

Mount Lavinia

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In this week's Trip, we headed towards Mount Lavinia, a beach strip that has been accessible all our lives and a place that never fails to offer the best of island life. On a weekend, this beach strip is easily as crowded and as happening as those in Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna but on a week day, it is mellow and an ideal place to take a walk or just chill out after a long day at work.

Walking along the beach you are bound to encounter small stalls selling a variety of things, including treats such as spicy achcharu, beach shorts and even toys.



S. Thomas' College

Although not a part of the sandy shores of Mount Lavinia, S. Thomas' College plays an important role in the history of this area. Started by Bishop Chapman in 1851, the college was first located next to the Christ Church in Mutwal. In 1918, the school was moved to its present location down College Avenue in Mount Lavinia.

During the Second World War, S. Thomas' College was broken up and some of its students were sent to Kingswood College, while the rest were absorbed by St. Paul's Milagiriya, as the school was used as a military hospital. In 1946, the premises was vacated and handed back to the school.

A Japanese plane had crashed during the war within the school premises. The plane had been shot in Galle Face but had fallen in the big club grounds.



<http://www.stmountsch.lk>

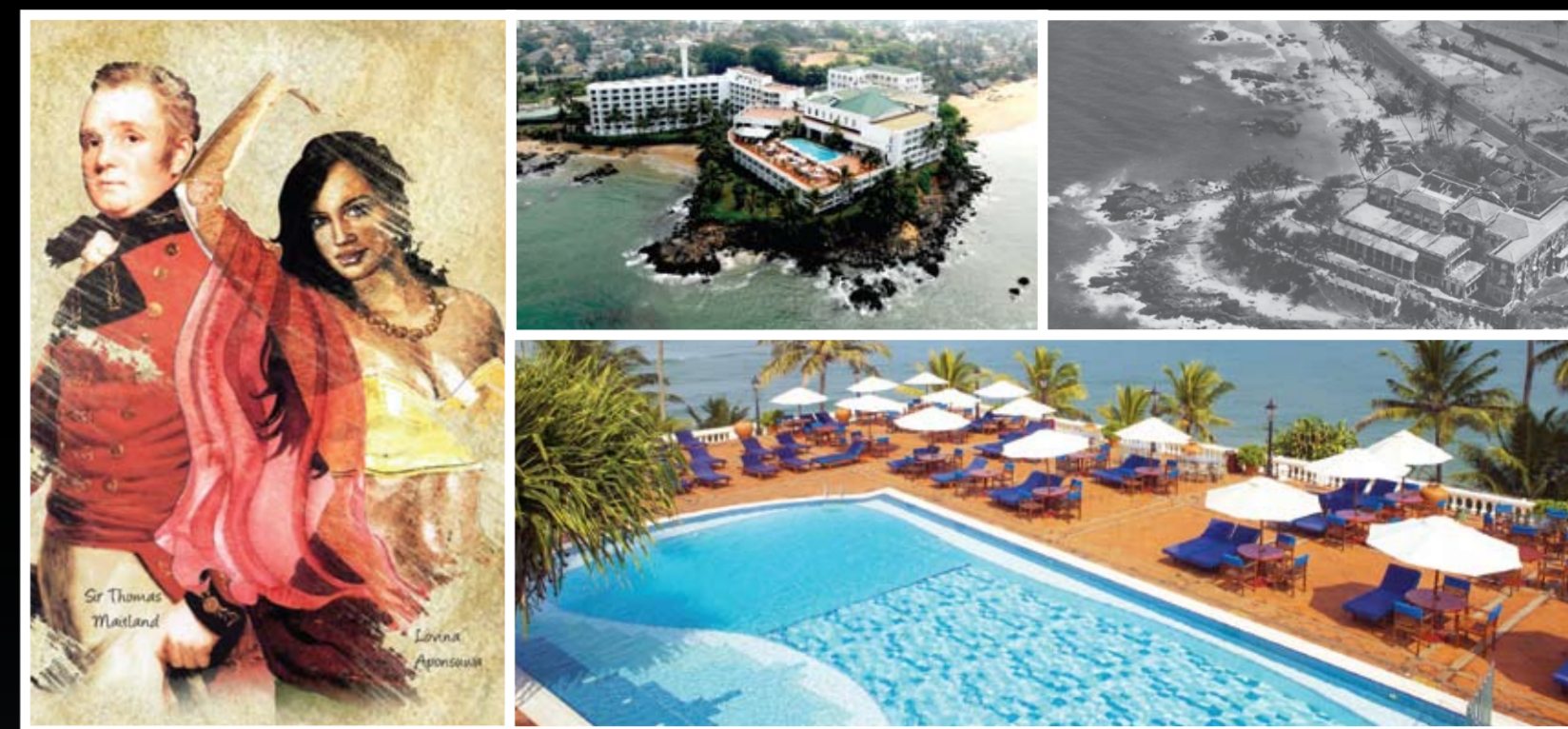
La Voile Blanche

This white themed restaurant on Mount beach cannot be missed. With white picket fences, white roof and white furniture to complete its picture, La Voile Blanche, is a unique restaurant. Started in 2008, the restaurant serves Italian and French cuisine and has also made a name for itself with the distinctive cocktails on offer.

The Manager of the restaurant, Shehan Fernando, said that they offer a seasonal menu which includes homemade pastas and various seafood dishes which range from Rs. 600 to Rs. 1200.

The three signature drinks served at La Voile Blanche are the Tamarind martini, Passion fruit mojito and the Espresso martini. The Tamarind martini is one of the best cocktails I have ever had. Frosted in chilled sugar, this gave the extra tang for a delicious drink. The Espresso martini was also quite an interesting concoction. I would definitely recommend the three signature drinks. The prices on the extensive drinks menu range from Rs. 400 to Rs. 1000.

La Voile Blanche is open from 9 a.m. till 11.30 p.m. and serves breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.



Mount Lavinia Hotel



We started off our walk from the Mount Lavinia Hotel, the grand old dame on the beach strip. Positioned on a rocky promontory, this beautiful building was built by the third British Governor in Ceylon, Sir Thomas Maitland as a country house in 1806. It was used by three other Governors including Sir Robert Brownrigg, Sir Edward Paget and Sir Edward Barnes, and came to be known as 'Mount Lavinia House'. Each governor after Maitland added a new wing to the house, during their stay.

The name of the hotel is also synonymous to the area as it is named after Maitland's love interest, a Sri Lankan - Portuguese mixed Mestizo dancer, by the name of Lovina Aponusa. As the love between a high ranking British official and a mixed cast dancer was not socially accepted, they had to be discreet and the Governor built a tunnel so that he could see her in secret. The tunnel began from a well located outside the parameters of the mansion and ended at the wine cellar inside the mansion. Eventually, the affair was discovered by the British government and the governor was sent to Malta, where he died as a bachelor. Although most of the tunnel was later demolished to accommodate the railway lines, parts of it still exist.

Mount Lavinia House was converted into a hotel in 1877 and was known as 'The Mount Lavinia Grand Hotel' and even served as a military base and hospital during the Second World War.

The hotel houses a special museum where they store items used by the British Governors that once walked through the hall of this place. These objects include the gramophone used by Maitland, letters written by him to the British government, pictures and various other items.

The Terrace offers a spectacular view of the Mount Lavinia beach and the coastline and is a favoured haunt of many who like to spend a laid back day watching the sea. The seafood pizza on the menu is quite good; check it out when you next visit the hotel.

Lavinia Beach Resort

As we continued to walk down the beach stretch in the hope of finding a new place, we stumbled upon Lavinia Beach Resort. What attracted me first towards this restaurant was the design of the building and the massive tap like object placed in front of it. The antique furniture sets the tone for the Lavinia Beach Resort.

According to the proprietor of the restaurant, Harendra de Mel, the Lavinia Beach Resort started operations in 2009 and is a seafood restaurant that serves Sri Lankan cuisine and is perhaps the only one of its kind on Mount beach, as most eateries tend to focus on international menus.

Harendra added that they are one of the few places that serve breakfast on the beach and their menu includes kola kanda and hoppers, which most foreigners have come to love. He also added that their signature dessert is Grandma's pineapple fluff, a family recipe that he inherited from his grandmother.

When asked about the uniqueness of the beach resort, Harendra added that his main business focus is carpentry and furniture and that the tables at the restaurant are in fact constructed from the wheels of a 200 year old vel cart which he had found in Jaffna.

Harendra further added that apart from the restaurant he also runs a small boutique hotel by the name of Mount Lavinia House and an apartment bloc called Lavinia Residences, just nearby.

The Lavinia Beach Resort is open from 7 a.m. till 11 p.m.

Lavinia Breeze

Having been in operation for the past 12 years, Lavinia Breeze specializes in seafood dishes. The restaurant has several seating areas including one with a balcony view, a private dining room and banquet area.

According to the restaurant manager, Chang Tira Ching, Lavinia Breeze focuses on international seafood cuisine and is one of the few such places on the Mount beach. The signature dish at this restaurant is their Seafood mixed grill, which has a reputation of its own.

He added that at present they have a Mongolian food promotion during the weekend which will continue till the end of March.

In terms of entertainment, a reggae band performs at the venue on Saturday nights.

Lavinia Breeze is open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and serves lunch and dinner.

