

An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The top half shows a sandy beach with some buildings and palm trees. The middle section features a curved bay with clear turquoise water and white waves. The bottom half shows a rocky coastline with waves crashing against the shore. The text 'Sri Lanka Tourism' is overlaid in a white, cursive font across the middle, and 'YEAR IN REVIEW: 2020' is in a white, sans-serif font below it.

# Sri Lanka Tourism

YEAR IN REVIEW: 2020

## Year in Review - 2020 for Sri Lanka Tourism

- A year of challenges due to COVID-19 health pandemic that impacted global tourism.
- Despite the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 tourism made a strong come back in December-March 2020.
- Tourist arrivals from Jan-March 2020 was 507,311 in comparison to 2.3 million in 2018 and 1.9 million in 2019.
- Passenger flights and ship arrivals for international guests were stopped from March 2020.

## His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Manifesto 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor' contains ten Key Policies:

- Priority to National Security.
- Friendly, Non-aligned, Foreign Policy.
- An Administration Free from Corruption.
- New Constitution that fulfils the people's wishes.
- Productive Citizenry and a vibrant Human resource.
- People-Centric Economic Development.
- Technology-Based Society.
- Development of Physical Resources.
- Sustainable Environmental Management.
- Disciplined, Law-abiding and value-based society.

## Tourism is stated seventeen times under the ten Key Policies of the Manifesto as follows:

- Identify new attractions of the country for foreign tourists .
- Facilitate to hold business conferences, festivals, exhibitions and seminars to attract tourists.
- Provide investment and other facilities to the private sector to develop tourism.
- Introduce more efficient immigration and emigration processes.
- Modernize internal airports.
- Set up Tourist Service Centres island wide.
- Streamline processors.
- Establish training schools.
- Introduce e-based facilities for reservation of hotels, transport, guides and domestic airline tickets.
- Increase the number of workers in tourism up to a million.
- Strategic marketing and advertising.
- Support development of high-end tourism.
- Enabling environment for local performers to support tourism.
- Revise labour laws in the tourism sector.
- Develop Household and Community Tourism.
- Register, train and certify tourist guides and drivers to prevent harassment of tourists and ensure security and protection for tourists.
- Develop Tourist Police Service.

Taking the ten Key Policies and the seventeen Agenda items in the Manifesto, we have identified ten Key Pillars to guide our work.

- Pillar One : People-centric tourism sector
- Pillar Two : An Efficient Public Service and Upliftment of Industry Standards
- Pillar Three : Technology-Based Tourism Sector
- Pillar Four : A Safe and Secure Country for Tourists
- Pillar Five : Legal and Regulatory Framework
- Pillar Six : Sustainable and environment-friendly tourism
- Pillar Seven : New Product Development & Promotion
- Pillar Eight : Position and market Sri Lanka
- Pillar Nine : Infrastructure and services
- Pillar Ten : Partnerships

Tourism can be identified as a multifaceted and dynamic industry, contributing to the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka. If different segments of people linked with the tourism sector are properly guided and supported, the tourism sector has the potential to be an economic stimulator that enhances revenue-generating sources, employment opportunities and foreign exchange earnings, among others. The aggregate of all these factors have a positive spillover effect on economic growth and development and tourism can serve as a facilitator of poverty reduction, unemployment reduction and upward social mobility.

# 01

## **PILLAR ONE: PEOPLE-CENTRIC TOURISM SECTOR**

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unforeseen challenges to the stakeholders of tourism. Sri Lanka Tourism has taken measures to support those who are directly and indirectly linked to the industry.





## INDUSTRY SUPPORT

- Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) was established with core functions of product and related infrastructure development of tourism businesses, regulation, facilitation, and promoting Sri Lanka as a tourist destination. However, for 50 years, only 4,237 businesses have been registered due to complicated procedures, accessibility issues and various malpractices. During 2020 the SLTDA registration process was streamlined and the process is now 100% online, thereby registration has already increased by 26% to 5,336.
- Until 2020, the support given to the industry was focused on larger entities representing a few associations. Accordingly, the moratorium and other support extended after the Easter Sunday attack were mostly beneficial for larger stakeholders. However, post COVID-19, Sri Lanka Tourism took the initiative to broaden the support given to stakeholders such as Tour Guides and Tourist Drivers who are trained and registered with SLTDA and have in the past been overlooked. This segment has no permanent employment, no EPF and ETF, no pension or any safety and efforts are underway to increase their minimum wage and upgrade their training to be in line with global best practices.
- Until 2020, the Provincial Guides were not registered with SLTDA and have hence been overlooked. However, post COVID-19 with the support of the Provincial Councils we have taken steps to register the Provincial Guides and grant them a one-off payment of Rs.15,000.00 as COVID-19 support.
- The Tourist Driver training has been expanded through a partnership with the Vocational Training Authority (VTA), thereby providing training centres island-wide, which is convenient and cost-effective.
- The tourism industry been identified for the first time as an export industry and was granted VAT exemptions.
- VAT refund for purchases of Rs. 50,000 and above would support the Colombo hoteliers and retailers in gradually building a retail hub in Colombo. The VAT refund mechanism is expected to eliminate malpractices such as commission taking, etc that disrepute the tourism industry.

## Relief Measures through SLTDA Funds

### Relief for Tour Guides

2,026 Tour Guides were paid Rs. 20,000 totaling Rs. 40.52 million. This includes 1,062 National Guides, 802 Chauffeur Guide, 135 Area Guides and 27 Site Guides.

### Relief for Tourist Driver

	Driver category	No of applications received as of 31.08.2020	Eligibility confirmed	Current status
01	Full time Tourist Drivers	2,617	1,899	Direct payment made to 738
02	Tourist Bus Drivers and Assistants	45	45	Payment made in full
03	Tourist Tuk Tuk Drivers	658	658	Payment progressing
04	Safari Drivers	634	559	Payment progressing
05	Drivers who were not trained and registered under SLTDA	359	359	Will be trained under VTA
<b>Total</b>		4,313	3,161	

### Status of Provincial Guides' Relief

	Province	Eligible guides for registration	Applied for registration	Registered	One off payment paid (Rs. 15000)
1	Central	542	225	166	123
2	North central	225	73	22	
3	Uva	70	26	-	
4	Western	237	1	-	
5	Southern	237	1	-	
6	North western	All are registered & payment made			
7	Northern	Not available			
8	Eastern				
9	Sabaragamuwa				
<b>Total</b>		1853	326	188	123

### Relief for Payment of Utility Bills

SLTDA registered Tourism service providers received a 12-month installment plan to settle accumulated electricity bills for 12 months starting from 1st March 2021. A request was made for an installment plan to settle accumulated water bills as well.

## COMPLETED

- VAT exemption for the tourism industry.
- Moratorium extended for the tourism industry till September 2021.
- Renewal fees waived off for SLTDA licensed establishments for one year.
- Grace period of twelve months for utility payments.
- Grace period of six months for vehicle lease rentals.
- Provisional registration to support informal sector.
- Rs. 150 billion loan schemes for affected industries including tourism.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the SLTDA with the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) to provide island-wide training for Tourist Drivers.
- Industry was given the opportunity to convert existing accommodations to quarantine hotels and accommodate seafarers.
- Liquor License fee waived off for 2021.

## IN PROGRESS

- Social protection for individual SMEs.
- Wage support schemes for hotels and travel agents approved by Cabinet.
- Seek the support of Local Government to streamline turnover tax for a trade license to be in line with other businesses.
- Seek support from the Ceylon Electricity Board to ensure unit price for hotels (particularly in peak periods), to be aligned with other export industries.
- Support Renewable Energy existing concessionary financing available from the current 50KVA solar to be increased to 300KVA.
- Upgrading syllabus for Tour Guides with the support of Australian Skills Development to bridge the gap with destinations such as South Africa, Thailand, and Australia.
- Include English and Digital Marketing segments to the Tour Guide training to support entrepreneurship.
- Increase minimum wage of Tour Guides to support the ambassadors of the industry who interact closely with international guests.
- Online Travel Agents (OTA's) to be levied 1% Tourism Development Levy on commission to ensure a level playing field with other local providers.
- Color coded Identity cards for Tour Guides, Tourists Divers, Tuk Tuk Drivers and Safari Jeep Drivers.



## TOURISM ENTRY PROTOCOLS AND PREPAREDNESS

Sri Lanka Tourism was one of the first in the Asian region to prepare and issue a detailed COVID-19 Health Protocol for the Industry. The detailed guidelines cover all areas relating to the tourism industry. This was prepared with the support of the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and the input of the industry.

### COMPLETED

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- Comprehensive COVID-19 guidelines developed and issued.
- Sri Lanka received the Safe Travel Stamp from World Travel & Tourism Council, reflective of the sound protocol implemented by Sri Lanka Tourism.
- An independent auditing firm, KPMG was appointed to conduct detailed audits for 'Safe and Secure' certification. Audits are conducted free of charge for the first-time certification, where the costs are being borne by SLTDA. Certification includes a QR code that will permit guests to provide feedback on health and safety protocols being followed by their hotel.
- Pandemic preparedness courses were conducted for SMEs designed and rolled out together with S4IG Australia covering four districts.
- COVID-19 guidelines training was conducted partnering with MDF Australia and Hotel Associations.

### IN PROGRESS

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- Trainers trained and ready to conduct Pandemic preparedness courses for SMEs in all other districts and SLTDA is discussing with Asian Development Bank to secure funding support for programme implementation.
- Airport Opening Protocol at the final stage and prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Health.
- COVID-19 insurance for hospitalization and quarantine hotel cover of international travellers is currently in the procurement stage.
- Development of short videos in progress to demonstrate how to correctly implement various key guideline requirements and project is funded by the GIZ.





## INCREASED REGISTRATION OF SMEs

For the past 30 years, the tourism industry has not been able to register the informal sector that has grown exponentially and a large number of accommodation providers remain unregistered. The informal sector has made a significant contribution to the tourism sector and overall economy. However, since they are unregistered, whenever there is a pandemic or such crisis, this segment is left out from any support.

To make it easier to register, to improve efficiency, to reduce cost and eliminate malpractices, all registrations are now conducted online.

### COMPLETED

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- 100% online registration.
- Increased informal sector registration by over 26%.
- Process reviewed and updated to meet current industry needs.

## ISLAND-WIDE SERVICE CENTRES

Working in close cooperation with the Provinces, Local Authorities and Regional Associations, several locations have been identified to open Service Centres that are expected to:

- Support the informal sector to register, by assisting them in overcoming legal impediments.
- Identify infrastructure development necessary to support tourism.
- Conduct provincial-level promotions to support wider community benefit from tourism.
- Support the registered establishments.
- Function as an information centre for international and domestic tourists.

Employees from the SLTDA and SLTPB will be assigned to the Service Centres to ensure that the current headcount is not increased and overall costs are managed.

### IN PROGRESS

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- Establish tourism branches in Ella and Dambulla.

## MORE INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE WITH INDUSTRY

The Tourism sector has several stakeholders with diverse and often contradictory agendas and views. This has resulted in lobbying by interested parties to push through initiatives that would benefit a particular association or group; instead of looking at the need to ensure benefits to the Industry and economy as a whole. Therefore, Sri Lanka Tourism has for the first time engaged with all associations, to ensure that the voice of all stakeholders are taken into consideration in drafting policies.

### COMPLETED

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- Industry consultation and dialogue with 52 tourism related associations, out of which 34 associations have already registered with SLTDA.
- Sought Industry participation via survey regarding Tourist Police.
- Sought industry participation via survey and feedback on hotel sector classification criteria.
- SMEs to have direct contact with senior management.

## CONVERT CURRENT FOUR-YEAR HOTEL SCHOOL DIPLOMA TO A DEGREE

The current diploma that takes four years to complete is being reviewed to be converted to a degree. In addition, steps are being taken to upgrade the syllabus and allow students after Ordinary Level and Advance Level to enter the tourism industry through SLITHM.

Furthermore, a series of short courses and boot camp style programs will be developed, which are less theoretical and more in keeping with current requirements, which also allow a larger number to be trained using existing resources.

### IN PROGRESS

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- With the assistance of Asian Development Bank, currently mapping the syllabus and conducting a gap analysis to achieve degree status.
- Study comparative hotel school syllabuses with the support of the Swiss Embassy.
- Partnerships with international Hotel Schools to conduct joint courses and provide opportunities for our students to gain exposure overseas.

# 02

## PILLAR TWO: AN EFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICE AND UPLIFTMENT OF INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Cumbersome and time-consuming procedures make public service highly inefficient and have led to malpractices, wastages and a visible breakdown in the administration process. Therefore, Sri Lanka Tourism has identified the need to simplify administrative procedures and re-engineer processes to make it more convenient and time saving for those seeking our services.

The four Tourism Institutions have a staff of over 488 employees. With the refocused approach to achieve results, reduce costs, and eliminate malpractices; strict action has been taken to ensure compliance.

Many previously developed standards which were too narrow in focus and often outdated were reviewed and amended. This also served as a deterrent to new entrants and formal registration.

Since tourism is a rapidly growing industry of Sri Lanka, with mushrooming numbers of service providers, Sri Lanka Tourism takes responsibility to uplift and ensure industry standards.





## **INCREASED REGISTRATION**

- Increased registration of accommodation providers by 39%.
- 100% online registration.
- Provisional Registration issued to support the industry.
- Development of videos and digital platforms to create awareness on the registration process with the support of MDF Australia.

## **STREAMLINED PROCESS WITH REDUCED DOCUMENTATION**

- Streamlined the process of approvals for new tourism investments incorporating all project approving government agencies with the support of USAID SAIL project.
- A common application form was prepared reducing documentation and an Investor Handbook as a repository of all information and a roadmap for investors.
- Strengthened inter-agency collaboration by signing MoUs with key government agencies such as BOI, UDA, CC and CRMD and the process continues process with the support of MDF Australia.

## **REDUCED OVERHEADS / TRANSACTION COST OF PROCUREMENTS**

- Effective cost reductions – reduced SLTDA cost by nearly 23% compared to 2019.
- Reduced SLTDA owned resort losses and converted loss making resorts into profit making ventures.

## **CREATE LAND BANK FOR TOURISM**

A Land Bank is critical to ensure that investors in tourism are able to identify our assets and make them available for investments. A project to document the data relating to land owned by the institutions is underway.

- Nearly 40% completed.

## **BUILD CAPACITY WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONS**

- With the support of UNDP and MDF Australia the capacity and skills required are being supported through promotions, procurements and public relations.

To remain competitive in the digital era, it is imperative that technology be integrated into the tourism sector. Accordingly, steps are being taken to invest in new technologies and innovative mechanisms to manage and promote the industry. Technology will also be infused to enhance the quality of services, human resources and the tourist experience.

# 03

## **PILLAR THREE: TECHNOLOGY BASED TOURISM SECTOR**





## **TOURIST TRAVEL APP**

### **COMPLETED**

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- Developed the first Sri Lanka Tourism Travel App Mobile Version 0 to meet the COVID-19 Health protocol. The App will be linked to the Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) web portal of the Department of Immigration and Emigration. The App will share tourist booking data (including flight details and accommodation) with Ministry of Health regional and district offices. The App was created with the support of ICTA and UNDP.

### **IN PROGRESS**

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- The Travel App will be upgraded and include nearly 5000 sites, Google Maps, ticket purchases to tourist sites, ability to rate establishments, a complaint management system, emergency button to share location with the Police and survey from guests. This upgraded Version will be supported by the World Bank and ADB under the guidance of ICTA.

## **DIGITAL AND ONLINE TRAINING**

### **IN PROGRESS**

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- Online training at Hotel School started during COVID-19 pandemic.

# CREATING COMPREHENSIVE TOURIST INFORMATION DATABASE

New attractions have been researched and a comprehensive database has been developed, to provide a diverse experience to international guests and to support community-based tourism that will have a positive impact on citizens.

## IN PROGRESS

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- 4,950 Tourist sites including hiking, camping, cycling, Buddhist trails, Ramayana trail, wildlife identified, and information collected.
- Content management Terms of Reference prepared and procurement process will be followed.
- The content to be shared on the Website and Travel App.

## ENGAGING THE TOURIST POLICE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

- Close dialogue with the newly appointed Tourist Police DIG and personnel.
- Concept approval to link the Tourism App with emergency button and location sharing.

## REVAMPING WEBSITES

- The two websites; srilanka.travel and SLTDA official website to be revamped.
- Procurement has been completed and a Digital Agency has been selected.

## TOURISM SATELLITE ACCOUNTING (TSA)

Tourism Satellite Accounting provides credible data on the impact of tourism and the associated employment on a nation's balance of payments.

Accordingly, TSA will measure;

- Tourism's contribution to GDP.
- Tourism's ranking compared to other economic sectors.
- Number of jobs created by tourism in an economy.
- The amount of tourism investment.
- Tourism consumption.

- Secure the technical support of UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)
- Partner with UNWTO, CBSL and Department of Census and Statistics for planning, coordination, data collection, analysis and publishing.

### **LIVE TELECASTING SUPPORT TO BE ESTABLISHED FOR PERAHERAS TO ENHANCE AN ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND VIEWERSHIP**

The Kandy Perahera was live telecasted for the first time in Thailand in the local language, with the support of Missions in Thailand and the Royal Thai Embassy in Sri Lanka. This promotion was done digitally due to the covid-19 pandemic.

### **LIVE STREAMING OF WILDLIFE UNDER THE BRAND NAMES “COUCH SAFARI” WAS FOLLOWED BY GUESTS AROUND THE WORLD**



Live streaming of wildlife at National Parks; Yala, Minneriya, Kaudulla and Uda Walawe attracted thousands of viewers with the concept of ‘stay home today and travel tomorrow’.

A multi-pronged approach using all social media channels was carried out targeting key source markets. The campaign was implemented on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Direct display advertising campaigns were carried out using Google Display Network and Trip Advisor. Couch safari was advertised using both video and display advertisements on top Travel, Wildlife, Destination websites and YouTube Channels.

The response to Couch Safari has been beyond expectations. The live streaming sessions alone recorded a reach of over 350,000 out of which at least 40% were international viewers. This is a great feat considering live streaming was often inconvenient for their time zones.

The key message focused on was ‘Diversity of the wildlife in Sri Lanka’.

Overall, the campaign generated over 22 million impressions, over 1.7 million video views and generated over 40,000 clicks.

Sri Lanka Tourism Facebook page reached 7 million people during the campaign period.

It generated over 1.4 million video views, close to 200,000 page engagements including around 5,500 shares, and over 3,500 comments. The campaign also generated over 11 million impressions on Facebook with over 16,000 link clicks during the campaign period.



Overall Couch Safari campaign helped to increase reach and engagement of the Sri Lanka Tourism Facebook page compared to the pre campaign period.

- Over 4000% increase in video views
- Over 3000% increase in people reached
- Over 400% increase in engagement

The streaming sessions alone generated around 350,000 impressions and over 100,000 video views with around 35,000 engagements including over 2,400 comments and 2,700 post shares. Streaming posts also had over 23,000 post clicks.

Ensuring a secure country is paramount for an industry such as tourism, which is highly sensitive to traveller risks. If there is no guarantee of safety for a tourist to travel peacefully, the Sri Lankan tourism industry which is known for its hospitality will be severely impacted. The 2019 Easter attacks is one such instance that denoted the degree of influence national security has on tourism, followed by the COVID-19 global pandemic, posing a health risk for both tourists and locals.

# 04

## PILLAR FOUR: A SAFE AND SECURE COUNTRY FOR TOURISTS





Therefore, Sri Lanka must build a brand for itself as one of the safest places to travel and in order to reach this goal, we have taken the following steps:

- Conducted an industry-wide survey to identify issues related to Tourist Police.
- DIG for Tourist Police appointed for the first time.
- Guidelines for COVID-19 Certification process released and communicated to the Industry, to ensure safety of the travellers and local communities.
- KPMG Safe and Secure audits are in progress. Currently 131 Hotels and 42 Travel Agents have been certified.
- KPMG Certificate includes unique QR code per establishment for guests to provide feedback on health protocols.
- Upgraded Travel App to include an emergency button to share the location with the nearest police station.
- Tourists police units to be set up island wide. Locations identified and work started.



# 05

## **PILLAR FIVE: LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

Establishing a sound legal and regulatory framework is essential for the efficient management, operation, and growth in the tourism industry. It helps to improve the accuracy of information held in records and establish procedural rules and protocols to handle required functions lawfully and methodically and achieve expected targets.

The Tourism Act No. 38 of 2005 with four separate Tourism Institutions was enacted for the needs of that time. However, during the past fifteen years, successive Governments have for good reason sought to merge the Institutions in line with global best practices. The current structure has resulted in inefficiency and waste with overlap of functions and lack of coordinated effort in developing Tourism.





Some of the key areas that require attention are elaborated below;

- The Tourism Development Fund provides a reliable, independent base financing for ongoing activities and for the Tourism Strategic Action Plan and should be retained in preparing a new Act.
- The responsibilities, authorities and powers granted under the existing legislation are necessary for a National Tourism Authority and should not be further fragmented or dissipated.
- Industry consultation in preparing the new Act would be sought, including all Associations, Universities, Sri Lanka Police and any interested stakeholders. A study would also be done on similar statutes in other countries to identify best practices that could be incorporated into the new Tourism Act.
- The Local Government levy of 1% of total turnover of a hotel is unique to the Tourism Industry. Hotels have been singled out for this levy; while no other businesses nor factories pay such a levy. Hotels provide a significant economic benefit to local areas through community employment, procurement and guests patronising local businesses and small entrepreneurs. Hence, it is necessary to work in cooperation with the relevant authorities to ensure that the tourism sector is treated in the same way as other industries.
- Hotel refurbishments are required to maintain and uplift the product and attract high-yield tourists. It is necessary to review the concessions available for refurbishment projects approved by SLTDA and permit duty-free imports similar to new projects which are subjected to the negative list restrictions for materials locally available.
- Any temporary import restrictions on basic supplies to the hotel industry would need to be reviewed. These categories include kitchen steel utensils, polycarbonate utensils, stainless steel cookware. These items are not available locally to the required standard of tourist hotels.

## ACTION POINTS

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- Revisit the organizational structure to reflect international best practices.
- Improve guidelines and resources on classification of accommodation.
- Ensuring sustainable tourism including banning of single use plastic and other sustainable initiatives in line with other countries included to new tourism projects.
- Liquor license regulations and procedures to be reviewed to enable a streamlined and effective process that meets the tourism industry requirements.
- Overlapping jurisdictions of different Government and Provincial Agencies to be reviewed and support sought to rationalize regulations.
- Local Government levy of 1% to be on par with other industries with the support of stakeholders.
- New Tourism Act to merge three if not four tourism institutions as 'Sri Lanka Tourism'.
- SLITHM to be upgraded, to become a degree awarding institution.

Sustainable tourism is important to protect natural, cultural, and environmental resources which are critical for the wellbeing of Sri Lanka's tourism industry. If we do not protect our biodiversity and cultural heritage, we will lose the primary reasons tourists travel to Sri Lanka and make the country a less agreeable place for locals.

Therefore, promoting sustainable tourism is a crucial initiative to make Sri Lanka's tourism businesses more competitive both locally as well as internationally, and to positively build Sri Lanka's image.

Particularly post COVID-19, sustainable tourism is more likely to be demanded by travelers.

# 06

## PILLAR SIX: SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY TOURISM





## COMPLETED

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- National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC) initiated.

## IN PROGRESS

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- Sigiriya to be developed as the first Sustainable Destination. Draft prepared and to be shared with the Central Cultural Fund (CCF).
- Yala Palatupana Tourism Zone to be upgraded as a Protected Conservancy Area, given the high level of biodiversity. Guidelines are currently being prepared.
- New tourism projects to have mandatory sustainability requirements including renewable energy, recycling, zero single use plastic.
- Boutique hotels currently in operation to be given a timeframe to be compliant to sustainability goals.
- Action initiated on targets of UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.
- MEPA and Tourism partnership for marine environment protection to ensure a healthy coastal and ocean environment for future generations.



Promotion is a critical component of Tourism. However, there has been only one global promotion in the history of Sri Lanka Tourism, which took place around about 10 years ago. The new comprehensive Global Communication Campaign has received approval of the Cabinet of Ministers in early 2020. Procurement processes for the marketing campaign have commenced and the campaign is expected to be deployed next year when tourism resumes.

Going forward, Sri Lanka is to be positioned globally as a unique destination with diverse experiences and as the most beautiful island in the world offering everything that Asia has to offer in a compact area.

Effective positioning, branding & communication will result in higher yields, benefiting the wider economy. Such measures can ensure higher revenues and also increase FDI flows from international brands who have so far been deterred from investing due to low yields and weak positioning.

# 07

## **PILLAR SEVEN: NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT & PROMOTION**





In order to attract more tourists and expand the customer base, the tourism industry should continue to be innovative. Sri Lanka Tourism through the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and Sri Lanka Conventions Bureau promote Sri Lanka. However, the responsibility of creating products and experiences within the country is with the industry and the service providers. Therefore, the Industry needs to untap hidden gems of Sri Lanka, promote unique experiences, promote value-added domestic and international tourism, and create awareness. The industry needs to differentiate on experience, rather than competing on pricing.

#### **Social and Economic Impact:**

- Increase demand to visit Sri Lanka.
- Attract higher spending tourists and increase yield and revenue of the country.
- People Centric Tourism Sector distributing benefits to wider communities.

## **NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENTS TO ATTRACT NEW SEGMENTS AND TO ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE**

- Appointed JWT as PR agent and E-Marketing Eye as digital marketing agency.
- Engage Industry Stakeholders to identify areas of new product development.
- Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau provided sponsorships for Duruthu Perahera, Nawam Perahera, Kandy Esala Perahera and Ruhunu Kataragama Perahera to show case the Sri Lankan culture to the world by promoting via digital media strongly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **BUDDHIST TRAIL PROMOTION**

A Committee was formed with the travel industry to develop an action plan for Buddhist Trail promotion including a website development, promoting packages through Master Card and holding a Vesak festival which was postponed due to the pandemic. Buddhist microsite was translated to Thai language with the support of the missions in Thailand.

## **RAMAYANA CAMPAIGN**

Opportunities are available in the lucrative Indian market in attracting Tourists to Ramayana sites. A full day Training Program was organized in February for 94 Travel Agents from the industry and tour guides sessions were postponed due to COVID-19.

## **CONTENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

We have collected around five thousand places of tourist attractions to create an image and video gallery as a promotional tool of Sri Lanka Tourism. As an initial stage, SLTPB conducted the first evaluation session with six experienced Tour Guides of the National Tour Guide Association who prioritized the main attractions in Sri Lanka to develop the content microsite.

## **FREE ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY WITH eXPLOREpLACES TRAVEL PLATFORM**

eXPLOREpLACES is a newly formed Australian based Travel Platform having 39 million worldwide visitors. It provides Travel information in video format to promote destination tourism products. It offered a free advertising opportunity to the Sri Lanka Tourism Industry worth AUD 21,000 for six months.

## **CRUISE DEVELOPMENT**

A meeting was conducted with Cruise Operators in promoting cruise tourism post pandemic. The creation of a City map of Colombo was started for the benefit of passengers who disembark in Colombo for tours. Furthermore, a microsite creation also commenced.

## **SUPPORT IN PROMOTING SRI LANKAN HANDICRAFTS**

As an initial step, Nattaranpotha village (Kalapuraya) in Kandy was selected to promote local handicrafts, by developing a dedicated web site with photographs and videos of each craftsman who are involved in this industry.

## **WELLNESS AND AYURVEDA**

- Sri Lanka is well positioned for fast growing wellness tourism with Ayurveda and *Hela Wedakama* heritage.
- The European Union has agreed to support the launch of the Wellness Campaign focusing on Ayurveda and *Hela Wedakama*, a first for Sri Lanka. Currently the terms of reference are being prepared.

## FILM TOURISM

Film tourism is an excellent vehicle for destination marketing.

A Single Window Approval (SWA) Scheme to streamline the current process offering filing approval for International films, documentaries, TV productions in coordination with the National Film Cooperation and other stakeholders to be created on a web platform. This process will result in a one stop shop to support international film.

Promotional video to be created in collaboration with the International Film Producers Association of Sri Lanka (IFPA) to build destination image and promote Sri Lanka for featured films, tv-series and global film induced travelers. We are in discussion with the Film Federation of India to organize a location familiarization trip to Sri Lanka for key Indian producers, directors and location managers.

## ADVENTURE AND SPORT TOURISM

Sri Lanka can offer a wide range of sporting events given the range of interesting locations.

Surfing national championships took place in Hikkaduwa in March 2020 in collaboration with Surfing Federation of Sri Lanka to promote surfing as a sport among the local community. The event also attracted foreign tourists.

The Tourism Promotion Bureau sponsored Dilantha Malagamuwa in racing. The Lamborghini Super Trofeo Europe in Spain, Belgium and France in Oct/Nov 2020 kept Sri Lanka on the minds of potential high yield visitors.



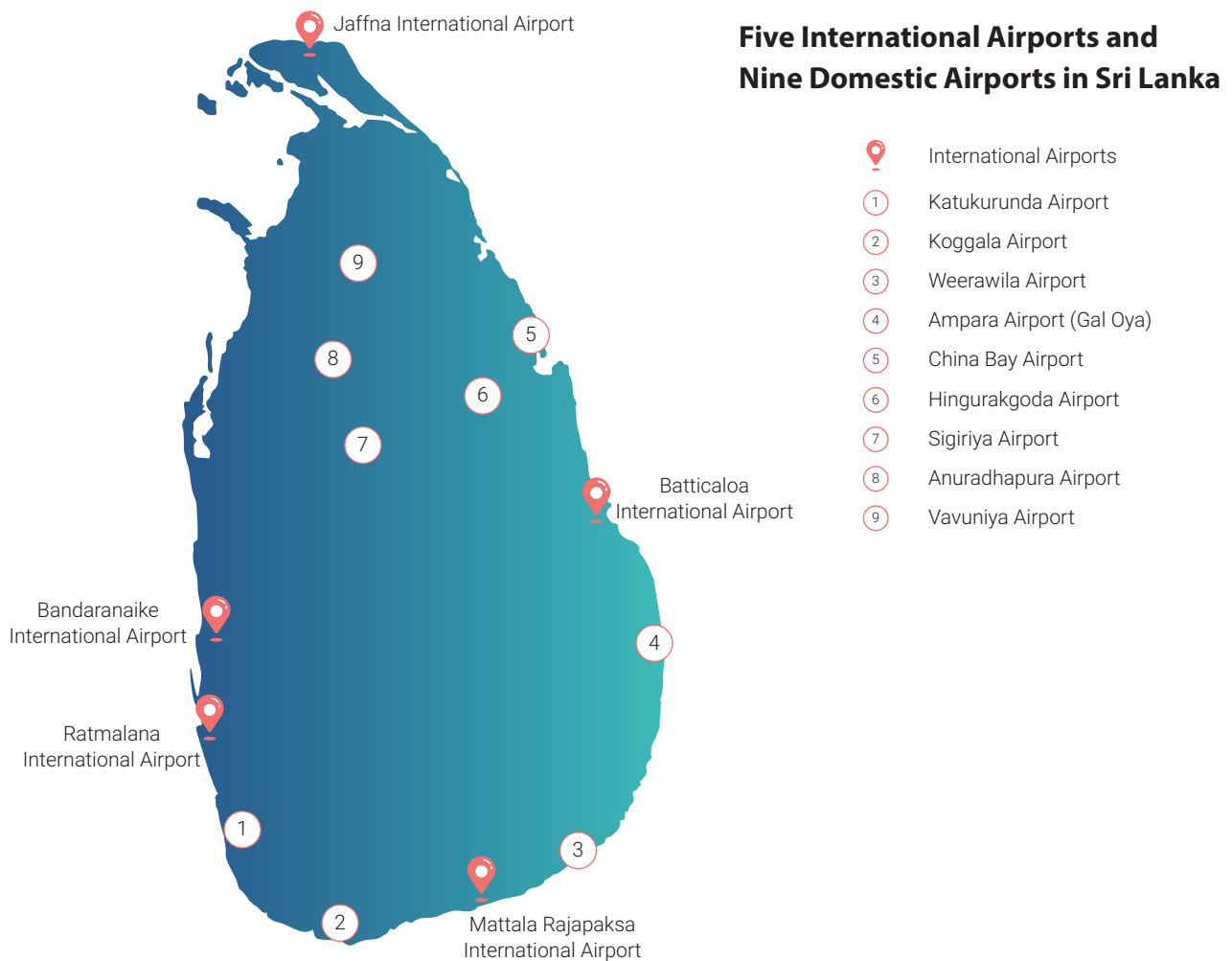
## CULTURE TOURISM

In order to showcase Sri Lanka's cultural tourism to the world, Duruthu perahera, Nawam perahera, Kandy Esala Perahera and Ruhunu Katharagama perahera were selected.

## INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC AIRPORTS

Sri Lanka has five international airports and nine domestic airports. The Colombo International Airport in Ratmalana was opened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Internal air transportation in Sri Lanka supports the high yielding tourist segment with seaplanes and helicopters that could reach any part of Sri Lanka.

- Ratmalana airport opened during this year for international smaller passenger flights up to 200 passengers and private jets.
- Private jet approvals reduced from 72 hours to 24 hours.
- The second phase of passenger terminal of Katunayake airport expansion commenced which will increase capacity from 6 million to 15 million passengers per annum, with a unique design.



## RESEARCH ROAD MAP

The research roadmap is currently being developed with the support of MDF Australia. The initial draft has been proposed and three capacity building workshops have been coordinated to commence from 7th December 2020.

## **VISITOR EXPERIENCE UNIT**

The focus in the past has been to promote destinations country-wise. However, the global trend has been for several years that promotion needs to be focused on experiences; whether it be adventure, wildlife, wellness, culture, food etc.

With the partnership and assistance from MDF Australia and University of Sri Jayewardenepura, work has already commenced for an organizational set up and unit formed for experiences.

## **PARTICIPATION IN TRADE FAIRS**

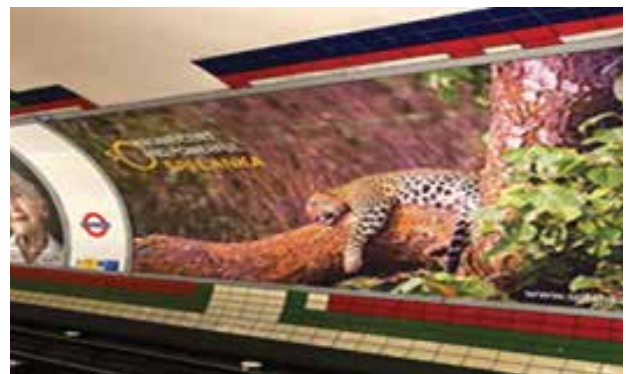
SLTPB has attended 24 travel and tourism fairs during the first quarter of the year. The trade fairs were held in Norway, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Finland, Luxemburg, Spain, Switzerland, UK, Belgium, Ethiopia, Italy, Israel, Czech Republic, India, Thailand, USA, Indonesia, Denmark, and Lithuania. In addition to this, ATM (Dubai) and WTM (UK) were held in virtual platforms.

## **TRADE FAMILIARIZATION TOURS**

There were two trade familiarization tours from the United Arab Emirates and Sweden during the months of February and March.

## **UNDERGROUND ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN- UK**

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau carried out an Underground Advertising Campaign from January to March 2020, in London UK. The campaign was carried out in ten stations during 2020.



## ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY THE SRI LANKAN MISSIONS OVERSEAS, IN COLLABORATION WITH SLTPB

- UK - Organized a Sri Lankan food festival and music to coincide with the 72nd Independence Day celebration of Sri Lanka with the participation of 220 attendees.
- Philippines - Cultural evening with networking session and B2B with Philippines Tour Operators. 110 high-level decision makers attended the Networking Session with Sri Lankan industry members.
- UAE - Networking session with key tourism industry stakeholders in Abu Dhabi.
- Japan - Sri Lankan Mission organized the Fukuoka Travel Symposium from 08th to 09th February 2020 and a press conference on 12th February 2020 in Tokyo, with the participation of over 80 media related persons.
- Austria - Culinary Event and Kite festival were arranged by Sri Lankan mission in Austria to celebrate World Children's Day.
- Russia - Online Round table discussion was hosted by the Association of Russian Tour Operators. More than 260 Russian Tour Operators and other representatives of the tourism industry along with the media participated.
- Germany – Online presentation of the destination on German portal “we love travel”.



### Best Places to Travel in 2020 (after COVID-19)

Discovering the best places to travel in 2020 (after COVID-19) has put travel on hold as the pandemic for every single one of us. However, we can still look ahead and find inspiration for future adventures! The chosen destinations stand out for their delicious food, amazing local life, pristine views, warmest local culture, and spectacular natural parks. Find your adventure spots, as well as some small favorites. Here are the best places to travel in 2020!

#### 2. Sri Lanka

The endless beautiful sights of Sri Lanka deserve a top spot in the best places to travel. Spend at least a few weeks traveling, taking stunning train rides that go through dewy tea plantations, green mountains, and dense jungle. Next, switch from the train to an open-top jeep, and go on a [safari in Sri Lanka](#) at one of the many rich national parks- home to leopards, monkeys, and elephants.



## BIMSTEC TOUR OPERATORS NETWORK MEETING

Sri Lanka was the host country for the 2nd BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Network of Tour Operators meeting which was held on 08th & 09th December 2020 as a virtual meeting with the participation of member states (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal & Thailand). Deliberations were made on key subjects such as BIMSTEC branding, Information Center and BIMSTEC Funding, Regional Cooperation in Buddhist and Temple Circuits, Eco & Adventure Tourism and Cruise Tourism.

## WEBINARS

- SLTPB has arranged webinars in Russia, UK, Pakistan, Norway, Sweden, and Baltic Regions.
- Russia - 126 Tour Operators / Travel Agents were registered from six countries including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Iran.
- Scandinavian Region - Over 60 Tour Operators from the region attended the Webinar which was hosted on the PATA platform with the participation of PATA CEO.
- UK - Reputable media from the UK participated, which was hosted on the platform of ANTOR (Association of National Tourist Offices and Representatives).
- Pakistan – 16 tour operators/ travel agents from Pakistan participated.
- Australia – Bonailie world/ webinar platform interview with Chairperson. Chairperson was a guest speaker in a series of worldwide webinars arranged on a new global platform Bonailie.world/webinar on destination readiness and innovation in a new era.
- China (Shanghai) – Pre-recorded interviews by Chairperson for trip.com, largest digital Travel and Leisure Company in China.
- Egypt- Interview with NileTv. Sri Lanka Tourism goes global to woo the Mediterranean traveler in November 2020.

## VISITING BLOGGER PROGRAM (VBP)

Visiting Blogger Program (VBP) is an annual program, where selected international travel influencers and digital storytellers are hosted by offering tailored travel experiences within the destination, Sri Lanka. Accordingly, travel influencers with over 6 million combined global travel seeking audience, covering key 8 source markets (UK, Australia, Germany, India, Switzerland, Norway, USA and Canada) were invited and they have created over 540 posts on various travel blogs and popular social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in the global arena.

During 2020, 29 mainstream travel influencers were invited from UK, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, USA, Australia to promote destination Sri Lanka covering various aspects including, lesser known areas, new tourism attractions, products and to a create positive image. During the first quarter of 2020, VBP hosted the first family travel bloggers group to promote Sri Lanka as a family friendly destination. Lesser known areas such as Chilaw, Jaffna, Gampaha District, Matale, Belihul Oya and many other areas were promoted by creating various blog content for social media. Besides this, during the period of April to September, VBP program organized a travel influencer campaign, "Keep Sri Lankan Dream Alive". This campaign is expected to increase the destination's visibility in popular social media platforms.



## VISITING JOURNALIST PROGRAM (VJP)

Under the Visiting Journalist Program, ten media personnel were hosted in Sri Lanka during the first quarter of the year 2020. SLTPB was invited to UK ITV's flagship daily morning program called "This Morning Show" series in Sri Lanka from 5th to 11th January, 2020. In addition, DOCMA TV from Germany and Travel Magazine from South Korea visited Sri Lanka during the month of March 2020.

## PRINT MEDIA ADVERTISING

- Sweden: Vagabond Magazine
- Australia: Signature Luxury Travel Magazine and International Traveller Magazine
- India: Outlook Magazine and India Today Magazine
- Netherland: National Geographic Traveller Magazine Asia & Down Under Magazine
- UK: Wonderlust Magazine
- Germany: Reise & Preise Magazine
- Italy: Dove Magazine
- Middle East: TravTalk Middle East Magazine and DNATA World Traveller Magazine
- Russia: National Geographic Traveller Russia Magazine
- USA : AFAR Magazine

## ACCOLADES

- USA and UK Conde Nast Traveller magazine Readers Choice Awards 2020 Sri Lanka rated the second-best destination after Italy.
  - Sri Lanka featured as one of the Top Destinations to Travel in February 2020 by Condé Nast Traveller, Middle East.
  - Sri Lanka listed as one of the best holiday destinations for 2020 by The Times, UK
  - Sri Lanka ranks CNN Travel's 20 best places to visit in 2020.
  - Sri Lanka wins "Back on the Map" award at Wanderlust Travel Awards 2020 in London.
  - Sri Lanka receives a Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel & Tourism Council.
  - World's Leading Emerging Tourism Destination 2020
  - Asia's Leading Adventure Tourism Destination 2020
- } WorldTravel Awards



## EARNED MEDIA COVERAGE

- Aljazeera English: Inside Story on how Sri Lanka is preparing to reopen the tourism industry post COVID-19.
- BBC collaborated with Sri Lanka Tourism to revive the Tourism Sector and provided coverage free of charge for one month.
- CNN one-month Digital and TV Campaign for Sri Lanka Tourism free of charge.
- CNBC to promote Sri Lanka Tourism in a Goodwill gesture for 3 months.
- Euro News virtual tourism debate on Rethinking and Reviving Travel and Tourism (Asian Region).
- Sri Lanka Tourism goes global on Nile TV Egypt to woo the Mediterranean travellers.

#	Post Title	Media	
1	9 Destinations to Visit	National Geographic	Sri Lanka has been dubbed as "a rising eco-tourism star" by Nat Geo for having a little bit of everything; from wildlife adventures to a rich heritage and culture. Click on the article to read more about it!
2	Lonely Planet Sri Lanka	Lonely Planet	Escape to the mysterious and homely island of Sri Lanka for a holiday filled with endless days on the golden sandy beaches, picturesque train rides, a delicious cup of tea and the stories of history everywhere you look. Find out what Lonely Planet has to say about our Paradise Island!
3	23 Reasons to Visit Sri Lanka	Daily Telegraph UK	If you need a reason to visit Sri Lanka, we can give you 23! From leopards, elephants and whales to cricket, crab and centuries of history; not forgetting the fast-developing modern facades, Sri Lanka has it all. Read more here!
4	Beautiful Reasons to Visit Sri Lanka	CNN	Every visitor to Sri Lanka at a time in history was so infatuated with the island, they gave it a name. Find out the many beautiful reasons as to why you should visit this beautiful and idyllic country.



**Ms. Taghreed Hussein interviewing Ms. Kimarli Fernando, Chairperson Sri Lanka Tourism, on the live programme via Skype**

## YEAR IN REVIEW FOR SRI LANKA TOURISM MICE TOURISM

- Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) successfully participated in its first trade fair for the year 2020 at Business/MICE and leisure travel mart (BLTM) 2020, India.
- In collaboration with the Sri Lanka consulate general in Melbourne, successfully organized the Sri Lanka pavilion at the Asia Pacific Meeting and Incentive Event (AIME).
- SLCB launched its corporate video to be used for promotional activities both locally and internationally.
- Revamped SLCB website. The website is designed to include sophisticated features and mobile friendly layout. ([www.meetinsrilanka.com](http://www.meetinsrilanka.com))
- Developed SLCB mobile application in order to give easy access to details of MICE facilities.
- Production of seven (07) MICE influential 30 second video clips.
- Preparation of creatives for Advertising in local and international promotions.
  - Social Media Creatives.
  - Artworks for Magazines and Newspapers.
  - Standees / Pennant artworks.
  - Trade fair pavilion artworks and designs.
  - Corporate material and brochures.
- Series of educational seminars on “Tourism Operation Guidelines – Covid-19”.
- Webinars:
  - The MICE conference 2.0, organized by exhibition experts and MICE affairs media magazine.
  - SLCB participated at ITB Asia virtual exhibition and conference.
- Organization of Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) 2020 conference in December.
- Regional MICE training for hoteliers & industry members.
- SLCB presentation at ICCA “Around the world in 40 minutes” session held on 27th Oct 2020.
- Familiarization programme of MICE venues for industry members in Colombo.

## EXPO 2020 DUBAI

Expo 2020 Dubai was scheduled to be held from 20th September 2020 to 20th April, 2021 over a period of 6 months to cover 192 countries and 15 million visitors from around the world. Considering the global pandemic situation, the event was postponed from the initial schedule to 1st October 2021 till 31st March, 2022. This is a strategic event for Sri Lanka, and the Export Development Board (EDB) has been the lead agency entrusted to coordinate the event since 2018. The event was then transferred to Sri Lanka Tourism through a cabinet paper in November 2020. Considering the COVID-19 situation and the resulting negative impact on the expected visitor numbers (footfall of the exhibition), Sri Lanka Tourism will mark the presence at the event to ensure visibility for Sri Lanka and to protect the bilateral relationships, given the resources and funding constraints.

To remain competitive, the tourism industry of Sri Lanka should recognize and highlight the factors that make the travel experience in Sri Lanka unique and authentic. Therefore, strategically positioning the Sri Lankan brand and influencing consumer perception is of utmost importance. In the past, the emphasis has been on attending trade shows having spent nearly LKR 1 billion in 2019 on B2B promotions.

For contemporary tourism promotion, consumer outreach is far more critical to ensure effectiveness while continuing to work with the trade partners such as tour operators who have been key contributors to Sri Lanka Tourism over the years.

# 08

## **PILLAR EIGHT: POSITION AND MARKET SRI LANKA**





## GLOBAL PROMOTIONS CAMPAIGN

The Cabinet of Ministers granted approval to carry out a 5-year Global Communication Campaign with an estimated budget of US\$ 190 million. Given the slowdown in the industry and drop in collections of the Tourism Development Levy, this investment may need to be scaled back at the initial stages.

The proposed campaign is of utmost importance to the Tourism Industry of Sri Lanka as it will assist in repositioning Sri Lanka Tourism. It will help attract yielding tourists post COVID-19 since in the short to medium term the visitor numbers are expected to be low given the pandemic situation. As part of the campaign, we will attempt to promote adventures, wellness (including Ayurveda *Hela Wedakama*), and other identified key attributes and features of the country as part of the offerings. The proposed campaign is crucial to ensure the competitiveness of the destination while ensuring that Sri Lanka does not lose-out in the new normal travelling. Sri Lanka since 2010 has not had an integrated global promotion. Thus, the launch of the campaign at the earliest possible is vital as other competing countries have already commenced promoting their destinations.

This would be an integrated communication campaign which involves Eight Destination representation Companies for UK, Germany (covering Switzerland & Austria, France (Covering Belgium, Luxemburg), India, China, Australia, Russia and GCC (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Oman) and eight Public Relation Companies for USA, Spain, Italy Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Japan, Korea Poland and Netherlands to carry out tasks of public relations, media buying and to represent Sri Lanka locally. A creative company will be appointed for formulation of the creative strategy, creative development, and content creation of the campaign. The Digital Agency appointed will create digital assets and will manage the Social accounts of the Bureau and the campaign. All eighteen Agencies mentioned will be managed through a Campaign Management Unit. The validation and monitoring of the campaign will be done by an independent Research Agency.

## INITIATE & DEVELOP A STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN TO PROMOTE TOURISM

- Strategic Communication plan is being developed as part of the Global Communication Campaign (GCC) for which Cabinet Approval was received.
- Phase 1 procurement process in progress.
- Progress made
  - Cabinet and board approvals received for the campaign.
  - Global Communication campaign mechanism and strategy developed.
  - Treasury approval received.
  - Bidding documents prepared for creative, research, digital and campaign management units.
  - Bidding documents being prepared for the Destination Representation Companies and Public Relational Companies.
  - TEC approvals received for creative, digital and campaign management units.
  - TEC approval pending for research.



For the tourism sector to progress, infrastructure and supporting services need to be developed along with it. In order to attract more tourists into Sri Lanka, facilities that are up to international standards should be available. This requires special investments targeting strategic tourist destinations to upgrade the overall tour experience in Sri Lanka.

# 09

## **PILLAR NINE: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE**





## **PROVIDE INVESTMENT AND OTHER FACILITIES TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DEVELOP TOURISM**

- Developed a Master Tourism Investment application, covering all Line Agency requirements.
- Increased new tourism investment projects processed by the Investor Relations Unit (IRU) of the SLTDA from US\$ 190 million in 2019 to US\$ 835 million. (This includes one single project with a value of US\$ 600 million).

International and local investors found procedures very cumbersome since approval of an average of 15 to 25 institutions are required for investment in a tourism project. There are 43 such project approving agencies listed.

A single window system was introduced with a professionally designed, comprehensive Master Application which has addressed this long-standing issue and has already increased tourism investment approvals by 340% (Including the high value single project. If that project is excluded it still reflects a growth of 24% against the previous year). Investors make a single application, and we can effectively coordinate all approvals with other agencies. We are in the process of developing a software to automate inter-agency coordination and approvals.

## **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT, NEW LANDS AND LEASES FOR TOURISM PROJECTS**

- The SLTDA initiated new theme resort development projects to cover the Northern part of the island, by identifying suitable lands in Mannar area and Delft Island in Jaffna. The land acquisition/vesting process is in progress and the aim of these new proposed resorts is to expand tourism routes and increase tourism infrastructure facilities for the tourists to experience the attractions and culture in the regions. These also will provide fair opportunities for more people to actively engage in the tourism industry.
- The SLTDA completed developing the tourism zoning plans for Ella and Arugambay obtaining the services of UDA, while the zoning plan for Nuwara Eliya is in progress. The completed zoning plans will be gazetted in the near future.
- The SLTDA following the proper procedures, obtained necessary approvals to lease out SLTDA owned lands in Kalpitiya, Kuchchaweli & Bentota Resorts to potential investors for new projects amounting to US\$ 478 million adding 1600 new rooms.



## **INVESTOR HANDBOOK**

An Investor handbook was introduced providing all information in a coherent and simplified manner about the project approving process and streamlined mechanism, as a roadmap as well as a guidance to fill the common application form and bring in tourism ideas. The handbook covers the entire approval process from the pre application meeting to the final approval. It provides design ideas based on Sri Lanka iconic architectural traditions, unique cultural heritage, and natural resources.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINE FOR NEW TOURISM DEVELOPMENTS IN SRI LANKA**

A guideline was developed to help investors design projects complying with minimum requirements of SLTDA guidelines while adopting green building concepts to its best capacity. Another important objective is to encourage new tourism developments to have unique design characters authentic to Sri Lanka, best suited for respective areas and locations. It was the first time a design guideline of this nature is introduced for developments deviating from imposing rules and regulations. The initial outline and the first few chapters of this document is completed and it is planned to be finalized at the earliest, after taking inputs from relevant professional bodies such as Urban Development Authority, Institute of Architects, Institute of Engineers etc.

Supporting Accelerating Investment in Sri Lanka (SAIL) project of USAID came forward in assisting the re-engineering of the investment approval process.

## **STRENGTHENING INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION – SIGNING MOUS**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 10th February 2020 between SLTDA & Board of Investment (BOI) to enhance the cooperation between the two agencies to reduce time and costs of investors.

Previously SLTDA had signed MoUs with Urban Development Authority (UDA) and the Department of Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management.

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

- Increase and expedite local and foreign direct investments in the tourism sector.
- Incentives to set up high quality, sustainable hotels and tourism services.
- Reduction in malpractice.
- Employment creation.
- Sustainable environmental management.

# 10

## PILLAR TEN: PARTNERSHIPS

For an industry like tourism, building partnerships with Foreign Missions, Diplomats, Institutions and International Funding Agencies is important to advance mutual interests and achieve long term targets. They are also helpful in improving domestic policies and strategies to be in line with international standards. This year many partners including the fifty-two Tourism related Associations, the Universities and Academia, Department of Immigration and Emigration, Airport Aviation Authority, Civil Aviation Authority, the Sri Lanka Army, Sri Lanka Police and the Ministry of Health have provided the Industry with valuable guidance and significant support.

Tourism unlike any other sector requires the support of multiple Ministries and Line Agencies. The journey of an international traveler starts from the time he lands at the airport and the experience he has from that point onwards. With social media widely used, any experience whether it be positive or negative is shared and has a significant impact on tourism.





## **WORKING IN COLLABORATION WITH ALL SRI LANKA FOREIGN MISSIONS**

Working in close partnership with the Sri Lanka Foreign Missions to promote and market the destination. In this respect special mission specific webinar programs and orientation programs were carried out and plans drawn to appoint destination representation and public relational agencies for key tourism markets as part of the global communication campaign who will work with the Sri Lanka Foreign Missions to expand Sri Lanka's tourism footprint. Further international events such as Expo 2020 Dubai will be organized in partnership with the respective missions. Sri Lanka Tourism will work in integration and interaction with the respective Sri Lanka Foreign Missions.

## **WORKING IN COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES**

In areas where we lack up to date technical skills, we have partnered with specialised agencies effectively and we are grateful for their support. They include:

- MDF Australia
- Australia Skills Development
- World Bank
- ADB
- UNDP
- USAID-SAIL
- EU
- ITC (International Trade Center)
- S4IG Australia
- GIZ

## **INTER-MINISTERIAL COOPERATION**

It is critical to work in close collaboration with other agencies to help ensure tourism friendly policies,

- ICTA to digitalize tourism.
- CCF – Sigiriya Sustainable destination and online ticket purchase on Travel App.
- Wildlife – Sustainable Tourism and online ticket purchase on Travel App.
- Railways – Upgrade some carriages to first class, upgrade popular stations and online ticket purchase on Travel App.
- Train connectivity from Katunayake Airport.
- Whale watching in line with international best practices.
- Central Planning with BOI and UDA to ensure development sympathetic to the environment.
- Tourism zones to be expanded.
- Sri Lanka Police to expand Tourist Police.
- MEPA in environmental protection.

## **COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

- Working in collaboration with all Sri Lanka foreign missions which is linked to marketing campaigns and develop dialogues.
- Seek proposals from the Universities to develop tourism in order to achieve a scientific and holistic approach that is tested through collaborations.
- Furthermore, we will work with Tour Operators, Credit Card Companies, Online Travel Agents, Airlines and any partner that would support Sri Lanka Tourism in a cost effective manner.

## CONCLUSION

Post COVID-19 recovery strategies would include:

- Continuity of support to tourism businesses and SMEs via the already started relief programs.
- Airport opening strategy is planned with detailed protocol in place.
- Domestic campaign to increase travel within the country.
- Safe and Secure Certificate awarding to accommodation and other service providers
- Wellness by way of Ayurveda and *Hela Wedakama* to be promoted.
- Preparation for Global marketing campaign from 2021.
- Global campaign strategy development.

The change in Tourism models started before COVID-19 health pandemic, with travellers looking for experiences and connection with the community when travelling. Online Travel Agencies who started dominating global travel, due to the growth of the internet and social media, met pent-up demand from travellers looking for experiences that are authentic and started creating custom travel itineraries based on their own research.

Post COVID-19, the traditional mass tourism model has been further impacted.

Supporting community-based tourism where local experiences are shared with the travelers provided them an opportunity to immerse in the local communities. It also ensures a source of income to the local communities.

Millennials are growing as a major travel segment globally and will be captured in the tourism strategy fabric. In parallel to this emerging trend product strategy changes will also be made to incorporate 'experiences' and to enhance the service quality levels throughout the product offering. Sri Lanka Tourism will partner with local universities and donors to drive this initiative and to facilitate the industry with the changed focus.

Post this health pandemic more emphasis will be placed to reach the consumer particularly through digital channels where travellers' user generated content such as storytelling which would provide content that is more effective, compelling and authentic, differentiating Sri Lanka with its unique attributes, providing much-needed economic benefits in rural and remote areas.

With the support of all stakeholders and all citizens, Sri Lanka can achieve significant success in Tourism.



S  SRI LANKA

**Ministry of Tourism  
&  
Sri Lanka Tourism**

December 2020