After a decade of peace, **Sri Lanka** is South Asia’s most daring design destination

**COLOMBO**

**Geoffrey Bawa Residence**

Maintained by the Geoffrey Bawa Trust after the architect’s death in 2003, Bawa’s Colombo home is open to the public (there are two rooms set aside for stays). The entire structure reflects Bawa’s penchant for graphic black-and-white accents, batik textiles, Buddhist relics, colonial cane furniture and mid-century designers like Eero Saarinen (GeoffreyBawa.com).

**The Gallery Café**

Udayshanth Fernando, often referred to as the Terence Conran of Sri Lanka, transformed Bawa’s former offices into a café and gallery in 1998 with the architect’s blessing. It also happens to be one of the best restaurants in the states and says, “Bawa created architecture with a soul strongly linked to Sri Lanka’s past that intimately involves you with the tradition of his culture.”

Companies like Ampersand (AmpersandTravel.com) and **Sri Lanka In Style** (SriLankaInStyle.com) offer Bawa-specific itineraries, while the island’s capital, Colombo, is best reached from the US via Dubai on Emirates (Emirates.com) or Qatar Airways (QatarAirways.com) through Doha.

Here’s a taste of the island’s best design spots.

**KALUTARA**

**Anantara Kalutara**

Situated between the Indian Ocean and Kalu Ganga estuary, the new Anantara Kalutara hotel was originally conceived by Bawa in the early ’90s. When the civil war escalated in 1995, the half-built property lay dormant. Much of it even survived the tsunami and construction began again under Bawa’s protegé, architect Channa Daswatte. He lovingly restored the hotel including the striking, yet simple main building with a gable roof and soaring ceilings (Anantara.com).

**KOTTE**

**Parliament building**

About a half-hour east of Colombo, Bawa’s most prominent public work is the Parliament building built in the 1970s, which symbolized self-rule for the new Republic of Sri Lanka. It used traditional building materials as well as copper-covered pitched roofs, a nod to local, traditional temple architecture (Parliament.lk).

**SIGIRIYA**

**Kandalama Heritage**

Perhaps the most dramatic Bawa design, this hotel, built on a cliff overlooking an ancient reservoir in the country’s “cultural triangle,” is the first building outside the US to receive LEED certification. Sustainable elements — roof gardens and cooling corridors — were often part of Bawa’s schemes, yet here the ship-like design, with its multiple levels, has been enveloped by the jungle as if it had always been part of the natural landscape (www.HeritanceHotels.com).

**TRUNK DRIVERS:**

Elephants make their way across Kandalama’s lush landscape.