



From Volume to Value: Sri Lanka's Tourism Reset Begins

Twin World Bank funded consultancies launched to lift visitor spend, sharpen the island's global story and chart the sector's course to 2031

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

Sri Lanka's visitor numbers are back but the money isn't. That is the challenge at the heart of two major consultancy projects launched last week under the World Bank's Grant Facility for Project Preparation (GFPP), backed by a total grant allocation of US\$1 million, which together will define the island's tourism strategy and global marketing direction through 2031.



Ruwan Ranasinghe

José de la Maza, Managing Director of Aninver Development Partners, set the tone for the industry conversation ahead, urging a "focus on yield, not on number of visitors." He emphasised creating distinctive travel products, supporting local small businesses, and minimising economic leakages, growth in arrivals is welcome, he argued, but it should no longer be the sector's headline priority.

In 2025, Sri Lanka welcomed approximately 2.36 million visitors, surpassing the 2018 benchmark year. Yet earnings came in at around US\$3.2 billion, with average spend per tourist still significantly below 2018 levels, according to Malraj Kiriella, local team leader of the strategic planning consultancy. The new national roadmap, he said, will focus on increasing visitor spending, encouraging longer stays, and spreading the economic benefits of tourism across all nine provinces.

A national blueprint for 2026–2031
The National Tourism Strategic Planning Consultancy (2026–2031) has been awarded to a joint venture between Spain's Aninver Development Partners and Sri Lanka's EML Consultants PLC. Over a 24-week programme including stakeholder co-creation workshops in October and validation sessions in January, the consultancy will deliver a comprehensive strategic framework covering demand and supply analysis, investment needs assessment, regulatory and institutional review, skills development, marketing strategy, and a national implementation road map.

Launching the initiatives at the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM), Prof. Ruwan Ranasinghe, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism, said the plan will form the backbone of Sri Lanka's tourism strategy for the next five years aligning provincial priorities with national policy, unlocking investment, and strengthening institutional capacity.

Telling Sri Lanka's story to the world
Running in parallel, the Global Destination Communication Campaign Road Map Consultancy led by US-based travel intelligence firm Skift Inc. with MTI Consulting of Sri Lanka will craft a five-year global promotional campaign strategy underpinned by market intelligence, creative direction, and a robust campaign management blueprint.

The roadmap will seek to sharpen Sri Lanka's destination positioning, diversify source markets, and develop targeted campaigns aimed squarely at higher-spending visitor segments modernising the island's global messaging so it is insight-driven, internationally benchmarked, and true to Sri Lanka's authentic identity.

The World Bank's Lead Private Sector Specialist for South Asia, Natasha Kapil, underlined why data sits at the centre of the exercise, noting that the island has seen a major shift in the types of tourists arriving, evolution the new strategy must be equipped to read and respond to.

Why it matters for the trade
For hoteliers, DMCs, airlines, and travel marketers, the significance is twofold. First, the pivot from volume to value signals where product development, investment, and promotion will be directed towards experiences and segments that lift spend per visitor and lengthen stays. Second, the promise of a unified, well-resourced global campaign answers years of industry calls for consistent destination branding.

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The Pekoe Trail: Recognised Among the World's Best-Kept Secrets

Named on Intrepid Travel's 2027 'Not Hot List' — the definitive line-up of the planet's most exciting under-the-radar destinations

DINUSHKA CHANDRASENA

For decades, Sri Lanka's story was written on its coastline: the surf breaks of Arugam Bay, the ramparts of Galle, the palm-fringed beaches of the south. One of the world's largest adventure travel company rewrote the script. The Pekoe Trail — the 300-kilometre walking route that threads through the emerald heart of the island's tea country has been named on Intrepid Travel's 2027 Not Hot List, the company's influential annual ranking of ten destinations poised to define the next chapter of global travel.

It is a landmark moment for Sri Lankan tourism, the Pekoe Trail is the only Asian mainland experience of its kind on the list, standing alongside Kenya's Samburu National Reserve, Georgia's Mestia and Canada's Whitehorse as a destination the industry's sharpest forecasters believe travellers will be talking about in 2027.

The Not Hot List is no ordinary listicle. First launched in 2018 and compiled from the insights of Intrepid's network of local leaders and destination experts in more than 35 countries, it has earned a reputation for calling destinations before the rest



Poornaka Delpachitra

of the world catches on. Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan and Kyrgyzstan's Tien Shan mountains both appeared on earlier editions and both went on to feature in The New York Times' celebrated '52 Places to Go' lists, with Intrepid recording booking growth of 67 per cent and 62 per cent respectively in the years that followed.

In other words: when the Not Hot List speaks, the travel industry and travellers - listen. And in 2027, it is speaking about Sri Lanka.

Intrepid positions the trail as the immersive alternative to the island's busy coastal circuit, a slower, deeper Sri Lanka where travellers walk between plantation bungalows, share meals in village kitchens and watch the tea pluckers work hillsides their families have tended for generations.

'As Sri Lanka's tourism boom continues, most visitors remain concentrated along the coast, but there's so much more to see. We need to better disperse tourists, and a trip through Sri Lanka's tea country is the perfect place to start,' says Poornaka Delpachitra, Intrepid Travel's Colombo-based General Manager for Sri Lanka.

The timing could hardly be better. Eased visa rules, a wave of new international flight connections and the national sustainable tourism strategy have made the highlands more accessible to international travellers than at any point in the trail's young life. To accelerate that momentum, Intrepid has launched a new 10-day 'Hike Sri Lanka's Pekoe Trail' itinerary, taking travellers on foot through six standout sections of the route — spreading the benefits of tourism into rural communities while revealing a side of Sri Lanka few visitors ever see.

The coast made Sri Lanka famous. The tea country, it seems, is about to make it unforgettable.



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September brings encouraging news for Sri Lanka's tourism industry. The island has welcomed three new airlines to its skies; two from South East Asia and one from Australia, a development that speaks volumes about the confidence these key source markets place in Sri Lanka as a destination. New air connectivity is never merely about additional seats; it is a statement of commitment, a signal that carriers see sustained demand and long-term potential in our shores.

But increased airlift is only half the equation. The arrival of these carriers must now be matched by focused, professional destination marketing and clear positioning in each of these markets. Seats that fly empty serve no one. It is incumbent upon all industry stakeholders, the national tourism authorities, hoteliers, destination management companies, and the travel trade at large to work in concert to convert this connectivity into sustained, year-round arrivals. The opportunity is here; we must not squander it.

Equally heartening is the news that Sri Lanka Tourism is working with the World Bank on a strategic plan for tourism development. A well-crafted, evidence-based roadmap has long been called for, and collaboration with an institution of the World Bank's calibre offers the prospect of structured, sustainable growth — one that balances arrivals targets with infrastructure, community benefit, and environmental stewardship. We look forward to seeing this plan take shape and, more importantly, to seeing it implemented.

Further afield, the Arabian Travel Market opens its doors in Dubai this month, bringing together the global travel trade at one of the industry's most important gatherings. We extend our very best wishes to all participants, particularly those flying the Sri Lankan flag, and trust the event will yield fruitful partnerships.

The wider region has weathered considerable disruption in recent months. Yet the travel industry has always been defined by its resilience, and we remain hopeful that calmer, brighter days lie ahead for the region, and for all who make their living from the wonder of travel.



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NEWS / MOVEMENTS

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From Volume to Value: Sri Lanka's Tourism....

Prof. Ranasinghe described the two consultancies as a coordinated, forward-looking effort to transform tourism into a high-value economic pillar, strengthening governance, attracting investment, enhancing institutional capacity, diversifying markets, and elevating Sri Lanka's global visibility.

With workshops beginning in October and validation due in January, the industry will not have long to wait before the shape of Sri Lanka's next tourism chapter becomes clear. The message from the launch, however, is already unmistakable: the era of counting heads is over. The era of counting value has begun.



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The Pekoe Trail: Recognised Among the....

INTREPID'S 2027 NOT HOT LIST

Ten destinations to watch, in no particular order

- **Pekoe Trail, Sri Lanka**
- Samburu National Reserve, Kenya
- Mestia, Georgia
- Northern Highlands, Jordan
- Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada
- Alonnisos, Greece
- Dili, Timor-Leste
- Liepāja, Latvia
- Carretera Austral, Chile
- Dalsland, Sweden

PEKOE TRAIL: FAST FACTS

Route: Kandy to Nuwara Eliya via Hatton, Haputale and Ella

Distance: Approx. 300 km across 22 walkable stages

Terrain: Tea estates, cloud forest, mountains, rivers and heritage villages

The experience: Community-led, walk-at-your-own-pace slow travel

New for 2027: Intrepid's 10-day 'Hike Sri Lanka's Pekoe Trail' trip covering six standout sections

Tailwinds: Eased visas, new international flights, national sustainable tourism strategy

‘The World Is Carried Within’ Launched in Bengaluru, Exploring Nature, Leadership and the Working Life

TTA BULLETIN

The World Is Carried Within – Eighteen Essays on the Natural World and the Working Life, the latest book by Manoj Mathew V M FIIHM, Senior Vice President – Operations, Tamara Leisure Experiences, was launched at a special event held at the Verandah Boutique Lounge, Tamara Leisure Experiences Headquarters, Bengaluru, on September 3, 2026.



Kite, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Indian Pond Heron become points of reflection on behaviour, intelligence, leadership and human experience.

“This is not a nature book. It is not a leadership book. It is a book about seeing.”

The book, which is Volume I of The Third Eye Series, was inaugurated by Mr S.D. Shibulal, Chairman, Tamara Leisure Experiences and Co-Founder, Infosys. The first copy was presented to Ms Shruti Shibulal.

The launch featured an engaging in-conversation session between the author and Mr Ian Faria, Mind Coach, Corporate Trainer and Leadership Consultant, exploring the experiences and reflections behind the book's 18 essays. Mr Mahesh Iyer, Principal & Founder of Iyer & Mahesh Architects and creator of The Tamara Coorg and The Tamara Kodai, and Dr. Tapas Mukherjee, former Head of the Department of English, Government College, Bori, District Durg, Chhattisgarh, also addressed the gathering.

Where Nature Becomes a Lens for Understanding Life The World Is Carried Within brings together 18 literary essays, each beginning with an original wildlife photograph captured by Manoj Mathew across the forests of Coorg and Nagarhole, the pilgrimage coast of Gokarna, and the shoreline of Bentota, Sri Lanka. The photographs serve as the starting point for reflections on nature, human behaviour, organisations, leadership and the inner life.

Rather than presenting nature as a collection of lessons for leadership, the book allows observations from the natural world to lead naturally into questions about people and the working world. Encounters with creatures such as the Coorg snail, potter wasp, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Black

Four Decades of Leadership, A Different Way of Seeing With a hospitality career spanning four decades across India, Zambia and Sri Lanka, including 33 years with the Taj Group, Manoj Mathew brings to the book an operational perspective shaped by years of observing people, organisations and behaviour. He currently serves as Senior Vice President – Operations at Tamara Leisure Experiences.

The book moves through four thematic movements — The Forest, The Organisation, The Shore and The Opening — taking readers from close observation of the natural world to reflections on organisations, working life and the deeper questions of living and leading.

Speaking about the book, Manoj Mathew said: “I did not set out to write a book about leadership, and I did not set out to write a book about nature. I set out, as always, with a camera. The photographs came first, and what they showed was not always what I had seen. That is where the essays began.”

Author's Fourth Book

The World Is Carried Within is Manoj Mathew's fourth book and follows his Dead Reckoning trilogy — Journey Without Maps, Where the Map Ends, and Landfall. Together, the books reflect his long engagement with leadership, hospitality, human behaviour and the experiences that shape working life.



ENJOY THE BEST OF *Sri Lanka's tea country* WITH JETWING



Set amidst the lush tea estates of Sri Lanka's hill country, Jetwing Warwick Gardens, A Luxury Reserve, and Jetwing Hoffmann Bungalow offer a charming escape where days unfold amidst nature, heritage, and the misty winds of the highlands.

At Jetwing Hoffmann Bungalow in Welimada, unwind in the newly unveiled swimming pool, surrounded by birdsong and views of the surrounding hills. At Jetwing Warwick Gardens in Ambewela, settle into the quiet rhythm of plantation life, where every corner holds a story of the estate's past. Steeped in colonial character, our bungalows invite you to discover the region's rich heritage with guided tours through our estates and artisanal tea factories followed by curated tea tastings.

Beyond the bungalows, the highlands beckon — the renowned Pekoe Trail, cascading waterfalls, and the breathtaking beauty of Sri Lanka's hill country await.

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Andrew's Travels Flies the Flag for Sri Lanka and the Maldives at ITE HCMC 2026 in Vietnam

TTA BULLETIN

Company strengthens twin-destination push into the fast-growing Vietnamese and Mekong-region outbound market at Vietnam's largest international travel expo

Andrew's Travels was among the international exhibitors and industry participants at the 20th International Travel Expo Ho Chi Minh City (ITE HCMC 2026), held from 27 to 29 August 2026 at the Saigon Exhibition and Convention Center (SECC), where the company promoted Sri Lanka and the Maldives as complementary twin destinations for Vietnamese and regional travellers.

The company's participation forms part of a wider strategy to tap into Vietnam's rapidly expanding outbound travel market and to position the Sri Lanka-Maldives combination of sun, culture, heritage and wildlife paired with island luxury as a compelling dual-centre holiday for travellers from Vietnam and the wider Mekong region.

During the expo, the Andrew's Travels delegation held a series of trade meetings, including discussions with representatives of VietJet Air, one of Asia's fastest-growing carriers, and a leading Maldives destination management company, exploring connectivity, packaging and joint promotional opportunities that would make travel between Vietnam, Sri Lanka and the Maldives more seamless and affordable.

Mahen Kariyawasan, Chairman Andrew's Travels, commented saying "Vietnam is one of Asia's most exciting emerging source markets, and ITE HCMC gave us the perfect platform to present Sri Lanka and the Maldives to the trade. The



response from buyers and airline partners was extremely encouraging, and we look forward to converting these conversations into new business for both destinations" A landmark edition of ITE HCMC

Marking two decades since its inception in 2005, ITE HCMC 2026 was the largest edition of the expo to date. Recognised as Vietnam's only international inbound tourism fair and the largest travel event in the Mekong sub-region, this year's expo held under the theme "Vibrant Connections – Global Destinations" brought together more than 520 exhibitors, over 260 international buyers from more than 30 countries, and some 21,000 pre-scheduled B2B appointments across three days.

Organised under the direction of Vietnam's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, and jointly organised by the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism and the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism, the expo also featured regional Tourism Ministers' Conferences and high-level forums on MICE tourism, digital transformation, green travel and sustainable destination management cementing its status as one of Asia's leading tourism trade platforms. For South Asian and Indian Ocean destinations such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives, ITE HCMC has become an increasingly important gateway to Vietnamese and Southeast Asian buyers, tour operators and airlines seeking new mid- and long-haul products for their clients.

South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) All Set for Landmark 10th Anniversary Gala in the Maldives this October

TTA BULLETIN

The South Asian Travel Awards (SATA), one of the region's most prestigious platforms recognizing excellence in travel and tourism, has officially announced that the 10th Edition, with the Gala Ceremony set to take place in the Maldives in October 2026.

Marking a significant chapter in the region's tourism story, SATA celebrates ten years of honoring outstanding achievements across South Asia's hospitality, travel, and tourism industries. Since its inception, the awards have grown into a benchmark of quality and innovation, spotlighting the brands, properties, and individuals who continue to elevate the region's standing on the global tourism map.

The Maldives is an island destination synonymous with world-class hospitality and provides a fitting backdrop for the anniversary celebrations, offering a spectacular setting to commemorate a decade of regional tourism excellence.



Industry stakeholders, organizations, and media partners across South Asia are invited to be part of this event which highlights deserving brands and individuals who make the region one of the most sought after by travelers globally.

Established to recognize and reward excellence in the travel and tourism industry across South Asia, SATA honors outstanding performance in hospitality, aviation, tour operations, and allied services. Over the past decade, the awards have become a trusted symbol of quality, celebrating the individuals and organizations driving the region's tourism growth.

INSPIRING JOURNEYS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ACORN GROUP

FROM CARGO TO COASTLINE: MAC HOLDINGS' BOLD VOYAGE INTO LUXURY HOSPITALITY WITH CLOVE BEACH – WADDUWA



Some journeys are measured in miles. Others are measured in vision. The story of MAC Holdings, a company that spent nearly three decades moving the world's cargo before turning its attention to moving the human spirit belongs firmly to the latter.

In 2026, the southern coastal belt of Wadduwa welcomed a new name in Sri Lankan luxury: CLOVE Beach Wadduwa. But behind the fragrant Araliya blooms, the Balinese-inspired pavilions, and the sweeping views of the Indian Ocean lies a far larger story of the remarkable evolution of one of Sri Lanka's most respected logistics powerhouses into a serious player in luxury tourism and hospitality.

The Foundation: Built on Movement

The MAC story begins in 1996, when a young Andre Fernando, then just 22 years old founded Marine & Air Consolidation (Private) Limited, later renamed MAC Supply Chain Solutions. What began as an ambitious freight venture grew steadily into one of Sri Lanka's largest and most trusted logistics service providers, with MAC Holdings incorporated in 1999 as the parent company of a fast-expanding group.

Over nearly three decades, the group built its reputation on precision, reliability, and an uncompromising commitment to excellence; qualities forged in the demanding world of maritime and air freight, supply chain solutions, and international trade. Under Fernando's stewardship, MAC expanded far beyond its logistics roots, placing its footprint across maritime services, aviation, renewable energy, fisheries, general trading, and travel.

It was, perhaps, only a matter of time before hospitality called.

The Pivot: A Belief in Sri Lankan Tourism

For MAC Group, the move into hospitality was never simply a business diversification, it was a conviction. The group has long held the belief that Sri Lanka's tourism industry is one of the most powerful engines for the nation's economic growth, and that the island's future prosperity is inseparable from its ability to welcome the world.

That conviction took tangible form in 2025, when MAC Hotels and Villas (Pvt) Ltd – a fully owned subsidiary of MAC Holdings acquired Serene Pavilions, the celebrated boutique property nestled along Wadduwa's golden shoreline, just an hour's drive from Colombo. The acquisition marked the group's first step into the luxury hotel industry, and MAC approached it with characteristic clarity of purpose: to honour the property's natural beauty while elevating it into a truly world-class destination.

The Transformation: Serene Pavilions Becomes CLOVE

What followed was an extensive, meticulous refurbishment, a labour of love that touched every corner of the five-acre beachfront estate. In January 2026, the property was reborn as CLOVE Beach Wadduwa, its relaunch celebrated with an enchanting evening of fashion, culinary artistry, live music, and cocktail craftsmanship attended by leading figures from the travel trade. The symbolic key handover by Andre Fernando, Managing Director of MAC Holdings, alongside Director Nalin Perera and Director/Group Chief Financial Officer Tilak Gunawardana, marked the dawn of a new era. The choice of name is telling.

The Experience: An Oasis Redefined

Today, CLOVE Beach Wadduwa stands as one of the most compelling luxury boutique offerings on Sri Lanka's western seaboard. Set amidst lush tropical gardens, tranquil ponds, and swaying palms, the resort comprises 12 exclusive Balinese-inspired pavilions (15 rooms), each designed as a private sanctuary:

Each pavilion offers spacious living and dining areas, opulent bathrooms with Jacuzzis, private plunge pools, and traditional Balinese-style shaded decks perfect for al fresco dining, all attended by round-the-clock butler service. Guests are welcomed with the timeless Sri Lankan greeting of "Ayubowan" and enveloped in hospitality that blends modern luxury with genuine island warmth.

The Road Ahead: A Brand Is Born

CLOVE is not a single hotel; it is the beginning of a hospitality brand. The group's portfolio already extends inland with CLOVE CASA Digana, a serene boutique retreat set amidst the misty landscapes of the hill country, an early signal of MAC's ambitions to build a distinctive collection of Sri Lankan luxury experiences spanning coast and highland.

Coupled with the group's established travel arm offering bespoke journeys across Sri Lanka and the Maldives, MAC Holdings is quietly assembling an integrated tourism ecosystem one that carries the same precision and passion that built its logistics empire.

An Inspiring Journey, Indeed

There is a pleasing symmetry to the MAC story. A company that made its name connecting Sri Lanka to the world through cargo and commerce is now inviting the world to Sri Lanka to slow down, to breathe in the sea air of Wadduwa, and to discover the island's incomparable gift for hospitality. From the freight terminals of Colombo to the ocean-front pavilions of CLOVE Beach, MAC Holdings' journey reminds us that the most inspiring voyages are not about where a company begins, but about the courage of where it chooses to go next.



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Sri Lanka Opens Up: A New Season of Direct Connectivity

Malik J. Fernando, Chair, Tourism Alliance

For as long as most of us can remember, flying to Sri Lanka has meant relying on a small handful of options — SriLankan Airlines' own direct services, useful but limited in schedule and market coverage, or a stop in Dubai, Doha, or Abu Dhabi via the Gulf carriers. That is beginning to change, and this winter season marks one of the more significant shifts in our aviation connectivity in years.

A wave of carriers is launching direct, point-to-point services into Colombo and it is worth taking stock of what that means for the industry — not just as a matter of flight schedules, but as a matter of strategy.

Europe, reconnecting

British Airways returns to Colombo on 23 October, restoring a non-stop link to London Gatwick after years of one-stop routings. This matters. The UK remains one of our strongest and most loyal source markets, and a direct flight removes a genuine point of friction for that traveller.

Edelweiss Air, part of the Lufthansa Group, is increasing its Zurich service to three times weekly from 26 October — a route that brings with it precisely the kind of high-spending Swiss and DACH-region traveller our wellness and upscale properties have long courted.

And in December, French Bee launches a new seasonal service from Paris Orly, opening a more cost-conscious but committed segment of the French long-haul market.

Between the three, Western Europe is reconnecting with us directly, on its own terms.

A first for Vietnam

A notable development is the arrival of two Vietnamese carriers — Vietnam Airlines and VietJet — both launching direct Ho Chi Minh City services this August. This is the first time Sri Lanka has had a direct link to Vietnam, and it opens a corridor of travellers who may well come to see Sri

Lanka and Southeast Asia as a natural pairing. Beijing Capital Airlines and Batik Air are expected to add further capacity later in the season, strengthening our reach into China and Malaysia.

The Vietnam route is worth a further word, because it connects us to more than tourists. Vietnam has become one of Asia's genuine growth stories, drawing strong foreign investment and establishing itself as a major manufacturing and export hub in its own right. A direct Colombo–Ho Chi Minh City link gives us an easier way to engage with that — not only holidaymakers, but business travellers, investors, and trade delegations moving in both directions. Closer connectivity tends to open the door to closer collaboration, whether that is shared investment, tourism partnerships, or simply the exchange of experience. It is a relationship worth building on, and this route is a practical first step.

Australia, and the low-cost gap it fills

SriLankan Airlines has flown non-stop to Melbourne and Sydney for years, so Jetstar isn't opening a new corridor — it's opening a new price point. From 25 August, Jetstar becomes the first low-cost carrier to fly non-stop between Melbourne and Colombo, operating three times weekly, year-round, on its Boeing 787 Dreamliner fleet, and putting well over 100,000 affordable seats a year into a route that has, until now, been served exclusively at full-service fares.

More than “budget”: what these new entrants actually offer

It is worth being precise about what these new services bring, because labels like “low-cost” and “seasonal” can undersell the product. Several of the low-cost and long-haul entrants in this line-up — Jetstar, VietJet, French bee among them — offer proper business-class or



premium-economy-style cabins, not a basic recline seat, and all of them are flying modern, widebody aircraft.

Just as important is brand familiarity. Jetstar is a household name across Australia, French bee carries the same trust French travellers place in its parent Dubreuil Group, and British Airways needs no introduction in the UK. Recognisable, trusted brands lower the barrier to trying a new destination. And on the loyalty side, travellers on nearly every one of these routes can redeem frequent flyer points — Avios on British Airways, Qantas points via the Jetstar partnership, Miles & More on Edelweiss and Lufthansa Group services — which is a genuine draw for the kind of higher-value, repeat visitor we want more of, and one worth featuring prominently in how we market these routes.

Each of these carriers markets Sri Lanka in its home country with a sophistication and reach that we would struggle with — glossy campaigns, in-flight promotion, and placement across a crowded travel marketplace that would cost us a great deal to buy on our own. Every new route effectively arrives with its own marketing engine attached, promoting Sri Lanka to precisely the audience we most want to reach.

Why this matters beyond the season

There is a strategic thread running through all of this. For years, the overwhelming majority of our long-haul arrivals have transited through the Middle East. That has served us well, but it has also meant a meaningful share of our connectivity has depended on a region that has had its share of instability.

Direct flights change that picture. They cut travel time, appeal to time-conscious, high-value holidaymakers, and, importantly, they diversify our routes to

market. A Sri Lanka reachable directly from London, Zurich, Paris, and Ho Chi Minh City is a Sri Lanka less dependent on any single hub remaining open and stable. This is not a case against our Gulf carrier partners, who remain vital to our connectivity. It is simply a recognition that resilience comes from diversity, and this season represents a real step in that direction.

What it means for the season ahead

With close to a dozen new routes and frequencies launching or expanding over the coming months, the signal to our industry is clear: demand for Sri Lanka is growing, and the world's airlines are responding to it. For hoteliers, DMCs, and the Tourism Board, now is the moment to align marketing efforts with these new gateway markets — Switzerland, France, Vietnam, Australia, and a re-energised UK chief among them.

Securing these routes is only half the job. It now falls to us, as an industry, to support the flights — through targeted destination marketing in each of these new source markets, so that load factors and yields justify the investment these airlines have made in Sri Lanka. Several of these services are seasonal, and our task is not simply to see them through a single winter, but to build the demand that gives an airline the confidence to extend a route year-round. We should not lose sight of the fact that Sri Lanka does not have an off-season — we are a year-round destination, in every sense, and our marketing should say so.

We have seen what happens when we get this wrong. Air France added Colombo to its network a few years ago, then quietly withdrew it when the numbers did not hold up. Every time that happens, it sends the wrong signal to the rest of the industry — at a moment when we need a more diversified mix of airlift, and more of the higher-spending traveller who will pay for a direct flight rather than sit through a layover to reach us. Getting this right is as much our responsibility as it is the airlines'.

Carne Diem Grill by Dharshan Named to 50 Best Discovery 2026

TTA BULLETIN

Carne Diem Grill by Dharshan has been named to the 50 Best Discovery 2026 collection, becoming the only restaurant in the Maldives to be featured in this year's global selection. The listing places the restaurant before the global audience of travellers, luxury travel advisors and food enthusiasts who actively follow the 50 Best ecosystem.



platform that establishments can apply to join. Every venue is selected following votes cast by members of the independent 50 Best Academies, comprising more than 3,000 chefs, restaurateurs, food writers, critics and hospitality experts from across the globe.

For Carne Diem Grill by Dharshan, the recognition reflects the strength of a concept built on consistency, craftsmanship and a clear point of view. Since opening at The Marina at CROSSROADS Maldives in 2020, the restaurant has remained committed to refining its craft rather than chasing trends, steadily establishing itself as one of the destination's standout dining experiences.

At the heart of the restaurant is Ignis Maximus, Chef Dharshan Munidasa's custom-engineered charcoal grill capable of reaching temperatures of up to 750°C.

Developed specifically for Carne Diem Grill, it embodies the restaurant's philosophy of Meat. Heat. Salt. — the belief that exceptional steak requires nothing more than outstanding ingredients, precise cooking and perfect seasoning.

That commitment to authenticity has attracted an international clientele, with guests from around the world sharing their experiences long after leaving the Maldives. Carne Diem Grill has also taken its signature live-fire cooking beyond the islands through acclaimed pop-up events in Colombo and Bangkok, each featuring an Ignis Maximus grill custom-built in the host country to faithfully recreate the restaurant's distinctive cooking experience.

"To receive recognition from our peers through 50 Best Discovery is a tremendous honour — not only for Carne Diem Grill, but also for the Maldives as a culinary

destination," said Chef Dharshan Munidasa. "Carne Diem has always been about doing one thing exceptionally well. We have never tried to be another steakhouse. We've remained committed to our philosophy of exceptional ingredients, precision cooking and genuine hospitality, and it is incredibly rewarding to see that recognised on a global platform."

The recognition also marks another significant chapter in Chef Dharshan Munidasa's culinary journey. Following the international success of Nihonbashi — the first restaurant from Sri Lanka to be featured on Asia's 50 Best Restaurants; and Ministry of Crab, which has maintained a presence on the Asia's 50 Best rankings and extended list for more than a decade, Carne Diem Grill becomes the third restaurant created by Chef Dharshan to be recognised by the organisation behind the prestigious 50 Best rankings.

TRAVEL CIRCLE 2026

Pegasus Reef Hotel brought together valued travel partners for a memorable evening by the beach at The Travel Partner Connect event.

More than just an evening of celebration, the event reflected the strong relationships and partnerships that continue to shape our journey. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect, celebrate shared successes, and look ahead to many more journeys together.



 salt
theory



Watch us in 360° | VR / 4K

CIMX 2026 Partners with PCMA to Bring Global Business Events Intelligence and Corporate Decision-Makers to China

TTA BULLETIN



The China International MICE Exchange (CIMX), taking place November 3–5, 2026, at the China National Convention Center (CNCC II) in Beijing, announces a strategic partnership with PCMA, the world’s largest community of business events strategists, to strengthen corporate buyer engagement and bring global business events intelligence to China’s meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) market.

The partnership will connect PCMA’s global community of more than 9,000 active members and 55,000+ engaged event professionals and student members in 72 countries with CIMX’s international business events platform, creating new opportunities for knowledge exchange, business connections and professional engagement.

A key highlight of the partnership will be the exclusive two-hour closed-door Corporate Intelligence Exchange, a workshop designed specifically for corporate MICE planners, buyers and decision-makers. Based on insights from the PCMA Outlook Report 2026 – Global Corporate Sector, the session will make intelligence available in Mandarin and combine global benchmarks with local insights from China’s corporate events community.

The Exchange will incorporate findings from a pre-session survey, live audience polling and structured peer-to-peer discussion, enabling participants to explore both global business events trends and the real-time perspectives of their industry peers. CIMX will be the first MICE event in China to host localized PCMA Outlook intelligence, underlining CIMX’s distinct positioning in connecting global resources with the Chinese market.

CIMX will also feature key findings of the PCMA Outlook Report 2026 – Global Corporate Sector on the CIMX Conference stage, making the research available to a broader audience of business events professionals. The closed-door intelligence exchange and keynote together offer event professionals practical insights into emerging trends, evolving market dynamics, and the future of business events.

Connecting CIMX with PCMA’s Corporate Community

The partnership will also extend CIMX’s reach to PCMA’s community of corporate event leaders, association executives and agency decision-makers who plan and

purchase meetings, incentives and conferences. Through its channels, PCMA will promote the opportunity to join the CIMX Hosted Buyer Program to its APAC community, helping qualified buyers from China and abroad to connect with CIMX exhibitors and destinations.

Selected corporate planners will also be invited to join the CIMX Corporate Delegate Program, with additional networking opportunities including invitations to exclusive lunch and dinner functions and the Corporate Delegate VIP Tour on day one of CIMX, introducing distinguished exhibitors with high-level corporate decision-makers from China and abroad.

Turning Industry Intelligence into Long-term Value

The collaboration will be supported by a dedicated pre-, during- and post-event communications campaign, including research-driven content, bilingual marketing collateral, and co-branded assets distributed to CIMX attendees.

Florence Chua, Managing Director, APAC at PCMA, will lead the closed-door Corporate Intelligence Exchange and present key findings from the PCMA Outlook Report 2026 – Global Corporate Sector in Beijing. She has more than 25 years of experience across Asia Pacific, including 11 years in China.

“Industry intelligence creates the greatest value when it is placed in the right market context and translated into practical action”, says Florence Chua. “At CIMX, we will bring PCMA’s global corporate-sector insights into direct dialogue with the experiences and priorities of China’s corporate events community. This exchange will help participants benchmark their strategies, examine emerging challenges and identify opportunities to strengthen the strategic value of their business events,” she adds.

“CIMX is designed to connect China’s MICE and business events markets with international expertise, buyers, and suppliers. Our partnership with PCMA adds a strong intelligence and corporate dimension to that connection. By combining research, peer exchange and continued communication, we are encouraging an ongoing dialogue between China’s corporate events community and global industry leaders — one that supports international exchange and stronger professional practices”, says Nikolaos Swoch, Director CIMX.

Browns Hotels & Resorts Unveils BIGG CARE, Its Sustainability Strategic Plan

TTA BULLETIN

Browns Hotels & Resorts has officially launched BIGG CARE, its Sustainability Strategic Plan, marking a significant new chapter in the Group’s commitment to ESG and sustainability. BIGG CARE stands for Browns Hotels & Resorts’ Initiative for Green Governance, Climate Action, Accountability, Resource Efficiency & Engagement.

The strategic plan brings together the Group’s sustainability priorities under one framework, with a focus on building more resilient operations, protecting natural ecosystems, supporting communities and creating lasting value for Sri Lanka.

BIGG CARE was unveiled at a ceremony held at The Eden Beruwala, with Chief Guest Harshini Halangode, Country Programme Manager, UN-Habitat, Sri Lanka, alongside senior management of Browns Hotels & Resorts, sustainability professionals and industry experts.

Rather than treating sustainability as a collection of individual environmental initiatives, BIGG CARE is designed to make sustainability an integrated part of how Browns Hotels & Resorts operates, measures performance and plans for the future. The strategy encompasses climate change mitigation and adaptation, climate resilience, energy and water stewardship, waste and the circular economy, biodiversity, employee development, guest engagement, community development and responsible governance.

The event also saw the launch of the Browns Hotels & Resorts Bi-Annual Sustainability Newsletter and the Group’s Sustainability Policy, further strengthening communication, transparency and stakeholder engagement around its sustainability journey.

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

“For a hospitality group operating across diverse destinations in Sri Lanka, sustainability is intrinsically linked to the long-term health of our environments, communities and economies. Our ESG strategy provides the framework for embedding these principles across our business, while BIGG CARE turns this

commitment into action—driving resource efficiency, environmental and community responsibility, and helping us build a more resilient, responsible and future-ready business.”

Delivering the keynote address, Harshini Halangode, welcomed the launch of BIGG CARE and highlighted the importance of embedding sustainability within organisational governance.

“UN-Habitat welcomes a plan like the one you launched today, one that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and

national priorities, and treats sustainability not as a marketing line but as a governance discipline. The plan is to reduce your carbon footprint in measurable terms, so that you can report progress against the GRI standards through sustainability reporting. What gets measured gets managed, and what gets reported gets improved.”

— Harshini Halangode, Country Programme Manager, UN-Habitat, Sri Lanka

The programme also featured a keynote address by Ajith De Alwis, who spoke about the importance of integrating sustainability into the tourism and hospitality business model.

“Driving sustainability in tourism also means ensuring a continued flow of quality tourists. To achieve this, we need to look beyond the business itself and factor the destination, its location and its communities into the way we operate. Sustainability has to become part of the business model, and eco-innovation will be essential for the industry to move forward.”

— Ajith De Alwis, Senior Professor, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Chemical and Process Engineering, University of Moratuwa

A key highlight of the programme was an expert panel discussion centred on Green Governance, Climate Action, Accountability, Resource Efficiency & Engagement.

The panel brought together Professor Ajith De Alwis, Sevvandi Jayakody, Chair Professor, Department of Aquaculture & Fisheries, Faculty of Livestock Fisheries & Nutrition, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka; Dr. Sharmen Vidanage, Country Representative, IUCN Sri Lanka; and Leonie Vaas, General Manager, Hirdaramani Group PLC, with Prashani Illangasekara, Co-Founder, AlchemX Global, serving as moderator.

The discussion explored how organisations can move beyond sustainability commitments towards practical climate action, while strengthening accountability, resource efficiency and engagement across their operations and wider stakeholder networks.

Prof. Sevvandi Jayakody highlighted the interconnected nature of ecosystems and the importance of understanding the relationship between natural systems, particularly from mountain landscapes to coastal and marine environments, while emphasising the need for practical climate action. Dr. Sharmen Vidanage brought a focus on green governance, highlighting the importance of embedding sustainability into decision-making, accountability and organisational systems.





Where ancient swimmers meet golden
shores

SLCB hosts MICE Tourism Workshop at Sabaragamuwa University

TTA BULLETIN



The Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB), in collaboration with the Department of Tourism Management of the Sabaragamuwa University, successfully conducted a specialized MICE Training Programme at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka recently. Held at the Faculty of Management Auditorium, the comprehensive session brought together undergraduate students pursuing degrees in Tourism Management and Hospitality Management.

The full day program was specifically designed to build MICE tourism awareness among the undergraduates and nurture a highly skilled future talent pool for the country's expanding tourism sector. To achieve these goals, the session covered several core industry modules. Key topics explored throughout the day included foundational MICE industry

trends, efficient event planning operations, event technology integration and sustainable risk management practices.

Enhancing the educational experience, the workshop featured an engaging panel discussion where participants benefited from valuable knowledge exchange and key industry insights. Students also actively took part in group presentations, carefully examining the MICE tourism potential across five different regions in Sri Lanka. Ultimately, this interactive workshop successfully bridged academic coursework with practical market standards. By aligning closely with the national MICE Tourism Road Map, the initiative reinforced vital industry academia partnerships, paving the way for Sri Lanka's long-term business tourism growth.

Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka Officially Launches Its People-Powered Tourism Ecosystem

TTA BULLETIN

Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka has officially launched the Traveleye People-Powered Tourism Ecosystem, a new approach to tourism development focused on developing and strengthening micro and small tourism enterprises across Sri Lanka's tourism ecosystem.



and experiences, while creating meaningful opportunities for tourism enterprises and destinations. Through Beautiful People, Beautiful Places and Beautiful Experiences, we seek to create more reasons for visitors to Come Back For More.

Established in 2006 as Explore Asia Holidays (Pvt) Ltd, the organisation has evolved over the years from its origins in travel into a broader tourism development organisation. Explore Asia Holidays (Pvt) Ltd was subsequently renamed Traveleye Alliance (Pvt) Ltd, reflecting the organisation's expanding vision and commitment to building a more connected and collaborative tourism ecosystem for Sri Lanka.

The Traveleye People-Powered Tourism Ecosystem brings together people, tourism enterprises, destinations, travellers, institutions and strategic partners through a connected approach to tourism development. Guided by the People-Powered Tourism Framework, it seeks to create stronger tourism enterprises, resilient destinations, meaningful travel experiences, strategic partnerships and lasting value for People, Places, Partnerships and Prosperity.

The ecosystem is also guided by Traveleye Alliance Sri Lanka's "Beautiful Sri Lanka" destination-brand positioning, Beautiful People. Beautiful Places. Beautiful Experiences. Through this positioning, Traveleye seeks to celebrate Sri Lanka's beauty through its people, places, culture, heritage, nature, hospitality, knowledge

At the heart of the ecosystem are Beautiful People, tourism entrepreneurs, Travelpreneurs, hosts, experience creators, destination champions, guides, farmers, artisans, professionals, innovators, investors, community leaders and others who bring knowledge, skills, creativity, entrepreneurship, local connections and resources into Sri Lanka's tourism ecosystem. They are people who care about others, respect people and places, value honesty, integrity and fairness, care for the environment and communities, and are willing to contribute, collaborate and create shared value.

The initiative is also grounded in Sri Lanka's own heritage of knowledge and wisdom, including generations of practices relating to sustainability, stewardship, resource conservation, agriculture, traditional medicine, food, crafts, culture and living in harmony with nature, while remaining aligned with contemporary global thinking in sustainable, regenerative and responsible tourism.

Through its connected Travel Collective, Host Experiences, Ecosystem Support and Destination Facilitation platforms, Traveleye Alliance aims to progressively develop and strengthen tourism enterprises,

WTM Spotlight Riyadh unveils conference agenda

TTA BULLETIN

WTM Spotlight Riyadh has unveiled the conference programme for its inaugural edition, bringing together international and regional tourism leaders to examine the opportunities emerging from Saudi Arabia's rapidly expanding visitor economy.



"WTM Spotlight Riyadh will bring together international expertise, research and perspectives from those actively shaping the sector. From policy and regional development to outbound demand, mobility, technol-

ogy and talent, the programme will examine the issues influencing the next phase of growth while strengthening connections between Saudi Arabia and the global tourism industry."

The second day will focus on Outbound Demand & Market Access, reflecting Saudi Arabia's growing importance as a global source market.

Taking place from 8–10 September 2026 at the Riyadh Front Exhibition & Conference Center (RFECC), the three-day programme will move from the Kingdom's Vision 2030 growth agenda to the increasing influence of Saudi outbound travellers, before turning to the role of connectivity, experiences, talent and technology in the next phase of tourism development.

The opening day, themed Driving Growth for Vision 2030, will explore how Saudi Arabia can translate continued tourism growth into long-term economic and social value.

Samer Al-Kharashi, Director of the Regional Office for the Middle East, UN Tourism, will draw on the latest research in rural development to examine how tourism can accelerate regional growth while preserving culture and nature, strengthening community inclusion, and improving quality of life.

UN Tourism will also partner with Chemonics International for Villages to Value Chains – Designing Community Tourism. The session will consider how locally rooted visitor experiences can create lasting economic benefits for communities and support sustainable tourism ecosystems, with speakers including Mohammed Almandiel, General Manager, Heritage Events and Programming, Ministry of Culture.

The economics behind the Kingdom's tourism growth will be addressed by Dave Goodger, Managing Director, EMEA, Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company. Goodger will assess the latest demand, spending and volume trends and identify where high-value opportunities are emerging across inbound and domestic tourism.

A CEO panel will turn to resilience and adaptability across tourism, aviation and hospitality, featuring Muzzammil Ahussain, Chief Executive Officer, Almosafer Travel & Tourism Co; Taha Nazer, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Cruise Saudi; and Sanjiv Kapoor, Acting Chief Executive Officer, flyadeal.

Danielle Curtis, Regional Portfolio Director – UAE, RX, said: "Saudi Arabia's tourism sector is developing at an extraordinary pace, creating opportunities across investment, destination development and the wider visitor economy. As the Kingdom advances its Vision 2030 ambitions, the conversation is increasingly about how that growth can translate into long-term economic value, exceptional visitor experiences and opportunities for communities across the country.

A dedicated Super Panel: The \$35BN Opportunity – How and Where to Capture Outbound Demand will examine how destinations and travel brands can convert Saudi Arabia's significant outbound demand into market share, and feature Turab Saleem, Chief Executive Officer, Perfetti Hospitality, and Faisal Alrajhi, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, almatar. MICE and luxury travel will also feature, including what Saudi Arabia needs beyond venue supply to compete for international business events and how luxury travel is moving towards more immersive, culturally relevant and purpose-led experiences.

UN Tourism will host an Innovation Startup Showcase, titled "How the Kingdom is Building Tourism's Most Ambitious Ecosystem", featuring opening remarks and a keynote from UN Tourism, along with a panel discussion on financing tourism's future featuring panellists from Red Sea Global, Eye Go, and the Tourism Development Fund of Saudi Arabia.

A dedicated China-Saudi session with Dragon Trail International will assess the growing Chinese travel opportunity following Saudi Arabia's Approved Destination Status, while other discussions will examine destinations that attract Saudi travellers and the growing role of wellness in premium travel.

The final day, themed Elevated Experiences & Connected Destinations, will focus on translating tourism investment and infrastructure into stronger visitor experiences. Sessions will consider how aviation, cruise, rail and road networks can create integrated tourism corridors, while Muhammad Bassrawi, Chief Marketing and Destination Officer, Qiddiya, will discuss how attractions, entertainment, events, and culture can combine to create more compelling visitor journeys.

Sports tourism will feature in discussions around converting major events into year-round demand and repeat visitation. A dedicated religious tourism session will consider the evolution of Umrah and pilgrimage through improvements in services, mobility and digital systems, as well as opportunities to encourage extended stays.



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AI VISIBILITY REPORT
FOR SRI LANKA HOTELS

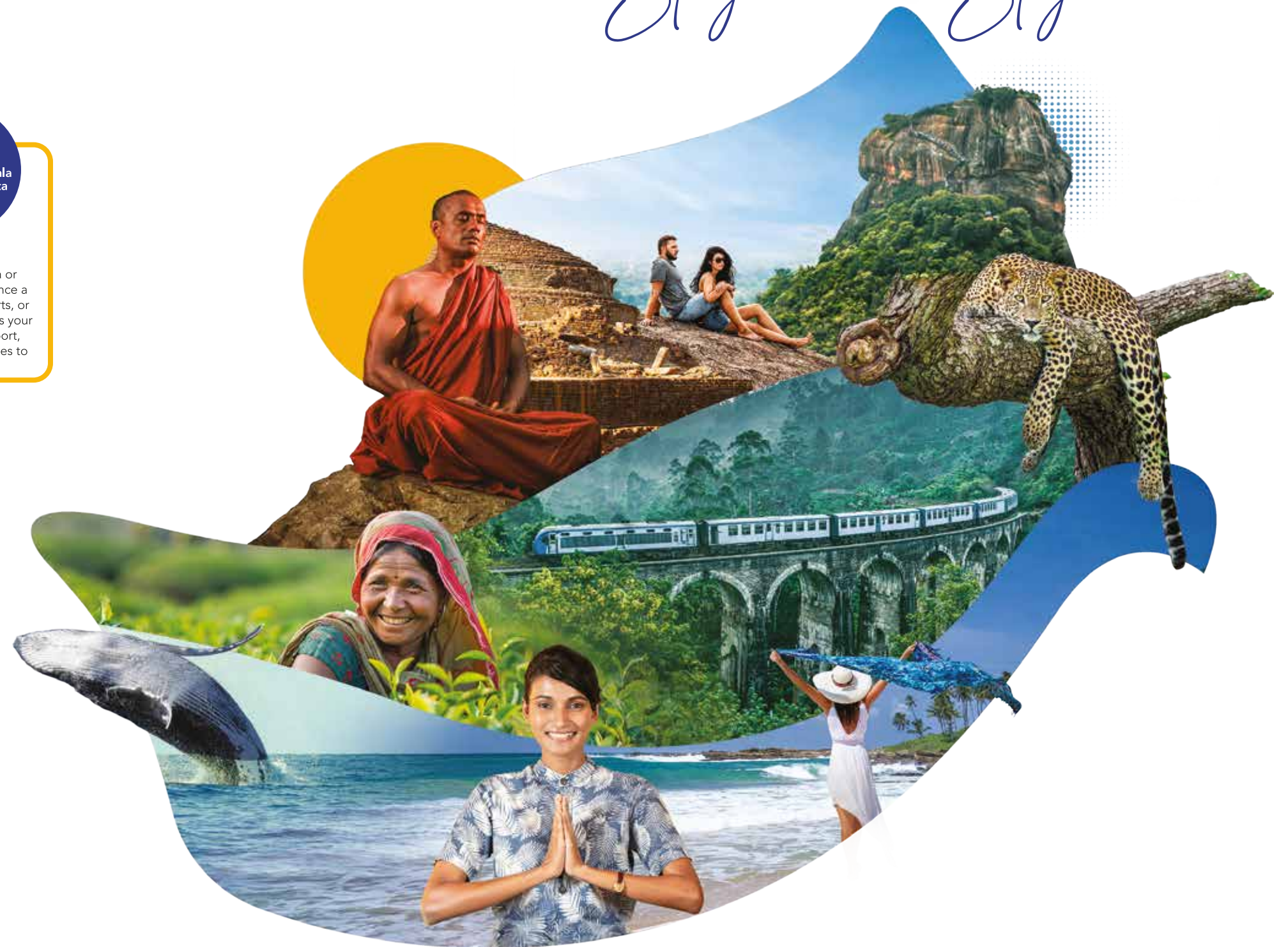
12 Days Around the Pearl of the Indian Ocean with Browns Hotels & Resorts

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HOTELS & RESORTS

Live the Story Love the Stay



Love the Beach Beginnings

Arrive and unwind by the coast. Enjoy sunset swims, lagoon boat rides, and lively evenings with great entertainment by the resort's famous animation team.



DAY 1-2 Club Hotel Dolphin Negombo



DAY 12

The Eden Beruwala
or Thaalaa Bentota

Live the Golden Mile

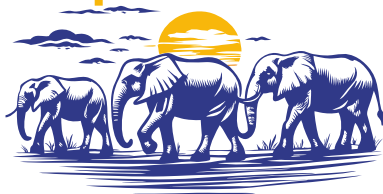
Enjoy your final stop at The Eden Beruwala or Thaalaa Bentota by the Golden Mile. Experience a river safari through mangroves, do watersports, or relax by the pool with a fresh king coconut. As your journey concludes, transfer back to the airport, feeling sun-kissed and rejuvenated with stories to share.



Live the Culture, Adventure & Wild Encounters
Climb the legendary Sigiriya Rock Fortress. Prefer a slower pace? Try a village safari, canoeing, and a home-cooked meal. Wildlife enthusiasts can visit Minneriya for elephant gatherings, while culture lovers can explore cave temples and hidden ruins.



DAY 3-5 Hotel Sigiriya, The Paradise Dambulla, Ayugiri Ayurveda Wellness Resort



Indulge in tailor-made meals, signature wellness treatments, and calming yoga at Kaludiya Pokuna—where every moment is designed to restore your mind, body, and soul.



Love the East Coast Bliss

Visit The Calm Resort & Spa on the east coast, known for its tranquil turquoise waters. Enjoy slow living with activities like snorkeling, paddling, or indulging in spa treatments. Explore the Batticaloa lagoon, local hindu temples and turquoise beaches.



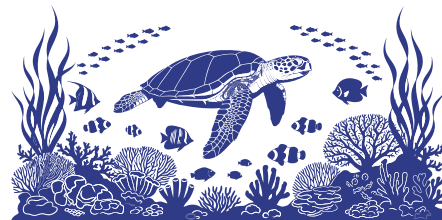
DAY 6-7 The Calm Resort & Spa

DAY 10-11 Dickwella Resort & Spa



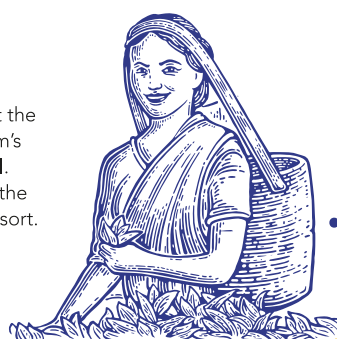
Love the Southern Soul

At Dickwella Resort & Spa for a luxurious, relaxed experience by the rocky shores. Indulge in the freshest sea food while surfing at the Dickwella Bay. In a walking distance discover the famous Hiriketiya Beach for surfing. Activities include whale watching in Mirissa, sunset ocean dips, and seafood dinners, highlighting the best of the south.



Live the Misty Hills

Dive into the misty mountain vibes of Ella. Check out the historic Nine Arch Bridge, take a hike to Little Adam's Peak for stunning views, or explore the Pekoe trail. Experience the art of tea making and the history of the Ceylon tea culture at Newburgh Ella - Tea Factory Resort.



Sri Lanka isn't one story—it's many. Set in the island's most desired locations, Browns Hotels & Resorts brings you closer to every destination and every moment. Live the legend in the Cultural Triangle, taste the island through flavour, feel the coast down south and the quiet of the East, and wake up to panoramic views in Ella. Restore through Ayurveda that recentres and renews, or chase adventure from ocean to wilderness. Shaped by hospitality that feels intuitive, personal, and real, every stay at Browns Hotels & Resorts is designed for comfort that comes naturally. Discover a story you'll always want to return to with us.



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AI-POWERED GROWTH: Driving Direct Bookings for Heritance Hotels and Resorts with Performance Max for Travel Goals

- ## The Challenge

Heritance Hotels and Resorts comprises six iconic hotels and resorts across Sri Lanka and the Maldives, with five award-winning properties located in Sri Lanka. Our strategy focused on increasing direct bookings for the Sri Lankan resorts through Brand.com. While traditional brand search campaigns effectively captured existing brand demand, there was a significant opportunity to reach new high-intent travellers earlier in the path to purchase.

- ## The Approach

To accelerate brand-led revenue growth, we adopted Google's AI-powered Performance Max for Travel Goals (PMTG) campaigns. By moving beyond traditional brand keyword targeting, PMTG leveraged Google's AI to identify high-intent travellers using search themes, audience signals, and real-time intent across Google's advertising channels. This enabled us to reach potential guests who were actively researching travel while maximizing campaign efficiency through automated bidding and optimization.

- ## The Results

The AI-driven strategy delivered outstanding results, exceeding the campaign targets and outperforming all key performance metrics compared to the period before PMTG was introduced. By expanding beyond traditional brand targeting, Heritance Hotels successfully increased high-intent traffic to Brand.com and drove stronger direct booking performance across its Sri Lankan portfolio.

+333%

YOY Increase
in Bookings

+299%

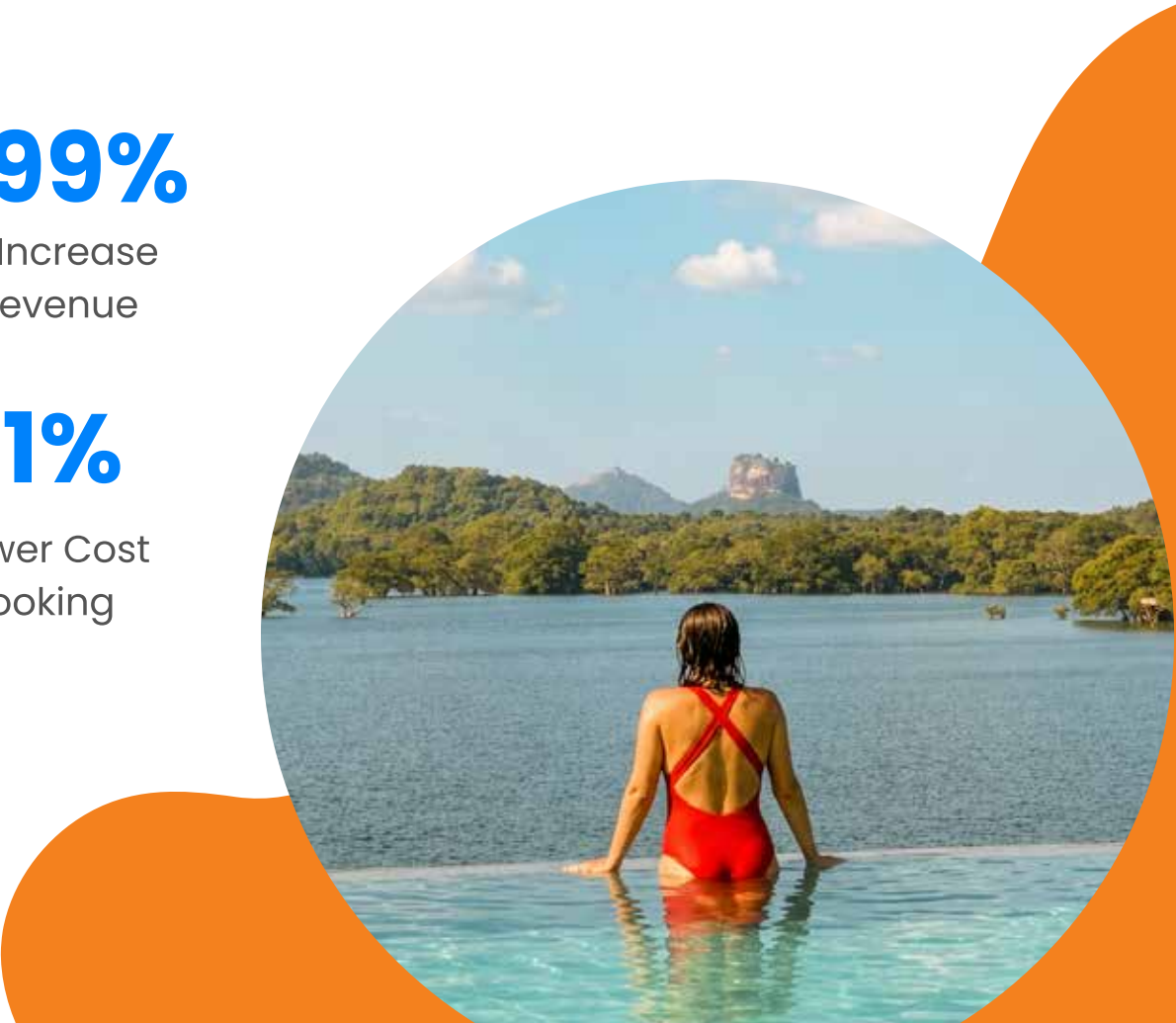
YOY Increase
in Revenue

+31%

YOY Increase
in ROAS

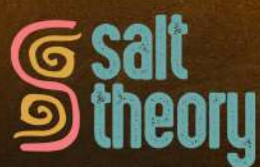
-31%

YOY Lower Cost
Per Booking



WHERE
COMFORT
FINDS QUIET

FOR MOMENTS WHEN THE WORLD FEELS A LITTLE TOO LOUD,
FIND YOUR WAY BACK TO STILLNESS.



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HOTELS

Jetwing Vil Uyana Becomes the Only Sri Lankan Hospitality Brand to Win PATA Gold Award in 2026

TTA BULLETIN



Jetwing Vil Uyana, A Luxury Reserve, has been awarded the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award 2026 in the Ecosystem and Wildlife Conservation Initiative category, becoming the only Sri Lankan hospitality brand to receive a PATA Gold Award this year. The recognition marks the property's third PATA Gold Award and highlights its long-standing commitment to responsible tourism.

Nestled within Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle, near the iconic Sigiriya Rock Fortress, Jetwing Vil Uyana has earned international recognition for transforming a once-degraded agricultural landscape into a thriving wetland ecosystem. Since opening its doors in 2006, the 28-acre resort has combined luxury hospitality with environmental stewardship, creating habitats that support biodiversity while strengthening local water resilience.

Commenting on the achievement, Hashan Cooray, Director of Marketing and Development at Jetwing Hotels, said "At Jetwing Hotels, sustainability is measured not only by the initiatives we implement today, but by the positive impact they create over time. The biodiversity gains recorded at Jetwing Vil Uyana over the past two decades demonstrate what can be achieved through long-term commitment, innovation, and responsible tourism. We are humbled to see these efforts recognised through a respected platform such as the PATA Gold Awards."

A key factor behind the award was the property's measurable conservation success. Independent biodiversity assessments conducted twenty years apart revealed substantial increases in species diversity across the site. A baseline study carried out in 2005 was replicated in 2025 by a research team from the University of Colombo, with findings highlighting significant growth in plant, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish populations across the restored ecosystem. Jetwing Vil Uyana has also become one of Sri Lanka's premier locations for observing the threatened grey slender loris. To further support conservation efforts, three acres of the property have been dedicated as a loris conservation site, complemented by an information centre focused on habitat preservation and public awareness.

Beyond biodiversity conservation, the resort's interconnected lakes and waterways contribute to local water security by harvesting rainwater, replenishing ground-

water reserves and supporting surrounding agricultural communities. Inspired by Sri Lanka's ancient cascade irrigation systems, these habitats continue to deliver environmental benefits while enhancing climate resilience.

Since its inception in 1984, the PATA Gold Awards represent the true spirit of innovation, sustainability, and the notion of tourism as a force for good. The PATA Gold Awards recognise excellence across a broad range of disciplines, from destination and industry marketing to emerging technology, climate action, conservation, human capital development, community-based tourism, inclusivity and youth and women empowerment.

PATA CEO Noor Ahmad Hamid said, "The PATA Gold Awards continue to shine a light on the creativity, innovation and commitment shaping a stronger and more sustainable tourism industry. This year's submissions were among the strongest we have seen, reflecting the remarkable efforts of PATA members and the wider industry in pursuing excellence."

The winning entries show how bold ideas can create lasting impact — from innovative marketing and emerging technologies to conservation, climate action, inclusion and community empowerment. They set new benchmarks for excellence and demonstrate tourism's potential as a force for positive change."

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.

Mandara Ridge Haputale: A Year-Round Family Sanctuary in Sri Lanka's Cool Hill Country

TTA BULLETIN

Set within a private 100-acre tea estate, this highland hideaway offers exclusivity, farm-fresh dining and refreshing mountain air in every season

For travellers seeking cooler climes and a slower, more meaningful pace of travel, Mandara Ridge Haputale offers a compelling escape: a serene bungalow retreat nestled within a private 100-acre working tea estate in Sri Lanka's misty highlands, where the mountain air stays refreshingly cool throughout the year.

Perched in Haputale, one of the most scenic corners of Sri Lanka's celebrated hill country, Mandara Ridge combines unspoilt nature with the warmth of genuine, personalised hospitality. The entire bungalow can be booked exclusively, making it ideal for families and groups who value privacy and the comfort of having a home entirely to themselves. From toddlers chasing butterflies in the rose garden to grandparents savouring a



quiet cup of estate-grown tea on the verandah, the property is designed to welcome every generation.

"Mandara Ridge Haputale was created as a home away from home — a place where families can slow down, reconnect and experience the hill country as it should be experienced," said Thilini Palihawadana, Director, Mandara Hotels. "What makes it truly special is that it never has an off-season. Whether you visit in the height of summer or the depths of winter, the estate greets you with cool breezes, emerald tea fields and food harvested that very morning. It is a retreat that appeals to travellers of every age, from every corner of the world."

A Feast of Freshness

Dining at Mandara Ridge is rooted in the estate itself. Meals are prepared using vegetables harvested daily from the property's own organic garden, alongside eggs from its farm — a true farm-to-table



philosophy. Guests can even join hands-on cooking classes, learning to prepare authentic Sri Lankan dishes with ingredients picked just hours before.

Gateway to the Highlands' Greatest Treasures

The estate is a destination in its own right. Guests may wander through rolling tea fields on self-guided walks, witness sustainable tea and coffee harvesting, or spot wildlife ranging from exotic birdlife to deer and even the elusive leopard.

Beyond the gates, Mandara Ridge serves as the perfect base from which to explore an extraordinary concentration of Sri Lanka's most iconic highland attractions. Thrill-seekers can take on the legendary Devil's Staircase, a dramatic mountain trail famed for its steep hairpin bends and sweeping valley views, or hike to Fox Hill in nearby Diyatalawa for panoramic vistas over the garrison town below.

Railway enthusiasts are especially spoilt for choice — the property sits just minutes from Idalgashinna Railway Station, the third highest station above sea level in Sri Lanka, while Ohiya Railway Station, the country's second highest, offers one of the most scenic stretches of the island's famous upcountry railway line and a charming gateway to Horton Plains.

Waterfall lovers can marvel at Bambarakanda Falls, Sri Lanka's tallest waterfall, just 36 minutes away, and Dyaluma Falls, the island's second tallest, which cascades 220 metres and rewards visitors with natural infinity pools at its summit. History awaits at Adisham Bungalow, a beautifully preserved colonial-era mansion surrounded by lush gardens, while Lipton's Seat, Horton Plains and the colonial charm of Nuwara Eliya, fondly known as "Little England," complete an unforgettable roster of family day excursions.

Sustainability at Its Heart

Mandara Ridge is committed to eco-conscious living, with a thriving organic farm, coffee and spice gardens, a cattle farm and its own bottled water project — offering guests a stay that treads lightly on the landscape it celebrates.

Mandara Ridge Haputale is part of the Mandara Hotels portfolio, which also includes Mandara Rosen Yala and Mandara Resort Mirissa — allowing visitors to pair the cool hills with wildlife safaris and the island's famed southern beaches in a single island journey.



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HOTELS

Walk Through the Story of Ceylon Tea at Newburgh Ella

TTA BULLETIN

Long before Ella became one of Sri Lanka's most sought-after travel destinations, the hills surrounding the region were already home to a legacy that would introduce the world to the finest Ceylon Tea.

Nestled amidst lush tea plantations, Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort by Browns Hotels & Resorts invites guests and visitors to discover this remarkable heritage through its signature Tea Factory Tour Experience—an immersive journey through a historic tea factory that has stood for more than 120 years.

Built by renowned planter George Thomson in 1903, the story of Newburgh Tea Factory predates one of Ella's most photographed landmarks—the Nine Arches Bridge, completed in 1921. While the bridge became a symbol of Sri Lanka's railway heritage, the tea factory was already part of a much older narrative, producing Ceylon Tea that travelled across the world.

Today, the former tea factory has been transformed into a distinctive 41-room heritage resort by Browns Hotels & Resorts, preserving the character of its tea-making past while offering guests an immersive

hospitality experience. The legacy also lives on through many former tea factory employees who are now part of the resort team, welcoming guests with their personal memories, knowledge and connection to Newburgh's tea story.

The Tea Factory Tour Experience takes visitors beyond a cup of tea, revealing the fascinating journey from plantation to factory floor.

The one-hour guided experience begins with a walk through the resort's tea plantation, where guests discover the art of cultivation, the influence of Ella's climate and altitude, and the traditional technique of selecting the finest "two leaves and a bud" for premium Ceylon Tea.

Guests are then welcomed into the historic factory with a cultural greeting before exploring its preserved interiors, vintage machinery and authentic equipment that bring the past to life.

The walkthrough reveals every stage of tea production, including withering, rolling, oxidation, drying and grading, while explaining how each process shapes the

flavour, aroma and character of the final product. Visitors also learn the differences between black tea and green tea production, gaining a deeper appreciation of the craftsmanship behind every variety.

The experience concludes with a curated tea tasting session, where guests explore Newburgh Ella's selection of teas and discover the art of tea appreciation.

Following the tour, visitors can unwind with a freshly brewed cup of tea while enjoying spectacular views of the Ella Gap, or dine at the Eastern Valley Restaurant, where Pan Asian cuisine is served against breathtaking mountain and valley landscapes.

Available daily at 10.30 a.m., 2.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m., the Tea Factory Tour Experience is open to both in-house guests and outside visitors through advance reservations.

Drawing on the legacy of Browns Plantations, the world's largest tea producer, Newburgh Ella offers a distinctive journey



into the story of Ceylon Tea. Combining authentic tea heritage, generations of expertise and Sri Lankan hospitality, the Tea Factory Tour offers visitors a rare opportunity to follow the journey from plantation to cup, in a setting where the story of tea has been preserved for more than a century.



Sri Lanka Shines on the Global Wellness Map as Ayurveda Takes Centre Stage

TTA BULLETIN

As travellers worldwide increasingly seek meaningful journeys centred on health, balance and rejuvenation, Sri Lanka's centuries-old Ayurveda traditions are enjoying renewed global attention. The island's standing as one of Asia's foremost wellness destinations received a significant boost this year when Sri Lankan Ayurveda was celebrated at the inaugural GlobalHealth Sri Lanka Conference & Awards 2026, organised by GlobalHealth Asia-Pacific.

The awards brought together healthcare, wellness, aesthetics and hospitality leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region to recognise excellence, innovation and service quality in advancing healthcare and wellness standards. That Sri Lanka's Ayurveda sector featured so prominently among the winners selected by an independent international jury of distinguished healthcare and wellness experts is a telling endorsement of the island's healing heritage on the regional stage.

An Island Shaped by Healing Traditions
Ayurveda, the ancient science of life, has

been practised in Sri Lanka for centuries. Passed down through generations of physicians and enriched by the island's own indigenous healing systems, it remains woven into everyday Sri Lankan life from home remedies and herbal gardens to dedicated wellness resorts along the coast and in the hill country.

What sets Sri Lanka apart as a wellness destination is authenticity. Treatments here are not spa add-ons but complete healing journeys guided by qualified Ayurveda physicians, drawing on the island's extraordinary biodiversity of medicinal plants and herbs. Visitors can immerse themselves in personalised programmes that combine traditional therapies with therapeutic nutrition, yoga, meditation and lifestyle guidance - all designed to address the individual as a whole and support long-term health, balance and rejuvenation.

Add to this the island's tropical climate,



unspoilt beaches, lush interior and famously warm hospitality, and it is easy to see why Sri Lanka is increasingly the destination of choice for travellers seeking transformative wellness experiences.

Recognition on the World Stage
Among the standout winners at the 2026 awards was Siddhalepa Ayurveda Health Resort, named "Holistic Health & Wellness Service Provider of the Year." For more than three decades, the resort has welcomed international guests seeking immersive Ayurveda experiences rooted in Sri Lanka's traditional healing heritage, a reflection of the depth and maturity of the island's wellness tourism offering.

Siddhalepa Ayurveda Products was also honoured with the "Excellence in Herbal Wellness & Functional Nutrition in Sri Lanka" award, recognising more than nine decades of developing trusted Ayurvedic healthcare products that carry the benefits of

authentic Sri Lankan Ayurveda to consumers around the world.

These accolades speak to something larger than any single brand: they affirm Sri Lanka's ability to preserve traditional healing knowledge while meeting international standards of quality, research and hospitality which is precisely the combination today's wellness travellers are looking for.

A Destination for Transformative Journeys
Global wellness tourism continues to grow at pace, with travellers seeking authentic experiences that nurture physical, mental and emotional well-being. With its rich Ayurveda heritage, natural beauty and centuries-old healing traditions now earning recognition on the international stage, Sri Lanka is well placed to welcome a new generation of wellness travellers.

For those planning their next journey, the island offers something increasingly rare: healing traditions that are genuinely lived, not staged and a wellness experience that begins the moment you arrive.

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Thema Collection's Direct Booking Transformation: How a Sri Lankan Hotel Group Turned Sixteen Distinct Experiences into a Unified Commercial Success

TTA BULLETIN

Partnership with global hospitality technology provider Profitroom delivers 25% growth in direct website bookings and a 35% rise in international presence — with the story of the collaboration now reaching a global audience of more than 101,000 viewers on YouTube in just three weeks

Sri Lanka's Thema Collection has long stood apart from conventional hotel chains. Founded on the philosophy that no two properties should share the same identity, the group's sixteen theme-led hotels — each drawn from the culture, nature and community of its location — offer travellers a journey through experiences rather than a repetition of rooms.

But what delights guests posed a genuine commercial challenge. Until recently, the group operated without a shared commercial system, without a single view of performance across its portfolio, and without the digital tools to sell what truly set each property apart. A newly published case study by hospitality technology provider Profitroom reveals how that has changed — and the results speak for themselves.

The Challenge: Selling Experiences, Not Just Rooms

Before partnering with Profitroom, Thema Collection's distribution leaned heavily on online travel agencies (OTAs), at the expense of the direct, personal guest communication the brand was built on. With a fragmented commercial setup, the group's management could not easily assess how each of its differently themed hotels was performing. Perhaps most critically, its previous booking technology had no means of reflecting the group's ethos — selling packages, add-ons and curated experiences rather than simply a night's stay.

Chirath Fernando, Manager of E-Commerce at Thema Collection, describes the earlier setup as disconnected and fragmented, noting that the absence of a unified view of the portfolio represented "a commercial loss" for the group at the time. The Solution: One Platform, Sixteen Identities

Rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all system that risked flattening its carefully cultivated individuality, Thema Collection deployed Profitroom's group booking engine alongside the platform's packages,

loyalty, CRM and marketing automation tools. The result is a shared commercial backbone that preserves the distinct atmosphere and voice of every property while unifying guest data, campaigns and revenue management underneath.

Maxime Wickramasinghe, Director of Marketing and Business Development at Thema Collection, explains that the group sought a booking engine that could carry its ethos — selling more than a stay. "Profitroom has really helped us do that," he says, adding that the support has been strong and the solution itself "top-notch."

The platform's Extras capability now allows the group to sell packages, add-ons and complimentary experiences, converting a room booking into the immersive experience the brand promises. Its Loyalty programme gives Thema Collection first-party guest data and a direct line of communication with returning guests — without paying OTA commissions — while built-in CRM and marketing automation tools power promotional campaigns the group previously had no capacity to run.



The Results: Six Metrics, All Moving in the Right Direction

Since joining Profitroom, Thema Collection has recorded:

- +25% growth in direct website bookings across the portfolio
- +35% growth in direct bookings driven by promotional campaigns
- +35% growth in international presence, reaching source markets the group had not previously penetrated
- 30–40% growth in the US and Australian markets, both previously underperforming for the group
- +33% year-on-year growth in off-season booking volume from international guests
- A rise in the off-season foreign guest mix from 16% to 22% — a meaningful shift in who is booking, not merely how many



"We're able to reach a new market we didn't think possible back then," reflects Fernando, who cites the 25% direct booking growth as the achievement he is most proud of.

On the Ground: Three Proper-



ties, Three Stories

The case study takes readers inside three of the group's sixteen properties, illustrating how the transformation plays out on the ground.

At Aliya Resort & Spa in Sigiriya — themed around the elephant, with lobby views of Pidurangala and Sigiriya Rock — direct bookings have grown 76% year on year and direct revenue 108%, with the property recording the strongest loyalty programme adoption in the group at 27.1% of direct bookings.

At Maalu Maalu Resort & Spa in Pasikuda, built around the traditions of the local fishing community, direct bookings are up 72% and direct revenue 47%, alongside the highest repeat guest rate of the three featured properties.

Perhaps the most compelling story belongs to Amba Yaalu Kandalama — a 100% renewable-powered property and the first in the group to be run entirely by women. Roughly sixteen months into that pioneering transition, the hotel has posted the fastest booking growth in the entire portfolio: direct bookings up 86% and direct revenue up 59% year on year.

Beyond individual properties, Thema Collection's group-level commitment to community and conservation continues through its Biodiversity Education & Research Initiative, which funds university-led research across the portfolio, and a paper recycling centre that transforms waste from its hotels into baggage tags and souvenir elephants.

A Partnership Built on Shared Values

For Profitroom — whose integrated platform is trusted by more than 4,500 hotels across over 50 markets worldwide — the partnership represents an ideal alignment of brand and technology. Marisa Nolan, Profitroom's Regional Director for APAC, who has led the relationship from the outset, recalls being struck by the

strength of the Thema Collection brand and its focus on sustainability, boutique luxury and experiential travel — precisely the kind of hospitality the platform was built to market and sell.

The story of the partnership has now been captured in a jointly produced video, featuring Founder and Chairman Chandra Wickramasinghe, Nolan and the wider Thema Collection team. The response has been remarkable: more than 101,000 views on YouTube within three weeks of release — an exceptional reach for a hospitality technology story, and a testament to the growing global interest in Sri Lanka's experiential travel narrative.

What's Next: New Stories, Not More Rooms

With a connected commercial platform now underpinning the group, Thema Collection's next chapter is defined by geography rather than scale. Over the next five years, the group plans to open in destinations that remain largely undiscovered — Kalpitiya on the northwest coast, Tangalle in the south, and the far side of Yala — while deliberately holding its footprint steady at around 352 rooms. "We're trying to extend the number of experiences," says Chandra Wickramasinghe — not the number of rooms.

It is a philosophy that has served the group well: a reminder that in an era of consolidation and standardisation, distinctiveness — backed by the right technology — remains one of hospitality's most powerful commercial assets.

The full case study is available at profitroom.com/case-studies/thema-collection. The partnership video can be viewed on YouTube.



Iconic Thai Brands Anantara and Jim Thompson Launch Limited-Edition Silk Resort-Wear Collection the ‘Soul of Siam’

TTA BULLETIN

Anantara Hotels & Resorts and Thai heritage silk house Jim Thompson have launched the ‘Soul of Siam’, a limited-edition silk resort-wear collection available from 1st September 2026 across all Anantara properties in Thailand.



case in two designs: the collection's signature Soul of Siam print and a deep navy. Every piece is cut from traditional glossy Thai silk, milled and finished using techniques Jim Thompson has championed for decades. The hand-drawn motif at the centre of the collection draws on Thai temple architecture, mythical guardian figures, rural landscapes and tropical flora.

The collection extends a partnership that already runs through Anantara's interiors. The Jim Thompson Explorer Suite at Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel and the designer villa at Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas both carry the fashion house's signature silk weaves and motifs drawn from Thai craft traditions. The ‘Soul of Siam’ moves the collaboration from interiors into pieces guests can take home.

Jim Thompson, an American architect turned entrepreneur, founded the Thai Silk Company in 1951, helping to revitalise Thailand's silk industry and bring Thai silk to international recognition. The costumes for The King and I were among the international commissions that carried the work onto the world stage. Thompson disappeared without explanation in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands in 1967, a mystery that remains unsolved. The company now trades in more than 60 countries and holds its heritage at the Jim Thompson House in Bangkok, a complex of six traditional teak houses that doubles as a museum for his art collection.

The nine-piece collection includes a wrap kaftan, a silk scarf, a silk pocket square, a Capri beach bag, an origami elephant cap and a vanity travel pouch, plus a laptop

"As Jim Thompson celebrates its 75th anniversary, this collaboration reflects our shared passion for showcasing Thailand's rich heritage through craftsmanship, design, and authentic storytelling. Having partnered with Anantara for many years on interiors, extending our collaboration into an exclusive lifestyle collection was a natural next step. Soul of Siam invites guests to take home a beautifully crafted piece that captures the spirit and timeless elegance of Thailand." explains Frank Cancelloni, Group CEO of Jim Thompson.

The campaign was shot on location at Anantara Siam Bangkok and Anantara Riverside Bangkok, fronted by Thai power couple Cindy Sirinya Bishop and Byron Bishop. Cindy, crowned Miss Thailand World in 1996, is one of Thailand's best-known faces and later hosted and judged Asia's Next Top Model. Byron, an American-born actor, model and producer based in Bangkok, has built a screen career across Thai and regional productions. Married since 2005, the couple bring homegrown glamour to a campaign that pairs Thai heritage with a contemporary point of view.

Hunas Holdings and CCH Co., Ltd. Enter Strategic Collaborative Partnership

TTA BULLETIN

Hunas Holdings PLC is entering a new phase of growth through a collaborative partnership with CCH Co., Ltd. (CCH INC.), a major Tokyo-based business group with experience across business process outsourcing (BPO), in-house services, investment, mergers and acquisitions, and business development.



For CCH, the partnership represents an opportunity to bring this experience to Sri Lanka through Hunas Holdings, an established local group with a strong platform and long-term growth ambitions.

Yoshihiko Tanabe, Director of CCH Co., Ltd., said: "Through our discussions with Hunas Holdings, we see a company with strong foundations, local expertise and a clear ambition for growth. We believe there is meaningful potential in bringing the strengths of CCH and Hunas Holdings together. I am excited about this partnership, and particularly about some of the projects and opportunities we are already exploring together. There is much to look forward to soon"

The partnership brings together CCH's international investment and business development experience with Hunas Holdings' local knowledge and established presence in Sri Lanka, creating a platform from which both organisations can explore new opportunities for long-term growth.

VietJet Arrives: A New Air Bridge to Sri Lanka

VietJet's launch flight to Sri Lanka was welcomed in true island style — a milestone moment connecting two of Asia's most captivating destinations.



Powering privacy in Premium Economy - Emirates unveils the world’s first electric Premium Economy seat with full-height privacy screen

TTA BULLETIN

Emirates is elevating the award-winning Premium Economy experience even further with the launch of the world's first electrically powered Premium Economy seat, featuring a full-height adjustable privacy screen between every seat. Debuting on newly received Airbus A350 aircraft, the new seat combines industry-leading innovation with elevated comfort, giving customers greater control over their personal space.

Installed in the Emirates A350 Premium Economy cabin in a spacious 2-3-2 configuration with just 28 seats, the new seat represents the airline's latest investment in continuously raising the bar for customer experience. The electric privacy divider extends to the full height of the seat – the first feature of its kind in Premium Economy cabins worldwide. Emirates Premium Economy seats are a comfortable 20” wide, and seat pitch is up to 39” on the A350. Seats also recline into a cradle position without intruding on the row behind, so that customers can comfortably sleep and relax inflight.

How does it work? Customers can effortlessly raise or lower the divider using the seat controls and lock it into position, creating a more private and personal environment for relaxing, dining or working throughout the flight. The new seat marks Emirates' first fully electrically powered Premium Economy seat, where customers can also adjust their preferred seating position at the touch of a button using the integrated Passenger Control Unit, with dedicated settings like lounge mode and meal mode.

Ergonomic comforts in Premium Economy Comfort has been further enhanced with the introduction of Emirates' widely acclaimed U-Dream headrest by Safran Seats. Crafted in leather, the redesigned headrest provides exceptional neck and head support, allowing passengers to adjust the wings into multiple positions for personalised comfort. A manually deployable leather footrest offers additional relaxation and reduces leg fatigue.

Always-on power for customer devices Wireless charging is also being introduced to Premium Economy for the first time, allowing customers to conveniently power compatible devices throughout the flight. Every seat also includes USB-C charging and a practical tray table with an integrated phone holder, transforming personal devices into a convenient second screen during meals or entertainment.

High-definition inflight entertainment and new aircraft cameras Customers can also enjoy Emirates' award-winning ice inflight entertainment on a 13.3-inch 4K HDR touchscreen, delivering stunning picture quality with ultra-responsive navigation. On newly delivered Airbus A350 aircraft, passengers will also enjoy enhanced aircraft camera



views, with new left and right exterior perspectives joining the existing forward and downward cameras to provide an even more immersive inflight experience.

Generous meals and beverages in Premium Economy The new seat builds on Emirates' award-winning Premium Economy experience, where every element has been carefully designed to deliver an elevated journey from take-off to landing. Akin to a Business Class experience, customers enjoy gourmet, regionally inspired menus prepared by Emirates' chefs and served on Royal Doulton fine china with linen napkins and stainless-steel Robert Welch cutlery.

Thoughtful amenity kits with complimentary skincare On long-haul flights, Premium Economy customers also receive exclusive reusable amenity kits designed in partnership with United for Wildlife. Crafted using bio-based materials including cactus leather alternatives, the collectible bags celebrate endangered wildlife across four natural habitats while introducing premium plant-powered skincare products from Aveda for the first time in Premium Economy. Each kit also includes travel essentials such as socks, eyeshades, earplugs and a dental kit, with sustainable materials incorporated throughout the collection.

Continuing to redefine Premium Economy Since launching Premium Economy in 2022, Emirates has continued to expand the cabin across its growing fleet, with the product now available across all markets which are currently served with A350 aircrafts.

Inspired by the airline's signature Business Class experience, Emirates Premium Economy has set a new benchmark for the category - offering a level of comfort, privacy and refinement that rivals the Business Class cabins of many airlines. The cabin combines spacious seating, generous legroom, refined dining, world-class entertainment to deliver a distinctive travel experience that has earned multiple international awards including ‘Best Premium Economy Class’ at the Business Traveller Middle East Awards 2024 and 2025 and was named ‘Airline with the Best Premium Economy Class’ at the 2025 ULTRAs Awards.

The introduction of the world's first electrically powered Premium Economy seat with a full-height privacy screen marks the latest chapter in Emirates' long history of aviation innovation. From

Jetstar Touches Down in Colombo, Opening Sri Lanka’s First Direct Low-Fares Link to Australia

TTA BULLETIN

New year-round Colombo–Melbourne service adds more than 100,000 seats and connects Sri Lanka to Jetstar’s Australia and New Zealand network



Australian low-fares carrier Jetstar has officially arrived in Sri Lanka, with its inaugural service landing at Bandaranaike International Airport

The launch marks the first direct low-fares connection between Sri Lanka and Australia, closing a long-standing gap in capacity between the two countries. Operating three times a week throughout the year, the route is expected to deliver more than 100,000 seats annually between Colombo and Melbourne.

Victoria is home to Australia’s largest Sri Lankan community, and the new service is expected to be especially popular with those visiting friends and relatives, as well as holidaymakers in both directions.

Beyond Melbourne, passengers can connect through Jetstar’s extensive domestic network to Sydney, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Tasmania, Auckland, Queenstown and more with a single connection.

“We’re so excited to be able to begin operating to Sri Lanka and to give Sri Lankans and Australians a low-cost connection between our two countries,” said Jetstar CEO Stephanie Tully. “We’ve

already seen strong demand for flights, and Victoria is home to Australia’s largest Sri Lankan community, so we’re expecting the route to be popular with holidaymakers and those visiting family and friends. We’re looking forward to becoming a familiar sight at Bandaranaike.”

A boost for Sri Lanka’s tourism sector Hayleys Advantis, Jetstar’s General Sales Agent in Sri Lanka, said the route addresses a long-standing need for direct capacity between the two markets.

“Until now, travelling between Colombo and Australia has meant connecting through a third country at a higher cost. Three weekly widebody services on a year-round schedule change that, with capacity that holds through the off season rather than only at peak,” said Shano Sabar, Deputy Managing Director, Hayleys Advantis.

“For Sri Lanka, it opens a large outbound leisure market at a point when the tourism sector needs consistent inbound capacity. As Jetstar’s General Sales Agent here, our role is to support the route commercially and operationally so that it performs in both directions.”

Three New Airlines Touch Down in Sri Lanka, Connecting the Island to Southeast Asia, Australia and Beyond

TTA BULLETIN

Sri Lanka's skies are busier and better connected than they have been in years. In August 2026, three international carriers have added Colombo to their route maps, opening new gateways between the island and Southeast Asia, Australia and China, and signalling renewed global confidence in Sri Lanka as a destination on the rise.



For the first time, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are linked by direct scheduled flights — and not by one carrier, but two, both taking wing in August 2026.

Low-cost favourite Vietjet now operates four weekly services between Ho Chi Minh City (SGN) and Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), bringing its trademark affordable fares to a city pair that previously required a stopover in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore.

Vietnam's national flag carrier, Vietnam Airlines, launched on the route in the same month, deploying its modern Airbus A321 aircraft on three weekly rotations between Ho Chi Minh City and Colombo. Together, the two carriers give travellers up to seven weekly nonstop options between the countries, a remarkable air bridge that opens Vietnam's dynamic cities, cuisine

and coastline to Sri Lankan travellers, while inviting Vietnamese visitors to discover the island's beaches, wildlife and heritage.

The third arrival is one Australians and Sri Lanka's large Australian diaspora have long been waiting for. Jetstar Airways touched down in Colombo on 25 August with its new nonstop Melbourne–Colombo service, operating three times weekly. It is Australia's only low-fare direct link to Sri Lanka, cutting out the stopover for holidaymakers chasing surf breaks, safaris, tea country and wellness escapes on the island's southern and eastern coasts.

Three new international carriers in a single month is a milestone few destinations can claim and the timing could not be better. Sri Lanka recorded a strong surge in international arrivals at the start of 2026, and these new services add capacity precisely where demand is growing Southeast Asia and Australasia while offering seamless onward connections across each carrier's wider network.

Opening of Clove Beach Wadduwa

Where serenity meets the sea — Serene Pavilions begins a new chapter as CLOVE Beach Wadduwa. Refurbished, rebranded and relaunched by MAC Holdings, this beachfront haven of 12 Balinese-inspired pavilions redefines luxury living, just an hour from Colombo.



SriLankan Airlines Makes ShakthiSAT Mission Possible for Talented Sri Lankan Student

TTA BULLETIN

SriLankan Airlines is making Mission ShakthiSAT possible for Sri Lanka’s Official Student Representative, Seneesa Goonewardena, and ShakthiSAT (Devi) Ambassador for Sri Lanka, Dr. Sulochana Segera, by sponsoring their travel to India to participate in the groundbreaking project that will bring together young girls from 108 countries to collaboratively design and build a satellite for the first time. Empowering young minds to pursue their dreams has long been at the heart of SriLankan Airlines’ corporate social responsibility efforts. The airline has worked with numerous schools over the years, including many in rural communities, helping foster better learning journeys.

Seneesa Goonewardena was selected following a highly competitive national selection process that engaged more than 200 Sri Lankan schoolgirls in specialised STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education programmes designed to introduce them to space technology. The programme was launched in Sri Lanka by Dr. Srimathy Kesan, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Space Kidz India, who is recognised internationally for leading one of the world’s largest educational satellite and rocket programmes.

The next phase of Mission ShakthiSAT will take place from 22 – 31 August 2026 at Gautam Buddha University in India, bringing together student delegates for advanced satellite integration, leadership development, cultural exchange and international STEM programmes, ahead of



the satellite’s targeted launch between September and October 2026.

Deepal Perera, Manager Corporate Communications at SriLankan Airlines, stated, “We are delighted to support Seneesa Goonewardena and Dr. Sulochana Segera on this remarkable journey and to contribute to Sri Lanka’s participation in Mission ShakthiSAT. We hope Seneesa’s achievement will inspire students across the island to believe that with determination and perseverance, they can achieve their goals. We encourage students to make the most of every opportunity to learn, explore their interests, and pursue their ambitions with purpose. As the national carrier, we are proud to support this pioneering mission and to see a young Sri Lankan take their place on an international platform in space exploration.”

Expressing her excitement about the opportunity, Seneesa Goonewardena, said, “Being selected to represent Sri Lanka in the ShakthiSAT space journey is a dream come true, and I feel incredibly proud to carry my country’s name on this international mission. At 18, this experience reminds me that there are no limits to what young girls can achieve when we dare to dream. I am also proud to begin this journey by flying with our national carrier, SriLankan Airlines. I hope my journey will inspire more young Sri Lankan girls to look towards science,

Qatar Airways Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Priority Pass to Offer Beyond Business Members Enhanced Airport Lounge Benefits

TTA BULLETIN

Qatar Airways has entered a Memorandum of Understanding with Priority Pass, the world’s largest independent airport lounge and travel experiences programme, to offer enhanced value and rewards to business travellers through its Beyond Business corporate travel programme.

Beyond Business members will soon be able to redeem Qrewards for access to more than 1,900 airport lounges worldwide through the Priority Pass network. This offering significantly broadens the range of travel benefits available for corporate travellers flying across Qatar Airways’ global network of more than 160 destinations.

This collaboration reflects growing demand from corporate travellers for greater flexibility, choice and premium experiences throughout their journey.

Designed to support companies of all sizes, the partnership reinforces a shared commitment to delivering customer-focused travel solutions that provide a greater flexibility, convenience, and value. Beyond Business members will be able to access premium airport experiences while benefitting from greater opportunities to earn and redeem

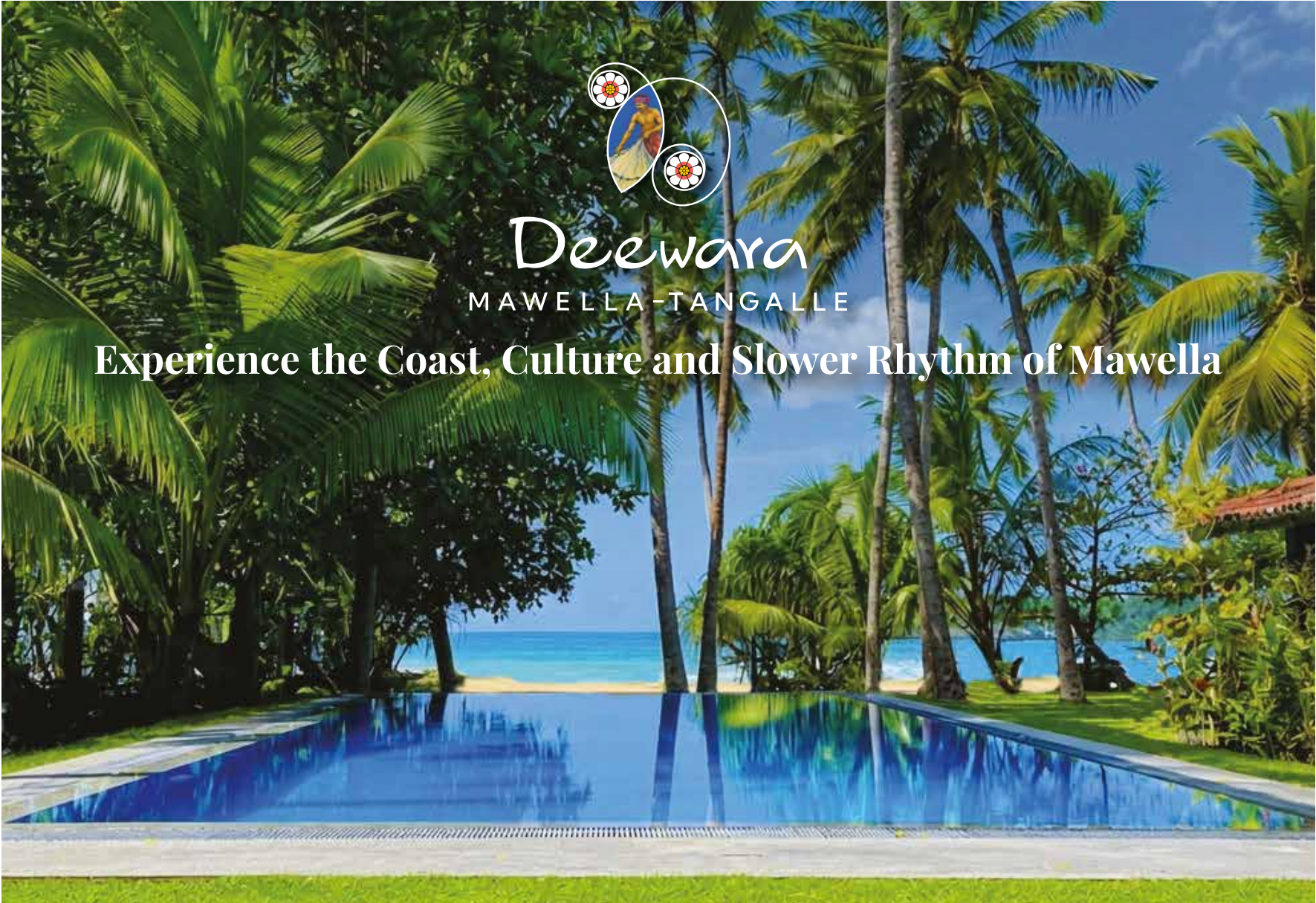


Qrewards.

In addition, the agreement supports more efficient corporate travel management, helping organisations maximise the value of their business travel budgets while delivering a consistent, high-quality travel experience for employees worldwide.

Together, Qatar Airways and Priority Pass are expanding the value of the Beyond Business programme, giving corporate travellers access to a broader range of premium travel experiences while helping organisations maximise the return on business travel.

Beyond Business is Qatar Airways’ dedicated corporate travel programme, helping organisations maximise value through tailored savings, flexible travel solutions, and the ability to earn Qrewards from business travel. Rewards can be redeemed for flights, upgrades, Privilege Club tier offers, and priority baggage, helping businesses get more from every journey.



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