

## Sri Lanka Tourism begins destination brand recovery process

The Sri Lanka tourism industry stands united with the rest of the world against terrorism; as we mourn this horrific tragedy, we must move forward with our enduring *Sri Lankan* resilience to restore the world's faith in our beautiful island home and our hospitality which is the heart of the Sri Lankan way of life.

One week on from the deadliest terror attacks perpetrated in the country since the end of the civil war, Sri Lanka Tourism discusses measures taken to ensure the safety and security of tourists and outlines strategic plans to rebuild tourism stakeholder confidence to ensure the vital recovery of the tourism industry that supports one in 10 families in Sri Lanka.

'Sri Lankans are among the most warm and nurturing people on earth, when guests arrive on our shores they become family' said Kishu Gomes, Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism. 'And when family is hurt the entire community comes together to protect, nurture, mourn and grieve and heal together...this is our way and it has been our way from the beginning of time.' He continued 'the promise of Sri Lanka is a promise of hope, of family, of deep awareness, of tolerance, of diversity, of sincere connection to humanity and nature and of generosity; we will live the promise of our motherland and we ask anyone who has ever visited us, relished our food, brewed our teas, cheered our cricket or just marveled at the beauty of a full moon to become ambassadors of kindness and compassion everywhere they go. We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of love, support and solidarity from people everywhere and look forward to welcoming the world back home to Sri Lanka'

Chairman Kishu Gomes explained that it is important to review emergency response protocol in the immediate aftermath of the attacks; Sri Lanka Tourism was focused on organizing our response in emergency care and assistance, providing access to clear and accurate information and working with all national and local law enforcement agencies and foreign missions to ensure the safety and security of tourists.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks we rolled out our emergency response protocol; trained teams were deployed to the affected hotels, all hospitals and the airport to ensure that all tourists directly affected by the attacks received the all the care, attention and assistance they needed.

Tourists already in country and those scheduled to arrive in the hours and days following the attacks were also an immediate priority. In addition to the help desks at hotels, airports and

tourist information centers Sri Lanka Tourism set up an emergency hotline to ensure tourists and their loved ones back home had access to accurate information and the entire suite of emergency services; updated information continues to be issued via local & global media, social media, and foreign missions on a regular basis.

‘Addressing security issues is a prerequisite for the revival of tourism and we continue working closely with all relevant authorities to support all foreign nationals in the country. Sri Lankan police and Tri forces are working tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of all tourists currently in Sri Lanka. This is absolutely our first priority’ said Gomes

### **Custodians of a key industry**

With one in every ten Sri Lankan families depending on tourism for their livelihood both directly and indirectly, Sri Lanka Tourism is focused on ensuring that the right groundwork is laid to drive an effective and efficient recovery for this critical industry.

‘We cannot allow ourselves to become paralyzed by fear, nearly half a million families across the island depend on us for their daily living; the impact on our economy must be mitigated. We are working to regain the confidence of global travelers and operators by demonstrating that Sri Lanka’s response to the incident is effective while reassuring future tourists that all appropriate steps are being taken by the Sri Lanka Government to prevent any future incidents and ensure the continued safety and security tourists within the country’ said Gomes

Several high-level cross industry working sessions that included both the public and private sector stakeholders have been conducted with the objective of outlining the strategic framework of the recovery strategy accompanied by a phased out action plan with the clear objective of minimizing the financial impact of cancellations and to maintain and rebuild the country brand and manage the long term impact of this tragic incident.

A task force is in place and having worked diligently over the course of the last week we are confident that a clear and actionable process is in place, resources allocated and global expertise procured to support the industry in its recovery.

### **Demonstrating resilience**

We are grateful and humbled by the resilience and generosity of all the tourists who have chosen to continue with their holiday in Sri Lanka and we are privileged to continue to welcome hundreds of new tourists every day since the attack. We must ensure wider global tourism communities have renewed confidence in our destination by persevering and so to this end all planned promotion activity will continue to ensure that our critical tourism industry is protected.

Sri Lanka Tourism will continue with its presence ATM in Dubai from 28<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019. The Sri Lanka delegation will begin on day one of the event by observing two minutes silence in honor of the innocent victims and a book of condolence placed at the Sri Lanka pavilion for

visitors to sign and write messages of sympathy to the victims and their families. Our purpose throughout this event is very clear - Sri Lanka will not be beaten by terror. We will take this opportunity to demonstrate to the global media, tour operators, airlines and the world that Sri Lanka is committed to security.

Similarly, Sri Lanka Tourism will address the tourism community at the prestigious 5<sup>th</sup> UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism in San Sebastian, Spain from 1-2<sup>nd</sup> of May, where the focus this year is on job creation and entrepreneurship as a means to advance tourism's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, Sri Lanka Tourism will seek means to create favorable frameworks to stimulate jobs and entrepreneurship along the gastronomy tourism value chain as well as develop knowledge on more relevant skills for gastronomy tourism.

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau will also be present at IMEX in Frankfurt from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May. IMEX is a worldwide Exhibition for Incentive Travel, Meetings and Events, incorporating Meetings made in Germany. The show is patronized by nearly 160 countries representing national and regional tourist offices, major hotel groups, airlines, destination management companies, service providers, trade associations and more. Over 3962 hosted buyers from more than 86 world markets visit IMEX. The MICE sector is a major growth driver for the Sri Lanka market.

The only tourism and travel fair in Sri Lanka, Sancharaka Udawa, will be held on 7 and 8 June. This unique exhibition, now in its ninth edition is open to all businesses within the local tourism ecosystem and is organised by Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO) in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB). The main objective of the exhibition is to create a platform for small and medium service providers in the industry to network and build vital links with tour operators and enter the wider tourism industry.

The 14th edition of The Lanka Challenge which flagged off on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April successfully concluded on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April at Suriya Resort Waikkaka. This event was organized by Large Minority in association with Connaissance de Ceylan and sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism and SriLankan Airlines. This unique rally saw 53 International participants ride in 20 tuk tuks across a 1000km route that track through Sri Lanka. The participants came from Britain, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Singapore, Ireland, Denmark and Switzerland, and give the world a wonderfully immersive experience of our island's natural beauty, authentic charm and welcoming spirit.

### **Media Unit**

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