An off-road journey

Posted on



Palm fringed terrain from Iyakachchi to Chundikulam.

The Northern sun was blazing in the morning, but we were on an adventure. Curious about a fort in Iyakachchi, we embarked on an off-road journey that took us upto Chundikulam, providing us glimpses of life away from the limelight.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe.

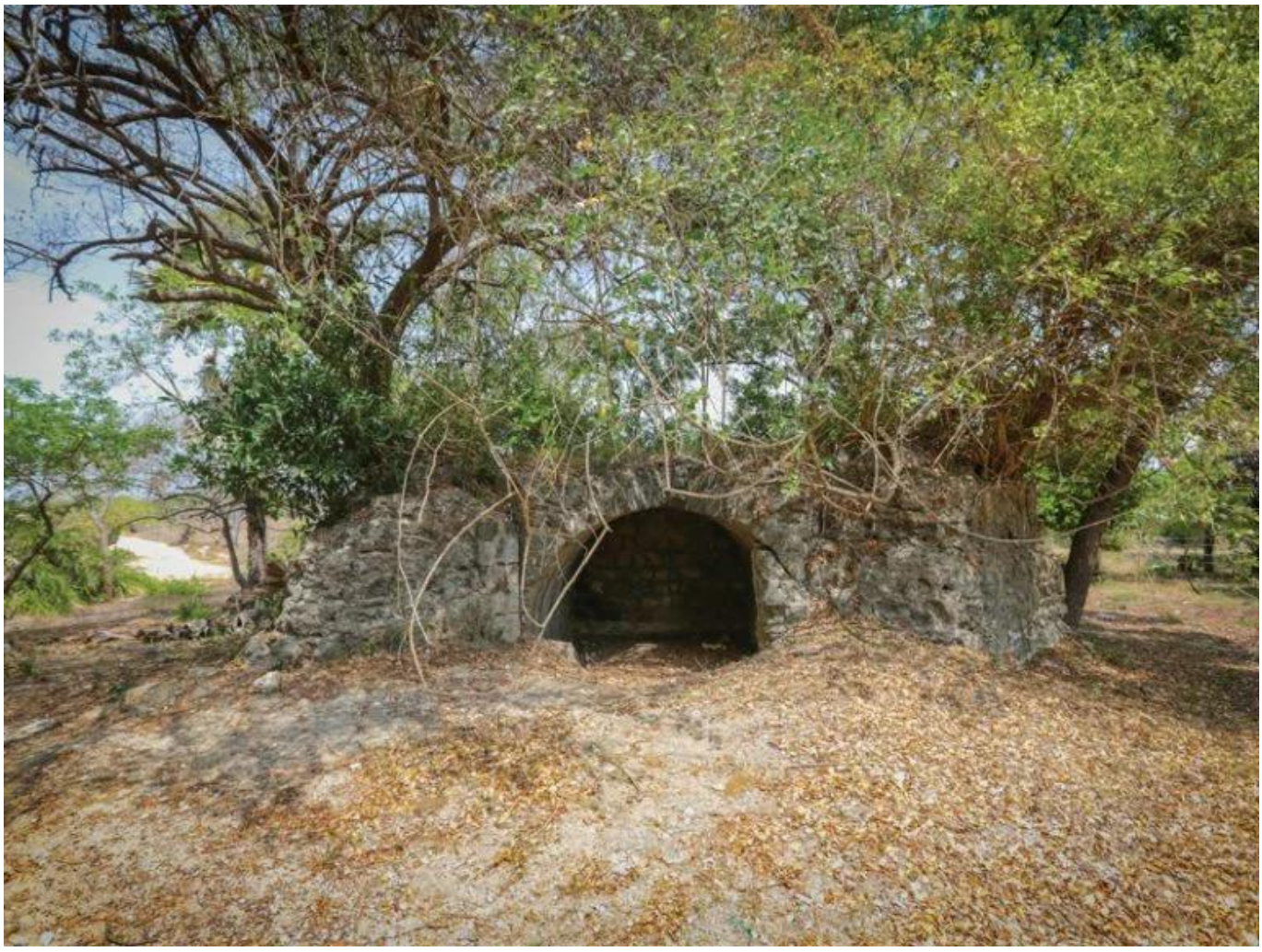
Photographs Menaka Aravinda.

We traveled inland, having taken the turn from the A9 in Iyakachchi. Our eyes were on the lookout for a fort. The landscape was of the rural North, vast land dotted with palmyra trees. We reached a shaded grove, and through the trees, we were able to make out remnants of a stone structure. We had reached Fort Beschutter (also known as Fort Pass Beschutter). Only a small section of this fort remains, which was built during colonial times in a strategic location to protect Jaffna. It had apparently

been in the shape of a square.

Deciding to continue on our journey, we ventured along the unpaved white gravel road. The terrain changed continuously. Dry zone shrub jungle opened up into vast open plains. The continuous blow of wind indicated that the ocean was nearby and also provided comfort from the scorching heat. We passed lakes with blossoming lotus flowers and saw a farmer tending to his cattle.

The beautiful northern ocean came into view, and the color contrasts were mesmerizing. Our attention was drawn to the activity on the shore. Walking towards them, we soon realized that the group of fishermen was hauling a huge net using a tractor.



Remnants of Fort Beschutter.

As we approached them, one fisherman asked us to take off our slippers. None of them were wearing footwear either. It was a sign of respect for the place they worked. The net being hauled from the ocean was far out and was slowly but surely being brought closer to the shore. Others were engaged in sorting the fishing nets and making preparations for the next journey to the sea. Back on the road, we were the only ones, and we were occasionally met by tractors carrying wood or random motorbikes, making their way to the town. On another instance, a young boy was filling water into colorful containers from one of the wells in the area. We passed small fishing villages neatly organized, creating a postcard setting. Coconut trees came into view, in some instances similar to large coconut estates.

We reached a small town like area, and we ventured towards the beach. It was an uninterrupted view of the Indian Ocean, a beautiful panorama. A blue and white statue of Mother Mary carrying Baby Jesus provided spiritual protection.

As Chundikulam drew closer, the two sides of the road were completely different. On one side, it was the ocean, coconut trees and flat plains, while on the other, there were giant sand dunes with scrub jungle.

Chundikulam is famed for birds, and as we reached small water bodies, there were flocks of birds navigating the wind current or simply idling near the water.

We reached the end of the road, which was the delta (moya) in which the lagoon connected to the ocean. Birds were out in all their glory. The landscape was beautiful, and the wind was blowing as if to a rhythm. We could not go any farther and turned back to journey a few hours back to the A9. It was indeed an enjoyable off-road experience, where man and nature had found a peaceful co-existence.







