



your ultimate travel and accommodation guide to Sri Lanka

Colombo - Sri Lanka Travel & Accommodation Guide

Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital city, cosmopolitan and filled with many-starred international hotels, shopping centers and surprisingly westernized, yet with its own unmistakable Sri Lankan character.



Colombo, the commercial and political heart of Sri Lanka is a fascinating mix of old and new, with a central cluster of high-rise office blocks and hotels overshadowing red-tiled colonial-era buildings and sprawling street markets which overflow with high piled fruit and vegetables, colourful silks and cottons, and deliciously fragrant spices.



The colourful street markets, **colonial-era buildings**, museums and galleries, churches, mosques and temples of Colombo can easily be explored on foot, by **tuk-tuk** or **public transport**.

The suburb Mount Lavinia is well known for its beach since the colonial time. The sea is a safe and popular bathing spot. Its clean sandy beaches are jutting into the waters of the Indian Ocean with softest sand and the calm and clear water.

- [Colombo Accommodation](#) >
- [Colombo Restaurants](#) >
- [Colombo Activities](#) >
- [Colombo History](#) >
- [Colombo Pictures](#) >

Mount Lavinia offers a broad range of hotels, guesthouses and serviced apartments.

To look for other **Sri Lanka hotels or guesthouses** [click here...](#)

For more travel and background information on Sri Lanka, read our **Sri Lanka guide** and the **travel tips**, helping you to make the most out of your holiday in Sri Lanka.

Colombo - Sri Lanka History

Originally named Kolomtota, Colombo was the main seaport of Kotte, Sri Lanka's 15th- and 16th-century capital. Known to Arab traders as Kalamba, the city attracted the rapacious Portuguese as early as 1505 and became

the bastion of their rule for almost 150 years.



Surprisingly little remains to attest to this era, apart from a scattering of Portuguese surnames in the telephone directory and a handful of Roman Catholic churches and seminaries. Nor are there many mementoes of the Dutch who expelled the Portuguese in the mid-17th century.

There are more mementoes of the British period, including the neo-Classical old parliament building, the Victorian-era President's House (still often called 'Queen's House'), and the grandly mercantile brick facade of Cargill's, a splendid 19th-century department store that has changed little since the 19th-century heyday of Sri Lanka's British tea planters.



The central area of the Colombo is still known as Fort, but the remnants of the colonial battlements have long since been demolished, or incorporated in newer buildings.



During World War II, Colombo served as an important Allied military base. A large segment of the British and American fleet were deployed on the island, as were tens of thousands of soldiers committed to the war against Japan in Southeast Asia.

Colombo - Sri Lanka Activities

Colombo, the commercial and political heart of Sri Lanka is a fascinating mix of old and new, with a central cluster of high-rise office blocks and hotels overshadowing red-tiled colonial-era buildings and sprawling street markets which overflow with high piled fruit and vegetables, colourful silks and cottons, and deliciously fragrant spices.



Sightseeing
Colombo is full of **historical** and cultural treasures. There are many magnificent Buddhist and Hindu

Shopping
Colombo is a shoppers paradise. Along Galle Road you'll find many international franchises and up-

temples, great museums and the attractions of an international harbor city.

The **colonial past** is evident everywhere at the Fort or the Galle Face Green. Why not having 5'clock tea at the Galle Face Hotel?



Diving

Surprisingly, some of the best diving on the west coast is straight off the capital Colombo. Wrecks are the main attraction here. There's everything from commercial barges and oil tankers to small aircraft, and more wrecks are being discovered every year. Apart from their intrinsic interest, Colombo's wrecks also attract a greater variety of marine life than some other sites on the west coast.

market shopping centers. In the Pettah bazaar everything from imported silk sarees to local Ayurvedic medicines is available. Odel's is the best place to for inexpensive designer wear and souvenirs.

The Sri Lanka Gem and Jewelery Exchange is a place for fine gemstones, and the Sri Lanka Handicraft Board stores are good for all kinds of metal, fabric and woodcrafts of high quality.



Excursions

Colombo is a good starting point for 1/2 or one day trips to **Negombo, Kandy, Bentota, Hikkaduwa** and **Galle**.

Colombo - Sri Lanka Restaurants

Colombo offers everything ranging from small food stalls to international franchises and 5* restaurants.

Authentic Sri Lankan cuisine, fresh seafood, Chinese, Thai, German, British Pubs - you name it, Colombo got it! Some of our recommendations you can find below.



Lavinia Cafe

A great place to start your day or for snacks and afternoon tea.. Huge selection of Italian coffees, pretzels, croissants, baguettes, pastry and cakes.

The Lavinia Cafe is located on the south end of Duplication Road.



London Grill

Some (including us) are saying that the London Grill has the best steaks in town. Imported Angus, NZ Lamb, Australian Ribeye,

Roastbeef and other cuts. All grilled to perfection.
Our recommendation is the Chateaubriand for two!
The London Grill can be found at the ground floor of the Cinnamon Grand Hotel.



Cricket Club

This converted colonial villa offers a restaurant with a good range of international specialties as well as a sports bar with wide screen tv in the back.
A favorite place for Colombo's expats.
The Cricket Club is just off Duplication Road (follow the signs).



Gallery Cafe

Very stylish but still affordable restaurant next to the Cricket Club. Perfect to hide in style from Colombo's busy street life.
There are always interesting exhibitions by local artists.



If you have any suggestions or would like to recommend a restaurant in Colombo please [contact us!](#)

[back](#)