From Kuchchaveli To Mullaitivu Northbound Across The East Coast

Posted on


Driving through Mullaitivu

We sped past the silently roaring sea, countless little gleaming ponds and mangroves with their feathery occupants. We followed dark grey ribbons of tar road and less trodden red brown gravel tracks, through quaint villages and vast open fields, reaching Mullaitivu in an awe inspiring journey of unparalleled novelty.

Words Kamalika Jayathilaka ***Photographs*** Menaka Aravinda

Sunrise…birdsong replenished the crisp morning air with a musical brilliance. The blinding golden reflection of the tranquil ocean was simply enthralling as I watched the waves constantly lap at my feet in a release of soft cold foam. As morning dawned on the sleepy coastal stretch of Kuchchaveli, bringing new hope, we began our much awaited northbound drive along the eastern coast; through Kuchchaveli in Trincomalee towards the District of Mullaitivu.

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Tiny roadside homes belonging to the Kuchchaveli fisher folk were waking up to another day. Children had begun their early morning stroll to school, dogs lazed on the road already warmed up by the morning sunlight. Cows grazed and birds chirped, and we wondered at the untouched beauty and the prevailing serenity as we traversed Sri Lanka's beautiful eastern coast.

The mangroves gathered large feathered predators that soared the sky or stood stone-still on dry stalks surfacing the boggy earth, their beady eyes on the water for prey. We admired the extensive rows of tiny SriLankan Barn Swallows swaying on electricity cables and the shiny blue peacocks that suddenly crossed the road, after we slowly edged awayfrom Kuchchaveli, Pudavaikaddu and Tiriyai along with the rows of palm trees and the palm leaf fences. At Pulmoddai we turned off on to a reddish gravel road; the Tennamaravedi Road was still under construction.

We were soon engulfed in the beautiful rural scenery that unfolded before our eyes with colour and variety

The journey forthwith became a lot less smooth and the vehicle rocked forward creating a powdery dust storm that tailed us all the way. But the scenery compensated for the slight discomfort and we were soon engulfed in the beautiful rural scenery that unfolded before our eyes with colour and variety.

Neck deep in muddy water in the middle of a paddy field lazed a group of grey brown buffaloes enjoying a morning mud bath. Among them were some that were a few shades lighter, a strange kind somewhere between cows and buffaloes, we thought. We moved forward amongst paddy fields, thorny thickets, and lush green woody patches.

Close to Tissapura; small houses appeared on the roadsides every now and again. Driving down the straight red stretch a large Buddha statue sitting on a rock caught our attention far out above the road. Following its trail we arrived at the gates of an ancient temple, the 'Sri Parakramabahu Rajamaha Vihara'. The small temple and its solitary Buddhist monk extended us a warm welcome explaining that the temple has been in existence since the ancient time of King Parakramabahu. Believed to have been constructed by a chief soldier of the King the little temple sitting amidst an eight acre land had ancient rock columns, a chaithya, ponds and ancient rock

caves.

The large seated Buddha statue stood high on a rock and once on top, we stood admiring breathtaking views of the land below. We were now on the Mullaitivu, Kokilai border and had to see the lagoon before we headed North. We drove straight through the jetty and found ourselves right in the middle of a large body of water. At the end of a concrete platform stood a few people, a trishaw and boats that bobbed up and down on the glistening water.

Prawn fishing being very much an early morning affair they had already called it a day and were packing their nets to take off

The people on the jetty were lifting something off the boats and loading them into the trishaw. Approaching them we realised that they were nets used to catch prawns in the lagoon. Prawn fishing being very much an early morning affair they had already called it a day and were packing their nets to take off. As the mid morning sun blazed its way down on the surface of the still water, and the wind roared in our ears, we stretched our legs a moment before heading off further North.

Leaving the Kokilai Wildlife Reserve behind and more lakes, acres of marshy patches, birds and buffaloes later we stopped at a small wayside shrine dedicated to God Ganesh which sat under a large Ironwood tree. Dropping a few coins in the ‘panduru pettiya’ (charity box) and attaching a leafy ironwood twig on the door for blessings for a safe journey we drove towards Sripura.

Cyclists, farming vehicles and cultivated paddy land were signs that we were once more closing in on human habitation. Before long we found ourselves seated in the tiny porch of a village tea shop enjoying the revitalising warmth of a sweet cup of tea. As a farmer stopped his tractor in front and walked in wiping the sweat off his brow, we slipped back out into the sunshine and on our way.

Before long we officially crossed the border into the Mullaitivu district over the Ma Oya across a ‘Sapaththu Palama’

A man was ploughing his field surrounded by milk white herons that kept close vigil for freshly unearthed worms; children played and life unrolled happily on the road sides as we sped past. Before long we officially crossed the border into the Mullaitivu District over the Ma Oya across a ‘Sapaththu Palama’ (causeway) leading

to more villages including Janakapura.

As the sky abruptly darkened and the clouds released a soft drizzle that moistened the arid Northern earth cracked from the absence of rain, we eagerly stepped into the heart of Mullaitivu.

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