



The South

The South needs to figure prominently in any traveller's visit to Sri Lanka. The Unesco-listed old port town of Galle is fast gaining international fame as one of the best-preserved examples of colonial life in Asia. The streets of the 17th-century Fort are lined with old, unrestored buildings that vividly show the influences of the Dutch, Portuguese, British, Muslims and the many other peoples and cultures that have passed through. As upmarket hotels open, Galle is on the cusp of becoming something much bigger.

Just around a rocky headland from Galle, Unawatuna has shaken off the devastation of the tsunami (even if the memories linger) and continues to be the idyllic beach town of many a traveller's dreams. The perfect crescent of sand inspires a languor that can last for days, if not weeks. Just east, luxurious, picture-perfect villas welcome the well-heeled.

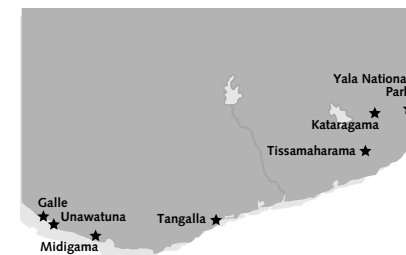
Among the smattering of villages and coastal towns between Unawatuna and Tangalla there are bare-bones guesthouses fronting the amazing surfing breaks at Midigama, and character-filled family-run resorts on their own little coves. The popular beach town of Tangalla, with its long stretches of white sands, will be reborn as the tsunami devastation recedes over time. At the far corner of the island, Yala National Park is the place to see leopards, elephants, monkeys and much more amid its remote savanna plains.

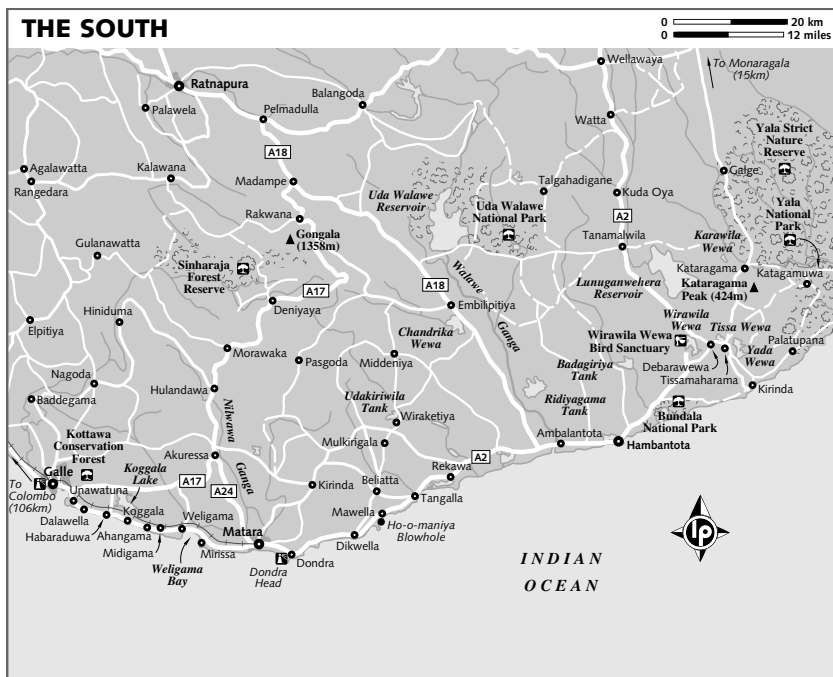
As you head east along the south coast the road becomes less and less crowded, and it becomes easier and easier to feel part of local life. Stretches of dramatic coast alternate with the lush green interior, and there are many important places of local culture, like the temples at Kataragama.

THE SOUTH

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wandering the atmospheric streets of **Galle** (p130)
- Living the colonial life in a restored Galle mansion such as **Galle Fort Hotel** (p135)
- Lounging away the days on the white sand of **Unawatuna** (p138)
- Finding your own perfect hidden resort along the coast west of **Tangalla** (p147)
- Surfing the breaks at **Midigama** (p142)
- Taking a yoghurt break on the **road to Tissamaharama** (p152)
- Spotting big game in **Yala National Park** (p156)
- Making your penance at the **Kataragama festival** (p159)





GALLE

☎ 091 / pop 91,000

Galle (pronounced gawl in English, and gaar-le in Sinhala) is a living time capsule. It has a vibrant commercial district that's also shambolic and often charmless, but pass through one of the Fort gates and you are transported back to the Dutch colonial era.

Built by the Dutch beginning in 1663, the 36-hectare Fort occupies most of the promontory that forms the older part of Galle. Described by the notoriously hard-to-please Paul Theroux as being 'garlanded with red hibiscus and smelling of the palm-scented ocean,' the Fort is an amazing collection of structures and culture dating back through the centuries. Just wandering the streets at random yields one architectural surprise after another. And be sure to take in the dramatic views of town and ocean from the encircling walls. Unesco has recognised Fort as 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 com-

panies and lots of regular folks populating the streets. There's a definite energy in the air, and tourism takes a back seat. However, this may not be the case for long. Some excellent boutique hotels have opened and locals are busily selling their often amazing unrestored vintage buildings to foreigners and speculators. The Fort is definitely one of those places that in a few years will have people saying: 'Oh you should have seen it before.' So hurry up and visit before 'before' is past.

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, instead choosing to make day trips to the beach towns.

History

Although Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa are much older than Galle, they are effectively abandoned cities – the modern towns are divorced from the ancient ruins. In contrast, both old and new Galle have remained vibrant.

THE 2004 TSUNAMI – AFTERMATH IN THE SOUTH

The south coast was heavily affected by the tsunami. You won't go far without seeing the effects, whether they are the 'temporary' encampments of people who lost their homes, boats washed far ashore or open land where there were once villages. Much of Galle was damaged, although the walls of the Fort lived up to their name and protected the historic old town. The popular beach resort of Unawatuna was virtually wiped out, but was rebuilt quickly thanks to foreign generosity. Further east, Tangalla suffered heavily and many once-popular beach guesthouses have vanished. In the sparsely populated areas past hard-hit Hambantota the waters changed the shape of the coast, although areas such as Yala National Park proved resilient to nature's forces.

Wherever you go, every person has a harrowing story of survival and loss. Although you'll see large signs along the main road proclaiming the involvement of various international programs, their efforts are often harder to discern. And talk of a buffer zone between the surf and beachside buildings proved to be just that – talk.

Historians believe Galle may have been the city of Tarshish – where King Solomon obtained gems and spices – but it became prominent only with the arrival of the Europeans. In 1505 a Portuguese fleet bound for the Maldives was blown off course and took shelter in the harbour. Apparently, on hearing a cock (*galo* in Portuguese) crowing, they gave the town its name. Another slightly less dubious story is that the name is derived from the Sinhala word *gala* (rock).

In 1589, during one of their periodic squabbles with the kingdom of Kandy, the Portuguese built a small fort, which they named Santa Cruz. Later they extended it with a series of bastions and walls, but the Dutch, who took Galle in 1640, destroyed most traces of the Portuguese presence.

After the construction of the Fort in the 17th century Galle was the main port for Sri Lanka for more than 200 years, and was an important stop for boats and ships travelling between Europe and Asia. However, by the time Galle passed into British hands in 1796, commercial interest was turning to Colombo. The construction of breakwaters in Colombo's harbour in the late 19th century sealed Galle's status as a secondary harbour, though it still handles some shipping and yachts.

For an interesting take on local history, buy a copy of *Galle: As Quiet As Asleep* by Norah Roberts, Galle's long-time librarian.

Orientation

Sri Lanka's fourth-biggest town, Galle is 116km south of Colombo. The old town, or Fort, occupies most of the south-pointing promontory. Where the promontory

meets the 'mainland' is the centre of the new town, with the bus and train stations, shops and banks. The two areas are divided by the grassy expanse of Galle International Cricket Stadium. Galle has a busy market area in the new town, on Main St.

The Fort's walls did a fine job of protecting the old town from the tsunami, while the newer commercial district was battered but rapidly recovered. However, residential areas near the water suffered heavily, scores of people died and 'temporary' housing looks to become a permanent part of the future.

Information

Galle is a good source of supplies and other essentials for those heading east along the coast.

Places offering IDD services are common, and many phone places also offer Internet access. There is no shortage of banks with international ATMs, both in the Fort and the new town.

Cargills Food City (☎ 223 3212; 3rd fl, 26 P&J City, Gamini Mawatha) This supermarket also has a pharmacy.

Commercial Bank (Church St) Has an international ATM.

Galle Library (Church St) Seems almost as old as the Fort. Has a small collection and students eager to try out their English.

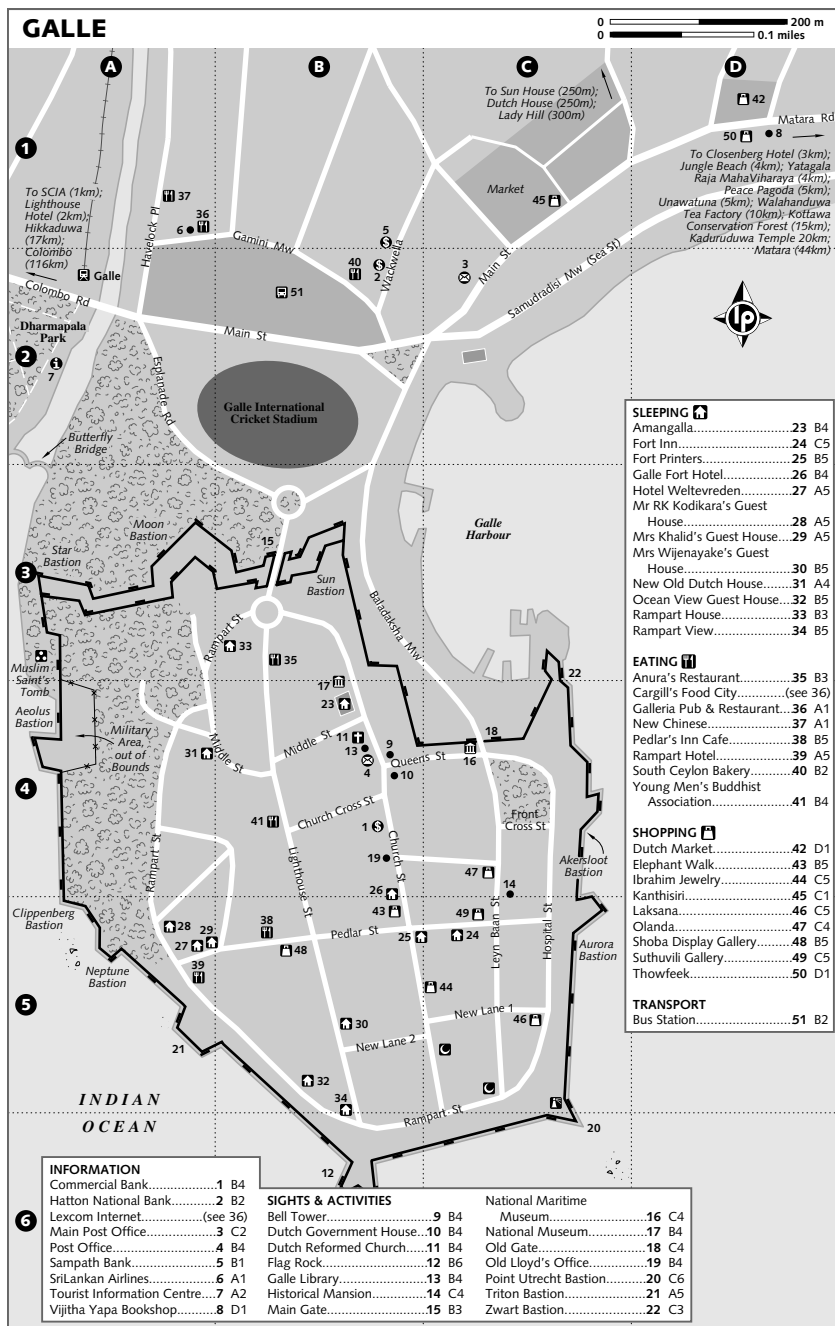
Hatton National Bank (Wackwella St) Has an international ATM.

Lexcom (☎ 438 5521; 4th fl, 26 P&J City, Gamini Mawatha; per min Rs 4) An Internet café in the same building as Cargills Food City, with good connections.

Main post office (Main St; per min Rs 4) Has a poste restante counter and an air-con Internet centre. It's near the market.

Post Office (Church St) A small branch office.

Sampath Bank (Wackwella St) Has an international ATM.



SriLankan Airlines (☎ 224 6942; 3rd fl, 16 Gamini Mawatha) You can book flights here; it also offers a full range of travel services.

Vijitha Yapa Bookshop (☎ 238 1181; 170 Main St) Small shop with novels, magazines, maps and guidebooks.

Dangers & Annoyances

Galle has legions of bamboozlers, fixers, flimflammers and other characters looking to pull a scam. Be prepared to fend off all sorts of fabricated stories, such as the Fort is closed, or there are no buses to Unawatuna, or predictably, tsunami tragedies. The usual aim is to set you up for the centuries-old gem scam, where you pay absurdly high prices for gemstones, or buy a fake, or are asked to buy gems and resell them for a profit in other countries.

Numerous touts hang around the train and bus stations. But you'll also find them in the Fort and along the walls. A firm 'I have no interest in anything you have to offer,' should do the trick – at least by the fourth repetition.

Sights

The Fort area is home to about 400 houses, churches, mosques, temples and many old commercial and government buildings. To really experience it, wander the walls and streets, making your own discoveries as you go. And don't neglect the new town: there are all manner of interesting shops and markets along Main St and Matara Rd.

THE FORT WALLS

One of the most pleasant strolls you can take in town is the circuit of the Fort walls at dusk. As the daytime heat fades away, you can walk almost the complete circuit of the Fort along the top of the wall in an easy hour or two. You'll be in the company of a few other travellers, lots of locals, shyly courting couples and plenty of kids diving into the protected waters. The views are great.

The **Main Gate** in the northern stretch of the wall is a comparatively recent addition – it was built by the British in 1873 to handle the heavier flow of traffic into the old town. This part of the wall, the most heavily fortified because it faced the land, was originally built with a moat by the Portuguese, and was then substantially enlarged by the Dutch, who in 1667 split the wall into separate Star, Moon and Sun Bastions.

Following the Fort wall clockwise you soon come to the **Old Gate**. The British coat of arms tops the entrance on the outer side. Inside, the letters VOC, standing for Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company), are inscribed in the stone with the date 1669, flanked by two lions and topped by a cock. Just beyond the gate is the **Zwart Bastion** (Black Bastion), thought to be Portuguese-built and the oldest of the Fort bastions.

The eastern section of the wall ends at the **Point Utrecht Bastion**, close to the powder magazine. The bastion is topped by an 18m-high lighthouse, which was built in 1938.

Flag Rock, at the end of the next stretch of wall, was once a Portuguese bastion. During the Dutch period approaching ships were signalled from the bastion, warning them of dangerous rocks – hence its name. Musket shots were fired from Pigeon Island, close to the rock, to further alert ships to the danger. On the **Triton Bastion** there used to be a windmill that drew up sea water, which was sprayed from carts to keep the dust down on the city streets. This part of the wall is a great place to be at sunset. There's a series of other bastions, as well as the tomb of a Muslim saint outside the wall, before you arrive back at your starting point.

INSIDE THE FORT

Most of the older buildings within the Fort date from the Dutch era. Many of the streets still bear their Dutch names, or are direct translations. The Dutch also built an intricate sewer system that was flushed out daily by the tide. With true colonial efficiency, they then bred musk rats in the sewers, which were exported for their musk oil. There's a large Muslim community living and working inside the Fort, particularly at the southern end of the walled town. Many shops close for a couple of hours around noon on Friday for prayer time.

The **Dutch Reformed Church** (Groote Kerk, Great Church; cnr Church & Middle Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm), near New Oriental Hotel, was originally built in 1640, but the present building dates from 1752 to 1755. Its floor is paved with grave-stones from the old Dutch cemetery (the oldest dates from 1662); the friendly caretaker will tell you where remains are held in the walls and under the floor. The organ from 1760 still sits in the building and the

impressive pulpit, made from calamander wood from Malaysia, is an interesting piece. Services are held each Sunday. The Dutch government has helped restore many parts, including the brilliant azure ceiling, to their original lustre.

The ultraposh hotel **Amangalla** (opposite) was built in 1684 to house the Dutch governor and officers. As **New Oriental Hotel** it was the lodging of choice for first-class P&O passengers travelling to and from Europe in the 19th century.

Near the Dutch Reformed Church are a **bell tower** (built in 1901) and the old **Dutch Government House**, now awaiting refurbishment. A slab over the doorway bears the date 1683 and Galle's ubiquitous cock symbol. Look for the **Old Lloyd's Office**, with its preserved ship arrival board, in the 19th-century commercial building just north of Galle Fort Hotel.

Entered via the Old Gate, the **National Maritime Museum** (admission Rs 65; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Wed) is inside the thick, solid walls of former storehouses. The dusty exhibits are poorly displayed, but have a certain kitsch appeal: fibreglass whales, pickled sea creatures, models of catamarans. There's an exhibit on the pilgrimages that fishermen from this area once made to Kataragama in the hope that they could increase their catches.

The **National Museum** (Church St; admission Rs 45; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Sun) is housed in an old Dutch building near the Main Gate. It has sad displays of traditional masks, information on the lace-making process, a few examples of the luxury items that once passed through the port, and religious items, including a relic casket.

The **Historical Mansion** (31-39 Leyn Baan St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Fri), in a well-restored Dutch house, is not really a museum, as many of the exhibits have price tags. It's a junkyard of colonial artefacts, including collections of antique typewriters, VOC china, spectacles and jewellery. There's also a gem shop.

Tours

Somebody's going to start offering walking tours of Galle and make a killing. Until then you can explore on your own.

Across from the train station you'll see a small building bearing the sign 'Tourist Information Centre'. It's official status

has been in doubt since the tsunami, but inside you'll find guides ready to offer their services and arrange tours of the region (for a price).

Sleeping

As testament to Galle's fast-rising star, there are several new boutique hotels inside the Fort. The Fort is also a bastion of character-filled guesthouses, where the real characters are often the owners. There are some nice upmarket places in the hills above town and along the coast in both directions.

FORT

Budget

Mrs Wijenayake's Guest House (Beach Haven; ☎ 223 4663; thalith@sri.lanka.net; 65 Lighthouse St; r Rs 600-3000; ☎) This is a modern home with 10 tidy rooms and a rooftop deck. The cheaper rooms are in the family home, and the larger, more expensive ones are upstairs at the back, with sitting areas on the balcony. The family is welcoming and still remembers the extended stay by Lonely Planet cofounder Tony Wheeler in 1977.

Hotel Weltevreden (☎ 222 2650; piyasen2@sltnet.lk; 104 Pedlar St; s/d Rs 600/750) A heritage-listed Dutch building, Hotel Weltevreden has characterful rooms surrounding a leafy central courtyard, and a pretty garden. The welcoming hosts are happy to make your meals.

Mr RK Kodikara's Guest House (☎ 222 2351; kodi.galle@penpal.lk; 29 Rampart St; r Rs 600-1100) This is a charming ramshackle mansion overlooking the ramparts. There are four clean, simple rooms downstairs, a suite upstairs, and two value-for-money rooms with views over the ramparts. If you're tall, Mr Kodikara (a real charmer) has made 2m-long beds with timber from the old roof.

Rampart House (☎ 223 4448; 3 Rampart St; r from Rs 500) This is a large 1970s home with a variety of rooms; the triples have a view of the ramparts. One room has a small study, another has a small balcony, bathtub and hot water, and there's a single downstairs. There isn't a sign outside; look for the street number on the fence post.

Rampart View (☎ 438 0566; rampartview@hotmail.com; 37 Rampart St; r Rs 1300-2000; ☎) This place, in a prime corner location, has some of Galle's best views of the ramparts. The five rooms are basic, although the pricier ones have air-con.

Midrange

Fort Inn (☎ 224 8094, 0777 394820; rasikafortinn@yahoo.com; 31 Pedlar St; r Rs 1500) The three rooms are smallish at this simple, family-run place. But the welcome is warm and you can observe the lively Pedlar St action from the large balcony out the front.

New Old Dutch House (☎ 438 5032; www.newolddutchhouse.lk; 21 Middle St; r US\$25-45; ☎) An old new place close to the sea where you can enjoy breakfast under papaw trees and listen to the ocean's waves break on the rocks below the ramparts. The eight suite rooms are modern, all-white and come with satellite TV and fridge. Cheaper rooms share bathrooms and are fan only.

Mrs Khalid's Guest House (Huize Bruisen de Zee; ☎ 223 4907; sabrik@sltnet.lk; 102 Pedlar St; r Rs 1500-2500) This tastefully restored Dutch house has a stylish sitting area. There are four hot-water rooms, two of which have balconies and sea views. The guesthouse is popular with nongovernmental organisation (NGO) workers, and Mrs Khalid's meals get good reviews.

Ocean View Guest House (☎ 224 2717; 80 Light-house St; r from Rs 2800; ☎) Two of the six comfortable and modern rooms here have views over the ramparts. The cheapest are fan only. There's a fine patio for relaxing. The guesthouse is entered from Rampart St.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Galle Fort Hotel (☎ 223 2870; www.galleforthotel.com; 28 Church St; r US\$150-250; ☎ ☎ ☎) Christopher Ong and Karl Steinberg have transformed a derelict 17th-century Dutch merchant's house into one of the finest boutique hotels in Sri Lanka. The 14 rooms are all different, with each room's design reflecting the part of the vast L-shaped structure it occupies. Some have two levels, others stretch across entire floors, and all are very comfortable. Linens are exquisite and there are antiques everywhere. What you won't find are distractions like TVs – rather, you can enjoy the large courtyard pool and the hospitality of the accommodating owners and smooth-as-silk staff. The restaurant serves excellent food and the bar is a stylish meeting place. The hotel also rents out several luxurious villas and has its own spa.

Top End

The Fort is regaining some of the upmarket cachet it enjoyed during the colonial era.

Fort Printers (☎ 224 7977; www.thefortprinters.com; 39 Pedlar St; ste US\$200-250; ☎ ☎ ☎) This 18th-century mansion was once used by printers, and you can still see the enormous wooden beams used to support the presses. There are five large suites here, each with an enormous tub and open bathroom. Luxuries include satellite TV, and vast and stylish public spaces.

Amangalla (☎ 223 3388; www.amanresorts.com; cnr Middle & Church Sts; r US\$450-650; ☎ ☎ ☎) There's nary a backpacker here now, although they once roamed the halls of the grand old New Oriental Hotel. The Amanresorts group has massively restored and rebuilt the property, paying homage to its 19th-century status as one of the most luxurious hotels in Asia. Several old rooms have been combined into each of the 27 large suites, which have traditional décor accented by period fittings. New areas past the gardens hold a huge pool and spa. Service is top end as well and, even if the hotel is not in your budget, you may at least want to hang out in the lobby for a drink.

OUT OF TOWN

Midrange

Lady Hill (☎ 224 4322; www.ladyhillsl.com; 29 Upper Dickson Rd; r from US\$60; ☎ ☎) This excellent-value hotel combines a 19th-century vicarage with good rooms and a modern wing of 12 spotless rooms with balconies and sweeping views of Galle. Situated in the quiet hills above the new town, five minutes away by three-wheeler, it's a cool, shaded and airy place. There's also a rooftop bar-restaurant, and all rooms include satellite TV and fridge.

Closenberg Hotel (☎ 222 4313; www.closenberghotel.com; 11 Closenbergh Rd; r incl breakfast US\$50-125; ☎) Built as a 19th-century P&O captain's residence in the heyday of British mercantile supremacy, this lovely bougainvillea-debedded hotel, east of the centre, sits out on a promontory with views over Galle beach and the Fort. Four rooms in the original building are filled with antiques and are a real step back in time, while the 16 rooms in a modern wing have balconies overlooking the beach. Breakfast is served on the wide, shady veranda.

Top End

Sun House (☎ 222 2624; www.thesunhouse.com; 18 Upper Dickson Rd; r from US\$150; 🍷 🍴) This gracious old villa, built in the 1860s by a Scottish spice merchant, has been renovated with superb taste and attention to detail. Located on the shady hill above the new town, the hotel has wonderful views towards the Fort on one side and the port on the other. There's a large, well-kept garden that's popular with hummingbirds. The food is excellent, and so is the hospitality.

Dutch House (Doomberg; ☎ 438 0275; www.thesunhouse.com/doornberg.html; 23 Upper Dickson Rd; ste US\$350; 🍷 🍴) A former residence of a Dutch admiral, this place was built in 1712 and has been beautifully restored with colonial furniture. The four suites each have a private garden, Fort views, a bathtub and a romantic net-covered four-poster bed. There's a pool, a croquet green, garden dining and more. Owned by the same people as Sun House (who also manage lovely Taprobane Island – see p144), Dutch House sits on the same shady hill as its sibling property.

Lighthouse Hotel (☎ 222 3744; www.jetwinghotels.com; Galle Rd; r US\$230-350; 🍷 🍴) Designed by Geoffrey Bawa, this 63-room resort has a prime position on the seafloor, 2km from town on the Colombo side. It beautifully blends Dutch colonial style with modern design. Check out the vast staircase sculpture *The Portuguese Arriving in Ceylon under a Cloud*, which features a Nero-like king at the top. The bar is very attractive, and the restaurant has great views.

Eating & Drinking

Many of the places to stay in Galle have good places to eat. As the scene heats up in the Fort, expect the options there to multiply. Nightlife remains very subdued.

FORT

Galle Fort Hotel (☎ 223 2870; 28 Church St; meals from US\$10) The restaurant at this hotel (p135) serves superb Asian fusion cuisine at tables set along the deep inner veranda. The dinner menu changes nightly. At other times there are baked goods, classic breakfast dishes, salads and sandwiches. The bar, overlooking Church St, feels like a colonial retreat. It's popular with the expat community.

Pedlar's Inn Cafe (☎ 077 314 1477; 92 Pedlar St; meals Rs 120-220) A groovy little place in an old

colonial house. Shakes, coffees and sandwiches can be enjoyed at long tables that are good for lounging.

Anura's Restaurant (☎ 222 4354; 9 Lighthouse St; mains Rs 220-300) This friendly, family-run hang-out serves local food and pizza from a tiny kitchen sheltered by beads.

Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA; Lighthouse St; meals Rs 50-100; 🍷 lunch) Housed in another mouldering colonial gem of a building, the YMBA is a local social club that has a wonderful café hidden away on the main floor. The superb curries are served at communal tables.

Mrs Khalid's Guest House (Huize Bruisen de Zee; ☎ 223 4907; 102 Pedlar St; meals from Rs 300; 🍷 dinner) Mrs Khalid's meals get the thumbs up from travellers; she'll cook Persian and Moroccan food as well as rice, curry and other local treats. Located at the guesthouse (p135), this restaurant does not permit alcohol. You must book in advance.

Rampart Hotel (☎ 074 380103; 31 Rampart St; mains from Rs 300) This ancient place has an ornately carved wooden staircase that would make redevelopers drool. But you won't drool over the long menu of dull Chinese, local and Western fare served in the cavernous dining room on the 2nd floor. Rather, come here for a drink and the amazing sunset views.

NEW TOWN

Galleria Pub & Restaurant (☎ 438 5555; 26 P&J City, Gamini Mawatha; meals Rs 200-400) Locals and travellers are attracted to this top-floor restaurant overlooking the cricket stadium and Fort. Pizza, pasta and sandwiches are the main items on the menu. You can enjoy your drinks under the air-con breeze inside or under the stars outside. On weekends there's music.

South Ceylon Bakery (☎ 223 4500; 6 Gamini Mawatha; mains Rs 50-200) Opposite the bus station, this open-air place serves casual fare in a tidy setting. The chicken soup is balm for the soul and there are many other fresh items on display.

New Chinese (☎ 222 3091; 14 Havelock Pl; mains Rs 120-250) A budget stand-by by the train tracks, this has very reasonable and filling Western, Chinese and Sri Lankan food.

Cargills Food City (☎ 223 3212; 3rd fl, 26 P&J City, Gamini Mawatha) This is a good spot to stock up on supplies for your journey through the South.

OUT OF TOWN

Lady Hill (☎ 224 4322; 29 Upper Dickson Rd; meals from Rs 600; 🍷 lunch & dinner) This charming hotel (p135) serves meals in the old vicarage, or up on the roof with its panoramic views. The food's also worth a second look.

Lighthouse Hotel (☎ 222 3744; Galle Rd; mains from US\$8) The Cinnamon Room restaurant at this resort (opposite) smells just like its namesake spice. It serves elaborate versions of local specialities in a stunning room with views of the surf crashing on the rocks. Book ahead.

Shopping

Galle's history makes it a natural spot for antique shopping, and you'll find several places inside the Fort. Besides the requisite gem shops, there's a growing number of boutique shops and galleries.

Olanda (☎ 223 4398; 30 Leyn Baan St) Dutch-period furniture and reproductions, including carved window and door lintels, are among the treasures you'll find here. Brass door hinges, Buddhist and Hindu statues, and ceramic door knobs (from Rs 150) will be easier to take home.

Laksana (30 Hospital St) Another place with a good selection of antiques and art works.

Elephant Walk (30 Church St) Fragrant spices and potions, fine paper goods and high-end collectable art works make this gem of a shop a browser's treat.

Shoba Display Gallery (☎ 222 4351; 67 Pedlar St) Handcrafted art works and other fine items – 80% made right in the shop – are the specialities here. It's a serene and beautiful place.

Suthuvili Gallery (Pedlar St) This small shop has simple displays of elaborate and beautiful polychromatic masks.

Ibrahim Jewellery (☎ 223 4253; Church St) A recommended jeweller that is several cuts above (ahem) the omnipresent gemstone vendors.

Kanthisiri (☎ 223 4361; 19-23 Main St) This is a huge and bustling fabric vendor. The cottons are top quality and come in a dizzying array of patterns. Six metres of fine silk is a mere Rs 3500 and, best of all, prices are fixed.

Thowfeek (☎ 238 4002; 108-110 Main St) Exceptionally cheap prices on name-brand clothes. The store is above a vendor selling cheap kitchenware.

South Ceylon Industrial Agency & Handicraft Factories (SCIA; ☎ 223 4304; 73A Kandewatta Rd) This place employs traditional craftspeople from

villages that specialise in the various handicrafts. You can watch jewellery, leatherwork, batik, lace and machine embroidery being created. And yes, gemstones are polished. Prices are negotiable. A three-wheeler from the station costs about Rs 100.

Look for the **Dutch Market** (Main St), which sells Galle's freshest fruits and vegetables under a 300-year-old columned roof. There are other fresh food markets along Main St, as well as a busy row of shops, many selling excellent merchandise at dirt-cheap prices. The entire area is worth a wander and a browse.

Getting There & Around

There are plenty of buses linking the towns along the coastal road. They leave from the bus station in the centre of Galle, opposite the cricket stadium. Major destinations include Colombo (regular/air-con Rs 63/130, three hours), Hikkaduwa (Rs 17, 30 minutes), Unawatuna (Rs 10, 10 minutes) and Matara (Rs 26, one hour).

There are express passenger trains to Colombo's Maradana station (2nd/3rd class Rs 108/58, three hours) from the town's vaguely art deco train station. Local trains serve Hikkaduwa (2nd/3rd class Rs 19/10, 30 minutes) and Matara (2nd/3rd class Rs 42/23, one to 1½ hours). There's a daily express to Kandy (2nd/3rd class Rs 217/115, 6½ hours).

A three-wheeler between Galle and anywhere in Unawatuna costs about Rs 200 to 250.

Although you won't need one for the Fort, a three-wheeler eases covering distances in the heat of the day, and makes it simple to navigate the town and nearby sights. At your accommodation arrange for one with an English-speaking driver or find your own (well, they'll find you). Expect to pay Rs 350 to 400 per hour – negotiable, of course.

AROUND GALLE

Huge and glistening, the **Peace Pagoda** was the gift of a Japanese Buddhist monk in 2005. It can be seen on a precipice at the east end of the bay. Take the first turn after the water ends as you drive east and follow a tree-lined track for about 1km. Along the way, you can visit isolated **Jungle Beach**, which can be reached down a steep path that begins by a huge tree (see Map p139).

The road heading north passes the **Kottawa Conservation Forest**, a 14-hectare wet evergreen forest about 15km northeast of Galle. There are walking tracks in the forest, but first get permission from the forest department office near the gate. Wear good walking shoes and trousers: the leeches are ferocious. Trees are identified with their botanical names, making this a good opportunity to get to know your Sri Lankan flora. In the small-sized park is a swimming spot fed by a waterfall.

On the way to the forest you can stop at **Walahanduwa Tea Factory** (☎ 438 1856; admission Rs 200; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat), a huge government-run complex that reeks of its produce. Closer to the park you'll find yet more tea factories tucked away in the hills. Some offer tastings.

About 10km east of Kottawa the 10m-high seated Buddha at **Kaduruwa Temple** (donation Rs 100) rises above the surrounding paddy fields.

Just 4km inland from Unawatuna the **Yatagala Raja Maha Viharaya** (donation Rs 100) is a quiet rock temple with a 9m reclining Buddha. The mural-covered walls are painted in the typical style of the Kandyan period. The site is reached by almost 100 steps; monks have been living here for at least 1500 years.

UNAWATUNA

☎ 091

Lying behind a crescent of beach lapped by turquoise waters, Unawatuna's setting is so perfect it could be a cliché. Easily the most popular beach town in the South, Unawatuna doesn't offer the same opportunities for surfing or diving as other parts of the coast but the waves are good for swimming and the sands are clean and white.

Unawatuna has a classic mellow traveller vibe and pretty much every bit of development is aimed at the mostly young visitors who flock here. With the coast road a kilometre away, Unawatuna isn't plagued by the same kinds of traffic irritations found at many other beach towns. It's quiet, which only adds to the allure. At night people wander the beach, sipping cold beers at the many simple beachside cafés.

In late 2004, however, this idyllic scene turned horrible. The tsunami caused major damage, washing away many of the guest-

houses and killing hundreds. Thanks to generous donations from foreigners who had vacationed here, as well as the efforts of teams of foreign volunteers, who were drawn by Unawatuna's natural allures, reconstruction happened faster here than any other place in Sri Lanka.

Unfortunately, the calamity was not turned into an opportunity to right some of the previous excesses of development. Business owners ignored plans for a setback from the water and rebuilt their places right on the sand. Some guesthouses sit on the high-tide mark. This, coupled with an unsightly pile of rocks dumped in the middle of the beach, detracts from the area's natural beauty.

Orientation & Information

Unawatuna is mostly strung along small Wella Dewala Rd and its tributaries, which lead off the main Galle-Matara coast road. Formal names for these little tracks are not commonly used.

For most goods and services you'll have to make the short trip to Galle, as there are only a couple of rudimentary huts selling bottled water and crisps. Many places offer Internet access; **Full Moon Resort** (☎ 223 3091; ☎ 9am-midnight) has the fastest connections in town (Rs 4 per minute).

Sights & Activities

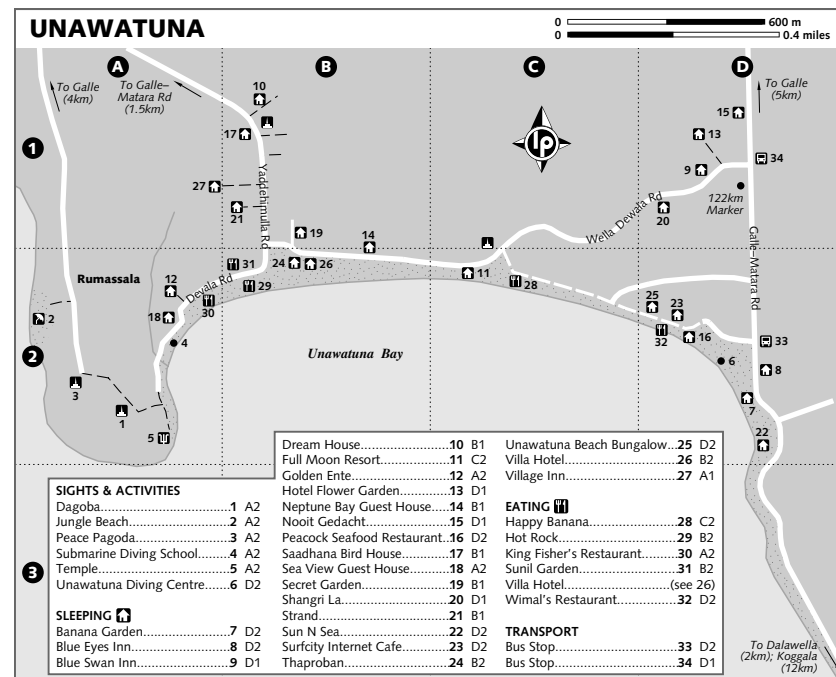
Most people spend a lot of their time lying around the beach or slouching in cafés. To actually see something requires activity.

WATER SPORTS

Unawatuna has active surf much of the year, making body-surfing a popular – and cheap – activity. All the regular cautions about rip tides and suchlike apply.

You can hire snorkelling equipment from some of the beachfront places (or borrow it from guesthouses) to explore a small reef that's a short distance from the west end of the beach.

There are several interesting wreck dives around Unawatuna, as well as reef and cave diving. The wreck dives include the *Lord Nelson*, a cargo ship wrecked about 10 years ago, which has a 15m-long cabin to explore. The 33m-long *Rangoon* is one hour south of Unawatuna. The following places run diving courses and trips.



Submarine Diving School (☎ 0777 196753) Rents out snorkelling gear for Rs 150 per hour or Rs 700 per day, and offers tours from Rs 2000. A Professional Association of Diving Instructors' (PADI) Open Water course costs US\$300, while one dive costs US\$30. A picture on the wall shows the many family members lost to the tsunami.

Unawatuna Diving Centre (☎ 0777 903430; www.unawatunadiving.com) Runs PADI courses from €300. Also rents out equipment and offers single dives. It has a good café on the water.

WALKING

You can take some interesting walks over the rocks rising from the west end of the beach or up the hill behind Yaddhehimulla Rd to catch views to the other side of the promontory. The rocky outcrop on the west end of the beach, **Rumassala**, is known for its protected medicinal herbs – legend has it that Hanuman dropped herbs carried from the Himalaya here. The temple right on the promontory is fenced off, but you can wander up to the **dagoba** (stupa) on top of the hill and on to the huge **Peace Pagoda** and isolated **Jungle Beach**; see p137 for more details.

Sleeping

Unawatuna is packed with budget places to stay. Modest midrange places are becoming more common; for top-end places and villas continue a bit east along the coast towards Koggala.

BUDGET

Stay a few metres away from the beach for big savings. Unless noted all the places below are cold-water only.

Peacock Seafood Restaurant (☎ 075 384998; r Rs 1000-1200) Right on the beach, this place has stunning views, making the six other-wise plain rooms good value.

Surfcity Internet Cafe (☎ 224 6305/6; www.surfcity1.net; r Rs 1200-1800) There are nine rooms above the namesake café. Three have hot water and all have places to sit outside and relax, although views are limited.

Village Inn (☎/fax 222 5375; r Rs 500-1000) This inn has an assortment of 13 rooms spread over three buildings. The picks of the bunch are the rooms with balconies or verandas. The owners have some harrowing tsunami stories and welcome guests gratefully.

Golden Ente (☎ 074 381228; Devala Rd; r Rs 700-1000) The nine neat and simple rooms in this three-storey block each have their own balcony or veranda. It's good value.

Saadhana Bird House (☎ 222 4953; birdhouse_unawatuna@hotmail.com; r Rs 1000-1500) Located away from the beach, this family-run place has pretty basic rooms, although personality is provided by the bug-eyed Bratz character sheets. The room on the top floor, with a rooftop lawn and peekaboo bathroom, can be your own bird house.

MIDRANGE

Rooms can vary greatly in quality at these places, and some are more worthy of their rates than others. Ask to see several.

Sun N Sea (☎ 228 3200; muhamam@stlnet.lk; r US\$25-100; ☎) The most stylish accommodation in Unawatuna, Sun N Sea has 10 rooms in a simple building right above the water. The views across the bay are superb. Furnishings are in easy-on-the-eye beiges, while the furniture is easy-on-the-backside rattan. A remnant of a door is displayed in the lobby – the charismatic owner Muharam Perera clung to it during the tsunami. There's also a decent restaurant.

Nooit Gedacht (☎ 222 3449; nooitged@stlnet.lk; Galle-Matara Rd; r Rs 2000-3000; ☎ ☎ ☎) Set back from Galle-Matara Rd, this 1735 Dutch colonial mansion has lovely gardens and a small pool, as well as lots of antique furniture, heavy timber panelling and loads of character. A four-bed family apartment, costing Rs 6000, is large and airy. The hotel is affiliated with a Dutch archaeology organisation doing work in Galle harbour.

Full Moon Resort (☎ 223 3091; r Rs 1200-2400; ☎ ☎) Built so close to the beach that some rooms have water at the door, the Full Moon has a range of 19 rooms, including some with air-con. The manager, Andrea Quintarelli, became a celebrity in Italy after his story of surviving the tsunami became a media sensation. The resort has a good restaurant.

Shangri La (☎ 438 4252; www.shangrila.lk; r from Rs 1500; ☎) A large compound set among coconut palms, the ever-growing Shangri La has four rooms and four cabanas. The personable owners have created a delightful atmosphere that's popular with NGO workers and long-term visitors. There's a spa with flotation tanks, a good bar with a pool table, and a sun deck.

Strand (☎ 222 4358; www.lanka.net/strand; r Rs 1000-5000; ☎) This is an attractive early-20th-century house set in large gardens. There are five charming rooms, and an apartment, ideal for families, that's furnished with atmospheric colonial-style furniture. One unit has air-con; the 'Nest' (Rs 3000) has a wrap-around veranda and is the pick of the bunch. The owner is a hoot.

Blue Swan Inn (☎ /fax 222 4691; Wella Dewala Rd; r Rs 1500-2000; ☎) A large, modern and spacious family home with four nice rooms. The best room has air-con, though the profusion of potted plants means that the breezes aren't great.

Thaproban (☎ 438 1722; r Rs 2800-4500; ☎ ☎) A three-storey place right on the beach, this has eight nicely furnished rooms, including four with air-con. Some rooms have good sea views and there's a small spa.

Villa Hotel (☎ 224 7253; thevilla@stl.lk; r ind breakfast Rs 6300; ☎ ☎) A three-storey hotel, set almost in the surf. All rooms have satellite TV, large fridge, attractive wooden floors and comfy loungers. There's also a popular beachside restaurant.

Neptune Bay Guest House (☎ 223 4014; www.neptunebayhotel.com; r Rs 1500-4000; ☎ ☎ ☎) The most ambitious hotel in the heart of Unawatuna, this imposing three-storey block has 24 large rooms with balconies and an elevated pool with views of the surf. More-expensive rooms have satellite TV and air-con.

Hotel Flower Garden (☎ 222 5286; www.hotelflowergarden.com; Wella Dewala Rd; r Rs 1500-3000; ☎ ☎) There are lots of flowers growing in the gardens of this popular place, located 300m from the beach. It has 25 rooms spread among several cabanas; more money buys you more room. The pool is quite large.

Banana Garden (☎ 438 1089; www.banana-garden.com; r Rs 1800-5000; ☎) The 10 rooms here vary greatly in quality. The cheaper ones only have cold water, but some of these have truly stunning views across the bay. More-expensive rooms come with hot water and air-con.

Sea View Guest House (☎ 222 4376; www.seaview.stl.lk; r Rs 2000-5000; ☎) One of Unawatuna's longest-running guesthouses, this has 16 comfortable rooms spread over one- and two-storey buildings. The grounds are spacious and rooms have balconies or patios; some rooms have air-con. During the high season, rates include half-board.

Unawatuna Beach Bungalow (☎ 222 4327; unawatunabeachbungalow@yahoo.com; r Rs 1100-3000; ☎) This place has a garden and eight well-kept rooms with beach-facing balconies. The singles are good value, and the doubles come with air-con.

Secret Garden (☎ 472 1007; www.secretgarden.lk; r US\$36-84) Past a prominent sign, this pleasant, old-style place is really only semi-secluded, although the garden is nice. It has four big bedrooms and two cute bungalows, and there's a domed meditation pagoda.

Dream House (☎ 438 1541; dreamhouse@libero.it; r ind breakfast US\$50) A delightful Italian-run guesthouse that has four spacious rooms with colonial ambience, four-poster beds, private balconies and a profusion of pillows in a panoply of colours. It's well back from the beach and very private.

Blue Eyes Inn (☎ 438 0445; Galle-Matara Rd; r Rs 1500-2500) At the east end of the beach, Blue Eyes is very well run. It has six large rooms, and the apartment is good for families. The food is recommended.

Eating & Drinking

Almost all places to stay provide meals or have restaurants. The best way to choose from the many places on the beach may be to simply stroll around and see what looks good. Most places are good for a drink – see which ones are in favour when you're there. Just don't expect much past midnight.

Sun N Sea (☎ 228 3200; meals from Rs 500) The dining area at this hotel (opposite) looks across the bay. Meals are a few cuts above the norm and focus on salads and seafood. The bar is a good place for a G&T.

Happy Banana (☎ 223 2776; meals Rs 300-1000) A fairly elaborate beachfront restaurant with plenty of appeal. The menu consist of a long list of seafood treats, and meals are well prepared. Ready to move beyond Lion Lager? Champagne is Rs 3000.

Full Moon Resort (☎ 223 3091; meals Rs 250-800) Thanks to the Italian owners, the standard of pasta is high at this café, located on the sand in front of the resort (opposite). It's a good place to take a new friend for dinner.

Sunil Garden (☎ 0777 472441; meals Rs 200-500) Set back from the beach, the Garden is busily re-growing after the tsunami. Sunil is a delight and he sets a festive mood while cooking up seafood, pasta and more. On many nights he leads live music. This is *the* place for a beer.

King Fisher's Restaurant (meals Rs 250-1000) It doesn't get much more simple than this thatched-roof place, right on the sand. The seafood, however, is more complex, including some excellent lobster dishes.

Wimal's Restaurant (☎ 077 301 6655; mains Rs 200-400) A simple seafood and sandwich place with great banana smoothies. It has a great location right above the surf and sand.

Hot Rock (☎ 224 2685; meals Rs 250-350) A classic bare-bones beachside seafood restaurant with delightful owners.

Villa Hotel (☎ 224 7253; mains Rs 200-1000) The food at this hotel (opposite) is good, and there's plenty to choose from as the menu is long even by the we'll-cook-anything-you'll-pay-for standard. The only downside to the prime beachfront location is the unsightly fence. Perhaps suggest the hotel removes it.

Getting There & Away

Coming by bus from Galle (Rs 10, 10 minutes) you can get off at the small road that leads into town, or get off at the next stop, where the ocean meets the main road, and walk in along the beach. A three-wheeler to or from Galle costs Rs 200 to 250. A taxi from Unawatuna to Bandaranaika International Airport costs from Rs 3500 and can take up to five hours, depending on traffic through Colombo.

UNAWATUNA TO KOGGALA

☎ 091

Beyond Unawatuna the road runs close to the coast through Dalawella, Koggala and on to Ahangama and beyond. There are numerous beautiful stretches of beach and picturesque coves in this area, as well as a number of attractive, secluded places to stay (including many renowned villas).

Along this part of the coast you will see stilt fishermen if the tides are running right (often around 6am to 8.30am, and 4pm to 6pm). Each fisherman has a pole firmly embedded in the sea bottom, close to the shore. When the sea and fish are flowing in the right direction the fishermen perch on their poles and cast their lines. Stilt positions are passed down from father to son and are highly coveted. The fishermen expect payment if you photograph them.

Sights & Activities

Just before Koggala there's a **WWII airstrip**. Beside the airstrip a small road turns inland, past a **Free Trade Zone**. The large **Koggala Lake**, next to the road, is alive with birdlife and dotted with islands, one of which features a Buddhist temple that attracts many visitors on *poya* (full moon) days. You can take a catamaran ride on the lake for Rs 400 per person per hour.

A visit to the lake's **Ananda spice garden** (☎ 228 3805; ☞ 7am-7pm) will provide you with the chance to buy all manner of home remedies and to see how cinnamon is grown. The catamaran and spice garden are managed by the same people. The return trip (including waiting time) by three-wheeler from Unawatuna to the spice garden should cost Rs 500.

Near the beachside behemoth called Hotel Horizon and the 113km marker, west of Koggala, is the **Martin Wickramasinghe Folk Art Museum** (admission Rs 50; ☞ 9am-5pm), set back from the road. It includes the house where this respected Sinhalese author was born. The exhibits are interesting and well displayed, with information in English and Sinhala. Among them is a good section on dance (including costumes and instruments), puppets, *kolam* (masked dance-drama) masks, kitchen utensils and carriages (including one to be pulled by an elephant). The bookshop sells the author's works, many of which deal with local culture.

Just east of Koggala the **Kataluwa Purwarama temple** feels like the temple time forgot. Dating from the 13th century, it has some recently restored murals. A friendly monk will open the building and explain the murals, if you ask. Some of the Jataka tales (episodes from the Buddha's lives) painted here are said to be 200 years old. The turn-off to the temple is in Kataluwa – you'll see the signs on the inland side of the road. Continue a couple of kilometres inland and ask for directions.

Sleeping & Eating

Sri Gemunu Guest House (☎ 228 3202; www.sri-gemunu.com; r incl half-board Rs 3200-4400; ☞) This slightly stylish place has 21 rooms in new and old two- and three-storey blocks. There's a pleasant garden and a small beach. Cheaper rooms are fan only, while more expensive ones have satellite TV and air-con.

Wijaya Beach Cottage (☎ 228 3610; lizinsrilanka@yahoo.co.uk; r incl breakfast Rs 1800-2200) A few hundred metres on from the Sri Gemunu, this place has 18 pleasant rooms and cabanas. Enjoy the sandy, palm tree-shaded garden, swim at the small beach or chill on the terrace with the friendly owners.

Apa Villa (☎ 438 1411; www.villa-srilanka.com; ste US\$195-660; ☞ ☑ ☒) This glamorous compound has seven luxurious suites in a spacious and relaxed complex of villas right on the beach. The design is minimalist yet also posh. The pool runs right out to the private beach, and the library is well-stocked with guidebooks, due to the owner's association with a Singapore publisher.

Some of the walled beachside compounds on the road east of Unawatuna are rental villas where you and your best friends can enjoy a luxurious holiday in chic surroundings with your own staff to serve you. Some are so large that you'll need a lot of best friends. **Villa-srilanka.com** (☎ 228 2372; www.villa-srilanka.com) is a Galle-based management company that represents many of the villas. Although not cheap, many can become reasonable deals with several couples.

Frequent buses stop along the main road.

AHANGAMA & MIDIGAMA

☎ 091

This is Sri Lanka's surfers' paradise, known for its powerful left break. For the best surfing in Ahangama, head straight out from Kabalana Beach Hotel; in Midigama, look for the breaks near the 139km marker. The whole area is popular with surfers as it's cheap to stay here and the breaks are never crowded. But apart from surfing, the area doesn't have wide appeal; the beaches can be pretty thin and there's no real concentration of places that appeal to travellers.

Note that the water covers lots of rocks, coral and other hazards. Also, besides a few guesthouses offering battered boards for rent (Rs 450 to 600 per day), there are no places selling surf gear or offering repairs – you'll have to go to Hikkaduwa.

One worthwhile stop on this stretch of coast is the **Sea Turtle Farm & Hatchery** (☎ 077 836115; admission Rs 150; ☞ 7am-7pm), midway between the 128km and 129km posts, where you can see baby turtles that are ready for release into the ocean here. For a description of turtle hatcheries, see p121.

Sleeping & Eating

AHANGAMA

Many surfers stay in Ahangama and ride the waves in Midigama.

Ahangama Easy Beach (☎ 228 2028; easyb@sltnet.lk; r Rs 2100-3800; ☞) A Norwegian-run place close to a couple of surfing points, this has views of the beach, eight bright and beachy rooms, Italian coffee and a good restaurant. The best rooms are in cabanas with air-con. Snorkelling gear, boogie boards and surfboards may be rented.

Kabalana Beach Hotel (☎ 223 6365; www.kabalanahotel.com; s/d US\$40/45; ☞ ☑) One of the best surf breaks is right in front of this attractive 23-room hotel. Antiques mix with amenities such as satellite TVs in the hotel's large rooms; ask for one with a view. There's not much beach but that makes it all the more easy to start paddling out on one of the rental boards.

Villa Gaetano (☎ 228 3968; vgaetano@sltnet.lk; r US\$8-19; ☞ ☑) Just after the 137km post, this place is right on the beach. The rooms are large and the four rooms upstairs at the front have balconies and great views. Some rooms have air-con and hot water. Surfboards are available.

Surfers Dream (☎ 077 551614; r Rs 1200) If a surfer dreams of a cheap, clean bed then this place, run by the owners of Villa Gaetano, is a dream come true. The house, set back from the road, has four basic rooms featuring surfing décor.

Hotel Club Lanka (☎ 228 3296; fax 228 3361; r US\$35-45; ☞ ☑) On the beach, this no-frills resort has 32 simple but stylish rooms; eight have air-con, and most have ocean views. There's a large pool and grassy gardens, a nice beach and stilt fishermen out the front.

MIDIGAMA

There are a couple of cheap guesthouses at the prime surfing break at the 139km marker, but not much else. The tsunami washed much away.

Jayaniki Surf Dreams (☎ 077 239955; r Rs 530) Seven rooms share bathrooms at this family-run joint right on the water. It is as basic as you can get. Rental surfboards are available.

Hot Tuna (☎ 228 3411; r with/without bathroom Rs 500/400) This is a friendly family home with slightly dark but reasonable rooms.

Villa Samsara (☎ 225 1144; members.aon.at/samsara; r per person incl full board €77) At the 140km

marker, this is a walled country house. Austrian-owned, it has four spotless rooms furnished in colonial style. There's a large tranquil sitting area, and a palm-studded lawn that fronts the beach. Ring in advance as it's not set up for drop-ins.

Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses along the southern coastal road connecting Ahangama and Midigama with other towns between Galle and Matara, and points beyond. The bus from Galle costs Rs 15 to Midigama. Many Colombo-Matara trains stop at Ahangama. Only a few local trains stop at Midigama.

WELIGAMA

☎ 041

About 30km east of Galle, the town of Weligama (which means 'Sandy Village') has a fine sandy sweep of bay – just as its name suggests. It's a busy fishing town, and you could easily spend a day wandering around, getting a feel for local life. The commercial area is small but vibrant; the fish stalls are both smelly and interesting.

Close to the shore – so close you can walk out to it at low tide – is a tiny island known as Taprobane. It looks like an ideal artist's or writer's retreat, which indeed it once was: novelist Paul Bowles wrote *The Spider's House* here in the 1950s. Even better, the island was once owned by the French Count de Maunay-Talvande. You can stay here (p144).

The road divides to go through Weligama, with one branch running along the coast, and the other running parallel through the town centre, a short distance inland. To reach the centre from the coast road, turn inland 500m east of Taprobane. The bus and train stations are in the middle of town.

Sights & Activities

Scenic though the bay is, Weligama beach is a bit shabby and not geared for sunbathers. It's primarily a fishing village, with **catamarans** lining the western end of the bay. You can organise an hour-long ride in one – expect to pay Rs 2000 per catamaran – by approaching a fisherman along the beach. Fishermen will also take you out in motorboats to see sharks and dolphins. This four-hour trip costs about Rs 5000 per person, but that's highly negotiable.

Snorkelling at Weligama is good, or you can scuba dive. **Bavarian Divers** (☎ 225 2708; www.cbq.de/bavariandivers), in Bay Beach Hotel, runs PADI courses (US\$350) as well as excursions such as wreck dives. These can include the sunken yacht that belonged to the shop's amiable owner.

Turning inland west of the centre takes you to **Kustaraja**, a large rock-carved figure in a peaceful small park. The statue, said to date from the 8th century, may represent a king who was mysteriously cured of leprosy, or it may represent Avalokitesvara, the most beloved of the Bodhisattvas (the divine beings who seek to help others reach enlightenment).

Weligama is known for its **lacework**, and stalls are located on the main road along the coast. You can spend anything from Rs 100 for a small lace doily to Rs 5000 for a large, finely worked tablecloth.

Sleeping & Eating

Taprobane Island (☎ in Galle 091-222 2624; www.taprobaneisland.com; island US\$1000; 🏠) Your own island, and this one comes with a staff of six and an infinity swimming pool! There are five large bedrooms here, so five couples could bring the rate closer to earth (and that's before you bargain). Run by the same people who manage the posh Sun House in Galle, this is a fantasy property with stunning views, balconies and verandas galore, antiques and more. You shuttle to shore via boat, but most guests never leave (until check-out time that is).

Bay Beach Hotel (☎ 225 0201; www.baybeachhotel.com; r Rs 3800; 🏠 📺) On the Galle end of the bay, this has an attractive swimming pool and extensive gardens. The 40 standard rooms are plain but have good views of the fishing boats out the front.

Weligama Bay Inn (☎ 225 0299; 247 New Matara Rd; r incl breakfast US\$26-36; 🏠) This is a simple and modern place near Taprobane Island. It has a wide veranda and pleasant green gardens; some rooms have air-con and views across the busy road to the sea.

Samaru Beach House (☎ 225 1417; 544 New Matara Rd; r Rs 800-1200) Located at about the middle of the bay, this eight-room place is close to the beach. The better rooms have a veranda. Bikes and surfboards may be rented; the latter can be used right out the front.

Neptune Guest House (☎ 225 0803; r Rs 1500-4500; 🏠) There's a range of units at this attractive place right on the beach. Older units are fan only while newer rooms are in two-storey units with views. The bar-restaurant is a cut above average and has an elaborate nautical theme, complete with lots of brass and polished wood. Have a few cold ones and make believe you're a salty pirate.

Crystal Villa (☎ 225 0635; www.holidays-srilanka.com; Matara Rd; r US\$50-60, bungalows US\$60-70, all incl half-board; 🏠 📺) This is a modern place facing the sea. Set on spacious grounds with a huge pool, it has four rooms and two bungalows with fairly basic furnishings.

Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses to Galle (Rs 15, one hour) and Matara (Rs 19, 30 minutes). Weligama is on the Colombo-Matara train line; destinations include Colombo (2nd/3rd class Rs 136/73, four hours), Galle (2nd/3rd class Rs 29/16, one hour) and Matara (2nd/3rd class Rs 40/18, 30 minutes).

MIRISSA

☎ 041

Sleepy Mirissa, 4km southeast of Weligama on the Matara road, has a headland dividing its small fishing harbour from a beautiful curve of sandy beach with calm, clear waters. It's a low-key, peaceful spot that was once the preserve of backpackers but is now becoming more popular as travellers seek out quieter alternatives to Unawatuna and Hikkaduwa. The tsunami caused much damage along the coast here.

Most of the places to stay are on the beach. You'll need to go to Matara for most services, although there are Internet and phone places, and small markets near the 149km marker.

Sights & Activities

The water at Mirissa is clear and excellent for snorkelling. The best stretch is at the west end of the bay, along the jagged coastline, where there are many fish. The south side of the bay yields flat-bottom coral and, sometimes, sea turtles. Surfing is also good at the west end of the bay. Ask your guesthouse or hotel if it has gear that you can rent.

The rocky outcrop to the east of the bay, Parrot Rock, is the perfect place to watch the sunset, and it's also a popular fishing spot.

There are pleasant walks around Mirissa. One heads up a steep series of steps from the main road to the small **Kandavahari temple**, while the headland is a good spot to view Weligama Bay. About 6km inland there's a **snake farm** with an Ayurvedic practitioner. Ask your guesthouse how to get there.

Some guesthouses organise boat trips on a lake that's about 2km inland.

Sleeping & Eating

Meals are available at all of these places. Unless noted, rooms only have cold water. Look for signs along the main road.

Villa Sea View (☎ 077 604 6653; r Rs 1000-1500) The seven rooms at this hillside place are pretty simple, but what separates them are the views. The Rs 1500 rooms have idyllic views over palm trees to the bay below (though note that some of these rooms bake in the morning sun). There's a veranda and a nice garden swing.

Calm Rest (☎ /fax 225 2546; Suranda Rd; r/cabanas incl breakfast Rs 1500/2500) The place is exactly as it's named. Four good-quality cabanas and seven rooms are set in a peaceful and immaculate garden about 300m from the beach. Fans are available on request.

Ocean Moon (☎ 225 2328; r/cabanas Rs 550/1100) A very simple place that has nine cabanas with verandas set on a lawn leading to the beach. The three rooms are inside the family home.

Mirissa Beach Inn (☎ 225 0410; beachinn@sltnet.lk; r Rs 900-1400) This inn has bungalows close to the beach, as well as rooms in a three-storey building – you can just about pick the coconuts from the balcony. The newer upstairs rooms are best.

Amarasinghe's (☎ 225 1204; chana7@sltnet.lk; r Rs 300-1500) This pleasant, lush spot is away from the guesthouse hub on the beach. There are 10 rooms; the cheapest share bathrooms. Three bungalows are spacious and comfortable and have fridges. Herbs are labelled in the garden and the meals are superb. It's signposted from the main road; a three-wheeler from the turn-off costs Rs 40.

Mount Garden (☎ 225 1079; r Rs 500-1400; 🏠 📺) This superfriendly family home, set back from the beach, has 10 rooms; the better

ones have air-con and hot water. It's signposted on an inland road near the eastern end of Mirissa.

Giragala Village (☎ 225 0496; nissanka.g@lycosmail.com; r €17-20) Almost opposite the road heading to Mount Garden, this simple place has a stunning setting that fronts Parrot Rock. The 17 rooms (only some have hot water) look onto the large, palm tree-shaded grounds. Grab a hammock and enjoy the view.

Getting There & Away

The bus fare from Weligama is Rs 10; a three-wheeler costs Rs 200. From Matara the bus far is Rs 12; a three-wheeler costs Rs 300. If you're heading to Colombo it's better to catch a bus to Matara and change, as many buses will be full by the time they pass through Mirissa.

MATARA

☎ 041 / pop 44,000

Matara, 160km from Colombo, is a busy, sprawling commercial town. The main attractions are its ramparts and well-preserved Dutch fort. Beaches in Matara proper are nothing special, but the one in Polhena, 3km towards Colombo, is clean, white and inviting. Polhena has a good coral reef that you can snorkel to, and there's a surfing point. Swimming in the Nilwala Ganga (Nilwala River) is not recommended; crocodiles are active and hungry.

The tsunami caused much damage locally; Polhena was hit hard, as was the old town inside the ramparts.

Orientation & Information

Matara is bisected by the Nilwala Ganga. Shops are located along Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha, and Old Tangalla and New Tangalla Rds.

Cargills Food City (☎ 222 9815) Near Bandaranayaka Mawatha, this place has traveller supplies and a pharmacy.

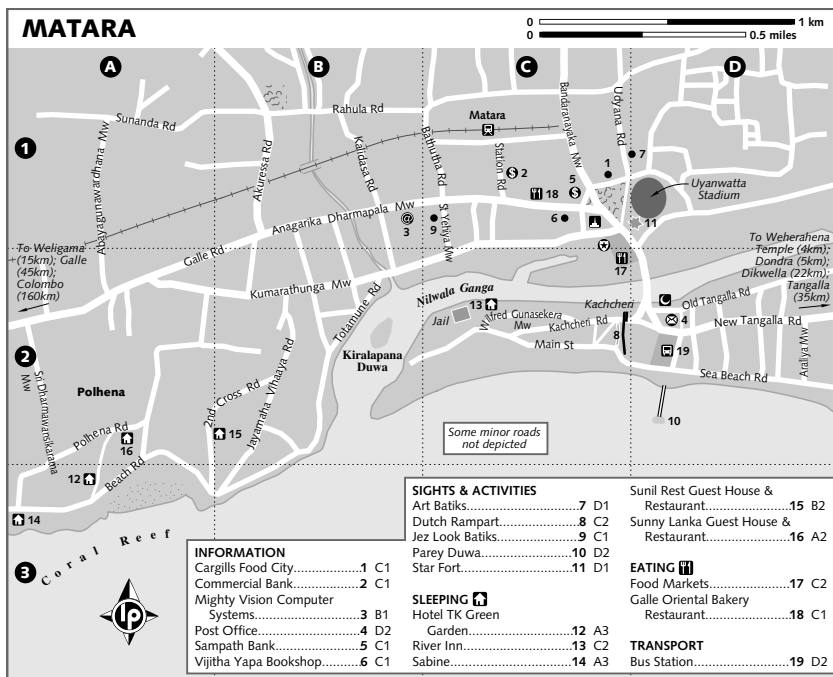
Commercial Bank (Station Rd) Has an international ATM.

Mighty Vision Computer Systems (☎ 222 0330; 171 Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha; per hour Rs 180) Offers Internet facilities.

Post office (New Tangalla Rd) Near the bus station.

Sampath Bank (Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha) Has an international ATM.

Vijitha Yapa Bookshop (25A 1/1 Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha) Good selection of novels, magazines, maps and guidebooks.



Sights

Seeing all Matara has to offer shouldn't take more than an hour or two. A pedestrian bridge near the bus station leads to a small island, **Parey Dewa** (Rock in Water), which is home to a tiny Buddhist temple. Four monks live out here and you can stop by and say hello.

The smallish **Dutch rampart** occupies the promontory separating the Nilwala Ganga from the sea. Built in the 18th century to protect the VOC's *kachcheri* (administrative office), its structure is a little peculiar – it was originally meant to be a fort, but cost-cutting dictated otherwise. Inside the rampart are quiet vestiges of old Matara. Wander the few streets and you'll see the odd colonial gem – though its real charm is that it is quieter than modern Matara.

The **Star Fort** (☎ 10am–5pm), about 350m from the main rampart gate, was built by the Dutch to compensate for deficiencies in the rampart. However, it's so small it could only have protected a handful of bureaucrats. The date of construction (1765) is embossed over the main gate, along with

the VOC company insignia and the coat of arms of the governor of the day. Look for the two carved lions that guard the entrance gates. You can also spot the slots that once secured the drawbridge beams.

The fort, built for 12 large cannons, is surrounded by a stagnant moat. Inside there's a dusty model replica of the site, a well, and the remains of the original quarters. There are also two eerie prisoners' quarters. For a tip, a guide will show you around the fort (this takes five minutes). The Star Fort was used as an administrative building and was never attacked. It was the last major defensive construction by the VOC in Sri Lanka.

Sleeping

MATARA

Matara has several places to stay, but most are not very nice.

River Inn (☎ 222 2215; 96/1 Wilfred Gunasekera Mawatha; s/d from Rs 440/660) There are eight tidy cold-water rooms in this three-storey building in the old town. Rooms upstairs have river views. It's peaceful and shady, and you'd never know you were next to the city jail.

POLHENA

Many travellers stay in Polhena, about 3km southwest of the centre. Most places serve meals and have cold water and fans. Note that the area is a warren of small tracks, so you may need to ask for directions. A three-wheeler from Matara costs Rs 200.

Sabine (☎ 222 7951; Beach Rd; r Rs 500) In a prime spot right at the surf, this small place has three rooms in bungalows, as well as hammocks and cheap eats. The charmer of an owner organises snorkelling tours and other trips.

Hotel TK Green Garden (☎ 222 2603; 116/1 Beach Rd; s/d from Rs 660/990) This hotel has 11 neat and tidy rooms and a large grassy garden. Rooms in the two-storey block have balconies or patios.

Sunny Lanka Guest House & Restaurant (☎ 222 3504; 93 Polhena Rd; s/d Rs 400/440) This is a friendly, relaxed place set in small compound. The six rooms are basic and clean. You can rent scuba-diving and snorkelling gear, as well as bicycles.

Sunil Rest Guest House & Restaurant (☎ 222 1983; 16/3A Second Cross Rd; r Rs 400–1000) The delightful family running this place has extended its empire over several buildings. Cheaper rooms are in the buildings (one quite tall!) set back from the beach down a track. Two other buildings are right at the surf. You can organise diving trips and gear rental here.

Eating

Just north of the bridge on the main road you'll see food markets and several fruit vendors with gorgeous displays of produce. Otherwise, dining choices are limited to some simple joints along the main road.

Galle Oriental Bakery Restaurant (41 Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha; mains from Rs 50) The best option in the centre is a classic old place with a carved wooden interior and display cases bulging with baked and savoury treats. The soups and curries are good.

Shopping

Matara has two places that are a dream come true for anyone interested in batik. **Jez Look Batiks** (☎ 222 2142; 12 St Yehiya Mawatha) has large displays and offers lessons. **Art Batiks** (☎ 222 4488; 58/6 Udyana Rd) is run by an older couple who have dedicated a good part of their house to batik displays. Both places sell fabric at good prices.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The Matara bus station is a vast multilevel place. Look for tiny destination signs over the various queuing pens. As Matara is a regional transport hub, service is frequent in all directions. The following are some of the major destinations.

Amapara Rs 168, eight hours.

Badulla Rs 135, 5½ hours.

Colombo Regular/air-con Rs 84/170, four to five hours.

Galle Rs 26, two hours.

Ratnapura Rs 105, 4½ hours.

Tangalla Rs 23, 1½ to two hours.

TRAIN

Matara's **train station** (☎ 222 2271) is the end of the coastal railway line. Destinations include Galle (2nd/3rd class Rs 42/23, one to 1½ hours) and Colombo (1st/2nd/3rd class Rs 270/148/79, four hours), as well as Vavuniya (for Anuradhapura; 2nd/3rd class Rs 372/194, 10 hours) and Kandy (2nd/3rd class Rs 255/135, seven hours).

MATARA TO TANGALLA

There are several other places of interest just off the 35km of road from Matara to Tangalla, including two superb examples of what one visitor labelled 'neo-Buddhist kitsch'. Another impressive sight is the Ruhuna University campus at Meddawatte, on the main road a few kilometres east of Matara.

Overall, this stretch of road is in good shape, and verdant inland views alternate with stretches of coast. Dikwella is a small market town midway along the route.

Sights & Activities

WEHERAHEANA TEMPLE

Just as you leave the outskirts of Matara, a turn inland will take you to this gaudy **temple** (admission by donation), where an artificial cave is decorated with about 200 comic-book-like scenes from the Buddha's life. There's also a huge Buddha statue.

At the time of the late November or early December *pooya*, a *perahera* (procession) of dancers and elephants is held at the temple to celebrate the anniversary of its founding. Foreigners should pay Rs 1000 to 1500 for tickets.

You can get here from Matara on bus 349; a three-wheeler will charge Rs 300 from Matara's bus station.

DONDRA

About 5km southeast of Matara you come to the town of Dondra. Travel south from the main road for 1.2km and you'll reach the lighthouse at the southernmost point of Sri Lanka. There are good views from here, and a humdrum café nearby.

Buses from Matara will drop you in the centre of Dondra. From here you can three-wheel it or walk to the lighthouse.

WEWURUKANNALA VIHARA

If the Weherahena Temple is 'Marvel Comics meets Lord Buddha', then here it's Walt Disney who runs into him. At the town of Dikwella, 22km from Matara, a road turns inland towards Beliatta. About 1.5km along you come to a 50m-high seated Buddha figure – the largest in Sri Lanka.

The temple (admission Rs 50) has three parts. The oldest is about 250 years old but is of no particular interest. The next part, a real hall of horrors, has life-sized models of demons and sinners shown in gory detail. Punishments include being dunked in boiling cauldrons, sawn in half, disembowelled and so on. Finally there's the gigantic seated figure, which was constructed in the 1960s. As if to prove that it really is as high as an eight-storey building, what should be right behind it but an eight-storey building? You can climb up inside and peer right into the Buddha's head. The walls of the backing building have been painted with hundreds of scenes of events in the Buddha's lives. There's also an interesting clock in the adjoining building, made by a prisoner over 70 years ago.

Puja (offerings or prayers) is held every morning and evening. There's usually a resident monk here to show you around. Tips are appreciated.

You can reach the temple on any Matara-Tangalla bus that goes via Beliatta. The fare from either town is Rs 15.

HO-O-MANIYA BLOWHOLE

About 6km northeast of Dikwella, near the 186km post, a road heads off for 1km to the (sometimes) spectacular Ho-o-maniya blowhole. During the southwest monsoon (June is the best time) high seas can force water 23m up through a natural chimney in the rocks, then up to 18m in the air. At other times the blowhole is disappointing.

Sleeping & Eating

There are places to stay in all categories scattered along this stretch of coast. Some are quite nice, and are isolated from the main road. Look for signs and watch the kilometre markers as you go; the following places are listed in the order you will reach them when travelling to Tangalla.

Dickwella Village Resort (☎ 041-225 5271; www.dickwellavillage.net; r incl half-board US\$70-120; ♿ ♿ ♿) A spectacularly sited resort on a headland on the Matara side of Dikwella. The 67 comfortably stylish rooms have been entirely rebuilt since the tsunami and feature terraces and stunning sea views. This place has buckets more personality than many large resorts – there's even a candlelit guitar pavilion and lots of spa and healing services. It's near the 178km marker.

Cloughton (☎ 041-225 5087; www.srilankayellowpages.com/cloughton; r incl half-board US\$90-120; ♿ ♿ ♿) This beautiful villa sits on a knoll and has a distinctly Mediterranean flavour. The garden runs down to a secluded beach and there's a fine swimming pool with sweeping views. The décor combines black and white, which contrasts nicely with the lush foliage and azure waters beyond. One of the three rooms has air-con, and the bathrooms are large with great tubs. You can rent out the entire property. The turn-off is 500m east of the 184km marker.

Nugaya Restaurant (☎ 041-225 5087; meals Rs 150-500) Down the hill a little from the Cloughton and owned by the same people, this restaurant has good views and serves well-prepared seafood dishes.

Kadolana Beach Resort (☎ 041-225 6140; r Rs 2000-3300; ♿) The eight large rooms at this mellow place are right on the beach. Views from the two-storey block are great, with the Ho-o-maniya blowhole in the distance. There's a small café. The turn-off is the same as for Cloughton.

Manahara Beach Cottage & Cabanas (☎ /fax 047-224 0585; r incl half-board US\$35-45; ♿ ♿) Just west of the 189km post and about 6km west of Tangalla, this has 10 spacious cabanas and rooms. There's also a large leafy garden, a big pool and beach frontage. It's a quiet spot and makes a good getaway.

Surya Garden (☎ 077 147818; srilankas@tiscalinet.lk; r €30-35) Sri Lankan charm meets Italian flair at this personable little place, set 100m back from the beach. The three cabanas

have large, open bathrooms with plants, hot water and large sinks. Not surprisingly, the menu features a lot of very tasty pastas. The turn-off is at the 189km marker.

Eva Lanka (☎ 047-224 0940; www.eva.lk; s/d chalets incl half-board US\$120/132; ♿ ♿ ♿) This Italian-owned hotel has 29 stylish rooms and chalets in a beautiful setting on the beach. There are three swimming pools throughout the lush multilevel garden, a water slide, sports, games and a restaurant, which includes a pizzeria. There are elaborate shell mosaics made by the owner's mother throughout the property, and the hotel is wheelchair-friendly. The turn-off to the steep entrance is at the 191km marker.

Amanwella (☎ 047-224 1333; www.amanresorts.com; ste from US\$550; ♿ ♿ ♿) Easily the most luxurious resort in Sri Lanka, the Amanwella opened in 2005. Each of the 30 suites has its own private pool and is comfortable to such an extent that you may need to be prised out on check-out day. The design is dramatic; the open-air bathrooms are all natural stone. All of the units have ocean views, and some are right on the beach. Service is superb, and the food and beverages are as you'd expect. The resort entrance is near the 193km marker.

TANGALLA

☎ 047

Situated 195km from Colombo, Tangalla (also spelt Tangalle, but usually pronounced *ten-gol*) is one of the nicest spots along the coast, particularly if you just want somewhere to relax and soak up the sun. The town itself is an easy-going place with some reminders of Dutch days.

From Tangalla the white sands of Medaketiya Beach stretch for more than 3km northeast. Heading southwest there is a whole series of smaller bays and beaches. From a distance it looks idyllic, but up close it is another story. Tangalla suffered grievously from the tsunami. Thousands died in the area and hundreds of homes were destroyed, especially going northeast from the Kirama Oya. Scores of oceanfront guesthouses (with owners, guests and staff) were washed away along Medaketiya Beach. Rebuilding has been very slow, although at some point more places to stay should reappear along this gorgeous beach. In the meantime, everybody has their own tale of loss.

Information

Shopping is fairly limited. The main post office is west of the Rest House and there is an agency post office opposite the main bus station. **Hatton National Bank** (Main Rd) has an international ATM. There are Internet and phone places on Main Rd near the bus station.

Sights & Activities

There are some reminders of the colonial era on the knoll just south of the centre. The shady **Rest House** was once home for the Dutch administrators. It's one of the oldest resthouses in the country, originally built (as a plate on the front steps indicates) in 1774. As you round the head, note the many large boats now permanently stranded high above the surf – this will give an idea of how far inland the tsunami came here.

Out by Matara Rd, a **pond** covered with lotus flowers offers a serene respite from development.

The bay just on the town side of Tangalla Bay Hotel is probably the most sheltered beach, although right beside the Rest House there is a tiny bay with a swimming area that is shallow and generally calm. There are some basic changing rooms on the grass, and it's popular with snorkellers. There is a picturesque and fairly secluded bay by Palm Paradise Cabanas, near the village of Goyambokka. Medaketiya Beach is beautiful but it drops off sharply and can have dangerous currents.

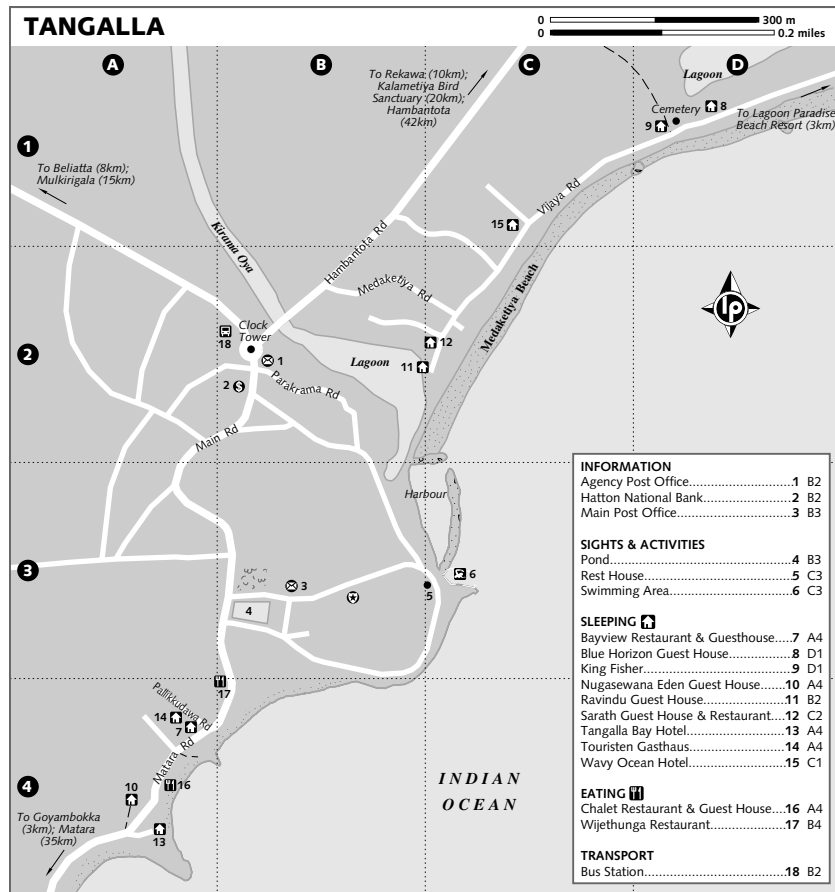
Sleeping

Most of the places to stay on the Matara side of Tangalla survived the 2004 tsunami, helped by their locations on hills and on protected bays. It will take several years for a new group of guesthouses to emerge along Medaketiya Beach, although a few places rebuilt fairly quickly.

MEDAKETIYA BEACH

Lagoon Paradise Beach Resort (☎ 224 2509; fax 224 2286; r Rs 1500-2500) Near the lagoon at the far end of the beach, 3km from town, this rebuilt place has 10 rooms and two cabanas done up in cheery shades of orange. Rooms have cold-water bathrooms. The friendly staff serves good food in the café. A three-wheeler from town costs Rs 100.

King Fisher (☎ 224 2472; r Rs 500-650) This is a colourful German-run place close to the



beach. Its rooms are neat and the indoor-outdoor dining room has lovely views. Better rooms have their own cold-water bathrooms.

Wavy Ocean Hotel (☎ 224 2680; r Rs 700-1100) This hotel has a range of very simple rooms with their own bathrooms. The beach – and a permanently beached trawler – is right outside the door. The guys running the place have energy to spare.

Blue Horizon Guest House (☎ 224 0721; r Rs 1000-1500) The six cold-water rooms here are in a multilevel building across from the beach. There are elevated open-air common areas where you can have a snack or just hang.

Ravindu Guest House (☎ 567 0560; r Rs 500) There are five very simple rooms here. A

shrine to the owner's family – lost to the tsunami – is at the front.

Sarath Guest House & Restaurant (☎ 224 2630; r Rs 800) This is a lively family home with six clean, neat rooms and shared bathrooms.

TANGALLA

The following options are above the beach, just south of the centre.

Bayview Restaurant & Guesthouse (☎ 224 2431; 230 Matara Rd; r Rs 650-1200) With excellent views over the bay, this place has two rooms and a cabana. The young owner, Ruwan, runs a hopping café.

Nugasewana Eden Guest House (☎ 224 0389; www.nugasewana.com; Matara Rd; r from Rs 440, s/d with air-con Rs 1430/1650; ☎/☎) The former Tourist

Guest House is opposite the big Tangalla Bay Hotel. It has eight stylish rooms with hot water, including some with sea-facing balconies and air-con.

Touristen Gasthaus (☎ 224 0370; wkapila@stnet.lk; 19 Pallikkudawa Rd; r Rs 1100-2500; ☎) This guesthouse has a leafy garden and six spotless rooms, including three with balconies facing the sea. One of the rooms has a kitchen; another has air-con.

Chalet Restaurant & Guest House (☎ 224 0452; Matara Rd; r Rs 800-1200) There are three simple rooms at this restaurant (right), each with a cold-water bathroom and postcard-ready views of the bay.

Tangalla Bay Hotel (☎ 224 0683; accountsbh@stnet.lk; r US\$23-32; ☎) A 1970s monstrosity built to look like a boat (you can get lost for hours looking for the poop deck), it's kitsch and dated in an endearing kind of way. It certainly has a great location right on a promontory, and the service is good and the pool has a view. The 28 rooms vary in quality (all have hot water, some have air-con); ask to see several.

GOYAMBOKKA

About 3km towards Matara on the main road you'll come to a signposted turn-off at Goyambokka, and a road lined with several guesthouses. This is a quiet leafy area with a beach that feels private. You can ask any Matara-bound bus to drop you at the turn-off. A three-wheeler from Tangalla bus station costs Rs 150.

Rocky Point Beach Bungalows (☎ 224 0834; rockypointbeach@yahoo.com; r incl breakfast US\$25-30) At the end of the road, this popular, relaxed spot has great views overlooking a small beach. The five rooms and three bungalows are in a large garden. There's a restaurant (with board games), and you can rent boogie boards.

Palm Paradise Cabanas (☎ 224 0338; www.palm-paradisecabanas.net; s/d incl half-board €30/40; ☎) There are 22 lovely cabanas here, scattered around a secluded beachside palm grove. All have their own sitting area, breezy veranda and hot water. There's an open-air bar and a good restaurant. Bicycles can be rented here for Rs 200 per day.

Goyambokka Guest House (☎/fax 224 0838; r incl breakfast Rs 1000-1600) Further on from Palm Paradise Cabanas, this place has four small, spotless rooms with screens on the

windows. It's away from the beach, but there's a pretty garden and a small shared veranda.

Calm Garden Cabanas (☎ 224 0523; r incl breakfast Rs 1000-1600) This is a family-run affair, back from the beach. The three cabanas are pretty simple, and there's a large garden. It's about 200m up the track from the turn-off.

Eating

Just about all guesthouses serve food. The following places are central.

Bayview Guesthouse & Restaurant (☎ 224 2431; 230 Matara Rd; r Rs 650-1200) The energetic vibe at this guesthouse-café keeps the place packed out with travellers, NGO workers and others. It's the place in town for a beer.

Wijethunga Restaurant (Matara Rd; meals Rs 50-150) This is a local place with good rice and curry. It's just near the popular lookout spot on the Matara road.

Chalet Restaurant & Guest House (☎ 224 0452; Matara Rd; mains Rs 175-320) A popular lunch stop with an extensive seafood menu and great views across the bay (ignore Tangalla Bay Hotel). Omelettes, sandwiches and other casual fare are also available.

Further afield, try **Lagoon Paradise Beach Resort** (☎ 224 2509; fax 224 2286; mains Rs 200-800) and **Palm Paradise Cabanas** (☎ 224 0338; www.palmparadisecabanas.net; mains Rs 200-800).

Getting There & Away

Tangalla is serviced by bus; the following are some of the major destinations.

Colombo Regular/air-con Rs 104/210, six hours.

Galle Regular/air-con Rs 48/100, two hours.

Hambantota Rs 24, one hour.

Matara Rs 23, 1½ to two hours.

Tissamaharama Rs 54, three hours.

MULKIRIGALA

The rock temple at **Mulkirigala** (admission Rs 100; ☎ 6am-6pm), about 16km northwest of Tangalla, has a little of Dambulla and Sigiriya about it. Steps lead up to a series of cleftlike caves in the huge rock. As with Dambulla, the caves shelter large reclining Buddhas, together with other, smaller, sitting and standing figures, and wall paintings. You can then continue on your barefoot way to a dagoba perched on top of the rock, where there are fine views over the surrounding country. There is a Buddhist school for young monks nearby.

Pali manuscripts found in the monastic library by a British official in 1826 were used for the first translation of the Mahavamsa (Great Chronicle), which unlocked Sri Lanka's early history for Europeans.

Mulkirigala can be reached by bus from Tangalla via either Beliatta or Wiraketiya (depending on the departures, it might be quicker to go via Wiraketiya than to wait for the Beliatta bus). A three-wheeler from Tangalla costs about Rs 600 for a return trip.

HAMBANTOTA

☎ 047 / pop 11,200

Travelling between Tangalla and Hambantota you move from a wet zone into a dry zone, which continues right across Yala National Park. Hambantota is a commercial town with little going for it, although there are some magnificent sweeps of beach both east and west of the town's small promontory. A large collection of outrigger fishing boats is often beached on the sands. The fish market near the bus station is interesting.

Hambantota's main claim to fame is that it was home to Leonard Woolf, the husband of Virginia Woolf, when he served as government agent from 1908 to 1911. He documented some of his experiences in *A Village in the Jungle*.

Hambantota has a large number of Malay Muslims, many of whom speak Malay as well as Tamil and Sinhala. A major industry is the production of salt by evaporating sea water from shallow salt pans. You will see these pans alongside the road on the east side of Hambantota as you turn inland from the coast.

The tsunami was hard on locals. Much of the area north of the centre was wiped clean, along with the area's minimal tourist infrastructure.

The **Hatton National Bank** (47 Wilmot St), about 200m up from the clock tower, has an international ATM. **Cargills Food City** (☎ 222 2267; Main Rd) has the usual travellers' supplies and a pharmacy.

Hambantota has a few touts angling to take travellers to Bundala or Yala National Parks. Ignore them as this is best arranged with your guesthouse in Tissamaharama.

Hambantota Rest House (☎ /fax 222 0299; r US\$24-36; 🏠) is nicely situated on the promontory overlooking the town and beach, about 300m south of the bus station. The

rooms in the historic wing are slightly palatial, definitely musty and are certainly the pick of the bunch. The restaurant is the best eating choice locally. A three-wheeler from the centre costs Rs 30.

Oasis Hotel (☎ 222 0650; www.oasis-ayurveda.de; Sisilasagama; s/d US\$60/70; 🏠 🏠) is a modern, well-run resort with 52 rooms. There's a large swimming pool and sloping gardens sheltered from the beach by dunes. Various meal plans are available and there's an on-site spa. It's about 7km along the main road before you reach Hambantota from Tangalla.

The bus station is by the fish market in the town centre. Destinations include Tangalla (Rs 24, one hour) and Tissamaharama (Rs 21, one hour).

BUNDALA NATIONAL PARK

Bundala is an important wetland sanctuary (adult/child US\$8.40/4.20, plus per vehicle Rs 72, plus per group Rs 144) that has been recognised under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, but it has always been less visited than Yala. It shelters some 150 species of bird within its 62-sq-km area, with many birds journeying from Siberia and the Rann of Kutch in India to winter here, arriving between August and April. It's also a winter home to the greater flamingo, and up to 2000 have been recorded here at one time. At most times you can see wild peacocks crossing the road.

As well as sheltering a small population of elephants (between 25 and 60 depending on the season), Bundala provides sanctuary to civets, giant squirrels and crocodiles. Between October and January four of Sri Lanka's five species of marine turtle (olive ridley, green, leatherback and loggerhead) lay their eggs on the coast.

Bundala's lagoons, beaches, sand dunes and scrubby jungle stretch nearly 20km along a coastal strip, starting just east of Hambantota. The main road east of Hambantota passes along Bundala's northern boundary, but it was severely damaged by the tsunami, and access is difficult. On the road to Tissamaharama look for the parking area near the signposted entrance to the park. You will usually see some guides and drivers here; a four-hour, five-person 4WD trip costs a negotiable Rs 2500, plus the entry fees.

Between Hambantota and Tissa are a number of roadside stalls selling delicious curd (buffalo-milk yoghurt) and treacle.

TISSAMAHARAMA

☎ 047

Usually called Tissa, the busy town of Tissamaharama is surrounded by rice paddies that are dotted with ancient temples. Yala National Park is the main reason most visitors come to Tissa, so there are plenty of 'safari' touts lurking at guesthouses and bus stops, and everybody else trying to get their cut of the safari business.

Orientation

If you're coming via Hambantota or Wellawaya you'll pass the village of Deberawewa (look for the clock tower) about 2km before Tissa. Ignore the 'Tissamaharama' signs here and the accommodation touts who board buses and advise travellers to get off because 'this is Tissa'. Most places to stay are closer to the real Tissa, so go there.

Information

Nearly all the facilities are on Main Rd, where you'll find an agency post office. There's not much in the way of shopping but there are some useful services. **Hatton**

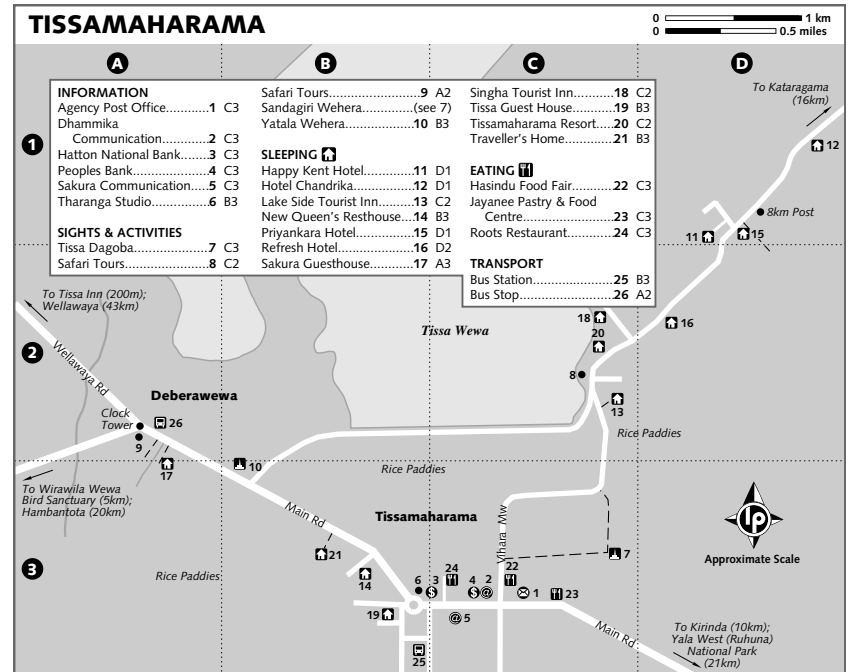
National Bank (Main Rd) and **Peoples Bank** (Main Rd) have international ATMs. Internet connections are slow but **Dharmika Communication** (☎ 223 9185; Main Rd; per min Rs 5) and **Sakura Communication** (☎ 223 7915; Main Rd; per min Rs 5) are friendly places for surfing and phone calls.

Sights

The **Tissa Wewa** (Tissa Tank), about 1.5km from the town centre, is thought to date from the 3rd century BC.

The large white restored **dagoba** between Tissa town centre and the *wewa* is believed to have been built by Kavantissa, a king of the kingdom of Ruhunu, which centred on Tissamaharama. The dagoba has a circumference of 165m and stands 55.8m high. It is thought to have held a sacred tooth relic and forehead bone relic. A small bookshop sells books on Buddhism.

Next to the dagoba is a **statue** of Queen Viharamahadevi. According to legend, Viharamahadevi was sent to sea by her father, King Devanampiya Tissa, as penance after he killed a monk. Unharmed, the daughter landed at Kirinda, about 10km south of



Tissa, and subsequently married Kavantissa. Their son, Dutugemunu, was the Sinhalese hero who liberated Anuradhapura from Indian invaders in the 2nd century BC.

The **Sandagiri Wehera**, an unrestored dagoba set behind the Tissa dagoba, is also credited to Kavantissa. A walk around the dagoba will give you insight into the construction of the great dagobas.

Next to the Tissa–Deberawewa road is **Yatala Wehera**, built 2300 years ago by King Yatala Tissa, who fled Anuradhapura after a palace plot and founded the Ruhunu kingdom. There's a small **museum** (admission free) next to the dagoba; its hours vary.

Tours

Tours of Yala National Park are easily arranged in Tissa. Perhaps too easily. Touts push safaris from the moment you arrive in Tissa. The easiest thing to do is to arrange a safari through your accommodation, as this gives you a bit more certainty that the guide will do a good job. Alternatively, you can go to one of the gatherings of safari touts at Tissa Wewa and at the clock tower, but this can be a bit of a carnival-like experience.

Generally expect to pay about Rs 2500 to 3000 for a half-day safari for up to four people (not including the raft of park fees). This will get you the services of a guide, who should also double as a driver. There's no need to hire both a guide and a driver, as you'll need to hire an animal tracker once in Yala anyway. Check out the 4WD before you book a safari; obviously avoid rust buckets, but also look for some of the newer and grander models, which feature elevated, open seats that help with spotting animals. Good drivers provide binoculars.

Expect to leave your hotel about 5.30am so as to catch the animals at dawn. It's also possible to arrange dusk safaris and overnight trips into the park.

Sleeping

There's no particular reason to be near the centre, so you might consider the pretty area around Tissa Wewa – the best places are on the road to Kataragama. Just about every place has a restaurant.

TOWN CENTRE

Traveller's Home (☎ 223 7958; supuncj@slt.net.lk; r Rs 350-1800; 🍽️) Surrounded by rice paddies,

this is just off Main Rd, about halfway between Tissa and Deberawewa. It's friendly, neat and basic. The seven varying rooms have features ranging from shared bath to posh air-con. There are free bicycles for guests, and a safari display.

New Queen's Resthouse (☎ 223 7264; s/d Rs 550/650, with air-con Rs 1000/1100; 🍽️) Off Main Rd, this is an eclectic building with a nice terrace and seven basic rooms, although the bidets lend continental flair. It's an easy walk from the bus station.

Tissa Guest House (☎ 223 7057; Molawatte Rd; r Rs 850) Found near the bus station, this is a pleasant family home, with four clean guest rooms and a colourful garden. Check in at the owner's photography shop, Tharanga Studio, on Main Rd near the bus station.

TISSA WEW

Most of Tissa's accommodation is near the Tissa Wewa, about 1.5km from the centre of Tissa. It's easy enough to get into town by bus (Rs 10) or by three-wheeler (Rs 70) from this area.

Hotel Chandrika (☎ 223 7143; www.chandrikahotels.com; Kataragama Rd; s/d Rs 1700/2100, with air-con Rs 2200/2600; 🍽️) This is a quiet and comfortable place with 20 rooms facing a lovely colonnaded veranda and a courtyard-style garden. There are rumours of a pool. The restaurant is a tad formal but good.

Happy Kent Hotel (☎ 223 7085; r Rs 1700-2700; 🍽️ 🚗) This growing place has 14 decent rooms (some with air-con) in cottages and a main building. The owner is helpful and the raised pool is a nice reward after a day's safari.

Refresh Hotel (☎ 223 7357; refresh@sri.lanka.net; Kataragama Rd; s/d Rs 1800/2200, with air-con Rs 2400/2800; 🍽️) The spot has five colourful, stylish and quiet rooms facing a small courtyard. The restaurant's food is delicious.

Priyankara Hotel (☎ 223 7206; priyankarahotel.com; Kataragama Rd; r US\$29-40; 🍽️) This modern place has 30 rooms served by a copious number of staff. Each room has a small balcony with views over rice paddies, and some have satellite TV and fridge. The restaurant has a Western menu; it's popular with groups.

Tissamaharama Resort (☎ 223 7299; www.ceylonhotels.lk; Kataragama Rd; r US\$44-64; 🍽️ 🚗) This old guesthouse is delightfully situated, right on the banks of the Tissa Wewa. It has 57 comfortable rooms (some with air-con) in a

three-storey block, a pool (Rs 200 for non-guests) and a pleasant open-air restaurant and bar. This place is the number one choice for groups, so it pays to book ahead.

Singha Tourist Inn (☎ 223 7090; s/d Rs 500/850, with air-con Rs 1150/1550; 🍽️) A no-frills place with a palm-studded lawn reaching down to the tank's edge. It has 11 basic rooms (some are a bit dark).

Lake Side Tourist Inn (☎ 223 7216; s/d Rs 900/1200, with air-con Rs 1250/1650; 🍽️) This spot has views to the tank from some of its 24 rooms. The rooms have simple furniture but vary in quality, so check out a few. This place is quite popular with groups.

DEBERAWEWA

It's fairly relaxed at the west end of Tissa.

Tissa Inn (☎ 223 7233; tissainn@slt.net.lk; Wellawaya Rd; s/d Rs 850/950; 🍽️ 🚗) Fifteen hundred metres from the Deberawewa clock tower, this has a touch of class for a very reasonable price. The newer rooms have French windows and a balcony, while the older rooms have a veranda. There are tables under the trees, and the guesthouse is popular with wedding parties.

Sakura Guesthouse (☎ 223 7198; s/d from Rs 400/600, cottages Rs 750) Near a creek, this spot is a friendly, traditional family home set in spacious, quiet grounds. There are three cold-water rooms plus two 'cottages' that sleep three. The family will pick you up (for free) from the bus station in Tissa or Deberawewa. A three-wheeler from the Tissa bus station will cost Rs 100.

Eating

Refresh Hotel (☎ 223 7357; Kataragama Rd; mains Rs 200-450) The menu is down-to-earth but the preparation is stellar at this hotel's (opposite) restaurant. Curries, omelettes and sandwiches are presented with colour and flair. It does big business with nonguests and is a good place for a Lion Lager.

Jayane Pastry & Food Centre (Main St; mains Rs 60-120) Run by a friendly young family, this small, simple place has a Rs 75 lunch buffet and very good rice and curry for dinner, as well as fresh juices.

Hasindu Food Fair (12 Vihara Mawatha; mains Rs 50-100) A dark and cool lunch spot in the centre of town, with tasty rice and curry.

Roots Restaurant (☎ 437 8755; mains Rs 60-250) Set a few metres off Main Rd, this very re-

laxed open-air place serves rice and curry. It's a good spot to have a chat and down a Lion Lager.

Getting There & Away

The road from Hambantota is sealed but pretty rough. Few buses go directly to the Hill Country, and if you can't get one you'll need to change at Wirawila junction (Rs 11, 30 minutes) and/or at Wellawaya (Rs 44). There are no buses to Yala National Park. Other major bus destinations from Tissa include Colombo (regular/air-con Rs 138/210, nine hours), Hambantota (Rs 21, one hour) and Kataragama (Rs 18, one hour).

AROUND TISSAMAHARAMA Wirawila Wewa Bird Sanctuary

Between the northern and southern turn-offs to Tissa, the Hambantota–Wellawaya road runs on a causeway across the large Wirawila Wewa. This extensive sheet of water forms the Wirawila Wewa Bird Sanctuary. The best time for bird-watching is early morning. See p62 for information on the bird species found in the area.

From Hambantota or Tissa you can get a bus to Wirawila junction on the south side of the tank and walk north; from Tissa you can also go to Pandegamu on the north side and walk south.

Kirinda

About 10km south of Tissa, Kirinda has a fine beach and a Buddhist shrine on the huge round rocks. Kirinda was used as a land base by Arthur Clarke's party when diving for the *Great Basses* wreck (see Clarke's *The Treasure of the Reef*). It can make an interesting pause on the way to or from Yala. The road here passes through savanna; it's flat and feels remote. A few cattle graze and dunes shimmer in the distance.

Suduweli (☎ 072-263 1059; r Rs 400, with bathroom from Rs 700, bungalows Rs 1000-1500) is on a peaceful farm with a shady garden. The bungalows' verandas look towards the paddy and lake. The friendly Sri Lankan–German couple and their dogs will share their home and local expertise (the dogs got bushes down!). There's a motorcycle and a bicycle available, and a 4WD for safaris into Yala.

There is a bus from Tissa to Kirinda every half-hour or so (Rs 10). A three-wheeler from Tissa costs about Rs 500.

YALA NATIONAL PARK

It's not Kenya, but Yala National Park (also known as Ruhunu) is a major draw in Sri Lanka for its opportunity to see herds of elephants, leopards and an array of other animals, including reptiles and birds. For many people, a safari here is an essential part of their visit to the island.

Information

The entrance fees for **Yala National Park** (adult/child US\$14/7, plus per vehicle tracker fee Rs 120, service charge US\$6, plus overall tax 15%; 🕒 6am-6.30pm 16 Oct-31 Aug) are payable at the main office, which is near the entrance, some 21km from Tissa. There are a few displays here of the pickled and stuffed variety. The road from Tissa

is rough but passable, although a 4WD is necessary once in the park. Realistically the only way to visit the park is as part of a safari (see p154). Part of the entrance fee includes the services of an animal tracker; their quality varies. Tips are both expected and usually earned; Rs 100 to 200 each for the tracker and driver is average.

Sights

Yala combines a strict nature reserve with a national park, bringing the total protected area to 126,786 hectares of scrub, plains, brackish lagoons and rocky outcrops. It is divided into five blocks, with the most visited being Block I (14,101 hectares). Also known as Yala West, this block was origin-

ally a reserve for hunters, and was given over to conservation in 1938.

With over 35 leopards, Yala West has one of the world's densest leopard populations. *Panthera pardus kotiya*, the subspecies you may well see, is unique to Sri Lanka. The best time to spot leopards is February to June or July, when the water levels in the park are low. Elephants are also well-known inhabitants (the best time to spot them is also between February and July), and you'll probably see sloth bears, sambars, spotted deer, boars, crocodiles, buffaloes, mongooses, jackals and monkeys.

Around 150 species of birds have been recorded at Yala, many of which are visitors escaping the northern winter. These birds include white-winged black terns, curlews and pintails. Locals include jungle fowl, hornbills and orioles.

If you visit between October and December you're guaranteed to see a lot of birdlife, deer and crocodiles – anything else will be a bonus. Whatever the season, dawn and dusk are the best times of day to view animals.

Yala contains the remains of a once thriving human community. A monastic settlement, **Situlpahuwa**, appears to have housed 12,000 inhabitants. Now restored, it's an important pilgrimage site. A 1st-century BC **vihara** (Buddhist complex) – **Magul Maha Vihara** – and a 2nd-century BC **chetiya** (Buddhist shrine) – **Akasa Chetiya** – point to a well-established community, believed to have been part of the ancient Ruhunu kingdom.

Sleeping

Although most of the park was untouched by the tsunami, two resorts near the shore were demolished.

There are six appallingly expensive bungalows scattered about inside the park. Costs (after park admission) are US\$24 per person per night plus US\$2 per person for linens and US\$30 per group for 'service'. The basic huts come with drinking water and don't have electricity. You can make reservations through the **Department of Wildlife Conservation** (☎ 011-269 4241; www.dwlc.lk; 18 Gregory's Rd, Col 7).

Alternatively, groups up to 10 people can camp inside the park at one of two primitive sites for Rs 690 per night. Book at the

park office. You'll need to bring your own supplies and gear.

Just outside of the entrance, **Yala Village Hotel** (☎ 047-223 9450; www.johnkeellshotels.com; s/d US\$90/95, full board per person US\$30; 🕒 🍷 🍷) offers posh accommodation amid the sand dunes near the rugged coast. Rooms are in individual bungalows, which come with satellite TV and fridge. A blackboard near the entrance lists the day's animal sightings, and there's a cool rooftop bar that has views in all directions. There's little else out here.

KATARAGAMA

☎ 047

Fifteen kilometres northeast of Tissa (past lots of woodcarving stands) is Kataragama. Along with Adam's Peak (Sri Pada), this is the most important religious pilgrimage site in Sri Lanka. It is a holy place for Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus, and the sprawling religious complex across the Menik Ganga contains buildings of all three religions. It is difficult to sort fact from legend at Kataragama. Many believe that King Dutugemunu built a shrine to the Kataragama Deviyo (the resident god) here in the 2nd century BC, and the Buddhist Kirivehera dagoba dates back to the 1st century BC, but the site has been significant for longer.

In July and August, the predominantly Hindu **Kataragama festival** draws thousands of devotees, who make the pilgrimage over a two-week period (see The Long Walk to Kataragama, p159).

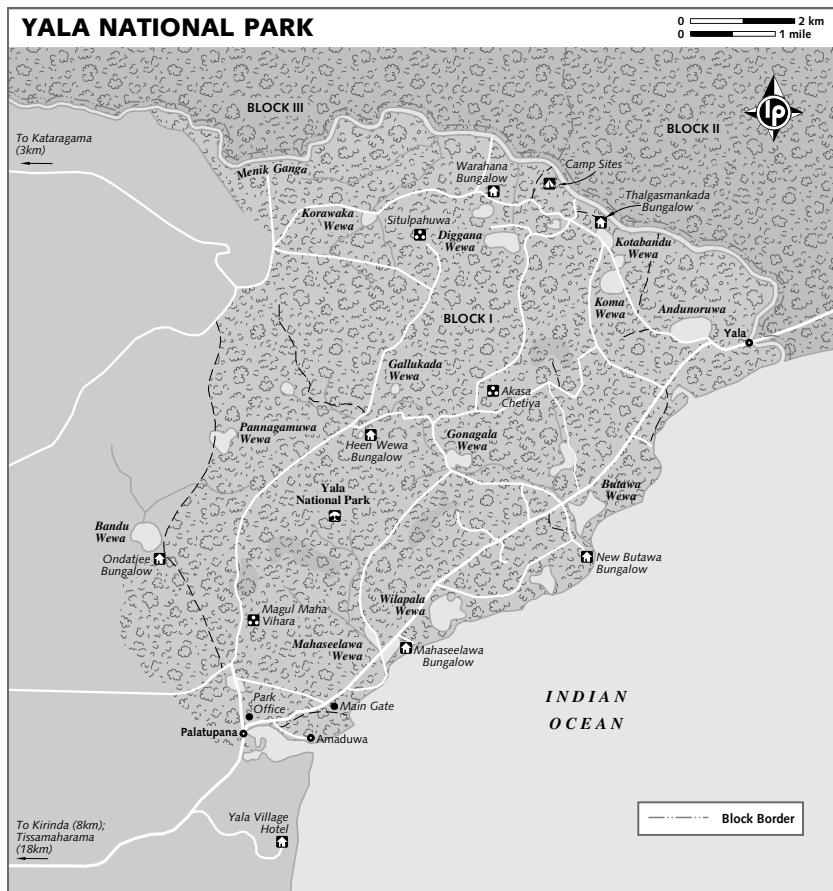
Apart from festival time, the town is busiest at weekends and on *poya* days. At these times it may be difficult to find accommodation, and the place will be buzzing. At other times it can feel like a ghost town. If you're staying in Tissamaharama you may just want to visit on a day trip.

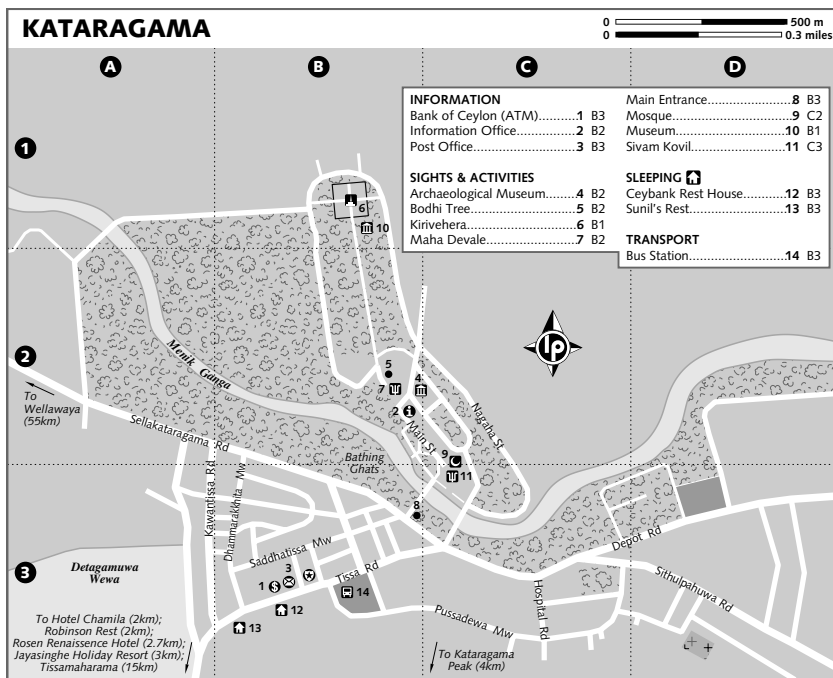
Information

There's a **Bank of Ceylon** (Tissa Rd), which has an international ATM, and a **post office** (Tissa Rd). Don't expect much help from the information office in the religious complex.

Sights

The most important shrine is the **Maha Devale**, which supposedly contains the lance of the six-faced, 12-armed Hindu war god, Murugan (Skanda), who is seen as identical





to the Kataragama Deviyo. Followers make offerings at daily *pujas* at 4.30am, 10.30am and 6.30pm (no 4.30am offering on Saturday). The **Kirivehara** and **Sivam Kovil** shrines are dedicated to the Buddha and Ganesh (the remover of obstacles and champion of intellectual pursuits) respectively; there is also a bodhi tree.

The Muslim area, close to the entrance, features a beautiful small **mosque** with coloured tilework and wooden lintels, and tombs of two holy men.

Apart from the shrines, there are some other points of interest inside the temple complex. An **archaeological museum** (admission by donation; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 6.30-9pm) has a collection of Hindu and Buddhist religious items, as well as huge fibreglass models of statues from around Sri Lanka. A small **museum** has a display of Buddhist statues.

Sleeping & Eating

The first two places are in town, while the rest are on Tissa Rd.

Ceybank Rest House (☎ 223 5229, reservations 011-254 4315; Tissa Rd; s/d Rs 1250/1500) An airy, well-run

place with 22 simple, clean rooms. Some rooms have views across to Kataragama mountain and others overlook the town. You're supposed to reserve your room from Colombo but there are often on-the-spot vacancies. You'll need to book in for the vegetarian food (no alcohol, meat, fish or eggs allowed). It's close to the temples.

Sunil's Rest (☎ 223 5300; 61 Tissa Rd; r with/without air-con Rs 1800/900; ☎) This clean, family-run place has three rooms, a pleasant garden and an elaborate waterfall feature.

Rosen Renaissance Hotel (☎ 223 6030-3; www.rosenhoteisrilanka.com; Tissa Rd; s/d US\$40/50; ☎) This posh two-storey hotel attracts a lot of tour groups. The 52 rooms have satellite TV and fridge. There's a swimming pool with an underwater music system – requests taken. Pool use for nonguests is Rs 300.

Hotel Chamila (☎ 223 5217; r with/without air-con Rs 1600/1100; ☎) Two- and three-storey blocks hold 40 modern rooms at this kid-friendly (there's a playground!) hotel. The grounds are pretty and the rooms clean and functional. Boozers, note that there's no drinking in the TV lounge, only in the bar.

THE LONG WALK TO KATARAGAMA

Forty-five days before the annual Kataragama festival starts on the *Esala poya* (full moon), a group of Kataragama devotees start walking the length of Sri Lanka for the Pada Yatra pilgrimage. Seeking spiritual development, the pilgrims believe they are walking in the steps of the god Kataragama (also known as Murugan), and the Veddahs, who made the first group pilgrimage on this route.

The route follows the east coast from the Jaffna peninsula, via Trincomalee and Batticaloa to Okanda, then through Yala National Park to Kataragama. It's an arduous trip, and the pilgrims rely on the hospitality of the communities and temples they pass for their food and lodging. During the war, the risks to them were great and the walk was not completed between 1983 and 2002.

Pilgrims arrive in time for the festival's feverish activity. Elephants parade, drummers drum. Vows are made and favours sought by devotees, who demonstrate their sincerity by performing extraordinary acts of penance and self-mortification on one particular night: some swing from hooks that pierce their skin; others roll half-naked over the hot sands near the temple. A few perform the act of walking on beds of red-hot cinders – treading the flowers, as it's called. The fire walkers fast, meditate and pray, bathe in the Menik Ganga (Menik River) and then worship at the Maha Devale before facing their ordeal. Then, fortified by their faith, they step out onto the glowing path while the audience cries out encouragement. The festival officially ends with a water-cutting ceremony (said to bring rain for the harvest) in the Menik Ganga.

Robinson Rest (☎ 223 5175; anjulaj@slnet.lk; Tissa Rd; r with/without air-con Rs 1300/900; ☎) Situated about 2km south of Kataragama on the road to Tissa, this place has 20 basic rooms with balconies and verandas. There's also a bar and restaurant.

Jayasinghe Holiday Resort (☎ 223 5146; www.jayasinghehotels.com; Tissa Rd; r with/without air-con US\$31/26; ☎) This place, 3km from town, has a swimming pool (which can be used by nonguests for Rs 100) and 25 clean, basic rooms. It's well back from the road.

Getting There & Away

To reach Pottuvil (for Arugam Bay), change at Monaragala (Rs 55, two hours). the following are some other major bus destinations from Kataragama.

Colombo Regular/air-con Rs 146/280, 10 hours.

Ella Rs 116, three hours.

Kandy Rs 172, eight hours.

Matara Rs 71, 3½ hours.

Nuwara Eliya Rs 116, five hours.

Tissamaharama Rs 18, one hour.

Wellawaya Rs 49, two hours.

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