**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.