

Check in: the Sri Lankan hotel where beach meets jungle

TRAVELLING

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It's not often you can combine a jungle escape by the beach but that's what is on offer at **UGA Escapes' Jungle Beach**. Found in the less developed north east of Sri Lanka, this luxurious hideaway is testament to what can be done when you invest in the local environment.

Use the resort as your base to explore local hot springs, rustic temples carved into cliffs and Pigeon Island, the country's oldest marine nature reserve park where you can swim with reef sharks and turtles.



The reception, bar and restaurant is basically a glorified treehouse

The rooms

Each individual villa has buckets of space, with double height ceilings, decked verandas and inside-outside bathrooms. Some are set back from the beach, others grouped round small pools in between thick tree clumps.

The views

Because the resort's been built between the existing flora, each villa is secluded and private.

The service

Most of the staff are locals who have been trained by the hotel; they'll be pleased to see you.



Tuck into super fresh seafood on the deserted private beach before heading out to snorkel with the tropical fish

The menu

Order the seafood platter down on the beach for an 'orange tower' of grilled seafood perfection. The fish and shellfish are caught locally that day. The main restaurant serves Sri Lankan curries and a mix of sandwiches and so on.

The bar

Set by the main pool, the rustic wooden bar is social central. Order up a lurid cocktail and get the cards out.

The spa

Hidden away down a jungle path, the hotel's spa is a small affair that doesn't scrimp on quality and uses local oils.



Sri Lanka's north-east coast is still pretty rustic and has a wonderful wilderness feel

The sustainable bit

The hotel invests in the local economy - so far it's built two wings for nearby hospitals and trains local people in hospitality. 40% of its staff were refugees from the civil war. War widows do the hotel laundry and the hotel has planted more than 2,000 trees along its three kilometre coastline.

3 reasons to book

Sri Lanka's north east coast is a mating mecca for blue whales. May-September is the best time to see them.

Elephants are everywhere in Sri Lanka - arrange a wildlife tour and you'll be sure to spot a few - and perhaps even some leopards.

While international hotels and brands are opening up in the south west, up here on the north west it's still a real island experience.

Where is Jungle Beach in Sri Lanka?

Jungle Beach is on the north east coast of the island near Trincomalee - around six hours drive from Colombo.

Free Wifi? Yes
Dog friendly? No
Child friendly? Yes