



The flamboyant sky as day breaks at Whisky Point

It was exactly five in the morning when I hollered to my friends to wake up. It was still dark but we had a task to complete and we were not going to be late! Together with our canine companion we headed to Whisky Point to capture the glorious sunrise and the surfing action.

Words Udeshi Amarasinghe | **Photographs** Thanuja Thilakaratne

The sky was orange-red with grey clouds, the sun trying its best to emerge from the darkness. We dipped our feet in the cool sand as we patiently watched the waves crashing on to the shore, changing colour with the rising sun.

Surfers were already on their way to the point, surfboards in hand. One was meditating in the early glow of the day before venturing into the water. Slowly but surely the sun rose and, as if on cue, the action at Whisky Point began.

It's a curious name for a surfing hotspot, and a mysterious one - no one seems to know the origin. A miniature rock outcrop is the landmark for the point, which depending on the tide,

you can either reach by walking along the beach or wading through the water. You can bask in the sun or watch the activity below comfortably perched on top of the rock.

Some speculate that the name 'Whisky' arose from the Tamil term '*whisekey*', which means swirling. And given that seawater literally swirls around the rock here, coming from one side with a surge, it's not a crazy suggestion.

Situated within the environs of Urani, a 10-minute drive from Pottuvil town, this stretch of beach is quiet and undisturbed - in stark contrast to its neighbour, Arugam Bay. There are no boats or other contraptions to be seen, leaving the entire place to the surfers. Whisky Point is the best place on the Island for amateurs and those learning to surf for the first time. They come with their trainers and spend the morning or the entire day depending on the waves. Advanced surfers come too - there's something for everyone here (Pottuvil Point, just a few minutes away from Whisky Point, also has a lot to offer the more experienced).



The Whisky Point hotspot

The surfing season technically begins in May and continues until the end of September, but there's not really a bad time to surf here. There are days when you'll see surges that rise to great heights. But the sea can be too rough, so you should always check the conditions before setting out. Generally, however, the waves are good, the aquamarine waters creating a hypnotic rhythm with their endless rise and fall.

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Surfers keenly watch the waves and as soon as a good one approaches their agile bodies anticipate the swell, paddling towards it and jumping up on their boards to ride the waves. The more experienced move with the wave almost as one and ride it all the way to the beach in expert fashion. Some topple but they're right back up in time to try again for the next.

It is all great fun, but you need to be fit too. Surfers warm up, stretch and try out their moves on the beach before they venture into the water. Trainers cheer as their students rise above the swell. There is a sense of camaraderie as others join in to encourage those new to the sport to experience the rush of surfing.

Whether you're a pro, an amateur or want to give surfing a go for the first time, head to Whisky Point this season to try your luck and ride the waves.

Only a couple of hours had past but the sun had already claimed its spot in the morning sky and more surfers, some coming in vehicles from other areas, headed towards Whisky Point. My friends and I had been well rewarded for our early morning wake-up call. I stood up from where I was seated on the sandy beach and climbed the Whisky Point rocks for a final view of the action from on high.

In the distance a surfer was in a pose of *namaskara* (worship) as he lay down on the beach and clasped his hands together facing the ocean... no doubt, praying for good waves.

