

SOUL of SRI LANKA (16 Days)

January 18-February 2, 2019 with Kelaniya Duruthu Maha Perahara
(the most authentic & culturally significant tradition; 2nd largest after Kandy)



We are excited to offer you an opportunity to attend Kelaniya Duruthu Maha Perahera at one of the most revered and oldest temples in Sri Lanka. This event has more history, cultural and religious significance, vibrant pageantry, quality dancers and quantity of elephants than the more touristic Navam Perehera.

Jan 18 Day 1 Arrival in Colombo / The Kingsbury

You will be met on arrival by our airport staff and our guide at the main arrival area and transfer to the hotel, a 45 minute drive.

No activities this afternoon. Enjoy some time to rest after the long flight. The hotel has several excellent restaurants.

Jan 19 Day 2 Colombo / The Kingsbury (B)

Colombo is fascinating, with a cozy mixture of past and present and is the commercial center of the country. The original trading settlers - the Portuguese, Dutch and British have all left in their wake churches and monuments, names and religions, costumes and food and smatterings of their languages, which have been absorbed into the speech of Sri Lankans.

We'll depart the hotel at 10 AM and start with an orientation drive around the capital and its impressive Parliament House, designed by celebrated architect Geoffrey Bawa.

We then visit the Fort where the foreign influences of the past are visible in the architecture of the ancient buildings. It is now a commercial center, offering an array of restaurants and shops to explore.

The heart of Colombo is known as the 'Fort', but there is little sign of any fortifications today. The Fort area today is a collection of marble and glass structures along such venerable buildings such as the Miller's, building and the General Post Office. Most of the important government buildings are housed here, including the Janadhipahi Mandiraya (President's residence, known as the Queen's House in old times), but the President no longer stays here. The clock tower in Fort is a familiar landmark, which was a lighthouse 140 years ago. Along the shore side of the Fort area is the Galle Face Green Promenade, built in 1859 under the governance of Sir Henry George Ward, the Governor of Ceylon during British colonial administration.

Continue to Pettah Market, a series of open-air markets and bazaars just east of the fort. Pettah is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic area. Moors and Memons are the predominant ethnic group however Sinhalese and Tamil populations live here as well. Other minorities include Burghers and Malays.

From here, a scenic drive to Cinnamon Gardens (5 km north of Kelaniya & 2 km inland), one of Colombo's ritziest areas—elegant streets with posh mansions, a cluster of museums and art galleries. We can stop at Horton Place, to visit Saskia Fernando Gallery, the largest contemporary art gallery in Sri Lanka. <http://www.saskiafernandogallery.com>

We'll pass by Independence Memorial Hall located at Independence Square in the Cinnamon Gardens.

Nearby, we visit a few art galleries: Lionel Wendt Center — has contemporary arts and crafts exhibitions (we'll stop if open; irregular hours). The galleries of the Sapumal Foundation contain over 200 paintings and drawings which trace the development of art in Sri Lanka from the 1920s to date, a selection from over 1000 items in the inventory of the Foundation. Galleries close at 5 pm.

Next we will stop at the Paradise Road complex <http://www.paradiseroad.lk/>, a collection of high quality shops, modern art exhibits. The shops stay open until midnight!-- No we will not stay that late!

This evening, enjoy dinner together at the city's iconic Gallery café at Paradise Road, which was once the office of Geoffrey Bawa. The open-air café overlooking a pebbled courtyard has inspiring Sri Lankan and European cuisine. **You can choose from the menu and pay direct.** <http://www.paradiseroad.lk/restaurants/paradise-road-the-gallery-cafe/>

Jan 20 Day 3 Colombo / The Kingsbury (B, picnic dinner snacks)

This morning we start again at 10 am as we have a long day today and exciting evening so we'll take it easy in the first half, to save our energy and pace ourselves.

Stop for a visit inside the Gangaramaya Temple. Women are required to wear long sleeves and skirt or pants to the ankles; men are required to wear long pants. You will see local Buddhists coming to pay honor and perform spiritual rituals. Receive blessing by a monk, if you wish. The temple operates somewhat like a community center with various social services, training programs and community development projects. <http://gangaramaya.com/>

We visit Number 11" the former residence and now, Bagatale Road Bawa Museum to view the work of Legendary Sri Lankan Architect Geoffrey Bawa. <http://www.geoffreybawa.com/number-11-colombo-residence/tour>

Enjoy a relaxing break at Barefoot Art Gallery, lunch at their garden cafe (pay on your own) and browse their textiles and pottery collections.

Return to the hotel for time to rest.

We depart at 4:30 pm driving from down town Colombo approx. 10 km south to the city of Kelaniya (approx 30-45 minutes depending on traffic) to attend the Kelaniya Duruthu Maha Perahera.

On arrival we will visit Kelaniya Temple. Kelaniya is older than the great cities of Anuradpura and Polonnaruwa. It is described in chronicles that the ancient stupa first built here enshrined a gem-studded throne upon which the Buddha preached the sermons to the Naga king, by the king's invitation. We will first tour the interior including two 18th century halls with Kandyan era paintings, Modern (1946) Image House Inner Walls (see Sri Lankan sculptures); Reclined Buddha Image House of Gauthama Buddha (the Oth Oillima Ge); the Golden Buddha Image Shrine Room and the King's Image House (Raja Pilima Ge). Certain parts of the interior will close to visitors by 5 pm.

Visit the web links for more details: <http://www.kelaniyatemple.org/> and <https://www.srilankaview.com/kelaniya.htm>

We will observe the puja ceremony in the Relic Chamber at 5:30 pm. We will then tour the grounds of the temple starting with the Upper Terrace with access to the courtyard and the Bodhi tree.

The procession starts at 8 pm but we must be in our reserved seats by 7:30 pm. Our guide will carry substantial snacks: sandwiches, chicken drumsticks, vegetable samosas, fish roti, fresh fruit, juice and bottled water for you to eat while we wait for the procession to start, as there are not decent restaurants here. It will be late by the time we return to Colombo (around midnight).

The annual Kelaniya Duruthu Maha Perahera (started in 1927) is held every pre-full moon day of January or 'Duruthu Poya' in commemoration of Lord Buddha's visit to Sri Lanka. The Perahera takes place in the vicinity of the Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya built by King Yala-tissa in the 3rd century BC.

It is believed that the temple was destroyed along with other shrines and temples in 1213 when the South Indian king Kalinga-Maga invaded Sri Lanka. Later King Vijayabahu III rebuilt these temples including the Kelaniya temple. However, the temple was destroyed again in the 16th century, when the Portuguese conquered the country. It was once again rebuilt by King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe in 1767.

The preparations for the perahera include two months of religious activities and seven days of continuous pirith chanting by the monks. The perahera is a three day event of religious rituals and sermons. The Maha Perahera is held on the final night with some 3000 participants and 50 elephants. Next to the world famous Kandy Perahera one can say the Kelaniya Perahera is 2nd largest.

It begins with the ritual of handing over of the relic casket to the chief Basnayake Nilame (guardian of the casket), by Ven. Professor Kollupitiye Mahinda Sangharakhita Nayaka Thera.

Heading the procession are the whip-crackers heralding the approach of the Perahera. Next comes a group of fire-ball performers (gini-bola), swinging stringed fire-balls making various patterns in the sky. Following are troops of drummers, Kandayan dancers, monks walking under the traditional yellow parasol, an elephant of noble birth carrying the sacred relic casket with the custodian of the casket, flag bearers and colorfully costumed elephants.

At the tail end of the procession are three palanquins (randoli) of the devalas, each carrying the ornaments of the respective Gods. A woman walks beside each palanquin, fanning it with a chamara (yak) tail. The palanquins are then carried back to their respective devalas. Then the relic casket is removed from the elephant amidst the beating of hevisi drums and a canon booms to indicate the closing of the ceremony of the Perahera.

Our return to Colombo will be late, perhaps after midnight.

Jan 21 Day 4 Colombo – Anuradhapura - Habarana / Cinnamon Lodge (B, D)

Morning departure, 9 am, for the drive into the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka. The first stop is Anuradhapura, approx 4 hour drive from Colombo. We will stop for lunch at a local restaurant before we begin touring. (pay direct).

After lunch we explore Anuradhpura's famous archaeological sites and witness its living temples.

Anuradhapura, a World Heritage Site, was the first capital of Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BC. The influence of Buddhism which transformed this island, has produced magnificent architecture as seen in the massive Dagobas, the ornate pleasure gardens and palaces decorated with excellent sculptures, monasteries and temples. A major pilgrimage site and one of the most important places of worship here is the Sri Maha Bodhi, the oldest historically documented tree in the world, dating back to over 2000 years. This Bodhi tree was grown from the same tree under which Prince Sidharth meditated in Bodhi Gaya India where he attained enlightenment and became known as The Buddha.

We will spend about 2.5 hours touring here. Continue to Habarana (1 hour). We'll arrive at about 4:30 pm, giving you time to settle in and enjoy the hotel grounds and facilities.

We'll depart at approx 6:45 pm for 10-15 minute drive to a local's house. Tonight you are invited to the house of a local for a village party – feast of local food, song and dance – in Sinhalese it is called a “Paduru” Party. There will be three local families participating in the party: your host family and two neighboring families.

Jan 22 Day 5 Polonnaruwa – Sigiriya - Habarana / Cinnamon Lodge (B, L, D)

This morning, a pleasant 45 minute drive to the medieval city of **Polonnaruwa**, approx 45 minutes.

En-route we visit a local school where you will be able to have some interaction with the students and observe the rural education system.

Polonnaruwa was the island's medieval capital between the 11th and 13th century. Built alongside a large ancient artificial lake there are well-preserved ruins of palaces, bathing pools, stupas and exquisite rock sculptures of the Buddha. Today the visible remains are those of a Buddhist monastic congregation, which practiced meditation in total austerity. Established in 3rd century BC, it peaked in the 8 & 9 century AD. Rarely visited by tourists this mystical place is incredibly beautiful and unspoiled with shady forests filled with streams, pools and granite boulders and ancient elegant stone pathways, which wind through the forest to the ruins of the various meditation platforms and ayurvedic hospitals.

After our visit of Polonnaruwa, we'll enjoy an exclusive lunch will be arranged by the side of a paddy field where you will be given a cooking demonstration of a typical local lunch which includes Rice with 05 / 06 authentic curries, fried lake fish and a green salad.

Next, we drive to Sigiriya (1 hour, 20 min), a massive rock fortress rising 183 meters above the surrounding green scrub jungle, just declared a world heritage site, is perhaps the most memorable place for visitors to Sri Lanka. Built by King Kasyapa in the 5th century, on the top of a vast 200m granite rock, it took seven years to build and was abandoned after ten years of occupation when the King, defeated by his brother, committed suicide. The well-planned complex included caved temples, bathing pools, lovely ponds and Asia's oldest surviving landscaped gardens. Sigiriya is known for its frescoes painted in the pocket of the rock. The “Lion Stairway,” the “Mirror Wall” and the “Water Gardens” are its other highlights. An easy climb (1200 steps) to the summit of the rock to view the ruins of the monastic complex, the views and frescoes are definitely worth the effort. Go as far as you like, it is all a delight even if you do not get to the top.

At about 5 pm, we travel away from the main roads of Dambulla and proceed along the picturesque Kandalama Tank. Arrive at a remote village and walk through the narrow roads to the waiting catamaran boats, which take you along the Kandalama tank (safety jackets provided). Each catamaran holds 6 people. The catamaran ride is a brief experience (10-12 minutes) but gives you the essence of how typical villages use them for fishing, transportation and for picking up water lilies.

We arrive at a point where we are greeted by two tamed elephants enjoying a bath in the tank. The catamarans are pushed onto the shore so you will not have to hop out into the water. The elephants' mahouts invite us to join them in washing the elephants using coconut husks, a practice passed on from many generations of mahouts. You feel the elephants whilst bathing them. The rough skin of this gentle giant, feeling of its enormous head and ears, the probing trunk curiously in search of potential favors a mahout might present such as a fruit. Elephants certainly do enjoy this form of pampering as they get a free massage as well. Bathing in the river, being washed and scrubbed, cooling their system in the water is a favorite pastime of any elephant.

After their bath in the tank, elephants are taken to the shore where we provide you with fresh fruits, which you treat them with. They love the tropical fruits. Most commonly we provide bananas, pineapple, watermelons or king coconuts. We provide you with a king coconut which you can enjoy during this time. Finally, we bid adieu to the elephants and get into “tractors” which are used by villagers. Tractors are used for both transportation and agricultural purpose and are an essential and practical in the villages as it can carry up to 10 passengers. We leave the beauty of Kandalama Lake with memories of encountering elephants in a more respectful manner.

Return to our hotel in Habarana, 30 minute drive, arriving at about 6:30 pm. Dinner at the hotel restaurant.

Jan 23 Day 6 Dambulla - Matale - Kandy / Cinnamon Citadel Hotel (B)

Depart at about 8 am. After a drive of 30 minutes, we stop for a one hour visit of Dambulla-Golden Temple and its caves.

Dambulla, a vast isolated rock mass, is known for its richly painted cave temples. It was here that king Valagam Bahu took refuge from invasions in the 1st century B.C., later turning the caves into a rock temple. Some of its frescoes are over 2000 years old. Another highlight is a colossal figure of the recumbent Buddha carved out of the living rock, some 15 meters long. The caves have a mixture of religious and secular paintings and sculptures with ceiling frescoes depicting scenes from Buddha's life and Sinhalese history.

Dambulla Golden Temple The temple was a monastic settlement as early as the 2nd century BC and is now among the seven World Heritage Sites of Sri Lanka. The rock rises over 400 ft. above its surroundings and consists of 5 cave temples spread out of about 50 acres. Here one can see one of the richest collections of 154 Sri Lankan sculptures in the form of Buddha images in standing, seated & recumbent postures as well as a few outstanding figures of gods. Well preserved massive wall and ceiling paintings covering 22,000 sq. ft. has made this temple complex more important to the world.

We continue driving about 1 hour to **Matale Spice Garden**. Though you may have seen plenty in various countries on past trips, this is a delightful stop. For centuries spices have been one of Sri Lanka's most celebrated exports. Spices such as such as cinnamon, ginger, vanilla, pepper, cardamom are grown in home gardens as home industry and used not only to flavor food, but also as home remedies. A visit to the Spice Gardens is a wonderfully relaxing experience.

We'll have a lunch stop at the restaurant near the spice garden (pay direct).

There is a lovely batik factory nearby we can visit. Batik has been an ancient procedure of painting cloth and today Sri Lanka is among the world leaders in the design of batik. You see the various phases of batik manufacture and witness truly quality design, artistry and workmanship.

Continue to "Senkadagalapura" today known as Kandy (approx 1.5 hr drive). Transfer to hotel. We plan to arrive between 2-3 pm. The rest of this afternoon is at leisure.

Kandy, was the last bastion of Buddhist political power against colonial invasion. This hill station is remarkable for the natural beauty of its setting in a peaceful wooded valley overlooking a vast artificial lake. The palace, shrines and British period buildings give it a special character, while Buddha's Tooth Relic lends a religious importance to the historic highland capital.

We shall depart the hotel at 5 pm and have some time to explore the temple before the puja. We walk to the Royal Palace complex Raja Wasala, Council Chamber known as "Magul Maduwa" an unique wooden pillared hall dated from 1784 and Devale complex.

We'll attend the puja (chanting/music) 630 - 7 pm, at the "Dalada Maligawa." The octagonal-shaped building is a national palladium for it houses the Tooth Relic of the Buddha, an object of veneration to Buddhists all over the world. According to tradition, the tooth was rescued at the cremation of Gautama Buddha in India in 543 BC and brought to the island in the 4th century AD. The relic is encased in seven caskets, one kept inside the other, the outermost of which has a shape of a stupa, adorned in gold. The Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha is exhibited during the ceremony. This is undoubtedly the greatest attraction of the city. It is one of the most sacred places for Buddhists all over the world.

THIS VISIT REQUIRES YOU TO BE ATTIRED IN CLOTHING THAT COVERS BOTH YOUR KNEES AND ELBOWS.

Afterwards, we'll go to the Robert Knox Lounge for dinner (pay direct; really the only decent place for foreigners to eat outside of hotels). Return to hotel by 830 pm.

Jan 24 Day 7 Kandy / Cinnamon Citadel Hotel (B,L)

Kandy is a World Heritage City that lies in a triangular valley surrounded by mountains, green velvet tea plantations covering the hills, and the river Mahaweli, the longest river in the country. Kandy is a fascinating city rich in cultural heritage-arts and crafts, music, and dance - an interesting mixture of the old and the new. Most of the old structures either have been rehabilitated or are still in its original use, such as the ancient religious monuments that continue as living monuments.

Today we visit Kandy's three main temples. It is a 45 minute drive to the village where the temples are located. Once inside the village we will use tuk tuks to go between the monasteries as the streets are too congested for the coach.

Gadaladeniya

Built almost exclusively of stone in 1344 by the Gampola King Wickramabahu, it is situated on a hilltop commanding views of the surrounding countryside. The architecture is Dravidian. The entrance porch features large stone pillars, which support a roof of huge stone slabs. Within the vihara, an ancient stone and plaster Buddha image looks down upon milk rice pots that have collected food offerings for centuries. The 638-year-old jack wood doors still exhibit their original paintings.

Lankathilaka Viharaya

Lankatilaka temple is a magnificent brick building in white and in the shrine room is found a superb seated image of the Buddha. Built by King Parakramabahu, and later restored by Vijayabahu IV, this dramatic brick building was once five story's high and embellished with flowers, creepers, animals, birds and statues of gods. The two gigantic columns at the entrance, now broken to a highest of 58 ft., must originally have been at least double that height. The cathedral-like aisle leads to a standing Buddha statue, now headless, which was 41 ft., tall. The exterior walls are ornamented with delicate

sculpture that depict various buildings of the Polonnaruwa era. In front of the Lankathilaka is a pillared 'mandapaya' with 40 stone chaste-ornamented pillars.

Embekke Devalaya

Built by King Vikramabahu-III of Gampola in the 14th century, the Devale is principally dedicated to Skanda or Kataragama Deviyo. It is renowned for carved wooden pillars with intricate designs. The pillars leap to life with dancers, musicians, wrestlers, legendary beats, fabulous animals and floral motifs.

A pooja ceremony will take place at 1030 – 1100 am in homage to God Skanda. We plan to reach the temple in time for the puja and an offering will be arranged on your behalf for a special blessing of protection for travelers given by Kapu Mahattaya or other layman involved with activities / ceremonies in the temple.

Afterwards, we drive into the suburbs of Kandy to the home of Jacques Soulie, Professor of Psychology and French at the Peradeniya University. Jacques lives in an amazingly restored 18th century Dutch mansion that belonged to the Village Chief. He has transformed this into a functional art center, along with a vast collection of old books, furniture, manuscripts and photographs. Over lunch at the house, Jacques tells us of his research on the Kandyan and Gampola kingdoms.

Next, visit a local dance school outside the city of Kandy, the Kandyan Dance Foundation run by Sri Anura Rangayathanaya. The Kandyan art reflects the unique heritage and culture of Sri Lanka. The dance school is conducted by a renowned Kandyan dancer recognized by the main Kandy Temple. The teacher conducts dancing and drumming lessons to emerging young students who aspire to be temple dancers and drummers. This is an important ambition to these students and the practice has been going on for several generations. It is common that the villagers nearby come over to witness the lessons admiring the skills and techniques passed on for many generations. You will be given an introduction to up country dancing and learn the basics of Kandyan dancing. You will also learn the basics in traditional drumming known as the 'BERA' drums.

We return to the hotel via a shorter route. The rest of afternoon/evening at leisure. Enjoy the lovely hotel grounds and facilities. If you wish to go into the city, just ask your guide. Note most shops are closed today, Sunday.

Jan 25 Day 8 Kandy/ Cinnamon Citadel Hotel (B)

Enjoy a leisure morning. (we skip **Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage** as it is very touristic and you have had a more authentic experience outside Dambulla). We'll depart at about 10 am stopping to enjoy the viewpoint and photo opps on Upper Lake Drive on the way into town. Spend some time exploring Kandy with your guide, browsing at the market square featuring the famous gem stores or walking around the temple/sitting by the lake. Your guide will suggest a good place to have lunch (pay direct).

At 3 pm, we'll drive about 45 minutes to visit a local artist in Kandy for tea.

Rahju Michael Pereira is of mixed Sri Lankan-Norwegian heritage, spends a kind of hermit life in a rural place close to Kandy. In addition to painting he is passionate about music as well as meditation.

At the age of sixteen, in his first year at art school, Rahju got in contact with Maharish Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation. It was a most revealing re-discovery for him and from then on, he dived into Hinduism, Yoga and Meditation.

During his last year in art school in Oslo, amidst all those people, Rahju was an absolute hermit, spending a lot of time at the Tantric Yoga and Meditation School of Swami Janakananda. The time spent there shaped Rahju. Rahju recalls moments in confronting his works of art with his teacher, Einar Granum always feeling he had unity, of parallel lines between art and spirituality, between art and being altogether.

Rahju has occasionally exhibited his works of art in Colombo, but he now prefers to show paintings to selected audiences from his studio in the Kandy hills



Jan 26 Day 9 Kandy - Nuwara Eliya /Jetwing St Andrews (B)

We depart at 9 am for the hill country. After 2.5 hours, we arrive in Nuwara Eliya, an important tea production region. We'll stop en-route to visit a tea plantation and factory to observe firsthand, the age-old tea making process from plucking to the artisanal converting factory with century old machinery and processing.

Lunch at a local restaurant (pay direct).

Proceed to Nuwara Eliya where we enjoy a refreshing tour of the town!

Nuwara Eliya is a mountain station at 1,868 m (6,128 ft) of altitude, in a splendid landscape. The city is particularly well-kept and neat, and the always green grass gives to the locality an aspect of "colonial British style". Nuwara Eliya was built entirely during the 19th century and its architecture mimics that of an English country town, with red-brick walls, country house like hill club and mock-Tudor half-timbering. Blessed with salubrious climate, breathtaking views of valleys, meadows, mountains and greenery; it's hard to imagine that Nuwara Eliya is only 180 Km from the hot and humid Colombo. Temperatures are 14C-21C (Jan- April) and 15C- 18C (Sept-Dec).

Jan 27 Day 10 Nuwara Eliya – Ella - Wellawaya / Jetwing Kaduruketha (B, picnic L)

This morning is at leisure to independently explore Nuwara Eliya.

We then continue the journey to the highlands of Sri Lanka. At approximately 1200 noon we board the train leaving from Nanu Oya at 1245 pm to the quiet town of Ella (approx 2.5 hr ride), with a picnic lunch. Your luggage will travel by coach.

The scenery en-route is magnificent and far superior to travelling in a car. This is undoubtedly the most scenic train journey in the country... Just before arrival at Ella station, we can see Ella's Gap from afar.

We arrive at the Ella train station at 3:15 pm. Ella is a beautiful small village with little more than a handful of shops, hotels and guesthouses. It has an almost perfect climate and occupies a very scenic vantage point, with views on a fine day stretching right across the South Coast of Sri Lanka.

After a short visit of Ella to browse and perhaps have a coffee/tea (pay directly), we continue by car about one hour to Wellawaya, enjoying beautiful views of Ella's gardens as we proceed.

Wellawaya has always been an en route stop for locals due to the "Buduruwagala" Buddha statue. The charming village of Wellawaya is a non-touristic destination but rich with history, unique local culture and predominantly agro based economy. Miles of paddy fields, Wellawaya paved the way for the south (known as "Ruhuna" during the ancient kingdoms) bravely rebelled against the invading "cholas" from South India during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. History takes us back as far as the 2nd century BC during the Anuradhapura era. Some of the significant royal battles too took place in the Wellawaya area.

Check into the lovely Jetwing Kaduruketha. The hotel is set amidst paddy farmland and natural forest, and has been designed to nestle itself as unobtrusively as possible into the rural landscape. Twenty five dwellings are spaced out over an expanse of 60 acres, with each dwelling surrounded by forest and paddy fields to maintain secluded privacy. A major portion of the land has been given over to the cultivation and harvesting of paddy, giving guests the opportunity to experience the culture and daily life of a traditional farming community.

Jan 28 Day 11 Wellawaya / Jetwing Kaduruketha (B)

This morning is at leisure to enjoy Jetwing Kaduruketha. You have the option of enjoying various activities available at the resort like a bicycle ride across beautiful paddy fields or an interactive cookery demonstration with the chef of Jetwing Kaduruketha.

Late afternoon we drive 10 km/about 15 minutes on the Thanamalwila road to visit Buduruwagala. The name Buduruwagala means "the rock with the statue of Buddha" And this is exactly what it is. Seven figures are carved in this rock with a massive 51 foot Buddha statue in the Abhaya Mudra gesture at the centre. The rock itself has shape of a kneeling elephant with its head own. Although there is no documented information about this site in the ancient scriptures, different historians have dated these statues from the 6th century to late Anuradhapura period. (between 8 – 10th century).

Return to hotel. Evening at leisure.

Jan 29 Day 12 Wellawaya - Yala / Jetwing Yala (B)

We depart at 9 am for the 2.5 hr drive to Yala, a rural outback in the deep south of the country. As part of the ancient kingdom, it has many archaeological sites from Buddhist temples, to ruin palaces and forest monasteries.

On arrival, check in to the hotel. Enjoy some independent time.

We shall depart the hotel at 3 pm and drive about 10 minutes from our hotel to embark on our evening safari at Ruhunu National Park (starts at 3:30 pm), a section of Yala National Park. This will include a safari tour by jeep with a jungle

tracker, where you can see animals in their natural habitat. Some of the animals you could see are elephant, bear, wild boar, leopard, crocodile, buffalo, monkeys and many others; if you are lucky, leopards too. You also could see different species of birds.

97,800 hectares in extent, this is the second largest of Sri Lanka's National Parks. Its open undulating terrain made it famous for elephants for many years, but recently the park has also received much fame through publicity by National Geographic and the Discovery TV channels, which focused on a leopard research/conservation and identification project. Claims have subsequently been made that Yala National Park has the world's highest concentration of leopard per square kilometer. Vegetation is primarily grassland and shrub jungle with patches of dense growth while several salt and fresh water lagoons are a haven for a large variety of resident and migrant birds. Areas popular with leopard are rock strewn hillocks with dense shrub in which the animals hide.

The tour duration is 2.5 hours. All vehicles must leave the park at 6 pm. Return to the hotel. Enjoy your evening at leisure.

Jan 30 Day 13 Yala - Galle / Jetwing Lighthouse Amari Galle (B)

Depart at 9 am for Galle, (3.5 hour drive), stopping at a local restaurant for lunch (pay direct).

En-route, visit to the excellent Martin Wickramasinghe Folk Museum, in the village of Koggala, just outside of Galle (30 minutes drive). The village of Koggala was the home of Sri Lanka's most famous author, Martin Wikramasinghe, and now a Museum of Folk Culture and local lifestyle, surrounded by eight acres of a restored eco-system with hundreds of varieties of indigenous trees and shrubs in which bird life abounds. There's a special collection of artifacts and memorabilia offering insight into a world of tradition, integrated and at peace with the environment

Continue 30 minutes to Galle. On arrival, transfer to hotel. Evening at leisure.

Jan 31 Day 14 Galle / Jetwing Lighthouse (B)

We start the day with a walking tour visiting the small pleasant town of Galle including the Old Galle Dutch Fort.

Historically, this award winning World Heritage fortified township was an essential port of call for Chinese, Persian, Arab and Indian traders. Javanese and Sumatrans came later followed by Marco Polo in 1299 AD. The Portuguese built the fort around Galle's natural harbor upon their arrival in 1505. Later, the Dutch and the Portuguese waged a bloody war to take control of Galle and after the loss of many lives the Portuguese surrendered to the Dutch who went on to control the maritime provinces of Ceylon for nearly 200 years. During this time the Dutch enlarged and fortified the fort with great ramparts and bastions to protect their presence, understanding its strategic significance.

Today, the Galle Fort is one of Asia's most well preserved Dutch forts. Old Dutch styled buildings are still common within the fort. The numerous schools and the magistrate court within the premises makes this 'living fort' one with character that is delightful. Narrow streets are lined with old houses displaying Dutch heritage, with their pillared verandahs. Government offices remain in use and the community within the fort is a bustle with daily life – a living breathing town, hidden within fortified walls of this ancient, maritime citadel

We explore the fort, overflowing with landmarks, strolling past the Dutch church, the governor's house, the spice warehouses, Court Square, the Kacheri or Town Hall, the lighthouse and ramparts. Near the old Arab mosque are streets leading to cricket fields and the district Judge's house, surrounded by ancient frangipani trees. There's a variety of exclusive boutique stores to explore.

The rest of the day you are free to relax and/or explore the pleasant town of Galle on your own. There are many shops, cafes, and of course the beach for those who want to take a dip in the Indian Ocean.

Our hotel is on the ocean about 5 km from town. Transport to town and return to hotel will be provided.

Feb 1 Day 15 Galle - Turtle Hatchery - Bentota - Negombo / Negambo Jetwing Blue hotel (B, L)

We shall depart at 9 am this morning. After a one hour drive, we stop at the Turtle Hatchery. Projects have been launched to conserve the population of turtles that are reaching extinction and such projects are found along the southern coast of Sri Lanka where turtles come ashore to lay their eggs. The turtle digs a hole on the beach, lays hers eggs and covers them with sand to incubate by the heat of the sun. What often happens is, the eggs are dug out by fisherman and sold to people who consume them. But now the eggs are bought up by the conservation projects and are hatched the natural way in enclosed areas where the birds don't have a chance of picking them up and the babies are put to the sea at night after two days, which offers them a better chance of survival.

We continue driving 45 minutes north to the Lunuganga Estate. This was the country home of the renowned Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. Started in 1947, the garden led Bawa, a lawyer called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1940, to

decide to become an architect. As he went on to become Sri Lanka's and one of Asia's most prolific and influential architects, the garden at the Lunuganga estate remained his first muse and experimental laboratory for new ideas. He continued to change and experiment with its spaces and structures throughout his life until his final illness in 1998.

After a pleasant tour of the garden, we sit down for lunch on the veranda of one of the cottages.

Then, we head to Negambo (2.5 hrs drive), a pretty town by the sea and close to the airport. Enjoy your evening at leisure.

Feb 2 Day 16 Negombo - Depart

If you are joining our tour to Bangladesh: Transfer to the airport for UL 189, dep 0755 to Dhaka; or South India tour: Srilankan Air 129, dep 840 am, arrives 10 am.

Others will have a leisurely-paced tour of the sleepy town of Negombo. We will see the old Dutch Fort ruins, the fishing village and a few churches including St. Mary's-- noted for its ceiling painting.

Check out at 12 noon. The rest of the day is independent. Enjoy relaxing by the beach or strolling/browsing shops.

If you would like the room until late night check out, extra cost.

PRICES: \$4175 per person based on minimum 6 people, single room supplement: \$1350

Includes:

- ❖ 15 nights' accommodation with daily breakfast
- ❖ Transportation in an air-conditioned Deluxe Micro for groups of up to 6 people & Deluxe Coaches for groups of 7 -12
- ❖ The exclusive services of an English speaking National Guide throughout the tour (from arrival to departure)
- ❖ All applicable Entrance Fees as per the above itinerary
- ❖ Dinner Box at the festival on Day 2
- ❖ Dinner at local house Day 4
- ❖ Dinner at Cinnamon Lodge Habarana Day 5
- ❖ Lunch at Priyamaligedera with cooking demo on Day 5
- ❖ Lunch with Jacques Soullier on Day 7
- ❖ Tea with Rahju on Day 8
- ❖ Picnic lunch during the train journey from Nanu Oya to Ella on Day 10
- ❖ First class reserved seats from Nanu Oya to Ella on Day 9
- ❖ Jeep hire at Yala National Park
- ❖ One safari to Yala National Park
- ❖ Tour and lunch at Lunuganga on Day 15
- ❖ Daily mineral water during sightseeing and transfers
- ❖ Tips to shoe keepers at temples
- ❖ Reserved seats at the Perahara procession
- ❖ All applicable Government Taxes / Levies as at date
- ❖ All applicable Hotel Taxes and Service Charges as at date

Does Not Include: international flight, airport taxes, visa fee (currently \$35), tips at meals even when the meals are included, tips to guide and driver, travel insurance, camera and video fees, early check-in or late check-out, personal expenses such as laundry, phone calls, drinks.

Meals: We have selected a variety of wonderful special restaurants for some meals together as a group. The dinner included at Cinnamon Lodge in Habanara is the buffet at their main restaurant. The quality of the food is excellent and much variety is offered. The property has 2 other restaurants so you may like to skip the buffet to try one of the others on the 2nd night. Sorry no refunds can be given for the buffet dinner (the cost is included in room rate). We have left some of the meals open where we know there are many options so you can select from menus what you like.

Hotels

Colombo: Kingsbury Hotel, 5* superior ocean view rooms www.thekingsburyhotel.com

The Kingsbury is the newest 5 star hotel in Colombo. It is located on the banks of the Indian Ocean with stunning ocean views from every room. The Kingsbury also has unparalleled views of Colombo city, Colombo harbor and its "Sky Lounge" is regarded as the best location to experience the tropical sun sets. It is near shops, pubs, the Trade Center and some historic sites. The hotel has 4 restaurants and three lounges. According to public opinion, The Kingsbury is considered the culinary capital of Sri Lanka with renowned chefs from around the globe creating culinary magic at its many restaurants to offer you world class gourmet meals.

Habarana: Cinnamon Lodge, 5* deluxe rooms <http://www.cinnamonhotels.com>

A charming resort set in the little town of Habarana, located at the heart of Sri Lanka's world famous cultural triangle of Kandy-Anuradhapura-Polonaruwa. The property consists of over 27 acres of resplendent beauty, shielded by over 1700 tall trees, surrounded by three nature reserves. The rooms are spacious with all modern facilities. The grounds here are breathtakingly beautiful and the food is superb. Facilities include ayurvedic spa, swimming pool, two restaurants.

Kandy: Cinnamon Citadel Hotel, 4* deluxe rooms www.cinnamonhotels.com/cinnamoncitadelkandy

This 4 star hotel is nestled high up in the hill country, beside a quiet bend in the Mahaweli River. It is just a few minutes drive to the city center of Kandy. The hotel interiors are a mix of a contemporary style with plenty of subtle reminders in the form of vibrant tones of red and traditional Kandyan art. The main restaurant offers breathtaking views of the Mahaweli River and the surrounding mountain range. The restaurant serves food buffet style and offers a variety of dishes including Indian, Thai, Italian, Chinese and French cuisine. There is a health corner, pasta corner, grill corner and salad corner in addition to many other action stations. The Cafe C is located close to the riverbank on the farther side of our pool. It is an a la carte restaurant that serves a wide range of contemporary fusion cuisine. It offers a quiet, cozy ambience. The Lounge Bar, located in the centre of the lobby, serves a variety of spirits, along with spectacular views of the terrace and the Mahaweli River. It features a lively jazz trio and saxophonist in the evenings. Facilities include a swimming pool, fitness center, spa and business center.

Please Note: There are not any decent hotels in the city center (believe me we have tried, since we are aware people like to be able to walk to shops in free time; but quality is just plain bad). The car/driver and guide will be available during free time to escort those who desire, to go into town.

Nuwara Eliya: Jetwing St Andrews, superior rooms www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwingstandrews

Amidst mountains swathed in mist and dotted with tea plantations, the quaint old mansion of Jetwing St. Andrews. (former country house converted into a Jetwing Hotel), is reminiscent of the days of the British Rulers with an ambience of old world charm. You will wake up to a typical English breakfast of bacon and eggs, high tea on the lawn and a stiff brandy at night.

Wellawaya: Jetwing Kaduruketha, deluxe dwelling www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwingkaduruketha

Exuding rustic charm, character and stylish simplicity, the unique eco-luxury resort Jetwing Kaduruketha is set amidst paddy farmland and natural forest, bringing you as close to nature as you can get. It has been designed to nestle itself as unobtrusively as possible into the rural landscape. Twenty five dwellings are spaced out over an expanse of 60 acres, with each dwelling surrounded by forest and paddy fields to maintain secluded privacy. A major portion of the land has been given over to the cultivation and harvesting of paddy, giving guests the opportunity to experience the culture and daily life of a traditional farming community.

Yala: Jetwing Yala, 5* deluxe rooms <http://www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwingyala/>

A combination of awe-inspiring wildlife, a wellness center, unparalleled beach access and a commitment to sustainability makes Jetwing Yala a beacon of light in the deep South. Not only is the hotel situated next to one of the best wildlife destinations in Asia, the Yala National Park, it also hosts the largest privately owned solar park in Sri Lanka and features recently developed beach access complete with a mini-bar, lounge area and manned by internationally trained lifeguards. Our spa rejuvenates your mind, body and soul while the natural habitat will help you reconnect with nature. There are several dining options indoor and out, all superbly delicious and catering to diverse palettes. Facilities include a magnificent swimming pool, fitness center and spa.

Galle: Jetwing Lighthouse 5* deluxe ocean view rooms <http://www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwingblue/>

Set outside the city, along the rocky shores of the Indian Ocean, this upmarket hotel is 3 km from the National Maritime Museum, and 6 km from Galle Harbor. Streamlined rooms with colorful accents feature balconies with ocean views. Facilities include: a wine cellar and event space, plus 2 outdoor pools, an Ayurvedic spa, a fitness centre and a tennis court. The hotel has beach access.

Negombo- Jetwing Blue Hotel, 5* deluxe rooms <http://www.jetwinghotels.com/jetwingblue/>

Jet wing Blue is a stylish beach hotel with modern elegance and simplicity. Two swimming pools, gymnasium, a spa and laundry service are a few of the amenities. There are three dining options plus a bar.