

Dune Towers

sunset beach resort
Alankuda, Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka

guide

especially for the
first-time visitor

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Introduction

We have been visiting Sri Lanka since 2012 for many times. During these trips we have met many great people, unique places, endless beaches, ancient temples, mountains reaching 3000 meters with high waterfalls and our favourite wildlife. The best thing is that you can find all these attraction within relatively small island of Sri Lanka. With its 65.000 km² it is around the size of Georgia (US), Tasmania or Czech Republic. Thanks to all this we fell in love with Sri Lanka and decided here in coming future.



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




Summer all the year - Climate in Sri Lanka

Great thing about Sri Lanka is that there is good weather 12 month a year. To be honest, it depends on which side of island you stay. There is plenty of weather guides telling which month is good weather on east side and which one is good the west. My personal experience says that even month like October and November, which are told bring the worst weather throughout the island, are not that bad. It is correct that during these two months you will probably face rain every day, but on the other hand there will be warm weather with at least 25 degrees of Celsius on the seaside. The rain typically lasts just an hour or two only. So, if you need to go to Sri Lanka during rainy season, it might still be very nice trip.

| Period | South and West | North and East |
|--------------------|--|--|
| January – March | This is the best time to visit Sri Lanka all over the island. There is typically plenty of sunshine and sea is mild for swimming and other water sports. | |
| | Beaches are hot and dry. | |
| April | Hottest and driest month of the year. Great time for beach activities. It might be too hot to visit the Cultural Triangle in North Central province for some of you. You will meet less tourist and you have better chance to find free hotel rooms without reservations. Be prepared for more traffic during Sri Lanka New Year around mid-April. | |
| May – June | South-west monsoon brings rain and sea waves in this region (mostly Colombo to Galle). You might experience some short showers during this time. Kalpitiya is usually dry this time anyway. | East coast offer nice weather. Beaches in Nilaveli and Arugambay are great option. |
| July – September | Inter monsoon season with rare showers. This time offers warm weather to spend some time on the beach. | |
| October – November | North-east monsoon blows here heavily in north-east and bit less in south-west. If you don't mind some rain and temperature around 25 degrees Celsius, you can come during this period to Sri Lanka. You will benefit out of less crowd and cheaper services. | |
| December | Pleasant time to come here and enjoy Christmas time on the beach. | Sometimes you will experience short showers or cloudy sky but you can enjoy this time with warm weather. |

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A year in Sri Lanka

| Month | West/South | East | North | Adam's Peak | Events |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|--|
| January |  |  |  |  | Duruthu perahera street festival Colombo Thai Pongal – Hindu winter harvest |
| February |  |  |  |  | Independence day (4 th) Navam perahera street festival (Colombo) |
| March |  |  |  |  | Maha Sivarathri – Hindu (and Buddhist) festival |
| April |  |  |  |  | Sinhalese and Tamil New year 13 th and 14 th |
| May |  |  |  | | Vesak Poya – Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death (paper lanterns are displayed) |
| June |  |  |  | | Poson Poya – Buddhism came to Sri Lanka (Anuradhapura and Mihintale temples) |
| July |  |  |  | | Vel – festival in Colombo and 25-day Jaffna Kataragama – Hindu festival |
| August |  |  |  | | Esalala Perahera (Kandy) – major street festival similar Nallur festival in Jaffna St. Anne – Christian celebration in Thalawila, Kalpitiya |
| September |  |  |  | | |
| October |  |  |  | | Deepawali – Hindu festival with oil lamps |
| November |  |  |  | | Little colder month with rain |
| December |  |  |  |  | Unduvap Poya Christmas |

Perahera = street festival usually with big procession of artists, elephants, etc.

Poya means full-moon and it is celebrated by Buddhists, so public transport might get crowded.

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Visa information

Getting VISA to Sri Lanka became easy since it is available through web site <http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/>

You can simply apply online, pay online and get your VISA to Sri Lanka by e-mail within 24 hours. The fee is 35-100 USD (based on your nationality) per person, but you are advised to check the current fees at <http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/visainfo/fees.jsp>

Sometimes you might not get the confirmation e-mail, in such a case, you can visit the site again and check the status right there.

Now during the covid period be careful about the irregularly changing conditions. Recently the government announced to increase the visa fee to cover the cost of mandatory covid testing for visitors.

Before you fly

What to pack with you

In general, you can find nearly everything in Sri Lanka but might be helpful to bring some of essential things with you:

- Sunscreen – especially if you do care about its brand and its factor
- Mosquito repellent – if you prefer some key ingredients (eg. Deet) at special percentage, or you require herbal content only
- Mosquito net – if you plan to stay in budget rooms or if expect to use extra-bed for your kids (rooms usually have just one bed with net)
- Valid VISA – see previous chapter.

Vaccination

Recommended vaccination includes Hepatitis A and B, Typhus, but you might consider Rabies as well. In general, nothing is strictly required unless you are coming from Yellow fever country, so it mostly depends on your tolerance to risk.

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Sri Lanka diving and snorkelling guide

Sri Lanka offers great variety of marine life all around the island. Until now, we have explored following dive regions:

Pigeon Island

You can access this island with public boat transport for snorkelling. The boats leave from Nilavelli beach. For scuba diving you can find two dive centres in Nilavelli and they both will provide you all the equipment, guide and also the boat transport. South west of Pigeon Island is shallow coral reef where you can meet reef sharks and turtles, but it is only accessible while snorkelling since the depth varies from 1-3 meters only. The scuba trips start from the island beaches which is quite comfortable.

Kalpitiya peninsula

This calm area offers several interesting underwater sites:

- Bar Reef

The biggest coral reef in Sri Lanka which is pretty shallow and that is why it is highly endangered by El Nino. Bar Reef could be reached within 30-minute boat trip. In the area are several beautiful scuba diving spots which could be visited with [Ocean Lanka](#) dive centre located in Kudawa near Kalpitiya town.



- Alankuda offers rich wildlife.

You can watch for dolphins and also whales during boat trips but there are also various scuba dive sites.

Complete overview of Sri Lanka dive sites you can find here divesrilanka.com or here divereport.com with usefull diving calendar for each location.

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Culture and religion

You can find some cultural or religious places nearly everywhere. It is just up to you if you prefer the well know hot spots like cultural triangle Kandy-Anuradhapura-Polonnaruwa which includes places like Dambulla and Sigiriya too, or you prefer hidden gems like village Buddhist temples.

Another benefit of Sri Lanka is the combination of 4 religions overlapping in most villages. You can find Buddhist temple and mosque or catholic church nearby, Hindu temples are concentrated in fewer locations, but you find it easily too. There are two ethnics majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils with its own languages, which makes English more important to all of them.

There is plenty of celebrations and festivals throughout the year. Buddhists celebrate every full moon called “poya day” by visiting their temple. On this day all liquor shops are closed – so get your stock early. Some poya day celebrations are bigger than others – eg. May or August.



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Wildlife

Sri Lanka is global biodiversity hotspot which gives you great opportunity to meet marine and land wildlife.

Marine life

Except all the typical sea life of Indian ocean you can meet sea turtles nesting mostly on southern beaches from Kosgoda to Tangalle. You can find guides within local villagers. There are 3 hotspots for whale watching:

Mirissa (December to April) – high chance to see whales from big passenger boat

Kalpitiya (December to April) – high diversity of whales, superpods of dolphins

Nilaveli (May – September) – good chance for whales and dolphins



Land fauna

Sri Lanka offers many national parks which are home to elephant, leopard, sloth bear, monkeys, spotted deer, peacock, mongoose and many more animals which you watch thanks to local guides available in all parks.



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Mobile phones and Internet

Sri Lanka is pretty well covered with GSM mobile phone signal and mobile internet. Internet tariffs are cheap in comparison to western countries, so it is highly advisable to get local mobile SIM card at the arrival (it is available at the airport arrivals hall). During your stay you will benefit out of it regularly: local drivers and other private service providers always ask your local number to confirm timing, price or whatever is needed.

Mobile internet is affordable too and the country is pretty well covered with 3G signal. Besides this, Sri Lanka was the first country in the world which is covered by internet signal up to 4G-LTE transmitted by hot air balloons and funded by Google.

TIP: Bring one (older) mobile phone extra where you put local SIM card, so it will not block your current phone.

Time

The whole Sri Lanka is within one time zone – which is also called India Standard Time (IST) and which is:

5:30 hours ahead of GMT (winter time)

9:30 hours ahead of New York

4:30 hours delayed after Sydney.

You can find exact time difference between Sri Lanka and your city [here](#).

| Extra tip of Sri Lanka Traveller Guide |
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|--|
| Very special is time perception in Sri Lanka. If someone tells to come in 5 minutes, then he can show up in 30-60 minutes or later. But it depends on the person you are talking to. |
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Weights and measures

Sri Lanka is using the standard SI system of units as the official standard. On the other hand, most of the local people is using imperial units which might be confusing for you. For example, you could be facing following:

| Imperial to Metric | Metric to Imperial |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 inch = 2.5 centimetres | 1 metre = 3 foot 3 inches |
| 1 foot = 30,5 centimetres | 1 hectare = 2,47 acres |
| 1 acre = 4,046 square meters 1 acre = 160 perch | 1.000 sq. meters = 40 perch |
| 1 perch = 25 square meters | |
| 1km is used everywhere | |
| 1kg is used everywhere | |

Locals often think in feet, tell you the amount (in feet) but they tell you it is in meters. So, better you ask how much it is in feet to be sure you get the correct number. Road distances are always counted in kilometres.

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Health and Safety

Health risks and treatment

Sri Lanka is generally safe country from the health point of view.

No Malaria

In 2016, Sri Lanka was announced by WHO to be malaria-free country. Still, the mosquito bites have some other risks:

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is the main reason why to avoid mosquito bites. Two of my friends have direct experience with Dengue fever. One, European adult man, describes the experience as a bit more severe fever than normal European flu. He just stayed in bed and recovered in a few days. Second, Sri Lankan teenager, was admitted to hospital and recovered only after a week. So, be careful anyway.

Rabies

Be aware that Sri Lanka is not rabies-free country and rabies is nearly 100% fatal disease. Our daughter was playing with domesticated monkey on Galle Face Green in Colombo while the monkey has slightly bitten her on arm. Even if no open wound occurred, the European hospital still evaluated it as too risky and they ordered full vaccination.

Hospitals

We have visited Sri Lankan government hospital two times and it was always very good and pleasant experience. They did not charge us anything and they always provided professional advice which worked well. In most villages you can find

private medical practise (usual open early morning and then evening) with good quality doctors which can help with minor injuries and fever.

Ayurveda

Many travellers are coming to Sri Lanka to get Ayurvedic treatment. There is ways how to approach it:

- Relaxing Ayurvedic massage
- Widely available Ayurvedic medicines like Samahan helping against flu
- Complex Ayurvedic treatment in some of the clinics

All of them are very popular. We personally tried massage in Negombo and Kandy which were both great and also we always bring several boxes of Samahan to Europe together with Ayurvedic balm helping with headage and other pains.



Security

Sri Lanka is relatively secure country, but you should be aware of some usual risks which might happen.

Women should be always careful while travelling alone. This means especially conservative dressing like longer skirt and covered shoulders and similarly while bathing.

Until now we have only experience with risk coming form stray dogs on remote beach. Be careful if you see a bunch of 3 or more dogs. It is helpful to hold a piece of wood and shout, they will run.

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Electricity

The standard voltage in Sri Lanka is 230V with frequency 50Hz. This voltage is commonly used in Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa. Sri Lanka is using plug type D which you can see below



Extra tip of Sri Lanka Traveller Guide

Experienced Sri Lanka visitors are using a pen or pencil to be inserted into upper hole (it requires moderate pressure to insert). This opens two bottom holes where you can easily insert European type plug with two pins.

Sri Lankan government is trying to avoid this practise and it was already decided to replace all plugs with new type, which does not allow it. It will definitely take several years, but you should be ready to it.

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ATM, money and costs

Sri Lanka is relatively affordable country. It is not one of the cheapest countries in the world but still it is a lot cheaper than the western countries. Many local families can live for approx. 100-200 USD per month but you as a visitor will need a bit more.

Some examples of Sri Lanka prices are following:

| Item | Price range |
|---|---|
| Cheapest hotels | 1.800 LKR (10USD) for double room |
| Budget hotels | 4-7.000 LKR (20-40 USD) for double room with bathroom and breakfast |
| Midrange – Top hotels are similar to other places in world with prices reaching | 100-1000 USD per night |
| Meal (rice curry) | 350-600 LKR (2 – 4 USD) |
| Beer | 160 LKR (1 USD) in shop 500 LKR (3 USD) in better restaurants |
| Bus / train ticket (100km) | 100 LKR normal bus 300 LKR express bus |
| TukTuk (threewheeler) | 50LKR per 1km, 2000-2500 LKR per 50km |

Most of the local and simple services and products you can pay just with cash. In most towns you find ATMs but in countryside you will sometimes need to travel 10-30km to find ATM. ATM mostly gives you just up to 100.000 LKR (550 USD). Cash payment will also help you to avoid credit card frauds which happen occasionally in Sri Lanka, but we have no such experience.

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Transport options within Sri Lanka

Transportation within Sri Lanka might be pretty tricky for you as un-experienced visitor. We tried following options and after reading this you will be able to select the best transport option for you easier.

Local (state) bus

Local buses go nearly everywhere and mostly you don't need to plan it advance. You simply walk to main street and find a bunch of people waiting there. This typically means a bus stop. Asking any local will provide 100% information about the nearest bus stop in your direction. These buses are usually very crowded, but on the other hand it is very cheap option. You roughly pay Rs. 1 per 1 km (year 2015) but be ready not to find any free seat, at some special routes might even stay hanging from the bus. Most of these buses is red colour.

Express (state) bus

A bit more comfortable is express bus. It shares the stops with local buses and you can hardly recognize it from the local bus. Ask locals waiting with you or the driver after bus stops. Express buses usually require you give them a sign (waving hand) to stop and they stop at selected bus stops only. Locals will tell you where the express bus will stop and sometimes you would need to use local bus first. The cost is usually 50-100% more than local bus. It is easier to find a seat, but it is not guaranteed. The express bus needs 50% of the time for the same distance compared to local bus. These buses are mostly white colour.

Private A/C bus

Private bus usually offers A/C and you have guaranteed seat per each paying passenger. If your luggage will block a seat, you might be asked to pay one more ticket. It cost approx. 5x time more than local bus, but it is pretty fast.

Train

Train is very cheap option but is not comfortable at all. It might be nice attraction for you at special routes – like Ella or Haputale train trip offering superb views during the train trip at affordable cost.

Tuktuk

Three-wheelers are found everywhere and they are pretty cheap. You need bargain hard and always fix the price before you get in. On longer router you can get rate of Rs. 1500-2000 per 50 km. Tuktuk are found everywhere and it is advisable for you to find reliable Tuktuk driver around and get his phone number. These drivers are typically willing to wait for you several hours just to ensure that they will be taking you back.

Private car (taxi)

Private car is the most luxury transport option and also the most expensive – approx. Rs. 10.000 per 100 km. This service is offered by nearly every person who owns a car. The reason is that cars are very expensive in Sri Lanka and their owners want to get some back. People are willing to offer full day trips as well be your personal driver and guide for your whole stay. As a bonus of this way is that the driver typically acts as your guide by offering interesting places to see, to stay or to eat.

I found very useful following web planner capable of combining several type of transportation and linking to time schedules of the transportation companies. Try this <https://www.rome2rio.com/s/Colombo-Airport-CMB/Kalpitiya>

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Dune Towers, Kalpitiya

[Dune Towers](#) beach resort is unique place located in remote natural location in Alankuda village in Kalpitiya peninsula. It offers beautiful garden full of various trees and plants which attract peacock, squirrel, mongoose, parrot, woodpecker and also agama lizards. It separated from Indian Ocean by wild beach which you have just for yourself. First, we have build Sri Lanka first plastic bottle house using more than 5.000 PET bottles collected in the area. This house is available for rent on booking.com or Airbnb and it is accommodates one group of 6 people. It offers simple kitchen and romantic bathroom. It is very natural with no luxury. If you love relaxing within natural garden surrounded by coconut plantations, sand dunes and empty beach, you will love Dune Towers. To make your even more comfortable, our housekeeper will cook for you according to your wishes, you can pick banana, papaya, lemon and of course coconut from our garden for you daily consumption. Alankuda sea is home to sperm whales and thousands of dolphins. We can organise the trip from December to April. During this season we can arrange scuba diving and snorkelling trips as well.



Hopefully, we will be able to open our new main building with 6 guest rooms and



restaurant with spacious terrasse overlooking our garden in 2021. Our truly panoramic roof terrasse offers stunning views of sunset into the ocean. Main building is built to very good standard with private bathroom in nearly all rooms, ground floor rooms

have 4 private terrasses allowing garden view.

Follow us



to stay informed about the progress.



visit our website www.dunetowers.com for more information and photos.

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