



TOUR REFERENCE
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The Secret Escapes (19 Days)

19 days · 18 nights

Private tour with chauffeur guide

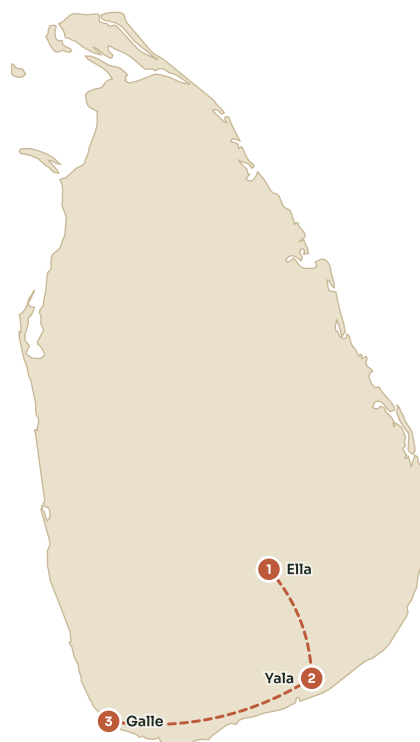
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About this experience

This 19-day private tour covers the full sweep of Sri Lanka: the west coast, the Cultural Triangle, the hill country, the southeast lowlands and the southern coast, moving at an unhurried pace with several multi-night stays built in for genuine rest. Travellers begin at Negombo's beaches, move inland to the ancient cities around Dambulla and Polonnaruwa, climb into the tea country around Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, descend to Ella and the wildlife of Yala, then finish with an extended stay on the beaches around Galle.

Highlights include the rock fortress of Sigiriya, the cave temples of Dambulla, the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, Horton Plains and World's End, the Nanu Oya to Ella train ride, a safari in Yala National Park, and the historic streets of Galle Fort. Village and plantation experiences along the way include an oxen cart ride and catamaran safari near Sigiriya, a spice garden visit near Matale, and a tour of a working tea estate near Nuwara Eliya.

The pace allows for several full days of leisure, particularly at Ella and across the final days in Galle, making this a tour for travellers who want depth and downtime rather than a packed sightseeing schedule. Transfers between regions run in a private vehicle with a chauffeur guide throughout.



Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 Airport > Negombo (days 1–2)

Two days to settle in on the western coast at Negombo, a beach town with a long-standing fishing tradition.



Negombo Beach

Negombo's sandy beaches sit on the island's western coast, with a centuries-old fishing industry still active just offshore. Visitors can try water sports or diving among corals and reef fish, and divers can explore a 50-year-old shipwreck close to the shore.

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Day 3 Negombo > Dambulla

Travel inland to Dambulla, with a stop at Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage on the way.



Golden Temple of Dambulla

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

Lankapic · CC BY 2.5



Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage

Located in Pinnawala village in Sabaragamuwa province, this orphanage cares for young elephants displaced or lost from their natural habitat. It is now home to around 70 elephants, making it the largest captive herd of elephants in the world.

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Day 4 Dambulla > Sigiriya > Dambulla

A day trip to the 5th-century rock fortress of Sigiriya, followed by a village experience near Dambulla.



Sigiriya Rock Fortress

Built in the 5th century AD under King Kasyapa, Sigiriya is entered through an archway framed by a lion's paws, giving the site its name, the Lion Rock. Visitors climb a steep staircase past the famous ancient murals to reach terraced gardens, still-working cisterns and tunnels leading to the former palace.

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Village Experience

The day includes an oxen cart ride through the countryside, a catamaran safari on a calm lake, and a walk through paddy fields ready for harvest. A traditional cooking demonstration is followed by a home-cooked lunch made over a wood fire and served on lotus leaves, giving a taste of Sri Lankan village life.

Day 5**Dambulla > Polonnaruwa > Minneriya > Dambulla**

Visit the medieval capital of Polonnaruwa and go on safari in Minneriya National Park.

**Polonnaruwa**

Kings ruled Sri Lanka's central plains from Polonnaruwa some 800 years ago, when it was a thriving commercial and religious centre with markets and numerous temples. The archaeological remains still give a clear sense of how the city looked in its heyday.

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**Minneriya National Park**

A three-hour safari through Minneriya National Park offers the chance to see elephants, along with other mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians across its scrubland and forest. Between May and October the park is known for the Great Elephant Gathering, when over 150 elephants congregate in one place.

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Day 6**Dambulla > Matale > Kandy**

Travel to Kandy via a spice garden near Matale, then visit the city's most sacred site.

Euphoria Spice and Herbal Garden

Located near Matale, Sri Lanka's spice capital, this garden grows spices and herbs in a tropical climate that preserves their original character. A guided spice tour explains the uses of the plants and the role of Ayurveda, with explanations offered in several languages.

**Temple of the Tooth Relic**

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

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Day 7**Kandy > Peradeniya > Kandy**

A day exploring the Royal Botanical Gardens just outside Kandy.

**Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya**

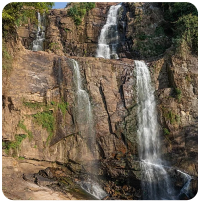
Established in the early 19th century, these gardens cover a large area with over 4,000 species of plants, including orchids, spices and medicinal plants. Visitors can walk avenues lined with rare trees, see the cannonball tree, cross a suspension bridge and explore hedge mazes.

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Day 8

Kandy > Nuwara Eliya

Head up into the hill country, stopping at a waterfall and tea estate before reaching Nuwara Eliya, a hill town built in the style of an English countryside retreat.



Ramboda Falls

Ramboda Falls is the eleventh tallest waterfall in Sri Lanka.

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Mackwoods Tea Estate

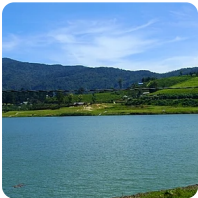
A guided tour of this tea estate covers the varieties of tea, how it is processed and what gives Ceylon Tea its quality. Commercial tea growing in Sri Lanka began when James Taylor, a British planter, settled at Loolecondera estate in Kandy in 1852, after an earlier tea plant had been brought from China in 1824 and planted at the Peradeniya gardens.



Hakgala Botanical Gardens

The gardens have shaded avenues and colourful mazes to walk through.

Own work of Buddhika Mawella · CC BY-SA 3.0



Lake Gregory

A walk along the shores of this lake offers a relaxed close to the day.

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Nuwara Eliya

Set in the heart of tea country, Nuwara Eliya is a town the British built to resemble the English countryside, with homes ranging from Georgian to Queen Anne style, manicured lawns, an Anglican church and a golf course. At around 6,200 feet above sea level, the air here is noticeably cool and fresh.

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Day 9

Nuwara Eliya > Horton Plains > Nuwara Eliya

A day trip to Horton Plains National Park, known for its grasslands and dramatic viewpoints.



Horton Plains National Park

Located in Ohiya, the park combines montane grasslands with cloud forest and is home to a number of endemic species. The highlights are the sweeping views from the precipice of World's End and the cooling spray of Baker's Falls, alongside archaeological finds discovered in the area.

Faslan at en.wikipedia · CC BY-SA 3.0

Day 10 Nuwara Eliya > Ella

Travel to Ella, with the option of a morning hike or a scenic train ride, and time at leisure in the town itself.

Ella Rock

A roughly three-hour hike leads up to Ella Rock, one of the highest viewpoints in the area, passing views of the Namunukula Range and Little Adam's Peak. From the top, landmarks such as the Bandarawela Range, Poonagala Hills, Narangala, the Ella Gap and the Badulla train tracks can all be identified.



Nanu Oya to Ella Train Journey

This scenic rail journey passes tea plantations, misty mountain villages and the landscapes around Haputale, with views of mountains, woodland and waterfalls along the way.

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Ella

The rest of the day can be spent at leisure at the hotel or exploring the town of Ella.

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Day 11 Ella

A full day at leisure in Ella.

Day 12 Ella > Yala

Transfer from Ella to Yala and check in to the hotel.

Day 13 Yala

A safari day in one of Sri Lanka's best-known national parks.



Yala National Park

A three-hour safari in Yala, the second largest national park on the island and set on the southeastern coast, offers the chance to see Sri Lankan leopards, wild water buffalo, Sri Lankan sloth bears and large herds of elephants. The park also supports many other species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates.

Ranmith Welikala · CC BY-SA 4.0

Day 14 Yala > Ussangoda > Rumassala > Galle

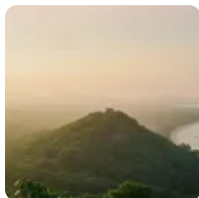
Travel along the coast to Galle, stopping at two sites tied to Ramayana legend before exploring the old town.



Ussangoda

This coastal area is notably treeless, its serpentine rock containing toxic heavy metals that only certain small plants can tolerate. Local legend ties its bare landscape to the Ramayana story, holding it to be land burned by Hanuman's flaming tail, and separately to have once served as an airport for King Ravana's flying chariot.

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Rumassala

This hill near Unuwatuna beach is topped by a white Buddhist dagoba and is one of five sites in Sri Lanka said to be fragments of Mount Dronagiri, dropped by Hanuman as he carried the mountain to Lanka in search of the Sanjiwani herb. The hill is also said to have been a refuge for Sita during her time in Lanka.

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Galle Fort

Galle was once a headquarters for the Portuguese and Dutch, and its fort is one of the best-preserved fortifications in Asia. The old town has museums, a lighthouse and cobblestoned streets with Dutch names, best explored on foot with a guide.

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Day 15 Galle (days 15–18)

Four days at leisure on the southern coast around Galle.



Galle Beaches

The beaches around Galle combine warm sun, soft sand and a cooling sea breeze, with luxury hotels clustered along the shore. Visitors can watch turtles coming ashore to nest, enjoy the sunset over the ocean, or take part in water sports such as jet-skiing and windsurfing.

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Day 19 Galle > BIA

After a relaxed morning and breakfast, transfer to the airport for the return flight home.

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.
- International / Domestic Airfare.
- Any expenses of personal nature.
- Entrance fees to the respective sites.

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