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REVIEW: Wild Coast Tented Lodge, Yala National Park - home of the Sri Lankan safari



By Sarah Hedley Hymers | June 26, 2018



Wild Coast Tented Lodge tastefully combines the feel of a wilderness safari with the comforts of a luxury hotel

Bouncing along the dusty tracks of Sri Lanka's Yala National Park, you can never be sure of what you might find around the corner. Most visitors are rooting for a glimpse of the park's more elusive residents, the Sri Lankan leopard. Boasting one of the world's largest concentrations of these big cats, Sri Lanka's second largest park offers pretty good odds for seeing one in its natural habitat.

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On Safari

As the trend towards eco-conscious travel grows, wildlife safaris form the highlight for most staying at Wild Coast Tented Lodge, the latest edition to the Yala southeastern coastline, a jungle escape full of creature-comforts. With the option of two game drives a day (one at dusk and one later in the afternoon), off-road vehicles whisk explorers to the quietest corners of Yala National Park, while expert guides talk through the behaviour and characteristics of resident flora and fauna, including wild elephants, sloth bears and those elusive Sri Lankan leopards. Without noticing, hours pass aboard the travelling classroom as passengers settle into awe.



SRI LANKAN LEOPARDS IN YALA NATIONAL PARK

It's obvious from the get-go that the protection of the wilderness, and everything that inhabits it, plays at the heart of this hotel. Wild Coast Tented Lodge displays an unwavering commitment to sustainability and conservation, from recycling water used on the resort for landscaping and the use of solar power to the establishment of a conservation station dedicated to monitoring and protecting vulnerable wildlife within the surrounding area, the first of its kind in Yala.



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Location

Until recently, the choice of accommodations in the Yala wilderness had been limited. Opened in November 2017, Wild Coast Tented Lodge joins a pocket of new luxury hotels in the area, pioneering an eco-approach to luxury. It's the third luxury property in the Resplendent Ceylon collection, which is owned by the Fernando family, Sri Lanka's most prominent tea producers and founders of Dilmah Tea. The main draw to Wild Coast Tented Lodge is its location; just a short drive from the main entrances of Yala National Park, bordering the Indian Ocean.



WILD COAST TENTED LODGE

Yala National Park is the most visited and second largest national park in Sri Lanka, comprising five blocks. Top tip: one and three are among the two most popular for sightings of leopards and elephants, and – an inevitable consequence – there are more sightings of tourists here, too.



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"These stylish pods channel a mod-safari vibe"

Accommodation

Wild Coast's Cocoon Suites tread new ground with their unique colonial-

expedition-inspired exteriors, cleverly providing panoramic jungle views from the glass facades. All 28 pods are spaciouly arranged to guarantee privacy; each sits above ground, linked only by lined pathways to allow nature to roam around them. These stylish pods channel a mod-safari vibe, kitted out with handmade copper bathtubs and sumptuous four-poster beds.



POD GOALS

Ideal for balmy evenings spent watching sunsets, there are four secluded beach-facing Cocoons that offer private decking and plunge pools. A further 16 pods cluster around water holes, where sightings of wild boar, water buffalo and grey langurs are almost guaranteed. There's also a family cluster of Cocoons with adjoining pods, offering families with teens the extended space and convenience of two bedrooms and two bathrooms.



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Food and Drink

Camouflaged in jungle greenery, the resort's open-air bamboo-clad bar and restaurant sits at the heart of Wild Coast Tented Lodge, wrapping around the hotel's free-form pool. To avoid the one-stop monotony, menus change regularly and offer a wide selection of authentic Sri Lankan cuisine, as well as refined international dishes. The à la carte breakfast menu will appease guests with healthy (fresh fruits, granola, omelets) and indulgent (fresh pastries, breakfast dosa with Sri Lankan curries) desirables. For something a little bit more special, dine al fresco on the neighbouring sand dunes and watch as the sun sets over the Indian Ocean.

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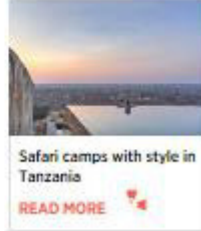


THE RESORT'S BAR AND RESTURANT

Facilities

The addition of the spa, designed to mimic the surrounding terrain with terracotta tones and bold prints, brings the benefits of treatments that make the most of Sri Lankan ingredients, Ceylon tea and Ceylon cinnamon. Used in oils and scrubs, they energise tired hides.

Doubles from AED3,268 (\$890) per night on a fully inclusive basis, to include daily breakfast, lunch, cream tea, dinner, beverages including house wines and spirits, two daily game drives, WiFi and taxes, based on double occupancy. Wild Coast Tented Lodge, Palatupana, Yala 82600, Sri Lanka; +94 11 774 5730; reservations@resplendentceylon.com; resplendentceylon.com/wildcoastlodge-yala/



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