Mystical Moon Plains

Posted on
The view from Moon Plains where the mists swirls below

Drawing the hoodie securely over my head, I huddled into the seat as the vehicle swayed every now and then, taking us through unfamiliar terrain. The cold wind whipped around, numbing our senses though not our roaming eyes that drank in the beautiful landscape.This is our journey to Moon Plains or Sandatenna in Seetha Eliya…

Words Krishani Peiris **Photographs** Mahesh Bandara and Indika De Silva

Rubbing the sleep from our eyes, we scrambled on to the safari jeep. It was six in the morning and the chilly air nipped at our heels and we shivered feeling somewhat daunted about having to travel so early in the morning in the teeth clattering cold.

However, by the time we neared the Potato Seed Farm, home of Moon Plains, the sun was rising in the distant skies and had begun to spread its warmth. Our apprehension melted away to be replaced by a sense of excitement now that we were about to begin our adventure in earnest. Before heading to the entrance, the tyres of the safari jeep were washed. Inquiring from our guide the reason for this unusual act, he said that it was to ensure that no contaminants were taken inside the farm, in order to preserve the sterile environment. Further, one is not to leave the vehicle until you reach the designated area.

The Potato Seed Farm, established in 1958, has been a restricted area for visitors up until 2014 and even now, only authorised safari jeeps are allowed to take visitors to the plains. Open between seven in the morning and six in the evening, the path that leads to Moon Plains is paved in such a manner as to not disturb the flora and fauna. The farm is spread through an extensive area of 472 hectares and crops are planted each year on 20 hectares, on a cyclic basis, where the particular plot of land is left alone for the next five years.

> From the very first stretch of the journey on, we were entranced by the scenery that unfolded before us

From the very first stretch of the journey, we were entranced by the scenery that unfolded before us. The entire area was enveloped in the warm golden rays of the sun, which as time passed slowly meshed into a carpet of emerald green and brilliant blue. Sun dappled verdant fields stretched as far as the eye could see before melding into evergreen forests. Here and there movements of wild buffaloes caught our attention and at times we stopped to better observe these animals who unnervingly stared back at us. At another point, several sambur scampered across our path, only to turn back and look at us intently before dashing off to safety.

The ride along the winding road that stretches between green fields like a thin strip of gravel was enjoyable and all too soon, it seemed, we reached our destination. A viewpoint has been built to provide an elevated space and we got down from the vehicle to walk up the short distance.

> The area provides a 360-degree view where nine out of the ten tallest mountains of Sri Lanka can be seen

If we were to say that the view from Moon Plains is enchanting, it would be an understatement, for no words could possibly describe the beauty that surrounds the plains from all sides. Compared by many to the nearby cliffs of World’s End, and hence nicknamed ‘Second’ or ‘Mini World’s End’, the sheer drop from the plains open up to cloud forests where mists swirl, painting a breathtaking picture. Silence reigned, only to be broken by the occasional call of the birds. Situated approximately 6,200 feet above sea level, in the Bomuruella plains, the area provides a 360-degree view where nine out of the ten tallest mountains of Sri Lanka can be seen. We quickly set about identifying the mountains, which were Pidurutalagala (the tallest), Single Tree, Kikiliyamana, Great Western, Koknihil, Kirigalpoththa, Thotupola, Hakgala and Namunukula. To the sides we glimpsed small clusters of houses and paddy fields.

The faint noise of an approaching vehicle called us from our reverie. Soon we were not the only ones that were admiring the picturesque view and enjoying the scenery, as was evident from the many ‘ooohs’ and ‘aahs’ we heard. Leaving the new arrivals to enjoy the plains, we bid adieu, driving back through the now familiar terrain, which seemed all the more dear and captivating after having been ensnared in the spell of the Moon Plains.