ISSN 2820-235X

Editorial
Volume 8

We are born, we travel in pursuit of our desires, and then we die. Lives go on. In the evenings, I get alone in my tiny house in the mountains of Belihuloya, and I often think about the pleasure of leisure in the moments when we bring that journey to a halt. What if the desire is already fulfilled or slipping from our grasp, yet we are at leisure? Leisure without desire is merely emptiness. In such moments, we might breathe, but we are truly dead. It is the darkness of leisure, and that is also a choice we make.

However, this darkness forms a black canvas, inviting colours to create the painting of life. Stars paint a beautiful blue grassland across the sky on the darkest nights. Vivid coloured lanterns generate a charming atmosphere at night during the Vesak season, rather than during the day. Irrespective of whether the canvas is black or white, the most important aspect of life's journey is the accumulation of many colours for the painting you craft. Although the final fragment of life's journey is burnt away when you are at leisure without desire, you will still have that colourful painting to gaze at, recalling your pursuit of everything.

Not only does the eighth volume of Tourism in Paradise magazine uphold its legacy into the unknown future, but even its earlier volumes carry it forward to a time when you pause at leisure, most preferably without desire, or with a desire but not for this life!

Hiran Dinusha

Advisors

Prof. (Dr.) Athula Gnanapala
Dr. Sampath Wahala

Editor-in-Chief

Hiran Dinusha
+94 72 957 7222
hiran@mgt.sab.ac.lk

Editorial Assistants

Ayodya Gurusinghe
Dumindu Wickramasinghe
Piyumindya Senarathne
Thejani Mayadunna

Page Designers

Kusal Kaluarachchi
Tharushi De Silva
Madhushanka Bandara

TiP Toon

Amandi Karunaratne (Toon Artist)
Chameli Umayangana

TiP Alumni Sponsors

Chrishika Fernando

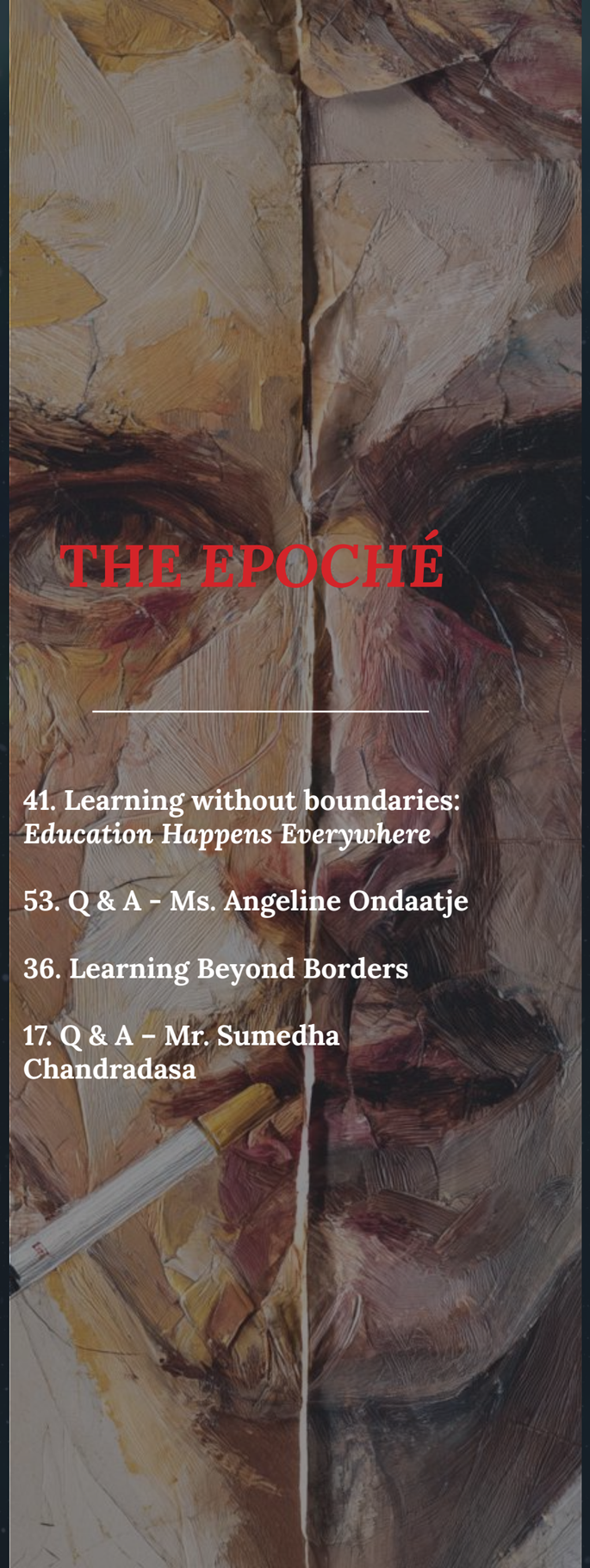
Printing Partner

THOTUPOLA

AI Tools

Google AI Studio
Midjourney.com

Department of Tourism Management
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
Telephone - +9445 228 0296
Fax - +9445 228 0296
Web – www.sab.ac.lk
Email – tourisminparadise@gmail.com



CLASSICS

09. Venice: A City that Floats on Dreams

59. The Historical Ruins of the Old Welfare Building, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

71. The Sacred Stone Culture of Kadazandusun in Sabah, Malaysia

69. Meet You at Tortoni

THE EPOCHÉ

41. Learning without boundaries: *Education Happens Everywhere*

53. Q & A - Ms. Angeline Ondaatje

36. Learning Beyond Borders

17. Q & A – Mr. Sumedha Chandradasa

NORMATIVISM

75. Iconic images as drivers of overtourism

07. Belihuloya: *Nurturing Sustainable Tourism for a Thriving Future*

33. Nine Steps to Becoming a Responsible Traveller

47. Cultural tourism management and climate change adaptation

QUILTS

21. Fun With Art Studies & Travels

43. The Kaleidoscope of Sri Lanka Tourism

01. A Colour Palette for My Sri Lankan Travels

63. Twenty-First Century Visual Culture: *Artist Talk Reflection*

Prof (Dr) Athula Gnanapala
Dean
Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

It is with great pleasure and honour that I share this message for the eighth volume of *Tourism in Paradise* (TIP) Magazine, published by the Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, under the theme "Colours and Symbols of Travel".

At the outset, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations and heartfelt appreciation to the editorial board for their dedication and tireless efforts in making this publication a reality. The *Tourism in Paradise* magazine has become a proud tradition of the Department, released annually to mark World Tourism Day on September 27. This year, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has declared "*Tourism and Sustainable Transformation*" as the global theme for 2025.

Tourism and Sustainable Transformation represents a call to reimagine tourism, not merely as a driver of economic growth, but as a force for positive environmental, social, and cultural change. Tourism today stands as a powerful catalyst for fostering cultural understanding, expanding educational and employment opportunities, and advancing social progress. However, realising this transformative potential demands more than expansion; it requires visionary leadership, inclusive governance, strategic planning, and the integration of sustainability, resilience, and equity into every aspect of decision-making. In doing so, tourism can truly serve as a cornerstone in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the Faculty of Management Studies, we are deeply committed to promoting academic excellence, innovation, and research, while nurturing a holistic learning environment for our students. As a state university in Sri Lanka, our primary mission is to produce competent, ethical, and socially responsible graduates who contribute meaningfully to the nation's socio-economic development. This mission is reflected in the high standards of our academic programs, the quality of our research output, and our strong collaborations with industry partners. We take pride in being recognised as a leading institution in tourism and hospitality education, a distinction we continue to uphold through dedication and continuous improvement.

Through this publication, we aim to share the knowledge, experiences, and innovations of our academic community with scholars, industry professionals, and the wider public. The TIP magazine continues to serve as an important platform for promoting informed dialogue and showcasing our ongoing contributions to the advancement of tourism.

I extend my best wishes to the Department of Tourism Management for its continued success and invaluable service to the tourism industry today and always.

Dr Sampath Bandara Wahala
Head
Department of Tourism Management
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

It is with great pleasure that I extend my warmest congratulations to the editorial team and contributors of the *Tourism in Paradise (TIP) Magazine* on the publication of its 8th volume, themed "Colours and Symbols of Travel".

Since its inception, the TIP Magazine has continued to evolve as a vibrant platform for creative expression, critical reflection, and academic exploration within the field of tourism and hospitality. Each issue—whether exploring *Tourism and Digital Transformation* (2018), *Tourism and Jobs* (2019), *Rural Development* (2020), *Seasons* (2021), *Summer* (2022), *Heritage* (2024), or *Wanderlust* (2024)—has beautifully captured themes of both national significance and global relevance, reflecting the dynamism of the tourism industry and the intellectual curiosity of our students and staff.

The 2025 theme, "*Colours and Symbols of Travel*", represents a celebration of diversity, creativity, and the emotional tapestry of journeys that connect people and cultures across borders. It reminds us that tourism is not merely an act of movement it is an act of meaning-making, storytelling, and coexistence. The concept resonates strongly with our department's vision to nurture reflective, globally minded graduates who understand the deeper cultural, environmental, and human dimensions of travel.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the Editorial Board, the academic advisors, and all writers, and creative contributors who have once again brought together a publication of exceptional quality and imagination. Your commitment and innovation have made TIP Magazine a hallmark of academic excellence and creativity at the Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

May this 8th volume continue to inspire curiosity, dialogue, and appreciation for the ever-evolving palette of tourism in all its colours and symbols.

A Colour Palette for MY Sri Lankan Travels

Over the past ten years, I have had the good fortune to be able to visit Sri Lanka on multiple occasions, and my travels have collectively taken me to every district on the island. Despite its small physical size, I have discovered that Sri Lanka shelters a seemingly endless variety of diverse locales—from the lush jungles and beaches in the west and south, to the clear and vibrant waters surrounding the Jaffna peninsula, and everything in between. As a traveller, I find that my own recollections of the places I have been and things that I have seen are somehow more alive in my mind's eye than anything that could possibly be contained in a photograph. For me, colour is a critical component of these recalled experiences, as it serves as an anchor point to which my memories are attached. When I think of my times in Sri Lanka, a wide colour palette runs through my memories and is linked to very specific places and things...

Blue and gold: The Sri Lankan national cricket team. I love how colourful the team's uniforms are, and I look forward to seeing the unique design that the team wears each season. I do not care much for physical souvenirs, but I do come home from every trip to Sri Lanka with at least one new jersey—either that of the national team or one of the city teams that participate in the Lanka Premier League.

Emerald: The waters of Puttalam lagoon and Koddiyar Bay in Trincomalee. There is nothing that I enjoy more than being on or near the water, and these two locations (perhaps along with the north shore of the Jaffna peninsula) beckon me to linger longer than my schedule usually allows!

Gold: Statues of the Buddha that are common throughout the island. I am still learning the meanings of the variety of mudras (distinct poses that symbolise different aspects of The Buddha's teachings) I encounter on my travels!

Grey and black: Storm clouds in the Western Province. Storms are a frequent occurrence during the southwest monsoon, and they provide a welcome and refreshing remedy to the afternoon heat.

Green: The lush foliage of the hill country and tea plantations. Travelling on the winding roads through Badulla and Nuwara Eliya provides seemingly endless views of thick forests and terraces filled with tea bushes.

Orange/saffron: The robes of Buddhist monks. These bright garments symbolise the monks' dedication to a lifetime detached from material desires.

Red: The unfinished brick that served as the primary building material in ancient sites throughout the island. I have twice visited Jetavanaramaya, the giant stupa in Anuradhapura. For reasons that I cannot describe or understand, I have sensed an energy in this place that is truly unique.

Silver: Simple illuminated Vesak lanterns displayed by rural homes. I often travel by car in rural areas after dark, and few things delight me more than views of glowing Vesak lanterns as they appear across the otherwise dimly lit countryside.

Yellow: Nestomalt advertising on large outdoor signboards. It is impossible to travel in Sri Lanka by road and not encounter a constant bombardment of colourful visual advertisements for a wide variety of products. The prominent companies are many—Dialog, Nippon Paint, Milo, Tokyo Super Cement, S-lon PE+, and LANWA/Ceylon Steel—just to name a few. But none seem to match the omnipresence of the brilliant yellow Nestomalt ads that adorn storefronts across the entire country.

White: Brilliant and unblemished whitewashed stupas. Throughout the southern, central, and western parts of Sri Lanka, these symbolic representations of the Buddha, his teachings, and Buddhist practice are dramatic when set against the blue sky, green foliage, and the brown/red rocks that often surround them.

What I enjoy most of all is seeing the many ways in which the communities of Sri Lanka combine multiple colours (sometimes unintentionally!) into a vibrant and dynamic rainbow. In my travels, some of the complex colour combinations that I have found to be the most striking include:

-Fleets of small, 2-person fishing boats in Trincomalee and the Jaffna peninsula.

-The five colours of the Buddhist flag, which was designed in Colombo in 1885 and brighten many outdoor public spaces throughout Sri Lanka.

-The hordes of bright tuk-tuks that fill the urban centres of Colombo, Kandy, Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee.

-The nightly light show at the Lotus Tower, which is visible each evening across many parts of Colombo.

But perhaps nowhere on the island is an immense array of brilliant colour more present than on the gopurams (monumental towers) that are frequently built at the entrance to Hindu temples. These towers are covered with brightly coloured statues depicting deities and components of Hindu mythology, and I frequently marvel at the work that must go into creating and maintaining these impressive collections of hundreds of figures in their perpetually vibrant state. Apart from their religious importance, these gopurams symbolise for me (as a visitor) complexity, diversity, order, and dedication to detail-which is much of what I believe makes Sri Lanka such a special and visually interesting place.

Mathew H. Gendle, *PhD*
Professor of Psychology
Elon University, Elon, NC, USA

Colour Psychology in Travel

Visitor behaviour can be influenced by numerous factors, particularly in a dynamic field like tourism. While the norm is to describe a destination in terms of activities and attractions, ***colour*** is an often-overlooked dimension that strongly influences the way visitors feel and respond. In the context of tourism, this raises an important question: how do colours contribute to the visitor's experience, and in what ways do they shape the meaning of travel? To understand this, a thorough understanding of colour psychology is needed, which this piece of writing attempts to explain.

Colour psychology is a fascinating blend of psychology, design, and neuroscience that helps explain why certain colours ignite feelings of calmness, energy, nostalgia, or even anxiety. The human brain registers and responds to colours in powerful ways. When light enters the eye, the visual system transmits signals to the hypothalamus, the region of the brain that is responsible for regulating mood, emotion, perception, and biological rhythm. This triggers hormonal and neurological changes that can influence heart rate, breathing, and even appetite. Ever wondered why some travel photos instantly make an individual want to pack their bags? The secret might be in colours. Highly saturated travel pictures, the kind bursting with lush greens or deep blue oceans, are proven to make destinations feel more emotionally close, inviting, and appealing (Lin et al., 2023). In a travel context, this means that colour is more than just a design element; it can set the tone of a destination, spark feelings of calmness or excitement, and influence travellers' decision-making and perceptions of their experiences.

The *Colour Context Theory* in colour psychology is widely accepted among researchers for its influence on individuals' emotions, perceptions, and memory. The Contextual theory suggests that the psychological effects of colour stem from the connection between colour and a particular meaning that developed through innate evolutionary and sociocultural processes (Elliot & Maier, 2012). For example, colours in the red area of the colour spectrum or the warm colours [red, orange, yellow] are known to evoke emotions ranging from warmth and comfort to excitement and anger. Colours on the blue side of the spectrum, known as cool colours, including blue, purple, and green, are often described as calm, but can also evoke feelings of sadness or indifference. These associations are not accidental. They are rooted in both biology and culture. Humans have long associated the colour blue with clear skies and clean water – both of which are essential for survival. This explains why visitors often describe coastal holidays as peaceful and restorative. Simply gazing at the ocean can reduce stress and create a sense of safety. And likewise, sunset oranges? They were always associated with danger, fire, and predators by our early ancestors. Now imagine a visitor at a carnival. Bursts of hot pink, saffron, and vermillion will hijack their attention immediately. Our brains treat saturated colours like alarm bells, triggering heightened alertness. Thus, it is evident how these primal associations still thrum in our DNA, making turquoise feel like an exhale and blood red like a warning scream. Such responses show how deeply colour is embedded in our evolutionary and psychological makeup.

This theoretical understanding has direct and practical implications for the tourism and hospitality industry. Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), hoteliers, and experience designers can strategically leverage colour psychology. For instance, a wellness retreat might utilise a palette of soft greens and blues to promote tranquillity and healing, while an adventure park could employ vibrant oranges and reds to heighten energy and excitement. Beyond marketing materials, this extends to urban planning, architectural design, uniform choices, and even lighting. This chromatic identity of a place is no accident. It is a composite of intentional and cultural choices that collectively shape the visitor's perception before a single activity is even undertaken.

Therefore, colour transcends its role as a visual element and emerges as a critical, non-verbal factor in destination experience design. It operates on a subconscious level, influencing emotional response, behavioural patterns, and memory formation. Like the artist Pablo Picasso once remarked, ***"Colours, like features, follow the changes of the emotions".*** This understanding elevates colour from a mere aesthetic detail to a fundamental strategic tool. For those who design travel experiences, mastering this language is not optional; it is essential. It is the key to moving beyond simply hosting visitors to truly captivating them, transforming a journey into a deeply felt narrative written not in words, but in colours. By thoughtfully applying the principles of colour psychology, the travel industry can consciously craft not just places to see, but profound experiences to feel, ensuring that the memories forged are not only vivid but intentionally beautiful. Because, perhaps in the end, we as travellers are all just chasing a colour – chasing a certain feeling – across unfamiliar lands all along.

References

- Elliot, A. J., & Maier, M. A. (2012). Colour-in-context theory. Advances in experimental social psychology (Vol. 45, pp. 61-125). Academic Press.
- Lin, L., Chen, Y., Zhu, H., & You, J. (2023). The effect of colour saturation of travel pictures on consumer appeal. Sustainability, 15 (19), 14503

Thejani Mayadunna

© vecteezy.com

When July arrives, the air itself seems to breathe in perfume. It rolls through the fields of Provence, blending with the sun and wind until the entire landscape feels alive with summer. Every year, from late June to early August, the landscapes of southern France turn into endless stretches of violet. The lavender fields of Provence are some of the most renowned in the world, attracting travellers with their fragrance and beauty.

Lavender fields tell two stories. The first belongs to *Lavande fine*, the true lavender, which blooms in the hills around Sault and Mont Ventoux later in the season, from mid-July into early August. Its fragrance is delicate, almost ethereal, making it the most expensive of perfumes and essential oils. This variety blooms later in the season, usually from mid-July into early August. The second, *Lavandin*, is a hybrid variety that grows in the lower valleys, such as the Valensole Plateau. It grows in larger fields, has a stronger scent, and blooms earlier, generally from late June to mid-July. Together, these two build a wave of lavender that rolls across Provence throughout the summer.

On the Valensole Plateau, endless waves of purple stretch toward the horizon, mingling with golden sunflowers beneath the warm sun. In the Luberon, the twelfth-century Abbaye de Sénanque is perhaps the most iconic setting, where the hum of bees and the stillness of stone walls create a timeless calm. High above the valleys, Sault holds the title of lavender's capital, a place where time itself slows, and the gentle breeze carries the scent of summer's soul. Further along, the Drôme Provençale offers an intimate landscape, where lavender mingles with vineyards and olive groves. And, in Forcalquier, often called the heart of Provence, lavender fields gently embrace the town. Markets bustle with chatter, and the air is rich with aromas of honey, cheese, and freshly cut lavender blooms. In this place, lavender is more than a sight or a scent; it is a way of life.

And yet, beneath the beauty, there is always a note of bittersweetness. When the last rays of July melt into August, Provence feels like the closing verse of a summer song. The violet turns green, waiting once again for another summer to return. That transience is part of its magic. It is a reminder that summer, too, is passing, urging us to cherish it before it slips away. Perhaps this is why, standing in those fields, one feels the tug of nostalgia even in the present moment. It is the same mood Lana Del Rey captures in her melancholy chorus *Kiss me hard before you go... summertime sadness.*

Ayodya Gurusinghe

The Scent of Summer
Lavender Fields of Southern France

© pixabay.com

Belihuloya: Nurturing Sustainable Tourism for a Thriving Future

Belihuloya is a hidden treasure with enormous promise as a sustainable tourism destination in the southern highlands of Sri Lanka. This charming village offers a great opportunity for eco-friendly tourists, with its stunning landscapes, abundant biodiversity, and rich cultural heritage. The area is an ideal destination for environmental enthusiasts and wildlife photographers due to its abundance of rare plant and animal species. For those seeking relief from the tropical heat, its cool climate, which is marked by misty mornings and clear, crisp evenings, offers the ideal getaway. Moreover, visitors who travel in Belihuloya can experience unspoiled jungles, stunning waterfalls, and picturesque views that stretch across the rolling hills.

As many modern tourists search for meaningful and sustainable travel experiences, Belihuloya has the potential to flourish as a destination that showcases the finest of Sri Lanka's natural splendour, culture, and responsible travel philosophy. With thoughtful preparation, collaborative efforts, and a strong commitment to sustainability, Belihuloya has the potential to emerge as a model of how tourism, done well, can support the local economy and environment. To accomplish this task, the tourism development of the region must be considered in the following aspects.

Preserving Nature

Belihuloya is home to a wide variety of plants and animals, lush forests, cascading waterfalls and many of the regional plantations. Making sure that these natural resources are protected is the first step in developing sustainable tourism in the region. Promoting responsible travel practices that prioritise waste reduction, water conservation, and wildlife habitat protection is important. Local authorities such as provincial councils and Pradeshiya Sabaha can work collaboratively with relevant organisations to set up protected areas and develop ecotourism activities and initiatives that promote environmental education. Encouraging tourists to participate in guided nature walks, where they can discover the area's richness and the value of conservation, is one possible approach. Cooperation with regional farmers and fruit growers also ensures that the travel and tourism sector promotes environmentally friendly agricultural methods, such as ecological and organic farming. By encouraging residents to protect their natural surroundings, these activities not only provide visitors with a genuine experience but also contribute to the preservation of the area's biodiversity. These excursions can inspire a sense of environmental care in both guests and the local population by enhancing their understanding of the local flora and fauna, contributing to a sustainable tourism strategy.

Empowering Local Communities

The people who live in and around Belihuloya must gain some sort of benefits through tourism if it is to be genuinely sustainable. To ensure equitable distribution of economic gains and the preservation of cultural treasures for future generations to enjoy, neighbourhood groups must be at the forefront of tourism development. Promoting community-driven tourism initiatives and activities is one method to accomplish this. The sale of handcrafted goods that honour regional customs, heritage-themed excursions that dive into Belihuloya's rich heritage, and environmentally friendly lodging options managed by neighbourhood families are a few examples of such initiatives. While preserving the region's originality, tourism can serve as a catalyst for social development by empowering local communities. Moreover, training sessions will be established for regional tour guides, hospitality workers, and craftspeople to ensure that locals possess the necessary skills to thrive in the growing tourism industry. To ensure that the area's tourism sector is both commercially successful and equitable for everyone, collaborations between local government agencies, neighbourhood associations, and tourism stakeholders may establish a framework that promotes sustainable growth.

Balance Development and Preservation

Belihuloya must meet the increasing demand for current infrastructure and recreational amenities even as sustainable tourism seeks to protect the area's natural and cultural environments. To ensure that subsequent generations of visitors and residents can still appreciate the area's attractiveness, this improvement should be implemented with the least possible negative impact on the environment. Minimising the carbon footprint caused by tourism in the area will require the construction of facilities such as environmentally friendly accommodation, responsible transportation systems, and renewable energy sources. To prevent excessive growth, comprehensive planning is necessary. To preserve the scenic appeal of the area and mitigate tourist traffic, tourism growth must be implemented gradually.

Preserving Culture and Heritage

Visitors can experience an abundance of history and culture in the area, which includes traditional villages and historic Buddhist monasteries and many more. These cultural resources offer visitors the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities, such as participating in spiritual retreats, learning authentic crafts, or attending local festivals. The preservation of the customs that make Belihuloya special must be a priority for tourism if it is to grow there. The area can attract tourists who want to learn about the region's history, art, and way of life, while preserving these customs by incorporating cultural events into its tourism offerings.

Promoting Responsible Marketing

Innovative advertising is essential for raising awareness and attracting travellers who share similar interests in responsible tourism. However, the area's marketing as a sustainable tourist destination needs to highlight not just its cultural legacy and breathtaking scenery, but also its commitment to ethical travel, environmental conservation, and community engagement. Marketing and Promotional campaigns should highlight the area's environmentally oriented initiatives and their efforts to accomplish a balanced relationship between tourism development and environmental conservation. Furthermore, collaborating with global ecotourism websites, travel influencers, and bloggers on sustainable travel initiatives can help promote Belihuloya as an ideal getaway for environmentally conscious tourists. This will make Belihuloya a model for other regions seeking to develop sustainable tourism by promoting ethical travel practices.

Namal Wijesundara, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Department of Tourism Management
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Venice : A City that Floats on Dreams

In 2005, while I was serving as a diplomatic officer at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Rome, I had the privilege of visiting one of the most remarkable cities in the world, Venice. The journey was organised by a reputed Sri Lankan gentleman living in Italy, and I was joined by a close colleague from the embassy. It was a short trip, yet one that left a lasting impression on me. Even today, two decades later, the memories of that visit remain as vivid as the reflections of Venice shimmering on the Adriatic waters.

The First Glimpse of the Floating City

As our bus approached Venice, I still remember the excitement I felt seeing the city appear to rise out of the water. Venice is not like any other place on Earth. Built on a cluster of over a hundred small islands connected by canals and bridges, it feels more like a dream than a city. There are no cars, no honking horns, only the gentle sound of water lapping against stone walls and the rhythmic movement of boats passing through narrow waterways. Venice was founded around the 5th century by people escaping invasions on the mainland. Over time, it grew into one of the most powerful maritime republics in Europe. Its influence stretched far beyond Italy, connecting East and West through trade and culture. As I walked through its narrow lanes and across its countless bridges, I could almost feel the centuries of history that shaped this city of merchants, explorers, and artists.

Sailing Across the Adriatic

One of the highlights of my visit was the Half-Day Murano and Burano Island Tour, which took us on a scenic boat journey across the Adriatic Sea. The trip was wonderfully organised, and as we sailed away from the main island, I was fascinated by the skyline of Venice fading into the horizon, the domes, bell towers, and ancient buildings floating charmingly above the blue-green water. Our first stop was Murano, famous worldwide for its glassmaking. I had the rare opportunity to visit a Murano glass factory, where master craftsmen demonstrated their skill in shaping molten glass into delicate vases, ornaments, and chandeliers. Watching them work so precisely, with intense concentration and artistry, was unforgettable. I was told that the tradition of glassmaking in Murano dates back to the 13th century, a proud heritage preserved through generations. I still remember the warmth of the furnace and the glow of the glass as it transformed before our eyes. From Murano, our boat continued to Burano, a small island that instantly seized my heart. Burano is like a painting come to life, rows of brightly painted houses reflected in the water,each one a different colour. The island is also famous for its lace-making, an intricate art that has survived for hundreds of years. I visited a small workshop where women were patiently weaving delicate patterns by hand. Their work reminded me of the quiet dedication of Sri Lankan artisans back home, each thread a story, each pattern a legacy.

The Magic of Venice

When we returned to the main island later that day, I spent the evening wandering around St. Mark's Square (Piazza San Marco), the heart of Venice. The magnificent St. Mark's Basilica, with its golden mosaics and domes, stood proudly beside the Doge's Palace, a masterpiece of Venetian Gothic architecture. The square was alive with music and laughter, and pigeons fluttered above the tourists enjoying their coffee in open-air cafés. As the sun began to set, I took a gondola ride through the narrow canals. The gondolier sang softly as we glided beneath centuries-old bridges, the water reflecting the pastel colours of the buildings. The quiet beauty of that moment made me realise why Venice has inspired poets, painters, and travellers for centuries. There is something deeply romantic and timeless about this city; it seems to exist outside the boundaries of reality.

A Memory that Lasts Forever

My visit to Venice may have lasted only a few days, but its charm continues to stay with me. The elegant canals, the artistry of Murano glass, the colours of Burano, and the grandeur of St. Mark's all come together to create a city unlike any other. Venice is not just a destination; it is a feeling, a living piece of history that continues to float serenely on water. Whenever I think of my time in Italy, this magical city is the first thing that comes to mind. It is a place where the past whispers through every canal and where every visitor leaves with a heart full of wonder. Venice taught me that beauty, like water, can take any shape and still remain pure.

Lal Gunasekara, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Department of Tourism Management
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

© pexels.com

Written in Earth:

The Travel Symbol We Overlook

Some people collect postcards, others collect souvenirs. I collect footprints, not mine, but the ones left by animals.

My interest in animal footprints began during a special session in Colombo, led by Dr Sampath Senevirathna, a well-known zoologist who has a deep love for nature and wildlife. The session was organised by the Venturers Club of the University of Colombo. I was lucky to join this session, and it quietly changed the way I see the world.

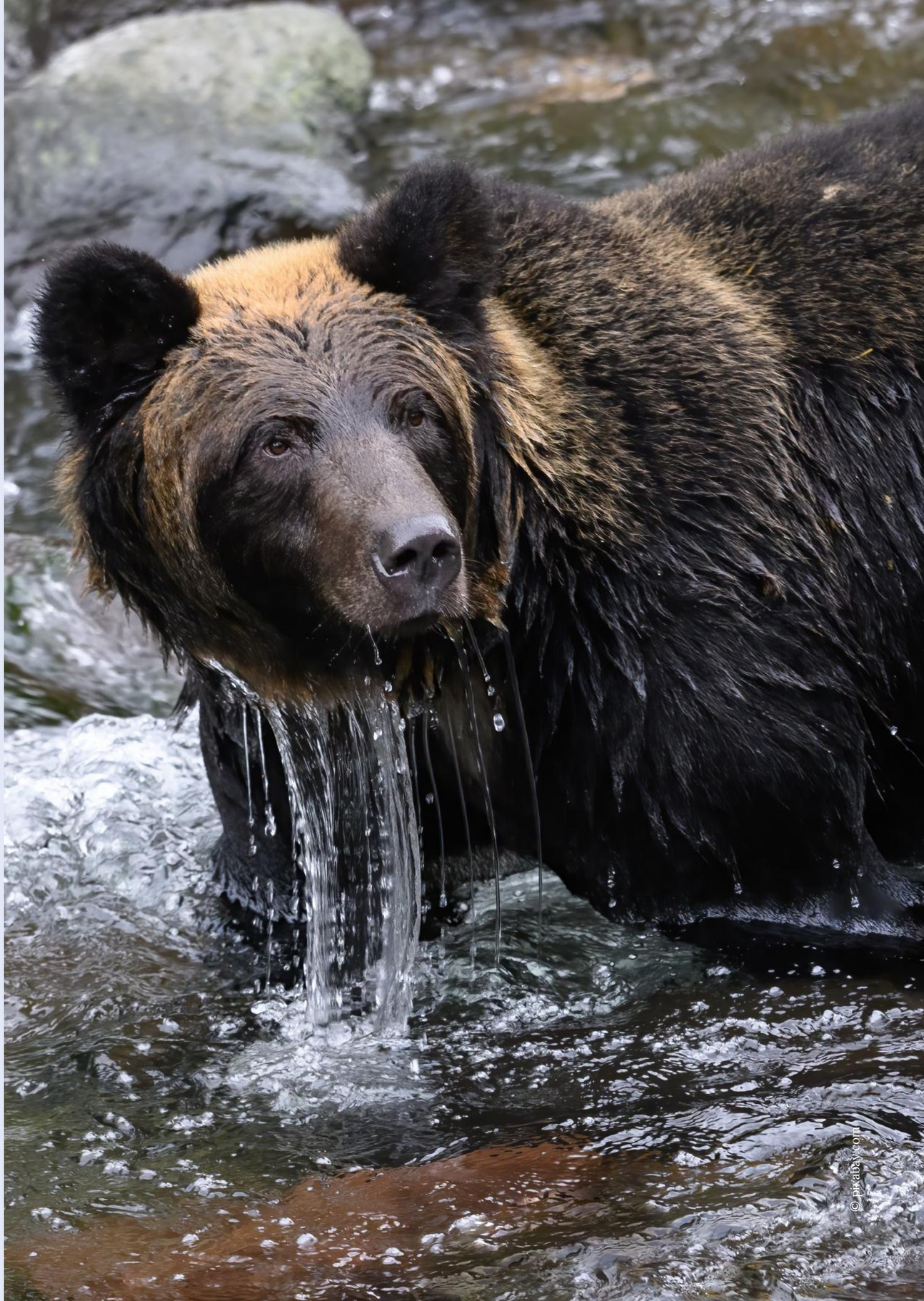
Dr Sampath did not start with a long talk. Instead, he showed us something simple: footprints made by a dog. It seemed a bit strange at first, but it was his way of teaching us to look down at the ground and notice the small signs animals leave behind. After that, he showed us some of the footprints he had collected during his travels: tiger tracks, bear prints, and fox paws. He had even tracked tiger footprints in the Belihuloya area. Seeing those made me feel curious and excited. He explained that footprints can tell us many things, not just the animal that made them, but also whether it was a male or female, which leg made the print, and even the animal's body position at that time. I had never thought a footprint could tell such a detailed story. That day, the ground became our classroom. While most people look up at birds or butterflies, we were learning to look down. We learned how to read the land and understand the quiet signs of animals that had passed by. It was a new and special way of seeing nature.

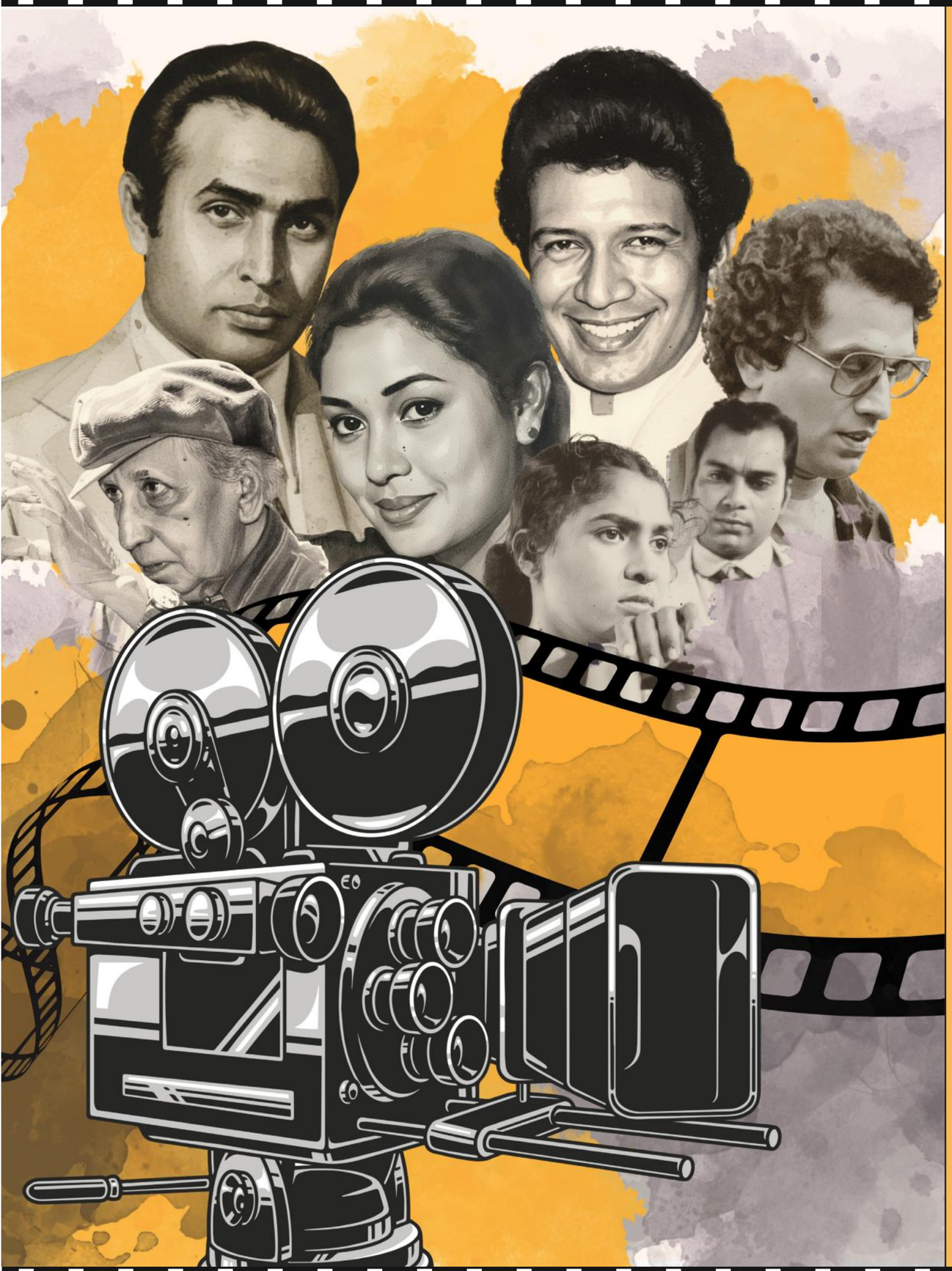
With just a few simple things —water, salt, and plaster of Paris (gypsum powder) —we made something magical. First, we gently cleaned the print and built a small wall around it using soil or leaves. Then we mixed the plaster until it was smooth, like yoghurt, and slowly poured it over the footprint. After waiting a few minutes, we lifted a small piece of the wild, frozen in time. Holding that dried print in my hands felt like holding a memory. It was not just a fun activity; it felt like I was touching the life of an animal I had never met, but who had walked the same path.

Since that day, this has become something I do often. Whenever I travel through forests, small paths, or riverbanks, I carry my plaster kit with me. It is more than a hobby now. It is how I connect with nature. Each footprint I collect feels like a quiet gift from the wild. To me, these prints are the true souvenirs of travel. They are untouched, full of beauty, and full of hidden stories. They remind me to stay curious, be patient, and look more closely at the world around me.

Today, while many people take quick photos and move on, I have learned to stop, look down, and notice the small things. Because sometimes, the most amazing journeys are the ones we find already written on the earth. Special thanks to Dr Sampath Senevirathna, whose kind teaching and collection of footprints helped me see nature in a new way. Thanks to him, I did not just find footprints, I found a new purpose.

Chathuri Delmi Dananjani





Golden Frames:

The Silent Poetry and Vibrant Truths of Sinhala Cinema

The roots of Sinhala cinema can be traced back to Sri Lanka's rich traditions of folk drama and ritualistic performances, which served as the earliest forms of public entertainment long before the silver screen arrived. Rural plays such as Sokari and Nadagam, the colourful folk dramas of Kolam, and the artistry of mask dances and Rukada (puppet shows) reflected the island's cultural spirit while also carrying religious and social messages. Rituals like Shantikarma not only provided spiritual healing but also evolved into dramatic performances enjoyed by communities.

Over centuries, these art forms absorbed influences from South Indian culture, which carried melodic and theatrical elements that blended with local traditions to create a uniquely Sri Lankan performance style. As colonial society modernised, these traditional entertainments gradually transitioned into organised theatre productions, paving the way for the birth of Sinhala cinema. The early black-and-white films captured both modern stories and traditional values, laying the foundation for a national film identity. This cultural journey reached its peak in the mid-20th century during the Golden Era of Sinhala cinema, where filmmakers showcased local stories, landscapes, and emotions on the global stage, creating *golden frames* that remain timeless in Sri Lanka's artistic and cultural memory.

The Golden Era of Sinhala cinema, from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, was a time of artistic brilliance and cultural awakening in Sri Lanka. Though the early years unfolded in black and white, they were rich in emotional vibrancy. Sinhala cinema began in 1947 with *Kadawunu Poronduwa*, directed by S. M. Nayagam. Though it was produced in India with Indian technicians and South Indian aesthetics. These early black-and-white films, rich in emotional contrast, reflected the innocence and theatricality of post-colonial Ceylonese society.

In 1956, a quiet revolution swept across Sinhala cinema with the release of *Rekava* by Lester James Peries. Rekava was filmed entirely on location and captured the rhythms of village life, spiritual beliefs, and childhood innocence. Though not a commercial success at the time, Rekava marked the true beginning of a Sri Lankan cinematic identity.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Sri Lankan cinema entered a period of great creativity and growth. From the early 1960s to the late 1970s, often called the Golden Era of Sinhala cinema, the industry developed rapidly. It moved beyond serving only as entertainment and became an important medium for cultural expression.

Directors such as Lester James Peries (*Gamperaliya*, *Nidhanaya*), Dharmasena Pathiraja (*Bambaru Awith*, *Ahas Gawwa*), and Vasantha Obeysekera (*Dadayama*, *Palangetiyo*) introduced a new era of realism and deep reflection in Sri Lankan cinema.

No celebration of Sinhala cinema's golden chapters is complete without honouring its music. The music of W. D. Amaradeva, Premasiri Khemadasa, and R. Muttusamy added both beauty and emotional depth to films. Their soundtracks combined elements of classical tradition with the feelings of cinema, producing memorable melodies that stayed with audiences long after the films ended.

The Golden Era of Sinhala cinema not only marked a cultural renaissance in Sri Lanka but also left a lasting imprint on the tourism industry by projecting the island's beauty and traditions to wider audiences. Films such as Gamperaliya and Bambaru Awith brought to life the charm of rural landscapes, fishing villages, historic towns, and colonial architecture, while also portraying the richness of local customs, rituals, and everyday lifestyles. International recognition at prestigious film festivals further elevated Sri Lanka's image as a country of artistic depth and cultural authenticity, drawing global curiosity toward its people and places.

Kaveesha Nimnadi Aponsu

Wellness Tourism: Trends and Prospects of Shari'ah Compliant Spas in Malaysia

Wellness tourism has recorded remarkable growth in recent years, making it one of the fastest-growing market segments in the hospitality and tourism industry. According to the Global Wellness Economy Monitor from January 2017, the sum of investments related to wellness tourism has grown to $563 billion.

Spa tourism is a component of wellness tourism that focuses on the provision of specific wellness facilities and destinations, emphasising the effects of relaxation and curative influences on the human body, achieved through water-based procedures such as mineral waters, thermal pools, vapour baths, and saunas.

The International Spa Association (ISPA) categorises spas into eight main types: club spa, day spa, cosmetic spa, cruise ship spa, destination spa, medical spa, mineral spring spa, and resort or hotel spa.

In 2018, the Global Wellness Institute estimated that spa earnings covered spa facility revenue of around $93.6 billion per year, as well as the learning, negotiating, corporate, media, and events sectors, which enabled spa businesses to reach a total market of $118.8 billion. It is demonstrated that the development of spa services and products in the global wellness tourism industry is becoming increasingly prevalent.

In recent times, there has been growing interest in the Malaysian spa sector in the Shari'ah-compliant spa concept, which is considered the latest addition to the conceptual spa market trend. As an Islamic country with a majority of consumers being Muslim, the Shari'ah-compliant spa concept has become one of the leading wellness activities in Malaysia, supporting the nation's Halal hub tourism industry. The Shari'ah-compliant spa concept is emerging as a new prospect with huge potential to tap into this lucrative market. This is because Muslims have more conservative protocols and religious requirements that may be a challenge to conduct in a conventional spa setting.

To implement the Shari'ah-compliant spa, an Islamic Spa Practice (ISP) was established to meet the requirements provided by the Malaysian Islamic Development Department, popularly known as JAKIM. Theoretically, the Muslim friendly elements practiced by ISP included beauty therapist segregation by sex; separate rooms and services among women and men; concept and internal decoration that are compatible with religion of Islam; using beauty products from halal sources; design of space planning is closed and hidden from non-muhrim's view; provide musollah/praying area; begin a treatment with the reading of verses from Al-Quran; hiring Muslim women or men employees and they must cover their aurah; neglecting prayers until overpass prayer times; as well as no hair dye with black colour and shaves the eyebrow.

By definition, a Shari'ah-Compliant Spa can be referred to as a spa that offers professional spa services in accordance with Islamic or Shari'ah Law in terms of services, management, and products. A Shari'ah-compliant spa has to take five vital elements of Maqasid Shar'iyyah into consideration in delivering spa services and products, including the protection of religion (Al-Diin), life (Al-Hayah), intellect (Al-Aql), progeny or dignity (Al-Muru'ah), and property (Al-Mal).

The preservation of religion is merely understood as safeguarding the religion by complying with the Islamic principle and protecting it from obliteration. In the Islamic beauty perspective, it is very crucial to ensure the facial and skincare products are *whudu*-friendly and do not affect the performance of prayer (*solah*). The spa products must be safe and may not cause serious health problems or lead to death, such as being free from carcinogenic agents, in order to preserve human life. On the protection of human intellect and progeny, Shari'ah-compliant spa products must not have side effects or adverse effects on the mind that could trigger mental ability, as well as promote hormone disruption and subsequently cause infertility and congenital disability. In terms of protecting property elements, Shari'ah-compliant spa products and services should be both halal and beneficial to prevent wasteful spending.

The implementation of a Shari'ah-compliant spa will allow smooth, practical spa activities, which will eventually expand the customer purchase-consumption system and benefit the community, especially Muslims. The addition of Islamic elements in spas will cater to the physical and spiritual needs of Muslim spa-goers, while also meeting the ordinary requirements of non-Muslim demand. This contributes to the field by delivering practical implications that consider the integration of economic, social, and environmental factors. A Shari'ah-compliant spa can be a national trait in Malaysia, as it has the potential to compete with conventional spa operators and would be a favourable tourist destination for Muslim tourists from all over the world.

Nor Dalila Binti Marican, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Mohd Hakam Bin Nazir, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Muhammad Firdaus Bidin
Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Thema
COLLECTION
Different themes, authentic experiences

Aliya SIGIRIYA · Amba Yaalu KANDALAMA · Mountbatten KANDY · Tea & Experience MANDARAM NUWARA · Scottish Planter NUWARA ELIYA · Waraka UDAWALAWE

Wild Glamping KNUCKLES · Wild Glamping GAL OYA · Parangi WELIGAMA · VistaVie MIRISSA · Kithala TISSA-YALA · Maalu Maalu PASIKUDA · Ayurvie SIGIRIYA · Ayurvie WELIGAMA

Q&A

Sumedha Chandradasa

Q You are recognised as one of the finest tour guides in Sri Lanka. Could you please share how you built your journey and tell us a little about yourself?

First of all, I do not know whether I am one of the finest, but that is quite subjective. I grew up in Kurunegala for four years during my childhood and later in Colombo. I started my education at St. Anne's College in Kurunegala, then moved to Mahanama College, Colombo 3, and ultimately completed my studies at Royal College, Colombo 7, in 1991. After my Ordinary Levels, I studied up to Advanced Levels. I joined a private bank and worked in foreign exchange dealing. I quickly realised that I am not suited for a desk job, but I am quite good with numbers and analytics. So I invested a bit in the stock market because there was a sort of bull run, so I made some money.

My entry into tourism happened by chance: I saw a paper advertisement from the National Tourism Organisation, which was called the Sri Lanka Tourist Board at the time. I was selected along with two others, so I joined Sri Lanka Tourism in June 1995 and worked in the marketing division. That is how I entered the field. I am thankful to my superiors at the time, former Directors and Assistant Directors, Mr Sarath Jayawardena, Mr P.P. Hettiarachchi, Mr Somarathna Pathirana, Mrs Sherine Wattewewa, Mrs Shiranthi Wattaladeniya and especially Mr Sanath Wijetunga, then Assistant Director, Marketing Division of the Tourist Board. He was the person who encouraged me to pursue a career in tour guiding because he recognised my public relations and interpersonal skills. Later, Mr Wijetunga encouraged me to do the National Tourist Guide Lecturer Course, which was held in 1998. I am also highly appreciative of my colleague, Mr Nalaka Palipana, a German and English-speaking National Tourist Guide Lecturer, for his advice and guidance on professional tour guiding, which has helped me immensely. Since then, I have been working as a freelance English-speaking national tourist guide lecturer. Additionally, I assist a friend's private travel company with business promotions and provide some consultancy services.

Q From your experience, what does it truly mean to be a tour guide?

> **"In this field, you should love what you do. Money exists, but ultimately, you must be happy with your work."**

In this field, you should love what you do. Money exists, but ultimately, you must be happy with your work. Additionally, you should have a solid understanding of the industry and your role because you are representing Sri Lanka as a professional tour leader. Therefore, you need to be thorough in your knowledge, presenting the country from cultural and social perspectives to foreign visitors, as many of them don't understand the deeper aspects of Sri Lanka. If you can reveal what lies beneath the surface of the country, it is highly worthwhile.

A good sense of public relations and common sense, along with flexibility, is essential, as this field is very demanding. We typically work with groups of about 8 to 40 people. Therefore, you should be able to recognise the collective's expectations. These are the challenges I would mention as a group leader who manages a tour, because you will perform better if you also understand individual needs. However, it's quite tricky because looking after 30 people isn't easy. Nonetheless, making the effort will greatly help you achieve your objectives.

Q Over your career, you must have met countless travellers. Could you share one of the most memorable or meaningful experiences you have had as a guide?

As you mentioned, I have met countless interesting characters, including people who have travelled to Sri Lanka, and I was lucky enough to associate with several well-known individuals as well. However, I would say the most memorable person I have met is a British lady named Joyce Sims. When she was 19, she spent 2.5 years in Sri Lanka serving with the British forces in the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). She mostly lived in the regions of Trincomalee, Colombo, Diyathalawa, and Bandarawela.

In 2003, she returned to Sri Lanka, and it was then, at the age of 80, that I met her. She had travelled extensively during her stay, visiting Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, and even Dambulla, and most memorably, Sri Pada. At that time, she spoke a little Sinhalese and still remembered it when she returned. But it was like, you know, 60 years ago. I remember her because she offered an insightful perspective on the country at that time. She describes the country vividly and provided a viewpoint from a foreign visitor. She recalled that the Sri Lankans are truly a hospitable people. So, I would say that this lady made the biggest impression as a traveller to Sri Lanka because she could see the differences, and even for me, it was quite touching to see how she had experienced the country and its people.

Q As a person who has been on the ground in the tourism field for many years, how do you feel about its current state, and in what direction do you think the industry is heading now and in the future?

Honestly, I feel very concerned about the state of tourism in the country, especially where it is heading now. Politicians and some officials focus on numbers and prioritise quantity over service quality. If we try to increase tourist numbers without adequate on-the-ground service staff, the system could collapse. Therefore, I believe that if this continues for the next 10 to 15 years, Sri Lankan tourism could be so severely affected that it becomes unsustainable.

If you look at it realistically, over 60% of the travellers coming to Sri Lanka are budget-conscious. We observed this impact during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the industry came to a halt, causing many tourism businesses to go bankrupt or struggle to survive. In fact, some people even committed suicide because they could not cope with the economic loss. Ultimately, everyone needs to realise that tourism is a sensitive industry that requires careful management. While there may be short-term gains from increasing tourist arrivals, the medium and long-term consequences could be severe. We risk losing the very uniqueness that makes Sri Lanka special. Therefore, it would be far better if we could offer a high-quality service.

Sri Lanka is notable for its diversity. It's a small island, yet incredibly rich in landscapes, culture, heritage, and biodiversity. You might be familiar with the quote by Arthur C. Clarke, who said that while other countries, like Cambodia and Thailand, may have more spectacular ruins, beaches, or wildlife, nowhere else combines all these elements to such a high standard within such a compact space as Sri Lanka. This untapped potential should be recognised and preserved. My personal suggestion is that the authorities shift focus from maximising tourist numbers to positioning Sri Lanka as a high-quality travel destination. Instead of chasing volume, we should aim for value, ensuring development remains sustainable and protecting the island's character and natural beauty for future generations.

I'm not saying reaching 3 million or even 5 million tourists is an unrealistic goal; it's definitely achievable with proper preparation and a solid plan. Otherwise, Sri Lanka risks becoming just another over-commercialised destination —a sort of showcase like Las Vegas. Tourism here must be managed carefully, so that both the country and its people can genuinely benefit. There has been no proper national policy that benefits the industry stakeholders, apart from a few individuals. So, considering how the industry has evolved over the past 15 years, I can't really be satisfied with it.

Q **Tour guiding in Sri Lanka is often described as a male-dominated field, with relatively few women in the profession. Why do you think this gender imbalance exists within the industry? And at the same time, what do you see as the main issues in this profession today? What solutions do you see?**

Currently, I believe there are approximately 2,400 qualified national guide lecturers in Sri Lanka. Although I do not have exact figures, I think it is definitely less than 5% of the qualified female national guide lecturers in the country. Not only among national guide lecturers but also across other sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry, the number of women working in the field is very low. It is essentially a male-dominated industry. The main reasons are rooted in Sri Lanka's cultural perceptions. Sadly, unlike careers such as teaching or healthcare, it is regarded as inappropriate for women to be employed in this profession or industry. This is the biggest obstacle. Fewer women choose the tour guiding profession because of its demanding nature, preferring work in hotels or the hospitality industry instead.

As a professional tour guide, they must keep travelling with the group and moving from hotel to hotel. This makes it especially difficult for those in relationships or married, as maintaining a family life or running a household is very challenging. Few manage both, but they are few. However, in Europe, more women than men work as tour leaders because they have a more flexible lifestyle.

Regarding the second part of your question, I believe the main issue in this profession is unauthorised tour guiding. I'm not suggesting that others should not conduct tour guiding or leading. In Sri Lanka, a 1986 tourism law states that if a regulated tour operator organises a tour group, the tour group must be accompanied by a licensed national guide lecturer. This law was introduced because the government recognised that tourism is a very sensitive industry and requires certain regulations to ensure standards.

It is crucial that local guides are regarded equally with travellers, not as industry servants. In the past, foreign tour leaders often looked down on Sri Lankan guides. But from the late 1970s onwards, local guides skilled in languages such as German, Italian, and French demonstrated that Sri Lankans could manage tours just as effectively as foreign leaders. This resulted in Sri Lankan guides taking over tours by the early 1980s, and in 1986, legislation was introduced to prevent foreigners from working as tour leaders without the correct visas. However, in recent years, many foreign nationals have been leading tours on tourist visas without sufficient knowledge of Sri Lanka, breaking immigration laws. This harms service quality and reduces the benefits to Sri Lanka's economy and its local community. The government should resolve this issue, but so far, little has been done.

> **"As a guide or leader, your role is to connect travellers with local culture, nature, and people, aligning with their expectations. This is what I mean by being the human connection."**

Q **Do you believe tour guiding is a good profession, and what message or advice would you like to leave for the next generation of tour guides in Sri Lanka?**

Yes, definitely, tour guiding is a good profession. But the thing is, we live in a world that's advancing rapidly in technology. If you think about where things are heading in the next 5 to 10 years, it's pretty clear that many things will change. Realistically, I believe there's a strong chance that traditional tour guiding will become a non-existent field within 20 years. That's what I honestly see.

Nevertheless, the human element in that profession will persist. In the 21st century, travel is increasingly focused on experiential movement, which is exactly what modern travellers seek. As a guide or leader, your role is to connect travellers with local culture, nature, and people, aligning with their expectations. This is what I mean by being the human connection. Therefore, for novice tour guides, I recommend adding a personal touch to your service. If you can showcase the sights and introduce the local people they will meet in Sri Lanka, and if you know how to foster interactions between travellers and locals, this could become the most vital part of your role. Regarding the human element, I would argue it's not about hand-holding clients but about helping them understand where Sri Lanka has come from—the past, its evolution, what they witness today, and how everything connects.

Sumedha Chandradasa
Honorary Secretary
Sri Lanka Institute of National Tourist Guide Lecturers (SLINTGL)

Fun With Art Studies & Travels

Back to Studies

In 2025, I became an undergraduate student once again. It marked the beginning of a journey I had first dreamed of as a 17-year-old student at Ananda College, Colombo 10. At that time, I had planned to enter the renowned Heywood Art School in Colombo (now part of the University of Kelaniya). However, life took me in a different direction, and I chose to pursue a career in hotel management and tourism, enrolling at the Ceylon Hotel School.

My passion for art, however, never waned. In 1993, inspired by the celebrated Sri Lankan visual artist Cavaliere Tilake Abeysinghe—who had a permanent gallery at the Mount Lavinia Hotel, where I served as General Manager—I organised my first art exhibition, 3 *Generations*. My dedication to art led me to study under several distinguished Sri Lankan artists and to undertake studio training at the University of Guyana. I later expanded my visual art education through courses at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Jamaica and completed Fine Art and Painting programmes at George Brown College's School of Design in Canada.

In 2025, I resolved to dedicate myself entirely to my work as a visual artist. I am now a first-year student at Brock University, Canada, pursuing a BA (Honours) degree in Studio Arts. Learning, after all, never truly ends.

Back to Travels

After my first semester at Brock University, I was excited to find an opportunity to enrol in an exciting course partly delivered in Spain during the spring of 2025. **VISA 3M05: Art Studies Abroad in Spain** was much more than an art study tour. It was a scholarly adventure that offered a multifaceted understanding of a unique region in Spain. Rather than visiting the usual tourist hotspots in major Spanish cities like Madrid or Barcelona, we focused on one of Spain's 17 autonomous communities—the Basque Country. This region, with its distinct history, culture, language, and cuisine, provided a rich and rewarding context for learning. Our pre-departure education deepened my curiosity and set the stage for a more immersive experience. It was indeed a truly fulfilling journey.

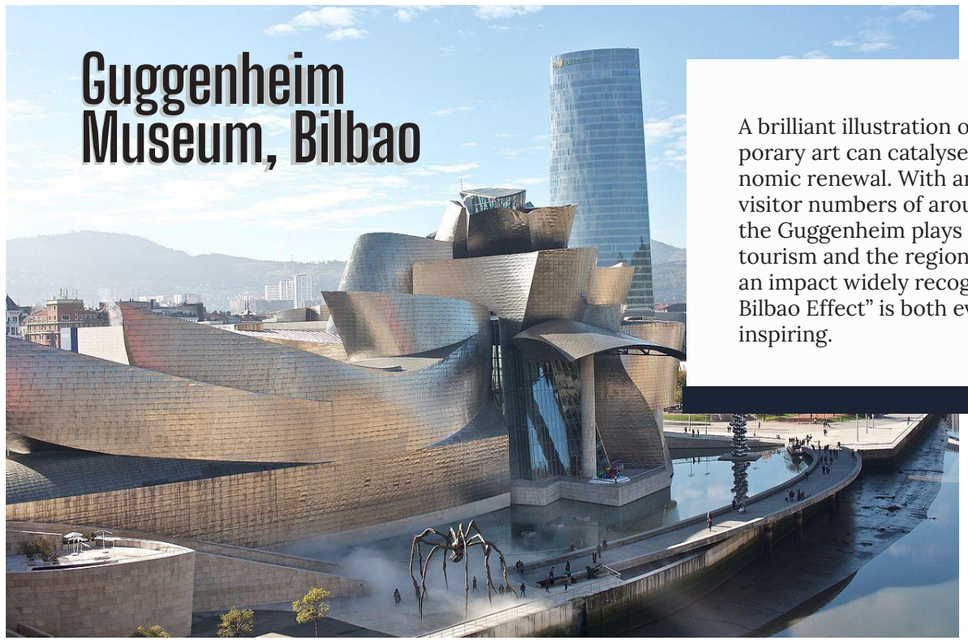
My 2025 trip to the Basque Country, Spain, with 13 fellow travellers, ranks among the most rewarding travel experiences I have had across more than 100 countries. The journey was exceptionally well planned, with an itinerary full of discovery, enjoyment, and intellectual stimulation. The built-in opportunities for *slow looking* added depth to our experiences, allowing for thoughtful observation and reflection. My anticipations before the trip, insights during the trip, and reflections afterwards all combined to enrich the experience significantly.

In addition, having spent a week in Spain 40 years ago, along with brief day visits to Amsterdam and Paris before and after the 2025 tour, I found my perspective further enriched. It was a rollercoaster ride of learning, exploration, and fun.

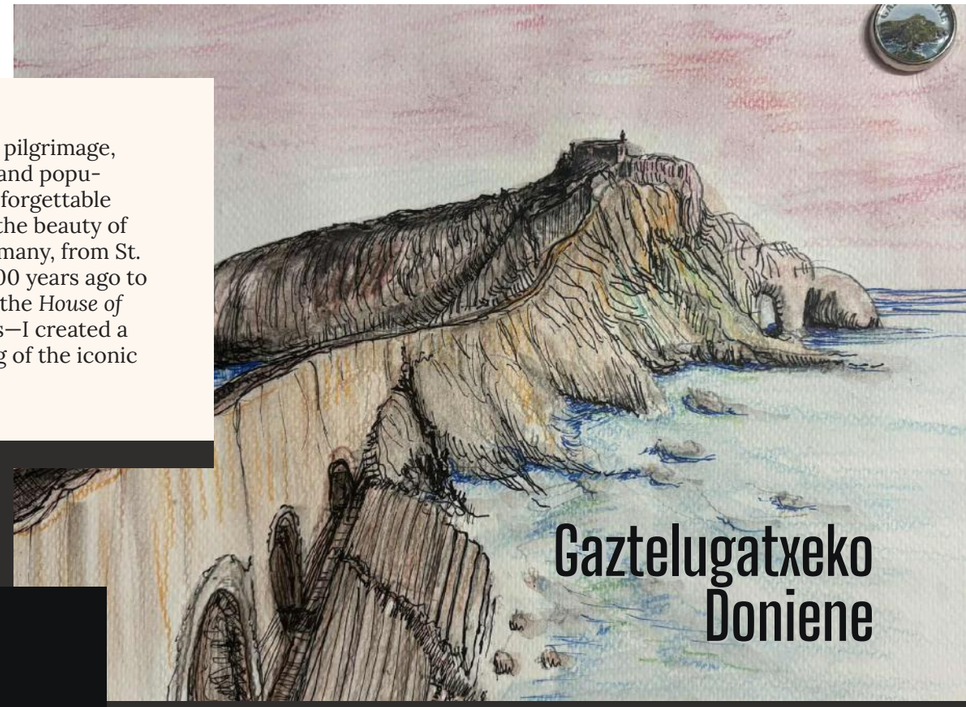
Given that our group included some first-time international travellers, comparisons between Spanish and Canadian customs were inevitable and thought-provoking. The leisurely pace of life with afternoon siestas, late restaurant openings, relaxed dining experiences, widespread café culture, minimal tipping expectations, and the more tolerant attitude toward smoking added a layer of cross-cultural insight, especially for our younger members in the student group. This, I believe, is the true essence of learning through travel: understanding and appreciating cultural differences. I could not help but think how fortunate we were to have this opportunity.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRIP

Several site visits left a lasting impression:



A brilliant illustration of how contemporary art can catalyse urban economic renewal. With annual museum visitor numbers of around 1.2 million, the Guggenheim plays a vital role in tourism and the regional economy—an impact widely recognised as "The Bilbao Effect" is both evident and inspiring.



A dramatic fusion of pilgrimage, physical adventure, and popular culture in one unforgettable setting. Inspired by the beauty of this site—visited by many, from St. John the Baptist 2,000 years ago to modern-day fans of the *House of the Dragon* TV series—I created a watercolour painting of the iconic rock formation.

Getaria

A charming coastal town rich in character, where life unfolds slowly amid historic monuments, lively cafés, exquisite seafood, and a unique museum dedicated to the master couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga. Nearby, the Sarantz Photomuseum proved a delightful discovery. Moved by the charm of the old streets, I composed a poem.

STREETS of GETARIA

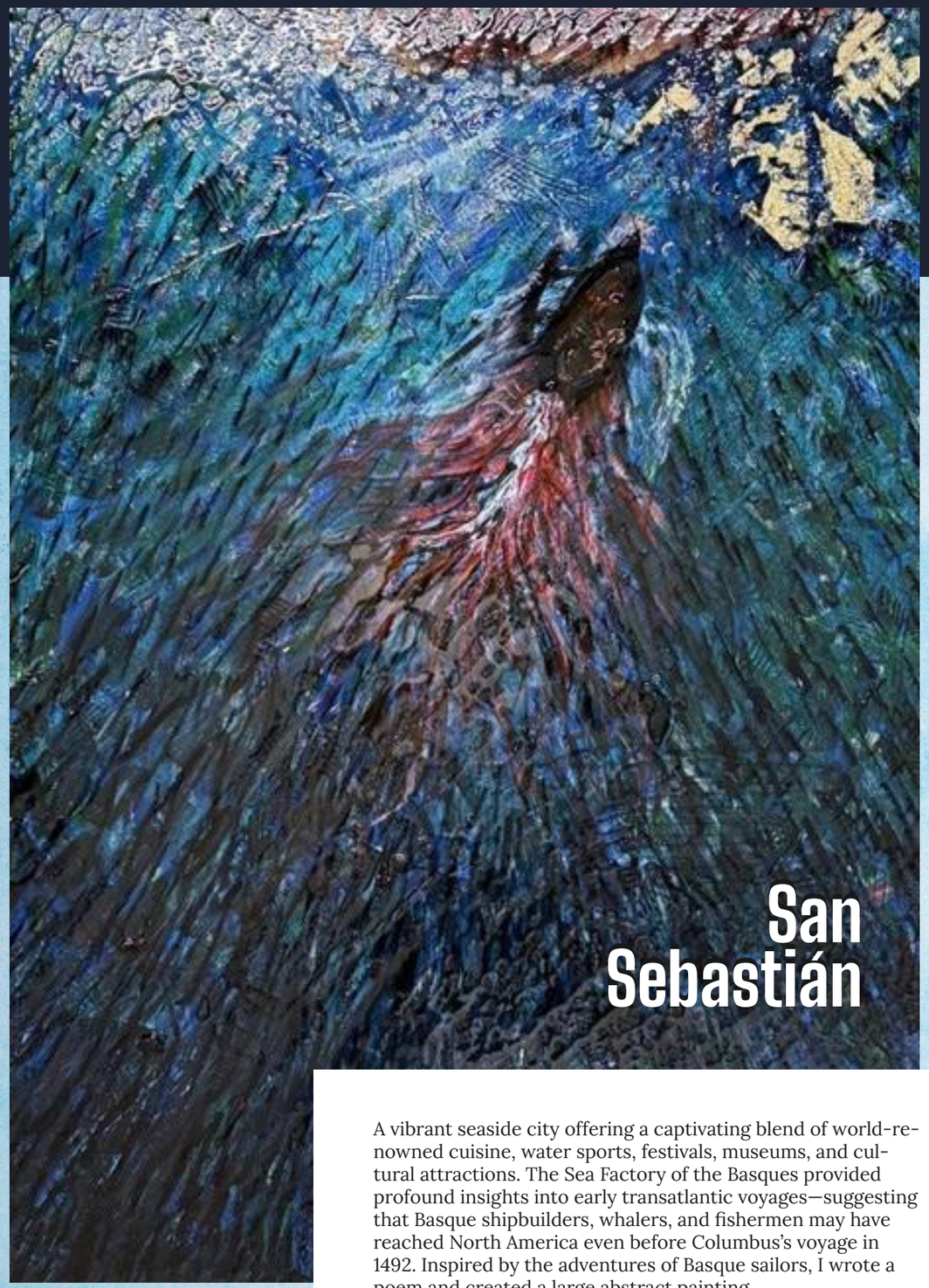
A small medieval town by the sea
Standing tall, a proud statue of Elkano
The explorer gazes towards the vast ocean
He conquered six centuries ago...

Through narrow lanes, I wandered with joy
Charm, style, the maritime soul of the Basque people
Seafood feasts and culinary delights on display
Others in my group still roaming
Surfing, scaling the famous Mouse Hill
Shopping, exploring every hidden corner of Getaria.

Rain returns, mist veils the mountain tops
Sea getting rough, waves covering sandy beaches
I pause - needing time to reflect, to paint, to write
At an old hotel room, I find my space and calm
While sipping a bubbly glass of Txakoli
Fruity, dry, gently sparkling, utterly refreshing.

I glance at the beautiful street below
No cars, no noise - only the soft patter of drizzle
Whispering on stones laid centuries ago
The rain finally decides to cease; I step out again.

And there - I fell in love once more
With Getaria's charming, time worn streets
I stop to slowly gaze in and around an old church
The bells ring out at the Church of San Salvador
An impressive Gothic building, now a national monument of Spain
Reminding the devotees that someone was once called:
"The Saviour of the World".



San Sebastián

A vibrant seaside city offering a captivating blend of world-renowned cuisine, water sports, festivals, museums, and cultural attractions. The Sea Factory of the Basques provided profound insights into early transatlantic voyages—suggesting that Basque shipbuilders, whalers, and fishermen may have reached North America even before Columbus's voyage in 1492. Inspired by the adventures of Basque sailors, I wrote a poem and created a large abstract painting.

TOWARDS THE UNKNOWN...

Long before Columbus set sail,
They reached the so-called 'New World'
With bold new ships, forged by hand,
Chasing dreams of fortune untold.

In early transatlantic quests,
Basque whalers and cod fishers braved
Storms, shipwrecks, and cruel fate,
Months at sea, their lives at stake.

From the Bay of Biscay they departed,
With maritime courage, leaving swirling hues of blue,
To face the Atlantic's turbulent waves.
The ocean, both their path and identity.

They anchored a legacy of grit and sea,
Of daring journeys that came to define
The rhythm of Basque coastal life,
A tale of heroism... or just greed?

They reached strange shores,
Unknowing what lay ahead,
Might they share the fate of the fish they pursued?
Would the hunters become the hunted instead?

Guernica Peace Museum

A profoundly moving experience. The curators' powerful narrative techniques vividly conveyed the horrors of 26 April 1937. I left haunted by one question: How can Hitler, Mussolini and Franco inflict such unimaginable cruelty on fellow human beings? I later produced a small reflective painting inspired by Picasso's iconic anti-war masterpiece Guernica (1937). masterpiece Guernica (1937).

A fitting conclusion to the journey, with its stunning beachfront and proximity to Portugalete, home to the world's first transporter bridge—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The 19th annual GetxoPhoto Festival provided the perfect icing on the cake, offering a feast of visual storytelling and critical reflection.

Getxo

Creative Research Assignment

As part of my post-trip assignments, I created a series of five paintings—collages on canvas completed in acrylic and pen, with a total combined dimension of 2 feet by 10 feet. The following artist's statement accompanied the series:

Basque Myths (green)

This work channels the deep spiritual roots of Basque heritage. At its centre stands Mari, the earth goddess, radiating primal energy through swirling greens. Surrounding her are sacred sites such as Gaztelugatxeko Doniene and the iconic Basque Cross—symbols of nature-bound belief and cultural pride. Elkano's historic voyages evoke maritime mythology, celebrating the sacred origins and enduring spirit of the Basque people.

Basque Sailing (blue)

This work pays homage to the Basque maritime legacy, where the ocean is both pathway and identity. Centred on a stylised ship, the canvas reflects traditions of shipbuilding, whaling, cod fishing, and Elkano's global circumnavigation. The fierce Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay surge in hues of blue, anchoring a legacy of seafaring resilience and discovery that has shaped Basque coastal life for centuries.

Basque Culture (yellow)

Radiating from the symbolic Basque Sunflower, this work pulses with living traditions. Medieval churches, old towns, and bustling streets mingle with the aromas of pintxos, cider, and txakoli. Festivals, folk music, sports, and contemporary arts animate daily life. Joyful and proud, the Basque cultural spirit endures—deeply rooted yet ever expressive.

Basque Resilience (red)

This painting reflects the indomitable will of the Basque people. The Tree of Guernica and the trauma of the 1937 bombing—immortalised by Picasso—anchor a narrative of endurance. Red, green, and white, echoing the Ikurriña flag, symbolise a resilient identity that rises undiminished through political struggle and cultural perseverance.

Basque Innovation (silver)

This work celebrates transformation—from industrial grit to global recognition. Basque cities such as Bilbao now gleam with bold architecture, contemporary design, and avantgarde cuisine. The Guggenheim Museum and the Bizkaia Bridge embody this creative reinvention, where past and future converge, and tradition evolves into innovation.

A heartfelt thank you to Professor Amy Friend for guiding us in Spain and awarding me an A+ grade for this full-credit course!

Dr. Chandana (Chandi) Jayawardena DPhil
President – Chandi J. Associates Inc. Consulting, Canada
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

The Rise of LGBTQ+ Friendly Travel

Travelling should be about exploring the world without hiding who you truly are. With diverse sexualities and identities, travel should offer everyone the equal right to explore the world freely without fear or limitation. A world where every sexuality is respected and accepted becomes a better place to travel, especially with the rise of LGBTQ+ friendly travel.

LGBTQ+ travel involves visiting destinations, staying at accommodations, and using services that are safe, inclusive, and welcoming for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations. It is a form of travel for those who do not conform to traditional heteronormative gender and sexual roles, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals, as well as those who are questioning or exploring their identity.

Today, LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance are growing more than ever, as society begins to truly value the authenticity of each person's identity and way of life. This is why we can see that the number of people in this community today has increased compared to the past. With that increase, some countries saw the potential of a niche tourist market to generate income by branding themselves as LGBTQ+ friendly. According to ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map, countries such as Malta, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Greece, and Germany rank among the most LGBTQ+ friendly destinations in 2025, both in terms of legislation and public opinion. Being LGBTQ+ friendly gives these countries a competitive advantage when promoting their countries as tourist destinations. Famous cities like New York, Berlin, and Sydney experience a surge in LGBTQ+ travel every year, particularly during Pride Month, with increased hotel bookings, flights, and tourism activities that benefit the local economy. Primarily focusing on the entertainment aspect, European and American cities hosted major international LGBTQ+ music festivals, including the Circuit Festival in Barcelona, the World Pride Music Festival in Washington, D.C., the OUTLOUD Music Festival in West Hollywood, and Mighty Hoopla in London, attracting a large number of travellers annually around the world.

LGBTQ+ travellers spend a considerable amount of money on tourism. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) estimate it to be worth over $200 billion annually (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). This is because most of them are DINKs (Double Income, No Kids), which means they have more disposable income to spend on things like fashion, luxury hotels, and travel experiences. Although the LGBTQ+ travel market is significant, certain countries overlook its potential, including Sri Lanka. The primary reason is that attracting these travellers is not as straightforward as attracting tourists from the traditional travel sector. Prejudiced attitudes and cultural barriers largely discourage inclusivity, and this must change first. In Sri Lanka, as a developing country, this challenge is more visible, as the mindset of the majority has not fully settled to accept LGBTQ+ travellers. This was evident during the first Public Pride march held in Colombo, where the LGBTQ+ community faced criticism and dishonour on social media. Additionally, the lack of proper laws concerning this community makes the destination less appealing due to safety concerns. Yet, Sri Lanka, a country with no regulations or campaigns promoting LGBTQ+ rights, still receives several LGBTQ+ travellers without officially recognising them as such.

If a country wants to promote LGBTQ+ tourism, it must become genuinely inclusive first. Inclusivity is about embracing all forms of diversity without exception. It requires the involvement of everyone in tourism, such as hotel staff, restaurant owners, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, and even residents. This can be done through training sessions, workshops, or communication materials. Moreover, it should also be practised throughout the year, not just during Pride Month, by understanding the needs of different LGBTQ+ travellers and creating experiences that make them feel safe and valued. Hosting inclusive events year-round not only strengthens a destination's reputation but also helps attract visitors during low seasons, making inclusivity both an ethical and economic advantage. Also, LGBTQ+ travellers can easily recognise when inclusivity is used merely as a marketing tool. This is known as pinkwashing or rainbow washing, where symbols like rainbow flags are displayed without actually supporting the community in real life. This must be stopped. True inclusivity means having real policies and continuous efforts, like staff training, diverse marketing campaigns, and inclusive hiring.

When LGBTQ+ people travel, it increases visibility and understanding across cultures, helping to challenge stereotypes and build acceptance. We should let people embrace their real identity without being homophobic. By removing limitations and creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces, countries can open their doors to a future where the colours of identity shine brightly across every corner of the globe.

References

- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2023, June 19). Travelling with Pride. WTTC.

Dumindu Wickramasinghe

The Hidden Legend of Sri Lanka's Robin Hood: Secrets of Uthuwan Kanda

On the misty hilltops of Mawanella, the story of a hero lives on, his life still wrapped in mystery. Long ago, during the difficult years of British colonial rule, he became a saviour to the poor and a feared outlaw to the wealthy. The British called him the "Black Robin Hood of Ceylon", but for the common people, he was nothing less than their protector. The narrative of Suura Saradiel of Uthuwan Kanda remains, part truth, part myth, echoing through time.

The story begins in the 1830s, when Saradiel was born as the eldest son of *Aadasi Appu* and *Pecho Hami*. Adasi Appu came from the distinguished lineage of *Jayamaha Mudali Dikiri Kavage* of the ancient Kotte Kingdom, while his wife, the daughter of a local coffee shop owner, was from a humble family in Uthuwan Kanda.

Tragedy struck early in Saradiel's life with the death of his father, leaving the family in deep financial hardship. As the eldest, young Saradiel had to shoulder the weight of family responsibilities well before his time. Although his family was once connected to aristocratic lineages, no help was offered to them in their struggle. This neglect planted the first seeds of resentment in Saradiel's heart toward the privileged classes. His sense of injustice deepened during his school years when he was often mocked and bullied by children of the aristocracy. After an incident where he struck down a child of the local elite, Saradiel was imprisoned for the first time. From that moment, his name began to echo as that of an outlaw. Later, after a quarrel with the village headman and witnessing the relentless suffering of the poor and innocent people of his village, Saradiel chose a different path.

Along with his trusted friend *Marikkar*, who had military experience and strengthened by the weapons training he had received at the Rifle Barracks in Colombo, he rose to defend the common folk of his homeland. By plundering the possessions of the British Crown, he was branded a traitor by the colonial rulers. Repeated clashes with the crown continued until betrayal from within his own kin led to his downfall. With his location revealed, police laid an ambush and opened fire. Wounded, Saradiel was captured and later executed by hanging at Bogambara prison on May 7, 1864. Nonetheless, even in death, his strength was undeniable. The British Crown remembered him as a true Sinhala warrior, for he faced his fate with unshakable courage until his final moments, standing not just as a bandit, but as something far greater.

Once a rugged hideout, Uthuwan Kanda has now transformed into a unique local tourist destination, forever tied to Saradiel's memory. At Saradiel Village, visitors step back in time to witness the milestones of his remarkable journey, from his humble birth to his daring daily life, and ultimately, his heroic end. Blending history with hospitality, the village today welcomes travellers with hotel stays, wedding venues, and restaurants, creating a space where his memory lives on, not just as history, but as an experience.

As the sun rises over the mountain, it shines with gold, and the morning mist drifts through the valleys. In that quiet moment, it feels as if Saradiel himself still stands there, proud and fearless, watching over his land. Was he a criminal, a hero, or a rebel? The answer depends on who tells the story. But one thing is certain: Saradiel was not just an ordinary man; he became immortal in the hearts of his people. His fight against the British Empire continues to inspire Sri Lankans today. Even now, villagers say that when the wind moves through the caves of Uthuwan Kanda, it carries the echo of the Black Robin Hood of Sri Lanka, forever free in the shadows.

Chalani Senarathne
Tharindi Umasha
Naduni Wickramasinghe

Nine Steps to Becoming a Responsible Traveller

Responsible tourism has become a positive trend in travelling. It is merely no longer the sun, sand and sea type of tourism. It has inspired people to embark on a journey that will leave minimum or zero negative impacts to the destination at large. The UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, stated that "economic prosperity, social inclusion, peace and understanding, cultural and environmental preservation" are among the pivotal ingredients for a sustainable tourism industry. Nevertheless, as tourist activity increases, more unacceptable deteriorations can be constructed from different sources, mostly threatening local communities.

Imagine travelling to a rural or slum area, bringing pure intention to elevate the lives of those in need, without realising that every step of helping is actually damaging their lives. Imagine sharing a photo of the poorest district in a country on social media and unintentionally promoting *poor tourism*, or some would say *poorism*, as a *new* kind of tourism attraction without actually helping the poor. Therefore, identifying the channel to 'making better places for people to live and better places for people to visit' is actually what responsible tourism is striving for.

Responsible tourism should begin from within an individual. Making an effort to understand the characteristics of a responsible traveller is fundamental. To become a responsible traveller, a small amount of sensitivity, fair judgment, smart planning, and a set of considerations are all that is needed. Let's explore the nine steps to becoming a responsible traveller.

1. Bring together good intentions

First things first! You need to have a good intention when travelling. Well, at least not to bring any harm to the place you visited. Psychologists believe that food tastes better, pain hurts less, and pleasure is more enjoyable when it comes with good intentions. Thus, whenever you travel, bring good intentions with you!

2. Do research

Ensure that you have researched the company you choose to sign up with for any trip. Pick tour agencies that participate with local communities, employ local staff, have policies like 'leave no trace', and, most importantly, are highly concerned about the changes that they bring to nature, culture, and heritage, as well as the authenticity of local people's lives.

3. Give a portion of time for volunteering

When travelling, make an effort to allocate some of your time to worthwhile causes, such as helping locals, cheering on local kids, and purchasing local groceries, among other things. Even though you are an unskilled traveller, if you have specific skills, such as experience in health and medical care, an engineering background, or social care services, you can always put your effort to good use.

4. Green alternatives

Sustainable efforts have been part of the tourism industry for many years now. When booking an accommodation or lodging, choose a place that promotes recycling, waste diversion, the use of renewable energy, and shows a commitment to controlling carbon emissions. Hotels could utilise alternative energy sources, such as solar power, to conserve energy and minimise their negative environmental impact.

5. Respect local culture, tradition and customs

Prepare yourself with at least a basic understanding of the local culture, its traditions and customs, and be aware of the do's and don'ts when engaging with them. Read about the locals before you arrive, learn basic local language and behave accordingly. In places where religion is highly practised, check out the dress you should not wear or the language that you should not speak. It is important that we show respect to locals when we travel.

6. Minimise bottled water

Drinking plenty of water when travelling is crucial; however, consuming it from a plastic water bottle every day may harm both the environment and your health. Plastic debris has the potential to injure and poison wildlife, and it is not biodegradable. Therefore, always go for a far greener option by bringing a reusable bottle or cup or choose eco-friendly bottled water.

7. Support the local economy

The local economy will definitely help local people. You can support local businesses through buying local souvenirs, local crafts, watching local cultural performances, eating from local restaurants, visiting local stores, staying at accommodations owned by the local (homestay, B&B, Airbnb), hiring local people directly, investing in small businesses and entrepreneurs, or even attending community events rather than engaging with international restaurant and hotel chains.

8. Travel overland

Instead of travelling by car or aeroplane, you can reduce your carbon footprint by using overland transportation, public transport, or carpooling. Whenever possible, always take the opportunity to walk or bike, not only to minimise environmental impact but also to get a better picture or view of the places you visit. If you must drive, avoid unnecessary braking and acceleration, and if you must fly, avoid flying on shorter trips.

9. Visit sites of national significance

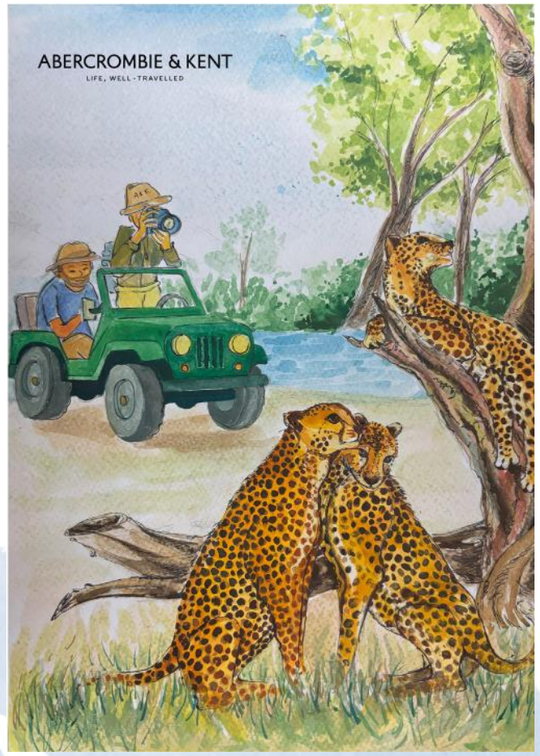
Show some support to the locals' efforts to preserve and maintain their natural and cultural heritage by visiting sites that focus on conservation and education. You may be involved in learning local culture, language, craft, and arts.

Spread the word. Educate others to be responsible travellers. It might someday become normalised.

Raja Norliana Raja Omar
Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Eni Noreni Mohamad Zain, *PhD*
Lecturer
Faculty of Entrepreneurship & Business
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Shah Iskandar Fahmie Ramlee, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Entrepreneurship & Business
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan



Philanthropically unified luxury tourism

Geoffrey Kent, founder of Abercrombie & Kent, stated, "Shoot with a camera and not with a gun." He believes that nothing influences a person more than the people they've loved and the places they've explored. Inspired by this philosophy, A&K redefines luxury travel, which also includes safaris in Sri Lanka's wild heart, where each click captures beauty, not harm, blending luxury, conservation, and deep respect for wildlife to enable guests to enjoy their holiday with loved ones.

The Rainbow of Las Palmitas

There are moments in life when we all silently struggle. Help may arrive, but it often feels heavy, almost intrusive. Yet, what feels unsettling at the moment often turns out to be something quiet, lasting, and transformative. One such story is in Las Palmitas, a hillside community once shadowed by hardship and despair. To uplift the spirit of the area, the Mexican government started a project that brought artists and residents together to paint murals across the neighbourhood. To outsiders, it seemed ordinary, but it touched something much deeper inside. What appeared to be simple strokes of paint became a symbol of renewal. It was not just painted walls; it was a promise that beauty could rise even from brokenness.

Our surroundings influence our hearts. An environment filled with suffering breeds fear, cruelty, and emptiness. But in bright places by a blue waterfall, on a green field, or beneath white clouds, the soul finds calm. In Las Palmitas, the hearts of these people began to soften and fall in love. Neighbours gathered, stories were exchanged, and laughter returned to the streets. Burdens felt lighter as the internal silence gave way to gentle calm.

This story is not just about one hillside or one project. It is about how even the smallest gesture, a painted wall, a planted tree, a kind word, can ripple outward, reaching farther than we expect. The rainbow across Las Palmitas was never painted on walls. It became a quiet reminder that beauty, once allowed to take root, can heal the soul and transform lives in both gentle and profound ways.

Piyumindya Senarathne

LEARNING BEYOND BORDERS

This year, the University of Education Karlsruhe from Germany chose Sri Lanka as the destination for its main geography field excursion. From April 21st to May 2nd, a group of 16 students and their lecturer travelled across the island, remarkable for its diversity in landscapes, culture, and history.

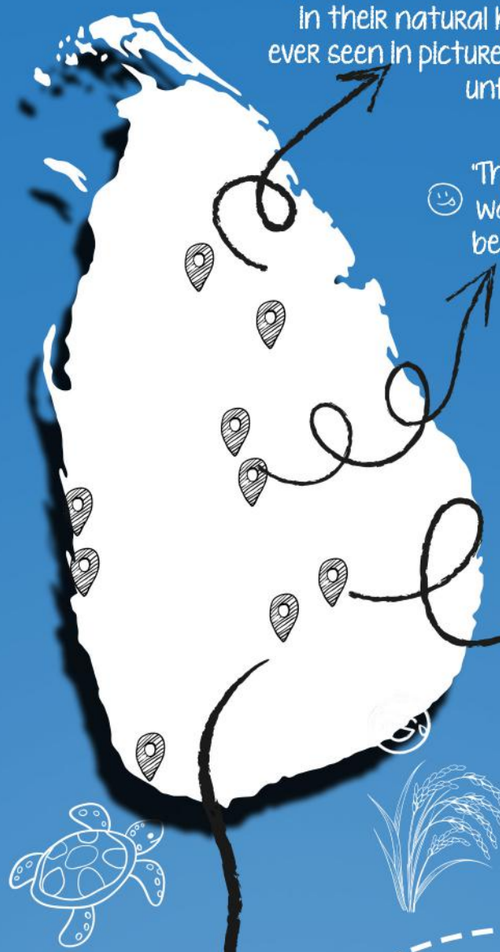
Highlights included the ancient royal cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, where the group studied the interplay of religion, culture, and urban planning, as well as encounters with modern agriculture at CIC Agro Farm and wild elephants in Minneriya National Park. They climbed Sigiriya, visited schools, and travelled through the tea-covered highlands to Kandy, arriving during the rare public display of the Buddha relic at the Temple of the Tooth. During an overnight stay in a Buddhist monastery, visitors were given insights into Buddhist life.

A central focus of the journey was the visit to Sabaragamuwa University, where German and Sri Lankan students met for a vibrant exchange. Together, they celebrated the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, joined campus activities, and shared an evening barbecue, fostering lasting connections and a deeper understanding of each other's cultures.

The trip concluded along the south coast with visits to Galle, Unawatuna, a turtle conservation project, and a mangrove planting activity, before ending in Colombo. The students returned to Germany with not only vivid memories of Sri Lanka's beauty but also strengthened bonds of friendship and academic collaboration.

Sarah Owtscharenko
Laura Werrer
Karlsruhe University, Germany

Sri Lanka in one word – impressions from the excursion group



"One of the most impressive experiences for me was the safari. Seeing so many wild animals in their natural habitat, animals I had only ever seen in pictures or videos before, was truly unforgettable."

"The day in Kandy was surreal. Like being in a parallel world."

"Meeting and singing with the students from Sabaragamuwa University let me believe that we're really alike."

"The night in the temple was unforgettable!"

"There were so many beautiful impressions: the wonderful views of the rice fields, the strong spirituality and religious diversity in the country, the friendly people who always smile at you, bathing with the turtles."

Exchanges and encounters at Sabaragamuwa University

"It was great. Thank you so much for letting us experience your culture first hand, which is partly similar to ours („tug of war" or „musical chairs") and partly new for us (the cry and laugh game)."

"One similarity that stood out to me was the shared love for music. Just like in Germany, music in Sri Lanka plays an important role in bringing people together."

STUDENT STATEMENT

"I would love to teach about Sigiriya. It's a fascinating example of how humans have adapted to and shaped their natural environment."

"I would talk about our visit to a school."

"I would teach about the tsunami in 2004."

"I would teach about the impact of tourism on such a wonderful, culturally rich country; both its positive and negative aspects should not be underestimated."

"I would teach about the island's landscape and its geological structure."

Sri Lanka in German classrooms

"We got to know new friends from Sabaragamuwa University. On our visit, we had a wonderful time, enjoyed a great barbecue, and learned to love singing Sri Lankan songs. Thank you so much!"

"They were so welcoming. We had such a fun evening with good music!"

"Seeing so many different facets of a country. No presentation could replace this experience!"

"The exchange among each other, as well as with the locals. The visit to the country gave me confidence to approach people openly."

"I learned how geography is lived and experienced daily, from agriculture to the impact of tourism in Ella. Seeing these dynamics in action gave me an understanding that theory could never provide."

Excursion

Whenever I stand by the sea, it feels as though I am standing before one of nature's greatest wonders. The water is never just water; it feels alive, shifting and sighing as if it shares its moods with the world. The waves rise and fall in a steady rhythm, carrying me into thoughts of life itself with its highs and lows, its joys and challenges, always moving forward, never stopping. At the edge of the horizon, where the sea leans into the sky, I feel curiosity stirring, a quiet pull toward the unknown. Sunrise paints the water in strokes of gold, amber, and sapphire, as though the sun keeps its own brush just for the ocean. Beneath that shimmering surface, silver fish dart like quick sparks, and corals sway in slow, graceful dances, reminding me of the hidden worlds just out of sight. The breeze drifts over my face, salty and soft, while seabirds call faintly from a distance, stitching sound into the moment. Each time I stand here, I realise that the sea's beauty is not only in what the eyes catch but also in what the heart feels. To truly know it, one must be willing to open both heart and mind to its wonder and unpredictability.

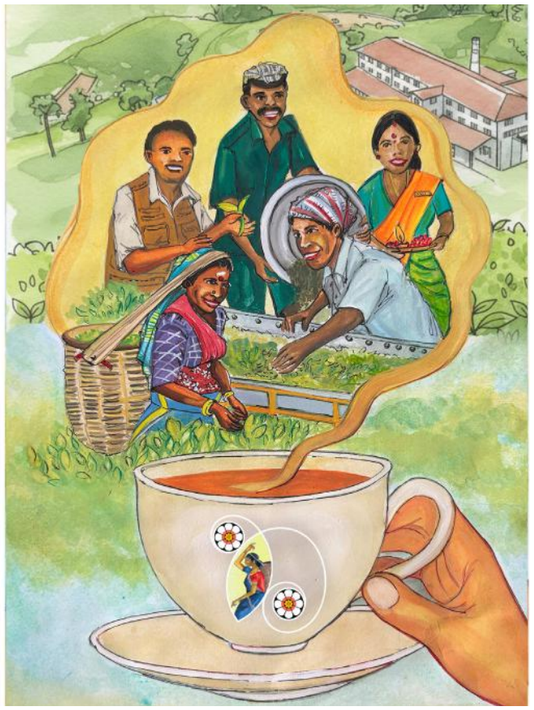
In the morning, the sand wakes early. It is cool and tight as if the night stitched it together with a fine thread. My feet press into it, and the edges hold their shape for a few seconds, neatly cut like fresh cake. I love that patience the way morning sand lets me write my name, draw a crooked sun, build a low wall to dare the tide. In those hours, tiny shells lie face up, crab tracks like handwriting, a feather sunk like a bookmark, the delicate stitch where a turtle dragged herself higher in the dark. I tiptoe, feeling the ground breathe under me. The sand smells faintly like salt, and even the breeze seems to skim across it as though it does not want to disturb the page.

By noon, the sand becomes an oven. Each grain seems to throb with heat, forcing me to hop between the shadows of coconut palms. It squeaks underfoot, pricks my heels, and dares me to slow down. I dig my toes a little deeper, where the layers are cooler, old grains softened by tides, old shells worn smooth. A handful slips away like a pale waterfall, no two grains alike: some sharp, some sweet as sugar. I see why castles crumble, and still, we build them. The sand calls to mind that the joy lies not in keeping, but in shaping, before it takes everything back with certainty, not cruelty. People say the sea is the great keeper of secrets, and the sky is the great witness. Maybe that is true. But I believe the sand is the translator between them. It patiently softens thunder into gentle edges, shapes storms into new curves, and turns our fleeting human moments into delicate, lasting marks.
On the edge of the peaceful shore, where sands whisper ancient secrets, I wonder if my eyes are looking at the sea or the sky dressed in sea clothes. The horizon shimmers like a silk ribbon embroidered by Heaven's hand, and at times it appears that the sky bends down to cradle the waves, while at others the water rises to embrace the heavens. Dawn spreads its golden light like a dragon gliding through folds of blue silk, while the waves dance as if guided by the sky. In these early hours, the landscape blurs, making it impossible to tell where the water ends and the sky begins, as if they are hidden lovers caught in each other's mirror.

By sunset, the sky had poured its purple grief into the ocean, colouring it in melancholy hues. If I lean close to the waves, I cannot tell if I am touching the sea or the sky's reflection. Night falls, and stars scatter like jade pearls on a black scroll, as the half-moon rises, spilling silver floods into my chest. In these moments, the sky runs through me as certainly as the sea, and I am carried by the sweet, unseen love that connects water and air, horizon and heart.

Perhaps the sea and sky belong solely to each other. They are mirrors that change with each breath of time, sometimes serene, sometimes wild, but always embracing. I stand barefoot on the beach, my spirit floating like a lone cloud, allowing the sea and sky to write their stories on me, a story of reflection, longing, and the peaceful, timeless love that keeps the world in its tides.

Ayodhya Jayathilaka
Parami Gamage
Samuduni Rathnayaka



Every sip carries their heritage

Tea & Experience Factory, housed within one of Sri Lanka's oldest functioning tea factories, offers a rare blend of heritage and hospitality. As the factory continues its original tea-making operations, guests are invited to experience rustic charm and slow living—while witnessing the timeless journey of Ceylon tea from leaf to cup.

Learning without boundaries: Education happens everywhere

Geography teachers must be very well-trained

Here in Karlsruhe, my university offers many different study programs. However, most students aim to teach at a primary school or a general/secondary school after completing pedagogical college. In my field, geography, this is no different. It requires not only fundamental subject knowledge across different subfields, but also a deep understanding of *how* to convey and impart this knowledge to students. Often, it is especially difficult here to distil the subject knowledge to reveal exactly the insights that students can process and should process in order to develop a deeper understanding of what enables a fulfilled and happy life in all its facets. On this basis, knowledge can be applied to future professions, but also basic knowledge about the planet, the lives of people in different countries, and the impact of human action to build a sustainable future for all.

Thus, teachers impart knowledge, the connections and systems of knowledge, and also methods for acquiring knowledge and skills—personal, social, and methodological. They are role models, showing paths that young people can take to develop further. To this end, teachers sometimes deliberately use media to convey planned instructional content, but very often they also convey content through their demeanour and their personality.

> ***"The best education a clever person can find is while travelling."***
>
> ——— ***Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe***

Why we travel

In my opinion, well-rounded, educated persons can best emerge when they travel. Every journey broadens the personal horizon more than any literature or narrative, because only then do processes of the Earth's surface, foreign cultures, and the dynamics of people become tangible. The effects of global phenomena such as climate change, as well as economic processes like the impacts of worldwide globalisation, can be recognised and understood. Together with research and literature, and motivation through real encounters during a journey, this creates a profound insight.

Most people in Germany are familiar with the well-known Ceylon tea. In daily life, it may simply be seen as a pleasant beverage. Only through understanding the living conditions and working conditions of the tea pickers, and the processing steps in a tea factory, does a more complete picture emerge, multifacetedly making the matter of *tea* more just. The consequence is that enjoying tea from Sri Lanka for a tourist in Sri Lanka may take on a different meaning later in life.

Travelling is important to teachers of the future because this holistic knowledge can be made available to students. And here it continues, because the teacher as a role model can convey curiosity and a thirst for knowledge about the real world. Students will not want to forego travelling as a means of acquiring competencies and holistic knowledge in their further lives. They will do as their trusted people do and then gain a view of all the values and content mentioned above themselves, but up to the latest standards. They

begin to sense and reflect on connections; they also view themselves and their own country of origin more critically, and through comparison, they can contribute constructive ideas. More personal attitudes will find a large development through travelling: tolerance and respect, for example.

In Germany, eating is usually done with cutlery; in Sri Lanka, people use their hands. What is the right way? Those who leave their homeland and try another way of eating can truly recognise that both paths can lead to the goal, and neither should be rejected.

The traveller as an ambassador

Of course, travelling also has negative moments. Reports of overtourism circulate; too many tourists disrupt the ecological balance of many regions around the world. In addition to pure thirst for knowledge, there are many other reasons people travel: They seek recreation, relaxation, and fun. But people experience these differently. The consequences are evident. Cultural upheavals, fun at the expense of the local population, and disrupted economic cycles can arise. The values and social fabric of the host country can fall out of balance, leading to dissatisfaction and even a rise in crimes. The solution is expected from the host country's politics. More rules and regulations, as well as a well-trained police force for implementation and handling, can help. But isn't there a need for an education of travellers in their home countries? Merely portraying travelling in schools and universities as something enriching is not enough, because the already stated positive effects are of an egoistic nature. Knowledge gain and the learning of competences must not be reserved for the traveller alone; rather, travel should be an exchange of people, everyone should be able to express their needs, but only within an acceptable frame. This requires that travellers generally see themselves as ambassadors of their home country, but also live by values such as tolerance and acceptance. Ambassador, in this context, does not mean that individual values and personal cultural practices should be lived out, but rather that one should adapt to the host country. Especially, people from humanist-leaning democracies should live democratic and humanistic values through acceptance and tolerance. Educational institutions, especially the social science disciplines, and thus geography as well, are expected to take on this duty. We teachers of these disciplines, whether in primary schools or secondary schools, must also teach travelling with appreciation.

Tourism Management and Teacher Education: Two unequal siblings?

It quickly becomes clear how much common ground there is between studying for a teaching profession and studying a tourism field. Tourism Management, in particular, shows many parallels. Just as a good lesson must be planned and thought through in its complexity, so must a tourist offer be designed. Since I am not in the field, I can only imagine the diversity to some extent. Yet I also see here a great potential to shape tourism in the host country sustainably, without neglecting the needs of travellers and without endangering ecological, economic, political, and social dimensions. It would be even more successful if travellers were aware of their role and impact, meaning that education in their home countries has also contributed to the outcome; then tourism can be a great engine to promote prosperity and sustainability, ecological balance, conservation, and cultural integrity.

Markus Igel
Lecturer
University of Education
Karlsruhe, Germany

The Kaleidoscope of Sri Lanka Tourism

Tourism is not only a journey of discovery but also a journey of colours and symbols. Every destination offers its own palette, blending natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and lived traditions into a vibrant kaleidoscope. For Sri Lanka, the *Island of Serendipity*, these colours and symbols are far more than aesthetic. They embody centuries of history, spirituality, and resilience, painting a portrait of a nation that welcomes the world with open arms.

Golden Sands and Blue Horizons: The initial impression for many visitors begins along the coastline, where miles of golden beaches shimmer under a tropical sun while the Indian Ocean extends in deep blues beyond. Together, gold and blue form Sri Lanka's opening strokes on the canvas of tourism, symbolising leisure, warmth, and escape. Year after year, beach lovers describe their visits not just as holidays, but as immersions into this elemental contrast of sand and sea.

The Green Heart of the Island: Beyond the beaches lies Sri Lanka's emerald interior, a patchwork of rice fields, moss-draped ruins, and the misty highlands of Nuwara Eliya and Ella. The undulating tea estates, pruned with geometric precision, resemble brushstrokes of a giant artist. Here, green symbolises fertility, abundance, and sustainability. For many tourists, the act of sipping Ceylon tea in its place of origin is more than refreshment; it is a symbolic communion with landscapes that shaped colonial history and continue to shape global trade.

Sacred Saffron and Yellow: Religion and spirituality infuse another dimension into this kaleidoscope. The saffron and yellow robes of Buddhist monks, encountered in temples from Mihintale to Kandy's Temple of the Tooth, radiate wisdom, compassion, and simplicity. For visitors, the enduring image of monks moving in silence through ancient courtyards often becomes the dominant colour of their memory, anchoring their experience in the spiritual fabric of Sri Lanka.

Red Earth and Ancient Symbols: In the Cultural Triangle — Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, and Kandy — the palette shifts to earthy reds and ochres. The baked bricks of stupas, terracotta pottery, and laterite soil speak to the endurance of civilisations. Symbols carved into stone lotus flowers symbolising purity, moonstones narrating the cycle of life, offer a lexicon of heritage. At Sigiriya, the iconic frescoes of celestial maidens, painted in vivid reds, yellows, and ochres 1,500 years ago, continue to mesmerise, their colours still alive with sensuality and grace.

Festivals - Multicoloured Celebrations of Unity: Sri Lanka's multiculturalism ensures that the kaleidoscope is always in motion. During Vesak, lanterns glow in gentle pastels across every street corner. Thai Pongal fills Hindu temples with reds and greens. Christian feasts bring processions of blue and white, while Muslim festivals add their own crescents and stars. The grand Esala Perahera in Kandy, Asia's most spectacular pageant, is a symphony of saffron, gold, and crimson: caparisoned elephants, fire dancers, and sacred relics borne in golden caskets. These festivals are not only spectacles of colour but also symbols of unity in diversity, where tourists often discover hospitality through shared meals, lantern-lit streets, and spontaneous conversations with strangers.

Wellness and Spiritual Hues: Sri Lanka's wellness tourism adds another shade to the spectrum. Ayurveda resorts use the greens of herbal leaves, the browns of healing clay, and the gold of fragrant oils to create sanctuaries of renewal. Yoga and meditation retreats, often set in forested sanctuaries like Ulpotha or Nilambe, cultivate simplicity: practitioners dressed in white against a background of forest green; elderly silver tourists; calm blue seas; golden oils; and shaded gardens promise comfort, recovery, and a gentle pace of life.

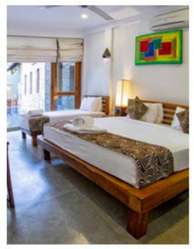
Tourism as a Living Kaleidoscope: What makes Sri Lanka's tourism kaleidoscopic is not only its range of colours and symbols but also the way they shift with each traveller's perspective. To a backpacker, the colours may be the neon lights of Hikkaduwa's nightlife. To a pilgrim, they are saffron robes and temple murals. To a luxury traveller, they are the mahogany interiors of colonial bungalows or the silver cutlery of heritage hotels. Each journey rearranges the fragments into a fresh pattern, yet each remains distinctly Sri Lankan.

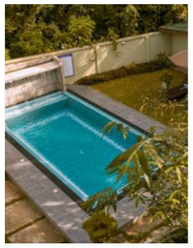
Ultimately, Sri Lanka embodies tourism as a living kaleidoscope. Its golden beaches, emerald highlands, saffron spirituality, red-earth history, and multicoloured festivals together form one breathtaking composition. For travellers, Sri Lanka is not just a destination but a reminder that every journey contains a spectrum of experiences, waiting to be discovered in colour and symbol.

Sarath Munasinghe, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Department of Tourism Management
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Elephant TRAIL

www.elephanttrail.lk



ATHGIRA HOTELS & RESTAURANT

www.hotelathgira.com

Athgira RIVER CAMP

www.athgirarivercamp.com



Athgira Hotels
C.P De Silva Mawatha, Udawalawa, Sri Lanka

+94 76 8 289 353 | +94 47 2 232 275
www.nilukasafari.com | www.athgirahotels.com

The Travel of the Matryoshka Magical Dolls

Tradition, Art, and Symbolism

Throughout cultural history, some creations have fascinated people around the world with their simplicity and charm. One such wonder is the Matryoshka Doll. Though widely believed to be Russian in origin, these charming nesting dolls actually trace their roots back to Japan's traditional Kokeshi Dolls, simple, hand-carved wooden figures with rounded heads and painted bodies. It was this distinctive Japanese artistry that inspired Russian craftsmen in the late 19th century to create the layered wooden figures we now know as Matryoshka.

Now, the dolls have come full circle, beautifully re-entering Japanese culture. In Japan today, they are more than just souvenirs; they are woven into fashion, Kawaii (cute and charming) aesthetics, and modern art. Japanese artists add unique touches like cherry blossoms, anime-inspired styles, and Kokeshi motifs (designs inspired by Kokeshi dolls), blending Russian tradition with Japanese creativity.

These dolls, found in Tokyo's shops and galleries, symbolise not only identity and motherhood but also emotional depth and hidden beauty. Their layered design reminds us that people, like dolls, are more than what meets the eye.

Amandi Abhisheka
Eshani Madhushika

© pexels.com

Cultural tourism management and climate change adaptation: can UNESCO WHS lead the way?

In recent years, climate change has begun to reshape the global tourism landscape. Rising temperatures, rising sea levels, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events not only impact natural ecosystems, but also, as numerous studies have now widely recognised, people's travel choices. For Europe, for example, a 2023 report from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre[1] showed how global warming is already altering tourism demand in Europe: southern coastal regions risk losing increasing numbers of visitors during the summer months in favour of more temperate northern destinations in the coming years.

But the effects of climate change are not limited to beach tourism. As we all know, they are also having a significant impact on mountain tourism, and are also affecting cultural tourism, impacting the accessibility and preservation of the places that constitute its heart: historic cities, monuments, cultural landscapes, and archaeological sites. It's not just about the various conditions of accessibility of sites— a prime example was the Greek authorities' decision to temporarily close the Acropolis in Athens in August 2025 for safety reasons related to an unprecedented heat wave — but also their conservation. Higher temperatures, variations in humidity, erosion, and hydrogeological instability put both material assets and the environmental and social contexts surrounding them at risk, as it is nowadays widely acknowledged by many studies, such as those produced by UNESCO or the EU[2]. And in many cases, these phenomena compound pressures generated by human activity, such as overtourism, worsening the vulnerability of destinations that already struggle to maintain a balance between conservation and economic development.

Precisely for this reason, climate change today represents a dual challenge for cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible: on the one hand, it directly threatens its physical integrity, and on the other, it alters the conditions and behaviours of the tourism that supports it. In this context, conservation choices, valorisation strategies, and tourism policies can no longer be considered separate areas, but rather parts of a single adaptation and resilience strategy.

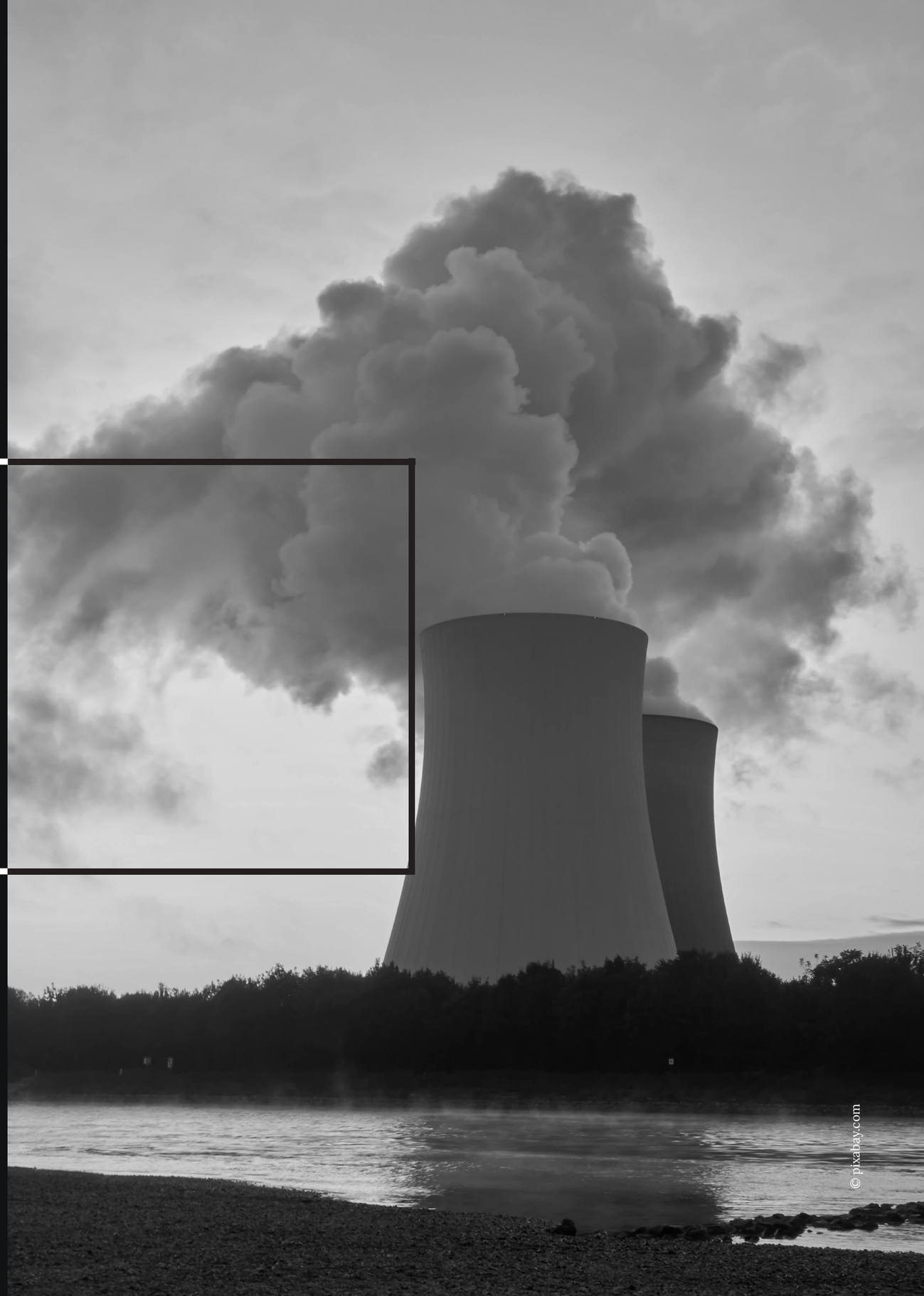
In this framework, a recent study, promoted by the Santagata Foundation for the Economy of Culture, interestingly analysed how Italian UNESCO sites are addressing this challenge. Italy offers indeed a particularly significant case study, specifically regarding its rich heritage inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and considering the pressure of climate change on tourism as recently mapped in the report produced by the Italian National Tourism board ENIT "Tourism Turns Climate-sensitive".[3] With sixty-one sites inscribed on the World Heritage list, the country holds the world record, but these sites are also highly exposed to climate change-related risks. Many of the WH-listed sites are located in fragile environments —from lagoons to coastal areas, from mountains to cities of art—where environmental pressures intertwine with those related to tourism.

Analysing how Italian sites recognise and address the effects of climate change, therefore, means understanding the extent to which UNESCO sites, in Europe and elsewhere, are moving from awareness to action, building integrated management models capable of reconciling protection, sustainability, and tourism attractiveness.

A survey of site managers assessed their awareness of climate risks and the level of concrete action taken to adapt to them. The tool used is the so-called 4C Model (Cultural and Creative Carbon Cut), an approach developed by the Santagata Foundation to assess the sustainability and responsiveness of cultural organisations to the challenges of ecological transition.

The results are clear and, in part, surprising. On the one hand, widespread awareness emerges: almost all sites recognise that they are already affected by the effects of climate change. Changes in rainfall patterns, coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, and extreme events such as fires or floods are concrete, daily experiences for many managers. No one considers the climate crisis a distant risk anymore: it is a phenomenon that is already present, tangible, and that is changing the very management of heritage.

On the other hand, however, the ability to translate this awareness into concrete action is uneven. Sites that do



not suffer from overtourism tend to develop more complex and long-term strategies, investing in energy efficiency, staff training, partnerships with universities and research institutes, and sustainable tourism projects. Sites subject to strong tourism pressures, however, struggle to look to the long term: the day-to-day management of flows and emergencies absorbs energy and resources, leaving less room for strategic planning. Is it perhaps a paradox of overtourism that precisely where public interest is greatest, the capacity to innovate and adapt is reduced?

The problem is not only economic, but also organisational and cultural. The most visited UNESCO sites often have significant financial resources, but their governance is more complex, involving a greater number of public and private stakeholders, and requiring a constant balance between protection needs, international tourism expectations, and local economic interests. This makes it more challenging to introduce structural innovations, such as decarbonisation plans or integrated adaptation strategies.

Where tourist flows are lower, however, management tends to be more flexible. This is the case, for example, of some smaller sites that have launched slow tourism projects—cycling routes, educational initiatives, nature experiences—capable of reducing environmental impact while simultaneously enhancing their heritage in a sustainable way. In these contexts, adapting to climate change is not just a defence measure, but also an opportunity to rethink tourism offerings and build new relationships with the local area and communities.

The Italian research thus suggests a broader reflection. The challenge of climate change for cultural heritage concerns not only the protection of material assets, but also the ability to build new forms of governance and collaboration, also with tourism. The sites that resist best are those where institutions, businesses, and communities are able to work together, integrating landscape protection, tourism planning, and environmental sustainability.

This message has a value that naturally extends beyond the Italian context and is also of direct relevance to other countries rich in heritage and biodiversity, such as Sri Lanka, where UNESCO sites face similar vulnerabilities. The combination of environmental fragility, growing tourism, and limited management resources makes an integrated approach that combines conservation and sustainable development crucial.

The Italian experience demonstrates that the ecological transition in the heritage sector cannot be merely technical, involving adaptation plans or infrastructure interventions, but must also be cultural and participatory. A shift in mindset is needed, leading site managers, institutions, and visitors themselves to recognise that tourism, if poorly managed, can become a threat, but if intelligently directed, it can be a resource for the resilience of places. Visitors, too, have a central role in the transition to more sustainable tourism. Climate change adaptation strategies at cultural and natural sites only work if they actively involve visitors, promoting responsible behaviour. In this sense, many international reports have highlighted the capacity of the cultural sector to promote innovation in climate change adaptation and call to action, while local and global communities of stakeholders.

The lesson that emerges is that the future of heritage—in Italy as elsewhere—will depend on the ability to combine protection and innovation, memory and responsibility. UNESCO sites must not only be symbols of the past, but laboratories for the future, where we can experiment with how culture can contribute to the fight against climate change and to building a more sustainable, conscious, and environmentally responsible tourism.

References

- [1] Matei, N., Garcia Leon, D., Dosio, A., Batista E Silva, F., Ribeiro Barranco, R. and Ciscar Martinez, J.C., (2023). Regional impact of climate change on European tourism demand, EUR 31519 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

- [2] See Markham, A., Osipova, E., Lafrenz Samuels, K. and Caldas, A. (2016). World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, France and Leissner, J., Grady, A., Maraña, M., Baeke, F., & van Cutsem, A. (2022). Strengthening cultural heritage resilience for climate change: Where the European Green Deal meets cultural heritage. Publications Office of the European Union.

- [3] Fondazione Santagata per l'Economia della Cultura ETS & Studio Giaccardi & Associati. (2024). Tourism turns climate-sensitive: What is changing and how to tackle the change. ENIT – Italian National Tourism Agency.

Asst. Prof. Martha Friel
Tourism and Culture Management
Faculty of Arts and Tourism
Department of Humanities Studies
Università IULM, Milan, Italy

© vecteezy.com

Department of Tourism Management

Q&A

Angeline Ondaatjie
Managing Director
Tangerine Tours (Pvt) Ltd

Q ***So firstly, we would love to start by getting to know you a little.***

My background, however, was in engineering. I studied chemical and materials engineering and worked for about five to six years at Phoenix, a leading plastics company in Sri Lanka. In fact, my journey into tourism began because of my father. He entered the industry in 1973. His first project was the Nilaveli Beach Hotel on the East Coast, one of the very first planned hotels in that region. He was very keen for my brothers and me to join the family business. Over time, I transitioned into the hospitality side, eventually heading two properties in the South.

In many ways, it was a natural progression, something in our family's DNA. Although I may have started in engineering, the knowledge I gained is still invaluable in tourism. Hotels, after all, are complex operations, and engineering expertise often comes into play in projects and property management. I truly believe knowledge is a spectrum, and it shouldn't limit us from moving between fields. For me, what began as my father's passion has now become my own, with a focus on respecting nature, showcasing authentic Sri Lankan culture, and creating unique hospitality experiences.

> **"This is an industry where women can thrive."**

Q ***As a female leader in Sri Lanka's tourism sector, how did you overcome the glass ceiling and become an inspiration to other women to pursue leadership in the industry?***

I didn't face many barriers entering the industry, and that's obviously due to my own privilege. I must acknowledge that my entry into the business was relatively smooth. I had the benefit of growing up in a family where the business was already part of our lives. My father started the business, and my mother was very involved from the early days.

I genuinely believe this is an industry where women can thrive. One more thing, I must say, there are very powerful female leaders. For example, Bobby Jordan Hansen, managing director of Columbus Tours, started her career straight out of school. Today, we're seeing more female general managers and female chefs, and they're doing a fantastic job. Traditionally, hotel kitchens were male-dominated, even though in most homes, it is the woman who cooks. But in the hotels, it's always a male chef. We are now proactively encouraging women back into the kitchen.

Nevertheless, when zooming out and looking at the industry as a whole, especially for women starting fresh, there are challenges. Still, we need to be proactive about supporting women in hospitality. Safety, for example, is crucial. We have designed secure living quarters for our female staff who need to stay overnight, and we offer transport for those working late shifts. We also try to accommodate needs around maternity leave and flexible hours. On more rural properties, like Nilaweli, it's a bigger challenge, as women may need to travel 10 miles or more to work. We are always thinking about how to make their environment safer and more supportive, whether that means adjusting shift patterns or providing on-site accommodation. We have made a conscious effort to change that and ensure women feel safe, respected, and empowered in all these spaces.

Q ***As the Managing Director of Tangerine Tours, how do you influence the company's direction in a rapidly changing tourism environment, especially as travellers now seek more meaningful and personalised experiences?***

Tourism began as a simple value proposition. In the 1940s, travellers mostly arrived by ship, stayed at the Grand Oriental Hotel or a few other places. The real numbers grew with the introduction of air travel in the 1960s. Charter traffic became popular, with European tour operators selling package holidays through brochures.

Today, the internet has disrupted this model. Travellers now curate their own journeys, often without the help of travel agents. Still, travel companies remain relevant for booking hotels, purchasing train tickets, and arranging other travel-related services. For example, Tangerine Tours, established in the 1990s, not only promotes its hotels but also markets the entire country.

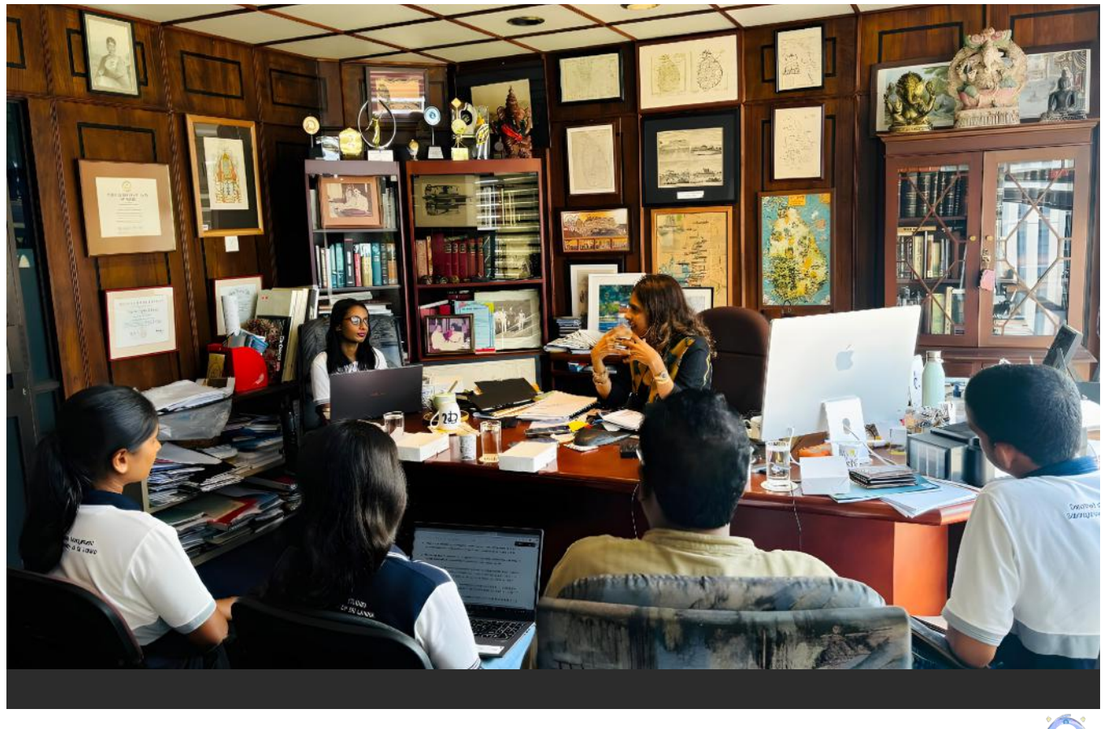
Tourism trends keep shifting. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, China was a major market; however, post-pandemic demand declined. Our China division is currently inactive. At present, India has become a key market, with two distinct segments: budget-conscious travellers seeking short stays and luxury travellers who prefer high-end international brands such as Taj, Hilton, or Marriott.

To stay relevant, travel companies must promote authentic, sustainable experiences and diversify beyond the common Sigiriya, Kandy, Colombo circuit. Sri Lanka has many under-visited destinations that are worth highlighting. At Tangerine Tours, I've been hiring and training young university students in costings and promoting experiential stays, ensuring clients are not misled. Sadly, in some places, tourists are pushed into shopping stops and forced to buy things. Many tours rely on commissions, and costs often depend on that revenue rather than hotel stays. We need to change this.

In short, my role is to inspire my team to showcase Sri Lanka in an authentic and sustainable way. Clients should leave with good memories, not feeling cheated. Then they will return and spread the word. The sad part is that we don't have a proper tourism campaign, even though a large tourism fund remains unused. Until that changes, it's up to us to present Sri Lanka ethically and meaningfully.

Q **What makes Tangerine Hotels distinctive in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry?**

At Tangerine Hotels, our commitment to authenticity is unwavering. Unlike many hotel groups in Sri Lanka that have rebranded or adopted international names, we have chosen to honour our local culture. Our unique features, such as the cascading water garden inspired by the ancient water gardens of Sigiriya, are a testament to this. It's not just about design; it's about our deep respect for nature and our local heritage.



> **"To stay relevant, travel companies must promote authentic, sustainable experiences and diversify beyond the common Sigiriya, Kandy, Colombo circuit."**

In Nilaveli, if there's a tree in the way of expansion, we don't cut it down. Once, we even redrew an entire balcony to save a *Kohomba tree*. Nature needs to be preserved, which is why people come to Nilaveli for its stunning sea, pristine sand, and tropical beauty. Heritage also plays a central role in our story. The Grand Hotel in Nuwara Eliya, over a century old, was originally the residence of Governor Sir Edward Barnes in the early 19th century and has since become a renowned landmark in hospitality. It's a heritage property; we can't change the colonial architecture, but we have brought it up to international standards while preserving its character. People come there for that colonial experience, so we offer it in the best possible form.

Another thing is, we have never worked in high-rise buildings during our construction. My father always said, "Don't build above a coconut tree", adhering to the rule of the coastal line that he and many of the pioneer hoteliers, like Herbert Cooray, strictly adhered to. At Royal Palms, you'll notice three levels, but one is almost like a basement, so it still follows that height guideline. It wasn't about the law; it was about respecting the concept. For us, it's about long-term sustainability. That kind of attitude has prevented our hotels from becoming overdeveloped, unlike what you see in places like Weligama today, where overbuilding is a serious problem. Dirty water and poor infrastructure will eventually drive tourists away.

In short, I would say what makes Tangerine unique is its authenticity, respect for the environment, heritage charm, value for money, and long-term loyalty. That's what ensures our guests don't just stay once— they come back, talk about us, and that's what truly makes us unique.

Q What is your opinion of tourist guides who offer firsthand service of what you have planned and sold, creating unique and memorable experiences for tourists?

Currently, tour guiding has become somewhat of a bottleneck. There is a disconnect between guides and the industry: guides want a specific daily rate, while travel companies need someone with particular language skills. I see it differently. I believe guiding should not be limited to a small group of officially approved individuals. I have even spoken to those who issue guide licences because I would like to obtain one myself. I would like to see a system where teachers, professionals, perhaps a retired doctor, or simply someone passionate about history or the country, can share their knowledge. Their expertise on a specific subject or place would be much richer than what you get from a standard guide. For example, when I visited the *Prado Museum* in Madrid, I booked a guide through *Viator* who turned out to be an art professor. He was not a typical guide, but his ability to connect each painting to its era was extraordinary. That is the kind of experience I would love to see in Sri Lanka.

That is why I have started personally training my own staff. A few weeks ago, I took them on a walking tour of Pettah. I didn't just point out buildings; I told them stories. I explained how the President's House began as a Franciscan church, later became the Dutch Governor's House, and then the British King's or Queen's House. I showed them Governor Barnes's statue and explained that this spot is ground zero for Sri Lanka's entire road network, from which every road was originally measured— zero miles. Therefore, I often tell my team: yes, you might need a guide, but more importantly, you must understand what you are showcasing. Many guides only concentrate on places with shops or commissions. That is not what guiding should be about. If you are designing an itinerary, be brave enough to suggest something different from what everyone else is doing. Do not just copy a location because another company included it. Find out why a place is genuinely interesting and tell that story.

For me, the idea of a "stereotypical guide" should disappear. What we truly need are people passionate about this country who can share it from their own perspective. That is what makes a tour genuinely memorable.

Q Sri Lanka has many hidden gems - which historical or cultural sites do you think are most overlooked, and what can be done to improve accessibility for visitors?

For me, the most undervalued places are on the East Coast, where Buddhist and Hindu heritages are closely intertwined. There are temples like Kudumbigala, and Thiriyaya offers a small, accessible climb with delightful views. At Mulkirigala, each cave features captivating Buddhist images, including the story of the goddess Pattini, blending Buddhist themes with local goddess imagery. Professor Gananath Obeyesekere's book demonstrates how a Tamil poem became part of our culture, for instance, the *Kiriamma Dane* traditions. These are cultural stories we should celebrate rather than hide.

We often forget how deeply interconnected Hinduism and Buddhism were in Sri Lanka. The Pandyans, for example, respected both faiths during

> **"What makes Tangerine unique is its authenticity, respect for the environment, heritage charm, value for money, and long-term loyalty."**

the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. Royal marriages with South Indian queens were common, and even Vijaya's second marriage was to a South Indian princess. They valued Buddhism as much as Hinduism, embodying a dual religious identity that has largely been lost over time. Today, Hinduism is often associated with nationalism, and people forget that both religions originally came from India.

Many of the country's best sites are surprisingly quiet compared to crowded highlights like Minneriya and Sigiriya. Mulkirigala, for instance, houses priceless Mahavamsa manuscripts that have been safely preserved for centuries. Around Kandy, most visitors flock to the Dalada Maligawa, yet treasures such as Gadaladeniya, Lankathilaka, and Embekke remain overlooked. Big buses can't reach these sites, making them ideal for smaller, high-end tours. At these temples, you can see the blend of Hindu and Buddhist traditions that reflects mutual respect between the two faiths.

Other hidden gems include Buduruvagala, which features statues of Goddess Tara, Maitreya Buddha, and Avalokiteshvara. During a recent visit, we were the only visitors, and elephants wandered nearby. Weligama has a striking Avalokiteshvara statue at Kushtarajagala. Simultaneously, Thiriyaya also holds a remarkable statue of Goddess Tara, a female counterpart of Avalokiteshvara, discovered in 1973 by Tissa Devendran.

Sri Lanka's heritage extends beyond temples. There are diving wrecks in Trincomalee Harbour from the 1942 Japanese attacks, and the Pahiyangala cave contains 11,000-year-old art — older than Sigiriya but little known. In Nuwara Eliya, people focus on the Pekoe Trail, yet stories of coffee and railway heritage are equally fascinating. Even in Jaffna, tourism is gradually growing, highlighting the untapped potential of places like the forts of Mannar, Jaffna, and Arippu. Koneswaram in Trincomalee was one of Sri Lanka's five great Eswaran temples destroyed by the Portuguese, along with Thiruketheeswaram in Mannar, Naguleswaram in Jaffna, and Munneswaram in Chilaw. Stones from the demolished temples were reused in forts, and even today, pillars are visible at Fort Frederick and Mannar. Marine archaeologists have found underwater remnants near Trincomalee, showing how religious politics and colonial power reshaped sacred landscapes.

Sites like Anuradhapura were abandoned to the jungle until the British rediscovered them. My great-grandfather, H. C. P. Bell, Sri Lanka's first Archaeological Commissioner, meticulously documented places such as Sigiriya and Anuradhapura through detailed drawings, many of which are now invaluable because some structures no longer exist. Preserving what remains is essential, but it is also important to appreciate these colonial records. For example, the Kayman's Gate Bell Tower in Colombo, recently refurbished, originally came from a Portuguese church destroyed by the Dutch, demonstrating how pre-colonial and colonial histories are intertwined.

Encouraging people to explore these sites can be surprisingly straightforward. Proper signage — QR codes with stories in Sinhala, Tamil, and English — could greatly enhance the visitor experience. Nowadays, places like Delft Gate or St. Peter's Church in Colombo are hard to find without a guide. In Europe, students easily explore cities like Rome or Florence because signs guide them seamlessly. In London, clear directions lead you to landmarks like Buckingham Palace or Hyde Park Corner. Even Google Maps can fall short here if you don't already know what to look for.

Similarly, there are many underappreciated sites throughout Sri Lanka. What we need is to present them properly, improve accessibility, and share their stories in ways that truly connect. When that happens, tourists — and even locals — will uncover a richer, more complex, and meaningful Sri Lanka than what is shown in the usual travel brochures.

> **“Tourism should focus on longevity, not short-term profit.”**

Q **As a top-tier professional in the Sri Lankan tourism industry, how would you briefly assess this entire value chain, and which aspects should be improved or kept as they are?**

I believe the entire tourism value chain should operate smoothly without becoming a bottleneck. For instance, transport can be further improved. Trains serve as a prime example. They are not only efficient and affordable but also greatly enjoyed by visitors. If we had more clean, reliable, and punctual trains, why would anyone need to drive? Even now, the quickest way to get to Kandy is by train, taking just one hour and forty-five minutes to Peradeniya. That is precisely the kind of seamless interface we should aim for.

The larger issue, however, lies in how Sri Lanka is being sold. Many unethical players are entering the market, seeking quick profits. They simply go online, and when someone searches, they appear at the top. As a result, travellers book with them. Meanwhile, companies like ours pay VAT, TDL, and all statutory taxes. Yet, we end up competing on an unfair playing field. It is frustrating and unfair.

That’s why regulation is important, not to hinder creativity. If someone introduces a new idea or experience, they should be able to implement it, but within a suitable framework. Take whale-watching, for example. Without regulation, operators could damage the environment and ruin the visitor experience. Tourism should focus on longevity, not short-term profit. Right now, it seems like an unfair game: regulated entities are struggling, while unregulated ones profit. That is why proper regulation and balance are essential to ensure tourism develops in a fair, sustainable, and long-term way.

Q **What message should we convey to undergraduates or those aspiring to join the tourism and hospitality industry?**

Tourism is truly one of the best industries to choose because it allows you to pursue your passion and forge your own path. No two days are ever alike. One day, you might be designing a new travel package; the next, you could be meeting a client, creating an experience, or building connections that lead to unexpected opportunities. It’s never dulled if you stay curious and engaged.

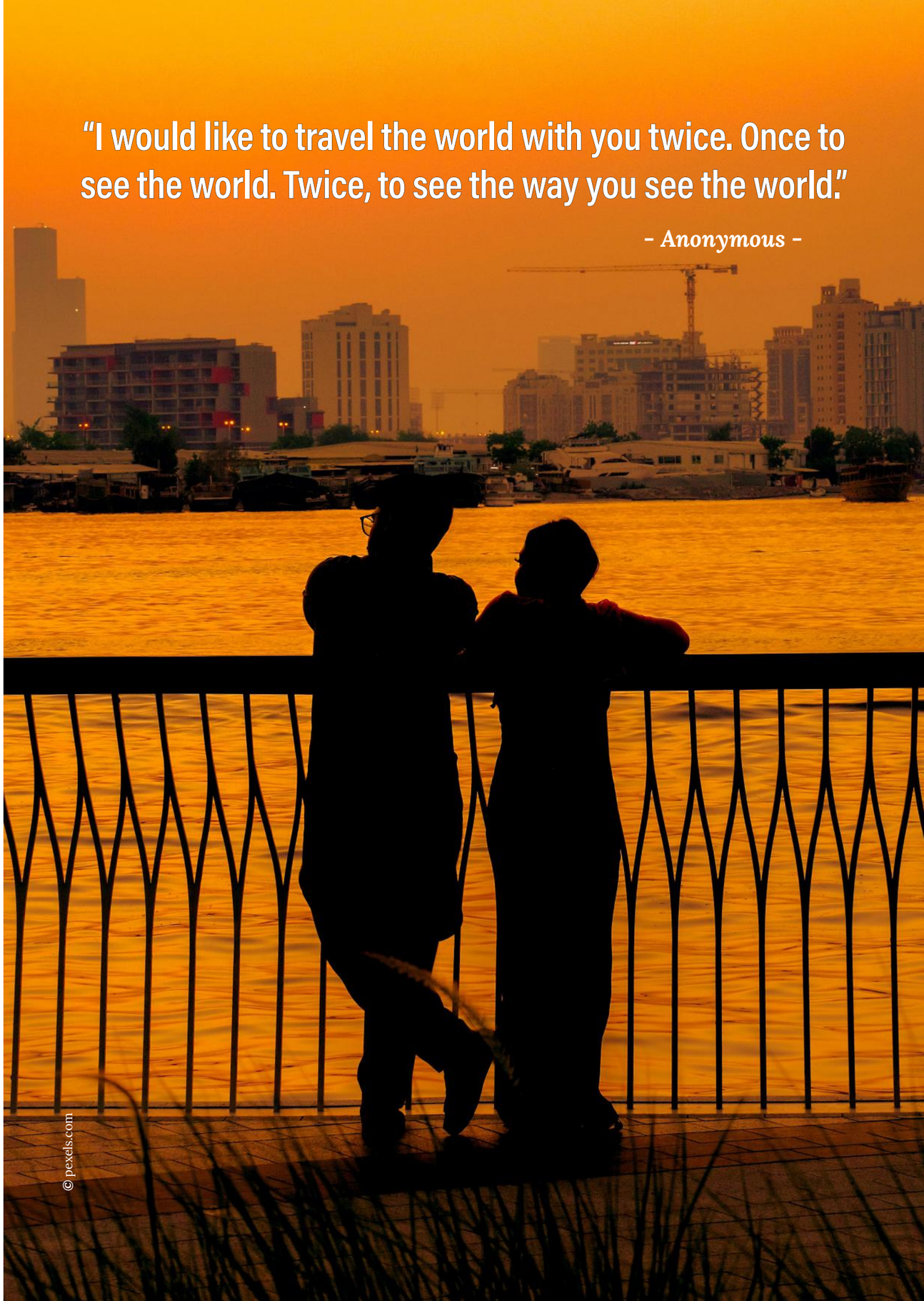
The beauty of tourism lies in its inclusiveness. It’s an industry that welcomes everyone, regardless of their background or personality type. Whether you’re an archaeologist, historian, marine biologist, or creative, there’s a place for you. Your unique knowledge and skills can be turned into unforgettable travel experiences that bring overlooked stories to life.

You do not need straight A’s or a university degree to build a career. Even if you struggle with exams or language, this industry offers you dignity and opportunities for growth. Many of today’s top General Managers started as room boys, cooks, or trainees and worked their way to the top. Institutions like SLITHM help train and guide individuals into meaningful roles, and many Sri Lankans are now working as hoteliers, chefs, and travel professionals in destinations such as Dubai, Doha, and Singapore.

Tourism also celebrates small beginnings. My only request is to remain compliant, unlike many who take shortcuts. Look at Ella or Negombo, where small family shops have evolved into tourist-friendly spaces while retaining their cultural roots. Even homestays can become thriving businesses if appropriately managed. It is an industry that rewards creativity, resilience, and hard work. Most of all, tourism transforms people. I have seen recruits from remote villages who could not speak a word of English become award-winning chefs or confident guides in just a few years. It is a career that values your effort and character, not just your qualifications. That is why I always say that tourism is not just a job, but a journey of growth, pride, and endless possibilities.

Tangerine Tours

This interview was conducted with Ms. Angeline Ondaatje at the Mercantile Investments and Finance PLC building in Colombo on 13th August 2025.



The Historical Ruins of the Old Welfare Building, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

The Old Welfare Building is also known as the Old Land and Survey Building. It was built by the British North Borneo Chartered Company (BNBCC) between 1918 and the late 1920s during the British Colonial era. This building was used by BNBCC as a government office until the Second World War. After World War II, it was used by the Land and Survey Department as its main office. Several years later, it was utilised by the Department of Social Welfare.

This building was one of the state capital's three remaining pre-war buildings. The Old Welfare Building, the Old Post Office, and the Atkinson Clock Tower were the only buildings that survived after the place was bombed by the Japanese army against the British and Australian armies during the Second World War. In 1992, the Sabah Museum proposed to convert the building into an art gallery. Permission was granted by the government for it to become the permanent home of the Sabah Art Gallery. Sadly, three months after the proposal, this two-storey British colonial building was ravaged by fire on 31st December 1992. Only a few pillars of the building remain standing today. Twenty-three years after the fire, the building has been left abandoned and is the victim of vandalism and colourful graffiti.

This place has considerable potential to become a key attraction for a heritage tourism destination. Before it was destroyed by fire, the original architecture was strongly influenced by the British, which made it stand out from all the other buildings around it through the remnant of British Colonial Architectural style, comprising half-timber and half-concrete columned structure. From a historical point of view, the significance of its history ought to be retained and remembered as part of this land's heritage. Undeniably, this building had witnessed various important functions of the department.

Remaining building after WW II (Source: The Sabah Architectural Heritage)


THE building at the height of the blaze yesterday morning.

One of three remaining landmarks gutted

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. – Fire, believed due to a short circuit, destroyed one of the State capital's three remaining pre-war structures today.

However, no injuries were reported as no one was inside the 80-year-old mainly wooden building located along Jalan Tun Fuad Stephens.

A Fire Services Department spokesman said the fire started at about 10.15am. It was spotted by a passer-by who saw smoke billowing from the building.

The spokesman said two fire engines with 12 personnel were rushed to the scene and managed to control the blaze within 30 minutes.

Toyota – were partially scorched and moved to a safe distance by the owners.

Damages caused by the fire to the building and the vehicles could not be immediately ascertained.

Swift action by staff members prevented the fire from spreading to a nearby bank.

The intense heat from the blaze caused the glass windows of the back facing the burning building to break and tongues of fire burst some curtains.

Alerted by the growing number of spectators, bank staff rushed to the affected floors and doused the flames with fire extinguishers.

The blaze brought traffic flow in

The gutted building was being used by the Welfare Department as their assessment office, but not on a regular basis. It was empty at the time of the blaze.

It was rejected that Sabah Museum had proposed to take over the building to be converted into an art gallery about three months ago.

According to history, the building, together with two other structures – the old post office and a clock tower – were the only buildings that survived the Japanese bombing during the Second World War.

Believed to have been built around 1913 to house the Lands and Survey Department, the building

Happy New Year
The management and staff of Sabah Publishing House (SPH) wish all readers a happy and prosperous 1993. There will be no publication of the Daily Express tomorrow. Publication will resume on Sunday.

INSIDE
Readers' New Year greetings – 14
Pen pals – 14 ● Kenon – 3

The building destroyed by the fire (Daily Express, 1992)

According to the findings of a group of students, the place could be transformed into an art gallery for tourists or a local attraction. The strategic location of this site will be the main contributor to its development. Located in the city centre, it is easily accessible by public transportation and is within walking distance of several shopping malls.

The Old Welfare Building holds significant sentimental value for the locals, especially the elderly. In conclusion, it is important to preserve the value of a heritage site. This is to ensure that the next generation has the knowledge and appreciation for the history of a great building, which could soon be forgotten if nothing is done to preserve it. Both the government and non-governmental organisations must play a role in maintaining and developing this heritage site, which has the potential to be one of the main heritage tourism sites in Sabah. Its architecture, uniqueness, and history will surely attract both local and foreign tourists. Therefore, it is recommended that a proper management system be put into action to promote this soon-to-be heritage site.

Boyd Sun Fatt, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sabah Branch, Malaysia

Nik Alif Amri Nik Hashim, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Zaimatul Awang
Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Aikal Liyani Mohd Rasdi, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Where every direction leads to meaningful discovery

With every step, DTH Travel Sri Lanka reshapes the travel experience, empowering communities, conserving nature, and fostering conscious exploration. This isn't just travel; it's a pledge to leave the world better than we found it. Even simple choices, like cycling or taking an eTuk, become acts of sustainable connection.

DRUMSTICK CURRY

Drumstick, known as *Murunga* in Sri Lanka, is a popular and nutritious vegetable widely used in traditional Sri Lankan cooking. It is valued not only for its unique flavour but also for its many health benefits. In Sri Lankan households, drumstick curry is a common dish made with coconut milk and aromatic spices, bringing out the authentic taste of local cuisine.

Ingredients

2 Drumstick pods
½ a big Onion
Turmeric powder - ¼ teaspoon
Curry powder - ½ teaspoon
Around 10 Fenugreek seeds
Curry leaves
Pandan leaves
1 cup of thin Coconut milk
1 cup of thick Coconut milk
Piece of Cinnamon
Salt to taste

Method

To make drumstick curry, select young drumsticks, as they significantly influence the flavour. First, remove the outer layer of the drumsticks and cut them into approximately 3-inch pieces. Place the pieces in a clay pot. Next, add curry leaves, pandan leaves, sliced onions, fenugreek seeds, a piece of cinnamon, turmeric powder, curry powder and about a cup of thin coconut milk. Stir well and cook over medium heat for around 3 minutes until the drumsticks start to soften. Avoid adding salt at this stage, as it can make the drumsticks tough and coarse. After 3 minutes, remove the lid, stir thoroughly, and continue cooking for another 7 minutes. Once 7 minutes have passed, the drumsticks should be well-cooked. At this point, add salt to taste and mix thoroughly so the salt is absorbed into the drumsticks. Cover and cook for an additional 2 minutes. Finally, stir in about a cup of thick coconut milk and cook on low heat, stirring constantly until the curry gently simmers. Remove from heat once ready. Your delicious drumstick curry is now prepared to serve.

Dushi Ranaweera

HAVC 2P88

TWENTY FIRST

Century Visual Culture

Artist Talk Reflection

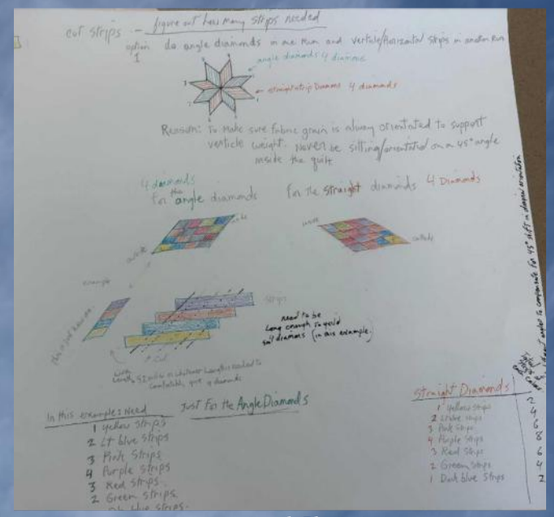
Pre-Talk Research

When our class was invited to attend an artist talk by Wally Dion, MFA, on October 23, 2025, I decided to conduct additional research beforehand. I quickly learned that Dion draws inspiration from his Indigenous heritage, technological advancement, and the environmental impact of consumer culture to create work that challenges modern society.

I explored Dion's website and social media, where he maintains an active presence. His online portfolio immediately drew my attention, particularly the *Star Blanket* works created with circuit boards, brass wire, copper tubing, and fabric (Dion, 2025a). I also viewed several YouTube videos, including BRENDA LAB: *Green Star Quilt by Wally Dion* (Portland Art Museum 2019), which deepened my understanding of his *Green Star Blanket*. Like Spencer Garland, who analysed this work, I was impressed and inspired by its visual beauty and the layers of meaning it contains.

Sewing sections of the new Star Quilt

I also watched *Wally Dion – Steel Star Audio Guide* (Remai Modern , 2018) and became more intrigued by Dion's exploration of the morning and evening star concepts in his *Star Blanket* series. These works represent both cultural reaffirmation and acts of reclamation. Dion's use of found materials reflects the Indigenous value of transformation—turning what is discarded into something sacred. The geometric precision of his designs evokes ancestral mathematics and symmetry inherent in Indigenous art traditions, while also referencing the circuitry of digital systems—both metaphors for connectivity and communication.



Artwork Plan

Working with Wally Dion

Following my research, I spent three hours working directly under the supervision of Dion, contributing to the *Star Blanket* he was creating for Brock University's art collection. Dion spent two days on this collaborative project at the Wardrobe Shop of the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, guiding around a dozen students and community members. I volunteered on the afternoon of October 23.

Dion was approachable, encouraging, and generous with his time, answering my many questions about his artistic process. He worked with a clear plan, explaining each stage while teaching me to sew sections of the new quilt. His positive feedback on my patchwork boosted my confidence (see photographs in the Appendix). Dion explained that while he initially used circuit boards and computer components, he now prefers working with fabric because it is less toxic.

Attending the Talk

That evening, Dion delivered an engaging and humorous lecture as part of the Walker Cultural Leader Series, hosted by the Department of Visual Arts. His presentation captivated the audience, leaving us all deeply inspired.

I learned that Dion works across painting, drawing, and sculpture, but he is especially known for his *Circuit Board Portraits* and *Star Blanket* series. By repurposing discarded computer circuit boards to create large-scale geometric works inspired by traditional star blanket patterns, Dion constructs a dialogue between Indigenous cosmology and modern technology. Both, he suggests, are systems of knowledge and visions of the universe. His art thus challenges the Western binary of "traditional" versus "modern," demonstrating that Indigenous art thrives within the digital and post-industrial era.

During the Q&A, I asked Dion whether he would consider collaborating with musicians to capture the sounds that large *Star Blankets* might produce in the wind. He smiled and replied, "Yes, I have thought about it and must find someone for such a collaboration." His openness to interdisciplinary exchange reinforced the vitality and adaptability of his artistic practice.

My Preferred Artwork by Wally Dion

After my research, I selected one of Dion's most recent works as my favourite: *Uncommon Valor* (2025), created with fabric, fringe, and copper piping. The large-scale textile (189¼ × 146 inches) is currently displayed at the *Utopia* exhibition, organized by Onoma in the White Hall and Black Hall of the former Copper Smithy in Fiskars Village, Finland (Fornwald, 2025).

This monumental work expands on Dion's ongoing themes, addressing solidarity with the people of Palestine. The piece depicts a rose blooming from a human skull, recalling activist imagery that unites Indigenous, Ukrainian, and Palestinian symbols of resilience. According to curator Blair Fornwald, the rose motifs—common in *tatreez* embroidery—represent resistance, friendship, and empathy. Through *Uncommon Valor*, Dion links global struggles for self-determination, transforming textile s into testimony.

Wally Dion's *Star Blanket* series functions not only as an homage to Indigenous heritage but also as a profound meditation on survival, transformation, and technological entanglement. His work stands as a landmark in Indigenous futurism, bridging traditional aesthetics and ecological consciousness within the language of contemporary art.

Selecting section for the new Star Quilt

Uncommon Valor. 2025. Wally Dion. Fabric, fringe, copper pipe, 189 ¼ inches x 146 inches.

References

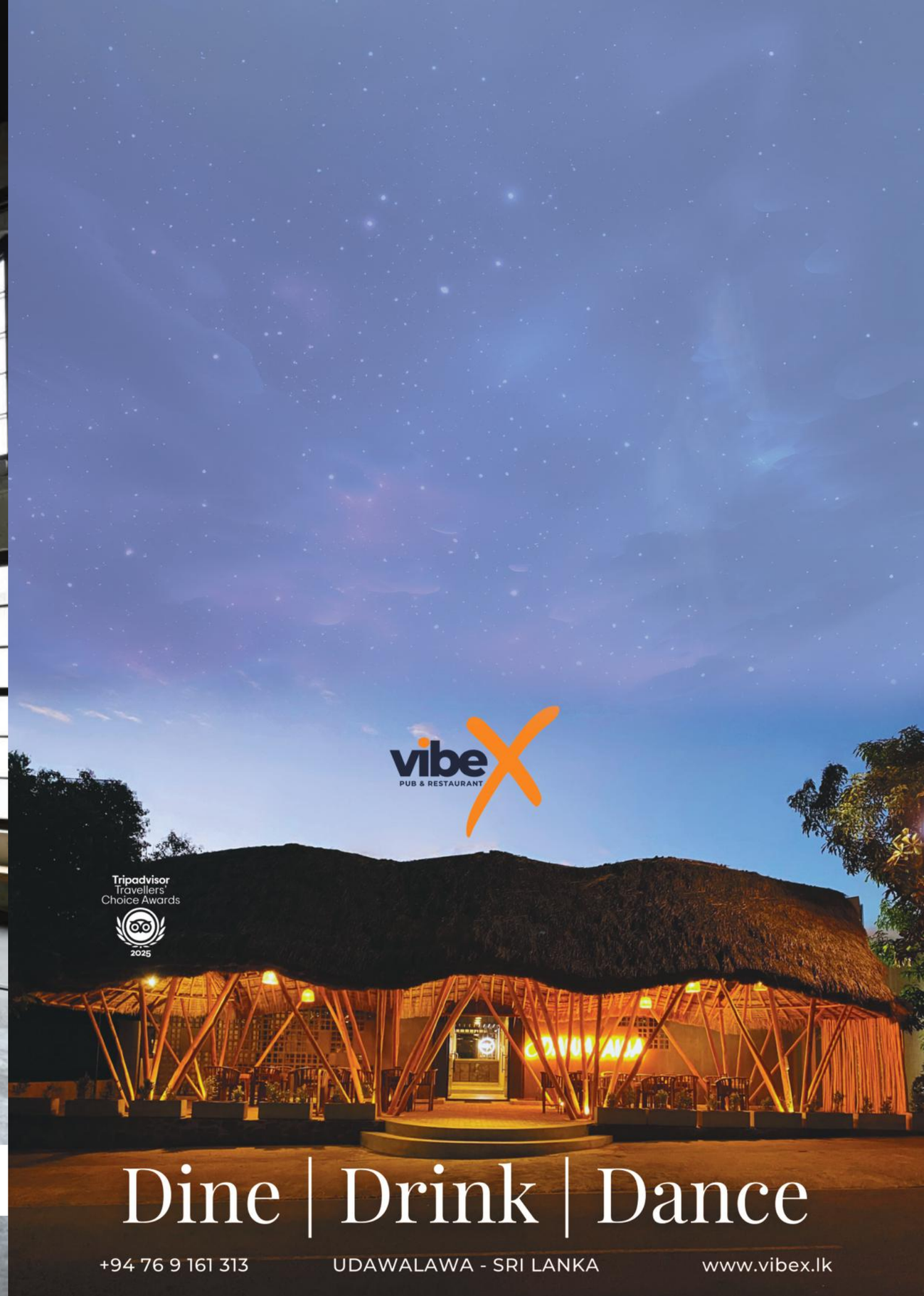
BRENDA LAB. 2019. *Green Star Quilt by Wally Dion, Portland Art Museum*. YouTube video, 3:23. Accessed October 22, 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuNIiV9aQ7M.

Dion, Wally. 2025a. "Painting & Drawing." *Wally Dion – Official Website*. Accessed October 21, 2025. https://wallydion.com/painting-drawing.

Fornwald, Blair. 2025. "Recent Work: *Uncommon Valor*." *Wally Dion – Official Website*. Accessed October 22, 2025. https://wallydion.com/recent.

Remai Modern. 2018. *Wally Dion – Steel Star Audio Guide*. YouTube video, 1:59. Accessed October 22, 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97_1-Inws_A.

Dr. Chandana (Chandi) Jayawardena DPhil
President – Chandi J. Associates Inc. Consulting, Canada
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka



Kottimbulvala Rajamaha Vihara

Walls That Speak: Temple Art and Murals of Sabaragamuwa

From ancient times up to the present day, Buddhist temples and wall paintings have held a central place in Sri Lankan culture. As a country that has become one of the world's leading tourist destinations, these cultural and religious heritages have played a significant role in attracting visitors. Among them, the Sabaragamuwa Province, with its temple complexes and wall paintings, provides an insight into the uniqueness of Sri Lankan Buddhist art through its distinctive artistic features.

In the Sabaragamuwa Province, most temple complexes are rock-cut cave temples, with examples including *Pothgul Rajamaha Viharaya* and *Bogoda Rajamaha Viharaya*. In addition, a notable temple in this area is the *Kottimbulwala Rajamaha Viharaya*. It features a rock-carved replica of the *Sri Pathula*, or the sacred footprint of the Buddha, measuring 5 ft 9 in by 2 ft 11 in, on the western side of the cave. Additionally, *Delgamuwa Rajamaha Viharaya* is significant for its historical importance, as the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha was secretly kept here in a *kurahan gala* for 43 years during the reign of King Vimaladharmasuriya I. Moreover, the *Saman Devalaya*, a shrine dedicated to God Saman, a guardian deity of the Buddha - is also situated in this region.

Similarly, when examining the wall paintings within the temple complexes of Sabaragamuwa Province, one can observe a mixed style of painting primarily rooted in the Kandyan tradition. Although the main features reflect the ancient Kandyan artistic style, it is also clear that elements of the older low-country style are blended in. These temple murals mainly follow a stylised Kandyan form, with line work central to highlighting detailed features through straight and curved lines. The murals are arranged in wall panels in a continuous narrative, featuring symbolic objects relevant to the theme and using red as the primary background colour. Stylised *Lotus*, *Sapu*, *Wetakeiya*, and *Kadupul* flowers fill empty spaces, while footnotes clarify the subject. Human and animal figures are usually shown in profile (from the side), with Buddha and deities portrayed front-facing (looking directly at the viewer). The paintings also display three-dimensional qualities, aerial perspectives, and minimal natural proportioning. Examples of temples displaying these symbolic features include *Pothgul Rajamaha Viharaya*, *Selawa Rajamaha Viharaya*, and *Madiliya Rajamaha Viharaya*. In addition to these Kandyan stylistic features, elements unique to the low-country style are also present, such as the use of black and blue alongside red for the

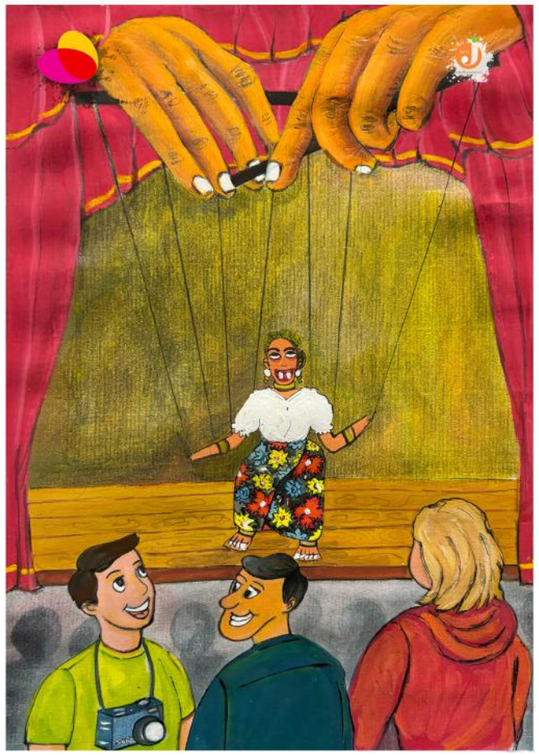
Beligala Galvihara

background, attempts to depict three-dimensional depth, and emotional expressions. These murals also aim to show human figures front-facing, depict three visible sides of the face in profile (three-quarter view), and maintain accurate proportional relationships in the figures. *Lenagala Rajamaha Viharaya* and *Saman Devalaya* are notable examples of this style. Simultaneously, both these styles can be observed in the *Kottimbulwala Rajamaha Viharaya*. When using colours for these paintings, ancient artists employed natural materials such as *Sadilingam* for red, *Hiriyal* for yellow, *Makulu Meti* for white, *Kekuna Deli* or *Pahan Deli* for black, and the *Nil Avariya* plant for blue.

The temple paintings in the Sabaragamuwa region, created through a unique blend of the two main painting styles of Sri Lanka, proudly display the skill and creativity of ancient Sri Lankan artists to the world. A large number of local and international tourists visit these temples to see this combined artistic style. Furthermore, the Sabaragamuwa Vihara paintings provide an experience that is essential for those interested in Buddhist history, ancient arts, and cultures. By properly maintaining and preserving these temples, these valuable paintings can be safeguarded for many more years to come.

Kande Purana Rajamaha Vihara

Poorni Kavindya
Ruwanthi Nadeesha
Krishmi Namarathna



Behind every story on stage, the hands of tradition keep the rhythm alive

Jetwing nurtures timeless heritage, letting each puppet performance echo Sri Lanka's cultural heartbeat. From Mask & Tide Ambalangoda, guests can explore a town rich in coastal arts and traditional crafts, where every stay becomes a journey into the living legacy of Sri Lankan culture, both on stage and beyond.

Meet You at Tortoni

On Buenos Aires' Avenida de Mayo stands Café Tortoni, a place where time refuses to age. Founded in 1858 by a French immigrant, it was never merely a cafe; it became a sanctuary of thought, a theatre of art, and a chamber of memory. Entering Tortoni is more than drinking coffee; it is to walk into history, to breathe nostalgia, and to sit among the echoes of poets, painters, singers, and lovers who once leaned across its marble tables.

Here, artists shaped verses over steaming cups, philosophers tested their arguments, and politicians whispered of futures to come. Among them were names the world still celebrates: Jorge Luis Borges, whose writings shaped Latin American literature; Carlos Gardel, whose voice gave tango its immortal soul; and even Albert Einstein, who visited in 1925 and spoke of science and philosophy beneath the café's chandeliers. To know Einstein once sat here reminds us that Tortoni is not only a monument of culture but also of human curiosity itself, a place where art, music, and science shared the same table. In the same room, couples exchanged folded notes, their words trembling with confession. Keats once wrote to Fanny Brawne of his "luxuries to brood over" her loveliness and the brevity of time. Such longing feels at home in Tortoni, where gratitude gave fleeting encounters a permanence stronger than stone...

Beneath its floors, the tango still begins slow, deliberate, unhurried. In Tortoni, the dance is not a show but a silent conversation, where pauses speak more than the steps. Shakespeare, in *Sonnet 116*, called such constancy "*an ever-fixed mark... never shaken*". Each turn on Tortoni's wooden floor echoes that thought, steady, patient, bending with the music yet never breaking.

The Café Tortoni also preserved the art of the written word. Before the glow of screens, a note passed across a table could hold the weight of eternity. In those pages, one might hear Beethoven's whisper to his *Immortal Beloved*: "*Ever thine, ever mine, ever ours*", or Virginia Woolf's confession to Vita Sackville-West: "*I am reduced to a thing that wants... you*". Here, love was not hurried; it was sealed like an heirloom, woven into memory as carefully as pressed flowers between pages.

And what outlasts marble or chandeliers is gratitude. Gratitude turned glances into legacies, letters into monuments, and dances into art. Love without thankfulness is hunger, but love infused with gratitude becomes inheritance. Every meeting within Tortoni carried this unspoken acknowledgement: not of ownership, but of presence, of beauty, of the moment's gift.

To walk into Tortoni even now is to be summoned into a ritual. It is as though you are stepping into a dance, shoulders poised, gaze lifted, each breath guided by unseen music. Dress with care, not for extravagance but for grace: a polished shoe, a well-fitted coat, a silk scarf or dress that moves as lightly as your confidence. For appearance here is not vanity; it is an outward reflection of self-respect, a reminder that each day deserves to be lived with quiet elegance. In this place, affection is not reduced to possession; it is rhythm disguised as art, eternity folded into a single evening, gratitude written silently in the pauses between words.

Café Tortoni has always been more than walls and tables. It is a living museum of memory, art, and quiet devotion. It reminds us that the most profound bonds are not always a blazing fire but often a soft candlelight, not always urgency but sometimes poetry. Its legacy is the lesson that gratitude is the foundation of all that endures, and memory the only eternity we can hold.

Perhaps this is Tortoni's final gift: to reveal that nostalgia is not a shadow of the past, but a gentle light guiding us forward. It whispers that to live well is to remember without chains, to honour without sorrow, and to give thanks for every fleeting hour. Yesterday's letters are not lost; they bloom again as tomorrow's gardens. As Shakespeare promised, "*So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, so long lives this, and this gives life to thee*".

Let your life move like Tortoni itself, a dance without haste, a letter written with care, a gratitude without end. For gratitude is what transforms moments into memory, and memory into legacy. Café Tortoni still stands as living proof: coffee still served, tango still echoing, voices of Einstein, Borges, Gardel and countless dreamers still lingering, reminding us that love and art endure, because they are built on gratefulness.

Dedunu Senarathne
Deakin University Burwood Campus
Melbourne, Australia

Even gentle giants need a little pampering

Eco Team introduces the concept of Elephant Spa, shifting focus from entertainment to ethical care, where elephant welfare takes priority. Eco Team emphasises sustainable practices over mass consumption and encourages travellers to participate in experiences that respect the natural rhythm and rights of all living beings.

The Sacred Stone Culture of Kadazandusun in Sabah, Malaysia

The tourism industry in Malaysia is at an incredible pace, having a significant contribution from Heritage Tourism. It can be defined as "travelling to experience the places, artefacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past, and the activities can take place in either cultural, historic or natural resources". Malaysia is a multi-cultural country which consists of Malays 50.1%, Chinese 22.6%, indigenous 11.8%, Indians 6.7%, other 0.7% and non-citizens 8.2%. Some of the indigenous groups are located in East Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. In Sabah in particular, there are 33 officially recognised ethnic groups, and the *Kadazandusun* is the largest amongst them. Visitors are attracted to experience and get to know these various unique cultural lifestyles that Malaysia has to offer. The attractions range from marriages, festivals, delicacies, folklore, and the practice of the Sacred Stone culture. There are still many potential cultures that have not been discovered and considered as heritage cultures. Thus, the purpose of this article is to discuss the Sacred Stone Culture of *Kadazandusun* as one of the potentials for Heritage Tourism in Sabah, Malaysia.

The History of Sacred Stones

The existence of hundreds of stone monuments can be seen in many parts of the world. For instance, the *Moai*, which are the monolithic human figures carved by the people of *Rapa Nui* on Easter Island in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, the Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England, and Ale's Stones in Sweden. These structures are known as megaliths. The word "megaliths" originates from the combination of two ancient Greek words: *megas*, meaning *great*, and *lithos*, meaning *stones*. In Borneo, megaliths are stones or rocks that have been deliberately placed or worked by man. These stones or rocks can be either incised, carved, shaped, hollowed out or balanced.

Generally, these megalithic structures can be divided into three types. The first type is the *menhir* or long stone. These stones sometimes have considerable height and are set vertically into the ground. These megaliths can be found in France, specifically in the area known as *The Kerloas*. The second type is the *cromlech* (*crom* = circle/curve, *lech* = place), which designates a group of *menhirs* set in a circle, half-circle, or sometimes aligned in several parallel rows. Stonehenge in England is the classic example of a circle of cromlechs, while Carnac in Britanny, France, is the example of a parallel-aligned *cromlech*. The last type of megalith is the *dolmen* (*dol* meaning table, *men* meaning stone). It is made up of an immense capstone supported by several upright stones, which were arranged to form a sort of enclosure or chamber. Originally, the *dolmen* was covered by a mound. The site where such dolmens can be found is in *Gochang*, South Korea.

It is believed that these megalithic structures existed in France in 4000 BC and in England, it was recorded as early as 3000 BC. In Southeast Asia, these megaliths belong to a type of culture known as the megalithic culture. This culture existed around 2500 BC, which means it emerged from the late Neolithic Age until the Metal Age. However, according to Professor J. Chandran (1978), the head of the Department of History at the University of Malaya, he stated that there is no definite time span, and the existence of the megalithic period is said to have fallen between 3000 BC and 500 BC. Another theory related to the existence of megaliths is the Dongson culture, which originated in Hanoi, Vietnam. This culture is well-known for its bronze kettle drums, decorated in an attractive form, such as frogs and the sun. These Dongson drums can be found in various parts of Southeast Asia, including Malaysia and Indonesia.

The types of Megaliths (Source: Sabah State Archives, 2015)

This culture practised some form of sun cult, which can be related to megaliths, as it might represent one of the chief elements of sun worship casting. Additionally, researchers have also discovered several megalithic structures in Sabah, Malaysia. The megalithic structures known as *menhirs* are scattered all over the paddy fields in Sabah. These stones are found at places where, predominantly, the Kadazan people and various traditional customs practised by the Kadazan community are connected with these *menhirs*. The *menhirs* can be considered as a part of the living culture of the Kadazan people since 1989. Most of the time, a *menhir* was erected in keeping with ceremonial tradition at the opening of the new *Tamu Ground* in Tambunan and in Penampang.

The *menhir* also marks the celebration of the United Nations' declaration of "International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples" at Hongkod Koisaan, Kota Kinabalu, on August 9, 1995. A total of 133 *menhirs or megaliths* were found in the districts of Tuaran, Kota Belud, Penampang, and Papar.

These megalithic structures are also believed to have many other functions in the *Kadazandusun* culture. In our research, we found that the megalith has six functions for the *Kadazandusun* community. The first function of megalith is to ask for a blessing from the ancient spirit to increase the productivity of paddy by pleasing the spirits. The locals believed that by honouring and pleasing one of the seven-in-one rice-soul, namely Gontolobon, they could ask the spirit for greater fertility for the rice crop. Second, the *Kadazandusun* was used as an oath stone. It was a custom to erect an oath stone in each *Tamu* ground. This signifies that people had to trade honestly and peacefully. The traditional religious ceremony was conducted to install the oath stone and empower it with a spirit. It was believed that this spirit would avenge any dishonest trading or any breach of the peace.

The first *Menhir* was erected in 1995 at *Hongkod Koisaan* (KDCA) Penampang. (Source: Sabah State Archives, 2015)

Other than that, megalithic stones also functioned as guardian stones. Ages ago, people believed that megalithic stones could act as a protective barrier for their homes and land, as they thought a spirit dwelled within the stone, guarding them from harm. Furthermore, megalithic stones can also be used as burial markers, just like the tombstone markers of Monsopiad, the ancient Kadazan warrior, and the tombstone markers at the *Pogunon* Community Museum in Penampang. Additionally, the megalithic stones were also erected to commemorate a person. An example of this is the *Sansa'abon stone*, which is located at Kampung Sugud, Penampang, in 1965. The stone was erected by *Libu*, great-great grandfather of the wife of Native Chief *Lojimon*.

Lastly, the megalith stone symbolises the sacred spirits. The most prominent spirit among the *Kadazandusun* community is the *Bambarayon*, also known as the *Bambaazon*, which is the *Paddy Spirit*. This is the foundation of the annually celebrated *Kaamatan* (Harvest Festival or the *Magavau* ceremony). This festival is held every year in May to feed the Bambarayon or Bambaazon, so that it can protect the rice from diseases and enhance yields.

In conclusion, the sacred stone culture is a significant symbol for the *Kadazandusun* ethnic, as this culture was practised by their ancestors years ago. The sacred stone or megaliths should be conserved as a heritage tourism attraction. This is because it is essential for future generations to be aware of their ancestors' culture. The future generation can also know about their origin based on the placement of the sacred stone. Other than that, conserving the sacred stone will prevent it from being forgotten, as this culture is no longer practised by the *Kadazandusun* ethnic anymore. A proper management system should be implemented to maintain and nurture this unique culture, as it has the potential to attract tourists from all over the world, particularly those with an interest in cultural heritage.

Cindy Johnny, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management
Universiti Teknologi MARA,
Sabah Branch, Malaysia

Nik Alif Amri Nik Hashim, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Mohamad Pirdaus Bin Yusoh, *PhD*
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Zaimatul Awang
Lecturer
Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

The Silent Colours of the Sigiriya

The Sigiriya murals, found high on the western side of the rock, are some of the best examples of ancient Sri Lankan wall paintings. They were painted using a plaster made from rice husks, coconut fibre, humus clay, and natural glue. A fine clay layer called spider clay was added before using natural colours like yellow and red. The paintings show great skill, with clear expressions, gentle hand movements, and beautiful decorations. The artist used soft lines and colour mixes to bring the designs to living form. Red, yellow, and green were the main colours. Women of high status were shown in gold or yellow, while their helpers were shown in green, showing the social levels. Unlike the Ajanta murals in India, which tell stories about the Buddha, the Sigiriya paintings are more realistic. The paintings mostly show single or paired women figures.

Professor Senarath Paranavithana believed that the women in the Sigiriya murals were not just royal ladies, but heavenly beings, clouds (*Meghalatha*), and lightning (*Vijjulatha*). He said the golden-coloured women represent lightning and the bluish ones represent clouds. He thought Sigiriya was built like the holy mountain *Kailasa*, home of the god *Kuvera*, and the paintings depict nature around it, such as clouds and lightning. He also used old poems to support his ideas, which compared the women to *Apsaras*. Paranavithana believed the paintings were not only beautiful but also full of deep spiritual meaning. His ideas helped people understand that Sigiriya is not just a palace, but a sacred place with cultural value.

Today, Sigiriya paintings face threats from over-visitation, insufficient protection, heat, moisture, and touching, which can damage the artwork. Without proper cleaning and preservation, colours may fade and walls crack, risking future access and cultural knowledge. As Sri Lankans, we have a responsibility to showcase their beauty and importance, while ensuring they are preserved for future generations.

Sewwandi Gamage

Iconic Images as Drivers of Overtourism

When we hear the word *holiday*, our brain inevitably conjures up images, sounds, and feelings associated with previous holiday experiences. At the same time, neurotransmitters, known as *happiness hormones*, are released. We are reminded of *happy* moments, but the waning effect of this endogenous *drug* is immediately noticeable in the form of withdrawal symptoms. The brain *longs* for a repeat of such exciting experiences. It is difficult to resist reaching for our mobile phone to search for suitable holiday destinations.

This is exactly what the global tourism industry thrives on: using carefully selected signals in the form of images, colours, sounds, and motifs to *trigger* the brains of potential customers, seducing them, as it were. From a neurobiological point of view, tourism can thus be described as a form of legal trade in non-material drugs, apart from the enjoyment of wine and other socially accepted drugs on holiday.

As a result of modern media structures and dynamics, especially the global spread of social media, certain types of triggers are increasingly permeating cultures. If we type *holiday* into Google, we will be inundated with images of white beaches, blue seas, bright skies and green palm trees. This is because beaches are considered *liminal* spaces where there is still enough ground beneath our feet to feel safe and familiar. Still, the adjacent open sea suggests unlimited freedom that promises unexpected, fantastic experiences – and thus feelings of happiness. This makes beaches perfect symbols of holidays, embodying the idea of an ideal holiday destination.

Tourism professionals are experts at arranging tourists' *front stages*, such as the so-called *perfect beaches*. Without appropriate measures, supposedly *untouched* beaches are littered with washed-up rubbish, threateningly hanging coconuts or razor-sharp coral reefs; sand fleas can bite beautiful legs into crater landscapes, jellyfish, crocodiles, or sharks can spoil the fun in the sea, not to mention unfriendly people with bad intentions. There is also a shortage of fresh water, and even more so of cool cocktails. Only with the construction of appropriate infrastructure, such as access roads, toilets, bars, or boat rentals, while at the same time *clearing* the beach of all disruptive elements, does a beach come closer to the globally widespread image of a *paradise*.

In my early, naive years of travelling, I was in search of *authentic* and *pristine* beaches where I could get as close as possible to nature in its original state. In Africa, I rode a horse across the Atlantic beach in Togo. On one hand, riding without a saddle turned out to be torture, and on the other, I narrowly escaped being mugged by teenage drug dealers; a Dutch couple had less luck on their romantic beach walk. On a Philippine island, I found a place that came very close to my ideal of a *dream beach* – until the sand fleas struck. An entire army of these treacherous creatures mercilessly attacked my legs. I still bear the scars of this *massacre* today. While snorkelling in the Red Sea, I was admiring the magic of the coral reef when I was suddenly attacked by a barracuda, which fortunately chose a clownfish as its meal at the last moment.

Tourists are not looking for *natural* places, landscapes, or cultures. Rather, they seek confirmation of their images and the associated ideas and expectations. These ideas have little to do with the reality of the *backstage*; they are instead taken from media products. Never before in history has our reality been so shaped by a flood of images. Cinema films play a special role in the dissemination and popularisation of iconographic ideas. The film *The Beach* (2000), starring Leonardo DiCaprio, was exemplary in many ways. Based on the novel of the same name by Alex Garland, the film tells the story of a young American backpacker named Richard who stumbles upon a secret island in Thailand with a paradise beach that soon turns out to be hell. Key scenes in the film were shot on Maya Bay beach on the Thai island of Ko Phi Phi Leh. The beach was significantly altered for filming, causing considerable damage to the environment.

However, the real environmental threat came later in the form of countless tourists seeking out this symbolically charged location. The many unregulated boats anchored in the previously intact reef have led to the destruction of the coral. The blacktip reef sharks that were widespread in the region disappeared, and mountains of rubbish accumulated on the shore. As a result, Maya Bay was closed for almost four years in 2018 and only reopened to holidaymakers in 2022, now under stricter rules. However, this did nothing to diminish the popularity of this symbolically charged place: between October 2023 and July 2024, 1.6 million holidaymakers visited the beach again.

Popular films and other media products are therefore essential marketing tools for promoting destinations. They create additional attractions, similar to the pre-modern form of tourist travel to pilgrimage sites: in Europe, for example, most of these places were *created* through the presentation of relics, which were either stolen or even forged (Forster, 2008). At that time, pilgrims sought salvation in the afterlife through such journeys *in the service of God* – much to the delight of the locals, who benefited from the economic spin-off. The same connections still exist today, except that modern tourists travel to secular pilgrimage destinations to experience *salvation* by posting a *selfie* of themselves. This proves that they have been at this *sacred* spot. At the same time, these photos increase the symbolic value of the destination and thus attract more visitors – much to the delight of tourism service providers, but increasingly to the displeasure of locals and the detriment of the environment.

Urban Beach at Da Land in Vietnam

This process of increasing the symbolic significance of places through the dissemination of stylised images in order to exploit them for tourism is irreversible for many reasons, interrupted only by dramatic events such as natural disasters, pandemics, or wars. That is why there will be no way around regulated access to such secular *pilgrimage sites* in the future, with time slots being booked in advance. This temporarily reduces the illusion of *untouched freedom* in such seemingly idyllic places, but ultimately, such regulations contribute to the sustainable development of such destinations, protected from *tourist tsunamis*.

References

- Foster, N. (2008). Die Pilger : Reiselust in Gottes Namen. Area.

Prof. Harald A. Friedl
FH JOANNEUM, Austria


TiP
TEAM


TiP
TiP

LKR 1088