



The East

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Hideaway (p236)
- ➔ Crab (p253)
- ➔ Coconut Beach Lodge (p253)
- ➔ RN Buffet & Take Away (p244)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Stardust Beach Hotel (p235)
- ➔ Uga Jungle Beach Resort (p255)
- ➔ Roy's Inn (p246)
- ➔ Sandy Beach Hotel (p235)
- ➔ Nandawanam Guesthouse (p246)

Why Go?

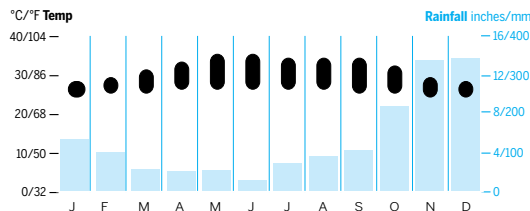
Welcome to a different Sri Lanka. You've probably experienced the booming beach resorts in the south and west. Maybe you're searching for somewhere a little less developed, a coastline that retains a more earthy, local feel. Well, the East might just be that place.

A mellow, emerging region, there's near-zero package tourism here – most places to stay are family-run guesthouses and small hotels. Still a little raw around the edges, the East remains primarily a land of fishing villages, sandy lanes, chickens in the yard and tradition. It's a culturally fascinating combination of ocean-orientated Muslim communities, astonishing Hindu temples, crumbling colonial forts, dazzling markets and a coastline of killer surf, hidden bays and stretch-for-miles white sand beaches.

Sure, there's the odd blot on the landscape. But with vastly improved infrastructure – upgraded highways, new bridges and better train and air links – the East will not remain a country cousin for long.

When to Go

Trincomalee



Mar–Apr The most reliable months for spotting blue whales in the seas off Trincomalee.

May–Jun This is shoulder season; nesting season in Kumana and good elephant-spotting.

Jun–Jul White sand beaches from Nilaveli to Arugam Bay are in their prime.

The East Highlights

1 Hanging ten on the endless rights of chilled-out surf mecca **Arugam Bay** (p232)

2 Seeking out blue whales and spinner dolphins on boat trips from **Uppuveli** (p251) and **Nilaveli** (p253)

3 Chasing a skittish leopard – or monitoring the treetops for sleeping cats – in **Kumana National Park** (p239)

4 Snorkelling or diving with reef sharks around **Pigeon Island National Park** (p253)

5 Venturing up a lost highway past empty sandy beaches, lagoons and mangroves north of **Nilaveli** (p255)

6 Listening to the quiet ripple of the water and watching rainbow-coloured kingfishers flit around mangroves on **Pottuvil Lagoon** (p237)

7 Napping in a hammock on a hill overlooking the sea at **Lighthouse Point** (p238)

8 Exploring the fortress, Hindu temples and sights in the historic port of **Trincomalee** (p247)

