

Ironman 70.3 Colombo to attract over \$3.5 m “racecation” revenue for SL

By DINYA THOTAWATTE

THE second edition of SO Sri Lanka Ironman 70.3 Colombo is set to kick off on 25 February while expecting revenue of over \$3.5 million from nearly 2,000 tourists visiting the country for the event.

The country's biggest international sporting event, SO Sri Lanka Ironman 70.3 Colombo is to increase engagement and attention for the country, said Pro Am Serendib Director Yassas Hewage at a media briefing in Colombo this week. Hewage explained that the high-profile visitors would not only stay for the event, but also after the event and make use of the trip to enjoy the country as well. “They would spend five to six days in the country, because these are all senior people, they make a holiday out of it. They do the race and then vacation. It's like a new category the “racecation”,” he added.

Hewage stated that Ironman 70.3 was not just another partnership, but an absolute leader for the sports tourism sector of the country because the event is a key international sports brand which has been there for over 40 years. He said that Sri Lanka had no track record of doing anything of that magnitude and therefore it is not just about Ironman, but also about taking the fitness and sports tourism sector of Sri Lanka to another level.

“I hope Sri Lanka understands the growing opportunity; the lifestyle of wellness and fitness is just taking off and we plan to do our part to prepare for that. We have engaged the tourism industry we've done a session on capacity building, and bringing all the experts while publishing the first ever sports tourism research. This time we're going deeper to tell you about the mind set of these athletes, why they select Sri Lanka and, why they do these kinds of events so that you could start building your businesses around it. It's not about plan, it's about all of us,” Hewage elaborated.

According to the organisers, last year, the event saw a majority of the athletes



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Promotion Bureau Chairman
Kishu Gomes



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travelling to Sri Lanka with friends and family, and that over 70% of them had stayed back to tour the country after the race. The reports depict that the average amount spent in Sri Lanka by foreign athletes on food, accommodation, internal travel and leisure activities was Rs.485,000. This year, the event will see over 738 athletes from 58 countries, with over 900 friends and family accompanying the foreign participants, which will amount up to over 1,638 tourists visiting the country.

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) Chairman Kishu Gomes said, “In terms of the tourism sector it's important that we keep expanding the sectors in order to draw attention to extended product portfolios and that's the way we

can grow. I'm excited about the future of tourism in Sri Lanka. The goal for 2019 is three million tourists, hence while growing traditional products we need to find opportunities. In that aspect, sports sponsorships play a key role, and what we're trying to do through this sponsorship is to connect with 58 countries, not just the 1638 visitors.”

The top five participating countries in the SO Sri Lanka Ironman 70.3 Colombo are India, with 94 triathletes, Great Britain with 55, Australia with 46, France with 34, and Japan with 24. Some of the other nations that will be represented at the triathlon are USA, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Germany, Russia, Maldives and Sri Lanka. A significant majority of

the participants are male, with women constituting 24% of the total number of athletes. This year Ironman is encouraging women's participation in the sport and have allocated 25 slots from Sri Lanka exclusively for women that finish first to take part in the 2019 Ironman 70.3 World Championship in Nice, France.

The race begins with a single-loop, 1.9km swim starting at the beach adjoining Galle Face Green, followed by a flat and fast 90km bike course and a 21.1km run course that offers scenic country views and a fantastic finish in front of Galle Face Green. This year the bike course would be extended to Janadhipathi Mawatha, Sir Baron Jayathilaka Mawatha, York Street and 80C Mawatha. The run course will be extended up to Colpetty junction by making it more spectator friendly the main aim of this year's event is to focus on enhancing athlete and spectator experiences with a spectator friendly course design.

SO Sri Lanka Ironman 70.3 Colombo is organised by Pro Am Serendib and the title sponsor of the event is Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau. Partner organisation include Shangri-La Colombo, MAS, Sri Lankan Airlines, Ceylinc, MTV/MBC Group, Hayleys Tours, Advantix, Adidas, Wijeya Newspapers Group, SES, Kantra LMRU, Emerging Media, Rotaract, Strategy Inspire X, Bernard's, Spinners and 330.

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