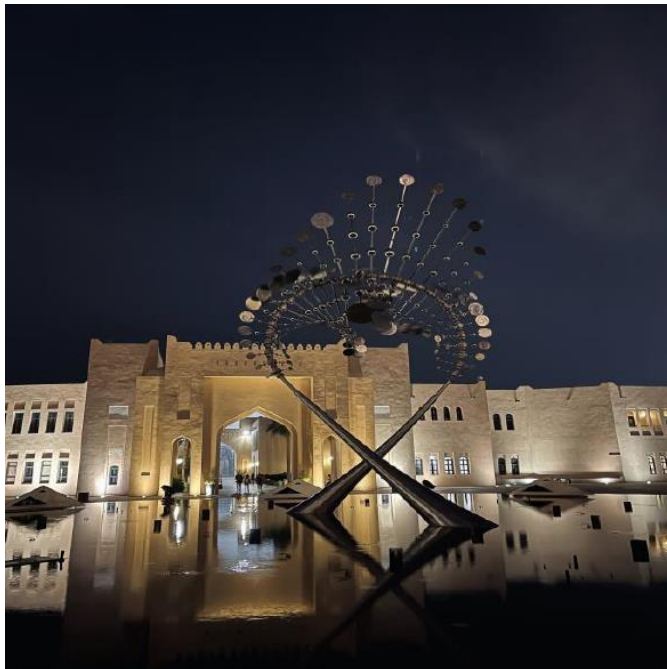


Early in the morning of 19th of April it was time to travel to Arlanda. As many of us had been eagerly waiting it was finally time for the first FAM trip after a long break due to the pandemic. We met up by the Qatar Airways check-in desk and went through the security check. It was 8 of us travelling with Eunice from QR and Madeleine from Pata. After a short wait it was time to hop on our Dreamliner that would take us to Doha. I had myself never travelled in Business class before, so it was a nice surprise when the gate agent handed me my new boarding pass at the gate. The flight went fast, could almost say that it went a bit too fast. We got to enjoy the hospitality and some good drinks & food. After landing to Doha, we met up with our guide who would take us around Doha. She was very knowledgeable, and we got to hear a lot about how the country is getting ready for FIFA in November. I had myself been to Doha a couple of times before for a stopover and I could really see how the city has developed. We visited many places through the city, for example Katara Cultural Village and The Pearl before heading to Souq Waqif where we enjoyed a lovely dinner at restaurant Parisa.



After the dinner it was time to head back to the airport where we met a representative from Al Maha who took us through immigration and security via the fast track before taking us around the different lounges of the airport. We also visited Oryx hotel which is a perfect place for someone who has a bit longer transfer, the hotel is located on airside and had beautiful facilities such as indoor pool and a golf simulator. After walking through the airport, it was time to board our next flight to Colombo which was operated by Airbus a350. It had been such a long day so most of us fall asleep quite fast after the takeoff, so did I (after a class of champagne of course as we were in business again).

We met our guide and his crew from Jetwing Travels after we had landed to Colombo. They'd be taking care of us for the first half of our trip in Sri Lanka. From airport we drove to Negombo where we had a much-needed shower before we had site inspections at Jetwing Beach & Blue. We got to enjoy some Sri Lankan food for the first time as lunch was served here. After lunch we started our drive towards Jetwing Lighthouse where we would be spending our first night. On the way there we made a stop for site inspection at Saman Villas where they had the most beautiful view directly from the villas with own private pool! We also stopped by a turtle sanctuary and got to release some of

the turtles to the ocean. It was such a beautiful experience, and it was just perfect timing as well as we were standing there on the beach as sun was slowly setting. After arriving to Jetwing Lighthouse we had dinner together before it was time to get some sleep. The rooms that we got were spacious and they had balconies towards the sea. It was very nice to sit down there and watch as the thunderstorm over the sea slowly got closer and closer to us. In the morning after the breakfast, we got to see the hotel in daylight as well as we were taken through their facilities and some other room categories as well. I liked this hotel, the staff was super friendly and the two pools on the property looked very tempting, unfortunately I didn't have time to test them.



Next stop on our trip was Galle fortes which is one of the UNESCOs world heritage sites. We walked through the area and made a short stop at Amangalla where they showed us around and told us about the rich history of the property. The hotel was very luxurious and felt very intime so it would most certainly be something for the guests who appreciates that and for them who likes buildings with rich history. We visited some other hotels and made a short stop to see some local fishing also along our way to Amanwella which was hands down the most beautiful property in my opinion during this trip. Real hidden paradise right by the beach with only just 30 rooms. This hotel would certainly be very suitable for couples looking to just relax and take it easy. The location is also pretty



good so the hotel could easily be added to a bigger itinerary, maybe spend 2-3 nights here just to relax before exploring the country further. We got to enjoy some lunch here before we drove to Jetwing Yala. The hotel was very big, and it was in a very secluded part close to Yala National Park. We got big rooms with huge terraces. The bathroom was open air and I thought that it was a nice detail. After our arrival I used the spare minutes before dinner by taking a quick swim at the hotel pool which was also very sizer. After the buffet dinner with some great food, little drinks, and a lot of laughter it was time to go to sleep as we would be having the safari next morning.

It felt like I had just closed my eyes when the wake-up call blasted in my room a bit after 5 in the morning. I met up the group by the lobby and we jumped on our Jeeps and drove a short drive to the entrance of Yala National Park. This hotel is perfect for those who are looking to visit the national park as the drive there was very short. It was quite a lot of cars waiting by the entrance and we got to know that during a normal day there might be 200-250 cars in the park. In the park we saw a lot of birds, some water buffalos and one elephant who was taking a bath. The scenery itself in the park was just beautiful and it was nice to feel the wind as we drove through the park with our open-air Jeep. After the safari we had a quick inspection at Jetwing Yala



before we started our drive towards Ella. On our way there stopped we at Jetwing Kaduruketha where we had lunch and a site inspection. The hotel is perfect for those seeking to relax close to the nature. Just before arrival to Ella we stopped by Ravana Fall to enjoy the beautiful waterfall and the mountain views on the other side of the road. In Ella we had a site inspection at 98 Aces Resort and oh boy I was sad that we were not staying here. The rooms had the most beautiful postcard like views towards the mountains and the atmosphere was so tranquil and relaxed. We got offered some tea from the hotel's own tea garden. After that we took us to Jetwing St. Andrews in Nuwara Eliya. It was such an interesting contrast as the temperature there was just +13 when we arrived. The hotel is located almost 2km above the sea-level. Back in Sweden that's called summer but in Sri Lanka it is so exotic that many people from the bigger cities travel to the area just to cool down a bit. The dinner here felt very special as it was the last evening with the Jetwing crew. They took such a good care of us, and we had so much fun during our time together. One of our group members had her birthday



and we of course celebrated that with some care and champagne. After dinner some of us gathered at the hotel bar by the fireplace to enjoy some drinks. The hotel was in colonial style, and we got to explore their flower garden in the morning, and it was so beautiful!

After our stay in the morning, we met up with our new guide and his crew from Aitken Spence. Today we would be taking the train down from Nuwara Eliya to Kandy. We got on the train and the whole ride was such a beautiful experience. The ride took a bit over 4 hours and most of us spent this time by taking pictures from the open doors of the train and enjoying the scenery as we

drove by the small villages and tea plantations. After our arrival to Kandy, we drove to Amaya Hills where we got to enjoy some lunch and some beautiful views. Then it was time to attend a Sri Lankan cultural show where we got to see dance from different parts of the country. We were staying at Mahaweli Reach Hotel for the night and after check-in it was time for some cocktails and mingle before we had private dining dinner with some representatives from the hotel. Such an interesting evening with a lot of good conversations and of course good food.



The next day we started the day by visiting the Temple of the tooth relic which is one of the most important temples in the region. It was very interesting to hear about the history behind it. After the temple visit, we made a stop at the OZO Kandy hotel which is just going to join the Radisson Hotels. Very nice property with fresh rooms and very good location close to Kandy centrum. We made a short stop at the local market before we took us to Spice Garden where we enjoyed lunch before learning a lot about different spices that can be used to boost health and wellbeing. On the way to our hotel we also stopped by a small local temple where we had the opportunity to take part of some rituals and we also got blessed by a local monk. We stayed the night at Amaya Lake which is a sister hotel to Amaya Hills where we enjoyed lunch the day before. We had small bungalows which were in very pretty surroundings.

We started our last full day in Sri Lanka by climbing to the top of the Sigiriya Rock Fortress. We arrived there at 7 directly when they opened and it was perfect timing as the weather was not super warm yet. It was quite some steps that needed to be taken before reaching the top but the view from there was stunning. After the climb we arrived back to the hotel and enjoyed breakfast and some free time by the pool. Then it was time to drive to Colombo where we would be staying at The Calle Face Hotel which is a beautiful property in colonial style right by the sea. At the hotel we had our farewell cocktails with our group, the crew, and some representatives from Aitkens Spence. It was a beautiful evening and the perfect end for this trip. We talked about our favorite things during the trip and everyone were convinced that we need to come back to Sri Lanka for a holiday trip too. At 1 am it was time to drive to the airport and take QR flight back to Stockholm via Doha. On the first leg we got lucky and got to experience the stunning QSuite onboard the A350. It's easy to understand why this product gets so much recognition, the suite offers so much space and privacy compared to the normal business class products.

I want to say a big thank you to Qatar Airways, Pata and our local DMC's and the great group. It was perfect first FAM trip experience even though the days were long and the schedule really tight. It would have been nice to have maybe a bit more time at the sites where we visited. Sri Lanka surprised me in really positive way, the nature was so pretty and the people so welcoming. The country has so much to offer and the diversity of it is very remarkable, one day we were standing by the beach under the burning sun and the next day we were freezing up in the mountains. As we all

now the country is facing some difficulties at the moment but I felt really safe during our visit and I understood that the problems don't really affect the tourists visiting the country. I have no concerns sending my customers there. Sri Lanka suits for many types of travelers as there truly is something for everyone. The flight connections to the country are also very good as we got to experience. Hope to reunion with the group in the future. A special thank you for Madeleine who made sure that we were following the schedule and Eunice who shared her knowledge about Qatar Airways and their products.

Until the next time,

Iivari Tamminen
American Express Centurion

