

# SIGIRIYA

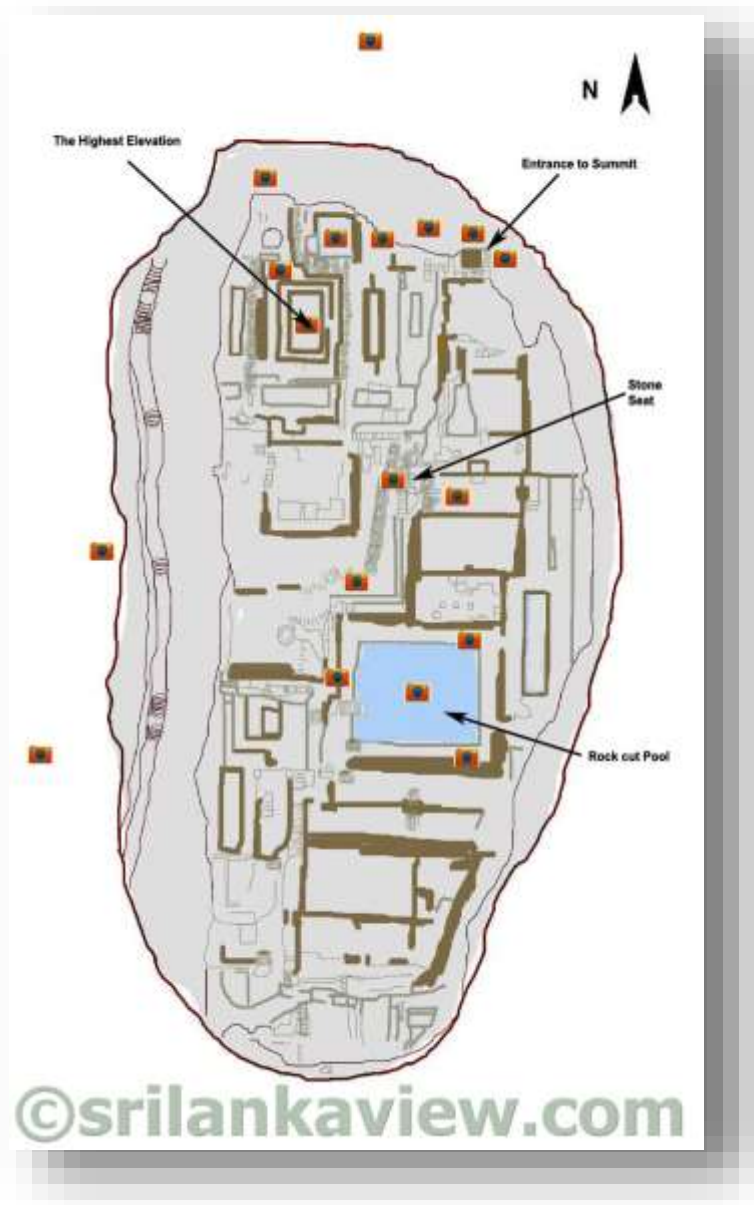
## **INTRODUCTION**

Sigiriya is an exception to the majority of archaeological sites in Sri Lanka. Most of the ruins found in the ancient cities of Sri Lanka depict a religious character. Sigiriya differs from them in being secular, with its pleasure gardens and frescoes of beautiful feminine figures. The royal pleasure gardens are laid out with a beautiful array of ponds, fountains, pavilions and pathways. The high artistic quality of the paintings are visible even today. Sigiriya today is a UNESCO listed world heritage site. It is one of the best preserved examples of ancient urban planning. It is the most visited historic site in Sri Lanka



# LOCATION

Sigiriya is located in the central Matale District of the central province, Sri Lanka in an area dominated by a massive column of rock nearly 200 meters high according to the ancient Sri Lankan chronicle the Culavamsa the site was selected by king Kashapa as his new capital.



# **THE STORY OF SIGIRIYA**

The chronicle tells us the story that king Dhatusena had two sons, Kasyapa and Moggallana. The King also had a daughter whom he loved as his own life and gave her in marriage to his sister's son, Migara, and made him the commander of the Army.

One day Migara told Kasyapa that the King was hiding his treasure for his brother. When Kasyapa asked for this treasure from his father, at first he denied but when he repeatedly asked for it, he went with Kasyapa's messengers to Kalaveva, the reservoir he built, and pointing at the water said: `This here, my friends, is my whole wealth. `Hearing this Kasyapa was filled with fury and got Migara to slay him.

But he could not live in peace for fear of his brother Moggallana. He sought refuge in Sigiriya `which is difficult of ascent for human beings, cleared the land round about, surrounded it with a wall and built a staircase in the form of a lion.

*Thus begins the story of Sigiriya.*





# SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

## THE LION STAIRCASE

One of Sigiriya's most dramatic features is its great Lion Staircase. Originally it has had the figure of a recumbent lion, and from the remaining two paws one can visualize the size and splendor that it must have once. There had been a door between the paws of the lion providing access to the beginning to the staircase through a gaping mouth, leading to the heights of the Sigiriya rock. The rock takes the name from this lion-entrance, Sigiriya, the `lion-rock`



## THE MIRROR WALL

The mirror wall has been built with brick masonry and the surface of the wall has a highly polished plaster finish; hence the name 'Mirror Wall' is used.

Many poets who visited Sigiriya between the sixth and the tenth century have expressed their feelings after seeing the frescoes, and their comments are visible even today on the mirror wall. Those are known as "The Sigiriya" Graffiti. Therefore, they exemplify the status of Sinhala poetry between the sixth to the tenth century.







*We came and as we looked*

*At these golden-coloured ones*

*They gave us no speech*

*But only glances from their motionless eyes, etc....*

## THE FRESCOES OF SIGIRIYA

The famous fifth-century paintings- are known Sigiriya frescoes. They are found on the rock, some hundred meters above ground level. Many interpretations have been given to these figures, mainly of women, but what is generally accepted is that they represent Apsaras or Celestial nymphs, a motif common to the art of Asia.

The plaster on which the frescoes are drawn have been made with a mixture of resin from a tree. Bee's honey have been used to form the foundation of this frescoes. These figures were drawn with a brush on top of this plaster. The technique of painting has been shown to be an oil emulsion tempera with gum. Now only fifty frescoes left from 250 frescoes and the rest diminished.





## THE GARDEN OF SIGIRIYA

Recent excavations by the Cultural Triangle have focused on the unique features of gardens in the Sigiriya complex. According to archaeologists Sigiriya is an example of one of the oldest landscaped gardens in the world. Three distinct but unified forms of gardens have been identified here: water gardens, cave and boulder gardens, terraced gardens encircling the rock.





