

The Light House Galley: A Unique Experience



The terraced dining area adjoining the Colombo Lighthouse

The waves crash on to the rocks and the historic lighthouse sends out its protective beams to guide weary ships home. The cool sea breeze and the changing shades of the sky heavy with dark clouds create a surreal atmosphere. For a moment you feel as if you are in a far off coastal town... but no, this was Colombo and we were at the Light House Galley.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe Photographs Menaka Aravinda

Situated on Chaitya Road in Colombo, this unusual restaurant is a concept of Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and was brought to life by the Sri Lanka Navy under the direction of Vice Admiral Somathilake Dissanayake. Formerly the Sea Anglers Club, the main building has been renovated and new sections have been added to create an all encompassing dining area.

The restaurant is structured around the various sections of a ship, the design though simple exudes an ambience of refined relaxation with its elegantly furnished interiors blending with the surrounding landscape.

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The shimmering sand stones create an exuberance that is a precursor to the light house galley

The Colombo lighthouse built in 1952, stands tall and majestic in its stance with the four lions guarding all directions. The shimmering sand stones create an exuberance that is a precursor to the Light House Galley. Facing the lighthouse is the outside food court, which is referred to as the midship, the fine dining and family dining area is named as the quarterdeck and can accommodate up to 50 and 25 guests respectively. Usually on a ship the wardroom is the living quarters of the Navy officers, as such the bar at the Light House Galley has been given this name to reflect the discipline of gentlemen. Appropriate attire is a must. Another aspect of this unique restaurant is the forecastle, which is another fine dining area and the upper deck area that is the roof top restaurant where guests can enjoy the beautiful view of the Indian Ocean, the stately lighthouse, the white stupa and the Colombo Port while savouring an exquisite dinner under the stars.

One needs to go there to truly understand the beauty of the place, sitting in the mid ship area after a hard day's work would be a moment to truly unwind. The soothing tones of the ocean and the cooling breeze of the sea combined together with the shimmering hues of dusk create the ultimate atmosphere for relaxation. A short walk along the road will take you to the Jayanthi Chaithya and the Colombo Port.

The seafront area adjoining the Colombo lighthouse is also utilised by the restaurant for barbecues and other such functions providing the best viewpoint from Colombo. Tables set across the terraced area with the lighthouse in its background create a unique dining experience. Furthermore, historical elements such as the Governor's bath, a stone structure built to encircle the flowing sea water can be seen while enjoying the view from the lighthouse.

The Light House Galley takes pride in the fact that the food they serve has been created from fresh ingredients that are brought in daily. Bringing together a diverse palate to the table, the menu includes, Sri Lankan, Indian, Italian, Mexican and Chinese cuisine, while the à la carte menu has gained much popularity among patrons. With well-trained chefs and stewards from here and abroad, the Light House Galley strives for perfectionism and service is given the utmost importance.

Fridays and Saturdays see the Light House Galley coming alive with music - provided by either the Navy calypso band, jazz band, solo performances by various artistes or by the beat group of the Navy. Furthermore the Galley also provides an ideal location for various events and functions. On special occasions performances are held on the steps of the

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Colombo lighthouse creating a festival of colour and dance.

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A souvenir shop that sells Sri Lanka Navy memorabilia is another aspect of the midship area, while a naval museum is currently under construction. Photographs lining the walls of the reception reflect the past and present...

A reflection of change...yet nothing truly changes.... as the evening descended on us and the lights were lit, the Light House Galley glowed in the darkness. In the background structures of modernity rose towards the sky, yet amidst it all the Light House Galley and the Colombo lighthouse form a symbiotic relationship that entails a perfect evening for the discerning.

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