

FOOD

and

TRAVEL

WIN
A WEEK IN PUGLIA

39 SEASONAL
RECIPES

**Paul
Hollywood**
Secrets and pies

Rick Stein
On the road to Mexico

**Hairy
Bikers**
Reveal all

Tenerife
Michelin island

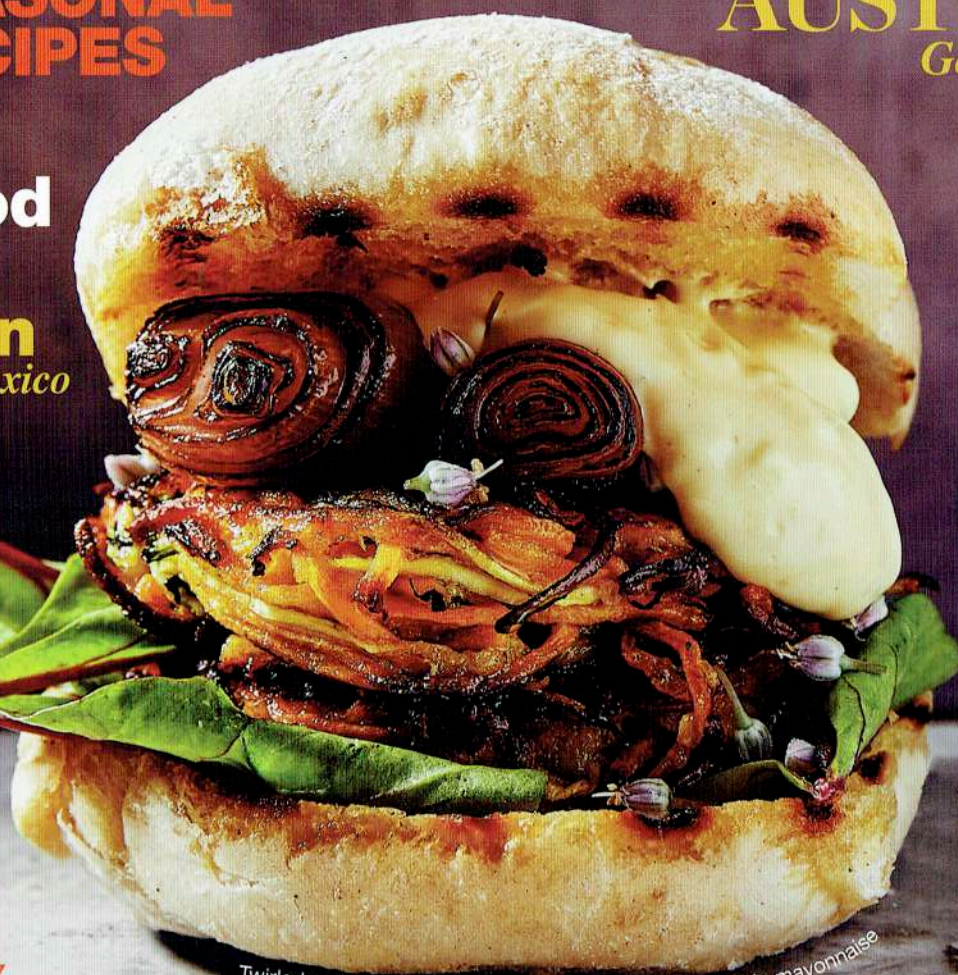
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GUIDE TO
THE BEST
SPA
BREAKS**



Twirled courgette and sweet potato burger with chipotle mayonnaise

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VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN
PLATES TO NOURISH AND REVIVE

Reviews Drinks Chefs In Season City Breaks Hotels Restaurants

48 HOURS

Luang Prabang

Travel time 18 hours



Salta

Travel time 16 hours



Trincomalee

Travel time 18 hours



First stop is Luang Prabang, Laos' spiritual capital, where **30 golden temples** rub shoulders with once-grand **Gallic mansions** and wooden houses that sway on creaky stilts in the tropical breeze. Built on the spot where the waters of the Mekong and Khan rivers mingle, this jungle jewel is a seductive marriage of **French influences** and ancient Laotian tradition. Every sunrise sees the air filled with the smell of **buttery croissants**, while 200 monks dressed in saffron robes parade through the streets. On to Argentina's wild north-west, where Salta nestles in a mountain crevice among some of the highest **vineyards** in the world. The **candyfloss-coloured cathedral** and **sun-dappled pavement cafés** have a historic Spanish feel, but the sight of a **gaucho** enjoying a beer and **empanadas** at a street stall is Andean all the way. Follow the ring of bells to Trincomalee, one of Sri Lanka's most overlooked cities, where every afternoon music fills the streets as **Hindu priests** call devotees to worship. Built on a glorious **natural harbour**, the city has long provided sanctuary for refugees of the civil war and today its **culture** is as eclectic as the **seafood** on sale at the market on Konesar Road.

TRINCOMALEE

Delve into the backstreets of this eastern Sri Lankan city and you'll find a vibrant food scene, a friendly reception and Hindu temples worth lingering over, says Anna Berrill

Why go Sitting on one of the world's finest natural harbours, Trinco (as the locals say) straddles a narrow peninsula between the Indian Ocean and the sheltered Inner Harbour. While most are drawn here for the golden sands of Uppuveli and Nilaveli's beaches, there's plenty of history to Trincomalee, too. The city has shaken off its turbulent past – the port was fought over during the colonial period and suffered unrest during the civil war in 1983 – to reveal a rich culture that goes beyond its famed deep-water harbour that attracted seafarer Marco Polo. Easy to combine with visits further afield to the many national parks (Yala National Park is particularly good for spotting leopards) or surfing in Arugam Bay, this lesser-known area on the 'pearl of the Indian Ocean' has charms galore.

What to do Follow the sounds from Kandasamy Kovil, the revered historical Hindu temple nestled on top of a rocky hill, at sunrise. Weave your way through the flocks of locals en route to morning *pooja* (prayers) and take in sweeping views across land and water, picking up a glass of freshly squeezed lime juice from a rustic café on the way. The daily fish market on Konesar Road is the place to immerse yourself in the flavours of Tamil cuisine: roam the bustling stalls where freshly caught crab, barracuda and squid take centre stage alongside myriad fruit and veg, including snake gourds and mangoes. Just like the culinary offerings, the Maritime and Naval History Museum, on Dockyard Road, is a treasure trove of influence – Sri Lankan naval history dates back to the 16th century, when the Dutch first landed on the island. Housed in a grand 18th-century colonial building, you'll also learn of the flora and fauna found locally and on nearby Pigeon Island. Beyond Trinco, white-sand beaches stretch for miles. However, Dutch Bay, in the centre of town, makes for a picturesque stroll along the fishing-boat-strewn shores, with an ice cream from one of the many beach-side vendors in hand.

Where to stay From the secluded private beach and glistening lagoon to snorkelling at the nearby coral reefs or reclining in the spa, Jungle Beach resort 00 94 26 567 1000, ugaescapes.com

has everything you could want from a luxurious lodging. Contemporary design reigns at Anilana Nilaveli 00 94 11 203 0900 anilana.com where accents of dark wood, colourful textiles and vintage maps create a contemporary yet calming atmosphere. The rooftop bar provides stellar views of the surrounding coconut grove and shimmering seas. Perched on the meandering Pillaikulam Aru River, Amaranthé Bay 00 94 26 205 0200, amaranthebay.com makes for a friendly retreat with a good number of organised day trips, from visiting the hot-water springs to whale watching. For those who want to take full advantage of the waterside location, the seafront rooms at Trinco Blu by Cinnamon 00 94 11 230 6600, cinnamonhotels.com come with picturesque balconies, while the on-site water sports centre offers copious activities.

Where to eat The cuisine in Trinco has also been shaped by historical changes, with local dishes influenced by Portuguese, Dutch and South Indian settlers. Now, you'll find a vivid array of flavour combinations, from sour lime pickle to sweet caramelised onion relish. Curries and sambars are the name of the game, so head to Anna Poomi Vegetarian Restaurant 00 94 265 679 999 a bustling locals' favourite, to savour simple plates of the best in town just a stone's throw away from the Kali Kovil temple. Set on the shore of the bay, Dutch Bank Café grandthalassic.com serves local cakes, fiery curries and freshly caught grilled fish with panoramic views. Head to the New Parrot Restaurant 00 94 265 670 510 in the centre of town for its popular noodle dishes, fried hoppers (pancakes) and *kottu* (savory chopped roti) or, for a lighter eat, head to Happy Cream House, on Central Road, where you'll find samosas and restorative freshly squeezed juices.

Time running out Migrating blue whales pass by in March and April, and are regularly sighted alongside spinner dolphins. Swami Rock is a good vantage point from which to spot them.

Trip tip The white sands and coral gardens of Pigeon Island, just north of Trinco, offer an idyllic spot to hike, snorkel and spot turtles.

Travel information

Currency is the Sri Lankan rupee. Time is five and a half hours ahead of GMT. Journey time from London is around 18 hours.

Getting there

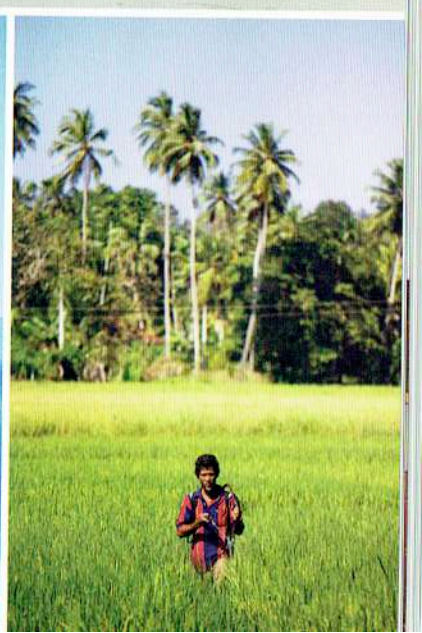
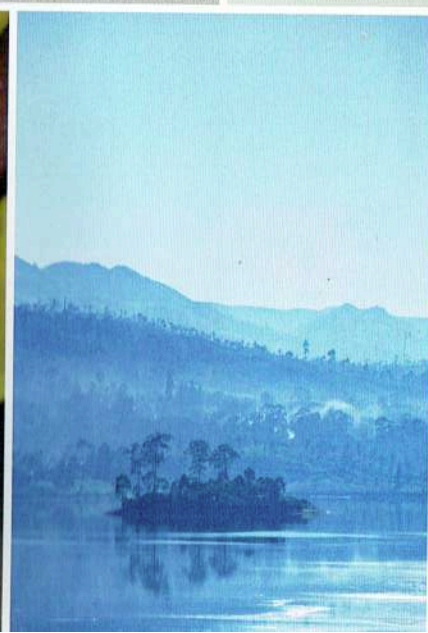
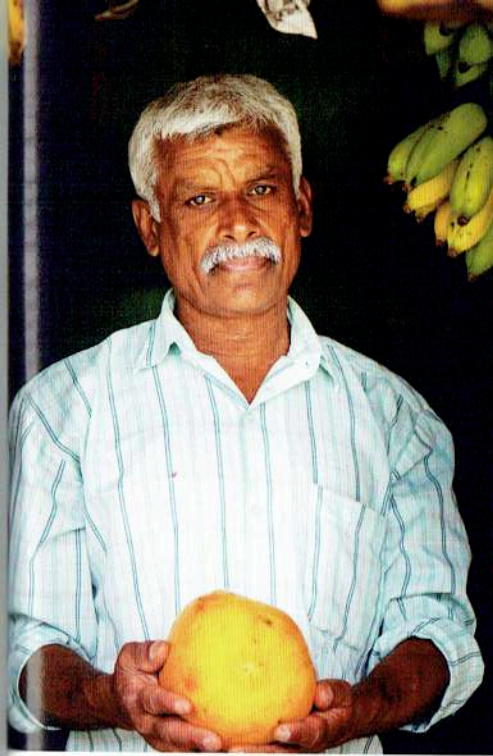
Emirates fly from Heathrow and Gatwick to Colombo via Dubai. From Colombo you can connect to Trincomalee. emirates.com

Sri Lankan Airlines go from Colombo Bandaranaike airport to Trincomalee in around 1.5 hours. srilankan.com

AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min C	25	26	26	27	27	27	27	26	26	26	25	25
Max C	27	28	30	32	33	33	32	33	32	30	28	27
mm	6	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	7	12	12

Clockwise from top left: locally grown papaya on display; colourful Tamil festival; tea estates rub shoulders with vegetable terraces; a tea picker in the fields; fresh produce at market; tuk-tuk drivers await custom; a worker tending to the paddy fields; dawn over a misty lakeside; freshly split coconut; fishermen at work; socialising under shade



Photos by Sarah Coghill and Julian Love