

Guliakhali Sea Beach: A HARMONY OF WAVES AND GREEN

We knew the day would not go easy on us the moment we peeked out of the hotel window at 7 AM. Dark clouds were already having a board meeting over Chattogram and the sky looked ready to tip over. However, the show had to go on, the cameras were charged, and the car was already booked. We set out in search of the lesser-known Guliakhali Sea Beach with Inti bhaiya, my colleague on holiday mode, me on assignment, and our cinematographer Tanzil (yep, two Tanzils, double trouble).

It felt strangely calming to drive out of the city, soaking in light rain - Chattogram felt quiet and gentle, like a kind companion. Things became much more subdued as we left the city. The route narrowed and wound through rusty tea stalls, lonely villages, and the occasional confrontation with stubborn cows. We briefly forgot we were actually working since the world seemed to move slowly.

When we finally reached Muradpur, the last motorable stop, a local, casually informed us we would need to walk the rest of the way. Barefoot!

Thanks to the rain, the stretch to the beach had transformed into a wet clay runway. There was some light resistance, but soon we gave in to what was basically a complimentary mud



spa. Slipping, sliding, and grumbling, we made it through.

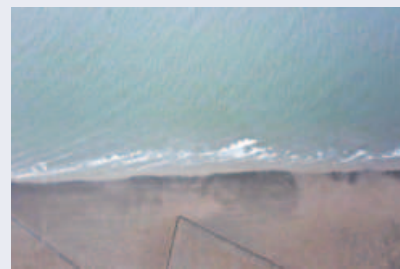
And then the view opened up.

Guliakhali does not try to impress you with rolling waves or the classic "beach photo-op" look. It just is. It seems as though someone took a beach, churned it into a mangrove forest, and then gently spread a grassy carpet on top. There are a lot of open grasslands, areas of shimmering water that cut through the green like silver veins, and mangrove roots that rise like natural sculptures. You don't arrive at Guliakhali; you ease into it.

Since we were early (or more accurately, wise enough to show up before the sun got serious), we had the whole place to ourselves. The only sounds were our footsteps squelching in the mud, the distant caws of birds, and Inti bhaiya making terrible jokes at our expense from a dry patch of land. You know a place is special when even the person who's supposed to

be relaxing starts chucking in ideas for better shots.

We spent a good hour just taking it all in. No distractions, no people, no Wi-Fi — not that you would expect any out here anyway. Apart from a tiny shack selling tea back near the main trail, Guliakhali has held out against commercial chaos. No beach rides, no



banana boats, and not even a child selling cucumber with salt and chilli. And maybe that's exactly why it works. You're not here to be entertained — you're here to notice things. Like the sound of stillness. Or the way the Keora trees spread their roots into quiet tidal canals. Or how the horizon looks strangely endless when it meets both green and grey.

It's a place that makes you slow down. Tanzil was busy setting up his shots while I found myself just walking aimlessly, sometimes stopping to photograph birds I could not name. While waiting for the tide to be right, a couple of boatmen waved from a distance. Guliakhali has a rhythm that is not in line with your timetable; it does

not rush and does not care if you are in one.

If you are planning a visit (and I'd recommend you do so before everyone discovers it), the route is straightforward: head to Sitakunda Bazaar, and from there take a CNG to Muradpur. The last bit is on foot, so dress like you might wrestle with the elements.

The entire trip from Chattogram can be done in half a day, provided you start early. But fair warning — it's not exactly picnic-friendly unless you pack everything yourself. There are no dustbins, so what you bring in, you take out. Simple rule: don't ruin what doesn't belong to you.

Swimming isn't advisable either. There are no lifeguards, and the terrain is too unpredictable. At best, you can dip your feet or hop onto a small boat if the local boatmen are around. Staying grounded, literally, is what makes it so appealing. Allow the grass-stained memories to linger, let the mud stick to you, and let the wind mess up your hair.

We sat in the car on the drive back, our trousers rolled up and our feet coated in a layer of mud, feeling oddly at ease. Inti bhaiya, now fully converted from mocker to muse, was already planning a second visit.

Maybe next time, we will come back without the cameras. Just to sit. And maybe watch the tide flirt with the grass one more time.

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Photo: K Tanzeel Zaman

