

**Bunnik
Tours**



**MAXIMUM
GROUP SIZE**
20

SMALL GROUP TOURING

Sri Lankan Discovery

> Multiple departures available between April 2020 and March 2021

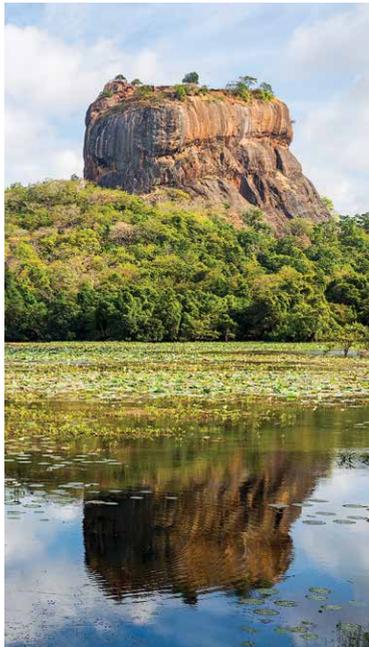
Days:
17

From
\$5,295_{pp}

✈️ Airfares & Tips Included

G **Guaranteed departure** with 4 or more passengers.

The tropical island nation of Sri Lanka is befitting of its title 'The Pearl of the Indian Ocean'. Few places in the world offer such a combination of stunning landscapes, pristine beaches and captivating cultural heritage. Explore its ancient cities, tea and spice plantations and wildlife abundant national parks.



See overleaf for full itinerary and inclusions.

> Highlights

- Cruise along the calm waters of the lush Gin Oya River teeming birdlife, before joining a local family for a hosted sunset dinner on the banks of the river.
- Visit a traditional Sri Lankan village and be welcomed into a local home. Learn about daily life and traditional farming, then feast on local delicacies!
- Travel to the lush tea-growing region of Nuwara Eliya by train and road, visiting a tea plantation to learn about Sri Lanka's most famous export. Of course, we'll enjoy a cup while we're there.
- Make a stop at the Elephant Transit Home in Udawalawe, which rehabilitates orphaned elephant calves for release back into the wild.

> Trip Info

Transportation:
Coach, jeep, boat & local train
Meals: **15B, 1L and 12D,**
including group welcome & farewell dinners

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TRAVEL by **RACT**

*Conditions apply. \$100 saving off travel insurance applicable to all Asia Small Group Touring bookings when booked through RACT Travel by 31 March 2020. All prices shown are per person based on twin share. Singles rooms are available at a supplement. Note air supplement may apply depending on airline availability and departure cities (available ex Hobart/Launceston for a supplement). Additional nights/stopovers may be required pending airline connections and will be at own expense. Price shown is for a cash payment. Credit card fees will apply. For any additional travel arrangements outside this offer service fees may apply. Please ask your nearest RACT Travel consultant for full terms & conditions at time of booking. Members Travel Group Pty Ltd Trading as RACT Travel. ABN 45 144 538 803. A11470.

> Itinerary

Day 1. Depart Australia - Arrive Negombo

Welcome to sunny Sri Lanka, the tear drop-shaped island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka is brimming with friendly people, ancient history and lush jungles. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

Day 2. Negombo

This morning is at leisure to unwind after our flight. Our sightseeing will begin late this afternoon.

★ *Cruise along the calm waters of the jungle-fringed Gin Oya River, listening to the tranquil sounds of the abundant birdlife. We'll watch the sunset before joining a local family for a hosted dinner on the banks of the river.*

Day 3. Negombo - Sigiriya

This morning we embark on a city tour of Negombo, including a stop at the fish markets when they are full of life. It's fascinating to see the variety of seafood available, fresh from the early morning's catch. We then depart Negombo for Sigiriya, travelling north into the Sri Lankan highlands. On the way we'll stop at the stunning Cave Temples of Dambulla, built by King Valagamba in the 1st century BC. This stunning temple complex houses approximately 150 statues and paintings of Buddha, which are considered to be some of Sri Lanka's most important religious art. We'll arrive in Sigiriya late this afternoon.

Day 4. Anuradhapura & Ritigala

Excursion

We visit the impressive ruins of Anuradhapura, the largest and oldest of Sri Lanka's ancient cities, dating back to the 6th century. Anuradhapura was the political and religious capital for over a thousand years. The ancient city is hidden within dense jungle and is home to the world's oldest tree, Sri Maha Bodhi.

★ We'll then explore the Ritigala Medicinal Forest and discover the ruins of an ancient hermitage.

Day 5. Polonnaruwa & Minneriya

National Park Excursion

Our day begins with a visit to the medieval capital of Polonnaruwa. Built alongside a large artificial lake, the city is brimming with archaeological treasures. We'll discover the well-preserved ruins of palaces, stupas, bathing pools and exquisite rock sculptures of Buddha. This afternoon we travel to Minneriya National Park to enjoy a jeep tour. The park is home to a variety of wildlife, including sambar deer, leopards and elephants. The central feature of the park is the ancient Minneriya Tank, built in the 3rd century by King Mahasena. During the dry season (June-September) large flocks of elephants come to graze and bathe in the water. We'll return to Sigiriya late this afternoon.

Day 6. Sigiriya

★ Today we explore the famous rock fortress of Sigiriya - 'Lion Rock'. This UNESCO World Heritage-listed site was formed by magma from an extinct volcano and was home to Buddhist monks for many centuries. It is a truly impressive site, located on top of a vast 200-metre-high granite rock, some 750 steps up!

★ *Visit a traditional Sri Lankan village and be welcomed into a local home. Learn about daily life and traditional farming, and then feast on local delicacies!*

Day 7. Sigiriya - Kandy

After breakfast we begin our journey to Kandy. Along the way, we will stop at the Matale Spice Plantations, which grow a variety of spices including cinnamon, pepper and nutmeg. We will also visit the Coconut House, which is a wonderful opportunity to see how a local family utilises every element of a coconut tree. When we arrive in Kandy later this afternoon we'll visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha. The temple houses one of the most sacred relics of Buddhism - a tooth of Buddha, collected from his funeral pyre.

Day 8. Kandy

Today is dedicated to exploring Kandy, known as Sri Lanka's cultural heart. We'll stop at the Royal Botanic Gardens of Peradeniya, which is where exotic crops including coffee, tea, nutmeg and cinchona were first tried and tested. Later this afternoon, we'll enjoy a traditional cultural show and Kandyan dance performance, including the cobra and mask dance.

Day 9. Kandy - Nuwara Eliya

★ *We travel to the lush tea-growing region of Nuwara Eliya by train and road, visiting a tea plantation to learn about Sri Lanka's most famous export. Of course, we'll enjoy a cup while we're there.*

Day 10. Nuwara Eliya

This morning, we'll visit St Clair and Devon Falls. Known as the 'Little Niagara of Sri Lanka', St Clair Falls is one of the country's widest waterfalls and a very stunning sight. We'll then discover more about the picturesque and colonial town of Nuwara Eliya during a city tour. Built by the British in the 19th century to escape the sweltering heat of the lowlands, this town still retains the charm of bygone days. High tea at the hotel awaits us upon our return.

Day 11. Nuwara Eliya - Tissamaharama

Travelling south towards the coast, our destination today is Tissamaharama (or Tissa). En route, we'll visit Ella's Ravana Falls.

★ *We'll also make a stop at the Elephant Transit Home in Udawalawe, which rehabilitates orphaned elephant calves for release back into the wild.*

Day 12. Yala National Park

This afternoon we embark on a safari in Yala National Park - the oldest and best-known of Sri Lanka's national parks. Its diverse range of habitats, including scrub jungle, brackish lagoons, lakes and rivers are home to elephants, wild buffalo, deer, black bears, macaques, jackals and a variety of birds. It's also believed to have one of the highest-density leopard populations in the world. Additionally, the national park also boasts a large number of important cultural ruins indicating previous civilisations.

Day 13. Tissamaharama - Galle - Weligama

Driving along Sri Lanka's beautiful south

coast, we make our way to the Dutch colonial town of Galle. This historic city is filled with Dutch colonial buildings, ancient mosques and churches. We'll take a city tour and visit its UNESCO World Heritage-listed sea fortress. We'll then stop to visit a hatchery that was set up to protect the endangered leather-head and loggerhead turtles. We'll also watch the famous stilt fisherman as they go about their trade.

Day 14. Weligama

We enjoy a scenic cruise along the Madu River, watching locals go about their daily lives. We'll then visit Sri Lanka's largest moonstone mine at Meetiyyagoda. The moonstones found here are renowned for their blue shine. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

Day 15. Weligama - Colombo

We make our way to the island nation's capital, Colombo. Facing the Indian Ocean, Colombo is a bustling city that has retained its charm, including tree-lined boulevards, colonial buildings and temples. We'll take a guided tour of the city, including Gangaramaya Temple, the Historical Museum of Colombo and the famous Cricket Club Cafe, which is run by two Australians and decorated entirely with cricket memorabilia. Tonight we enjoy a group farewell dinner.

Day 16. Depart Colombo

Today is at leisure before we bid farewell to Sri Lanka this evening and begin our journey home.

Day 17. Arrive Australia

★ *Walking Discovery: This symbol indicates an extended walking tour that you can opt to take with your tour guide.*

Inclusions

Small Groups

Our maximum group size is 20

Travel

- Return economy-class flights from Australia to Sri Lanka. Taxes included
- Airport transfers on the first and last day of tour
- All touring in air-conditioned vehicles (excluding jeep-safari vehicle)
- Train from Kandy to Gampola

Transportation

Coach, jeep, boat & local train

Accommodation

- 15 nights in 3-5 star hotels
- Day use of hotel on day of departure

Meals

15 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 12 dinners, including group welcome and farewell dinners

Tour Guides

- English-speaking national guide
- English-speaking national guide/driver (for group sizes below 7 passengers)

Tips

Tipping Made Easy, \$200pp pre-paid