



# West Coast

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Lords (p80)
- » Basil (p91)
- » Kandoori (p86)
- » Spaghetti & Co (p91)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Villa Araliya (p79)
- » Club Villa (p84)
- » Saman Villas (p85)
- » Ice Bear Guest House (p79)

## Why Go?

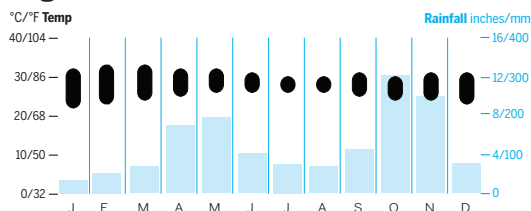
You don't have to be on Sri Lanka's west coast for long to realise that this coastline has something of a multiple personality. North of the capital is Negombo, a cheerful beach town crowned with church spires that is, thanks to its proximity to the airport, a staple of almost every visitor's Sri Lankan journey. Head further north, though, and you enter a wild and little-visited region that seems to consist of nothing but coconut plantations and lagoons, sparkling in the sun and filled with dolphins.

South of Colombo's chaos is a world that oscillates between the dancing devils of traditional Sri Lankan culture in Ambalangoda, the chic boutique hotels and uncluttered golden sands of Bentota, and the down-at-heel but ever-popular backpacker party town of Hikkaduwa.

Whichever side of the west coast you choose you can be sure you'll end up spending longer here than planned.

## When to Go

### Negombo



**Jan** Schools of dolphins party in Dutch Bay and packs of backpackers party nightly in Hikkaduwa.

**Mar–Apr** Sri Lanka's Christians stage Easter passion plays in Negombo and Talawila.

**Nov** If you prefer your beaches (almost) tourist-free then November is the month to come.

INDIAN  
OCEAN

Kalpitiya 1

Talawila

Puttalam

Sellankandal

Madurankuli

Udappuwa

Chilaw

Mahawewa

Marawila

Waikkal

Kochchikade

Negombo 2

Katunayake

Pamunugama

Muthurajawela  
Marsh 4

Wattala

Kelaniya

COLOMBO

Mt Lavinia

Ratmalana

Air Force

Base

Panadura

Wadduwa

Kalutara

Matugama

Beruwela

Aluthgama

Bentota 3

Induruwa

Kosgoda

Ahungala

Balapitiya

Ambalangoda 5

Akurala

Hikkaduwa 7

Hikkaduwa

National

Park

Galle

To Matara (25km)

Portugal Bay

Dutch Bay

Karaitivu

Bar Reef

Wilpattu National Park

Hunuwilagama

Kala Oya

Maragahawewa

Anuradhapura

Paymadu

Tantirimalai

Mahawewa

Galgamuwa

Mahoo

Yapahuwa

Padeniya

Wariyapola

Panduwasnuwara

Kurunegala

Polgahawela

Kegalle

To Kandy (20km)

Angururuwella

Avissawella

Parakaduwa

Ingiriya

Ratnapura

Agalawatta

Migahatenna

Udugama

Elpitiya

Morawaka

Sinharaja Forest Reserve

To Badulla (75km)

## West Coast Highlights

- 1 Scanning the horizon for schools of playful dolphins in the waters off **Kalpitiya** (p76)
- 2 Finding your feet after a long flight in charming but ramshackle **Negombo** (p78)
- 3 Feeling the stress levels drop under the palm trees of lovely **Bentota** (p83), and booking in for a pampering in one of the area's boutique hotels
- 4 Ticking off egrets and herons during a waterborne birdwatching safari through the **Muthurajawela Marsh** (p83)
- 5 Learning the secrets behind the devil masks in **Ambalangoda** (p91)
- 6 Getting all green-fingered in the **Brief Garden** (p84) near Bentota
- 7 Raising a toast to the sunset after a hard day's diving and surfing in lively **Hikkaduwa** (p87)