

Press Release 4

27th May 2019

Sri Lanka Tourism; The Steady Road to Recovery

Sri Lanka Tourism, custodians of Sri Lanka's most important economic driver, outlines progress on the vital recovery of destination Sri Lanka.

"It's just over a month since that dark Easter Sunday. The progress that has been achieved in the recovery process has been remarkable. Our security forces have been able to completely neutralize the terrorist threat. The healing process has also achieved much ground and things are fast returning to normal. I can assure tourists that we have taken all precautions to ensure their safety in all parts of the country. Hotels and airlines have come out with never to be repeated offers, so now is the time to visit the country. I must state that none of our tourist sites were affected and remain ready to welcome visitors. Sri Lanka is very much open for business," said Minister of Tourism Development, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs, John Amaratunga.

Security & Safety restored

The security threat is completely contained and there is no further threat of coordinated attacks - Sri Lanka has returned to normalcy; this has been the clear message from our Military leaders and Sri Lankans across the island have responded with confidence by sending children back to school and reporting to work in full force. All schools are now open with improved security protocols firmly in place. As pointed out by several people on social media the surest evidence of this normalcy being the familiar rush hour traffic building in Colombo and other major cities.

Sri Lanka Army commander Mahesh Senanayake in an exclusive interview with a leading local newspaper reaffirmed "Army has taken all necessary measures to ensure the safety of students and the public. Over 85 percent of the terror network has already been arrested and the intelligence mechanism has been strengthened"

Website – Dedicated single source portal

Establishing a credible line of intelligence and providing clear security updates have been a priority for Sri Lanka Tourism. Regular media releases, industry briefs, foreign mission briefs and new and improved Sri Lanka Tourism's website have all been geared towards establishing a dedicated single source portal of reliable and timely information on the security situation in the island. The website could be visited via www.srilanka.travel/tourism-updates

Travel Advisories - China relaxes

The Hon. Minister of Tourism together with representatives from the Military and Sri Lanka Tourism have visited foreign missions with a full debrief of the current security situation, reviewed intelligence processes, and reaffirmed our levels of preparedness all towards establishing a clear line of confidence that will help governments across the world relax the travel advisories currently in place.

China has lifted the travel ban which was imposed on 15th May 2019 to “be cautious” when travelling to Sri Lanka. This will be valid until 31st May 2019.

Other foreign governments have changed their travel advisories to “avoid non-essential travel” and advised their citizens to exercise caution when traveling to Sri Lanka. At present, the government is working closely with foreign missions to further relax travel advisories.

Signs of recovery

Tourist arrivals have been steadily rising after Easter Sunday Incident on 21/04 thus during the period of 21st April 2019 to 12th May 2019, total tourist arrivals were 30,203. However, by the end of 21st May 2019, total tourist arrivals were reported as 40,527, marking an increase of 10,324 more tourists to the country within a period of 9 days. This is encouraging for steady growth on tourism that have shown strong resilience and it is expected that this will further grow.

The top source market for tourists to the country for the period of 21st April 2019 to 21st May 2019 was India with total number of tourist arrivals of 9,238 followed by UK 3,297 , Australia 2,484 , Germany 2,168 , France 2,015 , China 1,762 , Russia 1,568 , Canada 1,506 , United States 1,326 , Japan 1,125 , Netherlands 1,017. In consideration of age distribution, 58.3% were males and 41.7% were females for the said period. These signs highlight recovery of country’s tourism industry.

Global exposure and Local Events – forging ahead!

Sri Lanka Tourism’s resolve in pushing forward through the earliest days of this crisis continues to demonstrate results. Messages of strength and confidence echoing across media and tourism events in the Middle East, Far East & Europe helps to bolster stakeholder confidence supported by strong global events in Sri Lanka like the 14th Lanka Challenge that had participants from 53 countries ride tuk tuks across the island. This event which started on the 20th of April continued uninterrupted till the 27th demonstrating that the incidents were contained to very specific locations. Further media and blogger tours and events during the latter part of April and May reinforced that life in all other parts of the island were normal.

Five major events scheduled to take place in the next few months include;

- The World Surf League 3000, scheduled through June-July with 700 registered competitors
- West Asia Baseball Cup 2019, scheduled in July with 275 registered competitors
- 71st AIESEC International Congress, scheduled in July with 600 delegates
- Colombo International Logistic Conference, scheduled in August with 100 participants
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) scheduled in September (date to be confirmed) with 3500 delegates. This is the biggest wildlife event in the world.

More events are being considered and Sri Lanka Tourism will work closely with the industry to bring international events to Sri Lanka during this year.

Sri Lanka tourism will champion the industry in all the calendared international travel fairs and road shows over the course of the next few months.

**SLTPB PLANNED TOURISM PROMOTIONAL EVENTS OVERSEAS
MAY – DECEMBER 2019**

Country	Travel Advisory as at 15th May 2019	Planned Activities 2019
India	Avoid non-essential travel	July , TTF, Kolkata, 12 th – 14 th July, TTF Hyderabad Travel Fair, August , Road shows in New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai & Mumbai, 22, 23, 26 & 27 August September , TTF Ahmadabad, 30 th August – 1 st Sep
China	lifted the travel ban, advise citizens to be cautious when traveling to Sri Lanka	June BITE - 18 - 20 June Press Conference 17 th June November ILTM, Shanghai, 30 Oct' - 01st Nov' CITE & road shows, Chengdu, 28 - 30 Nov'
UK	Avoid non-essential travel	November - WTM , 4 - 6 November
Germany	Not issued	June - Carnival of Cultures in Berlin, 07 - 10 June September - Road shows in Berlin, Leipzig, Essen, Stuttgart, 02 - 05 September
Australia	Avoid non-essential travel	November - Road shows in Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, 25 - 27 Nov' & 02 Dec' Consumer promotion in Sydney, Melbourne, 23 - 24 Nov'
France	Avoid non-essential travel	October - ITFM , Paris, 1 - 4 Oct' December - ILTM, Cannes, 2- 5 Dec'
USA	Avoid non-essential travel	Not planned any activities for the rest of the year
Russia	Advised to refrain from travelling to Sri Lanka	September - Leisure, Moscow, 10 - 12 Sept'
Netherlands	Avoid non-essential travel	Not planned any events for the rest of the year
Canada	Avoid non-essential travel	October - ITT, Montreal, 25 - 27 Oct'
Japan	Avoid non-essential and non-urgent	October - JATA Fair, 24 - 27 Oct'

	travel	Road shows in Nagoya and Osaka, 29, 30 October
Italy	Avoid non-essential travel	October - road show, Florence- 07 Oct' TTG Incontri, Rimini, 09 - 11 Oct' Consumer promotion, Milan, 12 - 13 Oct' International Travel Bloggers and Social Media Influencers Event
Ukraine	Not issued	Not planned any activity for the rest of the year
Switzerland	-	November - Swiss International Holiday Exhibition, 1 - 4 Nov'
Spain	-	Not planned any activity for the rest of the year
Sweden	Avoid non-essential travel	September - Road show in Stockholm
Malaysia	-	July - Road shows in Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, 29 - 31 July August - Shopping Mall promotion - 02 - 04 August
Poland	Avoid non-essential travel	May - Consumer promotion , 31 May - 07 June October - World Travel Show, 18 - 20 Oct' November - TT Warsaw, 21 - 23 November
Singapore	Avoid non-essential travel	May - Road show in Singapore, 28 May
Denmark	Avoid non-essential travel	September - Road show in Denmark, 17 Sept'
South Korea	Avoid non-essential travel	June - Seoul International Tourism Industry Fair, 06 - 09 June
Austria	Avoid non-essential travel	September - Road shows in Vienna, Salzburg, Linz, 09 - 11 Sept'
Philippines	No travel advisory	
Czech Republic	Avoid non-essential travel	June - Road Show in Prague, 04 June
Belgium	Avoid non-essential travel	
Norway	-	September - Road show in Norway, 18 September
Thailand	-	No activities planned for the rest of the year
Finland	-	No activities planned for the rest of the year

Slovakia	Avoid non-essential travel	
Romania	-	June - Road show in Bratislava, 05 June
Estonia	-	No activities planned for the rest of the year
UAE	Avoid non-essential travel	November , Taste of Abu Dhabi, 8 - 10 November

Briefing global media and trade in key markets

In addition to the general tourism activities carried out by Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, there will be briefing sessions arranged in key global markets. A delegation from Sri Lanka will address the global media, trade and other key global tourism stakeholders in the key markets on the restored safety and security of the country.

Local Tourism Promotions

Sri Lanka Tourism has initiated a program to work with local TV channels to promote local tourism/destinations among general public. As an initial step in this direction, Sri Lanka Tourism will be collaborating with Independent Television Network (ITN) on a weekly program for a period of six months to highlight tourist attractions throughout the country and hotels within close proximity to the attractions. The hotels will be linked up on social media platforms for greater visibility.

Global PR & Advertising Campaign

Sri Lanka Tourism is currently awaiting cabinet decision to activate a short-term PR and Advertising campaign to send a clear message to the international community that Sri Lanka has returned to normalcy.

Leveraging the Power of Social Media

As a part of ongoing efforts to strengthen our digital first marketing strategy Sri Lanka Tourism will be attending a prestigious international travel bloggers and social media influencers' event in June 2019 in Italy. The key purpose here is to network with and invite the most significant UK and European based travel bloggers, content creators and social media influencers to visit Sri Lanka on familiarization tours covering key locations and lesser known attractions within Sri Lanka.

The exponential rise in popularity and success of destinations like Ella, Hirikatiya and attractions like Pidurangala are all directly attributed to its amplification on social media platforms like Instagram. Sri Lanka's new amplifier brand 'So Sri Lanka' was strategically created by the world's leading branding and communications experts JWT & Landor in November last year with the express purpose of enriching engagement & shareability of destination Sri Lanka across the most valuable digital eco systems. The collective digital/PR reach of the highly successful 'Wild Guides' nature film was over 2.5billion with strong engagement across digital platforms in UK, Germany, France, China and India.

Relief Facilities to the Industry

As per Central Bank Circular No. 07 of 2019 issued on 8th May 2019 and Explanatory Note No. 01 of 2019 issued on 16th May 2019, Licensed banks may grant moratorium until 31st March 2020 for performing loans (both capital and interest) till 31st March 2020 in respective of outstanding credit facilities as at 18th April 2019. This applies for individuals and entities who have registered with Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority or any other authority/agency to provide services to tourism on a case-by-case basis.

If the individual or the entity is not registered with Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority as at 18th April 2019, and have at least registered their businesses/services with the local government authorities such as Pradeshiya Sabha, Urban Council or Municipal Council as at 18th April 2019, in order to avail the moratorium, such persons and entities shall now be required to register with Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority.

As per the same circular, individuals and entities who are registered and obtained moratorium are eligible to obtain loans via Enterprise Sri Lanka Loan Scheme (Jaya Isuru) and Sawbagya Loan Scheme of Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

SLTPB has been further advised this facility will be extended for financial institutions as well (Central Bank Circular No 1 of 2019 dated 21st May 2019).

As per the Extraordinary Gazette Notification No 2124/3 dated 21st May 2019 published under section 2A of the Value Added Tax Act, No. 14 of 2002 (VAT Act), VAT rate on the supply of certain services has been reduced to 5% for a period of 1 year commencing from 21st May 2019. The relevant circular for details of the gazette notification which details eligibility criteria and terms of conditions could be obtained by logging into Sri Lanka Inland Revenue website on ird.gov.lk

“The power of Sri Lanka is the power of diversity and tourism is our single most important tool against the ideas that try to scare the world into thinking that ‘different’ is dangerous. One month into the tragic events of Easter Sunday, when we are still heavy with grief Sri Lanka Tourism is steadfast in promoting tourism with renewed vigor as a part of its larger goal of promoting peace and harmony in Sri Lanka and around the world” said Kishu Gomes as he outlines Sri Lanka Tourism’s strategy at this critical juncture.

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