



Understand Sri Lanka

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Peace has finally arrived in Sri Lanka, albeit at huge cost. The country is booming, from tourism numbers to highway construction.

HISTORY268

This small nation has a lot of history, as evidenced by its eight Unesco World Heritage Sites.

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Progress comes at a price for an island with so many unique species – and so many elephants!

PEOPLE OF SRI LANKA.....284

It's an incredibly diverse crowd of some 21 million people.

SRI LANKAN TEA288

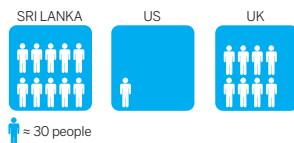
The island's most famous export is beautiful to behold and delicious to drink.

A TASTE OF SRI LANKA.....294

The humblest foods in Sri Lanka have the greatest flavour.



population per sq km



Sri Lanka Today

Peace

The 26-year-long conflict between the Sri Lankan military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ended in May 2009 in a brutal end to a brutal war. Thousands of civilians in the North and East were killed as the Sri Lankan military launched all-out war on the areas controlled by the LTTE, and hundreds of thousands of civilians were put in refugee camps.

In the years since, a government reconciliation commission has heard testimony and verified the huge death toll in 2008 and 2009. The LTTE infiltrated refugee camps with its weapons, the military attacked those same refugee camps. The charges and counter-charges go on and on. But what's most important about the end of the war is just how ready the entire country is to move forward.

A pearl-shaped island of enormous natural wealth and potential, Sri Lanka has been a poster child for misfortune for far too long. An earlier effort at peace was upended by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, which killed tens of thousands and plunged the nation into a chaos that allowed the war to erupt again.

Progress

'Everyone agrees, they'd rather die than live through the war again,' one Sri Lankan said to us, and the truth to that is palpable. Decades of delay in investment and progress are being made up for with vengeance. New roads and airports are being built across the nation. A great deal of work is being done in the former LTTE areas to try to mend the wounds.

The economy is booming and Colombo, which for years was a capital under siege from terrorists, is turning into a building site, and newfound wealth is translating into new shops and restaurants, restored historic buildings and huge public events such as pop-music concerts and fireworks.

Top Reads

Running in the Family A comic and reflective memoir by Michael Ondaatje of his Colombo family in the 1940s.

Monkfish Moon Nine short stories, by Booker Prize-nominated Romesh Gunsekera,

provide a diverse glimpse of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

The Foundations of Paradise

Features places remarkably like Adam's Peak and Sigiriya. The author, Arthur C Clarke (1917–2008), wrote *2001: A Space Odyssey* and lived in Sri Lanka.

Local Guides

» *Sri Lanka's Other Half* is a collection of features and travel info for the top half of Sri Lanka, including the North and East. There's also a Colombo book and others in the series.