

# BOOMING TOURISM IN SRI LANKA TO OPEN NEW ZONES



The small island of Sri Lanka currently enjoys booming tourism numbers according to reports. The local government has a positive outlook of the future of the sector.

According to the tourism analytics firm ForwardKeys, international air arrivals to the country have increased by 11.8%. Moreover, the forward flight bookings to Sri Lanka for Dec 2016 - Apr 2017 show a 1.3% growth in comparison to the same period last year.

The main source countries of tourists have all registered an increase. India (+10.3%), the UK (+17.3%) and Germany (13.1%) represent the TOP 3, with China showing the largest growth (+29.2%) on the 5th place. In general, **the inflow from Europe (+14.6%) and East Asia (+11.7%) has been on a significant rise and contribute greatly to the booming tourism numbers.**

According to the analysis, the forward bookings of flights to the country for December and January are 3.5% and 4.1% respectively ahead. However, in February and March the rates are 9.8% and 21.3% behind. April is ahead by 76.9%, but this needs to be taken with a grain of salt, as April is still far away.

The pattern is relatively unstable, but there are periods in which the rise is especially positive. For example, bookings for Chinese New Year (January 27 - February 2) are 12% ahead, which corresponds with the increase in Chinese inflow.

Other than that a positive trend is seen with regards to the inflow of Russian tourists. Overall, 2016 has been a disappointing year and the numbers show it. Visitor arrivals for the year to date have decreased by 26.4% compared to 2015. However, future bookings for November and the next five months have increased by 13.1%.

“Our data show that Sri Lanka deserves congratulations on a tremendous year for attracting visitors. In a competitive environment, continued effort will be needed to keep up the impressive rate growth,” James Wong, ForwardKeys director of business development, noted.

This is why Sri Lankan authorities remain relentless and continue to look for rooms for improvement. From November 27 to 29 at the Asia Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference, Sri Lanka introduced a new project to create the so called Tourism Development Zones.

At least five and up to eight ‘Themed International Tourism and Family Entertainment Zones’ were designated in state-owned land, selected for their natural beauty. Among these zones there are beaches, mountains and forest regions. The project was backed by the Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Tourism and the Sri Lanka Tourism Club.

The aim is to attract investors with transparent land ownership. The Sri Lanka Tourism Club started developing the infrastructure, but the main input will still be that of outside investors. Sri Lanka’s

tourism minister said in November that **the goal is to generate up to five million tourists by 2020 and increase tourism revenue to 10 billion dollars.** Moreover, the small state aims to double the current number of rooms available and create 300,000 new jobs.

The first zone in a five-year plan is already under initial construction - the Lanka Patuna, an area of over 450 acres of beautiful beach land. The booming tourism in Sri Lanka means further development of local companies. The effect of the new project on the sector however remains to be seen.

Date: 2016-12-05

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/booming-tourism-in-sri-lanka-means-further-development-news5219>