

# Sri Lanka Tourism

## Building a Strategic Blueprint

Highlights January 2020 - July 2021



Year 2020/2021 was marked with the height of challenges due to COVID-19 that impacted global tourism. Tourist arrivals from Jan-March 2020 were 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. Airports reopened for tourists in January 2021 with the "Tourism Bio Bubble" in place. Despite the troubled times, Sri Lanka Tourism which is comprised of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau (SLTPB), Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA), Sri Lanka Conventions Bureau (SLCB), Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management (SLITHM) made significant progress in strategic areas of technology, sustainability, service quality and destination branding.

### Creating a People-Centric Tourism Industry

#### Tourism Bio Bubble

- Tourism being one of the top foreign exchange earners with over 3 million direct & indirect dependents made it obligatory to resume operations in a prudent manner. Thus the creation of the innovative 'Tourism Bio Bubble' concept by Sri Lanka Tourism.
- 'Tourism Bio Bubble' was recognized globally as one of the first movers and innovators for new normal tourism operations.
- Industry preparedness was also created to enable an accountable 'Tourism Bio Bubble' operation.
  - 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.
  - Pandemic preparedness courses conducted for SMEs with S4IG Australia, COVID-19 guidelines training with



Market Development Facility (MDF) Australia and Hotel Association of Sri Lanka (THASL). Covid-19 Guideline awareness sessions conducted for 3450 tourist drivers as at 30th June 2021.

- Safe and Secure certification for hotels introduced to ensure adherence to health protocols subject to an audit by KPMG and EY. 555 accommodation providers, 267 travel agents, 1534 tour guides were certified as at 30th June 2021. The Certification includes a QR code that permits guests to provide feedback on health and safety protocols being followed by the hotels.
- Opportunity created for Safe and Secure Certified accommodation providers to serve as intermediary care centers.
- Sri Lanka received the Safe Travel Stamp from the World Travel & Tourism Council, one of the first in the Asia.



- Creation of 'helloagain' information portal for better communication with tourists and industry.

#### Pandemic Support to Industry

- Secured VAT exemption for the tourism industry.
- Extended the validity period of licenses of all registered tourism establishments until the 31st December 2021.
- One off payment of Rs. 20,000 for tour guides registered with SLTDA and 2,050 tour guides were paid totaling Rs. 41 Mn as of 30th June 2021.
- One off payment of Rs. 15,000 for tourist drivers registered with SLTDA and 2236 drivers paid totaling Rs. 34.54 Mn as of 30th June 2021.
- One off payment of Rs. 15,000 for provincial guides and 476 registered provincial guides paid totaling Rs. 7.14 Mn as of 30th June 2021.

### Efficient Public Service & Upliftment of Industry Standards

- Tourism Investments attracted Increased from USD 188 Mn in 2019 to USD 720 Mn in 2020.
- Streamlined internal processes and reduced institutional costs by 30% in 2020.
- Rationalized regulations and improved registrations by 26% in 2020 converting the informal to formal sector, supporting the SMEs.

	2019	Compared with 2019		
		2020	38%	2021.07.31
Accommodation	2459	3382	3638	48%
Services	1823	1996	2036	12%
Total	4282	5378	5674	33%

- SLITHM Scholarship program launched and a total of 400 scholarships were awarded in 2020 for the value of Rs. 6,962,000 covering 7 provincial colleges.
- New Tourism Act underway to merge three tourism institutions as Sri Lanka Tourism to enable efficient, integrated and holistic decision making.
- Driver training for service quality jointly with VTA and completed 695 refresher trainings as at 30th June 2021.

### Championing Sustainable and Environment-Friendly Tourism

- National Sustainable Destination Certificate (NSDC) Programme launched. NSDC is an extension of the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC) which aims to raise destination sustainability standards through certification and the ultimate goal is to convert Sri Lanka to a sustainable destination.
- 'Banning of single use plastics' to support and promote Sri Lanka's sustainability drive.
- Work underway to develop and promote 'Sigiriya' as the first Sustainable Destination.
- Implementation of 'Green Building Guidelines' for all new tourism projects.

### Enhancing Infrastructure and Services

- Guidelines improved for Eco lodges, Theme accommodation value added activities, Food courts, Hotel service apartments, Heritage hotels, Yachts, Adventure tourism and Cycling.
- Sri Lanka Tourism initiated an inter-institutional collaborative effort with BOI, CCD, UDA and adding National Building Research Organisation, Central Environmental Authority, Department of Wildlife Conservation, Department of Forest Conservation, Irrigation Department, Department of Archaeology and Agrarian Department to enable better coordination to improve Infrastructure and Services for the Tourism Industry.

### Branding and Positioning Sri Lanka

First ever 'Integrated Global Communication Campaign' for Sri Lanka is underway. This campaign looks at positioning and branding Sri Lanka on a holistic level covering the new emerging segments and geographic hot spots. Operational strategy developed and implemented to appoint the respective agency structure to execute the campaign.

### Promotions and Marketing

#### Global Recognitions

- 'Top Country' for Winter Travel for 2020 by 'USA Today'
- 'Best place to visit in 2020' by CNN.
- 'Top Destination to Travel' by Condé Nast Traveler in February 2020.
- 'World's Leading Tourism Destination 2020' and 'Asia's Leading Adventure Tourism Destination 2020' by 'World Travel Awards'.



- Sri Lanka Tourism has taken the lead in promoting the destination at the upcoming Expo 2020 Dubai, partnering with the Embassy in UAE, Consulate in Dubai, Gem & Jewellery Authority, EDB, Tea Board, BOI, Sri Lankan Airlines, Port City and Laksala.
- Global publicity campaigns conducted with the courtesy of the international media channels such as CNN, BBC, Aljazeera and CNBC.
- Digital Promotional campaign underway to promote Wellness Tourism in Germany with the EU support.
- Social media is now given priority with a focus on building a digital footprint for Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka Tourism.

#### PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 - 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021

**473 MILLION +** Impressions on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube

**24.5 MILLION +** Total video views on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube

**187,000 +** Facebook page likes

- Promotions for emerging segments of Digital Nomads, Cruise, Film, Adventure and Sports Tourism underway and tactical campaigns targeting CIS countries, Middle East, France and Sri Lankan expats planned.

### Promoting a Technology-Based Tourism Sector

- For the first time, 'Live Streaming' of National Parks during the pandemic, this created 22 million impressions, over 1.7 million video views and over 40,000 clicks and Sri Lanka Tourism Facebook page reached 7 million people.
- Development of Tourism app 'Visit Sri Lanka' underway with the support of World Bank and ADB. The app will feature 5000 known and lesser-known attractions.
- Automated the 'Tourism Service Provider Registration Process' with 100% online registration enabled from 2020.
- Creating a technology enabled learning environment for SLITHM with 'Student Management System' & 'Online teaching'.

### Creating a Safe and Secure Country for Tourists

- Vaccination of the Tourism Industry underway and priority given for employees of 'Safe and Secure' certified service providers.
- Establishing a network of Tourist Police Units (TPUs) and Tourist Information Counters (TICs) underway to ensure safety of the tourists.

### Building Partnerships for Growth

Sri Lanka Tourism is working in collaboration with many International Funding Agencies such as World Bank, ADB, MDF, UNWTO, UNDP, EU, USAID & S4IG Australia, GIZ, ILO to name a few who have provided grants and technical support. This is the first time ever Sri Lanka Tourism was supported by a large donor group.

