



## Thriving Together

Jetwing Kaduruketha: A Tale of Co-existence



Jetwing Kaduruketha – Sri Lanka’s first agro tourism project, is a luxury eco resort hidden away in the quiet rural plains of Wellawaya in the South Eastern heartland of Sri Lanka. From its concept and design to its day-to-day operations every aspect of it exists in harmony with its surroundings – the farming community and the environment, offering guests a place where they can relax to the rhythm of nature.

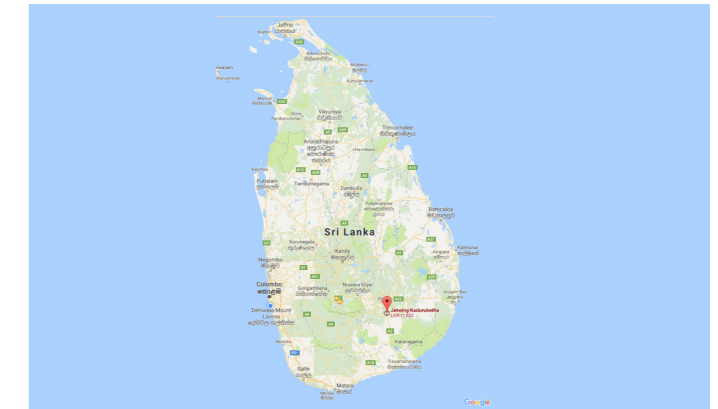
A luxury resort with 25 private, secluded dwellings, the hotel provides eco-friendly accommodation with a personal butler service, authentic local cuisine and ample opportunities for guests to reconnect with nature and interact with the community.

...a forgotten valley



A small, unassuming little town in the dry plains of the ancient Sinhalese kingdom of Ruhunu, Wellawaya was by no means an established tourist destination. Hidden in the shadow of the central foothills, it still remains a rural crossroads – to the North lies the spectacular Ella Gap leading into heart of the mountains, to the South is Tissamaharama and the Southern coastline, East, the surfs of Arugam Bay and West - the capital city, Colombo – around 214 km away.

Although seemingly insignificant and distant from the usual ‘tourist’ hotspots, the region is blessed with incredible natural beauty; and a wealth of cultural and historical interest with a past as deeply hidden as the town itself.





## ...a humble people

It is an inheritance that dates back over 2500 years. Agriculture once ruled Sri Lanka – a land lush with verdant paddy and abundant harvests. The kings of old built giant irrigation tanks – feats of engineering that still stand and support the rural communities who carry forward the farming tradition of their forefathers. Their methods and practices, as well as the ancient, complex agricultural systems continue to be used today. Their sustainable and organic agricultural practices demonstrated the intricate relationship of nature and human life.

Paddy cultivation was not just an economic activity but a way of life that also shaped society, culture, and religion. Considered as one of the highest occupations, the farmers were a venerated people holding high esteem.

The passing millennia however, have brought dramatic change – and today, the rural farmers hold no claim to such privilege. The land, no longer as fertile, yields little; and very few farmers actually own the fields they toil on. The seasons have become unpredictable, the weather gods seeming to pay no heed to their pleas. Whatever scant harvests they reap, are often sold at low prices to middle men, leaving them barely enough to live on. Behind the idyllic scenery, life is incredibly hard for a

simple people who still hold their heads high with a deep sense of pride in their heritage, culture and livelihood.

In rural areas such as Wellawaya and the small villages surrounding Jetwing Kaduruketha, paddy cultivation takes place on a small scale - usually for day-to-day rice requirements. As such, as an occupation, farming is generally far from profitable. With little money to spend, the farmers usually borrow from moneylenders, get loans from rice mills or wholesalers for machinery, seeds, labour and so on, at the beginning of each planting season. This debt is paid off at the end of the season, using the money earned by selling the harvested paddy. However, they are obliged to sell at cheaper rates in order to cover the loans and the heavy interest.

The harvests are not always plentiful and often, the yield is low. When the crops fail due to adverse weather, poor seed quality and other factors, the farmers have no funds to repay the mounting debts and the fast accruing interest. They are then forced to borrow more to farm the next season, doubling the debts. This vicious cycle continues – worsening each time a harvest fails or paddy prices drop. Living a life of poverty, the farmers hold little hope of breaking out of this debt trap.



## ...lending a hand

50 of the 60 acres of land belonging to Jetwing Kaduruketha is traditional paddy land. Therefore, to provide a lasting solution to the difficulties faced by the farming community and to uplift their lives, a partnership was formed when Jetwing Kaduruketha was envisioned. Kaduruketha Farmers Ltd which involves 31 local farmer families was created solely to handle the farming activities of this paddy acreage.

Rs. 25,000 per acre was given to each family (20,000 upfront and 5,000 after harvest) for farming provision such as seeds, fertilizers, maintenance, labour and harvesting machinery. This is not a loan, and the farmers are not required to pay the sum back.

At the end of the season, the total harvest is split 50/50 between the farmers and the hotel. There are no 'middle men' and the farmers are free to sell their half as they see fit. As the money given to the farmers is not loaned, in the event of crop failure or drop in market price, the farmers do not directly incur debt.

This way, the local farming community have a ray of hope to build up resources, break away from the circle of debt and see their hard labour bring in some reward.

The portion of the harvest belonging to Jetwing Kaduruketha is used at the hotel and the excess sold to other Jetwing properties keeping a marginal profit. The other Jetwing properties can buy at a lower than market rate as there is no 'middle man' involved.

The profit made from the sale of excess rice covers the payment made to the farmers. Even if there is a drop in the harvest, the profit made from the sales break even the farming expenses paid to them at the beginning of the season. Therefore the farming activities can be carried out without impacting, or being impacted by the hotel's expenses.

Through this partnership, benefits can be shared by all. The farmers - as they can farm at low risk; Jetwing Kaduruketha, because of their portion of the harvest as well as the positive relationships built with the community; other Jetwing hotels, as they are able to get quality produce at a better rate.

...a tradition, kept



Now: Jetwing Kaduruketha Entrance Terrace

Having found an innovative way of empowering the farming communities, the possibility of Wellawaya as a tourist destination was explored as it proved ideally suited to Jetwing Hotel's strategy of launching new properties in areas which are not established tourist hot spots in order to pass on the benefits of the nation's growing tourism sector to rural communities as well.

Along winding tracks heading into this heartland, hid a beautiful old 'walawwa' (traditional country home); flanked by acres of natural forest, cultivated trees, and lush green paddy fields stretching to the horizon with looming mountain sentinels. It was perfection found, and Jetwing Kaduruketha was born.

From the concept of designing an agro resort, much care was taken to stay true to the vernacular – the locality's natural and cultural heritage; and Jetwing Kaduruketha was developed to minimize, as much possible, any adverse impact from its creation and its operations, and bring benefits instead.



Then: The old 'Walawwa'



Reflecting the simplicity of rural life, and keeping with the traditions of the cultural past of the locality, Jetwing Kaduruketha was designed by the renowned environmental architect Sunela Jayawardene – who was also responsible for creating the award winning eco haven Jetwing Vil Uyana. Jetwing Kaduruketha was also constructed with minimum impact to the surrounding environment, while maintaining green principles and practices from the design stage itself.

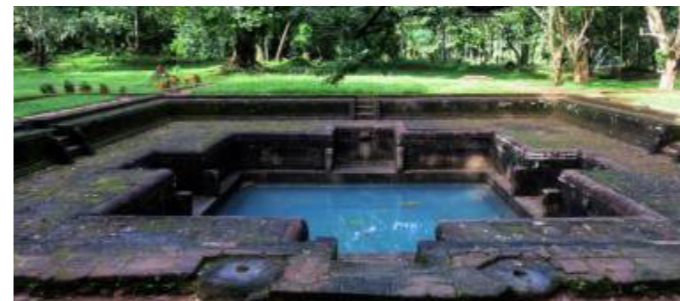
#### **True to tradition:**

Inspired by the agro-economy of the area and using traditional Kandyan design, the hotel was created to resemble a traditional Sri Lankan village with the old Walawwa as the main focal point and two types of villas named Arachchi and Wel widana – which are traditional posts of respect in a farming community.

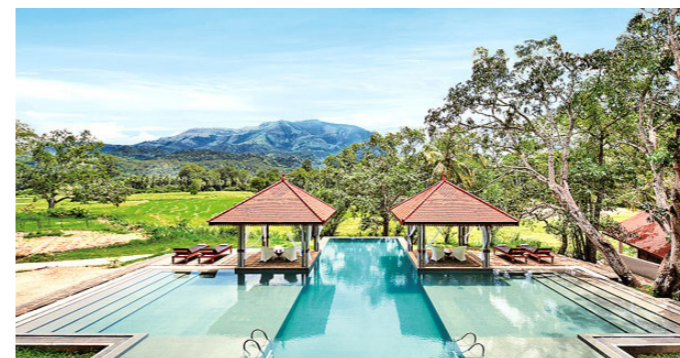
Traditional designs come to life throughout the hotel, from the exteriors to the interiors, and to the little details. The furniture is inspired by the lacquer art (laksha) industry in Sri Lanka. The colours red, black and yellow are characteristic of laksha products and are popularly seen in arts and crafts of the Kandyan era. The unique lighting fixtures are created out of local farming implements.



Influenced by ancient architecture, the swimming pool was created in the same style as the 'Biso Pokuna' (Queen's Pond) in the nearby archaeological ruins in Galabadda - the ancient palace complex of Queen Sugala Devi. This distinctively designed pool in the palace gardens is considered to be one of the masterpieces of traditional Sinhalese architecture.



Ancient 'Biso Pokuna'



The roof of the dwellings are made of clay tiles continuing the tradition of centuries in design as well as practicality, where they were used to achieve natural cooling within buildings.

#### **True to Green Principles:**

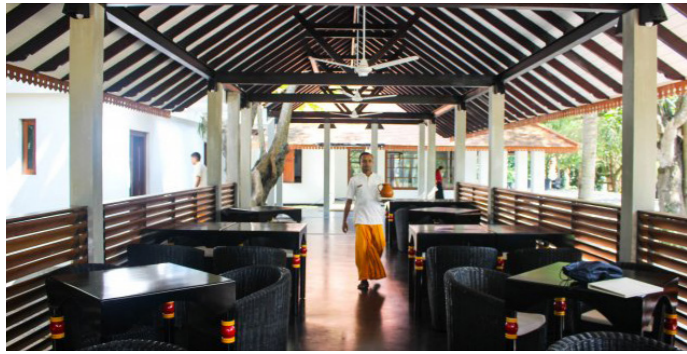
The inspirations drawn from the traditional designs were not merely aesthetic, but also environmentally friendly – as indeed they were in the centuries past. Therefore, when developing the dwellings, natural and recycled materials were used as much as possible to minimize the environmental burden. The core structure was built using natural material such as clay plastered walls, natural timber decking, cut and polished cement floors and clay tiled roofs for instance.

The use of bamboo grilled door sashes help to maximize natural cross ventilation and overcome the need of air-conditioners in the dwellings - which were avoided at the design stage itself to keep with the objective of minimal environmental impact from hotel operations.

The use of traditional clay tiled roofs supports natural cooling, as natural clay is more porous than synthetic asbestos or zinc/aluminium sheets and help to reduce the heat gain by retaining

air within the porous structure, acting as a natural heat insulator. This principle also applies to the brick based clay plastered walls used throughout. The dwellings are designed so that the pitch of the roof is at maximum height, creating comfortable temperatures within the room as it enables heat to be directed towards the upper part of the room.

The restaurant which extends outward from the main building facing the swimming pool is naturally ventilated throughout and naturally illuminated during day time. All dwellings also face the paddy fields, giving an unobstructed view of the landscape, while allowing the cool breeze moving across the surrounding vegetation to come through ensuring that the room is naturally 'air conditioned'.



All these design elements were inspired by traditional, local architectural practices used for hundreds of years, when there were no sophisticated technologies like air conditioning or artificial mechanisms of achieving comfort.

The hotel design also took advantage of the location as Wellaway is situated in a transitional zone between the chilly hill country and the dry zone plains, resulting in a pleasant environment: with ambient temperatures and humidity of the wet zone as well as the ideal conditions the dry zone.



Dedicated to green responsibilities, Jetwing Kaduruketha also helps to minimize its operational impact on the environment - from the outset, with systems in place for energy management, waste management, water conservation and use of environmentally friendly materials.



...preserving nature



Despite the land being 60 acres, the 25 luxury dwellings are built only on a 10 acre land area, maintaining the existing green cover - the paddy fields, riverine forest and the home garden areas.

The natural habitat surrounding the site was left undisturbed as much as possible. The design of the hotel and the garden were adjusted as necessary to accommodate existing trees. The landscaping was done with minimal disturbance to native vegetation, focussing instead on featuring species which are unique to the location. As the hotel design was to replicate a traditional village, native trees commonly found in home gardens were planted to enhance the habitat.



The undisturbed areas within the property are home to variety of wildlife, comprising feeder plants for butterflies, shrub habitats for reptiles such as lizards, fruit trees for birds and small mammals such as monkeys and giant squirrels. The native and endemic trees planted have also helped to attract a variety of fauna.

To date, more than 120 species of birds are recorded from the property - a testament to the endeavor's success. From friendly giant squirrels gorging on fruit trees at the hotel to a thrilling sighting of an endangered nocturnal flying squirrel, or a quick glimpse of the elusive fishing cat - the surrounds of Jetwing Kaduruketha is home to a vast variety of fauna and flora - endemic, rare and common.

Birds, small mammals, reptiles and insects thrive in the nearby forest and many are found within the hotel grounds. The giant trees adorned with winding creepers, the thick undergrowth, the quiet natural pools and cascading streams provide them all with an ideal haven to call home.



Guests have a variety of options onsite, to experience the surrounding nature first hand - the nocturnal fauna and the rich birdlife; as well as explore places of historical interest and natural beauty of the area.



#### **From farm to table:**

In addition to paddy farming - the primary feature at Jetwing Kaduruketha, the hotel also maintains an organic farm where vegetables such as capsicum, brinjal, lettuce and others are grown. The farm does not use chemical substances or fertilizers, but only compost produced on site and slurry from the biogas plant which is turned to liquid fertilizer. The organic produce harvested is used in the hotel kitchen, giving guests the opportunity to enjoy fresh, nutritious meals.



...a first hand experience



Jetwing Kaduruketha was created recognizing that ecotourism - within the framework of sustainable tourism, is a multifaceted activity able to promote job creation and education, with potential to improve livelihoods in local communities, as well as contribute to the sustainable development and protection of biodiversity.

We aim to provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts, provide direct financial benefits for conservation and local people, as well as raise sensitivity to the environmental and social climate. We ensure that tourism does not exploit the natural environment, or adversely affect local communities; we consult and work together with them.

The wonders of nature that surround us, and the trust and goodwill of the local community have enabled us to create our luxury eco haven and offer a novel experience to our guests, marking our achievement as a unique agro tourism project.

Promoting environmentally responsible travel and providing a luxury eco-hideaway to our guests, we offer them the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate nature, culture and heritage. At Jetwing Kaduruketha, they also have the chance to

gain a rare glimpse of real rural life. To see it from an entirely new perspective – and know that their holiday has helped to bring benefits to the local people and help to uplift their lives.

All the excursions offered are created to promote the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, allowing guests to experience the fauna, flora, and culture the locality around Jetwing Kaduruketha. The tours include safari to national parks, village cycling tours, visits to waterfalls and mountains, religious sites and archaeological tours. A vital part of the experiences offered encourage closer interaction with the locals, their community and their livelihood – paddy planting and harvesting, village tours, dining experiences – all of which offer unique insights into local attractions and everyday lives.

...we journey forward on a mutually beneficial relationship between our environment, our community, and our guests...



## Communities' involvement and impact

Jetwing Kaduruketha is one of the few hotels in the world to enter into an actual partnership with the local community as a part of its operations.

As explained before, the partnership with the local farming community - Kaduruketha Farmers Ltd - is an endeavour to provide a lasting solution towards the alleviation of poverty and debt, and uplift their lives.

Jetwing as a corporate places great emphasis on involving local communities in its operations, not just to provide sustained support to enable the development and empowerment of these communities, but also establish the hotel and operations as an integral part of the local community - as a mutually beneficial exercise.

The very essence of Jetwing Kaduruketha is co-existence and thriving together with the communities and the natural environment.

## INVOLVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

Apart from the core concept of the local farming community being stakeholders in Jetwing Kaduduketha other means of involving local communities according to the Jetwing Sustainability Strategy are also strictly adhered to with several methods are in place to ensure that this practice is carried out at all times.

Whenever possible products and services are purchased or procured locally. Striving hard to maximize local economic benefits by increasing links, ensuring that communities are involved in and gain benefit from tourism. Jetwing Kaduruketha is today, a vital means of sustainable income to local communities.

Sustainable employment helps to uplift their lives and using local 'experts' gives Jetwing Kaduruketha the advantage of having local specialists who understand the community and its way of life, as well as a thorough knowledge of the area – and are therefore able to offer a better service to the guests.

Fruits, vegetables and other essentials are purchased from the



vicinity. Local sweetmeats are sourced from villagers, whenever needed. 'Buffalo Curd' (traditional type of yogurt) - a unique product of South Eastern Sri Lanka - is produced in-house from milk sourced from local farmers.

Buying local not only benefits the communities who produce them, but also reduces the carbon footprint from transportation.

Other initiatives that bring the Jetwing philosophy into action are also implemented in an ongoing basis through community outreach programmes. An integral part of this endeavour is the Jetwing Youth Development Project (JYDP), and the 12th programme was held at Jetwing Kaduruketha.

## THE JETWING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:

The JYDP - Jetwing Youth Development Project is an initiative designed to empower rural youth who are underprivileged and cannot afford higher education. The initiative provides training for suitable employment within Jetwing Hotels as well as creating opportunities for them to find employment elsewhere within the hospitality industry.

Developed to address the growing problem of youth unemployment, and to provide a solution for the manpower shortage in the hospitality industry, JYDP relies on the involvement and support of local communities. Focusing on bridging the gap between the unskilled and the skilled by equipping them for employment, JYDP provides training absolutely free to school leavers from disadvantaged families in rural areas.

The first ever JYDP was held at Jetwing Vil Uyana in 2006, where the programme provided free training to 82 school leavers from disadvantaged farming families in the Sigiriya. In 2007, Jetwing Vil Uyana was awarded the PATA Grand Award for the JYDP in the Education and Training category. Building on this success, eighteen editions of JYDPs have been successfully completed at Jetwing properties around the island.

The 12th successive programme under the JYDP umbrella, was based at Jetwing Kaduruketha, providing training for youth from the Wellawaya, Thanamalvila and Buttala areas. The Programme commenced on the 09th January 2015, ending on the 15th November 2015, and was conducted in collaboration with Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka.

The subjects covered under JYDP are entry level technical inputs on the four core operational areas, which are: Front Office, Housekeeping, Kitchen and Food & Beverage service. These four areas are supported with personal and professional development inputs. All sessions are held under the guidance of members of the Training and Development team of Jetwing Hotels.

As the JYDP developed, it became evident that a fair level of proficiency in English was imperative to the progress of the project as well as to the trainees. To that end, a six-month training programme in practical, spoken English, using role play in a series of real-life situations, with exercises in grammar, general knowledge, Western ideas and other topics was designed to provide the young school leavers with a working knowledge of English which would enable them to express themselves and to be understood by others.

Simultaneously, they commenced a training program which covered entry level industry training which included general introduction to life-skills, self-development by way of personal hygiene, good grooming and inculcating a positive attitude. Training programmes are also conducted on Excursions and tourist attractions in Sri Lanka, and the ethos of Jetwing Hotels.

The trainees who are short-listed in to the departments are potentially allocated to work at, and are given on the job training. Upon successfully completing the final set of assessments they are recruited as full time associates by Jetwing. Employees who are selected and graduated via the JYDP programme are given a contract to work with the hotel.

All employees at Jetwing Hotels Ltd are monitored carefully by their Heads of Departments and performance appraisals are carried out once every six months by the Human Resource Department at the hotel. Promotions are handed out to outstanding individuals who have performed.

The key objectives are primarily to face and provide solutions for the manpower shortage in Jetwing hotels as well as the Sri Lanka Hotel Industry in general; to involve and engage local communities in tourism, passing on some of its benefits to them; and to contribute towards resolving the problem of Sri Lanka's youth unemployment.



## Actively encouraging community environmental programmes

The very concept of Jetwing Kaduruketha is based on co-existence and active engagement with the community. Being involved in community activities is therefore a vital part of the hotel's operation - not only by the hotel's management and employees but also the guests.

As a family owned business that has been a pioneer in the tourism industry for the past 44 years, the Jetwing management philosophy is a hybrid of professionalism expected of a large corporate, but also with an inherent value system which treats its employees as members of its extended family. Hence the reference to the Jetwing Group as "Jetwing family of companies". This ethos also extends to the communities around the hotels, who we view as part of our family, and every endeavour is made to support and encourage their development as well.

The partnership with the farmers at Jetwing Kaduruketha, is in line with the Jetwing Hotel's overall sustainability strategy, and as a part of this strategy, active engagement with the community takes place on a regular basis.

During the past year, awareness on environmental issues were raised amongst hotel guests, associates and the local community through a series of events especially organized to involve all interested stakeholders.

22nd April 2017: On Earth Day 2017 Jetwing Kaduruketha conducted a tree planting programme with our guests and education programme about global warming and climate change, for the Kaduruketha farmers' children.



25th March 2017: Jetwing Kaduruketha commemorated the Earth Hour by switching off lights from 8.30 - 9.30 pm; '60+' figurine was made on the grounds from clay oil lamps, with guests and associates joining in to placing the oil lamps.

22nd March 2017: Ellewala is the main source of drinking water supply to the Wellawaya city. Associates from Jetwing Kaduruketha conducted cleaning campaign at Ellewala waterfall to commemorate World Water Day.

05th June 2016: The Ellewala falls – a popular tourist destination is unfortunately littered with plastics and polythene. On World Environment Day, the Ellewala falls and the surrounding forest areas were cleaned by associates of Jetwing Kaduruketha.

Routine awareness programs on biodiversity conservation and environmental management, are also carried out for associates, guests and community members. For instance, an awareness programme on snakes of the dry zone was conducted for staff and villagers. Wellawaya has a high density of non venomous snakes; however, the locals tend to kill them unaware of this fact, or due to misconceptions. The objective of the programme was to educate the community.

