

THINGS TO DO WHILE STAYING AT ELLERTON

We find that more and more of our guests are choosing to spend several days here, treating Ellerton as a destination in itself rather than just a good place to stay while visiting Kandy. (We naturally hope that you enjoy being here as much as we do!) Many guests seem very happy just reading, sunbathing, swimming, going for walks or bicycle rides, playing croquet/table tennis or using the large selection of indoor games (which are in the large desk/bookcase in the Sitting room in the main house).

However, there are a number of other things to do and see in the general area of Ellerton, which don't usually appear in guide books but which you may well find interesting and/or delightful - and which will help you to appreciate the character of the area and of the people who live and work around here.

We should add that the roads up to the Knox Memorial and to Padma's dog charity are not good, and it is likely that chauffeurs will be reluctant to take their cars up these roads. Also the route to the Orange Field tea factory can be a little difficult to find if the chauffeur has not driven there before. In these cases we have established a standard rate for a tuk-tuk to do these journeys, and Ellerton staff can arrange this for you.

So, in no particular order, we recommend the following possibilities.

Near Ellerton

The Orange Field Tea Factory. This is at Panwilatenna village which is about 20 minutes from Ellerton. Tourists who travel to the tea areas of Sri Lanka will undoubtedly be taken to commercial tea factories, which are well used to visits from tourists. This one, however, had never thought of tourists until we suggested the idea to them, which is a reason why it is so interesting to visit. It is run by a family of Tamil Catholics, and there are lots of exhortations on the walls to encourage cleanliness, productivity etc. A tour around the factory will take about 2 hours and we have agreed a minimum price of Rs.2,000 per tour whether it is a group of friends, a family or a single visitor. There is also the chance to buy their excellent tea which of course is definitely *not* packed in smart export packages, since it is all destined for the Colombo tea auctions! Visits need to be done in the mornings, and we need to give them prior notice. Ellerton guests who have been round the factory all love the experience and say it is one of the best things they have done while in Sri Lanka.

Also, for those guests who have not either walked or bicycled up to the Knox Memorial in the hills above Ellerton, the factory is located in the valley just beyond it, so one can take in the Memorial en route. In addition, once at Panwilatenna, there is a marvellous round-trip by road up through the big tea estates of Beaumont and Levallon, back through Galaha town, and then down the hill to the other side of the Nilambe river and then across the dam to get back to Ellerton.

Drive through the Tea Estates There is a marvellous round-trip from Ellerton, going up into the local tea estates in a large loop of some 34 km. Of course you can go with your own driver, or we can arrange a Tuk Tuk. As it happens, the route takes you past the Orange Field tea factory (above), so a good idea is to do the tour at the factory and then take this drive. The great advantage of it is that it is totally off any tourist route; you can see these large tea estates very much as they have been for the last hundred years, as well as having quite superb views. So, you start from

Panwilatena village, where the Orange Field factory situated (kilometer 18), and head in the direction of Galaha. The first three or so kilometres are not particularly interesting, but you then enter the Beaumont Estate, itself a part of the huge Pusselawa Estates, which extend to some 30 km²! On your right you will see thousands of acres of tea, and down at the bottom of the valley various estate buildings, and a large factory. At about kilometer 13 you go into the little village of Pupuressa, which has quite a fine Hindu temple on the right as you leave. Behind the temple is a very large five-story tea traction factory. After another three or so kilometres, you will see the Lucky Wine Store on your right, which almost certainly has never seen a bottle of wine, and shortly after that you reach the top of the hill with a few shops. On your right you will see the signs to the home of our friend Christopher Worthington, modestly called "Chatsworth". You now start going downhill and into the Levallon Estate, which extends for the next few kilometers. There are excellent views to your left down the valley, and you will see the line-houses for the estate workers. As you approach the Levallon factory, you will see on your left the original small Presbyterian church - it is worth stopping to have a look, although it is often locked. You then pass right next to the factory and continue downhill. After a while you enter the Erin Estate, and the next landmark is a state health centre, a rather fine building set above the road on your left. After that you descend for 3 km into the bustling township of Galaha, and after a further 6 km on what is now the road to Peradinya, you turn off left down the hill which brings you to the dam underneath Ellerton, and then back to Ellerton itself.

Ambuluwawa. This is a very fine centre, aimed at environmental as well as cultural and religious issues sited on a magnificent monument on the top of a mountain above Gampola, the nearby town (9 km away), so easily accessible with your car and driver, or by tuk-tuk. It is deliberately aimed at all religions, so everyone is welcome there. The main site is over 3500 feet, and then the principal building, technically a Buddhist "stupa" but rather like a very big lighthouse, raises coming on for another 200 foot. It is claimed that you can see 70 percent of all Sri Lanka from the top on a clear day, as well as the sea, but why not see if this claim is correct! However the incredible view makes the effort well worthwhile. Do make the effort!

Gampola railway station. This is a very fine old station, built in 1870 and still using the original British equipment. The station staff are very friendly, and while we strongly recommend taking a train journey up into the hill country, or, at least to/from Kandy or Peradeniya, they will be very happy to show you around even if you're not travelling by train. We have prepared a separate paper about the railways and railway journeys, which is in your guest notes.

Gampola Magistrates Court. This is a simple but fine old colonial courthouse with open sides. The judge sits on a rather impressive seat at one end. The court activities are conducted in a combination of English and Sinhala, but in a way that is very familiar to anyone who has been to an English court, although the procedures can be rather slow! It is rather salutary to see the prisoners on remand being brought into the court shackled in chains. The court begins at 09.30 am on all weekdays, but you should be there well before. There are some seats for the general public, but most have to stand immediately next to the (open) courtroom. From here one can get a very good view of what is happening.

The Knox Memorial. Many visitors to Sri Lanka will have heard the story of Robert Knox - apparently the inspiration for the 'Robinson Crusoe' story. Knox was a Scotsman who, along with a dozen or so colleagues, was shipwrecked off Ceylon in about 1660. They became captives of the

King of Kandy. Some died in captivity, but Knox and three others were taken with the King when he moved his entire court from Kandy to Nilambe (the area around Ellerton). Knox was subsequently given some land on top of a hill about 5 km from here, where he and his remaining colleagues lived for three years, before finally escaping. On his return to England, after 12 or so years abroad, he wrote a book about his experiences (copies of which can be found at Ellerton). In 1908, a small memorial to him was erected on the site of his last house. It is in the form of a large gravestone, and while not impressive in itself, it is an interesting reminder of a man's remarkable experiences around here some 350 years ago! The Memorial is an energetic walk or bicycle ride from Ellerton, or you can be driven directly there. There are directions in the guest notes.

Churches and Temples. Many visitors to Sri Lanka get to the point of being 'temped out', but there are a number of simple Hindu and Buddhist temples around Ellerton that are worth a look, and visitors are always made welcome. Unfortunately the times of 'services' are somewhat unpredictable, but Buddhists all go to their local temple on a Saturday.

The nearest Christian churches are in Gampola, our nearest town. The oldest church is St Andrews, the original building of which was erected in 1852. A much newer building, now about 70 years old, replaced it in a very central position above the bus station. It is Anglican, and services are at 8.00 on Sunday morning. The church is not normally open, but a caretaker is always present and will open it up for visitors.

St Joseph's Church is Catholic, and also in the centre of Gampola. A service is held in English on Saturdays at 5.00 pm, and in Sinhala at 8.00 am on Sunday morning.

A visit to our local dog charity. Padma is a remarkable lady who loves dogs and could not bear to see the condition of some of the stray/street dogs in Sri Lanka, so began some years ago to take in stray and sick dogs, sort out whatever medical problems they might have, and neuter and then re-home them. So at any one time she has 60 to 80 dogs in her quite small house and garden, all clearly well tended for. Unfortunately, people take advantage of her, and when locals have a sick or unwanted dog, they take it to her house at night and leave it tied to her gate, waiting to be found in the morning! Apart from a small pension, she has no regular income, and is totally dependent on charity, so we and other people locally support her very valuable work. Her house is little more than a kilometre off the main road between Ellerton and Peradeniya, and as long as you phone beforehand, you're most welcome to visit. It is not for the faint-hearted, with all(!) the dogs barking when a stranger arrives; but if you like dogs and are prepared to make a contribution to what is extremely worthwhile work, do go and visit. The house is easy to find, and our staff can give instructions to a driver, or arrange a tuk-tuk for you. That the last bit is very steep, and not all tuk-tuks can make it, particularly if there is more than one passenger. You might have to walk!)

Around Kandy

Most visitors to Kandy will have the 'standard' sights of Kandy planned, either through their travel agents or through their own study of guidebooks. So we assume that most will go to the remarkable Botanical Gardens, the Temple of the Tooth, the elephant sanctuary and so forth. However there are some other sights, not necessarily on your tourist map, which you might also like to consider:

The Commonwealth War Graves. These are just off the Peradeniya road on the way into Kandy from Ellerton. They are just above the river, and are exceptionally well maintained and very serene. The guardian is very well informed about the individual graves, a number of which are really quite interesting. (For example, why would one find Italians in a Commonwealth War Grave?)

The Garrison Cemetery. This is behind the Temple of the Tooth, and filled with unfortunates (men, women and children) from the 19th century who tended to die of tropical diseases and so forth. Smaller, but also well maintained and worth a visit. Again, the guardian is wonderfully well informed.

Trinity College Chapel. Trinity College is the oldest (and best) boys school in Sri Lanka, and they have an exceptionally fine large, open-sided Chapel, built about 60 years ago, with contributions from the major English public schools, each of which contributed one of the main stone columns that support the building. It is not normally open to the public, but we are friendly with one of the board of governors, and so can arrange access for Ellerton guests given a few hours' notice. It is quite convenient, being very close to the centre of Kandy. As part of our informal arrangement, visitors are asked to contribute Rs.500 each to the maintenance fund of the Chapel. Interestingly, although 95% of today's students are Buddhist, the Christian services in the Chapel are always very well attended.

Hotel Suisse. There are two old colonial hotels in Kandy, the Suisse and Queens. Queens is somewhat run-down, but what is interesting about the Suisse is that it was the headquarters of Asia Command under Mountbatten during the Second World War. It is a large and rather fine building, and probably little changed since the war. The hotel is just across the lake from the centre of Kandy, and so a convenient place to go and have a sandwich lunch, and to reflect on the history that was made here.

Boat trips. A pleasant and relaxing way of seeing Kandy is from a boat on Kandy lake. There are four boats which are licensed to take passengers around the lake, and they start from the dam wall, which goes across the end of the lake from Queens Hotel.