



Elephant Complex

John Gimlette

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Everyone has wanted a piece of paradise.

Sri Lanka is a small island with a long, violent and enthralling history. Home to thousands of wild elephants, this is a place where natural beauty has endured, indifferent to human tragedy.

Journeying through its many regions - some haunted by war, many rarely seen by our eyes - award-winning travel writer John Gimlette interviews ex-presidents and cricketers, tea planters and terrorists, negotiating the complex relationships of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities and the more sinister forms of tourism.

Each city raises the ghosts of old colonies: Portuguese, Dutch and British armies striving to claim the most significant ports in the southern seas; each site resurrects a civilization that preceded, and sometimes, outaced them. The political families of Colombo lead Gimlette through recent years of turmoil, survivors of the tsunami tell of their recovery and, tale by tale, scrap by scrap, the thorny truths of the civil war emerge - a war whose wounds have yet to heal.

As he walks in the steps of old conquerors, follows the secret paths of elephants and marches alongside pilgrims, Gimlette seeks the soul of a country that is struggling to free itself from trauma and embody an identity to match its vitality, its power and its people.

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