

# Ayubowan

## Information about Sri Lanka

For a small island, Sri Lanka has many nicknames: Serendib, Ceylon, Teardrop of India, Resplendent Isle, Island of Dharma, Pearl of the Orient. This colorful collection reveals its richness and beauty, and the intensity of the affection it evokes in its visitors. Head for the rolling hills to escape the heat of the plains in the cool of tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life, and exotics like elephants and leopards are not uncommon. To top it all off, the people are friendly, the food is delicious and costs are low.

Marco Polo considered Sri Lanka the finest island of its size in the entire world, and you'll likely agree after exploring the country's fabled delights. What takes your fancy? Beaches? The coastal stretch south of Colombo offers palm-lined sandy expanses as far as the eye can see. Culture? Try the Kandyan dances, a procession of elephants or the masked devil dances. Ruins? You'll find enough ancient and inspiring architecture in the cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa to satisfy that inner archaeologist.

Full country name: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Area: 66,000 sq km

Population: 20 million

Capital City - Sri Jayawardenapura

Commercial Capital City: Colombo

People: 74% Sinhalese, 18% Tamils, 7% Moor, 1% other

Language: Sinhalese, Tamil, English

Religion: 64% Buddhist, 20% Hindu, 8% Muslim, 8% Christian

Government: republic

Head of State: President Mahinda Rajapaksa

Head of Government: Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayaka

GDP: US\$48.1 billion

GDP per capita: US\$2,500

Annual Growth: 5.4%

Inflation: 17%

Major Industries: Processing of rubber, tea, coconuts, and other agricultural commodities; clothing, cement, petroleum refining, textiles, tobacco

Major Trading Partners: US, UK, Germany, Japan, Singapore, India, Iran, Taiwan, Belgium, Hong Kong, China, South Korea

### Facts for the Traveler

Visitors from the USA, most western European countries, Eastern European Countries except for a very few, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Israel, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong do not require visas. Automatic entry for 30 days is given on arrival. Provided sufficient funds & return air tickets are with clients.

Health risks: cholera (This diarrhoeal disease can cause rapid dehydration and death. Cholera is caused by bacteria, *Vibrio cholerae*. It's transmitted from person to person by direct contact (often via healthy carriers of the disease) or via contaminated food and water. It can be spread by seafood, including crustaceans and shellfish, which get infected via sewage. Cholera exists where standards of environmental and personal hygiene are low. Every so often there are massive epidemics, usually due to contaminated water in conditions where there is a breakdown of the normal infrastructure. The time between becoming infected and symptoms appearing is usually short, between one and five days. The diarrhoea starts suddenly, and pours out of you. It's characteristically described as 'ricewater' diarrhoea because it is watery and flecked. Take care with your food consume only at restaurants, which are clean.

Water use only mineral bottle water.

Malaria (This serious and potentially fatal disease is spread by mosquito bites. If you are travelling in endemic areas it is extremely important to avoid mosquito bites and to take tablets to prevent this disease. Symptoms range from fever, chills and sweating, headache, diarrhoea and abdominal pains to a vague feeling of ill-health. Seek medical help immediately if malaria is suspected. Without treatment malaria can rapidly become more serious and can be fatal. If medical care is not available, malaria tablets can be used for treatment. You should seek medical advice, before you travel, on the right medication and dosage for you. If you do contract malaria, be sure to be re-tested for malaria once you return home as you can harbour malaria parasites in your body even if you are symptom free. Travelers are advised to prevent mosquito bites at all times. The main messages are: wear light-colored clothing; wear long trousers and long-sleeved shirts; use mosquito repellents containing the compound DEET on exposed areas (prolonged overuse of DEET may be harmful, especially to children, but its use is considered preferable to being bitten by disease-transmitting mosquitoes); avoid perfumes and aftershave. Use a mosquito net impregnated with mosquito repellent (permethrin) - it may be worth taking your own), dengue fever (The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits the dengue virus, is most active during the day, and is found mainly in urban areas, in and around human dwellings. Signs and symptoms of dengue fever include a sudden onset of high fever, headache, joint and muscle pains, nausea and vomiting. A rash of small red spots sometimes appears three to four days after the onset of fever. Severe complications do sometimes occur. You should seek medical attention as soon as possible if you think you may be infected. There is no vaccine against dengue fever)

Time Zone: GMT/UTC +5.30

Dialing Code: 94

Electricity: 220V ,50Hz

Weights & measures: Metric

## Attractions

### Colombo

the country). During the 8th century Arab traders settled near the port and, in 1505, the Portuguese arrived & the name Colombo was first introduced by them , is believed to be derived from the classical Sinhalese name Kolon thota, meaning "port on the river Kelani". It has also been suggested that the name may be derived from the Sinhalese name Kola-amba-thota which means "harbor with leafy mango trees". By the mid-17th century the Dutch had taken over, growing cinnamon in the area now known as Cinnamon Gardens, but it wasn't until the British arrived that the town became a city and, in 1815, was proclaimed the capital of Ceylon.

## Famous Structures

### National Museum Colombo

Established in 1877, this is the oldest museum in Sri Lanka. Include a collection of antiques, items displaying the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka and more than 4,000 ancient palm leaf manuscripts. The most important items include the throne of the last royal court. Visitors could gain a good understanding of 2500 year history of Sri Lanka. Open daily from 0900 hrs to 1700 hrs except on Friday. Address; Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha, Colombo 7, Tel.694366  
Also on site is the National Museum of Natural History. Open daily from 0900 hrs to 1700 hrs.

### Dutch Museum

The old 'Dutch House' on Prince Street, Pettah (Colombo 11) which houses this museum was built in the latter part of the 17th century and was initially the residence of Count August Carl Van Ranzow along with five other houses of the elite. Today, the sides of the street are choc-a-block with boutiques and stores of

traders. Opened to the public since 1982 this building embodies the unique architectural features of a colonial Dutch town house. The museum while displaying the Dutch legacy with the artifacts viz. furniture, ceramics, coins, arms etc. portrays facets of contemporary life and culture. Open daily except Fridays from 0900 Hrs.

### Colombo Zoo

The Dehiwala Zoo is one of the finest in Asia and its sprawling Areas are host to a variety of animals and birds. Drive 6 miles from Colombo, south along the Galle Road. It is pleasing to see many animals in their natural habitat. Whether it be lions, bears, tigers, rhinos, giraffes or gorillas, there is a greater freedom here than in many zoos around the world. The sight of painted storks fishing in the pond or screeching macaws ruffling their bright feathers immediately puts any visitor at ease.

In the Reptile House you will find a rare albino cobra and an enormous python. Watch out for the little tortoises which take piggy-back rides on the backs of ferocious crocodiles. The zoo also has an excellent collection of primates. Do not miss the 500 varieties of marine life at the Mini Medura, constructed with children in mind who dart around the exhibit like the fish in the tanks. The Nocturnal House allows visitors to see creatures like owls and lemurs in their natural habitat.

The highlight of the zoo is the elephant circus which comes on daily at 5.15 pm, with extra shows on Sunday and holidays at 3.15pm. The huge pachyderms perform all sorts of antics like standing on their heads, wiggling their backs to music, hopping on one foot and standing up on their hind legs.

When the biggest of the elephants begins to play a soundless mouth organ, the older elephants start skipping and trooping behind. There is an exciting moment when an elephant places a foot on the mahout's stomach and lifts him by the head using its mouth. The end of the performance signals a mass exodus from the zoo..

### Gangarama Temple

The beautiful Gangarama Temple is famous for its imposing buildings, and is complete with a chetiya, bo tree, image house, Simamalaka, relic chamber containing the relics of the Buddha and Arahat Seevali, museum, library, pirivena, and residential, education and alms halls. It is decorated with stone carvings, brass work and many other forms of Buddhist art. It contains row upon row of Buddha statues in the meditating pose, alongside miniature stupas arranged like a staircase.

As one enters the temple, one will see a huge mural on the wall depicting the 'Atalo Dahama' (the eight vicissitudes of life) - gain and loss, good repute and ill repute, praise and censure, and pain and pleasure - to give the message that one shouldn't be disturbed by these.

The Simamalaka, located on the waters of the Beira Lake and accessible via a wooden platform, is part of the Gangarama. This small temple and island pavilions had been designed by the renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa.

### The B.M.I.C.H.

The Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (The B.M.I.C.H.), with its landscaped gardens and dome-like structure, has the majesty of a modern day Parthenon and is the first-ever purpose built conference hall in Asia. The B.M.I.C.H., with its marble floors and panelled stairwells, has hosted everything from diplomatic conventions and trade shows to beauty pageants and rock concerts. A gift from China in the early 70s, this elegant indoor arena boasts 6 committee rooms, a library, a cinema, special suites complete with dining room and lounge, 1000 interpretation facilities, and a colossal assembly hall that could seat well over a thousand delegates.

A new exhibition and convention centre with a building area of 4430 sq.m. is due to be opened. Complete with IT facilities, this new wing will house a large exhibition hall of 1931 sq. m., a small exhibition hall of 1086 sq. m., a 403 sq. m. lobby, a 189 sq. m. lounge and a 205 sq. m. dining room.

### Shopping

The main shopping center for the locals is Pettah where the markets are busy and bustling. The main branch of Laksala, Sri Lanka's largest handicrafts shop is at Fort. More up market shopping destinations are towards the south of the city center along the Galle Road. Majestic City, Liberty Plaza and Crescat are popular among the locals where you could find handicrafts, tea and garments. Odel at Lipton Circus offers good quality items such as clothes, shoes, tea, books and leather goods in a fashionable setting. Sri Lanka is one of the largest producers of garments. There are many locations dotted around the city selling good export quality garments. Shoppers should be aware of cheap imports that has flooded some of these outlets recently

## Excursions

### Kelaniya Temple

Situated about six miles from Colombo, set within a sacred area of around ten acres, the Kelani Vihara stands beside the Kelani river as evidence of a Buddhist tradition in this country. The spot on which this vihara stands derived its sanctity in the Buddhist era 2531, with the third visit of the Buddha to this country. He hallowed this ground by His visit accompanied by 500 Arahants. The fact that the Buddha visited the spot on a Wesak day on the invitation of King Maniakkhika is given in the historic epics of Sri Lanka.

Historical evidence shows that the Kelaniya Vihara was at its highest glory during the Kotte Era. By the time the Portuguese conquered the country considerable land had been donated by the kings to the Kelaniya Vihara, and when in 1510 the Portuguese entered and destroyed the secret temple. They had confiscated this land preventing Buddhists from worshipping at the temple.

Restrictions placed on the development of Kelaniya were reduced with the advent of the Dutch. They in 1767 perhaps in order to gain King Kirthi Sri Rajasingha's good will permitted him to develop Kelaniya Vihara. Thus the reconstruction of the Vihara was undertaken by the then Chief incumbent Venerable Mapitigama Buddharakkhita. He was provided with funds from the treasury. The King was so overjoyed at the way the work was handled that further grants of lands had been given to the vihara.

### Kandy

The laid back 'capital' of the hill country, and the historical bastion of Buddhist power, is built around a peaceful lake and set in a picturesque bowl of hills. It has a distinctive architectural character thanks to its gently sloping tiled roofs and the town center is a delightful compendium of old shops, noise, buses, markets and hotels. Its standout attraction is the octagonal Dalada Maligawa ( Temple of the Tooth), a temple which houses Sri Lanka's most important religious relic - the sacred tooth of Buddha. There are daily ceremonies of homage to the Tooth Relic, each attracting white-clad pilgrims carrying lotus blossoms and frangipani.

During the frenetic Kandy Esala Perahera celebrations, a replica of the shrine is carried through the city on an elephant. Other sights include the small but excellent National Museum, the Peradeniya Botanic Gardens, and the Udawattakelle Udawattakele, a peaceful haven for bird life. There are plenty of lovely scenic walks around Kandy, one of which leads to the Mahaweli, where you may see elephants being bathed. The Kandyan Art Association & Cultural Center beside the lake has good displays of local crafts and an auditorium for popular dance performances. Kandy is just on 120km (75mi) north east of Colombo.

### Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura is Sri Lanka's first capital, a potent symbol of Sinhalese power, and the most extensive and important of Sri Lanka's ancient cities. For over 1000 years, Sinhalese kings, and occasional South Indian interlopers, ruled from the Palace of Anuradhapura and its size and the length of its history, and equally the length of time since its downfall, make it more difficult to comprehend. Founded in the 4th century BC, it was the capital of the Anuradhapura Kingdom until the beginning of the 11th century AD. During this period it remained one of the most stable and durable centers of political power and urban life in South Asia. The ancient city, considered sacred to the Buddhist world, is today surrounded by monasteries

covering an area of over sixteen square miles. The great building era was when vast monastery complexes and some of the tallest buildings in the ancient world were built.

#### Eight Places of Veneration in Anuradhapura – Atamasthana

**Sri Maha Bodhi :** The sacred bodhi tree (Sri Maha Bodhi) is central to Anuradhapura in both a spiritual and physical sense. The huge tree has grown from a cutting brought from Bodhgaya in India by the Princess Sangamitta, sister of Ashoka, who brought teachings to Sri Lanka, so it has a connection to the very basis of the Sinhalese religion. This sacred tree serves as a reminder of the force that inspired the creation of all the great buildings at Anuradhapura and is within walking distance of many of the most interesting monuments. The whole area around the Sri Maha Bodhi, the Brazen Palace and Ruvanvelisaya Dagaba was once probably part of the Maha Vihara (Great Temple).

**Thuparama Dagaba :** In a beautiful woodland setting north of the Ruvanvelisaya Dagaba, the Thuparama Dagaba is the oldest dagaba in Anuradhapura, if not Sri Lanka. It was constructed by Devanampiyatissa and is said to contain the right collarbone of the Buddha. Originally in the classical 'heap of paddy rice' shape, it was restored in 1840 in a more conventional bell shape. The dagaba stands only 19m high and at some point in its life was converted into a vatadage. The circles of pillars of diminishing height around the dagaba would have supported the conical roof.

**Ruvanvelisaya Dagaba :** Popularly regarded as the greatest, and certainly the most popular among the Buddhists, of the stupas at Anuradhapura, Ruvanveli Seya, is the pride of the Great Emperor Dutugamunu. Raised in the 2nd century B.C. this dagaba is supposed to have the perfect water bubble shape. You will also be impressed by the magnificent Elephant Wall which carries the terrace and the dagaba. Among the many statues in the courtyard there is one that is of a larger-than-life man. This is considered to be the king himself watching his work from a respectable distance.

**Lovamahapaya:** situated between Ruvanveliseya and Sri Mahabodhiya in the Ancient city of Anuradhapura. It is also known as the Brazen Palace or Lohaprasadaya. In ancient times the building included the refectory and the uposathagara. (Uposatha house). There was also a sima lake where the sangha assembled on poya days to recite the formula of the confession. The famous Lohaprasade built by King Dutugamunu described as an edifice of nine storeys, was a building of this class. One side of the building was 400 ft (120 m) in length. As the roof was covered with tiles made of bronze, this was known as the Brazen Palace. There are 40 rows, each row consisting of 40 stone pillars and a total of 1600 stone pillars were used for the building. It is believed that it took 6 years for the construction of the building and the plan was brought from the heavens. The building was completely destroyed during the reign of King Saddhatissa.

**Abhayagiri Dagaba:** "Abhayagiri", one of seventeen such religious units in Anuradhapura and the largest of its five major viharas. Surrounding the humped dagaba, Abhayagiri Vihara was a seat of the Northern Monastery, or Uttara Vihara.

The term "Abhayagiri Vihara" means not only a complex of monastic buildings, but also a fraternity of Buddhist monks, or Sangha, which maintains its own historical records, traditions and way of life. Founded in the second century B.C., it had grown into an international institution by the first century of this era, attracting scholars from all over the world and encompassing all shades of Buddhist philosophy. Its influence can be traced to other parts of the world, through branches established elsewhere. Thus, the Abhayagiri Vihara developed as a great institution vis a vis the Mahavihara and the Jetavana Buddhist monastic sects in the ancient Sri Lankan capital of Anuradhapura.

**Jetawanaramaya:** At a height of over 400 feet (120m), it is the tallest stupa in the world, largest brick building ever built, and 3rd largest structure in the ancient world, Approximately 93,300,000 baked bricks were used to build the stupa (Ratnayake 1993). This stupa belongs to the Sagalika sect. The compound covers approximately 8 acres (5.6 hectares) and once housed over 3000 Buddhist monks. One side of the stupa is 576 feet long, and the flights of stairs at each of the four sides of it are 28 feet wide. The doorpost to the shrine, which is situated in the courtyard, is 27 feet high. The stupa has a 6m deep foundation, and sits on bedrock. Stone inscriptions in the courtyard give the names of people who donated to the building effort.

"It is said by the British archaeologists who excavated the site that the amount of bricks used to build the stupa is enough to build a three-meter high wall, running all the way from Edinburgh to London."

**Mirisaveti Stupa:** situated in the ancient city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. King Dutugamunu after

defeating King Elara, built the Mirisaveti Stupa. After placing the Buddha relics in the sceptre, he had gone to Tisawewa for a bath leaving the sceptre. After the bath he returned to the place where the sceptre was placed, and it is said that it could not be moved. The stupa was built in the place where the sceptre stood. It is also said that he remembered that he partook a chilly curry without offering it to the sangha. In order to punish himself he built the Mirisavetiya Dagaba. The extent of this land is about 50 acres (20 ha). Although the king Kasyapa I and Kasyapa V renovated this, from time to time it was dilapidated. What stands today is the renovation done by the cultural Triangle Fund.

Lankarama: stupa built by King Valagamba, in an ancient place at Galhebakada in the ancient kingdom of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Nothing is known about the ancient form of the stupa, and later this was renovated. The ruins show that there are rows of stone pillars and it is no doubt that there has been a house built encircling the stupa (vatadage) to cover it. The round courtyard of the stupa seems to be 10 feet (3 m) above the ground. The diameter of the stupa is 45 feet (14 m). The courtyard is circular in shape and the diameter is 1332 feet (406 m).

#### Other Famous Structures

Isurumuniya Vihara : This rock temple, dating from the region of Devanampiya Tissa (3rd century BC), has some very fine carvings. One or two of these (including one of elephants playfully splashing water) remain in their original place on the rock face beside a square pool fed from the Tissa Wewa, but most of them have been moved into the small museum within the temple. Best known of the sculpture in the 'lovers' which dates from around the 5th century AD and is of the Indian Gupta School.

Aukana Buddha : The 13 meter high statue carved out of solid granite, goes back to the 5th century, to the reign of King Datusena. (about 50 km south of Anuradhapura). On a rainy day, it is said, that one can see droplets of water falling off the tip of the statue's nose hitting the ground exactly between the toes.- a testament to the architectural accuracy of the sculptor. The brick enclosure around and above was built recently to protect it from weather.

Samadhi statue: A statue situated at Mahamevuna Park in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. It is said that this is one of the best pieces of sculpture. The statue is 8 feet in height and made of granite and the Dhyana mudra is symbolised - The posture of meditation in which Buddha sits in the cross - legged position with upturned palms, placed one over the other on the lap.

#### Excursions from Anuradhapura

##### Yapahuwa

The rock fortress complex of Yapahuwa is situated in the Wayambaprovince of Sri Lanka. Yapahuwa served as the capital of Sri Lanka in the latter part of the 13th century (1273-1284). Built on a huge rock boulder in the style of the Sigiriya rock fortress, Yapahuwa was a military stronghold against foreign invaders.

Yapahuwa An ancient fortress and capital built in the year 1273. Yapahuwa is a rock rising to a height of 90m. Many traces of ancient battle defences can still be seen, while an ornamental stairway, remains its biggest showpiece.

"Yapahuwa" the the 13th Century capital in Sri Lanka, was made King Buvanekabahu I (1273-1284). Here the chief object is the rock which rises about 300 ft above the surrounding land. The land at the base to the south is fortified with two moats and ramparts . In this enclosure there are the remains of a number of buildings.

The Tooth Relic too was brought from Dambadeniya and kept in the Tooth Temple built for the purpose at the top of the third staircase.

This fortress capital of the Sinhalese kings when abandoned was inhabited by Buddhist monk and religious ascetics. The relics were carried away from the temple here to South India by the Pandyas, and then recovered in 1288 by Parakkramabahu III (r1287-1293), who temporarily placed them in safety at Polonnaruwa.

##### Mihintale

Situated 12 kilometers east of the ruins of the great city of Anuradhapura, the sacred mountain of Mihintale is considered the location where Buddhism was first introduced to the island of Sri Lanka. There are two stories, one historical and one mythological, that explain the arrival of Buddhism at Mihintale. According to historical sources, in the middle of the third century BC the great

Indian Emperor Ashoka had sent his son Mahinda to Sri Lanka to spread the teachings of the Buddha. Mahinda and his group of Buddhist monks were camped upon the sides of Mt Mihintale when King Devanampiya Tissa of Anuradhapura encountered them during a royal hunting expedition. Mahinda spoke to the king of Buddhism and recited the Culahastipadopama and other sutras. The date of this meeting between King Devanampiya Tissa and the Buddhist monk is believed to have been on the full moon of June in the year 247 BC. Soon thereafter the king (and 40,000 inhabitants of Anuradhapura) converted to Buddhism. An alternate story of the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka tells that the Buddha himself journeyed to the island, on the back of the great winged demigod Garuda, but there is no historical evidence that the Buddha himself ever visited the island. Today the peak of Mihintale, approached by a grand stairway of 1840 granite steps, has many temples, lodgings for monks and several splendid statues of the Buddha. Each June on the full moon there is a pilgrimage commemorating the date when Mahinda first preached the Buddhist doctrine in Sri Lanka and many thousands of pilgrims flock from all over Sri Lanka to meditate on the holy peak. The photograph was made with a Nikon F3, a 300mm lens (with two 2x teleconverters resulting in a 1200mm lens) and Fujichrome 50 film. The photograph was made during the brightest part of the day but was underexposed by several f-stops in order to turn the background to dark black and thereby simulate the view of the great Buddha as seen during the night of the full moon pilgrimage.

#### Aukana

According to tradition the magnificent 12m (30ft) standing Aukana Buddha was sculpted during the reign of Dhatusena in the 5th century - though some sources date it to the 12th or 13th century. Aukana means 'sun-eating', and dawn, when the first rays light up the huge statue's finely-carved features, is the best time to see it. There's a local story that the statue is so finely carved that a drop of water would fall from its nose, without any breeze, between the Buddha's feet. The reconstruction of the brick shelter over the statue looks like it was built by rail engineers, and detracts a little from the scene. There's another statue nearby, inferior and incomplete but nevertheless worth a visit

#### Sigiriya

##### The wonder and beauty of SIGIRIYA - The Lion Mountain

There are many interpretations of the Sigiriya period, history replete with legend, love and betrayal. But one story remains, the story of Kaspaya (477-495 A.D.) its creator, King with an artist's soul. Bards have written about him and plays and film have tried to capture his personality.

Kashyapa left Anuradhapura and built for himself at Sigiriya, a palace and city modeled on the mythical abode of "Kuvera" God of Wealth. He gave form to his dreams of grandeur. Eighteen years later, his half-brother Moggallan challenged him with an army. By one of those momentary mistakes of judgment that changes the course of history. Kashyapa thought he was alone in battle, raised his dagger and slew himself.

In a sheltered pocket on the western face of the Sigiriya rock, approached by a spiral stairway, are the famous frescoes. Epigraphically evidenced refers to the existence of 500 such portraits, but only 19 remain today.

On the western and northern sides of the steep rock face runs a gallery or pathway which provides access to the seemingly inaccessible summit. Shielding this pathway is a 9 1/2 ft. plaster wall, so highly polished, that even today, after fifteen centuries of exposure to sun, wind and rain, one can see one's reflection in it. Hence the name "Mirror Wall".

On the polished surface are the Sigiri Graffiti recorded by processions of visitors to the rock in the past. The summit of the rock is nearly three acres in extent. The outer wall of the palace which is the main building was constructed on the very brink of the precipice. There were gardens, cisterns and ponds laid out attractively.

The pleasure garden of the western side of the rock is studded with ponds, islets, promenades and pavilions. Some underground and surface drainage systems have been discovered during excavations. The wall abutting the moat encircling the fortress is one of the most arresting features.

Sigiriya, in fact, should have been classed as one of the Wonders of the Ancient World, long ago, and there is now a proposal to name it as the Eighth Wonder of the world. Perhaps, it is better late than never! Sri Lanka's ancient architectural tradition is well portrayed at Sigiriya, the best preserved city centre in

Asia from the first millennium, with its combination of buildings and gardens with their trees, pathways, water gardens, the fusion of symmetrical and asymmetrical elements, use of varying levels and of axial and radial planning. Sophisticated city planning was at the heart of Sigiriya, this royal citadel of ancient fame from the days of Sri Lanka's memorable past.

- The Complex consists of the central rock, rising 200 meters above the surrounding plain, and the two rectangular precincts on the east (90 hectares) and the west (40 hectares), surrounded by two moats and three ramparts.

- The plan of the city is based on a precise square module. The layout extends outwards from co-ordinates at the centre of the palace complex at the summit, with the eastern and western axis directly aligned to it. The water garden moats and ramparts are based on an 'echo plan' duplicating the layout and design on either side. This city still displays its skeletal layout and its significant features. 3 km from east to west and 1 km from north to south it displays the grandeur and complexity of urban-planning in 5th century Sri Lanka

#### The History of Sigiriya

Sigiriya dates back from over 7,000 years ago, through Pre-Historic to Proto-Historic to Early Historic times, then as a rock-shelter mountain monastery from about the 3rd century BC, with caves prepared and donated by devotees to the sangha.

The garden city and the palace were built by king Kashyapa 477 - 495 AD. Then after king Kasyapa's death it was a Buddhist monastery complex up to about the 14th century.

The Mahavamsa, the ancient historical record of Sri Lanka, describes King Kashyapa as a parricide, who murdered his father King Dhatusena by walling him up alive and then usurping the throne which rightfully belonged to his brother Moggallan. To escape from the armies of Moggallan, Kashyapa is said to have built his palace on the summit of Sigiriya, but Moggallan finally managed to get to Kashyapa and he committed suicide.

However, there is also another version of the Kashyapa story, related by one of the most eminent historians of Sri Lanka, Prof. Senerat Paranavitana. He claims to have deciphered the story of Sigiriya, written by a monk named Ananda in the 15th cent. AD This work had been inscribed on stone slabs, over which later inscriptions had been written. Till to date no other epigraphist has made a serious attempt to read the interlinear inscriptions.

#### The Sigiri Rock

The most significant feature of the Rock would have been the Lion staircase leading to the palace garden on the summit. Based on the ideas described in some of the graffiti, this Lion staircase could be visualized as a gigantic figure towering majestically against the granite cliff, facing north, bright coloured, and awe-inspiring. Through the open mouth of the Lion had led the covered staircase built of bricks and timber and a tiled roof. All that remains now are the two colossal paws and a mass of brick masonry that surround the ancient limestone steps and the cuts and groves on the rock face give an idea of the size and shape of the lion figure.

Though traces of plaster and pigments occur all over this area, there are only two pockets of paintings surviving in the depressions of the rock face, about 100 meters above the ground level. These paintings represent the earliest surviving examples of a Sri Lanka school of classical realism, already fully evolved by the 5th century, when these paintings had been made. Earlier the Sigiri style had been considered as belonging to the Central Indian school of Ajanta, but later considered as specifically different from the Ajanta paintings. The ladies depicted in the paintings have been variously identified as Apsaras (heavenly maidens), as ladies of Kasyapa's court and as Lightning Princess and Cloud Damsels. There are also remains of paintings in some of the caves at the foot of the rock. Of special significance is the painting on the roof of the CobraHood Cave. The cave with its unique shape dates from the pre-Christian era. The painting combines geometrical shapes and motifs with a free and complex rendering of characteristic volute or whorl motifs. It is nothing less than a masterpiece of expressionist painting

#### The Sigiri Gardens (The Sigiri Gardens blend together to make the perfect setting for the Lion Mountain)

The gateway to the western precinct lies across the inner moat. It had an elaborate gate-house made of timber and brick with a tiled roof. The moat is perfectly aligned with a mountain peak in the distance Only the southern side of the garden has been excavated, leaving the identical northern half for the archaeologist of the future. In the entire Sigiri-Bim, over 200 village tanks and rural sites have been investigated.



The water gardens of the western precinct are symmetrically planned, while the boulder garden at a higher level is asymmetrically planned. The water garden displays one of the world's most sophisticated hydraulic technologies, dating from the Early Historic Period.

This shows an interconnection of macro- and micro-hydraulics to provide for domestic horticultural and agricultural needs, surface drainage and erosion control, ornamental and recreational water courses and retaining structures and also cooling systems.

The Macro system consisted of the Sigiri Maha weva, the manmade lake with a 12 km dam, running south from the base of the rock, a series of moats, two on the west and one on the east fed from the lake. At micro level are, the water control and the water retaining systems at the summit of the rock and at various levels with horizontal and vertical drains cut in to the rock and underground conduits made of cylindrical terracotta pipes.

## WATER GARDENS

The miniature water garden just inside the inner wall of the western precinct consists of water pavilions, pools, cisterns, courtyards, conduits and water courses. The pebbled or marbled water-surrounds covered by shallow slowly moving water would have served as cooling devices with an aesthetic appeal with visual and sound effects, which could be visualized by a visitor who could spend a little time.

The largest water garden has a central island surrounded by water and linked to the main precinct by cardinaly-oriented causeways. This was created 5 centuries before those at Angkor in Cambodia or Mughal gardens in India. The central island would have been occupied by a large pavilion.

The water is in four L-shaped pools, connected by underground water conduits at varying depths, to provide different water levels. The pool on the south-west is divided into a large bathing pool, with a corbelled tunnel and steps leading down into it. The other pool is smaller with a central boulder on which was a brick-built pavilion.

The fountain garden is a narrow precinct on two levels. Western half has two long and deep pools, with shallow serpentine streams draining into the pools. These had been paved with marble slabs. These streams display the fountains, which have been made from circular limestone plates with symmetrical perforations, which are fed by underground water conduits and operate by gravity and pressure. There are two shallow limestone cisterns which would have served as storage and pressure chambers for the fountains. These fountains are still active during the rainy season from November to January.

## BOULDER GARDEN

The boulder garden at a higher level from the symmetrical water garden is a totally different organic or asymmetrical concept, with winding pathways, natural boulders. Almost every rock and boulder in this garden must have had a building of brick and timber. It also has the Cistern Rock which has a large cistern made of huge slabs of granite. There is also the Audience Hall rock, with a 5 meter long throne carved out of the rock

The entrance to the inner citadel (15 hectares) is made of a massive brick and stone wall, which forms a dramatic backdrop to the water garden and to the rock and the palace on the summit towards the east of it. The wall runs from the Octagonal pond to the bastion on the south-east, which is formed of wide brick walls linking a series of boulders surrounding a cave pavilion with a rock-cut throne.

## TERRACE GARDEN

The Terrace Garden at the base of the rock is fashioned out of the natural hill, made with rubble retaining walls, each terrace running in a concentric circle around the rock, each rising above the other. The Palace garden on the summit was the domestic garden with its terraces and rock cut pools

## The Sigiri Frescoes

John Still in 1907 had observed that; "The whole face of the hill appears to have been a gigantic picture gallery... the largest picture in the world perhaps".

The paintings would have covered most of the western face of the rock, covering an area 140 meters long and 40 meters high. There are references in the Graffiti to 500 ladies in these paintings.

## POLONNARUWA

Polonnaruwa is second of importance as royal city to Anuradhapura. In the 11th Century the capital was moved from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa, as it was hoped that this new residence in such a difficult

accessible area would be better protected from the notorious raids from the Indian Sub-Continent. As a result Polonnaruwa became a splendid residence and capital. During the reigns of the kings Parakrama Bahu the Great (1153 - 1186) and his successor Nissanka Malla 1187 - 1196 the Sinhalese kingdom reached its last golden age, of which the splendour of its buildings and palaces, the impressive irrigation system with artificial lakes, tanks and channels give clear evidence.

As in Anuradhapura the monuments and ruins are situated in a lovely tropical area, surrounded by paddy fields and jungle. The buildings are less grandiose and imposing dagobas are missing, with the exception of the Gal Vihara, a group of monumental Buddha statues, belonging to the most famous periods of Sinhalese sculptural achievements. But many of the buildings and constructions are in a much better state of preservation than in Anuradhapura. The ruins of the ancient city stand on the east shore of a large artificial lake, the Topa Wewa Lake, or Parakrama Samudra (the Sea of Parakrama), created by King Parakramabahu I (1153-86), whose reign was Polonnaruwa's golden age. Within a rectangle of city walls stand palace buildings and clusters of dozens of dagobas, temples and various other religious buildings.

A scattering of other historic buildings can be found to the north of the main complex, outside the city walls and close to the main road to Habarana and Dambulla. To see many of the relics excavated from the site such as the stone lion which once guarded the palace of King Nissanka Malla, or the fine Hindu bronzes unearthed from the ruins of the Siva Devale Temple - you may have to visit the National Museum in Colombo, where they are kept. However, with the opening of the new Polonnaruwa Visitor Information Centre and its museum in 1998/9 some of the key exhibits were scheduled to return to the place where they were discovered.

## Famous Structures

### Parakrama Samudra

Parakrama Samudra is an irrigation tank built by King Parakramabahu I. It covers an area of 5,940 acres, hence its name, 'Samudra' meaning the sea. It has 11 channels directing water to feed a network of irrigation canals and smaller tanks.

### Potgul Vehera ( Library Museum)-

Here you will find four small dagobas surrounding a circular brick building on the central platform. The acoustics of this building are excellent and this has led to the suggestion that it was a lecture theatre where the tenets of Buddhism were read aloud.

### Statue of King Parakramabahu I-

Statue of King Parakramabahu I or Agastaya is a huge 12th Century AD rock sculpture. A barefoot figure clad only in sarong, stands out of the rock from which he was carved. His broad face has a look of seriousness and he is holding a sacred manuscript from which he appears to be reading aloud. However, the subject of the statue is a matter of debate. Was it Agastaya or King Parakramabahu I ?

### The Royal Palace of King Parakramabahu I-

The Royal Palace of King Parakramabahu I was built in the 11th Century. The massive brick walls of the main hall stand amidst the ruins of about 40 inter-connecting rooms. The palace originally rose to seven storeys, however since the upper floors were wooden, no trace of them remains now. The Kumara Pokuna, the handsome royal bath, is a bit further on from here. The Royal pavilion still has its lion portals, graceful pillars and a moonstone (a delicately carved stepping stone).

### Thuparamaya-

Thuparamaya is an image house built in the 3rd Century BC for the worship of Lord Buddha. It is built in a style of the original form of architecture that flowered at Polonnaruwa. The barrel-vaulted and domed buildings had very thick brick walls, stuccoed and painted with figures and architectural subjects. The roof is still intact and several images in the interior are preserved.

### Menikvehera-

Menikvehera appears to be constructed in at least two stages, and the first stage dates around the 8th

Century AD. The stupa is built on a high walled terrace with a small lotus-shaped stupa in the centre. It is unique in its design.

#### Alahana Pirivena-

Alahana Pirivena was a Buddhist monastic university. It consisted of many separate apartments laid out to a regular plan. Each apartment was two-storied with tiled roofs and had its own living unit. However, the bath-house, refectory and other facilities were shared

#### Lankathilaka-

The walls of this image house soar to a height of 16 m (55 ft). Inside the shrine stands the headless statue of a Lord Buddha and the interior walls are adorned with murals. The outside walls are horizontally divided into five floors. Inside is a single tall space, which is now open to the sky but must have had a type of domed roof.

#### Kirivehera (Milk White House)-

One of the two big stupas of the Alahana Pirivena monastic complex. It is the best-preserved dagaba with its original lime plaster stucco intact and the remains of small structures cluster around it.

#### Galvehera-

Galvehera is one of the most famous sites in Sri Lanka. It consists of three figures of Lord Buddha carved out of a cliff of granite. The first figure is a sitting Buddha with an artificial cavern cut out of the rock. The other two are an upright Buddha and a reclining Buddha. The reclining Buddha is 14 m (46 ft) in length.

#### Tivanka-

Tivanka is the most important building in the Jetavana Monastery. It is an image-house. The name is derived from the image of the Lord Buddha in the narrow antechamber, which is seen in the 'Tivanka' or thrice bent posture. The most important paintings of the Polonnaruwa period were found on the walls of the Tivanka.

#### Siva Devale

Immediately north of the Royal Palace complex is the Siva Devale, a 13th-century Hindu temple dating from the period of south Indian conquest that followed the final decline of Sinhalese power in the north of the island. The technical skills of its masons are evident from the fine, precisely cut stonework of its walls. The brick domed roof, however, has not survived. There are several Siva Devales (Shiva Temples) at Polonnaruwa, reflecting the popularity of this powerful member of Hinduism's ruling trinity.

#### Excursions

##### Medirigiriya

An ancient name Mandala Mountain Monastery (Mandalagiri Vihara) 14 miles from Minneria. It is not known who first established it but earliest reference is in the Mahavamsa where it says Kaniittha Tissa (166-184) built an uposatha house there. In the 9th century a hospital was built there. The place was restored by Vijayabahu I. In the dispute between Parakramabahu and Gajabahu II it is said that Gajabahu came to Medirigiriya and carved the agreement on a rock.. The stupa is built on a huge exposed rock. And was built some 800 years before the thing that later enclosed it. Facing the four cardinal directions are four beautiful Buddhas on pedestals. Only the one on the east is intact.

The stupa is surrounded by three concentric circles of pillars. Between the second and third row of pillars was the outer wall of which little remains. The pillars supported a domed roof above the stupa. The circular terrace on which the stupa sits is 91feet in diameter and is held up by a huge retaining wall. Entrance to the stupa is from the northern side where a terrace and flight of stairs leads from a gate house. When one of these pillars was removed so it could be straightened a sheet of beaten gold was found under it which had the famous 'iti pi so' eulogy on it and dating from about the 8th century.

It seems that during the 12th century the monks of Medirigiriya together with some others played an important role in solving a major political crisis then afflicting Sri Lanka. Gajabahu II and the headstrong rebel Parakramabahu were locked in a bitter struggle for the throne. Both sides were equally matched and the conflict dragged on causing great loss of life on both sides and weakening the whole country. Finally the monks decided that something had to be done. They used their moral authority to get both sides to cease hostilities and then worked out a delicate and fruitful compromise between them. Gajabahu who was old and had no heir agreed to designate Parakramabahu who was still young as his successor if he ceased his rebellion. This meant that the former could live out the rest of his days as king while the latter would not have to wait too long before becoming king himself. The agreement held and peace was restored. To make sure both sides would not go back on their promise the agreement was inscribed on two stone pillars, one copy being kept at Medirigiriya and the other at Samgamuva. It is the finest amphitheatre in Sri Lanka. The dwarfs and lions on the capitals are particularly finely carved. There are four sitting images with their backs to the stupa. Little of the stupa itself remains it having been destroyed by treasure hunters.

### Minneriya

Minneriya reservoir and its surrounding wetland habitat is inhabited by a large number of aquatic bird species in addition to elephants. Early morning and late evening are the optimum observation times of the day for resident and migratory birds. Flock of about 2000 little cormorant diving in the waters of Minneriya reservoir is not a rare scene. In addition painted strokes, Great white pelicans, Ruddy turnstones and Grey herons too can be seen.

The best season to view the large Elephant herds gathering at the banks of the water reservoir is the dry season from June to Sept. When the ancient tank, the lake that dominates the area, dries out and the grasses and shoots push through. During this time it is possible to see herds of up to 150 elephants feeding and washing, as well as toque macaques, sambar deer and leopards. The hungry bird flocks include cormorants and painted storks.

Sri Lanka, home to over 400 species of birds, has long been a birdwatcher's paradise.

In Minneriya National Park alone, 160 species crowd the trees or strut the banks. Like the Painted Storks, Great White Pelican, Gray Herons, and even the Ruddy Turnstones & the special Jungle Fowl, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Sri Lanka Brown-capped Babbler and Sri Lanka Gray Hornbill, as you can guess from their names, nowhere else are you going to find them but here, in Sri Lanka.

### Beaches

Frequent buses run the 87km (54mi) down the coast from Colombo, or there are four daily express trains that are worth considering. There are a few slow trains as well but these can take up to three or four hours. On the east coast you can have the beautiful beaches of Arugambay & Trincomalee. Where tourists are coming in numbers back again.

### Negombo

Negombo is a town approximately 45 km north of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Negombo is located at the mouth of the Negombo canal and is a small port. Sri Lanka's major international airport is approximately 9km out-side of Negombo. It is an ideal tourist destination and most of the hotels here are crowded with tourists through out the year. Be it a honeymoon, a family vacation or a business trip. Negombo provides an ideal setting for all. It has a good number of tourist attractions to offer its visitors. It's situated by the shores of a lagoon by the same name once has been a trading port for Portugese and Dutch and is an ideal place for those who want quick access to and from the airport. Attractions in the city are the old Dutch fort gate built in 1672 now a part of the prison, the Dutch Canal which was then a supply route to the Dutch administration, old churches and fishing villagers. The 100km long canal running through the town is still being used and is an attraction for those who want to see the country from a different perspective.

The stretch of road towards Katchchikade comes to life at dusk (most shops are open at daytime too) with

many handicrafts and curio shops, gem shops, restaurants and internet cafes catering for tourists. Negombo is a fishing village which is the center of the island's fishing community. It is largely Roman Catholic by faith, with huge imposing churches down almost every street. Their feasts dedicated to various saints if you happen to be around at the correct time and the fisheries port.

The Buddhist temple in the town is a unique structure where beautiful statues depicting various Buddhist events built beneath a giant Buddhist statue.

### Festivals and Events

Festivals and Events in Negombo enliven the people of Negombo and give them a break from the daily chores of life. Since it is situated in the shores, the prime occupation of the people of Negombo is fishing. The fishermen of this island celebrate Fisherman's festival. The festival is celebrated in the late July. Some festivals or the other go on through out the year. This festival serve specific social needs as well as it is a celebration of life. The Festivals and Events in Negombo are celebrated with great pomp and show. The beaches are adorned beautifully. Sea foods are found in abundance. During the time of festivals sea foods are great attraction. Lobsters, crabs and prawns are the greatest attraction.

### BEACH

Fine sandy beaches of Negombo has been mostly unexplored but less crowded as most tourists use the town for the first or the last night of their stay in Sri Lanka. That is where the advantage where you have the beach mostly to your self. Nevertheless those who have identified its secrets have been visiting the town year after year. The sea is the backdrop to the Negombo. Fine beach stretches are superbly maintained by the hotels while some are always busy with fisherman and their equipment.

Negombo's fishing market is also a great attraction. The fish market remains crowded all day long. Large varieties of fishes are found in great abundance. Sea fishes like crab, lobsters, prawns and sharks are found in great abundance and tastes great too. In spite of being stinky the place remains a great tourist attraction. If you go to Negombo one day doesn't forget to visit fishing villages and to eat some seafood's. You have to go there around early morning and before noon to see arriving of boats with fish.

### Sports and Recreation in Negombo

Owing to its location by the ocean and also to its beaches, Negombo offers many exciting sports and thrilling activities. Sports and Recreation in Negombo provides you information regarding the interesting sports available in Negombo. On account of the presence of the ocean, Negombo features exclusive and wide varieties of water sports. Sports and Recreation in Negombo states some of the most popular among them are sailing, swimming, scuba diving, diving, wind surfing, surfing, water skiing, and many more. Deep-sea fishing is another interesting water sport found in Negombo. Snorkeling too can be done. This will open for you a whole new world of the bright and colorful marine life. You will get to explore a stunning underwater world comprising of stunning species of seaweed, plants, and rare fish. The magnificent coral reefs also provide splendid views. Sports and Recreation in Negombo lets you know that there are few training centers in Negombo where the trained professionals will teach you expert diving and other water sports. However, during the monsoons, diving is not allowed and rather not recommended. It is safe only after the monsoons, from mid-November to mid-May.

The expansive soft sand beaches are excellent for sunbathing. Sports and Recreation in Negombo states that you can spend hours after hours lying on the beach rejuvenating your senses and relaxing. The palm groves at the backdrop and the deep blue ocean in front provide spectacular views. You can also unwind yourself and take a refreshing break relaxing on the deck chairs under the colorful sunshades, with a cool drink in hand. This facility is particularly offered by most of the five star hotels and resorts in Negombo. These hotels also offer other recreational activities like swimming, tennis, squash, billiards and many more.

Sports and Recreation in Negombo tells you that Negombo also has provision for short boat trips. Those

trips offer you breathtaking views of the ocean, beaches and other colorful sailboats. On such a voyage, you will feel deported to a completely different world. The fresh sea breeze and the enamoring views will surely elate your body and mind.

## Excursions

### The Dutch Canal

Among the tourist attractions, The Dutch Canal, Negombo is a must visit for the tourists. If a tourist wishes to view the country from a different angle he or she must pay a visit to The Dutch Canal, Negombo. The Dutch Canal, Negombo was used for the purpose of a supply route in the times of the Dutch administration. The canal is still being used. It runs across the town and is hundred kilometers long. The Dutch Canal, Negombo, used to serve as a supply to the Dutch administration along with the Old Churches and fishing villages during the Dutch rule. A tourist can take a tour of the canal through a boat or a bicycle ride. It was constructed by the Dutch people from Colombo in the south to Puttalam in the north. The Dutch Canal, Negombo flows across Negombo.

The canals of Negombo were named by the Arabian geographers as the "Gobbs of Serendib". The canals dotted the Western Coastline. Its strength and importance was first evaluated by the Dutch people. They were the one who created these canals. These canals offered both easy and economical means of transportation of goods from the outlying areas of the ports.

From the mountain ranges various rivers of Sri Lanka flows down. These rivers flow across the flat lands. Sandbars are accumulated at the mouth of the rivers with the help of the sand and soils that come down along with the rivers. Now the water overflows due to the obstruction and gives birth to lagoons and lakes. Links between these lakes and lagoons were made by the canals.

If a tourist wants to soothe his spirits, he should visit Negombo. One can sit under the shades of palm and enjoy the sun kissed.

### Muthurajawela

Sri Lanka is blessed with many different types of wetland, such as estuaries, lagoons, sea grass beds, mangroves and marshes. These areas are of immense environmental, economic and social importance, yet they are increasingly under threat. Part of the marsh known as Muthurajawela near Negombo is a protected area open to the public. A boat trip allows you to make a leisurely exploration of the marsh.

South of Negombo is situated the Muthurajawela marsh, which has the distinction of being the island's largest saline peat bog. Peat is partly carbonized vegetable matter that is saturated with water. This carbonization process takes place over a long period of time: indeed the Muthurajawela marsh is believed to have originated around 5,000 BC. There is also evidence of extensive paddy farming in the area some 500 years ago. Today the marsh together with the Negombo Lagoon forms an integrated coastal ecosystem of 6,232 hectares. Muthurajawela itself spreads all the way south from the lagoon to the Kelani Ganga (River), situated at the northern tip of Colombo.

## GALLE

The capital of the southern province is a city with a colourful history. UNESCO declared World Heritage Site the magnificent Dutch fort is the most popular attraction of the town. 300 year old Dutch atmosphere is still very much alive around the fort and amidst its many historical buildings.

The southern coastal belt is the most popular among the tourists and comes to life mainly from October through April when the monsoon moves northeast and the sea becomes calm with blue skies. The

earliest European administrative centre of Sri Lanka was the major port and the largest city until the British shifted the port to Colombo. The City of Galle had been the European administrative centre over 4 centuries.

Galle, the main city and port on the south coast, retains a romantic, old-world atmosphere within its Dutch fort. In fact, Galle is considered to be Sri Lanka's most historically interesting city still functioning. It began to assume importance after a Portuguese fleet arrived accidentally in 1505. The story goes that on hearing a cock (gallus in Portuguese) crowing on their arrival, the Portuguese gave the town its name. Indeed, the harbor is strewn with rocks, some above but many below the water, a factor that made it quite dangerous for shipping in earlier times. Nevertheless, until the construction of breakwaters at the Colombo port was completed in 1875, Galle remained the island's major port.

Two entry points to the fort: main gate & old gate

The Main Gate was built by the British in 1873 to handle the heavier traffic into the old city. This part of the wall, most heavily fortified with massive ramparts facing the landside was originally built by the Portuguese with moat & drawbridge & was substantially enlarged by the Dutch, who in 1667 split it into separate Star, Moon & Sun Bastions. The clock tower is quite modern & usually has a huge national flag flying from it.

The Old gate is on the Queen Street. The arch on the Fort side of the gate is inscribed with the coat of arms of VOC (Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie), showing two lions holding a crest topped by the inevitable cockerel), while the arch on the exterior, port-facing side is decorated with the British crest, "Dieu et mon droit", & the date 1669.

## Famous Structures

### Dutch Fort

Portuguese built the first fort to withstand attack from the Sri Lankan kingdoms to the north. Dutch who captured the coastal cities from the Portuguese improved the defence system of the fort, widening the moat on the landside, improving the ramparts and the bastions. British who captured the city did not make many changes as they shifted the port to the northern town of Colombo and therefore the atmosphere of Dutch days are preserved to date. The Dutch entrance to the fort with its VOC with 1669 carved in the inner archway is still in use. Still there are many old Dutch buildings intact and, but unfortunately except for those in the private hands. The ramparts and the bastions still bring to life the old world.

### Dutch Museum

For a peep in to the life of the Dutch East India Company, look into this small museum at 31 Leynbaan Street. Housed in a restored Dutch mansion of the time, it contains paintings, prints, documents, furniture and ceramics from the Dutch Colonial Era.

### Historical Mansion Museum

A couple of minutes' walk down Leyn Bann Street (Old Rope-Walk Street, named "Oude Lijnbaanstraat" during the Dutch period), in a well-restored Dutch house is a collection of colonial artifacts, antique typewriters, VOC china, spectacles & jewellery. In spite of the rare items stored herein, the main aim of the museum comes to light when we are led to the gems for sale in the adjoining shop.

### Light House

The old lighthouse with the lantern at the height of 92 feet above low-water, built in 1848 was burnt down in 1936. The new light was built in 1940 at Utreeth Bastion in the same street, lighthouse street called 'Zeeburgstraat' 'Middelpuntstraat' during the Dutch period. The lantern is 92 feet above low-water level.

### Kottawa Conservation Forest

The road heading north out of Galle passes the Kottawa Conservation Forest, a 14-hectare wet evergreen forest. Trees are identified with their botanical names, making this a good opportunity to get to know Sri Lankan flora. On the other side of the road, near the forest entrance, is a swimming spot fed by a waterfall. There is a couple of tea factories tucked away in this area. Tallangaha & Kottawa are open to visitors

### Saints Church (Anglican Church)

Further down the Church Street is the All Saints Church. This was built in 1868 & consecrated in 1871 after much pressure from the English population who had previously worshipped at the Dutch Reform Church. The bell was gifted to the church by chief officer of the 'Ocean Liberty' of Clan Shipping Company. There is a particularly good view of the church with its red tin roof surmounted by a cockerel & four strange little turrets, from Cross Church Street.

### Excursions

#### Ahangama- Midigama

Home to a Unique type of technique. Silt fishing is a popular fishing method in the area and a very beautiful scenery to watch especially during sunset. Ahangama is also a popular surfing location and relatively less crowded than the surfing location to the north.

#### Hikkaduwa-Glass Bottom Boat Ride

Hikkaduwa beach in Sri Lanka is one such bay which you cannot miss out. Hikkaduwa located about 16 km from Galle, is one of the most popular beach resorts of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's only marine sanctuary is located here. Hikkaduwa is the place for underwater delights where there is a marine sanctuary abundant with rare corals and tropical fish. The underwater world of colourful corals and beautiful shoals of fish can be explored either by snorkeling or taking a ride in a glass bottom boat. It is an ideal place for nature lovers with its abundant corals and tropical fishes. Hikkaduwa offers multifarious options for everyone. It has something to offer to everyone-coral for snorkellers, waves for surfers and white pristine beaches for those who want to relax and enjoy Sun and sand.

#### Kosgoda-Turtle Hatchery

At the north end of Induruwa is one of the turtle hatcheries set up to protect turtle eggs till they hatch. Turtle eggs, which would otherwise be eaten, are bought for a few rupees each from local fishermen & re-buried along the beach. Once hatched, the baby turtles are kept in holding tanks. Small tanks contain hundreds of one to three-day old turtles, as well as larger one, including an albino, kept for the collection. In the night, you can release a three-day-old turtle into the Indian Ocean to fend off itself. The beauty of the operation is the beaches are guaranteed the female baby turtles released herein will find their way back, in the depths of seven seas to their natal beach ten years later to lay their own eggs. Five of the world's seven species of marine turtle visit Sri Lanka's beaches to nest, a rare ecological blessing.

#### Aluthgama-Mask Factory

The town is famous for masks & puppets. The traditional masks are carved from light Balsa like Kaduru wood (*Nux vomica*). Kaduru trees grow in the marshy lands bordering paddy fields. The wood is smoke dried for a week in preparation. The hand carved & hand painted masks in traditional dance dramas are vibrant & colorful. The colourful & vibrant naga raksha (Cobra demon) mask of the Raksha Kolama (Demon dance), consist of a ferocious face with bulging, popping & staring eyes, a bloodthirsty carnivorous tongue lolling out of wide mouth armoured & armed to the hilt with set of fanglike teeth, & all topped by a set of cobra hoods.

#### Aluthgama- Mask museums

you can view the traditional mask craftsmen busy in their trade at workshops. On display at museums are



masks symbolizing all the vivid characters, demons, gods, heroes & villains who appear in traditional mask dances. You will have an opportunity to delve into the mysteries, legend, exorcism & psychology in the world of mask dances. Once practiced in the hinterland villages in Sri Lanka, mask dances are now performed mostly for the purposes of tourism & that too mainly in the western beach resorts.

#### Moonstone mines

The village of Meetiya Goda near Ambalangoda is where the moonstone is found concentrated within an acre of land believed to have been blessed by the moon.

The mysterious gem, captivating as a full moon gleaming in the night sky, is considered sacred & has appeared in jewelry for centuries. A mesmerizing interplay of light, known as schiller or adularescence, causes a silvery-white sheen to glide like veils of mist across the milky surface of the moonstone. Some believe that this moving light is evidence of a living spirit that dwells within the gem. Gemologists, however attribute the shimmering phenomenon to the presence of albite crystals embedded in feldspar.

The most sought-after moonstones have a haunting blue sheen, an effect produced by the orthoclase feldspar, which is found almost exclusively in the mines of Sri Lanka

#### Boat ride in River Madu (Madu Ganga Wetlands)

915-hectare Madu Ganga Estuary is connected by two narrow channels to the Randoombe Lake, forming a complex wetland system encompassing 64 mangrove islets. In the year 2000, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) undertook a detailed biodiversity survey of the region & revealed the existence of no less than 10 major wetland vegetation types supporting over 300 plant species & 248 species of vertebrates. The Boat Safari on the River Madhu is something that words would not justify. The primitive Life Style of the inhabitant of the islands of the Madhu River is only a boat ride away. The boat ride that takes you through the thick mangroves, The bird life around, the primitive style of Fishing and prawn trapping still practiced by the inhabitants of the islands will reveal to you another facet of splendid Sri Lanka.

#### Adam's Peak

From December to April, pilgrims converge to climb the 2224m (7295ft) Adam's Peak. At the top is a huge 'footprint', claimed by Muslims to belong to Adam, who stood there in expiation of his sin in the Garden of Eden. Never mind that Buddhists believe it to be the mark of Buddha or that Hindus hold the print to have been made by Lord Shiva, the fact remains that it is has been a place of pilgrimage for over 1000 years. The view from the peak at dawn is enough to shock the most cynical agnostic into a state of reverie. It takes about four hours to climb to the top from the town of Dalhousie. Reaching the base of Adam's Peak is simple and if you're making a night ascent, you've got all day to arrive. Buses run to Dalhousie from Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, and Colombo in the pilgrimage season. Otherwise you need to get first to Hatton or Maskeliya. If you're really running late, taxis will take you to Hatton or Dalhousie. You'll need to cover 220km (136mi) to get there from Colombo.

#### Dambulla

Dambulla is a part of the Cultural Triangle declared by UNESCO is on the main road from Sigiriya to Kandy about 19Km from Sigiriya. There are over 80 caves in the surrounding and some of them have been used by the monks as meditation locations. Major attractions are spread over 5 caves, which contain the statues and the paintings. Since it's founding in the 1 century BC by King Valagamba, many improvements and additions have been carried out to the sculptures and paintings over the years. Hindu statues are believed to be of the 12 century AD and the latest paintings are of the late 18-century. The temple is a perfect location to view evolution of the ancient Sri Lankan arts. Dambulla is a unique and important historical site because of the amalgamation of the material from many eras. But separate entrance fees are charges at Dambulla of USD 10 per person it's not included in the Triangle cultural ticket purchased.

#### Dambulla Temple

The cave-temple dates back to the 1st century, BC when King Valagam Bahu was driven out of Anuradhapura and took refuge here. When he regained his throne, he converted the cave into a temple. It is the largest and best preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka. The rock towers 160 m over the surrounding plains. There are more than 80 documented Caves in the surrounding. There are five separate caves, most of every available surface being printed with the likeness of the Buddha, of the coming of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, of various kings and their meritorious deeds, great battles and Hindu deities. There are also several statues of great antiquity.

#### Cave One - Devaraja Lena "Cave of the Divine King"

An account of the founding of the temple is recorded in a 1st century BC Brahmi inscription over the entrance, where there is also a makara torana, an archway embellished with mythical figures. Inside there is a 15-metre long reclining statue of the Buddha. Ananda, the Buddha's most loyal disciple, is depicted nearby. The frescoes behind the Arahant Ananda are said to be the oldest at Dambulla, which is why they have been blackened by the smoke of countless oil lamps down the centuries. The Hindu deity Vishnu, "King of the Gods" or Devaraja, is believed to have used his divine powers to create the caves, hence the reason this name is employed. The deity may have been installed here in the Kandyan period, though some believe it is older than the Buddha images. There is a Vishnu dewale or shrine attached to this cave.

#### Cave Two - Maharaja Lena "Cave Of the Great Kings"

This is the largest cave at the temple, containing 16 standing and 40 seated statues of the Buddha. In addition, the Hindu deity Vishnu and the local deities Saman (gold in colour) and Upulvan (dark blue) are represented, as are the "Great Kings" of the cave's name, King Vattagamini Abhaya and King Nissanka Malla, who were responsible in the 12th century for the gilding of 50 statues.

At the right of the entrance is a small dagoba surrounded by seated Buddhas. Beyond, at the back of the cave, is a large reclining Buddha image dating from the 19th century. The ceiling, which is covered with colourful murals, has a small crevice from which water has dripped for thousands of years. This comes from a pool at the summit of the rock that has never dried up. The water that drips into a pot inside the cave is considered sacred. Moreover, devotees believe the water has miraculous properties and toss coins into the pot.

#### Cave Three - Maha Aluth Vihara " Great New Temple"

This is the second largest cave in size and second in splendour only to Cave Two. It acquired ceiling and wall frescoes during the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasingha (1747-1782), the great Buddhist revivalist. His statue stands in the cave, along with 57 Buddha images. The central Buddha image is a seated one. In addition, there is a huge reclining Buddha lying against one wall. The richly coloured murals show hundreds of Buddhas in identical postures. On the outer wall of the shrine there is a stylized mural depicting a Himalayan lake in which the Buddha is supposed to have bathed. It is depicted as square with four gateways, each symbolized by an animal – lion, elephant, horse and bull. From this lake flow four rivers.

#### Cave Four - Pachima Vihara " Western Temple"

This, the smallest of the cave temples, was the westernmost until Cave Five came into being. The small dagoba in the cave, known as soma chaitya, was damaged by thieves who broke into in the mistaken belief that it contained the jewels belonging to Queen Somawathie, the consort of Dambulla's patron, King Vattagamini Abhaya.

#### Cave Five - Devana Aluth Vihara " Second New Temple"

Once used as a storeroom, this temple is the most modern of the five. Restored and almost entirely repainted in 1915, it contains a dozen Buddha images of brick and plaster - including one large reclining statue – as well as the Hindu deities Vishnu and Kataragama, and the local deity Bandara

Close to Dambulla deep inside the jungle is perhaps the oldest garden in Sri Lanka is the Iron Wood Forest and the largest Rose Quartz Mountain Range in South Asia. The site had been declared as a

human sanctuary by King Dappula in 10 century AD as shown in an inscription at the entrance to Namal Uyana. Trees believed to have been planted by those who sought sanctuary here and subsequently turned in to a vast plantation of Iron wood forest. Apart from the biodiversity of the site as it contains many other plants, it is also geologically important because of the Rose Quartz mountain range in the garden, which is believed to be over 500 million years old. White, rose and violet colour quartz deposits can be seen here.

## Other Famous Structures

### Nalanda Gedige

Nalanda is situated one km to the east of the A9 route 20km north of Aluvihare. It is one of a number of remarkable archaeological sites in Sri Lanka . A visit to Nalanda Gedige - gedige exhibits a composite style of architecture unique in Sri Lanka, and an extraordinary fusion of Hinduism and Buddhism. To cap it all, this remarkable shrine occupies an extremely picturesque - if not original - location. Named after the great Buddhist University at Nalanda in India, it has been said that Nalanda Gedige is "one of those fortunate places that have no history." The surprising lack of knowledge regarding this shrine, and why it was located at Nalanda thwarts those who wish to delve into its past. Even estimates of its date of construction vary from the 7th to 11th centuries AD. This was a period of great turmoil on the island, with South Indian kings establishing themselves in the wake of the decline of the Sinhalese monarchy. It is possible that Nalanda Gedige was a bold attempt at a fusion of Tamil and Sinhalese cultures. Nalanda Gedige is a curious hybrid of Buddhist and Hindu architecture. Some of the design elements are distinctly Hindu, such as the mandapam or hall of waiting. Yet there is no sign of Hindu gods. There are erotic but eroded Tantric Buddhist carvings, much like the famous ones at Khajuraho in India. The richly decorated façade sections are in the 7th century style which flourished at Madras, South India. However, the southern section has a semi-circular niche containing in high relief a squat figure of Kuvera, the god of wealth, seated on a lotus plinth - an image that is only found in Sri Lanka.

## Excursions From Dambulla

### Aluviharaya

Aluvihare is a rock monastery located in a picturesque valley 3km north of Matale on the Kandy-Dambulla section of the A9 route, so it is conveniently located for those traversing the Cultural Triangle. It is easily recognised from the road as it has a boundary wall with a frieze of elephant heads. This sacred place is remarkable for the huge rocks that are an integral part of it, which is why it is classified as a rock temple. Aluvihare is one of the most important cultural sites in Sri Lanka, for it was here in the 1st century BC that the Buddhist doctrines - comprising the Tripitakaya or "three baskets of the law," along with the commentaries - were first transcribed after having been handed down orally for several centuries. This transcription was carried out for fear that the doctrine would be lost during the upheaval caused by repeated South Indian invasions. It is said that 500 scholarly monks congregated at Aluvihare to perform the onerous task of first reciting the doctrines and agreeing on an acceptable version before writing them down. Where they assembled for the work is a puzzle, as the only flat area available does not accommodate so many. No doubt most perched on rock ledges and in rock crevices.

### Spice Garden

The most popular time of the year to visit is between October and April, There are different types of ginger, cardamom, clove and coriander plants, and wild pineapple plant which has strong medicinal properties. Also pepper, jasmine, lemongrass and more that grows in these premises. They also offer Ayurvedic Massages done with Herbal oil made with flowers, roots, bark and leave. There is a spice shop" where essential oils, herbs and spices, cocoa powder, sandalwood oil Etc.. Are sold.

### Nuwara Eliya

Nuwara Eliya is located in the heart of Sri Lankan hill country. Home of the famous Ceylon tea and the rolling mountains are carpeted of velvety green tea plantations, interspersed with gushing streams and tumbling waterfalls. The cellubrious climate, misty glens and similar to the British climate, make the place a must to include in your travel itinerary. Located at the height of 1890 meters above sea level Temperatures are 140C-210C (Jan- April) 160C-180C (May-Aug) 150C- 180C (Sept-Dec).

Roads to Nuwara Eliya - From Colombo, there are two main routes to get to Nuwara Eliya - via Kandy or via Hatton.

Lake Gregory - An artificial lake in the southern part of the town.

Sita Temple - One and a half km. before Hakgala is another place connected to the Ramayana. A temple now stands at the spot where Sita, wife of the Hindu epic hero Rama is said to have been imprisoned by the demon king Ravana.

Pidurutalagala - 2524 meters tall and the island's highest peak. North of the town on the Gampola road it can be climbed in two hours but the state owned television tower at its summit is guarded by soldiers, who will not give permission, to pass its boundaries.

Hakgala Gardens - 10 km on the Badulla Road an ornamental garden associated with the Hindu epic Ramayana it is a scenic place with paths, shrubbery, ferneries, shady groves, lush foliage and flowers. Where plants and trees from around the world, are seen in one place, Hakgala Botanical Gardens just 10km away from Nuwara Eliya City Hakgala is one of the places one visits as an essential part of a pleasant journey in the famous hill resort of Nuwara Eliya. The site is legendary. It was once the pleasure garden of Ravana of the Ramayana epic and according to many; it was one of the places where beautiful Sitha was hidden by the demon king. The present botanical gardens were founded in 1860 by the eminent British botanist Dr. G.H.K. Thwaites who was the superintendent of more famous gardens at Peradeniya, near Kandy. An English oak, introduced around 1890, commemorates the "hearts of oak" of Britain's vaunted sea power, and there is a good-looking specimen of the camphor tree, whose habitat is usually in regions above 12,000m. Where the sights and scents of these glorious blooms can be experienced in their infinite variety From there it is a quiet stroll from the sublime to the exotic sophistication of the orchid House. A special attraction here is the verity of mountain orchids, many of them endemic to Sri Lanka. It would be in the worst possible taste to describe the Fernery as a collection of "vascular cryptograms" But that is how the dictionary describes the plant whose delicate fronds conjure up visions of misty grottoes, lichen-covered stones and meandering streams. The Fernery at Hakgala is a shady harbour of many quiet walks, in the shade of the Hakgala Rock, shaped like the jawbone of an elephant, from which the place gets its name. Sri Lanka's ferns are well represented here, as are those of Australia and New Zealand.

Hakgala is a temperate hill-country garden where also the languid low-country lotus and water lily floats in their serene loveliness. Pinks and blues emerging from a flat- floating background of lush leaves, recall the calm of yellow-robed monks, white-clad, devotees and flickering oil lamps. In time, the highlands bracing breezes dispel the languor of lotus land and even cause a shiver as a temperature lowers. The Hakgala Botanical Gardens is one of the lovely contrasts of Sri Lanka, a home to plants and trees from around the world, making them seem to be a part of the scenic beauty.

Horton Plains - Sri Lanka's only mountain national park, the Horton Plains offers incomparable access to tropical mountain cloud forest. Located 2,100,300 m above sea level, the park is 3,162 ha in extent, Horton Plains is now one of Sri Lanka's most visited national parks, and the only one in which visitors are permitted to tour on foot.

Tea Factories & Plantations - Any visit to Nuwara Eliya is incomplete without an excursion to any one of the numerous tea factories that dot its pretty landscape. Here a guide will show you the various processes which tea leaves go through before finding their way into a steaming pot of fragrant high grown tea.

Nuwara Eliya is a small town, located way up in the mountains in the south central part of Sri Lanka. In fact, it is the highest major town in the island, and over 6,000 feet above sea level. This makes for a very pleasant climate - not too much different than the end of a Canadian summer.

Nuwara Eliya is very reminiscent of the colonial days and still has a British feel to it. It is also the centre of the tea-growing industry and agriculture in Sri Lanka. Every inch of the hills around it is covered with tea plants or terraced vegetable gardens.

#### YALA NATIONAL PARK

Yala National Park is situated in the kingdom of Ruhuna which had an advanced civilization by evidence of the remains of dagabas and reservoirs built to irrigate large extents of cultivable land.

Being located in one of the dry regions of Sri Lanka, the climate of the National Park is usually hot and dry. The area receives its annual rainfall during the north east monsoon from November to January, and unpredictable inter-monsoonal rains in March/April and September.

In 1938, Yala Game Sanctuary was declared as a National Park, only with block I and other blocks were included later. It varies from open parkland to dense jungle on the plains. The scrub land is particularly distinctive with its enormous rocky outcrops, or inselbergs. There are also several streams, small lakes & brackish lagoons. The ocean to the east has wide beaches & high sand dunes. The varied terrain supports an extraordinary range of wildlife & vegetation.

The park's dry-zone landscape is strikingly beautiful, especially when viewed from the vantage points offered by the curious rock outcrops which dot the park. From these you can look out over a seemingly endless expanse of low scrub & trees dotted with lakes next to the dune - covered coast line, particularly magical from Situlpahuwa monastic settlement at Yala's northern end.

In the southeast, the Park is bounded by the sea. Unspoilt natural beaches and sand dunes provide a beautiful environment. This is surely one of the most spectacular seascapes of Sri Lanka. Far out at sea are two lighthouses which are named as the great and little basses. The extensive parklands that surround the lagoons offer visitors superb locations for viewing animals and bird life

The best period to see the animals is during the January to May dry season, when animals cluster around water sources in multi-species groups. Dawn & dusk are the best times of day to witness animals.

#### Flora

Yala's vegetation mostly consists of secondary forest containing semi-arid thorn bush. Along the coast this vegetation is either stunted or prostrate. Small patches of mangrove appear along the coastal lagoons. However, this secondary forest is interspersed with pockets of fairly dense forest characterised by such species as Palu, Weera, Malitthan, Ehal, Divul and Kohomba. Thorny scrubland is dominated by Eraminia and Andara. Sonneratia, Acanthus, Rhizophora and Lumnitzeria species dominate the mangrove vegetation.

#### Fauna

All the big game mammals of the country are found within the park. Elephant, Leopard, sloth bear, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar and sambhur. Apart from them small mammals such as Black naped hare, Grey, Ruddy & Striped necked mongoose, Grey Langur & porcupine are common small mammals.

With 35 individual leopards seen in Block 1, Yala West has one of the world's densest leopard populations. *Panthera pardus kotiya*, the subspecies you may well see, is unique to Sri Lanka. The best time to see leopard is February to July, when the water level of the park is low.

Yala is home to a variety of reptiles, such as the Sri Lanka swamp crocodile, which is abundant in the abandoned tanks. The Sri Lanka estuarine crocodile is to be found in and near the rivers, and the water monitor or kabaragoya a lizard often 2 metres in length, is found everywhere. Some of the venomous snakes present are the cobra and the Russell's viper

#### Bird life

There are about 130 species overall. These birds include white-winged black terns, curlews, pintails, barbets, hoopers, Malabar pied hornbills, orioles, Ceylon shamas, & paradise flycatchers, though pea &

jungle fowl are the most frequently seen.

The expanses of wetlands attract serpent - eagle, eastern grey heron, painted stork. White-fowl arrive each winter to augment the resident population. Among the common aquatic birds are various storks, egrets, pelicans, sandpipers, herons, ibises, kingfishers & the magnificent Indian darter. With a little bit of luck, you may also spot the rare black-necked stork near Buttawa on the coast.

#### UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARK

Uda Walwe National Park, is the best place in Asia to see herds of Asian Elephants in the wild. Uda Walawe National Park, is one of Sri Lanka's Dry-Zone Dry Evergreen Forests that harbors one of Asia's largest & most viable Asian elephant populations. The 30,821ha Park was set up in the year 1972 to protect the catchments area of the man-made Rainwater Reservoir which is at the south end of the River Walwe. The vital habitats that make up this land area include open parkland, grassland and thorn scrub aside riverbanks that are home to many valuable and much sought-after species of trees. Udawalawe was declared a national park in 1972. Since then it has become very popular, especially with Foreigners.

The Udawalawe reservoir is named after the Walawe Ganga, the river that feeds it. This reservoir was created as part of the massive Mahaweli development scheme and irrigates some 25,000 hectares of land south of the dam, which is 4 kilometres long. The park has the dual purpose of protecting the catchment area of the reservoir and providing a refuge for wildlife - particularly elephants - displaced by the opening up of land for agriculture in the region.

#### Flora

Udawalawe is well recognized for its rich biodiversity, its flora given to a high level of endemism. Park consists of dry lowland forest, revering forest, thorny scrublands and grasslands. One special attraction of the park is the Udawalawe reservoir and the Walawe River which flows through the park. Notable tree species include satinwood, halmilla or Trincomalee wood - which was once exported in quantity to India for boat-making, in the revering forest of the park it is kumbuk that dominates, while in the scrubland, damaniya is the main species.

#### Fauna

Udawalawe National Park is world famous for its large elephant populations. In this park one can observe elephants at any given time of the day. Apart from the 500 elephants that live in the park, other mammals that can be seen include the Sri Lanka sambhur, Sri Lanka spotted deer, Indian wild boar, toque monkey, Sri Lanka jackal, Sri Lanka sloth bear, Sri Lanka leopard, Sri Lanka small civet-cat, the common Indian palm-cat, and the golden palm-cat. Of these, bear and leopard are seen only occasionally.

The reservoir attracts a wide range of aquatic birds, including majestic Indian darters, egrets, cormorants, herons, kingfishers, comical black-winged stilt. Endemic species include Sri Lanka spurfowl, the Sri Lankajungle fowl, the Malabar pied hornbill, rare red-faced malkoha. You could as well spot the lesser adjunct, Sri Lanka's largest & ugliest bird, standing at well over a meter tall. Birds gather in large numbers around the tanks Magam, Habartu, Kiri ibban, Pulgaswewa, Timbirimankada. Among the raptors (birds of prey) are brahminy, black-winged kites, crested serpent, hawk, fish eagles, & the magnificent white-bellied sea eagle.

#### BUNDALA NATIONAL PARK

Bundala is the ideal location for visitors to experience just how exciting a bird-spotting location Sri Lanka is. Bundala National Park is situated on the south east coast near Hambantota, 256 kilometers from Colombo. It stretches nearly 20 km along a coastal strip, and is 6,216 hectares in extent. The history of Bundala as a conservation area began in 1969, when it was declared a sanctuary. Then in 1992 it was upgraded to a national park. Sri Lanka is a signatory to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance for Migratory Waterfowl, known simply as the Ramsar Convention. The high species richness of birds associated with Bundala resulted in it being declared as Sri Lanka's first Ramsar site in 1990

Bundala's hot parched wilderness is otherworldly. It consists of brackish lagoons, sand dunes, salt

marshes, mangroves and thorny scrub alongside a dry mixed evergreen forest. Though a large number of mammals and reptiles, especially huge crocodiles and snakes, are resident in Bundala, it is primarily a bird sanctuary and ornithologists' paradise. The diverse habitats found here, especially the brackish watering holes, attract all species of aquatic birds resident in the country and up to an incredible 20,000 shorebirds during migratory season.

#### Flora

Scrublands mainly consist of Andara , Eraminiya , Karamba . However the invasive species such as *Prosopis juliflora* and *Opuntia delenii* are spreading in the grasslands and scrublands. Forest is covered by typical dominants of Dry mixed ever green forests Palu , Weera and Mallithan. Maila and diwul are also frequently seen. However, the arid vegetation consists mostly of grass flats studded with scrub jungle. Marshes and streams contain water hyacinth and water lilies.

#### Fauna

Park provides the shelter for Elephant, Spotted Dear, Wild Boar, Black naped hare, Grey & Ruddy mongoose, toque macaque, Grey Langur & porcupine, jackal and fishing & Rusty Spotted cats. This park is also well known for sightings of estuarine crocodile and mugger rocodile.

The main attraction of the Bundala is the birdlife, especially waders. There are both resident and migratory species. Greater Flamingo, Spot-billed Pelican, Lesser Adjutant and Black-necked Stork are among the large birds. Large flocks of terns, gulls, sand-pipers, snipes, teals, cormorants, egrets and many more water birds are commonly seen. Most characteristic and unique to Bundala are the celebrated pink flocks of flamingo that are a true highlight of the park. The sight of them awkwardly standing on long legs in their pink splendour or serenely setting off into the sunset. Herons, spoonbills, egrets, painted storks and ibis are also commonly sighted. The lagoons are an ideal habitat for waders. In total, 197 resident (three endemic) and 58 visiting species have been recorded. Reptiles  
Noteworthy reptiles present at Bundala include the Sri Lanka swamp crocodile, Sri Lanka estuarine crocodile , water monitor or kabaragoya and star tortoise. Snakes include the rare sand boa - a subterranean species - the Indian python or pimbura , common rat snake or garandiya , Forsten's cat snake - a striking red snake that constricts its prey - as well as the venomous saw-scaled viper and Russell's viper or tic-polonga .

#### MINNERIYA NATIONAL PARK

Minneriya National Park is situated 20 kilometres northwest of Polonnaruwa although comparatively small in size - covering 8,889 hectares - it has a high degree of diversity. The park encompasses the beautiful Minneriya tank, built by King Mahasena (274-301 AD). Mahasena started his reign in an irresponsible and intolerant manner, so much so that this people were ready to revolt. Convinced of his errors, he devoted the last 18 years of his reign to acts of piety and building magnificent tanks and irrigation systems, such as that at Minneriya. Minneriya is the park to see large herds of elephants gathering, playing and feeding in groups of up to 300 in the wild. Claimed to be the biggest gathering of Asian elephants, Minneriya plays host to this amazing spectacle at the height of the dry season in July to mid-October though small herds are also seen at other times.

The highlight of Minneriya is of course the abundance of elephants that can be observed singly, or in large herds. Minneriya forms part of the elephant corridor linking Kaudulla and Wasgamuwa National Parks while recorded resident elephants number 400.

The history of Minneriya as a conservation area began in 1938 when it was declared a sanctuary. Part of the sanctuary was designated a national biosphere reserve in the late 1970s. In 1997 Minneriya became a national park.

#### Flora

The ecosystem dominated is the medium canopy secondary forests with scrub, ridge forests with open low canopy species, grasslands, plains and wetlands. Abandoned slashed and burnt cultivated patches (Chenas) are also found within this National Park., with such tree species as palu , burutha or satinwood milla , kalumediriya or calamander, halmilla or Trincomalee woodand weera.

## Fauna

Elephants are not the only mammals in Minneriya of course since a total of 24 species have been recorded. of which there are 150-200. Other species present include the Sri Lanka sambhur, Sri Lanka spotted deer ,Sri Lanka leopard , Sri Lanka sloth bear , toque monkey and purple-faced leaf monkey. An amazing 160 species of birds can be sighted too including beautiful endemics such as the Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Sri Lanka Brown-capped Babbler and the Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill as well as the Painted Stork, Lesser Adjutant and the Woolly Neck Stork.

The best season to view the animals is during the dry season from June to September when they gather in huge herds at the banks of the Minneriya reservoir. Visitors are also spot the endangered red lipped lizard and the Sri Lankan swamp crocodile in the reservoir.

In addition to the various species of mammals, the Minneriya National Park is also home to rare aquatic bird species such as the little cormorant. In addition to them, the painted strokes, Great white pelicans, Ruddy turnstones and Grey herons can also be seen spotted at the reserve. Early morning and late evening are perfect timings to spot these migratory birds.

## WASGAMUWA NATIONAL PARK

WASGAMUWA NATIONAL PARK located in the districts of Matale and Polonnaruwa stretches an impressive 36,948 hectares. Bounded by the rivers Mahaweli from the eastern boundary, Amban from the western and northern boundaries, Wasgamuwa National Park provides diverse micro habitats for fauna and flora. A mix of riverine forest, lowland dry evergreen forest, intermediate dry mixed evergreen forest are to be seen around the park while plentiful grasslands provide a rich feeding ground for elephants, some of which migrate from the Minneriya-Giritale Sanctuary to the north and the Flood Plains National Park to the north east. It is on these grasslands and at the river's edge where you may be rewarded with the greatest number of animal sightings.

This history of the Wasgamuwa National Park began in 1907 when the area was declared a game sanctuary. Then in 1938 it was converted into a Strict Nature Reserve, and an adjoining section was declared an Intermediate Zone in 1945. With the clearing of vast stretches of forest in the 1970s to make way for the Mahaweli development scheme, the area became a vital refuge for wildlife. Consequently the two conservation areas, along with additional land, were brought together as one and declared a national park in 1984.

There is historical evidence to that this area had been inhabited by man during the ancient Sinhala kingdoms in BC. Giant canal of Kalinga (Kalinga Yodha Ela) built in the reign by king Parakramabahu in the 12th century while the remains of Malagamuwa, Wilmitiya, Wasgamuwa and Dasthota tanks bear witness to the past prosperity of the area. Kalinga island (Kalinga Duwa) too is an interesting place to visit. Kadurupitiya, Dagoda, Baduruwayaya Buddha Statue, Malagamuwa stone pillars and other ruins also bear witness to the past glory of the area.

## Flora

The vegetation consists of primary forests, secondary forests, riverine forests, & also comprises grasslands and thorn scrubs and many valuable species of trees as park is almost surrounded by Mahaweli & Amban Rivers, riverine forest area is fairly large. Common trees include weera , palu , va , ehela or Indian laburnum , burutha or satinwood , welang or fishing rod tree , milla and kaluwara or ebony. The riverine forest of the park, however, is dominated by kumbuk . Other prevalent species include ovila , mi or honey tree and thimbiri .

## Fauna

23 species of mammal have been recorded at Wasgamuwa. Apart from the population of around 150 elephants , other species present are the Sri Lanka leopard , Sri Lanka sloth bear , Sri Lanka jackal , water buffalo , Indian wild boar, Sri Lanka spotted deer , barking deer , Sri Lanka sambur , Indian fishing cat , and slender loris . There are also water Monitors and crocodiles roaming very often in the water holes within the park. 143 species of birds reported to be found in this park, which includes the Red faced Malkoha & Yellow fronted Barbet, the Sri lankaJungle fowl, and Sri Lanka Spur Fowl,, there is also the Sri lankaFrogmouth, Which Appears to have no beak.

## Reptiles

35 species have been recorded, seven of which are endemic. They include the water monitor or kabaragoya , Sri Lanka swamp crocodile or kimbula , Sri Lanka estuarine crocodile, and the Sr Lanka



python or pimbura . Endemic species include the red-lipped lizard and Earle's lizard.

## HORTON PLAINS

This highly distinctive landscape to the south of the Hill Country is unlike anywhere else on the island. Despite only encompassing a comparatively small 3,160 ha, Horton Plains is of extreme conservational and biodiversal importance since it contains most of the habitats and endemic plants and animals representative of the island's wet and montane zones. Horton Plains is also immensely enjoyable to experience because you may go by foot on a circular route allowing you to really appreciate what it has to offer. You can spend as much time as you want observing birds, butterflies and endemic lizards or standing in the misty spray of Baker's Falls while the ultimate highlight, the journey to World's End, is a glimpse down a sheer cliff face of nearly one kilometre to the southern hill country below. Park consists of montane cloud forests embedded in wet montane grasslands. Horton Plains has rich biodiversity. Most of the fauna and flora found in the park are endemic and furthermore some of them are confined to highlands of the island.

The Horton Plains National Park is the only National Park situated in the Hill Country and falls within the Nuwara Eliya district . Panoramic scenic beauty of the Hill Country could be witnessed within the Park. The famous `Worlds End' is a major attraction within the Park

### The World's End

The most awesome physical feature of the Horton Plains - and perhaps the whole of Sri Lanka - is the escarpment at the edge of the plateau that falls 880 metres to the lowlands of the southern region of the island creating an astonishing escarpment, revealing breathtaking views across much of the southern area of the island. The whole panoramic view is right in front of your naked eyes. Aptly known as World's End, the view from the precipice of the countryside below towards the south coast is spectacular. Unfortunately, however, this view is often obscured by mist, especially during the rainy season from April to September. Dawn or early morning is undoubtedly the best time for observing it.

### Flora

Forests are dominated by *Calophyllum* sp. & *Syzygium* sp. Giant tree fern *Cyathea* sp. and colourful *Rhododendron* are among the main attractions. Park is also famous for beautiful flowers of endemic *Nellu* , *Bovitiya*, *Binara*, and many other orchid species. Endemic dwarf Bamboo dominates the edges of the river while *Chrysopogon zeylanicum* and *Garnotia mutica* dominate the grasslands. Grasses have colonized the plains, such as the *tutturi* and the *gawara* , which prefers marshy areas. In addition, the dwarf bamboo is widespread along the banks of the streams. The grasslands are interspersed with patches of dense montane cloud forest mainly consisting of the species known as *keena* . Although the canopy is up to 20 metres high, there are many stunted trees covered with trailing lichen called old man's beard. Large tree ferns are dotted. The *rhododendron*, which is common on the Horton Plains, has arrived from the Himalayas.

### Fauna

Few large mammals inhabit the plains, like *sambhur* deer at dawn or dusk, slender loris, hares, the striped-necked mongoose and the long-tailed giant squirrel provide the most frequent sightings. The lighter skinned montane leopard, otter and rare bear monkeys will prove harder to find. You have much more of a chance of finding and observing many varieties of endemic lizards and frogs at really close range such as the horned lizard.

Horton Plains is alive with birdsong. Residents include 12 species of endemic birds, as well as all six of the highland endemics such as the Sri Lanka blue magpie, the dusky blue flycatcher, the Sri Lanka white-eye, the Sri Lanka bush warbler, the Sri Lanka wood pigeon as well as the Sri Lanka spurfowl, the Sri Lanka junglefowl, yellow fronted barbet, rufous babbler and the Sri Lanka whistling thrush. Migrants such as the alpine swift and swiftlet as well as raptors, harriers and buzzards swooping silently in the sky above may also be observed on your harmonious walk around the park.

## MADURUOYA

Maduruoya is situated by Kuda Sigiriya a great eco location yet to be explored by travelers to Sri Lanka. The Maduru Oya National Park is located in the Dry Zone and is 300 k.m. away from Colombo. It is one of the reserve's with rich in ancient ruins found in different places and its southern parts provide veddhas, (indigenous people) their living environment. It was created in 1983 to protect the catchment areas of five reservoirs developed under the Mahaweli scheme as well as to provide refuge for wildlife, in particular elephants. In fact it is considered one of Sri Lanka's most valuable conservation areas for elephants and endemic birds. The park was extended in the east in 1985 to provide additional habitat for wildlife, bringing the total area to 58,850 hectares.

There are ancient Buddhist ruins at many places inside the park, such as Henanigala, Kudawila, Gurukumbura, Uluketangoda, and Werapokuna. In addition, there is much evidence of Sri Lanka's hydraulic heritage. For instance, an ancient sluice in the old earthen bund of the Maduru Oya has been discovered, consisting of stone slabs and bricks. It is 12 metres, 12 metres wide and 90 metres long. The upper sluice was built in two stages, the first of which dates back to the 6th century BC. The lower sluice is believed to be even older.

#### Flora

Maduru Oya is surrounded on the west and north by Mahaweli development areas and on the south and east by teak plantations and jungle. The dominant feature is the 8-kilometre long range of mountains in the southwest of the park. Water bodies, which constitute over 15% of the total area of the park, include the Maduru Oya, Ulhitiya, Ratkinda, NDK, and Henanigala reservoirs, as well as the tributaries of the Mahaweli Ganga and Maduru Oya.

The area is mostly tropical mixed evergreen forest, exhibiting such species as weera , burutha or satinwood , palu, welang , divul or woodapple , ehela and weliwenna.

#### Fauna

Maduruoya is a well known elephant habitat Other species of mammal include a wide variety of wildlife are found here. Endemic purple monkey is among the important animal species that can be seen in addition to Sambhur, a member of the cat family etc. There is some endemic avifauna also found within this Park.

Species of mammal include the Sri Lanka sloth bear, Sri Lanka leopard, water buffalo, slender loris, toque monkey, Sri Lanka grey langur, Sri Lanka jackal, Indian fishing cat, wild boar, barking deer, Sri Lankaspotted deer. & Aquatic species are plentiful, such as the painted stork or tantalus, white-bellied sea eagle, spot-billed pelican, great cormorant, and little cormorant. Forest species include the Sri Lanka jungle fowl, the very rare dollar bird or broad-billed roller, the tailor bird with its unique nest of leaves sewn together, the white-rumped shama, black-hooded oriole and red-faced malkoha.

#### Willpattu National Park

Wilpattu is one of the oldest National Parks in Sri Lanka Located in Northwest coast lowland dry zone of Sri Lanka. The park lies within the North-central & North-western providences. 26 km north of Puttalam (approximately 180 km north of Colombo) spanning from the northwest coast inland towards the ancient capital of Anuradhapura (50 km to the east of the park). The area of the park is 131693 ha. The unique feature of this National Park comprises of a complex of lakes called willus surrounded by grassy plains, set within scrub jungle. The seemingly endless wilderness whose scrublands, open grasslands and dry mixed evergreen forests are broken up by more than 60 willus and numerous coastal lagoons.

In 1905, the designated area in Wilpattu was declared a sanctuary. Thereafter it was upgraded to national park status on February 25, 1938. As the park lies in dry zone rainfall is highly seasonal. Inter-monsoonal rains in March and the northeast monsoon (December – February) are the main sources of rainfall. Mean annual rainfall is about 1000 mm and the mean annual temperature is about 27°C.

Wilpattu is also known to be a place of great historical and archaeological interest whose ruins evenly match the spectacle of the wildlife. The Mahavamsa records that in 543 BC Prince Wijaya landed at Kudrimalai Point, married Kuweni and founded the Sinhalese race. Some remains of the residence of Queen Kuweni can be found at Kali willu today.

#### Flora

There are many willu and lakes at Wilpattu. This is identified as the main topographical feature of the Park. They are often flat and basin like while containing purely rain water. Dry-lowland forests, scrublands, open grasslands and coastal belt, are also found. The western sector of Wilpattu is covered deeply with forests. Many species of flora can be identified at Wilpattu national park. There are three types of vegetation; Littoral vegetation, including Salt grass and low scrub immediately adjacent to the beach and further inland, monsoon forest with tall emergent, such as Palu, and Satin, Milla , Weera , Ebony and Wewarna.

#### Fauna

A total of 31 species of mammals have been identified at the Wilpattu national park. Mammals threatened with extinction are also there. The elephant , Sloth bear , leopard and water Buffalo are identified as the threatened species living within the Wilpattu National Park. Other wetland bird species as Garganey , Pin tail , Whistling teal , Spoonbill , White ibis, Large white egret , Cattle egret and Purple heron also found at the Wilpattu National Park. At Wilpattu, among the reptiles found the most common are the Monitor , Mugger crocodile Common cobra , Rat snake , Indian python, Pond turtle and the Soft shelled turtle who are resident in the large permanent Villus. Star tortoises roaming on the grasslands at Wilpattu is also a common Scene. Butterflies recorded include the Great Egg fly, Great Orange Tip, Glad-eye Bush brown, Blue Mormon, Common Mormon, Common Rose and Crimson Rose.

#### Galoya National Park

Situated in the eastern part of Sri Lanka, Galoya is an ecological destination and a National Park which centered around the Senanayaka Samudra Reservoir the largest inland body of water in Sri Lanka. Galoya is a great place for bird watching, nature expeditions and Elephants. The National Park lies south-east of the country in the eastern and uva provinces.

In addition to the national park, three sanctuaries were declared to protect the catchments area of this tank. They are

Senanayake Samudra Sanctuary

Gal Oya Valley North-East Sanctuary

Gal Oya Valley South-West Sanctuary

Together these reserves and the national park cover approx 63,000 ha of land. The park and the three sanctuaries was established by the Gal Oya Development board on 12 February 1954 and subsequently handed over to the Department of Wild life conservation in 1965

Gal Oya is a valley, which has given refuge to several kings in the ancient past. In the 2nd century BC, king Tissa sought refuge at the Digavapi, a place Lord Buddha has visited in his third visit to Sri Lanka. The Digavapi Dagoba, built in the 2nd century BC to mark the spot where the Lord Buddha sat on his last visit to Sri Lanka, attracts thousands of pilgrims even today.

#### Flora

About 45% of the vegetation is evergreen forest, 33% savanna, 9% grassland, 2% cheina cultivations and the balance is water bodies dominated by Senanayake Samudraya. A host of medicinal shrubs and trees such as Aralu, Bulu, Nelli can be readily found in the Nilgala area, while a number of locally known trees such as Vevarana, Halmilla, Veera, Palu, Ebony and Mahogany are found in great numbers.

#### Fauna

The park with its thick green canopy is a haven for species of birds and nearer to the Samudraya even migratory birds such as Painted Storks, Pelicans, Cormorants and Teals could be seen. A host of local birds such as the Grey Dove, Malabar Horn Bill and Grey Horn Bill, Koel and a number of water birds are found in this jungle habitat.

In addition to elephants, the park is home to leopards, bear, spotted deer, sambur, wild boar etc. Among other fauna are several species of monkeys, Porcupine, a number of fish species, reptiles and four species of butterflies such as the Crimson rose and Glassy Tiger have been recorded.

## SINHARAJA RAIN FOREST

Sinharaja forest reserve is one of the least disturbed and biologically unique rain forests in Sri Lanka. Pocketed between two sizeable rivers, namely river Kalu Ganga from the north & river Gin ganga from the south, of the numerous rivers of this paradise like Island is a virgin tropical rainforest of enormous national significance. This forest covers an extent of about 11187 hectares from east to west for almost 30 km across the southwest lowland Wet Zone of the island at the southern edges of the hill country, enveloping a series of switchback hills, ridges & valleys ranging in altitude from 300m up to 1170m with a breadth of 3.7 km north to south. Beautiful Streams, springs, rivers, waterfalls, leopard, monkeys, butterflies and moths, rare trees, valuable shrubs and medicinal herbs are all found within its green canopy. A trek along the sinharaja paths would provide nature enthusiast a never to be forgotten experience of sights and sounds and feelings

Apart from its ecological and biodiversity value its scenic beauty is also invaluable. The largest known tree of the country is found in the Sinharaja, which is an endemic tree. Insect eating Pitcher plant is frequently seen here. This magnificent rainforest is also a home for large number of butterflies. Inside the forest is dark even during the day time due to close canopy above and one can here the voice of cicadas and frogs throughout the time. Small streams found within the forest contain crystal-clear cool water and one can clearly see the fish, toads and crabs swimming in it. It was declared a National wilderness area in 1988 and lately a world heritage site in 1989.

### Tropical Wet Evergreen Forest

The vegetation of Sinharaja may be described either as a Tropical Lowland Rain Forest or Tropical Wet Evergreen Forest. A few notable characteristics of the forest are the loftiness of the dominant trees, the straightness of their bole, the abundance of regeneration and the diversity of species. The average height of the trees varies between 35m to 40m with some individuals rising even up to 50m.

The undergrowth is seldom dense; dense scrub growth does occur on rock shelves or gaps on the canopy created by falling of mature trees. The great diversity of species of Sinharaja forest makes it difficult to distinguish ecological patterns. However, some tree associations have been recognized and these are the Dipterocarpus (Hara-Bu Hara), confined to the lower elevations along the Gin Ganga valley, and the Mesua-Doona (Shorea) in the well drained lower ridge areas. This association forms the matrix of the Forest.

The vegetation found here is that of humid wet evergreen forest type with a high degree of endemism. Some families show an endemism of more than 90%. The untapped genetic potential of Sinharaja flora is enormous. Out of the 211 woody trees and lianas so far identified within the reserve, 139 (66%) are endemic. Similarly, high levels of endemism are true for the lower plants like ferns and epiphytes. Out of the 25 general endemic species found in Sri Lanka, 13 are represented in Sinharaja.

The total vegetation density, including trees, shrubs, herbs and seedlings, has been estimated to be around 240,000 individuals per hectare. Of this, 95% comprise individuals of the ground layer below 1m in height.

### Mammals & Butterflies

The reserve's most common mammal is the purple-faced langur monkey, while you might also encounter three species of squirrel - the dusky - striped jungle squirrel, flame-striped jungle squirrel & western giant squirrel-along with mongoose. More than half of Sri Lanka's mammals & butterflies have been recorded here. Having said that we must hasten to add that in the dense forest animals can be hard to see. The purple-faced langur monkey is the most commonly seen mammals. There are three species of squirrels. The dusky-striped jungle squirrel, flame-striped jungle squirrel & western giant squirrel. And others include mongooses, sambar, leopards, rusty spotted cats, fishing cats & civets. Porcupines & Pangolins waddle around the forest floor.

### Bird population

Sinharaja has one of Sri Lanka's richest bird populations: 21 of the country's 26 endemic species have been recorded here. Unfortunately the density of the forest & the fact that its birds largely inhabit the

topmost part of the canopy means that actually seeing is extremely difficult, & probably beyond the patience of all but committed birders-the tantalizing chirrupings of myriad invisible birds are an inevitable accompaniment to any visit to the reserve. It's much easier to spot birds around the edges of the forest, in the agricultural lands, which bound the park. Rare endemics include red-faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka blue magpie, the white-headed starling, green billed coucal, orange minivets, orioles, white throated kingfishers, Indian pond herons, spotted doves, babblers & many others. Pedestrian Ceylon jungle fowl found here is a more colourful version of & relative to the domestic chicken. An interesting & colourful spectacle is the presence of mixed flocks, sometimes comprising up to 80 species.

#### The rich reptile population

The agamid are the best represented group of reptiles, and of these the most common is the Green Garden Lizard. A rare sighting and one of special significance is the *Calotes liolepis*, and arboreal species and the rarest of all agamid found in the island. The only tortoise recorded in the reserve is the Hard-shelled Terrapin, while of the species of skinks; the Spotted Skink can often be seen. Of the snakes, the Green Pit viper and Hump-nosed Viper are commonly found in this forest and are endemic to Sri Lanka.

#### UDAWATTE KELE

The lush forest cover behind Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy has a long history dating back to many centuries. It was declared Tahansikele or forbidden forest by the Sinhala kings who ascended the throne when Kandy became the capital city.

However, King Wickremabahu of Gampola is popularly believed to be the founder of the city of Senkadagala who built his palace on a site carved out of Udawattekele. It is for this reason that the name Udawasalawatta was called Udawattekele, to this day.

The pond in the heart of the jungle was the place where queens in the past bathed and used as their pleasure garden. At times of war, kings always used the forest for their defence against. According to this historical record, the first settlement was founded during the rule of Gajabahu of Anuradhapura (114 - 136 AC). There is a reference to the Maha Thera Palabathgala Wanaratana of the lineage of Dimbulagala Dipankara Thero who brought four other bhikshus to Senkadagala during the rule of Panditha Parakramabahu of Kurunegala.

#### Fauna

In this verdant jungle where among trees, creepers, lichen, mosses, ferns, grasses, fungi, and bacteria are found in abundance.

The dual canopy found in this forest prevents the undergrowth. In certain areas where less light reaches the ground. The species of trees to be found here include Ankendhe, Madhetiya, Tel Kakuna, Karawale Kaballe, Jak, Valdel, Unna, Mavaywal, Wana Sapu, & Milla are a few to name.

#### Flora

The forest remained impenetrable for over many centuries where wild boar, monkey, hare, squirrel scaly anteater, porcupine, and reptiles, monitor lizard, tortoise and varieties of birds, worms and insects live in perfect harmony with nature. In the past elephants, elk, and leopard roamed freely among tall giant trees and hanging creepers. The leaves that fell from trees and creepers on the ground keep the surface moist after intermittent showers. But today it is a natural. Birds and butterflies have an important place within the forest. The most often seen birds within the sanctuary include the Sri Lanka Yellow-fronted Barbet (*Megalaima flavifrons*), Sri Lanka Layard's Parakeet (*Psittacula caltropae*), Sri Lanka Hanging Bird (*Loriculus beryllinus*) and Sri Lanka spot-winged thrush (*Zoothera spiloptera*), among a number of others.

#### KUMANA

A well-known bird sanctuary where a multitude of birds breed and roost. One of the most significant features of the park is the 'Kumana Villu' - a 200 hectare natural swamp lake, fed by the 'Kumbukkan Oya' through a half mile long narrow channel. The 18,149 hectare Sanctuary Situated on the southeast coast of the island in the Eastern Province is less well known than its sister, Yala West (Ruhuna) National Park, it is an exciting and diverse place to visit for its main attraction, the Kumana wewa, fed by the Kumbukkan Oya, and its surrounding mangroves that provide an important habitat for many aquatic birds. It is well known as one of the bird Sanctuaries that attracts the largest number of migratory

bird and aquatic birds.

#### Flora

The park comprises of the dry zone tropical thorn forest, saline lagoons, extensive plains, marshy swamps and scrub lands. The vegetation in Kumana consists mainly of mangrove trees, kumbuk trees and the karan fern, as well as the open marsh area.

#### Fauna

Yala East is more renowned for being an outstanding location to view large numbers of migratory and aquatic birds, especially in May and June. common sightings are of the pelicans, painted storks, spoonbills, the open billed stork, pond heron, moorhen, black-winged stilt and whistling teal in a way that will leave them undisturbed

#### KAUDULLA

Situated about 190 km from Colombo, Kaudulla National Park is dominated by the Kaudulla Tank built by the sister of the famous King Mahasena who was the creator of the Minneriya Tank. Kaudulla was declared a National park in April 1, 2002 by the Sri Lankan government. This is a unique national park in the sense that the two thirds of the park is under water during several months of the year. In addition to the Kaudulla Tank, which dominates the landscape, Kaudulla National Park includes Relapanawa Tank, Olumadu Wewa, Puliyan Kalla wewa, Minneriya-Kanthale Yoda Ela, Aluth Oya and Hatharas Kotuwa Oya. The park is also situated on an elephant migratory path (an Elephant corridor) , which makes this park even more interesting. The park sits in between the Somawathi National Park and the Minneriya National Park.

#### WEERAWILA

This dry zone sanctuary is mainly comprises with three lakes namely, Weerawila wewa, Debara wewa and Pannagamuwa wewa. Yodha wewa and Tissa wewa are another two lakes, which located little far away from above three lakes. All these lakes are act as ideal habitats for shorebirds. Since they are situated close to south coast and Bundala National Park, which is the south most destination of the migratory birds of Sri Lanka lot of migratory birds also can be seen here. Egrets, Cormorants, Asian Openbill, White Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill and many winter migrants can be seen here. Being the most prominent water resources in the area these tanks attracts considerable number of animals during the dry season. However the most common animal of the area is feral Buffalos.

#### History

Sri Lanka's first settlers were the nomadic Veddahs. Legend relates them to the Yakkhas, demons conquered by the Sinhalese around the 5th or 6th century BC. A number of Sinhalese kingdoms, including Anuradhapura in the north, took root across the island during the 4th century BC. Buddhism was introduced by Mahinda, son of the Indian Mauryan emperor Ashoka, in the 3rd century BC, and it quickly became the established religion and the focus of a strong nationalism. Anuradhapura was not impregnable. Repeated invasions from southern India over the next 1000 years left Sri Lanka in an ongoing state of dynastic power struggles.

The Portuguese arrived in Colombo in 1505 and gained a monopoly on the invaluable spice trade. By 1597, the colonizers had taken formal control of the island. However, they failed to dislodge the powerful Sinhalese kingdom in Kandy which, in 1658, enlisted Dutch help to expel the Portuguese. The Dutch were more interested in trade and profits than religion or land, and only half-heartedly resisted when the British arrived in 1796. The Brits wore down Kandy's sovereignty and in 1815 became the first European power to rule the entire island. Coffee, tea, cinnamon and coconut plantations (worked by Tamil laborers imported from southern India) sprang up and English was introduced as the national language.

Then known as Ceylon, Sri Lanka finally achieved full independence as a dominion within the British Commonwealth in 1948. The government adopted socialist policies, strengthening social services and maintaining a strong economy, but also disenfranchising 800,000 Tamil plantation workers. Sinhalese

nationalist Solomon Bandaranayake was elected in 1956 and pushed a 'Singhala Only' law through parliament, making Sinhalese the national language and effectively reserving the best jobs for the Sinhalese. This was partly instituted to address the imbalance of power between the majority Sinhalese and the English-speaking, Christian-educated elite. However, it enraged the Tamil Hindu minority who began pressing for a federal system of government with greater autonomy in the main Tamil areas in the north and east.

The country's ethnic and religious conflicts date from this time and they escalated as competition for wealth and work intensified. A Buddhist monk assassinated Bandaranayake in 1959, when he attempted to reconcile the two communities. His widow, Sirimavo, who became the world's first female prime minister, replaced him. She continued her husband's socialist policies, but the economy went from bad to worse. A poorly organized revolt by the Sinhalese Maoist JVP in 1971 led to the death of thousands. One year later, the country became a republic and made Sri Lanka its official name.

In 1972 the constitution formally made Buddhism the state's primary religion, and Tamil places at university were reduced. Subsequent civil unrest resulted in a state of emergency in Tamil areas. The Sinhalese security forces faced off against young Tamils, who began the fight for an independent homeland. Junius Richard Jayewardene was elected in 1977 and promoted Tamil to the status of a 'national language' in Tamil areas. of control.

When Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) secessionists massacred an army patrol in 1983, Sinhalese mobs went on a two-day rampage, killing several thousand Tamils and burning and looting property. This marked the point of no return. Many Tamils moved north into Tamil-dominated areas, and Sinhalese began to leave the Jaffna area. Tamil secessionists claimed the northern third of the country and the eastern coast. They were clearly in the majority in the north but proportionately equal to the Sinhalese and Muslims in the east. Violence escalated with both sides guilty of intimidation and massacres, now known as 'ethnic cleansing.'

By 1985, 50,000 Sri Lankans were in refugee camps, and 100,000 Tamils were in exile in camps in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The economy suffered as tourism dwindled. Tea prices slumped and aid donors threatened to withdraw support because of human rights violations. When government forces pushed the Tamil Tigers back into Jaffna city in 1987, Tamil unrest in Southern India and domestic pressure on the Indian government raised concerns about an Indian invasion. Jayewardene reached a compromise with then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi whereby the Sri Lankan Army would retreat and an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) would maintain order in the north and disarm the Tigers. What looked sensible on paper failed in practice, as Sinhalese and Muslims in the south rioted over the Indian 'occupation' and the 'sell out' of non-Tamils in the east. The Tigers attacked the Sinhalese, the IPKF attacked the Tigers and Sri Lanka became a quagmire of inescapable violence.

In 1989, just as the IPKF regained a semblance of control in the north, a Sinhalese rebellion broke out in the south and the JVP orchestrated a series of strikes and political murders. The country was at a standstill when the Sri Lankan government, under Ranasinghe Premadasa, tried to cajole the JVP into mainstream politics. When this ploy failed, Premadasa unleashed death squads that killed JVP suspects and dumped their bodies in rivers. A three-year reign of terror began which resulted in at least 30,000 deaths. The IPKF, which at its peak numbered 80,000 men, withdrew from its thankless task in 1990. The Tigers had agreed to a ceasefire but violence flared almost immediately when a breakaway Tamil group unilaterally declared an independent homeland.

The Sri Lankan government oscillated between political solutions and military offensives, neither of which ended the massacres and terrorism. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a Tamil suicide bomber in 1991 and Premadasa suffered the same fate in 1993. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga became prime minister in 1994, when the People's Alliance party defeated the United National Party in the August parliamentary elections. In 1995 Chandrika was elected President and for the second time since 1959, her mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike became prime minister.

A truce agreed to in early 1995 was unilaterally broken by the Tigers. The government responded with a

massive military operation that seized the Jaffna peninsula and dislodged both the Tigers and the Tamil population of the city. With government initiatives aimed at appeasing the Tamil population relatively well received and the Tigers apparently quashed, it seemed that Sri Lanka was on the path to lasting peace. But the Tigers regrouped and, by mid-1996, were able to launch damaging attacks on government troops stationed in northern Sri Lanka and terrorist strikes in Colombo. The violence renewed Sinhalese opposition to peace with the Tamils, which in turn disillusioned the Sri Lankan majority that was desperate for an end to violence.

As the new millennium came and went, the Tamil Tigers were still trying to retake the Jaffna Peninsula and their suicide bombers were still blowing themselves and bystanders up all over the island, particularly in Colombo. The massacre in mid-October 2000 of 26 unarmed Tamil prisoners by a crowd of Sinhalese in the hill country town of Bandarawela showed the depth (or lack) of feeling between some of the combatants - the killings resulted in violent demonstrations and retaliatory attacks which dragged Sri Lanka's relatively peaceful central region into the conflict. Some hope was offered by Norway's attempts to broker peace talks between the government and the Tigers in Nov-Dec 2000 - in a diplomatic first, their peace envoy met individually with leaders of both groups - but it currently looks as if the only good stance in Sri Lanka is a hardline stance.

Chandrika Kumaratunga, elected Sri Lanka's first female president in 1994, won a second term in office in elections in December 1999, keeping her People's Alliance coalition in power despite losses in parliament. Days before the vote, the president and People's Alliance coalition leader was the target of a LTTE suicide bomber, an attack in which she lost the sight in one eye. In December 2001, Ranil Wickramasinghe, who lost the 1999 elections, became prime minister when the United National Party swept parliamentary elections. Though political infighting could have rendered the government immobile when dealing with Sri Lanka's national problems - high inflation, high unemployment, poor infrastructure and, of course, the 18-year-old civil war - both parties have come together in support of unlikely and promising peace talks with the LTTE.

Peace talks brokered by a Norwegian delegation inspired a one-month cease-fire beginning 24 December 2001 (the first in seven years), which was bilaterally renewed in January 2002. Sri Lanka's government also lifted a seven-year-old embargo on LTTE-controlled territory. Whether this round of talks leads to the peace so many people on either side desire remains to be seen, but things are more hopeful in this, the Pearl of the Orient, than they have been in a very long time.

Peace has returned to Sri Lanka after 30 years of Fighting & last May 2009 officially the fighting was finished & Sri Lanka is on a path of rebuilding. All communities are trying to build a Sri Lankan identity.