



TOUR REFERENCE
LKJQNEXB2D

East Explorer (21 Days)

21 days · 20 nights

Private tour with chauffeur guide

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About this experience

This 21-day tour takes in the full sweep of Sri Lanka's east and centre, moving from Colombo through the Cultural Triangle, along the east coast beaches of Trincomalee, Pasikuda and Arugam Bay, and up into the hill country around Ella and Kandy before finishing on the west coast at Negombo. Travel is by private vehicle with a chauffeur guide throughout, so the pace is set by the traveller rather than a fixed coach schedule.

Highlights include the cave temples of Dambulla, the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the rock fortress of Sigiriya and a safari in Minneriya National Park, where elephants gather in large numbers during the dry season. The east coast stretch brings temple visits at Trincomalee, whale watching, Pigeon Island's coral reefs and extended beach time at Pasikuda and Arugam Bay, with a detour to Kumana National Park for its birdlife. The final days cover Ella's walking trails and viewpoints, tea country around Ella and Kandy, the Temple of the Tooth Relic, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, a Kandyan cultural show, and a stop on Negombo's beach before departure.

The result is a long-format itinerary suited to travellers who want to combine culture, wildlife and beach time without repeating regions, with built-in rest days at the coast to break up the touring.



Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 Airport → Colombo

The tour begins with a look at Colombo's mix of colonial landmarks and city life.



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, and take in the malls of Independence Square or the Race Course along with boutique shops and designer stores.

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Day 2 Colombo → Dambulla → Sigiriya

Travel to the Cultural Triangle, stopping at the cave temples of Dambulla en route to Sigiriya.



Golden Temple of Dambulla

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

Lankapic · CC BY 2.5

Day 3 Sigiriya → Anuradhapura → Polonnaruwa → Sigiriya

A day trip to the ancient capital of Anuradhapura and the standing Buddha statue at Avukana.



Anuradhapura

Walk through the ruined city that served as the capital for over a millennium until the 10th century AD, taking in pagodas, monastic buildings and ponds. Visit landmarks such as Jetavanarama, once one of the tallest buildings of the ancient world, the Sri Maha Bodhi, and the ruins of the Abhayagiri Monastery.

Thisaru Tharuka · CC BY-SA 4.0



Avukana Buddha Statue

See the 40-foot standing Buddha statue carved from a single rock and standing unsupported except for a single thin attachment at the back, with delicately carved robe folds and a cleanly sculpted body. Partially collapsed structures nearby suggest it once stood within an image house.

Carlos Delgado · CC BY-SA 4.0

Day 4 Sigiriya → Minneriya → Sigiriya

Climb Sigiriya rock fortress, spend time in a village setting, and take a safari in Minneriya National Park.



Sigiriya Rock Fortress

Walk through the entrance framed by the paws of a lion, giving the site its name, 'The Lion Rock'. View the unfading murals, climb the steep staircase, and see the terraced gardens and still-working cisterns that demonstrate ancient Sri Lankan hydraulic engineering.

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Village experience

Take an oxen cart ride, a relaxing catamaran safari across a calm lake, and a walk through paddy fields, followed by a traditional cooking demonstration and a home-cooked lunch served on lotus leaves.



Minneriya National Park safari

Take a safari through the park, which during the dry season between May and October sees over 150 elephants congregate at once in the famous Great Elephant Gathering, alongside other mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Stuart Pinkney · CC BY 2.0

Day 5 Sigiriya → Trincomalee

Transfer to Trincomalee on the east coast, with time to explore nearby ancient and natural sites.



Thiriyaya Watadage

Explore Thiriyai, a village where Tamil Buddhism was practised in ancient times, and visit the Girihadu Seya Stupa, said to mark the spot where Buddha gave hair relics to two traders, along with the old fortress of one of the last Vanniyar.

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Whale watching safari

Take a five-hour tour to see blue whales, sperm whales and fin whales in the waters south of Sri Lanka, guided by a qualified naturalist with a focus on responsible, low-impact viewing.

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Pigeon Island National Park

Visit the smaller and larger Pigeon Islands and the coral reef encircling the larger one, home to breeding rock pigeons and a range of coral types and marine life.

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Day 6 Trincomalee

A day exploring Trincomalee's temple and fort.



Koneswaram Temple

Visit this ancient temple, praised by Indian poet-saints and noted by historical figures worldwide, with murals describing its history and a cave shrine dating to 1580 BC, while the main temple developed from 400 BC. See the giant statue of King Ravana, said to have worshipped here.

Shamli071 · CC BY-SA 3.0



Fort Frederick

Visit the fort originally built by the Portuguese in 1624, see stones that once formed the Koneswaram temple before its destruction, and hear the history of its dismantling and rebuilding by the Dutch.

AntanO · CC BY-SA 4.0

Day 7 Trincomalee

A further day at Trincomalee focused on the offshore national park.



Pigeon Island National Park

Explore the smaller and larger Pigeon Islands and the surrounding coral reef, home to breeding rock pigeons and varied coral and marine fauna.

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Day 8 Trincomalee

A free day at leisure in Trincomalee.

Leisure time

Spend the day enjoying the hotel facilities or the beach.

Day 9 Trincomalee → Pasikuda

Transfer south along the coast to Pasikuda to relax.

Transfer to Pasikuda

Check out after breakfast and travel to Pasikuda for a relaxed stay.

Day 10 Pasikuda (days 10–11)

Two days at leisure on the beach at Pasikuda.

Beach time

Enjoy the golden sand, swaying palms and clear blue sea.

Day 12 Pasikuda → Arugam Bay

Transfer to Arugam Bay, visiting an ancient temple on the way.



Muhudu Maha Vihara

Visit this Buddhist temple near Pottuvil, built over 2000 years ago by King Kavan Tissa of Ruhuna, where ruins and remains of ancient stupas, Seema Malaka, Avasa Geya and statues can still be seen, including stone statues of Buddha and two statues of old kings or gods.

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Day 13 Arugam Bay → Kumana → Arugam Bay

A day trip to Kumana National Park for its birdlife and wetlands.



Kumana National Park

Visit the park, which spans 35,664 hectares bordered by the Kumbukkan Oya river and the south-eastern coast towards Panama. See the Kumana Villu mangrove swamp, where many water birds nest during May and June, and water pools such as Kudawila wewa, Thummulla wewa and Kotalinda wewa that attract wildlife.

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Day 14 Arugam Bay (days 14–15)

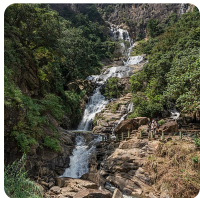
Two further days at leisure on the beach at Arugam Bay.

Beach time

Enjoy the golden sand, swaying palms and clear blue sea.

Day 16 Arugam Bay → Ella

Transfer inland to Ella, visiting a waterfall along the way.



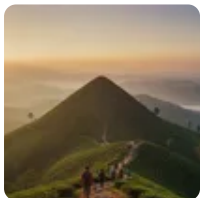
Ravana Falls

See this waterfall, which drops 82 feet from an oval concave rock in the Ravana Ella Wildlife Sanctuary, taking the form of a drooping areca flower in peak season and reducing considerably in the dry season.

A.Savin · FAL

Day 17 Ella

A walking day through Ella's countryside and landmarks.



Little Adam's Peak

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

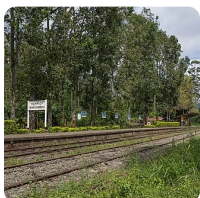
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Nine Arches Bridge

Walk over the bridge and hear the story of its construction.

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Demodara Railway Station

End the walk at the station, known for its unique loop-over track design.

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Day 18 Ella → Kandy

Travel towards Kandy with a stop to see how Ceylon Tea is made.

Tea factory and plantation

Visit a tea factory and plantation to see how Ceylon Tea is produced. Tea was first planted at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Peradeniya in 1824, and James Taylor, who arrived in 1852 and settled at Looolecondara estate in Kandy, introduced commercial tea planting to the island.

Day 19 Kandy

A day of temple, garden and cultural sightseeing in Kandy.



Temple of the Tooth Relic

Visit this UNESCO World Heritage Site, built in the 16th century to house and protect Buddha's sacred tooth, and walk through its decorated passageways and painted halls with carved pillars and golden statues.

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Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya

Walk through the gardens, established in the early 19th century and home to over 4000 plant species, including orchids, spices and medicinal plants, rare trees, a cannonball tree, a suspension bridge and hedge mazes.

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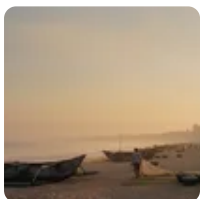
Kandy Cultural Show

Watch an hour-long performance of traditional Sri Lankan art forms, including fire dancers, sword dancers and Kandyan dancers performing to drumming.

Arian Zwegers · CC BY 2.0

Day 20 Kandy → Negombo

Transfer to the west coast for beach time at Negombo.



Negombo beach

Enjoy the sandy beaches on the western coast, watch the centuries-old fishing industry, try water sports, and dive among corals and a 50-year-old shipwreck just off the coast.

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Day 21 Negombo → Airport

The tour ends with a transfer to the airport.

Departure

Check out after breakfast and transfer to the airport for departure.

What's included

INCLUDED

- Breakfast
- Accommodation at 3 Star Hotels.
- 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

- Entry Visa Fees.
- International / Domestic Airfare.
- Any expenses of personal nature.
- Tips & Portages.
- Compulsory Supplements/Peak Supplements.