

INTERNATIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

Your Guide to living & working in Sri Lanka

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Your Guide to Living & Working in Sri Lanka

This brief guide is designed to answer the most common questions expatriates have about living and working in Sri Lanka. It is meant to cover points from a general perspective, but items specific to IWMI experience have also been included. It is presented in the form of frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Standard details about the history, geography, climate etc. are contained in the Insight Guide to Sri Lanka, a copy of which is included in your pack.

Housing

What type of housing do IWMI expatriates occupy?

Most expatriate staff live within a 5 mile radius of the IWMI HQ building. In this area there is a selection of newly built or refurbished houses. The IWMI Admin Services keeps a list of house-brokers, and also houses currently on offer.

What are rents like?

Current monthly rents range from US\$1100 for a 3-4 bedroomed villa, to US\$2000 per month for a 4-5 bedroomed bungalow, with swimming pool. The houses are furnished and equipped with kitchen range, pantry or laundry, additional rooms for domestic help, and have either an enclosed garage with automatic doors, or a car port. Gardens are enclosed, and have electronic gates, which are more for convenience than real security issues.

What about apartments?

Apartment complexes with all modern conveniences, 24 hour security, swimming pools and convenience stores are also available. Some are close to IWMI-HQ (2000Plaza Residencies) or a 30-40 minute drive away (Hyde Park Residencies) Rents can range from US\$900 to US\$1800, again based on the number of rooms.

Please see Annex 1 for some photographs of houses in the area and apartment details.

Security

Are foreigners safe?

Yes. Foreigners have never been the target of any attacks, even during the peak of the civil war. Of course one has to take precautions against touts and con-men who see all foreigners as tourists. Highway robbery is rare and if at all has occurred on lonely portions of out-station, by gangs operating on midnight to pre-dawn travelers.

Will my house be safe?

Burglaries are not uncommon but one can take precautions. Burglars usually operate singly or in pairs, and many times it is after workman visit and get familiar with a building, or with the assistance of domestic help. Especially when leaving your residence for a long time should you use a security service. This can be arranged through the security service that IWMI uses, but at your own cost.

What about army checkpoints?

Since the end of the civil war, security checkpoints and “no-go” zones have been reduced considerably. The Government is making determined efforts to open up and develop the capital to encourage tourism and foreign investment. Because of its proximity to the House of Parliament, the area on which the IWMI HQ stands is designated as a High Security Zone.

Schooling & Child-care

Schools

The Overseas School of Colombo (OSC) (www.osc.lk/) is an international school offering both primary and secondary education, and is located within close proximity to IWMI headquarters. OSC has highly qualified, globally recruited teachers and a well-equipped campus with up-to-date facilities. The school prepares senior students for the International Baccalaureate (IB) exams.

What provisions are there for day-care services and preschoolers?

There are a number of reputable pre-school centres around Colombo. The closest are the Overseas School for Children, Pre-School Section, and First Steps, Battaramulla.

http://www.educationguidesrilanka.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14&Itemid=25

Does IWMI have a crèche?

IWMI has an on-site crèche at HQ, for use by staff with young children, run by trained professionals . It is open from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. There is a Management Committee, comprising interested staff, which oversees the crèche and makes decisions on its operations.

What are the age limits for children using the crèche?

Besides infants, toddlers and preschoolers, some primary school age children also come in after their regular school hours, to await pick-up by the parents at the end of the day. The age limits are 5 months to 10 years. Please feel free to walk in and talk to the staff.

How much does it cost?

Rates are based on usage. Full-time use is charged for at 4.5% of basic salary up to a maximum charge of Rs.15,000. Parents who use the facility only part-time (morning or evening) have to pay 75% of the full charge.

Shopping

Are there shopping malls?

Colombo has three shopping malls: Liberty Plaza, Majestic City and Crescat Boulevard. The first two have wide ranges of local goods whilst Crescat, located near the Cinnamon Grand Hotel, has several stores with imported goods. The supermarket at Crescat also contains more imported foodstuffs.

Does Sri Lanka have modern supermarkets?

There are several chains of supermarkets in most areas, with large ranges of goods including imported items: Cargill's Food City, Keell's, Arpico Supercentres, LAUGFS Supermarkets. Imported goods are obviously more expensive and items can 'disappear' from the shelves from time to time. To find imported fresh goods e.g. some cheese varieties then specialist stores are the best source e.g. in Crescat Boulevard. Fresh fruit and vegetables can also be purchased from the ubiquitous street stalls or markets e.g. Pettah Market in Colombo.

What about other goods e.g. household appliances?

Most household goods are available: washing machines, TVs etc. though some slightly more expensive than elsewhere. Abans, Softlogic and Singer are three of the better chains dealing in branded electronic goods and household appliances. There are many furniture stores e.g. Don Carolis and custom-made furniture is a common feature.

And clothing?

Sri Lanka has a strong garment industry and most items of clothing can be purchased though named-brands ('designer goods') are not readily available. Department stores e.g. Odel, Cool Planet are reliable sources for clothing – and other goods, of course. Other stores' e.g. 'House of Fashion' also provide an excellent source of clothes and at 'budget' prices. Hameedia sells a good range of menswear e.g. dresswear. There are plentiful outlets for locally produced shoes (or from China/India/Thailand) but imported shoes stores are limited. Clarks have just opened an outlet at Crescat Boulevard.

Domestic staff

How can I find trustworthy domestic help?

The best way is usually by word of mouth. The IWMI staff expat network is a good source. Some of the expat associations also advertise when domestic help is sought or available on: <http://groups.google.com/group/expats-of-sri-lanka/>

Do local domestics know how to cook “Western” meals?

The main meal in Sri Lanka is rice and curry, with the emphasis on rice, but domestics who have worked in expatriate homes have usually picked up basic “western” cookery such as pasta, stews, steaks. Recently, one enterprising ex-pat spouse provided western food cookery lessons, for colleagues’ domestic staff.

Do I need a security guard for my house?

It depends on the location of your house. Most expatriate staff live within a 5 mile radius of the office, in highly populated areas. Usually the high walls and enclosed gardens of the properties keep unwanted visitors out, but certain areas may necessitate a security guard, especially when one is away on home leave or for more than a few days on travel.

How much should I pay a maid, gardener, chauffeur, security guard?

Domestic staff are generally paid on a monthly basis. Current rates are around US\$250 (paid in local currency). Basic accommodation and meals included.

Embassies / Foreign Mission

German

<http://www.colombo.diplo.de/>

Embassy: 40, Alfred House Avenue, Colombo 3
Telephone: +94-11-258 0431

Australian

<http://www.srilanka.embassy.gov.au/>

High Commission: No. 21 Gregory's Road, Colombo 7
Telephone: + 94-11-2463200

British

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy/asia-and-oceania/high-commission-colombo>

High Commission: 389 Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo – 7
Telephone: +94-11-5390639

International Contacts

International Expatriates Association of Colombo

This group is made up of the diverse group of expatriates living in Colombo. It was established in 2007 as a non-profit, non-political Association which aims to help expatriates find their way around this lovely island. The Association is also a forum that supports and assists local charities through the generosity of our members.

Membership is open to all expatriates living in Sri Lanka, or Sri Lankans with a foreign passport. Currently it has close to 90 members from 41 different countries. The Association offers a variety of activities that will enable you to broaden your horizons, learn new skills or improve old ones.

<http://www.ieacolombo.org/>

Association of British and Commonwealth Residents

The Association of British Residents is open to all British and Commonwealth citizens and their families, living in Sri Lanka on a permanent or temporary basis. It is managed by a Council, a group of voluntary persons elected at an AGM from the membership. The AGM is held late March or early April. The Patron is the High Commissioner (incumbent.)

The association organises regular monthly activities like the coffee mornings, TGIF nights (for newcomers and any members who would like to get together) and the library. Besides the above monthly activities, many other events are also held throughout the year. The regulars usually are something for Valentine's Day, a major fund raiser around springtime, and a Christmas Carol evening in December.

<http://www.abrsl.org/>

Cultural Associations

British Council

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/srilanka.htm>

German Cultural Centre

<http://www.goethe.de/ins/lk/col/>

Health Care

What medical insurance does IWMI provide?

All CG Centres sign up their staff to Vanbreda International, to provide a comprehensive medical insurance plan for internationally recruited staff. In addition IWMI and a few other centres also use the same company to cover nationally recruited staff of IWMI.

Who is Vanbreda International?

Vanbreda International has over 50 years of experience in designing, implementing and managing cross-border health insurance and employee benefits programmes for international organisations, multinational corporations and their international workforce, as well as individual expatriates. With 420 employees, our company has its headquarters in Belgium and offices and representations in Europe (Italy and Switzerland), the Middle East (United Arab Emirates), Africa (Kenya, South Africa), Asia (Malaysia), Latin America (Chile) and North America (Florida, USA). Vanbreda International serves around 430,000 plan members on a 24/7 basis in 192 countries.

Vanbreda International is part of Cigna , a US-based global health service company. The group's main activities are insurance brokerage, risk management services and consultancy, and specialized in the field of international employee benefits such as:

- Medical and dental coverage;
- Protection against loss of income in case of temporary incapacity;
- Protection against permanent disability;
- Long term care;
- Pension plans;
- Loss of life; and
- Employee affinity plans.

<https://www.vanbreda-international.com/>

Hospitals

Does IWMI have agreements with the leading hospitals in Colombo?

Colombo has many large hospitals, and IWMI has contacts with the major ones.

Lanka Hospitals Network

<http://www.lankahospitals.org/>

Formerly the Apollo Hospitals Limited, it is now owned by a Sri lankan company, but still has many Indian specialists and consultants.

Durdans Hospital <http://www.durdans.com/>

Asiri Hospitals <http://www.asiri.lk/>

Specialist Consultation

Sri Lanka has an on-line doctor channeling service. Payments can be made by credit or debit card. Visit www.echannelling.com/

Emergency Medical facility

Ambulance services are also available for house calls and transport to hospitals. They are available on a case by case basis, or through prior registration. Registration gives you the benefit of having the doctor make house-calls. IWMI registers staff at HQ with Medicals Ltd. <http://www.medicalsonline.com/>

For hospital admissions in an emergency, Vandreda partner hospitals in Colombo recognize the Vanbreda membership card.

Travel

Within Sri Lanka

Which system does Sri Lanka follow?

As a former British colony, Sri Lanka follows the British system of driving on the left hand side of the road. So 99% of the vehicles are right-hand drive. The Highway Code exists and can be strictly enforced by traffic policemen. You will find however that driving in Sri Lanka can be an adventure! The public bus service (large Indian buses and the occasional red double-decker bus), private buses (usually 26 seaters), and three-wheeler taxis all compete for road space with the car drivers. Defensive driving is a skill that is acquired after some time.

Do I have to drive in that traffic?

Many IWMI expatriate staff do, and enjoy it, especially the long trips outside Colombo. You may also hire a personal driver, which is not an expensive option.

International

How do I plan air travel?

IWMI has one of the best local travel agents operate an office on IWMI premises and so obtaining options is a very easy task. All booking is done on-line. Official travel is booked

through the SAP accounting system while personal travel can be discussed with the agent, McKinnons, and payment made directly. It is not mandatory that personal travel be booked through the IWMI agent.

Money / Banks

What currency does Sri Lanka use?

The currency of Sri Lanka is the Rupee. 100 cents equal Rs.1

Coins are available in 25c, 50c, Rs.1, Rs.2, Rs.5, and Rs.10

Notes are available in Rs.10, Rs.20, Rs.50, Rs.100, Rs.200, Rs.500, Rs.1000, Rs.2000 and Rs.5000

Exchange rates (as at 1 November 2015)

US\$1 = Rs.138.56

£1 = Rs.213.92

€1 = Rs.152.71

Au\$ = Rs.98.94

Bank accounts

Does IWMI have a preferred Bank in Sri Lanka?

IWMI works mainly with the Hatton National Bank and many expatriates have opened both local currency as well as Resident Foreign Currency accounts with the Bank.

What about ATMs?

All banks have ATM machines which work with the major international ATM card systems

Climate

What is Colombo weather like?

Sri Lanka's climate is moderately warm, but with high humidity. Colombo temperature ranges from 23°C between December and February, to 31°C in April & May and August.

Is it very rainy?

Colombo receives an average of 7-8 inches of rainfall each month. However certain months are monsoonal and rains vary from drizzles to thunderstorms. The wettest month of the year is usually October.

How can I dress to be comfortable?

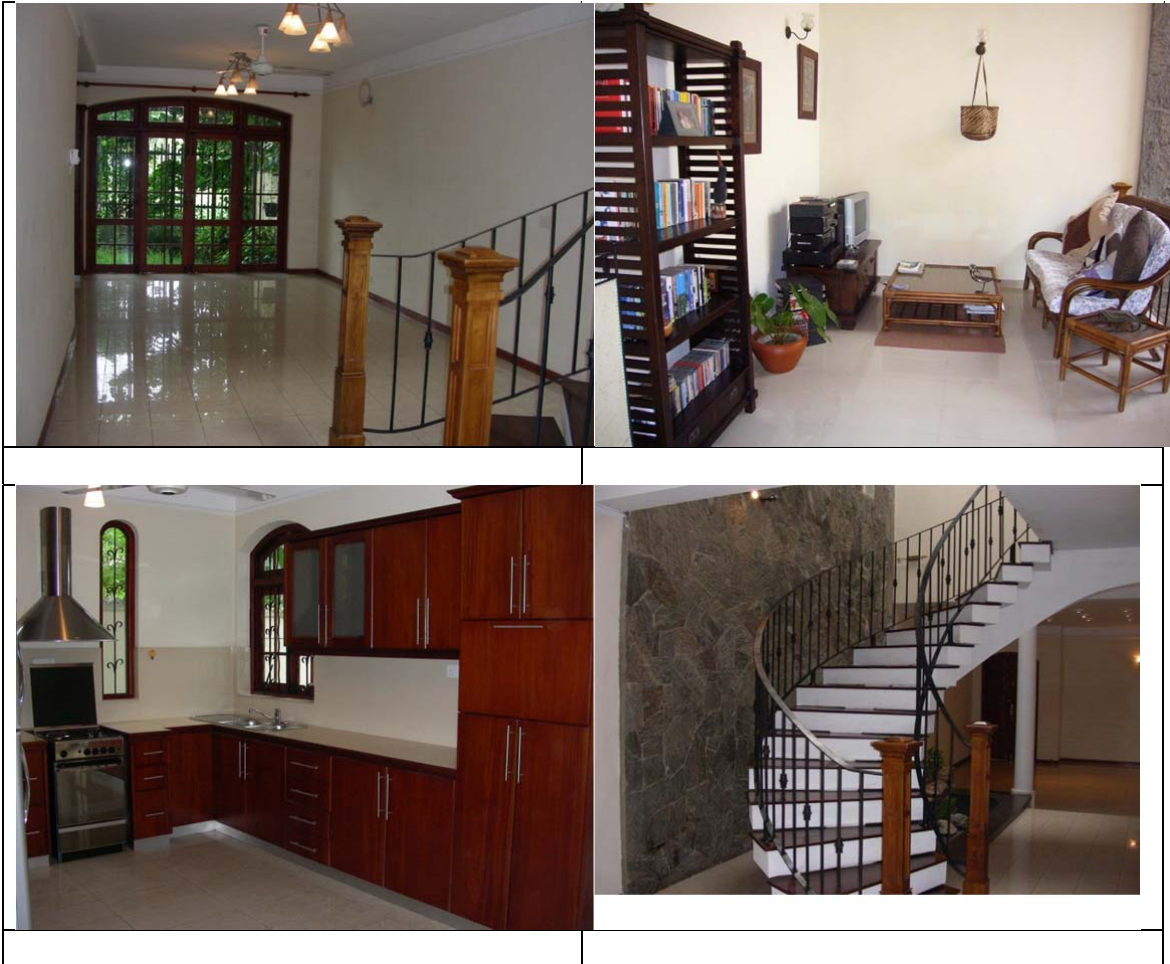
In the office, with air-conditioning, the temperature is very comfortable, even with high humidity outside. The IWMI dress code is not stringent, and staff are usually smartly, but casually, dressed. Comfortable usually means dressing appropriately, keeping in mind that humidity ranges from 75% in January to 83% in October!

Is the climate the same across the whole of Sri Lanka?

As one goes inland to the central hills, to “tea country” the temperature drops and recently overnight temperatures of 2-3 deg. were recorded in the highest central hill station Nuwara Eliya.

Annex 1 - Housing and apartments

Some examples of houses





A Housing Advertisement

House for rent



My contact details
0714-880001

Address :
233/23 Rajamahavihara Road,
Kotte.



FLOWER COURT

Luxury Apartment for Rent

3 bedroom fully furnished apartment at centrally located Colombo 7.

Immediately available for rent.

Contact Murie on 0775786838 or email bernardsilva1963@gmail.com

Apartment Features/Amenities:

- Spacious Sitting & Dining room
- Separate T V Room
- 3 Bed Rooms
- 2 bathrooms
- Two balconies: located on the 7th floor with an excellent view
- 3 elevators and round the clock security service
- Roof top garden
- 1600 square feet
- Fully air-conditioned
- Tastefully furnished
- Separate servants room with an attached bathroom
- Opposite Ladies College, close proximity to leading local & International schools.
- Rent negotiable.



Apartments

<http://www.expathomes.net>

<http://www.apartmentslk.com/>

<http://www.lankapropertyweb.com/rentals/>

http://www.ceylinohomes.com/Hyde_Park_Residencies.htm