

Colombo

Sri Lanka

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Colombo is Sri Lanka's commercial capital and largest city, though the official capital, Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, sits a few kilometers inland. The city stretches along the Indian Ocean coast and blends Dutch and British colonial buildings with modern towers and a busy working port. Buddhist temples, Hindu kovils, mosques, and churches stand close together, a legacy of centuries of trade and immigration.

Most visitors treat Colombo as a one- or two-night stopover before heading to the hill country, the beaches, or the ancient cities inland. Give it a bit more time and its colonial-era streets, markets, and museums reward exploring on foot. The science-fiction writer *Arthur C. Clarke* lived in the city for over 50 years and is buried here.

When to visit

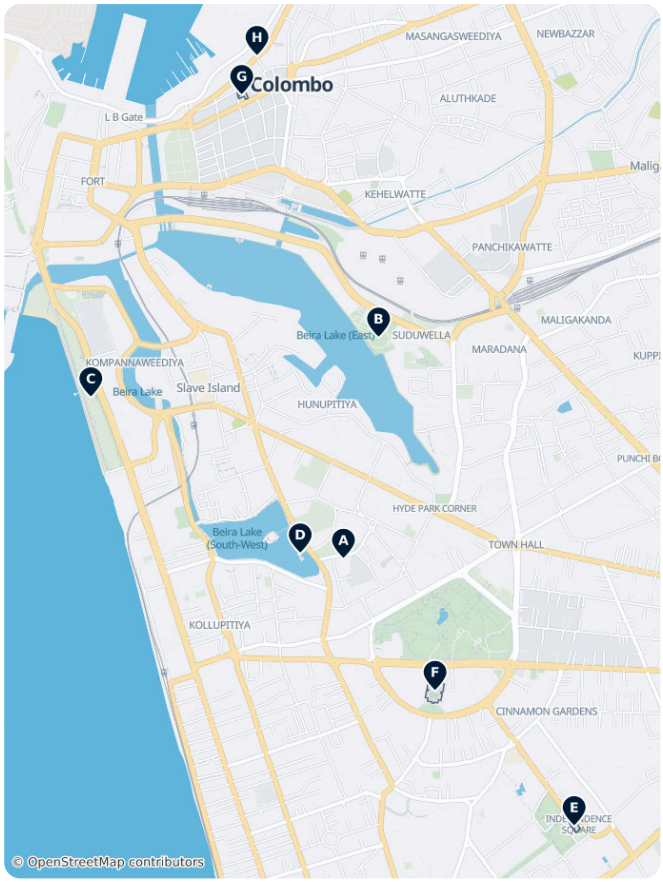
December to March is the driest and most pleasant stretch, with less rain and lower humidity than the rest of the year. The southwest monsoon brings heavy afternoon downpours from May to September.

Time a visit around late January or February for the **Navam Perahera**, a night procession of drummers, dancers, and decorated elephants starting at Gangaramaya Temple — one of Colombo's biggest annual events.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for sightseeing	30° / 33°	23° / 21°	Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	32° / 34° Feels like 35°	24° / 21°	Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 10 (Very high)
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	32° / 34° Feels like 36°	24° / 23°	20 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 11 (Extreme)
April	Poor Poor for sightseeing	31° / 33° Feels like 35°	25° / 24°	28 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 11 (Extreme)
May	Poor Poor for sightseeing	30° / 31° Feels like 34°	25° / 24°	30 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
June	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 30° Feels like 33°	25° / 24°	29 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 30° Feels like 32°	25° / 24°	30 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 30° Feels like 32°	25° / 24°	30 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 9 (Very high)
September	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 30° Feels like 32°	25° / 24°	29 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 10 (Very high)
October	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 30° Feels like 33°	24° / 23°	29 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 30° Feels like 33°	24° / 23°	25 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	29° / 31° Feels like 32°	23° / 21°	19 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



A Gangaramaya Temple is Colombo's most famous temple, a working Buddhist monastery that doubles as an eclectic museum of Buddha statues, antique cars, and donated curios collected over more than a century.

Rising 350 meters above the city, B Colombo Lotus Tower is the tallest structure in South Asia. Its observation deck and revolving restaurant give the best views over Colombo, especially at sunset.

C Galle Face Green is a long ocean-side lawn where locals fly kites, eat street snacks, and watch the sunset over the Indian Ocean. It has been the city's favorite open space since the 1850s.

Floating on Beira Lake, D Seema Malaka Temple is a small Buddhist temple and meditation center designed by the architect *Geoffrey Bawa*. Its calm setting is a contrast to the busy streets around it.

E Independence Memorial Hall marks the spot where Sri Lanka's first parliament opened in 1948. The domed building also houses a museum on the country's path to independence.

Founded in 1877, F National Museum of Colombo is Sri Lanka's largest museum. Its collection includes the royal regalia of the last Kandyan kings.

The candy-striped G Red Mosque, built in 1909, is one of Colombo's oldest mosques and a landmark of the Pettah district. A few streets away, H Pettah Market is the city's most chaotic market, selling everything from spices to electronics along narrow lanes.

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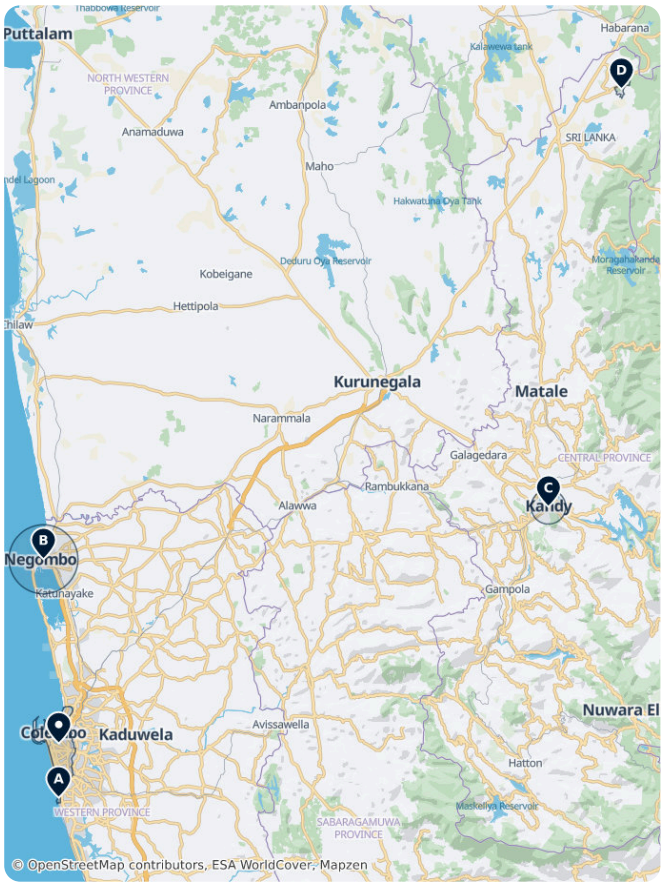
What to experience

- Fly a kite and snack on street food at Galle Face Green at sunset — a Colombo evening tradition, with vendors selling kottu, corn, and prawn fritters right on the lawn.
- Book an Ayurvedic massage or steam treatment at one of the city's spas, using herbal oils and techniques passed down for generations.
- Take a pedal boat out onto Beira Lake in the evening, when the lakeside temples and towers light up against the sky.

Day trips

Colombo makes a good base for exploring the west coast and the cultural interior, with options from a half day to a full day out.

- A Mount Lavinia — about 30 minutes by train or tuk-tuk south of the centre. A palm-lined beach town with a historic hotel and seafood shacks on the sand.
- Kelaniya — about 30 minutes by bus or tuk-tuk. Home to one of Sri Lanka's most sacred Buddhist temples, said to mark a visit by the Buddha, with vivid murals inside.
- B Negombo — 45 minutes to 1 hour by car, close to the airport. A fishing town with a lively fish market, a lagoon for boat trips, and a long beach.
- C Kandy — about 3 hours by train or car. Sri Lanka's hill capital and home to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic; the train ride itself, climbing through tea country, is part of the appeal.
- D Sigiriya — about 4 hours by car. A UNESCO-listed rock fortress with frescoes and water gardens. It's a long day, so consider staying overnight nearby instead of a round trip.



Where to explore

Fort is Colombo's old colonial core, laid out inside the former Dutch and Portuguese fortifications. Wander its streets to find the Old Colombo Lighthouse, colonial-era banks and government buildings, and the Old Dutch Hospital, now a shopping and dining precinct.

Getting there

- **By air**: Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB) is in Katunayake, about 30 km north of the centre. A taxi or ride-hailing car takes 45 minutes to 1 hour on the expressway, depending on traffic; an air-conditioned expressway bus is a cheaper option and takes about the same time.
- **By train**: Colombo Fort Railway Station is the country's main rail hub, with intercity trains to Kandy, Galle, and Jaffna, and commuter trains along the coast.
- **By bus**: Long-distance buses to towns across the island leave from terminals near Pettah, a short walk from the Fort area.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Buses (state-run and private) cover the whole city cheaply but get crowded; pay the conductor in cash, since there is no unified fare card yet. A limited suburban rail line is useful for a few routes, such as to Mount Lavinia. See Sri Lanka Railways for train times.
- **Taxi / ride-hailing**: **PickMe**, a Sri Lankan app, is used more widely than Uber here and covers both cars and tuk-tuks; agree a fare or use the meter before setting off in a tuk-tuk you flag down on the street.
- **On foot**: The Fort, Pettah, and Galle Face waterfront areas are walkable, but the city is spread out beyond them, and heat and humidity make midday walking tiring.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Fort, Pettah, and the Galle Face waterfront are compact and walkable; the rest of the city is spread out and better covered by tuk-tuk, taxi, or bus.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Heavy traffic and no dedicated bike lanes make cycling impractical for most visitors.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: No, not for getting around Colombo itself — traffic is heavy and parking is scarce, so taxis, tuk-tuks, and ride-hailing apps are easier. A car with a driver is more useful for day trips outside the city.
- **Parking**: Shopping malls and hotels offer paid parking; street parking in Fort and Pettah is limited and congested.

Food & drink

Colombo's food scene mixes Sinhala, Tamil, Malay, and Dutch Burgher influences, plus the seafood you would expect from a port city. Rice and curry is the everyday meal, but look for Colombo specialties like *lamprais* — a Dutch Burgher dish of rice and curries baked in a banana leaf — and fresh crab.

For a special meal, Old Dutch Hospital houses some of the city's best-known restaurants, including a crab restaurant ranked among Asia's 50 Best. For an everyday taste of the city, try the evening food carts at Galle Face Green, or the spice and snack stalls around Pettah Market.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Hoppers · Appa
Bowl-shaped pancakes made from fermented rice batter and coconut milk, sometimes with an egg.

String Hoppers · Idiyappam
Steamed rice-noodle nests eaten with curry and coconut sambol.

DINNER

Kottu Roti
Shredded flatbread stir-fried with vegetables, egg, and meat or seafood.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Watalappan
A spiced coconut custard dessert.

DRINKS

Ceylon Tea
Black tea grown in the central highlands, the national drink.

Arrack
A spirit distilled from coconut flower sap, often mixed with ginger beer or cola.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Rice and Curry
The everyday meal: rice with several small curries, sambols, and pickles.

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Safety & health

Colombo is generally safe for tourists, including at night in the well-lit central areas, and violent crime against visitors is rare. The main risks are petty and scam-related: tuk-tuk drivers who quote an inflated fare (agree the price first, or use a ride-hailing app instead), and touts near temples or gem shops

offering "special deals" that are not. Keep bags zipped and stay alert in crowded markets like Pettah Market, where pickpocketing can occur. At temples such as Gangaramaya Temple, cover your shoulders and knees and remove your shoes and any hat before entering.

History

Colombo's name comes from the Sinhala *Kolon thota*, meaning "port on the Kelani River", and Arab and Chinese traders used its harbor for over a thousand years before European powers arrived. The Portuguese built a fort here in 1517, followed by the Dutch in 1656 and the British in 1796, each expanding the port and the fortified old town that is now Colombo's Fort district.

Colombo grew into the capital of British Ceylon, and independence arrived on 4 February 1948, formally marked at what is now Independence Memorial Hall. The old colonial legislature, the Old Parliament Building, served as parliament until 1982, when a new complex opened outside the city. Sri Lanka's decades-long civil war ended in 2009, and Colombo has since seen fast redevelopment, including new towers rising along the harbor.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Sri Lanka at a glance:

CURRENCY
LKR Rs

ELECTRICITY

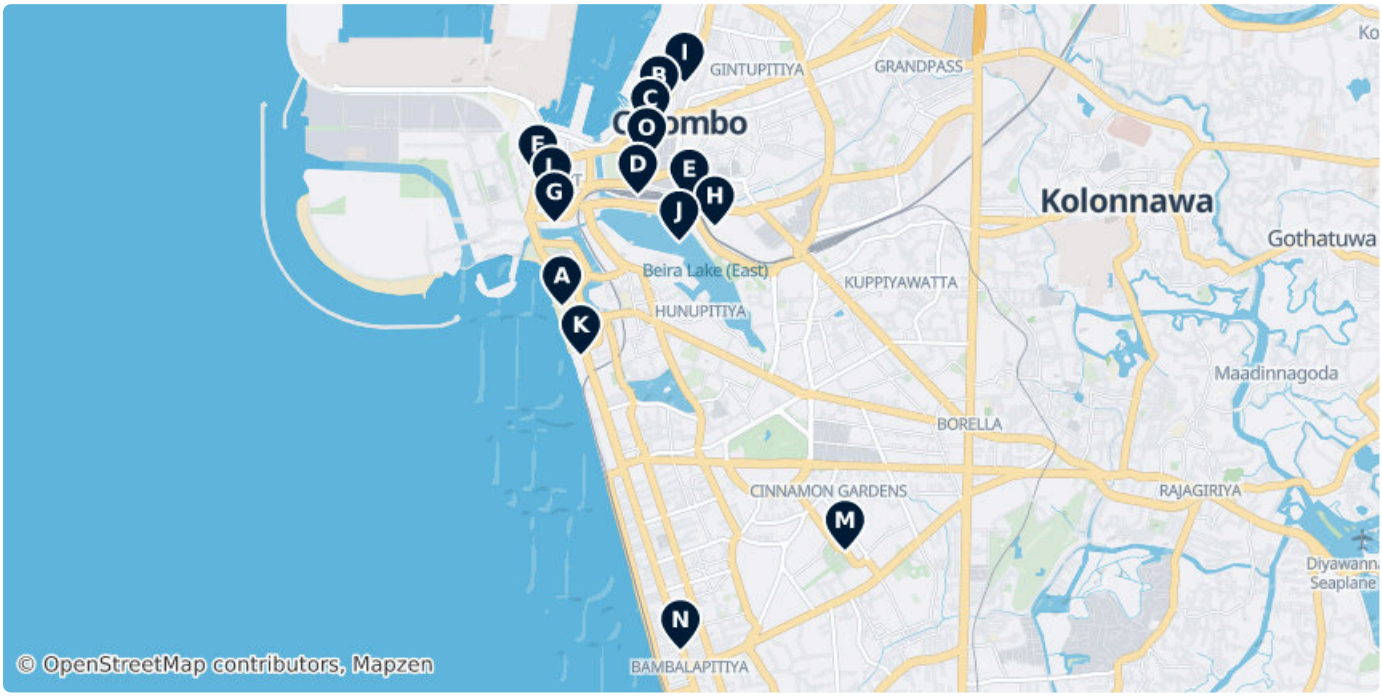
Type D / Type G
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Sinhala, Tamil

TAP WATER
Use caution

Colombo Unmissables

Colombo's landscape blends colonial-era architecture with modern hubs. The city features historic sites like the 19th-century Galle Face Hotel and the neoclassical Old Parliament Building. Spiritual landmarks include the striking red-and-white Jami Ul Alfar Mosque and the ancient Captain's Garden Hindu Temple. For commerce and culture, the Pettah Market and its floating counterpart offer local goods, while the Colombo Dutch Museum preserves history in a 17th-century residence. Open spaces like the ocean-side Galle Face Green and the central Beira Lake provide contrast to the 152-meter World Trade Center towers.





A Galle Face Green

Galle Face is a 5 ha ocean-side urban park, which stretches for 500 m along the coast, in the heart of Colombo, the financial and business...

Galle Face Centre Rd, Colombo 00300, Sri Lanka (6.92422, 79.84473)



B Pettah Market

The Pettah Market also called Manning Market is an open market in the suburb of Pettah in the city of Colombo, Sri Lanka.The entrance to...

Market St, Colombo 01100, Sri Lanka (6.94024, 79.85257)



C Jami Ul-Alfar Mosque

Jami-Ul-Alfar Mosque (Sinhala: කොලඹ කොටුව රතු පල්ලිය, romanized: Kolomba Kotuwa Rathu Palliya, Tamil: மஸ்ஜிதுல் ஜாமிஉல் அஃபார்

2nd Cross Street, Colombo, LK (6.93841, 79.85186)

Mo–Su 10:30–12:00, 13:00–15:00, 16:15–17:30

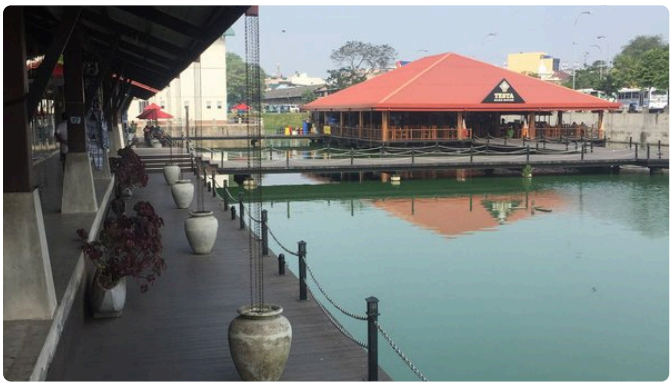
youtu.be/UbfYHmkWmxU, +94 11 245 1975



D Colombo Fort Railway Station

Fort railway station is a major rail hub in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The station is served by Sri Lanka Railways, with many inter-city and...

D. R. Wijewardena Mawatha, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.93317, 79.85086)



E Pettah Floating Market

The Pettah Floating Markets are located on Bastian Mawatha in Pettah, a neighborhood in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and consist of 92 trade stalls,...

Colombo (6.93277, 79.85502)



F Old Colombo Lighthouse

Old Colombo Lighthouse or Colombo Fort Clock Tower is a clock tower and was a lighthouse in Colombo.

Clock Tower RB, Fort, Colombo 10110, Sri Lanka (6.93473, 79.84280)



G Old Parliament Building

The Old Parliament Building, is the building that houses the Presidential Secretariat of Sri Lanka.

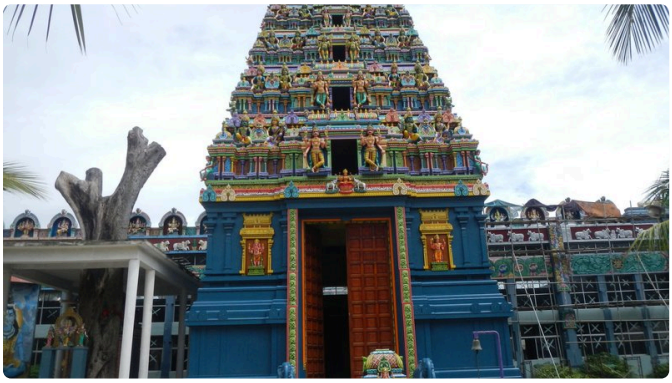
Lotus Rd, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.93093, 79.84412)



H Captain's Garden Hindu Temple

The oldest Hindu temple in Colombo, located in Captain's Gardens. It's dedicated to Shiva and Ganesh - Hindu deities.

D R Wijewardena Road, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.93061, 79.85706)



I New Kathiresan Temple

This is a newly built Hindu temple, where various festivals are held every year. Statue of the deity is its important feature.

St. Paul's Mawatha, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.94212, 79.85462)



J Beira Lake

Beira Lake is a lake in the centre of the city of Colombo in Sri Lanka. The lake is surrounded by many large businesses in the city.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.92943, 79.85418)



K Galle Face Hotel

The Galle Face Hotel, founded in 1864, is one of the oldest hotels east of Suez. It is located on Galle Road, Colombo.

2 Galle Road, Colombo 00300, Sri Lanka (6.92030, 79.84626)

gallefacehotel.com, +94 11 254 1010



L World Trade Center Colombo

The World Trade Center is a 152-metre-tall twin building in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Echelon Square, Colombo 01100, Sri Lanka (6.93295, 79.84391)

wtc.lk, +94 11 234 6333

M Independence Square

Independence Memorial Hall is a national monument in Sri Lanka built for commemoration of the independence of Sri Lanka from the British...

Independence Square, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka (6.90464, 79.86757)

N Barefoot

Whether you want to buy quality local fabrics, taste fresh lime juice & calamari pasta or just enjoy art, this is the place for you.

704, Galle Rd, Colombo 00300, Sri Lanka (6.89669, 79.85428)

Mo–Sa	10:00–19:00
Su	11:00–18:00

barefootceylon.com, +94 11 2589305

O Colombo Dutch Museum

The Colombo Dutch Museum is a museum that covers the history of the Dutch colonial rule in Sri Lanka.

Prince St, Colombo 01100, Sri Lanka (6.93608, 79.85158)

Notable Religious Sites

Colombo's religious landscape reflects its multicultural history through a blend of colonial and indigenous architecture. This collection includes the iconic red-and-white striped Jami-Ul-Alfar Mosque, the historic 18th-century Dutch Wolvendaal Church, and the intricate Dravidian carvings of the Captain's Garden Hindu Temple. From the Gothic spires of All Saints' Church to the serene Buddhist viharas of Borella and Narahenpita, these sites offer a glimpse into the diverse spiritual traditions and architectural heritage that define the city.





A Jami Ul-Alfar Mosque

Jami-Ul-Alfar Mosque (Sinhala: කොලඹ කොටුව රතු පල්ලිය, romanized: Kolomba Kotuwa Rathu Palliya, Tamil: மஸ்ஜிதுல் ஜாமிஉல் அஃபார்

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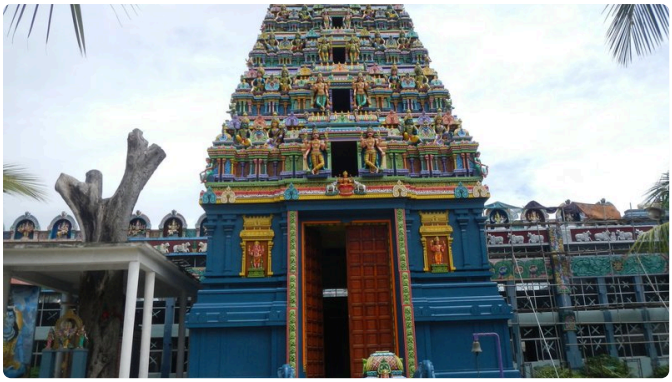
youtu.be/UbfYHmkWmxU, +94 11 245 1975



B Captain's Garden Hindu Temple

The oldest Hindu temple in Colombo, located in Captain's Gardens. It's dedicated to Shiva and Ganesh - Hindu deities.

D R Wijewardena Road, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.93061, 79.85706)



C New Kathiresan Temple

This is a newly built Hindu temple, where various festivals are held every year. Statue of the deity is its important feature.

St. Paul's Mawatha, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.94212, 79.85462)



D St. Anthony Church

St. Anthony's Shrine is a Roman Catholic church in the Archdiocese of Colombo in Sri Lanka.

St Anthony's Mawatha, Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.94686, 79.85613)

kochchikade.churchlk.com, +94 11 232 9303



E St. Lucia's Cathedral

St. Lucia's Cathedral is the seat of the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Colombo in Sri Lanka.

St Benadicts Street, Kotahena (6.94811, 79.86452)

F St. Theresa's Catholic Church

Catholic church in Thimbirigasyaya known for its mid-20th-century architecture and community-focused mission.

Sri Lanka (6.89498, 79.87229)

sttc.lk, 011 258 3425;011 2502530

G All Saints' Church

Anglican church in Borella featuring Gothic Revival architecture and stained glass windows, consecrated in 1865.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.92093, 79.87487)

H Church of Holy Rosary

Roman Catholic church located in the Slave Island district.

(6.92327, 79.85213)

I St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Gothic-style Presbyterian church built in 1906, situated near Galle Face Green.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.91898, 79.84768)

J St.Mary's Church

Roman Catholic parish church located in the Grandpass neighborhood.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.94561, 79.85951)

K Christ Church of Galle

Historic Anglican church built in 1853, noted for its red-brick exterior and location near the coast.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.92236, 79.84794)

L Cathedral of Christ the Living Saviour

The primary Anglican cathedral in Colombo, featuring a distinctive circular design and modern Sri Lankan religious art.

Sri Lanka (6.90376, 79.87322)

M Buddhist Temple

Local Buddhist place of worship.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.95726, 79.85808)

N Sri Abhayaramaya

Historically significant Buddhist temple in Narahenpita, often serving as a center for social and political gatherings.

Sri Lanka (6.89631, 79.87621)

O Sri Sambuddaloka Viharaya

Buddhist temple located on Lotus Road, known for its proximity to government landmarks and its white stupa.

(6.93224, 79.84596)

P Sri Lankarama Maha Viharaya

Buddhist temple and monastery located in the Borella district.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.91841, 79.87907)

Q Abesingharamaya

Buddhist temple situated in the Maradana area.

Sri Lanka (6.93448, 79.89126)

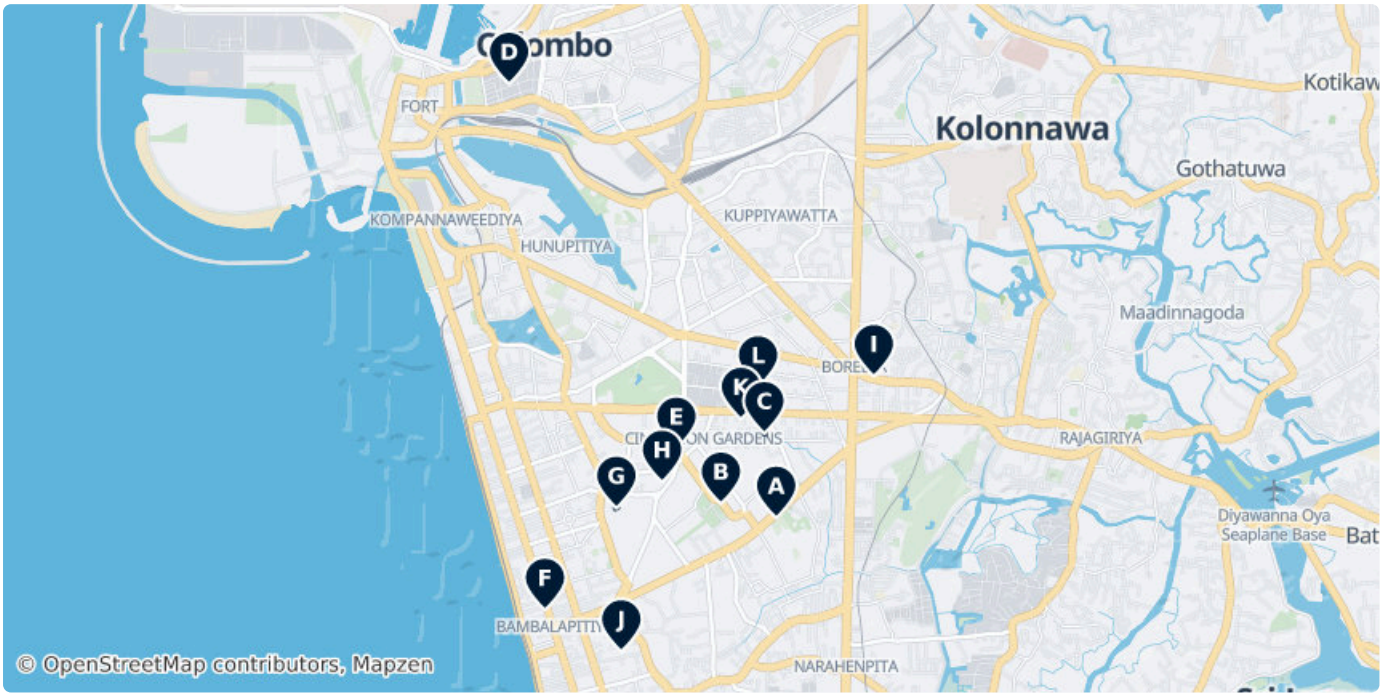
R Wolvendaal Church

Dutch Reformed Church built in 1749, featuring Doric architecture and tombstones of Dutch governors.

Colombo, Sri Lanka (6.94204, 79.85903)

Colombo Cultural Highlights

Colombo's cultural landscape spans colonial history and modern creative expression. The Colombo Dutch Museum and Independence Square reflect the city's complex past, while the Sapumal Foundation and J.D.A Perera Gallery showcase the evolution of Sri Lankan art from the 1920s. Performance spaces like the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall and Punchi Theatre host national events and local productions. This selection highlights the city's key museums, contemporary galleries, and cultural centers dedicated to international exchange and local heritage.





A Bandaranaike International Conference Hall

The Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, is a convention center located in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka
(6.90359, 79.87174)

bmich.lk, +94 11 2691131

B Independence Square

Independence Memorial Hall is a national monument in Sri Lanka built for commemoration of the independence of Sri Lanka from the British...

Independence Square, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka
(6.90464, 79.86757)

C Goethe Institute

The institute supports alternative artists and organises exhibitions of their work and also performances.

Gregory's Road 39, 00700 Colombo (6.90992, 79.87085)

goethe.de/ins/lk/col/en7228564.htm, +94 11 2694562

D Colombo Dutch Museum

The Colombo Dutch Museum is a museum that covers the history of the Dutch colonial rule in Sri Lanka.

Prince St, Colombo 01100, Sri Lanka (6.93608, 79.85158)

E Russian Centre Colombo

This centre's aim is to encourage cooperation of Russia and Sri Lanka. They have language department, chess club, music school and library.

Colombo 07 (6.90875, 79.86420)

infolanka.com/org/rcc/

F Barefoot

Whether you want to buy quality local fabrics, taste fresh lime juice & calamari pasta or just enjoy art, this is the place for you.

704, Galle Rd, Colombo 00300, Sri Lanka (6.89669, 79.85428)

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barefootceylon.com, +94 11 2589305

G Navarangahala

Located within the grounds of Royal College, this national theater was built in 1966. It is known for its distinctive acoustic design and serves as a venue for traditional Sri Lankan performing arts.

(6.90433, 79.85967)

H Junction Art Gallery

A contemporary art space showcasing works by Sri Lankan artists, focusing on modern paintings and mixed-media installations.

(6.90627, 79.86312)

I Punchi Theatre

An intimate performance space in Borella featuring traditional Sri Lankan architecture. It hosts local stage plays, puppet shows, and cultural workshops.

(6.91419, 79.87911)

J Hermitage

There is a collection of art, antiques, furniture and collectibles displayed. It is mainly Indian and Indonesian art.

Gower St, Colombo 00500, Sri Lanka (6.89358, 79.86005)

hermitart.com, +94 11 250 2196

K J.D.A Perera Gallery

The art displayed in this gallery is meant both for local people and for foreigners. It is named after famous Sri Lankan artist.

46 Horton Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka (6.91098, 79.86908)

colomboartbiennale.com/j-d-a-perera-gallery/

L Sapumal Foundation

The gallery maps development of Sri Lankan art from 1920s until now. It displays works of key local artists.

32 Barnes Pl, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka (6.91335, 79.87037)

+94 11 269 5731

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- New Kathiresan Temple — "பம்பலப்பிட்டி பழைய கதிரேசன் கோவில் கோபுரம்" by உமாபதி, CC BY-SA 3.0
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