Water Sports Galore

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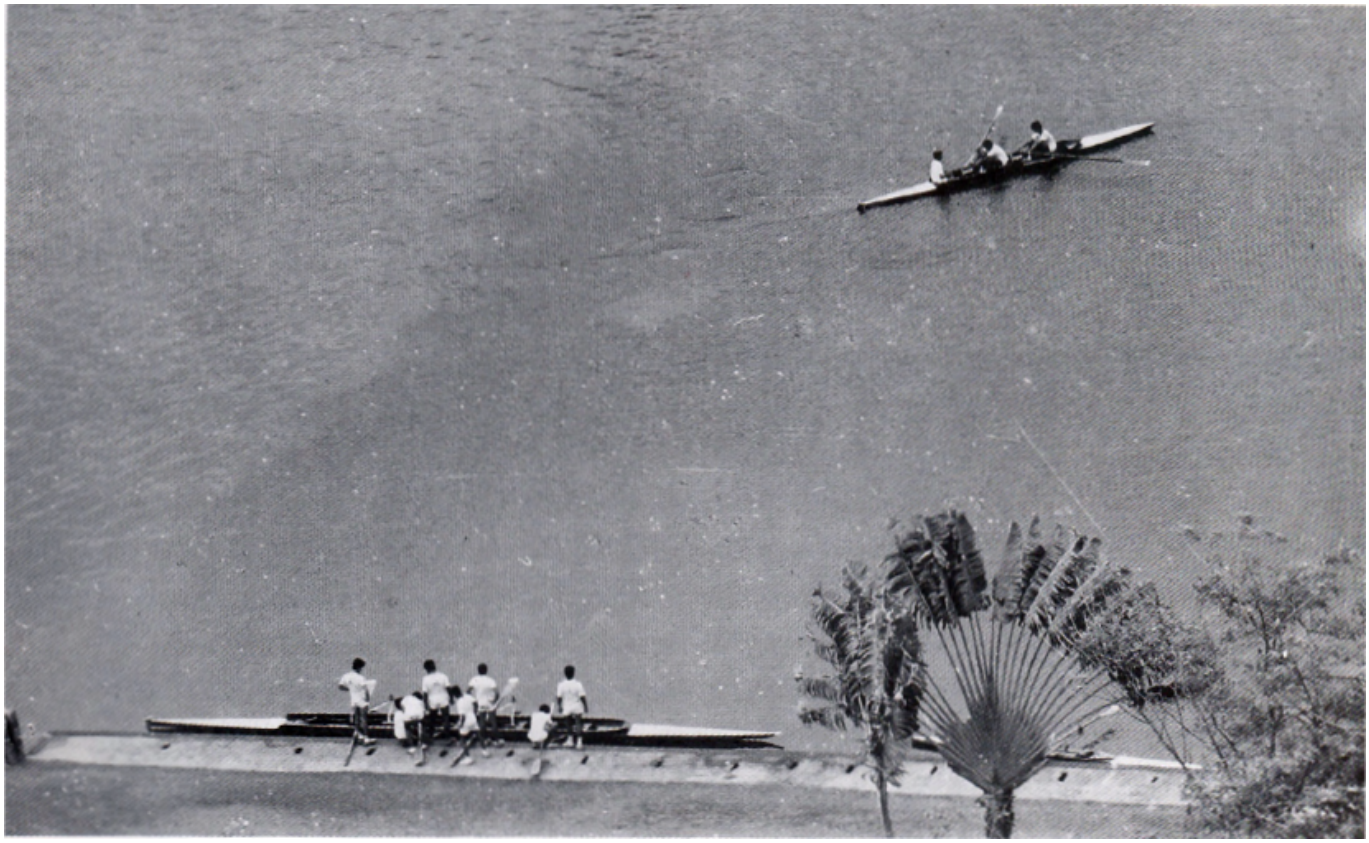
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Do you by any chance happen to be a sports fan? Better still a water sports fan. If you are, there is plenty in store for you in Sri Lanka, surrounded by the thundering surf and the island's many rivers, lakes and streams. Sri Lanka is indeed an ideal spot for water sports of any kind – rowing, sailing, water ski-ing, board sailing . . . you name it.

Rowing is one of the oldest sports in the country and a fine place for an evening of energetic rowing is definitely on the placid waters of the Beira, the only natural lake situated within the city. The Beira was the venue for much publicised rowing events in the days of the British who set the pace in social activity and were enthusiastic supporters of the sport. Rowing could be traced as far back as the 1860's but it was officially recognized some years later as a sport of the island. The Colombo Rowing Club (CRC) was 'born' in 1864 with the then Chief Justice of Ceylon, Sir Edward Creasey – a very ardent oarsman as its first president.

The original club was housed at the mouth of the Old Sally Port of the Fort area near the railway station, and the course was a mile and a quarter long and almost dead straight with room for five boats abreast. However, in 1924 the club had to be moved to its present site where the old club house was re-erected in its original glory. The rowing club is now well situated in the heart of Colombo though once inside the club premises you would not believe it. The serene atmosphere of the clubhouse overlooks a well manicured lawn rolling down to the Beira lake.

The club's own collection of boats include 7 Fours, 4 Coxless pairs, 2 Coxed Pairs and 4 Skulls. The CRC which is a private members' club has a varied category of members. The club has regular regattas every two months for a variety of races. The club regattas are held for 15 trophy events with six regattas every year. Annually the CRC participates in Madras-Colombo regatta which is one of the oldest boat races in the world held either in Madras or in Colombo.



Rowing on the Beira Lake near the Colombo Rowing Club.

Rowing at the club commences at 3 p.m. when the sun’s rays are not too strong and goes on till about 6 or 6.30 p.m. till the light remains. Visitors to the island who wish to take up the sport while in the country could become visiting or temporary members. Those staying in the country for about three months will pay a mall fee of not more than 3 US dollars as club fees. However, to use the facilities of the club you have to be recommended by a member and proof to show you are a good oarsman. This measure is taken mainly for the member’s own safety, as the Beira is not the place for the inexperienced. The club takes all safety precautions and there are enough people rowing daily without any mishaps. There is also a lifeguard at hand all the time. Re-assured? Good!! On to something faster – sailing. Unlike rowing, there are quite a few places to choose from. You could either sail on the ocean or on a lake. There are four sailing clubs in the island. They are at the port of Colombo, at Bolgoda near Colombo, Kurunegala and at Trincomalee. The Yachting Association of Sri Lanka which is the national controlling body is responsible for the activities conducted by the yachting clubs in the island and have helped to host many national as well as international yachting regattas. If you like sailing on the

ocean then its the Royal Colombo Yacht Club (RCYC) that you should make your way to.

Situated in the midst of boats and ships at the Colombo Port you have, in addition to a good day of sailing, a magnificent and breathtaking view of a vast expanse of the ocean and the city of Colombo. The club regattas are held on Wednesday evenings at 5.30 p.m. and on Saturday afternoons at 3.30 p.m. but the club is open daily for those who wish to sail the week out. As membership to the club, adults have to pay an entrance fee of Rs: 2,500/- and thereafter Rs:100/- as monthly subscription. There is no entrance fee for student members who have to pay only Rs. 8/- as monthly subscription. Temporary members who wish to join the club have to pay Rs. 300/- for three months. A member is allowed one guest each but they have to obtain a Port permit which is Rs. 5/- each time they enter the port. Most of the sailing vessels that are housed in the club are privately owned. There are 14 Dublin Bay Waterwags – one of the first racing dinghies in the world designed in the late 1800's and the only remaining ones are believed to be in Colombo, Madras and in Dublin bay, – two Enterprises, one catamaran and a big launch which is the club's rescue launch. However, this could be used for deep sea fishing at the cost of diesel only. The club gives out an Enterprise and a Waterwag at Rs. 25/- per half day. The RCYC is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. except on Mondays. If you stay after 6 p.m. a late client fee of Rs. 2/- is charged. The bar is open nightly and there is a barbeque night for the members and their guests every Wednesday and on the last Saturday of the month.

The Colombo Motor Yacht Club (CMYC) has neither restrictions nor permits. Situated 13 miles away from the city of Colombo on the picturesque Bolgoda lake amidst the surroundings of a natural wilderness, the CMYC is a wonderful place to spend a relaxed afternoon. Contradictory to its name there are no power boat racing anymore but only sailing dinghies and wind surfers. The CMYC has quite a few sailing vessels. There are 26 GP 14's (General Purpose 14 foot) 20 Enterprises and an odd mixture of a dozen or so of catamarans, Solos, Optimists and Hornets and around 20 motor boats. The club is open throughout the week for those who wish to sail or spend sometime at the bar. The CMYC conducts its races on Saturday mornings at 11 a.m. and afternoons at 3 p.m. There is also a lot of board sailing or wind surfing, water ski-ing and power boating too. Membership to the CMYC is as follows : Rs. 4000/-per person as an entrance fee and Rs. 100/- as monthly subscription for adult members. For junior members there is no entrance fee, but they pay a monthly subscription of Rs. 10/- each. Temporary members pay Rs. 300/-

each month. Outstation members (living over thirty miles away from the club) Rs. 88/- bi-yearly. The fee for a ‘Daily membership’ is Rs. 250/- per day. However ‘daily members’ are not permitted during the weekends. The club is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. A late fee is charged if you stay on after 6 p.m. Wanisagara Yacht Club is a sailing club at Kurunegala close to Naranwala. You can take your own boat along, if you want to sail or row.

There is also a new club at Bentota – the Neptune Sailing club, mainly for tourists. Other than these clubs it is possible to sail or row on the tanks at Victoria, Kotmale, Randenigala, Giritale, the Parakrama Samudra as well as on the Kandy lake. However you would have to find your own boats as there are no clubs attached to these places. Most hotels along the coast and some situated near lakes have their boats. A special permit may be required for sailing at the irrigation & hydro-power reservoirs such as Victoria, Kotmale, Randenigala, Giritale and the Parakrama Samudra. CRC has its clubhouse at Sir Chittampalam Gardiner Mawatha, Colombo 2.

CRYC at Harbour Waterfront, Kochchikade (Colombo) CMYC at Indibedda, Moratuwa.



Yachts moored at Bolgoda Lake.



Trying out individual sailing skills.