

SRI LANKA

“INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE”

VISA

- is mandatory. The price of a one-month visa is approx. EUR 30. You can order it online at www.eta.gov.lk. You usually receive it the same day. The price of a visa at the airport is USD 40.

VACCINATIONS

- are not required.
- Occasionally, dengue fever appears. There is no vaccine, you get better by resting.
- Repellents are recommended. Autan Tropical has proven to be good.
- You need to use repellents after 5 pm.
- You can also buy a mosquito coil or an electronic mosquito repellent.

HEALTH INSURANCE

- is a must for travellers. Of course, it is best you do not need it at all.
- There are government hospitals and many private hospitals with foreign doctors.
- Ayurvedic clinics and pharmacies are intended particularly for tourists, there is only a handful of genuine ones.

MONEY CHANGERS

- Change some money at the airport to pay for transport to your accommodation.
- Royal Pharmacy or other foreign exchange offices have better rates for high-value banknotes (LKR 500).
- Rates in banks are usually worse.

MONEY

- The national currency is the rupee (LKR).
- Most things are paid in cash.
- You can also withdraw money from ATMs. Choose the manner without transaction (the exchange is charged by your bank, which is more favourable).

TRANSPORT

- If a vehicle does not have a taximeter, always agree on a price before entering a taxi or a tuk-tuk.

TAXI

- You can rent one at the airport if you have not agreed on transport beforehand. Fares to the LASSANAI RESIDENCE, Ahungalla, south-west coast, which is approx. 130 km from the airport, are between LKR 8,000 and 10,000.

TUK-TUK

- The price per km is approx. LKR 50. If possible, choose Meter Taxi (tuk-tuk).

BUS

- Large white buses are private, while red ones are public.
- Small buses are private and have air conditioning. We recommend A/C buses.
- Fares vary depending on the owner but are still ridiculously low.
- Buses are main form of transport for most locals. That is why they are full but run frequently.
- Loud music and TV screens are a mandatory part of bus travel.
- Drivers drive like maniacs and have absolute priority in traffic.
- A/C buses are better maintained and drivers are calmer. Fares are higher but still very low.
- Bus stops are marked.

TRAIN

- You should try it if possible.
- Trains are always full of locals and tourists.
- Fares are favourable. You should travel in 2nd class.
- For long distances, use sleeper or 1st class trains.

CAR HIRE

- For your first visit to Sri Lanka, we recommend hiring a car and a driver. To drive a car, you need a Sri Lankan driving licence which may be obtained in Colombo.

- To drive a scooter, you need an International Driving Licence.
- Inland, signposts are in Sinhala, which means that you do not understand anything.
- They drive on the left-hand side.
- The strongest take priority (bus – lorry – van – car – motorcycle – bike – pedestrian).
- Overtaking and parallel driving of four vehicles on two-lane roads are commonplace.
- A scooter is the most appropriate vehicle for short rentals.
- To explore inland, the most appropriate, in addition to public transport, is to hire a car, a driver and a guide who will also organise everything in relation to your journey and accommodation.
- Prices are “European,” and you need to agree on all conditions before departure.

ACCOMMODATION

- Choose accommodation that includes breakfast. To our taste, food is excellent.

FOOD

- It is usually spicy unless you agree otherwise (you can always ask for less spicy food).
- They use a lot of their native spices.
- Coconut is part of almost every dish.
- They mainly eat rice and noodles with curries (sauces) or fried rice and noodles with vegetables, crabs, meat, fish.
- They do not eat much bread.
- Fruits are partly seasonal, but diverse and excellent fruits are abundant.
- There are many vegetables. If part of a dish, they are cooked or fried, and only rarely raw. In line with the Ayurvedic principle, cooked food puts the least strain on the body.
- Cottage cheese and sour cream are not part of Sri Lankan cuisine. They have delicious buffalo milk yoghurt – CURD.

DRINKS

- Locals drink tap water, while tourists drink bottled water.
- Coconut water is perfect to quench your thirst. However, it is not suitable if you have a cold because it cools your body.
- Coconuts for drinking, namely king coconuts, are sold at roadside stalls.
- Juices and smoothies made from fresh fruit are superb.
- Beer and alcohol are sold in special wine shops.
- Locals drink tea with milk and a lot of sugar three times a day.
- There is plenty of tea to choose from in shops, while in restaurants, tea selection varies.
- You can get Sri Lankan coffee anywhere.
- You can get cappuccino in some restaurants, and it has been gaining popularity. It costs eye-watering EUR 3.5 and more.

RESTAURANTS

- Sri Lankans are not familiar with minimum hygiene requirements. However, we have never had any problems because of that.
- Food is freshly prepared, so you sometimes have to wait and wait, but you will eventually get it.
- Fish and crabs are very popular.
- Their desserts are not very innovative, at least to our taste.
- Their traditional desserts are prepared for full moon and New Year celebrations.

SNACKS

- We think they deserve special mention.
- Certain restaurants offer sandwiches and rottis for snacks and quick lunches during lunch breaks.
- Sandwiches are made from milk dough or pastry and filled with sausages, fish or vegetables.
- Rottis are made from phyllo dough and filled with eggs, vegetables or meat, fried on a hot plate or breaded and fried – excellent.
- Hoppers, bowl-shaped pancakes with an egg in the middle, and kotthu, chopped rotti fried with vegetables or meat, are usually prepared for dinner. Very tasty, filling and cheap.
- Food prices in restaurants vary depending on the popularity and location of the place.

SHOPS AND OPEN MARKETS

- Supermarkets offer a wide range of products at fixed prices.
- Department stores, and there are plenty of them, offer clothing at fixed and affordable prices.
- At open markets and stalls, you must bargain. Generally, you can reduce the price by 30% or even more.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

- There are no special restrictions regarding clothing for tourists particularly in tourist towns.
- You are not allowed to wear a swimsuit on the street.
- Due to heat and humidity, cotton sleeveless clothes are most appropriate.
- Inland, knee-length clothes, at least for women, are recommended.
- In temples, knees and shoulders must be covered (applies to all).

- Warm clothes are recommended in the Hill Country, but only in the evening, as temperatures can drop to 2°C.
- Anoraks and raincoats are not mandatory but are recommended. They can be replaced by a folding umbrella.
- Flip-flops are the most suitable footwear. For trekking in the Hill Country, trekking shoes and trainers are most appropriate (we have no experience with trekking).

These short rules have been written on the basis of our four-year experience in Sri Lanka. But of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Sri Lankans say that their country is a “land like no other.” And they are very very right.