

Moving to Sri Lanka: Your Relocation Guide



By Appointment To
Her Majesty The Queen
Removals and Storage Contractor Abels

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Her Majesty The Queen
Removals and Storage Contractor Abels

TELEPHONE:	Country code 94 + area code
STANDARD TIME: GMT	+5 hours 30 mins
WEIGHTS & MEASURES:	Metric
ELECTRICITY:	230-40v 50Hz
INOCULATIONS / VACCINATIONS:	Typhoid, Polio, Tetanus, Cholera, Hepatitis A and Malaria (Chloroquine Resistant)
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:	Jan 1, 14, Feb 4, Mar 20, 21, Apr 13-14, May 1, Oct 2, 28, Dec 9, 25
BANK HOURS:	09.00-13.00 Monday – Saturday, 09.00-15.00 Tuesday – Friday
EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS:	Accident Service: 11-2422222 Fire & Ambulance: 11-2433333 Police: 11-2411111
BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN SRI LANKA:	389 Baudhaloka Mawatha Colombo 7 Tel: +0094 11 5390639 Fax: +(94) (11) 5390639 Email: colombo.general@fco.gov.uk Web: http://ukinsrilanka.fco.gov.uk/en
SRI LANKA HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON:	13 Hyde Park Gardens London W2 2LU Tel: 0207 262 1841 Fax: 0207 262 7970 Email: mail@slhc_london.co.uk
TOURIST & TRAVEL INFORMATION:	Sri Lanka Tourist Board 80 Galle Road Colombo 3 Sri Lanka Tel: (1) 112 437 059 / 60 Fax: (1) 112 440 00 Email: info@sltda.gov.lk
TOURIST & TRAVEL INFORMATION UK:	Sri Lanka Tourist Board 1 Devonshire Square London EC2M 4WD Tel: 0845 880 6333 Fax: 0485 880 6444

Customs

To the best of our knowledge, the following documentation is required to import household and personal effects into Sri Lanka. However, it is advisable to check with the authorities that documentation is in order, prior to despatch.

Household Goods

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Passports (Old / New) of all the family
- Packing inventory in English (detailed)
- List of articles with nominal value
- Sri Lanka Customs Form (baggage declaration)
- Resident Visa (one year for foreign nationals)
- Blue Card (issued by immigration for duty free)
- Insurance Certificate
- Photographs (for antique furniture, statues, ebony would be of assistance at time of re-export)
- Banks Guarantee (on FCL Shipments – full container load)

Duty free importation provided:

The baggage is “bonafide” i.e. it should consist of goods for personal use and for the use of the family members only. It should NOT include:

- Goods in commercial quantities
- Goods for others
- Goods (unaccompanied baggage), which arrive after 90 days of your arrival

Make a written declaration. Fill in all sections of the form, with passport number, last date of departure from Sri Lanka, and date of arrival etc. All currencies, gold jewellery, etc must be declared with details.

Ensure your passport is endorsed by Customs at the time of arrival.

Duty free allowances:

Period less than 90 day's unaccompanied baggage up to US \$125.

Period over 90 day's and less than 365 day's unaccompanied baggage up to US \$500.

Period over 365 day's unaccompanied baggage up to US \$1000.

Minors (under 18 years) – Period less than 90 day's unaccompanied baggage up to US \$87.50.

One year resident visa holders' unaccompanied baggage up to US \$1000.

Duty percentage is as follows:

- Duty 25%, 10% or 2.5%

- Surcharge 20% of the duty amount
- Value Added Tax (VAT) 10% or 20%
- If applicable, Excise Duty 15%, 35%, 65% of the declared value
- Port and Airport Levy 1% of the value

All relevant customs declarations forms for clearance must be signed by consignee at destination. (Photocopies will not be accepted).

The owner must be present in Sri Lanka before Customs clearance can be undertaken.

Surface shipments should arrive in Sri Lanka within three months of the owner's arrival, and air shipments within one month. In the absence of the owner, a Power of Attorney must be submitted with a copy of Passport.

FCL and Air Shipments must be cleared within three days of landing. LCL must be cleared after three days of de-stuffing from the containers or demurrage will be incurred from the first day of landing.

All shipments are subject to Customs checking.

Customs examinations are normally held at the baggage office of the Sri Lanka Customs between 8.30am and 3pm on weekdays.

Outside Examinations:

Applications for customs examinations outside the baggage office are entertained only on FCL Shipments and will depend on the availability of officers. These examinations are held after 4.30pm on weekdays and within Colombo and suburbs only.

A refundable deposit (the quantum, of which will be decided by the Assistant Director of Customs (baggage) on perusal of the valued inventory list attached to the application for an outside examination) must be advanced by the consignee in the form of cash or bank guarantee valid for six months in favour of Director General of Customs.

The above deposit would be refunded if:

Duty is not payable or on payment of the appraised duty payable. Owner's contact details, delivery address and packing inventories should be clearly written on the Bill of Lading. Total numbers of packages on the inventory, Bill of Lading and other related documents should tally.

Goods should be declared as used personal and household effects.

All documents should be in possession of the destination agent at least five days prior to arrival of shipment.

Diplomatic Shipments

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Duty Free Certificate issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Copy of passport endorsed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka
- Duty free clearance certificate – issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka

Duty free only, if clearance certificate is produced.

Obtaining duty exception from the Ministry takes approximately 7 – 10 days minimum.

All documents should be in possession of the destination agent at least five days prior to arrival of shipment.

Automobiles

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading and owners passport
- Manufacturers invoice / insurance
- Exchange control approval
- Import licence is required for cars over two years old and for vans and dual purpose has to be pre-paid by customer prior to vehicles over two years old

Left hand driven vehicles are not permitted

- Tin Certificate and VAT Certificate
- Insurance Certificate
- RMV cancellation Certificate from country of origin. If motor vehicle is being shipped with
- Marine Condition Certificate issued at origin

Duties / Taxes subject to local agent valuation.

Petrol vehicles:	Minimum duty of 80%
	Maximum duty of 90%
Diesel vehicles:	Minimum duty of 175%
	Maximum duty of 200%

Shipments must be cleared within three days of landing or demurrage will be incurred from the first day of landing.

The car will be in the Port for customs valuation etc, for a minimum of seven working days. There will be demurrage incurring for the car, which has to be pre-paid by the customer prior to clearance.

Customs examinations are normally held at the motor vehicle yard of the Sri Lanka Customs between 8.30am and 3pm.

If the motor vehicle is being shipped with personal effects in a container, the vehicle must be loaded at the front (near the door) of the container.

Import licence could be obtained from The Import Controller, Control Department, 75, 1/3 1st Floor, Hemas Building, Colombo 1. Tel: 0094 11 232 6774 / 2324386.

Boats with Engine

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading, manufacturers invoice
- Import Licence for engine exceeding 25hp

- Letter of credit or direct payment
- Exchange control approval, list of items
- Defence Ministry, Fisheries Ministry approval

Duty payable.

The boat will be in the port for approvals for a minimum of 10-12 working days. There will be demurrage incurring, which has to be pre-paid by customer prior to clearance.

Motorcycles

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading and owner's passport
- Manufacturer invoice / insurance
- Original Registration Certificate (English translation)
- Keys
- Exchange control approval
- Chamber of Commerce Certificate
- Import Licence for engine exceeding 250cc
- Certificate of Registration cancellation from the country of origin

Duty payable.

Engine capacity not exceeding 125cc

- Customs duty 10%
- Surcharge 20%
- VAT 10%
- Port Levies 1% of the declared value

Engine capacity not exceeding 125cc – 200cc

- Customs duty 10%
- Surcharge 20%
- VAT 10%
- Port Levies 1%
- Excise duty 5% of the declared value.

Engine capacity exceeding 200cc

- Customs duty 10%
- Surcharge 20%
- VAT 10%
- Port Levies 1%
- Excise duty 15% of the declared value

The motorcycle will be in the port for approvals for a minimum of seven working days. There will be demurrage incurring, which has to be pre-paid by customer prior to clearance.

If the motorcycle is being shipped with personal effects in a container, the motorcycle must be loaded at the front (near the door) of the container.

Donation Goods

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice / Import licence
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment – value exceeding USD 1.000.00
- Tin / VAT registration number

Duty payable.

If duty waiver is not obtained from the Finance Ministry and Social Service Ministry, the following taxes should be paid:

- Customs duty 25%
- VAT 20% or 10%
- Surcharge 20% of the declared value.

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Furniture New / Office

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice / Import licence
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment

Duty payable.

- Customs duty 25%
- Surcharge 20%
- VAT 20%
- Port / Airport Levies 1% of the declared value

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Machines / Parts

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment
- Tin number and GST registration number

Duty payable.

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Fax Machines, Phones, Antenna or Satellite Dish.

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice / Import licence / Telecom approval
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment

Duty payable.

Goods will be detained by customs until telecom approval has been obtained.

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Pets

Documents required:

- Original Airway Bill
- Health and Quarantine Certificates
- Original Import Licence obtained by the Department of Animal Protection and Health, Getambe, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Duty payable.

Advisable to send pets along with passengers on the same flight.

Applications for Import Licence can be obtained from the Embassy of Sri Lanka at origin and should be obtained by customer.

No duplicates or copies accepted. These documents should be produced to Customs for clearance.

Alcohol, Wine, Cigarettes

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- List of articles with value

Duty payable.

- US \$10 per litre
- Surcharge 20%
- VAT 20%
- Port / Airport levies 1%
- Approximately 250% - 300% of the declared value

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Office Files and Folders

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment

Duty payable.

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Exhibition Goods

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment

Duty payable.

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Electrical Appliances

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of credit or direct payment

Duty payable.

Do not undervalue. There will be penalties and high duties.

Prohibited Items

- Sri Lanka currency over Rs.250/-
- Indian & Pakistan currencies
- Gold, silver and Gems
- Dangerous drugs
- Pornographic material, seditious literature, etc
- Plants, fruits and vegetables, live fish and animals
- Firearms, dangerous weapons and explosives
- Telecommunication equipment
- Feathers, furs, skins, tusks etc

Warning – A false or non-declaration is an offence and may involve heavy penalties including forfeiture. When in doubt consult a customs officer.

Religious Art Work

Documents required:

- Original Bill of Lading / Airway Bill
- Packing inventory in English
- Invoice
- Exchange control approval
- Letter of Credit or Direct Payment

Duty payable.

Customs do not allow importing obscene, monstrous religious and Buddhist articles.

Food

We strongly recommend that shippers be advised not to ship any commercially prepared and purchased food product with your unaccompanied personal goods.

This includes: wines, spirits, beer, cider, spices, herbs, canned packed or wrapped foods, pet food, pastas, rice, food supplements, vitamins, fruit juices, carbonated / noncarbonated drinks, milk, perishable foods, dry foods and any other item intended for human or animal consumption.

If the shipper insists on shipping food items, the specified information below must be gathered and provided for each food item imported. If the information is not provided, the food items may face refusal of entry, requiring segregation / manipulation of the shipment under customs supervision at a bonded facility, at substantial additional cost. Costs could be in the thousands of dollars and can not be anticipated. These costs will be the responsibility of the client.

- Product brand name
- Product classification
- Country of production
- Country of packaging
- Type of product (canned, bottled, packaged)
- Quantity

Ask for **Abels form QF565** for completing.

General Information on Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Background

The first Sinhalese arrived in Sri Lanka late in the 6th century B.C., probably from northern India. Buddhism was introduced in about the mid-third century B.C., and a great civilization developed at the cities of Anuradhapura (kingdom from circa 200 B.C. to circa A.D. 1000) and Polonnaruwa (from about 1070 to 1200). In the 14th century, a south Indian dynasty established a Tamil kingdom in northern Sri Lanka. The coastal areas of the island were controlled by the Portuguese in the 16th century and by the Dutch in the 17th century. The island was ceded to the British in 1796, became a crown colony in 1802, and was formally united under British rule by 1815. As Ceylon, it became independent in 1948; its name was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972. Tensions between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists erupted into war in 1983. After two decades of fighting, the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) formalized a cease-fire in February 2002 with Norway brokering peace negotiations. Violence between the LTTE and government forces intensified in 2006, but the government regained control of the Eastern Province in 2007. By May 2009, the government announced that its military had defeated the remnants of the LTTE. Since the end of the conflict, the

government has resettled tens of thousands of internally displaced persons and has undertaken a number of massive infrastructure projects to reconstruct its economy.

Geography

Sri Lanka lies in the Indian Ocean off the southeast coast of India in South Asia. It has rolling coastal plains with mountains in the centre-south. It has a strategic location near major ocean sea lanes. Major manufacturing is textiles and clothing, tea, rubber, copper and gems are exported. Tourism has been damaged by separatist activities.

Environmental Issues

Deforestation and soil erosion. Wildlife populations are threatened by poaching and urbanization. Coastal degradation from mining activities and increased pollution. Freshwater resources are being polluted by industrial wastes and sewage runoff. Waste disposal and air pollution in Colombo.

Climate

Tropical monsoon, the northeast monsoon is December to March and southwest monsoon is June to October. Natural hazards are occasional cyclones and tornadoes.

Population

Is estimated at 20,926,315 and most people live on the west coast, however, since the outbreak of hostilities between the government and armed Tamil separatists in the mid-1980's, several hundred thousand Tamil civilians have fled the island. As of 2007 more than 200,000 Tamils have sought refuge in the West.

Currency

Sri Lankan Rupee (SLR).

1 SLR = 100 cents.

Travellers cheques and US dollars are widely accepted in the country.

Economy

Sri Lanka is engaging in large-scale reconstruction and development projects following the end of the 26-year conflict with the LTTE, including increasing electricity access and rebuilding its road and rail network. Additionally, Sri Lanka seeks to reduce poverty by using a combination of state directed policies and private investment promotion to spur growth in disadvantaged areas, develop small and medium enterprises, and promote increased agriculture. High levels of government funding may be difficult, as the government already is faced with high debt interest payments, a bloated civil service, and historically high budget deficits. The 2008-09 global financial crisis and recession exposed Sri Lanka's economic vulnerabilities and nearly caused a balance of payments crisis, which was alleviated by a \$2.6 billion IMF standby agreement in July 2009. The end of the civil war

and the IMF loan, however, have largely restored investors' confidence, reflected in part by the Sri Lankan stock market's recognition as one of the best performing markets in the world. Sri Lankan growth rates averaged nearly 5% in during the war, but increased government spending on development and fighting the LTTE in the final years spurred GDP growth to around 6-7% per year in 2006-08. After experiencing 3.5% growth in 2009, Sri Lanka's economy is poised to achieve high growth rates in the postwar period.

Language

Sinhala, Tamil and English.

Religion

Buddhist 70%, Hindu 15%, Christian 8%, Muslim 7%.

Health

Treatment is free at government hospitals and dispensaries; 24 hour treatment is available at Colombo General Hospital. Some hotels also have doctors.

All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Bottled water and a variety of mineral waters are available at most hotels. Unpasteurised milk should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Pasteurised and sterilized milk is available in some hotels and shops. Avoid dairy products made with unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

While many medical personnel have received their training in the UK and other Western countries, emergency medical treatment is not available countrywide and injured persons are brought to Colombo for treatment. The options for repatriation to the UK or neighboring countries in an emergency are limited. Medical facilities are not always of a standard expected in the UK, particularly outside Colombo, and treatment in private hospitals can be expensive.

Malaria exists in parts of Sri Lanka and the dengue fever bearing mosquito is found throughout the country. Outbreaks of dengue increase during the monsoon season. Before travelling, you should contact your GP for medical and inoculation advice. Rabies is widespread and common in local cats, dogs, squirrels, monkeys and other animals.

General Advice

You should take care when bathing in the sea as there are dangerous undercurrents and strong riptides. If in doubt, follow local advice e.g. from your hotel.

You must reconfirm your flights at least 72 hours before departure.

You must take out full Insurance Cover for medical treatment and accidents. You should have cover for unexpected losses such as cancelled flights, stolen cash, cards, passport or luggage. You are advised to check carefully what other risks your Insurance Policy covers.

You cannot change Scottish or Northern Irish bank notes. Most major banks will change US dollar travellers' cheques as well as allow Visa and Mastercard cash withdrawals. There are ATMs in major cities but some do not accept international cards. Credit cards should be used with caution due to the potential for fraud and other criminal activity. Leave copies of your card numbers with family or friends.

Foreigners must be able to show some identity if requested by, for example, by the police. You should carry your passport at all times as a form of identity, and leave details with family or friends.

You are strongly recommended that all British nationals who are resident, or visiting for over three months, register with the British High Commission in Colombo.

Travel Advice

You are advised against all but essential travel to the north or east (other than Trincomalee, Nilaveli and Arugam Bay). Much of the north and east of Sri Lanka remains heavily mined, particularly around the A9 road to Jaffna.

There is a threat from domestic terrorism in Sri Lanka.

Most visits to Sri Lanka are trouble free but you are strongly advised to obtain comprehensive Travel and Medical Insurance before travelling.

Safety and Security

There is a threat from domestic terrorism in Sri Lanka. In the course of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka since 1983, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have carried out a number of terrorist attacks.

Neither British nationals, nor Western interests more generally, have previously been the targets of terrorist attacks. However, there is a danger that foreigners might inadvertently get caught up if there were further attacks.

You should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners.

Crime

While violent crimes against foreigners are relatively infrequent, reports of sexual assaults on tourists, and robberies in or near tourist sites, have increased. When travelling around Sri Lanka you should make arrangements through reputable travel companies and exercise caution. Women visitors in particular should take care when travelling alone and be wary of befriending strangers.

Local Travel

Pay particular attention to signs warning of mines, and do not step off metalled roads.

The infrastructure in the north and east remains basic with very limited emergency services, and few hotels or guesthouses. You can travel to Trincomalee, Nilaveli and Arugam Bay but should confine your visit to these places unless it is essential for you to travel outside them. There were civil disturbances in September and October 2003, including in Trincomalee.

Road Safety

Buses are generally badly maintained and bus drivers often have little or no training. Private bus drivers, in particular, drive very dangerously (their pay is dependant on the number of passengers they carry, so they tend to race each other to the next bus station.) Alternative forms of transport should be used where possible. Taxis and hire cars are inexpensive and readily available in Colombo and other tourist areas. However, you should be aware that dangerous driving, poor maintenance of vehicles and bad road conditions are the cause of frequent traffic accidents. If driving yourself, be aware that other road users may behave erratically. You may need to take more care than you are used to. In general, bigger vehicles take precedence. Flashing headlights mean that the driver is not planning to give way (unlike the UK). Motorised rickshaws are readily available for hire in towns and villages, and most drivers are reliable. However, you should exercise caution, for example by changing to a different rickshaw if yours is being driven dangerously. Women in particular should be wary of travelling on their own in a rickshaw at night.

The conflict areas in the north and east were heavily mined and in these regions travel off the main roads should be avoided. Always take notice of signs warning about the danger from mines and do not step off metalled roads. You must comply with instructions at all roadblocks and security checks.

Visitors intending to drive should hold an International Driving Licence validated by the Sri Lankan Automobile Association (SLAA). Licences can be validated over the counter at a SLAA office.

Rail Safety

There have been a number of derailments affecting both tourist trains and commuter trains.

Air Safety

Several new airline companies have recently started flights between Colombo and Jaffna, but their safety and maintenance procedures are unknown. You are advised against all but essential travel to Jaffna.

Useful Numbers

Colombo General Hospital:	11-2691111
Central Bus Stand Pettah:	11-232960
	11-2329605
	11-2329606

Road Passenger Transport

Authority–Western Province:	11-2421731
Colombo Fort Railway Station:	11-2434215
Airport Katunayake:	073 2677

Mobile Phone Tips

To ensure you can still make and receive calls and messages abroad on your UK mobile phone, you need to change the network service to International Roaming before you travel. Contact your UK mobile network provider to ensure your mobile phone is enabled for International Roaming. Do this well in advance as it can take up to 14 days and you cannot do it from overseas. Check your existing handset will also work in the countries you are travelling to as this may not be the case particularly outside Europe. Check with your network provider for the current charges as they can be a lot higher.

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in the Abels Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date Abels cannot accept liability for any inaccuracy.