



BEACHSIDE *bliss*

Tempus checks in to the Sen Wellness
Sanctuary in Sri Lanka

Words: Vineetha Menon

The path to wellness is never easy, and neither is the makeshift road that leads to Sen Wellness Sanctuary. Located about an hour's drive from Mattala airport in the south, scenes of Sri Lankan town life whizz past, giving way to rolling green landscapes dotted with wildlife. Following a mud path that weaves next to wild trees, you'll soon arrive – albeit a bit apprehensively – at a giant colonial-style wooden door. It opens to paradise.

Founder Dr Sam Kankanamge designed the Sen Wellness Sanctuary to be a place to nourish the mind, body and soul. The talented osteopath, who left Sri Lanka when he was just 18, is already a celebrated name in London. Today, drawing on his professional background, love for his country and a strong network of family and friends, his homeland sanctuary is a dream come true.

Voted one of the top 20 yoga retreats in the world by *The Times*, the chic sanctuary remains untouched by growing praise: a name whispered in awe among holistic-minded circles. It's nestled in a pristine national park and its premises boast a protected turtle nesting beach as well as picture-perfect lagoon. With a giant statue of Buddha at the courtyard and a curiously circular layout, the sanctuary is as impressive as the setting. The seafresh breeze fills every rounded nook and cranny, including the communal dining area and expansive yoga shala with inspiring views overlooking lush treetops, swinging monkeys and a flurry of birds.

The sanctuary's luxury cabanas, designed by Brazilian-American architect Adriana Arbex, are a lesson in harmonious nature-inspired minimalism. With charming thatched roofs, the cabanas also feature private terraces bathed in sunlight, bathrooms that are open to the elements and a zen-like decor that champions local craftsmanship and materials. »



Once guests check-in, they schedule a consultation with the in-house Ayurvedic doctor, Dr Harshi. A powerhouse of knowledge, this demure woman plays the role of medical psychic and agony aunt perfectly. Ayurveda is a centuries-old science that originated in India, literally translating from Sanskrit as the 'science of life'. Key concepts of the ancient healthcare tradition refer to a sense of interconnectedness, body constitutions (dosha) and existing lifestyles that collectively influence a person's health and wellbeing.

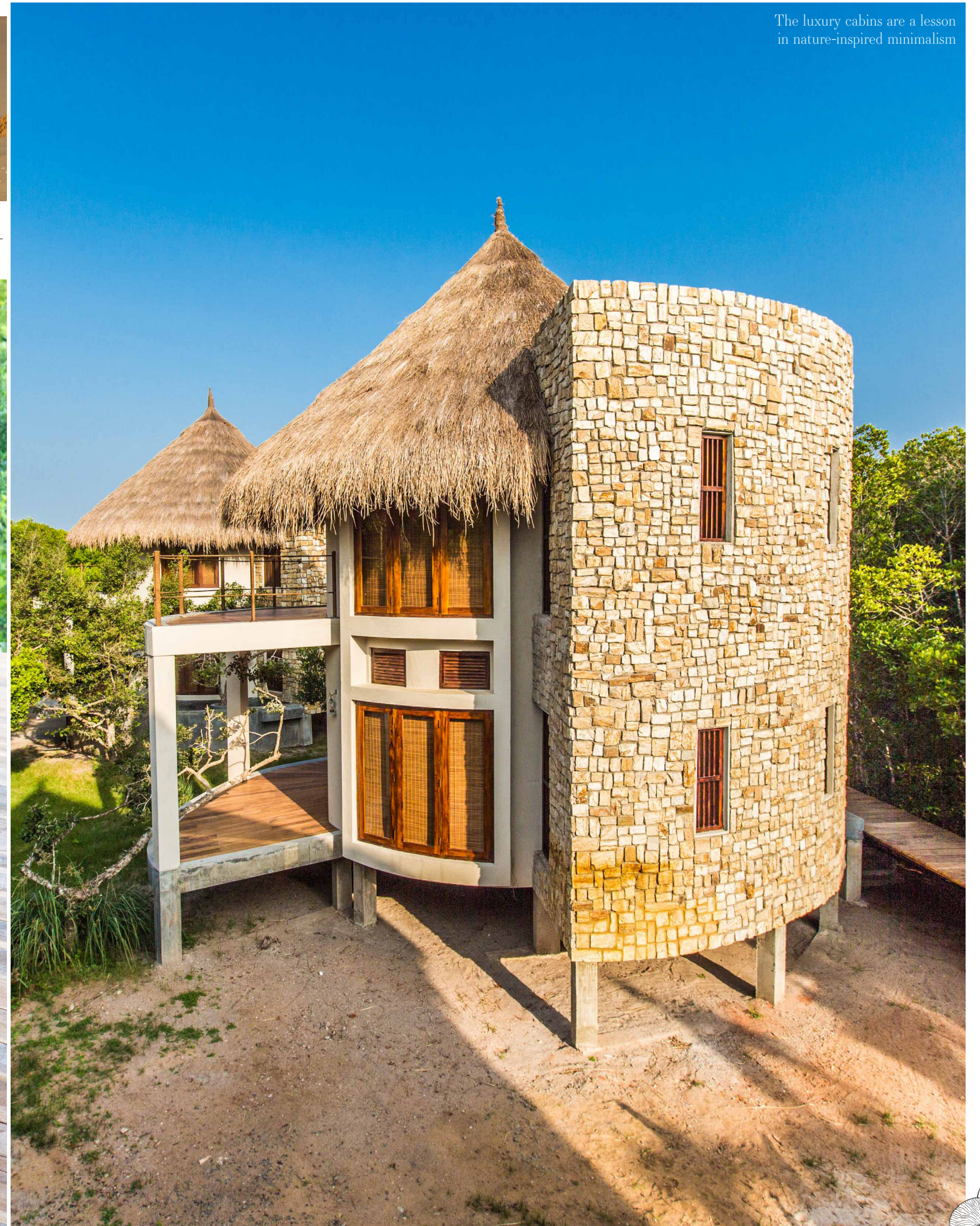
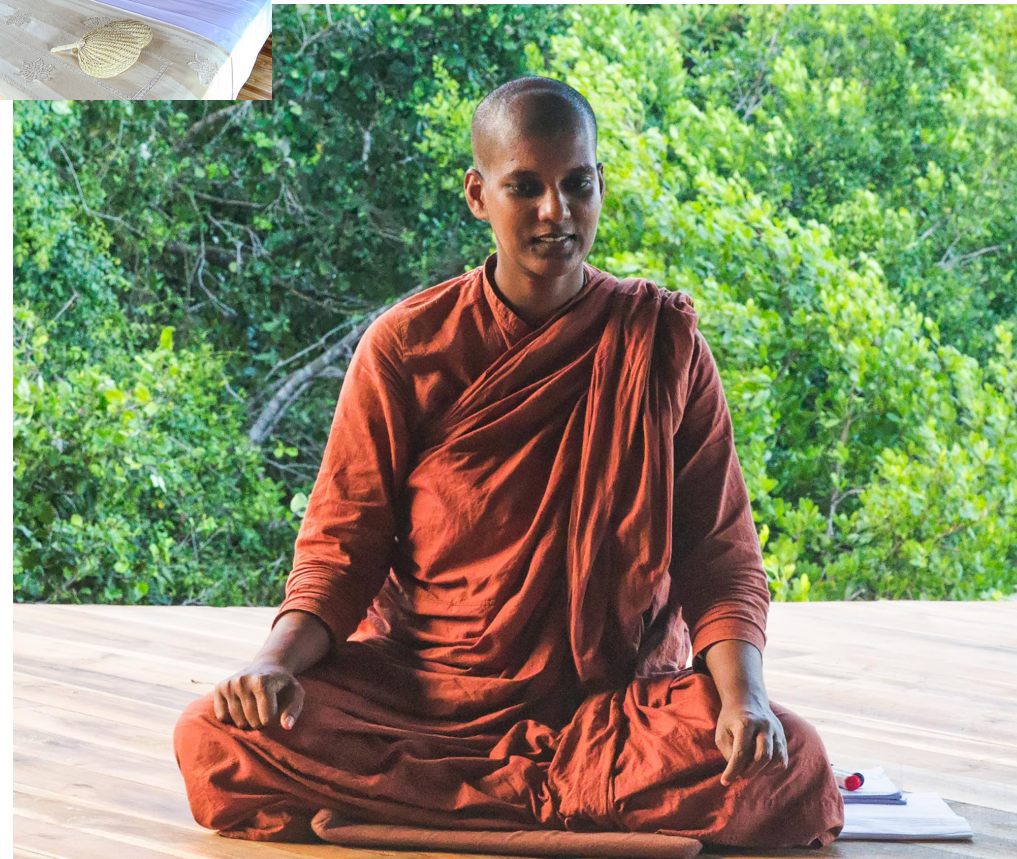
Coming from a long line of healers, Dr Harshi is able to pinpoint ailments in a few minutes, and offers herbal-based solutions and life advice with such remarkable ease that it's forgivable to think this is all one big new-age prank. Sure, the daily herbal medicines range from being quite palatable to downright confusing. Yes, the Ayurvedic 'treatments' can involve massages in the buff. And, of course, there is a one-love hippy vibe through every yoga session. But, make no mistake, this sanctuary will change your life.

In between Ayurvedic treatments, dining on fabulous Sri Lankan fare and twice-daily yoga sessions, stays are interspersed with visiting nearby towns, watching turtles, taking cooking lessons, and letting the healing power of nature work its magic. You'll meet people from all corners of the globe – some who are experienced yogis and others who consider downward dog an instruction for pets. They are all here to slow down, reflect and re-energise.

On my first night at Sen Wellness Sanctuary, we all nervously bonded over a love of life and coconut-based stirfrys. As the days passed, we were all smiling and sharing stories as we dipped in and out of treatment rooms, glowing with vibrancy – and a lot of herbal oil. By the end of our stay, we were all inexplicably united.

Strip away the stunning setting and luxurious cabanas, and you're still left with a truly life-enhancing experience. 🕉

senwellnesssanctuary.com



The luxury cabins are a lesson in nature-inspired minimalism

