

Your travel guide to  
**Sri Lanka**

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Tropical Sky 

WELCOME TO YOUR GUIDE TO

# Sri Lanka

Ready to book the trip of a lifetime to Sri Lanka?

With so much to see and do, it's natural to feel overwhelmed. But don't worry – we're here to help you every step of the way, making the process simple, stress-free, and tailored to your dream holiday.





## What you'll find in this guide:

- **Expert guidance**

We have travelled through Sri Lanka extensively to find the best experiences and recommendations.

- **Different ways to travel**

From private guided tours to rail journeys, we'll talk you through all the options to find your travel style.

- **Advice on when and where to go**

We'll recommend the best regions and best times to visit based on your interests.

- **Tips for your journey**

We'll guide you through Sri Lanka's cultural etiquette and health and safety, so you can travel with confidence.

## Why book your holiday with us?

- **We have 20 years of experience**

Our award-winning team has been dedicated to creating bespoke experiences for over two decades.

- **Every trip is customised**

Tailored to your preferences for the best experience in Sri Lanka.

- **We work with trusted local partners**

They will be there for you around the clock, allowing peace of mind.

- **You can fly from regional airports**

We offer flights across the UK and Ireland for added convenience.

- **Your money is safe with us.**

We're fully licensed with ATOL in the UK and IAA in Ireland, ensuring top service and financial security.

## THE BEST TIMES TO SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's climate is tropical and warm year-round. With different parts of the island being affected by weather at different times, there's always a region with beautiful weather and excellent experiences.

Sri Lanka has two monsoon seasons: Yala in the south and west (May–August) and Maha in the north and east (October–January).

### West & South Coasts

- Best visited from December to March while the weather is warm and dry.
- Perfect for relaxing on the golden beaches.
- Enjoy whale watching off the coast of Mirissa from December to April.
- Ideal weather for safaris in the nearby national parks.

### East Coast

- Best visited from April to September when the weather is sunny and the sea is calm.
- Ideal for beach days, snorkelling and diving around the Trincomalee and Passekudah.
- Enjoy local celebrations such as Poson Poya in June and spot wildlife in lesser-known parks like Gal Oya.
- Experience whale and dolphin spotting from March to October at Trincomalee, or from April to June for blue whales.

### Central Highlands

- Pleasant year-round, although January to April offers the most comfortable temperatures and clearest skies.
- A great time for hiking, experiencing tea plantation tours and taking a train journey through lush landscapes.
- A great time to spot wildlife in National parks and explore the natural surroundings.

Simply choose the region enjoying its dry season for the best beach days and outdoor exploring year-round.

We recommend two weeks for a well-rounded trip that includes a beach stay. We also advise booking your trip at least 6 months in advance to get the best availability.



Kandy



Nuwara Eliya



Bentota



Sigiriya

Kaudulla National Park

Passikudah

Yala National Park

Udawalawa National Park

Trincomalee

Dambulla

Negombo

Colombo

Kalutara

Galle

Weligama

Horton Plains

Tangalle

Hambantota

Mirissa

Minneriya

Polonnaruwa

## OUR TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Sri Lanka is a land of wild beauty, from lush national parks to golden beaches. Whether you're seeking thrilling safaris, serene shores, jungle adventures, or a mix of all three, Sri Lanka delivers extraordinary experiences.

# A land of contrast

## Wildlife and Safaris

If your focus is wildlife, Sri Lanka has you covered. From ancient temples framed by forests to thrilling safaris across vast plains, the island promises unforgettable encounters with nature.

Famed for its herds of wild Asian elephants, **Kaudulla National Park's** mix of grassland, forest and reservoirs also attracts colourful birdlife. It's a fantastic alternative to busier parks, offering a more peaceful and personal safari experience.

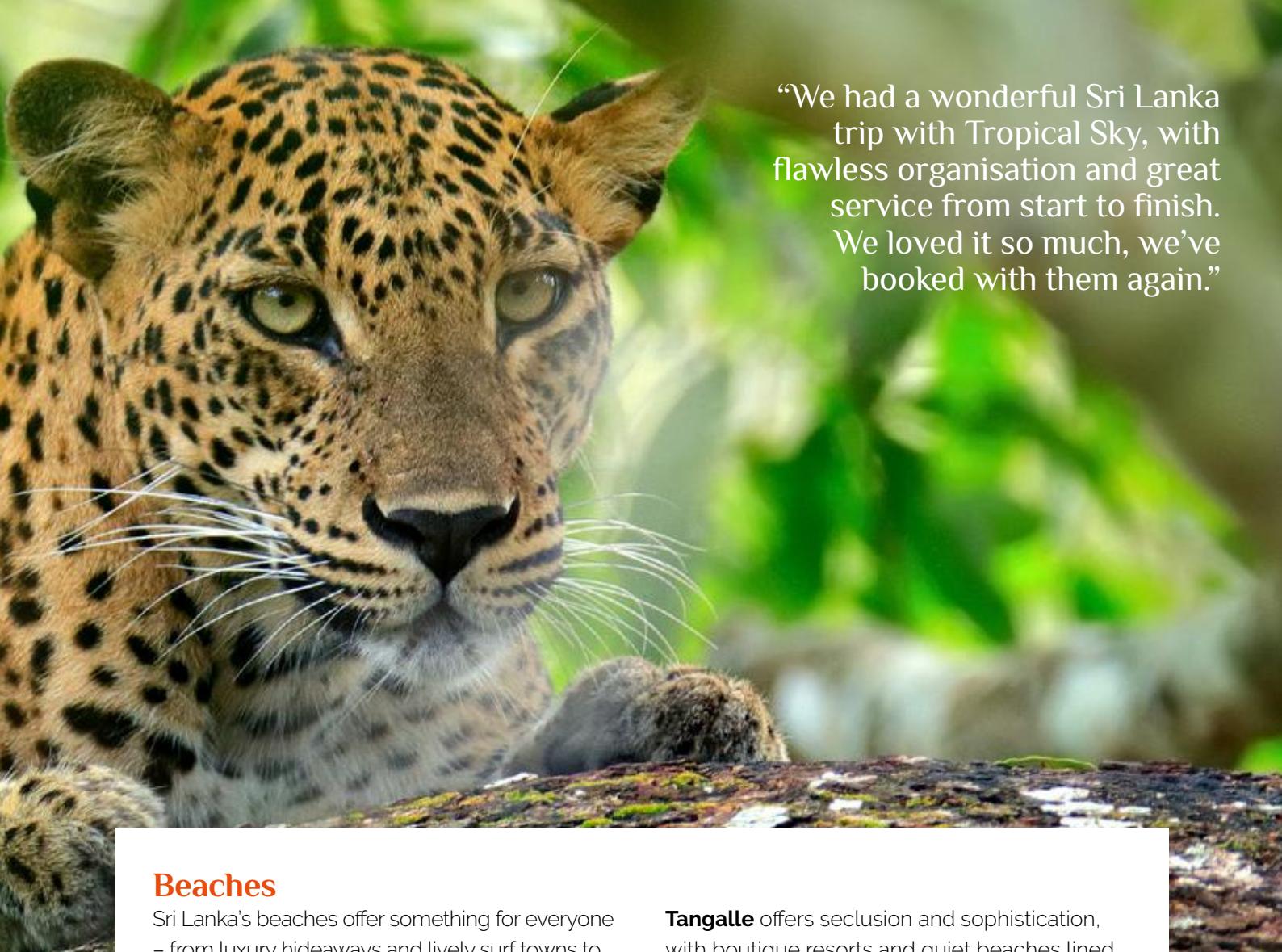


**Minneriya National Park** is one of Asia's best places to see wild elephants and is home to herds of up to 150. Its wetlands and forests also shelter deer, monkeys and diverse birdlife – ideal for families and first-time visitors.

In the central highlands, **Horton Plains Nature Reserve High** is a misty plateau of grasslands and cloud forest, offering scenic trails and cool mountain air. Spot elk, deer and giant squirrels, and keep watch for one of Horton Plains' elusive leopards.

**Udawalawe National Park**, with its open plains and vast reservoir, is known for close-up elephant encounters – especially playful calves by the water. You may also see crocodiles, buffalo and rare birds on relaxed jeep safaris.

**Yala National Park's** dramatic mix of forest, rock and lagoon is home to elephants, sloth bears and the island's best chance to spot leopards. Family-friendly lodges even offer a mini ranger program for kids.



“We had a wonderful Sri Lanka trip with Tropical Sky, with flawless organisation and great service from start to finish. We loved it so much, we've booked with them again.”

## Beaches

Sri Lanka's beaches offer something for everyone – from luxury hideaways and lively surf towns to tranquil bays and wildlife-rich shores. With golden sands on every side of the island, each coastline reveals a different rhythm and charm.

On the south coast, **Mirissa** is Sri Lanka's whale-watching capital between November and April. Its golden crescent beach blends relaxed days with chic cafés and sunset cocktail spots, making it ideal for both leisure and a little nightlife.

Just north of Colombo, the coastal town of **Negombo** is the perfect first or final stop. Known for its wide beach, Dutch-era canals and lively markets, Negombo captures authentic Sri Lankan charm close to the airport.

Famous for its long, palm-fringed beach and calm lagoons, **Bentota** is a hub for watersports from jet skiing to windsurfing, with luxury resorts and lush scenery completing the experience.

A wide bay with gentle surf, **Weligama** is perfect for beginners learning to ride the waves. The town's fishing heritage and relaxed beach cafés create a laid-back, local feel.

**Tangalle** offers seclusion and sophistication, with boutique resorts and quiet beaches lined by swaying palms – ideal for travellers seeking peace and privacy.

Less visited and surrounded by natural beauty, **Hambantota** is perfect for combining beach time with safaris in nearby Yala and Bundala National Parks.

On the east coast, **Passikudah's** crystal-clear shallows are perfect for snorkelling and diving, while **Trincomalee's** wilder coastline offers kitesurfing, coral reefs and a peaceful, eco-friendly vibe.



# Temples & Tea

Sri Lanka's rich heritage unfolds through sacred temples, ancient cities, and fragrant tea hills – where culture, cuisine, and spirituality blend into an unforgettable journey through time and tradition.



In the heart of Kandy stands the **Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic**, Sri Lanka's most revered Buddhist shrine. Housing a relic of the Buddha's tooth since the 4th century, the temple offers an unforgettable experience, with rhythmic drumming, colourful offerings and ornate architecture reflecting centuries of devotion.

The majestic **Sigiriya Rock Fortress**, rising 600 feet above the surrounding jungle, is one of Sri Lanka's most striking landmarks. Known as Lion Rock, it was once a royal citadel. Climb to the top to explore palace ruins and admire sweeping views of the forest below, pausing to see the famed frescoes and the intricate symmetry of the ancient Water and Boulder Gardens.

**Galle Fort** blends coastal beauty with colonial history; its cobbled streets, boutique shops, and sunset ramparts creating an atmospheric gateway to Sri Lanka's past.

**Colombo**, combines cultural landmarks, vibrant markets, and modern dining, balancing tradition with contemporary city energy.

**Dambulla**, famed for its Royal Cave Temple, showcases extraordinary Buddhist art, intricate statues, and sacred artifacts set within dramatic rock overhangs, offering a profound window into the island's spiritual heritage for visitors seeking insight into Sri Lanka's cultural story.

Finally, **Nuwara Eliya** enchants with rolling tea plantations, misty gardens, and colonial heritage. Known as "Little England," it invites visitors to tour tea estates, sample freshly brewed Ceylon tea, and enjoy its cool mountain serenity.



Sri Lanka's culinary traditions are as vibrant as its landscapes, blending spice, culture, and warm hospitality. From bustling city food walks to tranquil tea country tastings, every experience is a delicious journey through the island's heart and heritage.

In **Colombo**, join a guided food walk through the city's lively streets, where aromas of sizzling spices fill the air. Sample local favourites such as kottu roti, egg hoppers and Isso vadei, discovering how centuries of influences have shaped Sri Lanka's cuisine into something truly unique.



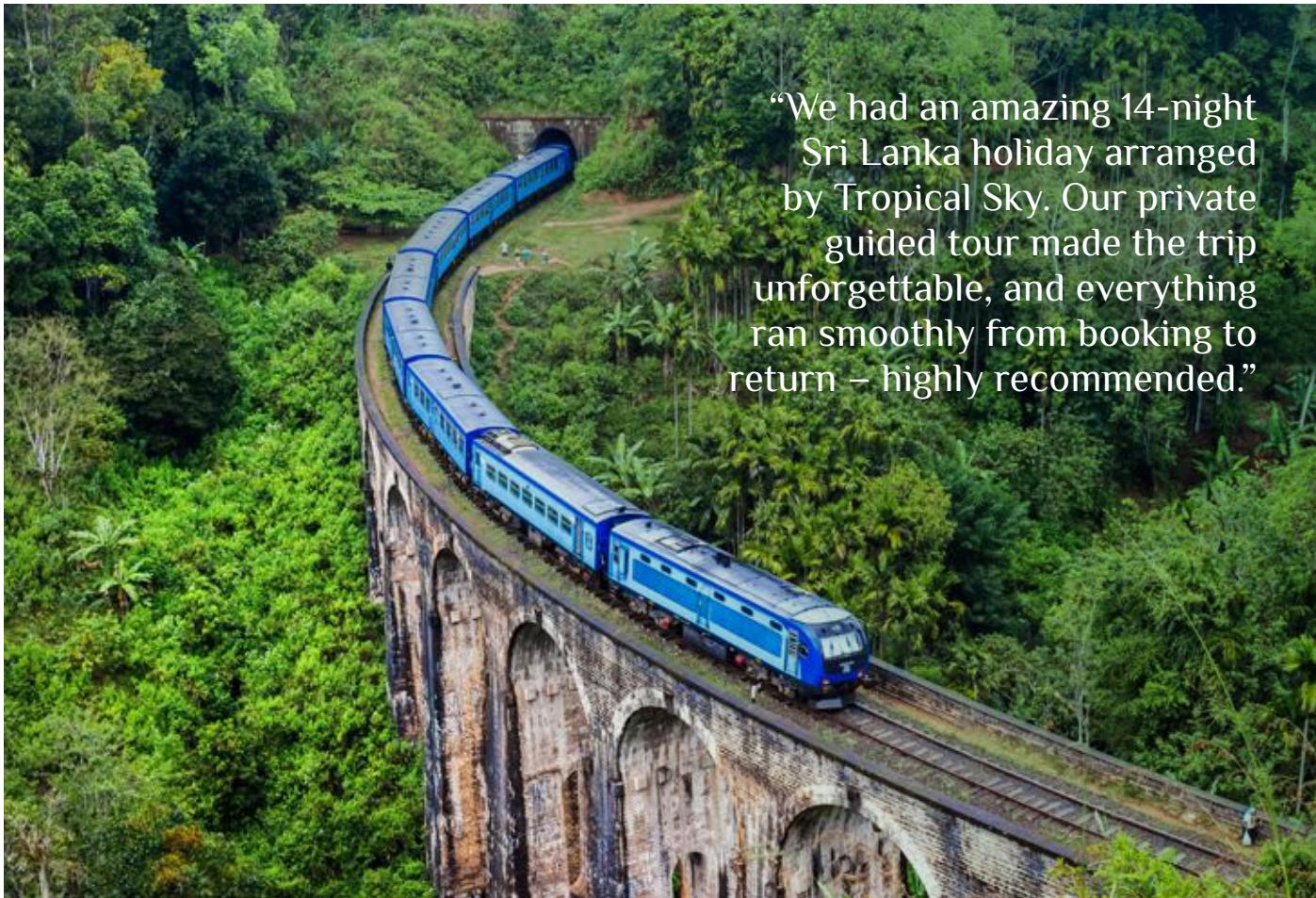
In **Dambulla**, visit a traditional mud house for an immersive cooking experience with a local family. Help prepare a home-cooked meal of rice and aromatic curries before sharing it together – a genuine glimpse into Sri Lankan daily life. In **Kandy**, join a local cooking expert for a hands-on class, learning to master classic dishes such as aubergine curry, dhal and spiced fish, before enjoying your creations.

Continue your journey through the **Spice Gardens of Matale**, where nutmeg, cinnamon and cardamom perfume the air. Learn about their cultivation, traditional uses and Ayurvedic remedies as you stroll among the greenery.

Finally, head into the misty highlands of **Nuwara Eliya** and visit a tea plantation in **Nanu Oya**. See the intricate process that transforms tender leaves into world-famous Ceylon tea – from withering and rolling to fermenting – before tasting a perfectly brewed cup in the heart of tea country.

# Getting around





“We had an amazing 14-night Sri Lanka holiday arranged by Tropical Sky. Our private guided tour made the trip unforgettable, and everything ran smoothly from booking to return – highly recommended.”

## From scenic trains and private guides to twin-centre escapes, here's how to make the most of your journey.

Getting around Sri Lanka is easy and stress-free, with transfer times between destinations often under three hours. Whether you're travelling between misty highlands, lush tea country or sun-soaked coasts, the journey is all part of the adventure.

### Private Guided Tours

Ideal for both full itineraries and day trips, private guided tours are the most flexible and rewarding way to explore Sri Lanka. Every itinerary can be tailor-made to suit your interests, giving you the freedom to stop off, explore at your own pace, and adjust plans as you go. With your driver-guide's expert insight, you'll uncover hidden gems, local traditions and authentic experiences that go far beyond the guidebooks.

### Rail Journeys

For a slower, scenic route, Sri Lanka's train network offers one of the most beautiful rail journeys in the world. The journey from Kandy to Nuwara Eliya passes rolling tea plantations, misty hills and waterfalls – a must for photographers and romantics alike.

### Escorted tours

Enjoy thoughtfully paced escorted tours with easy travel arrangements and a sociable group setting. Many people love the chance to meet new faces, swap stories and enjoy the journey together throughout.

### Tuk-Tuks and Bicycles

For shorter distances, tuk-tuks and bicycles are a fun, authentic way to see the island. Tuk-tuks let you zip through local towns and beaches, while cycling offers a peaceful way to explore rural paths, villages and quiet backroads.

### Combine with another country

Why not add the following countries to your trip, either as a stop-over on the way or for relaxation after your Sri Lankan adventure.

### Maldives

Experience staying in an over-water villa surrounded by vibrant lagoons.

### United Arab Emirates

Stay in Dubai or Abu Dhabi, boasting desert dunes and fabulous dining.

### Qatar

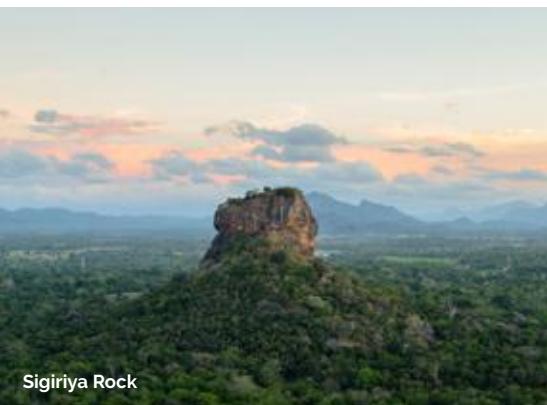
Enjoy world-class museums, traditional souqs, and striking modern architecture.

### Singapore

Discover Gardens by the Bay, vibrant heritage quarters and sizzling hawker markets.



# Private guided tour inspiration



Sigiriya Rock



Dambulla Cave Temple



Kandy

Discover Sri Lanka's culture, wildlife and coast on this suggested two-week private tour, featuring a scenic highland rail journey, elephant encounters in Udawalawe and time to relax by the ocean in Mirissa. Every itinerary is tailored to your pace and interests.

## DAY 1: Colombo

Arrive in Sri Lanka and transfer to your hotel in Colombo, a lively coastal city where colonial influences, markets and seaside promenades create a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Depending on your arrival time, relax at your hotel or enjoy a gentle stroll along Galle Face Green as the sun sets over the Indian Ocean.

## DAY 2: Dambulla

Travel north into Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle, where forests, lakes and ancient sites shape the landscape. Begin with the Dambulla Cave Temples, a UNESCO World Heritage Site filled with centuries-old murals, carved Buddha statues and atmospheric rock chambers.

## DAY 3: Sigiriya

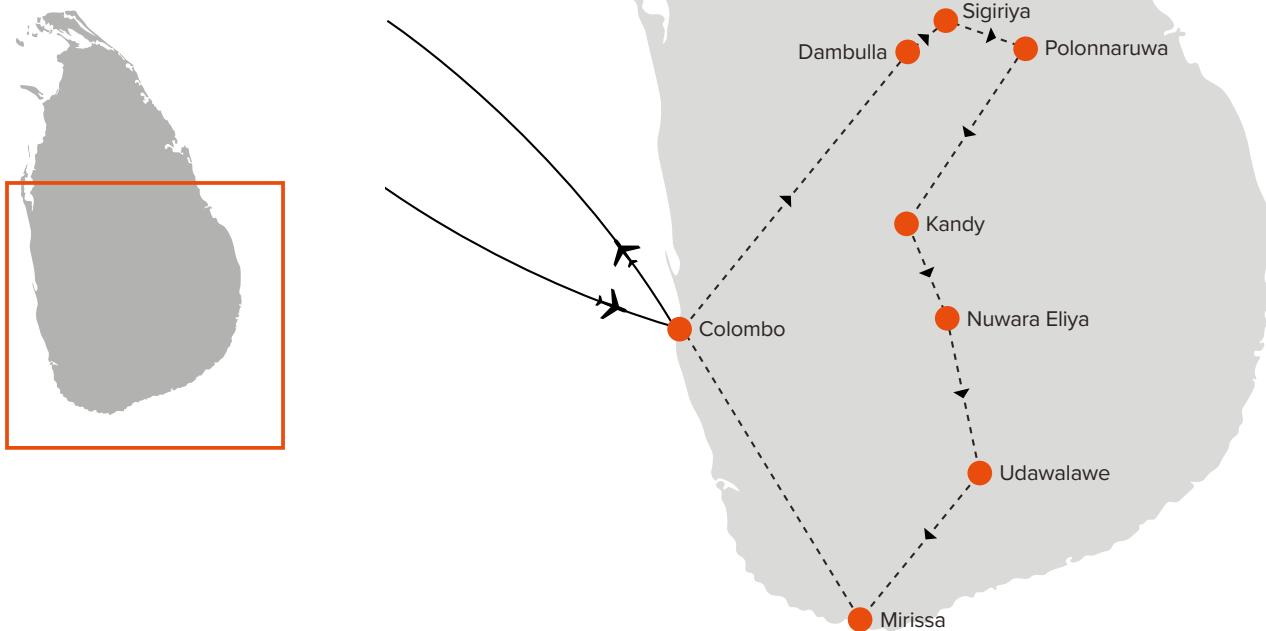
This morning, climb the iconic Sigiriya Rock Fortress. Once a royal citadel rising above the plains, it rewards you with sweeping views, ancient frescoes and a remarkable insight into early engineering and artistry.

## DAY 4: Polonnaruwa

Choose to explore Polonnaruwa, the medieval capital, where serene stone Buddhas, palace ruins and lakeside temples tell stories of a flourishing ancient kingdom.

## DAY 5: Kandy

Continue to Kandy, a cool highland city encircled by jungle-clad hills. Visit the revered Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, an important Buddhist pilgrimage site, and stroll around the lake at the heart of town. Kandy's lively markets and artisan shops offer colourful spices and handcrafted souvenirs. In the evening, enjoy a cultural performance bringing traditional dance and drumming to life.



#### DAY 6-7: Nuwara Eliya

Board the scenic highland train, a slow and beautiful journey through rolling tea gardens, misty valleys and mountain villages. Arrive in Nuwara Eliya, where cool air and Tudor-style buildings reflect the area's colonial heritage. Visit a working tea estate to learn how world-famous Ceylon tea is grown and processed, followed by a tasting. Across these two days, enjoy leisurely walks, lakeside views and the calm atmosphere of Sri Lanka's hill country.

#### DAY 8-9: Udawalawe

Travel south toward Udawalawe, where open plains and reservoirs create a landscape rich in wildlife. On arrival, settle into your lodge before an afternoon village cycle tour and a guided bird-watching experience, offering a gentle introduction to the region's natural beauty.

The following morning begins with a 4x4 safari in Udawalawe National Park, home to thriving herds of elephants, deer, monkeys and vibrant birdlife. Afterwards, visit the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home to witness the moving daily feeding sessions for orphaned young elephants being prepared for release back into the wild.



Nuwara Eliya

#### DAY 10-14: Mirissa

Continue to the southern coast and settle into your beach stay. With warm waters, golden sands and relaxed seaside cafés, Mirissa offers the perfect place to unwind. Enjoy days spent swimming, reading under palm trees, dining on fresh seafood or joining an optional whale-watching excursion or sunset cruise.



Udawalawe National Park

#### DAY 15: Departure

Transfer to Colombo for your onward flight, carrying home lasting memories of culture, landscapes and wildlife.



Mirissa



# Heritage, wildlife and beach inspiration



Colombo

Discover Sri Lanka's remarkable contrasts on this suggested 17-night itinerary, combining wildlife, rainforest, coastline and island luxury. From thrilling safaris and ancient forests to palm-lined beaches and the Maldives' turquoise lagoons, every detail can be tailored to your pace and interests.

## DAY 1: Colombo

Arrive in Sri Lanka and transfer to your hotel in Colombo, the island's lively seaside capital. Spend time exploring historic neighbourhoods where colonial architecture meets bustling markets or stroll along Galle Face Green as the sun sets over the Indian Ocean. In the evening, enjoy a guided Colombo food tour, sampling local favourites such as hoppers, kottu roti and fragrant seafood curries.

## DAY 2–3: Galle

Travel south along the coastline to Galle, arriving in around 2.5 hours. Settle into your hotel and explore the UNESCO-listed Galle Fort, where 17th-century ramparts surround cobbled streets lined with boutiques, cafés and galleries. One day, discover the region on a guided cycling tour through coastal lanes, fishing villages and coconut groves, stopping for lagoon views and fresh king coconut. Evenings are ideal for relaxed dining within the fort's lantern-lit courtyards.

## DAY 4–7: Yala National Park

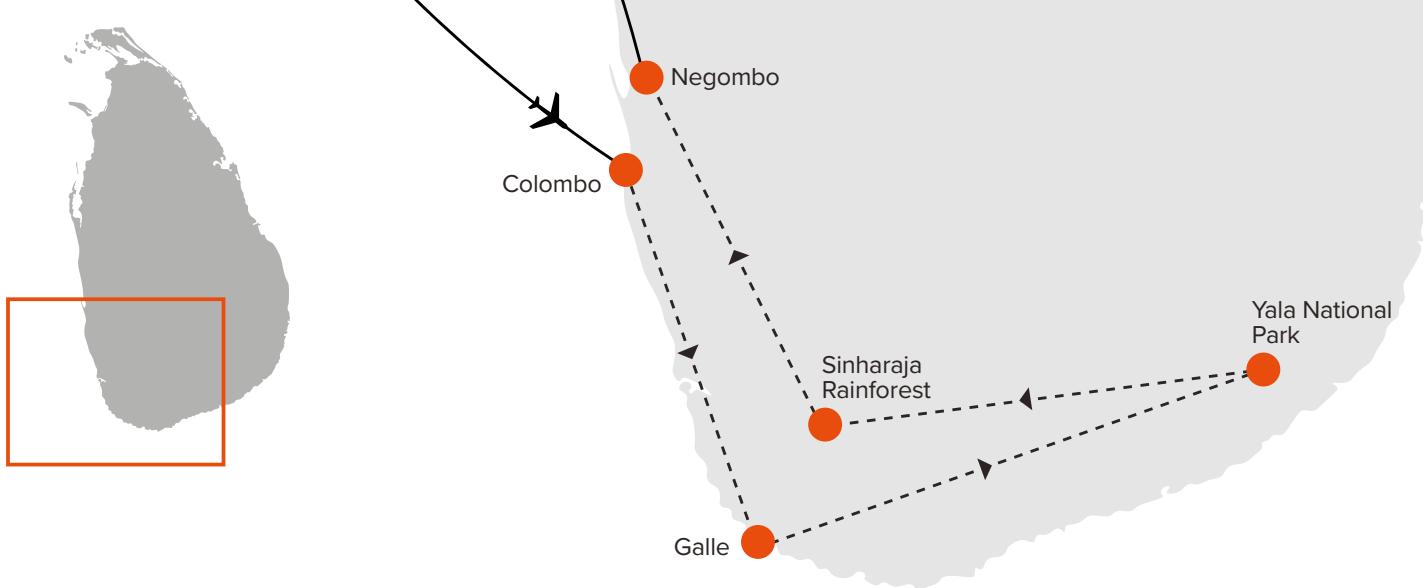
Journey east to Yala National Park. After settling in, enjoy a late-afternoon safari when wildlife is most active. Over the following days, early-morning and afternoon game drives offer excellent opportunities to spot elephants, deer, crocodiles and the elusive Sri Lankan leopard. Midday hours are free to relax at your lodge, enjoy the pool or join optional nature walks, with meals often enjoyed outdoors amid birdsong.



Galle



Yala National Park



#### DAY 8-10: Sinharaja Forest Reserve

Leave the dry plains behind and travel to Sri Lanka's southern rainforests, reaching the Deniyaya side of Sinharaja in around 3.5-4.5 hours. This UNESCO World Heritage rainforest is famed for its extraordinary biodiversity and high level of endemism. Guided walks take you beneath towering canopies alive with mixed-species bird flocks found nowhere else on Earth. Keep watch for purple-faced langurs, giant squirrels, colourful lizards and clouds of butterflies. The atmosphere here is cool, misty and peaceful, with multiple trail options ensuring no two walks feel the same.



#### DAY 11: Negombo

Travel north to Negombo (5.5-6.5 hours), arriving at this relaxed coastal town close to the airport. Enjoy a gentle final evening in Sri Lanka, perhaps dining by the lagoon or taking a sunset beach walk.

#### DAY 12-18: Maldives

Transfer to the airport and fly to the Maldives for seven nights of pure relaxation. Unwind on powder-soft sands, swim in crystal-clear lagoons, snorkel vibrant reefs or indulge in spa treatments and over-water dining – the perfect finale to an unforgettable journey.



#### Your dream Sri Lankan adventure awaits...

We tailor every itinerary around you. Whether it's scenic road trips, flights and trains between cities, or adjusting durations and destinations, it's all possible. Speak with our travel experts today and let us create a holiday that's uniquely yours.



# Contact Us

For more information and help with tailor making your holiday, talk to one of our friendly team

9am-7pm Mon-Fri

9am-5pm Sat-Sun

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Or visit:

[tropicalsky.co.uk](http://tropicalsky.co.uk)

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