A Way To Kallady

Posted on



Lagoon view along Custom Road

A bullock cart rolled past, its driver bestowing a toothy smile at me. The lagoon glistened with the morning sun and smells of warm food and spices mingled in the air. Breakfast beckoned, and an inconspicuous little saivara kadè (food joint) made the appropriate noises with chinking of steel metal

plates and cups. I was strolling down Lloyd’s Avenue and the town was waking sleepily….

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The Town

After silencing hunger pangs with a relishing steaming rotti breakfast, Batticaloa town lay in wait. Bazaar Street just by the town centre was the first introduction to marketing around the town with a statue of Mahatma Gandhi standing as its landmark. Just beyond a maze of streets and bylanes can be discovered to confound the novice visitor. Chains of stalls selling everything from groceries to ornamental flowers beckoned consumers. I too succumbed to the enticements with the certainty of getting lost amidst the hubbub of activity and abundance of whizzing cyclists.

The town with its laidback atmosphere, held an amiable and welcome nature about it. Town maps stood helpfully indicating important points such as banks, hospitals, churches, temples and other various sights of interest around the town. A day’s excursion would have to include a visit to the Fort and inevitably I was down Custom Road heading towards this historical monument. Along the way is the Batticaloa Gate Monument that stands boldly by the lagoon adding ornamental effect to the lagoon view alongside a paving of park benches. The inviting charm of this quaint setting left me with the urge to indulge in a moment of lounging around to drink in the surroundings but the day’s excursions had just begun and there was much to see.

Fort – A View Of History

Past the library the Fort was easily located. It loomed into view at the foot of the lagoon, an effect of continuum created by the still water reflections. Its exterior largely intact, its observation towers could be seen from a distance. Entering through its tunneled gateway, with 1628 inscribed on its arch, inside, the Fort shelters an administrative building with offices still in use. Built in the year inscribed by the Portuguese and later captured by the Dutch, the Fort comprising of four corners is bordered by a moat on two sides and lagoon on the others. Much of the ancient structure could be accessed along the perimeter providing panoramic views of the lagoon and the Kallady Bridge in the distance. Olden day canons still rest along the lagoon side fortifications. From one corner to the other, the Fort could be

traversed with the view from each observation tower offering to distinguish one from the other.

Heading back on the road after an afternoon stroll within the Fort ramparts, fanned by the balmy breezes that buffeted across the cool lagoon, I found myself in search of Kattankudy – known to be home to a busy shopping centre.

Kattankudy Bagful Of Goods

Situated farther south from the Batticaloa town, a massive water tank under construction serves as a landmark. Soon after, the roads transform with bustling activity, and an endless succession of shops align the main street. Palm trees along the centre of the road add a touch of surrealism here, and I feel I might have arrived at a middle-eastern country instead. What's more the abundance of clothing shops, inject life to the atmosphere with shocking colours. The shops continue for a long stretch till we reach a traditional pola and a stream of commuters straggle along to buy a week's worth of groceries. A simple cement-floor shelter, inside, many sellers had secured their spots on the ground, their goods laid out for the picking. Calls of the sellers rang in the air and overlapped each other. With fresh vegetables and fruits, it was evidently the season for peanuts, or rata cadju. A veteran seller sat upon a table selling incense sticks and at the rear of the stalls were where lentils and rice were being sold. Some sellers sat accounting the day's collection occasionally taking a moment to smile as I passed by… most had a penchant for chewing betel.

Returning to the Batticaloa town again, I went in search of the town's railway station that served as a key landmark…

Muttuwaran – Where The Lagoon Meets The Sea

Lloyd's Road, Custom Road, Lady Manning Road, these are the many popular roads seen around Batticaloa Town. Now heading down Bar Road, I wondered why it has been so named. The Bar Road stretches alongside the lagoon and a picturesque view of the Fort at the edge of the waters can be seen far across. Ahead of the road stood the bright white lighthouse. Built in 1913 by the British the lighthouse is the prominent feature around this flat land area. Rising to a height of about 28m it is known as the Muttuwaran Lighthouse as it stands above the point where the lagoon meets the sea. It is indeed a picturesque location with the brackish lagoon converted to a small mangrove to the left and a sandy island across the water,

which can be accessed by boat. The point where the lagoon meets the sea can be seen separated by a long stretch of sand bar leaving an opening for the waters to unite at last. I am told that the Bar Road is so named as it runs almost alongside this sand bar that extends across the water.

As evening crept in, the town slowed its pace, a demeanour of unwinding hung in the air… The park benches by the town’s lagoon were now host to idle chatter.

It was time to head to one other attraction here before sundown… and there were many with just this thought on their minds.

Kallady Beach Unwinding At Sundown

Travelling across the famous Kallady Bridge, watching the bright orange sun dipping into the horizon, I only wished for a moment longer to enjoy the view, however, it was a busy time of day at Kallady Bridge with people commuting up and down. A short distance ahead, a turn off to the left down Saravana Road and before long I was greeted by the salt wind. The beach was surprisingly vast and spacious.

People strolled along the sand and children ran hither and thither across the beach ignoring a playground nearby. A cluster of pine trees created a wooded area and alongside was a long sturdy wooden walkway, lit up by street lamps. Parents along with their children, friends, and loners… the walkway offered an easy and meditative stroll by the sea, the sunset and the sand. In the distance, youth indulged in an energetic game of football.

I sat just out of reach of the tide upon the sand, the salt wind blowing in my face, I could sit here forever but the sun had already bade goodbye to the day…

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