



Tips for Exploring Southern Sri Lanka: Must-Visit Places for a One-Day or Half-Day Trip

As a traveller in southern Sri Lanka, here are some great places to visit for a one-day or half-day trip:

UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARK

Udawalawe National Park is one of the best places in Sri Lanka to see elephants. There are about 500 in the park in herds of up to 50. Besides that there are also wild buffalo, sambar deer, mongooses, bandicoots, foxes, water monitor lizards, crocodiles and sloth bears. There are 30 varieties of snakes and a wealth of birdlife. This park is perfect for a morning or evening safari.

Distance from hotel: 112km

YALA NATIONAL PARK

Yala National Park is the largest national park of Sri Lanka and is located at the southeast edge of the island. The extent of the National Park is 97,880 hectares. Leopards, water buffaloes, wild bear, spotted deer, sambar, monkey, crocodile, elephant, peacock and golden jackal are some of the species which can be seen abundantly.

Distance from hotel: 144km

SINHARAJA RAIN FOREST

Explore this dense rainforest, a UNESCO site, with many unique plants and animals. Sinharaja has a wild profusion of flora. The canopy trees reach heights of up to 45m, with the next layer down topping 30m. There are almost 130 types of endemic trees and woody climbers. As for fauna, sambar, barking deer, wild boar, purple-faced langurs and squirrels are fairly common. Sinharaja also has 45 species of reptiles and 160 species of birds. Sinharaja has leeches in abundance, therefore make sure you wear long trousers, long socks and trekking shoes (sneakers); repellent sprayed on trousers and shoes will also help. Guided tours are available.

Distance from hotel: 74km

GALLE

Sri Lanka's fourth-biggest town with its UNESCO protected Fort is a place of colour, texture and sensation totally unlike anywhere else in Sri Lanka. With Dutch-colonial buildings, little boutique shops, cafes and hotels, you will feel like walking through a medieval European town placed on a tropical shore.

Distance from hotel: 35km

WEHERAHENA TEMPLE IN MATARA

Weherahena budhist temple is known for its gigantic Buddha statue and the underground tunnel with paints describing the life of Buddha and Jataka stories. The underground tunnel has thousands of paintings and murals. It is one of the not to be missed attractions if you are in the Weligama area.

Distance from hotel: 19km

VIRGIN WHITE TEA PLANTATION AHANGAMA

Handunugoda Estate is the only tea estate situated in the coastal belt of Sri Lanka specializing in the artisanal manufacturing of 'virgin white tea' and is one of the handful of estates in Sri Lanka exporting high-quality luxury teas to global markets. Visit the plantation to learn about white tea production and taste fresh tea.

Distance from hotel: 15km

CINNAMON PLANTATION WELIGAMA

Top House is a beautiful, working cinnamon estate of 25 acres, just inland from Weligama. The resident British owners have restored the plantation and now produce true Ceylon cinnamon, which grows on the steep slopes of a high hill.



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The Top House cinnamon tour is led by the owner and is intended for couples and families and smaller groups. The cinnamon tour entails a ride along the paddy in a traditional tractor/trailer and a short walk. It covers the nursery, the cinnamon plantation, the cinnamon peeling hut, and the cinnamon oil distillery. It explains the history of Ceylon cinnamon and shows the planting, harvest, peeling, and preparation of quills. Advance booking mandatory with property owners.

Distance from hotel: 3.5km

WHALE WATCHING IN MIRISSA

Take an early morning boat tour to see blue whales and dolphins in their natural habitat. You will leave early morning Mirissa harbour, which is the closest point to where blue whales are inhabited. In a season time (from November to April) you may see five kinds of whales (blue whale, bryde's whale, sperm whale, killer whale, pilot whale) and four kinds of dolphins (spinner dolphin, bottle nose dolphin, striped dolphin, Risso's dolphin).

Distance from hotel to Mirissa port: 11km

TURTLE WATCHING AT WIJAYA BEACH:

Watch and swim with sea turtles on this peaceful beach.

Distance from hotel: 22km

KOGALA TURTLE HATCHERY

The Koggala Turtle Hatchery operates as a non-profit organization dedicated to the survival and prosperity of sea turtles. The hatchery focuses on rescuing and rehabilitating injured turtles, protecting nests from poachers, and nurturing hatchlings until they are strong enough to venture into the sea. One of the most heart-warming aspects of the Koggala Turtle Hatchery is the opportunity for visitors to interact with the turtles. While it's important to handle these delicate creatures gently and under the guidance of the instructors, the experience of touching and observing them up close is both educational and moving. Turtle hatching season in Sri Lanka runs from November to May, peaking between January and March.

Distance from hotel: 17km

GOLF AT SHANGRI-LA HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka's premier 18-hole golf course is set amid a vast coconut palm plantation, offering spectacular views and unique challenges for both casual and seasoned players. The abundance of nature and wildlife, framed by lakes and the beautiful Indian Ocean, sets the scene for an incredible golfing experience.

Distance from hotel: 113km

Contact our reception to arrange your unforgettable adventure in southern Sri Lanka.