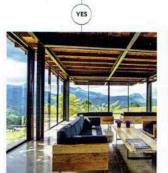


Where to go... FOR A SOUTH-ASIAN STOPOVER

HERE FOR THE SPA?



WANT A FULL OVERHAUL?

SANTANI Sri Lanka

Winding your way up through endless, jungle-smothered hills, you wonder if you're ever going to make it to Santani, a glossy new wellness resort near Kandy.

But maybe that's the point: the journey reminds you just how nail-bitingly impatient you really are. Because when you finally reach it and bump along the rocky track to see purple lotuses floating in pools and birds flitting about

the trees and misty hills in the distance, you immediately feel all stress melt away. You unwind when you walk into your room - a glass-fronted cube on stilts, cantilevered over green slopes, which makes you feel like you're sleeping in the air. And

again when you step into the spa, - open to the valley on one side, with a plunge pool - for a mindbending ayurvedic massage, watching the deer in the garden, right by your head. It's so relaxing you could probably roll down that long hill on the way

home and not care a jot if asked to run back up again. BOOK IT Double, from £380. full board (santani.lk).



NIRAAMAYA RETREATS SURYA SAMUDRA Kerala, India

On a hillside shaded by mango trees sits Niraamaya Surya Samudra - a cluster of pretty, 150-year-old teak bungalows with terracotta tiles, rainforest showers and hammocks that swing lazily in the breeze. The whole place inspires idleness - whether you're snoozing beneath a beach umbrella, floating in the pool that blends with the green-blue ocean or eating wood-fired pizza in the palm-dappled light of the beach bar. Craving activity? Book in for sunrise yoga, followed by a breakfast of masala pancakes and local coffee (with coconut milk and palm sugar – dangerously addictive). Struggling to switch off? The ayurvedic massages, using spice poultices, are bonecrunchingly good, leaving you floppy as a newborn kitten. Supper

sleep of a thousand years, to the sound of the waves below. BOOK IT Double, from £116, incl. breakfast (relaischateaux.com).

is Alleppey crab curry, with hot,

flaky naan and cold Kingfisher

beer. Then head for your muslin-

swathed bed - you'll sleep the



KK BEACH Sri Lanka

The road to Galle is hot, dusty and frenetic, with cars and mopeds (and the odd cow) all beeping and bumping their way into the walled city. But step through the door of KK Beach and all that falls away. It's like the hotel has a protective mantle around it - you won't hear a single toot or shout (or moo). Everything you see calms the nerves: cool white walls and polished floors; huge pieces of Sri Lankan art in different shades of blue. And ahead, through open glass doors, are the still pool, the leaning palm trees and the Indian Ocean, right there. With only six rooms two are penthouses, all are vast the pool is rarely occupied. Either lie on a sunlounger or organise a day out; the hotel arranges transport to Galle, where you can spend a not-insubstantial amount of money on gorgeous homewares, or take the shuttle to sister hotel Kahanda Kanda. As night falls, walk along the beach, guided by the moonlight - just watch out for turtles and their eggs. BOOK IT Double, from £230, incl.

breakfast (kkbeach.com).



NEED A BEACH?

BRUNTON BOATYARD Kerala, India

With its Dutch-Portuguese-British architecture and brilliant white façade, Brunton Boatyard - so named because it once housed the ships that set sail to Europe, their hulls loaded with tea and spices - cuts a fine figure in Fort Cochin. It whispers of a bygone India, but it's no pastiche. Walls have vanished, replaced by views across a grassy courtyard; lengths of linen sway from the rafters, beating back the hot breeze. The teak doors, cane armchairs and four-posters (so high you need a step to reach them) are the real deal - but there are solar panels too (power cuts, swiftly dealt with, make for a romantic dinner), and a lagoon-green pool at the water's edge, where you can spot the famous Chinese fishing nets. Their cargo - fat prawns, tilapia, mullet - makes an appearance in your evening curry. A bottle of (surprisingly good) local wine, and sleep will come easily... **BOOK IT** Ampersand Travel

(ampersandtravel.com) offers seven nights, from £1,900 per person, incl. breakfast, internal flights and transfers.