

Essential Sri Lanka 2020

7 Day Private Tour – 4V, 5V or Boutique

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

• Private tour with guide • Perfect tour for first time visitors • Sigiriya Rock Fortress • Minneriya National Park safari • Dambulla Cave Temple • Kandy • 4V, 5V or Boutique hotel options available • Extend to the beaches of Sri Lanka

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive Colombo

Arrive in Colombo this morning, where you will be transferred to Negombo (approximately 40 mins) where you'll overnight at the **Jetwing Beach or similar (4V option), Heritance Negombo or similar (5V option) or The Wallawwa or similar (boutique option)**. The rest of the day is at leisure to enjoy the hotel facilities. (D)

Day 2: Negombo to the Cultural Triangle

After an early breakfast, depart for Habarana by road (approximately 4 hours 30 minutes), upon arrival the rest of the day is free and at your leisure. Habarana is commonly referred to as the 'Cultural Triangle', the central plains area boasts of temple ruins and ancient cities combined with national parks and glistening reservoirs. UNESCO World Heritage Sites include the striking rock fortress of Sigiriya, Dambulla's Royal Rock Temple and crumbling archaeological treasures of Polonnaruwa. Habarana is a popular tourist destination for safari lovers as it is the starting point for safaris in the nearby Minneriya sanctuary, heavily populated by elephants. This makes the area an enthralling visit for wildlife and cultural lovers alike. Enjoy 3 nights at the **Habarana Village by Cinnamon or similar (4V option), Cinnamon Lodge or similar (5V option) or Jetwing Vil Uyana or similar (boutique option)**. (B/D)

Day 3: Sigiriya

This morning enjoy a tranquil walk, catamaran ride and tractor ride through the village of Hiriwadunna experiencing the calmness of a tropical village as you enjoy some local tea. Embark on a walk over village paths, an ancient reservoir and forest. Cross a little jungle rivulet by catamaran to reach a farmers simple "wattle and daub" house where you can enjoy an authentic Sri Lankan lunch with a local villager. Then walk half an hour by foot and bullock cart to a point where your vehicle meets you. In the afternoon, visit the magnificent site of Sigiriya Rock. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of Sri Lanka's major attractions, highlights include the water gardens, the mirror wall with ancient graffiti, the lion platform and the summit of 1.6 hectares, which was completely covered by buildings during the period of Sigiriya's glory. (B/D)

Day 4: Minneriya

Enjoy this morning at leisure to sit back and relax or why not add an optional tour to Polonnaruwa (local additional cost) the medieval and ancient capital of Ceylon.

In the afternoon you will drive to the Minneriya National Park (depending on the elephant movement, we may visit the nearby Kaudulla National Park or Eco Park instead). The 8,890 hectares of Minneriya National Park consists of mixed evergreen forest and scrub areas and is home to favourites such as elephants and sambar deer's. The central feature of the park is the ancient Minneriya Tank (built in 3rd century AD by King Mahasena). During the dry season (June to September), this tank is an incredible place to observe the elephants who come to bathe and graze, as well as the huge flocks of birds that come to fish in the waters. (B/D)

Day 5: Cultural Triangle to Kandy

This morning travel from the Cultural Triangle to the hill country capital of Kandy, an important cultural and spiritual centre (3 hours by road) with sightseeing on the way. Visit the Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temples, one of the largest and best preserved cave temple complexes in Sri Lanka. Located in the north central province, this UNESCO World Heritage Site dates back to the 1st century BC, and is an amazing complex of 5 caves. These caves were first used as a refuge by an ancient king who on regaining his throne commissioned magnificent carved images within the living rock. Onwards to Kandy, the last capital of the Sri Lankan kings, where many of the legends, traditions and folklore are still lovingly kept alive.

This evening you'll visit the Temple of the Tooth in time for the 'Pooja' ceremony. This is the major shrine where pilgrims have revered Buddha's tooth since the 16th century; its gilded roof seems to act as a beacon to visitors throughout the day and into the evening. Enjoy 2 nights at **Cinnamon Citadel or similar (4V option), Earl's Regency or similar (5V option) or Kings Pavilion or similar (boutique option)**. (B/D)

Day 6: Kandy

Enjoy a relaxing day with a tour of Kandy including the British Garrison Cemetery and a drive around the beautiful Kandy Lake. In the evening, experience an exhilarating show of traditional cultural dances and impressive performances. (B/D)

Day 7: End of your tour

Today we return to Colombo for your onward flight, you can continue by road (4 hours) or by light aircraft with Cinnamon Air (1 hour scenic flight). The flight arrives late, so a night in Colombo is required. Alternatively why not add one of our tour extensions or spend a relaxing few nights at one of Sri Lanka's beautiful beach resorts. (B)

Meals: B=Breakfast, D=Dinner

This is a set tour itinerary, if you have booked any pre/post or optional tour arrangements please refer to your separate vouchers and final documents.

TOUR NOTES

Pre/Post Tour Options

The first day of the tour is at leisure so allows you enough time to arrive and relax, if you have time we recommend adding a couple of extra nights on the beach before your tour. After the tour you can extend to Nuwara Eliya or a safari in Yala, alternatively you can extend your stay on the beaches of Sri Lanka or the Maldives.

Time difference

GMT +5 ½ hours (summer) +6 ½ hours (winter)

A Private Tour

This is a private itinerary, where you will travel with a driver and be met by local English-speaking tour guides for any included sightseeing

Tour inclusions

- Air-conditioned transport with private driver/guide
- Sightseeing as detailed including entrance fees and still camera fees
- Accommodation and meal inclusions as mentioned
- Road taxes, parking fees, fuel surcharges and portorage at airports

Tour exclusions

- International flight, including all UK and overseas airport taxes and applicable fuel surcharges
- Flight upgrades and airport transfers in the UK
- Insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, laundry, tips & gratuities, video camera fees at monuments
- Anything not detailed on the itinerary

Optional Excursions

- Visit to Polonnaruwa on Day 04

Accommodation

Occasionally due to availability or other circumstances we may need to substitute one or more of the hotels with that of a similar standard

Journey times

Sri Lankan roads are windy and there are few highways so journey times between destinations can be very long, those listed in the itinerary are approximate. If optional excursions are added or ad hoc visits are required this may add extra time on the roads. This tour have been designed by our destination experts so we have tried to build in free time to relax and added internal flights where we think cutting journey times may improve guest's experience.

In some instances you may want to add an internal flight to cut transfer times, for the Essential Sri Lanka tour you can add the Colombo to Sigiriya flight for an additional cost, please ask your Virgin Holidays agent.

Language

English is widely spoken in Sri Lanka

Visa requirements

Holders of UK Passports will require a visa to visit Sri Lanka. This must be obtained in advance for US\$30.00 and can be completed at:

<http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa>

Currency

The Currency in Sri Lanka is the Sri Lankan Rupee. There are plenty of banks and ATMs, but you see less once you head out of the cities, so make sure you have enough to cover your drinks and ad-hoc item bills. You may want to carry small amounts of local currency for tips and to buy souvenirs from vendors too! Please note that not all smaller hotels and shops can accept credit cards

Electricity

The electricity supply in Sri Lanka is 230 volts, as the sockets vary, an 'International traveller's adapter set' is recommended

Tipping

It is customary to tip in Sri Lanka. 10% is usual in restaurants (this is often included in the bill as a service charge) and a guide for your driver/guide would be \$5 per traveller per day.

What to pack

- Lightweight, cotton clothes, smart casual is acceptable
- A light sweater or fleece for early mornings and evenings and air-conditioning can be cool in restaurants
- Comfortable, enclosed and sturdy footwear for walking and game-drives
- Casual clothing and sandals for dinner and relaxing at your hotel/lodge
- Sun cream, sunglasses and hat
- Camera and/or video camera with spare batteries and memory cards
- Swimming attire for an occasional swim
- Binoculars
- Mosquito repellent and spray
- Handy wipes, antiseptic hand gel and bottled water where possible
- For visits to religious monuments and buildings clothing rules may apply, for example covering shoulders or removing footwear, your local guide can advise where necessary
- Low denominations of local currency – handy for ad-hoc tipping!

What to expect

A tour in Sri Lanka is an adventure where anything can happen. We recommend you are of a reasonable fitness as touring often involves long walks and uneven surfaces, this tour is not suitable for those who require special assistance. Sites such as Sigiriya and Dambulla involve climbing many steps.

Recommended vaccinations

We advise you to discuss your individual requirements for Sri Lanka with your GP at least 6-8 weeks prior to travel.