

A mountain retreat at Tea and Experience Factory

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The original architecture of the Tea and Experience Factory exudes the impression of a tea factory.

Glimpses of a tea factory rising out of a verdant slope in Mandaram Nuwara is visible through the lush greenery. Towering mountain peaks provide a dramatic backdrop to the structure - a tea factory from the 1800s renovated to become the Tea and Experience Factory.

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Photographs Menaka Aravinda.

The aroma of tea greets the visitor at the Tea and Experience Factory. Surrounded by acres of tea in the Kabaragala Estate, it offers a unique hospitality concept to guests – to reside at the active factory and participate in producing Ceylon Tea.

Situated in Mandaram Nuwara, the Tea and Experience Factory provides an immersive experience and incorporating the traditions of the area. Managed by Theme Resorts & Spas, the guest is welcomed to the hotel with a Hindu ritual, applying a tilaka (red dot of vermilion paste) on the forehead, by the staff, consisting mainly of the residents of the nearby village and estate.

The hotel's history as a tea factory is carefully preserved. At the ground-floor restaurant, visitors can observe tables and chairs arranged among old machinery and wooden winnowing machines of the former drier room. The exposed ducts on the ceiling are also a remnant of the past.

In addition to the Sri Lankan and Western cuisine, the restaurant also offers a concept known as 'Appu's Cuisine', serving a range of dishes prepared with recipes passed down the generations. Guests can also indulge in romantic dinners, candlelit dinner or request a special dinner menu. Ancient machines are strategically placed to create a division between the dining area and the billiard table. The former engine room is also accessible for visitors, which will be converted into a museum in the near future.

At the small factory, guests have the opportunity of producing and packaging the tea leaves they pluck. A separate room provides an opportunity to experience a tea tasting session.

The ground floor of the hotel also contains the bar, furnished with customized furniture. Through a passage leading from the bar, guests can access the Sinna Dorei accommodations – the dormitory and two double rooms. The dormitory, which can accommodate 12 guests, is ideal for groups. The first floor – Periya Dorei – is accessed by the original wooden staircase. A lobby area decorated with 40 selected drawings by the school children of the estate, leads to 14 rooms. These are arranged within former factory rooms. The minimalistic rooms are decorated in monotonous, with a fresh sprig of tea leaves and a wardrobe made

with tea boxes, creating a connection with the overall theme.

The former withering room on the second floor has been converted into a spacious conference area where corporates and companies can host events; a library with cozy bean bags and a spa with four massage rooms, two saunas, and a Jacuzzi.

The outdoor temperature controlled pool offers panoramic views of majestic mountain ranges. A bridge connects the pool with the first floor, allowing easy access to the rooms.

The guest can also set off on hiking expeditions with the resident naturalist, to reach the summit of a nearby mountain or visit nearby waterfalls.

A shuttle service takes the guests to the Tea and Experience Factory from the Elamulla Junction, where two car parks offer parking spaces. The hotel is a haven to enjoy adventures, and relax in the hill country.

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