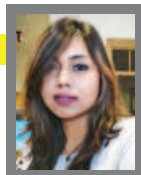


LIFE AS IT IS

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Revisiting childhood: A spectacular circus experience that is Cirque du Soleil

The Canadian circus company, Cirque du Soleil, was founded in 1984. The Montreal-based act is the world's largest contemporary circus company that has entertained more than 378 million people on 6 continents and 86 countries. If you are wondering what 'contemporary circus' is, well, unlike 'traditional circus,' 'contemporary circus' rarely uses animals but relies on music, theatrics, and mechanics to give a



memorable experience to their audiences. I first learned of Cirque du Soleil in 2011 during a trip to Las Vegas, where they stage



shows yearly. We always wished to attend at least one of their shows, which we finally did on 30 September in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We had the pleasure of enjoying 'Bazaar,' an eclectic, creative production that is inspired by the sights, sounds, and colours that one can find in a bazaar.

Once inside the temperature-controlled main tent, one begins to feel the magic of Cirque du Soleil right away. Audience expectations are always very high at any Cirque du Soleil show (they are the world's best after all). You will understand why the expectations are so high as soon as



the show begins with dramatic music and the appearance of the Maestro, who is the clown as well as the leader of the troupe.

If someone asks me which act I liked most, it will be difficult to answer, for all of them were impeccable and awe-inspiring. The jaw-dropping performances of an acrobatic duo in roller skates and another duo in trapeze left the audiences exclaiming in amazement; they were so smooth and swift in transitioning from one position to another! The artistic bicycle balancing act made the spectators applaud over and over.

Many of Cirque du Soleil's performers are

adept gymnasts, some of them Olympians! In a circus production, I think it is the aerialists who steal the show. Cirque du Soleil's top-notch artists perform dangerous acts in the air with so much fluidity that you can watch them worry-free, although, at the back of your mind, you always know that a tiny mistake can cost a performer his/her life.

Eclectic music filled the tent in the entirety of the 125-minute show. There was live as well as prerecorded music. In addition to instrumental music, the euphonious voice of Grande Âme or the singer of Bazaar enchanted the audience members.

In the darkness of the tent, the lighting effects along with the music created an immersive experience for the spectators; we were instantly transported to a fantasy world, where everything was possible, where joy abounded, and where energetic dance and exuberant music filled everyone's life to the brim. In short, the show was an out-of-this-world theatrical experience.

By Wara Karim

Photo: Wara Karim

#PERSPECTIVE

Hatirjheel water taxi: Escaping Dhaka's traffic woes

Dhaka never seems to rest and the very mention of this city seems to conjure images of cars, buses, and rickshaws inching their way through seemingly endless traffic. For most urban dwellers, a day often begins with the monotonous sounds of traffic congestion. What if we told you amidst this chaos, there is respite awaiting you? That is Hatirjheel and its water taxis.

A regular user of the water taxis, who travels from Badda to BFDC, shares, "I use the water taxi to reach my office, which is in Farmgate. It allows me to start my day with a fresh mind — from sorting out the whole day's plan to saving time — overall, I find water taxis to be quite efficient and refreshing."

He further highlights, "Long hours spent stuck in traffic not only lead to frustration but also result in lost working hours, and thanks to water taxis, I don't have to endure this."

The water taxis are a practical way to commute — offering a break from the traffic congestion and allowing you to explore the



city from a different perspective.

The city's public transportation system suffers from inefficiencies and overcrowding, making it less attractive for daily commuters. So, commuting by road can be a tedious and time-consuming affair, but water taxis offer a swift and hassle-free alternative.

Bandhan Das, an account executive, hops on the water taxis whenever he gets the chance — both for travelling to the office and to get a breath of fresh air.

"Unlike the chaotic and noisy streets of Dhaka, I find a water taxi ride in Hatirjheel

far more peaceful. The fares are reasonable, and you can see disciplined queues of people availing the water taxis, unlike the local buses that feel suffocating to me," says Bandhan, while gazing at the scenic view of the lake.

The stress of navigating Dhaka's traffic is well-known, and it can take a toll on our mental well-being. Water taxis minimise this stress, allowing us to relax and enjoy our journey.

Water taxis are efficient for commuting — whether you are heading to work, a business

meeting, or any other engagement, these boats make it a breeze to get around the city, but they equally serve as a well-liked tourist attraction.

Nilima Shorna, a homemaker, often visits Hatirjheel with her son to spend quality time. "There aren't many open spaces and recreational amenities for children in Dhaka," remarks Nilima, adding, "So, I come here with my son, and we both enjoy ourselves riding the water taxis."

Water taxis are perfect for family outings. Children and adults alike will relish the novelty of a boat ride and the opportunity to bond amid the picturesque surroundings. And for couples, a water taxi ride in the evening sets the stage for a romantic escapade!

So, how do you embark on an aquatic adventure in Hatirjheel? The process is simple and convenient. The water taxi service has jetties at five locations — Gulshan/Gudaraghat, Police Plaza, Badda, Rampura, and Karwan Bazar/BFDC. From Police Plaza to Karwan Bazar/BFDC, the ticket price is Tk 25, and to Rampura, it is Tk 20. The service is open from 6:30 AM to 10 AM.

As Dhaka continues to grow and evolve, innovative solutions like Hatirjheel's water taxis become essential. They not only provide a means of escape from traffic woes, but also contribute to a more efficient and enjoyable urban lifestyle.

By Ayman Anika

Photo: Ayman Anika