At heaven’s doorstep

Posted on



Plantation Hotel Restaurant

Green tapestries, granting an emerald shade best characterise the placid town of Kithulgala, a town in the wet zone rainforest, home to winding hills adorned by luscious carpets of tea and rubber among its many biennial inhabitants. It’s here in the heart of nature’s quiescent abode that you find three splendid properties; Plantation Hotel, Forest Edge and Royal River Resort, designed and best suited to dole out a paradisiacal vantage point to the many wonders of nature.

Words Dilshan Senaratne **Photographs** Damith Wickramasinghe

Plantation Hotel is come upon on the wayside of the 18 bus route, a short driveway leading up to a bungalow structure, with an air of cosiness. The dim pastel illumination brings to life age-old intricacies from a time gone by. The very air is thick with history and is a fitting accompaniment to the interior decor, which consists of many authentic heirlooms. The portraits on the walls and the teak finish

chests all bear witness to the rich heritage held within the walls of the Hotel, truly a befitting reception to a haven of old world splendour.

If the simplicity of the lounge and the lower level dining area doesn’t enthrall you, the Kelani River flowing freely mere metres from the seating arrangements is bound to cast a hypnotic chant on anyone

The corridor, encased with simple white walls and a stony floor, lead to the vast remainder of the property. The Porsche tractor that stands majestically midway in the corridor is only a preview of what the Hotel houses within its car museum. A glass doored compound within the property holds many vintage cars, each possessing a rich and vivid history. The black Volkswagen Karmann Ghia alongside three proud Rolls-Royce models make up less than half of a truly impressive collection.

Should you find it in your heart to tear your eyes and heart from the humbling predecessors of all present day luxury automobiles, a turn in the central corridor leads to the lofty lounge area, complete with a simple, rustic bar. If the simplicity of the lounge and the lower level dining area doesn’t enthrall you, the Kelani River flowing freely mere metres from the seating arrangements is bound to cast a hypnotic chant on anyone. The dining area, lounge and a reception hall are all placed at three levels in respective order of altitude.

At the foot of the restaurant is a conveniently placed smooth rock adjoining the river and bathing around this part of the river is also an option. The accommodation is complete with eight deluxe rooms and three super deluxe rooms, all of which carry forward the minimalistic design of the property with combinations of timber and cement. A merger of nature and soul, the Plantation Hotel is a space dedicated to peace of mind and soulful indulgence.

At the forest’s edge…

Further along the route to Hatton, a small turnoff leads to a hilly passage at the end of which Forest Edge is located. The clearing in the hills is the fitting location for the four suite property, which overlooks the embroidery of spanning tea and rubber plantations. The relatively new construction has a brighter ambience in contrast to the dim lighting of the Plantation Hotel, but maintains the minimalistic design structure, which places great emphasis on the magnificence of the surrounding scenery.

All of the four suites are lined up along an open courtyard, which houses the swimming pool, sustained by the natural spring water seeping from the hills. A dip in the pool offers a panoramic view of forestry and hills, which on one end span an expanse of 60 acres.

The suites each open up to a common corridor with a railing, which looks to the misty pinnacle of Adam’s Peak. Sitting on one of the antique timber easy-chairs and looking out into the wilderness is a rejuvenating experience on par with the best Mother Nature has to offer on her own hilltops.

The restaurant at Forest Edge is open to the same breathtaking view as the accommodation and harnesses the true calm of the misty climes to offer the finest al fresco dining venue imaginable. The surreality of the venue draws from its surroundings and converges into a humbling setting for the senses.

Kitulgala is popularly known for whitewater rafting and an abundance on wayward boating centres are commonly found on the A7 route. In addition to its most glaringly obvious attraction, Kitulgala is also a prime destination for birdwatching and jungle trekking; a few activities facilitated by the hotels themselves.

Encapsulated in the waters…

A climb of 6.5 kilometres along a secluded pathway is the third property – Royal River Resort. Keeping with its namesake, the Hotel is shrouded in greenery and flows alongside Induru Alla, a boisterous body of water, which passes through the property and flows peacefully into the lush forestry. The hum of the river is a constant accompaniment and follows you silently even into the four suites. The swimming pool is bedded by natural rock and is a plunge away from the river, a truly enticing invitation.

The property is best described as a bungalow with an ambience of history encapsulated within its walls. Passages from the reception to the accommodation are affairs of tree and shade, casting illustrious shadows, giving the impression of a walk in the jungle on a beaten track.

Royal River Resort is the utmost romance of man and nature, granting an intimate escapade into the heart of the green hills.

The three properties can all be broadly termed as eco-tourist catalysts but to

categorise it in such broad terms does no justice to the intricate nuances of ambience, which make each property stand for itself at heaven’s doorstep.
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