

# Information about Meditation Centers in Sri Lanka

Year 2015

## *Introduction*

There are many monasteries and meditation centers in Sri Lanka, but only few of these are suitable for foreigners who are new to Sri Lanka and only stay for a short time. The following information is specifically intended for them. Both males and females can stay in all of these places, albeit separate.

The only place where strict, guided ten day courses are held is Dhamma Kuta Meditation Center. For those who are new to meditation, Nilambe Meditation Centre or Dhammakuta Meditation Centre will be suitable. The moderate climate in the hill country around Kandy is more agreeable to those who come from a cool or temperate climate.

Most lay meditation centers charge a small amount of money for the lodgings and food. In monastic meditation centers such as Kanduboda there are no charges, but a donation is appreciated.

It is important to bring all basic personal requisites, such as towels, bed-sheets, toiletry, soap, mosquito repellent, vitamins, medicines, alarm clock, torch, batteries, umbrella, etc., as they are probably not available in the centres.

It is important to respect the local customs and etiquette. Sri Lankan culture is quite traditional. It is normal that laypeople who stay in Buddhist monasteries or meditation centers wear white clothes that cover the whole body. Please don't wear revealing dress, and stay aloof from members of the other sex. When visiting a monastery for the first time it is best to ask a Sinhalese friend to accompany one to give advice with regards the customs and appropriate conduct.

Conditions in meditation centers and monasteries can be simple and somewhat uncomfortable for those used to luxuries and comforts. The food is generally fairly plain and simple, and it can be quite spicy. Many people in Sri Lanka are vegetarian, therefore in many meditation centers and monasteries no meat or fish is served. In some centers fish might be served occasionally, but if one is a vegetarian one can easily refuse without offending anyone. Only a breakfast and lunch are provided in meditation centers. Milk tea and perhaps biscuits will usually be available in the late afternoon or early evening.

There are few infectious diseases in Sri Lanka. However, in some areas, mostly around Colombo, there can be epidemics of dengue fever and chikungunya fever. These diseases are spread by mosquitoes that bite during the day time. It is therefore always good to protect oneself against mosquito bites by using mosquito nets and repellents. Malaria has been eradicated from Sri Lanka. The drinking water is generally of good quality,

nevertheless it is always safer to drink boiled water. The monastery or meditation centre one is staying in can help with finding a doctor or hospital if one needs medical care. It is advisable to use a mosquito-net while sleeping in forest and rural areas so as to keep away mosquitoes and snakes and other dangerous creatures such as scorpions, centipedes, etc.

Public transport is cheap and widely available in Sri Lanka, but one has to be prepared to undergo some hardships. Due to road conditions, hectic traffic and frequent stops it takes a long time to get to a place by bus. Cars or minibuses with drivers can be hired. There are many traffic accidents in Sri Lanka so it is important to wear seat belts and to avoid traveling at night. Three-wheelers are a convenient mode of transport for shorter distances but make sure to settle the price with the driver before getting into one. Trains are the most comfortable and safest way of traveling long distances, but it is best to book seats in advance.

The book *[Sacred Island](#)* by S. Dhammika—published by the Buddhist Publication Society (BPS)—gives detailed information regarding ancient monasteries, sacred sites and pilgrimage places in Sri Lanka.

## ***Kandy District***

### ***Nilambe Meditation Centre***

Nilambe, Galaha. Contact information on: <http://nilambe.net/contact-us.php>

A popular lay meditation centre for western travelers. Both males and females can stay here. The center charges Rs. 800 a day to foreigners for lodgings and food. Although there is a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, there is a strict daily schedule and no or little talking. It is situated in an abandoned tea-estate on top of a mountain-range 15 kilometers south of Peradeniya, near Kandy. It is a quiet area with a cool climate and beautiful views. There is no electricity and conditions are simple. It is best to book a place at the centre at least two weeks before coming. The retreat schedule is available at <http://nilambe.net/retreats.php>. One can not stay here before and after courses. The gate is open from 6am to 5pm.

Godwin Samararatne, a respected meditation teacher, used to be the teacher here. Now the main resident teacher is Mr. Upul Gamage. Other teachers also teach.

From Kandy take a bus to Deltota or Galaha and get off at the Nilambe Bungalow junction, 17 kms after Peradeniya (conductors know the place). From there it is a fairly steep but scenic 40 minutes walk through tea plantations, or one can take a threewheeler. It takes about more than an hour to get to the Nilambe junction when traveling by bus from Kandy.

### ***Dhammakuta Vipassana Meditation Centre***

Mowbray, Galaha Road, Hindagala, Peradeniya. Tel.: Phone: [94](0)81-2385774; (0)81-3837800. Email: [info@kuta.dhamma.org](mailto:info@kuta.dhamma.org). Website:

<http://courses.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schkuta>

A meditation centre where Vipassana meditation courses are given in the tradition of Sayagi U Ba Khin, as taught by S.N. Goenka. The centre is located in an abandoned tea estate on a mountain slope with scenic views and a cool climate. Only intensive 10-day meditation courses are held here, both for males and female. One is not allowed to talk during the courses, except for interviews with the teacher, and there are several group sittings during the day. There are no fixed charges for the courses, but donations are welcome. It is best to book well in advance as the courses are often booked out. One can not stay here before and after courses. It is located 5 km from Peradeniya. Take a Deltota or Galaha bus from Kandy and get out Mowbray, Hindagala. From there take a threewheeler up the mountain or walk, which is more than half an hour walking.

There are two other Vipassana Meditation Centres in the low country, one, called Dhamma Sobha, is at Kosgama near Avissavella (see <http://www.sobha.dhamma.org>), and the other one, called Dhamma Anuradha, is at Kurundankulama near Anuradhapura (see <http://courses.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schanuradha>).

### ***Colombo District***

#### ***Siyane Vipassana Meditation Centre or Kanduboda Vipassana Meditation Centre***

Kanduboda, Delgoda. Tel. 011-2445518; 011-2570306.

E-mail: [siyanevipassana@yahoo.com](mailto:siyanevipassana@yahoo.com) Website: <http://www.insight-meditation.org>

A meditation centre with a long tradition of offering meditation instruction to Westerners. Meditation is taught according to the Burmese meditation tradition of Mahāsi Sayādaw. Women stay in a separate area. There are a few large buildings with rooms and some separate huts. It is surrounded by coconut plantations. Warm and humid climate.

The daily schedule and discipline is more relaxed than in the Mahāsi centers in Burma and there is more individual meditation than group meditation, but one is expected to meditate at least 10 hours a day. The instructors do not speak English well and there might be no good translator around. A stay costs 5000 rupees regardless of the duration of stay. Next door is Sumathipala MC of which the abbot is Ven. Premasiri, who used to be a popular meditation teachers, but now has mostly stopped teaching. There are group discussions with him at 3–4 pm.

The centre is approximately 20 kms east of Colombo. From the CTB Bus Station at Olcott Mawatha, Pettah, take the 224 bus to Pugoda which stops outside the monastery. The 207 bus from Gampaha goes there. The bus trip takes more than an hour.

### ***Other Buddhist Resources***

*Buddhist Publication Society* (BPS), PO Box 61, 54 Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy. Tel: 081-2237283. <http://www.bps.lk>

The BPS has a bookshop with a large assortment of Buddhist books. There is also a reference library.

*Buddhist Cultural Centre (BCC), 125 Anderson Road, Nedimala, Dehiwela.*

A large bookshop. There is a branch bookshop at the junction of Baudhaloka Mawatha and Sarana-road in the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress compound.