A Fort Within a Fort

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The interiors are subtle and mellow

Ayura is a bijou property in the Galle Fort that provides comforts while staying true to the fort’s spirit.

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The many candelabra
add elegance to the villa

Contained within the Galle Fort are the most expensive and most romantic 130 acres in Sri Lanka. Walk down the narrow cobbled Church Street, and you will discover the latest jewel among the centuries-old row of Dutch edifices. Wedged amidst Moorish and Dutch houses is Villa Ayura, a classic building. Despite its narrow facade, it commands attention with its sheer elegance and taste.

The Dutch facade with polished wooden columns is in stark contrast to the modern interior. The airy vestibule, into which you walk when you push open the doors, is the showroom for Ayura jewellery. Intricate silver and gold jewellery scintillate in immaculate showcases, with globules of gleaming stones. Ayura specialises in blue sapphires set on white gold, but they work with other stones too, all of them with a beautiful cold glow like hearts of red or emerald blazing in winter.

The rest of the building is the boutique villa. Nothing remains of the old Dutch house that used to stand here apart from the main walls. The new architecture and the interior have been impeccably done. A building situated within the Galle Fort cannot be loudly flamboyant, as such Ayura has retained the heritage feel of the fort while remaining stylish. There is an emphasis on white, which is complemented by the raw or burnished brown of wood and the thick black of elegant little curios. The hanging candelabra are elegant and uniquely designed in brass. Opulence is discreet and understated at Villa Ayura.

Colour has been used with great care, the only display of colour being a sprawling ethnic rug with symmetric patterns sporting the lightest shades like ochre, soft brick red and dull green. The result is a timeless look that makes inhabiting the spaces soothing and a real aesthetic pleasure.

The main suite is for a family of four while there are two bedrooms, each with a balcony. Decoration is no-frills but there is spartan elegance and absolute quality. The wooden floored rooftop terrace will soon be shrouded by natural greenery and become a serene, relaxing space from where to watch the sun sink into the Indian Ocean across the ramparts.

The dining room seating eight and the courtyard have been designed to resemble a home. The cosy feel within is enhanced by the staff, numbering less than four, are like a family ensuring that guests can be themselves and feel comfortable

More importantly, the boutique villa is situated in the very heart of Galle, a centre from which to explore the romance of southern Ceylon where time stands still and life takes on an easy pace.

Ayura itself is a cosy, snug little fort within the stocky ramparts of the Galle fort.

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