



Tourism in Paradise





Can you see the same star that I see from here?



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Editorial

The dilemma of reality and fantasy

I have some deep memories of a few journeys I went on with my father and this one is special. My father accompanied me to go by train to somewhere down south to meet a monk who had some metaphysical powers may be to find relief for the issues he had gone through during that time. As a four to five year's kid, I just only remember the vibes of that journey, not the details. Later day, I saw a dream, a dream that has never been forgotten. I was in a sand dune closer to the beach somewhere down south again and an alien spaceship came. This alien ship took me and flew to the galaxies full of stars. After waking up from a short deep sleep, I started to roam around the alien ship. The passageways of the ship were filled with a soft good smelling smoke with white moderate light. There were racks full of different varieties of sweets and food. What I wished that I needed was there but I was all alone. I felt so protective and at the same time, I felt so alien. I wanted to go back home, then where is the home? Again, I loved to be on the alien ship too. In that dream, I think, I was in a dilemma: a dilemma between reality and fantasy!

As said, though I have come up with some details, I always believe in the vibe and instinct; it is there in our souls. After years passed, at the age of 32, when I was driving parallel to the beach on a secret Friday, I felt the same feeling again with much more complexities. When I was driving back home, I was thinking about the realities and fantasies of my life and people's lives. Then, I made a few phone calls to a few who connected to my life and I asked that one question; "what is the fantasy of your life?" I have got many responses and I purposefully pointed out three interesting answers I received below.

A – To have a peaceful mind is my fantasy
B – I was dreaming about having a baby and she/he is playing around me
C – I only think about what I can get rather than thinking about fantasies

I was inspired to write this piece of writing for the editorial after listening to the answer given by respondent C.

Fantasies are apparently not possible or harder to achieve in the reality. Undoing the past is a perfect fantasy because changing the past is impossible unless traveling through time. But, it does not mean that we cannot fantasize about our future. I would say, the future is an elastic form of fantasy that can adjust according to our desires. See the fantasies imagined by the Wright brothers: the airplane; Arthur C. Clarke: the concept of the satellite; J. K. Rowling: Harry Potter; James Cameron: Avatar movies, and the 2013/14 Tourism batch who initiated to start the Tourism in Paradise (TiP) magazine in 2018.

The TiP was also a fantasy imagined in the minds of that batch and continued till today followed by four more batches midst of many challenges. Here we have volume five where I just have been playing the role of an escort so far. The life we dream of will not be served on a red carpet. It must be fantasised and we must work for it making the most heartbreaking sacrifices. The possible sufferings we have to go through may put us in a dilemma of reality and fantasy but if we are determined to realize the fantasy, we have to go for it. We must follow our heart's desires to end up with a happy and fair life on this short life's journey.

If somebody asks me about my fantasy, I do not hesitate to give the answer as Tourism in Paradise. In my five years of academic tenure, I loved, cared and fantasised for TiP. It has not been a single day that I did not think about her and I will keep thinking about her. What happened if the fantasy becomes a reality? See what happened to the world, and see how fragmented variations of tourism have formed in the world to please the unpleased. Let the fantasy come into your life. That's all I know.

Hiran Dinusha

*I have a dream, a song to sing
To help me cope, with anything
If you see the wonder, of a fairy tale
You can take the future, even if you fail*

*I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see*

*I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me
I'll cross the stream, I have a dream*

*I have a dream, a fantasy
To help me through, reality
And my destination,
makes it worth the while
Pushin' through the darkness,
still another mile*

*I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see
I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me
I'll cross the stream, I have a dream
I'll cross the stream, I have a dream...*

Album -Voulez-Vous

Released: 1979

Artist - ABBA

Lyricists - Björn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson

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Prof. (Dr.) Athula Gnanapala
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It gives me immense pleasure and honour to convey this message for the fifth issue of the Tourism in Paradise (TiP) magazine published by the Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. First, I warmly extend my heartiest congratulations and gratitude to the editorial board for doing all the hard work to publish the magazine consistently.

The TiP magazine is usually published to commemorate World Tourism Day on September 27. UNWTO has declared the theme of the year 2022 as Rethinking Tourism. I believe the theme is timely important since the entire tourism industry was badly affected due to the devastating effect of the Covid 19 pandemic during the last two and a half years. The crisis was more vulnerable and, therefore, millions of people lost their employment and income sources, at the same time millions of people had to stay in their houses without travelling. During this new normal, tourism is regaining slowly, however, the industry needs to learn the lessons from the pandemic and the associated issues. Rethinking tourism means the industry needs to be prepared for future challenges which require collaboration and a sense of interconnectedness between one another.

The Faculty of Management Studies is an 'A Grade' Faculty declared by the Quality Assurance Council of the University Grants Commission. The Faculty is dedicated to the pursuit of an excellent teaching and research culture to deliver high-quality education in a picturesque and peaceful environment for our students and other stakeholders. As a state university of Sri Lanka, our prime responsibility is to produce quality able graduates who can contribute to uplifting the socio-economic standard of the island. While the rewarding indicators of our efforts are the quality of our graduates, the scholarly works we published and the support we provided to our partners in the industry, we also have gained recognition and reputation as the pioneer tourism and hospitality higher educational institute by our stakeholders. With this magazine too, we can show the world what we do. The magazine will publish periodically to enlighten scholars, industry and the general public with quality, accurate, and timely needed information.

I wish all the best for the Department of Tourism Management to continue its valuable services forever.



Dr. Sarath Munasinghe
Head / Department of Tourism Management
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

It is with great pleasure that I issue this message to the 5th volume of Tourism in Paradise (TiP) magazine as the Head of the Department of Tourism Management (DTM). We at the DTM take pride in publishing this volume as an important and impactful publication of the department. The TiP is impactful not only because of its readership but also of the way this is published. TiP is a collective effort of both students and the staff of the DTM, led by the Editor in Chief, and is always supported by many tourism-related writers who are representing academia and private and public sector organizations. DTM takes pride in forming a platform for expressing the thoughts, comments, hopes, and expectations of all well-wishers in tourism on this special day – the International Tourism Day, 2022. We always hope for the betterment of tourism, especially Sri Lanka Tourism, which is in a crisis-hit situation where we need the support of tourists all over the world and all support networks to stand once again on our feet. I hope that TiP will be of great support to achieving this shared dream for all of us.



‘Dine in Dark’

Where Dark Can Light Us

Dark nights are a common sight these days in Sri Lanka as we encounter hours of daily power cuts even at night. You can imagine how messy your life is without light.

Working mothers having small kids, families having aged and elderly people have more harrowing times during power cuts in the early mornings and nights. It disrupts all the house chores like cooking, dining, studying, and even sleeping. Thus, the lack of lights after getting dark is resulting in many frustrations.

Oh no..... the power went out again!

Have you ever thought that you could enjoy DARKNESS?

Yes..... Darker the sky, the brighter the stars; Darker the room, the better the sleep; Darker the chocolates, the better the nutrition.

Have you ever enjoyed a meal in pitch darkness?

Oops! Quite Strange! How could? Could you enjoy a meal without seeing what is been eaten?

Yes. That’s where the unique concept of dine-in-the-dark originated. You can immerse yourself in a sensory dining experience in blackout darkness.

Dine-in-the-dark originated as a part of the Avignon Festival’s Noir season. The first Dinner in the Dark took place in 1993 at the Avignon Theatre Festival as a part of the event ‘Dialogue in the Dark’ which included a variety of acts centered on the exploration of light and darkness. This particular performance of dining in the dark was introduced by Michel Reilhac who offered food and drinks in total darkness under the guidance and service of blind and visually impaired waiters. It tantalized the audience and was a tremendous success. Thereafter, Michel Reilhac went on to open a full-fledged Parisian restaurant named “*Le Gout Du Noir*” (*A Taste of Darkness*) in 1999.

In 2003, another restaurant with a similar idea was opened. A French entrepreneur called Edouard De Broglie collaborated with the Paul Guinot Foundation for Blind People opened the first dine-in-the-dark restaurant chain “*Dans le Noir*” replicated in London, Auckland, Madrid, Barcelona, Nice, Nantes, and St Petersburg. From there on, this unique concept took off and it is now an experimental culinary experience among food lovers around the world. Under the concept of ‘Dine-in-Dark’, some restaurants provide a true 100 percent blackout dining experience, while others only dim the lights or blindfold the diners.

The notion of ‘Dine in dark’ incorporates ‘Culinary Tourism’ and ‘Inclusivity’. Dining in the dark is an adventurous culinary journey. Dining in a totally blackout room or dining blocking one of the key senses is quite challenging for the people with sight. This adventurous culinary journey starts with heading to a totally blackout dining room free from artificial or natural lighting.

The dinners have to discard phones, watches, and any other tech devices that could reflect or provide a light source before entering the dining room. It is more challenging when they are offered surprising dishes where they don’t have any clue about what they are getting to eat. Normally, when we go for dinner, it is filled with conversations while enjoying its surrounding, and less focused on the food itself. But here, the dinners get a chance to focus more on dishes (mindful eating); guessing at what they are eating while discussing its smell, texture, and taste. It’s full of exclamations. In the absence of vision, it sharpens the other four senses of taste, smell, touch and sound where it enhances gastronomic pleasure. Sometimes, it becomes even a sensitive experience where it puts the dinners in the shoes of those who are vision impaired or blind. They get a time to experience the life of a blind. People with sight won’t understand how hard it is until they go through it on their own. During these few hours of dark dining, it gives the dinners new perspectives on their lives; they feel blessed, be grateful for their gift of sight, and be compassionate. Therefore, darkness seems to have such a profound impact on our bodies and minds.

Today, we are living in an inclusive society where it is inviting, embracing and valuing people with physical and mental disabilities into the mainstream. The concept of dining in the dark embraces inclusivity whereas authentic dining-in-the-dark restaurants employ visually impaired or blind people as waiters to serve their dinners. The blind staff can better walk around in the dark and are best able to navigate inside the restaurant and assist with dinners. Their ‘blindness’ becomes a ‘blessing’ for them in this phenomenon. Visually impaired and blind people are marginalized from the labor market due to the partial or full loss of their sight. But with the growth of dining-in-the-dark restaurants around the globe, it opens up many employment opportunities for marginalized blinds. It enhances the self-confidence among the visually disabled food-service workers where they feel they are ‘workers’ not ‘charity beneficiaries’ or ‘donor recipients’. It showcases the real possibilities available to blinds and to the ways an inclusive society could accommodate their needs and specialized skills.

So, dining in dark is not just dining in a dark room.....

it focuses on ‘humanity’ than ‘business’.

It’s a restorative dining experience that harmonizes humanity with culinary.

Yeah! The power is back!

But..... how intolerant lighting is! My eyes are automatically squinted. I think I need more time to enjoy the darkness.

(This is a piece of writing which was awakened by my senses in the darkness during the scheduled power cut at night.)



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Kelantan Arts and Islamic Tourism

Kelantan is a land with colourful traditions and scenic beauty. Not only popular for its natural attraction, cuisine and shopping heaven, it is also known as the birthplace of some ancient Malay cultural arts in Malaysia such as *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppet show), *Mak Yong*, *Menora*, *Dikir Barat* and others. These performing arts are not only popular in Malaysia, especially in east coast states such as Kelantan and Terengganu but have been recognized internationally. Some of the cultural arts such as *Mak Yong* and *Wayang Kulit* have been recognized by UNESCO and are an important part of the cultural tourism industry. Due to the prohibition of performing arts such as *Mak Yong* and *Wayang Kulit* when PAS came into power in 1990, these performing arts faced extinction.

Islamic elements in traditional performing art (*Wayang Kulit*)

Wayang Kulit is a unique theatre form that uses the principle of light and shadow to bring its characters to life, depicted by intricate beautiful hand-crafted puppets. The master puppeteer (*Tok Dalang*), is the only one responsible to make the wayang alive by controlling the movements of the puppets and provide each one with a different voice, and at times, to sing. When PAS came into power in 1990 in the state of Kelantan, *Wayang Kulit* and *Mak Yong* have been banned due to elements and beliefs from Hinduism and Buddhism that contrary to Islam. Due to that, these performing arts faced extinction. The ban was later uplifted with strict guidelines and performances were prescribed to comply with Syariah.

Despite the issues, historically *Wayang Kulit* performances have gone through the Islamisation process. Professor Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof, a distinguished scholar and one of the world's leading specialists in traditional Southeast Asian theatre in his research highlight the significant element of Islamic culture that has shaped Malay and Indonesian traditional theatre. *Wayang Kulit* is believed to

be existed in East-Asian countries, especially Java prior to the 10th century. Following the coming of Islam on the island in the 11th century, this art was threatened with extinction due to elements of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism that contradict the belief in Islam. It was the role of *Wali Songo* (nine saints) in the 15th century, especially Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Bonang that reversed the trend. Instead of suffering death, *Wayang Kulit* became greatly popular and experienced “the most artistic transformation” that aligned with Islamic values. According to Professor Ghulam, through the spread of Islamic teaching from Java to East Coast Malaysia as well as Southern Thailand which all three countries were previously known as Malay Archipelago (*Nusantara*), it is believed that puppeteers of *Wayang Kulit* Siam and *Wayang Kulit* Kelantan too were influenced with Islamic values from *Wayang Kulit* Java. Sunan Kalijaga was tolerant of local tradition when applying arts and culture as a medium for his *dakwah*. He believed that people would run away from *dakwah* if their personality and their way of life is questioned. Due to that, he considered a step-by-step approach to using local arts to influence local people toward Islam. To him, if Islam is truly and fully understood, then people will gradually give up their old habits. His approach was proven successful when *Wayang Kulit* was considered the key success in the spread of Islam in the archipelago, especially in Java.

During the Islamisation process of these arts, Sunan Kalijaga made alterations through physical changes to the figures of the characters, the reinterpretation of traditional plots, the creation of the new story and lastly making the performance available to Javanese Muslim communities. As a consequence, the transformation process of the traditional theatre turned to serve as a vehicle for the propagation (*dakwah*) of Islam. Reinterpretation from the traditional plot to suit Islam so that the shadow play is acceptable to the Muslim community. Shadow play entitled *Wahyu Nugroho*, as an extension from *Mahabharata* (Hindu epic) was created by several involvements of *Wali Songo* (nine saints), particularly Sunan Kalijaga. In this show, the Pandawa brothers, heroes of the *Mahabharata*, five in number, were interpreted symbolically as the five fundamental principles (*rukun*) or pillars of Islam. Sunan Kalijaga himself performed as the puppeteer, using different names in different districts to suit the local culture. The interpretation given by the nine saints to the *Wayang Kulit* is particularly interesting. The *Wayang Kulit* show is seen as a symbol that reflects the “image of law” or shari’ah. “The wayang reflects all humanity, the puppeteer (*dalang*) corresponds to Allah, Creator of the universe.” Another reinterpretation from the original frameworks of the Hindu epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* is *Cerita Jimat Kalima Sada* (*Cerita Azimat Kalimah Shahadah*). This story is about a weapon or charm (*jimat*, *azimat*) named *Kalima Sada*, and when one possesses this weapon, he or she will be safe forever. *Kalimah Shahadah* is, of course, the Muslim affirmation of faith that means accepting Allah as the one and only God, and Muhammad is His last prophet and messenger. Thus the character of Pundatewa (local java name) as Yudhistira (name in Hindu epic), the eldest of the five Pandawa brothers does not die because he possesses

this charm. His end finally comes when he has clearly understood the meaning of the *jimat* (*azimat*) that he attains freedom. The moral of the story is no matter how low one’s position or status is in life, he or she can become ennobled and highly respected with the ownership of *Kalimah Shahadah*.

Way Forward

Arts and cultural activities have long been considered as important elements that spur not only the tourism industry but also educational platforms and excellent mediums for propagating values and religion, especially Islam. For that reason, the conservation of this cultural heritage is essential as a symbol of the identity of the Malays. In order to do that, it is wise that performing artists as well as enforcement authorities to work together on the reinterpretation of the work of art. Recently, performing artists in Kelantan take the initiative to incorporate Islamic values into their artistic activities. As an artist, their creativity to improvise their artworks to be in line with Islamic teaching and values would help preserve this cultural heritage from facing demise.

Awareness and knowledge of the origins, development and philosophical meaning behind these ancient artistic performances will provide better understanding and evaluation. Only with proper knowledge and a broader understanding of the meaning both literally and symbolically can these forms of art be preserved and appreciated. To instill actual values of Islam in these arts in various forms demand all parties involved to understand Islam in a real way. By doing so, the audience can see the beauty and perfection of Islam behind the art performances. Finally, continued appreciation of these art forms not only provides preservation of our cultural heritage, but it is also a platform to spur tourism and is no less important as an excellent medium of *dakwah*.



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A Vacation with a Difference with Voluntourism in Sri Lanka



The economy of any country is significantly impacted by tourism. Many countries today fully rely on tourism to drive their economies. Any country or location needs to promote tourism more than others since it boosts the value of the local currency. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka should focus on more suitable alternative forms of tourism which can promote the current situation of Sri Lanka. Voluntourism is one of the niche tourism that can be considered in the current scenario. There, voluntourists can make a difference while taking a dream vacation to the idyllic island of Sri Lanka, which is recovering from a horrific tsunami, the Corona pandemic, and its worst-ever economic situation.

The term ‘voluntourism’ is formed by combining the concepts of volunteer and travel. It also goes by the names ‘volunteer travel’ and ‘volunteer vacation’. Voluntourism is the practice of travelling while performing volunteer work, typically with the purpose of charity (Batcher, 2003). Volunteers come from many nations and range in age. It entails volunteering while on vacation and touring. People visit not only for fun and recreation but also to assist the local community in coping with natural catastrophes and the defenceless. Some people stop by these places freely and lend a hand in whatever manner they can. The volunteer tourism categories, which are a subset of “alternative tourism”, provide an alternate course where visitors are encouraged to support the neighbourhood. Volunteer travel is associated with “social travel”, “charity travel”, “moral travel” (Batcher, 2003) and “serious travel”, all of which connect the volunteer traveller to working on community issues that can also be experienced through cultural travel (Callanan, 2005). Furthermore, people go on vacation to assist with orphan care, plantations, wildlife preservation, and other similar tasks. There are several chances to lend a helping hand because the rural areas of Sri Lanka are still developing. A traveller with the appropriate skills, information, and enthusiasm can significantly influence the community’s need for knowledge and assistance, whether it be through teaching English or IT, supporting a start-up, helping a community to develop a project to provide clean drinking water, assisting in the eradication of dengue, promoting sustainable forest use, or rescuing animals.

In Sri Lanka, there are numerous volunteer opportunities. Sri Lanka is steadily gaining popularity as a desirable location for volunteer travel and will soon be on many people’s bucket lists. Many volunteers pick Sri Lanka as their destination for volunteer tourism during their gap year each year. The most well-liked initiatives are those involving teaching, child care, and wildlife conservation, although there are many additional options available for

volunteers in Sri Lanka. A volunteer teaching program is an ideal method to interact and explore a new culture while simultaneously boosting the education of the underprivileged, regardless of the age, stage of life, or teaching experience of the volunteers. Among the disciplines, one could teach music, sports, sportsmanship, and computer literacy. In Sri Lanka, providing child care is also difficult work that can be combined with volunteerism. Volunteering with children is a common option for people looking for a meaningful experience during their vacation. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds can have a positive impact on their lives and perhaps even change the course of their futures by receiving emotional, social, and educational help. As voluntourists learn about other cultures and make new friends, this enriching experience will help them hone their leadership and problem-solving skills. Such initiatives will also impress potential employers. Additionally, youngsters will gain from the abilities and information voluntourists impart to them, boosting their confidence. Compared to other volunteer options, community building is also one particularly demanding and diversified option. But assimilating into a new culture, empowering locals, and teaching them how to take charge of their environment are all wonderful experiences (Stainton, 2016). Although there are various subcategories when it comes to community development, each social group’s ultimate objective should be to fortify its locality. The protection of the environment and forests is another volunteer opportunity that is becoming more demanding.

McCarthy (2021) has described that the following volunteering opportunities are available in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation:

During this program, the volunteers can assist in the rehabilitation of sea turtles, safeguard the development of hatchery eggs, and enjoy the beautiful beaches and waterways along the Sri Lankan coast. This project is at Ambalangoda, Sri Lanka all year long.

Teach English to Children:

In a nation that depends more and more on trade and tourism, Sri Lanka has made it a priority to improve English proficiency. There is an opportunity to instruct elementary school pupils in Sri Lanka in the fundamentals of English as a volunteer teacher.

Veterinary Assistance and Dog Care:

In Sri Lanka, there are animals in need of assistance. Fortunately, animal shelters are swarming in to help. The goal of this initiative is to assist in cleaning, rehabilitating, and enhancing the lives of abandoned animals.

Research and Conservation of Wild Elephants:

The biggest herds of Asian elephants can be found in Sri Lanka. Working to identify critical areas that require improvement, finding the causes of human-elephant conflict, and working to inform the communities about sustainable lifestyle choices that will promote peaceful cohabitation are the aims of this program.

Improving Conditions in Slums:

For those with a passion for community development or public health, this program is ideal. Many slums in Sri Lanka have been left behind and degraded as a result of government negligence. The inhabitants’ health and well-being are in danger as a result.

Strengthening the Sri Lankan tourism industry with an entrepreneurial eye would be more sustainable. It is important to promote the beauty, joy, and inner peace that go into volunteering. Most importantly, it would be preferable if it were feasible to spread awareness of volunteer tourism among local tourists. Visitors can learn first-hand about a distinctive culture with its customs, beliefs, cuisine, and holidays by volunteering in different Sri Lankan local communities.



It is true that over the previous several months and even today, issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, spiking inflation, and fragile government finances that hurt the tourism sector of the country and remittances from overseas have severely impacted the economy of Sri Lanka. The essential fact that we must always have in mind is, that our country is going through one of the worst economic crises in recent history. When we find ourselves in a rut, we have to consider ways to restart.

By interacting with and living among the community, tourists obtain a better understanding of a group that leads a different lifestyle yet nevertheless laughs and cries like them. They are made aware of their aspirations, joys, and hopes as well as the difficulties they face and how they have overcome them. However, there are some criticisms of voluntourism as well. Therefore, to overcome them, if you want to be a good volunteer, what should you do first is, ask “Why” to yourself? When creating your travel posts for social media, do you want satisfaction? Do you wish to appear bold and valiant to your loved ones? Or do you genuinely want to help out the weaker communities? Volunteers should consider their motivations and hearts. If the voluntourism opportunity is well-planned and sustainable, the volunteers’ actions would have a long-lasting impact.



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TiP Volume 01

The first milestone of the journey of TiP was launched in September 2018 in parallel with the theme of World Tourism Day 2018; Tourism & Digital Transformation. With the numerous efforts of industry experts, university lecturers, and undergraduates, the magazine widened its rims among the industry.

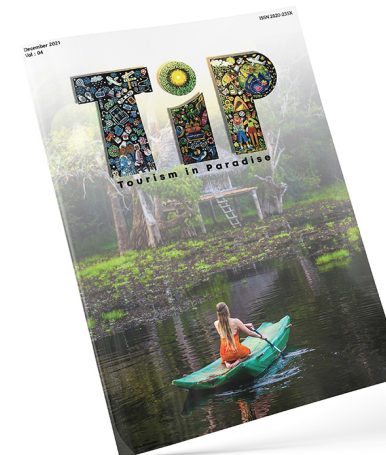


TiP Volume 02

The Second volume of TiP was published in parallel with the theme of World Tourism Day 2019; Tourism & Jobs: A better Future for All, marked its sign in September 2019 as the second milestone of the TiP journey. The magazine successfully held an inter-university article competition and an inter-university photography contest to articulate colours to the magazine's vibrant delivery.

TiP Volume 03

Despite COVID-19 pandemic, the third volume of TiP proved its mastery with the theme of World Tourism Day 2020; Tourism and Rural Development. The entire process of the third volume went on during COVID -19 pandemic in a digital mode, its journey from the beginning to the end. The magazine team gathered a remarkable international representation on its pages while supplementing extra features to its portrayal.



TiP Volume 04

Marking another climax of TiP journey, the fourth volume of TiP was launched in 2021 while distinguishing the world tourism day theme; Tourism for Inclusive Growth, in a different angle. Amidst of Christmas bliss and traveling chill the fourth volume of TiP, welcomed its TiP lovers with the enormous support and dedication of both local and international industry experts, university lecturers and undergraduates.

TiP Volume 05

2022 is a year to rethink about the tourism industry. The TiP volume 5 will walk us through the warmest season of summer and bring desirable fantasies to life. This magazine will uncover different perspectives of international and local industry experts and lecturers. Also, the talent of the university students will highlight through photographs, arts, and articles.



Q&A

Mrs. Bobby Jordan Hansen
Managing Director
Columbus Tours (Pvt) Ltd



Q A brief history of your tourism background?

A Tourism was a completely unknown entity when I joined a small company consisting of 8 staff, in 1973. The company was Walkers Tours (Pvt) Ltd. My career spanned 16 years when tourism was in its ascendancy until 1988. Walkers Tours grew to be a megacompany in inbound tourism and provided the equity to construct prestigious hotels like The Village Habarana, The Lodge Habarana, Citadel Kandy and to buy Bentota Beach Hotel, Coral Gardens Hotel and Hotel Ceysands. In 1987 and 1988 whenever our hotels were overbooked, we offered clients trips to the Maldives as an alternative, just to free up rooms in our hotels in Sri Lanka. Then from 1988-1991 I represented Tjaereborg Allkauf Reisen, Sterling Airways and Scanair directly and it was a huge learning curve for me.

In 1991 my husband and I set up Columbus Tours - catering to a niche market and building up a company with brilliant consultants who tailor made each and every tour. Today Columbus has grown to be a well-known company both in inbound and outbound travel and our hallmarks are going above and beyond the pale, to delight our clients and showcase destination Sri Lanka in all its most beautiful and vibrant nature. Most of our staff have grown with Columbus and have served at least 15-30 years in the company which is a proud testament to Columbus Tours.

Q How have you led Columbus Tours so far up to its present stance?

A Our ethos includes commitment, quality and innovation with every trip we plan. With Columbus Tours, we assure that: Columbus Tours works with a small circle of quality guides, each of them receives regular training on best practices in line with our company's principles. We also discourage single-use plastic on our trips to help reduce our carbon footprint. While on tour, each guest, if they so wish, gets the opportunity to plant trees to help sustain local communities.

When curating itineraries, we connect our guests with only the most knowledgeable and interesting local guides, providing a direct benefit to local communities. Several properties that we use are focused on sustainable tourism, using solar panels, abstaining from single use plastic and encouraging home grown suppliers. We have partnered with the Good Life Institute to connect our travelers with local communities in programs that focus on sharing knowledge and skills in an immersive 3-day program amidst spectacular rural settings. Our team received frequent training and exposure to the best hotels and experiences Sri Lanka has to offer and we provide our team of travel consultants and travel agent partners with regular familiarization trips and training to add value to our guests' travel.

Q What role can women play to integrate and shine in the fabric of tourism?

A There is a gradual growth in women's participation in tourism. They work in a wide range of positions. To satisfy the industry's future needs for productivity and capabilities, it will be important to hire, keep, and promote bright women for technical and management leadership roles considering gender equality as well.

The roles that women play in the tourism industry are influenced by many institutional and cultural factors such as salary parity, lack of career chances, discriminations and so on. There are things that employers can do to change their position and prospects within the sector. So, it is important to think about training and development options and equality of opportunities.

Q What is your purview on the role of tourism education providers in developing the quality human capital needed for the tourism industry?

A The role of tourism education providers in developing the quality human capital needed for the tourism industry is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to succeed in the field of tourism. This may include providing students with a well-rounded education that covers a range of topics related to the tourism industry, such as customer service, cultural awareness and destination management. By providing students with a strong foundation in these areas, tourism education providers can help develop the next generation of tourism professionals and ensure that the industry has the skilled and knowledgeable workforce it needs to thrive.

Q Finally, any message to undergraduates who pursue a career in the tourism industry?

A To undergraduate students pursuing a career in the tourism industry, I would say that this is an exciting and rewarding field to be a part of. The tourism industry offers many opportunities for personal and professional growth, as well as the chance to travel and experience new places and cultures. To succeed in this industry, it is important to be detail-oriented, and customer-focused. Additionally, having strong communication and interpersonal skills can help you build relationships with clients and colleagues. Finally, don't be afraid to take risks and try new things – the tourism industry is constantly evolving, and being open to new experiences can help you grow and succeed in your career.



Summer as I see

With sizzling hot summers and sub-zero temperatures in winter, Budapest; the capital of Hungary shows a different face with each changing season, but there's something to enjoy at every time of year. City life spills outdoors into restaurant terraces, parks and even Danube beaches in the summer, while the winter is more about culture and cosiness. Coming from a tropical country, I mostly enjoy the summer and the fall seasons as it brings more warmth and festive vibes to the city. In between the blossom filled spring and the hiking friendly, colourful months of fall, no matter when it is, there is always something to do in Budapest.

Daylight Saving Time (DST) is the practice of advancing clocks by one hour during warmer months so that darkness falls at a later clock time. The standard implementation of DST is to set clocks forward by one hour in the spring and to set clocks back by one hour in the fall to return to standard time. As a result, there is one 23-hour day in late winter or early spring and one 25-hour day in autumn. This makes the whole summer more engaged with so many outdoor activities and mostly in Central Europe people have 18-hour active days where they have bright early mornings and late nights throughout the summer.

The warm summer from May to September is the time to enjoy the outdoors the most. It's also the peak season for tourism, bringing high temperatures and higher prices. The lively Sziget Festival, which takes place in August on Óbuda island, is perhaps the city's most famous party. The

week-long festival has grown from a relatively low-profile student event in 1993 to become one of the prominent European rock festivals, with about half of all visitors coming from outside Hungary, especially from Western Europe.

A summer holiday is not perfect without authentic local food, juicy drinks, BBQ parties, ice cream and limitless beer evenings. There are many small-medium scale and fancy luxury outlets, and hotels to enjoy summer specials across the country. This is the time the Europeans enjoy the most of tropical fruits, cocktails, seafood, and sweets.

For me, summer is full of simple outdoor pleasures, such as the feeling of sun and wind on your arms and legs, freshly uncovered. It contains a larger amount of happiness born out of escapes of any kind. It tastes of roasted vegetables and fruits so ripe it dribbles off your chin. This is the ideal time to get out as much as you can for as long as you can. Feel the freshly cut grass in the garden, climb the trees, swim in the waves, eat outdoors, take a walk at dusk and sleep under the stars. Also, it reminds me of a family get-together and limitless talks, laughs while enjoying mom's special dishes. You don't want to miss anything by hurrying past it. And there is no need to sweat even more unless you're also having fun while doing it. Well, that's the wisdom of summer. It teaches everyone to be fully awake, engaged, and open to everything around us. Appreciate what we have. It's about being outside, whether on crowded streets or deep in nature.

Ms. Mihiri De Silva
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Communication Skills in the Hospitality Industry

Effective communication is important in any workplace, and this is included in the restaurant industry. This communication is more than exchanging information, but understanding the emotion and intention is the main factor. In the restaurant industry, the sender must convey the information communicated among the staff, managers and also the guests. Failure to communicate will disperse unsatisfactory moods.

For instance, the chefs who get involved in this industry have their duties and responsibilities to be done without a mistake. Any mistake will lead to creating their jobs will be redundant since all of them are connected to the restaurant's operation. Routine and timing need to be kept on track because both are important things to make sure the operation runs smoothly. So, effective communication in the restaurant is a big thing that must be clear all the time during the operation hour. In line with the above mention, mutual understanding in communication plays important role in every aspect of life and career.

There are two subsets of communication skills, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is sharing of information between the

senders and received by face-to-face speech. This verbal communication is an articulate fact and data. Meanwhile, non-verbal communication includes body language, facial expression and speech tone. Non-verbal communication is showing off the ability to make others understand the meaning of what we say physically, mentally and emotionally.

In contrast, today, in the era of electronic communication, people were talking thru short text messaging to spread the important message or news without any boundaries. This communication was called social media communication. By having this communication, the sender and receiver must clearly understand the situation to avoid miscommunication among themselves. Communication tends to be less effective due to the lack of focus, unable to manage stress and over-thinking. The sender must control their emotional stability and must increase their emotional intelligence when they are dealing with a tough decision. We are unable to forgo multi-thinking. The distraction and the tendency being miss cues in the conversation are high. So, we need to Keep it simple, FOCUS!



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POETIC MEMORIES OF CHINA II: THE FLYING DRAGON



Dr. Chandana (Chandi) Jayawardena DPhil
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'THE FLYING DRAGON' is the part II of 'POETIC MEMORIES OF CHINA I: THE SLEEPING LION' which appeared in *Tourism in Paradise* 2021 Volume. Part I covered some significant periods of China's recorded history of 3,272 years. It narrated about R. D. K. Jayawardena, my father's official trip to China in 1958, and having tea with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, and sitting on stage with the Chairman Mao Zedong during the national day celebrations of China. Part I ended with a mention of my father's ground-breaking book on China, published in 1963. *Cheena Charika* (Travels in China) was an instant best-seller in Ceylon.

An Opportunity to Introduce Sri Lankan Cuisine to Hong Kong

In early 1981, as Manager of one of the Walkers Tours/John Keells Hotels, I was promoted to the corporate office as the first Manager-Operations for Hotel Management and Marketing Services Limited. Being responsible for all six hotels of the John Keells Group at age 27, I was getting used to the corporate culture of the largest group of companies in Sri Lanka. I was busy taking over the management of the Ceylinco Hotel, which became the seventh hotel of the group. In the midst of my busy schedule, my immediate superior, Bobby Adams, Director-Operations entrusted me on short notice, to travel to Hong Kong. He wanted me to quickly plan and organize a large Sri Lankan and Maldivian food festival at the Hotel Furama InterContinental.

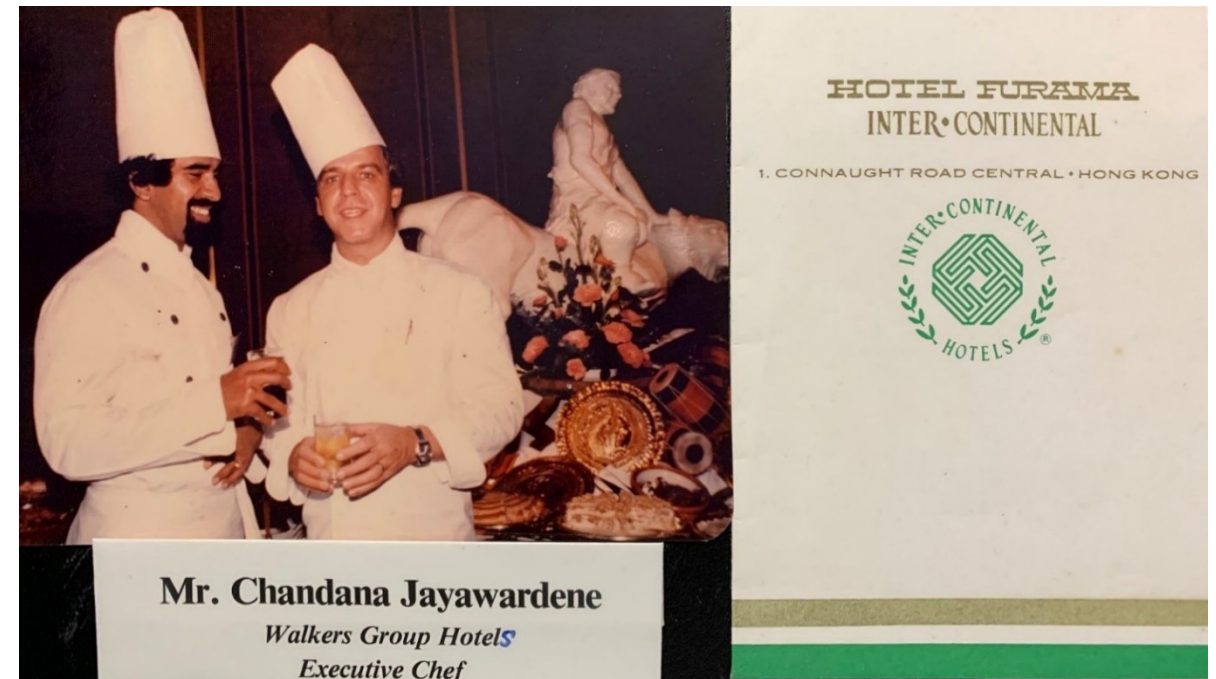
It was an important two-week tourism promotional festival with the partnership of a few organizations represented by: M. Y. M. Thahir for Walkers Tours, Pani Seneviratne for Ceylon Tourist Board and Ahamed Didi of Universal Resorts of the Maldives. The InterContinental Hotel Group was expected to be represented by their Executive Chef in Colombo. The festival included 28 large buffets for lunch and dinner over 14 days, promoting Sri Lankan and Maldives cuisine.

Three Hong Kong Chinese cooks had been allocated to assist the Guest Executive Chef representing Sri Lanka. At the eleventh hour, the Executive Chef of Hotel Ceylon InterContinental declined to take part, citing support in Hong Kong was inadequate to produce such a large quantity of Sri Lankan dishes. He wanted three Sri Lankan chefs from his brigade to be provided with air tickets to Hong Kong. That request was not accepted by Air Lanka, the airline sponsor of the festival.

The reputation of Walkers Tours as the main organizer of the festival was at stake. Bobby asked me, "Chandi, as we desperately need someone like you to rise to the occasion, can you please help the company?" Based on the festival attendance forecast from Hong Kong, I planned the menus, calculated quantities of ingredients, purchased key buffet decorations and took off on an Air Lanka flight to Hong Kong the very next day.

My Trip to Hong Kong in 1981

My father's advice before I left Sri Lanka, was "Chandana, try your best to do even a short trip to China, after the food festival. Future global tourism will be divided into two – China and the rest of the world!" His predictions since his visit to China in 1958 were: "China one day will become the number one tourist destination in the world and China will also become the most powerful nation in the world in the twenty-first century."



In Hong Kong, with the Executive Chef of the Hotel Furama InterContinental in 1981

The food festival was a big success and at the end of two weeks, I was exhausted from cooking all dishes for 28 buffets. My three Hong Kong Chinese assistants worked hard supporting me, and but depended on my final cooking. The experience and knowledge I gained in Hong Kong, helped when I organised four Sri Lankan food and culture festivals in Singapore, Oman, Guyana and Jamaica, as the Guest Executive Chef and Event Coordinator, between 1982 and 1996.

I was in Hong Kong for three weeks. My extra (non-cooking) seven days were spent on event planning, advance preparations, public relations and promotional events for the national TV in Hong Kong.

My Trip to Macau and China in 1981

I found a few days for a trip to Macau and Southern China. Compared to Hong Kong, Southern China, appeared to be totally underdeveloped in 1981. Nevertheless, I loved the experience of being one of the early tourists in China. In terms of Tourism in 1981, China was at an early developmental stage, much behind small countries such as Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.

My father, pleased and proud of me, had long chats with me upon my return home. He said, "I must go back to China to see if they are getting closer to the predictions, I made in 1958!" I felt his disappointment that he did not get an opportunity to revisit China.

Two More Trips to China in 1985 and 1987

Having retired from Sri Lanka Administrative Service by early 1980s, my father consulted for the Chairman of Phoenix Advertising (Pvt) Ltd, worked as a Company Director for Lanka Tiles and the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Ayurvedic Drugs Corporation. In those roles, he widely travelled overseas for business purposes but did not get another opportunity to travel to China. Being frustrated about it, one day in 1985, on the spur of the moment, he visited the Chinese Embassy in Colombo with a copy of his 1963 book, *Cheena Charika* (Travels in China). He showed the book to the Deputy Ambassador and narrated stories about his memorable trip to China in 1958. He also told them that he would love to visit China again to see the development in the areas he visited 27 years ago. My father had a gentle persuasive personality.

A week later, my father was invited to have tea with the Ambassador of China in Sri Lanka when my father was offered a fully sponsored trip around China as a special guest of the Chinese Government. They honoured my father for being one of the first foreigners to write a book about the People's Republic of China (PRC). After revisiting the locales of 1958, my father valued the opportunity to get some art lessons at the famous Shanghai School of Art and published a poem about this 1985 visit.

Chinese Painter

*Some skilful strokes
with a bamboo brush
on a sheet of rice paper
and stamping it in red
with his signature seal
the Chinese painter says:
“Let this painting be
the memento of your visit
to the Shanghai School of Art.”*

*I thank him and wonder why
salient features of the landscape
are not in the painting.
Reading my mind
his response was quick:
“What is most important
In a work of art is what
The artist chooses to leave out.”*

*And that advice has been my guide
every time I tried to paint or write.*

*(R. D. K. Jayawardena, 2008, p. 15, Fingerprint, Sarasavi Bookshop (Pvt) Ltd,
Nugegoda, Sri Lanka)*

As my life-long mentor and art teacher, my father gave me lessons on new techniques of visual art he mastered in China. As a semi-professional artist, I benefited tremendously from my father's passion for arts and ability to teach.

In the mid-1980s, my father was invited to help his friend, Minister Gamini Jayasuriya. As Coordinating Secretary for the Ministry of Health, Agriculture Development, Food and Co-operatives, my father represented Sri Lanka at the World Food Council meeting in Beijing in 1987. He used that opportunity to travel around China, once more.

Three More Trips to a Changing Hong Kong

In 1991, I arranged a Management Observer period at The Regent of Hong Kong, which was ranked as the best hotel in the world, at that time. The resident hotel band was the well-known Sri Lankan band, The Jetliners. My friends Tony Fernando and Mignonne Fernando (Band Manager and the Lead Singer) arranged my assignment.

I presented a case study from Sri Lanka in 1992 in Hong Kong at the Pacific Asia Regional Tourism Education Forum, organised by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and an agency of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). I was proud to meet two Sri Lankans leading PATA at that time – Lakshman Ratnapala, President & CEO and Renton De Alwis, Vice President – Asia.

I returned to Hong Kong in 2001, to present a case study from the Caribbean. This was at the International Hospitality Industry Evolution Conference, organised by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Cornell University, USA. On this fourth visit, I felt the changing political climate of Hong Kong and the growing uncertainty among many residents.

My Memorable Trip to China in 2010

In 2010, while working as a dean, I was asked by my then employer, George Brown College, Toronto, Canada to lecture at the Guilin University of Technology in China and also establish educational pathways to Canada for Chinese students. I went there for three weeks along with two professors on my team.

While in Shanghai, I took a couple of days off to attend the largest exhibition I had ever seen (EXPO 2010). The train I took from Shanghai to the exhibition ground was also memorable. It was the fastest, cleanest, safest, and the most efficiently operated train ride I experienced during all my travels around the world.

The most memorable experience I had in China was a day excursion on the mystic Li River and ending the day by watching a fully choreographed show staged on the banks and in the water of Li River for an audience of 4,000 spectators. This show, 'Impression Liu Sanjie' by director Zhang Yimou is a local tourist attraction. The show is the world's biggest natural auditorium that uses Li River waters as its stage, with its backdrop to be twelve mist-enveloped hills. This show was grandeur than any show I have seen in Las Vegas, the Broadway, Toronto, the Westend or Paris.

Inspired by the beautiful Li River and the fascinating show in Guilin, I completed a series of Li River paintings, the largest of this series being purchased by the President of George Brown College. This art exhibition, 'Century ½ - 50 years in Art', was presented by George Brown College's School of Design to raise money for student scholarships.

My last meeting with my father was in 2020, in Colombo a few months before he passed away at nearly 99 years of age. We discussed many things that were important to him – my three children, visual art, poetry and China. He repeated his 1958 and 1981 predictions, again, "China one day will become the number one tourist destination in the world and China will also become the most powerful nation in the world." Before I left Sri Lanka in 2020, sixty years since his first art lesson to me in 1960, my father gave me his final art lesson. Thank you for everything, Thaththa!



An early tourist to Macau and Southern China in 1981

First Art Lesson

*A guiding hand
Taught me to walk
Talk and read
Then to paint*

*A little kid
In a tropical zoo
A first-time wonderer
Amazing big animals!*

*“Paint what you see”
“Pen what you feel”
Advice then
Still useful, decades later*

*“Use less paint”
“Be gentle with the brush”
Critical, as ever
During my last meeting*

*Cherished memories
Lessons in life and art
From my first visit to the zoo
To the final lesson from my father*

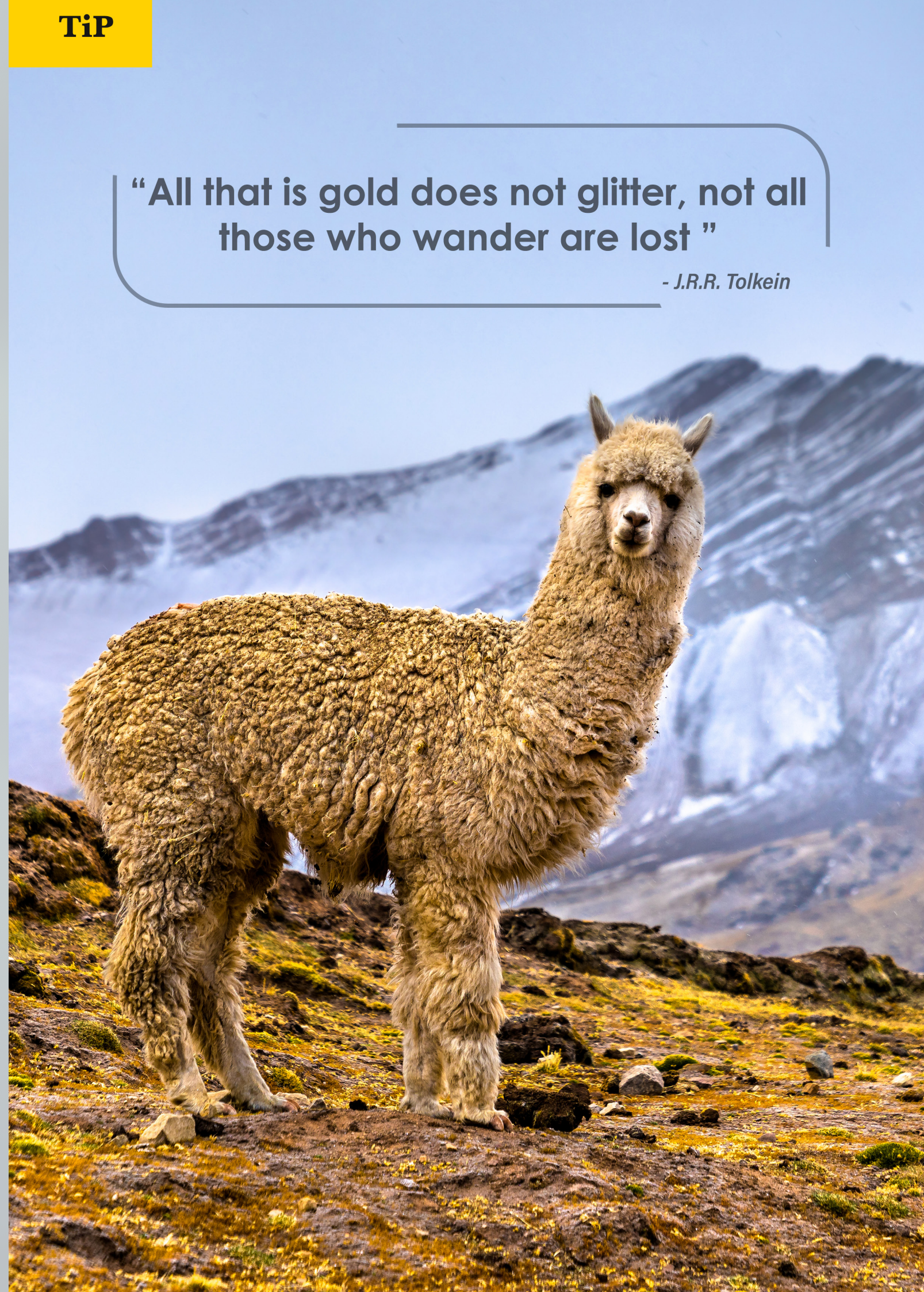
(Chandi Jayawardena, 2022, p. 55, Emotions, 10-10-10 Publishing, Markham, Canada)

Today, China has climbed to the number four slot in the world of Tourism (after USA, Spain and Italy) and has become the second most powerful nation in the world after USA. In the year 2019, the World Tourism Organization also identified China as the # 1 source country in tourist spending for the year 2019.

I think that my father’s prediction will become a fact during my lifetime. However, international criticism about China’s bad behaviour as a world leader is ever growing. China’s record of human rights violations, ethnic cleansing (of the Uyghur population and other mostly-Muslim ethnic groups), religious freedom, conflict in Tibet, handling of protests in Hong Kong, demonstration of military power close to Taiwan (before and after the Taiwan visit by Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August, 2022), disrespect for the Law of the Sea, indirect colonisation via massive developmental projects with 99-year rights, environmental pollution, cyber warfare and mis-information about COVID-19, are concerning to a majority of the global population. In spite of all these black marks as a bad global actor, the Dragon is Flying Higher. Meanwhile, my curiosity and fascination over China continues...

“All that is gold does not glitter, not all
those who wander are lost ”

- J.R.R. Tolkein





AROMATIC FOOD BY THE STREETS

Years ago, on a fine evening, I was chasing through the crazy traffic in a tuk-tuk worn out by elbow-to-elbow crowds. To make the matters worse, I was in the precincts of Colombo on an empty stomach. So, I came across the idea of tasting street food near a vibrant oceanfront urban park that never sleeps. The aroma of the food and the sound of the sizzling meat on the grill invited me to satisfy my sudden cravings.

As I was a freshman to street food, I decided to have a *kottu* as I made my rounds around the street vendors to see the options I have. But I guarantee you that no one will ever be happy with just one choice. The longer I stayed there, the more I was allured by the food. Even though my belly was fully loaded, the authentic Sri Lankan flavors, the aroma of masalas, and pleasing smells of sweet treats invited me to eat more.

Since I was craving for more food options, I went to the next stall. Precisely cooked, smoking and aromatic *isso vadei* were presented there. Normally an *isso vadei* is prepared along with a single shrimp, but that day I was served with a flat, extra crispy *vadei* with many shrimps. It was topped with masala gravy and smoothly chopped onions. The first bite took me to a whole new world. The beach atmosphere and the aroma of the crispy *isso vadei* were a heavenly made match. I could not stop eating. I wanted to taste something crispier, and I came across some manioc chips, which were hanging inside the stall. They were deep-fried and well-seasoned with salt and mild spices. The flavour and art that the street vendors blend into their meals are indescribable. Next, I wanted to taste something fruity and spicy. And what could be better than a Sri Lankan-style pickle or Achcharu wrapped in a paper takeout cone? There were plenty of options that I could choose among. The sweet and spicy varieties were Ceylon olives (*veralu*), mangoes, gooseberries, pineapples and many more.

Even though I wanted to roam around every corner of the street, the time didn't allow me to realize my desires. Despite returning home with a full stomach, I left my unfulfilled empty soul at street food stalls. I am still curious where it wanders all alone without its other half. Probably waiting for me for the next round to try each food variety in these stalls along the streets.

I strongly believe that the way to reach the heart of a country is through its food, and street food is the fastest, most authentic and most delicious way to do it. Once we indulge in street food, there is no going back. It makes us forget the restaurant menus and lace up our walking shoes for the best, cheapest, and most fascinating eats on the streets.

Senuri Jayaweera

The Ultimate 12-hour Guide for the Train to Dabong

Just a three-hour train ride from Kota Bharu, Dabong is the latest rural charm in Malaysia. It's a great option for thrill seekers on a budget. Here is your guide to spending a day in this small town.

7:00 a.m. - Enjoy the sunrise amid the Kelantan rural scenery



Arrive at the *Wakaf Bharu* train station for a ticket check at least 20 minutes before your journey begins. You may buy a return ticket to Dabong on the same day for RM10 (USD 2.30). However, buying your ticket in advance, either at the counter or on the Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) website, can help avoid disappointment. Make sure your camera is ready to capture the sounds and sights of the train as it approaches the platform. At 7:21 AM, the train departs from *Wakaf Bharu* train station. The train's four coach cars are equipped with air conditioning. As you enjoy breakfast on the train, enjoy the sunrise through Kelantan's rural scenery, main towns, and rivers that run through the province. The train stops briefly between Tanah Merah and Kuala Krai to allow the train travelling in the opposite direction to pass.

10:33 a.m. - Dabong, the ecotourism gateway



The town of **Dabong** gets its name from the stone used to make one's teeth glisten. Previously, on weekdays, the train mainly transported school children. Then in 2020, the **Train to Dabong** took over social media, and the town became a weekend getaway among Malaysians. Once you start passing the tunnels after the Kuala Krai station, you know you'll soon arrive at your destination. Get ready to disembark when the announcement is made for Dabong. Take a picture with the Dabong station sign with the mountains in the backdrop. Meet your local personal guide, who will brief you about the day's itinerary. You will need to book a local personal guide or rent a car ahead of time to help navigate Dabong and its attractions.

10:50 a.m. - Admire the centenary geo-heritage aesthetic at Gua Ikan



Kick off your trip at **Gua Ikan** (Fish Cave); the limestone cave is named for its resemblance to the form of a fish. As legend has it, a fish pool formerly existed in the cave. The low cave ceiling provides you with a close-up view of the stalactites and stalagmites dating back 150 years old. Take a stroll around the cave and admire this natural wonder. Don't forget to take a selfie with Gua Ikan's large, brightly coloured sign for your Instagram. If you stay longer in Dabong, the 2-hour caving experience through **Gua Gelap**, **Gua Keris**, and **Gua Pagar** is a must, where you can see the "God's light" phenomenon. This spectacle requires patience and the right timing to witness! You can only access these caves with a certified nature guide.

11:35 a.m. - Photo stop with Southeast Asia's tallest waterfall

Take a quick stop at the Gunung Stong landmark. The highest waterfall in Southeast Asia, the picturesque Jelawang Waterfall, is visible on a clear day. Take a photo overlooking the waterfall, which boasts a cascading 7-storey column of water at 303 meters above sea level. If you want a close-up view of the waterfall gliding down the rocky wall mountain and see the "awan karpet", the sea of cotton-like cloud phenomena, you can start the hike to Gunung Stong before sunrise or, even better, camp overnight on the mountain.

12:00 p.m. - Immerse in the beauty of nature at Lata Kertas

Next stop: Lata Kertas, an ecological treasure. Dabong and its neighbouring town are surrounded by rivers such as Sungai Galas, Sungai Pergau, and Sungai Setong, which provide the area with many impressive waterfalls. One of them, Lata Kertas, is well worth a visit to take in its stunning waterfall and surrounding pristine tropical forest. The craggy rock here is quite slippery, so explore at your own risk. Lata Kertas is unsafe for leisurely swimming due to its current and depth.

12:40 p.m. - Slow down or speed up at Sungai Kenerong

At **Sungai Kenerong**, you'll see most of the people from the train spending their day, picnicking and BBQing. Take a dip in the stream to get in touch with your senses. The river has a distinct pebbled formation, and the soft sand feels like beach sand. If you are lucky, you'll see the resident hornbills. However, according to the locals, if you hear more than three cries, it is a sign to pack and get away from the stream, as the hornbills are letting you know that the "kepala air" (drainage basin) is headed your way. If an adrenaline rush is your thing, spend your day here tubing. The 1.7-kilometre ride downstream will take you about 1½ hours.

1:00 p.m. - Enjoy a freshwater prawn dish

Make a food stop at *Kedai Kak Nah Kg. Stong* for Dabong's famous dish, **Mee Udang Galah** (freshwater prawn noodle). The sweet tartness of the tomato ketchup weirdly complements its clear broth, with no fishy taste for skeptics. The standard serving is 4 prawns for only RM15 (USD 3.40). For those who don't fancy noodles, the restaurant also serves freshwater prawn *nasi goreng* (fried rice) and *nasi berlauk* (white rice with mixed Malay dishes).

2:10 p.m. - Ziplining at the Jelawang Pipe Resort & Extreme Park

After lunch, head to the highly rated Jelawang Pipe Resort & Extreme Park. The road to the resort is a rough uphill climb. When you arrive, you will be welcomed by colourful concrete pipe (culvert), hence the name "pipe resort". Culverts were turned into an innovative capsule accommodation overlooking the surrounding nature view and stream. If you are planning a picnic, the establishment also rents a picnic hut for an hourly rate. Try out the famed 180-metre ziplining across the river. Or, if you prefer an ATV ride, you can ask your guide to book this experience before your arrival.

4:10 p.m. - Take home a memento of Dabong

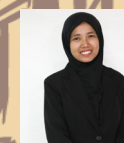
Arrive at the station 30 minutes early for your train ride home. Make sure to get a Dabong souvenir at the train station and say goodbye to your friendly local guide. The train departs at 4:46 PM, and you might enjoy a quiet nap for the first hour or so. The train will make another stop to allow the train in the opposite direction to pass. Enjoy the blue hour as the sun lowers into the horizon and the sky darkens. At 7:29 PM, the train pulls into *Wakaf Bharu* train station. Take one last video of the departing train into the darkness to its final stop, Tumpat, to commemorate your Train to Dabong bucket-list experience.



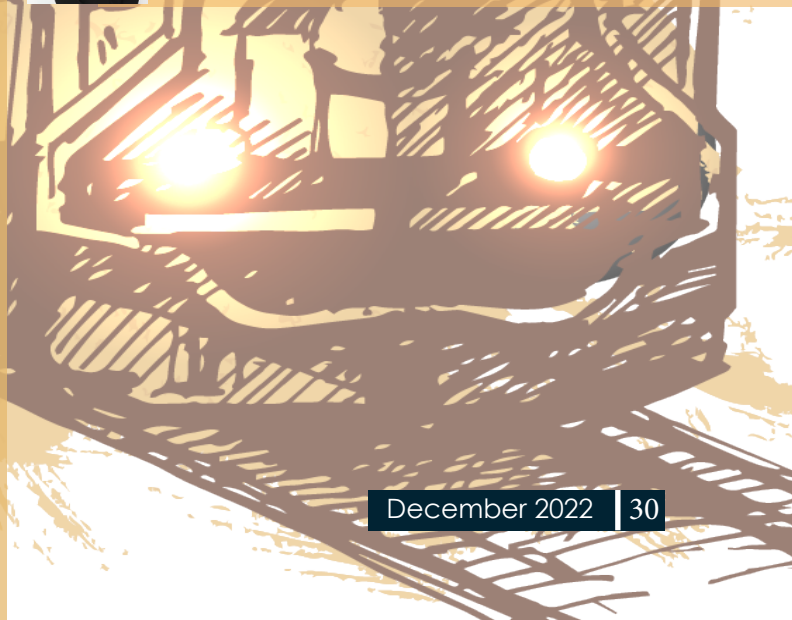
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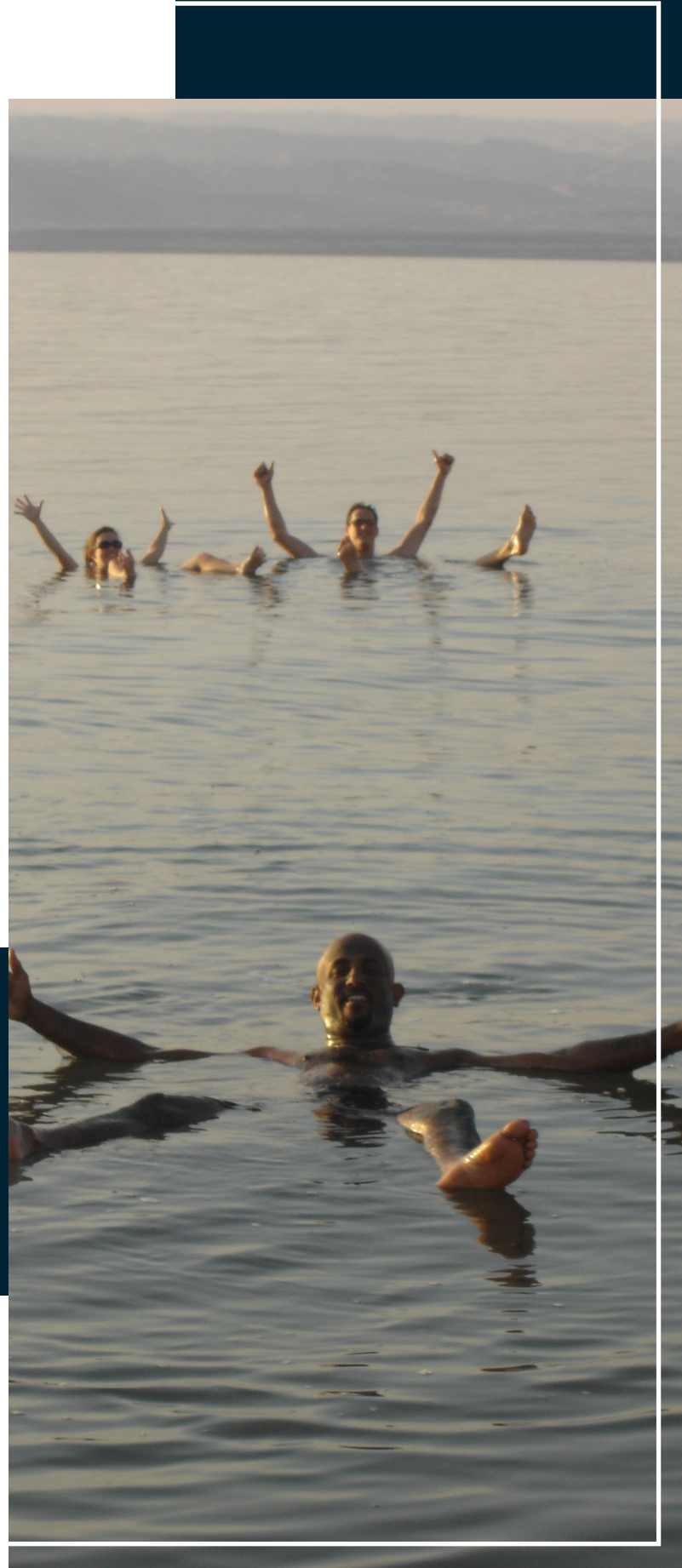
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Ms. Nor Amira Binti Mohd Razali
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Universiti Malaysia Kelantan



A touristy place I visited in the world



I left Rome Fiumicino airport to come to Colombo on Royal Jordanian flight. Since this is the first time I am using this airline, my only concern was how the sisters in the cabin crew would treat me. It was a three-and-a-half-hour journey from Rome to Amman and it took around six hours from Amman to Colombo. I can remember one special thing after the transit in Amman. I was offered a business class seat on the next flight thanks to my diplomatic passport. Further, the initial doubtfulness about the hospitality of the cabin crew disappeared as they served plenty of red wine. As I had to go back to Rome in two weeks, and since I bought a return ticket from Rome, I had to leave on the RJ flight again. Most of the people who travel between Colombo and Rome do not use this plane since there is a 24-hour transit in Amman. Just after I got off in Amman, I was hurrying to get immigration clearance to go to the hotel provided by the airline to spend the transit duration. When I passed the immigration counter, one officer stopped me and took my hand luggage and said that he was the officer who will take me to the hotel. He ushered me through a special red carpeted exit path, and I realized how they respect diplomats. Only I was taken to the hotel by a car while other passengers went by bus. I can remember, though it was around 11 a.m., Amman was very cold as it was winter in Europe. After having a coffee from the hotel, having a wash and coming back to the lobby, the bellboy told me that there was an opportunity to go on one-day trips. Accordingly, I joined three others to visit the Dead Sea. Two were Sri Lankan and the other one was Italian. While traveling to the Dead Sea along the desert road, we were surprised to see a large banana plantation. Although Jordan is considered as a desert country in middle-east, they have managed to grow vegetables and fruits. Obviously, it's a wonderful and tremendous achievement. I thought about what we were doing in our country with fertile soil.

The Dead Sea is like a lake, not large, very equal to our lakes in Anuradhapura. The special characteristic is its location. Just 60 kilometers southwest of Amman, it's within easy reach from the capital or from Madaba, which lies 40 kilometres to the east. The Dead Sea has the

lowest elevation and is the lowest body of water on the surface of Earth. For several decades in the mid-20th century, the standard value given for the surface level of the lake was around 1,300 feet (400 metres) below sea level. The Dead Sea is also called the Salt Lake and its eastern shore belongs to Jordan, and the southern half of its western shore belongs to Israel. It lies in the Jordan Rift Valley, and its main tributary is the Jordan River.

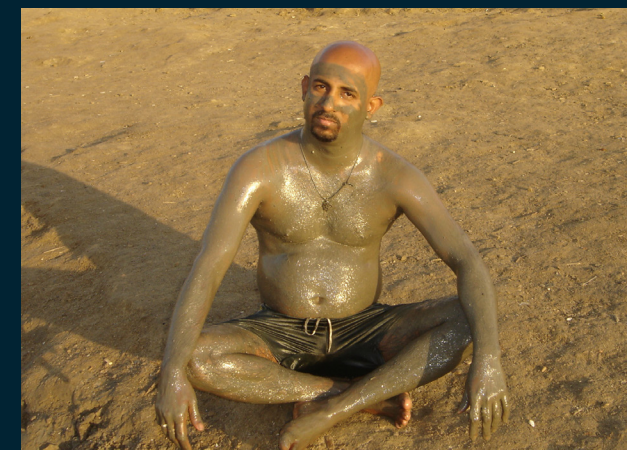
Since the water here is very salty, no living things can be seen in the Dead Sea. Many people were bathing in this remarkable sea. I also decided to bathe and only one person who participated in the picnic joined me. Bathing in the Dead Sea is very safe, not dangerous because no matter how deep we go, we don't sink and just only floating on water like a rubber ball. Really, it was an incredible experience. The Dead Sea's mineral-rich mud is well known to have therapeutic properties. People who take baths here, apply mud on the whole body because it is believed that the mud of the Dead Sea is very healthy for the skin. I did not think twice to follow this tradition which was also an unforgettable experience.

This is a fascinating tourism destination. The restaurants at the Dead Sea beach complexes offer a vast lunch buffet. All the resorts here offer rooms and spa ritual packages for a pampering time-out from traveling. Products including various types of skin creams and souvenirs are available in shopping malls located around the Dead Sea.

RJ flight was chosen due to the unavailability of seats on regular airlines which I use to travel. The excursion to visit the Dead Sea was also a coincidence. However, it would be more accurate to say that through these coincidences, I enjoyed a truly memorable and wonderful experience. My sincere thanks to RJ Airlines.



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Q&A

QUESTIONS

ANSWERS



Q&A

Mr. Hiran Cooray Chairman, Jetwing Symphony PLC

Q What is your story in the world of business, notably in tourism and how has your family background directed you to the business? How have you developed it so far?

A Okay. I'm a second-generation tourism person because my father started the business. In that respect, I was a little luckier than some others. My sister and I didn't have to build a business. We came into a business which my father started very small.

He was a bit of a rebel in the University. Later, he taught English at Gurukula Vidyalaya. Then, he was an insurance agent. After that, he started building construction as his main profession. While he was doing that, he got into building a hotel for himself. In 1972, he started building one with six rooms in Negombo, which was then *Blue Oceanic*. Now it is *Jetwing Blue*. With that small number of rooms and a small kitchen and various things, six rooms became 40 rooms and what you see today is what you see. That's how, our family got into hospitality and tourism. Even *Jetwing Travels* or *Jet Travels* then started by accident. German tour operator wanted rooms in Negombo, and he helped us to establish the travel agency, *Jet Travels*. My father said "I don't know how to run a travel agency", then the German gentleman, Mr. Dieter Phelsen said, "No, you set it up, give me an office, I'll train your people and start". That's how it started in 1981.

So, in 1972 got into hotels, 1981 got into travels with no idea about brand building, just his motto was to provide legendary service, *just make your customer happy*. That was it. And, I joined my family in 1987 after having a lots of theories in my head.

1987-1989 was one of the worst periods in Sri Lanka as well. The North was burning, the South was burning. There were a lot of killings and a lot of things happening and in 1981, the chairman of tourism asked the tourists to go because it was impossible to even look after them. For three months, this country had no tourists whatsoever.

That was my official initiation into tourism. First two years, I was wondering why the hell I came back. I would have had a better life because I had a degree in America, I could



MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOFILE (PRISHAN PANDITHAGE)
Image courtesy: www.lmd.lk/cropped

have lived very well. I had a girlfriend in America. I could have got married to her, gotten the citizenship and lived happily ever after in America. But my father wanted me to come back. That's how I ended up here. No questions asked. Father said come, I came. Then the girlfriend came; she didn't like Sri Lanka, and went back. So that's the story. That's how I got into it. I had no idea of hospitality.

My only interest in school was playing cricket. I was fairly good. I represented Sri Lanka in junior cricket with Arjuna Ranatunga, Aravinda De Silva, Romesh Ratnayake. I went to England, touring in England with Sri Lanka schools' team. I've played two years of first-class cricket in 1983 for Singhalese Sports Club (SSC) and Colts Cricket Club. But then, of course, at that time; there was no money in cricket, unlike today. So, I went back to my studies.

I started studying from Advanced Levels onwards. Until A/Ls, I didn't study very much. I was just playing cricket and then teachers helped me and I got into university. Then, there I studied. My father never forced me to study, but he forced me to read. So, I still continue to read. Reading makes you a little bit more knowledgeable. Today, there are more opportunities than in the time we were youth. We never had the access to the internet. We never had access to any other media. We had only books, magazines, newspapers, so we had to buy them and read. Today, you have more opportunities to expand your horizon and to see what is happening globally in Tourism. At that time, there was no way of learning what was happening globally until you go to a place.

We had a gentleman by the name of M.Y.M. Thahir, who was the Director General of Sri Lanka tourism. After he retired from government service, he worked with my father. He's the one who told my father that one of the children must go and attend Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) meetings. I learned a lot from that. I was 27 then. From that age onwards, I got exposure to very senior people in tourism and hospitality through PATA. When I asked Mr. Thahir, what do I do?, when we went for the first meeting in Penang in Malaysia, he said, you just sit and listen to the elders, talking about tourism policy, tourism, what's happening globally, and the tourism trends. So, that's how I started learning. In 1991, I went to Bali, Indonesia, for a PATA annual conference. There, the keynote speaker was a man called Professor David Suzuki who is a Canadian, Japanese. He spoke for 45 minutes about protecting the environment. 45-minute speech was on the need as tourism people to look after the environment.

It took me about a year, after that to really understand what he was saying. Then, I could match with what my father was saying, as a socialist in the country. When I drove in Negombo, he never allowed me to horn and he never allowed me to go fast. He says that you have to respect the local people. If you go to the Jetwing old hotels, you will see that we don't have gates either from the sea or from the roadside. So, his policy was, you live with the local community and don't harass them. We are privileged to be going in cars. They are not. Don't put them into the

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My father never forced me to study, but he forced me to read”

drain. So, that plus the environment, is linked to what is now today, Sustainable Tourism, Eco-tourism, Responsible Tourism, or Geo Tourism. All these words were not coined then. Those words were coined in the mid-1990s.

So, that is my beginning. Then I became a complete convertor. We were the first hotel in Sri Lanka to do a sewage treatment plant in the early 1990s. There was no legal requirement to do a sewage treatment plant. You pump the shit into the sea. Then what do you do? You're shitting on the place where you're making money. People come to Sri Lanka because of the sea and the beach. They don't come because of the hotels. The attractions are the beach, the sea, the mountain, the cultural heritage of the country. The hotel is secondary, transport is secondary. So that became our motto. That's why even now, after 30 years, still no other company can match us in the commitment to the local community, commitment to the environment, and commitment to peace. That has to come from the heart, not from the head. If you analyze only from the head, then you're thinking of money. But money is important. If you don't earn money, you cannot do the other two things. So, sustainability requires 4P's; profit, people, planet and peace. If there you forget these 4P's you're basically in shit streets.

When it comes to how far I have developed the business is what you see. I am not going to tell you what I have developed. In orchestras, there is a composer and a conductor. I look at myself as a conductor. Well, maybe after I die, people will say that I was also a composer. But it's not for me to say whether I am a composer. I'm currently a conductor. Therefore, what I have done is what you see. It is not for me to tell. You go to our hotels and see. Then you'll see if I have done something right or wrong. Eventually, then you will determine if I am a composer or a conductor.



Image courtesy: www.lmd.lk/cropped

Q Sri Lanka is now in a turbulent situation in terms of political, economic, and socio-cultural stability. So, how have these instabilities and uncertainties impacted contemporary tourism in Sri Lanka and according to your purview, what remedial actions need to be applied to pass through these challenges?

A Now you are seeing only what is happening today. In my life, I have seen this country through turmoil since 1983. I was 20 years old then. Every time something happens, we think, oh this is the last time; this is the last time we are going to suffer like this. Since 1983, we have been thinking like that, and when will this end, when will that end, when will something else end. So, how many years now? Almost 40 years.

In one way, we are a very blessed country. In another way, I don't know what to say. We are a country where people are with hatred, anger, greed, selfishness, and all of that. I think people need to change. People's ways have to change. We have four great religions beginning with Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. We don't practice them properly. No religion will teach you anything other than love, compassion, prayers, penance, and reconciliation. Are we practising these?

Now we have come to a stage where we have become international beggars. That is the worst that has come to, and we are responsible. If you look at it, I am more responsible than you all are because I'm slightly senior in age. I have a slightly bigger position than you have in the society. So, I should have acted more than you all but I didn't and I regret it very much. I hope people in the same society of me or, higher than me, will regret as well because we elected these people. They didn't come to power by force. Whether it is Gotabhaya, Mahinda, Ranil. We are supposed to be very influential. Hotels association, travel agents association, various associations, university professors, doctors, lawyers, engineers, all the people of influence are represented in the society but no one spoke out until we became international beggars.

So, I am more responsible than you all. I feel bad about the situation the country is in. So, what happened to Tourism? Tourism has come to pretty much a standstill. We have lost confidence in tourism. This was a culmination of events. Now we are coming to the bottom of it and I hope nothing worse than this can happen. If more than this happens, then I don't even think whether God can help us. Tourism is something that needs to be nurtured, cared for, and developed, so that the people of this country benefit. 80% of the money earned through tourism remains in the country unlike agricultural exports, like tea, rubber. In tourism, the money has to come back because as a tourist, you come with the money. Now if I have tea, I can send it out to someone in Russia or Iran and then say, to pay my account in Timbaktu which he will do. For him, it is not a problem. So, 100% of the money doesn't come back to the country. That's why we are struggling with balance of payments. People are keeping their money outside. So, we have lost our patriotism, our love for the country. We have to develop this country which gives us everything, gives us the soil to plant, and gives us the produce. We send it out and keep the money outside. So, how can this country develop?

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Tourism is something that needs to be nurtured, cared for, and developed, so that the people of this country benefit”

The governor can't match imports and exports. We're struggling. So, tourism can play a huge role in bridging that gap. That's where I'm coming with tourism right now. We have a role to play if you listen to the governor. If you believe, that's the only person I can believe at this point in time, who's in a higher position. One and a half billion dollars of imports a month, out of which as I remember 600 million is petrol and diesel and the balance is medicine, food items, gas and all that. Our exports are a billion dollars. So, we have to bridge it with two things. One is of course tourism should pick up again and maybe brings in \$150-200 million a month to the country. Then the other is people who are working outside the country. All will have friends working outside. Ask them to send the money through the banking system. They may lose Rs.10-Rs.15 because the black market will pay more. But the country has given them free education and free medication. Don't forget that. Even today, if you fall sick, you can go to the hospital and get free medication. You're getting free education; give something back to the country. So, when you send the money through the banking system to your family, then that money can be used to pay for the bare essentials that we are importing now.

The other thing is we have to have the confidence to serve tourists with domestic products; what is ours. Be proud to serve those. No tourist comes to eat Swiss cheese, oranges, apples, grapes, or Norwegian or Alaskan salmon in this country. We don't need them. They can get that in any amount in their countries. They are coming here to eat what we produce.

IMF regulations will not allow us to stop importing. You know why? That is because IMF is in all the countries. Not only in Sri Lanka. So, when we stop importing something from another country that country gets affected. So, IMF conditions

will be that you can't stop imports. But IMF can't tell you and me not to eat or to eat. You understand? If we don't eat apples, grapes and oranges, the fellow who's importing is not going to import. We have papayas, pineapples, about twenty varieties of bananas, rambutan, mangosteen and durian. You name it, we have it. Tourists are coming to eat these tropical fruits and not to eat the imported fruits that have been hanging for so long. Think about it.

So that's where we have lost confidence. We have lost confidence to tell, you come to my country, and I'll give you to eat or give you to drink. I'll take you around the country. We have lost it. We have to now rebuild that confidence again. The main reason why someone will come, first and foremost is safety. If it's not safe, whatever you do, people will not come unless you're mercenary or an army fellow or you're coming to train these killers or something like that, otherwise, they will not come. So, what is important is for us to have a belief in confidence, believe in tourism. Maybe from three months' time, tourism will be one of the most sought-after industries to be in, because you're earning dollars. We are doing two things. One is our revenue will be higher because today the dollar is at 360 or 365. And number two, you're serving, you're doing a major service to the country. You're helping to bridge the gap, balance of payments gap that the country is facing today. And hopefully, in the future, we will also help pay back the loans that we have to pay in dollars. When you all become close to my age I hope and pray that the loans we have taken will be paid, but before we pay the loans, we must eat and live. So that is why the balance of payments is important.

Q What is your impression about the level of collaboration and participation of the stakeholders (e.g., state, guides, small enterprises, local communities, etc.) in the tourism and hospitality industry in Sri Lanka?

A See, there are an informal and a formal sector. Something that worries me is why more people don't come into the formal sector. They do not feel comfortable coming and joining the formal sector. Maybe we also who are in the formal sector, haven't welcomed them with open arms. So, there are restrictions on both sides. There is sadly a divide. There is no link between formal and informal sectors. Maybe the universities can play a role in linking as well because you can have access to both. As much as you are talking to us, you can also talk to some of them in the informal sector who are influential tourism people. Do not think only we are influential; they are also influential people in different ways.

That is an area that needs improvement. During the last couple of years, the relationship between the National Guides, the Travel Agencies and the Hospitality Sector dropped a bit due to different thinking of the administration, development authority and promotion bureau, and so on. So hopefully, I hope that will not happen again.

What are we in? We are in the service industry. We are serving our customers. If we are fighting among ourselves, then it becomes very difficult to serve. So, this country needs a clear system where big, small anybody benefits from tourism. That is it. If you don't, we are the losers.

So, there are a lot of people who play a role in tourism. Universities play a very important role in tourism. They are researching on trends, people's behavior, people's purchasing trends, and habits. Those are the things that need to be linked. Then about architecture; architects play a role. How do you beautify areas? Tourism is also about service and space. How do you create beautiful spaces for people to enjoy when they come? All those things are linked.

In tourism, everybody has an opinion. Everybody is a stakeholder in tourism; transportation, defense, and health. I wrote down about 14 Ministries that are stakeholders of tourism; culture, environment, wildlife, and finance, all of which are sectors that are involved in tourism. It is not only the tourism minister. The tourism minister alone can't do much. If there are no airlines, we are dead anyways. How do people come here? They cannot swim here. They have to come by plane. So, the airline industry is extremely important for us to develop tourism in the country.

So, all these sectors have to play an important role in building tourism. Unfortunately, that link happens but not in a collective way. It is not integrated. There is no real plan of saying; Look, if tourism is to be contributing 10% of the GDP of the country, which means we have to earn at today's GDP levels of about 8 billion dollars, hopefully, if our national income increases to, let's say, \$120 billion, then we have to earn \$10 to \$12 billion if you have to maintain the 10% contribution to GDP.

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The other thing is we have to have the confidence to serve tourists with domestic products; what is ours. Be proud to serve those”

A Well, as I said before, we have a blessed country. We, for an island of our size, other than snow, we have pretty much everything else. No other country can boast of what we have. First and foremost, we have to have confidence. That is to me is the most important thing. My thinking comes also from Cricket. Pick up the cricketers who gave us confidence. You all were small. I have played with Arjuna and I know Arjuna very well. He gave confidence to Sanath Jayasuriya and Kaluwitharana to play. So, it is similar to tourism. You must go out into the world and say, “My country is the best. Come here, we have everything”. What are we doing now? We are not projecting an image with confidence. We have to project ourselves to the global audience with confidence. We have to say, we have the best, we are the best. We may not be the best. That is a different story. But when we go out, we have to talk about the positive things we have.

This afternoon, I'm going to our Sigiriya and Dambulla hotels by train. I go to Habarana and then take another bus to Sigiriya. So, we have now stopped all our managers, directors from using their private cars or company cars to visit work. We have to use public transport. It's not because we don't have money to buy petrol and go in the car but because if you're using your private car, you're consuming more than what is necessary. Anyway, the train is going. Anyway, the buses are going. So, you get into it and go. We have to sacrifice a bit. We have to discipline ourselves because I realized if I'm to get the 3 o'clock train, I have to be at the station by 2.30. All of that has to be disciplined.

So, if we get ourselves going, and if you like you get in, and think differently. If you think differently, we can get out of the balance of payments crisis very fast. Then we can start rebuilding tourism, then we will be able to contribute at least \$200 to \$250 million a month. That's what we should start doing immediately. Hopefully, by next year or the year after we'll be contributing. Therefore, tourism is going to play a leading role in our country's recovery stage. That's my conclusion and I strongly believe that.



Health and Nature Tourism

A Healthy Contribution to Sustainable Tourism Development?

What does health have to do with nature tourism? It is banal that physical activity in fresh air is always good for you. However, nature has extremely diverse effects on the human mind and body, which is itself part of the natural cycle. For people like farmers who live from nature, this is self-evident. But those who live in a modern city, surrounded by high technology and complex economic processes, easily forget the nature-bound and vulnerability of their own bodies. During the Covid pandemic, however, when many people were forced into social isolation due to lockdowns, this vulnerability made itself felt as a great longing for nature. In the Alps, for example, the demand for nature-based offers increased so much that many a previously lonely mountain peak was suddenly threatened with the infection of covid and claustrophobia (Lenart-Boroń et al., 2022). But when tourism expands without control, it almost always leads to dangerous, unhealthy effects (Nikolova, 2021). What measures are therefore needed to ensure that health-oriented nature tourism contributes to sustainable development is addressed in this article. First, there is the simple question of what “health-promoting nature tourism” may be.

The concept of health-promoting nature tourism

Classic tourism is based on the consumption of products and services. It is essentially about being pampered in the best possible way. To this end, everything foreign and strenuous is packaged and served in easily digestible morsels. In contrast to this is the principle of health promotion. Here, health is not understood as a consumable good, but as an expression of the ability to cope with the world and its challenges in the best possible way (Lindberg, 2021). In this sense, health can be compared to a muscle: Only a muscle that is exercised grows and becomes strong and resilient, while an untrained muscle remains weak and vulnerable.

When you go out into nature, you enter unfamiliar territory where the rules are completely different from those in your own living room or city neighbourhood. In a forest, for example, you are moving on impassable terrain, which is why you must choose your steps carefully so as not to injure yourself. There are dangers from venomous animals and plants here, but they can also be a source of fascination. However, this presupposes that you have learned to move carefully in this strange world (Lee, Han & Ko, 2020). Free nature is thus a wonderful “training ground” to sharpen



one's senses and train one's attention. The rewards are discoveries and authentic encounters with the “inhabitants” of this foreign world, the likes of which cannot be bought anywhere. As an added benefit, a “bonus” as it were, the immune system and the cardiovascular system are also trained, because nature can only be experienced if you approach it with your own strength.

New Trends in Tourism

With increasing urbanization, digitalization and regulation, people's need for the “magic” of such “wild” green counter-worlds, where one can prove oneself in an extraordinary way, is also growing. In industrialized countries, the demand is booming for tourism products that include lifestyle sports activities such as bushwalking, rock climbing, canoeing, or wildlife watching. What such products have in common is that they combine the key elements of health-promoting nature tourism into an experiential, unique tourism product (Fredman et al., 2018). These elements include:

- access to attractive forms of nature such as forests, rivers, mountains, bush, or coast
- a meaningful level of physical and mental challenge according to the skills of the travel client: this may be overcoming an obstacle, encountering animals that seem dangerous, a greater physical burden...
- appropriate professional guidance to encourage the client to take independent steps into challenging nature to prevent accidents and to protect against unexpected dangers, but to coach their mindfulness by advising as needed (Tarver et al., 2019)
- enough safe space for independent steps and experiments to promote one's own senses, creativity and courage, but above all to be able to experience proving oneself as one's own successes.

In summary, health-promoting nature tourism combines the encounter of nature with elements of wilderness education



and with risk management to promote the empowerment of guests in nature and thus their ability to prove themselves and experience this foreign environment. In consequence, this kind of nature tourism allows intense experiences of happiness, freedom, and connectedness (Brown & Bell, 2007).

A healthy and sustainable development?

Studies show that people are more empathetic towards themselves and their environment after an intensive experience of nature (Seeler, Lück & Schänzel, 2021). They develop more compassion and understanding for ecological connections and their threats (Lee et al., 2021), such as environmental toxins and global warming. At the same time, nature tourists experience how little they need to experience fulfilment and happiness. Thus, nature tourism promotes a key core value of sustainability, namely sufficiency (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018).

The independently acquired familiarity with these previously “foreign” worlds also often contributes to the fact that health nature tourists are particularly committed to nature conservation and the active promotion of the visited population (Gezhi & Xiang, 2022). They, therefore, contribute to higher added value of the visited region by preferring local products as “authentic”. In addition, they are usually more willing to pay higher prices for products that protect the environment as much as possible and contribute to the preservation of the local culture (Friedl, 2008).

Just in theory or also in practice?

For almost twenty years I have been teaching sustainability, ethics, and nature tourism at FH JOANNEUM – University of Applied Sciences in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria. Whenever I tried to inspire my students about the power of nature, I, fortunately, was able to profit of my manifold experience as a nature tourism guide. I have coached tourists in some of the most beautiful places all over the world. Most intensively, I was able to observe the positive effects of encountering wild nature in the Sahara. For the encounter with the extremes of the desert leaves no one untouched. It is no coincidence that three world religions were born in the desert, where one is reduced to the essential as well as to the encounter with oneself. One cannot escape this radical nature; one can only love or hate the desert. But those who manage to accept and understand this world will discover and learn to love the desert as a magical space of unfolding, probation, experience and spirituality (Moufakir & Selmi, 2018), and return home from such a journey extremely relaxed.



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Kelantan State Museum

An Interesting Place to Visit

Kelantan State Museum is the main museum and office located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia. Kelantan is situated in the northeast of Peninsular Malaysia and Kota Bharu refers to the state capital of Kelantan in which the State Museum is placed. This old building served as the colonial land office for a long time before but, it now has become the house of the Kelantan Art Gallery. In 1988, the interior of the building was renovated by adding an extra half story and rooms for a museum exhibition. At the end of the renovation process, it was finally opened on the 6th of August 1990 by Kelantan Sultan Ismail Petra. Kelantan State Museum building is a stone building. Before being used as a museum, it is the office of the Kota Bharu Municipal Council. The building has been restored and some changes have been made. The objective of the development of the Kelantan State Museum is to display the history and culture of the state of Kelantan for public viewing. The items that have been featured in the state museum are traditional musical instruments, traditional games, ceramic collections and land and water transport equipment. There is also an ancient history room of the 'Gua Cha' a historical site that proves that Kelantan was inhabited thousands of years ago by 'Melayu Porto'.

Kelantan State Museum has two floors which refer to the ground floor and first floor respectively. The ground floor of the State Museum refers to the exhibition gallery which includes the history of Kelantan, historical places, past prominent figures, the arrival of Islam, the Royal Lineage of Rulers, and Kelantan's present and past events. Meanwhile, the first floor of the State Museum exhibits includes traditional pastime performances such as the *Wayang Kulit* which refers to the shadow play, *Dikir Barat*, *Mak Yong*, *Main Puteri* (all performing art), *Gasing* (top spinning), *Kertuk* (Musical), *Silat* (self-defense), *Rebana* and *Rebab* and more. In order to meet the vision of the tourism sector as well as reflect the culture of the state of Kelantan, the Museum Corporation (Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan) has succeeded in creating several museums or special galleries located within the cultural zone.

There are 8 museums or gallery as follow:

- Royal Ceromonies Museum (Muzium Adat Istiadat DiRaja Kelantan)
- Islamic Museum (Muzium Islam)
- Handicraft Museum (Muzium Kraftangan)
- The Royal Museum (Muzium Diraja – Istana Batu)
- War Museum (Muzium Perang – Bank Kerapu)
- Wau Museum (Muzium Wau)
- Kampung Laut Mosque (Masjid Kampung Laut)
- Kelantan Art Gallry (Balai Seni Lukis Kelantan)

In conclusion, Kelantan State Museum displays its uniqueness to the public either from inside or outside of Kelantan able to promote the cultural and historical importance of Kelantan. In addition, state museums are able to show leadership in the promotion of the heritage of the nation and become a very important institution that is respected and valued.



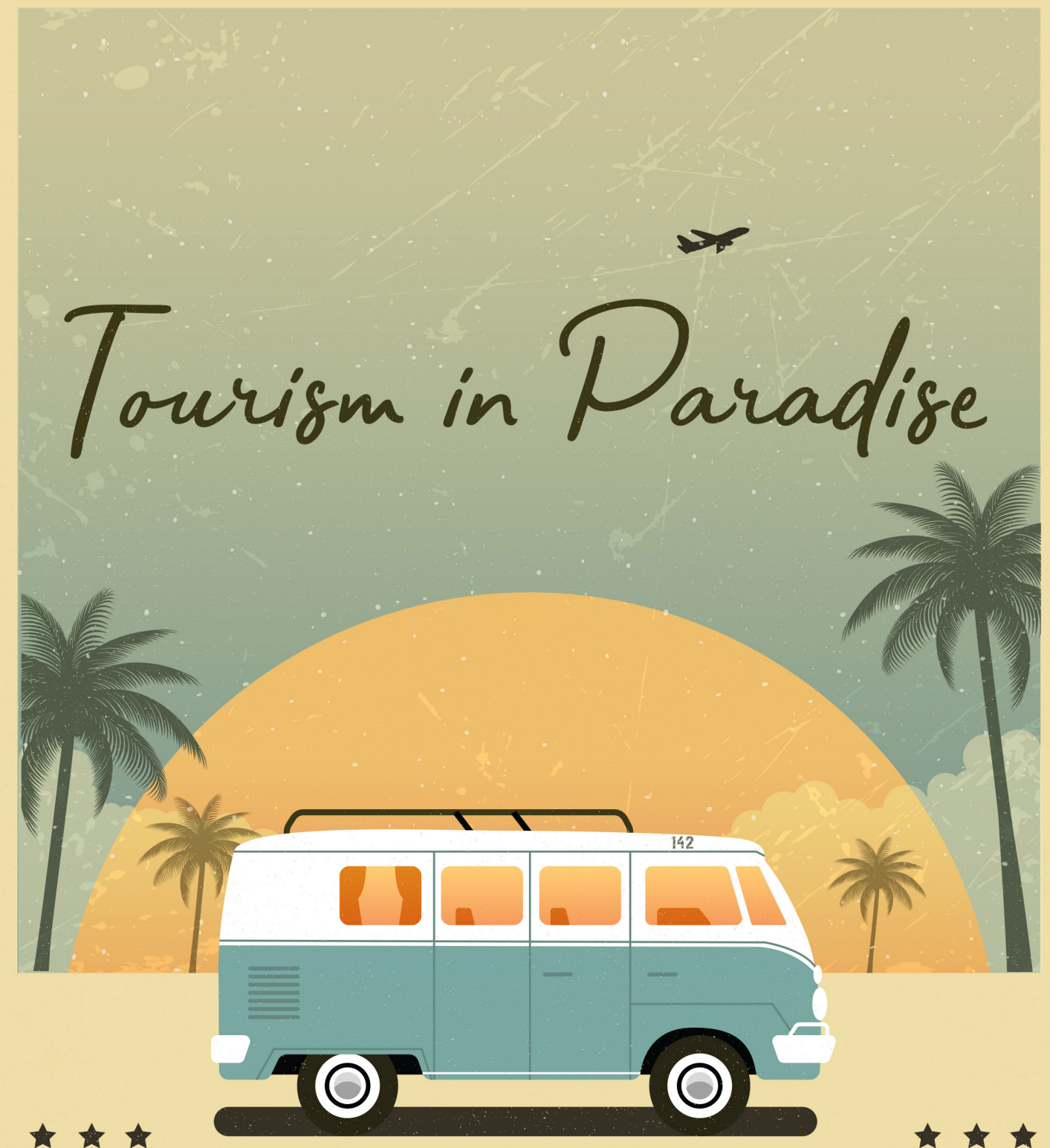
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“There is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a new and different sun”

~Into the Wild~

This quote is from the movie *Into the Wild*, an American biographical adventure drama film (2007) written and directed by Sean Penn.

Hill Country Tamils:

Heart of Hand-Picked Sri Lankan Tea

During the mornings in Sri Lankan hill country, a cold breeze comes down from the mountains to the greenery tea estates, bringing a fresh breath to the day. As the whooshing sound passes through the estate, an exhausted, but gentle and comfortingly sweet Tamil voice blends into the air. “*aararo arirao araaro ariraroa...*”. It is the voice of a young, tanned lady wearing a bright-coloured saree singing lullabies to the air. She goes all out to ease the pain of her wailing little baby while plucking the tea leaves to support the family as the breadwinner. This is just a small cross-section of the lives of the ethnic group, *Indian Tamils*.

In the first phase of the 18th century, Sinhalese folk refused to contribute their labour to the plantations. Therefore, British rulers brought labourers from South India to work in their estates. Another unique ethnic group continued to live in the Sri Lankan cultural system as these Indian Tamils migrated and settled in the upcountry. They are also known as the *Hill Country Tamils* of Sri Lanka. This ethnic group still has not grabbed much attention from the outside world, even though they have 200 years old unique, socially and culturally vibrant lifestyle.

A typical day for Hill country Tamil tea pluckers starts early in the morning. From dawn to dusk they spend their time among row upon row of luscious tea plants, plucking tea leaves and engaging in other related gardening work in tea estates. Women in bright-coloured sarees and men in *vesti* and a shawl walk on badly rutted footpaths for their work in the tea plantations. This journey begins from their small houses which are built near their tea plantations. They are called *line rooms or line houses*. Ever wondered about living in one of those line rooms for even a day? Line rooms are sets of four to twelve small, old one-storey homes with shared walls. Most of the hill country Tamils live in these small houses since they suffer from extreme poverty. Within those faded, cracked walls, aromatic, delicious food such as *idly*, *dosai*, *vadai*, and *pongal* are made for their essential nourishment. Except for having that delicious food and the heavenly beautiful surrounding, they have never been able to enjoy the so-called “luxuriousness” in their whole lives.

There is a belief among them that they belong to castes such as *Paraiyans*, *Cakkliyans*, *Pallans* or other lower Dalit castes. Due to this class structure that is determined by birth and the fact that this is not their origin country, they have lowered their mental status and also have faced discrimination from other ethnic groups in the country. They make every effort to blend in with the culture which already have on this small island because of their strong desire to manifest that they are a Sri Lankan community even though their ancestors were descended from India. Therefore, they established *Kovils* around their tea estates to worship Goddess *Mari Amman* and organized a large annual festival to fulfil the goal of articulating and reinforcing community identities and boundaries. 200 years ago, they migrated to Sri Lanka with tons of hopes in their mind to increase their status of life and have a better future with their loved ones. They struggle a lot to earn their basic rights, so it is only the right thing to offer the acknowledgment they deserve from the outside world to not leave their ancient legacy left alone in the world.

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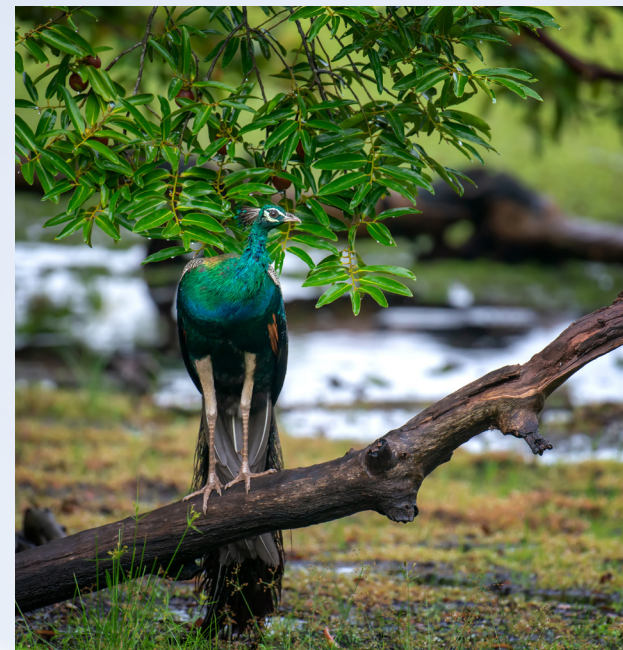
Possible Travel Trends in the New Normal

The tourism industry was one of the most badly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the closures of many tourism-related businesses, travel bans, and the disappearance of international travel. As per the SLTDA statistics, in 2020 alone, the country lost nearly US\$ 3000 million, which is recorded as around a 75% decline, badly impacting the living standards and well-being of communities across the country. The tourism sector is getting ready for a comeback while specialists continue to assess the degree of the damage done. It won't be easy to imagine the precise scenario for travel in the post-COVID-19 period, but several patterns have already begun to be embraced by established actors to shape travel's future in the new normal.



Local before global

The restrictions on overseas travel and the uncertainty around aeroplanes and airports will cause tourism to concentrate on the domestic market. Most people will attempt to discover undiscovered attractions within their own country's boundaries, travel to remote mountain retreats, or spend a few days taking up the natural beauty of the landscape or national parks. Even now, a considerable number of local tourists have started to visit the different parts of the country. There is an excellent opportunity for government and tourism authorities to reconsider their strategies, look at the domestic market in another way, and utilize various products for domestic tourists as the country's economy recovers from the pandemic.



Demanding outdoors

Travellers will undoubtedly be eager to engage with outdoor tourism because this type of tourism will enable them to automatically put together social distancing and emphasize direct contact with nature, which many travellers haven't been able to benefit from in recent weeks. Now many travellers are likely to choose outside, open areas while choosing a trip, such as beaches, forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and so forth, where adhering to social distance would be simpler. People will want to spend a few days in a destination surrounded by beautiful greenery, away from the crowds and worry of contamination. Now it's time for all the outdoor tourism activity operators to finetune their outdoor tourism products.

More concerns on Community-based tourism

One of the significant positive impacts of the pandemic is that tourists are looking for local experiences and are spending more time with local communities. Therefore, it should be clear that community-based tourism places the community at the centre of every development, guaranteeing that it is involved, empowered, and successful. Genuine community-based tourism products will ensure an authentic experience for tourists. They encounter something new and different within the community and are not in congested, touristy areas.

Extensive duration of travel

Many businesses now operate entirely remotely or even hybrid, enabling employees to work from wherever they choose. As a result, there have been more extended stays. For instance, according to an Airbnb report, one out of every five reservations in the first quarter of 2021 was for 28 days or more.

More youth on tours

In recent years, it has become clear that retirees all over the world are making the most of their free time by travelling extensively and discovering exotic locales. The worry that older people are more vulnerable to the virus may severely temper their newly acquired freedom. Younger travellers in the 18–35 age range, who seem less susceptible to the viruses, will be the ones to leave their homes for increased travel in the post-Corona period.

A boom in experiential tourism

We have had enough time to reflect and concentrate on the things we love during the extended lockdown and home quarantine periods. Many simple joys may reappear as reasons to go on vacation, but in a different way as individuals stay indoors, slowing down and embracing the long-forgotten hobbies. People who have discovered their love for photography may choose locations where they can take more photos or choose cycling or walking holidays, wellness farms, eco-tours, and other types of travel.



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Why Sustainability Matters

The Importance of Sustainability Practices in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry

The earth we inhabit is a gift from God that needs to be cherished and taken care of. The existing earth is complete with unlimited and limited resources, as well as renewable and non-renewable resources for us to carry out activities for survival. However, the earth also has its capacity and limits. Population growth around the world results in over-consumption that can erode the balance and resources on earth. In addition, economic and daily activities among households are able to cause climate change, which results in various negative effects on the balance of the ecosystem. Thus, sustainability has become the mainstay of every policy formulation and become the orientation for government organisations, NGOs, and so on.

The hospitality and tourism sector is one of the rapidly developing industries that provide income to the country's GDP because the industry has always had a demand from the community. No matter what kind of hospitality and tourism services are offered by the operators, they have always been favoured by the public. However, this industry always encounters risks or controversies due to activities related to the erosion of resources and the effects on the environment. For example, the development of resorts and hotels revolves around the preservation and conservation of nature. Such attractions or destination areas have great potential for income generation, but at the same time provide a risk to the environment. In addition, wastage from the hospitality industry's practices contributes to environmental risks. The same applies to the tourism industry owing to the exploitation of natural areas and the production of waste; all of which contribute to the degradation of nature. Although we are striving towards the goal of sustaining economic growth, we should never neglect the focus and efforts we have made in trying to achieve environmental stability and sustainability. Environmental erosion, excessive use of energy and resources, and excessive carbon emissions from daily human activities will result in detrimental effects and abrupt climate change, which could later ultimately affect



the smoothness of daily human activities. Therefore, sustainability principles become a crucial foundation for human activities, especially pertaining to hospitality and tourism activities. The sustainability framework can be a guide for current and future policies of hospitality and tourism in the country.

To increase the capacity of implementing sustainability, stakeholders who are involved in this industry need to adopt sustainability practices. Although sustainability has been introduced for a long time and has become the pillar of policy planning at the international, national, and local levels, the level of awareness and knowledge of sustainability among stakeholders in this industry particularly is still low. Hence, there is still a low level of engagement in terms of sustainability practices in hospitality and tourism among stakeholders at the local level. The exposure to sustainability is not only meant for the industry's key players, but also for members of the community who are the customers or service recipients. They should also know and understand the importance of sustainability in this industry so that sustainability practices can be implemented successfully at various levels among stakeholders in order to achieve the desired objectives.

The degree of knowledge of sustainability practices could determine the stakeholders' level of awareness and practice on sustainability. Therefore, it is very important for all parties to ensure that they understand the concept and practice of sustainability. Many resorts or hotel operators are hesitant in practicing sustainability in their operations, even though they would be able to obtain the benefits of sustainability practices, such as reducing business operating costs and stimulating innovative values. Sustainability practices should be the basis of the day-to-day operations of a company. However, it is not easy to adapt sustainability principles during business operations. Perhaps, various challenges may surface, but implementation needs to be continued and further enhanced toward sustainable living for the present and the future in order to achieve the desired ambition highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In a nutshell, sustainability is not a foreign term, especially among key players in the hospitality and tourism industry; its implementation should be the core of business operations as this sector is rather prominent in relation to environmental issues and excessive utilisation of resources. This sector provides a high economic return to the national income, but at the same time, we cannot ignore the aspect of environmental stability that will ultimately affect the

quality of life in the future. Proactive actions and practices need to be implemented to increase knowledge and awareness among stakeholders, to ensure that sustainability is not limited to a rhetoric, but something that can be undertaken realistically.



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The Trouble with Voluntourism

According to a 2018 report from the United Nations Volunteers Program, the global volunteer workforce is equivalent to roughly 109 million full-time workers. This exceeds the number of people employed in many populous countries including Japan, Mexico, and Bangladesh. The majority of this global volunteering is informal, with 70% of volunteering occurring through casual, direct person-to-person engagements. This informal volunteering exceeds formal volunteering in all parts of the world, including Asia and the Pacific.

The term voluntourism (a portmanteau of volunteer and tourism) has come to represent a wide array of travel experiences that combine traditional tourist activities with a few days of unpaid and informal community service work, typically for a charity or NGO. Within many sectors of the global tourism market, there has been an increased interest in voluntourism. In particular, demand for voluntourist experiences has increased dramatically in markets that cater to university students, young adults, and other people from high-income countries who wish to engage in a “travel experience that matters”. At present, there are several tour operators in Sri Lanka that provide voluntourism experiences to paying guests throughout the island.

Although we recognize the noble intentions that motivate people to seek out travel experiences where they feel they can make a difference, these good intentions are simply not enough. As a practice, voluntourism has the potential to generate substantially more harm to host communities than good, and we believe that tourism operators should end the practice of providing tourists with short-term community-based service experiences as they are currently conceptualized. Current criticisms of voluntourism can, in part, be traced back to Ivan Illich’s poignant 1968 speech “To Hell with Good Intentions”, which was delivered to the Conference on Inter-American Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. In this work, Illich pointed a glaring spotlight at “voluntourist” attitudes, the perceptions of economic, political, and social exceptionalism that are commonly held by visitors from high-income countries volunteering in international contexts, and the extensive damage caused by well-intentioned, but ignorant, “community development” initiatives that are created without input from the communities they hope to serve. Thoughtful criticism of international “service” programming has been present in the public sphere as well, perhaps most notably from Cole (2012). In his work, Cole coined the term “White Savior Industrial Complex” to describe the problematic assumptions,

mindsets, and power dynamics that all too frequently exist in situations where wealthy organizations and tourists seek to “help” those they deem to be “disadvantaged”.

From the work of Illich, Cole, and many others, it has become clear that voluntourism is a deeply problematic and harmful practice. Some of the more significant problems with voluntourism include:

01) The perpetuation of problematic mindsets related to white saviorism, colonialism, and economic and cultural power dynamics.

Many voluntourist programs are founded upon deficit models that mistakenly assume that local communities are lacking in material, emotional, and intellectual resources, and that short-term foreign visitors can somehow effectively offset these shortfalls. These assumptions perpetuate colonialist mindsets that presume that these communities are somehow “damaged”, are in need of “saving”, and that foreign visitors are the answer and will provide the necessary resources and solutions. In truth, Westerners have yet to significantly impact issues of deep social, political, and economic inequality within their own societies, let alone within the context of a short-term engagement, within another country and culture. Voluntourism has the potential to reinforce social, political and economic inequities that may further disadvantage communities and create insecurities and dependencies. Unfortunately, these deficit models continue to privilege Western ways of thinking and acting over the wisdom and resources of local community members in order to solve complex problems. In truth, the solutions to complex local challenges will always come from inclusive, locally-led initiatives, and not from visitors or external constituents who are not part of the fabric of the local communities.

02) A failure to create sustained and meaningful community relationships.

Most voluntourist programs are designed to be short-term where tourists engage with a community for a few days or weeks and then leave, often never to return. Because of this, relationships in these contexts are often transactional, with community members being “providers” and visitors being the “customers”. This potentially creates a burden, impacting the time, capacity, and resources of the very community the voluntourists wish to engage with in order to “make a difference”. Engagements such as this can inappropriately commodify the community in purely economic terms, limiting the opportunity for visitors and community members to listen to, and learn from, one another as equals, in ways that can facilitate just and mean-



-ingful, long-term relationships. Creating sustainable partnerships takes time, trust, and ongoing interactions that value local solutions, shared decision-making, collective action, and social justice.

03) A lack of meaningful impact and “value-added” for host communities

In typical voluntourist contexts, the development of volunteer-community relationships is frequently limited and often commodified. It is certainly true that voluntourism programs can provide a much-needed influx of capital into host communities, however, these income streams may not be equitably distributed between the tourism provider and the community being served. Additionally, funding may not be equitably shared among the community members, reinforcing power imbalances, financially burdening some, and potentially creating inter-community conflict. Hosting externally organized voluntourism programs can also come at a significant opportunity cost to the communities as the time and resources provided to these programs could be better used to advance community-directed, locally owned initiatives that are cost-effective, mobilize the community, and enhance solidarity and collective action. Past issues of *Tourism in Paradise* (for example, see Wijesundara (2019) and Gendle & Senadeera (2020)) have provided best-practice models for community-based tourism that focus on the development of meaningful relationships that create a “value-added” partnership for host communities.

04) Humanistic harms to communities

As noted above, voluntourism programs frequently perpetuate a deficit-based approach that focuses on the problems and needs of communities as identified by external constituents. Deficit approaches reinforce power dynamics that are rooted in problematic colonialist assumptions about who needs “saving” and who are the “savers”. This approach is incredibly harmful and undermines a community’s ability to focus on their assets, identify local resources, and motivate community members to enact positive change. Additionally, deficit-based voluntourism programs frequently engage in activities with vulnerable populations, such as children and medical patients. It must

be made clear that voluntourism programs that allow untrained or minimally trained foreign volunteers/tourists to work in medical facilities or orphanages can create unethical situations and inadvertently cause harm. Such activities can place children and patients at significant physical and emotional risk, facilitate the economic exploitation/commodification of children and medical patients, create multiple privacy and personal rights concerns, and likely violate both local laws and the standards of the World Health Organization (WHO; Rowthorn, et al., 2019). Specific guidelines have been developed to ensure ethical practices, mitigate harm, and maximize community benefit from volunteer trips with global health components. Unfortunately, the way most voluntourism programs are operated renders them incompatible with these enhanced guidelines (Lasker, et al., 2018).

As a general rule, short-term programs that engage with children in education and childcare settings should also be discouraged, particularly if the visitors to the communities do not possess formal professional training in these settings. Voluntourist programs in orphanages, childcare, or early education settings may also cause emotional and psychological harm to the children they are hoping to help. For example, children can form meaningful bonds with volunteers who may only be in their communities for a brief period of time and then depart, never to return. This may be especially harmful to children in orphanages who experience a rapid turnover of volunteers during a critical time in their psychological and social development. Voluntourists would never be comfortable with their own loved ones being cared for, educated by, or treated medically by untrained/minimally trained volunteers in their home community. It is critically important that this same belief, expectation, and standard be applied when working with communities that host these volunteers.

There is no doubt that tourists from wealthy countries will continue to desire “meaningful” experiences in the material resource-poor countries that they visit. How can tourism providers proactively address this well-intentioned desire and also minimize/eliminate potential community harms? Tourism providers and charitable organizations/NGOs must prioritize educating potential customers/ clients/ visitors



about the ethical concerns, potential risks, and negative outcomes that are associated with traditional voluntourism. Furthermore, they need to provide an asset-based approach/model for more responsible, community-based, and ethical voluntourist practices. Tourism providers must similarly reject narratives generated by tourist experiences founded on aspects of white saviourism, colonialism, and inequitable economic and cultural power dynamics that perpetuate problematic stereotypes about material resource-poor communities, and take the time to educate potential clients about the many community harms that can result from these structures and assumptions.

In addition, providers should engage with international volunteers/tourists and host communities in ways that facilitate cultural humility and prioritize the formation of equitable community partnerships. Community agency and decision-making should be prioritized as international tourist/volunteer programs are planned and co-created in order to maximize benefit, minimize the risk of harm, and eliminate exploitation. Providers must work with communities, giving them the agency and decision-making power to co-develop short-term engagement experiences and partnerships that are ethical and just and remove international tourists/volunteers from the frequently perceived role of a “necessary saviour” of the community. As Dr. Shawn Humphrey clearly states in his “Sidekick Manifesto” (<http://sidekickmanifesto.org/>), low materially-resourced communities don’t need wealthy visitors to come and be their “saviour”, they need them to be their “sidekick”.

In other words, foreign visitors and volunteers must come to honour the knowledge, cultural practices, and human resources that already exist in these communities. Tourist providers, volunteers, and communities need to work in partnership to lift up “local solutions to local problems”. If the global tourism industry can accomplish that, it will indeed be a massive achievement in support of the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.



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"All journeys have secret destinations
of which the traveler is unaware "
- Martin Buber

The quote is by the Jewish Philosopher, Martin Buber who was the author of 'the legend of Baal-Shem: the founder of Hasidic Judaism'.



The Joy of Sports in the Breeze of **Summer**

Once the sprouted plants start to grow fast and when your skin absorbs the warmth of beams, you may set your foot into a new season, summer. Warbler chimes, bright colours, gentle breeze, and blooming flowers may bring the smell of summer to your doorsteps. Summer is unquestionably the best season for discovering stunning flora and fauna while letting yourself perspire due to extended hours of daylight. Hence, why not outdoor activities?

If you seek to experience the joy of sports, you may consider the summer season and summer sports a necessity. From mega sports events like the Olympics to activities like cycling, there is a broad spectrum of summer sports that fascinate you. But most importantly, to wipe away your fatigue while freshening up your body with brine droplets, an island will be a perfect destination. So, let's explore the joy of sports in the season of summer on one such island to discover its gravity.

Sri Lanka, often known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean, offers a diverse choice of water recreational activities that will delight your senses and enhance your happiness. From shore to the horizon, you can discover certain levels of amusement according to your preferences. To grasp the gravity and the profound depth of surfing, you must visit one of South Asia's surfing wonders, Sri Lanka. From a newbie to an ace, you can make it in Sri Lanka on one of the best sandy beaches with crystal clear water. Whether you need smooth and soft waves or a steep surf break that soars over shallow reefs, you can choose where to surf among the best surfing spots on the island. You will be able to face the best east coast waves, especially in Arugam Bay, from May to October.

To explore the underwater world and to be a part of life below water for a while, the best summer sport you can engage in is snorkelling. Sri Lanka itself is a sight for sore eyes. Apart from its beauty, several snorkelling spots drew the attention of thousands of tourists. If your mind seeks impressive and magnificent coral reefs, there is no best place other than Hikkaduwa and Pigeon Island, with the largest coral reef in Sri Lanka in Kalpitiya. To bump into diverse marine life with plenty of fauna and flora, make sure that you add Nilaweli, Weligama, Trincomalee, Galle, Polhena Reef, Unawatuna, and Negombo snorkelling spots to your must-visit spectacular snorkelling spots.

If you wish to know what it's like to be a seabird, you should try water kite surfing in Sri Lanka. The Kalpitiya kite surfing lagoon will serve you as the main and best kite surf spot in Sri Lanka, allowing you to collect memories from the extreme water sports experience you got. Canoeing is the only way to release your buried energy while boosting your cardiovascular fitness in the water. In Sri Lanka, you can combine a canoe journey with beautiful scenery and exceedingly uncommon animals, particularly birds. Ahungalla, Kitulgala, Bentota, and Bolgoda will provide you with the most spectacular canoeing experience worth your money.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka is a well-known summer recreational spot that provides you with not only aquatic recreational activities but also surface recreational activities. There are a bunch of summer camping spots you can visit to experience the most exciting camping experience while activities like ziplining boost your adrenaline. Hiking and cycling also are considered summer recreational activities to burn out your fat and shed some extra sweat. Other than summer recreational activities, a journey to Sri Lanka is worthwhile in summer. As a hospitable nation, Sri Lankans are always willing to cater to you with a pool of fresh resources included with nature, culture and traditions which create the atmosphere for summer sports.

Hasanga Gagalamuwe

Dealing with strange(r) encounters: A glimpse into **intellectual hospitality**



Delving into the concept of hospitality is fascinating despite hospitality in tourism confines most of us to the provision of food, beverage and accommodation. Hospitality is something that is so pervasive in our lives that it can be related to almost every human encounter we face. Strange(r) encounters are so common in hospitality as well as in our personal and professional lives and it is the stranger encounters that make hospitality happen. This strange(r) can be understood as a strange person as well as strange ideas and views of hitherto known and unknown others hold. It is in light of the latter that we can relate the idea of intellectual hospitality to our lives. If thoughtfully perceived, intellectual hospitality can enrich our lives in many respects, for example, interpersonal relationships, intellectual growth, and living with diversity.

The term intellectual hospitality first appeared in a book by Eleanor Kaufman - *The Delirium of Praise* - a book that examines a group of five 20th-century philosophers and their laudatory essays on each other. Intellectual hospitality simply denotes being hospitable to the intellect of others: being hospitable to other views, ideas, and perspectives; admitting and respecting different other views. According to Kaufmann, intellectual hospitality involves the suspension of subjectivity, personality and even place and time and, in the views of some scholars, it is a neglected mode of thinking that has immense applicability in the intellectual growth of individuals and the progress of organisations.

Having reflected upon several life events, I understand that intellectual hospitality has so powerful implications

on the growth of not only individuals and organisations but also on the progress of nations, if properly employed. In this piece of writing, I am attempting to relate the idea of intellectual hospitality to our personal and professional lives and to organisational growth.

The essence of hospitality involves welcoming strangers. However, the extent to which we are prepared to welcome, admit and respect the strangeness is a question. Many of us find comfort in ourselves only in not-so-strange encounters and so discomforting in seeing, meeting and dealing with strange views. One cause of this could be the power relations that we see in human encounters: some people enjoy exercising power over the others by suspending the others' apparent differences and different views that shake their stances while some people suspend the power differences and enjoy the differences in others and their views and perspectives.

At the personal level, unless for a trained and humbled mind, exercising intellectual hospitality can be risky and frustrating because the things that we hold strongly and deeply can be challenged or become baseless in the face of some others' views or perspectives. One's personality matters in facing these shaky moments. Facing this moment, in my view, is a mental exercise that involves taking a step back or a pause, a great deal of tolerance and reflection on one's own thinking. However, it can be both fascinating and rewarding both in personal and professional spheres of life as it can illuminate our understanding of, especially, the social world when diverse perspectives are present. One hallmark of the success of intellectual hospitality is that we are interested in knowing the truth more than we are interested in holding on to our own prejudices, positions, power and ideologies, may it be at a dining table with family or friends or colleagues, or a corporate boardroom.

In the context of the corporate world or other organisations, intellectual hospitality has many implications for decision-making. Since we all are not experts on all fronts, it is imperative that we admit and accept the fact that there are some alternative perspectives to a situation/problem that we are blind to. I have come across many situations where some people, including me in some cases, perceive different perspectives and views of others as hostile and as threats to their power and positions. Such perceptions can sometimes have devastating impacts on organisations in the long run simply because we fail to sense the damage some of our decisions and approaches to such decisions can cause, for example, to the fundamentals, and core functions of those organisations concerned. The damage can be heightened when some power and position-oriented individuals hold decision-making positions. Thus, suspension of our power and position to welcome and to glimpse into other views is required to moderate our decisions and perceptions that can otherwise have devastating consequences. This suspension is a pre-condition for hospitality to occur.

Intellectual hospitality can be particularly important for higher education institutes, which are the places where we encounter and engage with intellectual diversity and thus those are the places where multiple and conflicting perspectives encounter each other. The importance of intellectual hospitality in these places can be considered in light of the duality of approaches to making those places 'growth places' or 'safe places' (Bob on Books, 2014). A safe place is a place where one can be safe from divergent or opposing people or their views and enclave in their own comfort zone. These places may not entertain differing views and perspectives and the people may characterise having *xenophobia* - a phobia to be exposed to strangeness or discomforting or differing views and perspectives. Contrary to this is a growth place where one can see *philoxenia* - Philo (friend/friendship) to *Xenos* (stranger) - characterised by people who welcome differences and diversity of views so that those views can be integrated and blended for having enriched understanding of situations and progressive ideas. Obviously, the latter is constructive and should be encouraged in higher education as one key aspect of higher education is promoting diverse perspectives in exploring and expanding the horizons of knowledge.

Intellectual hospitality is not conforming to all what other people hold about a situation/idea, but accepting that there are other perspectives and re-think, if required, our own way of perceiving a situation. Thinking this way is suspending subjectivity and of course, our own understandings so that one can be open to many possibilities. I believe that intellectual hospitality could be encouraged in all spheres of our lives so as to have a better understanding of the world around us.



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The World's Longest Canopy Walk

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There are numbers of rules need to be considered in order to develop tourism attraction. First, a largely authentic natural or small scale and richly structured cultural landscape is desirable. Second, a landscape, which offers beauty as well as other cultural, historical, or natural attractions, would add value to the products. Third, good transportation links are required to make easily accessible by the public, and lastly basic tourism amenities too should be available (i.e. comfortable accommodations) as well as the acceptance and support by”

Kulim is one of the small towns in Kedah that has several great attractions, particularly eco-tourism sites and its interestingly unique natural landscape with 13 existing tourist destinations. In addition, 25 areas committed to development have been identified as a source of tourist attractions. Of those, 17 areas are classified as new destinations while another eight are targeted for upgrading. With the overwhelming and rapid industrial development in Kulim, exemplified by Malaysia's first high-tech drive in Kulim Hi-Tech Park, investment from abroad in the form of developing high-tech factories has introduced thousands of jobs to the local people, especially for rural communities. There is a dramatic increase in population and rapid growth in this area.

Sungai Sedim Amenity Forest (SSAF), one of the most popular destinations in Kulim, was chosen as the research setting due to its characteristics and future contributions to host residents. It was recognized as one of the “*Top Five Chosen Destinations in Asia Pacific*” with 24 waterfall cascades along a 15-kilometre stretch. The forest is located in the north of Peninsular Malaysia, within Sedim's area and near Karangan, 30km from Kulim's town. The World's Longest Canopy Walk, the 925m long and 50m high Tree Top Walk (TTW) is among the best attractions at SSAF and offers great aerial views of the natural forest.

The potential of SSAF to be the best eco-tourism destination in Malaysia can be seen from the rich, natural resource base that includes an adventurous waterfall that was promoted as being among the best white water rafting challenges internationally. In addition to this, it has a rich combination of tourism endowments, such as forest recreational parks, waterfalls, and mountains. Adventurous visitors can test their endurance by taking on the rapids with rafting, kayaking, or canoeing while the less daring can opt for soft adventure activities. Having the world's longest Tree Top Walk, SSAF also offers various types of eco-tourism activities like bird-watching, education tourism and research centre visits.

In addition, according to the Kedah Tourism Board, the SSAF, as well as the Merbok River Cruise, are expected to attract more tourists to the mainland of Kedah. This will help the tourism industry to create a more balanced inflow of tourists to the state. The tourism board also will be continuously promoting Kedah's eco-tourism products on a low-key basis in the future and will be waiting for the government to improve

the basic infrastructure in SSAF like public toilets, changing rooms as well as small shelters for visitors. Tourism has become the priority tool of rural planning at SSAF. It helps to energize the rural economy and plays an important role in creating a value-added commercial channel for local produce.

One of the most significant current discussions related to the prospects and future development at SSAF is the nature of tourism products at SSAF, such as the adventure's waterfall and surrounding pristine forest. This often involves small-scale operations and the availability of culturally based or farm-based products can be conducive to wide community participation. There are also reasons why it is important to develop SSAF as a rural tourism destination in Kedah, namely: (i) to create economic growth and outline environmental objectives and (ii) to improve the social conditions of the local communities and tourism operators. Besides that, tourism development at SSAF can bring a range of other benefits to Kulim's areas, such as infrastructural development and spin-off enterprise opportunities. SSAF has great potential to be developed as the best eco-tourism site in the region, which may offer visitors the opportunity to get closer to nature, flora and fauna. They were proud to have TTW in their area, which was acknowledged as international attraction.

There are developmental reasons to promote tourism at SSAF as a growth pole, such as diversifying a state's tourism image and travel packages or alleviating bottlenecks in popular sites. One key opportunity of involving more of the people in tourism activities at SSAF is to develop tourism enterprises where they live. But this is not to say that they will necessarily own an enterprise or even provide the labour just because it is located in a rural area. In this context, sustainable development is one of the best alternatives to be practiced and adopted in any tourism-related development, particularly in SSAF. Thus, various stakeholders must be assisted through capacity building in order to involve the local community in developing a sound tourism development plan that has the potential for generating positive outputs for all.



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Tourism is widely accepted as one of recreation since it is a powerful tool for the rejuvenation of the mind and body and economic development in a large number of developed or developing countries. The tourism industry generally focuses on people, who are physically capable to move from one place to another. The industry has failed to pay much attention to the people who are physically incapable but they are economically much capable. Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 15% of the population has some kind of need for accessibility assistance. For these people, accessible space is essential to be able to carry out daily activities including their leisure time. Also, many people have some temporary difficulties such as, pregnant women, recovering from an accident, having children, etc. The progressive ageing of the population associated with a longer life expectancy in developed countries also is causing an increase in the number of people with reduced mobility. Hence providing access to the disabled and people with difficulty in accessibility intensify the need for accessible tourism which enables people with access limitations in mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions to function independently with equity and dignity by delivering universally designed tourism products, services and environments (Darcy and Dickson, 2009).

The contemporary economic crisis in Sri Lanka expects tourism to generate more dollars. Performance of the emerging accessible tourism market indicates 70% of Europeans with disabilities have physical and economic possibilities to travel. This is equivalent to 58,115,778 potential visitors only in the European Union. In the case of Germany, people with physical disabilities spend a total of about 5 billion euros each year on travel, although the number of trips has been reduced due to the lack of accessibility in tourist areas in Europe. According to European Commission (2014), the number of people with disabilities was 49.8 million in 2011 aged 15-64 and they also have estimated that approximately 80 million people (among all ages including aged 65 or above). In America, specifically in the United States, people with motor disabilities spend about 11,212.90 dollars on travel each year (González, 2014). As shown in Figure 1 Australian accessible tourism segment comprises various types of disabilities. The dearth of foreign exchange earnings in Sri Lanka signifies the inevitability of the accessible tourism market segment which can perform better than any other segment to recover the tourism earnings immediately as possible. As accessible tourism is high-yielding tourism, recovery and rebuilding strategies of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka can establish and expand the tourism value

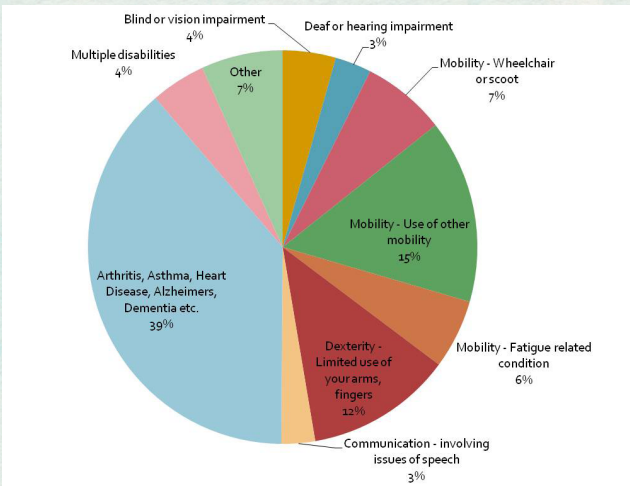


Figure 1: Types of Disability of those Travelling in Australia
Source: Dwyer & Darcy, 2008

chain into this particular market segment. Each component of the supply chain should be specifically focused on the convenience and comfort of tourists who are with difficulties in access to services and facilities.

Destination Setting for Accessible Tourism

European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) describes the need for special attention to every point of the tourism value chain in serving accessible tourists. From a tourism and hospitality point of view, Dr. Vicky Richard from Cardiff Metropolitan University intensifies accessible tourism experiences so that the industry can easily begin to break down the barriers for people with disabilities and access needed. Promoting and pulling the accessible tourism segment requires barrier-free destinations with infrastructure and other facilities. These infrastructure and other facilities provision at the airport, attraction sites, accommodations or resort regions, comfort centres, shopping cities and all the other tourism-related places need to be distinguished for all tourists. Anticipating the needs and wants of accessible tourists also demand suitable transportation by air, land and sea that should be taken into special consideration for tourists with access difficulties. Destinations also need to hold well-trained staff to deliver high-quality services since accessible tourists demand distinguished comfortabilities and accessibilities as shown in Figure 2. Unexceptional to other tourists, accessible tourists are also to be provided convenient access to tourists' activities, exhibitions, events, festivals and other attractions. The accessible tourism value chain intensifies the information accessibilities such as marketing, reservation system, websites and other information services. Value creation at the Macro, Meso and Micro levels would enable the destinations to thrive through accessible tourism as a high-end market segment. Macro-level value creation requires the integration and collaboration of different sectors and institutions to establish and encourage the national accessible tourism value chain. Meso-level value creation needs to be focused on product designing and development, policy setting, marketing and promotion, human capacity building and research development for accessible tourism. Micro-level value creation should focus on the operation of accessible

tourism through the active participation and performance of each and every value chain actor to anticipate the desires and expectations of tourists with disabilities and difficulties.



Figure 2 , Serving Tourists with Access Needed

Accessibility Tourism and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In the last twenty years, accessible tourism has become a priority for both public and private initiatives in different countries through laws protecting the right to accessibility for people with disabilities. UN convention on the right of people with disabilities (UN, 2008) asserts the right to access all areas of cultural life that includes tourism particularly. It led to a change in the formal tourism operation to guarantee access to people with disabilities to all possible goods and services of tourism. This proliferates inclusivity, equity peace, prosperity etc. Accessible tourism provides opportunities for all global citizens to participate in tourism as a popular and widely accepted recreational activity. This has been revealed by UNWTO through the declaration of the year 2016 International Tourism Day as "Tourism for All". Accessible tourism development magnifies the basic 5 'P's people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership under the UNSDGs. As accessible tourism is a high-end segment that would contribute to poverty alleviation and wealth distribution between developed nations and developing or less developed nations. Particularly developing and providing accessibility for people with disabilities and difficulties will generate numerous opportunities for people in destination countries to overcome their economic challenges. As described above accessible tourism will generate economic opportunities by providing suitable transport facilities, site facilities, accommodation facilities, recreation activities, guiding services and information services exclusively for tourists

who need assistance and support to perform their tours. A consistent supply of accessible tourism requires a combination of integrated public and private services, providing reliable and guaranteed access to all goods and services along with the tourism value chain. Ever-increasing challenges and inevitability of sustainability in the tourism industry and the business desires of destinations and tour operators lead to growing and thriving accessible tourism financially. Charlotte V. McClain-Nhlapo, Global Disability Advisor at the World Bank states “Governments and the private sector should view the potential for inclusion of 15-17% of the population as an untapped market, as a sound investment in social inclusion – something that could benefit large swathes of the population,”. Accordingly, the current dollar crisis and economic setbacks in Sri Lanka can be recovered and resettled sustainably by incorporating an accessible tourism supply chain and appropriate market positioning to cater to the untapped tourism market of people with disabilities and access difficulties. This inclusive tourism strategy would generate numerous opportunities for local communities by serving people with disabilities and difficulties in access that lead to anticipating the objectives of responsible tourism sustainably.

The Competencies and Human Capital Development for Accessible Tourism

Targeting and positioning Sri Lanka in this untapped tourism market compels the destinations to embrace competencies and suitable human capital that is built on social and digital skills. Greater integration of these competencies in the future design of training itineraries, which increasingly need to take into account accessibility requirements. Social skills including many soft skills such as compassion, communication, empathy, assertiveness, etc. are essential in accessible tourism since most of these people require direct accompaniment or help in performing many leisure activities. Similarly, destinations also can be supported by digital and technological skills in serving the accessible tourism market. The digital revolution in technology such as the internet, robotics, virtual or augmented reality, and big data, would provide fascinating new opportunities to enrich the experiences of accessible tourists in service deliveries and destinations. Social and digital integrated competencies and human capital will be complementary or inevitable for anticipating the real and specific needs with reference to different types and levels of disability or access difficulty.

Developing human capital and enhancing the competencies to cater the accessible tourism should consider the following limitations or practical difficulties:

1. Inaccessible or only partially accessible websites and information centres
2. The lack of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and assistances
3. The lack of well-adapted hotel rooms, recreational activities and other
4. Lack of professional staff capable of dealing with accessibility issues
5. Lack of reliable information on the level of accessibility of a specific attraction
6. Lack of accessible restaurants, bars and other facilities
7. The lack of adapted bathrooms in restaurants and public places
8. Inaccessible streets and sidewalks
9. The lack of technical aids and equipment for the disabled, such as wheelchairs, bathing chairs and public toilets

Dissimilar to serving and satisfying the needs and wants of other tourism market segments, the accessible tourism market requires client-specific and location-specific products and services that are integrated with human intelligence and artificial intelligence. The dearth of foreign exchange in Sri Lanka intensifies the distinguished human capacity building and digital infrastructure to attract accessible tourism, which is the wealthiest niche market.

Growth Potential of the Accessible Tourism Market

Unexceptionally, soon after the UN declaration for the prioritization of the accessibility of people with disabilities in all forms of activities including tourism, accessible tourism has reached significant attention as a growing segment of the tourism market. According to European Commission (2014) over the last decade, increasing

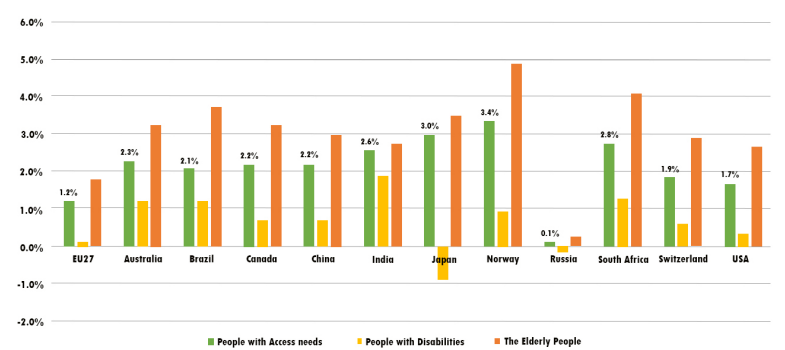


Figure 3, Implied annual growth rate of people with access needs in the EU27 area and the key international inbound markets over 2011 – 2020 (unit: %)
Source: European Commission, 2014

demand for accessible tourism from different categories of people with disabilities has been identified and the majority of them are mobility limitations and hidden limitations. Over 2011 – 2020, the tourism demand will jump from about 744.3 million trips to 861.9 million (Figure 4) trips by all people with access needs within the EU27 area, which is equivalent to an annual growth rate of 1.64%. Yet, with minimum improvements, the tourism demand can be reached 971.9 million trips or an increase of 24.2% by drawing on the figures from 2012, the baseline current demand is 782.8 million trips by all people with access needs in the EU27 area.

Although accessible tourism does not indicate exponential growth, it shows a smooth growth rate as shown in Figure 3. Similarly, Figure 4 shows the increasing demand for accessible tourism over the period from 2012 – 2020 from people with access needs which consist of the number of people with disabilities and elderly people.



Figure 4 - Current and future demand for EU's accessible tourism by EU27 countries from 2012-2020 (unit: '000 trips)
Source: European Commission, 2014

Distinguished economic capabilities and non-seasonal orientation are lucrative characteristics of destinations to penetrate into the accessible tourism market. This worthwhile opportunity can be well explored through recovery and rebuilding strategies of Sri Lanka tourism to thrive the industry through the current crisis.

In light of disabilities and people with access needs, accessible tourism has become an inevitable contemporary need of global tourism. Basically, accessible tourism promotes destinations, and tour operators and other service providers in paying special attention to anticipating the expectations and desires of people with disabilities and elderly people with ease and comfort. However, access needs differ from person to person. It could also extend to the special access older people require while travelling. The thematic intervention of International World Tourism Day – 2016; “Tourism for All” magnified the inevitability of accessible tourism for social inclusion and attaining SDGs. Accessible and sustainable tourism development

intensified the special skill needs which integrate human intelligence and artificial intelligence to meet the access needs of people with disabilities and elderly people. Unexceptionally compared to conventional tourism development, accessible tourism is the worthiest niche segment, which has been ignored in many destinations. The growth potentials of accessible tourism have been well addressed and noted by the tourism and hospitality industry. Undeniably, the prevailing crisis along with recovery and rebuilding tourism strategies of Sri Lanka would be well aspired and inspired by accessible tourism due to its distinguished economic capabilities and non-seasonal orientation.



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Sri Lankan Elephants

Elephants are honoured as sacred animals and a source of pride in Sri Lankan culture. With the aid of elephants, Sri Lankan monarchs triumphed against the invaders in 4 B.C. Even the kings of the nation had a portrayal of a tusker on their coat of arms. However, tuskers began to carry sacred Tooth Relics in the late 15th century for the annual event known as “Kandyan Perehera”, which is celebrated by Buddhists. Kandyan artwork and drawings are also reflecting shreds of evidence about the existence of tuskers and elephants in ancient Sri Lanka.

Currently, in Sri Lanka, there are between 2500 to 4000 elephants, with an average weight of 2 to 5 tonnes. Elephants are very intelligent creatures with an incredible memory, and also have the special ability to recognise themselves in a mirror. When compared to African elephants, Sri Lankan elephants have much smaller ears and are dark black in colour tone. Additionally, just like human fingerprints, their ears act as a unique characteristic that separates each of them from the others.

Elephants from Sri Lanka prefer to dwell in herds consisting of 10 to 12 elephants. These animals have one of the longest gestation periods, lasting roughly 22 months, with no set timing for reproduction.

The calves get a maximum amount of maternal warmth throughout the first five years of their lives, and they will mature into chips off the old block. Another fascinating fact about elephants is that their trunks have 100,000 muscles which consist of thousands of sensitive nerve endings. These creatures typically enjoy taking baths in water and mud and covering themselves in filth. They have extremely sensitive skin to the sun, which is the hidden cause of this.

Since their natural environment has been destroyed, these adorable creatures are now under the greatest threat. Conflicts between humans and elephants are a result of this, and occasionally both sides lose their lives. The International Union for Conservation of

Nature (IUCN) has also determined that Sri Lankan elephants fall into the category of endangered species and have been added to the red list. This will also result in the complete collapse of the entire ecosystem. Therefore, as a country, we must take immediate actions to preserve their right to live freely on this magnificent island.

Rohith Thambawita





Can we sell 'Recreation' at Diyatha Uyana?

Diyatha Uyana Wetland Park (DUWP), or the Park by the Lake, which is located in Battaramulla on the outskirts of Colombo, has many interesting places and activities such as a water retention lake, walkway, aquarium, flower shops, water fountain, food stalls, a restaurant, boat rides and a children's play area. The whole DUWP area consists of a lower catchment area of Diyawanna Oya (a small river). The park has a walking path surrounding the lake and a commercial area with stalls promoting small and medium-scale entrepreneurs. The lake covers a 50-acre area and surrounding it is the walking path which is roughly 800 m long. The park also has bio-diversity and eco-friendly areas. It also has a separate children's play area and a car park. In addition to the fountain, it has a solar-powered, green-energy-based transportation system. It is estimated that the park attracts around 10,000 visitors per day on the weekend while it attracts about 5,000 on a weekday.

DUWP in Sri Lanka is today recognized as an important recreational site in the Greater Colombo area in Sri Lanka. The availability of food stalls, meeting points, walking paths, daily fairs offering different items, and small shops for purchasing day-to-day needs and places for relaxation are among its major attractions. While visitors to the park expend money to enjoy the environmental services, their recreational value has not been estimated. The upkeep of DUWP entails a high maintenance cost on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka as it extends over a large area. It is argued that if the park generates more welfare benefits, at present the park levies no entrance fee from visitors although the Municipal Council allocates a considerable amount of funds for the upkeep of the park.

Given DUWP's status as a recreational wetland park, a flow of annual benefits has come to be associated with it over a long period of time. Thus, the sum of aggregate consumer surplus (CS) estimated in our study provides insight into the "welfare benefits" of preservation. Our study focused only on the welfare benefits provided by the DUWP.

Furthermore, the study estimates only the benefits of preserving the present recreational use value of the site. The Individual Travel Cost Method was applied to estimate the welfare benefits of recreation at DUWP.

From the estimates, it can be said that an individual receives an estimated welfare benefit of LKR 839.16 (1USD = LKR 360.00) in terms of CS. Accordingly, based on CS the wetland generates an estimated welfare benefits of total LKR 16,846.02 million (PVB) per year. These calculations represent the value of access to the site derived by measuring the recreational value that would be lost if the wetland park was to disappear or, equivalently in the case of recreation, if no recreational visitors were allowed to visit the park. However, the government would benefit from knowing the recreational value of the wetland park when making decisions regarding its future uses. This study measured the impact of a direct entrance fee. If an entrance fee is introduced (at LKR 100.00 which is the fee levied at parks in Sri Lanka), the Government of Sri Lanka would earn LKR 181.06 million annually. But the findings indicate that there would be a reduction in social welfare benefits with such a fee.



However, considering the estimated revenues to be had from such an entrance fee, the government would do well to think of possible alternative fund-generating strategies. As the imposition of an entrance fee is not practical given the multiple recreational sites (without precise boundaries) throughout the wetland, imposing a reasonable parking fee would be more appropriate which has the added benefit of reduced congestion and pollution. It is a fact that the DUWP has been deteriorating in quality as a recreational site owing to ineffective management during recent years. Hence, it is timely that the Government gives serious thought both to revenue generation and providing funds to maintain the wetland. Finally, the time has come to include the most sensitive areas of the DUWP in the national protected area network in Sri Lanka.

According to economic theories, CS is defined as the difference between the total amount that consumers (here visitors) are willing and able to pay for a good or service and the total amount that they actually do pay. This finding confirmed that the amount of welfare benefits generated at DUWP is the motivation factor for visiting DUWP. Further, based on the estimated welfare benefits, an entrance fee to a wetland park can be determined.

The basic finding of the study is that visitors derive an annual welfare benefit of LKR 16,846.02 million from the recreational benefits at the site. The total welfare benefits generated from the wetland would be far higher than this estimate if the other use and non-use values were incorporated into it. But the findings also indicate that there will be a reduction in welfare benefits with such a higher fee. However, considering the estimated revenues to be earned from such an entrance fee, the government could think of possible alternative fund-generating strategies.



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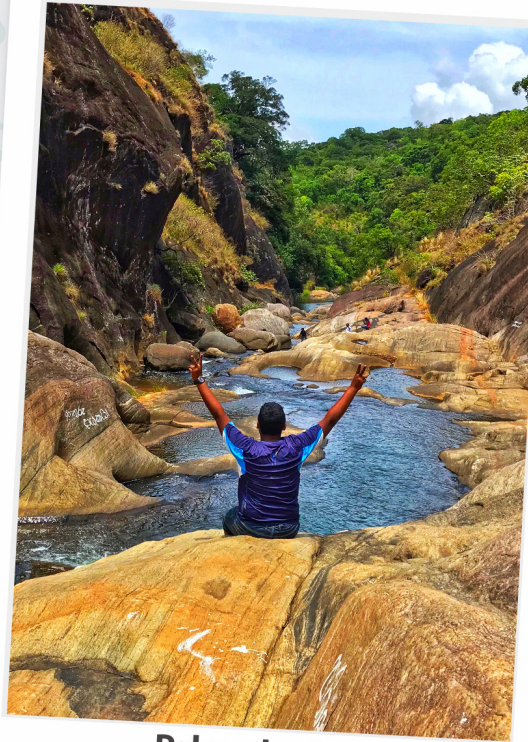
Photography Competition



Uragala, Hanthana Mountain Range



Narangala Hill



Pahanthudawa



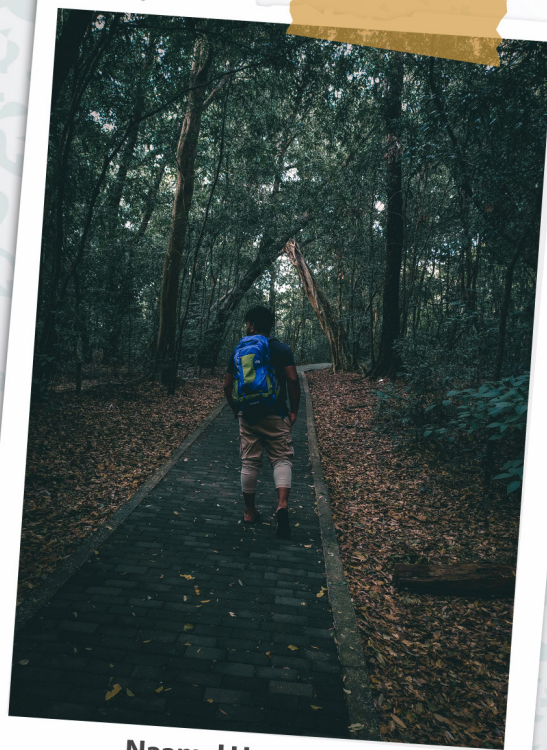
Bakers Bends



Kalutara South Beach



Nonpareil Estate Falls



Naamal Uyana



Idalgashinna View Point



Upper Diyaluma Waterfall

Girls jump into nature therapy...

It was the middle of August.

We, undergraduates, were looking forward to going on a hike during our vacation but hadn't an exact destination to do so. Middle of our blabbering I was busy scrolling Facebook blogs up and down, and it just appeared a photo of Adam's Peak, so-called by Sri Lankans as Sri Pada.

It was the off-season time of Sri Pada's hiking and worshipping, and there is another trend in Sri Lanka of hiking Sri Pada in the off-season. We have heard that trekking and hiking Sri Pada Mountain in the off-season is harder than during the season.

And here I unfold our splendid journey story caught from my diary...

My loving diary,

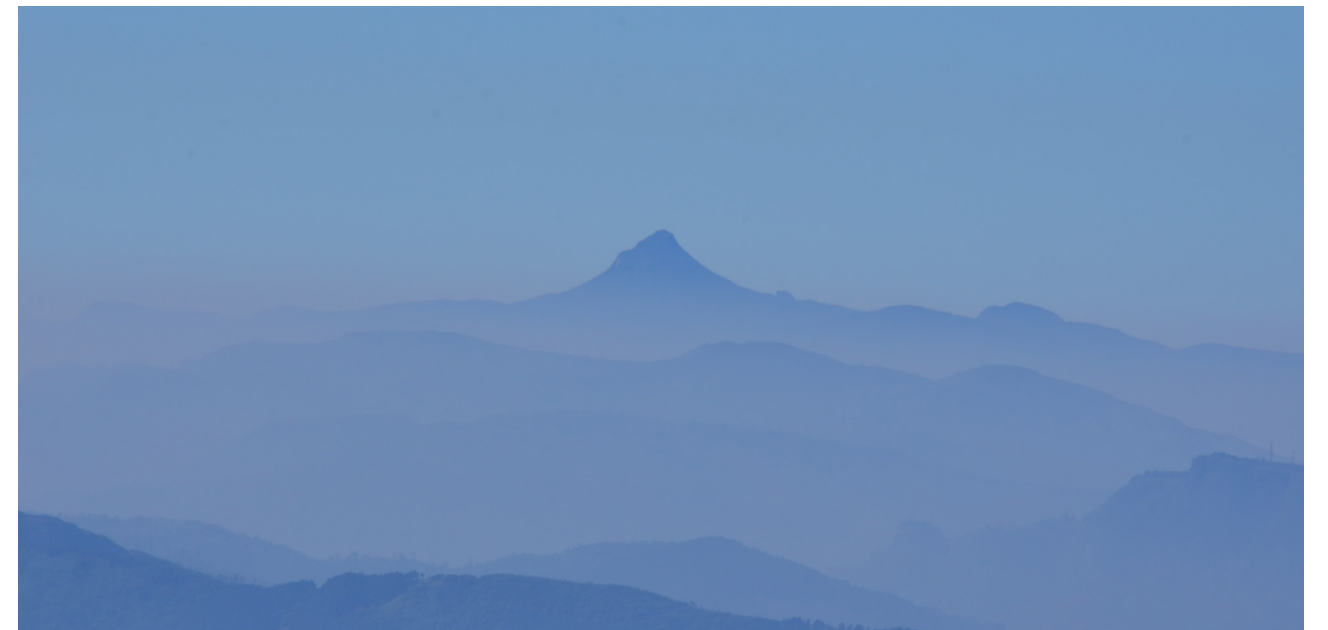
Here I'll fill your soul with amusement.

You know, I had never visited Sri Pada in my entire life until today. If someone visits Sri Pada for the first time they are called as *Kodukaraya*.

So in our seven girls' team, I was the only one who was climbing the Sri Pada for the first time. We picked the longer but the most scenic path Kuruwita-Erathna to trek instead of taking the most famous roads of Rathnapura-Palabaddala and Hatton-Nallathanniya.

At around 6 o'clock in the breezing morning, we began the journey from Erathna. It was a minimally populated road and a bit hard route to climb. The morning misty breeze and the miraculous nature's vibe were able to blow away those exhausted feelings. During the journey, we met places called *Ambalam* which our ancestors built for resting.

We stopped at the first *ambalama* called *Jambola Gaha Yata Ambalama*. Having meals there, we were enjoying the scenery of Pidurutthalagala, the highest mountain in Sri Lanka. Then we passed through respective resting places (Ambalam): *Diyamangala*, *Warnagala Ambalama*, *Thun Modara Ambalama*, and after that, we have reached a river called *Seetha Gangula* along. It took around five hours to reach here. When climbing Sri Pada, locals take a bath in this *Seetha Gangula* to arrive at the top of the Sacred Footprint with physical and spiritual purity.



Thun Modara second Ambalama, Medahinna Ambalama, Idikatupana Ambalama, Gal Wangediya, the place, which is called *Heramitipana*, and finally *Andiyamala Thenna Ambalama* are the next corresponding places we met after *Seetha Gangula*. The wet greenery surrounding was a relief for our busy lifestyles. Folk stories say that this Sri Pada area is hiding an abundance of miracles and the god called *Sumana Saman* is the one who protects this mountain range. If someone uses inappropriate words, then they will be punished by God and maybe misled along the way.

It says that in this off-season time, Gods and animals are coming to worship Lord Buddha's Sacred Footprint. Lots of butterflies, monkeys, jungle fowl, and once an elephant just for a sight seen during the stroll. Some say that leopards and elephant herds usually can be seen there. The cascades, rainforest groves, and smell of the dewy, pure environs added another dimension of the world to us by giving a cuddle of frizzy wind. So-called *Lihini Hela* is so slippery rock face that tried to drag me on my feet. On the way, I felt like something cool was running over my skin and took a sudden pull-up. Oh God, leeches!!! Not just a single leech, it was three leeches climbing up on me. That was the moment everyone checked their legs. I was not alone. All of us were attacked by leeches and had to battle against them. One girl taught me how to take them off without bleeding a single drop of blood and it was another new learning experience for me.

We met a slopy rock called *Dharmaraja Gala* and it says that a priest called *Dharmaraja* carved a rock staircase there to help others climb on. Passing over *Mahagiri Dambaya* was the most unforgettable moment I've ever experienced. It was a steep rock cliff, and the staircase built over there was kind of narrow and high. So, it was not easy to move on, and the sudden heavy breeze, and the frosty mountain wind atmosphere made me feel like an angel who is sitting over clouds at the same time.

We reached the peak of the mountain around 6.30 p.m. There we worshipped the Sacred Footprint of Lord Buddha and decided to spend the night in the resting place at the top. At 5 a.m., we waited to see the magnificent sun rising which is unique to this place and it was specially called *Ira Sewaya*.

The sun was coming up over clouds and mountains, like an orange snowball. There was nothing more mesmerizing than reaching the top of the mountain, which is giving non-stop amusement. Isn't it wonderful?

Through the uphill struggles and adventures of this expedition, an abundance of miracles witnessed by the pack of girls is dreamy. Hence, to reach the mesmerizing top view, it takes 16km and departing via Rathnapura-Palabaddala road gave us a cosy cuddle of mother nature.

Dear Diary, I hope you felt comfy when you were in my backpack and will give you another delightful chronicle. Until then, bye!

Yours lovingly, Vijini.

Vijini Gamage
Sewwandi Handapangoda

Dream it Possible

As an industry which itself is a highly sensitive industry, even a sniff in a country, can directly have an impact on thousands of insights. We highly experienced these tragic changes in the industry during the past two years, not only as a country, but also as an entire planet. Even before recovering from one widespread, the world is about to suffer from another outbreak. In such a commotion, many believe that entering to the leisure industry means digging one's own grave. Whenever I hear such words, my mind always whispers that,

"The past is everything we were don't make us who we are
So, I'll dream until I make it real and all I see is stars
It's not until you fall that you will fly,
When your dreams come alive you are unstoppable
Take a shot chase the sun find the beautiful
We will grow in the dark turning dust to gold,
And we'll dream it possible".

There has never been such a crucial need to get a feel for what the future holds, unless it's for the vandalism we faced. It is true, that we went three decades back with such rives, but we can let the industry breathe for a while.

After going through such a rough period of time, the industry itself has started to focus on some new trends such as, sustainable tourism, local tourism, eco-tourism and using digital aspects as much as possible in the sector. When we talk about eco-tourism and nature tourism, the aspects can be considered as double-edged swords where we must be extremely careful in applying. While financially stabilized countries like China moved towards local tourism, countries like ours still try to put up with the outrage. But what I still believe is we will surely be able to grow in the dark and turn dust into gold. That is the phase, where rethinking tourism proves its significance. When it comes to functioning, it is really important to engage in safer travel protocols rather than stopping travel altogether, because we all aware of how many livelihoods depend on tourism, not only directly, but also those working in the industries that depend on the sector.

To grow back tourism to its former glory, it is essential to revamp the confidence in the travellers' mind, who are willing to travel and experience new cultures. So, in rethinking aspect it is a vital requirement to introduce tourism recovery packages to ensure the tourists' protection. Even though during the last thirty years, the industry grew up continuously, the last two years gave us evidence of a great dunk and that turned us back to the very beginning. While we were identifying the industry as a milestone at the start, people never thought it was possible to reach this far. Even when the pandemic occurs, it was forgotten how fragile the industry is. When today becomes the past in future, we should not forget the lesson we learned and we should not step back on our efforts towards sustainability. Learn from the past and apply it in future will cause minimum damage to the sector when history repeats.



Sex on the Beach

Sex on the beach; is one of the most famous cocktails, especially among freshmen for drinking. That is mainly due to the fruity and pleasant flavour of this cocktail. It makes this drink more desirable and approachable. Although it fell out of favour during the ensuing craft cocktail boom, sex on the beach remains a popular choice at beach bars and a favourite among tourists.

1 ½ fl. oz. Vodka
½ fl. oz. Peach schnapps
½ fl. oz. Chambord or creme de cassis (optional)
1 ½ fl. oz. Orange juice, freshly squeezed
1 ½ fl. oz. Cranberry juice
Garnish: Orange slice

First add ice, vodka, peach schnapps, chambord, orange juice, and cranberry juice into a shaker. chambord is a fancy black raspberry liquor made in France that can use as an optional ingredient. Adding fresh orange juice will give the drink a brighter acidity and fresher flavour. Shake them well to combine the ingredients. Put fresh ice into a highball glass and strain the cocktail into it. As a final touch, garnish it with half of an orange slice.

Niwantha Sandaruwan



THE REAL TASTE OF PARADISE

Sri Lanka is a place where you may experience the sun all year long as a country located closer to the equator. However, you must be quite clear about where and when you plan to go to this lovely island. The west coast, the south, and the central of the country are the ideal regions to visit during the Southwest Monsoon (May–October). The north and east beaches of Sri Lanka are the ideal areas to travel during the Northeast Monsoon Season (November–April). Therefore, wherever you travel in Sri Lanka to enjoy its unique and fresh atmosphere, there are various authentic drinks ready to quench your thirst and make you feel at home away from home.

Ceylon Tea

Sri Lanka is an island built for tea, where you can experience the mildest to strongest tea kinds with various flavours, scents, and colours. The seven regions of Sri Lanka–Nuwara Eliya, Pussellwa, Dimbula, Uva, Kandy, Sabaragamuwa, and Ruhuna are ready to awaken your spirit and mind with incomparable tea flavours. The greatest hand-picked tea in the world is always available to brighten your day on this magnificent island.



Mangrove Apple juice

One of the undiscovered Southern shore jewels is the *Kirala*, or mangrove apple, which thrives in the southern marshy lands. The mangrove apple juice is a delightful beverage with a touch of coconut milk. You may wash away your fatigue and awaken both your taste senses and your soul with this all-natural, light green beverage that is nutrient-rich and tastes like wood apple juice. It can also help you feel better physically and mentally.



Coconut Toddy

The coconut tree, also known as the *Kapruka* tree, is the source of coconut toddy, which is produced by fermenting the sap of the coconut flower. Even though this genuine alcoholic drink is available throughout the nation, Kalutara and the Wadduwa regions are where it is most well-known. A dish of steaming cassava, hot coconut *sambol*, and pork curry is the perfect accompaniment to this milky white beverage, while served in a coconut shell cup. After tasting this wonderful combination, you will undoubtedly be at a good level of intoxication.



Saruwath

Saruwath is a local beverage created with fresh fruits, basil seeds, sugar syrup, and ice cubes that have the perfect balance of sweet and sour flavourings. In Sri Lanka, it's not difficult to find this vibrant drink stands along most roadsides. This refreshing drink is available in a wide selection of flavours, including orange, mango, lime, nelli, pineapple, mixed fruit, and many more. This is the perfect drink to sip on if you desire a fruit punch while dripping with sweetness.



Wood Apple Juice

A special treat with a unique aroma and a sweet and sour flavour. Even though wood apples are indigenous to India and they are a common sight along travel routes in Sri Lanka. The pulp within the wood apple shell can be consumed raw or made into juice by combining it with water or coconut milk according to your preferred formula. A scoop of vanilla ice cream is the perfect finishing touch for this drink.

King Coconut

The king coconut, known as “the golden nut of Sri Lanka”, has a greater level of flavour and taste and is also rich in minerals. Unlike the kurumba, its external shell is orange. If soft drinks are not your thing, this is the ideal all-natural sweet beverage to quench your thirst. In addition, if you're looking for something different, visit Trincomalee and try a chilled king coconut made with crushed ice, a dash of sugar, and lime juice for a divine combination.



Palmyra juice and Palm toddy

Every home in the communities of Jaffna, Mannar, and Kilinochchi bears the distinctive sign of the palmyra palm. Therefore, the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka are where this special beverage is most commonly found. Fresh palmyra fruit juice, also known as ice apple juice, is a healthy beverage. Palmyra juice is fermented to produce palm toddy, an alcoholic beverage. You'll want more after you start enjoying this drink.



Kurumba Water

A healthier alternative to water with few calories is kurumba picked in the early ripening stage of coconut. It has a wide range of health advantages and is especially useful for treating diarrhea. Kurumba water is not as sweet as king coconut water. The only way to enjoy its flavour is to drink it in traditional Sri Lankan way without using paper straws and while still in the green-coloured shell. t



Lion Lager Beer

The most popular beer in Sri Lanka is Lion Lager, a mild beer that is rightly Sri Lankan-made and has caramel flavouring. Lion Lager stands for visionary leadership and power. It is roasted malt golden in colour. If you prefer alcoholic beverages over tea you're in good hands here. You won't get bored when sipping a beer while enjoying the stunning sunset on this lovely island beside the beach.



Thathsarani Wijesundara



Slow tourism

through the lens of Sartrean existentialism

Tourism is becoming increasingly popular, and visitors have been attracted to places and communities all over the world. Even though modern tourism is a relatively new phenomenon, tourist behaviour has the potential to become a tradition. But traditions are subject to change. They are altered or uprooted when the human mind demands to experience something new and can be recognised from an individual's behaviour. In tourism, tourist behaviour is shaped by travel motivators, as identified and proposed by many scholars. According to McCannel (1999), consumerist and comfort-seeking travel has been the essence of the new leisure class. This format of travel and tourism merely creates a space for tourists to have a 'snapshot view' of 'things' they get exposed to during their stay in destination communities. Interestingly, McKercher (1993) asserts that the tourist type is a consumer, not an anthropologist. Given this context, the purpose of this essay is to evaluate the potential visitor experience of slow tourism through the lens of Sartrean existentialism, as well as how this philosophical idea can advance our understanding of slow tourism conceptualization.

We are supposed to make rational decisions in our daily affairs, and we usually see a logical structure in such decisions. Most of our travel- and tourism-related decisions are no exception. However, such thoughtful decisions are conditioned by our subjective experience and external pressures on social conformity. Since we as members of society, feel a sense of belonging and a sense of meaning in adhering to its values, we

feel comfortable following what others value. This behaviour restricts the freedom of our choice, which hinders our way of living authentically and our freedom to think and act. This might distract us from experiencing things organically.

Predominantly, we live in societies where the meaning and purpose of life are reduced to the possession of money and material goods. Individuals are defined in terms of their consumption. If not, they become less prominent or unnoticeable. Consumerism and globalisation create substantial space for multiplying and meeting our diverse needs, including leisure and recreation. As a result, mass tourism has been growing exponentially. However, slow tourism is not a response to the implications of mass tourism, but a deliberate and personal choice made consciously. In this context, it is interesting to understand how slow tourism, as a visitor experience, can contribute to making meaning in our lives. As the problem of 'meaning' is common to every human being, we all want to create some value or ultimate purpose in life.

Our common belief is that technological advancements are supposed to relieve much of the pressure of contemporary human life. But it is not the case. Our consumption-heavy mindsets, combined with endless desires, keep many of us busier than ever. Human relationships are being dropped gradually to compensate for the proliferation of technological devices and applications. Technology helps more people accumulate power and wealth and manipulates society in

many ways. Here, it would be worth considering resetting our true biological phase of life to get rid of this absurdity. Having experienced this, many of us are deliberately searching for the essence of our own lives through the way we think and act. This means that slow tourism as a form of tourism could only be experienced in a setting where this primary norm is respected. What is the nature of the visitor's experience in slow tourism? How are reflections possible and important with a slow tourism experience? Can a slow tourism experience be created and presented to the visitor? These are some of the fundamental questions we need to answer.

While there is an intense dialogue to define the concept of slow tourism, Krippendorf (2011) introduces 'conscious travel' as a different and new form of travel behaviour that allows the visitor to travel responsibly and meaningfully. This allows intimate communication or rapport with oneself that allows reflection of our own cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses. Krippendorf characterised this form of tourism as reasonably comparable to what we recognise today as slow tourism. Hence, it is rather interesting to discover the characteristics of this phenomenon, and what matters in terms of the outcome of slow tourism is the visitor experience.

Recognising slow tourism, the visitor's movement or mobility is expected to be reduced. This enables the visitor to deeply explore and reflect on the experience gained. The visitor wants this experience to be 'authentic or appreciatively authentic' (Moir, Mylonopoulos, & Kondoudaki, 2017). To make this a reality, persistent observation and prolonged engagement can be recognised as prerequisites. During the slow phase of the movement, the visitor can engage with and experience the physical and cultural landscapes of a destination at full scale.

As a result of the consciously gained lived experience, the visitor establishes a strong link with the cultural manifestations of the local people. The 'slowness' in this case is a real compliment to the process of this mode of (slow) tourism. Authenticity-seeking in travel and tourism is a challenge, but an effort to do so would be a rich and rewarding experience. This movement of the visitor is characterised by a search for meaningful involvement, leading to an entirely different rhythm and pace of tourism.

It is important to understand the setting that is conducive to a slow tourism experience. The degree of active slow tourism largely rests on the notion that there are borderless interactions between the visitor and the environment (both physical and cultural). The visitor will be a conscious social being of his or her travel environment, which symbiotically co-exists. The tolerance and compassionate understanding of both spheres are expected to be at the best possible level. The value transformation will take place with a much broader understanding. Cultures and places will not be treated as commodities to be consumed, but rather as things that add meaning to life, particularly the visitor's life. The construction of subjective meanings is the product of this process, and importantly, that will be the beauty of the visitor experience. As a result, the values that have been interpreted in commercial terms and are attached to manifestations will gradually disappear. Neither the host nor the visitors will be dependent on them, nor will they be bothered by them. In other words, the visitors will not be regarded as something that should be commercially capitalized. Culture-conscious hosts and guests can make this happen in destination communities, and as a result, adverse socio-cultural impacts will no longer exist in these communities.

As I explained before, the intersection of slow tourism and existential philosophy is crucial for the further development of this essay. Because the key concepts of existentialism shed some reasonable light to broaden our understanding of slow tourism and explore its potential visitor experience in terms of 'meaning' and 'value' on one hand. On the other hand, recognise preconditions that make slow tourism a true visitor experience. Existentialism is a form of philosophical inquiry that is largely credited to the works of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). However, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish philosopher, was the first to investigate the concept of existence, and the contributions of several others including Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Albert Camus (1913-1960), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) were also noteworthy. Existentialism focuses on the notion of human existence and explores questions related to the meaning, purpose, and value of human existence. In other words, the essence of life is something that each of us must individually create. These questions provide some clear implications for this essay on slow tourism.

Existentialism as a philosophical idea asserts that humans have free choice, and because of that free choice, we can create purpose and apply meaning to our lives that we are responsible for. Accordingly, key ideas of existentialism

are about creating our identity and how we attribute meaning to our life. Precisely, the idea that we exist first and find meaning later. Sartre puts this as ‘existence proceeds essence’—one of the existential standpoints. Hence, existentialists believe that life is ‘absurd’ and has no meaning until we attach importance to it. I find an important reference from the teachings of the Lord Buddha (5th century B.C.) where many Buddhist ideas are comparable with those of other philosophies. Following is the quote:

Na jaccā vasalo hoti, Na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo; Kammunā vasalo hoti, Kammunā hoti brāhmaṇo”ti. - Vasalasutta: Sutta Nipāta 1.7 (SuttaCentral, 2022).

Translation: One is not a noble person by birth or an ignoble person by birth, but it is one’s deeds (the way one lives one’s life) that determines whether one is a noble person or an ignoble person.

This verse of Sutta Nipāta, stresses that it is our responsibility to attach and hold moral values as humans. As it further explains, this determines by our acts of self-consciousness, and self-reflections based on our effort to live meaningfully. As explained before, it asserts that humans exist first before they have meaning in life and this meaning is not given but must be achieved by us. The existentialists’ belief in a meaningful and fulfilling life is classically on par with this Buddhist ontological stance. For instance, Sartre in his major philosophical work ‘Being and Nothingness’ posits that we are “condemned to be free” (Sartre, 1943/1956: 439); because once thrown into the world, we are responsible for everything we do. Given this philosophical underpinning, we could enrich our understanding of the concept of slow tourism.

Conceptually, slow tourism is rooted more deeply in visitor motivations, individual choice of travel modes, and other personal reasons, such as preference and lifestyle. The visitor is seeking a subjective experience of thinking, feeling, and acting that helps establish and attach meaning and value to his/her own life. The well-established relationship with the local people is the key bridging mechanism when the visitor strives and commits to a conscious and deeper understanding of diverse facets of the destination. Slow tourism enables visitors to meet this objective as mobility is reduced to a considerable extent. The exploration will be much deeper and relatively non-consumptive in nature. The guest will be comfortably accommodated without any alienation by the host community. Hence, there will be less stress on the natural environment too. The inclusiveness of this form of tourism will assure benefits from tourist visits against any possible costs. As Dickinson (2022) rightly points out slow tourism relies on the idea that a trip is meant to educate and have an emotional impact while remaining sustainable for local communities and the environment.

In addition, authenticity is another key element of existential theory. It is about being genuine and making choices in a way that is fundamental to exploring who you are regardless of external pressure. We mould ourselves to think and behave what others like or accepted people around us. This raises the question of inauthentic living. Being true to ourselves is a precondition that makes us enable self-reflection and self-awareness. Yet it could be challenging but will help us capture the essence of our slow tourism experience much more meaningfully. Furthermore, living authentically also enables us to enjoy the freedom to make our own choices, especially to create meaningful experiences in our life. Hence, it is fundamental to be authentic to ourselves to gain a ‘pure’ form of slow tourism experience.

In conclusion, slow tourism is an approach to recreation that emphasises the seamless association between the visitor and what he/she experiences subjectively. The visitor’s prolonged engagement and persistent observation are fundamental in the ‘pure’ form of slow tourism.



The visitor spends time in the destination sufficient to capture the essence of his/her travel experience. This visitor behaviour promotes establishing relationships and empathy and can be seen as a potential attribute of slow tourism. The slowness of the process allows the visitor to self-reflection and self-awareness that will lead to the self-realisation of a meaningful travel experience. Further, it guides us to realise the importance of being authentic and helps us resolve the problem of meaning. Interestingly, further study of slow tourists’ behaviour and their travel experience would assist us to answer the fundamental questions of existentialism. The questions evolved from “existential angst” in the face of this absurd world.

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Yes, but in a different perspective...



Art by - Gimhani Chandima (Winner of TiP Blossom Art Competition, 2022)



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Tourism in Paradise