Discovering Hiriwadunna

Posted on
A boatride along Hiriwadunna Wewa offers scenic views against the backdrop of Pidurangala and Sigiriya

The sight of bullock carts caught our attention as we reached the Hiriwadunna Wewa one morning. With the breeze from the reservoir blowing towards us – cooling from the rising sun, we decided to explore the quaint village of Hiriwadunna in Habarana.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe
Photographs Menaka Aravinda and Geeth Viduranga

Bullock Cart Ride

Stately and sturdy bulls were tied to the carts. We eagerly hopped into one and started our journey to explore the village around. The bulls proceeded together almost as one, there was a rhythm to the way they moved. Occasionally the cart owner had to give a shout to make them stay on course, almost like a parent requesting a child to behave. We passed lush paddy fields and village life. There were plenty of aquatic birds and lizards to draw our interest. Since elephants were known to roam the paddy fields at night, farmers had built tree-houses and these, in the morning light seemed more like play houses.

The bullock cart stopped in a small area with large trees. We stepped off and took a moment to pet the bulls in gratitude, with guidance from their owner. And then the next part of our journey began by boat.



Exploring the village in a bullock cart

Chena cultivation and a village meal

Along a small canal bordered by fertile growth of greenery, the boat glided on the water. The boatman steered the boat using the oar with graceful movements and we soon reached rich land being utilized for chena cultivation. The soil was being prepared for the next planting season. Various types of vegetables such as pumpkin, chillies and gourd were being planted by the farmers.



A typical village meal – pol roti, pol sambol, hakuru and refreshing beli mal drink

In one of the village houses a freshly prepared meal of pol roti acccompanied by a dish of spicy pol sambol was waiting for us. Steaming hot, it was just the right thing to replenish our energy. We washed down the meal with a warmly brewed cup of beli mal tea and hakuru.

> Filled with lotus plants, there were flowers visible above the water like decorative elements. The boatman made a hat from the lotus leaf and a pretty garland with the lotus flower and stem.

Rice was winnowed and then pounded in the vangediya at the village house to

prepare flour for their next meal. Life was definitely simple and peaceful in Hiriwadunna Wewa.

Hiriwadunna Wewa

We continued the rest of the journey in the boat along the canal and we emerged on the waters of the Hiriwadunna Wewa. It is believed that this reservoir was built by King Wasamba and provided water to the paddy fields and agricultural lands in the area.

Filled with lotus plants, there were flowers visible above the water like decorative elements. The boatman made a hat from the lotus leaf and a pretty garland with the lotus flower and stem. The hat of course provided great respite from the rising sun.



A tranquil view of the Hiriwadunna Wewa

As we reached the middle of the reservoir, the magnificent view was beautiful. Pidurangala and Sigiriya stood like sentinels of a by-gone era; one a monastery, the other a rock fortress. The tranquil environment was pleasant with only the sounds of the swishing water and birds.

Just a three-hour drive from Colombo, a sojourn in the tranquil village of Hiriwadunna in Habarana will definitely give you a breath of fresh air and scenic views.



