



Evening ambience at the Cloud Café

Nestled in the heart of the city, amongst the hustle and bustle of one of Colombo's liveliest streets, lies Colombo Courtyard, considered to be the first boutique hotel in South Asia to be CarbonNeutral® certified.

Words Celine Akshay **Photographs** Indika De Silva

Having implemented multiple ways to reduce their carbon footprint, this hotel has proved that being eco-friendly does not mean compromising on style. Right from inception, architect Sunela Jayawardena has curated the eclectic environmental design with each decorative piece, lampshade and chair having its own unique story. The 32 rooms including 15 suites at the hotel are each exclusively designed with an eco-friendly yet contemporary fusion style.

Both aesthetically and responsibly, Colombo Courtyard stands as a hotel with a conscience, educating and allowing guests to be a part of reducing the inevitable reality facing our planet today.

The different surfaces, textures and colours that one is exposed to when entering the hotel, exude a certain charm and flair as the pairing of nature with that of the industrial makes an environmentally chic statement.

The vast open spaces in the lobby resemble a courtyard, with an abundance of plants in the entrance to improve air quality from the street, bamboo hedges to separate different seating areas and water bodies interspersed to cool surroundings as opposed to using air conditioning.

Feeling at one with nature is then complemented with sustainable art that can be seen in the centre of the lobby such as a tree, referred to as "The Giant Tree" intricately put together from recycled bicycle parts. Another interesting element is the lobby flooring that has been made up of old bricks, which were salvaged from a number of dilapidated buildings.

This theme of upcycling—using products classified as waste and converting them into new materials—is a prominent feature and can be seen consistently throughout the hotel.

Each of the dining areas: Scarlet Room, Amber poolside, Cloud Café and Loft Lounge Bar, incorporate this approach while also projecting a different ambience. The Loft Lounge Bar is

a definite must-go and one of Colombo's trendiest hotspots.

Guests can enjoy a cocktail while either sitting by the bar on stools made from rustic tractor seats or on couches made from hospital beds. The décor is attractive and eye-catching while also being environmentally conscious.

The vision of Colombo Courtyard aims to address the key issue of climate change—from the alarming rise of global warming to water scarcity and food shortage being amongst the most important. They have joined the world's green movement and have successfully managed to address these particular issues head on in their daily running of the hotel. Having focused on energy saving, Colombo Courtyard has installed solar panels for water heating and generating electricity. In addition to this they use CFL and LED bulbs as well as gas burners instead of electric ones in the kitchen.

All restaurants and bars at the hotel serve food only from an à la carte menu to avoid food wastage from buffet service. Another key practice is rainwater collection, which reduces water usage for plant watering.

In 2013, Colombo Courtyard underwent a Greenhouse Gases assessment carried out by the Carbon Consulting Company to measure emissions produced by the hotel and to calculate their carbon footprint, which was quantified under three areas.

This took place during the course of a year and was pivotal in allowing the hotel to achieve CarbonNeutral® certification. The assessment was needed to fully examine where they were offsetting emissions to be able to introduce alternative solutions. Until now, Colombo Courtyard continues to monitor its carbon footprint with the help of a Carbon Management Response Plan. Future endeavours include an online marketing campaign to demonstrate achievements and raise awareness.

Preserving our planet is by no means an easy feat but one that is essential for the future of our children and generations to come. Colombo Courtyard has pioneered a wave of awareness by turning CarbonNeutral® and hopes to inspire others to follow suit.

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