



Ayubowan..... May you live long...!!!

The palms clasped together and gentle bows of the head accompany the “Ayubowan”, Sri Lanka’s gentle gesture of welcome and respect. It is the age-old greeting of our people and the chances are that you will be greeted this way, wherever you happen to travel throughout the island. With this very greeting, we welcome you to a land like no other, the land of serendipity...

Marco Polo thought Sri Lanka was the finest island of its size, in the entire world. Well, he certainly had his reasons...!

One of it is the people. You must meet Sri Lankans. Meet plenty of them while you are here. Among all 18 millions of Sri Lankans, you will find many common factors. For one thing, they are all smiles, always. They also have a good sense of humour...! You know you have spent too much time with Sri Lankans if you adopt the habit of shaking your head from side to side, while saying yes. In fact, you will get used to it so much that you will find yourself doing it without even noticing it. Watch out for the puzzled comments from your fellow countrymen...!

Another reason is the history and varied culture. The island has a colourful history spanning over 2500 years. With many mythical stories of giants who served King Dutugemunu, remains of a massive castle and a fortress on the gigantic Sigiriya rock, temples and an entire statue complex carved out of one living rock in Polonnaruwa, cities built and rebuilt over destruction and war brought upon by foreign invaders... it is as good as the Greek & Roman civilizations.

Similarly, we are also in possession of a colourful cultural and religious mix. Don’t be surprised to find a Buddhist Temple, a Cathedral, a Mosque and a Kovil, within a few minutes walking distance from each other...! Festivals of each religion have their own social decorum and mark their prominence in various occasions throughout the year.

The amazing variety of fauna and flora of Sri Lanka is yet another key element. The entire island is just 437 kms long between the northernmost and the southernmost points. The island is just 227 kms wide. Within this span, you will find the direst of climates in the Southern portion of the island, and the bewitchingly cool weather in the central highlands, in just a few hours drive from each other. The scenery in between is breathtaking. In between the tea covered mountains in Nuwara Eliya and the golden beaches all around the island, you must certainly not miss out the wild life. The daily life is very harmoniously intertwined with the wild. Despite the infrastructural advancements, some highways leading out of a few main cities are still closed with the setting sun, as wild beasts like elephants and buffaloes take to the road. When you visit the ancient cities, do remember to watch out for the numerous monkeys hopping on about the ruins of age old temples and castles, which you will find quite amusing...! What is more amusing is iguanas, lizards and mongoose crossing the roads in the drier North Central provincial suburbs. The national parks offer a very up close experience with the wild in its most natural environs.

Amidst all that, a walk in the cooling Ritigala medicinal forest, an evening spent staring at the distant mountain range of many shades of blue in Kandy, a dip in the soothing Menik River bordering Yala National Park are just a few, typically Sri Lankan natural highs.

A few things to note before you begin the tour of our wonderful island.

Assistance

Our aim is to make your visit a pleasant and memorable one. With this in mind, we are available 24 hours of the day throughout the year should you require any assistance or wish to make amendments to your schedule.

Business Hours

Business hours are from 8.30am to 5.00 pm. certain businesses in the private sector are open on Saturdays till 1.00pm.

Visa

Sri Lanka has introduced a new Visa (ETA) system for anyone entering the country from the 1st of January 2012. The ETA is issued through an on-line system. No passport copies, documents or photographs are required. There is no requirement to endorse the ETA on the passport. Anyone can obtain an ETA on <http://eta.gov.lk> . All necessary information is on the above site.

Banks

Banks and Automatic Teller Machines are available in every major city and suburban townships. Banking hours are between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm during the working week. Some banks of the private sector also remain open on Saturdays from 9.30 am till 12.00 noon.

Holidays

In addition to Saturday and Sunday, the full moon day (Poya Day) of each month is a holiday in Sri Lanka. On Poya Days all places of entertainment are closed and no liquor is sold. Hotels make special arrangements for customers to order their liquor the day before Poya holiday.

Currency

One Sri Lankan rupee is made up of 100 cents. Currency notes are in the denominations of Rs. 10, Rs. 20, Rs. 50, Rs. 200, Rs. 500, Rs. 1000, Rs. 2000 and Rs. 5000. Coins are in the following denominations: 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents, one rupee, two rupees, five rupees and ten rupees.

Time Difference

Sri Lanka standard time is 5 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

Credit cards

Reputed credit cards such as Master, Visa and American Express are widely accepted by shops in Sri Lanka. Some establishments may not accept debit cards. Therefore please check with the vendors concerning this.

Language

Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages. English is also widely spoken and most hotels will have someone who can speak another language.

Guides

Guides who have obtained the National Guide License are recognized by the Sri Lanka Tourism as National Tourist Guide Lecturers. They are proficient in English, and some may be fluent in another language such as French, Italian, German, Russian, Spanish and Japanese etc.

The Butterflies have a fleet of National Guide Lecturers who are fluent in these languages, and have a broad knowledge of the history, archeological sites, nature and wildlife and many more interesting subjects and are available for your service at any time.

Shopping

Sri Lanka, particularly Colombo, has a wide range of shops and shopping centers selling international brands. The local handicrafts are available freely through out the island. Each region of the island has its own "Specialty" handicraft. Ask your national guide to show you the specialty of the area you are in and recommend a shop to you. We advise you to avoid touts and roadside vendors as we cannot guarantee the quality of their products.

Transport

Transportation in Sri Lanka is based mainly on the road network which is centred on Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo. There is also an extensive railway network but it is largely a legacy of British colonial rule and is less appropriate for the modern transport requirements of the country. There are also navigable waterways, harbours and airports, including an international airport, located in Katunayaka. The highways and roadways around the capital are in very good condition and being upgraded for the future.

Electricity

The Voltage in Sri Lanka is 220-240 volts, 50 cycle's alternating current.

Food and Beverage

Sri Lanka boasts a wide variety of food and beverage, both local and international. While the traditional Sri Lankan cuisine is not to be missed, be advised that it is often hot and spicy. You could request the local cuisine to be prepared mild should you wish to sample it. Not all restaurants maintain strict standards of hygiene. It is best that you seek the advice of your national guide if you wish to try one of the many restaurants located outside your hotel.

Water

Tap water is not potable. Whilst tap water is safer for bathing, washing and rinsing, we recommend consuming bottled water for drinking. Drinking water is also provided separately in your hotel room. Bottled water can be purchased freely - ensure that the safety seal is intact before purchasing.

Wakeup Calls / Baggage

Please contact hotel reception to arrange your wakeup call. They will also send you a porter should you require your luggage to be brought down from your room. Please ensure that all your baggage is loaded on to the vehicle you are traveling in, particularly if you are a part of a large group.

Tipping

Most hotels include a service charge in their bills. Where this is included, there is no reason to leave a tip. Nevertheless, a small tip (Rs.200/- approx.) once you have paid your bill has become an accepted practice in Sri Lanka. Porters are generally tipped approximately Rs. 100/-. Please ask your national guide for advice if you are not sure.

Laundry

Most hotels offer laundry services. Please check with the reception of your hotel.

Hotel Bills

At the hotels when you have consumed any extra services other than your entitlement and the bill is brought to you make sure that you do not sign the bills if you wish to pay and settle immediately. If you sign the bill do not settle it immediately, as it will be transferred to the Front Office for settlement before you depart from the hotel.

Please ensure you settle all bills carrying your signature for extra services, the night prior to your departure from the hotel. This will facilitate your checkout and avoid any unnecessary delays.

Safety

To ensure the health and safety of all guests in Sri Lanka, every tourist hotel has to be equipped to manage illness and injury.

Safety Lockers

It is advisable that you use the safety lockers provided by the hotel (in your room or at the Front Office) to store your valuables in.

Beggars & unauthorized guides

Please do not encourage beggars by giving money to them. If you are willing to contribute to the poor, donate to appropriate charities. Ask your driver / guide for details. For your own safety we recommend that you do not entertain strangers. If you are visiting Sri Lanka for a beach holiday, please speak with us if you desire to go on an excursion, boat ride etc. DO NOT use the services offered by various unauthorized guides.

Dress Code: What to Wear

Light cotton dresses and light weight suits. A wide-brimmed beach hat and sunglasses, comfortable shoes/sandals. In the hill country pullovers will be necessary. Visitors should be decently clad when visiting any place of worship. Beach wear is NOT suitable for temples and shrines. All visitors to Buddhist and Hindu temples are expected to be unshod and have their heads uncovered. Some hotels require that you wear long pants and shirt in the public area / restaurants in the evenings. Clothes are cheap and freely available through out the island.

***** Law in Sri Lanka prohibits topless or nude sunbathing or swimming.**

Photography

It is an offense to photograph airports and military sites. Some sites of archaeological / historical interest require a permit for photography. It is always courteous to obtain permission from the relevant authorities, if you wish to photograph these sites. Film is widely available but we recommend that you make your purchases from one of the major city centers or your hotel.

Communication

Communication facilities are available in various forms. Whilst telephone calls can be made from your hotel at any time, you will also have access to the Internet and e-mail service at almost every star category hotel, whilst fax transmissions are also available. Local Mobile Telecommunication Companies also offer the facility to obtain "Rent-a-mobile" for visitors intending to stay in Sri Lanka longer. You will also find Communication Centers in all major cities and suburbs which offer international and local calls at nominal fares, Internet and E-mail services and Facsimile transmission.

Please note that in certain regions, such as the Cultural Triangle, local mobile telecommunication networks do not operate from time to time.

Newspapers

National daily Newspapers are published in English, Sinhala and Tamil languages and Magazine type editions are available during the weekends. A comprehensive selection of International publications, newspapers, journals and magazines are available at newsagents, bookstalls and in hotel foyers.

Radio

The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation operates radio transmissions in 9 languages - Sinhala, Tamil, English, Hindi, Nepali, Kannada, Telungu, Malayalam and Japanese for listeners between 0530 hrs and 2300 hrs.

TNL, Sun FM, E FM, Yes FM and other FM service Transmissions are also available to Listeners Island wide. Please check daily newspapers for programmes.

Television

There are about 15 channels in operation – Rupavahini, ITN, MTV, Sirasa, Channel Eye, TNL, ART TV, ETV and Derana are some of them. A wide variety of programmes covering various subjects are telecast on these channels, which include News brief from B.B.C., Sky News & CNN. Please refer to the daily press for programmes.

Cable television is also widely available and many hotels are now equipped with in-house channels as well.

Postal Information

Most hotels sell stamps and post cards. They will also post your mail if you request them to do so.

Prostitution

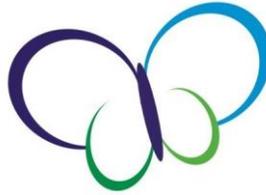
Prostitution and sexual exploitation of children are penal offenses in Sri Lanka.

Export Restrictions

Please check before purchasing certain plants, animal and wood products since the export of some items is prohibited.

Thank you.

The Butterflies wish you a pleasant stay in Sri Lanka...!

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