TOUR REFERENCE
LKSP43VXZ3

Classic Sri Lanka (20 Days)

20 days · 19 nights | Private tour with chauffeur guide

AI-generated image · not an actual photograph

About this experience

This 20-day tour runs the length of Sri Lanka's classic circuit, from the capital Colombo down the south coast, into the hill country, across the dry-zone wildlife parks and cultural heartland, and on to the northeast coast before returning to Negombo for departure. It covers colonial port towns, tea-country retreats, ancient rock fortresses and cave temples, two national parks, and an extended stay on the beaches around Trincomalee.

Travellers get a broad sample of the island's landscapes and history in one trip: Galle's fort and coastline, Udawalawe and Gal Oya wildlife safaris, Kandy's temples and gardens, Nuwara Eliya's hill-station character, Dambulla and Sigiriya's ancient sites, and several days of beach time at Nilaveli and Pigeon Island before the fishing harbour at Negombo. The pace allows time to settle into each region rather than rushing between highlights.

The tour is run with a private vehicle and chauffeur guide throughout, so stops and timings can flex around the traveller's interests, whether that is a cycling detour in Galle, a sunrise trek near Gal Oya, or extra time on the water at Trincomalee.

Day-by-day itinerary

Day 1 Airport → Colombo

The tour begins with a look around Colombo, the capital, taking in its historic buildings 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.

Gihanud2001 · CC0

Independence Square and Race Course

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

Charaka Ranasinghe · CC BY 2.0

Day 2 Colombo → Galle

Head to Galle, once a Portuguese and Dutch headquarters, to explore its fort and old town.

Galle Fort

Walk through one of the best-preserved fortifications in Asia, with cobblestoned streets still bearing their Dutch names.

Rovin Shanila · CC BY-SA 4.0

Maritime Museum and Galle National Museum

Visit the Maritime Museum, the Galle National Museum and the lighthouse to learn more about the fort's history.

Cycling tour of Galle

A cycling tour of Galle is also available for those interested.

Day 3 Galle → Ahangama → Koggala → Galle

A day trip from Galle to see tea production and the traditional stilt fishermen of the south coast.

Handunugoda Tea Factory

Also known as the Virgin White Tea Factory, learn how its famous tea is plucked and processed untouched by human hands, with a tasting of tea and chocolate cake and a chance to buy tea leaves.

AI-generated image · not an actual photograph

Stilt fishermen of Koggala

Watch fishermen perched on stilts along the coast of Koggala and hear from them how this generations-old craft is practised.

Bernard Gagnon · CC BY-SA 3.0

Day 4 Galle → Udawalawe

After breakfast, travel to Udawalawe to check in and relax ahead of the following day's safari.

Day 5 Udawalawe → Haputale

A morning safari in Udawalawe is followed by a move up to Haputale and its hill-country viewpoints and colonial-era sights.

Udawalawe National Park

A three-hour safari through the marshes, forests and grasslands of this park, created as a wildlife sanctuary in the 1970s, with water birds, Sri Lankan elephants and other mammals, reptiles and butterflies.

AntanO · CC BY-SA 4.0

Lipton's Seat

One of Sri Lanka's most famed observation points, with views over the Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Central and Eastern Provinces.

Kapidis (talk). The original uploader was Kapidis at English Wikipedia. · CC BY-SA 3.0

Adisham Bungalow

A Tudor mansion built in the early 1900s, open to roam around its grounds.

St Andrews Church

A neo-gothic church with a graveyard that is the resting place of many British tea planters.

Day 6 Haputale → Ella → Haputale

A day exploring Ella, with its tea fields, viewpoints and colonial-era railway heritage, before returning to Haputale.

Little Adam's Peak

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

AI-generated image · not an actual photograph

Nine Arches Bridge

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

Deitel55 · CC BY-SA 3.0

Demodara Railway Station

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

A.Savin · FAL

Day 7 Gal Oya (days 7–8)

Two days in Gal Oya, one of Sri Lanka's most remote and least-visited wilderness areas, given over to its wildlife and landscape.

Gal Oya wilderness

Explore the park's rich wildlife and reconnect with its remote, little-visited landscape.

Gal Oya jeep safari

A guided jeep drive through the jungle, with an expert naturalist pointing out grey langurs, deer, birds, small mammals, elephants, reptiles and, with luck, leopard.

Day 9 Gal Oya → Kandy

Travel on to Kandy, with an evening cultural show and an optional early-morning trek beforehand.

Monkey Mountain trek

An optional two-hour uphill trek first thing in the morning to the cliffs facing the lodge, rewarded with wide views over the forested valley, ideally timed to watch the sunrise.

Kandy Cultural Show

An hour-long performance of Sri Lankan art forms, including fire dancers, sword dancers and Kandyan dancers performing to drums.

Arian Zwegers · CC BY 2.0

Day 10 Kandy

A day in Kandy devoted to its best-known religious and botanical sites.

Temple of the Tooth Relic

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

A.Savin · FAL

Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya

Formed in the early 19th century, the gardens hold over 4000 species of plants, including orchids, spices and medicinal trees, a cannonball tree and a suspension bridge.

Bernard Gagnon · CC BY-SA 3.0

Day 11 Kandy → Nuwara Eliya → Kandy

A day trip up to Nuwara Eliya, the hill station built by the British in the heart of tea country.

Nuwara Eliya town

A replica English countryside town with homes from Georgian to Queen Anne styles, an Anglican church, a golf course and well-kept parks, set high enough to keep the air cool and fresh.

Abdul malik77 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Day 12 Kandy → Matale → Dambulla

Travel via Matale, Sri Lanka's spice capital, to Dambulla and its ancient cave temples.

Euphoria Spice and Herbal Garden

Near Matale, an educational spice tour through gardens of herbs and spice groves grown in their natural tropical climate.

Dambulla Cave Temple

Dating to the 1st century BC, the complex holds ancient murals of the life of Lord Gautama Buddha, hundreds of Buddha and deity figurines across five main caves including the Cave of the Divine King and the Cave of the Great King, and a giant golden Buddha statue outside.

Lankapic · CC BY 2.5

Day 13 Dambulla → Sigiriya → Dambulla

Climb Sigiriya rock fortress, then spend the afternoon experiencing village life nearby.

Sigiriya Rock Fortress

Climb the 5th-century AD rock fortress of King Kasyapa, entering through the lion's-paw gateway, and see its famous murals, terraced gardens, still-working cisterns and palace ruins.

Wrobell · CC BY-SA 3.0

Village experience

Visit a nearby village, take a catamaran safari across a calm lake, walk through paddy fields, and have a home-cooked lunch served on lotus leaves.

Day 14 Dambulla → Trincomalee

Travel to Trincomalee, stopping at an ancient temple, a Portuguese and Dutch-era fort, a beach and a Buddhist site, with whale watching also on offer.

Koneswaram Temple

An ancient temple praised by Indian poet-saints, with murals describing its history, a cave shrine dating from 1580 BC and a giant statue of King Ravana, who legend says worshipped here.

Shamli071 · CC BY-SA 3.0

Fort of Trincomalee

Originally built by the Portuguese in 1624, later dismantled and rebuilt by the Dutch as Fort Frederick, using stones from the destroyed Koneswaram temple.

Kondephy · CC BY-SA 4.0

Nilaveli Beach

One of Sri Lanka's most noted beaches, with golden sand, palms and clear water, and a 10th-century Tamil inscription recording it as a land grant to the Koneswaram Temple.

Anton 17 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Thiriyaya Watadage

A village once home to ancient Tamil Buddhism, with the Girihadu Seya Stupa marking the spot where Buddha is said to have given hair relics to two traders, and the ruins of a Vanniyar chief's fortress.

AI-generated image · not an actual photograph

Whale watching

A chance to see blue, sperm and fin whales off the south coast with a qualified naturalist, run as a low-impact excursion.

Ji-Elle · CC BY-SA 3.0

Day 15 Trincomalee

A day trip out to Pigeon Island to see its coral and birdlife.

Pigeon Island National Park

Made up of a smaller and larger pigeon island surrounded by coral reef, home to breeding rock pigeons and a range of coral types and marine fauna.

AntanO · CC BY-SA 4.0

Day 16 Trincomalee (days 16–18)

Three days at leisure on the beach in Trincomalee, with time for sunsets, turtle watching and water sports.

Trincomalee beach

Relax on the sand, watch the sunset over the ocean, and look out for nesting turtles.

Kondephy · CC BY-SA 4.0

Water sports

Try jet-skiing, windsurfing and other water sports available along the beach.

Day 19 Trincomalee → Negombo

Travel south to Negombo, stopping to see its fishing harbour in action.

Negombo Fishing Village

Known locally as Lellama, this large open-air fish market, one of the largest in the country, shows the local fleet bringing in its catch and wholesalers, retailers and customers trading in a lively, pungent scene.

AI-generated image · not an actual photograph

Day 20 Negombo → BIA

After breakfast, check out and 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.