



# On the Road

News and Features from Tsunami-Affected Regions

► On the Road

Browse by Author

Browse by Region

Africa

Americas

Asia

Australasia & Pacific

Europe

Middle East



Raj Pragash, owner and manager of the French Garden Pragash Guest House in Uppuveli.  
Photos by Ethan Gelber

## New environmental regulations could change beach tourism

by [Ethan Gelber](#), Lonely Planet Author

Raj Pragash's father bought this seafront property in Uppuveli, just north of Trincomalee town, in 1957, long before the village evolved into an international beach getaway. In 1979, he opened his hotel, the French Garden Pragash Guest House, which has never closed its doors despite civil war and even the December 26, 2004 tsunami.

Possibly more devastating to Raj's business than the damage brought on by natural disaster are impending government regulations. The Sri Lankan government has called for an island-wrapping Coastal Conservation Zone (CCZ), a buffer 'to better safeguard the lives of the coastal population and to protect the coastal environment from any future disasters.' The CCZ will extend 200m inland from the mean high water line in the north and the east, and 100m in the south and the west (with restrictions on construction in the interior 200meters).

With a few exceptions, no new development will be allowed inside the CCZ, and damaged structures within this perimeter will be barred from being repaired.

In theory, the proposed CCZ is progressive environmental planning at its best. In order to survive the reach of future killer waters, concluded government officials, Sri Lanka's commercial development needs to be shielded by a natural bulwark. The undisturbed mangrove forests and saltwater lagoons that rim the east coast proved that natural



Wreckage of the French Garden Pragash Guest House a few days after the tsunami and the repair work completed at the end of February. Before picture courtesy of Raj Pragash.

[All Tsunami Coverage](#)

[download book updates](#)



Check back frequently for downloadable pdf updates for [Sri Lanka 9th edition](#).

- >> [Jaffna & the North v1.0](#)  
updated 03.2005
- >> [The East v1.0](#)  
updated 03.2005
- >> [West Coast v1.0](#)  
updated 03.2005

[post-tsunami updates](#)

Country-specific info on the tsunami recovery progress.

- >> Country update for [Sri Lanka](#)
- >> [View all updates](#)

[tsunami impact maps](#)

Maps of the tsunami-impacted region.

- >> Map of [Sri Lanka](#)
- >> [View regional map](#)

[thorn tree travel forum](#)

Discuss travel and recovery in regions affected by the tsunami.

- >> [Post-Tsunami Recovery](#)
- >> [View all topics](#)

[postcards](#)

Up-to-date travel reports from Lonely Planet readers.

- >> [Postcards from Sri Lanka](#)
- >> [View all Postcards](#)

environments are specifically suited for absorbing the unexpected punch of a tsunami. By contrast, in heavily developed and densely populated regions, especially in the south and west, the toll was very high.

In order to maintain economic vitality, the CCZ does allow for development within the buffer zone for the hospitality industry. But this exception is applicable only to a small minority of hotels that are registered with the Ceylon Tourist Board. A representative from the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (Tafren) said that 'out of the 67 [hotels registered with the tourist board], 40 to 50 are group hotels or big individual hotels with the backing of a group or company and privately insured.' Six of these registered hotels were damaged or washed off, continued the representative, and the rest are in operation. 'The government is confident that these hotels are back on their feet.' (For more on Tafren, see [Bouncing Back and Building Up.](#))

page 1 of 2 | [next >>](#)

---

*More information is available at Lonely Planet's [Tsunami Update](#) section.*





# On the Road

## News and Features from Tsunami-Affected Regions

▶ On the Road

Browse by Author

Browse by Region

Africa

Americas

Asia

Australasia & Pacific

Europe

Middle East

### Getting in the Zone (continued)

by [Ethan Gelber](#), Lonely Planet Author

[<< previous](#) | page 2 of 2

-----  
 Yet a recent (and still incomplete) Ministry of Tourism assessment reveals that damage to unregistered enterprises, primarily small family-owned hotels, was far greater. More than 100 hundred hotels and as many as 200 guesthouses were affected by the tsunami. 'Ninety percent of hotels [and guesthouses] affected are within the 100 meters [no-development zone].' said the Tafren representative. And the CCZ regulations do little to address these concerns.



Damage at the Dyke Corner Inn in Trincomalee a few days after the tsunami and the repair work completed at the end of February. Before picture courtesy of Dyke Corner Inn.

'How to help them out is yet to be identified. We'll have to come up with some guidelines for them. We understand that small places are part of the industry, but there has to be criteria for rebuilding tourism.' The representative went on to predict that if the current CCZ directives are put into effect, 'the tourism industry will come to a halt.'

The government's commitment to maintaining these local businesses appears to be contradicted by reports from the Bounce Back Sri Lanka Programme, a public-relations campaign designed to encourage tourism after the tsunami. According to the report, officials see beachfront rebuilding efforts as a way to gentrify Sri Lanka's former backpacker enclaves. (For more, see Bouncing Back and Building Up.) The CCZ also faces additional challenges from the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission, which has begun the process of legal action based on the buffer zone's questionable legality, relevance and scientific basis.

In the meantime, rebuilding within the CCZ continues. Looking at construction materials set amidst breeze-stirred palm trees, Raj still seemed determined. 'I will rebuild this now, but if I also have to build another area 100m or 200m back, I guess I will do that too. This older part can be the 'New Old French Garden' and the other part the 'New French Garden.'" In Trincomalee, the Dyke Inn, which backs directly onto Dutch Bay, has already completed refurbishing work. In Nilaveli, the full reconstruction of the flattened Hotel Coral Bay is nearly accomplished.

[All Tsunami Coverage](#)

[download book updates](#)



Check back frequently for downloadable pdf updates for [Sri Lanka 9th edition](#).

>> [Jaffna & the North v1.0](#)  
updated 03.2005

>> [The East v1.0](#)  
updated 03.2005

>> [West Coast v1.0](#)  
updated 03.2005

[post-tsunami updates](#)

Country-specific info on the tsunami recovery progress.

>> Country update for [Sri Lanka](#)

>> [View all updates](#)

[tsunami impact maps](#)

Maps of the tsunami-impacted region.

>> Map of [Sri Lanka](#)

>> [View regional map](#)

[thorn tree travel forum](#)

Discuss travel and recovery in regions affected by the tsunami.

>> [Post-Tsunami Recovery](#)

>> [View all topics](#)

[postcards](#)

Up-to-date travel reports from Lonely Planet readers.

>> [Postcards from Sri Lanka](#)

>> [View all Postcards](#)

In Arugam Bay, many unregistered hotel owners have invested significant time and money and don't know what will happen in the future. Fred Netzband-Miller of the Siam View Hotel, one of only a few registered enterprises in Arugam Bay, recognized that the CCZ and its enforcement are complex issues. 'The rule cannot be implemented at Arugam Bay unless an attractive offer is made to residents to change their minds and leave peacefully to a new location. Hardly anyone wishes to vacate the beach area.'

---



#### About Ethan Gelber

Born in New York City, Ethan is a devoted sojourner (six continents well covered, often by bicycle) and co-author of Lonely Planet's *Cycling in Italy*. He currently lives with his fiancée in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where he is involved in many writing projects.

#### More Stories

- [Forgotten Weh Island](#)
- [Flight to Meulaboh](#)
- [Bachelors of Lampuuk](#)
- [Meaning of Home](#)

#### Featured Blogs

- From Lonely Planet Authors on the road in [Sri Lanka](#), [Maldives](#), [Indonesia](#), [India](#) and [Thailand](#).

[<< previous](#) | page 2 of 2

---

More information is available at Lonely Planet's [Tsunami Update](#) section.

