

# Three friends, one epic night, and the serene seas of Cox's Bazar

If you ask people to pick between the sea and the mountain, most would go with the 'Mountains by the sea' response. Not me, though. It's the sea or nothing! When life gets me down, being by the sea is like an instant battery recharge and mind purge. Sadly, for the last couple of years, be it for time or some other recurring reason, I have been unable to visit my heaven on earth, Cox's Bazar.



Last week, I was enviously watching a resort plan to kick off their electronic music festival, Burning Crab, which I guess is a nod to America's Burning Man, and wishing I could attend. I had resigned myself to my fate when one of my school buddies called asking if I wanted in on a trip to Cox's (even attend the festival!) with friends. But there was a catch — I had to confirm within the hour.

I would like to sound cool here and say that I accepted immediately, threw office papers in the air, and ran out to celebrate while traffic stopped to celebrate my good fortunes as we see in movies! However, this is reality and the first thing I did was check my work calendar and see if I could spare the time, and if I could not, was it possible to work remotely (the nail-biting experience of being in your late 30s, right?).

I guess I had some unused good luck tokens for a while because it turns out I could go. It also occurred to me that while I made several trips to Cox's with other friends, colleagues, and so on, I never went there with school friends, so that was yet another thing to look forward to.

Next day, we were all present at a place where all good stories usually start — the airport terminal. I have this travel procedure — I refuse to eat or drink anything three hours before any journey and during the journey itself. That does not apply to my friends however, and soon we were

standing in front of a booth ordering samosas and shingaras.

The best part of taking a plane anywhere is the take-off, which I love, and I enrich the experience further with Kenny Loggins's Danger Zone. Other than this short excitement, the flight, landing, and drive to lodgings was mostly uneventful, so let's skip ahead.

Our accommodations this time were somewhere quite new, and quite far — past Inani Beach. One look at the building and you could tell it would be a swanky 5-star experience, and it was, and then wasn't (more on that later).

After settling in, we sat down to plan, because we arrived on Wednesday and would leave on Friday afternoon, and Burning Crab, held at Mermaid Beach Resort, was happening for exactly the same days. So realistically, we could only attend for one day, and we had to pick between that night and Thursday, and we surmised that as Wednesday is still a working day, the real crowd would not show up until Thursday, so that's when we go.

As we arrived late on Wednesday, we decided it would be better spent to eat out somewhere, and maybe explore this area of Cox's. We were recommended Sun Dancer Café, but one of our friends went there with family, so we two decided not to intrude and instead went to try another café.

Perhaps, it was our fault in choosing, but the food was TERRIBLE (I ordered

French fries, while my friend ordered loitta fry). We quickly paid, and found ourselves embarking on an adventure; going back to our hotel, and the eateries around it, before they closed at 2 AM.

We already started on the backfoot because we were setting off at 12:30 AM, with a slow electric rickshaw, and the Inani Bridge (Reju Khal Bridge) shut down at 11 PM for some maintenance work. Making matters worse, as an advertisement for electric transport, our vehicle ran out of juice just past Mermaid Beach Resort, with no other transport in sight.

We decided to walk the kilometre or so to the bridge, until thankfully, another transport popped up. We got off at the bridge, crossed on foot, managed to grab another and we were on our way. For the stargazers reading this, all I can say is on that road, with no light and a clear sky, the night and seas were illuminated by starlight!

We decided to stop, and just walk to the beach because these are moments you only read about in books or see on TV — a beach completely void of any humans, except us two bros, and of course our rickshaw driver, who was waiting on the road.

We managed to get back in one piece, (imagine how many times we'd be robbed if we attempted this in Dhaka), brought a couple of bottled sodas back to our room to go with the hefty snacks I bought from the airport.