

# **The Hidden Paradise; Belihuloya**



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Belihuloya, cocooned in the great Sabaragamuwa mountain range, is a small village with unimpaired natural beauty. The unspoiled glamour of the environment truly resembles the authenticity of the countryside. The lush greenery of the paddy fields joins with Belihul Oya (river) which flows to the Samanala Wewa to amplify the calm attractiveness of this hidden paradise.

Situated approximately 152km away from Colombo, Belihuloya showcases adorable scenic views and landscapes as it is nestled among the island's wet zone, dry zone, and hill country, featuring the characteristics of all three zones which has led the destination to be geographically inimitable.

The natural beauty of Belihuloya is complemented by the rich culture it holds. Descending from the Sabaragamuwa tradition, music, dance, arts and crafts take a unique essence and the local lifestyle that is bound with agriculture brings a different flavour to the rurality of the village.

Belihuloya treasures countless attractions that travelers could explore and gain lifelong experiences and memories.

## **Kuragala Monastery Complex**

This cavern is a traditional Buddhist heredity that belongs to the hermitage genre and it is cited that Kuragala cave has a long history that has descended from the era of aborigines. It holds a significant place among the few caverns in Sri Lanka. According to folklore, this massive rock was anciently known as “Kuharagala” and there are two rock – apical; Kuragala and Hituwangala, which are named by the natural concavity that can be seen in the east slope of the rock. This rock concavity is 5 - 6.5m deep and is large enough for two people to go in at once.

# Pahanthudawa Waterfall

Pahanthudawa is located in the Belihuloya river and it is considered to be one of the unique creations among the waterfalls in Sri Lanka. The waterfall gets its name due to the lamp-like tip of the fall. Even though it is small in size, it is said to be having an unmeasurable depth. Pahanthudawa is well-known for its stunning beauty and peaceful natural setting.



## Nonpareil Estate

The picturesque Nonpareil Estate is located on Nonpareil Road, which leads to Horton Plains. The route to Nonpareil Estate comprises many natural settings, including the famous and breathtaking Nonpareil Estate Falls and many other waterfalls, rivers, and sceneries. It is a popular tourist destination due to its scenic beauty and breathtaking views of the surrounding.

## Baker's Bend

Baker's bend is a one-of-a-kind horseshoe-shaped bend located in the route to Nonpareil Estate. It is a famous viewpoint among local hikers and is located at a height of approximately 1530m. This bend provides breathtaking views of the surrounding areas, including Balathuduwa, Gommolikanda, Paraviyangala, Udawalawe Reservoir and Samanalawewa Reservoir. According to legend, the bend was built by Governor Baker to commemorate his travel companion – a horse that slipped and fell off the cliff during a ride.



## Silogama Community Tourism Village



Silogama Praja Sancharaka Gammanaya or Silogama homestay is an ideal place to enjoy the authenticity of rural life. The village still practices the traditional agriculture industry and conserves the rituals, customs, values and language as well as a traditional cuisine that are on the verge of deteriorating from society. The visitors can embrace the agro-rural lifestyle while enjoying the beauty of this touristy village which is considered to be a biodiversity hotspot.

## Paraviyangala

A paradise for hikers and campers, also known as Adara Kanda (Lover's Peak) is one peak in the Kalupahana mountain range. The elevation of Paraviyangala is approximately 1,500m above sea level. At the end of the 3 – 4 hours hike, the view that surrounding mountains and the scenery creates is heavenly and breathtaking.

## Surathali Falls

The charming Surathali Falls rains down from a height of 60m and is cascaded to three segments creating a fascinating view when it falls down. Originating from the Horton Plains, the fall is created by the Kadawath River and later runs into the Weli Oya (river). It is bordered by an untouched wildlife sanctuary. The fall was named after the film titled "Surathali" which has been filmed nearby the fall and it is home for many historical legends that have been written based on the area.

Recently, Belihuloya has gotten increased attention of many domestic as well as foreign travelers. The natural beauty that seconds to none and the traditional rural setting of the village creates Belihuloya an ideal place to practice alternative types of tourism such as community-based tourism, rural tourism, agro-tourism, etc. Practicing tourism in a sustainable manner both by hosts and guests would undoubtedly generate many positive outcomes and the benefits reaped through tourism can be dispersed to all the stakeholders.

Belihuloya is located in an extremely sensitive area that is rich in biodiversity, bordering the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary and the Horton Plains National Park, making it an unmatched bliss for adventurers and nature lovers. It is in the hands of the travelers to enjoy this paradise leaving no trace but to take home a reel full of memories to cherish a lifetime.