

# TRAVELTALK

ASIA

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

VOL 25 NO 02 2026 24 PGS



Relive the epic of

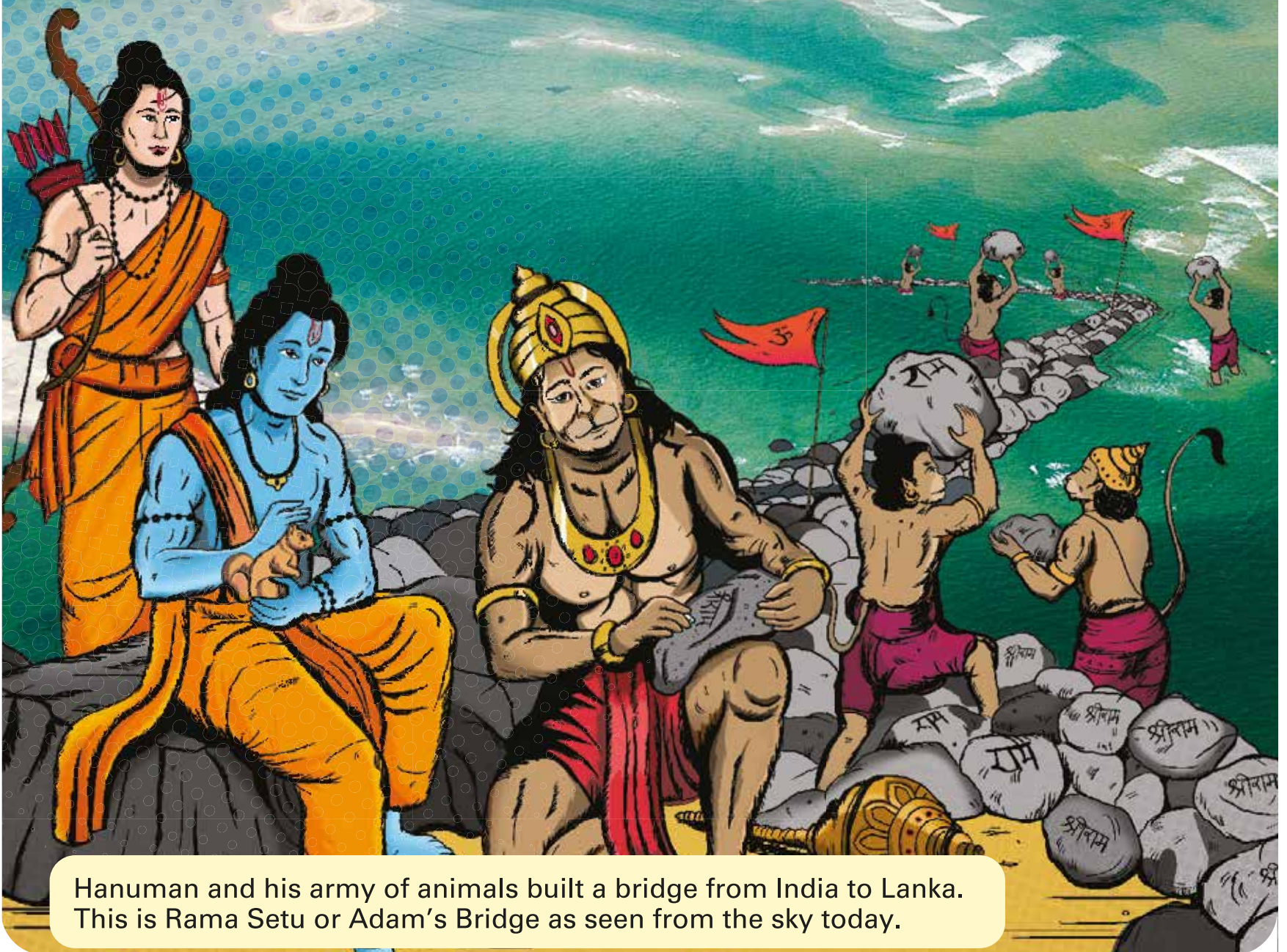
# THE RAMAYANA TRAIL

[www.ramayanasrilankan.com](http://www.ramayanasrilankan.com)





Relive the epic of  
**THE  
RAMAYANA TRAIL**



Hanuman and his army of animals built a bridge from India to Lanka.  
This is Rama Setu or Adam's Bridge as seen from the sky today.



Book this once-in-a-lifetime experience today!  
[www.ramayanabysrilankan.com](http://www.ramayanabysrilankan.com)

 **SriLankan Holidays**  
A world of memories





# TRAVELTALK

## ASIA

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

VOL 25 NO 02 2026 24 PGS



## Sri Lanka Eyes 1 Million Indian Tourists in 2026 with Strategic Market Push

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka Tourism has taken a major step to strengthen its ties with India, the country's largest source market, with a wide-reaching promotional campaign across Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai. The initiative aims to attract higher-spending travellers year-round while showcasing Sri Lanka's diverse offerings—from beaches and mountains to heritage sites and spiritual destinations.



Nalin Jayasundera

The campaign was a coordinated effort between the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), the Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), and SriLankan Airlines, reflecting a strong public-private sector partnership. SLAITO President Nalin Jayasundera said the campaign was met with enthusiastic support from Indian partners, especially the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI). "The feedback from our Indian counterparts was overwhelmingly positive," he noted.

The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) has reported that a total of 194,553 tourists have arrived in the country during the first three weeks of 2026. During this period, India accounted for the largest number of arrivals, with 35,177 visitors, followed by Russia with 19,930, the United Kingdom with 19,893, and Germany with 12,822 visitors.

Industry conversations highlighted Sri Lanka's potential to welcome up to one million Indian visitors in 2026, thanks to proximity, shared cultural ties, and Sri Lanka's appeal for year-round travel and pilgrimage tourism. India accounted for 531,511 visitors in 2025, making up 27% of Sri Lanka's total arrivals, and growth is expected in niche segments such as destination weddings, golf tourism, MICE travel, and spiritual experiences.

Jayasundera also pointed to Sri Lanka's free-visa policy as a key enabler, lowering barriers and encouraging short-haul visits. "Indian travel agents emphasized that Sri Lanka's unique ability to offer beaches, cloud forests, mountains, and ancient heritage sites within a few hours' drive makes it attractive to a wide range of traveller profiles," he said. He stressed that deeper collaboration through joint marketing campaigns and consolidated digital content will be essential to convert demand into arrivals.

Further cementing India-Sri Lanka tourism ties, TAAI will host its Executive Committee meeting in Colombo in late Q1 2026, reinforcing engagement with the Indian travel trade. Connectivity remains strong, with SriLankan Airlines operating 126 flights per week to 14 cities across India, positioning the island nation to fully capitalize on the projected 50 million outbound Indian travellers by 2030.

## Beyond Luxury: Kahanda Kanda Strengthens its Wellness Philosophy

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Set amidst the lush jungle landscapes of Sri Lanka's south, Kahanda Kanda (KK) has long been synonymous with privacy, understated luxury and a deeply personal approach to hospitality. The property's recent expansion marks an important new chapter, reinforcing its positioning as a sanctuary for rest, reflection and refined wellbeing.

According to George Cooper, Owner of Kahanda Kanda, the development was driven by a clear and considered vision. "There are two aspects to the expansion at KK," Cooper explains. "One was the opportunity to create five additional Pool Villas, and the other was the much larger Spa building."

The Pool Villas, he notes, have consistently been among the property's most popular offerings.

"Guests really value the privacy and seclusion they provide, along with the views over the surrounding jungle," he says, adding that the new villas build naturally on this appeal.

Equally important to the expansion was the desire to elevate Kahanda Kanda's wellbeing offering. While it is still early days following the Spa's opening in January, interest from wellness-focused travellers is already gaining momentum.

"Having a 'serious' Spa is a fantastic asset to the hotel," Cooper says. "We hope guests will experience the same level of personalised service, attention to detail, comfort and luxury in the Spa as they do throughout the rest of the property."

Kahanda Kanda has begun discussions with specialist therapists and retreat leaders, with several retreats already confirmed. The presence of a dedicated, full-scale Spa is seen as a major asset, allowing KK to attract a new layer of discerning guests while continuing to deliver the personalised service, attention to detail and sense of comfort that loyal visitors have come to expect — both in the villas and within the Spa experience itself.

"We can now provide proper wellness packages — whether that's a reset, a detox, or even helping guests rethink what and how they eat, enabling them to begin a weight-loss journey,"

At the heart of the Spa is a philosophy Cooper describes as Taking Time Out. "It's about time to breathe, time to disconnect from the outside world and time to be still. The world today is so connected and frenetic, and we want to encourage guests to truly take time for themselves."

Sustainability and community engagement

remain deeply embedded in the KK Collection ethos. With Green Destination accreditation now covering all three properties within the Collection, environmental responsibility and local stewardship are integral to daily operations. These principles extend naturally into the Spa, where efforts such as zero-plastic policies, recycling practices and energy-saving measures are actively encouraged. Importantly, these values are shared not only with guests, but also with staff, who are empowered to take these practices back into their own communities, helping to extend the impact beyond the hotel gates.

Against the backdrop of Sri Lanka's steady tourism recovery, KK is also seeing encouraging momentum from the Indian market, now one of the island's most important source regions. Ease of visa access, competitive air connectivity and relatively short transfer times from the airport make Sri Lanka an attractive option for Indian travellers

"We've hosted several Indian weddings and have quite a few more booked over the next 18 months," Cooper reveals. "There's also a growing interest in wellness from the Indian market."

Recognising this potential, KK Collection is actively strengthening its engagement with the Indian travel trade. Participation at OTM Mumbai, alongside targeted roadshows across key Indian cities, forms part of a broader strategy to build relationships and raise awareness of the brand's unique positioning.

Looking ahead, KK Collection's strategy is clearly defined by depth rather than scale. Instead of expanding its footprint, the focus remains on strengthening the wellbeing philosophy across its existing properties, with plans to host more thoughtfully curated retreats throughout the year and collaborate with a diverse range of specialists. While India continues to be a key growth market, emerging opportunities in destinations such as Australia and Germany are also beginning to take shape.

As Cooper concludes, "Because we place such importance on delivering a high level of service and product, we prefer to stay focused on what we already have. This is reflected in the number of repeat guests who return year after year, often describing KK as their 'home from home'."



George Cooper

Sri Lanka has stepped confidently into the new year, welcoming 2026 with record arrival numbers that reflect a destination firmly back on the global travel map. Early performance indicators point to this winter season shaping up to be one of the strongest since 2018, offering renewed optimism to an industry that has worked relentlessly to rebuild demand, diversify source markets, and enhance the overall visitor experience.

This positive momentum was evident at FITUR in Madrid, where Sri Lanka maintained a strong presence among global tourism stakeholders. Spain continues to prove itself as one of the most stable and promising emerging markets for Sri Lanka tourism: With Spanish travellers increasingly seeking long-haul destinations rich in culture, nature, and meaningful experiences, sustained engagement in this market is beginning to deliver steady, long-term returns. This steady growth is despite the fact that there has been no direct flights from Spain to Sri Lanka.

India, however, remains the cornerstone of Sri Lanka’s inbound strategy. In early January, SLAITO, together with key industry partners, successfully concluded a three-city roadshow across India, reinforcing trade relationships and keeping Sri Lanka top-of-mind in its most important source market. Such initiatives are critical to maintaining booking momentum, particularly in an environment where regional competition for the Indian traveller continues to intensify. Looking ahead, the industry is gearing up to further woo the Indian market at two key trade platforms—OTM Mumbai and SATTE New Delhi—both of which play a pivotal role in driving conversions and sustaining year-round demand.

Yet, despite these encouraging developments, the need for a cohesive, high-impact destination marketing campaign remains pressing. Trade activity alone cannot carry the full weight of destination promotion. A strong, strategic campaign is essential to build global mind recall, sharpen Sri Lanka’s positioning, and ensure that the current momentum translates into sustained growth all year round.

Uga Resorts has once again placed Sri Lanka in the international spotlight, earning a coveted place on Time magazine’s list of the most exciting new hotel openings for 2026. Renowned for its thoughtful luxury, immersive design, and deep connection to place, Uga Resorts has consistently set benchmarks for high-end hospitality in Sri Lanka. This latest recognition strengthens Sri Lanka’s credentials as a high-spend, experiential destination. Such global accolades play a vital role in elevating the country’s profile and reinforcing confidence in Sri Lanka’s tourism proposition



*Dinushka*

Dinushka Chandrasena  
Editor



Editor / Managing Director  
Dinushka Chandrasena

Directors  
Firoze Munzeer  
Dinesh Chandrasena

Head of Marketing  
Anoj Tillekeratne

Digital Marketing & Communication  
Lakshini Wanigesinghe

Lead Designer  
Eshan Perera

Digital/ Website Associate  
Navodh Jayasundara

Website Design  
Antyra Hospitality

Printing/ Publishing  
Printage (Pvt) Ltd

Traveltalk Asia is a Monthly publication  
of Doubledee Publications Private Limited

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

Travel Talk Asia is a publication of DoubleDee Publications. All information in Travel Talk Asia is derived from sources, which we consider reliable and a sincere effort is made to report accurate information. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Similarly, opinions/views expressed by third parties in abstract and/or in interviews are not necessarily shared by Travel Talk Asia. However, we wish to advise our readers that one or more recognized authorities may hold different views than those reported. Material used in this publication is intended for information purpose only. Content of this publication are protected by copyrights laws. Material appearing in Travel Talk Asia cannot be reproduced whole or in part without prior permission. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication. Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission could face legal action. The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material nor is she responsible for material lost or damaged in transit. This publication is not meant to be an endorsement of any specific product or service offered. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw or amend or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Sri Lankan and International Advertisement Code. The publisher will not be liable for any damage or loss caused by delayed publication, error or failure of an advertisement to appear.

## NEWS

# Airbnb Co-Founder Nathan Blecharczyk To Speak About The Importance of Nature Tourism at ITB Berlin Convention

TTA BULLETIN

With interest in nature tourism growing across Europe, ITB Berlin 2026 is for the first time entering into a Premium Partnership with Airbnb in order to promote nature stays and boost development in rural regions. At the ITB Berlin Convention, Airbnb co-founder and CSO Nathan Blecharczyk will speak about Airbnb's commitment to rural regions.

The aim of the collaboration between the World's Leading Travel Trade Show and Airbnb is to highlight the potential of nature tourism. At ITB Berlin 2026, which will take place from 3 to 5 March on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds, they will highlight why specific tourism flow management is vital for the future of sustainable travel.

"On our sixtieth anniversary we are delighted to welcome Airbnb as the Premium Partner of ITB Berlin 2026," said Deborah Rothe, director of ITB Berlin. "ITB Berlin reflects the diversity of international tourism and provides a central platform for global thought leaders at the ITB Berlin Convention. Together with Airbnb, we want to actively shape this dialogue and continue to advance sustainable, responsible travel in the future."

Nathan Blecharczyk, Co-Founder and Chief Strategy Officer of Airbnb: "Airbnb has long been a catalyst for helping travelers discover places outside of typical tourist hot spots. With more Germans traveling to explore the country's beautiful natural features, Airbnb is proud that we can help visitors discover new communities and redistribute visitor spending to businesses and hosts throughout Germany. We look forward to sharing how

nature tourism will play a key role in the future of travel at ITB Berlin."

Airbnb Co-Founder and Chief Strategy Officer Nathan Blecharczyk will appear as a speaker at ITB Berlin Convention on 3 March, 2 PM on the Orange stage to discuss how Airbnb and rural tourism represents the future of travel in Europe, with nature travel leading the way in Germany. Additionally, Airbnb will make nature travel a focus topic at its booth in Hall 9, Booth 319 and within the conference program, including contributions from Kathrin Anselm, Country Manager Central and Eastern Europe, and Ellen Madeker, Head of Public Policy Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to the presence at the convention, the partners are planning joint communication activities around topics such as sustainable tourism, responsibility in tourism, and the future of travel.

Today in Germany, more guests on Airbnb are swapping the bustle of cities for the calm of nature - often found in rural communities near mountains, forests and coasts. The trend is fueled predominantly by Gen Z and their desire to disconnect from technology while travelling authentically and affordably.

With many rural communities offering few or no hotel accommodation options, Airbnb is the go-to platform for nature stays. This reflects travel trends across Europe, where nights on Airbnb spent in rural accommodations



## TAT drives quality leisure growth at FITUR 2026 across Spain and Latin America markets

TTA BULLETIN

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is leading a delegation of Thai tourism operators to Feria Internacional de Turismo (FITUR) 2026, held from 21–25 January at the Feria de Madrid exhibition centre in Madrid, Spain. The engagement advances TAT’s strategy to drive quality leisure growth across Spain and Latin America, reinforcing a value-led approach to long-haul market development.

Ms. Thapanee Kiatphaibool, TAT Governor, said, “Spain and Latin America are important long-haul markets with strong growth potential for Thailand. Our participation in FITUR 2026 reflects TAT’s clear focus on quality leisure travel, with wellness, culture, and meaningful experiences at its core. Through close collaboration with Thai operators and international partners, TAT is strengthening Thailand’s position as a destination where travel delivers lasting value and genuine renewal.”

FITUR is Spain’s largest international tourism trade fair and this year marks its 46th edition. Thailand’s presence enables Thai tourism businesses to engage with global buyers, strengthen commercial partnerships, and expand reach across Spanish-speaking markets. A total of 26 Thai operators from seven provinces are participating as sellers, including hotel and resort operators, destination management companies, and airline, representing Chiang Mai, Sukhothai, Bangkok, Pathum Thani, Surat Thani (Ko Samui), Phuket, and Krabi.

Thailand’s market positioning at FITUR 2026 is guided by the global marketing concept “Healing is the New Luxury”, highlighting health and wellness tourism alongside cultural experiences. The positioning reframes luxury as time, balance, and meaningful moments, aligning with travel demand in Spain and Latin America, where travellers increasingly prioritise quality, depth, and purpose-driven journeys.



The Thailand pavilion features live demonstrations and cultural showcases designed to reflect this positioning. Visitors can experience Thai flavours through miang kham cocktail and Thai herbal cocktail demonstrations using locally sourced ingredients, alongside cultural performances including southern Manorah dance, Isan folk dance, and traditional choreography. Exhibitions honouring Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, The Queen Mother include Thai national costume displays and a Khon performance, presenting Thailand’s living cultural heritage to international audiences.

TAT also hosts an Amazing Thailand Networking Lunch for media representatives from Spain and Latin America to present Thailand’s tourism direction for 2026. The programme includes participation by a Spanish influencer, Mrs. Carla Royo-Villanova, to share travel experiences in Thailand and support broader destination visibility, alongside discussions on future collaboration, including opportunities to enhance air connectivity between Spain and Thailand.

TAT estimates that engagement at FITUR 2026 will generate at least 780 business appointments, with projected tourism revenue exceeding 745 million Baht. The initiative supports TAT’s objective to achieve a new high record of 250,000 Spanish visitors to Thailand in 2026, alongside continued joint marketing and promotional activities with international partners. Spain remains one of Thailand’s high-potential European source markets, with year-round travel demand and a strong contribution during the June–August period, supporting Thailand’s low-season performance. In 2025,



# TAKE TIME OUT TO BREATHE

RELAX TODAY. RESET TOMORROW.



COLLECTION  
SRI LANKA

+94 77 342 9555

[WWW.KKCOLLECTION.COM](http://WWW.KKCOLLECTION.COM)

BENTOTA | HABARADUWA | KOGGALA





# Sri Lankan Culinary Visionary Chef Dharshan Munidasa Takes Maldives-Born Carne Diem Grill to Bangkok for International Pop-Up

TTA BULLETIN

Renowned Sri Lankan Chef-restaurateur Dharshan Munidasa is taking his steak-based restaurant, Carne Diem Grill, for an exclusive pop-up at the Siam Kempinski Hotel, Bangkok from the 22-25 January.

The Bangkok engagement marks another key step in extending this Maldives-born concept onto a broader international stage, taking its signature fire-driven cuisine to a global audience. The four-night-only pop-up will take place at ALATi at the Siam Kempinski Hotel, for an immersive Carne Diem Grill experience. The custom-built Ignis Maximus grill has been recreated specifically for the Bangkok pop-up, mirroring the bespoke grill originally designed and operated in the Maldives.

Launched in 2020, Carne Diem Grill is located at The Marina @ CROSSROADS Maldives, Maldives’ largest multi-island integrated leisure and entertainment destination. The Marina is home to three of Chef Dharshan’s restaurants: Carne Diem Grill, alongside Ministry of Crab and Nihonbashi Blue, an offshoot of Nihonbashi Sri Lanka.

Driven by a constant pursuit of innovation,

## 16th Annual Jaffna International Trade Fair A Success

TTA BULLETIN

The Jaffna International Trade Fair (JITF), Northern Sri Lanka’s largest and most influential multi-trade exhibition, held for the 16th consecutive year, ran from 23rd to 25th January 2026 at the Muttraweli Ground, Jaffna. Recognized as the region’s most established commercial platform, JITF continues to strengthen economic growth, business connectivity, and innovation across the Northern Province.

Organized by Lanka Exhibition & Conference Services (LECS)—Sri Lanka’s leading exhibition organizer and Presidential Award winner—in association with the Chamber of Commerce & Industries of Yarpnam (CCiy), JITF has become one of the country’s most anticipated annual trade events. With strong national visibility and extensive promotional reach, the fair attracts businesses, investors, and institutions seeking access to the rapidly developing Northern market.

The 2026 edition builds on a strong track record. The previous fair attracted 78,452 visitors and 5,000 invited business delegates, reinforcing JITF’s reputation as a high-impact business and networking platform. This year’s exhibition features 400+ stalls, showcasing products, services,

Chef Dharshan drew on his Sri Lankan-Japanese heritage and engineering background to redefine the art of steak dining by engineering a custom grill oven, fondly named Ignis Maximus. Featuring individual charcoal pits with sliding hoods that convert the grill into an oven, capable of reaching temperatures of up to 750°C. This allows each cut to be cooked using a precise method that balances three essential elements: meat, heat, and salt, enhancing the natural flavours of the steak and eliminating the need for sauces, resulting in what most of our guests refer to as “The Best Steak Ever”.

“This is about taking what we’ve built in the Maldives and letting it travel. The Maldives gave the brand its identity, discipline and confidence, and it is where the concept was truly refined. Stepping onto the international stage is a natural progression, and Bangkok marks another step in this journey as we thoughtfully expand and introduce Carne Diem Grill to new global audiences. Carne Diem Grill is about fire, restraint and honesty, and I’m excited to share that philosophy with a new audience in Bangkok,” he said.

es, and advanced technologies across sectors such as construction, automobiles, agriculture, consumer products, food & beverage, ICT, finance, healthcare, education, and emerging industries.

Nearly 70% of visitors engage in direct business discussions, resulting in partnerships, distribution agreements, and investment opportunities. Strategically scheduled to avoid regional holidays, the fair ensures maximum participation and engagement from exhibitors and visitors alike.

JITF attracts a diverse visitor profile, including importers, exporters, SMEs, chamber members, financial institutions, technical professionals, and development agencies, making it a key catalyst for long-term trade and investment in Northern Sri Lanka.

For the second consecutive year, JITF 2026 will continue its Plastic Neutral Initiative, promoting sustainable practices through dedicated waste collection, recycling stations, and public awareness activities.

# Global Speakers Confirmed for India’s First Invite-only Online Travel Industry Event in February

TTA BULLETIN

The Travel Connections event for leaders from the online travel community taking place in Mumbai on 4 February is pleased to confirm the first speakers for its panels and debates.

The invite-only event will take place at the JW Marriott hotel in Juhu, Mumbai and is organized by Vervotech, a travel technology company specializing in managing hotel and room data that is part of Constellation Inc.

Speakers from leading international companies already confirmed include Jose Diaz, Chief Distribution Officer from Roibos; Sercihan Sen, Co-Founder and Managing Partner from Peakpoint Global; Ruchir Bang, Co-Founder of Stuba; and Erik Akhmetgaliev, APAC Director from RateHawk.

Whilst speakers from leading local Indian companies confirmed already include Arun Bagaria, CEO of TravClan; Kahraman Yigit, Co-Founder & CEO of Olive Hospitality; and Sushant Mathur, Director, Product Management at Sabre Corporation.



tion.

Talking about the event Sanjay Ghare, Founder and CEO from Vervotech said: “There are several great travel trade shows each year in India but really few real travel events in the sense of conferences for senior leaders focused around speakers and debate – and absolutely nothing focused on the online travel community. So we’ve decided to change that by launching The Travel Connections and already we’re expecting around 200 senior figures from the space to attend. Our aim is to create depth, not noise, and we’re being very selective about who attends and in particular who is speaking.”

Vervotech offers AI-based solutions such as hotel and room mapping along with hotel curated content to over 1000 online

## Professional Housekeepers Association and Karnataka Pest Management Association Sign MoU at ‘Housekeeping Synergy 3.0’

TTA BULLETIN

In a significant step towards strengthening industry collaboration and enhancing hygiene standards, the Professional Housekeepers Association (PHA) and the Karnataka Pest Management Association (KPMA) formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at a special knowledge-sharing program titled ‘Housekeeping Synergy 3.0’, held at Hotel Ramanashree, Bengaluru, on 17th January 2026.



A key highlight of the event was an engaging panel discussion titled ‘Power of Collaboration: Redefining Clean and Safe Environments through Housekeeping and Pest Management Synergy’, moderated by Mr. Virender Razdan. Founder & CEO Incode Hotels & Hospitality. The discussion brought together industry experts who deliberated on integrated approaches, compliance, innovation, and the critical role of coordination between housekeeping and pest management professionals.

The MoU marks a strategic partnership between the two associations aimed at fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, training initiatives, and the promotion of best practices to create cleaner, safer, and more sustainable environments across hospitality, healthcare, commercial, and institutional spaces.

The program was graced by Mr. PK Mohankumar, Founder & CEO - Turnstone Hospitality LLP who attended as the Chief Guest and lauded the initiative as timely and impactful. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Mohankumar said, “Cleanliness and safety are no longer isolated functions; they are interdependent responsibilities. This MoU between the Professional Housekeepers Association and the Karnataka Pest Management Association reflects a progressive mindset and sets a benchmark for collaborative efforts that will benefit the industry and society at large.”

Commenting on the partnership, Mr. Ravichandra V, President – Karnataka Pest Management Association, stated, “This MoU is a milestone for our association. By aligning closely with housekeeping professionals, we can jointly develop holistic solutions that address hygiene, safety, and preventive care more effectively. Collaboration is the future, and this partnership is a step in that direction.”

Echoing similar sentiments, Mrs. Jayashree Nagaraj, Founder President and Chairperson – Professional Housekeepers Association, said, “Housekeeping today goes beyond aesthetics—it is about health, safety, and sustainability. Partnering with KPMA allows us to create stronger frameworks, shared learning platforms, and unified standards that will elevate the profession and deliver greater value to stakeholders. We should start with renaming the concept of ‘vendors’ into the realm of partnerships and equal stakeholders!”



An aerial photograph of the Hilton Yala Resort at dusk. The resort features modern, multi-story buildings with large glass windows, some of which are illuminated from within. A large, winding swimming pool with several smaller pools and waterfalls is the central feature, surrounded by lush greenery and trees. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange from the setting sun.

Hilton.  
YALA RESORT

# Find Your Calm, In the Wild!

The first and only wildlife resort within  
the global Hilton portfolio.

Book Now: [www.hiltonyala.com](http://www.hiltonyala.com) | ☎ +94 74 391 1892

Follow Us: @ @hiltonyalaresort



# PATA Signs MoU with Phuket Hotels Association to Support Responsible Growth in Hospitality Sector

TTA BULLETIN

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) brokers a new partnership agreement with the Phuket Hotels Association (PHA), a nonprofit organisation representing a diverse range of hotels across the island of Phuket, southern Thailand.

Signed by PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid and Jayne MacDougall, Executive Director of PHA, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishes a mutual affiliate membership between the organisations.

Hamid said, “As one of Thailand’s most sought-after island destinations, Phuket’s hospitality sector is a cornerstone of its economy. With this partnership, we pave the path for collaborations with the Phuket Hotels Association on their mission to promote and strengthen Phuket’s standing as a destination recognised for its quality offerings and sustainable practices.”

MacDougall said, “Formalising a partner-



ship with PATA marks an important step in advancing shared goals around responsible tourism, regional collaboration, and innovation, strengthening long-term outcomes for Phuket and the wider region.”

The agreement supports joint activities, including the mutual promotion of events and speaker participation where appropriate. Representatives and members of both PATA and PHA will have opportunities to connect through networking sessions and annual events, with registration support provided in line with the agreement.

In addition, the partnership promotes knowledge sharing. It enables PHA to share selected tourism research and insights with the PATA network on a quarterly basis through member-exclusive newsletters and relevant online channels.

# Puerto Rico, next partner country for FITUR 2027

TTA BULLETIN

Puerto Rico will take centre stage at the International Tourism Fair in 2027 as Partner Country, as announced today



at the country’s stand by Daniel Martínez, Executive Vice President of IFEMA MADRID, and Jennifer González Colón, Governor of Puerto Rico. The announcement was also attended by Williamette Robles Cancel, Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (CTPR), and Jorge L. Pérez, Chief Executive Officer of Discover Puerto Rico, together with Arancha Priede, IFEMA MADRID’s Managing Director of Trade Fair and Congress Business, and María Valcarce, Director of FITUR.

The collaboration agreement under which Puerto Rico will serve as FITUR 2027 Partner Country during the 47th edition of the International Tourism Fair offers the island a strategic opportunity to strengthen its international visibility, boost promotion of its tourism offering and consolidate its global positioning. The announcement comes after a record breaking 2025, with more than 6.8 million arrivals at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport — a 3% increase compared with 2024, according to Discover Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico’s designation as FITUR 2027 Partner Country represents a powerful driver of growth, granting the island exceptional international visibility and a strengthened position among key players in the global tourism industry. This status develops the reach of its tourism offering on a world class stage, facilitates direct

engagement with professionals and strategic markets, and accelerates opportunities for promotion, investment and business development. Within this framework, FITUR becomes a unique showcase for highlighting the diversity, richness and competitiveness of a destination, backed by the world’s leading international tourism fair.

In the words of Daniel Martínez, “over the years, Puerto Rico has turned its presence at FITUR into a clear and consistent calling card: showcasing the diversity of its offering, the richness of its culture, and its ability to blend innovation, sustainability and local talent. FITUR 2025, with Puerto Rico at its side, will once again be the great global meeting point for tourism — with Caribbean flair and a character all of its own.”

“We proudly accept this designation, which represents an unprecedented strategic opportunity for Puerto Rico. We continue to move forward in a key phase of international positioning aimed at strengthening our presence in European markets, reinforcing high level institutional partnerships, and projecting ourselves as an innovative, competitive destination with a clear vision for growth. This alliance allows us to amplify the Island’s visibility and reinforce a strong narrative before global audiences,” stated Jennifer González Colón, Governor of Puerto Rico.

# INSPIRING JOURNEYS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
ACORN GROUP

## FROM VISION TO VOICE: THE JOURNEY BEHIND TONIK



At the heart of this journey is Harith Perera, Partner at Acorn Group, whose belief in Sri Lanka’s untold tourism narratives laid the foundation for TONIK’s creation.

In an era where travellers are no longer content with simply visiting destinations, but seek meaning, connection, and story, a new hospitality brand is quietly redefining how Sri Lanka presents itself to the world. TONIK is not just another villa or boutique hotel brand it is a philosophy shaped by those who believe that every place has a soul, and every stay should tell a story.

Launched under the Acorn Group, one of the region’s most diversified conglomerates with interests spanning aviation, travel, logistics, leisure, insurance, and education, TONIK represents a natural evolution of decades spent understanding how people move, explore, and connect across borders.

“Sri Lanka’s tourism story is rich, diverse, and waiting to be told in ways that resonate with the world’s most discerning travellers,” Harith notes. For him, TONIK is about positioning Sri Lanka beyond sun-and-sand clichés, and instead elevating its culture, community, and craftsmanship through design-led, story-driven hospitality. It is a vision rooted in long-term value—one that benefits not just travellers, but property owners, communities, and the wider tourism ecosystem.



Translating that vision into reality is Sundararajah Kokularajah, Chief Executive Officer of TONIK, whose journey reflects a deep sensitivity to place and purpose. Under his leadership, TONIK views villas and boutique hotels not as commercial assets, but as living narratives—shaped by architecture, memory, and human connection. His approach addresses a long-standing gap in Sri Lanka’s tourism landscape: exceptional independent properties that lack global visibility and strategic positioning.

“With TONIK, we believe Sri Lanka stands on the cusp of a renaissance,” Kokularajah explains. “Our mission is to unlock the island’s potential with creativity and care—honouring the communities that sustain these properties while preparing them for the future.”

Backed by Acorn Group’s strong presence in key demand markets such as the Maldives, Middle East, Europe, and Asia, TONIK brings global intelligence to local stories. As travel trends shift toward intentional, slow, and meaningful experiences particularly among high-net-worth travellers TONIK blends design, service, and technology-enabled personalisation to create emotional resonance.

Together, the Acorn Group with Harith Perera and Sundararajah Kokularajah are shaping more than a brand. They are building a platform where Sri Lanka’s villas become portals into its culture, its people, and its untold stories—positioning TONIK as a future global ambassador for Sri Lankan hospitality.





# One Island - Three Experiences, Spiritual, Coastal, and Highland Escapes

From the spiritual serenity of **Mandara Rosen - Yala, Kataragama** to the coastal charm of **Mandara Resort - Mirissa, Weligama**, and the cool highland retreat of **Mandara Ridge - Haputale** - discover Sri Lanka's diverse beauty seamlessly curated by **Rosen Tours**, your trusted destination expert. Experience the island's soul through sacred journeys, seaside indulgence, and misty mountain escapes - all crafted with warmth and authenticity. With **Mandara Hotels** and **Rosen Tours**, every journey becomes a story worth retelling.



[www.mandarahotels.com](http://www.mandarahotels.com)  
[www.rosentours.com](http://www.rosentours.com)



# Travel Meet Asia and ASITA Sign Strategic MoU to Strengthen Indonesia’s Regional Tourism Presence

TTA BULLETIN

Travel Meet Asia and ASITA have entered into a strategic partnership to advance Indonesia’s tourism and MICE sector. The collaboration combines Travel Meet Asia’s global B2B reach with ASITA’s strong domestic network to enhance Indonesia’s visibility and business opportunities across the region.



A Power Partnership set to boost Indonesia’s tourism momentum: Travel Meet Asia, the regional travel-trade marketplace and conference series organised by Messe Berlin Asia Pacific (MB APAC), and the Association of the Indonesian Tours & Travel Agencies (ASITA) have officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 7 January in Jakarta. The signing took place as part of ASITA’s 55th Anniversary celebrations, marking a significant milestone for the association and underscoring its long-term commitment to shaping a high-quality and sustainable tourism industry in Indonesia.

The MoU was signed by Darren Seah, Executive Director of Messe Berlin Asia Pacific and Mr. Budijanto Ardiansjah, Secretary General of DPP ASITA and Chairman of ASITA Fair, and was witnessed by the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism, and the President of ASITA.

The agreement leverages MB APAC’s

international network, as the organiser of ITB Asia, the largest travel trade show in the Asia-Pacific region, together with ASITA’s extensive domestic reach, creating a robust platform to elevate Indonesia’s presence in the regional tourism and MICE sector.

Travel Meet Asia has already established itself as a successful and fast-growing event series across Asia, hosting numerous high-quality B2B meetings, conferences, and marketplace activities welcomed by international and regional travel professionals. Building on this strong foundation, the new partnership with ASITA is set to further strengthen Indonesia’s role as a central hub for business development and tourism collaboration in the region.

Under the MoU, MB APAC will spearhead international sales and marketing efforts, global buyer recruitment, overall branding, and the management of event operations: from floorplan development to financial oversight. The organisation will

# Anantara Chiang Mai Resort Appoints Tudsaporn Jaiboonthuen as General Manager

TTA BULLETIN

Anantara Chiang Mai Resort, a luxury resort operated by global hospitality group Minor Hotels, announces the appointment of Tudsaporn Jaiboonthuen as its new General Manager, effective 1 January 2026.



In her new role, Tudsaporn will lead the resort’s overall strategy and operations, with a focus on elevating guest experience, driving commercial performance, upholding brand standards, and fostering team development across the property.

Tudsaporn brings nearly two decades of experience with Minor Hotels, having joined the group in 2007 as Assistant Spa Manager. Her career progression reflects a strong foundation in operational excellence and leadership, with senior roles spanning Thailand, Vietnam, and the Maldives. Her experience includes Executive Assistant Manager at Avani+ Hua Hin, as well as key leadership positions overseeing Operations, Food and Beverage, and Spa.

Most recently, as Resort Manager at Anantara Chiang Mai Resort, Tudsaporn

provided single-point leadership across all operational functions, successfully delivering revenue and GOP targets while maintaining high standards of guest satisfaction and service excellence.

“We are confident that Tudsaporn’s leadership, operational discipline, and deep understanding of the Anantara brand will further strengthen Anantara Chiang Mai Resort and support its continued success,” said Nicholas Smith, Vice President of Operations for Asia at Minor Hotels.

“I am honoured to take on this role and to continue building on the strong foundations of Anantara Chiang Mai Resort,” said Tudsaporn Jaiboonthuen. “Together with the team, I look forward to creating meaningful guest experiences, celebrating the resort’s unique heritage, and driving sustainable growth while staying true to Anantara’s spirit of heartfelt hospitality.”

Located on the banks of the Mae Ping River, Anantara Chiang Mai Resort is an award-winning urban sanctuary renowned for its refined design, rich Lanna heritage,

# Web in Travel identifies five key travel trends set to shape APAC in 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Web in Travel (WiT), Asia’s leading travel intelligence and events platform, has unveiled its top five predictions for the year ahead. Editor in Chief Siew Hoon Yeoh draws on emerging signals across the region – from shifting traveller behaviour to the rapid adoption of new technologies.



tions, AI is reshaping how travellers discover, compare, and book experiences. For travel brands, this marks a shift toward hyper personalised, conversational commerce.

2. Secondary cities rise as the new growth engines

Across APAC, travellers are

looking beyond traditional hotspots. Searches for secondary cities have been growing faster than major hubs over the past two years in many APAC locations, driven by value, authenticity, and improved connectivity. Destinations such as Fukuoka, Tokushima, Kochi, and Denpasar are seeing significant increases in search interest.

This trend is reinforced by domestic travel growth – 35% of Asian travellers plan to travel mostly within their own country in 2026 (Agoda, 2025) – creating opportunities for lesser known destinations to capture new demand

Across Asia Pacific, demand is rising, traveller expectations are evolving, and new patterns are emerging that will reshape how destinations, brands, and intermediaries compete. Reports from leading travel data providers show strong momentum: APAC travel redirects for 2026 are up 9% year on year (Skyscanner, 2025), while digital adoption and AI enabled planning are accelerating rapidly, with AI already used by 39% of travellers for research and planning (Phocuswright, 2025).

1. AI driven trip planning goes mainstream AI has already become a core planning tool for APAC travellers. By late 2025, 58% of active travellers in key markets were already using AI for travel related tasks, and adoption is expected to surge further in 2026. In Asia, nearly 63% of travellers say they are likely to use AI for their next trip (Agoda, 2026 Travel Outlook Report).

From itinerary generation to real time translation and personalised recommenda-

3. Experience led travel surges: Food, culture, and mega events

Experience driven travel continues to dominate APAC demand. Culinary exploration, cultural immersion, and major entertainment events – from concerts to exhibitions – are shaping travel flows. In 2026, theme parks, immersive shows, and fan driven attractions across Asia are expected to be among the most booked experiences (Trip.com, December 2025).

# Emirates elevates next generation of commercial leaders

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has announced leadership appointments across key global markets, advancing its commitment to developing a strong pipeline of Emirati talent to drive future growth. Effective 1 February, the following commercial management movements will take place:

- Majid Al Falasi, currently Manager Vietnam, will become Manager Indonesia.
- Wahid Albaloooshi, currently District Manager Jeddah, will become Manager Vietnam.
- Mohammed Alqassim, currently Country Manager Cambodia, will become District Manager Jeddah.
- Fahad Al Hassawi, currently District Manager Eastern Province – KSA, will become Country Manager Cambodia.
- Sultan Bin Hadda will become Commercial Support Manager, Eastern Province – KSA.

These rotations are part of Emirates’ Outstation Programme, a UAE National graduate training initiative designed to

provide immersive, rotational roles across Emirates’ global network. The programme focuses on developing future leaders in commercial operations, cargo, and airport management through extensive training, mentorship, and international exposure, helping participants build versatile skill sets and strong global networks.

As a core component of the Emirates Group’s Emiratisation strategy, the initiative aims to cultivate local talent for future global leadership roles.





# Revealing

## Mirissa's Zen & Chic Luxury

Along the sun-drenched shores of Mirissa Beach, four boutique villas by Reveal The Collection come together to create a sanctuary of tropical tranquillity. This intimate collection offers twenty-eight thoughtfully designed rooms, infused with southern island character and contemporary comforts. Here, the gentle rhythm of the ocean becomes your morning wake-up call, welcoming you into a setting defined by panoramic ocean views and breathtaking sunrises.

Immerse yourself in the art of paradisaal dining as you embark on a culinary journey shaped by innovative cuisine, authentic flavours, and handcrafted spices. Reveal The Collection – Mirissa also opens the door to a wealth of adventures, from whale-watching expeditions and surfing to exploring Parrot Rock and the iconic, Instagrammable Coconut Tree Hill. Experience the calming zen of Mirissa Beach, paired with the chic luxury of Reveal The Collection — where paradise feels effortlessly personal.

lantern boutique hotel | ubuntu beach villas | the beach house



Blissful floating breakfast in the pool 

Private beach access and Mirissa adventures 

 Turtle Hatchery experience

 Intimate candlelit dinners by the beach



**REVEAL**

+94 77 376 5363

[www.revealthecollection.com](http://www.revealthecollection.com)





# HOTELS

## A Harvest Celebration at The Pegasus Reef: The Golden Buffet

TTA BULLETIN

On 21st December, Pegasus Reef Hotel hosted Santa Land at The Reef – a festive Christmas carnival filled with joy and excitement for children.

Kids enjoyed colourful decorations, fun games, cheerful music, and magical moments that brought the Christmas spirit to life. The highlight was seeing their faces light up with happiness as they explored

the carnival and enjoyed festive treats in a safe, family-friendly setting by the sea.

Santa Land was a celebration of childhood joy and unforgettable family memories. We were thrilled to welcome so many happy families and look forward to creating more magical experiences at Pegasus Reef Hotel.



## From Spain to Graze: A Spanish Culinary Experience at Hilton Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

This January, Hilton Colombo adds a Spanish flair to its dinner buffet at Graze Kitchen with ‘From Spain to Graze,’ an exclusive culinary showcase set to take place from January 28 to February 7, 2026. The experience promises to bring the vibrant flavors of Spain to Graze Kitchen, alongside its signature international dinner buffet spread.

Conducted in collaboration with Hilton Madrid Airport, this vibrant culinary showcase will feature Sous Chef Manuel Jurado and Chef Andrea Oliden, who will present a curated assortment of delicacies that will highlight the diversity of Spanish cuisine.

Guests dining at Graze Kitchen will experience authentic Spanish starters and tapas, live cooking stations with carveries,



signature Spanish main courses inspired by regional flavors, and a selection of traditional desserts, all thoughtfully integrated into the dinner buffet. A vivid Spanish-inspired

ambiance, complete with music, themed décor, and traditional attire, will also create a lively and immersive setting that enhances guests’ dining experience, whilst celebrating Spanish culture.

“‘From Spain to Graze’ celebrates the joy of sharing global flavors and culinary stories,” said Manesh Fernando, Area General Manager for Hilton Sri Lanka and General Manager of Hilton Colombo. “This special collaboration with Hilton Madrid Airport will allow us to offer our guests a truly authentic taste of Spain, whilst representing a continued elevation of the dining experience at Graze Kitchen.”

## Explore Southern Thailand in Style with ONYX Hospitality Group’s Exceptional Stays in Phuket, Koh Samui and Krabi

TTA BULLETIN

ONYX Hospitality Group, a leading regional player and prominent hospitality management company in Southeast Asia specialising in hotels, resorts, serviced apartments, and luxury residences, invites travellers looking for destination inspiration for 2026 to embark on a journey and experience the enchanting charm of Thailand’s southern sea.

Across its properties in Phuket, Koh Samui, and Krabi, spanning both its Amari and OZO brands, ONYX Hospitality Group brings the magic of Southern Thailand to life through stays that seamlessly blend breathtaking natural landscapes with contemporary comfort.

Guests can embrace the inviting tropical climate on powder-soft beaches, take in panoramic views of crystal-clear waters, and share warm, uplifting moments with family and friends. Each destination offers vibrant holiday experiences designed to create memories that last a lifetime.

Amari Phuket is a five-star resort nestled along the curve of Patong Bay, offering expansive views of the Andaman Sea amid serene natural surroundings. Renowned for its privacy and romantic ambiance, the resort is an ideal retreat for both couples and families seeking rest and relaxation.

Amari Koh Samui, a resort on Chaweng Beach, offers guests a tranquil escape surrounded by lush greenery and the warm charm of Thai hospitality, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in every moment of their stay.

The resort also offers guests effortless access to the local charms of Samui, including the stunning Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park and the picturesque Na



Muang Waterfall. With a convenient location that supports a variety of travel experiences, each stay is designed to be filled with captivating moments and unforgettable memories.

Amari Vogue Krabi is a beachfront resort on Tubkaek Beach, where the beauty of the Andaman Sea seamlessly meets a serene and romantic atmosphere. Distinguished by its elegant applied Lanna Thai architecture, the resort offers an ideal retreat for travellers seeking tranquility and privacy. Guests can explore the region’s breathtaking natural attractions, from boat excursions to the Hong Islands and kayaking through lush mangrove forests, to visiting the famous Thale Waek (Separated Sea) viewpoint, Ao Nang, and the picturesque Than Bok Khorani Waterfall.

Guests can rejuvenate both body and mind with soothing treatments at Breeze Spa, and savour exceptional dining experiences at the resort’s four restaurants and bars—each offering its own distinctive ambiance.

OZO Phuket is an energetic lifestyle hotel located just 150 metres from Kata Beach, one of Phuket’s most beautiful stretches of shoreline. It offers guests a fun-filled getaway with a wide range of water and beach activities, including paddleboarding, surfing, and cycling along the coast. The rooms feature a simple, clean design while still offering full amenities and seamless online connectivity.



# WHERE THE COAST SETS THE MOOD

RELAXED SEASIDE MOMENTS  
SHAPED BY WARM LIGHTS, OCEAN AIR AND EFFORTLESS RESORT LIVING.



Watch us in 360° | VR / 4K



**PEGASUS REEF**  
*the city resort that's just right!*

[www.pegasusreefhotel.com](http://www.pegasusreefhotel.com)

[www.facebook.com/pegasusreefwattala](https://www.facebook.com/pegasusreefwattala)

[www.instagram.com/pegasusreef\\_wattala](https://www.instagram.com/pegasusreef_wattala)



# The Pegasus Reef: A Culinary & Cultural Haven Reimagined

TTA BULLETIN

In the ever-evolving landscape of Sri Lanka's hospitality, The Pegasus Reef Hotel resonate with as much enduring charm and commitment to excellence. This beloved four-star haven, perched on the edge of Wattala and a mere 30 minutes from the buzz of Colombo, has long been celebrated for its stunning vistas of the city skyline across the water. Now, entering an exciting new chapter, Pegasus Reef unveils a series of transformative upgrades, masterfully blending modern luxury with its signature, heartfelt hospitality, a warmth that has always been the true soul of the property all while retaining that priceless, panoramic Colombo view.

The first phase of this renaissance is already complete, offering guests an immediately enhanced experience. Culinary journeys are at the forefront, beginning with the revitalised Sand and Spice Restaurant. Here, a fresh, contemporary design sets the stage for a delicious exploration of flavours, where vibrant buffets and à la carte specialities showcase both local zest and international classics. The guest rooms and corridors have undergone a sophisticated makeover, creating serene sanctuaries with soothing coastal palettes and plush new furnishings. Perhaps most significantly, the hotel has reimagined its crown jewel: Kurulu Kele. This iconic bird sanctuary within the hotel grounds has been carefully nurtured, with new walkways and viewing points ensuring this unique slice of nature remains a tranquil retreat.

But this is only the beginning. The Pegasus Reef is poised for an even more ambitious wave of enhancements, set to elevate every facet of the guest journey. The transformation will start at the very first impression, with a grand redesign of the hotel entrance



and lobby. The banquet halls and outdoor wedding locations are also slated for a magnificent overhaul, designed to offer unparalleled versatility and style. In a testament to Sri Lanka's beautiful diversity, The Pegasus Reef proudly hosts weddings of all religions, providing a stunning, beautifully appointed canvas for every couple's dream celebration.



The culinary scene is set for a spectacular expansion with plans to launch Salt Theory, a chic new beach bar where mixology meets the ocean breeze, and the Fishery Sea Food Restaurant, a dedicated destination promising the freshest catch in an authentic, atmospheric setting.

Yet, beyond the bricks and mortar, it is the vibrant life within the hotel that truly defines it. This was perfectly illustrated in January 2026, a month that sparkled with community and celebration.

The hotel joyously marked Thai Pongal, with special culinary offerings and traditional decorations honouring the harvest festival. Energy levels soared during the lively Couple Fitness Program, and the calendar culminated in the prestigious Annual Corporate Cocktail, where the hotel's elegant spaces and impeccable service facilitated an evening of networking and celebration against the backdrop of the setting sun.



Through all these changes and celebrations, the soul of The Pegasus Reef remains constant. It is still that accessible coastal escape where genuine service, delicious food, and the serenity of Kurulu Kele form the unchanging heart of the hotel. The Pegasus Reef Hotel is not just upgrading its facilities; it is thoughtfully curating its future as a complete destination for gastronomy, culture, and connection. It invites you to rediscover a classic, now reimagined for the modern era.

# Mandara Resort Mirissa: A Commitment to Conservation, Rooted in Care

TTA BULLETIN



Along the sunlit shores of Mirissa, where the Indian Ocean gently laps against golden sands, Mandara Resort Mirissa plays host to a conservation effort that has quietly made a lasting impact. Since 2008, the resort's Turtle Conservation Initiative has grown into a meaningful pillar of its sustainability journey, demonstrating how hospitality can actively support the preservation of Sri Lanka's natural heritage.

What began as a modest, instinctive response to protect nesting turtles has evolved into a structured and responsible programme embedded within the resort's wider CSR philosophy. Each year, between October and May, the beach in front of Mandara becomes a vital nesting ground for several endangered sea turtle species, including the Green Turtle, Olive Ridley, Hawksbill, Loggerhead and Leatherback.

Working in close coordination with the Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Department, turtle eggs laid along the shoreline are carefully relocated to a protected hatchery within the resort grounds. During the 2024-2025 nesting season, the Mandara team successfully safeguarded over 13,000 hatchlings from an estimated 14,000-15,000 eggs — giving thousands of young turtles a fighting chance as they make their first journey to the ocean.

The work is meticulous and demanding. Resort staff maintain constant surveillance



to protect nests from natural predators such as dogs and monitor lizards, while also engaging with local fishing communities to discourage illegal egg collection. When eggs are discovered in local possession, the resort adopts an ethical approach by purchasing them back, transforming potential risk into education and collaboration.

For Chairman Sagara Paliyawadana, the initiative represents a shared responsibility rather than a symbolic gesture. "Every hatchling we protect carries the promise of a healthier marine ecosystem," he says, underscoring the pride taken by the Mandara team in safeguarding Sri Lanka's coastal biodiversity.

Guests, too, are invited to connect with the experience. For many visitors — including families and travellers from India seeking meaningful, nature-led holidays — witnessing a turtle release or learning about conservation efforts becomes a deeply memorable highlight of their stay.

Today, the Mandara Hatchery stands as a powerful example of sustainable tourism in practice. Supported by ongoing CSR investment and scientific oversight, it reinforces Mandara Resort Mirissa's role not just as a beachfront retreat, but as a dedicated custodian of the ocean's most ancient travellers — nurturing life, one turtle at a time.





# Amba Yaalu Kandalama

Marks One Year of Redefining Women-Led Hospitality in Sri Lanka

Amba Yaalu Kandalama, Sri Lanka's first women-led hotel, proudly marks its first anniversary, celebrating a year of empowerment, inclusion, and purposeful hospitality.

Amba Yaalu Kandalama was conceived in response to a pressing gap within Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality sector. Despite women representing 52.8% of the national population and achieving high literacy levels, female participation in the formal hospitality workforce remains critically low at approximately 10%. Limited opportunities to showcase talent, restricted access to education and professional training, workplace discrimination, and concerns around safety have long prevented women from fully participating and progressing within the industry.



Recognizing both the challenge and the responsibility to act, Thema Collection, a pioneering, thematic, and eco-conscious hospitality brand - introduced Amba Yaalu Kandalama as a bold intervention. Under the leadership of its Chairman, renowned for conceptualizing 16 distinctive properties that have reshaped Sri Lanka's tourism landscape, Amba Yaalu was envisioned as more than a hotel. It was designed as a platform where women are trusted to lead, supported to grow, and empowered to redefine hospitality on their own terms.

Nestled beside the serene Kandalama Lake and surrounded by flourishing mango groves, Amba Yaalu Kandalama stands as a living example of what inclusive tourism can achieve, proving that when women are given equal space, opportunity, and respect, they deliver experiences defined by authenticity, warmth, and excellence.



**Mr. Chandra Wickramasinghe**  
Chairman - Thema Collection

Beyond the boundaries of the property, Amba Yaalu Kandalama has intentionally extended its impact along the value chain. A conscious effort has been made to engage and support women-led suppliers, particularly in areas such as flowers, mushrooms and spices, ensuring that the benefits of tourism reach beyond the hotel and into the wider community. This approach reinforces the belief that true empowerment must be inclusive, sustained, and shared.

Local recruitment has been another cornerstone of Amba Yaalu's first year of operations. Approximately 20% of the team has been recruited directly from the surrounding villages, creating meaningful employment opportunities close to home and strengthening the relationship between the hotel and the local community.



Speaking on the vision behind Amba Yaalu, the Chairman of Thema Collection stated:

"Amba Yaalu is more than a resort; it represents a promise shaped by the strength of women, inspired by my single mother who nurtured and raised eight children with resilience.

Over the past year, we have seen confidence grow, skills flourish, and hospitality delivered with genuine warmth and care at every turn. Amba Yaalu has reaffirmed my belief that women's compassion, creativity, and courage are not just strengths, but the very heart of meaningful hospitality.



As we mark one year of this journey, Amba Yaalu stands as our gift to Sri Lanka - proof that inclusive tourism can inspire change, uplift lives, and redefine the future of our industry. This is a movement wrapped in mango blossoms and bound by purpose."

Reflecting on the journey, Resort Manager Jeewanthi Adhikari shared her perspective on building a women-led team from the ground up:

"When we first started, there were many questions about whether we would be able to recruit and sustain an all-women team. Today, those doubts have been replaced with confidence. We have built a committed and capable team, and in our recruitment process, we continue to give special emphasis to local women, creating opportunities for growth, learning, and long-term careers in hospitality."



As Amba Yaalu Kandalama enters its second year, it does so with renewed commitment and quiet confidence. The journey ahead will continue to focus on deepening skills, expanding opportunities, and strengthening its role as a catalyst for inclusive growth within Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

More than a celebration of one year, this milestone affirms a powerful truth, that when women are empowered, communities prosper and hospitality becomes a force for lasting change. At Amba Yaalu Kandalama, the future of tourism is not just being imagined; it is being lived, led, and nurtured every day.





## Up to 80% Savings from Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Maldives

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Maldives has announced a limited-time flash offer inviting travellers to experience the Maldives in March, one of the destination’s most favourable months, with savings of up to 80% when booking direct. Available across all four of their Maldives resorts, the offer combines exceptional value with added island experiences, allowing guests to enjoy the warmth and tranquillity of the Maldives at a time when weather conditions are ideal. The promotion is open for bookings from 23 January to 2 February 2026, for stays between 1 March and 31 March 2026, using the promo code MARCH26.

Guests can look forward to encounters with vibrant marine life through diving and snorkelling excursions, with opportunities to spot manta rays, reef sharks, and sea turtles. Beyond the ocean, the experience extends to island hopping, sunset fishing trips, soothing Balinese spa treatments, and elegant four-course dinners set by the beach. Guests staying a minimum of three nights are also eligible to enjoy resort credits of up to USD 150, adding further value to their island escape.

### Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives

Guests booking direct may select any two island perks, or enjoy up to all benefits once per stay depending on GHA DISCOVERY membership tier\*, along with USD 100 resort credits for stays of three nights or more.

- Beach Dinner
- Balinese Massage
- Swim & Snorkel
- Local Island Visit

### Cinnamon Velifushi Maldives

Guests booking direct may select any two island perks, or enjoy up to all benefits once per stay depending on GHA



DISCOVERY membership tier\*, along with USD 150 resort credits for stays of three nights or more.

- Beach Dinner
- Spa Treatment
- Island Hopping
- Dolphin Watching

### Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives

Guests booking direct may select any two island perks, or enjoy up to all benefits once per stay depending on GHA DISCOVERY membership tier\*, along with USD 100 resort credits for stays of three nights or more.

- Sunset Fishing
- Island Hopping
- Bottle of Bubbly
- Kayaking Experience

### Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon

Guests booking direct may select any two island perks, or enjoy up to all benefits once per stay depending on GHA DISCOVERY membership tier\*, along with USD 100 resort credits for stays of three nights or more.

- Beach Dinner
  - Balinese Massage
  - Sunset Fishing
  - Dolphin Safari
- GHA DISCOVERY Membership Tier Benefits
- Silver Tier: Select 2 benefits
  - Gold Tier: Select 3 benefits

## A New Era of Luxury Travel: IHG Hotels and Resorts brings Vignette Collection brand to India

TTA BULLETIN

IHG® Hotels & Resorts, one of the world’s leading hotel companies, has signed a management agreement with Hanu Overseas to bring its distinctive luxury and lifestyle brand, Vignette Collection, to India. Scheduled to open early 2026, the Vignette Collection hotel in Panchkula reinforces IHG’s strategy to accelerate its growth within India’s high-potential luxury segment.

Vignette Collection is a family of one-of-a-kind, exclusive hotels curated for guests seeking rich and varied stay experiences in some of the most sought-after urban and resort locations. The brand also gives owners of world-class independent hotels the opportunity to retain their distinctive identity, while benefitting from IHG’s global scale and luxury and lifestyle expertise. The brand is recognised for purposeful luxury, memorable rituals and stays that are authentically connected to their location.

Strategically located in the rapidly developing Chandigarh Metropolitan Region, Panchkula is a dynamic economic hub. The tri-city cluster is home to major IT parks, leading automotive companies, pharmaceutical and manufacturing hubs, PSUs, and premier national institutions. The upcoming 145-room hotel, featuring 11 suites, will reflect the Vignette Collection brand ethos of individuality and meaningful hospitality. Guests can look forward to four distinct dining venues including a signature restaurant, lobby lounge, and a private dining space. Amenities will include a swimming pool, spa, fitness centre, curated retail, and ample parking. With over 2,200 square meters of dedicated meeting and event space, the hotel is ideally positioned to meet the



region’s strong demand for MICE and social celebrations, particularly weddings.

Commenting on the signing, Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts, said: “Introducing Vignette Collection to India is a significant milestone as we expand our luxury and lifestyle portfolio in the country. This move directly responds to the growing segment of discerning travellers seeking deeply personal, locally-rooted experiences. Vignette Collection offers captivating individuality backed by IHG’s global strength and loyalty programme, IHG One Rewards. Panchkula, with its strong year-round demand and economic vitality, presents the perfect landscape for our brand’s entry. We are excited to elevate the hospitality offering here with a truly distinctive luxury experience.”

Speaking on behalf of the ownership, Aman Gupta added: “We are proud to partner with IHG Hotels & Resorts to bring the Vignette Collection brand to India. Panchkula is emerging as a preferred destination for celebrations, retreats and meaningful leisure travel; and we believe this partnership will set a new benchmark for luxury hospitality in the region. Our vision is to create a hotel that celebrates its unique identity while offering thoughtfully designed experiences rooted in a strong sense of place.”

This signing strengthens IHG’s development momentum in the Chandigarh Metropolitan Region, joining the upcoming Crowne Plaza Chandigarh Zirakpur

## Dusit records all-time high hotel signings in 2025, positions for a strong year of openings in 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit International, one of Thailand’s leading hotel and property development companies, has achieved the strongest development performance in its history, recording an all-time high of 24 hotel signings in 2025 and significantly strengthening its global pipeline across key growth markets in Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.

The milestone comes at a time when many hotel groups are reassessing expansion strategies amid rising development costs and shifting investor expectations. For Dusit, the record year reflects a clear and deliberate approach to growth – one grounded in brand clarity, disciplined execution, and the ability to bring projects to market efficiently to create early and sustainable value for owners.

While the number of signings marks a new high point, Dusit’s development strategy

continues to prioritise quality over scale alone. Central to this approach is a growing focus on conversions and brownfield developments, which offer faster timelines and earlier returns compared to traditional greenfield projects, while allowing the group to expand its footprint across diverse markets with agility and control.

This capability was demonstrated in several projects that were signed and opened in 2025, including Dusit Hotel AG Park, Chengdu, China; dusitD2 Feydhoo Maldives; and Tantawan Tented Camp, Chiang Rai, Thailand. Each reflects Dusit’s ability to execute at speed while maintaining brand standards and delivering distinctive guest experiences aligned with local context.



At the same time, Dusit’s evolving brand architecture has played a key role in supporting international growth. The recent introduction of Devarana – Dusit Retreats, Dusit Collection, and Dusit Hotels has

expanded the group’s reach across wellness-led luxury, character-driven high-end stays, and the upper-upscale segment, respectively, allowing Dusit to respond more precisely to the needs of travellers and development partners.

### A year of firsts

In Indonesia, the 2025 signing of Kaliwatu Villas & Residences – Dusit Collection, a boutique luxury retreat in Labuan Bajo, the gateway to Komodo National Park, marked Dusit’s first hotel signing in the country.

In Japan, Dusit built on the success of Dusit Thani Kyoto and ASAI Kyoto Shijo with the signing of its first Dusit Collection property in the country: WE Hotel – Dusit Collection, an intimate lakeside retreat with 55 rooms and three private villas on the shores of Lake Toya in Hokkaido.

India also emerged as a major growth market in 2025, with six new properties signed across the Dusit Collection and Dusit Princess brands. The signings span a diverse mix of destinations, from the Himalayan retreats of Solang and Kasol to key urban centres including Kolkata, Raipur, and Bhiwadi, reflecting Dusit’s ambition to build scale across both leisure-led and city markets in the country.

The Maldives also remained a key focus, with the signing of Devarana – Dusit Retreat Maldives building on recent momentum in the market, including the





**Browns**

HOTELS & RESORTS

# The best kind of *luxury* Is the kind that changes you



When was the last time a vacation truly changed you? At Browns Hotels & Resorts, we believe the best kind of luxury is the kind that transforms you. After all, what's the point of travelling across the world if all you bring back is a photo album?

We curate journeys that break routine, ignite wonder, and awaken your senses—whether you're witnessing the world's largest gathering of wild elephants, sharing beachside dinners, immersing in rich Sri Lankan traditions and culture, or reconnecting with your breath at a forest Ayurveda retreat.

Browns Hotels & Resorts offer authentic Sri Lankan hospitality that embraces you from the moment you arrive, and every experience is designed to connect you more deeply with the island, and with yourself.

Exactly how Sri Lanka as it should be felt...leaving you changed, inside out.



**Occidental**  
Eden Beruwala

**Occidental**  
Paradise Dambulla



[www.browshotels.com](http://www.browshotels.com)



# HOTELS

## Minor Hotels Sharpens Growth Agenda for 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Record year of signings drives new phase of expansion focused on portfolio diversification and asset-light growth

Minor Hotels will pursue a focused approach to growth in 2026, building on a year of record development momentum to prioritise market depth, portfolio diversification and capital-efficient expansion.

The group signed 40 new hotel contracts and master agreements in 2025 – its highest annual total to date – and expects to secure a further 25 signings in the first quarter of 2026, highlighting sustained owner demand and signalling another record growth year ahead.

With its strongest pipeline to date and a portfolio of more than 640 properties globally, the year ahead marks the beginning of a new phase of growth for the hotel owner and operator, marked by targeted asset-light expansion and supported by the addition of four new hotel brands and a strengthened global platform under the Minor Hotels master brand.

“The pace of recent signings reflects strong owner confidence in our brands and platform,” said Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO of Minor International (SET:MINT), the parent company of Minor Hotels. “Driving growth through a higher mix of HMAs and franchising allows us to scale with discipline, while our continued role as owners keeps us closely aligned to hotel performance and brand standards. As we add depth to our brand portfolio in 2026,



this combination of global reach and an owner’s mindset gives us the insight needed to really tailor solutions to different assets and owner ambitions.”

Minor Hotels will focus investment and development in 2026 on markets where it sees the strongest long-term demand signal, combining deeper positions in established regions with selective, focused entry into new destinations.

Of the 25 new deals that Minor expects in Q1, more than 60% will be in Middle East and Asia, signalling the group’s intent to drive a higher contribution from those regions to balance its strong presence in Europe, which currently accounts for more than half of the group’s portfolio.

In 2026, the group is set to debut multiple brands in North America, including in the key strategic cities of New York and Miami, plus in the Caribbean, with a selection of its brands including within the luxury segment. This marks a significant step in strengthening its presence in the high-priority North America market. This luxury portfolio expansion will also extend into Australia, where the group already operates more than 60 properties,

## Nala Maldives by Jawakara Islands Maldives Now Open

TTA BULLETIN

Crown & Champa Resorts (CCR) has just launched Nala Maldives by Jawakara Islands, now open as of 1 December 2025. Located a brief 35-minute seaplane flight from Velana International Airport, the resort sits on a 10-hectare island in Lhaviyani Atoll. This intimate, adults-only sanctuary (guests age 12 and above) is designed for romance, connection, and relaxation.



The dual-island concept means that Nala Maldives guests can access the full range of Jawakara’s restaurants, recreation, and experiences, before returning to Nala’s adult-only tranquillity. The trip between in the islands takes only three minutes by speedboat.

Central to both resorts is a deep commitment to sustainability and marine conservation. Nala guests can also visit the Jawakara Atoll Research Centre and the Maldives’ first Sea Turtle Health Institute (developed by Jawakara Islands Maldives, managed by Olive Ridley Project). These groundbreaking facilities are pioneering marine research, wildlife rehabilitation and the world’s first accredited sea turtle veterinary nursing programme.

Nala Maldives features 80 one-bedroom villas, each designed for comfort and

privacy. Categories include 20 Sunrise Beach Villas, 8 Romantic Beach Villas, 22 Sunset Beach Pool Villas, and 30 Ocean Pool Villas, all featuring tropical décor, private porches, and in select categories, solar-powered energy systems. Villas are complemented by private pools or direct lagoon access, offering uninterrupted views.

The resort’s Sulha Spa offers a comprehensive wellness experience with facilities including a Himalayan Salt Room, Red-Light Therapy Room, Sauna, and Cold Bath - the first of its kind within the CCR collection. Treatments range from traditional massages, hydrotherapy tretment and Ayurveda therapies to yoga sessions and organic skincare rituals, combining modern wellness with holistic healing.

Culinary experiences include Velu serving international cuisine through live cooking

## Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives Curates a Five-Day Valentine’s Celebration Where Love Takes Centre Stage

TTA BULLETIN

In a place where the ocean stretches endlessly and time seems to soften, Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives reimagines Valentine’s Day as more than a single celebration. This February, love unfolds across five thoughtfully curated days, inviting couples to slow down, reconnect and savour moments that feel instinctive, intimate and deeply personal. Each experience is designed to complement the rhythm of island life, allowing romance to emerge naturally from playful beginnings to a graceful finale by the sea.



The journey begins on 10 February with a couples’ pickleball tournament, setting a light-hearted tone for the days ahead. Designed to spark laughter and friendly competition, the experience offers couples a chance to share a moment of fun, ease and connection, a reminder that love is often found in the simplest joys.

As the celebrations continue on 11 February, couples are invited to sail into the golden hour on a sunset cruise across calm Maldivian waters. With the sky awash in warm hues and the ocean gently unfolding beneath, the evening offers space to pause, raise a toast and reconnect, framed by one of nature’s most romantic settings.

On 12 February, the pace slows further with an early morning couples’ yoga session led by the resort’s spa team. As the island awakens, partners move in quiet harmony, focusing on balance, relaxation and shared presence. The experience offers a mindful interlude, grounding both body and mind while strengthening togetherness.

As sunset approaches on 13 February, romance takes on a celebratory note at the Sunset White Party. Dressed in white, couples gather for an evening of music, movement and island elegance. As the sky deepens in colour, the atmosphere comes alive with laughter and rhythm, culminating in a special reward for the evening’s most spirited dancing couple.

The five-day celebration reaches its crescendo on Valentine’s Day, 14 February, with an elegant gala dinner at Coral Beach. Set against sweeping ocean views, the evening brings refined flavours and a carefully curated ambience together, offering couples a memorable and romantic conclusion to their Valentine’s journey.

At Cinnamon Hakuraa Huraa Maldives, Valentine’s is not confined to a single date on the calendar. It is a series of shared

# Build Your Career In Hospitality

NIRMALAN NAGENDRA

Learn with Nagendra and become a veteran hotelier. From Rooms, to F&B, and Finance, Nirmalan Nagendra has got you covered.

37+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

10+ COUNTRIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

01 360 degree Knowledge and insight

02 One on One Discussion

03 Possible Job Opportunity

Nirmalan Nagendra  
Managing Director  
NN Recruitment Consulting (Pvt) Ltd

EMAIL: NIRMALAN\_NAGENDRA@YAHOO.COM

CALL OR WHATSAPP: +94 771116669





**ITB**  
CHINA

The Market-  
place for  
China's Travel  
Industry

# ULTIMATE BUSINESS POTENTIAL **LIVES HERE.**

26 – 28 MAY 2026 • SHANGHAI  
[itb-china.com](http://itb-china.com)

A brand of



**MESSE BERLIN**  
China



## Amari Colombo Welcomes Acclaimed Indian Chef to Elevate Indian Curry & Tandoor Cuisine

TTA BULLETIN

Amari Colombo is proud to announce the appointment of Chef Puran Singh as our Speciality Chef, bringing an extensive career spanning over a decade across India and Sri Lanka. With a rich background in Indian specialty cuisine, Chef Puran is set to redefine the Indian dining experience at Amari Colombo.

Chef Puran has worked with some of South Asia’s most prestigious hotels and resorts, including The Oterra, Crowne Plaza Electronic City, Khedda Resort, Angsana Oasis Spa & Resort, Atria Hotel, Copper Chimney Restaurant, and Hotel The Marty Exotica Resort.

With expertise in Indian curry and tandoor specialties, Chef Puran blends traditional flavours with modern techniques, promising guests an authentic and elevated dining experience.



“Chef Puran brings not only technical brilliance but also a deep understanding of Indian culinary traditions,” said Sampath Meddawattage, Executive Chef at Amari

Colombo. “His journey across India and Sri Lanka, coupled with his dedication to flavour, creativity, and presentation, will elevate our Indian cuisine offerings to new heights.”

Guests at Amari Colombo can look forward to experiencing India’s rich culinary heritage through innovative dishes and tandoor specialties, crafted with precision and passion by Chef Puran.

## Uga Ghiri Recognized by The Times as One of the World’s Most Exciting Hotel Openings for 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Uga Ghiri, the newest property from Uga Resorts, has been spotlighted by The Times as one of the world’s most exciting hotel openings for the year ahead. In its feature on standout stays to watch in 2026, Susan d’Arcy highlighted properties ranging from peaceful retreats in Mykonos to the smallest resort in the Maldives, noting that



this year’s crop of openings “will surely ignite” the passions of travellers seeking unique experiences.



According to The Times, Uga Ghiri exemplifies this spirit. The ten-acre Uga Ghiri, the group’s eighth property, slated to open mid-2026 on the historic Sutherland tea estate in Ella, will offer 15 private and understated villas with spectacular outdoor hot tubs overlooking the iconic Nine Arch Bridge, emerald tea plantations, and the mist-clad mountains of Sri Lanka’s Hill Country.

The estate’s restored colonial manor serves as an atmospheric restaurant, showcasing dishes inspired by regional Sri Lankan cuisine. With its combination of natural beauty, thoughtful design, and authentic culinary experiences, Uga Ghiri promises to be a destination that resonates with discerning travellers seeking serenity, privacy, and a true sense of place

## Jetwing Surf & Safari Named Among Sri Lanka’s Top Safari Hotels by Condé Nast Traveller and Lonely Planet

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Surf & Safari, the eco-luxury retreat in Pottuvil on Sri Lanka’s magnetic East Coast, has been recognised by global travel authorities Condé Nast Traveller and Lonely Planet as one of the country’s best safari hotels. Set along the pristine shores near Arugam Bay, the resort features 20 seashell-inspired beachfront cabanas, designed with sustainability in mind, offering a rustic yet luxurious coastal escape.



While celebrated for its proximity to world-class surf breaks such as Arugam Bay and Pottuvil Point, Jetwing Surf & Safari, A Luxury Reserve, invites travellers to discover much more. The resort’s curated experiences open a window to the region’s rich biodiversity, cultural heritage, and archaeological marvels that make the enchanting east a compelling year-round destination.

Just an hour from the resort lies Kumana National Park, a serene wilderness forming the eastern sector of Yala. Far less crowded, yet equally captivating as the Yala National Park, Kumana is a paradise for nature lovers. Spanning over 35,000 hectares, Kumana is an underappreciated gem, rich in biodiversity and ecological variety. Its landscape unfolds across dry-zone scrublands, monsoon forests, lagoons, mangroves, rocky outcrops, and villus. Its centerpiece is Kumana Villu, a wetland basin that attracts thousands of migratory and native birds, including Black-necked Storks, Lesser Adjutants, Eurasian Spoonbills, Great Thick-knees, pelicans, painted storks, and herons, creating a breathtaking spectacle throughout the year. Kumana is also rapidly gaining recognition as one of the world’s emerging leopard strongholds, with recent studies placing it among the highest leopard population densities globally. Its diverse terrain and abundant prey, ranging from spotted deer to wild buffalo, make it ideal for big-cat sightings while offering excellent opportunities to encounter elephants, jackals, mugger crocodiles, and a variety of reptiles and small mammals.

Besides the wildlife, the park shelters remarkable archaeological heritage, most notably the ancient Kudumbigala Monastery located just outside its boundaries. Scattered ruins, drip-ledged caves, and remnants of ancient carvings reveal the site’s long spiritual history, adding a compelling cultural layer to Kumana’s wild landscape. This rare blend of tranquil landscapes and vibrant wildlife cements its position as a must-visit for those seeking the raw beauty of Sri Lanka’s wild heart.

Beyond the traditional game drives, Jetwing Surf & Safari is reimagining the safari experience. Guests can embark on a tuk-tuk safari straight from the resort, winding through rustic village roads to the

Rottaikulam Tank at the edge of Lahugala National Park. Wildlife often roams beyond park boundaries here, offering rare, crowd-free opportunities to observe elephants and other species in their natural habitat. For a different perspective, the Lagoon Safari offers a quiet sail across the still waters of Pottuvil Lagoon guided by local fishermen, revealing mangrove ecosystems and the wildlife that roam freely around the region.

Hashan Cooray, Director of Marketing and Development at Jetwing Hotels, said, “These recognitions are not just wins for Jetwing Surf & Safari, but for the entire eastern belt of Sri Lanka. It helps debunk the myth that this region is only about surfing, while in reality, this part of the island offers so much more. From incredible wildlife to history and archaeology, it truly is a year-round destination that deserves much more attention.”

For travelers seeking more than surf and sun, Sri Lanka’s East Coast offers an unforgettable mix of adventure and discovery. From the enthralling wildlife of Kumana National Park to ancient monasteries and archaeological treasures, this region delivers experiences that rival any on the island. And there is no better place to begin your journey than Jetwing Surf & Safari, proudly recognised by leaders in global travel media as one of Sri Lanka’s finest safari hotels.

With a legacy spanning over half a century in the tourism industry, Jetwing Hotels stands as a true pioneer in crafting distinctive travel experiences and delivering the warmth of legendary Sri Lankan hospitality. Guided by the core values of passion, humility, tenacity, and a deep sense of family, this family-owned brand has long been committed to sustainability and responsible tourism. Jetwing continues to champion initiatives in community empowerment, environmental stewardship, and resource efficiency, ensuring its growth remains deeply rooted in purpose. Today, with more than 35 properties across the island, Jetwing’s diverse portfolio spans Luxury Reserves, Premium Hotels, Select Hotels, and Essentials, each offering its own lens into the island’s rich cultural heritage and breathtaking natural landscapes. No matter the destination, every Jetwing experience is crafted to immerse guests in the authentic beauty and iconic charm of Sri Lanka.



## Qatar Airways Colombo Celebrates Top Travel Partners

Qatar Airways Colombo hosted a prestigious awards ceremony at Cinnamon Life Colombo, recognising its Top 20 performing travel agents for the Financial Year 2024/2025. The event celebrated outstanding achievements in sales performance, revenue contribution and long-standing partnerships, reaffirming the airline's strong collaboration with the Sri Lankan travel trade.

The ceremony was attended by senior Qatar Airways management, including Mustafa Khambaty, Regional Manager – Indian Subcontinent; Ajay Jacob, Regional Manager Commercial Operations – Middle East, Caucasus, Indian Subcontinent and Pakistan; Sashini Seneviratne, Commercial Manager – Sri Lanka and Maldives; and Karthik Viswanathan, Vice President Sales – Middle East, Caucasus, Pakistan and Indian Subcontinent,

reflecting the airline's continued commitment to its agency partners.

Among the Top 20 agents honoured, Classic Travels secured the number one position, followed by 2nd Chance Travel in second place and Inqbaytor in third, in recognition of their exceptional performance throughout the year.



## Newburgh Ella: Where Tea Heritage Meets a New Chapter of Experiential Luxury

TTA BULLETIN

High in Sri Lanka's mist-laced Uva hills, where rolling tea plantations have shaped both landscape and livelihood for generations, a new hospitality story is unfolding. With the opening of Newburgh Ella, a Tea Factory Resort by Browns Hotels has transformed a 124-year-old tea factory into a luxury retreat—one that invites travellers not just to stay, but to step into Sri Lanka's enduring tea legacy.

Located on the Ella Passara main road, and set within one of the country's most scenic rehiions, Newburgh Ella reflects over 150 years of the Browns Group's heritage through Browns Hotels. The hotel features thoughtfully designed family rooms, specially catered for families, and is fully wheelchair accessible to all floors. One of its most distinctive highlights is the breathtaking view on a clear day, guests can enjoy panoramic views extending all the way to the southern coastline, with the privilege of witnessing a stunning sunrise directly from their rooms.

More than a hotel, it is an immersive destination that brings together history, culture, and contemporary comfort, positioning itself as a future icon on Sri Lanka's tourism map.

"Tea is one of Sri Lanka's most powerful global stories," says Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels & Resorts, reflecting on the vision behind the project. "With Newburgh Ella, we wanted to preserve that heritage while allowing guests to experience it meaningfully—beyond aesthetics,

into the very process and people behind it."

Originally a working tea factory, the building has been carefully repurposed to retain its industrial character and historical soul. Today, it houses 41 rooms, thoughtfully categorised into Silver, Gold, and Bronze—a nod to the hierarchy of tea grades, from prized Silver Tips to robust everyday blends. This subtle storytelling runs through the property, reinforcing its deep connection to the land and its produce.

What truly sets Newburgh apart is its experiential depth. Guests are invited to engage with tea not as a commodity, but as a living tradition. From tea plucking sessions in the surrounding estates to guided factory tours that trace the journey from leaf to cup, Newburgh Ella offers an on-site story few properties in Sri Lanka can match. The hotel's tea lounge further enhances this connection, allowing guests to savour tea in an authentic, unhurried setting—much as it has been enjoyed for generations.

Complementing the heritage experience is a carefully curated hospitality offering. The hotel features a main dining space for breakfast and dinner, alongside an Asian fusion restaurant that brings regional flavours into conversation with global tastes. Leisure spaces such as a billiard room designed for relaxed social gatherings and a children's play area with childcare facilities reflect Browns Hotels' understanding of today's traveller—par-

ticularly families seeking balance between exploration and comfort.

Situated on the Ella main road and an ideal location to venture on the Pekoe Trail, Newburgh Ella is ideally positioned for travellers interested in hiking, history, and scenic exploration, without the isolation often associated with converted plantation properties. This accessibility, combined with its scale and integrated experiences, gives Newburgh a competitive edge among Sri Lanka's growing portfolio of heritage hotels.

Beyond Newburgh Ella, the property reflects the broader philosophy driving Browns Hotels' expansion across Sri Lanka. With a portfolio that spans beachfront resorts such as Hotel Dolphin and Eden, wildlife-adjacent escapes, hill country retreats, and flexible accommodation formats including bungalows and villas, Browns Hotels has focused on offering diversity without compromising consistency. The offering ranges from villas to three- to five-star categories, ensuring appeal to a wide spectrum of travellers.

Central to this consistency is Browns Hotels' approach to service. Rather than managing properties remotely, the group places experienced General Managers on-site, empowering them to maintain standards while responding to local nuances. Incentive-driven performance structures further motivate teams, resulting in guest satisfaction ratings consistently

exceeding 90 percent. "Happy teams create memorable experiences," Wijeratne notes, highlighting a people-first philosophy that underpins the brand.

Sustainability is another cornerstone of Browns Hotels' strategy. From solar power adoption and flora and fauna conservation to active CSR initiatives and green certifications, sustainability is embedded both operationally and strategically. Importantly, this extends to cultural preservation—ensuring that communities surrounding each property remain integral to the tourism value chain.

Innovation also plays a role in differentiating the brand. Browns Hotels' luxury yacht experience at Port City Colombo adds a contemporary dimension to its portfolio. Featuring three bedrooms and an upper deck that accommodates up to 15 guests, the yacht caters to private celebrations, romantic escapes, and milestone events—an offering that resonates strongly with premium and experiential travellers.

This innovation is particularly relevant when considering the Indian market, which Browns Hotels continues to prioritise. With flight times of just one to two-and-a-half hours and strong value positioning, Sri Lanka remains highly attractive to Indian travellers. Browns has responded with round-trip offerings,



Eksath Wijeratne



Erik Solheim Attends Carbon-Neutral Symposium on Sustainable Tourism at Amba Yaalu

TTA BULLETIN



An exclusive Symposium on Sustainable Tourism was successfully held on 25 January 2026 at Amba Yaalu – Kandalama, Sri Lanka’s first 100% women-led hotel, operated by Thema Collection. The symposium brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and sustainability practitioners to discuss innovative and practical pathways to embed sustainability across the tourism value chain.

The discussions explored key topics including low-impact destination planning, plastic-free tourism models, climate-responsive design, biodiversity-positive operations, and community-led and inclusive tourism initiatives, positioning tourism as a powerful driver of sustainable development. Demonstrating its commitment to responsible action, the greenhouse gas emissions of the event were quantified and independently verified by Control Union Environmental Services, and the symposium achieved carbon neutrality through the offsetting of its verified emissions.

The symposium was graced by Mr. Erik Solheim, an internationally respected statesman, environmentalist, and development thinker whose work has shaped global dialogue on sustainability, climate action, and inclusive growth. Addressing the audience, Mr. Solheim emphasized the transformative role of tourism, stating:

“Tourism is one of the world’s largest job creators, providing vital opportunities for local communities. While global tourism has now returned to pre-COVID levels, there is significant room for improvement especially in advancing low-impact and responsible travel.”

Mr. Solheim also commended Thema Collection for its leadership in inclusive tourism, particularly highlighting Amba Yaalu – Kandalama as a pioneering example of women-led hospitality in Sri Lanka. He expressed appreciation for hosting the symposium at a property that embodies sustainability and social empowerment in practice.

Joining the discussion, Mr. Chandra



Wickramasinghe, Chairman and Managing Director of Thema Collection, reflected on the importance of bold decision-making in shaping Sri Lanka’s tourism landscape. Drawing from experience, he noted:

“Taking risks is essential to move the industry forward. Maalu Maalu was initiated just after the war as the first resort on the Eastern Coast, supporting the revival of tourism and economic reconciliation between the North, East, and the rest of Sri Lanka. Today, terrorism against the environment must stop—otherwise, the industry itself will face serious challenges in the future.”

Dr. Samantha Pathirathna, Chairman of ECO Treats Tourism (Pvt) Ltd and Sustainable Tourism Consultant to the Asian Development Bank, highlighted the importance of landscape-level investments in driving climate resilience. He emphasized that when landscape investments are integrated with climate-responsive projects, they deliver long-term environmental protection while strengthening livelihoods and destination sustainability.

Adding a strong advocacy perspective, Mr. Nishshanka De Silva, Founder of the Zero Plastic Movement, drew attention to Sri Lanka’s escalating plastic crisis. He stated: “Sri Lanka uses nearly 20 million shopping bags, 10 million PET bottles, and 15 million lunch sheets every day. Yet, only about 3% of the plastic we import is recycled. Addressing plastic pollution must become a core priority for tourism and beyond.”

Further contributing to the discussion, Ms. Nimesha Palliyaguru, Sector Coordinator – Tourism at the Market Development Facility (MDF), stressed the importance of data-driven decision-making in advancing sustainable tourism. She highlighted the need for systematic data collection and monitoring to measure impacts, guide investments, and ensure accountability across the tourism value chain.

The symposium reaffirmed Sri Lanka’s potential to position itself as a sustainability-led tourism destination, where environmental stewardship, community empowerment, and economic resilience are central to the future of the industry

Wild Coast Tented Lodge Unveils New Guest Experiences in Yala

TTA BULLETIN

Resplendent Ceylon is delighted to announce the unveiling of a series of new guest experience enhancements at Wild Coast Tented Lodge, further elevating its offering as one of Sri Lanka’s most distinctive luxury safari retreats. Officially opened on 5th January 2026, these thoughtfully designed additions deepen the lodge’s connection to Yala’s extraordinary natural environment while enriching the overall guest journey.



spired activities, it encourages curiosity and a deeper understanding of Yala’s unique ecosystem.

Nestled between the Indian Ocean and Yala National Park, Wild Coast Tented Lodge has introduced four new spaces that blend seamlessly into the surrounding dunes, boulders, and wilderness.

The Dune Lounge is an open-air retreat set among the dunes, created for relaxed sundowner moments and quiet reflection in nature. With panoramic views and a tranquil atmosphere, it offers guests a serene setting to unwind as the sun sets over the landscape.

The Quarry is a refined fitness space inspired by Yala’s raw geology, designed to support strength, movement, and renewal. Framed by natural textures and earthy tones, it provides an immersive wellness experience that connects body and environment.

The Fossil Room is an engaging learning and play space for young explorers, celebrating biodiversity and ancient life. Through interactive displays and nature-in-

The Trunk is a curated boutique showcasing locally inspired crafts, thoughtful mementoes, and conservation-led products. Each piece reflects Sri Lanka’s rich cultural heritage while supporting sustainable and ethical practices.

These new enhancements reflect Resplendent Ceylon’s continued commitment to creating meaningful, nature-led luxury experiences that honour Sri Lanka’s landscapes, wildlife, and communities.

Malik J. Fernando, Chairman of Resplendent Ceylon, commented: “Wild Coast Tented Lodge was conceived as a sanctuary where guests could experience the raw beauty of Yala in comfort and style. With these new additions, we are further enriching that vision – offering spaces that invite relaxation, discovery, wellness, and connection with nature. Each element has been thoughtfully designed to reflect the spirit of the destination while enhancing the guest experience.”

Lao Airlines chooses Sabre as long-term transformation partner, supporting future Offer-Order evolution

TTA BULLETIN

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading global travel technology company, today announced it has entered into a 10-year agreement with Lao Airlines - designed to take Laos’ national carrier into the future of offer-and order-based retailing.



travelers anywhere can easily connect with the country. Furthermore, this digital shift anchors

The agreement deepens Sabre’s long-standing relationship with Lao Airlines – who have selected the SabreSonic Passenger Service System (PSS), accompanied by an extension of their distribution partnership – creating a unified technology foundation to support the airline’s future expansion. Not only will the carrier continue to be part of the SabreMosaic™ Travel Marketplace, but it will also join Sabre’s cloud-based PSS suite, which helps airlines around the globe with everything from initial bookings to post-flight services.

“The decision to partner with Sabre goes way beyond a simple software upgrade,” said Mr. Viengxay Singkham, Managing Director, Lao Airlines. “It is the practical engine behind the airline’s vision to connect Laos to the world. By adopting this technology, Lao Airlines ensures that

the company’s mission of safety and efficiency, replacing legacy systems with modern tools that allow the operations team to deliver a smoother, more reliable experience. This long-term alliance also reflects careful consideration to ensure we have the right technology partner to guide us toward the Offer-Order world of tomorrow at a pace that makes sense for our business.”

“This marks a pivotal step in Lao Airlines’ growth journey,” said Maneesh Jaikrishna, vice president and regional general manager, airline IT solutions, Asia Pacific, Sabre. “A unified PSS and distribution strategy provides the stability, scalability, and efficiency the airline needs as they grow into the future. Sabre’s technology will be instrumental in helping them achieve their vision for network expansion and improved customer experience. This win also underscores Sabre’s growth momentum in the region and demonstrates the strength of our integrated retailing and distribution capabilities.”



# Emirates serves up a winning partnership with world no. 1 tennis player Aryna Sabalenka

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has announced a landmark partnership with the world's No. 1 tennis player, Aryna Sabalenka, who becomes the airline's first tennis ambassador.



The milestone builds on Emirates' longstanding commitment to tennis as the Official Airline of all four Grand Slams worldwide. To mark the occasion, Sabalenka unveiled an Emirates A380 aircraft adorned with a special tennis-inspired livery celebrating its sponsorship of the Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon and US Open.

Sabalenka and Emirates both share a passion for excellence, innovation and a winning spirit. Dubai serving as a hub for Sabalenka's training and preparation over the years, positions her as a natural fit for Emirates.

The partnership caps a dominant period for the 27-year-old, who is now a four-time Grand Slam champion after claiming a second US Open in September last year. Sabalenka, who won back-to-back Australian Open titles in 2023 and 2024, before finishing as runner-up at AO25, has also been crowned the WTA Tour Player of the Year for the past two seasons.

Reflecting on the announcement, Sabalenka shared: "In tennis, every little detail counts - so to align with a brand which matches my ambition and attention to detail makes this feel like a natural fit.

Travelling in world-class comfort with Emirates has been key to my preparation. But this partnership represents much more than that - because it also highlights what we, as women in sport, can achieve on the

world stage. Stepping off this Emirates A380 in Melbourne I feel ready to make 2026 another year to remember."

Boutros Boutros, Emirates' Executive Vice President for Corporate Communications, Marketing & Brand said:

"Aryna is not only a champion on the court but a global icon who inspires millions through her determination and professionalism - qualities that resonate strongly with our ethos at Emirates. With Dubai as our shared home, we already have a strong connection with Aryna, and this partnership allows us to elevate our engagement in a truly meaningful way.

Together, we hope to create unique opportunities for fans to experience the Emirates journey, both in the air and at the heart of the sport. Whether it be by offering live tennis through our ice entertainment system, or a taste of Australia through our in-flight menu. Emirates can't wait to see what Aryna can achieve at the Australian Open and beyond in 2026."

About Emirates and tennis Emirates' extensive portfolio of global sports and cultural partnerships connects millions of people through shared passions and world-class experiences. The airline's tennis portfolio includes some of the highest profile events on the ATP and WTA tours, including the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships as well as all four Grand Slams (Australian Open, Roland Garros, US Open, Wimbledon). Beyond tennis, Emirates' commitment to connecting fans across the globe through shared sporting moments spans horse racing through the Dubai World Cup and Team Godolphin; golf via the DP World

# Hahnair enters 2026 after record year with 29 new airline partnerships

TTA BULLETIN

Global distribution specialist Hahnair begins 2026 with momentum after closing the record breaking year 2025. The Germany based company welcomed 29 new partner airlines to its network, the largest number of additions since 2019.



"Our mission is to give travel consultants access to broad and attractive flight content, and our solid growth in 2025 gives us an excellent foundation for the year ahead," says Adriana C. Carrelli, Vice President Airline Business at Hahnair. "With more than 350 partners carriers worldwide, our network ranks among the most extensive airline distribution networks globally."

New airline partnerships last year spanned

Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, and the Americas, improving booking options and connectivity for more than 100,000 travel agencies in over 190 markets. Through its ticketing solutions, Hahnair enables airline partners to offer their flights in the GDSs beyond their own distribution reach, increasing revenue opportunities for carriers and travel consultants alike.

In 2026, Hahnair will continue investing in strategic alliances, digital tools, support for travel agency partners, and its distribution infrastructure to deliver efficient global coverage via traditional distribution channels as well as NDC based retail solutions.

# PKFARE Partners with Citilink to Broaden the Airline's Market Reach Globally

TTA BULLETIN



PKFARE, a leading global travel wholesaler, today announced a strategic partnership with Citilink, Indonesia's leading low-cost airline. Through this direct connection, PKFARE's 2000+ travel seller clients will access Citilink's full content, including ancillary and branded fares, at competitive prices, while Citilink will broaden its global distribution reach with integrity control. Citilink has established itself as a major force in Indonesia's domestic aviation market, serving as a vital connector for affordable air travel across more than 50 domestic destinations. Building on its strong domestic foundation, the airline is also expanding its footprint across Southeast Asia and beyond, capturing rising inbound demand as Indonesia continues to see strong tourism recovery.

"Indonesia's inbound tourism market rebounded strongly in 2025, with continued growth driven by travelers from APAC and Europe," said Emir Bustamam, Sales and Distribution Group Head at Citilink. "PKFARE's strong distribution presence in these regions enables us to better capture inbound demand, while

maintaining distribution control and content integrity aligned with our commercial

strategy." "We are delighted to partner with Citilink to support its global distribution growth," said Jason Song, Founder and President of PKFARE. "This collaboration enables our travel seller clients to offer more competitive and diverse flight options across Indonesia and Southeast Asia. By strengthening direct airline partnerships, we continue to deliver better pricing, improved service quality, and integrity-assured content."

According to IATA projections, Asia-Pacific is expected to remain the world's fastest-growing aviation market, with air traffic forecast to grow 7.3% year over year in 2026. PKFARE has established direct connections with leading regional airlines including AirAsia, Lion Air, VietJet Air, IndiGo, and more, and will continue accelerating direct partnerships with major APAC carriers to deliver curated, high-quality content to global travel sellers.

# Qatar Airways Colombo Honors Outstanding Travel Agents at Prestigious Awards Ceremony

TTA BULLETIN



Qatar Airways (QR) one of the worlds leading airlines, hosted an awards ceremony at Cinnamon Life Colombo to recognize its Top 20 performing travel agents for the Financial Year 2024/2025, celebrating outstanding achievements in sales performance, revenue contribution, and long-standing partnership excellence across the region.

The event was attended by senior Qatar Airways management, including Mr. Mustafa Khambaty, Regional Manager for the Indian Subcontinent; Mr. Ajay Jacob, Regional Manager Commercial Operations for the Middle East, Caucasus, Indian Subcontinent and Pakistan; Ms. Sashini Seneviratne, Commercial Manager for Sri Lanka and the Maldives; and Mr. Karthik Viswanathan, Vice President Sales for the Middle East, Caucasus, Pakistan and the Indian Subcontinent, reflecting the airline's strong commitment to its valued agency partners.

From the Top 20 agents recognized, Classic Travels secured the number one position, followed by 2nd Chance Travel in second place and Inqbaytor in third

place, in recognition of their exceptional performance and contribution throughout the financial year.

In addition to overall performance recognition, several agencies were honored for excellence in specific revenue categories. Classic Travel was awarded both the Top Premium Revenue Contributor Award and the Top Corporate Revenue Contributor Award, highlighting its strong performance across premium and corporate segments. Inqbaytor received the Top NDC Revenue Contributor Award for its outstanding adoption and revenue generation through NDC channels, while Qwest Destinations was recognized as the Top Group Revenue Contributor for its significant contribution in the group travel segment.

The ceremony concluded with Qatar Airways management congratulating all award recipients and reaffirming the airline's commitment to strengthening partnerships, driving mutual growth, and delivering exceptional value to customers in the year ahead.



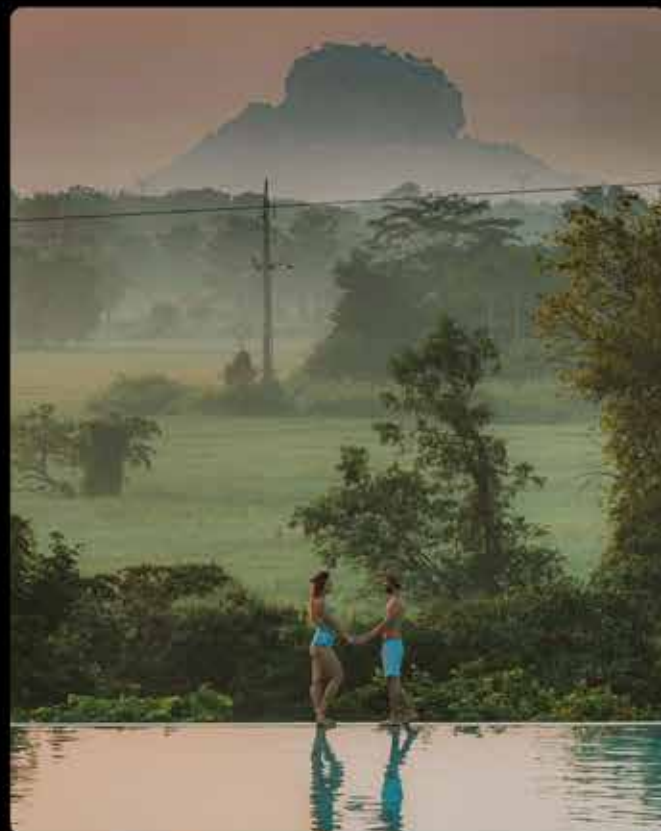


Discover Sri Lanka through 16 unique escapes - from sun-kissed beaches to mist-covered mountains. Each property is a tribute to the island's beauty, thoughtfully designed to make you fall in love with its charm.

Conceptualized by our founder, Chandra Wickramasinghe, and the Thema team, every destination reflects a distinctive theme inspired by the culture, nature, and history of its region.

At Thema Collection, sustainability is at the heart of everything we do. We focus on environmental stewardship, local employment, community empowerment, and the preservation of culture and heritage - ensuring our initiatives enrich both our surroundings and guest experiences.

Moving beyond the traditional hotel chain model, we offer a collection of thematic, experiential properties - each telling its own story and creating unforgettable journeys for every traveler.



Aliya Resort & Spa - Sigiriya



Amba Yaalu - Kandalama



Maalu Maalu Resort & Spa - Pasikuda



Mountbatten Bungalow - Kandy



Waraka - Udawalawe



Wild Glamping - Gal Oya



Aliya  
SIGIRIYA



Amba Yaalu  
KANDALAMA



Mountbatten  
KANDY



Tea & Experience  
MANDARAM NUWARA



Scottish Planter  
NUWARA ELIYA



Waraka  
UDAWALAWE



Wild Glamping  
KNUCKLES



Wild Glamping  
GAL OYA



Hikka House  
HIKKADUWA



Parangi  
WELIGAMA



Vista Vie  
MIRISSA



Maalu Maalu  
PASIKUDA



Kithala  
TISSA-YALA



Blue Monk  
TISSA-YALA



Ayurvie  
WELIGAMA



Ayurvie  
SIGIRIYA

[www.themacollection.com](http://www.themacollection.com)



Different Themes, Authentic Experiences