

TOUR REFERENCE
LKHAMEV3AT

Trail Around The Pearl (21 Days)

15 days · 14 nights | Private tour with chauffeur guide

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About this experience

This 21-day route runs the length of Sri Lanka, from the western coast near the airport through the ancient cities of the cultural triangle, into the tea-growing highlands, down through the hill-country train line to Ella, on to the dry-zone safari country around Yala, and finally to the southern coast at Galle. It is built as one continuous overland trail rather than a string of short hops, with several nights set aside in each region so there is time to see things properly rather than rush past them.



Travellers get a genuine cross-section of the island: Negombo's beaches and fishing harbour, the rock fortress of Sigiriya and the cave temples of Dambulla, the ruined city of Polonnaruwa, Kandy's Temple of the Tooth and botanical gardens, the tea estates and cool climate of Nuwara Eliya, the scenic rail journey to Ella, a jeep safari in Yala National Park, and the colonial fort and coastline around Galle. Along the way there are stops at an elephant orphanage, a spice garden, a working tea factory, and a village experience near Sigiriya that includes an ox-cart ride and a home-cooked lunch.

The pace favours depth over distance, with longer stays built around Dambulla and Galle so there is room for several separate excursions from one base rather than constant relocation. Travel and sightseeing are arranged throughout with a chauffeur-guide, leaving travellers free to take in the landscapes, history and wildlife without managing the logistics themselves.

Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 Negombo (days 1–2)

The tour begins with two days in Negombo on the western coast, a short drive from the airport, with time for a city tour or simply the beach.



City Tour in Negombo

Negombo is known for its golden sandy beaches and a centuries-old fishing industry still active along the coast. Visitors can try water sports, go diving to see the coral and underwater life, or view a 50-year-old shipwreck just offshore that has become home to many species of fish.

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Day 3 Dambulla (days 3–6)

Four days based around Dambulla cover the heart of the cultural triangle, taking in an elephant orphanage, cave temples, a rock fortress, a village experience and two of the island's major ancient and wildlife sites, with a day left free at the hotel.



Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage

This is a home for young elephants displaced or lost from their natural habitat, located in Pinnawala village in Sabaragamuwa province. With around 70 elephants, it holds the largest captive group of elephants in the world and offers a close encounter with the animals.

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Dambulla Cave Temple

The Golden Temple of Dambulla dates back to the 1st century BC and holds ancient murals depicting the life of Lord Gautama Buddha alongside hundreds of Buddha figurines and other deities across five main caves, including the Cave of the Divine King and the Cave of the Great King. A giant golden Buddha statue stands a short distance outside the cave complex.

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Rock Fortress Sigiriya

This 5th-century AD rock fortress, once ruled by King Kashyapa, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the Lion Rock for the lion's-paw entrance at its base. Visitors climb a steep staircase past well-preserved murals to reach terraced gardens and still-working cisterns that demonstrate ancient Sri Lankan hydraulic engineering.

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Village tour in Sigiriya

The village experience includes an ox-cart ride, a catamaran safari on a calm lake, and a walk through golden paddy fields. It also features a traditional cooking demonstration and a home-cooked lunch made over a wood fire and served on lotus leaves.

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Minneriya National Park

A safari through Minneriya National Park offers the chance to see elephants gathering in large numbers, including over 150 during the Great Elephant Gathering between May and October. The park also holds other mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians across its scrubland and forest.

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Ancient Kingdom of Polonnaruwa

Polonnaruwa was the second major capital of Sri Lanka, flourishing between the 10th and 13th centuries AD. Highlights among its ruins include Gal Vihara, the Vatadage, the lotus bath, Lankathilaka Temple and the statue associated with King Parakramabahu, whose reign is considered the kingdom's golden age.

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Day 7 Dambulla → Kandy (days 7–8)

The route continues to the hill capital of Kandy, stopping at a spice garden en route before visiting the city's most venerated temple and its botanical gardens.



Spice Garden

The Euphoria Spice and Herbal garden lies near Matale, the spice capital of Sri Lanka, and grows spices and herbs in a tropical climate that preserves their natural qualities. A guided spice tour explains the uses of these plants and the principles of Ayurveda.

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Temple of the Tooth Relic

This UNESCO World Heritage Site was built in the 16th century to house and protect Lord Buddha's sacred tooth. Its passageways and halls are decorated in red, cream and black, with carved pillars and golden statues throughout.

A.Savin · FAL



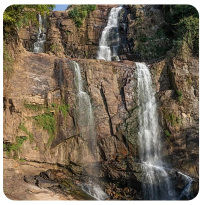
Royal Botanical Garden

The Royal Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya were formed in the early 19th century and hold over 4,000 species of plants, including orchids, spices and medicinal plants. Features include a cannonball tree, a suspension bridge, hedge mazes and avenues of large, rare trees.

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Day 9 Kandy → Nuwara Eliya (days 9–10)

Travelling into the Central Highlands to Nuwara Eliya, the day takes in a waterfall and a tea factory before touring the town itself, with Horton Plains available as an optional trek.



Ramboda Falls

Ramboda Falls is the 11th tallest waterfall in the country. The day also includes the shaded avenues of Hakgala Botanical Gardens and a walk along the shores of Lake Gregory.

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Tea Factory

This tea factory and plantation shows how Ceylon Tea is manufactured, a tradition dating to 1824 when a tea plant was first brought to Ceylon and planted in the Royal Botanical Gardens. British planter James Taylor, who arrived in 1852 and settled at Loolecondera estate in Kandy, introduced commercial tea cultivation to the island.



Explore the Misty City of Nuwara Eliya

Set in the heart of tea country at around 6,200 feet above sea level, Nuwara Eliya is a town built in the style of the English countryside, with Georgian and Queen Anne-style homes, well-kept lawns, an Anglican church and a golf course. The elevation keeps the air cool and fresh.

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Horton Plains

Horton Plains National Park, near Ohiya, is an area of montane grassland and cloud forest. Its features include the precipice known as World's End, the cooling spray of Baker's Falls, and a number of endemic species found within the plains.

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Day 11 Nuwara Eliya → Ella (days 11–12)

After a further visit to a tea factory, the journey continues by rail from Nanu Oya to Ella on one of the island's most scenic train rides, with a free day in Ella afterwards.

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Scenic Train Ride

The train journey from Nanu Oya to Ella passes through highland countryside, with tea plantations, misty mountain backdrops and the landscapes of Haputale visible along the way. The ride also takes in mountains, woodland and waterfalls as the train descends.

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Day 13 Ella → Yala (days 13–14)

From Ella the route drops to the lowlands around Yala, home to the country's second-largest national park, for a jeep safari.



Yala National Park

This three-hour safari explores Yala National Park, the second largest in the country, on the southeastern coast. The park holds a population of Sri Lankan leopards, wild water buffalo, Sri Lankan sloth bears and large herds of elephants, along with many other mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates.

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Day 15 Galle (days 15–20)

The final stretch is spent around Galle on the south coast, with visits to a coastal nature site, a hilltop landmark and the old colonial fort town, plus time to relax on the beach before departure.



Ussangoda Beach

Ussangoda is a coastal area notable for its lack of trees, a result of its serpentine rock containing toxic heavy metals that only certain smaller plants can tolerate. Local legend links the site to the Ramayana, associating its bare landscape with Hanuman's burning tail and with King Ravana's use of the plateau as a landing site for his chariot.

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Rumassala

Rumassala hill, a few kilometres east of Galle, is marked by a white Buddhist dagoba at its summit and is a landmark of Unuwatuna beach. It is said in legend to be a fragment of Mount Dronagiri dropped by Hanuman, and is also associated with Sita's stay in Lanka.

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Old Colonial City of Galle

Galle Fort was a headquarters for both the Portuguese and Dutch and remains one of the best-preserved fortifications in Asia. The town has museums, a lighthouse and cobblestoned streets with Dutch names to explore.

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