

Beach Holidays With A Bonus

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Negombo, a traditional fishing town just north of Colombo. Photo courtesy: Ceylon Tourist Board.

An island renowned for scenic beauty and cultural wealth, Sri Lanka has approximately 1600 kilometers of classically beautiful sun-blessed tropical beaches. Some of the choicest are on the west, south and south-east coasts. In addition, a hinterland of exceptional scenic and cultural interests offers bonus to beach holidays here.

Situated between 5 and 9 degrees north of the equator and completely surrounded by the perennially warm waters of the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka has a pleasantly warm, tropical climate all year round. Sea temperatures remain around an inviting 27°C (80°F). The west and south coast beaches are in perfect high season condition from November to April and the south-east coast at its superb peak between May and October, giving the island's coastlines a truly year-round viability.

The west coast beaches, which extend about thirty kilometers north and south of Colombo, have developed to international levels of sophistication without losing their distinctive local charm and character. Palm-fringed golden sands, a high sunshine record, warm, unpolluted surf and good facilities for swimming, sailing, water-skiing, windsurfing, and choice restaurants offering seafood and indigenous

specialities are top attractions at these resorts. All are within easy reach of Colombo's international and domestic airports. Negombo and Mount Lavinia, two of the best known, are less than an hour's drive from the capital and offer luxury accommodations plus quiet beaches and a history of their own.

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The resort hinterlands are full of interest and charm as well. Lush tropical lowlands and the southern foothills of central mountain ranges present many interesting facets: rustic settlements centered around rice-growing paddies and terraced hillsides; extensive rubber and coconut plantations and gem mining in the south-western foothills.

The south is also a center for the performance of long-lived religious rituals, such as demon dancing and fire-walking. Buddhist festivals may also be observed here. Elaborately decorated or reverently simple old temples, as well as the 17th

century Dutch forts and churches in the walled city of Galle, are well worth a visit. And all of these destinations are within a half-day's drive from Colombo.

Colombo an historic shipping port and entry point of most island visitors, has a fine selection of top notch hotels to choose from, many with world-class recreational and business facilities in addition to superb restaurants and entertainment. You'll find well-stocked shops in town with a fine array of unique hand-made handicrafts, gems, clothing and dutyfree goods, as well as interesting museums and temples. Entertainment ranges from swinging discos and lively local bands to traditional dance performances. A host of colorful age-old festivals, especially during May through August, are held within easy reach of the resorts.

Tours can be arranged out of Colombo to visit Sri Lanka's unique and impressive ancient cities at Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya. Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and the hill country with its magnificent scenery of vast tea gardens, the exotic wild-life parks and bird sanctuaries at Yala and Uda Walawe, and the gem-mines of Ratnapura offer a refreshingly cool climate and varied interests for one to several day outings.

Sri Lanka -an isle of paradise for the beachhungry traveller with a taste for the cultural spice of life.



Negombo, a traditional fishing town just north of Colombo. Photo courtesy: Ceylon Tourist Board.



Palm -laced beaches and clear blue skies .. Photo courtesy: Ceylon Tourist Board.



Sunny days and warm waters make Sri Lanka the year-round vacationland. Photo courtesy: Ceylon Tourist Board.



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