

Across The Mountains Of Riverstone



The skies were in steady competition with the beautiful mountains

The air was fresh, the landscape awash with the early morning sunlight, the blue sky was more radiant than usual, cotton white clouds adorning its vacant vastness. Multicoloured butterflies danced like miniature fairies in tune to the incessant birdsong; and as we slowly followed the winding track uphill, nothing prepared us for the enchanting spectacles of nature that awaited...

Words Kamalika Jayathilaka Photographs Prabhath Chathuranga

Soon after passing the bustling town of Matale high on the central hills, we turned off on a winding road towards Raththota, leaving behind all sights and sounds of city life; and as the houses and little towns got scarcer we adjusted our eyes to the approaching lush greens of the looming trees on one side and the bright light greens of the paddy fields on the other. The path was a steady climb uphill and gradually the trees got thicker and the air cooler and darker with occasional little streams of natural spring water rushing down the hillsides. We slowly edged forward through these dark snaking corridors of nature in silence

drinking in the unspoilt beauty of the Knuckles Forest Reserve.

Through The Rolling Hills

Suddenly, the trees began to thin, and we came out into the open. Sunlight poured out from all directions, and the skies were in steady competition with the beautiful mountains to capture the attention of the traveller. On our right rose bare hills, some strewn with tea and others with pretty ferns and tall grass, on our left the spectacular views of the mountains left us speechless. Down in the valley were long stretches of paddy fields like a soft green carpet beyond which stood more mountains blue against the glare of the sun behind them. Far back in the horizon beyond the blue mountains and as far as the eyes could see was a dull white haze. If you squinted your eyes and looked hard enough you could see far away reservoirs and tanks resembling large mirrors that reflected the morning sky.

The narrow road wound around the hills taking us from one to another of beautiful Riverstone, and across the whole range, and midway we stopped to stretch our legs and fill our lungs with the purest of air. Captivated by the breathtaking scenery all around we walked forward looking back over our shoulders every now and again mistaking the loud roaring of the ferocious wind for an approaching truck.

Pitawala Patana

The wooden sign said 'Pitawala Patana, World's End' and a footpath led its way seemingly into the sky. Minutes later following the trail we found ourselves walking upwards on a rocky surface. Trees were scarce and the grassy earth was dried up by the scorching sun. Little yellow marks made on the earth showed us in which direction to walk. The ascent was made all the more difficult by the overpowering strength of the gusty wind pushing us backwards, so that it felt like pushing a weight up the mountain. After 700m of trekking and trying to keep our feet on the ground and not get blown away, we suddenly stumbled upon a doorway of trees to our right and nothing beyond.

[below were lush treetops of various shades of green stretching out into the surrounding ring of mountains](#)

The cliff was fierce but the view was worth all the effort. The two rocks at the

edge provided good seating and a means to hold on. Below were lush treetops of various shades of green stretching out into the surrounding ring of mountains. The calls of birds echoed and mingled with the cooing of the wind. It was not only a 'world's end', but also a threshold into another. A few feet away was another precipice, a window to another spectacular view. Resisting the urge to remain spectators to the amazing scenery, we retraced our steps back to the main road and our journey towards Wasgamuwa.

[The river below, the blue mountains and the beautiful blue skies made this FEEL magical...](#)

Nippon Paalama (Bridge)

Henceforth began the descent and passing more twists and turns and bending roads we arrived in Wilgamuwa, a little town sitting at the foot of the mountains in the early afternoon. Back in the valley the scenery switched back to acres and acres of lush paddy, patches of water with solitary trees standing in their midst, herds of buffaloes and busy farmers tending to their fertile fields. Heading towards Hettipola we drove through flat land crossing the Mahaweli River through the Nippon-Wilgamuwa Bridge which is better known as Nippon Palama. The river below, the blue mountains in the far distance and the beautiful blue skies made this experience through the Japan-Sri Lanka Friendship Bridge exceptionally beautiful, magical and unforgettable.

As the afternoon drew to a close and the sun began its journey west, as flocks of tired birds flew in search of nesting trees, we reached our destination, the impression of the picturesque journey across the beautiful mountains of Riverstone still fresh in our minds.

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