

The wonder of Asia

A wonder of Asia, and indeed the world, Sri Lanka, crowned the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, is home to some of the finest spectacles of natural beauty known to man. An island considered to be *en route* to paradise, surrounded by both the Indian Ocean and the mystique of an enduring and diverse history - makes this place one of fascination for both the eye and the soul.

Arab, Portuguese, Dutch and British influences all in their own times have converged in the present day to leave a distinct cultural flavour and experience; only to be found in countries with such colourful and impassioned pasts. The history played out, of which there is much to see in the vast array of architecture, museums and galleries, has all been forged against a common background of sheer natural beauty. A landscape unerring, unfaltering and uncompromising in its ability to inspire awe.

The undulating terrain provides spectacular views of the iridescent ocean and the teeming land, affording unique vantage points such as Kandy and Nuwara Eliya in the hill country. Mountains shrouded in mist, cascading waterfalls as luminous as glass and tea gardens to invigorate the senses can all be found within Sri Lanka. From the planes in Nuwara Eliya to the mountains of Knuckles, the landscapes are extraordinary.


A tropical climate all year round ensures that a colourfully dense population of flora and fauna are to be found. Testament to this is the fact that Sri Lanka has the highest biodiversity per 10,000 square km in the whole of Asia, with many species endemic to the land. In no way an exhaustive list, -the country for example has four species of wild cat, with the leopard the largest of them, five species of deer, over 400 species of bird, 60 species of fish, five species of sea turtle, twenty five species of whales and dolphins, and elephants and monkeys to boot. The Yala National Park is most famous for spotting leopards with the highest population in Asia. There is an abundance of other national parks, such as Wasgamuwa, Kumana, Wilpattu, Uda Walawe and newly opened Chundilulm bird sanctuary, all providing rare glimpses into the lives and habits of nature's most beautiful creatures. Sri Lanka also offers a sanctuary for the soul - Ayurveda is popularly practiced, a traditional form of medicine originating in India, literally meaning 'the complete knowledge for long life'.

The capital city Colombo is majestically situated on the coast of the Indian Ocean, and while it has

the bustling vibe of a vibrant, emerging metropolis, the ambience is one of relative calm and composure when compared to other capital cities of the region. Scattered with Buddhist temples, churches, Hindu temples and mosques, it sets an example for religious and cultural diversity.

Moreover religious and cultural festivities have adorned the beauty of Sri Lankan life for centuries. Religious celebrations such as Kandy Esala Perahera, Vesak Festival and Sinhala, together with festivals of art, music and culture including the South East Asia's biggest literary event - Galle Literary Festival - ensure that the spirit of festivity is alive all year round.

Sports and adventure represents another dimension to the country. Surfing, rafting, air-ballooning, golf, cricket and other soft sports and adventures like mountain climbing, trekking, cycling, canyoning are some of the popular activities available to those that relish a chance to tackle the great outdoors.

Perhaps Sri Lanka's most renowned offering, however, is the hospitality of its people. Travellers are met with sincere smiles whether they go, and to welcome a foreigner seems natural to a people that are themselves a make-up of various backgrounds. Overall, Sri Lankans are keen to ensure that the country's beautiful scenery, pristine beaches, abundant wildlife, blissful surroundings, festive cultures, thrilling adventures, serene essence and unrivalled heritage remain cemented in the visitor's heart. Log on to www.srilanka.travel for further information. 

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Sri Lanka's many and diverse religious sites are an essential part of the traveller's itinerary.

