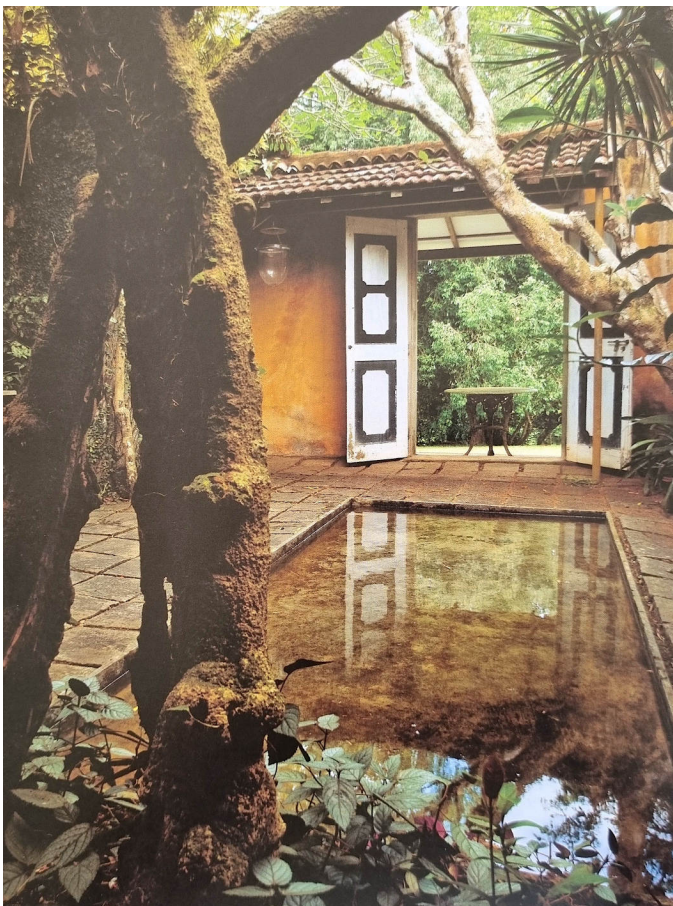
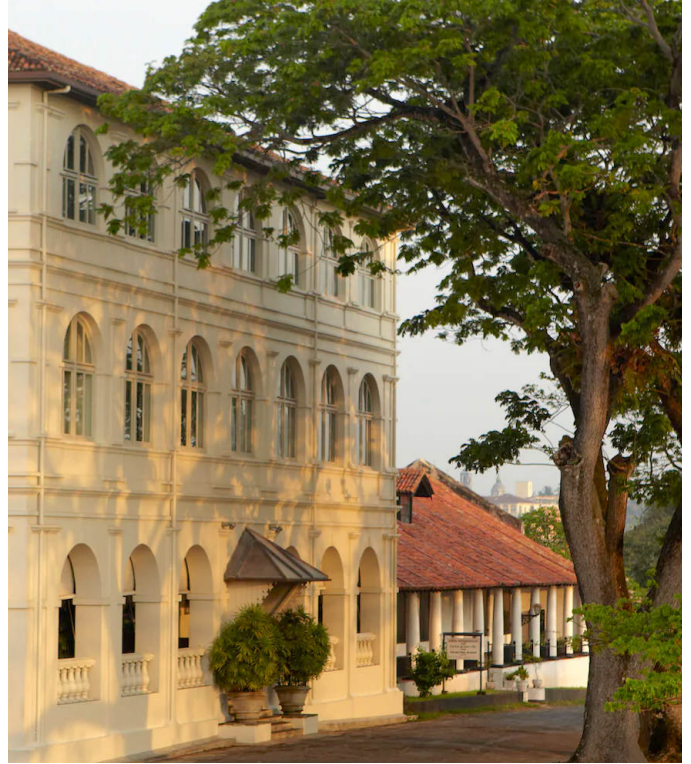


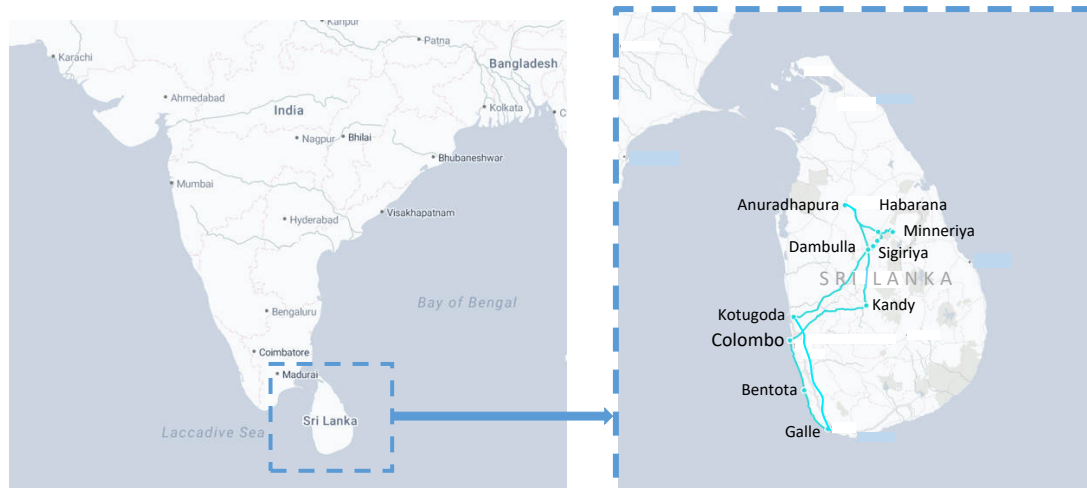
Art | Architecture | Gardens | Textiles | History



# Sri Lanka Design Tour

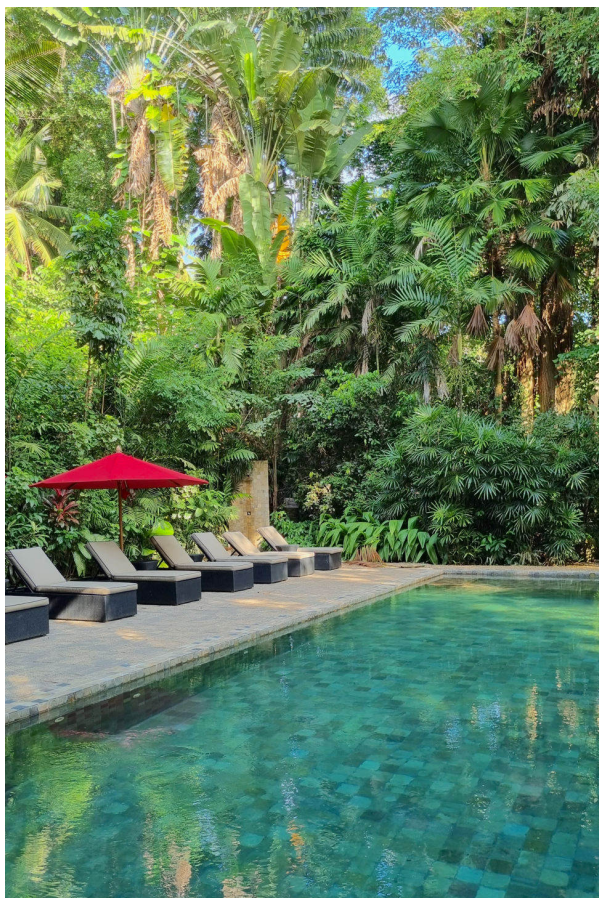
A 14-Day Insider Journey: Art, architecture and gardens across Sri Lanka's iconic landscapes and UNESCO World Heritage Sites

11-24 JUNE 2027



## AT A GLANCE

<b>Dates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11-24 June 2027 (14 days, 13 nights)</li> </ul>
<b>Hotels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wallawaa, Kotugoda</li> <li>• Uga Ulagalla, Anuradhapura</li> <li>• Heritance Kandalama, Dambulla</li> <li>• W15 Hanthana Estate*, Kandy</li> <li>• Galle Face Hotel, Colombo</li> <li>• Lunuganga*, Bentota (architect Geoffrey Bawa's country estate)</li> <li>• Fort Bazaar, Galle</li> </ul> <p><b>* We have reserved these entire hotels exclusively for our tour</b></p>
<b>Meals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfasts daily (13), lunches (5), afternoon teas (7), sundowners (8), dinners (9) and complimentary mini bars (5)</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air-conditioned vehicles for airport transfers and ground transport</li> <li>• Jeeps for safaris</li> </ul>
<b>Your Hosts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour leader – Nicole Court (Sydney-based designer)</li> <li>• Tour manager and specialist guides (Sri Lanka based)</li> </ul>
<b>Group size</b>	A minimum of 9 guests and a maximum 14
<b>Pricing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twin share: AUD\$15,750 per person</li> <li>• Single supplement: AUD\$5,950 per person</li> </ul>
<b>Bookings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A deposit of AUD\$1,000 is required to confirm a spot on this trip (please refer to Tour Details on p25 for the full payment schedule)</li> <li>• This tour requires a minimum of 9 confirmed guests by 5 February 2027 to proceed</li> </ul>
<b>Itinerary Highlights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying in Sri Lanka's most charming and luxurious boutique hotels</li> <li>• Visits to meet artists, designers, makers, naturalists, archaeologists and local experts for an insider's perspective into Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Curated architecture, art, textile, craft and history-focused excursions that showcase our favourite experiences in Sri Lanka</li> <li>• Naturalist-led walks and safaris</li> <li>• A candlelit Sri Lankan dinner in a rice field</li> <li>• Five UNESCO World Heritage sites</li> <li>• Hands-on weaving workshop, as well as tea tasting, spice tasting and Sri Lankan cooking class</li> <li>• Farewell dinner at Michelin-keyed Amangalla</li> </ul>
<b>Best time of year to visit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June is a lovely time of year with sunny 30°C days and 25°C nights that make for lovely travelling weather – the north is sunny and dry; and the SW coast is sunny, with occasional short rain bursts overnight</li> </ul>



WALLAWWA, KOTUGODA

## INTRODUCTION

**SRI LANKA IS AN ISLAND OF ART, NATURE AND ANCIENT CIVILISATIONS**, a land of temple murals, forest monasteries, Dutch forts, tea planter's bungalows, jungle shrines, and hidden gardens. Here, every moment feels layered – women in colourful saris carry flowers to shrines, monks chant beneath ancient bodhi trees, cinnamon perfumes the breeze, and colonial mansions sit quietly beneath banyan trees.

You are invited to join us in June 2026 for an Art, Architecture & Design Tour to Sri Lanka, an intimate and curated journey led by design expert, Nicole Court. Together, we will uncover the island's most exquisite cultural expressions: from traditional crafts and Kandyan palaces to Geoffrey Bawa's visionary tropical modernism. This journey is immersive and personal – offering behind-the-scenes access to private homes, galleries, gardens, artists, temples and archaeological sites.

Over 14 days, we will wind through Sri Lanka's highlands, lowlands, and coasts, encountering heritage in both grand and everyday forms. The ancient city of Anuradhapura, with its colossal Buddhas and moonstone steps offers awe-inspiring moments for lovers of early Asian architecture. At Sigiriya, 5th-century frescoes still shimmer on a sheer rock face, while in Kandy, we will meet spice growers, tea planters and Buddhist monks who keep age-old traditions alive. Nicole will guide us through some of the island's most beautiful private homes and studios, and share insights into Sinhalese symbolism, Indo-colonial design, and decorative arts that fuse Indian, Dutch, and British influences.

Expect moments straight out of an artist's sketchbook: floating lotus pools at dawn; the scent of wet sandalwood after temple prayers; a weaver's nimble hands at work; hornbills swooping overhead as the sun sets over the water; seeing the sunrise from a 5th-century sky palace; rolling hills carpeted in vibrant green tea bushes arranged in neat, ordered grids; and the stillness of Lunuganga's lake reflecting the sky. The accommodations are just as transportive. Imagine a private stay at Geoffrey Bawa's country estate – home to one of Asia's most famous gardens; swimming in an infinity pool as elephants swim in the lake below; staying in a 200-year-old aristocratic home surrounded by lush tropical gardens; waking up to the sound of the ocean in Colombo's grandest colonial-era hotel, or having your afternoon tea served on the veranda of a 19th-century tea planter's bungalow. In Galle, you will sleep in a 17th-century spice merchant's house and walk cobbled lanes that have not changed in centuries. Each property offers its own rhythm – always deeply rooted in its setting and in harmony with local culture.

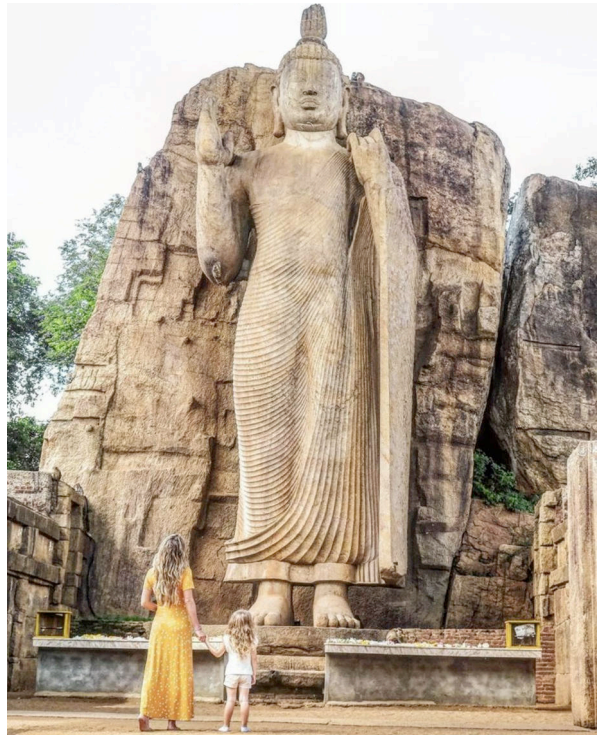
This is an opportunity to experience a deeper Sri Lanka – not just a holiday, but a richly textured creative pilgrimage. Our journeys are always personal in scale. This tour has a minimum of 9 guests and a maximum of 14 – a size that allows for genuine encounters with artists, curators, chefs, community leaders, gardeners and archaeologists who bring meaning to place. Whether you are drawn to textiles, gardens, architecture, or simply the sensory pleasure of travel, this tour promises to be transformative and unforgettable.

### CONSCIOUS LUXURY

Every property and partner we work with is selected with intention. Our hotels are part of a small community of hoteliers and heritage custodians who understand luxury as an immersive and responsible experience. They share common values:

- Preserving architectural and cultural heritage
- Supporting environmental conservation and sustainable land use
- Empowering local communities through training and employment
- Offering exceptional hospitality, design, and a strong sense of place

This is luxury with integrity – slow, soulful, and enriching. It is travel that celebrates beauty, heritage, and the art of meaningful connection.



THE ANCIENT CITIES OF ANURADHAPURA AND DAMBULLA

## ITINERARY SUMMARY\*

### A 14-day Insider Journey with Nicole Court

#### Day 1 • Arrival in Colombo

- VIP airport meet and greet with private transfer to Wallawwa, a 200-year-old aristocrat's manor house surrounded by lush tropical gardens.
- Welcome afternoon tea in the garden to meet your host, Nicole Court, and fellow travellers.

**Accommodation:** *Wallawwa, Kotugoda (Garden Suite), Kotugoda* | **Meals:** *Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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#### Day 2 • Dambulla Cave Temples

- Morning visit to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Dambulla Cave Temples, home to magnificent Buddha statues and intricate frescoes.
- Afternoon jeep adventure through rural villages and rice fields, ending with sunset drinks at Nachchaduwa Lake.

**Accommodation:** *Uga Ulugalla, Anuradhapura (Ulagalla Pool Villa)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Sundowners, Dinner*

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#### Day 3 • Anuradhapura

- Archaeologist-guided exploration of the 2,500-year-old UNESCO World Heritage-listed ancient city of Anuradhapura, including the world's oldest human-planted tree.
- Evening candlelit dinner under the stars, featuring traditional dishes cooked over a cinnamon wood fire.

**Accommodation:** *Uga Ulugalla, Anuradhapura (Ulagalla Pool Villa)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Dinner*

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#### Day 4 • Rural Villages and Crafts

- Morning cycling or tuk-tuk tour through rural villages, exploring traditional crafts and enjoying a Sri Lankan lunch.
- Afternoon at leisure at the iconic Heritage Kandalama, designed by Geoffrey Bawa.

**Accommodation:** *Heritage Kandalama, Dambulla (Luxury Room)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

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#### Day 5 • Sigiriya and Minneriya National Park

- Early morning ascent of Sigiriya (Lion's Rock) to explore 5th-century frescoes and royal pleasure gardens.
- Afternoon elephant safari at Minneriya National Park.

**Accommodation:** *Heritage Kandalama, Dambulla (Luxury Room)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Dinner*

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#### Day 6 • Spice Trails and Kandy

- Visit a spice garden to learn about Sri Lanka's aromatic spices, followed by a traditional Sri Lankan lunch.
- Explore the Temple of the Tooth, one of the world's most sacred Buddhist sites, in UNESCO World Heritage-listed Kandy.
- High tea on the lawn and a private stay at a colonial-era tea planter's bungalow.

**Accommodation:** *W15 Hanthana Estate, Kandy (Exclusively booked for the tour)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Dinner, Drinks, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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#### Day 7 • Tea and Cooking in Kandy's Hill Country

- Learn about the history of tea, plantation ergonomics, and enjoy a tea tasting.
- Participate in a Sri Lankan cooking class with the head chef.
- Scenic jeep ride through the hills to spot wildlife or enjoy leisure time at the estate.

**Accommodation:** *W15 Hanthana Estate, Kandy (Exclusively booked for the tour)* | **Meals:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Dinner, Drinks, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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**\*Detailed itinerary can be found on p8**

## ITINERARY SUMMARY (CONTINUED)\*

### Day 8 • Colombo's Colonial Charm

- Drive to Colombo and enjoy free time at the Galle Face Hotel, a colonial-era seafront property.
- Explore Pettah, Colombo's oldest quarter, and visit the iconic Jami Ul-Alfar Mosque, a masterpiece of Indo-Saracenic architecture.

**Accommodation:** *Galle Face Hotel, Colombo (Sea View Room) | Meals: Breakfast*

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### Day 9 • Colombo's Art and Architecture

- Artist-guided exploration of Colombo's hidden gems, including Tropical Modernist architecture, murals, contemporary galleries, and private art collections.

**Accommodation:** *Galle Face Hotel, Colombo (Sea View Room) | Meals: Breakfast*

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### Day 10 • Geoffrey Bawa's Townhouse and Lunuganga

- Morning visit to Geoffrey Bawa's Colombo townhouse, showcasing his mastery of space and light.
- Explore Barefoot Gallery, featuring textiles by artist Barbara Sansoni, with time for lunch and browsing.
- Afternoon transfer to Lunuganga, Geoffrey Bawa's iconic country estate, for a private stay.

**Accommodation:** *Lunuganga, Bentota (Exclusively booked for the tour) | Meals: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Dinner*

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### Day 11 • Lunuganga and Brief

- Morning exploration of Lunuganga's exquisite gardens.
- Afternoon visit to Brief Garden, created by Geoffrey Bawa's brother, Bevis, featuring art by Donald Friend and other renowned artists.

**Accommodation:** *Lunuganga, Bentota (Exclusively booked for the tour) | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners*

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### Day 12 • Cinnamon and Galle

- Visit a home garden to learn about cinnamon cultivation and taste local delicacies like treacle and toddy.
- Afternoon exploration of UNESCO World Heritage-listed Galle with a local storyteller, followed by sunset drinks.

**Accommodation:** *Fort Bazaar, Galle (Bazaar Room) | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Dinner, Complimentary Non-Alcoholic Mini Bar*

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### Day 13 • Weaving Workshop and Farewell Dinner

- Morning visit to a family-run workshop preserving Sri Lanka's handloom traditions
- Afternoon at leisure for shopping in Galle's cobbled streets.
- Farewell dinner at Michelin-awarded Amangalla.

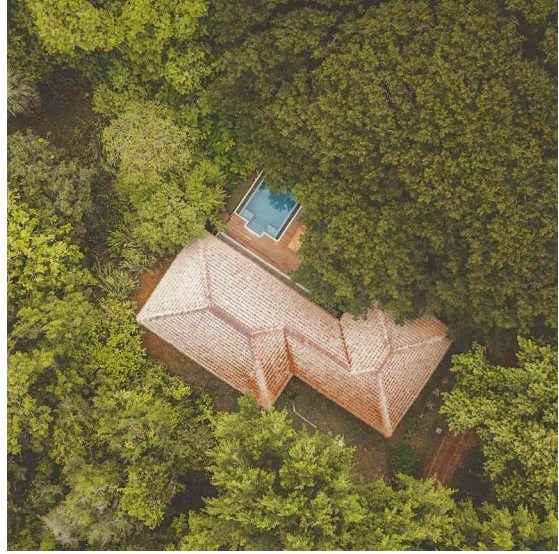
**Accommodation:** *Fort Bazaar, Galle (Bazaar Room) | Meals: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Dinner, Complimentary Non-Alcoholic Mini Bar*

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### Day 14 • Departure

- Group transfer to Colombo Airport for your departure flight.
- Meals: Breakfast*

**\*Detailed itinerary can be found on p8**



UGA ULUGALLA, ANURADHAPURA

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### A 14-night Insider Journey with Nicole Court

Art | Architecture | Gardens | Textiles | History

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#### DAY 1 • Arrival in Colombo

A VIP experience awaits you on arrival at Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport. You will be met at the gate by our representative and escorted through passport control and customs and then whisked off to Wallawwa in an air-conditioned car (20 mins drive). Check in from 2 pm onwards.

Welcome afternoon tea in the garden to meet your fellow travellers and your host, Nicole Court.

**Accommodation:** *Wallawwa (Garden Suite), Kotugoda* | **Meals included:** *Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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#### *Wallawwa*

Luscious tropical gardens, large rooms, good food and a lovely little spa warmly await the travel weary at this historic manor house-turned-boutique hotel. The beautiful 200-year-old gardens, home to birdlife, wide-canopied trees and luscious plants add to the hotel's tranquillity. The setting of the pool feels more like a rainforest than a garden, elegantly hidden beneath mature trees. There is also a croquet lawn, a library with traditional games and a chic boutique that supports local charities.

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#### DAY 2 • Dambulla Cave Temples

This morning we will visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Dambulla Cave Temples to see the 18th century masterpieces of the Kandy school of painting. Inhabited by forest-dwelling Buddhist monks since the 3rd century BC, these natural caves are one of the largest Buddhist complexes in south and southeast Asia.

#### **Lakeside sundowners**

This afternoon we have organized a drive through the countryside. We will travel in jeeps through rural villages, emerald rice paddies and pristine forest pockets with a local naturalist. Water is a key element of the landscape here on Sri Lanka's central plains. The intricate network of tanks, canals, and reservoirs – some dating back more than 2,000 years – transformed a dry landscape into a thriving agrarian civilisation. Designed and built by the ancient Sinhalese with remarkable ingenuity, these interlinked water systems capture and distribute rainwater, sustaining rice fields and villages through long dry seasons.

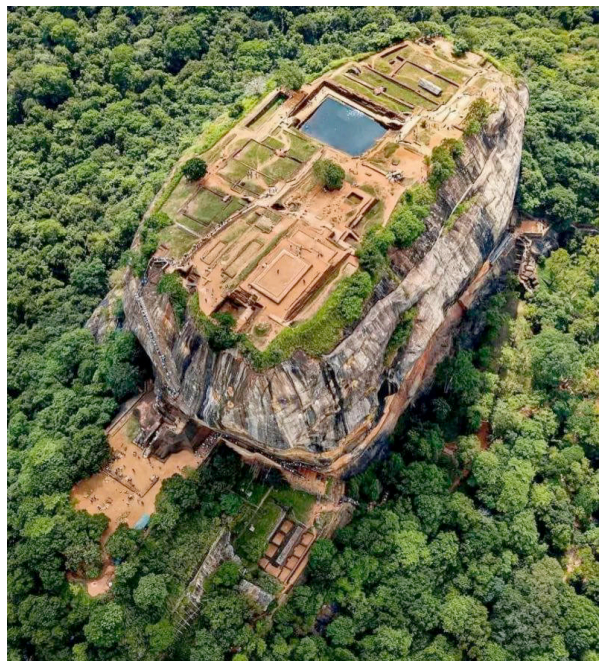
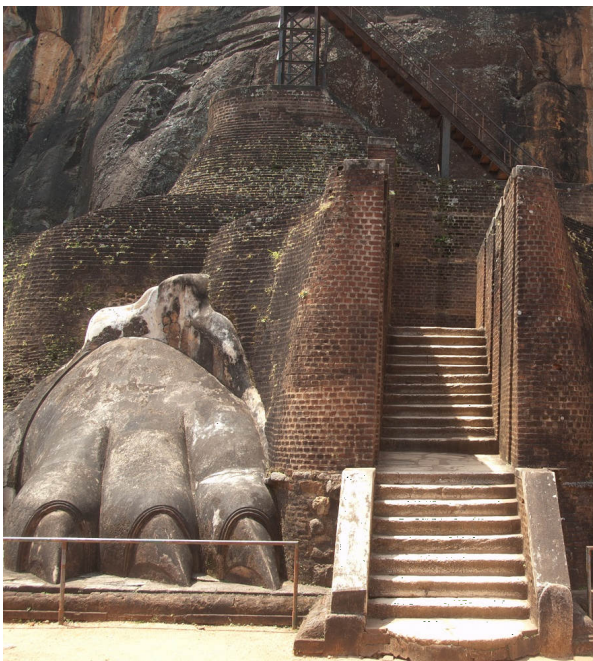
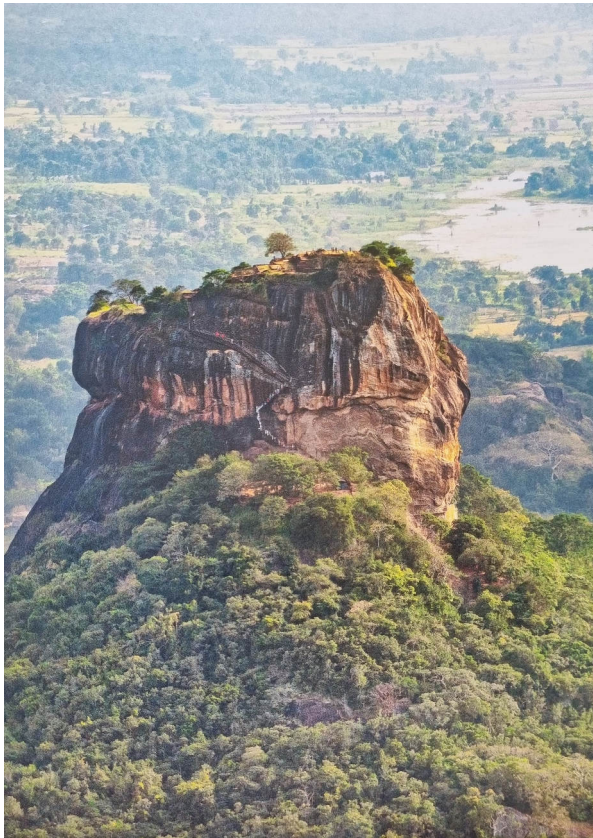
As the sun sets over Nachchaduwa Lake, we will enjoy sundowners as hornbills call and glide above, settling into the trees that line the lake as evening falls. It is a magical setting that captures the quiet beauty of rural Sri Lanka.

**Accommodation:** *Uga Ulugalla (Ulagalla Pool Villa)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Sundowners, Dinner*

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#### *Uga Ulugalla*

This 150-year-old Dutch colonial mansion is set among 58 acres of lush tropical gardens and wildlife-rich private grounds – home to more than 100 bird species. The property features 25 private villas, each with its own plunge pool, and combines modern luxury with a focus on nature and conservation.



SIGIRIYA

## SRI LANKA'S CULTURAL TRIANGLE

Sri Lanka's Cultural triangle is situated in the centre of the island and was the crucible of early Sinhalese civilization. We will explore the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Anuradhapura, Sigiriya Rock Fortress, Dambulla and Kandy and see many of the key motifs referenced in Sri Lankan architecture – from moonstones, to boulder and water gardens, and more.

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### DAY 3 • Secrets of an Ancient City: Exploring Anuradhapura with an archaeologist

Founded in the 4th century BC, Anuradhapura was the greatest monastic city of the ancient world. It was once home to over two million people and was the heart of Sri Lankan civilisation for 1,500 years. During this long period of stability, there was a great flowering of the arts, producing magnificent palaces, intricate sculptures, ornate pleasure gardens and vast stupas built to protect the most sacred relics of Buddhism. The three main stupas are the largest buildings ever attempted in the ancient world, surpassed in size only by the pyramids at Giza.

After the city was abandoned in 11th century, it was enveloped by the jungle – the British explorers who first surveyed these ruins in the 19th century felt they were rediscovering a “lost” city. We will explore Anuradhapura with an archaeologist, starting with a visit to the ancient bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is the oldest living human-planted tree in the world and has been tended by an uninterrupted succession of guardians for over 2,000 years.

#### Candlelit dinner under the stars

Cooked using traditional methods over an open cinnamon wood fire, the ingredients for tonight's dinner are sourced directly from the estate's organic farm. Each dish will showcase the aromatic spices that define Sri Lankan cooking.

**Accommodation:** *Uga Ulugalla (Ulagalla Pool Villa)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

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### DAY 4 • Cycling tour through Sri Lanka's countryside

This morning is an immersion in everyday rural life. We will be welcomed into village houses where local crafts like brick, coir broom and ayurvedic oil making take place. We will finish with a traditional dance lesson and an alfresco lunch. (Note: Tuk-tuks are available as an alternative to e-bikes.)

#### Geoffrey Bawa's most iconic hotel

We are staying at Heritance Kandalama, which took the design world by storm when it opened in 1994. The afternoon is at leisure.

**Accommodation:** *Heritance Kandalama (Luxury Room)* | *Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

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#### *Heritance Kandalama*

Designed by Sri Lanka's most celebrated architect Geoffrey Bawa, Heritance Kandalama is one of his most dramatic designs. Described by Lonely Planet as ‘resembling a multi storey carpark after the zombie apocalypse’, the hotel stands as an embodiment of Bawa's signature Tropical Modernism style, showcasing his commitment to integrating architecture with the environment. Vines and greenery creep over the building's facade, blending with its lush jungle surroundings and softening its contemporary lines. Overlooking Kandalama Tank (look out for elephants swimming in the lake), it has panoramic views that stretch all the way to Sigiriya (Lion's Rock).

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### DAY 5 • Lion's Rock and 5th century frescoes

We will begin the day with an early ascent of Sigiriya, the fabled Lion Rock fortress that rises from the jungle plain. From the summit, the landscape stretches endlessly: mist drifting through



ELEPHANT SAFARI; VILLAGE LIFE; LOCAL CRAFTS; RURAL LANDSCAPES

the forests, the distant shimmer of lakes, and the first rays of sunlight illuminating the surrounding plains. It is an unforgettable moment of quiet wonder – standing where a 5th century king once built his sky palace, whilst watching the island awaken below.

Below the rock lies one of the oldest surviving landscaped gardens in the world. The royal pleasure gardens combine moats, pools, and fountains fed by ingenious underground channels, revealing the sophistication of early Sinhalese design and their deep understanding of water and engineering.

### **Elephant safari at Minneriya National Park**

In the late afternoon, as the light softens, herds of elephants emerge from the forest to graze and bathe along the shores of the Minneriya Tank. From the comfort of our private jeeps, we will watch as hundreds of elephants gather, set against the sweeping grasslands, ancient reservoirs, and forested hills of Minneriya National Park.

**Accommodation:** *Heritage Kandalama (Luxury Room) | Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner*

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### **DAY 6 • Spice trails in the central highlands**

From the misty highlands come intensely aromatic cardamom; rich, oil-laden cloves; smooth, buttery nutmeg; and mace. And the island's black pepper stands apart for its bright, complex heat. This morning, we will drive into the green rolling hills of Sri Lanka's tea and spice country to visit a passionate farmer in his forest garden to see how spices are grown and processed. We will learn which common spices double as medicine before seeing how they are used to make the perfect curry – which we will have for our lunch! Our visit will also help support the work of the Forest Healing Foundation Program.

### **Kandy's Temple of the Tooth – Sri Lanka's most sacred Buddhist site**

After lunch we will visit Sri Lanka's most sacred Buddhist site, the Temple of the Tooth, which houses the left canine tooth of Buddha, in UNESCO World Heritage-listed Kandy. The temple is a major pilgrimage site and was historically linked to the political power of the Sinhalese kings, who believed possessing the relic granted them the authority to govern the country.

### **Tea country**

Then we will climb higher into the mountains to stay at a beautifully restored planter's bungalow surrounded by tea plantations. The property offers uninterrupted vistas of Kandy's jagged mountains, including the Knuckles Mountain Range, a UNESCO World Heritage site recognised for its exceptional biodiversity, diverse ecosystems, and striking landscapes.

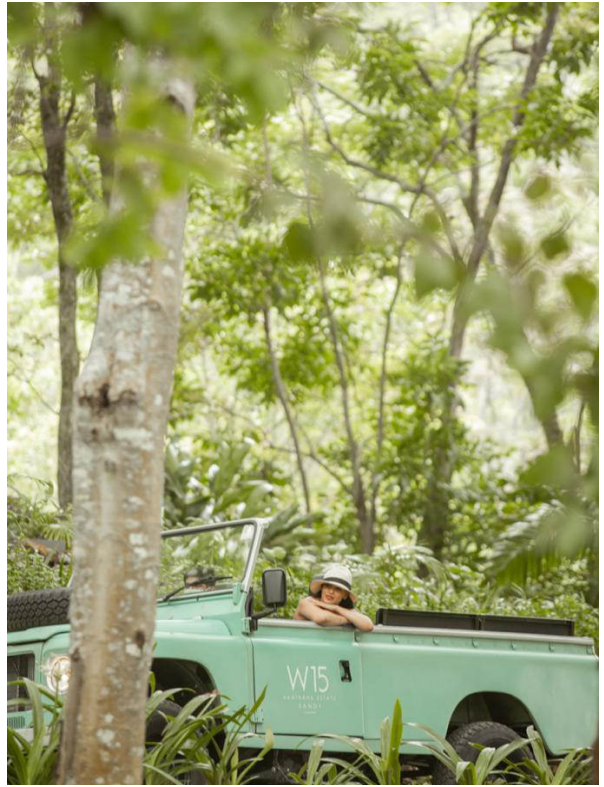
We have reserved the entire hotel exclusively for our stay so please make yourself at home. High tea will be served on the lawn, and there will be time for a few games of croquet before pre-dinner cocktails.

**Accommodation:** *W15 Hanthana Estate | Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Dinner, Drinks, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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### ***W15 Hanthana Estate***

We have exclusively booked W15 Hanthana Estate for our stay. This 19th century colonial-era tea planter's bungalow has been transformed into a luxury boutique hotel – think high ceilings, grand piano, plush sofas, and butler service – and there is a colonnaded veranda with lush croquet lawn, swimming pool and tennis court to complete the picture. It was recently awarded a coveted key by the Michelin guide – all Michelin Guide hotels excel in design, architecture, service and personality – and the Michelin Key denotes the most outstanding experiences in their selection. Although the bungalow is just a 15-minute drive from Kandy, its location in the Hanthana Hills offers both a sense of seclusion and fabulous views.



SRI LANKA'S LOVELIEST TEA ESTATE, W15 HANTHANA

## KANDY

Nestled among misty hills and lush forests, Kandy was the final stronghold of the Sinhalese monarchy, who ruled for more than 2,300 years – a place of refuge when the island’s lowland capitals fell to Portuguese, Dutch, and British invaders. As the last royal city, it preserved the spirit of Sinhalese culture, art, and religion through centuries of change. Today, Kandy remains the island’s cultural heart. It was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1988.

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### DAY 7 • Tea & empire, a cooking class, scenic jeep ride, or . . . just rest and relax

Today we will learn about the history of tea and the ergonomics of plantations, finishing with a tea tasting. There will also be a Sri Lankan cooking class with the head chef and a scenic jeep ride in the hills with a naturalist to spot fishing cats, civets, wild boars, hares, a wide range of monkeys, the elusive leopard and a diverse range of birds. Or you may decide to skip all of these activities and, instead, have a bath, go for a walk, swim in the beautiful pool, take in the mountain views, get your watercolours out or curl up with a book.

**Accommodation:** *W15 Hanthana Estate* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Dinner, Drinks, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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### DAY 8 • Colombo’s colonial and Indo-Saracenic architecture

Today we drive down to the coast to the capital, Colombo. There will be free time to enjoy lunch, sea views, the pool and the colonial-era charm of our hotel, the Galle Face Hotel.

In the late afternoon we will explore Pettah, one of Colombo’s oldest quarters. Tucked behind the city’s modern skyline, Pettah remains a labyrinth of narrow streets, century-old buildings and bustling markets. Nestled in its heart is the 1908 Jami Ul-Alfar Mosque, with its candy-striped red-and-white brickwork – every detail reflects the pomegranate’s essence. This iconic landmark is a masterpiece of Indo-Saracenic architecture, and a symbol of Colombo’s rich multicultural heritage in an area where mosques, temples and churches sit side-by-side.

**Accommodation:** *Galle Face Hotel, Colombo (Sea View Room)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast*

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#### *Galle Face Hotel*

This 19th century *grande-dame* brings a nostalgic colonial feel to Colombo’s seafront. It has a pool overlooking the ocean and is the city’s best spot to watch the sunset.

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## COLOMBO

Sri Lanka’s strategic position along ancient sea and land trading routes shaped Colombo’s diverse community. It has graceful colonial-era buildings, bustling markets and a vibrant arts scene, with a perfect Indian ocean sunset guaranteed at the end of each day.

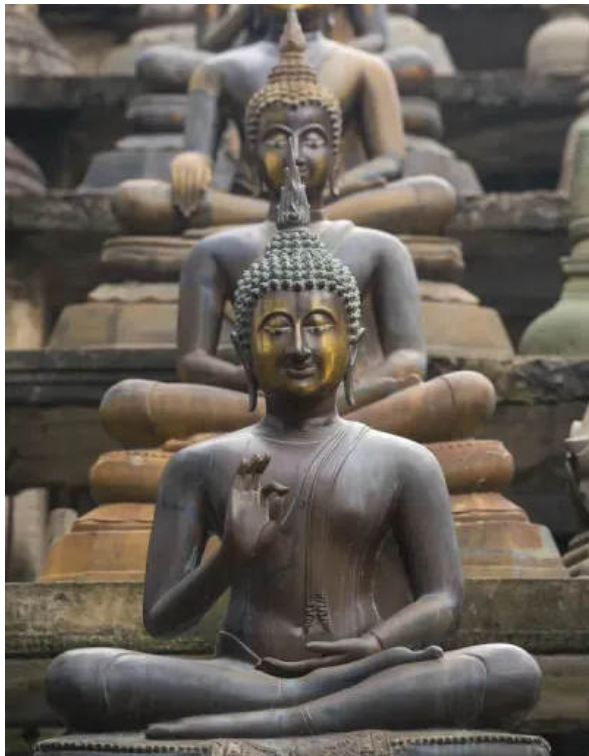
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### DAY 9 • Colombo’s hidden artistic layers

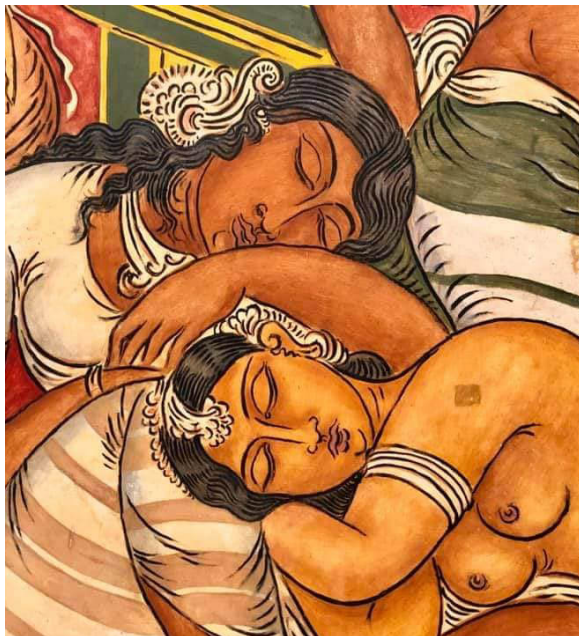
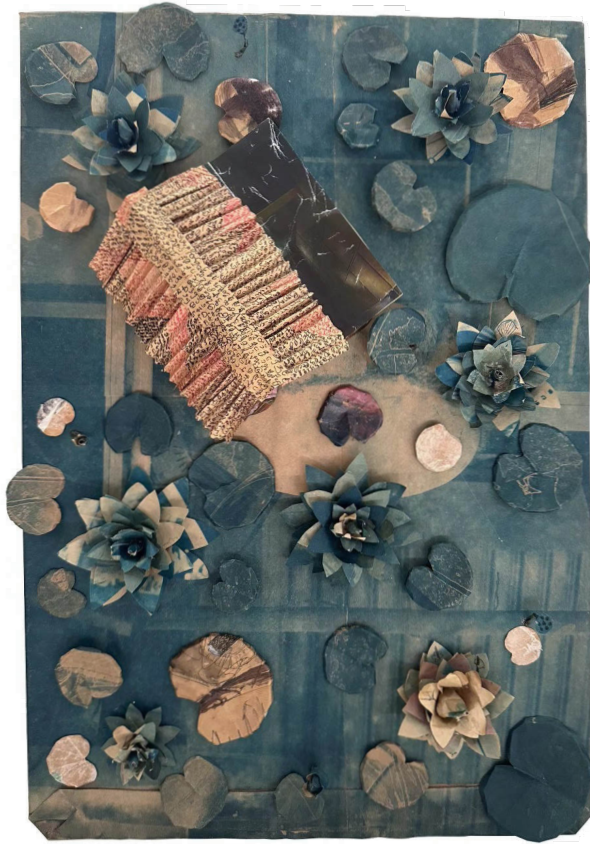
An insider’s experience of Colombo’s architecture and art scene awaits us today as we explore the city with a local artist. As well as visits to a Tropical Modernist architectural masterpiece, we will see extraordinary murals, visit a contemporary gallery to see what is happening on the art scene right now and visit a private 20th century art collection.

**Accommodation:** *Galle Face Hotel, Colombo (Sea View Room)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast*

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COLOMBO'S SACRED ARCHITECTURE



COLOMBO: MODERNIST AND CONTEMPORARY ART; GEOFFREY BAWA'S TOWNHOUSE

## **DAY 10 • Geoffrey Bawa's townhouse**

This morning we will visit the home of Sri Lanka's most influential architect, Geoffrey Bawa. The design reflects Bawa's mastery of space and light, with narrow courtyards, open terraces, and strategically placed windows that create intimate yet airy spaces, offering a glimpse into Bawa's design process and personal life.

### **Barefoot – the textiles of artist Barbara Sansoni**

Barefoot was founded by Barbara Sansoni (1928-2022) – artist, designer, and design collaborator and friend to Geoffrey Bawa – to revive traditional weaving with bold contemporary colour. Today, the Barefoot Gallery brings together art, design, and community, in a serene courtyard space filled with textiles, books, and paintings, with a lovely cafe and a shop selling her iconic textile designs. There will be free time for lunch, browsing in the book shop and people watching whilst listening to live jazz.

This afternoon we drive to Lunuganga, for one of the highlights of the Design Tour – our private stay at Geoffrey Bawa's country estate. We will arrive in time for afternoon tea and sundowners before dinner on the terrace. We have the run of the house so please make yourself at home.

**Accommodation:** *Lunuganga, Bentota* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Dinner*

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### ***Lunuganga – Geoffrey Bawa's country estate***

We have exclusively booked Lunuganga for our stay. Featured on Conde Nast's Gold List of the Best Hotels in the World in 2024 and recently awarded one key in the 2025 Michelin Guide, Lunuganga is Geoffrey Bawa's iconic country house and garden. Bawa spent 50 years curating this wonderland, creating indoor-outdoor spaces, and furnishing them with his interesting collections of furniture, art, and antiques. His home on an abandoned rubber estate served as a testbed for his emerging ideas. The result is a series of outdoor rooms with an exquisite sense of theatre, conceived as a civilized wilderness in the greater garden of Sri Lanka.

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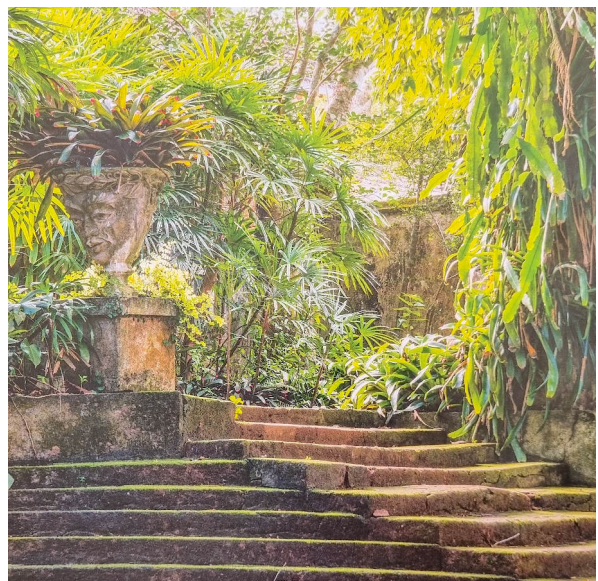
## **GEOFFREY BAWA**

When Sri Lanka regained its independence in 1948 after four centuries of colonial rule, it released a wave of creativity across many branches of the arts, including architecture, as the country explored ideas of national identity through visual mediums. One pioneer was the architect Geoffrey Bawa (1919-2003), son of a Muslim lawyer and his Dutch Burgher wife.

Bawa studied English at the University of Cambridge and Law in London before embarking on a legal career back in Colombo. In 1948, he bought Lunuganga, an abandoned rubber estate a few miles inland from Bentota on the south-west coast, intending to transform it into a tropical iteration of an Italian garden. But the project laid bare his lack of knowledge and, in 1954, he enrolled to study architecture at the Architectural Association in London. In 1957, he qualified at the age of 38 and returned to Colombo.

Bawa's early projects were executed in the modernist style using white sculpted forms, exposed concrete frames and patterned ventilation blocks, as prescribed by Maxwell Fry at the Architectural Association. But Bawa quickly realised that this approach was unsuited to the island's hot and humid climate. Influenced by the work of Sri Lankan architect, Minnette de Silva (1918-1998), he began to experiment with traditional forms – verandas, courtyards, overhanging roofs - and materials including clay tile, stone and timber.

Bawa's house for the batik artist Ena de Silva, built in the early 1960s, typified this new approach. Taking inspiration from traditional Kandyan architecture, he turned the structure inside out, organising the accommodation around a large central courtyard. This was a time of



THE GARDENS AT LUNUGANGA AND BRIEF

restricted imports and the house was built without glass, concrete or air conditioning. The verandas around the courtyard were supported by polished satinwood columns and the roofs were clad in half-round clay tiles, but the open-plan style was wholly modern in spirit. Originally the house was located in the heart of Colombo, but when it was threatened with demolition, it was dismantled and carefully rebuilt on the edge of Lunuganga by the Geoffrey Bawa Trust.

Bawa was seeking a new but authentic architecture that would reconcile the needs of the present with memories of the past. Working like a scenographer, he conceived a building as a series of tableaux to be experienced sequentially, breaking down the barriers between inside and out. Over the next 35 years, he completed over 200 projects, establishing himself as one of the most important Asian architects of his generation.

Throughout his career, Bawa continued to fashion his own garden at Lunuganga, using it and his Colombo townhouse as space laboratories in which to conduct various architectural experiments. In 2001, Bawa was given lifetime-achievement recognition as one of the recipients of an Aga Khan Award for Architecture. At the time of his death in 2003, the garden was still a work in progress. An intriguing sequence of spaces and vistas created through the interaction between landscape and topography, it had come to be recognised as one of the most important Asian gardens of the 20th century.

Bawa's interest in the architectural heritage of Sri Lanka can be traced back to early excursions in the family motor car to the ancient cities during the 1930s and to journeys with his brother, Bevis, during the early 1950s. However, a serious interest developed only after he qualified as an architect in 1957. It was then that he came under the influence of Australian painter, Donald Friend, who stayed for five years on his brother, Bevis' estate at Brief. Friend and Bevis Bawa travelled around the island together, searching for what were then little known and remote ruins that Friend recorded in his drawings and paintings. It was Friend who encouraged Geoffrey Bawa to look at his native Sri Lanka and its architecture with new eyes. Bawa began to incorporate indigenous elements into his evolving regionalist style, gathering together a group of young architects and artists to join him in his search for a new approach to Sri Lankan architecture – one that was sensitive to the environment and local traditions.

In the late 1960s, his design for the Bentota Beach Hotel broke the mould of generic hotel design that was applied around the world by being modern yet still looking recognisably Sri Lankan. Other resort hotels followed, including perhaps the most influential of them all – a complex of holiday villas in Bali called Batujimbar. Its pavilions, courtyards and pools became the familiar shorthand for Bali hotels today, shaping the scale and style of similar resort developments in Bali and beyond.

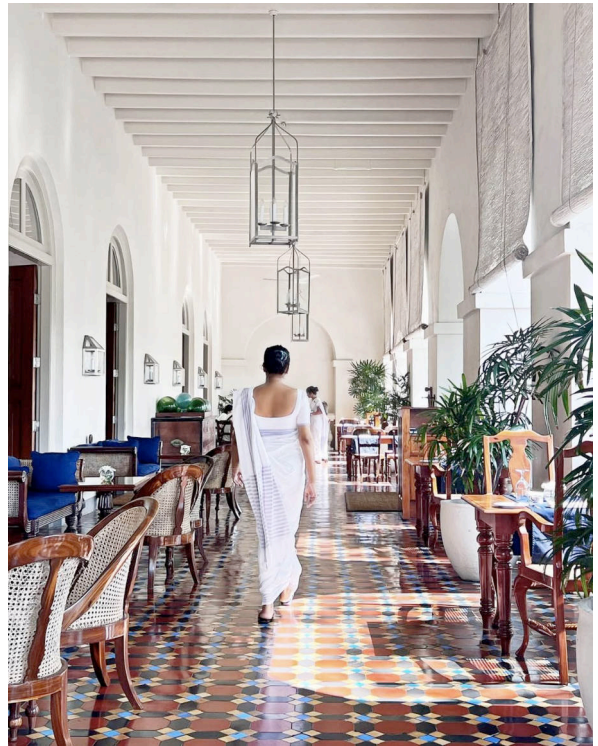
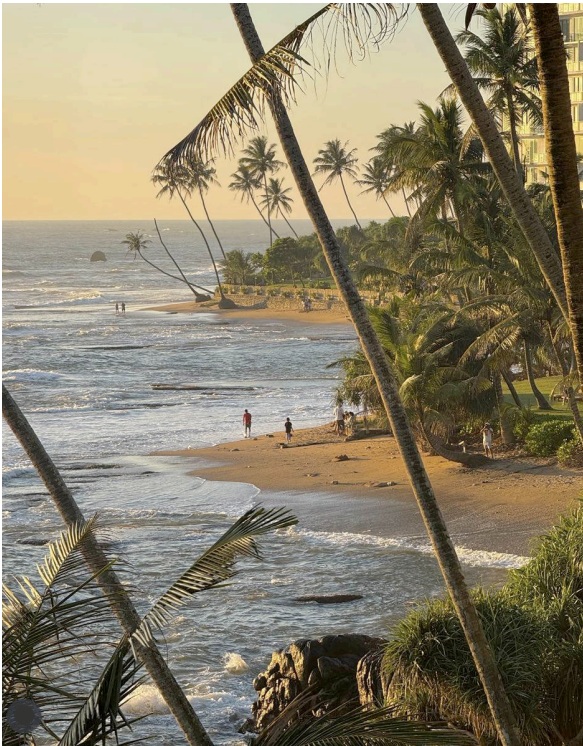
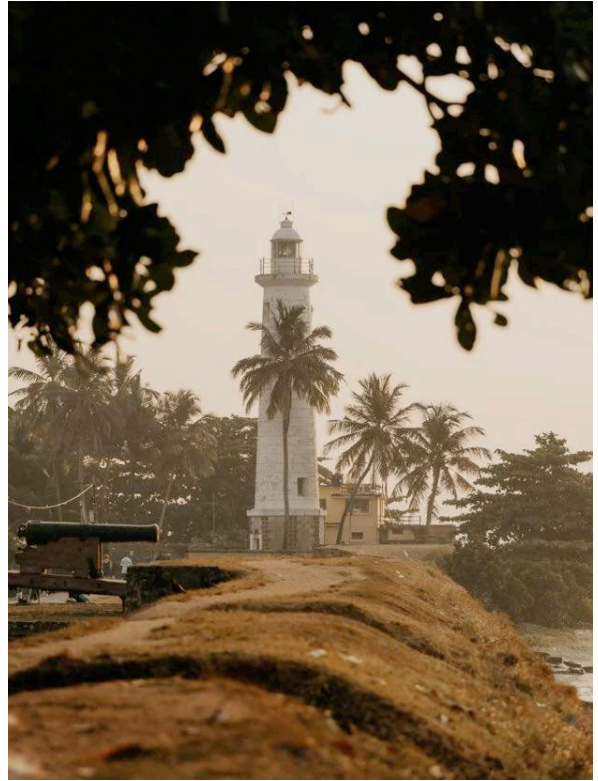
These villas in the Batujimbar estate housed influential Australian architects Peter Muller and Kerry Hill, as well as legendary hoteliers Adrian Zecha (who went on to found Aman), Ong Beng Seng (Four Seasons Resorts in Bali) and his wife Christina Ong (who went on to found Como Hotels & Resorts). Was the conception of Aman and Como due to the influence of Bawa's design – perhaps born out of this interaction between visionaries at Batujimbar in Bali?

Bawa's influence escalated following the publication of his work in *The White Book* in 1986 (*Geoffrey Bawa: Architect in Sri Lanka*) which saw a flurry of copycat designs across the region. Suddenly everyone saw the sense of open-sided buildings with shading roofs, and the beauty of cool courtyards and lavish plantings. It became the new Asian style, which we see today in everything from Singaporean hotels to Byron Bay beach houses.

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### **DAY 11 • Lunuganga and Brief – two influential 20th century Asian gardens**

This morning is an immersion in the glorious gardens of Lunuganga. And in the afternoon, we will visit Brief, the garden created by Geoffrey Bawa's older brother, Bevis (1909-1992).



GALLE

Bevis was a bon vivant, renowned for his sharp wit and quick mind. A photograph in the house shows a celebration in the gardens, with Bawa entertaining Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. Other famous names to have also gossiped over a gin and tonic at one of Bawa's garden parties include Gregory Peck, Aldous Huxley and Agatha Christie.

Bevis met the Australian painter, Donald Friend (1915-1989), in 1949 on a ship sailing from Colombo to Italy and invited him to come and stay at Brief when he was next in Ceylon. Friend took up this invitation in 1957 and stayed for five years. This was a prolific period for Friend, as he experimented with a number of different media: bas relief tiles, aluminium sculptures, painted doors, murals, gold leaf paintings.

A number of the artist's works, given as thanks for Bevis Bawa's hospitality, are on display in the house, the highlight being the giant *Brief Mural* (1958), Friend's colourful interpretation of Sri Lanka, depicting Hindu goddesses, elephants, jungles and peacocks. An original painting by Russell Drysdale – who was another visitor to Brief – hangs in the dining room.

**Accommodation:** *Lunuganga, Bentota* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners*

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## **DAY 12 • The world's best cinnamon**

Sri Lanka's fertile soils and tropical climate produce some of the world's finest spices. Fragrant Ceylon cinnamon – the island's most famous export – exudes a delicate sweetness found nowhere else. We will stop at a home garden enroute to Galle to see how cinnamon is grown and harvested. Another highlight will be seeing how the delicious sap of the Kitul Palm (*Caryota urens*) is collected and learning about its medicinal properties. We will taste two Sri Lankan delicacies – treacle and toddy – and have a light lunch of cinnamon tea and traditional local snacks.

### **Historic Galle**

Afterwards, we continue to Galle. This afternoon is at leisure with time for a swim. Later, we will meet for afternoon tea and then explore historic old town of Galle with a local storyteller, finishing with sunset drinks.

**Accommodation:** *Fort Bazaar (Bazaar Room)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Dinner, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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### **Fort Bazaar**

Formerly a spice merchant's home, this boutique hotel and spa was lovingly restored to honour the Fort's rich history and vibrant culture, resulting in a blend of modern luxury and heritage charm. There is a stylish in-house restaurant, peaceful courtyard and gorgeous pool. Galle's heritage sites, chic cafes and sandy beaches are just steps away.

### **GALLE**

Built by the Portuguese in 16th century and then fortified by the Dutch in the 17th century, UNESCO World Heritage-listed Galle is a melting pot of cultures and communities. Once a busy port that served as a meeting point for Greek, Arab and Roman traders, it is home to Moor (Muslim), Sinhalese, Burgher and Tamil ethnic groups. This architectural and archaeological fortress has a colourful history and is one of the best-preserved forts in South Asia.

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## **DAY 13 • A weaving workshop**

This morning we will visit a family-run workshop preserving Sri Lanka's handloom traditions. We will learn about natural dyes and weaving techniques from the artisans whose craftsmanship continues to shape Sri Lanka's contemporary design story.



CINNAMON PEELING, SPICE TASTING AND HANDLOOM WEAVING

### Shopping in Galle

The afternoon is at leisure, but you may like to visit some interesting shops in the cobbled streets nearby – think antiques, handlooms, homewares, jewellery, fashion and retro posters.

### Farewell dinner

Tonight, we will gather for a farewell dinner at Amangalla – recently honoured with a Michelin “Key” – to celebrate our unforgettable adventure in Sri Lanka.

**Accommodation:** *Fort Bazaar (Bazaar Room)* | **Meals included:** *Breakfast, Afternoon Tea, Sundowners, Dinner, Complimentary Mini Bar*

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### DAY 14 • Departure

We will transfer to Colombo Airport in time for late morning/midday departure flights, which concludes our tour.

Feel free to reach out if you need assistance with any additional travel arrangements – such as a few relaxing days by the beach, or an extra night’s accommodation near the airport.

**Meals:** *Breakfast*



NICOLE COURT

## MEET YOUR HOST: NICOLE COURT

### An Artistic Journey through Sri Lanka with a Designer

Join Sydney-based designer Nicole Court on an immersive, 14-night journey through Sri Lanka's intricate beauty, layered history, and living traditions.

This one-of-a-kind tour, handcrafted by Nicole in collaboration with local experts, invites you to explore Sri Lanka through a designer's lens – from historic homes and lush gardens to workshops, temples, and quiet corners of architectural wonder. With her thoughtful eye, deep respect for craftsmanship, and warm, personal approach, Nicole creates space for real connections – not just to places, but to the people who shape them.

This is not a typical tour. It is an invitation to see more, feel more, and slow down – in the company of like-minded travellers and a host who has spent a lifetime chasing beauty and meaning around the world.

#### About Nicole Court

Nicole Court is a multi-disciplinary designer with more than 30 years experience across textiles, interiors, homewares, publishing, and landscape design. Her creative journey has taken her through India, Sri Lanka and beyond – always with an eye for the handcrafted, the historic, and the beautifully unexpected.

Nicole's textile and homeware collections were sold in Australia and New Zealand's top boutique stores and regularly featured in publications including *Belle*, *Vogue Living*, *Inside Out*, *Gourmet Traveller*, *House & Garden* and *Marie Claire*.

Today, she works as a landscape designer in Sydney. Whether she is designing a garden or curating a cultural journey, Nicole brings the same sensibility: thoughtful, tactile, and quietly elegant.

#### A Family Tradition of Travel and Design

Nicole's love for Asia is woven into her family story. Her mother, Dee Court, an art teacher and textile expert, led small-group tours to India and Central Asia – passing on to Nicole a fascination with traditional crafts and cross-cultural connections. Nicole's aunt, Robin Duffecy, a writer and interior designer, once lived in Delhi and formed close friendships with many of the country's leading thinkers and creatives.

These relationships didn't end with the previous generation. Over time, Nicole built her own network of artists, collectors, writers, and designers in the region and these connections form the heart of this special journey.

#### What to Expect

- Design-led discovery: Explore Sri Lanka's architectural treasures, lush gardens, and rich artistic traditions with a designer, revealing the stories and details behind each place.
- Meaningful encounters: Meet local artists, curators, and creatives in private settings – from home studios to heritage houses.
- Beautifully balanced: Enjoy a curated pace with time for conversation, contemplation, and every comfort thoughtfully chosen.
- A personal touch: This tour reflects Nicole's passion, insight, and care – and is designed to feel more like travelling with a generous friend than a tour leader.

Join Nicole Court on a unique and intimate exploration of Sri Lanka – where art, design, and culture come together in ways that are deeply inspiring and quietly unforgettable.

Instagram: @nicolecourtdesign

## TOUR DETAILS

Design Tour to Sri Lanka | 11 – 24 June 2027 | 14 Days | 13 Nights

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### How to Reserve Your Place

To secure your place on this journey, please follow the steps below:

- Request a Booking Form via email [nicole@nicolecourt.com.au](mailto:nicole@nicolecourt.com.au)
  - Complete and return the Booking Form
  - Nicole will then send you an invoice for the AUD\$1,000 deposit
  - Pay the deposit (the bank details will be on the invoice)
  - Upon receipt of the deposit, Nicole will confirm your tour booking in writing via email
- 

### Payment Schedule

The following payment schedule applies:

- **At time of booking**  
AUD \$1,000 deposit
- **5 February 2027**  
Additional payment due, bringing your total payments to **25%** of the tour cost
- **6 March 2027**  
Final balance of **75%** due

### For later bookings:

- Bookings after **5 February 2027** require a **25%** payment
  - Bookings after **6 March 2027** require **full payment** at time of booking
- 

### Inclusions

Your journey has been designed for comfort, ease and enrichment. The following is included:

- 13 nights carefully selected hotel accommodation
  - All meals, beverages and minibar as outlined in the itinerary
  - Private airport arrival and departure transfers
  - Ground transport by air-conditioned coach and private vehicles with expert drivers
  - Complimentary bottled or filtered water throughout the tour and in all hotels
  - Specialist local guides at key destinations
  - Tour leadership by **Nicole Court** and full support from your accompanying Sri Lankan tour manager
  - Entrance fees, monument charges, taxes and all gratuities
  - 24/7 support from our experienced Sri Lankan travel team
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### Exclusions

The following items are not included:

- International flights
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Alcoholic beverages not included in hotel minibar or stated meals
- Visa costs

### Exclusions (continued)

- Comprehensive travel and health insurance (required)
  - Medical expenses
  - Costs associated with voluntary or unavoidable itinerary changes
  - Personal expenses such as snacks, laundry, telephone calls and internet
  - Video camera fees at certain museums and sites
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### Cancellation Terms

Should you need to cancel your booking, please notify us in writing by email.

- Cancellations **before 5 February 2027**: deposit is retained (unless the tour is cancelled by us due to insufficient numbers – in this case, the deposit will be refunded to you in full)
  - Cancellations **after 5 February 2027**: 25% cancellation fee
  - Cancellations **after 6 March 2027**: 100% cancellation fee
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### Minimum Numbers

This tour requires a minimum of **9 guests** by **5 February 2027** to proceed.

- Please wait for written confirmation before booking flights (or ensure flights are refundable).
  - If minimum numbers are not met, you will be notified on **8 February 2027**.
  - The tour may then be cancelled or re-costed.
  - If re-costed, you may accept the new cost or cancel your booking within 1 day of notification.
  - If the tour is cancelled — or if you choose not to proceed with a revised cost — you may elect to receive either a **full refund** of all payments (including deposit) or a **credit** toward future arrangements, processed within **5 business days**.
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### Booking Terms & Conditions

For full details, please refer to the

**“Design Tour to Sri Lanka June 2027 Booking Form with Terms and Conditions.”**

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### Medical

All hotels have access to on-call doctors, should assistance be required.

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### Dietary Requirements

We are pleased to accommodate dietary needs wherever possible.

Please advise us at the time of booking so arrangements can be made in advance.

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### Flexibility

This itinerary has been crafted with great care.

However, travel in Sri Lanka occasionally requires minor adjustments.

If an activity must move to a different day, or if a site is unexpectedly closed, an alternative of equal interest and quality will be arranged.

## TESTIMONIALS

**I HAVE NOW DONE TWO TOURS WITH NICKY.** Two unforgettable, wow every single day, in fact, often multiple times a day, wow! moments. It was evident from the moment I landed in Delhi, warmly greeted, walked through the airport, onto a waiting bus and into the comfort of the first of many beautiful hotels. All the way through to the moment I flew out again, filled to the brim with awe and delight.

Every single detail of the tour was thoughtfully curated. Nicky is a natural curator. Her attention to detail. Her love of all things India. Her passion for authentic human experiences all shine through with grace and love. Yes, love. I feel spoilt by my two incredible tours through India with Nicky. I'm not sure there is any other way to do it now!

**Sally, Sydney (two tours – Calcutta & India's North-East and Rajasthan)**

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**NICOLE COURT'S DESIGN TOUR WAS A LUXURY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE THAT CANNOT BE MATCHED.** Travelling with my sister, for my 50th birthday present, this tour was a complete success for me; the places we travelled to, the experiences that were curated and timed perfectly to build up our understanding of this complex and wonderful and diverse culture and place. I experienced utter beauty and fulfillment in many forms, be it the world class hotels, food or seamlessly planned activities.

Mostly it was a wonderful human experience, feeling safe and totally cared for, allowed me to confidently explore this foreign country, supported and connected to both Nicky and our guides, and finding new connections with a fantastic tour group that have ensured I have some wonderful new friends for life. I cannot recommend Nicole Court's Design Tours highly enough.

**Jacqui Williams, Perth (Design Tour to Delhi, the Taj Mahal and Rajasthan)**

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**THE METICULOUS PLANNING OF THE DESIGN TOUR TO INDIA,** the attention to detail, lovely surprises along the way, and our extremely knowledgeable guides all made this experience incredibly enlightening, where history, creativity and spirituality entwine, an unforgettable adventure for anyone passionate about design, textiles and architecture.

Spice scents, tiles, saris, hand-painted walls, incense, etched glass, hand-blocked prints, and temple bells have left an indelible mark on my soul. I feel completely spoilt and privileged to have been. It far exceeded all my expectations. I would go again in a heartbeat with Nicole and the team. Highly recommended. A huge thank you. Heart open.

**Suzanne Maher, Bellingen (Design Tour to Delhi, the Taj Mahal and Rajasthan)**

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**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE MOST MAGICAL AND AMAZING TRIP.** We were so well looked after at every moment and felt so safe, secure and well supported. Mum is still buzzing from the trip and her face lights up when people ask her about it. I've made us a photo book and she's showing everyone. Such great memories for us both to treasure.

It was also really special to spend time with you and watch you work and weave your magic. You have a real gift for what you do and you always operate with such grace, authenticity and a real sense of ease and calm. And fun!! So many giggles and so much fun. I can really feel the love in what you do - even though I know it's not always as easy as you make it look.

**Lara Esden, Sydney (Design Tour to Madhya Pradesh)**

## TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

**I'VE BEEN TO NORTH INDIA TWICE BEFORE**, but doing a tour with Nicky Court on her Design Tour is by FAR the best way to see India. You see the best of the best along with the chaos, but knowing you are safe and well taken care of. Just sit back and trust! There was something wonderful in every day along with pleasant surprises. We saw the most unique places, beautiful palaces, tombs, and ruins along with how the masses live on the streets, compatibly with cows, dogs, elephants, camels, donkeys, goats, sheep, bicycles, rickshaws, tuk-tuks, motor bikes, cars, buses, and trucks. The two most challenging components are the air and water quality but that faded as we basked in the glow of all that was so wonderful!

**MJ, Sydney (Design Tour to Delhi, the Taj Mahal and Rajasthan)**

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**FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY STEPWELLS IN AHMEDABAD**, to the spotted leopard spotting, the textile exhibitions and the fabulous palaces of Rajasthan, the India tour was full of surprises and “wow” moments. Along the way the accommodation was superb and the company great fun. Nicky and her team went to no end of trouble to ensure everything went smoothly and that we got the most out of all our visits. Grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about Indian architecture and culture from our expert guides. Highly recommended!

**Anne W, Sydney (Design Tour to Gujurat and Rajasthan)**

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- What would you do again: All of it
- Funniest moment: Hooning around in tuk-tuks wherever we were
- Favourite hotels: RAAS Jodhpur, RAAS Chhatrasagar and Samode Haveli, Jaipur
- Best meal: The food everywhere was amazing, but it was also about the gin and tonic
- Most enjoyable experience: The colours and the textiles (especially the Calico Museum and the Anokhi Museum), architecture in Ahmedabad, the leopard adventure, the stepwell dinner, bird watching on the lake, palace visits, and the shopping in Jaipur!!

**Sarah Ogilvie, Melbourne (two tours – Rajasthan and South India)**

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**IT WAS AN AMAZING TRIP** and I would recommend it to other Kiwis and Aussies – I feel that it was the right balance for us and Nicky knows what we want. Going in the winter is highly recommended. The trip was well run and organised. All the hotels were good. Highly recommend this trip to anyone wanting an informative trip to India with no hassles.

**Michelle, New Zealand (Design Tour to Gujurat and Rajasthan)**

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**NICKY TOOK US ALL ON A MAGIC CARPET RIDE** through Calcutta and India's North-East on her Design Tour. I have been to India many times, and I have been on a lot of group tours – this was one of the best I have experienced. Nicky was a great host and showed us things we would never have discovered ourselves, in a less travelled part of India.

**Susan B, Sydney (two tours – Calcutta & India's North-East and Rajasthan)**

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**TRAVELLING WITH 'DIETARY REQUIREMENTS'** was not a problem with Nicky as our leader. She ensured that all our accommodation chefs were warned in advance and I never ever had an upset stomach. This is a small example of the attention to detail and care Nicky takes in planning her tours. Not to mention the wonderful places and people we saw, and accommodation we stayed in. I highly recommend Nicky's Design Tour.

**Karen Robinson, Sydney (two tours – Calcutta & India's North-East and Rajasthan)**

## TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

**I'VE RECENTLY RETURNED FROM INDIA** and was fortunate enough to be part of Nicky Court's Design Tour. As I was travelling alone, I did have some reservations about how I would manage, never having been to India before and being a little nervous in unfamiliar places. Fortunately, everything was taken care of with thoughtfulness and care. From the moment I alighted the plane until the moment I boarded to return home everything was looked after. The detail of what we did down to where the next clean bathroom would be, were all taken care of. I enjoyed hearing about the history of beautiful buildings. We experienced delicious meals in beautiful locations, from a Mughal-inspired garden to a step well, lit with hundreds of candles. The timing of our glamping in the beautiful wilderness park was impeccable. After a week of taking in so much history, culture and horns beeping it was lovely to enjoy the solitude and see the stars. Nicky is a kind and gracious woman whose care for others made the trip what it was. Her humbleness and willingness to help with any issue made everything seamless and stress free for the guests. Her knowledge and cultural insight was fantastic and we were well informed throughout the trip, much has stayed with me as I've settled back into life at home. Thank you for everything, I would highly recommend any trip to India that Nicky would organise.

**Carla M, Sydney (Design Tour to Delhi, the Taj Mahal and Rajasthan)**

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**MY TRIP TO INDIA** with Nicole Court was just magical. Her knowledge and care and kindness for us all was outstanding. I have been to India many times but never like this. A small group of like-minded travellers, some were travelling to India for the first time. Everything was organised so it was hassle free. At times India can overwhelm but there was a great mix of excursions and relaxation. We stayed in luxury small hotels and palaces which were divine. I cannot recommend this trip highly enough or India. India's people, culture, customs are intoxicating and with Nicole you are immersed fully. Thank you so much.

**Denise Wright, Melbourne (Design Tour to Calcutta and India's North-East)**

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**NICOLE'S INTRICATE DETAILED ITINERARY** allowed us the privilege of experiencing unique insights into the personal lives of those connected to art and culture.

If you haven't been to Calcutta (Kolkata) and her surrounds, it is probably the most interesting place to visit in India. I've been to many places in India but I found Calcutta, the most affecting, indeed overwhelming. Perhaps it was the connection with my family's ties in the jute business in the late 70's and the fact that very few tourists venture.

Highlights included traversing through the backstreets, inhaling the flower market scenes, witnessing statue makers preparing for the Durga Puja ceremony, idyllic sunset drinks and dances on Hooghly River barge...

Complete chance to see not one, but three, magnificent synagogues (although only 17 Baghdadi Jewish members remain after the majority voluntarily left after Indian independence in 1947).

Nicole certainly gets the balance right: exploring and seeing the essence of each place, as well as having some peaceful times in the tea fields of Darjeeling.

So many highlights – the sound of a conch shell mixed with the aromatic essences that were burnt with each ceremonial welcoming by our hosts; Nicole's direction; her on-ground experienced network (Husna, Mrinalika, Akshita and Minx) all giving us a sense of inclusiveness and fine hospitality.

Indeed, trust is the word to have as one's mantra, allowing the serendipitous adventure to unfold.

**Jane Grossberg, Sydney (Design Tour to Calcutta and India's North-East)**

## TESTIMONIALS (CONTINUED)

**I HAVE COME BACK TO EARTH AFTER THE WONDERFUL TRIP YOU ORGANISED FOR US.** I feel privileged to have travelled with you in such an understated and interesting way, just how I like it. We could never have envisaged an itinerary like that so thank you. You did it all with calm efficiency. Aditya was very kind and helpful to us. And the driver, what a man, not a worrying moment as he weaved his way amongst all that life along the roads.

**Sophie Wilson, Sydney (two tours – Madhya Pradesh and South India)**

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**THANK YOU FOR A MEMORABLE HOLIDAY.** I was conscious (but not too) of the hard work that you put in to make it so. On reflection it is hard to pinpoint single events as all the days were so individually rewarding, rather like a colossal film set on a Cecile B. DeMille scale.

Just riding on the coach with kaleidoscopic images of village and road life was fascinating enough to say nothing of the set pieces which will live in both our memories. To cap it all my scepticism about seeing tigers in the wild (a private childhood fantasy bound up with Jim Corbett) was fully bowled at Panna.

We have done a lot of travel in our lives, at coffee today we both reflected that this trip was right up there and gave some insight into Robin and your fascination with the place.

It is no surprise after absorbing *The Golden Road* that India was a very major influence of cultures East and West well before the birth of Christ and will continue to be. We eschewed our hippy peers all those years ago who left to pay homage and I take all that back.

I acknowledge how much personal insight, attention to detail, romance and good taste that endowed this trip, thank you for allowing us to share it.

**Tim Wilson, Sydney (two tours – Madhya Pradesh and South India)**

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**ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS THE NEXT TOUR I WILL DO WITH NICOLE COURT.** I don't think there is any better recommendation for a travel experience than that. I have just returned from her Design & Architectural Tour of Southern India and am still processing all the amazing places and experiences, and, of course, the several thousand photographs I took along the way.

As a first timer in India, it was incredibly reassuring to be guided by Nicole and her outstanding team of local experts. Every detail was thoughtfully handled, from the beautiful hotels, delicious meals, seamless transportation, unforgettable excursions, and visits with remarkable artisans. She also shared tips on shopping, spa treatments, and much more. But as Nicole says, you do have to leave room for the unexpected in India, and those were the magical things that can't be pre-planned but give such joy.

Each day was a completely new experience and feast for the senses. I totally fell under India's spell and that is entirely due to Nicole's ability to lead us to the best southern India has to offer. People keep asking me for my top 3 highlights, but that's impossible – every single day was full of them.

**Laura Reid, Sydney (Design Tour to South India)**