A day in the Central Hills

Posted on



The Victoria Reservoir resembles a painting at dusk and can be reached via the Old Mahiyangana Road

Nestled amidst mist covered mountains, the Central Hills of the island has many wonderful secrets within its folds waiting to be unravelled. Explore the fascinating beauty of the landscapes, shimmering waters and ancient grandeur.

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Driving through swathes of emerald green tea estates, we enjoyed the refreshing breeze. Suddenly, a patch of colour among the tea bushes drew our attention to a group of tea pluckers deftly snipping the leaves and buds. After stopping to snap a photograph we were soon on our way, in search of a natural pool.

A vine of bougainvillea growing across two tea estates indicated the route we needed to take. Soon enough, we were driving across the Kota Ganga Bridge. Stopping the vehicle, we walked back towards the bridge to see that we had reached our destination; the Rangala Natural Pool.



A panoramic view of the reservoir can be enjoyed from the Rangala – Teldeniya road

The Kota Ganga (River) flows through a narrow space between two boulders into the pool. At the far end where the pool is bordered by steep rock walls, the water takes on a dark green hue, indicating its great depth. Towards the bridge, a sandy riverbed emerges and pebbles can be seen through the comparatively shallow water. The Kota Ganga continues to flow as a stream once it passes the bridge.

A footpath next to a tea estate leads downstream and we eagerly made our way to the water. Aware of the depth of the pool, we were content to dip our feet into the cold flowing stream and to clamber over the large boulders. Eventually, we climbed up the footpath and discovered a small trail that led upstream.



The temple is built on several levels on the Bambaragala Kanda providing views of the reservoir

A small water conduit ran along the path on one side, while the Kota Ganga merrily gushed over rocks and boulders on the other. While the rainfall on the catchment regions can affect the river current, it remained playful on this particular day. Therefore, we happily enjoyed our walk.

After a thorough exploration of the Kota Ganga, we made our way towards Teldeniya. On the way, we passed terraced paddy fields, and sprawling tea estates. We were soon on the A-26, the road that connects Kandy town with Padiyathalawala. Once we crossed the Hulu Ganga Bridge, we stopped to observe a fisherman on a traditional outrigger casting his net.

We then visited the Bambaragala Raja Maha Viharaya, which is built on the slope of the Bambaragala Kanda (Mountain). According to ancient sannas (copper plate grants), King Keerthi Sri Rajasinghe has constructed the temple. The viharaya was a centre of Vidharshana Bhavana, and within its premises 59 well-preserved caves can be found.

A beautiful moonstone leads to a flight of stairs and a makara thorana (a doorway with an image of a dragon above the arch. A well-paved pathway stretched beyond, and slender trees that grew on either side provided shade. The temple is built on several levels, accessed by stairs. As we climbed up, the structures within the premises slowly came to view.



The sprawling reservoir can be seen from the Bambaragala Viharaya premises

On the first level, a cave drew our attention. Above a clay-tiled roof, an inscription was carved into the smooth surface of the rock. Intrigued, we entered the cave to discover a statue of a reclining Buddha. Painted on the low ceiling were images of deities and floral motifs.

To access the Image House, stupa and the Bo tree, we once again climbed a staircase. A reclining Buddha image is placed within the Image House built inside a second cave. Its ceiling was adorned with intricate paintings and motifs from the Kandyan era.

The small dagoba (stupa) is also built under the shelter of the same cave. Walking past the stupa, you can access the bell tower. Here, a bird’s eye view of the temple premises as well as brief glimpses of the Victoria Reservoir can be seen.

As we left the Bambaragala Raja Maha Viharaya, we did not forget to travel down the Old Mahiyangana Road to reach the Victoria Reservoir. By this time, the sun had begun to set, and the water twinkled under the colourful sky.

Surrounded by majestic mountains, Teldeniya had given us many amazing memories. As we left the town, we began to reminisce on the many beautiful moments we had enjoyed. To discover the beauty of the Central Province, head on a road trip to Teldeniya.



Kota Ganga forms the Rangala Natural Pool.



A trail past the Kota Ganga bridge leads to the cool water downstream.



The picturesque vistas of lush green tea estates of the Central Hills are part of the journey.



Hulu Ganga merges with the Mahaweli River to form the Victoria Reservoir.



Terraced fields are used for paddy cultivation.



The Bambaragala Raja Maha Viharaya was the centre of Vidharshana Bhavana.