

FLYING HIGH IN 2009

Deccan Aviation Lanka – the only operator of a helicopter service in Sri Lanka – discusses marketing initiatives and the outlook for 2009.

Q: What are the new marketing initiatives Deccan is undertaking in 2009?

A: The most exciting development is our tie-up with the FlySmiLes programme of Sri Lankan Airlines. For the first time in local aviation history, a domestic airline has been invited to join hands with our national carrier. FlySmiLes members who use our helicopters earn FlySmiLes points and can also redeem these points to charter our helicopters.

All arriving passengers have the option of taking a helicopter directly from Katunayake on arrival from their international flight to virtually any domestic destination within an hour. We are allowed to land directly at the grounds of the passenger's hotel or villa.

Q: What are the other benefits that Deccan offers its customers?

A: For FlySmiLes members we have designed three unique experiences – 'Heritage', 'Beach' and 'Sunrise' which can be booked using FlySmiLes points. The heritage tour takes guests by helicopter to Sigiriya, while the beach tour flies guests along the south coast. The sunrise tour is an overflight of Adam's Peak which is my personal favourite.

Q: How else is Deccan marketing itself for 2009?

A: We have carefully screened and selected 150 individuals, who are the indisputable corporate elite of Sri Lanka, that have been invited to receive our complimentary 'SkyLimo' membership. Among other benefits, holders of the card are offered booking access to our fleet at preferential charter rates and unlimited complimentary use of the Executive Lounge at BIA, no matter which airline they fly or whichever fare.

'SkyLimo' holders can also call on the services of their very own travel concierge, who will suggest luxury itineraries and make reservations at private villas that are normally off-limits to the casual traveller. Members also have access to a fleet of 55 aircraft owned or managed by our partner company Deccan Aviation India, which means, if you need a plane, we will get you one at short notice.

Q: Apart from FlySmiLes, are there any other marketing partnerships you have entered into?



Mario Stubbs
Head of Corporate
Communications

A: Deccan is also the Sri Lankan Representative for the specialist medivac firm, Executive Jets Asia, which ferries critically ill patients from Sri Lanka for urgent medical treatment overseas. This is good as it complements the aircraft we operate three times a week, bringing patients from Jaffna to Colombo.

Q: How do you market yourselves overseas?

A: We have a full-time consultant based in the UK who works closely with the industry to make potential customers aware of our services in Sri Lanka.

Q: How about maintaining service quality?

A: We are concentrating mainly on perfecting our level of customer service which is primarily done by updating our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, to

enable us to decipher and disseminate the many processes that are involved in our operation.

The CRM system helps us in maintaining a concise database of our clients which in turn manages the transition of our direct marketing efforts.

In addition, the gaps that have been identified in our service quality delivery are also being addressed, through a streamlined process of monitoring and intense evaluation. Our crew, ground staff and sales team who are the face of our organisation and key to our front line have been well briefed on closing one of the most important gaps which lie between the service expected by the customer and the management's perception of the customer's expectation.

Q: What are the prospects for Deccan with the opening of the A9 Highway?

A: Our helicopters do not operate to Jaffna and hence this will not change demand for this division, although our aircraft currently operate two flights to Jaffna each day.

The statistics available from the Civil Aviation Authority show that each time the A9 is open, air traffic actually increases, as improved trade and business creates demand for air travel. We are very optimistic and remain committed to retaining our leadership position in Sri Lanka.

– Savithri Rodrigo



MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOFLEET (DECCAN AVIATION)