

TOUR REFERENCE
LKCB7H2T2E

Footsteps In Paradise (17 Days)

17 days · 16 nights | Private tour with chauffeur guide

About this experience

This seventeen-day tour runs the length of Sri Lanka, from the capital Colombo to the ancient cities of the dry zone, the hill country around Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, the wildlife parks of the south-east, and the coastal fort town of Galle. The route links the country's main archaeological sites, its tea-growing uplands and its beaches into one continuous journey, with a chauffeur guide driving and handling logistics throughout.

Along the way the itinerary takes in the ruined capitals of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the rock fortresses of Yapahuwa and Sigiriya, the cave temples of Dambulla, and the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. Three safaris are built into the route, at Minneriya, Gal Oya and Udawalawe, alongside a village and lake excursion near Sigiriya and a river boat trip near Galle. Free days in Kandy and Galle allow for rest or independent exploration.

This is a private tour for the traveller who wants to see Sri Lanka's history, nature and coast in one trip rather than choosing between them, with the driving, routing and pace of each day already worked out.



Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 Airport → Colombo

The tour begins with a look at Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, taking in its historic landmarks and shopping streets.



Colombo city sights

Visit historic monuments such as the Old Lighthouse, the Old Parliament, Galle Face Hotel, Galle Face Green, Gangarama Temple and the National Museum.

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Independence Square and Race Course

Enjoy the malls around Independence Square or the Race Course, along with boutique shops and designer stores.

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Day 2 Colombo → Anuradhapura

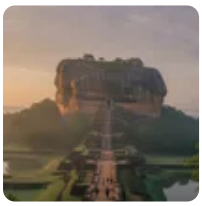
The day is spent walking through Anuradhapura, which served as Sri Lanka's capital for over a thousand years until the 10th century AD.

Ancient city of Anuradhapura

View the pagodas, monastic buildings and ponds scattered across the vast site, including Jetavanarama, once one of the tallest buildings of the ancient world, the Sri Maha Bodhi, and the ruins of the Abhayagiri Monastery.

Day 3 Anuradhapura → Yapahuwa → Dambulla

The route continues to the rock fortress of Yapahuwa before ending at the cave temples of Dambulla.



Yapahuwa rock fortress

Yapahuwa served as the seat of government in the 13th century and once housed the Temple of the Tooth Relic. View the entrance arch and ornamental stairway, and walk through the temple ruins at the summit and along the terraces, with sculptures scattered throughout the fortress.

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Golden Temple of Dambulla

These caves date back to the 1st century BC and hold ancient murals depicting the life of Lord Gautama Buddha, along with hundreds of figurines of Buddha and other deities across five main caves, including the Cave of the Divine King, the Cave of the Great King and the Great New Monastery. A giant golden Buddha statue stands a short distance outside the cave complex.

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Day 4 Dambulla → Sigiriya → Dambulla

A day combining the climb of Sigiriya rock fortress with a village experience on the surrounding plains.



Sigiriya rock fortress

This 5th-century AD fortress was ruled by King Kasyapa. Walk through the entrance framed by a lion's paws, view the unfading murals, climb the staircase to the terraced gardens and working cisterns, and pass through the tunnels leading to the palace.

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Village experience

After descending, visit a nearby village for a catamaran safari across a calm lake, a walk through paddy fields, and a home-cooked lunch made over a wood fire and served on lotus leaves.

Day 5 Dambulla → Polonnaruwa → Minneriya → Dambulla

The day pairs the ruined city of Polonnaruwa with a safari in Minneriya National Park.



Ancient city of Polonnaruwa

Polonnaruwa was the centre of royal rule over Sri Lanka's central plains some 800 years ago, a thriving commercial and religious hub whose temples and archaeological remains still convey the look of the city in its heyday.

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Minneriya National Park safari

This three-hour safari passes through the park's scrublands and forests, home to elephants, other mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians; in the dry season between May and October it is known for the Great Elephant Gathering, when over 150 elephants congregate in one place.

Stuart Pinkney · CC BY 2.0

Day 6 Dambulla → Matale → Kandy

En route to Kandy the day calls at a spice garden near Matale before ending at the Royal Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya.

Euphoria Spice and Herbal Garden

Located near Matale, Sri Lanka's spice capital, this garden grows herbs, spices and plants in their tropical setting, with a guided spice tour explaining their uses and the basics of Ayurveda.



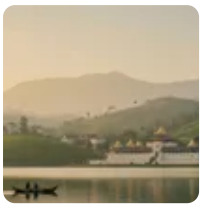
Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya

Formed in the early 19th century, these gardens hold over 4000 species of plants, including orchids, spices and medicinal plants. Features include the cannonball tree, a suspension bridge, hedge mazes and large, climbable trees.

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Day 7 Kandy

A day exploring Kandy, the last capital of the Sinhala kings and a UNESCO World Heritage city, followed by an evening cultural show.



Kandy city tour

Kandy was Sri Lanka's capital until the British took control in 1815 and is the island's cultural centre, now a city of Edwardian buildings, a king-made lake and a nature reserve, set among forested hills near the Royal Botanical Gardens. The tour includes stops at local markets and architectural landmarks.

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Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic

This UNESCO World Heritage Site was built in the 16th century to house and protect Lord Buddha's sacred tooth. Walk through passageways and halls painted in red, cream and black, past carved pillars and golden statues.

A.Savin · FAL



Kandy Cultural Show

This hour-long show presents some of Sri Lanka's traditional art forms, including fire dancers, sword dancers and Kandyan dancers performing to drumming.

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Day 8 Kandy

A free day in Kandy to rest at the hotel.

Day 9 Kandy → Gal Oya

The journey continues to Gal Oya, one of Sri Lanka's most remote and least visited wilderness areas.

Gal Oya region

Explore the local culture and wildlife of this remote area, taking the opportunity to reconnect with a landscape still largely untouched.

Day 10 Gal Oya

The day is spent on a jeep safari through Gal Oya National Park.



Gal Oya National Park safari

The drive takes in the park as it comes alive with sunlight, birdcalls and insects, with stops to take in the surroundings quietly. An expert naturalist points out wildlife including grey langurs, deer, birds, small mammals, elephants, reptiles and possibly leopard.

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Day 11 Gal Oya → Nuwara Eliya

The route climbs into tea country and the colonial-era town of Nuwara Eliya.



Nuwara Eliya town

Set at 6,200 feet above sea level in the heart of tea country, Nuwara Eliya was built by the British in styles from Georgian to Queen Anne, with lawns, hedges, an Anglican church, a golf course and parks giving it a cool, nostalgic air.

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Day 12 Nuwara Eliya → Ella

The day moves through tea country to Ella, taking in its best-known viewpoints and landmarks.



Little Adam's Peak

Pass through bright green tea fields and rocky stretches for views towards Little Adam's Peak.

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Nine Arches Bridge

Walk over the Nine Arches Bridge and hear the story of its construction.

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Demodara Railway Station

End the walk at Demodara Railway Station, known for its unique loop-over track design.

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Day 13 Ella → Udawalawe

The day includes a safari in Udawalawe National Park on the way south.



Udawalawe National Park safari

This three-hour safari crosses the marshes, forests and grasslands of a park created as a wildlife sanctuary in the 1970s, known for its water birds and Sri Lankan elephants, with further sightings of other mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and butterflies possible.

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Day 14 Udawalawe → Galle

The tour reaches the coast at Galle, a trading port with a Dutch colonial fort that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Galle Fort

Explore the fort on foot among Dutch-colonial buildings, old mosques, churches, mansions and museums, with restaurants and coffee shops to stop at along the way.

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Galle beach

The beachside area offers a place to relax by the sea breeze and the ocean.

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Day 15 Galle

A boat excursion on the Madu River is the focus of this day from Galle.



Madu River boat ride

This two-hour ride passes through mangrove channels, with sightings of basking crocodiles and water monitors, a stop at an island where cinnamon is harvested, a fish massage, and views of water birds.

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Day 16 Galle

A free day in Galle to spend at the hotel or on the beach.

Day 17 Galle → Airport

After breakfast, check out and transfer to the airport, bringing the tour to a close.

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.
- Entry Visa Fees, please visit www.eta.gov.lk for more details.
- International / Domestic Airfare.
- Any expenses of personal nature.
- Entrance fees to the respective sites.