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# TOUR SRI LANKA

## DESTINATION NEWS

### SPECIAL AND PUBLIC HOLIDAY

#### Sinhala & Hindu New Year 13 – 14 April 2017

Sinhala and Hindu New Year, one of the most celebrated festivals, symbolizing prosperity and ethnic harmony in the country, is the time of joy and renewal for Sinhala and Tamil population in Sri Lanka. April 13th marks the journey of the Sun from Meena to Mesha (from Pisces to Aries) in the Zodiac advocating the dawn of a new year for Sri Lankans according to the Sinhala calendar. The New year vibe spreads all over the island since the beginning of the month of April although celebrated on 13th and 14th of April. New year festivals are held around the island throughout the month, comprising of different traditional games where both children and adults take part in to cherish this joyful period of the year.



#### Nuwara Eliya Holiday season 1 April – 31 May 2017

The Nuwara Eliya season begins during the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year holiday period, when Colombo's resident flock to the hills for the holidays to escape the pre-monsoon heat

– another tradition that stretches back to the British colonial period. The 10-day holiday period includes horse races, motocross rallies, flower exhibitions, concerts and revelry late into the night. Several golf tournaments are held in April including the Stableford Competition for Ladies and Gents are held at the challenging golf course at the Nuwara Eliya Golf Club. Motor Races include the Mahagastota and Radella Hill Climbs.



#### Butterfly migration 1 April – 31 May 2017

Sri Lanka is one of the bio-diversity hot spots in the world that homes approximately 245 species of butterflies, out of which 23 are endemic to the island. Though there are many intriguing animal/insect/ migration patterns in the world, none of it can compete with the holistic nature, Sri Lankan butterflies migrate. During the season, countless number of butterflies especially yellow, white and jewel coloured butterflies, fly towards the most venerated summit of Sri Lanka – The Adam's Peak, also known as Samanala Kanda (Butterfly Mountain) where they crash and perish kissing the rock. It is said that at the end of the migration, the mountain is smeared in yellow, which is caused by the crash of countless butterflies.



#### Whale & Dolphin spotting in Mirissa & Kalpitiya 1 April – 24 May 2017

This is the final month for whale and dolphin watching off the North West and south coast of the island. After this period, the seas are too rough and choppy for boats to go into the deep seas. Large pods of Dolphins, sometimes in their hundreds can be seen just a few miles off Kalpitiya in the North West and southern coast off Mirissa.



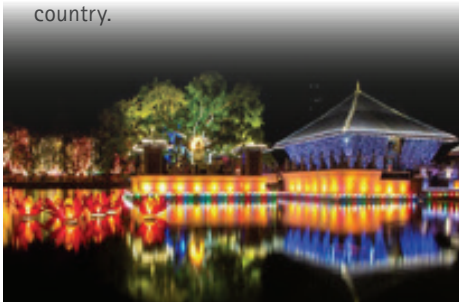
#### Vesak – festival of lights celebrated Island wide 21 & 22 May 2017

Vesak is the main Buddhist religious festival in Sri Lanka. During this time, people celebrate the triple anniversary of Lord Buddha - his birth, his attaining of Enlightenment and his passing away into Nirvana.

Also known as the Buddhist Festival of Light, colorful bamboo framed lanterns adorn the interior of every home and incredible luminous displays decorate the streets of most towns. Visit Bhauddoloka Mawatha, the main street in Colombo, to catch this glowing spectacle in full glory.

Vesak marks the first month of the Buddhist Calendar. This is a day spent in reflective prayer as people cease worldly pursuits and engage themselves in religious activities. Devotees Buddhists pray in temples from dawn until the dusk. As the sun sets, devotees partake in processions and return to the temples in the evening to hear monks read stories from sacred texts.

Stalls on the roadside distribute free refreshments to passers-by and there are some fantastic mime and street theatre performances, staged on tall platforms near temples in cities and towns throughout the country.



- **Surfing in Arugam Bay on the South East Coast**

1 May – 31 July 2017

Listed as one of ten top surf spots in the world, Arugam Bay is a popular youthful haunt for surfers and holiday makers during the surfing season. There are several popular point breaks including Ullah Point, Pottuvil Point, Surf Point, Peanut Farm Point, Surf Point, and Crocodile Rock.



- **Snorkeling-whale & dolphin spotting in Trinco**

1 May – 30 September 2017

The waters around Trincomalee are inhabited by Dolphins, Marine Turtles and Whales including Blue Whales and Sperm Whales. This is the best time to go whale watching off the coast of Trincomalee. Snorkeling is possible around Pigeon Island off the coast of Nilaveli.



- **Kite Surf at Kalpitiya**

Kite surf over the turquoise seas that surrounds this paradise island or skim the waters of a tranquil lagoon. Sri Lanka has excellent kite surfing spots for beginners as well as the more experienced. The best season for kite surfing on the North West coast is from May to December.

Kite surfing in Kalpitiya on the North West Coast 31st May to 31st December 2017



- **Poson in Mihintale**

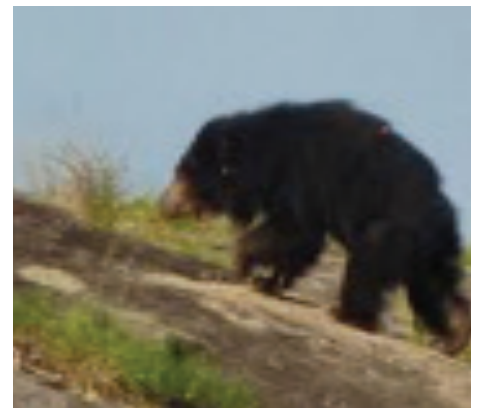
08 June 2017

One of Sri Lanka's most significant religious sites, Mihintale lies 13kms east of Anuradhapura and is where Buddhism originated on the island. In 247 BC King Devanampiya Tissa of Anuradhapura, was deer hunting on the plains beneath Mihintale, and met Mahinda, son of the Indian Buddhist emperor, and chose the path of Buddhism for the Sinhalese nation following Mahinda's persuasion. Anuradhapura and Mihintale's ancient, spiritual ruins can leave you in awe. It can be an inspiring visit at all times of the year, especially on the full moon day of May when Vesak is celebrated in remembrance of Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment and Prinivanpama (his passing) and in June, when the festival of Poson is celebrated when the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka by Mahinda, is remembered. Thousands of pilgrims and devotees flock to these Buddhist shrines from across the country to pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma (Buddha's teachings) and the Sangha (the Buddhist monks).



- **Sloth Bear Season in Yala and Wasgomuwa**  
1st June – 31 July 2017

The Sloth Bear, also found in the subcontinent, is one of the most elusive 'big game' in Sri Lanka. Although found in most National Parks, Yala would be the best place to spot the Sloth Bear with Wasgomuwa National Park also being popular. The Sloth bear is best seen during the months of June & July when its favorite fruit the 'Palu' is in season.



- **International Surfing Competition in Arugam Bay**

1 – 30 June 2017

The Association of Surfing Professionals will hold their annual Surf Competition in Arugam Bay this June. This is a much awaited event that will bring together international surfing competitors from the world over including Australia, USA, Germany, UK, New Zealand and Japan.

Listed as one of ten top surf spots in the world, Arugam Bay is a popular youthful haunt for surfers and holiday makers during the surfing season. There are several popular point breaks including Ullah Point, Pottuvil Point, Surf Point, Peanut Farm Point, Surf Point, and Crocodile Rock. Waves of up to 5-6ft and up to a 400 metre 'ride', the relatively isolated beaches and simple, laid-back lifestyle, away from the main tourist haunts, are a major attraction to surfers.

■ **SPECIAL AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS**

• **Sinhala & Tamil New Year**  
13 – 15 April 2017

Sinhalese New Year, generally known as Aluth Avurudda in Sri Lanka, is the new year of the Sinhalese people in Sri Lanka. It is a major anniversary celebrated by not only the Sinhalese people but by most Sri Lankans. The timing of the Sinhala New Year coincides with the new year celebrations of many traditional calendars of South and Southeast Asia. The festival has close semblance to the Tamil New Year. Thai New year, Bengali New Year, and Oriya New Year festival in India. [1] It is a public holiday in Sri Lanka. It is generally celebrated on 13 or 14 April 2017. According to Sinhalese astrology, New Year begins when the sun moves from Meena Rashiya (the house of Aries) to Mesha Rashiya. It also marks the end of the harvest and spring.



• **Bak Full Moon Poya Day**  
1 April 2017

The significance of Bak Poya is historical as it was on this religious day that Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka for the second time to settle the imminent war between two Naga Kings Chulodara and Mahodara over a "Manipalaga" jewel-studded throne.

According to Mahavamsa Chronicle, Buddha was accompanied by a deity in his visit and it was also on this religious day that Naga King Maniakkhika invited Lord Buddha to visit Kelaniya.

Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka in his fiftieth year of his enlightenment to solve the dispute between the uncle and nephew.

Bak full poya is a noteworthy, as Bak is a month of series of national importance as well. Devotees around the country today attending to religious ceremonies to mark this special day and the events occurred in the history.



• **May Day**  
1 May 2017



• **Vesak Full Moon Poya Day**  
10 May 2017

On Vesak full-moon Poya day in May, Buddhists all over the world venerate the life of Lord Buddha – his birth, enlightenment and passing away. Homes, villages and cities in Sri Lanka are lit up in serene splendor with oil lamps, intricate handmade lanterns, and colourful Pandals depicting the life story of Lord Buddha are erected across the island.

• **Vesak Full Moon Poya Day**  
8 June 2017

During the full-moon poya day of June, Buddhists celebrate Posen when the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka by Mahinda, is remembered. Thousands of pilgrims and devotees flock to Buddhist shrines across the country to pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma (Buddha's teachings) and the Sangha (the Buddhist monks). Mihintale where Buddhism originated on the island in 247 BC is taken on a serene air during this period with thousands of pilgrims lighting incense and oil lamps in honour of Buddha.

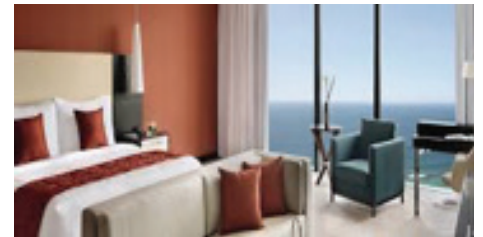
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■ **NEW HOTELS**

• **Movenpick Hotel**

With open spaces, modern designs and cool features, Mövenpick Hotel Colombo is the first new five-star hotel to open in Colombo in 25 years, making it the perfect base from which to explore this capital city. Situated in the commercial and cultural heart of Sri Lanka's capital city, this stunning 24-storey hotel brings a touch of altitude and attitude to Colombo's hospitality scene.

Contemporary design, panoramic views and an uplifting atmosphere are just some of the highlights of the 219 spacious rooms and suites. Themed restaurants and a spectacular rooftop bar complement a beautiful spa, fitness centre, jacuzzi and infinity pool. The 5-star Mövenpick Hotel Colombo is located close to the Liberty Arcade, Colpetty market and National Museum.



• **Anantara Kalutara Resort**

In a secluded beachfront setting along Sri Lanka's southwest coast, yet only an hour away from the excitement of the capital, Anantara Kalutara Resort a heavenly getaway among Kalutara hotels offers the best of both worlds – luxurious accommodation and inspirational experiences of the island's wild nature and rich culture.

Relish easy access to a coastal paradise that inspires a sense of wanderlust. Experience the warmth of Sri Lankan hospitality and Anantara's signature service. Natural exclusivity reveals Indian Ocean and Kalu Ganga River views, as well as a private river and lagoon frontage. Feel charmed by the simplistic elegance and great craftsmanship of a unique resort inspired by the architectural vision of the late Geoffrey Bawa – Sri Lanka's most famous architect.

Curate your ideal escape. Sink your toes into pristine golden sands or retreat to the shade of swaying coconut palms. Wind down to the sound of the ocean or refresh your perspective with a myriad of water sports. Feast on the bold, spicy flavours of island culture, take a culinary tour across Asia or savour Italian coastal cuisine. Celebrate romance with a private pool villa hideaway, couple's spa bliss, a sunset boat cruise and tailored private dining. Enjoy the family friendly allure of a kids club and endless adventures, from watching turtles hatch to whale and dolphin trips.

Nearby, the historic town of Kalutara charms travellers with its culture and tropical nature. From the island's spice trading days and colonial heritage, a rich tapestry of history beckons exploration – the 12th century Richmond Castle, the world's only hollow Buddhist shrine and Kalutara Vihara, where vivid murals illustrate Buddha's life.

