

SRI LANKA'S BOLD TOURISM PLAN WORKING



Only a few days ago, Sri Lanka prepared a warm welcome for its 250,000th visitor. It is a unique achievement which will hopefully help the country reach the ambitious tourism target.

Sri Lanka has immense potential yet years of political unrest have essentially closed the door to any foreign visitors. While the country has been safe for several years, many travelers think twice before entering and such circumstances make any tourist boost challenging. However, **the country is prepared to further invest in promotion** and only a few days ago, the director of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau, Mr Malraj Kiriella, proudly welcomed the 250,000th visitor since the beginning of 2011.

Reaching such milestone is a true accomplishment. The only time the country came anywhere near was in 2006, when the first four months recorded 209,312 tourists. Mr Nordhuis, a Dutch national came to visit Sri Lanka with his family and was thrilled to receive such a warm welcome as well as a special complimentary package. He mentioned many of his friends had been recommending Sri Lanka as a must-see holiday destination and with such an entrée all expectations may as well be exceeded now.

Sri Lanka is famous for its beautiful beaches, striking crystal clear waters abundant with marine life and diverse coral reefs, however, its Yala National Park hides many wildlife gems, including water buffalo, monkeys, elephants, crocodiles and many species of native birds.

Mr Kiriella revealed **this year's target is to welcome 700,000 visitors**, which may have seemed a little far-fetched a few months ago, however, with current pace it may be reached quite easily. Local government is preparing to further invest in services and improve the infrastructure and if the 2018 Commonwealth Games bid is successful, the tourist attention will certainly increase.

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