

Market

Feted variously by traders and historians who visited the island of spices centuries ago, Ceylon was famed the world over for its natural beauty and rich culture. While the fragrance of its spices still permeates the corners of the globe, modern Sri Lanka has developed into a favoured tourist destination for holidaymakers worldwide.

When the economy was liberalised in the 1970s, several hotel properties were set up to take advantage of the increased numbers of inbound travellers that would result from Sri Lanka opening its doors to the world. The Jetwing Group was one such entity that gained a firm foothold in the island's tourism industry back then. Since then, the group has expanded and diversified into related activities with a clear vision and strategy.

From charter to budget traveller, to the Frequent Independent Traveller (FIT) category, Jetwing caters to a varied clientele today. Jetwing has broken traditional boundaries and built luxury boutique hotels such as Jetwing Lighthouse, Jetwing Beach, Jetwing Ayurveda Pavilions and Jetwing Vil Uyana. While critics doomed these ambitious projects to eventual failure, their stupendous success has proved that this was what discerning tourists were looking for. These impeccably maintained properties are renowned for their flawless service and delectable cuisine – setting a benchmark for other hoteliers.

The group's destination-management arm, Jetwing Travels, has also diversified over the years. The company not only handles accommodation, sightseeing with qualified guide services and transportation, but has also expanded into airline representation, professional conference organisation and outbound travel. Jetwing Eco Holidays was set up in 2001 for nature-focused travellers, offering customised tours to suit every budget. Jetwing Travels celebrated 25 glorious years in 2006, a testimony to its enduring legacy.

Achievements

Jetwing is one of Sri Lanka's leading hotel chains and travel groups. Its ability to innovate and exceed clients' expectations has enabled it to



become a preferred partner organisation in Sri Lanka for travel and tour operators globally. Over the years, the group has won a wide array of awards that recognised its exceptional offerings.

The Jetwing group received a Commendation Award in 2000 at the Green Globe Awards for its sustainability in green tourism. In 2005, Jetwing Lighthouse won the PATA Gold Award in the Education and Training category for its project – 'A Taxi Service through the Community'. In addition, most of the Jetwing properties have received the internationally-recognised HACCP certification. In 2005, Jetwing Hunas Falls was awarded second place for the 5S productivity award within the Central Province; whereas the following year, it was awarded second place for companies in the large-scale service sector within the Central Province once again. In 2007, it won first place.

Jetwing Ayurveda Pavilions was voted as Sri Lanka's Leading Resort in the World Tourism Awards in 2006 and 2007. Once again, this property was voted Sri Lanka's Leading Spa Resort in 2007, while Jetwing Lighthouse won the same accolade in 2006.

In 2007, Jetwing Vil Uyana won the PATA Grand Award in the Education and Training category for its youth development project, We Dreamed a Dream. This programme equipped 120 students in surrounding communities with English-language and hotel-craft training, with a majority of them being absorbed into the hotel cadre.

Jetwing Vil Uyana has also received accolades at the Chillies Awards in 2007. A relatively new competition for the

advertising industry, the Chillies recognises groundbreaking creative efforts. Jetwing Vil Uyana walked away with two awards in the Transport, Travel and Tourism category. The advertisements for this property were among the finalists and won the Silver award in this category. It also went on to win the Bronze award in the Print Campaign category for Service.

History

When Sri Lanka implemented a tourism master plan, which marked its entry into the international tourism arena in the 1970s, Jetwing's Chairman Herbert Cooray seized the opportunity to be associated with the tourism sector when he was invited to construct a hotel in Negombo. A contractor by profession, he rose to the challenge and built a small hotel property of six rooms which he subsequently acquired, catering to the charter traveller, thus leading to the birth of Jetwing.

Jetwing has grown from strength to strength since then, consolidating its position as one of the leading entities in the travel and tourism sector. In 1981, the Royal Oceanic Hotel was set up in Negombo and the group's destination-management company, Jetwing Travels, established. The Yala Safari Game Lodge was bought over in 1983, becoming the key property for visitors to the safari park and its environs. The group added another feather to its cap with the acquisition of the historic edifice of St. Andrews Hotel in Nuwara Eliya in 1987. Jetwing joined hands with Hayleys and acquired the 31-roomed property, Hunas Falls Hotel. Between 1991-93, Jetwing set up the Hunas Falls Hotel and Tropical Villas, by which time the group's airline ticketing operation – Jetwing Travels – and its professional event-management company – Jet Asia – were operational.

The year 1997 witnessed the establishment of the glorious Lighthouse Hotel and Spa in Galle, which was granted membership the following year of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World,

the first such accolade for a Sri Lankan hotel.

Realising the need for specialisation, Jetwing set up the Ayurveda Pavilions in 2000, with Jetwing Travels receiving its IATA accreditation at this juncture. Jetwing Eco Holidays was then set up in 2001 with a view to attracting the burgeoning ecotourist community. Jetwing has maintained and upgraded its properties regularly and Royal Oceanic, which was recently refurbished and renamed The Beach, was also promptly ushered into the Small Luxury Hotels of the World; as was Vil Uyana, in 2006, which is built on a wetland.

Jetwing entered a new era by rebranding its hotels, adding on the 'Jetwing' prefix to the names of its hotels.

Not content to rest on its laurels, the group opened Jetwing Warwick Gardens, a scenic estate bungalow and Jetwing Kurulubedda, a luxury eco lodge in Galle, to a clamouring public. By now, it seemed that Jetwing possessed the Midas touch.

And thanks to strategic relationships with tour operators and travel agents, Jetwing has prospered even in adverse market conditions.

Product

Jetwing is an umbrella company with three distinguished sub units. Jetwing Travels, the destination-management arm, has a specialised unit organising professional conferences under the banner Jetwing Events. It is also an accredited airline-representation company handled by Jetwing Air.

Jetwing Travels deals in inbound and outbound travel, covering ticketing and packaged holidays to other destinations.

Jetwing Eco Holidays specialises in ecotourism. With the ever-growing demand for nature-oriented travel experiences, it has contracted with a variety of hotels to suit the needs of its discerning clientele.

Jetwing Hotels has grown over the past years from being a six-room hotel-owning company to a 625-room one that is represented in seven districts around Sri Lanka. Every hotel has its own unique character and style – and so, each Jetwing location is an individual destination in its own strength. The Jetwing Group probably boasts the finest collection of hotels in Sri Lanka.

From basic needs to customised, personalised service, Jetwing provides them all. At a time when people wanted to be pampered, it introduced spa experiences. Recently, the group joined hands with Elemis, the UK-based lifestyle brand, offering aromatherapy products aimed at treating each individual holistically, with plant essential oils and marine extracts mixed with natural bases.

In the year 2005, Jetwing Hotels embarked on yet another unprecedented entrepreneurial adventure, deciding to directly import wines to be sold exclusively at Jetwing's hotel chain. The wines are sourced by a few selected wine connoisseurs based in the UK and elsewhere. The first shipment of 89 select wines and 9,936 bottles arrived in Sri Lanka on 23rd November 2005. Since then Jetwing Hotels have imported a new selection of wines from France.

Jetwing also celebrates Sri Lanka's famous tea by offering single estate, loose tea which is exclusively sourced for Jetwing Hotels by Robert Wilson's Ceylon Teas. To further enrich the experience, tea-tasting ceremonies are held in varying locations around most of the hotels within the group, enabling guests to flavour and experience the tea the Sri Lankan way.

Given the unfolding scenario of environmental consciousness, Jetwing has



documented many areas and methods to conserve natural energy in its Green Directory. And following the December 2004 tsunami, the group was quick to assist employees and associates who were seriously affected – Jetwing supported its neighbouring communities to rebuild their lives.

Recent Developments

Jetwing continues to travel along its path of innovation. It recently launched *Villas by Jetwing*, documenting the island's heritage in this area. Jetwing Warwick Gardens, an old English bungalow, located in the hills of Ambewela, was recently renovated. This five-bedroom luxury property has a variety of activities on offer. Jetwing has also opened a two-bedroom luxury eco lodge in Galle – Jetwing Kurulubedda. Access to this property is by boat on the Mamodara Ganga and it offers the guests a unique experience.

The group embarked on a new project called Jetwing Eternal Earth Project (JEEP), which focuses on minimising global warming and its effects on mankind by creating a model of reforestation at Jetwing Hunas Falls.

Promotion

Having worked closely with and depended heavily on tour operators and travel agents over the past years in targeting the mass market, Jetwing is now focussing its attention on direct communications with its clientele. The group is leveraging on promoting itself through the World Wide Web as a key communications tool in keeping with the changing trends. Jetwing has formed alliances with various websites such as responsibletravel.com, slh.com, ghotw.com and kiwicollection.com to name a few. And the group says it will make its website more interactive, to enable easy access to its range of products for online bookings.

Global travel trends are moving towards being more environmentally-responsible and Jetwing has partnered with responsibletravel.com – a website that promotes only hotels that are practising environmental responsibility. At present, Jetwing Lighthouse, Jetwing Beach and Jetwing Vil Uyana are members of this prestigious website. Jetwing Eco Holidays features as a destination-management company on this site as well. The introduction of JEEP – which is focused on minimising global warming and its effects on mankind, by way of creating a model of reforestation at Jetwing Hunas Falls – will also be used as a tool to promote Jetwing's hotels as being environmentally-conscious.

Jetwing has realised the sagacity of creating an aura around the location of each of its properties, rendering them as strong individual destinations in their own right. The group has launched a range of packages with varying

activities that would enable guests to stay at one location but enjoy their surroundings to the fullest.

Jetwing's close association with the international and local media enables it to generate positive and productive features, aimed at its target market. The group has been featured in *The Time*, a weekly magazine published in several countries around the world. Jetwing Vil Uyana was the first Sri Lankan property to be featured in this magazine. In addition, *The Business*, a weekly business magazine published in the UK and sold internationally, featured Jetwing Vil Uyana in a double spread, another first for a leisure property from Sri Lanka. The article rated the property on par with top-end resorts in the Maldives.

Brand Values

Jetwing has been singularly focussed on its vision to be world-class in every aspect of its operations. In consultation with representatives of associates from the different units, the group put together a set of values which has been inculcated in its every function. These values commit to a positive attitude at all times, while working with integrity and confidence.

Dependability and the pursuit of excellence are the hallmarks of Jetwing's products and services, to which any visitor to a Jetwing property will testify. Jetwing now embarks on a new challenge to strengthen its overseas brand with an intention of introducing the 'Jetwing experience' to other parts of the world. The Jetwing promise continues to be 'To give the best in quality regardless of the category', moving toward 'one brand – one promise'.

www.jetwing.com

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT Jetwing Sri Lanka

- ▶ The only hotel group in Sri Lanka to have three properties as members of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World.
- ▶ One of the few companies in Sri Lanka with a 100% Sri Lankan workforce.
- ▶ The first company in Sri Lanka to introduce the Green Directory concept in its hotels and to have a common environmental policy.
- ▶ The first hotel company to introduce a team of professionally trained naturalists at all its hotels.
- ▶ It is the only hotel group in the country to appoint female hotel General Managers.