

Cinnamon Wild Yala Where Nature and Splendour Mingle



Lush greenery decked the hotel grounds while the chirping of birds and the soft chattering of grey langurs lurking in the trees filled the air. We were at Cinnamon Wild Yala, wandering around savouring these enchanting encounters, where guests are able to experience nature up close and personal.

Words Krishani Peiris **Photographs** Indika De Silva

Sprawled along two acres, Cinnamon Wild Yala sits bordering the Palatupana entrance of the Yala National Park and it is clear that much attention was paid to preserve the natural wilderness while building the Hotel. The journey to the Hotel itself is quite an adventure as guests have to travel through a dirt road lined with small jungle areas and with each step and bend the anticipation of encountering a wild elephant or some other animal is enhanced. It was the same for us and as we drew near the Hotel, we were rewarded with glimpses of a pelican perched on a rock as well as a crocodile sun bathing in a small islet located in the middle of the water body fringing one side of Cinnamon Wild Yala.

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Stepping into the reception area, the breathtaking batik designs of animals and flowers adorning the ceiling in vibrant colours entranced us while wooden and green tones with soft hues dominated the decor at the Hotel. The pool area, beyond, glimmered in the sun rays beckoning to take a dip in its cooling depths and lounge chairs arranged around presented the perfect setting to relax while enjoying the random appearances of wild life that has designated the Hotel grounds as part of their territory. Also located in the first floor is the main bar named Pug Marks Bar where an à la carte menu and a variety of refreshing beverages await to delight the palettes of guests.

The second floor is dedicated to Tuskers, the main restaurant, where a multitude of mouthwatering cuisines in the form of western and local dishes are served. Comfy seats and tables are spaciouly spread to accommodate 140 diners or more and as night falls lights are lit to create a mellow glow, which renders an exalted ambience to relish each dish. Another flight of stairs leads to the observation deck where one could enjoy a 360 degree panoramic view of the surrounding area. Cushy sofas and an ever present breeze with views of the forest, punctured with roof tops of the Hotel chalets on one side and the Indian Ocean on the other, makes this space a favourite among visitors who seek to lounge around observing the ongoings of Yala.

Cinnamon Wild Yala is equipped with sixty Jungle Chalets and eight Beach Chalets that are interconnected with narrow pathways leading to and fro from the chalets. The Beach Chalets are hoisted up on stilts to provide a better view and the Jungle Chalets are located on the ground with some linked to provide a getaway for the entire family while one chalet is even furnished with wheelchair accessibility. Swathed in wood, white and yellow hues each chalet is arrayed with a myriad of amenities to ensure the utmost comfort of guests. An escort service is available for visitors who wish to stroll around the Hotel between the hours of six in the evening and seven in the morning as a precautionary measure, since Cinnamon Wild Yala is akin to a natural habitat for animals, especially at night. However, many lodgers are enchanted by this prospect as it provides a unique and enjoyable stay where they are able to experience nature without having to wander far from the comforts of the Hotel.

Taking a small pathway that wound around a beach chalet we stumbled on to the beach where waves rolled in an seemingly endless parade. Though there were signs cautioning against swimming, the breeze along with the seascape more than made up for this lack as a sense of everlasting tranquillity and beauty engulfed our senses. Besides enjoying the ocean, guests can select from a variety of activities such as safaris to Yala National Park - during the day and night with infrared goggles, nature walks and much more.

As night fell, a spell seemed to slowly weave around Cinnamon Wild Yala holding all captive

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in its grasp with golden and orange illuminations radiating warmth. Beyond the comfort of light, through the pitch darkness, the muffled calls of the wild could be heard as from a distant dream. Breaking away from this spell we made our way out of the Hotel, and looking across the water body bordering Cinnamon Wild Yala we were unable to tear our gaze from the captivating lights of the Hotel that were reflected on the shimmering waters.

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