

A 12-day tour to uncover the Splendours of Sri Lanka’s rich culture, heritage and landscape. We visit major UNESCO world heritage sites, historic Buddhist-Hindu temples, a tea factory, gem museum, tribal villages and local markets, go for a game viewing safari, explore Tropical Modernist architecture, a 16th century fort, and the spectacular Indian Ocean coastline.

Note that the following itinerary may be subject to change/adjustments.

Sept	Itinerary	Location & Hotel	Meals
4	<p>5.30pm: Meet at Changi Airport for group check-in.</p> <p>8.10pm: Sri Lankan Airlines flight, Singapore to Colombo</p> <p>9.30pm: Arrive in Colombo.</p> <p>We meet our guide at the airport and transfer to our hotel in Colombo (approx. 50 min drive). Built in 1864, the Galle Face Hotel faces the sea and has the grandeur of a bygone colonial era, with modern comforts – this is our base for 3 nights. https://www.gallefacehotel.com/history/ and https://mahaweli.lk/galle-face-green/</p>	<p>Colombo:</p> <p>Galle Face Hotel</p>	<p>Dinner</p> <p>on flight</p>
5	<p>After a leisurely start, we visit the home of the late Geoffrey Bawa on Bagatelle Road for a tour. Bawa was one of the most influential Asian architects of the 20th century and pioneer of Tropical Modernism; he was awarded the Aga Khan Award for architecture in 2001 (https://geoffreybawa.com/geoffrey-bawa).</p> <p>After lunch, we have a tour of Colombo’s famed National Museum, the oldest and largest museum in the country and custodian of Sri Lanka’s heritage with its vast collection of artefacts. It’s collection spans over two millenia from the ancient Sinhala kingdoms through to the colonial era. (https://www.visitcolombo.com/content/4-colombo-national-museum). We also have a talk by Prasanna Weerawardane, an archaeologist and former Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow, on Sri Lanka’s ancient kingdoms (a prelude of the sites we visit later).</p> <p>In the evening, we’ll meet for sunset welcome drinks and dinner.</p>	<p>Colombo:</p> <p>Galle Face Hotel</p>	<p>BLD</p>
6	<p>We visit Gangaramaya temple (https://gangaramaya.com/), built with an “interesting” mix of Sri Lankan, Thai, Indian and Chinese styles. Then we see the Bawa-designed Seema Malaka on scenic Beira Lake where Buddhist monks were ordained:</p>	<p>Colombo:</p> <p>Galle Face Hotel</p>	<p>BLD</p>

	<p>https://www.visitcolombo.com/content/49-seema-malaka-temple, https://gangaramaya.com/the-seema-malaka/.</p> <p>Later we have a walking tour of Old Colombo that takes in many historic sites. We walk through the historic Fort area with buildings dating from colonial times, and visit the Pettah neighborhood, famous for its bustling open air street markets (https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/colombo/attractions-in-colombo/pettah-market/). We also visit Independence Square and Paradise Road, and have free time for shopping. (https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/colombo/attractions-in-colombo/)</p>		
7	<p>We leave Colombo and drive to the north central region (approx. 4 hrs drive). Enroute, we stop to visit the Kelaniya Rajamahavihara, a royal temple believed to be 2500 years old which has beautiful carvings and paintings (https://kelaniyatemple.lk/). We also visit the magnificent Aukana Buddha, a 12m high statue dating to the 5th century, believed to be the finest and tallest of the standing Buddhas in the country and learn about its stories (https://www.beyondescapes.com/things-to-do/aukana-buddha-statue/).</p> <p>After lunch, we explore the Ibbankatuwa Megalithic Tombs, an iron age burial ground dating to the 6th century BCE: https://blog.cinnamonhotels.com/dambulla-sightseeing-visit-to-ibbankatuwa-megalithic-tombs/. Next, we tour the famous Dambulla Caves, a 2000-year old UNESCO World Heritage site – this is a cave temple complex within a vast overhanging rock. The complex comprises five caves that are shrine rooms decorated with paintings and statues of Buddha and bodhisattvas. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFhHSUFyNFO)</p> <p>We then check into Kandalama, an architectural masterpiece by Geoffrey Bawa, whose structure and design features a seamless extension of the mountain and combines modern minimalist aesthetic with the surrounding vegetation -- this is our base for the next 4 days.</p>	Dambulla: Kandalama	BLD

	<p>(https://www.heritancehotels.com/kandalama/) In the evening, we have a special atmospheric dinner in a cave at Kandalama.</p>		
8	<p>Today we explore the ancient city of Anuradhapura, first of Sri Lanka's great kingdoms of and its capital for over a thousand years.</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/anuradhapura/tales-of-anuradhapura/the-kingdom-that-set-the-course-of-the-islands-faith/)</p> <p>This is now a UNESCO World Heritage site famous for its ancient ruins. We have a walking tour of its remarkable sights – including the gigantic Ruwanwelisiya stupa which towers over the countryside, the Abhayagiri monastery, the sacred Bo tree, believed to have been planted in 236 BCE and which has been carefully tended for 23 centuries, the Jetavanaramaya monastery, the Thuparamaya, and many other sights: (https://www.insightguides.com/destinations/asia-pacific/sri-lanka/cultural-triangle/anuradhapura). We also visit the Archaeological Museum in Anuradhapura: (https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/anuradhapura/attractions-in-anuradhapura/anuradhapura-archeological-museum/)</p> <p>If time permits, we visit Mihintale Hill, the birthplace of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, where Mahinda, the son of Emperor Ashoka, met Sri Lanka's king in 247 BCE and converted him to Buddhism. This involves climbing a 300m hill with shallow stone steps leading to the summit which has excellent views. (https://www.wondersofceylon.com/mihintale/). Near Mihintale are the ruins of an ancient hospital, believed to be the oldest known hospital in the world (https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-ancient-monastic-hospital-system-sri-lanka).</p>	Dambulla: Kandalama	BLD
9	<p>A morning tour of the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, capital of the Chola and Singhala kings for 3 centuries, and also a UNESCO World Heritage site. Sights include the royal palace, swimming pool of the Chola kings, and many Hindu-Buddhist temples.</p> <p>(https://www.ceylonexpeditions.com/polonnaruwa-ancient-city-sri-lanka). After lunch, we head to Minneriya/Kaudulla national park for a</p>	Dambulla: Kandalama	BLD

	<p>game viewing safari in a jeep. This park has one of the greatest concentrations of wild elephants in the world. Other animals to spot are deer, buffalo, crocodiles, iguana, monkeys, peacocks</p> <p>(https://www.bigworldsmallpockets.com/minneriya-national-park/)</p>		
10	<p>An early 7am start to climb Sigiriya (also called Singhagiri or Lions Rock), the famous 5th century rock fortress that is 180m high and a UNESCO World Heritage site (https://sigiriyafortress.com/). This was the stronghold of King Kashyapa I who built a palace in the sky that has lasted over a thousand years:</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/sigiriya/tales-of-sigiriya/)</p> <p>Then we experience village life at the charming Hiriwaduna village, set among paddy fields by a lake -- we arrive there by bullock cart, and have a delicious lunch. (https://srilankatravelpages.com/hiriwadunna-village-tour/).</p> <p>Next we explore the mysterious Ritigala Forest, once occupied by the Veddhas, the indigenous people of Sri Lanka</p> <p>(https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20220327-sri-lankas-last-indigenous-people). First century Buddhist monastery ruins are found on this site though its origins may be older due to a link with the Ramayana. (http://mysrilankaholidays.com/ritigala.html)</p>	Dambulla: Kandalama	BLD
11	<p>In the morning we transfer to the hill town of Kandy (3 hour drive), visiting a Spice Garden enroute and having lunch there. (https://go-sri-lanka.com/kandy-spice-garden/)</p> <p>Kandy was the last capital of the Sinhala kings from 1592 until the occupation of Sri Lanka by the British in 1815. It remains the religious capital of Buddhism and a sacred city for millions of believers.</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/kandy/tales-of-kandy/)</p> <p>In Kandy, we visit a Gem Museum</p> <p>(https://www.attractionsinsrilanka.com/travel-directory/natural-gems-and-gemological-museum/), explore the local markets and have a walking tour of historic Kandy. In the evening, a cooking</p>	Kandy	BLD

	<p>demonstration and dinner at the Cinnamon hotel where we stay for 2 nights: https://www.cinnamonhotels.com/cinnamoncitadelkandy</p>		
12	<p>We visit three unique 14th century temples with outstanding architecture and artistic features (https://mahaweli.lk/kandys-three-temple-loop/) – the Gadaladeniya temple with distinct South Indian influences</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/kandy/attractions-in-kandy/gadaladeniya-viharaya/), Embekke Devalaya with magnificent wooden carvings</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/kandy/attractions-in-kandy/embekke-devalaya/), and the fortress-like Lankatilaka temple with Sinhala architecture, intricate frescoes and carvings</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/kandy/attractions-in-kandy/lankathilaka-viharaya/).</p> <p>Later we visit the famous Botanical Gardens</p> <p>(https://magnificentsrilanka.com/ultimate-guide-to-peradeniya-royal-botanical-gardens/), experience a Cultural Show, and see the fabled Temple of the Tooth, the holiest Buddhist site in the country.</p> <p>(https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/kandy/tales-of-kandy/the-home-of-an-ancient-relic-of-buddhism/)</p>	Kandy	BLD
13	<p>We leave early in the morning and drive south to Galle (approx. 4 hours). Enroute, we stop at Lunuganga, Geoffrey Bawa’s beautiful country estate. Here we have a tour of the house and the extensive gardens followed by lunch:</p> <p>https://www.travelwanderlust.co/articles/geoffrey-bawa-lunuganga/.</p> <p>Later we reach the atmospheric Galle fort, first built in the 16th century and now a UNESCO world heritage site</p> <p>(https://www.thecommonwanderer.com/blog/galle-fort-guide-things-to-do). After check in, time to relax or do some exploring on your own.</p> <p>In the evening, we have a guided Heritage walk of the Fort by an archaeologist and enjoy the stunning sunset over the Indian Ocean.</p>	Galle: The Merchant	BLD

	https://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/en_GB/blog/walking-tour-of-galle-fort-and-old-colombo).		
14	In the morning we head to Handunugoda tea estate for a guided tour (https://panlanka.com/excursions/virgin-white-tea-factory-tour/) , followed by a walk through a cinnamon plantation and lunch (https://panlanka.com/excursions/cinnamon-experience/). Later, we head to the mysterious Rumassala hill believed to be linked to Ramayana (https://www.talesofceylon.com/destinations/galle/tales-of-galle/rumassala-the-myth-of-the-mountain-that-fell-from-the-sky/) , and explore the lovely beach town of Unawatuna for sunset drinks and dinner by the beach.	Galle: The Merchant	BLD
15	7.00am: After an early breakfast, we check out and drive to the airport (approx. 2.5-3 hours drive). 12.10pm: Sri Lankan Airlines flight to Singapore.		B