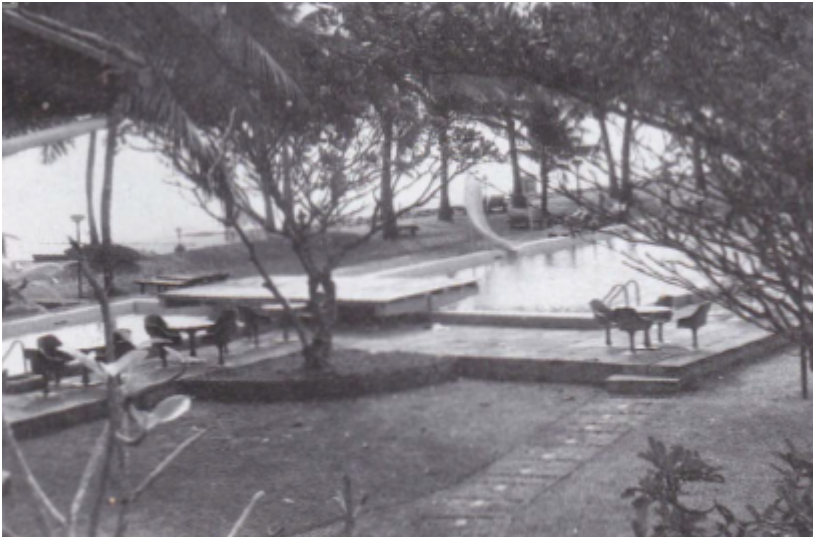


Meriviere Beach and River Delights

Marko Polo



The green lawn with the swimming pool by the beach at Hotel Meriviere.

Beach hotels come in many shapes, styles and sizes. But the Meriviere is one which gives the visitor the impression of abundant space. An impression which grows as your stay extends. The Meriviere is situated at Kalutara, a sparsely exploited part of Sri Lanka's western coast -44 km from Colombo, and to add to its many advantages is that the hotel is situated beside the estuary of the Kalu Ganga, one of Sri Lanka's four principal rivers, which flows all the way down from the Adam's Peak wilderness in the mountains. It's fine location between sea and river gives

the Meriviere a unique advantage of beauty and activity on two fronts. There are nearly 2 km of wide, white, sandy beach, almost tucked away in near isolation. A beach where the charm of the tropics has not been lost. It has shady coconut groves and quiet coves where one could have all the delights of sun, sea, and sand, with a beach all your own. If it is the fun of sea sports you are looking for, the Meriviere provides plenty of opportunity and facilities for skiing, snorkeling, wind-surfing and even sailing, sometimes in the outrigger canoes of nearby fishermen, who know the sea and its many ways and wiles from the experience of many generations. On the other front, the Meriviere opens out to the tropical beauty of the Kalu Ganga, ideal for all the excitement of power skiing, or punting

up the river on canoes to discover the exotic hinterland of Kalutara. You can row past dense tropical jungles, with myriad birds, spot wild boar and deer, and call at little hamlets where villagers still live simple unspoilt lives, in harmony with the river and all the green around.

Each of the Meriviere's 105 rooms is a comfortable retreat. Well-appointed, with doors and windows giving a fine view of the sea, the rooms are spacious, have ample double-beds, plenty of cupboard space for clothes, and are kept clean all the while. There is comfort in the cool sea breeze, blowing into each room. But if you need extra cooling, 33 of the rooms are air-conditioned with six of them special family suites, with separate entrances for children. All air-conditioned rooms are complete with bath, for a good hot water soak as well. The Meriviere's Restaurant boasts of a wide selection of Eastern and Western fare, with pride of place going naturally to sea food. Among the sea food specialities are Prawn and Lobster Each of the Meriviere's 105 rooms is a comfortable retreat. Well-appointed, with doors and windows giving a fine view of the sea, the rooms are spacious, have ample double-beds, plenty of cupboard space for clothes, and are kept clean all the while. There is comfort in the cool sea breeze, blowing into each room. But if you need extra cooling, 33 of the rooms are air-conditioned with six of them special family suites, with separate entrances for children. All air-conditioned rooms are complete with bath, for a good hot water soak as well. The Meriviere's Restaurant boasts of a wide selection of Eastern and Western fare, with pride of place going naturally to sea food. Among the sea food specialities are Prawn and Lobster Cocktails or Crab Marion, which is fresh crab meat moistened with white wine and served in the shell, truly a delight to see and taste. Main dishes from the sea include Lobster Thermidor -which is lobster cooked with wine and arranged in Chinese sauce, or Baked Crab, which is crab meat cooked with liquor, arranged in the shell and served with pilau rice and straw potatoes. Or better still, the Meriviere's own Fisherman's Basket - a variety of fish and shell fish fried, grilled and served with straw potatoes and Tartar Sauce.

For those who would prefer to stick to meat dishes, even so close to the sea, there is a good choice available in the Mixed Grill Meriviere, the Pork Chop with Pineapple, or the Grilled Chicken Mexicane, all with plenty of fresh green salad on the side. If you wish to try out the taste of Sri Lanka, the Meriviere also serves a fine selection of Sri Lankan Curry and Rice preparations, hot to suit your own palate, and well-spiced with those special spices the island is famous for. A

recommended dessert would be Sri Lanka's fresh fruits - Papaya, Bananas, Pineapple and in season, those delightful Kalutara langosteens (July/ August). The Meriviere's ample swimming pool is well located in a wide green lawn and has a safe children's pool beside it, as well. The hotel's Animator will keep you involved in tennis, mini-golf, pethanque, darts and table tennis, when you decide to spend time at the hotel, or, will arrange a special cruise up the river for bird watching and fishing, for which there are excellent opportunities. Meriviere's Kalutara location makes it a very convenient point from which to tour the principal places of interest on Sri Lanka's South Coast. It is halfway between Colombo and the old port city of Galle. A short drive can take you to the Coral Gardens at Hikkaduwa, the mask-makers of Ambalangoda, the lace-makers of Galle and lapidarists at Beruwela, or for a whole day at the Dutch Fort at Galle. A short drive from Kalutara can take you into rubber or tea plantations, cocoa gardens, or a rubber or tea research station. There are spice groves nearby, as well as, orchards of fruit, especially passion fruit and mangosteen. The gem city of Ratnapura is also not too distant from Kalutara, although it is best to plan a visit to Ratnapura as a one-day outing. Kalutara has been an important centre of Buddhism and from the early part of this century played a prominent part in the island's Buddhist revival. Which makes Kalutara and its environs quite a rich area in which to discover interesting Buddhist temples. Although many of them are not on the regular tourist maps, some of these temples have their own unique attractions, such as temple frescoes, and are also very good seats of Buddhist teaching. The Meriviere is a total experience. It does not have the restrictions of a mere beach hotel. Although doubly attractive due to its location which ensures privacy on the beach, it is also so close to the life of the tropical world of which it is so much a part.



A view of the Kalu Ganga flowing by. from the balcony of a room at the Meriviere



The Meriviere's Restaurant serves a sumptuous Sunday buffet.