



Colombo

☎ 011 / POP 760,000

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Nihonbashi Honten (p77)
- ➔ Nana's (p76)
- ➔ Good Market (p77)
- ➔ Bu Ba (p80)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Cinnamon Red (p73)
- ➔ Cinnamon Grand Hotel (p73)
- ➔ Havelock Place Bungalow (p74)
- ➔ Colombo City Hostel (p71)
- ➔ YWCA (p71)

Why Go?

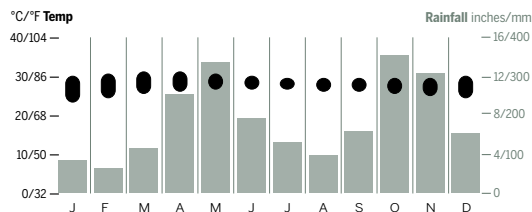
Although it's unlikely it will reclaim its 19th-century moniker 'the garden city of the East', Colombo has nevertheless emerged as a must-see stop in Sri Lanka. No longer just the sprawling city you have to endure on your way to the beaches, it has become a worthy destination in its own right and makes an excellent start – or finish – to your Sri Lankan adventures.

The legacies of colonial Colombo's garden roots are still very much intact along its often-shady boulevards. Fort is a compelling place thanks to ongoing restoration of its landmark colonial architecture, while Pettah brims with markets and rampant commerce. Even traffic-clogged Galle Rd is getting spiffier with glossy new hotel complexes.

Colombo's cosmopolitan side supports ever-more stylish eateries, galleries and shops. Surprises abound: with a little exploration you'll find great local food, characterful shops and tiny, convivial cafes. Meanwhile, a building boom like no other is transforming the city's skyline.

When to Go

Colombo



Jan–Mar The driest season, with night-time cool breezes. More tourists, so book hotels in advance.

May The important religious celebration of Vesak sees the city come alive in colours, lights and festivities.

Dec Although Christians are a minority, Christmas is popular and festive decorations abound.



Colombo Highlights

- 1 Fort** (p58) Revelling in the restoration of this compelling historic quarter.
- 2 Pettah** (p59) Plunging into the timeless commercial madness of the shops, stalls and markets.
- 3 Galle Face Green** (p59) Catching a sunset amid families and courting couples on Colombo's front lawn.
- 4 National Museum** (p63) Soaking up Sri Lanka's history and discovering its treasures in the remarkable first five rooms.
- 5 Ministry of Crab** (p76) Getting splattered with goodness at this hugely popular restaurant.
- 6 Walking tour** (p68) Exploring this fascinating old city on foot.
- 7 Tea** (p76) Enjoying the best of Sri Lanka's national beverage in a stylish cafe such as T-Lounge.
- 8 Shopping** (p82) Prowling through landmark stores such as Barefoot, where you can revel in the beauty and creativity of local merchandise.