



Hidden Treasures of Galle

INDIAN OCEAN

GALLE

# Hidden Treasures of Galle

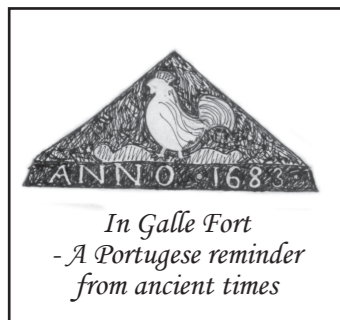
Galle is Sri Lanka's Rainforest City and we at Rainforest Rescue International, would like to invite you to experience some of its wonders and treasures. This map will help you to find them.

To find out more about our rainforest ecotours to Kottowa arboretum, Kanneliya forest reserve and Sinharaja forest reserve contact us at:

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**Rainforest Rescue International**  
working for a sustainably managed world

The historical Galle Fort has been a famed destination for exotic spices and ocean trade for over 300 years. Legend has it that in 1505, a Portuguese sailor lost with his damaged ship heard cockerels crowing in the harbour village so sailed into the harbour. The town then took the name Gallo which is the Portuguese word for cockerel. Trade has slowed in the modern day with the establishment of alternative designations on the island but if you are lucky and willing to explore you can experience glimpses of the past in rarer and more unique treasures. Once you leave the city and the fort behind you will notice a lush



In Galle Fort  
- A Portuguese reminder  
from ancient times

emerald green Rainforest environment with an abundance of large trees, clean streams with multicolored fish such as the ruby striped cherry barb, a staggering variety of birdlife such as the blue magpie and larger inhabitants such as the elusive fishing cat and the ever present purple faced leaf monkey.

The hills and countryside surrounding Galle, harbour more than 70% of the country's biodiversity. For example 3% of the world's frog species are found within a few hours travel from Galle.

We at Rainforest Rescue International, Galle, have identified some interesting and unusual natural heritage sites for your experience and enjoyment during your visit to Galle: Rainforest City.

The Natural Treasures of Galle are free for you to enjoy but please remember to only leave your footprints behind.

## 1. Vegalmodura Mangrove Trail

This is a good walking/biking trail about 5.5km long (but better in the early morning before it gets too hot). On this trail you can see common and rare mangrove species, egrets, lapwings, green bitterns, cormorants, kingfishers, bee eaters, eagles and many other wetland birds.



The Kirila fruit,  
from which a delicious  
juice can be made

A nice trail to see some traditional practices of Sri Lanka: brush pile fishery (using branches and organic matter to create an 'artificial mangrove' to attract fish before netting); coconut harvesting (see how many uses there are for coconut!); rice paddies and a small Buddhist shrine.

Unfortunately this area is threatened by local communities who clear the mangroves for timber and firewood. In Sri Lanka the mangrove ecosystem is down to 0.5% of its original coverage. This rate of loss can be seen in mangroves throughout the globe.

\*Mangrove is actually the common name for a species of plant with special adaptations to saline conditions which grow on the shores of lagoons. Mangroves as a habitat are unique ecosystems with many specially adapted plants and animals. A natural barrier against extreme coastal weather, Mangroves are credited with saving thousands of lives during the Tsunami disaster of South Asia.

## 4. Wakkwella Wetland

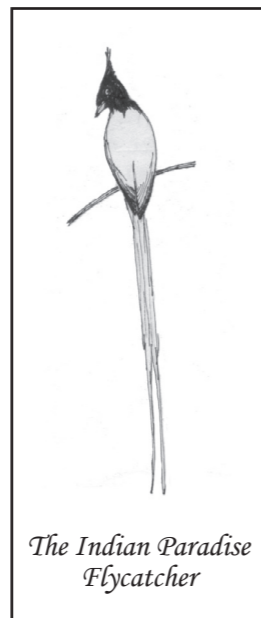
A great place for bird watching, especially for those who are not so keen on walking. From Galle, continue down Wakkwella Road, through Wakkwella village until you reach a bridge over the wetland – this is Sri Lanka's longest bridge. The whole surrounding area is beautiful. You can see purple herons, lapwings, whiskered terns, brahminy kites, jacanas, moorhens, indian rollers and many more wetland birds.



The Common Heron

## 5. Birdwatcher's Paradise (Labuduwa Forest Patch)

To reach this beautiful hill top forest area, follow the Labuduwa Road past the Advanced Technical Institute. Park your vehicle near the post office and take the steps on the right just after the Labuduwa Post Office and Shop. Follow the steps and various paths which take you up and up. The last stretch of path is not clear but the undergrowth is not too thick and you can take any route up to the top. At the top of the hill there is a small shrine and amazing views over Galle to the ocean. It is also a fantastic place to do some bird-watching. Among the species sighted here are the changeable hawk eagle, indian paradise fly-catcher, black-headed oreole, orange minivet, grek, grackle lorakeet and the pompadour green pigeon.



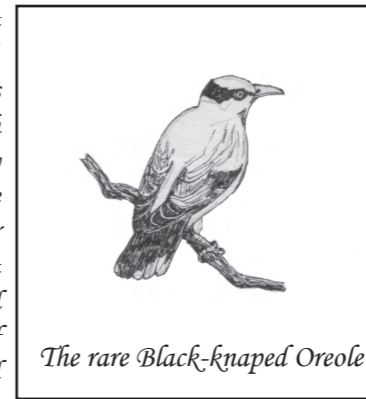
The Indian Paradise  
Flycatcher

## 6. Kapu Ela River Safari

The Kepu Canal (called Kapu Ela by local people) is very close to the Gin River and flows through the same wetland habitat. It is possible to take a boat along the river, a perfect way to spot the local bird and animal life.

## 2. Beekke Lake

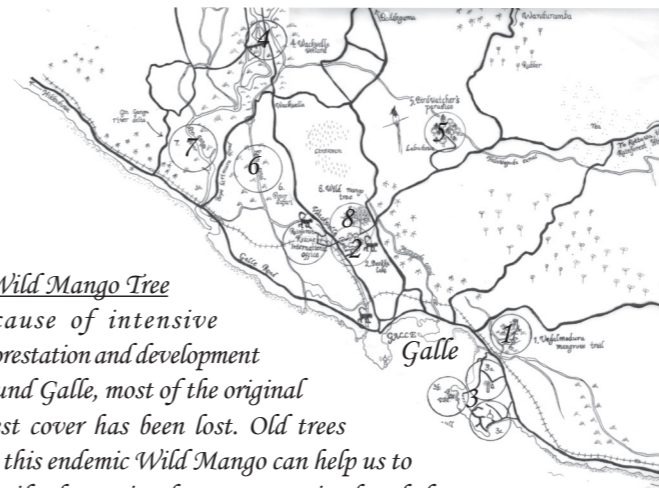
A wonderful remnant forest which is beautifully preserved, only 3 km from Galle Fort, this urban forest can be accessed with permission from the Municipality (contact RRI). This forest-lake ecosystem is a vital harbour for the biodiversity of Galle. A short walk through the jungle will offer a visitor many sightings of endemic amphibians, birds and butterflies. It's a beautiful place where you can see large groups of the endangered purple face leaf monkeys and birds congregating on rainforest trees. A black knaped oriole was recently spotted here, the first confirmed sighting in 126 years. If you want to be adventurous, ask a local to show you the way.



The rare Black-knaped Oriole

## 8. Wild Mango Tree

Because of intensive deforestation and development around Galle, most of the original forest cover has been lost. Old trees like this endemic Wild Mango can help us to identify the species that were growing here before, so that we can replant and restore some of the original forest. There is a temple at this site which was built as a shrine to the tree which is about 350 years old. Buddhist people normally worship the Bo tree, but this is a classic example of how other old trees were and still are worshipped. It is situated on the road between Beligaha and Ulagahawa junctions.



A traditional Sri Lankan fishing boat

## 7. Gin Ganga River Delta

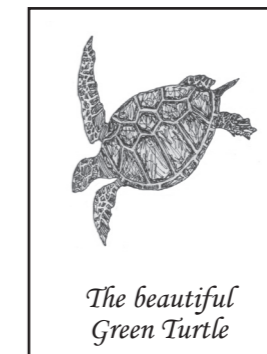
This beautiful area stretches from Gintota where the Gin River passes under the road and into the sea all the way to Wakkwella Wetland (site number four). If you turn off Galle Road at Gintota onto Bope Hirimura Road and drive inland you can follow the river and wetland as far as Wakkwella. On the delta there are many wetland bird species, water monitors and a species of endemic palm, the Gin Pol which grows only in this area.

## 3. Rumasala Hill

On Rumasala Hill, a headland before Unawatuna bay, you can find several points of interest which may be visited as part of a nice circular trail, about 5km long (very steep in parts). On this hill are many medicinal plants which, according to local legend, were brought here from the Himalayas by Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god who came here to fight with the Sri Lankan king, Ravana. Take Galle Road southbound out of Galle and turn right onto Buona Vista Road after the Relax Inn.

### 3a. Lighthouse View Point

Turn left off Buona Vista Road, and next to a beautiful white Buddhist dagoba you will find an ancient lighthouse built by the British in 1875. Continue on the path past the lighthouse and pagoda over big flat rocks to amazing views over the Vegalmodura mangrove and inland areas (on a good day people say you can even see Adam's peak). Go down over the rocks a further 10m to a small shelter, perfect for a picnic and a short break from the sun. At this site you can see many butterflies and lizards on the rocks.



The beautiful  
Green Turtle

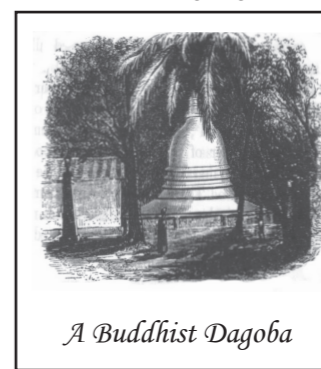
### 3b. Jungle beach

From Lighthouse view point, go back to Buona Vista Road and ask a local for the road to Jungle Beach which is otherwise hard to find. A steep and at times slippery trail leads down to a beautiful secluded beach where you can take a refreshing swim or go snorkeling to see the beautiful coral reef that lies here. Amongst the species you might see here are the moorish idol

fish, longfin banner fish, barracuda, spotfin firefish, groupers and the butterfly fish. If you're lucky you may even be able to catch a glimpse of the beautiful green turtle.

\*A coral restoration project is being carried out here by the Nature Conservation Group who have an office on Buona Vista Road on the way up.

After your swim, continue round to the left of the bay over the rocks onto a footpath which takes you round the headland. The cliff on the right once had a waterfall which was used as a watering point for boats on their way across the Indian Ocean. You will pass two more beaches before the end of the path (from where you can see the Japanese Peace pagoda on the hill above Unawatuna. Take the well defined track up the hill on your left and continue up to the main road. On this route you can see many butterflies including the common crow, blue tiger, common rose and sailor species. This area was severely affected by coral bleaching from the El Nino phenomenon and coral was further damaged during the tsunami. Ongoing threats include unsustainable fishing practices and pollution.



A Buddhist Dagoba

### 3c. Japanese Peace pagoda

Built by a peace initiative from Japan, this pagoda is situated in a beautiful place looking out over Galle bay and south towards Unawatuna. From here, you can either go back to Galle Road on Buona Vista Road, or continue south round and down the headland to Unawatuna bay.



Common Tiger  
Butterfly