

*Full Itinerary*

## SECRETS OF SRI LANKA



TALK TO OUR WELL  
TRAVELLED TEAM OF  
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00  
GMT



### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

Secrets of Sri Lanka

**DURATION:**

10 days / 9 nights

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Please arrange your flights into Bandaranaike Airport [CMB] on Day 1 and departing from there after 2pm on Day 10

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

Bandaranaike International Airport [CMB]

## OVERVIEW

Choose your own departure date for your group

Discover the secrets of Sri Lanka & experience its diverse culture & wildlife. Timeless ruins, welcoming people, famous tea & flavourful food make Sri Lanka irresistible

Sri Lanka is a fascinating island country, surrounded by the Indian Ocean and a treasure trove of sights and smells to discover. From ancient sites, historic temples and a wide variety of wildlife in beautiful national parks – you are bound to fall in love with this small country.

Join us as we discover the lively capital, Colombo, discover the historic 'Cultural Triangle', home to the well-preserved Polonnaruwa Ancient Capital and the impressive Sigiriya rock fortress - a feast for your eyes! Historic Kandy with the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic or rock cave Buddhist sites.

Further tantalise your senses with the unmistakable aromas as we explore tea plantations, rice fields, cinnamon farms, spice gardens and the Royal Botanical Gardens and enjoy many traditional meals. This is a trip not to be missed!

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to Sri Lanka

**DAY 2** - Captivating Colombo & Melsiripura Monastic Retreat

**DAY 3** - Historic Hiriwadunna & Sigiriya Rock Fortress

**DAY 4** - Polonnaruwa, the Medieval Capital & Minneriya National Park

**DAY 5** - Dambulla Cave Temple & Fragrant Spice Garden

**DAY 6** - Royal Botanical Gardens & Traditional Cooking

**DAY 7** - Discovering Kandy

**DAY 8** - The Fortified City of Galle

**DAY 9** - Tea Tasting & Cinnamon Cultivating

**DAY 10** - Goodbye, Sri Lanka

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO SRI LANKA

You will be met at the airport upon arrival in Sri Lanka and transferred to your hotel in Colombo.

Here you will meet with your Big Journey Company Tour Director and enjoy the day at leisure to enjoy the surroundings and the hotel facilities before a welcome dinner with the rest of the tour group this evening.

**Included meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Colombo

### DAY 2 - CAPTIVATING COLOMBO & MELSIRIPURA MONASTIC RETREAT

After breakfast, we head out to discover Colombo, the island's capital city.

Our guided walking tour to old Colombo proceed to our sightseeing tour in Colombo will lead us through the streets of the old town, recounting tales of its history. We'll pass the Old Dutch Hospital from the 17th century, now home to boutiques and restaurants before heading to Colombo Fort to learn of the colonial buildings and monuments that shape modern Colombo.

From here we start our journey inland, to Melsiripura, a model organic village in a monastic retreat. Here, over 55 acres of thick wilderness have been transformed into a model village and monastic retreat. During our visit, you will get the chance to follow the daily rituals of the 15 resident Bhikkus and Bhikkunis that call Melsiripura home.

Here, we will also learn of the importance of rice in the typical Sri Lankan diet, learn about the many varieties and the health benefits each provide, as well as traditional farming and fishing methods. We will enjoy lunch at the retreat before we continue to our base for the next few nights, Habarana.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Habarana

### DAY 3 - HISTORIC HIRIWADUNNA & SIGIRIYA ROCK FORTRESS

This morning, we head out after breakfast to Hiriwadunna for a traditional Sri Lanka village experience.

Located in the 'Cultural Triangle' of Sri Lanka, you will get the opportunity to interact with villagers and experience their day-to-day life. Welcomed by the cheerful bullock cart drivers and their age-old carts, bullock carts were once a common mode of travel, however they are rarely used nowadays. Passing the scenic Hiriwadunna Lake, a short walk will take you further in to the village, passing by the tree houses built by farmers to protect their crop, as well as acres of paddy fields, Chena crops and of course local scarecrows!

We return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure before we head out in the late afternoon to visit the imposing Sigiriya Rock Fortress and hopefully witness the beautiful sunset.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, Sigiriya is an enormous rock boulder rising some 200 meters above the surrounding jungle. Built by King Kassapa I in the 5th century BC, it served as a royal citadel for more than 18 years, something that seems more astonishing with every step you climb. As you ascend, pause to admire the mirror wall, the sigiri graffiti, the famous Sigiriya frescoes (paintings) and the great lion paws. Upon reaching the summit you'll immediately see that it was worth the effort.

Here you can wander through the ruins and admire the courage and work it must have taken to build this palace all those years ago - you will even find a fully functional swimming pool at the top! Aside from the ruins, with the unparalleled 360-degree view of the surrounding jungle and hills, it will not be just the climb that takes your breath away.

NB - Climbing up to the summit requires good fitness level and is by no means mandatory

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Habarana

## DAY 4 - POLONNARUWA, THE MEDIEVAL CAPITAL & MINNERIYA NATIONAL PARK

Today we head out to discover the medieval capital, Polonnaruwa to explore the blend of archaeological monuments including ancient palaces, intricately carved moon stones and royal baths.

Polonnaruwa was the second kingdom of Sri Lanka and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The iconic man-made reservoir was appropriately named “Parakrama Samudra”, or “the sea of Parakrama”, due to its enormous size. Look out for the famous Gal Viharaya or “Rock Temple” where you will see four colossal statues of the Buddha cut into the stone, reflecting peace, serenity and strength.

This afternoon we head out to Minneriya National Park. Located in the North Central district of Sri Lanka, it is a sanctuary for wildlife and one of the best places on the island to see the Sri Lankan Elephant up close, as well as a host of other mammals, birds, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians. The park is also an important habitat for the two endemic monkeys of Sri Lanka - the Purple-faced Langur and Toque Macaque.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Habarana

## DAY 5 - DAMBULLA CAVE TEMPLE & FRAGRANT SPICE GARDEN

We check out after breakfast and drive south to Dambulla.

Dating back to the 1st Century BC, Dambulla is a vast cave complex, converted into a rock temple which is still regarded today as one of the most important Buddhist monasteries in the world. Covering the ceiling is the largest collection of paintings in Sri Lanka within a cave temple, and surrounding you is the highest number of Buddha statues found in one single place - it is no wonder the Rock Temple has become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

From here, we continue our journey south to Kandy, stopping en route visiting in Matale at a spice garden for a spice identification session.

Here we will discover many different spices for which Sri Lanka is most famous, be shown how many spices are grown and processed and have the chance to stroll in the gardens and their fragrant greenery whilst learning about nutmeg, pepper vines, clove trees, curry, cinnamon and the precious cardamom.

We continue to Kandy to our next base and enjoy dinner on arrival

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Kandy

## DAY 6 - ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS & TRADITIONAL COOKING

This morning we head out to visit the Royal Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya, accompanied by an expert botanist on a fascinating walk through the scenic gardens.

Housing over 4,000 species of plants and trees, the ancient royal pleasure garden transformed into a botanical garden in 1821. You'll hear stories of the garden's history and the precious live collections gathered over the past centuries and about the 'Grand Circle' where world leaders have donated and planted trees since 1875. Stroll amongst the bamboo collection, Palm Avenue and the herbal plants, as well as the colourful collection of orchids, where a priceless collection of over 300 varieties bloom in all their glory.

Afterwards, we head into Kandy's hilltop surroundings to discover the culinary flavours of the island. We will join a wonderful host at their home in the suburbs of Kandy, discovering their ancestral kitchen and traditional 'Back Black Kitchen utensils.

Our host will demonstrate how to prepare some of the must try Sri Lankan delicacies such as Hoppers, a crispy wok-shaped pan cake or Kotthu Roti.

After the exciting cookery demo you will sit down to enjoy scrumptious dinner with Sri Lankan Calypso music and fusion drumbeats in the background before we return to the hotel for an evening at leisure.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Kandy



## DAY 7 - DISCOVERING KANDY

Today we explore some of the highlights of the city of Kandy, the last Kingdom of Sri Lanka and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You will notice a more comfortable temperature here, compared to the tropical climate prevailing throughout the rest of the island.

Our first stop will be the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, the most prominent Buddhist Temples in the hill capital. Located near the banks of the scenic Kandy Lake, the temple is a city landmark and revered by Buddhists. Built during the 16th Century, the Temple of the Tooth is one of the most important temples for Buddhists as it houses the Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha. The resident monks here demonstrate age-old traditions as you become surrounded by the sound of drums and the smells of lotus and jasmine flowers, as well as incense.

Afterwards, we will enjoy a guided walking tour of Kandy with its iconic monuments, bustling marketplace, and vibrant shopping opportunities. It is a great spot to buy silverware, brassware and gem-studded jewellery, carefully carved and designed by the Kandyan craftsman, who are known to be the most skilled in the country.

Later in the afternoon before returning to the hotel, indulge in a rare opportunity to engage in a personally curated hands-on gem identification and cutting experience with an expert gemmologist. You may make a souvenir of your own with the island's precious and colourful gems!

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Kandy

## DAY 8 - THE FORTIFIED CITY OF GALLE

We depart Kandy after breakfast and make our way overland to the south of the island and the fortified city of Galle.

After checking in to our new hotel and enjoying the facilities, we will embark on a guided walking tour along the atmospheric paved streets of the Galle Dutch Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city of Galle mixes the exotic with the colonial. This impressive Fortress, originally built by the Portuguese and further fortified by the Dutch, remains standing today with only a few changes, and is a living example of the interaction between European architecture and South Asian traditions during the 16-19th Centuries. As we explore Galle Fort, with panoramic views of Old Dutch Reformed Church, chic boutique hotels, the lighthouse and the souvenir shops along the way, we end our walk at the Moon Bastion for a photographic moment overlooking the Indian ocean.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Galle

## DAY 9 - TEA TASTING & CINNAMON CULTIVATING

On our final excursion, we head to nearby Handungoda.

Along the drive, you will be able to see the traditional stilt fisherman engaging in their daily catch. Stilt fishing is an age-old method in Sri Lanka and today remains as a scenic icon in the southern coastal belt. Notice how carefully the fishermen balance themselves on the thin stilt during the low tide to fish in the rising waters of the high tide - a picturesque sight.

In Handungoda, we will visit a Virgin White tips tea factory. Virgin White Tea, the only tea untouched by hand, tea possesses over 10% antioxidants and is considered the purest tea in the world. After being shown around the plantation, you will get the chance to see the tea manufacturing process taking place at the factory, and taste over 20 different teas produced at the estate.

From here, we proceed to Villa Mayurana, a privately-owned villa set in acres of cinnamon plantations with views of Koggala and the coastline beyond for a cinnamon infused lunch. Here we will visit the cinnamon plantation and experience Cinnamon manufacturing process. We'll learn how a cinnamon tree is transformed into a cinnamon stick with a demonstration from one of the estate's expert peelers, to see how this intricate process takes place.

We return to our hotel for a final dinner together

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Galle

## DAY 10 - GOODBYE, SRI LANKA

Sadly, today it is time to say goodbye to Sri Lanka as we check out, make our way back towards Colombo and the airport. Transfers will be

arranged in time for your departure flight.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** none

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at the airport on arrival
- Transport as detailed in the itinerary
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guide
- Tour Director from The Big Journey Company as well as the local tour guide (subject to minimum group size being reached)

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- ATOL protection
- International flights from to/from Bandaranaike International Airport [CMB] - Please contact us for a flight quotation
- Drinks
- Gratuities
- All entrance fees to non-stipulated attractions
- Visas, travel insurance
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above
- Any meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Any optional activities offered
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please note, flights to/from Sri Lanka are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company would be happy to provide a quotation for your flights - please contact us for further details
- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Please book your departure flights from Colombo after 2pm on Day 10
- Check in is after 2-3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable. Final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.
- Please consult your doctor for advice on vaccinations and inoculations before travel.



## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

*Choose from the list of dates below*

*Call to Book*

**0844 3350 197**

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00 GMT