

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

JANUARY 2012

12

**CAN'T-MISS
VACATIONS
FOR 2012**

SYDNEY

THE LOWDOWN ON
ITS CREATIVE EDGE

**PHNOM
PENH**

Cool drinks in
one hot city



**BHUTAN
HAWAII
SIDHPUR
CHIANG RAI**

**T+L
500**

**THE WORLD'S
BEST HOTELS**

**CHINESE
BALANCE**

Get the best of
ancient healing
traditions

SINGAPORE S\$7.90 HONG KONG HK\$4.3
THAILAND TH฿175 INDONESIA IDR50,000
MALAYSIA MYR17 VIETNAM VND85,000
MACAU MOP44 PHILIPPINES PHP240
BURMA MMK35 CAMBODIA KHR22,000
BRUNEI BND7.90 LAOS LAK52,000

ISSN 1906-0823

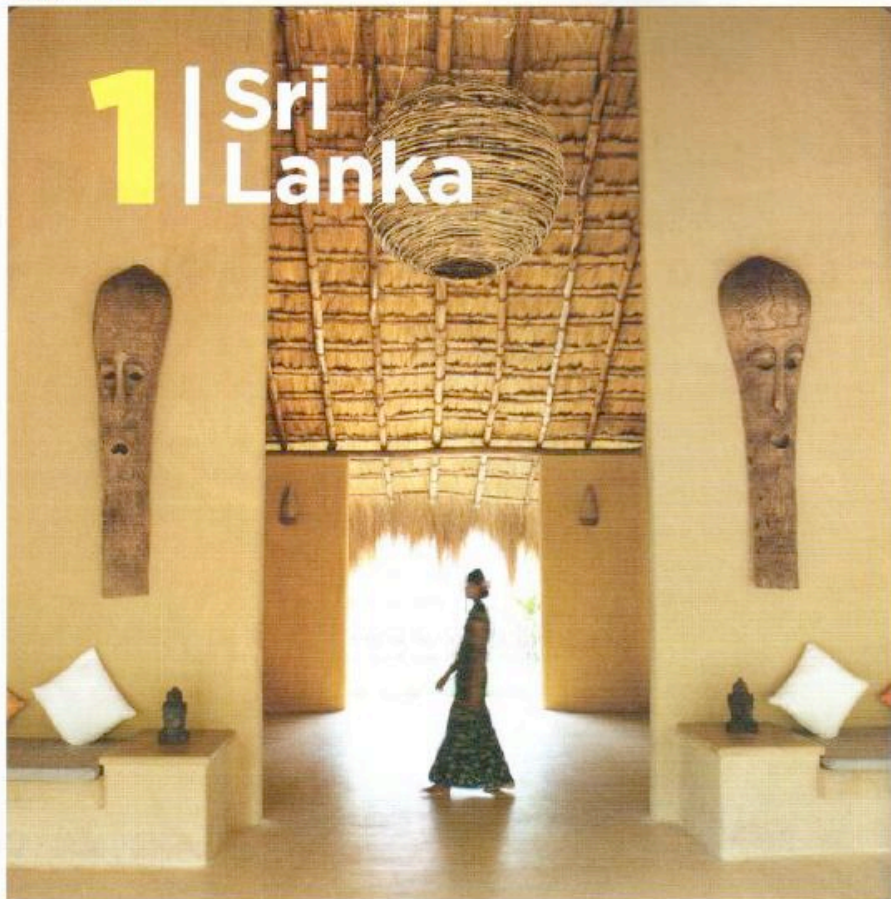


9 771906 082018

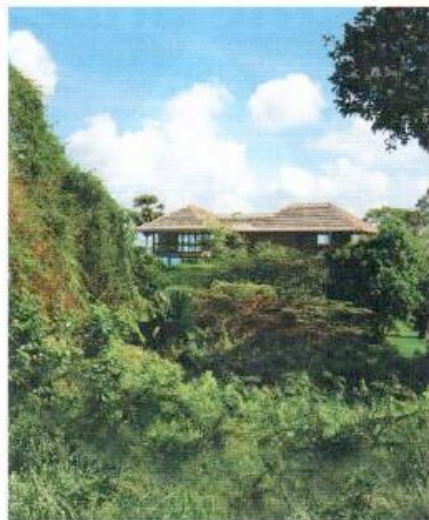
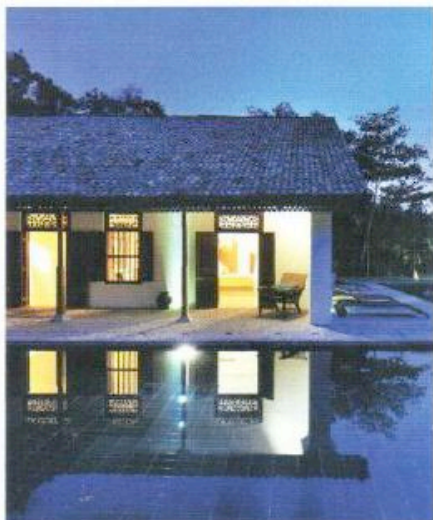
TravelandLeisureAsia.com



1 | Sri Lanka



ISLAND LIVING Clockwise from top: The entryway to one of the villas at Bar Reef Resort, on the Kalpitiya peninsula; a chalet at the Ulagalla Resort, in the northwest; looking into the Old House at the Maya hotel, on the southern coast.



THE BREAKDOWN

WHO IT'S FOR
Beach lovers with a yen for culture and wildlife.

WHEN TO GO

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

HOW TO DO IT

Many international airlines fly to Colombo, from cities such as Bangkok and KL.

EXOTIC FACTOR

Familiar Foreign Far-Flung
▲

Sri Lanka's lush hill towns and pristine beaches have long appealed to a certain breed of worldly traveler, but the flare-ups of the country's brutal on-again, off-again 26-year civil war kept all but the most devoted of them away. The conflict ended three years ago, and as a prolonged peace finally takes hold, this Indian Ocean island is on the cusp of a tourism boom.

Sri Lanka's beach-lined southern coast, centered around the popular town of Bentota, is the country's strongest draw—and big developers are moving in. The Minor Hotel Group chose the area to debut its sister brand to Anantara with last month's launch of the 75-room **Avani Bentota Resort & Spa** (94-34/227-5353; avanihotels.com; doubles from US\$180) in a restored Geoffrey Bawa-designed building. A second Avani, a Six Senses resort, and a Shangri-La property are also in the works. • In the meantime, a handful of designers have opened boutique hotels, including the 15-room **Villa Bentota** (94-34/227-5371; paradiseroadhotels.com; doubles from US\$224), the latest project from Sri Lankan tastemaker Shanth Fernando. Farther south, in Beliatta, Hong Kong decorator Niki Fairchild has turned a century-old house into the glamorous five-suite **Maya** (94-47/567-9025; mayatangallesriilanka.com; doubles from US\$170). • In the northwest, an ambitious government scheme aims to transform the Kalpitiya peninsula into the country's next big resort destination. Until those plans are realized, the laid-back **Bar Reef Resort** (94-777/352-200; barreefresort.com; doubles from US\$125) has airy cabanas and a quiet two-kilometer beach. • Perhaps the biggest peace dividend has been the reopening of the leopard- and elephant-filled Wilpattu National Park, in the northwest. Stay at the **Ulagalla Resort** (94-25/567-1000; ulagallaresorts.com; doubles from US\$374), which has 20 thatched-roof bungalows on 23 hectares an hour from the park. —JENNIFER CHEN