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You will find photos, hotel and restaurant lists, entertainment lists, shopping and sightseeing information and other travel information for this particular area. We welcome your comments and suggestions! Best wishes for a wonderful visit to Sri Lanka! COPYRIGHT 2013 ATLANTIS GROUP LTD. UPDATE: DECEMBER 23, 2013 HELPING PEOPLE PLAN TRIPS TO SRI LANKA FOR 20 YEARS! FIND OUT ABOUT THE SRI LANKA RELIEF FUND OF AMERICA... run by the operator of this website and helping those in need, including those affected by the 2004 tsunami ... Lots of photos and information on how you can help as well! WANT TO CHANGE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE? Join the owner of this website and sponsor a child in need in Sri Lanka or many other countries through PLAN INTERNATIONAL... Click on the link to the right for more information! SRILANKATRAVELGUIDE.COM This page has been last updated: September 22, 2020 If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this website, please contact us on support@srilankatravelguide.com Copyright 2001 - 2020 Atlantis Group Ltd. NOTE: We are in the process of redesigning our website with an exciting new look! During this time you can see the old and new format pages on our website. The conversion of our website into a new design should be completed in 2020. We hope you like our new design! In addition, although many sections of the site have been completed, we are still in the process of building some sites. Please come often as we will be adding new information often! Thank you! ENJOY THE HOSPITALITY OF THAI AIRWAYS WHILE TRAVELLING TO AND FROM SRI LANKA! THAI AIRWAYS OFFERS SERVICE TO SRI LANKA FROM THEIR EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF 71 CITIES FOR THE BEST FARES, VISIT THAIAIRWAYS.COM.LK OR CLICK HERE You are here: Home Travel Experimental guide to Sri Lanka: 19 ideas to get you started thinking about traveling to Sri Lanka, but not not Where to start? What places to visit, what to work with or how to plan a trip? And how can you better avoid the crowds? We will answer all these questions and more in this Sri Lanka Experimental Guide and two-week itinerary. From meeting people on trains, sharing the sunrise with pilgrims and travelers alike at the top of Adam's peak, wandering through the tea gardens, learning to pop spices and cooking Sri Lankan cuisine in clay pots, admiring the sleeping sculptures of Buddha in caves, and more, here's a taste of the variety of experiences and destinations you'll find traveling through Sri Lanka. Sunrise at the top of Adam's Peak, a sacred place for Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Sri Lanka. Ceylon. A small tear-jerking island south of India. Our visit there was not my first. I lived there for 18 months when my father worked at the U.S. Embassy. My memories of Sri Lanka from six to seven years old consisted of brightly colored saffron robes worn by Buddhist monks, orphan elephants bathing in the river, giant sleeping gilded Buddhas and bright green, as far as I could see on the hills of tea plantations in the north. I was six years old with orphaned elephants when we lived in Sri Lanka. Something I appreciate now as an adult, but not fully understand how a child, except to note the differences in people's clothing, was the diversity of nationalities, cultures and religions in Sri Lanka. This includes the majority of the Sinhalese population, who are predominantly Buddhists, a Tamil community consisting of both Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils, who are mostly Hindus as well as Christians and Muslims. Add to that the long and complex history that has existed for 8,000 years, including the power struggle between the kingdoms, colonialism and forced migration, and you have a mixture that makes Sri Lanka a fascinating and complex place that it is, the same mixture that helped divide it and cast it in the devastating 26-year civil war (1983-2009). My family left before the Civil War. As the war unfolded, we watched Sri Lankan friends emigrate to avoid conflict. And just as peace and stability have returned over the past decade, we have seen many of them return home. Dan and I were close to visiting Sri Lanka in 2008 when we were in southern India. It was the time before the end of the civil war. On the advice of Sri Lankan friends, we decided to wait. When the war finally ended in May 2009, we were looking for an opportunity to visit. One finally represented years later. Inspired by the opening of the Vipassana meditation course in downtown Sri Lanka, we booked a flight to Colombo at the last minute. As I sat my meditation course, Dan made his way south to the beach for his own self-retreat. After completing the meditation course, we are together on a two-week trip to the island. To collect the route that we have put together from friends who have lived or visited there recently, piecing together a rough route focused on train travel, tea gardens and hiking. We left things flexible, often booking accommodation the day before or the day to allow shifts and adjustments as we wanted. In the end, it turned out to be an even better two-week trip than we imagined, flush with the variety of experiences and destinations that belied the relatively short space of time we had. Despite the land we covered and everything we experienced, we never felt rushed. Trains, tea gardens and hikes. Here are the best experiences of our Sri Lanka travel and a two-week itinerary. How to use this empirical guide to Sri Lanka: The following experiences are in chronological order from our trip. If you have about two weeks, you can conservatively perform something similar and fit into trains, hikes, tea plantations and more. From three to four weeks you can add in more beach time, a meditation course, a visit to the eastern part of the island, or a few more hill towns along the way. We include train travel offers, pleasant hikes and well-known hotels in Sri Lanka to help round up your itinerary. Purpose: You have all the inspiration and practical information about travel to create your own Sri Lanka itinerary and travel. Update: This post was first published in April 2019 and has been updated and republished with more details and options for day trips on December 28, 2019. Our Sri Lanka 2-week itinerary: Map Our two-week journey together through Sri Lanka included: You can view the interactive Google My Map here. Colombo - Kandy (train): 2 days Kandi - Dambull Caves - Sigiria - Kandy (bus): 2 days Kandy - Hutton (train) - rickshaw in Delhousie - Adam Peak - Hutton: 2 days Hatton - Haputale (train) in place Lipton: 3 days Haputale - Ella (train): 3 days Ella - Colombo (train): 2 days Note: dan's beach segment took him from Colombo by train to Halle and then by bus to the southern beaches between Godellavel and Goyambokka. Days for each segment of the route listed above and below include travel times between destinations. Moving between destinations can often take most of the day when you take into account the time by train (or bus) and rickshaw transfer is necessary. However, these journeys are also experiences in and on their own to meet the locals and enjoy the changing scenery and lush tea plantations. Sri Lanka Guide: 19 things to do and places to visit 1. Take a train to Sri Lanka - over and over and over again Train travel to Sri Lanka, no matter what class of transportation, it's the best way to get around the country for views, hanging with locals, and budget It's more than just a transportation option to get you from point A to B; it's an experience. We traveled in every class, from third grade to 1st grade (air conditioning), and strongly recommend trying it all if you can. Train travel to Sri Lanka: the best way to get around the island. Sri Lankan trains do not run everywhere, but they reach most of the places in Sri Lanka that you would like to visit. In addition, many routes train you through gorgeous scenery and scenery - tea gardens, forests, villages, coasts - often where there are no roads. Fresh air and meditative slow movement and the sound of a train are much nicer than diesel-filled roads and jerky bus traffic. We traveled by train from: Colombo - Kandi - Hutton - Haputale - Ella - Colombo. Views from the train in the hilly terrain of Sri Lanka. No matter what train journey you choose, you won't be disappointed. Although the train route to Ella gets most of the press and hype, we really felt that the segment from Hatton to Haputale was the most impressive. Given the popularity of train travel with locals and travelers it can be challenging to secure tickets for reserved seats. Read below for advice on buying tickets and travelling by train in Sri Lanka without a reservation. What to do in and around Kandy: 3 days 2. Admire the frescoes and gilded Buddha statues in the temple in Dambull Cave We can quickly develop temple fatigue. So, and based on our research, we arrived at the Temple Cave Dambulla with managed expectations. But since it was only a few hours north (72 km) from Kandy and en route to Sigiriya Rock Fortress, we decided to stop and check it out. We're so glad we did. Buddha statues in the temple in Dambull Cave. These Buddhist cave temples, also listed as World Heritage Sites, date back to around the 1st century BC. The complex includes five caves open to the public, each slightly different from the next in terms of its size, as well as its style and range of paintings and Buddha statues. Of course, the paintings and statues have been repaired and brushed over time. However, it is still an impressive take on Buddhist religious art spanning 22 centuries and witnessing a living story of how locals still use these caves today for religious purposes. Sleeping Buddha, temple in Dambull Cave. It's a popular destination for both Sri Lankans and travelers, so if you find that one cave is overcrowded, just go to the next one until the crowds disperse and move on. It's worth the extra effort to be able to enjoy each of the caves with some silence and silence. How to visit the temple of Dambulla Caves: Buses leave Kandy bus station (next to the train station) for Dambulla during the day. The trip is about 90 minutes each way. Ask a chaperone or driver you're at the entrance to the cave temple so you don't have to return twice from Dambull a few miles away. We decided to spend an extra dollar or two to catch an air-conditioned bus from Kandy bus station. It's not the easiest simple so just ask one of the men on the information table. They'll tell you in the right direction. If you have a backpack or luggage with you, ask to leave your bags at the police/security checkpoint on the way to the temple. There aren't many food options around the temple entrance, so consider bringing in some snacks or taking a tuk-tuk to the city of Dambulla for lunch. When we visited, there was no entrance fee. We've read before to expect an entry fee, so we're not sure if we were lucky just the day we visited. 3. Climb to the top of the Citadel of Sigiria (Lion Rock) before the arrival of the crowd Story is that in the 5th century King Kasyapa needs to build a new, safe capital after the usurpation of the throne. He brutally killed his father and scared off his brother, the rightful heir to the throne. After this Game of Thrones-style move, he headed north from Dambulla and built his palace atop a massive 180-metre cliff - Sigiriya, or Lion Rock - giving him a viewpoint from which to see any army from miles away. His palace served him well and protected him during his reign. After his death, it was used as a Buddhist monastery until the 14th century. Sigiriya Palace, top view. Most travelers visit Sigiria, another place on the UN website and one of the most visited places in Sri Lanka, as a day trip from Kandi. Our advice is to spend the night in one of the family guesthouses near the place and take a tuk-tuk early in the morning, so you arrive at 7am when the ticket office and gates are open. This will allow you to stroll through the gardens, enjoy the frescoes - including the famous Sigiriya Maidens - in caves along the cliffs (cool but you can't touch!), climb to the top of the cliffs, walk around the ruins of the palace, enjoy the view from above, and head back down. And do all this before the hordes of tourists arrive on bus tours from Kandy. On our way down from the top of the cliff, we saw hundreds of visitors lining up. Walk to Sigiriya in the morning mist. Another advantage of this approach is that you will be able to explore Sigiria at the beginning of the morning before the day warms up and the views become hazy. Note on entry fees and an alternative to Sigiria: The entry fee for foreigners to visit Sigiriya is a pretty hefty $30/person. We have decided to visit anyway, but if you are on a strict travel budget consider skipping Sigiria and climbing nearby Pidurangala Rock for views of Sigiria and the surrounding scenery. Where to stay to visit Shigirya earlier in the day: We stayed at Gagadiya Rest just a few kilometers from the entrance to Sigiria. This is a small family guesthouse with two rooms - very clean and new. They were in the process second floor and extra rooms when we stayed so they probably have more rooms now. We got a free tuk-tuk tuk tuk-tuk ride boarding house early in the morning to Sigiria and then had breakfast there when we returned before heading back to Kandy that day. It's also possible to get a great homemade dinner there, but ask about the price as it's usually a little higher than in other rooms, perhaps because there's not much around and you're in captivity of the audience. You can also find other hotels and guesthouses in Sigiri. NOTE: If you have little time, you can also book a day trip to Sigiria and Dumbulla Cave from Colombo. 4. Eat your weight in Sri Lanka rice and curry. The main Sri Lankan food, whether in a restaurant with a hole in the wall or in a high-end restaurant, are rice and curry. Often, you get a large plate or a bowl of rice and then a selection of a few different curries to go with it. In many simple places in the style of a cafeteria curry will be lined in the style of a buffet and you specify the server to which you want. It is best to eat during local meal hours, so the food is freshly cooked and not sitting for hours in the heat. Rice and curry, a typical Sri Lankan lunch at a local restaurant. Vegetarians should enjoy Sri Lankan food. There are usually several types of dala (lentils), sabjis (mixed vegetables), beetroot root, eggplant and other vegetarian curry options on offer. For meat eaters, you will find different types of chicken, meat or fish curry options with different levels of heat and spices. In more formal restaurants you'll be able to choose how many curries - and which ones - you want served with a bunch of rice. Delicious food at Matey Hut in Ella with a choice of four curries. Be sure to look for or ask for different types of sambo (salads), chutneys or hot sauces available. Some of our favorites included pennywort salad (gotukola sambol), spicy coconut chutney (half sambola), and spicy onion sambol (lunu miris). When you do, you often get a nod of approval and a smile from your waiter as well. For more information on Sri Lankan cuisine, check out this article from our friend Mark. 5. Visit the Sacred Tooth Relic Temple in Kandy. Inside the former royal palace complex in Kandi Sri Dalada Maligawa (aka the Sacred Tooth Relic Temple) is believed to be a relic of Gautama Buddha's tooth, rescued from his funeral pyre in 543 BC Almost 800 years later, the story continues with a tooth that was smuggled into Sri Lanka from India in the early 4th century. In addition to its religious value, the relic tooth introduces another Game of Thrones-like twist: it is believed that whoever holds the relic also rules the country. Thus, it has become a valuable possession and political tool of monarchs over the centuries. His final resting place is now in Kandi, where he is said to be safe inside the palace's main shrine. One of many carefully decorated Relics of the Tooth. While it is not possible for visitors today to see the actual heirloom of the tooth, it is still worth visiting the palace and temple if you are in Kandy. The procession of pilgrims, devotees and rituals surrounding this sacred relic, offers a little active devotion, living history. You will notice lotus flowers and frangipani offerings have collapsed all over the various temples tucked into sacred corners. The palace and temples of the grounds - with their elaborate wood carvings, gilded statues and paintings, and manicured gardens - serve as a bit of a visual overload. Floral offerings in the Temple of tooth relics. Kandi, Sri Lanka. Note: If you happen to visit Kandy in July or August ask about the dates of this year's Esala Perahera (Festival of the Tooth), two weeks of interlude when the city fills up with decorated elephants, dancers, ceremonies and more. 6. Buy some creative, colorful and eco-friendly souvenirs in Kandy. We weren't looking for souvenirs or buying anything when we stumbled upon EarthBound Creations (28 Yatinuwara Veediya, Kandy) as we wandered the streets of Kandy. However, the colorfully creative use of recycled materials (recycled newspaper paper, plastics, etc.) has changed that. In addition to the environmentally sensitive use of recycled materials, the social enterprise also works with women affected by the tsunami or displaced persons in 2004. Our recycled Sri Lankan newspaper souvenirs from EarthBound Creations in Kandy. This means that when you buy cool souvenirs and gifts here - we bought a basket and an old b-plane made, both from recycled cardboard and newspaper paper - it helps provide income and training to this disadvantaged group of women. The inventory there is cool, visually appealing, reasonably priced and feel good. What to do in Hatton and Adam's Peak: 2 days 7. Wake up at 2 a.m. to climb the peak of Adam (Sri Padaya) and enjoy the sunrise at the top of This mountain is considered sacred to several religions, including all the prominent ones practiced in Sri Lanka. Sri Pada (Sacred Trail), a rock formation near the summit, is considered a buddha trail for Buddhists, Adam for Christians and Muslims, and Shiva for Hindus. While walking, you will find many local pilgrims of different religions and travelers along the way. You will find even more collected in large quantities on top near the temples in anticipation of sunrise. Sunrise at Adam's peak. The idea is to climb adam's peak in the dark so that you can enjoy the sunrise at the top and then views from the mountain at the beginning of the morning light on the way down. We set our alarms for the wicked hour of 2am, bundled in several layers of clothing against the morning cold, got a tuk-tuk ride to the base of the mountain, and headed for the top (2243 m / 7359 While we enjoyed the wait for the sunrise near the Hindu and Buddhist temples at their peak, while we watched them perform various ceremonies and prayers, we found crowds and all the cameras and selfie-sticks a little bit after a while. We headed down before the sun was full and left the crowds behind us. It was such a good decision. Early morning light on our way down from Adam's peak. We had views of the nearby mountains and hills almost all to us in the beautiful morning light which lasts only a few minutes at best. It's magical. How long does it take to get to Adam's peak? It's not technically difficult to climb, but it's a rather challenging walk with long stretches of steep steps (estimated to be between 5,000 and 6,000 stairs). We were informed that it took about 3-3.5 hours to get to the top, but we ended up in the final stretch after about 2.5 hours with another hour to wait until sunrise. So we avoided the cold in a comfortable tea house place before the final set of stairs and enjoyed cups of smoky milk tea. It will take about 1-2 hours to get back down. Steep descent can be tough on the knees, muscles and other joints. Bring a knee and/or ankle brace if you have any problems. Even better, bring a cane or two. The best time of year to climb Adam's peak: The pilgrimage season at Adam's Peak runs from December to May, coinciding with the best weather in the region. At other times of the year you may encounter rain or get clouded in views at the top. If you can manage it with your schedule, try to avoid the weekend as we heard the crowds swell even more with local pilgrims. Getting to Adam's Peak: Take the train to Hatton station and then the local bus (usually waiting outside the train station) or rickshaw (about 1000-1500 rupees) at Delhousie. Where to stay to climb to the top of Adam: We recommend staying at Delhousie, a village built at the entrance to the top of the Adam Trail. We were hoping to stay at Hugging Clouds but by the time we got to the reservation it was sold out so we stayed about 3-5 km. Although our accommodation offered a free tuk-tuk shuttle at 2.30am, being that far from the entrance was still something quite. And on the way back we had to look for and negotiate another tuk-tuk. You can look for other hotels and guesthouses near Adam's Peak. 8. Rickshaw ride on the hill country and tea plantations Sometimes it's worth spending a few dollars to take your own rickshaw rather than a public bus. It's definitely a wise idea when you're in the middle of a hill country surrounded by tea plantations and you want to take it all in a little slower and take pictures along the way. Tea plantations and green as far as the eye can see. Two routes we recommend for adoption Rickshaw: from Delhousie to Hatton (or in the opposite direction) and from Haputale to Dambethenna Tea Estate (also starting starting to go to Lipton's place). Don't be afraid to ask the driver to stop for a photo opportunity and just enjoy the view. We found that our drivers snapped pictures of tea plantations and views from their mobile phones, just like us. 9. Take a break from Sri Lankan rice with some roti (flat bread) Although the standard Sri Lankan rice fare and curry is delicious, you may find yourself reaching the point of rice fatigue. That's where roti (roasted flat bread) or kottu roti (diced roti that mixes with vegetables like fried rice) come to the rescue. Excited for a large stack of roti with curry (instead of rice). If you still have a longing for curry, consider switching rice to a stack of freshly cooked roti to go with daal (lentils) and other curries. One of our favorite places for this was the Malabar restaurant and Bakers in Hatton. It was so good we ate here two days in a row as we transited through town on the way to and from Adam's Peak. A heart plate of kottu roti, made from a finely chopped roti. Another alternative to rice and curry is kotti roti, which essentially looks like fried rice cooked with vegetables and other meats, but where the diced roti replaces rice. You always know when it's done as you can hear the kottu roti master clang away with his knives to cut the roti super fine. The taste is hearty and sound satisfying. And the whole experience offers a welcome break from the rice and curry routine. What to do near Haputal and Tea Plantations: 3 days 10. Find a room overlooking the hill station Although Nuwara Elia and Ella can be more popular and challenging hill stations in the tea country of Sri Lanka, we decided to try the less visited Haputale for a few days based on the recommendation of friends who have lived in Sri Lanka for several years. Most of the guesthouses and hotels in this area are in the countryside outside the city, but we are lucky with this room and the view in the city. View from the balcony to the tea plantations in Haputal. To be honest, there is not much going on in Haputale and not many tourist services. But, it's a good base if you want to visit nearby tea plantations, go on some hikes in the area (like Lipton Place), witness local life, and just relax with a good view for a few days. Where to stay at Haputale: We stayed at the ABC Guest House, but not all rooms have balconies and this view. Contact to confirm that you will be placed in one of the rooms upstairs with a balcony. Otherwise, think about staying somewhere else in the area... and ask about the view. 11. Hike to The Lipton Place and have a cup of Tea Mr. Lipton tea really exists. He's not just a marketing person. He is credited with turning Sri Lanka into one of the world's largest tea producers after the disease wiped out part of the country's coffee bushes at the end of the 19th 19th Where Lipton allegedly sat overlooking his tea plantations. Today you can hike through the tea plantations to the place on the hill where he used to supposedly look at his various tea plantations to take stock and ensure everything was in order. A small transplant has been set up there so you can have a cup of tea as you enjoy the views of the tea gardens below. How appropriate. Walk to Lipton's place through the misty tea gardens. The walk takes several hours along the winding plantation roads and through the various segments of Dambethenna Tea Estate Tea Gardens to arrive at Lipton's Seat. Depending on the time of day and season you can also catch tea pickers at work they methodically pass through the narrow rows of tea bushes and choose only their top, green leaves. Like a hike to The Lipton Place: We took a tuk-tuk from Haputale to Dambethenna Tea Estate and walked a winding road from there. We are stuck on the main road and not trying to find short paths in the tea bushes. If you decide you don't want to walk, there are plenty of rickshaws on ready to take you all up. If you have extra time, stop at Dambethenna Tea Estate for a tea tasting and factory tour. Local buses regularly depart during the day back to Haputal. What to do in Ella and nearby: 3 days 12. Enjoy the sunset at the top of Little Adam's Peak near Ella In full disclosure, we didn't really plan to be on top of Little Adam's peak at sunset. We decided to take the scenic route offered by our guesthouse owner in Ella and as typical of us we got a bit turned around along the way. So we were in the golden hour hiking the last stage of what is affectionately known as Little Adam's Peak. It turns out, after all, that our time was almost perfect. Capture the descending light at the peak of Little Adam. Cheesy selfie on top of Little Adam's peak. Where to stay in Ella: We decided to splurge a bit and stay at Ella Grand View on the outskirts of town. The rooms are new and beautifully decorated and each has its own balcony. The owner is very friendly and serves a hearty breakfast. The quickest way to get there is by walking along the railway tracks from Ella train station. Look for other hotels and guesthouses in Ella. 13. Take a cooking course in Ella and learn the secrets of Sri Lankan cuisine, because Sri Lanka is so close to India, we can assume that the kitchens are the same. Although there are some superficial similarities between the collection of cuisines of the two countries, Sri Lankan food is unique and uses different combinations of spices in masala, plenty of coconut milk, enough fresh curry leaves and pandans, spicy sides called sambols, and cinnamon. Start work in a Sri Lankan cooking lesson in Ella. To understand the basics of Sri Lankan cuisine and how we could replicate some dishes at home, we with Lanka in Ella. Within a few hours we learned how to cook five different curries (carrots, beets, green beans, eggplant and chicken), as well as sambol and salad. It was excellent. Not only did we learn the basics, but Lanca was open to answering the many questions we had, including those related to Sri Lankan cuisine, what life was like during the Civil War, the spurt of tourism growth (or enveloping) in Ella, and pretty much everything else. We highly recommended this experience. It's also great value for about 2,000 rupees ($12). There are other cooking courses in town, but be sure to ask how many dishes you actually make as some of the other options only offer 2-3 curries at a similar price. 14. Hike Ella Rock in the morning sun Although we didn't get up before dawn to climb up to Ella Rock at sunrise as many advised (yes, we really enjoy our sleep), we did it there in the middle of the morning. It still allowed us to enjoy some of the morning light, cool weather, views of Little Adam's peak and hilly country before the haze settled in with the daytime heat. Enjoying the view from the top of Ella Rock. While Ella Rock proper gets everyone in the spotlight, we enjoyed a different view, one about a five-minute drive involving a small Buddhist temple in a cave. There are almost no people out there and it is a good place to breathe deeply and take in the beauty around you. Like a hike in Ella Rock: The hike takes about 2-3 hours from Ella. It starts with a walk along the railway tracks for several kilometers. The trail then cuts in on the left side near several makeshift restaurants just past kithaella train station. Don't worry about walking on the railway tracks; You will hear the train coming from far away. Here's a tour map and a complete guide. Do you need a guide to Ella Rock's hike? In doing so our research for this hike was all sorts of stories of people getting lost and having to pick up a local guide to get to Ella Rock. Maybe we were just lucky with our timing, but we found that although the trail was not clearly marked by signs, the path was clear enough to follow, especially given other tourists along the way. NOTE: If you have little time, consider taking this day trip around Ella, which includes hiking up to Ella Peak in the morning, visiting Nine Arches Bridge and hiking up to Little Adam Peak. What to do and eat in Colombo: 1-2 Day 15. Get a Sri Lankan street food fix at Galle Face Green in Colombo for a mix of street food, ocean views, and a great place to watch the sunset, head to Halle Face Green this afternoon. While most of the street food here can be a bit on the fried side, there are some delicious crab and shrimp bites that you can find at some food stalls along the track. grocery stores on Halle Face Green. For eating with a real seat, a seat, Your choice is one of the restaurant's stalls, the menu is full of diabolical and fried seafood or chicken. It is you order beer, it is likely they will serve can in the bag in order to avoid them running contrary to liquor license makers. To see more of Colombo and learn about its history, consider taking a half-day tour of the city to see the main attractions of the city. Where to stay in Colombo: It may seem strange to stay at a capsule hotel in Sri Lanka, but the Star Anise Boutique Capsule Hotel has been recommended to us by another traveller. Its novelty factor, the fact that it offers a double bed capsule, and the price and convenient location at the train station made it an easy sell for us. If you are someone who loves a lot of space and privacy, this would not be the place for you. But, for a quick night's stay in Colombo, it worked great for us. You can look for other hotels in Colombo here. 16. Find a Master Hopper in the Colombo area old fort Hoppers is a typical Sri Lankan dish with a bowl shaped pancake made from rice flour and coconut milk, often with the option of fried eggs inside, which is served with a simple curry. Almost as much fun as eating bins watching craftsmen at work on the street with their bunker pans churning out perfectly formed bins for hundreds. Hoppers, Sri Lankan Champions Breakfast. If you are in Colombo, look for this guy on York Street in the Old Fort area. Hoppers with a smile! Master bunker of old Colombo. If you really want to go deep into Sri Lanka street food in Colombo, consider taking this Colombo street food tour. 17. Stock up on spices at the market to take home after our Sri Lankan culinary class in Ella we were armed with a list of Sri Lankan spices, sauces and other food that we wanted to bring home. If you are like us and opt for food souvenirs rather than typical souvenir tchotchkes, make a stop at the fresh market behind the Colombo bus station to stock up on all your Sri Lankan spice needs. We'd like to take them home. We chose dried spices instead. Not only is it interesting to enter the market with a shopping list (of course we bought more than we expected), but the quality and price of spices in Sri Lanka is hard to beat. The aroma of cinnamon sticks and cinnamon bark is something magical. Interacting with local suppliers and asking questions about the different qualities of spices and options is fun, too. Recommendations for Week 3 in Sri Lanka 18. Unplug and unpack in a small Sri Lankan beach village We haven't done a lot of beach jumping to be able to give you the ultimate best beaches in Sri Lanka list. Reason? As soon as Dan found this beach and family guest house near Tangalla in the south, he decided not to leave for ten days. Godellavela in Silent Beach... Near Tangalle. So while I was on my Vipassana meditation course, Dan created the created own retreat on the beach. For him, the morning was about meditation, reading and a leisurely breakfast with the guest house's family. The days were about more reading on the beach, exploring nearby towns and villages, and impromptu Sri Lankan cuisine lessons at local restaurants. And the afternoon featured more beach time and sunset with beer under your palm swooping into a strip of sand carved waves of the day. Sunsets like snowflakes, not two were the same. The colorful sunset marks the end of another day. The long, empty beach and wide horizons combined with a disconnection and calm pace and limited movement were exactly what it needed to relax, read and recharge. Note: If the accommodation in the Godellavel beach area is full or the beach is under construction or development, consider also the beach area of Goyambokka in the east. Also, consider Silent Point and Paradise Beach just to the west. Getting there: To get from Colombo, take the train to Matara. From Matara take a taxi or a local bus. For Godellawela, ask the driver to drop you off on the side of the road at Muthu Resort and Restaurant. For Goyambokka, ask the driver to drop you off on the road between Grand Residence and Cafe Goyambokka. 19. Take Vipassana's 10-day course of silence meditation If you really want to disconnect from the world to reconnect with and dig deep within yourself, there is no better way to achieve this goal than by taking a Vipassana silent meditation course for ten days. Now, it's not a luxury, unensideded meditation retreat with extra massages on the side. Instead, it's more like a meditation boot camp with a morning bell at 4am, about 10 hours of meditation every day and almost nothing for dinner. Walk to the meditation hall (taken after the course and the return of the phones). But doing the Vipassana course is so worth any temporary feeling of discomfort or lack of luxury, and will probably be one of the most rewarding and memorable experiences of your life. I won't go into all the details about why, and the mental and physical benefits. Dan has already done an incredible job doing this in his Vipassana course article. However, I would like to point out that every Vipassana experience is different and unique. Search for a Vipassana Meditation course in Sri Lanka: I searched around on the Dhamma website for Vipassana centers in warm climates - in order to avoid winter in Berlin - which had availability when I had a break in my schedule. The search for an affordable Vipassana course in Sri Lanka motivated the trip and its time by travelling to Sri Lanka. I chose the Dhamma Sobha Vipassana Meditation Center, a few hours away by public bus outside Colombo. I had a good experience there, but I would prefer a little more green space to walk and wander in my spare time between meditation sessions. If I went back to Sri Lanka for Of course, I would instead go to the Dhamma Kuta Vipassana Centre near Kandy as there are reportedly really lovely grounds and gardens overlooking the mountains. Essential Sri Lanka Travel Information Next practical travel information aims to help you plan your trip to Sri Lanka, from visas to train tickets, so it all runs smoothly without any unpleasant surprises. Day trips and other tours in Sri Lanka Although two weeks in Sri Lanka is not a ton of time, we had enough flexibility in our schedule to organize things at the last minute and piece things together on the spot. However, if you have a tighter schedule or want to book day trips, transfers and other activities in advance (recommended for high season), we can offer to use our partner, Get Your Guide. It offers many different day trips and other tours in Sri Lanka with no booking fees and free cancellations up to 24 hours before that. In addition to the recommendations above, here are a few other day trips and tours that you might consider making in Sri Lanka. Day trip to the city of Anuradhapur: Unfortunately, we did not have time to visit Anuradhapur, Sri Lanka's first capital and an important Buddhist religious place. However, this is on our list for our next visit as our friends who used to live in Sri Lanka recommended it. Minneria National Park Day Trip: Seeing elephants in the wild is pretty wonderful, and Sri Lanka has one of the highest populations of wild Asian elephants. On this day's trip to Minneria National Park from Colombo you will be able to see the elephants in the wild (much better than seeing them in the center). It's a long day, but all the transport takes care of you so you can relax and enjoy. Colombo City Tour Tuk Tuk: We passed through Colombo very quickly on our way to and from the country and wish we had spent more time there. Given the size of the city, a tuk-tuk city tour like this will allow you to see the highlights of the city in a short period of time with all the history, stories and context that only a local guide can bring. The best time to visit Sri Lanka Country is having several monsoon seasons, so the best time to visit Sri Lanka largely depends on where you want to go. For the southern, central and western parts of the country (i.e. where we were) December - May is considered the best time. In the eastern part of the country, April or May to September is considered to be the best. The weather changes everywhere and the monsoon seems to come and go at different times each year. Large waves with early monsoons in southern Sri Lanka. How to get a Sri Lankan visa Most nationalities need a visa to Sri Lanka. You can get online easily and quickly. Just fill out an electronic visa Sri Lanka and pay the $30 needed to obtain a 30-day visa. Our applications were approved within 24 hours. Although we carried a copy of our visa visa The immigration officer did not ask for it. Flights to Sri Lanka flying from Europe, we had quite a few options to Colombo, Sri Lanka (CMB). Many European flights do land very late at night or early in the morning, so we booked a hotel near the airport for that first night. You can also pre-book a transfer from the airport to make it less stressful when you arrive. We often use Skyscanner to check the availability and cost of airfares, as its database includes all low-cost airlines. Once you find your best itinerary or price, then you can book directly through the airline without additional fees. The art of rickshaws in Colombo, inspired by travel. How to book train tickets in Sri Lanka Many reserved seats on popular train routes sell out early. Don't hold back, though. You can always take the train you want with a 2nd or 3rd class ticket purchased on the same day without a seat. To get a feel for train routes and how you can plan your own train journey around the country check out this train route map on the official Sri Lanka Railways website. You can also find schedules and train prices there as well. Travelling by train without a reservation: Many of the local trains are not reserved seating, so you just need to show 30-60 minutes before the train to buy a 2nd or 3rd class ticket (usually very cheap). Then, it's a matter of waiting on the platform for the train to arrive, and positioning yourself close to the doors, so you can be one of the first to enter and snag the place. Even if you don't end up with a seat, don't worry. One of them is likely to be available at another station. Travelling without a train reservation is a fun balance. Buying train reservations: If you want a little comfort on the train with the actual assigned seat, then you need to do a little pre-planning to figure out your itinerary and travel dates. We went straight to the main train station (Colombo Fort Railway Station) when we arrived in Colombo and bought as many reserved seats as we could for train routes that we knew we wanted to take. Although this period is 10 to 14 days before the actual dates of the trip, some routes are already booked in full. We heard but didn't try ourselves that you can work with local travel agents to buy reserved train tickets in advance. Seat 61, the website of All Things Train Travel, has tips on how to do it here. Searching and booking hotels in Sri Lanka Although we were travelling in high season, we were able to make the most of our hotel bookings in Sri Lanka just a couple of days before - or even the day - our arrival without Problems. We mostly stayed in small, family boarding houses and used Booking.com to find and book accommodation. English is spoken at different levels in small boarding houses, so we found booking a home through Booking.com was easier, immediate and safer trying to call and make a reservation by phone or email. Buying a SIM card in Sri Lanka when you arrive at Bandaranaike International Airport in Sri Lanka, you will find several mobile operators offering various SIM card travel plans for mobile calls and the internet. We ended up choosing a Mobitel SIM card with several gigabytes of mobile data and a piece of SMS and minutes of call about $10. It was easy to set up and we had pretty good coverage all over Sri Lanka during our trip. Trip.

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