Monthly Tourist Arrivals Report:

A Monthly Snapshot of International Arrivals to Sri Lanka from Immigration Statistics

December 2023

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority

Introduction

The following document provides a synthesis of the most recent December, 2023 international visitor arrivals data sourced from the Department of Immigration & Emigration. The data is current as of 31st December 2023, and subject to change. The data provides an overview of month-on-month and annual changes in visitor arrivals to Sri Lanka from international source markets. The data is meant to provide an overview of how travel and tourism is performing to Sri Lanka.

This report is developed by the Research & International Relations Division at Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA).Questions, comments and feedback are welcome and will support the future amendment and enhancement of the report to ensure it meets the data and insights needs of Sri Lanka's Government and industry stakeholders.
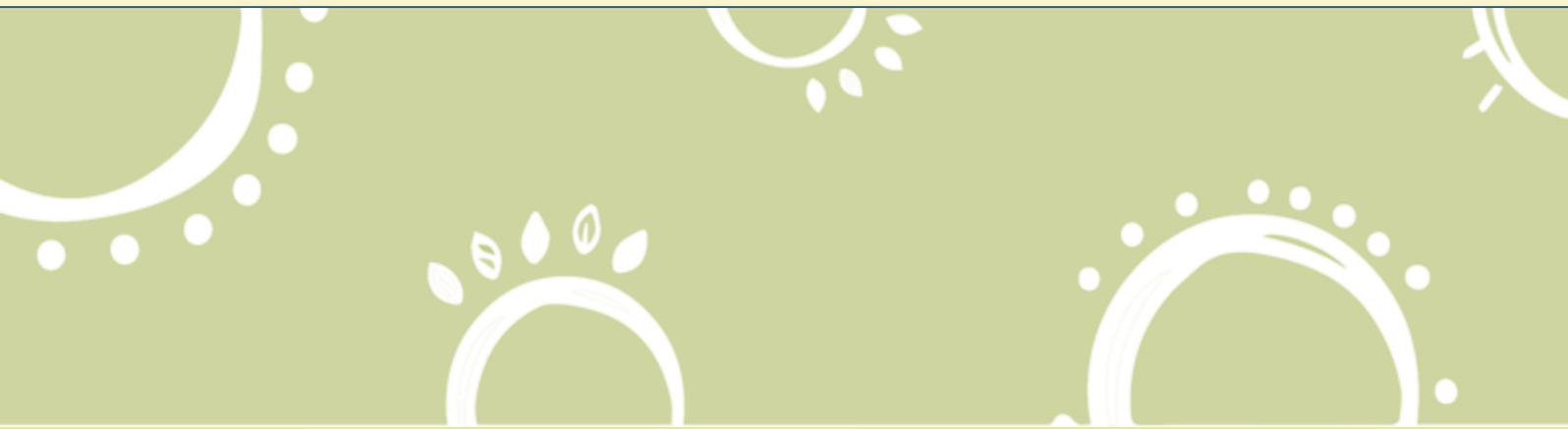
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Summary

In December 2023, Sri Lanka experienced a notable increase in the arrival of international tourists, reaching the peak for the entire year. The number of foreign visitors saw a remarkable surge of 128.7%, totaling 210,352 arrivals. This upswing may be linked to the peak tourist season, favorable conditions in Sri Lanka, and the recognition of Sri Lanka as one of the top destinations by travel-related entities.

Between January and December 2023, Sri Lanka reached a noteworthy achievement in the overall count of tourist arrivals. The total surpassed the previous year's figure of 719,978, reaching an impressive 1,487,303 visitors.

In December 2023, there was a significant upswing in visitors to Sri Lanka, with India, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia standing out as the key source markets. These countries played a crucial role in propelling the growth in tourist arrivals, contributing significantly to the overall rejuvenation of Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

UNWTO had predicted a slowdown in the fourth quarter of 2023 due to existing economic and geopolitical challenges. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that the total number of international arrivals will reach 1.3 billion in 2023. Despite grappling with economic issues such as high inflation and reduced output, as well as specific geopolitical tensions and conflicts, international tourism is on track to approach pre-pandemic levels by 2024. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) 2023 Economic Impact Research (EIR), the Travel & Tourism sector is nearing its 2019 peak, recovering by over 95%.

Table 1. Monthly tourist arrivals, December 2023

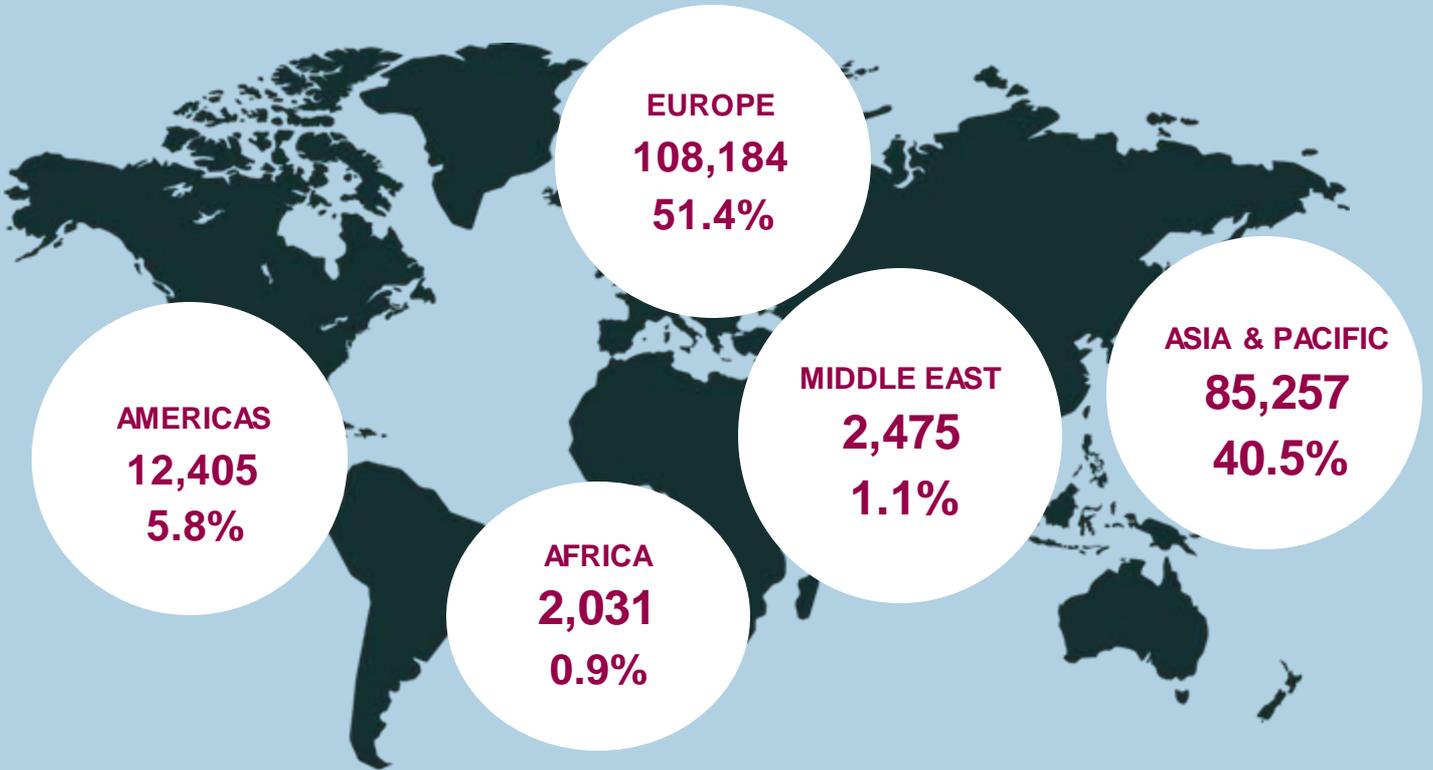| Month	2022	2023	% change 2023/22
January	82,327	102,545	24.5
February	96,507	107,639	11.5
March	106,500	125,495	17.8
April	62,980	105,498	67.5
May	30,207	83,309	175.8
June	32,856	100,388	205.5
July	47,293	143,039	202.4
August	37,760	136,405	261.2
September	29,802	111,938	275.6
October	42,026	109,199	159.8
November	59,759	151,496	153.51
December	91,961	210,352	128.7
TOTAL	719,978	1,487,303	106.6

Tourist Arrivals | December 2023

210,352

Tourist arrivals by region and percentage share

December 2023

Map 1.Tourist arrivals by region and percentage share

EUROPE
108,184
51.4%

ASIA & PACIFIC
85,257
40.5%

AMERICAS
12,405
5.8%

MIDDLE EAST
2,475
1.1%

AFRICA
2,031
0.9%

Analyzing the patterns of tourist influx by region unveils the evolving dynamics and shifting influences that characterize Sri Lanka's appeal to global travelers. Europe had a considerable impact on Sri Lanka, representing a substantial portion of tourists at 51.4% of total arrivals. Simultaneously, Asia and the Pacific took the lead as the predominant source market for tourists visiting Sri Lanka, making up 40.5% of the overall influx. This alteration in the origin of tourists highlights the evolving dynamics in Sri Lanka's tourism sector, with Europe playing a significant role and Asia and the Pacific emerging as key contributors.

The surge in tourism owes its momentum to growing demand from nations like India, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia, all of which have significantly bolstered Sri Lanka's tourism sector. To explore these contributions further, the Americas made up 5.8% of the overall tourist arrivals, with the Middle East and Africa contributing 1.1% and 0.9%, respectively. Each of these regions has played unique and discernible roles in shaping the features of Sri Lanka's tourism scenery.

The persistent geopolitical tensions in Ukraine and Palestine remained significant factors, presenting potential risks to international tourism in the latter part of 2023. According to the IMF's 'World Economic Outlook,' a decline in global growth was expected, with a decrease from 3.5% in 2022 to 3.0% in 2023. However, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) anticipates that by the end of 2023, nearly half of the 185 countries will have either fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels or be within 95% of full recovery. Conversely, the economic outlook for 2024 is marked by high uncertainty, characterized by increasing interest rates, ongoing global conflicts, and a growing frequency of climate disasters (Harverd Business Review, 2023).

Top primary markets and top potential markets

Top primary markets, December 2023

India ①
Arrivals : **43,973** | % Share: **20.9**

Italy ⑪
Arrivals: **3,389** | % Share : **1.6**

Russia Federation ②
Arrivals: **29,657** | % Share: **14.1**

Poland ⑫
Arrivals: **3,217** | % Share : **1.5**

United Kingdom ③
Arrivals: **19,265** | % Share : **9.2**

Bangaladesh ⑬
Arrivals: **3,185** | % Share : **1.5**

Germany ④
Arrivals : **13,747** | % Share : **6.5**

Netherlands ⑭
Arrivals: **2.672** | % Share : **1.3**

Australia ⑤
Arrivals: **10,847** | % Share : **5.2**

Spain ⑮
Arrivals: **2,667** | % Share : **1.3**

China ⑥
Arrivals: **8,274** | % Share : **3.9**

Switzerlands ⑯
Arrivals: **2,654** | % Share : **1.3**

United States ⑦
Arrivals : **8,044** | % Share : **3.8**

Japan ⑰
Arrivals: **2,554** | % Share : **1.2**

Maldives ⑧
Arrivals: **5,968** | % Share: **2.8**

Czech Republic ⑱
Arrivals: **2,466** | % Share: **1.2**

France ⑨
Arrivals: **5,509** | % Share: **2.6**

Kazakhstan ⑲
Arrivals: **2,399** | % Share : **1.1**

Canada ⑩
Arrivals: **3,640** | % Share : **1.7**

Sweden ⑳
Arrivals: **2,118** | % Share : **1.0**

Note: The top primary markets for Sri Lanka have been identified using visitor arrivals. The previous methodology used to identify the markets was altered due to the current arrival trends in the source markets and the socio economic factors in Sri Lanka. The intention is to track these source markets on a go-forward basis to understand future performance of Sri Lanka's tourism economy, including during the projected international tourism recovery period, 2022-2025.

Top potential markets, December 2023

Austria ①
Arrivals : **1,883**| % Share : **0.9**

New Zeland ⑥
Arrivals : **1,343** | % Share: **0.6**

Malaysia ②
Arrivals : **1,784**| % Share : **0.8**

Pakistan ⑦
Arrivals: 1,168 | % Share: **0.6**

Singpore ③
Arrivals : **1,601** | % Share: **0.8**

Ukraine ⑧
Arrivals: **1,042** | % Share : **0.5**

Belarus ④
Arrivals : **1,566** | % Share : **0.7**

Hungary ⑨
Arrivals: **1,040** | % Share: **0.5**

Denmark ⑤
Arrivals: **1,440** | % Share: **0.7**

Norway ⑩
Arrivals: **1,035** | % Share: **0.5**

Note: The top potential markets for Sri Lanka have been identified using visitor arrivals data. The previous methodology used to identify the markets was altered due to the current arrival trends in the source markets and the socio economic factors in Sri Lanka. The intention is to track these source markets on a go-forward basis to understand future performance of Sri Lanka's tourism economy, including during the projected international tourism recovery period, 2022-2025.

Top ten source markets

December 2023

In December, India took the lead as the primary source of tourism for Sri Lanka, accounting for 21% of total arrivals. Following closely were Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia, contributing 14%, 9%, 6%, and 5%, respectively. These statistics highlight shifting preferences and evolving travel trends. Notably, there has been considerable increase in arrivals from China, Germany , India & United Kindom compared to the previous December, indicating a shift towards emerging destinations. The significant presence of Moldives and Canada in the top ten source markets is noteworthy. Various factors, such as the commencement of the peak season, improved air connectivity, favorable local conditions, geographical proximity, and geopolitical considerations, collectively position these countries as the primary contributors to Sri Lanka's tourism.

Chart 1.Top ten source markets to Sri Lanka, December 2023

- Other 29%
- India 21%
- Russia 14%
- United Kingdom 9%
- Germany 6%
- Australia 5%
- China 4%
- United States 4%
- Maldives 3%
- France 3%
- Canada 2%
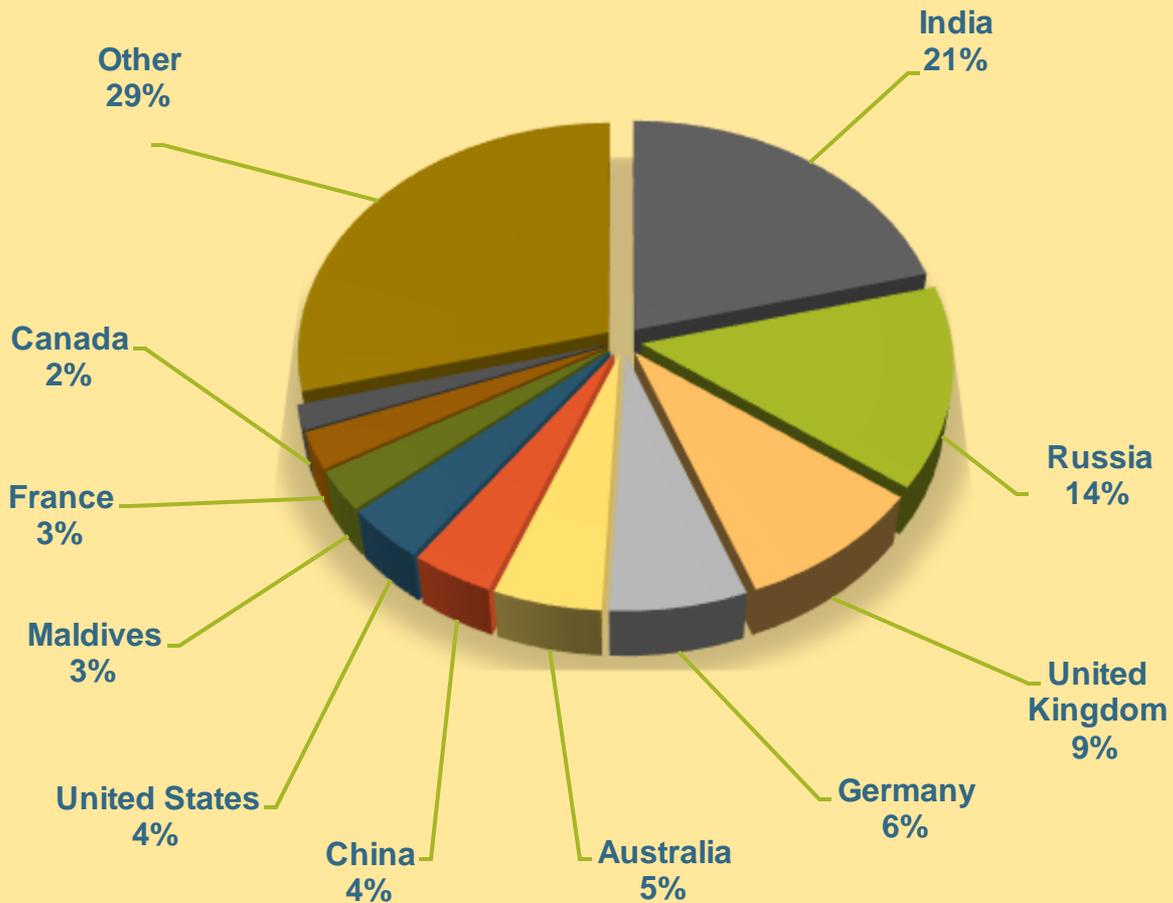
Table 2. Top ten source markets to Sri Lanka, December 2023

Rank	Country of Residence	Tourist Arrivals (December 2023)			Tourist Arrivals (December 2022)
		By Air	By Sea	Total	
1	India	43,804	169	43,973	17,350
2	Russian Federation	29,329	328	29,657	19,963
3	United Kingdom	16,689	2,576	19,265	7,879
4	Germany	11,212	2,535	13,747	4,984
5	Australia	10,599	248	10,847	5,158
6	China	8,270	04	8,274	635
7	United States	6,929	1,115	8,044	3,638
8	Maldives	5,968	0	5,968	3,444
9	France	5,473	36	5,509	2,665
10	Canada	3,341	299	3,640	2,618

Chart 2. Comparison of arrivals from top ten markets to Sri Lanka, Nov/ Dec – 2023
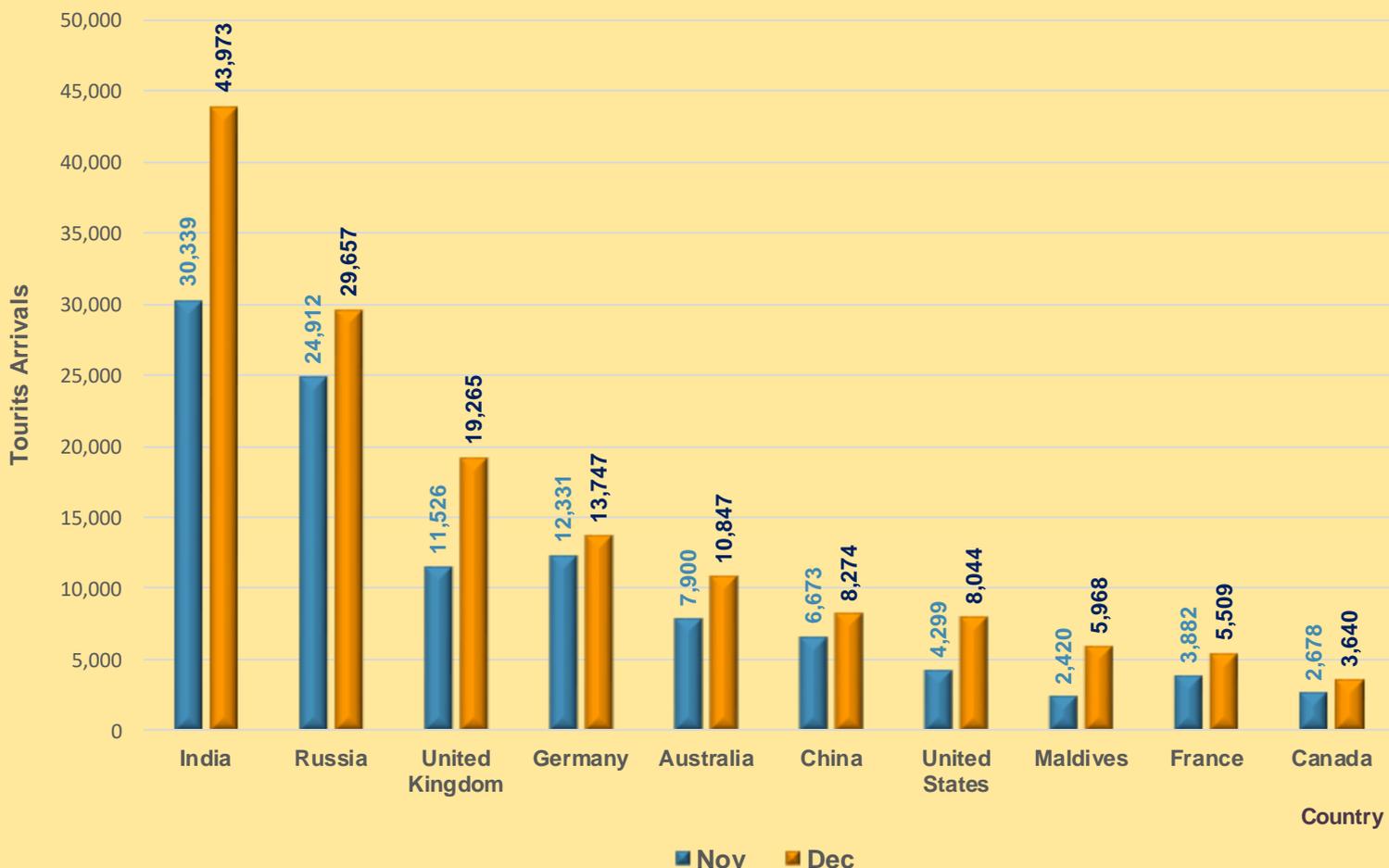
Top ten source markets
January to December 2023

From January to December 2023, Sri Lanka experienced an increase in international tourist arrivals from its primary source markets compared to the corresponding period in 2022. Particularly noteworthy was the significant surge in tourists coming from countries like India, Australia, the USA, and the Maldives, making substantial contributions to the overall growth in tourist numbers for the year 2023.

However, it is important to emphasize that tourist arrivals from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada did not exhibit significant growth compared to the same period in the previous year. This suggests evolving travel preferences and patterns specific to these countries.

Table 3. Top ten markets to Sri Lanka, January to December 2023

Rank	Country of Residence	Tourist Arrivals (Jan. – Dec. 2023)	Tourist Arrivals (Jan. – Dec.2022)
1	India	302,844	123,004
2	Russian Federation	197,498	91,272
3	United Kingdom	130,088	85,187
4	Germany	102,539	55,542
5	China	68,789	4,715
6	Australia	67,436	30,924
7	France	56,251	35,482
8	United States	46,344	22,230
9	Canada	43,944	26,845
10	Maldives	37,328	18,880
11	Others	434,242	225,897
Total		**1,487,303**	**719,978**

Chart 3. Top ten source markets to Sri Lanka, January to December 2023

Others, 29%
India, 20%
Russia, 13%
Maldives, 2%
Canada, 3%
United States, 3%
United Kingdom, 9%
France, 4%
Germany, 7%
Australia, 5%
China, 5%
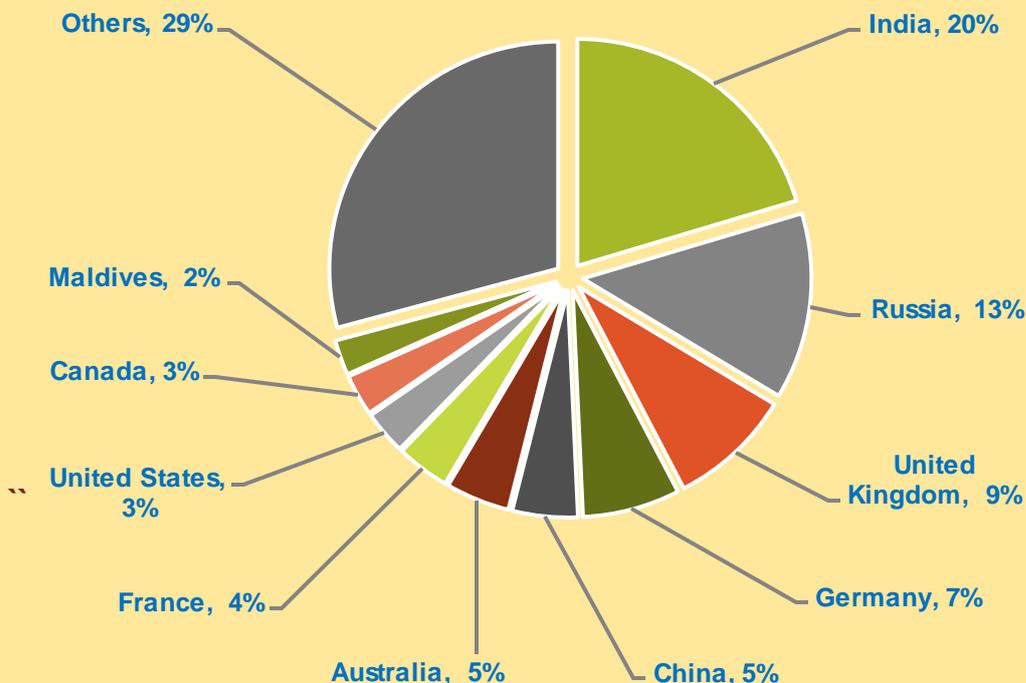
Tourist arrivals by purpose of visit

December 2023

An analysis of the motivations driving tourists to visit Sri Lanka reveals distinct trends in their travel purposes. A significant majority, comprising 65% of all visits, chose Sri Lanka as their destination for leisure and vacation, highlighting its widespread popularity as a top choice for those seeking relaxation and enjoyable experiences. Another 10% of tourists arrived to reconnect with friends and relatives, emphasizing Sri Lanka's ability to attract individuals with personal connections or a desire to nurture relationships with loved ones residing there.

In contrast, business-related purposes constituted only 2% of tourist visits, indicating a relatively small segment of visitors arriving for professional engagements. Additionally, 6% of tourists came to Sri Lanka for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) purposes, showcasing the country's growing reputation as a venue for such events. Furthermore, niche interests were represented, with 0.6% and 0.036% visiting for health/Ayurvedic and educational purposes, respectively. These findings underscore Sri Lanka's multifaceted appeal and highlight its attractiveness as a destination that caters to a wide range of traveler preferences and goals.

In December, across the majority of source markets, the primary reason for visiting Sri Lanka was leisure. Specifically, the data indicates that a significant proportion of tourists from key source markets, including India (66.2%), Russia (65.9%), the United Kingdom (70.2%), Germany (76.3%), China (85.5%), France (74.2%), the United States (60.1%), chose Sri Lanka as a destination for recreational purposes. This data underscores the country's strong appeal as a place for relaxation and enjoyable experiences.

As indicated by the purpose of visits statistics, December is a favored month for visiting friends and relatives in Sri Lanka. 47.2% of Australian tourists, and 47.7% of Canadian tourists primarily chose Sri Lanka as a destination to reconnect with friends and relatives.

In addition, 15.5% of Russian tourists and 5.2% of Chinese tourists traveled to Sri Lanka for MICE purposes, while 5% of Indian visitors traveled to Sri Lanka for business purposes. Furthermore, 4% of German tourists journeyed to Sri Lanka with the specific intention of seeking health-related services.

Chart 4: Purpose of visit

Business 2%
Health /Ayuruvedic 0.66 %
MICE 6%
Visiting friends and relatives 10%
Other or not responded 17%
Sports 0.37 %
Religious 0.36 %
Education 0.036 %
Official 0.006 %
Pleasure/ Vacation 65%
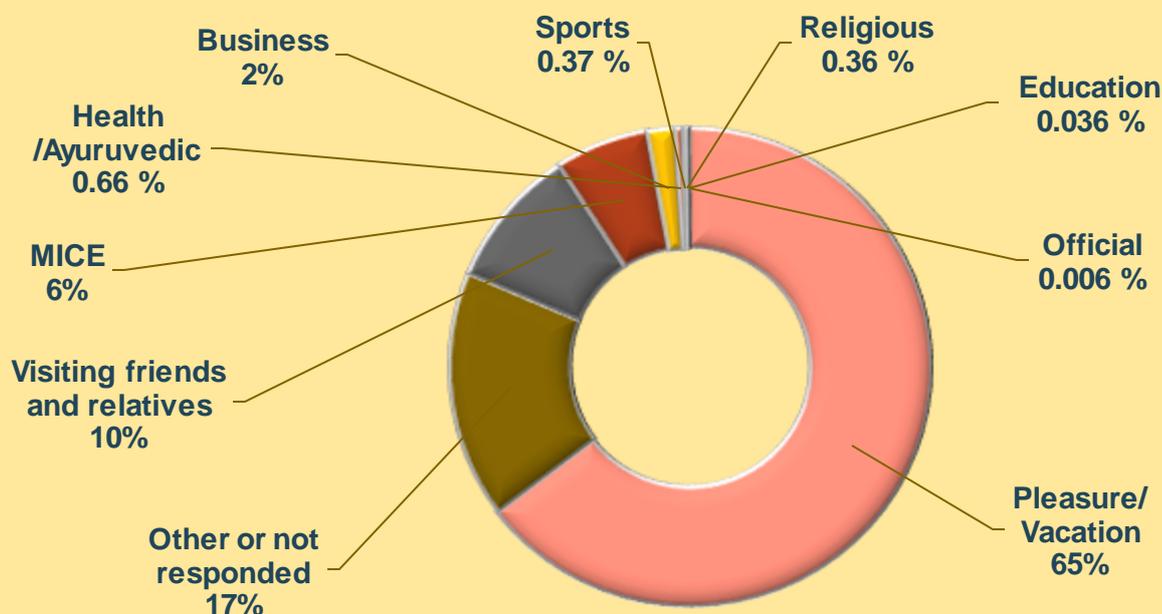
Chart 5 : Purpose of visit vs main source markets

Percentage Share

Official	Education	Religious
Sports	Health / Ayuruvedic	Business
MICE	Visiting friends and relatives	Other or not responded
Pleasure/ Vacation		

Top Ten Markets

India, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, China, United States, Maldives, France, Canada
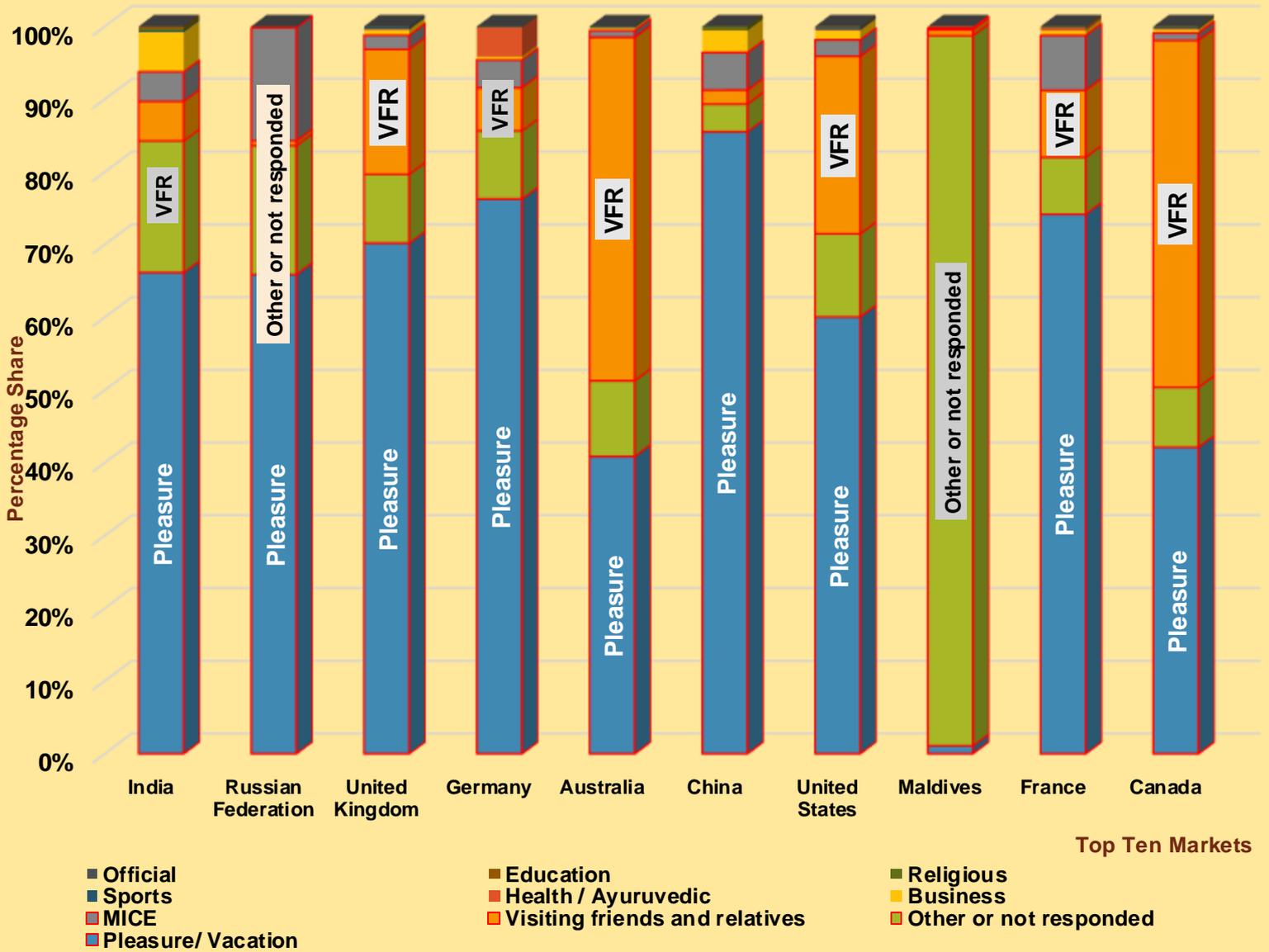
Emerging Travel Trends in 2024: Navigating the Future of Tourism

In the dynamic landscape of tourism, the year 2024 is poised to introduce a multitude of trends that will profoundly influence the way tourists engage with the world. From technological innovations to shifting consumer tastes, numerous trends are set to mold the industry in the upcoming year. As a popular tourism destination, Sri Lanka can strategically harness its resources to align with and cater to these evolving trends.

Plan-free travel

A growing counter-movement is emerging, advocating for travel without any predetermined plans by rejecting the never-ending scroll to meticulously plan every detail of a trip, and embracing spontaneity instead. Booking.com has recently revealed that 50 percent of UK travelers express a desire to arrange a surprise trip in 2024, where every aspect, including the destination, remains unknown until the moment of arrival. Achieving this can be facilitated through travel companies like Black Tomato, known for their Get Lost service. This unique offering allows customers to choose their preferred environment – be it polar, jungle, desert, mountain, or coastal – and entrusts the Black Tomato team with all other decision-making aspects of the journey. This has gained notable popularity among solo female travelers. (Allard, 2023).

Silent travel

In the era of constant stimulation, the appeal of silence in our travel experiences for 2024 cannot be overstated. Providing an opportunity for restoration and recalibration, silent travel embodies a more mindful approach to journeys, sparing travelers the need for a vacation to recover from their vacation. Although silent meditation retreats have gained popularity as a wellness trend, silent travel extends to include secluded nature resorts, sleep retreats, tranquil hotels, hushed walking tours, and even silent disco and concert experiences.

The recent surge in the silent walking trend on platforms like TikTok reflects a growing desire to escape the clamor of technology-driven lives and embrace tranquility, promising positive implications for overall well-being. Research from 2015 suggests that silence may stimulate brain development.With the Global Wellness Institute predicting a 21 percent surge in wellness tourism in the next two years, silence stands out as a compelling antidote to the chaos of our perpetually connected lives. Furthermore, silent travel aligns with the broader shift towards more sustainable tourism (Allard, 2023)

Sri Lanka can benefit from the growing trend of plan-free and silent travel by promoting its serene and tranquil locations. The country's diverse landscapes, including secluded nature resorts and quiet beaches, can attract travelers seeking a break from the constant stimulation of technology-driven lives.

AI becoming the travel companion

In the early part of last year, following the rapid growth of Open AI's Chat GPT, which set records as the fastest-growing consumer app, travelers began experimenting with AI chatbots to seek inspiration for their next destinations. More recently, major travel booking platforms have started incorporating AI chatbots into the booking process. However, if 2023 marked the rise of AI chatbots assisting in trip planning, 2024 is poised to be the year when AI seeks to become your ultimate travel companion. A surge of new AI-powered features and products is geared towards supporting travelers on the ground

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In 2024, AI is expected to play a more active role in travel experiences, offering real-time interventions. One tangible illustration is live translation, a feature Samsung plans to introduce on its 2024 Galaxy devices. Additionally, popular apps that already utilize will see increased AI personalization. Uber's CEO has recently emphasized the company's growing reliance on personalized AI algorithms, designed to understand the habits and provide suggestions based on activities. For those at the forefront of technology adoption, real-time travel interventions may even involve abandoning screens entirely, opting for a screenless personal translator and travel assistant attached to the chest (Allard, 2023).

The incorporation of AI in travel experiences can enhance visitor satisfaction. Sri Lanka can consider implementing AI-powered features, such as real-time translation services or personalized suggestions based on traveler activities. This could enhance the overall travel experience and make it more convenient for international visitors.

Rise of automated bookings

Considering the escalating dependence on technology, one of the most significant trends anticipated in travel for 2024 is the surge in automated bookings.
While automated (online and app) bookings in travel have been around, they are projected to experience substantial growth in the coming years. In 2020, the online travel booking market held a value of $432 billion. This figure is estimated to soar to $833 billion by 2025. (Euromonitor International,2023).

With the surge in automated bookings, Sri Lanka should focus on a user-friendly online booking system to cater to the increasing demand for convenient and efficient travel planning. Collaborations with major travel platforms and ensuring effective advertising in relevant spaces will be crucial.

Sustainable journeys: Exploring the depths of meaningful travel

In Intrepid Travel's recent 'A Sustainable Future for Travel' Report, , the concept of 'People-Positive' travel is positioned as the evolution beyond sustainable travel. The report suggests that regenerative travel will shift its focus from being product-led to social-led. It highlights that people-positive travel emphasizes the development of deeper human connections while taking into account both environmental and social impacts (Euromonitor, 2023).

Simultaneously, Hilton's 2024 Trends Report notes a transformation in the composition of the modern traveler. It identifies a growing emphasis on experiences (85%), with a significant number expressing interest in exploring the unknown (81%), indulging in local cuisine (64%), and learning about local customs and traditions (48%) during holidays. Many individuals are allocating resources specifically for travel, with more than half (52%) adjusting spending in other areas to prioritize their travel experiences. The report indicates that 56% of people in Britain plan to increase their travel spending in 2024 compared to 2023. Additionally, a quarter (25%) are actively seeking locally-sourced food during their travels to immerse themselves in local traditions (Clarke, 2023).

According to a joint report from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Trip.com Group, 69% of travelers actively seek sustainable travel options in 2023, and this trend shows no signs of diminishing (WTTC, 2023).

Sri Lanka can align itself with the sustainable travel trend by emphasizing its commitment to eco-tourism and responsible tourism practices. Promoting initiatives that contribute positively to local communities and the environment can attract travelers seeking meaningful and socially-led experiences.

Unlocking personalization: Travel brands embrace consumers' passions

Anticipated in the coming year are substantial growth areas in niche tourism segments, including wellness, luxury, eco-tourism, sports, and adventure. Consumers are progressively emphasizing personalized experiences that resonate with their lifestyles and values, fostering a heightened willingness to invest more in what holds the utmost significance to them (Euromonitor International,2023).

The emphasis on personalized experiences presents an opportunity for Sri Lanka to highlight its diverse offerings, catering to niche tourism segments such as wellness, luxury, and adventure. Tailoring experiences to resonate with travelers' lifestyles and values can make Sri Lanka a more appealing destination.

Ascendance of experience seekers

In Hilton's 2024 Trends Report, a shift in the characteristics of the modern traveler is recognized. The report highlights a growing inclination towards prioritizing experiences (85%), with a significant number expressing eagerness to venture into the unknown (81%), indulge in local culinary delights (64%), and delve into the customs and traditions of the visited destination (48%). Moreover, a considerable portion of travelers is demonstrating financial dedication to their wanderlust, with more than half (52%) reallocating their expenses to prioritize travel. Additionally, a noteworthy 25% of travelers actively seek locally-sourced food during their trips, aiming to deeply engage with and embrace local traditions. Numerous travel agencies are dedicated to crafting distinctive global experiences through strategic collaborations with handpicked local partners, ensuring travelers enjoy unforgettable stays. The pursuit of authentic travel encounters has steadily gained momentum in recent years(Clarke, 2023).

Sri Lanka can focus on providing unique and authentic experiences that align with the preferences of experience-seeking travelers. Offering value for money and promoting lesser-known destinations can be key strategies.

Evolution of the traveler: Youthful, diverse, and empowered

The noteworthy aspect of the post-pandemic traveler is the shift toward a younger demographic, with millennials (aged 30-44) comprising the largest segment among Wellness Worshippers, Leisure Seekers, Luxury Seekers, and Digital Travellers, as outlined in Euromonitor's Voice of the Consumer: Travel Survey.

Luxury Seekers are most prevalent in Middle Eastern and Asia Pacific countries, while Eco-Adventurers are prominent in Asia Pacific and Europe. Cultural Explorers show the highest representation in Europe (Euromonitor International, 2023).

Traveller Segmentation by Age 2023

% respondents
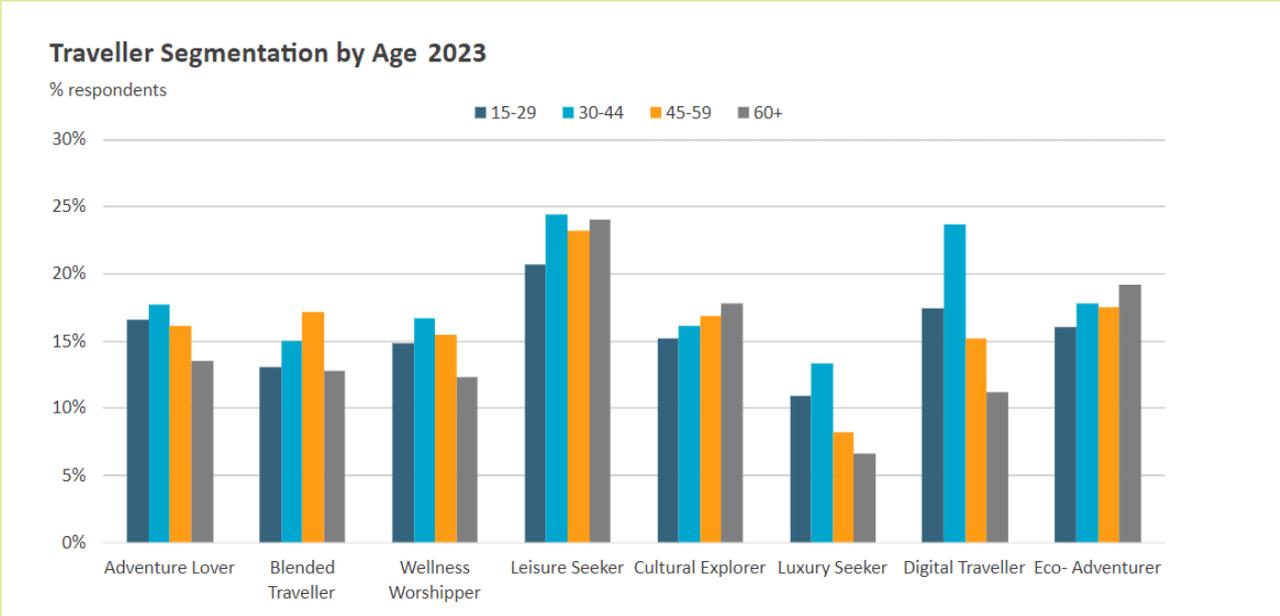
Source: EuroMonitor

Recognizing the shift towards a younger demographic, Sri Lanka can tailor its marketing strategies to appeal to millennials. Highlighting cultural exploration opportunities, eco-friendly activities, and digital-friendly services can attract this evolving traveler segment.

The surge of rail transport and luxury trains

In 2024, rail transport emerges as the fastest-growing travel category globally, experiencing a notable growth rate of 35.6% compared to 2023(Euromonitor International, 2023). Travel booking platforms are noting an increasing demand for especially luxury rail journeys, where the focus is on the journey itself as the ultimate destination. In Asia, the once-halted Eastern & Oriental Express is set for a remarkable comeback commencing in February. The train carriages have undergone an upscale revamp, and the renowned route is being retraced through the picturesque landscapes of Malaysia. Simultaneously, Japan is gaining popularity as a sought-after destination for its scenic train excursions, with the exclusive Train Suite Shiki-shima experiencing high demand, prompting an early closure of applications for its 2024 trips (Allard, 2023).

Sri Lanka can explore opportunities in rail tourism, especially if there is a growing interest in luxury train journeys. Enhancing existing rail services or introducing luxury train experiences that showcase the country's scenic beauty could tap into this emerging trend.

Sri Lanka can capitalize on these global travel trends by adapting its tourism offerings and marketing strategies to align with the preferences of modern travelers. Emphasizing sustainability, personalization, and unique experiences can position Sri Lanka as a desirable destination for a diverse range of travelers.

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International tourist arrivals by country of residence

	December 2023 Tourist Arrivals			Tourist Arrivals Dec 2022	% Change Dec (23/22) 2023	Total Tourist Arrivals up to December 2023	Total Tourist Arrivals up to Dec 2022	% Change up to Dec (23/22)
	By Air	By Sea	Total					
AMERICAS	**10,889**	**1,516**	**12,405**	**6,608**	**87.7**	**95,263**	**51,429**	**85.2**
North America	**10,355**	**1,476**	**11,831**	**6,320**	**87.2**	**91,080**	**49,409**	**84.3**
Canada	3,341	299	3,640	2,618	39.0	43,944	26,845	63.7
Mexico	85	62	147	64	129.7	792	334	137.1
United States	6,929	1,115	8,044	3,638	121.1	46,344	22,230	108.5
Antarctica	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**-**
Antarctica	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	-
Carribean & Central America	**93**	**3**	**96**	**50**	**92.0**	**701**	**306**	**129.1**
Costa Rica	09	01	10	6	66.7	62	40	55.0
Jamaica	10	0	10	2	400.0	57	13	338.5
Others	74	02	76	42	81.0	582	253	130.0
South America	**441**	**37**	**478**	**237**	**101.7**	**3,482**	**1,713**	**103.3**
Argentina	53	14	67	55	21.8	687	268	156.3
Brazil	219	17	236	97	143.3	1,337	669	99.9
Chile	39	02	41	23	78.3	394	182	116.5
Colombia	75	04	79	27	192.6	539	304	77.3
Others	55	0	55	35	57.1	525	290	81.0
AFRICA	**1,826**	**205**	**2,031**	**709**	**186.5**	**9,950**	**4,679**	**112.7**
North Africa	**335**	**0**	**335**	**187**	**79.1**	**2,621**	**1,818**	**44.2**
Morocco	134	0	134	56	139.3	789	446	76.9
Sudan	65	0	65	45	44.4	834	819	1.8
Others	136	0	136	86	58.1	998	553	80.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	**1,491**	**205**	**1,696**	**522**	**224.9**	**7,329**	**2,861**	**156.2**
Kenya	126	0	126	42	200.0	613	230	166.5
Mauritius	84	110	194	41	373.2	471	130	262.3
Nigeria	06	0	06	06	0.0	93	27	244.4
South Africa	810	91	901	258	249.2	3,444	1,502	129.3
Others	465	04	469	175	168.0	2,708	972	178.6

	December 2023 Tourist Arrivals			Tourist Arrivals Dec 2022	% Change Dec (23/22)	Total Tourist Arrivals up to Dec 2023	Total Tourist Arrivals up to Dec 2022	% Change up to Dec (23/22)
	By Air	By Sea	Total					
ASIA & PACIFIC	**84,692**	**565**	**85,257**	**32,455**	**162.7**	**596,933**	**213,537**	**179.5**
North East Asia	**12,141**	**23**	**12,164**	**1,743**	**597.9**	**100,790**	**10,061**	**901.8**
China	8,270	4	8,274	635	-	68,789	4,715	-
Japan	2,549	05	2,554	708	260.7	19,583	3,087	534.4
South Korea	950	07	957	322	197.2	7,298	1,843	296.0
Taiwan	367	07	374	77	385.7	4,999	363	-
Others	05	0	05	01	400.0	121	53	128.3
South East Asia	**5,024**	**69**	**5,093**	**2,034**	**150.4**	**36,060**	**12,095**	**198.1**
Cambodia	27	01	28	20	40.0	519	157	230.6
Indonesia	266	11	277	134	106.7	2,352	885	165.8
Malaysia	1,777	07	1,784	519	243.7	10,940	2,779	293.7
Myanmar	103	0	103	27	281.5	1,130	252	348.4
Philippines	442	06	448	236	89.8	4,164	1,961	112.3
Singapore	1,561	40	1,601	720	122.4	9,551	3,770	153.3
Thailand	633	04	637	311	104.8	4,922	1,725	185.3
Vietnam	202	0	202	58	248.3	2,307	519	344.5
Others	13	0	13	09	44.4	175	47	272.3
Oceania	**11,952**	**302**	**12,254**	**5,761**	**112.7**	**75,635**	**33,876**	**123.3**
Australia	10,599	248	10,847	5,158	110.3	67,436	30,924	118.1
New Zealand	1,289	54	1,343	572	134.8	7,913	2,866	176.1
Others	64	0	64	31	106.5	286	86	232.6
South Asia	**55,575**	**171**	**55,746**	**22,917**	**143.3**	**384,448**	**157,505**	**144.1**
Afghanistan	16	0	16	11	45.5	181	39	364.1
Bangladesh	3,185	0	3,185	662	381.1	17,846	3,817	367.5
Bhutan	68	0	68	09	655.6	433	139	211.5
India	43,804	169	43,973	17,350	153.4	302,844	123,004	146.2
Iran	898	02	900	362	148.6	10,322	4,301	140.0
Maldives	5,968	0	5,968	3,444	73.3	37,328	18,880	97.7
Nepal	468	0	468	181	158.6	4,750	1,065	346.0
Pakistan	1,168	0	1,168	898	30.1	10,744	6,260	71.6
EUROPE	**102,127**	**6,057**	**108,184**	**50,187**	**115.6**	**757,327**	**432,226**	**75.2**
Northern Europe	**22,570**	**2,652**	**25,222**	**10,161**	**148.2**	**165,485**	**108,264**	**52.9**
Denmark	1,433	07	1,440	551	161.3	10,346	7,278	42.2
Finland	471	02	473	159	197.5	2,287	1,500	52.5
Norway	1,024	11	1,035	408	153.7	8,747	5,983	46.2
Sweden	2,106	12	2,118	892	137.4	8,643	5,097	69.6
United Kingdom	16,689	2,576	19,265	7,879	144.5	130,088	85,187	52.7
Others	847	44	891	272	227.6	5,374	3,219	66.9

	December 2023 Tourist Arrivals			Tourist Arrivals Dec 2022	% Change Dec (23/22)	Total Tourist Arrivals up to Dec 2023	Total Tourist Arrivals up to Dec 2022	% Change up to Dec (23/22)
	By Air	By Sea	Total					
Western Europe	**24,739**	**2,795**	**27,534**	**11,050**	**149.2**	**233,297**	**128,279**	**81.9**
Austria	1,809	74	1,883	619	204.2	10,594	5,541	91.2
Belgium	981	14	995	512	94.3	10,667	6,164	73.1
France	5,473	36	5,509	2,665	106.7	56,251	35,482	58.5
Germany	11,212	2,535	13,747	4,984	175.8	102,539	55,542	84.6
Netherlands	2,606	66	2,672	956	179.5	29,056	11,987	142.4
Switzerland	2,588	66	2,654	1,248	112.7	23,556	13,260	77.6
Others	70	04	74	66	12.1	634	303	109.2
Central/ Eastern Europe	**46,105**	**475**	**46,580**	**24,422**	**90.7**	**276,921**	**159,062**	**74.1**
Belarus	1,561	05	1,566	582	169.1	10,969	3,621	202.9
Czech Republic	2,459	07	2,466	529	366.2	12,056	7,350	64.0
Estonia	703	03	706	111	536.0	1,808	978	84.9
Hungary	1,011	29	1,040	300	246.7	3,786	2,324	62.9
Kazakhstan	2,378	21	2,399	262	815.6	5,130	8,068	(36.4)
Lithuania	487	03	490	158	210.1	2,722	2,115	28.7
Poland	3,195	22	3,217	524	513.9	17,946	15,195	18.1
Romania	946	09	955	407	134.6	4,092	3,313	23.5
Russia	29,329	328	29,657	19,963	48.6	197,498	91,272	116.4
Slovakia	461	01	462	206	124.3	4,464	2,432	83.6
Ukraine	1,035	07	1,042	544	91.5	5,082	14,917	(65.9)
Others	2,540	40	2,580	836	208.6	11,368	7,477	52.0
Southern/ Mediterranean Europe	**8,713**	**135**	**8,848**	**4,554**	**94.3**	**81,624**	**36,621**	**122.9**
Greece	338	06	344	174	97.7	1,816	899	102.0
Italy	3,377	12	3,389	1,206	181.0	22,242	7,449	198.6
Portugal	523	04	527	156	237.8	3,943	1,906	106.9
Spain	2,626	41	2,667	991	169.1	23,905	12,895	85.4
Turkey	465	50	515	224	129.9	3,739	1,514	147.0
Israel	419	02	421	1,457	(71.1)	19,517	9,326	109.3
Others	965	20	985	346	184.7	6,462	2,632	145.5
MIDDLE EAST	**2,463**	**12**	**2,475**	**2,002**	**23.6**	**27,830**	**18,107**	**53.7**
Bahrain	104	0	104	88	18.2	1,232	510	141.6
Egypt	468	04	472	220	114.5	3,091	2,340	32.1
Iraq	94	0	94	145	(35.2)	902	1,113	(19.0)
Jordan	302	02	304	335	(9.3)	3,604	2,472	45.8
Kuwait	150	0	150	96	56.3	1,955	952	105.4
Lebanon	484	0	484	267	81.3	3,347	1,606	108.4
Oman	108	0	108	157	(31.2)	2,038	876	132.6
Qatar	33	0	33	57	(42.1)	822	301	173.1
Saudi Arabia	290	03	293	324	(9.6)	6,797	5,952	14.2
United Arab Emirates	339	03	342	207	65.2	2,945	1,347	118.6
Others	91	0	91	106	(14.25)	1,097	638	71.9
TOTAL	**201,997**	**8,355**	**210,352**	**91,961**	**128.7**	**14,87303**	**719,978**	**106.6**

Main last departure airports and airlines to Sri Lanka, December 2023

An examination of tourists' departure airports and preferred airlines when heading to Sri Lanka underscores the pivotal role of air travel in the country's tourism sector. As illustrated by the data in Chart 6, approximately 30% of tourists chose departure airports in Dubai, Chennai, and Doha as their final transit points before arriving in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the primary airlines favored by tourists in reaching Sri Lanka were Sri Lankan Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates, collectively accounting for 47% of the total tourist arrivals. The initiation of Rossiya Airlines and LOT Polish Airlines from January onwards is expected to bolster the increase in tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka . This highlights the crucial significance of air transportation in facilitating tourism in Sri Lanka, with specific airports and airlines playing a substantial role in accommodating a significant portion of visitors.

Chart 6. Main last departure airports to Sri Lanka, December 2023

Almaty 1%
Tolmachevo Novosibirsk 1%
Others 20%
Dubai 12%
Frankfurt 1%
Chennai 10%
Bangkok 1%
Muscat 1%
Doha 8%
Istanbul 2%
Moscow 7%
Abu Dhabi 2%
Shanghai 2%
Mumbai 4%
Hyderabad 2%
Singapore 4%
Doha 3%
Sharja 3%
Kuala Lampur 4%
London 3%
Male 3%
Delhi 3%
Bangalore 4%
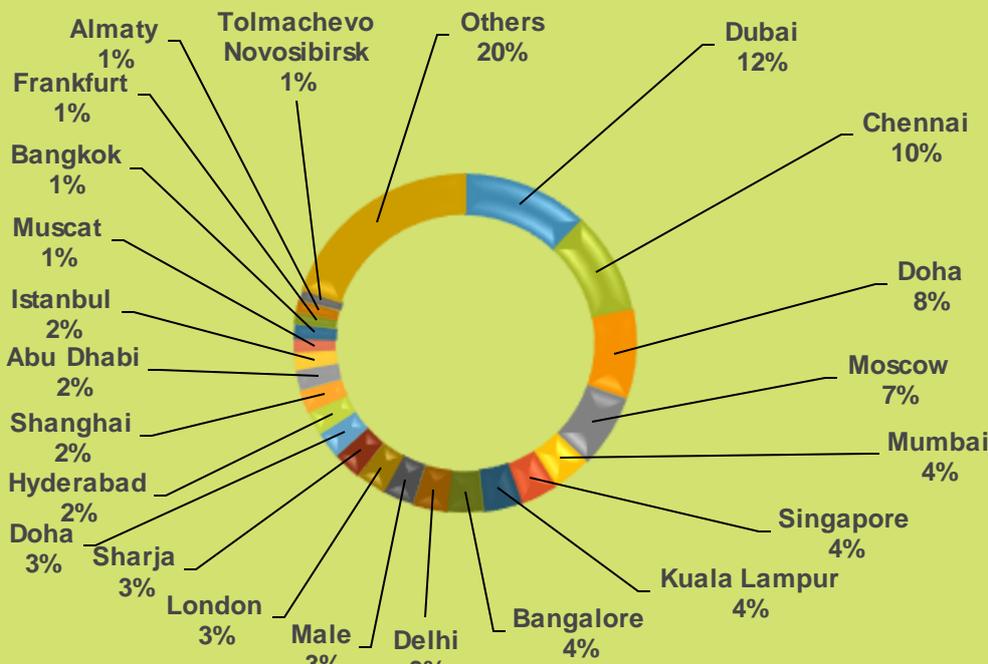
Chart 7. Main airlines to Sri Lanka, December 2023

Air Asia 2%
Fits Air 1%
Etihad Airways 1%
Spicejet 1%
Other 14%
Vistara Airline 2%
Turkish Airline 2%
Sri Lankan Airlines 28%
Singapore Airlines 2%
Air India 3%
Azur Air 3%
Emirates 9%
China Eastern Airlines 3%
Air_Arabia 3%
Qatar Airways 10%
Aeroflot 3%
Fly Dubai 3%
Red Wings Airlines 4%
Indigo 7%
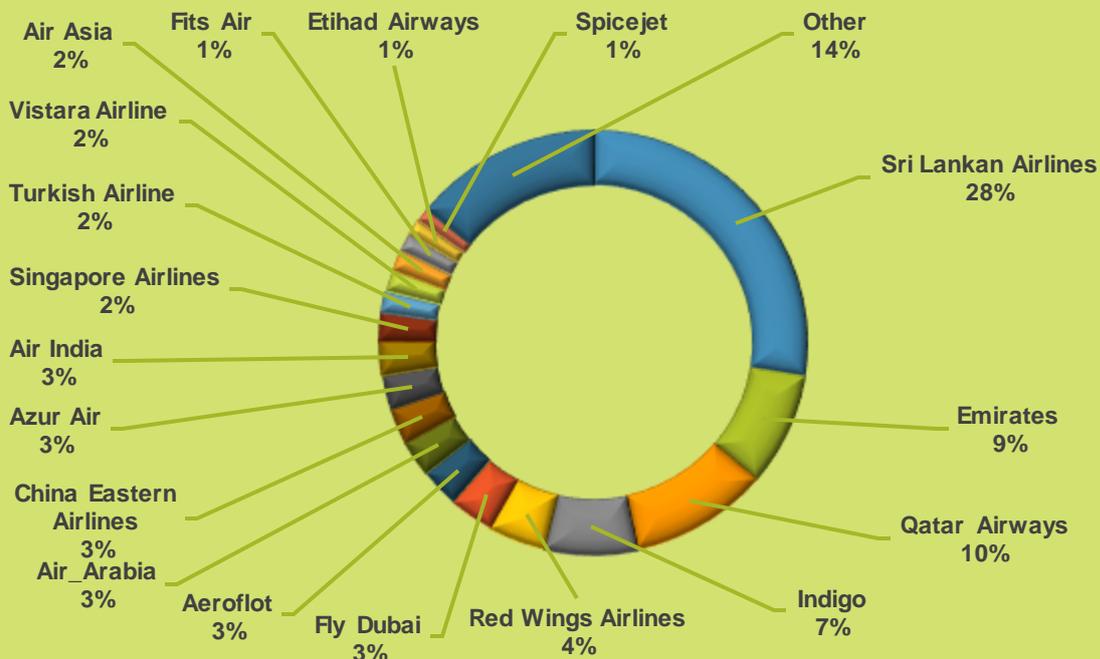
Top ten markets versus main last departure airports and main airlines to Sri Lanka
December 2023

The choice of airlines plays a crucial role in shaping the travel experiences of tourists heading to Sri Lanka. Preferences in airlines are often intricately tied to the home countries of the visitors, reflecting a diverse array of carriers catering to different regions.

For instance, Indian travelers frequently prefer Sri Lankan Airlines and IndiGo, while Russian tourists lean towards Red Wings and Aeroflot. Conversely, Sri Lankan Airlines is a popular choice among tourists from the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, the United States, Maldives, France, and Canada. Chinese tourists show a preference for China Eastern. Regarding final ports, Chennai is the most utilized airport for Indian tourists, while Dubai is the primary port for tourists from the United Kingdom and Canada. Doha serves as the main final port for tourists from Germany, the USA, and France. For Australians and Russians, Singapore and Moscow are the main final airports, respectively. This underscores the critical role of accessibility in promoting tourism in Sri Lanka. It emphasizes that tourists' decisions regarding airlines and departure airports are significantly shaped by their home countries, highlighting the importance of seamless connections in attracting visitors to Sri Lanka.

Table 4. Top ten markets vs. main airlines to Sri Lanka, December 2023

	Sri Lankan Airlines	Qatar Airways	Emirates	Indi Go	Red Wings	Fly Dubai	Aeroflot	Air Arabia	China Eastern Airlines	Air Asia	Air India	Singapore Airline	Turkish Airline	Vistara Airline	Air Asia	Fits Air	Etihad Airways	Spicejet	Others	Total
India	43.55	0.47	1.31	26.38	0.00	0.87	0.01	0.88	0.03	0.01	9.62	0.17	0.01	5.85	0.26	3.29	0.09	5.07	2.14	100.00
Russian Federation	1.96	1.52	2.69	0.42	28.20	2.84	19.95	10.07	0.92	17.75	0.38	0.02	0.40	0.12	0.42	0.83	0.45	0.06	11.00	100.00
United Kingdom	35.91	17.24	15.95	1.51	0.00	1.97	0.00	1.05	0.41	0.01	0.56	0.80	0.67	0.79	1.32	0.48	2.06	0.11	19.16	100.00
Germany	24.50	23.77	13.41	0.97	0.01	2.33	0.01	0.39	0.25	0.01	0.50	0.38	2.63	1.04	1.03	0.57	2.92	0.12	25.18	100.00
Australia	50.36	1.36	2.46	1.18	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.26	0.26	0.00	1.58	21.96	0.10	0.24	7.26	0.10	0.23	0.08	12.08	100.00
China	14.37	0.42	1.98	0.08	0.01	0.94	0.00	0.15	53.03	0.02	0.05	0.88	0.01	0.06	2.20	0.07	0.05	0.00	25.66	100.00
United States	26.99	19.98	9.17	6.30	0.00	2.21	0.01	0.70	0.70	0.00	2.96	5.49	1.04	1.93	1.67	0.48	1.16	0.63	18.57	100.00
Maldives	38.91	0.22	33.23	0.00	0.00	12.72	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.22	4.46	0.00	0.00	10.05	100.00
France	31.91	27.72	13.76	1.43	0.00	3.67	0.00	1.31	0.47	0.02	1.00	0.87	4.17	0.54	1.87	0.49	1.85	0.13	8.79	100.00
Canada	33.41	17.86	17.88	1.90	0.00	3.32	0.00	1.46	0.93	0.00	1.04	0.71	1.76	0.41	1.46	0.55	1.68	0.14	15.49	100.00

Table 5. Top ten markets vs. main last departure airports to Sri Lanka, December 2023

Country	Dubai	Doha	Chennai	Moscow	Mumbai	Singapore	Kuala Lumpur	Bangalore	London	Delhi	Sharja	Hyderabad	Shanghai	Male	Abu Dhabi	Istanbul	Muscat	Bangkok	Frankfurt	Others	Total
India	1,375	264	16,584	8	5,935	249	212	6,258	37	4,427	388	4,156	11	209	134	3	134	117	8	3,464	43,973
Russian Federation	1,901	555	154	13,533	45	18	169	35	18	186	2,887	35	258	68	266	119	403	116	14	8,877	29,657
United Kingdom	3,661	3,362	415	0	287	367	446	168	5,112	213	202	74	77	235	499	130	163	239	16	3,599	19,265
Germany	2,241	3,409	327	4	339	102	235	214	152	147	50	34	29	180	550	361	315	116	1,662	3,280	13,747
Australia	374	148	279	0	94	3,580	2,002	72	58	226	28	52	23	98	41	11	16	155	10	3,580	10,847
China	292	38	6	1	8	147	303	4	6	6	12	2	3,138	153	13	1	30	392	1	3,721	8,274
United States	977	1,665	503	2	305	587	217	289	271	363	55	259	44	135	174	84	62	171	53	1,828	8,044
Maldives	739	13	28	1	2	11	88	17	6	0	4	0	1	3,838	1	0	4	55	0	1,160	5,968
France	1,022	1,593	142	1	73	139	173	37	107	73	72	13	23	41	243	230	150	104	77	1,196	5,509
Canada	825	675	106	0	50	60	114	38	548	56	53	12	27	46	77	64	21	93	39	736	3,640

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