewing all aircraft options to ensure we are best equipped to respond to the evolving demands of the market and reaffirming our confidence in the role of airfreight and, more specifically, Emirates SkyCargo, in global

trade."

"We are honored that Emirates SkyCargo, renowned for operational excellence and innovation, has once again selected the Boeing 777 Freighter to extend the reach of its global network," said Stephanie Pope, president and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "We deeply value Emirates' trust in the Boeing widebody family and are committed to supporting their long-term strategic growth plan."

With the staggered delivery of its new aircraft, Emirates SkyCargo will retire older freighters, reinforcing the airline's commitment to operating one of the youngest and most efficient fleets in the sky.

In addition to the 10 Boeing 777Fs on order, the airline's cargo capabilities will be bolstered by the 10 777-300ERs currently being converted into freighters, taking Emirates' freighter fleet to 17 aircraft by the end of 2025. Harnessing the Emirates passenger fleet, the cargo division will continue to facilitate the fast, reliable and efficient movement of goods worldwide, offering customers more flexibility with a fleet mix comprised of 777s, 777Fs, 747Fs, A350s, and A380s.

## Gulf Air Group Reports Passenger and Travel Statistics of First Half 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Gulf Air Group has reported robust first half-year statistics for Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Bahrain Airport Company (BAC), the operator and managing body of Bahrain International Airport, for 2024. The performance in the first half of the year was marked by an increase in passenger numbers, Travel Volume and cargo traffic.

The airline strengthened its Asia-Pacific and European network with new flights to Guangzhou and Shanghai in China, and Munich in Germany, establishing additional connectivity with Bahrain.

Furthermore, the airline resumed flights to the cities of Baghdad and Najaf in Iraq, increased frequencies to the Qatari capital of Doha, and the Omani capital of Muscat, in addition to Manchester in the United Kingdom, and Milan and Rome in Italy, and launched new seasonal destinations to Alula in Saudi Arabia, Geneva in Switzerland, and Rhodes in Greece.

Passenger volume increased by 8.5% to 3.1 million compared to the same period last year. Capacity grew to more than 4.3 million, while passenger load factor rose to 77.9% and cargo traffic increased by 3.5% to 41,000 tons.

## مجموعة طيران الخليج GULF AIR GROUP

In terms of overall passenger statistics in Bahrain International Airport, Bahrain Airport Company (BAC) reported a 13.2% increase in passenger volume to 4.6 million in the first half of 2024, as well as a 9.4% rise in air traffic movements to over 48,000. Cargo operations saw an increase of 7.19% to 189,799 tonnes compared to the first half of 2023.

As for new airlines, Bahrain Airport Company welcomed Fly Jinnah (Pakistan's leading low-cost carrier) which began flights from Islamabad to Bahrain in July.

Garnering industry recognition, Bahrain Airport Company was honored with two leading industry awards: 'Airport Operator of the Year for Medium Size Airport' and 'Aviation Sustainability Award' at the 2024 Aviation Achievement Awards, as well as Skytrax "Best Airport Staff in the Middle East 2024" award.

Gulf Air Group was founded in 2010 to improve the coordination amongst the various entities within the group in order to enhance the contribution of the aviation sector to Bahrain's economy and maximise stakeholder value.

## SriLankan Aviation College Gains Nepal Civil Aviation Authority Accreditation

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Aviation College, a regional leader in aviation training, achieved a significant milestone by receiving accreditation from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal for Type Training. This accreditation designates SriLankan Aviation College as the only NCAR Part-147 (Nepalese Civil Airworthiness Requirements for Maintenance Training Organizations) approved organization in Nepal, making it a key player in aviation training in the country.



Kalinga Hiranya, Deputy General Manager of SriLankan Aviation College, stated, "With the achievement of the Nepalese Civil Aviation Authority approval, SriLankan Aviation College, the training arm

of the national carrier SriLankan Airlines, has secured its 35th international accreditation, expanding its global reach. This is a significant accomplishment for both the training arm and the airline, allowing us to offer our world-class training portfolio to a broader audience in the region."

The approval paves the way for Himalaya Airlines and other regional carriers to collaborate with SriLankan Aviation College and have its facility listed in the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) Maintenance Training Organization Exposition (MTOE), addressing the gap of EASA-approved training organizations in Nepal. This collaboration will enable SriLankan Aviation College to offer both theoretical and practical type training in Nepal, adhering to international training standards, and contribute to enhancing aviation skills and competencies in the country.

The approval from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal adds to the extensive list of accreditations that SriLankan Aviation College has scored over the years. This includes certifications from the EASA, which is recognized in 27 European countries, as well as approvals from the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL), the Maldives Civil Aviation Authority (MCAA) and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA). The college's achievement underscores its commitment to providing top-tier training services while catering to students from both domestic and international regions.



# AIRLINES

## Emirates' in-flight meals pre-ordering service now available across all German gateways

TTA BULLETIN

Expanding the restaurant-above-the-clouds experience: Emirates' Business Class passengers can now select their hot main meal between 14 days and 24 hours before departure across the airline's all four German gateways. This further enables the airline to ensure guests always receive their favourite meals.



Last year, Emirates introduced the service for Business Class passengers on its busiest routes including Hamburg, and has since expanded the offer to more points in its global network. Emirates' Business Class customers can now pre-order in-flight meals on flights departing from Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich and Duesseldorf. The service is now available on more than 100 routes worldwide. To date, more than 135,000 pre-orders have already been delivered on over 30,000 flights. Every day, more than 400 meals are pre-ordered by Emirates' customers.

From 14 days up to 24 hours before departure, guests can view the menu for their flight online at emirates.de or via the Emirates app and choose from a range of regionally inspired dishes with local ingredients. Special Meals, which cater for dietary, religious or nutritional preferences, can also be pre-ordered.

Emirates' culinary offerings for the Business Class passengers flying between Germany and Dubai include grilled veal chop with green pepper sauce, grilled

courgettes, caramelised fennel and Anna potatoes with herbs, roast chicken with thyme and garlic, served with chicken jus with truffle oil, celeriac puree, red herb potatoes, pearl onions and blanched broccolini or fish tahta with pan-fried grouper in Emirati spices, served with buttered rice and fried onions as a main course. Passengers can also choose from over 300 vegan dishes in the changing menu, such as roasted cauliflower with ancient grains, lovage pesto with caramelised pear or ragout of Asian tofu and shitake mushrooms with glass noodles.

The pre-orders are added to existing AI-supported data for tracking customer preferences and information from the cabin crew, which enables the menu planning, the optimal loading of the aircraft with food. On board, cabin crew use a specially developed app to view the meal selection and serve the guest the desired dish. The new offering is a further service initiative for digital passenger convenience when travelling.

In addition to check-in via website and app, the option of a digital boarding pass and itinerary management, Emirates' customers can access digital menus in advance, register for the Skywards frequent flyer programme or create a personal playlist of films, series and music tracks for in-flight entertainment ahead of their flights, which is synchronised with the personal screen using the app.

## SriLankan Airlines Promotes Dual-Country Holidays with UAE Tour Operators

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines, in collaboration with Travel Portfolio from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Aitken Spence Travels from Sri Lanka, recently concluded a successful familiarization (FAM) tour of Thailand and Sri Lanka for top travel and tour operators in Dubai. The FAM tour was designed to raise awareness about the new seamless connections from the Middle East, including Dubai and Abu Dhabi, to Bangkok via Colombo on flight UL 404, and to showcase Sri Lanka as a captivating holiday destination to UAE tour operators.

SriLankan Airlines currently offers daily services from Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, Jeddah and Kuwait City to Colombo and operates 11 flights per week between Colombo and Bangkok. The schedule of flight UL 404 facilitates seamless connections via Colombo, allowing for quick transfers for passengers heading to Bangkok. Moreover, the scheduled arrival time of UL 404 at 12:50hrs in Bangkok and the departure time of the corresponding return flight UL 405 at 13:55hrs perfectly align with standard hotel check-in and check-out times for the convenience of holiday travellers.

Additionally, passengers traveling from the Middle East can enjoy a free stopover in Colombo when flying to Bangkok on SriLankan Airlines, offering the opportunity for a dual-country vacation in one trip. SriLankan Airlines also offers convenient connections via Colombo between nine key Indian cities and Bangkok.

The travel and tour operators discovered the best of both worlds during the FAM tour. They explored the vibrant street life and shopping that capture the essence of Bangkok, as well as the bustling melting pot of Colombo, sun-kissed southern beaches, and the historic city of Galle, all deeply rooted in Sri Lanka's heritage.

With the FAM tour wrapped up, SriLankan Airlines aims to strategically promote seamless connections via Colombo and position Sri Lanka as a premier, sought-after destination in South Asia for tourists from the UAE, with the support of local travel and tour operators. The pearl of the Indian ocean has something for everyone, and holiday seekers from the UAE will find that Sri Lanka holds the key to their perfect Asian getaway.



## THAI Ranked Among Top 10 in TRAVEL +LEISURE World's Best Awards 2024 in the Best International Airlines

TTA BULLETIN

Thai Airways International Public Company Limited



(THAI) was ranked eighth in the Best International Airlines of TRAVEL+LEISURE World's Best Awards 2024. The survey was carried out by TRAVEL+LEISURE readers including travellers, tourists and businesspersons from around the world who completed this annual survey on their travel experiences covering service providers in several categories such as hotels, resorts, cities, islands, cruise ships, spas, and airlines.

Airlines were rated based on cabin comfort, inflight service, customer service and value. The ranking has determined THAI's commitment and dedication to provide the best service qualities of international standards. The company would like to extend our highest gratitude to all passengers for their continual support and trust.

TRAVEL+LEISURE is the internationally renowned travel magazine based in the United States of America with worldwide network.

## Qatar Airways Unveils Highly Anticipated 'Qsuite Next Gen' on the First Day of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024

TTA BULLETIN

On the first morning of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, unveiled the new, ultra-modern 'Qsuite Next Gen'. This latest iteration of the award-winning Qatar Airways Qsuite brings the World's Best Business Class in commercial aviation to new heights. The reveal was held in the presence of His Excellency Jassim bin Saif bin Ahmed Al Sulaiti, the Qatari Minister of Transport; and Mr. Mohamed Faleh Alhajri, Acting President of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority.

In the Qatar Airways Discover Lounge at the Farnborough International Airshow, Engr. Al-Meer introduced the Qsuite Next Gen with Sama – the World's First AI Digital Human cabin crew. Sama built up the audience's excitement through an interactive conversation on how the World's Best Airline has once again redefined luxury and innovation, elevating the industry's benchmark in business class experiences.

During the reveal, Engr. Al-Meer highlighted the Qsuite Next Gen's new and enhanced features, including fully customisable Quad Suites; Companion Suites in window aisles; 4K OLED manoeuvrable in-flight entertainment (IFE) screens; along with increased space and privacy in each suite.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr



Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "We are excited to have finally revealed the long-awaited Qsuite Next Gen at the Farnborough International Airshow. Qatar Airways has once again raised the bar for its award-winning product, the Qsuite. We look forward to welcoming media and partners to our stand throughout the week to experience the future of business class travel with the World's Best Business Class onboard the World's Best Airline."

The game-changing Qsuite Next Gen aims to facilitate a mindful work-life balance with its revolutionary attributes for all professionals, friends, and families. The redesigned Quad Suite is now equipped with movable 4K OLED Panasonic Astrova IFE screens – a first for any airline in the world. The screens can be repositioned to the side to create the largest social and productivity space in the sky for up to four passengers in the Quad Suite, and up to two passengers in the Companion Suite.

Rest and relaxation on-board the Quad Suite has also been enhanced with increased space for dining together – a hallmark of Qatari heritage, as well added privacy with taller, digitally controlled dividers. With larger lie-flat and double beds, the new Quad Suite will also offer the 5-star Qatar Airways turn-down service with a dedicated 'Make My Bed' feature.





# Waraka

U D A W A L A W E



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



# Thema

COLLECTION



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SIGIRIYA



Maalu Maalu  
PASIKUDA



Kithala  
TISSA-YALA



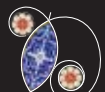
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