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HOW TO DO **Sri** **Lanka** *in* **Style**

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
VACATION RENTALS

INTRODUCING THE CREATIVE SIDE TO
CAPE TOWN

25 INSPIRING FAMILY ESCAPES



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MARCH 2017



A warm morning spent sunbathing on the rocks at Anantara Kalutara Resort. On her: Bandedu bikini top by Maus Swim, batik robe by Lili Paris antique necklace and bangle by Pinks Design Collection (all available on nr.lk), Navy blue bikini brief by Meraki.

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Savour Sri Lanka's Style

Once known for being the best place to buy Victoria's Secret lingerie from factory surplus 'back-of-the-truck' outlets, Sri Lanka now sports a completely different avatar. Discover stunning modern use of Batik, beautiful colonial buildings restored into retail sanctuaries, fabulous antique folk jewellery, and swanky beach and resort wear.

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There's a seductive and pristine quality to Sri Lanka's blue-green southern coast. Two new Anantara resorts book a curve of this coast and offer a spectacular way to experience the destination.

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As *Maria Shollenbarger* finds at four new resorts in the Maldives, nowhere else does sea, sand, and splendour quite like this.

ON THE COVER

At Anantara Kalutara Resort. Produced by Ruchira Bose. Photographed by Ashish Chawla. Styled by Anjali Flamer-Caldera and Nadine Jayaratne of The Agency Sri Lanka. Make-up and hair by Nisha Senviratne of Senisha Make-Up Artistry. Model, Carla Acar is wearing a halter maillot by Maus Swim and teak sunglasses by Parkville. Available at Paradise Road (*pr.lk*), Sri Lanka.



Clockwise: The spa at Anantara Kalutara is spaced out with pools and boardwalks separating different sections; a guest fixes her daughter's robes as they prepare for a spa day; mother-daughter duo enjoy a foot massage at Anantara Kalutara; gazebos on the beach at Conrad Bali are a great place to relax after a spa.



Wellness

Time Out

Introduce your kids to wellness holidays. We've found fabulous luxury resorts that offer spa menus for the young. **BY ANWESHA SANYAL**

It's never too early to introduce your kids to the finer things in life. As family detox catches on as a major trend this holiday season, some leading hotels and resorts bring organic and herbal treatments for the underage gen.

baths to back rubs, foot masks, and complimentary snacks post treatment, there is something for every discerning kid. conradbali.com

FOUR SEASONS BEVERLY WILSHIRE, USA

A Princess Mini-Facial, a Rock Star Massage, a Pop Star Polish, and a Super Star Mani-Pedi is reserved for kids between 12 and 17. The hotel itself is the crown jewel of the posh Beverly Hills neighbourhood and a popular hotspot for celebrities. fourseasons.com

HOTEL DU CAP, FRANCE

The French luxury hotel in Cap d'Antibes offers an informative and engaging spa ritual that gives young guests an insight into secrets to natural beauty and a healthy lifestyle. hotel-du-cap-eden-rac.com

IL SALVIATINO, ITALY

This gorgeous 15th-century villa on the hillside of Fiesole, overlooking the Tuscan landscape is our favourite Italian find. It offers teenagers a great first time spa experience with a cocoa butter body peel or a Swedish chocolate body massage followed by an organic lunch at the restaurant called La Cucina. salviatino.com

CONRAD BALI, INDONESIA

Kids Love being pampered at the Jiwa Spa that's plunked in the plush corners of this Balinese property. From sweet smelling

WITH JUNIOR

MANGWANANI AFRICAN SPA

Travelling with your girls for a special occasion? At **South Africa's** Magwanani Spa, you can book the **PINKTeen Day** package and make a party out of a spa day. It includes breakfast, revitalising facial spas, body treatments, and a mineral spa jacuzzi afterwards for the girl gang. mangwanani.co.za

ANANTARA KALUTARA

Deliciously fragrant bubble baths for toddlers, Japanese face massages for teenage girls, and body scrubs for boys; the brand new **Sri Lankan** property rolls out royal treatment for families. The 'Mum & Me' or 'Dad & Me' treatments offer each member of the family special indulgences. anantara.com



TRAVEL+LEISURE
March 2017

SAVOUR SRI LANKA'S STYLE

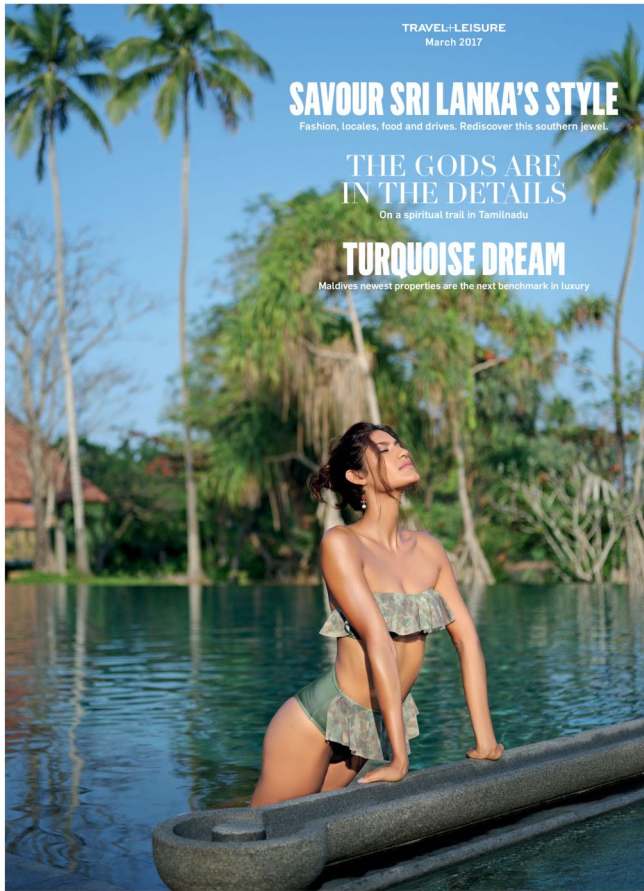
Fashion, locales, food and drives. Rediscover this southern jewel.

THE GODS ARE IN THE DETAILS

On a spiritual trail in Tamilnadu

TURQUOISE DREAM

Maldives newest properties are the next benchmark in luxury





Black swim bandeau
bikini top by **Maus**; batik
wrap skirt by **Sonali**
Dharmawardena.
Mattakuliyia tuna leather
pouch by **Khogy**; totem
earrings and Aphrodite
ring by **Papillon du thé**.



Savour Sri Lanka's Style


ONCE MOSTLY KNOWN FOR BEING THE BEST PLACE TO BUY VICTORIA'S SECRET LINGERIE FROM FACTORY SURPLUS 'BACK-OF-THE-TRUCK' OUTLETS, SRI LANKA NOW SPORTS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT AVATAR. COME HERE TO DISCOVER STUNNING MODERN USE OF BATIK, BEAUTIFUL COLONIAL BUILDINGS RESTORED INTO RETAIL SANCTUARIES, FABULOUS ANTIQUE FOLK JEWELLERY, AND SWANKY BEACH AND RESORT WEAR.

PRODUCED BY **RUCHIRA BOSE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ASHISH CHAWLA**

STYLED BY **ANJULI FLAMER-CALDERA** AND **NADINE JAYARATNE** (THE AGENCY SRI LANKA)

MAKE-UP AND HAIR BY **NISHA SENEVIRATNE** (SENISHA MAKE-UP ARTISTRY)

MODEL: **CARLA ACIAR** LOCATION: **ANANTARA KALUTARA RESORT, SRI LANKA**

A woman with long brown hair is sitting on a dark wooden dock. She is wearing a white bandeau bikini top and high-waisted briefs. On her head, she wears a black and white patterned headscarf tied in a large knot at the back. She is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is a body of blue water with a blurred boat in the distance.

Bandeau bikini top and swim high-waisted bikini brief by **Maus**; palmyrah batik silk shawl by **Kinsfolk**; totem earrings, green spirit ring, and energy ring by **Papillon du thé**.

OPPOSITE: Halter neck slit dress by **Maluba Asia**; totem earrings and green spirit ring by **Papillon du thé**.





Bandeau bikini top by **Maus**;
batik robe by **La Pard**;
antique necklace and bangle
by **Pinks Design**; bikini
bottom brief by **Meraki**.

OPPOSITE: Swimsuit and
sandals by **Maus**; tricolour
ring by **Cher** by **Chevonno**;
necklaces by **Pinks Design**
Collection; layered long
skirt by **CHARINI**.

street animals. Eponymously named Odel (From Otara Del Gunawardene), her first store opened in 1989, in a 400-square-foot space on Dickman's Road, now renamed after acclaimed Sri Lankan filmmaker Dr Lester James Peries. From there, it expanded into a retail empire, becoming a favourite among Indian A-listers and western tourists. Within a decade, the flagship store opened in a massive colonial building in Alexandra Place in the heart of Colombo, setting a trend for others to follow.

And while, a few years ago, Gunawardene sold her stake in the business and now focuses entirely on her work with rescued dogs, she inspired a new generation of fashion entrepreneurs and designers in Lanka.

Colombo's shopping neighbourhoods that feature these designers and fashion retailers are symbolic of the colourful fabric of today's Lankan society that comprises Sinhalese, Moors, Tamils, Burghers (Portuguese, Dutch and British descendants), Chinese and Malay communities.

S

ri Lanka is quite the delightful surprise when it comes to shopping. For the longest time, Indian travellers knew it as a place to shop for factory surplus from brands like Noritake or Victoria Secret. In the decade after Sri Lanka's economic reforms of 1977, the country experienced a flood of growth in its garment manufacturing sector. Some of the world's top apparel and lingerie brands moved their business from India to Sri Lanka, finding it cheaper and easier to produce there. As factories scaled up, surplus product spewed out too.

Interestingly, one of the country's top fashion entrepreneurs, Otara Gunawardene began her business in the late 80's by seeing the opportunity in selling these factory surpluses. Back then, she sold them from the boot of her car to fund treatment and rescue of



Fête long dress by **Maus**;
vintage Afghani necklace
by **Pinks Design Collection**.

OPPOSITE: Strapless maillot
by **Maus**; long bag by **Paradise
Road**; Abarcas by **Forty Red**
Bangles; lustre round wood
drops by **Cher** by **Chevonne**;
coverup by **Three By TPV**.







Dress, model's own.

Colombo's shopping neighbourhoods are symbolic of the colourful fabric of today's Lankan society.

Another entrepreneur and philanthropist, Barbara Sansoni captures this mix beautifully in her stores. The Barefoot story actually began in Sri Lanka, in 1962, when Sansoni, a talented artist, colourist, designer and entrepreneur, began working, almost exclusively, with women in rural communities.

For over 40 years, the Barefoot family has provided training and fair wages to its workers along with an environment conducive to creativity, and at the same time, captured the talent, heritage craft, and the aesthetic spirit of Sri Lanka in products that are irresistible to travellers here. Sansoni's textiles are inspired by the vivid land and seascapes, foliage, and wildlife of Sri Lanka. Colourful yarns, created using Swiss dyes, are hand woven into glorious fabrics and transformed by Barefoot's designers in innovative and unexpected ways, to create charming toys, bags, and clothes that make both adults and children smile.

Everything from Barefoot is produced in village workshops, close to the homes of the weavers and sewers. Although Barefoot now exports to over 30 countries, nothing is mass produced; no child labour is used and it has no factories or production lines. Barefoot in Colombo is part art gallery, part performance space and part shop. It's also one of the best places to buy books on Sri Lanka.

Among the younger generation, Samaadhi Weerasinghe, the designer behind the newly-launched brand ANUK is securing Sri Lanka's spot in the world of contemporary fashion. The brand is defined as 'simple silhouettes in fine fabrics; made in the tropics, for the tropics'. As a firm believer of everything in moderation, Saamadhi's designs reflect clean-cut designs with an overall polished look. Her brand, ANUK, named after her brother, is currently being retailed at PR. She's an intrepid traveller, the daughter of one of the country's most established garment traders, and is known to have a talent in creating a lovely blend of casual ease and elegance.

Art, Home & Style

SASKIA FERNANDO GALLERY

With its stark white washed façade, the Saskia Fernando Gallery, founded by Annika Fernando's younger sister, exhibits emerging Sri Lankan artists as well as those from established ones. Come here to see emphatic installations, beautiful sculptures and paintings. They have started a platform called Collectors Desk last year which aims to encourage art collecting among Sri Lankans. They offer consults and information on how to collect, invest and support the art industry. 41 Horton Pl, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka

SURIYA

Furniture, handicrafts, toys, genuine antiques and nice reproductions are packed into Suriya. Every product is made locally, using Sri Lanka's traditional handloom textiles and wood. The best part is

that it's all arranged Ikea-style in the rooms of a charming colonial bungalow on Layards Road, making it hard to resist buying a few pieces. They have a really nice collection of brightly coloured throws, overstuffed mattresses, patterned cushions and more. Suriya was opened 17 years ago by entrepreneurial couple Ruwanmali Sepalika Jayasinghe and Roshan Jayasinghe who love to travel across the world. So some items at the store are also those that the couple have brought back from their travels. *Layard's Rd, Colombo, Sri Lanka*

HERMITAGE

On the picturesque Gower Street, Hermitage is Sri Lanka's version of Sharma Farm in Delhi. Traditional local woodwork, craft, antiques and figurines, Buddha statues can be found seemingly-randomly stacked shelves, floors and other surfaces. Step into its lovely courtyard that has printing presses, cart tables converted from actual ancient ox-carts among other conversation-starter pieces. *Gower St, Colombo 00500, Sri Lanka*

GANDHARA

Gandhara is an extremely posh destination for high-end décor. It's more like a large emporium, with many levels, many rooms and storing thousands of exquisite artefacts collected from different parts of Asia. It takes up the entire stretch of Stratford Avenue. Find medicine cabinets from Mongolia, figurines from temples in Southern India, Buddha statues from Indonesia and more. It's also a great place for smaller home accents, wedding presents and souvenirs. It has an art gallery too that showcases upcoming local artists. No: 28, *Stratford Ave, Colombo 00600, Sri Lanka*

PARADISE ROAD

Shopping suggestions to Sri Lanka will always find Paradise Road right on top of the list. A beautiful homeware store,



TOP: Silk harem jumpsuit by **KT Brown**; mattakuliyya pouch in tuna leather by **Khogy**; hammered disc earrings by **Pinks Design Collection**.

RIGHT: Anantara Kalutara Resort offers excursions to River Kalu Ganga—book the sunset cruise on the river for a spectacular view of the coast in the setting sun.





BELOW: Dumbara waistcoat by **KT Brown**; silk pants by **ANUK**; triangle bikini top and flat slides by **Maus**; vintage earrings by **Papillon du thé**; antique silver cuffs by **Pinks Design Collection**.



it enjoys a must-visit status for tourists. Although some locals did say that there are less pricey options in Colombo that offer a similarly curated collection of rustic furniture, bric-a-brac, craft, tasteful porcelain, scents, very tempting serving ware and more. If you love to entertain at home, be prepared to spend at least a few hours browsing through everything here. And keep an extra suitcase. 213 *Srimath Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha*, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka ■

THE DETAILS

PR 41 Horton Place, Colombo; +94/112699921. pr.lk

ZUDHORA 14 Reid Avenue, Colombo; +94-77/788-8404. [facebook.com/zudhora](https://www.facebook.com/zudhora)

Three by tpv 21 Duplication Road, Colombo; +94-11/205-5212. threethreetytpv.com

Meraki at Gandhara 28 Stratford Avenue, Kirulapana, Colombo; +94-11/259-6329. [facebook.com/merakibysharmila](https://www.facebook.com/merakibysharmila)

Glory Swim Shop 1/1 Spathodea Avenue, Colombo; +94-77/730-7788. gloryswimshop.com



Outdoor sitting spots offer a private retreat on the banks of the river at Anantara Kalofata.

Resort Opposite:
The entrance to the spa at Anantara Private Haven Yanggalle Resort.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES HARRIS

THE OTHER BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY

THERE'S A SEDUCTIVE AND PRISTINE QUALITY TO **SRI LANKA'S** BLUE-GREEN SOUTHERN COAST. TWO NEW ANANTARA RESORTS BOOK A CURVE OF THIS COAST AND OFFER A SPECTACULAR WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE DESTINATION. **RUCHIRA BOSE** AND **ANWESHA SANYAL** GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS TO DISCOVER HOW THEY DO THIS.



ANANTARA
SPA



ANANTARA PEACE HAVEN TANGALLE

Less than three hours drive from Colombo down to Sri Lanka's southern coast, is a quaint white-and-cerulean blue dotted fishing port called Tangalle.

If you arrive in the evening in Colombo, the drive down on the snazzily built multi-lane Southern Expressway is a gorgeous moonlit ride through dark emerald green plantations on both sides, leading into Matara, where you pass neat and tidy hamlets, and a last stretch of road that runs alongside a coastline with luminous white waves rolling in from an inky Indian ocean. By day, this drive is just a feast of pantone colours—from the slate grey curvy expressway, tangerine orange sari-clad and chocolate-skinned pretty Lankan ladies standing in doorways of houses with bright blue walls, to cool canopied palm forests, tender green paddy fields, wagon-red tuk tuks and that incredible Indian Ocean out there in all kinds of shades of sea green and sky blue.

Tangalle's sheltered coconut-palm fringed coves are simply gorgeous. It's as if Roberto Cavalli designed a destination. It has all the oomph of the heaving Indian Ocean and the luxurious languor of its sun-drenched golden sand. And like a Cavalli creation, not everyone can afford it. Hence, there are no noisy tourist crowds, no tacky stack of low-star hotels, and no peddlers of excursion packages or taxis. In fact, there aren't too many hotels at all. Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle opened just a year ago with its impressive pool villas, suites and rooms, and its serious commitment to deeper food experiences (the extraordinary Dining By Design concept), and a stellar yoga and spa programme.

When you arrive, no matter what the hour, the greeting ritual makes you feel very welcome. The reception is an open pavilion where you actually end up spending hardly any time, as you're taken straight to your room or villa. The unusual aspect of the design of Anantara Tangalle is that both villas and rooms have their own special aspect. The rooms in the main building enjoy a stunning ocean view, close access to the beachfront, the pool, and the all-day dining and breakfast restaurant called Journeys. The villas meanwhile are tucked along the bends of a beautiful shaded stream that runs through the property. A little wooden footbridge across the stream connects the two sides of the resort. Every time you cross this, you can't help but stop to check where the resident ducks are. Late evenings, a small square raft with a kennel-like structure on it houses the ducks and is floated out to sit in the middle of the stream. You can see them huddled and asleep there. In the mornings, the raft appears moored near the edge of the water, with its residents waddling across the lawns. It seems like magic because you never quite see anyone pulling in that raft to the water's edge or floating it out. And yet, like clockwork, the ducks' schedules are managed invisibly. Ducks aren't the only birds here. More than a dozen peacocks should be charged for room nights, as they are regular residents of the resort. Wandering across trees and rooftops, and filling children with delightful wonder as they watch the birds dance with their plumes fanned out, or hear them call out. A board near the wooden bridge shows a chart with pictures and names of the three dozen-odd variety of birds you're likely to see or hear here. From here, you can find your way easily across the lawns to either the spa, or the game room and kids centre.

On the other side of the footbridge are the pool villas. In true Anantara style, these are generously sized with long infinity pools that visually seem to spill into the cool stream flowing by. The villas are luxuriously furnished and naturally designed. There's a deep sense of calm, a welcoming feel that you experience across this property, whether it is when you're interacting with the staff or simply taking in the atmosphere. The villas come with dedicated butlers, and little cycle rickshaws that



A couple enters the lobby at Anantara Kalutara. Guests find the batik print wall hanging behind the desk bright and welcoming.



can transport you quickly across the 42-acre property. Although, walking would definitely be a better idea, considering how good the food is here. Still, you can get a bit lazy, specially when your sweet and soft-spoken butler gently offers to pedal you across to the reception or the main pool area. When you take excursions, their branded blue auto rickshaws come right up to your villa to pick you up or drop you back.

If you skip walking, you can still feel better by attending their yoga sessions at sunrise and sunset. A beautiful yoga pavilion, set just below Il Mare, their cliff-top Italian restaurant, is an inspiring venue for meditation and yoga. The resident instructor is not your average resort yoga instructor. You will notice the difference when you see his smart choice of asanas, their sequence, and his attentiveness when you're not doing them right. Anantara also offers tai chi and pilates classes on the beach front and in your villa.

At the spa, Anantara's signature treatment usually is an outstanding experience that combines relaxing massage techniques with a blend of oils, and a mix of western and Asian approach to spa therapy. It's designed to restore the flow of energy, lull you into a deeper zone of relaxation and emerge mentally fresh. The 90-minute treatment allows for extra attention paid to troublesome areas of your body. However, if you're here for more than a couple of days, it's an extremely good idea to also go for a head and foot massage. This 60-minute treatment is particularly fantastic for those who carry most of their stress in the neck, shoulders, and feet. Anyway, during the treatment, the therapist pays attention to your entire back, shoulders, and head, as well as the feet, so the most common areas that carry tension knots and will benefit the most are covered in a more focused manner.

While the spa works on your body from the outside, the culinary experiences at Anantara work from within. If you love picking up local cooking techniques and recipes, the Spice Spoons Cooking School, like at all Anantara properties is an intense and extremely memorable experience. It begins with a visit in the tuk tuk to the markets, fields and villages around Anantara. From choosing fresh catch at the docks early morning, to discovering typical Lankan ingredients like Tamarind that grow wild by the roads, to driving through paddy fields and lotus ponds, to browsing oddly coloured and shaped fruits and vegetables at the local farmer's market. From India, the produce is not hugely different. But there are spices that definitely make wonderful souvenirs—specialty packets of Sri Lankan cinnamon, roasted curry powder (that's used in the local meat dishes) and wild honey that is sold in bottles that once contained local alcohol. You return to the resort with all these ingredients which the chefs design an eight or nine-course meal, prep the vegetables and spices, and keep it all laid out beautifully at the culinary school for you to cook under their direction and in just an hour or so. The beauty of Sri Lankan food is that most dishes have a basic standard start—an aromatic blend of onions lightly fried with cinnamon, green chillies, turmeric,



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ON LAZY AFTERNOONS, YOU'RE LIKELY TO RUN INTO A REED-THIN OLD MAN, WITH WEATHERED OLIVE SKIN, BARE CHEST, WEARING JUST A THIN LUNGI, FLASHING A BIG TOOTHLESS GRIN AND SHOWING A RATHER SHARP SCYTHE-MEETS-MACHETE TYPE KNIFE JUST TUCKED INTO HIS LUNGI AT THE WAIST. HE'S ANANTARA'S COCONUT GURU.

”



mustard seeds and curry leaves. There's almost always some coconut milk (either light or thick). And yet, each dish actually ends up tasting distinct. You cook in traditional clay pots with coconut shell ladles over a gas burner that sits enclosed in a clay stand. And while the Spice Spoons Cooking Classes across all Anantara resorts is a delightful experience for food and cooking enthusiasts, at Tangalle, they add another special touch—songs from vintage Sri Lankan films play overhead, adding an extra bit of the exotic to your afternoon. At the end of the class, your lunch features everything you cooked. And if you don't like your own cooking (which is unlikely since you've been supervised by their chefs), you can choose an incredibly romantic gourmet experience they call Dining by Design. They set your table under a lovely canvas canopy right outside Il Mare, far out on the cliff top. The tablet is laid dressed with fresh local flowers, candles, and silverware. A path of lit candles guides you to your table, where a couple can share a journey of exceptional flavours, great quality meats and seafood, grilled fresh just a few feet away by a dedicated chef and team. Everything in the Dining By Design concept is 'off-menu', so you can literally ask them to make you whatever you would like to eat. At the end, there's a lovely little surprise they do on special occasions. A paper lantern that you light and release into the sky together. As you watch it float away, it's hard not to let out a deep sigh.

When you're not cooking or feasting, meditating or getting indulged at the spa, take some time to wander the beaches and gardens. On lazy afternoons, you're likely to run into a reed-thin old man with weathered olive skin, bare chest, wearing just a thin *lungi*, flashing a big toothless grin and showing a rather sharp scythe-meets-machete type knife just tucked into his *lungi* at the waist. He's Anantara's Coconut Guru. He races up trees defying age and fear, to bring down the best king coconuts that he then keeps on a little wooden cart, cuts them open and offers them to people on the sun loungers on the beach or lazing in the four-poster cabanas under the trees there.

His King Coconut is the sweetest finish to your holiday here.

ANANTARA KALUTARA RESORT

I was at the Geoffrey Bawa Library at Anantara Kalutara, when Navoda bent over to gently pat the backrest of a sofa and smile, "This belongs to Geoffrey Bawa."

There was a clear strain of sentiment in her voice, although she might have never met the architect and had just been hired for the front desk duty. But this is typical of anybody who speaks of Bawa. The Sri Lankan artist who put the tiny island country on the world map was commissioned to design a luxury hotel in 1995 in an area between the Kalu Ganga estuary and the Indian Ocean. The setting he found was gorgeous, except, there was a public road running right through the land, threatening to ruin everything. It was then, that Bawa executed one of his core plans to structure the hotel around the road by raising a three-storey wall to hide the areas beyond each, a design that's often compared with that of the gymnasium at Hadrian's Villa in Italy.

The same year, Sri Lanka was faced with civil war, which paused construction, and later brought the plan to a complete standstill when Bawa fell ill. It remained dormant for years after, and in 2003, when



From above: A fruit platter at Anantara Kalutara; a lavishly appointed one-bedroom garden pool villa. Opposite: Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort enjoys ocean-view rooms and suites.





he passed, there was little hope left. The following year, the tsunami struck the Sri Lankan coast, creating a massacre in the country, destroying a major fraction of the foundation, but his walls survived and saved the public spaces he had created, protecting his ideas.

Only two years ago, Channa Daswatte, an architect who had worked with Bawa earlier, was appointed to take over and complete the project. When I arrived late on a February evening, I was famished and exhausted from the long journey. It was not until I had politely said hellos to every staff member who looked in my direction that I sat at the reception and looked around. My head made for a quick summersault—everywhere around me, I could sense the presence of the architect. His love for non-air conditioned spaces was brought in strikingly simple Dutch colonial style, large free spaces for cross-breeze, rooms overlooking the lagoon in front. Bawa's modernist architecture blended harmoniously with the large Batik wall hangings behind the reception desk; the terracotta-coloured walls reflected the yellow light from lamps to create a warm glow; a huge chandelier hung languidly as it neared midnight.

His concept of long, sometimes hidden corridors ran along the length of the property. The main building had no outer walls but broad pillars supporting its gigantic terracotta gable roof, creating a spacious lobby between the inner walls and the pillars. This lobby drew a periphery around two parts of the building; plugging the reception, the all-day dining restaurant called Olu, and the arrival lounge in different areas. "Cross-breeze and sunlight," said Navoda later, "Bawa liked having a lot of sunshine in his house."

Next day, I visited Lunaganga. This is where the architect had lived the last quarter of his life, now under a foundation in the architect's name. He was a lifelong bachelor and left no heir. The car had driven into a blind curve off the main road,

“

WHAT I HAD
COME TO KNOW OF
THE MAN WAS THAT
HE WAS METICULOUS
AND EXTRAVAGANT
ABOUT HIS WORK.

”



some 40 minutes from the property, and halted in front of a red gravelled footpath with an enormous mahogany tree spread out near its rusted iron grilled gate. A bunch of murmuring tourists had begun to overflow onto the street when I arrived and the tour guide, behind them, swiftly walking out, ushered me in for the next round. Beyond the gate, the path had curved upwards, with a thick cover of trees on either side, and into a property one'd realise was fit for a modern-day king. What I had come to know of the man shortly after, was that he was meticulous and extravagant about his work. Ebony wood furniture, Chinese urns, vaulted ceilings, monochrome floors, at one corner, an antique steam pressure fan he made before electricity came, a hen house and cow shed, two ponds out of four made in the shape of a butterfly and a rifle, and 14 bells at different points in the 23-acre property, each with a different sound. Some of this was resonated in the hotel as well.

My one-bedroom pool villa was gorgeous to the point you'd not leave it, and I didn't; the DND switch was on duty for most parts of my time there; I spent taking shallow dives into my private pool, enjoying my outdoor shower and extra-large bathtub, and ordering in from Spice Traders and Acquolina, the restaurants. In three days' time, I realised Bawa had enough for an art geek to gaze at, if they were not spending time star-gazing on a walk around the property. In fact, what was supposed to be a hotel stay and a lot of Sri Lanka, became the search for a man who had left himself largely at my disposal. It is as if he knew, that if he didn't live to see his creation, he'd still want someone to walk in one day and feel the impact he wished to have on her: a spine down the chill and a gasp. ■



Clockwise: Fresh salad at Anantara Kalutara; a couple enjoys high tea in the lovers' chair at the hotel's lobby; the garden pool villa bedroom has floor to ceiling windows that offer lots of sunlight into the bedroom. Opposite: A sunbathed swimming pool at Anantara Kalutara Resort.

COURTESY OF ANANTARA KALUTARA RESORT (3)

This story
continues... on
[travelandleisure
india.in](http://travelandleisure
india.in)



The Road to the OCEAN

Sri Lanka's swanky expressways offer the best way to see the country's stunning green landscape and heritage sites. Ruchira Bose goes on a drive on one of Asia's finest ocean roads.



Sri Lanka's dark, coppery soil is its ultimate treasure. Locals will tell you that the soil is so fertile that anything can take strong root here. As I drove along the Eo1, I was tempted to move and take root there myself. The country's roads were an amazing contrast to the ones I drive on in India. Well-lit, beautifully laid, even internal roads off the highway are uncluttered and smooth. For a nature lover, the types of trees, spice plantations, and the highway's famous peacock crossings are a delight to view.

In the morning, the mist of dawn hovered over the Southern Expressway, dissolving with the warmth of the day. The windows were a blur of emerald as we sped through the sleek tarmac. With sleepy eyes, we focused on the road ahead to take in the view.

A thick grove of rubber trees leaning towards the road from various elevations was the first cultivation that I identified. White pigmented trunks make it easy to spot these lithe greens, bowing off the travellers on their way. It's past the Dodangoda Exit that I enjoyed spectacular views of these sloping beauties growing in strict rows. And throughout the highway these plantations of rubber can be seen, boasting its contribution in putting Sri Lanka amongst the world's top 10 producers of natural rubber.

Coconut trees beckon your attention with fringed leaves cha-chaing with the wind. Nothing paints a prettier picture of the paradise island than coconut palms glistening in the sun.



Fishing boats on a coastal highway in Sri Lanka. BELOW: Spot 'Danger Peacocks Ahead' sign on the Southern Highway. OPPOSITE: Fishing in the waters in Sri Lanka; colourful street art is a common sight.

The tall palms along the beach are the embodiment of enjoyment—it truly is a tropical heaven. Yet, the copses of coconut that we glimpsed en route to Matara represent the economical importance of this unassuming palm. From its fruit to its root, this tree serves as cooking ingredients, medicine, roof material, and lumber for furniture. The estates of the coconut triangle that leans on the E01 span out in acres, catering to a never-ceasing demand.

As we rushed through Mathugama, a far more exotic palm waved us to slowdown. *Elaeis guineensis*, or the African oil palm, stood short and stout, burgeoning rosy smiles in its midst. These red fruits are pulped and refined into oil used for cooking and making body care products.

Clearings of light green stood out from the thick groves as our four-wheel drive Mitsubishi plied on. In symmetrical squares, the lush cultivation spanned like a sea of lime, interrupted by isles of banana or coconut. There's a sense of calm that set in as the rice fields drifted into view, paddy sauntering in the breeze. It was soothing to watch buffaloes taking a break from their chores by lounging in their mud baths or a farmer out yonder tending to his crop.

Amidst the paddy fields here, you'll suddenly find patches of bright pink... hundreds of lotus blossoming in ponds that have just nudged their way into the fields.

As we crossed over the Bentara Ganga, our view was jarred by fortified concrete. Mangroves filled our flanks, bushy and wild with vines creating ripples in the water. The highway boards indicated that we were in the vicinity of Batuwahena—Elpitiya. My driver was quick to point out a cook's delight here: a scene of glossy flat leaves that drape thin, polished green barks. It was cinnamon! Crowding plots of land in rows, this spice was ancient Sri Lanka's most coveted gem—an aroma that lured foreign nations from across oceans to these shores. Cinnamon plants are short and easily mistaken for young rubber plantations; however, the colour of the trunk is a helpful hint, I was tipped off by



PEACOCK CROSSINGS

As soon as you leave Colombo on the E01, you'll see massive yellow road signs (they are at least 12 feet by 6 feet) that warn you that peacocks may be crossing the road ahead. And it's true. Peacocks along this stretch are a guaranteed sighting.

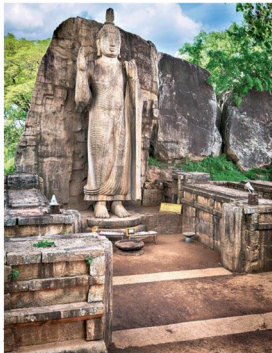
INDIAN OCEAN BLUES

Keep your camera out, and be prepared to make a stop on the stretch between Tangalle and Weligama. The road runs along the ocean and the colours before you on any bright day are breathtaking.



THE BREAD TUK TUK

Take an afternoon drive off the Southern Expressway to enter into Matara, Tangalle, and go further into the villages to spot a delightful sight. A little red tuk tuk (like our autorickshaws) with a big glass panel at the back and retro-fitted wooden shelves sells freshly baked, unsliced bread loaves to villagers. You can hear the Tuk Tuk come through the fields as it plays a piece by Chopin like an old music-box.



FROM ABOVE: Tea plantations along the Peradeniya-Badulla-Chenkaiadi Highway; roads in Sri Lanka run parallel to the Indian Ocean; the 40-foot Avukana Buddha Statue near Kekirawa is a sight to behold.

our driver. Rubber, coconut, cinnamon, paddy, cashew, tea, puwak (areca palm), and even the homely banana shrub—the Southern Expressway is like a cook's culinary drive through 'source'.

Along our quest to spot Sri Lanka's various food gems, we were caught by surprise by a red hue that glowed through the green. It was the dwarf cashew tree showing off its flat leaves shaded in red.

On the home stretch to Matara, the island's famous symbol stole our attention. Tea bushes concealed low-lying hills and surrounded pint-sized houses. Here, tea does not take over the slopes to create a carpet of green. This truly Southern scene shows pruned tea bushes co-existing with the tangled wild of the terrain. As we breathed in this view, an unusual palm swayed into the window. Towering over the tea fields was a row of puwak, the lanky cousin of the coconut tree. This is the mother plant of the betal nut, the kernel chewed with betal leaf, a retro-but-favourite after-dinner ritual. ■



THE COMPLETE SAPPADA

The full Sri Lankan meal is a combination of a couple of mains, rice, vegetables and sambals (spicy chutneys). Mutton, jackfruit, dried fish sambals, vegetable kottu and a sweet are standard.

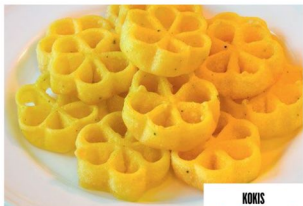
ARTISTIC SALADS

Lankans like to serve their salads in a creative and colourful style, combining seasonal produce with micro greens.



What We Tried

From lagoon prawns, freshly prepared hoppers to tangy-spicy sambals like Lunumiris, we tried a delightful array of food as we travelled from South to the West of Sri Lanka.



FRESH CATCH

Sri Lankan cuisine is a wonderful combination of local ingredients and styles, and Indian and South East Asian flavours. At Spice Traders at Anantara, we tried the lamb and fresh coconut appetizer with lime dressing.



KOKIS

A traditional sweet made around the new year (April 15), Kokis is a crunchy snack also had at teatime. A brass mould is dipped in a thin mildly sweet batter made of coconut milk and flour and then deep fried.



LAGOON PRAWNS

At Anantara, the batter-fried lagoon prawns delivers the Sri Lankan love for salty, sour and crunchy elements of a good dish.