Legging It Around Colombo

Posted on



Stretching along Colombo’s busy streets, the neatly paved pathways are an invitation to walkers. Some of these just recently rebuilt or reopened, they run beside towering buildings, giant trees and open fields, each assuming a character of its own, as they make way for all those who opt to traverse their path.

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The waysides begin to fill up as day dawns on the country’s metropolis. Among those on the street are the brisk walkers, youth in tracksuits and sports bags, children hanging on to their parents as they head towards school, working men and women hurrying ahead and folks carrying shopping bags and groceries. As the day progresses, the pathways continue to be busy, as more people – some alone and

others in pairs or groups – wander along them.

Running parallel to the picturesque Beira Lake, the walkway alongside Perahera Mawatha, which leads towards Sri Uttarananda Mawatha, behind Colombo's iconic Cinnamon Grand Hotel, is wrapped in tranquillity. The quiet paths, one adjoining the road and the second located just below, closer to the Lake, make for a peaceful walk. The gentle breeze that sweeps across the Lake ensures that even in the hot sun, it remains quite cool out here. A charming setting, the many buildings of the country's metropolis that tower over the commuters in the distance, form a striking backdrop to the scene, making the area ever more scenic.

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Moving towards Fort, in the heart of Colombo's financial hub, the newly constructed walkway opposite World Trade Centre extends an invitation to not merely those working around this area, but to anyone. A neatly paved, spacious path, the area is somewhat comforting, even though it is located amidst the bustle of the city. The scurrying businessmen and women who frequent the World Trade Centre seem to fade away into the distance as we leisurely stroll along the walkway.

Towards evening, the walkway on the side of Independence Square, which falls onto Stanley Wijesundara Mawatha, is usually crowded. Built especially for those longing for a quiet space to walk in the early morning or late evening, this path serves its purpose. Set away from the busy streets, there is a sense of serenity here. Many move in single file, some ambling slowly while engaging in conversation with their peers. Others, meanwhile, move at a rapid pace, waving their arms in exercise, but are overtaken by the joggers and runners, who pause once in a while for a quick break.

The pavement stretching along Bauddhaloka Mawatha is yet another option. The section of the road near Thunmulla Junction, which was only just recently opened, is shady and quiet, lined by giant trees. Walking along this road heading towards the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, it continues to run parallel to the Thurstan College Playground. At the playground groups are usually seen hard at cricket practice. Sans the walls or fences that used to mark the boundary of the ground, the walker is presented with a vast open field on one side, making it a pleasing

setting.

Just around the corner, Cumaratunga Munidasa Mawatha, Rajakeeya Mawatha and Reed Avenue have, for years, offered a space for those wanting a long walk and they continue to be visited daily not just by the commuter, but those longing for some physical exercise.

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Driving towards Rajagiriya, the pavements along Parliament Road and the Parliament Grounds themselves have also long been frequented by the walker. In the evenings, the grounds are crowded with those yearning for some exercise or friendly games, while many can be seen walking or jogging along the pavements. They come as individuals or in groups.

Along the pavements are also those getting about their daily chores, people walking from shop to shop, carrying heavy bags, and those merely walking from one location to another. As night draws, however, the road walkers begin to vacate the waysides. Sparkling under the bright lights of the street lamps, the paths reserve their invitations for the daily commuter and the occasional visitor treading their way.

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