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# Life's a BEACH

Get your flip-flops! Y&YW discovers honeymoon-perfect stretches of sand

## RUSTIC ROMANCE

*Head to the friendly isle of Tobago for off-the-beaten-track beaches and liming with the locals*

Here's the thing about Tobago: you don't realise it's stolen your heart until you're already in love. It's like the shy guy you've been just friends with forever, until you look at him one day and it hits you that you're crazy about him. (Hey, maybe you're marrying him.)

This Caribbean island – just 26 miles across – is known for its sandy white beaches and laid-back vibe. Tobago's sister island, Trinidad, has famously vibrant nightlife and non-stop partying, but the mood here is all about calm relaxation. A key part of the culture is "liming": that is, simply hanging out, taking pleasure in food, drink and the people you're with.

We stayed at Castara Retreats, a hillside hideaway that perfectly captures this mood. It's less about razzle dazzle and more about getting the best from the stunning surroundings – think hammocks for lounging in the warm breeze and darting hummingbirds.

Set against lush rainforest, the 15 wooden buildings are rather like luxe treehouses. Each has a unique feel – Fisherman's, with its covered deck and sun terrace, is our top pick for 'mooners; there are also some more budget-friendly options. It's self-catering, but there's a wonderful restaurant at the resort with gorgeous views. Every dish we tried was fresh and full of flavour, and the cocktails were second to none; whisper it, but

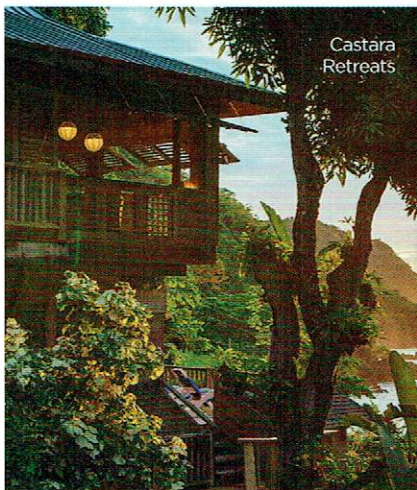
they may do the best rum punch on the island, among stiff competition.

It would be easy to pass your days here in loved-up seclusion – and if that's what you want to do, fair enough. But Castara is very much part of the community, and the local fishing village is just a short stroll down the hill. You can pick up fresh-from-the-ocean fish, and twice a week there's an open-air bakery, with a variety of tempting treats for sale. There are several small restaurants and bars for liming with a cold beer. Gotta love the liming. And then there are the two lovely beaches just by the village.

We had some particularly pleasant mornings that started with freshly made coconut bread and a warm welcome at Cheno's coffee shop, followed by some serious Kindle-and-snoozing time on the sand. Don't expect resort-style manicured beaches with lounge service and a sunglasses concierge (yes, that is a thing in some places). Hire a sunbed, grab a fresh coconut from the fruit stall to stay hydrated and settle back while fishermen haul in their catch – join in and help if you want.

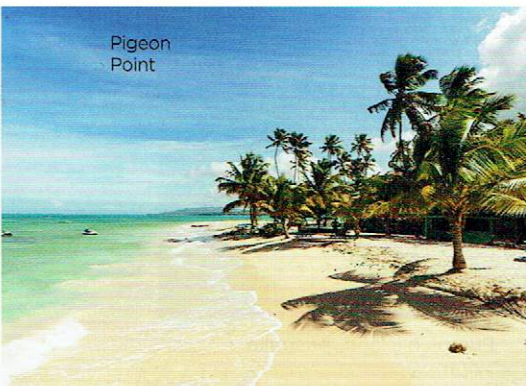
There are more sandy pleasures further afield. Castara's utterly lovely manager, Porridge, took us on one of his boat trips. We passed through scenery of rainforest and rock, stopping every now and again to swim in the sparkling water. The day ended with a barbecue on a secluded beach – with plenty of rum punch. Hint: if you're prone to seasickness, go easy on that punch.

**THE VIBE**  
Pared-back luxury  
**BEST FOR**  
Getting away  
from crowded  
Caribbean  
hotspots



Castara  
Retreats

Pigeon  
Point





Castara Retreats

For more beachy fun, Parlatuvier Bay is an idyllic spot with a horseshoe-shaped stretch of sand. Pigeon Point has cabanas and bars, and at night you can go on a bioluminescence kayak or paddleboard tour and watch the water sparkle like stars. If you like your beach life with a side order of aquatic adventure, spend a couple of nights at Blue Waters Inn, which has an on-site PADI school and is set amid some of Tobago's most spectacular dive sites. The accommodation is elegant and airy – we particularly liked the deluxe ocean-view studios.

Need a quick break from the beach? Take a nature tour into the rainforest with Newton George and discover the exotic birdlife. There are also plenty of hiking opportunities on the island, but as we weren't in the mood for anything too energetic, we decided to stick to a gentle 15-minute walk to Argyle Waterfall. We stopped and looked at it for a while, and then left. We saw adventurous types clambering up and across the rocks to explore further, but by that point we'd acclimatised to the Tobago way of life – and that meant it was time to lime.

Seven nights in a Fisherman's Cottage from £1190, [castararetreats.com](http://castararetreats.com)



Castara Retreats



## COASTAL ADVENTURE

*Mix sunbathing on beautiful shores with wildlife and history in Sri Lanka*

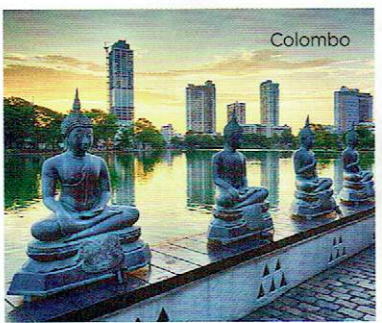
It's a tricky one: you want to build plenty of beach-time bliss into your first escape as newlyweds. But on the other hand, you know one or both of you will end up wild with boredom if you spend more than a week simply sunning yourselves, however golden the sands are. That's why you should make sure Sri Lanka is firmly on your honeymoon radar. This Indian Ocean island country has it all, from safari parks with abundant wildlife to 2000-year-old temples. One day, you can sample the cosmopolitan urban swagger of the capital, Colombo; the next you can be surrounded by a sea of green on a tea plantation. And of course, there are some fabulous beaches.

Our trip started in Colombo. There wasn't time for more than a whistle-stop tour, taking in some temples and admiring the colonial architecture, but what we saw convinced us we'll need to come back for more. We overnighted at boutique hotel Residence by Uga Escapes, a subtly luxurious bolthole with a glorious pool and private courtyard.

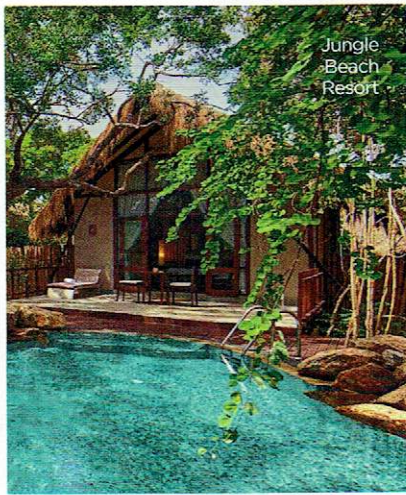
The next morning, we flew with Cinnamon Air to Trincomalee. This would have taken more than five hours by road, so the 50-minute flight was most pleasing – more beach time for us! Or so we thought. As it turned out, we were entirely distracted by Jungle Beach, our temporary home. Set in the jungle (the clue's in the name), the resort was built to incorporate existing trees and plants, which gives it a wonderfully tropical feel. Before hitting the beach, we decided we had to spend time sipping chilled wine by the lotus pond, have a massage in the spa, and then laze on the floating platform of the pool. Eventually, though, we took the short walk down to the sand to catch the sunset.

For a slightly wilder beach experience, we went for a jaunt to Pigeon Island, a marine national park. Don't expect soft sands here

**THE VIBE**  
Culture by the sea  
**BEST FOR**  
Variety. From jungle-fringed shores to soft white sand, there's something for everyone



Colombo



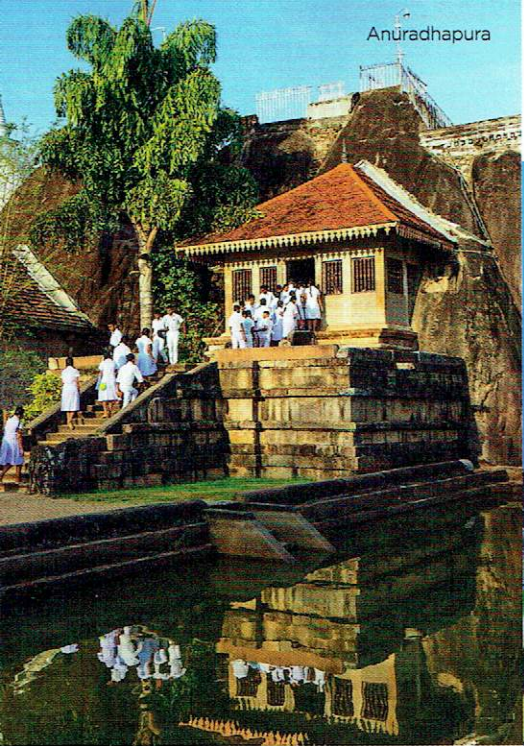
Jungle Beach Resort



Jungle Beach Resort

PHOTOS BY ALAN WATSON AND ALISON VAUGHAN FOR GETTY IMAGES. CASTARA RETREATS PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX TREADWAY

Anuradhapura



– there are sharp pieces of coral scattered everywhere, so some form of footwear is necessary – nor indeed sunbeds and ice cream sellers. This is all about nature, pure and simple. Make sure you bring some snorkel gear with you so that you can catch the turtles, reef sharks and jewel-bright fish.

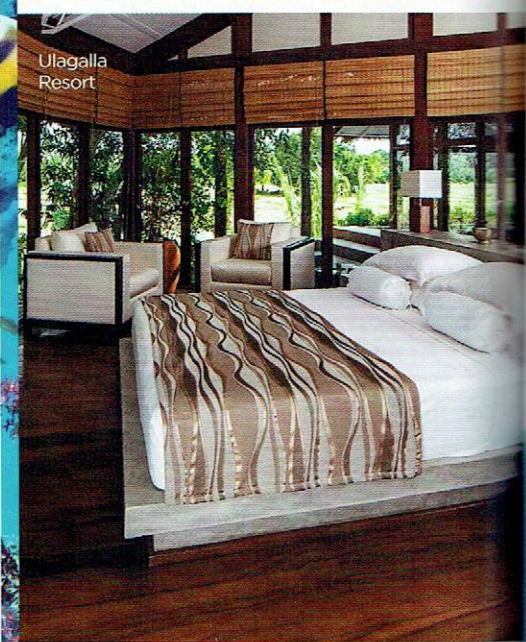
Our next stop was Uga Bay, an elegant resort set on Pasikudah, which is one of the country's most famous beaches. We could see why. Seemingly endless sand stretched before us, and looking into the ocean was like glancing through a window. The resort makes the most of the stunning location, with an infinity pool and restaurant that both have ocean views. For something special, we strongly recommend having a private dinner one evening on the beach. Waves lapping, stars twinkling... and some seriously good grub.

For a change of scene, we swapped powdery beaches for a green landscape at the magnificent Ulagalla Resort. This 58-acre estate has only 20 villas, which means it's easy to be lulled into thinking all this loveliness – rolling emerald fields, soaring trees – is just for you. Our villa was incredibly spacious and featured glass walls for showcasing those vistas, plus a sun deck and plunge pool for getting into outdoor-living mode.

You can get around the grounds by bike, or call for a golf buggy to take you to the spa or to the large pool by the main mansion. Activities available include horse riding and jungle kayaking, but for our last glimpse of Sri Lanka we opted for a spot of ancient culture at the ruins of Anuradhapura, an ancient city that dates back to the fifth century BC. It's like something from another world: crumbling palaces, temples and monastic buildings, all rising eerily from the parkland. Buddhist monks and worshippers mingle with the tourists. As we wandered these architectural marvels, it was strange to think that the day before we were on a sun-soaked beach, cocktails in hand and toes in the sands. But then, perhaps that's what makes Sri Lanka so magical.



Ulagalla Resort



Ulagalla Resort



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