



The South

Includes »

Galle.....	94
Unawatuna	103
Unawatuna to Koggala.....	107
Ahangama & Midigama.....	108
Weligama.....	110
Mirissa.....	111
Matara	113
Matara to Tangalla.....	115
Tangalla	117
Bundala National Park.....	121
Tissamaharama	122
Yala National Park.....	127
Kataragama.....	128

Best Places to Eat

- » Mama's Galle Fort Roof Café (p101)
- » Galle Fort Hotel (p101)
- » King Fisher's Restaurant (p106)
- » Surya Garden (p117)

Best Places to Stay

- » Talalla Retreat (p116)
- » Mangrove Cabanas (p120)
- » Dutch House (p100)
- » Secret Garden (p105)
- » Fort Printers (p98)
- » Palm Villa (p111)

Why Go?

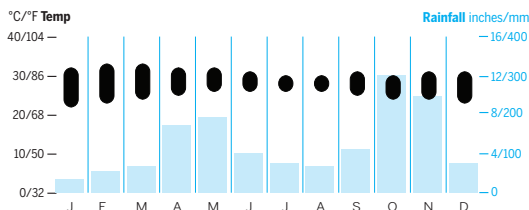
Southern Sri Lanka overwhelms the senses. The landscape is one of utter beauty; the radiant green rice paddies and forests of swinging palm trees contrast with beaches of ivory-coloured sand and an ocean of rich turquoise. The air is heavy with the scent of jasmine and the people drift past in clouds of bright colours.

No matter what you're after you'll find it here. You can dive across glowing coral reefs or learn to surf on gentle sandbars. The culturally inclined can soak up works of Buddhist-inspired art in lonely caves; for the naturalist there are huge whales splashing through offshore swells, and leopards moving like spirits in the night.

A sense of romance and wonder sweeps up all visitors to this coastline; after all, this is the land where people dance across fire on monsoon nights, fishermen float on stilts above the waves and turtles crawl up onto moonlit beaches.

When to Go

Galle



Jan Whales roll through the sea, the beaches buzz and Galle's literary festival is held.

Aug Pilgrims perform acts of self-mortification at the unforgettable Kataragama festival.

Nov The monsoon rains die out, beach resorts wake up and crowds are yet to arrive.

Galle

Q091 / POP 90,270

Galle (pronounced gawl in English, and *gaar-le* in Sinhala) is a town of colour, texture and sensation totally unlike anywhere else in Sri Lanka. It is at once endlessly exotic, bursting with the scent of spices and salty winds, and yet also, with its wonderful collection of slowly decaying Dutch-colonial buildings, vaguely familiar, like a whimsical medieval European town unexpectedly deposited in the tropics. Above all else Galle is a city of trade and, increasingly, art. Today the Fort is crammed full of little boutique shops, cafes and hotels owned by local and foreign artists, writers, photographers, designers and poets – a third of the houses are owned by foreigners.

Built by the Dutch, beginning in 1663, the 36-hectare Fort occupies most of the prom-

ontory that forms the older part of Galle and is an amazing collection of structures dating back through the centuries. Just wandering the streets at random yields one architectural surprise after another. Its glories have been recognised by Unesco, which has made the Fort a World Heritage Site.

A key part of the Fort's allure, however, is that it isn't just a pretty place. Rather, it remains a working community: there are administrative offices, courts, export companies, lots of regular folks populating the streets and a definite buzz of energy in the air.

Galle is easily reached as a day trip from Hikkaduwa and Unawatuna, but an increasing number of travellers are staying within the atmospheric walls of the Fort.

History

Although Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa are much older than Galle, they are effectively abandoned cities – the modern towns



The South Highlights

- 1 Strolling the sculptured streets of arty and whimsical **Galle** (p94)
- 2 Slipping into the limpid, moonstone-coloured waters of **Unawatuna** (p103)
- 3 Staring in slack-jawed amazement at the biggest creatures ever to live during a **blue whale safari** (p112)
- 4 Oohing, ahing and staying forever on the perfect beaches of **Tangalla** (p117)
- 5 Speeding through the tube at **Midigama** (p108) or learning to surf at **Weligama** (p110)
- 6 Watching the first faltering flipper-flaps of a tiny baby turtle on **Rekawa Beach** (p117)
- 7 Spotting a spotty leopard and listening out for big-eared elephants in **Yala National Park** (p127)
- 8 Walking on fire to make your peace with the gods at the spectacular **Kataragama festival** (p128)