

SRI LANKA – FACTS & FIGURES



"A Land Like No Other"

Why Sri Lanka?

Sri Lanka, the teardrop shaped island in the Indian Ocean, has been the center of attention since ancient times due to its strategic location and the natural harbors. Traders, European powers and monarchies of other countries vied to extend their power over the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean"

The captivating natural beauty and treasures of Sri Lanka left the legendary 13th-century explorer Marco Polo entranced that he deemed Sri Lanka "The finest island of its size in all the world".

"The island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) is a small universe; it contains as many variations of culture, scenery and climate as some countries a dozen times its size" – Sir Arthur C. Clarke

An island famed for her resplendent beauty, "Unsurpassed on the face of the Earth" according to Mahathma Gandhi, of her centuries old history, culture and traditions beckons you for a holiday among the warm and serene smiles, happy and welcoming greetings of the most friendly and hospitable race of people.

The great scholar and traveler monk Fa-Hien also mentions in his travel journal that; "The people of various countries heard how pleasant the land was and flocked in numbers...."

The exquisite splendor of Sri Lanka has been discussed and admired since time immemorial.

"The (climate) is temperate and attractive without any difference of summer and winter. The vegetation is always luxuriant."

“Sri Lanka has topped many polls as the ‘place to go’.....it offers beaches, wildlife, scenery, food and culture” says Tom Hall in ‘The Guardian.uk’.

“The north has so much to offer - its Sri Lanka’s next booming tourism center. The main draw are the beaches – they’re sensational.” Says Cricket legend Ian Botham, England's leading wicket taker.

“The (climate) is temperate and attractive without any difference of summer and winter. The vegetation is always luxuriant.” If golden beaches, rising waves, misty mountains, lush greenery, mighty elephants, stealthy leopards, giant whales, a majestic past, lovely tea, scrumptious food, great surf and warm smiles are in your itinerary for a dream holiday, Sri Lanka is certainly the dream destination for you! Sri Lanka also boasts of 8 UNESCO World Heritage sites, making her one of the must-visit destinations in the world. Nature lovers, adventurous spirits, spiritual souls, wave lovers, honeymoon couples, learning students, seniors, families and the weary souls seeking to do nothing but spend days at leisure would all find their hearts’ content here in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka offers a varied choice of cuisine for the food enthusiast; the staple food, rice and an assortment of curries that range in potency from delicately spiced to near dynamite, Kiri bath and sambol, hoppers and string hopper, pittu, wade and the all-time favorite Kottu Roti! The island caters to a wide range of needs providing something to everyone.

‘Ayubowan’! May you live long and enjoy every minute you spend in this wondrous isle...

Location & Physical Features

Sri Lanka, an island in the Indian Ocean is located to the south of the Indian subcontinent. It lies between 5 55' and 9 55' north of the equator and between the eastern longitudes 79 42' and 81 52. The total land area is 65,610 sq km and is astonishingly varied. A length of 445 km and breadth of 225 km. encompasses beautiful tropical beaches, verdant vegetation, ancient monuments and a thousand delights to please all tastes. The relief features of the island consist of a mountainous mass somewhat south of the centre, with height exceeding 2,500 meters, surrounded by broad plains. Palm fringed beaches surround the island and the sea temperature rarely falls below 27 C.

The Land

Sri Lanka lies 10 degrees north of the Equator and south east of India, separated from it by the Gulf of Mannar, Palk's Bay and Palk Strait, which at its narrowest point, Rameswaram in India and the Jaffna Peninsula, is less than 80 km wide. The sea crossing between Rameswaram in India, and Mannar Island, off the northwest coast of Sri Lanka, is only around 32km.

There is evidence of a natural land bridge connecting Sri Lanka with India at this point, and indeed this vanished causeway, only a few meters below sea level, is still known as Adam's Bridge. This close proximity to the subcontinent has meant that Sri Lanka's history and ecology have always been exposed to strong influences from its larger neighbour.

Climate & Seasons

Only 640km north of the equator, Sri Lanka's tropical climate shows little seasonal variation in temperature. Around the coasts, temperatures hover between 26 C and 28 C, with a mean temperature in the capital of 27.5C inland, however, average temperatures are very much cooler. From May to September, the southwest monsoon deposits heavy rain on the southwest coasts, from Colombo to Galle, and also raise heavy seas which make swimming and diving unattractive. The worst intensity of the monsoon is from November to February, but this will have little impact on most visitors, as the main resort areas and visitor attractions are concentrated in the south and the central hills. Local thunderstorms can occur at any time of year, and while these are often intense they do not usually last more than a few hours.

In the lowlands the climate is typically tropical with an average temperature of 27 C in Colombo. In the higher elevations it can be quite cool with temperatures going down to 16 C at an altitude of nearly 2,000 meters. Bright, sunny warm days are the rule and are common even during the height of the monsoon-climatically Sri Lanka has no off season. The south west monsoon brings rain mainly from May to July to the western, southern and central regions of the island, while the north-east monsoon rain occurs in the northern and eastern regions in December and January.

Temperature Chart In Celsius

	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.
Colombo	30	22	30	24	29	22
Kandy	31	17	29	21	28	18
Nuwara Eliya	21	14	18	16	18	15
Trincomalee	32	24	33	25	33	23

History

Recent excavations show that even during the Neolithic Age, there were food gatherers and rice cultivators in Sri Lanka. Very little is known of this period; documented history began with the arrival of the Aryans from North India. The Aryans introduced the use of iron and an advanced form of agriculture and irrigation. They also introduced the art of government. Of the Aryan settlements, Anuradhapura grew in to a powerful kingdom under the rule of King Pandukabhaya. According to traditional history he is accepted as the founder of Anuradhapura.

During the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa, a descendent of Pandukabhaya, Buddhism was introduced in 247 B.C. by Arahat Mahinda, the son of Emperor Asoka of India. This is the most important event in Sri Lankan history as it set the country on the road to cultural greatness. As a new civilization flourished Sri Lanka became rich and prosperous.

In the mid 2nd century B.C. a large part of north Sri Lanka came under the rule of an invader from South India. From the beginning of the Christian era and up to the end of the 4th century A.D. Sri Lanka was governed by an unbroken dynasty called Lambakarna, which paid great attention to the development of irrigation. A great king of this dynasty, Mahasen started the construction of large 'tanks' or irrigation reservoirs. Another great 'tank' builder was Dhatusena, who was put to death by his son Kasyapa who made Sigiriya a royal city with his fortress capital on the summit of the rock.

As a result of invasions from South India the Kingdom of Anuradhapura fell by the end of the 10th century A.D. Vijayabahu (I) repulsed the attack and established his capital at Polonnaruwa in the 11th century A.D. Other great kings of Polonnaruwa were Parakramabahu the Great and Nissanka Malla both of whom adorned the city with numerous buildings of architectural beauty.

Invasion was intermittent and the capital was moved constantly until the Portuguese arrived in 1505, when the chief city was established at Kotte, in the western lowlands. The Portuguese came to trade in spices but stayed to rule until 1656 in the coastal regions, as did the Dutch thereafter. The Dutch rule lasted from 1656 to 1796, in which year they were displaced by the British. During this period the highland Kingdom, with its capital in Kandy, retained its independence despite repeated assaults by foreign powers who ruled the rest of the country. In 1815 the whole island came under British power when the last Sinhalese King Keerthi Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe was captured. Modern communications, western medical services, education in English, as well as the plantation industry developed during the British rule. By a process of peaceful, constitutional evolution, Sri Lanka won back her independence in 1948 and is now a sovereign republic, with membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations Organization.

Government and Economy

Declared a republic in 1972, 14 years after independence, Sri Lanka has opted to stay within the British Commonwealth and maintains close links with Britain and with other Commonwealth member countries, especially those in Asia. The president, the prime minister and the single-house parliament are elected for a six-year term. With the power to dissolve parliament and appoint or dismiss cabinet ministers and the prime minister, the president is the real head of state, not merely a ceremonial leader.

Language

Language has been a contentious issue in Sri Lanka. In the 1970s, Sinhalese demagogues promoted efforts to make Sinhala -the language of the Sinhalese majority- the sole language of education, administration and government. This was perceived by the Tamil minority as a deliberate move to keep Tamils out of government and exclude them from further education, and was a major cause of the discontent that eventually erupted into inter-communal violence. Subsequently, a compromise was reached in an attempt to satisfy both the disgruntled Tamil community and hard-line Sinhalese nationalists. Tamil and Sinhala are ranked equally as "national" languages. Tamil which is also the largest language group in southern India and the main language of Tamil Nadu, the Indian state closest to Sri Lanka- is the mother tongue of about 20 percent of the population in total, including both northern and hill-country 'Indian' Tamil communities, while Sinhala is the first language of the Sinhalese majority.

Meanwhile, English is still almost universally spoken by educated people of all communities, and is the language with which Sri Lanka communicates with the outside world. Despite being the language of the former colonial power, English is also politically neutral. Most of the people you are likely to encounter in shops, hotels, restaurants and when traveling on public transport are likely to speak enough English for you to get by. Taxi drivers usually speak some English, and bus and railway personnel are usually quite fluent. Out in the country side, English may be less widely spoken, though it is rare to find yourself completely unable to communicate.

The Arts

Sri Lankan visual arts, architecture, literature, music and dance, all bear the stamp of the country's centuries-old Buddhist culture. Poetry, as well as music and dance, were almost entirely ceremonial and

devotional until well after the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom to the British, but by the mid-19th century Sri Lanka was being opened up to outside cultural influences by the advent of the printing press. However, a strongly conservative Buddhist tradition has not provided fierce political repression which followed the leftist revolts of 1971 and 1987-88 and the ethnic troubles of the 1980s and 1990s have also made it hard for writers to write freely. That said Sri Lanka has its share of home-grown literary talent. Probably the best known of its authors is Michael Ondaatje, author of the acclaimed novel, the English Patient, which is also a popular screen picture.

Music And Dancing

Music and Dancing in Sri Lanka are still closely tied up with religious ritual. Kandy or 'high country' dance has evolved from village dances performed by the complex rhythms of several drummers who use a percussion instrument called the 'gatabere' – a wooden drum with leather heads of monkey skin at one end and cow-hide at the other, which make contrasting tones.

Dancers, usually women, go through a routine of sinuous pose and flowing arm movements. 'Low Country' or 'devil-mask' dancing is also accompanied by drummers, who use a special 'demon drum' to enhance the steps and movements of dancers wearing the grotesque masks which represent the 18 demons of disease. These dances were-and sometimes still are performed with the intention of persuading the demon to leave the afflicted person.

Art And Architecture

The most prominent examples of Sri Lanka's Buddhist influenced architectural heritage are at the dagobas which can be seen from one end of the country to the other. In the shape of a dome, the dagoba, usually painted white, often enshrines a relic of the Buddha, such as a hair or a tooth, and is usually massively constructed of brick covered with a coat of plaster. The pan tiled roofs and verandahs which grace many older buildings are the legacy of the Portuguese and Dutch. Galle has many fine old Dutch buildings, while in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya there are many surviving buildings from the British colonial era which would not look out of place in an English country town.

Statues of the Buddha are features of ancient temple sites, where they are often carved from the living rock of basalt crags and crafts. The Buddha may be represented standing, reclining or sitting in meditation. Frescoes like those at Sigiriya may display beautiful women, temple dancers or deities.

Sport And Recreation

Sri Lankans have triumphed internationally at athletics, among them, 2000 Olympic Games Bronze medalist sprinter Susanthika Jayasinghe and others, including Sriyani Kulawansa and Sugath Tillekaratne. But it is Cricket that is the first and true love of all Sri Lankan sport fans. When Sri Lanka, led by Arjuna Ranatunga, trounced the giants of world cricket to win the 1996 Wills Trophy in one-day internationals, there was dancing in the streets. When Sri Lanka's team is playing in major international events the whole island is watching or listening. Players are major stars, and probably the most popular public figures in the country. Any patch of relatively flat wasteland or village square is likely to have its complement of small boys playing an improvised game and no matter how crude or aged the equipment, the players will be as deadly serious as any world cup final team. If you are a cricket fan, you may want to watch a game at the Kettarama Stadium in north Colombo or at Asgiriya, in Kandy, where cricket is played from January to April.

Sri Lanka also abounds in water sports, with some excellent scuba diving excursions offered by qualified dive shops.

Gemstones And Rivers

Geologically, Sri Lanka is composed of gneiss, schist, granite, quartzite and crystalline limestone-an agglomeranite, quartzite rich gemstone deposits, washed by streams and rivers from the central highlands in to lowland valleys. For more than 2000 years Sri Lanka has been a noted producer of rubies, sapphires, and semiprecious stones such as amethyst, alexandrite and topaz. From a coastal plain, the island rises to an area of south-central highlands, which reach their highest point at Pidurutalagala (2524m/ 8281ft). Two major rivers flow out of the highlands- the Mahaweli, which flows northeast to reach the Indian Ocean near Trincomalee, and the Walawe, which joins the ocean near Hambantota on the south coast. A third, the Aruvi, flows out of the northern fringes of the highlands and the dry zone which surrounds them, emptying into Palk Bay on the northwest coast.

Harbours And Beaches

Sri Lanka's natural harbours have made the island a magnet for mariners throughout its history, from the legendary Sindbad the Sailor to the Portuguese navigator Vasco de Gama and the others who followed in search of the untold wealth of the fabled Orient. Modern visitors are as likely to be drawn by some 1600km of sandy beaches, warm Indian Ocean waters and coral reefs.

Colombo, the capital, lies on the west coast and is home to some 800,000 of Sri Lanka's 19 million population. Relatively few Sri Lankans are city dwellers; of the country's other cities, none approach even Colombo's modest size. The most popular beach resorts are those closest to the capital: Negombo, only 35km north and close to the international airport, is a thriving resort and residential community of some 140,000 people. About 55-65km south of the capital, Beruwala and Bentota have merged into the island's biggest resort area, with international-standard resort hotels, restaurants and water sports, and from the gateway to a 130km stretch of beach which display varying degrees of tourism development, with Hikkaduwa, 100km south of Colombo, forming a second resort hub. Close to the south end of this tourism ribbon, and on the southwest corner of the island, Galle, with a population of 97,000, is the most important town in southern Sri Lanka. The south coast is less thoroughly developed, though its excellent surf, beaches and dive sites have for long attracted younger and independent travelers, scuba divers and surfers.

Capital	:Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte
Commercial Centre	:Colombo
Area	:65,606 sq km
Population	:20.7 million
Currency	:Sri Lankan Rupee

What to Wear

Light weight cotton clothing.

Higher reaches of the hill country can get cool at night.

You have to wear long trousers/ skirts and shirts/ blouses with sleeves to temples

You have to take off your caps and shoes when you are going to a temple

A wide-brimmed beach hat and sun-glasses are recommended.

Slippers or sandals will be more comfortable than shoes.

Transportation

Public and private buses

Railway

A/C or non A/C Car rental. (With or without drivers)

Three wheeler / Auto rickshaw

Languages

English

Sinhala

Tamil

Things To Eat

Rice and Curry

Plain Hopper & Egg Hopper

String Hopper

Kiribath

Kottu Roti

Watalappan

Western food

Fresh Fruits

How To Greet

Say "aayu-bowan" (may you live long) when you meet someone.

Say "Isthu-thi" (thank you) or you may simply say 'thank you'.

Say "suba udasanak" (Good morning) when you meet someone in the morning.



Sri Lanka Fact

Country	:	Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Gained Independence in	:	04 th February 1948
Administrative Capital	:	Sri Jayawardhanapura, Kotte
Commercial Capital	:	Colombo
Area	:	65,610 sq km (25,322 sq miles)
Length	:	445 km
Breadth	:	225.3 km (278 meters)
Population	:	18.1 million
Population in Colombo	:	1.5 million
Main Ethnic Groups	:	Sinhala 74% Sri Lankan Tamils 12.75% Indian Tamils 5% Moor 7% Others 0.8%
Language	:	Official language is Sinhala. Sinhala is a language of Indo-Aryan origin and is the language of the majority. Tamils & Muslims speak Tamil. English is widely spoken by all communities.
Currency	:	Sri Lankan Rupees
Religious Groups	:	Buddhist 69% Hindu 15.5% Islam 7.6% Christian 7.5% Others 0.1%
Literacy Rate	:	89%
Average Life Expectancy	:	70-80 years
Topography	:	Flat coastal and Northern areas Hills and mountains in the Central and Southern Central areas
Average Temperature	:	Colombo 30.60 C to 24.10 C Kandy 29.00 C to 20.20 C Nuwara Eliya 20.20 C to 11.50 C Beach 29.00 C

Rainfall	:	March – April Inter Monsoon May – September South West Monsoon October – November Inter Monsoon December – February North East Monsoon
Average Rainfall	:	39" – 197"
National Flower	:	"Nil-Manel" Flower (Blue Water Lily) Found in abundance in the marshes and waterways of the rural area. It is a water lily that is also found in other tropical countries.
National Tree	:	"Na" Tree (Ceylon Iron Wood)
National Bird	:	"Wali Kukula" (Jungle Fowl)
Longest River	:	Mahaweli (207 miles/333 km)
Highest Waterfall	:	Bambarakanda (790 ft/241 m) (it breaks off at 3 points by hitting onto a rock before it drops down) Diyaluma Falls (560 ft/171 m) (highest single drop)
Widest Waterfall	:	St. Clair (241 ft/73 m)
Highest Mountain	:	Pidurutalagela (8281 ft/2524 m)
Clothing	:	Cottons and light clothing in Colombo and other coastal and dry areas. Light woolens in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya.

DISTANCE CHART IN KILOMETERS

	AHUNGALLA	AIRPORT	ANURADHAPURA	BENTOTA / BERUWELA	COLOMBO	DAMBULLA	GALLE	HIKKADUWA	HABARANA	KANDY	KALUTARA	NEGOMBO	NUWRA ELIYA	POLONNARUWA	RATNAPURA	SIGIRIYA	TRINCOMALEE	YALA
AHUNGALLA	0	115	286	14	78	229	37	21	250	194	35	118	254	293	112	243	334	213
AIRPORT	115	0	179	101	40	136	152	136	160	112	80	10	186	192	138	152	240	328
ANURADHAPURA	286	179	0	272	208	66	320	307	58	138	248	168	214	101	238	80	106	499
BENTOTA / BERUWELA	14	101	272	0	64	214	51	35	235	179	21	104	240	278	98	229	320	227
COLOMBO	78	40	208	64	0	150	115	99	171	115	43	40	189	214	101	165	256	291
DAMBULLA	229	136	66	214	150	0	262	250	29	72	190	136	149	67	173	16	109	363
GALLE	37	152	37	51	120	262	0	16	283	230	72	155	288	330	149	280	371	176
HIKKADUWA	21	136	307	35	99	250	16	0	270	214	56	136	304	314	165	264	355	192
HABARANA	250	160	58	235	171	29	283	270	0	101	214	152	178	42	181	24	90	421
KANDY	194	112	138	179	115	72	230	214	101	0	158	104	77	139	141	90	181	291
KALUTARA	35	80	248	21	43	190	72	56	214	158	0	83	190	258	77	208	299	248
NEGOMBO	118	10	168	104	40	136	155	136	152	104	83	0	181	210	141	152	246	331
NUWARA ELIYA	254	186	214	240	189	149	288	304	178	77	190	181	0	216	147	166	258	192
POLONNARUWA	292	192	101	278	214	67	330	314	42	139	258	210	216	0	240	67	128	376
RATNAPURA	112	138	238	98	101	173	149	165	181	141	77	141	147	240	0	181	282	182
SIGIRIYA	243	152	80	229	165	16	280	264	24	90	208	152	166	67	181	0	109	445
TRINCOMALEE	334	240	106	320	256	109	371	355	90	181	299	246	258	128	282	109	0	477
YALA	213	328	499	227	291	363	176	192	421	291	248	331	192	376	182	445	477	0

APPROXIMATE JOURNEY TIMING

	AHUNGALLA	AIRPORT	ANURADHAPUR A	BENTOTA	COLOMBO	DAMBULLA	GALLE	HABARANA	KANDY	KALUTARA	NEGOMBO	NUWRA ELIYA	POLONNARUWA	RATNAPURA	SIGIRIYA	TRINCOMALEE	YALA
AHUNGALLA	0	3.5	8.5	0.5	2.5	6.5	0.5	7.5	5.5	1.5	4	6	8.5	5	7.5	9.5	5
AIRPORT	3.5	0	5	3	1	3	4	4	3	2	0.5	6	5	5	4	6	9
ANURADHAPURA	8.5	5	0	8	6	2	9	1	5	7	5	8	3	9	2	2	12
BENTOTA	0.5	3	8	0	2	6	1	7	5	1	3.5	5	8	4	7	9	5.5
COLOMBO	2.5	1	6	2	0	4	3	5	3	1	1.5	6	6	4	5	7	7.5
DAMBULLA	6.5	3	2	6	4	0	7	1	3	5	4	6	2	7	1	3	10
GALLE	0.5	4	9	1	3	7	0	8	6	2	4.5	7	9	4	8	10	4.5
HABARANA	7.5	4	1	7	5	1	8	0	4	6	4.5	7	1	8	1	2	11
KANDY	5.5	3	5	5	3	3	6	4	0	4	3	3	5	4	4	6	7
KALUTARA	1.5	2	7	1	1	5	2	6	4	0	2.5	5	7	3	6	8	6.5
NEGOMBO	4	0.5	5	3.5	1.5	4	4.5	4.5	3	2.5	0	6.5	5.5	5.5	4.5	6.5	9.5
NUWARA ELIYA	6	6	8	5	6	6	7	7	3	5	6.5	0	8	3	7	9	4
POLONNARUWA	8.5	5	3	8	6	2	9	1	5	7	5.5	8	0	9	1	2	12
RATNAPURA	5	5	9	4	4	7	4	8	4	3	5.5	3	9	0	9	10	5
SIGIRIYA	7.5	4	2	7	5	1	8	1	4	6	4.5	7	1	9	0	2	11
TRINCOMALEE	9.5	6	2	9	7	3	10	2	6	8	6.5	9	2	10	2		13
YALA	5	9	12	5.5	7.5	10	4.5	11	7	6.5	9.5	4	12	5	11	13	0

