



A trip to

CHAR KUKRI MUKRI

ARISSA ASMA ALAM

It was quite a surprise for me to find out that we were going to Char Kukri Mukri on our South Bengal trip. I didn't even know the small island existed until my mother decided to enlighten me with Google searches and Wikipedia articles.

Where, or rather, what is Char Kukri Mukri?

Char Kukri Mukri is a wildlife sanctuary on a small island off the coast of Bangladesh. It's a lush and green little island filled with hundreds of different birds and animals one would or could never see in the cities, or at least not in Dhaka city. The entire sanctuary is covered in mangrove trees, providing a mysteriously magnificent feeling to the whole island.

One of the only ways or perhaps, the only way to get to Char Kukri Mukri is via a speed boat. You might be wondering, how is that the only way? Well, the answer is rather simple. The twists and turns of the narrow waterways and the scattered tree roots, and shallower waters make it extremely difficult for boats any larger than a speedboat to make it through the maze-like waterways.

The boat ride was by far one of the best highlights of the trip there. The scenery moved past us in a blur of green and dark brown. Even the rush of wind in my ears elevated the experience. Though I must say, keeping my eyes open when the wind felt like it was pricking my eyes like needles, was certainly not easy.

Later, we reached a *ghat* where we got off of the speedboat and nearly slipped off the steps. Once we arrived on the island, it took ten minutes and many attempts at trying to decipher confusing Google Maps directions, and help from some of the locals to get to where we were staying for the next two days.

I must say though, it was no five-star hotel. It was rather dirty, and the room my brother and I were staying in didn't have water supply in the bathroom. As a result, we were

forced to visit our parents' room quite frequently.

Despite the dysfunctional bathroom, the lovely scenery around the property and the fresh air made up for it. We took a tour of as much of the island as possible, looking at even the smallest, most insignificant scenes in front of us.

However, nothing about the scenery was insignificant. The trees, the flora, the slow and leisurely lifestyle, as well as the setting of the people and community gave us space and time to breathe and enjoy our long trip, away from the usual claustrophobic life back home.

We didn't really see any major landmarks. Not that there were any to begin with but we had our fun by just roaming around in a CNG. The lush green fields with specs of yellow flowers scattered here and there mixed with the cloudy sky was truly a scene to behold. It was so wonderful that I had forgotten to take a single picture.

The speedboat ride back was rather early in the morning. We were going to use the same route back but instead, stopped at a beach about thirty minutes away from the *ghat* we were supposed to go to. The special thing about that little beach wasn't that it was completely secluded and therefore, a lovely beach day spot. Rather, it was the fact that there were hundreds of red crabs living on that beach.

The small crabs looked like blobs of paint from afar. If you were to stomp your feet or even clap, be sure to expect a good number of red specs to disappear under the blanket of sand.

Char Kukri Mukri was an experience worth having. The lack of hustle and bustle and the calm serenity of the environment and people really made the journey worthwhile. I would like to thank the wonderful CNG driver who showed up at 5:30 AM every day for the two days we were there. He was with us and showed us around despite his own tight schedule. I would also like to thank the lovely lady we met when we took a break during one of our small tours and she fed us some of the best buffalo milk yoghurt I've ever had. Finally, I would like to thank the people who drove the speed boat, and my parents for making it such an interesting experience.

Arisa Asma Alam is a student at Glenrich International School.

