

PRESS RELEASE: Sri Lanka's Other Half

Guide book to Central, North and Eastern Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's 'Love' triangle

Travel with 'Sri Lanka's Other Half' and you won't disappear!

OK, so when it comes to travel these days everyone's been everywhere and seen everything, right? Wrong. Pick up a copy of Sri Lanka's Other Half, a ground-breaking guidebook published today, and you'll be catapulted into a whole new world of adventure.

Discovering psychedelic kovils (Hindu temples) that cling precariously to rugged cliffs, ancient jungle ruins, pristine rainforests, the largest elephant gathering in the world and huge freshwater mangrove lagoons, this book reveals the other half of Sri Lanka, truly one of the most exciting new places to be in Asia right now.

Powerful photographs of the people that make each of the places so unforgettable and unique, bring the book to life, and as soon as you open it, you'll find yourself drawn into an exhilarating trip through fascinating areas that almost no traveller has seen for 30 years because of Sri Lanka's bitter civil war with the Tamil Tigers.

Get immersed in this book and you'll instantly want to jump onto the back of a motorbike or into a car, van, bus, train or three-wheeler and head north! But this is not your usual guidebook, simply telling you where to go and what to see. As every traveller knows, it's not just about the places, but about the people you meet along the way. Inspirational interviews with local people give an insight into what the major attractions mean from a local perspective. Enjoy reading the exciting highlights, whether it's about a beach hut miles from anywhere, where just off shore, up to a thousand spinner dolphins fly through the air or in places like Batticaloa how fish will sing to you through the night. The book's double-page guide sections will reveal not only how to get to these secret spots, but also help you to find quirky places to eat and incredible sites to visit, from hot healing springs to the islands off Jaffna.

Travel photojournalist Juliet Coombe and Daisy Perry co-writer from bestselling guidebook *Around The Fort in 80 Lives* set off on their epic road journey to record their experiences as the first tourists and guidebook writers into these extraordinary and until recently, undocumented parts of the country. On roads less travelled, they competed in Trincomalee market with herds of spotted deer, found alien-sized jellyfish in Batticaloa, original Jaffna horse carvers in their traditional workshops in Jaffna, and even artists cashing in on the war by hand painting on bullets. Starting their trip in the centre of Sri Lanka at the temple complex of Nalanda Gedige, they met an archaeologist and tried a banquet of traditional Sri Lankan rice and curry in a natural forest setting. Next they headed to central Sri Lanka, known as the Cultural Triangle,

and saw the ancient World Heritage Sites in a new light, by uncovering the people who work and live in and around them: Mr Deppriya in Polonnaruwa who sells delicious local snacks in the temple ruins for hungry travellers giving a different view of the ancient history found in standard guidebooks, Ranjini in Mihintale who has been running a sandalwood stall under the frangipani trees for over three decades and a Buddhist monk at the Sri Maha Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura who gives us an insight into monastic life.

From here, Juliet and Daisy headed to the east coast, meeting characters that confirm that life in Sri Lanka is never dull, from Meera Mohideen an intrepid fisherman in Batticaloa to Charith Senanayake whose mission is to preserve the traditionally fished mangroves. The east coast has always had an alluring reputation for calm turquoise seas and beaches with boat trips to uninhabited islands and for the twitcher, there's plenty of bird of life. Read about Jamaldeen Muthalif, the guardian of Pigeon Island who spends almost every day watching over his precious blue rock pigeons - Pigeon Island is certainly a trip for men who want a real adventure!

Daisy Perry says: "If you enjoy off the beaten track travel then this book is a must read. With a fantastic photography guide co-written by BBC top-selling author Steve Davey, author of Unforgettable Places to See Before you Die you can get tips on how to take amazing photos to wow your friends and family with! But none of this would have been possible without the fantastic Sri Lankan translators who were dedicated to finding the most exciting stories: a journalist mad enough to take on a 15 hour trip to Jaffna and back to Colombo in 48 hours and Juliet's cheeky two and half year old child, Samad, who pointed out what the little people like to see!"

To prove this guidebook is for everyone and not just the extreme backpacker - Juliet and her second son, six week old Amzar, flew north into former Tiger Land in an old war plane to discover Sri Lanka's northern most city Jaffna. She says, "Jaffna may have lost its roar, but not its raw, wild beauty, or its two thousand years of history. It is a warm, hospitable city, a different world from hip, happening Hikkaduwa and contemporary Colombo, a slice of India without the intensity and hassle. It's like going back in time as it's totally unspoilt by mass tourism."

The north-east is famous for its stoic Portuguese-Dutch fortresses, coffee, fat Havana-like cigars, classic vintage cars, and the seven islands - the crown jewels to Sri Lanka. To get to this compulsively fascinating northern province hire a van or a boat or take the 15 hour bus ride from Colombo Central Bus station to Jaffna. This is an incredible journey through giant salt pans and the controversial Elephant Pass, a 1km long causeway revealing war ruins, lush lagoons and towns that are a jumble of crumbling colonial buildings. At the end of this bone-crunching bus journey, enjoy a few hours in Jaffna's magnificent public library - with over 100,000 books to pick from, you'll have no shortage of inspiration.

As a well-travelled BBC Lonely Planet photojournalist who's been to 143 countries in total, Juliet was totally amazed by this region of Sri Lanka. She says "In my opinion, it's one of the most exciting and inspirational places to be right now in Asia. Adding "We really hope our book will lead to a revival of the north and east as traveller's destinations."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information, interviews or photos please call Juliet Coombe on +94 (0) 77 683 8659

Please come along to meet the authors in person, here about their travels and grab a signed copy of the book, at Barefoot on Friday 26th from 11-4pm, Saturday 27th, from 11-4pm and Sunday 28th at Odel, Alexander Place from 10-7pm.

This guide to the north, east and central parts of Sri Lanka will be launched to the general public during a prestigious three-course dinner at the Cinnamon Grand's 'New Village' on Saturday 27th February in Colombo from 7.30pm until midnight. Tickets still available for Rs.5000 per head including a comp copy of the book and being entered into the prize draw.

Where to buy the book. Colombo: Barefoot and Odel. Galle: Barefoot and The Galle Fort Hotel. Price: Rs 3500. Pages: 278. Format: Colour, paperback

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