

Advice to visitors

Visitors are allowed to view the Sigiriya archaeological site only from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

After 7 p.m., visitors are prohibited from remaining within the archaeological reserve area.

Please do not bring / use polythene / plastic to or in Sigiriya, which is both an archaeological reserve and an environmental sanctuary. Please put all waste items / garbage into the bins provided.

The Archaeological Ordinance forbids the actions listed below. Archaeological Ordinance forbids the actions listed below. According to the ordinance, these are punishable offences which carry penalties.

Harming, removal, carrying away, despoiling and writing on monuments or archaeological objects

Harming or removal of plants from the archaeological reserve
Do not walk on brick walls, monuments etc, sit on them or place bags on them. Please note that brick walls round the various gardens are also monuments.

Do not walk across the lawns in the Gardens area.

The taking of photographs / videos for commercial purposes should not be attempted without prior permission from the Central Cultural Fund.

Visitors are advised to behave in a disciplined manner within the site. Playing musical instruments, use of loud speakers, radios and consumption of liquor should be completely avoided. The Lion's Paw Terrace contains nests of hornets. Throwing objects at these nests, making a loud noise etc. should be completely avoided. Please note that the actions mentioned above, rouse the hornets, provoking attack.

Partaking of food should be done in places suitable for the purpose.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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SIGIRIYA

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CENTRAL CULTURAL FUND

Help save the glory that is Lanka

World Heritage Site of SIGIRIYA



CENTRAL CULTURAL FUND



Water resource management and technology

Within the entire site, water technology and work of a creative nature related to this technology, show pre-eminence. The ponds of various proportions that grace the Water Gardens show the close affinity between the designer and natural features available at the site and also his skill.

The fountains show how elementary scientific principles were used for creative work. These fountains use both the force of gravity and pressure.

The ponds in the Water Gardens were inter-connected by a system of underground stone conduits. In certain instances, earthenware aqueducts were also used. The run-off from the Water Gardens in its final phase went underground and drained into the outer moat which lay beyond the inner moat.

Map of World Heritage City of Sigiriya



- 1. Outer Rampart
- 2. Outer Moat
- 3. Middle Rampart
- 4. Inner Moat
- 5. Inner Rampart
- 6. Western Entrance
- 7. Southern Entrance

- 8. Northern Entrance
- 9. Water Garden No. 1
- 10. Ambagaspitiya Inscription
- 11. Ancient Plaster
- 12. Water Garden No. 2 (Fountain Garden)
- 13. Southern Summer Place
- 14. Water Garden No. 3

- 15. Octagonal Pond
- 16. Inner City Wall
- 17. Boulder Garden
- 18. Stupa
- 19. Image Cave
- 20. Bodhi-tree Shrine
- 21. Deraniyagala Cave

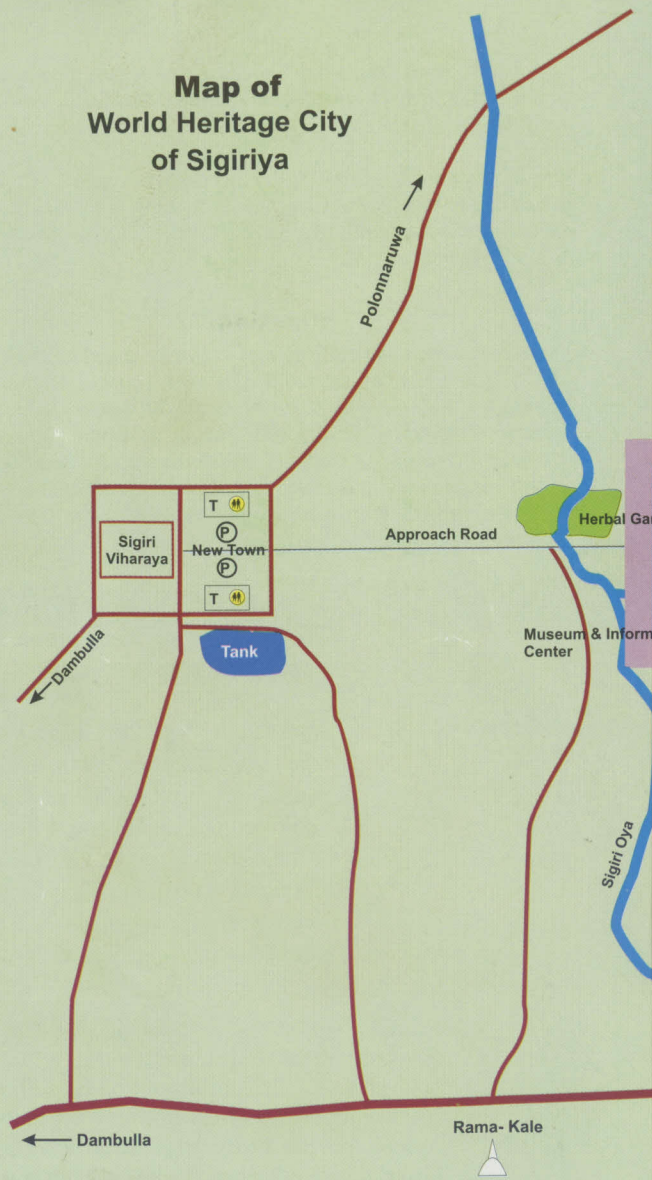
- 22. Cobra-Hood Cave
- 23. Boulder Arch No. 2
- 24. Asana Cave
- 25. Audience Hall
- 26. Plaster With Graffiti
- 27. Boulder Arch No. 1
- 28. Ancient Pathway

- 29. Terraced Garden
- 30. Mirror Wall
- 31. Paintings
- 32. Lion's Paw
- 33. Lion's Paw Terrace
- 34. Palace
- 35. Palace Complex

- 36. Thorne
- 37. Petangala
- 38. Miniature Water Garden
- 39. Preaching Rock
- 40. Cistern
- 41. Count Yard
- 42. Prison Rock
- 43. Mapagala

- Key**
- Main Road
 - Internal Motorable Roads
 - Pathways
 - Toilets
 - Vehicle Park
 - Ticket Counter

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14. Water Garden No. 3



History and Development

Located in the northern extremity of the Matale district, above 350 meters Sigiriya has a striking geological profile, being a rocky outcrop (monodnock), in the northern semi-highland zone. It is one of Sri Lanka's ancient political capitals and most sensational archaeological heritage site that has also been listed on the World Heritage List.

There is sufficient archaeological evidence to prove that the history of Sigiriya goes back to pre-historic times. Aligala, a smaller rock outcrop to the east of Sigiriya, has a cave that has been used by pre-historic man, nearly 5,500 years B.P. In the same site excavations have brought to light what remains of pre-historic human settlements dating back to the 10th - 9th centuries B.C.

Subsequent to this archaeological interest is centered on caves around Sigiriya rock which were built up as cave shelters from the 3rd century B.C. These cave-shelters with drip-ledges were used by monks at the early Buddhist period and the Brachmi rock inscriptions throw light on Buddhist religious activities of the period. However, interest in Sigiriya today is focused on the constructional activities of King Kasyapa I (A.D. 477 - 495). Kasyapa was a son of King Dhatusena (A.D. 459 - 477) by a lesser queen: hence his right to the throne was not a strong one. Assuming the kingship by a palace conspiracy, which led to the execution of his

father, Kasyapa chose to make Sigiriya his seat of administration and reigned for 18 years. According to the eminent archaeologist Prof. Senerat Paranavitana, Sigiriya reflects the sensuousness of a pleasure-loving king, who modeled the city on the mythical Alakamanda of the god Kuvera. This capital city was short-lived and ended abruptly, when Mugalan, the rightful heir to the throne and Kasyapa's half brother, succeeded him. Mugalan, however opted not to rule from Sigiriya and he converted it again into a Buddhist monaster. This second phase of the Buddhist monastery appears to have lasted up to the 12th 13th centuries A.D. After this period, Sigiriya was completely abandoned and was swallowed up by the surrounding jungle, forgotten and quite alone in its glory.

In 1894 H.C.P. Bell, who was the first Commissioner of Archaeology, initiated archaeological research at Sigiriya. In the decade from 1930-40, this research was carried further, under the guidance of Prof. Paranavitana. As Part of the Cultural Triangle program of 1982, archaeological activities at Sigiriya were revived once more by the Central Cultural Fund. Research, conservation and maintenance are the key activities currently undertaken at the site.



International Contacts

Research conducted in and around Sigiriya reveal that its rulers had relations with diverse foreign countries. Roman and Indo-Roman coins found during excavations provide the principal supporting evidence for this surmise. Also, earthenware utensils belonging to the Sassanian dynasty (A.D. 222 - 651) of ancient Persia have been found. Persian influence is plainly seen in the layout of the Sigiriya Water Gardens. At least three of the graffiti verses mention silk from China (verses 219, 221, and 230).





City Planning and Landscaping

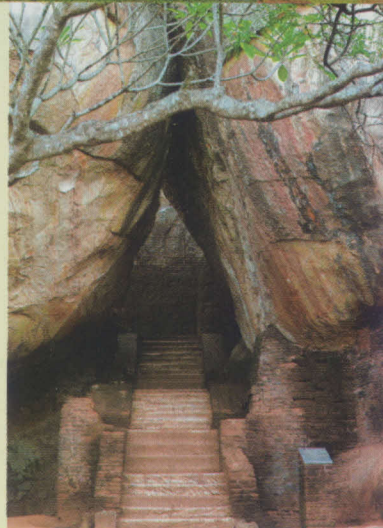
The sigiriya city plan bears a rectangular shape and runs westwards and eastwards from the main rock. The high ramparts and deep moats defending the complex divide it into two distinct precincts located to the east and west of the central rock. The hilly terrain immediately around the central rock is further fortified by a high wall and is the citadel of the complex. The palace complex is



Water Garden

located on top of the central rock at an elevation of 180 meters from the surrounding plain (360 meters above mean sea level)

The Water Gardens, the most striking feature of the Sigiriya city plan, occupy the central portion of the western precinct. This unique creation shows four distinct parts. In Water Garden No. 1, there are four symmetrically arranged 'L' -shaped ponds, creating an island in the middle. This is considered a special feature found in ancient garden designs and is termed 'Charbagh' and this specimen seems to be the most ancient one extant in the world today. Beyond this lies Water Garden No. 2, which is also called the 'Garden of Fountains' Here small ponds, fountains and serpentine streams specially constructed for slow movement of water, will delight the visitor. Water Garden No. 3, perched at the highest level of this water garden system, is markedly different from the others. The axial arrangement and the symmetrical layout of garden structures found elsewhere



in the system is absent in Garden No. 3. In the north of this garden is an octagonal pond, with an 'L'-shaped one directly opposite the central axis. The Miniature Water Garden located to the extreme west, on the other hand has been laid out as an extension and is a 'miniaturized' refinement of the other three garden systems.

The Boulder Garden, located within the citadel, contain boulders of picturesque appearance that are unevenly scattered around the central rock. The routes to the palace on the rock summit are laid out through the boulder garden as winding pathways that are punctuated by natural boulder arches. Summits of several rock boulders have also been fashioned into thrones, cisterns, etc. for ritualistic purposes. Among the unique features of this garden are the 'Audience Hall' where a five-meter long main throne and other low level seats are carved out of the living rock, and the Asana Cave' where a seat is carved out inside a natural cave. The high ground immediately around the base of the central rock is fashioned into a series of roughly concentric terraces. This area is at present termed the Terraced Garden.

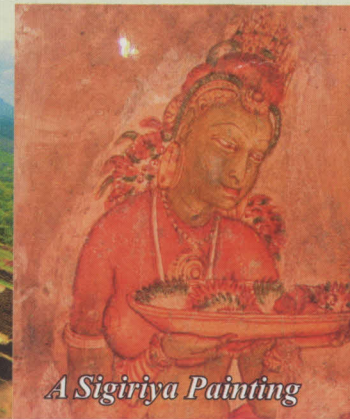
The pathways to the rock summit through the Boulder Garden converge at the southwest base of the main rock to become an elevated and protected walkway. This pathway which traverses the whole of the western rock surface at a considerable elevation from the base of the rock is protected by a parapet wall called the Mirror wall. This wall had been so named due to the mirror-like appearance of its polished surface. This elevated walkway then joins a plateau called the Lion's Paw Terrace, which projects out of the northern rock face. The final

ascent to the royal palace on the rock summit is through a gateway which lies dramatically between the paws of a huge, crouched, lion figure on this terrace.

The Sigiriya rock-summit is 1.5 hectares in extent. The royal palace on the rock lies towards the west, while the palace garden consisting of a large artificial pool and other garden features are located to the east

Paintings

There is evidence that the whole of the western and northern rock faces were originally plastered and painted. The world-renowned paintings of Sigiriya which date from the 5th century A.D. are a supreme expression of Sri Lankan art at its height. Today the paintings are reduced to only 19 female figures, but the Sigiriya graffiti verses reveal a startling fact about their original number. According to these, there were as many as 500 damsels gracing the whole of the plastered rock-face. In the



A Sigiriya Painting

paintings which have survived to dazzle all who see them, the damsels are portrayed in pairs or singly.

Historians as well as archaeologists who have studied these ancient masterpieces come up with varied interpretations. According to H.C.P. Bell, the paintings depict the women of Kasyapa's harem, on their way to worship the Pindurangala Buddhist shrine, close by. The eminent scholar



Terra cotta figurine

Ananda Coomaraswamy takes the view that the figures depict female deities or apsaras.

The views of Prof. Paranavitana on the paintings are based on classical literary traditions. According to his theory, the golden or ochre tinted figures depict lightning, (Vajjukumari) while the dark tinted ones depict thunder (meghalata).

Apart from the paintings in the fresco pocket, traces of paintings can be seen in the caves of the Boulder Garden. The remnants of paintings in the 'Asana Cave', 'Cobra-hood Cave' and 'Deraniyagala Cave' are examples. Terracotta figurines of apsaras (goddesses) similar to the figures in the painting have been

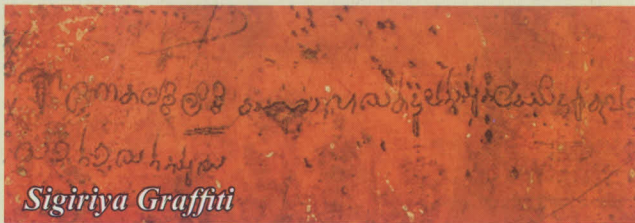


Mirror Wall

unearthed in excavations at the ancient pathways to the rock summit. According to Prof. Senake Bandaranayake who headed a major archaeological project in Sigiriya, these exquisite figurines may have been souvenirs sold to visitors in the past.

The Mirror Wall and Graffiti

The Mirror Wall is a unique element of great importance in the study of the literature of the period. Visitors, who



Sigiriya Graffiti

came to view Sigiriya from the 7th century to the 19th century A.D., have left their impressions recorded on the Mirror Wall. Widely known as the graffiti verses of Sigiriya, these literary compositions date from the 7th - 13th centuries A.D. These scribbled verses on the Mirror Wall are written in praise of the beautiful paintings and the surrounding environment. The verses are additionally of much interest, throwing light as they do, on the socioeconomic context of the time. Prof. Senerat Paranavitana who is widely regarded as the foremost authority on the subject, has read, interpreted and published 685 of these verses in two volumes, in his monumental work, Sigiri Graffiti.



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Lion's Paw

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