



## INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SRI LANKA

By thinking a little about your holiday destination before you travel, and taking some simple steps when you are there, you can gain so much more from your holiday. You will also be making a positive contribution to the people and the places you visit.

### SRI LANKA

This stunningly beautiful island destination offers a rare combination of holiday options from golden beaches to historical ancient cities, lush tea plantations and a variety of wildlife, complemented with vibrant culture. Sri Lanka has had a long history of tourism dating as far back as early 1960's. Today the destination offers a number of well developed resorts, boutique properties and off the beaten track offers equally popular amongst families, couples and single travellers alike.

#### – BEFORE YOU GO

Start enjoying your holiday before you go by doing some background reading on the people and places you'll be visiting. Your welcome will be warmer if you take an interest and speak even a few simple phrases in the local language.

Recycle your holiday brochures when you've finished with them or pass them on to a friend.

#### – WARM FRIENDLY PEOPLE

Sri Lanka, a great smiling nation, is known for its warm friendly people. You will always be greeted with a smile whether in your hotel or on the road. Don't hesitate to smile back with a stranger. Locals are very friendly towards visitors.

#### – LOCAL LANGUAGE

The country has three official languages including English which is widely spoken. It can be great fun learning a few phrases in Sinhalese or Tamil. This is certainly a great way to make friends. Saying 'Ayubowan' with your hands clasped together is the main greeting as well saying good bye. Ayubowan means – may you be blessed with long life. They love to talk about cricket!

#### – RESPECT THE RIGHTS, FEELINGS AND PRIVACY OF SRI LANKANS

When visiting local communities let your behaviour be guided by the people you meet there. Sri Lankans are very hospitable and are friendly towards visitors, however, please respect their privacy. Always take advice from your guide and seek permission before you enter anyone's home, a community building or a gathering.

#### – LOCAL CUSTOMS

cultural practices, traditions & religion play a strong part in the local way of life. Lifestyles are generally centred on customs and religious importance; this is especially strong in the rural areas. There are a number of festivals and a busy calendar of events for religious activities. You will find that every full moon day of the month is declared a buddhist 'poya' holiday. Respect

local customs and way of life. Locals are more relaxed and are less likely to be hurried. It is good to be aware of this and not get worried if things are little early or late.

#### – ASK FOR PERMISSION BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHING LOCAL PEOPLE & PLACES

Always ask before taking photographs of people and places. Some religious sites and certain ceremonies are restricted from being photographed and it will be considered offensive. If you are taking pictures of people, first ask them. Most will be very happy to be photographed and a few not so. Pay respect to sacred sites and statues and do not pose in front of those if you are scantily dressed.

#### – WHEN VISITING RELIGIOUS SITES

Remember to remove head gear, footwear and cover your body reasonably well when visiting Buddhist temples and other religious places. Locals generally wear white or sober colours. Conservative dress is the norm. In Sri Lanka under religious festivals there are restrictions on the serving of alcohol and the provision of entertainment, though hotels will usually make special arrangements if you are out and about it is worth being aware of.

#### – PLEASE DON'T HAVE YOUR PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN WITH ANY 'WILD' ANIMALS USED AS PHOTOGRAPHIC PROPS ON THE BEACH.

Many of these animals live in appalling conditions and are often mistreated and disposed of when they get too large or difficult to handle. Having your photo taken with them only serves to propagate their suffering. Think twice about taking camel rides on the beach, as you do not know how these animals are treated once out of sight.

#### – PLEASE DON'T FEED OR TOUCH WILD ANIMALS, PARTICULARLY MONKEYS AROUND YOUR HOTEL

This can lead to increased aggression as they compete for food, which is detrimental to both animals and people. Some monkeys will be carrying rabies and other diseases that are transmissible to humans, so please keep your distance.

#### – CHILD SEX TOURISM IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

and is a growing area of concern in coastal areas due to poverty. If you would like to report an incidence, contact Crimestoppers – if overseas +44 800 555 111 or 0800 555 111 in the UK or contact ECPAT UK (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking) [www.ecpat.org](http://www.ecpat.org), +44 207 501 8927 or talk to your local representative or accommodation for advice.



#### – ENJOY SOME LIFE OUTSIDE THE ALL-INCLUSIVE HOTELS

If your holiday is 'all-inclusive', take some time to eat and drink outside your hotel. Eating and drinking outside your hotel can be an enjoyable way to learn something about the country as well as helping local people and the country's economy gain some benefit from tourism. It can also be great fun to participate in community & hotel guests interactions such as beach volleyball and cricket!!

#### – TRY THE LOCAL DISHES

A large choice of locally grown tropical and exotic fruits, vegetables and fresh seafood are widely available. Sometimes locals might perceive that you like to eat western types of food all the time. Try and taste delicious local dishes. Most indigenous culinary practices often offer wellness and health benefits. Rice and assortments of fish/meat and vegetable curries, mostly cooked in coconut milk, makes a typical meal. Sri Lanka is the home for spices so remember, to taste 'Spice & Rice and Everything Nice!!!'

#### – BE FAIR WITH YOUR BARGAINING.

Other than in a main store with price marked items, there are plenty of opportunities for bargaining. Remember, bargaining should be seen as an opportunity to build a social relationship between seller and buyer, not simply as a competitive economic exchange. Agree on a fair final price, considering the time and effort that has been spent in making the product.

#### – SHOPPING.

Shopping in Sri Lanka can be excellent value for money. Buying local goods supports the local economy and brings in much needed revenue and jobs. The destination offers exciting shopping for quality garments & fabrics, gems & jewellery, souvenirs, lifestyle items, various memorabilia, and informative colourful coffee table books on various themes of Sri Lanka. At times, especially in the resort areas, you will encounter local street sellers offering various goods and excursions. Be tolerant of their lack of language and marketing skills.

#### – LOCAL CRAFTS

In many areas you can find crafts that are special to that specific area. Buying from producer groups directly not only supports the local workers and their families, it also helps create awareness and education on age-old crafts handed down from generation to generation. Your appreciation for local crafts will help revive dying and disappearing arts and crafts.

#### – TAKE ONLY PHOTOGRAPHS AND LEAVE ONLY FOOT PRINTS

You will discover a striking variety of wildlife, plants, shells and some rare and ancient items. This is Sri Lanka's heritage and should remain where it belongs. It is illegal to collect and export archaeological relics and certain plant varieties. Avoid buying souvenirs that exploit wildlife or threaten endangered species. Please do not disturb animal and plant life - Animals and plants could be rare, fragile, sacred, or even harmful to your health. Please be sure that you don't buy any products made from endangered plants or wild animals, including hardwoods, corals, shells, starfish, ivory, fur, feathers, skins, horn, teeth, porcupine quills, eggs, reptiles and turtles. Curios made from hardwood are causing deforestation in **Sri Lanka**

(you can tell hardwood from softwood, as it is very heavy). For more information on endangered species and the WWF-UK Souvenir Alert Campaign for tourists and to find out how to report a concern, visit [www.wwf-uk.org](http://www.wwf-uk.org).

#### – HELP PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Sri Lanka's rain forests, national parks and marine life are beautiful but fragile. When visiting these sites or enjoying snorkelling or diving on the reefs, refrain from touching or collecting shells or coral. You can also help regenerate the Tsunami affected region by participating in re-forestation or tree planting projects while you are in Sri Lanka. The Travel Foundation has such a project in Galle. This will provide staple food and valuable timber for locals in the long term.

#### – CONSERVATION OF ENERGY

Sometimes, you might not know the extent of scarce resources used to make your visit a comfortable one. Use air conditioning, electricity and water sparingly. Remember to turn off lights, televisions and air conditioning when not in use, take quick showers and don't brush your teeth under a running tap.

#### – ENTRY FEES

Most visitor attraction centres, such as national parks and historical cultural sites have two tiers of entry tickets, a lower amount for locals and a higher amount for visitors. These wildlife and heritage conservation sites depend heavily on the income that you bring to help maintain the sites. Your entry fee makes an important contribution to conservation in Sri Lanka.

#### – LITTER

As in any other destination, Sri Lanka too needs to address ever-increasing needs to reduce, collect and recycle litter. Therefore the less litter you create the better it will be for everyone. Please remove all unwanted packaging material before you leave your home country and avoid disposable goods.

#### – TSUNAMI RECOVERY

Despite the 2004 Asian Tsunami devastation, the destination is fully functional for tourism. Tourism has bounced back with visitors patronising popular beach resorts. Don't get deterred and think that the country is not ready for tourists as in fact all areas are back to normal. Your decision to visit the country will help secure the livelihoods of the local communities. Tourism is the fifth largest foreign exchange earner for the country; a significant number of jobs are dependent on the tourism industry.

#### – CONTINUING TO SUPPORT

You may come across communities in need of a helping hand. We suggest that you support humanitarian or conservation efforts that are promoted by your tour operator or their local counterpart. For example, giving money to children will encourage begging and keep them away from schools. Therefore, select a charity that you can either support while you are on holiday or after you have returned home. Areas such as school projects and tsunami recovery housing projects can be much more rewarding and have long term benefits.



## FOR MORE INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

[www.srilankatourism.org](http://www.srilankatourism.org)

Official site of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board

[www.tourismrights.org](http://www.tourismrights.org)

For information about Indigenous Tourism Rights International

[www.makeholidaysgreener.org.uk](http://www.makeholidaysgreener.org.uk)