

## Jewels of Sri Lanka



*Experience the best of Sinhalese culture and hospitality on this 10-night guided tour of Sri Lanka. Starting at the ancient ruins of Polonnaruwa and ending in the modern-day capital of Colombo, you'll explore length and breadth of Sri Lanka's history.*

### **Day 1: Arrive Colombo**

Your driver will be waiting to meet you on arrival into Bandaranaike International Airport (Colombo). After collecting your luggage, transfer to the town of Habarana, in central Sri Lanka, by private vehicle (approx. 4½ hours). Here you stay two nights at Galkadawala Forest Lodge for in a twin/double room (inc. breakfast).

### **Galkadawala Forest Lodge**

*Galkadawala Forest Lodge is a rustic eco-retreat set on four acres of wilderness just outside the village of Galkadawala, in Sri Lanka's "cultural triangle".*

*Accommodation is in cosy chalets situated amid the lush forest, most with a view of Galkadawala Lake. The rooms are comfortably furnished and fully air-conditioned. All are en-suite and open onto private seating areas.*

*You can dine privately or around a shared dining table at Galkadawala. The staff will prepare a full spread of Sri Lankan dishes on request.*



*NB. This itinerary assumes you arrive Colombo in the morning or early afternoon – a later arrival time will necessitate a night in Colombo or at an airport hotel.*

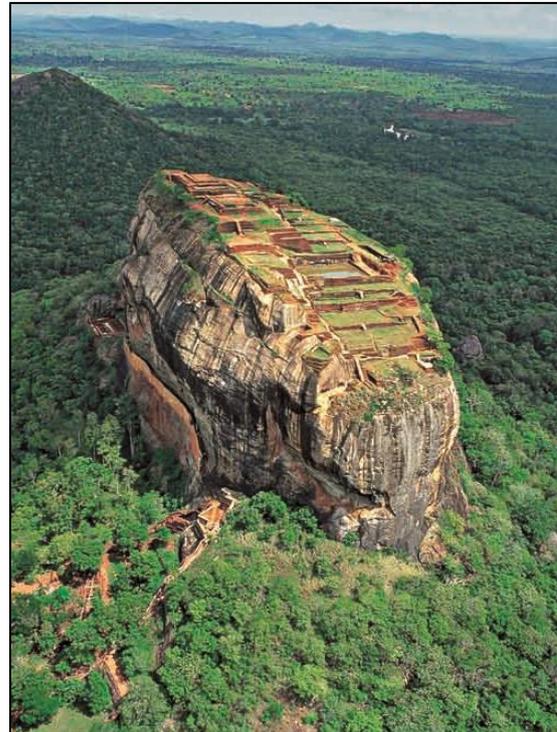
## Day 2: Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa and Minneriya (B)

An early start today, as you set off for the Sigiriya Rock Fortress. Often dubbed the Eighth Wonder of the World, this giant rock citadel is Sri Lanka's most spectacular monument. Built in the 5<sup>th</sup>-century AD, during the reign of King Kasyapa, it's an astounding feat of engineering, as well as an example of early Sinhalese art and iconography.

Allow 3-4 hours to get to the summit of Sigiriya and down. It's a steep climb but worth the effort for the marvellous views from the top. Close to the summit, you pass through the "Lion Paws", which overlook the former royal gardens below, presenting a splendid spectacle.

Take the time to examine the Lion Rock's intricate frescoes, which recall the Gupta style of paintings found in India, and the equally stunning "mirror wall", with its ancient graffiti.

Before departing Sigiriya, be sure to pay a visit to the museum at its entrance, which explains how the citadel's sophisticated irrigation system was once used to pump water to its summit. After exploring the citadel, travel back to your lodge for lunch.



In the afternoon, explore the ancient ruins at Polonnaruwa.



Polonnaruwa rose to prominence following the fall of Anuradhapura. The crown jewel of King Parakramabahu I, it served as Sri Lanka's capital during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and remains one of the country's most impressive repositories of tradition and culture.

Allow 2-3 hours to explore within Polonnaruwa's old stone walls, where you'll encounter crumbling stupas, reclining Buddha statues, and intricately-carved Hindu sculptures. Exploring the ancient city's numerous monuments, you'll be able to continue the journey through Sri Lanka's history that you begun in Anuradhapura.

This evening, take an exciting journey into Minneriya National Park in a 4x4 vehicle.

Declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1931, Minneriya is one of Sri Lanka's most beautiful parks. Almost 90 sq km in size, it encompasses a diverse eco-system of wetland, forest and scrub, centred on the ancient Minneriya Tank, a 3rd century reservoir. Most famous for its wild elephant, which congregate on Minneriya's open

plains in vast herds, the park is also notable for its rarer mammals, including sambar deer, leopard (very rarely sighted) and the endemic to Sri Lanka toque macaque monkey.



### Day 3: Kandy (B, L)

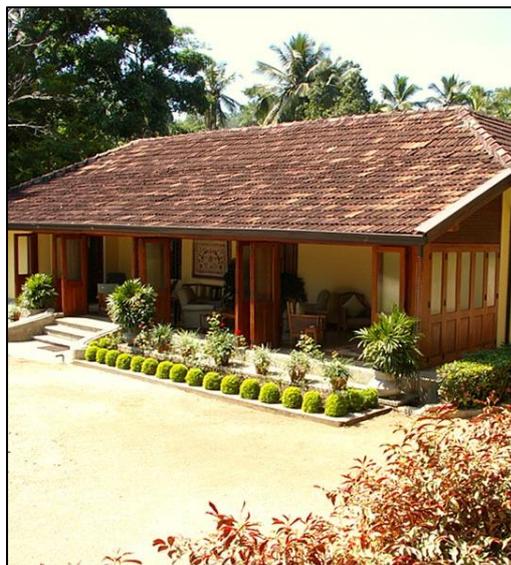
Depart Sigiriya for Kandy (approx. 3½ hours), travelling via Matale and Dambulla.

The Royal Rock Temple complex in Dambulla consists of five separate caves, housing between them well over one hundred Buddha statues and paintings. Dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup>-century BC, they constitute Sri Lanka's largest and best-preserved cave temple complex, and contain some of the country's most iconic and evocative examples of religious art.

Adjoining the Dambulla Rock Temples is the Golden Temple, said to date back to the 5<sup>th</sup>-century BC.

After exploring Dambulla, take a tour of the Ranweli Spice Garden, where you'll be able to learn about the great variety of spices grown in Sri Lanka, followed by a lunch served in the paddy fields.

After lunch, continue to Gampola, a small town just outside Kandy, where you check into Kirinda Wallauwa for two nights (inc. breakfast).



### Kirinda Walauwa

*Kirinda Walauwa is a charming farm estate turned private guesthouse, situated in the quiet town of Gampola, 16km from Kandy.*

*Kirinda Walauwa enjoys an enviable location in a beautiful valley embraced by forested mountains and green paddy fields. It forms part of a 12 acre farm estate, with much of the land given over to the cultivation of spices and fruits.*

*The house itself has been in the same family for around ten generations, though it's been through numerous renovations. The spacious, airy guest rooms are equipped with a full range of modern amenities, but retain a certain charm in keeping with the property's age. A long verandah connects the individually-furnished rooms with the gardens—the perfect spot to enjoy an evening sundowner!*

#### **Day 4: Kandy (B, L)**

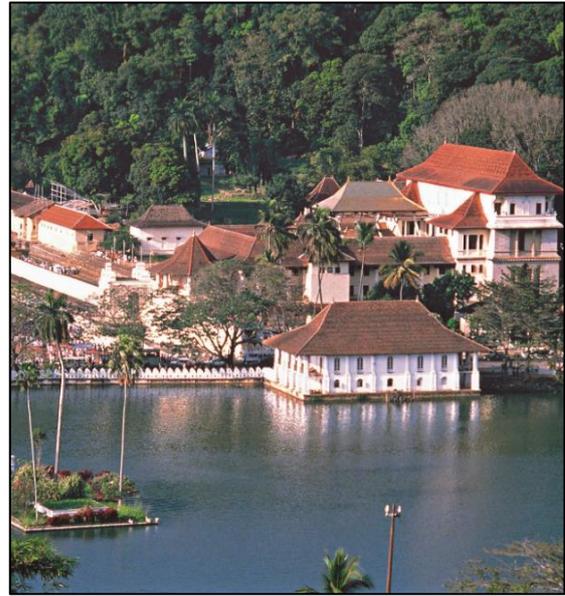
This morning, embark on a tour of Kandy accompanied by an experienced guide, continuing your tour of Sri Lanka's history through its former capitals.

The last royal capital of the Sinhalese kings, succeeding both Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura, Kandy is among Sri Lanka's best-preserved "sacred cities". But Kandy is also a vibrant, living city, with a thriving economy and lively market centre.

Take the time to explore the city with your guide, visiting its most famous colonial-era and royal monuments, including Sri Dalada Maligawa (the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic).

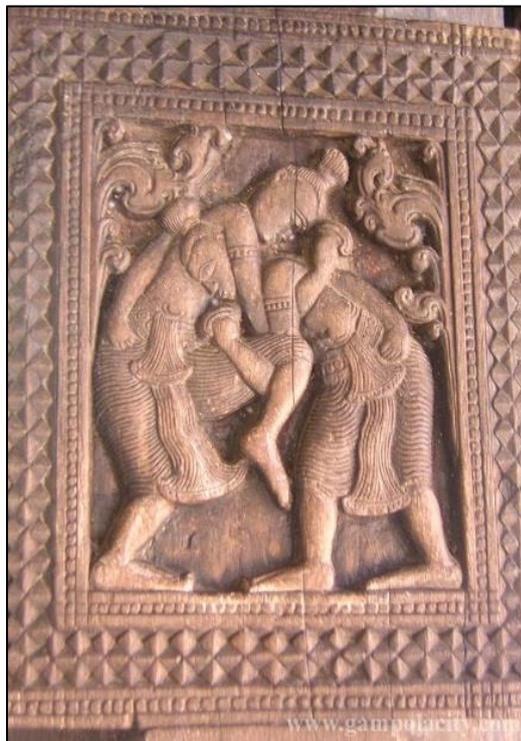
Early afternoon, stop for lunch at a local resident's home, where you'll be able to learn more about the city's people and their history. Late afternoon, we recommend tea at the iconic Queen's Hotel or the Empire Cafe.

Dinner is to your own account. You might like to sample hoppers, a traditional Sri Lankan dish, at Avanhala, followed by drinks at the kitsch Helga's Folly, Kandy's most eccentric bar and hotel which has played host to everyone from Laurence Olivier to Gandhi!



#### **Day 5: Kandy – Nuwara Eliya (B)**

Start the day with a tour of the Three Temple Loop of Embekke, Lankathilaka and Gadaladeniya.



This trio of temples are among the most impressive examples of religious architecture in the Kandy region.

The first, Embekke Devalaya (late 14<sup>th</sup>-century), is situated south of Kandy, in semi-rural surrounds near the village of Daulagala. Dedicated to the Hindu god Kataragama, Embekke is most famous for its intricate wood carvings and ornate drummer's hall.

Built in 1344, Lankathilaka predates Embekke Devalaya by several years, and conforms to a more traditional Sinhalese design style. The interior of the temple has been beautifully preserved, its painted wooden doors still bright with their original paint work from the later Kandyan era.

Gadaladeniya, the most significant of the three temples, enjoys impressive views of the surrounding countryside from its hilltop position. Among its most notable features are its 638-year-old teak wood doors, which still exhibit their original paintings.

Late morning, transfer to Peradeniya Station and board the 12:30pm train to Nanu Oya (approx. 3½ hours; first class observation carriage). On arrival, meet with your driver and transfer to the Jetwing St. Andrews Hotel in Nuwara Eliya, where you stay two nights (inc. breakfast).



### Jetwing St. Andrews

*Situated in Sri Lanka's cool Central Highlands, in the old colonial-era hill station of Nuwara Eliya, St. Andrews is a charming mock-Tudor country house that has been converted into an upmarket hotel under the Jetwing brand. Steeped in old-world charm and atmosphere, St. Andrews is a wonderful place to enjoy a few days' leisurely retreat away from the heat and humidity of Sri Lanka's tropical lowlands.*

### Day 6: Nuwara Eliya (B)

Set off on a guided tour of Nuwara Eliya, a small city that forms the heart of Sri Lanka's tea industry.

Your tour will see you visit a tea factory to learn the story of Ceylon Tea, and enjoy a stroll through the lovely Queen Victoria Park, situated in the centre of town.

For lunch, we recommend the Grand Hotel.

At the end of the tour, you'll be returned to the Jetwing for overnight.



### Day 7: Udawalawe National Park (B)

Travel south to Udawalawe National Park (approx. 3½ hours by private vehicle). On arrival, check-in at the Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort for one night in a deluxe room (inc. breakfast).

### The Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort

*This upmarket hotel is located barely 10 minutes' drive from Udawalawe National Park. It offers 79 spacious and air-conditioned rooms overlooking the surrounding wilderness, as well as facilities including swimming pool, bar, and gym.*

This evening, enjoy a game drive in Udawalawe National Park.

Udawalawe National Park occupies the boundary separating Sabaragamuwa and Uva Provinces. One of Sri Lanka's oldest and most-visited national parks, it serves to protect the catchment area of the Walawe River, an important habitat for water birds and wild elephant.



## Day 8: Galle (B)

This morning, pay a visit to the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home.

The Elephant Transit Home provides young and injured elephants with a safe environment and sufficient food and water, with the ultimate goal of seeing them released back into the wilds of Udawalawe. The elephants roam freely and the older elephants are able to obtain food by grazing in an undisturbed and natural environment. Arrive in the early morning, and you can watch the young elephants as they are being fed.

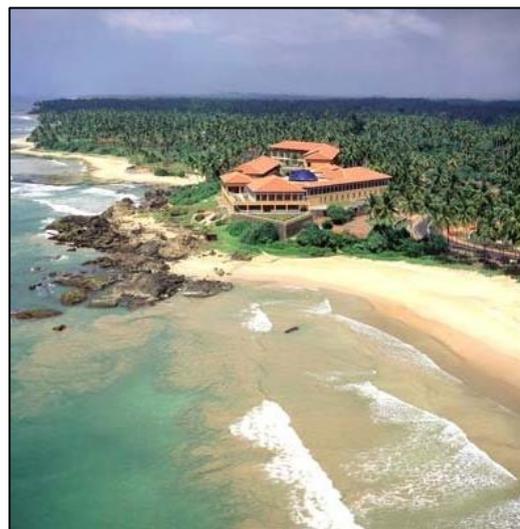
After your visit to the elephant home, continue to Galle (approx. 3½ hours). On arrival, check-in at the Jetwing Lighthouse Hotel for two nights in a deluxe room (inc. breakfast).

### Jetwing Lighthouse Hotel

*The Jetwing Lighthouse Hotel perches on a rocky headland, from where it enjoys a marvellous view of the Indian Ocean. It occupies seven acres of land in a quiet bay, providing easy access to a wonderful stretch of white-sand beach.*

*The Jetwing is perhaps Galle's most distinctive and immediately recognisable hotels. Its elegant interiors draw upon the city's Dutch, Indian and Moorish influences, with light, airy corridors, wide terraces, and stylish dark wood and brass furnishings.*

*The Lighthouse's 85 rooms and suites are lavishly furnished to 5-star standards and equipped with all the expected modern amenities. The hotel's two generously-sized swimming pools enjoy uninterrupted views of the ocean, while the beach – which allows for safe swimming on its natural reef – is never more than a few minutes' stroll away.*



The remainder of the day is at leisure.

## Day 9: Galle (B)

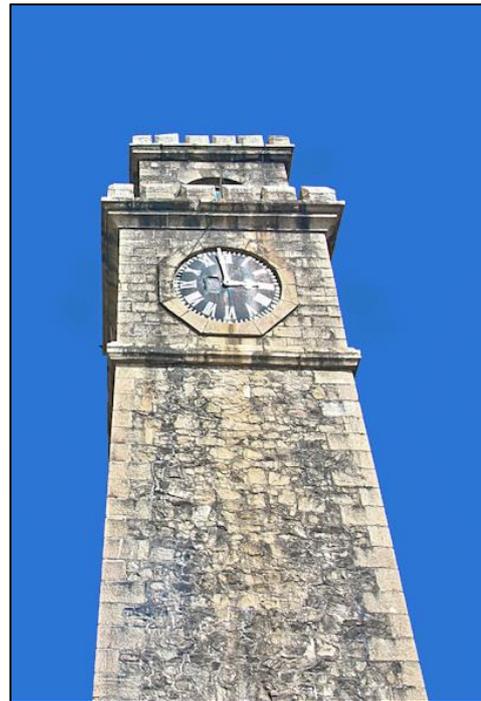
An early start, as you embark on a half-day whale watching cruise between Galle and Mirissa on Sri Lanka's southwestern coast. You'll be collected from your hotel in Galle in the morning and depart on a 50-foot vessel. The cruise starts with a complimentary breakfast served on board, after which you can take to the decks in search of blue and humpback whales, dolphins, sea turtles and other aquatic rarities. Following the cruise, you'll be returned to Galle.

Late this afternoon, enjoy a guided tour of Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In Galle, classic colonial-European (chiefly Dutch) architecture melds with a luscious tropical setting to create a stunningly beautiful town, and nowhere is this unique mix more apparent than within the walls of Galle Fort.

The fort is a town in and of itself, occupying most of the promontory and housing numerous shops, boutiques, and hotels, alongside beautifully-preserved merchant homes dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century.

The two-hour guided walk will take in the best of the Fort's attractions, including its old colonial-era administrative offices, Catholic Church and original square. End the tour with a walk along the town ramparts as the sun sets.



## Day 10: Colombo (B)

After breakfast, depart Galle for Colombo (approx. 3½ hours), where you check-in at Lake Lodge for one night (inc. breakfast.)

### Lake Lodge

*Opened in 2009 by famed Sri Lankan interior designer Nayantara "Taru" Fonseka, Lake Lodge is a stylish boutique hotel converted from a former mansion. The discrete, 13-room B&B enjoys a convenient location on a quiet residential lane close to the heart of Colombo's commercial district. The service is unobtrusive and the rooms immaculately furnished.*



Late this afternoon, take a tour of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, accompanied by a resident host.

Local guide Mark, or one of his colleagues, will collect you late this afternoon to begin your walk. The tour will take you through the history of Colombo, starting with its 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch and British colonial-era heritage, through to the city's modern landmarks. If you're wanting an escape from the tourist hotspots, Mark can include a visit to some of Colombo's local markets, such as Pettah, and to a traditional tea house.

There has been much effort in recent years to restore Colombo's heritage buildings – though many have a certain charm in their current, somewhat shabby state! – making now a great time to visit, while the city and its heritage is in a state of transition.

For dinner, we recommend the popular Ministry of Crab at the Old Dutch Hospital.

### Day 11: International departure (B)

Morning at leisure until your scheduled transfer to Bandaranaike International Airport (Colombo) for your international flight home.



#### Price Guide

*The cost of this itinerary is from **£1,985 per person**, based on twin/double share and subject to availability at the time of booking. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).*

#### Includes:

- Accommodation and meals as described
- Activities as per itinerary (optional activities on self-guided days are not included)
- All transfers as outlined
- Private driver-guide and vehicle
- Return airport transfers

#### Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Travel insurance
- Meals not specified
- Items of a personal nature
- Additional activities
- Tips