



# City of Dreams Sri Lanka opens its doors, Marking a New Era in South Asian Luxury Tourism

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH) and Melco Resorts & Entertainment (MRE) recently ushered in a new era for Sri Lanka tourism with the grand opening of City of Dreams Sri Lanka on 2nd August 2025. This launch marks the completion of the final components of the project, including a world-class casino, the luxurious Nüwa hotel and a premium shopping mall.



The milestone partnership, marks the debut of South Asia's first fully- integrated resort and Sri Lanka's largest private sector investment in luxury lifestyle to date – an over USD 1.2 billion development that redefines Colombo's place on the global tourism map.

Strategically located in the heart of Colombo, the integrated resort brings together world-class hospitality, upscale retail, immersive entertainment, and cutting-edge MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) infrastructure in one dynamic destination.

Some of the key highlights of the property includes 800 rooms and suites, comprising of a 687-room luxury hotel branded "Cinnamon Life" which was launched in October 2024, and a 113-room ultra-luxury hotel under Melco's flagship "Nüwa" brand. An expansive MICE facilities designed to host global business events and conventions. A state-of-the-art casino and entertainment zone, operated by Melco, to international luxury gaming standards.

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# Sri Lanka Tops the List of the World's Most Beautiful Islands in 2025

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka has claimed the number one spot on Big 7 Travel's prestigious list of The 50 Best Islands in the World – 2025. Beating out some of the world's most iconic island destinations, Sri Lanka's recognition is a powerful endorsement of its growing appeal among global travelers.



The annual list by Big 7 Travel, a leading global travel platform known for its trendspotting and travel inspiration, celebrates the most stunning island destinations across the world — and this year, Sri Lanka rose to the top for its remarkable mix of cultural depth, biodiversity, and natural beauty.

Praised for everything from its golden beaches and misty mountains to ancient temples and vibrant local life, Sri Lanka's winning formula lies in its diversity.

Big 7 Travel noted Sri Lanka's "rich blend of cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and pristine beaches," while also highlighting its "unique wildlife, lush tea plantations, and immersive local experiences."

The accolade places Sri Lanka ahead of globally celebrated destinations such as Mo'orea in French Polynesia, the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador, and the Seychelles — positioning the island as a must-visit destination for 2025.

- Top 10 Most Beautiful Islands in the World – 2025
1. Sri Lanka
  2. Mo'orea, French Polynesia
  3. Socotra, Yemen

Cont on Pg 2

# Hotel Show Colombo 2025 Concludes with Resounding Success, Elevating Sri Lanka's Hospitality Industry

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

This year the Hotel Show Colombo 2025, is hailed as one of the most successful in the event's illustrious history. Organised by the Sri Lanka Hospitality Graduates Association in collaboration with CDC Events, the three-day exhibition once again reaffirmed its status as the country's flagship hospitality trade event, setting new benchmarks for innovation, networking, and industry advancement.



Drawing an impressive turnout of local and international attendees from Sri Lanka, the Maldives, India, and across the South Asian region, the event proved to be a vibrant hub for hospitality professionals, suppliers, and thought leaders. Exhibitors showcased a world-class array of products and services spanning smart technology, interior design solutions, energy-efficient systems, guest experience enhancements, sustainable hospitality supplies, cutting-edge food & beverage concepts, and advanced safety systems.

The dynamic programme featured thrilling competitions and expert-led knowledge-sharing sessions, including the National Barista Championship, Tea Masters Cup Sri Lanka, National Room Stylist Challenge, Bar Champs bartenders competition, and an engaging series of Masterclasses. These activities not only celebrated skill, creativity, and craftsmanship but also provided attendees with invaluable insights into emerging global trends and standards.

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Sri Lanka’s decision to grant visa-free entry to over 40 countries is a welcome move that signals intent to boost inbound tourism. In a region competing fiercely for tourist dollars, easing entry barriers is a crucial step—but one that must be accompanied by broader, more strategic planning if Sri Lanka is to truly shine on the global tourism map.

There’s much to celebrate. The recent opening of Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka, a visionary joint venture between John Keells Holdings and Melco Resorts, marks a new era in the country’s tourism and leisure landscape. As the first integrated resort in South Asia, it positions Colombo as a modern metropolis ready to offer world-class experiences. Congratulations are certainly in order for this bold milestone.

Meanwhile, the Pekoe Trail, Sri Lanka’s 300km walking trail through the central highlands, has taken a significant leap forward with the signing of its first public-private partnership with the Ceylon Tea Museum—a promising model for sustainable tourism development rooted in community and heritage.

Sri Lanka has also been named one of the most beautiful islands in the world—a testament to its natural charm and potential as a year-round destination. Yet, despite these individual wins, the absence of a cohesive destination marketing campaign, which has been long in the making, is holding the country back from achieving its full potential.

Now is the time to move beyond ad hoc promotion and toward long-term strategic planning, including tourism zoning to ensure balanced growth across regions. The world is watching, and Sri Lanka has all the ingredients—it simply needs the roadmap to bring it all together.



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## NEWS

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### City of Dreams Sri Lanka....

A curated collection of signature dining experiences involving internationally acclaimed chefs and a host of immersive entertainment spaces for international performances and cultural showcase.

As City of Dreams expands its iconic brand into a vibrant new market, it capitalises on Sri Lanka’s strategic location and the region’s growing tourism demand. By introducing

global expertise in luxury hospitality and gaming, the resort is poised to elevate the standard and appeal of Sri Lanka’s tourism offerings. City of Dreams Sri Lanka is more than a resort - it is the epicenter of a new lifestyle movement, where modernity, elegance, and local culture converge. The landmark project sets new benchmarks for luxury, sustainability, and community engagement, redefining the region’s tourism narrative.

Cont on Pg 2

### Sri Lanka Tops the List....

4. Madeira, Portugal
5. The Galápagos, Ecuador
6. Great Exuma, Bahamas
7. Seychelles
8. Achill Island, Ireland
9. Koh Lipe, Thailand

10. Milos, Greece

As the tourism industry in Sri Lanka continues its steady recovery and transformation, this global recognition couldn’t have come at a better time.

Cont on Pg 2

### Hotel Show Colombo 2025....

Reflecting on the success of the event, Chairman of the Organising Committee, Mr. Trevin Gomez, stated, “This year’s Hotel Show Colombo has been a phenomenal success. The energy, engagement, and exchange of ideas have been inspiring. As the hospitality industry embraces renewed growth and investment, the Show has provided the perfect platform for stakeholders to connect, innovate,

and elevate service excellence.”

With strong backing from both the public and private sectors, Hotel Show Colombo 2025 has once again proven itself as more than just an exhibition – it is a catalyst for collaboration, transformation, and the continued elevation of Sri Lanka’s hospitality standards.

## Travel Trade Ball 2025 Returns with a Glamorous 'Casino Night' at Hilton Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Get ready to roll the dice in style! The highly anticipated Travel Trade Ball 2025 returns on 13th September promising its grandest edition yet “Casino Night” set against the backdrop of the luxurious Hilton Colombo.

With a dazzling Las Vegas flair, this year’s ball invites members of Sri Lanka’s travel and tourism industry to an unforgettable evening of indulgence, elegance, and high-stakes fun. Guests can look forward to an immersive night of live entertainment, premium food & beverage offerings and incredible prizes that could literally take you places.

The musical lineup features Sri Lanka’s crowd-favorites Misty and Doctor, guaranteeing a night of energetic performances and non-stop dancing.

“We aimed to craft something truly exceptional for 2025 a night where the entire industry can reconnect, relax, and revel in luxury. 'Casino Night' perfectly captures that spirit of excitement and celebration,” said Vivek Kerkoven, Chairman of the Dance Committee.

“The Travel Trade Ball has always been more than just a party — it’s a celebration of the camaraderie of the people who drive Sri Lanka’s tourism

sector forward,” added Dilshan Gnanapragasam, President of the Travel Trade Sports Club (TTSC).

Main sponsors for this event are; Platinum sponsor- Bellagio Casino  
Sustainability partner- Intrepid DMC Colombo  
Hospitality partner - Hilton Colombo

Whether you’re there to network or to dance the night away, Travel Trade Ball 2025 – Casino Night is set to be the most memorable night of the travel calendar.

Don’t miss the travel industry’s most anticipated celebration of the year







# Jetwing

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Jetwing  
SAMAN VILLAS  
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WAHAWA WALAUWA  
A Luxury Reserve

Jetwing  
VIL UYANA  
A Luxury Reserve

Jetwing  
LIGHTHOUSE  
A Luxury Reserve

Jetwing  
WARWICK GARDENS  
A Luxury Reserve

Jetwing  
SURF & SAFARI  
A Luxury Reserve

Jetwing  
KANDY GALLERY  
A Luxury Reserve



# Pekoe Trail Partners with Ceylon Tea Museum, advancing PPP Model and National Tourism Vision

TTA BULLETIN



The Pekoe Trail Organization (TPTO) has signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with the Ceylon Tea Museum, located at the starting point of Sri Lanka’s iconic 300+ km long-distance hiking route. Under this partnership, hikers can purchase their Trail Passes at the museum and enjoy complimentary museum access, creating a unique link between tea heritage and adventure tourism.

The museum will act as an official hub for hikers to gather essential information, while TPTO integrates its offerings into digital platforms, ensuring a seamless visitor experience. This partnership reinforces TPTO’s commitment to its Public-Private Partnership model and national tourism goals.

TPTO is a non-profit destination management organization created to ensure the long-term commercial sustainability of The Pekoe Trail, which weaves through Sri Lanka’s breathtaking central highlands, historic tea estates, and rural communities. The trail has earned global recognition, including from National Geographic - Top Travel Experiences in the World 2024 & Best of the World 2024, TIME Magazine’s World’s Greatest Places 2025, and the British Guild of Travel Writers.

Trail stewardship is vested in the Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance and Regional Plantation Companies. TPTO’s board is led by Malik Fernando (Chair, Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance), alongside Dr. Roshan Rajadurai (Hayleys Plantations), Geeth Kumara (Aitken Spence Plantations), and Yadarshi Sivarajah (Tea Leaf Trust).

The passionate operational team comprises Pramudith Thenabadu (Strategy & Technology), Renusha Gomis (Partnership Development and Institutional Relations), Buddhika Ranasinghe (Trail Operations & Product Development), Kushlani Karunaratne (Signature Experience, Communications & Engagements), Visvanathan Thalaisingam (Finance & Administration) and Yaseen Nizar (Digital Platforms & Fulfilment).

TPTO’s mission extends beyond trail maintenance. Its core pillars include enhancing infrastructure and safety, empowering rural communities through MSME development and certified guide training, conserving biodiversity and heritage, promoting low-impact travel to high-value markets, and ensuring long-term financial viability. Additional revenue sources include corporate sponsorships, branded merchandise, memberships, and project partnerships.

A key innovation is the Trail Pass, a digital permit granting access to the trail and app-based navigation tools. Proceeds fund trail upkeep, safety, and community initiatives. “The Trail Pass ensures every visitor contributes directly to preserving the experience and supporting the communities that make it possible,” said TPTO Chairman Malik Fernando.

By integrating conservation, culture, and community, The Pekoe Trail is setting a new benchmark for sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka, uplifting remote areas while strengthening the nation’s global tourism brand.

thepekoetrail.org

# United Ventures Celebrates 30 Years of Innovation, Resilience, and Leadership in Travel & Tourism

TTA BULLETIN

This year marks a proud milestone for United Ventures, as the company celebrates three decades of shaping Sri Lanka’s travel and tourism landscape. Founded in 1995 by visionary entrepreneur Afghar Mohideen, the company’s journey has been defined by a steadfast commitment to organic growth, evolving in step with the needs of the industry while remaining true to its core values of passion, commitment, and integrity.

From its humble beginnings, United Ventures has grown into a trusted name in travel, renowned for its ability to adapt to challenges and deliver innovative solutions. As its leader reflects, “Our sustained success stems from an enduring vision – to grow with the industry, anticipate change, and embrace it. It has been 30 years of hard work, adaptability, and staying focused on what matters most: our clients and our people.”

As a woman-led company, United Ventures stands out for its advocacy of gender diversity in a sector where women are underrepresented at leadership levels. The company has built an inclusive work culture that actively supports women through opportunities for leadership, professional development, and mentorship. This ethos extends beyond the organisation, with a focus on inspiring more women to pursue leadership roles in travel and tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed one of the greatest challenges in the history of the travel industry, yet United Ventures navigated the crisis with creativity



and foresight. Drawing on strategies from outside the industry and fostering a collaborative, team-driven approach, the company not only stayed afloat but emerged stronger. The key lesson? Resilience thrives on adaptability and openness to unconventional solutions.

Today, as global travel rebounds and technology transforms the industry, United Ventures is positioning itself at the forefront of sustainable tourism, digital integration, and experiential travel. By embracing innovation and keeping a pulse on emerging trends, the company aims to deliver seamless, tech-driven travel solutions that meet the expectations of modern travellers.

Reflecting on her journey, the company’s leader shares an empowering message: “Trust your natural strengths – your intuition, resilience, and leadership potential. Lead with fairness and integrity. Success is about uplifting others and creating opportunities for your team to achieve greatness together.”

As United Ventures steps into its next chapter, it remains committed to the values that have carried it through 30 years of success – innovation, inclusivity, and a passion for creating meaningful travel experiences.

# India International Travel Mart Completes Successful Editions in Chennai and Bangalore

TTA BULLETIN

Now in its successful 26th year in these cities, IITM has emerged as South India’s Biggest Travel Events, drawing participation from leading national and international tourism boards, travel operators, hospitality brands, technology providers, and other key stakeholders from the tourism ecosystem. With a focus on business networking, knowledge exchange, and destination promotion, both editions of IITM hosted buyers, travel trade professionals over three days of immersive interactions, workshops, and showcases.

The India International Travel Mart (IITM) successfully concluded its Chennai and Bangalore editions, held in July 2025, reaffirming its position as India’s premier travel and tourism networking platform. The event brought together an eclectic mix of national and international stakeholders from across the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors.

The Chennai edition, held from 16–18 July 2025, and the Bangalore edition, from 24–26 July 2025, drew an overwhelming response from travel trade professionals, tourism boards, DMCs, hotel chains, airlines, travel startups, and digital platforms. With participation from over 25 Indian states, 20 international destinations, and more than 800 exhibitors, the exhibitions served as a dynamic platform for meaningful B2B engagements and destination promotion.

IITM Chennai was inaugurated by Thiru T. Christuraj, Director of Tourism, Govt. of Tamil Nadu. The guests of honour included Sri. Mr. Venka-

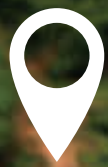
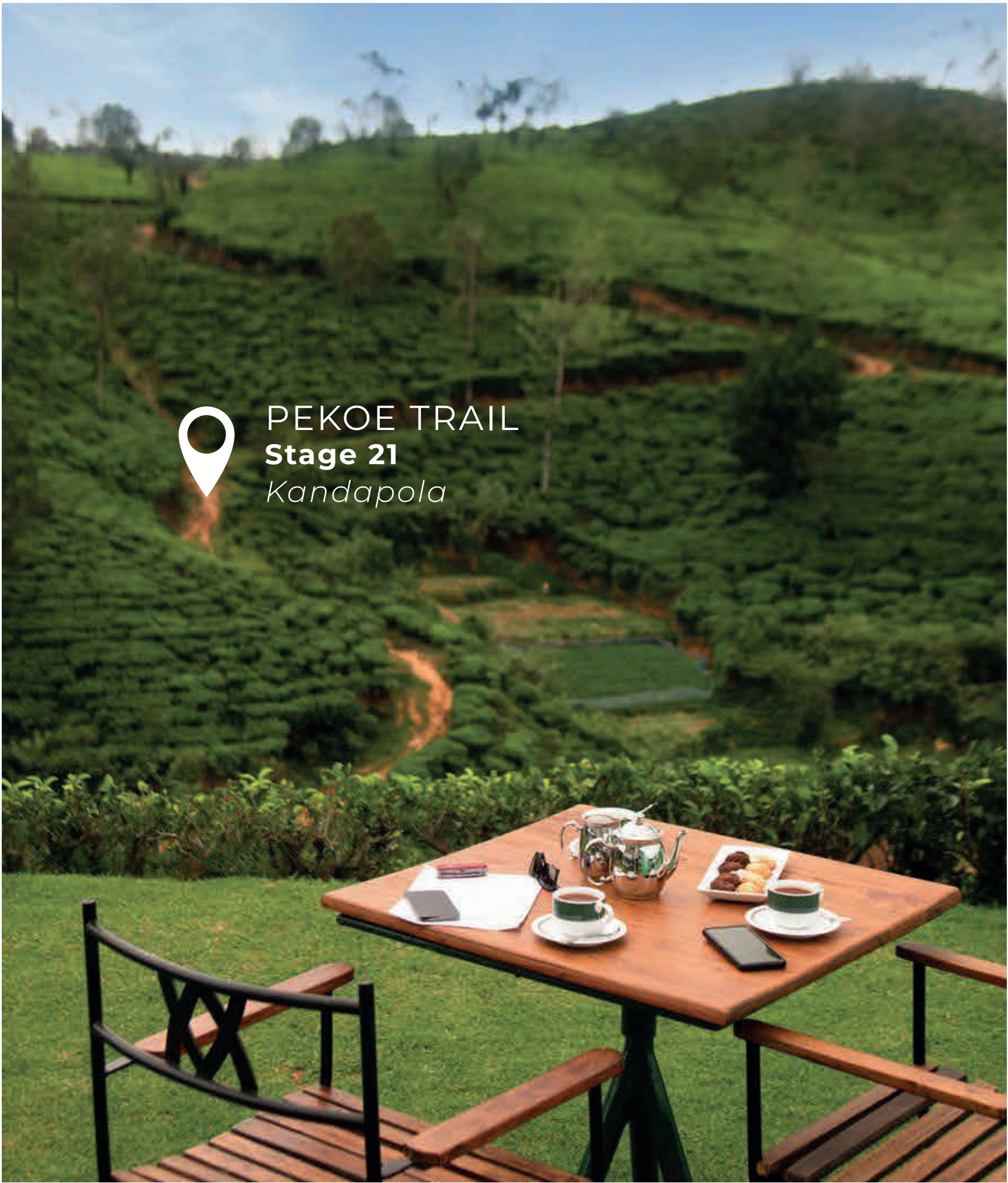


tesan D, Regional Director, India Tourism, Smt. T Devaki, Chairperson, Travel Agents Assc. of India; Sri. Kamaleshwaran, President, SKAL International, Chennai, Sri Pankaj Ravish, General Manager, IRCTC; Sri Pawan Kumar Gupta, Vice President, SIMA, Sri Ashok Kumar P, Chairman, ADTOI;

IITM Bangalore was inaugurated by Shri. Pasang Dorjee Sona, Honourable Minister for Tourism, Education, Rural Works, Parliamentary Affairs and Libraries, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Guests of Honor at the inauguration included Sri. Neelu Sharma, Honorable Chairman, Chhattisgarh Tourism, Govt. of Chhattisgarh Sri. Ranphoa Ngowa, IFS, Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Sri. Vivek Acharya, IFS, Managing Director, Chhattisgarh Tourism, Govt. of Chhattisgarh, Mr. Hishamuddin Mustafa, Director, Tourism Malaysia Chennai (South India & Sri Lanka), Sri Biswajit Routray, OTS, Additional Director, Odisha Tourism; Sri Dinesh Kumar, Joint Director, UP Tourism, Sri. Lokesh Bettaiah, Vice President, Travel Agents Association of India; Sri. Niranjan Bhargava, Chairman, Travel Agents Association of India, Mr. M Vinod, President, Andaman Association of Tour Operators, Mr. Kaulesh Kumar, General Secretary, Association of Buddhist Tour Operators, Mr. Amish Desai, MC Member, TAAI.





PEKOE TRAIL  
**Stage 21**  
*Kandapola*

**Step Into a Storybook: The Pekoe Trail's Final Stages Unfold at Heritance Tea Factory**

For those seeking to turn their Pekoe Trail journey into a timeless memory,  
Heritance Tea Factory stands ready to welcome adventurers, tea lovers, and storytellers alike





# SLCB launches Sri Lanka MICE Expo 2025

TTA BULLETIN

Aligned with the mandate much-anticipated SL-MICE



set to take place in Colombo from 22–26 September 2025. This premier event will elevate Sri Lanka’s profile on the global MICE map by providing an exceptional platform for local and international MICE sectors to showcase their products, services, and innovations. SL-MICE Expo 2025 will be a dynamic marketplace for business growth, networking, and collaboration among MICE professionals worldwide.

Sri Lanka is gifted with an amazing diversity of attractions from beaches, ancient cities, sanctuaries for wildlife, to hill country tea plantations, literally within a few hours of each other. These are featured in pre and post tours of the MICE events. Although well on the road to modernization, the country and its people still cherish most of their traditional values and take pride in their rich culture, an aspect, which continue to attract visitors from abroad.

Since 2021, the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) has proudly hosted four successful editions of the MICE Expo, establishing it as a cornerstone event in Sri Lanka’s Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) calendar. From virtual beginnings to vibrant physical gatherings, the expo has attracted a diverse range of international and local stakeholders, highlighting Sri Lanka’s unique potential as a leading MICE destination.

SLMICE Expo 2025 – A New Chapter for Sri Lanka’s MICE Tourism

the government has identified Sri Lanka’s MICE sector as a key economic driver within the tourism industry. He expressed appreciation that the SLMICE Expo 2025 will focus on showcasing MICE opportunities in the central region of Sri Lanka to visiting foreign MICE buyers and media representatives.

Mr. Dheera Hettiarachchi, Chairman of SLCB, remarked that the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau invited MICE buyers and media representatives from key international markets—including India, China, Pakistan, Germany, Russia, France, the UK, Turkey, Spain, UAE, Bangladesh, Qatar, Malaysia, Singapore, etc.,—to join this prestigious event. The Bureau has received over 400 hosted buyer and media applications representing more than 25 countries. From these, 100 hosted buyers and 15 media representatives will be selected to participate.

The programme will include a full day B2B meetings programme between the hosted buyers and local MICE industry vendors, providing a platform to exchange best business practices and business leads to enhance the collaboration in the MICE sector. A post familiarization tour for the all-hosted buyers will be organized covering the central part of Sri Lanka (Kandy and Nuwara Eliya) to experience Sri Lanka.

SLMICE Expo 2025 is expected to deliver unparalleled experiences, support local economies, and leave a lasting impact on all stakeholders in Sri Lanka’s MICE sector.

# Ikebana Exhibition to celebrate the 80th Birthday of Mrs. Nobuko Munidasa

TTA BULLETIN

In celebration of Mrs. Nobuko Munidasa’s 80th birthday, a special Ikebana Exhibition will be held at The Mall at Port City foyer on the 13th of August 2025. Open to the public from 10AM to 8PM, with no tickets required, the exhibition offers a rare glimpse into the lifelong journey of a Master in one of Japan’s most revered art forms.



through exhibitions and personal instruction. Her influence was not only artistic but cultural as she played a vital role in cultivating a bridge between Japan and Sri Lanka. The grace and precision of Ikebana have since become embedded in her family’s broader cultural expression.

This influence would ultimately extend to the culinary world through her son, Chef Dharshan Munidasa, who credits his Japanese heritage as foundational to the creation of Nihonbashi, one of Sri Lanka’s most celebrated Japanese restaurants. Nihonbashi, named after “Japan Bridge,” embodies the very ethos of cultural connection that Mrs. Munidasa has long championed.

The upcoming exhibition not only honours her 80th birthday but also pays tribute to a legacy that quietly, but powerfully, shaped one of Sri Lanka’s most iconic cross-cultural institutions.

Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement, is a philosophical practice rooted in balance, line, and space. Far beyond simple floral decoration, it is an art that reflects mindfulness and harmony with nature. Mrs. Munidasa began studying Ikebana at the age of 12, and by 19, she was awarded the prestigious title of Master in the Ohara School of Ikebana, one of Japan’s most innovative and globally recognized schools.

Having moved to Sri Lanka in the early 1980s, Mrs. Munidasa began introducing the island to the elegance of Ikebana

# BIT 2026: Value Grows Along the Entire Travel Supply Chain – Thanks to the Travel Makers

TTA BULLETIN

In a constantly changing world, tourism is no longer just about movement: it is about connection, relationship, and regeneration. It creates bonds between people, cultures, and territories. It goes beyond boundaries – geographical, cultural, mental – to give rise to new travel ecosystems, where the travel experience becomes a catalyst for shared value.



Today, designing tourism means listening to local areas, involving communities, and promoting authenticity. It means imagining experiences that go beyond simply “visiting” and instead bring about transformation – for the traveller, the host, and the storyteller alike.

In response to this evolution, BIT 2026 is being reimagined around a powerful new concept: the Travel Makers. These are the individuals who, through a wide range of roles and approaches, turn the dream of travel into reality. They create, enable, promote, and guide experiences, working across all levels of the tourism value chain – from planning and delivery to communication and storytelling: from specialist intermediaries to bespoke travel designers; from consultants to local ambassadors; from community managers to professional storytellers.

BIT as a Cultural, Innovative, and Storytelling Hub for the Entire Industry  
BIT 2026 is set to become a dynamic platform for exchange, inspiration, training, and business – a shared, open, and participatory space where travel is not just a product, but also a narrative, a relationship, an experience, and a skillset.

This approach strengthens business opportunities too, by attracting a highly profiled, motivated, and engaged visitor base. A prime example of this is the Straight to the Point programme, designed for industry professionals: a series of themed speedy meetings between supply and demand, creating commercial connections through 9 targeted matchmaking sessions – sport and adventure, wellness, art and culture, film, food and wine, major events, business travel, technology, and hospitality.

While matchmaking remains one of the fair’s strongest assets, the true beating heart of BIT 2026 will be the Travel Makers Fest, dedicated to exploring new ways of experiencing travel under the banner: “Building bridges. Imagining new ecosystems”.

A vibrant, inclusive space for reflecting on the deeper meaning of travel – its transformations, the places and people that make it a generator of not only economic but also social value. At the centre of this experience is a rich and diverse cultural programme: six arenas – four thematic and two main plazas – will host over 200 events across three days, with six hours of daily talks, seminars, and discussions.

The narrative unfolds through several

thematic formats: Discovery, dedicated to journeys of self and worldly exploration; Backstage, revealing the hidden sides of the tourism experience; (Im)Possible, sharing inspirational stories from great travellers; This Must Be the Place, spotlighting destinations and their stories; BIT&Friends, a series of deep dives curated with experts into cross-cutting topics such as artificial intelligence, hospitality design, e-commerce, and data management.

Also part of the Travel Makers Fest will be Future Travel Minds, an event focused on young professionals, students, change-makers, and start-ups who are envisioning the tourism of tomorrow. Topics will include inclusive leadership, sustainability and impact, smart destinations, branding, emerging professions, mentorship, and innovation.

Professional development will be at the core of the Next Level workshop programme, offering four dedicated tracks: Travel Agents Academy, for travel agencies; Hospitality Academy, for hospitality professionals; Storytelling Farm, to enhance communication and narrative skills guided by professional communicators; Discovery Italy Academy, to promote Italy’s tourism offering to domestic and international buyers.

To further encourage dialogue, interaction, and inspiration among exhibitors and the wider community, BIT 2026 will take place on new dates: 10 to 12 February. The exhibition area will be organised into six thematic districts – Italy, World, Travel Expert, Hospitality, Transportation, and Innovation – to represent all facets of the sector. Every stand will be content, every event an opportunity, every encounter a potential spark.

The concept behind BIT 2026 stems from in-depth reflections by Fiera Milano and its stakeholders on what a tourism fair truly needs today to effectively respond to the sector’s ongoing evolution. The answer: to place people and their ideas at the centre, bringing together the industry’s key players to promote a travel supply chain where value is equitably distributed among all actors.

To further support this vision, BIT 2026 will also be guided by an advisory board of industry experts, who will accompany the event on its path towards a new positioning – one designed to create long-term value across the entire chain. A contribution that reinforces Fiera Milano’s



# Acorn Group Awards 2025

The Acorn Group Award 2024/2025 was a spectacular evening of recognition at The Forum, Cinnamon Life. The event was a vibrant showcase of Acorn’s values, accomplishments, and unstoppable spirit of the team showcased through out the previous year.

This year’s theme for the Awards celebration was “Limitless,” perfectly capturing the tone of the night – a reminder that with passion, collaboration, and purpose, there are no boundaries to what can be achieved. The

event brought together teams from regional branches across Sri Lanka and international offices in Maldives, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Thailand and the UAE, making it a truly global celebration of collective success.

A total of 43 awards were presented, honouring outstanding individuals and teams who have gone above and beyond in their roles. From leadership and innovation to collaboration and customer excellence, each award recognized the incredible contributions that continue to

drive the Acorn Group forward.

Two pinnacle awards were presented as the highest honors of the night. The “Spirit of Acorn” award was proudly awarded to Brian Williams from TSM and the “Ace of Acorn” award was presented to the Group Finance Team, applauding their consistent excellence, cross-functional collaboration, and vital role in powering organizational growth.





## Emirates announces new Country Manager for Sri Lanka & Maldives

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has announced the appointment of Jaber Mohamed as the airline's Country Manager for Sri Lanka and Maldives, effective 1 August 2025.



Jaber Mohamed

In his new post, Jaber will be responsible for supporting Emirates' commercial objectives, overseeing the airline's operations across the two island nations as well as maintaining crucial relations with various stakeholders.

Jaber is currently the Emirates Country Manager Bangladesh. His new appointment is among several strategic commercial team appointments designed to bolster the airline's presence in key markets across West Asia, the Indian Ocean and Africa. These appointments aim to further build the airline's commercial and operational footprint in these regions while creating meaningful development opportunities for emerging UAE national talent to grow their expertise.

Among other UAE National commercial leaders that will take on new roles for Emirates from 1 August are Talal Al Gergawi, currently Country Manager Zimbabwe, who will become Country Manager Bangladesh; Salem Almana, currently Regional Manager Pakistan, who will become Country Manager Ghana; and Omar Bushlaibi, currently Country

Manager Zambia, who will assume interim responsibility for Zimbabwe, alongside his ongoing duties in Zambia.

The latest rotations are part of Emirates' commercial outstation managers programme, designed to offer UAE Nationals unique opportunities to diversify their leadership skills and deepen their knowledge of local markets within the airline's network. The programme also helps Emirati managers further expand their networks by engaging with local industry and government stakeholders, fostering new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships.

Emirates began operations to Sri Lanka in April 1986 and has consistently supported the country's tourism and export industries with passenger and cargo services. The award-winning airline has carried more than 12 million passengers to and from Colombo since operations began.

Emirates currently operates four daily flights to Colombo, two of which offer the airline's popular Premium Economy cabin. Emirates recently deployed its A350 aircraft on one of its daily services to Colombo, and also serves the destination with its retrofitted Boeing 777 aircraft featuring refreshed interiors.

## Radisson Collection Resort, Galle welcomes Eduard Sarton as General Manager

TTA BULLETIN

Radisson Hotel Group is pleased to announce the appointment of Eduard Sarton as General Manager of Radisson Collection Resort, Galle, the Group's first Radisson Collection hotel in the Southeast Asia & Pacific (SEAP) region.



Eduard Sarton

Eduard brings with him over two decades of international experience in luxury hospitality, having held senior leadership roles across Asia-Pacific and Oceania. He most recently served as Managing Director for Rosewood Hotels & Resorts in New Zealand, overseeing iconic properties including Rosewood Kauri Cliffs, Cape Kidnappers, and Matakauri. Prior to that, he was General Manager at Langham Hospitality Group in Auckland.

His impressive portfolio also includes a nearly 12-year tenure with Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, where he held General Manager positions at New World Dalian Hotel, New World Beijing Hotel, and New World Saigon Hotel.

Prior to that, he held senior Food & Beverage roles with Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, gaining valuable experience in Manila and Kuala Lumpur.

Commenting on his appointment, Eduard Sarton said: "It's a privilege to join Radisson Collection Resort Galle. This property is beautifully positioned between Sri Lanka's natural beauty and cultural richness, and I look forward to working with our passionate team to create authentic and inspiring stays for every guest."

Located on the southern coast of Sri Lanka, Radisson Collection Resort Galle opened its doors to guests on 18th January. The resort blends contemporary design with warm hospitality, offering a refined beach-side escape in one of the island's most scenic destinations.

Eduard's appointment signals an exciting new chapter for the resort as it continues to set new standards for luxury hospitality in the region.

Eduard officially assumed his role on 1 July 2025, and will now lead the resort's strategic direction, focusing on delivering exceptional guest experiences, building a strong service culture, and enhancing the property's positioning within Sri Lanka's growing luxury travel landscape.

## Granbell Hotel Colombo appoints Shehan Safraz as General Manager

TTA BULLETIN

Granbell Hotel Colombo, a flagship property of Belluna Lanka — the Sri Lankan arm of Belluna Co. Ltd., Japan — is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Shehan Safraz as its General Manager. A leader whose journey within Belluna Lanka reflects what's possible when talent is nurtured and given space



Shehan Safraz

to grow. Shehan has been part of Granbell from the very beginning, playing an instrumental role through pre-opening and operations. Rising steadily from Rooms Division Manager to now General Manager, his career reflects Belluna's long-term belief in building from within.

that leadership isn't just about personal success. It's about showing up consistently — for your team, for your guests, for the long-term."

Speaking on the leadership approach across Belluna Lanka's properties, Managing Director Reyhan Morris shared, "We believe that people are at the heart of long-term success — both our guests and our teams. This appointment is a reflection of our deep commitment to nurturing talent from within and creating spaces where people can thrive. It's how we grow responsibly, and with purpose."

With over two decades of international experience across leading hospitality brands in the Middle East, Shehan brings both a global outlook and deep operational focus. Under his leadership, Granbell Hotel Colombo has continued to strengthen its presence, with recognition at the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards — where it was named Best City Hotel in its class in 2024, a testament to the team's commitment to excellence and guest care.

His steady rise has been marked by perseverance, discipline, and a strong sense of accountability — values that continue to shape how he leads today. "Taking on responsibility early taught me

This people-first ethos is something Shehan echoes in his own leadership style: "Whether it's a warm greeting at the door or a seamless experience behind the scenes, every detail matters. Fostering a culture that values both guest experience and team wellbeing has been central to shaping who we are as Granbell."

As Belluna Lanka continues to expand its footprint in Sri Lanka — this leadership progression signals more than just continuity. It marks a commitment to cultivating leadership from within, building resilient teams, and laying the foundation for long-term growth. This appointment serves as a reminder that within Belluna, leader-

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## Travelex appoints Philip Bowcock as its new CEO

TTA BULLETIN

Former chief executive of William Hill brings extensive leadership experience in transformation and consumer-focused businesses.

Travelex, a leading foreign exchange company, today announced Philip Bowcock has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately. Philip will take over from Richard Wazacz, who is stepping down as CEO after three years of leadership.

Philip most recently served as Executive Chair of NM Money Group, which operated a number of consumer-facing financial services businesses including Eurochange, one of the UK's leading high street and online foreign exchange retailers. He previously spent five years at William Hill plc as Chief Financial Officer and CEO, where he headed a transformation that re-shaped the business. In March 2021, as interim CEO, Philip led Countrywide plc through its successful sale to Connells.

Philip is currently Chair of Victoria Plumbing Group plc and has a proven track record in leading consumer-focused, multi-site businesses with a strong digital presence. He previously held senior finance positions at Cineworld Group Plc, Luminar Plc, Barratt Developments Plc and Tesco Plc.

Alexander Filshie, Chairman, Travelex said: "This announcement marks the next phase of our journey at Travelex, focused on adapting to our changing customer



Philip Bowcock

requirements and industry environment, further strengthening our foundations, and building for long-term success. I am confident Philip will drive our strategic priorities and build for long-term success across our retail and wholesale businesses. Philip brings a wealth of experience from consumer-focused and travel money organisations. He is well placed to lead the Travelex team in the developing and changing global travel money market."

Philip Bowcock, Chief Executive, Travelex said: "I am delighted to join Travelex at this pivotal time in its journey. The business has shown remarkable resilience, having navigated the challenges of the pandemic and made significant progress in recovering and stabilising its operations over recent years. I look forward to building on its strong foundations to further strengthen the core business, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure sustainable growth.

"Travelex is well positioned to adapt to the changing forex landscape and meet the evolving needs of our customers. I look forward to working closely with the Board, Executive Leadership Team, and our talented colleagues across the globe to build on this momentum, enhance our capabilities, and continue delivering exceptional value to our customers."

## Kanishka Udawatta Appointed Director of Sales – Leisure for Shangri-La Hotels Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Shangri-La Hotels Sri Lanka is pleased to announce the appointment of Kanishka Udawatta as Director of Sales – Leisure, overseeing both Shangri-La Colombo and Shangri-La Hambantota. In this key leadership role, Kanishka will be responsible for driving the leisure business segment across the group's Sri Lankan properties, working closely with global partners and key markets to strengthen Shangri-La's footprint in the region.

Kanishka brings with him over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, with more than 15 years specifically in sales across leisure, corporate, and MICE segments. Prior to joining Shangri-La, he served at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts for over 11 years, where he held a variety of senior positions—most recently leading leisure sales for the group's resort portfolio. His earlier years were shaped by a six-year tenure at the Taj Group, giving him a strong grounding in both city and resort hotel operations.

An alumnus of the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management, Kanishka is well known for his strategic approach to



Kanishka Udawatta

sales, stakeholder management, and market development. His deep understanding of the industry and his ability to foster strong client relationships have contributed to his long-standing success.

In addition to his corporate achievements, Kanishka is a highly active figure in the Sri Lankan hospitality community. He currently serves as the Head of PR, Communications, and Social Media for the Sri Lanka Hospitality Graduates Association (SLHGA) and also holds the position of General Secretary of the Travel Trade Sports Club (TTSC)—two of the country's most recognized industry bodies. Through these roles, he plays a vital part in strengthening community ties, promoting industry development, and nurturing the next generation of hospitality professionals.

Commenting on his new appointment, Kanishka said, "It's truly an honour to join a globally admired brand like Shangri-La. I'm excited to contribute to the growth of our leisure business and to showcase the beauty and potential of Sri Lanka through our two exceptional properties."

## Deshanee Wijayasinghe appointed Director PR & Communications Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts

TTA BULLETIN

Deshanee Wijayasinghe oversees all public relations and communication initiatives for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, supporting the brand's positioning across its Sri Lanka and Maldives portfolio. She is responsible for driving strategic media engagement, brand messaging, and internal and external stakeholder communications in alignment with the Group's vision of bringing the best of Sri Lanka to the world.

With over 10 years of experience in communications, Deshanee joined the hospitality sector in 2023, taking on the



Deshanee Wijayasinghe

role of leading PR and Communications for the Group's Maldives sector before assuming responsibility for the wider portfolio. Her focus remains on building strong media relationships, enhancing corporate visibility, and supporting market-level communications across key business priorities.

Prior to re-joining Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, she headed Marketing Communications for the Sri Lanka cluster of Minor Hotels, overseeing Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle, Anantara Kalutara, and Avani Kalutara Resorts.

## ATM outlines why luxury hospitality leaders view personalisation as key to revenue growth

TTA BULLETIN

Personalisation is emerging as a growing trend in travel and tourism, particularly within the luxury segment, as travellers increasingly seek experiences tailored to their individual preferences and lifestyles.



At Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025, senior executives from leading hotel groups, including Minor Hotels, Fairmont and Marriott, examined the rising influence of 'hyper-personalisation', which moves away from one-size-fits-all services to offering bespoke guest experiences. Leveraging tools such as AI-driven customisation and chatbots, as well as personalised welcome amenities and bespoke dining options, these brands are redefining the customer journey in the luxury travel segment, which is witnessing a continued surge worldwide.

According to the ATM Travel Trends Report 2025, developed by ATM in partnership with Tourism Economics, 85% of hoteliers now consider personalisation as a key driver of commercial value, with tailored experiences shown to generate additional revenue of up to 5%. Furthermore, insights by market intelligence firm Future Market Insight Inc, has revealed the global customisation and personalisation in travel market is expected to reach US\$620.71 million by 2032.

Speaking during the panel, experts defined hyper-personalisation as providing individualised experiences that anticipate both expressed and unspoken guest needs. While technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are instrumental in delivering customised offerings at scale, the panellists agreed that human connection remains essential for a truly personalised hospitality experience.

Nicolas Hauvespre, VP of luxury brands at

MEA Marriott, said: "When it comes to hyper-personalisation, for many brands, this goes far beyond traditional service. It's about creating something highly tailored and curated through leveraging technology and building on your culture, so you can develop that anticipatory service and meet both the explicit and unspoken needs of your guests."

The panel, which also included Loay Nour, Vice President Fairmont Brand and Marketing Communications, and Amir Golbarg, Senior Vice President Minor Hotels, also discussed the importance of establishing an emotional connection, anticipating guest needs, and building this over time.

"Luxury is not one size fits all, it's no longer about recognising someone by the name or knowing their preferences in their profile, because you need to understand that those consumers are not only hotel consumers, they are exposed into the ultra level of personalisation from other brands and other industries that they work with, so they have a certain minimum of expectations," said Nour.

In the Middle East and Africa, Marriott is embracing this shift while maintaining brand distinctiveness, expanding its luxury footprint with projects such as the Ritz-Carlton Reserve at Nujuma in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea, which is rooted in immersive, cultural experiences. Upcoming openings elsewhere in the region include a portfolio of curated Ritz-Carlton safari lodges in eastern Africa, which will pioneer new destinations and provide guests with highly authentic experiences.



# Transco Travels Celebrates Second Anniversary with Industry Partners at Royal Colombo Golf Club

Transco Travels marked its second anniversary with an elegant celebration at the historic Royal Colombo Golf Club, bringing together partners from across the hospitality industry.

The event was hosted by Managing Director ,Mr. Mohan Perera who, along with the Transco Travels team, raised a glass in appreciation of the continued support from the

tourism and hospitality community. The evening served as a heartfelt thank you to industry colleagues who have been part of the company’s journey since its inception.

“What began two years ago has grown into a trusted travel brand, and we owe much of that success to the incredible partnerships we’ve built along the way,” said Group CEO Dr. Charitha Perera “Tonight is about

celebrating that shared success and looking forward to the journey ahead.”

As Transco Travels continues to expand its presence in the market, the team remains committed to delivering personalised travel experiences and strengthening collaborations within the industry.





As 60% of UAE travellers rely on AI to plan trips, human connection remains vital

TTA BULLETIN

Travel technology is transforming the industry globally, changing the way travellers plan, book, and experience their journeys. According to a recent report by Tourism Economics on behalf of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), 60% of travellers in the UAE trust Artificial Intelligence (AI) to plan every aspect of their trips, compared to 48% of travellers in other countries, with this figure predicted to rise as technology becomes more embedded into consumer habits.

According to the report, AI is becoming a key tool for travellers planning trips to the Middle East. Nearly six in ten have used AI for travel planning, with 21% using it before their most recent trip. As AI adoption grows, it is expected to play an increasing role in delivering personalised recommendations and booking experiences for tech-savvy travellers. The research also confirmed that travel firms are harnessing AI to enhance customer service and drive economic impact.

In line with the digital transformation within travel and tourism, ATM 2025 provided a platform for experts across the technology, hospitality and events industries to discuss the implications for human connection as AI-powered tools, personalised service platforms, and data-led design become more prevalent.

Speaking during the event, Amy Read, VP Innovation at Sabre Hospitality, said: “It is important to recognise that human connection is at the core of hospitality. When we think about innovation within hospitality, we try to find ways that amplify those key moments, rather than replace them. We want to free up staff time so that they can engage in more meaningful interactions.”

Read acknowledged that it is vital for the industry to recognise that technology has changed guests' expectations of hospitality providers as they now seek instant gratification and swift responses. This has led to the development of innovative solutions such as SynXis Concierge AI, which uses generative AI to transform customer service for hoteliers, providing immediate, detailed, and accurate responses to specific queries, reducing the reliance on individual staff knowledge and ensuring consistent, high-quality service around the clock.

Other examples include Miral's AI



Danielle Curtis

concierge, Majd AI, which is utilised at attractions such as Yas Bay Waterfront and Ferrari World Yas Island in Abu Dhabi. The service offers tailored suggestions based on individual preferences,

helping visitors maximise their experience.

Fellow panellists agreed that human-centric innovation begins with understanding consumer behaviour, with organisations like Almosafer adopting a co-creation approach, developing tools based on customer pain points. Similarly, travel agent platform Expedia TAAP builds technology informed by insights from travel agents themselves, ensuring that its tools are aligned with customer needs and are usable.

Meanwhile, the rise of AI in the business events (MICE) sector is delivering significant gains in efficiency and insight. With the global meetings and events industry set to reach USD 945 billion in 2025 and projected to exceed USD 2.3 trillion by 2032, the need for scalable, intelligent tools has never been greater. Data-led personalisation is now critical to driving attendee engagement and loyalty, with AI helping to automate sourcing, translate content in real time, and generate tailored event experiences.

However, speakers were united in warning against over-reliance on technology at the expense of authenticity. As AI becomes central to personalising travel experiences and improving operational efficiency, it does not replace human roles but rather reshapes them, encouraging organisations to realign talent towards more meaningful, guest-focused interactions. Ultimately, as event planners and travel providers aim to create experiences that resonate, the consensus remains that human connection must stay central to every digital advancement.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, commented: “When it comes to travel and tourism innovations, the most effective technologies are those that amplify human interactions, improve efficiency and respond directly to customer needs. The industry has a shared commitment to responsible innovation by placing people at the centre of every technology solution.”



Reflecting the travel industry's total convergence with technology and innovation, ATM Travel Tech was larger than ever at the 2025 edition, with an increase of over 26% in the number of products showcased. ATM 2026, which takes place from 4-7 May, will build further on this innovation focus, showcasing the latest technologies that are shaping the future of travel.

Sri Lanka's Garden Legacy Comes to Life: Launch of New Book on Bevis Bawa's Brief Garden by Juliet Coombe

TTA BULLETIN

A new era of nature and garden tourism in Sri Lanka was officially launched yesterday with the unveiling of acclaimed British travel writer Juliet Coombe's latest book, Brief Garden by Bevis Bawa—a compelling tribute to one of the world's most iconic tropical gardens. The book was launched in Colombo amidst a gathering of subject enthusiasts, cultural historians, nature lovers, and members of the travel industry.



the world—an artistic sanctuary that remains a benchmark in tropical garden design.

The book also pays tribute to Sri Lanka's traditional ecological knowledge. From using marsh snails to purify water to crafting layered plant canopies that offer natural air conditioning, Coombe's exploration reveals how indigenous gardening practices offer sustainable solutions to modern environmental challenges.

More than just a chronicle of Bevis Bawa's artistic garden sanctuary, this pioneering publication positions Sri Lanka as a global destination for garden and nature-based travel. It offers an immersive journey through the island's lush landscapes, tracing the evolution of garden design from the ancient boulder gardens and hydraulic engineering marvels of the 5th-century Sigiriya Fortress to contemporary garden creations across the island.

A New Chapter for Nature and Garden Tourism in Sri Lanka

Coombe's work introduces a bold new genre of experiential travel in Sri Lanka—one that invites travellers to explore the island through its gardens. From luxurious villas on the coastal belt to the emerald highlands of tea country and the sprawling 300-kilometre Pekoe Trail—now considered the world's largest interconnecting garden walk—visitors can experience a harmonious blend of history, biodiversity, and botanical beauty.

The book builds on the momentum generated by the recently held Wildlife & Nature Tourism event in London from 15-17th July, which underscored the growing global demand for purpose-driven travel centered around nature and conservation. Sri Lanka's unmatched biodiversity—home to thousands of species including the world's largest natural gardeners, the wild elephants—is a key theme. Coombe highlights how these gentle giants play a vital ecological role, spreading seeds and shaping forests with their movements.

Celebrating a Century of Garden Design and Environmental Innovation

Brief Garden by Bevis Bawa spans over a hundred years of visionary landscaping, celebrating three generations of Sri Lankan garden designers. Bevis Bawa, inspired by his global travels, reinterpreted classical tropical aesthetics to create one of the most celebrated private gardens in

Garden Poetry, Colonial Heritage, and Creative Rewilding

One of the book's more poetic elements is its inclusion of garden-themed verse by John Vincent, whose writing encourages readers to reconnect with nature and rewild both their landscapes and their spirits. A standout chapter is dedicated to the hidden courtyard gardens of Galle Fort—where coral ballast from ancient ships has been upcycled into stunning colonial courtyards, shaped by centuries of multicultural influence.

The book closes with a deeply personal chapter titled From Toxic Tip to Mini Eden, documenting Coombe's own transformation of a lockdown-era rubbish dump in the UK into a flourishing garden, now featured in the prestigious National Gardens Scheme. Her story of turning trash into treasure—car tyres into planters, horseshoes into arches—reinforces the book's core message: we can all be the change the world needs.

Sri Lanka: The Real Garden of Eden

Through her vivid storytelling and ecological insights, Sri Lanka invites the world to rediscover the country as the true Garden of Eden. There are many thematic, exotic gardens around Sri Lanka built on different passions followed by a purpose. The travellers can redefine their travel experience by exploring these garden wonders of Sri Lanka, a true depiction of country's immense tourism assets. The author is grateful to the Brief Garden Owners and Guardians Mr. Dan De Silva and Mr. Dooland De Silva who have been instrumental in bringing Brief Garden story into life.

Sri Lanka Tourism will launch a new chapter of authentic experiences with this book- to lure travellers to value the island's best kept wonders, the natural and cultural heritage, and to explore it with care, curiosity, and with a purpose.



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## Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort Shines at Culinary Art Food Expo 2025

TTA BULLETIN



Sheraton Kosgoda Turtle Beach Resort proudly announced their outstanding performance at the recently concluded Culinary Art Food Expo 2025, held at the BMICH in Colombo from June 13 – 15.

The event, organized by the Chefs Guild of Lanka, is Sri Lanka’s largest culinary exhibition and competition, attracting the most talented hospitality professionals from across the country.

Sheraton Kosgoda's Kitchen and F&B teams secured a total of 25 medals, marking a significant achievement for the property and further reinforcing its commitment to culinary excellence.

The medal tally includes 5 Gold, 10 Silver and 9 Bronze medals.

Participants from the resort competed in a variety of categories ranging from hot cooking, dessert preparation, to restaurant service and creative presentations. The management extended heartfelt congratulations to all participants for their hard work, dedication, and team spirit.

This achievement places Sheraton Kosgoda among the top-performing resorts in the culinary arena, and the team looks forward to continuing to raise the bar in future competitions.

## 3 Gold Awards for Barista at the National Business Excellence Awards 2025

TTA BULLETIN

Barista Sri Lanka has secured three Gold Awards at the National Business Excellence Awards 2025, hosted by the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka; a resounding recognition of the company’s financial discipline, strategic clarity, and market leadership in a volatile economic landscape.

Barista was awarded:

- Gold – Medium Category
- Gold – Excellence in Business and Financial Results (Medium Category)
- Gold – Hospitality and Tourism Sector

This triple gold win highlights Barista’s exceptional performance driven by robust financial management, prudent investments, and operational resilience. Today, with 63 cafés islandwide, Barista stands as Sri Lanka’s largest and most preferred café chain, delivering consistent value to its stakeholders.

Dilupa Pathirana, Director and Chief Executive Officer of Barista Sri Lanka, stated: “These awards are a testimony to Barista’s financial discipline, strategic execution and outstanding performance in a volatile economic environment. We have built a business that is not only purpose-driven but also financially

resilient, and these awards recognize exactly that. While delivering the best coffee and Barista-branded customer service to our coffee-loving community, we have remained grounded in agility, discipline and focus. These Gold Awards are a tribute to our exceptional team, our loyal customers, the leadership that drives Barista forward every day and our dedicated franchisees. We are proud of how far we have come through financial crisis and economic adversity, not just surviving but thriving.”

At the heart of Barista’s success is a commitment to operational excellence, sound financial planning, and bold strategic execution. While 'Brewing Happiness' remains central to its culture, it is Barista’s strong financial foundation that has enabled it to grow sustainably, even during a national financial crisis.

Barista extends its heartfelt gratitude to its employees, franchisees, suppliers, and customers who have been vital to its journey. With bold ambitions for the future, Barista remains focused on innovation, responsible growth, and most importantly, continuing to brew happiness across Sri Lanka.



## Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Wins Prestigious PATA Gold Award 2025 for Best Ecosystem & Wildlife Conservation Initiative

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Sri Lanka's premier hospitality brand, has been honoured with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award 2025 in the category of Best Ecosystem & Wildlife Conservation initiative for its ground-breaking Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project.

The PATA Gold Awards, now in their 41st year, remain the most prestigious accolades in the Asia Pacific travel and tourism industry, celebrating organisations that lead with purpose, innovate with impact, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable tourism development.

"This recognition from PATA affirms that true hospitality is inseparable from environmental responsibility," said Hishan Singhawansa, CEO of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. "The Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project aligns with our broader ambition to sustain the environment we operate in, restoring ecosystems, empowering communities, and shaping a more conscious way of travel."

Initiated in 2022, the Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project represents a transformative approach to ecosystem rehabilitation. Spanning 59 acres in Suduwelipotha within Sri Lanka's biodiversity-rich wet zone, the project has evolved from degraded land into a thriving sanctuary for endemic and endangered species.

This project demonstrates the role of the private sector as a catalyst to form a multi-agency partnership to achieve a common conservation goal. Partners of the project includes the Forest Department of Sri Lanka as a government agency that provided the state land for this project, while local NGO 'Ruk Rekaganno' (the Tree Society) is responsible for all the field implementations. Total project sponsorship has been provided by - Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts in collaboration with John Keells Foundation. In addition to financial assistance, scientific assistance for the project is provided by the ecologists of Cinnamon Nature Trails.

The project's remarkable transformation is evidenced by its thriving ecosystem that now harbours 251 fauna species, including 54 endemic and 43 nationally threatened species. Since inception, 22,797 native trees have been planted with an exceptional 85-90% survival rate, while 36 new plant species have been recorded including the successful reintroduction of Pini Beraliya (Doona ovalifolia), an endemic tree previously listed as extinct in the wild.

Beyond environmental impact, the project empowers 15 local families through direct employment, and they also play the role of local guardians of the project. Volunteer



engagement is one of the strong elements of the project. Volunteerism is aimed at connecting as many as employees of the company as well as attracting outside interest groups/institu-

tions/schools, etc. Due to the success of the project, many institutions are visiting the project site for volunteer activities, such as site clearances and planting. So far, 1,208 volunteers have participated to plant trees and to learn on the forest restoration.

The Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project was selected from over 100 entries submitted by 45 organisations across the Asia Pacific region. The independent judging panel, comprising 25 industry leaders, recognised the project's innovative approach to conservation and its measurable impact on biodiversity restoration.

"The winning initiatives of the PATA Gold Awards are a breath of fresh air for the tourism industry," noted Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office. "It is energising to see the new approaches and commitment displayed by the awardees in sustainability and social responsibility."

This award adds to Cinnamon's growing collection of sustainability accolades, including the ACCA Sustainability Reporting Award for three consecutive years and the Best Project Sustainability Award at the Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Awards 2024. The recognition reinforces Cinnamon's position as a leader in responsible tourism, demonstrating that environmental conservation is integral to delivering world-class hospitality experiences.

The project directly supports Cinnamon's ambitious 2030 sustainability goals, which includes: developing biodiversity conservation plans at every property where Red list species have been identified, increasing forest cover by 10,000 trees and achieving 30% reduction in Scope 1 and 2 emissions.

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts will be formally recognised at the PATA Travel Mart 2025 on August 27 at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center in Bangkok, Thailand. The winning initiatives will be showcased in a special presentation and featured in the 2025 PATA Gold Awards publication.

The Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration Project goes beyond traditional conservation efforts. Monthly engagement with local communities, scientific assessments by independent ecologists, and partnerships with organisations ensure the project's long-term sustainability and scientific rigour. The project has become a model for how hospitality brands can





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Acclaimed Chef Mahmoud Salah Brings the Flavours of Arabia to Sri Lanka with Aitken Spence Hotels

TTA BULLETIN

Aitken Spence Hotels is pleased to announce a special culinary showcase this August featuring acclaimed Arabic chef Mahmoud Salah of Heritance Aarah, Maldives. In a limited-time engagement, Chef Mahmoud will bring the depth and richness of authentic Arabic cuisine to Earl’s Regency in Kandy and Sentido Heritance Negombo, curating two exclusive evenings of sensory discovery.

Renowned for his mastery of traditional Middle Eastern flavours, Chef Mahmoud’s visit promises an immersive experience shaped by recipes, aromatic spices, and refined presentation – introducing Sri Lankan guests to the heart of Arabic culinary heritage.

Event Lineup

- Earl’s Regency – Kandy
- Date: 9th August 2025
  - Experience: Guests will enjoy a special Arabic culinary experience at the Far Pavilion, where Chef Mahmoud will host a live station featuring authentic dishes from the Middle East. A dedicated corner of the dinner buffet will be transformed into an immersive Arabic-themed showcase for this one night.



Sentido Heritance Negombo

- Date: 15th August 2025
- Experience: In the Mad Dogs restaurant at The Banyan, guests can savour a specially curated Arabic à la carte dinner presented by Chef Mahmoud. The evening promises an elegant, flavourful journey through Arabic cuisine in an intimate setting, available exclusively for this one-night event.

Reflecting on his journey, Chef Mahmoud said: "I’m truly excited to bring the rich flavours, aromas, and heritage of Arabic cuisine to Sri Lanka. Food has the unique power to connect people, and I consider it a great honour to share dishes that are close to my heart with the Sri Lanka community. From traditional favourites to hidden gems of the Middle East, I look forward to creating an immersive and unforgettable gastronomical experience – one that not only excites the palate but also tells a story of culture, tradition, and passion."

With only one night at each property, seats are limited, and advance reservations are recommended.

Swastha Serene Spa Unveiled at Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo proudly announces the opening of Swastha Serene Spa, a purpose-designed wellness retreat that introduces a new standard of holistic care in the heart of Sri Lanka’s capital. Created to serve the wellness needs of diplomats, corporate leaders, city residents, and leisure travellers alike, the spa offers a curated menu of therapeutic treatments and traditional rituals in a serene and culturally inspired setting.

Swastha Serene Spa combines the essence of Balinese wellness heritage with global best practices, delivering treatments that are both restorative and individually tailored. Whether guests seek a mid-day pause between business engagements or a full day of rejuvenation, each experience is guided by expert therapists committed to personal well-being and sensory excellence.

The treatment menu is varied, offering options such as soothing massages, rejuvenating facials, herbal body therapies and aromatherapy rituals. Many of these experiences draw inspiration from Indonesian Balinese healing traditions while incorporating contemporary techniques to promote relaxation, detoxification and overall wellbeing.

The spa has already garnered acclaim from



distinguished guests. Her Excellency Gustina Dewi, Ambassador of Indonesia, remarked on its harmonious blend of Sri Lankan hospitality and world-class wellness, praising the calming atmosphere and attentiveness to detail. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Nazoomi Azhar, General Manager of Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo, stated, “Swastha Serene Spa reflects our continued commitment to offering refined, sensory-rich experiences that elevate guest expectations.”

The addition of Swastha Serene Spa further reinforces Cinnamon Lakeside Colombo’s position as a premier destination for wellness and hospitality in the region. Plans are underway to introduce bespoke corporate wellness programmes and diplomatic wellness partnerships, ensuring the spa becomes a valued resource for Colombo’s professional and international communities.

Swastha Serene Spa is open daily from 10:00 AM. Advance reservations are encouraged to ensure the highest standard

Heritance Hotels & Resorts and Aitken Spence Travels Partner with CCC Foundation to Champion Mental Health Through 1333 Bikeathon

TTA BULLETIN

Heritance Hotels and Resorts, the flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, and Aitken Spence Travels are proud to announce their partnership for the upcoming Bikeathon, organised by the CCC Foundation to raise national awareness for mental health and promote the lifesaving 1333 Mental Health Helpline.

The 1333 Bikeathon charts a powerful journey across Sri Lanka, from southern coastlines to the heartland, blending purpose with discovery. Along this route, participants will find exclusive accommodation at Heritance Hotels & Resorts, and Aitken Spence Hotels, including Heritance Ahungalla, Heritance Kandallama, Sentido Heritance Negombo and Amethyst Resort Passikudah.

This partnership signals a brand-wide commitment to social responsibility, supporting a cause that affects communities across Sri Lanka. At a time when mental wellness is an increasingly vital conversation, particularly among youth, Heritance Hotels & Resorts and Aitken Spence Travels are proud to stand with the CCC Foundation in amplifying the visibility of the 1333 Hotline as a critical helpline for those in need.

"At the heart of hospitality lies a profound commitment to people, not just those we welcome through our doors, but the communities that we serve and the lives that we touch. Our partnership with the CCC Foundation and our support of the 1333 Bikeathon underscore our belief that social responsibility is not optional, it’s essential. Mental health is a deeply human issue, one that transcends boundaries and affects every family, every neighbourhood, every nation. As an industry rooted in human connection, we recognise our duty to lead with empathy, to raise awareness, and to champion meaningful change for the people that we endeavour to serve," said Stasshani Jayawardena, Chairperson, Aitken Spence PLC.

In extending this commitment, Heritance Hotels & Resorts and Aitken Spence Travels recognises the profound role travel can play in restoring the mind and

uplifting the spirit. Purposeful journeys like the 1333 Bikeathon offer more than physical movement—they create space for reflection, healing, and connection. As the route winds through Sri Lanka’s coastlines, lush interiors, and rural heartlands, Heritance Hotels & Resorts and Aitken Spence Travels will document the experience through a visual storytelling series that not only showcases the island’s natural beauty but reinforces the importance of mental wellness as a shared national priority.

From empowering a movement of awareness to hosting meaningful moments of rest and rejuvenation along the way, Aitken Spence Hotels is proud to walk, ride and rise with Sri Lanka, within and beyond.

Heritance Hotels and Resorts is the flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, a part of Aitken Spence PLC, a leading Sri Lankan blue-chip conglomerate. Aitken Spence Hotels oversees a diverse collection of 18 hotels and resorts across Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Oman and India through its diverse collection of brands Heritance Hotels and Resorts, Adaaran Hotels & Resorts, and Turyaa. Heritance Hotels & Resorts stands as the custodian of the largest portfolio of Bawa designed hotels in Sri Lanka, adding a touch of architectural distinction to its rich offerings.

Aitken Spence Travels is a leading name in the tourism industry and stands as a premier destination management company in Sri Lanka. With over four decades of experience, we have earned a reputation for excellence, offering unparalleled service and unforgettable holiday experiences to our travelers worldwide. As a joint venture between Aitken Spence PLC and TUI Group, our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and customer satisfaction remains firm. With a diverse portfolio of tourism activities and a multicultural team of professionals, we continue to lead the way in showcasing the beauty and cultural richness of Sri Lanka to the global community.





## Pegasus Reef Hotel Hosts Inspirational Session with Brian Kingston – A True Beacon of Courage and Excellence

TTA BULLETIN

Pegasus Reef Hotel proudly welcomed Brian Kingston, an extraordinary achiever, for an inspirational session with our staff. His story is a shining example of how determination and positivity can overcome any obstacle.

A former student of the Ratmalana College for the Blind, Brian made history as the first visually impaired student from the school to score 9 A's in the O/L exam. He later completed his Advanced Level studies in the Biological Science stream at Ananda College, Colombo, further demonstrating his academic excellence.

Today, at 21 years old, Brian is awaiting admission to Peradeniya University, where he plans to pursue his ambition of becoming a researcher—a dream that reflects his thirst for knowledge and his determination to contribute to society and achieve his ambition of becoming a Researcher.



During his visit to Pegasus Reef Hotel, Brian delivered an inspirational speech, sharing his personal experiences and the mindset that helped him rise above limitations. His story left a profound impact on our team, motivating everyone to embrace challenges with courage and optimism. His achievements are a true testament to his loving mother's courage and determination who has embarked on a journey to ensure that Brian achieves to his fullest potential.



This initiative underscores Pegasus Reef Hotel's commitment to fostering positivity and growth among our employees. Brian's journey is a powerful reminder that true strength lies in the will to succeed against all odds.

We are honored to have hosted such an extraordinary individual and look forward to organizing more engagements that inspire and uplift our team.

## Travel + Leisure Readers Rank Minor Hotels Among the World's Best in 2025 Awards

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a global hotel owner and operator with more than 560 properties across six continents, is celebrating a standout year in the Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards 2025, with multiple properties ranked among the world's top hotels and Anantara named one of the Best Hotel Brands globally.

Published annually, the Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards are a trusted barometer of the places and companies that resonate most with passionate, discerning travellers. Among the standout accolades, Anantara Hotels & Resorts – Minor Hotels' flagship experiential luxury brand – was named one of the Top 25 Best Hotel Brands in the World, ranking eighth overall.

Three Minor Hotels properties were included in the 100 Best Hotels in the World, showcasing the group's geographic and experiential diversity. These were Kilindi Zanzibar by Elewana Collection at No.5, Anantara The Palm Dubai Resort at No.26, and Anantara Quy Nhon Villas in Vietnam at No.75.

In the Middle East, Anantara The Palm Dubai Resort topped the list of Resorts in North Africa and Middle East, highlighting its continued leadership in one of the world's most competitive luxury markets.



The accolade cements the property's status as a regional icon, famed for its overwater villas, Thai-inspired design, and immersive guest experiences that continue to raise the bar in urban resort luxury. Kilindi Zanzibar by Elewana Collection also earned top spot as Best Resort in Africa.

In Asia, Anantara Quy Nhon Villas, a secluded beachfront escape on Vietnam's south-central coast, was recognised among the 20 Best Asia and Southeast Asia Resorts, drawing praise for its villas and tranquil beachfront setting. The resort was also ranked fifth among Southeast Asia's best resorts.

Anantara Convento di Amalfi Grand Hotel was honoured among the Top 10 Resorts in Europe, and the Top 3 Resorts in Italy, a testament to its transformation from 13th-century monastery into one of the Amalfi Coast's most desirable retreats. Its sister property, Anantara Palazzo Naiadi Rome Hotel, was also recognised among the Best Hotels in Rome, a timely accolade as it prepares to host the inaugural

## Taj Samudra, Colombo Shines at Chef Guilds of Sri Lanka Competition with 17 Prestigious Awards

TTA BULLETIN

Taj Samudra Colombo made a remarkable mark at the prestigious Chef Guilds of Sri Lanka Competition 2025, held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), by clinching an impressive tally of 17 medals.



Demonstrating exceptional culinary mastery and innovation, the hotel's talented team earned 3 Gold, 4 Silver, and 10 Bronze medals across a variety of challenging categories. Recognized as a premier event in Sri Lanka's culinary calendar, the competition brought together top chefs from leading hotels, resorts, and culinary institutions across the nation.

The triumphant food & beverage and the kitchen team of Taj Samudra was celebrated alongside Mr. Samrat Datta, Area Director – Taj Maldives & Sri Lanka and General Manager of Taj Samudra Colombo, as well as their respective departmental heads, all of whom expressed immense pride in this remarkable achievement.

## Elewana Collection Revamps Two Safari Icons in Kenya

TTA BULLETIN

Refreshed design and elevated dining concepts bring new energy to the legendary Elsa's Kopje and Elephant Pepper Camp



Nairobi, Kenya: Elewana Collection, an operator of award-winning boutique lodges and safari camps across Kenya and Tanzania, has unveiled significant renovations and refreshed culinary concepts at two of its iconic Kenyan properties: Elsa's Kopje Meru, and Elephant Pepper Camp in the Maasai Mara.

Elewana, part of international hospitality group Minor Hotels, is known for its commitment to conservation, community, and classic East African hospitality. The latest enhancements exemplify that ethos, elevating the guest experience while remaining deeply rooted in each property's natural surroundings, cultural heritage, and distinctive character.

Perched dramatically above the savannah in Meru National Park, Elewana Elsa's Kopje is a lodge steeped in history. Named after the orphaned lioness made famous by conservationists George and Joy Adamson in the 1996 film Born Free, the lodge is built into the rocky hillside above the Adamsons' former camp. Since opening in 1999, Elsa's Kopje has become an icon of responsible luxury and timeless safari charm.

The latest renovations pay tribute to this legacy while enhancing comfort and design throughout the lodge. All guest suites now feature upgraded furniture, Nero-finished bathroom floors, and reimagined lighting that accentuates the lodge's organic architecture and expansive views. The expansive Private House has also been elevated with a luxurious new bath and redesigned outdoor shower.

Communal areas reflect the same attention to detail: the main and private pools have been refinished with terrazzo tiles, offering a refreshed setting for relaxation between game drives. A new in-house sundowner space provides the perfect

stage for evening G&Ts overlooking Meru's vast wilderness, with a new outdoor cinema screening the film, Born Free, set to be launched in the area within the month. The spa has been expanded, offering a more spacious retreat for wellness rituals.

"Careful attention has been paid to ensure the refreshed Elsa's Kopje still holds the heart and soul of what makes it so special," said Callum Oliver, Operations Manager Kenya at Elewana Collection. "Whether it's your first visit or your fifth, the updates enhance the comfort and elegance of the lodge without losing the deep connection to the wilderness and history of Meru."

The lodge's updated culinary direction celebrates Kenya's rich gastronomic traditions, blending comfort and authenticity. From slow-simmered local stews and grilled meats to elevated breakfasts featuring yoghurt parfaits, fresh pastries, and vibrant garden fare, each dish is a reflection of the land and its culture.

Elephant Pepper Camp: Bush Luxury Meets Fire-Cooked Flavour

Nestled in the Mara North Conservancy in the Maasai Mara National Reserve in southwestern Kenya, Elewana Elephant Pepper Camp has long been a favourite for safari purists and those seeking a close-to-nature experience with minimal environmental impact.

The final phase of the camp's multi-stage renovation is now complete, bringing a full upgrade to guest tents with new furnishings that retain the camp's rustic



Excellence on Display - Cinnamon Life shines at Bocuse d’Or Sri Lanka 2025

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka has secured first place at the Bocuse d’Or Sri Lanka 2025, earning the prestigious Gold Award thus, setting new standards for fine dining and culinary excellence in the country.

This prestigious national selection for Bocuse d’Or Asia brought together 26 of the leading culinary teams across the island. Representing Cinnamon Life, Nilupul Sandakalum and Adithya Fonseka distinguished themselves through exceptional technique, artistry, and discipline. The team’s gold-winning performance was a testament to the creativity and precision cultivated within the Cinnamon Life culinary team.

Adding further distinction to the team’s success, Adithya Fonseka was named Best Commis Chef, an accolade awarded to the competition’s most promising young

culinary talent with the guidance of Chef Chamaka Perera, the hotel’s Executive Sous Chef.

“We are incredibly proud to have brought home the Gold,” said Sanjiv Hulugalle, CEO and General Manager, Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka. “This is not just a win for our team but for our vision of positioning Cinnamon Life as a beacon of culinary excellence in the region.”

With this national victory, Cinnamon Life has secured its place on the international culinary stage and reaffirms its role as a hub for innovation, mentorship and global-standard gastronomy in Sri Lanka. As Colombo’s most iconic lifestyle destination, Cinnamon Life continues to lead with creativity, luxury, and a deep commitment to excellence across every dimension of hospitality.

Sweet Moments at The Choco Reef – A Chocolate Lover’s Dream!

TTA BULLETIN

Pegasus Reef Hotel, Wattala, transformed into a chocolate paradise on World Chocolate Day, hosting its much-anticipated Choco Reef High Tea event. The delightful celebration was a true treat for guests of all ages, bringing together an irresistible combination of flavor, fun, and unforgettable moments.

From decadent chocolate fountains and handcrafted desserts to signature beverages and sweet surprises, every detail of the event was designed to indulge the senses. Guests were welcomed to a whimsical world of chocolate where laughter, joy, and creativity filled the air.

Adding to the excitement, the event featured a special kids’ zone with face painting, art & craft stations, fun games, and exciting gifts, creating magical moments for our youngest guests. Laughter and joy filled the air as families came

together to enjoy this unforgettable experience.

The highlight of the day was seeing families and friends come together to savor an array of rich chocolate creations curated by our talented culinary team. Children enjoyed engaging activities while adults relaxed over an elegant high tea experience, making it a memorable outing for everyone.

Pegasus Reef is proud to have hosted this unique celebration that truly captured the essence of World Chocolate Day. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who joined us in making this event a sweet success.

Stay tuned for more exciting and flavorful adventures at Pegasus Reef – where every occasion is crafted to perfection!



Hahn Air honours Top Selling Agencies in Sri Lanka at Awards Dinner

TTA BULLETIN

Hahnair, in collaboration with its service partner Jetwing Air, hosted an exclusive awards dinner to recognise and celebrate the Top Selling Agencies in Sri Lanka for 2024. The event brought together a select group of six participants for an evening of appreciation, recognition, and industry networking.



The spotlight was on the three top-performing agencies, who were awarded for their outstanding sales achievements:

- 1st Place: Classic Travel Pvt Ltd
- 2nd Place: Worldlink Travels Pvt Ltd
- 3rd Place: Inqbaytor Group Pvt Ltd

Each winner received a Certificate of Achievement and a Hahnair Trophy, celebrating their exceptional contribution to Hahnair’s continued success in the Sri Lankan market. The dinner took place at the ITC Ratnadipa Hotel, one of Colombo’s newest luxury landmarks. With its refined décor and panoramic views of the city skyline, the venue provided an elegant

setting for the evening. Guests enjoyed a warm, celebratory atmosphere perfect for reflection, recognition, and connection.

Representing Hahnair was Mr. Bharat Kapoor, while Jetwing Air was represented by Mr. Santhush Udamalagala, General Manager, and Mr. Tuan Hassim, Assistant Sales Manager.

“It was a pleasure to honor the success of our partners and to engage in meaningful conversations, exchange ideas, and reflect on shared achievements,” said Mr. Bharat Kapoor.

The event highlighted the strength of Hahnair’s partnerships in Sri Lanka and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the success and growth of travel agencies across the region.

City of Dreams Sri Lanka Unveils NÜWA

TTA BULLETIN

In a landmark moment for Sri Lanka’s tourism and hospitality industry, NÜWA, the internationally acclaimed luxury hotel brand by Melco Resorts & Entertainment, officially opens its doors at the prestigious City of Dreams Sri Lanka. This grand launch is the result of a powerful partnership between Melco, a renowned developer, owner and operator of integrated resort facilities in Asia and Europe, and John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH), Sri Lanka’s largest listed conglomerate, and marks a defining step in positioning the island as South Asia’s most aspirational luxury destination.



First introduced in Macau and Manila in 2018, NÜWA represents Melco’s highest standard of refinement—merging sophistication, innovation, and cultural grace. Now in Colombo, NÜWA brings its signature experience to South Asia, inspired by the mythical Chinese goddess who shaped humanity. The property blends contemporary elegance with Sri Lankan heritage, offering guests a deeply personalized and elevated escape.

Located within the transformative City of Dreams Sri Lanka development, NÜWA features 113 luxurious rooms, including Oceanfront and Cityscape Deluxe Rooms, Premium and Executive Suites, and the exclusive Presidential and Dragon Suites. Every space has been designed to reflect relaxed opulence, with sweeping views of the Indian Ocean and Colombo skyline.

Guests will also enjoy curated dining and lifestyle experiences at restaurants and bars including The Vault, a sophisticated private lounge; The Crystal Lounge, serving gourmet Western cuisine and

handcrafted beverages; and the Pool Bar, offering jazz, signature drinks, and panoramic cityscapes. For those in the highest-tier suites, bespoke in-room dining adds another layer of personalized indulgence. NÜWA also features Italian-crafted amenities by La Bottega and eco-conscious dry amenities, reinforcing its commitment to luxury and sustainability.

Part of a broader vision by Melco and JKH, City of Dreams Sri Lanka spans 4.5 million square feet and represents a USD 1.3 billion investment—the largest private-sector investment in Sri Lankan history. The integrated resort includes luxury residential towers, a 30-storey office tower, high-end retail, and South Asia’s most sophisticated casino. The development is expected to generate over 20,000 jobs, directly and indirectly, while revitalizing Colombo as a business, entertainment, and tourism hub.

The launch of NÜWA signals renewed confidence in Sri Lanka’s tourism resurgence. With JKH’s deep-rooted local leadership and Melco’s international excellence in integrated resort operations, City of Dreams Sri Lanka is poised to redefine hospitality in the region. It stands not just as a landmark development, but also as a symbol of what is possible when global luxury meets Sri Lankan spirit.



The logo for 'Mitt' is displayed in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font. A red horizontal line is positioned directly beneath the letters 'i' and 't'.

11-13 March, 2026  
Crocus Expo Moscow

A photograph of a crowded exhibition hall, likely Crocus Expo Moscow, with various booths and people in the background. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue overlay at the bottom.

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## Cathay Pacific to Increase Colombo–Hong Kong Flights to Daily Service from 1 September 2025

TTA BULLETIN

Effective 1 September 2025, Cathay Pacific, Hong Kong’s flagship carrier, will increase its flight frequency between Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Sri Lanka and Hong Kong International Airport from five times a week to a daily return service.

These flights will be operated using the airline’s Airbus A330-300 aircraft, featuring fully flat beds in Business Class and comfortable, spacious seating in Economy.

Passengers continuing beyond Hong Kong can take advantage of seamless connections to a wide range of onward destinations via Cathay Pacific’s hub. These include major cities across the Chinese Mainland, the Greater Bay Area, and key destinations throughout Asia such as Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and more.

For long-haul travellers, Cathay Pacific also offers convenient connectivity to Australia and New Zealand, with the addition of new non-stop flights between Hong Kong and Adelaide commencing 11 November 2025—marking its eighth



passenger service in the Southwest Pacific. Travellers heading to North America can choose from flights to eight destinations including the newest addition to its network, Dallas-Fort Worth. The airline’s codeshare partnerships and extensive network also allow for smooth connections to cities within the US and to Central and South America.

Rakesh Raicar, Cathay Pacific’s Regional General Manager for South Asia, Middle East, and Africa, commented: “Our daily flights between Colombo and Hong Kong reflect our commitment to meeting growing travel demand and enhancing regional and global connectivity. Hong Kong remains a key international hub, offering efficient onward connections for both business and leisure travellers. Sri Lanka is an important market for us, and we’re excited to support its growth with increased passenger and cargo capacity.”

## Emirates recognised as 2025’s Most Recommended Global Brand by YouGov

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates, the world’s largest international airline, has topped the rankings as YouGov’s Most Recommended Global Brand for 2025, a testament to the airline’s longstanding ‘Fly Better’ promise. Emirates is the only airline to be featured on the global top 10 list.

The YouGov Most Recommended Brands rankings measure the percentage of a brand’s customers who would recommend it to a friend or colleague. This year, Emirates achieved an outstanding score of 88.4%, with a significant lead on the next closest brand. Fuelled by insights from YouGov BrandIndex, Recommend scores are based on over a million customer surveys in 28 markets, tracking brand performance daily between June 1, 2024 and May 31, 2025. Positive Recommend scores for each top 10 global brand are aggregated and weighted by the size of the brand’s current customer base per market.

Sir Tim Clark, President Emirates Airline, said, “This recognition underscores the deep connection and loyalty we’ve built with passengers all over the world, who trust us not only to get them to their destination, but to do so with care, reliability, and excellence. We will continue to evolve our already exceptional experience and set new benchmarks in travel to ensure Emirates is always a brand that our customers are proud to recommend.”

Emirates has always kept customers at the heart of its operations, providing memorable journeys at every touchpoint, every time. Continually investing in the finest products and exceptional signature services, the airline provides a world-class travel



experience in-air and on-ground.

In the first half of 2025, Emirates expanded its global network with route launches to three new destinations, with Hangzhou to follow; inaugurated nine reimagined travel retail stores in Asia, Africa and Europe; introduced its newest aircraft type, the A350, to 10 destinations; and achieved its designation as the world’s first Autism Certified Airline™, making significant headway on its journey to make travel accessible to all.

By December 2025, the airline will serve over 70 cities with aircraft fitted out with the latest interiors on Boeing 777s, A380s and A350s, representing almost 50% of its network, and offer over 2 million Premium Economy seats, enabling more travellers to enjoy Emirates’ latest generation premium onboard experience.

Emirates has been recognised by YouGov before, as the most recommended brand in the UAE in the Recommend 2024 rankings with a score of 92.6. In YouGov’s 2024 US airlines report, Emirates recorded the “most satisfied customers amongst US flyers” and was one of the top 10 airlines considered by US Millennials and Gen Zs. As an international online research data and analytics firm, YouGov pioneers accessible and neutral market research and consumer interest surveys, utilising its flagship tracking tool, YouGov BrandIndex.

## Discover Qatar Appoints Jetwing Air as Agent for Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Air Pvt Ltd is proud to announce their appointment as the Agent for Discover Qatar in Sri Lanka.

Discover Qatar is the Destination Management Company of Qatar Airways.

This Strategic Partnership marks a new chapter in delivering Premium Stopover Programmes, Transit Tours and Destination Management Services.

Discover Qatar offers an outstanding and comprehensive selection of hotels, excursions,

transfers and activities, and vast experience in managing major sporting events.

Given Jetwing Air’s strong presence and reputation in the Aviation and Travel Industry in Sri Lanka, this collaboration aims to enhance Outbound Travel experiences for Sri Lankan travelers transiting through or visiting Qatar.

Passengers can access the services of Discover Qatar through their Travel Agents.

## SriLankan Airlines Named ‘Best Airline for South Asia’ at International Tourism Conclave and Travel Awards

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has been named the ‘Best Airline for South Asia’ at the recently held International Tourism Conclave and Travel Awards in Delhi, India, cementing its position at the pinnacle of the region’s aviation landscape. The award honours SriLankan’s expansive, next-level network connecting South Asia to the world, its signature Sri Lankan hospitality and the meaningful connections it fosters with travellers across the region, as recognised by a distinguished panel of judges and jury members.



emerging urban centres.

Dimuthu Tennakoon, Head of Commercial of SriLankan Airlines, stated, “Receiving this award further validates our unwavering commitment to delivering an exceptional travel experience to our customers in South Asia. Our extensive connectivity across key markets, combined with our renowned service, make us the preferred choice for travellers in this part of the world. This recognition inspires us to continue pushing boundaries in our quest to enhance both the travel experience and our network, so we can serve our customers even better in the future.”

With nearly 90 weekly flights linking India to Colombo and beyond, SriLankan Airlines offers multiple daily connections from key metro cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru, along with strong connectivity from Tier two cities. The airline operates eight weekly flights from Tiruchirappalli, proudly holding the distinction of being the first international carrier to serve the city.

SriLankan also connects Madurai with six weekly frequencies, while operating four weekly flights each from Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram. From the Kerala hub of Kochi, the airline offers daily services, reinforcing its role as a key enabler of India’s rapidly growing leisure travel market, both from metros and

India is Sri Lanka’s single largest tourism source market, accounting for about one-fifth of the total inbound traffic to the island, underscoring the commercial and cultural significance of India to SriLankan Airlines, which holds market leadership on routes connecting Chennai, Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai with Colombo.

SriLankan Airlines serves South Asia with spacious wide-body and narrow-body Airbus aircraft, offering both Business and Economy Class cabins. Passengers can look forward to a fusion of regional cuisine and global flavours, including the airline’s award-winning Sri Lankan cuisine. They can also relax with an extensive selection of movies, music and more, while enjoying the warmth of true Sri Lankan hospitality as they travel.

Complementing its schedule and onboard service are targeted engagement initiatives to the Indian market. These include bespoke holiday packages and special deals, such as the airline’s recent and successful Ramayana Trail campaign, covering the legendary sites from the epic tale of King Rama. SriLankan also caters to business travellers through all-inclusive MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) solutions, and to couples planning trending destination weddings in Sri Lanka.



## SriLankan Cargo Joins Freightos: New Digital Bridge to South Asian Markets

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Cargo, the air freight arm of SriLankan Airlines, has joined WebCargo by Freightos, a leading digital booking and payment platform for international freight. The integration allows over 10,000 freight forwarding offices worldwide to seamlessly access SriLankan Cargo's capacity, request quotations, make bookings and process payments in real time.

"By joining Freightos' WebCargo platform, we're not just digitalising our booking process – we're expanding our reach to thousands of new potential customers," said Chaminda Perera, Head of Cargo at SriLankan Airlines. "The integration with Freightos' rate management and procurement tools ensures our services are visible at the critical decision-making stage of the freight buying process."

"SriLankan Cargo brings high-quality regional capacity into our digital network at a time when agility is key," said Zvi Schreiber, CEO of Freightos. "By integrating their rates and capacity, forwarders gain instant and enhanced access to critical South Asian trade lanes, including Colombo and India."

The integration also expands market participation through WebCargo Pay which allows non-IATA forwarders across Asia to access SriLankan Cargo's capacity without requiring airline credit lines or bank guarantees. This democratization of access is particularly valuable in emerging markets, where many SME forwarders have historically faced barriers to carrier capacity.

SriLankan Cargo offers extensive coverage across key trade lanes in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe and the Indian Subcontinent, supported by a robust feeder network using Colombo as a consolidation hub.

In addition to offering instant capacity and booking to forwarders, SriLankan Cargo is also leveraging WebCargo by Freightos' interlining capabilities, enhancing SriLankan's existing partnerships with major carriers, and eventually allowing forwarders to seamlessly book complex multi-carrier routes while helping partner airlines optimize their load factors. For more information visit <https://www.webcargo.co/>



## Emirates Group launches massive talent drive to power its next era of innovation and expansion

TTA BULLETIN

The Emirates Group has kickstarted a global talent scouting and acquisition drive, revving up this phase of its phenomenal growth. This financial year, the aviation powerhouse is looking to onboard 17,300 people, equivalent to a mid-size town or the seating capacity of 58 Airbus A350 aircraft, across 350 roles.

These roles span every facet, function and operations across Emirates, the world's most profitable and largest international airline, and dnata, a leading global air and travel services provider. Hundreds of new recruits are required across some roles, including cabin crew, pilots, engineers, commercial and sales teams, customer service, ground handling, catering, IT, HR and finance. dnata is looking to hire more than 4,000 cargo, catering and ground handling specialists.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline & Group, said: "The Emirates Group's people strategy is anchored in Dubai's Economic Agenda D33 and our own projected growth and expansion. We're seeking world-class talent to fuel our bold ambition, redefine the future of aviation, and continue our commitment and culture of innovation and excellence. This is an opportunity for skilled and talented professionals to play a stellar role in our future, our strategy, and our growth story."

Throughout the year, the Group will be hosting more than 2,100 open days and other talent acquisition events in 150 cities to recruit the best pilots, IT professionals, engineers, and talent for cabin crew roles. This also includes Dubai-based events to engage UAE national students and graduates. For those keen to join the Group, it's a valuable opportunity to meet experienced recruiters and sometimes passionate long-serving employees in these roles.



Since 2022, the Group has onboarded more than 41,000 talented professionals, including nearly 27,000 in various operational roles, and today has a 121,000-strong workforce.

The Group has always been a top talent magnet and an employer of choice both in the UAE and globally. In the last financial year, the Group received more than 3.7 million applications for roles spanning all its brands and departments, with candidates attracted by its brand power; global reputation; people-first strategy; tax-free salary and top-notch benefits; and its renowned training, development, and recognition programmes.

Talented professionals around the world are drawn to Dubai for any number of reasons – safety, security, economic opportunity, tech-centric ecosystems, future-thinking policies, and for being a vibrant, lifestyle destination.

For Dubai-based employees, benefits at the Emirates Group include profit share eligibility, comprehensive medical and life insurance cover, a whole range of travel benefits including flight tickets – annual leave, service-related, and concessional ones for self, family, wider family and friends – concessional cargo rates, and membership cards that provide discounts at hundreds of retail, hospitality and lifestyle outlets.

Those aspiring to join the Emirates Group can apply for the various roles and keep a lookout for open days and recruitment events worldwide at [www.emiratesgroup-careers.com](http://www.emiratesgroup-careers.com).

## SriLankan Airlines and Tourism Malaysia Host Media FAM Tour

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines, together with the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, recently hosted a group of Sri Lankan journalists on an exciting familiarisation (FAM) tour of Malaysia, aimed at strengthening travel and tourism ties between the two countries. The tour will serve to reinforce why Malaysia has long remained a favourite holiday destination among Sri Lankans, popular for its affordability, family-friendly attractions and great shopping. It also highlights SriLankan Airlines as the preferred choice of travel, with twice-daily flights to Kuala Lumpur offering travellers convenience and flexibility beyond compare.

A Malaysian holiday is every traveller's dream, with back-to-back experiences across cities such as Putrajaya, Melaka,

Genting and Kuala Lumpur, offering a range of attractions, fun activities, entertainment and endless opportunities for shopping, from premium to value brands. Holidaymakers can get a bird's-eye view of the city through sightseeing tours and cruises; visit places such as Genting Highlands and Batu Caves; explore temples and historic landmarks including the King's Palace and Porta de Santiago; immerse themselves in the vibrant night markets of Jonker Street; and enjoy some serious retail therapy at various precincts and malls, including Malaysia's largest, IOI City Mall.

Malaysia is also rapidly gaining ground among Sri Lankan students pursuing higher studies. Whether it is for a short getaway, shopping or as a pathway to one's



dream career, this Southeast Asian country offers a lifetime of memories for any visitor through first-hand experiences of its cultural heritage; traditional cuisine; modern and historical attractions; and warm hospitality. As for the journalists who toured the country, they are back in Sri Lanka, inspired and eager to share their incredible journey with their fellow Sri Lankans.

This initiative is expected to bolster tourism between Sri Lanka and Malaysia, fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchange. By experiencing the diverse offerings of Malaysia, Sri Lankan visitors can develop a deeper appreciation for its vibrant heritage and contemporary attractions, thus encouraging more frequent travel between the two nations.

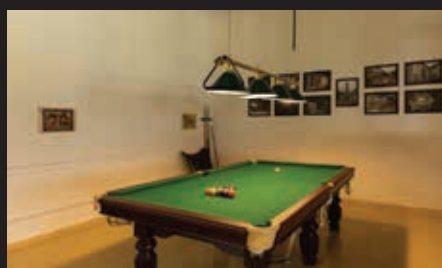
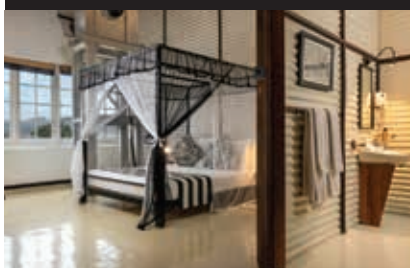




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