

# TRAVEL TALK

## Asia



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

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## Jetwing Hotels launches Jetwing Jungle Lodge, Yala

Sustainable luxury in the wilderness

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

In the heart of Sri Lanka's wild coastal frontier, the newly refurbished Jetwing Jungle Lodge (formerly known as Jetwing Safari Camp) has emerged as a beacon of sustainable luxury. This exquisite retreat, nestled adjacent to the renowned Yala National Park, offers guests an unparalleled experience of coastal luxury amidst the untamed beauty of nature.

Jetwing Jungle Lodge is not just a hotel; it's an immersive experience that blends the thrill of the wilderness with the comfort of luxury. The lodge boasts ten private Jungle Dwellings, each a sanctuary of serenity with expansive wooden terraces that serve as perfect vantage points to observe the diverse wildlife that roams freely through the property.

"The demand for sustainable travel is on the rise. Jetwing Jungle Lodge is positioned to offer visitors a luxurious and sustainable abode while experiencing the best of nature" said Dmitri Cooray, Managing Director Jetwing Hotels.

The recent enhancements at Jetwing Jungle Lodge are not limited to aesthetic upgrades. The introduction of a stunning rooftop infinity pool offers guests a tranquil oasis to soak in panoramic views of the Indian Ocean and the lush jungle canopy. The culinary journey at the lodge is a celebration of Sri Lankan heritage, infused with international flavors, offering guests a diverse palette of dining options from the main restaurant, The Thicket, to unique dining experiences at



Dmitri Cooray

The Hive rooftop bar and beach dining on the dunes. Additionally, to elevate the guest experience, a team of skilled butlers is on hand to offer personalized service and curate exclusive excursions.

Jetwing Jungle Lodge's commitment to sustainability is evident in its strides towards becoming Sri Lanka's first 'Net Zero' resort. The installation of a 125kW solar photovoltaic system marks a significant step in this journey, projecting to offset the entirety of the resort's direct and indirect emissions. The transition from conventional fuels to on-site generated biogas and biomass further underscores the lodge's dedication to environmental stewardship.

For those seeking an escape that harmonizes luxury with ecological consciousness, Jetwing Jungle Lodge offers a guilt-free retreat into the wild, where every moment is a step towards a more sustainable future.

## Rebounding Strong: Sri Lanka Tourism's Mid-Year Review Highlights Growth and Future Potential

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka Tourism has embarked on a transformative journey, steadily rebranding itself under the new identity, "Sri Lanka: You Will Come Back for More." This vibrant new outlook reflects a fresh chapter in the country's tourism success story, marked by a resilient bounce back from its past economic challenges.

One of the standout initiatives in 2024 was the "Seeing is Believing" campaign, which brought the beauty and culture of Sri Lanka to the global stage. By inviting 58 foreign media professionals, including travel influencers and bloggers, the campaign generated over USD 550 million worth of media publicity. This powerful push amplified the nation's image, showing the world that Sri Lanka is not just back—it's better than ever.

"With over 1,250,000 million tourist's arrivals recorded up to the 15th of August, there is no doubt that we can surpass the anticipated targets for this year. We can attribute this surge in arrivals to the multiple factors which have been both private sector and government driven" said Chalaka Gajabahu, Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau.

Throughout the year, Sri Lanka Tourism has had a significant presence on the international stage. Participating in 16 major travel shows, including ITB-Germany, FITUR-Spain, ATM-Dubai, IFTM-France, SATTE-India, BIT-Milan,



and GIFT-China, the country showcased its offerings to a global audience. Additionally, 16 roadshows were organized in key markets like India, China, Australia, and Turkey, focusing on business-to-business (B2B) sessions to forge stronger ties with international partners.

Domestically, Sri Lanka Tourism has supported cultural events of national importance, such as the Duruthu Perahera, Gangarama Navam Perahera, Buddha Rashmi Vesak Festival, and the Kandy Esala Perahera. These events not only attract tourists but also preserve and promote Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage.

"The Northern city of Jaffna was recently categorized as a 'hidden gem' by CNN further increasing awareness on Sri Lanka's northern capital"

A significant milestone this year was the launch of PR and digital campaigns in top markets like India, China, the UK, Germany, and France. These year-long campaigns aim to boost awareness of Sri Lanka, especially during the winter season, paving the way for a strong 2025.

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**A NEW ICON IN COLOMBO'S VIBRANT TAPESTRY**

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As we reach the halfway point of 2024, Sri Lanka's tourism industry is steadily recovering, having welcomed over a million visitors. This milestone reflects the resilience and determination of the country to bounce back after years of challenges. The numerous accolades and endorsements Sri Lanka has received this year further affirm its status as a premier destination, recognized globally for its cultural richness, natural beauty, and hospitality.

However, amidst these promising developments, we are reminded of the complexities that come with recovery. The upcoming presidential elections this month are a critical juncture for the country. Stability is essential for sustaining the growth trajectory of tourism, and we remain hopeful that the post-election period will continue to foster a conducive environment for the industry to thrive.

That said, one of the most pressing concerns for our tourism stakeholders is the ongoing visa scandal. The disruptions caused by this issue have introduced uncertainty and complexity to travel, which could potentially deter visitors. As the situation remains unresolved, it is imperative that a swift solution is implemented to restore confidence in Sri Lanka as a hassle-free destination. The longer this persists, the greater the risk of losing valuable tourist arrivals.

Despite these challenges, our focus remains on strengthening key markets and expanding our reach. This month, Sri Lanka will have a strong presence at ITB India in Mumbai, reinforcing India's position as a key source market. We are committed to further deepening our ties with our neighbor and maximizing the opportunities this vibrant market offers.

In addition, Sri Lanka will also participate in IT&CMA in Thailand, one of Asia's premier MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) shows. As momentum builds, positioning Sri Lanka as a preferred MICE destination is crucial. We hope to use this platform to showcase our potential and further enhance awareness among global event planners and corporate entities.

While Sri Lanka's tourism industry is on a promising path of recovery, vigilance is necessary to address the ongoing visa issues and maintain stability post-elections. The upcoming trade shows in India and

Thailand provide us with opportunities to continue promoting Sri Lanka on the global stage. Let's work together to ensure that our journey of recovery is smooth and successful.



*Dinushka*

Dinushka Chandrasena  
Editor

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## NEWS

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### Rebounding Strong: Sri Lanka Tourism's...

Sri Lanka's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2024, the country garnered 15 international endorsements, including being ranked the 4th most popular solo travel destination by Forbes Magazine, and topping the list for best places for solo female travel. Additionally, Sri Lanka Tourism won the "Best International Tourism Board" award at the Global Tourism Awards in New Delhi, India.

When commenting on the MICE segment Nalin Perera, Director General Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority said "The MICE market has contributed approximately 10% to Sri Lanka's Tourism figures"

The upcoming Digital Marketing campaign is scheduled to kick off in Q4 of this year with the aim to run for a period of six months. The Public Relations campaign is also due to commence for a period of one year.

"The spend allocated is according to the available funds and may not be considered a lot in comparison to the media spend budgets of our competitor destinations. However, the split has been carefully studied and spend has been attributed accordingly to both create a significant impact and highlight the proper messaging to the world"

The industry is confident that this winter season 2024/2025 will be one of the best Sri Lanka has witnessed. Tourists, from strong arrivals markets like India, the UK, Russia, Germany, France, and China will see an increase. The future looks promising as markets like Australia, the USA, the Netherlands, and Poland show strong growth potential. With these successes, Sri Lanka Tourism is optimistic about reaching its target of 2.3 million tourists by the end of the year.

### Sri Lanka Introduces Visa-Free of Charge Entry for Eligible Visitors Starting October 2024

Sri Lanka is set to boost its tourism sector with the introduction of a new visa-free of charge entry program starting from October 1, 2024. Under this initiative, eligible visitors will be granted 30-day tourist visas at no cost upon arrival. The program will initially run as a pilot until April 2025, allowing tourists from approved countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, to benefit from visa-free of charge entry.

The government aims to position Sri Lanka as a leading travel destination by eliminating visa fees, similar to popular tourist destinations like Singapore, Thailand, and

- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- South Korea
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- Australia
- Canada
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Qatar
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Poland
- Bahrain
- Austria

Vietnam. This move is designed to attract more international visitors and capitalize on the rapidly growing global tourism industry.

For more information on the new visa program and a list of eligible countries, travelers are encouraged to consult with relevant tourism and immigration authorities.

Travelers from the following countries will be approved for free 30-day tourist visas to Sri Lanka starting on October 1, 2024 until April 2025:

- Belarus
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- France
- Israel
- Iran
- Indonesia
- India
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Malaysia
- Nepal
- New Zealand
- Oman
- United Arab Emirates

### WTM London 2024 conference programme announced

TTA BULLETIN

More than 60 conference sessions have been confirmed for this year's World Travel Market London, bringing together leading experts and ministers, helping WTM cement its reputation as the world's most influential travel and tourism event.

With regenerative tourism and transformative technologies within the mix of exciting discussion points, WTM London is set to be a platform for positive change.

The sessions are split into six Conference Tracks, all carefully curated by a panel of conference advisors, to guide visitors to the topics of most benefit to them, where they can dive into discussions with peers and experts. These are: Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion (DEAI), Geo-Economics, Marketing, Sustainability Travel Trends and Technology

Following a 29% increase in attendance across the conference sessions in 2023, this year's stages have increased in size. To ease navigation, this year's conference theatres will be named in line with the colour scheme in corresponding regions. The Yellow Theatre will sit within the Africa region, Orange Theatre within Asia and Purple Theatre in Tech.

The opening day kicks off with the unveiling of the WTM Global Travel Report, curated by WTM and supported by renowned researchers Oxford Economics. This draws on



extensive data from more than 185 countries to give valuable insights into consumer behaviour and trends likely to shape the industry.

The Technology Summit follows, with the theme of Frictionless Journeys. Visitors can discover how to implement user cases for new technologies and find out more about the intersection between AI and loyalty schemes.

The DEAI Summit, From Commitment to Action, will also take place on the first day, providing a safe platform to showcase the future of diversity, accessibility, equality, inclusion and intersectionality (DEAI) in tourism.

On the second day of the show, more than 50 of travel's most influential political figures will gather at the 18th Ministers Summit at World Travel Market, in association with UN Tourism and WTTC. Emerging Technology's Potential for Good in Tourism is this year's theme. During this largest annual gathering of ministers, these policymakers will debate the transformative potential of AI and other emerging technologies in shaping the future of travel and hospitality against the ethical implications of their deployment.

This year's Sustainability Summit, The Rise of Regenerative Tourism - a Paradigm Shift, will explore the core principles of regenerative tourism, highlight successful case studies, and provide actionable strategies for integrating these concepts into tourism practices.

# NEWS

## Discover exciting fun and thrills at Excel World Entertainment Park

TTA BULLETIN

Excel World, one of the favoured entertainment destinations for families in Colombo, ensures an unforgettable experience for all. Serving as an ideal venue for family get-togethers, social gatherings and professional meetings, the space promises a time well-enjoyed along with modern facilities, while offering a plethora of exciting indoor and outdoor activities that evoke nostalgic memories. Visitors can choose from a wide range of entertainment options which include; bowling, laser games, pool parlour, gaming zones and more.



swing and explore various adrenaline-induced activities or immerse themselves in the latest state-of-the-art VR games at Video Game Arcade. Other fun-filled options include letting loose in the vibrant Bouncy Castle, engaging in exciting gel blasting battles or testing one's aim with archery challenges.

Customers have the choice of relaxing and enjoy a game in the laid-back pool parlour, suitable for casual and competitive players alike or have a blast at the modern bowling alley, perfect for family outings, parties, friendly competitions or even professional bowling tournaments.

Adventura, a featured attraction, offers captivating rides imported from Italy, designed to delight children. From an exhilarating ride on the Pirate Ship and carousel horseback rides, to a journey on the Fancy Train and the ever-popular Bumper Car ride, children can immerse themselves in endless fun. Adventura is not only open to the public but also caters to school groups, clubs and corporate or family events with special booking options available.

At the Adventure Zone visitors can climb,



Exclusive corporate gatherings can additionally be hosted in the sophisticated and spacious Marco Polo and Corporate Lounges. With ample parking and a prime location in the heart of the city, Excel World stands out as a venue of choice.

Excel World, Colombo's most popular entertainment park for the whole family is owned and managed by Excel Restaurants Ltd., which company falls under the ownership of the Browns Group.

## Classic Travel Pvt Limited wins Best Travel Agency for Sri Lanka at the World Travel Awards

TTA BULLETIN

Classic Travel Pvt Limited triumphed at the recently concluded World Travel Awards 2024 bagging the accolade for 'Best Travel Agency for Sri Lanka' at the prestigious ceremony held in Manila, Philipnes. This distinguished recognition underscores the company's unwavering commitment to excellence in Sri Lankan travel and tourism industry.



Sabry Bahaudeen

"This award is a significant achievement for Classic Travel," said Mr. Sabry Bahaudeen, Director of Classic Travel. He further added, "It reflects the company's ongoing efforts to innovate and set new benchmarks in the travel industry. This victory would not have been possible without the continued trust and support of our valued stakeholders, including clients, partners, and employees."

For over three decades, Classic Travel has been at the forefront of the travel sector, providing unparalleled service and creating exceptional travel experiences for its clients. The company's dedication to delivering outstanding customer service has not only earned it a loyal clientele but also numerous

accolades throughout its history. Consistently recognized as the number one travel agent in Sri Lanka by many of the world's leading airlines, Classic Travel has garnered trust and confidence from both customers and industry partners.

The recognition at the World Travel Awards, often regarded as the 'Oscars of the travel industry,' is a proud moment

for the entire Classic Travel team, highlighting their hard work, dedication, and passion for delivering the best in travel services.

As Classic Travel continues to lead the way in Sri Lankan outbound travel, the company remains committed to maintaining the high standards that have made it a household name. The company extends its deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to its success and looks forward to many more years of excellence in travel.

World Travel Awards was established in 1993 to acknowledge, reward and celebrate excellence across all sectors of the tourism industry.

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## Minor Hotels Welcomes Torsten Richter as Area General Manager for Malaysia and Indonesia

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a leading global hospitality group, is delighted to announce the appointment of Torsten Richter as Area General Manager of Indonesia and Malaysia and General Manager of Anantara Desaru Coast Resort & Villas, effective July 1st. In addition to day-to-day management of Anantara Desaru Coast, Richter's responsibilities include oversight of the Avani Sepang Goldcoast Resort, Anantara Uluwatu Bali Resort and the soon-to-open Anantara Ubud Bali Resort.



Torsten Richter

Maldives Resort, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort and Naladhu Private Island Maldives.

"We are thrilled to welcome Torsten back to the Minor Hotels family," said Puneet Dhawan, Head of Asia at Minor Hotels. "His extensive experience, leadership and dedication to excellence make him the perfect fit to lead our properties in Malaysia and Indonesia. We are confident that under his guidance, our resorts will continue to flourish and deliver unparalleled experiences to our guests."

Richter expressed his excitement about his new role, saying, "I am honoured to rejoin Minor Hotels and look forward to working with the talented teams in Malaysia and Indonesia. Together, we will strive to enhance our resorts' reputation as premier destinations, offering our guests unforgettable memories and exceptional service."

A German national, Richter holds certifications in Food & Beverage Management, Revenue Management, and Sales & Marketing from Cornell University.

Richter's career spanning three decades in the hospitality industry. Proficiency in managing both resorts and city hotels, he has held leadership positions in several major destinations worldwide, including Thailand, Indonesia, the Maldives, Germany, the United States of America and the UK. Most recently, Richter served as the multi-property General Manager at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel and Hotel Am Steinplatz Autograph Collection in Berlin, Germany, where he oversaw operations and ensured the highest standards of luxury and service. His experience includes time with Minor Hotels' resorts in the Maldives as Cluster General Manager of Anantara Dhigu

## Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka Welcomes Indika Jayawardena Ahead of Its Grand Opening

TTA BULLETIN

Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka, the latest addition to ONYX Hospitality Group's portfolio, proudly announces the appointment of Indika Jayawardena as the Executive Assistant Manager (EAM). With a stellar reputation and over 20 years of operational excellence in the hospitality industry, Indika's expertise is set to elevate the Amari experience in Sri Lanka.



Indika Jayawardena

Situated in the bustling Kollupitiya commercial district, Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka is poised to become a beacon of modern upper upscale and traditional Sri Lankan charm. The hotel offers a unique blend of contemporary design, world-class amenities, and warm, personalised service, reflecting the Thai essence

of the Amari brand while integrating the rich culture of Sri Lanka. This makes it an ideal destination for both business and leisure travellers.

As the EAM, Indika will oversee the hotel's day-to-day operations, ensuring the highest standards of service and hospitality are achieved. His vision for Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka is to create an inviting and memorable experience for every guest, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and vibrant spirit of Sri Lanka.

With the grand opening just around the corner, Amari Colombo is excited to introduce this dynamic new chapter in Sri Lanka's hospitality landscape. The addition of Indika Jayawardena to the team underscores the hotel's commitment to excellence and its goal of becoming the premier destination in Colombo.

This appointment marks not only a significant step for Amari Colombo but also the much-anticipated return of ONYX Hospitality Group to Sri Lanka, reinforcing their commitment to delivering exceptional hospitality in the region.

Indika joins Amari Colombo with an impressive career with a trajectory marked by significant achievements and leadership roles across renowned brands inclusive of Amari and the OZO brands. His extensive experience spans various aspects of hotel operations in USA, Thailand, Maldives and Sri Lanka, including guest services, food and beverage management, culinary masterpiece, staff training and development. Indika's commitment to excellence and his hands-on approach to management have consistently resulted in enhanced guest satisfaction and operational efficiency.

## Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka Welcomes Mahika Chandrasena as Assistant Director of Marketing

TTA BULLETIN

Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka, a distinguished property within the ONYX Hospitality Group, is pleased to announce the appointment of Mahika Chandrasena as the new Assistant Director of Marketing. With over 25 years of exemplary experience in the hospitality industry, Mahika's addition to the Amari team



Mahika Chandrasena

"I am thrilled to join the Amari Colombo team," Mahika shared in an exclusive interview. "Amari embodies warmth, cultural richness, and modern sophistication. I look forward to leveraging my experience to enhance our brand presence, create unique guest experiences, and contribute to the overall growth of Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka."

represents a significant milestone for ONYX Hospitality Group. This appointment coincides with the group's return to Sri Lanka and the launch of Amari Colombo, reaffirming its commitment to enhancing the country's hospitality landscape.

Mahika's illustrious career includes notable achievements across international and national hotel chains, airport business in the Maldives, destination marketing for Sri Lanka Tourism, and the aviation sector in Sri Lanka. Her expertise spans strategic marketing, brand growth, and partnership development. Starting her journey in the USA after earning her degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Mahika has made substantial contributions to Sri Lanka's hotel industry and aviation sector, enhancing customer relations, brand marketing and communications.

In her role at Amari Colombo, Sri Lanka, Mahika will spearhead comprehensive marketing strategies, blending digital innovation with traditional approaches to elevate the hotel's profile locally and internationally. She will oversee digital and traditional marketing campaigns, social media and content creation, public relations efforts, and strategic partnerships. Her visionary approach and profound understanding of market dynamics are poised to drive significant growth for Amari Colombo.

Indika Jayawardena, Executive Assistant Manager of Amari Colombo, expressed his enthusiasm: "Mahika brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success. We are confident that her expertise will be instrumental in achieving our goals and setting new benchmarks in hospitality."

## Minor Hotels Appoints Richard Beh as Vice President Commercial – Asia

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a leading global hospitality group, is delighted to announce the appointment of Richard Beh as Vice President Commercial – Asia, effective April 1st. In his new capacity, Beh will report directly to Puneet Dhawan, Head of



Richard Beh

Asia, and Ian Di Tullio, Chief Commercial Officer, for Minor Hotels, and is based at the company headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand. Before joining Minor Hotels, Beh served as Global Vice President, Hotel Chains at Trip.com, a multinational travel service conglomerate.

At Minor Hotels, Beh will spearhead the overall regional strategy, adopting a holistic approach to sales, marketing, e-commerce, revenue and distribution across all Minor Hotels brands in Asia, including Anantara, Avani, Oaks, Tivoli, NH and NH Collection. His responsibilities extend to providing strategic guidance to hotel sales and marketing leaders, as well as collaborating with the Global Sales Organization to maximise business performance across Minor-operated properties.

Beh's career trajectory took a pivotal turn in 2006 when he joined Marriott International as the Director of Sales & Marketing at

Renaissance Melaka Hotel. After quickly rising through the ranks, he became Area Director of Sales & Marketing (China) for The Ritz-Carlton in 2014. In his next role, as Vice President of Sales and Distribution for the Shangri-La Group, he drew on his luxury background to elevate revenue generation strategies and enhance customer experiences across the group's portfolio of upscale properties.

A Malaysian national, Richard Beh is fluent in five languages and holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Sunway University, as well as a master's degree in business administration from HELP University, both in Malaysia.

Minor Hotels is a global hospitality group operating over 550 hotels, resorts and residences in 56 countries, pursuing its vision of crafting a more passionate and interconnected world. As a hotel owner, operator and investor, Minor Hotels fulfils the needs and desires of today's global travellers through its diverse portfolio of eight hotel brands – Anantara, Avani, Elewana Collection, NH, NH Collection, nhow, Oaks and Tivoli – and a collection of related businesses. Minor Hotels is rapidly accelerating its global growth ambitions, aiming to add more than 200 hotels by the end of 2026.

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

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 Gener-

al 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.





# TIMELESS GRANDEUR

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## ITB India 2024 ready to kick-off under the theme 'Future Ready Travel'

TTA BULLETIN



**ITB**  
INDIA

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to the Indian  
Travel Market

ITB India 2024 Conference will gather travel industry professionals from 11 – 13 September 2024, at Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai, India. Under this year's theme "Future-Ready Travel: Embracing Innovation, Sustainability, and Global Connectivity", thought leaders and experts from the MICE, Corporate, Leisure and Travel Technology sectors will provide in-depth perspectives on trends, challenges, and the future of the fast-growing Indian and South Asian travel market across three conference tracks.

Leading experts from MICE, Corporate, Leisure, and Travel Technology sectors will share valuable insights at ITB India 2024 Conference. Participating international and national heavyweights include Agoda, BCD Meetings & Events, BWH Hotels - India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka, Booking.com, Cleartrip, Thomas Cook India Limited, and many more.

India's growing outbound and domestic travel industry is on a remarkable growth trajectory, with total travel expenditure set to reach \$410 billion by 2030 and outbound travel expected to surpass 80 million travellers by 2040. This growth in demand has reignited the industry's focus on targeting travellers from this dynamic region. In light of this, the conference agenda promises to guide the global travel industry on current travel expectations and future trends, focusing on Indian and South Asian outbound and domestic travel

The second in-person edition of the ITB

India Conference will cover a wide range of topics including adapting to changing contexts, emerging trends, and evolving consumer expectations, MICE tourism in South Asia in 2025, digital transformation in corporate travel, travel in the age of ChatGPT, the impact of smart technology on the hospitality industry, outlook and trends in the travel industry, as well as the interface between technology and the future of tourism.

MICE Show India will set the focus on MICE & Corporate Travel, where leading MICE and corporate travel executives from convention and venue bureaus, meeting planners, event organisers, MICE technology, travel managers and travel management companies deliver insights into the transformative innovations that are reshaping the MICE and corporate travel industry in various conference sessions. As this year's Knowledge Partner, the Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA) will be curating sessions aimed at the MICE audience. They will also look at the pressing issues and challenges currently facing the industry, as well as the opportunities that lie ahead for the vibrant industry in India and South Asia.

Travel Tech India will give valuable insights to digital travel leaders. Leading travel tech experts and innovators will share their views on the impact of cutting-edge technology on enhancing the customer experience in the travel industry. Attendees can expect to hear from visionary speakers who will share their perspectives on the future of travel technology and gain insight into the unique challenges and opportunities in the travel technology landscape.

## WTM Ministers' Summit to Explore Emerging Technology's Potential for Good in Tourism

TTA BULLETIN



The high-profile Ministers' Summit at World Travel Market in association with UN Tourism and WTTC will see more than 50 tourism dignitaries and leaders from across the globe debate the potential for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies to transform the tourism industry.

With an increasing demand for innovative solutions that can revolutionize how we experience and interact with destinations, the industry is on the brink of profound change as a result of technological advancements. The Ministers' Summit, which takes place on Wednesday 6th November, will debate the transformative potential of AI and emerging technologies in shaping the future of travel and hospitality against the ethical implications of its deployment.

This year the Summit, run in association with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), will be moderated by a well-known BBC journalist, bringing together both the public and private sector, to ensure a fair but thought-provoking discussion.

Now in its 18th year, this year's Summit aligns with World Travel Market's Travel-Power campaign, which aims to convey the potential of tourism industry to drive positive change. Ministers will discuss how AI promises enhanced experiences and streamlined processes, and how to ensure that these advancements align with ethical standards.

Another key discussion point will be how

equitable access to AI technology is essential to prevent existing socio-economic disparities from becoming even further entrenched.

Ministers will debate the best ways to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all stakeholders, regardless of their background or resources, have access to the benefits of AI in tourism, one of the main priorities laid out in the UN Secretary-General's report on Science, Technology and Innovation for sustainable development.

WTTC has released a number of reports about the potential impact of AI and believes AI can play a pivotal role in delivering a tailored and enhanced experience for travellers now and in the future. UN Tourism, meanwhile, is a leading champion of innovation across the global tourism ecosystem, supporting start-ups and promoting greater and better-targeted investments into the sector.

Juliette Losardo, Exhibition Director, World Travel Market London, said: "The Ministers' Summit represents the biggest annual gathering of Tourism Ministers anywhere in the world. As such, it plays a vital role acting as a platform for debating key issues and finding solutions to shape the future of our industry."

"There has already been much debate around AI and other emerging technologies and how best to harness their potential for positive change. Therefore, it is timely that the opportunities it affords our industry are discussed at the highest level as we continue to contribute to a positive future for the tourism sector."

## "Sri Lanka is so Instagramable, and made us keep returning back," says the world's top travel Instagrammers

TTA BULLETIN

Having a diehard travel-seeking global audience, representing all the key source markets to Sri Lanka, seven (07) mega influencers were invited to Sri Lanka in order to create some of the most engaging content about Sri Lanka under the tagline of "You Will Come back for More". These influencers are expected to promote Sri Lanka among social media-savvy global travel seekers targeting the upcoming winter season of 2024/25.

This mega influencer campaign is the biggest Instagram-focused digital content campaign undertaken for 2024 targeting a global social media-based travel audience of 7.5 million where the focus is mainly



gaining to multiple destinations including the UK, France, Germany, Russia, India, USA, Australia, Singapore, Cyprus, UAE, India, etc. Overall, the media value expected to be gained from this campaign is well over Rs. 44 million. Over 200 IG & FB posts, reels, and various other promotional content were expected to be created about Sri Lanka by inspiring winter holiday seekers to select Sri Lanka as the ideal holiday destination to visit Sri Lanka as one of the most Instagramable islands in the world

Within 10 days of an exclusively tailored destination promotional tour, influencers



explored a perfect blend of some of the most highlighted tourism attractions as well as lesser-known destinations including, Haputhale, UVA- Paranagama, Wellawaya, Ohiya, and Kurunegala, to create some of the most inspiring travel content about the destination.

Renowned international travel Instagrammer and content creator Ms. Dorothy Soh from Singapore who has over 1.2 million global follower base on Instagram (on Instagram: @dotzsoh) stated that,

"This is my 4th time on your beautiful island because I love the landscape, the people, the culture, the food, and the amazing scenery. All these factors make us keep returning back to destination, Sri Lanka. I will definitely share my travel

experiences and lovely memories of Sri Lanka with my followers across the globe.

Major hospitality partners in Sri Lanka including Galle Face Hotel, Jetwing Hotels & Resorts, and boutique hotels such as Teardrop Collection and Garfield Bungalow & Cottages partnered with SLTPB for this national tourism promotion by offering their hospitality support while creating many reasons to visit Sri Lanka as the most preferred holiday getaway in Asia.

Special thanks to the Department of Archeology, Central Cultural Fund, Lotus Tower PLC, Uva Tourism, Haputale Hoteliers Association, Haputale Estate, Ceylon Tea Board, and Barista Coffee Sri Lanka for the extended support given to this project.



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## EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave Sets New Standard in Digital Marketing for the Hospitality Industry

TTA BULLETIN

On August 6, 2024, the Shangri-La Colombo buzzed with innovation and excitement as eMarketingEye hosted the landmark EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave. This premier event brought together over 200 delegates from across the hospitality sector, achieving a notable milestone with a stellar lineup of industry leaders, innovative technologies, and progressive digital marketing strategies.

The one-day conference was designed to be a transformative experience for hospitality professionals, marketers, and

techniques. Breakout sessions explored essential areas such as UI & UX best practices, the transformative role of AI in digital strategies, the power of search, practical tips for enhancing search engine visibility and driving organic traffic, leveraging data for business success, creative content creation and effective mobile strategies.

The sessions provided insights into the future of Sri Lanka tourism, followed by engaging panel discussions on "The Importance of Digital for the Future of Tourism



tech enthusiasts. With an agenda brimming with forward-thinking sessions and expert-led discussions, the Conclave set a new benchmark for the industry. Attendees had the opportunity to immerse themselves in more than 15 sessions led by over 20 digital and technology experts, driven by the enthusiastic involvement of 80+ leading local and international hospitality brands and key decision-makers.

Conference sessions covered a wide range of topics, including revenue management, latest AI-driven google ad campaigns, advanced data analytics, social media marketing and innovative digital marketing

in Sri Lanka" and "Digital Strategies and Technologies Shaping Tomorrow's Marketing Landscape." We were also delighted to have HSMIA Asia Pacific participate in the conference, offering expert moderation for one of the key panel discussions.

Attendees lauded the Conclave for its thoughtfully curated content, exceptional networking opportunities, and the dynamic exchange of ideas. The event emerged as a vital platform for both local and international knowledge-sharing, with delegates from Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Malaysia, India, Singapore and Australia contributing to its broad appeal. The exhibitor booths



provided valuable opportunities to engage with leading technology and digital solution providers, significantly enhancing the conference experience with a focus on the latest advancements in digital marketing and technology.



Special recognition is due to our supporting partners Sabre, Lighthouse, and IDeaS who played a crucial role in making this event a triumph.

We extend our appreciation to the sponsors of the event: TV Derana as the Official Electronic Media Partner, Prime Residences 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.

Rajitha Dahanayake, CEO of eMarketingEye, shared his reflections on the event's success:

"EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave surpassed our expectations, driven by the remarkable engagement of our delegates and the steadfast support of our partners. We are excited to have created a platform that not only fostered meaningful connections and sparked innovative discussions but also delivered

actionable insights poised to shape the future of digital marketing in the hospitality industry. This conference was our way of giving back to the industry, demonstrating our commitment to advancing industry standards, and playing our part in driving growth and success. We look forward to continuing to lead such initiatives that propel the industry forward."

As the curtains closed on this landmark event, the feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. The Conclave not only showcased the potential of digital marketing but also set a new precedent for industry gatherings. It was a day of impactful learning, vibrant discussions, and valuable networking that will undoubtedly resonate within the industry for years to come. As the excitement from the recent event continues, eMarketingEye is set to make a swift return with more pioneering events, promising to further elevate industry standards and drive ongoing innovation.





# Digital Hospitality Conclave

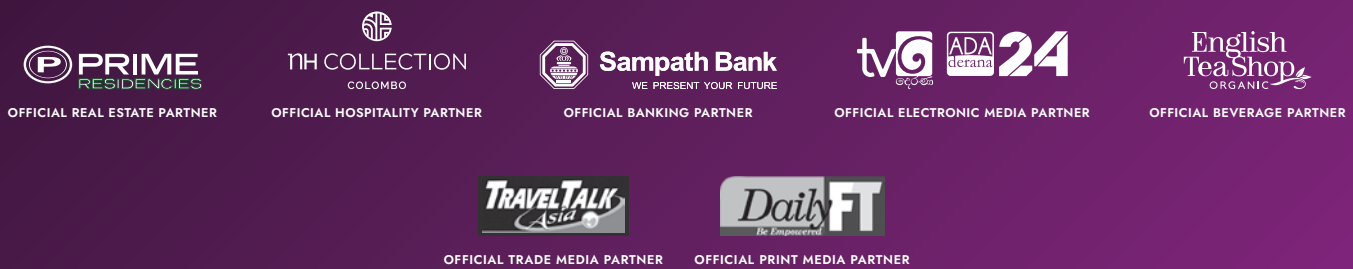
EME Level Up: Digital Hospitality Conclave, a conference for the hospitality industry gathered over 200 delegates from 80+ local and international hospitality brands. The event featured more than 15 sessions, 20 expert speakers, and 6 breakout sessions. It was a key platform for advancing industry standards and driving digital innovation.

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## Sri Lanka Convention Bureau: Spearheading the Country's MICE Tourism Comeback

An Exclusive Interview with the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau – Thisum Jayasuriya

TTA BULLETIN

**How has the MICE sector evolved in Sri Lanka over the past few years, and what role does it currently play in the overall tourism strategy?**

Over the past years, Sri Lanka MICE industry gained a certain degree of popularity worldwide and this can be attributed to numerous reasons. The increase in frequency of global events, a surge in overall global travel a higher disposable income, enhanced air connectivity, positive country profile, advance technology and infrastructure developments are just some of the reasons that shaped the importance of Sri Lanka as a MICE destination

The development of the MICE sector in Sri Lanka is necessary for both economic development and to reduce limitations related to seasonal fluctuations in arrivals. As per the tourism statistics, 10% -12% of arrivals in the year can be attributed to MICE tourism.

SLCB geared to bring Sri Lanka to the forefront of MICE tourism, SLCB along with the MICE industry stakeholders are strategically planning to widen the horizons of MICE offerings to warmly welcome the South Asian and world-wide MICE events to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau warmly invites the global tourism trade to add Sri Lanka to their wish-list of group travel for meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions, outbound training, yoga, Ayurveda and wellness, sports, adventure, film tourism, destination weddings, and honeymoons, and more.

**Can you share the latest MICE tourism**

**figures for 2024? How do they compare to previous years, and what trends are you observing?**

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau made arrangements to incorporate the MICE classification into the e-visa application system under the Tourist visa for better identification of MICE tourists, as per the Tourist arrivals up to 15th July 2024, approximately 10-12 % of arrivals represented for MICE tourism.

MICE travelers are more entertainment driven and are specifically looking at areas such as shopping, night life, sight-seeing and entertainment. They are price driven and expect value for money. Team building activities are also key for groups especially for Incentive Groups. Sri Lanka as a destination is ready to cater to the requirements of the MICE travelers while offering the perfect backdrop for a memorable experience.

**What recent developments or initiatives has the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau undertaken to attract more MICE events to the country?**

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau organized a series of "MICE Expos" to popularize the destination among the key potential International MICE tour operators. The latest edition was organized in May 2024t which was the "Southern MICE Expo" with the participation of over 100 International MICE buyers and media.

In addition to that, SLCB organized several Tourism Roadshows and Exhibitions in key global markets to create more awareness on the MICE industry benefits in Sri Lanka.

SLCB also supports the local MICE operators with services and financial contribution in order to secure MICE events in Sri Lanka.

The SLCB social Media campaign, production of new video clips, revamping of SLCB website are also some of key initiatives undertaken by SLCB.

SLCB is involved in capacity building of the local MICE industry in terms of organizing training and development programmes and thereby contribute to enhance the skill level of those actively involved with selling Sri Lanka as a premier MICE destination in South Asia.

**How do you foresee the MICE sector contributing to the recovery and growth of Sri Lanka's tourism industry in the near future?**

MICE tourism involves group travel and generates revenue and there by contributes towards the recovery and growth of the Sri Lanka's economy. In general, it is estimated that MICE traveler spends three time more than the leisure traveler indicating the importance of this industry.

MICE industry involves a number of parties, meeting, congress, conference, exhibition and event organizers, suppliers, entertainments etc. The all connected parties get benefit of the industry in terms of employment generation, capacity building and income generation.

**With global competition increasing in the MICE sector, how is Sri Lanka positioning itself to attract large-scale international events and conferences?**

Sri Lanka blends MICE tourism with experiences. The latest addition in to M I C E inventory



Thisum Jayasuriya

will be the Cinnamon Life integrated project – Melco City of Dreams. This will undoubtedly scale up the MICE industry. In line with the available resources, Sri Lanka is geared to receive medium scale events and provide a compact offering with the perfect blend of experiences. In this regard, Sri Lanka hopes to attract regional events and conferences.

**What are your projections for MICE tourism for the remainder of 2024, and what key markets or industries do you see driving this growth?**

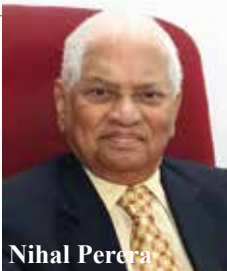
We forecast a growth up to 15% of MICE arrivals from the total tourist arrivals during the coming years. The main market is India and the Bureau is focused on diversifying the markets to other South Asian countries, China, Europe and the Middle East. The main industries to further explore includes pharmaceutical, Financial, IT, Technology and Manufacturing

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) is the Government Organization established for the development of MICE sector in Sri Lanka and currently functions under the Ministry of Tourism and Lands. SLCB is the main contact point for MICE travelers and works towards the increase the share of the MICE tourism and add contribution to the national economy.

## Sparklink Travels Celebrates 45 Years of Service Excellence in Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Sparklink Travels, a family-owned company in Sri Lanka, is thrilled to commemorate its 45th anniversary of providing exceptional travel services. Incorporated in 1979 by Mr. Nihal Perera, The company has grown from a humble start-up into a trusted name in the travel industry, renowned for its personalized service and unwavering commitment to quality.



Nihal Perera

Mr. Perera, a former Director of Development and Publicity at the Ceylon Tourist Board, has been a pioneering force in Sri Lanka's tourism sector. His passion for delivering great travel experiences, grounded in integrity and proactiveness, laid the foundation for Sparklink Travels. Under his stewardship the company quickly gained a reputation for excellence as an IATA-accredited travel agency, serving clients with dedication for the past 45 years.

The legacy of Sparklink Travels continues with his son Praki Perera now spearheading the company's operations in Sri Lanka

and Australia. Together, they remain committed to upholding the core values that have defined the company's success. Their dedication ensures that the company remains a premier provider of Air travel, Cruises, and Tours, with professional services tailored to enhance the true essence of travel.

The company has embraced modern demands by adopting a hybrid model, providing flexible service options to meet the evolving needs of clients by connecting with the team in Sri Lanka at 20 Frankfurt Place, Colombo 4 or by phone at +94-11-2339339 & in Australia at 15 Jackson Avenue, Mont Albert North, VIC or by phone at +61-3-9125 4559.

Chairman Mr. Nihal Perera together with the team extend their heartfelt gratitude to their valued clients and acknowledges the support from key partners including the Airlines, Hotels, Tour Operators, the Department of Civil Aviation and Sri Lanka Tourism.

## Adrian Gomez: Leading the Charge in Transforming Colombo with the Lotus Tower Casino

TTA BULLETIN

Adrian Gomez, a seasoned professional with over 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, has been a driving force behind numerous high-profile projects. His expertise spans across hotel management, investment coordination, and strategic planning, making him a key figure in the industry. One of his most notable recent achievements is his instrumental role in



Adrian Gomez

The Lotus Tower, an iconic landmark in Colombo, Sri Lanka, has long been anticipated as a symbol of the city's modernity and growth. The addition of a casino is set to elevate its status further, positioning it as a premier entertainment destination in the region. Adrian's deep understanding of the hospitality and entertainment sectors, coupled with his ability to forge strong partnerships, has been pivotal in securing

the necessary investments for this ambitious project.

Gomez's approach to this venture reflects his commitment to excellence and his vision for transforming Colombo's tourism landscape. He meticulously oversaw every aspect of the investment process, ensuring that the project aligns with both local and international standards. His efforts have attracted attention from global investors, highlighting the potential of the Lotus Tower as a major attraction.

As the Casino at Lotus Tower prepares for its grand opening, Adrian Gomez's contributions stand as a testament to his expertise and dedication. His work not only enhances Colombo's appeal as a tourist destination but also sets a new benchmark for the hospitality and entertainment industries in Sri Lanka.

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## Why Seychelles Should Be on Your Travel List: A Conversation with Amia Desir Jovanovic

A closer look at the archipelago islands with Seychelles Tourism

TTA BULLETIN

During her recent visit to Sri Lanka, the Head of Marketing for the Seychelles Tourism Board, Mrs. Amia Desir Jovanovic shared valuable insights into what makes Seychelles a unique and compelling destination. Leading a delegation that included two renowned chefs, she hosted a vibrant Seychelles Food Festival at the Kingsbury Hotels in Colombo, showcasing the rich culinary heritage of her archipelago nation.



Amia Desir Jovanovic

In an exclusive interview, she emphasized that Seychelles is a destination that must be experienced firsthand. "We invite travelers to come and see for themselves the unparalleled beauty of our country. Seychelles offers pristine landscapes that are truly untouched by time," she remarked. Her message was clear: Seychelles is more than just a tropical getaway; it's a destination committed to sustainability and conservation.

A key highlight of Seychelles' sustainability efforts is its dedication to preserving its natural environment. The country has made significant strides in the conservation of its mangroves, a critical ecosystem for marine life and coastal protection. "We take pride in maintaining the natural beauty of Seychelles, and our conservation efforts ensure that future generations will also be able to enjoy this pristine paradise," she said. This commitment to sustainability sets Seychelles apart as a destination that not only offers stunning scenery but also leads by example in eco-friendly tourism practices.

Mrs. Amia also touched upon the exceptional connectivity that Seychelles offers. With flights from major cities worldwide, reaching this tropical paradise has never been easier. "Visitors will find the best of international brands and top-notch services in Seychelles. From luxury resorts to boutique hotels, the options are diverse, catering to all kinds of travelers," she added. Colombo offers a twice weekly connection via Air Seychelles which has made it extremely viable for Sri Lanka's to experience the best of Seychelles hospitality.

Seychelles, an archipelago of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, is a dream destination for nature lovers. With its powdery white-sand beaches, lush green mountains, and crystal-clear waters, it offers a postcard-perfect escape. The country is a haven for marine enthusiasts, with opportunities for snorkeling, diving, and exploring vibrant coral reefs. For those who prefer land adventures, hiking trails wind through verdant forests teeming with unique wildlife.

Despite its reputation as a luxury destination, and predominantly known

globally as a wedding and honeymoon destination, Amia begs to defer and emphasized that 'Seychelles is for everyone'. "Whether you're seeking a high-end luxury experience or are traveling on a limited budget, Seychelles has something for everyone. Our tagline, 'Seychelles is for EVERYONE,' truly reflects the diversity of experiences we offer."

Seychelles' culinary scene is as vibrant and diverse as its landscape. The recent Seychelles Food Festival in Colombo, led by two expert chefs from the islands, provided a tantalizing glimpse into the nation's rich food culture. Seychellois cuisine is a delightful fusion of African, French, Indian, and Chinese influences, reflecting the archipelago's multicultural heritage. Fresh seafood is the star of the show, with dishes like grilled fish, octopus curry, and smoked fish salad being local favorites. Coconut is a staple in Seychellois cooking, adding a distinct flavor to many dishes. From coconut milk-based curries to sweet coconut desserts like "ladob" (a dish made from ripe plantains or sweet potatoes simmered in coconut milk), the coconut is integral to the Seychellois gastronomic experience.

Apart from its culinary delights, Seychelles is also known for the warmth and friendliness of its people. The islanders are proud of their heritage and are eager to share it with visitors. Whether you're exploring local markets, where vendors greet you with wide smiles, or enjoying a leisurely day on the beach, the hospitality of the Seychellois people will make you feel right at home.

Ultimately, Seychelles is more than just a picturesque destination; it's a welcoming haven for all who seek relaxation, adventure, and connection with nature. The combination of its rich culture, sustainable practices, and diverse experiences makes Seychelles a destination that truly has something for everyone.

## Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism is pleased to announce the 7th edition of the National Tourism Awards, celebrating excellence and outstanding contribution in the travel and tourism industry. The objective is to promote and enhance service standards, encourage best practices, and foster a culture of excellence and innovation within the industry. By acknowledging the achievements of individuals and organizations, we aim to inspire others to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in Sri Lanka.



COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the continuity of the prestigious event. It is in this context that Sri Lanka Tourism proudly presents Sri Lanka Tourism Awards 2024.

The awards encompass a wide range of categories to ensure every facet of the tourism industry is recognized. These categories cover various sectors including accommodation, restaurants, tour operators, airlines, MICE tourism, marketing communications, education and training, events, excellence in service, etc. Detailed information are available on our website [tourismawards.lk](http://tourismawards.lk).

The first ever National Travel & Tourism Award was held in 2008. Since then, this annual event has been gathering momentum with more participation and recognition of new products and services. The last event was held in 2018 making a significant celebration of excellence within the industry. The subsequent occurrences such as Easter Sunday Attacks and the

## TAT announces "Nihao Month" 50-Year Thailand-China Celebration

TTA BULLETIN



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has announced the "Nihao Month" with special events and promotions scheduled between September and October leading up to the year-long celebration to mark the 50th Anniversary of Thailand-China relations in 2025.

Famous Chinese actor Luo Yunxi, along with Thai actors DaOu Pittaya Sae-chow and Mai Davika Hoorne, will make a special appearance in one of the key events.

Mr. Sermsak Pongpanit, Minister of Tourism and Sports, said "Thailand and China have enjoyed 50 years of diplomatic relations that have resulted in flourishing trade and closer culture and tourism ties. The 'Nihao Month' festival is organised to further strengthen the tourism cooperation between the two nations and boost awareness for the unprecedented celebrations each nation has planned to commemorate this milestone occasion."

Mr. Sermsak presided over the launch ceremony, together with Mrs. Chang Yumeng, Counsellor for Cultural Affairs of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Thailand, and Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor. Also present were representatives from private sector.

Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor, said "The Nihao Month heralds the grand celebration TAT has planned for the 50th Anniversary of Thailand-China

relations. In this connection, TAT warmly invites Chinese tourists to come enjoy this Mid-Autumn Festival and Golden Week in Thailand and many more special events scheduled through the end of this year to early next year, culminating in the Chinese New Year and the 50th year festivity."

TAT has set a target for the Nihao Month festival to materialise into 250,000 arrivals from China during the upcoming Golden Week. Special events and promotion would help generate about 500 million reaches and further enhance the positive image of Thailand as the preferred destination for Chinese tourists.

Commencing in September is a "KOLs Mega Fam Trip" up to 100 KOLs from China. The activity is intended to boost awareness of Thailand's soft power and five must-do activities through content shared with followers of the participating KOLs via various online platforms, including Little Red Book, Weibo, and Douyin, reaching some 100 million views.

The buzz surrounding the Nihao Month is set to reach 400 million more views through the "Amazing Thailand, Mid-Autumn Night" with a special appearance by the China-Thailand Cultural Friendship Ambassador, famous Chinese actor Luo Yunxi, along with Thai actors DaOu Pittaya Sae-chow and Mai Davika Hoorne. The event will be held on 17 September at Parc Paragon, Siam Paragon, Bangkok.

## Out with Tradition, In with Innovation & Inclusivity: Redefining MICE & Corporate Travel at IT&CM Asia And CTW Asia-Pacific 2024

TTA BULLETIN

IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific 2024 returns with new initiatives and educational sessions on more inclusive travel. It will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 24 – 26 September 2024. The upcoming 3-day in-person IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific offers a line-up of conferences and networking sessions that have been specially curated to meet the diverse needs and interests of delegates.

The event will kick off with engaging pre-show activities aimed at enhancing the delegate experience:

- **Pre-show City Tour:** Hosted by the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), this tour offers delegates a unique opportunity to explore Bangkok's vibrant culture and iconic landmarks.

- **FAM Trip:** Hosted by Topgolf Megacity, this evening event offers delegates the chance to unwind, network, and enjoy a unique golfing experience. Whether they are seasoned or amateur golfers, Topgolf Megacity's interactive environment promises delegates fun-filled experiences. More than just a golfing destination, the sports and entertainment complex is also a great space for team building, corporate meetings, product launches, and year-end parties.

The conference sessions are tailored for different buyers and delegates, offering invaluable insights from industry experts:

- **CruiseXchange:** Keynote by Ms. Patricia Yuen, Director, Cruise, Hong Kong Tourism Board, who will address the Evolution of Cruise Tourism in Hong Kong, followed by a fireside chat on Mapping Asia's Cruise Development and integrating land and sea programmes for meetings and incentives.

- **Opening Keynote – Fireside Chat:** A forward-looking discussion on the future of events, with a focus on the advancement of AI applications and emerging trends reshaping the industry.

- **NextGen Leadership Exchange:** Hosted by ICCA, this session will explore developing young leaders in the MICE and corporate travel industries, offering youth perspectives and opportunities for building relationships with industry leaders.

- **Advancing DEIBA in the MICE Industry:** This session, dedicated to embracing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility (DEIBA) in the MICE industry, highlights the benefits of inclusive practices.

- **Corporate Travel Exchange:** Hosted by SAP Concur, this session will focus on Making Travel Policies More Inclusive for individuals with visible and non-visible medical needs, and how technology can facilitate this inclusivity.

- **SITE Incentive Track:** Hosted by Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), this session will focus on Next Level Incentive Travel Incorporating Wellness into Traditional Models and look at how incentive travel has evolved into experiences that combine wellness and cultural immersion. The aim is to enhance employee performance and their well-being while they align with modern values of sustainability and work-life balance.

- **Evening Get-Together:** An evening of networking, collaboration, and celebration designed to be the perfect blend of business and leisure. Whether it's catching up with old friends or meeting new colleagues, this evening promises a memorable experience filled with engaging conversations and potential partnerships.

If you would like to procure, network and learn at IT&CM Asia and CTW Asia-Pacific 2024, join us from 24 – 26 September at the Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld. The leading MICE event is co-located with CTW Asia-Pacific – The Leading Corporate Travel Management Conference for the Asia-Pacific.

Established in 1993, IT&CMA is at the forefront of fostering MICE growth opportunities for the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Its multi-faceted programme engages regional and international industry suppliers and buyers in the realms of business, education and networking. IT&CMA also features dedicated platforms designed around the interests of valuable MICE niche segments, enabling the event to consistently deliver a delegate profile that is both relevant and dynamic. IT&CMA remains uniquely positioned as the only global event with the largest exhibition showcase of Asia-Pacific MICE suppliers. The show is part of the IT&CM Events series.

Co-located with CTW Asia-Pacific, IT&CMA is part of the IT&CM Events series organised by TTG Events, a business group of TTG Asia Media. IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific is Asia-Pacific's Only Doublebill Event in MICE and Corporate Travel. Both events have been co-locating since 2004, offering its delegates an unparalleled platform to do business, learn and network.

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## PATA Celebrates 25th Anniversary in Bangkok, Welcoming Over 900 Delegates at PATA Travel Mart 2024

TTA BULLETIN

PATA Travel Mart 2024 (PTM 2024), organised by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), welcomed over 900 delegates from 45 destinations, including 266 exhibitors from 168 organisations and 24 destinations, along with 191 buyers from 173 organisations across 31 source markets.

PATA Travel Mart 2024, now in its 47th edition, is being held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (QSNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of PATA Headquarters' relocation to this destination.

PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid said, "PATA Travel Mart 2024 exemplifies our commitment to the future of Asia Pacific tourism by being a platform for high-quality buyers and sellers from Asia Pacific and beyond. It reflects the Association's mission to promote sustainable growth, drive innovation, and foster collaboration within the Asia Pacific region. Hosting this year's event in Bangkok underscores PATA's enduring partnership with Thai tourism organisations and reinforces our shared commitment to upholding Thailand's reputation as one of the leading MICE destinations in Asia Pacific."

He added, "On behalf of the Association, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to each and every PATA Travel Mart 2024 sponsor, partner and participant, whose steadfast support is pivotal to the continued advancement of our industry."

On August 27, the PATA Media Briefing was held at the Foreign Correspondent Club of Thailand (FCCT) and covered PATA's current and upcoming international initiatives. This briefing also included the signing of an MOU between PATA and the Sanya Tourism Board, along with the announcement of the 2024 Tropical Coastal City Tourism Event, to be organised by PATA and hosted in Sanya, China.

PTM 2024 commenced with the PATA Knowledge Forum 2024, featuring sessions centred around the theme "Reimagining Responsible Tourism for a Regenerative Future." The forum offered valuable insights into the evolving tourism industry, covering key topics such as sustainability integration, cybersecurity challenges, and the future role of travel agents. These sessions equipped attendees with essential knowledge and tools to navigate the complexities of the Asia Pacific tourism industry in contemporary times.

During the Knowledge Forum, PATA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tourism Seasonality Summit. This agreement underscores the commitment of both parties to address the challenges associated with peak season



tourism and to work collaboratively towards mitigating the impacts of over-tourism.

Simultaneously, the inaugural PATA Youth Symposium and Career Fair was underway at Srinakarin Hall, Dusit Thani College. With over 200 student delegates and industry professionals in attendance, this event fostered connections between aspiring young professionals and industry leaders. The Career Fair segment further provided students with opportunities to advance their tourism careers.

The day concluded with a Welcome Reception hosted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), themed "Thai Temple Fair." The Phi Ta Khon performance and Thai Puppet show, both celebrated facets of Thailand's rich cultural heritage, captivated the attendees.

The official opening ceremony on August 28, which featured a contemporary Muay Thai performance, was officiated by Thapanee Kiatphaibool, Governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand; Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, Director, Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO); Puripan Bunnag, Senior Vice President, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB); Ben Montgomery, Chair, PATA Thailand Chapter and Executive Board Member, PATA; Hui Jeong Kim, Deputy Director, Korea Tourism Organization (KTO); Peter Semone, Chair, PATA; Suman Pandey, Vice Chair, PATA; and Noor Ahmad Hamid, CEO, PATA.

The day's event continued with the PATA Gold Awards Lunch and Awards Presentation, hosted by the Macao Government Tourism Office, which celebrated 20 winners across two key categories: Marketing and Sustainability & Social Responsibility.

From August 28 to 29, business and open hall sessions provided extensive opportunities for networking and collaboration between buyers and sellers. Trade visitors were granted the opportunity to attend the Mart and participate in a variety of activities on the final day of the event.

PATA Travel Mart 2024 was proudly supported by Platinum Sponsor, Tourism Authority of Thailand; Gold Sponsors, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, and Korea Tourism Organization; Sponsor, Thailand.co.th.; Event Tech Partners, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, and Cvent; and Official Publication for PTM Daily, TTG Asia Media.

## Navigating Growth and Competition: Taj Samudra's Approach to Leading Colombo's Hotel Market

In discussion with Samrat Datta - Area Director Taj Maldives and Sri Lanka, General Manager Taj Samudra Colombo

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

**India is the top source market for Sri Lanka. How has Taj Samudra capitalized on this, and what strategies are you implementing to further attract Indian travelers?**

At Taj Samudra, we've strategically adapted to meet the evolving preferences of Indian travelers. Leveraging our robust sales network across India, we actively engage with our audience through social media, offering enticing packages and unique experiences. Our digital transformation, including mobile apps and an optimized online booking system, has streamlined guest interactions and enhanced the overall experience. The launch of our group loyalty program, Tata Neu, with over 5 million members, has been particularly exciting. Through this platform, we regularly promote special offers to a vast client base.

We frequently host authentic Indian food festivals, such as Goan, Hyderabad, Bengali, and Kerala Food Festivals, using genuine ingredients sourced from India. Collaborating with master chefs from our Taj hotels across India, we bring authentic flavors to Colombo. This month, we eagerly await the Kashmiri food festival, featuring Wazwan cuisine curated by expert chefs from Taj Dal View, Srinagar starting from 22nd August, 2024.

**How do you perceive the current demand for Colombo as a destination, particularly in comparison to where tourism was just 20 months ago?**

Before 2023, we grappled with the several challenges of a volatile global environment ranging from a pandemic to a serious economic downturn. Despite these hurdles, Sri Lanka's tourism sector demonstrated remarkable resilience, with earnings surpassing \$1.5 billion in the first half of 2024—a 78% year-on-year increase, according to the Central Bank. Colombo shines as an ideal destination for leisure and business travelers alike, offering rich cultural experiences, and robust infrastructure with modern amenities. At Taj Samudra we have seen a reflection of this positive journey and catered to the growing numbers of Corporate, MICE as well as Leisure segments.

**Have you noticed any shifts in the type of guests or the length of their stays?**

Colombo is the central hub for business activities, conferences, and sports events in the country. It acts as both a gateway and a stopover point for international tourists, creating a favorable environment for hotels. The normal length of stay ranges between 2 to 4 nights which is almost the same as previous years.

At Taj Samudra, we strive to create a home-away-from-home experience for our guests. This commitment not only enhances guest satisfaction but also positively influences both guest movement and the length of their stays.

**With the entrance of more properties into the city of Colombo, how does Taj Samudra differentiate itself to maintain its market position?**

In Colombo, we're witnessing significant growth in the hospitality industry with the emergence of new properties. I believe that maintaining healthy competition among hotels is crucial for both consumers and operators. It ensures that guests receive the best value for their money and high-quality service, while also allowing operators to achieve fair profitability.

Taj Samudra is distinguished by its service philosophy of Tajness, focused on providing personalized experiences that celebrate local culture, ensuring that guests feel valued at every destination, we follow the highest standards of food production and our Chefs uphold the reputation of being the best in terms of quality, taste and value.

We are committed to continuous improvement through cross-exposure training and comprehensive programs tailored to specific hotel needs. Our staff recognition programs highlight our commitment to service excellence... All of the above gives us a unique entity characterized by 'Tajness', and that sets us apart from all others.



Samrat Datta

**There has been a noticeable increase in the number of hotel rooms available in Colombo. How has this impacted your occupancy rates, and what adjustments have you made to stay competitive?**

I agree with your observation. While the number of hotel rooms in Colombo has increased, we have a loyal guest base that chooses to stay at Taj for their vacations, meetings, and business gatherings. We ensure that their experience is exceptional from the moment they arrive until they check out, which is why we have many regular, long-stay guests.

Despite the challenges, there are also significant opportunities. By leveraging our strong brand reputation and service philosophy, we aim to capitalize on the city's growing appeal to tourists. We are implementing revenue strategies to effectively manage seasonal fluctuations and maintain our fair share.

**What role does Taj Samudra play in promoting Colombo as a destination, and how do you collaborate with local tourism bodies to boost the city's appeal?**

Colombo is a key destination for leisure and business travelers alike. At Taj Samudra Colombo, we actively promote the city's cultural richness, tourist attractions and authentic cuisine through social media, engaging with travelers worldwide.

Looking ahead, we aim to stay committed to sustainability and responsible tourism. We work closely with government health authorities to ensure the topmost levels of safety of our guests and staff.

Additionally, we partner with local and international organizations to host tourism and MICE promotions, strengthening our ties with local tourism bodies and showcasing the unique Taj experience.

**Are there any new developments, renovations, or services planned at Taj**

**Samudra to enhance guest experiences in response to the growing competition?**

In July, we proudly opened our newly refurbished banqueting space, now known as 'Anthurium,' formerly 'On Golden Pond.' Last year we completely renovated our Grand Marquee replacing the old with a brand new state of the art German marquee.

Additionally, we have revitalized our swimming pool area, which features a relaunched pool bar and Sheesha offerings, a perfect setting to relax with family and friends.

We have a phase wise renovation plan wherein we undertake several renovation and refurbishment projects. These initiatives are designed to enhance the guest experience and uphold the high standards of our brand.

**Given the evolving preferences of travelers, especially from key markets like India, how do you see the future of Colombo's hospitality industry shaping up, and what role will Taj Samudra play in it?**

The hospitality industry, both an economic and social force, has experienced continuous growth and diversification. In Colombo, it's a vital economic driver, and its momentum shows a very positive force.

For 40 years, Taj Samudra has been a pillar of excellence in this vibrant city. We take pride in offering exceptional service and a diverse culinary experience. Our renowned restaurants include YUMI for exquisite Japanese cuisine, Navratna for authentic Indian dishes, and Golden Dragon for Chinese fare, beloved by both Indian and international guests. Our service philosophy aka Tajness is a key differentiator and a prime reason why we have a strong base of loyal guests who ascertain our commitment to 'sincere care' which is felt even with your eyes closed.

As an extremely coveted, loved and recognized hotel of Colombo, we elevate guest experiences through continuous innovation, leveraging expertise across our organization, partnerships with artisans and local community.

## NH Hotels & Resorts Makes Indian Ocean Debut with Opening of NH Maldives Kuda Rah Resort

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a leading hospitality group with more than 550 hotels in 56 countries, has announced the arrival of the first NH Hotels & Resorts branded property in the Indian Ocean, with NH Maldives Kuda Rah Resort set to open its doors on 01 September 2024.

Located in South Ari Atoll, approximately 25 minutes by seaplane from the capital Malé, NH Maldives Kuda Rah will offer marine enthusiasts unparalleled access to some of the world's most spectacular diving and snorkelling sites. Right in their backyard holidaymakers will find the

legendary Kuda Rah Thila, an underwater pinnacle teeming with vibrantly coloured soft corals and frequented by majestic marine life like blue striped snappers, turtles, napoleons and even the occasional white tip or grey reef shark.

The atoll is also a well-known hotspot for some of the Maldives' largest marine wildlife, meaning whale shark and manta ray spotting adventures - along with more



than 50 established dive sites - are only a short boat ride away from the resort.

NH Maldives Kuda Rah Resort is an intimate hideaway, with just 51 modern deluxe suites and villas, each boasting an inner courtyard or beach-facing pool, and generously sized between 90 to 231 square metres. Inside, a calming blend of solid wood floors, a palette of chalky whites and creams with ocean-blue accents, and charming pitched roofs create a restful space that celebrates Maldivian topography.

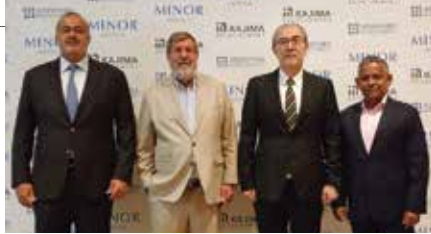
Culinary experiences at NH Maldives Kuda Rah Resort unfold to unhurried rhythms of the ocean. Sea Spray, with its stunning ocean views, offers sustained vitality throughout the day, featuring an international buffet-style menu that zigzags from breakfast favourites to inventive vegetarian dishes. At specialty restaurant Ocean, fresh-caught seafood delicacies are served a la carte, with guests able to handpick their favourite catch of the day, from succulent lobsters to delicate prawns, and customise their dishes to perfection with interactive dining options.



## Minor Hotels to Debut in Singapore with Avani Hotels & Resorts Lifestyle Brand

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a global hospitality leader with over 550 hotels, resorts and residences in 56 countries, has announced plans to launch its Avani Hotels & Resorts lifestyle brand in Singapore, marking the group's entry into the country. Scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2027, the 13-storey upscale property aligns with Minor Hotels' expansion strategy to strengthen its footprint in major global destinations.



To develop the 200-key hotel, Minor Hotels has partnered with Singapore's Kajima Development and Abu Dhabi-based Alwathba Investment. With a prime address at 24 Peck Seah Street, guests will find themselves in the heart of the bustling Tanjong Pagar district, within minutes' walk to the Central Business District and Chinatown. The hotel is set to become part of the Historic District's next chapter, offering both business and leisure guests a contemporary stay that blends the rich heritage of the city-state's iconic shophouses with its modern urban development. The Tanjong Pagar neighbourhood is a food hotspot, offering dining options ranging from traditional hawker fare at Maxwell and Amoy Street food centres to Michelin-recommended global cuisine along Kiong Siak Road, Telok Ayer and Duxton Hill, to name a few.

The property's location, less than 200 metres from the Tanjong Pagar MRT Station and 350 metres from the Maxwell MRT Station, will provide easy access to Singapore's Downtown Core, Marina Bay and other districts where locals frequent for work and play.

"Avani Singapore represents a strategic market entry for Minor Hotels, and we are honoured to have our partners Kajima and Alwathba alongside us as we venture into Singapore's hospitality sector," commented Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels. "Their industry expertise and market knowledge will ensure the delivery of an exceptional hotel experience, creating a vibrant base for business and leisure travellers."

Avani Hotels & Resorts, one of Minor Hotels' eight hotel brands, prides itself on offering stylish rooms, connected social spaces and relaxed dining designed for today's traveller. Launched in 2011, Avani currently operates 42 hotels and resorts in 24 countries. Minor Hotels plans to expand Avani's footprint to nearly 100 hotels and resorts by the end of 2026, with openings in Thailand, China and the Seychelles scheduled for later this year.

## Heritage Ayurveda Earns Fit Reisen's Premium Quality Award for Wellness Excellence

TTA BULLETIN

Heritage Ayurveda, the wellness resort of Heritage Hotels and Resorts, the flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, was recently commended for their excellence in quality and standards by leading German health and wellness travel provider Fit Reisen with the Fit Reisen Premium Quality Certificate in the category of 'Ayurveda and Yoga'.



This certification, which highlights the property as one of the highest quality and best-rated hotels, further reaffirms Heritage Ayurveda's position as the ultimate destination for traditional Ayurvedic treatments in Asia.

Validated through a comprehensive evaluation process which involves a thorough analysis of service standards, health orientation, and guest feedback, the recognition is awarded to hotels that have exceeded expectations in the service and health orientation of Fit Reisen's partner hotels and customers' reviews.

Designed by Deshamanya Geoffrey Bawa, Heritage Ayurveda is the first property in the Heritage Hotels and Resorts' portfolio. Located on the southern coastal

belt of Sri Lanka, the 64-room resort caters to the niche segment of wellness seekers by providing age old practices of the 3,000-year-old

Ayurvedic traditions seamlessly merge with modern amenities. The resort offers a variety of specialized programs, including stress relief, slimming, and immunity boosting and rejuvenation and other experiences such as yoga and meditation programmes to enhance overall wellbeing and vitality. Guests will indulge in personalized meal plans tailored to each body type and chosen programme, while in-house German translators ensure a seamless understanding of all programme details. This thoughtful blend of ancient wisdom and modern convenience promises a transformative experience, leaving guests rejuvenated, inspired, and connected to their wellness journey.

The Fit Reisen Group has been a leader in health and wellness travel since 1975. With a portfolio of seven brands, 1,500 hotels, and 10,000 programs, the Fit Reisen Group is a frontrunner in expanding health tourism and ranks among the top 50 tour operators globally.

## Occidental Paradise Partners with University of Colombo for World Photography Day

TTA BULLETIN

In keeping with the hotel's vision for collaborative educational initiatives and green living, Occidental Paradise Dambulla was recently instrumental in facilitating a successful workshop in conjunction with the University of Colombo for World Photography Day. The program consisted of undergraduates and lecturers from the University of Colombo's Sustainable Tourism Unit (STU) which equips students in eco-friendly education while partnering with key industries through workshops and assignments in an effort to further enhance their knowledge and skills.

Under the guidance of Professor Sarath Kotagama - Ornithologist/Wildlife Ecologist, Patron Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka, Professor Suranga Silva - Tourism Economics, University of Colombo, Sampath Siriwardena - Senior Lecturer Tourism Research Academic Circle (TRAC) and STU University of Colombo and Prasad Kapuarachchi, Founder of Wild Squad, Senior Lecturer at National Photography Society of Sri Lanka and Regional Director of Asian Wildlife Photography Club, students were offered guided tours around the Occidental Paradise premises and iconic locations in the vicinity. Some of the sites visited included the Kubukadanwala Rock and Kalu Diya Pokuna nature trail, where the undergraduates captured images of endemic flora and fauna while enhancing their knowledge of the said species and responsible tourism practices. They also received extensive training on scientific names, pollination patterns, flowering periods, diverse habitats of different species, and more.

During the workshop, the importance of preserving correct eco-friendly measures where people, plants, and procedures co-exist harmoniously was emphasised. Students explored practices on how responsible tourism measures were implemented, processes that could be improved, and where prevention is needed. They were given an overview of ways in which photography could be utilised to enhance the country's tourism industry by understanding methods to capture images without disrupting natural habitats, along with right image selection and effective publishing.

Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels



& Resorts said, "As we celebrate World Photography Day, we reaffirm our commitment to sustainability and the protection of our country's natural beauty. Our recent activities highlight the importance of preserving these precious landscapes, not just for today, but for future generations. By fostering a culture of conservation, we can ensure that our nation remains a vibrant and enchanting destination for tourists to explore and cherish."

Commenting on the initiative, Professor Sarath Kotagama said, "Photography is not merely about taking photos; it is about capturing the essence of our world and the stories that lie within each frame. It allows us to witness the beauty of nature and the delicate balance of our ecosystems. As we engage with our surroundings through photography, we cultivate a deeper appreciation for the environment, inspiring us to initiate active steps in preserving it."

Taking a holistic approach to all its CSR programs while fostering knowledge sharing within the tourism industry, Occidental Paradise provided on-site accommodation, transport, food and beverage, and more to the undergraduates, with a similar workshop scheduled at Occidental Eden Beruwala for students from the University of Colombo and the Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka in the near future.

All images from the photography workshop were displayed on the 17th of August at Excel World, Legacy Court, in an exhibition.

Browns Hotels & Resorts, the leisure arm of Browns Investments - the investment arm of the LOLC Group, presents a distinguished portfolio of properties, including Thaalaa Bentota, Club Hotel Dolphin Negombo, The Calm Resort and Spa Pasikuda, Hotel Sigiriya, Dickwella Resort and Spa, Ayugiri Ayurveda Wellness Resort Sigiriya, Occidental Paradise Dambulla and Occidental Eden Beruwala. The portfolio also features luxury boutique villas under Reveal the Collection and associate hotel, Sheraton Kosgoda. Browns Hotels & Resorts diligently strives to make a positive impact on both the environment and society through dedicated nature conservation efforts to impactful community empowerment projects.

# HOTELS

## Inaugural Session of Thema Talks Season 2 Achieves Net Zero Emission Status

TTA BULLETIN

On August 13, 2024, the inaugural session of Thema Talks Season 2 was held at Sherwood by the Barn, Panadura. This event was a collaborative effort between the Barn House Studio – Sri Lanka, Sherwood by the Barn and Control Union Sri Lanka. The event on 'Low Carbon Emissions in Sri Lanka's Hospitality Industry' centred on strategies for reducing carbon emissions in the hospitality sector, exploring certification processes, and sharing success stories.

It featured a diverse panel of speakers discussing their organisations' efforts and challenges in implementing low-carbon strategies. Mr. Upali Ratnayake, Deputy Director General, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority opened the discussion by outlining the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority's efforts towards low-carbon strategies. He emphasised the need for collaborative action to advance sustainability in tourism, stating, "Our challenge at SLTDA is to assist all stakeholders in meeting and overcoming their sustainability

challenges. It is our responsibility to engage more actively in promoting this concept and making sustainability a widespread trend. Sustainability cannot be enforced solely through rules and regulations; it must be embraced as a shared responsibility."

"When we're talking about the global perspective, we need a global language and standards. So, in that sense, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council provides you with the pathway, the plan or criteria for how to align your process or practices more sustainably." Mr. Chinthana Duminduhe-wa, Lead Trainer, Global Sustainable Tourism Council and Country Coordinator, at Green Destinations, highlighted the importance of global standards for sustainable practices. Mr. Roshan Ranawake, Managing Director, Control Union Sri Lanka emphasised the role of third-party certification in

supporting greener tourism practices. He said, "As a third-party certification body, our primary objective is to be the impartial body to verify whether the organizations are meeting compliance levels. By implementing certification standards and offering our knowledge and expertise, we aim to support greener tourism."

The discussion included insights from various perspectives. As a practitioner, Mr. Maxime Wickramasinghe, Director of Marketing and Business Development, at Thema Collection, stressed the importance of authenticity in sustainability efforts, saying, "Sometimes sustainability is not just about replacing your plastic water bottle with a glass bottle. It's a never-ending scope, which you can't just say. We need to tell our sustainability story while being authentic to ourselves without greenwashing it and it has been somewhat of a challenge." Mr. Sameera Palliya Guruge, Resort Manager, The Barn House Studio Sri Lanka & Sherwood by the Barn also shared their commitment to sustainability, "Barn-

house was the first event venue to be built from the upcycled material. Our core philosophy is going towards sustainability and lowering the impact on environment." and added "When you come up with a sustainable or carbon-neutral event venue idea, you have to ensure everyone gets the right picture. We need to convince the customers and the vendors to think differently."

The event itself was a model of sustainability, featuring natural lighting, renewable energy, locally sourced plant-based foods, recycled materials, and reduced plastic usage. The carbon footprint of the event was meticulously calculated at 276.83 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e and offset by cancelling an equivalent amount of carbon credits from a recognised crediting scheme, facilitated by the Barn House and Thema Collection. This process was verified & supported by the Control Union Sri Lanka, making it the first hospitality industry event to achieve this level of sustainability in Sri Lanka.



## The Timeless Elegance of Galle Face Hotel: Colombo's Grand Heritage Icon

TTA BULLETIN

Nestled in the heart of Colombo, where tradition meets modernity, the Galle Face Hotel stands as a timeless symbol of elegance and grandeur. Established in 1864, this iconic hotel is more than just a building; it embodies the vibrant history of Sri Lanka, with its corridors whispering tales of a bygone era. Positioned along the sun-kissed shores of the Indian Ocean, the hotel's enduring presence exudes a grace that defies time.

The Galle Face Hotel is more than a place to stay—it's a representation of the city's enduring spirit. While Colombo's skyline has evolved, this grand hotel has proudly preserved its heritage. Each visit offers a journey through history, where the past seamlessly converges with the present. The hotel's iconic colonial architecture, meticulously maintained, invites guests into a world where tradition and luxury coexist.

Every corner of the Galle Face Hotel tells a story. From the majestic Verandah restaurant, where the waves of the Indian Ocean provide a mesmerizing backdrop, to the grand corridors adorned with historical photographs and priceless memorabilia, this hotel is a treasure trove of memories. Strolling through its expansive halls feels like reliving moments from the past, with each step revealing a new chapter in its rich history.

The Galle Face Hotel plays a vital role in preserving Sri Lanka's cultural heritage. As a guardian of the country's traditions and architectural wonders, it ensures that future generations can experience the beauty of a bygone era. Yet, while honouring history, the hotel also embraces modern comforts, offering guests a blend of old-world charm and contemporary luxury.

What truly elevates the Galle Face Hotel to its iconic status is its rich legacy as a gathering place for the world's elite. Throughout the decades, its Golden Book has captured the signatures of illustrious figures who have graced its halls. From Emperor Hirohito of Japan to U.S. President Richard Nixon, and from Indian Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi to literary giants like Mark Twain and Arthur C. Clarke, the hotel has been a sanctuary for



visionaries, leaders, and artists alike. Sir Arthur C. Clarke, enchanted by its ambiance, even wrote the final chapters of 3001: The Final Odyssey here. These distinguished guests add a layer of prestige that continues to attract travellers from around the world.

As the festive season approaches, the Galle Face Hotel transforms into a beacon of celebration. December brings with it a magical atmosphere, as the hotel's colonial charm is enhanced with twinkling lights and festive decorations. The nearby Galle Face Green becomes a lively extension of this festive spirit.

The Galle Face Hotel's ability to blend grand heritage with modern luxury is a testament to its enduring appeal. Whether seeking a festive celebration, a luxurious

getaway, or a memorable function, this iconic hotel offers an experience that is both grand and intimate. Conveniently located, the Galle Face Hotel offers easy access to Colombo's key attractions. Guests can explore nearby landmarks such as the Colombo National Museum, the bustling Pettah Market, and the picturesque Beira Lake, all within a short distance from the hotel. Its prime location makes it an ideal base for discovering the city's rich cultural and historical sites.

Through the years, the Galle Face Hotel has not merely survived—it has flourished. Its timeless allure continues to captivate those seeking more than just a place to stay. The Galle Face Hotel is a sanctuary of heritage, a living monument to the art of hospitality, and a place where cherished memories are made.





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# HOTELS

## Cinnamon Colombo Hotels Take The Spotlight With Multiple Wins At The Hotel Show 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Hotel Show Colombo 2024, Sri Lanka's premier hospitality event, concluded successfully, showcasing the latest talent and setting new standards of distinction in the industry. Held from July 26th to 28th at the BMICH, the event drew industry leaders, professionals, and innovators from across South Asia, marking a significant milestone for Sri Lanka's tourism sector.

Cinnamon Grand Colombo and Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo proudly celebrate the outstanding achievements of our employees at this prestigious event, highlighting our dedication to fostering top talent and advancing innovation within the hospitality industry.

In the National Room Stylist Competition, K.A.M. Arshad from Cinnamon Grand Colombo emerged as the champion. Arshad impressed the judges with his meticulous room styling techniques, including impressive bed-making skills and creativity in room presentation. His achievement underscores the high standards of distinction in housekeeping that the competition has come to represent.

The first runner-up of National Room Stylist Competition, Yeshmi Dasanayaka from Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, also delivered an outstanding performance. Yeshmi was commended for her exceptional attention to detail, especially in preparing a room for a famous cricketer, where every element was flawlessly aligned with the chosen theme. Her commitment to detail was evident in every aspect, from the



welcome note to the precisely arranged throw pillows.

The National Tea Masters Cup saw Navodya Prabashara from Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo take top honours as champion. Navodya showcased his mastery of tea preparation, rising to the top among over 100 participants from around the country. His expertise and passion for tea secured him the prestigious title, underscoring his dedication to excellence in the culinary arts.

Dinoj Bevan Rathnayaka from Cinnamon Grand Colombo claimed the first runner-up position in the Tea Masters Cup. Dinoj's deft and sophisticated approach to tea preparation earned him recognition as one of the most exceptional performers in the competition, adding to the event's illustrious reputation.

## Hilton Yala Resort Commemorates First Anniversary

Hilton Celebrates with a Series of Community Improvement Initiatives and Anniversary-Exclusive Experiences

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton Yala Resort, nestled in the heart of Sri Lanka's renowned Yala National Park, celebrates its first anniversary on 31 August 2024. In commemoration of this milestone and in alignment with its ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement, the resort is rolling out a series of activities to improve public amenities at two iconic locations within Yala National Park: Patanangala, a scenic rock outcrop along the Yala coastline, and Parana Thotupola, a popular camping site. These efforts will focus on improving cleanliness, functionality, and the overall visitor experience, ensuring that these natural attractions remain pristine for both local residents and international visitors.



"We are committed to making a positive impact on our community and the environment," said Gitanjali Chakravarthy, general manager of the Hilton Yala Resort. "By enhancing facilities at key locations in Yala National Park, we hope to contribute to the park's sustainability and improve the overall experience for visitors. These initiatives are a testament to our commitment to preserving the natural beauty of the area while supporting local tourism," she added.

Guests can craft their own pottery pieces through traditional pottery techniques guided by the property's Master Potter on 31 August 2024. The anniversary-exclusive session is suitable for all skill levels and offers a relaxing and educational glimpse into the region's cultural heritage. The resort will also offer an interactive wildlife session

with its park rangers on the day, where guests can learn about local wildlife, including snake species native to the region. This session will include valuable advice on snakebite management, engaging discussions, and hands-on demonstrations, all designed to enhance understanding and promote safe interactions with these remarkable creatures.

To round off the celebratory experiences, Hilton Yala's renowned culinary maestro Chef Jerome Tissera will present a special high tea experience for two, featuring an array of delicacies such as Strawberry Mimosas, Mississippi Mud Pie, Classic Fruit Pavlovas, Prosciutto Crostini with Compressed Apples, Braised OX Sandwiches with a French Dip, and Chili Jaggery Rooster Wings.

Hilton Yala Resort also takes this opportunity to recognize the achievements of its dedicated team members. The resort's team members have been instrumental in delivering exceptional service and have been recognized in various industry competitions. Notably, Adhil Sama was named the Most Promising Bartender of 2024 at the 29th National Bartender's Competition and also won the Bar Champs Regional Competition, and Chef Ruchira Siriwardane was lauded through Hilton's global Hospitality Heroes program for his intuitive customer-oriented service, where he customised a chocolate bar for two Australian children with severe allergies, which transformed their stay into a memorable experience.

## Swiss Circle Celebrates 733rd Swiss National Day at Mount Lavinia Hotel

TTA BULLETIN

Swiss Circle, a prominent non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Swiss culture and community in Sri Lanka, celebrated the 733rd Swiss National Day with an elegant and memorable event at Mount Lavinia Hotel. This historic celebration, which gathered over 40 distinguished guests including Swiss expatriates, members of the diplomatic corps, business leaders, and friends of Switzerland, took place against the stunning backdrop of the Indian Ocean.

The Swiss National Day, commemorating the founding of the Swiss Confederation in 1291, is a day of national pride for Switzerland, marked by festivities, speeches, and bonfires. This year, the celebration was graced by a traditional Swiss buffet and an inspiring speech from Dr. Siri Walt, the Swiss Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Anura Dewapura, Chief Operating Officer

of Mount Lavinia Hotel Group, remarked, "We are honored to once again host the Swiss National Day celebration. This event not only highlights the rich cultural ties between Switzerland and Sri Lanka but also showcases our hotel's dedication to providing a unique and memorable experience for all our guests. Our collaboration with Swiss Circle is a testament to our commitment to cultural exchange and excellence in hospitality." The event was further enhanced by the breathtaking decor and ambiance created by Mount Lavinia Hotel, with the Tropical Hut on the beach transformed into a charming Swiss-inspired setting.

The highlight of the evening was the exquisite Swiss cuisine prepared by the renowned Swiss chef, Ralf von der Heyde.



Chef Ralf, with his impressive background in Swiss culinary arts, transported guests to Switzerland through his meticulously crafted dishes. His esteemed career includes prestigious roles in several top Swiss hotels, including Nassauer Hof Wiesbaden, Widder Zürich, Parkhotel Vitznau, Grand Hotel Zermatterhof, Hotel Carlton St. Moritz, and Hotel Schloss Fuschl. His experience is reflected in his accolades, including multiple Gault Millau points and Michelin stars.

The President of Swiss Circle, Rolf Blaser expressed their gratitude, saying, "Our heartfelt thanks go to Mount Lavinia Hotel for their outstanding support in making this year's Swiss National Day celebration the best ever. The hotel's attention to detail, exceptional service, and the authentic Swiss cuisine prepared by Chef Ralf von der



Heyde created an unforgettable experience for all."

Mount Lavinia Hotel, established in 1806, is celebrated for its colonial charm, elegant architecture, and spectacular beachfront location. As one of Sri Lanka's oldest and most prestigious hotels, it continues to be a partner in significant cultural events and initiatives, including the Swiss National Day.



## Occidental Paradise: A Pristine Sanctuary Amidst the Jungles

### TTA BULLETIN

Nestled within the lush, green jungles of historical Dambulla, Occidental Paradise beckons discerning travellers in search of a serene and enchanting escape. This idyllic retreat offers a secluded setting to unwind and awaken to the melodious symphony of birdsong, embraced by magical surroundings seeped in folklore and history.

Far enough from the hubbub of the city, Occidental Paradise Dambulla boasts of total peace and tranquillity. With 67 spacious rooms and earthy wooden floors designed to prioritise light and space, visitors are able to enjoy deep-jungle vistas from just about any angle. One of the property's unique features lies in its Superior Duplex Rooms spanning two expansive floors which are primed for families looking to book a luxe getaway. Each one is equipped with its own outdoor terrace, filled with mischievous monkeys,

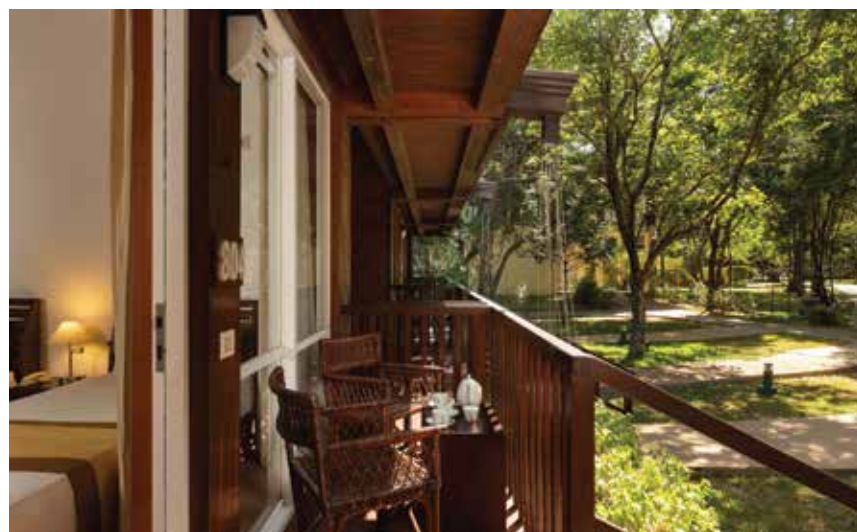
flitting butterflies, ever-changing chameleons, paradisaic peacocks and more...the perfect spot to enjoy an uplifting cup of Ceylon tea. Set against the emerald-green jungle backdrop and located beside a mystical rock formation, Occidental Paradise's glimmering pool with its unobstructed views proves to be otherworldly, offering an immersive aquatic experience for all.

Occidental Paradise comes armed with abundant offerings to keep one entertained; whether exploring the nearby Sigiriya Fortress and Dambulla Cave Temple or witnessing the renowned Minneriya elephant gathering, there is an experience for everyone to choose from. Other bespoke on-site activities include idyllic spots for yoga and morning meditation, choice of high tea or breakfast located atop a rock, authentic Sri Lankan cookery



demonstration with a personal chef, bird watching or for the adventurous, a bit of rock climbing.

Enveloped in magical surroundings and filled with memorable experiences, find your escape at Occidental Paradise Dambulla.



# HOTELS / FAMILY ALBUM

## Minor Hotels to Open Avani Ratchada Bangkok Hotel

Avani Hotels & Resorts arrives in the heart of Bangkok's new CBD  
TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a global leader in hospitality with over 550 hotels, resorts and residences in 56 countries worldwide, has announced the upcoming opening of Avani Ratchada Bangkok Hotel in partnership with Thailand's premier real estate developer, CP LAND Public Company Limited (CP LAND). On 1st September 2024, following an extensive renovation, the 402-key property formerly known as Grand Fortune Hotel Bangkok will start operating under the Minor umbrella. This will mark the 12th Avani hotel in Thailand and the 3rd Avani hotel in Bangkok, joining sister properties Avani+ Riverside Bangkok Hotel and Avani Sukhumvit Bangkok Hotel.



Avani Ratchada Bangkok's state-of-the-art wellness centre occupies an entire floor and features a lap pool, AvaniFit gym, and spa facilities, including a Japanese Onsen and sauna. This ensures guests have ample space to relax, rejuvenate, and maintain their wellbeing during their stay. For events and meetings in the heart of Bangkok, guests can choose from 16 versatile venues, including a 924-square-metre ballroom equipped with advanced technology and catering to everything from weddings to product launches.

On their doorstep, guests will find the vibrant district of Ratchada with its bustling night markets, tantalising street food, world-class performances and shopping malls. Visitors can explore the trendy RCA nightlife, catch a show at the Muangthai Rachadalai Theatre, or shop at Fortune IT Lifestyle Mall and Central Rama 9. With excellent public transportation, Ratchada is a convenient base for exploring the rest of the city.

"With its central location only 30 minutes away from two international airports, Avani Ratchada is ideally situated to capture both the leisure and business traveller segments," commented Mr. Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International and CEO of Minor Hotels. "Together with our partners CP LAND, we are proud to give the city of Bangkok a hotel that brings the best in hospitality, dining and MICE facilities to the thriving district of Ratchada."

Mr. Keerati Satasuk, Chief Executive Officer of CP Land Public Company Limited, said, "This collaboration between CP LAND's Fortune Hotel Group and Minor Hotels is a strategic alliance that will pioneer the expansion of hotel management across Thailand.

Strategically located in the heart of the new Central Business District, Avani Ratchada Bangkok offers seamless connectivity with the city via Phra Ram 9 MRT Station and proximity to the Airport Rail Link and BTS Skytrain, making it an appealing city base for both leisure and business travellers. Contemporary guestrooms and suites, designed for optimal sleep and productivity, offer modern amenities and captivating city views, while the 169-square-metre Presidential Suite offers luxury features including a dining room that seats eight guests, a cocktail bar, and a private sauna. Perched on the 25th floor, the exclusive AvaniClub Lounge offers a serene retreat above the city where suite guests can enjoy gourmet breakfast, afternoon refreshments and evening cocktails.

Catering to the diverse palates of its wide-ranging clientele, the hotel's culinary offerings reflect its upscale positioning as a premier destination. One Ratchada serves international and local flavours throughout the day, while Nan Yuan Chinese Restaurant specialises in Cantonese delicacies. Metro Lounge soothes with handcrafted cocktails and live music; The Pantry supplies busy executives with convenient grab-and-go options; and the pool bar provides a refreshing escape with signature drinks and city views.

## Hilton Opens its First Conrad Hotels & Resorts Property in Chongqing

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton has officially announced the launch of Conrad Chongqing, marking its inaugural Conrad Hotels & Resorts establishment in Chongqing, which is owned by the Chongqing Jafa Group.

Situated within the renowned Jiafa Cross-Border Trade Center, this hotel stands as a significant landmark in the Nanping District of Chongqing. It was crafted by the Cheng Chung Design (CCD) based in Hong Kong. The design of the property is influenced by the distinctive mountainous landscape of Chongqing, harmoniously

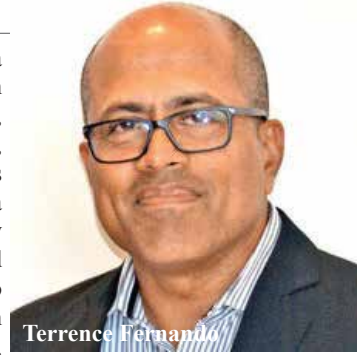
integrating elements of nature and culture within a modern luxury environment.

Conrad Chongqing features a total of 275 accommodations, comprising 26 suites, located from the 38th to the 55th floor. This establishment is situated to cater to both business and leisure requirements, in proximity to notable attractions including the International Convention and Exhibition Center, the Jiefangbei commercial district, the Yangtze River Cableway, and the picturesque Hongyadong area.

## Celebrating a Decade: Cinnamon Red's 10th Anniversary

IT TAKES TEN TO TANGO  
TTA BULLETIN

Much like the tango, a dance that thrives on coordination, connection, and shared rhythm, Cinnamon Red's success has been the result of a collective effort. Every milestone we've reached stands as a testament to the collaboration between our esteemed guests, trusted partners, and dedicated team.



Terrence Fernando

gratitude to all who have been part of our story.

"Cinnamon Red expresses its deepest appreciation to our guests and patrons for singing with us, for dancing with us, for dining with us, and for choosing us, always,"

says Mr. Terrence Fernando, General Manager, Cinnamon Red Colombo.

Since our inception, we have had the privilege of welcoming over 800,000 guests, with regulars returning for repeat stays—an affirmation of the lasting relationships we have cultivated. Over the past five years, our booking rates have soared, reflecting the unwavering trust and satisfaction our guests place in us.

These figures represent more than just numbers; they symbolise the shared experiences and enduring bonds that have been nurtured. As we look back on ten years of growth and lasting relationships, we extend our heartfelt



He emphasized that the General Manager of Cinnamon Red joins him in expressing heartfelt gratitude to the talented team for their exceptional dedication and remarkable progress over the last ten years.

"As we look to the future, we are excited to continue building new bonds and renewing old ones whilst we serve up heartfelt, Sri Lankan hospitality to the world and make our contribution to the Sri Lankan economy" mentioned Mr. Kamal Munasinghe - Area Vice President, Cinnamon Colombo Hotel.

## The Fishery at Pegasus Reef Unveils New Menu with Nautical Flair

The Fishery at Pegasus Reef Hotel celebrated the launch of its new menu on August 9th with an event that combined creativity and elegance. Guests were greeted with a signature cocktail and soft music, setting the stage for a memorable evening.

The highlight was a dramatic treasure chest procession, accompanied by a drumbeat, leading to the chest's unveiling in the Bar area. The chest's contents were revealed amid nautical decor and candlelight, creating an air of mystery. A note from the legendary Captain Arlo Thorne detailed his travels and introduced the new menu inspired by his adventures.

General Manager delivered a warm welcome, toasting to the menu's launch. Chef Ruklantha then showcased a live cooking demonstration, engaging guests and offering a glimpse into the new dishes. Each course served throughout the night was paired with a story about Captain Thorne's voyages, enhancing the dining experience.

The event concluded with a raffle draw and heartfelt closing remarks. Attendees praised the evening's concept and the new menu, highlighting the food's exceptional quality. The event successfully increased awareness and patronage, marking a triumphant relaunch for The Fishery.



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.



Scan here to book your enchanting escape  
+94 52 222 4509 | +94 11 470 9400  
resv.broomfield@jetwinghotels.com

  @broomfieldbyjetwing | @jetwingvillacollection

**BROOMFIELD**  
by   
**Jetwing**  
NUWARA ELIYA • SRI LANKA

TRULY THE HOME OF AUTHENTIC SRI LANKAN HOSPITALITY.

# AIRLINES

## SriLankan Airlines Turns 45 Celebrating a Journey of Milestones

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines turns 45, celebrating a trailblazing journey that took off on September 1, 1979, with just two Boeing 707 aircraft. A pioneer in the region, the airline has always remained resilient in the face of turbulence and has consistently



championed true Sri Lankan hospitality globally. Over the years, SriLankan Airlines has proven its versatility in an ever evolving and testing environment. Today, SriLankan continues to be one of the major international airlines from South Asia, having achieved numerous milestones and accolades along the way.

“Forty-five years is a long time in any industry, but achieving this milestone in the commercial airline sector is an even greater feat. SriLankan Airlines is one of the oldest commercial airlines in this region, and we are incredibly proud of our journey over the past 45 years, despite the regular challenges we have faced. Through it all, SriLankan has remained steadfast in its commitment to our loyal customers and in supporting Sri Lanka through every high and low,” reflected Ashok Pathirage, Chairman of SriLankan Airlines.

“On this occasion, it is important to express

our gratitude to our people. We owe our successes and resilience to every individual within the airline, both current and past, who has dedicated themselves and made sacrifices for our success. As we celebrate our achievements, we will also focus on our vision for the future, striving to be the airline of choice for travellers seeking an authentic Sri Lankan experience, personified by the warmth and hospitality of our people,” added Richard Nuttall, Chief Executive Officer of SriLankan Airlines.

SriLankan Airlines provides convenient connections to a global network (including codeshare partners) of 114 destinations in 62 countries around the world. The airline’s direct route map covers major cities across the Europe, Australia, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia and the Far East. SriLankan operates an all-Airbus fleet consisting wide-bodied A330 aircraft, A321 aircraft and mid-range A320s.

## Oman Air Introduces Next-Level Business Travel with Business Studio

TTA BULLETIN

To cater to shifting demand and in line with global consumer trends, Oman Air has announced its new Business Studio. The new cabin, which will replace the airline’s First Class product, will retain its spacious cabin layout, classic lie-flat seats, and Wi-Fi connectivity, but with more affordable fares and a redefined service approach that is tailored to the needs of modern travellers. Featuring predominantly on its London and Bangkok services, the new higher-tier Business experience offers all the features of premium flying along with Oman Air’s award-winning service and hospitality, giving guests the room to work, connect and rest like never before, whether traveling for business or premium leisure.

“Inspired by valuable guest feedback and to adapt and evolve in line with global market trends, we have strategically refined our premium offering to deliver greater value and appeal. The traditional First Class experience has seen diminished demand, and after careful analysis and benchmarking against industry standards, we decided to



retire the product. This decision allows us to focus on delivering an exceptional Business Class experience that better meets modern traveller expectations and is more closely aligned with the demographics targeted by the national tourism objectives, such as such as wellness, adventure and MICE. Moreover, we’re offering it all at a more competitive price point,” said Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air.

Oman Air’s new Business Studio offers the best Business Class available anywhere in the region with one of the world’s most generous pitches at 82”, privacy walls for every seat, 23-inch personal screen, free Wi-Fi connectivity, and à la carte dining to stay nourished on-the-go.

Guests will be able to book Business Studio from 9 September 2024

## Qatar Airways Increases Flight Frequencies to London, Male, Miami and Tokyo

TTA BULLETIN

From 27 October 2024, the World’s Best Airline will add an eighth daily flight to



London Heathrow and Doha.

London due to increased demand from passengers travelling with Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways, the World’s Best Airline as voted by Skytrax in 2024, has launched additional flights to the key global destinations of London, UK; Male, the Maldives; Miami, USA; and Tokyo, Japan for the 2024-2025 season.

Qatar Airways Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Thierry Antinori, said: “As the World’s Best Airline, Qatar Airways is the best travel companion for international holiday-makers. Our increased flights during the winter holiday season comes as a response to the needs of our passengers who wish to create unforgettable travel experiences.

Mr. Antinori continued: “Qatar Airways’ is also strengthening its commitment to the UK. Growing to 56 flights a week – the most of any Gulf carrier – further reinforces our long-standing relationship with London Heathrow Airport, as well as our unique strategic alliance with British Airways, which also operates two flights a day to Doha.”

Starting 27 October 2024, Qatar Airways flights to London (LHR) will increase from 49 to 56 weekly flights. Following strong demand from customers, the airline will be offering more than 42,000 seats per week each way. Along with the two daily flights operated by its joint business partner, British Airways, there will be 10 daily flights

New flights for this popular route are open for travellers, including travellers from Australia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UK.

Starting 13 December 2024, Qatar Airways flights to Male (MLE) will increase from 21 to 28 weekly flights. Bookings are now open for travellers from Germany, Italy and the UK looking for their dream holiday along the coasts of one of the Maldives’ captivating islands.

Starting 16 December 2024, Qatar Airways flights to Miami (MIA) will increase from 10 to 12 weekly flights. Travellers from the Magic City of Miami can now book their exciting escapes to Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

Starting 14 February 2025, Qatar Airways flights to Tokyo (NRT) will increase from seven to 11 weekly flights. Travellers from Europe and beyond can now plan their enriching cultural experiences when visiting Tokyo.

Qatar Airways Privilege Club members are able to earn Avios with their flights and enjoy special discounts when paying for their tickets with Cash + Avios, or Avios Max when paying 100 per cent of the fare using Avios. Travellers can also use Avios at Qatar Duty Free outlets at Hamad International Airport, or purchase special Qatar Airways Holidays travel packages with Avios, among many other benefits.

## Air Ceilao Set to Redefine Sri Lanka's Aviation offering

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka’s aviation industry is on the brink of a significant transformation with the upcoming launch of Air Ceilao, the country’s latest international airline. Poised to revolutionize the market, Air Ceilao aims to leverage Sri Lanka’s strategic position as a regional aviation hub, offering a fresh perspective on air travel.



Janith Kashaan

begin operations with a fleet of narrow- and wide-bodied aircraft, initially connecting passengers to key destinations across the Middle East and Asia Pacific. In its second phase of expansion, the airline plans to introduce long-haul flights to Europe and Australia, broadening its reach and establishing itself as a

global player.

Unlike conventional airlines, Air Ceilao plans to carve out a unique niche by combining the elegance of full-service airlines with the affordability of low-cost carriers. This innovative approach is designed to appeal to both discerning travelers seeking luxury and budget-conscious flyers looking for value. The airline promises a travel experience that seamlessly blends luxury and affordability, catering to diverse customer needs.

The airline’s debut is drawing closer, with preparations well underway and strong engagement with the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka. Air Ceilao will

Air Ceilao is built on the pillars of innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability, with an unwavering focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences. “We’re here to redefine air travel,” said Chairman Janith Kashaan. “Our digital-first approach ensures seamless journeys, making air travel not just accessible but extraordinary for everyone.”

As the countdown to its inaugural flight begins, Air Ceilao is set to make a bold statement in the aviation industry, offering a compelling alternative to traditional airlines and reshaping how the world views air travel.



# SriLankan Airlines Ltd.



## SriLankan Airlines' 'Colours of Jaffna' campaign lauded at PATA Gold Awards 2024

SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier and a prestigious oneworld member, bagged a Gold Award in the category of 'Marketing-Carrier' at the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards 2024 held at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, Bangkok, Thailand on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024, reaffirming the global appeal of its marketing communication endeavors. The campaign, "Colours of Jaffna" is the first of its kind of marketing campaign steered by any Sri Lankan entity that exclusively shone a spotlight on the island's vibrant north.

This year, PATA honoured 23 travel and tourism entities from across the world for their award-winning work towards marketing, promotional and sustainability endeavours in the global sphere, out of 100 entries adjudged by a panel of 14 industry experts.

One of the most successful campaigns ever to have been executed in the Airlines' history, 'Colours of Jaffna' garnered a reach of over 14,000,000 across social media platforms with over 500,000 engagements.

SriLankan Airlines, Head of Marketing, Saminda Perera said, "As we are defending this coveted title for the sixth consecutive year, I take this opportunity to thank the encouragement and support extended to us by the management, our valued partners and my team, without whom this will never be a possibility. Time after time, we have endeavoured to present Sri Lanka in novel perspectives, and it gives us a great pleasure to be affirmed that our efforts are recognized by the industry fraternity and the travellers alike."

Considering the potential of Jaffna's rich heritage, striking architecture, vibrant cultural characteristics, and the quintessential flavours of its unique culinary features, the National Carrier, in its campaign, has aptly captured the beauty of each of these aspects, thereby inviting the traveller to embark on an immersive experience.

Situated in the Northern most part of Sri Lanka, Jaffna has always been a hotspot with a rich history. It has evolved from an ancient kingdom, a symbol of cultural vibrancy, and a city with progressive currents, before the three-decade conflict drastically changed the city's trajectory. With the end of war, Jaffna re-emerged as a sought-after destination among the local tourists, with the same inherent attributes of culture, cuisine and people, recommending it over other popular tourist getaways.

Today, Jaffna boasts of a legacy of rebirth, and represents the seamless amalgamation of contemporary hospitality with its defining attributes that have stood the test of time.

Centring it around the historic Nallur Kandaswamy Festival, the national festival that spans the longest duration of 20-25 days which takes place in August every year, this was an invitation to visit Jaffna and experience the city in its most glorious and vibrant form.

Staying true to the campaign title 'Colours of Jaffna' the campaign visuals, both the imagery and videography, highlight the plethora of colours that defines Jaffna. From the water fronts, the historic Fort, ponds with fabled health properties, colourful

temple interiors, festivities, cuisine, the visual tonality focuses on the contrasting, yet striking colours to highlight the novelty, excitement and vivacity of the city. The attributes of water and shades of green and blue are generously used to bring out the soothing surrounds.

The video, with its rhythmic soundtrack presents a mix of scenic, cultural, and human beauty of Jaffna. The change of tempos signifies the ebb and flow inherent to the city- the fine contrast of calm against the beautiful chaos of festivities. Like little surprises, the main soundtrack gives a way to sound bites of the mundane such as the bells etc., making the visual experience as authentic as possible.

The Airline launched the campaign with this spectacular video that unveils the fascinating facets of Jaffna, which was followed by a series of posts and a fun quiz, raising awareness on Jaffna's various attractions. The scenic beauty of Jaffna has adorned the backdrops and giveaways of the Airlines' corporate events. Complementing the promotional drive, the Airlines' leisure arm, SriLankan Holidays introduced a series of holiday packages covering the best of Jaffna, with Jetwing Hotels as the exclusive hospitality partner. The Airline takes this opportunity to congratulate Jetwing Hotels, the other PATA award-recipient from Sri Lanka under the coveted category "Climate Change Initiative."

This attractive invitation to experience Jaffna was carried across the Airlines' vast network, including its single largest market, India, which is connected to the island with over 80 flights a week out of 9 Indian cities.



## Qatar Airways Introduces Caviar to Business Class, Further Elevating its Award-Winning Onboard Experience

TTA BULLETIN

As the only airline in the world to have won the Skytrax World's Best Business class 11 times, Qatar Airways announces further enhancement to its business class service with the introduction of caviar service on its menu offering.



option or part of the onboard meal courses.

Starting with 13 routes from 15 August, caviar lovers can experience the luxurious service onboard Qatar Airways business class between Doha and Boston, Dallas, Hong Kong, Houston, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, New York, Paris, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Sydney, and Washington.

Qatar Airways' award-winning Business Class service features extensive food and beverage options, as well as on-demand dining where passengers can dine at their preferred meal time. The new caviar service can be enjoyed as a standalone

Qatar Airways Senior Vice President Product Development and Design, Ms. Xia Cai, said: "As the world's only 11-time winner of the Skytrax 'World's Best Business Class' award, Qatar Airways takes pride in providing the best premium business class travel experience. The introduction of caviar service, commonly available only in first class cabins, further elevates Qatar Airways' award-winning business class experience. We are committed to continuously enhance our onboard services to elevate the industry's standards and delight our passengers."

## Emirates' Unaccompanied Minors Service prepares for busy period

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates is currently operating one of the busiest time periods for its Unaccompanied Minors Service, as many children return to Dubai from summers spent abroad to start the new school year. In the coming week alone, Emirates will welcome more than 900 children, who are flying alone using the acclaimed family-friendly service.



At the airport, a specialist member of Emirates' team will meet the child at the Unaccompanied Minors check in desk. The Emirates specialist

Over the past 5 years, more than 120,000 children have availed of Emirates' Unaccompanied Minors and Young Passenger services. The majority of children who have travelled alone in Emirates care are aged 11 years or younger. The families who currently use the service the most are British, then Indian, followed by American, Filipino and French. When children are flying without their family, Emirates is there every step of the way. For those aged between 5 and 11 years old, Emirates' Unaccompanied Minors Service ensures young people enjoy a supervised and safe trip from check in to destination, with plenty of fun and memorable moments along the way.

When parents and guardians bring their young flyer to Dubai International Airport (DXB), they can go straight to the Unaccompanied Minors Lounge near the check in area. Proof of identification must be provided to Emirates by the person dropping off the child and the guardian will need to sign a permission form. Children will be swiftly checked in and can then relax with video games, free Wi Fi, and comfortable sofas. In the dedicated and private space supervised by the Emirates team, kids can enjoy complimentary drinks and snacks while they wait for their flight and use the children's bathrooms.

stays with the child all the way through the airport, taking care of them and carrying their passport for safety. The specialist helps them through security and immigration, facilitating priority boarding so that the child has time to get settled on their flight, before introducing them to the cabin crew at the aircraft door for the next stage. While in the air, Emirates cabin crew are on hand to make sure the young flyer has a comfortable and memorable journey. Parents and guardians can request any special dietary requirements in advance and advise whether the child would like to sit by the window or the aisle, or seat siblings together. Emirates cabin crew regularly check on the child to ensure they are enjoying their trip, are eating their meals and whether they need any support in adjusting their seat or inflight entertainment system.

Children onboard Emirates can pass the time with free Wi-Fi when they sign up to Emirates Skysurfers, complimentary toys and giveaways, more than 100 video games and a huge array of children's content on the award-winning inflight entertainment ice, including new release movies, Disney Classics, Marvel Studios and Star Wars collections, and the complete Harry Potter movies series, CBeebies, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network.

If it's the child's birthday, parents and guardians can order a cake 48 hours before the flight and Emirates cabin crew will celebrate the special occasion.

## Grand entry into next phase of IndiGo - launches IndiGo Stretch a tailor-made business product for India

TTA BULLETIN

In a ground-breaking move to redefine business travel in India, IndiGo, India's most preferred airline, announces details of IndiGo Stretch - a tailor-made business product for India's busiest and business routes. With a coupe-style, 2-seat wide bay, IndiGo Stretch promises customers a relaxed and comfortable journey, along with specially curated healthy meal options from Oberoi Catering Services. In its constant endeavour to elevate customer experience, IndiGo has partnered with the best in business to design the premium seats that will have a spacious pitch of 38 inches and a width of 21.3 inches so that customers can sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight.

IndiGo Stretch's seats come with a six-way adjustable headrest with neck support, 5" deep recline to relax, electronic device holder, 60-watt USB-Type C power supply, and a three-pin universal power outlet to stay charged during the journey. IndiGo Stretch customers will also enjoy a host of complimentary benefits such as no convenience fee, specially curated vegetarian meal box, wide choice of beverages, and advance seat selection at no additional charge along with priority check-in and anytime boarding. It will create a desired option for many who are aiming to travel business, some of them seasoned and some perhaps for the first time in their lives.

IndiGo Stretch cabin will feature 12 seats in a 2-2 configuration, offering space and comfort. The 6E cabin will provide 208 seats, preserving our current seating layout, including the XL seats in the middle of the aircraft.

Pieter Elbers, Chief Executive Officer, IndiGo, commented, "IndiGo is embarking on a new path of its incredible growth story by introducing a tailor-made business product on the nation's busiest and business routes. With India's soaring economy and the evolving aspirations of the Indian society, we believe it's time for IndiGo to redefine business class in India, increasing availability of this service for the nation. IndiGo Stretch will provide our customers the on-time performance and hassle-free and courteous experience they can expect from us, while adding more space and increased priority at a great value for money".

The product will be opened for sale from 6th August 2024, on the Delhi-Mumbai sector, starting from mid-November at an introductory price of Rs18018. This will be followed by a gradual scale-up and product will operate on most of the Metro-to-Metro routes, with all 12 routes expected to be served by the end of 2025, twelve months after introduction.

## SriLankan Airlines' New Safety Video Showcases Safety Protocols Against Iconic Sri Lankan Backdrops

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines, aiming to capture travellers' attention with its safety protocols, has launched a brand-new onboard safety video featuring a range of Sri Lanka's most mesmerizing scenic locations.



tourist attractions of Sri Lanka Airlines' hub, Sri Lanka. It transforms the flight cabin into

In the air travel industry, disseminating safety information is a regulatory pre-requisite, as well as a precaution to ensure that every passenger is aware of safety provisions and protocols. The new safety video transcends this basic requirement by incorporating the island's aesthetics and the signature warmth and care of SriLankan's onboard service, to create a cinematic experience that is both informative and captivating.

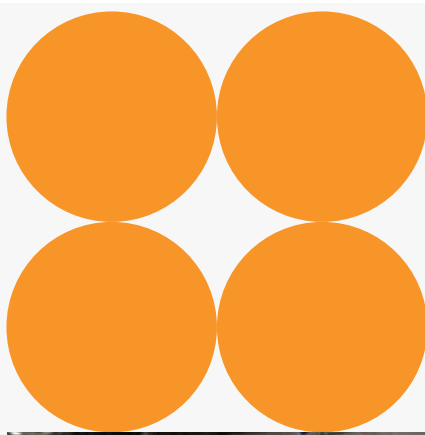
Richard Nuttall, Chief Executive Officer of SriLankan Airlines, said, "We are delighted to launch our brand-new onboard safety video, which we premiered to over 200 international travel trade partners at the Global Sales Conference. This video replaces the one we have had for over a decade and offers a fresh perspective on the island home we proudly share with the world."

While drawing the viewer's attention to vital safety details, the video unveils the

various scenic ambiances, conveying that a journey aboard SriLankan Airlines to Sri Lanka is a visually captivating experience in itself.

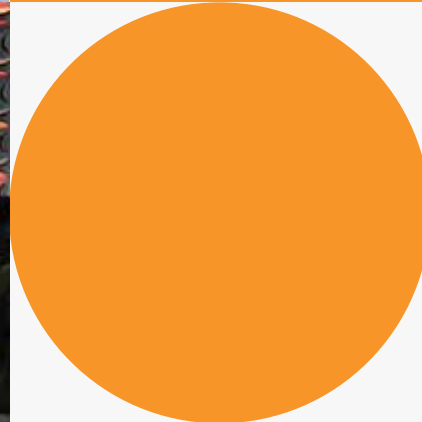
As the regulatory body, Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL) worked closely with the airline, where the input and valuable insights of the former were immensely helpful to deliver an accurate and universally comprehensible safety demonstration. The Inflight Entertainment system (IFE) version of the video includes subtitles in Sinhala and Tamil, enhancing the clarity and engagement of the safety guidelines being demonstrated.

SriLankan Airlines has always been in the forefront of marketing quintessential island attributes to its global network, both through the portrayal of Sri Lanka in its audio-visual content as well as bringing down acclaimed sporting events such as Raid Amazonas, BikingMan and Barmy Army Fans' World Cup, where Sri Lanka is presented as the ideal backdrop for adventure and sports tourism.



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## Emirates' first retrofitted 777 aircraft featuring its latest cabin interiors takes off to Geneva

TTA BULLETIN

The first Emirates Boeing 777 with a nose-to-tail cabin refresh sporting a new look has rolled into service, taking off to Geneva as EK 83. The aircraft took a total of 37 days for a complete revamp and entered service four days ahead of its officially announced deployment schedule.



that recline 8 inches providing more space for stretching and relaxing, in addition to 6-way adjustable headrests.

Watch this timelapse video offering a glimpse into how the first Emirates 777 cabins were gutted, fitted and refurbished by the airline's seasoned in-house engineering team.

Sir Tim Clark, President Emirates Airline said: "Emirates continues to carry out our commitment to deliver an unmatched onboard experience with the introduction of our latest Boeing 777 with new signature interiors, raising the industry benchmark when it comes to premium travel. Our latest Business Class cabin offers customers a sense of exclusivity and privacy, complemented by our best-in-class suite of onboard products. The addition of our popular Premium Economy cabin, rated one of the best in the industry, injects modern sophistication to the flying experience and is carefully designed for more comfort. With more Boeing 777s and A380s refreshed to sport our latest generation onboard products, customers can consistently have the very best experiences in the sky across both aircraft types."

The Emirates Boeing 777 entered refurbishment in early July, with a planned reconfiguration of the aircraft to make way for a new Premium Economy cabin consisting of 24 seats set in three rows in a 2-4-2 abreast layout. The cream leather seats, accentuated by wood panel finishings across the cabin, offer enhanced comfort with a 38-inch pitch, 19.5-inch-wide seats

The new Emirates 777 Business Class is set in a warm and inviting cabin featuring thoughtful refinements with enhanced privacy for customers. The cabin's seats and colour story have been enhanced to echo the light and airy design elements of Emirates' iconic A380 experience, with soft leather cream seats accented with champagne trim, lighter wood panelling, and modern technology touches that deliver function and luxury.

Set with 38 seats in a 1-2-1 configuration, each ergonomic 20.7-inch-wide seat converts to a spacious flat bed which reclines up to 78.6 inches. The seat also features a padded headrest for enhanced comfort. Seats in the cabin are arranged four-abreast offering every customer direct access to the aisle. Each seat features a personal mini-bar, table for dining or working, multiple charging outlets for personal devices and more. The seat's touch screen seat controller for in-flight entertainment and seat operation and a personal 23-inch HD screen, one of the biggest in the skies ensure every customer can fully enjoy the airline's award-winning ice entertainment system.

The Emirates Boeing 777 Business Class cabin will also include a small bar for customers to quickly grab mid-flight snacks and refreshments.

The new Economy Class cabin features 256 seats in a colour palette of soft greys and blues. The ergonomically designed seats also include full leather headrests with flexible side panels that can also be adjusted vertically for optimum support.

## SriLankan Airlines Delights Samanera Monks with Special Airport Tour

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines with the support of Airport and Aviation Services (Sri Lanka), marked a milestone event today (22 August 2024) by delighting a large group of Buddhist child monks, or 'Samaneras,' with a special guided tour of the airport and their first opportunity to board an aircraft. This event coincides with the airline's 45th anniversary on 1 September 2024, adding to its significance in the airline's history.



The group, consisting of monks aged five and older from the Ganewatta Purana Rajamaha Viharaya in Waskadubedda, Deldoova, Kalutara was accompanied by several Venerable Theros and volunteers from SriLankan Airlines. During the tour, the young monks were guided through the Bandaranaike International Airport, where officials explained various ground operations. They also had the opportunity to board a SriLankan Airlines' Airbus A320 parked on the tarmac, giving each young

monk their first experience of both the airport environment and boarding an aircraft.

In keeping with religious traditions, the group of Samaneras and Theros were offered a special almsgiving (Dana) and pirikara in the airport's Silk Route Arrival Lounge. The almsgiving was attended by SriLankan staff volunteers, members of the airline's senior management team and senior managers from Airport and Aviation Services (Sri Lanka).

## IndiGo launches its much-awaited loyalty program - IndiGo BluChip

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, India's preferred airline, has announced the launch of its much-awaited loyalty program, IndiGo BluChip. As part of the next phase



when booking directly on the IndiGo website and mobile app and review of tiers for upgrades will occur daily, as opposed to a fixed anniversary.

of growth towards becoming a global aviation player, its time in IndiGo's evolution to recognize and rewards our most frequent flyers through our new loyalty program. This program will not only provide recognition for these loyal flyers but also the fastest way for them to earn free flight on the vast IndiGo network.

Furthermore, five nominees can benefit from the IndiGo BluChips earned by a member and redeem them on IndiGo flights. The program is designed on the simple concepts of easy to earn, easy to burn, real-time redemption, and lifetime validity for active members.

IndiGo customers who become members of the program will be able to accumulate IndiGo BluChips on every IndiGo flight, based on their spend. Members will also enjoy enhanced travel experiences with exclusive benefits, as they effortlessly upgrade to higher loyalty tiers. The program offers the highest rewards per spend on flights and ensures hassle-free redemption on every IndiGo flight up to the last seat available, 365 days of the year. Additionally, earned IndiGo BluChips never expire for active members.

Early bird pre-registration is open from 5th August, 2024 with exciting benefits, ahead of the program going live in September 2024.

Neetan Chopra, Chief Digital and Information Officer, IndiGo, said, "IndiGo continues to be dynamic and evolve with the changing needs and wants of our customers. I am absolutely delighted with the launch of IndiGo BluChip, our hassle-free, innovative and customer centric loyalty program. I warmly welcome all our customers aboard our loyalty program, carefully designed to make your journeys with IndiGo even more rewarding."

Members will earn more IndiGo BluChips

## THAI Reports Operational Performance Results for the Second Quarter of 2024

TTA BULLETIN



THAI Reports Operational Performance Results for the Second Quarter of 2024 with Targets to Finalize its Capital Restructuring under the Business Rehabilitation Plan within the End of 2024 and Obtain the Cancellation of the Business Rehabilitation within the Second Quarter of 2025

period last year which was 37,381 million baht but 4.3% lower than Q1/2024 owing to the typical lowest travel demand during Q2 of the year. THAI resumed flights to Milan and Oslo to serve intercontinental passengers between Europe and Asia-Pacific. Moreover, THAI partnered with Kuwait Airways to provide codeshare services in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. In Q2/2024, THAI served 3.81 million passengers. An average cabin factor was 73.2%.

Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) reinforces its sustainable strength and capability with the operational performance for the second quarter of 2024 as well as elevates corporate governance and management in preparation for the capital restructuring within the end of 2024. The capital restructuring consists of (1.1) debt-to-equity mandatory conversion (1.2) the debt-to-equity conversion right and (2) offering of newly issued shares to its pre-capital restructuring shareholders, THAI's employees and selected investors by way of private placement, sequentially. The Company targets to file a petition to the Central Bankruptcy Court for the cancellation of the business rehabilitation and THAI's shares are expected to resume trading on the Stock Exchange of Thailand within the second quarter of 2025.

THAI and its subsidiaries reported the total expenses, excluding one-time transactions, at 38,056 million baht, 32.1% higher than the previous year mainly due to an increase in variable costs. THAI and its subsidiaries reported the operating profit, before financial costs and excluding one-time transactions, at 5,925 million baht, comparing to 8,576 million baht profit in Q2/2023. THAI and its subsidiaries' financial costs, according to Financial Reporting Standard No. 9 (TFRS 9), was 4,796 million baht. THAI and its subsidiaries had one-time items mainly due to loss from foreign exchange and asset impairment resulting total expense of 809 million baht. Consequently, THAI and its subsidiaries reported a net profit of 314 million baht while in the same period last year.

In the second quarter of 2024, THAI and its subsidiaries reported the total revenue, excluding one-time transactions, at 43,981 million baht, 17.7% higher than the same

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## 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.

## Cathay unveils 'Song of Cathay', its new sonic branding that captures the love for travel and aviation

TTA BULLETIN

Cathay is excited to announce the launch of its new sonic branding, Song of Cathay — an uplifting, inspirational and journey-like musical composition designed to forge deeper ties with customers and create an auditory expression of its purpose to move people forward in life.



Adding a new dimension to Cathay's already established brand identity, Song of Cathay draws inspiration from its heritage as a leading airline and travel brand. The musical composition, instrumentation and arrangements come together to captivate customers by evoking fond memories of travel, capturing the spirit of adventure, and exuding the warm sense of hospitality that embodies every journey flown with Cathay Pacific.

Customers can experience the new soundtrack designed by sonic branding agency Sixième Son through a wide range of touchpoints. Song of Cathay will be progressively rolled out and played in Cathay Pacific's lounges and aircraft, in the Cathay Shop at Cityplaza, and on Cathay's mobile apps, global contact centre hotlines and Spotify playlists, creating a holistic brand experience whenever customers engage with Cathay.

To celebrate the launch, Cathay

collaborated with the Asian Youth Orchestra to bring Song of Cathay to life. The orchestra recorded the new sonic identity at its Rehearsal Camp in Tianjin last month and debuted it during its concert "Celebrating 34 Years of Excellence" at Hong Kong City Hall on 3 August as part of its Asian Concert Tour. Cathay has long been a supporter of youth development, arts and culture in Hong Kong, and has been a sponsor of the Asian Youth Orchestra since its inception in 1990.

Cathay Group Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau said: "It has always been our mission to connect and move people forward in life through the Cathay experience. Song of Cathay is an audio representation of not just who we are as a brand, but also the journey we have been on and are moving towards. Our longstanding support for Hong Kong's development of youth, arts and culture is also vividly captured in the tune, which seeks to inspire communities, ignite creativity and add to the vibrant fabric of our city."

Cathay General Manager of Brand, Insights and Marketing Communications Edward Bell said: "Music is a unifying language that brings people together by transcending cultures and boundaries."

## flydubai touches down in Basel

TTA BULLETIN

flydubai, the Dubai-based carrier, touched down in Basel today, becoming the first national carrier from the UAE to operate direct flights from Dubai. This marks the start of the carrier's four-times weekly service to EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg (BSL) from Dubai International (DXB).



Thailand," added Efendi.

The inaugural flight touched down at EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg (BSL) and was met with a traditional water cannon salute. Senior airport officials welcomed the delegation led by Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations and E-commerce at flydubai.

With the start of flights to Basel, flydubai has grown its network in Europe to 29 destinations including Budapest, Catania, Krakow, Milan-Bergamo, Prague, Salzburg and Zagreb.

Speaking at the press conference, Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations and E-commerce at flydubai, said: "at flydubai, we are committed to opening up underserved destinations and creating free flows of trade and tourism and we are pleased to add Basel to our network in Europe. We also look forward to welcoming more travellers from Europe to Dubai and beyond on the flydubai network. Through Dubai's aviation hub, passengers travelling from Basel can enjoy convenient connections to holiday destinations including Kenya, the Maldives, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and

EuroAirport's Managing Director Matthias Suhr was delighted to welcome the new airline at the Airport: "we are proud that with regular direct flights to Dubai, the UAE is now even easier to reach from EuroAirport, which meets the growing demand for travel to this region and strengthens our role in ensuring connectivity of our trinational region."

Dubai offers a perfect mix of leisure and business opportunities with luxurious resorts, world-class shopping and entertainment venues, in addition to state-of-the-art facilities for conferences and events. The city's strategic location and business-friendly policies make it a hub for aviation, commerce and innovation in the region.

Since commencing operations in 2009, the Dubai-based carrier has built a growing network of more than 125 destinations in 55 countries across Africa, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Central and Southeast Europe, the GCC and the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent as well as Southeast Asia. This offers passengers travelling with flydubai more options to reach key business hubs as well as attractive holiday destinations.

## IndiGo wins the 'Award of Honour' at the Indo-US Tourism and Hospitality Summit

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, India's preferred airline, has been felicitated with the 'Award of Honour' for its contribution to the Indian aviation industry at the Indo-US Tourism and Hospitality Summit, hosted by the Indo American Chamber of Commerce (IACC). The award was presented to Mr. Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo by the Guest of Honour, Mr. R Venkataramani, Attorney General of India on August 23, 2024, in New Delhi.



The Indo-US Tourism and Hospitality Summit is organised by IACC's Tourism and Hospitality committee, with an aim to create a platform that recognises the efforts made by industry stakeholders in facilitating travel and tourism within India and beyond, through international operations. The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC), established in 1968, is the apex bi-lateral Chamber synergizing India-US Economic Engagement. Today IACC has PAN India presence with around 1500+ members, representing cross section of US and Indian Industry

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Vinay Malhotra, Head of Global Sales, IndiGo, said, "We are humbled to be felicitated with the Award of Honour by the Indo American

Chamber of Commerce. This recognition reflects our organization's unwavering commitment to enhancing accessibility, connectivity, and facilitating travel & tourism, domestically as well as internationally. Our endeavour is to continue with our philosophy of affordable fares, on-time operations, and a courteous & hassle-free travel experience across an unparalleled network."

Over the past 18 years, IndiGo has built the most extensive network of domestic flight operations, connecting 88 domestic and 34 international destinations across India. This network is helping provide flight connectivity not just to metropolitan cities, but a vast array of Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, many of which have joined the country's civil aviation ecosystem for the first time. IndiGo has also significantly expanded its global reach through a series of new destination launches, route introductions, and partnerships. This provides a vast array of destinations for customers travelling to and from India, as well as those transiting through the country.



# Waraka

UDAWALAWE



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.



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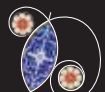
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