It’s Time For Arugam Bay!

Posted on
Catching the waves at Arugam Bay Point

I buzzed everyone to wake up as it was 5.30 in the morning and I wanted to catch the morning sun rising. Grumbling they followed me to the beach. Stepping on to the cooling sands of Arugam Bay, it was soon apparent that we were not the only ones awake, surfers were heading towards the Arugam Bay point to catch the waves. Hold on, we are coming too!

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It was a beautiful cool morning and as the sun started to rise in the eastern skies, one by one the surfers headed towards the Point. With their surf boards in hand and sun tanned perfect bodies, they would greet us with a quick “good morning” as they passed us on the way. The beach itself was on a slightly higher level than the ocean and we had to step down along a small slope to wet our toes. It is said that the season for surfing in Arugam Bay begins in April and continues till October. The actual ‘bay’ of Arugam Bay is peppered with small cosy hotels, which are establishments that have grown within the community. One area of the beach is full of fishing boats as that is the livelihood of the coastal area, but this does not disturb the surfers and there was not much of activity this morning.

> We Reached The Famed Point And There Were More Than 20 Surfers Already Tackling The Waves And More Were Joining Them. It Was Almost Like A Graceful Dance...

Arugam Bay is famous for its surfing points that attract surfers from around the world. Many of them make Arugam Bay their home during the surfing period where they stay for months end. Arugam Bay Point, which is at the tip of the bay is considered to be an advanced point, where the waves can rise to a height of five to ten metres depending on the swell and oceanic conditions. While the point used to have a sandy bottom, following the 2004 Tsunami the reef bottom of the ocean was exposed as such the waves are much more aggressive than before. As such, Arugam Bay Point is for experienced surfers only.

With all this information in my head, we reached the famed point and there were more than 20 surfers already tackling the waves and more were joining them. It was almost like a graceful dance as the surfers swam towards the wave on their boards and lifted themselves with the swelling ocean to stand and balance themselves moving perfectly with the wave. As they finished riding one wave they would swim to the beach and jog back to the point where they wanted to start. Some would topple after a few minutes while others would ride the wave to completion, at times doing a couple of flips along the way.

We watched entranced and left as the glare of the sun became too hard to bare. By this time there were almost 30 surfers at this point and all of them were foreigners. Next we headed to Crocodile Rock by vehicle, which was a little distance away and cannot be reached by foot. From the main road we headed in the direction of Panama and took a turn to reach a peaceful beach. Along the sandy terrain we drove on a ‘mini sand safari’. The beach was isolated except for a couple of fishermen. Crocodile Rock is a small rock outcrop, where on one side is the beautiful beach and ocean and on the other a lagoon with a picturesque mangrove. Elephant rock is at the tip of this cove. However, as there were no waves on this day, surfers had supposedly headed towards Peanut Farm.

> At Peanut Farm There Were Many Young Girls Learning To Surf While Others Were Paddling On The Waves

Crocodile Rock and Peanut Farm points are for beginners as the waves are milder and rise to lesser heights. At Peanut Farm there were many young girls learning to surf, while others were paddling on the waves. These foreign surfers would travel to each point in three-wheelers with their boards secured on top of the vehicle. The Peanut Farm beach is quite small and has a private cosy feel to it.

Whiskey Point and Pottuvil Point were next. These two points are adjacent to each other. From Arugam Bay we headed towards Urani, passing Pottuvil Town. Along winding residential roads we drove to finally reach the beautiful beach, where the blue turquoise ocean glistened like a sapphire. Here too, there were many surfers, some braving the scorching sand as they ran from the beach to the water. Whiskey Point too has a small rock outcrop and beyond is the ocean, where the waves are perfect for beginners. Many rose with the swelling wave to slowly fall back as it receded.It was a joyful experience of adrenaline and camaraderie. Some of the

surfers had retired for the morning and were relaxing in the shade with a book or just a comfortable nap.

> Whiskey Point Too Has A Small Rock Outcrop And Beyond Is The Ocean, Where The Waves Are Perfect For Beginners

We did not see anyone at Pottuvil Point, but this too is considered to be a more rough surf and is only for advanced surfers. Okanda Point, which is located just beyond the Okanda Temple and on the way to Kumana National Park is also an advanced surfing point. There was only one surfer on this day. The waves break quickly at Okanda, where the surf is a short ride with more power but less drive.

> As Day Became Evening, Arugam Bay Took On A Party Atmosphere, With Colourful Lights Blinking At The Restaurants And Hotels Lining The Street

Arugam Bay has become famous for surfers because of the diversity it provides in terms of its various points. Though at times it is difficult to believe we are in Sri Lanka because this modest beachside area is reminiscent of Jamaica due to its laid back nature and rusta style. As day-became evening, Arugam Bay took on a party atmosphere, with colourful lights blinking at the restaurants and hotels lining the street. Foreigners now changed into their comfortable evening attire were either heading for dinner or to the various shops to purchase their requirements. Music floated towards us and we walked at a leisurely pace along the street drinking in the relaxed atmosphere around us. Many of the restaurants already had diners and it was nice to see these modest places full of people, enjoying the beauty of a peaceful evening.

