



The West Coast

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Ging Oya Lodge (p94)
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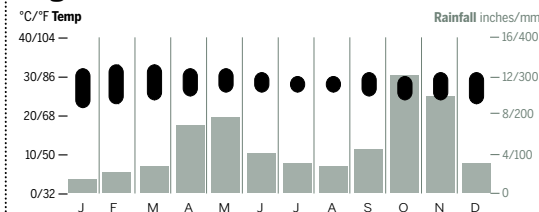
Why Go?

You don't have to be on Sri Lanka's west coast for long to realise that the 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 slightly scrappy but ever-popular backpacker party town of Hikkaduwa.

Whichever part of the west coast you choose, a beach stay here makes for the perfect beginning or end to your Sri Lankan adventure.

When to Go Negombo



Jan Schools of dolphins party daily in Dutch Bay; 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 (mostly) tourist free, November is the month to come.

West Coast Highlights

1 Kalpitiya

(p95) Scanning the horizon for schools of playful dolphins or learning to kitesurf in protected lagoon waters.

2 Negombo

(p89) Finding your feet and strolling the beach after a long flight in this oh-so-easy resort town.

3 Bentota

(p98) Feeling the stress levels drop as you are pampered under palm trees in one of the area's boutique hotels.

4 Muthurajawela

(p91) Ticking off egrets and herons during a waterborne birdwatching safari through this salt marsh.

5 Wilpattu National Park

(p96) Scouring the undergrowth for leopards and spotted deer from the back of a safari jeep.

6 Brief Garden

(p97) Enjoying the artful horticulture of Bevis Barwa's former home near Bentota.

7 Hikkaduwa

(p101) Raising a toast to the sunset after a hard day's diving and surfing in this lively backpacker hangout.

