Celebrating Kandy

Posted on



The graceful Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is synonymous with Kandy

Explore Kandy while you experience the magnificent celebration of history and religion as the city pulsates to the sound of drums…

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It was an uphill climb, on a long winding path to reach the Upper Lake View Point. Cosmopolitan Kandy flashes in all its glory from a distance. The beauty is spellbinding. The Kandy Lake stands still, except for ripples created by the wind. The pinnacles of many structures beam magnificently from afar. So do the mountains and the greenery. The long line of evening traffic is moving at a slow pace. Amidst this blissful scenery, the 88 feet image of the seated Buddha, a solitary yet serene figure set against the mountains in distant Bahiravakanda stands out.

Kandy, the last sentry of Sri Lanka’s regal heritage radiates a sense of quiet dignity in the midst of frenzied movement. It is an epitome of modern urban living, but its rich history resounds in every corner. The month of August is Kandy’s moment of glory. It is the best time of year to be in Kandy, to take on a journey of cultural discovery as the Temple of the Tooth celebrates its annual street parade, a time of jubilation as the city comes alive with colour from August 8 – 18.

Meanwhile, Kandy town is ceaselessly abuzz with activity. The railway station and the market are scenes of chaos mixed-up in human theatrics. Strings of shops

crisscross the streets and by-roads, selling almost everything, from garments, shoes, bags, phones, electrical items and home appliances to knick-knacks. Relatively new global food chain outlets to decades old family-owned eateries are prominent in Kandy. The remarkable sight about the ‘old town’ is that most businesses are still housed in colonial period buildings. In fact, most family-owned eateries retain a quaintness that is visible in the buildings and in their names. Bake House is synonymous with the locality and remains magnificent in a two-storey building that has retained its colonial identity.



The Kandy Lake is an epitome of Old Kandy

While still in the Town, step into stores selling curios, souvenirs and jewellery, which are in plenty. And traditional Kandyan costume jewellery, a unique form of period art, is distinct in design. Kandy is fascinating and captivating that taking back a souvenir would be to retain pleasant memories of the place. Of course an intrepid traveller would not only walk the length and breadth of the town and its surroundings, but will even dare don the bulky royal Kandyan attire worn by men. The saree draped in Kandyan style is graceful too. Learning a few steps of the

traditional dance and a few beats of the drum will be an experience.

The Kandy Lake is perfect for relaxing. The gentle breeze creates a restful and calming feeling while time stands still as one is amazed by the sight of distant mountains. Boat rides and feeding fish rice flakes are enjoyable activities around the Lake. On one side of the lake is the beautiful Queen's Hotel; a colonial edifice with a beatific attribute of sublimity, finely perched to afford views of the Lake and the Temple of the Tooth Relic. The nearby Church of St Paul, a rustic structure of brick masonry, owes its beauty to the stained glass window at the back of the altar. The Kandy museum is also a historic building, part of the king's palace, where the king's countless ladies lived. Nestled against the hillside is the British Garrison Cemetery, imparting a sombre aura as tombstones and black headstones mark the final resting places of British and Europeans. Likewise is the Commonwealth War Cemetery, a memorial to men who fought during World War II.

Surrounded by history and beautiful architecture is the magnificent Kandy City Centre (KCC), a shopping complex that has emerged majestically to characterise Kandy. KCC is an embodiment of modernity. From leading banks to clothing stores to consumables to almost anything one wants is to be found at KCC.

A drive around the Lake provides more highlights of Kandy. The historic Malwathu and Asgiri Temples are situated along this route. The preserved old structures of square buildings with overhanging roofs and temple paintings are stunning. The Royal Palace Park located at an elevation above the Lake is another place to explore and relax.

Thrill seekers can hike to Udawattakele sanctuary, home to large lianas, shrubs and trees, and wildlife. It was once reserved for the pleasure of the royalty. The royal water pond, Kodimale – the highest peak, ancient caves, temples and monasteries are cocooned in Udawattakele.

Embrace the charisma of the ancient citadel by staying at The Kandy House, a boutique hotel in a two centuries old manor of aristocratic bearings. Overlooking the Hantane Mountain is Amaya Hills, a beautiful hotel resting on a forested peak. At the foothills of Mount Pleasant, Randholee gazes at mist covered mountains. Experience life as the British tea planters did at Taylors Hill neighbouring the first Sri Lankan tea estate planted by James Taylor. In close proximity to the Kandy city is the chic OZO Kandy, pampering the indolent.

Choices in Kandy are plenty, which makes for a pleasant escape in the hills.