Mountbatten Bungalow: A Royal Retreat

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Mountbatten Bungalow has travelled through time unscathed. Once a secret war room moulded in the Victorian age, the stately retreat unfolds its brand of rare old world charm a century later, fashioned in modern day trappings.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara **Photographs** Indika De Silva

A little ways away from the Kandy Town, the boutique-themed bungalow marks an elegant presence in a quiet precinct of Heerassagala far removed from urban life. An arched entrance heavily veiled with flowers leads to the property that sits amidst trim lawns, and the cool still air of the hill capital. At a glance the bungalow with its row of paned windows strikes a nostalgic chord. Restored carefully to its dapper state—not losing any of its colonial charm—it paints an idyllic picture poised against the Hantana mountain range in the backdrop.

Bordered by mountainous terrain all around, it’s no wonder that this once served as

Lord Louis Mountbatten’s secret war room during the height of war.

The first impression at the lobby area is of airy cosiness, and its stately history is established with portraits of Lord and Lady Mountbatten that hang on either side of the fireplace. Light and greenery of the gardens seep through to vitalise a setting tailored for ease and comfort. The well-placed furniture is in character with the bungalow that incidentally comprises of original pieces from the old war room, upholstered to plush comfort, and adds a touch of vibrance with subtle prints.

Step into any of the rooms and the sensation of being caught in a time warp takes hold. The bungalow accommodates four deluxe rooms and two suites, each very much a throwback to Victorian style. High-ceilinged spaciousness and polished cement floors showcase a four-poster bed and here too the space is further furnished with refurbished chair sets, salvaged from the past. While there is very much a feel of old regal grandeur, it does not take away from the warm hospitable character. While clawfoot bathtubs for the deluxe rooms are a quaint addition to the prevalent theme, Mountbatten has no failings in terms of modern comforts. While the two suites have Jacuzzis guests can avail of a host of amenities including free wifi.

The Victorian dining hall on either side of the passage that runs across the bungalow is all about finesse and fine dining. Ornate embellishments, framed pictures of old Ceylon and a series of old maps of Sri Lanka that adorn the walls add character and interest to the space. With views across the windows at each end, the light and airy atmosphere is vitalised by these finer touches. Guests can enjoy a choice of western, Sri Lankan or Chinese cuisine and the ambience here as with the rest of the bungalow is all about relishing quiet moments and privacy. The table linen is alternated to be white by day and black by night and the staff who serve too dress accordingly. There’s also means to indulge in novelty at the demonstration kitchen where an obliging staff will help guests play dress up in traditional Sri Lankan garb and whip up their own dishes. Novelties such as this can extend out to the tea estates of the property where for a few moments guests can become tea pluckers if they so fancy.

The outdoors of Mountbatten Bungalow has much to offer to idle away the hours. The four acres that surround the bungalow are ideal for a morning stroll and includes tea trails that falls amidst the tea estates. The silence is pleasantly punctured with the vibrant calls of birds that are not commonly seen elsewhere. Further down the garden is an infinity pool and adjacent are the spa and sauna

accommodated on a wooden deck that overlooks a scenic vista of the hill country. Guests can also have meals arranged on the deck to make the most of the cool outdoors and its many attributes. This corner of Mounbatten exemplifies indulgence, with hours of dipping in the infinity pool, Ayurveda treatments to relish at the spa or the closed confines of the sauna to relax in.

Wherever guests chose to lose themselves, the draw of Mountbatten Bungalow becomes clear—an abundance of tranquillity and quiet, and plentiful hours of relaxation.

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