

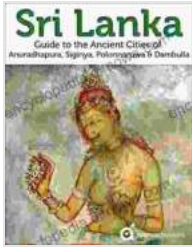
# Unveiling the Historical Treasures of Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, and Polonnaruwa: Your Travel Guide to Sri Lanka's Ancient Capitals



Sri Lanka, an island nation steeped in ancient history and vibrant culture, boasts a rich tapestry of UNESCO World Heritage Sites that transport visitors to bygone eras. Among these historical gems are the ancient cities of Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, and Polonnaruwa, each a testament to the grandeur and ingenuity of Sri Lanka's past civilizations.

**Sri Lanka: Travel Guide to the Ancient Cities of Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla (Approach Guides 2024)** by Approach Guides

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5



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This comprehensive travel guide invites you to embark on a historical pilgrimage to these magnificent cities, offering an immersive exploration of their grand palaces, sacred temples, and awe-inspiring ruins. Prepare to unravel the mysteries of forgotten kingdoms, admire exquisite works of art and architecture, and immerse yourself in the vibrant culture that has shaped these timeless landmarks.

## **Anuradhapura: The Sacred City**

Anuradhapura, the first capital of Sri Lanka, stands as a testament to the island's Buddhist heritage. Founded in the 4th century BC, Anuradhapura flourished for over a thousand years, leaving behind an impressive legacy of religious monuments and architectural wonders.

### **Must-Visit Sites:**

- **Ruwanwelisaya Stupa:** This colossal stupa, built in the 2nd century BC, is one of the most iconic landmarks in Sri Lanka. Its massive white

dome dominates the city's skyline, and its intricate carvings showcase the exquisite artistry of ancient Sri Lankan craftsmen.

- **Sri Maha Bodhi:** This sacred tree is said to be a sapling from the original Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. Planted in Anuradhapura in the 3rd century BC, Sri Maha Bodhi is the oldest living tree in the world and a pilgrimage site for Buddhists from around the globe.
- **Thuparamaya:** This ancient temple is believed to house one of the Buddha's collarbones. Built in the 3rd century BC, Thuparamaya is the oldest Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka and exudes a palpable sense of history.

## **Sigiriya: The Lion Rock Fortress**

Sigiriya, an ancient rock fortress located in the heart of Sri Lanka, is a marvel of engineering and architectural ingenuity. Built in the 5th century AD, Sigiriya served as the palace of King Kassapa I and is renowned for its stunning frescoes, elaborate gardens, and breathtaking views.

### **Must-Visit Sites:**

- **Sigiriya Rock:** This massive rock formation, standing at 200 meters tall, is the centerpiece of Sigiriya. Ascend the 1,200 steps to the summit and be rewarded with panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.
- **Mirror Wall:** Along the ascent to the summit, be sure to marvel at the Mirror Wall, a polished rock face covered in ancient Sinhalese graffiti and poetry.

- **Lion Staircase:** The entrance to Sigiriya Rock features a grand staircase flanked by two colossal lion paws. These paws are all that remain of a majestic lion statue that once stood at the top of the stairs.

## **Polonnaruwa: The Medieval Capital**

Polonnaruwa, the second capital of Sri Lanka, flourished during the 12th and 13th centuries AD. This medieval city is known for its well-preserved ruins, including royal palaces, temples, and irrigation systems that were far ahead of their time.

### **Must-Visit Sites:**

- **Gal Vihara:** This complex of four Buddha statues carved into a granite rock face is a masterpiece of ancient Sri Lankan art. The largest statue stands at 14 meters tall and exudes a serene and majestic presence.
- **Royal Palace:** The ruins of the Royal Palace offer a glimpse into the grandeur of Polonnaruwa's medieval rulers. Admire the elaborate carvings and delicate frescoes that adorn the palace walls.
- **Parakrama Samudra:** This massive reservoir, built in the 12th century AD, was a testament to Polonnaruwa's advanced irrigation system. Take a boat ride across the lake to experience its tranquil beauty and admire the ancient stupas that dot its shores.

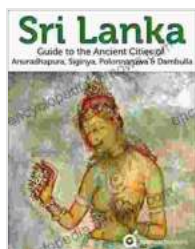
## **Planning Your Trip**

To fully experience the ancient cities of Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, and Polonnaruwa, plan for at least three days of exploration. The best time to visit Sri Lanka is during the dry season, from December to April, when the weather is pleasant and ideal for sightseeing.

To ensure a comfortable and hassle-free trip, consider booking a guided tour with a reputable tour operator. This will allow you to learn about the history and significance of each site in detail and avoid any transportation or logistical issues.

A pilgrimage to the ancient cities of Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, and Polonnaruwa is an unforgettable journey into the heart of Sri Lanka's rich history and culture. These UNESCO World Heritage Sites offer a captivating blend of historical, architectural, and archaeological wonders that will leave a lasting impression on any traveler.

Embark on this historical pilgrimage today, and immerse yourself in the timeless beauty of Sri Lanka's ancient capitals.



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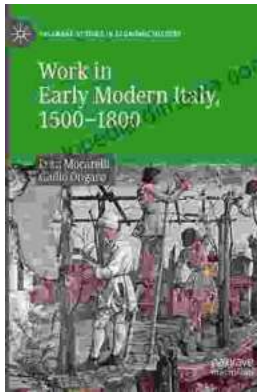
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