

The Magical World of Ceylon Cinnamon

Posted on

A Must-See Experience in Sri Lanka



Welcome to the Land of Cinnamon

Imagine walking through lush green plantations, where the air is filled with the warm, sweet aroma of cinnamon. Welcome to Sri Lanka, the home of Ceylon cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*)—a spice so rich in history, flavor, and health benefits that it has captivated the world for centuries. Known as the “true cinnamon,” this golden treasure isn’t just a spice; it’s a journey through time, culture, and nature. Whether you’re a foodie, a history buff, or a wellness enthusiast, the story of Ceylon cinnamon offers a unique adventure that promises to enrich your Sri Lankan travels.

A Journey to the Spice Capital of the World

Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, is a tropical paradise where cinnamon grows naturally. The island’s coastal belt, with its warm climate and fertile soil, creates the perfect conditions for cultivating this world-famous spice. While you’re here, why not immerse yourself in the fascinating process of cinnamon production?

Visit a cinnamon plantation in areas like Galle, Matara, or Negombo, where you’ll witness local farmers peeling and drying cinnamon bark with incredible skill. This hands-on experience allows you to see the artistry behind those delicate cinnamon quills that grace gourmet kitchens worldwide.



Cinnamon leaves.

Don't miss the chance to try peeling a cinnamon stick yourself! Guided tours will teach you the craft, and you'll leave with a newfound appreciation for the labor and love that go into every stick of Ceylon cinnamon.

A Spice That Shaped History

The story of Ceylon cinnamon is like a Hollywood epic. Over 2,000 years ago, cinnamon was more valuable than gold, traded by ancient Egyptians for embalming rituals and coveted by Roman emperors who burned it during lavish ceremonies. It even fueled the Age of Exploration!

In medieval Europe, cinnamon was a symbol of wealth and status, used to flavor food, preserve meat, and even as a gift for royalty. However, its origins remained a closely guarded secret, shrouded in myths of phoenixes and distant lands.

When you explore the historic fortresses and trading ports of Galle and Colombo, you'll uncover how Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonizers fought fiercely to control the cinnamon trade. The island's history is woven into this spice, making it an exciting chapter of your Sri Lankan adventure.

The Age of Exploration and Colonialism

The mystery of cinnamon's source fueled Europe's Age of Exploration. By the 15th century, Portugal had discovered Sri Lanka and realized its potential as the world's leading supplier of cinnamon. The Portuguese established a monopoly, forcing the Sinhalese to harvest the spice under brutal conditions.

In the 17th century, the Dutch wrested control of Sri Lanka from the Portuguese, establishing a more organized cinnamon trade. They introduced systematic cultivation methods and improved harvesting techniques. The Dutch East India Company profited immensely, making Ceylon cinnamon a cornerstone of their spice trade.

By the 19th century, the British seized Sri Lanka and took over the cinnamon trade. However, the introduction of cassia cinnamon from other parts of the world reduced the global reliance on Ceylon cinnamon, and its production declined. Despite this, Ceylon cinnamon retained its reputation as the finest and most authentic variety.



Cinnamon peeling reflects the pride and skill of its growers, highlighting their artistry through precise cuts and gentle handling.



Artisans skillfully manage every step of the process, ensuring that the Cinnamon quills are carefully hung on ropes beneath the roof, allowing them to dry to perfection.

Cultural Significance in Sri Lanka

Ceylon cinnamon is deeply rooted in Sri Lankan culture. Known locally as kurundu, it features prominently in traditional cuisine, from curries to desserts like kiribath (milk rice) and kavum (oil cakes). It is also an essential ingredient in herbal teas and tonics, cherished for its soothing properties.

Cinnamon harvesting is a skill passed down through generations. The salagama caste, historically responsible for cinnamon peeling, has preserved the intricate techniques required to produce the finest quills. The art of cinnamon peeling, with its precise cuts and delicate handling, reflects the pride and expertise of Sri Lankan cinnamon growers.

Cinnamon in Sri Lankan Cuisine

No trip to Sri Lanka is complete without savoring its rich culinary delights, and cinnamon plays a starring role. From spicy curries to delectable desserts, cinnamon elevates every dish with its warm, complex flavor.

Must-Try Dishes:

Polos Curry (Young Jackfruit Curry): A savory dish with a hint of cinnamon that will leave you craving more.

Kalu Dodol: A sticky-sweet delicacy infused with cinnamon and coconut.

Cinnamon Tea: A refreshing herbal brew that's perfect after a day of exploration. For the ultimate foodie experience, book a cooking class in a local village or at a boutique hotel. Learn how to use cinnamon the Sri Lankan way, and take these delicious recipes home to wow your friends!

The Healing Power of Cinnamon

Ceylon cinnamon isn't just about taste—it's about wellness. Celebrated in traditional Ayurvedic medicine, it helps regulate blood sugar, boosts immunity, and improves heart health. Unlike its cheaper cousin, cassia cinnamon, Ceylon cinnamon is low in coumarin, making it safer and more beneficial for long-term use. While in Sri Lanka, treat yourself to cinnamon-infused spa treatments. Many luxury resorts offer cinnamon scrubs, massages, and aromatherapy sessions that leave you rejuvenated and refreshed.

Explore the Cinnamon Heritage

To understand the magic of Ceylon cinnamon, explore its cultural and historical importance.

Cinnamon Museums and Workshops: Visit places like the Cinnamon Island in Koggala, where you can see the entire cinnamon-making process from tree to quill. Guided tours often include a boat ride, making it a fun, family-friendly outing.

The Dutch Fort in Galle: Learn how this UNESCO World Heritage site was a hub for the global cinnamon trade during colonial times. These experiences are not just educational but also a fantastic way to connect with Sri Lanka's rich heritage.

Ceylon cinnamon stands as a remarkable symbol of the island's rich heritage.



Perfectly rolled cinnamon quills in golden-brown hues.



The meticulous process of accurately cutting and sorting quills.



The distinctive aroma of fresh cinnamon fills the air, creating a sensory experience that is truly unique and memorable.

The Perfect Cinnamon Souvenir

When it's time to take a piece of Sri Lanka back home, don't forget to stock up on authentic Ceylon cinnamon. Many plantations and local markets offer high-quality cinnamon quills, powder, and essential oils. Look for products with Geographical Indication (GI) certification to ensure you're getting the real deal. Whether you use it to flavor your coffee/ tea or add it to your skincare routine, Ceylon cinnamon is the ultimate souvenir that keeps the memories of Sri Lanka alive.

Ceylon Cinnamon in the Modern World

Sri Lanka remains the world's largest exporter of Ceylon cinnamon, accounting for over 90 percent of global production. The spice is a key contributor to the country's economy, providing livelihoods for thousands of farmers and workers. Ceylon cinnamon has carved a niche in the gourmet market, favored by chefs and food enthusiasts for its subtle flavor and health benefits. Global demand for natural and organic products has further boosted the popularity of Ceylon cinnamon. It is used in everything from gourmet chocolates and baked goods to skincare products and essential oils.

A Cinnamon Adventure Awaits!

Sri Lanka's cinnamon story is one of adventure, passion, and timeless beauty. From the ancient trade routes that spread its fame to the hands of skilled artisans who craft each quill, Ceylon cinnamon is a living testament to the island's incredible heritage. So, why not spice up your vacation with a cinnamon-themed tour? Discover the lush plantations, savor its culinary magic, and immerse yourself in a culture that has been shaped by this golden treasure. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a seasoned traveler, the journey into the heart of Sri Lankan cinnamon is

one you'll never forget. Pack your bags and head to Sri Lanka—the land of cinnamon and so much more. Your next great adventure is waiting!



Ceylon cinnamon stands as a remarkable symbol of the island's rich heritage.



A cup of cinnamon tea served with cinnamon sticks on the side.