

60p

Weekend

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- » Farage 'frustrated' and must be given future role in Ukip



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Holly Willoughby
Keeping up appearances

INSIDE Janet Street-Porter
Start the sex ed revolution

The Isis endgame
Special report by Patrick Cockburn

Simon Calder
Travel after Tunisia

Alice Jones
Bad Uber

SATURDAY 4
& SUNDAY 5
MARCH 2017
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Clash of the chokers



Liverpool vs Arsenal



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INSIDE **i** INQUISITOR **P23** | WHAT NEXT WEEK'S BUDGET MEANS FOR YOUR PENSION



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Tangalle beach;
bottom, the Anantara
Peace Haven Resort



= INDIAN OCEAN =

The coast is clear

Adam Jacot de Boinod takes a tour from Colombo to Tangalle and back, and discovers a cornucopia of Sri Lankan gems, temples, peacocks, grand hotels – and an undisturbed feeling of peace



I have to go back. It's so uplifting to be part of this harmonious triangle of mankind, animal and nature. And, of all the tropical islands I have visited, Sri Lanka has the most heady mix of exoticism.

On arrival, I have a one-night stop-off at the Wallawwa (thewallawwa.com), which refers to itself as "my house near Colombo" – with good reason. It's a great hideaway and resting spot, with spa, à la carte restaurant, team of butlers and five acres of tropical landscaped gardens, just 15 minutes' drive from the airport – and an easy 18 miles to the capital.

The next morning and I'm off on my adventure – though rather than Colombo, I'm travelling 50 miles inland,

to Ratnapura, home of Sri Lankan jewellery, in search of gems.

No time to hang around, as I'm due in the fishing town of Tangalle, 75 miles south-west, on the coast that meets the Indian Ocean. Along this strip is the new Anantara Peace Haven resort (tangalle.anantara.com), where guests receive a theatrical welcome with traditional blessings. A bearded man in full costume blows his conch and three girls sing and drum.

Walking around the area, I feel a real delight in witnessing the skill of the workers, who, up to their knees in mud in the paddy fields, leave behind them immaculate rows of rice. To taste the

Continued overleaf



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Continued from page 43

product that evening makes me appreciate my food all the more.

A stone's throw away from Anantara, or five minutes in a tuk-tuk, is Amanwella (aman.com/resorts/amanwella), a stunning hotel tucked away in a cove. Amanwella means "peace and beach". It's a signature Aman hotel, enhancing what's already in the environment with the lines and colours, spaces and angles of the buildings. I find myself stopping in my tracks to appreciate fully the brilliance of the design.

On I go, past the famous temple at Dikwella, 20 minutes down the coast to the west, and the large sprawl at Matara, past the beautiful half-moon bay at Mirissa and the already developed Weligama, before finally returning inland to Lake Koggala and my next hotel, the Kahanda Kanda (kahandakanda.com), which stands on the north-west side of the water basin.

Five miles from Galle, this style-conscious hotel looks down from its hilltop perch over a 12-acre tea plantation. Most of the movement within the complex is along or across a saffron wall. It's all designed to be reassuringly familiar for a principally British clientele, with scattered *Country Life* magazines in the lobby-cum-library.

My next treat is at the nearby Maliga Kanda (thehideawaysclub.com). It's part of the Hideaways Club Classic Collection portfolio, which has properties all around the world. An exclusive property investment club, it's perfect for anyone who doesn't want to be restricted to one location or



Top, dining at Kahanda Kanda; bottom, from left: Maliga Kanda; Amangalla

GETTING THERE
Adam travelled with the Holiday Place, which offers a wide range of holidays to Sri Lanka starting from £699, including flights, accommodation and transfers. Call 020 7644 1770 for a tailor-made holiday or visit holidayplace.co.uk to book.

have the hassle of maintenance. Monkeys hang, swing and jump all around the trees that encircle the villa.

Meaning "Mountain Palace", Maliga Kanda is perched on a hill. There's music in the jungle here, especially with the dawn chorus. Colourful birds abound, peacocks strut around, while fireflies shine out like mini stars, and I am soon a twitcher, straining to spot the cormorants, eagles, kingfishers, blue pigeons and grosbeaks.

I take the most wonderful walk down through the village where I feel all of the island's innocence and timeless charm. Elderly ladies parade in pairs beneath their vivid parasols. Old men stick their legs out at right angles on old bicycles that cause them to adopt stanch postures.

Formerly the officers' mess within the fort at Galle, the hotel is full of character, with triangular stairwells and wonky tiles

My next stop, the Amangalla Hotel (aman.com/resorts/amangalla), brings with it the period charm of a bygone era. Formerly the officers' mess within the ramparts of the historic fort of Galle, it's full of character, with triangular stairwells and wonky tiles.

When I dine at the restaurant, I choose well: an avocado gazpacho and a "salami-thin" beetroot and quinoa salad, followed by seared scallops beside an aubergine ravioli.

The library is like a museum, with dusty old prints of Ceylon, backgammon sets and back-broken atlases, objects in glass cases and, most symbolically, a Union Flag folded in the corner.

Finally, I make my way back up the west coast to Colombo, where I stay at the boutique hotel Maniumpathy (maniumpathy.com) in the heart of the city. Off the main road and secure behind a grand facade and porch, it features lattice artwork and has columns lifted to prevent the threat of monsoon floods. The interior houses an old-fashioned dining room with a lovely long ebony table and a sitting room that is cosy and convivial. Teak and mahogany are also much in evidence.

I pick up a copy of the Sinhala dictionary, the language spoken by Sri Lanka's largest ethnic group. It has some wonderful vocabulary, especially those alluding to physical characteristics such as "kadadat", meaning to possess only half of your original teeth; "tivili", for a person with three dents in the belly (from fatness); and my favourite, "miyulesa", for a woman with the eyes of a deer.

Unlike other popular tropical destinations, Sri Lanka remains relatively unspoilt. The war is finished, the tsunami is a decade gone and the highways now connect the island efficiently. With tourism rates projected to rise and rise over the next few years, now is the perfect time to visit.



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