Ultimate Bliss at Laya Safari

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It takes your breath away the moment you catch a glimpse of its unique structure silhouetted distinctly against the open skies. Located bordering the Yala National Park on one side and the sparkling blue ocean on the other, Laya Safari is yet another remarkable effort by the Sri Lanka Army in the Sri Lankan leisure sector. It is a haven for those who seek to revel in the comfort of nature amidst all that is serene and pure…

Words Kamalika Jayathilaka **Photographs** Damith Wickramasinghe

Turn left at the Yala Junction along the Kirinda Road from Hambantota and drive through the shrub jungle for nearly 10 km. You will not miss its magnificent facade looming in the far distance, against the arid treeless landscape. Step in through the threshold into the comfort of its cool interior to let your travel weariness wash away with an inviting cold towel and an icy tropical fruit drink that welcomes you.

The luxury holiday resort is conveniently located a mere two km distance away from the entrance to the Yala National Park and stands on a few golden dunes overlooking the turquoise sea, offering the best of both the excitement of a wildlife experience and the serenity of a beach holiday.

Laya Safari, in Palatupana, Yala is the latest of the three ‘Laya’ resorts established by the leisure division of the Sri Lanka Army. Laya Safari was declared open by Hon Chamal Rajapaksa, Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka along with Lt Gen Jagath Jayasuriya, Commander of the Army. From concept to design and construction to maintenance is done by the Sri Lanka Army. The service, front office, food and beverage and kitchen staff however, have been recruited from among talented industry professionals. The inspirational project has also created employment opportunities for local youth.

Everything from its concept, the architectural and interior designs to the construction including regular maintenance is done by the Sri Lanka Army.

The Hotel’s spacious coffee lounge is positioned directly above the lobby looking out on to the shrub landscape. Green is all you see when you look out through the expansive glass windows, on this side of the property. Across from a corridor on the other side of the same floor, facing the beach is the main restaurant with the capacity to accommodate up to 90 guests. The mesmerising view from the restaurant and its wide balcony, of the endless ocean and the sky beyond will leave you in a trance and lost in time. The second and last floor to the main building of the resort houses the bar with the same captivating views. The resort has two bars, the other at the poolside next to the beach.

Three of the ten acre land of this beautiful resort houses ten luxurious chalets with all modern amenities. Each chalet has two separate units consisting of the ground floor double room, and the first floor family room with an attic, capacitating accommodation for four altogether. All chalets overlook the beach.

As the sun sets beneath the far-off horizon, indulge in a dip in the refreshing waters of the resort’s infinity pool watching the purple dusk settle in, or take a walk on the pristine golden beach and lose yourself in the surrounding serenity. Or, add a little spark to your sojourn and let Laya Safari arrange a romantic location on the beach to dine or enjoy a cup of tea immersed in the fading light. Yala, the most visited and the second largest National park in the country, spanning close to 980 sqkm is home to a myriad species of birds and wild life including the elusive leopards. To

spice up your stay even further, Laya Safari is prepared to organise wild safari tours into the heart of the National park and in the future plans to organise adventurous camping sessions that could be arranged at several selected riverside locations.

What is more, the efficient Executive Chef with years of experience at five star establishments, both local and international, and his well trained staff are more than capable of catering to your unique gastronomical preferences. Laya Safari will tingle your taste buds with unbeatable flavours from the east as well as the west through a range of mouth-watering dishes.

Laya Safari already houses a modern gymnasium for all your fitness needs and through its second phase of development has plans to establish an Indonesian spa along with 20 more chalets in the near future. Also in the pipeline are BBQ and theme nights, fleet of bicycles for cycling around the area, dolphin watching and a diving club for scuba diving.

While you avail yourself to the unspoilt beach and the mystic jungle, don’t miss out on the local heritage. The historical Sithulpawwa, Magul Viharaya and Katharagama are some of the most visited religious and cultural sites just a short distance from the resort. History also unravels that Yala has been a centre of past civilisations, and it is believed that King Ravana had landed here and had established a kingdom in this region.

‘Laya’ in Sanskrit means ‘a state of mental quietude’; and Laya Safari is the ideal holiday destination for the wildlife enthusiast and beach lover, offering a one of a kind holiday that would create impressions to last a lifetime.

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