

Cattleya Villa: Taking New Strides In Hospitality



The tourism industry is keeping up a steady momentum of growth and property developers are keen to make their contribution towards the projected capacity of rooms, according to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Strategy for 2011-2016. In this endeavour, the concept of boutique villas is becoming increasingly popular in South Asia. Cattleya Villa, a luxury boutique villa, located in Hikkaduwa strives to

further this concept as it completes a year in business. Owner Chathurika Fernando, speaks of the progress achieved up to now and future aspirations.

By Dinali Gunawardana
Photography Indika De Silva

Starting her career as a part-time radio presenter at TNL while studying for the Advanced Level Examination, Chathurika Fernando-from an early age-has gained experience in various fields. A multi-skilled individual, she found her passion in modelling and singing as well. Thus, she was placed the first runner up at the Miss Sri Lanka contest in 2006 and has also won the TNL Onstage contest in the Solo category. However, keen on venturing into the hospitality industry in keeping with a family tradition, she went on to obtain an honours degree in Business Administration from the University of Greenwich.

"When I was studying in London, I walked into the Dorchester and having always been fascinated by Orchids, spotted this beautiful orchid, named Cattleya. I discovered that it was a rare breed, and my name starts with C," Chathurika Fernando explained. "That was the inspiration for the concept, theme and the interior design of the Cattleya Villa." A property that includes just five suites, the Villa has been able to achieve much progress within the span of just one year, having been able to garner a positive response from the clients. Revealing the secret of her success Chathurika said that the Villa represents beauty, charm, luxury and love, where the notion of 'love' is incorporated to present a departure from the norm.

Further making note of the off-peak months in the South, which coincides with the peak period in the North, the proprietor of Cattleya Villa hopes to diversify her business by opening more properties to level out the benefits available through the year. As such, she is looking at Arugam Bay and Passekudah while making plans to venture into the Maldives in the medium term. "Tourism will keep booming not just in Sri Lanka and Asia, but around the world," Chathurika affirms. "However, it would be great if more support is given to the tourism industry and the private sector as I strongly believe that tourism is one of the main assets in our economy."

Chathurika believes that the strength of the Villa's success is attributable to the staff and the special attention that is given to each and every guest that arrives at their doorstep. Accordingly she spends time with the staff to ensure that service levels are maintained and guests are paid special attention. "Every review written mentions the service given by my staff," she said. "The smiles given by the staff are completely genuine and as the owner of Cattleya, I believe it is an important aspect of what we offer. Differentiating and finding good staff matters, because I want everyone-the staff and guests included-to have a good relationship."

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Paying attention in delivering a personalised service, staying in line with the luxury boutique concept where prominence is given to smaller number of rooms and a more closer bond with the staff, Chathurika makes sure that she herself gets involved in making her guests feel at home at Cattleya Villa.

Envisioning to expand her business, beyond villas, Chathurika observes that, "though competition is necessary, it would be good to see companies working together in Sri Lanka. Well established business organisations should recognise small and medium scale companies and allow them to grow, to see a growth in the industry as a whole. Achieving success is certainly a challenge. But if you strive hard with the right goals and motivation, you can progress."

Stressing on the importance of promotions to make known the true value of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka the world over, she reveals, "leaving all the negativity aside, if we promote tourism as one nation, we would be earning much more than Singapore and our economy would be booming."

With the ongoing development in the country, the infrastructure has seen a rapid improvement where more and more people, local and international, are keen to explore the Island to witness its charms. Cattleya Leisure with Cattleya Villa under its wing as the company's first endeavour is making strides to establish itself as a much sought-after place that provides personalised accommodation. "It's all about

friendship, love, having a good time and feeling that you can have your very own home away from home. That's the whole concept and idea behind the Villa and I hope I'm succeeding," she concluded.