A Retreat in the Wild

Posted on



The Nil Manel Floating Villa, captivatingly lit up at night

The Kalundewa Retreat offers an escape into nature replete with all comforts; for the discerning traveller.

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If you know which route to take, you can very easily escape the commerce of Dambulla town. In virtually no time we were in a calm land lapped by waters and curtained by brooding trees, a skyline of purple mountains sketched dream-like on the horizon. We were on our way to the Kalundewa Retreat, an exquisite hideout set in 104 acres of peace and pristine nature. Paths amble through the vast property, like brown arteries, to be crossed in golf carts.

Seven units – chalets, villas and suites – are sequestered deep within the sprawling, serene land, leaving as minimal a footprint as possible on nature. 46 acres of the green land is agricultural; 26 acres are covered by sheets of deep, magical waters. It is a place for those who ardently want to be engulfed by nature, while keeping the best of luxury. In 2011, the retreat was crowned with the laurels of the Sri Lanka

Institute of Architects Award of Excellence for Hotel and Tourism. Each unit, named after local flora, is elegant and luxurious with a minimalist chic that allows them to open up and interact with the wild nature brushing against glass walls.



Guests are ferried to the Nil Manel Floating Villa in comfort

The hotel is an oasis from where to experience the wildlife and rural village life. 140 species of feathered fauna can be ticked off while unusual mammals like the Fishing Cat and rare butterflies wander about. During December, the lakes are animated with migratory birds. Among these routes to embrace nature is a walk along the river with an avid in-house naturalist; a ‘tree trailer’ where guests get to know the trees that lend their aura to Kalundewa; cycling through the rugged terrain; and conquering the mighty Kalundewa mountain – the solitary giant of the quiet retreat’s skyline. Absorbing the fascinating local culture, now on the brink, is made possible with many forays to neighbouring villages, where you get to witness the traditional farming methods and the rites and rituals at temples and homes. You

can also lend a hand to organic farming, pluck vegetables, and also learn Sri Lankan cookery, finally being able to taste the results. For those who would rather stick to the home comforts, fusion, authentic and international dishes are available, to be enjoyed indoors or al fresco: on a bridge, by the poolside or under a tree as you wish.



The Floating Villa is a private, romantic haven amidst wild waters

Kalundewa Retreat opens up an unbelievably romantic private haven for honeymooners, with no other life in sight – other than the wildlife and the discreet butler who will attend to your needs in a short period of time. Three honeymoon packages: Silver Dream, Golden Dream and Platinum Dream, are each tailor-made to offer the memorable, romantic, intimate, just-the-us-two experience every honeymooner wants to savour. All the details have been perfected down to candle-lit dinners in the middle of green paddy fields or wherever you fancy.

The Nil Manel Floating Villa, the latest addition to the retreat, is quite beautifully romantic. Moored in the middle of the biggest blue lake, the villa has its own Jacuzzi/plunge pool, a spacious dining deck upstairs and all luxuries. The Villa is a dream in a different element, cut off from the ordinary, afloat amidst solitude and nature; the most lovely, enchanting specially-built location in the Island, perhaps, where to celebrate love and start building a new life.

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