



#TRAVEL

ESCAPING DHAKA'S CHAOS

A tranquil road trip to Bandarban

Ah, Dhaka! The city that never sleeps — mostly because if you close your eyes for even a second, a CNG might just merge into your life, literally. So, what do four restless souls do when Dhaka's chaos turns monotonous? We trade it for a different kind of chaos — a road trip to Bandarban, aiming for the tranquillity of the Holiday Inn Resort.

We had this grand plan: to hit the road at 4:30 AM. Because, let's be real, who doesn't enjoy a predawn drive while the city's notorious traffic takes its own nap?

Well, we actually started at 7 AM, thanks to our innate Dhaka-tarian tendency to underestimate time. The crew? Rakib, the FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) king and the man behind the wheel who considers speed bumps a personal insult; Mithila, my better half, and our trip's personal Doraemon (she has an entire convenience store in her pouch); Adity, Rakib's wife and our car's resident DJ; and yours truly, the navigator and

storyteller.

To keep the spirit alive and ensure we do not exhaust our playlist of "best road trip songs" or Rakib's exhaustive catalogue of puns, we decided on a good ol' game of 'I Spy.' Meant as a diversion for Adity and me, Rakib joined in because of his acute FOMO, momentarily forgetting he was steering a hunk of metal at high speeds.

Oh, did I mention it was raining cats, dogs, and maybe a cow or two? As serene as the highway was, getting lost in the torrential rain on the windshield was very enticing. Thanks to our Doraemon whipping out her flask of lemon-inducedAmericano, we were able to stay awake. And by we, I mean Rakib, gulped all the ounces of coffee.

After multiple pit stops, tea breaks, and finally, as we hit Bandarban territory, the heavens blessed us with impeccable roads. It really does invoke a thought in you as to why people are so drawn to

places where you can get lost willingly. It does not take much for your inner self to come out from its defensive shell and let loose. After hearing my live narration in the car, Rakib almost shed a tear. Almost.

Having our glutes cemented to the seats for 10 hours, the roads started to stretch more than they should have. Out of nowhere, Adity yelled the name of the resort while pointing it out. It was finally over!

Witnessing the spot of solace, nestled above a serene lake and veiled by hilly trees, Holiday Inn Resort was the peaceful haven we had fantasised about during every Dhaka traffic jam. The rooms were the kind you wish you could 'add to cart' and take home. We dined on local delicacies and unanimously decided to forget calorie counting for the duration of the trip.

On our last day, nature offered a dramatic encore; a downpour so intense it would make a Dhaka monsoon blush.

Sans umbrellas, we took a walk in the rain because, let's face it, Bandarban rain beats Dhaka drizzle any day. As we strolled, we discovered an entrance to a lake that looked like it was yanked straight out of a fairy tale.

For a brief moment, I contemplated the logistics of moving there. Could I swap Dhaka's concrete jungle for this ethereal lakeside?

And so, after little to no sleep and a whole lot of adventures, we found our much-needed rest. We came to a realisation. While we initially escaped Dhaka to find peace, what we discovered in Bandarban was something even more valuable — a renewed sense of what life could be when you remove the noise and just listen to the rain, the hills, and your own heartbeat.

Trust me, Bandarban was not just a destination; it was a revelation.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

