

## Sri Lanka

Depart Cairns 06 May at 10.55AM arrive Singapore 3.25PM – Silk air

Accommodation: Peninsular/Excelsior IN: 06 May OUT: 07 May

Depart Singapore 07 May at 8.50AM arrive Colombo 10.05AM – Silk air

Commence the following tour in Negombo on the 07 May and ending in Colombo on the 18 May

### Day 1: Negombo

Welcome to Sri Lanka. Known as the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean', the island offers travellers palm-studded beaches, rolling plantations, and sacred sights steeped in spirituality. With charming people, mysterious ruins and some of the best cuisine in the world, Sri Lanka's hypnotic essence will remain with you long after you come home. An arrival transfer is available for you to book before you depart at an extra cost, alternatively a taxi will cost you approximately USD10-15. You'll begin your adventure by getting in the seaside spirit in Negombo, a historical commercial centre surrounded by a fascinating network of canals teeming with rural life. Pull up a deck chair on Negombo's huge, sweeping beach and enjoy the Indian Ocean before meeting up with your group and leader at a welcome meeting tonight at 6pm. Please ask reception to confirm the time and place of your meeting. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting so please ensure you have these for your leader. If you can't arrange a flight that will arrive in time, you may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend. Spend your first night enjoying the coastline, getting to know your fellow travellers and watching the fishing boats float by. Perhaps go out for a meal together for your first taste of Sri Lankan cuisine.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

### Day 2: Dambulla

In the morning, wake early and catch the action at the Negombo fish market. The market is situated at the northern end of a lagoon renowned for lobsters, crabs and prawns. Weave through stalls piled with shark, squid, barracuda and unheard of sea creatures as the sellers call out their wares, and get a great insight into local commerce. Continue on to a coconut plantation (approximately 1 hour) to discover why this 'superfood' is so central to life in Sri Lanka. Learn how all parts of the tree play an important part in daily life, sip the water of a king coconut, watch 'toddy tappers' extract the palm wine from the coconut sap and taste the results. Enjoy a Sri Lankan rice and curry lunch. Head inland to Dambulla (approximately 2 hours), home to vibrantly decorated cave-temples and a great base to explore the wide array of natural wonders and historic sites in this fascinating area. Your evening is free to explore. Alternatively, your leader can point you in the direction of a local delicious Kothu Roti restaurant.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

## Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

### Day 3: Dambulla

After breakfast, drive to Sigiriya (approximately 30 minutes). Here you will have the opportunity to climb to the top of the rock to witness its elaborate ancient fortress complex (approximately 2.5 hours round-trip on foot, including stairs). The 200-metre-high ancient remains of a defensive capital built by a fearful king, 'Lion's Rock' houses dynamic 5th century frescos, terraced gardens and splashing fountains. Next, observe age-old traditions at a nearby chena cultivation area, one of the oldest forms of agriculture known to humans. It's particularly popular in the dry zone of the country where it rains only for few months for the year. Principal crops are tropical vegetables, cereals, grains, yams and corn. Then feast on tropical vegetables, curry made with tapioca and fried fish caught in the nearby lake for lunch. In the late afternoon, return to Dambulla to explore the Wholesale Market and dodge the trucks and people piled high with every type of produce imaginable. Boasting an incredible array of fresh food, much of which is subsequently transported to Colombo for sale, this is the perfect place to get a sense of Sri Lanka's agricultural diversity. The rest of the evening is free for your own food adventures. Use the free evening to poke around the town or sit back with a drink. There are plenty of restaurants surrounding the markets. Your leader will also have some tips on where to find the best roti in town.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Dambulla - Wholesale Markets tour
- Sigiriya - Lion Rock

### Optional Activities

- Minneriya - Jeep Safari - LKR6500

## Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

### Special Information

There is a steep staircase to ascend to Sigiriya. Good walking shoes are recommended for this experience.

### Day 4: Kandy

Located high on a cliff face are the impressive Dambulla Cave temples. You will have time to explore these this morning and admire the many Buddha images, frescoes and paintings.

On the way to the physical and spiritual heart of the country and the former home of the last Sri Lankan king, stop for lunch at a spice garden in the renowned spice-growing region of Matale. Sri Lankans are the masters of spice and here you can learn how spices aren't just used in food, but also cosmetics and ayurvedic medicine. Smell the fragrant odours of cumin, cinnamon and curry

leaves before tasting pumpkin curry flavoured with aromatic fenugreek, with a side of dry chilli sambol and the uniquely Sri Lankan coconut roti. As the spice gardens here are popular with tourists, you will find the prices to be higher than outside, but it is the ideal place to learn about the best Sri Lankan spices. Continue on to Kandy and arrive by late afternoon (approximately 2 hours). Kandy is a pleasant city surrounded by lush green countryside, and it's home to a picturesque lake, old shops, a bustling market and some great restaurants. This evening, observe locals worshipping in Kandy's Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Tooth), one of Sri Lanka's most sacred shrines that houses a tooth relic of the Lord Buddha. Contrast the holy hush of the temple with the booming, energetic drums that accompany the elaborately costumed performers of a Kandyan dance show. With your free evening, perhaps follow the sound of rhythmic chopping to watch a chef transform a ball of dough into a huge sheet of wafer-thin roti, skilfully slice, griddle, mix with vegetables and spices and create Kotthu Roti.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Matale - Spice Garden Tour and Lunch
- Kandy - Temple of the Tooth
- Kandy - Market Wander & Tastings

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

#### Special Information

Please note that there are many steps to the caves and a dress code which requires you to remove your shoes and cover up your shoulders and legs.

#### Day 5: Kandy

This morning you'll enjoy a guided walk around Kandy's peaceful city centre, including a tour of the Central Market. The rest of the day is free for you to explore. Kandy is home to a National Museum, monasteries and there are many scenic walks around town. The botanical gardens here are among the best in Asia. In the early evening, join a Sinhalese family to spoil your sweet tooth with a Kandyan sweet-filled Sri Lankan dinner and cooking class. Try your hand at crafting the perfect hopper (this is an art that takes some practice to master!), try a chicken curry made with spice-infused coconut milk, closer to a Thai curry than a classic North Indian one. Then fill up on specialty sweets inspired by Dutch and Portuguese dessert traditions.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Kandy - Cooking Class in a Sinhalese Home

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

- Dinner

#### [Day 6: Bandarawela](#)

This morning you will take a picturesque train ride to the town of Bandarawela (approximately 6 hours). Journey past waterfalls, little villages and up through the mountains on the scenic railway to this town in the cool highlands, once popular with British plantation managers. Look down over a sweeping vista filled with bright green tea bushes and vegetable gardens. Tonight, you are invited to a local home for a traditional meal.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Dinner

#### Special Information

Train tickets from Kandy to Bandarawela are in very high demand. We always try our best to secure tickets for the full journey or the part of the trip. Though on the rare occasion that we cannot you will be provided with a private bus to take you to your next destination.

#### [Day 7: Bandarawela](#)

Rise early for an easy walk through the verdant surrounds of the region's tea plantations. Learn about the country's most important export a local tea factory, one of the oldest in the areas. Depending on the season, meet with some of the plantation workers and try your hand at picking tea leaves and tastings. Travel out to the town of Haputale (approximately 1 hour) for a home-cooked lunch with a Tamil family. Tear into traditional Tamil cuisine with Dosa, a crispy rice pancake, and idli, a savoury steamed rice cake served with curry sauces or chutneys. Return to Bandarawela in the late afternoon and soak up the rural charm of the town and the beautiful surrounding landscapes.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Tea Factory Visit

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

#### [Day 8: Yala/Udawalawe National Park](#)

Drive to the wilderness of Yala or Udawalawe National Park (approximately 2 hours). Encompassing a variety of diverse ecosystems, the park has an impressive array of wildlife, including sloth bears and lots of birds. In the evening take a safari tour and get the binoculars out to search for the

leopards that lounge in trees or stalk through the brush, crocodiles that patrol the river or wild elephants that graze across the savanna.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Yala/Udawalawe National Park - Wildlife safari

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Dinner

#### Special Information

Tourism in Sri Lanka is booming, and with it has come a huge increase in visitors to Yala National Park. Overtourism and lack of sustainable management practices have become a major concern for us in continuing to visit Yala. In order to reduce our impact on wildlife and the environment we are trialling visiting a less touristed section of Yala, known as Block 5. Should we determine that high tourist numbers at Block 5 also make it difficult to continue visiting responsibly we will change our itinerary to visit Udawalawe National Park, where wild elephants, wild buffalo, sambar deer and leopards also reside, and the nearby Elephant Transit Home.

From September to mid-October when Yala National Park is closed annually for infrastructure development and rejuvenation we follow the alternate itinerary of Udawalawe NP and Elephant Transit Home.

#### [Day 9: Mirissa](#)

Start the day sweetly discovering one of Sri Lanka's favourite ingredients. Try buffalo curd, served in bright terracotta pots with thick, golden treacle, often eaten as a snack, as an accompaniment to meals or as a desert. Sri Lankans are famed for their sweet tooth and this is just about as sweet as it gets.

En route to the beautiful beach village of Mirissa (approximately 3 hours), discover the Muslim influence on Sri Lankan food with dishes like biryani and watalappam at lunch. Spend the rest of the day relaxing or exploring the golden sands of Sri Lanka's southern coastline. The beach is a long curve of sand and has lovely calm clear waters for swimming, and the sunsets are great too. This is a paradise that you won't want to leave. Perhaps consider taking a bicycle ride or tuk tuk to nearby Weligama, where colourful fishing boats bring back their loads of fresh fish to sell along the shore. Maybe take a boat to spot whales and dolphins, or wash down all that chilli with a beer, while watching surfers take on the waves.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

### Special Information

Whale watching season is from November to April. Your tour leader will be able to recommend an agent to book this optional activity through.

#### [Day 10: Mirissa](#)

Meet with a local fisherman and learn about their craft, and how their lives have changed after the tsunami. Enjoy the freshest seafood lunch possible with a fisherman's family – a wonderful crab curry is likely to be on the menu. Continue on to the perfectly preserved colonial township of Galle (approximately 1 hour) and its blend of European architecture and South Asian traditions. In the evening take a tour of the Royal Dutch Fort, exploring the winding passageways, maze of gallery-filled narrow streets and 400 years of rich history. Return to Mirissa for the night (approximately 40 minutes).

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

#### [Day 11: Colombo](#)

Head north for the final stop on this gastronomic adventure and Sri Lanka's commercial heart, Colombo (approximately 2.5 hours). The city is a cosmopolitan mix of vibrant street markets, colonial buildings, interesting museums, fine restaurants and great shopping opportunities. On an orientation walk through the city, stroll through the buzzing bazaar in Pettah, where Sri Lanka's multi-cultural character is so clear and thousands of stalls vie for business. Snack your way around lanes filled with 'short eats', street-food possibilities and bustling local eateries. Enjoy a final Dutch Burgher-influenced meal and celebrate the end of your food adventure with new friends.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Colombo - Walking tour
- Colombo - Dutch Burgher Lunch

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

#### [Day 12: Colombo](#)

This trip concludes this morning. There are no activities planned for this final day and you are free to leave at any time.

#### Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

Depart Colombo 18 May at 11.05AM arrive Singapore 5.30PM – Silk air

Accommodation: Furama Riverfront IN: 18 May OUT: 22 May

Depart Singapore 22 May at 8.30AM arrive Cairns 5.10PM – Silk air

Cost per person \$3,957\*pp and includes the following:

- Airfares
- Airport taxes
- 12-day tour 10 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 3 dinners and sightseeing as per itinerary
- 5 nights accommodation in Singapore