

✘ Just an hour's drive from Colombo, the leisure lounge can be approached by both the low level and high level roads in Hanwella. At the 41km post one is almost abruptly greeted with the Ambalama's Restaurant. As appearances go, "rustic" comes to mind conveyed by the traditional coloured windows and earthy hues of the walls. Entering the premises through the lane by the restaurant, it appears to be a theme that permeates throughout.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara **Photographs** Hiranya Malwatta

Just over a decade old, Ambalama Leisure Lounge continues its efforts to preserve ecotourism. A stay here assures seclusion within nature. The walkways are like alleys engulfed in greenery. Accommodation is provided with the varying needs of the guests in mind be it a family, a group of friends, or honeymoon couple. One of the unique features of the Ambalama Leisure Lounge is its traditional style "cottages" complete with names borrowed from the bygone traditional village era. The three non-AC cottages are unpretentious abodes with double room accommodation. Kumbal Geya- the potter's, is made of clay, Kammala- the blacksmith's, of iron and Wadu Maduwa - the carpenter's, of wood. Each is complete with necessary amenities, such as hot water, room service and includes unique features that add to its charm. For instance in the potter's house, water is released out of a stone opening in a rustic style bathroom, in place of a shower.

For those looking for additional comforts there are the two new air-conditioned double room cottages along with television as well. Aside from the isolated cottages, Guru Gedara or teacher's house, can accommodate a family of five, the hospital dorm style Weda Gedara or doctor's house, is suited for two groups of four and Dutch style double rooms are available here as well. Weddings, seminars, workshops, day outings and other functions can be hosted at the air-conditioned hall. It can

accommodate up to 300 guests or for light functions or gatherings, a hall set in the reaches of nature is available. In the interior of the premises is the Ul Pan Geya or the natural swimming pool that visibly exudes the traditional feel that Ambalama embodies. The roadside restaurant offers buffets of Sri Lankan cuisine for all meals of the day and an à la carte menu of Chinese and Western dishes is available too.

A new feature that adds to Ambalama's appeal is the "Wadiya". Set in a clearing deeper in the woods, here one can enjoy buffet style breakfast, luncheons and dinners in the open air. Furthermore a dinner entails, indulging in meals under the night skies, in the warm glow of torches lit in the surroundings. Apart from a selection of three menus that can be pre-ordered for the buffet, barbeques can also be set up on request.

Ambalama Leisure Lounge: in the Heart of Nature

Nature's snug presence is felt at every corner of this restful abode. The green lawns, the shady walkways, the cosy cottages and the rustic ambience, all make for an apt summation of what it says it is - a leisure lounge, in the heart of nature.

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