



SRI LANKA: BUDDHIST MEDITATION RETREAT

You cannot visit Sri Lanka without absorbing the gentle philosophy of Buddhism which is prevalent in every day life and an important part of the local culture. Sri Lanka's natural beauty and charm is utterly inspiring. This island is a paradise and if you are seeking a connection with nature or the spiritual you have found the right destination.

Sri Lanka is a vibrant country, rich in its diversity of culture, race, language and religion. The island has an abundance of natural resources, fauna and flora, mountains, rivers and beautiful beaches. It is located at the crossroads where East meets West and is regarded as the gateway to South Asia. The hill country has gorgeous rolling hills and tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life and exotics like elephants and leopards. The people are friendly, food delicious and costs low! A stunning island filled with beaches and wild life sanctuaries like the Elephant Orphanage, ancient cities, hills, beaches... and most of all - incredible beauty!



WHAT DO YOU GET?

- An exciting, never-to-be-forgotten adventure into South East Asia and the Sri Lankan culture.
- The enormous satisfaction of helping disadvantaged children and seeing how your efforts are making a difference to them.
- New skills, more confidence, a greater understanding of a different culture, invaluable personal and professional development.
- An entry on your CV or résumé that will put you head and shoulders above most others in the job market.
- Experienced local staff with 24/7 back-up and support who'll meet you at the airport on your arrival - helps you **feel safe and never alone!**
- An in-depth Induction makes you **feel local straight away!**
- And best of all ... **an unforgettable experience!**

SUMMARY FACTFILE

Start Dates	All year round - You choose your start and finish dates.
Duration	1 or 2 weeks, or longer if you prefer.
Requirements	No qualifications or experience needed.
Price	For up-to-date prices, please check our website www.travellersworldwide.com .
What's included	► Accommodation ► Food ► Meeting you at the Airport ► Transfer to your accommodation ► Full pre-departure support ► Local in-country team support and backup ► 24-hr emergency support
What's not included	Flights, Insurance, Costs of Visas, Return transfer to the airport.
Who can do this Project?	All projects are open to all nationalities. You need to be aged between 17 and 70+

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW:

This is an ADD ON placement, which means you can add it on to your longer term project in Sri Lanka either at the beginning of your trip, in the middle, at the end, or whenever you choose. You can even decide to do it once you are already in Sri Lanka!

We do recommend however that you spend at least 3 days in Sri Lanka adjusting to the heat and recovering from jetlag before you embark upon the meditation retreat. After experiencing the meditation centre ourselves first hand we recommend a 1 week or 2 week add on placement at the centre, for a truly remarkable experience enjoying or discovering meditation.

THE BUDDHIST MEDITATION CENTRE:

The meditation centre is situated in a town called Gampaha. This is about 1.5 hours north of Colombo and 50 minutes from the main volunteer house in Ja-Ela. The centre is separated into different areas, with lots of small cabana's splayed out in extremely peaceful surroundings which will assist you in setting your mind free.

The centre is in a beautiful setting in a small and secluded area. It is very peaceful and relaxed, with sunny and shady parts and areas to sit and relax in. The retreat is split into two sections for males and females and the centre does not allow any interaction between the sexes. The retreat is a silent retreat, allowing you to focus on your own thoughts.

INSTRUCTION:

When entering Vipassana Meditation Centre for the first time you really are not sure what to expect. This is understandable and many people will never have been to such a place before. If you have no experience with meditation it is helpful to research the practice a little before arriving.

You will receive little in the way of an introduction, other than being shown to your accommodation. There is a schedule to follow to make it easier for you, and at 2pm each day you have the opportunity to visit the head monk. Here you will be able to talk and ask as many questions as you like to aid you in your spiritual journey and your understanding of the meditation technique. Don't worry though – you may well feel like a fish out of water to begin with, but you will soon become familiar with the routine at the retreat and the monks will always offer a helping hand by communicating with hand gestures and eye contact if you are unsure of the required etiquette.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

The centre is a drop in centre. It is polite to let them know to expect you, which our organiser will do for you. Once you are within the retreat compound, you are not encouraged to leave until you depart conclusively. The other people in the retreat will be largely Sri Lankans but there may also be a few foreign visitors such as you. Dropping into a Buddhist retreat for a few weeks is not uncommon in Sri Lanka as meditation is highly regarded as a way to heal and replenish the soul. Locals practice at the retreat if they are studying Buddhism or simply feel the need for some faith and restoration. There is room for a total of about 40 male visitors and 20 female visitors at one time.

The centre is silent and no talking is permitted between yourself and the other meditators but slow and gentle speech is sometimes allowed when you are with the monks. The rule of silence is strongly upheld in the centre, but more so in the male quarters. The females do have a tendency to whisper to each other occasionally!

Body language communication must also be very subtle but is not recommended generally. It is better not to make eye contact and smile as the purpose of the retreat is for each person to focus inwardly. Communication in any form distracts from this. The silence is something that takes some getting used to. However it also comes as a tremendous relief as there is no polite chitchat required! Should you need to ask a question or make contact with someone you may do so subtly, with respect and you should whisper. Keep communication to a minimum. This rule is generally very strictly upheld in the male section of the retreat, but not so much in the female section. You may find that the female monks and participants talk quietly at some periods in the day – this is not a regular occurrence though. You may find that some of the monks and younger Sri Lankans will want to talk to you a little bit. Sometimes the women that bring your lunch will also want to talk. Please use your discretion and observe the rules of the



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monastery by keeping contact to a minimum. Always follow their lead and do not initiate any communication yourself, unless you need to.

Many of the other people meditating in the retreat may be there for anything between 2 weeks and 6 months. Your stay of 1 or 2 weeks will be relatively very brief. However, as a westerner with little or no experience of meditation previously, this will probably be long enough. During an initial exploration into meditation, a new sense of self-discipline must be acquired. To do very little all day long is difficult. If you want to stay for a longer or shorter period than your allocated time, of course you can, and this can be arranged through the Sri Lankan staff at the time. However, it will depend how long you have left on your visa as the maximum stay in Sri Lanka as a volunteer is 3 months.

The first 2-3 days of a meditation retreat can be quite tricky. This is how long it takes to unwind and slow down from a life of deadlines, responsibilities, distractions, aggressive subliminal marketing, conflicts, rushing, traffic, communication, relationships, to-do lists and so on. For a long time you have been on fast forward in your life and suddenly there is relatively little to do. All you have to do now is be – exploring your inner feelings and emotions before setting your mind free!

You will probably go through a range of emotions and physical sensations during your first few days. Some initial boredom, urgency and frustration should be replaced by peace and relief quite soon. What you should notice, and take with you, is this: most things that you experience and feel should change, with each state being replaced with a new one. Boredom will give way to Euphoria; anger will be replaced by acceptance, fear to comfort, etc. All you have to do is just breathe, note how you feel and experience the feeling without fighting it. When the noise of the outside world is turned down and distractions are taken away from us, our awareness comes back to us and a meditation retreat enables us to journey inside and find a sense of calm, of balance.



The meditation gets easier as you go along but it should never be too much for you as you can gain hints by observing the other monk and have the opportunity to pose questions to the head monk at 2pm every day. You will acclimatise to the pace, the silence and the routine after a few days. You will slow down to the rhythm around you! It is now that you start to hear the sounds of the jungle better, notice the wildlife in the trees above you, the way the insects move, the changing light of the forest. You begin to appreciate everything in a deeper way; the hot afternoon tea, the sun on your back, a smile, breathing... you are not in a rush and your thoughts have slowed down also, they are less ferocious and demanding and sometimes, briefly, there are no thoughts. This is the time when inspiration can come, creativity, insights and understanding are able to arise when your mind is peaceful and you are completely relaxed.

CAUTION! A meditation retreat can be a very intense experience. You are very limited in how much you have contact and communication with others so you are really doing this alone. Anyone who has recently been through a traumatic experience may find the experience too much and it may not be helpful to you at this stage. We highly recommend that you consider this meditation retreat only if you feel that you are in sound and stable mind.

MEDITATION:

It is very helpful to have some idea about meditation before you go. If you have had no formal experience we recommend you read some books in advance and try to do a little practise of your own. It can be frustrating and uncomfortable at first but you'll soon get used to it.

Mediation can be either walking or seated and can be done in your room or the outside areas. You will receive instruction in both of them. You are free to do mediation at any time of the day in addition to these given times in fact you will find that most yogis mediate at every opportunity! You can alternate between sitting meditation and walking meditation during these times. It is not encouraged to read or write unless the monk gives you relevant literature and their permission to read. Listening to music, painting or other pastimes are also strictly prohibited.

SITTING MEDITATION

Sit quietly in a comfortable position with your back straight, your head up and your chin tucked in a little. You want your spine from bottom to top to be as straight as possible. This may feel uncomfortable at first as we are so used to sitting with back support in the west and have not developed our muscles adequately. With practise however you will become used to sitting in this position. You can cross your legs or kneel or sit on a cushion or a ledge. The important



This is the female head nun. She is lovely! She doesn't speak much English at all but her smile lights up any room!

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thing is that you are comfortable and that your back is straight. Once you have found your position try to relax into it but stay alert and firm enough to keep the posture.

If you find yourself slouching sit up straight. If you find yourself in physical discomfort and experience pain anywhere in the body try and stay still and observe the pain with a sense of acceptance until it goes away. If it does not go away after some time or if you feel particularly uncomfortable you can adjust your position, but generally try to move as little as possible during a meditation session.

Close your eyes and take your attention to the breath. Try not to control your breathing, just to be aware of yourself breathing; just try to observe your body in its natural state of breathing. It helps to concentrate on a particular part of your body as you breathe such as the sensations in your nose as you breathe air in and as you release it. Or you can focus on the back of the throat where you can feel the air, or on your lower stomach expanding as you breathe in and decreasing as you breathe out.

This is all you have to do. Try to keep the attention on the breath. Sounds easy? Try it! The mind has a natural inclination to wander. This is fine. Each time you notice it happening however bring the attention straight back to the breath. This is step one in meditation, concentrating and directing the mind to one thing. It enables the rest of your mind to stop and it creates space in the mind, something that can lead to a wonderful sense of calm.

Alternatives methods of meditation can include observing simply the sounds around you. You might like to create a visualisation that is personal to you and creates calm, or you may like to meditate upon a mantra such as 'may all beings be happy'.

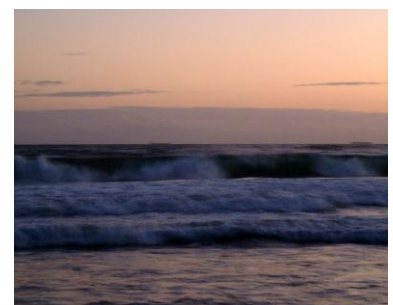
WALKING MEDITATION

Walking meditation is a nice contrast to sitting meditation and can break up the time. The principle is the same, to concentrate the mind on present physical sensations. Walk very slowly, and be mindful of each movement. Eyes open and looking ahead take your attention to your feet and the sensations as you place one foot down slowly roll from heel to toe and lift it off the ground placing the other foot down in front. Feel these sensations of walking and try to take all of your concentration into these sensations. Walk up and down a path for 30 minutes or as long as you feel you can continuously taking your attention back to the sensations created through walking. Other sensations that you are aware of such as the heat of the sun on parts of your body, the sounds of the jungle or the colour of a flower can also be meditated (intently focused) upon for variation.

More reading will help you in your understanding of meditation.

SCHEDULE

4.00am	Rising
4.15	Puja (Pay homage)
5.00	Porridge/ gruel called Conglee
5.15	Meditation
6.15	Breakfast
7.15-8.15	Meditation
8.15	Drink of King Coconut
8.30-9.30	Attending to cleanliness
9.30-11.00	Bathing and washing of clothes
11.15	Lunch
12.30-1.30pm	Meditation
1.30	Drink of tea
2.00	Mediation advice usually by head monk
5.00-6.00	Cleaning outside areas
6.00	Puja (Pay homage)
6.30	Evening drink
7.00-8.00	Meditation
10.00	Rest – Lights Out



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LUNCH

Your lunch is the main meal of the day, and this is provided by local people. Most Sri Lankans choose a day to take food to a Buddhist monastery and take one dish on that day every year. It is often a meaningful day to the person who prepares and brings the food – such as the anniversary of the death of a loved one. It means that you will be treated to a wide range of wonderful, tasty dishes each lunch time. It is always rice and curry with lots of variety and endless portions. The food is mostly vegetarian, with some fish. Usually there is also warm water or soup, and pudding of fruit, yogurt and something very sweet, which varies. Some people save their pudding snacks. This is wise as you do not get to eat again for the remainder of the day (unless you have taken some snacks)!

MONK TIME

After lunch is free time until 2pm. Then the monk comes and sits for anyone who wants to come and talk with him. He speaks English. This is the time to ask questions, get help, or discuss any problems that you are having. Anything at all can be discussed here. Someone is there everyday at 2pm. Sometimes the monk may give you a book to read on how to meditate. Otherwise he will answer any questions that you may have about your meditation.

You are encouraged not to write or read, unless advised by the monk or teacher. Sometimes there will also be guided meditation sessions by the head monk, when he is in town. These take place in English.

MEDITATION GUIDELINES/THE RULES – FOR ALL YOGIS (MEDITATORS)

1. Yogis should observe as many precepts during their stay as they can.
2. Walking, sitting, standing and lying down should be carried out mindfully at all times.
3. Silence is golden.
4. Talking is a strong hindrance to meditation.
5. If you must talk, do it where it does not disturb others
6. Refrain from talking about your meditation to others.
7. Meals are taken in silence.
8. Yogis should not read unless asked to do so by their teachers.
9. Under garments should be hung to dry discreetly.
10. Do not keep sweets in your room as it attracts ants. Keep in a tight jar if necessary.
11. While staying here please help keep all areas neat and clean. Be mindful at all times so we can help each other progress. Please take attentive care of resources here.
12. Please sweep out your room and wash linen lent to you before you leave.
13. Please note that this centre is only for those who wish to follow a course of training in insight (vipassana) meditation. Under the method sponsored by the late Van. Mahasi Sayadaw II Sobhana Mahathera of Burma.

MEDITATION GUIDELINES/ THE RULES – FOR FOREIGNERS

1. Do not use cell phones inside the meditation centre.
2. Observe silence for good meditation
3. Stay in Sati (Mindful) at all times
4. Speech is harmful to meditation
5. Follow at least 5 precepts
6. Practice walking and sitting meditation
7. Remember to turn off lights and fans when not in use.
8. Do not disturb others when meditating
9. You may not leave the premises without the permission of the nun-in-charge.
10. Follow the timetable.

OBSERVE THE 10 PRECEPTS

1. Not to kill any living being.
2. Not to take what is not given.
3. Not to have sexual contact.
4. Not to tell lies; not to indulge in idle talk or gossip (wrong speech).
5. Not to take any drugs or alcohol.
6. Not to eat solid food after 12 noon until the next dawn (– although beginners do not have to follow this strictly at first.)
7. Not to dance, sing, listen to music
8. Not to wear garlands or apply scents, use makeup, cosmetics or jewellery.
9. Not to sleep on high and expensive beds.
10. Not to accept gold and silver (money)

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VISAS:

Visas are required for most nationalities visiting Sri Lanka. We will liaise with you about your visa requirements – the process is very straightforward.

FLIGHTS:

You have the option to arrange your own flights or we can assist you with your flight arrangements. If you would like us to do this for you, we will liaise with you regarding available flights and dates to suit you. All arrangements for your flight bookings/payments will be fulfilled by [Murray Rogers Travel Limited](#), ATOL No. 6856.

COSTS:

Please see the prices pages of our website [Full Price List](#). The price of this project is a reflection of the following costs:

- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Meeting you at the airport
- ✓ Local in-country team support and backup
- ✓ 24hr emergency helpline
- ✓ Full pre-departure support
- ✓ UK administration
- ✓ Marketing (brochures, website design and maintenance, attending careers fairs, advertising, website listings and presentations)
- ✓ Project Research/Site Inspection
- ✓ Staff Training/Equipment
- ✓ Donations to worthwhile projects

HOW YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

By joining a Travellers Program you enable us to keep donating money to worthwhile projects around the world; from clothing and feeding school children, building playgrounds or funding vital conservation research - your participation makes these donations possible.

For every volunteer, a donation is made by Travellers on your behalf into the [Bridge The Gap Foundation](#). This Foundation was set up by us to donate directly to particularly worthwhile and necessary projects for children and animals around the world, and partners with other NGO's to raise match-funding for worthy projects.

**COUNTRY PROFILE:**

Sri Lanka is famous for its 1,600 km of unspoilt, golden beaches. It's a paradise Island shaped like a tear drop in the Indian Ocean. Formerly known as Ceylon and famous for its wonderful Tea, Sri Lanka is a vibrant country with an incredible history. It's a country of 18 million people; rich in its diversity of culture, race, language and religion.

The island has an abundance of natural resources, fauna and flora, mountains, rivers and beautiful beaches. It is located at the crossroads where East meets West and is regarded as the gateway to South Asia. The hill country has gorgeous rolling hills and tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life and exotics like elephants and leopards.



The people are friendly, food delicious and costs low! A stunning island filled with beaches and wild life sanctuaries like the Elephant Orphanage, ancient cities, hills, beaches - and most of all, it's incredible beauty.

THINGS TO DO IN: SRI LANKA

You will never be short of something to do in Sri Lanka - wherever you are based on your project you will be able to reach some of the most incredible beaches, cultural sites including ancient temples and cities, aromatic tea plantations and exhilarating waterfalls in the rolling hill country. The famous Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage is also a "must-see" on this paradise island.

In Sri Lanka, every sight, sound and smell will engulf you with new experiences. Take an early morning train ride from Colombo to Hikkaduwa and watch in awe as you travel past some of the most incredible scenery. Smiling children will wave at you from shanty towns lining the outskirts of Colombo, but these soon give way to views across paddy fields where buffalo and cows can be seen grazing. As your journey continues the train tracks begin to run parallel to the beach and you will be left mesmerised by the incredible sights in this friendly country.

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- Detailed information on your project and country and suggestions, safety guide, tips and checklists, via our EXTRANET, available from anywhere, 24/7.
- 24/7 emergency helpline for you and your family
- Free pick up from the nearest airport.



VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK:

"I have just got back from the meditation centre which was a fabulous experience.

The rooms are basic but clean and comfortable, and have in them special cushions for comfortable meditation. The cushions can be taken outside to meditate in the grounds. This is especially a good idea in the morning and evenings as the sun and the moon and the beginning and end of the day are beautiful. The fireflies are enchanting!

One of the main worries or concerns I had before I went was the food... do not fear! I can honestly say that I have never eaten so well! The quality and quantity of the food is quite amazing and I didn't feel hungry once during my week long stay. You will be fed very well indeed and if you do find that you are hungry for some reason Sister Soma will make sure that some biscuits and snacks can be found. Many people keep some food over from the lunchtime meal just in case hunger strikes in the night but I assure you, food is plentiful! One thing you can take to make you feel more at home is tea bags, coffee sachets (cappuccino style) and you can have these instead of the drinks provided. Take care, if you wish to be a real yogi then milk cannot be drunk after 12 noon and that does include powered milk!

At the end of you stay you may wish to leave behind a small gift to say thank you. The yogis at the meditaion centre do not want a great deal but basic things such as pens, mosquito coils and spray, tissues, hand dispenser sized washing up liquid, washing powder sachets are far more useful to them than biscuits.

I spent 1 week at the centre and entered it a complete beginner. I could not meditate in anyway shape or form and the idea of being virtually silent for week caused much hilarity within my friendship group but 1 week on I can do both walking and seated meditation. Without a doubt the first few days are unusual as everything is new and the people around you seem to understand what they are doing while you are still trying to grasp hold of it all. But just live in the present and listen to the advice given to you. Yes it is hard work but you are there to learn a new skill and that takes practice and time... one thing you have a great deal of in the centre. I felt very well looked after and cared for throughout the whole stay! I am really pleased that I took this opportunity and I do feel different, much calmer and ready to face the next part of my journey"

LISA OAKDEN

HOW TO BOOK:

Please complete a [booking form](#) online or you can send a postal booking from our free brochure. When we receive this, we'll telephone you to discuss the details and then start the exciting process of planning your trip!

We do hope you'll join us and are confident that you'll find this an incredible experience. Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions - we'll be happy to help you plan your exciting adventure!

You may also be interested in other courses with Travellers - please visit our [website](#) for details of all our projects. In fact you can choose from over 300 projects in 19 countries!

Make a Difference – Get Involved!

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