

> **COUNTRY GUIDE**



Facts @ a Glance

Name of country	: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Population	: 21,128,773 (2008 est.)
Capital city	: Colombo (legislative capital - Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte)
Key cities	: Colombo, Kandy, Galle
Telephone country code	: 94
Size	: 65,610 sq. km

COUNTRY

Sri Lanka, (Former: Serendib, Ceylon), is an island in the Indian Ocean, lying off the south eastern tip of the Indian subcontinent. The island's strategic location in the Indian Ocean on the major air & sea routes between Europe & the Far East gives it an advantage as a global logistics hub. Sri Lanka has a pleasant tropical climate with two climatic zones - the wet & the dry.

PEOPLE

Sri Lankan society is multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a diverse & rich culture. The Sinhalese comprise the majority (73%) and follow the precepts of Buddhism. Tamils, who are Hindus, are the majority in the Northern Province. The Eastern Province is ethnically mixed—Tamils, mainly Tamil-speaking Moors (Muslims), and Sinhalese. Indian Tamils, descendants of those brought over by the British to work the tea plantations, are concentrated in the plantation districts of the Central Highlands. Each of these groups has its own identity, customs & traditions.

The two official languages are Sinhala & Tamil. Sinhala is the language of the majority of the population. English is widely spoken & understood in the urban centers. It is the language of business & commerce.

Statistics

Ethnic groups	: Sinhalese 73%, Muslims 8%, Tamil 9%, unspecified 10% (Est.)
Religions	: Buddhist 69.1%, Muslim 7.6%, Hindu 7.1%, Christian 6.2%, unspecified 10%
Languages	: Sinhala 73%, Tamil 18%, other 8%

GOVERNMENT**Executive**

The President of Sri Lanka is head of state, Chief Executive, and commander in chief of the armed forces. The President is elected for a six –year term and serves no more than two terms. The President appoints the Prime Minister and the cabinet of Ministers, all of who must be members of legislature. The legislature of Sri Lanka is a unicameral (single-chamber) body called Parliament, has 225 members, who serve six-year term.

Legal System

Sri Lanka's legal system reflects diverse cultural influences. Criminal Law is fundamentally British. Basic civil law is Roman - Dutch law.

The principles of English law is applied in relation to Bills of exchange, Sale of Goods, Partnership and Companies.

ECONOMY

Sri Lanka's economy is based on Tea, Rubber, and Coconuts. It is an island that is both resourceful, and economically successful. Sri Lanka has experienced modest economic growth since independence in 1948. The economy relied on agricultural exports until the 1980s, when export-oriented manufacturing grew in importance.

Sri Lanka's most dynamic sectors now are food processing, textiles and apparel, food and beverages, port construction, telecommunications, and insurance and banking.

GDP (purchasing power parity)	: \$ 81.29 billion (2007 est..)
GDP (official exchange rate)	: \$ 30.01 billion (2007 est.)
Unemployment rate	: 5.7% (2007 est.)
Population below poverty line	: 22% (2002 est.)
Exports – partners	: US 27.7%, UK 11.3%, India 9.3%, Belgium 4.8%, Germany 4% (2006)

Major influences

The civil war in Sri Lanka has discouraged foreign investment and constrained economic progress since the early 1980s. The struggle by the Tamil Tigers of the north and east for an independent homeland continues to cast a shadow over the economy.

In late December 2004, a major tsunami took about 31,000 lives; left more than 6,300 missing and 443,000 displaced, and destroyed an estimated \$1.5 billion worth of property.

Tourism

Sri Lanka's tropical climate, scenic beaches, and historical sites are prime tourist attractions. By the 1970s, sizeable investments were devoted to the building of infrastructure for the tourism industry, including hotels and resorts. Tourism declined after 1983 as a result of the civil war and related security concerns. About 560,000 tourists, mostly from Europe and India, visited Sri Lanka in 2004.

WEATHER

Sri Lanka has a pleasant tropical climate with two climatic zones - the wet & the dry. Temperatures range from 23-30 degrees Celsius in the lowlands & 10-20 degrees Celsius in the hill country. The average temperature in the country is approximately 27 Celsius.

Location	: Southern Asia, island in the Indian Ocean, south of India
Coastline	: 1,340 km
Climate	: Tropical monsoon Southwest monsoon (June to October)
Elevation extremes	: Northeast monsoon (December to March) : Lowest point : Indian Ocean 0 m Highest point: Pidurutalagala 2,524 m