

# **Explore Sri Lanka**

Index:

1. 10 things to know about Sri Lanka before traveling
2. Best Beaches in Sri Lanka
3. Best places to see in Sri Lanka
4. Festivals and events in Sri Lanka
5. Food in Sri Lanka
6. Fruits in Sri Lanka
7. Animals in Sri Lanka
8. Flowers in Sri Lanka
9. Trips in Sri Lanka – Suggested Itineraries
  - a. 5-night trip in Sri Lanka
  - b. 10-day trip in Sri Lanka
10. Economy of Sri Lanka
11. Education system in Sri Lanka
12. History of Sri Lanka
13. Religions
14. Weather

## **1. 10 Things to know about Sri Lanka before traveling:**

### **1. Cultural Etiquette**

- **Respect Religious Sites:** When visiting temples and religious sites, dress modestly, covering shoulders and knees. Remove your shoes and hats before entering.
- **Photography:** Be cautious when taking photos of people, especially monks. Always ask for permission first.

### **2. Climate and Weather**

- **Tropical Climate:** Sri Lanka has a tropical climate with two monsoon seasons. The southwest monsoon affects the southwest and west from May to September, while the northeast monsoon affects the north and east from October to February.
- **Best Time to Visit:** December to March is ideal for the west and south coasts and the hill country, while April to September is best for the east coast.

### **3. Visa Requirements**

- **Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA):** Most travelers need to apply for an ETA online before arrival. The process is straightforward, and you'll receive your visa via email.

#### 4. Local Currency

- **Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR):** The local currency is the Sri Lankan Rupee. It's advisable to carry some cash for small purchases, as not all places accept credit cards.
- **Currency Exchange:** You can exchange money at the airport, banks, or authorized money exchange centers. ATMs are widely available.

#### 5. Transportation

- **Public Transport:** Buses and trains are the main forms of public transport. They are affordable but can be crowded and slow.
- **Tuk-Tuks:** These three-wheeled vehicles are a common mode of transport for short distances. Agree on the fare before starting the journey or ensure the meter is used.
- **Domestic Flights:** For faster travel between major cities, consider domestic flights.

#### 6. Safety and Health

- **Safety:** Sri Lanka is generally safe for tourists, but it's always good to be cautious of petty theft. Avoid isolated areas, especially at night.
- **Health Precautions:** Drink bottled water and avoid ice in drinks to prevent waterborne illnesses. Consider vaccinations for hepatitis A and B, typhoid, and Japanese encephalitis, depending on the areas you plan to visit.

#### 7. Cuisine

- **Local Food:** Sri Lankan cuisine is diverse and flavorful, with dishes like rice and curry, hoppers, and kottu roti. Street food is popular and generally safe to try.
- **Spiciness:** The food can be quite spicy. If you're sensitive to spice, ask for milder versions.

#### 8. Cultural Heritage and Attractions

- **UNESCO Sites:** Sri Lanka has eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the rock fortress of Sigiriya, and the sacred city of Kandy.
- **Beaches and Nature:** The country is known for its beautiful beaches, lush tea plantations, and national parks like Yala and Udawalawe, home to diverse wildlife including elephants and leopards.

#### 9. Language

- **Languages Spoken:** Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages. English is widely spoken, especially in tourist areas, making it easier for travelers to communicate.

## 10. Local Customs and Traditions

- **Greetings:** A common greeting is "Ayubowan" (may you live long) with palms together as in a prayer position.
- **Respect for Elders:** Showing respect to elders is important in Sri Lankan culture. Address people politely and use titles where appropriate.

## 2. Best Beaches in Sri Lanka

### Beaches for Swimming

1. **Unawatuna:**
  - **Location:** Near Galle, on the southern coast.
  - **Description:** famous for its calm and clear waters, making it ideal for swimming. The beach is also known for its beautiful coral reefs and vibrant marine life.
2. **Bentota:**
  - **Location:** Southwest coast, near Aluthgama.
  - **Description:** offers long stretches of golden sand and gentle waves, perfect for swimming. The area is also known for its water sports facilities and luxury resorts.
3. **Hikkaduwa:**
  - **Location:** Southwest coast, near Galle.
  - **Description:** Known for its coral reefs and marine sanctuary, great for swimming and snorkeling. The waters are generally calm, and there are plenty of restaurants and bars along the shore.

### Beaches for Whale Watching

1. **Mirissa:**
  - **Location:** Southern coast.
  - **Description:** the premier destination for whale watching in Sri Lanka. Between November and April, you can embark on boat tours to see blue whales, sperm whales, and dolphins.
2. **Kalpitiya:**
  - **Location:** Northwestern coast.
  - **Description:** from November to April. The lagoon and the surrounding waters are home to a diverse range of marine life.

## Beaches for Surfing

1. **Arugam Bay:**
  - **Location:** East coast.
  - **Description:** internationally renowned for its surf breaks, attracting surfers from around the world. The best time to surf here is from April to October.
2. **Weligama:**
  - **Location:** Southern coast.
  - **Description:** great spot for beginner surfers, with gentle waves and surf schools offering lessons.
3. **Hikkaduwa:**
  - **Location:** Southwest coast.
  - **Description:** In addition to swimming, Hikkaduwa offers good surf spots, particularly for intermediate surfers. The beach has a lively scene with plenty of surf shops and cafes.

## Beaches for Sunbathing and Relaxation

1. **Nilaveli:**
  - **Location:** Northeast coast, near Trincomalee.
  - **Description:** known for its pristine white sands and tranquil waters. It's a perfect spot for sunbathing and enjoying the serene environment. The nearby Pigeon Island offers great snorkeling opportunities.
2. **Tangalle:**
  - **Location:** Southern coast.
  - **Description:** offers a more secluded and less crowded environment, perfect for sunbathing and relaxation. The palm-fringed shoreline and turquoise waters create a picturesque setting.
3. **Pasikuda:**
  - **Location:** East coast.
  - **Description:** famous for its shallow, calm waters and long stretches of sandy beach. It's ideal for sunbathing, and the water is perfect for a leisurely dip.

## 3. 15 Best places to See in Sri Lanka

### 1. Sigiriya

- **Description:** Sigiriya, also known as Lion's Rock, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This ancient rock fortress was built by King Kashyapa in the 5th century and is renowned for its stunning frescoes, landscaped gardens, and remarkable water technology. The summit offers panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

## 2. Kandy

- **Description:** Kandy, the cultural capital of Sri Lanka, is home to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (Dalada Maligawa), one of the most sacred Buddhist sites in the world. The city is also famous for the annual Esala Perahera, a grand procession featuring traditional dancers, drummers, and beautifully decorated elephants. Nearby, visitors can explore the scenic Knuckles Range, Hantana mountain range, and the Udawatta Kele Sanctuary.

## 3. Galle

- **Description:** Galle is a historic city located on the southern coast, known for its well-preserved Dutch Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city combines colonial architecture with modern charm, offering beautiful beaches, coral reefs, and a vibrant arts scene. Galle is also a hub for tourists and expatriates, with many foreign locals investing in property and businesses here.

## 4. Ella

- **Description:** Ella is a picturesque town in the central highlands, famous for its stunning views, tea plantations, and hiking opportunities. Key attractions include the Nine Arch Bridge, Little Adam's Peak, Rawana Falls, and the Ella Rock hike. Ella's cool climate and lush landscapes make it a perfect escape from the heat.

## 5. Anuradhapura

- **Description:** Anuradhapura is one of the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city is known for its well-preserved ruins of ancient Sri Lankan civilization, including stupas, temples, and palaces. The sacred Bodhi Tree, grown from a cutting of the original tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, is a major pilgrimage site.

## 6. Polonnaruwa

- **Description:** Polonnaruwa, another ancient capital and UNESCO World Heritage Site, offers well-preserved ruins from the 10th and 11th centuries. Visitors can explore impressive structures such as the Royal Palace, the Gal Vihara with its giant rock-cut Buddha statues, and various temples and monasteries.

## 7. Nuwara Eliya

- **Description:** Nuwara Eliya, often referred to as "Little England," is known for its cool climate, tea plantations, and colonial architecture. Popular attractions include Gregory Lake, the Victoria Park, and the Hakgala Botanical Gardens. The area is also renowned for its scenic landscapes and trekking opportunities.

## 8. Yala National Park

- **Description:** Yala National Park is one of the best places in Sri Lanka for wildlife enthusiasts. The park is home to a diverse range of animals, including elephants, leopards, sloth bears, and a variety of bird species. Safari tours offer a chance to see these animals in their natural habitat.

## 9. Trincomalee

- **Description:** Trincomalee, located on the northeast coast, is known for its beautiful beaches such as Nilaveli and Uppuveli. The city also boasts the historic Koneswaram Temple, a sacred Hindu site dedicated to Lord Shiva. Nearby, Pigeon Island National Park offers excellent snorkeling and diving opportunities.

## 10. Mirissa

- **Description:** Mirissa is a popular coastal town famous for its stunning beaches, surfing spots, and whale watching opportunities. Visitors can enjoy fresh seafood, explore the nearby coconut plantations, and relax in the laid-back atmosphere.

## 11. Jaffna

- **Description:** Jaffna, in the northern part of Sri Lanka, offers a unique cultural experience with its distinct Tamil heritage. Key attractions include the ancient Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil, the Jaffna Fort, and the beautiful Nagadeepa Island, which requires a boat trip. The region is also known for its delicious cuisine and warm hospitality.

## 12. Kalpitiya

- **Description:** Kalpitiya is renowned for its kite surfing and stunning natural beauty. The area offers a range of activities, including dolphin and whale watching, snorkeling, and exploring the pristine beaches and lagoons. The best time to visit for kite surfing is from May to October when the winds are strongest.

## 13. Arugam Bay

- **Description:** Arugam Bay is a world-famous surfing destination located on the east coast of Sri Lanka. The area is also home to Muhudu Maha Viharaya, an ancient Buddhist temple with historical significance. Visitors can explore the beautiful beaches, enjoy the local culture, and take part in various water sports.

## 14. Mannar

- **Description:** Mannar, known for its historical significance as a pearl harbor during the Portuguese era, offers several attractions such as the Mannar Fort, the ancient Baobab

tree, and the Madhu Church. The region is also a haven for bird watchers, with migratory birds including flamingos making a seasonal appearance.

## 15. Colombo

- **Description:** The capital city of Colombo is a bustling metropolis that offers a mix of modernity and tradition. Key attractions include the Galle Face Green, the National Museum, and the bustling Pettah market. Colombo's vibrant nightlife, shopping centers, and diverse dining options make it a great starting point for exploring Sri Lanka.

## 4. Festivals and cultural events in Sri Lanka

### Sinhala and Tamil New Year (Aluth Avurudu)

- **When:** April 13-14
- **Description:** This festival marks the traditional New Year for both Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus. It's a time for family gatherings, rituals, and cultural events. Traditional customs include boiling milk to overflow (a sign of prosperity), lighting the hearth, and partaking in games such as 'kotta pora' (pillow fighting). Special foods like 'kiribath' (milk rice) and 'kokis' (a type of crispy snack) are prepared.

### Vesak

- **When:** Full moon day in May
- **Description:** Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing away of Lord Buddha. It is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. Homes and streets are adorned with colorful lanterns and illuminated pandals depicting stories from the Buddha's life. Devotees visit temples for prayers, and acts of charity such as giving alms and releasing animals are common.

### Poson

- **When:** Full moon day in June
- **Description:** Poson marks the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE, brought by the monk Mahinda. The main celebrations occur in Mihintale, where Mahinda first preached to the Sinhalese king. Religious observances, processions, and pilgrimages are integral parts of Poson.

### Esala Perahera

- **When:** July/August

- **Description:** Held in Kandy, the Esala Perahera is one of the grandest Buddhist festivals in Sri Lanka. The festival lasts for about ten days and features a magnificent procession with traditional dancers, drummers, whip-crackers, fire jugglers, and beautifully adorned elephants. The highlight is the carrying of the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha through the streets.

## **Deepavali (Diwali)**

- **When:** October/November
- **Description:** Celebrated by the Tamil Hindu community, Deepavali, or the Festival of Lights, symbolizes the victory of light over darkness. Homes are illuminated with oil lamps, and families exchange sweets and gifts. Fireworks and festive meals are a significant part of the celebrations.

## **Christmas**

- **When:** December 25
- **Description:** While Christmas is primarily celebrated by the Christian community, it has become a festive occasion for many Sri Lankans. Churches hold special services, and homes are decorated with Christmas trees and lights. Colombo and other major cities are adorned with colorful decorations and lights.

## **Maha Shivaratri**

- **When:** February/March
- **Description:** This Hindu festival is dedicated to Lord Shiva and involves night-long vigils, fasting, and offerings of milk and flowers. Devotees visit temples such as Koneswaram in Trincomalee and Munneswaram in Chilaw for special prayers and rituals.

## **Eid al-Fitr**

- **When:** Date varies (end of Ramadan)
- **Description:** Celebrated by the Muslim community, Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. The day begins with a special prayer service, and families gather to share festive meals. Acts of charity and giving of 'Zakat al-Fitr' (charity given to the poor) are important aspects of the celebration.

## **Navratri and Durga Puja**

- **When:** September/October
- **Description:** These Hindu festivals are dedicated to the worship of the goddess Durga. Navratri involves nine nights of dance, music, and prayers. Durga Puja, particularly celebrated in the Tamil community, includes elaborate decorations, rituals, and cultural performances.

## **Thaipongal**



- **When:** January 14-17
- **Description:** Thaipongal is a harvest festival celebrated by the Tamil Hindu community. It involves the cooking of the first rice of the season, known as 'pongal,' in a decorated clay pot. The festival also includes cattle races and colorful kolam (rangoli) designs.

### **Perehera of the Gangaramaya Temple**

- **When:** February/March
- **Description:** This vibrant procession in Colombo features caparisoned elephants, traditional dancers, musicians, and religious artifacts. It is organized by the Gangaramaya Temple and attracts thousands of devotees and tourists.

## **5. Staples of Sri Lankan Cuisine**

1. **Rice:** The cornerstone of Sri Lankan meals, rice is served in numerous forms. From plain steamed rice to more elaborate preparations like biryanis and fried rice, it is typically accompanied by a variety of curries and side dishes.
2. **Curry:** Curries in Sri Lanka are diverse and can be made with meat, fish, vegetables, and lentils. Each curry is distinct, characterized by a complex blend of spices such as cumin, coriander, fennel, fenugreek, turmeric, and curry leaves. Coconut milk is a staple ingredient that imparts a rich, creamy texture to many curries.
3. **Roti:** Roti is a type of flatbread that is commonly consumed in Sri Lanka. Variations include pol roti (coconut roti), which is made with grated coconut and served with spicy sambols (condiments made from chili peppers and other ingredients).

### **Popular Dishes**

1. **Kottu Roti:** A beloved street food, kottu roti is made by stir-frying chopped roti with vegetables, eggs, meat, and a medley of spices. The dish is prepared on a hot griddle, and the rhythmic sound of metal spatulas clanging as the ingredients are chopped and mixed is iconic in Sri Lankan street food culture.
2. **Hoppers (Appa):** Hoppers are bowl-shaped pancakes made from a fermented batter of rice flour and coconut milk. They can be plain or enhanced with an egg (egg hoppers) and are typically eaten with a variety of sambols and curries.

3. **String Hoppers (Indiappa):** These are delicate, steamed rice noodle nests that are often served with coconut milk and spicy curry or sambol. They are a breakfast staple but can be enjoyed at any meal.
4. **Lamprais:** A dish influenced by Dutch Burghers, lamprais consists of rice boiled in stock, a variety of meats, and a mixed meat curry, all wrapped in a banana leaf and baked. The banana leaf imparts a unique flavor to the dish.
5. **Fish Ambul Thiyal:** A sour fish curry, fish ambul thiyal is made with chunks of fish (often tuna) cooked in a blend of spices and tamarind. This dish is known for its tangy and spicy flavors.
6. **Devilled dishes:** Proteins like chicken, beef, pork, prawns, and cuttlefish are commonly marinated in a mix of spices before cooking to infuse them with flavor. The hallmark of devilled dishes is their intense spiciness combined with a tangy kick, often from vinegar or lime juice. The marinated ingredients are quickly stir-fried with onions, bell peppers, and sometimes tomatoes, which adds a sweet balance to the spicy dish. Garlic, ginger, and various spices like cumin and coriander are often used to enhance the depth of flavor.

## **Street Foods, Snacks also called” Short Eats”**

### **1. Sri Lankan Rolls**

**Description:** Rolls are cylindrical pastries filled with a savory mixture, typically spiced meat, fish, or vegetables, then coated in breadcrumbs and deep-fried.

**Common Fillings:** Spiced fish, chicken, or vegetable mixtures.

**Taste:** Crispy exterior with a spicy and flavorful filling, often enjoyed with a splash of chili sauce.

### **2. Cutlets**

**Description:** Cutlets are small, round, breadcrumb-coated patties made from mashed potatoes mixed with spiced meat or fish.

**Common Fillings:** Tuna, mackerel, chicken, or just spiced potatoes for a vegetarian option.

**Taste:** Soft and creamy inside with a crispy outer layer, offering a burst of savory and spicy flavors.

### **3. Pattis**

**Description:** Pattis are crescent-shaped pastries filled with a spicy meat or vegetable filling, similar to empanadas.

**Common Fillings:** Beef, chicken, fish, or mixed vegetables.

**Taste:** Flaky and buttery pastry with a rich, spiced filling. They can be baked or fried.

#### 4. Fish Buns

**Description:** Fish buns are soft, fluffy buns filled with a spicy fish mixture, often incorporating onions, peppers, and curry leaves.

**Taste:** A delightful combination of soft bread with a mildly spicy, savory filling. Perfect for breakfast or a quick snack.

#### 5. Vada

**Description:** Vada are savory fried snacks made from lentils or potatoes, similar to fritters or doughnuts in shape.

**Common Types:** Ulundu vada (made from urad dal) and parippu vada (made from split chickpeas).

**Taste:** Crispy and crunchy, often spiced with chilies, curry leaves, and sometimes served with chutney.

#### 6. Samosas

**Description:** Samosas are triangular pastries filled with a spiced mixture of potatoes, peas, and sometimes meat.

**Taste:** Crispy on the outside with a flavorful, slightly spicy filling. Usually accompanied by chutney or sauce.

#### 7. Chinese Rolls

**Description:** Despite the name, Chinese rolls are a local creation. These are spring rolls filled with a mixture of vegetables and sometimes noodles.

**Common Fillings:** Cabbage, carrots, onions, and occasionally meat.

**Taste:** Crunchy exterior with a mildly seasoned vegetable filling, perfect for dipping in chili sauce.

#### 8. Mutton Roti

**Description:** Mutton roti is a stuffed flatbread with a spicy mutton filling.

**Taste:** Flaky, crispy bread with a rich and spicy meat filling. Great for a substantial snack or light meal.

## 9. Seeni Sambol Buns

**Description:** These buns are filled with "seeni sambol," a sweet and spicy caramelized onion relish.

**Taste:** A balance of sweet, spicy, and savory flavors encased in a soft bun.

## 10. Kimbula Banis

**Description:** These are elongated, slightly sweet buns often enjoyed with tea.

**Taste:** Slightly sweet, soft, and perfect for a light snack.

## Desserts and Sweets

**Watalappan:** A traditional Sri Lankan dessert, watalappan is a spiced coconut custard made with coconut milk, jaggery (palm sugar), eggs, and spices like cardamom and nutmeg. It's rich and creamy, with a deep caramel flavor.

**Kiri Pani:** A simple yet delightful dessert, kiri pani is curd (a type of yogurt made from buffalo milk) served with treacle (a thick syrup made from the sap of the kithul palm).

**Kalu Dodol:** A dark, chewy sweet made from rice flour, coconut milk, and jaggery. It's flavored with cardamom and cashew nuts.

## Beverages

**Ceylon Tea:** Sri Lanka is famous for its tea, particularly black tea. A cup of Ceylon tea is a must-try when visiting the island. It can be enjoyed plain or with milk and sugar.

**King Coconut Water:** A refreshing natural drink, king coconut water is enjoyed straight from the orange-husked king coconut. It's hydrating and packed with electrolytes.

## 6. Popular Fruits in Sri Lanka

1. **Mango:**

- **Season:** April, May, June to July.
- **Description:** Sri Lankan mangoes are sweet, juicy, and come in various varieties, such as Karthakolomban and Willard. They are enjoyed fresh, in salads, or as part of desserts.

2. **Pineapple:**

- **Season:** Available year-round.
- **Description:** Known for their sweet and slightly tangy flavor, Sri Lankan pineapples are often eaten fresh, juiced, or used in dishes and desserts. They are also a key ingredient in local curries.

3. **Banana:**

- **Season:** Available year-round.
- **Description:** There are several varieties of bananas in Sri Lanka, including Seeni Kesel (sweet banana) and Ambul Kesel (sour banana). Bananas are a staple fruit, consumed fresh or used in cooking and baking.

4. **Papaya:**

- **Season:** Available year-round.
- **Description:** Papayas in Sri Lanka are sweet, juicy, and rich in flavor. They are often eaten fresh, added to fruit salads, or blended into refreshing juices.

5. **Jackfruit:**

- **Season:** March, April, May to June.
- **Description:** Jackfruit is the largest tree-borne fruit and can weigh up to 35 kg. It has a sweet, fibrous flesh that can be eaten fresh or used in curries. Unripe jackfruit is commonly used as a vegetable in savory dishes.

6. **Rambutan:**

- **Season:** May to August.
- **Description:** With its hairy red or yellow skin, rambutan is a visually striking fruit. The sweet, translucent flesh is similar to lychee and is enjoyed fresh.

7. **Mangosteen:**

- **Season:** May to August.
- **Description:** Known as the "queen of fruits," mangosteen has a thick purple rind and juicy, sweet-tart segments inside. It is highly prized for its delicious flavor.

8. **Durian:**

- **Season:** June to August.
- **Description:** Often called the "king of fruits," durian is known for its strong odor and rich, creamy flesh. It is an acquired taste, loved by many for its unique flavor.

9. **Wood Apple:**

- **Season:** May to September.
- **Description:** Wood apple has a hard shell and a sticky, brownish pulp with a tangy-sweet taste. It is often made into juices, chutneys, and desserts.

10. **Star Fruit (Carambola):**

- **Season:** Available year-round.
- **Description:** Star fruit is named for its star-shaped cross-section. It has a crisp, juicy texture and a mildly sweet and tart flavor. It is enjoyed fresh or in salads.

## **Exotic and Lesser-Known Fruits**

1. **Beli (Bael Fruit):**

- **Season:** March to May.
- **Description:** Beli fruit has a hard shell and an aromatic, sweet-tart pulp. It is often used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine and made into drinks and desserts.

2. **Soursop (Graviola):**

- **Season:** Available year-round.
- **Description:** Soursop has a spiky green skin and soft, white flesh with a sweet-tart flavor. It is consumed fresh, in juices, or as a flavoring in desserts.

3. **Rose Apple:**

- **Season:** March to April, July to August.
- **Description:** Rose apples are small, bell-shaped fruits with a crisp texture and a subtly sweet, floral flavor. They are enjoyed fresh and often used in salads.

4. **Ambarella (June Plum):**

- **Season:** March to April, August to September.
- **Description:** Ambarella is a small, green fruit with a crunchy texture and a sweet-tart taste. It is eaten fresh, pickled, or used in juices and salads.

## **7. Animals in Sri Lanka**

### **Mammals**

#### **1. Elephants**

- **Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus maximus*)**: Sri Lanka is home to one of the largest populations of Asian elephants. These majestic creatures can be seen in national parks such as Yala, Udawalawe, Minneriya, and Kaudulla. The annual "Gathering" of elephants at Minneriya National Park during the dry season is a spectacular sight.

#### **2. Leopards**

- **Sri Lankan Leopard (*Panthera pardus kotiya*)**: An endemic subspecies, the Sri Lankan leopard is a top predator on the island. Yala National Park is one of the best places in the world to see these elusive big cats.

#### **3. Deer**

- **Spotted Deer (*Axis axis*)**: Commonly seen in many national parks, including Yala and Wilpattu.
- **Sambar Deer (*Rusa unicolor*)**: Often spotted in the central highlands, especially in Horton Plains National Park.

#### **4. Wild Boars**

- Wild boars are widespread throughout Sri Lanka's forests and grasslands. They are commonly seen in most national parks.

#### **5. Sloth Bear**

- The Sri Lankan sloth bear is another endemic species that can be seen in national parks like Yala and Wilpattu. They are known for their shaggy coats and unique feeding habits.

#### **6. Primates**

- **Toque Macaque (*Macaca sinica*)**: An endemic monkey species found throughout the island, often near ancient ruins and temples.
- **Purple-faced Langur (*Semnopithecus vetulus*)**: Another endemic primate, usually seen in forested areas.

### **Birds**

Sri Lanka is a birdwatcher's paradise, with over 400 recorded bird species, including many endemics.

1. **Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)**: Commonly seen in open areas and national parks.
2. **Sri Lanka Junglefowl (*Gallus lafayetii*)**: The national bird of Sri Lanka, endemic to the island.
3. **Ceylon Blue Magpie (*Urocissa ornata*)**: An endemic species found in the rainforests of the central highlands.
4. **Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot (*Loriculus beryllinus*)**: Another endemic bird, known for its bright green plumage and red beak.

5. **Migratory Birds:** Mannar Island and other coastal regions are hotspots for migratory birds, including flamingos, during certain times of the year.

## **Reptiles and Amphibians**

1. **Crocodiles**
  - **Mugger Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) and Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*)** can be found in rivers, lakes, and coastal areas.
2. **Snakes**
  - Sri Lanka is home to numerous snake species, including the Indian cobra and the green pit viper.
3. **Turtles**
  - **Marine Turtles:** Several species of sea turtles, including the green turtle, hawksbill turtle, and leatherback turtle, nest on Sri Lanka's beaches. Conservation projects, particularly along the southern and southwestern coasts, protect these creatures.

## **Other Wildlife**

1. **Butterflies**
  - With around 245 species, including several endemics, Sri Lanka is a haven for butterfly enthusiasts. The Sinharaja Forest Reserve is a particularly good spot for butterfly watching.
2. **Insects**
  - The island has a rich insect fauna, including a variety of colorful and unique species.

## **Marine Life**

1. **Whales and Dolphins**
  - Sri Lanka is one of the best places in the world for whale watching, particularly off the coasts of Mirissa and Trincomalee. Blue whales, sperm whales, and various species of dolphins can be seen in these waters.
2. **Coral Reefs**
  - The coral reefs around Hikkaduwa and Pigeon Island are teeming with marine life, including colorful fish, rays, and sea turtles.

# **8. Flowers in Sri Lanka**

## **Blue Water Lily (*Nymphaea nouchali*)**



The blue water lily, known locally as "Nil Manel," is the national flower of Sri Lanka. It is commonly found in ponds, lakes, and marshes throughout the country. The flower's striking blue petals and yellow center make it a symbol of purity and tranquility in Sri Lankan culture.

### **Frangipani (Plumeria)**

Frangipani, or "Araliya" in Sinhala, is a fragrant flower widely grown in gardens and used in religious offerings. It comes in various colors, including white, yellow, pink, and red. The delicate fragrance and beautiful appearance of frangipani make it a favorite in Sri Lankan floral arrangements.

### **Hibiscus (Hibiscus rosa-sinensis)**

Hibiscus flowers, locally known as "Wada Mal," are common in Sri Lanka and come in a wide range of vibrant colors such as red, pink, yellow, and orange. These large, showy flowers are often seen adorning gardens and are also used in traditional medicine.

### **Lotus (Nelumbo nucifera)**

The lotus, or "Nelum," is a sacred flower in Sri Lanka, often associated with purity, enlightenment, and rebirth. It is commonly seen in Buddhist temples and religious ceremonies. The lotus blooms in pink and white, with its leaves and flowers rising above the water surface.

### **Orchids**

Sri Lanka is home to a diverse range of orchids, with over 170 species found on the island. These exotic and often rare flowers are prized for their intricate shapes and stunning colors. Orchids grow in various habitats, from lowland rainforests to montane regions.

### **Bougainvillea**

Bougainvillea, known locally as "Rathmal," is a popular ornamental plant in Sri Lanka. It produces vibrant clusters of papery bracts in colors like magenta, red, orange, and white. Bougainvillea is often used to decorate gardens, fences, and arbors.

### **Temple Tree (Plumeria alba)**

Similar to the frangipani, the temple tree, or "Araliya," is another fragrant flower commonly found around temples and gardens in Sri Lanka. It blooms in shades of white and yellow, with a distinctive sweet scent.

### **Jasmine (Jasminum sambac)**

Jasmine, or "Saman Pichcha," is a highly fragrant flower widely used in Sri Lankan culture. The small, white blossoms are often used in religious offerings, garlands, and traditional ceremonies. Jasmine is also valued for its essential oil, used in perfumes and aromatherapy.

## **Roses**

While not native to Sri Lanka, roses are widely cultivated in the island's cooler regions, such as Nuwara Eliya. These classic flowers are cherished for their beauty and fragrance, and they come in a variety of colors, including red, pink, yellow, and white.

## **Anthuriums**

Anthuriums, with their glossy, heart-shaped spathes and brightly colored spadices, are popular ornamental flowers in Sri Lanka. They are often grown in gardens and used in floral arrangements for their striking appearance and long-lasting blooms.

# **9. Trip Suggestions**

## **1. 5-nights trip**

### **Day 1: Arrival in Colombo**

#### **Morning:**

- Arrive at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo.

#### **Afternoon:**

- Explore Colombo's highlights including the Gangaramaya Temple, Independence Memorial Hall, and the National Museum.
- Stroll through the bustling Pettah Market for a taste of local life.

#### **Evening:**

- Enjoy a sunset walk along Galle Face Green.
- Dinner at a local restaurant or at your hotel.

### **Day 2: Colombo to Sigiriya**

#### **Morning:**

- Early breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Sigiriya (approximately a 4-hour drive).

**Afternoon:**

- Check into your hotel in Sigiriya.
- Visit the Sigiriya Rock Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Climb the rock and explore the ancient frescoes and ruins of King Kashyapa's palace.

**Evening:**

- Relax at your hotel or explore the nearby village.
- Dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.

**Day 3: Sigiriya to Kandy via Dambulla**

**Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Kandy, stopping en route to visit the Dambulla Cave Temple, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore the ancient cave temples with their stunning Buddha statues and murals.

**Afternoon:**

- Continue the journey to Kandy (approximately 2.5-hour drive).
- Check into your hotel in Kandy.
- Visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (Sri Dalada Maligawa), a significant site for Buddhists worldwide.

**Evening:**

- Explore the Kandy Lake and its scenic surroundings.
- Dinner at a local restaurant or your hotel.

**Day 4: Kandy to Nuwara Eliya**

**Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Nuwara Eliya, also known as "Little England" (approximately a 2.5-hour drive).
- En route, visit a tea plantation and factory to learn about Sri Lanka's famous tea industry and enjoy a tasting.

**Afternoon:**

- Check into your hotel in Nuwara Eliya.
- Explore the town, visiting Victoria Park, Gregory Lake, and the colonial-era buildings.

**Evening:**

- Relax at your hotel or take a leisurely walk through the town.
- Dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.

**Day 5: Nuwara Eliya to Galle**

**Morning:**

- Early breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Galle (approximately a 5-hour drive).

**Afternoon:**

- Check into your hotel in Galle.
- Explore the Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its cobblestone streets, historic buildings, and charming boutiques.

**Evening:**

- Enjoy the sunset from the ramparts of Galle Fort.
- Dinner at a local seafood restaurant or your hotel.

**Day 6: Departure from Colombo**

**Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depending on your flight schedule, you can either explore more of Galle or start your journey back to Colombo.

**Afternoon:**

- Transfer to Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo for your departure flight (approximately a 2.5-hour drive from Galle).

**Evening:**

- Depart Sri Lanka with wonderful memories of your trip.

## **2. 10-nights trip**

### **Day 1: Arrival in Colombo**

#### **Morning:**

- Arrive at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo.
- Transfer to your hotel in Colombo and check-in.

#### **Afternoon:**

- Explore Colombo's highlights including the Gangaramaya Temple, Independence Memorial Hall, and the National Museum.

#### **Evening:**

- Stroll through Galle Face Green and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

### **Day 2: Colombo to Sigiriya**

#### **Morning:**

- Early breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Sigiriya (approximately a 4-hour drive).

#### **Afternoon:**

- Check into your hotel in Sigiriya.
- Visit the Sigiriya Rock Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

#### **Evening:**

- Relax at your hotel or explore the nearby village.

### **Day 3: Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa**

#### **Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Drive to Polonnaruwa (approximately 1.5-hour drive) and explore the ancient city, another UNESCO World Heritage Site.

#### **Afternoon:**

- Return to Sigiriya and relax at your hotel.

**Evening:**

- Dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.

**Day 4: Sigiriya to Kandy via Dambulla****Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Kandy, stopping en route to visit the Dambulla Cave Temple.

**Afternoon:**

- Continue to Kandy (approximately 2.5-hour drive).
- Check into your hotel in Kandy.

**Evening:**

- Visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic.
- Enjoy a traditional Kandyan dance performance.

**Day 5: Kandy****Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Visit the Royal Botanical Gardens in Peradeniya.

**Afternoon:**

- Explore Kandy Lake and the local markets.

**Evening:**

- Dinner at a local restaurant or your hotel.

**Day 6: Kandy to Nuwara Eliya****Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Nuwara Eliya (approximately 2.5-hour drive).
- En route, visit a tea plantation and factory.

**Afternoon:**

- Check into your hotel in Nuwara Eliya.
- Explore the town, visiting Victoria Park and Gregory Lake.

**Evening:**

- Dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.

**Day 7: Nuwara Eliya to Ella**

**Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Take a scenic train ride from Nuwara Eliya to Ella, known for its breathtaking views.

**Afternoon:**

- Check into your hotel in Ella.
- Visit the Nine Arch Bridge and Little Adam's Peak.

**Evening:**

- Relax at your hotel or explore the local area.

**Day 8: Ella to Yala National Park**

**Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depart for Yala National Park (approximately a 3-hour drive).

**Afternoon:**

- Check into your accommodation near Yala.
- Go on an afternoon safari to see elephants, leopards, and other wildlife.

**Evening:**

- Dinner at the lodge or a local restaurant.

**Day 9: Yala to Galle**

**Morning:**

- Early morning safari in Yala National Park.
- Breakfast at the lodge.

**Afternoon:**

- Depart for Galle (approximately a 4-hour drive).
- Check into your hotel in Galle.

**Evening:**

- Explore Galle Fort and enjoy the sunset.

**Day 10: Galle and Unawatuna****Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Visit Unawatuna Beach for swimming and relaxation.

**Afternoon:**

- Explore more of Galle, visit the Maritime Museum and the Dutch Reformed Church.

**Evening:**

- Dinner at a local seafood restaurant or your hotel.

**Day 11: Departure from Colombo****Morning:**

- Breakfast at the hotel.
- Depending on your flight schedule, you can either explore more of Galle or start your journey back to Colombo.

**Afternoon:**

- Transfer to Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo for your departure flight (approximately a 2.5-hour drive from Galle).

**Evening:**

- Depart Sri Lanka with wonderful memories of your trip.

**Additional Notes:**

- This itinerary can be adjusted based on your interests and travel preferences.
- Make sure to check the opening hours and any travel restrictions for the attractions in advance.



- Consider hiring a private driver or using a reputable tour company for convenience and comfort.

## **10. History of Sri Lanka:**

### **Ancient History**

#### **1. Prehistoric Period**

- The earliest human inhabitants of Sri Lanka are believed to have arrived around 125,000 years ago. Archaeological findings at sites such as Balangoda and Fa Hien Cave have provided evidence of prehistoric communities.

#### **2. Early Settlements**

- The island's recorded history begins with the arrival of the Indo-Aryan settlers from northern India around the 5th century BCE. The legendary Prince Vijaya is considered the first king of Sri Lanka, establishing the kingdom of Tambapanni.

#### **3. Anuradhapura Kingdom (377 BCE - 1017 CE)**

- The Anuradhapura Kingdom, founded by King Pandukabhaya, was the first established kingdom in Sri Lanka. It became a major center of Theravada Buddhism after the introduction of Buddhism by the monk Mahinda, the son of the Indian Emperor Ashoka, in the 3rd century BCE.
- The city of Anuradhapura flourished as a political and religious capital, known for its impressive stupas, monasteries, and irrigation systems.

#### **4. Polonnaruwa Kingdom (1017 - 1236)**

- After the fall of Anuradhapura, the kingdom of Polonnaruwa became the island's capital. King Parakramabahu I (1153-1186) was a significant ruler who promoted agriculture, building extensive irrigation systems, and fortifying the city.
- Polonnaruwa is renowned for its well-preserved ruins, including the Royal Palace, the Gal Vihara rock temple, and various Buddhist and Hindu temples.

### **Medieval Period**

### **1. Kotte and Kandy Kingdoms (13th - 15th Centuries)**

- Following the decline of Polonnaruwa, the island saw the rise of several regional kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Kotte in the southwest and the Kingdom of Kandy in the central highlands.
- The Kandy Kingdom, in particular, played a crucial role in preserving Sri Lankan independence during the colonial era.

## **Colonial Period**

### **1. Portuguese Era (1505 - 1658)**

- The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Sri Lanka, establishing control over coastal areas and key ports. They introduced Christianity and built fortifications, including the fort in Colombo.
- Resistance from the inland Kingdom of Kandy kept the Portuguese from fully controlling the island.

### **2. Dutch Era (1658 - 1796)**

- The Dutch East India Company ousted the Portuguese and took control of coastal areas. The Dutch influence is still visible in the architecture of cities like Galle and Colombo.
- The Dutch maintained a profitable trade in cinnamon and other spices but faced continuous resistance from the Kandyan Kingdom.

### **3. British Era (1796 - 1948)**

- The British took over from the Dutch in 1796 and gradually extended their control over the entire island, annexing the Kingdom of Kandy in 1815.
- Under British rule, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) underwent significant economic changes, including the development of tea, coffee, and rubber plantations. The British also built railways and introduced modern education and legal systems.

## **Independence and Modern History**

### **1. Independence (1948)**

- Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain on February 4, 1948. D. S. Senanayake became the first Prime Minister of independent Ceylon.
- The country retained the British monarch as the head of state until it became a republic in 1972, adopting the name Sri Lanka.

### **2. Post-Independence Period**

- The post-independence era was marked by ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. These tensions escalated into a civil war in 1983.
- The civil war lasted for 26 years, ending in 2009 with the defeat of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) by government forces. The conflict had a significant impact on the country's political, social, and economic landscape.

### **3. Contemporary Sri Lanka**

- Since the end of the civil war, Sri Lanka has been focused on rebuilding and reconciliation. The country has seen economic growth and development, particularly in tourism.

- Sri Lanka's strategic location in the Indian Ocean continues to play a vital role in its geopolitical significance.

## 11. Economy of Sri Lanka

### Key Sectors of the Economy

#### 1. Agriculture

- **Tea:** Sri Lanka is one of the world's largest tea exporters. The tea industry is a significant contributor to the economy, providing employment to a large portion of the population. Ceylon tea is renowned globally for its quality.
- **Rubber and Coconut:** Besides tea, rubber and coconut are also major export crops. These industries have a long history and contribute substantially to the rural economy.
- **Rice:** Rice is the staple food, and paddy farming is a major agricultural activity. The government supports rice cultivation through various subsidies and programs.
- **Spices:** Sri Lanka is famous for its spices, including cinnamon, pepper, and cardamom, which are significant export commodities.

#### 2. Manufacturing

- **Textiles and Apparel:** The textile and apparel sector is one of the largest industries in Sri Lanka, contributing significantly to export earnings. The industry benefits from preferential trade agreements and a skilled workforce.
- **Cement and Construction Materials:** With ongoing infrastructure development, the demand for cement and construction materials has increased.
- **Food Processing:** The food processing industry, including the production of processed tea, coconut products, and spices, is vital for both domestic consumption and export.

#### 3. Services

- **Tourism:** Tourism is a key pillar of Sri Lanka's economy, attracting millions of visitors each year. The country is known for its natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural heritage. Major tourist attractions include beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, ancient cities, and festivals.
- **Information Technology (IT):** The IT and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors are rapidly growing, supported by a young, educated workforce and favorable government policies.

- **Banking and Finance:** The financial services sector is well-developed, with a robust banking system, stock market, and insurance services.

#### 4. **Tourism**

- Sri Lanka's tourism sector has shown resilience and growth, despite setbacks such as the civil war and the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019. Post-war, the country saw a boom in tourism, with investments in hotels, resorts, and infrastructure.
- Key tourist destinations include the Cultural Triangle (Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya), beaches (Negombo, Bentota, Mirissa), and nature reserves (Yala, Udawalawe, Horton Plains).

#### 5. **Fisheries**

- The fisheries sector is an important part of the economy, providing livelihoods for coastal communities. Sri Lanka has a rich marine biodiversity, and the fishing industry includes both coastal and deep-sea fishing.

### **Economic Indicators**

#### 1. **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

- Sri Lanka has a middle-income economy with a GDP that has shown consistent growth over the years. Key drivers of GDP growth include manufacturing, services, and tourism.

#### 2. **Trade and Exports**

- Major export commodities include textiles and garments, tea, rubber, spices, and gems. The country imports machinery, petroleum, foodstuffs, and textiles.
- Sri Lanka has trade relationships with countries around the world, with major export destinations including the United States, the United Kingdom, and India.

#### 3. **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**

- The government has taken measures to attract FDI by improving the business environment, including reforms in investment policies and infrastructure development.
- Key areas attracting FDI include tourism, real estate, manufacturing, and IT.

#### 4. **Infrastructure Development**

- Significant investments have been made in infrastructure, including roads, ports, and airports. The Port City Colombo project is one of the largest infrastructure projects aimed at creating a new business and financial hub.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

#### 1. **Challenges**

- **Debt Burden:** Sri Lanka has faced challenges related to high public debt, which has constrained public finances and investment capacity.
- **Political Stability:** Political uncertainty and instability have sometimes affected investor confidence and economic performance.

- **Income Inequality:** There are disparities in income distribution, with some regions lagging in terms of economic development.
- 2. **Opportunities**
  - **Tourism Growth:** With its diverse attractions, Sri Lanka has the potential to significantly grow its tourism sector further.
  - **IT and BPO:** The IT and BPO sectors present opportunities for economic diversification and job creation.
  - **Agricultural Diversification:** There is potential for diversifying agricultural exports and increasing value addition.

## **Government Initiatives**

1. **Economic Reforms**
  - The government has undertaken various economic reforms to improve the business climate, attract investment, and boost economic growth. These include tax reforms, regulatory improvements, and infrastructure development.
2. **Vision 2025**
  - The government's Vision 2025 strategy aims to transform Sri Lanka into an upper-middle-income country. Key focus areas include promoting exports, enhancing productivity, and improving education and skills development.

# **12.     Education of Sri Lanka**

## **Historical Background**

1. **Ancient and Colonial Periods**
  - Sri Lanka has a long tradition of education, with ancient learning centers like the Buddhist monastic colleges in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.
  - During the colonial period, the Portuguese, Dutch, and British introduced formal education systems, including missionary schools.
2. **Post-Independence**
  - Since gaining independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has made significant strides in expanding and improving its education system. The government has focused on providing free education from primary to tertiary levels.

## **Structure of the Education System**

1. **Pre-School Education**
  - Pre-school education is not compulsory but is widely available. It caters to children aged 3-5 years and focuses on early childhood development.
2. **Primary Education**

- Primary education spans grades 1 to 5, starting at age 5. The curriculum includes basic literacy and numeracy, environmental studies, and moral education.
- Primary education is free and compulsory.
- 3. **Secondary Education**
  - **Junior Secondary (Grades 6-9):** Builds on primary education with a broader curriculum that includes subjects like mathematics, science, social studies, and languages.
  - **Senior Secondary (Grades 10-11):** Students prepare for the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O-Level) examinations, which are crucial for progressing to advanced studies.
  - **Senior Secondary (Grades 12-13):** Students who pass the O-Level exams proceed to study for the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A-Level) exams. The A-Level exams are critical for university entrance.
- 4. **Tertiary Education**
  - **Universities and Higher Education Institutions:** Sri Lanka has a number of public and private universities and higher education institutions offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in various fields. The University of Colombo, University of Peradeniya, and University of Sri Jayewardenepura are some of the prominent universities.
  - **Technical and Vocational Education:** Technical colleges and vocational training centers provide skills development and training for various trades and professions.

## **Key Features and Policies**

1. **Free Education Policy**
  - One of the cornerstone policies of Sri Lanka's education system is the provision of free education from primary to tertiary levels. This policy, introduced in 1945, aims to ensure that education is accessible to all children regardless of their socio-economic background.
2. **Medium of Instruction**
  - Education in Sri Lanka is conducted in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. Sinhala and Tamil are the primary languages of instruction in primary and secondary schools, while English is widely used at the tertiary level.
3. **National Curriculum**
  - The national curriculum is designed by the National Institute of Education (NIE) and is implemented in all public schools. The curriculum includes a broad range of subjects aimed at holistic development, including languages, mathematics, science, social studies, and physical education.
4. **Examinations**
  - Key national examinations include the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination, GCE O-Level, and GCE A-Level. These exams are critical for academic progression and higher education opportunities.
5. **Equity and Inclusion**
  - The Sri Lankan government has implemented various programs to promote equity and inclusion in education. These include initiatives to support children with

disabilities, programs for disadvantaged and rural communities, and efforts to reduce gender disparities in education.

## Challenges and Opportunities

### 1. Challenges

- **Quality of Education:** Despite high enrollment rates, the quality of education, particularly in rural areas, remains a concern. Issues include outdated teaching methods, inadequate facilities, and a lack of qualified teachers.
- **Resource Allocation:** There are disparities in resource allocation between urban and rural schools, affecting the quality of education provided.
- **Employment and Skills Gap:** Aligning the education system with the needs of the job market is a challenge, with many graduates facing difficulties in finding employment.

### 2. Opportunities

- **Educational Reforms:** Ongoing reforms aimed at modernizing the curriculum, improving teacher training, and incorporating technology in education offer opportunities for enhancing the quality of education.
- **Investment in STEM:** Emphasizing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education can help address skills gaps and meet the demands of a modern economy.
- **International Collaboration:** Partnerships with international educational institutions and organizations can provide access to resources, expertise, and best practices.

## 13. Religions in Sri Lanka

### Buddhism

- **Theravada Buddhism:** Buddhism is the predominant religion in Sri Lanka, with about 70% of the population adhering to Theravada Buddhism. The religion has been deeply rooted in Sri Lankan culture since its introduction in the 3rd century BCE by Mahinda, the son of the Indian Emperor Ashoka.
- **Sacred Sites:** Significant Buddhist sites include the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (Sri Dalada Maligawa) in Kandy, which houses a tooth relic of the Buddha; the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, known for their stupas and monasteries; and Mihintale, the site where Buddhism was first introduced to the island.
- **Festivals:** Vesak, celebrating the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha, and Poson, marking the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, are major Buddhist festivals.

### Hinduism

- **History:** Hinduism has been practiced in Sri Lanka for over two millennia, primarily by the Tamil ethnic group. It is the second-largest religion in Sri Lanka, with about 12.6% of the population adhering to it.
- **Sacred Sites:** Important Hindu temples include the Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil in Jaffna, dedicated to Lord Murugan (Skanda); the Koneswaram Temple in Trincomalee, a significant site dedicated to Lord Shiva; and the Munneswaram Temple in Chilaw.
- **Festivals:** Deepavali (Diwali), the Festival of Lights, and Thai Pongal, a harvest festival, are significant Hindu celebrations.

## Islam

- **Introduction:** Islam was introduced to Sri Lanka by Arab traders in the 7th century. Today, Muslims constitute about 9.7% of the population, primarily following Sunni Islam.
- **Community:** The Muslim community in Sri Lanka is diverse, with significant populations in the Eastern Province, Colombo, and the southern coastal areas.
- **Festivals:** Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha, commemorating the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God, are major Islamic festivals.

## Christianity

- **Catholicism and Protestantism:** Christianity in Sri Lanka includes both Catholic and Protestant denominations, making up about 7.6% of the population. Catholicism was introduced by the Portuguese in the 16th century, while Protestantism followed with the Dutch and British colonial periods.
- **Sacred Sites:** St. Anthony's Shrine in Colombo and the Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka in Tewatta are important Catholic sites. The Church of Ceylon (Anglican) and various other Protestant churches are also present.
- **Festivals:** Christmas and Easter are widely celebrated by Christians across the country, and these festivals are also recognized as public holidays in Sri Lanka.

## Other Religions

- **Indigenous Beliefs and Folk Traditions:** Alongside these major religions, there are indigenous and folk beliefs that incorporate elements of animism, ancestor worship, and local deities. These traditions often coexist with the major religions and are particularly prevalent in rural areas.
- **Interfaith Harmony:** Despite occasional tensions, Sri Lanka is generally characterized by a spirit of interfaith coexistence and respect. Various interfaith organizations and initiatives work towards promoting dialogue and understanding among different religious communities.



## 14. Weather in Sri Lanka

### Seasons and Monsoons

#### 1. Southwest Monsoon (Yala Season)

- **Duration:** May to September
- **Affected Regions:** Southwestern parts of the island, including Colombo, Galle, and the central highlands.
- **Characteristics:** This season brings heavy rainfall to the southwestern part of Sri Lanka, which includes the most populous and developed regions. The central highlands also receive substantial rainfall during this period.

#### 2. Northeast Monsoon (Maha Season)

- **Duration:** October to January
- **Affected Regions:** Northern and eastern parts of the island, including Jaffna, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa.
- **Characteristics:** The northeast monsoon brings rain to the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka, which are generally drier for the rest of the year.

#### 3. Inter-Monsoon Periods

- **First Inter-Monsoon:** February to April
- **Second Inter-Monsoon:** October to November
- **Characteristics:** These periods are characterized by less predictable weather, with scattered showers and thunderstorms occurring across the island. The weather can be quite variable, with both dry and wet spells.

### Regional Climate Variations

#### 1. Southwestern Region

- **Weather:** This region, including the capital Colombo and popular coastal areas like Galle and Bentota, experiences high humidity and heavy rainfall during the southwest monsoon. Temperatures remain relatively consistent year-round, averaging around 27-30°C (81-86°F).

#### 2. Northern and Eastern Region

- **Weather:** The northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, including cities like Jaffna and Trincomalee, are driest during the southwest monsoon but receive significant rainfall during the northeast monsoon. Temperatures in these areas can be slightly higher, averaging around 28-32°C (82-90°F).

#### 3. Central Highlands

- **Weather:** The central highlands, which include cities like Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, and Ella, have a cooler climate due to the higher elevation. Temperatures here can range from 15-20°C (59-68°F) and drop even lower at night. The region receives ample rainfall, particularly during the southwest monsoon.

#### 4. Southern and Southeastern Coasts

- **Weather:** Coastal areas like Hambantota and Arugam Bay are generally warm and dry, with temperatures ranging from 26-30°C (79-86°F). These areas

experience less rainfall during the southwest monsoon but can receive sporadic showers during the inter-monsoon periods.

## **Best Time to Visit**

### **1. South and West Coasts & Hill Country**

- **Best Time:** December to March
- **Reason:** These areas are drier and more pleasant during these months, making it ideal for beach holidays and exploring the central highlands.

### **2. North and East Coasts**

- **Best Time:** May to September
- **Reason:** These regions are relatively dry during the southwest monsoon, offering good conditions for travel and outdoor activities.

## **Weather Considerations**

### **1. Cyclones and Storms**

- Sri Lanka is occasionally affected by cyclones and tropical storms, particularly during the inter-monsoon periods. While these events are not frequent, they can bring heavy rains and strong winds.

### **2. Humidity**

- Humidity levels are generally high across the island, especially in coastal and lowland areas. This can make the weather feel warmer than the actual temperature.

### **3. Clothing and Gear**

- Light, breathable clothing is recommended for most parts of the island. In the central highlands, particularly Nuwara Eliya, it's advisable to have warmer clothing due to the cooler temperatures.