It’s all about the bays

Posted on
Satellite image of Trincomalee

Trincomalee is renowned as one of the best natural harbours in the world. But, did you know that the main harbour consists of a number of mini bays? And, what’s more they have unusual names too. Driving around Trincomalee *you soon realise that it is all about the Bays!*

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe **Photographs** Indika De Silva and Mahesh Bandara

We started with Sweat Bay, which is a short drive from the main China Bay road. It is a small private cove, the ocean is a cooling blue and trees shade the beach. There was a small group of fishermen taking a dip and except for them it was very quiet and peaceful. The sea gently lapped on the beach and the shady spot provided the ideal place to just sit and enjoy the surrounding tranquillity. There were a few small boats on the shore that are used for fishing in the bay. This cove is said to be good for sea cucumber and just as we were leaving Sweat Bay, a boat reached the shore with a good harvest of sea cucumber. Cylindrical with a somewhat rough surface the creatures do look like large cucumbers, though slimy. We were told that these were for the South East Asia market. The fishermen dive

into the water and collect the sea cucumber from the seabed. With the sun rising to its peak, we quickened our steps to continue on our search for the bays in Trincomalee.

> Sweat Bay is a small private cove, the ocean is a cooling blue and trees shade the beach. This cove is said to be good for sea cucumber

We tried next to find Dead Man’s Cove to no avail, though our maps indicated the location there was no road to access the Cove, as such we headed next to Cod Bay. There was much activity here as there was a fisheries harbour on one side, where the water was deeper and on the other side the massive cement factory on land. You can enter the fisheries harbour after purchasing a ticket. The place was a hub of activity as the days catch had come in a little while ago and the lorries were being packed to send the fish to various markets. There were fishermen mending their nets and preparing for the next day. What was interesting was that many of the boats were from Tangalle and southern parts of the country as it was off-season in those areas. Fishermen migrate along the coastal belt according to the changing tides and as this was the fishing season in the East, boats from other parts of the country were venturing out to sea from here.

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We drove along the Prima Factory road and the view of the surrounding bay was beautiful. However, you cannot venture beyond a certain point and as such we proceeded to the next bay— Malay Bay. From here there is a nice view of the factory as well as opening to the greater ocean. There were no boats, but just peace and quiet.We soon realised that we had not visited the most famous bay of all, China Bay. Having found some by-roads we ventured towards the bay from the main road. There were interesting massive contraptions and vessels within the bay that made us think of the movie Transformers. The harbour itself is beautiful and with large ships stationed at its docks you can just enjoy the pristine beauty and enormity of this natural port. With a 360 view, time just flies as you observe the day-to-day activities of the area.

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As the sun began its decent to end the day we headed towards Trincomalee town and from the main street we walked along one of the paths that led to the beach. This was another bay named Back Bay because it was literally behind Trincomalee. This was a massive bay stretching far and the entire area was full of fishing boats and as it was evening some boats were returning for the day. Swami Rock is visible from here and you can see the Koneswaram temple and the impressive statue of Lord Shiva. The Sri Gokanna Raja Maha Viharaya is also visible from here. As we wanted to get a different perspective we headed to Fort Frederick within which both temples are located and visited Sri Gokanna Raja Maha Viharaya as sections of the ancient ramparts were part of the temple. The chief priest was very helpful and the podi hamuduruwo was a cheerful youngster who felt passionate about his responsibilities. A flight of steps takes you to a statue of a standing Lord Buddha. From here you can see the entire area. The town glistened in the distance and the Sri Bhadarakali Amman Kovil lit up as the time of the *pooja* neared.

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We came out of the Fort and proceeded along Fort Fredrick Road, and the next bay was Dutch Bay. A group of school girls from Kandy were having a great time near the water, excited to be at the beach. The bay was very calm, and perfect for an evening swim. As the sun receded to the background we called it a day to return in the morning.

> Swami Rock is visible from here and you can see the Koneswaram temple and the impressive statue of Lord Shiva

Fitness enthusiasts had started their day either jogging along the beach or on the road at Dutch Bay and along the road to Orrs Hill. Each road provided us with different views of the morning beauty of the Inner Harbour and then Yard Cove.

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While each Bay had different names they made sense once we went and had a look. There are no stories how these names originated and if there were, well there was no one to tell us because these bays are part of the daily lives of the inhabitants of Trincomalee. Beauty aside these are also places that have created livelihoods and have great potential that can be garnered for the development of the country.

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