Itinerary

12 Day Splendours of Sri Lanka With Flights

***IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

Day 1: Depart Australia ~ Arrive in Colombo

Today, you'll begin your journey to the beautiful island of Sri Lanka! Upon arrival at Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport, you will be greeted by your driver. Most flights from Australia arrive late at night (from 10:30 pm onwards). After reaching your hotel, check in and head straight to bed for a good night's rest.

MEALS: In-flight

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Mirage Hotel, Colombo

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Moren Hotel, Colombo

Day 2: Colombo - City Tour

After breakfast, enjoy a panoramic tour of Colombo, Sri Lanka's largest city and commercial capital. Located on the west coast, Colombo is a vibrant and bustling city that blends modern developments with rich colonial history. You'll marvel at the diverse architectural styles, from Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial buildings to Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Indian, and contemporary structures.

Highlights include the iconic Fort area, where the striking contrasts between old and new architecture are most evident. Colombo is also a popular shopping destination, with many malls and department stores offering brand-name clothing at bargain prices.

During the tour, visit key landmarks such as Galle Face Green, Viharamahadevi Park, the Twin World Trade Centre Towers, the Old Parliament Building, the Fort District, and Independence Hall at Independence Square.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Mirage Hotel, Colombo

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Moren Hotel, Colombo

Day 3: Colombo ~ Dambulla

After breakfast, say farewell to Colombo and embark on a scenic drive to Dambulla, where you'll stay for the next two nights.

On the way, you have the option to visit the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage (additional cost apply). Here, you can watch orphaned elephants roaming freely, feeding, and bathing in the river—an unforgettable experience for animal lovers.

Upon arrival in Dambulla, visit the famous Dambulla Cave Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site. This incredible complex features five caves filled with around 150 stunning Buddha statues and paintings, some over 2,000 years old. Your guide will explain the historical and spiritual significance of this ancient place of worship.

After checking in at your hotel, enjoy the rest of the afternoon at your leisure. Later, have dinner at the hotel before visiting Dambulla's bustling wholesale market in the evening. Witness the incredible diversity of Sri Lanka’s agriculture as trucks arrive loaded with fresh produce destined for markets in Colombo.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING TIME): 5 hours

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Lario Resort, Dambulla

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Fresco Water Villa, Dambulla

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage

Day 4: Dambulla ~ Anuradhapura ~ Dambulla

After breakfast, travel to Anuradhapura, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Sri Lanka’s most historically significant cities.

Anuradhapura, the country’s first ancient capital, is steeped in history. Your guide will lead you through the impressive Ruwanweliseya and Jetawanaramaya stupas, showcasing the grandeur of this ancient civilisation. Explore the crumbling temples and ruins, gaining insight into the rise and fall of these remarkable times.

Visit the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree Temple, home to the sacred bodhi tree believed to have been planted in 236 BCE, making it the oldest human-planted tree in the world. End your exploration with a visit to the ancient Isurumuniya Temple, known for its stunning carvings that tell stories dating back thousands of years.

Return to your hotel in the afternoon and enjoy the evening at your leisure.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING TIME): 4 hours

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Lario Resort, Dambulla

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Fresco Water Villa, Dambulla

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Village Tour

Minneriya Elephant Safari

Day 5: Dambulla ~ Sigiriya ~ Kandy

This morning, embark on a climb to the top of Sigiriya, also known as Lion Rock, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Sri Lanka's most iconic landmarks. This ancient fortress showcases remarkable feats of artistry and engineering that continue to amaze visitors. Below the rock, beautifully landscaped pleasure gardens await, while giant lion paws carved into stone mark the entrance to the fortress. As you ascend, you'll encounter the famous mirror wall, still adorned with ancient inscriptions by poets.

NOTE: The visit to Sigiriya takes approximately 3.5 hours. The final 30-minute climb from the Lion's Paw to the summit involves steep and narrow walkways and steps. Those who prefer not to climb to the top can wait at the Lion's Paw for the group's return. Access to sites like the water garden, boulder garden, frescoes, and mirror wall requires climbing.

After descending from Sigiriya, begin your journey to Kandy. Along the way, visit a spice garden in Matale to learn about the spices that are deeply woven into Sri Lanka's cultural heritage. Upon arrival in Kandy, enjoy a free evening to explore at your leisure. Take a peaceful walk around Kandy Lake, the centrepiece of this charming city, which combines urban vibrancy with a relaxed atmosphere.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Oak Ray Regency, Kandy

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Oak Ray Heritage Hotel, Kandy

Day 6: Kandy - City Tour

Nestled amidst lush hill country and surrounding a scenic lake, Kandy is one of Sri Lanka's most charming cities. It boasts a lively market, historic shops, and a fascinating cultural heritage. Once the home of Sri Lanka's last king, Kandy resisted European control long after coastal areas had fallen.

Begin your day with a visit to Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Tooth), which houses Sri Lanka's most sacred relic: a tooth believed to belong to the Buddha. This revered site has drawn pilgrims since the 16th century.

Next, explore the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, renowned as one of Asia's finest. Marvel at its immense fig tree, stunning orchid collection, and expansive grounds, offering a perfect place for relaxation or for kids to roam.

Later, enjoy a cultural show, where you'll witness traditional Sri Lankan music and dance.

NOTE: When entering temples, hats and shoes must be removed. Avoid leaving shoes on the roadside, as monkeys may steal them. Use the designated shoe storage service for a small fee or pack them in your bag.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Oak Ray Regency, Kandy

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Oak Ray Heritage Hotel, Kandy

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Cooking class in a local home

Day 7: Kandy ~ Scenic Train from Nanu Oya to Ella ~ Nuwara Eliya

Depart Kandy and drive to Ella. From Ella take the scenic train journey to Nanu Oya. Upon arrival into Nanu Oya, you will be transferred to Nuwara Eliya. Nestled even deeper into tea plantation country, Nuwara Eliya sits at an elevation of 1800 metres, making it one of the coolest regions in Sri Lanka. Favoured by the Scots and English during the colonial-era, remnants of the past can be seen in sculpted gardens and manor homes decorating the city today. In the evening head to the sky-scraping Single Tree temple and embark on a short 40- minute hike, taking in spectacular views of the surrounding hills and tea fields.

NOTE: Train tickets from Kandy to Nanu Oya are in very high demand, especially during peak seasons (December–April and August). While every effort is made to secure tickets, in the rare event they are unavailable, you will travel via private vehicle instead.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Oak Ray Summer Hill Breeze Hotel, Nuwara Eliya

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Oak Ray Heritage Hotel, Kandy

Day 8: Nuwara Eliya ~ Ella ~ Yala National Park

Start your morning with a visit to a tea estate in Nuwara Eliya. Learn about the intricate process of transforming the finest tea leaves into world-renowned Ceylon black tea. Gain a newfound appreciation for your morning brew and enjoy a tasting of freshly made tea.

Continue your journey to Ella, a charming mountainous town known for its laid-back vibe and stunning scenery. Visit the famous Nine Arches Bridge, a colonial-era architectural marvel spanning 91 metres and standing 24 metres high. This picturesque spot is perfect for photography, whether with a drone or from the ground.

Your guide will help you choose the best approach to the bridge. The easiest route is a walk along the railway tracks from Ella train station, while the more scenic views from a distance or the base of the bridge require a moderate hike.

After exploring Ella, proceed to Kataragama, near Yala National Park. Check into your hotel and relax for the evening.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING TIME): 4.5 hours

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Okrin Hotel, Kataragama

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Grand Tamarind Lake, Kataragama

Day 9: Yala National Park ~ Yala Jeep Safari – Hikkaduwa

This morning, venture into Yala National Park, Sri Lanka's premier wildlife reserve, for an exciting 4x4 jeep safari. Explore the park's open grasslands, dense forests, and serene lagoons as your guide uses their expertise to track hidden wildlife. Keep an eye out for crocodiles, elephants, monkeys, and buffaloes—and if you're lucky, you may spot a leopard. Yala is one of the best places in the world to encounter these elusive big cats.

During the day, try buffalo curd, a popular Sri Lankan delicacy served in terracotta pots with golden treacle. It can be enjoyed as a snack, dessert, or side dish.

After the safari, continue your journey to the historic Galle Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Originally built by the Portuguese in 1588 and fortified by the Dutch in the 17th century, the Galle Fort is a treasure trove of history and architecture. Walk along the Galle Ramparts and visit the Galle Lighthouse, the oldest in Sri Lanka, strategically positioned at the southern tip of the fort with stunning views of the harbour.

APPROXIMATE DRIVING TIME): 4.5 hours

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Coral Rock by Bansei, Hikkaduwa

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Hikka Tranz by Cinnamon, Hikkaduwa

Day 10: Hikkaduwa – Free Day

Enjoy a full day at your leisure in the beachside town of Hikkaduwa. Relax on the sandy beaches, swim in the clear waters, or explore the town at your own pace.

NOTE: The tour vehicle will not be available for your disposal.

MEALS: Breakfast

OVERNIGHT (3 STAR OPTION): Coral Rock by Bansei, Hikkaduwa

OVERNIGHT (4 STAR OPTION): Hikka Tranz by Cinnamon, Hikkaduwa

Day 11: Hikkaduwa ~ Colombo ~ Departure

After breakfast, transfer to the international airport for your departure flight. The drive to the airport takes approximately 2.5 hours. We hope you've had a wonderful time exploring Sri Lanka!

NOTE: Depending on airline schedules, your flight may depart in the early hours of Day 12.

MEALS: Breakfast, In-Flight

OVERNIGHT: In-Flight

Day 12: Arrive Australia

Arrive back in Australia today, bringing your incredible journey to a close. Welcome home!