P for Passekudah or Paradise?

Posted on

Sunset at Passekudah

‘Swish Swish’, the waves lapped as they broke on the beach. Calm and quiet, Passekudah presented a paradise within paradise, a respite for a soul that had wandered far…

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda and Indika De Silva

Situated in the eastern coast of Sri Lanka – Batticaloa – Passekudah can be considered as one of the oldest beachside resorts in the country. Though during the time of the conflict the area was abandoned, with the dawn of peace, Passekudah is gradually reliving its former glory with 14 hotels to adorn the bay, five of which are already in operation. Passekudah is about a six hour drive from Colombo and can be reached via Polonnaruwa or through the Bibile-Mahaoya-Chenkalady route.

Passekudah bay is complemented by its larger sibling, Kalkudah Bay, which is still relatively untouched though signs of civilization were visible through the undergrowth and the rows of palmyrah trees.

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The Passekudah beach is quite different from other beaches around the country, in the sense that the sand is fine and soft, almost primordial in its colour of shimmering shade of pearl. The sea, a soft blue with shallow waters that provide an ideal natural pool to relax and rejuvenate.

Maalu Maalu Resort and Spa, the first hotel on the Passekudah Bay is the brainchild of Chandra Wickramasinghe, Chairman/Managing Director of Connaisance de Ceylan. Built on the concept of a traditional fishing village, the buildings of the hotel are made of wooden cladding and cadjun roofing and are reminiscent of a Waadiya. Even the staff are dressed according to this theme.

Upon entering you are drawn to the beach and the ocean as the main pool of the hotel blends with the natural blue. Spread over three acres Maalu Maalu offers both deluxe rooms and suites, which are aptly furnished to provide the utmost comfort. The suites come with their own plunge pools.

Karadiya restaurant is the main restaurant and has a capacity of 75. Serving both buffet and à la carte menu, the restaurant provides a laid back ambience. While international cuisine is served, authentic Batticaloa cuisine is a must and guests can enjoy a delectable spread during breakfast, lunch and dinner. White Sands is for more casual dining and is located on the beach itself. The hotel effortlessly opens out to the beach where guests have easy access to the shallow waters of the bay. The pool bar, which is actually a traditional boat transformed into a bar is open throughout the day. The Karadiya Bar is the main bar at Maalu Maalu, and in addition a discotheque and karaoke bar are also available. Other facilities include a conference hall, gymnasium, Ayurveda Spa where Balinese, Indonesian and Thai treatment are provided.

Though water sports, banana boats, diving are some of the activities available, the allure of Passekudah is definitely its beach and shallow waters. Walking along the breadth of the bay, the ongoing construction of the hotels are visible. While the beach is not a private one, you rarely see locals along the hotel stretch, furthermore

a public area has been designated for people to enjoy a splash in the waters of the bay.

Lanka Sportreizen under Leisure Sports and Recreation (LSR) has two properties (Marina Passekudah – 30 and LSR Resort – 50 rooms respectively) on the Passekudah bay, which are under construction and due to be completed soon. They have already established themselves for providing water sports such as jet scooter rides, banana boat rides and many more for the area. While water sports will be a focus at Marina Passekudah with its water sport centre and 25m competition pool, these properties will provide luxurious accommodation and other facilities that will provide guests with the utmost comfort.

The beaches of Passekudah and Kalkudah have no season to visit, however November to January is the northeast monsoon period and the area experiences heavy showers. But the rest of the year it is the sun, sand and the beach. With the end of the conflict Sri Lankans have been visiting the area to see Passekudah as well as explore Batticaloa after so many years of not being able to visit the areas. However, foreign tourists usually stay for more than four nights as Passekudah is a beach resort.

Together with Maalu Maalu and Amethyst, three other properties are in operation in Passekudah. With star class hotels lining its beaches, Passekudah will definitely make its mark on the global tourist maps.

The hotels spread over the Passekudah bay are of different designs and concepts, each making a statement with its unique style

Amethyst is a 40-key hotel with both sea and river views. Upon entering you are instantly relaxed by the spacious atmosphere of the reception, where the free flow of air allows you to sink in and adapt to your surroundings. What is unique about the property is that a natural river runs through the hotel. The rooms of Amethyst consist of two types, standard (double and single) and suite. As in the rest of the hotel, the rooms are spacious and furnished with all requirements to enable a pampered stay. With a central swimming pool, Amethyst also boasts of a sophisticated bar with a pool table, karaoke facilities and movies. The restaurant serves international cuisine with both buffet as well as à la carte menus.

The hotels spread over the Passekudah bay are of different designs and concepts, each making a statement with its unique style, as such no two hotels are alike.

Though much activity is going on, the beach is still calm and quiet and a walk from one end of the bay to the other is truly breathtaking. However, the draw of passekudah relies on its untouched beauty and in turn its preservation is important.

Nandawanam, Victoria and Vasuki provide a simplistic ambience, where a homely stay with home cooked meals give a glimpse into the life of the area

While Passekudah beach itself has drawn big names and large scale hotels line its shores, small guest houses owned and run by those from the community itself, such as Nandawanam, Victoria and Vasuki provide a simplistic ambience, where a homely stay with home cook meals give a glimpse into the life of the area. At a time when no large hotels were available it was guest houses such as these that provided accomodation to those who visited the bay. Guests staying at the resort hotels can thus venture to these guest houses for a home-cooked meal.

I sat on the beach and sunk my feet into the soft sand as the ocean lapped against me… I had found paradise

As the sun set, my sojourn of Passekudah came to an end. I sat on the beach and sunk my feet into the soft sand as the ocean lapped against me… I had found paradise.

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