

The Reddish Hues of Kudiramalai



The cliff at Kudiramalai

Dry scrubland turned to woodland forest, the terrain kept changing as we neared the coast. It was not only the vegetation that changed but the colour of the soil to a coppery reddish hue. We were on our way to Kudiramalai with intriguing stops on the way.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe | **Photographs** Menaka Aravinda and Vishwathan Tharmakulasingham

The midday sun was upon us, yet the northwestern breeze was gently soothing. The undulating scenery provided a snapshot of the unique features that make up

this beautiful land. It is believed that the beginnings of the Sri Lankan nation occurred on these shores thus making it historically significant.

Kuveni's Palace



The ruins of the tribal Princess Kuveni's palace

We passed a natural lake that was almost black in colour. Folklore narrates that the palace of Kuveni, the tribal princess of the Yaksha clan was located close to a black pool of water. It is with this in mind that we ventured farther into the jungle.

Sandy plains turned into closely knitted jungle and soon we reached an open area. Amidst the trees, large rock columns were strewn in an almost organized manner. We had arrived at Kuveni's Palace. The soil was a reddish brown and the great stone columns stood like sentinels, as evidence of the prehistoric importance of the site. It is said that when Prince Vijaya arrived in Sri Lanka, Kuveni had been spinning cotton at this location.

The Aryan Prince Vijaya of North India landed on the shores of Thambapanni with 700 followers in 543 BC

Thambapanni



The coppery sand of Thambapanni

The coppery coloured sand of Thambapanni is the reason for its name. Thamba in Sinhala means copper in English. The Aryan Prince Vijaya of North India landed on the shores of Thambapanni with 700 followers in 543 BC. It is said that the copper coloured sand stained the hands and feet of the arrivals and is the reason for its interesting name. Thambapanni is mentioned in the annals of history as Prince Vijaya is believed to be the founder of the Sri Lankan nation.

The sand is a rich red and is not seen anywhere else in the country. Blending beautifully with the blue of the sky, ocean and the green of the vegetation, Thambapanni is a confluence of colours.

Kudiramalai



The fascinating soil structure at Kudiramalai

Kudiramalai literally means Horse (Kudira in Tamil) Mountain (malai in Tamil) and is named thus due to its shape. The reddish soil continues and the landscape looks entirely 'other worldly'. The cliff has a sudden drop into the ocean. One could just imagine the royal impressive ship of Prince Vijaya arriving on the shores of the northwestern coast.

We soon reached a beautifully tranquil cove, where the reddish soil turned a soft yellow sand

As we ventured farther, there were interesting clumps of rocks, as we took a closer look, we could see ossified shells and corals. Over the millennia, the sea had receded, leaving behind the oceanic bed on land. With time, as the upper soil was removed due to diverse climatic conditions, it revealed this unusual surface. It was almost like a maze as we climbed and jumped across the dark red soil structure.



The peaceful cove at the end of our exploration

Another belief for the origin of the name Kudiramalai was the massive statue of a horse rearing, with its hind legs on the ground that was located on the highest point facing the sea. What remains today is only parts of its hooves (hind legs) and tail with a few stones strewn around. During the period of the Dutch, it is believed that horses were traded from this location.

We soon reached a beautifully tranquil cove, where the reddish soil turned a soft yellow sand. Peaceful and isolated, we breathed in the pure bliss of the northwestern coast. It was a perfect end to our exploration of Kudiramalai.