

# Quarterly Tours



Jayatissa Herath

**NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA**

23 rd July 2018

# SECOND QUARTERLY TOUR 2018

## MAGUL MAHA VIHARA AND RAJAGALA MONASTIC SITE

### Tour Leader

Archt. Ashley de Vos - The senior vice President of the National Trust Sri Lanka.

Mr. Yohan Ferreira participating in the tour, have volunteered to assist Archt. Ashley de Vos with organizational aspects, where required.

### Route

By Bus: Colombo – Battaramulla – Kaduwella – Ratnapura – Wellawaya Road–Siyambalanduwa – Lahugala – Ampara

### Itinerary

#### DAY ONE

5.30 am	Meet at PGIAR and leave at 6.00 am
9.00 – 11.30 am	Breakfast/Tea/Coffee break at Silver Ray Restaurant Pelmadulla and comfort stop
2.00 – 3.00 pm	Lunch at Nethmini Regency Siyambalanduwa
3.00pm on wards	Visit Magul Maha Vihara which is an ancient Buddhist temple situated at Lahugala

#### **Overnight in Monty Hotel, Ampara**

#### DAY TWO

6.30 am	Breakfast at Monty Hotel
7.30 am	Leave to Rajagala Monastic site
1.30 pm	Lunch at Rajagala, supplied by Monty Hotel
3.00 pm	Leave for Colombo with two stops en route back

*The itinerary planned may change depending on factors such as time and weather. **Please refer last page for more instructions.***



## MAGUL MAHA VIHARA - LAHUGALA

Magul Maha Viharaya is an ancient Buddhist temple situated in Lahugala in Ampare District. The temple lies on the northern edge of the Lahugala National Park, about 22 km off from Siyambalanduwa town and about 11 km off from Pottuvil town. Lahugala has been a part of the Ruhunu rata in ancient Sri Lanka. It is believed that this temple is built by King Kavantissa in the 2nd Century BC on the location where the King married Princess Viharamaha Devi. Ruins of the Magul-maduwa where the function was held is still to be seen. Contrary to this, referring to one of the inscriptions at site, it is believed that the responsibility of

establishment of this vihara lies with King Dhatusena (463-479 AD).

The entire area of the vihara covers about 10,000 acres in which ruins of a palace, monastery, bo-tree shrine, stupa and ponds etc are found. There is a very significant and unique moonstone in this complex. The significance of the moonstone is that those elephants are carved out with the mahout riding on it. This vihara had been renovated by many later monarchs after its establishment. Some believe that his temple was constructed by King Dappula I (661-664 AD) after listening to preaching. It is speculated



stupa entrance



Magul-maduwa

that there had been 12,000 monks inhabited in this complex. There are many ruined ancient structures in the site. The Image house, Bo-tree shrine, and a stupa are significant and fairly well preserved. The stupa is built on a high terrace with three stair cases. There are images of grand lion guardians at the top of these stairs.





## RAJAGALA MONASTIC SITE

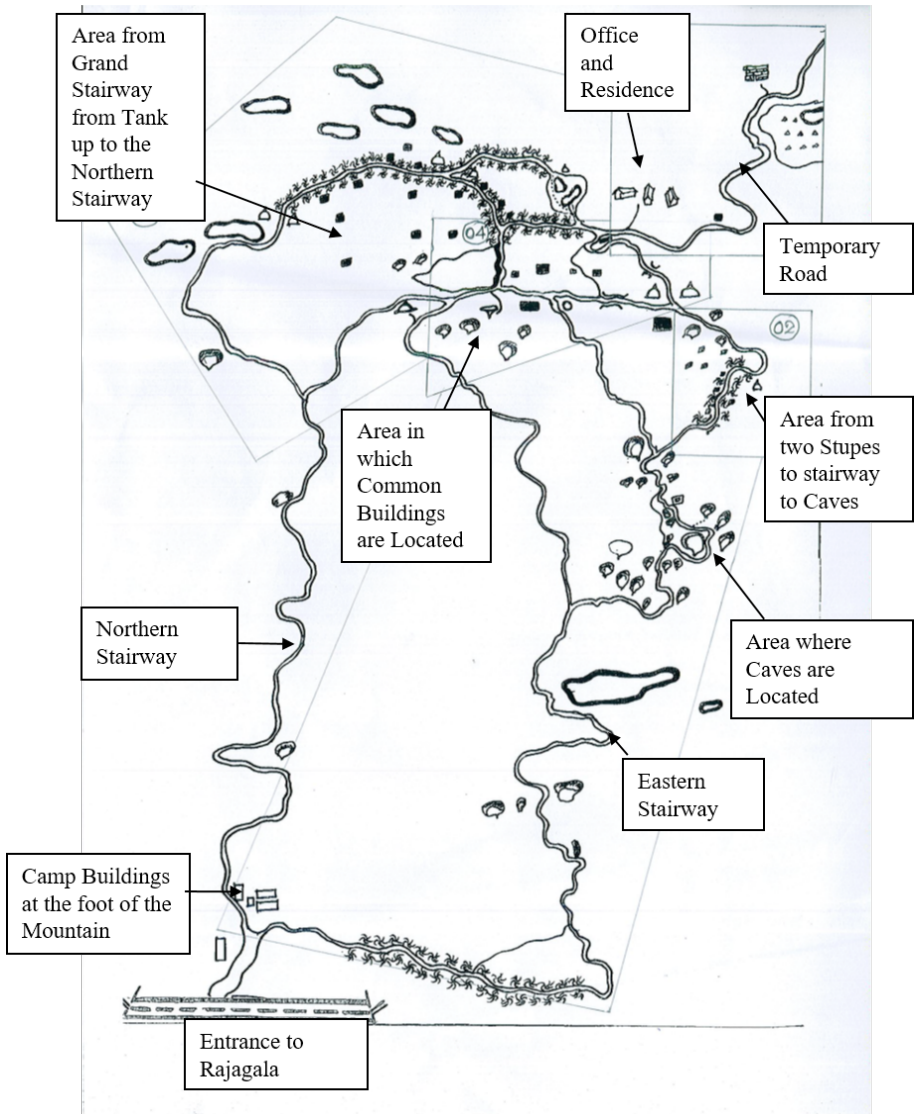
Rajagala is a mountain range situated in Uhana Divisional Secretary's division in the District of Ampare. This archaeological reserve is a rocky terrain consisting with flat terraces surrounded by boulders and mounds of which the land extent amounts to 1025 Acres located at 1038 feet higher elevation from the mean sea level.

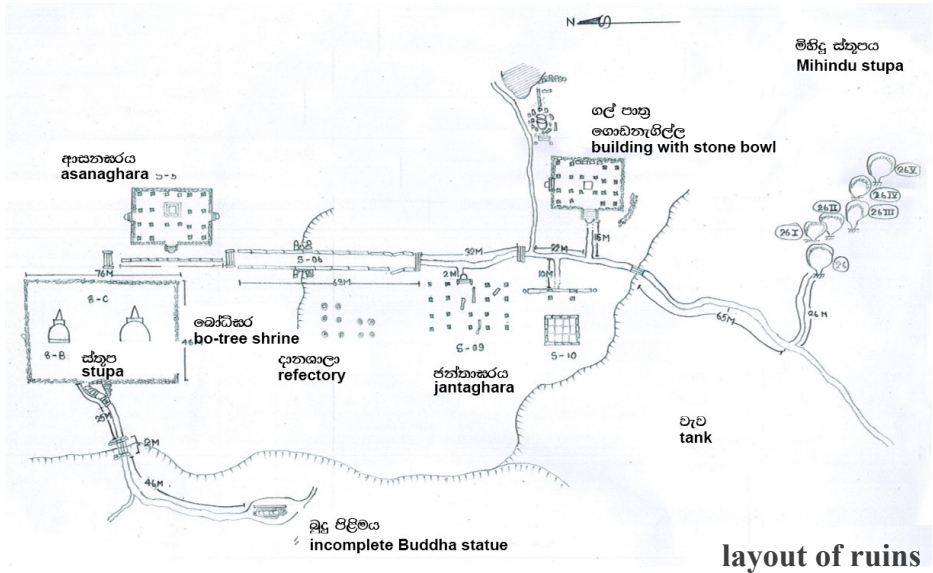
The site is accessible from the left turn at Bakkiella Junction at the 26<sup>th</sup> mile post on the main road leading to Mahaoya from Ampare. It is little more than 1 Km distance along the access road from Bakkiella Junction.

Remains of many ancient buildings and structures are scattered all over

the mountain on flat areas and on sloping sites. It is believed that most of those monastic buildings were belong to Anuradhapura period.

Large flat areas on tops of rocks, raised boulders of different sizes spreading along South North direction forms mounds, terraces and slopes for housing these ancient structures in the site. The Slopes are greater at south and east of the mountain. There are many water courses and niches in rock boulders that retains rain water throughout the year. This is a very rich site of fauna and flora belongs to the region. The thick forest consists of tree species such as Milla, Damba, Madan, Veera, Halmilla, Na, Velan,





layout of ruins

Ruk-attana, Yakadamaran, Kalu-mediriya, Kirikone, Wewarana, Beradamiunal. The lower layer of forest consists of Pathok, Heen-bovitiya, Eraminiya, Baloliya, Eluk, Maana and also special kind of grasses and creepers. This forest is a habitat for Elephants, Dears, Chevrotain, mouse deer, Meeminna, wild boar, Monkeys, Large Squirrels, Porcupines and also Fowls, Kendetta, Parrots, Minah, kingfisher, Kurulugoya, Woodpecker, Kola Kottoruwa, Malitta, Owl, Bassa and also Bakamoona. In addition to that there are many species of reptiles and insects including poisonous spiders.

The weather in the region is mostly dry. It gets rain during North-eastern monsoons and during that time all

the water causes become active and rainwater collects in small ponds. They too provide habitats for small fish varieties like Galpandiya, Madakariya, and Dandiya.

Although the site is now called as Rajagala, Rassahela or Rassagala, during early periods the place was referred and identified as Girikumbhila Vihara, Kumbhilatispaw Vihara, Ariyakara Vihara, Ariyakooti Vihara, Ariyakoti Vihara and Ariththraa Vehera according to literature books and inscriptions. No reference was yet found to get the name used to identify this place during the Anuradhapura period.

It is believed that most of the ancient structures in this monastic site are belong to Anuradhapura



stupa-detail



chakra and chakra danda





period ranging from 100 BC to 1000 AD. Such ruined structures are more than 600 in number. It is also believed that ashes of Arahant Mahinda Thero were enshrined in this particular site. By considering the number of ruins, their concentration, and the area of the site, it can be designated that this is one of the major archaeological sites which carries untouched ruins and evidences of a great civilization.

The inception and the establishment of monastery in the site runs back to King Lajjitissa according to literature and inscriptions. King Lajjithissa is the eldest son of King Saddhatissa of Anuradhapura regime. Saddhatissa is the brother of King Dutugamunu. According to historical records, King Lajjitissa has

established Girikumbeela Vihara when King Saddatissa is in Digavapi. This incident has been taken place during the reign of King Dutugamunu while this area was then attached to Ruhunu rata. According to great chronicle, King Lajjitissa has offered robes consisting three components to each monk who participated for the ceremony of donating the vihara to mahasanga. The number of monks participated for the ceremony was recorded as 60,000. Number of inscriptions found in this area states that King Lajjitissa and his Queens have donated several cave dwellings to this Vihara. One of the inscriptions specifically states that the King has donated 25 cold caves to the Vihara. With the reception of king's patronage through deputy kings who ruled Ruhunu rata, this



**incomplete stone Buddha statue**



**giant stone bowl**



**an inscription**



**umbrella shape cave**



**stone stairway**



a building



stone room for meditation

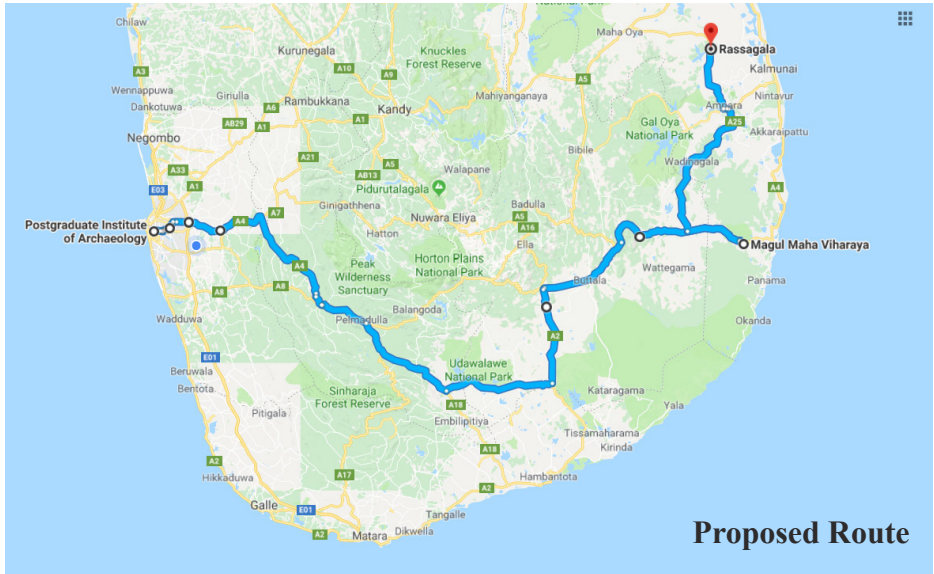


Viharaya was further expanded with the support of ordinary people and other noble men.

It is interesting to note that there are mentions in *Sihalavaththupakaranaya*, *Rasavahiniya*, *Attakatha* and *Saddharmalankaraya* about this particular Girikumbeela Vihara.

According to inscriptions in Rajagala, buildings were added to this site

during regimes of King Koottakanna Tissa, King Bhathika Tissa, King Mahasen, King Buddhadasa and King Mahinda II. Further to that, according to the Mahavamsa, there have been several new constrictions during the regime of King Dappula-I (661-664 AD) and King Udaya-I in the ancient meditation monastery of Rajagala. Thus the history of these ruined structures varies from 1st Century BC to 10th Century AD.



**Acknowledgements and credits  
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*“Eithihasika Rajagala”- Publication of Rajagala Archaeology Project  
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<http://amazinglanka.com/wp/lahugala-magul>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magul\\_Maha\\_Viharaya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magul_Maha_Viharaya)  
<https://www.google.lk/maps>*

**Meals**

Each participant is requested to bring their own breakfast or have self paid breakfast during comfort stop. Tea and a buffet lunch has been organised to accommodate both veg and non veg meal preference.

A pack of fruit juice will be provided and bottles of water will be available on board.