

Amba Yaalu Kandalama Marks one year of redefining women-led hospitality in Sri Lanka

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Posted on



Amba Yaalu Kandalama, Sri Lanka's first women-led hotel, celebrates its first year of empowerment and purposeful hospitality.

Amba Yaalu Kandalama, Sri Lanka's first women-led hotel, proudly marks its first anniversary, celebrating a year of empowerment, inclusion, and purposeful hospitality.

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Amba Yaalu Kandalama was conceived to address a pressing gap in Sri Lanka's tourism and hospitality sector. Despite women representing 52.8 percent of the national population and achieving high literacy levels, female participation in the formal hospitality workforce remains critically low at approximately ten percent. Limited opportunities to showcase talent, restricted access to education and professional training, workplace discrimination, and concerns around safety have long prevented women from fully participating and progressing within the industry.

Recognizing both the challenge and the responsibility to act, Thema Collection, a pioneering, thematic, and eco-conscious hospitality brand, introduced Amba Yaalu Kandalama as a bold intervention.

Under the leadership of Chandra Wickramasinghe, Chairman and Founder, renowned for conceptualizing 16 distinctive properties that have reshaped Sri Lanka's tourism landscape, Amba Yaalu was envisioned as more than a hotel. It was designed as a platform where women are trusted to lead, supported to grow, and empowered to redefine hospitality on their own terms.

Nestled beside the serene Kandalama Lake and surrounded by flourishing mango groves, Amba Yaalu Kandalama stands as a living example of what inclusive tourism can achieve, proving that when women are given equal space, opportunity, and respect, they deliver experiences defined by authenticity, warmth, and excellence.

Beyond the property's boundaries, Amba Yaalu Kandalama has intentionally extended its impact along the value chain. A conscious effort has been made to engage and support women-led suppliers, particularly in flowers, mushrooms, and spices, ensuring that the benefits of tourism reach beyond the hotel and into the wider community. This approach reinforces the belief that true empowerment must be inclusive, sustained, and shared among all stakeholders.

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Chandra Wickramasinghe, Founder and Chairman, Thema Collection.

Local recruitment has been another cornerstone of Amba Yaalu's first year of

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operations. Approximately 20 percent of the team has been recruited directly from the surrounding villages, creating meaningful employment opportunities close to home and fostering a stronger relationship between the hotel and the local community.

Speaking on the vision behind Amba Yaalu, the Chairman of Thema Collection stated: “Amba Yaalu is more than a resort; it represents a promise shaped by the strength of women, inspired by my single mother, who nurtured and raised eight children with resilience.



A staircase through time — celebrating the golden frames of Sri Lankan cinema at Amba Yaalu.

Over the past year, we have seen confidence grow, skills flourish, and hospitality delivered with genuine warmth and care at every turn. Amba Yaalu has reaffirmed my belief that women’s compassion, creativity, and courage are not just strengths, but the very heart of meaningful hospitality.

As we mark one year of this journey, Amba Yaalu stands as our gift to Sri Lanka — proof that inclusive tourism can inspire change, uplift lives, and redefine the future

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of our industry. This is a movement wrapped in mango blossoms and bound by purpose.”

Reflecting on the journey, Jeewanthi Adhikari, Resort Manager shared her perspective on building a women-led team from the ground up: “When we first started, there were many questions about whether we would be able to recruit and sustain an all-women team. Today, those doubts have been replaced with confidence. We have built a committed and capable team, and in our recruitment process, we continue to give special emphasis to local women, creating opportunities for growth, learning, and long-term careers in hospitality.”



Where skilled hands, fresh ingredients, and shared smiles bring Amba Yaalu’s flavors to life.

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Quiet dedication that keeps every moment effortless.

As Amba Yaalu Kandalama enters its second year, it does so with renewed commitment and quiet confidence. The journey ahead will continue to focus on deepening skills, expanding opportunities, and strengthening its role as a catalyst for inclusive growth within Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

More than a celebration of one year, this milestone affirms a powerful truth: that when women are empowered, communities prosper and hospitality becomes a force for lasting change.

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A dedicated supplier of water lilies for prosperity.



At Amba Yaalu, heritage design, modern comfort, and lakeside serenity meet under the mango trees.

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At Amba Yaalu Kandalama, the future of tourism is not just being imagined; it is being lived, led, and nurtured every day.

Amba Yaalu, Kandalama

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