

THE **apa** VILLA STORY

I left Germany in the mid-sixties in an old Volkswagen bus with \$500 in my pocket and a trunk full of silk ties - the cast-offs made in my home town - to travel the world with friends. As I headed for the Middle East, I bartered the ties for petrol and food which got me as far as Kuwait...

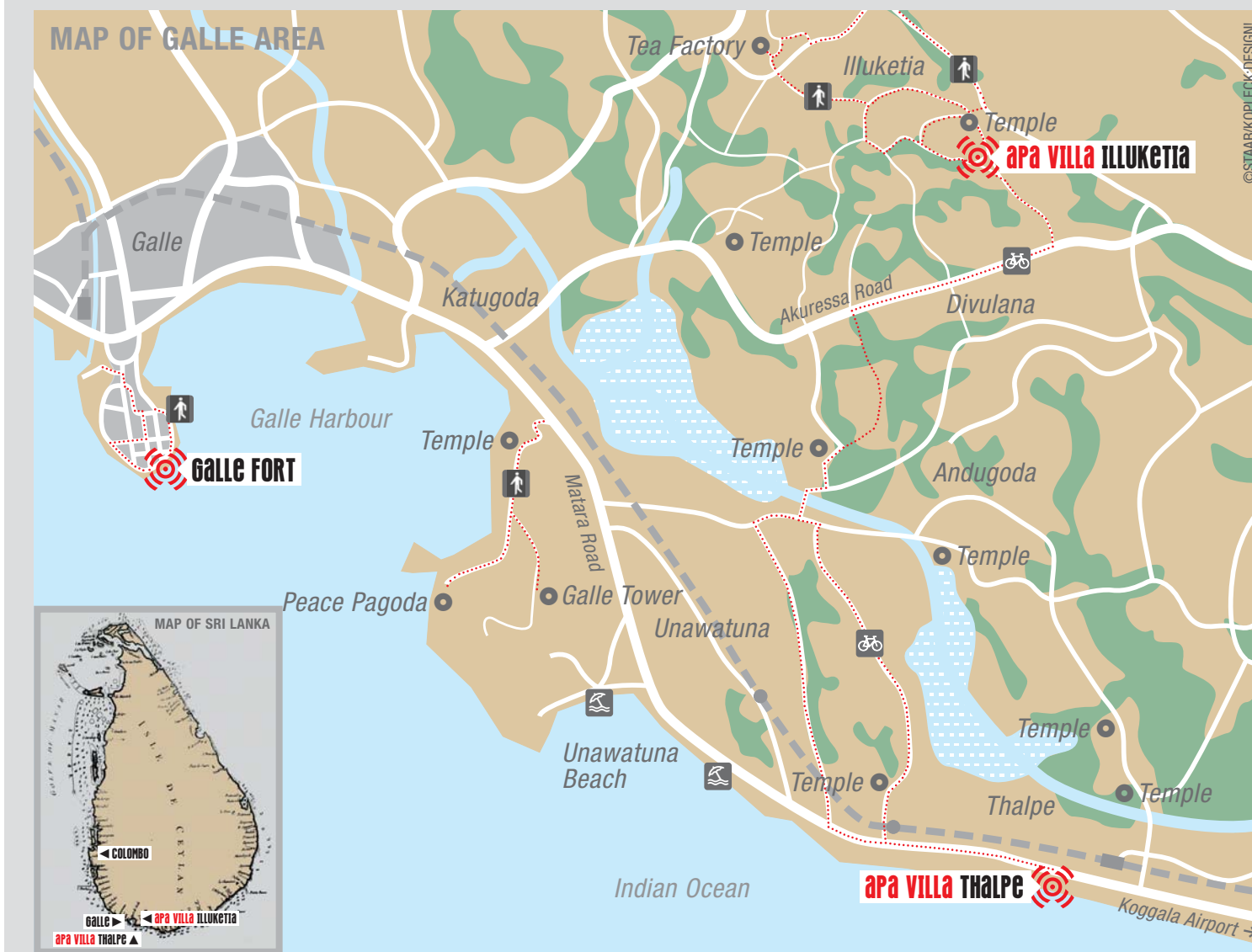


APA owner Hans Höfer

My journey lasted far longer than I ever imagined. In one sense, I have been on the road ever since, and as I travelled, the friends I made along the way invited me to stay in their homes. I slept on their couches, chilled out in guest-rooms, and knew that when I had a place of my own, I'd reciprocate in kind. I sold the car in Katmandu, and began a new life as a photographer and publisher based in Asia. I spent three years in Bali where I painted, took photos, and eventually published the first of what turned out to be nearly 300 Insight Guides on over 120 countries, 30 years later.

Today I have one foot in London, the other in Singapore and spend part of the year in Sri Lanka where I can share my love of art, culture, and nature with friends and guests at Apa Villas – just as the friends I met on my travels showed me their worlds. I bought and renovated Illuketia, a 19th century plantation house tucked away among trees on the outskirts of a village near Galle, to be my home in Sri Lanka. But then more and more friends visited and wanted to go to the beach to swim, so I ended up building more villas on a strip of coast nearby.

I took my inspiration from the small, private guesthouses where I stayed on my travels, combining holiday with playing host to guests who can mingle in a very personal and well-designed environment on the beach in Thalpe and in the tropical garden estate in Illuketia. So you can choose the sea, village or both. If you stay with us, you will soon see that these really are special places.



apa SHORTCUTS

First stop www.apavilla.com for more information, updates, special offers and free downloads.
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APA VILLAS THALPE facing the Indian Ocean add up to seven suites in three separate villas. All have been restored to a high level of luxury and comfort after the tsunami wave in 2004. The 25-metre long pool is cool. Eat, relax, gaze out to the sea from the wide verandahs. Walk the beach, enjoy service that guests rave about.

Location: 8 Km South from busy Galle town and half-hour to Koggala Domestic Airport.

APA VILLA ILLUKETIA Estate is set in ten acres of mature garden surrounded by villages, tea and rubber plantations and rice fields. A 75-foot-long pool is sited among tropical trees. There are six suites in total: four in the main house set around a central courtyard pool and two suites at the Pond House, a separate unit overlooking a lotus pond.

156 bird species, 556 native plants at last count live discreetly within the boundaries. No room is alike. Meals are taken



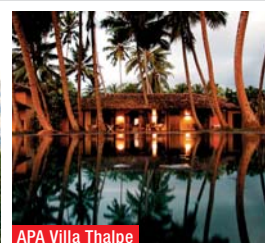
APA Villas captured by CN Traveler Magazine

on the wide verandah in the main house. Our large hall is a common lounge area. There is a library and billiards upstairs. We grow organic rice, herbs and vegetables. Floral arrangements are fresh cuts of heliconias, gingers, hibiscus and other flowering trees from the estate. Short cut to Thalpe beach villas on the country lanes past temples and humble village clusters. APA's kitchen is well known and caters for all meals. We also accept dinner reservations from non-resident guests.

Driver's direction: Turn off at Akuressa Road on Galle-Matara Road. 800 m after the 4 km marker opposite Walkers Building turn left. Follow the lane. See two white dagobas. Enter Illuketia gate.



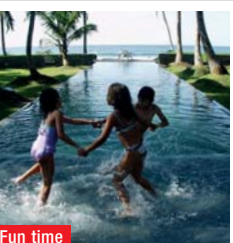
On a wave length



APA Villa Thalpe



Bedroom in Thalpe



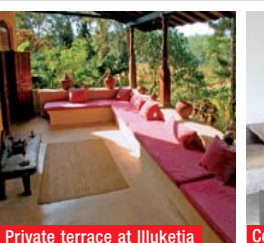
Fun time



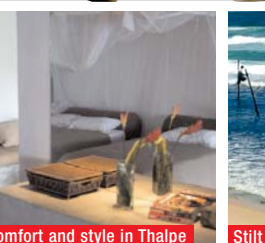
Outdoor living at Illuketia



Lush and lively at Illuketia



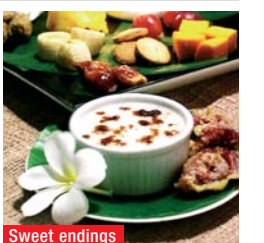
Private terrace at Illuketia



Comfort and style in Thalpe



Stilt fishermen at Thalpe



Sweet endings

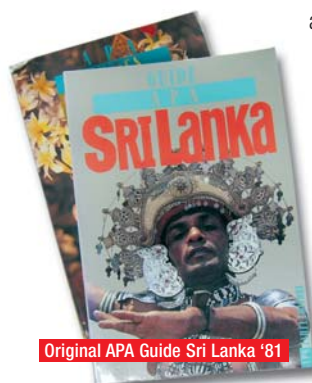
When you come to Southern Sri Lanka, you enter a time warp, stepping back into the 1970s. Don't resist it, just sink into it slowly as if it were a hot bubble bath and relax. Take off your watch, forget about time because here, everything is slower, more laid back. Sit on the verandah and watch nature: the monkeys leaping from tree to tree as they forage

for fruit, a timid mongoose shuffling across the lawn, the sudden flash of turquoise as a kingfisher heads for the ponds. The garden is a riot of colour, with more than 500 different plants, from the crimson heliconias to the faintly fragrant delicate pink cannonball flowers, each one encapsulating a pedestal in the

shape of buddha's seat. The Beach Villas will lull you with a gentle tropical mix of monsoon rains, surf, and stunning sunsets. Our beautiful elongated pool is shaded by swaying palm trees, with a wooden deck at one end that's perfectly positioned for watching the waves, an occasional pas-

sing ship, or a sea turtle surfacing for air. As for the food, our staff can serve you breakfast on your terrace, any time, and have a wonderful repertoire of recipes from all over the world, ranging from Sri Lankan curries to fresh lobsters, tiger prawns and yellow-fin tuna prepared in a variety of ways.

When you feel sufficiently relaxed, put down your book or binoculars and explore the local setting.



Original APA Guide Sri Lanka '81

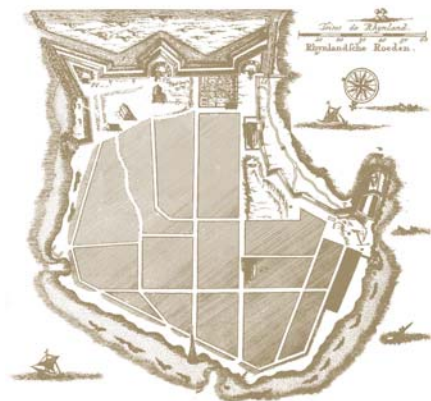
THE GALLE FORT

Imagine the year is 1690. Your name is Johannes Oosterman, a reluctant soldier of fortune, picked up from a port tavern with the help of a lead-weighted blackjack, awakening somewhere south of Brittany and heading for the Cape. Now your body is racked with shivering fevers, your eyes sunken in their sockets, and below you, slaves and prisoners survive off stinking fish and weevil-infested wheat. You are sweltering in your rotting kneeboots and salt-rusted breastplate and you wonder if mangrove spikes and sword-grass be your lilies of the valley, you forget-me-nots . . .

Whenever I visit Galle Fort, I find myself thinking about the lives that went on behind these walls. The Fort dates back to remarkably different historical eras where successive conquerors and rulers have left their imprint, destroying or adding to the work of their predecessors.

The Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, post-independence Sri Lankans, and now a new wave of foreign inhabitants. The UN made it a World Heritage Site in 1988. Until the 1990s, the Fort was a well-kept secret, but now it is in the midst of a controversial revamp driven by "culture-tourism" and real estate anxiety. Neighbours who lived side by side for generations have seen their homes rise a hundred-fold in value, and buildings that were in a state of collapse mysteriously reappear reinvented and restored as boutique hotels or holiday homes. Galle has turned "decay-chic" into a new art form. I find the best way to absorb the Fort's charms is slowly, languidly, striking up a conversation with the people you meet over a drink or a long lazy lunch,

DUTCH MAP OF PUNTO GALE



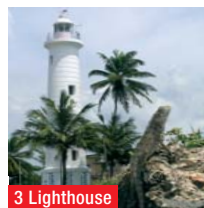
then criss-crossing the Fort's narrow streets for an hour or two, meeting the locals and smiling off the hoots and touts, if I can ...



1 Crest of the VOC

It's easy. You can use our map if you want to plan a route, or just take any turn and wander, preferably in the early morning or late afternoon.

Approach Galle Fort from the old harbour beside the Old Dutch Gate. Sri Lanka's abundant spices were its wealth, filling the coffers of the colonial rulers. The scented cargos of precious cinnamon, pepper, coffee, and cardamom were worth a fortune in gold and silver back home in Amsterdam. As you enter the Fort, you will see the crest of the VOC, the Dutch East India Company from 1671 above the inner arch of the Gate. Pass through the Gate and enter a time warp as you turn left down Queen Street towards a tree-lined square, called Court Garden, where you may find huddles of witnesses, spectators, and lawyers waiting to go into court. Cross the square and face Akersloot, built in 1759 on top of the first Portuguese bastion. Now stroll along Hospital Street, look up Peddler Street which bisects the entire town. Slow down below the



3 Lighthouse

British lighthouse, which was built in 1938 above the thick-walled Kruit-house, where saltpeter, charcoal, and sulphur were ground up to be mixed into gunpowder, the might of colonialism. As you look back over the rooftops, see how the prominent main mosque dating from 1898 has been laid over the facade of a former Portuguese church dating from 1760. Five times a day, the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. From the ramparts you can peek down at the Fort's only swimming beach where shy young girls steal a glimpse of the boys below showing off.



5 Temple

Fort's only swimming beach where shy young girls steal a glimpse of the boys below showing off.



SATELLITE IMAGE OF GALLE FORT, 2005



Now follow the ramparts, pass the remains of the cannon mounts - the vital weaponry that defended the Fort. You come to reach Flag Rock Bastion, popular with youngsters who offer to jump off the cliffs for a few rupees.



6 Fort jewellers

Then follow the ramparts from bastion to bastion, taking in the local life - joggers, impromptu cricket matches, lovers sheltering from the public

gaze under an umbrella. Or cross the grass opposite the pagoda, once a Portuguese Church, and follow the lane around the corner until you reach Peddler Street, where newly restored and decaying mansions stand shoulder

THINGS WE RECOMMEND IN THE GALLE FORT



Olanda Antiques

HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

- 1 Amangalla
- 2 Galle Fort Hotel
- 3 Rampart Hotel
- 4 Fort Printers
- 5 Aruna's Pizza

SHOPPING

- 1 Elephant Walk
- 2 Exotic Roots
- 3 Sithuvilli Marks
- 4 Galle Fort Gallery
- 5 Olanda Antiques
- 6 Barefoot

SERVICES

- 1 Commercial Bank
- 2 Bank of Ceylon
- 3 People's Bank

MUSEUMS

- 1 National Museum
- 2 Historical Mansion Museum

to shoulder. Turn up Church Street at The Printers and walk along a stretch of new galleries and hotels



7 Dutch Church

juxtaposed with historic churches. The Clock Tower, dating from 1701, stands across from the old post office, still in use. Alongside is All Saints Church, built in the British style, and the Dutch Reformed Church, dating from 1640, altered in 1755, and beautifully restored recently thanks to Dutch funding. Find the oldest gravestone, tucked along the cemetery walls.



8 NOH, 1980s

This is usually where I take a break. Stop at The Printers, the Galle Fort Hotel, or the Amangalla, which was once the famous New Oriental Hotel. Foreigners have bought and lovingly renovated the buildings in this street, so don't be surprised if someone approaches you and offers to sell you a



9 Dutch attack Galle Fort

house. Now, climb up the ramparts where the three massive bastions and a clock tower face inland and take the plunge back into modern-day Galle or the surrounding country ...



Moon Bastion and Clock Tower