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Sri Lanka and Germany: Strengthening a Timeless Tourism Partnership at ITB Berlin 2026

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

As the international travel community gathers for the 60th anniversary edition of ITB Berlin, we extend our warm congratulations to Messe Berlin for six decades of fostering global tourism collaboration and innovation. ITB Berlin has long been a pivotal platform where destinations shape narratives, forge partnerships, and unlock new opportunities. Sri Lanka has proudly been part of this journey, consistently presenting its diverse and compelling offerings to German and European audiences.

Germany remains one of Sri Lanka's most valuable and resilient traditional source markets — distinguished not only by volume but by quality. In 2025, Germany contributed approximately 147,966 arrivals, playing a significant role in Sri Lanka achieving a record 2.36 million total visitors, the highest in the nation's history. German travellers are known for longer stays, strong spending patterns, and a preference for cultural immersion, sustainability, and wellness experiences — all of which align seamlessly with Sri Lanka's tourism proposition.

While emerging markets continue to grow, traditional markets like Germany remain central to Sri Lanka's strategy of attracting high-spend, experiential travellers. German interest in eco-tourism, responsible travel, Ayurveda, and nature-based experiences dovetails perfectly with the island's strengths beyond the beach.

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) will kick off its exclusive promotional activities at ITB Berlin 2026, scheduled from 3rd to 5th March at Messe Berlin. With participation from over 180 countries, 5,000+ exhibitors, and 100,000+ trade visitors, the event offers unparalleled global exposure.

Sri Lanka's delegation will include 72 local companies alongside SriLankan Airlines, showcasing products and packages at an attractive pavilion reflecting the island's rich cultural heritage. The pavilion will host B2B meetings, media engagements, cultural performances, raffles, promotional giveaways, and tea service throughout the three-day event. A dedicated Sri Lanka Press Conference, led by Hon. Deputy Minister of Tourism Prof. Ruwan Ranasinghe, will address global media and key operators, reinforcing bilateral ties and strategic partnerships.

These initiatives are designed to sustain German visitor growth, increase revenue, and provide Sri Lanka's private sector with a powerful global platform.

As ITB Berlin marks this milestone year, the Sri Lanka-Germany partnership stands stronger than ever — rooted in trust, aligned in values, and poised for a future of sustainable, high-value tourism growth.



Belluna Lanka in Partnership with Sanken Overseas Launches Project Granbell Ella

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA



Belluna Lanka Pvt Ltd., the South Asian anchor of Belluna Co. Ltd., Japan, together with Sanken Overseas (Private) Limited, has formally launched Project Granbell Hotel Ella, a planned hospitality development located in Sri Lanka's Uva Province. The project represents a total planned investment of approximately LKR 4 billion (USD 12.5 million) and reflects Belluna Lanka's continued focus on strategic, long-term hospitality development across emerging destinations in Sri Lanka.

Granbell Ella forms part of the Belluna Group's established Granbell hotel portfolio, which spans multiple destinations in Japan and includes Granbell Hotel Colombo and Le Grand Galle in Sri Lanka. The project extends the brand's location-led, experience-focused hospitality philosophy, supported by Belluna's broader international presence across hospitality and service-led developments in markets such as the United States and the Maldives, including The Westin Maldives, managed by Marriott International. Belluna also owns and manages over 26 hotels in Japan, further underscoring the Group's depth of experience and operational expertise in the hospitality sector.

Sanken Overseas, the international construction arm of Sanken Group, brings extensive experience in hospitality investments and developments operated by leading global and regional brands including JW Marriott, Alila, Amari, Cinnamon Hotels, and Hayleys Leisure, across Sri

Lanka and the Maldives. For Granbell Ella, Sanken Overseas will act as both co-investor and turnkey contractor, marking a significant addition to its Sri Lankan portfolio.



Rayhan Morris

Planned as a 60-key hotel development, Granbell Ella is being developed as a joint venture between Belluna Lanka, a wholly owned subsidiary of Belluna Co. Ltd., Japan, and Sanken Overseas. Located in close proximity to Ella Town and the Ella Railway Station, the project is designed to respond sensitively to its natural and cultural surroundings.

Construction is scheduled to begin in mid-2026, with project completion targeted for 2028, following a planned development timeline that carefully considers architectural, operational, and environmental factors.

Rayhan Morris, Managing Director of Belluna Lanka, said: "Ella is a destination that demands moderation and respect. Granbell Ella reflects our conviction that long-term sustainability, appropriate scale, and location sensitivity must guide hospitality development. This project aligns closely with the Government of Sri Lanka's broader tourism objectives, including regional economic growth, employment creation, and long-term value generation for local communities. It is an investment driven by quality and experience rather than volume." **Cont on Pg 2**



As ITB Berlin marks its 60th Anniversary, we extend our sincere congratulations to Messe Berlin for six decades of shaping global travel and tourism. It is equally a moment of pride for Sri Lanka Tourism, which has been part of this extraordinary journey, consistently presenting the island's evolving narrative to the German and European markets.

Germany remains one of Sri Lanka's most resilient and high-value traditional source markets. While emerging markets are contributing significantly to visitor growth, established markets such as Germany continue to play a pivotal role in attracting discerning, high-spend travellers seeking depth, authenticity and meaningful engagement. These travellers often stay longer, explore beyond the obvious, and contribute to value addition across boutique hotels, experiential travel, culture, and nature-based tourism.

Sri Lanka's offerings align seamlessly with German travel preferences. Sustainability is embedded in the destination's DNA — from eco-conscious properties and wildlife conservation initiatives to community-based tourism that ensures benefits reach local communities. Wellness, too, stands as a powerful drawcard. Ayurveda, holistic healing, yoga retreats and immersive nature experiences position Sri Lanka as a sanctuary for renewal in an increasingly fast-paced world.

As the country sharpens its focus on quality tourism and sustainable growth, the German market remains central to this long-term strategy.

We also take this opportunity to wish the Sri Lankan trade participating at ITB Berlin every success in forging meaningful partnerships and strengthening business connections. May this landmark edition open



new doors and reaffirm enduring relationships that continue to benefit Sri Lanka's tourism story for decades to come.

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NEWS

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Belluna Lanka in Partnership with Sanken...

Mevan Gunatilleke, Managing Director of Sanken Overseas, added: "Ella has grown organically as a destination over the past decade. We believe the time is right for carefully selected branded hospitality developments that appeal to discerning travellers.



Granbell Ella represents a long-term investment that brings together Belluna's proven hospitality expertise and Sanken Overseas' development capabilities to create enduring value for the region."

Architectural design for Granbell Ella continues Belluna

Lanka's long-standing collaboration with PWA Architects, led by Philip Weeraratne, ensuring contextual design sensitivity and disciplined scale consistent with the group's existing portfolio.

Backed by Belluna Co. Ltd., Japan a Tokyo Stock Exchange-listed company with diversified global investments, Belluna Lanka continues to expand its footprint across Sri Lanka and the region

through projects that balance technical rigour, contextual design, and sustained operational value. Granbell Ella stands as the company's latest step in extending this philosophy into Sri Lanka's hill country, reinforcing confidence in the country's evolving hospitality landscape.

IRONMAN® 70.3 Colombo Returns with Port City Colombo as Presenting & Venue Partner

TTA BULLETIN

IRONMAN 70.3 Colombo returns to the world stage on Sunday, 22nd February 2026, with Port City Colombo as the official presenting partner and venue partner. This landmark partnership, brought to fruition by Serendib Multisport, aligns global endurance excellence with Sri Lanka's vision for a future-ready nation.

By integrating the world's most prestigious lifestyle brand into the heart of South Asia's first "Blue and Green" Special Economic Zone, the event serves as a profound catalyst for Sri Lanka's sports tourism and economic re-emergence.

A Powerful Synergy of Purpose

The decision to centre the race at Port City Colombo is a strategic move to showcase a city capable of hosting internationally benchmarked lifestyle and sporting experiences. This alignment is rooted in a shared DNA of resilience, ambition, and the pursuit of world-class excellence.

Port City Colombo is more than a real estate development; it is a vibrant urban ecosystem and a canvas for a new way of living and engaging with the world. Hosting IRONMAN 70.3 physically demonstrates that the city's infrastructure, planning, and operational readiness can support the world's most demanding international events. Economic and Tourism Impact

IRONMAN 70.3 Colombo 2026 is poised to be a significant economic driver, strengthening Sri Lanka's credibility as a premier sports tourism destination.

- **High-Value Tourism:** Athletes from over 49 countries typically travel with support teams and families, staying an average of five to seven days and spending significantly more than the average tourist. Beyond tourism, the partnership attracts global investors who value livability and quality of life, positioning Port City Colombo as an emerging hub for living, working, and enterprise."

- **Sustainable Legacy:** Port City's "City of the Future" vision prioritises efficient land use and blue-green spaces, directly complementing IRONMAN's global Green Race framework and setting a benchmark for environmentally responsible sporting events in South Asia.

- **Community Connection:** Beyond race day, the partnership fosters an endurance culture in Sri Lanka, inspiring healthier lifestyles while creating opportunities for local small businesses and the broader tourism ecosystem.

Port City Colombo offers a uniquely purpose-built race environment that is distinctly Colombo:

- **Standout Swim:** A 1.9km swim in the 101-hec-



tare sheltered lagoon, home to a thriving marine ecosystem and protected by a 3.2km offshore breakwater for calm, high-performance waters.

- **Fast Bike & Run:** A 90km bike course on wide, newly developed roads and a 21.1km coastal run, offering a preview of how the city's public realm is designed to host world-class lifestyle events.

Serendib Multisport: Bridging Ambition and Performance
Port City Colombo is a multi-service Special Economic Zone (SEZ) designed as a future-focused financial, business, and lifestyle hub in South Asia, spanning 269 hectares of reclaimed land. Serendib Multisport is the leading organiser of premier endurance events in Sri Lanka, focused on building local capability and positioning the nation as a world-class destination for sports tourism. Thus, this collaboration has been instrumental in creating this event to show that Colombo is open, capable, and globally connected.

Speaking on the partnership, Thulci Aluwihare, Deputy Managing Director of CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt) Ltd stated: "This partnership is a powerful demonstration of what Port City Colombo is designed to do, not just in terms of hosting a globally recognised event at the highest international standards, but also acting as a catalyst for inspiration, development and community connection, positioning Colombo as THE future-ready international city."

Yasas Hewage, Director of Serendib Multisport, added: "This event is not just a celebration of what Port City Colombo has completed; it is a demonstration and appreciation of what it is designed to do. Through this partnership, we are unlocking Sri Lanka's potential to become a permanent fixture on the global endurance circuit."

Beyond the race, Serendib's integration of the KAYA Wellness & Active Lifestyle International Expo at the nearby Shangri-La Colombo from February 19th to 22nd will further immerse international visitors in a broader lifestyle experience.



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Robust growth in GCC outbound tourism drives increased

Asian participation at ATM 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2026, which takes place at the Dubai World Trade Centre on 4-7 May, is projecting a significant increase in exhibitors from Asia-Pacific countries, underpinned by a strong 13.95% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in participation from Asian exhibitors over the 2024-2026 period.



The burgeoning participation from Asian destinations runs in parallel with the continued strong growth of GCC outbound travel to the Asia-Pacific region. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Japan remain among the most in-demand destinations for Gulf travellers, supported by robust air connectivity and increasingly competitive airfares.

Asia-Pacific remains a significant air travel market, with Southeast Asia in particular experiencing significant growth, contributing to a projected 5.9% increase in Middle East air passenger traffic in 2025, according to the Airports Council International (ACI) World's 2025 global air traffic forecast.

This is further compounded by data from the 2025 ATM Travel Trends Report, developed in collaboration with Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company, which shows that destinations such as Thailand are set to attract more travellers from the Middle East region as preferences shift and more destination choices open up.

"Thailand is the standout performer, as Asia-Pacific takes an even greater share of outbound travel from the Middle East, with over ten million extra tourism nights expected in 2030 compared with current levels, according to our report," said Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market.

"It is one of the top outbound destinations for the UAE and broader GCC in 2025, with 12% growth year-on-year. Excluding inter-regional travel in the Middle East, Thailand is forecast to capture the second largest volume of outbound leisure nights for the period 2025-2030, with 33%," she added.

Tourism boards from across Asia confirmed for ATM 2026 include the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Hong Kong Tourism Board, Cambodia Tourism Marketing and Promotion Board, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Korea Tourism Organization, the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, Brunei Tourism and Visit Maldives Corporation, among many others.

Exhibitors already confirmed include Hilton Hotels of Malaysia, Conrad Singapore Orchard, The Garden Hotel Company Ltd. (Guangzhou), Hilton Maldives Aminigiri Resort & Spa, ROKU KYOTO, LXR Hotels & Resorts, Six & Six Private Islands, Ayana Hospitality and China Cultural Centre in the UAE, to name a few.

A number of factors are driving this upward trend, including increased air connectivity, more affordable travel options, and a growing appetite among GCC travellers for diverse cultural experiences. Asian destinations also benefit from the fact that GCC residents are among the world's highest-value tourists, spending 11 times the global average when travelling in Asia, according to the research company, Reso.

Strengthening economic ties between the Gulf and Asia is further supporting travel flows. Trade between the two regions is projected to reach \$802 billion by 2030, according to insights from the global think tank Asia House, which expects the continent to become the Gulf's largest trading bloc by 2028.

To address this topic in more detail, ATM 2026 will feature a panel session on the Global Stage entitled "Asia-GCC Corridor: The Next Great Growth Engine". Industry experts will examine the broader issue of how and why the GCC's premium spenders are fuelling one of the world's most lucrative travel corridors.

"ATM supports the wider travel and tourism industry by analysing emerging trends, addressing sector-wide challenges and equipping stakeholders with strategic insights to strengthen existing revenue streams and unlock new ones," added Curtis.

ATM 2026 will also deliver an in-depth exploration of global travel trends, innovations, and growth opportunities through a packed content programme across the Global Stage, Future Stage, and Experience Stage, featuring expert panels, market outlooks, technology showcases, and destination briefings.

With the ATM Ultra Luxury Lounge, IBTM @ ATM and the co-located event, ATM Travel Tech, which will have two dedicated halls, ATM 2026 will highlight the industry's rapid response to shifting traveller expectations and its drive to build deeper connections across the global tourism ecosystem.

Now in its 33rd year, Arabian Travel Market (ATM) is the leading global platform driving growth and innovation across every sector of the travel and tourism industry. Held annually in Dubai – the gateway to global travel and tourism with its unmatched connectivity – ATM is where the energy of opportunity comes to life.

Skål International Colombo Holds 72nd Annual General Meeting; Bernard Wijetunge Takes Office as President

TTA BULLETIN



Skål International Colombo successfully concluded its 72nd Annual General Meeting at the Taj Samudra Colombo, marking an important milestone in the club's longstanding history of leadership and fellowship within Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality industry.

At the AGM, Bernard Wijetunge officially assumed office as President of Skål International Colombo, succeeding Ahintha Amarasinghe.

The newly appointed committee of Tourism and Travel professionals include Bernard Wijetunge - President, Prasanjith Perera Vice President, Dinushka Chandrasena - Secretary, Suteash Balasubramaniam - Treasurer, Shereene Gunasekera - Asst. Secretary, Ahintha Amarasinghe - Immediate Past President, Suren Ediriweera, Denesh Silva, Bonita Odayar, Parveen Dassanaike, Sabry Bahaudeen, Gerard Victoria and Keethi Jayaweera (Ex-officio)

A deeply moving moment of the afternoon was the tribute paid to Zahara Cader, the outgoing Secretary of Skål Colombo, who has served the club with unwavering dedication for an extraordinary 39 years. Her remarkable tenure stands as a testament to her loyalty, professionalism and passion for the values of Skål — doing business among friends. Members acknowledged her tireless efforts in ensuring continuity, structure and consistency within the club across nearly four decades.

Skål Colombo continues to maintain a strong presence both regionally and globally. The club proudly counts Dushy



Jayaweera as a Director on the Skål International Board, while Dinushka Chandrasena serves on the Skål Asia Board, reinforcing Colombo's active role at both international and regional levels.

The AGM also featured an insightful address by the Guest Speaker, Hasib Omar, Managing Director of Moose Clothing Company. Speaking on the importance of building a strong and enduring brand, Omar highlighted the value of understanding people, respecting craft and maintaining disciplined execution

The AGM was hosted at the Taj Samudra Colombo, where General Manager Samrat Datta and his team went above and beyond to ensure that all formalities were executed seamlessly. Members were treated to the hallmark warmth and refined hospitality synonymous with the Taj brand



As Skål International Colombo embarks on its 72nd year, the club remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting tourism, fostering meaningful business relationships and upholding the spirit of friendship that defines the global Skål movement



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Sri Lanka–Maldives Business Council Strengthens Community Healthcare Through CSR Initiative

TTA BULLETIN

The Sri Lanka–Maldives Business Council (SLMBC), operating under the aegis of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, recently handed over a selection of essential medical equipment to the Divisional Hospital, Anavilundawa, as part of its ongoing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.



This contribution is intended to enhance the hospital's capacity and support healthcare professionals in delivering timely, effective, and quality medical care to the surrounding community.

SLMBC extends its sincere appreciation to Dr. W. G. Kalani Sajeewa Welipitiya, Medical Officer-in-Charge of the Divisional Hospital, Anavilundawa, and the hospital staff for their cooperation, as well as to the Provincial and Regional Health Authorities for their invaluable support in facilitating this initiative.

Commenting on the initiative, Sanjeeva Perera, President of the Sri Lanka–Maldives Business Council, stated, “While the core mandate of the Sri Lanka–Maldives Business Council is to promote trade, investment, and economic collaboration between Sri Lanka and the Maldives, we strongly believe in giving back to society. Supporting grassroots-level initiatives, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare, reflects our commitment to creating sustainable and meaningful impact within the communities we serve.”

SLMBC remains committed to complementing its economic objectives with socially responsible initiatives that contribute to national development and community well-being.

WTM Spotlight in Saudi Arabia to explore hotel growth in the Kingdom and the increasing influence of Saudi travellers

TTA BULLETIN

Saudi Arabia's hospitality market, valued at US\$27.14 billion in 2025, is forecast to reach US\$54.32 billion according to Mordor Intelligence, reflecting rapid growth driven by Vision 2030, large-scale hotel development, and the increasing influence of Saudi travellers at home and abroad.



These trends will be examined at the inaugural WTM Spotlight Riyadh, which will take place from 8 – 10 September at the Riyadh Front Exhibition & Convention Center (RFECC), where global and regional travel leaders, buyers, and suppliers will come together to evaluate the expansion of the Kingdom's hotel sector and how Saudi travel demand is influencing hospitality markets both locally and internationally.

According to research from Mordor Intelligence, Saudi Arabia had approximately 167,500 hotel keys as of Q1 2025, with 61% already positioned within high-end segments. A further 99,500 rooms are planned or under construction, with 78% of this upcoming supply expected to serve the premium market.

Driven by Vision 2030 objectives, the Kingdom aims to deliver 362,000 hotel rooms by the end of the decade, in support of a national target to welcome 150 million domestic and international visitors annually. Mordor Intelligence data shows that chain hotels accounted for 58% of the hospitality market in 2024, while luxury accommodation represented 37% of total market value.

Religious tourism continues to drive hotel demand in Saudi Arabia, with the government aiming to attract 30 million Umrah

pilgrims annually by 2030. Large-scale developments in Makkah and Madinah, along with technology-driven initiatives such as AI-enabled crowd management under the Smart Hajj programme, are supporting ongoing growth in hospitality and increasing capacity during peak periods in the country.

International brands are significantly contributing to Saudi Arabia's hotel supply. According to Knight Frank, 40% of the upcoming supply, totalling 79,080 rooms, will be delivered by international operators, including Accor, Hilton Worldwide, Marriott International, IHG Hotels & Resorts, and Radisson Hotel Group, with growth focused on Makkah, Riyadh, and Madinah.

Alongside domestic hotel growth, WTM Spotlight Riyadh will also examine the travel preferences of Saudi travellers and their growing impact on international hospitality markets. According to research from IMARC, the GCC outbound tourism market is projected to reach US\$138 billion by 2033, up from US\$71 billion in 2024, with Saudi travellers among the region's highest-value segments.

Data from travel marketplace WEGO shows that more than 80% of Saudi travellers preferred hotels during the summer 2025 season, while over 10% opted for apartments or aparthotels. Luxury remains a top priority, with nearly 45% of hotel searches focused on four-star properties and a further 19% on five-star accommodation.

INSPIRING JOURNEYS

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FROM SRI LANKA TO THE WORLD
DULAN'S INSPIRATION



Dulan Hapuarachchi is a Sri Lankan culinary storyteller and entrepreneur based in Australia, passionate about positioning Sri Lankan cuisine on the global stage. Through his work, he blends authentic heritage with international hospitality standards, using food as a bridge between culture and tourism while proudly representing Sri Lanka abroad.

Dulan, your culinary journey has inspired many. Could you share how you first entered the profession, the key influences along the way, and how your Sri Lankan roots continue to shape your work today?

Food was never just food in my life it was memory. My journey into food began at home, helping my grandmother in the kitchen from the age of five, watching my parents cook for gatherings, and seeing my sister excel as a professional chef for over a decade.

Some of my earliest memories are of kitchens filled with the aroma of fragrant yellow rice, simmering coconut milk, and family gathered around the table. In Sri Lanka, food is how we celebrate, how we comfort, and how we connect.

When I moved to Australia at a young age, I was exposed to Melbourne's multicultural food scene. I saw something powerful other cultures telling their stories proudly through cuisine. Their food wasn't just delicious; it was positioned with confidence. Even sharing dishes at school with kids from around the world reinforced this. Reflecting on my own roots, I realized Sri Lankan cuisine had the same depth but we weren't always telling its story loudly enough. Going into MasterChef Australia was a turning point for me: I didn't just want to cook Sri Lankan food; I wanted to represent it.

Today, my Sri Lankan roots remain my foundation. Every dish carries a piece of home, while my global exposure has taught me how to present those roots with confidence and intention. I don't just cook Sri Lankan food I honor it.

You were recently recognised at the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards. What does this recognition mean to you, and how do you see chefs contributing beyond the kitchen in destination promotion?

Receiving recognition at the Sri Lanka Tourism Awards was deeply humbling. Living overseas, I've always tried to represent Sri Lanka through food, especially during the tough Aragalaya period when tourism was at a record low. That award felt like Sri Lanka saying, “We see you. We're proud.”

It also reminded me that chefs today carry responsibility beyond the kitchen. Food shapes perceptions of a country. A single meal can inspire curiosity, connection, and travel. We are storytellers, connectors, and cultural ambassadors. Even if I'm not in a kitchen daily, my duty is to educate the world about Sri Lanka through food. For me, the recognition wasn't just about achievement it was about belonging, reinforcing that even abroad, I'm still deeply connected to Sri Lanka's story. One day, I hope to work more closely with the Tourism Board to showcase our Motherland further.

Food and travel are deeply interconnected. How do you consciously marry cuisine with tourism, and in what ways do you see yourself acting as a tourism ambassador for Sri Lanka while living abroad?

I've been an unofficial ambassador for Sri Lankan tourism for many years. My goal is that when someone tastes Sri Lankan food for the first time, I don't just want them to enjoy it I want them to feel curious. I want them to ask, “Where is this from? What is this country like? What does it feel like to be there?”

That's how I consciously connect food and tourism. I talk about regions, coastal flavours versus hill country dishes, and the local stories behind ingredients. I want the plate to become a doorway. Living overseas gives perspective when you're away from home, you realize how unique your culture truly is. If someone books a trip to Sri Lanka because they fell in love with a dish I shared, that's the most meaningful outcome. That's when food becomes bigger than itself I've built a bridge.

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Sri Lanka Tourism Strengthens India Market Presence at OTM Mumbai 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka Tourism marked a strong presence at Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) Mumbai 2026, reinforcing its focus on India as one of its most strategically important source markets. The momentum was set at the opening press conference, held at the Lotus Ballroom of the Jio World Convention Centre, where Sri Lanka was represented at the highest level during the inaugural session of the show.

The opening session featured Professor Ruwan Ranasinghe, Deputy Minister of Tourism of Sri Lanka, as one of the panelists, reflecting the destination's commitment to strengthening regional partnerships and deepening engagement with the Indian travel trade.

The session was moderated by Tanya Khanijow, one of India's most recognised travel creators and entrepreneurs, bringing a contemporary and consumer-focused perspective to the discussion.

Joining the panel alongside Sri Lanka were Dato Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, Minister of Tourism, Sarawak, and Datuk Manoharan Periasamy, Chairman of Tourism Malaysia, highlighting the importance of South and Southeast Asia in shaping the future of regional and outbound travel. The dialogue focused on evolving travel trends, destination positioning, and the growing influence of India as a global tourism powerhouse.



Recognised by NielsenIQ as the Leading Travel Trade Show in India and Asia for two consecutive years, OTM 2026 is hosting over 2,200 exhibitors from more than 60 countries, with participation from over 45 National Tourism Organisations and more than 30 destinations. The scale and diversity of the show underline its role as a key platform for global tourism stakeholders to connect with the Indian market.

Alongside this extensive international representation, OTM 2026 is expected to welcome over 50,000 trade visitors and more than 1,000 hosted and VIP buyers, bringing together the global travel ecosystem at a time when India continues to emerge as one of the world's fastest-growing and most influential outbound travel markets.

Sri Lanka's participation at OTM Mumbai 2026 reaffirms its intent to maintain visibility, build long-term trade partnerships, and capitalise on India's expanding outbound potential, while positioning the island as a diverse, year-round destination for the Indian traveller.

ASEANTA Honours Regional Excellence at the 35th ASEANTA Tourism Awards

TTA BULLETIN

The ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA) today proudly presented the 35th ASEANTA Tourism Awards of Excellence in Cebu, the Philippines, recognising outstanding achievements that exemplify excellence, innovation, sustainability, and collaboration across Southeast Asia's tourism industry. The Awards Ceremony was held in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2026, one of the region's most important annual tourism gatherings.

With a legacy spanning more than three decades, the ASEANTA Tourism Awards remain one of ASEAN's most respected regional accolades, setting benchmarks for quality and responsible tourism development. The 35th edition continues this tradition by celebrating organisations and individuals whose initiatives demonstrate measurable impact, creativity, and a strong commitment to advancing ASEAN as a competitive and unified tourism destination.

"This year's awardees represent the very best of ASEAN tourism – from sustainability leadership and cultural preservation to innovative marketing and world-class



visitor experiences," said Eddy Krismeidi Soemawilaga, President of ASEANTA. "Their achievements show how tourism excellence can drive positive impact not only for individual destinations, but for ASEAN as a region."

The ASEANTA Tourism Awards are expected to generate a meaningful and lasting impact for Southeast Asia's tourism sector by raising industry standards across the region, encouraging tourism players to continuously improve quality, innovation, and sustainability. By showcasing exemplary initiatives, the Awards help inspire the replication of best practices across ASEAN destinations, enabling successful models to be adapted and scaled within different national and local contexts. At the same time, the Awards provide greater visibility and credibility for award recipients, strengthening confidence among travellers, industry partners, and policymakers, and reinforcing ASEAN's positioning as a diverse yet unified tourism destination on the global stage.

Minor Hotels Appoints Winston Gong as General Manager of Avani Kota Kinabalu

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a global hospitality group with hotels, resorts and branded residences across 59 countries, has appointed Winston Gong as General Manager of Avani Kota Kinabalu, reinforcing the group's leadership as the hotel accelerates its commercial strategy and guest experience agenda ahead of the hotel's launch in Q2 2026.



Winston Gong

Winston brings extensive international hotel leadership experience across Australia, Asia and the Middle East, with a track record spanning hotel openings, operational turnarounds and performance-led commercial delivery. Throughout his career, he has been recognised for revenue and profit improvement, guest satisfaction gains and high-impact stakeholder management, with experience across both city and resort environments.

Most recently, Winston served as General Manager of Crowne Plaza Phu Quoc Starbay, where he drove year-on-year growth and market share performance while strengthening brand standards and owner alignment. He has also held senior leadership roles with Holiday Inn Sydney St Marys and Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley and has delivered multiple pre-opening and renovation projects across the region.

At Avani Kota Kinabalu, Winston will lead

end-to-end operations for the 352-key hotel, including 22 suites, alongside a diversified food and beverage offering and meetings facilities. Integrated with The Logg development, the hotel is positioned to serve both leisure and corporate demand, with convenient access to retail and dining and straightforward airport connectivity.

Winston Gong, General Manager, Avani Kota Kinabalu, said: "I'm excited to join Avani Kota Kinabalu at a pivotal moment. The priority is clear: deliver consistent service excellence, sharpen our commercial focus and build a high-performance culture that creates standout guest experiences and strong returns for our stakeholders."

Avani Kota Kinabalu features a Chinese restaurant with an adjoining Tea Room celebrating regional flavours, an all-day dining venue offering international cuisine, a lobby lounge and a SEEN Rooftop Bar, plus a rooftop infinity pool, 24-hour gym and four meeting rooms. Located in Luyang, the hotel is approximately 13 minutes from Kota Kinabalu International Airport, supporting both short break stays and longer itineraries.

Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort Welcomes New General Manager Frederik Van den Borre

TTA BULLETIN

Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort announces the appointment of Frederik Van den Borre as General Manager, effective 15 January 2026.



Frederik Van den Borre

Frederik will oversee the resort's strategy and day-to-day operations, focusing on enhancing the guest experience, strengthening commercial performance, maintaining brand standards, and supporting team development across the property.

After joining Minor Hotels in 2022 as Executive Assistant Manager at Anantara Mui Ne Resort, Frederik later served as Acting General Manager and led the property through a full refurbishment. He then assumed the role of General Manager at Avani Hai Phong Harbour View Hotel in mid-2022, before returning to Anantara Mui Ne Resort in August 2024 as General Manager.

A German national, Frederik brings more than two decades of hospitality experience across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. He began his career at the iconic Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Hamburg, Germany, before taking on his first international assignment as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager with Raffles in St.

Vincent and the Grenadines. He subsequently held senior food and beverage leadership roles with Kempinski Hotels across multiple regions, including at landmark properties including Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul and Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi before joining The Peninsula Shanghai as Executive Assistant Manager overseeing food and beverage operations.

"Frederik brings a strong operational focus shaped by diverse international experience. His leadership approach aligns well with Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort, and we are confident he will support the resort's ongoing commitment to heartfelt hospitality and unforgettable guest experiences," said Nicholas Smith, Vice President of Operations for Asia at Minor Hotels.

"It is a privilege to join Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort at this important moment. The destination holds a distinct character, and I look forward to working closely with the team to build on the resort's established culture and guest experience," added Frederik Van den Borre, General Manager, Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort.



Where ancient swimmers meet golden shores

MOVEMENTS

Shangri-La Colombo Appoints Andreas Streiber as General Manager

TTA BULLETIN

Shangri-La Colombo is pleased to announce the appointment of Andreas Streiber as General Manager, effective immediately.

A distinguished hospitality leader with decades of global experience in upscale hotel operations, Andreas brings a proven track record of elevating guest and colleague engagement, strengthening operational excellence, and delivering sustainable financial performance.

Prior to joining Shangri-La Colombo, Andreas most recently served as General Manager of Shangri-La Bengaluru, India. His impressive 25-year journey with Shangri-La Group has seen him hold several senior leadership roles across China and India, contributing meaningfully to brand growth, service innovation, and performance excellence. In addition, Andreas brings valuable experience from internationally recognised hospitality brands including Hyatt Hotels and Möven-



Andreas Streiber

pick Hotels & Resorts.

With deep expertise spanning hotel operations, food & beverage, sales and marketing, financial planning, and talent development, Andreas is known for his strategic leadership, strong interpersonal skills, and unwavering commitment to service excellence. In his new role, he will oversee the overall strategic direction and day-to-day operations of Shangri-La Colombo, continuing to strengthen its position as one of the city's most distinguished urban destinations.

Andreas shared, "I am delighted to take on this role at Shangri-La Colombo and to work alongside a passionate team committed to heartfelt hospitality. Colombo is a vibrant destination, and I look forward to building on the hotel's strong foundations while creating meaningful experiences for our guests and colleagues alike."

Hospitality Veteran Kamal Munasinghe Takes Helm at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams has announced the appointment of Kamal Munasinghe as General Manager, effective 15 February 2026. Munasinghe will continue in his role as Senior Vice President – Colombo Hotels at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts.

In his new capacity, Munasinghe will lead the strategic direction and day-to-day operations of Cinnamon Life, South Asia's first fully integrated resort, as it enters its next phase of growth and solidifies Colombo's position as a premier destination for luxury hospitality, entertainment, and business.

Munasinghe brings over three decades of international and local hospitality experience, having held senior leadership roles with globally recognised brands such as Marriott, Hyatt, and Mövenpick. Most recently, he served as Chief Operating Officer of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, where he played a central role in driving operational excellence and consistently elevating guest experiences across the group's portfolio of 17 hotels and resorts in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

His long-standing association with the Cinnamon brand includes previous roles as Area Vice President – Colombo and General Manager of Cinnamon Grand Colombo, where he contributed significantly to shaping the city's upscale hospitality offering. Prior to rejoining Cinnamon, he served as General Manager of Alila Bangsar Kuala Lumpur, part of the Hyatt Hotels Corporation.



Kamal Munasinghe

With professional experience spanning Switzerland, Malaysia, and Vietnam, Munasinghe brings a global outlook to his leadership approach, informed by a deep understanding of evolving traveller expectations and market dynamics. A graduate of Schiller International University, Switzerland, he is recognised for his focus on innovation, agility, and strategic execution, qualities that will be instrumental as Colombo continues to evolve as a competitive urban destination.

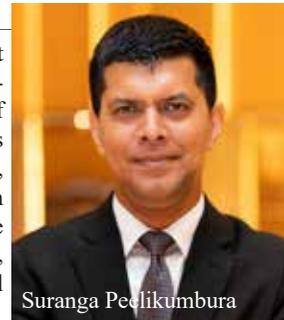
His appointment comes at a pivotal moment for Sri Lanka's tourism sector, as Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams emerges as a landmark development within the country's hospitality landscape. As part of Sri Lanka's largest private sector investment and South Asia's first fully integrated resort destination, Cinnamon Life represents a convergence of luxury accommodation, world-class entertainment, dining, retail, and culture. The property features 687 rooms and suites, five grand ballrooms, an extensive portfolio of restaurants, a premium retail mall, and a curated collection of over 1,000 artworks by Sri Lankan artists, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for tourism, business, and creative expression in Colombo.

Under Munasinghe's leadership, Cinnamon Life will continue to build on its strong foundation, advancing its vision as a transformative destination while contributing meaningfully to positioning Colombo on the global tourism map.

Suranga Peelikumbura appointed General Manager Courtyard by Marriott Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Courtyard by Marriott Colombo proudly announces the appointment of Suranga Peelikumbura as its new General Manager, marking the beginning of an exciting new phase for the hotel shaped by experience, authenticity, and global insight.



Suranga Peelikumbura

With more than 20 years in hospitality, Suranga brings a wealth of international and local expertise to the role. His career has taken him from the distinguished luxury of The Ritz-Carlton in Doha to leading hospitality roles in Ireland, and most recently to Resplendent Ceylon, where he served as Vice President of Operations. Throughout his journey, he has combined international standards with a deep appreciation for Sri Lanka's unique hospitality identity.

Beyond his impressive résumé, Suranga is guided by a people-first philosophy. He firmly believes that strong relationships — with associates, guests, partners, and stakeholders — form the foundation of sustainable success. It is this approach that now underpins his leadership at Courtyard by Marriott Colombo.

At a recent gathering attended by corporate partners, industry colleagues, and members of the media, Suranga acknowledged the contributions of outgoing General Manager Elton Hurtis, recognizing his leadership and the pathways he created for talent development within the Marriott network. Building on that foundation, Suranga is committed to enhancing guest experiences, strengthening industry partnerships, and reinforcing the hotel's position within Colombo's competitive hospitality landscape.

His career began at The Lanka Oberoi and Cinnamon Grand Colombo, later advancing to senior roles including leadership at Weligama Bay Marriott before joining Resplendent Ceylon. His return to the Marriott family represents not just a career progression, but a meaningful reconnection with the brand.

Courtyard by Marriott Colombo welcomes Suranga Peelikumbura with confidence, as he leads the property forward with clarity, purpose, and a continued commitment to exceptional hospitality.

Courtyard by Marriott Colombo welcomes Suranga Peelikumbura with confidence, as he leads the property forward with clarity, purpose, and a continued commitment to exceptional hospitality.

Denesh Silva Appointed Director, Head of Marketing and Sales at Ramada by Wyndham Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Ramada by Wyndham Colombo has announced the appointment of Denesh Silva as Director, Head of Marketing and Sales



Denesh Silva

Strategically located in the heart of Colombo, the hotel has long been recognised as a preferred address for both business and leisure travellers. Silva's appointment signals a strengthened focus on strategic growth, enhanced brand visibility, and deeper engagement with key international markets.

With over three decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Silva is widely regarded as one of the sector's most respected marketing and sales professionals. His career spans the full spectrum of hotel operations, supported by a strong academic foundation as a Fellow Graduate Member of the Ceylon Hotel Schools Graduate Association

Over the years, he has built a reputation for delivering results through targeted sales strategies, innovative marketing campaigns, and effective revenue management practices. His expertise covers corporate sales, MICE development, travel trade partnerships, and OTA optimisation, contributing to sustained commercial growth for several leading hospitality brands in Sri Lanka.

His leadership within the tourism industry is equally noteworthy. He previously served as Chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association Sri Lanka Chapter, where he championed youth engagement and industry collaboration. His portfolio of service also includes roles as a Board Member of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau, Vice President of The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, Chairman of the Marketing Committee of the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, and Immediate Past President of the Travel Trade Sports Club. He also serves as an All Island Justice of the Peace.

At Ramada Colombo, Silva is expected to lead a dynamic marketing and sales strategy aimed at reinforcing the hotel's position within Colombo's competitive hospitality sector. His strong grounding in MICE tourism, corporate travel, and international partnerships positions him well to support the property's next phase of growth.

As Sri Lanka's tourism industry continues to gain momentum, this appointment reflects confidence in experienced leadership to guide one of Colombo's established city hotels into its next chapter.

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Remauld Mack Appointed Director of Sales & Marketing at Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo is pleased to announce the appointment of Remauld Mack as the Director of Sales & Marketing, effective 21st January 2026.

Remauld Mack brings with him over 16 years of extensive experience in the hospitality and travel industry, with a proven track record in driving commercial growth, building strategic partnerships, and delivering impactful sales and marketing initiatives across Sri Lanka's leading hospitality brands.

Prior to joining Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo, he held several senior leadership roles including Head of Sales & Marketing at Mackinnons American Express Travels, Director of Sales & Marketing at Mount Lavinia Hotel Group, Head of Sales & Marketing at Sunshine Travels & Tours, and Cluster Sales Manager at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. Most recently, he served at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka, as the Director of Sales - International Markets and Director of Sales - MICE, contributing significantly to the development of strategic international partnerships and large-scale global event business.

In addition to his professional experience, Remauld holds a Master of Business Administration from the Australian Institute of Business and a Postgraduate Diploma from the



Remauld Mack

Chartered Institute of Marketing.

In his new role, Remauld will lead the overall sales and marketing strategy for Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo, focusing on brand positioning, revenue growth, market expansion, and strengthening the hotel's presence both locally and internationally as it prepares for its exciting new chapter.

His strategic vision, industry expertise, and dynamic leadership are expected to play a key role in driving the hotel's commercial success and elevating Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo as one of the city's premier lifestyle and business destinations.

ITB Berlin 2026 is fully booked – anniversary edition with a global appeal and clear focus on trends

TTA BULLETIN

With over 160 countries, strong ticket sales and a high-calibre convention, the trade show is looking forward to numerous anniversary events, new guided tours, the launch of MIA, a 24/7 chatbot, and headline topics ranging from AI to sustainability – Angola is the official Host Country. ITB Berlin is growing particularly strongly in Asia, the Arab countries, and in the cruise, travel technology, adventure and health tourism segments.

ITB Berlin 2026 is taking place from 3 to 5 March on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds and in its anniversary year will set new trends as the World's Leading B2B Travel Trade Show. Featuring a strong international line-up, including major national displays from Thailand, Egypt, Türkiye and Italy, ITB Berlin underlines its role as a global marketplace for business, innovation, dialogue and sustainable growth – proof of its continuing international importance as an industry meeting place.

At hub27, the German-speaking countries and the German federal states are once again represented with a wide range of products and services. Bavaria along with Hamburg are occupying larger stands. Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony are also represented with their own displays. Baden-Württemberg, Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Thuringia, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saxony, among others, are



represented on the combined stand of the German National Tourism Board (DZT). The State Theatres of Saxony – Semperoper Dresden are represented separately.

The stands of neighbouring countries will also be attracting visitors: Austria is experiencing high demand and bringing new Austrian exhibitors, while Switzerland and Liechtenstein continue to maintain stable numbers. hub27 is also where Slovenia, Deutsche Bahn as well as Düsseldorf, Cologne/Bonn and Paderborn Airports can be found. Among others, Gate of Nations (Germany tours, UNESCO trips), EdelSwiss International-Limousinen GmbH (Switzerland), German Aviation Service and SEA LOFT (yacht trips) are taking part for the first time. A special highlight will be the opening of the new exhibition Destination Europe: A Journey in Posters exhibition on 3 March, a collaboration between the European Travel Commission and the Museum of Tourism – accompanied by a walking lunch.

Opening of Newburgh Ella - The Tea Factory Resort

Newburgh Ella was officially opened recently with a ceremonial launch attended by Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels & Resorts; Gangadaran Velsamy, General Manager of Newburgh Ella; Priyali Perera, Head of Projects and Procurement; Nishad Rajapakse, Manager – Engineering; along with key officials from Browns Hotels & Resorts. The event featured traditional regional performances and a ceremonial presentation

Newburgh Ella was once a working tea factory. The century-old estate, originally established in 1903 by the legendary Scottish tea planter George Thomson, has been carefully transformed into a luxury resort, preserving its industrial character and historical soul while elevating it into an immersive experience.



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Tourism on the Rise: Sri Lanka Records Unprecedented Growth

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka's tourism industry is experiencing a powerful resurgence, with 2025 closing as a record-breaking year for visitor arrivals — the highest in the country's history. Despite brief disruptions caused by natural calamities in early December, the destination demonstrated remarkable resilience and sustained momentum.



M Shanthikumar

Peak season areas outside Colombo saw exceptional performance from November onwards, supported by increased air connectivity. Colombo itself recorded average occupancies exceeding 90% over a two-week period during major international events, including the ICC T20 World Cup matches, drawing significant overseas spectators.

Sri Lanka is increasingly recognized as a “must-visit” destination, praised for its diverse attractions, authentic experiences, and warm hospitality. Notably, travel publications and social media have highlighted the country as a safe destination for solo female travellers.

With over 12% of the population dependent on tourism, the sector is positioned to become Sri Lanka's leading foreign exchange earner within the next three years. The The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), representing the formal hotel sector, continues to engage closely with the Government on policy advocacy to ensure sustainable industry growth and strengthen investor confidence.

Approximately 80% of visitors chose to stay within the formal accommodation sector, enabling hotels to achieve mature occupancy levels throughout 2025. The industry is poised to fully capitalize on this demand growth in 2026, with rising investor confidence — particularly in the hotel sector. International hotel brands are actively exploring entry into Sri Lanka, engaging with private sector stakeholders in recognition of the destination's long-term potential.

Growth has been supported by improved external stability and diversified source markets, notably India, the UK, and Europe. Sri Lanka now attracts a wide mix of travellers — from FITs and groups to honeymooners, adventure seekers, families, destination weddings, and the expanding MICE segment.

Reveal The Collection invites you for soulful stays in Mirissa

TTA BULLETIN

Mirissa stands as one of Sri Lanka's most striking coastal destinations — a vibrant stretch of southern shoreline known for its sweeping beaches, clear turquoise waters, and an atmosphere that balances energy with natural beauty.



guests direct access to the beach and uninterrupted sea views.

Days at the Collection unfold with ease and elegance. Mornings begin with floating breakfasts in private pools, pause midday for high tea by the waves, and close with sundown cocktails as the sky deepens into colour. Destination dinners, curated for truly memorable experiences, are also available to enrich the stay.

Mirissa offers countless ways to explore its coastline — sunrise whale-watching excursions, surfing breaks for intermediate and skilled beginners, scenic walks to the globally recognised, Instagrammable Coconut Tree Hill, and panoramic views from Parrot Rock. Guests staying two nights or more can enjoy complimentary experiences, including a guided kayaking excursion along calm waters and a Galle city tour that showcases the area's rich history and architecture.

One of the most meaningful elements within the Collection is the on-site turtle hatchery, a conservation initiative that allows guests to witness hatchlings making their first journey to the ocean — an experience that adds purpose and depth to a coastal escape.

This holiday season, Reveal The Collection invites families and couples to enjoy the best rates for soulful escapes.

Reveal The Collection, a luxury boutique offering, presents a curated selection of four beachfront villas that together redefine coastal luxury. These include Lantern Boutique Villa, The Beach House, and the two Ubuntu Beach Villas, all positioned along Mirissa's most scenic shoreline. Across 28 well-appointed rooms and suites, the Collection blends contemporary design with thoughtful comfort, creating spaces that are elegant, modern, and perfectly aligned with the rhythm of the Indian Ocean.

Each villa brings a distinct expression of coastal living. Lantern offers six contemporary ocean-facing rooms with open, light-filled interiors. Guests can also enjoy 71 Lantern Bistro & Bar, where fresh seafood sourced from the local market and regional ingredients are elevated into dishes that reflect bold flavours and culinary heritage. The Beach House features stylish suites tucked behind tropical greenery, balancing privacy with ocean views. The two Ubuntu Beach Villas, just 300 metres apart, offer modern tropical design with floor-to-ceiling windows framing the coastline, giving

Bandhula Ekanayake appointed as the Chairman of the Tourism Industry Skills Council (TISC).

TTA BULLETIN

The Tourism Industry Skills Council (TISC), established in 2016, is a public-private sector initiative operating under the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training. The Council was formed with the objective of enhancing the quality, relevance, and accessibility of Sri Lanka's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system. Led, owned, and driven by the tourism industry, TISC is formally recognized and supported by the Government of Sri Lanka and functions under the governance of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) and the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA).



Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), brings over four decades of experience in the hospitality industry. His distinguished career includes serving as Director General of the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) and as a Board Member of the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management (SLITHM), among other leadership roles. He currently holds the position of Director – Marketing & Sales at Ladyhill Hotel Galle and manages his own hospitality management company and Cross Roads Concepts (a travel and tourism entity).

In his inaugural address, Mr. Ekanayake outlined his vision to elevate the tourism skills sector by promoting greater awareness of industry opportunities, strengthening training and career guidance initiatives, and encouraging increased participation of women in the tourism workforce.

The TISC Board comprises eminent representatives from leading tourism sector associations. Mr. Nilan Wickramasinghe, representing the Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), was appointed Deputy Chairman, while Mr. Palitha Wijemanna of the Sri Lanka Hotel School Graduates Association (SLHGA) was appointed Secretary. Dr. Chandima Jayaweera, representing NAGA, was appointed Treasurer.

The primary mandate of TISC is to strengthen the quality of training delivered by government-led institutions through industry-aligned curriculum development, informed by emerging trends and evolving skill requirements. The Council plays a key role in identifying and bridging skills gaps, improving the quality of trainers through structured “Train the Trainer” programmes, and enhancing workforce productivity and service standards by developing industry-relevant competencies. In addition, TISC facilitates private-sector internships to provide students with practical exposure and hands-on industry experience.

At the recently concluded Annual General Meeting of TISC, veteran hotelier and tourism consultant Mr. Bandhula Ekanayake was appointed Chairman. Mr. Ekanayake, who was the Vice president of The

Sofia Colombo Unveils Sri Lanka's First Women-Only Pink Floor Experience

TTA BULLETIN

Sofia Colombo has introduced a pioneering women-centric hospitality concept with the launch of its exclusive Pink Floor — a thoughtfully curated women-only space designed to enhance comfort, safety, privacy and wellness for modern female travellers.



Illangakoon, General Manager of Sofia Colombo, noted that today's women travellers seek more than just accommodation.

“Modern women expect privacy, security and wellness-focused spaces that truly understand their lifestyle. The Pink Floor is a natural extension of Sofia Colombo's commitment to inclusivity, sustainability and guest-centric innovation,” he said.

Responding to the growing global demand for personalised and inclusive travel experiences tailored specifically for women, the Pink Floor offers a secure sanctuary in the heart of Colombo. The concept reflects a deeper understanding of the evolving expectations of today's female traveller — whether journeying for business or leisure.

A key highlight of the initiative is the newly opened Tonic Wellness SPA, developed in partnership with Tonic Wellness. The spa provides professionally curated treatments and holistic therapies within a private, women-only environment, allowing guests to relax, rejuvenate and focus entirely on their wellbeing with complete peace of mind.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Sugath

The Pink Floor features exclusively designed women-only guest rooms supported by an all-female service team, ensuring discretion, comfort and personalised attention throughout each stay. Controlled access protocols and female-led services further enhance security, directly addressing common concerns faced by solo women travellers.

As Sri Lanka continues to gain recognition as a preferred destination for independent female explorers, Sofia Colombo's Pink Floor positions the hotel as a forward-thinking leader in women-focused hospitality.

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Place Leaders Forum launches at IMEX Frankfurt

TTA BULLETIN

Senior business event decision-makers and place leaders are invited to the new IMEX Place Leaders Forum (formerly the Policy Forum). The event has been created to strengthen cross-sector collaboration on shared challenges and support the development of prosperous, resilient destinations.



Natasha Richards

Taking place on Tuesday May 19 during IMEX Frankfurt, the Place Leaders Forum builds on the legacy of the IMEX Policy Forum while focusing on the new market needs around place leadership and the destination economy.

The scope of the Forum has been broadened to unite the full range of destination decisions makers, as Natasha Richards, IMEX's Director of Impact & Industry Relations, explains:

"We've enhanced the Forum to align with how destinations function and compete today. New governance models are emerging and decision makers need clearer evidence, deeper insight and stronger cross sector partnerships.

"Cities and countries now operate in complex environments where economic development, talent, investment, culture and liveability all overlap. Business events play a critical role in this mix—not just economically, but by delivering multiple positive impacts within research, innovation, health, sustainability and community well-being.

"The Forum brings together place leaders and event strategists to unlock this shared value."

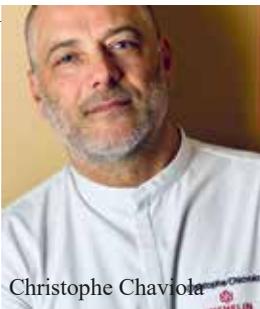
In partnership with Professor Greg-Clark CBE and The Business of Cities, IMEX is preparing a new white paper which will inform discussion at the Forum. The Destination Economy, Place Leadership and the Strategic Role of Business Events has been created in response to a shift in how cities compete for talent, investment and innovation. Greg outlines why the pace of urban and economic change has created a pivotal moment for the business events sector: "Global mobility, knowledge-driven economies, and competition between places have elevated the importance of convening, collaboration and narrative. Business events are uniquely positioned to contribute to these dynamics, provided the sector is willing to evolve its role, invest in new capabilities, and engage seriously with the long-term future of the places it serves."

Destination leaders are invited to contribute case studies of business events which have been proven to enhance local economic, innovation or community goals, with the final paper scheduled for launch after the Forum.

Dusit Thani Maldives welcomes Michelin-starred chef Christophe Chiavola for an exclusive culinary residency

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit Thani Maldives on Mudhdhoo Island in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Baa Atoll will host an exclusive culinary residency by Michelin-starred Chef Christophe Chiavola from 5 to 10 March 2026, bringing refined French craftsmanship and nature-driven gastronomy to the resort's oceanfront restaurant, Sea Grill.



Christophe Chiavola

Known for his instinctive, seasonal approach to cuisine, Chef Christophe has earned international recognition for his precise technique, elegant compositions, and deep respect for natural ingredients. Currently at the helm of the Michelin-starred Le Prieuré Baumannière in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, France, he will present a series of intimate dining experiences that thoughtfully weave French culinary artistry with Maldivian influences.

Over the course of the residency, guests will be invited to experience four carefully curated events, each designed to reflect Chef Christophe's philosophy of balance, craftsmanship, and a close connection to nature:

- **Masterclass by the Ocean**
An intimate, hands-on cooking session offering insight into Michelin-starred techniques and a seasonal approach to flavour.

- **Island Flavours Unveiled**

A small-group masterclass highlighting refined culinary methods and the use of fresh island produce.

- **Shades of the Sea: A Cocktail & Dinner Evening**

A sunset experience combining handcrafted cocktails with a multi-course dinner inspired by Chef Christophe's French roots and the spirit of the Maldives.

- **The Michelin Star Gala**
The centrepiece of the residency, this one-night-only gala dinner will showcase Chef Christophe's signature dishes, reinterpreted with local ingredients and served under the stars by the ocean.

"We are delighted to welcome Chef Christophe Chiavola to Dusit Thani Maldives for this special residency," said Jean-Louis Ripoche, Area General Manager of Dusit Thani Maldives and dusitD2 Feydhoo Maldives. "His respect for nature, seasonality, and craftsmanship aligns seamlessly with our own approach to culinary expression. This collaboration offers our guests an opportunity to experience world-class cuisine in a way that is thoughtful, immersive, and deeply connected to our island setting."

Cinnamon Grand Colombo Announced as Official Hospitality Partner for MasterChef Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Grand Colombo proudly announces its role as the Official Hospitality Partner for the much anticipated launch of MasterChef Sri Lanka, marking a significant collaboration between one of the country's most iconic hospitality brands and the globally renowned culinary competition.

As the show officially launches in Sri Lanka, Cinnamon Grand Colombo stands at the forefront of this exciting culinary journey, reinforcing its long standing commitment to excellence in gastronomy, innovation, and world class hospitality.

Cinnamon Grand Colombo is also especially proud that its very own Executive Chef, Kapila Jayasinghe, is featured among the distinguished panel of judges for MasterChef Sri Lanka. Chef Kapila's journey with Cinnamon Grand and Cinnamon Lakeside has been one of passion, dedication, and culinary innovation, and his presence on the judging panel not only reflects his personal achievements but also underscores the hotel's commitment to nurturing and celebrating culinary excellence at a national level.

In addition to Cinnamon Grand Colombo's role, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts has also partnered with the production for selected



episodes that were recorded across its properties in Sri Lanka, showcasing the diversity of destinations and culinary experiences within the portfolio. Further strengthening this collaboration, Cinnamon Academy of Hospitality Management has come on board to support the initiative, providing invaluable exposure and real world learning opportunities for its students through engagement with the show and industry professionals.

The launch of MasterChef Sri Lanka signals a new era for the local food and beverage industry, providing a powerful platform to spotlight Sri Lanka's rich culinary heritage, modern techniques, and emerging chefs. Cinnamon Grand Colombo's involvement underscores its continued investment in elevating Sri Lanka's hospitality and dining standards on both local and International stages.

With this partnership, Cinnamon Grand Colombo reaffirms its dedication to fostering culinary creativity, supporting industry growth, and delivering unforgettable guest experiences.

ONYX Hospitality Group ranks #7 among Asia-Pacific's Top 15 Best Places to Work

TTA BULLETIN

ONYX Hospitality Group, a leading Southeast Asian management company overseeing



ONYX's vision as a regional player committed to systematically advancing human

hotels, resorts, serviced apartments, and luxury residences under brands such as Amari, OZO, Shama, and Oriental Residence across prime locations in the Asia-Pacific region, has been awarded the "Best Place to Work in Thailand 2025"

Certification by Best Places to Work, an international organisation specialising in workplace standards assessment and certification.

In addition to this certification, ONYX has been recognised at both national and regional levels. In Thailand, Best Places to Work ranked ONYX Hospitality third among the Top 5 Best Places to Work in Thailand for 2025.

Across the region, ONYX was also ranked #7 among the Top 15 Best Places to Work in the Asia-Pacific region for 2025 highlighting the Group's consistent focus on people-centric workplace practices within the hospitality sector, where employee development and service excellence go hand in hand.

Best Places to Work is an internationally recognised certification programme that enables organisations to benchmark HR practices and strengthen employee engagement. This achievement reflects

resource development and cultivating a strong corporate culture—key foundations for long-term business growth and sustained competitiveness in the rapidly evolving hospitality industry.

The Best Place to Work Certification is awarded following a robust and comprehensive evaluation process covering multiple dimensions, including employee engagement, employee experience, and the effectiveness of human resource policies and practices. ONYX achieved outstanding results across several key criteria, including a work environment conducive to growth, an open and inclusive corporate culture, and a human resource development strategy aligned with the Group's regional business direction.

One of the key drivers behind ONYX's evolution into a trusted workplace is ONYX Academy. This comprehensive learning and development institute spans foundational skills training, advanced role-specific competency development, and clearly defined career pathways for employees at all levels. By prioritising both future-ready capabilities and practical, applicable skills, ONYX Academy equips team members for truly sustainable growth.



Welcome to Ella's Most Anticipated Address



High in the mist-kissed hills of Sri Lanka, stands a century-old tea factory, once steeped in stories of tea and history, now thoughtfully reimaged.

Browns Hotels & Resorts unveils Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort, a signature stay where, craft blends with comfort, and leaf meets luxury. Marked by its iconic orange chimney, the resort overlooks the sweeping Ella Gap, framed by Ella Rock and Little Adam's Peak. Perfectly located near the Nine Arch Bridge and the Pekoe Trail, it offers easy access to Ella's most treasured experiences.

Newburgh Ella features 41 rooms, graded Silver, Gold, and Bronze – inspired by the hierarchy of tea tips, and is a family-friendly resort, welcoming travellers of all ages.

With carefully designed rooms and curated dining across multiple outlets, Newburgh Ella captures the spirit of tea factory living, creating a stay unlike any other in Sri Lanka.

From the finest grade of tea to the finest grade of stay, the resort invites travellers to step into a story, centuries in the making, perfected by Browns Group, the world's largest tea manufacturer.



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HOTELS & RESORTS



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eMarketingEye Launches AEYEPULSE: Enhancing Your Brand's AI Visibility with Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)

As the travel industry rapidly embraces artificial intelligence as a primary discovery channel, eMarketingEye proudly announces the official launch of AEYEPULSE, its AI Visibility Intelligence platform, alongside a specialised **Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)** service.

The way travellers search, evaluate, and make booking decisions is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Platforms such as **ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity** are no longer experimental tools; they are becoming central to how modern travellers research destinations, compare hotels, and plan experiences. Traditional search behaviour is evolving, and with it, the rules of digital visibility.

Recognising this shift, eMarketingEye has developed AEYEPULSE to help brands measure and strengthen their presence across leading AI platforms.

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) is the practice of optimizing your brand's content so it is understood, trusted, and cited by Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Perplexity and Gemini.

Being cited within AI generated responses strengthens brand credibility and trust. When a Large Language Model references your website, mentions your brand in comparison guides, or includes you in curated recommendations, it positions

your brand as authoritative and relevant at the exact moment of decision making.

What is AEYEPULSE?

To address this shift, eMarketingEye launched AEYEPULSE, an AI Visibility Intelligence platform designed to help brands understand and strengthen their presence across leading LLMs.

AEYEPULSE enables brands to see how they appear across ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity, track mentions, assess sentiment, and compare visibility with competitors. This is an advanced AI Visibility Intelligence platform designed to provide brands with clear, measurable insights into how they appear within AI generated responses.

The platform enables brands to:

- Monitor visibility across ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity
- Track high-impact prompts that drive AI exposure
- Measure AI Visibility Score, sentiment, and share of voice
- Benchmark performance against competitors in AI generated responses
- Identify trends, gaps, and growth opportunities
- Access unified insights through a clear, intuitive dashboard

For brands competing in an increasingly digital first marketplace, understanding AI driven exposure is becoming critical.

Beyond Monitoring: Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) Strategy

While AEYEPULSE provides visibility intelligence, eMarketingEye's **Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)** service goes one step further.

GEO focuses on actively optimizing a brand's digital footprint to improve how large language models (LLMs) understand, interpret, position, and recommend a brand. From structured data and content refinement to authority signals and digital ecosystem alignment, GEO ensures brands are accurately represented and competitively positioned in AI powered search environments.

In a landscape where AI engines influence traveller decisions before they even visit a website, proactive optimization is no longer optional; it is a strategic necessity.

Shaping the Future of Travel Marketing

As AI driven discovery continues to redefine consumer behaviour, forward-thinking brands must adapt quickly. Combining AEYEPULSE and a GEO strategy offers a future-ready solution empowering brands to monitor, measure, and strategically enhance their AI visibility.

With this launch, eMarketingEye reinforces its commitment to innovation in travel and hospitality marketing, ensuring brands remain

discoverable, competitive, and recommended in the next generation of digital search.

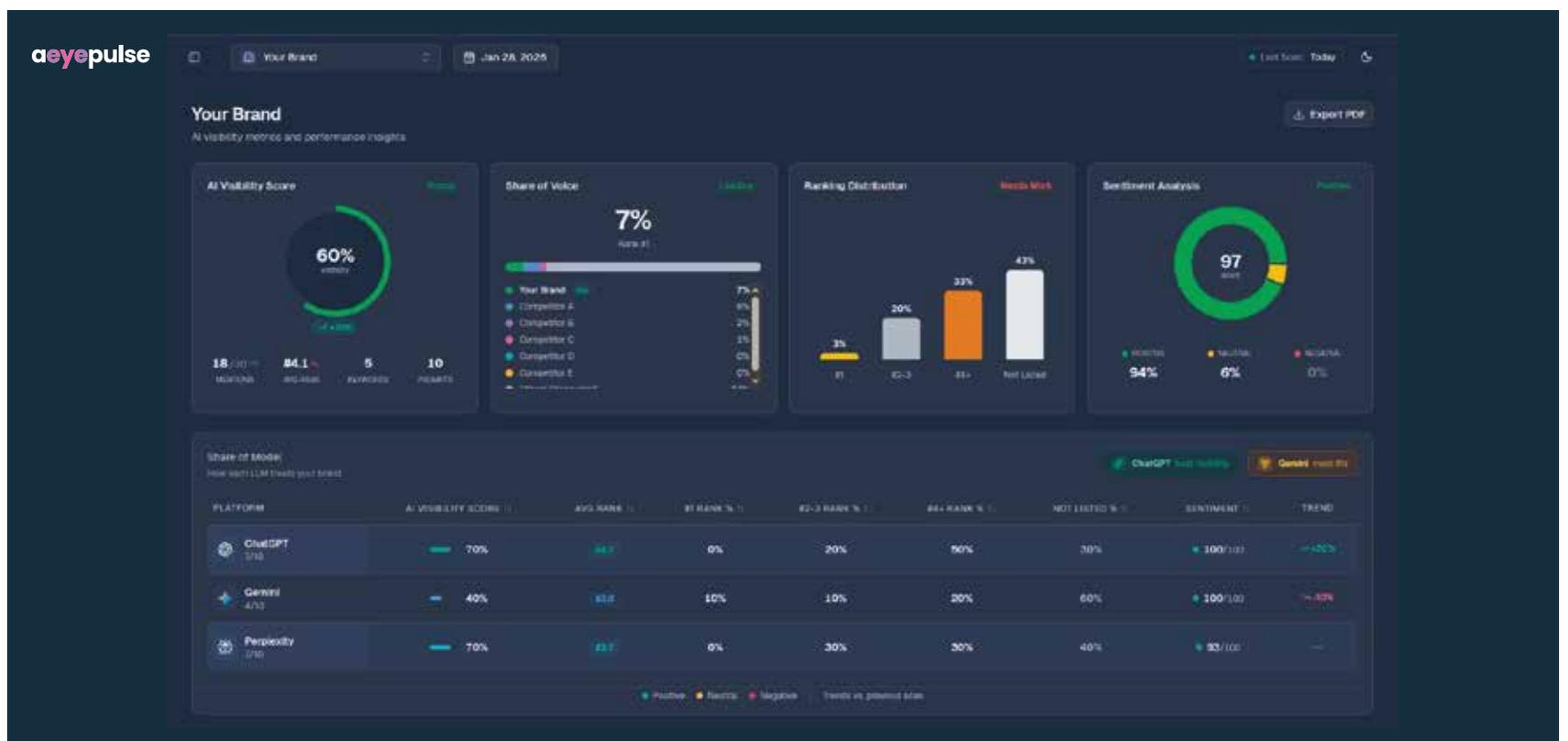
Explore the full capabilities of AEYEPULSE here, and to request a demo, visit <https://aeyepulse.emarketingeye.com/>

eMarketingEye (EME) is a globally recognised, award-winning digital marketing agency delivering data driven strategies and performance led digital solutions. Established in 2007, the company has grown over the past 19 years into one of Asia's most respected digital marketing agencies, with a strong and expanding footprint in travel & hospitality.

EME has partnered with hotels across 45+ countries, managing over 1,200 hotels worldwide. The company specialises in delivering fully integrated, end-to-end digital marketing solutions, from strategic consulting and performance marketing to web development, analytics, and digital transformation initiatives.

EME's commitment to excellence has been recognised through more than 300 awards, including prestigious accolades from Google, AdTech, and over 50 HSMIAI Adrian Awards for outstanding digital and social media campaigns.

With the introduction of AEYEPULSE and its dedicated GEO services, eMarketingEye positions itself at the forefront of the AI visibility revolution.





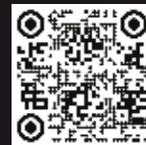
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Cinnamon Bentota Beach Launches Addarahena – An Experiential Farm-to-Table Dining Journey

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Bentota Beach – Signature Selection launched the Addarahena Farm-to-Fork Project, a journey that brings sustainability, community, and culinary innovation to life. This initiative tells a story of mindful living, from soil to table, where every step reflects care for the environment and connection to local culture.

Adding a culinary dimension to this story, the resort introduces “Ambula”, an experiential dining concept inspired by traditional Sri Lankan village cuisine. Served in a space anchored by a traditional mud house, Ambula invites guests to enjoy a meal that is not just about flavour but about culture, community, and sustainability.

The Addarahena farm now produces fresh organic vegetables that supply the resort’s kitchens, allowing guests to experience the taste of truly seasonal, locally sourced

produce. The launch was celebrated with the first harvest, where guests joined in to witness and savour the joy of farm-fresh food, creating a tangible link between nature, nourishment, and mindful living.

At the heart of Addarahena is an in-house mass in-vessel composting system, transforming garden waste into organic compost. This enriches the resort’s farm and is shared with the Bentota Police Station garden, exemplifying the project’s commitment to community partnerships and responsible food systems.

With the Addarahena Farm-to-Fork Project and Ambula, Cinnamon Bentota Beach – Signature Selection sets a new benchmark for responsible hospitality, weaving together sustainability, storytelling, and immersive dining experiences that leave a lasting impact on both guests and the community.



A Seaside Celebration of Tradition and Grandeur at Pegasus Reef Hotel

TTA BULLETIN

Pegasus Reef Hotel recently transformed into a vibrant canvas of colour, culture, and celebration as it hosted a spectacular traditional Indian destination wedding by the sea. Framed by sweeping views of the Indian Ocean, the multi-day festivities seamlessly blended sacred rituals with coastal sophistication, creating a setting that was both intimate and majestic.

From the joyful mehendi ceremony and high-energy sangeet to the solemn exchange of vows beneath an exquisitely adorned floral mandap, each event unfolded with grace and meaning. The venue came alive in rich tones of red, gold, and ivory, evoking regal splendour while complementing the serene ocean backdrop.

Guests travelled from across borders to be part of the celebration, turning the wedding into a luxurious seaside retreat filled with music, dance, and heartfelt reunions. Thoughtfully curated décor, meticulous event coordination, and seamless service ensured every detail reflected both tradition and contemporary elegance.

Adding to the grandeur was an elaborate culinary journey featuring authentic Indian delicacies, crafted to delight discerning palates and honour cherished flavours from home. The fusion of heritage, hospitality, and horizon once again underscored Pegasus Reef Hotel’s standing as a sought-after destination for weddings where culture meets coastal charm.





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HOTELS

Jungle Calm and Conscious Living: Kahanda Kanda Unveils KK Spa

TTA BULLETIN



Tucked away in the lush hills overlooking Koggala Lake, Kahanda Kanda has long been synonymous with refined seclusion and design-led luxury. Now, the boutique retreat enters a new chapter with the opening of the KK Spa — a purpose-built wellness sanctuary that deepens the property's commitment to mindful travel.

Thoughtfully designed to blend into its jungle surrounds, the new spa features three tranquil treatment rooms — two singles and one double — alongside two dedicated studios for consultations and visiting practitioners. Upstairs, an open-air yoga shala captures cooling breezes and sweeping views over the treetops, creating a serene space for movement, meditation and stillness.

For owner George Cooper, the philosophy behind KK Spa is simple yet powerful: "Taking Time Out." In a world that is increasingly frenetic and hyper-connected, the spa invites guests to pause — to breathe, disconnect and be present.

With a team of professional therapists, KK Spa offers a wide range of treatments and curated wellness packages, from restorative "re-set" programmes and detox

journeys to personalised guidance on nutrition and lifestyle changes. The focus is not only on relaxation, but on helping guests rethink how and what they eat, supporting sustainable wellbeing long after they leave.

Although the spa officially opened on January 4th, interest has already been strong. Discussions are underway with international wellness practitioners and retreat organisers, some of whom have confirmed bookings — signalling a promising new direction for the property.

While it may be too early to see a definitive shift in guest demographics, the addition of a "serious" spa enhances Kahanda Kanda's positioning among the South's luxury offerings. What sets KK apart, Cooper notes, is the seamless extension of its signature personalised service, meticulous attention to detail, and understated comfort from the villas to the spa.

At Kahanda Kanda, wellness is no longer an add-on — it is an integral part of the guest journey, woven gently into the rhythm of jungle life.



Heritage Hotels and Resorts Awarded Superbrands Sri Lanka Status 2025

TTA BULLETIN



Heritage Hotels and Resorts has been recognised as a Superbrands Sri Lanka's Choice 2025, reaffirming its position as one of the country's most respected and trusted hospitality brands. The accolade, awarded by Superbrands Sri Lanka, celebrates brands that demonstrate the very highest standards of excellence and consistency, evoking a strong emotional connection with their consumers and creating a clear point of differentiation within the hospitality market.

Participation in Superbrands is offered by invitation only and is extended to the most outstanding brands within their respective fields. Brands awarded the Superbrands Status are evaluated through an independent process led by the Superbrands Council, comprised of experts and industry leaders in branding, marketing, design, advertising, public relations, and business. This signal recognition reflects both their market research and a professional assessment, identifying brands that consumers consciously and consistently value and are willing to choose at a premium.

Heritage Hotels and Resorts' recognition as a Superbrand highlights its long-standing commitment to experience-led hospitality, sustainability, and authenticity. Operating across Sri Lanka's most culturally and geographically diverse regions, as well as the Maldives with the flagship property, Heritage Aarah, the brand has built-up a portfolio defined by a strong architectural identity, meaningful guest experiences, and a deep respect for its sense of place.

As the flagship brand of Aitken Spence Hotels, Heritage is also the

custodian of the largest portfolio of Sri Lankan hotels designed by the legendary architect Geoffrey Bawa, whose philosophy of tropical modernism continues to shape the brand's distinctive sense of space, flow, and connection to nature. This architectural legacy, combined with progressive sustainability initiatives, wellness offerings, and culinary excellence, has positioned Heritage as a benchmark for responsible exclusivity across the region.

Ms. Stasshani Jayawardena, Chairman / Chairperson – Aitken Spence, commented:

"Superbrands Sri Lanka's Choice 2025 is a meaningful affirmation of the values that have shaped Heritage from the very beginning. It reflects our long-term commitment to building a brand grounded in design integrity, responsible practices, and authentic hospitality, while continuing to evolve in-step with the expectations of our guests."

Susith Jayawickrama, Managing Director – Aitken Spence Hotels, said:

"Being awarded Superbrands Sri Lanka's Choice 2025 reinforces the trust our guests, partners, and stakeholders place in Heritage Hotels and Resorts. This recognition reflects not only our commercial strength, but also our continued focus on creating emotionally resonant, experience-led hospitality offerings that connects deeply with today's discerning traveller."

This latest achievement adds to Heritage Hotels and Resorts' growing portfolio of international accolades and reflects its continued focus on evolving with global travel trends, while remaining rooted in Sri Lankan heritage and hospitality.



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Cinnamon Life and John Keells Foundation Present La Bamba! The Song of Veracruz

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Life, in collaboration with John Keells Foundation (JKF) and in association with Nations Trust Bank (NTB), announced the staging of the West End-licensed musical La Bamba! The Song of Veracruz at a press conference held on 5 February 2026 at Cinnamon Life, City of Dreams, Colombo.



The musical theatre production will be performed at Cinnamon Life, City of Dreams, Colombo, from 24–28 April 2026, featuring seven performances across five days. The production will also include local auditions to source part of the cast from Sri Lanka, bringing together international and homegrown talent for an energetic and immersive theatrical experience.

A Landmark International Theatre Production

La Bamba! The Song of Veracruz is a West End-licensed professional musical that delivers vibrant music, dance, and storytelling inspired by Mexican heritage. The production features a cast of 19 performers, 6 musicians, supported by a crew of over 40, and full stage design, reflecting the scale and sophistication of West End productions.

In partnership with Paul Morrissey Ltd, a London-based theatre production company with extensive experience in West End and international productions, the show ensures globally aligned creative direction, production quality, and operational excellence.

Paul Morrissey, Founder of Paul Morrissey Ltd, said, “La Bamba! is a celebration of collaboration across cultures. The local auditions allow Sri Lankan performers to participate in the production alongside international artists, creating a performance that is dynamic, diverse, and exciting for audiences.”

Cinnamon Life: A Stage for Global Entertainment

Cinnamon Life has previously brought major international productions to Sri Lanka, including The Sound of Music in February 2018 and West End’s Mamma Mia! in December 2018, both hosted at an alternative venue, each selling over 7,000 tickets across multiple shows. With La Bamba!, Cinnamon Life now presents a production of this scale for the first time at its own state-of-the-art premises since its grand opening last year, further reinforcing Colombo’s position as a hub for world-class entertainment.

Designed to accommodate over 900 seats, Cinnamon Life’s Forum is equipped to host large-scale performances, featuring advanced backstage and rigging facilities. The Forum is fully capable of presenting seven shows in five days, providing a polished stage environment for both international and Sri Lankan performers.

Kamal Munasinghe, Senior Vice President, Colombo Hotels & General Manager, Cinnamon Life, said, “With La Bamba!, we are creating a platform where audiences can enjoy exceptional theatre right here in Colombo. The production demonstrates our commitment to enriching the city’s cultural offerings and supporting the growth of local talent in a professional setting.”

John Keells Foundation: Supporting Cultural Engagement

John Keells Foundation (JKF), the Corporate Social Responsibility entity of the John Keells Group, is the presenting partner for La Bamba!. Established in 2005, JKF supports long-term initiatives aligned with national priorities, with the arts playing a role in fostering dialogue, creativity, and social cohesion across communities. It’s involvement in La Bamba! reflects sustained efforts in supporting Sri Lanka’s creative industries through accessible, high-quality cultural platforms.

Carmeline Jayasuriya, Head of CSR, John Keells Holdings PLC, said, “John Keells Foundation is delighted to partner on La Bamba! and support a production that brings together international expertise and local artistry. We see this as a wonderful opportunity for Sri Lankan artistes to showcase and develop their skills and help position Sri Lanka on the global cultural stage.”

Associate Direction for the Local Cast

The local cast will be guided under the associate direction of theatre practitioner Kalakeerthi Jerome Lakshman de Silva. With over five decades of experience in musical theatre and stage direction, Jerome brings deep expertise in large-scale, ensemble-driven productions, ensuring that La Bamba!’s performance resonates with both its West End roots and international audiences.

Jerome said, “La Bamba! is a production rich in rhythm, movement, and narrative. It is a privilege to be part of this musical, which blends rich storytelling with dynamic performance, and I look forward to guiding our local cast in bringing this vibrant show to life for a diverse audience.”

The production blends expert stagecraft, choreography, and live music, offering Sri Lankan performers exposure to professional production techniques while audiences enjoy a show on par with West End offerings.

Minor Hotels Announces Expansion in the Adriatic with Debuts in Croatia and Slovenia

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a leading global hotel owner and operator, has announced the signing of a management agreement with MK Group for two new additions to its portfolio on Europe’s Adriatic coast. From 12 February 2026 the two properties will be operated by Minor Hotels and will reopen for the 2026 season in late March. Following extensive refurbishment programmes, the resorts will relaunch under the group’s luxury Anantara and Minor Reserve Collection flags in Q1 2027. The hotels add two new countries to Minor Hotels’ global portfolio and represent the group’s debuts in both Croatia and Slovenia.



The signings further the group’s European growth agenda, expanding its focus beyond city hotels to strengthen Minor’s presence in priority resort destinations across the Mediterranean. Slovenia is recognised for its leadership in sustainable tourism and deep-rooted wellness traditions, while Croatia continues to attract international travellers with its dramatic coastline and Mediterranean lifestyle. Istria, in particular, has emerged as Croatia’s leading region for tourism arrivals, combining natural beauty with a strong culinary identity and a culture of outdoor living.

Debating in the Slovenian resort town of Portorož, Hotel Palace Portorož is designed for guests seeking privacy and highly personalised experiences. The 183-key resort blends contemporary luxury with the area’s longstanding wellness heritage and refined gastronomy across three restaurants and three bars, a spa and both indoor and outdoor pools. With beach access and a dedicated MICE area, the resort delivers a balanced experience for both leisure and business guests. Following the refurbishment, the property will relaunch in Q1 2027 as Hotel Palace Portorož, Minor Reserve Collection Slovenia.

Located less than a 30-minute drive from Portorož, Adriatic Istria Resort will mark Minor Hotels’ entry into Croatia. Set in Savudrija on the prestigious Istrian peninsula, the 186-key property features a varied culinary offering across three restaurants and four bars and a dedicated MICE area supporting the growing demand for high-end corporate retreats and events and weddings in the region. Health hedonists will be able to enjoy an impressive full-service spa and wellness centre, indoor and outdoor pools and direct beach access. The resort is also home to the premier golf

course of the Adriatic, with the picturesque 18-hole, par 72 Golf Adriatic PGA National Croatia course running from the hotel alongside the coastline.

The property will undergo an extensive refurbishment and will relaunch as Anantara Adriatic Istria Resort in early 2027. At that time the full suite of Anantara hallmarks and experiences will be introduced, showcasing Anantara’s signature blend of heartfelt hospitality and experiential luxury, offering cultural journeys into Istrian heritage and nature-led activities.

The hotels are owned by MK Group, a company that has held a leading position in the economy of the Adriatic region for more than four decades, with businesses across tourism, real estate, renewable energy, agriculture and the food industry. MK Group operates in the markets of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Montenegro.

“The decision to accelerate our presence in Central and Southeastern Europe is driven by strong tourism growth and rising demand for distinctive luxury hospitality experiences,” said Dillip Rajakarier, CEO of Minor Hotels. “We are delighted to be partnering with MK Group on this unique opportunity to enter the Adriatic and I am confident that the synergy between our teams will bring about a distinctive and enhanced experience at these two outstanding properties.”

Currently with a strong development pipeline globally, Minor Hotels is looking to grow its luxury footprint in Europe and beyond with brands including Anantara and Minor Reserve Collection, its new luxury soft brand. Designed for travellers seeking extraordinary stays that celebrate personal expression and refined distinction, Minor Reserve Collection brings together independent luxury hotels with a strong sense of identity and place. Europe’s rich landscape of characterful luxury properties and independent owners seeking to retain individuality while benefitting from global marketing, sales and distribution reach, makes the region a key focus for growth, with this Portorož property representing a natural fit for the collection.

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TTA BULLETIN

This March, the shoreline comes alive with the much-anticipated launch of Salt Theory, the newest and most exciting beachside experience at Pegasus Reef Hotel.

Opening mid-March, Salt Theory is more than just a beach bar — it's a mood, a rhythm, a sunset state of mind.

Set right on the sand with uninterrupted ocean views, this stunning space is designed for those who crave authentic coastal energy. Think golden sunsets, chilled cocktails, a refreshing ocean breeze, and music that carries beautifully into the night.

With laid-back seating, warm ambient lighting, and a thoughtfully crafted menu designed to complement the beach vibe, Salt Theory promises an exciting and fresh social scene by the sea. From signature cocktails inspired by tropical flavours to



carefully curated bar bites perfect for sharing, every detail has been considered to let guests unwind in true island style.

Whether you are gathering with friends, celebrating special moments, or simply chasing the perfect sunset, Salt Theory invites you to step out of the ordinary and surrender to the rhythm of the waves.

This March, get ready to feel the real beach bar experience — right on the shore.

Jetwing Saman Villas Wins “Best International Hotel for Weddings” at Travel+Leisure India’s Best Awards 2025

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Saman Villas, part of Jetwing Luxury Reserves, has been awarded “Best International Hotel for Weddings” at the 14th edition of Travel+Leisure India & South Asia’s Best Awards, held on December 16, 2025, in New Delhi. This prestigious accolade celebrates the resort’s exceptional ability to create unforgettable wedding experiences, placing Sri Lanka firmly on the global map as a leading destination for romance.

The annual India’s Best Awards, driven by reader votes, honours excellence across the travel spectrum, from hotels and destinations to wellness retreats and culinary experiences. This year’s theme, “Passports to Possibility,” highlighted the transformative power of travel and brought together global hospitality leaders for an evening of recognition and inspiration.

Perched on a dramatic cliff overlooking the Indian Ocean, the 27-suite resort is Sri Lanka’s pioneering luxury boutique hotel and a haven for intimate celebrations. The property offers one of the most unique settings on the island: a garden on a rock surrounded by nothing but incredible ocean views. From pre-wedding rituals to gourmet receptions, the property specializes in intimate weddings that feel truly exclusive and deeply personal. Beyond the ceremony, Jetwing Saman Villas doubles as an idyllic honeymoon retreat, offering luxurious private-pool suites, indulgent spa rituals, and romantic dining experiences under starlit skies, making it the perfect beginning to a lifelong journey together.

“We are truly honoured to bring this recognition to Sri Lanka,” said Hashan Cooray, Director of Marketing and Development at



Jetwing Hotels. “As the country’s first and leading boutique hotel, this award reinforces Sri Lanka’s true potential as a premier destination for romance and weddings.”

Farrel Blom, General Manager of Jetwing Saman Villas, added, “Weddings are deeply personal, and for us, it’s never just about one evening, but it’s about creating an experience that feels like home. Many couples stay with us for several days, allowing us to be part of their story. Seeing them return for holidays and hearing their heartfelt feedback is the greatest reward.”

With a legacy spanning over half a century in the tourism industry, Jetwing Hotels has established itself as a pioneer in curating unique experiences and offering the best of legendary Sri Lankan hospitality, with the values of passion, humility, tenacity, and the spirit of family being at its core. As a family-owned brand, Jetwing Hotels continues to be a leading advocate for sustainability and responsible tourism, with ongoing initiatives focused on community upliftment, environmental conservation, and resource efficiency. With over 35 properties across the island, the brand’s diverse portfolio includes a range of Luxury Reserves, Premium Hotels, Select Hotels, and Essentials, each offering a unique perspective on Sri Lanka’s rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.

Spice Ceylon Opens Its Doors, Showcasing Sri Lanka’s First Spice Heritage Museum and Immersive Cultural Journey

TTA BULLETIN

Spice Ceylon, a thoughtfully curated spice heritage experience conceptualized by Thema Collection, officially opens to visitors, offering an immersive journey into Sri Lanka’s rich spice legacy, agricultural traditions, and cultural storytelling.

Drawing on Thema Collection’s extensive experience in heritage-led hospitality and destination storytelling, Spice Ceylon has been designed to deliver a well-curated and professionally managed visitor experience that connects history, nature, and gastronomy in a meaningful way.

“At Thema Collection, we continuously strive to introduce new and meaningful concepts to Sri Lanka’s tourism landscape. Spice Ceylon is something truly different, an experience where guests can explore the history of Sri Lanka’s spices through our dedicated museum, enjoy immersive guided tours, and conclude their journey with an authentic lunch inspired by Kandyan royal recipes,” said Chandra Wickramasinghe, the Chairman of Thema Collection.

At the heart of the experience is the Spice Heritage Museum, the first of its kind in Sri Lanka, dedicated entirely to the island’s spice history and its role in global trade. The museum traces Sri Lanka’s centuries-old spice journey, highlighting how spices such as cinnamon, pepper, and cloves shaped the country’s cultural identity and international relations.

Visitors are guided through spice cultivation areas and nature trails by well-trained interpreters with agricultural backgrounds, ensuring knowledgeable and credible narration. These guided walks provide deeper insights into traditional spice cultivation practices, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture.

The experience is further enriched with a curated lunch at the historic Walauwa, featuring authentic Sri Lankan cuisine inspired by Kandyan royal recipes, offering guests a rare opportunity to connect culinary heritage with place and history.

Conveniently located in Matale along the Dambulla–Kandy road, in close proximity to the historic Aluvihare Rock Temple, Spice Ceylon is thoughtfully designed as a practical, time-efficient stop that seamlessly complements cultural and heritage-focused itineraries.

By bringing together spice cultivation, immersive storytelling, and authentic Kandyan-inspired cuisine in a carefully curated setting, Spice Ceylon redefines how Sri Lanka’s spice heritage is experienced. The initiative reflects Thema Collection’s commitment to creating meaningful visitor experiences that celebrate the island’s history, culture, and living traditions, while setting a new standard for heritage-driven tourism in Sri Lanka.



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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.

The Serendipity Collection: Elevating Sri Lanka's Villa and Boutique Hospitality to Global Distinction

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka's quiet resurgence as a refined global destination is defined not only by renewed visitor confidence, but by a thoughtful evolution in how luxury hospitality is imagined.



Koenraad Pringiers



Shaleen Shanthikumar



Mario Stubbs

Today, the island's most compelling experiences are less about scale or spectacle and more about space, story, and emotional resonance. Within this emerging landscape, The Serendipity Collection has established itself as a distinctive presence, approaching villa and boutique hospitality as a form of cultural expression rather than a commercial formula.

In just five years, the Collection has become a trusted curator of place-led experiences for discerning international travelers seeking privacy, authenticity, and meaningful connection. Its portfolio, concentrated along Sri Lanka's southern coastline and gradually expanding toward the east and north, embodies a deliberate philosophy: that true luxury on the island resides in stillness, architectural character, intuitive service, and a dialogue with history and landscape.

Unlike many luxury operators, The Serendipity Collection does not cluster properties within a single destination. Instead, it embraces geographic diversity as a defining strength. Each villa or boutique retreat is situated within its own ecological and cultural rhythm; coastal, heritage, or wilderness, allowing travelers to experience Sri Lanka not as a single narrative, but as a sequence of distinct, deeply rooted journeys. This spatial breadth has become central to the brand's identity, underscoring a luxury defined by destination, design, and the unexpected joy of discovery.

At the heart of the Collection's philosophy are three enduring pillars: history, architecture, and culture. Restored residences, thoughtfully designed contemporary spaces, and properties embedded within living communities together create an experiential tapestry that honours the island's past while embracing the sensibilities of modern global travel.

Guiding this vision is a leadership collective with expertise spanning international tourism, maritime exploration, and operational excellence. Mario Stubbs, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, shapes the overarching vision of The Serendipity Collection. With experience as Managing Director of Sail Lanka Charter, Area Manager for Expedia, and active leadership roles in the European Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka, Mario combines global perspective with local insight. Under his direction, Sri Lanka is positioned not simply as a leisure destination, but as a place capable of delivering culturally resonant, world-class experiences.

Working alongside him, Shaleen Shanthikumar, Director and General Manager, ensures this vision is consistently delivered across every property. With extensive experience in travel operations and tour management, he brings operational precision, service consistency, and intuitive hospitality to the forefront, transforming each stay into an immersive and meaningful journey.

Complementing the leadership team is Koenraad Pringiers, Director and Partner, and Group CEO of Sea Leisure Yachting Group. His expertise in maritime leisure and luxury yachting introduces a distinctive ocean dimension to the Collection's offerings. Through his guidance, The Serendipity Collection embraces Sri Lanka's maritime potential, curating experiences that celebrate coastal exploration, sailing routes, and the island's seafaring heritage — where luxury unfolds seamlessly across land and sea.

This integration of land, culture, and ocean aligns with the global shift toward wellness-led and intentional travel. Across the Collection, experiences extend beyond accommodation to embrace slower rhythms, nature-integrated design, personalised wellbeing journeys, and reflective spaces that encourage both exploration and stillness. In Sri Lanka, where Ayurveda, spirituality, and landscape have long shaped daily life, wellness is not an addition but a natural expression of culture. At the same time, the revival of marine and sailing tourism is redefining how travellers experience the island. Coastal passages and yachting routes are re-emerging as compelling pathways to discover Sri Lanka more holistically, strengthening its appeal as a luxury destination.

This philosophy resonates strongly with a new generation of high-value travellers seeking depth and authenticity. Interest now extends beyond Europe to Asia, the Middle East, and Australia, reflecting Sri Lanka's renewed global presence as a destination that feels layered, intimate, and gently undiscovered.

With a commitment to technology, data-driven strategy, and seasoned hospitality expertise, the Collection ensures sustainable, measured growth. It also serves as a trusted partner for investors, facilitating villa ownership supported by professional management and international distribution. Looking ahead, expansion into boutique hotels — locally and internationally — will remain rooted in its design-led, culturally grounded ethos.

72nd Annual General Meeting of Skäl International Colombo

Skäl International Colombo successfully held its 72nd Annual General Meeting at the Taj Samudra Colombo, celebrating decades of leadership and fellowship in Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality sector.

A highlight of the AGM was the tribute to outgoing Secretary Zahara Cader, who served the club with dedication for 39 years, exemplifying professionalism, loyalty, and the Skäl spirit of "doing business among friends."

Bernard Wijetunge officially took office as President, succeeding Ahintha Amarasinghe.

Guest Speaker Hasib Omar, Managing Director of Moose Clothing Company, addressed the importance of building enduring brands through understanding people, respecting craft, and disciplined execution.



HOTELS

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 Palihawadana, 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.

Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon Receives HolidayCheck Gold Award 2026 for the Second Consecutive Year

TTA BULLETIN

Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon has been honoured with the HolidayCheck Gold Award 2026 for the second consecutive year, reaffirming its continued popularity among global travellers. The Gold Award is presented exclusively to accommodations that have won a HolidayCheck Award at least five times since 2019 and is reserved for only the 10 most popular hotels within each region.



Located in the North Ari Atoll, Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon is a resort widely recognised for its exceptional house reef and vibrant marine ecosystem. The island offers direct access to over 50 dive sites, alongside 24-hour diving opportunities, making it a sought-after destination for enthusiasts and seasoned divers alike. Its thriving reef has also earned international recognition from Lonely Planet as a premier diving destination, celebrated for having one of the best house reefs in the Maldives.

Accessible via a scenic 25-minute seaplane journey or a 90-minute speedboat ride from Malé, the resort combines effortless connectivity with an immersive island experience. Beyond diving, Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon is equally valued for its welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere, offering guests the opportunity to experience both relaxation and adventure within a compact and naturally rich island setting.

Commenting on the achievement, Sanjeeva Perera, Area General Manager for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Maldives, stated "Receiving the HolidayCheck Gold Award 2026 for the second consecutive year is a significant milestone for Ellaidhoo Maldives by Cinnamon. This recognition speaks to the consistent dedication of our team and the continued support of our guests. Maintaining strong recommendation rates over several years is built on attentive service, environmental responsibility, and delivering memorable experiences centred around our house reef and diving offerings."

To discover award-winning diving, vibrant marine life, and an island stay shaped by consistent guest acclaim, make your booking today and take advantage of the resort's exclusive Book Direct Summer offer, which includes complimentary speedboat transfers for stays until 31st October 2026.

City of Dreams Sri Lanka Ushers in a Spectacular Lunar New Year with Signature Celebrations

TTA BULLETIN

Ring in the Lunar New Year in grand style as City of Dreams Sri Lanka unveils a bold and immersive celebration to welcome a year of prosperity, fortune, and new beginnings.

From 17th February to 3rd March, the resort transforms into a vibrant canvas of auspicious energy, inspired by the traditions of Chun Jie (Spring Festival). Guests are invited to step into a world where every detail is designed to attract good fortune, abundance, and happiness.

At the heart of the festivities, Centre Stage comes alive with high-energy cultural showcases. Expect the rhythmic pulse of traditional lion dances—symbolising prosperity and warding off negative energy—alongside graceful fan dances that embody elegance, renewal, and joy. Adding to the spectacle, the revered Gods of Fortune will make special appearances, sharing blessings of wealth and success, while festive hostesses enhance the celebratory spirit with warm hospitality and interactive moments.

Elevating the experience, Spice8 presents an indulgent Chinese New Year buffet infused with festive symbolism. Guests can savour specially curated dishes

inspired by traditions of abundance and longevity — from prosperity-inspired delicacies to flavours that celebrate togetherness and good fortune.



The entire experience is brought to life through striking décor across Level 6 and Spice8, where rich reds, gold accents, and traditional motifs set the tone for luck and celebration. Every corner reflects the essence of the season, creating an atmosphere that is both luxurious and culturally immersive.

Blending world-class entertainment with meaningful traditions, City of Dreams Sri Lanka's Signature Chinese New Year celebration is more than an event—it's an invitation to manifest prosperity, embrace renewal, and celebrate the year ahead in true style.

Step into the energy of the Lunar New Year and let your fortune rise at City of Dreams Sri Lanka.

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Browns Hotels & Resorts Brings a Century of Tea Heritage to Life at Newburgh Ella

TTA BULLETIN

In the mist-veiled heart of Sri Lanka's hill country, where Ella has earned global recognition as one of the island's most photographed destinations, Browns Hotels & Resorts introduces a new chapter in experiential hospitality with Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort. Once a working tea factory, the century-old estate, originally established in 1903 by the legendary Scottish tea planter George Thomson, has been carefully transformed into a luxury resort, preserving its industrial character and historical soul while elevating it into an immersive experience. Set against dramatic mountain backdrops and defined by its iconic orange chimney, the resort commands world-famous views of the Ella Gap, framed by Ella Rock and Little Adam's Peak — where landscape, legacy, and luxury converge.

On 30 January 2026, Newburgh Ella officially opened its doors to travellers from around the world with a ceremonial launch attended by Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels & Resorts; Gangadaran Velsamy, General Manager of Newburgh Ella; Priyal Perera, Head of Projects and Procurement; Nishad Rajapakse, Manager – Engineering; along with key officials from Browns Hotels & Resorts. The event featured traditional regional performances and a ceremonial presentation of the first keycards to Newburgh Ella's inaugural guests by the resort staff.

This unveiling marks the soft opening of Newburgh Ella, with the property currently progressing through its LEED and green certification processes. As part of its sustainability journey, the resort operates on a fully paperless concept, with digital check-in and digital menu systems in place, reinforcing Browns Hotels & Resorts' commitment to responsible and future-ready hospitality.

Located on the Ella-Passara main road, near the Nine Arch Bridge and Pekoe Trail, Newburgh Ella features 41 thoughtfully designed rooms, categorised as Silver, Gold, and Bronze — inspired by the hierarchy of tea tips. The resort includes special family rooms, exquisite suites, and full wheelchair accessibility, offering inclusivity without compromise. Guests can witness sunrises and sunsets unfold directly from their rooms, framed by emerald vistas, connecting them to the rhythm of



the hills.

Dining at Newburgh Ella celebrates the estate's relationship with tea, land, and craft. 1903 – The Dining Room offers all-day dining with local and international flavours. Eastern Valley, an open-air restaurant, presents Pan-Asian cuisine, while Three Tips, the tea lounge, invites guests to savour the estate's finest teas. The resort's bar, George Thomson – The Founder's Tavern, features specially curated beverage menus inspired by the region, reflecting the warmth of Browns hospitality. Together, these experiences offer the luxury of tea factory living, blending heritage, craft, and modern comfort.

Beyond its spaces, guests can explore Ella through curated experiences — from estate walks and visits to Ravana and Diyaluma Falls to scenic railway journeys. SKY, the resort's observation deck, offers breathtaking vistas over tea-carpeted valleys and the world-famous Ella Gap.



Commenting on the launch, Eksath Wijeratne, CEO of Browns Hotels & Resorts,

said: "Tea is one of Sri Lanka's most powerful global stories, and with Newburgh Ella, we wanted to honour that legacy while creating an experience that goes beyond aesthetics. Guests can connect with the very process, the people, and the land that give Sri Lanka tea its global recognition. At the same time, this project supports the local community, with many former factory staff now part of the resort team, ensuring heritage, sustainability, and hospitality thrive together."



With the unveiling of Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort, Browns Hotels & Resorts continues to expand its portfolio of story-led destinations across Sri Lanka, inviting travelers to experience tea country differently — where the finest grade of tea meets the finest grade of stay, steeped in history, character, and heart.



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HOTELS

Cinnamon Sri Lanka Resorts Launches 'Cinnamon DISCOVERY Island Rewards'

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Sri Lanka Resorts launched Cinnamon DISCOVERY Island Rewards, a loyalty initiative designed to bring the global Double D\$ campaign by Cinnamon DISCOVERY to travellers visiting its Sri Lankan destinations. The programme enhances guest recognition and rewards across properties including Cinnamon Bentota Beach – Signature Selection, Cinnamon Bey Beruwala, Trinco Blu by Cinnamon, Hikka Tranz by Cinnamon, Cinnamon Wild Yala, Habarana Village by Cinnamon, Kandy Myst by Cinnamon and Cinnamon Citadel Kandy.

Cinnamon DISCOVERY members will earn double their base D\$ for stays completed between 1 December 2025 and 31 May 2026, with benefits extended to both existing members and new travellers who enroll during this period. Eligible stays will automatically receive the enhanced rewards.

Cinnamon DISCOVERY Island Rewards enables guests to earn D\$ that can be redeemed toward future stays, room upgrades, or unique local experiences.



Members will also enjoy added-value privileges across participating resorts, including preferential offers on dining, culinary activities, cultural sessions, and select perks for higher-tier guests who book directly through brand or GHA channels. Some of the



benefits offered across the resorts are

- Complimentary breakfast for two
- 10% off on Cookery demonstration with Chef
- 10% off on BBQ dinner experience at Cinnamon Lodge Habarana, Habarana Village by Cinnamon & Cinnamon Citadel Kandy
- Upto 20% off Sri Lankan cocktail experience at Cinnamon Wild Yala & Kandy Myst by Cinnamon

For more information and bookings, visit Cinnamon DISCOVERY Island Rewards.

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Soho Hospitality Charts First Expansion into South Asia with Charcoal's Colombo Debut

TTA BULLETIN

Soho Hospitality, one of Southeast Asia's most respected integrated hospitality and design groups, has announced plans to introduce its celebrated dining concept Charcoal Tandoor Fire Grill to Colombo later this year. The upcoming opening will mark a strategic milestone in Soho Hospitality's broader regional growth trajectory.



Founded in Bangkok in 2014, Charcoal has become one of the city's most distinctive Indian dining destinations—known not only for its cuisine, but for its ability to translate culinary heritage into a contemporary, design-led experience. Over the past decade, the restaurant has built a loyal following among local and international diners, positioning itself as a destination restaurant within Bangkok's competitive premium dining landscape.

At the heart of Charcoal is a philosophy rooted in the historic Spice Route, when trade between India and the Middle East shaped flavours, cultures and commerce across the region. This legacy informs a menu that balances the drama of North Indian tandoor cooking with the richness and finesse of Mughlai cuisine. Live fire, slow cooking techniques and carefully layered spice profiles define the brand's culinary identity—bold yet calibrated, immersive yet refined.

Charcoal Tandoor Fire Grill is situated at the iconic Capitol Twin Peaks on Union Place, rising high on the 50th floor and offering a truly panoramic view of the Colombo city skyline. Blending fire, flavour, and atmosphere, the restaurant delivers an elevated grill experience set against one of the most breathtaking backdrops in the capital. Home to Colombo's tallest sky bridge, standing an impressive 600 feet above the city, Charcoal Tandoor Fire Grill pairs dramatic views with an equally striking culinary journey, making it a standout venue for both dining and discovery.

The decision to select Sri Lanka as Charcoal's first entry to South Asia reflects a deliberate and data-driven strategy. Colombo's evolving consumer sophistication, renewed investor confidence, and growing relevance as a regional tourism and lifestyle hub were key considerations in the expansion decision. As a city increasingly positioned

at the crossroads of South Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, Colombo presents a natural extension of Charcoal's Spice Route narrative—both culturally and commercially.

Commenting on the upcoming expansion, Rohit Sachdev, CEO and Founder of Soho Hospitality, said, "Charcoal has always been a brand built on heritage, movement and exchange—of flavours, ideas and experiences. Sri Lanka felt like a natural step beyond Thailand. We see strong long-term fundamentals in Colombo, from tourism growth to an increasingly discerning dining audience. This expansion is not about rapid scale, but about entering the right market at the right time with the right concept."

Charcoal's reputation has been reinforced by international recognition, including features in Wallpaper* and The Boston Globe, as well as an Asia Pacific Property Award for leisure interiors in Thailand.

These accolades reflect the brand's ability to combine culinary authenticity with thoughtful design and experiential depth—qualities that have become hallmarks of Soho Hospitality's portfolio.

In Colombo, Charcoal will be developed with the same design-first sensibility that defines its Bangkok flagship. The forthcoming restaurant will blend traditional Indian architectural references with contemporary spatial design, reinforcing its positioning as a premium, experience-led destination rather than a conventional dining outlet. Further details on location and opening timelines will be announced closer to launch.

With this pre-launch announcement, Soho Hospitality signals its intent to extend its footprint beyond Thailand while remaining selective and strategic in its international growth. Charcoal's arrival in Sri Lanka represents the first chapter of that journey—anchored in a proven brand, a clear point of view, and confidence in markets that value depth, craft and long-term vision.

Soho Hospitality is a Bangkok-based integrated creative studio and hospitality group delivering experiences from concept to design, development and management. Founded in 2010, the company has built an award-winning portfolio including Above Eleven,

Charcoal Tandoor Fire Grill, Havana Social, Cantina Wine Bar & Italian Kitchen, Brasserie Cordonnier, The Bar Upstairs and Soho Pizza. Through its in-house design studio, Soho Hospitality has also partnered with leading global hospitality brands including Accor, Marriott International, IHG, Minor, Dusit, Centara and Taj, and has developed the 163-key Fraser Suites Sukhumvit property in Bangkok.



Hilton Colombo Welcomes Ramadan with 'A Middle Eastern Flair'

TTA BULLETIN

Hilton Colombo invites guests to observe the season of Ramadan with 'A Middle Eastern Flair,' a specially curated Iftar celebration taking place from 17 February to 18 March 2026 at Graze Kitchen. Inspired by the time-honored traditions of the Middle East, this month-long showcase brings together authentic flavors, generous hospitality, and the spirit of togetherness that defines the Holy month.

At Graze Kitchen, the Iftar buffet will be available daily from 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm, priced at Rs. 10,888 nett per adult and Rs. 5,444 nett per child (6–11 years). The lavish spread features an array of mezze, fragrant rice dishes, slow-cooked specialties, and indulgent desserts. Signature highlights include Lamb Kabsa with Vegetables, Braised Ouzi with Khalta Rice, Meat-Stuffed Artichokes, Cheese and Meat Sambousek, Jordanian Maqluba, and

traditional Kunafa.

Complementing the dining experience at Graze Kitchen, Café Kai presents 'Iftar, Brought to You', a specially curated Middle Eastern selection available throughout the promotional period, featuring Iftar Sawan, Biryani, varieties of hummus, stuffed dates, baklava, and Turkish delight—perfect for sharing with family or taking home.

Commenting on the initiative, Manesh Fernando, Area General Manager for Hilton Sri Lanka and General Manager of Hilton Colombo, said, "A Middle Eastern Flair' reflects our commitment to honoring cultural traditions through authentic culinary storytelling. This Ramadan, we are delighted to bring guests together over flavors that celebrate heritage, generosity, and the joy of sharing a meal."



HOTELS

Cinnamon Velifushi Maldives helps island students discover a world beneath the waves

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Velifushi Maldives successfully completed a six-day PADI Open Water Diver certification



programme for a selected group of students from Keyodhoo and Felidhoo schools, as part of its ongoing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives focused on youth development, environmental awareness, and community engagement.

The programme was designed not only to provide internationally recognised diving qualifications but also to instil a sense of responsibility towards the Maldives' delicate marine ecosystems, while opening pathways for future careers in marine tourism. This transformative journey was delivered in partnership with Dive & Sail, the resort's PADI-certified diving centre, with full support from the participating schools.

Nine students, aged between 16 and 18, were carefully selected for their academic promise and curiosity about marine life. Over six days, they progressed from classroom learning to the open waters of the lagoon, experiencing first-hand the beauty and fragility of the coral reefs surrounding their islands.

Classroom sessions: Introduction to diving theory, safety protocols, equipment use, and environmental conservation principles.

Confined water training: Practical skill development in controlled water environments to build confidence and competence.

Open water dives: Culminating in supervised dives in the lagoon and reef areas, students applied their training in a real marine environment, earning internationally recognised certification

The training emphasised safe diving practices, reef protection, and respect for marine biodiversity. Beyond technical skills, the programme strengthened engagement between Cinnamon Velifushi Maldives and neighbouring island communities, fostering collaboration and long-term development opportunities.

The initiative concluded with an award ceremony at the resort, where participants received their PADI Open Water Diver certifications in the presence of representatives from Cinnamon Velifushi Maldives, Dive & Sail, and partner schools.

Commenting on the programme, Area General Manager of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Maldives, Sanjeeva Perera, says "This programme reflects our commitment to integrating education, environmental responsibility, and community development.

Celebrate Love at Pegasus Reef This Valentine's Day

TTA BULLETIN

Love, in its most beautiful form, deserves a setting as breathtaking as the feeling itself. This Valentine's Day, Pegasus Reef Hotel opens its heart — offering an extraordinary escape where the ocean breeze carries whispers of romance and every moment is tenderly crafted to celebrate the most profound of human emotions.

As the sun dips below the horizon and the Indian Ocean shimmers in golden light, surrender to a specially curated dining experience where every dish is a love letter written in flavour. Soft candlelight, elegant décor, and the gentle rhythm of the waves

create an atmosphere so intimate it feels as though the evening was made solely for you.

Whether you are celebrating a proposal, an anniversary, or simply the quiet beauty of togetherness, Pegasus Reef Hotel provides the most magical of backdrops. Our warm and attentive team ensures every detail is perfectly in place, leaving you free to be fully present with the one who holds your heart.

This Valentine's Day, let the ocean bear witness to your love.



Celebrating Freedom by the Ocean

TTA BULLETIN

As Sri Lanka proudly commemorates its Independence Day, Pegasus Reef Hotel joins the nation in honouring the spirit of unity, resilience, and progress that defines our island home.

Independence Day is more than a historic milestone — it is a tribute to the courage and determination that shaped our nation's journey. It is a day when the Lion Flag rises high, reminding us of the strength, diversity, and cultural richness that make Sri Lanka truly unique.

Along the shores of Wattala, Pegasus Reef embraces this national celebration with



warmth and pride. From special culinary experiences inspired by local flavours to moments of reflection by the ocean, the hotel becomes a space where guests connect with the true essence of Sri Lankan hospitality.

As waves meet the horizon, we are reminded that freedom is not only a chapter in history but a responsibility carried forward with hope and unity.

On this Independence Day, Pegasus Reef Hotel celebrates the spirit of Sri Lanka — past, present, and future — with gratitude and pride.

Kandy Myst By Cinnamon Celebrates One Year Of Energising Contemporary Hospitality In The City Of Kandy

TTA BULLETIN

Kandy Myst by Cinnamon celebrates its first anniversary, marking a year as Kandy's contemporary hospitality destination that brings energy, culture, and lifestyle experiences to the city. Opened on 12 February 2025 through a partnership between Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and Indra Traders (Pvt) Ltd, the hotel blends hospitality expertise with local insight to deliver a modern, energetic and lifestyle driven offering.

With the highest room inventory in Kandy, comprising 215 contemporary rooms, Kandy Myst by Cinnamon caters to both leisure and business travellers, offering modern comfort in close proximity to the city's key attractions and transport routes.

Its dynamic dining and social spaces; Grains Dining, Terra Lounge, and the rooftop Kosmos Sky Bar with heated infinity pool, invite guests and locals to engage, with panoramic city views, curated entertainment, and vibrant social experiences. Grains Dining, the buffet restaurant, serves an extensive selection of local and international cuisine, while Terra Lounge provides a welcoming café-style hub for casual meetups and social gatherings.

In its inaugural year, the hotel achieved significant milestones, becoming the first hotel in Kandy to receive LEED Gold certification, demonstrating a commitment to responsible, future-ready development.

Reinforcing its culturally connected and globally relevant positioning, Kandy Myst by Cinnamon hosted globally celebrated icons such as Alpha Blondy and a series of high-profile local and international events, including the official trophy unveiling of the inaugural New Zealand U85kg Rugby Tour of Sri Lanka in May 2025.

Throughout the year, the hotel brought guests and the community together through seasonal activations, curated experiences, and loyalty-driven offers, contributing to strong engagement while supporting Kandy's tourism economy through local partnerships and community initiatives.

As it enters its second year, Kandy Myst by Cinnamon continues to invite international and local guests alike to experience its vibrant dining, social, and lifestyle spaces, while reinforcing its role in shaping Kandy's modern hospitality and cultural landscape.

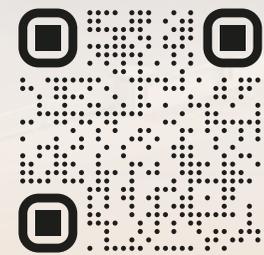




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HOTELS / AIRLINES

Cinnamon Bentota Beach – Signature Selection Supports Smart Learning at Bentota Gamini National School

TTA BULLETIN

Reinforcing its commitment to the community in which it operates, Cinnamon Bentota Beach – Signature Selection has taken steps to enhance the smart classroom at Bentota Gamini National School through the donation and installation of two air conditioning units.

The initiative was undertaken to create a comfortable and conducive learning environment, enabling students and teachers to fully benefit from digital learning facilities without disruption. Implemented following a request from the school, the project was carried out under the guidance of the resort's senior management, with the hotel team coordinating the



installation and commissioning.

A formal handover ceremony was held at the school in the presence of the Principal, teachers, and students. Representatives from Cinnamon Bentota Beach – Signature Selection, including members of the management and staff, attended the event, reflecting the property's collective commitment to community engagement.

By supporting improved learning conditions and access to technology-enabled education, the resort continues to invest in the long-term development of the Bentota community while strengthening its partnership with local institutions.



Emirates extends latest cabin experience to more cities worldwide

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has announced a series of aircraft deployments and product upgrades across its network, extending the reach of Premium Economy and delivering a more consistent experience for customers.

As part of its ongoing retrofit programme, the airline is set to complete the upgrade of its first high-density, two-class A380 by mid-April. The aircraft will be reconfigured into a three-class layout featuring 76 Business Class seats, 56 Premium Economy seats, and 437 Economy Class seats.

The first upgraded aircraft will operate flights EK903/904 between Dubai and Amman from 14 April to 31 May, before moving to Prague on EK139/140 from 1 June. By November, Emirates expects to have retrofitted all 15 of its two-class A380s into the new three class configuration.

In Europe and North America, New York JFK will be served by a four-class retrofitted A380 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 1 April, increasing to a daily service from 1 June. From 1 March, Emirates will operate a four-class A380 featuring Premium Economy on flights EK085/086 to Zurich. With this upgrade, the airline will offer more than 1500 weekly seats in Premium Economy to and from Zurich. Emirates will operate flights EK101/102 to Milan with a retrofitted, three-class Boeing 777-200LR fitted with Premium Economy from 10 May, and operate flights EK165/166 to Dublin with a three-class retrofitted Boeing 777-200LR from 25 October. Once deployed, all 21 weekly flights to Dublin will offer Premium



Economy.

In Asia, flights EK392/393 to Ho Chi Minh City will be operated with a three-class retrofitted Boeing 777-200LR from 1 May. With this upgrade, the airline will offer more than 600 weekly seats in Premium Economy to and from Ho Chi Minh City on double daily flights. Emirates will also upgrade flights EK382/383 to Hong Kong from a Boeing 777-300ER to an A380 from 1 October, transitioning to a retrofitted A380 fitted with Premium Economy from 1 December.

In Africa, Emirates will operate flights EK729/730 to Entebbe with the new A350 from 29 March.

In the Middle East, Emirates flights EK945/946 to Basra will be operated with a retrofitted four-class Boeing 777-300ER starting from 1 May, offering Premium Economy across all five weekly flights to Basra.

In the Indian Ocean, Emirates will operate a retrofitted three-class Boeing 777-200LR on flights EK709/710 to Mauritius from 29 March.

Emirates will further deploy a three class A380 on flights EK362/363 between Dubai and Guangzhou from 1 October, offering seats in First, Business and Economy Class.

SriLankan Cargo Secures Another South Asian First with IATA CEIV Live Animals Certification

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Cargo, the air freight arm of SriLankan Airlines, has secured another regional first by becoming the first airline in South Asia to be awarded the Center of Excellence for Independent Validators (CEIV) for Live Animals Logistics Certification from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Regarded as the premium global standard for the air transport of live animals, the certification serves as a powerful pledge to pet parents, livestock owners, conservationists and all shippers that SriLankan Cargo will transport animals in humane, safe and stress-free conditions across its worldwide network.

Chaminda Perera, Head of Cargo at SriLankan Airlines, commented on the achievement, stating, "Earning the IATA CEIV Live Animals Certification underscores our dedication to animal welfare and operational excellence, ensuring safer handling, trained teams and peace of mind for our customers."

Sheldon Hee, Regional Vice President, Asia-Pacific, said, "The CEIV Live Animals certification is not only about compliance, but ensures the safety and welfare of live animals transported by air. This is particularly relevant as this is a



market that continues to grow with more than 200,000 live animal shipments globally in 2025. We are pleased to see SriLankan Airlines achieve this important certification and ensure the implementation of the highest standards across the supply chain."

The certification stands out for placing animal safety and welfare at the forefront, supported by best-in-class infrastructure and operational excellence. Achieving it requires a rigorous, multi-step process of training, assessment, validation, certification and recertification, ensuring that only organisations fully compliant with the IATA Live Animals Regulations and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species gain membership in this highly exclusive circle of airlines, which currently numbers 12 worldwide.

Emirates Flight Catering (EKFC) commissions large-scale biodigester, with aim to reduce annual CO₂ emissions by 2,000 tonnes

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates Flight Catering (EKFC) is scaling up its approach to waste management with a custom-built biodigester, one of the largest in commercial scale and capacity. The Power Knot LFC-3000 biodigester at EKFC's Central Commissary Unit enables on-site processing of organic waste, treating it at the source rather than diverting it to landfill.

A biodigester functions through aerobic digestion, using oxygen, heat and microorganisms to break down organic waste. This natural process produces grey water which can be repurposed for non-potable use. Unlike mechanical systems that degrade over time, the biodigester becomes more efficient as its microbial culture matures and adapts to a wider variety of feedstock.

Shahreyar Nawabi, Chief Executive Officer of Emirates Flight Catering said: "At EKFC, when we look at where we can make the greatest difference, it's in how we handle waste by treating it responsibly, diverting it from landfill, and finding ways to put it back into productive use. Commissioning a biodigester of this scale is a major operational milestone for us as we accelerate EKFC's landfill diversion efforts. The strong cross-functional collaboration from every part of the business, in addition to consistent waste segregation efforts of teams on the ground were also key drivers



of this project's successful delivery. The combination of innovation and operational commitment

will continue to drive our progress on sustainability."

Since commissioning in December 2025, throughput has risen steadily, with the system now processing an average of up to 3.5 tonnes of waste per day. Current projections for the biodigester at EKFC estimate capacity will increase to around 6 tonnes of food waste per day. *

Using the UK's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) aligned GHG conversion factors, EKFC estimates that diverting one tonne of food waste from landfill avoids approximately 0.7 tCO₂e per tonne, primarily by preventing methane emissions stemming from decomposition in landfill. At full capacity and biological maturity, the biodigester could avoid more than 2,000 tonnes of CO₂e annually.

The biodigester is one component of EKFC's broader efforts to embed sustainability into day-to-day operations. EKFC is advancing strategic investments in energy and fleet, including incorporating solar panels which generated 4,000 MWh last year, avoiding 1,600 tonnes of CO₂e.

Cathay achieves another year of record SAF commitment with global partners

TTA BULLETIN

Cathay achieved another milestone year for its Corporate Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Programme in 2025, as more corporate and cargo customers join forces to decarbonise business travel and air cargo shipments. Building on the strong momentum since its launch in 2022, the programme saw another year of record growth, with SAF commitments more than doubling from 2024.

This growth was enabled by 17 global partners, whose commitment and leadership have helped keep the programme positioned as one of the leading initiatives of its kind globally. Together, the corporate partners have committed to using around 17,400 tonnes of SAF, representing an increase of nearly 180% compared with 2024. This is equivalent to a reduction of approximately 54,600 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) emissions on a lifecycle basis — equal to the emissions of about 61,800 Economy class round trips between Hong Kong and London.

Cathay was pleased to welcome Microsoft as a new partner to the programme in 2025, collaborating to address emissions from both air cargo and business travel. Kuehne + Nagel, a Diamond partner of the programme since 2024, remained the largest cargo contributor in 2025, while the partnership with DHL Express also enabled the first SAF uplift on flights operated by Air Hong Kong, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Cathay Group.

Several Diamond partners of the programme, including EQT, have entered into multi-year SAF commitments with Cathay demonstrating a long-term commitment to scaling SAF and credibly



reducing their climate impact from business travel and airfreight. DSV and EY are also among the programme's 2025 Diamond partners, contributing towards the adoption of SAF.

Growing commitments from partners in the Corporate SAF Programme enable Cathay to purchase additional SAF beyond mandatory requirements and its own voluntary usage, directly supporting the scaling of SAF. This expanded SAF usage is made possible through partnerships with leading suppliers around the world, working together to increase the availability of SAF certified to internationally recognised sustainability standards across Cathay's global network. Key supplier partnerships in 2025 included China Aviation Oil Europe, Itochu, Neste, Shell Aviation, Sinopec and SK Energy, each contributing to the continued expansion of SAF usage by Cathay.

Cathay Group Chief Executive Officer Ronald Lam said: "Cathay has set ambitious sustainability goals, but like every airline, we cannot achieve them on our own. The growing collaboration between our corporate customers and SAF suppliers through the Corporate SAF Programme is a powerful example of how collaboration with like-minded, ambitious partners can help scale SAF adoption. We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing trust and long-term commitments shown by our partners."

Qatar Airways Supports Inaugural Art Basel Qatar 2026 as Official Premium Partner

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways, the Official Premium Partner of Art Basel Qatar 2026, continues its commitment of the renowned global art fair as Art Basel Qatar made its debut in Doha from 5-7 February 2026, with Preview days from 3-4 February 2026.

Qatar Airways' partnership with Art Basel as its Official Premium Partner, reflects a shared advancement of excellence, global connectivity, and the exchange of ideas across cultures. The airline's role as Official Premium Partner aligns with its broader ambition to connect people and places through meaningful cultural experiences, while reinforcing Doha's growing profile as a global destination for art, culture, and creativity.

As part of its collaboration with Art Basel Qatar, Qatar Airways will offer exclusive travel benefits to selected audiences, reinforcing its role in enabling seamless access to the world's leading cultural moments.

Art Basel Qatar represents the fifth edition of the world's premier contemporary art fair, joining Basel, Miami Beach, Hong



Kong and Paris. With Doha's evolving creative landscape as the backdrop, Art Basel Qatar brings together leading galleries, artists, collectors, and cultural figures, signifying its role as a regional hub for arts and culture.

Through its partnerships, Qatar Airways, the World's Best Airline as voted by Skytrax in 2025, continues to facilitate international access to major cultural moments around the world through its global network and award-winning hospitality.

Art Basel Qatar is organised in partnership with leading Qatari institutions, Qatar Sports Investments and QC+, and takes place across the city's key cultural venues including M7 and the Doha Design District in Msheireb Downtown Doha.

Emirates and Sydney Symphony Orchestra renew longstanding partnership

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates has renewed its long-standing 23-year partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra until 2028, reinforcing a shared commitment to connecting people through world-class music, culture, and travel experiences.

As Emirates' longest-running non-sports sponsorship globally, the renewed partnership with Sydney Symphony Orchestra builds on more than two decades of collaboration and will continue to bring extraordinary musical performances to audiences in Australia and around the world.

Celebrating the renewal of the Emirates partnership, an ensemble from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra took to the tarmac at Sydney Airport to perform in front of the flagship Emirates A380. The piece, Takeoff, commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and composed by Jessica Wells exclusively for Emirates, pays tribute to the iconic aircraft. The performance is a symbol of how music and aviation share the power to connect cultures and transcend borders.

As part of the renewed agreement, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra will expand its presence on Emirates' award-winning inflight entertainment system, ice, with a rotation of orchestral performances, recently adding The Planets. The content



will allow millions of Emirates passengers to experience the artistry of one of the world's leading orchestras while travelling across the airline's global network.

Barry Brown, Divisional Vice President Australasia at Emirates, said: "Music and travel come together in their ability to inspire, connect and move people. We are proud to renew our partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, a cultural institution that represents excellence, creativity and global connection. This next chapter of our collaboration not only strengthens our support for the arts in Australia but also allows us to share the orchestra's extraordinary performances with millions of passengers worldwide through ice."

Through the renewed partnership, Emirates will continue to support the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's live performances, digital initiatives, and audience engagement, while offering exclusive ticketing and hospitality experiences and presenting partner opportunities across selected concert series.

flydubai signs MoU with Emirates Aviation University to launch Flight Dispatcher Cadet Programme for Emirati Talent

TTA BULLETIN

flydubai, the Dubai-based carrier, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Emirates Aviation University to collaborate on the launch of a Flight Dispatcher Cadet Programme, marking an important initiative in the airline's long-term commitment to building in-house aviation capabilities and further developing its national workforce.

The MoU was signed by Nasser Binkherbash, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at flydubai, and Professor Ahmad Al Ali, Vice Chancellor of Emirates Aviation University. Hamad Obaidalla, Chief Commercial Officer at flydubai, and Mick Hills, Chief Operations Officer at flydubai, also attended the signing ceremony. The agreement marks the first step toward launching the programme in July 2026, targeting Emirati nationals.

Under this partnership, candidates will undertake the Flight Dispatcher Initial Course (FDIC) at Emirates Aviation University in Dubai. The FDIC is a 10-week, UAE General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) approved programme (CAR Part II) designed to prepare cadets for a flight dispatcher licence. The course equips trainees with essential technical and operational knowledge, including aviation law, meteorology, navigation, aircraft performance, weight and balance,

human factors and flight planning, while emphasising close cooperation with pilots to ensure safe and efficient operations.

This programme is a strategic investment in flydubai's future workforce and a key enabler of the airline's training ecosystem. By creating a structured career development path for Emirati nationals with no prior aviation experience, the initiative broadens access to highly skilled aviation roles and strengthens the pipeline of future professionals across flight operations.

Nasser Binkherbash, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at flydubai, added: "Developing national talent and investing in our people is vital to flydubai's growth strategy. This programme not only supports our internal training and succession planning, but also contributes to national development goals by creating meaningful job opportunities and building a sustainable pool of future aviation professionals, including flight dispatchers, engineers and pilots."

The collaboration also reinforces flydubai's commitment to expanding its in-house capabilities by nurturing talent from the earliest stages of their careers, ensuring operational efficiency as the airline continues to grow its network and fleet.





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