

Probably our guests' favourite spot – the Soaking Pool!

HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME
- THE *UNIQUE* SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE -
MARCH 2019

We ended the shortest month in the year with an unprecedented bout of weather in which, while the temperatures weren't blistering hot, were unbelievably oppressive. We were spared the worst of this by virtue of the trees we have around HPH. However, one had to be judicious in picking the time for a walk around the usual footpaths to avoid total debilitation. Our spring water supply has not diminished to the extent one would have expected thanks to the many previous initiatives undertaken.

We had a guest staying over for a couple of nights whose philosophical leanings, insofar as the land, its primary inhabitants

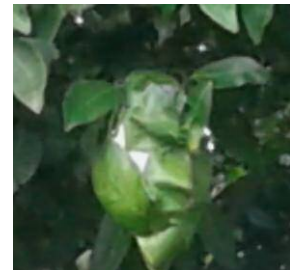


Ranjit and the hosts of HPH contribution to the "Travel" magazine of the Sri Lanka Sunday Times gave us some very useful new perspectives on the operation of HPH as a result of which we are examining some of

and its uses was akin to ours.

Ranjit Hulugalle who makes a very high quality weekly

our current practices. He has been provoked into doing an analysis of the massive challenges faced by those living in rural Sri Lanka - about 80% of the country's population – and the results do not give room for much optimism in the matter of economic survival in rural Sri



Nest of (fierce) red tree-ants on *Bakiea* tree

Lanka.

Our electric fence, powered by a solar panel, has now been installed and we are looking for evidence of its efficacy in the matter of keeping the wild pigs and porcupines away from our vanilla vines. The first (heavy) showers after a long and very

dry spell have just begun and it's "D-Day" for our efforts at crop preservation and we hope it will be akin to the landing on the beach at Normandy and not another evacuation from Dunkirk!

The first vanilla flower buds are beginning to appear and Biso and Rajamani have begun to mark each of the clusters with weather-proof coloured tape so that they

For March, as in past months, we'll continue our "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies," which appears to delight our guests as they take their leave of us!

Some Recognition of HPH

- Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor
- Rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri Lanka
- Recommended by [Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka](#)

can be visited on a daily basis because they have to be individually hand-pollinated on the day they open, not forgetting that the blossoms in a bunch **don't** all open together but do so one by one. We'll leave you, dear reader, with the prospect of evaluating the extremely labour-intensive nature of just this **one** part of the production, harvesting and curing of this most exotic of spices borne on an orchid vine!

We are also in the process of harvesting what promises to be a good crop of nutmegs though what that will mean at



Jamalone, a superb practitioner of an old skill - clock repairing

the end of the day in the matter of making a net profit is something yet to be determined, given the fact that the market for what used to be

high-value spices has collapsed while the cost of production has soared thanks to the astronomical cost of protecting those crops from predators that didn't, literally, exist on this land a few decades ago. Our old Thomson wall-clock stopped a couple of days ago and we had to call on our superb and reliable clock repairer, Mr. Jamalone, to get it going again. For the benefit of anyone who requires the services of a clock- or watch-repairer of skill and integrity he can be contacted at +94 72 905 2000 or his son's email, tzthuwan232@gmail.com. Sadly, in order to make ends meet, he has been reduced to working at an occupation which doesn't require his exceptional skills. "Progress" anyone?!

**With all good wishes!
Arlene & Emil**



**THE HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME
OF ARLENE MADAWELA & EMIL VAN DER POORTEN
IN GALAGEDERA, SRI LANKA**

**CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF A TRULY UNIQUE
DESTINATION**

Those who've tasted the delights of Halgolla Plantation Home in the matter of food, accommodation, hospitality and ambience will speak eloquently enough of what we offer at our truly unique Sri Lankan destination.

Now, in response to the demand that has emerged over the last couple of years, we have formalized our "**Walkabout and Planter's Lunch at HPH**" which is intended for those able to spend only a day with us.

This is a special journey through a unique agricultural operation in the mid-country of Sri Lanka which grows six of Sri Lanka's famed spice crops – cinnamon, pepper, cloves, vanilla, nutmeg and mace – and processes all but one of them

on site. In addition, it provides more than a peek into the political history of the country, demonstrates a socially responsible tourist initiative that focuses on enhancing the skills and the earning capacity of its employees, particularly the women, and provides what can only be described as an enchanting morning at Halgolla Plantation Home!

Starting off from the Halgolla Plantation Home which is situated equidistant (approximately 20 Kms) from Kandy or Kurunegala, 1 ½ kms off the A10 Highway, as early in the day as possible, Emil van der Poorten, whose ancestral home this is, will take the guests through the vanilla field, where every flower has to be **hand-pollinated** to produce the beans that, as this is written, retail for \$500 per kilo! The

harvesting and processing of our various spice crops may be observed during the walkabout, depending on the time of year.

Along the walking trails, none of which call for mountaineering skills, the termite hills display the nocturnal efforts to get at the termite grubs by that most endangered (and harmless) mammal in the world, the Pangolin. Evidence of other nocturnal wildlife such as the wild pigs that plough up the ground right up to our doorstep is most evident in wet weather. Among the smaller mammals to be encountered on the

walkabout are the macaque monkeys, giant squirrels and the (cute!) palm squirrels. The unique Flying Squirrel is strictly nocturnal and it is only guests over-nighting at HPH that have a chance of seeing them. The bird life is as impressive as one might expect in a tropical country and, at HPH, goes all the way from the ominous-looking Black Eagle to the dainty Loten's Sunbird!

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Jak burlwood table at entry to HPH



Hand-pollinating vanilla blossom



Pompadour Green Pigeon



The beginning of Boulder Path



Mace, the second spice from the Nutmeg tree



Cinnamon quills and harvesting tools

Most of the time, the hives of the fierce Giant Rock Bees of Sri Lanka are on the huge trees that dwarf the rest of the vegetation. Among the latter are the pepper vine- and vanilla-carrying *Gliricidias*, the clove and nutmeg trees and the cinnamon bushes. The thirty-odd varieties of tropical fruit that are a part of HPH's cuisine in either fresh or preserved form are scattered through the land one traverses. Almost the entirety of our Sri Lankan cuisine is cooked on an open hearth in clay pots in traditional



Typical HPH Planter's Lunch

manner and guests, without exception, have found the methods employed fascinating and worthy of observation and some participation as well.



HPH Dining Room

Emil provides the guests with a commentary about the land they

are traversing on gentle walking trails, the history of HPH and any relevant background information that would interest them. The walk could take anything from 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours depending on the guests' desires and ends with chilled fruit juice or King Coconut water before everyone sits down to one of HPH's Sri Lankan lunches that have to be experienced to be appreciated.

Finally, the goodbyes are accompanied by what is now a HPH tradition: a "goody bag" of our HPH-grown spices for each group.

The Walkabout and Planter's Lunch has been described as a Sri Lankan experience without equal that can only be appreciated by those who have experienced it.

- Maximum of six (6) guests
- Cost per guest - US\$70.
- Guide/Chauffeur charged for lunch ONLY at US\$10.
- Payment may be made in Sri Lankan Rupees at the rate prevailing on the day of the visit.
- **At least two days** prior notice is required if you intend joining us for the Walkabout and Planter's Lunch.

While the contact information you require is on this sheet, please don't hesitate to email or phone us if you have any other questions.



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- HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME - EVENTS & PLACES OF INTEREST



Boulder Path

DAILY

1. Preparation of ingredients and cooking of traditional foods on our open-hearth, in clay utensils. While no “cooking lessons” are provided, guests are welcome to observe and assist in making *pol roti*, *pittu*, *kiributh*, *sambols*, *mallungs*, string-hoppers, and other traditional Sri Lankan foods.
2. Harvesting (wild) leaf and other vegetables
3. Explore the surroundings of HPH – vegetation, birds, animals etc. on a variety of self-guided, well-sign-posted walking trails, none requiring mountaineering skills!
4. LIVE the HPH history and experience!



Cooking on our open-hearth

Seasonal

1. Vanilla Pollination – Jan. –Apr.
2. Vanilla bean harvest – Apr. –Jun.
3. Cinnamon harvesting – All year, except periods of drought
4. Nutmeg harvest/processing – Jan. - May
5. Migratory bird-watching – Oct. – May
6. Pepper harvest/processing – Nov. – Feb, Apr.- Jun.



**Vanilla
pollination**

7. Clove harvest/processing – Nov. - Jan.
8. Coconut & King Coconut harvesting – 2-month cycles
9. Fruit harvest (40+ varieties) – Throughout the year



Peeling cinnamon

OFF-SITE EVENTS & PLACES OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

(Also check <http://halgollaplantationhome.com/PlacesOfInterestNearby.htm>)



Vesak pandal

May 18th 2019

Wesak Full Moon Poya.

Most significant day in the Buddhist calendar. Celebrates a number of very important events in Buddhist history

<https://lanka.com/events/vesak-festival>



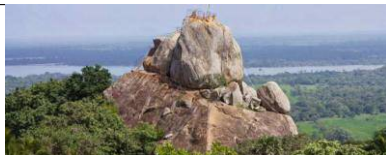
Elephant in Esala Perahera

July 7th to July 17th 2019

Kandy Esala Perahera

Magnificent torch-lit procession, without equal anywhere in the world, with hundreds of dancers, drummers and gaily-caparisoned elephants. Booking of tickets to view well in advance of the event is strongly advised.

<https://lanka.com/events/kandy-esala-perahera/>



June 16th 2019

Poson Full Moon Poya

Celebrates the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka,

delivered to King Devanampiyatissa by the Arahat Mahinda at Mihintale. <https://lanka.com/events/poson-festival/>



DECEMBER

Season for climbing Sri Lanka's holiest mountain – venerated by followers of all of the world's major faiths – commences.

<https://lanka.com/events/adams-peak/>



Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*)

ANY TIME OF THE YEAR!

Dr. George (Michael) van der Poorten's butterfly garden at Hammaliya about 45kms from HPH, is, simply, unique. Dr. van der Poorten is Sri Lanka's foremost authority on its butterflies and his wife, Nancy, is an internationally recognized authority on dragonflies. A morning spent in this idyllic spot has to be

experienced to be believed!

www.thenationaltrust.lk/activities/download/the-butterfly-fauna-of-sri-lanka.pdf

We would like to emphasize the fact that HPH gives you the **complete** experience of Sri Lanka, one without equal.