



## Sri Lanka – ‘The Isle of Serendipity’

November to April; 16D/15N ex London or 15D/14N Colombo to Colombo

Our Sri Lanka adventure will take you from the spectacular ancient cities of the Central Plains and ‘Cultural Triangle’ through Kandy, the scenic hill country and its tea estates, to the beautiful and undeveloped Southern Coast. The flourishing wildlife and stunning scenery of Yala West and Horton Plains National Parks, plus no less than six [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#) as well as ample time for relaxation and opportunities to ‘do your own thing’, make this tour an ideal introduction to the magnificent island of Sri Lanka.



**Day 1** Departure from UK.

**Day 2** Arrival in Colombo, meet your tour-leader and transfer to nearby Negombo on the island’s west coast for some relaxation time after your flight.

**Day 3** Morning drive to our first [UNESCO World Heritage](#) site, Dambulla, location of Sri Lanka's finest cave temples, dating back to the 1st century BC. In the afternoon we’ll continue to Habarana where we’ll stay at a forest lodge - the base for our 2 day exploration of the ‘Cultural Triangle’.

**Day 4** Head to the picturesque medieval capital of [Polonnaruwa](#) – another World Heritage site - for a guided tour of it's historic temples and exquisitely carved statues with a late afternoon return to Habarana.



**Day 5** Early morning ascent of the rock fortress of Sigiriya itself to view the surrounding countryside at dawn. Tour of Sigiriya's rock palace, cliff paintings and ornamental gardens before heading south to Kandy, one of the principal points of the Cultural Triangle. The second city of Sri Lanka has a picturesque lake-side setting, a rich historical and cultural heritage, a comfortable Mediterranean-type climate, and again, World Heritage Site status. Overnight at a picturesque colonial-style hotel.

**Day 6** Morning at leisure with an afternoon visit to the beautifully kept and well-presented [Peradeniya Botanic Gardens](#) on the outskirts of Kandy. In the evening, experience the Buddhist puja (blessing ceremony) at the Temple of the Tooth, which houses Sri Lanka's most revered religious relic. (Yes, one of Buddha's teeth!)

**Day 7** Transfer to Kandy railway station for a scenic train journey into the upper Hill Country, passing through tea plantations and past spectacular waterfalls on our way to Nuwara Eliya, the former British capital of the Hill Country and the highest town in Sri Lanka at 1,900 m above sea level. On arrival, a tour of a working tea factory to see how 'two-leaves-and-a-bud' turns into your daily cuppa! Accommodation at Nuwara Eliya.



**Day 8** Drive to Horton Plains for an early morning trek through the heath and forest of Horton Plains National Park, via Baker's Falls, in time to see the awe-inspiring views at World's End before the cloud sets in. Continue on to Ella for a relaxing afternoon in the cool mountain air of Ella Gap.

**Day 9** Free day in Ella. Explore the surrounding area, hike through the hills or just relax on your hotel balcony and admire the superb views?

**Day 10** Drop down from the Hill Country to the southern plain over 1,000 m below and continue across the hot and dry southern plain to Yala. Afternoon jeep safari in Yala West National Park, Sri Lanka's principal wildlife reserve, which has the highest density of leopards in the world. Other inhabitants include elephants, sloth bears, sambar deer, spotted deer, wild boars, crocodiles, wild buffaloes, mongooses, jackals, monkeys, and over 150 species of birds. Transfer to a jungle treehouse for the night. The isolated treehouse is in the buffer zone of Yala West National Park and is positioned high up in the leaf canopy. The treehouse stay will include a BBQ dinner, picnic breakfast and a campfire, (marshmallows and singing NOT compulsory!).

**Day 11** Leave the park and enjoy a leisurely drive west along the picturesque southern coastline to laid back Tangalle overlooking the Indian Ocean and where we'll stay in a secluded beach resort set in a coconut grove next to a pristine bay.

**Day 12** At leisure at Tangalle checking out the beach, going for a swim or exploring the area. Other options include a morning [whale watching](#) boat trip at nearby Mirissa\* where sperm, humpback and blue whales are occasionally spotted as well as pods of dolphins, or a bird watching boat safari through the lagoons and mangroves of Kalametiya Sanctuary, a coastal wetlands teeming with bird life. (\*Note this option is dependent upon weather and sea conditions but can be booked once in place without prior reservation.)



**Day 13** At leisure in Tangalle with an evening trip to the Turtle Conservation Project at nearby [Rekawa](#).

**Day 14** Continue along the southern coastline to Galle for a guided tour of the Old Dutch Fort, another World Heritage Site. Amble around the ramparts and stroll through the Arab Quarter. Overnight in Galle.

**Day 15** Morning at leisure relaxing in this wonderful setting. A boat trip through some mangrove swamps or a visit to some nearby tropical gardens are options for the more energetic. Afternoon drive north along the west coast back to Negombo, via Colombo.

**Day 16** Transfer to the airport for the flight back to the UK.

**Note:** This tour is offered with or without return flights from London to Colombo - those persons not wishing to take up the flight option should join the tour on day 2 in Colombo and would finish the tour in Colombo on day 15.

**Highlights:** Kandy, Polonnaruwa ancient city, Sigiriya rock fortress, Dambulla cave temples, the Hill Country, train journey, Horton Plains National Park, Yala West National Park, Indian Ocean beach stay, Galle, optional whale watching trip, local food

**Accommodation:** hotel, safari camp, guesthouse, beach chalet

**Transport:** minibus, train, jeep

**Fitness:** easy to moderate – maximum hiking 3-4 hrs on day 8.

**Meals:** full board except for lunch on days 2, 6, 12 & 13 and dinner on days 5, 6, 11, 12, 13 & 15



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