



# picturesque Manor

## Maya

MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOFILE (MAYA TANGALLE)

**Ashani Amarasinghe** steps into what was originally a *walawwa* and finds a contemporary masterpiece.

**L**eaving Colombo in the early hours of the morning, we are journeying down south and taking in the sea breeze and beaches. A good six hours and many kilometres later, we reach the cinnamon-stick fence that borders the property of Maya, our destination. The gate

gives no indication of what lies beyond, and we are baffled as a gatekeeper directs us to a vehicle park that seemingly leads to nowhere.

We look around, and there it is... the old mansion (or 'walawwa', as it is popularly known among the villagers) painted in pristine white,

standing gracefully amidst a nest of greenery. Indeed, it is a picturesque sight!

We are welcomed with cold towels and fresh Narang juice, and shown to our room.

Walking through the mansion, the bold uniqueness of the architecture catches my eye, and I have many questions for which the answers are promptly provided by Asanka Perera, the young and exuberant

Reservations Manager.

The manor – originally the Aranwella Walawwa, with a history of over 120 years – was converted into the masterpiece it is today by British architect Nicola Fairchild and business partner Hernán Cortés. The renovation also benefited from the skills of





COUNTRY CHARM

ROOM RATES



BED AND BREAKFAST	RS.
DOUBLE	21,000
THE VILLA (10 PAX)	90,000

Rates are for Sri Lankans  
Valid until June 2012

BED AND BREAKFAST	US\$
DOUBLE	275
FULL VILLA (10 PAX)	1,200

Rates are for foreigners  
Valid until June 2012

**HISTORIC SETTING**

Old meets new

pool. Inside our abode, I am drawn to the bathroom – it is large and spacious, in addition to being equipped with modern luxuries.

Lunch is a simple but tasty affair of Mushroom Soup (a definite thumbs-

architect Pradeep Kodikara. And the outcome is truly unique.

The old mansion and the new wing, which lies beyond the swimming pool, have come together so convincingly that 'traditional' and 'modern' are no longer antonyms in this striking destination.

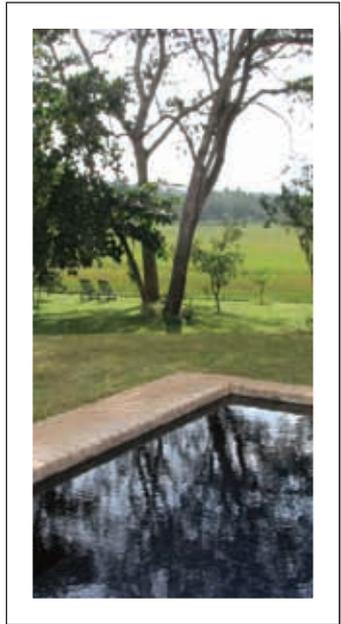
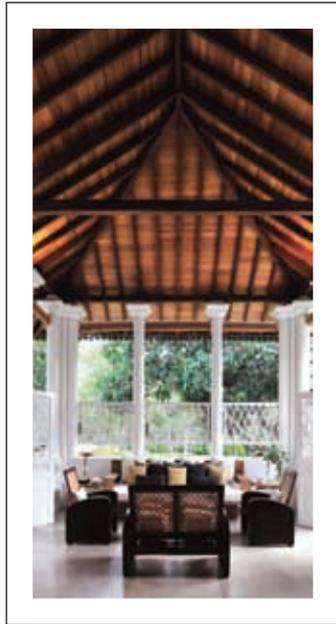
Having seen the exterior, I set forth to examine the interior. In the old manor lie two suites, while the new wing consists of three more. The suite names Thekku, Kumbuk, Amba, Ehela and Kohomba are pleasing to the ear and well furnished, complementing the preferred modernity in living. The fusion of the new wing's modernity with the traditional feel of the old is impressive.

While the suites in the new wing are larger and come with their own courtyards to bring a sense of freedom along with privacy, an additional feature is that all five suites open out to the

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up, if you are considering it!), Prawn and Avocado Salad and ice cream. We are rejuvenated and ready to explore the large garden in the midst of which lies the mansion.

The child in me soon spots a swing tied to one of the many large trees in the garden. All around, we hear the rhythmic sound of birds – a whole choir singing different songs that sound like a musical. Across the virtually infinite paddy field, a lone peacock walks through, pompously displaying its majestic feathers. A parrot (so green that it is almost invisible in the midst of the paddy) flutters its wings and jumps from tree to tree. A mighty eagle eyes its prey and flies away in a hurry.

Meanwhile, the sun is setting and the sky is turning into a light auburn hue, illuminating the entirety of Maya. I can't help wondering if this really is an illusion ('Maya' is Sanskrit for 'illusion')...

Maya is an ideal sanctuary for a calm and quiet getaway; but if you are looking for adventure, you will not be disappointed.

Perera tells me that Udawalawe is only a one-and-a-half hour's drive, while Yala can be reached in two-and-a-half hours. The turtle hatchery in Rekawa is only a half-hour drive from Maya and the sea is less than 30 minutes from here.

There is a library with a reasonable choice of books and an exciting DVD collec-

tion at the hotel. Sports lovers can play cricket and badminton. Wi-Fi facilities are also freely available. The Reservations Manager happily informs me that guests at Maya are not restricted in any way, be it on dress code, children or even smoking.

Suites at Maya are usually on bread-and-breakfast terms, while lunch and dinner are prepared according to guests' requirements and charged at the cost of ingredients.

Chef Dharshana's Hotel School experience is surely reflected in the delicacies he creates. For those of

you with a sweet tooth (like me!), Maya Kulfi is a 'must have'!

Sleep comes very easily on Maya's comfy beds and we are soon in a deep slumber. As the first rays of sunlight creep in, I am woken up by the chanting of *pirith* in the temple next door.

Being Sri Lankan, I am used to this; but I ask Perera about it when I see him at breakfast. He assures me that the rooms will be made soundproof before the peak season in December.

After a scrumptious English breakfast of toast, bacon, eggs, baked beans and tomatoes, we are ready to journey back to Colombo.

I ask my better half for his thoughts on our weekend experience. He replies: "This place is a merger of the impossible with reality and illusion." Ironically, I can't think of a better way to describe Maya!

LIVING HOTEL RATINGS

ACCOMMODATION	☆☆☆☆
CHECK-IN	☆☆
FACILITIES	☆☆☆
ACTIVITIES	☆☆☆
SERVICE	☆☆☆☆
CUISINE	☆☆☆☆
OVERALL RATING	☆☆☆

LIVING RATINGS GUIDE

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EXCELLENT	☆☆☆☆
GOOD	☆☆☆
ADEQUATE	☆☆
LIMITED	☆

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