Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa: A Boutique Retreat with Timeless Character

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In the heart of Rambukkana lies Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa.

Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa stands as a testament to the power of passion in turning back the clock. This 19-century bungalow embodies the beauty of second chances – transformed from a fading relic into a carefully restored masterpiece, revived to its former glory and into a luxurious boutique hotel.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.

Some places exude such profound quietude that they seem designed only for one kind of traveler – those searching for the pure bliss of a truly restful holiday. Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa in Rambukkana captures that rare essence of escape, offering the kind of retreat an exclusive few would deeply cherish.

The seven-acre property exudes many emotions. The sense of seclusion. The old-world charm. The storied history and the natural environment combine to create an extraordinary holiday. Once known to the villagers of Wahawa as Peacock Villa, the stately house was both palace and mansion in a raw landscape of greenery, standing at one point amid more than a hundred acres of flourishing cultivation.

The house was never called a walauwa – a term once reserved for the residence of aristocrats. Yet, its architecture is a striking blend of South Asian and European influences. Built in early 1870’s by Pemanis, an entrepreneur, it was christened Peacock

Villa and later became known as Hector Bungalow, after the original owner’s grandson. The house had seen better days when the property was acquired in 2022 from the fourth generation of Pemanis’s descendants. Still, it stood tall, a proud vestige of a bygone era, quietly telling the story of its ambitious founder.

Sent away by his family to Rambukkana, Pemanis built a flourishing business based on cultivating papaya, spices, and areca nuts. He strategically and surreptitiously acquired land, often at the expense of local residents, until his holdings expanded to nearly 400 acres. His fortunes grew with exports of papaya milk and areca nuts to India, and with them, so did his ambitions. Like many who sought to display their newfound wealth, Pemanis poured his success into an architectural statement.

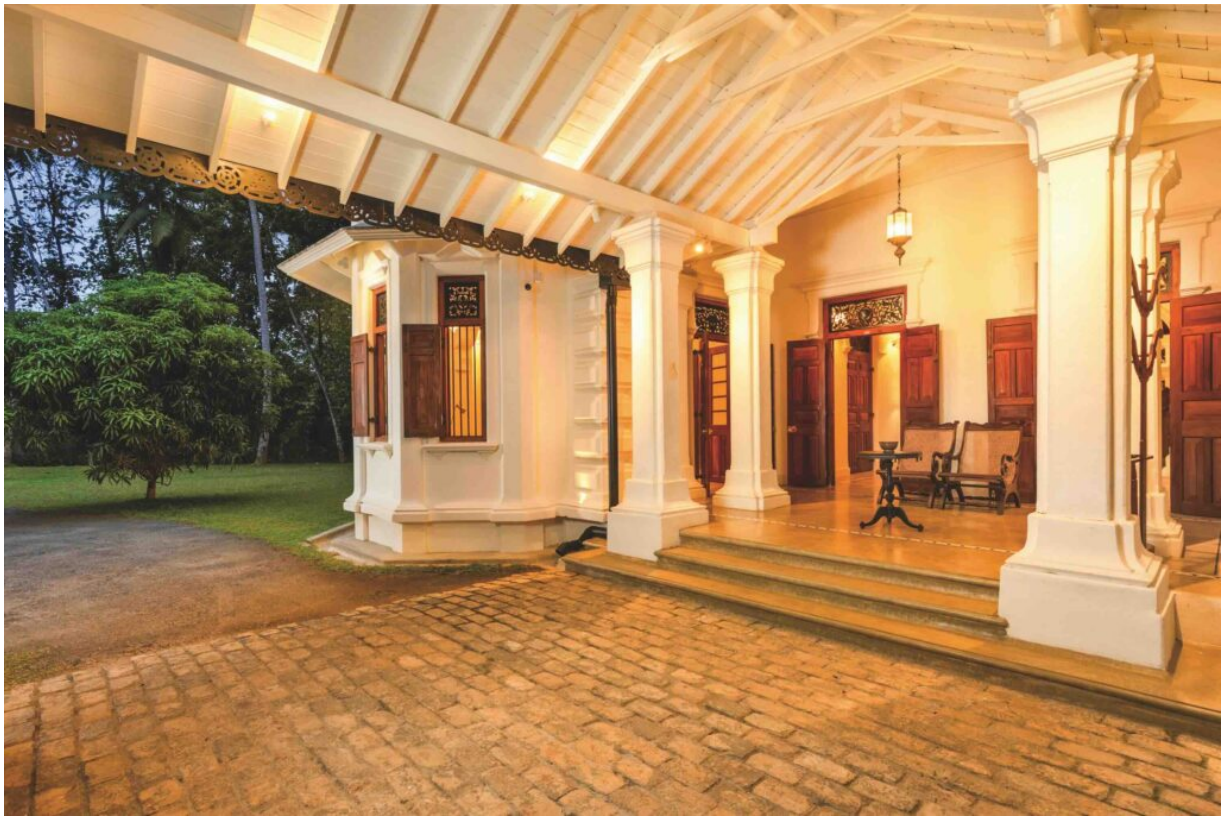
Peacock Villa was conceived as the ultimate symbol of his prosperity. He spared no expense, commissioning the finest materials, including bricks made on-site and designing the house according to the ancient Indian architectural principles of Vastu Shastra.

The house’s design is intentional, capturing the grandeur its first owner envisioned. Its façade is striking with a sweeping front porch supported by stately columns and adorned with intricate moldings. More than its crisp white exterior, the perfect symmetry and proportion lend the structure a sense of visual harmony. A flight of steps leads to the veranda and into the sitting room, where the most captivating feature is the ornate arched entryway framed by columns. This elegant transition defines and separates two spaces. The decorative moldings, rich in detail and maximalist in style, add a timeless charm to interiors. Adding to this character are the extensive carvings embellishing the tiled roof, windows, and doors. Historical records note that the woodwork was crafted in Ambalangoda, a southern coastal town celebrated for its master carvers of masks and puppets.

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Spread across seven acres, the property evokes a tapestry of emotions — the allure of old-world charm, and the whispers of history intertwined with nature, creating an extraordinary escape.



The entrance to Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa greets you with classic charm.



The bungalow’s handcrafted wooden staircase stands as a tribute to timeless artistry.

The handcrafted wooden staircase is a remarkable feature of the house. Its finely carved balusters and robust newel posts showcase the skill of traditional artisans, while the warm patina of the wood speaks to its age and careful preservation. The detailing on the railing echoes the decorative vocabulary seen elsewhere in the house – particularly the carved transoms above doors and windows, creating a sense of harmony and continuity in design. The upper floor of the house opens onto a balcony framed by an impressive carved wooden railing, offering a view of the front garden below. Every space is furnished with vintage furniture whose delicate carvings complement the house’s architectural details. Despite the richness of these features, the interiors remain uncluttered, with a deliberate sparseness that allows for openness and easy movement throughout the spaces.

The property features six suites: two junior and four grand suites, with a maximum capacity of 13 guests. This limited capacity creates an intimate atmosphere that appeals particularly to middle-aged couples seeking tranquility.

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Colonial grandeur blends seamlessly with the quiet embrace of Rambukkana, offering guests their very first glimpse of timeless escape.



Each space is thoughtfully furnished with vintage furniture.



The 19th century bungalow, infused with colonial elegance.



Within the bungalow, the indoor dining area sets the stage for memorable gatherings.

> At its heart lies Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa, an oasis waiting to be discovered in the quiet village of Wahawa. Yet, the true discovery lies within – a world of history, architecture, style, luxury, and comfort, all woven together in a home of timeless character.

True to its name, the grand suite is truly lavish; every space is designed for comfort and relaxation. Minimalist in style, the suites exude an air of quiet luxury because of the white walls, vintage furniture, sparse décor, and ample room to relax. The suits contain a bedroom, bathroom, and living area. The bathrooms are truly standout spaces, each as large as a bedroom. Designed as places to recharge and decompress, they combine light, texture, and color to create a calming atmosphere,

investing much personality into their creation, a fusion of expression and functionality.



Lavish in every sense, the grand suite offers a sanctuary where each detail is crafted for comfort, and every corner invites complete relaxation.



Grand suite features a spacious bedroom and a welcoming living area.



The bathrooms are large and impressive.

Courtyards were a hallmark of colonial-era homes, especially those built in the walauwa tradition, and Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa has three. The oldest is a long, narrow courtyard at the rear of the house, once the heart of daily life, where the kitchen and dining areas were located. Today, it provides a serene light source to the columned corridor that leads to the two junior suites.

A doorway from this space opens into the guest dining area, which is framed by two smaller courtyards. In the bungalow’s early days, this was the employees’ dining and resting area. It also housed two traditional “Vee Bissa” (granaries), used to store paddy for consumption and cultivation. In the past, such granaries were regarded as symbols of wealth and social standing, an apt reflection of the prosperity of the house’s first owner, Pemanis. The former workers’ rest area has since been reimagined as an open-air pavilion overlooking the swimming pool, where the staff create memorable dining experiences for guests. The dining area continues the vintage charm with antique furniture while serving as a quiet retreat—an inviting space to linger over a meal or relax with a book.



True to the walauwa tradition of colonial-era homes, courtyards remain central to the design.



Originally a workers’ rest area, the space is now an open-air pavilion by the pool, where staff create memorable dining experiences for guests.



A chill spot—an inviting place to unwind after a meal or sit back with a good book.

The property is home to various trees, including banana, durian, rambutan, coconut, bael, ebony, and teak. Remarkably, it boasts 23 varieties of bananas, inspiring signature dishes such as the locally renowned banana blossom salad.

At Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa, luxury is thoughtfully blended with Sri Lankan authenticity. Guests are encouraged to experience native cuisine, while kitchen staff remain ready to accommodate any preference or dietary requirements. The dedication to service is elevated further through personalized butler service, with professionally trained staff available around the clock through modern communication channels such as WhatsApp. Tailored for the boutique scale of the property, this attention to detail ensures every guest enjoys a memorable stay.

It has been just over four months since Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa opened its doors. Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of mainstream tourist hubs, it offers a distinctly different experience for the discerning traveler.

As the property prepares for the upcoming tourist season, it will curate new guest experiences within its tranquil and pristine setting – wellness programs such as yoga, thoughtfully designed all-inclusive packages, innovative dining concepts, and curated excursions.

Wahawa can be reached from Kegalle, Mawanella, or Kurunegala, with each journey offering a glimpse of the island's diverse landscapes and local life. At its heart lies Jetwing Wahawa Walauwa, an oasis waiting to be discovered in the quiet village of Wahawa. Yet, the true discovery lies within – a world of history, architecture, style, luxury, and comfort, all woven together in a home of timeless character.



Guests can relax by the swimming pool and enjoy the calm surroundings.

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