

# VOGUE

AUSTRALIA

Lily-Rose De

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BILL CUNNINGHAM  
Exclusive image  
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CHRISSEY TEIG  
The woman we all want

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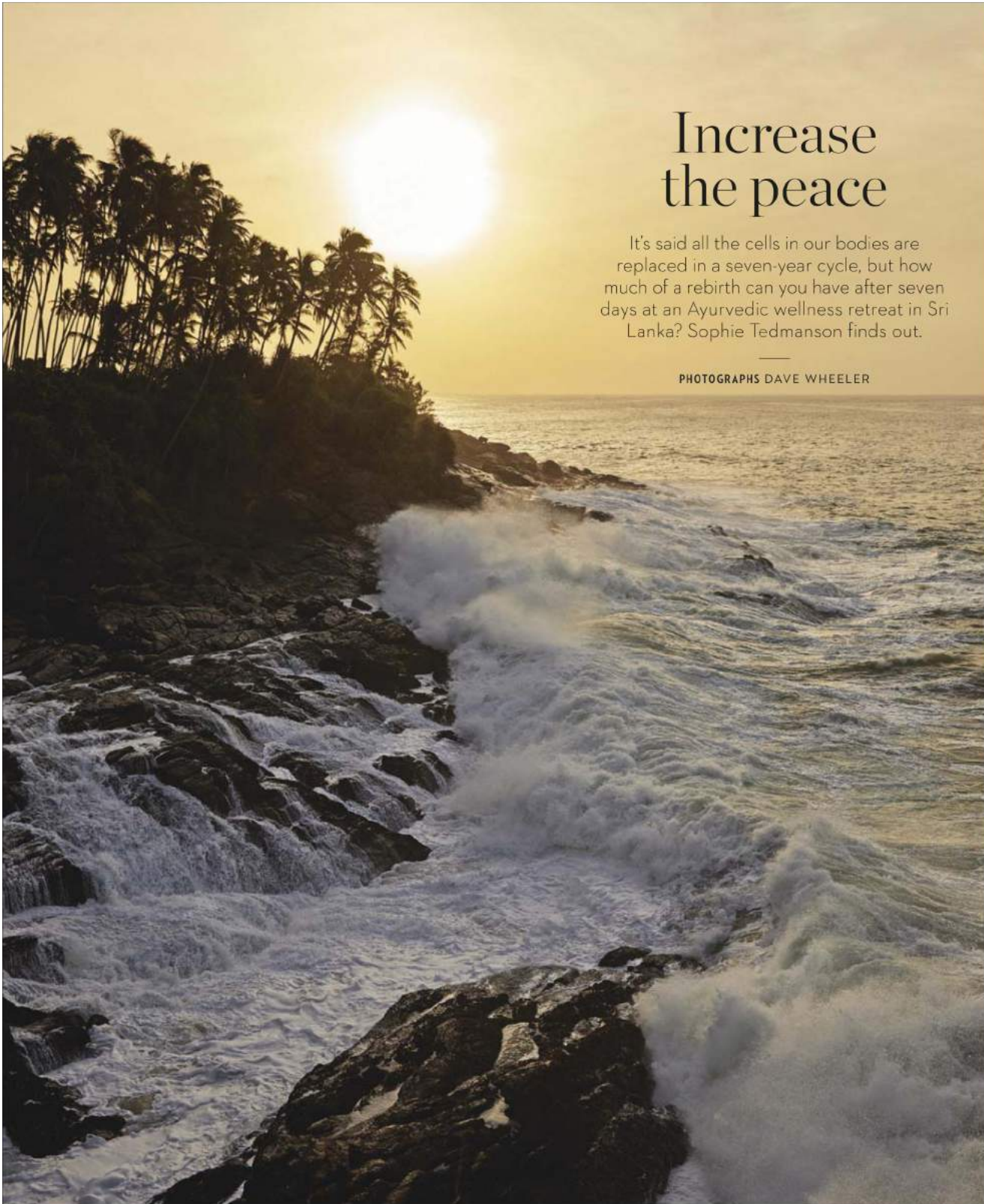
FASHION TO FALL FOR & TREASURE



AN ELEPHANT AT THE  
UDAWALAWE NATIONAL  
PARK, INLAND FROM  
TANGALLE IN SOUTHERN  
SRI LANKA. **OPPOSITE:**  
VIEWING THE SUNRISE  
OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN  
FROM ANANTARA TANGALLE  
PEACE HAVEN RESORT.







# Increase the peace

It's said all the cells in our bodies are replaced in a seven-year cycle, but how much of a rebirth can you have after seven days at an Ayurvedic wellness retreat in Sri Lanka? Sophie Tedmanson finds out.

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PHOTOGRAPHS DAVE WHEELER





Ayurvedic spa treatments help soothe both the mind and body.



A tree house next to the resort's rice paddies hosts farm-to-table experience dining.

A panoramic view from the top of the Mulkirigala Raja Maha Vihara temple.



The Verala teppanyaki restaurant at Anantara.

Vihara, an extraordinary 205-metre-high rock formation with exquisite cave art and giant reclining Buddha sculptures. Inside a white stupa we find a monk, who wraps a twine around my hands and sings a blessing. I am overwhelmed with emotion and a wave of calm washes over me that continues throughout my stay in Sri Lanka. My soul is further satiated with a safari to the nearby Udawalawe National Park, where we watch elephants in their natural habitat, the majestic mothers leading their gorgeous babies to feed.

Back at the spa it's time for another treatment, my favourite of which is the Shirodhara therapy, where a continuous flow of warm oil is dripped onto my forehead then massaged deeply into my scalp and hair to calm the mind, body and spirit. The next morning it's time to leave, and as we take the drive back to Colombo we pass through the town of Dondra, home to a giant temple preparing to celebrate a holy festival with several elephants. My driver pulls over and performs a blessing for me. A giant sun has just risen and casts a spectacular light, and through the morning haze I spot another peacock by the side of the road as I head home feeling completely rejuvenated.

For details go to [www.anantara.com/peace-haven-tangalle](http://www.anantara.com/peace-haven-tangalle).



**A** peacock apparently symbolises several things: royalty, spirituality, watchfulness and awakening. When I first arrive at the Anantara Tangalle Peace Haven Resort, nestled in a coconut plantation on Sri Lanka's south coast, one of the first things I notice is a peacock strutting through the grounds. The peacock, and its poignant symbolism, will go on to become a mascot of my Sri Lankan stay.

It is early morning and we have just landed from Sydney – two flights to Colombo then a three-and-a-half-hour drive through the dark. By the time we arrive, to a traditional welcome with three women singing around a drum, I am so jet-lagged I don't know what time it is, except that I see the sun coming up telling us it's a new day. And what a spectacular one it is. The sun rises over the palm-tree-lined jagged cliffs facing the Indian Ocean on the boundaries of the resort, and it is hard not to be captivated by the raw tropical beauty of this stunning country.

When I first visited Sri Lanka 10 years ago it was recovering from the end of the civil war that ravaged the north of the island, as well as the repercussions of the deadly Boxing Day tsunami in 2004 that affected many coastal areas in the south. But the resilient Sri Lankans have rebuilt and have begun focusing on developing their tourism industry to help boost the economy. As a result, the Emerald Isle, which last year celebrated 70 years of independence from Britain, is now on the top of many travel must-visit lists and a number of luxury resorts, including Anantara Tangalle Peace Haven, which opened in 2015, have become sought-after holiday destinations.

Despite the long journey, the minute I arrive at my ocean pool villa the jet lag is replaced by wide-eyed wonder at the tranquillity laid out before me: the sight of waves crashing ashore amid a chorus of birds over the lagoon is mesmerising. Later they will be joined by cheeky monkeys who emerge from the trees every day at dusk.

It is day one of my week of wellness, so I start it as any retreat should begin: plunging into my private infinity pool, then heading straight to the resort spa for the first session with an Ayurvedic doctor.

While Anantara Tangalle is not a wellness retreat *per se*, it does target the wellness traveller who yearns for a rejuvenating luxury stay but not necessarily at an all-encompassing health resort. Instead you can get the best of both worlds: an immersive personalised Ayurvedic wellness experience – mind, body, soul (and stomach!) – with the guilt-free bonus of five-star luxury and several restaurants to choose from, including award-winning teppanyaki with a Sri Lankan twist, or you can even opt for a custom-designed farm-to-table experience dining in a tree house overlooking the resort's own rice paddies and featuring a tailored menu of organic produce from the resort grounds.

In the spa I am assessed by Dr Preethika Gamage, Anantara Tangalle Peace Haven's Ayurvedic doctor. She begins by explaining the Ayurvedic theories of three *dosha* energies within our bodies, which defines people into three categories: Vata (wind/air), Pitta (sun/fire) and Kapha (water). Within five minutes of meeting me – assessing my eating and sleeping habits, bodily functions, checking my blood pressure and pulse, and quietly observing as I describe my lifestyle, she smiles and says: "For you it is clear, you are a Vata-Pitta person ... I can guess just from meeting you." Much to my delight she prescribes a regimen of meditation, yoga, swimming, art therapy, surf lessons and several spa treatments over the coming days to calm my nervous system and cool my bodily energies.

The next morning, after sunrise meditation and a yoga session, we are driven to the nearby ancient Buddhist temple of Mulkirigala Raja Maha

WHILE YOU'RE THERE ...  
From the capital of Colombo to the  
tea plantations in the centre, Sri Lanka  
has much to offer visitors.

### SHOP

Paradise Road, a retail chain of homewares and art, a concept store and even a boutique hotel all epitomising Sri Lankan design chic.

### CLIMB

Sigiriya, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed rock fortress that dates back to 5th century AD. Here the ruins of an ancient royal palace sit atop the 200-metre-high rock.

### SURF

Sri Lanka has become a must for groups of girlfriends seeking a tropical yoga/surfing retreat at one of the many southern beach resorts.

### EXPLORE

Head south to the historic fort town of Galle, or inland into the centre to picturesque towns of Kandy or Ella in the tea plantation districts.

### VISIT

Elephants can be seen throughout Sri Lanka, but only at the Yala National Park will you find the country's largest leopard sanctuary.

