

Leaf Watagala

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The bungalow surrounded by picturesque views

An inviting abode set in an enchanting surrounding of sprawling trees and towering mountains.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardena | **Photographs** Isuru Upeksha and Geeth Viduranga

It is evening and the curtain is drawn to reveal the peaks of surrounding mountains. There is a yearning to sip a cup of tea reclined in the veranda in front, watching the water in the pool create ripples and listen to the orchestra of sounds. The beauty of solitude is unmistakably comforting at Leaf Watagala in Ruwanwella.

Like the allure of British period architecture is a perennial endowment of grace and style,

Leaf Watagala is yet another vestige of a classic bungalow. It is a hideaway that boasts openness in design, with a long veranda supported by columns and doors that open to manicured lawns that overlooks a glorious rubber and cinnamon plantation.

While the affinity with nature is apparent from wherever one emerges or looks from, the design of this property from its exterior to the design of its interior is simple and minimalistic with white open spaces. The flight of steps leading to the veranda opens to a sitting area decorated with furniture made of ebony and white wood; large couch, colonial lounge chairs, coffee table and unusually tall wooden candle stands, conjure visions of colonial grandeur and Sri Lankan 'antique' furniture. The walls are adorned with pictures of men and women at work in rubber and cinnamon plantations and factories in colonial Ceylon. The bedrooms, three deluxe rooms, one superior room with a private balcony, the suite, and the living room are all situated around a central living area and display minimalistic interiors with spaciousness marked with minimum furniture and details. The four poster beds accentuate the character of a bygone era in this colonial pavilion.

The large dining table for twelve has been designed according to a replica of antique Sri Lankan furniture with conspicuous floral and leaf motifs in ebony. The rooms are fitted with all modern amenities.



The spacious dining area in unison with the rest of the bungalow

It is not only the beauty in the bungalow and its scenic outdoors that provide a cherished experience. Agro tourism allows visitors to experience the many stages of planting, harvesting and processing of rubber and cinnamon.

According to Asitha de Costa, CEO, SMS Plantations and Leisure, the bungalow, situated in the midst of 55 acres of rubber and cinnamon, offers many experiences that are exceptionally different to everyday encounters. This is a diversification business of SMS Holdings, pioneers in the cement paving industry. Thus, agro tourism is promoted actively among guests, giving them the freedom to walk the trails, to tap a rubber tree, with a little help from a worker, plant a young tree or visit the factory to watch the various processes and activities that take place there.

A lonely track at the back is open for hiking to the summit of a nearby elevation that

provides a vantage point of surrounding plantations and mountains, an ideal place to indulge in yoga or meditation, or simple relaxation at sunrise or sunset.

There is history to be explored as well. Bearing the vestiges of the Seethawaka kingdom, the Berendi Kovil, the garden in Pethangoda and the king's tomb are relics that speak of the story of king Rajasinha. The Yakkini Mountain that gazes at the abode is the perfect site to vent a burst of energy. The well at the bungalow and surrounding streams make excellent bathing places. And returning from the outdoor activity, the guest is treated to a sumptuous meal, with a choice of Western or Sri Lankan, but to indulge in a delicacy of boiled cassava (manioc), black pork curry downed with local toddy will be uniquely Sri Lankan.

The rural idyll yearned and dreamed about by many is at the heart of Leaf Watagala. The rugged lanes lead to a ubiquitous country house that is in sync with modern requirements that are environmentally friendly.

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