



TRAVELOGUE

Coasting in the clouds

*Such a feelin's comin' over me
There is wonder in most everything I see
Not a cloud in the sky, got the sun in my eyes
And I won't be surprised if it's a dream...*

Bipa said she intended to use the long Eid holidays to just read books; Swarna was of the mind to listen to music somewhere in the hills, and Imran wanted to watch Satyajit Ray films under the shade of a tree—this was the variety of people that Nowroz was driving to Bandarban with. Behind their car was another one, filled with people seeking some time to spend with friends, because simply hanging out was not much possible in the busy days that characterise Dhaka.

It's true that the homebound nature of the city dwellers has somewhat changed. A few holidays, along with a little money, are enough to spur many of these urban prisoners to go back or visit the villages they left long ago. The more adventurous among them may seek out the hills, the sea or just mingle in the midst of some natural greenery. "Eetermajheet, majhemanushkeet", the people stuck like insects in the crevices of earthen bricks, all want to be free for a while, and breathe fresh. So they have to look for some affordable yet enjoyable and beautiful place. That is exactly what Sairu Hill Resort in Bandarban is. Right on top of a hill, it is a cosy spot where light, shade, clouds and butterflies play freely.

The resort is about an hour's uphill drive over undulating terrain from the city of Bandarban. You can stop for a while at a roadside stall for fresh tea brewed with pure cow's milk, or eat a few of the tasty bananas that grow on the hills.

The place has a plaque with the love story of a hill maiden called Sairu. Right at the top is a bridge, linking two hills. After a while of walking about, you can sit and relax in the open veranda if you so wish. The

open reception area with its easy chairs is a good place to relax too, or you can sprawl under the willow trees with a cup of steaming tea. Sing a song aloud, or listen to a few bars; nobody here will tell you not to.

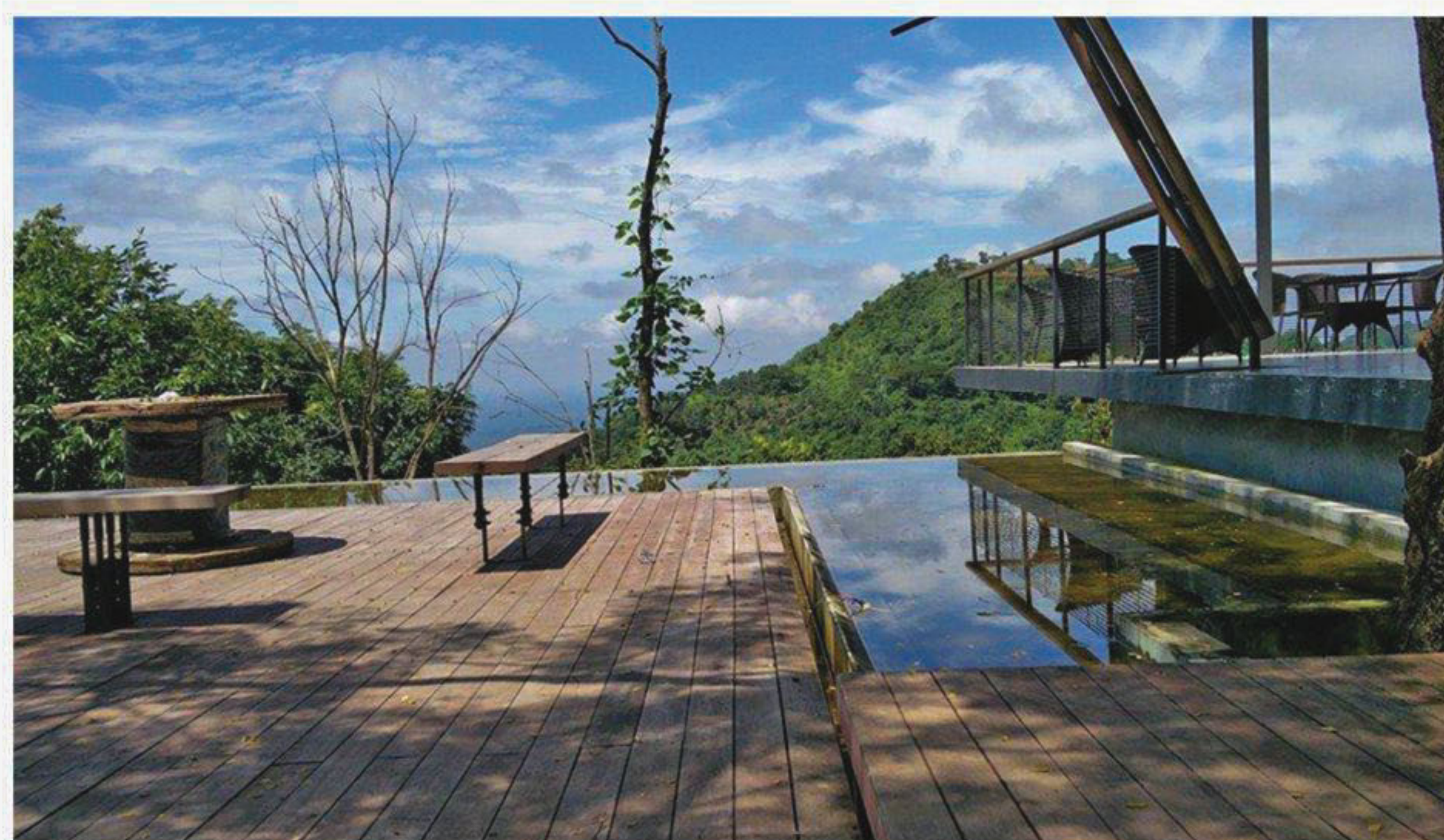
Would you rather sit alone snuggled with a book in your hands? Play around with paints in the veranda overlooking green hills? Or is some quiet time with your significant other or the whole family on your mind? No matter which, Sairu resort beside the Chimbuk Hill in Bandarban is the

peaceful shade or the one the frequent and sudden rain showers is not busy washing away even the slight vestiges of city dust. I had never seen vast open spaces from this height before. While the morning rolled into noon, I sat in the veranda, mesmerised by nature's moods. The clouds floating in the sky, in their frolic with the sunlight, create corresponding moods over the hills. Where the clouds are grey, the hills are dark, and where the white cotton clouds do not obstruct the sun, the whole scene shines,

backs and counting stars and looking for the constellations or the North Star.

A child remembered his favourite rhyme... "twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are." We stood there, a bunch of people enchanted, surrounded by the symphony of chirping crickets and glow worms flying about.

Morning wafted through the large glass doors and windows, though without any sight of the sun, with clouds floating near hill tops in the distance.



place to go. There is no need to go anywhere else once you reach the resort. The tasteful set up with modern amenities and natural scenic beauty will amaze you. Sairu has 24 cottages, priced between Tk6500 and 8500. The food prices are also competitive.

The best thing about Sairu is the view it offers. Whichever way you look, it's a vast expanse of green, with lazy hills etched tall against a blue sky. The sun's rays shimmer on these, when the clouds have not cast a

bathed in golden rays. As if the hills were changing every few often, reflecting nature's whimsy. Autumn here is special, with momentary changes surprising visitors all the time. Winter is a different kind of pretty, with wisps of fog creating a melancholy cover.

Night falls on the hills very quickly, bringing with it a sudden and deep darkness. And yet the hills around were visible under the soothing and glittering sky, studded with stars. It was a distant memory, of lying on our



A quick round of rain followed. As the day advanced, the sun also showed up, changing the scene completely, and bringing a spate of golden cheer to all of nature, with bright green becoming prominent everywhere. Butterflies appeared with their colourful wings. I thought once more, is this a dream?

By Ranjana Huda

Photo Courtesy: Ranjana Huda and Sairu Hill Resort