

**Title:** Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Grabs Silver for Best in Responsible Tourism at WTM!

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## **Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts Grabs Silver for Best in Responsible Tourism at WTM!**

*The only Sri Lankan Brand to be Awarded at the International Travel & Tourism Awards*

11<sup>th</sup> September 2018 - Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts wins the Silver Award for Best in Responsible Tourism at the International Travel and Tourism Awards held for the first time by the World Travel Market in London last Tuesday. Cinnamon was the only Sri Lankan brand to be recognised at the Award ceremony, competing with tourism destinations such as Kerala, to win this prestigious award. The award was won for the Cinnamon Elephant Project carried out together with Nature Trails supported by the John Keells Foundation as an initiative for elephant conservation in Sri Lanka.

Dileep Mudadeniya, Vice President John Keells Group, Head of Brand and Marketing, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts and CEO Cinnamon Life Mall stated "We give importance to projects of this nature as it addresses timely causes in the country and showcases Sri Lanka not only a destination with diverse offerings but is also socially responsible. The brand Cinnamon has continuously paved the way for such unique initiatives to create awareness in this regard and is widely known for identifying sustainability need gaps by consistently measuring and monitoring material, economic, social and environment impacts to ensure its contribution to society."

Cinnamon was honoured in front of an audience of more than 500 senior industry professionals at the gala event near WTM London's ExCeL venue. Judged by an independent panel of experts from around the world, the 14 awards showed the best in class of the global travel and tourism industry.

Nick Pilbeam, Divisional Director at WTM London's parent company, Reed Exhibitions led the judging panel alongside UNWTO's Director of Communications, Marcelo Risi. ITTA's Co-Founder Paul Nelson said; "We have been delighted with the response from the industry to the ITTAs and blown away by both the quantity and the qualities of the entries. All the finalists represent what these awards are about, celebrating the success of national, regional and city tourist boards and recognising outstanding private sector companies and individuals."

The International Travel & Tourism Awards, presented by WTM London, celebrate the success of national, regional and city tourist boards and recognizes outstanding private sector companies and individuals. They consistently looks for examples to inspire and educate others about the contribution which tourism can make to the development of a place since it contributes in a

remarkable variety of ways such as through employment and local economic development, providing additional spending power to sustain more restaurants, cafes and entertainment, sustaining cultural and natural heritage, contributing to sense of place and local pride, and encouraging young people to stay in their community and thrive. The 13 awards showcase the best in class of the global travel & tourism industry, in front of an audience of 500 senior industry professionals.

Commenting on this achievement, Carmeline Jayasuriya, Head of CSR and Assistant Vice President of the John Keells Group stated, "We are delighted to have partnered Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts on this long-term initiative to study the elephant gathering, behavioural and dispersion patterns in Anuradhapura District. We supported this initiative from its inception as it aligns to our Environment pillar in terms of promoting environmental conservation and sustainability and is also expected to recommend solutions to the human-elephant conflict which has become a pervasive issue in Sri Lanka. We applaud the initiative and commitment of the Nature Trails team in identifying and acting on critical environmental issues of the country in furtherance of responsible tourism."

Considered to be among the top 10 greatest natural animal spectacles in the world, the Elephant Gathering is the largest wild gathering of the Asian elephant, occurring annually within the safety of the protected Minneriya and Kaudulla National Parks in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. The Cinnamon Elephant Project a collaborative effort initiated in 2014, between Nature Trails and the Centre for Conservation and Research with the full funding support from John Keells Foundation. This integrates both long-term conservation efforts of the endangered Asian elephant, and inclusive ecotourism practices in Sri Lanka through elephant viewing based on this annual elephant gathering.

Under the Project the satellite tracking of two elephant herds from Minneriya and Kaudulla was undertaken through GPS collaring. Data gathered from tracking the collared matriarchs will help understand the exact seasonal movement of the elephant herds, and help tackle the human-elephant conflict through better land and water management recommendations. This also facilitates effective, long-term conservation initiatives for Asian elephants. The team successfully completed the first phase of the project in 2017 where over 70 elephants were identified, named and photo-catalogued. Phase two of the project was activated in early 2018 with the collaring of the matriarchs of two elephant herds with support from the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), which enabled state-of-the-art satellite and GPS tracking of the two herds after the dispersion of the gathering.

"We take great pride in the work that we do to promote responsible tourism in Sri Lanka, and the Cinnamon Elephant Project is one that is extremely significant to us due to the critical nature of this sensitive issue and that this effort will generate valuable information which can be shared encouraging best practices in eco-tourism especially concerning elephants and their habits," stated Chitral Jayatillake, Head of Nature Trails at Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts. "Nature Trails together with Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts is delighted to be recognized for an initiative that has reached the bar set by WTM and the International Travel and Tourism Awards."

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts is a chain of in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, that offers diverse and unique experiences in each of the hotels spread across Sri Lanka and the Maldives islands spanning beaches, jungles and mountains.