I’ve never felt the impulse to buy a duty-free washing machine after disembarking from a long-haul flight. But judging by the proliferation of appliance and electrical stores at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo, it’s top-of-mind for Sri Lankans. Even at 12am, shop assistants lean casually on their whitegoods hoping to entice returning travellers with tax-free freezers. It’s the first endearing peculiarity people notice on arrival in Sri Lanka, but it certainly won’t be the last this technicolour country throws at you.

We’ve arrived during Sinhalese New Year, so our driver tells us. He’s chatting away as we hurtle down arterial roads, overtaking with what seems like reckless abandon but turns out to be a fluid motorway dance to which every vehicle knows the choreography. Amid all the weaving, I clock hundreds of LED-lit displays. But unlike most countries where they are usually spruiking Coke or fuel, these illuminated beacons are advertising faith. There’s a Buddha or Ganesh every 200 metres or so, festooned with colourfully flashing lights. It makes quite the impression in the dark and seems so jarring compared to the usually sombre Western-style of worship. Yet in tropical Sri Lanka, a place where iridescent, indigenous peacocks mooch about like common pigeons, over-the-top colour abounds in the every day.

I would like to stay and explore the capital, but the following morning we make our way via seaplane down to the very south of the teardrop-shaped country, to an oasis called Tangalle. After skidding onto a lagoon, we’re met with smiles and cool refreshing towels before being bundled into an air-conditioned mini van (in Sri Lanka, ‘w’ is ‘v’, and vice versa) and carefully deposited at the new Anantara Peace Haven Resort.

Three women sit around an enormous drum managing the threefold task of beating a rhythm, smiling the warmest of welcomes and singing melodically as I cross the boardwalked pond to the resort’s entrance atrium. They seem to be beaming their wonderful smiles directly at me, but this elaborate welcome surely can’t be only in my honour? I glance over my shoulder expecting to see...

**POSTCARDS | Sri Lanka**

**A DROP OF COLOUR**

Full of colour, smiles, and... whitegoods, Sri Lanka is a teardrop isle of exotic flavours and cultures, and it’s concentrated in the paradise of Tangalle.
RESTAURANTS, CASUAL

a lot of people know how a cashew grows. On a tree, for one. But he’s hit a sacred cow. Luckily, there was no bumped bovine to incite local kids can get right off a tree. cooking, tamarind is used to sour curries, but like this it’s a treat these group accurately compares it to a sour Warhead. In Sri Lankan unlike any inferior paste or liquid form I’ve ever had; someone in our collected from the tree and demonstrates how to extract the seed about it halfway through brushing, hands us brown pods they’ve seeing arriving guests. During this stay, there were no invitees, unlike other national leaders, Sri Lanka was a halfway mark for Buddha on his way to paradise, and in others, Adam (called Kottun Roti), and parcels of chickpeas and curry.

WHAT TO EAT WHILE YOU’RE THERE

Sri Lankan cuisine has a rightful reputation as some of the most delicious in south-east Asia, using very little meat, lots of seafood and bountiful tropical produce. It’s impossible to try it all in one visit, but if you can shameful yourself away from curry long enough, look out for these treats...

EGG HOPPERS These baskets of yolk goodness are the perfect way to start a Sri Lankan day, along with a side of fish curry, of course. A yeasted and steamed savoury pancake made from coconut milk and rice flour creates a perfect nest for a just-set egg. Top it off with sambals such as coconut, chilli or, our favourite, sambal (caramelised onion).

KIRIBATH A type of rice pudding, kiribath (literally ‘milk rice’) is an auspicious breakfast dish of boiled rice and coconut milk typically served on the first day of each month with savoury accompaniments. If you’re lucky enough to be visiting around Sinhalese New Year, enjoy it with jaggery and bananas, as is the tradition.

WHAT TO PACK

Iceland essentials to save you from the sun

WEAVER'S SHEEP CHECK MATERIAL HAT, $290

MARCS HEART-PRINT BLOUSE, $69

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