

Sri Lanka



...Colombo, the south coast, Yala National Park and Nureli Mountains

The autumn of 2012



Unpredictable weather, with stunning landscape...

...Having persuaded the whole family that this falls vacation would be spent in Sri Lanka (former Ceylon for those who are old enough to remember this name from school – I was at least). It is always a bit of a challenge with the weather during the fall vacation when travelling to south or South-east Asia.

...Having rented a fantastic villa smack on the beach on the south coast of Sri Lanka (Unawattuna area) all-inclusive with full staff and our own Tuc-Tuc for transport, the expectations were of course very high. Arriving at the airport in Colombo the rain was pouring down and the further south we got the more it intensified. When we eventually reached our beach house “Villa Tusk” and were greeted by the staff the weather had turned into a full storm. We experienced the worst weather Sri Lanka had experienced for over 50 years we were told.

...so for 2 nights and 3 days we stayed put, read books, played games, watched videos and enjoyed good food cooked by the staff outside on the patio, but under the roof. There were unfortunately not too many opportunities these first days to lie on the beach, swim and get sun-tanned. Who’s fault was this? Mine of course. I should of course have known that we would be running into the worst weather ever in over 50 years..!





“Villa Tusk” – smack on the beach!

We'll select better weather and come back again - Paradise!

On the south coast of Sri Lanka – make sure to use the Toll highway, which is much quicker and does not cost very much, if you arrive at the international airport north of Colombo.

Villa Tusk is located on the small main road around the Island directly on the beach near Unawatuna. One of the most beautiful beaches on the island, but also not very crowded with tourists. You're also very close to the main local sights such as; **Galle (8 km), Hikkaduwa (23 km) as well as Mirissa (27 km).**

Galle is worth a days visit in itself. First entered by the Portuguese back in the 15th century. This fortified city was built by the Dutch already back in 1633 and reached its height back in the 18th century during the Dutch period.

There are some lovely small colonial style streets with beautiful houses from the period. There are many small shops where one can buy tea, various fabrics and clothes. For lunch or dinner go to the old Hotel near the waterfront. Great settings inside and very good food – well recommended.

Use Galle for grocery shopping and stock-up in your house (if you have your own villa/bungalow). There are also many smaller shops on the small road along the coast.

For restaurants, there is a handful to choose from within 2-15 km range. 2-3 of these are quite decent and try and keep a “gourmet” level on the menu. Don't expect too much and you'll be positively surprised.

The beaches are really nice around the south and you can make long walks...





Yala National Park – for wild game is a must!



After 2 days of rain at the beach we decided to take a break and do something else. We choose to make a two-day tour to the well-known Yala National Park in the southeast corner of Sri Lanka.

We decided to book and stay at the **Lake View Cottage in Tissamaharama** on the boarder of the **Yala National Park**. The place itself is really quite simple, but the food – **the food is absolutely marvellous**. The manager is also the chef. He has previously worked as the private chef to the Lankese ambassador to Australia. It is almost worth the effort to make a detour to this place only for the food.

This was then our base for a two day safari trip into the Game park it self where you're not allowed to overnight. We did not have any special expectations, but were positively surprised with the variety of game, which was available. We spoke afterwards to locals who had been many times to the park but never seen the Leopards. **We were lucky as we saw Leopards not once but twice** and also managed to take some pictures of this rare animal.

The birdlife is also extensive here and many rare species have the park as their breeding ground. **The only drawback was the number of other tourists**. On some stops we were swamped with jeeps that were all positioning themselves as best as possible for good views of monkeys and elephants.





Sri Lanka – Nuwara Eliya

Nureli mountains (Nuwara Eliya)

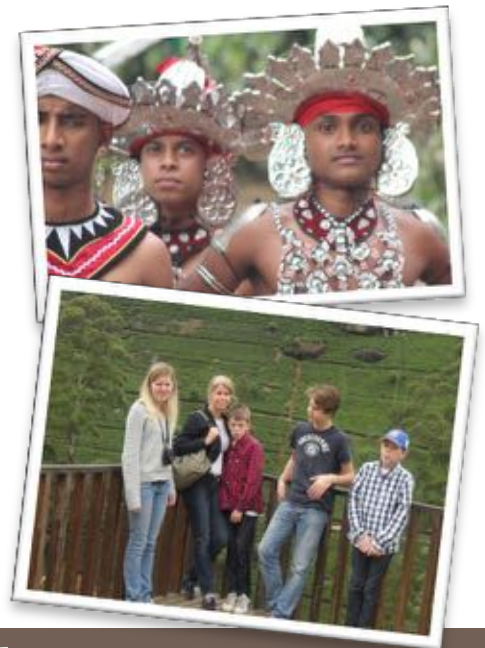
The tea plantations at 2000 m

The district of Nuwara Eliya has a long tradition. It was founded by Samuel Baker. The climate lent it self to becoming the prime sanctuary of the British civil servants and planters in Ceylon. Nuwara Eliya, called Little England then, was also a hill country retreat where the British colonialists could relax and engage in pastimes such as foxhunting, deer hunting, elephant hunting, polo, golf and cricket.

Many of the buildings in this town retain features from the colonial period and you really feel you're visiting an old English village in the

One of the distinctive features of this area is the widespread growing of vegetables, fruit, strawberries and flowers usually associated and found in temperate climate such as in Europe.

The slow-growing tea bushes of this highland produce some of the world's finest tea. There are several tea factories around the area, and most can be visited. You will also see a lot of poor tea pickers and tea plantation works along the roads walking up and down the rather steep roads.



Miscellaneous snapshots from tea plantations!





Plantations and British 19th century resort..

This old British retreat in the 19th century during colonial times looks more like an English country village than an Lankese town at 2000 m...



..On the third day of rain and storm at our villa on the coast, we had simply had enough and started to make plans. The owners of the villa called at the same time and felt sorry for us. The suggested that we use their **summer villa up in the mountains in Nuwara Eliya**. This was then quickly organized and before we knew it we were on our way to the mountains. It was said to take 3-4 hours – it took 8 hours! The winding road and small villages on the way however was really nice and a good chance for us to see the “real” Sri Lanka.

When we eventually arrived, we were greeted by the staff of the owners of the Villa. They were living in Colombo, the capital, but had staff “on-hold” always at this there summer retreat. ...And what a place it was (see picture above). It was a 400-m2 English style house with a staff of 4 people. We were treated as royals and had a 3-course dinner prepared for us in the main dining hall of the villa. We could later relax by the open fireplace enjoying a cognac and a good book. There was also a pool table for the kids to enjoy.

We then spend a full day visiting one of the tea plantations and were given a tour around the factory and premises. A lot of the poorest of the Tamils does work at tea pickers.





Colombo – city of restaurants...!

Massage, good food, shopping and lots of pool-time...



To round up this trip, we ended up in Colombo for 4 days staying in the beautiful **Park street Hotel** in the centre of Colombo. This boutique, top-of-the-range hotel, was indeed an oasis in the middle of the busy city. We were also very fortunate to end up with 4 days full with sunshine and leisure by the pool.

The shopping was not quite as good as rumours had it from friends who had visited a few years back. We did manage to fill-up an extra suitcase, but we had hoped for a greater variety. **There is a top-class massage and nail parlour just across the street.**

As for restaurants we picked the top-range from trip advisor and were very pleased; Chutneys (**Indian**), **The Gallery Café** or the **Semondu (Asian)**. These were all excellent and well recommended.



Scenes from along the road....

