In the midst of nature

Posted on



Picturesque and calm, the four cabana’s reflecting beautifully on the lake

We were travelling on the A9 heading towards the northern tip of Sri Lanka, when at Medawachchiya we came across a quaint row of cabanas reflecting on a lake. We were at the Boo Oya Nature Resort.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda

The owner of the property, T V S Menaka is actually an artist and sculptor, who has had numerous exhibitions particularly in Europe. However his interest in constructing buildings prompted him to develop this unique property. He selected the property while visiting the area and having had a bath at the Boo Oya he

decided that this was the ideal place for the hotel. The A9 runs right in front of the hotel where the main building, housing the restaurant and lounge, faces the main road. The man-made tank buffers the sound of the road from the four cabanas which are situated on the other side of the lake.

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Spread over eight acres the hotel is built with seven cabanas in total and consists of two sections. The front area, which includes the four cabanas facing the lake and the three individual cabanas which are farther into the property surrounded by natural habitat, where guests can live closer to nature. The aim was to make all the buildings blend into the natural landscape.

The cabanas in front are well furnished and are double rooms. The bathrooms are interesting with open sky bathing areas. From the entrance as you walk towards the cabanas the sound of the road recedes and the cooling breeze from the lake relaxes you. All buildings in this hotel have been built using recycle material and in case of the cabanas, railway sleepers have been used for the steps as well as the decks. Furthermore the outer walls are of clay.

One may wonder why this property is named Boo Oya Nature Resort, well it is because the river Boo Oya flows along the border of the property. This river is fed by numerous fresh water springs and as such is said to never dry up. This could be the reason that although the sun was bright it was cool and green within the property.

Two of the cabanas are located on the banks of the river within a short distance from each other. One is a two storeyed building built using wood. The room on the ground floor is closed with a couple of windows and it opens out to an open bathroom. The room upstairs is totally open to the elements, of course there is a roof but there are no walls as such. The design and placement of the buildings depend on the location as such this was deemed as the best location for a two storey cabana as there are many large trees such as Kumbuk, and there are the birds and squirrels as well. Therefore the top floor was kept open, with movable bamboo curtains, which could be used if necessary.

Another smaller cabana is built further within the forest. It is a private enclosure with a small room, a completely open toilet (can be covered with a bamboo curtain)

and bathroom. The idea is to be one with nature, where the entire area is covered with trees as Boo Oya flows just a few steps away. The sound of the river is very soothing and the hum of nature gives you a sense of peace and tranquillity. The double bed within the room is unique in the sense that it is a swinging bed that is kept in place by thick coir rope.

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Then, the final cabana, which is actually closer to the wooden cabana, is made out of clay. Tree trunks and cart wheels have been used to decorate the room. It has a small verandah and a spacious bathroom where coconut shells have been used as taps. This is a large cabana compared to the small cabana farthest away.

The colour scheme throughout the hotel provides a natural feel and ambience and whatever adornments used are local crafts and utensils that one might not even think of using as decorations to create a beautiful setting.

The restaurant serves an extensive array of delectable cuisines. A speciality is the village food that is made out of the vegetables from the locality, which is served for breakfast and lunch. Furthermore many of the cooks are from the village itself thus giving an authentic taste to the food. For instance, *Kidaran Ala*, which is a type of yam prepared by first drying and then fried before making it into a curry or a salad. *Kesel Muwa* or the banana blossoms are also prepared in a special way. However, western and oriental cuisines are also available.

The lounge on the upper level of the building where the restaurant is situated provides a free space for artistic discussion and creation. One of Menaka’s art pieces, which is of a woman has also been placed there. Furthermore, the art on the wall has been created out of discarded mirror.

Boo Oya Nature Resort also provides for camping such as ‘Pel Rekeema’ during the time that the paddy fields are prepared, as well as camping on the banks of a large tank which is known as Pawakkulama. These campsites are located a short distance away from the hotel.

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