

Sri Lanka: After the Tsunami

Rogier Westerhuis, one of our Sri Lanka specialists and occasional aviation journalist, discusses his aerial impression of the damage caused by the Boxing Day tsunami to the beaches of tropical Sri Lanka, and how the country is now recovering.

“This is one of the most badly hit villages on the east coast!”

The pilot of the helicopter points down below, and the damage is beyond imagination. I was in Sri Lanka to write an article about the role of the Sri Lanka Air Force in supporting the victims of the tsunami, and on a second helicopter flight from Colombo to the colonial town of Galle I got to see how the tidal waves hit the west coast, damaging areas such as Bentota and Hikkaduwa. You could see that only a few of the hotels built on slightly higher ground had been spared.

This year I have been back to Sri Lanka twice to visit some of the same hotels that I had seen from the air just a year earlier. I was pleasantly surprised to see that all the hotels had opened again and were up and running as normal. But that was not the only thing that surprised me; the hoteliers have done an excellent job in repairing the damage, and some have even used the temporary closure to refurbish and further improve the quality of their properties.

What the discerning visitor to Sri Lanka will also notice is that there

are not many other physical traces left from the tsunami. Life along the beautiful coastline seems back to normal. What has not changed as much is the number of travellers visiting Sri Lanka, which is still well below pre-tsunami figures - the people affected by the tsunami rely on tourism to fully rebuild their lives. A visit to this country is a special experience and one that I would highly recommend.

Rogier Westerhuis
Sri Lanka Specialist

FACT FILE

A typical two-week trip, with your own chauffeur guide, starting in the Cultural Triangle and visiting Kandy, the Tea Country and Yala National Park, ending on one of Sri Lanka's golden beaches costs from £1,750 per person. For more information please call Rogier or Jenny on 01993 838 335.

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www.audleytravel.com/srilanka
Details of travel to Sri Lanka

South coast beach

