

Colombo, Caves & Kandy

8 days | Starts/Ends: Colombo



Discover Sri Lanka's famous cultural triangle and visit the rock fortress of Sigiriya, the exquisite Dambulla cave temple and the historic Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. Add a scenic train trip through the verdant tea plantations and spot wildlife at Udawalawe NP, all in an exciting one week holiday.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Colombo - The Fort area, Galle Face Green and Gangaramaya Temple
- Polonnaruwa - the ancient capital city of Ceylon
- Sigiriya - 5th century fortress ruins
- Dambulla - Rock Temple
- Kayanwala village visit & cookery demonstration
- Matale - spice gardens
- Kandy - city tour including Tuk Tuk ride, Temple of the Tooth and cultural performance
- Giragama Tea Factory - a working tea factory with a long history
- Scenic train ride through waterfalls and tea plantations from Kandy to Nuwara Eliya and drive through Nuwara Eliya's 'Little England'
- Udawalawe National Park - home to the nation's largest herd of Asian Elephants

- Ratnapura - heart of the nation's gem mining industry

What's Included

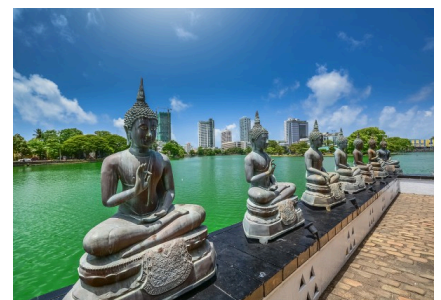
- 7 breakfasts and 1 lunch
- 7 nights 4 - 5 star and heritage properties
- Touring of Dambulla, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, Nuwara Eliya, Udawalawe, Gem Mine and Colombo
- Jeep safari/ game drive in Udawalawe National park
- Scenic train trip Kandy - Nuwara Eliya, canoe and Tuk Tuk trips
- Escorted by an English speaking national guide for group 6 or more (professional chauffeur guide for groups of 5 or less)
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 8
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$50-\$60, paid in local currency
- Entrance Fees: USD\$120-\$140, paid in local currency
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow \$3 - 6 USD per day per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture
- International flights and visas

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Colombo - your way



Saturday. Welcome to Sri Lanka! Airport arrival transfer and remainder of the day at leisure. Our start hotel located on the seafront is a short walk from Galle Road and many of the city highlights. Choose to head out and explore, take a dip in the pool or enjoy a cocktail whilst you watch the perfect sunset over the Laccodive Sea.

Overnight - Colombo

Day 2 : Dambulla & Polonnaruwa



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Colombo - Dambulla - Polonnaruwa - Dambulla. Bidding farewell to Colombo this morning we drive inland to Dambulla, stopping en route at a fruit and vegetable market in Naramwela Town. Dambulla Rock Temple is an incredible ancient complex of caves which date back to the 1st Century BC. The five caves contain over 150 images of Buddha including an impressive 14 metre carved statue.

After exploring this ancient site we continue to Polonnaruwa. This fascinating 11th century city is home to many interesting ruins and famous monuments including the Royal Palace and the Gal Vihara. Polonnaruwa was once the capital and is also the second most ancient city in Sri Lanka. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This evening return to Dambulla for an evening at leisure.

Overnight - Dambulla (B)

Day 3 : Sigiriya & Kandy



Dambulla - Sigiriya - Kandy. This morning we explore Sigiriya and the famous 'Lion Rock' fortress. Built over 1500 years ago, this beautiful citadel stands 200 meters high in the middle of verdant jungle and was an important stronghold of the 70 hectare fortified town. It can be viewed from miles around and is definitely one of Sri Lanka's most iconic and famous sites. You'll be able to view the world famous paintings of the Heavenly Maidens which stand in a sheltered pocket of the rock approached by a spiral stairway.

From Sigiriya we take a bullock cart ride and short canoe trip to the village of Kayanwala. Here, at Kayanwala village we take part in a cookery demonstration in the mud brick home of a local woman and enjoy a freshly prepared

lunch of curry, dahl, spiced rice, pickle and more. En route to Kandy we stop off a spice garden in Matale, to see the different herbs and spices, which Sri Lanka is famous for. You will be introduced to different spices and shown how some of these spices are grown and processed.

Overnight - Kandy (B, L)

Day 4 : Kandy Temple of the Tooth



This morning we take a sightseeing tour of Kandy - the last capital of the Sri Lankan kings. The name Kandy conjures visions of splendour and magnificence. Many of the legends, traditions and folklore are still lovingly kept alive. Our first stop will be the Temple of the Tooth Relic. Legend has it that one of Buddha's teeth was taken from him as he lay on his funeral pyre. It was then smuggled into Sri Lanka in 313AD. It now attracts daily pilgrims who come bearing lotus flowers and frangipani. After driving around the Kandy Lake - built by the last Sinhala king Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe in 1798, visiting the local bazaar and a gem museum we take a Tuk Tuk ride up into the hills to look down upon the city.

This afternoon we visit a working tea factory at Geragama en route. Geragama Tea Factory is located in close proximity to the city of Kandy was established in the year 1903, manufacturing 'Low Grown' and 'Long Leaf' tea.

This evening, we watch a cultural performance of traditional Sri Lankan music and dance this evening. **Overnight - Kandy (B)**

Day 5 : Scenic Train trip & Tea Plantations



Kandy - Nuwara Eliya. This morning offers free time before transferring to Peradeniya railway station for a scenic train journey through tea plantations and waterfalls up to Nanu Oya. On arrival at Nanu Oya railway station we transfer to Nuwara Eliya - Sri Lanka's most popular hill resort because of its invigorating mountain climate and scenery. Nuwara Eliya is also the heart of Sri Lanka's tea country producing a significant share of the world's best tea. Sri Lanka's highest mountain Pidurutalagala is located here and can be seen on the trip.

This afternoon we take a sightseeing tour of Nuwara Eliya on a beautiful drive through 'Little England'.

Please note: There are two trains departing from Kandy, due to availability we cannot guarantee which departure could be given in advance. **Overnight - Nuwara Eliya (B)**

Day 6 : Udawalawe NP Jeep Safari



Nuwara Eliya - Udawalawe National Park. Today we head south to Embilipitiya, our base for exploring Udawalawe National Park. This national park is probably one of the best places to spot the famous Sri Lankan Elephant, the biggest of all the Asian Elephants. It is thought that there are around 400 elephants here. The

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park is also home to the elusive leopard, the Sri Lankan Sloth Bear and lots of types of deer. We take an afternoon game drive here before returning to the hotel for the night. **Overnight - Udawalawe National Park (B)**

Day 7 : Colombo City Tour



Udawalawe National Park - Colombo. We begin our final journey back to Colombo this morning with a visit to the Gem Mine and Museum at Ratnapura. Sri Lanka is famous for its gem industry and is home to 40 out of the 85 types of gems in the world.

Arriving to Colombo, we commence a city tour seeing the Fort area in the north of the city, famous for its government buildings and interesting shops. Taking a stroll along Galle Face Green we'll see kite flying and informal games of cricket being played before heading over to the somewhat unique Gangarama Temple. Colombo has lots of beautiful temples which are all intricately-carved and it's also a great place to shop. Fashion, both branded and unbranded is widely available in the capital, as are souvenirs, books, arts and crafts and electronics. **Overnight - Colombo (B)**

Day 8 : Goodbye Sri Lanka

Saturday. Today offers free time for you to independently explore the city, before included departure transfer to the airport. (B)

10 August 2019 - Kandy Festival Tour

Our 10 August 2019 tour will be in Kandy for the city's most famous festival - Esala Perahera, also known as The Festival of the Sacred Tooth or the Kandy Festival. Here, we will attend the colourful Kandy Festival pageant on the evening of day 3 and are likely to see more festivities as we enjoy our Kandy city tour the following day.

The entrance fee for this pageant is included in the cost of this tour.

For ten consecutive days every year this laid back Sri Lankan hill city erupts into a whirlwind of colour and activity. Dancers in colourful silk costumes and over one hundred ornately decorated elephants parade through the streets backed by the rhythm of beating drums. There is also fire twirling, cracking of whips, cane dancing, fire walking and other cultural dances. The pageant commences at the golden Temple of the Tooth, which once housed a tooth of Buddha, and in a public display that dates back to 310 AD a replica of the revered relic is paraded through the city in a golden casket by the chief elephant. Spend the evening of day 3 joining in the revelry of this exhilarating Buddhist festival!

Guides & Groups

Our longest group tour in Sri Lanka is our Sri Lanka Northeast Explorer – 12 day tour. All other group tours that we offer are sectors of this larger tour. As such on your holiday you may have travellers join you part way through your tour or end their holiday when you continue on. You also may have a number of escorting guides throughout your tour, ie one guide escorting days 1-5 then another for the remainder of the holiday.

Whenever there is 6 persons or more on your holiday you will have a tour guide escorting/travelling along with you. Your guide will conduct the sightseeing arrangements, or accompany you where the local law dictates that a local guide must conduct the sightseeing in this region. Where the group number is less than 6 persons you will travel from place to place with a driver and meet a local guide at each new destination that will conduct your sightseeing arrangements in this location.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Visas

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Sri Lanka.

All nationalities require a visa to enter Sri Lanka. Your visa application must be submitted to the Ministry of Emigration and Immigration via the online ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation) prior to departure.

To apply for your ETA visit www.eta.gov.lk

This is a very simple process and requires no additional documents. You must fill in the required information and once the visa is approved, you will be notified with an ETA approval notice promptly. All passenger travelling to Sri Lanka will be required to make a payment of USD \$50 per person following the same ETA process.

The Visa issued will be a Double-Entry Tourists Visa applicable for 30 days from the date of arrival to Sri Lanka.

The Maldives

Nationals of the United Kingdom, the EEC, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA (if resident in the UK) currently do not require a visa in advance of entry to the Maldives if stay is less than 30 days. Holders of RSA passports must obtain a visa for the Maldives prior to departure.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Sri Lanka from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Typhoid are strongly recommended. You are also advised to take anti-Malarial medication.

Water

As tap water is not safe to drink in Sri Lanka, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants. You should also avoid salads which may be washed in unhygienic water.

Currency

The currency of Sri Lanka is the Sri Lankan Rupee.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars or other major currencies can be exchanged only in Sri Lanka, as the Rupee is presently exchangeable only in destination. The Rupee is non-exportable, so

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spend it all before you leave! There are plenty of money changers in Colombo, at the airport, in the street and at hotels. A growing number of ATMs in Colombo and Kandy accept foreign-issued cards. Credit cards are widely accepted for purchases. Visa and Mastercard withdrawals can be performed at banks.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Entrance Fees & Tip Kitty

Entrance fees are not included within the cost of our Group Tours and need to be paid locally in Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR). They will be collected on day 2 of your tour.

If travelling to India on our Delhi to Colombo tour, entrance fees for the India section of your tour will be collected in INR, then for the Sri Lankan section of your holiday in LKR.

Note: Entrance fees are included on our Safari in Sri Lanka tour.

TIPPING

Tipping is not a natural part of many Western cultures and many of us feel uncomfortable, or unsure about when or how much to tip. However in Sri Lanka tipping makes up a significant part of many people's wages so it's important that we get it right. For this reason we've developed a very simple system on our Group Tours to take all the hassle out of tipping.

With our 'tipping made easy' policy, a nominal pre-determined amount is collected from all group tour participants to cover tips en route. This then saves you the hassle of when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, local guides and other support staff through the tour. The tipping kitty amount is noted under 'Exclusions' on the first page of these Trip Notes.

PLEASE NOTE: The tipping kitty is to be paid in LKR and it will be collected on day 2 of your tour. If travelling to India on our Delhi to Colombo tour, tipping kitty for that section of your tour will be collected by your guide in India and payable in India Rupees (INR).

Our 'tipping made easy' doesn't include a tip for your group tour guide, where we suggest an amount of approx USD\$3 - 7 per day multiplied by the duration of your tour. Naturally though, the amount is up to you. The tip for your guide is an entirely personal gesture.

Note: We do not collect a tipping kitty on our Safari in Sri Lanka tour or on our Private Tours, where you can tip at your own discretion.

Climate

Situated in the Indian Ocean, at the base of the Indian Sub-Continent and around 880km north of the equator, the island nation of Sri Lanka has a pleasant tropical climate and despite its two short monsoon seasons has no 'off-season' as such. The average temperature of the low lands ranges between 25 - 30 degrees C, with higher temperatures in April. The hill country is particularly popular at this time of the year where temperatures can be 5 to 8 degrees cooler during the day, yet rather chilly at night. The two monsoons are the southwest from May to July, affecting south/west/central areas and the northeast from September to November, affecting north/east areas. Despite intermittent rain, the sun does shine and the days are warm, unlike the partnering of rain and cold weather in Europe.

Time and Voltage

Sri Lanka is 5 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Sri Lanka does not observe daylight saving.

Standard voltage is 230 - 240V; 50Hz AC. Sockets are of the 3 round-pin variety, similar though not identical to European sockets. Use a power adaptor with a hairdryer or other appliances.

What to Pack

- Suitcase or frameless backpack/rucksack if preferred
- Small day bag for your camera, water, sunglasses, i-Pod etc.
- Please see the heading 'Etiquette' for recommendations on what/what not to wear
- Personal first aid kit
- Sunglasses, hat, umbrella, money belt
- DEET - based industrial strength mosquito/ insect repellent

- High factor sunscreen and bathers/swim costume
- Anti-bacterial hand gel/wet wipes and flat pack toilet paper/tissues
- Universal adapter for your hairdryer, i-Pod or digicam
- Two spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport in case of loss or theft
- Although film is available at similar prices to the UK or Australia, it is advisable to carry all you anticipate using from the UK, particularly if your camera uses the APS 'drop-load' film
- Spare camera batteries, especially if you possess a digital camera, which requires specialist high-power batteries
- Pack as light as possible to leave room for the souvenirs!

Food and Drink

Sri Lanka offers a diversity of cuisine. The national dish is rice and curry (even for breakfast!). A typical Sri Lankan meal consists of a 'main' curry that could be fish or meat with several side dishes including vegetables, chutneys and 'sambol'. Made of ground coconut, onion, chilli, dried fish and lime, sambol is fiendishly hot.

Excellent seafood can be found along the coast, including local crab, prawns and tuna. Local specialities include appa or hoppers which are small rice-batter pancakes eaten with palm treacle and yoghurt.

Roti stuffed with fresh chilli, onions and cooked eggs, griddled meats or fish are also popular. Kotu roti is chopped roti with onions, vegetables and meat.

Colonialism left an indelible stamp on the local cuisine. A popular Dutch-Portuguese dish is Lamprais (rice steeped in stock with a special curry), accompanied by frikkadels (meatballs), baked and served in banana leaves.

Sri Lanka grows some of the finest tea in the world for export. Your best chance for a good cuppa is in the hill country, where tea plantations and hotels serve the pick of the locally harvested crop.

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Trading Hours

- Generally 0930 – 1300hrs and 1400 – 1900hrs or later
- Shops are closed on Sunday. In tourist areas, shops are open from 1000 – 2200hrs, including Sunday
- Markets are open 0800 – 1830hrs Monday – Saturday (limited sections on Sun)
- Banks are open 0830 – 1230hrs and 1330 – 1700hrs Monday – Friday

Shopping

Sri Lanka is excellent for gemstones especially sapphires, moon-stones and cats-eye. Other items to look out for include spices, wood carvings and other handicrafts, clothing of types, batik and hand-woven textiles, brassware, handmade lace from Galle and of course tea. Tea varies in quality, so if you're buying in bulk, ask for a tasting! If seeking modern local chic, Colombo offers a selection of department stores and stylish boutiques. Refrain from buying souvenirs made of coral (creation of this sort of tourist that contributes greatly to the destruction of Sri Lanka's reefs), ivory or the hides of endangered animals.

IMPORTANT: Set your budget and don't be swayed, remember the caveat – 'Let the buyer beware'. Any purchases made whilst on holiday with us, irrespective of whether the store is recommended by us or other, are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with the product you are purchasing and the delivery arrangements (we would recommend you take away with you any purchases rather than rely on shipping services). On The Go cannot be held responsible or accountable for items bought in country or shipping arrangements. We will not become involved later in your holiday or once you return home should your purchase not live up to your expectations. Proceed with caution.

Etiquette

Despite the inevitable ups and downs of travelling abroad, you will generally be shown great hospitality in Sri Lanka. In return, please demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the local customs. Sri Lanka is a conservative country; so care should be taken to dress respectfully in large cities and towns, for example when at markets or public places.

- Don't try to sneak into temples and mosques that forbid non-Hindus or non-Muslims
- Never touch a carving or statue of a deity within a temple
- Do not touch locals on the head or point the soles of your feet at a person, religious shrine or image of a deity. This is very disrespectful
- Take care to dress conservatively and ensure that limbs are covered when entering any place of religion. Please also ensure footwear and headwear is removed if entering any Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim place of worship
- Both ladies and gentlemen will need to dress conservatively and cover all shoulders and knees when visiting any sacred site in Sri Lanka including Dambulla, Kandy Temple of the Tooth, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura. Men and Women are not permitted to wear headgear or footwear at sacred sites in Sri Lanka - these must be removed prior to entry
- Ladies should avoid wearing 'clingy, tight or suggestive attire, and stick to cool, flowing cottons in busy city areas and markets. T-shirts are fine!
- Beach attire is fine on beaches, in a resort or by a hotel pool and at tourist sites but ladies, avoid wearing bikini tops anywhere but on the beach or at the pool
- Nudity and topless bathing are prohibited. Heavy fines can be imposed
- Displays of intimacy are not considered suitable in public
- Ex-military style clothing should not be worn
- It is polite to ask permission before taking photos of people
- Use your right hand for giving, taking, eating or shaking hands as the left is considered to be unclean
- Don't be surprised if you are frequently the centre of attention when travelling around the country. Staring unabashedly is not a social taboo
- Do carry toilet paper with you (or adjust to the Sri Lankan habit of using water instead), but don't throw it down the toilet without first checking to see if there's a basket to put it in (narrow pipes clog easily)
- Don't be surprised to see men defecating or urinating in public when restrooms are not readily available. Women, in the same circumstance, tend to use cover of darkness and huddle in groups
- Mosques are open to non-Muslims but cannot be visited during prayer time, particularly noon on Friday
- Photography is prohibited in certain sections of sacred sites. Do not attempt to be photographed with Buddhist bhikkus (monks) or to pose for photos with statues of Buddha or other deities or paintings
- Do be open and friendly in conversations with locals. Sri Lankans can be quite talkative, asking strangers questions (about marital status, salary, etc.) that might be interpreted as overly personal in other cultures

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