



Where Tropical Dreams Come True

As sailors of old approached this beautiful tropical island, they gazed upon lushly forested mountains surrounded by coastal plains, fringed by mile after mile of exquisite golden sand. No wonder so many called it The Resplendent Isle.

Sri Lanka's beaches still delight today's traveller. With more than 1,000 kilometres of sandy coastline to choose from, and a year-round summer with two different weather systems, visitors will always find a beach with sunshine and calm seas.



When the northeast winds blow from November to March, it's beautifully sunny and calm on the west and southern coasts. From April to October, during the southwest monsoon, tranquil waters and a steady supply of sunshine can be enjoyed on the east coast.

Dreams of a tropical beach fringed by coconut palms, where the Indian Ocean sighs gently onto soft sand, really do come true in Sri Lanka. The warm sea bathes reefs where vivid tropical fish dart among the coral, and shipwrecks lie waiting to be explored. Large sheltered lagoons, where rivers meet the sea, create a fascinating habitat for marine and bird life, as well as an ideal environment for a range of water sports.

Several west coast beaches can be found north of Colombo, conveniently close to the International Airport. These include Negombo (with its many long-established resorts), Waikkal, Seeduwa, Uswetakeiyawa and Marawila. This region includes an historic town with the remains of an ancient fort, lovely old Catholic churches, Dutch-built canals, local fishermen in their outrigger canoes and tranquil lagoons.

Mt Lavinia, almost a suburb of Colombo, has a popular beach, while resorts further south of the capital can be found at Wadduwa and Beruwala. The beaches, restaurants and bars of Beruwala are separated from Bentota's prime beach resorts by the wide Bentota River.

South of Bentota, the largest number of beach resorts is found at Hikkaduwa, with others at Induruwa, Kosgoda and Ahungalla. *Coral reefs off Hikkaduwa attract snorkellers and scuba divers, while several turtle hatcheries give visitors the chance to see efforts to conserve endangered sea turtles.*

There are a few coastal resorts close to historic Galle Fort (a UNESCO World Heritage Site of enormous charm), while further along the south coast, glorious beaches can be found at Unawatuna, Koggala, Weligama, Dikwella, Tangalle and Hambantota.



The pristine beaches of Sri Lanka's east coast are renowned for their soft white sand, enchanting bays and sleepy lagoons. The finest beaches north of Trincomalee (which has a fine natural harbour), include Nilaveli, Uppuveli, Kuchchaveli, Marble Bay, Deadman's Cove, Sober and Pigeon Islands.

To the south, the top east coast spots include Kalkudah and Pasekudah, with Arugam Bay – a 20 km strip of glorious beaches and bays – achieving almost legendary status among surfers, who come here between April and October.

Another area with some fine beaches is the Jaffna Peninsula in the far north. As well as Casuarina Beach and Manalkau, several nearby islands, inhabited only by wildlife and birds, beckon the adventurous sun lover.



Sri Lanka's coastal resorts provide water sports such as snorkelling and scuba diving run by professionally qualified operators, wind surfing, parasailing and fishing, as well as canoeing and water skiing on the lagoons. And for those wanting to do more on land other than lounge in a deck chair, there may be horse-riding, badminton, archery, table tennis, squash or billiards. The hinterland offers a wide range of diversions including wildlife parks, gem mining, cinnamon plantations, ancient monuments, traditional carving and masked devil dancing. Many coastal resorts have Ayurveda spa facilities, as well as lively entertainment and restaurants featuring ocean-fresh seafood.

A holiday in one of Sri Lanka's coastal regions, where the accommodation ranges from simple home-stays to exclusive boutique hotels and large, well-equipped resorts, is sure to fulfil everyone's dream.

