



The serene view along the Hakmana - Akuressa road

**Generally, when travelling in the south, one would think about the ocean and beaches. Yet, driving through alternative routes that traverse inland, the experience is of lush greenery and resplendent village scenery.**

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Journeying from Beliatte to Hakmana and then through Kamburupitiya and Akuressa to Matara, we passed resplendent landscapes that are relaxing to the mind. Vast extents of paddy fields spread out before us as far as the eye can see, almost merging with the evening sky.

Wild yellow flowers similar to the sunflower added colour to the green monotone. With the arrival of the monsoon rains, the paddy fields were being prepared. Farmers were ploughing the land, while flocks of white egrets pecked on the newly turned soil. The white against the rich brown of the soaked mud was a beautiful contrast in colour. With the approaching sounds, the birds took flight as a blur of white. A quaint stupa glistened in the distance, thus creating a postcard moment.

To relieve your mind or to simply enjoy a smooth drive, head on this alternative route to Matara and you are bound to have a relaxing experience.

The road stretched on, providing snapshots of a simplistic life. The sky was transforming into various hues and towers, stood tall almost in a line like great sentinels across the paddy fields. Farther along, a curious site met our eyes; near the main road and in a more suburban area, a couple of peacocks were busily feeding in a golden-yellow paddy field. We encountered a few more as we drove along. We soon crossed the bridge over a glorious river. The pale evening sun was beautifully reflected on the water.



A flock of egrets take flight as a farmer ploughs the soil preparing for the next season

Passing small towns, we drove along the road. In Kamburupitiya, the symbol of the 1991 Gam Udawa stood in the centre of the road, an unusual element in the otherwise simplistic environment. Enjoying the peace and quiet away from the busy sounds of the metropolis, we continued on our journey. The lush greenery and waterways were breathtaking. Agriculture being the primary livelihood of the area, we soon drove over the bund of a lake that provided water via its canals to the paddy fields. The view was peaceful and while people travelled along the road, there were no loud sounds as everyone was aware of the tranquility of the surroundings.

We reached a forested area. We could not believe that a short distance away was the sun-kissed beaches of the south. Along bends we navigated, the tree cover limited the light coming through, it was a surreal experience.



The dramatic scene of dusk approaching Matara

Upon emerging out of the forest, we were mesmerised by the orange-hued sky glowing over the paddy fields. Farmers and egrets too were still at work though dusk had already taken over and night was approaching. The sun began its descent creating beautiful and also vibrant designs in the sky as well as on the land. Coconut trees formed silhouettes that were similar to a picturesque painting. Peaceful solitude prevailed as we journeyed on.

To relieve your mind or to simply enjoy a smooth drive, head on this alternative route to Matara and you are bound to have a relaxing experience that reflects the simple life of Sri Lanka.

## To Hakmana and Beyond

