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Robb Report



Anantara Phuket Layan Resort & Spa has won Robb Report China Magazine's Best Resort for 2016 in their annual Best of the Best Awards.

Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas placed #6 in the global luxury brand rankings in 2016 as presented by Review Pro, which conducted an independent survey of global luxury hotel companies and their guests to conclude their rankings. Anantara received a guest satisfaction with rooms score of 93.1%.



Condé Nast Traveler USA - Reader's Choice Awards 2016

Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas
No. 2 Best Resort in the World





Condé Nast Traveler USA - Reader's Choice Awards 2016

Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas
No. 1 Resort in the Indian Ocean

Anantara Qasr al Sarab Desert Resort
No. 2 Best Resort in the Middle East

Anantara the Palm Dubai
No. 3 Best Resort in the Middle East



Condé Nast Traveler USA - Reader's Choice Awards 2016

Top Resorts in the World

- #2 - Anantara Kihavah Villas Resort
- #36 - Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort
- #44 - Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort

Top Resorts in Asia

- #6 - Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort
- #9 - Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort
- #10 - Anantara Hua Hin Resort
- #22 - Anantara Uluwatu Resort
- #23 - Anantara Si Kao Resort
- #30 - Anantara Chiang Mai Resort

Top Hotels in Southern Asia

- #17 - Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel

Top Resorts in the Middle East

- #2 - Qasr al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara
- #3 - Anantara the Palm Dubai

Top Resorts in the Indian Ocean

- #1 - Anantara Kihavah Villas Resort
- #5 - PER AQUUM Niyama Resort
- #8 - Anantara Veli Resort



Condé Nast Traveler Russia - Reader's Choice Awards 2016

PER AQUUM Huvafen Fushi
Best Beach Hotel





TIVOLI VICTORIA - PORTUGAL

Best European Hotel and 4th Best Worldwide Hotel in the “Relaxation & Spa” Category
Travelers Choice 2010 by TripAdvisor



TIVOLI MARINA VILAMOURA - PORTUGAL

Best Golf Resort in Portugal - Today's Golfer magazine UK, Consumer Travel Awards 2016



A SELECTION OF RECENT AWARDS & PRIZES

RECOGNITION OF TIVOLI EXCELLENCE

TIVOLI CHAIN

- Best Hotel Chain by Publituris trade publication – Portugal Travel Awards, in 2009 and 2010
- Turismo de Portugal Award for Quality of Service, for the “Experience More” concept, in 2011

TIVOLI HOTELS IN PORTUGAL

TIVOLI MARINA VILAMOURA

- 2015 Best in Stay Winner – Orbitz Worldwide Best in Stay 2015
- Best Golf Resort in Portugal, Today’s Golfer magazine UK, Consumer Travel AWARDS for 2016

TIVOLI MARINA PORTIMÃO

- “Algarve Explorers” The Most Friendly Hotel in the Algarve 2013

TIVOLI LISBOA

- Elected as one of the best hotels in the Iberian Peninsula - Condé Nast Traveler Reader’s Choice Awards 2015 (USA)

TIVOLI VICTORIA

- Best European Hotel and 4th Best Worldwide Hotel, in the “Relaxation & Spa” category, according to “Travelers Choice 2010” research, by TripAdvisor

TIVOLI HOTELS IN BRAZIL

TIVOLI SÃO PAULO-MOFARREJ

- Best Hotel in Brazil in 2010 and 2012 by “Brasil Travel News” magazine
- “Brazil’s Leading Hotel Suite” Prize in the World Travel Awards 2014
- Best Hotel of the Year, Cool Awards 2015, Cool Magazine

TIVOLI ECORESORT PRAIA DO FORTE

- Best hotel in Brazil, in the category “Leisure”, the awards “The Ten Most Tourism 2011” by Brasil Travel News Magazine
- Best Resort for Families in South America, the World Travel Awards 2012



- Certificate of Excellence awarded to nine Tivoli Hotels in 2015
- Eight Tivoli Hotels inducted into TripAdvisor 2015 “Hall of Fame”



- Seven Tivoli Hotels won Guest Review Awards in 2014



ANANTARA QASR AL SARAB DESERT RESORT

Best Destination Spa in the World - Travel & Leisure South Asia





ANANTARA PEACE HAVEN TANGALLE RESORT

Best New Hotel of the Year: Luxury/Upper Scale Resort Segment







A

AS WE MAKE OUR WAY DOWN THE ROAD LEADING TO Salalah, the smell of earth combines with a spice, resulting in a mystical scent that wafts through the air. Frankincense trees dot the land; first just a handful, but gradually becoming more dense. Then, out of nowhere, herds of camels appear and wait for no one; a hundred or more blocking our path, forcing us to pause our journey and take in the incredible vistas all around us.

We stop, we wait, we watch. I feel transported back in time, to an era when camels were all that roamed these ancient lands. I can't help but imagine myself as a desert nomad, travelling atop one of these creatures, crisscrossing my way through the region in search of respite.

As a modern-day nomad, I feel pretty lucky as we drive to Salalah, a small corner of Oman's south-west coast that for six months every year catches the monsoon on its way to the Indian subcontinent and is transformed into a place flush with green grass, shrubs and trees. A true oasis in an otherwise harsh climate and geography.

My personal oasis for the next couple of days is Oman's newest hotel, Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara, set in this lush slice of the country. The hotel is centred around a three-storey main building, housing the lobby and 30 Premier Sea View Rooms. It's the heart of the resort and overlooks the 88 single-level Pool Villas below, the design a nod to the traditions of an Omani community where one building serves as a meeting point for all the villagers of the area.

Palm trees – 750 of them – partially cover the Pool Villas, some of which have ocean views; others look out toward a lagoon. If you can't choose, book the three-bedroom Royal Beach Villa, which overlooks both. My one-bedroom villa has beach and ocean views, including from the bathroom and the private terrace and pool. Inside, the lounge area is dotted with sofas decorated in fabric typical of a *majlis*. It's easy to

CNT EXCLUSIVE



The 80m infinity pool leads on to the beach and the sea beyond.
Below: View from a one-bedroom, beach-facing pool villa

imagine hanging out there all day, but there's much else to explore.

The property houses three restaurants. Sakalan, meaning "land of frankincense" in Arabic, serves Mediterranean and Arabic cuisine; the outdoor seating area at Al Mina spills out on to the beach for barbeques and shisha. Mekong dishes up authentic Asian food you'd expect from the Anantara brand. For special occasions, the hotel also arranges private dining experiences in unique locations. For one meal, I was escorted to a quiet beach where it was just me, the sound of the waves and delicious food being prepared a few feet away by the resort's chef Gaspare "Sam" Greco. Chef Greco and his team also host Spice Spoon, a cooking class for guests. I spent a fun morning mastering regional specialities like tabouleh, *samke harra*, a spiced fish dish, and sweet fried dumplings called *luqaimat*.

There are plenty of activities that help work up an appetite including water sports such as stand-up paddle boarding, or beach volleyball and football. For children, a fun overnight camping experience involves a bonfire and star-gazing. The hotel also arranges guided tours to nearby attractions such as the Museum of Frankincense and Al Baleed Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, both of which sit just over the lagoon. A short drive away are wadis and waterfalls worth exploring during the rainy season, the Grand Mosque, souks and, of course, green valleys as far as the eye can see.

Much of the landscape in Salalah has remained charmingly unchanged over the years, and the pride that locals take in their homeland is evident. This contentment is understandable with such a winning combination of beaches, mountains, greenery and waterfalls, as well as an abundance of frankincense growing naturally across the plains. Al Baleed Resort is particularly well positioned to give visitors a taste of this life – but with all the comforts they're used to.

Yes, as nomads go, I've been lucky. ☺

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TIME FOR TANGALLE

A luxurious new resort provides the
perfect excuse for exploring this
bucolic corner of Sri Lanka's southern
coast. BY CHRISTOPHER P. HILL

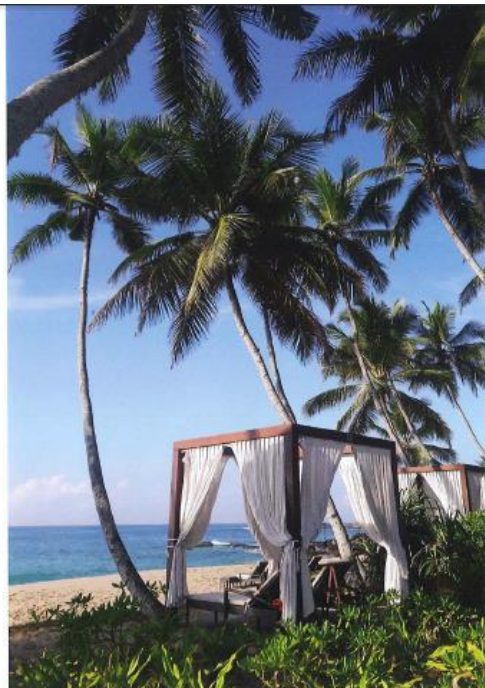


True Blue
The 25-meter
swimming
pool at Anantara
Peace Haven
Tangalle Resort



It's three days until the Sinhala New Year and downtown Tangalle is bustling in anticipation. Loudspeakers pump out pop music and sales promotions, villagers hawk rustic clay pots and braziers on the sidewalks, and the morning vegetable market is in full swing, its tables groaning under a bounty of fresh produce. I'm here with an affable young chef from the nearby Anantara Peace Haven resort to pick up some vegetables for the curries he is going to teach me how to make, but unlike the swirl of sari-clad shoppers around me, I have no idea what I'm looking for. "Anything, anything you like," he tells me. "You can put anything into a Sri Lankan curry and it will be delicious." Ten minutes later I climb back into one of the Anantara's shiny new electric tuk-tuks for the return drive to the resort, a modest haul of okra, green beans, bitter melon, eggplant, and bright-red tomatoes on the seat beside me.

The curries we make during the "Spice Spoons" cooking class that morning are, as promised, delicious. I can take no credit for this. Though I do a bit of chopping and grating, most of my time is spent thoughtfully sipping a glass of chilled Prosecco as the chef explains and executes the preparation of five different curry dishes (one involving the plump tiger prawns we acquired on an earlier foray to Tangalle's fishing pier) and a dynamite coconut sambol. And since I'm his sole student, the resultant feast is mine alone to devour. So I stuff myself—and spend the rest of the afternoon lying in torpor next to my villa's pool like an en-



Ceylon Ease
Above, from left: The interior of a beach villa; cabanas line the sand. Opposite page, from left: Crab curry is among the many dishes made (and devoured) during a Spice Spoons cooking class; villa host and experience guru Karishka Sandanayake posing in the Tangalle countryside.

gorged python. But my appetite for this corner of Sri Lanka has only just been whetted.

Tangalle, a 90-minute drive east of Galle on the island's south coast, is blissfully free of the tourist crowds that fill beaches closer to Colombo. But it isn't exactly terra incognita either. Backpackers and intrepid surfers have long appreciated the area's laid-back charms, as have the cognoscenti who frequent its handful of luxury villas and boutique hotels like the 30-suite Amanwella, which opened way back in 2005. The December debut of the eight-hectare Anantara, however, has put Tangalle firmly on the map.

"This is the future for Sri Lanka," says Tamir Kobrin, the resort's suave, Panama-hatted general manager, as he walks me through the



grounds, where phalanxes of tall palm trees testify to the estate's former life as a coconut plantation. "The beaches around Tangalle are beautiful. Now that the expressway from Colombo goes as far as Matara [an hour's drive away], you'll see a lot of resort development along this coast."

That expressway, the EoI, has cut the traveling time between Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport and Tangalle from six hours to three and a half. For those who still balk at the idea of spending that much time on the road—even in the comfort of one of the Anantara's plush SUVs)—Cinnamon Air, an island-wide seaplane service, can fly you to the lagoon at Dickwella in just 45 scenic minutes, from where it's a short drive to the resort.

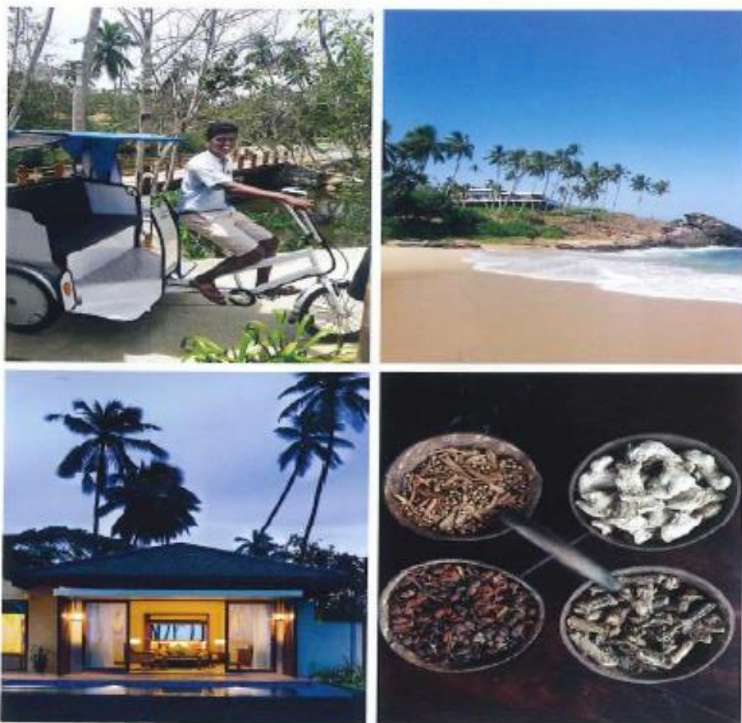
However you get there, the Anantara impresses from the get-go. On arrival, guests are greeted by smiling staff under a pillared portico that leads to a lobby designed to evoke a tra-



The Details

A three-and-a-half hour drive from Colombo, **Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort** (34-47/767-0700; tangalle.anantara.com; doubles from US\$252) is also accessible via seaplane with **Cinnamon Air** (cinnamonair.com), which operates a daily flight to nearby Dickwella.

ditional courtyard house, its blue-tiled reflecting pools flanked by whitewashed colonnades. The breezy lounge area behind overlooks the resort's two-tiered swimming pool and a swath of grassy, palm-studded beachfront, beyond which Indian Ocean waves roll in gently against a sloping stretch of golden sand bookended by rocky protrusions. This view is shared by many of the 152 guest rooms and pool villas, all of which are done up in a pleasant 21st-century colonial style accented by hand-loomed textiles. If, like me, you're lucky enough to snag one of the beach villas at the western end of the property, you'll feel like you have the pandanus-edged seafloor all to yourself, even if the cove next door is shared with a low-key clutch of cabanas and cottages. I spend most of my down time in my pool, reading or gazing out to sea or watching the ubiquitous chipmunk-sized palm squirrels that dart across the grass from tree to tree, their chirping calls mingling



with birdsong and the crash of waves.

Villas also come with the services of a butler—or “host,” as they call them here—and mine is Kanishka Sandaruwan, a genial 29-year-old who, like most of the resort staff, hails from the Tangalle area. Kanishka books my treatment at the standalone spa complex and appears at the appointed time to whisk me hence on one of the resort’s cycle rickshaws. He consults on my dining options, which range from Dining by Design—a selection of private, customizable dinners set up on the beach or elsewhere around the property—to meals at Il Mare, the dramatically perched Italian restaurant whose authenticity is underscored not only by a bevy of imported Mediterranean products, but also by a chef and the maitre d’

The Coast Is Clear
Clockwise from top left: One of the resort’s electric rickshaws; Il Mare, the Italian restaurant, sits on a rocky outcrop above the beach; spices on display in the lobby; a villa at twilight.

who are both Italian. With a recent award from *Wine Spectator* magazine under its belt, it’s one of the finest restaurants in Sri Lanka.

Kanishka also serves as my “experience guru,” advising on local attractions and activities and personally guiding me for a day out in the countryside. There is much to see. Tangalle and its surrounds are an agriculturally rich and diverse area, and our drive takes us past rice paddies, spice gardens, orchards, and even a buffalo paddock where cows are being milked to make curd. We pass Kanishka’s village school and detour along an empty dirt road that traverses a reservoir, halting midway to watch the reflection of clouds move across the water’s still surface. Kanishka tells me it’s one of his favorite spots, and I thank him for sharing it with me. Walking to the base of a giant tamarind tree, he lobs a stick at the branches until one of the pod-like fruits falls to the ground, then peels it open so that I can taste the sweet-sour pulp within. Later, we drop in unannounced on a rope factory, where chugging machines spin coconut fiber into thick, bristling lengths. It’s hardly your standard tourist attraction, but then, that’s the point.

Twenty kilometers north of town, the rock temple of Mulikirigala is the area’s headline attraction, though I have the great granite monolith almost to myself. Little wonder, I think, as I haul myself huffing and puffing up the 500-plus steps to the temple’s intricately frescoed grottos and stupa-crowned summit. Still, the view from the top is reward enough, a vast panorama that stretches across green plains and forested hills all the way back to the coast.

I rise early on my last morning for the drive to the Kalametiya Bird Sanctuary, an expanse of brackish lagoons and mangrove swamps navigable only by canoe or simple pontoon boat. I’m escorted into one of the latter by an Anantara staffer, who comes equipped with binoculars and a well-stocked picnic basket. The sun is still low and orange on the horizon when the boatman pushes his pole against the bank of the lagoon and slides us into the still waters. Over the course of the next two hours, we spot all sorts of birds—egrets, ibises, herons, kingfishers—and hear the calls of many more. In one reed-fringed channel, we drift past a group of wallowing buffalo; in another, gray langur monkeys stare back at us from the branches of a gnarled tree. Except for the occasional bird cry and the low rumble of the surf beyond the lagoon’s sandbar, all is quiet and serene. It’s every bit the peaceful haven as the resort up the road. ♦

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Expect total luxury in the Maldives, where high-end resorts attend to your every need, and then some. Amelia Hungerford discovers what three of the best have to offer.




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DHIGU • MALDIVES
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Just when I feel certain a holiday in the Maldives couldn't get any more lavish, the dhoni pulls away from the jetty at PER AQUUM Huvafen Fushi. The water is still and clear, the entire reef visible through the rippling surface. After the frenzied excitement of feeding the stingrays along the beach, a feeling of calm settles over the passengers as we enjoy canapés, sip wine and watch the changing of the guard between sun and moon.

Huvafen Fushi means 'dream island' in the local language and it is a fitting end to a week of incredible dining and exclusive experiences. I've crossed over impossibly turquoise Maldivian waters, skimming from one atoll to another in search of what defines this island nation through three different resorts.

Thrice as nice

The speedboat cruises into the night, past the neon capital of Malé, and it is only when we arrive at the jetty of Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort – a choral welcome with drums and hand-clapping breaking the silence of the night – that the destination starts to seem real.

The resort's 110 villas exude a feeling of tropical exoticism. Rich woods feature throughout and the bathroom in the beach suites is surrounded with lush vegetation. While I don't get a chance to try the enormous bath, I make good use of the outdoor shower, looking up to the palms swaying above.

In addition to four unique dining venues, guests at Dhigu also have the option to use the facilities at adults-only sister resort, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort. Among its many dining options is the Japanese restaurant, Origami, home to the island's teppan and the utensil-wielding chef, Garib. Lunch here is an exciting mix of Japanese and Maldivian fresh produce, including plump lobster and creamy snow fish.

While Dhigu has its own overwater Anantara Spa, I choose an afternoon of indulgence at Veli's Sundāri Ayurvedic Spa, where ancient medical wisdom offers a holistic approach to wellbeing. Two of its five treatment rooms are dedicated to Ayurvedic therapies and I opt for a soothing Abyhanga massage with liberal amounts of warm oil.

At night I dine under the stars, feasting on everything from pizza to lobster to dessert pancakes at my request. Anantara's chefs have painstakingly made my culinary dreams come true and it is a testament to the lengths they will go to accommodate a guest's desires.



Chill and play

To reach PER AQUUM Niyama in the Dhaalu Atoll, I take to the air for a 40-minute seaplane flight over aqua-ringed islands. Buggies swiftly whisk guests to their rooms for an indulgent welcome in the form of a foot-cleansing ritual. The in-room popcorn machine is a hit with all ages and the homemade ice-cream is restocked daily.

I am staying on Play, the new sister island to Chill unveiled in February. As well as being home to 48 new villas, Play encourages guests to dine among the treetops at Nest, revel in layers of aquatic shades and Mediterranean-style dining at BLU, and let the little ones run wild at Explorers, the Maldives' most

exciting kids' club complete with pint-sized kitchen and a water playground.

My adventure begins in a water playground of sorts with a subaquatic lunch. Six metres under the waves lies the world's first underwater nightclub, Subsix. Following its makeover in May, this chic aquarium now offers dining, private champagne breakfasts and bespoke experiences. Fish drift past the floor-to-ceiling glass windows, while inside, chandeliers resemble coral, shells drip from the ceiling and textured chairs covered in spongy spines mimic an anemone's tendrils.

Back on land, the decision to Chill or Play is never easy. Kickboxing, high-speed thrills such as seabobbing and

relaxation at Lime Spa are all tempting prospects, but I eschew all of these options to relish the view from the two-bedroom Family Beach Pavilion. This marble-floored residence is the height of island luxury, with a sunken lounge, nanny's room and a private spa room.

The Coral Garden is just a short boat ride away and makes for an ideal snorkelling destination. We spot a Hawksbill turtle on the edge of the reef before continuing out to the edge of the lagoon. A sandbank emerges from the turquoise water, gleaming white with Niyama's signature red umbrellas. Champagne is waiting as we jump off the bow. When the boat disappears, there is no one around but us, living



a tropical island dream with beach beanbags and picnic bento boxes filled with fresh sashimi.

I dine that night in a treehouse at Nest. Its pods of tables are linked by wooden walkways creaking with the rhythm of the old banyans but the cuisine is perhaps even more inventive: the sashimi platter arrives in an ice sphere, shimmering in a glacial palace. Dining at Tribal, on the other hand, is all about the meat – this pan-African restaurant with South American influences is earthy and rich. All the tantalising cuisine is courtesy of Australian-born executive chef Geoffrey Clark.

Dream island

After just two days exploring Niyama, I make the journey north to its sister in the North Malé Atoll, PER AQUUM Huvafen Fushi. This intimate isle of 44 bungalows is the quintessential luxury island destination. Its lagoon views are

endless, melting into infinity-edged pools, but look beyond the surface and you'll also discover the world's first underwater spa at Lime, a saltwater pool perched at the lagoon's edge, fresh and light cuisine over the water at Raw, and an extraordinary array of encounters with marine life.

Each night, local stingrays gather on the beach. Brave souls can join marine biologist, Mohamed Hamid, in the water as he feeds them, but I choose to stay in the shallows, squealing whenever a ray's velvet fin brushes over my foot.

I wander by lantern-light over the sandy paths to UMBAR, staying for a drink and a canapé of smoked salmon and caviar before following the stairs down to Vinum, eight metres below the surface. Some 5200 wines adorn the walls of this underground cellar, where we devour a beautifully paired meal around a table in the heart of the room.

Rolling with the sumptuous feast, we head to Lime for a SpaQuarium experience. Once more, I descend into the underwater treatment rooms, although the view is rather different by night. With black-light torches we peer into the depths. Corals that were pastel in the sunlight are now fluoro in a magnificent show of bioluminescence. ♦

Travel file

Accommodation

www.anantara.com
niyama.peraquum.com
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Getting there

Singapore Airlines flies to Malé via Singapore. Singapore Airlines Holidays can arrange a stopover in the city. www.singaporeair.com
www.siaholidays.com.au
 Your resort can arrange transfers from Malé International Airport via seaplane or water limousine, depending on its location.

Information

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