

# TRAVEL TALK

## Asia



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## 50 Years of Aitken Spence Hotels: A Story of Sustainability, Innovation & Success

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Aitken Spence Hotels proudly celebrates 50 years of excellence in the hospitality industry. Since opening Neptune Hotel in 1974, the company has grown into a global leader, renowned for its commitment to sustainability, quality, and innovation. Over the decades, Aitken



Stasshani Jayawardena

Spence has expanded its international footprint beyond Sri Lanka, setting new standards across the Maldives, Oman, and India, making it the only hotel chain of Sri Lankan origin to have such a wide-reaching presence.

From its beginnings with Neptune Hotel, named after the Roman God of the sea, Aitken Spence quickly made history as the first Sri Lankan hospitality company to invest overseas with the acquisition of Bathala Island Resort in the Maldives in 1994. This pioneering spirit continued as the company expanded into Oman in 2008. Turyaa Chennai was opened in India in 2016, and a successful collaboration with RIU Hotels Spain followed in 2017. These game-changing initiatives have stood the test of time, cementing Aitken Spence's place as an industry trailblazer.

Today, Aitken Spence Hotels manages 18 properties across Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Oman, and India, totaling 2,629 rooms. The flagship brand, Heritance Hotels & Resorts, is renowned for its architectural excellence, with three properties designed by the legendary Geoffrey Bawa. Notably, Heritance Kandalama became the first LEED certified hotel outside the United States and the first Green Globe certified hotel in South Asia. It remains one of the most awarded hotels globally, reflecting Aitken Spence's innovative approach to blending design, nature, and sustainability.

Sustainability is a cornerstone of Aitken Spence's operations. From managing a 211-acre conservation forest at Heritance Kandalama, which supports rich

biodiversity, to eliminating single-use plastics across all resorts in the Maldives, the company consistently demonstrates its commitment to environmental responsibility. These initiatives are benchmarks within the industry, underscoring Aitken Spence's leadership in sustainability. Additionally,

the company's dedication to nurturing talent is evident through its hotel schools at Heritance Kandalama and Heritance Ahungalla, ensuring that future generations of hospitality professionals are equipped to thrive.

As Aitken Spence Hotels reflects on its 50-year journey, this milestone serves as a springboard to motivate employees and inspire a renewed focus on the future of hospitality. "Reaching this milestone is a moment of pride and reflection," remarked Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings PLC. "It's a celebration of our achievements and a reaffirmation of our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community impact. We are greatly thankful to our discerning guests, dedicated associates, and valued suppliers and partners for their unwavering support, trust, and collaboration over the years. Your contribution has shaped our journey; and we are dedicated to continuing this path, enhancing our positive influence, and creating timeless memories and exceptional experiences for all."

This 50th anniversary is not only a testament to Aitken Spence's pioneering spirit but also a moment to reenergize its workforce as the company propels itself into the future of hospitality. Strong leadership, dedicated teams, and long-standing partnerships have driven the company's success, and as it looks ahead, Aitken Spence Hotels remains poised to shape the future of hospitality, advancing sustainable tourism, and making a meaningful impact across the globe.

## ETA Return Sparks Tourism as Sri Lanka Enters New Era Under New President

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka's tourism industry is on an impressive upward trajectory, with the latest data revealing over 1.4 million international visitors arriving in mid-September 2024. This remarkable recovery has ignited optimism within the sector as it moves toward its ambitious goal of welcoming 2.3 million visitors by year-end.



President Anura Kumara Dissanayake

the smooth transition of power has reassured both local and international stakeholders, reaffirming Sri Lanka's status as a stable and welcoming destination for travelers.

President Dissanayake, known for his strong stance on social justice, anti-corruption, and progressive policies, brings a renewed sense of optimism to the country. His focus on fostering sustainable development, improving infrastructure, and driving economic growth has bolstered confidence in Sri Lanka's ability to continue drawing visitors from around the globe.

Adding to the sector's positive momentum, Sri Lanka's Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system has been reinstated, simplifying the visa process for travelers. The streamlined system is expected to further boost arrivals, making it easier for visitors to explore the island's wonders.

Strategic marketing initiatives and the introduction of additional flight frequencies have been instrumental in positioning Sri Lanka as a safe and attractive destination. These efforts have resulted in a steady influx of tourists, and with the peak winter travel season fast approaching, the country is gearing up to welcome even more visitors from key markets.

In the midst of this recovery, Sri Lanka has entered a new era of leadership. Anura Kumara Dissanayake was recently elected as the nation's new president, following one of the most peaceful elections in the country's history. Despite high anticipation leading up to the polls,

As the winter travel season approaches, Sri Lanka's tourism sector is ready to capitalize on the influx of holidaymakers and business travelers. With new leadership and a streamlined visa process in place, the nation is well-prepared to meet the growing demand.

For travelers, Sri Lanka's appeal remains timeless, offering the perfect blend of adventure, relaxation, and cultural exploration. As the country moves forward under President Dissanayake's leadership, both the tourism industry and the broader economy stand poised for continued growth and prosperity.

## Sri Lanka's Luxury Hotels ranked among the best at Condé Nast Traveller Awards

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka's luxury hotel industry has once again made waves on the global stage, with two of its standout properties—Ceylon Tea Trails and Galle Face Hotel—receiving top honours at the Condé Nast Traveller 2024 Readers' Choice Awards.



Galle Face Hotel, a landmark establishment dating back to 1864, was also named one of the top hotels in the Rest of Asia. Known for its colonial architecture and rich history, it remains one of Sri Lanka's most

cherished hotels. The property is owned by Ceylon Hotel Corporation and managed by The Leisure Group. These accolades were determined by UK readers of Condé Nast Traveller, whose annual awards showcase the very best in global luxury travel experiences.

Ceylon Tea Trails, a luxurious five-bungalow retreat in the hills, was recognized among the best resorts worldwide, earning a coveted spot in the Rest of Asia category. As part of the Resplendent Ceylon portfolio, the luxury arm of Dilmah Tea, this picturesque resort is celebrated for its breathtaking surroundings and exclusive experiences.

These accolades were determined by UK readers of Condé Nast Traveller, whose annual awards showcase the very best in global luxury travel experiences.



The reinstatement of Sri Lanka's ETA visa system comes at a crucial time for the country's tourism sector, particularly following the peaceful elections and the appointment of a new president, Anura Kumara Dissanayake. The streamlined visa process is expected to significantly boost tourist confidence, offering a much-needed reprieve for an industry that faced a slight slump in September due to the temporary suspension of the visa-on-arrival scheme.

Sri Lanka's tourism industry is a key economic driver, and the recent visa complications had led to a notable drop in visitor numbers. Travelers from key markets hesitated, unsure of the evolving regulations. However, with the reintroduction of the Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system, the country is now better equipped to welcome international visitors with ease and efficiency, removing previous uncertainties and simplifying the process for prospective travelers.

The recent peaceful elections have also played a positive role in restoring global confidence. Political stability is a crucial factor for tourism, and the smooth transition of leadership under President Dissanayake signals a commitment to both internal harmony and international partnerships. This, combined with a stable economy, ensures that Sri Lanka is positioned for growth.

Despite the September dip, the numbers are expected to recover steadily as travelers regain confidence in Sri Lanka as a secure and welcoming destination. The economy remains resilient, which is another reassuring sign for potential visitors and investors alike.

The return of the ETA system, along with the country's renewed political stability, marks a turning point for Sri Lankan tourism, fostering optimism as the country looks ahead to welcoming more international travelers in the coming months.



*Dinushka*  
Dinushka Chandrasena  
Editor

**DoubleDee**  
PUBLICATIONS

**Editor**  
Dinushka Chandrasena

**Directors**  
Firoze Munzeer  
Dinesh Chandrasena

**Head Of Marketing**  
Anoj Tillekeratne

**Lead Designer**  
Eshan Perera

**Web Designer**  
Navodh Jayasundara

Traveltalk Asia is a Monthly publication  
of DoubleDee Publications Private Limited

15A, Swarna Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka  
Phone / Fax: +94-115345346  
Mobile: +94-777756726,  
+94-777756762,

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

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## NEWS

### Eventex Awards 2025 is now live and accepting entries

#### TTA BULLETIN

Eventex Awards, the world's leading awards for events and experience marketing, is proud to announce the launch of its 15th edition. Eventex Awards 2025 comes after a record-breaking 14th edition which saw 1207 entries from 62 countries, marking a 4-digit entry number for the first time in the awards' history.

Eventex Awards meanwhile continues to uphold outstanding objectivity, ensuring there is no unintentional judging bias in the evaluation process. The awards further remain committed to transparency, with all scores and jury feedback made public after the results have been announced.

"We are excited to launch the new edition of Eventex Awards and can't wait to celebrate the outstanding achievements, creativity, and innovation in the world of



events and experience marketing. This year, we're also thrilled to give event professionals a further opportunity to shine, introducing new categories for individual contributions," comments Ovanes Ovanessian, Co-founder of Eventex Awards.

Registration for Eventex Awards 2025 is now open, with an early-bird offer available.

Founded in 2009 to celebrate creativity, innovation, and effectiveness in the industry, today Eventex Awards is the most esteemed international awards in the world of events and experiential marketing. Every year, the awards highlight the best events, brand experiences, tech, suppliers, and venues from the world of events.

### Sri Lanka makes waves at the OTDYKH / Leisure Travel Fair 2024 in Russia

#### TTA BULLETIN

On September 19, the 30th anniversary International Forum and Exhibition OTDYKH Leisure 2024 concluded its work at the Expocentre Fairgrounds. This year, the event was a great success, bringing together more than 9,000 industry professionals on one site, including official representatives of Russian regions, delegations from foreign countries, leading tour operators and travel agencies, hotels and accommodation facilities, online booking agencies, MICE agencies and concierge services and other representatives of the tourism industry and related fields.

For 30 years now, OTDYKH Leisure has remained the only business event in Russia of such scale before the start of the autumn-winter tourist season, helping the professional community solve the problem of stimulating year-round demand for travel both in Russia and abroad. These prominent events serve as effective platforms for strengthening business connections and advancing bilateral relations between the two countries especially considering the current situation occurred due to the military unrest between Russia and Ukraine.

Given the importance of Russian inbound tourism, Sri Lanka Tourism has decided to participate in the Leisure (OTDYKH) Travel Fair 2024. This initiative highlights



the significance of this market for Sri Lanka and aims to enhance awareness of the destination. By maintaining a strong presence, we can ensure ongoing promotional efforts that keep Sri Lanka top-of-mind for travelers. Furthermore, this engagement will allow us to expand our network and strengthen connections with key stakeholders in the Russian travel industry.

OTDYKH / Leisure Travel Fair 2024 successfully held in Russia from 17th to 19th September 2024 which was organized by Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau in an area of 90 sqm with 15 travel industry participants representing local travel companies and hotels. Sri Lanka showcased its vast array of holiday opportunities to inspire Russian travelers to consider a different experience in a new destination.

The Sri Lanka stand was officially opened by The Ambassador of Sri Lanka Embassy in Moscow H.E. Mr. Pakeer Amza, along with other representatives from the Sri Lanka Embassy in Moscow

### Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia Embarks on Working Visit to Europe

#### TTA BULLETIN

The Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia, YB Dato Sri Tiong King Sing undertakes a working visit to France and the United Kingdom (UK) from 29 September to 7 October 2024. Accompanying the Minister is Datuk Manoharan Periasamy, Director General of Tourism Malaysia.

This visit aims to reinforce Malaysia's tourism ties with France and the UK, bolstering its position as a premier travel destination for both markets. Key objectives include strengthening relationships with decision-makers and exploring new collaborative ventures to attract more tourists.

A highlight of the visit will be a business networking session, bringing together Malaysian and tourism stakeholders from both countries. This event will serve as a platform to discuss strategic initiatives and opportunities, particularly for the upcoming Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM 2026), in developing exclusive packages and tailor-made itineraries that cater to the diverse preferences of travellers



from both markets.

The session will be attended by key partners, including airlines, leading travel agents, and industry leaders, underlining the importance of the French and UK markets to Malaysia's tourism strategy.

The UK remains Malaysia's largest European market, contributing 240,815 tourist arrivals from January to August 2024, representing a significant 34.7% growth compared to the same period in 2023 (178,725). France, meanwhile, maintains its position within the top 5 European markets, with 115,036 arrivals from January to August 2024, compared to 81,061 during the same period last year.

With VM 2026 on the horizon, Malaysia aims to boost international tourist arrivals, projecting 35.6 million arrivals and RM147.1 billion in tourism receipts. This visit also underscores Malaysia's commitment to attracting 27.3 million foreign tourists and generating RM102.7 billion in tourism receipts this year.



# NEWS

## Greek National Tourism Organisation takes centre stage at WTM London 2024

TTA BULLETIN

World Travel Market London has announced the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) as its Premier Partner, showcasing the destination's dynamic cultural experiences and endless year-round opportunities.

The prestigious partnership will ensure positive global exposure for Greece across WTM's unrivalled international audience – showing how the country is investing heavily in ensuring it remains one of the top leisure destinations in the world.

WTM London is the perfect platform for Greece to show how its tourism strategy is successfully balancing the benefits of tourism with the needs of local economies and communities while safeguarding the natural and cultural environment. Along with policies to diversify offerings, mitigate seasonality, upgrade education, and foster cooperation with local communities, tools have been introduced for comprehensive and systematic data collection and information flow in tourism.

Greece is addressing sustainability through a multi-faceted approach, with the safeguarding



of natural and cultural resources, spotlighting lesser-known destinations, as well as the identity and well-being of local communities, at the heart of all considerations.

As Premier Partner, the GNTO will build on this outstanding progress, thanks to the prime advertising and marketing opportunities with WTM. The exciting partnership will also help the tourist board and 80 of its stakeholders who are exhibiting, further raise its global profile by taking part in the opening ceremony and key press conferences with the international media.

Juliette Losardo, Exhibition Director, World Travel Market London, commented: "I am thrilled to announce the Greek National Tourism Organisation as our Premier Partner for 2024. Greece has long been at the forefront of leisure tourism and has participated in World Travel Market for many years, but they never stop innovating.

## Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau celebrates the World Tourism day with Simplicity and Cultural elegance

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, as the main stakeholder for promoting Sri Lanka all across the Globe celebrated the World Tourism Day on 27th September 2024, with simplicity and elegance, by offering sweets, gifts and memorabilia to each tourist who arrived at the Airport to mark the



Madubhani Perera

A special celebration was held at the Bandaranaike International Airport, amidst the presence of Ms. Madubhani Perera, Director PR of SLTPB, Ms. Harindra Wijewardene, Deputy Director TIC, and all the Tourist Information Centre officials, (TIC) and Media. The special activities were held throughout the whole day and the foreign visitors enjoyed the experience very much also by partaking in the cultural performances which was a novel experience for them. The main purpose of arranging these activities was to allow the foreign tourists to experience the Sri Lankan Culture. The TIC officials at the BIA interacted in a very friendly manner with the tourists to make them feel at home. The Selfie corner provided an amazing

experience for the tourists to cherish the memories of this particular special day spent in Sri Lanka, on the first day of their arrival.

The Travel Information Centre of SLTPB in Kandy collaborated with Sri Dalada Maligawa in organizing few groups of foreign tourists to take part in the World tourism day celebrations. The tourists were warmly welcomed by its staff offering lotus flowers and took them to the temple of the sacred tooth relic for an organized tour. The foreign tourists also got involved in elephant bathing in the river and feeding them. Finally, they all enjoyed traditional dance performance while enjoying traditional sweet meats. They were thoroughly impressed with the welcome they got on both occasions and also keenly participated in taking photos with the TIC officials of both TIC centers.

Thus, the World Tourism Day on 27th September 2024, which is of great significance to Sri Lanka Tourism, being the main Tourism stakeholder of the country, and is committed to take Sri Lanka's name across the world, was celebrated in a simple yet elegant style with the foreign visitors who contribute a great deal to promote Sri Lanka as one of the best Tourist destinations of the globe.



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## Sri Lanka Showcases its Tourism Potential at IFTM Paris 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka made a strong impression at this year's International French Travel Market (IFTM) in Paris, showcasing the island's rich tourism offerings alongside 26 prominent companies and SriLankan Airlines. The Sri Lanka Pavilion was officially inaugurated by H.E. Manisha Gunasekara Ambassador of Sri Lanka to France, accompanied by Mr. Chalaka Gajabahu, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, and esteemed industry representatives.

The delegation highlighted Sri Lanka's diverse tourism attractions, from its

cultural heritage to natural beauty, positioning the destination as an attractive option for French travelers. The collaborative effort between the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and the Private sector reaffirmed Sri Lanka's commitment to strengthening its presence in the French travel market.

With Digital Marketing, Events participation, Public Relations, Consumer Promotions Sri Lanka continues to promote itself as a destination not to be missed!



## Aquafresh Unveils New Glass Water Bottles: a Step towards Sustainable Drinking Water Solutions

TTA BULLETIN

Aquafresh, the leading brand in Sri Lanka's bottled water industry, has announced the launch of its new glass water bottles, a significant step forward in the company's commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness.

As global awareness grows about the need to reduce plastic waste, Aquafresh is introducing an eco-friendly alternative that aligns with the brand's dedication to long-term consumer wellbeing and environmental stewardship.

The new collection features three main labels under the theme "Spirit of Sri Lanka" depicting the natural beauty of our island nation. Artistically designed, the imagery highlights the Sri Lankan elephant, leopard and Blue Whale.

Founded in 2001 under Access Natural Water (Pvt) Ltd., Aquafresh has consistently delivered pure and natural bottled drinking water, trusted by over a million Sri Lankans. The company's state-of-the-art bottling facility draws water from 200 feet below the bedrock, ensuring purity and untouched quality until it reaches consumers. With this latest innovation, Aquafresh is setting new standards in eco-friendly packaging, enhancing its mission of sustainability without compromising on quality.

"Switching to glass bottles is more than just a change in packaging—it's a commitment to protecting our planet. Glass is 100% recyclable, and this move reflects our responsibility towards

reducing plastic pollution and creating a healthier environment for future generations," said Shamal Perera ..... (Chairman/ MD / Designation).

Aquafresh's source is located in the pristine rainforests of Labugamakanda, where the water is naturally purified without chemicals, ensuring that what customers receive is as close to nature as possible. By using glass bottles, Aquafresh not only preserves the purity of its water but also reduces its carbon footprint, further solidifying its place as an industry leader in sustainable practices.

As part of the Access Group of companies, Access Natural Water (Pvt) Ltd. has long been committed to consumer wellbeing and long-term environmental sustainability. This new initiative complements previous innovations, such as the introduction of Sri Lanka's first Alkaline water, Alkafresh, in 2016. These efforts underscore the company's dedication to pioneering health-conscious and environmentally responsible water products.

The introduction of glass bottles marks a pivotal moment for both Aquafresh and Sri Lanka's bottled water industry. It signifies not only a move towards a greener future but also a response to the growing demand from consumers for more sustainable products. By choosing Aquafresh's glass water bottles, consumers are making a choice that supports both their health and the health of the planet.

## ITB India 2024: A market of opportunities

Growth in spending, broad investment in infrastructure and a new generation of innovative entrepreneurs are creating momentum.

TTA BULLETIN

ITB India provides an opportunity to find out in detail about the rapidly expanding markets of India and southern Asia, establish new partnerships and strengthen relations with the region's leading players. "Foreign companies looking for a share of India's tourism market should visit as many travel trade shows and events as possible in the country.

ITB India in Mumbai offers a first-class opportunity in that respect. There are a number of small events and trade shows also worth visiting in many parts of the country and in regional cities", is travel analyst Muqbil's advice. However, any new

business partners should be carefully scrutinised before an agreement is signed. "Companies who make big promises but ultimately do not deliver should at all costs be avoided", the tourism expert says.

ITB India is taking place from 11 to 13 September 2024 and gathers leading travel industry companies and international exhibitors from the MICE, leisure, corporate business and travel tech sectors. At the ITB India 2024 Conference, representatives and speakers from leading companies, among them Agoda, Booking.com, Cleartrip, Thomas Cook India Limited, are due to attend.





A POCKET OF *wonder* IN THE MISTY HILLS



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## Neon Night by Browns Hotels & Resorts: A Dazzling Evening of Industry Partner Networking

Under the effervescent glow of neon lights, Browns Hotels & Resorts hosted a spectacular networking event on September 6th, transforming the Excel World Colombo Convention Centre into a hub of vibrant energy and festivity. The function attracted over 500 travel agents, alongside general managers from Browns Hotels & Resorts' properties, corporate representatives and key figures from the tourism industry. The radiant Neon theme provided the perfect backdrop for an evening of meaningful connections, animated collaboration and industry celebration.

The event commenced with guests being welcomed by the smooth sounds of jazz music, setting a refined and elegant tone for a night of exquisite cocktails and

gourmet canapés, while captivating dance performances by Browns' hotel staff added an exciting dynamic to the proceedings.

Chief Executive Officer, Eksath Wijeratne addressed the audience, stating, "Browns Hotels & Resorts continues to expand its portfolio, focusing on innovation and guest excellence. With the recent additions of Ayugiri Ayurveda Wellness Resort Sigiriya, and Ayr Castle 1922 – a charming bungalow under the Reveal the Collection boutiques - we are pleased to be setting new benchmarks in the hospitality sector." His speech was accompanied by exclusive premieres of the new properties.

The evening additionally featured immersing activities

that sparked partnerships among industry professionals. Attendees were treated to a thrilling raffle draw, along with prizes including luxurious stays at Browns Hotels & Resorts. A sumptuous buffet spread, showcasing the exceptional culinary skills of the hotel's chefs, offered a delectable array of dishes that added an epicurean touch to the night. Entertainment was further elevated by a lively performance from The Redeemers, ensuring the event was both enjoyable and memorable for all in attendance.

The Partner Networking Night by Browns Hotels & Resorts was a lively fête of the local travel industry, showcasing the value of continued partnerships and successful collaboration.





# Revealing

## ayr castle 1922



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ayr castle 1922



## TCEB, Visa Launch “Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card” Offering Special Privileges for MICE Travelers

TTA BULLETIN

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) joins hands with Visa International (Thailand), and two Thai establishments - T2P Co. Ltd, and Central Group – in launching “Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card”. Targeting MICE travelers, businesspersons and SME operators, the card entitles the holders to special privileges in accommodation, shopping, dining, transport, meeting package, etc. in Thailand.

The launch of Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card by the four entities took place on September 11 at Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit Hotel. The card is part of their marketing campaign “Thailand MICE Privileges” designed to boost the growth of the Thai MICE industry.

Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card offers such privileges as discount shopping vouchers at Central Department Stores and Robinson Department Stores in Thailand, a 17% discount for accommodation at Centara Hotels & Resorts in Thailand. Other partners’ benefits include a 15% discount on limousine services, 10% off dining at participating restaurants, up to 60% off transport services, complimentary airport luggage storage twice a year, one free luggage delivery annually, up to 25% off hotel stay, as well as discounts on shopping, spa packages and meeting packages of participating venues.

Cardholders are also entitled to access to TCEB’s industry network, keeping them informed of business opportunities, marketing activities and business events.

Mr. Chiruit Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, TCEB President, stated that TCEB aims to drive Thailand to become a high value-added destination for MICE and business travelers. Towards this end, the bureau has formed business partnership with private sector entities in developing new MICE product under Thailand MICE Privileges marketing campaign. With Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card offering special benefits for a variety of services, TCEB aims to deliver return on investment (ROI) and return on experiences (ROE) for MICE and business travelers during their stay in Thailand. The bureau believes ROI and ROE are key performance indicators when business sector is facing challenges in their operations.

The participation of VISA, Central Group, Central Department Stores and Robinson

Department Stores, Centara Hotels & Resorts and T2P, which are all notable establishments, shows that the private sector in Thailand places importance on MICE industry and realizes its marketing potential. It is a good sign for Thai MICE industry to welcome new partners, which can enhance a scope of benefits for clients staging events and/or attending events in Thailand, added Mr. Chiruit.

It is targeted that by 2025 there will be 30,000 holders of Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card, boosting spending per head per trip of MICE travelers by 5%. With the target of 34 million MICE travelers, combining both domestic and overseas ones, it is expected that revenue from their spending will reach 200 billion baht.

Mr. Punnamas Vichitkulwongsa, Country Manager for Visa Thailand, stated: “We are thrilled to partner for the first time with a government agency like TCEB in launching the prepaid commercial card. This financial solution comes at an appropriate time, as commercial card payments in Thailand have grown by double digits compared to last year, highlighting the need for businesses of all sizes to adapt and digitize their payments. At Visa, we are dedicated to empowering businesses through our global network, cutting-edge innovations, and over 30 years of expertise in commercial payments. Our collaboration with TCEB underscores our commitment to enhancing the access to financial solution for B2B operation and driving sustainable economic growth in Thailand.”

The Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card is a prepaid card requiring a top-up before use. The card has an issuance fee of 350 baht. Users can easily top up via the Deep Pocket app, available on both iOS and Android platforms. The card, issued by T2P and regulated by the Bank of Thailand, complies with global data security standards set by VISA. It can be used everywhere, where VISA card is accepted, with the added advantage of a multitude of exclusive benefits.

For more information about the Thailand MICE Visa Prepaid Card and to purchase online, please visit [www.businesseventsthailand.com/en/thailandmicevisaprepaid-card](http://www.businesseventsthailand.com/en/thailandmicevisaprepaid-card) or visit campaign booths located at participating events. For further inquiries, don't hesitate to get in touch with the Call Center at 1105



## ASMET 17th AGM on 6th September 2024

TTA BULLETIN

The Association for Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism (ASMET) successfully held its 17th Annual General Meeting on 6th September 2023 at the SLITHM Auditorium, Colombo 03. At the event, Mr. Prebudda Jayasinghe was unanimously elected as the new President of the Association.

ASMET, representing the SME sector in tourism, focuses on uniting and creating a robust network for both national and international stakeholders in the tourism industry. The Association is committed to raising awareness among its members about the importance of responsible tourism, ensuring the protection of society, the environment, and elevating service standards within the industry.

Despite numerous challenges that have disrupted the tourism industry locally and globally, the outgoing president and his executive committee worked diligently to deliver valuable support and benefits to ASMET’s members.

The leadership of past presidents and their executive teams, who volunteered their time and efforts, has brought ASMET to its current strong standing. The newly elected committee is dedicated to continuing this important work and supporting ASMET’s members in the years ahead.

Members of ASMET remain hopeful that the proposals submitted by the Association, which focus on the development of sustainable tourism, will be favorably considered and implemented in the near future.



## Barista Unveils Cutting-Edge “Happiness Hub” to Elevate Food Preparation and Distribution

TTA BULLETIN

In a bold move to enhance operational efficiency and aggressive expansion while maintaining high standards across its café network, Barista, Sri Lanka's leading café chain, has officially inaugurated its new state-of-the-art facility, the “Happiness Hub,” in Peliyagoda. This facility will serve as the central hub for procurement, food preparation, storage, and distribution for Barista’s expansive network of cafés.

The grand opening was marked by the presence of Barista’s Directors Hiran Embuldeniya and Nath Kottegoda, CEO/Director Dilupa Pathirana, along with the Head Office team and staff from across the company’s cafés.

CEO Dilupa Pathirana emphasized the significance of this development: “The Happiness Hub represents a crucial step in our journey toward enhancing operational efficiency, maintaining product consistency, and supporting our growth. By consolidating procurement, production, and distribution under one roof, we aim to uphold the high standards while getting benefited from economies of scale. This initiative aligns with our ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence in the coffee industry.”

The facility is set up to ensure uniformity in taste, and quality across Barista’s 41 cafés. This centralization will not only optimize production processes, but also reduce costs



through bulk purchasing, and improve overall supply chain efficiency. Stringent quality control measures are in place to monitor food safety and ensure top-notch food preparation standards.

Strategically located near the Highway entrance, the Happiness Hub is well-positioned for efficient inventory management and faster delivery of supplies. The facility’s design supports better logistical operations, preserves food hygiene and minimizes food waste through optimized ingredient usage and bulk preparation.

In addition to its operational functions, the Happiness Hub includes a training school for aspiring kitchen staff. This educational component will equip future talent with essential skills in food preparation, logistics, and café management. Currently, a dynamic team of coffee enthusiasts operates the facility, with plans to expand the team as Barista’s network continues to grow.

Barista’s commitment to sustainability is also reflected in the Happiness Hub’s operations, which focus on reducing waste, deploying sustainable energy and promoting efficient material use.

Looking ahead, Barista plans to expand the Happiness Hub in tandem with its growing café network, further enhancing its ability to deliver exceptional quality and service across Sri Lanka and beyond.



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## Commemorative Stamp Honoring Sahasrabhisheka Waidhyashuri Deshabandu Dr. Victor Hettigoda: A Legacy of Dedication to Indigenous Medicine

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Post honored the late Sahasrabhisheka Waidhyashuri Deshabandu Dr. Victor Hettigoda, the visionary founder of the Hettigoda Group, with the launch of a commemorative stamp on his birth anniversary at the event held at Shangri-La Colombo. This significant occasion a testament to Dr. Hettigoda's dedication, vision, and unwavering commitment to indigenous medicine and its role in both local and global health practices.

Dr. Victor Hettigoda's life was a remarkable journey of passion, innovation, and profound societal contributions. Born in 1937 in the serene village of Kananke, Matara, he emerged from humble beginnings to become one of the most respected figures in Ayurveda. Educated at Rahula College, Matara, his early life was shaped by the values of hard work and commitment instilled by his family.

Under the guidance of his father, a kidney specialist and Astrologer Dr. Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda, he spent 12 years mastering the ancient craft of Ayurveda. His dedication led him to inherit the unique formula of the famed Siddhalepa Balm, a powerful symbol of his father's trust in his abilities. This balm would later become a cornerstone of his business empire.

Behind every great success, there is often a pillar of strength. In the remarkable journey of Dr. Victor Hettigoda, that unwavering support has been his wife, Mrs. Rupasiri Wickramanayake, whose contributions have been integral to his achievements. Her presence, often working

quietly in the background, has been a guiding force throughout his life's endeavors.

In 1971, with a modest investment of Rs. 2,500 from his mother-in-law, he embarked on a mission to bring the healing power of Ayurveda to the masses. His journey, often on foot, took him across Sri Lanka, spreading the benefits of Ayurveda. From humble beginnings, he transformed his company into a global enterprise, exporting products to many countries globally and providing employment to thousands of individuals.

Dr. Victor Hettigoda, a distinguished pioneer in the field of Ayurveda, has conducted extensive research to develop innovative Ayurvedic products that have significantly influenced the Sri Lankan



Dr. Victor Hettigoda

consumer market. He was the first to introduce Ayurvedic toothpaste, soap, baby products, and food supplements, creating a lasting impact in the industry. His visionary leadership has elevated the Siddhalepa brand to international recognition, making Sri Lankan indigenous medicine popular across the globe.

Dr. Victor Hettigoda's influence extended far beyond the business world. His passion for promoting Sri Lanka's indigenous medicine brought him widespread recognition, both locally and internationally. In 1998, Lanka Business Digest (LMD) named him one of the 50 greatest post-independence Sri Lankans, acknowledging his efforts to popularize local indigenous medicine globally.

Dr. Victor Hettigoda's remarkable contributions have been recognized through numerous prestigious accolades. In 1990, he was awarded the esteemed Deshabandu title for his significant contributions to the business community. In 1996, the Vishwa Prasadini title was conferred upon him in recognition

of his outstanding service to the field of Ayurveda.

His exceptional healing abilities were honored with the Sahasrabhisheka Waidhyashuri award from the Ministry of Health, Nutrition, and Welfare, and his inclusion among the top 100 doctors of the century in 2002 solidified his legacy as both a medical and business pioneer.

In 2017, the University of Sri Jayawardena-pura bestowed an honorary doctorate upon him for his contributions to business and marketing. Dr. Victor Hettigoda's legacy extends beyond his business achievements; he touched countless lives and uplifted communities. His visionary leadership, creativity, and unwavering commitment to corporate and social responsibility earned him the title of 'The Father of Modern Ayurveda'.

The commemorative stamp launched on September 13 serves as a lasting tribute to Dr. Hettigoda's life and achievements. As we remember his indelible contributions to Sri Lanka's heritage and the field of Ayurveda, this stamp is a symbol of the enduring impact he left on both local and international communities.

## Ministry of Crab Partners With UNDP Sri Lanka to Advance Mangrove Conservation Through The GEF Small Grants Programme

TTA BULLETIN

Ministry of Crab restaurant partners with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sri Lanka through the Global Environment Facility funded Small Grants Programme (SGP) in the Mannar Landscape, in the form of an 18-month project that will empower communities in the area, with a strong focus on mangrove restoration. Working together with GEF-SGP Community Based Organizations and Grantees, the programme participants will lead their communities in mangrove propagation, reforestation, and protection.

To mark the occasion, Chef Dharshan Munidasa, Founder, Ministry of Crab and Ms. Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP in Sri Lanka ceremoniously signed a letter of agreement.

The project will work with two grassroots organizations, the Human Development Organization (HDO) and WeCAN, who will plant 1,000 mangrove plants with community participation, forming youth groups for the maintenance and monitoring of planted mangroves. This will be carried out through creating tree bands on 5 hectares of saline land and supported by constructions of a storage pond by low-lying areas to capture rainwater as well as the establishment of a plant nursery.

Mangrove forests play a critical role in Sri Lanka's ecological system; however, they are rapidly degrading due to climate change and pollution. Mangrove forests thrive along the border between land and sea and are the first line of defence for coastlines, reducing erosion from storm surges,

currents, waves, and tides. They can absorb up to five times more carbon than forest trees and improve water quality by filtering out sediments. As an important source of livelihood and food for thousands of small communities in Sri Lanka, protecting its mangroves will make coastal communities more resilient by promoting improved fishing and agriculture, fostering sustainable livelihoods that can withstand shocks and stresses, and ensuring a healthier environment in which communities can thrive.

Mangroves are a biodiversity hotspot, providing a home to many birds, crustaceans, reptiles, and mammals to thrive at the junction between land and sea, and is home to Sri Lanka's iconic mud crabs. Chef Dharshan Munidasa, Founder, Ministry of Crab noted, "Mangroves are a vital part of Ministry of Crab's journey, as well as for everyone in Sri Lanka who takes pride in our crabs and the ecosystems that sustain them. We are one entity, and it will take much more involvement from communities and corporations to help preserve both the mangroves and our heritage".

Ministry of Crab places high value in sustainably sourcing seafood and has worked with suppliers who have sustainable sourcing practices and supporting the livelihoods of local fishing communities. From its inception, the restaurant has been an advocate for the sustainable harvesting of Mud Crab, by not serving crabs below 500 grams, emphasizing that their commitment and respect for ingredients and sustainability have always been paramount. The recently introduced "Mud Crab Fishery

Management Regulations, 2024," by the Ministry of Fisheries in Sri Lanka that aims to prevent the overharvesting of mud crabs is a testament to this. Starting this year, these regulations apply to the fishing of wild mud crabs in Sri Lanka's waters and establishes the minimum size for wild crab that can be caught, sold, kept in possession, processed, or exported. As such this partnership is the next step in Ministry of Crab's sustainability journey.

The project in the Mannar Landscape will also foster community building initiatives such as zero plastic awareness training for community groups, public waste collection with bins, digging trenches for degradable waste, soil and water conservation and strengthening women-led enterprises.

Commenting on the partnership, Ms. Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP in Sri Lanka stated, "The GEF funded Small Grants Programme (SGP) embodies the very essence of 'thinking globally, acting locally'. Over the past three decades, we have worked closely with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and saw that community action can maintain the fine balance between human needs and environmental imperatives. We wholeheartedly welcome this new partnership with Ministry of Crab to further augment the impact of community engagement in mangrove restoration under the SGP, and we hope to see more private sector partners joining this journey."

At Ministry of Crab, our commitment to



community building is deeply rooted by initiated projects. Our co-owners are passionate advocates and active agents of supporting local communities, driving meaningful change through their initiatives. In line with this vision, all proceeds from the sale of Ministry of Crab merchandise will be donated to this project, ensuring that every purchase directly benefits those in need.

Ministry of Crab is a celebration of Sri Lanka's abundance of seafood, particularly the wonderfully succulent mud crab, commonly held to be the best in the world. Launched in December 2011, Ministry of Crab was the first of its kind, with Sri Lankan mud crab being the hero ingredient, whereby for decades, it had been more easily available internationally than in Sri Lanka itself.

The brainchild of renowned chef-restaurateur Dharshan Munidasa, in partnership with Sri Lankan cricketing legends Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, Ministry of Crab is located in the historic 400-year-old Dutch Hospital in the heart of Colombo. With overseas outposts in Singapore, Shanghai, Chengdu, Mumbai, Maldives and Bangkok, the restaurant continues to expand internationally.



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## Philippines shines as host of World Travel Awards 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Tourism royalty from across Asia and Oceania convened in Manila, Philippines to recognise the travel brands pushing the boundaries of excellence and innovation. The World Travel Awards Asia & Oceania Gala Ceremony, hosted at City of Dreams Manila, World Travel Awards Official Hotel Partner, proved a fitting showcase for the fascinating city destination.



The red-carpet reception marked the fourth leg of WTA's Grand Tour 2024, a global search for the finest travel and tourism organisations, covering six continents.

Winners at the VIP reception included Vietnam, which took the title for 'Asia's Leading Destination'. The beautiful Ha Giang province was named 'Asia's Leading Regional Cultural Destination', and Ho Chi Minh City collected 'Asia's Leading Business Travel Destination'. Hong Kong Tourism Board took to the podium as 'Asia's Leading Tourist Board'. Cebu, Philippines was voted 'Asia's Leading Wedding Destination'. Bali claimed the title for 'Asia's Most Romantic Destination'.

New Zealand confirmed its reputation as the land with it all to secure 'Oceania's Leading Destination'. Sydney won 'Oceania's Leading City Destination'. Fiji Tourism lifted the trophy for 'Oceania's Leading Tourist Board'. The fusion of ancient storytelling with a technological twist helped Wintjiri Wiru – Ayers Rock Resort, Uluru to win the title for 'Oceania's Leading Tourist Attraction'.

In the hospitality sector, W Osaka was voted 'Asia's Leading Hotel', with Sofitel Bali Nusa Dua Beach Resort taking 'Asia's

Leading Resort'. InterContinental Grand Stanford emerged victorious as 'Hong Kong's Leading Hotel'. Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts claimed 'Asia's Leading Luxury Hotel Brand'.

The Ascott Limited enjoyed a double celebration, winning 'Asia's Leading Serviced Apartment Brand' and Ascott Makati, Philippines voted 'Asia's Leading Serviced Apartments'. Vietravel claimed 'Asia's Leading Tour Operator' and Discovery Primea, Philippines took 'Asia's Leading Business Hotel'.

In the hotly-contested newcomer categories, Japan's The Ritz-Carlton, Fukuoka claimed 'Asia's Leading New Hotel', Nha Trang Marriott Resort & Spa, Hon Tre Island, Vietnam collected 'Asia's Leading New Resort', whilst W Sydney reigned supreme as 'Oceania's Leading New Hotel'.

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

scene.

Graham Cooke, Founder, WTA, said: "It has been a privilege to host our first ceremony in the Philippines – a celebration that has served as a fitting showcase for this incredible destination and its historic capital Manila."

He added: "Our winners are stellar examples of tourism excellence, and I congratulate each and every one for helping to raise the collective benchmark across Asia and Oceania."

"Today, the Philippines stands ready to host global events of all scales while maintaining our local charm and authenticity. We are a nation that rises to challenges, innovates with passion, and embraces every opportunity with optimism, exerting every effort towards our country becoming a tourism powerhouse in Asia. This year's World Travel Awards is not only a celebration of excellence in tourism, but a testament to the resilience, creativity, and collaborative spirit of our global tourism community," said Philippines Department of Tourism Secretary, Christina Garcia Frasco, who was also awarded the Transformational Leader Award in Tourism Governance.

Aviation winners included Singapore Airlines taking 'Asia's Leading Airline' and Air New Zealand winning 'Oceania's Leading Airline'. Hong Kong Airport was voted 'Asia's Leading Airport'. AirAsia took double honours, landing both 'Asia's Leading Low-Cost Airline' and 'Asia's Leading Low-Cost Airline Cabin Crew'. Qantas Airways claimed the title for 'Oceania's Leading Airline Brand'.

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

Today, the WTA brand is recognised globally as the ultimate hallmark of quality, with winners setting the benchmark to which all others aspire.

Each year, WTA covers the globe with a series of regional gala ceremonies staged to recognise and celebrate individual and collective success within each key geographical region.

WTA gala ceremonies are widely regarded as the best networking opportunities in the travel industry, attended by government and industry leaders, luminaries and international print and broadcast media.

## WTM London reveals Katherine Ryan as closing keynote speaker

TTA BULLETIN

Comedian and TV star Katherine Ryan will share her inspiring story, talking about how she reached the top of the entertainment industry and the challenges she faced along the way as she addresses WTM London (5th-7th November) on day three of the world's most influential travel and tourism event.



comic Joe Wilkinson to show viewers how to live the champagne lifestyle on a lemonade budget in destinations such as Latvia, Montenegro, Wales and beyond. From her experience, she'll offer a fresh perspective on how curiosity inspires innovation and can open doors to new experiences.

The hugely popular and quick-witted Canadian actor, writer and presenter will speak during a 45-minute fireside chat, "Katherine Ryan on resilience, breaking barriers and her global travel experiences", where she will unpack her journey of challenging industry norms and breaking cultural barriers with humour.

Katherine will discuss her struggles and the sacrifices women make and how building resilience has been key to her success. The session will see her draw on personal and professional experience to explore how resilience and humour can foster a culture of positivity and inclusivity to drive authentic narratives through storytelling.

Katherine hosted Channel 4, hit TV series, Joe & Katherine's Bargain Holidays, where she partnered with friend and fellow

A star of TV and radio shows, including 8 Out of 10 Cats, Taskmaster and Have I Got News for You, Katherine has also appeared in travel programmes including, Travel Man: 48 Hours in New York with comedian Richard Ayoade.

World Travel Market London Exhibition Director, Juliette Losardo, said: "I'm delighted that a star of Katherine's calibre will be our closing keynote speaker. She promises to be hugely entertaining but also very thoughtful, with insights into the challenges and triumphs of women in the workplace – and practical advice for travel professionals on breaking through perceived barriers.

"Katherine will bring a truly international perspective to the stage with her understanding of different cultures, thanks to her background and experiences.

## Sri Lankan tourism, culture, food and tea promoted in Hague

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), in collaboration with the Embassy of Sri Lanka in the Netherlands, participated at the "Embassy Festival 2024" on 7th September 2024 in Hague, the Netherlands. The Embassy organized two stalls showcasing Sri Lanka tourism, culture, cuisine, tea and handicrafts to the Dutch and other international visitors. This was an excellent opportunity to promote Sri Lanka's potential as a travel destination to the European continent, in order to encourage more enthusiastic travelers from the region.



material, including videos, brochures and maps of Sri Lanka were shared with the public. People who had already visited Sri Lanka, also visited the stalls and shared their warm and fond memories of their travels in the country.

Sri Lankan arts and craft; wooden masks; soft toys; jewelry; batik, reed and brassware products available in the stalls

were much sought after with Sri Lankan tea and food being the centre of attraction. The visitors were treated to a wide variety of authentic Sri Lankan cuisine including yellow rice and curry, string hoppers, egg hoppers, kottu, kokis, jackfruit cutlets, vadai and many more. Children from the Sri Lankan community in The Netherlands mesmerized the crowds with their Sri Lankan dance performance and added color and excitement, with their traditional costumes to the event. The Embassy also participated in the cultural parade alongside the other Embassies and the colorful procession was enjoyed and warmly appreciated by the public.

The "Embassy Festival" is an annual event organized by the Municipality of Hague in a central location in the city. The Mayor of Hague, Jan Van Zanen opened the Festival where 46 Embassies and international organizations participated attracting over 60,000 visitors.

The Sri Lankan stalls were very popular at the Festival, with many expressing interest to visit the country. Tourism promotional



## IBTM World confirms speakers from Amazon, TikTok, Canva and more for Exceptional Experiences programme

TTA BULLETIN

The leading global event for the meetings and events industry, IBTM World, which returns to the iconic Fira de Barcelona from November 19 to November 21, has revealed the first details of its new Exceptional Experiences programme.

An exciting addition to this year's event, titans of industry will engage with delegates on the power of AI, the importance of audience collaboration, the value of brand-building, the merits of harnessing key data, and the benefits of developing a marketing strategy around face-to-face interaction.

Designed to showcase groundbreaking solutions to help in-house event professionals and marketers create event experiences that fuel business growth, the programme will be split into two parts. The first, on day one of IBTM World, will comprise an exclusive, invite-only workshop for senior executives, VPs and influential leaders from different sectors.

On day two, the Exceptional Experiences Forum will take place on the Main Stage, beginning with 'Cre-AI-tivity as the new events game-changer: feel the fear, but do it anyway (and see the results)'. This scintillating session, hosted by Lesly Simmons, Head of Community Innovation at Amazon, and Paula Medeiros, Global

Media Project Manager at Palo Alto Networks, will explore how the application of artificial intelligence has been misunderstood. Drawing on their first-hand experience, Lesly and Paula will explain the difference AI can make to business success when adopted early and utilised properly.

Lizzie Dale, VP Marketing at WPP Plc, will follow and join a discussion on the power of events to generate marketing spend. Titled, 'Making the business case for face-to-face: how to get more investment for events', Lizzie and others will delve into the latest IPA Bellwether report, examining the strong appetite for in-person engagement shown by businesses, and discovering how in-house event professionals have continued to make the case for face-to-face interaction as an outsized marketing opportunity.

Event leaders will take to the stage next to analyse what measurements matter amongst the sea of metrics event professionals have at their disposal. This thought-provoking session, titled, 'The short-term win & the long-term gain: deciphering what really matters when it comes to measurement', will see event leaders share their personal experiences of turning data into compelling stories which generate investment.

It is then the turn of marketing pros to share their wisdom in a stimulating session titled, 'Audience-first every time: attracting people to your events by listening to them all the time'. It will examine how marketing pros use insights to inform their experiential strategy, and advocate for the importance of listening closely to customers before doing anything else. Speakers will detail how this fundamental rule creates a conversation across all platforms and results in a flywheel effect of SEO, organic traffic, data-build and increased conversion of attendees to events.

Jimmy Knowles, Global Head of Experiential at Canva, and Madolyn Grove, Head of Creator Community at TikTok, will close the Exceptional Experiences Forum by looking at brand-building. In an engaging session titled, 'Building and expanding a world-class event brand – what differentiates good from great?', they will argue that brand equity is a business' single most important intangible asset, and share their experiences of creating strong global brand propositions that have continued to build equity over time with all stakeholders.



Claudia Hall, Exhibition Director at IBTM World, said: "This may be Exceptional Experiences' inaugural outing at IBTM World but, with our array of pioneering speakers and our dedication to alleviating the challenges faced by in-house event professionals and marketers, we know it's one that delegates will love.

"More than anything else, we strive tirelessly to ensure IBTM World provides true value for attendees. This is why we can't wait for in-house event professionals and marketers to discover the tangible, take-home insights and solutions that will make a significant difference to their working lives, as well as elevate their experience of the show with a programme devoted exclusively to addressing their needs."

## MICE Show Asia 2024 To Host Record Breaking MICE and Corporate Buyers and Partnerships with International Global MICE Associations

TTA BULLETIN

Asia's premier MICE show is set to take place from 23-25 October at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore and will feature a strong exhibitor line-up such as Business Events Perth, Business Events Sarawak, Gangneung Convention Bureau, Guam Visitors Bureau, Gyeongju Hwabaek Convention & Visitors Bureau, Jakarta Convention Bureau, Sapporo Convention Bureau and many more. Industry heavyweights from Amadeus, Dubai World Trade Centre, FCM Meetings and Events, FIRST, Meetingsselect and TRICOM Events will be leading ground-breaking MICE conversations. Co-located with ITB Asia and Travel Tech Asia, this year's 3-in-1 show promises to be a must-attend platform for industry professionals to network, collaborate and explore new opportunities in an era of renewed growth.

MICE Show Asia 2024 brings together over 700 MICE and corporate buyers, alongside event professionals, convention marketing experts, and thought leaders under one roof. With a projection of over 50% of the MICE industry planners to increase both their event budgets and volume of in-person events in 2024(\*1), MICE Show Asia 2024 is poised to meet the industry's needs by showcasing cutting-edge insights, solutions, and connections.

"As the industry rebounds with heightened demand, the show will offer an extensive programme featuring key MICE exhibitors,

insightful conference sessions, and invaluable networking opportunities. Attendees will engage with top MICE destinations, associations, and service providers, gaining access to industry trends and future outlooks critical for thriving in this dynamic sector", says Joyce Wang, Executive Director of Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, the organiser of MICE Show Asia, Travel Tech Asia, and ITB Asia.

Business matching and pre-scheduled appointments at MICE Show Asia ensure seamless AI generated profile recommendations and smart lead retrieval. Exhibitors may now connect with targeted MICE and Corporate international buyers and engage in post-show lead generation activities. In addition, the tradeshow includes a series of networking sessions, including structured B2B appointments, opening night function, and evening receptions. These sessions are curated to encourage interaction and collaboration, allowing sponsors to expand their professional networks and explore potential partnerships.

"This will be our third consecutive year exhibiting at MICE Show Asia. As we seek to promote our city as a distinctive MICE destination to buyers from Southeast Asia and around the world, MICE Show Asia provides an ideal platform to connect with motivated buyers and high-potential business leads", says Aya Sugimoto, Manager, Incentive & Corporate Events.

## PATA Celebrates PATA Chapters and Student Chapters' Accomplishments in Bangkok, Thailand

TTA BULLETIN

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) recognised six PATA Chapters and three Student Chapters for their commitment to advancing the travel and tourism industry at the PATA Power of Networking session, held at Abandoned Mansion Bangkok on Thursday, August 29. At the gathering, the 2024 PATA Face of the Future award and certificates of recognition had also been formally presented to the winners.

During the event, PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid reflected on the purpose of the PATA Chapter & Student Chapter Awards, stating, "These awards were established to honour the unwavering commitment of our Chapters and Student Chapters in advancing the travel and tourism industry. They also highlight the vital role these groups play in organising impactful training programmes and business development events across the globe, all while carrying forward PATA's mission to foster meaningful partnerships that enhance the value, quality, and sustainable growth of travel and tourism within the Asia Pacific region."

He continued, "I extend my heartfelt thanks to all participants and warmly congratulate the winners. Your success is an inspiration to us all, and I am confident that you will continue to lead with the same passion and dedication in the years to come."

The Spirit of PATA Award was presented

to the PATA India Chapter for consistently embodying the Association's mission and values for over five consecutive years. Runeep Sangha, Executive Director of the chapter, alongside Venkatesan Dhattareyan, Regional Director of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and San Jeet, PATA Executive Board member, accepted the award on its behalf.

These chapters and the student chapter demonstrated exceptional leadership in advancing the travel and tourism industry within the Asia Pacific region, in alignment with PATA's mission.

The Best Engagement with Young Tourism Professionals Award was presented to the PATA Malaysia Chapter for its remarkable support of young tourism professionals and educational institutions over the past year. Jonathan Low, a member of the chapter's Executive Committee, accepted the award on its behalf.

The Best Sustainability Initiative Award was presented to the PATA Malaysia HELP University Student Chapter for its innovative and impactful sustainability projects. Rajesvare Rada, Senior Lecturer at HELP University, accepted the award on behalf of the chapter.





## Taking Sri Lanka's Spirit to the Seven Corners of the World

Exclusive Interview with Johann Peries

TTA BULLETIN

It was a privilege to sit down with Johann Peries, an individual who embodies both the triumphs and trials of Sri Lanka's mountaineering legacy.

Johann, one of the pioneering Sri Lankans to challenge the formidable heights of Mount Everest, has become a symbol of our nation's indomitable spirit. His story is not just about scaling the world's tallest peaks but about taking the Sri Lankan flag & story to some of the most difficult terrains in the world & to a global audience of climbers of indomitable spirit, who are fast learning that a Sri Lankan has broken through cultural and historical barriers within this sphere.

In our conversation, Johann shared insights into his journey—from his early days in Colombo, where his love for the outdoors first took root, to his relentless pursuit of personal and national pride. His determination to raise the Sri Lankan flag, speaks volumes of his patriotism and his desire to showcase the resilience of our homeland on a global stage.

Our discussion delved into the heart of what motivates him: the spirit of adventure, the call to overcome the most daunting obstacles, and the deep-seated belief that a small nation like Sri Lanka can achieve extraordinary feats. Johann's journey is not just his own; it is a testament to the strength and perseverance that defines us as Sri Lankans.

It was an honour to explore the mind and heart of a man who, with every climb, takes a piece of Sri Lanka to the very ends of the earth.

TravelTalk Asia Editor: Johann, your name is synonymous with both triumph and tragedy in Sri Lanka's mountaineering



Johan Peiris

history. Can you tell us what drives your passion for adventure and mountaineering?

Johann Peries: My journey into mountaineering started as a personal challenge, but it soon became something much larger. I've always had a deep love for the outdoors, but what really drives me is the desire to represent Sri Lanka on a global stage. It's not just about the thrill of climbing; it's about raising the Sri Lankan flag in places where few have ventured and showing the world the resilience and tenacity of our people.

TTA: Your first attempt to summit Mount Everest in 2016 was a historic moment for Sri Lanka, but it ended just 400 meters from the top. How did that experience shape your journey?

Johann Peries: That experience was incredibly challenging, both physically and emotionally. I was so close to the summit, but when my oxygen system failed, I had to make the tough decision to turn back. It was heartbreaking, not just for me but for everyone back home who was following the journey. However, I've always believed in resilience. Instead of letting that setback defeat me, I used it as motivation to come back stronger. And in May 2018, when I finally reached the summit, it wasn't just a personal victory—it was a victory for all Sri Lankans.

TTA: You're now pursuing the Seven Summits Challenge, aiming to scale the highest peaks on each continent. What does this challenge mean to you?

Johann Peries: The Seven Summits Challenge is about more than just climbing mountains—it's about proving that Sri Lanka, though a small nation, is capable of

great achievements. Each summit represents the challenges our country has faced, and continues to face, but also our ability to overcome them. Every time I reach the top of a peak and raise our flag, I'm sending a message that Sri Lanka is resilient, determined, and capable of greatness.

TTA: How has your progress been on this journey so far?

Johann Peries: I've already summited Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa and Mount Elbrus in Europe, in addition to Everest. Each of these climbs presented unique challenges—extreme temperatures, technical difficulties—but they also provided invaluable lessons. Mountaineering teaches you so much about perseverance, about pushing your limits, and about the power of determination. It's not just about the physical climb; it's about the journey within.

TTA: What do you hope to achieve by taking the Sri Lankan flag to the world's highest peaks?

Johann Peries: My goal is to showcase the spirit of Sri Lanka to the world. We've faced numerous challenges as a nation, but we always emerge stronger. By raising our flag on these peaks, I'm telling the world that Sri Lanka is more than just a dot on the map—it's a nation with a rich history, a vibrant culture, and a people who never give up. This journey is about inspiring others to dream big and showing that anything is possible with determination and resilience.

TTA: Looking ahead, what's next for you on this incredible journey?

Johann Peries: The road ahead includes summiting Mount Aconcagua in South America, Mount Denali in North America, Mount Vinson in Antarctica, and Mount Kosciuszko in Australia. Each of these



peaks presents its own unique challenges, but I'm prepared to face them head-on. This journey isn't just about reaching the top—it's about inspiring others, particularly the youth of Sri Lanka, to pursue their own dreams and to never give up, no matter how tough the journey might get.

TTA: Johann, your story is truly inspiring. As you continue on your quest, what message do you want to leave with the readers of TravelTalk Asia and the people of Sri Lanka?

Johann Peries: I want people to know that no challenge is too great if you have the will to overcome it. Whether it's in the mountains or in any other field, the key is to keep pushing forward, no matter how difficult the path. Sri Lanka is a nation of fighters, and my journey is just one example of what we can achieve when we set our minds to it. We may be small, but we have the strength to reach the highest heights, and we should never stop striving for greatness.

Interview conducted by Dinushka Chandrasena the TravelTalk Asia Editor for Travel Trade Magazine.

## Celebrating International Housekeeping Week at Team Pegasus Reef

Team Pegasus Reef celebrated International Housekeeping Week with the theme "Honoring the Heart of Hospitality." This annual event, held during the second week of September, recognizes the essential contributions of housekeeping staff in the hospitality industry.

The celebration took place at the resort, where staff

gathered to appreciate the hard work and dedication of the housekeeping team. A special ceremony featured awards for outstanding team members, highlighting their commitment to maintaining high standards for guests.

Guests enjoyed refreshments and entertainment, fostering a sense of community among the staff. The

event emphasized teamwork and the crucial role housekeeping plays in ensuring a welcoming environment for all.

As the week concludes, Team Pegasus Reef reaffirms its commitment to recognizing and celebrating the invaluable efforts of its housekeeping professionals, who truly embody the heart of hospitality.





## Tropical Getaways at Occidental Eden Beruwala

TTA BULLETIN

Discover the epitome of island luxury at Occidental Eden Beruwala, your premier destination for a sunny December getaway. Nestled along the pristine beaches in Beruwala, our hotel invites you to unwind and rejuvenate amidst its idyllic surroundings, making it the perfect sanctuary for those who are searching for a year-end holiday with a tropical twist.

Our opulent rooms offer breathtaking views of the breezy ocean and serve as a haven of modern conveniences, complete with expansive balconies that bask in sun-drenched vistas. As evening sets, indulge in a unique high tea experience by the beach, accompanied by a spectacular sunset serenade that adds a touch of magic to your evening.



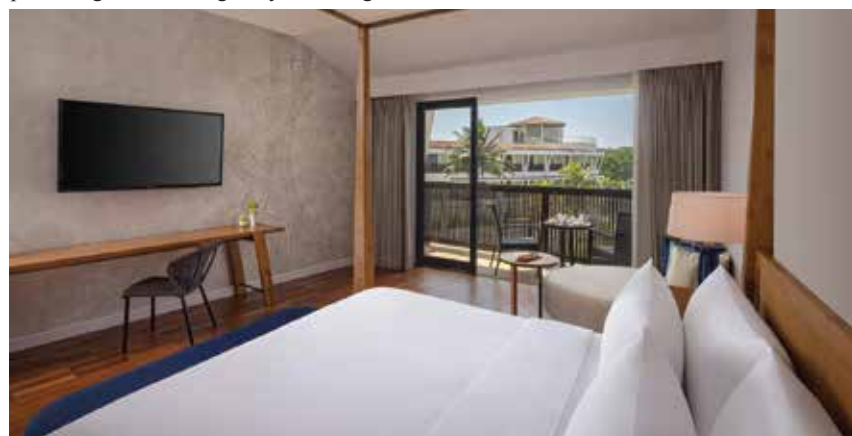
your holiday. Do not miss the Madu River boat ride to observe the mangroves and migratory birds while enjoying a relaxing fish spa along the way. Our expansive pool area is another highlight in your year-end getaway, featuring morning aerobics sessions and a splash pool bar where you can sip on refreshing cocktails of your choice.

At The Garden of Eden, culinary enthusiasts can embark on a gastronomic journey with our international buffet, catering to a diverse array of tastes and preferences for a truly memorable dining experience. For a more relaxed atmosphere, the Champs Bar beckons you to unwind in style with expertly crafted holiday-themed cocktails and delectable tapas, creating the ideal setting for socialising.

Our latest culinary innovation, 'Sippi,' a refined à la carte restaurant, offers a contemporary take on dining culture, featuring experimental dishes infused with global flair and bursts of island flavour, allowing you to explore a local take on the holidays through a variety of inspiring cuisines.

For those seeking adventure, Island Adventures presents an array of water sport activities, from exhilarating jet ski rides to kayaking through the mangroves, providing an exciting way to invigorate

If you are looking to rejuvenate your mind and body, Occidental Eden Beruwala is the perfect place to create unforgettable memories this December.



## Hilton Colombo Marks 37th Anniversary with Community Empowerment Initiative

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton Colombo celebrated its 37th anniversary with a meaningful community initiative, offering a hands-on pastry training session to students from The Ceylon School for the Deaf and Blind in Ratmalana.



Manesh Fernando

Led by two differently-abled team members from Hilton Colombo, the session aimed to inspire and equip the students with practical culinary skills. The students learned the art of cake preparation and were presented with certificates and essential pastry tools, including nozzles, cake trays, palette knives, and turning tables, to continue their culinary journey.

“Spending quality time with these talented individuals and witnessing their passion and dedication has been truly inspiring. It brings me great joy to contribute to their growth and to support their dreams,” said

Manesh Fernando, General Manager for Hilton Colombo and Area General Manager for Sri Lanka at Hilton. “At Hilton Colombo, we are deeply committed to engaging with our community and making a positive impact. We look forward to continuing our efforts in various community initiatives and partnerships,” he added.

Following the training session with the students, a panel discussion took place, followed by a delightful breakfast buffet for all Team Members. The anniversary celebrations were attended by distinguished guests, including Patsy Ng and several other regional Team Members. The event was led by Manesh Fernando, Area General Manager for Hilton Sri Lanka and General Manager for Hilton Colombo, along with the General Managers of all Hilton properties across the country.

## All Bartender's Workshop: Cinnamon Colombo Hotels collaborates with Atilla Iskif

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Colombo Hotels continues to set the standard for exceptional hospitality by hosting the All-Bartender's Workshop, led by the world-renowned, four-time award-winning bartending champion, Atilla Iskif. As one of Sri Lanka's premier destinations for a top-tier drink experience, Cinnamon



from Cinnamon Grand Colombo, Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, Cinnamon Red Colombo, and top students from the Cinnamon Hotel School.

Colombo Hotels is responding to the growing demand for elevated cocktails, innovative blends, and a refreshing departure from conventional mixology.

Atilla Iskif, a global icon in the mixology world, is celebrated for his unparalleled expertise in crafting some of the most intricate and sophisticated beverages in the industry. With illustrious residencies in Las Vegas and other international hotspots, Atilla has shared his mastery with over a thousand professionals across premier hotels and resorts worldwide. His charisma and command of the craft have made him a sought-after figure in the world of bartending, bringing a touch of exclusivity to every pour.

During his residency at Cinnamon Colombo Hotels, Atilla has also spearheaded various exclusive events, each met with overwhelming enthusiasm, with several selling out beyond capacity. His involvement has consistently elevated the hotel's beverage offerings, setting new benchmarks in Sri Lanka's hospitality scene.

The workshop, designed for a select group of 100 participants, includes professionals

The All-Bartender's Workshop is poised to redefine the standards of mixology, reinforcing Cinnamon Colombo Hotels' leadership in bartending and cocktail craftsmanship. This initiative will further cement the hotel group's esteemed reputation as a frontrunner in the art of mixology in Sri Lanka.

Cinnamon Colombo Hotels is enhancing industry standards with its All-Bartender's Workshop, featuring renowned mixologist Atilla Iskif. This collaboration aligns with the hotel's commitment to fostering innovation and excellence in mixology, responding to the increasing demand for elevated beverage experiences.

The workshop, which will include 100 participants from across the hotel's properties and top students from the Hotel Schools in Colombo, aims to advance professional skills and set new benchmarks in cocktail craftsmanship. By investing in the training and development of local talent, Cinnamon Colombo Hotels addresses a significant challenge: the loss of skilled Sri Lankans to opportunities abroad. This initiative not only seeks to retain organic talent and resources but also underscores the hotel's dedication to promoting sustainable professional development within the hospitality sector.



## The Annual Travel Trade Dance: A Night of Glamour, Fun, and Celebration

The Travel Trade Sports Club (TTSC) recently hosted its highly anticipated annual dance at Hilton Colombo, featuring a vibrant tribal theme. The night was filled with lively entertainment, delicious food, and exciting prizes. Meticulously organized by Dance Committee Chairman Bonita Odayar, with the support of TTSC President Dilshan Gnanapragasam and the dedicated team, the event was a spectacular success!





# FAMILY ALBUM





# HOTELS

## Discover Your Sanctuary: Unwind at Occidental Paradise Dambulla

TTA BULLETIN

Occidental Paradise Dambulla unfolds like a hidden gem, nestled amidst the enchanting embrace of Dambulla's lush landscape. This tranquil haven is more than just a destination; it's a sanctuary for weary souls seeking the perfect family getaway, where relaxation reigns supreme.

Imagine stepping into a world where your every holiday desire is catered to with meticulous care. Just a stone's throw away, lies the majestic Sigiriya Rock Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage site that whispers tales of ancient kings, while the awe-inspiring Pidurangala Mountain offers a front-row seat to nature's spectacular sunrise performances. The renowned Dambulla Cave Temple, with its rich history

and stunning artistry, is conveniently close, placing you in the heart of Sri Lanka's captivating North Central Province.

As you step outside our doors, a delightful nature walk awaits, inviting you to lose yourself in the symphony of local wildlife, wander through verdant paddy fields, and immerse yourself in the vibrant rhythms of village life. For those with a passion for culinary exploration, our rustic mud hut beckons, offering an authentic Sri Lankan dining experience where you can roll up your sleeves and engage with our culinary artisans, discovering the secrets behind the aromatic spices that define our rich cuisine.

When it's time to unwind, our spa promises



a sanctuary of serenity, offering a diverse range of treatments from age-old Ayurvedic practices to rejuvenating Balinese therapies, ensuring your body and soul are revitalised. Our spacious rooms, including charming duplex family accommodations adorned with stunning wooden architecture, provide a paradisiacal retreat. Upon entering, the serene beauty of nature envelops you, with each room thoughtfully designed to enhance the comfort and joy of your stay.

and unwind in a sanctuary designed for your comfort. Each moment spent within these enchanting surroundings becomes a cherished memory, inviting you to return time and again. We invite you to discover Occidental Paradise Dambulla, where every visit promises relaxation and rejuvenation, enveloped in the warmth of genuine Sri Lankan hospitality.



As the sun dips below the horizon, casting a warm glow across the landscape, Occidental Paradise Dambulla reveals itself as more than just a destination; it is a tapestry of experiences woven into the very fabric of your stay. Here, you can immerse yourself in the island's rich history, indulge in the flavours of authentic Sri Lankan cuisine,



## Jetwing Expands Organic Tea Footprint

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing acquired the Uva Ben Head Tea Estate in Welimada in 2022 with a mandate to produce premium artisanal teas while safeguarding the environment through organic farming and biodiversity conservation. The Uva Ben Head Estate, a 100-acre expanse previously reliant on inorganic farming methods, is undergoing a transformative journey under Jetwing's guidance. The estate is now a beacon of organic farming, with Jetwing introducing mixed cropping and phasing out chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The estate management has been committed to eliminating the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides through a phased reduction, since acquisition in 2022, with the final application of these chemicals occurring in August 2023. The transformation includes the production of organic liquid fertilizers,

composting, and the planned introduction of biochar. Additionally, the estate is optimizing water usage through rainwater harvesting.

To inform future decisions, the estate is conducting comprehensive soil and leaf analyses in collaboration with the Tea Research Institute. Furthermore, a biodiversity survey is being undertaken led by Prof. Devaka Weerakoon, Head, Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences, University of Colombo, to evaluate the impact of organic farming and to develop strategies for resource optimization and biodiversity enhancement.

Jetwing's vision extends beyond agriculture to community development. The estate supports a vibrant community of over 300 individuals, providing employment oppor-



tunities and comprehensive training programmes. Health initiatives and financial assistance programmes reflect Jetwing's commitment to the well-being of its associates and their families.

Currently, the harvested tea leaf is sold to third-party processors; however, plans for an on-site tea processing facility are underway, promising to enhance quality control and minimize environmental impact. The company's circular approach to sustainability is further exemplified by initiatives that support dairy farming among estate residents, fostering a symbiotic relationship between agriculture and animal husbandry.

Nestled within the estate are the Jetwing

Uva Ben Head Villa and Jetwing Welimada Villa, two homely planter's bungalows, offering guests an immersive experience in Sri Lanka's renowned tea country and providing employment opportunities for the local community. These villas are a testament to Jetwing Hotels' esteemed reputation for providing serene retreats that harmonize luxury with nature.

The acquisition of the Uva Ben Head Estate and its subsequent conversion to organic cultivation represents a strategic expansion of Jetwing's involvement in the tea industry. The estate complements the company's inaugural venture, producing organic artisanal teas at Jetwing Warwick Gardens in Ambewela.





## Oktoberfest returns to Hilton Colombo: A truly Bavarian Tradition

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton Colombo will host the much-anticipated Oktoberfest where guests are invited to partake in a truly Bavarian celebration, offering the best in food, beverage, ambiance and entertainment.



The highly anticipated annual Oktoberfest, from 24 October to 2 November 2024 is a beloved tradition for locals and visitors alike, Oktoberfest promises an authentic Bavarian experience right in the heart of Colombo. Guests can enjoy a lavish buffet featuring freshly baked Pretzels, Munich Supper Plate, German Bread Loaves, Thuringian Pork Sausage, Brew-battered Fried Fish with Pickled Mayonnaise, Baked Farmers' Meat Loaf with German Mustard, traditional Swabian Pasta, and Crumbed Mini Pork Schnitzel.

The festive atmosphere will be enhanced by the lively tunes of the Oompah Band and a spirited brew-drinking competition, ensuring an unforgettable night of celebration. "We are incredibly excited to host our 31st Oktoberfest celebration," said Kapila Mohotti, Director of Food & Beverage at Hilton Colombo. "This event has become a highlight for the city, providing an immersive Bavarian experience paired with our signature Hilton hospitality," he added.

## Galle Face Hotel wins Best Hotel in 'Rest of Asia' at Condé Nast Traveller Reader's Choice Awards 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Galle Face Hotel has secured 1st place in the "Rest of Asia" category at the Condé Nast Traveller Reader's Choice Awards 2024: Best Hotels in Asia. This prestigious accolade is a reflection of the hotel's enduring excellence, as voted by discerning travellers who recognize the exceptional experiences Galle Face offers.



As one of the oldest hotels east of the Suez, Galle Face Hotel has stood as a beacon of luxury and hospitality for 160 years. Since its founding in 1864, the hotel has woven itself into the fabric of Sri Lanka's rich history, serving royalty, celebrities, and global icons while offering guests a unique blend of heritage and modernity. Today, it remains an iconic landmark that upholds its proud tradition of world-class service, sophistication, and elegance.

Commenting on this accolade, General Manager, Mr. Rohan Fernandopulle said "This award is not just a reflection of the

incredible journey we've embarked on, but also a tribute to the tireless efforts of our team, whose passion and dedication continue to elevate the guests' experiences. We are also truly grateful to our loyal guests for their trust and for making Galle Face Hotel a home away from home."

As the hotel celebrates its 160th anniversary, this recognition cements its legacy as a global leader in luxury hospitality. Galle Face Hotel remains committed to offering an unparalleled experience that reflects the best of Sri Lankan culture and hospitality, inviting guests from all over the world to be part of its timeless journey.

## Mini Olympics at Pegasus Reef Hotel

On August 31st, Pegasus Reef Hotel hosted a vibrant Mini Olympics, starting at 3 PM, inviting families to enjoy an afternoon filled with fun and friendly competition, all set against the soothing sound of sea waves.

Guests checked in at the registration desk, eager to participate in a variety of exciting activities.

The event kicked off with an adrenaline-pumping Obstacle Course, followed by opportunities for kids to showcase their creativity at the Art & Slime Station. Participants also engaged in thrilling Swimming and

Relay Races, while the Water Bucket Race brought laughter and excitement to the crowd.

A lively DJ kept spirits high with upbeat music, and families enjoyed the classic game of Musical Chairs. The Magic Balloon Man added a whimsical touch, delighting children with colorful creations, while the bouncer castle provided endless entertainment. Attendees enjoyed a variety of delicious food options from multiple food stalls, ensuring everyone had plenty to eat.

The day culminated in an inspiring Awards Ceremony,

where medals and gifts were presented to participants, celebrating their achievements.

Families captured lasting memories at the beautifully decorated entrance arch and photo booth.

As the event came to a close, children and parents enjoyed the final moments together, reflecting on a day filled with joy and community spirit.

The Mini Olympics was a memorable experience, and attendees are already looking forward to next year's festivities!





## Minor Hotels Wins 34 Accolades in 2024 Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards in US & UK

Anantara's European Properties Named #2 in Central & Southern Europe and Rome, and #3 in Ireland

### TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, the parent company behind the Anantara, Avani, Elewana Collection, Tivoli and NH Collection hotel brands, is delighted to announce a total of 34 accolades awarded to its hotels and resorts worldwide in the 2024 Condé Nast Traveler US and UK Readers' Choice Awards – the longest-running and most prestigious recognition of excellence in the travel industry, as voted by the publications' audiences.



Dillip Rajakarier

Reflecting the Group's growing presence in key European destinations, this year's winners feature many of the grand dames lovingly renovated and brought back to life by Anantara. Anantara New York Palace Budapest Hotel – home to "the most beautiful café in the world" – shot up 26 positions to claim the #2 spot among the leading hotels in Central & Southern Europe; Anantara The Marker Dublin Hotel in the regenerated Docklands area of the city debuted at #3 in Ireland and Anantara Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky Amsterdam took the #6 spot for Amsterdam. In Italy, Anantara Palazzo Naiadi Rome Hotel suspended over the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian, retained its position among Rome's top hotels moving up to #2 and Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel in the 13th century cliffside Capuchin convent was named #13. Lastly, Anantara Plaza Nice Hotel on the iconic Promenade des Anglais was ranked #13 in the Rest of France category.

In Southern and Eastern Africa, the Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara was the top achiever for Minor Hotels, securing the #7 spot in its category. Meanwhile, in Central and Eastern Africa, the luxury safari lodges Elewana Elsa's Kopje Meru and Elewana Loisaba Tented Camp were celebrated as the #12 and #15 winners, respectively. In the Rest of Africa,

Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort claimed the #12 spot, Anantara Sahara Tozeur Resort & Villas came in at #14 and Anantara Bazaruto Island Resort in Mozambique was ranked #18.

In the Middle East, a total of seven awards went to Anantara's flagship properties, both established and recent additions to the portfolio. At #2, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort was celebrated as one of Oman's most spectacular wilderness hotels, a soaring achievement closely followed by the successes of the UAE properties. Meanwhile, in the uber-exclusive Indian Ocean group, four resorts stole the spotlight: Anantara Veli Maldives Resort at #4, Naladhu Private Island Maldives at #9, Niyama Private Islands Maldives at #17 and Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas at #20.

In Minor Hotels' home market of Thailand, two properties made it into the top ten: the ultimate adventurer's playground, Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort, was ranked #4, and the recently launched family getaway, Anantara Koh Yao Yai Resort & Villas, #8. Avani, another home-grown lifestyle brand, also had its moment in the sun with Avani+ Khao Lak Resort being named in the #11 spot. In the rest of Asia, accolades went to two Vietnamese properties linked by the luxury Vietage train, with Anantara Quy Nhon Villas coming in at #4 and Anantara Hoi An Resort in the UNESCO-protected old town #12.

"Each year, as Condé Nast Traveler readers select their favourite properties, we aspire to see our Minor Hotels brands and properties among them," said Dillip Rajakarier, CEO of Minor Hotels and Group CEO of its parent company Minor International.

## Celebrating World Tourism Day: Pegasus Reef's Commitment to Nature

### TTA BULLETIN

On September 27th, Pegasus Reef joined the global community in celebrating World Tourism Day, organized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization. This year, the resort hosted a Beach Cleanup campaign and a Tree Planting Project, showcasing a commitment to environmental conservation.

The day began with local volunteers, staff, and eco-conscious travelers gathering to clean the beautiful shores of Pegasus Reef. Armed with gloves and bags, participants collected plastic waste and litter, enhancing the beach's natural beauty. "Every small action counts," said one volunteer, emphasizing the importance of maintaining clean coastlines for future generations.

In addition to the cleanup, the Tree Planting

Project involved local schools and environmental groups planting native trees along the coast. These trees not only combat climate change but also enhance biodiversity and protect the ecosystem. "Trees are vital for our planet," a Pegasus Reef representative noted, highlighting their crucial role in our environment.

World Tourism Day reminds us of the connection between tourism and sustainability. By participating in local conservation efforts and respecting our surroundings, we can all contribute to a healthier planet.

Pegasus Reef's initiatives inspire ongoing commitment to nature. Together, we can ensure that our beautiful destinations remain protected for generations to come.

## Mount Lavinia Hotel Partners with Forest Garden Organics to Launch Pioneering Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet

### TTA BULLETIN

Mount Lavinia Hotel (MLH), a cornerstone of hospitality in Sri Lanka, is thrilled to announce a groundbreaking collaboration with Forest Garden Organics, renowned for their commitment to sustainability and organic farming. This partnership heralds the debut of an innovative Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet, set to transform the dining landscape by offering a fully organic, eco-friendly culinary experience.



The Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet will officially launch on September 17, 2024, coinciding with Poya Day, at the esteemed Governor's Restaurant within Mount Lavinia Hotel. This initiative represents a major leap forward in the hotel's dedication to sustainable dining and will be celebrated with an enhanced culinary offering that highlights the freshest organic produce.

In response to the rising consumer demand for healthier and more transparent food choices, Mount Lavinia Hotel's new Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet is set to become a trailblazer in the realm of sustainable dining. This unique buffet will exclusively feature 100% organic ingredients, all sourced from Forest Garden Organics, a leading organic farming operation certified by both USDA and EU standards.

Forest Garden Organics operates a 40-acre farm in Rambukkana, renowned for its rich farming culture and dedication to organic practices. Their commitment to growing produce without synthetic chemicals or pesticides ensures the highest quality ingredients for the buffet.

This pioneering initiative is not just about enhancing the dining experience but also about advocating for conscious consumption. As consumers become increasingly aware of the impact of their food choices on health and the environment, this buffet offers a compelling solution. By showcasing dishes crafted from the freshest organic produce, Mount Lavinia Hotel and Forest Garden Organics aim to inspire diners to make more eco-friendly and health-conscious choices.

"Mount Lavinia Hotel is proud to lead the way in sustainable dining with our new Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet," said Anura Dewapura, Chief Operating Officer of Mount Lavinia Hotel. "Our

collaboration with Forest Garden Organics reflects our commitment to promoting a healthier lifestyle and supporting local, sustainable agriculture. We believe that this initiative will not only elevate the dining experience but also contribute to a broader movement towards conscious consumption."

Dammika Abeyratne,

Founder of Forest Garden Organics, expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership: "We are excited to join forces with Mount Lavinia Hotel to bring this unique organic buffet to life. Our farm's dedication to organic practices aligns perfectly with the hotel's vision for sustainability. This collaboration allows us to showcase our commitment to producing the highest quality organic ingredients while supporting a sustainable future for Sri Lanka's food industry."

In addition to the Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet, the hotel will continue to host the popular Eco-Friendly Poya Market featuring local vendors, from 10 AM to 4 PM every Poya day. This market offers a variety of sustainable products and supports local artisans and entrepreneurs, further enhancing the hotel's commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement.

The Organic Poya Vegan Lunch Buffet is just the beginning of Mount Lavinia Hotel's broader initiative to incorporate more organic and sustainable options into their culinary offerings. The hotel is committed to expanding this model across other food offerings, progressively transitioning to more sustainable practices that benefit both the environment and the health of its patrons.

As Sri Lanka continues to evolve in its approach to food and sustainability, Mount Lavinia Hotel and Forest Garden Organics are leading the charge with a vision that integrates health, taste, and environmental responsibility.

Mount Lavinia Hotel is a historic and iconic hotel located in Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka. With a rich heritage of providing luxury accommodations and exceptional dining experiences, the hotel is dedicated to embracing innovation and sustainability in its offerings.



Forest Garden Organics is a leading organic farm in Rambukkana, Sri Lanka, certified by USDA and EU standards. Known for its dedication to sustainable farming practices, the farm produces a wide range of high-quality organic produce, supporting both local communities and global environmental goals.



# Avani Hotels & Resorts Debuts in Bangkok's New CBD with the Launch of Avani Ratchada Bangkok Hotel

TTA BULLETIN

Avani Hotels & Resorts, the upscale lifestyle brand of Minor Hotels, announces the opening of Avani Ratchada Bangkok Hotel. Located in the heart of Bangkok's new Central Business District, the 402-room hotel offers an ideal stay for both business and leisure travellers. Guests can explore a different side of the 'Big Mango' through unique local experiences, from bustling night markets to vibrant cultural hotspots. Avani Ratchada Bangkok joins sister properties, Avani+ Riverside Bangkok Hotel and Avani Sukhumvit Bangkok Hotel, as the third Avani hotel in the city.

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.

Avani Ratchada Bangkok's culinary offerings cater to a diverse range of palates, reflecting its upscale positioning as a premier destination. One Ratchada serves both international and local flavours throughout the day, while Nan Yuan Chinese Restaurant specialises in Cantonese delicacies. Metro Lounge offers a relaxing ambiance with handcrafted cocktails and live music. For busy executives, The Pantry provides convenient grab-and-go options, and the pool bar offers a refreshing escape with signature drinks and soaring city views.

Avani Ratchada Bangkok's state-of-the-art wellness centre spans an entire floor and includes a swimming pool, AvaniFit gym, and spa facilities, including a Japanese Onsen and sauna. This expansive space is designed to help guests relax, rejuvenate, and maintain their wellbeing throughout

their stay. For events and meetings, the hotel offers 11 versatile venues, including a 924-square-metre ballroom equipped with advanced technology, suitable for everything from weddings to product launches.

Just steps away, guests can immerse themselves in the vibrant Ratchada district, known for its bustling night markets, including the lively Jodd Fair Market — a celebration of Thai food, culture and creativity. A must-visit for foodies, the market offers a wide selection of local delicacies and street food favourites. Guests can also explore the Huai Kwang Market, visit the Thailand Cultural Centre, catch a show at the Muangthai Rachadalai Theatre, or shop at Fortune IT Lifestyle Mall and Central Rama 9.

Opening rates start from USD 85 per room, per night based on two people sharing, including breakfast. Guests who book directly before year-end will receive exclusive dining credits. For more information and to book, please visit [avanihotels.com/en/ratchada-bangkok](http://avanihotels.com/en/ratchada-bangkok), call +66 (0) 2 641 1500 or email [ratchada@avanihotels.com](mailto:ratchada@avanihotels.com).



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.

Minor Hotels is a proud member of the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA), the world's largest alliance of independent hotel brands, and participates in the GHA DISCOVERY loyalty programme.

## Dusit international and Saigontourist Group sign MOU to boost tourism development in Thailand and Vietnam

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Saigontourist Group, one of Vietnam's largest multi-service travel corporations, to drive tourism development in Thailand and Vietnam through strategic promotions, enhanced services, and the creation of innovative tourism products.

Under the terms of the MOU, Dusit International and Saigontourist Group will share technical expertise, experience, and best practices to help elevate the quality and effectiveness of tourism services in both countries. The two companies will also explore opportunities for joint hotel development and promote each other's tourism offerings at major events, festivals, and travel fairs.

Thailand remains a significant source market for Vietnam's tourism industry, and Saigontourist Group's expansive portfolio of hotels, resorts, entertainment venues, and conference facilities across Vietnam welcomes thousands of Thai visitors each year. Likewise, Thailand is a popular destination for Vietnamese travellers. In 2023 and the first half of 2024, Saigontour-



ist Travel Service Company arranged trips for approximately 15,400 Vietnamese tourists to experience Thailand's top destinations, including Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Phuket, where Dusit Hotels and Resorts has a strong presence.

Alongside its fast-growing portfolio of global hotels and resorts, Dusit is also a key player in hospitality education, with Dusit Thani College, The Food School, and Le Cordon Bleu Dusit Culinary School developing top talent for Dusit Hotels and Resorts and the industry at large. Leveraging this, Dusit International and Saigontourist Group will seek to coordinate efforts in education and training for tourism operations to ensure their respective workforces remain at the forefront of industry standards.

"We are delighted to partner with Saigontourist Group to strengthen tourism ties between Thailand and Vietnam," said Mr Gilles Cretallaz, Chief Operating Officer, Dusit International.

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# HOTELS

## Dusit Thani Bangkok Offers Porsche Panamera Executive Limousine Service

Dusit's reimagined flagship hotel sets a new standard in Thailand, becoming the first to offer chauffeured Porsche Panamera Executive sedans as part of its luxurious guest experience. Guests can unlock this exclusive privilege when booking direct via [dusit.com](https://dusit.com).

### TTA BULLETIN

Dusit Thani Bangkok, the highly-anticipated reimagined flagship hotel of Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies, is partnering with Porsche Thailand to deliver a bespoke luxury limousine service for guests.



With a shared vision to 'redefine the art of the journey,' this collaboration marks the first time in Thailand that Porsche sports cars will be used as part of a hotel's limousine service, offering an unparalleled experience for discerning travellers. This exclusive service is now available for guests booking Club Rooms or Suites – or the 'An Iconic Stay: Opening Offer – directly through [dusit.com](https://dusit.com).

Dusit Thani Bangkok's luxury fleet includes five Porsche Panamera 4 E-Hybrid Executive models. Carefully chosen to meet the exacting standards of Dusit Thani Bangkok's discerning guests, this top-tier executive sedan delivers an unmatched blend of comfort, style, technology, and sophistication, all while combining power with whisper-quiet efficiency.

The long wheelbase Panamera Executive features a spacious, luxurious interior, with premium leather seats designed to embrace the body, providing satisfying support for even the longest trips within Bangkok or to picturesque destinations beyond.

State-of-the-art entertainment systems and complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi are just some of the thoughtful amenities that ensure each journey is as productive or relaxing as guests desire, whether for transfers, bespoke excursions, or tailored travel routes.

"At Dusit Thani Bangkok, we are dedicated to elevating every aspect of the guest experience and crafting meaningful moments that leave a lasting impression," said Adrian Rudin, Managing Director, Dusit Thani Bangkok. "Our partnership with Porsche ensures that from the very start of their journey, our guests experience



the same level of care, luxury, and sophistication that defines their stay with us."

In addition to experiencing unparalleled comfort, guests can take confidence in knowing that each chauffeur managing Dusit's fleet has received rigorous training from Porsche Thailand, where safety and precision are the highest priorities. These elite drivers further distinguish themselves by wearing bespoke uniforms, crafted to reflect the elegance and sophistication of both Dusit Thani Bangkok and the Porsche brand.

Peter Rohwer, Managing Director of Porsche Thailand by AAS Group, said, "We are delighted to partner with Dusit Thani Bangkok as part of its transformative journey to set a new benchmark for luxury accommodation in Bangkok. Dusit's exceptional reputation for blending tradition with innovation aligns perfectly with Porsche's pursuit of excellence. Together, we share a commitment to creating experiences that are as refined as they are unforgettable, and we look forward to contributing to this iconic hotel's legacy by redefining the art of the journey and offering guests the unrivalled luxury and performance of Porsche."

The reimagined Dusit Thani Bangkok will open its doors on 27 September 2024, following a stunning transformation as part of the Dusit Central Park project opposite Lumpini Park.

For a memorable arrival, guests booking Club Rooms or Suites directly through the hotel or [dusit.com](https://dusit.com) will enjoy a complimentary airport transfer in a sleek Porsche Panamera Executive limousine – an exclusive privilege reserved for direct bookings only. This service is also part of the 'An Iconic Stay: Opening Offer,' which also includes exclusive club benefits, USD 75 (THB 2,700 net) hotel credit per night for dining or Devarana Wellness experiences (subject to availability), and late check-out until 4 p.m. This limited-time offer is available for booking now, exclusively via [dusit.com](https://dusit.com).

## Amora Hotels & Resorts Goes Property Shopping In Key Cities Across Australasia

### TTA BULLETIN

Amora Hotels & Resorts, the family-owned company which flies the flag for independent hotel groups, is accelerating its expansion across Australia as it bids to introduce its five-star



hospitality brand to every state capital city. Driving this growth is Tamer Habib, the former senior executive with Starwood, Rydges and Stamford Hotels & Resorts, who is currently Vice President of Operations. Tamer is leveraging his 25 years of hospitality acumen and expertise to lead the company into an exciting new era of success.

At present, Amora operates three hotels in Australia: Amora Hotel Jamison Sydney, Amora Hotel Riverwalk Melbourne, and Amora Hotel Brisbane, which made its debut in March 2024 following a comprehensive AUD 25 million (USD 16.4 million) rebranding and refurbishment. Every Amora property in Australia commands a prime CBD location, and the company is now pursuing an ambitious strategy that will see it establish a presence in the centre of every state capital within five years.

Tamer Habib recently oversaw the launch of a new regional office in Sydney and has helped to appoint a series of top industry professionals in key leadership positions, including group director of development, group financial controller, group purchasing manager, group executive chef, and group director of human resources. This has enabled Amora to streamline and standardise its processes, driving operational efficiencies and enhancing the performance of its hotels.

Supporting the expansion of the Amora portfolio is Narej Farik, Group Director for Commercial & Business Development, who has more than 25 years of experience with some of the world's leading five-star hotel chains, including Marriott, Oberoi and Banyan Tree, and has been a consultant for over 20 hotels and resorts in Asia and Australia. Now, he is using this depth of expertise to oversee the analysis, planning, management and pre-opening of each new hotel project.

On the creative side, Hemant Dadlani has been appointed as Amora's Group Executive Chef. An award-winning culinary virtuoso with two decades of experience in luxury hotels and resorts across seven countries, Hemant is tasked with creating innovative and inspiring F&B concepts for the group. Having cooked for global celebrities including Sir Richard Branson, Morgan Freeman and Sir Paul McCartney, he is perfectly positioned to cater for Australia's most discerning diners.

One of these new creative concepts is Brooksy Bar, the stylish lounge at Amora

Hotel Jamison Sydney. Having opened its doors in June 2024, this ultra-chic venue is already delighting hotel guests and local residents with its glamorous 1920s theme and sophisticated menu of crafted cocktails and small plates. With its prime CBD location and direct street access, Brooksy is rapidly gaining a reputation as the new "go-to" lifestyle bar in Sydney – and setting the benchmark for hotel bars with its experiential concept.

"One of our core strengths is that we are an owner-operator, so we can control every aspect of our experience. And this will continue as we expand. We are mainly seeking rebrandings and refurbishments, but also potential conversions. Crucially, every Amora property has to be in a prime location and it has to be operated under our own brand. Our newly-opened regional office in Sydney is making it easier to consolidate our operational processes, which, in turn, is driving our sales, revenue and profitability, and providing a solid platform for our future growth," Tamer stated.

Tamer recently embarked on a productive business development trip which included visits to Adelaide and Perth – two key cities in Amora's development strategy. The group is also in discussions over future opportunities in the centre of Auckland, as it spreads its wings across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand.

One of Amora's key strengths, according to Tamer, is the company's comparative small scale compared to major global chains. With just six hotels and resorts – three in Thailand and three in Australia – under a single five-star brand, Amora understands the unique needs of its clientele.

"Being smaller, we have the opportunity to create an emotional connection with our guests. We are already seeing the results of this; all three of our hotels in Australia are running very healthy occupancy and GOP (gross operating profit), and at Amora Hotel Riverwalk Melbourne, for example, almost 60% of our clientele is repeat business," Tamer revealed.

Looking ahead, every Amora hotel will strive to become a focal point for local dining and social interaction, as discerning international travellers mix and mingle with urban residents in sophisticated restaurants and bars that reflect the essence of their destination, either through local produce, seasonal menus or creative design.



## Jetwing Hotels Receives PATA Gold Award for Climate Change Initiative

TTA BULLETIN



Jetwing Hotels has been honored with the prestigious Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award for Sustainability and Social Responsibility, under the Climate Change Initiative category. The award recognizes the company's groundbreaking efforts in expanding its solar photovoltaic (PV) installations across its hotel portfolio.

Hashan Cooray, Director of Marketing and Development at Jetwing Hotels, accepted the award at a ceremony held in Bangkok, Thailand. This esteemed recognition underscores Jetwing Hotels' unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship and its role as a leader in sustainable tourism.

"We are deeply honored to receive the PATA Gold Award for our commitment to sustainability," said Hashan Cooray. "This recognition inspires us to continue pushing the boundaries of environmental innovation and to contribute meaningfully to Sri Lanka's Nationally Determined Contributions in line with the Paris Agreement."

Jetwing Hotels has invested over USD 1 million to increase its solar PV capacity by 1.6 megawatts (MW) in 2024. Since introducing its first 20-kilowatt (kW) solar PV system in 2010, Jetwing Hotels has steadily grown its renewable energy footprint to 925 kW across its properties and corporate office. In 2023 alone, the company generated 1,069 megawatt hours (MWh) of clean energy, equivalent to powering 13,490 households and offsetting 608 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

The upcoming expansion will boost the company's solar PV capacity to 2.6 MW, tripling its current solar energy contribution to 24% of total electricity consumption. This significant achievement brings Jetwing Hotels closer to its goal of reducing its carbon footprint and aligning with Sri Lanka's ambitious renewable energy targets.

Beyond solar power, Jetwing Hotels has embraced a holistic approach to sustainability, incorporating biomass boilers, innovative steam-powered vapor absorption chillers, solar thermal systems, and biogas digesters into its operations. This multi-faceted strategy has enabled the company to generate 66% of its energy demand from renewable sources.

Since its inception in 1984, the PATA Gold Awards represent the true spirit of innovation, sustainability, and the notion of tourism as a force for good. The awards are further distinguished by the voluntary participation of 23 independent expert judges from renowned organisations across the region.

"I am extremely delighted to note that we have received a significant number of high-quality submissions, with a 19% increase compared to the previous year. This is a clear sign that the travel and tourism sector is thriving and becoming more competitive than ever. We have witnessed tourism professionals putting more creativity and passion into their work to enhance the tourism economy. I would like to extend my gratitude to all the applicants and judges who have dedicated their time and efforts into making the PATA Gold Awards a possibility" said PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid.

Jetwing Hotels' dedication to responsible tourism is evident in its numerous awards, including over 10 PATA Gold Awards for its contributions to community upliftment and environmental conservation. The 2022 PATA award for the 'Second Careers' initiative highlights Jetwing Hotels' commitment to local communities, providing employment opportunities for women over the age of 45 from economically challenged backgrounds and contributing to both community upliftment and increasing female participation in the hospitality sector.

## Aitken Spence Hotels to Elevate Rainforest Ecolodge as a Global Model of Sustainable Tourism

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka's leading hospitality chain, Aitken Spence Hotels, announces its latest venture: the takeover of the management of Rainforest Ecolodge, the first classified ecolodge in the country. This partnership is more than just a management agreement; and represents a continuation of a visionary legacy and a profound commitment to sustainable tourism and innovative hospitality solutions.

Rainforest Ecolodge is a unique tourism project initiated by industry stakeholders and similar investors, spearheaded by the respected industry stalwart Mr. Prema Cooray. This initiative was also part of a USAID-sponsored study aimed at positioning Sri Lanka as a global leader in eco-friendly hospitality. The lodge exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between development and environmental stewardship, enhancing the destination's biodiversity and community.

The lodge, which holds the prestigious LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification, is a trailblazer in the hospitality industry. It is the first hotel in Sri Lanka, fourth in Asia, and fifth in the world to receive this accolade, reflecting its unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability. The property features 20 eco-chalets ingeniously constructed from reclaimed shipping containers and decks made from repurposed railway sleepers, demonstrating a commitment to reducing its environmental footprint while providing guests with a unique blend of comfort and eco-consciousness.

Nestled discreetly within the expansive 500-acre Enselwatte Tea Estate in Deniyaya, bordering the Sinharaja Rainforest, the Rainforest Ecolodge offers a serene, off-grid haven of tranquillity. Guests can experience complete seclusion and total immersion in the lush, wildlife-rich surroundings. The ecolodge boasts picturesque treks and trails leading to hidden waterfalls, guided by knowledgeable resident naturalists, ensuring a truly immersive and educational

experience.

Stasshani Jayawardena, Jt. Deputy Chairperson and Jt. Managing Director of Aitken Spence Hotel Holdings PLC, shared her enthusiasm for this partnership, stating, "Welcoming Rainforest Ecolodge into the Aitken Spence family of properties marks a significant step in the journey towards sustainable tourism. In line with Aitken Spence Hotels' commitment to eco-friendly practices, the goal is to integrate this rich biodiversity into the guest experience, fostering a deep appreciation for nature in its most pristine form. The ultimate objective is to reinforce a dedication to preserving and promoting the natural beauty of Sri Lanka, ensuring that guests leave with a profound respect for the environment and a lasting impression of its untouched splendour."

The Company invites all nature enthusiasts and green advocates to visit Rainforest Ecolodge for an enriching experience, featuring insightful educational treks and immersive learning opportunities.

The Ecolodge aims to provide a unique hospitality experience that highlights the area's diverse ecosystem while minimising environmental impact and supporting the local community. The partnership with Aitken Spence Hotels is focused on elevating the lodge to new heights of excellence, leveraging Aitken Spence's industry expertise to enhance and reposition Rainforest Ecolodge as a premier eco-tourism destination and a global eco-tourism model.

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





# HOTELS / FAMILY ALBUM

## Revealing Ayr Castle 1922: Where Scottish Grandeur Meets Sri Lankan Serenity

TTA BULLETIN

Amidst the fast-paced rhythm of city life, the longing for a peaceful retreat grows ever stronger. Imagine finding that serene escape just an hour's drive from Colombo. Nestled in the picturesque landscapes of Padukka, Ayr Castle 1922 is the latest gem in the exquisite boutique collection, Reveal the Collection. Here, guests are invited to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and experience a sanctuary where history and luxury are seamlessly intertwined.

In the golden era of 1922, amidst the lush estates of colonial Ceylon, young tea planter J.F. Arley Elford found himself captivated by a woman of Scottish nobility. His humble dwelling failed to impress her, prompting Elford to embark on a labour of love to build a grand residence that would win her heart. Choosing a breath-taking vantage point on his estate, he fashioned Ayr Castle 1922 to reflect the grandeur of Scottish castles—a tangible expression of his devotion and affection. However, fate had other plans. By the time the castle stood in all its splendour, she had moved on, tired of waiting. To make matters worse, Elford's employers disapproved of his ambitious endeavour, leading to his dismissal. Heartbroken and defeated, he left Ceylon, leaving behind a legacy of unrequited love carved in stone.

Perched high on a cleared hilltop overlooking sweeping views of mountains and a rubber estate, Ayr Castle 1922 rises

like an eagle's eyrie, its striking stone facade standing as a timeless landmark. The castle's impressive stone construction, achieved with the help of elephants hauling massive "kalugal" blocks, showcases the colonial influences of the era. Constructed entirely of stone, with double walls ingeniously filled with sea sand, the castle remains refreshingly cool even on the warmest days. Designed to echo the majesty of Scottish architecture with unique stone arches, this 1922 marvel embodies both the romantic allure and enduring charm of its creator's love story.

Stepping into Ayr Castle is akin to stepping back in time, where colonial charm is beautifully preserved through antique décor, including Old Ceylon picture frames, ebony Dutch boxes, timber sideboard cupboards and antique almirahs. The warm welcome from the "Appu" (traditional caretaker), with his gracious colonial-era hospitality, sets the tone for a truly memorable stay.

The castle boasts five spacious suites—Elford, Edinburgh, Turnberry, Governor and Ayr—each thoughtfully named to reflect both the colonial days of Sri Lanka and Scottish inspiration. The suites feature plush beds, elegantly designed living spaces, and luxurious bathrooms with scenic bathtubs. Spacious balconies offer breath-taking mountain views, which, on a clear day, extend to the buildings and lights of Colombo and Adam's Peak.



Beyond the suites, Lounge 1922 provides a serene setting for quiet reflection, whether guests are savouring a warm cup of coffee, working on a writing project or conducting a business meeting. The space elegantly combines business with leisure, creating an atmosphere that inspires creativity. It's an ideal retreat for corporate visitors seeking inspiration and a peaceful escape from the demands of urban life.

Dining at Ayr Castle is an exceptional experience, with a menu that highlights fine dining, an exquisite breakfast selection, local flavours and the essence of Sri Lankan tea culture. The library at Ayr Castle evokes the charm of a Jane Austen novel, inviting guests to lose themselves in stories that captivate the imagination and transport them to a bygone era of grace and refinement.

Beyond its historical charm, Ayr Castle

1922 offers guests a range of enchanting experiences, with picturesque picnic spots and refreshing bathing areas. Visitors can explore the nearby waterfalls, Ranmudu Ella and Kumari Ella or find tranquillity at the serene Kalutuwawa Reservoir. The Seethawaka Botanical Gardens provide a peaceful retreat for leisurely walks, while cycling through the rubber estate allows guests to observe the traditional art of rubber tapping.

Reveal the Collection, under the flagship of Browns Hotels & Resorts, features four boutique beach villas in Mirissa—The Lantern Boutique Hotel, The Beach House and two Ubuntu Villas—as well as The Lavender House in Pussellawa and The Stafford Bungalow in Ragala. Whether seeking adventure, serenity, secluded beaches or hillside tranquillity, Reveal the Collection is your gateway to unforgettable experiences.

## International Housekeeping Week at Sofia Colombo City Hotel

Every second full week in September is designated as Housekeeping Week. It happens this year from September 8–14. Many are unaware of what it takes to do this job and Housekeepers Week aims to change that. To raise awareness of the unseen work that goes into this sector, thousands of businesses join forces. This has evolved into a means for them to express gratitude, and acknowledge, and honor their diligent employees.

The purpose of Housekeepers Week is to honor

housekeepers for their dedication and hard work. The holiday has been officially sponsored by the Integrated Environment and Health Assessment (IEHA) since 1981. Since then, it has become a global festival for housekeepers, lasting a week. The lengthy hours and labor of housekeeping are necessary for any building operation, including those of hotels, restaurants, casinos, and other official structures.

Sofia Colombo City Hotel had a lengthy week of activities of recognizing their energetic housekeeping

associates and appreciating their hard work while enhancing their job knowledge by conducting a range of activities.

The hardworking group, under the direction of General Manager Sugath Illangakoon and Executive Housekeeper Nishad Karunaratne, held competitions that were evaluated by seasoned housekeeping experts in the field. The winners were duly acknowledged and awarded at a closing ceremony.





## Emirates touches down for the first time in Antananarivo

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates, the world's largest international airline, has landed in Antananarivo, Madagascar for the first time.



The arrival of EK707 was celebrated with a water canon salute at Ivato International Airport, followed by an exclusive event for VIPs, government officials, industry guests, and media. His Excellency, Andry Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar and the First Lady greeted the Emirates delegation, led by Adnan Kazim, Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer; Adil Al Ghaith, Senior Vice President of Commercial Operations, Gulf, Middle East and Central Asia; Badr Abbas, Divisional Senior Vice President of Emirates SkyCargo and Sami Aqil Abdullah, Senior Vice President of Emirates Airport Services Outstation and Business Support, as well as international media.

Fostering stronger links between the UAE and Madagascar, Mohammad Lootah, President, CEO of Dubai Chambers, His Excellency Jamal Al Hai, Deputy CEO of Dubai Airports and Major General Talal Ahmed Al Shangeti, General Director Assistant of Airport Passport Sector also joined the inaugural flight, along with Buti Qurwash, Senior Vice President Safety & Security at Dubai Airports; Rabie Atieh, CEO Transguard Group and Abid Hamza, CEO of Fast Logistics.

Commanding the inaugural flight to Antananarivo was Canadian national Captain Bruce Pope and First Officer Solo Chuk, a Malagasy pilot who has been flying for Emirates for 14 years. The inaugural flight operated with an almost full passenger load from Mahe, the Seychelles, taking advantage of the enhanced travel options available on the linked service by merging two trips into one.

Following the welcome ceremony, Adnan Kazim, along with senior representatives showcased the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft flying on the route in a three-class configuration\* to His Excellency President Rajoelina along with a group of dignitaries, government representatives, media, guests and members of the travel industry. The aircraft features eight private suites in First Class, 42 lie flat seats in Business Class and 310 spacious seats in Economy Class.

His Excellency, Andry Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar, said, "In just four months, through shared determination and hard work, we have successfully launched this long-awaited inaugural flight between Dubai and Antananarivo with Emirates. This is a historic moment for Madagascar, and I am convinced that it will act as a catalyst and a true lever for tourism and economic development in our country. Madagascar opens its skies to Emirates, and through Emirates, Madagascar opens itself to the world. Together, let's continue to dream, build, and grow for the good of our nation."

Commenting on the start of operations, Adnan Kazim said, "Madagascar is a new and exciting destination on our vast global network, unlocking a world of natural wonders, rare and diverse wildlife, and a rich, vibrant culture. As the Malagasy government continues to grow its tourism industry with the aim to attract one million tourists by 2028, we proudly support this vision by enhancing connectivity and premium travel options to encourage more international travellers to discover the island."

We would like to thank the Malagasy authorities, including the Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Tourism and Ravinala Airports Group, as well as all stakeholders and authorities in Madagascar and the UAE for their support and we look forward to providing our unique product and award-winning service to travellers who have chosen Madagascar as their destination of choice for leisure and business."

EK707 departs from Dubai to the Seychelles at 0855hrs, arriving in Mahe at 1335hrs\*, and continues to Antananarivo to land at 1650hrs. The return flight EK708 departs Antananarivo at 1835hrs, landing in Mahe at 2220hrs, and taking off from Mahe at 2350hrs to Dubai, landing at 0420hrs the next day. The four-weekly service operates on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. The flight times have been scheduled to optimise connections to and from key points in Europe, the Far East, West Asia and the Middle East/GCC, streamlining international travel to and from Madagascar.

Delivering on its global fly better promise, Emirates provides an outstanding travel experience, with elevated comfort and thoughtful touches in every class. Passengers can dine on regionally inspired multi-course menus curated by a team of award-winning chefs, complimentary in every class. On the Mahe-Antananarivo leg of the inaugural flight, passengers in First and Business Class were treated to tropical fruit plates featuring local produce and a specially crafted Vanilla Mojito, drawing inspiration directly from Madagascar Vanilla, muddled with coconut water, mint, lime, rum and soda water.

Enhancing premium travel options, Emirates is the only airline operating to Madagascar with three dedicated classes of travel, including First Class, featuring true inflight luxury, on the Mahe-Antananarivo leg. Akin to a private hotel room in the clouds, passengers traveling in First Class can indulge in sumptuous a la carte cuisine and free-flowing premium beverages in private closed doors suites.

## Club Hotel Dolphin Triumphs as South Asia's Top All-Inclusive Resort at SATA 2024

TTA BULLETIN

Club Hotel Dolphin, Waikkal, a premier property in the Browns Hotels & Resorts portfolio, has been recognised as the Leading All-Inclusive Resort at the South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) 2024. The ceremony took place in Kathmandu, Nepal, where Thurashath Niyatapala, General Manager, accepted the accolade at a star-studded event. SATA, considered as one of South Asia's foremost hospitality awards, celebrates excellence in travel and tourism, acknowledging those who have contributed to shaping and elevating the industry.

Commenting on the distinction, Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels & Resorts, said: "Club Hotel Dolphin's position as the largest all-inclusive club operation by a Sri Lankan hotel is not only a point of pride but also a responsibility we take seriously. We are redefining what all-inclusive means, delivering not just comfort, but immersive experiences that leave a lasting impact. Browns Hotels & Resorts will continue to drive innovation and set new benchmarks in the region's travel industry, ensuring our guests depart with unforgettable memories."

Situated just 20 minutes from the Bandaranaike International Airport, Club Hotel Dolphin in Waikkal has long been associated with luxury, adventure, and heart-warming guest experiences. The resort's diverse offerings, from its beautiful beachfront location and Sri Lanka's largest swimming pool to its vibrant entertainment programme make it a top choice for travellers seeking both



relaxation and excitement.

As an all-inclusive hotel, Club Hotel Dolphin takes pride in offering exceptional service alongside a diverse culinary experience. Guests can enjoy intimate beach dinners, expansive buffet spreads, and creative cocktails crafted by award-winning mixologists. With a special menu that features local flavours and fine dining experiences, every meal is designed to be a memorable culinary journey. The resort's energetic animation team ensures non-stop fun with engaging cultural shows, theatre performances, and lively dance routines. Activities such as beach volleyball, archery, squash, and billiards are available for all ages, while the resort's expanded animation programme has gained popularity on social media, positioning it as a standout destination in the Negombo area.

One of Club Hotel Dolphin's defining features is its meaningful connections with its guests. The resort is renowned for its loyal visitors, many of whom have returned over 30 or 40 times. The team's attention to detail, from remembering favourite meals to celebrating special family moments, creates a welcoming atmosphere where guests feel at home.

## SAS officially joins the SkyTeam alliance

TTA BULLETIN

SAS has officially joined the SkyTeam global airline alliance today, marking a major milestone for the airline and elevating SkyTeam's global network to new heights.



By joining SkyTeam, SAS contributes to the alliance's strategic focus on operational synergies and sustainability. SAS customers will also benefit from seamless connectivity to over 1,060 destinations in SkyTeam's extensive global network, notably opening new opportunities in regions such as Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Codeshare agreements are already in place with Air France-KLM with options for codeshares with more SkyTeam members to follow later.

SAS EuroBonus Silver members will now be recognized as SkyTeam Elite, and Gold and Diamond members will enjoy the

elevated status of Elite Plus, granting them enhanced services across the SkyTeam network.

With SAS now a member, SkyTeam becomes the only airline alliance to serve both the southernmost and northernmost commercial airports in the world: Ushuaia in Argentina and Svalbard in Norway. This addition further strengthens the alliance's reach across key global markets, with improved access to the key Scandinavian hubs of Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Oslo, providing more robust connections for travelers.



# AIRLINES

## SriLankan Airlines Launches New Pre-order Meal Service “Serendib Delights”

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has introduced “Serendib Delights,” an exciting new pre-order meal service exclusively for Economy Class passengers. This service enhancement allows travellers to select from a carefully curated menu before their journey, offering an elevated onboard dining experience.

With Serendib Delights, Economy Class passengers can choose from an assortment of meals designed to meet a variety of dietary preferences. The menu features options such as Salmon Steaks, Chicken Lamprais, Fillet Steaks, Fish Fritters, Beef Burgers, Seafood Pies and authentic Arabic, Western and Indian breakfasts.

Each meal is meticulously prepared from fresh, high-quality ingredients to create a gastronomic treat. The menu also includes vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, ensuring that every passenger can find something to delight their taste buds. All meals catered from Colombo and many other locations across the SriLankan network are Halal Certified.

Commenting on Serendib Delights, Gayan Wickrama, Senior Manager Commercial Services and Support of SriLankan Airlines, stated, “At SriLankan Airlines,



we are committed to making every onboard experience special for our valued passengers. Serendib Delights offers the best of exquisite flavours crafted by SriLankan Airlines' culinary experts, all at a price that's within reach.”

Passengers can easily pre-order their preferred Serendib Delights meal at least 48 hours before departure by visiting the SriLankan Airlines website, contacting the SriLankan 24-hour contact centre at 1979 (within Sri Lanka) or +94 777 77 1979 (outside Sri Lanka) or by speaking with their travel agent.

In addition to Serendib Delights, passengers can enhance their onboard journey by opting for other valued-added services such as neighbour-free seats, extra legroom seats, advance seat reservation, travel insurance, prepaid extra baggage, special occasion cakes or by bidding for Business Class seats through the SriLankan website.

## oneworld names new VP of Membership and streamlines leadership structure

TTA BULLETIN

The oneworld® alliance announced today the appointment of Loren Neuenschwander in the new role of Vice President, Membership. A seasoned aviation leader with more than thirty years' of international aviation experience, Neuenschwander spent 28 years with Delta Air Lines and joins the alliance most recently from the Boston Consulting Group.

Neuenschwander will drive oneworld's global membership strategy and relationship optimisation. He will spearhead the integration of Fiji Airways and Oman Air as full members of the alliance and champion oneworld's sustainability initiatives. Reporting to oneworld CEO, Nat Pieper, Neuenschwander's strategic vision will be integral to advancing the alliance's mission to consistently deliver a superior, seamless travel experience.

At Delta, Loren held senior leadership roles in airline partnerships and alliances, corporate strategy, and finance across Europe, Asia and Latin America, including management of Delta's Europe, Middle East, Africa and India business and its joint ventures with multiple global airline partners.



Loren holds an MBA from the Harbert College of Business at Auburn University and a dual bachelor's degree in Accounting and Computer Science from Grace College.

Nat Pieper, oneworld CEO, said: “Loren brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the airline industry's complexities and opportunities across both developed and emerging markets. His strategic insight and leadership will be invaluable as we continue to strengthen our alliance and deliver value to our member airlines and customers.”

Neuenschwander's appointment is part of a broader organisational change at oneworld, aimed at streamlining key areas of responsibility and enhancing operational efficiency. This includes the introduction of new appointments and realignment of existing roles to better support the alliance's strategic priorities and member airlines. As part of these changes, Elise Zealand has been re-appointed to her current role of Vice President, Legal, HR and Compliance; Nicholas Melfi as Vice President, Finance and Administration; and Gerhard Girking as Vice President, Customer Experience and Airports.

## Hahnair's 25th Anniversary Competition: three lucky travel agents to win EUR 2,500 flight vouchers

TTA BULLETIN

Hahnair announced an exclusive competition for travel agents worldwide, offering a chance to win one of three flight vouchers, each worth EUR 2,500. The competition begins today, 16th September, which is celebrated as Hahnair Day (16.9.), in reference to the airline prefix of the leading ticketing expert (169). Travel agents can participate until 25th September.

To qualify for the lucky draw, travel agents need to follow three steps:

1. Visit the competition page at <https://www.hahnair.com/en/Anniversary-Quiz-25years>.
2. Watch Hahnair's video “Endless Travel Opportunities with HR-169”.
3. Answer a question about famous landmarks featured in the video.

The video at the centre of the competition, “Endless Travel Opportunities with HR-169”, showcases beautiful images of famous landmarks and vibrant scenes from destinations around the globe. “We are happy to launch this special competition in celebration of Hahnair Day”, says Alexander Proschka, Executive VP Commercial. “The video accompanying the competition represents what Hahnair stands for: connecting the world with unlimited travel opportunities and giving passengers access to beautiful adventures,



all thanks to our travel agency and airline partners.”

The competition is one of many activities taking place this year to celebrate Hahnair's 25th anniversary. “Since we started our ticketing business two and a half decades ago, our network has grown to over 100,000 travel agencies in 190 markets”, said Kimberley Long, Vice President Agency Distribution. “With our special anniversary competition, we want to thank travel agents around the world for their loyalty and trust.”

The three lucky winners will each receive a Hahnair travel voucher worth EUR 2,500 EUR that can be used towards a flight issued on a HR-169 ticket to any destination in the world. Terms and conditions are specified on the Hahnair competition page. The winner will be announced on Hahnair's social media channels on 9th October 2024.

## Emirates and Museum of the Future to host first-ever Aviation Future Week

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates and the Museum of the Future will host the first Aviation Future Week, taking place from 15-17 October 2024 in Dubai.



UAE ministers, senior government officials, industry leaders from across the aviation and aerospace, airfreight, Maintenance, Overhaul & Repair (MRO) and logistics ecosystem, will converge in Dubai for the inaugural event. The event presents a platform for unparalleled insights and discussion opportunities around the passenger journey and future traffic demand, airfreight and logistics, as well as the latest developments in AI and XR.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline & Group said: “It is fitting that Dubai is setting the stage for visionary global leaders and decision makers in aviation and aerospace to gather for key discussions and powerful collaborations to help redefine what the future could look like for the industry at Aviation Future Week. Dubai's strategic commitment to leveraging technology and innovation and embracing the digital revolution is fertile ground to pioneer new approaches and push the boundaries of what is possible for more efficient and sustainable operations, and reshaping the passenger journey and experience as the industry forges ahead.”

Aviation Future Week will include key notes, panels and workshops over three days. The first day includes a packed programme led by speakers and industry

experts who will address air travel demand and airport infrastructure and how airports, airlines, aerospace manufacturers and other stakeholders can deliver an enhanced passenger experience using technology.

The second day will be dedicated to developments within airfreight and logistics, while the second half of the day with focus on MRO development within the region. The third and final day will navigate the boundary-breaking potential of Web3, AI and XR infused solutions to drive workflow efficiencies and service delivery. Sessions will also tackle strategies required to rethink existing processes through AI, and the collaboration necessary to upskill the aviation workforce today to embrace, adopt and leverage these technologies.

In addition to the main programme track, Aviation Future Week will also feature a rich exhibition platform showcasing the latest in aviation technologies. Visitors can learn about new products and concepts, and network with industry representatives. A series of interactive workshops will be spearheaded by Emirates and Museum of the Future, supported by Emirates CX teams, dnata, Emirates SkyCargo, Flight Operations, Emirates and dnata environment teams, Boeing and the Emirates Group Youth Council.



## GDS Expands Its Reach in Sri Lanka: A Journey of Growth and Excellence

In 2022, GDS, a Dubai-based travel company, made its entry into the Sri Lankan market. In just two short years, it has established itself as a trusted name in the industry, particularly in the B2B sector. With a focus on strategic partnerships and a steadfast commitment to delivering exceptional service, GDS has successfully catered to over 3,000 passengers, facilitating their travel to nearly 100 global destinations.

This remarkable growth reflects GDS's dedication to creating world-class travel experiences and ensuring customer satisfaction at every turn. From personal vacations to corporate travel and special events, the company's reach continues to grow, reinforcing its role as a key player in the region.

One of the most significant achievements for GDS has been the transformation of its Dubai office into a comprehensive operational hub. This shift allows GDS to manage its services with enhanced efficiency, offering seamless and personalized travel solutions to its diverse

clientele. With this expanded capability, the company is better equipped to meet the needs of individual travelers, businesses, and large groups alike, ensuring each trip is managed with the highest level of care and attention to detail.

What truly distinguishes GDS from its competitors is its specialized team. With over five decades of combined international experience, the GDS team brings unparalleled expertise and passion to the table. Every journey, whether it's for leisure or business, is meticulously planned and executed by professionals who prioritize customer satisfaction. The team's wealth of knowledge ensures that travelers are not only booking a trip but also experiencing an adventure designed with their preferences and needs in mind.

At the heart of GDS's mission is a simple yet profound goal: to create unforgettable travel memories. Whether it's a family vacation, a corporate retreat, or an incentive trip, GDS strives to ensure that each traveler returns with

experiences they will cherish for a lifetime. The company's customer-centric approach guarantees that every aspect of the journey is tailored to meet the unique expectations of its clients.

GDS operates on three fundamental pillars: Friendliness, Flexibility, and Fairness. These values are deeply embedded in every aspect of the company's operations. From the first interaction to the conclusion of the trip, GDS ensures that every customer experience is characterized by warmth, adaptability, and integrity. This approach not only fosters lasting relationships but also sets the standard for excellence in the travel industry.

As GDS continues to grow in the Sri Lankan market and beyond, its unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional travel experiences remains at the forefront of its operations. With a specialized team, a broad global reach, and a dedication to customer satisfaction, GDS is poised to become a leader in the industry, both regionally and internationally.





## SriLankan Airlines Named Leading International Airline in South Asia at SATA 2024

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has once again been recognized as the Leading International Airline in South Asia under the Visitors' Choice Awards category at the South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) 2024, marking its second consecutive win in this prestigious category. This accolade reinforces the airline's status as a powerhouse in the aviation industry of South Asia, with an unmatched legacy of service and hospitality, and a comprehensive flight schedule serving 85% of the South Asian region.



Airlines spares no effort in providing seamless connections between the region and the world, while delivering our renowned Sri Lankan hospitality onboard, along with meals and entertainment thoughtfully tailored to suit localised preferences. I would like to dedicate this award to all the teams overseeing South Asia for their unwavering commitment to serve our customers."

SATA, an annual event, celebrates the best of South Asia's hospitality and travel industries and is widely regarded as one of the region's most eminent travel awards, endorsed by over 18 regional tourism organisations. Winners are determined based on votes from both industry professionals and passengers, making the award a reflection of industry excellence and customer satisfaction.

Commenting on the award, Fawzan Fareid, Regional Manager India, Bangladesh & Nepal at SriLankan Airlines, said, "We are honoured to be recognized as a leader in the region by our valued customers. South Asia is integral to our network, and SriLankan

SriLankan Airlines' vision is to provide passengers with an authentically Sri Lankan experience, characterized by the warmth and hospitality that is so distinct to the country. This vision is reflected in every award the airline has scored for service, including the continuous Four-Star Rating in the Major Airline category at the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) awards, which is based on certified passenger feedback. In addition to its service excellence, SriLankan Airlines is celebrated for its extensive schedule, offering convenient connections worldwide. In South Asia alone, the airline operates nearly 130 flights each week between Colombo and key cities across India, Pakistan, the Maldives, Nepal and Bangladesh.

## Malaysia Airlines selects Sabre's PRISM to optimise the experience for corporate travellers

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider powering the global travel industry, today announced that Malaysia Airlines, Malaysia's national carrier, has selected PRISM to power and optimize its corporate segment. By using automated, real-time data insights and trends, PRISM offers advanced data analytics, enabling a more customised travel solution for business customers.



airlines and commercial clients.

A truly global tool with international customers and data sources, PRISM ingests data from more than 5,000 sources internationally with more than 200m individual corporate flight bookings in 2023. PRISM provides uniquely valuable insights and analytics, including robust contract profit modelling and performance reporting, along with more than 350 preformatted reports containing thousands of different data configurations.

In addition to being fully hosted on Google Cloud, PRISM now supports weekly data submissions from its data sources. Those opting for the API option will benefit from automated daily data submissions. PRISM offers daily corporate booking trend data, enhanced user analytics driven by Google Cloud's BigQuery and Looker capabilities, API connections to link to airline CRM systems, and enhanced user tools to streamline sales collaboration with partner

"Selecting the right business intelligence solution is essential for enhancing our corporate travel offerings, driving business growth, and boosting revenue while elevating the travel experience for our customers. This is why we've chosen Sabre PRISM, to help us achieve these goals by optimising and streamlining our sales processes," said, Ahmad Luqman Mohd Azmi, Chief Executive Officer of Airlines from MAG.

With PRISM, airlines gain a comprehensive view of corporate travel while ensuring compliance with GDPR and other global data privacy regulations. It is the only solution that offers a built-in analytics tool, on-demand reporting, and API connectivity. Additionally, Sabre offers PRISM customers 24/7 self-service access to analytics and reporting, as well as in-house technical and development support.

## Emirates deepens presence in South Africa and adds fourth daily flight to Johannesburg

The addition of the fourth daily flight provides more choice and seamless connections to and through Dubai

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates, the world's largest international airline, is bringing even more choice, connectivity and premium travel options to Johannesburg, by adding a fourth daily flight on the in-demand route. This follows the recent announcement of the second daily A380 between Dubai and Johannesburg, which launched on 1 September, reaffirming the importance of South Africa on the airline's extensive global network.



The fourth daily service will begin on 1 March, 2025, and will be operated on a three-class Boeing 777-300ER, offering an additional 708 seats in and out of South Africa's largest and busiest international airport every day, broadening options for leisure and business travellers alike. EK767 will depart Dubai at 00:10hrs, arriving in Johannesburg at 06:20hrs; the return flight, EK768, will depart Johannesburg at 10:15hrs arriving in Dubai at 20:15hrs, expanding the airline's schedule to introduce a morning departure from Johannesburg.

Adnan Kazim, Emirates Deputy President and Chief Commercial Officer said, "South Africa has long been a highly popular destination for both leisure and business travellers connecting to and through Dubai, and the fourth daily flight enables us to better serve the growing demand for travel to and from the market. We'd like to extend our thanks to the South African authorities for their partnership and support in securing this new service, which reinstates the capacity we offered South Africa pre-pandemic, with 49 weekly flights, across three gateways. As we reflect on nearly three decades of operations to the market, we remain committed to driving inbound travel to South Africa, supporting the government as they aim to make tourism the leading economic contributor and vehicle for transformation, as well as encouraging more inwards investment to the country."



The fourth daily flight further supports connectivity across Emirates' global network of over 140 destinations, optimising schedules to key destinations including Dubai, Thailand and India as well as European hotspots such as UK, France, the Netherlands and Germany.

Customers taking advantage of the expanded Emirates schedule to Johannesburg can reach a further 60 regional points in Africa via codeshare and interline agreements with four key partners. Emirates and South African Airways first established a codeshare arrangement back in 1997, and it remains one of the oldest partnerships in the airline's history, enabling frictionless, single-ticket travel to and from

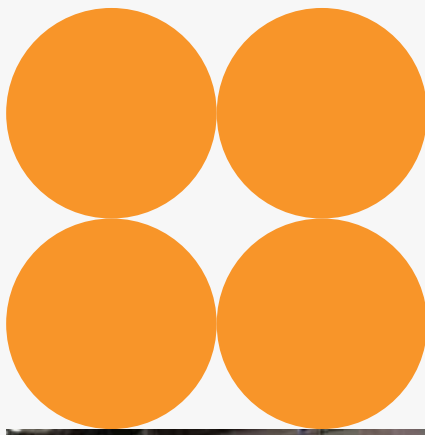
all three South African gateways, including 12 destinations via Johannesburg. Unlocking greater connectivity, Emirates' codeshare with Airlink opens up a further 44 regional cities, while its interline agreement with Cemair provides access to exclusive leisure points such as Margate and Plettenberg Bay. Similarly, the agreement with FlySafair enables travel to domestic points such as Port Elizabeth, East London and George. These partnerships provide greater connectivity for passengers across Africa to access Emirates' world-class product and service, while also enabling international travellers to seamlessly explore more of Africa.

In addition to enhancing passenger travel, the new flight increases cargo capacity in and out of South Africa, offering 300 tonnes via the belly of the Boeing 777, weekly. Emirates SkyCargo, the airline's freight division, uplifts key commodities, including fresh fruit and vegetables, chilled meat, dairy, seafood and fresh cut flowers, further stimulating the economy and connecting South African businesses with their global customers, quickly, reliably and efficiently. The new flight provides additional opportunities to move goods to key destinations, such as London, Madrid, Kuwait, Hong Kong and, of course, Dubai, via the airline's multi-vertical specialized product portfolio.

In the last 29 years, Emirates has established itself as a long-term partner of South African aviation, tourism and trade, since the inaugural flight to Johannesburg in June 1995. Since then, the airline has scaled operations, increased frequencies and gateways to Cape Town and Durban and served over 20 million passengers to and from the market. In October 2011, Emirates first deployed its flagship A380 to Johannesburg, bringing the airline's world-class products and services to South Africa, and now offers two daily flights from Johannesburg on the iconic double-decker aircraft.

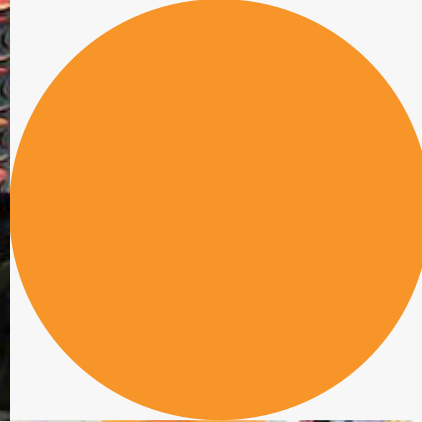
On-ground, Emirates delivers a premium and comfortable experience with two exclusive lounges, in Johannesburg and Cape Town, for customers travelling in First Class and Business Class, as well as Skywards members in select membership tiers. The airline also offers Chauffeur Drive Service for all three gateways, guaranteeing both a luxurious and comfortable transport experience for premium travellers.





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## Air China will operate Daily Flights to Colombo for Winter Schedule Starting October

TTA BULLETIN

Air China is set to enhance its frequency to Colombo with the launch of daily flights, beginning on the 27th of October, aligning with the winter schedule.



This strategic move underscores Air China's commitment to bolstering connectivity between China and South Asia, offering greater convenience for travelers and fostering business and tourism links between the two nations.

The new daily service will cater to the increasing demand for travel to Sri Lanka, which is gaining popularity as a year-round destination for both leisure and business travelers. The frequency of flights will provide passengers with more flexibility, contributing to smoother travel experiences and quicker connections through Air China's expansive global

network.

Sri Lanka's tourism sector is optimistic that this increase in direct air capacity will further boost visitor arrivals, especially during the peak winter months, when global travelers seek tropical getaways. The move also reflects the strengthening economic ties between Sri Lanka and China.

For more information or to book your flight, visit [airchinasales@jetwing.lk](mailto:airchinasales@jetwing.lk) or contact your travel agent.

## Qatar Airways Expands Services to Canada with Launch of Flights to Toronto

The World's Best Airline will operate three-weekly non-stop flights to Toronto Pearson International Airport - its 14th destination in the Americas and second gateway to Canada, from December 2024.

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways will launch a new service to Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ) starting on 11 December 2024, with three weekly non-stop flights from the World's Best Airport - Hamad International Airport (DOH).



As the airline's fourteenth gateway to the Americas, the new Toronto route marks the airline's second destination in Canada, joining Montréal which has served more than 1.6 million passengers across seven daily flights to and from Montréal-Trudeau International Airport (YUL) since its launch.

Operated by Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, equipped with 42 award-winning Qsuite Business Class seats and 312 Economy Class seats, the new Toronto service will provide travellers from Canada and beyond with seamless access to destinations across Qatar Airways' extensive global network, including Colombo (CMB), Bangkok (BKK), Delhi (DEL), Kathmandu (KTM) and Mumbai (BOM).

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, said: "The Toronto route is a strong and enduring commitment towards providing Qatar Airways' Canadian customers with the enhanced connectivity they deserve, as well as access to our world-leading service and Qsuite in-flight product.

"The addition of a fourteenth gateway to our Americas network is also a testament to our aim in maintaining a key presence across the local market, and cements our reputation as a reliable global connector."

The World's Best Airline, as voted by Skytrax in 2024, has provided Canada with extensive support and assistance over the years, including contributing critical diplomatic efforts across several challenging issues. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Qatar Airways also assisted the country by establishing an air bridge to facilitate the repatriation of thousands of Canadians.

Qatar Airways currently flies to more than 170 destinations worldwide, connecting through its Doha hub, Hamad International Airport (DOH), and continues to expand on its global network to provide all passengers with the most luxury travel experience in the world.



## Emirates' retrofitted Boeing 777s with Premium Economy rolling out to six US cities

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates will be introducing its refurbished Boeing 777s on six routes in the US, providing customers with an elevated experience across all cabins, including the debut of its latest Business Class seats and highly-popular Premium Economy.



more privacy, fully reclined flat bed in addition to a personal mini-bar amongst other amenities.

On the introduction of Premium Economy to additional US routes,

Adnan Kazim, Deputy President, and Chief Commercial Officer at Emirates said: "With the success and popularity of Premium Economy on routes like New York JFK, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Houston served by our refurbished A380, we look forward to bringing a new level of comfort and privacy to more cities with refreshed cabins on our Boeing 777s. The introduction of our refreshed product and ensuring consistent experiences in the sky on more routes is part of our long-standing commitment to the US and adding more premium options in a span of just a few months ensures we offer a competitive, value for money proposition for our customers."

The roll out of Emirates' refreshed aircraft featuring a four-class configuration will bring the number of routes offering the distinctive Premium Economy product to 27 cities globally including Dubai by the end of 2024, utilising 48 Boeing 777, A380 and A350 aircraft. Besides the US and Latin American points where the retrofitted aircraft will be deployed, customers are already enjoying choice and comfort with refurbished Boeing 777s flying to Geneva, Tokyo Haneda and Brussels, and Zurich along with Riyadh are scheduled from next month.

The continued roll out of Premium Economy across Emirates' network allows its US customers to enjoy the luxury, comforts and affordability of Premium Economy to final destinations beyond Dubai including Mumbai, Bangalore and Singapore, to name a few.

Furthermore, Emirates' customers travelling to United's hubs in Chicago, Houston and San Francisco, can fly in Premium Economy before connecting to its services to hundreds of US domestic points and cities in Canada and Latin America.

Seats on flights can be booked on [emirates.com](http://emirates.com), the Emirates App, or via both online and offline travel agents.

The four-class Boeing 777 features six or eight First Class suites, 38 or 40 Business class seats in a 1-2-1 arrangement, 24 seats in Premium Economy, and 256 Economy class seats.

In addition to the introduction of Premium Economy on the retrofitted aircraft, customers across all cabins can enjoy the refreshed interiors which sport a blend of beautiful designs and new colour palettes, in the carpeting, wall panels, and wood finishings, to name a few of the aesthetic enhancements.

The retrofitted Boeing 777 aircraft are scheduled to operate on direct flights to Chicago, Boston, Dallas Fort Worth, and Seattle. In addition, flights to Miami linked to Bogotá and to Newark via Athens will also be served with the refreshed aircraft featuring Emirates' four cabin classes and signature product touches. The refurbished Boeing 777s will debut for the first time in the US starting from next month and until early 2025 with the following schedule:

- Chicago - Emirates will introduce its retrofitted Boeing 777 three times weekly on EK 235 and EK 236 starting from 1 November 2024 and will increase to daily from 22 November 2024.

- Boston - From 10 December 2024 Emirates' newly-retrofitted Boeing 777 will serve the route three times weekly as EK 237 and EK 238, increasing to daily from 18 December.

- Dallas Fort Worth - Emirates' enhanced Boeing 777 aircraft will be deployed three times weekly on EK 221 and EK 222 from 9 January 2025, with daily flights starting from 15 January 2025.

- Seattle - The newly-configured aircraft featuring four cabin classes, including Premium Economy, will be rolled out on EK 229 and EK 230 from 24 January 2025.

- Newark/Athens - From 10 February 2025, Emirates' retrofitted Boeing 777 with refreshed interiors and new cabins will operate daily on EK 209 and EK 210

- Miami/Bogotá - Emirates' latest B777 experience will be introduced on EK 213 and EK 214, the service to and from Dubai and linking Miami with the Colombian capital, on four weekly flights from 19 February 2025, expanding to daily from 1 March 2025.

With the deployment of its newly retrofitted Boeing 777 aircraft, flights to and from ten of the 12 gateways in Emirates' US network will feature Premium Economy by February 2025. The understated luxury products will also be available to two cities in Latin America, with Bogotá joining São Paulo. Emirates' signature Premium Economy seats will now be available on a mix of Boeing 777 and A380 aircraft, operating to 12 gateways in Emirates' 19-point network in the Americas. The refreshed aircraft also feature the new Emirates 777 Business Class with seats in a 1-2-1 arrangement,



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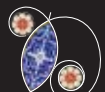
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