Float Away in the City

Posted on



The Floating Restaurant – Diyatha Cruise making its way along the Diyawanna and the brightly lit Boardwalk Restaurant and walkway in the distance

In the mellow embrace of the evening, the Diyatha Cruise glides surreptitiously along the Diyawanna Oya. Setting off on the vessel is much like being cast into one's own world as the steady stream of traffic, the lights and sounds of the city life fade into a placid background. Initiated by Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, this is the Floating Restaurant, the newest venture of Waters Edge in collaboration with the Navy.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda

Passers by on the busy main road towards Battaramulla would be none the wiser of

the presence of a large houseboat rocking gently on the Diyawanna. The Floating Restaurant is conveniently stationed beside the banks below road level, it is indeed remarkable in that the venue escapes the shackles of the city that surrounds it.

The house boat has been designed from scratch by the construction and egineering arm of the Navy and promises a novel experience at first glance. Its spacious timber floor area, cleverly woven coir embellishments and the bamboo tats and roof, capture a warm and inviting ambience. The Restaurant anchored towards the Rajagiriya side of the lake is ideally for dining out upon the lake as it sets sail on a two hour journey. It is by evening as the sun begins to set that the Diyatha Cruise comes alive. The soft lighting within the ship against the darkening skies, the gently shimmering waters of the Diyawanna and the distant echo of the city reveal the Restaurant’s true character.

For dining, the boat sets sail at eight in the evening and cruises along for two hours till ten in the night. An additional hour is accommodated for guests to linger on and unwind after a hearty meal in the lulling atmosphere. Food and beverages are provided by Waters Edge and a warm buffet is opened, as is a well stocked bar to cater to a minimum of 20 people required aboard to set sail. The route falls through evolving landscapes and allows one’s gaze to rest upon the hypnotic stream of traffic on the roadside, the twinkling lights of the Boardwalk Restaurant and walkway in the distance or the uninhabited island amidst the water. The crew on board includes the Captain of the boat along with navy personnel who ensure the smooth running of the boat’s operations and the safety of the guests. Essentially, a chef, sou chef and stewards of Waters Edge ensure the guests every comfort during each outing. Wooden tables and chairs are placed comfortably apart and can accommodate up to 40 guests.

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If one wishes, however, the boat may even be hired for just a dinner for two if so desired. In the candle lit interior it would certainly make for a rare and memorable evening. Cast out in the waters it ensures a distinct seclusion and privacy, as opposed to the upbeat atmosphere of a busy restaurant. For this reason the boat is already much favoured for such events as business dinners, meetings and corporate events where easy conversation can ensue undisturbed. With the substantial floor space, in case of cocktails the boat can accommodate up to 70 people inclusive of the crew. In case of an emergency where guests require to

disembark, feeder boats arrive promptly to transport guests safely back ashore. These boats also supply additional food, water and other necessities when required. If this is not all, the boat also houses washroom facilities for both gents and ladies.

Aside from dining, the Diyatha Cruise is also available to the public, at four, five and six in the evening for short tours that last 45 minutes. These tours also require a minimum of 15 guests onboard who may order snacks and drinks to accompany as they breeze along the still waters of the lake.

As the day melts into the night, enveloped in a candle-lit aura and a soothing breeze, the Floating Restuarant is an ideal getaway to lose all concept of time. Amidst light conversation or simply gazing upon the steady ripples of the Diyawanna, it is indeed a world away in the city.

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