

Sri Lanka

Depart Cairns 14 July at 10.55AM arrive Singapore 3.25PM – Silk

Depart Singapore 14 July at 10.40PM arrive Colombo 11.55PM – Singapore Airlines

Accommodation: Covanro IN: 14 July OUT 15 July

Commence the following tour in Colombo on the 15 July and ending in Colombo on the 30 July

- Day 1

Start Veyangoda.

The group flight arrives at Colombo's Bandaranaike Airport and we transfer to our hotel approximately 30 minutes away. Those not flying with the group will meet us at the hotel. The Covanro or alternative accommodation in the area

- Day 2

Visit cave temples at Dambulla; to Sigiriya.

We depart after breakfast for the drive (approx. 4 hours) through lush green countryside (a mix of coconut palms, paddy fields and banana plantations) through Kurunegala to Dambulla. Here we visit the magnificent Cave Temple, for some, the most impressive sight in Sri Lanka. There are colourful, well preserved paintings and statues of Buddha inside the caves, which date back to the 1st century BC. After lunch we continue to Sigiriya where we stay for the night. From our hotel we can see Lions Rock rising up from the plains (occasionally we may stay nearer to Dambulla due to hotel availability).

Hotel Sigiriya or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 3

Morning climb to the rock fortress; optional afternoon game drive.

This morning we drive to the foot of the Lions Rock at Sigiriya. The imposing 5th century rock fortress of Sigiriya rises 600 feet from the plains overlooking the surrounding countryside and giving far-reaching views. Used as a safe haven from invaders, the route to the top goes via a series of steep steps and gangways. From the base, where a moat surrounds impressive water gardens, we ascend 200m, passing an overhanging rock under which superb portraits of native maidens holding flowers and temple offerings still adorn the rock wall. Crowning the flat-topped summit of the rock are extensive remains of the King's Summer Palace.

During the afternoon there is a chance to enjoy an optional game drive in either Minneriya or Kaudulla National Park or the Hurulu Eco Park to see elephants in their natural habitat. For those who don't want to take part, there is time to relax at the hotel.

Hotel Sigiriya or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 4

To Giritale; bike ride through country villages.

This morning we have a short drive to Giritale where our usual hotel overlooks the scenic Giritale Tank. The island's early inhabitants solved the dual problem of heat and lack of water in this dry area by constructing large tanks to act as reservoirs and cool the warm breeze. Nowadays they provide an important habitat for bird life, particularly from August to April. Today we take to bikes and cycle at a leisurely pace through a series of small villages and lakes (if you don't want to cycle you can follow the group in the support vehicle). We should see plenty of bird life including Egrets, Brahmany kites, Kingfishers and Bulbuls. Stopping for lunch in a traditional village will break up the journey. In the late afternoon we

return to our hotel in Giritale.

Giritale Hotel or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast Lunch

- Day 5

Visit ancient capital of Polonnaruwa; drive to Kandy via spice garden.

After breakfast we take a short drive to the 10th century capital of Sri Lanka; Polonnaruwa, the ancient capital of the Sinhalese. Here there are many Buddhist relics and ruins dating from a thousand years ago when Sinhalese culture reached its zenith. The city flourished in the 12th century after the decision was made to move the capital from Anuradhapura, so it was further away from incursions from Southern India. The ruins are therefore younger and better preserved than those at Anuradhapura. We visit many of the temples, palaces, huge dagobas (Buddhist stupas) and remarkable Buddhist sculptures. After lunch we head into the hills to the picturesque town of Kandy. On the way we stop at a spice garden near Matale where we can see various spices and herbs growing, and there is a chance to stock up on massage oils, spices and Ayurvedic medicines. This is a long but fascinating day and we arrive at Kandy in the early evening.

Hotel Thilanka or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Days 6-7

Free time in Kandy to explore or relax.

Kandy is located by a small lake and we spend two full days in and around the town. On the first day we will visit the Temple of the Tooth, which houses Sri Lanka's most important Buddhist relic. The Tooth of Buddha was taken from the funeral pyre in 543 BC and only found its way to Sri Lanka in the 4th century AD. There are literally hundreds of worshippers who visit the temple each day and in August the most spectacular ceremony takes place. Some of our trips in August should coincide with the Kandy festival, but the exact dates, decided by priests, are not known until 5 months prior to the event. After our visit we drive to a beautiful viewpoint over Kandy overlooked by a huge Buddha, and visit a gem museum where you can see the products of the traditional methods of gem extraction. Another highlight is the vast Peradeniya Botanical Garden with species of orchid that are endemic to Sri Lanka. In the evening we may have the chance to attend a performance of dancing and fire walking.

The second day is free to explore this wonderful town. The surrounding hills are wonderful, offering fantastic views of the town below and there are many handicraft stores and antique shops in which to browse.

Hotel Thilanka or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 8

To Nuwara Eliya via Kitulgala; optional Adams Peak climb (Dec-Apr only).

Leaving Kandy early, we have a spectacular drive through the countryside on the way to Kitulgala. Here we have the opportunity of going on a walk through the jungle or local villages followed by an optional white water rafting excursion. The rafting costs extra (see the Optional Excursions section), lasts a maximum of 1.5 hours and there is a choice of gentle or wild water (grade 3 rapids) depending on your preference. Those of us who do not wish to go rafting will be able to freshen up and relax by the water until the rafters return in time for lunch. Afterwards we will drive to our hotel in Nuwara Eliya.

(Please note that from the full moon day of December to the full moon day of May it is possible to climb Adams Peak. This is optional and you need to be very fit to attempt this. You would leave Nuwara Eliya at 11pm on day 8 and drive to the base of the peak. From

here it is a strenuous 4 hour climb to the top in time for sunrise. We then return to Nuwara Eliya to join the group for lunch on day 9).

Hill Club Hotel or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 9

Free morning in old colonial hillstation of Nuwara Eliya. Visit tea factory in afternoon.

This morning we will have free time to explore the beautiful town of Nuwara Eliya. Nuwara Eliya was a popular hill station during the British era and is situated in the cool highland air at 1890m. Known locally as 'Little England' it is dotted with British style houses and parks and features a golf club and a racecourse! Following lunch we will visit a nearby tea factory and learn about the process of tea production.

Hill Club Hotel or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 10

Early morning to Horton Plains; walk to World's End viewpoint; to Bandarawela by train.

We have an early start this morning and take a 30km drive south to Horton Plains, a large plateau over 2,000m high, overlooked by the second and third highest peaks in Sri Lanka.

The scenery is beautiful and the best way to explore is on foot. We take a guided walk through the rolling grasslands where we hope to see such as the Sambur and Purple Faced monkey. We also visit 'World's End' which is one of the most stunning sights in Sri Lanka where the ground drops 1050m to the plains. Following this we catch a train from the highest railway station in the country - within an hour and a half we drop from 1889m to 1097m. The train travels through the cloud forest into the tea plantations, with breath-taking views of the lush valley below. Although the train can be very busy on occasion, this is still a great experience. We get off at Bandarawela, a town relatively untouched by tourism.

Orient Hotel or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 11

Scenic drive through Ella Gap to Kataragama; game drive in Yala N.P.

Today we continue on to Ella Gap where we have spectacular views of the coastal plain nearly 1,000m below. Almost the entire southern part of the island is in view and on a particularly clear day the shimmering silver of the Indian Ocean is visible. Heading south out of the hills we travel to Kataragama on the plains; this is our base for visiting Sri Lanka's best known national park, Yala. The park is popular for elephant, leopard, bear, crocodile and Wild boar. At 97,800 hectares, this is the second largest of Sri Lanka's national parks. Its open undulating terrain made it famous for elephants for many years, but recently the park has also become better known for leopard. The park, which is primarily shrub jungle with several salt and fresh water lagoons, has one of the highest concentrations of leopard per square kilometre in the world. (Please note that the sanctuary may be closed for 4-6 weeks from September to October allowing the park authorities to check the welfare of the animals. We therefore go to an alternative area close by, usually Udawalawe National Park).

Mandara Rosen or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 12

Drive to Tangalle and walk through rice paddies; coastal drive to Ahangama; optional lunch at Tsunami house.

Today we leave for the coast, with its beautiful palm fringed bays. Stopping on the way at Hambantota and walking to a nearby farm house where you be offered tea in a coconut shell along with a local snack. We will mix with real Sri Lankan life and take part in some traditional Sri Lankan games, returning to our bus in tractors used by the farmers. We have

the option of enjoying lunch at one of the houses that we built for Tsunami victims; this may be one of the best curries of your trip! Continuing on to Ahangama in the afternoon we arrive at our coastal hotel and you can relax for the rest of the day.

Insight Resort or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 13

Free day to relax on the beach or optional activities including whale watching (Nov to April). Today is a free day to relax on the beach or by the hotel pool. There are also optional activities during the day including a boat ride through mangrove swamps to a cinnamon plantation or, from November to April you can go whale watching off Dondra head, one of the best places in the world for seeing Blue and Sperm whales. Huge pods of dolphins are also often seen playing alongside the boats.

Insight Resort or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 14

To Galle; visit old fort and turtle hatchery; transfer to Colombo.

We set off today and drive along the coastal road to the historic port of Galle, visiting a turtle hatchery on the way. Galle dates back to the 17th century, and now a UNESCO world heritage site. We take the express way to Colombo reaching our hotel in the late afternoon.

Hotel Mirage or alternative accommodation in the area

Meals included: Breakfast

- Day 15

End Colombo.

The trip ends after breakfast. Those on the group flights will be taken to the airport in time for their flight home.

Meals included: Breakfast



Depart Colombo 30 July at 1.10AM arrive Singapore 7.40AM – Singapore Airlines

Accommodation: Peninsular/Excelsior IN: 30 July OUT: 01 August
Depart Singapore 01 August at 8.30AM arrive Cairns 5.10PM – Silk

Cost per person \$4185.00 and includes the following:

Airfares

Airport taxes

1 extra night in Colombo

15 day tour including breakfast and 1 lunch and sightseeing as per itinerary

2 nights accommodation in Singapore