

Press Release 3

10th May 2019

So strong and resilient Sri Lanka.

As Sri Lanka returns to normalcy after the tragic events of Easter Sunday that interrupted a decade of peace and prosperity in the island, Sri Lanka Tourism is illustrating what Sri Lankans are best at - moving forward. With authorities' strategic operations carried out to contain the situation and the arrest of those responsible Sri Lanka is rapidly returning to normalcy and the industry is readying itself for what was to have been a record mid-season in what would have been a record year of growth for the tourism industry.

"Tourism is a strategically critical sector in Sri Lanka's ever-expanding economy. It's now the third highest revenue generator for the country and it is estimated that 500,000 individuals depend on it. From the fishermen, to the farmer to the tuk tuk driver to the king coconut seller on the roadside, they all benefit from the tourism industry. On the flip side, thousands of people are directly employed in the hospitality sector. Therefore, many Sri Lankans from various walks of life are stakeholders of the tourism industry. We have seen darker days but have always bounced back, better and stronger. Our resilience as a nation is unrivalled. This is our strength and we will show the world that Sri Lanka will once again be the top destination to visit," explains a confident Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs, Hon. John Amaratunga.

Security first.

Ensuring security and safety for everyone in Sri Lanka has been the single focus of the government of Sri Lanka. In the immediate wake of the attack the full force of Sri Lanka's highly experienced Tri forces were deployed across the island and it is confirmed that all the suspects of this small but deadly cell have been identified and apprehended proving

again that the advanced capabilities of our military power must never be underestimated. This was an important message and Sri Lanka Tourism was committed to ensuring that the entire Tourism community both at home and across the world were able to hear it. To this end a joint industry press conference was organized on the 6th of May and a full security update was provided by a military spokesperson along with updates by Kishu Gomes Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism and the Presidents of the key industry bodies THASL and SLAITO.

Sri Lanka Tourism chairman led the panel and briefed the different stakeholders on the following;

1. Sri Lanka Tourism's Emergency response protocol deployment
2. Information access & dissemination
3. New safety and security procedures that focus on training people, defining procedure and installing advanced security equipment
4. Crisis management process & procurement of services
5. Destination recovery acceleration through focussed and strategic marketing
6. Aggressive promotion strategies
7. Discussions on concessions and relief packages for the industry

As all Sri Lankans are reassured by the expert skills of our military forces in keeping the island safe from any future threat, so will Sri Lanka Tourism re-inspire confidence in what is Lonely Planet's destination of the year 2019. 'This is a journey governed by focus, clarity, maturity, experience and expertise' asserts Gomes

Ensuring convenience and comfort amidst new security procedures

The Airport has been a primary focus in the government's efforts to ensure complete control of the security of the island and we are grateful to Sri Lankans and visitors alike for understanding that these unprecedented incidents have resulted in some inconveniences at the Airport especially with respect to pick up and drop off. Sri Lanka Tourism is working with the Air Force and Airport authorities to minimize the inconvenience caused by these improved security procedures. In order to provide a more user-friendly and efficient experience during arrivals, the coach park at the Bandaranayke International Airport (BIA)

is now open to permit holders, with 24hr prior confirmation to airport authorities. The terminal car park is now opened to park and pick passengers, with only the limitation of restrictions to the arrival lobby. A Shuttle service is still in operation to ensure convenient travel to the remote car park and a new road has been especially constructed to pick passengers at the arrival terminal. These improvements will reflect well given that Airport arrivals data indicates that we are welcoming an average of 1500-1800 daily arrivals since April 21st.

Onward and upward.

Echoing again the promise it made nearly three weeks ago, Sri Lanka Tourism will not be beaten, and we will not let down the millions of Sri Lankans that depend on the industry for their daily living. This message was delivered loud and clear at ATM 2 weeks ago and reaffirmed at 5th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism in San Sebastian soon after.

We welcomed the President of the UFTAA's (United Federation of Travel Agents Association) and his arrival has inspired renewed confidence in the destination. This visit comes in relation to the organization's planned mid-year meeting set to take place in Sri Lanka this year, where representatives from over 25 countries will attend.

In 2019, 34 road shows have been planned out of which 4 already completed. Sri Lanka Tourism will as custodians of the industry move forward with the other 30 as planned. In addition to the road shows, Sri Lanka Tourism will lead the destination marketing efforts in 62 travel fairs around the world. It has already successfully positioned Sri Lanka as the world's premier holiday destination in 38 fairs to date and will continue to do so with renewed vigor at the balance 24 fairs scheduled in the months ahead.

While international exposure for Sri Lanka is vital it is just one strategic pillar in the destination marketing strategy. Sponsorships and pre-planned event schedules will also move forward; as such the World Surfing League will still be held in June this year, bringing in a myriad of professional surfers from all around the world. The Amateur Golf

World Cup, set for the latter half of 2019, set to bring in participants mainly from Europe and Asia, expects to impact over 1 million golf-lovers around the world and establish Sri Lanka as a golfing destination. West Asia Baseball cup 2019 is another sporting activity year-marked for July 2019. Over 600 foreign participants and their families are expected predominantly from South Asia. Moreover, given Sri Lanka's importance as a cultural destination, the Kandy Esala Perehera planned for August is expected to bring in travelers who seek out the historic and cultural aspects of the island's travel experience. The 71st AIESCC International congress is also to be held in Colombo from 5th – 13th July where a large number of members are expected to arrive in Sri Lanka.

We have developed a number of ways in which to help the global tourism community, industry stakeholders and global travelers alike understand that the vast majority of the island was unaffected by the attacks of Easter Sunday and that while everyone is deeply shocked by the senseless tragedy and reassured by the heightened security presence, life on the island is as it always has been; warm, generous and deeply rooted in compassion. One such initiative was a special program aimed at foreign travel journalists; five journalists from reputable media houses in Ukraine, Malaysia and Italy visited Kandy, Colombo and the Southern Part of Sri Lanka. Similarly, Sri Lanka Tourism has moved rapidly to ensure that Sri Lanka's ground situation is readily accessible to those planning their itinerary, as current portals may not always carry specific information that tourists may be looking for, given the surplus of incident-specific news in the last few days. In this regard, apart from the planned portal, Sri Lanka Tourism is currently hosting a number of international travel bloggers in the island with reach in over 15 countries around the globe & a combined following of over 1.5 million. The bloggers who plan to do a one-week stay in Sri Lanka, are currently traveling through the island's most popular destinations to give their audiences a real-time look at what traveling through the greater part of Sri Lanka looks like right now. 'There's so much of Sri Lanka to see, experience, and enjoy. It's unfortunate if that gets overshadowed by these isolated events says blogger Jerre Stead from USA. This being a sentiment that is voiced by a number of tourists still flying in to the island. The bloggers toured Jaffna, Dambulla, Kandy, and Nuwara Eliya before arriving in Negombo and itinerary specially designed by Sri Lanka Tourism aimed to better educate and promote lesser known attractions throughout the island. the social media

platforms Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Pinterest and Instagram have been used by both groups extensively and in a extremely positive light to share what they experienced during their time in Sri Lanka.

In addition to bloggers coming into the island, Sri Lanka is set to participate at the international blogger conference in Italy in early June. The platform will provide maximum exposure to illustrate the Island's experience and plans, as well as garner support to strengthen the island's travel campaign for the coming months. It is expected that over 400 bloggers predominantly from the UK and other European countries would attend.

Global expertise and strategic recovery plans

Sri Lanka Tourism is focused on laying the right ground work for rapid recovery and is working with a team of senior international experts in destination reputation management & crisis recovery, this team have successfully worked to mitigate risk for Egypt Tourism, Lufthansa Germanwings among other famous brands. The phased out strategic plan includes 1) Channel management & rapid rebuttal 2) Scenario mapping & planning 3) Customized recovery strategies for key source markets based on global consumer research

‘We have already taken all possible steps to demonstrate that Sri Lanka's response to the incident is effective and credible. We are now aggressively planning to reassure the world of our levels of preparedness and setting the groundwork for future reputational recovery work by reassuring tourists that all appropriate steps are being taken by the Sri Lankan Government to prevent any future incidents and ensure the continued safety of tourists within the country. As we do this we are developing a holistic reputation recovery plan based on data and research for each of the key markets, this will be followed by an intensive global marketing campaign to further accelerate the recovery process’ said Kishu Gomes Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism

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