



Nestling cosily between a ring of mountains, acres and acres of paddy, lakes and trees lies the beautiful Kalundewa Retreat sublimely blending in with the sights and sounds of nature; the perfect getaway from the bustling chaos of city living. Its maze of red-brown gravel footpaths adorned with colourful butterflies and birds welcome you to its captivating tranquility, pulling at your heartstrings and instantly transporting you into a dreamlike trance.

Words Kamalika Jayathilaka Photographs Mahesh Prasantha

A mere 4 hours drive from Colombo, hidden away within the beautiful village of Kalundewa in the historic town of Dambulla lies this private chalet sitting calmly on the dull green waters of a seven acre lake. As you drive in through the narrow footpath unwinding at its entrance, the reception area greets you with its strikingly open structure made possible with a blend of wood, steel and glass. Hovering in the far away background under floating clouds is 'Lord Matterhorn' the rocky mountain (used also for its logo) rising majestic under the bright rays of sunshine. Facing the reception is the lake, and the wooden platform reaching out into the water through a few steps gives you access to the small raft that takes you towards the chalet.

As you step into the teak floored, glass walled chalet, you are instantly drawn into a cocoon of breathtaking serenity. Surrounded by 'Kumbuk' trees and the calm waters, the two-storied chalet sits in perfect harmony with its naturally green setting where you become one with nature. Sit in the lounge and take in the picturesque lake while you watch the dry amber leaves falling on to its glassy surface, relax in the jacuzzi under the shade of the protruding trees listening to the soft musical bird-song, or if you still miss your urban pastimes make use of the satellite-plasma TV, DVD and wireless internet connection provided in the two en suite bedrooms. The bedrooms each overlook a stretch of lush green paddy followed by a range of mountains making up the skyline and if you step into the balcony, you could catch the soft breeze humming in your ears.

While away the time in the comfort of this quiet chalet or explore the vast acreage of land and waters with its myriad bird species ranging from peacocks to Hornbills. If you are a notch more adventurous take a hike into the faraway 'Kalundewa', Naya-kumbura' or 'Kaluwa-gahala' mountains or visit the heritage sites of Dambulla Temple and Sigiriya Rock Fortress located close by. In the evenings, take a swim in the nearby 'Ulpotha' a freshwater spring diving into its pure, soothing waters.

Kalundewa Retreat is not just a place for leisure but is also an inspiring agricultural project. Its 100 acres of land and water are used efficiently for paddy, vegetable and fruit cultivation divided between the 'Yala' and 'Maha' cultivation seasons. Its fruit orchard, directly behind

the chalet, is lined with banana, cherry and avocado trees, frequented by birds and squirrels. Blending in and working away are the friendly village folk employed to look after the crop. Across the lake and beyond the reception another footpath lined with mango trees leads you to the garden of herbs consisting of 'Ranawara,' 'Nelli' and numerous other plants. The freshly picked produce is directed straight onto the kitchens, giving you an opportunity to experience typically Sri Lankan cuisine during your stay, carefully prepared by the expertise of a local lady from the village. Indulge in this scrumptious cuisine over a romantic candle lit dinner hidden among the trees.

Up on the observation deck more than forty feet above ground with only the wind to keep you company, drink in the beauty of the wonderful surroundings, the only place high enough to give you a complete picture of this wonderfully mysterious lakeside Kalundewa Retreat.

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