



(The below article is taken from a report by Charumini de Silva of the Daily FT in Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka is set to welcome its one millionth tourist today (Tuesday, 26 September 2023), marking a significant milestone after enduring multiple challenges over the past three years.

“We are planning to receive our one-millionth tourists on Tuesday (26). Our earlier estimation was that it would happen on the 27th, coinciding with World Tourism Day,” Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) Chairman Priantha Fernando told the Daily FT. As the one millionth tourist steps onto Sri Lankan soil, he said the entire country not only celebrates a remarkable numerical milestone but also the triumph of perseverance and the unwavering spirit of its tourism industry stakeholders.

“The resilience and adaptability displayed by the industry and its stakeholders underscore the commitment to safeguarding Sri Lanka’s reputation as a top-notch tourist destination,” Fernando added.

In the first 24 days of this month (September 2023), Sri Lanka received a total of 88,885 tourists, propelling the year-to-date figure to a commendable 993,203. This surge indicates a noteworthy improvement in daily arrivals, a particularly encouraging sign given that September is considered a shoulder month in the tourism calendar.

For 2023, the industry has set an ambitious goal of over 1.55 million visitors. The authorities anticipate 31,316 more arrivals during the following five days to meet the monthly target of 120,201 tourists.

India also remains strong as the top tourist source market for Sri Lanka YTD with a cumulative number of arrivals at 193,231 or 19% followed by Russia with 130,904 or 13% UK with 89,563 or 9% Germany with 67,691 or 7% and China with 44,715 or 5%. Tourists were also received from France, Australia, Canada, the US and Maldives, the provisional data released by the SLTDA showed

Tourism earnings in the first eight months of 2023 were over \$ 1.3 billion, reflecting a 56.7% increase from the corresponding period of last year, whilst August earnings stood at \$ 210.5 million, the latest Central Bank data released showed.

The authorities have set their sights on increasing arrivals to 5 million by 2029 and earning an impressive \$ 21.6 billion within seven years. As part of its long-term strategy to welcome 5 million visitors, it hopes to lift the average spending per visitor to \$ 4,000, with 2.5 million of them spending over \$ 500 per day, indicating a concentration on luring high-end tourists.

This ambitious objective is a testament to the country's determination to revitalise its tourism sector and re-establish itself as a premier global destination.

Monthly Tourist Arrivals Reports 2023

Monthly Tourist Arrival figures for the months from January to December, are published below.

(Taken from the website of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority)

Month	2022	2023	% of increase
January	82,327	102,545	24.5
February	96,507	107,639	11.5
March	106,500	125,495	17.8
April	62,980	105,498	67.5
May	30,207	83,309	175.8
June	32,856	100,388	205.5
July	47,293	143,039	202.4
August	37,760	136,405	261.2
September	29,802	111,938	275.6
October	42,026	109,199	159.8
November	59,759	151,496	153.51
December	91,961	210,352	128.7
Total	719,978	1,487,303	106.6