



## HPH: Sri Lanka's best homestay



(<http://colombogazette.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Lunch-at-HPH-DSC02268.jpg>) Nestled in the Kandyan foothills and looking down the Weuda valley of the North Western Province, Halgolla Plantation Home (HPH) is a unique facility recently picked by world-renowned travel writer Royston Ellis as “Sri Lanka's Best Homestay.”

Unlike most “Homestays,” HPH is the ancestral home of Emil van der Poorten's family and he and Arlene Madawela decided, sometime after his return from Canada seven years ago, to open their home to guests interested in the serenity of an area blessed with a wealth of bird- and wildlife, beautiful vistas and climatic conditions that provide the best of two worlds – that of the warm dry plains below and the cool hill-country behind the spacious house of which three bedrooms, providing lodging for seven, are available to paying guests.

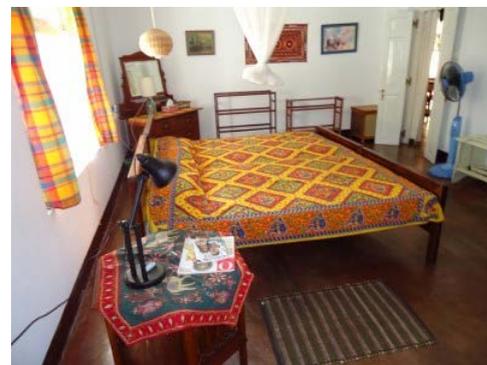
While Emil and Arlene have sought to maintain the warmth and integrity of their home and the sprawling garden around it, they have also developed simple walking trails on the adjacent hillsides, a very popular “soaking pool” in the unspoiled stream that borders their land and rustic benches and picnic areas in appropriate parts of their land.

The domestic water supply is pipe-borne from a private spring and gravity provides the more-than-ample pressure at tap and shower. Hot water is provided by means of a wood-burning “geyser” reinforcing the efforts at self-sufficiency on site. (<http://colombogazette.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Bens-Bedroom-2.jpg>)

The cuisine which has been judged by guests as “exceptional” is primarily traditional Sri Lankan, using herbs, vegetables and fruit – mangosteen, mango, bananas, papaya etc. (in season) – grown on the land

adjacent to HPH. Several of the spices – cloves, nutmegs and pepper among them – are home grown and will soon be joined by cinnamon and vanilla from the fields adjacent to the Home. The coffee served is grown, roasted and ground at HPH.

Cooking is primarily on a traditional open hearth and visitors speak eloquently on such websites as Trip Advisor of the exceptional variety and quality of the food.



HPH is “off the beaten track,” though only 20 kilometres from the provincial capitals of Kandy and Kurunegala and within day-tripping distance of the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka – Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya. The Elephant Orphanage at Pinnawela is a comfortable half-day excursion from HPH. (<http://colombogazette.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Boulder-path-DSC02307.jpg>)



Visitors have also begun to evince interest in some of Sri Lanka's less-famous, but very significant places of historical and archaeological importance such as Panduwasnuwara and Yapahuwa and the hosts of HPH are currently exploring the possibility of arranging visits to them as well as the butterfly garden of Sri Lanka's premier lepidopterists.

Increasingly, though, many who have intended to make HPH a primary jumping-off point for tours to other parts of the country have extended their stays, drawn by the serenity of the surroundings and the exceptional hospitality of the hosts whose home is a virtual art gallery of original paintings enhanced by a superb library of books ranging from current affairs to a very large collection on Sri Lanka's natural history, several of them qualifying as “collectors' Items.”

Halgolla Plantation Home is indeed unique, a combination of bucolic surroundings and vibrant ambience and has cast its spell over the guests from the four corners of the world who have spent time at this Homestay that has been available to the public for a brief two years.

Comprehensive information on this unique facility, inclusive of Tariff and Visitor Registration form is available at [www.halgollaplantationhome.com](http://www.halgollaplantationhome.com) (**Colombo Gazette**)