

CLAIRE'S TRAVEL NOTES

Sri Lanka FAQs

Practical answers to the questions I would ask before planning a Sri Lanka holiday. These are based on my own trip, with room to adapt the journey to yours.

**A GOOD STARTING POINT**

Allow 12 to 14 days if you want cultural sites, tea country and time by the coast. A shorter trip can be lovely too, with fewer stops.

01 How long do I need?

I'd usually start with 12 to 14 days for the cultural sites, tea country and a few days by the coast. If you have a week, I'd choose fewer places and enjoy them properly.

02 When's the best time to visit?

It depends on the route, especially the coast. December to April broadly suits the south and west; May to September often favours the east. The hills are cooler and rain is possible at any time, so I'd choose the dates and route together.

03 How should I get around?

For a trip like mine, I'd choose a private chauffeur-guide. You can watch the scenery, stop when something catches your eye and learn far more at the historic sites. Our local team also helped when heavy rain changed our plans in Kandy.

04 What should I pack?

Light layers, comfortable enclosed shoes and a hat were useful for me. I'd add something warmer for the tea country, insect repellent, a water bottle and socks you don't mind getting dusty. A handheld fan was brilliant at the hotter sites.

THE PRACTICAL DETAILS

Before you travel

A little preparation makes the journey more comfortable, particularly when you're moving between very different parts of the island.

05 What should I wear at temples?

Cover your shoulders and legs, and be ready to remove shoes and hats. Our evening in Anuradhapura called for white clothing, but that isn't a rule for every visit. Ask your guide what is appropriate at each site; socks can help on hot paving where they are permitted.

06 What do I need for entry?

If you're travelling on a full British citizen passport, check its validity and apply for Sri Lanka's Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) before you travel. The rules can change, so use the official UK travel advice and ETA site for your own dates and passport.

07 What about health and insurance?

Check current travel-health advice at least eight weeks before departure and tell your adviser where you plan to go. Make sure your insurance covers the activities, transport and medical needs relevant to your trip.

08 What should I budget for?

The local currency is the Sri Lankan rupee, and some smaller notes are handy. Ask what's included in each hotel and transfer: meals, guiding, entry tickets and experiences can vary considerably. I'd also discuss tips and optional activities before you go.

09 What about wildlife experiences?

Wildlife is one of the joys of Sri Lanka. I'd choose opportunities to observe animals rather than ride, bathe or pose with them. Some of my favourite sightings were the birds and lizards I noticed simply by slowing down.

Check before departure Entry and health advice can change. The official UK guidance is at gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/sri-lanka.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TRAVEL

Make the trip your own

There's no single right way to see Sri Lanka. These are the conversations I'd have when shaping a holiday around you.

10 Is it suitable for families?

Yes, with a pace that works for your children. I'd think about fewer hotel changes, genuine downtime, suitable rooms and vehicle arrangements rather than giving everyone an adult touring schedule.

11 Do I need to be very fit?

No. You can shape the activities around your comfort and mobility. Sigiriya's summit climb, for example, is very different from exploring the gardens below. Tell me what you enjoy and any access needs, and I'll look at the specifics with you.

12 Could I combine Sri Lanka with the Maldives?

Absolutely, especially if you'd enjoy a mix of discovery and island time. I'd simplify the Sri Lanka route to fit the total length of your holiday rather than trying to squeeze in every stop.

13 Could I just have a beach holiday?

You could, but I'd encourage at least a little exploring. The people I met, the food and that train journey made the trip so special for me. Even a short touring section can add a great deal.



A train journey into tea country was one of Claire's highlights.

What would your version look like? Tell me how you like to travel and I'll help you choose the right places, pace and time of year.

ASK CLAIRE ABOUT SRI LANKA