

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

CONDÉ NAST

APRIL 2016

Traveler

GUATEMALA · PYRENEES · GALÁPAGOS
TANZANIA · HIMALAYAS

THE
ADVENTURE
ISSUE



Previous page: The spa, library, and yoga pavilion at Sri Lanka's eco-chic Tri hotel. Above: Looking out over Koggala Lake from the pool at Tri.

SRI LANKA

The Island with It All

For a quarter century, Sri Lanka was largely off-limits to tourists, riven by a brutal civil war that finally ended in 2009. Now, Asia-bound isle-philes are looking beyond Bali to this tiny island that's currently experiencing a welcome hotel boom. Makes sense—besides its otherworldly beaches on the south coast (Aussies and Kiwis have been surfing here for years) and lush national parks in the southeast, where you can see leopards and elephants on a mini safari, there's also an embarrassment of culture: Buddhist temples neighbor sixteenth-century European forts, and colonial-era tea plantations sit high above the majestically pretty Bogawantalawa Valley, in the island's interior. You can see it all in ten days, though you might want to park yourself at one of these hotels for longer.

FOR COLONIAL RELICS, HEAD TO COLOMBO

Around the corner from Gangaramaya Temple, famous for its Buddhist relics and resident tuskier elephant, **Uga Residence** has 11 suites inside a town house from Victorian times, with tidy gardens and a courtyard pool. Meanwhile, in October the landmark 1864 **Galle Face Hotel** revealed a major refurb, offering sea-facing rooms with balconies overlooking its manicured croquet lawns right on the Indian Ocean.

TO COOL OFF IN THE HILLS (AND TASTE PHENOMENAL TEA), GO INLAND

Stay at **Santani** (opening in June), Sri Lanka's first destination spa, set within a 48-acre abandoned tea

plantation near the cultural center of Kandy. Or base yourself at **Thotalagala**, a planter's bungalow turned seven-suite hotel near Dambatenne, the world's most famous tea estate, planted in 1890 by Sir Thomas Lipton (yes, that one). About 38 miles north, the colonial-era **Stafford Bungalow**—a four-room retreat on a working tea plantation—was recently made over by Sri Lankan interior designer Taru Fonseka, who's known for mixing a clean, modern aesthetic with traditional handloomed textiles and local artwork.

FOR NATIONAL PARKS, LOOK TO THE SOUTHEAST

Stay at the eight-bungalow **Gal Oya Lodge**, where father-and-son architects Cecil and John Balmound

worked indigenous materials (dried paddy reeds, mara-wood, woven palm leaves) into the elegantly modern design (atrium bathrooms; natural breezeways in lieu of AC), resulting in a near-zero carbon footprint. Ten miles away, in Gal Oya National Park, elephants bathe in Sri Lanka's largest reservoir. Three hours south, Yala National Park is home to the world's highest concentration of leopards. On the edge of the park you'll find the 14 eco-friendly **Chena Huts**, each with a plunge pool, and **Wild Coast Tented Lodge's** 28 air-conditioned tents, their curvilinear wood frames inspired by caterpillars.

FOR EMPTY BEACHES, HIT THE SOUTH COAST

Stay at the 152-room **Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort**, set on a 42-acre oceanfront coconut plantation. At the island's southern tip, Maison&Objet darling Reda Amalou designed the sleek wood-and-stone **Ani Villas Sri Lanka** along a private beach. An hour to the west, the eight ultra-sustainable suites at **Tri** hug the shores of Koggala Lake. Colonial architecture meets polished concrete at the seaside **Owl and the Pussycat**, designed by New York architect Uday Dhar, a few miles from the 428-year-old Galle Fort. —CYNTHIA ROSENFELD

GREECE

Vacation Like Jackie O.

Though Jackie and Aristotle Onassis famously lived on the Greek isle of Skorpios, the couple often spent summer weekends at **Villa Eartha** in Lagonisi, a tony, largely residential seaside town just 45 minutes south of Athens. Available for private rental this summer, the seven-bedroom property—originally a gift from Aristotle to his sister Kalliroe—has been updated with a gym, Wi-Fi, even a hammam, but thankfully its mid-century architectural details have been diligently preserved: the rectilinear angles, the open floor plan, the generous floor-to-ceiling glass with sweeping views over the Saronic Gulf. It's enough to make you feel like a Greek shipping magnate—for a long weekend, anyway. *beyondspaces villas.com*. —JASON CHEN

Jackie and Aristotle Onassis boating off Skorpios in 1968.

