

SriLankan Airlines garners support of global agents for tourism revival

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Colombo : The SriLankan Airlines' Global Sales Conference came to a successful conclusion having showcased the country's readiness for tourism to over 150 of the world's premier travel agents and tour operators including Bangladesh during a four-day programme.

The conference drew the largest contingent from the international travel trade to Sri Lanka in recent history. The assemblage experienced Sri Lanka's top-rated tourist attractions firsthand before convening in Sigiriya to learn about the outlook of Sri Lanka as a destination that is not just magnificent, but safe and more than ready to receive global travellers to its shores, said the airline in a release.

Foreign General Sales Agents of the airline and SriLankan Holidays' Franchise Operators also participated in the symposium in addition to travel trade industry representatives.

A thoughtfully designed sightseeing tour preceded the conference, with visitors taking in highlights such as the Yala National Park, Ella, Kandy, Galle, Beruwala, Sigiriya, NuwaraEliya, Habarana, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Ritigala, Negombo, and Colombo.

Fresh off the tour, the group joined the main conference on November 18, 2022 at the Aliya Resort, where they were given an opportunity to share positive experiences of the tour with the audience. They also engaged with several interactive sessions led by officials of SriLankan Airlines and industry experts.

Eminent guest speakers, Alexandre Debanne, founder of Raid Amazonas and PiyushMinocha, a Sr Business Development Manager of the Expedia Group, spoke on marketing Sri Lanka to French travellers and Sri Lanka's potential for sustainable tourism, respectively.

The conference wrapped up with a panel discussion involving Richard Nuttall, Chief Executive Officer and DimuthuTennakoon, Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution from SriLankan Airlines and ChalakaGajabahu, the Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and moderated by DileepMudadeniya, Senior Vice President Global Alliances and Partnerships, John Keells Group Leisure sector.

A special feature of the conference was the Sri Lankan craft fair that was held at the venue, exhibiting traditional arts and crafts of local artisans. The global travel trade audience was thus introduced to cultural crafts of the island such as making of pottery, drums, brassware, ethnic jewellery and wooden masks.

Further, for the first time in the history of Sri Lanka, a travel mart inspired by leading global travel events such as the World Travel Market (WTM) in London and ITB Berlin, was organised on the day following the conference. The travel mart afforded a priceless opportunity for local Destination Management Companies and tour operators to meet and explore commercial opportunities with the visiting foreign travel agents.

Ashok Pathirage, Chairman, SriLankan Airlines remarked, "SriLankan Airlines has done it once again, by taking the initiative and laying the groundwork to accelerate the recovery and growth of Sri Lanka's tourism industry. I am certain that the synergism created in the last few days will contribute towards realising the national vision to transform Sri Lanka into a high-value destination in the years ahead."

With the conclusion of the SriLankan Airlines' Global Sales Conference, the airline looks forward to an on-target performance this winter, and the numbers look promising. SriLankan Airlines currently offers passenger services to 114 destinations in 60 countries through online and codeshare operations.