

VANITY FAIR

MARCH 2014

ON TRAVEL

AFRICA

THE CASE FOR ZIMBABWE

Plus: TOP GUIDES and
SAFARIS FOR KIDS

By GRAHAM BOYNTON and LUGIA VAN DER POST

PERU

IF I CAN, YOU TOUCAN

By STEVE KING

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

MAKING FRIENDS AND
HAVING THEM FOR DINNER

By STANLEY JOHNSON

*"One of the gladder moments in
life is the departure upon a distant
journey into unknown lands."*

RICHARD BURTON



THE BEST... NEW OLD DESTINATIONS

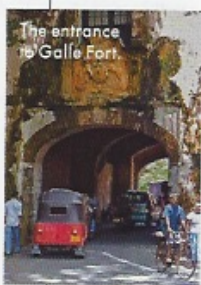
SRI LANKA

WHY NOW

Sri Lanka is a tuk-tuk-powered whirl of flamboyant temples and colonial bygones, thoughtfully spiced curries and biff-buff Ayurvedic massages, boisterous jungles and billboards promoting the joy of lemon-puff biscuits. Until recently it was primarily seen as a place to catch some winter sun. Now it's blossoming into a year-round destination as its eastern shores, which have fine beaches and dry weather from May to September, gradually develop following the end of its civil war in 2009.

WHAT TO DO

Most of the island's eight World Heritage Sites lie inland, including Kandy, the former royal capital, where the Esala Perahera Festival in July or August is an exuberant high-point in the Buddhist year, with cacophonous processions featuring masked drummers and tuskers showered in lights. While there, spare a moment for the engrossing Garrison Cemetery, where the jumbled tombstones recall the hopes and tragedies of empire. Further north, the Cultural Triangle mixes the ruins of ancient cities and palaces with enormous Buddha statues—one of the best is



The entrance to Galle Fort.

Gal Vihara in Polonnaruwa. On the south coast, Galle Fort is richly stocked with Dutch and British buildings, including a library that was once the Officers' Mess for the British Ceylon Rifles. Want nature? A short drive southeast, Mirissa is a rewarding base for whale watching from November to April (mirissawatersports.com), or try your luck spotting leopards in Yala National Park (leopardsafaris.com).

WHERE TO BE

Set 4,000 feet up in the evergreen hills of Bogawantalawa, the four colonial-



The pool at Tea Trail's Norwood bungalow.



The railway near Nuwara Eliya.

era tea planters' bungalows run by Ceylon Tea Trails (teatrails.com) are the place to learn about this heavenly leaf, with expert-led plantation tours. You'll never touch a teabag again.

OVER THE RAINBOW (DE-LUXE)

Amangalla (amanresorts.com/amangalla) originally opened in Galle in 1863 as the New Oriental Hotel, and is now a grande dame for our times.

UNDER THE RADAR (DE-LESS)

On the east coast, make for the new Beach House Pasikudah (beachhousecollection.com). In Galle, the seven-room Sun House (thesunhouse.com) is a former nutmeg merchant's house turned hotel with two gardens and pool—just the place to pull up a sunbed and



A Galle fisherman.

dip into Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle*.

THE FUN BIT

Meet the ever-smiling Sri Lankans on a train ride across the hills, travelling

through the jungle on breezy carriages where there are still seats reserved for clergy and everyone screams when you rattle through a tunnel. A second-class ticket for the two-and-a-half-hour trip from Hatton to Peradeniya costs about 50 pence. Food is a delightful, curry-led adventure. Major on fish and seafood, even in Colombo, where you can feast well at Ministry of Crab (ministryofcrab.com) and Lagoon in the Cinnamon Grand Colombo (cinnamonhotels.com).

WHO WITH

Go with Ampersand Travel (ampersandtravel.com), run by brilliant Anglo-Sri Lankan James Grace Jayasundera. BA (britishairways.com) flies from Gatwick to Colombo three times a week.

—NIGEL TISDALL



Staff at Amangalla.