

# Savour Sri Lanka's Style

Black swim bandeau bikini top by **Maus**; batik wrap skirt by **Sonali Dharmawardena**; Mattakuliya tuna leather pouch by **Khogy**; totem earrings and Aphrodite ring by **Papillon du thé**.

ONCE MOSTLY KNOWN FOR BEING THE BEST PLACE TO BUY VICTORIA'S SECRET LINGERIE FROM FACTORY SURPLUS 'BACK-OF-THE-TRUCK' OUTLETS, SRI LANKA NOW SPORTS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT AVATAR. COME HERE TO DISCOVER STUNNING MODERN USE OF BATIK, BEAUTIFUL COLONIAL BUILDINGS RESTORED INTO RETAIL SANCTUARIES, FABULOUS ANTIQUE FOLK JEWELLERY, AND SWANKY BEACH AND RESORT WEAR.

PRODUCED BY **RUCHIRA BOSE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ASHISH CHAWLA**

STYLED BY **ANJULI FLAMER-CALDERA** AND **NADINE JAYARATNE** (THE AGENCY SRI LANKA)

MAKE-UP AND HAIR BY **NISHA SENEVIRATNE** (SENISHA MAKE-UP ARTISTRY)

MODEL: **CARLA ACIAR** LOCATION: **ANANTARA KALUTARA RESORT, SRI LANKA**

Bandeau bikini top and swim high-waisted bikini brief by **Maus**; palmyrah batik silk shawl by **Kinsfolk**; totem earrings, green spirit ring, and energy ring by **Papillon du thé**.

OPPOSITE: Halter neck slit dress by **Maluba Asia**; totem earrings and green spirit ring by **Papillon du thé**.





Bandeau bikini top by **Maus**; batik robe by **La Pard**; antique necklace and bangle by **Pinks Design**; bikini bottom brief by **Meraki**.

OPPOSITE: Swimsuit and sandals by **Maus**; tricolour ring by **Cher by Chevonne**; necklaces by **Pinks Design Collection**; layered long skirt by **CHARINI**.

street animals. Eponymously named Odel (from Otara Del Gunawardene), her first store opened in 1989, in a 400-square-foot space on Dickman's Road, now renamed after acclaimed Sri Lankan filmmaker Dr Lester James Peries. From there, it expanded into a retail empire, becoming a favourite among Indian A-listers and western tourists. Within a decade, the flagship store opened in a massive colonial building in Alexandra Place in the heart of Colombo, setting a trend for others to follow.

And while, a few years ago, Gunawardene sold her stake in the business and now focuses entirely on her work with rescued dogs, she inspired a new generation of fashion entrepreneurs and designers in Lanka.

Colombo's shopping neighbourhoods that feature these designers and fashion retailers are symbolic of the colourful fabric of today's Lankan society that comprises Sinhalese, Moors, Tamils, Burghers (Portuguese, Dutch and British descendants), Chinese and Malay communities.

# S

ri Lanka is quite the delightful surprise when it comes to shopping. For the longest time, Indian travellers knew it as a place to shop for factory surplus from brands like Noritake or Victoria Secret. In the decade after Sri Lanka's economic reforms of 1977, the country experienced a flood of growth in its garment manufacturing sector. Some of the world's top apparel and lingerie brands moved their business from India to Sri Lanka, finding it cheaper and easier to produce there. As factories scaled up, surplus product spewed out too.

Interestingly, one of the country's top fashion entrepreneurs, Otara Gunawardene began her business in the late 80's by seeing the opportunity in selling these factory surpluses. Back then, she sold them from the boot of her car to fund treatment and rescue of



Fête long dress by **Maus**;  
vintage Afghani necklace  
by **Pinks Design Collection**.

OPPOSITE: Strapless maillot  
by **Maus**; long bag by **Paradise  
Road**; Abarcas by **Forty Red  
Bangles**; lustre round wood  
drops by **Cher by Chevonne**;  
coverup by **Three By TPV**.





Dress, model's own.

## Colombo's shopping neighbourhoods are symbolic of the colourful fabric of today's Lankan society.

Another entrepreneur and philanthropist, Barbara Sansoni captures this mix beautifully in her stores. The Barefoot story actually began in Sri Lanka, in 1962, when Sansoni, a talented artist, colourist, designer and entrepreneur, began working, almost exclusively, with women in rural communities.

For over 40 years, the Barefoot family has provided training and fair wages to its workers along with an environment conducive to creativity, and at the same time, captured the talent, heritage craft, and the aesthetic spirit of Sri Lanka in products that are irresistible to travellers here. Sansoni's textiles are inspired by the vivid land and seascapes, foliage, and wildlife of Sri Lanka. Colourful yarns, created using Swiss dyes, are hand woven into glorious fabrics and transformed by Barefoot's designers in innovative and unexpected ways, to create charming toys, bags, and clothes that make both adults and children smile.

Everything from Barefoot is produced in village workshops, close to the homes of the weavers and sewers. Although Barefoot now exports to over 30 countries, nothing is mass produced; no child labour is used and it has no factories or production lines. Barefoot in Colombo is part art gallery, part performance space and part shop. It's also one of the best places to buy books on Sri Lanka.

Among the younger generation, Samaadhi Weerasinghe, the designer behind the newly-launched brand ANUK is securing Sri Lanka's spot in the world of contemporary fashion. The brand is defined as 'simple silhouettes in fine fabrics; made in the tropics, for the tropics'. As a firm believer of everything in moderation, Saamadhi's designs reflect clean-cut designs with an overall polished look. Her brand, ANUK, named after her brother, is currently being retailed at PR. She's an intrepid traveller, the daughter of one of the country's most established garment traders, and is known to have a talent in creating a lovely blend of casual ease and elegance.

## Art, Home & Style

### SASKIA FERNANDO GALLERY

With its stark white washed façade, the Saskia Fernando Gallery, founded by Annika Fernando's younger sister, exhibits emerging Sri Lankan artists as well as those from established ones. Come here to see emphatic installations, beautiful sculptures and paintings. They have started a platform called Collectors Desk last year which aims to encourage art collecting among Sri Lankans. They offer consults and information on how to collect, invest and support the art industry. 41 Horton Pl, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka

### SURIYA

Furniture, handicrafts, toys, genuine antiques and nice reproductions are packed into Suriya. Every product is made locally, using Sri Lanka's traditional handloom textiles and wood. The best part is

that it's all arranged Ikea-style in the rooms of a charming colonial bungalow on Layards Road, making it hard to resist buying a few pieces. They have a really nice collection of brightly coloured throws, overstuffed mattresses, patterned cushions and more. Suriya was opened 17 years ago by entrepreneurial couple Ruwanmali Sepalika Jayasinghe and Roshan Jayasinghe who love to travel across the world. So some items at the store are also those that the couple have brought back from their travels. *Layard's Rd, Colombo, Sri Lanka*

### HERMITAGE

On the picturesque Gower Street, Hermitage is Sri Lanka's version of Sharma Farm in Delhi. Traditional local woodwork, craft, antiques and figurines, Buddha statues can be found seemingly-randomly stacked shelves, floors and other surfaces. Step into its lovely courtyard that has printing presses, cart tables converted from actual ancient ox-carts among other conversation-starter pieces. *Gower St, Colombo 00500, Sri Lanka*

### GANDHARA

Gandhara is an extremely posh destination for high-end décor. It's more like a large emporium, with many levels, many rooms and storing thousands of exquisite artefacts collected from different parts of Asia. It takes up the entire stretch of Stratford Avenue. Find medicine cabinets from Mongolia, figurines from temples in Southern India, Buddha statues from Indonesia and more. It's also a great place for smaller home accents, wedding presents and souvenirs. It has an art gallery too that showcases upcoming local artists. *No: 28, Stratford Ave, Colombo 00600, Sri Lanka*

### PARADISE ROAD

Shopping suggestions to Sri Lanka will always find Paradise Road right on top of the list. A beautiful homeware store,



ABOVE: A perfectly-timed shot captured at the beach, titled 'Water Handcuffs'.

BELOW: Dumbara waistcoat by **KT Brown**; silk pants by **ANUK**; triangle bikini top and flat slides by **Maus**; vintage earrings by **Papillon du thé**; antique silver cuffs by **Pinks Design Collection**.

TOP: Silk harem jumpsuit by **KT Brown**; makkuliya pouch in tuna leather by **Khogy**; hammered disc earrings by **Pinks Design Collection**.

RIGHT: Anantara Kalutara Resort offers excursions to River Kalu Ganga—book the sunset cruise on the river for a spectacular view of the coast in the setting sun.



it enjoys a must-visit status for tourists. Although some locals did say that there are less pricey options in Colombo that offer a similarly curated collection of rustic furniture, bric-a-brac, craft, tasteful porcelain, scents, very tempting serving ware and more. If you love to entertain at home, be prepared to spend at least a few hours browsing through everything here. And keep an extra suitcase. **213 Srimath Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka** ■

#### THE DETAILS

**PR** 41 Horton Place, Colombo; +94/112699921. [pr.lk](http://pr.lk)

**ZUDHORA** 14 Reid Avenue, Colombo; +94-77/788-8404. [facebook.com/zudhora](https://www.facebook.com/zudhora)

**Three by tpv** 21 Duplication Road, Colombo; +94-11/205-5212. [thethreebytpv.com](http://thethreebytpv.com)

**Meraki at Gandhara** 28 Stratford Avenue, Kirulapana, Colombo; +94-11/259-6329. [facebook.com/merakibysharmila](https://www.facebook.com/merakibysharmila)

**Glory Swim Shop** 1/1 Spathodea Avenue, Colombo; +94-77/730-7788. [gloryswimshop.com](http://gloryswimshop.com)