

# Volunteering at Singharaja Garden

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Dear Volunteers,

In the last couple of years we already offered this opportunity successfully to many volunteers from Germany and now we would like to invite people from other countries to join the volunteering program at our Singharaja Garden ECO-Lodge in Sri Lanka as well. German is not a must, but a good knowledge of English is required.

In this guide you can find a variety of useful information that will be quite helpful while planning your stay with us in Singharaja Garden but also during your time here. Moreover, we answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the volunteering program. However, you can always contact us directly if you have any further questions.

## **Before you apply:**

The first step before applying is to see if you can identify yourself with our economical and ecological concept here at the Singharaja Garden ECO-Lodge. It is also important that you think about how long you would like to stay as a volunteer and the cost that this implies. For a volunteering period of up to 30 days you need to apply for a holiday visa online under <http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/> . This process is applicable to most countries. Please also check this page for information regarding the fees required. In case you plan on staying longer (up to three months) you need to check the website of your country's Embassy of Sri Lanka in order to get more information about the visa process and the charges for an extended holiday/ tourist visa.

The minimum volunteering period at our lodge is 30 days. According to government information we are required to get a work permit for the time of your stay. However, it is impossible for foreigners in general to obtain such work permits, but we were able to find a solution which is suitable for the government and us. Therefore, we need to emphasize at this point that the entry to Sri Lanka is only possible with a regular holiday/ tourist visa. For this reason it is important that you simply mention your intention of staying at the Singharaja Garden ECO-Lodge for holiday when applying for the visa. It is your responsibility to get the right holiday/ tourist visa. We generally recommend contacting the respective embassy before applying for a visa in order to avoid any problems.

We hope that with this solution we will be able to continue the volunteering program in the future.

The total costs for your individual volunteering stay include the respective visa fees, expenses for flight tickets, our charges for (airport) transfer and accommodation as well as your travel health insurance. The insurance costs vary from country to country. Therefore, you need to compare prices individually. The prices for airline tickets (round trip) depend a lot on the season you are planning to come and can be as high as 900 €.

One month at our ECO-lodge, including accommodation in a single room with en-suite bathroom and full board, costs 700 € per volunteer. You receive a 20% discount on all our

guest tours (Galle Dutch Fort, Bentota Beach, Udawalawe Safari). All other activities at the lodge like yoga, jungle tour, mountain biking and kayaking are free of charge for you and you can always participate when there is spot available. We charge 80 € for the transfer to or from the airport (one way).

You get 1.5 days off per week and an additional 2 holidays per month. You are free to save those days for the end of your trip so that you are able to go on a self-organized round trip through Sri Lanka, for example.

The tropical climate in Singharaja Garden is well balanced throughout the year and we have an average temperature of 28°C during the day and 22°C during the night. We usually get heavy rains from mid-April till the end of June and also in November. The wind is generally very pleasant all year round, sometimes even a little brisk, and comes from south-east (January until April) or from north-west (May until December). However, especially during the first couple of days the weather feels very tropically humid.

Every year in May and June we have our company holiday and the lodge is closed.

Therefore, we do not offer the volunteering program during this period.

Your application should include an informative letter of motivation and your CV with a picture. We recommend contacting us before preparing and sending out the application in order to check if there is still an open spot for your preferred time period. When working as a volunteer at the lodge the ability to work in a team is as important as flexibility, a good attitude towards cleanliness and tidiness and the knowledge of English. Knowing some Sinhalese words and phrases would also be very nice.

### **Preparing your trip:**

As soon as your application is confirmed by us you can book your flight, get a travel health insurance and apply for a visa. You might also want to buy a travel guide about Sri Lanka and a language guide for Sinhalese so you can get to know the country and the language a little bit in advance.

No special vaccinations are needed for this region of Sri Lanka, but all standard vaccinations should be up-to-date and noted in an international vaccination certificate. We do not have that many mosquitoes but we still recommend bringing a mosquito repellent in order to avoid any allergic reactions. Wearing light and long clothes in the evening helps as well. **There is no danger of malaria in our region!**

### **What you should and shouldn't pack in your suitcase/ backpack:**

We do not recommend bringing highly sensitive electronic devices like notebooks/ laptops or expensive smart phones. Hair dryers, curling irons and hair straighteners should also stay at home in order to keep electricity consumption low. An mp3 player, a camera and books are much better choices. You can get a local SIM-card for about 2.00 €, which you can also use for short calls home. Also bring summer clothing, sturdy shoes and hiking trousers for the jungle tours as well as a fleece sweater for cooler evenings and tuktuk tours; bathing trunks/ bathing suit/ bikini for the beach or the lodge pool. In public women should always wear knee-length trousers/ skirts/ dresses and cover their shoulders with a shirt or blouse, men should at least wear longer shorts and a t-shirt/ short-sleeved shirt. This is also applicable to all public volunteering jobs like at school, pre-school or the ECO-lodge. You can wear old summer clothing when working on a construction site or in the garden. All clothes should be stout, practical and robust. You should not bring any white clothes. During your free time you can also wear shorter clothes while at the lodge. A small backpack for hiking tours, a beach

towel, a sun hat, sunglasses and sunscreen with a high UV factor should also be on your packing list. If you wear glasses you might want to bring an extra pair. Packing a flashlight, a pocketknife and a first aid kit also makes sense. You can use our washing machine once a week.

Euros are sufficient as pocket money and you do not have to exchange US Dollars or Sri Lanka Rupees in advance. There is an opportunity to change money at the airport in Colombo. The cash machine in the village nearby also accepts credit cards.

ATTENTION! The possession and importation of drugs can lead to very high penalties in Sri Lanka, in some cases it can even lead to death penalty.

### **Arrival:**

You will be picked up personally at the airport. We will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall. Here you also have the opportunity to change some money. The mere transfer time from the airport to the lodge is 3 to 4 hours. Depending on your arrival time we will stop for some grocery shopping and to get food/ drinks in Colombo. After your arrival in Singharaja Garden you can use the first 2 days to acclimatise yourself and to get to know everything.

### **Projects:**

We offer our volunteers two different forms of volunteer work.

1. Social voluntary service
2. Ecological voluntary service

The social voluntary service is realised in connection with projects supported by our association "New home Beruwale". This can be house construction, pre-school or school projects.

### **House construction:**

In some cases we support very poor families by building a house for them. Our volunteers can help during the construction phase. Simple knowledge of English is sufficient, but we recommend learning some words in Sinhalese in order to be able to communicate on site.

### **Pre-school:**

There is a private pre-school in the village 15 km from our lodge. Here you support the teachers by helping them with their classes, especially with English lessons (easy level). You need good English knowledge and also some Sinhalese to communicate with the teachers and students. You go there by bus which leaves at 7:40 am and it comes back at 1:00 pm.

We pay for the bus service.

### **School:**

If you want to help with regular school lessons it would be nice if your career wish is to become a teacher. We generally prefer volunteers who have already completed a teacher training course at university. If you are interested in this position please contact us for further information.

### **ECO-lodge:**

The work for the ecological volunteer service takes place at our ECO-lodge. Besides our ecological hotel we also have an organic farming project on our 3 ha property. In order to gain insights into a diversified lodging establishment led under CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) aspects we involve you in any activities and tasks at the lodge.

If desired a combination of social and ecological voluntary service is possible as well.

### **Your volunteer period:**

No matter which volunteer form you chose the centre of your daily life will be our Singharaja Garden ECO-Lodge.

During your stay here it is your responsibility to keep your room clean. This means that you need to sweep daily and that you should thoroughly clean your room once a week. In the

tropics it is essential that you keep everything clean. We will explain why when you arrive here. We provide towels and bed linen for the single room which should be changed and washed according to your personal needs. In general, we expect you to keep your room tidy so that everybody could feel comfortable in there.

Helping with kitchen duties (preparing breakfast, lunch and dinner) is also part of the program. If you leave the lodge for work (construction site, pre-school, school) or to go on one of our guided day tours we provide you with a snack, lunch box and a water bottle.

In Sri Lanka you cannot expect everything to go right all the time and therefore there is a chance that we have to cancel your respective project at school, pre-school or one of our construction sites on short notice. If this happens during your volunteering period we will appoint you tasks in the field of the ecological voluntary service here at the lodge. If needed, we also issue a volunteer certificate for you. In return we would like you to write a volunteer report that reflects your feelings and impressions about our volunteering program. This report will be published on our website and in our Facebook group "Volunteering Singharaja Garden". After receiving your volunteer report we will send you the certificate. All things considered we try to keep the amount of rules as low as possible and we do love a relaxed atmosphere.

We are looking forward to an interesting and exciting time with you.