

GALLE & SOUTH COAST GUIDE

Eat • Drink • Explore • Do | Galle Fort to Weligama
Edition: December 2025 | experientially.lk

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This is a shortlist of the best the south coast has to offer, focusing on established venues with proven track records. Best workflow: pick a base (Galle Fort for culture, Unawatuna/Mirissa for beach, Ahangama for surf), then explore nearby spots for meals and activities.

Note: We prioritize including locally-owned and properly registered businesses. When possible, support Sri Lankan entrepreneurs and establishments.

IF YOU ONLY DO 5 THINGS

1. **Galle Fort walking tour** : Explore the UNESCO World Heritage colonial fort with ramparts and lighthouse
 2. **Jungle Beach** : Hidden cove perfect for swimming and snorkeling in calm, clear waters
 3. **Whale watching from Mirissa** : Early morning boat trip to spot blue whales and dolphins (Nov-Apr)
 4. **Sunset at Wijaya Beach or Coconut Tree Hill** : Classic south coast sunset spots with drinks
 5. **Visit a turtle hatchery** : See baby turtles and learn about conservation efforts in Habaraduwa or Koggala
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THINGS TO DO

Classic South Coast

Galle Fort — UNESCO World Heritage colonial fort with ramparts, lighthouse, boutique shops, and galleries

Jungle Beach (Unawatuna) — Hidden beach accessed by jungle path, perfect for snorkeling

Whale watching (Mirissa) — Blue whales, sperm whales, and dolphins (best Nov-Apr, early morning departures)

Turtle hatcheries — Conservation centers in Habaraduwa and Koggala, baby turtle releases

Coconut Tree Hill (Mirissa) — Instagram-famous viewpoint, best at sunset

Natural pools (Thalpe) — Rock pools along the coast, perfect for sunset dips

White Tea Estate — Tea plantation tour and tasting near Galle

Snorkeling — Unawatuna and Mirissa offer great reef snorkeling with turtles and tropical fish

Mangrove tours — Koggala Lake boat tours through mangroves, with cinnamon island visits
Surfing — Weligama is ideal for beginners, Ahangama and Mirissa for intermediate surfers

Nearby Adventures

Sinharaja Rainforest — Guided hikes through UNESCO World Heritage rainforest (2-3 hours from Galle)

Yala National Park — Leopard and elephant safaris (2.5 hours from Mirissa)

AREAS AT A GLANCE

Galle Fort — Historic walled city, boutique hotels, fine dining, art galleries, colonial charm

Unawatuna — Curved bay beach, backpacker vibe mixing with boutique stays, great for snorkeling

Thalpe — Quiet stretch with luxury villas, natural pools, residential feel

Ahangama — Surf town with hip cafes, digital nomad scene, boho-chic restaurants and beach clubs

Mirissa — Lively beach town, whale watching hub, sunset bars, mix of backpackers and mid-range stays

Weligama — Surf learning capital, long bay perfect for beginners, growing food scene

QUICK PICKS BY VIBE

Special dinner: Aqua Forte (Galle Fort) / Church Street Social (Galle Fort) / Hotel De Uncles (Ahangama)

Post-surf breakfast: Cactus (Ahangama) / Skinny Tom's (Unawatuna) / Shady Lane (Mirissa)

Sunset drinks: Wijaya Beach (Unawatuna) / Hotel De Uncles (Ahangama) / Ceylon Sliders (Ahangama)

Casual beach lunch: Skinny Tom's (Unawatuna) / Petti Petti (Mirissa) / Hotel De Uncles (Ahangama)

COFFEE & CAFÉS

Galle Fort

Pedlar's Inn Café: Historic setting in colonial building, good for breakfast and coffee

KiXi: Specialty coffee and healthy breakfast bowls

Maru: Minimalist Japanese-inspired cafe, matcha lattes and quality espresso

Heritage Café: Traditional setting with local coffee and pastries

Kaffi: Scandinavian-style cafe with excellent coffee and simple breakfast

Unawatuna & Thalpe

Skinny Tom's: Popular breakfast spot, Sri Lankan-Western fusion, excellent coffee

Ahangama

Cactus: Beachfront cafe, Instagram-worthy, all-day breakfast and smoothie bowls

Hotel De Uncles: Specialty coffee with ocean views, refined breakfast menu

Kai: Rooftop cafe with bay views, quality espresso and healthy options

Kurundu: Laid-back beach cafe, good coffee and casual vibe

Kaffi: Scandinavian-inspired, consistent quality coffee and simple food

Mirissa

Shady Lane: Popular brunch cafe, smoothie bowls and specialty coffee

Aloha Coffee Gallery: Surf-town vibe, good espresso and relaxed atmosphere

Weligama

Nomad Cafe: Digital nomad favorite, excellent coffee, smoothie bowls, great wifi

Moochie's: Garden setting, healthy food and reliable coffee

RESTAURANTS

Galle Fort

Church Street Social: Middle Eastern and Sri Lankan fusion in Fort Bazaar hotel, buzzy atmosphere

Aqua Forte: Fine dining Italian, authentic Neapolitan cuisine

Aqua Pizza: Casual sister restaurant to Aqua Forte, great pizzas

Ropewalk: Cocktail bar at Galle Fort Hotel, fort views

1710 by The Merchant: Merchant Biryani, Sri Lankan dishes with heritage recipes, live music weekends

The Bungalow: Colonial courtyard setting, seafood platters and crab curry

Lucky Fort: Famous 10-curry rice and curry buffet

Pedlar's Inn: Historic cafe-restaurant, Western comfort food

A Minute by Tuk Tuk: Sri Lankan comfort food with ocean views at Dutch Hospital

Elita: Warehouse restaurant, excellent tuna steaks and fusion dining

The Arch: Contemporary dining with sharing seafood plates

Unawatuna & Thalpe

Wijaya Beach: Beachfront restaurant-bar, Asian and European with emphasis on seafood

Skinny Tom's: Eggs benedict hopperts, Sri Lankan-Western fusion breakfast

Ahangama

Cactus: Beach cafe, all-day brunch, Instagram-worthy, vegan-friendly

Hotel De Uncles: Refined Sri Lankan dishes, creative cocktails, sunset deck

Kai: Rooftop with ocean views, all-day dining and cocktails

Vertigo Pizzeria: Best Neapolitan pizza on the south coast

Kurundu: Live music Wednesdays, beachside atmosphere

Manori's Kitchen: Authentic rice and curry, local favorite

Townhouse: Traditional Sri Lankan in modern setting

Ceylon Sliders: Beach club vibes, sunset DJs, burgers and cocktails

L'il Bang Kitchen: Contemporary dining, creative menu

Mirissa

Shady Lane Cafe: Popular brunch spot, smoothie bowls

Zephyr Ceylon: Seafood grill, romantic atmosphere, also at Weligama Marriott

Ceylon Curry House: Authentic Sri Lankan curries and kottu

Dewmini Roti Shop: Famous stuffed rotis, local institution

O Mirissa Café: Italian bistro, seafood platters

Petti Petti: Beachfront dining, infinity pool, cocktails

Weligama

Nomad Cafe: Smoothie bowls, specialty coffee, healthy options

Moochie's: Garden setting, healthy bowls and great wifi

The Cliff: Elevated dining with bay views, seafood and international cuisine

Locale: Pan-Asian gastro bar, bay views

Kaiyo: Sushi bar with creative cocktails

Alkimia: Spanish cuisine with local twist, chef-run

DRINK

Galle Fort

Charlie's (Charleston Hotel): Regional produce cocktails, sunset terrace views

Ropewalk (Galle Fort Hotel): Cocktail bar with fort views

Ahangama

Hotel De Uncles: Creative cocktails with arrack, sunset deck

Ceylon Sliders: Beach club, sunset DJ sessions

Lamana: Live music and skate jams Thursdays and Sundays

Trax: Hidden jungle bar, live music and DJ sets

Mirissa

Zephyr Ceylon: Seafood grill with cocktail focus

Doctor's House: Trendy hangout, hotel and gallery

Weligama

Kaiyo: Cocktail bar with Japanese-Sri Lankan fusion drinks

ACTIVITIES & TOURS

Whale Watching

Season: November to April (peak Dec-Mar)

Where: Mirissa harbor departures

What to expect: Blue whales, sperm whales, dolphins — book early morning tours (6am departures)

Turtle Hatcheries

Habaraduwa Sea Turtle Hatchery — Conservation and rehabilitation, baby turtle releases

Koggala Turtle Hatchery — 40+ years operating, education and releases

Note: Visit in the evening for possible baby turtle releases

Snorkeling & Diving

Unawatuna — Calm waters, coral reefs, sea turtles

Jungle Beach — Excellent snorkeling from the beach

Mirissa — Reef snorkeling, turtle sightings

Surfing

Weligama — Best for beginners, long gentle waves, many surf schools

Ahangama (Kabalana Beach) — Intermediate level

Mirissa — Various breaks for different levels

Mangrove Tours

Koggala Lake — Boat tours through mangroves, cinnamon island, bird watching

Hiking

Sinharaja Rainforest — UNESCO World Heritage site, guided treks, endemic species (2-3 hours from Galle)

White Tea Plantation

Handunugoda Tea Estate (near Ahangama) — Tea tours and tastings, white tea specialty

PRACTICALITIES

Getting around: Tuk-tuks are everywhere; negotiate prices first. Consider renting a scooter for flexibility between towns (10-20 min drives between each area)

Best time to visit: November to April for calm seas, whale watching, and sunshine. May to October is monsoon season (southwest coast)

Swimming safety: Unawatuna and Mirissa have calmer waters. Check for flags and ask locals about currents before swimming

Whale watching: Book a day ahead. Tours leave 6-7am and last 3-4 hours. Can be rough seas — take motion sickness tablets if needed

Turtle hatcheries: Visit in late afternoon/evening for best chance to see baby turtle releases

Accommodation: Book ahead Dec-March (peak season). Galle Fort for boutique charm, Unawatuna/Mirissa for beach access, Ahangama for surf/digital nomad scene

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