

The Spirit And Charm Of The Galle Face Hotel

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In the past – A view from the South side of the property towards the Classic Wing

The Galle Face Hotel (GFH) for almost a century and a half has been known by many names; Asia's Emerald on the Green, the Grande Dame of Serendip and the Beautiful Duchess are but a few that are reminiscent of the grandeur and history of perhaps the oldest hotel East of the Suez. Among its quaint stone pillars the GFH has quite a collection of stories and memories from the years gone by.

Four British entrepreneurs built the hotel in 1864, embedding the colonial style architecture, which has been preserved to this day.

In many ways the GFH mirrors what Ceylon once was. In another sense the GFH also embodies the true Sri Lankan spirit of strength. It is said that the area adjoining the hotel was used as a practicing ground for the British Royal Artillery Company. One day a young Ceylon lascar ignited a 30-pound cannonball that went off course and ended up in the hotel dining room where it rolled and came to rest beneath a chair

but fortunately did not explode. The governor at that time Sir Collin Campbell on hearing of the incident arrived to view the cannonball and the mischief done. Over the years the hotel has marked this event with the annual Cannonball Run.

The hotel has also stood its ground through two world wars, 30 years of civil strife, the ever-changing tropical weather in Sri Lanka and a roller coaster economy. Today the GFH is undergoing extensive restoration in preparation for its 150th anniversary but the old world charm and the countless stories that its walls have seen and heard will live on.