

### Abode Tours Visitor Feedback

Throughout the summer of 2014 and well into 2015, The Abode saw many western families stay with the grandparents high in the Knuckles Mountains. Here is what they had to say about the experience.....

'Thank you for giving us some really special memories and an insight into your wonderful country....

The Abode was very much a highlight so please give our love to all at the Abode and tell them we think about them (and talk about them) often..... with all good wishes. *Rita, Peter, Michael, Patrick and Ronan.*

'The Abode Home-stay was the highlight of the trip for us....' *Mike Carter.*



A good holiday must have something a bit unpredictable and special that you don't get easily... and all the children agreed (and they rarely all agree on one thing) that the time spent with you, Grandma and Grandpa and all the 'gang' up there was the very best part of the holiday. *Elizabeth and Nick.*

Thanks for your guiding and great sense of humour.

We all enjoyed going for lunch to the back of the tearoom on the way back – felt like a real privilege to be in a restaurant that the locals use instead of just tourists. The boys loved the cricket and we all thought

the visit to Granny and Grandpas was one of the highlights of the trip. We really enjoyed getting away from the busy tourist trail. Give our regards to Granny and Grandpa and Uncle VJ and grandpa's son. We enjoyed our cup of tea in his house and meeting his daughter and wife. You have beautiful country with very friendly people – we have been encouraging our friends to go there before Sri Lanka gets inundated with tourists which it surely will. *Chris, Susie, Stuart, Andrew and Lucy.*

**2015**

***Jana Starcukova and Family***



We were lucky enough to travel around Sri Lanka with Sid for almost three weeks. It was a tremendous experience as we got in touch with local people as close as we could never have achieved ourselves. And as a bonus we found a new friend in Sid – an honest, reliable, generous and knowledgeable man with a great sense for humour.

We started our trip in the Sinharaja Rain Forest. As we did not have enough change, Sid bought leech socks for our son and acquired another pair for me free of charge - this a good example how nice Sid is - and indeed the socks turned out to be an invaluable piece of clothing in the rainforest.





Another day we were taken to the hill country for trekking in one of the most remote Tamil plantations. It was a hard trip, 20 km in length and 1000 m vertically. While we were trekking in high-tech boots (as the terrain was hilly and required bushwalking in places), Sid and our Tamil trekker were effortlessly walking in their flip-flops (and waiting for us all the time). We realized how spoiled we are and how tough are the locals.



Sinhalese hiking boots



Tamils hiking boots



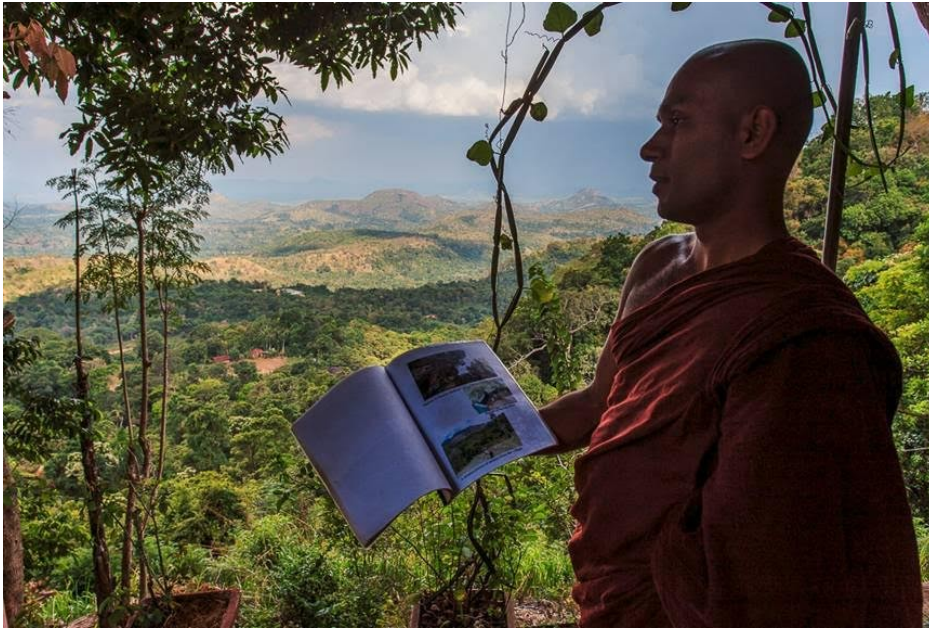
Westerner's hiking boots

Another day Sid got up at 4am to drive us from Ella to Lipton's Seat for a wonderful sunrise. We were the only people who managed to get there in time.



We were also taken to a small temple hidden in mountains in a small cave. As the only tourists we were guided by a monk through the whole temple, invited into his living room,

treated to kitul (a sweet syrup from the kitul palm) and finally blessed with fastening of Buddhist's string bracelets into our wrists. It was an unbelievably spiritual experience.



We went on safaris, visited local markets, tea factories, archeological sites and other temples, we attended Esala Perahera (Sid found the best free place in Kandy for the festival photographing).



But of the most exciting experiences we rank our visit to the Abode. We were driven to Knuckles and felt being very welcome already on the way to the village when we stopped to pick up some arrack (Sri Lanka's spirit made from the sap of coconut flowers) and to have a tasty local lunch comprising roti, fried lentils, bananas with jaggery (boiled and left to set hard with kitul) and tea from the local plantations (the same tea I am drinking while writing this).





Once at the village we were welcomed by grandma and grandpa, a nice pair of proud hardworking people. Immediately we at home. For all four days that we stayed in the village and in the Abode in Knuckles mountains we realised how honest and modest local people were and with how few resources they were able to survive.



We were shown the harvesting of native herbs and fruits (it was so tasty having fresh curry made from local plants on an open fire).



And were taken to the disused terrace fields and remains of an old village in the Knuckles and had awesome views of the surrounding peaks and rice fields. The whole stay at The Abode was tremendously mentally refreshing.





**The only thing we did not like on the whole trip was the fact that it ended. We can't wait to return to The Abode sometime in future to see the village valley flooded by the greenery of growing rice and to meet all the wonderful people again.**

**Thank you Sid for everything. We hope to see you soon**

**Jana, Zenon Jr. and Zenon III.**



