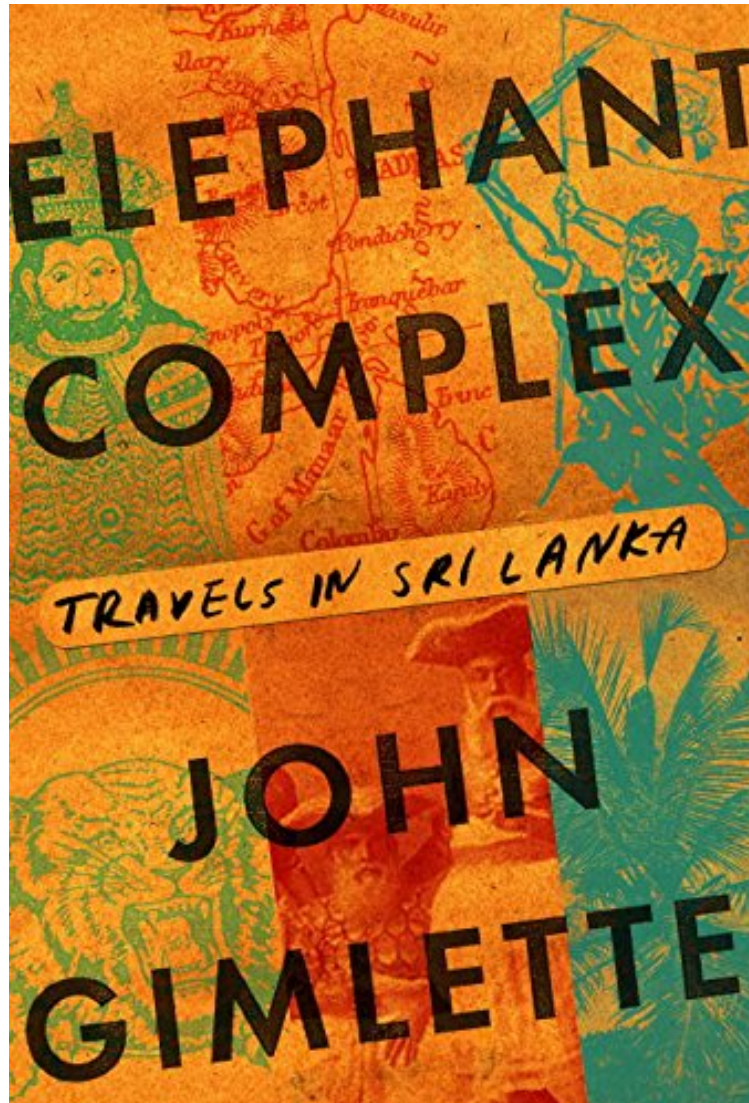


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Elephant Complex: Travels in Sri Lanka

John Gimlette

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#283417 in Books John Gimlette 2016-02-16 2016-02-16Format: Deckle EdgeOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.52 x 1.41 x 6.65l, 1.25 #File Name: 0385351275432 pagesElephant Complex Travels in Sri Lanka | File size: 76.Mb

John Gimlette : Elephant Complex: Travels in Sri Lanka before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Elephant Complex: Travels in Sri Lanka:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ELEPHANT COMPLEX : TRAVELS IN SRI LANKABy ALBERTO NAVARROTRAVEL BOOKS ARE THE BEST WAY TO KNOW IN DETAIL A COUNTRY, ELEPHANT COMPLEX ABOUT SRI LANKA(FORMERLY CEYLON) IS ONE OF THESE BOOKS; SRI LANKA IS AN INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND LOCATED SE OF INDIA;THE BOOK IS A THOROUGHLY

DESCRIPTION OF SRI LANKA ITS HISTORY, CULTURE, LANDSCAPE, FLORA AND FAUNA COVERING THE WHOLE ISLAND FROM SOUTH TO NORTH ENDING IN THE JAFFNA PENINSULA AND THE DELFT ISLAND. SRI LANKA IS ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT CIVILIZATION OF THE WORLD, IS A MIXTURE OF SINHALESE BUDDHISM AND TAMIL HINDUISM WITH LATER INFLUENCES FROM ARABS IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AND THE EUROPEAN COLONIZATION, THE PORTUGUESE (16TH-EARLY 17TH CENTURY), THE DUTCH (LATE 17TH-18TH) AND FINALLY THE BRITISH (19TH-MIDDLE 20TH), THE COUNTRY ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE IN 1948 AND AFTER A PERIOD OF RELATIVE STABILITY THE COUNTRY WAS ENGULFED IN A BLOODY CIVIL WAR THE LONGEST IN ASIA (1983-2009) BETWEEN THE SINHALESE GOVERNMENT IN COLOMBO AND THE LTTE (LIBERATION TIGER TAMIL EELAM) WHICH WAS FOUGHT MOSTLY IN THE NORTHEAST ENDING WITH THE VICTORY OF THE SRI LANKAN ARMY. THE BOOK STARTS WITH THE CAPITAL COLOMBO CONTINUING WITH THE GREEN JUNGLES A PARADISE IN THE EARTH TO KANDY THE EPICENTER OF SRI LANKAN BUDDHISM; IN THE LAST CHAPTERS THE AUTHOR GIVES A FULL DESCRIPTION OF THE EASTERN AND NORTHERN PART OF THE ISLAND, WHERE THE BLOODY LTTE INSURGENCY WAS TAKEN PLACE, I STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE WAY THAT THE AUTHOR PORTRAYS THE CONFLICT BECAUSE HE TOES THE LIBERAL LINE PREVALENT IN THE WEST AND THE INTERNATIONAL BODIES LIKE THE UNITED NATIONS WITH ITS HOLLOW RETHORIC OF "HUMAN RIGHTS", "DEMOCRACY" AND "CIVIL SOCIETY", THIS LINE HAS FAVOURED THE LEFTISTS INSURGENCIES THROUGH THE WORLD; I CONSIDER THE SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT MAHINDA RAJAPAKSAA GREAT LEADER AND ALONGSIDE RODRIGO DUTERTE AND VLADIMIR PUTIN ARE THE ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES (ESPECIALLY IN CUBA AND VENEZUELA). AFTER READING THIS BOOK I CAN SAY THAT SRI LANKA IS AN INTERESTING AND FASCINATING COUNTRY AND I REALLY WANT TO VISIT IT ONE DAY. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not much good as a travel guidebook. By Oldfart48A very, very verbose story. English prose, I guess if you can slug through it. Some interesting history and stories. Not much good as a travel guidebook. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A good read before first visit. By Mr. Bengt Divided in 13 chapters, the book covers hundreds of years of colonial and modern history and society and all parts of Sri Lanka. Very balanced and well written.

No one sees the world quite like John Gimlette. As The New York Times once noted, he writes with enormous wit, indignation, and a heightened sense of the absurd. Writing for both the adventurer and the armchair traveler, he has an eye for unusually telling detail, a sense of wonder, and compelling curiosity for the inside story. This time, he travels to Sri Lanka, a country only now emerging from twenty-six years of civil war. Delving deep into the nation's story, Gimlette provides us with an astonishing, multifaceted portrait of the island today. His travels reveal the country as never before. Beginning in the exuberant capital, Colombo (a hint of anarchy everywhere), he ventures out in all directions: to the dry zones where the island's 5,800 wild elephants congregate around ancient reservoirs; through cinnamon country with its Portuguese forts; to the Bible Belt of Buddhism on the tsunami-ravaged southeast coast; then up into the great green highlands (the garden in the sky) and Kandy, the country's eccentric, aristocratic Shangri-la. Along the way, a wild and often desperate history takes shape, a tale of great colonies (Arab, Portuguese, British, and Dutch) and of the cultural divisions that still divide this society. Before long, we're in Jaffna and the Vanni, crucibles of the recent conflict. These are the hottest, driest, and least hospitable have been utterly devastated by war and are only now struggling to their feet. But this is also a story of friendship and remarkable encounters. In the course of his journey, Gimlette meets farmers, war heroes, ancient tribesmen, world-class cricketers, terrorists, a former president, old planters, survivors of great massacres and perhaps some of their perpetrators. That's to say nothing of the island's beguiling fauna: elephants, crocodiles, snakes, storks, and the greatest concentration of leopards on Earth. Here is a land of extravagant beauty and profound devastation, of ingenuity and catastrophe, possessed of both a volatile past and an uncertain future a place capable of being at once heavenly and hellish brought to vibrant, fascinating life here on the page.

Praise for John Gimlette "A gorgeously vivid depiction of one of the last untamed places on the planet . . . Guaranteed to arouse the adventurous reader's wanderlust." --The New York Times Book "John Gimlette's account is so rich in anecdotes, so suffused in color and dialect and detail that we are left with a sense of having somehow inhaled all this Paraguayan history and then experienced it through a nightmare or a dream. He has given us a cast of characters as vivid as any by Dickens or Waugh." --Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times "A hilarious, informed anti-travelogue [with] bite and style." --The Boston Globe "You couldn't ask for a more entertaining guide . . . For all his mastery of Paraguayan history, it's Gimlette's extravagant prose and unhinged enthusiasm that make the book." --The Seattle Times About the Author JOHN GIMLETTE has won the Shiva Naipaul Memorial Prize and the Wanderlust Travel Writing Award, and he contributes regularly to The Times (London), The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Independent, and Cond Nast Traveller. When not traveling, he practices law in London. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights

reserved. This journey begins with a bus ride. A few minutes from my house in south-west London is a large and yet barely visible community of Sri Lankans, in Tooting. They're all Tamils, mostly refugees and mostly from a single town, Velvettithurai. Nobody knows exactly how many there are, although the usual figure is eight thousand. Whatever the number, there are now more Sri Lankans in Tooting than there were ever Britons in Ceylon (even in 1911, at the height of the empire, the British population numbered only six thousand). But Tooting, of course, is only part of the picture. Across the country, there are 110,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, with twenty-two temples in London alone. For years, I've been intrigued by my Tamil neighbours. Perhaps it's their seclusion that's fascinated me. They demand little of the outside world; they have their own shops, their own after-school academies, their own charities, their own leaders and their own cafs (where lunch still costs four pounds). There are also Tamil newspapers and a special Tamil Yellow Pages, which offers a curious glimpse of another London: coy, jewelled and Asian. The Tamils (or, strictly speaking, the Tamilians) even have their own internal crime wave, vicious gangs with names like The Jaffna Boys or The Tamil Posse, who go at each other with knives, Tasers and samurai swords. In one year alone (2005), sixteen Tamils died at the hands of their own. London hardly seems to notice. As Sri Lanka's civil war (1983-2009) drew to a close, I decided to explore this shy community further, and to begin with the temple. Tamil friends from elsewhere had plenty of advice about what I must do (I mustn't wear any leather, and I mustn't eat any beef for two days before), but none of them would come with me, and nor would they ever allow themselves to be named or quoted in anything I ever wrote. That, of course, made me more curious than ever. I made several visits. From the outside, the Sri Muthumari Amman Temple still looked like a little department store. Its tiled art-deco facade now cracked and grimy like old eggshell had previously housed the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society. But once over the threshold, a new world appeared, which I always assumed was Sri Lanka. My eyes would prickle with incense, and the air was greasy with the smoke of coconut lamps. Upstairs, there were twelve deities arranged around the old shop floor, and the walls (once a delicate Bakelite green) were darkened with soot. The gods, all made of silver and bronze, were tended by twelve priests, each half-naked with hair down to the waist. It would have been easy to forget where I was, except for the odd London bus, glimpsed through the vapours. I was always the only white face amidst the crowds. The older men often offered me snippets of information, perhaps as a way of gauging my intentions. Our deities weigh six hundred and fifty kilograms each, they say, or, Five hundred people worship here every day. From time to time, the most important deity, the goddess Mari Amman, would be ritually bathed in gallons of milk, rosewater and orange juice, before being dressed again in a fresh silk sari. Around her, the worshippers would prostrate themselves on the floor, and stuff her coffers with money. I'd never imagined such devotion in England, let alone a mile from home. On the notice board was a letter, asking every devotee to give the temple ten thousand pounds. There was also a shrine to the Tamil Tigers. It looked like a four poster bed, but with photographs and flowers. For many people around the world, the LTTE or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has been the most heartless, cold-blooded terrorist organisation mankind has ever known. But not here. In this temple, the pictures staring back were of martyrs: a boy who died in a hunger strike; pretty girls in that distinctive tiger-striped camouflage. And these ones, one of the worshippers told me, were poisoned, with nerve gas.