

Sri Lanka

Worth knowing from A - Z

Accommodation

The living conditions of your placement will vary, depending on the area to which you are assigned. One should not expect luxurious accommodations in Sri Lanka. Living conditions are very basic. If your project includes a homestay we place each volunteer in a welcoming family setting and with a private room. Also, most placements will have electricity. (If electricity is a priority, it can be arranged). Most of our host families are educated, well-respected people who have experience with international students. Also, some members of a host family may speak English. Your host family will provide three nutritious, ethnic meals a day.

Airport pickup

Please inform Global-Volunteers.de (info@global-volunteers.de) about your arrival at Colombo airport, as soon as you have a flight schedule. We need your arrival date, time and flight number. A staff member will be waiting for you at the airport terminal and holding a sign with your name on it. Please do not forget to get telephone numbers, addresses, and any other important contact information from our international office before you leave for Sri Lanka.

Change of work placement

Our partner organisation will seriously consider a volunteer's request for a change of placement. However, we will only change the placement if the reasons are genuine and if the original arrangements collapse due to unavoidable circumstances.

Clothing

Rural Sri Lanka is quite conservative, and volunteers are expected to respect the local customs, traditions, and dress. Women should not wear shorts, mini-skirts, see-through garments, or sundresses. The most practical clothing items for women are modest T-shirts, cotton shirts, and long skirts or pants. For men, please bring shirts, T-shirts, and Bermuda shorts or pants. Bring white clothes to wear for special occasions, such as Full Moon Day.

Credit card

You can use credit cards (visa) in most hotels, restaurants and at ATM's in tourist areas and airport upon arrival.

Electricity

220 V. But very often an adapter is needed. This universal adaptor is for sale at most airports.

Holidays

Official holidays are Christmas, Easter and every full moon (poya). Most shops are closed during these days.

Internet, phone and post

This depends on your placement. Most placements will have access to a post office. If you are in a city, you will have easier access to a phone or your e-mail. Specific information is given to you before you leave for Sri Lanka, so you will know ahead of time and can notify family and friends as to the forms of communication that will be available to you.

Food

Our partner organisation, in collaboration with host families, will manage your food and accommodations from the first to the last day of your program. Breakfast is just tea and some bread. In case you are used to more food during breakfast, you will have to go count on extra expenses and buy some yourself.

Friends

We allow volunteers to come with friends or even in large groups. You may be placed in different homes, but they will be located within 3 – 4 km of each other. Also, we can place any volunteer near another who is already working in the field. Please be reminded that two different genders of volunteers are not allowed to stay in the same house unless they are a married couple.

Language

Volunteers should have intermediate knowledge of English. Orientation (if booked) will include an

intensive introduction to Sri Lankan language, and you should learn the Sri Lankan language quickly.

Luggage

Some items which you may consider bringing are a mosquito net, a first-aid kit, a sleeping bag, and some sun block.

Pocket money

Our partner organisation manages food and accommodations for volunteers from the first to the last day of each program, so it is not necessary to carry large sums of money. You may need some extra money if you plan to participate in activities outside the program outline, or if you want to buy some souvenirs. Sri Lanka charges an airport tax (\$10, U.S.), which you pay when you leave the country.

Safety

Generally speaking Sri Lanka is a safe country as long as you do not travel to restricted areas.

However, Global-Volunteers.de cannot be held responsible for any damage resulting from your negligence in failing to take appropriate travel advice offered by your home country. Please check the websites of the ministry of foreign affairs in your home country.

Transport

Best is to hire a taxi with a driver. Trains are not as comfortable as in Europe, but safe to use. Contact the local coordinator for more tips, when planning trips.

Traveling and sight seeing

If you are planning to travel to Sri Lanka either before or after our scheduled volunteer program, you will need extra money. However, you will be pleased to discover that Sri Lanka is an inexpensive destination. You will be able to purchase interesting gifts for family and friends in easy-to-find locations. Major currencies and traveler's checks are easy to

exchange in the airport or with any other exchange agent in populated areas.

Vaccinations

This all depends on what vaccinations you have already had and what country you are coming from. Volunteers are recommended to have the following immunizations: Hepatitis A and B, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, influenza, and polio. We suggest that you consult your doctor well in advance.

Visa

All volunteers should acquire a tourist visa from their home country. If you don't apply for a visa from our home country you will get a visa for 30 days upon arrival and will have to apply for an extension at the Sri Lankan immigration bureau. This extension can only be granted for another 30 days. We therefore urge all participants to seek a visa for the entire period they intend to stay in Sri Lanka before traveling.

Water

Drink only bottled water.

Weather

Sri Lanka is a tropical country with distinct dry and wet seasons. However, this picture is somewhat complicated by the fact that the country is subject to two monsoons: the Yala season (May to August) where the south-west monsoon brings rain to the southern, western, and central regions; and the Maha season (October to January) where the north-east monsoon brings rain to the north and east of the island. Temperatures in the lower coastal regions are high year-round, but they rapidly fall with altitude, where it feels like perpetual spring. The highest temperatures are from March through June, while November to January is the coolest time of the year. Rainfall is heaviest in the south, southwest, and central highlands; the northern and north-central regions are very dry. The best time to visit

All suggestions to improve and give advice when considered relevant to this document are very welcome. We are well aware of the limited content and kindly ask you to participate in improving it. Send us an e-mail with your suggestions to: info@global-volunteers.de