

MARKETING VILLAS TAKES TOURISM TO NEW LEVEL IN SRI LANKA

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Marketing Villas takes tourism to new level in Sri Lanka

Hong Kong-based JV between Elite Heavens Group and Singapore's Private Homes and Villas launches three boutique villas in Galle, Tangalle and Kogalla

By Roshenka de Mel

MARKETING Villas Ltd. on Tuesday announced the launch of its first three villas in Sri Lanka. The Hong Kong based company is a joint venture between the Elite Heavens Group and Singapore based Private Homes & Villas Pte Ltd.

With the launch of three villas in Galle, Tangalle and Kogalla, Marketing Villas has extended its regional presence to Sri Lankan shores.

As a pioneering force in the villa rental and management industry, Marketing Villas has extensive experience, maintaining and managing over 50 villas across South East Asia. Through a partnership with over 300 agents, the company provides reputable and personal villa style experiences to a diverse client base that exceeds 50,000.

As global travel trends shift in favour of more tailor-made holiday experiences, more travellers are beginning to opt for the villa experience. This emerging concept lends a highly personalised service with a private and remote location to meet every guest's specific holiday needs. The company essentially provides every guest with a completely private space to be enjoyed at their own pace.

Jon Stonham, CEO of Marketing Villas Ltd, said: "We are thrilled to launch our first three villas in Sri Lanka. Our company has an expertise of villas, which we rent across the South East Asian region particularly in Bali where the villa market is thriving. Today's tourism demands are changing rapidly. More people are looking for an individual experience and are moving away from mass orientated tourism towards 'me' orientated tourism. Rather than being a number on a hotel room, what today's traveller wants is a personal, private and unique experience catered to their specific needs. Our villas are all fully staffed and provide a quality customer experience with a strong value for money proposition."

The three new villas available for rental under the management of Marketing Villas are located in key destinations across Sri Lanka.

Ambassador's House in Galle is the former private residence of the Bangladeshi Ambassador to Sri Lanka and is a five-bedroomed, fully-staffed villa priced at US\$ 400 per night.

Pooja Kanda in Kogalla is a five-bedroomed colonial style hillside villa being offered at US\$ 300 per night.

The final villa, Ocean's Edge in Tangalle, is a four-bedroom villa located on an isolated stretch of beach on Sri Lanka's south coast.

All the villas are easily accessible, located in secluded areas with a team of staff equipped to provide guests with a tailor made experience. From the choices of meals served to how and when meals are served, every aspect of the villa experience is entirely catered to the needs of the guest.

Addressing the growing demand for more villa styled holiday experiences, Stonham described how the niche villa market was gradually expanding across Asia and now infiltrating into Sri Lanka.

"The villa experience is entirely different to your typical 'hotel' experience and it is fast becoming popular. Privacy and personalised services are becoming considerably more important to clients. Bali is a model example of a destination that has enjoyed success as a leading villa destination. Five years ago there was no villa market in Bali, following a dramatic change, there are presently over 1,000 villas operating in Bali today. According to a recent Google trends search showed that for every two people looking for a hotel in Bali today, one person is looking for a villa. The mindset of travellers is changing, as are their needs and expectations. Sri Lanka is a destination with immense potential, until 2009 villa inquiries hardly existed. With the war over, Sri Lanka as a destination is very attractive and the demand for villas in Sri Lanka is increasing. In collaboration with our travel partners we have access to an ever-growing client base. The demand for villas is definitely there amongst our clients and it is coming to Sri Lanka."

Commenting on how the villa experience will be marketed and differentiated from the masses of small boutique type hotels rapidly being established in Sri Lanka, Stonham stated that the villa experience was a progression from even what a boutique hotel could offer: to an even more private and personalised holiday experience. This offering in itself serves to differentiate the villas as a completely personalised experience that provides clients with complete flexibility and a space that is entirely theirs.

To ensure streamlined operations, Marketing Villas offers an integrated booking system, which provides live updates for all travel partners. This increases the efficiency of booking operations and allows agents to accurately gauge and maximise villa usage.

With a 20% commission on villa bookings guaranteed to all agents and supporting promotional material provided, Marketing Villas works in close collaboration with an extensive network of agents to ensure the effective marketing and sale of rental slots for all their villas.

A key challenge to be addressed in the marketing of villas is the general public misconception that luxury villas are unsustainable and unaffordable. Stonham explained: "Although

Tourism 7

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we only rent out the entire villa, if you look at the price from a cost per room perspective, the proposition of staying in a villa is more affordable than what is commonly perceived. Every time my child puts his hand up in a hotel, I know it costs me US\$ 10, at a villa it's whatever the cost at the local supermarket is. At a villa a chef will plan your menu, shop for it and prepare it for you.

A villa provides a personal and high quality holiday experience that is essentially affordable luxury at its best." Rob Tai, General Manager of the three Sri Lankan villas launched by Marketing Villas, stated: "The villa market is picking up in other countries and is bound to take off in Sri Lanka as well. Sri Lanka offers fantastic locations, great history and a host of activities for people to enjoy. Our average booking often comprises of extended families as well as members of the expatriate community."

Stonham plans for Marketing Villas to manage a further ten villas in Sri Lanka over the next two years and intends to expand the company's representation into Thailand within a year. Sri Lanka is being perceived as an increasingly attractive destination and with increased demand for villa styled experiences, it is poised to benefit as a leading villa destination in the near future.




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Through a partnership with over 300 agents, the company provides reputable and personal villa style experiences to a diverse client base that exceeds 30,000.

As global travel trends shift in favour of more tailor-made holiday experiences, more travellers are beginning to opt for the 'villa experience'. This emerging concept blends a highly personalised service with a private and remote location to meet every guest's specific holiday needs. The company essentially provides every guest with a completely private space to be enjoyed at their own pace.

Jon Stonham, CEO of Marketing Villas Ltd., said: "We are thrilled to launch our first three villas in Sri Lanka. Our company has an expanse of villas, which we rent across the South East Asian region particularly in Bali where the villa market is thriving. Today's tourism demands are changing rapidly. More people are looking for an individual experience and are moving away from mass orientated tourism towards 'me' orientated tourism. Rather than being a number on a hotel room, what today's traveller wants is a personal, private and unique experience catered to their specific needs. Our villas are all fully staffed and provide a quality customer experience with a strong value for money proposition."

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