It’s Time For Jogging!

Posted on
The walking track and the parallel bicycle lane at the Bellanwila Walking Tracks

It was a clear day with sunny skies. Just the perfect weather for a brisk jog or walk to start the day! While looking for the perfect place to embark on my new found enthusiasm, I came across a snippet about the newly opened Bellanwila Walking Tracks. Intrigued, off I went to the walking tracks which, to no wonder at all, was already teeming with joggers.

Words Krishani Peiris **Photographs** Indika De Silva and Dilshi Thathsarani

The landscape of urban and suburban Colombo is changing fast due to the beautification projects implemented by the Urban Development Authority and spearheaded by Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development. As part of this project and promoting a healthier lifestyle, several walking tracks have been created in various places around the city, converting otherwise mundane spaces to attractive areas filled with activity.

And so there I was, at Bellanwila Walking Tracks, the newest addition to the slew of tracks around Colombo, well prepared to start my new health regime. The time was around 6.30am and by the looks of it, the day starts early at Bellanwila as there were many people who were already finishing up or half way through their routines. Falling into step with the many that still traversed the tracks, I started on a slow jog enjoying the sound of the crunching gravel each time my feet hit the neatly paved pathway. A tar road built parallel to the walking track enjoyed a steady stream of cyclists who sped past with the ‘wind in their hair’. I could not help but feel a twinge of envy as they whizzed pass me.

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Posts with distance markers have been set up every 100m or so, which help joggers to keep track of the distance covered in the almost 3km loop that goes around the Verassa river, once a marshland. However, now all the bush and shrubs that

hampered the view of the river have been cleared to create an open area that provides a breathtaking sight of the waters. I was soon distracted in admiring the unfolding vistas by watching birds diving into the river banks or to the shallower parts of the waters to hunt. At times the path gave way to small bridges that arched their way over the flowing stream while at certain points tall trees gave some shade from the scorching sun.

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Halfway through the walking tracks, a road interrupted, cutting its way through to lead up to the Pillawa temple in the distance. The road was decorated with Buddhist flags and a little way along, small way-side stalls carrying flowers and other items for devotees to purchase, presented a colourful setting. Taking but a moment to take in this beauty and bowing my head in reverence to the roadside Buddha statue that marked the beginning of this road, I continued on.

Another short distance and this time I was again waylaid to pay a visit to the doorstep of the Bellanwila Temple located just outside the perimeter of the Bellanwila walking tracks. There were many people who had come to pay their respects early in the morning, perhaps in the hopes of finding success in the ventures they had planned for the day, at this one of the most revered temples in the Colombo city.

Back on track and I was finally able to complete the loop ending at the parking lot of the Walking Tracks. Here tables and chairs, built of cement, perfectly blending into the surroundings, were set up for people to sit and relax. A few stalls in the adjacent food court were already open and people were gathering around to grab breakfast or a snack. Taking a moment to catch my breath, I watched as more and more people trickled in, some to exercise, others to lounge around leisurely enjoying the perfect sunny day, before heading out to start their day, beautifully refreshed.


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