



SPA GUIDE

SANTANI, SRI LANKA

Santani, Kandy, Sri Lanka

by HARRIET COMPSTON

In brief

Jungle escape high up in the hills

The lowdown

Set among 48 acres of tea plantations and lush vegetation including every fruit tree imaginable (mango, avocado, guava and mandarin), this place is about getting in touch with your inner self. Founded by Sri Lankan Vickum Nawagamuwage, who was educated at Harvard before being snapped up by Deloitte, Santani is the hardcore Ayurvedic big hitter that [Sri Lanka](#) really needed. Twenty architecturally edgy villas slotted seamlessly into the landscape sit upon exposed steel pillars with naturally finished cement walls and timber flooring. It's all very simple, almost stark, and inspired by the country's Buddhist meditation caves. Best of all is the view, maxed out by floor-to-ceiling windows, of the spectacular Knuckles mountain range. Fresh breezes replace air-conditioning and there's no Wi-Fi (don't panic, a modem can be delivered to your room).

Head to the spa, tucked into the hillside, and let the switching-off continue. Everything is covered: weight loss, anti-ageing, joint pain, exhaustion, trauma and depression. Following an assessment by Dr Sreekanth to determine your dosha, gear up for a tailored programme. The full-body massage, Choorna Swedana, and the tension-alleviating Udwarthanam are deliciously soothing, but don't think you get away that easily - Sneha Vasti, an oil enema, and the nasal-cleansing treatment, Nasyam, are also on the agenda (ask for Beenitha, who calms nerves in seconds). There's also a thermal-salt bath that is excellent for skin conditions.

Yoga ticks all the boxes: Gillian has every type up her sleeve, teaching ashtanga, restorative and yin yoga. The pavilion is ideal for meditation, but ask to have a session beside the sparkling waters of the Hulu Ganga, a half-hour walk from the retreat. Thanks to executive chef Wajira Gamage, a Relais & Château veteran who spent 16 years in France, there's no deprivation when it comes to the dosha-specific menus - just super-fresh, healthy food made with seasonal produce from the local farm. When it's time to go home, you will be sleek and sparkly-eyed with spirits soaring. Santani's aim is to restore balance, and with the help of the charming staff, it's achieved with aplomb. Excitingly, plans for a European outpost are in the offing.

BOOK NOW

INSIDER TIP

It's a long drive from the airport, so get the seaplane from Colombo to Kandy and enjoy a thrilling view of the Hill Country, plus the odd elephant, before landing on Mahaweli Ganga river.

BEST FOR

[A Total Escape](#), [Weight loss](#), [Anti-ageing](#), [Holistic Healing](#)

BOOK IT

Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; healingholidays.com/condenast) can arrange a 7 night Detox programme from £3,149 per person sharing, including flights, transfers and full board accommodation.