



Lush green paddy fields in the evening light

**We were indecisive on which way to go, yet the name ‘Girandurukotte’ seemed to beckon us. Along peaceful and quiet roads, we headed immersed in the beauty of rural Sri Lanka.**

**Words** Udeshi Amarasinghe

**Photographs** Menaka Aravinda and Geeth Viduranga

It was a cool pleasant evening with a soft mist that gave the area a surreal feel. Lush green paddy fields with young plants looked beautifully fertile. Farmers huts were located in a seemingly random way and enhanced the picturesque setting. The roads glistened, wet from the recent rains. A vibrant peacock seemed almost a part of the landscape as it perched royally on a tree branch. Close to Ginnoruwa, we drove through roads shaded with flower laden trees.

We made a small turn towards Girandurukotte, it was quiet and peaceful and at times we were the only ones around. The road with the trees creating a canopy overhead was similar

to a storybook. We briefly stopped at a placid lake that was momentarily disturbed by fluttering birds.

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Reaching Girandurukotte we continued on, seeking places of interest. An archaeological site drew our attention, it was a simple stupa like structure but there was no description and none could explain its significance. Corn fields came into view, many had been harvested. One of the farmers offered us fresh corn that had been recently collected. He insisted that we should try the raw kernels and we did. It had a soft texture with a creamy taste. Munching on the corn we continued on our journey.



Herds of cattle disperse as a bus approaches

The area was green and wet. Village life was moving at its own pace. A herd of cattle scattered as a bus passed through, this made way for us to proceed as well. Girandurukotte is an area that was developed under the Mahaweli and is a significant agricultural area.

We jumped back into the vehicle slowly driving, our ears attentive to the slightest noise.

Evening was turning to dusk as we headed towards Ulhitiya reservoir. We were told that elephants gather at this time of the day. We soon realised that we were actually along a border of the Maduru Oya National Park. The reservoir was vast and beautiful; a fisherman was casting his net for a catch or two before the day's end while his friend watched on from a nearby rock. Answering our query about elephants they asked us to go towards the adjoining forest as they had seen a herd nearby.

Excitedly, we jumped back into the vehicle slowly driving, our ears attentive to the slightest noise.

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We drove through the village and reached the end of the road, it was the forest along the edge of the reservoir. We had to go by foot. Slowly and quietly we walked along the path, at every moment expecting to meet the giants of the land. While twigs snapped and leaves rustled from within the trees, it was not to be...



Large flocks of pelican gather at the reservoir

The surface of the reservoir was still with moments of gentle ripples formed by the breeze. A flock of large Pelicans had gathered on the waters edge. One by one they started swimming across, almost in a line and suddenly took to the air in a single swift movement.

We had enjoyed our exploration of Girandurukotte, and as the birds flew away, we too bid adieu and continued on our journey of discovery.

# Tranquil Girandurukotte

