

I
Sri Lanka
January
2026



THE ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

Heritance Kandalama Hotel
by Geoffrey Bawa

AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COURSE
ON UNDERSTANDING THE JOURNEY OF
TROPICAL MODERNISM IN SRI LANKA



MEMORY, IDENTITY, TROPICALITY

Jetwing Lighthouse
Staircase, designed by
Laki Senanayake

Sri Lanka is an important feature in any architecture enthusiast's bucket list, being the place Geoffrey Bawa calls home. The Architecture Experience takes the participant on a journey starting with the early typologies of Sri Lankan architecture, move on to the identity of Sri Lankan architecture, a confluence of local and European styles, and end with modern architecture we see today - Tropical Modernist architecture. Bawa, considered the Father of Tropical Modernism, pioneered this style of architecture that blended the ideals of his European Modernism architectural schooling and the intrinsic knowledge of traditional Sri Lankan tropical architecture.





De Seram House,
Colombo

THE ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

The best approach to growing as an architect is to learn from experiencing and observing. *The Architecture Experience* aims to do just that. Participants get to observe the journey of Tropical Modernism, through site visits and interactions with local architects, and document the learning in a themed narrative for later referencing.

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**9 DAYS,
20 PARTICIPANTS,
5 CITIES**

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These visits will focus on observing and learning about the importance of site sensitivity, different architectural techniques – active and passive, importance of material selection, use of local resources and other aspects vital to sustainability. The visits will foster a deep understanding of building with nature with an inclination to local materials and techniques, while working on the pavilion project will illustrate the immediate applications and impact of Tropical Modernist ideals on architecture across - be it in an urban setting, landscape, rural or any other.

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



The undisputed star of Bawa's landscape design successes, the Lunuganga Estate has been a constant work in progress in Bawa's lifetime. The best place to decode the Bawa method was his 25-acre laboratory, where he tested out various ideas and concepts later employed in some of his most renowned works. The estate comprises different sections - terraces, pavilions, suites - with a host of distinct design ideas and inspirations, all tied by the ideology that nature is the dominant feature of the design and the finest man-made outcome is the least intrusive, resulting in the use of only local and salvaged materials to create built spaces merging with the open landscape.



Completed in 1994, it is the first hotel outside the US to receive LEED certification. Bawa designed this sprawling hotel with minimal intervention - the rock formations were retained and the facade with vertical vegetation helps the building blend into its surroundings. The in-house Biomass Gasifier and Water Treatment Plant further cement its commitment to sustainability. Observe the integration with nature and responsible management of resources by employing active and passive design strategies - the recurring ideologies that set this building apart as a world-class example of sustainable architecture

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



ANURADHAPURA

In Anuradhapura, we will observe some of the early typologies in Sri Lankan architecture like the palaces, royal audience halls and the earliest and biggest stupas in the world along with large man-made reservoirs and tanks e.g.: Tissa Wewa.

Visitors can observe the idea of pavilions and open structures as architecture as a common occurrence in most ruins in Anuradhapura. Another occurrence to be seen is the influences of nature in the context of architecture.



HOUSE NO. 11

Bawa's Colombo office and residence is a perfect example of adapting a conventional urban land parcel into a tropical modernist expression. As plots were added, they were united by designing courtyards to wrap around the open spaces, blending the interior and exterior together into an open, flowing space. The sloping roofs and structural elements compliment the European Modernism and Sri Lankan traditional styles so characteristic of Bawa's works.

Visitors can see how small courtyards and green corridors can effectively create a sense of openness even in compact plots, uniting and dividing spaces as per the landscape design.

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



CINNAMON BEY

Designed by Channa Daswatte, this 11-acre resort is skilfully laid out in linear patterns oriented to the shore such as to give each of the 200 rooms a magnificent sea view. The hotel is modern and sophisticated but also gives a generous nod to the Turkish-Moorish history of the region in terms of its styling and aesthetics. Waste management, recycling, solar power, rainwater collection and greywater utilisation are implemented and highly prioritised winning it a LEED Gold certification in 2014.

Visitors can observe how a vernacular, heritage look and theme can be coupled with sustainable techniques to produce truly world-class architecture.



SEEMA MALAKA

A modern Buddhist Temple, commissioned in the place of an older one that sank into the lake, Seema Malaka, completed in 1978 by Bawa, is a marvel of restraint. The complex, inspired by the ancient jungle temples of Anuradhapura, consists of three pavilions on platforms raised on the lake, connected to each other and the mainland by floating bridges.

Visitors can see the use of design, materials and elements of landscaping as tools to craft an ambience.



CAPSTONE PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project work by the
October 2019 batch - A pop
up pavilion design

The experience is designed with the intent of enhancing architectural understanding, by creating a hands-on and interactive learning layer on top of a curated travel plan. Throughout the trip, participants will visit architecturally relevant sites, both historic and modern.

**“ON TOUR
DISCUSSIONS,
ON SITE
OBSERVATIONS,
ASSIGNMENTS AND
FEEDBACK”**

They will explore methods of observation and documentation while focusing on ideologies of Tropical Modernism and its applications. Participants will be given an existing project in which they will have to conduct a basic SWOT analysis and identify areas that could be enhanced by ideologies of tropical modernism. Participants will engage with the curator in daily sessions and discussions. The discussion will cover the feasibility and impact of their design modifications and how to proceed post-trip. Participants will also get to engage in dialogue with local Sri Lankan architects and draw parallels with their design approach back home in India.



WHAT IS IN IT FOR ME?

The October 2019 batch at
Lunuganga Estate by Geoffrey Bawa

Participants get to understand the journey of Tropical Modernism - how it originated, the influences, and how Bawa made it his own. Participants also get to understand how sustainability is approached in the projects visited, and the solutions devised.

From a learning perspective, participants get to understand how their domain of interest approaches sustainability, and how they can work towards Sustainable Development Goals in their projects.

At the end of the Experience, participants will have an improved practical understanding of what they study in college and learn how to implement these strategies into their own project, enhancing their portfolios.

Post the trip, their work may be published and exhibited with collaborating organisations and media outlets.

Participants also get internship opportunities from our partners.

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**RELEVANT
PROJECTS,
INTERNSHIP
OPPORTUNITIES,
UNDERSTANDING
OF TROPICAL
MODERNISM**

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EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

Day 1

Arrival in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Travel to Dambulla.

Orientation on the structure of the tour visits and project. **Finalisation** of teams, and the participants' individual roles and responsibilities within the team will be defined.

Day 2

Topic of discussion: Identity of traditional Sri Lankan architecture, influence of art, history of Sri Lanka and its ancient irrigation systems.

Places visited: Anuradhapura ruins, walking tour, Kaludiya Pokuna.

Day 3

Topic of discussion: Vernacular architecture, makings of tropical architecture - some of the common features and its response to climate.

Places visited: Heritance Kandalama Hotel (Architecture of Geoffrey Bawa), Menikdena Archaeological Reserve and Arboretum.

Day 4

Topic of discussion: Achieving functionality and aesthetics while employing passive planning techniques and building with local and salvaged materials, sustainability strategies.

Places visited: Cinnamon Bey Hotel.

Day 5

Topic of discussion: Importance of spatial planning as a tool to maximise appeal and minimise resources consumed. building with local materials and local construction techniques.

Places visited: Jetwing Lighthouse, Galle Fort Area.

Day 6

Topic of discussion: Achieving functionality and aesthetics while employing passive planning techniques and building with local and salvaged materials. sustainability strategies, landscape planning.

Places visited: Lunuganga Estate.

Day 7

Topic of discussion: Architecture beyond the structure - as a socio-cultural tool as seen in Seema Malaka, preserving cultural identities.

Places visited: Seema Malaka Pavilion, No. 11, Bagatalle Road, Studio Visit.

Day 8

Topic of discussion: The scope of Tropical Modernist design in urban typologies, presentation and review of the project.

Places visited: Barefoot Gallery Cafe, De Saram House, Dutch Hospital, Galle Green Face.

Day 9

Free Day

Culmination of the tour, brief on submission of Capstone project.

Departure to India or home country.



Curator -
Ar. Rachita Bhonsle
(B.Arch)

CURATOR & TOUR LEADER

The Architecture Experience Singapore is curated by Rachita Bhonsle, who will also be accompanying the participants on the tour. Rachita is a senior architect at a private firm which specialises in high-rise buildings and high-density residential communities. She has a background in environmental policy management, sustainable design, and energy-efficient planning.

Rachita has worked mainly in the residential, hospitality and educational sectors. She is passionate about climatology-based design, the environmental impact of built spaces and sustainable site planning. These principles have driven her work for the last decade.

Timeline

- 2007-2012 B.Arch, MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore
- 2012-2014 Vishwannath Associates, Bangalore
- 2015 Graduate Certificate Program in Environmental Policy and Management – Major in Energy and Sustainability, University of Denver, Colorado, USA
- 2016 Rogue Architecture, Wheatridge, Colorado
- 2017-2023 Poornakriti Architects, Bangalore
- 2021 - Sustainable Site Planning, MITx
- 2024 - How to use Biomimicry in Architecture, Eduwik
- 2024 - Sustainable Building Design, MITx



Curator -
Ar. Atul Saraff
(B.Arch)

CURATOR & TOUR LEADER

The Architecture Experience Sri Lanka is co-curated by Atul Saraff, who will also be accompanying the participants on the tour. Atul is a practising architect based in Bangalore and also currently teaches at CMR School of Architecture. He has 12+ years of experience in the field, working with firms such as Mistry Architects - Bangalore, Mozaic - Goa, and Total Environment - Bangalore. Atul is an IGBC-accredited professional and focuses most of his effort on creating and teaching about environmentally conscious designs. Most of his experience is focused on the Residential and Hospitality sector.

Atul is an Alumnus of MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore.

Timeline

- 2007-2012 B.Arch. MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore
- 2012-2014 Mistry Architects, Bangalore
- 2014 IGBC Green accreditation
- 2014-2015 Mozaic, Goa
- 2015-2021 Total Environment, Bangalore
- 2021-Present - Design Principal at Saraff and Sharalaya Design House
- 2021-Present - Assistant Professor at CMR School of Architecture

ALUMNI TESTIMONIALS



AYUSHI MADAN
4th Year, Wadiyar
Centre For
Architecture, Mysore

Participant - The Architecture Experience Vietnam (Feb 2024)

The trip allowed me a very holistic experience of the cities, which is a first for me despite having been on quite a few "study" trips. It encompassed everything from contemporary and historically relevant site visits to vibrant day and night markets, offering insights into various aspects beyond architecture- food, culture, history, and so on. To our surprise and joy, the lively local New Year celebrations added a dynamic dimension, revealing various facets of the city's essence. It was encouraging to see studios and practices using sustainability and adaptive reuse as forefront agendas in a relatable urban context. I enjoyed seeing the variety in the typologies and languages of architecture within the same city. Would definitely want to explore more into the observations and learnings from Vietnam. There were a lot of spontaneous discussions encouraged and initiated by Atul Sir, that made me look a few more steps beyond just the surface and helped me catch onto certain aspects in a much more simplified way. He was really a great mentor to have on this trip!



SARAH SULEKHA
Architect

Participant - The Architecture Experience Japan (July 2023)

The learning experience was not only with regards to architecture, it also included learning about the social and cultural environment. I loved how I got to experience both contemporary and traditional cultures in parallel and also get the opportunity to interact with architects like Florian Busch as well as with the locals. Hats off to Rachita for being so patient and positive in every situation. She made me feel very comfortable. The team was very enthusiastic and comfortable to work with. The accommodation, transportation and every other basic need was very comfortably organised with the cost in consideration.. The team was very enthusiastic and comfortable to work with. The accommodation, transportation and every other basic need was very comfortably organised with the cost in consideration.



**TANUSHREE
MURKIBHAVI**
3rd Year, BNCA, Pune

Participant - The Architecture Experience Singapore (Feb 2024)

We learned a lot about urban planning, city-scale development, and how planning and sustainability go hand in hand. We visited exhibitions that reinforced those ideas and later got time to explore our ideas in the form of projects. The trip was a balance of both fun and academics. Rachita made the entire learning process more fun and carefree, which allowed us to explore more around the core concepts. Overall, I had an amazing time with her and am glad that she was our mentor. An Amazing experience, I understood new ideas and concepts from a new perspective. Site visits were the best, I got to learn a lot and also saw real-life applications of concepts related to urban planning.



SHHRRUTI JAIN
Architect

Participant - The Architecture Experience Sri Lanka (October 2019)

Studio and site visits were very well organised but what I loved the most were the interactive sessions that we had with various artists and architects in Sri Lanka. Conversations with them were an extremely enriching experience. I got a better understanding in material selection, and the integration of nature in the landscape was eye opening. Prithy and Kshitija curated the experience extremely well and I got to learn a lot from them. About the places as well as the field in general. It was a great experience altogether! Very well planned especially keeping in mind the fact that we were here for a decent number of days and have almost covered everything ranging from the historic places to the modern ones. This trip was worth the money and will definitely influence my design in the future.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

All our Experiences are aimed at implementing and solving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.

Goal no. 17, Partnerships for the Goals, is key to our Experiences, since we work with a global team of experts to be able to add value to the learning of the participants.

The Architecture Experience focuses on 3 of the Goals primarily -



Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being



Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing
- By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement
- By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters



Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
- Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production



THE HAPPY LLAMAS

At **The Happy Llamas**, we curate Experiences for participants to show them how their domains work in the real world, and how they approach sustainability. Why?

We believe that the world has a lot to offer, and only on going out and engaging with different cultures in different corners of the world can one get a holistic view of life, and evolve personally and professionally. We also feel strongly about the need to make this planet, the only one that we have, more sustainable.

Keeping these two thoughts in mind, we work with domain and subject matter experts to co-curate Experiences where we inspire today's youth on how to make this world a better place to live for themselves and their peers, and creating positive global impact in their domains of interest.

We invite you to join us in this journey, and be a part of an inclusive and global community of changemakers!

Contact Us

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WE ADHERE TO WORK TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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A building can only be understood by moving around and through it, and by experiencing the modulation, and feel the spaces one moves through - from outside into verandah, then rooms, passages, courtyards. Architecture cannot be totally explained but must be experienced

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GEOFFREY BAWA

Lunuganga Estate, Bentota