

Condé Nast Traveller

COMPLIMENTARY WITH
NOV-DEC-JAN 2025-26 ISSUE

PROMOTION

T H E L A T E S T I N
SRI LANKAN
L U X U R Y

New openings, heritage makeovers, and the island's
evolving bespoke travel scene

PLUS: A LENS ON WELLNESS, WILDLIFE, AND NIGHTLIFE



The pool at Amangalla, Sri Lanka

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PHOTOGRAPH BY RESPLENDENT CEYLON

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The top half shows a dense, lush green forest covering a rocky cliffside. The bottom half shows the ocean with white foam from waves crashing against the rocks. The water transitions from a deep blue to a lighter turquoise near the shore.

FOREWORD

The perfect trip to Sri Lanka cannot be boxed into a definition. Across its length and breadth, the island hosts myriad experiences that take different forms along its golden coastline, wild jungles, and glittering cities. The country's tourism has also evolved in such leaps and bounds over the past couple of years that every visit reveals a new lens on the destination. For many of us, Sri Lanka has been a familiar neighbour—close enough to be accessible, yet distinct in the escape it offers. Indians have led the pack of explorers as the largest tourist group arriving into the country this year, and if you end up being one of them, there's a range of novelty waiting for you.

While a crop of new hotels take stage in the region, heritage properties are getting makeovers that preserve timeless stories in a fast changing world. And a growing focus on wellness and wildlife is adding new layers to Sri Lanka's famed coastal charm. Multigenerational getaways are on the rise amid a family travel boom, and on such trips, these experiences are

creating an opportunity to interact and connect with the place, with oneself, and with each other.

Locals and experts are taking travellers on curated journeys to explore all of this more consciously. Personalised to a tee, such itineraries are making it possible to witness Sri Lankan culture up close, but at your pace. In an upward arc representing the rise of bespoke travel, Sri Lanka is coming out at the top. There are more ways than ever to explore the island's diverse beauty—be it by covering the best of history, culture, wellness, and food in one kaleidoscope of a trip, or by expanding into one moment of inspiration that calls out to you. The perfect trip to Sri Lanka cannot be boxed, for the island can give you exactly what you desire, with offerings that continue to evolve at lightning speed.

There is no better time to zoom in on what makes the destination so magnetic. This supplement is an invitation to discover this evolving story of Sri Lanka—one of heritage, hospitality, and the timeless joy of discovery.



BY THE SOUTHERN WATERS

Embrace the gentle soul of Weligama at The Six, a curation of six villas by the water inspired by coastal living. Gather and give in to the slow life with the best of wellness, dining and beachside beauty

Along Sri Lanka's southern coast, where the land melts into the Indian Ocean, The Six Weligama stands as a sanctuary for slowing down. Since its debut in 2024, this enclave of six villas has become a beacon of beachside privacy for discerning travellers, offering a stay that is both deeply personal and indulgent.

Each villa at The Six Weligama is a world unto itself, inspired by a different shoreline from across the world, be it Bali's Amed for its sunlit ease or Greece's Kyra for its timeless romance. Yet all are bound by their nod to natural beauty: sprawling living spaces open directly onto golden sands, bedrooms are hugged by the salty sea breeze, private pools shimmer under the sun, and saunas offer sanctuary after long days of exploration. For families and





Each villa at The Six Weligama is a world unto itself, inspired by a different shoreline from across the world.

friends, the Bari and Cies villas build on this experience with game rooms, larger pools, and endless space to gather.

Dining at The Six is more than sustenance—it is an immersion. Mornings here are marked by a floating breakfast, with trays of fresh fruit and coffee drifting across a turquoise pool. As the sun sets, flames rise from the beachside grill while guests circle a bonfire. Their signature dishes are plated as works of art, marrying global sophistication with the untamed soul of the island. A mobile bar ensures that every hour has its own mood, its own story, whether by way of a sunset cocktail by the shore or a glass of wine to be savoured in solitude.

It's natural to crave rejuvenation by the lapping waves of water, and the wellness focus at this beach destination offers exactly that. Here, relaxation is whispered rather than announced, as evident in the touch of warm stones, the scent of coconut oil, and the harmony of two therapists working in



tandem. Yoga by the sea, meditation at dawn, and saunas in every villa create moments where body, spirit, and the surrounding landscape unite as one.

In all this, service at The Six flows like the tide—ever present, never obtrusive, and gently tying the picture together. Private butlers, chefs, and mixologists anticipate desires before they are spoken, while the team curates experiences that reveal Sri Lanka's magic: imagine watching whales make an appearance out at the ocean, following turtles as they return to shore,



walking through cinnamon groves, and soaking in the timeless echoes of Galle Fort's history.

For more information, visit www.theonegroupofhotels.com/thesix/, email reservations@theonegroupofhotels.com, or call +94 77 550 6000

The Six

BESPOKE JOURNEYS

Personalised and purposeful, these itineraries let you explore the island at your pace



PHOTOGRAPH: RESPLENDENT CEYLON/TOM PARKER

THE PEKOE TRAIL

GO FOR: A SLOW WALK THROUGH SRI LANKA'S TEA COUNTRY

Curated along the scenic Stages 7 and 8 of the 300km trail, half-day hikes trace forest paths and tea estates at a gentle pace. The five-night journey is customised with storytelling stops, tiffin lunches and tea-plucking sessions tailored to each traveller, blending discovery with the quiet luxury of time. resplendentceylon.com

WILDLIFE, CULTURE, AND COAST

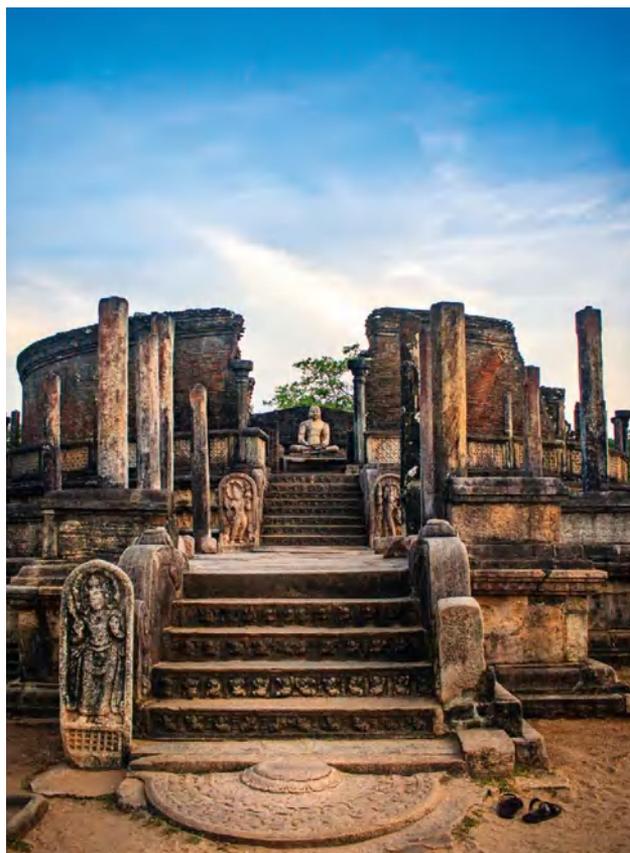
GO FOR: WILD ENCOUNTERS WITH LOCAL EXPERTS

Venture into wilderness on a 10-day journey designed for up to 10 people. Tailored by experienced naturalists and local experts, it begins at Horathapola Estate and visits Polonnaruwa's archaeological sites. Take private meals at stunning locations, encounters with local communities, and wildlife experiences from safaris in Bundala National Park to whale watching off Mirissa's coast. andbeyond.com

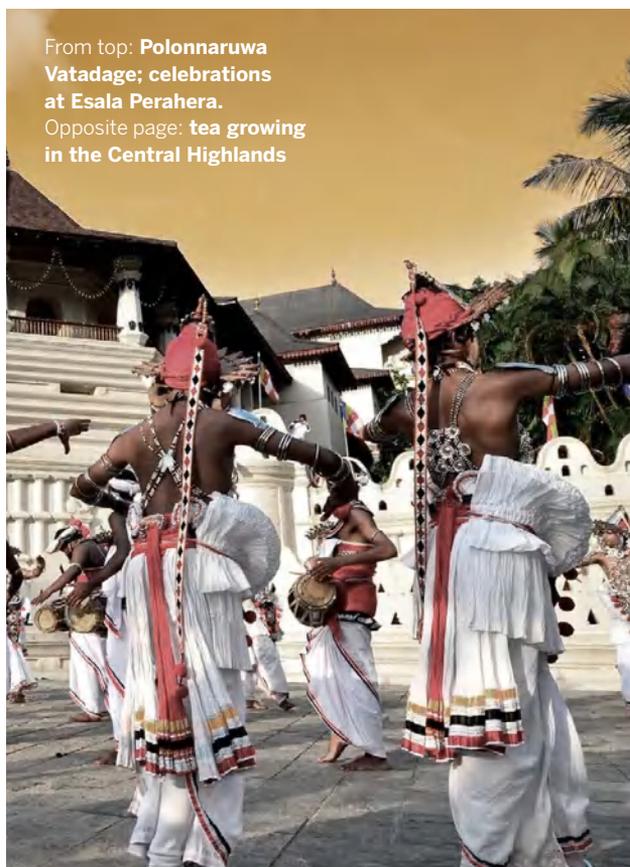
THE BAWA TOUR

GO FOR: A PEEK INTO A VISIONARY'S LEGACY

Take 14 days tracing Geoffrey Bawa's architectural legacy. Explore Sigiriya's ancient citadels, the serene Heritance Kandalama, and the seamless design of The Kandy House. Delve into Lunuganga's lush gardens and conclude at The Last House, Bawa's coastal masterpiece. Guided tours, meals and stays along the way let you soak in Bawa's tropical modernism. srilankainstyle.com



From top: **Polonnaruwa Vatadage; celebrations at Esala Perahera.**
Opposite page: **tea growing in the Central Highlands**



SRI LANKA IN STYLE

GO FOR: A SNAPSHOT OF THE BEST IN SRI LANKA

Cover the Cultural Triangle over 13 days of touring tea estates in the central highlands, cultural sites in Anuradhapura, and the southern coast. Heritage train rides, tastings and tours, and visits to UNESCO sites are tailored with stops and stays as per your choice. abercrombiekent.com

ESALA PERAHERA

GO FOR: THE GREATEST CULTURAL FESTIVITIES IN KANDY

It's not easy planning a trip around Esala Perahera, one of the country's most famous cultural festivals. The event takes place in Kandy over 10 days in July or August. This customised journey lets you see the best of the celebrations, coupling it with stops at Polonnaruwa and the Dambulla Cave Temples. Wind off with a relaxing few days in Trincomalee and Colombo. ampersandtravel.com

STAY

Only available for a single booking of six to 30 people at a time, ANI Sri Lanka offers two salas on a private southern beach. Everything from stay and dining to spa journeys and cultural adventures is personalised to guest preference.

TRAVEL

For private transfers, operators like Helitours offer helicopters to remote locations, while Sail Lanka has yachts for leisurely cruising. Or, book a carriage on The Viceroy Special, a vintage steam train with a scenic route.

A JOURNEY ACROSS LANKAN SHORES

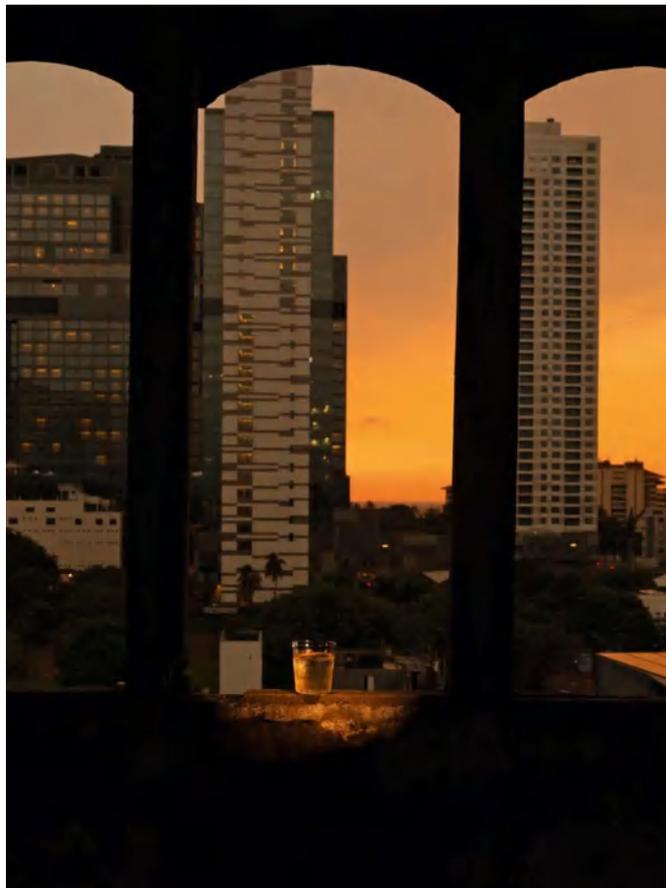
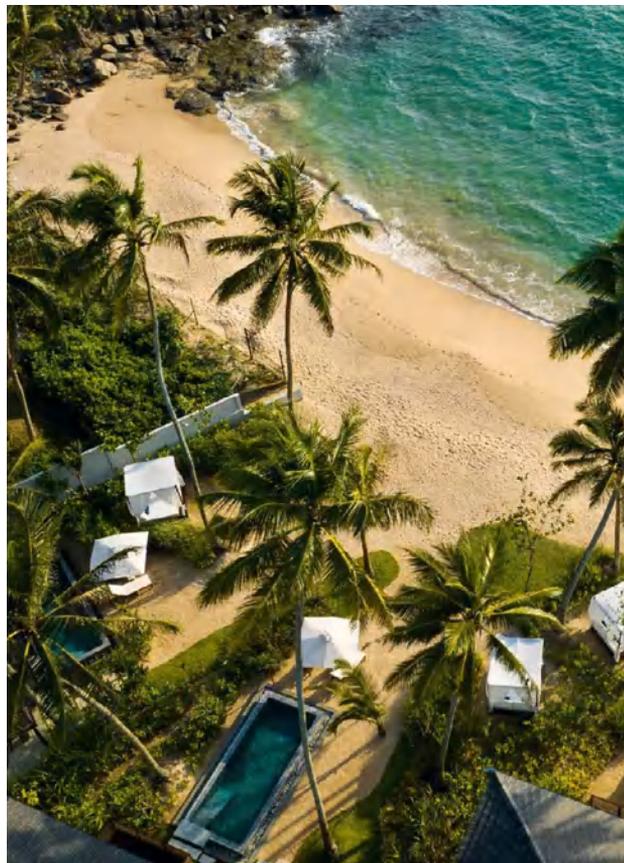
In Sri Lanka, every journey begins with a promise: golden beaches meeting a sun-kissed horizon, misty hills scented with tea, ancient citadels etched in stone, and plains alive with the frolic of wildlife. Amid such abundance, the best way to experience a destination is to see it from an insider's lens, and that is where We Stay Ceylon steps in. The Colombo-based tour designer is reimagining bespoke journeys across the island with destination experts to craft every aspect of your next getaway.

Founded by seasoned travel professionals Imthiyaz Boharie and Akeelah Kalim, We Stay Ceylon was born from years of experience in crafting getaways for discerning travellers. Today, their team orchestrates itineraries supported by trusted local guides, chauffeurs, and a dedicated concierge service that ensures every moment of your trip feels effortless.

But recovery matters as much as discovery, which is why their selection of accommodation is never ordinary either. Guests enjoy privileged access to Sri Lanka's finest villas, resorts, coastal hideaways, and historic estates. For travellers ready to discover Sri Lanka at its most exclusive and unforgettable, We Stay Ceylon is more than a travel planner—it is a storyteller revealing the secrets of the land, opening a gateway into the island's soul.

For more information, visit www.westayceylon.com, email hello@westayceylon.com, or call +94741200044

We Stay Ceylon
Luxury Travel Designer



SIPS AND SECRETS

There's a new buzz in Colombo, and it's coming from behind a discreet doorway on Kopannya Veediya. Kampong, named after the Malay word for 'village', is Colombo's newest cocktail bar. Part neighbourhood story, part sensory time machine, it leans into the city's forgotten past, when the neighbourhood was a cultural crossroads of traders and sailors. Head bartender Nelaka Dayawansa, the self-taught talent behind Gini's cult cocktails, leads a drinks programme that's both nostalgic and avant-garde. Expect bold, local infusions that pay homage to sights in the neighborhood, alongside a variety of small plates. The food menu riffs on comfort classics, turning them into elegant small plates that feel familiar but surprise with every bite. The design keeps things grounded, anchored by a low bar that invites you to lean in, watch, and chat with the mixologists as they work their magic. Kampong isn't just another bar—it's a conversation with Colombo itself. Every pour carries a secret from the island's past, every sip feels like discovering something you didn't know you'd missed.

For more information, email kampong.colombo@gmail.com, or follow them @kampong.colombo

KAMPONG



COME TASTE THE
island life

GINI

www.ginicolombo.com

WELLNESS ESCAPES

Set amid natural beauty to sate the soul, these Sri Lankan retreats are offering personalised journeys for holistic wellness

SANTANI WELLNESS KANDY

Tucked amid the rolling hills of Werapitiya, Santani Wellness is built at the intersection of inner restoration and atmospheric views. The resort invites in mountain mist through its open pavilions for oneness with the surroundings. Guests are welcome to book spa services or multiday journeys crafted by therapists and nutritionists. Each experience blends modern science with Ayurvedic rituals to restore the body's equilibrium.

Signature Treatment: The Santani Detox combines Ayurvedic cleansing, yoga, and plant-based nutrition for gentle renewal and mental clarity. *Doubles from approx. ₹87,000; santani.com*

KAYAAM HOUSE, REKAWA

Kayaam House is designed as a place of deep rest, sitting on an unspoilt beach away from the din of the world. The retreat, which opened as part of the Reverie Collection

by Resplendent Ceylon, offers packages to restore inner balance through Ayurvedic care, local botanicals, and nourishing meals.

Signature Treatment: The Ayurveda Immersion is a three-night orientation in holistic wellbeing with therapies, meditation, and yoga sessions. *Doubles from approx. ₹50,000; resplendentceylon.com*

AMANWELLA, TANGALLE

There's a stillness about Amanwella that feels almost architectural—clean lines, the hush between palm fronds, waves lapping just beyond. Wellness here is not prescribed but practiced in sync with daily rhythms: think slow breakfasts of local fruit, breathwork by the sea, and mindful movement on an alfresco platform. Programmes follow Aman's four pillars of nutrition, movement, psychological health, and bodywork.

Signature Treatment: The Amanwella massage is entirely bespoke, with therapists adjusting pressure, oils, and pace to each guest's needs. *Doubles from approx. ₹1,06,000; aman.com*

GLENROSS LIVING, KALUTARA

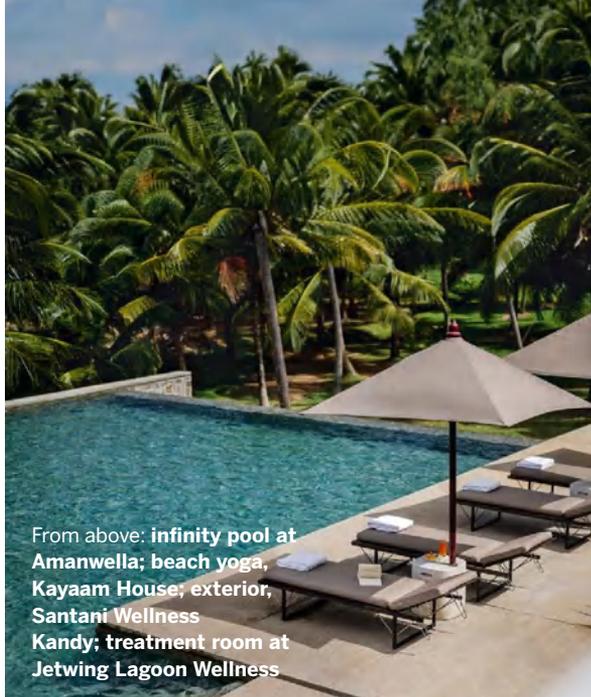
Ten rooms and villas offer the gift of privacy at this Scottish hillside mansion. Plunge pools, a breezy yoga deck, and treatment rooms for tailored Asian therapies sit against the valley views of Kalutara. For those interested in exploring strength and mental stimulation, trained instructors offer sessions in the ancient martial art form of Angampora, clubbing agility and self-defense skills with meditation and mindfulness.

Signature Treatment: The Glenross Living Signature curates Balinese, Vietnamese, Japanese Shiatsu, and Thai stretching techniques. *Doubles from approx. ₹26,000; glenrossliving.com*

SOUL & SURF, AHANGAMA

At Soul & Surf, wellness wears a salt-streaked grin. Here, restoration isn't confined to a spa, but found in the tinsel waves, the sand between toes, the slow sundowners. Guests can take surf lessons, open-air yoga in the rooftop shala, and deep relaxation massages, but also enjoy the odd live music night and evening barbecues on a spirited quest for self discovery.

Signature Treatment: Their all-inclusive week combines guided surfing, yoga, and food with evenings of communal connection. *Packages from approx. ₹1,30,000; soulandsurf.com*



From above: infinity pool at Amanwella; beach yoga, Kayaam House, exterior, Santani Wellness Kandy; treatment room at Jetwing Lagoon Wellness



JETWING LAGOON WELLNESS, NEGOMBO

At Sri Lanka's first hotel designed by Geoffrey Bawa, a sense of wellness lives on in the details. The stay here is guided by five pillars: mindfulness, nutrition, movement, rest, and community, integrating yoga, mindful dining, and creative local experiences. Morning vinyasa and evening yin sessions unfold at the Geoffrey's Pavilion, which remains open to the breeze by the lagoon.

Signature Treatment: The Authentic Abhyanga is a rhythmic herbal-oil massage followed by steam therapy for improved circulation and vitality. *Doubles from approx. ₹26,000; jetwinghotels.com*

AARUNYA NATURE RESORT, KANDY

Aarunya's newly relaunched Aarogya Spa & Wellness Centre sits on a foundation of Sri Lankan healing traditions and light-touch Ayurveda. Treatments can be taken at the spa, which features a nutmeg bathhouse, Ayurveda hut, and infrared sauna, or at each of the ten villas including the newest Sol Sanctuary.

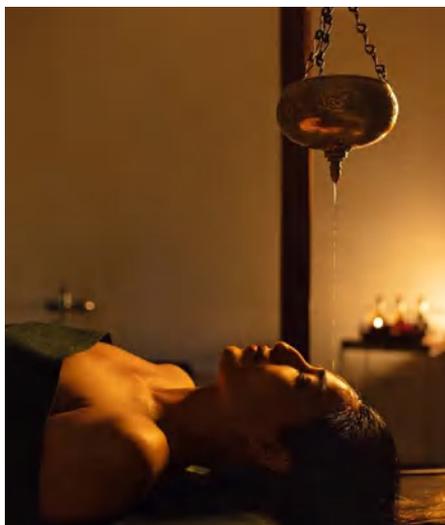


Signature Treatment: The Spice Harmony Ritual features scrubs, massages, and more inspired by the spices of Aarunya's estate. *Doubles from approx. ₹53,000; aarunyaresort.com*

KURULU BAY, AHANGAMA

A jungle and nearby lake frame the scene as well as philosophy at Kurulu Bay. Rooted in the balance of body, mind, and spirit, the spa blends traditional Sri Lankan healing with contemporary therapies shaped by experts from around the world. To nurture connection with nature, the retreats offer creative experiences such as cacao ceremonies, blue lotus rituals, and sound healing.

Signature Treatment: The Kurulu Calm releases energy blockages through deep, rhythmic strokes for circulation and serenity. *Doubles from approx. ₹28,000; kurulubay.com*



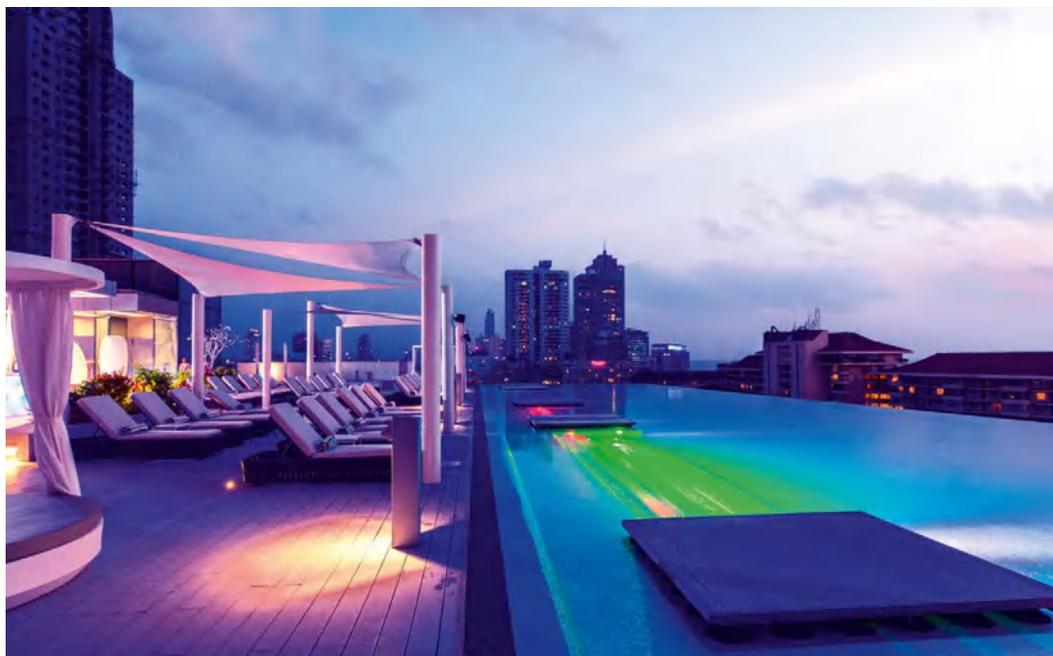


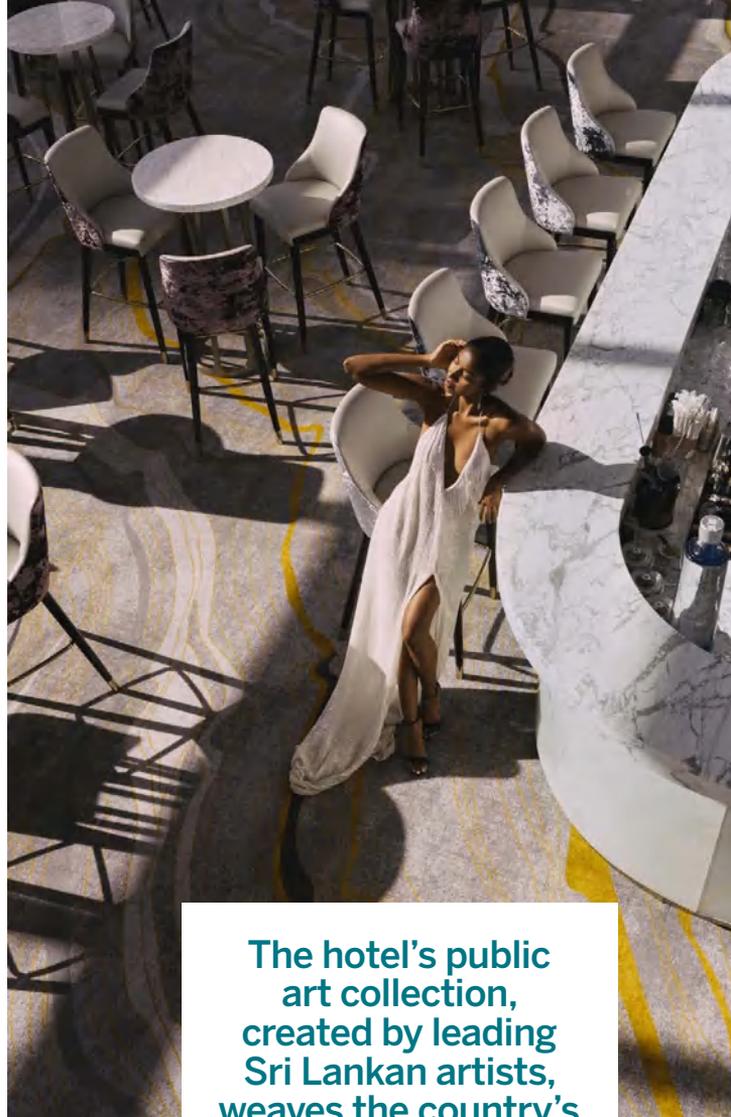
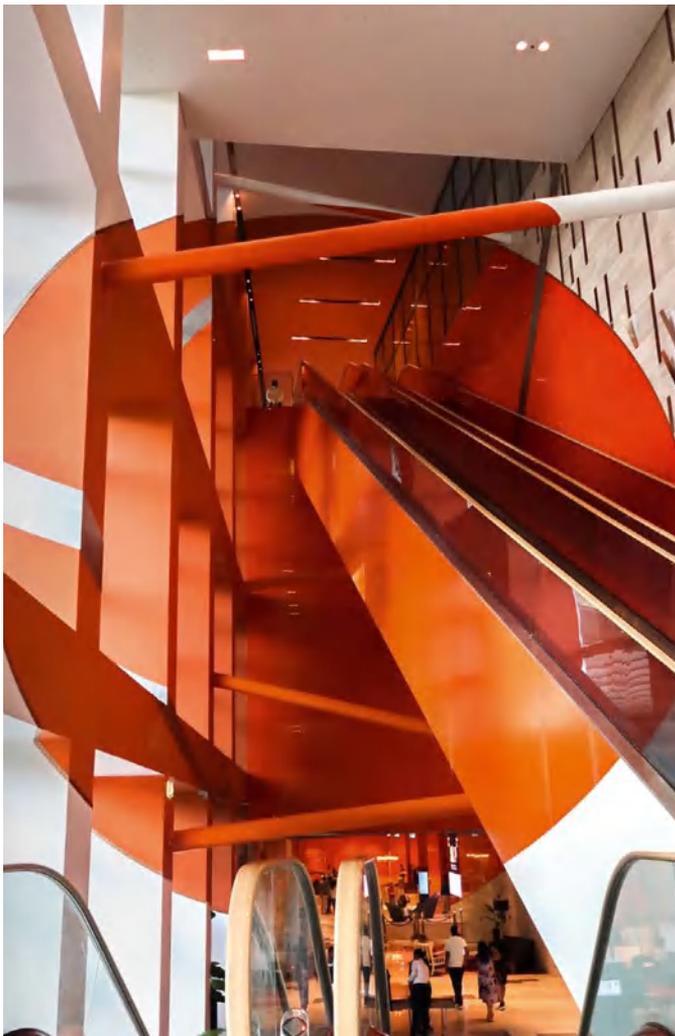
A NEW ADVENTURE

Experience Colombo in a whole new way at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka, an ambitious new address with panoramic views, eclectic dining, and a world class casino

Colombo has long been a city of contrasts. Old world streets meet glass-fronted towers here, while tranquil lakes rest against the hum of markets. Rising from the heart of this dichotomy is Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka, a bold new landmark that reimagines the city as an urban playground for travellers who want it all without having to choose: culture in the lap of luxury and entertainment with ease.

Arriving at Cinnamon Life at City of Dreams Sri Lanka is seamless. From the airport, guests are welcomed into the city in less than an hour, with private transfers arranged in a fleet of luxe cars and electric vehicles. Inside, the scale impresses.





The hotel's public art collection, created by leading Sri Lankan artists, weaves the country's history, diversity, and landscapes into every corner and corridor.

With 687 rooms and suites, the hotel has attracted international attention for its superlative scale, offering a panorama of choice with a butler service that marries stay with service. Its ocean-facing suites frame the Indian Ocean at sunrise, while skyline rooms reveal the pulse of Colombo after dark.

At an address of this size, experiences unfurl across various levels and moods. At Dreams & Beats, the infinity pool seems to stretch into the horizon. At Kurundu, wellness therapies inspired by the five elements offer restoration, while the fitness studio energises body and mind. Dining becomes a journey around the world: Cantonese artistry at Sapphire Dragon, Mediterranean seafood at Bistro des Marées, refined Japanese flavours at Yoroko, fragrant Indian classics at Indiya, and indulgent grills at Staten Bar. Sweet Lab, with its desserts and coffee, provides the perfect punctuation.

Evenings spill effortlessly into Colombo's social scene without ever leaving the property. Gatz shifts from afternoon tea to a lively night bar, Flux pours cocktails under



sunset skies, and Cloud Wine, guided by an international sommelier, curates rare vintages in intimate style.

What anchors all this is a sense of place, expressed through a lens on the region's art scene. The hotel's public art collection, created by leading Sri Lankan artists, weaves the country's history, diversity, and landscapes into every corner and corridor. Outside, Beira Lake glimmers, pelicans in

flight reminding guests that even in the city, serenity is never far.

No wonder that for families, business travellers, or those chasing the thrill of its world-class casino, Cinnamon Life is more than a hotel. It is Colombo's hottest new address where every experience feels like a celebration.

For more information,

visit www.cinnamonlife.com, email life-reservations@cinnamonhotels.com, or call 0112220000



BACK IN TIME

Reimagined as iconic hotels, these heritage properties are keepers of the island's storied past

CEYLON TEA TRAILS, HATTON

Set across five tea planters' bungalows, Ceylon Tea Trails once housed British estate managers. Under the Fernando family of tea company Dilmah, the bungalows went through a restoration led by designer Deirdre Renniers and later refined by Cécile Domain. Original rooms, verandas, gardens, and fireplaces remained, while with new pools, jacuzzis, and world class hospitality, Tea Trails soon became the first Relais & Châteaux property in Sri Lanka. *Doubles from approx. ₹1,08,000;* resplendentceylon.com



Owner's Cottage at Dunkeld Bungalow, Ceylon Tea Trails

GALLE FORT HOTEL, GALLE

Look closely, and you will see this hotel's story as a Dutch merchant's home. Crushed coral, shells, and stone hide beneath its plastered walls, while the Palladian archway built for his daughter's wedding still greets visitors. As the new custodian, Karl Steinberg preserved and restored this structure with architect Channa Daswatte, reopening it as Galle Fort Hotel in 2004. Today, the hotel is writing its own story with Sri Lanka's first arrack specialty bar, Ropewalk. *Doubles from approx. ₹45,000;* galleforhotel.com

PARADISE ROAD TINTAGEL COLOMBO

This grand residence was built in 1930 by Lucien De Zilwa, and later produced three Prime Ministers and Sri Lanka's first female President as home to the Bandaranaike family. In 2005, design visionary Udayshanth Fernando transformed it into a 10-key boutique hotel with eclectic interiors: European chandeliers, Chinese antiques, and Sri Lankan contemporary art. A pool, courtyard fountain, and the Red Bar add modern flair to this picture without erasing its heritage. *Doubles from approx ₹31,000;* paradiseroadhotels.com

GALLE FACE HOTEL, COLOMBO

This site was originally a Dutch villa in the 18th century, turned into a hotel in 1864, and continued to expand through the next three decades. Restored in the 2010s, it today preserves the 19th-century luxury of scale by way of colonial façades, high ceilings, and verandahs. While the rooms have been reimaged in a contemporary style, it



Sandella Garden Room at Lunuganga

sustains its legacy as Sri Lanka's most storied seafront hotel. *Doubles from approx. ₹16,000;* gallefacehotel.com

THOTALAGALA, HAPUTALE

Built in 1870 as an estate manager's residence, Thotalagala was once a part of Dambattenne, one of the five estates bought by Sir Thomas Lipton. The bungalow was later reimaged as a retreat with each of the seven rooms named after a figure who shaped Sri Lanka's history. The gardens were redesigned by botanist Sam Popham, and remain untouched along with the rest of the structure. *Doubles from approx. ₹89,000;* thotalagala.com

KAHANDA KANDA, GALLE

It was love at first sight for George Cooper. Just outside Galle in 1999, the interior

designer stumbled upon a 10-acre hilltop estate overlooking Koggala Lake, which later became his holiday home. It now stands as a boutique hotel featuring 12 villas. Minimal boundaries, plunge pools, and outdoor showers blur the lines between indoors and outdoors, leaving guests to witness Sri Lanka's stunning wildlife up close. *Doubles from approx. ₹45,000;* kkcollection.com

AMANGALLA, GALLE

Dating back to 1684, Amangalla began as a pair of Dutch houses before serving as a British garrison. Transformed into the New Oriental Hotel in 1865 and reborn under Aman in 2004, it retains an old world elegance in its teak floors, high ceilings, and arched windows. A spa, a pool, and the Garden House spell out the signature Aman experience, which builds on the property's location within the historic Galle

Fort. *Doubles from approx. ₹89,000;* aman.com

LUNUGANGA, BENTOTA

After serving as a British cinnamon and rubber plantation, Lunuganga was transformed by Geoffrey Bawa into an arcadian estate and garden. This estate stands as is even today, overseen by The Bawa Trust with the hotel being managed by Teardrop Hotels. Among the few new additions made by the trust is the Master Suite, which was once occupied by Geoffrey Bawa himself and had previously remained off limits for guests. *Doubles from approx. ₹57,000;* teardrop-hotels.com

JETWING MAHESA BHAWAN, JAFFNA

The dream home of Richard and Maheswari Cooke has carried their legacy through decades of conflict and disarray. After changing several hands over eight decades, the two-storey villa was bought by the owners of Jetwing Hotels and resorted by architect Lilani Jayaweera. Now Jaffna's first boutique hotel, it retains the stately façade and warmth of a lived home with four heritage rooms and a new pool. *Doubles from approx. ₹20,000;* jetwinghotels.com

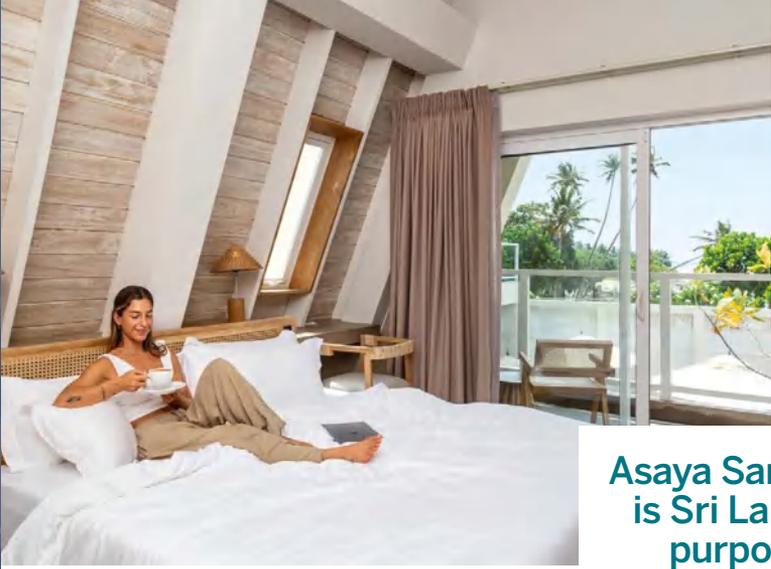
FORT BAZAAR, GALLE

The sleek interiors of Fort Bazaar belie its origin story. When Teardrop Hotels took over the building in 2006, the plan was to retain its historic proportions and identity while adding details that suited the new-age traveller. Now, the former merchant's home hosts travellers in rooms with modern amenities and contemporary interiors—think custom furnishings and sleek materials. *Doubles from approx. ₹53,000;* teardrop-hotels.com

STANDUP MORNINGS IN MIRISSA

On Sri Lanka's famed Southern coast lies Asaya Sands, a first of its kind retreat in Mirissa designed to ensure that you can unwind without having to switch off





Asaya Sands Mirissa is Sri Lanka's first purpose-built resort for the location-independent professional.



Asaya Sands Mirissa is Sri Lanka's first purpose-built resort for the location-independent professional. Designed as a private stay by the beach, it is complete with all the world-class amenities you need to check off your to-do list during your travels.

The resort consists of 14 thoughtfully furnished rooms, with ample natural light flowing in through tall windows. Southern Sri Lanka is famed for its art and crafts heritage, and you will spot subtle nods to this legacy at almost every touchpoint. The resort also features blazing WiFi, several private meeting rooms equipped with top-of-the-line video conferencing facilities, and a dedicated coworking space. One of the largest in the area, this space is where individual professionals can connect with each other and with like-minded travellers. With hot desks, meeting rooms, and a quiet focus zone, guests can lead an executive retreat here with the ocean as their backdrop. This balance of work and play makes Asaya Sands Mirissa a natural choice not only for digital nomads, but also for



start-ups and businesses seeking inspiration in an island break.

There's nothing like sampling Sri Lanka's legendary culinary delights, and travellers can savour the best of them at Asaya Sands. Here, the restaurant and bar offer a menu crafted from the ground up, incorporating fresh local ingredients and traditional cooking styles consciously tweaked to suit a more global palate. Authentic Sri Lankan fare is also

available on request for those who dare to try the spice levels loved by the locals.

Venturing beyond the resort's boundaries unlocks the slow-paced charm of the south. Whale-watching boats set off from Mirissa harbour, while the breaks at Weligama and Mirissa beckon surfers of every level. Inland, cultural encounters await, from mask-painting workshops and puppet performances to Galle Fort's storied ramps.

Asaya Sands is perfect not just for you but even for an entire executive team to host a retreat. For the modern traveller, this is the face of true luxury, the freedom to work and wander, without compromise.

For more information, visit www.asaya.lk, email reservations@asaya.lk, or call +94 11 758 8482

as
asaya sands

FROM SURF TO SAFARI

Discover Sri Lanka in all its diversity at properties by Thema Collection, each rooted in the land they stand on and the culture they celebrate





Certified by global nonprofit Green Destinations, the properties at Thema Collection honour both environment and heritage while offering guests refined comfort.



of the planter era, with butlers tending to guests in heritage suites overlooking tea fields and manicured gardens. The heritage architecture adds to the charm, with stately suites and alfresco spaces. In Mandaram Nuwara, a century-old tea factory now stands reimagined as the Tea & Experience Factory with its farm to cup experience.

Threading these experiences together is a deep commitment to sustainability and conscious hospitality. Thema Collection supports local communities, champions women in hospitality, and leads conservation initiatives from turtle protection to biodiversity research. Certified by global nonprofit Green Destinations, its properties honour both environment and heritage while offering guests refined comfort.

For travellers, each stay in the collection is not just accommodation but immersion—whether in the cadence of the sea, the quiet of the hills, or the call of the wild. With Thema Collection, luxury is found in the way every place tells its own story, and invites you to become part of it.

For more information,

visit www.themacollection.com, email info@themacollection.com, or call +94117386386

Amid the golden south coast, tea-clad highlands, and the island's many national parks, Thema Collection curates stays that feel less like hotels and more like stories of the land. Fourteen properties carry this narrative, each shaped by its setting as well as the community that thrives in it. Together, they form a portfolio where individuality is the greatest luxury.

On the southern coast, the rhythm of the sea shapes life at Mirissa's Vis Ta Vie and Parangi Weligama Bay. Parangi sits on a lively sweep of Weligama Bay as a favourite among surfers and families, while Vis Ta Vie is tucked into a quieter cove for ocean views and slower days. Both celebrate the south's

abundance with seafood feasts, butler service, and Ayurvedic spa rituals practiced against the gush of waves.

In the wild heart of the island, Waraka Udawalawe rises from a jackfruit garden featuring contemporary design as well as a culinary journey built around the humble fruit. Wild Glamping Gal Oya takes a different path. Consciously crafted with the support of the Veddah community, its open verandas and naturalist-led safaris immerse guests in one of Sri Lanka's most untouched national parks.

The hills tell yet another story, thanks to Scottish Planter Bungalow Glendevon in Nuwara Eliya and Mountbatten Bungalow in Kandy. They both preserve the romance





AN ITALIAN TRYST

Experience the romance of Italian fine dining come alive on the streets of Sri Lanka. At Aqua Forte and Aqua Pazza, a culinary adventure awaits with housemade delicacies and choice wines

Amid Sri Lanka's kaleidoscope of local flavours converging with global influences, the Aqua Family has carved out a space for authentic Italian dining. Well heeled locals and tourists alike seek out comforting flavours at its two spectacular restaurants—Aqua Forte in Galle Fort and Aqua Pazza in Colombo—looking to savour European culinary artistry that, for a moment, open doors to the flip side of Sri Lanka as you know it.

A STORIED SETTING

A neoclassical Dutch mansion in the heart of Galle Fort houses Aqua Forte, its





heritage bones reimagined into a space of understated elegance. Linen-draped tables, Italian glassware, and copper accents create an atmosphere that is intimate yet sophisticated. Etchings by Italian artist Walter Valentini complete this picture, giving the restaurant a gallery-like atmosphere that sets the stage for food recognised by The World's 50 Best Discovery. Executive Chef Roberto Vicario draws inspiration from every corner of Italy for his menu, balancing tradition with modern technique. Handmade pastas, freshly baked breads, and authentic flavours make dining here feel like a journey through Italy—perfect for those looking to switch things up between heaps of local curry rice. Everything is made fresh to order, down to each loaf of bread. Complementing the food is the island's most extensive Italian wine list, personally curated by the owners.

For more information,

visit www.aquaforterestaurant.com/reservations/ or email info@aquaforterestaurant.com



CONTEMPORARY DINING

The gentle experience in Galle is contrasted by a bold, modernist restaurant set in the lively Park Street Mews of Colombo. Aqua Pazza is unapologetic in its interiors, inspired by the design languages of Milan and Madrid. Here, sleek furniture, abstract art, and a play of soft lighting sets off a flood of warmth in the air. The menu is a thoughtful blend of Italian and Spanish influences: house-made pastas and breads meet regionally inspired tapas, all crafted with a balance of imported delicacies and the best of local produce. Whether it's a quiet business lunch,

a romantic dinner, or an evening of wine and small plates, the eclectic match of ambience with food caters to everyone without ever compromising on quality. The wine list here is equally ambitious, with one of the most extensive by-the-glass selections in the country designed to make exploration approachable and enjoyable. With a range of sumptuous desserts to wind up the fare, it's easy to stretch dinners to leisurely evenings of indulgence. At both restaurants, private dining rooms allow for intimate celebrations, while customised menus for groups highlight the team's versatility.

For more information,

visit www.aquapazzarestaurant.com/reservations/ or email info@aquapazzarestaurant.com



DINING ACROSS LANKA

These iconic culinary experiences at the island's hotels offer more than just food

A FIELD TRIP UGA ULAGALLA

This boutique dining pavilion set amidst rice fields transports you into an alternate life on the island. **The Kamatha** experience sits you down in cinnamon stick chairs in a rural mud home on an open patch in the middle of a field. Local women lay out a feast of 25 dishes for a taste of royal dining traditions through Sri Lanka's indigenous foods.

FROM ITALY WITH LOVE ANANTARA PEACE HAVEN TANGALLE RESORT

Il Mare pairs fine Italian fare with Tangalle's most spectacular sunsets. Dine indoors or alfresco on dishes like Mirissa tuna tartare, Wagyu lasagne, and Tuscan-style baby chicken. With fine wines and sea views, its coastal romance served with unmistakable Italian flair.

FLAVOURS OF GALLE THE MERCHANT

Sample family recipes at **1710**, a Galle Fort restaurant in a 14-key hotel built by a family of gem traders. Dishes such as the Galle Biryani carry stories of the region's past, having been created by settlers and traders over the years. Others, like the ambul thiyal pizza and tangy eggplant pickle, offer a new take on traditional Sri Lankan preparations.

DINING IN THE WILD WILD COAST TENTED LODGE

Dine by the dunes or on the beach where Yala's jungle meets the Indian Ocean. **The Wilderness Dining Experience** at this Relais & Châteaux property features multi-course menus of local seafood, heritage rice, and spiced curries cooked over open fires and served in bespoke setups at natural locations.

A JOURNEY FROM INDIA ITC RATNADIPA, A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL

ITC Ratnadipa's launch last year brought **Avartana** to Sri Lanka. The flagship restaurant, which ranked #8 at the Condé Nast Traveller Top Restaurant Awards 2025, offers progressive renditions of South Indian distilled down into theatrical bites. The multisensory tasting menus of seven, nine, and 13 courses feature traditional dishes prepared with modern cooking techniques, from clarified rasam to raw mango pudding with a ghee candle.

VINTAGE DINING THE GRAND HOTEL NUWARA ELIYA

This heritage hotel reimagines its vintage rooms as eccentric dining locations. Anachronistic table setups lend a fine dining

atmosphere to a century-old boiler room or a laundry area. Take your pick from such secluded spots in the building, and savour a **themed dinner** with interactive elements punctuating the meal.

TRACING THE SOURCE TEKANDA LODGE

At this boutique hotel, guests are invited to connect with the land that feeds them. Owners Richard and Charlie Pembroke lead **guided estate tours** featuring the tea, coconut, and cinnamon production process. Enroute, the kitchen garden offers an untamed lesson in the ingredients used in the communal dinners at night. Guests can also visit food markets with their chef or learn to cook local dishes.

The Kamatha at Uga Ulagalla

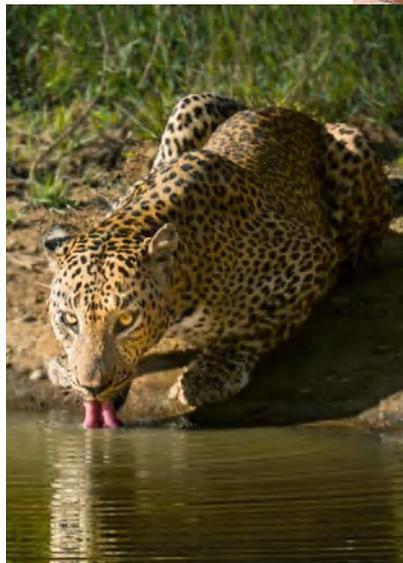


A WILD LIFE

From watching the world's largest elephant gathering to caring for turtles by the waves, there are more ways than one to get familiar with the life that thrives on the island

GATHERING IN MINNERIYA

Every year between July and October, Minneriya National Park hosts the largest gathering of Asian elephants in the world as a stop on the island's elephant corridor. As the waters of the ancient Minneriya Tank recede, dense glades draw the gentle giants in by the hundreds. The best time to be there is late afternoon, when families shuffle in from the forest. Set base at the nearby **Cinnamon Lodge Habarana** amid 27 acres of forest, or opt for a more immersive experience at **Mahoora Tented Camps**.



TURTLE TRACKING

To develop a positive footprint, track turtles at one of the hatcheries on the island. Kosgoda's beach has been a vital nesting ground for endangered turtles for decades. Five species including the leatherback and hawksbill lay their eggs here, safeguarded by conservation projects that incubate and release thousands of hatchlings each season. Visitors can tour the hatchery, meet rescued adults, and watch them head into the surf. Perch at the lagoon-side boutique property of **The Postcard Galle**, and head out with them to the beach's care centre for firsthand experience of turtle care and conservation.

THE LEOPARDS OF YALA

With one of the highest leopard densities in the world, Yala National Park is easily Sri Lanka's big cat capital. Every morning, visitors fan out across its thorny outcrops looking out for leopards sprawled on boulders or padding lightly through the grass. Sloth bears, elephants, and over 200 bird species add to the spectacle. The dry months of May to July bring high leopard spotting and thin crowds. Stay at the sleek **Hilton Yala Resort**, the award-winning **Wild Coast Tented Lodge** with its cocoon-like suites, or the intimate **Uga Chena Huts** with its private plunge pools against untamed wilderness.



Clockwise, from top: elephant gathering; turtles in the sea; leopard in Yala



A WHALE TO SPOT

The southern waters off Mirissa are a passage for whales. From December to April, blue whales, sperm whales, and pods of spinner dolphins breach and dive within sight of the coast. It can get crowded around this time, though sustainable operators maintain a safe distance with half-day cruises into the deep. Further along the shore, **Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort** makes for a comfortable base with cliffside villas and Ayurvedic treatments. Join them for an excursion to Mirissa at dawn, and depart in a traditional fishing trawler restored for leisure cruising.

BIRDERS' PARADISE

Sri Lanka is also home to

a mesmerising repository of avian creatures. Head inland to the UNESCO-listed Sinharaja Forest Reserve, the country's last stretch of rainforest popularly known as a birdwatcher's paradise. It's home to 34 endemic species, from the Sri Lanka blue magpie to the red-faced malkoha. Early morning walks reveal flocks flitting through the canopy as antsy langurs swing overhead. The edge of the reserve features a few unassuming stays, but places like **Martin's Lodge** are well-frequented by birding enthusiasts and the eco-conscious **The Rainforest Ecolodge** offers direct access to dawn trails and the sounds of the jungle at night.

A COASTAL HIDEAWAY

Sri Lanka's premium beachside destination, Sol House Mirissa, comes kitted with two villas, private pools, and all the trappings of a coastal hideaway





The first thing you notice at Sol House Mirissa is the sound—a gentle flush of waves breaking against golden sand, inspiring a restful pace that sets the tone for your entire stay. Here, life revolves around the ocean: its endless horizon, its shifting moods, its promise of escape.

The two three-bedroom villas are designed not as showpieces but as havens of this coastal lifestyle. The Ocean Breeze villa brings with it sun-soaked terraces, while Garden Bliss offers a leafy calm and rooftop views. Each alcove of private space comes with two pools and direct beach access. The sense of space coupled with the option of a buyout offers the perfect playground for multi-generational getaways, with something to do for everyone. Days at Sol House don't follow an itinerary so much as they shift with the tide. Mornings may begin barefoot on the beach, and sundowners enjoy coffee sipped by a pool that mirrors the sky.

Meals are crafted as milestones in these nature-kissed days. From a seafood grill under a pink sunset sky to a private alfresco

What happens between these meals is set entirely to your whim. You can venture out to Mirissa's famed waters for whale watching, lose yourself in the markets of Galle, or return to the surf for a dance with the waves.

dinner under flickering lanterns, each dining experience is a moment to pause and mingle with the surroundings. With a chef curating each plate to your personal taste, dining here feels less like service and more like ritual—intimate, unhurried, unforgettable.

What happens between these meals is set entirely to your whim. You can venture out to Mirissa's famed waters for whale watching, lose yourself in the markets of Galle, or return to the surf for a dance with the waves. For some, the greatest indulgence is never leaving at all: midnight dips in the pool,

reading under the shade, or surrendering to a massage that carries the scent of coconut and sea breeze.

There is no script at Sol House Mirissa, only gentle suggestions. The rooftop terrace calls for starlit gatherings, a movie room inspires laidback nights, and the private pools blur boundaries between ocean and accommodation. Families, friends, couples—whichever you arrive with, the stay moulds to the shape of your story. Here, luxury is not just what you are offered, but how you become part of the beachside rhythm.

For more information, visit www.theonegroupofhotels.com/sol-house/, email reservations@theonegroupofhotels.com, or call +94 77 900 0077



SOL HOUSE
—
MIRISSA

COLOMBO AFTER HOURS

As the sun goes down, the city wakes up with a new lease of life. From open mic nights to dive bar hopping, these nocturnal experiences let you see Colombo in a new light



OPEN MIC NIGHTS

Every now and then, **The Geoffrey Bawa Trust** calls Colombo's literary crowds together for an open mic night of poetry. Set within The Bawa Space, Geoffrey Bawa's Colombo 07 residence, the sessions feature readings by established and emerging voices in English, Sinhala, and Tamil. Tickets are typically announced on their social media pages and can also be tracked on the website. The atmosphere is low-lit and intimate, more salon than stage. geoffreybawa.com

STREET FOOD UNDER THE LAMPPOST

If a day of exploration has worked up your appetite, head north to **Abdul Hameed Street** in **Aluthkade**. From 8pm in the evening, the street food affair in this popular night market goes on well past midnight, frequented as a favourite weekend haunt by locals and travellers alike. The market is lined with stalls selling delicacies like kotthu roti chopped on iron sheets and fiery oxtail soup. Best experienced with cash in hand, it remains one of the capital's most crowded alfresco food courts.

CYCLING THROUGH THE STREETS

To see, feel, and hear Colombo up close, cycle past the glittering streets on a relatively crowd-free route through the city. Several operators start off from Independence Square, with a group of riders decked in reflective gear and bicycles following the guide through Beira Lake, Pettah, Galle Face Green, and the Fort district. On tours that last from two to four hours, sample snack stops, test your fitness levels, and savour the outdoor atmosphere of the night. srilankainstyle.com

DIVING INTO LOCAL CULTURE

There's nothing like seeing a city through the eyes of a local. Dilshan and Adam of **Soulful Sri Lanka** spend evenings taking guests bar hopping across the most quirky watering holes around Colombo Fort. Not for the faint hearted, the Dodgy Bar Tour has everything: hidden haunts, finger food to break the spice scale, and conversations with like-minded enthusiasts over glasses of local alcohol. Having grown up in Colombo, the founders have ample stories to swap and won't mind sharing insights on the island's greatest experiences either. soulfulsri.lanka.com

SCREENINGS UNDER THE SKY

On select weekends, **Café Ceylon** transforms its courtyard into an outdoor cinema. Screenings usually begin at 7pm, with cult classics or indie films projected under the stars. The venue's laidback charm spills out under the open sky, with mattresses, local cocktails, and light snacks keeping company through the screening. cafeceylon.lk

Late Night Tipples

As the island evolves into a hub of world-class mixology, iconic bars in the capital see a buzzing nightlife and social culture take shape around local spirits and craft cocktails. Savour music nights at **ColomBar**, or head to **Uncle's**, a crowd favourite bar in the crowd favourite neighbourhood of Park Street. **Rhythm And Blues** claims the night with its atmospheric dance floor, coupled with occasional live jazz performances. Savour sundowners at **Vistas Bar**, and post dinner clinks at **Café Français**.



GINI

Cinnamon
WAVE
CITY OF DREAMS
SRI LANKA

KAMPONG
COCKTAILS AND PLATES



The Six



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