

Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon, island country lying in the Indian Ocean and separated from peninsular India by the Palk Strait. It is located between latitudes 5°55' and 9°51' N and longitudes 79°41' and 81°53' E and has a maximum length of 268 miles (432 km) and a maximum width of 139 miles (224 km).

Sri Lanka

Proximity to the Indian subcontinent has facilitated close cultural interaction between Sri Lanka and India from ancient times. At a crossroads of maritime routes traversing the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has also been exposed to cultural influences from other Asian civilizations. Ancient Greek geographers called it Taprobane. Arabs referred to it as Serendib. Later European mapmakers called it Ceylon, a name still used occasionally for trade purposes. It officially became Sri Lanka in 1972.

Kandy, Sri Lanka: Dalada Maligava

The distinctive civilization of Sri Lanka, with roots that can be traced back to the 6th century BCE, is characterized by two factors: the preservation of Theravada Buddhism (the orthodox school of Buddhism having its literary traditions in the Pali language) and the development over two millennia of a sophisticated system of irrigation in the drier parts of the country. This civilization was further enriched by the influences of Hinduism and Islam.