



Jaffna & the North

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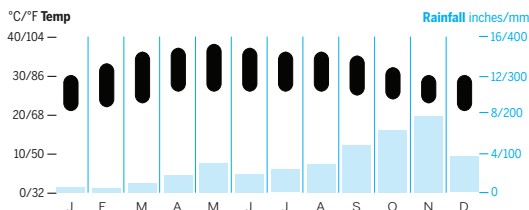
Why Go?

With towering, rainbow Hindu temples, colourful saris draped effortlessly over women on bicycles, and warm breezes carrying the sweet fragrance of fruit trees, the North is a different world. Here the landscape is arid and the sun is hot and tough, with coastlines and sparkling aqua water everywhere. The light is stronger: surreal and white-hot on salt flats in the Vanni, bright and lucid on coral islands and northern beaches, and soft and speckled on Jaffna's leafy suburbs and its battle-scarred centre.

And of course there are the cultural differences. From the language to the cuisine to religion, Tamil culture has its own rhythms, and people here are proud of their heritage. It's still tense up here, and conversations easily veer from Tamil history to the military presence. But for now, the focus is on healing, rebuilding and reviving the rich traditions of northern life.

When to Go

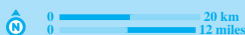
Jaffna



Feb A tiny post-monsoon, pre-unbearable-heat window; some drizzles still, but all is green.

Jun-Jul High season sees sunshine, moderate heat and Karuthakolamban mangoes.

Jul-Aug Jaffna's extraordinary 25-day Nallur festival is on: parades, ice cream and ritual self-mutilation.



Jaffna & the North Highlights

the smells of local coffee, fruit
and cigars

6 Riding along coastal roads in the **Jaffna peninsula** (p259), fringed by fishing boats, calm seas and quiet beaches