Kalundewa Retreat: In The Arms Of Nature

Posted on

Shrouded in trees, cast away amidst placid waters, or overlooking farming lands, the discreet dwellings make the best of its surroundings, their design a homage to nature’s benevolence. To immerse one’s self in the solace of nature, without the slightest compromise on comforts is the speciality at Kalundewa Retreat.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara **Photographs** Indika De Silva and Damith Wickramasinghe

If not for the pavilion style lobby first encountered along the path, you could very well be making a stroll along the countryside, oblivious to the presence of Kalundewa Retreat. A yet unidentified tree rises from the centre and the structure is built primarily of timber, steel and glass—modern minimalism that remains an unmistakable theme at Kalundewa Retreat.The pavilion affords generous views of the farming fields on one side and is open to the marshy Kumbuk forest on the other where a pier leads right to the waters. From here rafts can be taken out along

the small lake for hours of bird watching.

The first chalet aloft the waters was once a holiday getaway for its owners. In time as Kalundewa Retreat was offered for guest occupancy, two more structures—a bungalow and a chalet—were developed, tailored to offer the spoils of hospitality amidst nature at its most unspoilt. The chalets far removed from one another make up a total of six master bedrooms. And each room is named after a tree that remains at close proximity. For instance, the two storey Chalet hidden away in the marsh is built around a Bakmee tree and is consequently named lower Bakme and upper Bakmee. Damunu, Ehela, and Nika are the other christenings that identify rooms. The Bakmee Chalet, a light and transparent structure of exposed brick, steel and tall glass panels elegantly unravel a tasteful interior. Nestled quietly over the lake, privacy is easily secured while at each level of the chalet you become spectator to nature. Although compact in size, the tiered interior accommodates ample space to impart a sense of ease and being at home. The chalet is best suited for families with a capacity of up to seven members. An open-air bathtub, plunge pool, kitchen and pantry, dining and sitting area, and a pier that leads right to the waters are among the features that make for a comfortable stay. It is evident that the chalets have been built to accommodate not just comforts, but also nature.

The newest addition to the retreat is the Kumbuk Chalet at another end of the lake. With one master bedroom, the chalet makes an ideal retreat for honeymooners. This chalet simply disappears into the landscape and although more compact, is similar in structure, comforts and ambience to that of the Bakmee Chalet. En route to the Kumbuk Chalet is an outdoor seating area at the edge of the shrouded waters. Set nearby a pier, this is a thoughtful addition as it serves as an ideal setting to lose concept of time in complete idleness.

Located a distance away from the chalets is The Bungalow. Complete with three master bedrooms it is set in vastly different surroundings facing the farming fields fanned by the constant blowing of cool winds.

With much to explore, a selection of bicycles offer the best means to commute along the vast acreage while making the most of the views, breeze and the inherent charm of the surroundings. Aside from cycling, the Bridge that falls beside the fields serves as a meditation deck and takes you right up to the fields. Here you can sit in the shade of trees, watch farmers working the fields or meditate. The Bridge will soon accommodate a Spa and the space to practice Yoga. There is much to keep you engaged at Kalundewa Retreat. An in house naturalist takes you on nature

walks to visit herbal gardens, bird watching to identify among 120 species, and to take a peek at bee houses. You can even venture out to the fields and Kalundewa Retreat hopes to develop its organic farms further so that you can select vegetables and fruits for dishes of your own choice. At present only organic produce is used for the preparation of dishes, be it Sri Lankan or Western. Excursions outside the premises are also arranged, if so desired, in particular a hike up the picturesque Kalundewa Mountains.

Although an extent of 100 acres, Kalundewa Retreat will remain as three built structures, mindful of preserving nature that remains its best attribute. This eco-conscious nature extends to three notable measures in place that can be appreciated about the Retreat. For instance, a novel feature at the premises is the ‘Ulpatha’, a natural spring water swimming pool at a quiet niche of the premises complete with a deck and wash rooms. What is noteworthy about the Ulpatha is that the clean water devoid of any chemicals flows continuously throughout the year from its underground spring. Nearby a windmill, the only one in Dambulla, powers water to the tanks and in turn is used for irrigation. In addition, the use of solar panels generates a surplus of electricity.

Time stands still here and you never tire of the generous breezes that gush gently over the expanse. While there’s much to indulge in, a stay here is to reconnect with nature and relish in its comforts.

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