

INSIDE STYLE

Meet our Interior Design Awards finalists

AUSTRALIA

## belle

Kit Kemp's  
*vivacious  
tailored chic*

RUN TO  
PARADISE  
*Port Stephens  
Sri Lanka  
Israel*

ALL STITCHED UP  
Bespoke upholstery for little stylistas

ARTSTART  
*Winning artists  
revealed*

Modern  
Classics

*House reads from Sydney to Paris*

# Tropical SAFARI

Six luxe stays in lush Sri Lanka.

from an eco-friendly camp in leopard

territory to design hotels dripping with history.

Photographs ROMELLO PEREIRA Words NADINE BUSH



PASSENGER

## WILD COAST TENTED LODGE

The spectacular WILD COAST TENTED LODGE is a unique and innovative glamping resort conceived by Malik Fernando of Sri Lanka's Resplendent Ceylon hotel brand. Fernando commissioned Netherlands-based architects and project developers Nomadic Resorts and Bo Reudler Studio in Amsterdam to team up to design and construct his vision which opened in November 2017. They came up with the organic basket-like 'boulders' to house the restaurant, bar and library, and tented 'cocoon' and 'urchins' for luxury safari sleeping quarters which are a play on the shape of the clusters of rocks found on the nearby coastline. The structures merge seamlessly into the dramatic landscape and are as playful as they are sophisticated and expressed in the perfect balance of stunning appearance, luxury, comfort and sustainability.

The interiors are beautifully detailed with leather, copper, brass and stretched canvas panels laced together in a 'steam punk meets Jules Verne' vernacular. The hugely romantic safari tents with freestanding copper baths, four-poster beds swathed in mosquito nets and vaulted ceilings complete the glam-camping fantasy. The turquoise pool meanders through the camp's main boulder-pavilions with their cathedral ceilings and white gravel floors. Made of woven bamboo and teak shingles these were constructed and engineered by a team of local fishermen retrained in carpentry after an overseas contractor opted out.

The camp resort sits in thick jungle that opens up to a dramatic and wild coastline and is adjacent to Yala National Park – leopard country. The night we arrived a leopard had been sighted on the perimeter of the resort minutes before, causing much excitement as there are no fences between the camp site and the park. Elephants are known to roam the area as are monkeys, wild boar and buffalo. Guests must be accompanied from their tents to dinner and back. By night the camp site is magical: illuminated with a mix of resort lighting and dozens of kerosene lanterns which create a path to happy hour under the stars and among the boulders on the beach, where waves crash onto the rocks in the warm, balmy atmosphere. [resplendentceylon.com](http://resplendentceylon.com)

## THE VILLA BENTOTA

Located on Sri Lanka's west coast about an hour out of Colombo, THE VILLA BENTOTA is one of two boutique hotels by the island's quintessential brand, Paradise Road. The original dwelling on the site was an ancestral home known as Mohotti Walauwa. This building was redesigned and renovated by renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa in the 70s. Bawa also built several other connecting buildings to the original structure and converted it into the country's first boutique hotel. In 2007 Paradise Road owner Udayshanth Fernando added his stylish sensibility to Bawa's, creating a design match made in heaven. Fernando has further

This page, clockwise from top left Wild Coast Tented Lodge features 28 cocoon-shaped tents. The main pavilions. The dreamy Villa Bentota interiors feature art and striped elements. Geoffrey Bawa helped create the original hotel. Opposite page: The Lodge's pavilions are built in bamboo and teak shingles.





This page, clockwise from top left The lap pool at the Tintagel. The lavish boutique hotel is in a 30s heritage building located in Colombo city. The Kandalama Hotel looks out onto the jungle. Famed Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa created the hotel. It was designed to be part of the landscape.



refurbished, extended and re-energised the hotel, adding more rooms, larger, new facilities, and a fabulous new pool and outdoor pavilions. The beach is mere steps away; just head through the gate at the bottom of the garden then cross the railway line.

The hotel has the typical Bawa resort-style courtyard gardens that transect with the architecture, built-in furniture, column-lined corridors and framed views of the landscape through apertures in walls and windows. Layered on this is Fernando's unmistakable vernacular of art and sculpture, rhythm of repetition, celebration of the handmade, blending of the native, antique and contemporary, and the iconic Paradise Road stripes in black and white, all considered, curated, then artfully placed into breathtaking still-life installations. [villabentota.com](http://villabentota.com)

#### TINTAGEL COLOMBO

The elegant big sister to The Villa Bentota under the Paradise Road boutique hotel umbrella, TINTAGEL has to be Colombo's most notable luxury hotel, set in the heart of the city's most exclusive quarter, Cinnamon Gardens.

The building is a stunning heritage structure of national importance and once the private home to three of Sri Lanka's former political leaders. It was here that Ceylon's (Sri Lanka's name under British rule) political history was decided when in 1956 S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike became prime minister and where in 1959 he was shot on Tintagel's verandah and subsequently died in hospital. His widow became the world's first and longest serving female prime minister.

In 2005, the Bandaranaiques leased their home to Udayshanth Fernando to become a unique private hotel offering 10 well-appointed, high-ceilinged and spacious suites with all modern amenities and services.

Leaving the high temperatures outside to enter the hotel foyer, you are greeted by the sound of trickling water from two hidden fountains that effectively cool the chic, moody interior.

Fernando's signature Paradise Road aesthetic is paced up to a polished and sophisticated degree with Flemish chandeliers, the Red Bar with its huge French gilt-framed mirror, Vietnamese black lacquer tables and dramatic, narrow courtyard void with a lap pool overlooked by six life-sized statues. [tintagelcolombo.com](http://tintagelcolombo.com)

#### KANDALAMA HOTEL

The Heritance KANDALAMA Hotel sits in thick jungle at the edge of a tranquil lake in Dambulla verged by two UNESCO world heritage sites: the 1st-century BC Dambulla rock temple and the 5th-century AD Sigiriya fortress. A creation of Sri Lanka's premier architect, Geoffrey Bawa, the hotel is astonishing, barely visible in parts as the jungle has claimed it, encasing it in dripping vegetation that throbs with the life

force of nature. Birds, monkeys, squirrels, and hundreds of butterflies interrelate with the completely open architecture of the building.

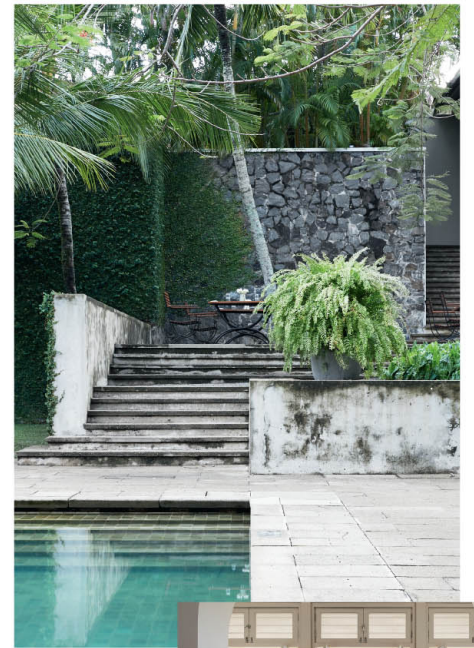
The hotel feels like a huge verandah where you can perch at many vantage points to view the jungle panorama. At every turn the architecture frames the spectacular view. While Kandalama is a very large hotel, the clever way Bawa has intersected its architecture with nature and his abundant use of open space makes you unaware of its magnitude and illustrates the use of open air cross-ventilation to keep environmentally cool. Bawa cleverly ramped up the approach to the hotel, making the driveway rise up so that the arrival area and reception foyer sit on the fifth floor of the hotel, completely camouflaging the extent of the edifice. The large metal owl sculpture at the top of the stairwell, a large wooden elephant on wheels and the painted tile wall behind the reception desk are by Sri Lankan artist Laki Senanayake. The late, great Ena de Silva's extraordinary batik textiles appear on entire walls and ceilings of the Presidential suite.

If you're looking for a place to feel at one with nature and be recharged this is a great place to do it. The stunning location and well-disposed architecture of the hotel will provide. [heritancehotels.com](http://heritancehotels.com)

#### AMAN RESORTS

Always sited on iconic destinations, AMAN RESORTS are designed to frame their natural environment and are well-known for the luxurious, tranquility they emanate. On the south coast of the island, AMANGALLA is situated at the heart of Galle Fort in the 17th-century two-storey house which served as the Dutch governor's residence and officers' living quarters. In the 19th century the property became a hotel and Aman Resorts took over in 2004, lovingly restoring it and preserving many heritage features. Its 28 suites evoke a bygone era with many colonial touches such as four-poster beds and freestanding baths. It is the most romantic and exclusive place to stay in the ancient fort now listed as a UNESCO world heritage site in the area sometimes described as the terracotta-roofed 'French riviera' of Asia.

AMANWELLA is further along the south coast in Tangalle, and is the Bawa-inspired work of the late premier Australian architect Kerry Hill. The minimal, clean lines of the tropical modernist architecture pairs perfectly with a densely tangled grove of coconut palms with a 47-metre-long infinity pool that overlooks a pristine stretch of coastline. Each of the 30 individual suites opens on two sides: to a private plunge pool courtyard on one flank and a sweeping terrace facing out to sea on the other. Both resorts offer serene spa treatments based on ancient Sri Lankan natural ayurvedic therapies. [aman.com](http://aman.com)



This page, clockwise from top Amangalla's tranquil grounds are a lovely spot to catch the sea breezes. The villas at Amanwella are open on both sides for cross-ventilation with a balcony and ocean view to one side and a private plunge pool courtyard on the other. Stunning views of Tangalle beach can be had from the swimming pool at Amanwella resort.

