

## **Bangladeshis gradually becoming top 10 tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka**

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Dhaka : Bangladeshis are on the verge of becoming one of the top 10 tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka. Bangladesh with 2600 tourist arrivals grabbed the 12th spot among the top tourist generating source countries to the island country's capital Colombo, as per November 2023 figures, just behind Japan which holds the 11th spot with 2800 tourist arrivals. From January to November 2023, Sri Lanka welcomed a total of 18,000 Bangladeshi tourists, on average 1800 travellers a month, with November recording the highest number ever.

Fawzan Fareid, Country Manager-Bangladesh, SriLankan Airlines said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at the latter's head office in the capital.

A month prior, in October 2023, Bangladesh was the 16th tourist generating country to Sri Lanka. This shows how rapid Bangladesh is

getting into the top 10 tourist arrival list for the island nation.

Therefore, Bangladesh recently has become Sri Lanka tourism board's focal point. Hence, the latter has been organising fam trips for the former's travel agents annually in an effort to better promote the island destination among Bangladeshis across a range of tourism avenues, mentioned the Country Manager of Sri Lanka's flag carrier.

Currently, the airline operates daily flights on Dhaka-Colombo route. So far, it has been the only airline to operate direct flights on this promising route, mentioned Fareid.

The airline operates four widebody A330-300 aircraft and three narrow-body A321neos on the route with plans to increase frequencies to double daily by summer 2024, further said the country manager.

Also, many Bangladeshi travellers fly to the Maldives on SriLankan airlines with a one-night stop in Sri Lanka. This way, travellers get to enjoy two holiday destinations in one travel without much fare difference, informed the Country Manager while mentioning the airline's diversification efforts.

Besides leisure, MICE tourism is another market the flag carrier and the country's tourism board are in efforts to tap from Bangladesh, claimed Fareid.

Destination wedding is another avenue Sri Lanka promotes in Bangladesh. The island nation is quite popular for destination weddings among Europeans and Indians since it boasts larger hotels with plenty of rooms and banquet facilities in scenic island destinations across the country, claimed the country manager. Furthermore, Sri Lanka can offer destination weddings to Bangladeshis at half the price of Thailand, expressed Fareid.

The country also eyes to tap the medical traffic from Bangladesh to South India, shared the Country Manager of SriLankan Airlines.

As Sri Lanka offers easy and convenient e-visa facility to Bangladeshis, there is much more potential of tourism exchange between the two countries, suggested Fareid.

He further informed the airline is currently in efforts to partner with Biman Bangladesh Airlines for code-sharing collaboration with a view to

carrying its passengers from Colombo to Toronto via Dhaka.