

# Sri Lanka in Depth

Blue Dot Travel

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## SRI LANKA - IN DEPTH

Sri Lanka is an island nation in the Indian Ocean separated from India by the Palk Strait. It is “almost” linked to India by a mostly underwater atoll called Adam’s Bridge. It is a very lush, tropical island sitting just north of the equator. For over 2,000 years the island was ruled by a monarchy which only ceased in 1972 with the appointment of a president. Sri Lanka’s population of around 21 million - similar to our own – is multi ethnic with four main groups. Singhalese (mostly Buddhist) is the largest, followed by Tamils (mostly Hindu), Moors (with Arab origins) and Burghers – a mixed group of Portuguese and Dutch origin who are mainly Christians. Generally speaking, it is a poor country with around 25% of the population living below the poverty line. Its core source of income comes from tea exportations, spices, rubber textiles and petroleum refining. About 30% of the island is covered by forest and about 10% of this is national park.

There are so many reasons to visit this country – there is so much to see and do. Even though it is a relatively small country, each region is quite different. The indigenous and colonial history is fascinating. The food is fabulous. The scenery is spectacular. Plus, the abundance of wildlife — one of the drawcards for travellers — will take you by surprise. Visiting the national parks — and sometimes in the wild — you can spot sambar deer, Sri Lankan elephants, leopards, sloth bears, crocodiles, water buffalo and hundreds of birds species.



It’s no wonder that in 2013, Lonely Planet rated this wonderful country as the “hottest travel destination on the planet”, and they didn’t mean the weather. Join us on this in-depth tour which will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the culture and history.

# SRI LANKA IN DEPTH – ITINERARY



## Day 1 TRANSFER AND ARRIVAL

Depart Australia and arrive into Colombo international airport around midnight (depending on flights). We'll be met by our guide and transferred to Jetwing Blu Hotel, about 25 minutes drive. \*NOTE All dates for this trip are yet to be confirmed.

## Day 2 NEGOMBO

Given the late arrival of your flight, today is a late start. Sleep in and have a hearty breakfast before heading off on a tour late morning to the famous Negombo Fish Markets. Called Lellama, which means the place of bargain, buying and selling is done in a rhythmic fashion and is a unique aspect of Sri Lankan markets. After that, we'll take a cruise on the Ginoya River followed by a BBQ dinner. Overnight at the Jetwing Blu. (Your guide will help you exchange your Aussie dollars for the local currency during the day). *B/D*

## Day 3 NEGOMBO - ANURADHAPURA

After breakfast we'll depart for Anuradhapura, an ancient city and previous capital. Enroute we'll stop to see the toddy tapping in a coconut plantation. On arrival into Anuradhapura, check in to the Forest Rock Garden Hotel. Later we will visit the Mihintale, a mountain peak that Sri Lankans believe is the site of a meeting between the Buddhist monk Mahinda and King Devanampiyatissa which inaugurated the presence of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Dinner and overnight stay at Forest Rock Garden Hotel. *B/D*

## Day 4 ANURADHAPURA

After breakfast the group will take a guided and detailed sight seeing tour of the ancient city. The ruins of Anuradhapura include fabulous archaeological and architectural sites amongst the crumbling temples. The city was originally built during Anuradhapura's thousand years of rule over Sri Lanka. In the afternoon, there'll be some time to relax. Dinner and overnight stay at The Forest Rock Garden Hotel. *B/D*

## Day 5 ANURADHAPURA- TRINCOMALEE

Today the group departs for Trincomalee on the north coast of the island. After arrival we will have time to enjoy the grounds and Nilaveli Beach, overlooking Pigeon Island. Dinner and overnight stay at Hotel Anilana, Trincomalee. *B/D*



## Day 6 TRINCOMALEE & PIGEON ISLAND

After breakfast, an excursion to Pigeon's Island – a national park just one km off the coast. In the afternoon there will be a city tour which will include Fort Fredrick, Koneshwaram Temple, local hot springs and the WWII cemetery where we will learn



about Sri Lanka's involvement in the war. Dinner and overnight stay in Trincomalee. **B/D**



#### **Day 7 TRINCOMALEE – HABARANA**

In the morning the group will leave for Habarana. There's a lunch stop along the way at a local village home. In the afternoon we will arrive at The Cinnamon Lodge

Hotel and have a little time to relax and enjoy the beautiful grounds. Located in the north central area of the island, Habarana is a part of Sri Lanka's dry zone. Thanks to the genius of the ancient kings dating as far back as the 5th Century AD, the Sri Lankan dry zone is anything but, with hundreds of lakes and reservoirs which are connected by an elaborate network of canals. The region has breathtakingly beautiful scenery. Dinner and overnight stay at Cinnamon Lodge. **B/L/D**

#### **Day 8 SIGIRIYA**

An active day today! In the morning those of us up to it will climb Sigiriya. One of the main icons of the country, the Rock Fortress of Sigiriya is a must-see. A mighty 600 ft high fortress of a 5th century King, Sigiriya is famous for its entrancingly beautiful frescoes which are found in a sheltered pocket of the rock. The old stairway to the top led through the mouth of a huge crouching lion, carved from the rock — today only the paws remain. Remains of the handsome royal citadel are on the summit. (Note, the climb to the top of Sigiriya could be considered hard and not for everyone. There is an option to climb about one third of the way up to see the unique, medieval frescos. Those not climbing at all can visit the beautiful gardens. Note there are local guides to help climb for those wanting assistance. They are persistent and even pushy but please be respectful — you may need them! They are very helpful and make a living out of providing assistance to travellers in this manner. **B/D**



#### **Day 9 HIRIWADUNNE VILLAGE AND POLONNARUWA**

This morning we will visit Hiriwadunne Village, just 10 minutes from your hotel. There will be a bullock cart transfer and water crossing in a traditional boat. The flat walk (about 2 – 3 hours depending on the fitness of the group), passes the surrounding scrub jungle, marshland and local village - a hive of early morning activity. The amazing birdlife, butterflies and possible sightings of crocodile only add to the charm of seeing the villagers as they go about their early morning tasks. Back to the hotel for lunch (at your leisure). In the afternoon we visit the ancient city of Polonnaruwa to explore the ruined palace and temple complex, about an hour's drive from the hotel. Polonnaruwa rose to fame as the capital after the decline of Anuradhapura. The monuments of this medieval city are relatively well preserved and give clear evidence of the glory of Sri Lanka's past. Following this expedition the group will return to the hotel around 7.00pm for dinner. Overnight at Cinnamon Lodge, Habarana. **B/D**

#### **Day 10 HABARANA – KANDY**

After breakfast you'll depart for Kandy. En-route visit the Dambulla Cave Temple and Spice Garden Matale for tour and lunch. The climb to the Cave Temple is steep but well worth the effort for those who persist. The bus will take you half the way up but there is still a fair way to go! Oh... and watch out for the monkeys, they can be very curious! The spice gardens tour is very interesting. Take your mosky repellent. Check in to your hotel and then transfer to the city for an evening service at the Sacred Temple of the Tooth of Buddha. Dinner and overnight at your hotel — the Cinnamon Citadel in Kandy. **B/L/D**

#### **Day 11 PINNAWALA & KANDY**

The main item on the agenda today is the excursion to Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage. You'll depart in the morning, have the chance to feed the baby elephants and then watch them as they bathe in the local river. The Elephant Orphanage, located on the banks of the Maha Oya, is mainly to house young elephants who find themselves displaced and lost from their natural habitats for various reasons - environmental changes due to development projects, injury or being abandoned by their parents. On our way back we'll walk through the busy city of Kandy. The markets and the shops in the old slum area are very interesting. In the afternoon, the coach will take us to Arthur's seat view point (high above the city) and then to watch the local Cultural show with singing and dancing. (Subject to time, there may be an option in the afternoon to visit a local Gem factory). Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel. **B/D**

#### **Day 12 NUWARA ELIYA**

Today we will depart for the tea growing region of Sri Lanka — Nuwara Eliya. Lunch will be at the fabulous Tea Factory Hotel and then you will transfer to your hotel in the township — the "very British" Grand Hotel. In the afternoon



we'll take a sightseeing tour of the town and visit a tea plantation before returning to the hotel for dinner. **B/L/D**

#### **Day 13 HORTAIN PLAINS & ELLA**

Those up for a decent trek will take an excursion to The Hortain Plains National Park and World's Ends, starting very early in the morning. This group will return about lunch time and then we'll check out of the hotel for transfer to Ella, a very pretty township just an hour's drive from Nuwara Eliya. Included today is a scenic train ride of about 2 hours to Ella from Nanu Oya. You will transfer by train in the afternoon and then check in to the stunning "98 acre resort and Spa" for dinner and overnight stay. The trek to Worlds End and the beautiful Bakers Falls is around 3 hour's walking depending on the fitness of the trekkers. This is a very scenic region with an astounding variety of landscapes from mountains to grass lands, from marshes to trout filled streams. The trek could be considered medium level however there are a few short hard sections. It will depart about 5.30am and return around midday. Those not wishing to trek can enjoy the hotel grounds, visit the botanical gardens or stroll through the township at leisure. **B/D**

#### **Day 14 ELLA – YALA**

After breakfast the group will have an opportunity to stroll around the pretty township of Ella, blessed with some of the most beautiful views Sri Lanka has to offer, which include Ella

Gap and Ravana Ella Falls. Then we will transfer by coach to Yala on the south east of the island. The national park in Yala is the second biggest in the country. Late in the afternoon, the group will do some jeep safari animal spotting. Yala National Park is known for its abundant elephants plus leopards, bears, crocodiles, wild boar and many species of birdlife. Its open undulating terrain made it famous for elephants for many years, but recently the park has also received much recognition through National Geographic and the Discovery channels, who documented the leopard research conservation and identification program. Several salt and fresh



water lagoons are a haven for a large variety of resident and migrant birds. Tonight we have dinner in the lovely hotel. **B/D**

#### **Day 15 YALA**

We've been on the go for over two weeks now so now a day of leisure. We can enjoy the hotel grounds and stroll along the beach or arrange for a morning safari (at your own expense) or even do both! Dinner and overnight at Jetwing Yala. **B/D**

#### **Day 16 YALA – UDAWALAWE**

This morning we will leave for Udawalawe. On arrival we'll visit the Elephant Transit Home and take a jeep safari to the National Park in the afternoon. Udawalawe is a 30,000 hectare park where the elephants — displaced by the construction of the reservoir — are homed prior to being released into the wild. Dinner and overnight stay is at Grand Udawalawe. **B/D**



#### **Day 17 UDAWALAWE – GALLE**

After breakfast the group will depart for Galle on the Southwest coast to experience the style, architecture and cuisine. The south of Sri Lanka has evolved a

distinctly unique culture. On route we'll visit a local family village home for lunch where you will join in the preparation of a few typically southern dishes. Learn how to prepare fish ambul thiyal and a curry made of young jackfruit which, correctly prepared makes a great substitute for meat. It's a favourite among Sri Lanka's vegetarians! The curry powder used for this dish is a unique mix of powdered coriander, cumin, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves. In the afternoon we'll arrive at the hotel with a little spare time before exploring the Dutch city of Galle on foot. A photo of the lighthouse with the sun setting is quite special. Dinner and overnight stay at the Jetwing Lighthouse. **B/L/D**

#### **Day 18 GALLE – COLOMBO**

After breakfast we will transfer to Colombo, the largest city in Sri Lanka. En route there is a boat excursion on the Madhu river. The boat men will meander through the islets and mangrove swamps located haphazardly on the river. Get lost amidst these thick growths and spot aquatic birds such as herons, kingfishers, cormorants as well as the monitor lizards and crocodiles that wade through the water. Next we'll visit the nearby turtle hatchery and the Meethiyagoda Moonstone mine town. The group will reach Colombo late in the afternoon. Dinner and our overnight stay is at the Galle Face Hotel, Colombo. **B/D**



#### **Day 19 COLOMBO – AIRPORT**

Today we will see the core sites of Colombo including the old and new parliament houses, Galle Face Green, Independence Square, Town Hall, Viharamahadevi Park and the National Museum. Your guide will accompany you to the airport after dinner for your flight home. All flights are to be confirmed. **B/D**

#### **Day 20 ARRIVE HOME**

We will depart Colombo airport for Singapore or Kuala Lumpur (depending on schedule) and then connect for your flight back to Australia.