



## Title, one sentence that summarize your field studies

### Before arrival

I had heard about some people the year above me who had done field studies and I immediately became interested. It seemed like a unique and fantastic opportunity to experience a country I wouldn't experience the same way if I went on a vacation there myself. In the beginning we were very open to what country we wanted to go to, but a goal was Asia. I had never been to Asia before. We started emailing embassies and I asked pretty much everyone I knew if anyone had any ideas on who we should reach out to. Eventually, we found a company in Sri Lanka that worked closely with Swedish companies, which seemed like a great fit for us. We talked with the examiner for our bachelor thesis to get a better understanding of what the requirements of our thesis project was and could discuss with the host company until we found a suitable project within optimization, which is the area we wanted to do our bachelor thesis within.

Before we arrived, we needed to take some vaccinations and apply for Visa. The Visa process was very simple, and we received confirmation within 30 minutes of the application.

### Upon arrival

We arrived on a Saturday to Colombo. When we arrived our host in Sri Lanka picked us up in the airport and we spent the evening with our host and another person from our host company who showed us around Colombo. This evening we went Go Karting which was a very fun experience. In total, we spent eight weeks in Sri Lanka.

### Financials

In general, Sri Lanka was less expensive than Sweden. In Colombo we ate local food, which cost us about 20-50 SEK per meal. Traveling was very cheap, we used an app called PickMe which was the equivalent to Uber. A TukTuk to the office cost us about 15 SEK. We didn't cook food at home that much since we didn't really know how to cook the local food, but since eating out was so cheap it didn't really mean that much of an extra cost. Hotels were also very cheap. We spent the last 12 nights in different hotels, and in total it cost us less than 250 dollars for two people.

### Accommodation

Before arrival, we did a bit of research on where the office was located and how the city of Colombo was laid out. We wanted to stay close to the office and found an apartment via AirBnb which cost us about 7000 SEK for six weeks. We didn't book accommodation for the full eight weeks since our hope



was to do a bit of traveling during the last two weeks. The apartment we stayed in was the top floor of a house where our hosts lived on the lower floor. Our host family was very nice, they took us to the store and helped us if we needed anything in the apartment. We had a nice garden with palm trees and the area in general was calm, it was also very close to the office which was perfect. The only problem we faced was that they had openings above the windows which meant that they couldn't be properly closed and bugs such as cockroaches could get into the apartment... Luckily, we had a spray that could kill them!

### **Project**

Our project was to do a resource allocation algorithm. In short this means that when the company we worked with receives a new tech project, the algorithm determines what developers are most suitable for that project based on competences and availability. The algorithm does not consider factors such as gender or age, with the goal of making unbiased decisions. The algorithm could be something we could continue working on, for example adding more dimensions to it. A typical day during our field studies meant going to the office in Malabe (Colombo) where we worked on developing the algorithm and having meetings with the project manager in charge to make sure that we developed it according to their needs and priorities. We had contact with our host in Sri Lanka mostly for helping us with tips on places we should visit, and other things not related to the project. The person in charge of the project was another employee at the host company. When we were finished with the project we presented it to the company.

### **Country**

We definitely experienced some cultural shocks in Sri Lanka. One small thing that we noticed that was different to Sweden was that they never said goodbye when they hung up the phone, they just hung up. Also, we could sometimes hang out with Sri Lankans and just be there without talking. It felt like they just appreciated being around each other. In general, Sri Lankan people are incredibly kind and accommodating. We felt like princesses when we were there because everyone wanted to make sure that we had the best time possible. It is a Buddhist country, so there were many beautiful temples and Buddha statues practically everywhere.

### Leisure and social activities

During the weekends we usually went on trips. The first weekend after arrival we went to Bentota, which is a small town located on the south coast. Here we went to a river safari, which was a fantastic experience and the first time we saw crocodiles! Sri Lanka has so much to offer in terms of nature and



beaches, so we never got tired of exploring new parts of the country. When we had extra time on the weekdays after the office we went to the city centre of Colombo where we had some drinks on a rooftop bar or went shopping in the mall. The prices in the mall were very cheap compared to Sweden. One weekend we went on a road trip organized by the office which we luckily got to come along on. On that trip we went to the middle of the country and saw elephants. During the last two weeks we were pretty much done with the project and could therefore go on a longer trip. It was a different vibe in the tourist locations compared to Colombo, we appreciated both in different ways.

### Sustainability

In general, we managed to live pretty sustainably. When we went on weekend trips, we tried to take the train as much as we could, the scenery from the train was fantastic. However, the public buses in Sri Lanka are very scary as they drive like crazy which meant that we had to take TukTuk or Taxi to the office or Colombo. Sidewalks were also very limited, so distances that we can walk in Sweden meant taking a TukTuk in Sri Lanka.



**Other recommendations and observations**

I would recommend anyone thinking about field studies to do it! It is such a unique experience and we truly got to experience Sri Lanka as locals, which was such a rewarding experience. And if you have the chance, Sri Lanka is a country that you must visit!