

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is home to around twenty million. The [Sinhalese people](#) form the largest ethnic group in the nation and Tamils are concentrated in the North, East, Central and [Western provinces](#) of the country. Tamils who were brought as indentured labourers from India by British colonists to work on estate plantations. [Sinhalese](#) and [Tamil](#) are the two [official languages](#) of Sri Lanka. [English](#) is spoken by approximately 10% of the population, and is widely used for education, scientific and commercial purposes. Until recently, for example, most Sri Lankans, certainly those in the villages, have eaten traditional food, engaged in traditional crafts and expressed themselves through traditional arts.

Sri Lankans have added western influences to the customary diet such as [rice](#) and curry, pittu (mixture of fresh rice meal, very lightly roasted and mixed with fresh grated coconut, then steamed in a bamboo mould). While Dutch and Portuguese influences are found with the island's Burgher community preserving their culture through traditional favorites such as Lamprais (rice cooked in stock and baked in a banana leaf), Bredher (Dutch [Christmas cake](#)) and Bolo Fiado (Portuguese-style layer cake).

Every year on or about April 13th Sinhala and Tamil people celebrate [Sinhala and Tamil New Year Festival](#), and Muslims celebrate [Ramadan](#). [Esala Perahera](#) is very grand with elegant costumes. Happening in July or August in Kandy, it has become a unique symbol of Sri Lanka. It is a Buddhist festival consisting of dances and richly-decorated elephants. There are fire-dances, whip-dances, Kandian dances and various other cultural dances. A very popular type of music is the so-called [Baila](#), a kind of dance music that originated from Portuguese music introduced to the island in colonial.

Sri Lanka has a multi ethnic and multi religious population. Buddhism constitutes the religious faith of about 70% of the population. The second largest religion is [Hinduism](#). Hinduism was primarily established in Sri Lanka by migrants and often invaders from southern India. European colonists introduced [Christianity](#) to the country in the 16th century and the religion has been adopted by around six percent of the population.