

Sri Lanka Sample Itinerary

We specialise in Sri Lanka and act as agents for all those operators who offer Sri Lanka as a holiday destination so that you can be sure that the information we give you is both knowledgeable and impartial.

Sri Lanka is a travellers paradise. From ancient cities, religious temples, dense jungle and vegetation teeming with birds and wildlife to exotic beaches and busy towns, Sri Lanka is whatever you want it to be. The people of Sri Lanka will welcome you with open arms, their hospitable nature means nothing is too much trouble when you have made the effort to visit their beautiful country of which they are extremely proud. Our ground agents offer an excellent service whilst you are in Sri Lanka giving you a very personalised service. We can put together any sort of itinerary depending on what you want to do - whether it is sightseeing, walking, bird watching, diving or relaxing on a beach.

The itinerary below details the main areas and sights to be visited in Sri Lanka. However, as we tailor holidays to suit, this itinerary can be amended in anyway to give you the perfect Sri Lanka holiday. All our tours are on a private basis with your own driver/guide throughout.

International Flights

The only direct international flight flies into Colombo from London Heathrow and is with Air Sri Lanka. Alternatively you can get to Sri Lanka via the Emirates. The Air Sri Lanka flights are daily and the times are as follows:

London Heathrow 10.20	Arrive Colombo 02.25+1
Total flying time: 10hrs 35mins	
Colombo 13.15	Arrive Heathrow 19.45
Total flying time: 12hrs	(+1 indicates following day)

Flight prices start from around £550 pp. They are often more cost effective to book online and if you'd rather do that I can advise the best flight to get and organise your ground arrangements to fit in with the international flight schedule.

Itinerary

**Negombo • Cultural Triangle • Kandy •
Nuwara Eliya • Yala • Bentota**

Day One

Fly into Colombo from London Heathrow. You will be met at the airport and transferred to Browns Beach hotel for 2 nights.

- **Browns Beach Hotel in Negombo**, about 30 minutes from the airport and stands amidst landscaped gardens and palm groves in the West of Sri Lanka. It is renowned for having one of the best and widest beachfronts offering a breathtaking view of the Indian Sea.

Day Two

Spend the day just relaxing at the beach. Overnight Browns Beach Hotel, a lovely hotel with direct beach access. I would suggest staying in one of their beach cabins which are very comfortable and contemporary in design with direct access to the beach, stylish bathrooms and a small seating area outside.

Day Three

Transfer to Sri Lanka's cultural triangle for 3 nights

The Cultural Triangle is famous for Sigiriya, Polonnuruwa and Dambulla and you will have the opportunity to visit all. Sigiriya is a spectacular rock fortress was built by King Kasyapa in the 5th century A.D. and was a royal citadel for more than 18 years. In a sheltered pocket, approached by a spiral stairway, are the famous rock frescoes of buxom maidens. The summit of the rock, with an area of nearly one-hectare was the site of the palace, the outer wall of which was built on the very brink of the precipice. There are fantastic views from the fortress.

The UNESCO - sponsored Central Cultural Fund has restored Sigiriya's 5th century Water Gardens to their former glory.

Like Sigiriya, **Dambulla** is a vast isolated rock mass and it was here that King Valagam Bahu took refuge in the 1st century B.C. He later turned the caves into a rock temple. Some of the frescoes are over 2,000 years old and there is a colossal figure of the recumbent Buddha carved out of the living rock, some 14 metres long. Since these caves were built each of the subsequent Kings who had work carried out on the temple has added a statue of himself somewhere in the caves.

It is a high climb to the caves so comfortable shoes for the climb are required and due to its importance as a Buddhist temple, shoulders must be covered and either a long skirt or trousers must be worn.

Polonnaruwa became established as the capital in the 11th century when Anuradhapura was abandoned due to foreign invasion. A well planned medieval city defended by enclosing walls (of which about 5km still remain), it was graced by palaces, shrines, monasteries, pavilions, parks and lakes. The city is incredible, with the parliament house and temples and shrines still in remarkably good condition. The King was unable to have any children despite having over 300 women in his harem and a number of wives. This was a great source of sorrow to him as he loved to watch children play so he built a public swimming pool just outside the city walls from

where he used to see and hear the children. The ruins of the Kings palace are all that stand of what was once a 7 storey, 400 room royal residence.

The **Alahana Pirivena**, a 12th century monastic university is a vast, landscaped complex of terraces and platforms, well designed monastic dwellings, image and chapter houses, pavilions, hospitals and bathing ponds. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, excavations and restorations are uncovering some of the mysteries of this walled-in complex but much remains to still be revealed.

Whilst you are in this area, **Minneriya National Park** is definitely worth a visit. The 8890 hectares of the National Park is an ideal eco tourism location in Sri Lanka. The park consists of mixed evergreen forest and scrub areas and is home to Sri Lanka's favourites such as sambar deer, leopards and elephants.

However the central feature of the park is the ancient Minneriya Tank (built in 3rd century AD by King Mahasena). During the dry season this tank is an incredible place to observe the elephants who come to bathe and graze on the grasses as well as the huge flocks of birds (cormorants and painted storks to name but a few) that come to fish in the shallow waters.

- **Amaya Lake Hotel**

Amaya Lake Hotel, Set on the shores of Kanalama Lake the Amaya Lake Resort is a 40-acre sanctuary with 92 Sri Lankan villas scattered amongst the trees.

There are 100 bungalow style rooms situated around the lake all with air conditioning, mini-bar, ensuite facilities and a small verandah. The hotel has a large open air dining area and offers a choice of international or Sri Lankan cuisine.

- **Deer Park Hotel,**

A boutique style hotel in the most lovely setting facing the Giritale Reservoir within the district capital of Polonnaruwa. The hotel is surrounded by a number of national wildlife parks and in close proximity to many rural villages. All 77 cottages are furnished in vibrant colours and Asian craft – 61 of these rooms have open air bathrooms.

Day Six

Transfer via Matale to Kandy for 3 nights

Matale is a large, busy town between Sigiriya and Kandy. There are many shops here and you'll see all walks of life – from groups of school children in their white uniforms to the shop keepers and groups of elderly men standing around generally 'chewing the fat'. This town is home to the Batik factory where you can see the whole process from start to end of making these brightly coloured garments.

Whilst driving through here make sure you stop at Ranweli Spice Garden. These incredible gardens grow a wide variety of herbs and spices which are then all prepared into various lotions, potions and pills to cure a whole range of ills. You be given a tour around the grounds and all the plants explained, then a talk of how the various plants treat, heal and prevent illness and common complaints.

Sri Lanka's hill capital **Kandy**, stronghold of the Sinhala Kings, is regarded by most Sri Lankan's as the country's most beautiful town. It is 488 metres above sea level and is built around a peaceful lake and set in a picturesque natural arena. Next to Colombo Kandy is Sri Lanka's most visited place. The focal point of the town is, without doubt, the golden roofed Dalada Maligawa

where the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha is enshrined. Major restoration work is in progress here by the UNESCO - aided Central Cultural Fund.

Visit Kalapuraya in the beautiful Dumbara valley 8 km. from Kandy, where descendants of the ancient craftsmen still create items of rare elegance in metal and wood. There are many shrines and temples in and around Kandy, where you will see rare paintings, frescoes, wood and stone carvings. Don't miss the Peradeniya Gardens begun as a pleasure garden by a Sinhala King, with its amazing variety of trees, plants and flowers. Kandy is an excellent place for shopping with souvenirs in wood, copper, silver, brass, ebony and bronze. Ceramics, lacquer work, handlooms, batiks, jewellery and rush and reed-ware can also be purchased.

Whilst you are staying in Kandy, you will be taken to **Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage**. One of only three in the World, this is a personal favourite of mine. Home to many elephants, one in particular – a tiny 4 week old calf, had been rescued after an attack by a leopard leaving it with only one ear. After an hour or so grazing, the elephants proceed to walk down the high street, past all the shops with their goods hanging outside to take a two hour bath in the river. The opposite side of the river there will be locals doing their washing or kids playing in the water. It is a scene that probably hasn't changed in many years. Whilst the elephants are in the river, you can do down to the water and 'help' them bathe by throwing water over them.

- **Mahaweli Reach Hotel, Kandy**

A beautiful hotel situated on the banks of the Kandy river in lush gardens, the Mahaweli Reach hotel is an ideal hotel for exploring Kandy and the surrounding area. This is also a popular hotel for those wishing to play golf at the Victoria Golf Course just outside Kandy. The hotel runs a vintage bus to and from the golf course and you book a round through the hotel.

- **Stonehouse Lodge** is a simple, clean guesthouse set in a gorgeous garden that is as well kept as any of the best gardens you'd find in England, if a bit more exotic. Teak – much from the Lodge's own garden – has been used throughout and the dark wood furniture, floors and ceilings are in stark contrast to the cool white walls and furnishings.

With colourful hibiscus, shaded courtyards, hummingbirds and tropical songbirds feeding just outside your window, this Lodge feels much more like a home than a hotel. We found it the perfect place for a relaxing break whilst enjoying the culture and sights of Kandy, a gentle 30 minute stroll away down the hill.

Day Nine

Transfer to the tea plantations and Nuwara Eliya for 1 night.

Set in the heart of the tea-country, this beautiful town is where the British succeeded in creating an English countryside with homes in styles from Georgian to Queen Anne. Well-kept lawns with hedges, an Anglican Church and the famous golf course and beautiful parks give the place an air of nostalgia. Situated at 1890 metres above sea level, the air here is cool and fresh - a serene retreat from the hustle and bustle of Colombo.

No visit to the hill country is complete without a visit to a tea estate and the chance to purchase some of the world's finest flavoured tea. Sri Lanka is the world's leading producer of high quality tea. Most itineraries, which include hill country resorts also, include a visit to a tea estate and

factory to see production and processing which is done in some of the most scenic areas of the island....almost everyone leaves them vowing never to drink tea made with teabags again.

- **Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya**

The Grand Hotel has been in existence for over 100 years, starting out as the former residence of Sir Edward Barnes, Sri Lanka's governor from 1830 to 1850. As of the moment, the hotel is considered among the best hill station hotels in Nuwara Eliya.

The hotel is in Nuwara Eliya, situated 170 kilometres east of Colombo, at the height of 6200 feet above sea level. A walk around the city will take you to age old colonial buildings and fresh fruit stalls.

- **The Tea Factory.** The hotel began as a factory built in the days of the British Raj. It has been converted so that much of the original style and machinery remains, making a unique hotel, full of character, history yet with modern comforts.

To stay at the Tea Factory is to experience a hotel like none other. The reception area is where the factory's leaf drying process was originally carried out. The atrium is latticed with steel and at its top, two giant wooden fans capped with brass remind you that the bedrooms are on floors that used to be the withering lofts.

Day Ten

Transfer to Kataragama/Yala National Park for 2 nights

Situated 309-km. south of Colombo, Yala is approximately 1,259 sq.km. in size and is located in the south eastern corner of the island. Its northern boundaries border on the Lahugala Elephant Sanctuary and it has the added bonus of a scenic ocean frontage. The terrain is varied flat plains alternating with rocky outcrops. The vegetation ranges from open parkland to dense jungle. Water holes, small lakes, lagoons and streams provide water for the animals and birds. The speciality here is the large numbers of elephants.

- **Rosen Renaissance Hotel,**

A lovely hotel with excellent facilities. In addition to spacious rooms with ensuite facilities and each room with either a balcony or terrace, this is the only hotel with piped underwater music in their swimming pool in Sri Lanka. This hotel is excellently located for exploring Yala National Park. During excursions into the Park you'll see wild elephant, crocodiles, water buffalo and a huge range of birds, flora and fauna.

- **Yala Village** is situated at Kirinda, bordering the Yala Wildlife Sanctuary and the Indian Ocean, on the southernmost tip of Sri Lanka. Spanning 10 acres of jungle and endless miles of beach, the Yala Village is truly a nature resort of untamed beauty and unmatched luxury. Step out into the jungle from your luxury chalet to watch the elephants walking by or the illusive leopard sunning itself on the rocky outcrop close by.

Day Twelve

Transfer to Bentota via the historic city of Galle for 4 nights beach.

The resort of Bentota is located on the southwest coast, just 40 miles south of Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital. The resort lies at the confluence of the river after which the village is named. Palm fringed beaches stretch for several miles along the coast and it is here most hotels are located.

The small resort centre of Bentota has a railway station and post office, several tourist shops and a few restaurants. There is also a Tourist Information Centre and an open-air theatre showing folk and mask dancing, under a canopy of swaying palms. The calm water of the Bentota River is excellent for sailing, windsurfing, water skiing or a simple boat ride up stream through the shaded creeks. On the south bank of the river several miles upstream, is the Galapota Temple, said to date from the 12th century. Activities are mainly centred at the hotels, where water sports can be organised for guests. The island's locally mined; precious gems can be seen in Bentota's factory, where they are painstakingly prepared in settings for jewellery.

- **Serendib Hotel, Bentota**

Serendib is located on the beach of **Bentota**, 2 hours and 30 minutes South of the Airport, 1 hour and 30 minutes South of Colombo. Set in eight acres of lush coconut palms and situated in Bentota's golden tropical beach, Hotel Serendib has the quality of a happy dream. Lavishly spacious old-world Sri Lanka architecture evokes an aura of ease and relaxation.

- **Saman Villas**, one of the most sought-after small hotels in Sri Lanka, is perched on a rocky headland just south of Bentota. The headland is divided two long, unspoilt beaches of golden sand, backed by dense green coconut plantations. The atmosphere is one of sheer tranquillity.

Chalets have open-air bathroom, dressing room, sleeping and lounge areas, and veranda. Excellent facilities include cable and satellite tv, CD player, phone, The main restaurant and the more informal terrace restaurant both overlook the ocean. The lounge bar, pool-side, and the a/c library bar, with snooker table and books, share magnificent views.

- **Aditya** is undoubtedly one of the finest boutique properties in Sri Lanka. It sits on a secluded stretch of beach in Rathgama, midway between the hedonistic beach resort of Hikkaduwa and the historic old town of Galle. The drive from Colombo is about three hours. Aditya's suites are a delight, so much so that you may never want to leave them!

Day Sixteen

Transfer back to Colombo Airport for your international flight home to the UK.