

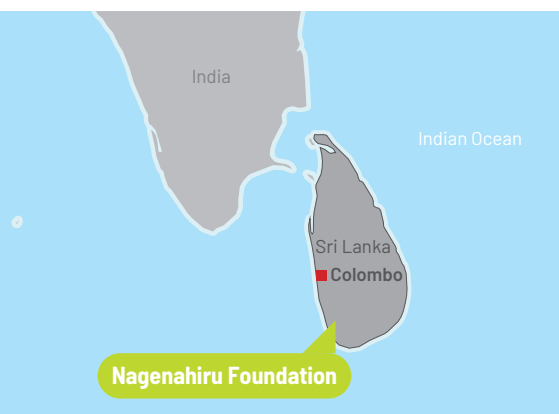


Success story

Experience sustainability: Tourism that creates real impact

From a local conservation initiative to a reliable partner for sustainable travel

What began as a mangrove conservation project now attracts travellers from all over Europe: the Nagenahiru Foundation in Sri Lanka combines environmental protection with authentic travel experiences and is now successfully established in the European market. The Import Promotion Desk (IPD) has played a key role in this journey – supporting the organisation in refining its offers and connecting them with suitable business partners. One result is a long-term partnership with socialbnb, a travel platform specialised in responsible tourism. Together, they demonstrate how tourism can empower local communities while protecting valuable ecosystems.



Products

- Mangrove conservation projects
- Environmental learning experiences
- Community based tourism
- Traditional craft and cooking workshops
- Birdwatching and wildlife observation
- Eco-camping

Hands-on nature conservation

The Nagenahiru Foundation is based at Madampa Lake in southern Sri Lanka – a mangrove ecosystem covering around 319 hectares. Originally established to protect this sensitive ecosystem and secure the livelihoods of surrounding communities, the organisation now combines environmental protection with truly memorable travel experiences.

Travellers can experience conservation through environmental education activities and hands-on mangrove protection initiatives. In addition, they can connect with local communities through traditional cooking classes and craft workshops, discover rich birdlife and wildlife, or stay in eco-camps surrounded by untouched nature.

The result is a deeply immersive and authentic experience that goes far beyond conventional tourism. Visitors gain meaningful insights into local culture and ways of life, while their stays directly support local communities and help preserve unique ecosystems. In this way, the Nagenahiru Foundation responds to the growing demand for regenerative, and mindful travel experiences.

Challenge



Accessing the European and UK market

The basis for attractive tourism experiences was already given – but entering the European market brought new challenges. The Nagenahiru Foundation lacked experience in working with European tour operators and guests, as well as a clear strategy for international marketing. At the same time, there was only limited access to potential business partners. This is where IPD contributed its expertise: building market knowledge, increasing visibility, and opening doors to relevant contacts.





Sajeewa Emmanuel
Project Director,
Nagenahiru Foundation

»The support from the IPD has strengthened our ability to develop professional and sustainable tourism offers.

Thanks to the guidance and business connections provided, we are now reaching European guests.«

Approach



Strengthening skills and building partnerships

Since 2025, the IPD has been supporting the Nagenahiru Foundation in entering the European market. Through practical trainings and tailored coaching, the organisation strengthened its B2B communication skills and sharpened its market positioning. At the same time, they have learned to communicate the unique environmental and social value of their offerings in a clear and compelling way.

This new knowledge was immediately applied in virtual business meetings and at leading international trade fairs such as ITB Berlin and WTM London. There, the organisation established its first valuable connections with European and British tourism companies.

Another key milestone was an IPD-organised FAM trip to Sri Lanka. Tour operators from Europe had the opportunity to experience the initiative on site and see their quality for themselves. This helped building trust - the foundation for long-term business relationships and successful collaborations.

Impact



Sustainable partnerships that create added value for people and nature

Today, the Nagenahiru Foundation works with several European partners. One particularly successful collaboration is with socialbnb. The platform arranges stays with social and environmental projects worldwide and through its partnership with Nagenahiru Foundation, has expanded its portfolio with a unique travel experience that combines nature conservation, cultural exchange and meaningful personal encounters.

This partnership is a strong example of the value created through targeted matchmaking by the IPD. socialbnb gained a reliable partner whose values and offers align perfectly with its own concept. At the same time, the Nagenahiru Foundation is now reaching international guests whose stays make a direct contribution to mangrove conservation and the local community.

The result is more than just a new business relationship. It is the creation of long-term partnerships with tangible benefits for the companies, travellers, communities and the environment - a tourism model that successfully connects economic success with sustainable development.

Further information: www.socialbnb.org/en <https://nagenahiru.org>

Results



- Business deals and partnerships
- Benefits for local communities and nature conservation
- Accommodation capacity



Nils Lohmann
Co-Founder,
socialbnb

»We are truly impressed by our collaboration with the Nagenahiru Foundation. They show how conservation and community-based tourism can work hand in hand.

Through IPD, we discovered this inspiring project and are very happy to have included it in our portfolio.«

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