

Lanka

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Sri Lanka Travel News

# TOURGUIDE

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**David Rasiah**  
Coordinator of Trek4 Ceylon  
Charity Cycle Ride.

**Matthew Duckworth**  
Australian High Commissioner  
in Sri Lanka



## Sri Lanka Gears Up for Global Cycling Adventure

Trek4 Ceylon over 50 riders from 11 countries took part in the trek including United Kingdom, Australia and United States of America.

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## EDITORIAL

# Cricket Matches Boosting Sports Tourism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has witnessed an exhilarating wave of cricket matches that not only captivate local fans but also attract sports tourists from around the globe. The nation's picturesque stadiums, combined with its rich cultural heritage, have made it a prime destination for cricket enthusiasts.

The recent Test match series has seen packed crowds, with thousands of international visitors flying in to catch the action. The thrill of live cricket, coupled with the vibrant atmosphere, has created an unforgettable experience for fans.

Sports tourism is proving to be a significant economic driver for Sri Lanka. Hotels and restaurants in the vicinity of the stadiums reported a surge in bookings and foot traffic, with many establishments offering special cricket-themed promotions. Local tour operators have also introduced packages that include match tickets, guided tours of historical sites, and culinary experiences, further enhancing the travel experience for cricket fans.

The international exposure from these matches has not only promoted cricket but also showcased Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage. Tourists are not just visiting for the matches; they are exploring ancient temples, pristine beaches, and engaging with the local communities. This cultural exchange is fostering a deeper appreciation for both sports and the unique traditions of Sri Lanka.

With upcoming international fixtures, Sri Lanka is poised to further establish itself as a premier sports tourism destination. The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority is actively promoting the country through campaigns that highlight both cricketing events and the myriad of experiences available to visitors.

As the cricket season continues, the collaboration between sports authorities and tourism boards is essential to ensure that the momentum builds, creating lasting benefits for the local economy and reinforcing Sri Lanka's position on the global sports stage.

Cricket matches in Sri Lanka are more than just sporting events; they are a catalyst for cultural exchange and economic growth. With strategic promotion and continued investment in infrastructure, Sri Lanka is on track to become a leading hub for sports tourism in the region.

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We support Sri Lanka Tourism to achieve Sustainable Tourism, join hands with Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

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of Sri Lanka

TOURISM JOURNALISTS'  ALLIANCE

# AUSTRALIA DAY 2026: A CELEBRATION OF FRIENDSHIP IN SRI LANKA

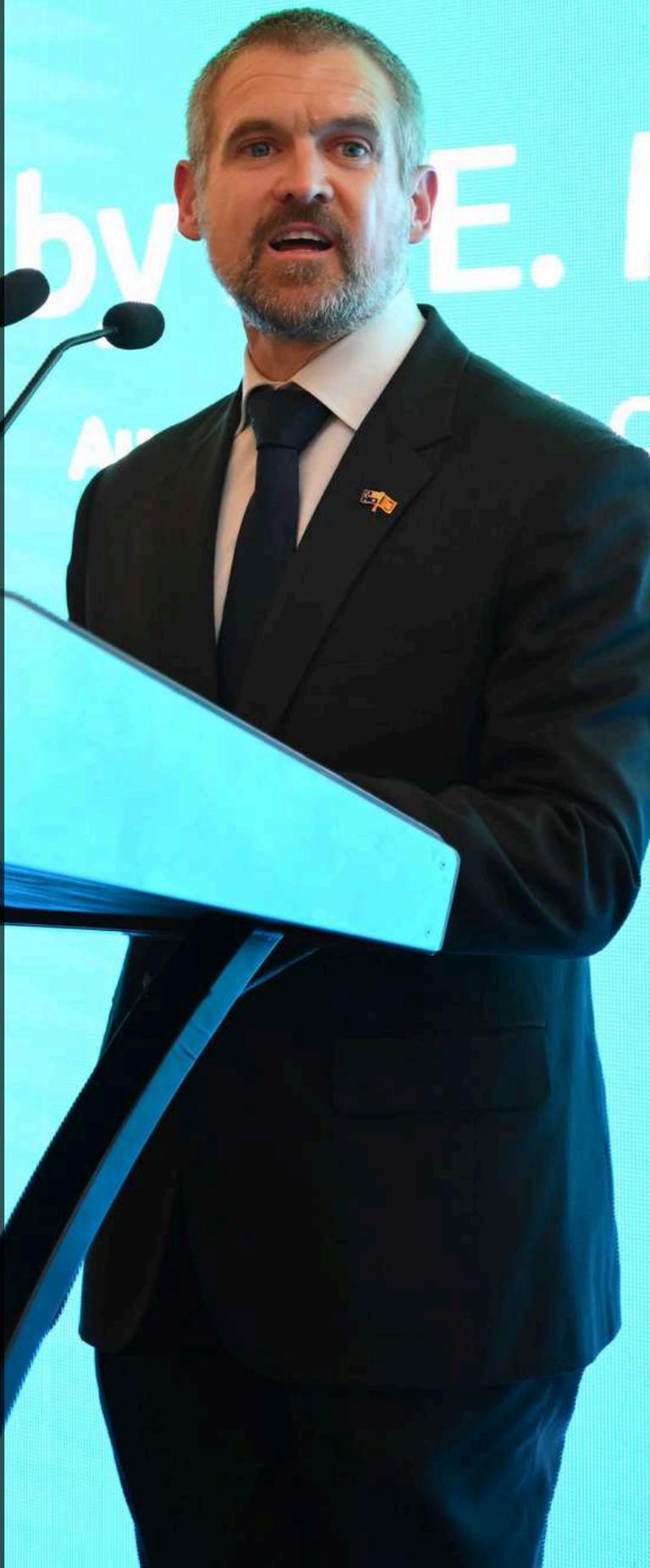
Colombo, Sri Lanka – The Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka celebrated Australia Day 2026 with a vibrant reception, gathering dignitaries and community leaders to honor the strong ties between Australia and Sri Lanka. Hosted by Australian High Commissioner Matthew Duckworth, the event featured Housing, Construction and Water Supply Minister Dr. Susil Ranasinghe as the Chief Guest, alongside representatives from the government, civil society, and the business sectors of both nations.

In his address, High Commissioner Duckworth emphasized the significance of the day, stating, "Australia Day is a moment for reflection as well as celebration. It reminds us of the diversity of our own nation and the values we share with partners like Sri Lanka: respect, resilience, and a commitment to a peaceful and inclusive future."

He further mentioned, "Our nations are intertwined not only through history and geography but also through the bonds of our people, families, and communities that strengthen our relationship every day. In 2026, we are excited to expand our cooperation and foster an Indo-Pacific region where everyone can thrive."

The celebrations highlighted Australia's rich heritage, spanning over 65,000 years, showcasing its evolution into a modern global nation. The event reinforced Australia's lasting friendship with Sri Lanka, emphasizing collaborative efforts in education, trade, and regional security.

Guests enjoyed exquisite Australian products available through local vendors, while cultural displays and discussions underscored the innovation and collaboration that bind the two nations.



Reflecting on the challenges faced in 2025, he mentioned the devastating Cyclone Ditwah that claimed 600 lives in Sri Lanka and Australia's solidarity with the nation during its recovery. He also referenced the National Day of Mourning in Australia on January 22, honoring victims of the Bondi terrorist attack, and thanked Sri Lankans for their support during this difficult time.

Duckworth expressed a deep understanding between the two countries, built on historical connections of migration, trade, and maritime links. He emphasized that the connection is not only geographic but also rooted in shared interests in regional stewardship, trade security, and protection of marine resources.

In his remarks about trade, he noted, "Trade is a central pillar of our bilateral ties. Our two-way goods and services trade, worth more than AUD 2 billion annually, illustrates our connection. This trade supports jobs, livelihoods, and prosperity, linking Sri Lankans and Australians in shared opportunities."

He highlighted the establishment of a new factory by Australian brand Kookai in Hanwella, which will create 3,000 jobs for Sri Lankans, and spoke about Australia's role as a major supplier of lentils to Sri Lanka, contributing to local economies.

Education was also highlighted as a critical bridge between the nations, with over 20,000 Sri Lankan students currently studying in Australia's world-class institutions. Duckworth shared stories of scholarship recipients, showcasing the positive impact of educational programs like the Australia Awards.

Concluding his address, he stated, "Australia and Sri Lanka's friendship is grounded in our shared geography in the Indian Ocean, made meaningful by the bridges we build through our people, trade, education, development, and cultural connections. It is a partnership based on trust and shared aspirations, strong in both joyful and testing times. We look forward with confidence to another year of working together for the benefit of all Australians and Sri Lankans."

CLAUDE GUNASEKERA



**"Australia Day is a moment for reflection as well as celebration. It reminds us of the diversity of our own nation and the values we share with partners like Sri Lanka: respect, resilience, and a commitment to a peaceful and inclusive future."**

# HS

## HiddenSecrets Dambulla

### Discover the Perfect Harmony of Comfort and Culture at **Our Eco-Friendly Hotel!**

Immerse yourself in a sanctuary where modern luxury meets the rich heritage of Dambulla. Our innovative design seamlessly blends with the breathtaking natural landscapes, making us the go-to sustainable destination for travelers from near and far. Indulge in our chicly designed rooms, each equipped with state-of-the-art amenities and stunning views that will leave you in awe.



# THE TRUE ESSENCE OF THAI CUISINE AT THAI RASA



THAI MAMA

Nestled within the prestigious NH Collection Colombo, Thai Rasa is rapidly establishing itself as the signature destination for authentic Thai cuisine, catering to the refined palates of both Sri Lankans and international visitors.

With a deep understanding of the diverse taste preferences of its clientele, Thai Rasa offers an unforgettable dining experience that promises to thrill the senses. Showcasing the refined essence of Thai cuisine, Thai Rasa presents an authentic and contemporary dining experience inspired by the true flavours of Thailand. The restaurant's specially crafted Thai menu celebrates authenticity while embracing modern presentation, ensuring that each dish resonates with the rich culinary heritage of Thailand.

Curated by the renowned Thai Mama, the menu highlights a variety of dishes prepared using traditional recipes, aromatic herbs, and time-honoured techniques that preserve the true essence of Thai cooking. From the classic Pad Thai and the restaurant's signature Tom Yum soup to the vibrant Yum Mamuang (raw mango salad with cashew and peanut), each dish reflects the balance of flavours that define Thai cuisine—bold yet refined, vibrant yet harmonious.

Moreover, recognizing the diverse dietary preferences, the menu features a range of thoughtfully prepared vegetarian options, ensuring that there is something delightful for every palate. Thai Rasa stands out not just for its exceptional food but also for its inviting atmosphere, making it ideal for business lunches, elegant private dining, or relaxed evening meals. The restaurant provides a sophisticated culinary journey in a setting designed for comfort and

ease, where attentive service enhances the overall experience. Opening Hours: Lunch: 12.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. (daily) Dinner: 7.00 p.m. – 11.00 p.m. (daily) With its dedication to authenticity and a specially curated Thai menu, Thai Rasa has quickly become a refined dining destination in Colombo, where tradition is honoured and contemporary dining comes together seamlessly. Guests can indulge in a culinary adventure that not only satisfies their taste buds but also tells a story of Thailand's rich culinary heritage. NH Collection Hotels & Resorts, a premium hospitality brand with over 100 properties across Europe and the Americas, is committed to offering worldly travellers extraordinary stays that evoke unique feelings. The brand perfectly combines comfort, innovation, intuitive service, an elegant atmosphere, and surprising flavours, all while being embedded in the local identity. As part of the Minor Hotels brand, NH Collection recognizes its guests through one unified loyalty programme, Minor DISCOVERY, part of GHA DISCOVERY.

Ashanthi Perera



# Sri Lanka Gears Up for Global Cycling Adventure



## Trek4 Ceylone Cycle Ride Kicks Off to Jaffna from Colombo

CLAUDE GUNASEKERA

The vibrant island of Sri Lanka is set to welcome cycling enthusiasts from around the globe with the much-anticipated Trek4 Ceylone Cycle Ride, an event that promises adventure, breathtaking views, and a celebration of local culture.

Trek4 Ceylon officially announced its annual tour of Sri Lanka at a press conference held at Cinnamon Grand Colombo, unveiling the 2026 five day charity ride dedicated to restoring St. Luke's Methodist Mission Hospital in Puttur. The trek began from Cinnamon Grand Colombo yesterday (10<sup>th</sup>) and will end in Jaffna on 14<sup>th</sup> February covering over 560 kilometers across Sri Lanka. The ride will cover some of the most picturesque routes across the island, from the stunning beaches up to Jaffna. Over 50 riders from 11 countries take part in the trek including United Kingdom, Australia and United States of America.



Andrew Patrick, British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka expressed strong support for the Trek4 initiative. He stated, "This cycle trek not only promotes cycling and sustainable tourism but also emphasizes our mission to help local communities thrive. By participating in this event, cyclists will contribute directly to the local economy and foster community development. It's a fantastic opportunity to explore the beauty of Sri Lanka while making a positive impact."

Speaking at the gathering Australian High Commissioner Matthew Duckworth said "Cycling in Australia is a deeply ingrained cultural phenomenon, with Australians being world-renowned for their participation in both competitive road cycling and extensive off-road trekking. It was an honor to attend the send-off gathering for the Trek4 cycle ride in Sri Lanka at Westminster House. This initiative not only promotes fitness and camaraderie but also strengthens the bonds between our nations. I am excited to see the positive impact it will have on both participants and the communities they engage with along the way."

"Trek4 Cycle Ride aims to promote cycling as not only a sport but also as a sustainable tourism activity in a way to explore the diverse landscapes and rich heritage of Sri Lanka. The event encourages participants to experience the beauty of the countryside while

engaging with local communities, highlighting the importance of eco-tourism in preserving the rich biodiversity of the region. The Cycle Ride promises an unforgettable adventure that combines physical challenge with cultural exploration. As participants pedal through the stunning landscapes of Sri Lanka, they will not only be creating lasting memories but also contributing to the sustainable development of the communities they pass through" said David Rasiah Sri Lanka Coordinator of Trek4 Ceylon Charity Cycle Ride.





# SHANGRI-LA COLOMBO APPOINTS

## Andreas Streiber as General Manager

Shangri-La Colombo announced the appointment of Andreas Streiber as General Manager, effective immediately. A seasoned leader in the hospitality industry, Andreas brings with him decades of international experience and a distinguished track record in upscale hotel management. His expertise is expected to elevate guest and colleague engagement while ensuring operational excellence and sustainable financial performance. In his most recent role, Andreas served as General Manager at Shangri-La Bengaluru, India.

Over his impressive 25-year career with the Shangri-La Group, he has held various senior leadership positions across both China and India. His contributions have been instrumental in driving brand growth, fostering service innovation, and achieving outstanding performance metrics. Andreas's extensive experience is further complemented by his tenure at other prestigious hospitality brands, including Hyatt Hotels and Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts.

His comprehensive skill set spans hotel operations, food and beverage management, sales and marketing, financial strategy, and talent development. Renowned for his strategic leadership and strong interpersonal skills, Andreas is dedicated to delivering exceptional service and creating memorable experiences. As the newly appointed General Manager, Andreas will oversee the strategic direction and daily operations of Shangri-La Colombo.

He aims to continue enhancing the hotel's reputation as one of the city's premier urban destinations. Addressing his new position, he expressed enthusiasm about joining the team: "I am delighted to take on this role at Shangri-La Colombo and to work alongside a passionate team committed to heartfelt hospitality. Colombo is a vibrant destination, and I look forward to building on the hotel's strong foundations while creating meaningful experiences for our guests and colleagues alike." With Andreas at the helm, Shangri-La Colombo is poised for continued success, promising an unwavering commitment to excellence and a focus on providing unparalleled guest experiences in the heart of Colombo.

SHAMRI NAVEED





## ANUSHA MAUREEN

The much-anticipated Hidden Secrets Hotel officially opened its doors last weekend and is poised to become a favorite among travelers seeking an unforgettable experience in Dambulla and accommodations will be opened for guests from February 01.

"At Hidden Secrets Hotel, we are proud to redefine luxury by embracing the true essence of sustainable tourism. Our property is intricately linked with the village community, allowing our guests to immerse themselves in an authentic village atmosphere while enjoying modern comforts. We believe in creating meaningful experiences that not only enrich our visitors but also empower local artisans and foster environmental stewardship by harmonizing luxury with sustainability" said Nishansala Malwenna Director/CEO.

She also invite guests to connect with the heart of Sri Lanka, creating lasting memories in a setting that respects both nature and culture. "We are dedicated to fostering sustainable tourism that enhances local communities and contribute to the region's economy, ensuring that our rich heritage is preserved for future generations to enjoy"

"The hotel aims to blend modern comfort with the rich cultural heritage of the region, making it a prime sustainable eco-friendly destination for both local and international travelers. The property boasts an innovative design that harmonizes with the natural surroundings, featuring eco-friendly materials and landscapes that reflect the beauty of Dambulla. Guests can enjoy chicly designed rooms each equipped with modern amenities, breathtaking views. It offers a diverse culinary experience" said Thushara Kodithuwakku, Group General Manager Hidden Secrets Private Limited. "Savor the world on your plate while celebrating local flavors—where every bite is a journey from our hometown to the globe!" he added. Kodithuwakku further said the restaurant offers an authentic culinary experience where the rich flavors of local cuisine beautifully intertwine with international dishes, creating a delightful fusion that takes your taste buds on a global adventure, emphasizing organic and locally sourced ingredients.



A state-of-the-art spa and wellness center will provide guests with rejuvenating treatments, yoga sessions, and fitness classes, ensuring a holistic experience. Hidden Secrets Hotel is designed to cater to a range of travelers, including: Guests interested in sustainable travel practices and environmentally friendly accommodations, Visitors eager to explore the rich history and cultural offerings of the Cultural Triangle.

Dambulla, includes nearby attractions like Dambulla Cave Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site featuring stunning rock caves filled with ancient Buddha statues and exquisite murals. Golden Temple of Dambulla, known for its impressive golden statue of Buddha, this temple complex offers a glimpse into Sri Lanka's spiritual heritage.

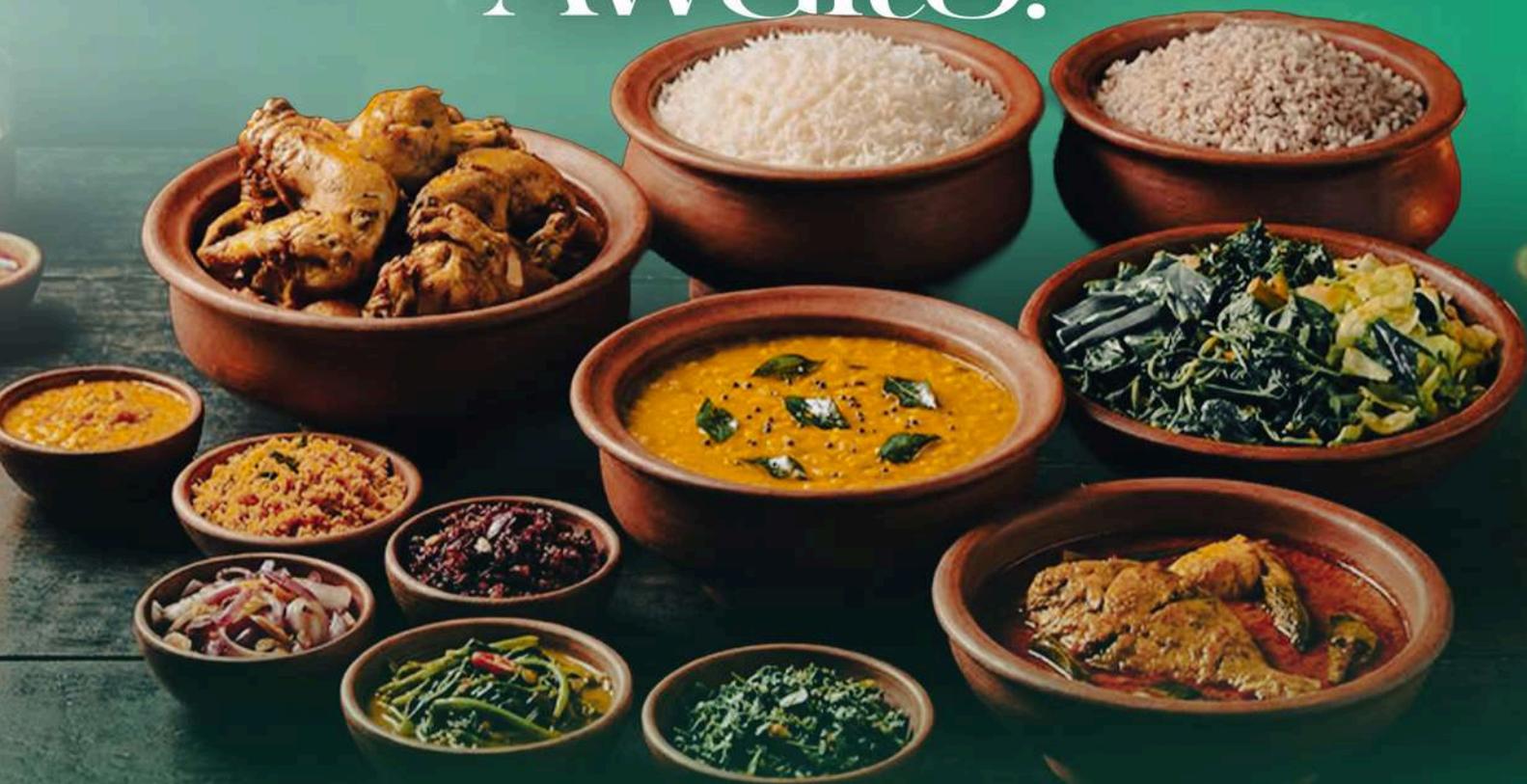
Sigiriya Rock Fortress, a remarkable ancient fortress with stunning views, intricate frescoes, and rich history, just a short drive from Dambulla.

Pidurangala Rock, a hike to this rock offers breathtaking views of Sigiriya and the surrounding landscape, ideal for adventure seekers. Minneriya National Park, famous for its large elephant gatherings, this national park is perfect for wildlife enthusiasts and safari lovers. Kandalama Lake, a serene spot for bird watching and enjoying the tranquil scenery, perfect for a relaxing day out. Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium a modern cricket stadium that hosts local and international matches, adding a sporty vibe to your visit. Herbal Garden explore the local flora at a nearby herbal garden showcasing traditional Sri Lankan medicinal plants. These attractions offer a wonderful mix of culture, history, and nature, making Dambulla a fantastic destination for tourists!





# Culinary Adventure Awaits!



Join us on a gastronomic journey where every meal is a celebration of local flavors and global influences. "Savor the world on your plate while experiencing the essence of our hometown!"

Our restaurant offers an authentic culinary experience that beautifully intertwines rich local cuisine with international dishes, all crafted with organic and locally sourced ingredients. Prepare your taste buds for an unforgettable fusion that takes you on a global adventure.

# SRI LANKA SEES IMPRESSIVE RISE IN TOURIST ARRIVALS

Sri Lanka welcomed a total of 277,327 tourists in January, representing a remarkable 9.7% increase compared to the same month in 2025. This surge in tourist arrivals, as reported by the Department of Immigration & Emigration, underscores the resilience and attractiveness of the island nation as a premier travel destination.

The significant influx of visitors can be attributed to robust growth from key source markets. The leading countries contributing to this tourism boom includes; India, United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, China.

The growth in arrivals from these key markets has propelled the sector forward, encouraging investments in hospitality, infrastructure, and tourism services.

These markets have consistently shown a strong interest in Sri Lanka, drawn by its rich cultural heritage, pristine beaches, and diverse wildlife.

The increase in tourist arrivals is not just a number; it signifies a positive trend for the local economy. The tourism industry plays a vital role in Sri Lanka's economy, contributing significantly to employment and foreign exchange.

As the tourism sector continues to recover and expand, stakeholders remain optimistic about ongoing growth throughout 2026. With various initiatives aimed at enhancing tourist experiences and promoting sustainable tourism practices, Sri Lanka is poised to solidify its position as a leading travel destination in South Asia.

In conclusion, January 2026 marks a promising start for Sri Lanka's tourism industry, reflecting a renewed confidence among international travelers. As the year unfolds, the industry will undoubtedly continue to thrive, supported by the vibrant cultures and breathtaking landscapes that Sri Lanka offers.

Dulanjala Hettiarachchi  
Sri Lanka Tourism

## WELCOME TO SRI LANKA





# Ironman Colombo 70.3: A Thrilling Showcase of Endurance and Community Spirit

The anticipation is palpable as athletes and fans gear up for the highly anticipated Ironman Colombo 70.3, set to take place from February 19–22, at the Port City Colombo. Organized by Serendib Multisport, this prestigious triathlon promises to be a spectacular event that will showcase top-tier athleticism and endurance.

In a thrilling development, several elite triathletes have confirmed their participation in the highly anticipated Ironman Colombo 70.3, elevating the competitive atmosphere of the event. As they prepare to tackle the challenging course, spectators can expect to witness remarkable performances that push the boundaries of human endurance.

Yasas Hewage, a key figure in organizing the event, expressed his excitement, stating, "The Ironman Colombo 70.3 is a celebration of athleticism and resilience. We are thrilled to see elite athletes coming together to compete in what promises to be an unforgettable experience for both participants and spectators."

He said the Ironman Colombo 70.3 will feature not only the main triathlon event but also associated activities such as the Kaya Colombo and Ironkids Colombo,

ensuring that the excitement extends to participants of all ages. "These events aim to inspire young athletes and promote a healthy, active lifestyle among the youth"

Yasas further highlighted that "Ironman event has received significant support from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, along with Sri Lanka Tourism, underscoring the importance of sports and tourism development in Sri Lanka. The collaboration with government entities reflects a shared vision of fostering a vibrant sports tourism culture in the country".

Shangri-La Colombo is thrilled to announce its partnership with the prestigious Ironman Colombo 70.3 as the official hotel partner for this exciting event. General Manager Andreas Steiber expressed immense pride in this collaboration, emphasizing the hotel's dedication to supporting sports and tourism in Colombo.

"We are honored to associate ourselves with Ironman Colombo 70.3, a world-class event that showcases the spirit of endurance and athleticism. It is a pleasure for us to take part in this event as the hotel partner," stated Steiber. "Our involvement reflects our commitment to not only providing exceptional hospitality but also



contributing to the development of Colombo as a premier destination for entertainment and sports tourism."

Shangri-La Colombo recognizes the importance of such events in promoting a vibrant community and attracting visitors from around the globe. The hotel is dedicated to enhancing the experience of athletes and spectators alike, ensuring that everyone feels welcomed and valued during their stay.

Steiber further noted, "We are highly supportive of the government's efforts in making Colombo a hub for entertainment and sports tourism. By collaborating with events like Ironman Colombo 70.3, we aim to elevate the profile of our beautiful city on the international stage."



# Thema opens Spice Ceylon Museum and Authentic Sri Lankan Restaurant in Matale

A new culinary and cultural landmark emerged in the heart of Matale with the grand opening of the Spice Ceylon Museum and Authentic Sri Lankan Restaurant, housed in the beautifully restored Lekam Walawwa. This innovative venture by Thema Collection promises to offer both locals and tourists an immersive experience into Sri Lankan heritage, cuisine, and the rich history of spice cultivation in the region.

The Lekam Walawwa, a historical mansion that dates back to the colonial era, has been transformed into an exquisite space that reflects the fusion of tradition and modernity. Visitors can explore the museum, which showcases the significance of spices in Sri Lankan culture, from their historical trade routes to their culinary uses. The exhibits include rare artifacts, interactive displays, and educational panels that bring to life the story of Sri Lanka's spice industry.

Chandra Wickramasinghe, the visionary behind this project, expressed his enthusiasm at the opening ceremony, stating, "We aim to create a unique dining and cultural experience that honors our rich heritage while providing a platform for sustainable tourism. The Spice Ceylon Museum is not just a restaurant; it is a celebration of Sri Lankan identity and the pivotal role spices have played in our history."

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

The restaurant offers an authentic Sri Lankan dining experience, featuring a menu crafted by renowned chefs who specialize in traditional recipes that have been passed down through generations.



**Chandra Wickramasinghe**  
Chairman, Thema Collection

Guests can indulge in a variety of dishes made with locally sourced spices, ensuring that each meal is a true representation of Sri Lankan flavors. Specialties include aromatic curries, mouth-watering rice dishes, and a selection of delectable desserts that highlight the country's culinary diversity.

In addition to its culinary offerings, the Spice Ceylon Museum, allow visitors to engage with the local community and learn about spice cultivation and cooking techniques firsthand. This initiative not only enhances the visitor experience but also supports local farmers and artisans, promoting sustainable practices in the region.

The opening of the Spice Ceylon Museum and Authentic Sri Lankan Restaurant is expected to significantly boost tourism in Matale, drawing both domestic and international visitors eager to experience the charm of Sri Lankan culture. With its rich history, stunning architecture, and commitment to authenticity, this new venture by Thema Collection is set to become a must-visit destination for anyone exploring the wonders of Sri Lanka.



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**“At Thema Collection, we continuously strive to introduce new and meaningful concepts to Sri Lanka’s tourism landscape.” - Chandra Wickramasinghe**



# SLAITO Presents Sri Lanka's Leading Travel & Tourism Expo: Sancharaka Udawa 2026

***The grand 13th edition of Sancharaka Udawa, Sri Lanka's foremost Travel & Tourism Fair, is scheduled for May 15th & 16th, 2026, at the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Memorial Exhibition Centre (SBMEC).***

Sancharaka Udawa, organized by the Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO) in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) as the main event partner, was officially announced by Nishad Wijayathunga - Chairman - Sancharaka Udawa Organizing Committee 2026, under the guidance of Mr. Buddhika Hewawasam, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) & Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA).

This premier exhibition provides an exclusive platform for both B2B and B2C sectors, fostering engagement between industry stakeholders and pertinent Government bodies. For further information and booth reservations, visit [www.sancharakaudawa.com](http://www.sancharakaudawa.com).

Scheduled from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm on May 15th & 16th, 2026, Sancharaka Udawa anticipates over 250 exhibitors. The event will accommodate businesses of all sizes within the tourism sector, with this year's edition extending to outbound tourism stakeholders such as travel agents. The exhibition will conclude with a celebratory gathering, offering networking opportunities for both newcomers and veterans in the industry, alongside an award ceremony honoring the Best Stall Creations.

The primary aim of the exhibition is to establish a networking platform for small and medium-sized service providers within the industry, facilitating connections with tour operators and facilitating their integration into the broader tourism landscape. The anticipated outcome includes a significant surge in bookings for regional small-scale tourism service providers.

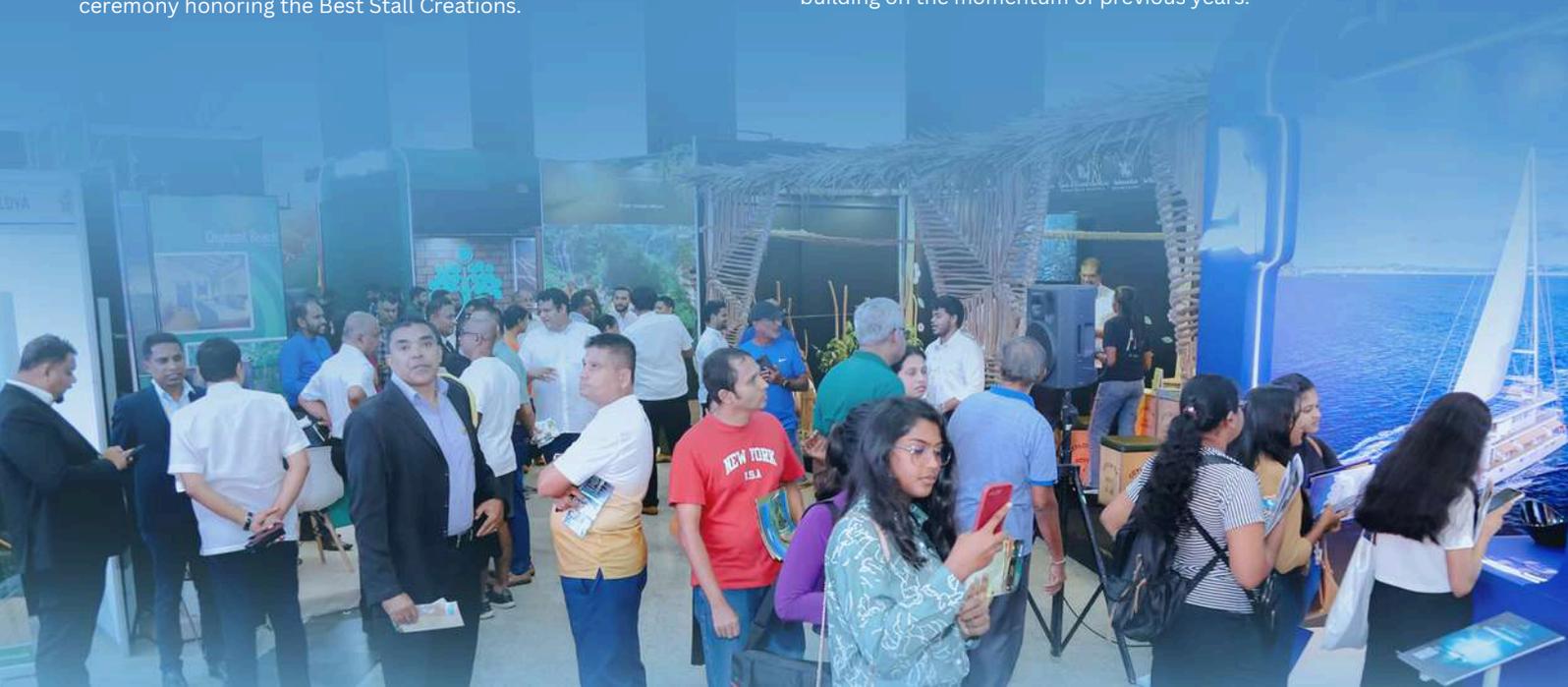
Moreover, exhibitors stand to gain numerous benefits, including enhanced brand visibility across Sri Lanka's tourism marketing platforms, reaffirming Sri Lanka Tourism's commitment to industry capacity building and infrastructure enhancement.

To foster stronger ties between industry players and governmental bodies, tourism-related government departments will be provided complimentary stalls. Additionally, several universities, including Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM), University of Uva Wellassa, University of Rajarata, University of Sabaragamuwa, University of Colombo, NSBM Green University, University College of Jaffna and University of the Visuals & Performing Arts have joined as knowledge partners for the event, further strengthening the forum's focus on youth participation and academic engagement.

The upcoming event will feature engaging sessions aimed at both trade visitors and the public, ensuring maximum value.

A robust marketing campaign is underway to ensure the success of Sancharaka Udawa 2026, with event management entrusted by SLAITO to CDC Events & Travels Pvt. Ltd. together with Aitken Spence Conventions & Exhibitions.

With the burgeoning significance of the tourism and hospitality sector, this year's event is poised to attract even more sponsors, building on the momentum of previous years.



# Hospitality Leader Kamal Munasinghe Appointed General Manager of Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams

CLAUDE GUNASEKERA

Senior hospitality specialist Kamal Munasinghe has been appointed as General Manager for Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams, effective 15 February 2026. Alongside his new post, Munasinghe will continue to serve as Senior Vice President – Colombo Hotels at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts.

In his expanded role, Munasinghe will steer the strategic growth and daily operations of Cinnamon Life, South Asia's first fully integrated resort, as the landmark property enters a new era of development. His mandate includes strengthening Colombo's appeal as a global destination for high-end hospitality, entertainment, and business experiences.

With more than 30 years of experience across international and local markets, Munasinghe has built an illustrious career with prestigious hospitality brands including Marriott, Hyatt, and Mövenpick. Prior to this appointment, he served as Chief Operating Officer of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, where he was instrumental in driving operational excellence and enhancing guest satisfaction across the group's 17 hotels and resorts in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

A long-time member of the Cinnamon leadership team, Munasinghe has previously served as Area Vice President – Colombo and General Manager of Cinnamon Grand Colombo, where he played a key role in elevating the city's luxury hotel landscape. Before rejoining Cinnamon, he was General Manager at Alila Bangsar Kuala Lumpur, part of the Hyatt Hotels Corporation.

Having gained extensive international exposure in Switzerland, Malaysia, and Vietnam, Munasinghe brings a global perspective complemented by deep local insight. A graduate of Schiller International University, Switzerland, he is widely recognised for his innovative leadership style, agility, and focus on strategic execution – attributes that will guide Cinnamon Life through its next phase of growth.

Munasinghe's appointment arrives at a crucial juncture for Sri Lanka's tourism industry, with Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams emerging as a defining development in the nation's hospitality landscape. Representing Sri Lanka's largest private sector investment, the property stands as a beacon of integrated luxury – blending upscale accommodation, entertainment, fine dining, retail, and art under one ambitious concept.

Featuring 687 rooms and suites, five grand ballrooms, a wide array of restaurants, an exclusive retail mall, and a curated collection of over 1,000 artworks by Sri Lankan artists, Cinnamon Life is set to further enhance Colombo's profile as a dynamic center for tourism, business, and creativity.

Guided by Munasinghe's proven expertise, Cinnamon Life will continue to strengthen its position as a transformative force in the region – redefining the hospitality experience while reinforcing Colombo's standing as a world-class urban destination.



# SOHO HOSPITALITY CHARTS FIRST EXPANSION INTO SOUTH ASIA WITH CHARCOAL'S COLOMBO DEBUT

Bangkok-based international hospitality group selects Sri Lanka for its game-changing dining brand Charcoal Tandoor Fire Grill

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

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

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

identity—bold yet calibrated, immersive yet refined.

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

The decision to select Sri Lanka as Charcoal's first entry to South Asia reflects a deliberate and data-driven strategy. Colombo's evolving consumer sophistication, renewed investor confidence, and growing relevance as a regional tourism and lifestyle hub were key considerations in the expansion decision. As a city increasingly positioned at the crossroads of South Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, Colombo presents a natural extension of Charcoal's Spice Route narrative—both culturally and commercially.





**Rohit Sachdev**  
CEO and Founder of Soho Hospitality

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

Charcoal's reputation has been reinforced by international recognition, including features in Wallpaper\* and The Boston Globe, as well as an Asia Pacific Property Award for leisure interiors in Thailand. These accolades reflect the brand's ability to combine culinary authenticity with thoughtful design and experiential depth—qualities that have become hallmarks of Soho Hospitality's portfolio.

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

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



# REMAULD MACK APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING AT RADISSON BLU HOTEL GALADARI COLOMBO



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

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

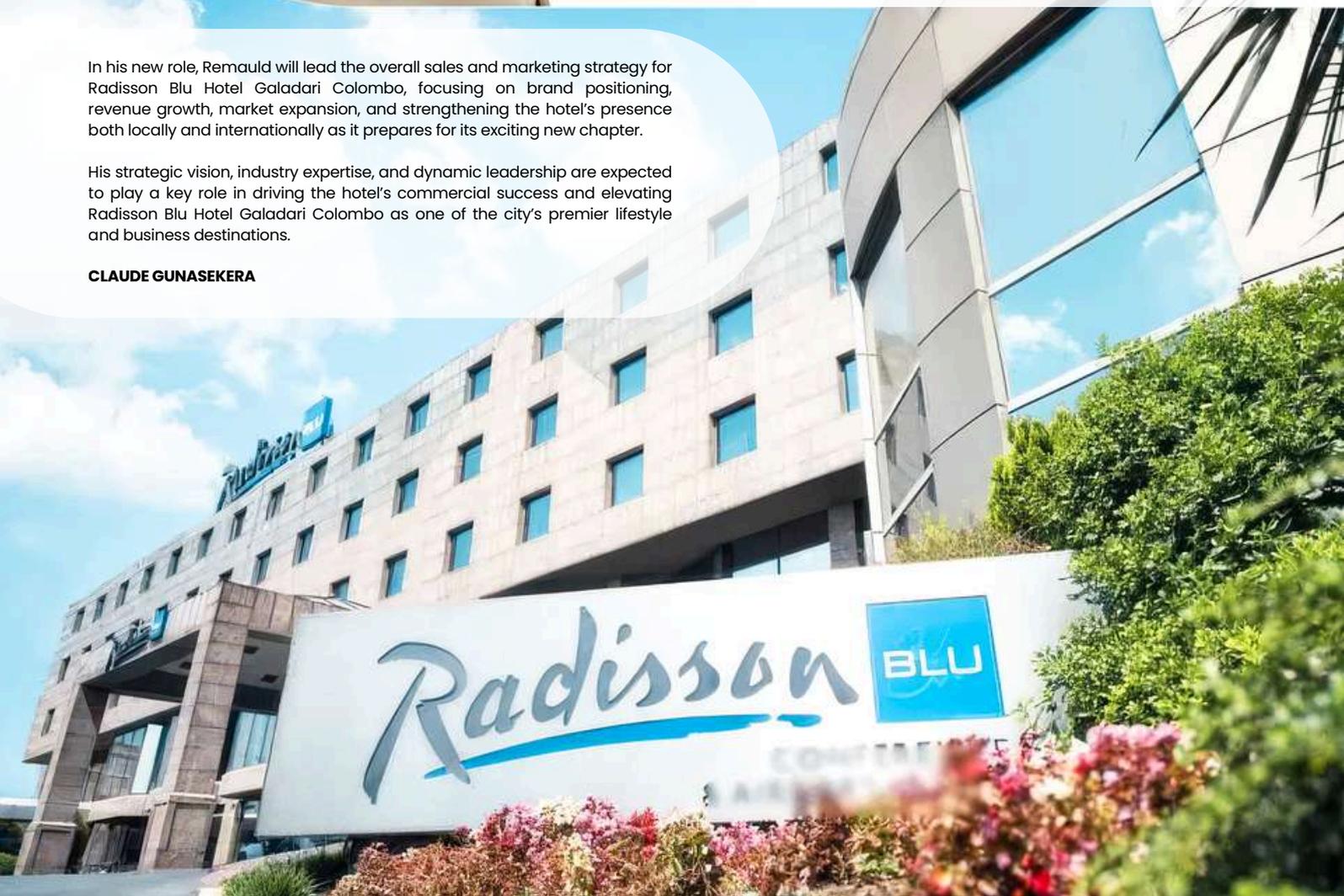
Prior to joining Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo, he held several senior leadership roles including Head of Sales & Marketing at Mackinnons American Express Travels, Director of Sales & Marketing at Mount Lavinia Hotel Group, Head of Sales & Marketing at Sunshine Travels & Tours, and Cluster Sales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

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

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

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

**CLAUDE GUNASEKERA**



Middle Eastern  
FOOD FESTIVALsavoring the spirit of  
ramadan at hilton colombo

The UAE's Ramadan Crescent Moon Sighting Committee has confirmed that the first day of Ramadan 2026 in the Emirates will be Wednesday, February 18, after sighting the new crescent moon.

Following the sighting of the crescent by the moon-sighting committee on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia has announced that the first day of fasting will be Wednesday, February 18. During the month, which lasts 29 or 30 days.

A Middle Eastern Flair - 'Iftar Delight' a sumptuous Iftar was launched yesterday at the prestigious Colombo Hilton yesterday attended by an esteemed gathering of dignitaries and media personalities, including Badli Hisham Adam High Commissioner of Malaysia. The event showcased a rich and elaborate Iftar dinner, featuring a delightful

variety of Middle Eastern food and beverages that delighted the Tsenses and celebrated the cultural heritage.

The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the lavish buffet, which showcased a delightful array of traditional Middle Eastern dishes. Diners were treated to an impressive selection.

Iftar is the meal that Muslims consume to break their fast during the holy month of Ramadan. It is typically enjoyed at sunset, marking the end of daily fasting from dawn until dusk. Iftar meals can vary widely in culture and cuisine, featuring a variety of dishes, drinks, and desserts that reflect local traditions. It's a time for families and communities to come together, share meals, and celebrate the spirit of generosity and fellowship.

**CLAUDE GUNASEKERA**



**Mrs. Ines Eissa**

**Adel Ibrahim**  
Ambassador of the Arab Republic of  
Egypt to Sri Lanka and the Maldives

**Badli Hisham Adam**  
High Commissioner of Malaysia

**Manesh Fernando**  
General Manager of Hilton Colombo and  
Area General Manager Hilton Sri Lanka

# A Symphony of Flavors: CULINARY ARTISTRY AT NUWA COLOMBO

## ANUSHA MAUREEN

Nuwa Hotel situated within the iconic City of Dreams Colombo, hosted an exceptional evening event with a Gourmet Pairing Showcase on the Valentine's Day that captivated attendees and showcased the artistry of Gourmet selection, pairing and presentation.

The event brought together connoisseurs for an intimate exploration of how aged malts interact with artisanal dairy. The focus of the night was the intricate science of flavor profiles, where the smoky and oaky notes of world-renowned single malts were meticulously matched with a curated selection of premium cheeses.

The hotel's General Manager, Micheal Habashi expressed his excitement about the evening, stating, "It was a pleasure to see so many people come together to appreciate the nuances of gourmet pairings.

Habashi added "We strive to not only highlight the products but also to emphasize responsible consumption and the good practices surrounding food and beverage appreciation."

"Gourmet pairing refers to the art and science of matching food and beverages in a way that enhances the flavors and overall dining experience. This practice involves a deep understanding of the characteristics of both the food and the beverage to create a harmonious balance" said Angad Singh Gandhi, Luxury Beverage Consultant of Delhi, India. Guests were guided with the aging process of distilled beverages and he highlighted the texture of the cheese and the aromatic complexity of the malts. The event served as an educational master-class in sensory appreciation conducted by Gandhi.



Angad Singh  
Gandhi

He explained that each food and drink has its own unique flavor profile, which includes various taste elements such as sweetness, bitterness, acidity, and umami.

"Gourmet pairing aims to complement or contrast these flavors effectively. The texture of food and drink plays a vital role in gourmet pairing".

Gandhi also invited diners to explore new tastes and enjoy the culinary arts to their fullest.

"In recent years, the liquor drinking culture in the world has undergone a remarkable transformation. As more people embrace a refined approach to alcohol consumption, the trend is shifting from merely 'drinking to drinking better'.

Gandhi indicated that 'Gone are the days of simply consuming alcohol', today enthusiasts seek sophistication and flavor in their drinks. He also highlighted that the rise of craft cocktails and premium spirits reflects this change.

"This cultural shift is evident in pubs at high end sector particularly tourists hotels, focusing on providing consumers with memorable experiences" said Gandhi. Gandhi is a Sales & Marketing Manager with 11+ years of experience and a creative thinker with a knack for experiential marketing.

According to Kamal Munasinghe, COO, Cinnamon Hotels & Resort and GM Cinnamon Life

"This evolution in drinking culture signifies a broader societal movement towards enjoying life's finer offerings. People are no longer just looking for a drink; they are seeking an experience that tantalizes their taste buds and elevates social interactions."

Head of On Premise Sales Rockland Distilleries Dilhan Fernando hopes to continue such experiences in hospitality on premise. "We are committed to providing our customers with memorable experiences that celebrate culinary excellence with perfect pairing" he said.

The Nuwa Hotel provided a sophisticated backdrop, emphasizing its position as a premier destination for high-end gastronomic experiences in the heart of the city. The event held in collaboration with Rockland Distilleries (Pvt) Ltd.

Chamika Karunaratne, Head of Marketing and Thakshila Galappaththy Hotel Manager, of Nuwa Colombo also attended the event.



# CINNAMON BENTOTA LAUNCHES A UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INITIATIVE



Adding a culinary dimension to this narrative, the resort introduces "Ambula", an experiential dining concept that draws inspiration from traditional Sri Lankan village cuisine. Nestled within a traditional mud house, Ambula invites guests to not only savor delectable flavors but also immerse themselves in the rich cultural heritage and sustainable practices that define the region.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony on Sunday Johan Aschan, Area Vice President of Sri Lanka Resorts for Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and the General Manager of the premier Cinnamon Bentota Beach - Signature Selection, a seasoned hospitality professional with expertise in luxury resorts, focusing on enhancing sustainability, community empowerment, and guest experiences said "Addarahena is an innovative in-house mass in-vessel composting system that converts garden waste into nutrient-rich organic compost. Through the Addarahena Farm-to-Fork Project and Ambula, sets a new benchmark for responsible hospitality. This initiative weaves together sustainability, storytelling, and immersive dining experiences, leaving a lasting impact on both guests and the local community, while championing the principles of sustainable tourism that resonate beyond the resort itself".

## ANUSHA MAUREEN

Cinnamon Bentota Beach - Signature Selection proudly launched the Addarahena Farm-to-Fork Project yesterday, a remarkable initiative that seamlessly intertwines sustainability, community, and culinary innovation, setting a high standard for sustainable tourism in the region. This project embodies a journey of mindful living, where every step—from soil to table—reflects a deep commitment to environmental stewardship and a connection to local culture.





He said “The Addarahena farm plays a crucial role by producing fresh organic vegetables that supply the resort’s kitchens, ensuring that guests enjoy the true taste of seasonal, locally sourced produce. This farm-to-table approach not only reduces carbon footprints associated with food transportation but also promotes the local economy, aligning perfectly with the principles of sustainable tourism.

The launch of this initiative coincided with the first harvest, where guests actively participated in the experience, witnessing and savoring the joy of farm-fresh food. This engagement creates a tangible link between nature, nourishment, and mindful living, transforming visitors into advocates for sustainability.





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

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

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

Sheldon Hee, Regional Vice President, Asia-Pacific, said, "The CEIV Live Animals certification is not only about compliance, but ensures the safety and welfare of live animals transported by air. This is particularly relevant as this is a market that continues to grow with more than 200,000 live animal shipments globally in 2025. We are pleased to see SriLankan Airlines achieve this important certification and ensure the implementation of the highest standards across the supply chain."

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

SriLankan Cargo remains firmly committed to upholding the highest standards stipulated in the IATA Live Animals Regulations throughout the shipment lifecycle, from acceptance and handling to loading, transportation and final delivery. Working closely with veterinary authorities, ground handlers and cargo partners, the airline ensures every check box relating to welfare and compliance is consistently ticked.



# VALENTINE'S CELEBRATIONS UNFOLDED AT NH COLLECTION COLOMBO

Valentine's celebrations at NH Collection Colombo concluded on a high note, with guests enjoying an evening centred on carefully prepared cuisine, a wide selection of beverages, music, and entertainment in the heart of the city. The atmosphere throughout the hotel was lively and welcoming, creating a setting where people could relax and enjoy the occasion.

The celebration placed strong emphasis on its culinary experiences. At AYU, guests enjoyed a dining experience that was well received for its variety and flavours, while Thai Rasa added a distinctive touch to the evening with its Thai Valentine celebration featuring special dishes curated by Thai Mama. The authentic flavours and thoughtful presentation brought a festive character to the occasion and were widely appreciated by guests.

Adding to the evening, Vistas Rooftop Bar offered a romantic dining experience where carefully crafted dishes were paired with sweeping views of Colombo's skyline. The combination of cuisine and city views added an extra dimension to the celebration and contributed to the overall mood of the evening.

The Valentine's celebrations at NH Collection Colombo were warmly received, with guests enjoying an evening built around good food, beverages, music, and entertainment. The event added to the hotel's growing calendar of social experiences, reinforcing its place as a venue where well-crafted dining and enjoyable occasions come together in the heart of the city.



# “Gone are the Days of Simply Drinking”

Claude Gunasekera with an exclusive interview with International Beverage Legend Angad Singh Gandhi.

In an insightful commentary on the evolving drinking culture, Angad Singh Gandhi, Luxury Beverage Consultant from Delhi, India shared with 'LankaTourguide' Tourism Magazine that spirits connoisseurs seek sophistication and flavor in their drinks.

In recent years, the drinking culture in the world has undergone a remarkable transformation. As more people embrace a refined approach to alcohol consumption, the trend is shifting from merely drinking to drinking better. This cultural shift is evident in the happenings at most high-end pubs and particularly at tourist hotels focusing on providing consumers with memorable experiences. While embracing this new culture, it is essential that all who consume liquor need to consider some limitations regarding alcohol consumption" he said.

As this new drinking culture continues to flourish, it's crucial to strike a balance between enjoyment and responsibility. By prioritizing quality and thoughtful consumption, individuals can enhance their drinking experiences while fostering a healthier attitude towards alcohol in society. The evolution of our drinking habits reflects a growing awareness and appreciation for life's pleasures, encouraging both enjoyment and mindfulness in equal measure.

The rise of craft cocktails and premium spirits reflects this change. Many consumers are now prioritizing quality over quantity, and their palates are becoming more discerning as they explore a wider array of beverages.

With a growing appreciation for unique flavors and experiences, consumers are eager to explore pairings that enhance their drinking moments. Recent events have showcased how best food and mixer pairings for strong beverages, based on industry guidelines. Pairing requires matching the intensity of the drink with rich, bold, or savory flavors to prevent the alcohol from overpowering the gourmet items to create a delightful gastronomic experience.





Pairings by Spirit Type; Whisky/Bourbon: Pair with rich, fatty foods like grilled steak, smoked meats, pork belly, aged hard cheeses, and dark chocolate desserts. Tequila/Mezcal: Pair with spicy, acidic, or fatty foods like tacos, nachos, ceviche, guacamole, mole sauces, and grilled shrimp. Gin: Pair with salty items like oysters, smoked salmon, prawns, soft cheeses. Rum (Dark/Aged): Pair with BBQ dishes, chicken, roasted pork, plantains, or dessert pairings like bread pudding. Vodka: Pairs well with salty or smoky foods like smoked salmon, French fries, and salty nuts. Brandy/Cognac: Pair with rich cheeses, dark chocolate, roasted nuts, and savory pastries.

Classic Mixer Pairings; Whisky with Ginger Ale, Cola, Soda Water, or Fresh Hot Tea. Gin with Tonic Water, Soda Water, or Grapefruit Juice. Tequila: Grapefruit Soda, Lime Juice, or Pineapple Juice. Rum: Ginger Beer, Coke, or Fruit Juices like Pineapple or Mango.

Avoid adding flavoured mixers or only adding Ice to liquor is the best recommendation.

Pair strong, bold cocktails with hearty dishes and high-alcohol drinks often benefit from high-acid foods (lemon, lime) to cut through fat, or salty foods to balance the heat. Pair peaty or smoky spirits with similar flavors, such as grilled or smoked foods.

This trend is not just about individual preferences; but it signifies a broader societal movement towards enjoying life's finer offerings.



Gandhi proposed ten guidelines that could help individuals drink responsibly:

1. Know Your Limits: Understand personal factors like height, weight, and tolerance to determine how much alcohol is appropriate.
2. Set Boundaries: Limit the number of drinks when socializing to avoid excessive consumption.
3. Moderation is Key: Aim for no more than two standard drinks per occasion to maintain a safe and enjoyable experience.
4. Be Aware of Alcohol Content: Different drinks have varying alcohol concentrations; understanding these can help regulate intake.
5. Pair Wisely: Always consider food pairings that complement the drink, enhancing flavors while reducing overall alcohol absorption.
6. Mindful Drinking: Focus on savoring each sip, which encourages slower consumption and a greater appreciation for the drink.
7. Hydration is Crucial: Drink water in between alcoholic beverages to stay hydrated and minimize the effects of alcohol.
8. Avoid Drinking on an Empty Stomach: Eating a substantial meal prior to drinking can mitigate the effects of alcohol.
9. Plan Ahead: If drinking outside the home, arrange for safe transportation to avoid driving under the influence.
10. Educate Yourself: Stay informed about the effects of alcohol and the importance of responsible drinking.



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