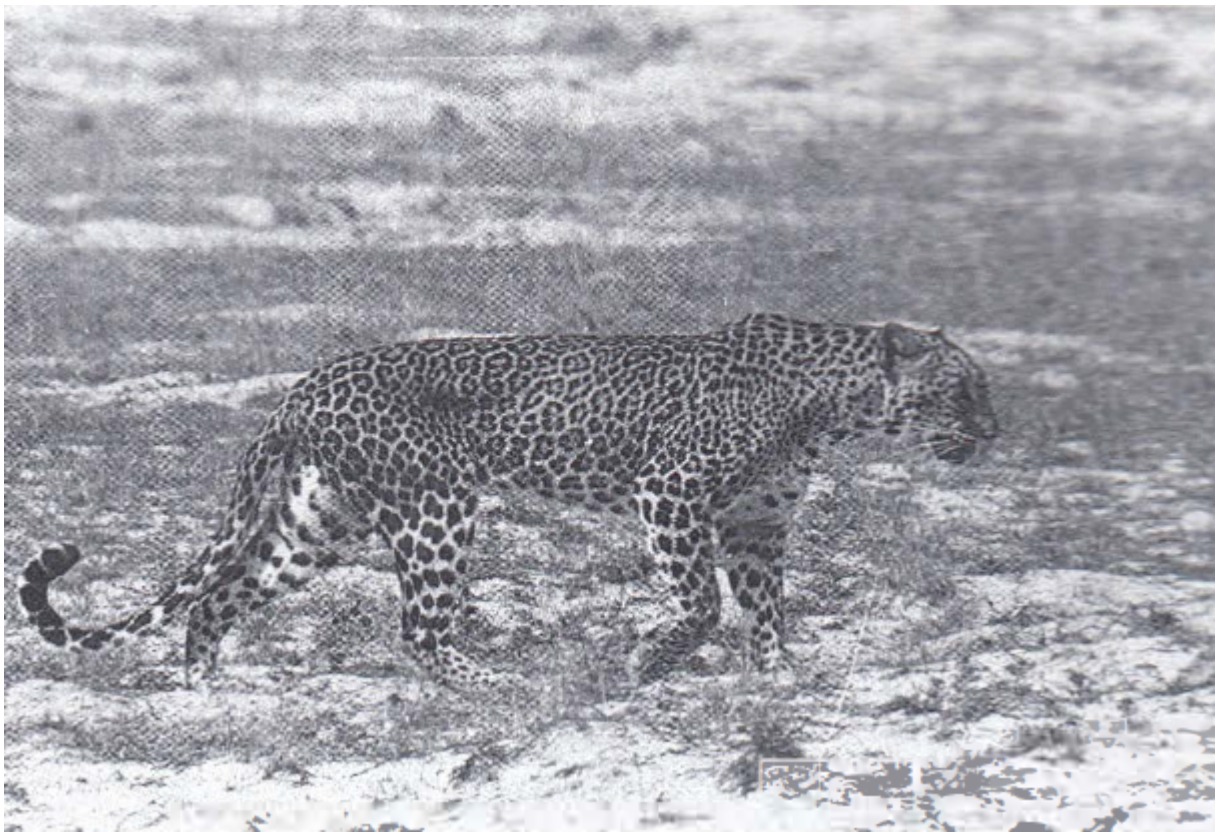
Sri Lanka in Season through the Year

Posted on



A leopard on the prowl at the Ruhunu National Park, Yala

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It is the land known over the centuries as Tambapanni, Tabropane, Serendiv, Serendip, Ceilao, Ceylan and Ceylon but always Lanka or Sri Lanka to her people, and those from countries of the region from neighbouring India to distant Indonesia.

Centrally located in the ancient sea routes from Rome and Greece through Arabia and Persia to Burma, China and the Orient, it was the lure of sea-farers and travellers from many lands – from the Chinese Fa-Hsien, to the legendary Sindbad

the Sailor from Araby, and the Genoese Marco Polo. The Britisher, Sir Emerson Tennent wrote: “There is no island in the world, Great Britain not excepted, that has attracted the attention of authors in so many distant ages and so many different countries as Ceylon. There is no nation in ancient or modern times possessed of a language and literature the writers of which have not at the same time made their theme”. Sri Lanka is today a central location on the itineraries of the modern traveller, the tourist in search of pleasure relaxation and history, and the business traveller in search good investment. Sri Lanka’s attraction to the visitor are many faceted. Although an island ringed with more than a thousand miles of lovely beach. and the deep blue, shark-free waters of the Indian Ocean. It is no mere island. It is an island-country, with a history named after events in that great eastern epic.

It is a country with a multiplicity of peoples and faiths. A blend of traditions. A country and people who have absorbed the successive wave of influence from Vedic teachers to Aryan settlers and Buddhist reformers, Arab traders and South Indian coastal migrants, to culminate in western spice hunters, missionaries and colonisers. The capital, Colombo, is still a largely uncluttered city, although the impact of the vigour of the Japanese auto industry is not unfelt. From the best of international hotels, where you can dial the world direct in the comfort of well appointed rooms, or the smaller Sri Lankan hotels or more intimate guesthouses in the city and suburbs, one could reach out to a country which has a fascinating array of things to do, see and experience.

If Colombo has not still made a name as a city which keeps awake all night, the signs are that it will soon be so. Just now you have the advantage of being a pampered visitor in a place which has yet to discover the problems of tourist overcrowding. There are many good Restaurants and Supper Clubs, serving a world-wide fare in cuisine, with spicy Sri Lanka specialities too, and night clubs and discos, where Sri Lankan and foreign cabaret artistes perform to satisfied audiences. And there is the new trend for Casinos, of which there are plenty in the city, where you could spend a hole night trying out your luck, Palm Beach Star Dust… and many more to come soon we are told.

For those keen on daytime pleasure, Colombo has its many bazaars and shopping centers, including a very good Duty Free Shopping Complex (over 40 shops here). The pleasant Vihara Maha Devi Park, Maha Devi Park, or the expanse of promenade at Galle Face, many shaded avenues, a very good museum, art galleries with regular exhibitions, good bookshops, one of the best zoos in the East at nearby Dehiwela, many Buddhist temples and Hindu kovils, and a delightful beach at Mt.

Lavinia, just south of the city, or a little north wonderful sea, surf and beach hotels at Hendala. The beach fare in Sri Lanka is a whole culture. Beach resorts dot the shore – Negombo, Kalutara, Beruwela, Bentota, Ahungalla in the South and West and Trincomalee, Nilaveli, Kalmunai in the East. While the standard attractions of sun-sea sand-surf are there in abundance, there is plenty of shade in the coconut and pandanus groves for those who may be a little cautious of open intimacy with the sun, and a beach of your own is never too far away. There is also plenty of sea-sport from surfing and snorkelling and deep sea diving, or strolling, or the greater excitement of being out at sea in a sail blown catamaran.

There are the photo experiences of boats returning or setting off in picturesque sunsets, the nets laden with fish being drawn in, and the activity of an auction of the catch on the beach itself. And the beach has its coconut, culture too. Or drive to the beckoning mountains. Just four hours from Colombo to the famous Adam’s Peak, easily the most sacred mountain in the world.

Buddhists who believe the footprint on the summit is that of Gautama, the Buddha; Hindus who hold it to be the footprint of Shiva; Muslims who are convinced it is that of Adam, who wept on the peak after the loss of Eden (that’s how the mountain got its name from Arab travellers), and some Christians who believe the indentation was caused when St. Thomas, Christ’s Apostle who came East, prayed at the peak. By all rights the most venerated mountain in the world. Adam’s Peak rises in the midst of central mountains forming the hill country of Sri Lanka, where in the cloud-kissed fastness above and the mist-blown slopes lower, grow the world’s best tea. Acres upon acres of well-nursed and tended green, tea. The waist-high bushes from which nimble fingered women in colourful sarees pluck two-leaves-and-a-bud, to give the world the best cup that cheers at any time of day or night. Sri Lanka’s principal rivers all have their sources in the Adam’s Peak springs and some of these carry down gem bearing gravel, which gives some of the finest gems of the world. Blue and White Sapphires, Cats Eyes, Rubies, Aquamarines, Alexandrites, a seemingly endless list of crystalline beauty.

The existence of so many varieties of gems in its soil has made Sri Lanka attractive to traders and rulers from afar over many centuries. Traders who came here to buy the rubies for crowns, and sapphires for thrones. Emissaries of kings who came to obtain peacocks, elephants and gems with which to woo their queens, as did King Solomon when he wooed the Queen of Sheba. Gems which gave to Sri Lanka fame as a land of beautiful women and their exquisite and valuable jewellery, a tradition still true today. Or visit the Ancient Cities and the culture of Buddhism.

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Or move close to nature in the national parks, in a country where one-tenth of the land is set apart for nature and forest reserves, and efforts are being made to increase the area so reserved. Visit the national parks at Yala in the South, Wilpattu and the North Central region and Gal Oya in the east.

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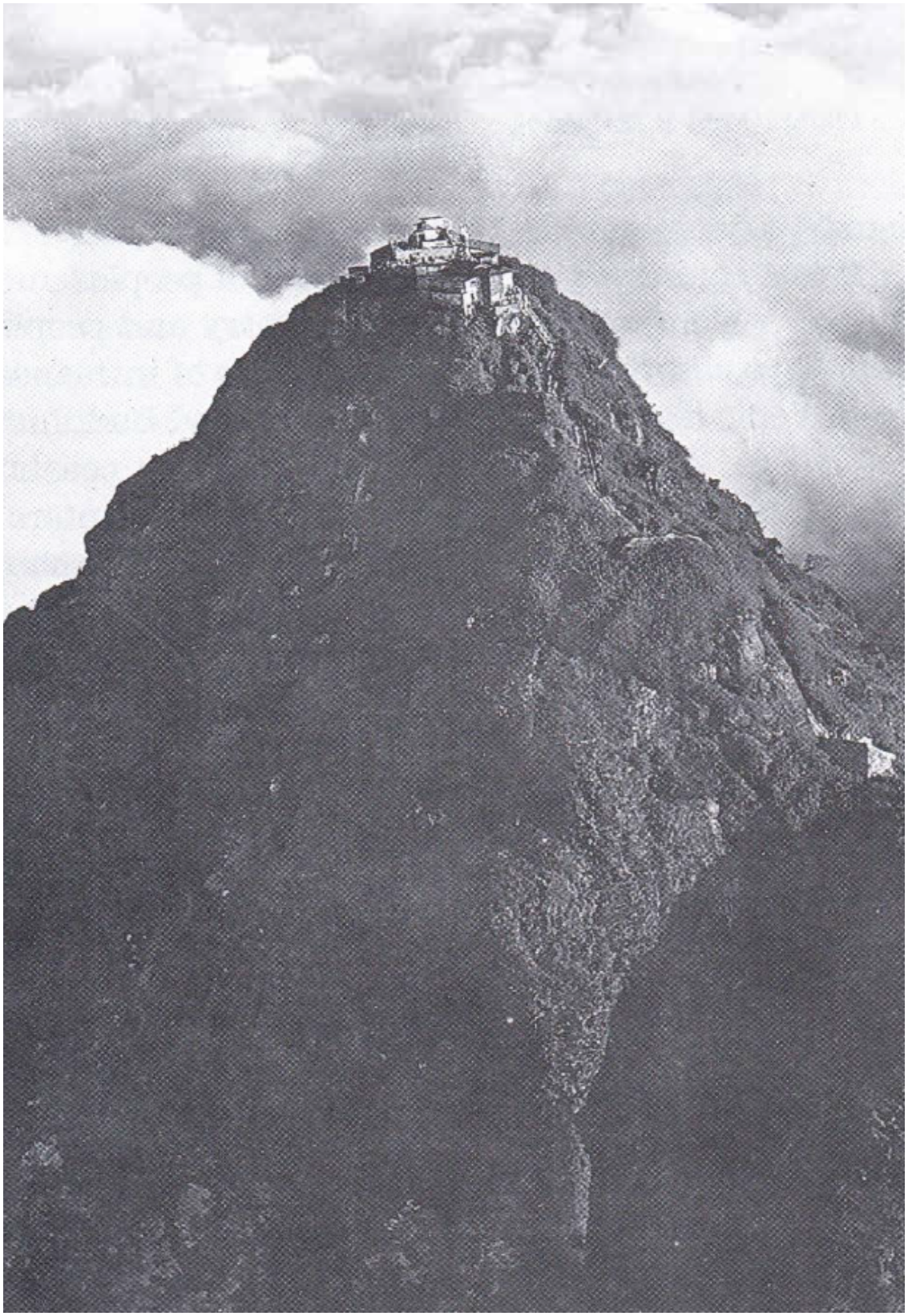
Discover Sri Lanka and explore a land with sunshine throughout the year.

Patience with the rod and line. Fishermen on stilts at Weligama.



The sacred mountain: Adam’s Peak with pilgrims on the way to worship the footprint at the summit.