

Heritage Travel – Kingdoms, Temples, Fortresses

Sri Lanka is blessed with numerous tourist attractions within its borders, from beautiful beaches to scenic mountainous regions, heritage and religious sites. Some of the leading heritage sites in Sri Lanka include;

Anuradhapura – Ancient Kingdom

This city is labeled as the greatest monastic city of the ancient world, spanning 437 BC – 845 AD. It was the seat of the kingdom of Sri Lanka till the 11th century. The city was the backbone of the Sinhalese Buddhist civilization and it is a UNESCO world heritage site.

The city is an engineering masterpiece, from the vast rainwater reservoirs that are created by meandering rivers that are crossed with enormous dams and the controlled outlets to the magnificent rock carvings, colossal stone pillars and the ruined royal palaces, Buddhist monasteries and temples not forgetting the stone cut swimming pools. The place is indeed a must see tourist attraction.



Sigiriya – Ancient Kingdom & Fortress

Built by King Kasyapa from 479 to 497 AD the city has a huge archeological significance; it is the most elaborate and well preserved urban sites in the South Asia dating the 1st millennium AD. It was a well-planned city meant for the king and also a UNESCO world heritage site.

The lion rock citadel is a sight to behold, the rock rests on a steep mound and rises over 200 meters, the palace ruins, landscape designs and the manmade water reservoir that forms part of the extensive assembly of pools, fountains and ponds all make for good viewing.

Polonnaruwa – Ancient Kingdom

It is also called the ancient kingdom of reservoirs. It was an agricultural city and had a vast irrigation network used for rice planting. The city was inhabited between 846 – 1302 AD. The preserved ruins of the royal palaces, the huge Buddhist temples, the almost intact and magnificent statues really do make the city worth its title of being a UNESCO world heritage site.

All visitors should make a point of visiting Lankatilaka Vihara, Polonnaruwa Vatadage, Sea of Parakrama and the Stone book.

Kandy – Ancient Kingdom with Temple of Tooth Relic

This was a medieval royal city during the 1469 – 1815 AD period. It is also called Maha Nuwara and is designated as the cultural capital of the Sri Lankan people. It is home to Holy Dalada Maligawa, the holiest temple in the world of Theravada Buddhism. The temple does house the sacred tooth relic of Buddha.

The city is easily accessible either by domestic air or road, using the main road from Colombo. It was declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1988.



Galle – Fortress

It was a trading center in the old days owing to its strategic location in the sea routes between India, South East Asia and Arabia. Many nationalities inhabited the city because of the trade in spices, ivory, pearls and gems.

The enchanting fort which forms a landmark in the town was constructed in 1602 by the Dutch; they also built a church and underground sewers. The town has 2 entry points, the main gate and the old gate. Visitors can use the western coastal road to drive into Galle.

Dambulla – Rock Cave Temple

The Ran Giri Dambulla or golden rock cave is a UNESCO world heritage site. It is one of the famous Buddhist sanctuaries in Sri Lanka. It consists of five caves that are all built into a rock; an architectural masterpiece by any standards. Housed in the cave there are 150 statues.

The ancient city has the triple pillars of Sri Lanka namely the ancient rainwater reservoirs, Buddhist temples and the Buddhist stupas.

Maligawila – Ancient Monastery with Largest Statue of Lord Buddha in Sri Lanka

It is home to the 3 m wide and 10.5 m high Buddha statue made of crystalline limestone, it is a fine work of Sinhalese sculpture and stands unsupported. The statue was crafted in the 7th century. There is also the Ancient monastery and the statue of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva who is believed to provide succor to

the helpless.



Visitors can take part in trekking, rock climbing and wildlife spotting. Entry to the town is through various roads like the Badulla–Bandarawela road that goes through Ravana Ella Falls or the Buttala road.

Yapahuwa – Fortress

A huge rock fortress that is located on a beautiful and well shaded site, it is built around a huge rock that rises to about 100 meters. The city is protected by a moat and two ramparts, the fortress has two fortifications. The ornamental stone stairway is a must see site for any visitor, so is the cave temple, lion terrace and a small museum.

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