

REVIEW

A taste of rural Bengal at Rajshahi's VARENDRA RESORT

Every few days, people like us living in the concrete cities, especially Dhaka, are susceptible to fatigue relating to city living. The pollution, the dirt and grime, dust in the air, long commutes due to jams and the associated fumes, the suffocating heat from all the machines and people, and specially the decreasing cover of green...they all play their part in our deteriorating health, both physical and mental. Those of us lucky to have had childhoods in greener freer spaces, or those who could escape to a 'nana-bari' or 'dadabari' in the summer and winter holidays, with the abundance to fruits and pithas, look upon those times as fond memories, cherished and oft reminisced.

But many of us have been unlucky, those who were severed completely from their rural roots by choice or due to nature's fury aka erosion and floods, and missed out on the connection to the verdant wealth of rural Bengal. But thanks to improved connectivity, and the idea of a young mind, visiting a lush green, typical village with all the privacy and peace is not only possible, but also easy for most of us.

One such place is the Varendra Resort in Kashiadanga of Rajshahi, in a little village called Shitlai. Except for some 20 minutes or so of drive through a kutcha village road, the rest of the way is smooth, and a quick drive from the divisional headquarter. Known to locals as the "Shitlai bagan bari," the property comes with adjoined mango orchards spread over some 21 acres. It must smell a little like heaven in the summer, with all the fresh mangoes

ripening, I bet! Interestingly, picking fruit right from the tree for consumption is a perk offered to visitors during the harvesting season. It is easy to just take a walk about in the village right outside the facility, and see all sorts of farm animals and people going about their lives.

This place was not built with the intention of making it a resort, and looks just like a farmhouse in a village of an affluent family, surrounded by a high boundary wall for protection and privacy. It's a modern two-storeyed building, with the floors tiled and modern washroom amenities as well as working air-conditioning. The

those inclined to go for a walk. There are plenty of other fruit trees, like lemons, litchis and grapefruit, as well as jackfruit and mangoes.

On the other side of the lake is a small patch of grass with some recreational equipment for children, like a couple of swings, a slide, and such.

It is ideally suitable for family trips, with plenty of space for the young to play around, and the old and tired to rest and enjoy. The lack of city noises is relief to the ears. The place is large enough for groups of 50 and such to have comfortable picnics, and they do accommodate larger groups



roof is a bonus, being nicely done with a beam canopy, and a gentle swing, with expansive views of the lush countryside every way. There is only one building, with a spacious sitting area, the kitchen and a washroom comprising the first floor, and three bedrooms on the second. The rooms vary in size, and so do the attached washrooms. Two of the rooms share a long wide balcony, which is lovely to sit in, sipping some coffee or reading a book, particularly in the sunlight on gloomy winter mornings, or during breezy afternoons. Right in front of the bungalow is a sizable pool, with opportunities for fishing, and a clean walkway around for

for day-trips, but the facilities are limited. The staff is simple, and the food freshly sourced and cooked.

All in all, if you expect star-service and facilities, this is not the place for it. But for gentle relaxation reminiscent of simpler times amid the lush green of nature in the heart of the famed Barendra region of northern Bengal, and some respite from the rushed urban way of life, Varendra Resort offers a good choice.

By Sania Aiman

For rates and other inquiries, contact: 01979810855 or visit www.varendraresort.com

