



TRAVEL GUIDELINES FOR SRI LANKA





PASSPORT & VISA

Sri Lanka needs a valid VISA to enter, which can be obtained online prior to arrival, by visiting this link, <http://eta.gov.lk/slvisa/>. The cost per visa is USD 50/- + service charge per person and is valid for 30 days of travel within Sri Lanka. This visa is a dual entry visa. From the date of entry, it is required to have at least 6 'months' validity of your passport.

It is highly recommended to have digital copies (accessible through the visitor's email account) of all the crucial details before embarking on a journey. These details may include airline numbers, phone numbers of credit card companies, passport information, travel insurance details, and driving license numbers. By doing so, all the necessary information will be always with the visitor in case of lost or stolen belongings.

GETTING AROUND

BY ROAD:

If a traveller is visiting Sri Lanka for the first time, it is important to keep in mind that the roads can be busy and it may take some time to get around. However, with experienced chauffeurs and tour guides, visitors are guaranteed a safe and hassle-free travel experience whether they choose to travel by road, rail or air. Travelling by road is the most flexible and efficient way to explore Sri Lanka. However, it is worth noting that driving times in Sri Lanka don't always correspond with distance due to traffic congestion and rough terrains in some parts, which may result in longer journeys.

Emergency Washroom Breaks: Travel around Sri Lanka relies heavily on overland journeys. This entails several long drives, often on rough roads. Bathroom facilities during the drives at times can be very basic. Anyone who would be uncomfortable in such a situation should reconsider a long overland journey around Sri Lanka. An itinerary may call for a significant amount of walking on uneven paths, and

travellers may encounter long and steep stairs at many of the sites they visit. Expect some challenging climbs at some of the historic sites. Travellers should assess the climbs with their guide before attempting.

BY RAIL:

Exploring Sri Lanka is incomplete without experiencing its iconic train journey. Train rides through the hill country offer an incredible opportunity to witness the awe-inspiring tea fields, stunning views, and charming villages while gaining insight into the local people's daily lives.

However, during the weekday rush, most railway stations can get overcrowded, making it challenging to navigate through the passengers. It's important to note that Sri Lanka Railways does not provide an online booking system. Therefore, the on-ground travel experts are available to make the necessary arrangements on behalf of the guests.

BY AIR:

There are a handful of internal flight services connected to domestic airports in Sri Lanka. A convenient way of reducing travel time and an opportunity to witness sceneries from a bird's-eye view.

TIME ZONE

India Standard Time | Time zone in Sri Lanka (GMT+5:30)

BUSINESS HOURS

Private Offices operate Mondays to Fridays: 09:00 AM – 5:30 PM.

Banks are open on weekdays from 09.00 AM to 13.00 PM but some remain open until 15.00 PM and open on Saturdays.

Government Offices are open from 9.30 AM to 17.00 PM, Monday to Friday. Closed on Public holidays.

Shops serving tourists are generally open from 10.00 AM to late evening. Village shops open from 06.00 AM daily. Local chain supermarkets are open from 08.00 PM to late evening. Shopping malls are usually open from 10.00 AM to late evening.

Restaurants and Bars are generally permitted to serve alcohol from 11.00 AM to 14.00 PM and from 17.00 PM to 23.00 Night. Wine shops (i.e. alcohol retail shops) are open from 09.00 AM to 21.00 PM.





HEALTH & SAFETY

It is highly recommended that the traveller contacts a vaccination centre to receive the necessary vaccinations before travelling to Sri Lanka. It's advisable to check the recommended inoculations at least a month before the trip. While travelling in Sri Lanka, finding a reputable local doctor or private hospital in case of serious illness could be done with the advice and assistance of the hotels a traveller is staying in. In the event of diarrhoea, it's essential to pack body-salt replenishment powder like Dioralyte, along with Imodium or a similar product. It is recommended to pack items such as sun creams (biodegradable sunscreen that doesn't harm coral reefs and marine life), insect repellent, sting relief cream, antiseptic cream, a lightweight hat, and sunglasses.

CURRENCY & FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Local Currency

The local currency is Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR). Currency can be exchanged only in Sri Lanka so, it is best to bring currency in USD, AUD, Pounds or Euros and use foreign exchange bureaus at the airport or a bank which offers fair exchange rates without commissioning. Changing money at a hotel is also possible, however, at the risk of a higher exchange rate. Similarly, traveller's cheques are received but, the commission can be higher. The ROC of all banks is similar as they are updated according to the currency exchange rate in line with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

When exchanging money into LKR, please keep safe the encashment certificate provided for each transaction as it might be required to convert any unused LKR to foreign exchange at the end of the holiday - this can be done at the departure terminal at the airport.

Using Credit / Debit Card

Automated Teller Machines (ATM) are available in all the major cities and accept commonly used money transfer services like VISA, MasterCard and American Express. Most banks in Sri Lanka charge a withdrawal fee, therefore, unless the card is designed for overseas use, a visitor will get charged a currency conversion fee if using their card to make purchases. Before inserting the ATM card, carefully read the list of cards that are accepted mentioned by the side of the machine. If the visitor needs assistance, the chauffeur/tour guide will be there for guidance.

Gratuities

It is not mandatory to tip the staff at hotels or restaurants. However, Tipping for good service is considered a gesture of appreciation if the guest finds the service levels meeting their expectations. Please note A service charge is sometimes added to

restaurant bills but otherwise a similar tip is appreciated (based on guidelines shared by the local consultant).

ELECTRICITY

Voltage: The standard voltage in Sri Lanka is 220 – 240v and ranges between 5 amp – 15-amp sockets.

Adaptors: Sri Lanka's socket standard is a square pin. While most hotels will provide visitors with a universal adapter on request, we advise carrying one as a backup.

WIFI: All hotels in Sri Lanka provide WIFI facilities, both in room and public areas free of charge. The guests will receive the login credentials at check-in.

FOOD & DRINK

MEALS:

Sri Lankan cuisine is a blend of flavours and spices that creates a unique culinary experience for any visitor. Some of the must-try dishes include rice and curry, hoppers, string hoppers, kottu roti, and samosas. The famous hoppers are a popular breakfast food that resembles a thin pancake with crispy edges and string hoppers

are made from rice flour and shaped into thin noodles, often served with a coconut sambol. If we're feeling a bit adventurous, another must-try in the street food culture of Sri Lanka includes kottu roti, which consists of chopped roti, vegetables, meat, and spices. Lastly, samosas are a popular snack that is crispy on the outside and filled with spiced vegetables or meat. In addition to local cuisine, many hotels and restaurants offer a wide range of international dishes throughout the island. Sri Lanka is also well-known for its variety of seafood, from the famous lagoon mud crab to lobsters, jumbo prawns, and cuttlefish. Overall, Sri Lankan cuisine has something for everyone and is sure to tantalize your taste buds.

DRINKING WATER:

To avoid any potential gastro bugs, it is advised that all travellers should drink bottled or treated water and use it for cleaning teeth. The properties where you'll be staying will provide two bottles of mineral water per day, free of charge. Given the hot tropical climate, we strongly recommend that all travellers consume enough water daily to keep their bodies cool, and hydrated, and avoid heat-related illnesses. Tropiculture has stopped providing single-use plastic bottles in the fall of 2018. We now offer reusable 20-litre water dispensers, with an insulated stainless-steel water bottle provided for all travellers.



WEATHER

Sri Lanka offers a unique experience for travellers throughout the year. Due to its diverse climate, the island is blessed with sunshine and warmth, making it an ideal holiday destination at any time of the year. When planning a trip to Sri Lanka, it's important to take into account the weather patterns of each month to decide on the best time to visit. A well-planned holiday is just as exciting as a spontaneously planned holiday in Sri Lanka.

The temperatures in the region remain fairly constant throughout the year. Travelling during the summer months (May to September), it's recommended to head towards the east coast and northern regions for dry and sunny weather. The west and southwest coasts experience rain during this time. Conversely, during the winter months (October to February), the west and southwest regions have favourable weather conditions, whereas the east and north regions experience the monsoon season.



	West & South	Central	North & East
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			





RESPONSIBLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Taking photos, and sharing them, is now part of our everyday lives - particularly while we're travelling. Sri Lanka is an ideal destination if you are into "Street Photography" and long-exposure landscape photography. To ensure that everyone has a positive impact, kindly ask for permission before taking photographs of people and respect their personal space and privacy.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLING

MINDFUL ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Responsible travellers recognize the fragility of the planet and its ecosystems. They are committed to minimizing their environmental impact by making eco-conscious choices. This includes reducing waste, conserving resources, and supporting initiatives that protect and preserve the natural world.

CULTURAL RESPECT

Respect for local customs, traditions, and cultural sensitivities is a core principle of responsible travel. Engage with the local culture with an open

mind, aiming to learn and understand rather than imposing their own values and behaviours.

SUPPORTING CONSERVATION

With the help of the local ground handler, travellers may contribute to or volunteer for ethical local conservation organizations that work to protect the environment and wildlife in the areas they visit. These contributions help ensure the long-term preservation of the natural beauty of the region.

MINIMUM IMPACT PHILOSOPHY

Strive to leave no trace, ensuring that their presence has minimal negative impact on the environment and communities they visit. They avoid activities that may harm or degrade the destination.

ETHICAL WILDLIFE AND NATURE INTERACTIONS

Responsible travellers enjoy nature and wildlife while adhering to ethical guidelines. They avoid activities that exploit or harm animals, opting instead for responsible wildlife viewing practices that prioritize the well-being of the creatures and their habitats.

TELEPHONE / COMMUNICATION

Consider buying a Sri Lankan SIM card and top-up cards for mobile phones - Sri Lankan mobile phone call rates are relatively cheap, both for local and international calls and are recommended. There is a Dialog GSM shop outside airport arrivals. The ground handling team can pre-purchase a SIM card for any visitor should they wish, kindly keep them informed in advance.

SHOPPING

When travelling to Sri Lanka, many people like to buy souvenirs or gifts to remind them of their experiences. These mementoes allow them to look back and reminisce about their fantastic holiday. If a visitor is looking for high-quality, affordable souvenirs, there are a few places we recommend that are known for their quality products, good value, and refund policies. If purchasing items that need to be shipped or couriered, we recommend that travellers ask the store manager to provide clear delivery instructions, the estimated time of arrival, and any additional payment requirements upon receiving the merchandise. This will ensure a smoother delivery process and avoid any confusion.

Keeping Your Valuables Safe: Protecting valuables while travelling will make for a much more pleasant experience by keeping the belongings safe. To do so, we recommend that visitors always use the hotel safes provided free of charge in their rooms or at the safety vaults at the hotels for a nominal fee.

WHAT TO PACK

WHAT TO WEAR

Lightweight, breathable clothing (cotton or linen) for hot and humid weather.

Swimsuits and beachwear for swimming or relaxing on the beach.

Light, long-sleeved shirts and trousers to protect against mosquitoes, especially in the evenings.

Comfortable walking shoes for sightseeing and hiking.

Sandals or flip-flops for the beach and casual outings.

Modest clothing for visiting temples and religious sites (shoulders and knees should be covered).





While Sinhala is widely spoken in Sri Lanka, Tamil is spoken mostly in the northeast and a few selected cities around the island. However, English is a common language that most people understand and communicate with when necessary.

Even though Sri Lanka is introduced as a Buddhist country, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are practised all around the nation. Wherever a traveller visits, they will find places of worship for each of these religions – some of which unfold great history.

PEOPLE

Sri Lanka is known for its hospitality and heart-warming smiles. Further delving into the island's lifestyle and culture, one might notice little quirks such as "head-bobbing" which is a way of agreeing to something, eating spicy food with their hands and drinking tea a few times a day.

FESTIVALS AND HOLIDAYS

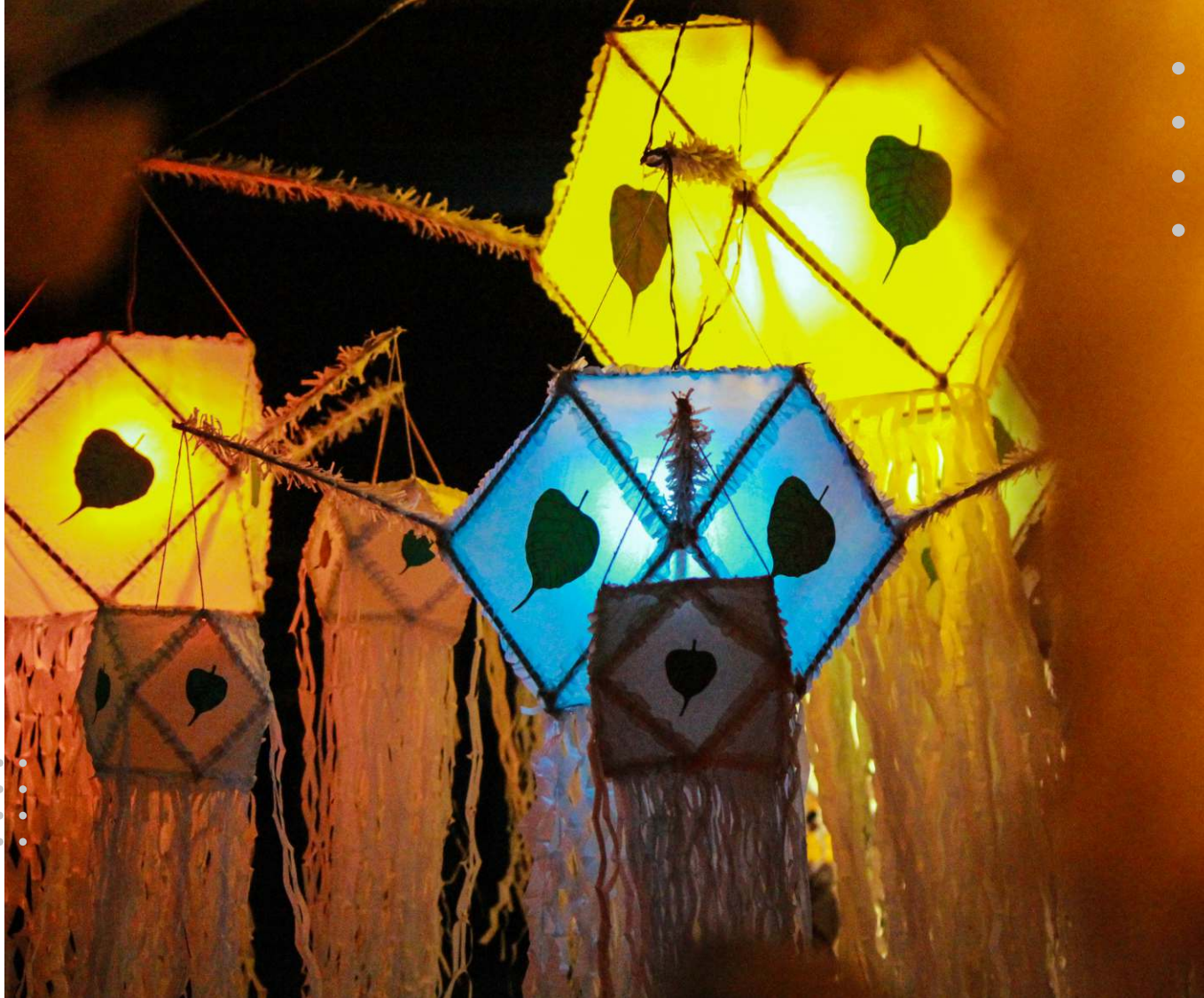
Sri Lanka has around 25 public holidays, with almost every holiday celebrating some kind of lively festival. The most famous of all is the grandest traditional festival in Kandy. The Buddhist festival "Kandy Esala Perahera" lasts for an entire week and usually takes place during July/August. The locals love to celebrate festivals in Sri Lanka and all visitors are welcome to participate.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON FULL MOON 'POYA' DAYS

For the islanders, Poya days are significant Buddhist holidays that occur on each full moon day of the lunar calendar. Poya days signify an important role in fostering religious harmony and cultural practices in Sri Lanka, reflecting the profound connection between Buddhism and the daily lives of the people. These days are considered sacred and are dedicated to religious activities, meditation, and spiritual reflection.

Occurring every month, typically 12 to 13 times a year, depending on the lunar calendar, Poya Days are public holidays in Sri Lanka, as such, all pubs, bars and wine stores will be closed. Hotels and restaurants will not serve liquor in common spaces. However, travellers can still consume liquor from their mini bar from the privacy of their room.

Although National Archaeological Museums, Schools and Public Markets will be closed during Public Holidays, all sites, monuments and tourist shops will remain open.



Here are dates for Full Moon 'Poya' holidays for 2024.

Date	Day	Holiday
25 Jan	Thu	Duruthu Full Moon Poya Day
23 Feb	Fri	Navam Full Moon Poya Day
24 Mar	Sun	Madin Full Moon Poya Day
23 Apr	Tue	Bak Full Moon Poya Day
23 May	Thu	Vesak Full Moon Poya Day
24 May	Fri	Day following Vesak Full Moon Poya Day
21 Jun	Fri	Poson Full Moon Poya Day
20 Jul	Sat	Esala Full Moon Poya Day
19 Aug	Mon	Nikini Full Moon Poya Day
17 Sep	Tue	Binara Full Moon Poya Day
17 Oct	Thu	Vap Full Moon Poya Day
15 Nov	Fri	Ill Full Moon Poya Day
14 Dec	Sat	Unduvap Full Moon Poya Day

READING LIST

Architecture / Photography / Art | Tropical Houses by Tim Street Porter

Cuisine | Exotic Tastes of Sri Lanka by Suharshini Seneviratne

Biographies / Autobiographies | Woolf in Ceylon: An Imperial Journey in the Shadow of Leonard Woolf, 1904-1911 by Christopher Ondaatje

Fiction | Elephant Walk by Robert Standish

History | Illustrations and Views of Dutch Ceylon, 1602-1796 by Sir Samuel W. Baker

Lifestyle | Sri Lanka Style: Tropical Design and Architecture by Dominic Sansoni

Wildlife | A Photographic Guide to Birds of Sri Lanka by Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

Plant Life and Green Things | Sri Lanka's Magnificent Cloud Forests By W. Werner

2022 Booker Prize | The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida by Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka





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**Safe
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