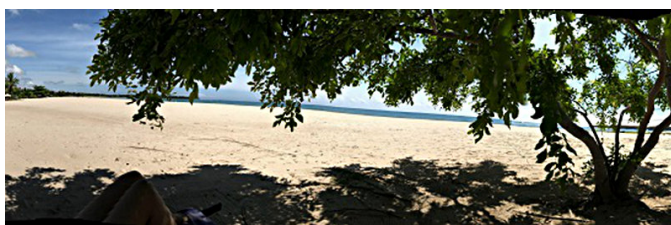




A Taste of Cinnamon and Conversations on Civil War-Emerging Tourism in Sri Lanka

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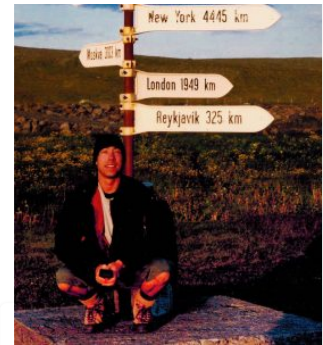
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View of Uga Bay ©2018 Kim Ward

I arrived late in the evening in Colombo, **Sri Lanka's** capital and even at the airport I could smell the fragrance of cinnamon that **Sri Lanka** is so famous for. In Colombo, I was staying at the glamorous Galle Face Hotel. The hotel is a gracious, historical seaside icon dating back to 1864. Its immaculately restored with old world colonial charm. They could name drop all day about the luminaries that have stayed such as Che Guevara, Sir Roger Moore, Pope John Paul II, astronauts from Apollo 12 and so many heads of state and glitterati from the jet set, that the walls are lined with pro le pictures. It's right outside the green, on the seaside where local street food vendors spring up every evening. I strolled along the waterfront at night, listening to the sound of the waves with the sky coloured by kites and listening to calls of the hawkers selling their mouth-watering food.

Welcome to ITKT



I am **Devin Galaudet** the Editor in Chief of ITKT. I am asked all the time how I did it? Was it worth? Changing my life around to make travel a priority. The short answer is yes. It was really a lifestyle choice. It hasn't always been easy but I have never regretted it. If you are like me, you might want to explore what I did to get started.

Before visiting **Sri Lanka** I thought historic, spicy and colonial and it is all that, but it's very different from its near neighbour **India**. Its sophisticated, international, charming and very eco conscious.

My stay in Colombo was relaxing and thought provoking. Their famous seafood such as their crab dishes live up to their reputations. Restaurants like the Crab Factory at the Taj Hotel with its haunting flute music, put me in a tranquil and relaxed mood from the first day.

I made leisurely excursions from my base in Colombo for the first few days of the trip. My favourite visit was a local Buddhist temple Gangaramaya where I could feel the sense of faith and serene contemplation that added to my burgeoning Zen state. The Buddhist temple was eclectic, with treasures both physical and spiritual beyond measure. Walking around the Bodhi tree and watering the ancient roots for me was a very moving experience.

Sri Lanka by Seaplane



From Colombo I took a sea plane to the East Coast doing some spectacular low level flying over the interior and even had an exhilarating stop on Kandy dam. The plane wove through blankets of storm-clouds across verdant countryside to land at Batticaloa airport.

We were flying through seemingly small pin holes of clear sky circling the black clouds with the precision. Shards of sunlight through the dark clouds made for a very scenic trip. 45 minutes later after flying over tea plantations, waterfalls and generations of river and lake families we arrived at the airport. Batticaloa airport still has a military presence but is more open now with locals crowding to see the plane

land, pressing curious noses to the windows. Outside men were cutting large areas of grass with sticks with movements like using a scythe.

As I arrived at my accommodation at Pasikuda Beach (Uga Bay Resort) peals of laughter were ringing out from the local public beaches. Ladies were bathing in full sari's (visiting from **India**) with grandma and the grandchildren floating for hours in the warm tropical waters. Locals were celebrating and enjoying their local beach.

When booking my stay in **Sri Lanka** I was confused as to which coastal area to visit. The South has been the more favoured sunny coastal stop for some time because of the civil war which was ruthlessly being played out on the East Coast. With the East now opening up following the cease re, I was thrilled I had decided on the quieter and less touristy East Coast.

I loved the coconut groves, cinnamon spiced air and the warm smiling welcome as we approached our accommodation. Our accommodation at Uga Bay Resort was right on the beach. The rooms were spacious, great amenities and reasonably priced. As everywhere in Sri Lanka the food was perfect. The chef even took the time to show me how to make a local breakfast called hoppers, including the secret ingredient! They are a thin, crunchy edible bowl with an egg and then spiced up with some sambal and onion relish. Delicious.

Buddhism in Sri Lanka



Inside A Buddhist Temple ©2018 Kim Ward

The area seems to be blossoming under peaceful skies now. They have left their guns and bombs idle to embrace a new start and their hopes are pinned on the emerging tourism there. I talked to many locals who told us stories of boat people who had left to make the arduous boat trip to Australia.

I was told heartbreaking stories of bombs in watermelons or pumpkins that often injured or killed elephants and other wildlife as well as untold and senseless human tragedies. Everyone has a story and they are very keen to share what times were like during the war. Gun shots in the streets, taking 3 hours to get from Batticaloa to Kalkudah stopping every 2-3 kms at the military stops. I was told it was “no work, always no laughing.” There is still some voluntary segregation, but it appears that people were just so relieved to see the end of the conflict. Our new found local friends commented that now ‘with our new freedom we have new roads, electricity, and many new buildings.’ Tourism is helping to totally rebuild the area so your tourist dollars are very welcome. As well as chilling and chatting with the locals, I relaxed on the beach and swam for hours in the warm tropical waters. There is not a lot of accommodation here but 20% of the profits go to the local villages helping to rebuild. I stayed for 5 nights at Uga Bay resort and this seemed a perfect time to really relax into the local area. A special treat one night was a sand sculpture evening. At sunset we were taken to the beach which had been carved to have a chair and table made of sand, with artistic patterns surrounding the area like a mandala. The local hermit crabs were busy finishing the pattern on the outside. We were brought a meal with local lobster and seafood and ate a wonderful dinner on the beach under the stars. Just beautiful and thank you so much to the boys who dug such a creative impromptu dining area. You can take bikes to the local village, long walks on the beach, or just laze with a good book.

I met other travellers who were also travelling further north, which is a popular stop to see the jungle animals on safari and heard lots of stories about this from fellow travellers. Might be on the list for next time.

A Changing Sri Lanka

For an area heavy under the weight of a civil war followed by a tsunami, I was so pleased to share the quiet pristine beaches, the calm water and the amazingly resilient people of the East. There is an optimism and a spirit of looking forward to the future, so I was glad to help them rebuilding their beautiful country with our tourist dollars.

Written by: Kim Ward



Kim started her travel adventures as a backpacker travelling through Asia before starting work as an International flight attendant with Qantas Airways. She met her wonderful husband flying and they continue their travels for several months a year. She is a freelance travel writer and teacher and is always looking forward to the next **adventure!**