

This is where the 'wasn't' part of the 5-star experience shows up. We call the front desk and ask for a bottle opener. "Sorry Sir, we don't provide the service, but opening the bottle is easy. If you twist, the plastic will automatically give way," replied the unbothered concierge.

I quickly corrected him by saying we needed a bottle opener for a glass bottle while wondering how he connected a bottle opener and a plastic bottle. But it's late in the night, so I let it go. "Sorry Sir, but we don't have a bottle opener," was his reply, to which I incredulously responded, "No bottle opener in a 5-star hotel?"

His response was that he would send someone over to sort it out. Thirty minutes later, someone appeared with something wrapped in a napkin, which we assumed was the fabled bottle opener. Jubilation turned to utter confusion when he unwrapped a knife. We knew his plan would not work, but we let him at it, and five minutes later, he came to the same conclusion and took the bottles to the kitchen.

Another 20 minutes later, after we were already done snacking, he comes up with the now-open bottles. We had to drink them if only to justify the hour and nonsensical conversations that led up to this moment.

Thursday morning started as it usually does during holidays, grumbling your way to a breakfast buffet, cursing the 7-10 AM timing logic. With that done, we headed to their infinity pool, which credits where credits due, had an incredible view of the sea.

While my friend, let's call him A, was ready to dive-bomb into the pool, me and my other friend, let's call him B, told him to ditch the pool because the sea was literally METRES away from us.

Begrudgingly, he obliged, but all that disappointment of his went away the moment the waves hit him. Pretty soon, three 37-year-olds devolved into 17-year-



old brats, slinging mud and splashing sea water at each other, while laughing at lame jokes loud enough for the coast guard to take notice.

The rest of the day was pretty uneventful; yet another forgetful lunch, and a monotonous afternoon, but things were about to pick up because we were gearing up for Burning Crab. We experienced all of the joy of school life, but now, we wanted that final experience; a class party excitement, sort of.

We were out by 10 PM, reached, got scanned in, made to wear a bracelet, and in we went to what was shaping up to be

Bangladesh's first such EDM (electronic dance music) festival of its kind. There were other elements to the festival, such as art, and wellness, but that's not why I came.

The festival made good use of Beach Resort's vast front portion, housing two zones for DJs, many of them flown in from abroad and quite famous, to play their tracks, and listeners to vibe to. Interlaced between these zones were pop-up shops selling all kinds of food, albeit at astronomical prices!

We decided to forgo those and went to Mermaid Beach Resort's restaurant and ordered us a seafood platter for my friend

and Kala Bhuna with tandoor ruti for me. I am a land mammal and I prefer to stick to food from the land, so not a lot of fish was highlighted on this trip.

Once dinner was done, we were back out to enjoy the music and just sink into the vibe that was this festival. I was particularly fond of the Zone 2. That was being held on a tiny island, with the DJ occupying one of Mermaid's iconic egg-shaped sitting areas on one end and the uninterrupted sea on the other where the listeners were.

To say it was a transcendental experience would be an understatement — the sound and feel of the waves lapping at your feet, the darkness pierced with light shows, and of course, the music! For an introvert like me, who always wanted to experience events like Tomorrowland, and A State of Trance, but never could because A. Introvert and B. Cost, this experience really hit the spot.

The rest of the night went by in a blur, and by 2 AM, we decided enough was enough (mostly because we would not get transport otherwise). We came back and I wanted to get rid of the bracelet. Unfortunately, I had another enlightening conversation with our hotel's front desk. This time, I called for scissors, and guess what? They don't have that either!

This was later solved on Friday morning, at the breakfast buffet egg station, where the chef, also without scissors, whipped out a gigantic knife and cut it off me.

After that, it was boarding another delayed plane, land in this urban depression prison we call our capital, and back to normal life. Like I stated before, I have travelled with others before, but never with school friends, and that's important because unlike with other people, you can cut loose without any worries or judgement. And if I were to sum up this trip, you could say this is going down as perhaps a death-bed-memory.

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Photo: Mermaid Eco Tourism Ltd

