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PAPER MARVELS

A GASTRONOMIC TOUR IN BRAZIL

DÜSSELDORF IN STYLE

ULTIMATE MUSIC DESTINATIONS



Clean & green

A remote calm beckons from Sri Lanka, along with a collection of stays that do justice to the stunning surroundings. Sanjay Surana reports



With tourist arrivals reaching a record high last year, Sri Lanka is seeing a boom in luxury hotel investment, much of it focused on the global trends of eco-sensitivity and wellness. That's fitting, since the country is steeped in both. It has a wealth of healing plants – this is the land where, in the Hindu epic poem *Ramayana*, Hanuman brought a hill full of life-saving herbs from the Himalayas to treat Rama and Laxman – herbs that still

grow today. Two new hotels, with stunning locations and sublime architecture, are spearheading the charge.

Tri, owned by British photographer Rob Drummond and his yoga teacher wife Lara Baumann, opened in December 2015 on a hill above the country's largest natural lake, Koggala, 25 minutes from Galle Fort. Eleven sustainably built suites spiral down a forested hill like the strands of a helix. Each suite runs on solar power and features LED lighting,



Santani enjoys the fresh mountain air of unspoilt hill country near Kandy. **Facing page, from top:** The treetop *yogashala* at Tri; the living area of one of Tri's suites looks out over Koggala lake

green roofs, and windows, doors and floors made from recycled wood.

Wellness forms Tri's backbone, with yoga exercises taught in a treetop *yogashala*, and individualised yoga classes, spa treatments and nutrition programmes are available. Other indulgences include a 21-metre cantilevered pool, a glass-walled library, fresh seafood from fishermen that ply the coastal waters two kilometres away, and a 360-degree viewing deck

for sundowners and private dining (trilanka.com).

Sanskrit for harmony, Santani orchestrates spaces designed to help guests focus and relax, with clean lines and minimalism instead of ornate styling and a barrage of amenities. The resort opens in July 2016 and forgoes the use of air-conditioning – which typically consumes about 70% of energy use in a hot-climate hotel – relying on the cool climes of its woodsy location 2,200 feet above sea level near Kandy, in the centre of

the country. Almost all the furniture and woodwork is made of reclaimed wood, including decks built from a salvaged 100-year-old tea factory, while the architecture is inspired by the Buddhist *tampita-vihara* style (building atop stilts) to minimise the impact on the ground. The owners have also planted a thousand trees to regenerate the habitat.

The 16 cement-floored and -walled rooms and two suites, raised five metres off the ground on iron

stilts – with bed headboards inspired by 16th-century Sri Lankan murals – mimic meditation caves, open in the front with a framed view of nature. Food menus feature fresh, sustainably sourced local produce, while lifestyle coaching and wellness programmes explore themes such as healthy cooking, meditation, music therapy, sleep enhancement, detox and post-baby bliss (santani.lk).

Singapore Airlines flies daily to Colombo.