

Celebrating Ceylon Tea - Part 2a - by Gail Gastelu



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“Let’s start at the very beginning, a very good place to start!” (Singin’ it! - Sound of Music, Do-Re-Me) - Shall we begin at the beginning then? Here through my own blog, I am aching to tell you all about my trip. Everything written here and in a dedicated blog for Sri Lanka is intended to celebrate Ceylon tea and its 150th Anniversary. Our goal is to teach you something, a lot of things about Ceylon tea, but I need you to know what it was like to go there too since many of you, I know, are yearning to go yourselves.

As I write this, it is just under two weeks since my return. The photos I have [posted to The Tea House Times Facebook page](#) and bits of thoughts shared thus far barely scratch the surface of what I’d like to share and yet the volume of incredibly positive and excited feedback from family, friends, and you our readers, has been pouring in already.

My sweet daughter asked if I am depressed. How could I possibly be? No! But then again, yes. The reason she asked is that she had been on a tour to perform in an orchestra in five different countries and returned with wonderful memories but also lifetime friends. You miss those friends. I understand now why she asked me – yes, I miss all my new friends!! And another business associate of mine just agreed that Sri Lanka definitely gets into the “fiber of your being.” So many people are telling me of their own experiences in Sri Lanka and of the best friendships formed for them as well. :)



My hairdresser of 20+ years just asked me if I was “an oddity” there. LOL! Really?! Of course, she would ask that. Yes, blonde hair, blue eyes....I suppose I was. But it also was the coolest blessing of all. One day when we stopped to ask directions, a few children spotted me. Shy at first, they waved from a distance. Before you knew it, we had four adorable children standing at my window beside our van staring at me. Of course, I had some candy for them (we came very

well prepared!). There were other instances of my being an oddity I suppose.... but in the tourist areas, I blended right in. Good times!

Roundtrip from JFK/NY through Dubai to Colombo, Sri Lanka, I was traveling from January 21-January 31, 2017. We had a very full program of scheduled appointments each day, starting early, ending late and enjoyed different types of accommodations nightly from luxury hotels to boutique style hotels to resorts and private bungalows.

First stop, Colombo! We stayed at the [Galadari Hotel](#). It was luxury all the way and not what I had expected to be experiencing at all. (I would have been happy even if we were camping as long as I could have a hot shower!) - - From the bellman at the door on through to the VIP treatment they provided, Ms. Linda and I were well cared for. Our rooms were comfortable and clean. Dining at Galadari was a remarkable sight.... where we tried new foods....and enjoyed the magnificent buffet for dinner and breakfast.



Our first day in Colombo was full of activity including:

- Meetings at the Sri Lanka Tea Board
- A visit to their Analytical Laboratory and Tea Tasting Unit
- A visit to the Colombo Tea Traders Association/Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and site of the Colombo Tea Auction
- Visit / tour with a major tea exporter, Mlesna Tea Factory and tea tastings.
- A brief trip around the city of Colombo including stops to see a few sights including a temple tour, Independence Hall, etc.



It is almost hard to believe the volume of things accomplished each day on this trip. Most of my 2500+ photos, as magnificent as they are, were taken out the window of our moving van, less we stopped, we would never accomplish our goals for each day.

It will take a few months of weekly posts to tell our entire tale, but here we go now! For now, I'd like you to learn a little more about the Sri Lanka Tea Board and our visit there. See this week's post on our dedicated Sri Lanka blog.

In coming weeks, we will also hit on the rest of this day's itinerary and important places to know about - and the rest of our trip!! A long and wonderful tale to tell. Thanks for following along!

(P.S. Don't miss *The Tea House Times* Mar/Apr issue which includes special features on Ceylon Tea - to be released Feb 20.

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Sri Lanka Tea Board

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sri-Lanka-Tea-Board/181010221960446>

See left column for archived entries to my personal blog.

Please see <http://srilanka.theteahousetimes.com> for more informative posts.

For the Love of Tea. . .

Gail