

# TRAVELTALK

## ASIA

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## Aarunya Nature Resort Named Among TIME's World's Greatest Places 2026

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka's Aarunya Nature Resort has earned international recognition after being featured in TIME Magazine's prestigious list of the World's Greatest Places 2026, under the Asia category.

The accolade places the boutique property among some of the most remarkable destinations around the globe and highlights Sri Lanka's growing reputation as a hub for unique and sustainable travel experiences.

Perched on a 10-acre mountaintop estate overlooking the breathtaking Knuckles Mountain Range, Aarunya Nature Resort blends luxury hospitality with conservation, wellness and immersive nature experiences. The resort was founded by architect Nath Rankothge, whose ancestral land forms the setting for the property.

Inspired by a Sanskrit phrase meaning "first rays of the sun," Aarunya reflects a philosophy that places nature at the heart of the guest experience. The resort's architecture, crafted by skilled village carpenters, embraces traditional design elements while ensuring minimal impact on the surrounding environment.

One of the property's most distinctive new additions is the Nature Research Pavilion, a bamboo-clad space that allows guests to actively participate in environmental initiatives. Visitors have the opportunity to collaborate with naturalists and researchers on projects including habitat mapping, biodiversity conservation and reforestation. These efforts also support the protection of rare species such as the endangered Moore's Shrub Frog, which inhabits the region's unique ecosystem.

The resort's original nine villas draw inspiration from traditional ambalama rest houses of Sri Lanka and are thoughtfully positioned to frame panoramic



views of the surrounding mountains and forest canopy. Each villa offers a secluded retreat where guests can unwind in outdoor bathtubs or plunge pools while observing birdlife such as hanging parrots and scarlet minivets.

Further enhancing the resort's offerings, the recently introduced Sol Sanctuary Villa has been designed around the sacred Sri Yantra, a geometric representation of cosmic balance and harmony. Carefully positioned ceiling apertures transform the space into a natural observatory, allowing shifting daylight to illuminate the interior throughout the day.

Looking ahead to 2026, Aarunya is also set to expand its wellness experiences with new therapies that incorporate spices grown on the estate, including cinnamon, cardamom and nutmeg—bringing guests closer to Sri Lanka's rich natural and cultural heritage.

The recognition by TIME underscores Aarunya Nature Resort's commitment to sustainability, innovation and authentic hospitality, while further reinforcing Sri Lanka's appeal as a destination for travellers seeking meaningful and immersive nature-based experiences.

## Acorn Group Accelerates Growth Agenda with New Executive Appointments

Suranjith De Fonseka named Deputy CEO; Saminda Weerasinghe appointed Chief Operating Officer

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA



Suranjith De Fonseka



Saminda Weerasinghe

Acorn Group recently announced the appointment of Suranjith De Fonseka as Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Saminda Weerasinghe as Chief Operating Officer, strengthening its senior leadership team as the organization continues to drive growth and transformation across its business portfolio. Both appointments came into effect from 1 April 2026.

Suranjith was a founder Partner of The Acorn Group in 2020 and has held many senior positions within the Group and was the Chief Operating Officer until recently. In his new role as Deputy CEO, Suranjith De Fonseka will carry overall responsibility for performance, with a focus on driving revenue and profit growth across the organization's diverse business units while ensuring the successful delivery of key strategic initiatives. The appointment marks an important step in the organization's leadership transition, reflecting its continued focus on strengthening governance, performance, and strategic direction.

Meanwhile, Saminda Weerasinghe has been appointed Chief Operating Officer, joining the Executive Committee and serving as a member of the Acorn Leadership Team. As COO, Saminda will lead the Transformation Program, translating the organization's strategic vision into operational execution and driving performance. His role will be pivotal in ensuring the transformation agenda is implemented with clarity,

discipline, and pace.

Saminda Weerasinghe, CFA, brings over 20 years of experience in corporate finance and private equity. A CFA Charter holder and Fellow Member of CIMA (UK), he is recognized for his strong analytical expertise and ability to unlock value across sectors including manufacturing, renewable energy, and technology. He has led large-scale mergers, acquisitions, and complex restructuring initiatives as a senior investment banking executive, and has held multiple C-level and Director roles across manufacturing, export, real estate, and technology sectors within leading Sri Lankan organizations and startups.

Commenting on the appointments, CEO Malinga Arsakularatne said: "These appointments represent an important step in strengthening our leadership team as we continue to grow and evolve. Suranjith brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of our business, and I have every confidence in his ability to drive performance and lead from the front as Deputy CEO. Saminda's appointment as Chief Operating Officer cements the importance we place on our transformation journey, and his leadership will be instrumental in translating our strategic vision into operational excellence."

These strategic leadership changes also highlight the organization's commitment to building a strong and agile management structure capable of delivering sustained growth and operational excellence

The geopolitical landscape has shifted considerably over the past month, once again placing global travel under the spotlight. For Sri Lanka's tourism industry, these developments have presented certain challenges, particularly as many travellers from our key source markets rely on transit through the Middle East. When global dynamics influence air routes and travel sentiment, destinations like ours inevitably feel the impact.

However, the tourism industry has always been resilient, adapting quickly to change and identifying new opportunities. In recent weeks, Sri Lanka has begun shifting gears, exploring new markets while strengthening ties with those already showing strong potential. One of the most encouraging developments has been the increased connectivity from India. As our primary tourism generating market, India continues to play a vital role in sustaining visitor arrivals, and the growth in flight capacity has further strengthened this important relationship.

At the same time, it is heartening to note a gradual uptick in interest from several emerging markets. These travellers are increasingly discovering the appeal of Sri Lanka — a destination that offers extraordinary diversity within a relatively small island. From heritage and wildlife to beaches, wellness and cuisine, Sri Lanka continues to capture the imagination of travellers seeking authentic and meaningful experiences.

Adding momentum to this positive outlook is the Tourism Alliance's recently launched campaign, "Love Sri Lanka Always." The initiative highlights the many reasons to visit the island while showcasing experiences that can be enjoyed during the traditionally quieter months that lie ahead. By drawing attention to the unique charms of the low season — from lush landscapes and cultural encounters to fewer crowds and excellent value — the campaign encourages travellers to rediscover Sri Lanka in a different light.

While global conditions may continue to evolve, Sri Lanka's spirit of hospitality and its enduring appeal remain constant. For travellers willing to explore, there has never been a better time to fall in love with Sri Lanka — always



*Dinushka*

**Dinushka Chandrasena**  
Editor

**DoubleDee**  
PUBLICATIONS

**Editor / Managing Director**  
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**Directors**  
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**Lead Designer**  
Eshan Perera

**Digital/ Website Associate**  
Navodh Jayasundara

**Website Design**  
Antyra Hospitality

**Printing/ Publishing**  
Printage (Pvt) Ltd

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

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## NEWS

# Aitken Spence Travels Achieves Prestigious GSTC Certification, Setting a New Benchmark for Sustainable Tourism in Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Aitken Spence Travels, Sri Lanka's leading Destination Management Company, is delighted to announce the achievement of the internationally recognized certification from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), marking a historic milestone in the company's sustainability journey.



The GSTC provides the world's most comprehensive and respected framework for sustainable tourism, built upon four key pillars: sustainable management, socio-economic benefits to local communities, preservation of cultural heritage, and environmental responsibility.

Achieving GSTC certification is not an easy task but a rigorous and demanding process. It requires company wide engagement, supply chain compliance, continuous monitoring of environmental performance, extensive documentation and independent third-party on-site audits by a GSTC accredited body. It goes far beyond compliance embedding sustainability into the company corporate strategy, operational processes, and decision making frameworks.

At Aitken Spence Travels, this certification confirms that sustainability principles are actively implemented and independently verified across the organisation. It reflects a measurable commitment that goes beyond policy and into real operational impact.

Commenting on the achievement, Mr. Nalin Jayasundera, Managing Director of Aitken Spence Travels, stated "This achievement represents the highest recognition of all sustainability certifications, and we are proud to be among

a very few DMC's who have GSTC and Travelife certification. Sustainability at ASTL is not an isolated initiative. We drive it with clear leadership direction and strong governance. The GSTC certification represents the highest global benchmark in sustainable tourism. At ASTL, sustainability is not a standalone initiative, it is embedded in our strategic direction and governance framework. We operate with strong alignment and support from the wider Aitken Spence PLC Group, ensuring our strategies are fully synchronised and our impact is cohesive, measurable, and meaningful. As a leader in tourism, we believe in walking the talk. This certification affirms that our commitment to responsible tourism is authentic, structured, and deeply integrated across the organization."

As global travelers become more conscious of their environmental and social footprint, GSTC certification provides assurance that Aitken Spence Travels delivers experiences that respect Sri Lanka's ecosystems, protect cultural heritage, and generate meaningful socio-economic benefits for local communities not only for today but for the sustenance of its future bookings too.

The GSTC achievement milestone firmly establishes Aitken Spence Travels as a sustainability leader in Sri Lanka's tourism industry demonstrating that responsible tourism is not merely an aspiration, but a verified and measurable standard embedded into the company DNA.

## Explore Asia Holidays Recommences as Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka

TTA BULLETIN

Explore Asia Holidays, originally founded in 2006, has recommenced operations under a new identity as Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka, marking a strategic evolution built on nearly two decades of experience in Sri Lanka's tour operations and experiential tourism sectors.

The transition reflects a renewed vision to strengthen Sri Lanka's tourism ecosystem through a more coordinated, people-centred and future-focused approach to tourism development.

Positioned as more than a traditional tour operator, Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka aims to function as an ecosystem builder through its People-Powered Tourism (PPT) Framework. This model brings together travellers, communities, women entrepreneurs, tourism enterprises, creators and industry partners within a collaborative system designed to ensure tourism development contributes meaningfully to destination wellbeing.

A key priority of the initiative is supporting the growth of micro and small-scale tourism enterprises across Sri Lanka, particularly by creating pathways for young Sri Lankans to enter the sector as entrepreneurs. By encouraging youth- and women-led tourism initiatives, as well as community-based enterprises, the initiative seeks to broaden grassroots participation in tourism while strengthening local economies across the country.

Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka will also focus on promoting regenerative tourism initiatives, where tourism contributes positively to the economic, cultural and environmental resilience of destinations. Through this approach, tourism is positioned not only as a driver of economic growth, but also as a catalyst for empowering communities, protecting

cultural heritage and natural environments, and encouraging responsible stewardship of destinations.

Recognising that meaningful tourism development requires collaboration, Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka intends to work closely with investors, national and provincial tourism authorities, divisional and village-level government institutions, NGOs, cooperative societies and community organisations to support balanced destination development.

Founder and CEO of Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka, Pradeepthi Hemachandra, said the recommencement represents a natural evolution of experience gained over many years in the tourism sector.

"Tourism has the potential to become one of Sri Lanka's most inclusive and regenerative economic sectors when it meaningfully connects travellers, communities and local enterprises. Through Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka, our focus is on building an ecosystem that enables people — especially young entrepreneurs, women and small tourism enterprises — to actively participate in tourism while ensuring destinations grow in a balanced and responsible way," she said.

The recommencement of operations as Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka therefore represents more than a rebranding. It reflects a broader vision to strengthen Sri Lanka's tourism sector through people-powered participation, ecosystem collaboration and regenerative tourism development — positioning tourism as a force for inclusive growth and long-term national value.



Pradeepthi Hemachandra



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## Despite rising geopolitical tensions, Germans' desire to travel is increasing

TTA BULLETIN

Despite growing global tensions, Germans are spending more on travel than ever before. At the opening of ITB Berlin 2026 on Monday, Albin Loidl, President of the German Travel Association (DRV), gave a positive assessment of 2025 in travel. He also looked ahead to the coming summer with optimism. Holidaymakers were booking earlier and placing greater emphasis on safety and quality, said Loidl. With regard to the current developments in Iran, he stated that the situation was being monitored with great concern. For the industry, the safety of travelers and employees was the top priority; tour operators were monitoring the situation on the ground very closely. At the same time, Loidl expressed his hope for de-escalation and a diplomatic solution. The events served as a reminder of how closely networked – and at the same time how fragile – the industry could be; especially in times like these, travel connects people. The eastern Mediterranean and Spain were once again the main summer travel destinations.

According to Loidl, Germans spent a record 88 billion euros on travel bookings last year, five per cent more than the previous year and 20 billion more than before the pandemic. "Travel is not a luxury, it is a part of life," Loidl said, "especially in times of economic uncertainty and global challenges."



The package holiday market displayed particularly dynamic growth, and with an increase of over nine per cent reached 43.4 billion euros. This meant that almost one in two euros invested went to tour operators. Loidl cited a growing need for security and the desire for transparent costs, protection against financial losses and professional support in crises as reasons for this.

"At the same time, however, we are also seeing a more cautious approach to spending," the DRV president said. In restaurants at holiday destinations it has fallen, and less is being spent on excursions. Travel itself was "a given". Indeed, all-inclusive packages were on the rise, but people then saved money at their destination

The early booking trend already observed in 2025 was continuing in 2026, said Loidl. Summer sales were already seven per cent higher than last year. Traveller numbers were already up by four per cent.

According to Loidl, cruises and package flights would be the mainstay of upcoming summer travel. Transparent prices and attractive all-inclusive packages were arguments in favour of cruise holidays. Air travel sales had increased by 14 per cent and air passenger numbers by 12 per cent. The travel industry and air transport were thus co-dependent.

## ITB India 2026 to Take Place from 1–3 September in Mumbai

TTA BULLETIN

With new dates confirmed, ITB India 2026 will take place from 1–3 September in Mumbai. The three-day B2B trade show and conference, held alongside MICE Show India and Travel Tech India, will once again provide a comprehensive platform for business, networking and knowledge exchange.

ITB India will return from 1 to 3 September 2026 at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai, uniting professionals from the MICE, Leisure, Corporate and Travel Technology sectors in one dynamic marketplace. The event was previously scheduled for 2 to 4 September. Under the guiding theme "Future of Travel, Built Together", the fourth in-person edition continues its mission to foster deep engagement with the growing Indian outbound market.

"With ITB India 2026, we are sharpening our focus on what truly matters: strong business outcomes," says Saurabh Shukla, Head of Sales, ITB India. "By facilitating targeted connections between sellers and qualified buyers within a focused and highly efficient trade environment, we create the foundation for lasting partnerships and continued industry growth."

ITB India 2026 is expected to welcome more than 100 exhibitors and over 3,000

participants from across the globe, underscoring its role as a key gateway to the fast-growing Indian and South Asian travel markets. The show will host more than 400 high-quality buyers from India and South Asia, creating targeted business opportunities for international and national exhibitors.

Over 80 industry experts will take the stage at the ITB India Conference 2026, delivering over 1,400 minutes of high-level content across a wide range of conference sessions addressing the most relevant trends and developments shaping the future of travel.

Exhibitor registration for ITB India 2026 is live, with booth space filling fast. Companies looking to strengthen their presence in the Indian and South Asian travel markets are encouraged to secure their stand early. Super Early Bird rates are available until 15 May 2026, offering attractive conditions for early registration. To the Exhibitor Registration

Exhibitors will enjoy access to the exhibition floor and all conference sessions, up to 33 pre-scheduled meetings with qualified buyers, and direct engagement with decision-makers from the MICE, Corporate and Leisure sectors.

## Hiran Cooray Appointed to PATA Foundation Board of Trustees

TTA BULLETIN

Hiran Cooray, Chairman of Jetwing Symphony PLC and Lighthouse Hotel PLC, has been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the PATA Foundation, marking a notable recognition for Sri Lanka's tourism leadership at the regional level.



Hiran Cooray

The appointment places Cooray among a select group of global industry leaders entrusted with guiding the Foundation's strategic direction. The Board of Trustees serves as the governing body responsible for advancing the organization's mission of equipping the next generation across the Asia Pacific region with the knowledge and skills required to build sustainable careers in tourism and hospitality.

Established in 1984 in the United States as a charitable arm of the Pacific Asia Travel Association, the PATA Foundation is dedicated to promoting sustainable and equitable development in the travel and tourism sector. Over the years, the Foundation has contributed more than USD 1.3 million towards initiatives focused on human capital development in 38 destinations worldwide, with a strong emphasis on supporting vulnerable communities across the Asia Pacific region.

Leading the newly appointed Board as Chair is Andrew Jones, Guardian of Sanctuary Resorts, who previously served as Vice Chair and Trustee of the Founda-

tion as well as Chair of PATA. A respected veteran of the global tourism industry, Jones has also been recognised as a PATA Life Member for his longstanding contribution to the sector.

Commenting on his appointment, Jones noted that the Foundation is entering a renewed phase of activity following the disruption caused by the pandemic. "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the PATA Foundation experienced a hiatus of activity; however, we are now fully operational and moving forward with renewed passion and purpose as our industry transitions from recovery to sustainable growth," he said.

He further emphasised the continued importance of supporting communities and promoting responsible tourism practices as the industry evolves.

With more than five decades of experience in global tourism and hospitality, Jones is widely recognised for his expertise in sustainable tourism development, risk management, and corporate social responsibility. In 1996 he founded Sanctuary Resorts, a resort management company dedicated to wellness tourism and community development.

Supporting him as Vice Chair of the Foundation is Simon Lloyd, Dean of Hospitality Management and Business Administration at Dusit Thani College.

## Maldives Announced as Host Country of ITB Berlin 2027

TTA BULLETIN

The partnership was officially sealed during ITB Berlin 2026: Ibrahim Shiuree, CEO and Managing Director of Visit Maldives (MMPRC) and Dr. Mario Tobias, CEO of Messe Berlin, signed the agreement during an official photo ceremony at the Maldives' stand in Hall 5.2. "We are delighted that, 10 years after their first appearance as Host Country, the Maldives will once again take center stage at ITB Berlin. This long-standing partnership underscores the importance of ITB Berlin as a global platform and highlights the Maldives' prominent role in the international travel industry. In 2027, we look forward to showcasing the Maldives' extraordinary beauty and diversity, while also demonstrating how tourism and sustainability can go hand in hand," explained Dr. Mario Tobias, CEO of Messe



ences, water sports, wellness retreats and cultural encounters. Sustainability remains an integral part of the country's tourism strategy, with numerous initiatives dedicated to protecting marine ecosystems and supporting local communities.

"ITB Berlin provides us with the ideal platform to showcase the unique experiences our islands offer to travelers from around the world. We look forward to welcoming the global tourism industry in Berlin and highlighting the diversity, quality and hospitality that define the Maldives as a destination," said Ibrahim Shiuree, CEO and Managing Director of Visit Maldives.

Just a few weeks earlier, the Maldivian President visited Berlin and was received by the German Federal President in Berlin. The historic visit emphasized the strategic importance of the island nation for Germany and the international community.

The year 2027 has been officially designated "Visit Maldives Year", a landmark national tourism initiative aimed at highlighting the Maldives' unique appeal on the global stage.

With more than 1,000 islands, turquoise lagoons, white sandy beaches and vibrant coral reefs, the Maldives rank among the most iconic long-haul destinations worldwide. The country stands for exclusive resort experiences, authentic local island tourism and warm hospitality.

As Host Country of ITB Berlin 2027, the Maldives will present the full diversity of its tourism offering: from luxury resorts and boutique properties to diving experi-



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## City of Dreams Sri Lanka and SLITHM Host International Women's Day Forum to Empower the Next Generation of Women Leaders

TTA BULLETIN



In celebration of International Women's Day, City of Dreams Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management, hosted a special forum themed "Give to Gain", bringing together industry leaders, educators, and aspiring hospitality professionals for an inspiring exchange of insights, experiences, and ideas.

The event welcomed students from SLITHM and created a platform for meaningful conversations around women's empowerment, leadership, and the evolving role of women within Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality sectors. The forum formed part of City of Dreams Sri Lanka's ongoing commitment to nurturing future talent and fostering inclusive leadership across the industry.

The session commenced with a welcome address by the Director General of SLITHM Wasantha Manthripala, who emphasized the importance of education, mentorship, and strong industry collaboration in cultivating the next generation of women leaders within the tourism and hospitality sector. Addressing the students, he highlighted how initiatives like this forum help bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world industry experience.

The keynote address was delivered by Gitanjali Chakravarthy, General Manager of Hilton Yala Resort and the first female general manager in Sri Lanka's hospitality industry, as well as the first female President of the Sri Lanka Hospitality Graduates Association. Speaking on the theme "Next Gen She," Chakravarthy reflected on her three-decade career journey and encouraged young women to pursue leadership with confidence and resilience.

Sharing practical advice drawn from her own experience, she encouraged aspiring professionals to own their voice, prepare themselves for opportunities, lead with emotional intelligence, and support other women along the way. She also acknowledged the demanding nature of the hospitality industry, noting that dedication, passion, and perseverance are essential to building a successful career.

The forum also featured a cybersecurity awareness session conducted by Manoj Samarasekara, Officer-in-Charge of the Community Policing Division Headquarters in Colombo. His session highlighted the importance of online safety, digital awareness, and protection from cybercrime,

while also addressing broader social issues including domestic violence awareness and the support systems available to individuals facing such challenges.

A highlight of the event was the panel discussion titled "Give to Gain," which brought together accomplished female professionals from diverse sectors to share their personal journeys and perspectives on leadership, equality, and career growth.

Nirmalie Mendis, Principal (Cover-Up) and Senior Lecturer at SLITHM, spoke about resilience as a defining trait for women in hospitality, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and the willingness to take on diverse roles throughout one's career.

Legal professional from City of Dreams Dedunice De Silva reflected on the evolution of women's rights, noting that progress has been achieved through decades of advocacy and collective effort. She also stressed the importance of strengthening workplace policies—including maternity and paternity leave—to ensure more supportive and equitable working environments.

Representing City of Dreams Sri Lanka, Michelle Wahid - De Silva spoke about the importance of creating inclusive, people-centric workplaces that encourage more women to pursue careers in industries traditionally perceived as challenging, including gaming and integrated resort operations.

Chef Sudarshani Kirindigala shared her journey within professional kitchens, speaking about the challenges and rewards of culinary careers while encouraging young women to pursue their passion with confidence and pride.

Adding a perspective on the evolving digital landscape, Chamika Karunaratne discussed how digital transformation is reshaping communication and marketing across the hospitality sector. She highlighted the growing importance of digital literacy, adaptability, and strong communication skills in today's rapidly changing professional environment.

The forum concluded with a powerful message aligned with its theme "Give to Gain." Speakers encouraged participants to support one another, share knowledge, and create opportunities for future generations. The event reinforced the importance of mentorship, collaboration, and collective action in building a more inclusive and progressive future for women within Sri Lanka's hospitality and tourism industries.

# INSPIRING JOURNEYS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
ACORN GROUP

BREAKING NEW GROUND: A FIRST FOR WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP



**"I didn't become a General Manager overnight,"**

In a profession where leadership journeys are often long and demanding, Gitanjali Chakravarthy stands as a testament to perseverance, reinvention, and quiet determination.

Today, as the General Manager of Hilton Yala, she leads one of Sri Lanka's most unique wildlife resorts having also made history as the first Sri Lankan woman to be appointed General Manager of an international hotel brand under Hilton.

Alongside this, her recent appointment as the first female President of the Sri Lanka Hospitality Graduates Association marks a defining moment in the country's hospitality landscape.

But her journey has been anything but linear.

With a career spanning over three decades, Gitanjali began in academia as a Senior Lecturer and Head of Housekeeping at the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management, where she played a pivotal role in shaping future industry professionals.

Her decision to step back into operations was a bold one transitioning from the classroom to the fast-paced world of hotel management. "I didn't become a General Manager overnight," she has often reflected, underscoring the years of persistence and learning that defined her path.

Her global career has taken her across more than a dozen countries including the Maldives, UK, US, Thailand, and Indonesia working with renowned international brands such as COMO Hotels & Resorts, Mövenpick, and Taj.

This international exposure gave her a deep understanding of diverse markets and operational excellence, shaping her into a well-rounded leader.

She later went on to lead prestigious properties in Sri Lanka, including Uga Ulagalla, before spearheading the opening and success of Hilton Yala Resort Hilton's only wildlife resort globally.

Beyond operations, her leadership has been marked by a strong focus on people development. Initiatives such as youth training and mentorship programmes introduced under her leadership reflect her commitment to nurturing future talent and giving back to the industry.

Her contributions have not gone unnoticed. She has received multiple international recognitions, including the Global Woman Leader Award and being named among Sri Lanka's Top 50 Career Women affirming her influence both locally and globally.

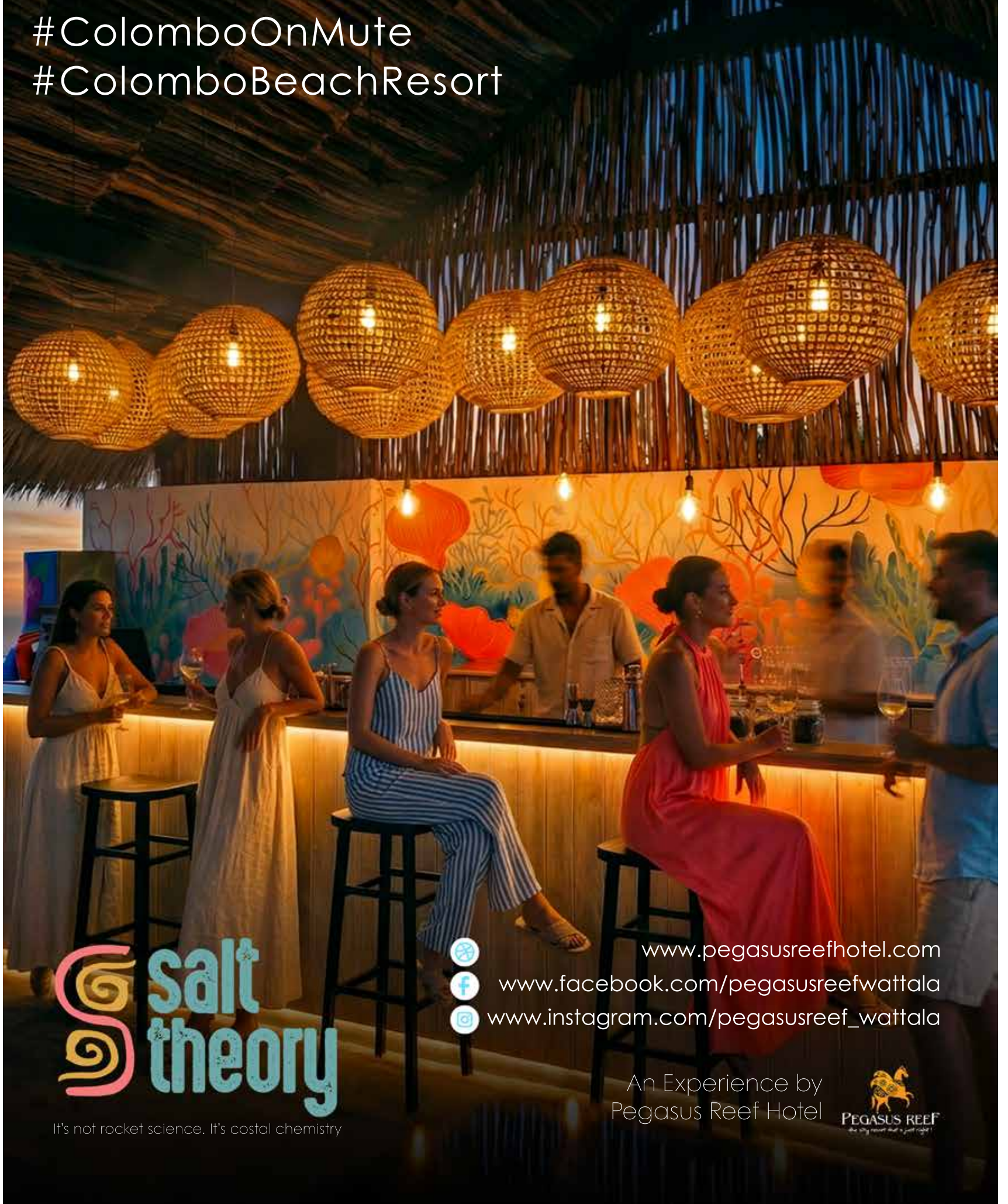
Yet, what makes her journey truly inspiring is the balance she has maintained building a global career while managing family life, and breaking barriers in a traditionally male-dominated industry with grace and resilience.

Today, as both a hotelier and industry leader, Gitanjali Chakravarthy represents more than personal success. She represents progress.

Her journey is a powerful reminder that leadership is not defined by how quickly one rises but by the courage to evolve, the willingness to start again, and the determination to keep going

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## Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance launches “Love Sri Lanka, Always”

TTA BULLETIN

The Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance announces the launch of its new tactical campaign burst, “Love Sri Lanka, Always,” a bold and evocative initiative designed to showcase the island as a destination to discover and rediscover, no matter the season to select markets.



Malik Fernando

Strategically, this campaign push seeks to reshape global travel perceptions and address the long-standing challenge of demand-driven seasonality. By highlighting time-specific cultural, wildlife, and natural experiences, the campaign encourages travellers to consider Sri Lanka beyond traditional peak travel windows. This approach not only promotes more balanced year-round visitation, but also unlocks lesser-known experiences and supports tourism communities across different regions and seasons. It highlights Sri Lanka as a destination that offers unique, unrepeatable experiences year-round, with each season revealing something extraordinary.

“Sri Lanka is a destination that constantly surprises and delights,” said Malik Fernando, Sri Lanka Tourism Alliance. “Through this tactical campaign, we are inviting travellers to see the island in a new light, to experience its culture, nature, and festivals during times that fall outside the traditional season. We are also addressing a key issue of demand-driven season-

ality and our goal is to position Sri Lanka as a truly year-round destination.

Importantly, this seasonal campaign initiative also underscores that Sri Lanka has made a strong bounce-back following recent flooding and adverse weather. Tourism operations are fully resumed, communities are welcoming guests safely, and the island is once again ready for travellers to experience its natural beauty, culture, and wildlife at any time of year.

Through cinematic films, evocative photography, and digital storytelling, “Love Sri Lanka, Always” celebrates experiences that can only be enjoyed at certain times of the year, including wildlife spectacles such as the Minneriya elephant gathering, and cultural celebrations like Vesak lanterns and the Kandy Perahera festival, moments that are impossible to replicate during other seasons.

Delivered through a digital-first global rollout, the short-term campaign rollout leverages high-impact visual, targeted performance marketing, and integrated storytelling to reach modern travellers at key decision-making moments. The initiative also strengthens the Love Sri Lanka platform as the central gateway for discovery, inspiration, and trip planning.

## Maldives to host World Travel Awards Indian Ocean Gala Ceremony 2026

TTA BULLETIN

World Travel Awards (WTA) has announced that the paradise nation of the Maldives will host its Indian Ocean Gala Ceremony 2026, with travel industry leaders from across the region gathering for a prestigious VIP reception on 27 September 2026 to coincide with World Tourism Day.

The ceremony heralds the return of the Indian Ocean leg of the World Travel Awards Grand Tour, an annual series of red carpet events hosted in each continent. The decision reflects the strength of the travel and tourism sector in the Maldives and its leadership in the luxury, sustainability and experiential travel domains.

With its crystalline lagoons, powder-white beaches and world-renowned overwater bungalows, the Maldives represents the pinnacle of barefoot luxury and remains one of the most aspirational destinations on earth.

Graham Cooke, Founder, World Travel Awards, says: “It is an incredible honour to host our Indian Ocean Gala Ceremony 2026 in the Maldives – and what better occasion than World Tourism Day to celebrate the very best of our industry! The Maldives continues to set the global standard for luxury and sustainable tourism,



and I look forward to welcoming travel leaders from across the Indian Ocean to experience the extraordinary magic of these remarkable islands.”

The Maldives last hosted the VIP ceremony in 2017. Since then, the nation has consistently secured top honours at the World Travel Awards for sustainability and hospitality excellence, and currently holds the title of ‘World’s Leading Destination’. Bringing the gala back to Maldivian shores is both a recognition of the destination’s achievements and a strategic opportunity to further strengthen its global positioning.

In celebration of this milestone, Visit Maldives will organise a comprehensive ‘Visit Maldives Week’ aligned with World Tourism Day, providing a vibrant celebration of tourism, culture and industry collaboration. The week will feature high-level industry forums, thought-leadership discussions on responsible tourism and innovation, familiarisation trips and networking events.

## City of Dreams Sri Lanka, Walkers Tours and Cinnamon Hotels initiate direct Ahmedabad-Colombo flights in partnership with FitsAir

TTA BULLETIN

City of Dreams Sri Lanka, in collaboration with Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and Walkers Tours, have partnered with FitsAir, on their direct scheduled passenger flights connecting Ahmedabad and Colombo, enhancing connectivity for Indian travellers to South Asia’s first fully integrated resort. FitsAir, Sri Lanka’s first private international airline, will operate the service, providing travellers with convenient connectivity and a comfortable travel experience between Ahmedabad and Colombo.

The new Ahmedabad Colombo service, operated by FitsAir will run three times a week, catering to travellers from Gujarat, one of Sri Lanka’s key and fast-growing source markets from India. With strong cultural ties and rising outbound travel from the region, Gujarat continues to show growing interest in Sri Lanka as a preferred leisure destination. The state’s well-established travel trade network and strong appetite for international leisure experiences make it an important market for tourism to Sri Lanka. The enhanced connectivity further strengthens travel between the two regions while positioning Colombo as an attractive luxury getaway for Indian travellers.



Located in the heart of Colombo, City of Dreams Sri Lanka is part of a broader vision to position the city as a vibrant hub for entertainment, leisure and lifestyle in the region encouraging travellers to experience Colombo as a destination. Guests can stay at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams or explore other Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts in Colombo, including Cinnamon Grand, Cinnamon Lakeside and Cinnamon Red, offering a range of luxury, upscale and contemporary stays while discovering the city.

The launch of the direct Ahmedabad-Colombo flights also introduces curated Cinnamon holiday packages designed specifically for Indian travellers, combining the City of Dreams Sri Lanka experience with multi-destination itineraries across the island, including cultural experiences in Kandy and beach stays at Cinnamon resorts. These offerings aim to deliver a seamless travel experience while showcasing Sri Lanka’s diverse leisure offerings.

## Wanderlust announced as official consumer media partner for WTM London 2026

TTA BULLETIN

World Travel Market London, the world’s most influential travel and tourism event, has announced a new partnership with Wanderlust Magazine, the UK’s leading travel magazine and one of the most authoritative voices in travel globally, which will see Wanderlust become the official consumer media partner for WTM London 2026.

As part of the collaboration, Wanderlust will curate and host the WTM Wanderlust Headliner Stage, a major new content platform at the event that will host keynote speakers and iconic names in the industry. The stage will bring together some of the most influential voices in global travel, while showcasing Wanderlust’s editorial authority, global outlook and deep understanding of the issues shaping travel on one of the industry’s biggest platforms.

Taking place at Excel London on 3-5 November, WTM London is the pinnacle gathering of the global travel industry. The partnership will combine the event’s extensive international reach with Wanderlust’s editorial authority and storytelling expertise to create a dynamic programme of high-profile conversations across the three-day event.

The partnership unites two of the most



powerful brands in travel. WTM London has long been the

place where the global travel industry comes together to do business, shape debate and set the agenda for the future. Wanderlust has built its reputation over more than three decades as the UK’s number-one travel magazine, with a trusted voice with an ethos of authentic, meaningful and responsible travel. Together, they will create a stage with real energy, influence and impact.

The WTM Wanderlust Headliner Stage will host bold, high-profile conversations with some of the biggest names in travel, tourism and beyond. Curated and run by Wanderlust, the programme will bring together ministers, CEOs and senior industry leaders, destination figures, broadcasters, changemakers and cultural voices for a series of compelling sessions designed to inform, inspire and spark debate.

This new partnership reflects a shared ambition from WTM London and Wanderlust to elevate the conversation around travel and tourism at a defining moment for the sector.

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# MOVEMENTS / HOTELS

## Dusit International appoints Marc Handl to lead flagship Dusit Thani Bangkok and upcoming branded residences at Dusit Central Park

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit International, one of Thailand's leading integrated hospitality companies, has appointed Marc Handl as Managing Director of Dusit Thani Bangkok, its reimagined luxury hotel overlooking Lumpini Park in central Bangkok, alongside Dusit Residences and Dusit Parkside, two upcoming luxury residential offerings managed by Dusit. All three form part of Dusit Central Park, one of the city's most significant mixed-use developments, which also includes a retail centre, an office tower, and one of Thailand's largest rooftop parks in the heart of the capital.

A third-generation hotelier, Handl brings more than three decades of international experience across luxury hotels, resorts, and mixed-use developments. His career spans senior leadership roles with globally recognised brands including Park Hyatt, The Ritz-Carlton, Aman, and Rosewood, with experience across Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas.

With a professional foundation in food and beverage, Handl combines strong operational expertise with commercial leadership across sales, marketing, and multi-property management. His international upbringing and extensive experience in Asia support a culturally attuned leader-



Marc Handl

ship style aligned with the expectations of today's global luxury traveller.

He joins Dusit from Abu Dhabi National Hotels, where he oversaw a portfolio of 15 properties across 10 international brands, further strengthening his expertise in multi-asset operations, asset management, and brand positioning in complex, competitive markets.

His appointment comes at a pivotal time for Dusit, as the company builds on the early success of its reimagined flagship hotel, which reopened in September 2024 following a complete redevelopment that honours the original property's rich heritage. Since then, it has already received a Michelin Key for its accommodations and service, and a Michelin Star for its signature restaurant, Cannubi by Umberto Bombana.

Dusit is now preparing for the phased introduction of its branded residences, Dusit Residences and Dusit Parkside, at Dusit Central Park. These offer two distinct luxury living concepts within the same tower overlooking Lumpini Park, combining classic, heritage-inspired luxury residences with contemporary, lifestyle-led living. Unit transfers are expected to unlock significant value for the company.

## Radisson Hotel Group Appoints Nipun Bandara as Director of Marketing Communications - Radisson Collection Resort Galle

TTA BULLETIN

Radisson Hotel Group has appointed Nipun Bandara as Director of Marketing Communications at Radisson Collection Resort Galle, reinforcing its leadership team at the Group's flagship Radisson Collection property in the Southeast Asia and Pacific region.



Nipun Bandara

With over a decade of experience in luxury hospitality marketing across Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Nipun brings expertise in brand positioning, digital strategy, and content-led storytelling. He most recently served as Marketing Manager at Park Hyatt Maldives Hadahaa, where he led a successful brand and digital transformation, contributing to global recognition by featuring the property in Forbes Travel Guide, Luxury Escapes, Vogue Turkey, Travel + Leisure and many more.

Previously, as Head of Marketing and Communications at Galle Face Hotel Colombo, he repositioned the iconic heritage property to achieve the #1 Best

Hotel in Rest of Asia by Condé Nast Traveller's Readers' Choice Awards 2024.

Commenting on his appointment, Nipun Bandara said: "What excites me most about joining Radisson Collection Resort Galle is the opportunity to build something truly destination-defining. Galle is already one of Sri Lanka's most culturally rich and visually compelling destinations, and I see the resort evolving into a lifestyle and culinary hub on the southern coast. Through strong storytelling, meaningful collaborations, and experience-led marketing, my focus will be on creating moments that not only attract global travellers, but also resonate deeply with guests long after they leave."

Nipun assumed his role on 24 March 2026 and will lead the resort's marketing and communications strategy, focusing on enhancing global visibility, guest engagement, and brand storytelling in line with the Radisson Collection ethos.

## Island-Wide Royal Avurudu Celebrations with Browns Hotels & Resorts

TTA BULLETIN

Browns Hotels & Resorts continues its much-loved Royal Avurudu theme this year, inviting you to celebrate the Sinhala and Tamil New Year with royal experiences rooted in tradition, culture, and togetherness across its properties in Sri Lanka.



Along the down south coast, Thaala Bentota, a signature Bawa-inspired property, The Eden Beruwala, a luxurious five-star resort, and Dickwella Resort & Spa come alive with grand Royal Avurudu celebrations, featuring traditional games, cultural performances, sundown entertainment, and lavish festive buffets. On the west coast, Club Hotel Dolphin in Negombo, one of Sri Lanka's most loved family resorts, offers a lively lineup of royal Avurudu rituals, games, and activities for all ages, led by its renowned animation team, ensuring excitement and joy for the entire family.

In the Cultural Triangle, Hotel Sigiriya and The Paradise Dambulla offer a deeply immersive Royal Avurudu experience amidst Sri Lanka's rich heritage. From authentic village visits, wildlife encounters, and cultural explorations, to special day outings with a touch of royal Avurudu during the festive week, these destinations bring you closer to the true spirit of the

season.

For those seeking rest and rejuvenation, Ayugiri Ayurveda Wellness Resort Sigiriya presents a unique take on the season—blending Avurudu traditions with holistic wellness experiences in a serene natural setting. Meanwhile, the newly introduced Newburgh Ella Tea Factory Resort, set amidst misty hills and lush tea estates, offers a distinctive highland escape. You can indulge in traditional high tea experiences inspired by Sri Lanka's rich tea heritage, alongside a relaxed and intimate Royal Avurudu celebration in Ella's cool climes.

Ideal for families and couples alike, the festivities include traditional Avurudu games, cultural performances, authentic sweetmeats, and thoughtfully curated dining experiences.

## Female Leaders Inspire the Next Generation at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts' Women in Tourism Career Summit

TTA BULLETIN



Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts successfully hosted the "YOUR PLACE. YOUR POWER. – Women in Tourism Career Summit" at the Cinnamon Hospitality Academy, bringing together female leaders from across tourism, hospitality, aviation, and travel to inspire students, young professionals, and entrepreneurs to explore careers in the sector.

The summit addressed the persistent challenge of low female participation in Sri Lanka's tourism workforce, which remains below 10%, despite the sector's steady growth. Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts has led by example, achieving a 20% female participation rate across its properties in 2026, demonstrating the impact of sustained organisational effort.

The event featured industry insights highlighting both the challenges and opportunities for women in tourism, followed by a keynote address by Dulani Guruge, Founder and Managing Director of Mountain Boutiques Luxury Collection, whose leadership journey exemplifies the rise of women-led enterprises in hospitality.

At the heart of the summit was the Industry Leadership Panel, "Claiming Your Place," was facilitated by Dinushka Chandrasena, Editor of Travel Talk Asia and Director of Skal Asia. The panel included distinguished

leaders from across the tourism ecosystem:

- Angeline Ondaatjie, Vice President, Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL)

- Bobby Jordan, Vice President, Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO)

- Dinali Dandeniya, President, Ceylon Cafés & Restaurants Collective (CCRC)

- Jeewanthi Adhikari, General Manager, Amba Yaalu

- Gitanjali Chakravarthy, President, Sri Lanka Hotel School Graduates Association (SLHGA) and General Manager of Hilton Yala

- Nadeeka Liyanage, President, Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition and Event Organisers (SLAPCEO)

- Kamal Munasinghe, Senior Vice President Colombo Hotels & General Manager, Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka

The panel discussion was followed by Career Connect, a speed networking session enabling participants to interact with industry professionals in small group settings, providing practical insights and mentorship opportunities. Nishara Preena, Bonita Odayar and Chamila Wijethunga facilitated this initiative representing Aviation, GDS and Inbound / Outbound Travel



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# HOTELS

## Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Presents a Month of Culinary Experiences this April

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams is setting the tone for April with a curated dining calendar that brings together flavour and experiences across its signature venues. Designed around how Colombo dines today, the month-long lineup offers a mix of weekday convenience, social evenings, and destination-led dining, all within a single location.



At Indiya, The 3500 Feast offers a streamlined midday option that balances efficiency with depth of flavour. Available daily from 1st to 30th April between 12:00 PM and 3:30 PM, the experience features a rotating selection of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, priced at LKR 3,500+++ making it a practical yet refined choice for business lunches or a quick reset during the day.

As the week transitions into the weekend, Quizine Terrace continues its "Unlimited Pizza and Pints" promotion, a relaxed experience built around shared moments and easy evenings. Available every Friday to Sunday from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, the offering combines unlimited pizza and selected beverages at LKR 5,500++, creating a casual setting for after-work catchups and weekend gatherings.

Adding to the lineup, Sapphire Dragon introduces Dim Sum Haven, a Sunday indulgence designed for leisurely dining. Available every Sunday from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM on Level 24, the experience invites guests to feast their way through an endless Yum Cha menu, featuring steamed

dumplings, crispy spring rolls, and sizzling stir-fries—each bite bursting with authentic Chinese flavours.

Meanwhile, Staten Bar & Grill shifts the focus to personalisation with Cut by the Gram, available Monday to Thursday from 8th to 30th April. Guests can select their preferred cut and portion, paired with two complimentary sides, allowing for a more tailored dining experience that adapts to individual appetite and preference.

Together, these experiences form part of a broader dining strategy that brings multiple concepts into one cohesive calendar, offering guests the flexibility to choose how and when they dine. Whether it's a quick lunch, a relaxed evening, or a more considered meal, the focus remains on delivering variety without compromise.

As Colombo's newest lifestyle destination continues to take shape, Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams is positioning itself not just as a place to dine, but as a space that evolves with how the city connects, unwinds, and experiences food.

## W15 Collection Recognised at TTF Bengaluru 2026 with Excellence Award

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka's boutique luxury hospitality brand W15 Collection has achieved a notable milestone in its regional expansion, receiving the Excellence Award for Most Exclusive Leisure Product at the prestigious Travel & Tourism Fair (TTF) held in Bengaluru, India.



The Travel & Tourism Fair is widely regarded as one of India's most prominent travel trade platforms, bringing together tourism boards, hospitality brands, travel agents, tour operators, and other industry stakeholders from across the country and international markets. Hosted annually in major Indian cities including Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, TTF serves as a vital marketplace for networking, product showcases, and forging new partnerships within the travel industry.

At the 2026 edition in Bengaluru, W15 Collection stood out among numerous global exhibitors, earning recognition for its distinctive approach to luxury hospitality. The award for Most Exclusive Leisure Product reflects the brand's commitment to delivering curated, high-end travel experiences that blend Sri Lankan culture, personalised service, and unique destina-

tions.

The accolade also represents an important step in W15 Collection's strategic engagement with the Indian travel market. With India continuing to emerge as one of the most significant source markets for Sri Lanka, the recognition

highlights the growing interest among Indian travellers for exclusive and experiential stays on the island.

Commenting on the achievement, Nadeera Fernando, Director of Sales at W15 Collection, noted that the recognition was both encouraging and timely as the brand strengthens its presence in India.

"We are truly honoured to receive this recognition at TTF Bengaluru. As our first step towards entering the Indian market, this award is both encouraging and validating. India represents a key growth market for W15 Collection, with strong potential for luxury and experiential travel. This milestone strengthens our commitment to building meaningful partnerships and offering distinctive Sri Lankan experiences to Indian travellers," she said.

## Jetwing Hotels Publishes and Launches 'Ceylon in 1907', Revealing Rare Photographic Record of Sri Lanka at the Turn of the 20th Century

TTA BULLETIN

Jetwing Hotels announced the publication and launch of Ceylon in 1907, a remarkable visual record that reintroduces rare photographs of Sri Lanka from more than a century ago. Authored by Mr. Pali Wijeratne in collaboration with Dr.



Antonia Laurance Allen, the book was unveiled at a launch hosted by Jetwing Hotels at Jetwing Colombo Seven, marking a significant cultural moment in the documentation and reinterpretation of the island's past.

At the heart of the publication is a collection of photographs taken in 1907 by Scottish artist Edward Atkinson Hornel during his seven month journey across then Ceylon. Travelling through Mannar, Galle, and Kandy with his sister Elisabeth, Hornel captured scenes of everyday life, labour, ritual, and landscapes. While the images were originally created to support his Western art practice, Ceylon in 1907 reframes them as valuable visual records of Sri Lanka's social, cultural, and economic life at the turn of the 20th century.

Published by Jetwing Hotels, the book reflects the group's longstanding role as a cultural patron committed to safeguarding Sri Lanka's heritage. By supporting research-led publications such as Ceylon in 1907, Jetwing Hotels continues to extend its engagement beyond hospitality, enabling meaningful contributions to national conversations around history, culture, and preservation.

The publication is authored by Mr. Pali Wijeratne, architect, town planner, and conservator of historic monuments, in collaboration with Dr. Antonia Laurance Allen, an art historian, educator, curator, and specialist in the history of photography. The book also features research and

essays by leading Sri Lankan scholars, including the late Somasiri Devendra, Manuka Wijesinghe, Emeritus Prof. J. B. Dissanayake, Anura Gunasekera, Kowshika Gunasena, L. W. G. Kawshalya, and Udeshi Amarasinghe, bringing multiple disciplinary perspectives to the material.

"To preserve our history is to preserve our identity," said Hiran Cooray, Chairman of Jetwing Symphony PLC. "At Jetwing Hotels, heritage stewardship is integral to our hospitality, with each property telling a story that's rooted in place, especially our restored hotels in Jaffna, Rambukkana, Galle, and the hill country. Supporting this publication continues our commitment to presenting Sri Lanka as a living heritage, not merely a destination."

"By examining early photographs alongside paintings and archival material, this book highlights the shared heritage of Sri Lanka and Britain, while documenting the realities of life on the island at the dawn of the 20th century," said Mr. Pali Wijeratne. "It is both a historical record and a prompt to consider how we carry forward cultural and environmental legacies today."

More than a historical publication, Ceylon in 1907 speaks directly to contemporary conversations around heritage, identity, and representation. By revisiting colonial era visual records through present day scholarship, the book encourages readers to engage critically with the past and to recognise history as a living force, one that continues to inform how Sri Lanka understands itself and tells its story.

Ceylon in 1907 is published by Jetwing Hotels and is available for purchase through selected Jetwing properties and designated bookstores.

## Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Honoured at the TAGS Awards 2026

TTA BULLETIN



Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts received multiple accolades at the TAGS Awards 2026, Diamond Chapter, marking another strong year for reporting across its listed entities. John Keells Hotels PLC was also named the overall Winner of the Tourism & Leisure Category.

Trans Asia Hotels PLC received the Gold Award in the Hotel Sector - Group Assets

up to Rs. 10 billion. In the Hotel Sector - Group Assets above Rs. 10 billion, John Keells Hotels PLC received the Silver Award, while Asian Hotels and Properties PLC received the Bronze Award.

The TAGS Awards recognise organisations that uphold high standards in corporate governance, transparency, and financial reporting.

## Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts' Women in Tourism Career Summit

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts successfully hosted the “YOUR PLACE. YOUR POWER. – Women in Tourism Career Summit” at the Cinnamon Hospitality Academy, bringing together female leaders from across tourism, hospitality, aviation, and travel to inspire students, young professionals, and entrepreneurs to explore careers in the sector.

The panel discussion was followed by Career Connect, a speed networking session enabling participants to interact with industry professionals in small group settings, providing practical insights and mentorship opportunities.



# HOTELS

## Dusit Hotels and Resorts joins GSTC in support of sustainable hospitality worldwide

TTA BULLETIN

Dusit Hotels and Resorts, the hotel management arm of Dusit International, has joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, marking a significant step in the company's ongoing efforts to embed responsible practices throughout its global operations.



GSTC is a global non-profit organisation that brings together public and private sector stakeholders to advance sustainable tourism practices worldwide. By joining as a member, Dusit becomes part of a global network committed to knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and the promotion of responsible tourism principles across the industry.

Founded in 1949, Dusit International has evolved into a diversified hospitality company spanning hotels and resorts, hospitality education, food, real estate development, and hospitality-related services. Today, its portfolio includes 290 hotels, resorts, and luxury villas across 18 countries, representing more than 11,800 rooms under nine distinctive brands.

Central to Dusit's sustainability strategy is Tree of Life, a group-wide programme designed to guide responsible growth while creating positive environmental and social impact. Aligned with key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Climate Action, Responsible Consumption, and Community Engagement, the framework integrates sustainability across hotel operations, from energy and water efficiency to waste management, employee and guest well-being, and community initiatives.

As part of its commitment, Dusit has introduced property-level energy management systems to improve efficiency and

reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Renewable energy solutions, including solar photovoltaic installations, are already in place at several properties, including Dusit Thani Maldives, Dusit Beach Resort Guam, Dusit Thani Kyoto, ASAI Kyoto Shijo, and Dusit Thani Lubi Plantation Resort.

Water stewardship is supported by water conservation measures and wastewater treatment systems, with treated water reused for irrigation and landscaping where possible. The group has also introduced measures to reduce single-use plastics, including refillable amenities, reusable water bottles, and more sustainable packaging alternatives.

To address food waste, Dusit applies a three-pronged approach focused on minimising waste during preparation, redistributing surplus food through local partnerships where feasible, and composting organic waste for use in gardens and community projects.

Beyond environmental initiatives, Dusit continues to advance responsible tourism practices. The company joined The Code – The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism – in 2018, integrating preventive measures into its policies and conducting staff training across its hotels in Thailand.

The company has also signed the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Declaration on Illegal Trade in Wildlife, reinforcing its commitment to responsible sourcing and a zero-tolerance approach to illegal wildlife products.

## Indiya at Cinnamon Life Begins a New Culinary Chapter with Chef Mukesh Joshi

TTA BULLETIN

Indiya, the signature Indian restaurant at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams, is embarking on an exciting new phase under the culinary direction of Mukesh Joshi. Located on the striking Level 23, the restaurant now presents a dining experience that matches its sweeping views—bringing together the rich traditions of Indian cuisine with subtle Sri Lankan influences in a contemporary, family-style setting.



highlight the depth and diversity of Indian culinary traditions. Guests seeking something distinctive can explore the chef's special creations, including Tandoori

Kaala Jhinga, Pahadi Tandoori Kukkad, Nandu Curry, and the standout Lagoon Jhinga Biryani.

To round off the meal, diners can indulge in traditional desserts such as Mishti Doi and Kulfi Falooda, offering a comforting and nostalgic finish to the experience.

Indiya's refreshed concept moves away from the formalities of classic fine dining, instead embracing a more relaxed and convivial atmosphere centred around sharing. Whether for family gatherings, celebrations, or evenings with friends, the restaurant aims to create an environment where conversation flows easily and every dish is crafted with authenticity and care.

Chef Mukesh brings extensive international experience to the role, having worked across renowned hospitality destinations in India and the UAE, including kitchens at The St. Regis Mumbai and The Westin Mumbai, as well as leading culinary teams at restaurants such as India Bistro and Art of Dum. Known for blending traditional flavours with modern presentation, his hands-on approach and dedication to quality shape every element of the dining experience at Indiya—from the choice of ingredients to the teamwork behind the kitchen.

Guided by Chef Mukesh, the menu offers guests a culinary journey across India's diverse regions. Aromatic rice dishes such as Awadhi Mutton Biryani and Zaffrani Chicken Dum Biryani form the centrepiece of the experience, complemented by beloved favourites including Dal Makhani and Chana Masala. The menu also celebrates vegetarian cuisine with thoughtfully prepared dishes such as Kurkuri Bhindi, Hyderabad Bagara Baingan, and the luxurious Shahi Subz Korma.

The dining experience unfolds through a variety of textures and flavours. Crisp appetisers like Sev Papdi Chaat, a generous Pakora Platter, and comforting soups set the stage for the meal. These are followed by tandoor-inspired selections including Hariyali Tandoori Gobi and Rajma Galouti, alongside seafood and meat specialities such as Jhinga Koliwada, Rawa Fried Surmai, and a classic non-vegetarian Kebab Platter. Freshly baked breads—from Chilli Cheese Naan to flaky Paratha and Aloo Kulcha—are served warm and designed for sharing at the table.

Chef Mukesh's confident use of spices and regional storytelling shines through in the main courses. Signature dishes such as Jhinga Hara Pyaz, Macchi Malai Curry, Railway Chicken Curry, Kozhi Milagu Fry, Mewari Kheema, and Mutton Bhuna

With this new chapter, Indiya offers guests a vibrant and immersive celebration of Indian cuisine—an experience that feels both authentic and approachable, perfectly suited to the dynamic atmosphere of Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams.

## One of the Largest Destination Weddings Hosted in Sri Lanka: Shangri-La Hambantota Showcases the Island's Global Appeal

TTA BULLETIN

This vision came vividly to life this March with the multi-day wedding celebrations of entrepreneur and Managing Director of Gulf-O-Flex, Rubber World Industry Global Mujtaba Shaikhani and Dr. Hafsha, a renowned aesthetic medicine practitioner from Mumbai, India, hosted at the ocean-front resort.

Designed as an immersive, multi-day celebration, the wedding unfolded through an extraordinary 21 curated events across the resort, welcoming guests from the United Arab Emirates, India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Sri Lanka. Over several days, the southern coastline transformed into a vibrant stage for culture, celebration, and global connection.

The significance of such international celebrations was reflected in the presence of Hon. Vijitha Herath, Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka, who attended during the

festivities, underscoring the growing importance of destination weddings within the country's evolving tourism landscape.

Set across 58 hectares of tropical landscape overlooking the Indian Ocean, Shangri-La Hambantota offers a rare combination of expansive outdoor venues and the capability to host multi-format, large-scale celebrations seamlessly. From sunset ceremonies along the coastline to intricately themed evenings, the resort continues to demonstrate a level of versatility and scale unmatched in the region.

Yet, the impact of such weddings extends far beyond the celebrations themselves.

Large-scale international weddings activate a wide network of local industries — from florists, designers, and entertainers to transport providers and small and medium enterprises across the southern region. Each

event generates sustained economic activity over several days, supporting livelihoods while showcasing Sri Lanka's creative and hospitality capabilities to a global audience.

This is not the first destination wedding of its kind hosted at Shangri-La Hambantota, with the resort witnessing a growing portfolio of international celebrations. Based on confirmed events, the property is set to see a doubling of destination wedding bookings this year — a strong and encouraging signal for Sri Lanka's tourism industry as a whole.

Refhan Razeen, General Manager of Shangri-La Hambantota, commented: "Hosting a celebration of this scale is a testament to Sri Lanka's ability to deliver world-class experiences with authenticity and warmth. Destination weddings are not only deeply personal milestones, but also powerful contributors to tourism — bringing global audiences to our shores

while creating meaningful opportunities for local communities."

The Shaikhani-Hafsha wedding stands as a compelling example of how Sri Lanka can position itself within the high-value travel segment. With extended stays, increased per-guest spend, and global visibility driven organically through influential networks, destination weddings represent one of the most impactful avenues for tourism growth.

Shangri-La Hambantota, with its scale, versatility, and setting along Sri Lanka's southern coastline, continues to lead this movement — shaping a future where celebrations not only create lasting memories, but also contribute meaningfully to the nation's tourism story.





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# HOTELS

## Minor Hotels Signs Anantara's First Resort and Urban Hotel in India

TTA BULLETIN

Minor Hotels, a global leader in hospitality with more than 640 properties across 63 countries, announces the first signings in India under its luxury Anantara Hotels & Resorts hotel brand for 2026: Anantara Zanti Coorg Resort and Anantara Kolkata Hotel. Both properties represent firsts for the brand in India: its first resort and first urban hotel in the country.



of Minor International, parent company of Minor Hotels, added, “Coorg’s natural beauty exemplifies India’s potential for experiential luxury and is ideal for the Anantara brand. The upcoming Anantara Zanti Coorg Resort will showcase our vision of creating distinctive stays that honour local culture, immersing guests in the destination’s vibrant nature and tradition.”

Slated to open in 2032, the 170-key hotel will anchor the upcoming World Trade Center Salt Lake Kolkata an-acre mixed-use development. Designed to serve the city’s growing business and meeting and events demand, the hotel will feature two restaurants, a lobby lounge, flexible meeting and event spaces, and complementing leisure facilities including Anantara Spa and wellness centre, a gym and a swimming pool.

The World Trade Centre Salt Lake is a joint venture between Aryan Realty and Merlin Group.

Mr Sanjay Saraf, Co-Chairman of Aryan Realty, commented, “The World Trade Center Kolkata is a landmark development for Kolkata and West Bengal, strengthening the city’s standing as a regional business and cultural centre.

Scheduled to open in 2028, Anantara Zanti Coorg Resort will bring the brand’s immersive experiences and refined hospitality to the UNESCO recognised Western Ghats. Set within a forested enclave near Madikeri in Coorg, Karnataka, the 69 key resort is designed by renowned Sri Lankan architect Channa Daswatte, widely recognised as the foremost protégé of Geoffrey Bawa, the pioneer of tropical modernism, and draws on the region’s natural landscapes, coffee heritage and Kodava culture. The property facilities will feature four dining venues, a swimming pool, a lobby lounge and library, Anantara Spa and wellness centre, a fitness studio, meeting and event spaces and a kids’ club.

Bimal Desai, Chairman of Zanti Hospitality, owner of Anantara Zanti Coorg, commented, “Our partnership with Minor Hotels brings a renowned brand to one of India’s most captivating destinations. Through this greenfield development, we aim to deliver authentic experiences that immerse guests in Coorg’s rich culture and pristine landscapes, setting a new benchmark for luxury hospitality in the region.”

William Heinecke, Founder and Chairman

## TONIK Launches “Island Daughters” — A Storytelling Series Honouring the Women Who Carried Sri Lanka to the World

TTA BULLETIN

This International Women’s Month, TONIK invites Sri Lanka to see itself differently. Not just as an island shaped by land and history — but by its women.



Through Island Daughters, a new storytelling series, TONIK shines a light on the women whose voices, creativity, and courage have carried Sri Lanka’s story far beyond its shores.

“She is not just part of the island. She is the island.”

At the heart of this first edition are six extraordinary women — each from a different world, yet connected by the quiet power of what they built.

There is Sybil Wettasinghe, who turned village life into wonder — her stories filled with mischief, memory, and magic, giving generations of children a Sri Lanka they could see and feel. There is Annalakshmi Rajadurai, whose words travelled across decades of Tamil media — preserving culture, connecting communities, and ensuring stories were never lost in transla-

tion. On stage and screen, Iranganie Serasinghe brought grace and depth to every performance, carrying Sri Lankan artistry to international audiences with a presence that was both timeless and transformative. In the world of design, Minnette de Silva reimagined what Sri Lankan architecture could be — weaving together modernism and tradition, creating spaces that spoke both globally and deeply of home. Through rhythm and movement, Vajira Chitrasena preserved the soul of Kandyan dance — opening doors for women on stage and ensuring that heritage lived on, not as memory, but as living art. And in classrooms that shaped generations, Ayesha Rauf quietly transformed futures — expanding access to education for Muslim girls and strengthening the foundation of a more inclusive Sri Lanka.

Six women. Six journeys. One island.

Told through TONIK’s Island Portrait Series, each story unfolds in a single frame and a short visual narrative — simple, intimate, and real.

## Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives recognised as TUI Global Hotel Awards 2026

### Quality Winner

TTA BULLETIN

Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives has been recognised as a Quality Winner at the TUI Global Hotel Awards 2026, an accolade determined by guest feedback from millions of travellers worldwide. The recognition reflects the resort’s consistent delivery of high-quality experiences, shaped by attentive service, thoughtful offerings, and a strong understanding of evolving traveller expectations.

Set within the North Malé Atoll, Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives offers a well-rounded island experience designed to cater to a diverse range of travellers. The resort features over 140 accommodation options, including overwater suites, beach bungalows, and duplex garden bungalows that provides flexibility for couples, families, and larger groups seeking both privacy and shared experiences.

A varied culinary landscape further enhances the guest journey, with seven dining venues offering a mix of international and local flavours across different settings. Among these, Tex Mex introduces vibrant Mexican and Spanish-inspired dishes in a relaxed island setting, while Dalchini serves as an Indian à la carte selection available during lunch and dinner hours. As the day transitions into evening, the Raalhu Bar offers a scenic vantage point to take in the sunset, where



guests can unwind with light refreshments, evening snacks, or cocktails.

Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives is also home to Pasta Point, one of the Maldives’ most established surf breaks, known for its consistent left-hand waves. Each year, the resort welcomes surfers from around the world who travel specifically to experience this iconic location. Surfing experiences at Pasta Point are operated by Atoll Adventures, recognised for its service standards and environmentally conscious approach. Bookings are managed exclusively through Atoll Travel (info@atolltravel.com), ensuring a structured and sustainable surf experience.

The TUI Global Hotel Awards are based entirely on guest feedback, making this recognition particularly significant. Cinnamon Dhonveli Maldives’ inclusion as a Quality Winner highlights its ability to consistently meet and exceed guest expectations, reinforcing its position as a preferred choice within the Maldives’ resort landscape.

## Yazu Set to Make Sri Lankan Debut at Radisson Blu Resort Galle in 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Radisson Blu Resort Galle is set to unveil its newest culinary venture in March 2026 with the opening of Yazu by the Beach, a Pan-Asian restaurant that marks the first international expansion of India’s acclaimed Yazu brand. Located along the shoreline, the restaurant will introduce a refined Asian dining experience to Sri Lanka’s southern coast, blending bold flavors with a vibrant beachfront setting.



program showcases wok-smoked spirits, charcoal accents, tea extractions, and layered flavor profiles that reinterpret the vibrancy of Asia’s streets in a refined, contemporary style.

Founded in India, Yazu has built a strong reputation for its focused interpretation of Japanese, Thai, and Cantonese culinary traditions. Rather than offering a broad multi-cuisine approach, the concept is rooted in technique and authenticity — from precise sushi craftsmanship and delicate dim sum to wok-hei precision, robata-style grilling, and slow-simmered broths. Over the years, Yazu Hospitality has expanded across major Indian cities including Mumbai, Goa, Indore, Chandigarh, and Bangalore, establishing itself as one of India’s leading Pan-Asian dining brands.

While the kitchen defines the foundation of the brand, the bar takes the experience to the next level. Yazu’s cocktail philosophy centers on clarity, balance, and modern technique, highlighted by its signature clarified cocktails and inventive Asian-inspired infusions. The “High Spirits of Asia”

Each cocktail is thoughtfully crafted to complement the cuisine — bright citrus cutting through richness, umami-forward sake enhancing delicate sushi, and aromatic blends designed to elevate shared dining moments.

Commenting on the brand’s first international venture, Ranbir Singh Nagpal, CEO of Yazu Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., said, “As Yazu Hospitality continues to expand its footprint across India, taking our first international step into Galle, Sri Lanka, is a truly defining milestone for us. Galle’s charm, cultural richness, and global appeal make it the perfect destination for our international debut. This is more than just a new outlet — it marks the beginning of Yazu’s journey beyond borders.”

Welcoming the partnership, Bob Kundanmal, Chairman of Sino Lanka Holdings Pvt Ltd, added, “Sri Lanka has always embraced global culinary excellence, and welcoming Yazu — one of India’s finest Pan-Asian hospitality brands — is a significant moment for us.

## Skål International Colombo Celebrated International Women's Day with Elegant High Tea at Shangri-La Colombo

Skål International Colombo marked International Women's Day with an elegant high tea, held at the iconic Shangri-La Colombo.

Manager of Hilton Yala and the first female President of the Sri Lanka Hospitality Graduates Association (SLHGA) in its 55-year history. Ms. Chakravarthy shared her insights on leadership, breaking barriers in the hospitality industry, and empowering women to thrive in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

The highlight of the event was a keynote address by Gitanjali Chakravarthy, General



## SriLankan Airlines Records Revenue Increase with AI and ML-Powered Revenue Management System

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines has recorded a revenue increase following the implementation of a next-generation, AI and Machine-Learning (ML) powered Origin and Destination (O&D) revenue management platform. The system enables dynamic pricing and smarter inventory optimisation, while delivering a superior passenger experience across all sales channels through real-time seat availability and predictive analytics.

Kshanaka Saparamadu, Head of Revenue Management at SriLankan Airlines, remarked, “Embracing the latest revenue management technology is a testament to our commitment to continuous innovation and digital transformation. With the introduction of PROS Revenue Management Advantage and Amadeus Revenue Availability and Active Valuation, we are not only refining our current processes but also positioning ourselves for long-term success in modern airline retailing, ensuring we stay ahead in a rapidly changing industry.”

Chamara Perera, Group Head of IT at SriLankan Airlines, added, “This transition to a dynamic, integrated revenue management system reflects our strategic focus on remaining agile in an increasingly competitive and fast-evolving airline industry. As the aviation sector undergoes rapid digital transformation, SriLankan Airlines is enhancing its ability to respond swiftly to market fluctuations and meet the evolving demands of today’s travelers.”

Powered by PROS’ AI-driven Revenue Management Advantage (RMA) and Amadeus Revenue Availability and Active Valuation (RAAV), the platform leverages AI algorithms and ML models to improve alignment of capacity and demand, optimise premium seat allocation and respond swiftly to market shifts. These capabilities deliver unmatched agility and scalability, boost yield and position SriLankan Airlines at the forefront of digital transformation in aviation.

## Turkish Airlines increases flight frequency to Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

Turkish Airlines will increase the frequency of flights between Istanbul and Colombo by two additional flights per week to enable travellers’ access to Sri Lanka while offering more seat capacity to and from Europe

Following diplomatic discussions between Sri Lanka and Türkiye, the initiative was positively received, and after Turkish Airlines’ decision, the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka granted the necessary permissions without delay



The additional flights would be introduced on April 5th and continue until October 2026



Industry benchmarks show that O&D-based revenue optimisation models typically deliver a 3%-5% increase in passenger revenue, underscoring the new revenue management system as a key driver, among other strategic factors, to the 13% growth recorded by SriLankan Airlines during the first three quarters of the 2025-2026 financial year.

This initiative has not only enhanced SriLankan Airlines’ agility, scalability, and competitiveness in a dynamic global aviation market, but also strengthened collaboration between pricing, demand and flight analyst teams, earning two awards in the process. It was recognised with the Growth Catalyst Award at the Outperformer Customer Awards 2025 in Las Vegas by PROS, as well as the Silver Award in the AI and Data Science category at the National Project Management Excellence Awards 2025 in Colombo by the Project Management Institute Sri Lanka Chapter.

As SriLankan Airlines continues its modernisation journey, the new integrated revenue management platform will significantly improve SriLankan Airlines’ global market position, its ability to attract and retain high value connecting passengers, and competitiveness in the global aviation landscape.

## IndiGo Expands International Network with New, Direct Flights between Delhi and Colombo

TTA BULLETIN

IndiGo, India’s preferred airline, is further strengthening its connectivity to Sri Lanka, with the launch of new, direct flights between Delhi and Colombo. Commencing 29 March 2026, the airline will operate six flights every week on this route using its A320 aircraft, offering seamless and convenient travel options for customers.



India and Sri Lanka share deep historical, cultural, and economic ties; improved connectivity will significantly strengthen these relations by boosting trade and tourism between the two neighbouring countries.

With the addition of these flights, IndiGo will operate over 55 weekly flights to Colombo from five cities in India, namely Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and now Delhi. IndiGo also connects Chennai and Tiruchirappalli to Jaffna with 10 weekly flights. This expanded network further solidifies IndiGo’s presence in the island nation, consistently offering affordable, reliable, and hassle-free travel experiences to its customers.

Acorn Aviation is proud to support the continued expansion of IndiGo’s network in Sri Lanka.

The launch of the Delhi–Colombo route marks another important step in strengthening connectivity between India and Sri Lanka, while reinforcing IndiGo’s growing presence in the market.

As the GSA for IndiGo in Sri Lanka, Acorn Aviation remains committed to driving sustainable growth, expanding market reach, and delivering value to both the airline and our travel partners.

Customers can plan and book their travel through IndiGo’s official website [www.goIndiGo.in](http://www.goIndiGo.in), mobile app, or authorised travel partners. They can also pre-book their meals and beverages, including alcoholic beverages. Additionally, they can personalise their travel experiences by opting for offerings that suit their respective preferences, including UpFront and Flexi, which give best value, comfort seats, complimentary snacks, and hassle-free cancellations

## Kuwait Airways to Launch Colombo Operations from 15 April 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Kuwait Airways, the national carrier of the State of Kuwait, will commence scheduled flight operations to Colombo, Sri Lanka from Wednesday, 15 April 2026, marking an important step in strengthening air connectivity between the two countries.



The introduction of this new service is expected to meet growing travel demand while providing passengers with greater convenience and improved access to Kuwait Airways’ expanding international network.

The weekly service will operate every Wednesday, connecting Kuwait with Colombo and offering travellers a seamless travel option for business, leisure, and visiting friends and relatives.

Flight Schedule – Weekly (Every Wednesday):

- Departure Kuwait – 01:30 hrs | Arrival Colombo – 18:05 hrs
- Departure Colombo – 19:05 hrs | Arrival Kuwait – 03:30 hrs

The new route further enhances connectiv-

ity between the Middle East and Sri Lanka, supporting tourism, trade, and stronger people-to-people links between the two destinations.

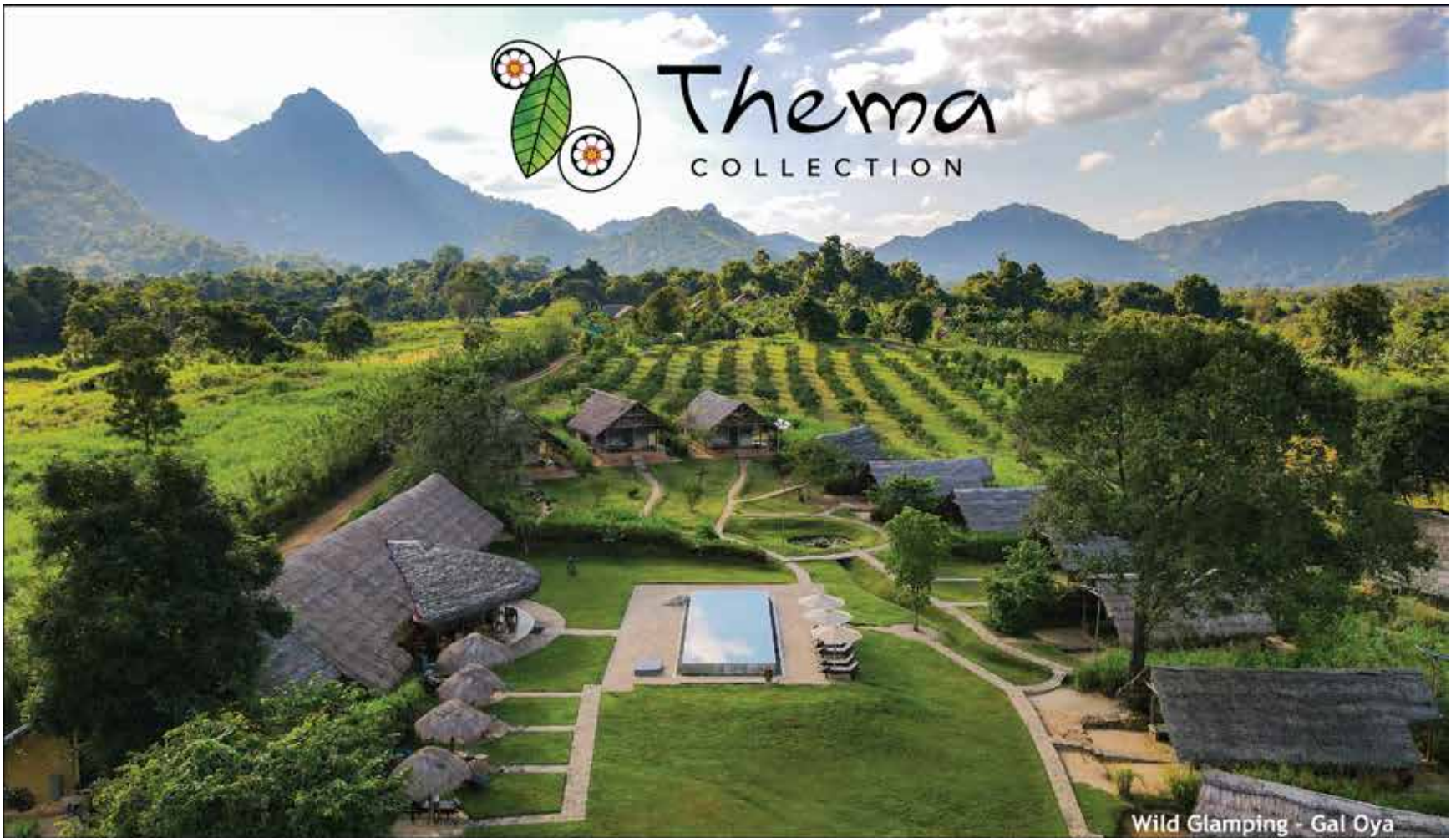
In addition to launching operations to Colombo, Kuwait Airways is also offering a complimentary Saudi Arabia Transit Visa facility for eligible passengers, providing added convenience and flexibility for those transiting through the Kingdom.

With the commencement of flights to Colombo, Kuwait Airways continues to expand its global footprint while offering passengers a high standard of service and connectivity across its network.



# Thema

COLLECTION



Wild Glamping - Gal Oya

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

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

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

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



Aliya Resort & Spa  
Sigiriya



Tea & Experience  
Mandaram Nuwara



Amba Yaalu  
Kandalama



Maalu Maalu Resort & Spa  
Pasikuda



Waraka  
Udawalawe



Mountbatten  
Kandy



Scottish Planter  
Nuwara Eliya



Ayurvie  
Sigiriya



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



Different Themes, Authentic Experiences