

# President Ranil Wickremesinghe Embarks on Observation Tour to Revitalize Tourism Industry in Scenic Nuwara Eliya



President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe visited the Court Lodge Estate, owned by the Udupusellawa Plantation Company in Nuwara Eliya, to explore opportunities to revive the tourism industry around the picturesque hills of Nuwara Eliya.

Notably, the President embarked on this journey by traversing the Pekoe Trail. The “Pekoe Trail” spans 300+ km through the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka and is regarded as one of Asia’s best-kept secret routes.

Originating from the renowned city of Kandy, it extends south towards the Hatton and Horton Plains National Park, then east through Haputale and Ella, before meandering around the charming town of Nuwara Eliya. Originally constructed during the British colonial

period to transport tea from vast plantations to factories, the trail holds historical significance.

During his walk along the Pekoe Trail, covering a distance of 3.2 km, the President engaged in friendly conversation with the workers employed at the Court Lodge estate. Welcoming the President warmly, the people expressed their heartfelt wishes for a joyous Sinhala and Tamil New Year.

The Court Lodge estate, overseen by Browns Plantations, spans 264 hectares and employs 349 workers. During his visit, President Ranil Wickremesinghe personally inspected the fundamental requirements of the plantation workers, addressing issues related to education, healthcare, and housing. He mainly focused on the prospects of the children within the plantation workers' community, especially those set to complete their schooling after the G.C.E. Advanced level examination.

The factory at Court Lodge is known for producing "Light Bright" tea. During his tour, President Ranil Wickremesinghe also emphasized the importance of giving Pekoe Trail tourists the opportunity to savor a freshly brewed cup of tea. Furthermore, he explored avenues to bolster the tourism industry associated with Sri Lanka's central highlands by leveraging the Pekoe Trail.

Miguel Cunat, the visionary behind the Pekoe Trail expedition, who has extensively explored the central mountains of Sri Lanka over the years, expressed his belief that Sri Lanka can be mapped internationally as one of the premier hiking destinations globally.

Pekoe Trail offers tourists a unique opportunity to explore a variety of terrains, delve into the region's storied history, engage with its vibrant culture, and savor authentic local cuisine and beverages. Comprising 22 stages, the Pekoe Trail can be tailored to suit one-day or multi-day excursions, catering to a range of preferences. Plans are underway to develop the trail further, enhancing it with necessary facilities to ensure a seamless and enjoyable experience for visitors.

The European Union (EU) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have supported the Pekoe Trail project, aligning with Sri Lanka's national tourism strategies. The initiative encompasses various aspects, including sustainable environmental development, to foster tourism growth in the country.

The Pekoe Trail project aims to draw in a new wave of tourism, including adventure seekers, to Sri Lanka while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of rural communities. Miguel Cunat expressed his appreciation to President Ranil Wickremesinghe for his support in initiating the Pekoe Trail. He commended the President's vision to revitalize the country's economy by transforming the tourism industry.



President journeying on the Pekoe Trail.



President Wickremesinghe with Miguel Cunat, the brainchild of Pekoe Trail.



President with the staff of the Court Lodge.