Modern elegance in ancient Kandy

Posted on
OZO suite

Kandy, known for its rich heritage, fanciful legends and temperate climate, is one of the most popular cities in Sri Lanka. What better place to stay during your visit than OZO, a hotel whose modernity offers a charming counterpoint to the history that surrounds it?

Words Nawya Ponnamperuma | **Photographs** Vishwathan Tharmagulasingam

The friendly staff and reception

The dusty drive from Colombo to Kandy was tiring, but it was worth it. I came through towns devoted to fruit selling, pottery and *wewal* (cane) products; acres of plantations; and landscapes strewn with massive boulders. As I drove around Kandy Lake, the artificial body of water in the heart of the city, I was looking for a large sign to lead me to the hotel. What I eventually found was a surprisingly modest black and white board bearing its name – a symbol of the understated chic to come.

A short drive up a narrow road led me to an unpretentious blue building with plain glass doors. As I walked in, the modern décor of the interior hit me like the sugar

rush of a bonbon with a surprise at its centre: white tiled floors, sculptural ceiling, lit-up reliefs of trees on the walls casting a cooling blue glow across the space. The uncluttered reception – a beautiful light fixture hanging above it like a cloud of copper – is paperless: digital concierge software keeps things hassle-free for management and guests.

I sauntered into the lobby area – they call it the ‘Spot’ – to meet enthusiastic Hotel Manager Krishantha Damunupola. The blue-grey colour palette and comfortable furniture calmed my senses as I waited for him to arrive, while the bright orange and yellow flowers reminded me that though the OZO is international in outlook, it’s firmly Sri Lankan at heart. Next to the hotel’s business area – where you’ll find computers with free internet access – is an additional reminder of the locale: a series of photographs of Kandy.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served at Eat. The décor here continues the themes from elsewhere in the hotel, with white and blue the major elements, but with the addition of a bright lime green. The mood is modern, with wicker chairs and a carved screen offering a touch of heritage. The aroma of waffles, omelettes, and toast wafts from the omelette station while buns, pastries, juices, cereal and other breakfast options are lined up nearby. The ‘Eat to go’ system lets you grab a drink or a snack at any time of the day, or you can have a full meal in the al fresco seating area, luxuriating in the fresh air and surrounding greenery.

The 122 rooms at OZO Kandy – which fall into the four categories ‘Sleep’, ‘Dream’, ‘Dream Lake’ and ‘OZO suite’ – possess an elegant charm. ‘Sleep’ and ‘dream’ rooms come with views of either the city, the garden or the Kandy hills, while ‘dream lake’ rooms offer captivating panoramas of Kandy Lake. The suites are a jump up in size, and both mountain and lake views are available.

The concept behind the rooms is simple, says Krishantha. It’s all about giving guests a spacious, private, comfortable place to rest their heads. The aesthetics that govern the rest of the hotel play an important role in the rooms though too – a striking print adorns each one. Colour-wise, grey and blue offer a restful atmosphere. The rooms include all mod cons, as well as a work desk, sofa, balcony and free wifi. Each bathroom boasts upmarket features such as rain showers.

Another important amenity is Bommu, the hotel’s rooftop bar and lounge also Splash the pool area. On the day of my visit the cool water of the swimming pool reflected the flawless blue sky above Kandy hills, a blue echoed by the trendy

furnishings at Bommu.

The bar, which offers cocktails, snacks and shisha, is an ideal place to put your feet up. Your needs will be attended to by well trained, friendly staff and there are plenty of promotions, happy hours and theme nights to check out, including the delicious sounding ‘Kottu night’, when they serve the popular Sri Lankan roti, vegetable and egg dish.

Fully equipped with a meeting room, gymnasium, smoking area and strikingly beautiful surroundings, plus staff rich in local knowledge, OZO Kandy has plans to grow still further. Krishantha, born and bred in Kandy, watched the hotel being built. Stepping in and seeing it in all its glory was hugely rewarding, he says.

Jazz was playing throughout the hotel during my visit, from the lobby to the restaurant, and from the corridors to the rooftop. Just one more sign of OZO Kandy’s opulence, class and attention to detail.

31 Saranankara Mawatha
Kandy
Tel: (+94 81) 203 0700
kandy@ozohotels.com