

First Look: KK Beach

By *Jenny Johnson* - *March 08, 2017*



 GRID VIEW

This contemporary Sri Lankan beach retreat oozes casual chic

“Yubowan.” This is the friendly greeting I’m met with on arrival at boutique property KK Beach, the latest stylish offering by award-winning interior designer George Cooper whose much-loved jungle property Kahanda Kanda (known to regulars simply as KK) recently celebrated 10 years.

“I found that many guests at KK wanted to go to the beach for the day rather than “staying inland for the whole trip, so I decided that rather than sending them to other properties we would build our own – and we did, from scratch, in just nine months,” says Cooper.

“With KK Beach I wanted something fresh, younger and more informal because it’s by the sea. It’s about personality, individuality, character and personalised service, where the staff know you by name and not just a room number.”

This is made easier, perhaps, by the fact that there are just two deluxe rooms, two suites and two penthouses (with four more due to be built starting on May 1). Each comes with Mediterranean-inspired décor, a well-appointed bathroom with a rain shower, full-length sliding glass panels and a private outdoor terrace overlooking the pool, the beach and the Indian Ocean beyond.

There’s a feel of being in a private retreat, with an al fresco open-plan ground floor featuring the laid-back Living Room and Bar, and the Beach Club restaurant where guests can enjoy seafood barbecues, classic Sri Lankan curries and creative three-course menus utilising fresh local ingredients.

The sense of place is further cemented by the rotating display of paintings commissioned from Sri Lankan artists and available for purchase, and by the beach chic homeware, from seashell cushions to pineapple ornaments, curated by Cooper for the hotel as well as for his cult Galle Fort boutiques, KK The Collection and the new KK by George.

Perched on tranquil Habaraduwa beach – 12km along the coast from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Galle Fort – KK Beach is just steps from the golden sand yet the 20m black slate pool and comfy sun loungers are separated by a manicured garden and wooden fence for that sense of seclusion and exclusivity.

While the petite property doesn’t have a dedicated spa, massages can be booked in the privacy of your suite, and yoga classes are held three times a week at 8am to help you relax and rejuvenate.

Should you choose to venture out, the hotel can arrange tours in the area such as tea trail experiences, where you can pluck your own leaves and see them being processed at the local factory; an excursion off the coast to spot blue whales and spinner dolphins; and a Koggala Lake boat trip with stops at a temple island, a spa, a bird sanctuary and a small island where you learn how cinnamon is harvested.

A free shuttle is offered between KK Beach and sister property Kahanda Kanda, just a 12-minute drive away on a working tea plantation overlooking Koggala Lake, allowing guests to take advantage of the facilities at both properties. I signed up for a traditional Sri Lankan cooking class at the original KK, where we learnt to make sh and aubergine curries and dal, all using spices grown on the island, before tasting the fruits of my labour in the natural surrounds of the restaurant.

With the addition of KK Beach, the brand now offers the ultimate beach-meets-jungle experience for those who want to explore more than one side of this tropical island nation.

Scott Dunn (800-035-70 3722; scottdunn.com) offers a seven-night stay at KK Beach on a bed and breakfast basis, including flights from the GCC and private transfers, from AED 7,350

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