

## HONEYMOONS

# The Ultimate Sri Lankan Honeymoon Itinerary

By

[Katie James](#)*Published on June 28, 2017**Follow our abbreviated itinerary to experience the best of this Indian Ocean island nation, chockful of local culture and undiscovered experiences.*<http://www.brides.com/story/sri-lanka-honeymoon-ideas>

Getty Images

This Southeast Asian island nation, located just off the tip of India, has been the subject of much buzz in recent years, quickly becoming one of the world's most up-and-coming destinations. And with good reason: A Sri Lankan **honeymoon** guarantees an epic journey because nowhere else in the world can you experience such a wide array of cultures and experiences in one compact destination. Everywhere you go leads to discovery: ancient temples in the Cultural Triangle, artist havens in Kandy, tea plantations in Ceylon, palm-lined beaches in Tangalle, colonial-era buildings in Galle, leopards on safari in Yala National Park, and metropolitan grandeur in Colombo. For years, the island nation was unsafe for western travelers due to decades-long civil war, but since peace was finally achieved in 2009 and political and economic climates have stabilized, Sri Lanka is once again booming. Couples can spend anywhere from 10 days to two weeks exploring all this island nation has to offer, but most of today's honeymooners pair a Sri Lankan itinerary with a stay in the **Maldives**, the Indian Ocean archipelago famed for its luxe private-island resorts. No matter how much time you have, it's easy to pick and choose your perfect honeymoon using this overview as a starting point.

### **Know Before You Go**

Given that tourism is still developing on Sri Lanka (intra-island flights and highway infrastructure are scarce), it's essential to enlist an expert travel advisor to help plan your honeymoon. No one knows Sri Lanka better than Jen Boyd, a Boulder, Colorado–based travel specialist at **ATJ (Asia Transpacific Journeys)**. Boyd's skills are unmatched when it comes to crafting the perfect itinerary that highlights your specific interests (be it safari, history, food, et cetera), with seamless on-the-ground transportation and expert guides to boot. (Do yourselves a favor and ask for the ebullient Thushara, who has encyclopedic knowledge of the country.) Boyd will walk you through which regions are ideal for your honeymoon dates, but a word to the wise: steer clear of the south and west coasts during the heavy rains of monsoon season (May to August).

Courtesy of @louisaws via Instagram

### **Getting There**

Most trips to Sri Lanka from the United States include a stopover in the Middle East. For example, couples can choose the Qatar Airways overnight departure, direct from New York City to Doha, followed by a five-hour flight into the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo. While this is one of the most time-efficient routes from the States, you'll touch down in the middle of the night. But fear not, Boyd and her team arrange "fast track" service through the airport—as soon as you step off the plane, you're greeted by an airport representative to escort you through immigration and on to the Silk Route Lounge for a meet-and-greet with your guide.

After your luggage has been collected, your private transport will take you to a nearby hotel to shower up and catch some more Z's. But airport hotel this is not—ATJ nails it

on local scouting: **The Wallawwa** feels worlds away from the bustling terminal from which you just came. Set in a 200 year-old manor home, once owned by the commander of the British Royal Air Force, the Wallawwa has been expertly restored and converted into an intimate boutique hotel. Waking up in your room's airy four-poster bed, surrounded by perfectly manicured tropical gardens, will immediately get you in a peaceful Sri Lankan state of mind—as will the alfresco breakfast and dip in the gorgeous outdoor pool.

## Day 1

After a solid night's sleep, you should be better acclimated to the local time. But no rest for the weary—it's back to the airport for your short, scenic seaplane flight to central Sri Lanka's Ceylon tea region, the heart of the world's finest tea production. You'll land directly on Castlereagh Lake and check into **Tea Trails** (*all-inclusive rooms from \$583*), a historic resort composed of five converted century-old tea planters' bungalows spread out across the hillside. Take your pick among Norwood, Tientsin, Castlereagh, Summerville, and Dunkeld bungalows—there's literally no bad choice. In fact, you don't have to choose just one: Most guests book multiple nights at Tea Trails and will either transfer bungalows midway through or, at the very least, go for lunch at a different one to view the breathtaking landscapes from another angle.

Couples can spend their days kayaking on the lake, touring the nearby Dilmah Tea Plantation, hiking steady-incline trails, or relaxing by their bungalow's pool. Just be back in time for 4 p.m. daily high tea, so you can sample a few of the region's sophisticated and complex varietals, like the strong but elegant "Udawatte" tea from Somerset Estate. If you're more the alcoholic beverage type, you'll fancy 6 p.m. cocktail hour, when your bungalow's private butler is on-duty to serve your favorite mixed drink or help you select the perfect vintage from an extensive wine list. Chances are he'll have already paired it with your meal before you've even sat down—thoughtful cuisine is central to the experience at this Relais & Chateaux-designated hotel. Guests can expect consultations with the chef each morning, in which you'll work together to create your own personalized menu—so don't fill up on the complimentary in-room cookies before your mouth-watering traditional Sri Lankan curry dinner.



Courtesy of Katie James

## Day 2

Did you know that Sri Lanka's Yala National Park has the highest population density of leopards in the world? That's right, this Southeast Asian island nation is home to tons of wildlife—peacocks, elephants, sambars, chital, crocodiles, and rare black-necked storks—which you can spot on safari. Yala National Park, the second-largest national park in Sri Lanka, is a six-hour drive southeast of tea country. (Yes, that's a long time to spend in the car, but we promise it's worth the hassle.) This 400-square-mile protected wildlife sanctuary is home to more than 40 species of rare mammals, including the leopard and sloth bear (an elusive hybrid of the same two animals for which it's named), in a landscape filled with rainforests, grasslands, wetlands, and sandy beaches.

Post up at [Chena Huts by Uga Escapes](#), which sets the standard for safari-style lodging on the outskirts of Yala. There, you'll lay your head in thatched-roof bungalows, which, at first glance, are a contrast to their incredibly chic design, spacious interiors, and private plunge pools. Mornings start early at Uga Chena—after a quick breakfast, you'll hop in the jeep and head for the gates of the park (but skip the long line of vehicles waiting to buy daily safari permits, since someone from Uga Chena arrives even earlier to pick them up for you). Guides like Hary are expert spotters and true wildlife connoisseurs, having grown up visiting Sri Lanka's parks and undertaken guide training in Africa. After a three- to four-hour game drive, you'll return to camp; take a leisurely lunch, go for a stroll on the beach, or indulge in a spa treatment. Then, it's back in the

jeep for a second, evening drive, where you may even get lucky and spot a female leopard with her cubs.

### Day 3

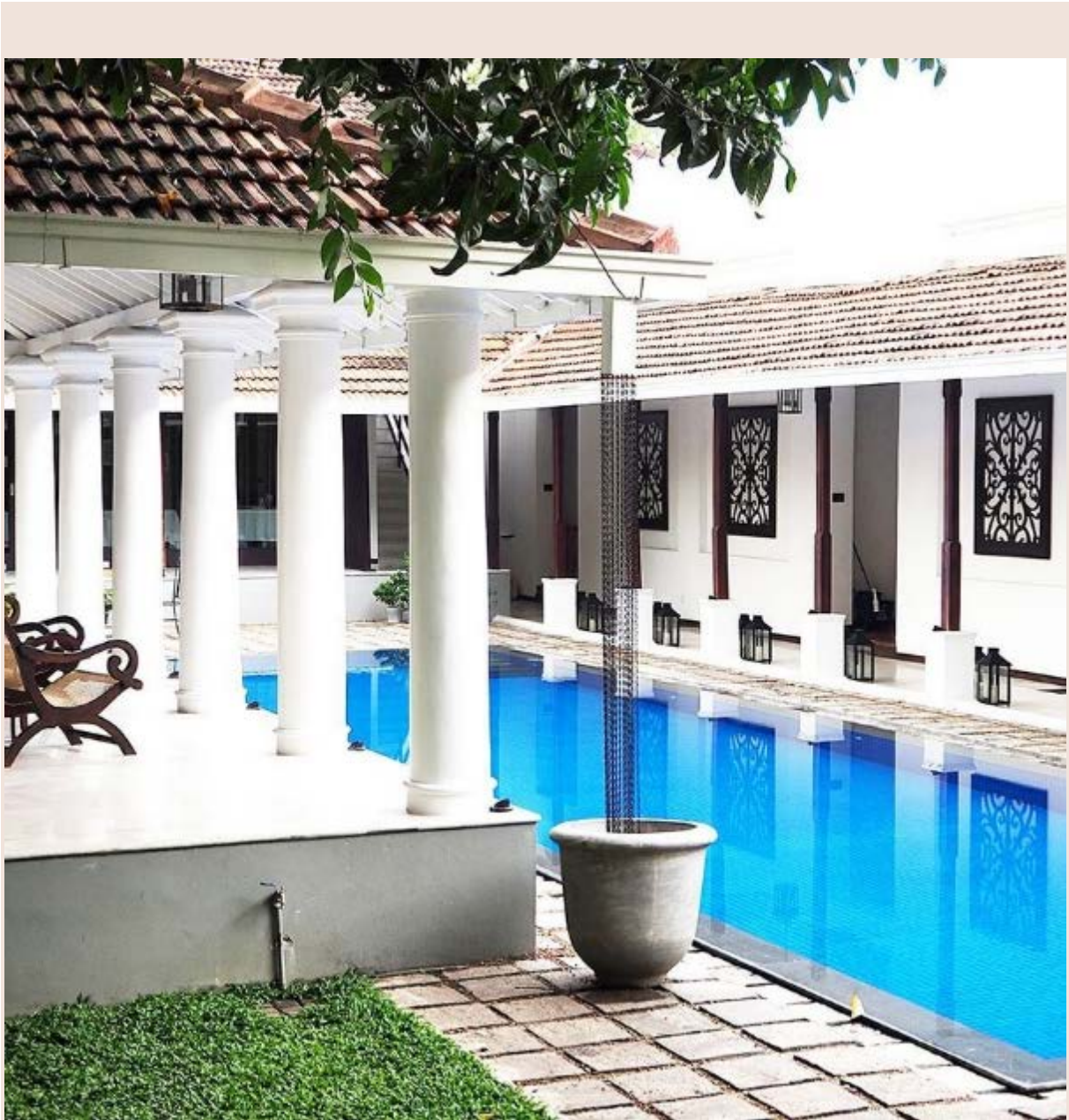
A Sri Lankan honeymoon wouldn't be complete without a stay on one of its southern beaches. The recently opened [Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort](#) (*rooms from \$250*) offers a superluxe experience on a secluded stretch of beach fronting a 21-acre coconut plantation. Each of the 120 guest rooms and 32 villas (with private pools) have comfortable interiors and are spread out across the property for maximum privacy. Spend your days hanging by the pool (where you're given a basket with sunscreen, flip flops, glasses cleaner, and fresh oranges), play tennis and badminton, take a surf lesson, tour the nearby town of Tangalle, or hop on your complimentary bicycle or electric *tuk tuk* for a tour of the property. Return to the main building by 4 p.m. for—you guessed it—high tea. Afterward, book a treatment at the extensive spa (the second largest on Sri Lanka, offering full salon and ayurvedic medical services), followed by an intimate dinner at one of four restaurants, which blend Sri Lanka's distinctive flavors with international cuisines. You can't beat the rustic Italian dishes at the cliffside restaurant, Il Mare, but the hallmark of any stay at Anantara is its "Dining by Design" program, which allows couples to indulge on a multi-course menu handcrafted by the chef and served in an ultra-private section of the resort, like a secluded table on the beach lit only by candlelight.

### Day 4

Next stop on your honeymoon itinerary: the historic city of Galle, a Unesco World Heritage Site and former trading port that's filled with Dutch-colonial buildings, ancient mosques and churches, grand mansions, and museums. But first, an obligatory stop to photograph the storied stilt fishermen in Welligama. While more tourist prop than actual fishermen (expect to be asked for money before you're allowed to snap any pics), the image of these men balancing in the middle of the ocean while casting lines is one you'll surely want to frame for your new home together.

Once you arrive in Galle, make the incomparable [Amangalla](#) (*rooms from \$550*) your home base. Set in a 1600-era Dutch building, Amangalla oozes romance—from the serene pool ensconced in vegetation to the antique furnishings in your simple yet chic room, and the candle-lit piazza where dinner is served to the acoustic tune of classics like "Hotel California," played by guitar-strumming duo.

The city of Galle is quite small, so you could spend a day wandering its rambling lanes, popping into stylish cafes, and touring historic sites like the Dutch Reformed Church, built in 1640, and the Galle Fort, a walled fortress surrounded on three sides by the ocean—where you'll now find young boys playing games of cricket on the lawn. After you've had your culture fix, retreat to Amangalla for sunset cocktails in the upstairs lounge overlooking the city, followed by a reflexology treatment or head and neck massage at the spa.



Courtesy of Style in Sri Lanka via Instagram

## Day 5

Last stop: Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, a port city once situated along ancient east-west trade routes. The history of Sri Lanka—which was ruled successively by the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British—is embodied in the city's architecture, which melds colonial buildings with modern high-rises. Check into [Uga Residence](#) before shopping for local fabrics and sophisticated homewares at [Barefoot](#), visiting a Buddhist temple, and going for dinner at [the Gallery Café](#), set in the former offices of world-renowned Sri Lankan architect, the late Geoffrey Bawa. Consider your final Sri Lankan curry the perfect (spicy) send-off.