



## SRI LANKA PRACTICAL INFORMATION

We are pleased to offer you herewith some useful tips and practical information on traveling in Sri Lanka.

### COUNTRY PROFILE

Official Name:	Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Population:	20.3 million
Capital City:	Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte
Area:	65,610 km <sup>2</sup>
People:	Vedda, Malays, Tamil, Burghers
Religion:	Buddhism (Therevada)
Language:	Sinhalese
Currency:	Sri Lankan rupee
Time Zone:	UTC +5.30 hours
International dialing code:	+94
Electricity:	220-240 V
Driving:	Left hand side





## INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS BY ISLAND AND CITY

At present Sri Lanka has two international airports namely the 'Bandaranaike International Airport' and 'Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport'. The airport that brings in most of the traffic is the Bandaranaike International Airport, which is located approximately 37km from the capital city Colombo. The 'Mattala Rajapaksa Airport' is located in Hambantota, which is a 258km drive from Colombo and the southern expressway, which starts in Colombo and runs up to Matara.

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

Visa to Sri Lanka can be obtained on arrival at the airport, but we advise travelers to apply for visa online to avoid delays or long waiting times at the airport.

## MONEY

International currency can be exchanged at the arrival lounge of the airport. Banks, moneychangers and hotels also exchange currency. Hotels will usually charge a higher commission. The currency used in Sri Lanka is Sri Lankan Rupee and the exchange rate against the American dollar may fluctuate between USD 128-130.

## HEALTH

Sri Lanka is overall a very safe destination but there are certain risks. For example, it isn't recommended to drink tap water. Mosquitos are also a risk as there is dengue fever in Sri Lanka. We recommend that travellers always apply mosquito repellent to ensure that they don't get stung. In general street food is fine to eat, but of course we recommend using your best visual judgment to determine the hygienic quality of the place.

## CLIMATE

Sri Lanka has been categorized as a tropical island and the weather is pleasant throughout the year. However as the global weather patterns are changing rapidly there could be few exceptions. The Monsoon season can be categorized as follows:

March-April:	First Inter Monsoon Season
May-September:	Southwest Monsoon Season
November:	Second Inter Monsoon Season
December-February:	Northeast Monsoon Season

Detailed information on the Monsoon Seasons could be obtained through the website for the metrological department, which is mentioned below.

[http://www.meteo.gov.lk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=106&Itemid=81](http://www.meteo.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106&Itemid=81)

## FOOD & DRINKS

Options for food and drinks are widely available throughout the main cities. However, the options will be limited as you travel further out of the main touristic cities. Sri Lankan food is in general spicy. Sampling Sri Lankan food at a restaurant or a village home, could be an experience on its own. If travelers have sensitive stomachs it is advisable to acquire the help of a local guide when deciding on a dish.

## TIPPING

The decision to tip for a service lies in the hands of the traveler depending on the satisfactory level of the service provided. Locals do expect a tip, but it is not compulsory. In restaurants 10% of the total bill value can be considered as a reasonable tip. If travelers want to tip their guide(s), they can do so depending on the satisfactory level of the service provided.



## DONATIONS & GIFT- GIVING

Most sightseeing locations in Sri Lanka will have a fixed entrance fee, various sites such as temples are happy to receive donations. Travelers can decide on the amount for themselves. Gifts can be given to worthy institutions; village schools and orphanages are examples. It is always better to check with the institution on their requirements before handing out gifts or donations to make sure it helps the people best.

## COMMUNICATION

Travelers can purchase local sim cards on arrival at the arrival lounge of the airport. There will be two or three service providers to choose from. The sim cards can be topped up from local communication centers throughout the island. Most of the hotels and cafés provide WI-FI for free, or at a reasonable price.

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Sri Lankans are very friendly and respectful to travelers, and will always take the extra effort to help you out in any situation and this not done expecting a tip of any sort. 'Ayubowan', which means 'may you live longer' can be used to greet people at any time of the day. Sri Lanka is a multicultural country and the population consists of:

- Sinhalese
- Tamils
- Muslims
- Malays
- Burghers

All religions should be respected equally. When visiting religious sites it is compulsory to be decently dressed and it is better to avoid loud colors. No photographs should be taken with the back facing to any religious shrines as it is considered impolite.

## Bargaining

Travelers can go ahead and bargain for prices at bazar areas and purchase goods at a reasonable rate. It is advisable to be pleasant when bargaining for prices and to walk away if not satisfied, as there will always be more than one place to buy anything and looking around a few shops will always help. Remember that this should be a fun game, for both traveler and shopkeeper.

## Clothing

Sri Lankans are conservative and it is always advisable to respect the thoughts of the local people and respect their traditions at all possible times. Hence, why it is advisable to dress in a conservative manner when travelling within the country.

## Displays of affection

Kissing in Public is not allowed in Sri Lanka due to local culture and practices. Kissing is considered as more of a private way of showing affection to your beloved ones. But there is no offence in hand holding. As well as a simple hug is also a way of showing hospitality, affection and tenderness.

## SAFETY

It is very safe to travel to any part of the island and the locals are very helpful and respectful towards travelers. Guests are encouraged to engage with the local communities and experience the local culture. However, it is advisable to follow the instructions of the local guide at all times.

## LINKS & READING

It is always best to have an idea of the country you are travelling to and the internet is a great tool where travelers can read up on the local culture, food, weather, experiences, local festivals and more accurate up to date information could be obtained from the local travel agent at all times.



There are several books we can recommend to read before or during a stay in the country:

- A Hand Book On Ancient History Of Sri Lanka & Monu, by Karu Peiris
- The Diversity Of Sri Lankan Wildlife, by Jayantha Jayewardene
- Endangered Elephants, by Jayantha Jayewardene
- From Ceylon To Sri Lanka, by Jayantha Jayewardene
- A History of Sri Lanka, by K.M. De Silva
- The nature of Sri Lanka, by Luxshman Nadaraja

Websites:

- <http://srilanka.travel/index.php?route=common/home> - The Official Website of Sri Lanka Tourism
- <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/sri-lanka> - The Lonely Planet
- [http://www.srilanka.travel/things\\_to\\_do\\_in\\_colombo](http://www.srilanka.travel/things_to_do_in_colombo) - 12 Things To Do in Colombo
- <http://www.insightguides.com/destinations/asia-pacific/sri-lanka/top-attractions> - Insight Guides - Sri Lanka

### LANGUAGE

'Sinhalese' the language spoken commonly by locals, and English is widely spoken throughout the country. Hence, communication will be relatively easy in Sri Lanka.

### MOSQUITOES

Mostly dengue is a common disease in urbanized areas. The number of victims for this disease has been increased throughout last few years. Government has initiated dengue prevention campaigns throughout the island, starting from local schools to several institutes. As a precaution of the mosquito's threat, we can recommend travelers to use mosquito sprays or mosquito nets. Those items can be purchased from local pharmacies, supermarkets, or already in your home country.

### TRAFFIC

Mostly traffic is seen in Colombo during office hours (e.g.: From 7 am to 9 am in the morning / and from 4.30pm to 8pm in the evening). Also traffic can be seen during the days that Sri Lankans celebrate their main festivals (e.g.: Vesak/New Year Holidays etc). Recently the government has introduced two expressways, one from Colombo to Galle and the other from the airport to Colombo. That proves to be an advantage for quick traveling.

### DRUGS

Not acceptable. If any person is caught using drugs in Sri Lanka, or importing drugs to Sri Lanka, the police will arrest them and they will take them for legal actions like imprisonment. This is the biggest reason for us to advice against using drugs. Obviously there's also health concerns. For example consequences are bad psychological effects or nervous disorders.

### BEACH

Down south there are beaches like Bentota, Beruwala, Tangalla, Galle, Mirissa, and Unawatuna. There are mostly popular in the winter season. On the East coast the beaches are Pasikudah, Arugambay, Trincomalee, Nilaveli, which are mostly popular in summer season.

Sunbathing can be done in hotel's private beaches at coastal areas in Sri Lanka, but not in public beaches. It is acceptable for women to wear bath suits and bikinis in hotel's private beaches.



## TREKKING & OTHER ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES

Trekking in Sri Lanka can be done in Horton Plains, Sinharaja Rain Forest, Knuckles, Udawatta Kale in Kandy, Galway Forest in Nuwara Eliya. Travelers have to get the advice and the guidance from the trekkers who have experiences before going on a trekking. Guides can make travelers aware of accident risks, natural disasters such as landslides, floods, draughts, and lightning. Attacks from wild animals can be a possible threat. We promote adventurous trekking based on the guidance given by the trekkers and naturalists.

## SCAMS

Scams can happen to occur in Sri Lanka. Sometimes shopkeepers are trying to fraud by fooling customers. We advice guests to be aware of *overcharging at sights for entrance fees*. There are three options for travelers to pay these sight entrance fees:

- 1) Pay the entrance fees along with the total package before arriving to Sri Lanka,
- 2) Pay the entrance fees in the beginning of the tour to the tour guide,
- 3) Pay the entrance fees on the spot.

Option 1 and 2 are safe for tourists. But in case 3 there are lots of sight guides in those sights and they say some different amounts to pay for them for sights/guide fees.

### *Forcing for tips*

Usually travelers pay tips to guides, drivers, porters which is based on clients' satisfaction regarding their service. Sometimes people ask more tips from travellers. As well as some travellers cannot recognize Sri Lankan notes and values related to them. Guides can explain tourists about the good side and the bad side of these scams. As well as travelers can refer to the reviews from previous visitors on trip advisor.



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