

Sri Lanka

Country name	Sri Lanka
State title in English	Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
State title in official languages (romanized in brackets)¹	ශ්‍රී ලංකා ප්‍රජාතාන්ත්‍රික සමාජවාදී ජනරජය (Śrī Laṅkā prajātāntrika samājavādī janarajaya) (Sinhala) இலங்கை சனநாயக சோசலிசக் குடியரசு (Ilaṅkai chaṇanāyaka chōchalichak kuṭiyarachu) (Tamil)
Name of citizen	Sri Lankan
Official languages	Sinhala (sin), Tamil (tam) ²
Country name in official languages (romanized in brackets)	ශ්‍රී ලංකා (Śrī Laṅkā) (Sinhala) இலங்கை (Ilaṅkai) (Tamil)
Script	Sinhala is written in Sinhala script Tamil is written in Tamil script
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	LK/LKA
Capitals	Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte (administrative & legislative) Colombo (commercial) ³
Population	21.8 million ⁴

Introduction

Sri Lanka is an island country in the Indian Ocean. It is separated from the mainland South Asian subcontinent by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. Formerly known as Ceylon, the island was a British crown colony from 1815 until it was granted independence in 1948, becoming a republic within the Commonwealth; its name was changed in 1972 to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's civil war, from 1983 to 2009, ended with victory for the majority Sinhalese government at the expense of the minority Tamil insurgents who were fighting for independence. Approximately 75% of the population is Sinhalese, with the 15% Tamil mostly found in the Northern and Eastern provinces.⁵

Geographical names policy

Recommended geographical names are those used in Roman script as found on official Sri Lanka-produced sources, where possible. Official maps are produced by the [Sri Lanka Survey Department \(SLSD\)](#) in three editions: Sinhala, Tamil and English. The Sri Lanka Geographical Names Regulatory Board⁶ is responsible for the standardization of geographical names in Sri Lanka. Standardized Sinhala, Tamil and English geographical names can be found on their [Geographical Names Web Portal](#).

BGN/PCGN romanization systems for Sinhala and Tamil are in work. These may be used for transliterating names in Sinhala and Tamil scripts into Roman script, although these resulting Roman-

¹ Proposed BGN/PCGN Sinhala and Tamil romanization systems have been used in this Factfile.

² English is widely used for official and commercial purposes. Language codes given in this Factfile are ISO-639 codes.

³ Although Colombo is often described as the capital of Sri Lanka, the official capital is Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte, where all government functions are located and this city should be marked on any mapping product as the capital of Sri Lanka. It is sometimes called New Capital Territory and is located beyond the eastern suburbs of the commercial capital Colombo.

⁴ [Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka](#).

⁵ [Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka](#).

⁶ Previously the Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names.

script forms would not supersede the Roman-script names as found on official Sri Lanka-produced sources, which remain the recommended names for use on UK government products.

Language/s

The [Sri Lanka Constitution](#) states that Sinhala and Tamil are the two official languages in Sri Lanka with English used as a link language and in administration. The intention of the Sri Lanka government is to provide official administration and education in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Around 87% of the population speaks Sinhala, 28% speaks Tamil and 24% speaks English (mostly in urban areas as a second language).⁷ Sinhala and Tamil are both ‘abugida’ scripts, where consonant characters have a default inherent vowel and other vowels are denoted by diacritics.

Administrative structure

At first-order administrative level (ADM1), Sri Lanka is divided into nine provinces (Sinhala: *paḷāta*, Tamil: *mākāṇam*). The provinces are further subdivided into twenty-five districts (Sinhala: *distrikkaya*, Tamil: *mavaṭṭam*) at second-order (ADM2) level.



Note: this map is for illustrative purposes. It is not to be taken as necessarily representing the view of the UK Government on boundaries or political status.

1. Central

Location	07° 20' 00" N, 080° 45' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-2
Centre	Kandy (07° 17' 26" N, 080° 38' 01" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Madhyama
Romanized Tamil name	Mattiya
Website	http://www.cp.gov.lk/en/

2. Eastern

Location	07° 50' 00" N, 081° 25' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-5

⁷ [CIA World Factbook](#)

Centre	Trincomalee (08° 34' 40" N, 081° 13' 44" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Nāgenahira
Romanized Tamil name	Kiḷakku
Website	http://www.ep.gov.lk/en/

3. North Central

Location	08° 20' 00" N, 080° 30' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-7
Centre	Anuradhapura (08° 20' 36" N, 080° 23' 40" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Uturumāda
Romanized Tamil name	Vaṭamattiya
Website	http://nc.gov.lk/

4. Northern

Location	09° 10' 00" N, 080° 25' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-4
Centre	Jaffna (09° 39' 36" N, 080° 01' 43" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Uturu
Romanized Tamil name	Vaṭakku (Vaṭa)
Website	http://np.gov.lk/

5. North Western

Location	07° 45' 00" N, 080° 10' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-6
Centre	Kurunegala (07° 29' 02" N, 080° 22' 06" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Vayaṃba
Romanized Tamil name	Vaṭamēl
Website	http://www.nw.gov.lk/nwp/

6. Sabaragamuwa

Location	06° 45' 00" N, 080° 30' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-9
Centre	Ratnapura (06° 41' 09" N, 080° 24' 13" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Sabaragamuva
Romanized Tamil name	Chaprakamuva
Website	http://sg.gov.lk/sgpc/

7. Southern

Location	06° 10' 00" N, 080° 45' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-3
Centre	Galle (06° 02' 46" N, 080° 12' 37" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Dakuṇu
Romanized Tamil name	Teṇ
Website	http://www.cs.sp.gov.lk/index.php

8. Uva

Location	07° 00' 00" N, 081° 15' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-8

Centre	Badulla (06° 58' 49" N, 081° 03' 28" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Ūva
Romanized Tamil name	Ūvā
Website	https://www.up.gov.lk/

9. Western

Location	06° 50' 00" N, 080° 05' 00" E
ISO 3166-2 code	LK-1
Centre	Colombo (06° 55' 55" N, 079° 50' 52" E)
Romanized Sinhala name	Basnāhira
Romanized Tamil name	Mēl
Website	http://www.wpc.gov.lk/

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11999611>
- CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html>
- FCO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/sri-lanka>
- Government of Sri Lanka: <https://www.gov.lk/index.php>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/>
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com; www.omniglot.com
- Department of Census and Statistics – Sri Lanka: <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/>
- Map of Province and District boundaries -2013:
<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/misc/Map%20of%20Administrative%20District.pdf>
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server (GNS):
<http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/>

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