

Classic Sri Lanka

9 Days | Starts/Ends: Colombo



Exotic Sri Lanka. Ancient cities steeped in history, elephants, tea plantations, lush countryside, bustling bazaars and wildlife, Sri Lanka has all this and more. Enjoy a wonderful 9 day tour, taking in the highlights of this enchanting island.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Colombo - The Fort, Gamgarama Temple
- Polonnaruwa - 11th century city
- Sigiriya - 5th century fortress ruins
- Dambulla - Rock Temple
- Matale - spice gardens
- Kandy - Temple of the Tooth, Royal Botanical Garden, Ceylon Tea Museum
- Nuwara Eliya - tea plantation, Hakgala Gardens
- Udawalawe National Park - home to the nation's largest herd of Asian Elephants
- Ratnapura - gem capital

What's Included

- 8 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- 8 nights Superior (4 star) accommodation (Standard and Deluxe hotel options are also available)

- Guided touring of Colombo, Dambulla, Polonnaruwa, Sigariya, Matale, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Udawalawe NP
- Airport arrival and departure transfer for day 1 and day 9
- Escorted by a licensed English speaking chauffeur guide
- Specialist local guides at some sites
- Jeep safari/ game drive in Udawalawe National park
- Entrance fees to all included sites
- All transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned tourism vehicles

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Colombo

Welcome to Sri Lanka and the start of your holiday! You'll be met at Colombo Airport and transferred to hotel. Tonight enjoy a tasty welcome dinner at your hotel. **Overnight - Colombo (D)**

Day 2 : Sightseeing in Colombo

Today, your guide will take you on a driving tour of colourful Colombo, Sri Lanka's frenetic capital. Just off the north end of Galle Road, the main north-south artery of the

city is the area known as the Fort, once a colonial stronghold but now the site of many government buildings and interesting shops. Just south of the Fort is Galle Face Green, a seaside expanse where informal cricket games are played out amongst city folk enjoying a pleasant stroll. At the south end of the green is the Galle Face Hotel, a beautiful colonial-era hotel. Just east of the Fort is the Pettah, the traditional bazaar district – a colourful retail experience. Just beyond the centre is the affluent Cinnamon Gardens district of the city. You will drive through these districts on your tour of the city and visit Gangarama Temple and Independence Square. **Overnight - Colombo (B)**

Day 3 : Dambulla and Polonnaruwa



Colombo - Giritale (via Dambulla). Drive to Giritale today, stopping en route to visit the impressive Dambulla Rock Temple. Dambulla is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the most impressive of Sri Lanka's cave temples.

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The complex of five caves with 2000 sq. metres of painted walls and ceiling, is the largest area of paintings found in the world. These caves contain over 150 images of the Buddha of which the largest is the colossal figure of the Buddha carved out of rock spanning 14 meters.

This afternoon, after checking into your hotel in Giritale, visit UNESCO Listed Polonnaruwa – an incredible 11th century city. Explore the ruins of the Royal Palace, temples and Gal Vihara which boasts three enormous and revered Buddha figures. **Overnight - Giritale (B)**

Day 4 : Sigiriya and Kandy

Giritale - Sigiriya - Kandy. This morning drive to Sigiriya and explore the UNESCO World Heritage Listed, 5th century Sigiriya rock fortress, built by King Kashyapa (477-495 AD). The 'Lion Rock' is a citadel of unusual beauty rising 200 meters from the scrub jungle. The rock was the innermost stronghold of the 70 hectare fortified town. A moat, rampart, and extensive gardens including the renowned water gardens ring the base of the rock. Discover the world-renowned frescoes of the 'Heavenly Maidens' of Sigiriya, which are in a sheltered pocket of the rock approached by a spiral stairway. After exploring the sights of Sigiriya, stop to visit a Spice Garden in Matale, en route to Kandy. **Overnight - Kandy (B)**

Day 5 : Kandy Sightseeing



Today a visit is made to the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, Sri Lanka's largest botanical garden once reserved for the sole use of the Kandyan elite. Back in the scenic lakeside town of Kandy, embark upon a sightseeing tour, visiting the bazaar, the arts & crafts centre and a gem workshop. There will also be a visit to the Ceylon Tea Museum,

dedicated to all things tea-related and housed in an attractive old building. Later in the afternoon we offer a guided tour of the Temple of the Tooth Relic and enjoy a cultural show featuring traditional Sri Lankan dancing in the evening.

Overnight - Kandy (B)

Day 6 : Nuwara Eliya tea plantations

Kandy - Nuwara Eliya. En route to Nuwara Eliya – a scenic hillside town with a distinctly English flavour, visit a tea plantation and enjoy a tasty cup of pure Ceylon tea in the factory. In Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka's most popular hill resort, enjoy a sightseeing tour this evening, including a visit to Hakgala Gardens. **Overnight - Nuwara Eliya (B)**

Day 7 : Udawalawe National Park

Nuwara Eliya - Embilipitiya. This morning, check into your hotel in Embilipitiya before going wild on a jeep safari in Sri Lanka's most popular national park! Udawalawe National Park is home to large herds of elephants and deer species such as Spotted Deer, Sambhur, Barking deer and Langur, wild boar, water buffalo and jackal. **Overnight - Embilipitiya (B)**

Day 8 : Ratnapura



Embilipitiya - Ratnapura - Colombo. En route back to Colombo today, stop off in Ratnapura - Sri Lanka's gem capital, where you can learn about these all about the islands precious stones, visit gem mines, a museum and a lapidary. **Overnight - Colombo (B)**

Day 9 : Colombo

Tour ends after breakfast today. Included onward transfer to airport.(B)

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

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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 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.

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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.

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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