



67.5-foot tall Moneragala Samadhi Buddha Statue

## HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME

### - THE UNIQUE SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE -

#### OCTOBER 2017

Recent conversations with members of the travel industry specializing in setting up itineraries for more discerning tourists have made it abundantly clear that HPH has been underselling itself in the matter of what it has to offer.

We have looked at what exists in the neighbourhood and feel like kicking our collective behinds for not seeing what has been staring us in the face for far too long: some absolute gems which lend themselves to a leisurely morning's excursion.

The first of these which we have organized is what we have chosen to call the "Near North Western Province Jaunt."

We will leave HPH as early in the day as possible to watch the sunrise from *Nelligala Saama Chaitiya*, packing breakfast, picking up a friendly and knowledgeable guide on the way. This site which is the epitome of peace and tranquillity provides an unrivalled view of the North Western Province plain, made that much more impressive that early in the day.

The next stop, after a short drive, is the magnificent 67.5 foot tall granite Samadhi Buddha at Moneragala, one without equal anywhere in the world.

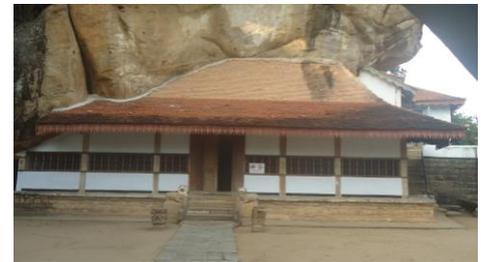
The history of this massive work of art is truly unique. It was the response of the Chief Incumbent of the Moneragala Vidyasagara Pirivena Vihara, the Ven. Egodamulla Amaramoli Thero, to the Taliban's destruction of the huge (sandstone) Buddha statues in Afghanistan, an act of horrendous vandalism without equal in recent times. Words do not do justice to this wonderful example of the (South Indian) stone-sculptors' art. It and the large pool carved out of the same massive piece of granite at its foot has to be seen to be believed!

Your sojourn in this less-known part of the North Western Province will end at the lovely surroundings of *Ridi Vihare*, a temple whose contribution to Buddhism goes back more than 2000 years and which, largely thanks to its Chief Incumbent, has maintained the best traditions of that faith: at the time of our last visit he was sending out tanker-trucks of water to villagers experiencing one of the worst droughts in living memory.

Ridi Vihare, apart from its unrivalled atmosphere of tranquillity and peace, owes its fame to the legend about, perhaps the most iconic of Sri Lankan monarchs, King Dutugemuna. Running out of funds to complete the *Ruvanveliseya* in the twilight of his life, he sent emissaries out into the countryside to obtain the means of completing that most important of Buddhist shrines. They were met in *Ridigama* ("Silver village") by those who donated the silver they had mined from a vein in the hill at the foot of which the *Vihare* is today.

For October, as in month's past,  
we'll continue our  
"Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies"  
that appears to delight visitors as  
they take their leave of us and HPH!

- Certificate of Excellence 2015 from  
Trip Advisor
- rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri  
Lanka
- recommended by [Bradt Travel](#)  
[Guide for Sri Lanka](#)  
5th edition, 2014



Ridi Vihare

On a totally different note, pictured on this page, is Ashwin Gabriel, the son of Suresh and Kirthika. "Cute as a button" as the old expression has it and the newest resident of

HPH who ensures that there is never a dull moment for the adult population there!

In closing, we continue to encourage readers of this Newsletter who like it to disseminate it as widely as possible, while we would love to have your suggestions on how we could improve it.



Ashwin Gabriel asleep in his saree hammock

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