

Discovering Arugambay Beyond Surfing: Why You Should Visit from October to March



Arugambay, located on the southeastern coast of Sri Lanka, is famous as one of the world's premier surfing destinations. While it draws surfers from all over the globe during the peak season from April to September, the months from October to March reveal a quieter, more peaceful side of this coastal gem. From October to March, Arugambay transforms into a tranquil retreat, offering rich cultural experiences, extraordinary wildlife encounters, and serene natural beauty that go far beyond the surf.

Words Noa Ben-Ari. **Photography** BT Images.

In this article, we explore why Arugambay is an unmissable destination from October to March, highlighting its peaceful beaches, abundant wildlife, and stunning sunrises and sunsets, along with cultural gems like Okanda Temple and Kudumbigala Monastery.

A Serene and Picturesque Beach Retreat

From October to March, Arugambay's beaches offer a sense of peace and solitude that's perfect for those seeking relaxation. The absence of large crowds means the soft, golden sands are practically yours to enjoy. Whether it's lounging in the sun or taking long walks along the shoreline, you can soak in the tranquil surroundings without distraction.

One of the most magical aspects of being at Arugambay during this time is experiencing both sunrise and sunset. The eastern location of Arugambay means that it is one of the best places in Sri Lanka to watch the sunrise. The early morning skies are painted with hues of pink, purple, and gold, with the sun slowly rising over the Indian Ocean, casting its warm glow across the calm waters. Waking up early to witness this natural spectacle is a must for any visitor.

And while the sunrise is stunning, don't miss out on the sunset either. The beaches of Arugambay face slightly southwest, making for incredible sunset views as well. Watching the sun sink below the horizon, with the sky ablaze in shades of orange, red, and purple, is the perfect way to end a peaceful day. Whether you're on the beach or enjoying the view from one of the nearby hills, the sunset experience in Arugambay is unforgettable.

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The sun-kissed green paddy field shimmers with vibrant energy!



Enjoy the enchanting allure of nature as the sun sets over Arugambay!

Lush Green Landscapes: Paddy Fields and Agriculture

A short distance from the coast, Arugambay is surrounded by lush green paddy fields that stretch out as far as the eye can see. These fields, dotted with coconut palms and small vegetable farms, come alive, offering a peaceful and refreshing sight.

Visitors can explore the countryside by bike or on foot, enjoying the tranquil scenery. The cool weather makes it the perfect time for leisurely rides or walks through the paddy fields, where you can observe local farmers going about their daily routines, often with the assistance of water buffaloes. The landscape, with its uninterrupted greenery and lack of high-rise buildings, provides a beautiful

contrast to the urban hustle many travelers are seeking to escape.



Travellers capturing the unique experience of seeing elephants roaming near the paddy fields.



Be captivated by the awe-inspiring presence of majestic giants and the vibrant birdlife that paints the skies with breathtaking displays.



Amazing elephant sighting in Lahugala.

Wildlife Encounters: Elephants Roaming Freely

One of the most unique aspects of visiting Arugambay is the opportunity to witness wildlife, particularly elephants, in a way that feels both raw and natural. Unlike many places where wildlife is confined to national parks, the region around Arugambay allows for up-close encounters with wild elephants in their natural environment, even outside the designated reserves. It's not uncommon to spot these majestic creatures wandering through the countryside, especially near the villages of Panama and Pottuvil, or grazing peacefully alongside paddy fields.

These encounters with wild elephants are unforgettable and often happen in unexpected places—along the road, near the lagoons, or at the edge of the forest. This natural coexistence between humans and wildlife is one of the most authentic and awe-inspiring experiences visitors can have in Sri Lanka.

Leopards and Migratory Birds in Kumana National Park

Just a short distance from Arugambay lies Kumana National Park, a haven for

wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers. While Kumana is best known for its incredible birdlife, it is also home to leopards, one of Sri Lanka's most elusive and fascinating predators. Sightings of leopards are rare but highly sought after, and the months from October to March provide a cooler and more comfortable environment for wildlife safaris.

Kumana is also a paradise for birdwatchers. The park becomes a hotspot for migratory birds, including rare species such as the black-necked stork, painted storks, egrets, pelicans, and spoonbills. The park's wetlands, lagoons, and mangroves provide an ideal habitat for these birds, making it one of Sri Lanka's most important bird sanctuaries. The sheer diversity and beauty of the birdlife during these months make Kumana a must-visit for anyone with an interest in ornithology or nature photography.

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One of the majestic and marvelous creatures of nature.



A watchful gathering of spotted deer.



A vibrant gathering of Painted Stork.



A flock of Barn Swallows.

Cultural Exploration: Okanda Temple and Kudumbigala Monastery

Arugambay is not just a haven for beach lovers and wildlife enthusiasts, but also a region rich in history and culture. Two important sites that are worth visiting are Okanda Temple and Kudumbigala Monastery.

Okanda Temple: Perched near the entrance to Kumana National Park, Okanda Temple is a sacred pilgrimage site for Hindus and Buddhists alike. It is dedicated to God Murugan, the Hindu god of war, and is a significant stop for pilgrims on their way to Kataragama. The temple sits on a hill that offers breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding wilderness and the Indian Ocean. The spiritual energy and serene atmosphere make it a must-visit during your stay in Arugambay.

Kudumbigala Monastery: For those seeking a more off-the-beaten-path experience, the Kudumbigala Monastery provides a peaceful retreat into Sri Lanka's ancient past. This remote Buddhist monastery, hidden away in the jungle and surrounded by rocky hills, dates back over 2,000 years. A climb to the top of Kudumbigala's rocky outcrop rewards visitors with panoramic views of the jungle

and coastline below, making the effort well worth it. The ruins of stupas, caves, and inscriptions add to the mystical allure of this site.

Both Okanda Temple and Kudumbigala Monastery offer travelers a chance to connect with Sri Lanka's deep spiritual and cultural heritage, providing a sense of history and serenity that perfectly complements the natural beauty of Arugambay.

Muhudu Maha Viharaya: This ancient Buddhist temple near Pottuvil is believed to be over 2,000 years old. It holds great historical significance and is thought to mark the spot where Princess Viharamaha Devi was brought ashore after being set adrift as a sacrifice. The temple's stone ruins and statues offer a serene setting for those interested in history and spirituality.

Magul Maha Viharaya: Another significant historical site, Magul Maha Viharaya is located within the Lahugala National Park. Built by King Kavantissa, this temple complex is said to have been the location of his marriage to Princess Viharamaha Devi. The jungle surrounding the temple adds to its mystical and secluded ambiance.



Muhudu Maha Viharaya, set against the backdrop of the sand dunes.



Ruins of Magul Maha Viharaya, with the jungle surrounding the site, providing a mystical and tranquil atmosphere.



Okanda temple dedicated to lord Murugan.



Discover the rich history of the ancient Kudumbigala rock monastery.

Exploring Traditional Village Life

Beyond the wildlife and natural landscapes, Arugambay offers a glimpse into traditional Sri Lankan village life. The surrounding area is dotted with small villages where agriculture plays a central role in daily life.

Paddy farming, coconut harvesting, and fishing are the main livelihoods for many local communities. Visiting these villages allows travelers to experience the simplicity and authenticity of rural Sri Lanka, where life moves at a slower pace, and the connection to the land is deeply rooted in culture.

Urani Lagoon, located just north of Arugambay, is a beautiful and tranquil spot where visitors can take boat tours through the calm waters, exploring the mangroves and witnessing traditional fishing practices.

The lagoon is also home to a variety of wildlife, including crocodiles and waterbirds, adding an element of adventure to the experience.



Experience the breathtaking view of Arugambay fishing village at sunset, with colorful boats lined up along the shore, creating a picture-perfect scene!



Fishermen in action - the Arugambay fishing village is a hive of activity.



A family of grey langurs relaxed in the evening glow.



The herdsmen guiding their cows into safe enclosures.

Wellness, and Rejuvenation: Yoga in Paradise

Arugambay is an excellent destination for those seeking relaxation and rejuvenation. Several wellness resorts and guesthouses offer yoga and meditation retreats, making use of the serene surroundings and peaceful atmosphere. It is the perfect time to join a retreat, as the fewer tourists mean more personal attention from instructors and a greater sense of tranquility.

Yoga sessions on the beach at sunrise or sunset are especially popular, allowing visitors to start or end their day immersed in the natural beauty of Arugambay. The combination of wellness, nature, and peace makes it the perfect destination for reconnecting with yourself and the environment.

Adventure and Ecotourism: Beyond Surfing

For adventurers, Arugambay offers a variety of outdoor activities beyond surfing. The nearby forests, lagoons, and national parks provide ample opportunities for ecotourism.

Hiking and Trekking: The nearby national parks and forests provide opportunities for hiking and trekking. You can explore jungle trails, discover hidden waterfalls, or take a guided trek to ancient ruins.

Lagoon Tours: Kayaking or boating through the tranquil waters of Pottuvil Lagoon is an excellent way to explore the area's mangroves, spot wildlife, and experience the serenity of the lagoon ecosystem.

Cycling: Rent a bicycle and explore the backroads, passing through paddy fields, coconut groves, and small villages at your own pace. The cooler weather makes cycling a delightful way to explore the area.

Culinary Adventures: A Taste of Sri Lanka

Arugambay's culinary scene offers a delicious array of traditional Sri Lankan dishes. From rice and curry to kottu roti and fresh seafood, there's something to satisfy every palate. Local eateries are less crowded, giving you more opportunities to interact with locals and enjoy the island's flavors at a relaxed pace.

Some restaurants also offer cooking classes, where you can learn to prepare Sri Lankan dishes and bring home a taste of the island.



Lagoon safari is a popular ecotourism activity.



Gliding through the mangroves in Urani Lagoon.



Pedaling down the open road on a glorious, sun-drenched day!

Arugambay is much more than just a surfing destination. From October to March, this coastal paradise transforms into a serene retreat where visitors can enjoy the beauty of sunrises and sunsets, explore wildlife-rich landscapes, and connect with Sri Lanka's rich cultural history through visits to Okanda Temple and Kudumbigala Monastery. Whether you're looking for a peaceful getaway, a wildlife adventure, or a cultural immersion, Arugambay offers something for every traveler.

For those seeking a unique and tranquil escape, Arugambay is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered.

Noa Ben-Ari is an Israeli travel writer and journalist with a passion for exploring lesser-known destinations around the world. She has written for several international travel publications, focusing on eco-tourism, wildlife conservation, and cultural experiences. With a background in anthropology, Noa brings a unique perspective to her travel writing, weaving together narratives that highlight the connection between people, nature, and place. In November 2023, she spent time in Arugambay, Sri Lanka, experiencing the region's charm and the quiet beauty of its wildlife and landscapes.