

Newburgh Ella: History Reimagined

Posted on



Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort – A modern sanctuary where refined interiors and sweeping mountain views come together in effortless luxury.

Tea country unfolds around you as you drive to Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort, the latest addition to the Browns Hotels and Resorts portfolio. The experience begins on the journey, with more awaiting within. Here, luxury blends with nostalgia, shaped by stories of industriousness, heritage, and taste.

Words: Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.

The transformation of a tea factory established in 1903 began in 2024. From a once-bustling workplace of noise and activity, a luxury resort has emerged, thoughtfully transforming the historic factory's interiors into a modern retreat while remaining deeply connected to its origins.

Newburgh Ella – The Tea Factory Resort is a celebration of its heritage, preserving the history of a place long part of Ella's tea landscape. Its story continues to be woven into the guest experience, with every detail reflecting its past and its enduring connection to tea. Above all, the resort remains true to what the place was always meant to be – a setting that breathes and smells of pure tea.

Once a working tea factory acquired by Browns Plantations, the property has been given a new identity while preserving its century-old heritage. Today, it stands as a luxury hospitality destination where history and contemporary elegance meet, offering guests an opportunity to experience the story of Ceylon Tea. In doing so, Browns Hotels and Resorts has reimagined the past in a distinctly luxurious way.

There is a gentle balance in the transformation, with the property retaining its industrial character, including its orange chimney and original structural elements. Newburgh Ella is where one witnesses a juxtaposition working in harmony – a hotel that preserves the factory's character while meeting the expectations of a contemporary luxury hotel.

The hotel is surrounded by some of the finest vistas of Sri Lanka's hill country, but its most remarkable feature is the view of the iconic Ella Gap – the deep corridor formed between Ella Rock to the west and Little Adam's Peak to the east. On a clear day, the distant Kataragama landscape comes into view. It is a setting unlike any other in Ella, raising the intriguing possibility that George Thomson deliberately chose this spot as a retreat from the factory's bustle, a place to pause and take in the timeless landscape.



The Sky Deck at Newburgh Ella offers breathtaking views, with spectacular sunrises and sunsets not to be missed.

To fully appreciate this panorama, the hotel has created the Sky Deck, an elevated vantage point offering sweeping views and a sense of an entirely different world – an ideal spot to pause, take in the scenery, and capture the beauty of Ella.

Inside Newburgh Ella, the aroma of tea naturally fills the air. Occasionally, the hum of machinery reminds guests that the property still carries its century-old legacy.

Set amid a sprawling tea plantation, the resort is surrounded by neatly cultivated tea bushes rising into the hills. Through every window, misty mountains and endless greenery create a beautiful backdrop – a sight to wake up to and linger over while sipping a golden cup of tea.

Interestingly, even the rooms draw inspiration from the hierarchy of tea tips. Silver Tip, Gold Tip, and Bronze Tip are room categories that echo the language of tea, while the interiors evoke an era of graceful, old-world charm. Factory tools and furniture have been thoughtfully repurposed as decorative elements, while new additions complement the property's overall character. Even the windows retain the distinctive feel of the original tea factory, making the transformation from a once-grimy workplace to a pristine hotel all the more remarkable. Newburgh Ella is designed for accessibility, ensuring a comfortable and inclusive stay for differently abled guests.

Silver Tip is the highest room category. Gold Tip and Bronze Tip make up the remaining 41 rooms, comprising ten Silver Tip, 22 Gold Tip, and nine Bronze Tip. The property also features a Presidential Suite.



Presidential Suite – A spacious setting where contemporary luxury meets heritage charm.



A luxurious bathroom in the Presidential Suite, framed by panoramic views.

The resort has four F&B outlets, with the main restaurant, 1903 The Dining Room, aptly named after the year the factory began operations. Eastern Valley offers Pan-Asian flavors and à la carte options in an alfresco setting. Here, slow dining takes on a different character as mist drifts across the hills and cool mountain air surrounds you, creating a memorable experience beneath an expansive panorama.



Scrumptious food amid Ella's cool mountain air at Eastern Valley.

The George Thomson Founder's Tavern pays tribute to the Scotsman who established the Newburgh tea plantation in the 1800s, keeping his story integral to the property's past and present. It celebrates the grit and perseverance of the pioneers who shaped the tea industry, with tea-infused mocktails and cocktails complementing the resort's theme.



Three Tips Café – A relaxed setting to savor Ceylon Tea against Ella’s stunning landscape.

Three Tips Café is dedicated to the story of Ceylon Tea, from black and green to white tea. Freshly baked treats accompany the selection of teas, creating an inviting setting in which to savor a leisurely cup. Guests can also purchase their preferred teas, with knowledgeable staff on hand to guide them through the selection.

The Tea Factory Tour Experience offers a fascinating journey into the making of Ceylon Tea, taking guests through the meticulous process behind the island’s beloved beverage. The experience begins in the plantation, where guests learn the art of tea picking before following the freshly harvested leaves to the factory. There, they can observe each stage of production as the leaves are transformed into the tea that ultimately finds its way into the cup. Guests can also have a freshly brewed cup of tea at the Three Tips Café at Newburgh Ella.

The decision to retain a working tea factory, albeit on a smaller scale than the original, gives the transformation of Newburgh a meaningful dimension. Tea remains central to the experience, allowing guests to discover the process first-hand and enjoy teas produced by Browns Plantations. Everything they need to understand the story of Ceylon Tea is thoughtfully brought together at Newburgh Ella.

Tours are conducted at 10.30am, 2.30pm, and 4.30pm, giving guests a choice of timings. The experience is also open to non-residents.

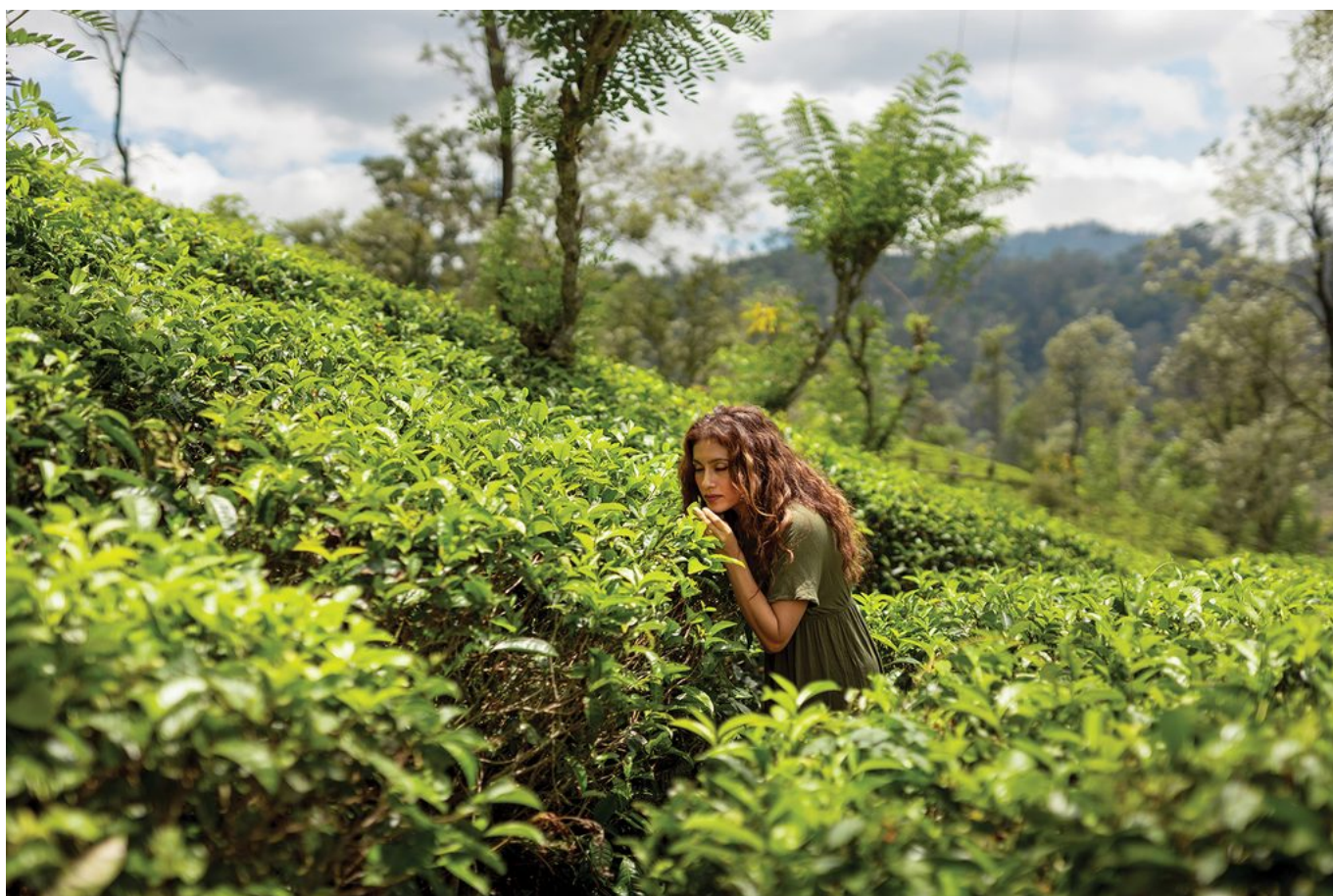


Experienced hands continue Newburgh's century-old tradition of crafting Ceylon Tea.

Adding to the experience is the presence of employees who previously worked at the larger Newburgh factory, including its former factory manager, while others have taken up roles across the hotel.

Bringing these experienced hands into the new chapter of Newburgh has preserved not only invaluable knowledge of tea but also a deep understanding of the local community. For some, the connection is even generational, with ancestors having worked at the factory.

Fluent in English and proficient in Sinhala and Tamil, these employees can share the stories and intricacies of tea with guests, creating a personal connection to the property and its past.



A fragrant encounter – Pausing to indulge in the delicate aroma of tea leaves.

The hotel has also created employment opportunities for the surrounding community, with nearly three-quarters of its team drawn from the local area.

When in Ella, there is no shortage of remarkable places to explore. The iconic Nine Arches Bridge is within walking distance of the hotel, while the long-distance Pekoe Trail is just a short distance away. For hikers, the gentle climb to Little Adam's Peak and the more demanding ascent of Ella Rock offer spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. The scenery changes constantly, from clear mountain vistas that disappear beneath mist and clouds to unforgettable sunrises and sunsets. Newburgh Ella has an in-house naturalist who takes guests on a variety of dynamic excursions around Ella, including hikes, waterfall treks, and Pekoe Trails.

Ravana Falls, associated with the ancient Ramayana legend, is another popular attraction, while Diyaluma Falls – the island's second-highest waterfall at 220 meters – offers the thrill of trekking to its upper cascades and natural pools. Ravana Cave and Temple add another dimension for those drawn to the history and mystery surrounding the legend.

The Demodara Railway Loop is a remarkable feat of British-era engineering, with its spiral track overcoming the challenges of the mountainous terrain. Watching a train navigate the loop is a memorable experience in itself.

The hotel team, led by General Manager Gangadaran Velsamy, can arrange excursions to these attractions and more. Ella is a natural addition to the Browns Hotels and Resorts portfolio, extending its presence into one of Sri Lanka's most distinctive hill-country destinations.

Marking a significant step in its sustainability journey, Newburgh Ella operates entirely paperless, with everything from check-in and check-out to guest notices handled digitally. The hotel is also recognized as the first certified paperless operation hotel in Sri Lanka by the National Cleaner Production Center and is set to receive an A+ energy-class rating, recognizing buildings with very low energy consumption per square meter.

Since opening its doors in February 2026, Newburgh Ella has begun establishing its presence locally and internationally, earning its first accolade as the Leading Best New Hotel in South Asia at the South Asian Travel Awards.

For Newburgh Ella, the journey has only just begun. Like the island's illustrious tea industry, which has evolved while remaining rooted in its heritage, the hotel aspires to become an enduring icon of the history it has chosen to preserve.

Newburgh Ella - Tea Factory Resort
Passara Road, Ella;
Reservations: +94 572 333 400;
reservations@brownshotels.com
brownshotels.com