



Sri Lankan Minister of Tourism announces UK no.1 market from Europe and 3rd International market with an increase of 17.3% to date in 2016

At a press conference during his first visit to the London World Travel Market (WTM) the Hon. Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs for Sri Lanka, John Amaratunga, advised that, following peace restored across the country after three decades of conflict Sri Lanka has achieved record growth in Tourism. He confirmed that the UK is the third largest market and no. 1 tourism market for Sri Lanka from Europe accounting for approximately 10% of the country's tourist arrivals in 2015. "With 143,412 British visitors so far this year, an increase of 17.3%, Sri Lanka Tourism anticipates reaching 200,000 British tourist arrivals by the end of 2016". The Hon. Minister stated. Top hotel chains such as Shangri-La, Hyatt, Marriot, Sheraton and ITC are building substantial luxury properties to cater for the affluent foreign clientele seeking out Sri Lankan experiences. Celebrating 50 years of Tourism, under the guidance of the Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs, Sri Lanka has a 2020 vision of reaching a total of 4.5 million international visitors with extended average stays and revenues.

The change in the political landscape of the country is an important aspect of Sri Lanka in 2016. The newly elected government is focused on good governance and upholding the democratic values of Sri Lanka. Businesses are focused on private/public partnerships and the new government has already actively engaged with the western world. "Sri Lanka has already become a most sought after destination amongst the UK tourists within the past few years. and WTM 2016 will indeed be a milestone in this journey to develop the UK and other international markets" commented the Mr Withana, Chairman of the Tourism Promotion Bureau, "Sri Lanka is known as the Wonder of Asia due to the island's unique Compactness, Diversity and Authenticity. The differentiating aspects that set Sri Lanka apart are its' nature, heritage and culture combined with sun, sea and sand. Visitors can literally enjoy 8 different experiences in 8 wonderful days". he added.

Ms Madhubani Perera, Director of marketing of the Tourism Promotion Bureau went on to present the range of thrilling experiences between the top of its mountains and the depths of the oceans: Due to two different weather zones either side of the island and pristine beaches relaxing beach holidays are guaranteed year round. Sports and adventure add an exhilarating dimension to the country. Surfing, rafting, air-ballooning golf, cricket and other soft sports and adventures like mountain climbing, trekking, cycling, canopying are some of the popular activities available to those that relish a chance to tackle the great outdoors including fifteen national parks. With a rich history of over 2000 years, visitors interested in culture and history can travel to the past while visiting the remains of ancient cities. While the Ayurveda Resorts on the island, amongst the best in the world, offer top quality health and wellness programs and relaxing end to the day.

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Notes to editors:

Sri Lanka has won many accolades over the years including most recently the Sunday Times, destination of the year for travel in 2016 and Forbes magazine listing amongst the top 10 coolest countries in the world to visit in 2015. “Sri Lanka offers tremendous value but is still often overlooked”, travel specialist Owen Gaddis said. “And the main draw is the wildlife: Elusive leopards, wild elephants, boar, sloth bears and dazzling bird life from peacocks to hornbills roam this surprisingly diverse island. We can’t think of another country that has the variety of experiences that Sri Lanka does”, he added.