

ISLE *Be* THERE

WHAT BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE YOUR LOVE THAN WITH A ROMANTIC ISLAND HONEYMOON? EMIRATES BRIDE SCOURS THE EARTH TO FIND THE BEST PLACES TO GET WRECKED

CAPE WELIGAMA

LOCATION: Galle, Sri Lanka
TIME TO DESTINATION: 4hrs 15min
FLIGHTS: Emirates Airline has three daily direct flights to Colombo. There are private transfers for the two and a half hour drive to the hotel

With its diverse landscapes of breezy mountains, bountiful plantations, fascinating world heritage sights and some of the most immaculate beaches you'll ever step foot upon, Sri Lanka dishes up dollops of romance with a side order of adventure. At Cape Weligama, the newest member of Sri Lanka's southern coast's portfolio of luxury resorts, you can appreciate the island's rugged scenery without even having to leave the 12 acre site as here everything is offered on tap. Built as it is on a jutting peninsula, the views work their way into the 'not to be deleted' section of your memory bank forever. In fact, once you sit yourself down to lunch at the edge of the cliff and drink in the panoramic views, it is incredibly difficult

WORDS: LYNSEY STEVEN

to wrench yourself away.

From here you can admire the cluster-like arrangement of the 40 villas and suites – designed by Asia's most talked about architect, Lek Bunnag – the prismatic gardens, the titanium yellow beaches on either side of the headland and the crescent-shaped pool with the bar beneath it. There's also a separate family pool – on top of the private pools shared amongst some of the villas.

The second property for Resplendent Ceylon hotels after Ceylon Tea Trails located in the mountainous interior (a 20-minute seaplane flight over tea country connects the two sister properties), as with Tea Trails the chefs at Cape Weligama are committed to high-end food. Breakfasts include fresh fruit platters, pastries and bread that can compete with (and beat) some of Paris' most celebrated patisseries, followed by your choice of eggs. Be sure to try the buffalo curd (similar to Greek yoghurt) with palm treacle. Lunches and dinners feature fresh, wholesome western and fragrantly

spiced Sri Lankan dishes with plenty of succulent seafood options. Two meals a day along with premium drinks are included in your board making this a paperless stay – so much more civilised!

Interiors are bright and breezy with the blue, white and yellow colour scheme of the villas lending itself perfectly to the upmarket house in the Hamptons look – with a local twist courtesy of the art and craftwork from communities Cape Weligama's charitable foundation have adopted. It's not just the guests that the family focuses on: a cut of all profits goes to their foundation helping those affected by the 2004 tsunami and the civil war which ended in 2009.

Activities range from surfing lessons, scuba diving, whale watching (in season) and lake kayaking to rice paddy bicycling and elephant safaris – Sri Lanka accounts for seven per cent of the world's elephant population. They can even arrange leopard safaris for the wild at heart. Then again, you may prefer to pull up a lounge

on your shaded veranda with a pot of the freshly brewed single origin Ceylon tea for which the isle is famed. Nowhere in the world do they manage to combine serene simplicity with sublime splendour with such aplomb.

THE EXTRA MILE: You may feel as though you're stranded far away from anything, located as you are on top of a precipice with miles and miles of sea before you, but that doesn't mean you won't benefit from highly skilled service – many of the butlers here have cut their cloth in the UAE's best hotels, so they know a thing or two about looking after you.

ESSENTIALS: Scott Dunn offer bespoke tailor-made itineraries to Sri Lanka from Dhs 12,140 per person based on two people sharing for three nights including two return Emirates flights from Dubai, private transfers and experiences at scottdunn.com or call 800 035 703 722 capeweligama.com emirates.com ➤

ONE&ONLY HAYMAN ISLAND

LOCATION: Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia

TIME TO DESTINATION: 14 hours plus an internal flight and a luxury yacht transfer to Hayman Island.

FLIGHTS: Qantas fly from Dubai to Sydney daily. From there, it's a one-hour internal flight directly to Hayman Island where the resort will transfer you to the Great Barrier Reef either by luxury yacht or private helicopter.

There's a moment when you arrive at One&Only Hayman Island when every part of your being senses it has arrived in an otherworldly paradise. It begins with the luxury yacht transfer from Hamilton Island, the gateway to Australia's jaw-dropping Great Barrier Reef, builds to a crescendo as you are gently ushered across a palm-fringed shore to a romantic beach villa – complete with open air bar, outdoor shower and private plunge pool – and then peaks as you take in the watery

turquoise vista from your floor to ceiling glass doors. A dewy-skinned and tousled-haired Christy Turlington (a One&Only ambassador of sorts) beckons you from the villa's flat screen TV as she frolics on an impossibly dreamy beach with a delectable male admirer and then you realise, you're living this dream.

Nestled at the northernmost point of Australia's Whitsunday archipelago, One&Only Hayman Island has recently benefitted from a complete refurbishment and luxury upgrade. The result is heady combination of sophisticated elegance and laid back Palm Springs beach vibe, making this the ideal honeymoon destination for couples seeking a five-star shipwrecked experience.

Guests can choose from a range of accommodation including the stunning beach villas, one or two-bedroom suites or One&Only penthouses which include the three-bedroom Owner's Penthouse and the stylish two-bedroom Diane von Furstenberg Penthouse.

There are several dining options ranging from the casually chic poolside grill, On the Rocks, to the elegant Fire – the resort's signature restaurant where the Victor Churchill salt-crusted tomahawk

steak for two is theatre on a plate.

While pool lazing and stargazing are encouraged, guests with a more adventurous curiosity can snorkel, scuba dive or charter a helicopter to explore the Whitsundays and the stunning underwater marine culture of the Great Barrier Reef.

There's a Bastien Gonzalez PEDI:MANI:CURE Studio located within the resort and honeymooners will certainly want to indulge in an Ocean Dreaming massage – a heavenly experience where your treatment room is the ocean itself.

THE EXTRA MILE: Charter one of the resort's two choppers for a trip to Whitsunday Island, with a deserted beach boasting the world's whitest sand. Resort staff will pack you a gourmet picnic basket loaded with chilled bubbles. After setting down directly on the shoreline, your pilot will pop up a sun brolly, roll out some towels and leave you to kick back and enjoy your own private party for two.

ESSENTIALS: Exclusive Travel Group arranges bespoke VIP travel and curated honeymoons at exclusivetravelgroup.com or call +64 75793320. Room rates start at Dh4,227 per night, oneandonlyhaymanisland.com.au, Qantas.com



THE H RESORT

LOCATION: Beau Vallon Beach, Seychelles

TIME TO DESTINATION:

4hrs 36min

FLIGHTS: Emirates Airline has daily direct flights to Mahé, Seychelles.

WORDS: JANELLE SALANGSANG

There's a good reason the likes of the Jolie Pitts and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge make the Seychelles their holiday destination of choice. A year-round honeymoon hotpot, UAE residents are better placed than most – just over four hours to be precise – to take advantage of this Indian Ocean

idyll, meaning you could even flit in for the weekend – but trust us, you'll want to stay longer.

Sitting on three kilometres of glistening white sand surrounded by mountains, visitors are met with a wonderful sense of space and serenity from the moment they arrive at the H Resort. The stunning Beach villas, which all feature private plunge pools, are the epitome of island chic. The H is also home to Trader Vic's, famous for its Polynesian cuisine, exotic cocktails and fun decor. Step into the Sesel Spa where expert therapists take a holistic approach to wellness with the finest techniques and treatments

from the east and west. Whether it's romance or adventure you're after – be sure to take a private boat trip – the resort is perfectly equipped to cater to guests from all over the world – with a truly personalised touch.

THE EXTRA MILE: Ask the chef for a private lesson to learn how to whip up a sublime Seychellois Octopus curry. Not only will you enhance your culinary skills, you'll be equipped with a signature recipe that will take your dinner parties to new levels.

ESSENTIALS: For bookings visit seychelles.h-hotel.com or call +248 438 7000, Room rates start at Dhs 1,950 ➤



KEMPINSKI SEYCHELLES RESORT

LOCATION: Baie Lazare

Nestled at the south end of Mahe in Baie Lazare, the white sandy beaches here were made for couples to intertwine their footsteps in the sand.

Rooms and suites all feature spectacular views of the coastline and verdant greenery. This hotel was made for couples who don't like to sit still for too long with activities ranging from hill trekking to scuba diving, surfing, tennis,

yoga and cultural dance lessons.

For a taste of local cuisine, be sure to dine at their signature restaurant L'Indochine where your taste buds will be taken on an exotic journey – and one you'll want to repeat.

Marine and land conservation projects are active in the Seychelles, with both locals and the resorts involved in doing their bit to protect the natural resources, including indigenous flora and wildlife like the rare black parrot, Aldabra giant tortoises and one of the largest seabird colonies in the world. There are hundreds of uninhabited, unspoiled and

unbelievable beach-lined islands – a total of 41 tropical havens surrounded by 74 low-lying coral clusters which play host to over 1,000 species of tropical fish. Visit the Seychelles Tourism board at seychelles.travel for more information.

THE EXTRA MILE: The spa at the Kempinski – which comes complete with an Olympic sized swimming pool – offers a couple's massage in a room overlooking the gardens. Not to be missed.

ESSENTIALS: For bookings visit kempinski.com/Seychelles or call +248 4 386 666, Room rates start at Dhs 1,250 ■