



AMANGALLA

Experience Guide

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The Amangalla Experience

Known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean, the tear-shaped island of Sri Lanka was called 'Serendib' by the ancient Persians and 'Ceylon' by the British during their colonial rule. By whatever name, however, the island's beauty has always been a constant – its golden beaches scalloping a whale-visited coastline, its jungles revealing ancient temples and its verdant tea plantations cloaking mist-draped hills. Serving as a time capsule and a gateway to the country's breathtaking south coast is the historic UNESCO-protected Galle Fort, which has welcomed guests since 1588 when it was first established by the Portuguese.

Located in the heart of Galle Fort, with mature gardens surrounded by frangipani and towering trees, Amangalla is the perfect base for exploring the Fort's charming lanes, historical buildings and contemporary boutiques, as well as the beaches, temples, rural countryside and national parks that await beyond the Fort's four-hundred-year-old stone walls. Read on to discover the broad range of personalised activities and experiences on offer at Amangalla, both into the island's lush interior and offshore.



Revisit the Past

Galle Fort

Galle Fort was written about for centuries as the fabled Serendib's main trading post. As the first port of call for Europeans travelling to the Orient in the 19th century, up to 700 passengers would disembark each day from steamships, thronging the narrow streets and bazaars behind the Fort's ramparts to trade in sapphires, rubies, Sinhalese lace, cinnamon and ebony. With parasols and tropical topees in hand, ladies and gentlemen would board horse-drawn carriages only to alight again at the colonial buildings known in 1863 as The Oriental Hotel. Later renamed the New Oriental Hotel, and now known as Amangalla, the hotel is one of Asia's oldest and has been restored to capture the genteel ambience of a bygone era.

The Fort is best seen on foot. This can be a private walk with our Amangalla Fort map, a historical tour with your butler or a ramparts stroll at sunset. Exploring the Fort on a bicycle is also a pleasant way to experience this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Walking Tour Around the Fort

Amangalla is located next door to the Groote Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), the Governor's House, vast spice warehouses, the Court Square, the Old Dutch Hospital, the Lighthouse and Meera Jumma Mosque. Further around the ramparts are the Dagoba at the Buddhist temple and the District Judge's house, now the Army Camp, with its fragrant frangipani trees. Panoramic views of Galle and St. Mary's Cathedral can be enjoyed from the three highest bastions of the Fort named the Sun, Moon and Star.

In the late afternoon, the Fort community takes its daily passeggiata, gathering on the ramparts to watch the sunset and catch up on the gossip of the day. Start from the lighthouse and walk clockwise around to the temple to be a part of this lovely daily ritual.

Cultural Insight

Sri Lanka claims the world's second-oldest continuous written history - one that chronicles the Indo-Aryan Sinhalese or 'People of the Lion', who arrived from northern India around 500 BC to establish magnificent Buddhist kingdoms on the central plains, and the Tamils of Dravidian stock, who arrived a few centuries later from southern India. Colonised by the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally the British, the island regained independence in 1948.

Amangalla delights in offering insights into the rich cultural heritage of this fascinating country and its many influences.

Temple Tour

Serene temples abound on this blessed island. Three of our favourites are Yatagala, Rhummasala and Nawamunisaya, all situated within a 30-minute drive of Galle Fort by hotel car.

Built when King Devanampiya Tissa ruled the Kingdom of Anuradhapura, Yatagala Temple is one of the oldest in the region, set in a beautiful valley of rice paddies and tropical jungle. At the top of 120 steps, the almost 2,000-year-old rock temple offers a beautiful image room as well as ancient Bo trees and a sacred meditation cave. A Buddhist blessing can be arranged during your visit to the temple. Blessings can also be experienced in Amangalla's lush gardens.

Rhummasala is a newer temple built on the headland across the bay from Galle Fort by the Japanese after the devastating 2004 tsunami. The stupa is of beautiful zen simplicity on a huge scale. This is a stunning location for sunsets with breathtaking views back towards Galle.

Named after its nine stupas, Nawamunisaya is the simplest of the three temples located in a small village close to the sea. The preschool set within its grounds is apt considering the temple's unique origin story.

It is said that a Brahmin fortune teller advised a childless woman to make an offering to ensure she would be blessed with children in her next life. Determined to be a mother, she built a temple composed of one large and eight smaller stupas, to represent the children she hoped to have one day.

Tip: When entering temples, please remove your shoes and ensure that shorts and skirts are below the knee and shoulders are covered with a shawl or pashmina.

If you are lucky enough to visit at Poya (a Buddhist festival every full moon), save your temple visit until late afternoon to join locals as they perform puja, a ritual offering of flowers and incense.





Mask Painting

Join a local artisan to learn about the history and symbolism of masks in Sri Lanka. Playing integral roles in traditional rituals, festivals and performances on the island, each mask tells its own story, embodying a mythical creature, an ancestral spirit or a deity to symbolise protection, wisdom or spiritual connection with the divine.

This lively class will then see you trying your hand at painting your own handcarved wooden mask in the local style. This unique artwork is yours to take home - the perfect memento of your time at Amangalla.

Market Visits

The markets on the fringes of Galle Fort are home to an explosion of colours and aromas from the tropical harvests of the island's fertile soil and the rich bounty of the sea. Here, produce from local farms, home gardens and estates as well as the day's freshest catch converge in a medley of flavours and textures that shape the seasonal fare of Amangalla and each island home.



Adventures on Land

The Geoffrey Bawa Tour

Sri Lanka's most famous architect, Geoffrey Bawa, was among the most influential Asian architects of his generation. His 'tropical modernism' style can be explored in person with a knowledgeable Amangalla guide in Bentota, just an hour's drive north of Galle. Visit hotels, private houses and train stations designed by this icon, and have lunch at Lunaganga, his most striking achievement.

His home on an abandoned rubber estate, Lunaganga occupied him for 50 years, serving as a testbed for his emerging ideas. The result is a series of outdoor rooms conceived with an exquisite sense of theatre as a civilized wilderness in the greater garden of Sri Lanka. On your return to Galle, visit more of his hotels, and finish with sunset cocktails.

Handunugoda Tea Plantation

Sri Lanka's history was not foretold in tea leaves but rather unfolded because of them. Long Sri Lanka's main source of foreign exchange, tea represents as much as 65% of the country's total income from exports and is the main source of employment in rural Sri Lanka. Learn all about the country's tea production at the scenic Handunugoda, situated a 40-minute drive from Galle.

One of the lowest-lying tea estates in Sri Lanka, it also boasts rubber and cinnamon plantations. Walk through the rolling hills of the tea estate, then savour tea and cakes on the veranda of the planter's bungalow as he regales you with stories of old. A tour of the factory and its 100-year-old British machinery follows and finally a tea tasting, including the rare white tea, which can also be enjoyed at Amangalla from our tea menu.



Cinnamon Estate and Picnic

One of the spices for which the world clamoured during colonial times, cinnamon is made from the inner bark of trees scientifically known as *Cinnamomum*. These trees thrive in Sri Lanka, and the island's trading history is strongly tied to the spice that a Dutch captain once claimed, "One can still smell when eight leagues out to sea." Cinnamon is still today a major agricultural export.

Amangalla guests can visit a private cinnamon estate near Koggala Lake, a 40-minute drive from the Fort. Enjoy a walk around the plantation, lessons in harvesting and a guided tour of the factory.

The tour includes a picnic lunch prepared by Amangalla's kitchen and served overlooking the rice paddy.



Shopping

Galle Fort is not just full of history, it is also a contemporary hub of designer fashion and homeware boutiques, jewellery stores and galleries. Whether you're interested in purchasing indigenous gemstones, bejewelled kaftans, local Sri Lankan sarongs, colonial antiques, painted boxes or a pot of jam, simply ask your Butler for our Amangalla map and shopping recommendations. Walking is the easiest way to shop the Fort.

Jewellery

Galle Fort is home to some of the best jewellers on the island, with many old family businesses creating bespoke designs. Sri Lankan sapphires are some of the best in the world and you will also find semi-precious stones such as aquamarines, tourmalines, topaz and moonstones in abundance. Amangalla can arrange a private audience with a trusted jeweller.

Galle Town

Just outside the Fort's ancient gate is the town of Galle, best explored by tuk-tuk or on foot. The bustle of the Main Street bazaar is in sharp contrast to the historical calm of the Fort. The street is filled with shops selling colourful textiles and just about every object and cooking utensil you could possibly need. The fruit and fish markets are on the esplanade, with spice shops adjacent and the vegetable market tucked off Main Street.

Antiques

If you're after antiques like those within Amangalla, there are several shops dotted along the coast. There is an excellent antique store within the Fort, two that we recommend 20 minutes to the south of Galle and a whole town full 45 minutes to the north. Collections range from wooden statuaries, furniture, ceramics and heritage pieces from Sri Lanka's colonial past. Local artisans reproducing replicas of antique pieces as well as tropical modern furnishings and accessories also abound nearby.



Ocean-Based Adventures

Sailing Experience

All our sailing experiences take place on locally made 48' or 53' catamarans designed to accommodate up to six guests. A full crew includes a captain, chef and butler. Each Catamaran offers an outdoor living room and a fully equipped kitchen, as well as an upper deck ideal for whale-watching and enjoying the sunset.

Ocean Adventure Cruise

This full-day, whale-watching cruise takes place on a speedboat. Board your catamaran at Mirissa Harbour at 6 AM, then settle in for a sun-kissed journey along the coastline. This adventure includes morning tea on the way to the site and a picnic lunch in a scenic spot, possibly overlooking tranquil Mirissa Bay on the return journey.

Sunset Cruise

Enjoy sunset aboard your private catamaran accompanied by your butler, who will serve a bottle of house champagne and canapés. The cruise will depart at 3 PM.

The Ocean Adventure Cruise and Sunset Cruise are generally possible from late November to early April but can sometimes be enjoyed at other times of the year, if sea conditions are optimal.



Culinary Experiences

Sri Lanka is renowned for its cuisine and Amangalla celebrates the region's variety with a full menu of authentic dishes made from local, seasonal ingredients. Guests can dine on the Veranda, watching the daily comings and goings of Fort locals and tourists as they pass by, in the lofty-ceilinged Dining Room at one end of the chandeliered Great Hall, or in the cool embrace of the hotel's garden, beside the swimming pool.

Amangalla also offers several unique culinary experiences both on-property and in the surrounding countryside - as hands-on as you desire.

Afternoon Tea

Experience Amangalla's Signature Silver Stand Tea with patisserie and sandwiches or the Zaal Cream Tea on the sun-dappled Veranda, within the elegant confines of the Great Hall, or on the private library terrace overlooking the garden. By arrangement, these teas can also be enjoyed upstairs on the Sunset Balcony with views of the Fort's terracotta rooftops.

Private Island Traditional Roti Dinner and Cultural Show

In Amangalla's romantic ambalama - literally an island in a sea of rice paddies - savour a traditional Sri Lankan roti dinner made beneath the stars by your personal chef and served by candlelight and flaming torches. This experience begins in the late afternoon, and you'll get to watch the verdant hues of the paddies turn to gold, then velvet black, as the sunset paints the sky a myriad of pinks. This experience also includes a short cultural show unique to the southern province.

Please give advance notice should you prefer to dine from one of our other menus. The menus include arrack sours, local beer and soft drinks.

Private Island Cooking Class

Sri Lanka's tropical climate ensures a cornucopia of fruit and vegetables, fragrant spices and fresh seafood year-round. Visit the local market with one of Amangalla's chefs to discover more about the fertile island's varied produce. Then choose your own ingredients to create an authentic Sri Lankan feast at Amangalla's private ambalama - a thatched, open-sided pavilion surrounded by rice paddies in the countryside. Enjoy your fragrant creations in their traditional clay pots for a memorable alfresco lunch which includes local beer and soft drink selection.



Wellness at Amangalla

Amangalla's spa also has two wonderful hydrotherapy suites referred to after the ancient tradition of 'taking the waters' to improve physical, emotional and mental well-being. Five softly-lit treatment chambers lead off a gently descending arched hallway with candlelit recesses, and two hydrotherapy chambers each offer a thermal pool, sauna, steam room, cold plunge pool and dressing room.

The treatment menu draws extensively on the wisdom of Ayurveda, and our hydrotherapy suites offer the services of a fully certified Ayurvedic physician. The traditions of the past continue in the Salon and Barber Shop with its original planter's chairs.

Hydrotherapy

Experience the intense heat of the sauna then an icy dip in our cold plunge pool for an invigorating health hit. Or unwind in our massage pools before retreating to the steam room to complete your rejuvenation. Amangalla's hydrotherapy experience is as relaxing as it is revitalising.

The hydrotherapy suite facilities are complimentary for all our in-house guests for 30 minutes, and thereafter at a charge of USD 30 per person per hour. Advance reservation is recommended.

Signature Treatment

Amangalla's signature treatment is an indulgent three-hour journey including a cleansing scrub and wrap of native cinnamon and lotus, followed by a full-body massage and a sandalwood facial. Finish on the veranda sipping afternoon tea accompanied by a silver stand of dainty scones, finger sandwiches and cakes.

Ayurveda

India's 5,000-year-old system of preventive medicine, Ayurveda combines the Sanskrit word for 'life' with veda meaning 'science' and encourages balance in all things.

Based on an in-depth consultation and thorough assessments with Amangalla's consulting Ayurvedic physician, personalised Ayurvedic programmes can be tailored to your needs and goals, according to the time you have available. These can include comprehensive nutrition plans based on your personal Ayurvedic dosha (your constitution) and Amangalla's expert chefs will ensure that every meal follows your specific Ayurvedic menu. Ayurvedic cuisine is typically vegetarian and incorporates a wide variety of herbs and spices including ginger, garlic, lemongrass, cumin and cardamom.

Nail Salon and Barber Shop

The traditionally styled salon offers ladies and gents manicures and pedicures as well as a third-generation barber shop, which provides gents haircuts and a traditional wet shave experience.



Singing Bowl Meditation

Relax and clear your mind during a meditation session with our resident instructor, who uses Himalayan singing bowls to guide you.

This dedicated time for yourself allows you to unwind, reduce stress and engage in self-development through deep breathing exercises and the peace of our secluded Garden Pavilion.

Private Yoga

Wake with the sun and join your personal yoga instructor in the Garden Pavilion. Sessions are tailored to suit individual needs, goals and fitness levels and promise that rejuvenating endorphin rush brought on by exercising in nature.

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