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# Tour Notes

Sri Lanka – Beyond the Tourist Trail

Tour Duration – 16 Days



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●●○

Tour Pace - Busy

## Tour Highlights

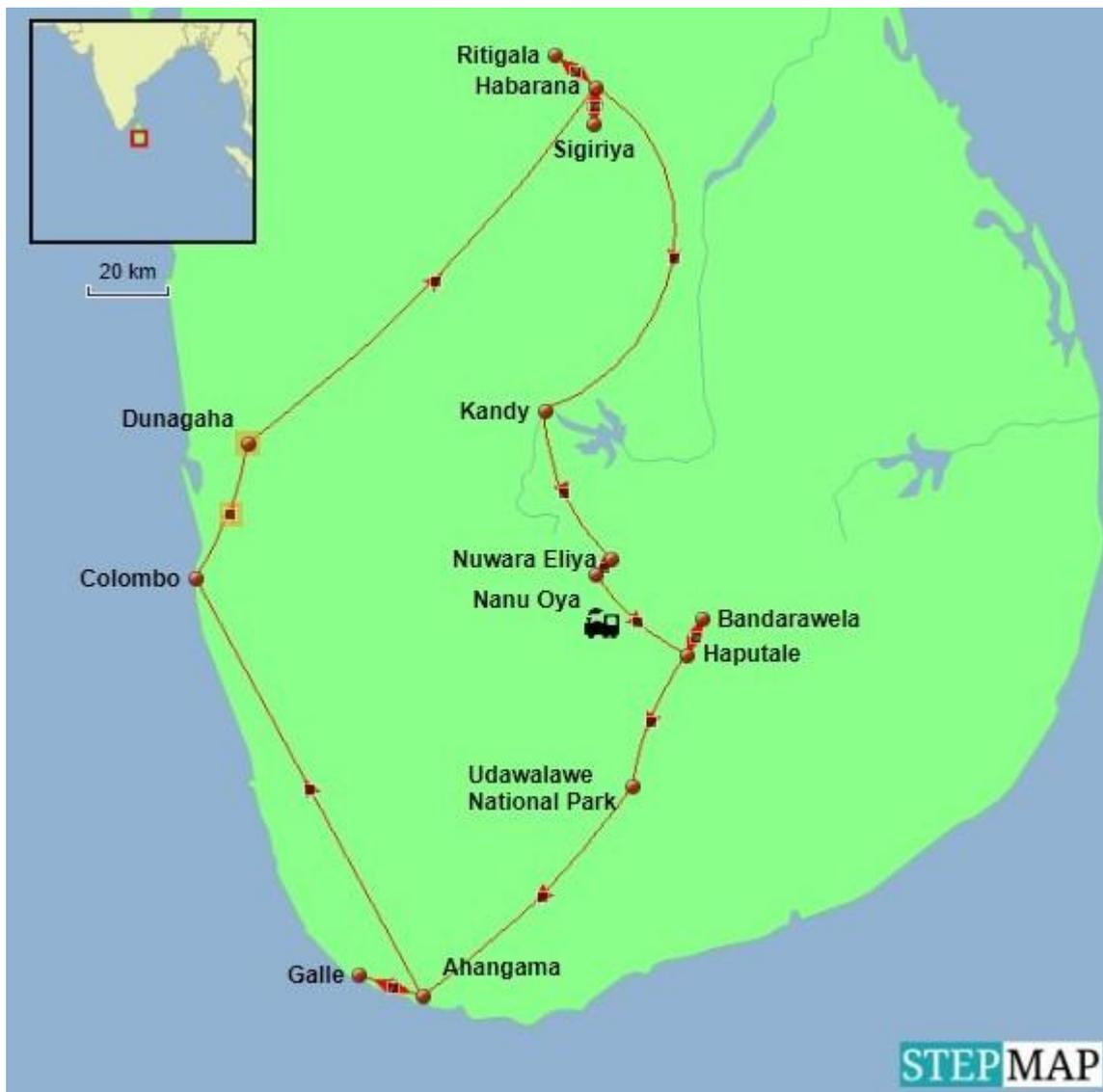
- ✓ Stay on a working coconut plantation estate
- ✓ Experiences with local people including village visits and local craft experiences
- ✓ Bustling Kandy with its iconic Temple of the Tooth (UNESCO)
- ✓ Rarely visited Ritigala's jungle-clad archaeological site
- ✓ Take a spectacular train journey through the hill country
- ✓ Marvel at Sigiriya Rock's panoramic views
- ✓ The option to view wild elephant herds at Udawalawe National Park.
- ✓ Off the beaten track bird and animal life on Safari at the incomparable Yala National Park
- ✓ Relax amidst the laid-back south coast and visit historic Galle Fort





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## Tour Map – Sri Lanka – Beyond the Tourist Trail



### Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotels with private bathrooms
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D), as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum 12
- Start Point:** Negombo (Colombo airport)
- End Point:** Negombo (Colombo airport)
- Transport:** Minibus or similar vehicle depending on group size
- Countries:** Sri Lanka



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### Sri Lanka – Beyond the Tourist Trail

Sri Lanka is a one of the most culturally rich holiday destinations in the Indian Ocean, mixing Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian faiths and traditions. Colonial powers – Portuguese, Dutch and British – likewise have left their mark. Diverse landscapes provide a plethora of habitats for world class wildlife, whilst white-sand beaches afford an off-duty playground for visitors and residents alike. Island cuisine is first class, distinct flavours providing an enlivening culinary subtext to any visit. Beneath its idyllic surface, Sri Lanka's past has been challenging at time, having suffered a succession of travails, not least a long-running civil war, fortunately now in the distant past. Sri Lanka's landscape is awash with fabulous archaeological and natural wonders so that, whilst we do not entirely shun the iconic sites that so many enjoy here, we have sought out little-visited and fascinating corners of the island to offer you a unique combination of experiences and memories to cherish and regale. On this tour you will travel through the central and southern regions of the country exploring areas that are not on the well-trodden tourist path, such as Ritigala archaeological complex engulfed by the jungle in scenes akin to the set of an India Jones adventure, and the fascinating rural villages around Dunagaha, introducing much-needed funds into local economies. Along the way, enjoy the stories and experiences of local characters from former tea planters to a snake naturalist! For the wildlife elements, you will stay clear of the jeep-packed thoroughfares of Yala National Park and take peaceful alternatives away from the crowds. This tour of Sri Lanka doesn't insulate travellers in an all-inclusive international cocoon. The island's sometimes difficult past validates its reality. In fact, it is a key factor in the reasons for visiting now in a land where you may be assured of a warm welcome from the locals.

### Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

### Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not merely passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies, it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK: we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible, you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be advantageous to change the guide at one or more points during the tour. For tours where the group size is very small – a driver/guide may be used.

## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Airport – Dunagaha (*Driving time approximately 40 minutes*)

On arrival, meet our local team and transfer to a working coconut estate called Kotaliyadde Estate. Ambarella Lodge provides an ideal introduction into the Sri Lankan culture, spirited away from the main tourist hubbub of the coast. The rest of the day will be at your leisure where you can stroll in the lush gardens and explore the myriad types of spices around the estate. One of your hosts will happily join you to explain about the different varieties. Alternatively you can simply relax by the pool and unwind after your journey. Overnight Ambarella Lodge (D)

### Day 2 – Dunagaha

After breakfast you explore the local village with one of the community. You will also visit other villages in the area, travelling by Tuk-tuk with a local guide. On a stop at a pineapple farm, you will see a family making



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wonderful textiles using wooden looms and also a small brick factory. Enjoy the ride as a fascinating assortment of sights and sensations awaits every turn along the rural back roads in this area, lending an authentic feel to local life. Enjoy a simple but delectable lunch at a local house, before having some time at leisure in the afternoon to relax or further explore the estate. Overnight Ambarella Lodge (BLD)

**Please Note** – *We are using genuine locals to experience the villages in this rural area ensuring a vital source of income to local people. We ask you to be patient as English proficiency is not always to a high level, but your tour guide will help with translation and understanding.*

### **Day 3 – Dunagaha – Habarana – Ritigala Archaeological Site – Habarana** *(Driving time approximately four and a half hours)*

After breakfast, you will drive towards Habarana located at the heart of Sri Lanka's celebrated cultural triangle. This afternoon you visit the off-the-beaten-track gem of Ritigala Archaeological Monastery; an extraordinary complex sequestered in the jungle and often over-looked by the regular tourist. After the visit, you return to Habarana for the overnight stay. Overnight The Other Corner or similar (BD)

#### **Ritigala**

Ritigala is most certainly shrouded in an air of the undiscovered and still retains a curiously mysterious ambience owing to the long meditational pathways that spill into dense jungle and large stone-lined ritualistic reservoirs. It is a splendid world away from the more celebrated and bustling historical tourist sites in the country and preserves a wonderfully peaceful aura. Ensure you take time to explore the ruins in depth and walk all the way to the higher reaches of the complex for a truly holistic appreciation of the site. There is time here too to sit awhile and connect with nature in the sacred ancient meditation grounds.

### **Day 4 – Habarana – Sigiriya UNESCO – Habarana** *(Driving time approximately one and a half hours)*

This morning you arrive at Sigiriya Rock Fortress (UNESCO) early at around 7am, in the still relative cool of the day and in the soft light and this also beats the main throng of tourist crowds. Referred to by Sri Lankans as the 8th wonder of the world, this breathtakingly beautiful and dramatic site is a rare jewel among the many treasures in Sri Lanka. You will explore some of the interesting features in the lower sections of the site such as the Royal Gardens and the water gardens, set amidst a stunning wooded wilderness. On your ascent of the rock fortress, take time to linger at the wonderfully preserved frescoes, depicting buxom, wasp-waisted maidens bearing flowers. Enjoy the amazing 360 degree views from the top of Sigiriya. Time slips rapidly away in this incredible place and all too soon it will be time to descend. You take a well-earned rest at a close-by local restaurant in leafy Habarana to enjoy yet another delicious lunch that captures the very essence of village cuisine. Lakmal, proprietor of the establishment, takes particular pride in pleasing guests with his coconut sambol, best enjoyed with rice and bread. After lunch you press on to Hurulu and set out on a jeep safari aiming to see wild elephants in their natural habitat. After the safari, head back to the hotel. Overnight The Other Corner, or similar (BD).

#### **Sigiriya Rock**

It is hard to overstate the stunning beauty and drama of Sigiriya. Named after the vast lion ('Lion Rock') whose base and paws still dominate the 5<sup>th</sup> century fortress' gateway, the site has had several functions. British archaeologists began excavations in the late nineteenth century, having found a landscape entirely overrun by nature, and considered that the earliest settlers came nearly 5 thousand years ago, though the first substantial building wasn't until the late 400s AD when the rock summit fortress and surrounding complexes were built as a more secure capital. By the violent end of his reign, the capital went elsewhere and a Buddhist monastery grew up which endured until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. During its occupation, both the elaborate citadel and its surrounding moats, terraces and breath-taking gardens were examples of truly exquisitely planned urban development. In particular, visitors come to view the mirror wall and extraordinary frescoes which once probably covered the majority of the rock sides, indicating the sheer opulence and the grand scale King Kashyapa's project.



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**Please note** - the Lion Rock (*Sigiriya*) ascent takes approximately 1½ to 3 hours, depending on your preferred pace. There is no rock climbing involved, only stairs, but visiting the frescoes should not be undertaken by people with joint problems, breathing difficulties, heart problems or vertigo. The top of the rock is exposed, so wearing a hat is advisable. The lower sections of the site still hold a great deal of interest from a historical perspective and the museum is excellent.

#### **Day 5 - Habarana – Kandy** (Driving time approximately three hours)

Today you proceed to Kandy, the last stronghold of the Sinhalese Kings, a pleasant city surrounded by lush green countryside. Upon arrival, you will take some time to wander around the idyllic lake and stroll its maze of copious old shops, bustling markets and great restaurants. Perhaps watch the colourful processions that make their noisy way down to the fascinating Dalada Maligawa or Temple of the Tooth (a UNESCO world heritage site), so called because it contains a sacred tooth belonging to 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. Overnight Hotel Suisse, or similar (B)

#### **Kandy**

Set in a relatively temperate zone, Kandy is encircled by lofty hills and lies at the heart of the hill-country. Its altitude makes it cooler than the coast, but it lies in a basin alongside the River Mahaweli and so can still be hotter and drier than surrounding hill towns. The kingdom of Kandy is the very fabric of legends: it dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and saw a fiercely independent and successful era, repelling a series of invasions from the Portuguese, Dutch and British until finally succumbing to colonial rule under George III of Britain in 1815. The city has continued to grow, being the Allied headquarters for South-East Asia in World War 2 and the modern, vibrant culture is based around the gemstone, tea and textile industries, the wares of which are all worth perusing during your visit. Visitors come largely to see the religious site at the Temple of the Tooth, a major pilgrimage destination, the delightful botanical gardens and the fascinating museum. Further afield, the hills and peaks afford superb trekking opportunities.

#### **Temple of the Tooth**

The courtyard is brim-full of worshipers of every age and origin, bearing offerings in their hands – young coconut leaves, the air awash with the aromas of fresh petals and succulent fruits. As the door opens, the pilgrims surge along the dim, narrow stairway towards the argent and ivory portal beyond which the Buddha's tooth lies. The doors are opened and a flood of exotic, heavy-scented air floods out. The golden karandua-casket of the tooth stands revealed obscurely behind gilded bars. The ornate golden candelabra casts an ethereal light through which yellow-robed priests move to and fro. The tooth is enclosed in five karandua and slowly and solemnly each is removed, some liberally encrusted with precious stones – rubies, emeralds and diamonds. At last the great unveiling arrives and, as the last karandua is shed, amidst silken folds a first glimpse is allowed of the wondrous relic.

#### **Day 6 – Rural life outside of Kandy**

This morning you will take a short drive from the centre of Kandy to a village where you embark on a walk connecting the fabled twin temples of Galdaladeniya and Lankathilake, gracefully hidden away amidst the hills of Kandy. Stroll in amongst rice fields bordering small villages and enjoy the verdant countryside all the while observing locals tending to their gardens and rice fields. Periodically stopping along the way, discover an array of resplendent fruits, vegetables and spices that thrive in the climate. The locals are extremely hospitable and will appreciate a wave and a smile as you pass. Towards the end of the walk, you will visit the house of C.G. Gunasoma, an 8th generation (and probably the last) descendant of a long line of professional optometrists who were bound to the service of the kings as far back as the 14th century. Gunasoma will demonstrate how quartz is made into a lens, raising the profile of and helping to secure a future for a little known but invaluable part of Sri Lankan Heritage that our local team are fighting to preserve. Overnight Hotel Suisse, or similar (BL)



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**Please Note:** For this walk, ensure you take plenty of water, sunhat and sunscreens as well as insect repellent. Please also take a take a Sarong or a shawl to cover yourself when you visit the temples.

### **Day 7 – Kandy – Nuwara Eliya – Nanu Oya - Haputale by train**

*(Driving time approximately three hours and approximately three hour local train journey)*

After an early breakfast, snake into the lush hills of the tea country towards the often mist-shrouded hill station of Nuwara Eliya. Take a short walk around the town in the cooler air at 1868m above sea level. Next, continue to nearby Nanu Oya and experience a magical train journey through Sri Lanka's luxuriant hills. Sit back and relax, enjoying splendid views of tea plantations in the foreground and emerald mountains beyond. The journey leads you through a multitude of tunnels and across dramatic bridges, punctuated by stops at small village halts where one can gain an insight into the hustle and bustle of local life. At Haputale Railway Station, disembark and transfer to the overnight accommodation. Overnight at Melheim Resort, Haputale – No Air Conditioning (BD).

**Please Note:** Seats on the train can be confirmed only 21 days prior to the date of travel. Seats from any particular class compartment cannot be guaranteed and will be subject to availability. We reserve the right to change the route of the train journey based on availability.

### **Nuwara Eliya**

Much has changed since the heyday of the town in the 1920s and 30s, yet the climate is still pleasant, even amidst a cool drizzle or sometimes a gentle veil of fog. Today Nuwara Eliya is a town re-inventing itself. After the civil war and with the advent of tourism, a vibrant and proud Sri Lankan culture has surmised that colonial heritage is perhaps something to be embraced rather than rejected, at least in terms of a revival for commercial reasons. Old derelict bungalows have been patched up, and the guidebooks dub the town "Little England". The reality is somewhere in between, but it is possible to see the faded glories of the past; yet the present equally offers an enigmatic paradox of a regular Sri Lankan town that wants to look fondly at the past yet is still not quite sure how to face the future. A must-read before coming to Nuwara Eliya is 'Running in the Family' by Michael Ondaatje which relates the story of a dysfunctional family of tea planters, adding compelling perspective to the whole experience.

### **Day 8 – Haputale – Bandarawela – Haputale (Driving time approximately one hour)**

Today is devoted to the Sri Lankan religion that is tea! You will meet Salinda Madugalle, a retired and passionate Tea Planter who will be sharing his intriguing stories about the time-honoured tale of tea. Salinda began his planter's career as long ago as in 1977, carrying with him a huge amount of experience in the tea fields as a planter for over 30 years and also developing experience as a consultant at sundry tea estates in the hill country. Now retired, yet with the desire for keeping his planting memories alive, Salinda will take you on a delightful trip down his own memory lane offering an insight into his life as a tea planter, regaling you with compelling details as to how tea estates have slowly evolved. With Salinda, stroll the serpentine trails amongst the bountiful tea bushes and perhaps meet some of the groups of local Tamil women plucking tea-leaves. As you will learn, conditions have improved considerably for workers since the brutality of 19th century labour experiences, but it is still amply evident that this is a particularly tough job. Salinda's Tamil is very fluent, following his extensive experience amongst the estate workers, so you may be able to strike up engaging conversations with the locals about their occupations and the tea itself. Later, enjoy an absorbing tea tasting experience, examining the characteristics, idiosyncrasies and qualities of different tea varieties which will far surpass anything you have hitherto enjoyed at home. Overnight at Melheim Resort, Haputale, or similar. No air conditioning. (BD)



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### **Day 9 - Haputale – Buduruwagala - Udawalawe National Park** (*Driving time approximately three hours*)

After a relaxed breakfast, you will depart the hill country and begin your descent towards Udawalawe, the territorial heartland of wild elephants. En route, you visit the secluded archaeological site of Buduruwagala (literally 'the rock with the Buddha statues'), definitely not on the standard tourist itinerary. It is a very quiet site and a perfect place to stretch the legs amongst a wonderful fusion of history and nature. On arrival at Udawalawe the rest of the day is at leisure to relax by the pool. Overnight Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort or similar (BD)

### **Day 10 – Udawalawe elephant transit home and safari**

This morning, there is an optional visit of the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home which is another interesting project tending to injured/orphaned Elephant calves to don the skills to survive in the wild. Although the visitors are not permitted to be up-close and personal with the elephants, the feeding times of baby elephants scheduled four times daily (9 am, 12 noon, 3 pm and 6 pm) provide wonderful opportunities to observe them and can be a very pleasurable experience. The Transit Home tends to attract a heavy footfall of tourists, so you may prefer to spend your morning at leisure. Later, under soft afternoon light, embark on a wonderful safari at Udawalawe National Park where you should hope to enjoy some excellent elephant sightings. Overnight Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort, or similar (BD)

### **Udawalawe National Park**

Established only as recently as 1972, the Park is in area of former 'chena' farming – a form of shifting cultivation that has kept the landscape relatively youthful and hence a thriving habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife across its 199 square miles. Much of the vegetation is low scrub, marshes and water fringes, so viewing animals is relatively straightforward; however, there are rivers, wooded areas and hill ranges which add to the variety of species here. Central to it all, and the major draw for many species is the reservoir, offering a stable water source, marshy fringes covered in thousands of wading birds and enough prey to draw in a host of eagle species to hunt and fish. As with most safaris, the prize species such as the 250 elephants – which give fabulous views – and leopard are only the tip of the iceberg and the park is dripping with birds, reptiles, deer, wild boar, civets, etc. Amongst the fascinating cross-section of fauna are the delightful Sri Lankan spotted chevrotain, the Golden jackal, the threatened Golden palm civets and Mugger crocodiles. Those keen on birding may well be rewarded with sightings of endemics such as Red-faced malkoha, Sri Lanka grey hornbill and Sri Lanka jungle fowl and few can fail to be impressed by views of the splendid Indian peafowl or the exotic Malabar pied hornbill. Although well-visited, the grandeur and breadth of the vistas gives a sense of solitude and separation from other safari vehicles and you can expect a busy, action-packed visit where you rarely are able to put down your cameras or binoculars.

### **Day 11 – Udawalawe – Yala National Park** (*Driving time approximately three hours*)

This morning you travel to Yala National Park, internationally acclaimed as the jewel in Sri Lanka's wildlife viewing crown. After checking in at the hotel, embark on a mesmerising afternoon safari in the little visited Block 5 (subject to local permission). The more popular areas of Yala National Park are generally packed full of vehicles, so instead you will delve deeper into the park to Block 5 which is rarely frequented by tourist jeeps. It has a slightly lower density of leopards than the more popular areas of the park (though the designer of this tour did however spot one!), but the scenery is alluring and the anticipation of what, amongst a myriad of possibilities, may be around the corner is nothing short of thrilling. Overnight Big Game Camp or similar – Not air conditioned (BD)

### **Yala National Park**

Yala proudly boasts that it possesses a higher leopard density than anywhere else in the world and this is sufficient to make it famous as a site where leopard viewing is an excellent possibility. Founded as a National park in 1938, Yala has always been a wilderness area and the park now consists of 5 designated areas, two of which are open for public safaris. In the rainy season the water sources and rivers are abundant, but by the drier months wildlife tends to congregate around pools, lagoon and tanks to feed, offering some superb



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chances for observing some of the 350 elephants, 25 leopards and countless water buffalo, toque macaque, civets, fishing cat and sloth bears. Bird watchers will find Yala equally rewarding – pelicans, flamingos, eagles and flycatchers are some of the families amongst the 215 species recorded here, whilst special treats come with the seven endemics – Blue-tailed bee-eater Sri Lanka wood pigeon, Crimson-fronted barbet, Black-capped bulbul, Sri Lanka grey hornbill, Sri Lanka junglefowl and Brown-capped babbler. A useful tip is to be willing to travel some distance: the quieter areas tend to be the less disturbed and offer the most rewarding and breathtaking vision of what Yala truly has to offer.

### **Day 12 – Yala National Park – Galle – Ahangama** (*Driving time approximately four hours*)

Starting early, you follow the palm-lined roads of the tropical south coast. After checking in to your hotel in Ahangama, you will spend the afternoon exploring nearby historic Galle, wandering the back streets and the crumbling ramparts of the Old Dutch fort. You can even enjoy some thambili from a local vendor or savour some crispy vaddais. After the visit of Galle Fort you return to the hotel. Overnight Garton's Cape, or similar (BD)

#### **Galle**

A fascinating blend of cultures lends Galle a sense of being a step back in time. The effervescent Sri Lankan spirit abounds, yet here it is set in a world of Dutch and British colonial influence. The old town is positioned on a peninsula on Sri Lanka's south west coasts and circuitous and seductive cobbled streets open out into grand military edifices: Galle's history as a vital trading post for hundreds of years is never far from the consciousness here. The sea air combines with the tropical warmth to lend a languor and dreaminess to a visit. In the afternoon, the ramparts of the fort which lies at the heart of the old city swell with people coming to view the simply breath-taking silence of sun dipping in the sky. Alongside, the city's obsession with cricket is everywhere, with games seemingly springing up on every street corner. Galle's significance as a port dates back to at least 1400 BC and cinnamon has long been exported throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, a prized trading partner of such as the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Chinese and Malays. European domination is relatively modern, though the fort, Jesuit cathedral and Amangalla historic hotel are major draws to visitors, alongside the Shiva temple, the close-by beautiful beaches, and the buzzing cafés and gelaterias.

### **Day 13 – Kanneliya Rainforest**

The morning opens by enjoying a unique visit to a snake expert's house, set close-by the entrance to Kanneliya Forest. Vishan is a knowledgeable naturalist who has made a career of collecting reptiles from the residences and gardens of locals, checking on their welfare and then releasing them back into their natural rainforest habitat. His experiences and wealth of expertise make for fascinating conversations which will educate you on these beautiful and inscrutable creatures. Once you have shared your traditional cup of local tea, you will be escorted into the heart of the incredible rainforest by Upal, a local guide and tracker, who knows the area intimately. Amazingly, this is one of conservation's true triumphs, being reclaimed in the 1970s from logging and severe habitat loss. Keep your eyes peeled for spotting many of the exquisite endemic birds, snakes and lizards as you make your way along its dappled forest paths, whilst Upal instructs you on the amazing diversity of flora and fauna that makes calls this home. After you have visited a small cave where a huge colony of innumerable bats roost, relax by an idyllic waterfall where a clearing comes alive with a kaleidoscope of colourful dragonflies and butterflies. The excursion culminates in a delicious rice and curry spread, prepared by Upul's wife, served on the banks of the nearby Nannikitha River, a lovely spot for an optional swim. Later, return to the hotel at Ahangama. Overnight at Garton's Cape or similar (BLD)

### **Day 14 – Ahangama at leisure**

Today is spent at leisure for you to independently enjoy the languidly beautiful tropical south coast: you might explore the local small town by tuk-tuk, head out to view nearby Koggala Lagoon's islets and bountiful birdlife, see the turtle conservation work being accomplished there, or simply enjoy its low-key white beaches and surfing opportunities. Overnight at Garton's Cape, or similar (B)



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### **Day 15 – Ahangama – Colombo** (*Driving time approximately three hours*)

This morning you drive to Colombo. After checking in at the hotel and having some time to relax, in the afternoon you will meet a local guide who will help you explore behind the scenes of Colombo. Travelling in Tuk-tuks you first visit a street food joint at the Galle Face Green and enjoy the taste of Kottu Rotti, an everyday Sri Lankan meal not to be missed and always best enjoyed on the street. Then it's time to experience the evening market at Pettah, observing the local vendors who throng to its buzzing hub from sundry corners of Sri Lanka to sell their vast array of goods. Perhaps sample some of the seasonal fruits on offer. You will also tread the bustling back-streets of Slave Island, again immersing yourself amongst the locals going about their daily rituals. Overnight at Lake Lodge, or similar (BD)

### **Day 16 – Colombo – Airport** (*Driving time approximately one hour*)

Transfer to the airport at the appropriate time for your onward flight (B)

## *Tour inclusions/exclusions*

#### **Inclusions:**

Arrival and departure transfers  
All accommodation  
Services of English speaking guide / tour leader  
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

#### **Excluded:**

International flights  
Travel Insurance  
Visas  
Drinks  
Items of a personal nature  
Tips (Discretionary)

## *Important Information*

#### **Foreign Government Travel Warnings**

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Sri Lanka to areas that we travel to. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

#### **Accommodation and Meals**

#### **Hotel Check-in Times**

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your





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room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

### **Accommodation Rating**

Accommodation on this tour is of a comfortable standard with private bathrooms. Properties in the hill country where it is cooler do not have air conditioning.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

### **Food & Drink**

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### **Dietary Requirements**

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### **Budgeting for your Tour**

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### **Food**

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £5

Dinner £10

### **Drink**

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of local beer £1- £2

Bottle of water £0.50



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### **Tipping – Guide and Drivers**

Tipping is common practice in Sri Lanka. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. When tipping a driver, a guide or hotel staff a few dollars will always be gratefully received.

### **Foreign Exchange**

**ATM Availability:** Sri Lanka is well equipped with ATMs, although less so in smaller towns than in larger cities

**Credit or Debit Card Acceptance:** Cards are generally only accepted in the more expensive shops and restaurants especially in the lesser visited north of the country

**Local Currency:** Rupee

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Pound Sterling or US Dollars

**Where to Exchange:** Your guide will advise you

### **Joining your Tour**

#### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Please contact us if you would like a flight quotation.

#### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

#### **Travel Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

#### **Visa Information**

Most nationals including UK, EU and US visitors require a visa for entry to Sri Lanka. For most nationalities this is done online as an electronic visa. We recommend that you check with your nearest embassy for the most up to date details. For more details on the e-visa please visit

<http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/visainfo/center.jsp>.

#### **Passports**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.



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For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### **Vaccinations & Protection**

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended. Malaria is not known as high risk in Sri Lanka but again speak to your doctor or travel clinic for up to date advice.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

## *Preparing for your tour*

### **Climate**

Sri Lanka experiences year round high temperatures in coastal regions: Colombo averages 27°C. It can be several degrees cooler in the hill country but by day temperatures are usually still pleasant. There are two monsoon periods: Apr-Sep when rain is confined to the southwest of the country; and Oct-Mar when it falls in the north and east the country. However being a tropical country, rain showers can never be ruled out but they tend to be short lived and heavy perhaps with a thunderstorm. Please note predicting modern climate patterns have become increasingly more difficult, especially in Sri Lanka and travellers should only use this advice as a guide.

### **Clothing**

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night although in Sri Lanka unless you are in the hill country temperatures never dip too low. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days where rain showers may be present.

You should bear in mind that Sri Lanka tends to have a conservative attitude towards dress. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women.

### **Equipment**

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is also recommended to take a torch/head torch in case of any electricity outages at night.

### **Footwear**

Footwear is always a priority consideration on tour and we recommend comfortable walking shoes when sightseeing and walking for example at Sigiriya and Ritigala. Lighter shoes or sandals are suitable when travelling and when at the beach.



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### **Driving times**

Driving times stated in the itinerary are given in the best of faith. Driving times may on occasion be longer due to unforeseen circumstances such as poor weather, road construction activity, mechanical problems etc. Most of the roads in Sri Lanka are of a reasonable standard but the going can be slow due to traffic and large vehicles on the road.

### **Safari Expectations**

On this tour you have the opportunity to see some amazing biodiversity. However these animals are wild. We cannot guarantee sightings. So please enjoy what nature has to offer and keep expectations realistic.

### **Luggage on tour**

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

230-240volts. Plugs are usually of the European three round pin variety.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

These notes were updated 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020.