

TOUR REFERENCE
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Kingdoms of Ceylon (10 Days)

10 days · 9 nights | Private tour with chauffeur guide

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About this experience

This ten-day tour traces Sri Lanka's historic kingdoms from the west coast to the Cultural Triangle, up into the hill country, and down to the south coast, travelling throughout in a private vehicle with a chauffeur guide. It opens at Negombo on the western coast, moves inland to the ancient capitals of Panduwasnuwara, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, then to the cave temples of Dambulla and the rock fortress of Sigiriya, before reaching Kandy, seat of the island's last kingdom.

From Kandy the route climbs into the tea country around Nuwara Eliya, a former British hill station, with a side trip to the grasslands and viewpoints of Horton Plains. It then drops south through Ella and on to Yala for a jeep safari, before following the coast through the old trading town of Galle to the beaches of Hikkaduwa, with river, turtle hatchery and garden excursions near Bentota along the way, ending with a city tour of Colombo before the flight home.

Travellers come away with a sense of Sri Lanka's layered past, its tea-growing highlands, a chance at leopards and elephants in Yala, and a final stretch of beach time on the south coast. Transport, chauffeur and taxes are included throughout; hotels, meals and entrance fees are arranged separately, and the pace is set by the traveller rather than a fixed group schedule.

Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 Airport > Negombo

Arrival at Colombo airport and transfer to the coastal town of Negombo for the first night.



Negombo

A beach town on the western coast known for its long-standing fishing industry, with sandy beaches, water sports, diving among corals, and a decades-old shipwreck just offshore.

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Day 2 Negombo > Panduwasnuwara > Anuradhapura

The day moves inland to two of the island's ancient capitals, Panduwasnuwara and Anuradhapura.



Panduwasnuwara

Ruins of a city that briefly served as the capital in the 12th century, including pagodas, image houses, meeting halls, a citadel, a restored former temple of the tooth relic, and a palace with its surrounding legends.

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Anuradhapura Sacred City

The capital for over a thousand years until the 10th century AD, with pagodas, monastic buildings and ponds spread across a wide area, including the Jetavanarama stupa, the Sri Maha Bodhi tree and the ruins of the Abhayagiri Monastery.

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Day 3 Anuradhapura > Polonnaruwa > Dambulla

The route continues to the medieval capital of Polonnaruwa before ending at the cave temples of Dambulla.



Polonnaruwa

Sri Lanka's second major capital, flourishing between the 10th and 13th centuries, with ruins including the Gal Vihara, the Vatadage, the lotus bath, the Lankathilaka Temple and a statue linked to King Parakramabahu.

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Dambulla Cave Temple

Caves of the Golden Temple dating to the 1st century BC, with murals of the Buddha's life, hundreds of Buddha and deity figurines across five main caves, and a large golden Buddha statue outside the complex.

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Day 4 Dambulla > Sigiriya > Matale > Kandy

A climb up Sigiriya rock fortress, a stop at a spice garden near Matale, and an evening cultural show mark the approach to Kandy.



Sigiriya Rock Fortress

A 5th-century rock fortress built for King Kasyapa, entered through a gateway shaped like a lion's paws, with well-known frescoes, terraced gardens, working cisterns and tunnels leading up to the palace ruins.

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Matale Spice Garden

A spice and herbal garden near Matale growing spices and herbs in their tropical setting, with guided tours explaining their uses and links to Ayurveda.

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Kandyan Cultural Show

An evening performance of traditional Kandyan dance and music, including fire dancers and sword dancers, alongside the chance to see craft traditions such as gem crafting, woodcarving and batik.

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Day 5 Kandy > Nuwara Eliya

The day begins with the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy before heading up to the hill station of Nuwara Eliya, stopping at a waterfall and tea factory en route.



Temple of the Tooth Relic

A UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the 16th century to house the Buddha's sacred tooth relic, with painted halls, carved pillars and golden statues.

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Ramboda Falls

One of the country's taller waterfalls, visited as a stop on the drive towards Nuwara Eliya.

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Tea Factory and Plantation

A guided tour of a tea estate and factory explaining how Ceylon tea is grown and processed, tracing its origins back to tea brought to Sri Lanka by the British in the 19th century.



Nuwara Eliya Town

A former British hill station with period cottages, villas and mansions, an old red-brick post office, and open spaces such as Queen Victoria Park and Lake Gregory.

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Day 6 Nuwara Eliya

A full day around Nuwara Eliya combines a trek in Horton Plains with visits to gardens and a temple in the afternoon.



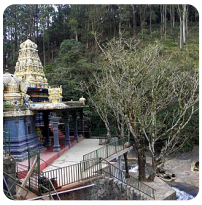
Horton Plains National Park

Montane grasslands and cloud forest near Ohiya, with views from the World's End precipice, the Baker's Falls, and a chance to see endemic wildlife.

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Hakgala Gardens

A quiet garden around 10 kilometres from Nuwara Eliya, set on a rock associated with the Hanuman legend of the Ramayana.



Seetha Amman Kovil

A temple visited in the afternoon alongside the Hakgala Gardens.

Buddhika Mawella · CC BY-SA 3.0

Day 7 Nuwara Eliya > Ella > Yala

The route drops from the highlands through Ella before continuing to Yala for the night.



Ella

A hill town surrounded by tea fields, with views towards Little Adam's Peak, a walk over the Nine Arches Bridge, and a stop at the Demodara Railway Station with its loop-over track.

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Day 8 Yala > Galle > Hikkaduwa

An early jeep safari in Yala is followed by a tour of the old fortified town of Galle on the way to Hikkaduwa.



Yala National Park

The island's second-largest national park on the southeastern coast, home to leopards, wild water buffalo, sloth bears, elephants and a wide range of other mammals, birds, reptiles and fish.

Ranmith Welikala · CC BY-SA 4.0



Galle Fort

A well-preserved fortification from the Portuguese and Dutch era, with the Maritime Museum, the Galle National Museum, a lighthouse, and cobblestoned streets bearing Dutch names.

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Day 9 Hikkaduwa > Bentota > Hikkaduwa

The day covers a river safari, a turtle hatchery and a garden estate around Bentota before returning to Hikkaduwa.



Madu River Boat Safari

A boat ride through the river's mangrove channels near Balapitiya, passing crocodiles, water monitors, a cinnamon-growing island, waterbirds and a stop for fish massage.

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Kosgoda Turtle Hatchery

A hatchery on the southwestern coast caring for endangered sea turtle species, with the chance to see, touch and feed baby turtles and injured adults.

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Lunuganga Estate

The country home of architect Geoffrey Bawa at Bentota, visited on a tour of its gardens and the parts of the house open to the public.

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Day 10 Hikkaduwa > Colombo > BIA

The final day brings a tour of Colombo before the transfer to the airport for departure.



Colombo City Tour

A tour of Sri Lanka's capital taking in landmarks such as the Old Lighthouse, the Old Parliament, Galle Face Hotel, Galle Face Green, the Gangarama Temple and the National Museum, along with its shopping areas.

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What's included

INCLUDED

- Transport in a Private Vehicle, inclusive of all chauffeur accommodation.
- Service of an English-Speaking Chauffeur Guide throughout the tour.
- All prevailing taxes and service charges.

NOT INCLUDED

- Hotel Accommodation and Meals.
- Entrance fees to the respective sites.
- Chauffeur Guide's Accommodation.
- Expenses of personal nature.
- Visa and Related Expenses.
- Tips & Portages.