

THE SRI LANKA VOLUNTEER HOLIDAY

A Different Challenge, organised by

THE DIFFERENT TRAVEL COMPANY

About Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is located off the southeastern coast of India, 880 km north of the equator in the Indian Ocean. It encompasses beautiful tropical beaches, verdant vegetation and fascinating ancient monuments. Geographically, the coastline gives way to lowland plains growing rice, coconut and rubber. Green carpets of tea are grown in the central highlands reaching heights of over 2,500 feet above sea level. Mainly an agricultural country, Sri Lanka's chief crop is rice whilst tea, rubber and coconut are also important agricultural crops; tea being a major foreign exchange earner. In the last three decades tourism has also emerged as an important industry. Sri Lanka's recorded history stretches back over 2,500 years. The Sinhalese arrived in Sri Lanka in the 6th century B.C. from northern India. Buddhism was introduced in the mid-third century B.C. and with it the great civilizations at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. In the 14th century, a south Indian dynasty seized power in the north and established a Tamil kingdom. Occupied in the 16th century by the Portuguese and by the Dutch in the 17th, the island was ceded to the British in 1796 and was united under British rule in 1815. As Ceylon, it became independent in 1948 and eventually changed its name to Sri Lanka in 1972.



Hikkaduwa

The perfect base for your stay! Hikkaduwa is a popular beach destination on the south west coast of Sri Lanka, about 20km to the north west of Galle. Situated opposite the only marine park in Sri Lanka, the resort has a great beach and glass bottom boats offer fantastic views of the coral reefs just offshore. For those who want to get a closer view of the coral and marine life, complete diving facilities are also available.

The Project



There will be several projects available for you to work on, depending on the skills base. **However**, although there is still much work to be done to alleviate the suffering caused by the tsunami, many of the projects on which we are now working are not directly linked to what people might consider as 'post disaster projects' – projects such as house building or putting-up temporary shelters.

Much of the work we now do in Sri Lanka is supporting those who have lost their livelihood or financial support as a result of the tsunami. Although it might not always feel like it, these projects do have a direct link to the tsunami as the effects of the tsunami were not just seen on

buildings – but continue to be evident in the on-going economic impact the tsunami has had. Other projects include meeting pre-tsunami needs, particularly supporting education and welfare projects.

Current projects include the following:

- A home for elderly men
- An orphanage
- A displacement school for tsunami victims
- A school for deaf and blind children
- A home for children with Downs Syndrome
- A psychiatric hospital

- Environmental support such as tree planting and pollution clearing

Please note that Different Travel cannot provide items such as hard hats, steel-capped boots etc and advise you to bring additional equipment if you feel this may be necessary as part of the project.

Different Travel supports responsible tourism and therefore does not encourage personal gift-giving, as the children soon equate visitors and foreigners with “gifts” and expect them. So we ask you to please give your donations to the local representative or the orphanage director to distribute to the children.

Itinerary

Day 1 London – Colombo

Fly from London to Colombo.

Day 2 Colombo – Hikkaduwa

Upon arrival in Sri Lanka you will be met at the airport and transferred by minibus / small coach to Hikkaduwa, your base for the next two weeks. (D)

Days 3 – 14 Hikkaduwa

Spend your time between studying the local tourism infrastructure with relevance to coursework and getting stuck into a number of community projects in and around the Hikkaduwa area. (BD)

Day 15 Colombo – London

Transfer to the airport for the return flight to London. (B)

BEFORE YOU GO: AN A - Z OF INFORMATION ON SRI LANKA

A is for Arrival. Automatic entry (between 30 and 90 days) is given on arrival to visitors from most western European countries, US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Israel, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay. If you have any queries about whether or not you need a visa please go to www.slhclondon.org

B is for Begging. Beware of Touts. Avoid them. Do not accept their offer to give more for foreign currency or lead you to shops that give special bargains. It will all be for the tout's benefit only. Avoid beggars and do not give money. They are working in a ring for the King of Beggars and some of the babies the women carry are not theirs. Be careful not to sympathise with them. However if you are considering someone's financial request you should have a chat with DTC ground staff before committing.

C is for Communications. Sri Lanka's country code is +94. Telephone, Fax, E-mail and mobile phone services are readily available, whilst the hotels have internet and e-mail access. Internet Cafés can be found in most areas. There is also a widespread nationwide mobile phone network. It is thus quite likely that your mobile phone will work. Remember your charger and to switch to the international roaming option with your phone. There are four mobile phone services providers - Celltel, Mobitel, Hutchison and Dialogue GSM. Colombo and Provinces have IDD with direct dial facilities. Coin box phones are available in some towns taking 2, 5 and 10 Rupee coins. Stamps are readily available in hotels and post offices with the cost being 17 cents for a postcard and 30 for a letter to the UK.

C is also for Clothing. Wear light cotton clothes of the drip dry wash and wear variety (jeans take forever to dry). A hat for sun protection and sunglasses are recommended. A light cotton towel or similar to protect the back of the neck is advisable. Lightweight trainers or sports sandals will be more comfortable than shoes. The temperatures can go down to 10 C in the hill country therefore please bring a jumper or cardigan and trousers. Avoid wearing beach wear in public places and places of worship. Briefs, shorts, bare shoulders and a bare back will not be appreciated. There is no need to dress formally, just comfortably and decently covered. A sarong is a useful item to put on over shorts for covering knees when required and is easily available all over Sri Lanka quite cheaply

D is for Dehydration. You should bring your own re-hydration salts. Packets can be purchased from chemists in different flavours and simply added to water. Filtered water, mineral water and bottled drinking water are available.

D is also for Dietary Requirements. The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for. Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking or as soon as possible.

E is for Etiquette. Pay special attention to what you wear as a large percentage of the local population is Muslim and skimpy clothing of any kind is inappropriate. When in public places, or during project work, shorts and a t-shirt are fine but you should respect the preferences and cultural norms of those around you – i.e. no bikinis, hot pants, halter neck tops etc. If you show respect then respect will be reciprocated.

E is also for Expenses. Allow money for personal use other than accommodation such as meals, guide and entrance fees, laundry, drinks, personal spending money, personal equipment, souvenirs and tips. The minimum costs in tourist hotels and restaurants are approximately US\$ 3 for breakfast, US\$ 6-8 for lunch and US\$10-15 for dinner. Drinks range from US\$1 for soft drinks and US\$1.50 for tea. Local tea kiosks and eating houses charge a far lesser amount for food and drinks.

F is for Food. Sri Lanka is famous for fresh seafood especially crab, prawns, lobsters and many varieties of fish. The staple food is rice and curry which tends to be hotter than Thai or Indian. South Indian food is also available and very cheap. Hotels also serve international dishes. Hoppers are a unique Sri Lanka snack, similar to a pancake, served with egg or honey and yoghurt.

H is for Haggling. Unless you are shopping at a fixed price store, it is normal to bargain. Generally the buyer and the vendor will settle on a price somewhere between where they first started.

H is also for Health. You should seek medical advice before travelling and ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up-to-date. For further information on health, check the <http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk> . Dengue fever, Chikungunya fever and malaria – all mosquito-borne disease occur in Sri Lanka. Appropriate preventive medicines are required, along with measures to avoid mosquito bites, such as nets and creams.

I is for Insurance. Different Travel will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, certain risks are involved and should be recognised by participants. Thus, we highly recommend the purchase of short-term travel insurance for our trips. Travel Insurance is a cost effective way to protect yourself and your equipment in the event of problems due to canceled trips, delays, medical problems, baggage loss or damage. **Medical insurance** – this is an absolute necessity. You should make sure that you inform them of your intention to get involved with project work to ensure that you are fully covered.

L is for Language. The main and official spoken language is Sinhala (74%) with Tamil being the second most popular (18%). Place names, bus and train signs are usually in all three languages. English is commonly used in government and is spoken competently by about 10% of the population. Here are a few helpful words and phrases:

Ayubowan - Hello and Goodbye
Isthuthi - Thank you.
Bohoma Isthuthi - Thank you very much
Oww - Yes
Hondai - Good
Enna - Come
Yanna - Go
Hitaganna - Stand
Waadiwenna - Sit
Kohomeda? - How are you?
Kanna - Eat
Bonna - Drink
Salli - Money
Keeyada? - How much?
Visikili - Toilet

Suba Udaasanak Wewa - Good morning

Suba Raaththriyak Wewa - Good night

Ecka 1-Decka 2-Thuna 3 –Hatara 4 – Paha 5 – Hiya 6 – Hutah 7 – Utah 8 – Namaya 9 – Dahiya 10

M is for Money. The Sri Lankan currency is the Rupee (Rs.) with 100 cents equalling 1 Rupee. Currency notes are available in the denominations of Rs. 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1,000. Coins are available in 1, 2, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Cents as well as 1, 2, 5 and 10 Rupees. The exchange rate fluctuates between 179 – 190 Rupees to the £. Banks are open from 9am to 1pm and some up to 3pm. Some banks have night banking facilities. All Banks are closed on Sundays and public holidays while the bureau de change at Bank of Ceylon in York Street Fort Colombo 01 is open 365 days a year (from 8.30am to 6pm on weekdays and 8.30am to 4pm on weekends). Most leading banks have ATM services in Colombo and major towns which accept MasterCard and Visa.

P is for Packing. Bring as little as possible but bring everything you need. Travelling light is much less of a hassle, so do not bring things you can do without. If you need to wear jewellery keep it simple and inexpensive. The general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. Please carry medicines, camera, money, jewellery, passports and urgently needed items in your hand luggage. All other items can be packed in your main baggage to be unpacked at the hotel.

R is for Religion. The Sri Lankan people have a multitude of faiths. The majority are Sinhalese Buddhists while the Tamils, Moors, Malays and Burghers are Hindu, Muslim and Christian.

S is for Safety. Do not expose money, jewellery and valuables. Use marked crossings to cross roads wherever available but take care as they may not stop. Avoid walking below buildings under construction. Wear a helmet, gloves and shoes when riding. Make sure life saving equipment is available when travelling by boat.

S is also for Souvenirs. Sri Lanka offers an interesting array of items for shoppers. Gems, clothes, batiks, tea and handicrafts are popular among tourists.

T is for Tipping. Tipping is optional. It is left to the customer to tip if satisfied with the service. Most hotels and restaurants include a 10% service charge in any bill. In the event you still wish to tip, a further 5-10% of the bill is generally considered a good tip. A small tip for drivers and guides is customary.

T is also for Tea. Sri Lanka produces some of the world's best teas. Tea therefore is very cheap and comes in presentable packages and many flavours. There are many tea estates and their affiliated sales outlets towards Nuwara Eliya.

W is for Weather. Sri Lanka's climate is typically tropical with an average temperature of 27°C with high humidity. In the higher elevations it can be quite cool with temperatures falling to 16°C at an altitude of nearly 2,000 metres. Bright, sunny, warm days are the rule and are common even during the height of the monsoon. Climatically Sri Lanka has no off-season with sea temperatures remaining around 27°C all year round. The southwest monsoon brings rain mainly from May to July to the western, southern and central regions of the island, while the northeast monsoon rains occur in the northern and eastern regions in December and January.