

The Very Best of Sri Lanka

15-DAY ENLIGHTENED TOUR

From £3,075 per person

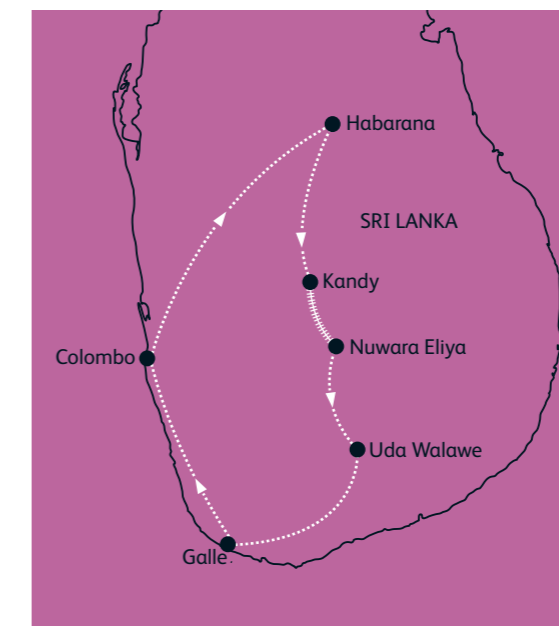


Monks with lotus flowers

From raw, untamed nature in the heartlands, to rich cultural experiences in the mountains, to spiritualistic encounters in serene temples; every day in Sri Lanka is different from the last.

Tour highlights

- Getting acquainted with the sights of Colombo, including the Fort district, The Queen's House and bustling markets of the Goldsmith Quarters
- Discovering fascinating caves, water gardens and the ruins of an impressive stone lion at the Palace and Fortress in the Sky at Sigiriya
- Venturing by jeep into Minneriya National Park on the lookout for elephants, wild buffalo, leopards and deer
- Visiting the well-preserved Dambulla Cave Temples
- Learning to cook an authentic Sri Lankan curry
- Taking conservation to your heart at the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage
- Watching a cultural dance show in Kandy
- Feeling the serenity at Sri Lanka's Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens
- Travelling by rail in the First Class Observation carriage from Kandy through lush verdant scenery
- Learning about the tea blending process at a tea plantation
- Sipping champagne at the spectacular Hakgala Botanical Gardens
- Camping and dining under the stars at Mahoora Luxury Tented Safari Camp, Udawalawe National Park complete with two game drives



Tour itinerary

Day 1 Depart Heathrow
Join your Tour Manager and travel companions in the executive lounge before boarding your overnight flight to Colombo.
Meals: In-flight.

Day 2 Arrive Colombo
Your Local Guide will meet you at the airport and accompany you to the Cinnamon Grand Hotel, where you can settle in, relax and get your bearings. This evening, you're invited to join your Tour Manager and fellow travellers for welcome drinks and dinner.
Meals: In-flight, Dinner. Hotel: Cinnamon Grand.

Day 3 Colombo
This morning, we'll release your inner adventurer, as your journey of discovery begins in earnest. On a morning tour, Colombo will reveal all her secrets as you visit the Fort district, the former British administrative centre and military garrison. You'll see the colonial buildings and sprawling gardens of the President's House, which was known as The Queen's House until Sri Lanka became a republic in 1972. You'll then continue on to the Goldsmith's Quarters in the heart of Pettah, to experience the atmosphere of its open-air bazaars and bustling markets. To round off the morning, you'll see the fascinating Hindu Temple, which is engraved with elaborate stone carvings, and the 16th century bell found in historic belfry at Kayman's Gate. You're free for the rest of the day to relax or explore further. A trip to the Colombo National Museum to view its vast array of artefacts and exhibits will give you even more of an insight into the country's history and culture.
Meals: Breakfast. Hotel: Cinnamon Grand.

Day 4 Colombo to Habarana
After breakfast, you'll travel to Habarana for a 3-night stay at the delightful Cinnamon Lodge. Set in beautiful scenery with abundant bird life and gentle walking trails, this is an idyllic location. There's also a fantastic spa, if you'd like to indulge yourself, as well as an inviting swimming pool.
Meals: Breakfast. Hotel: Cinnamon Lodge.

Day 5 Habarana

There's a wonderful day in store for you today, as you travel to Sigiriya, known as The Fortress in The Sky. A UNESCO World Heritage Site built on a massive rock that towers over lush jungle surroundings, the stunning Lion Rock Palace was a wonder of ancient engineering holding many intriguing tales and legends. Today, only ruins remain, but they are impressive nevertheless. The huge lion's paws and life-sized paintings of the king's concubines, still shining in their original colours, give a glimpse of former splendour. You'll explore the beautiful water gardens with their pavilions, pools, fountains and water courses, and see the fascinating caves where monks used to meditate.

Meals: Breakfast. Hotel: Cinnamon Lodge.

Day 6 Habarana

You have a free morning to enjoy a leisurely breakfast and relax in this tranquil setting. In the afternoon, you'll journey deep into the wilderness on a jeep safari in Minneriya National Park. The park covers an area of 8,890 hectares of roaming landscape, evergreen forest and scrub areas, which is home to a vast array of wildlife including sambhur deer, leopards, buffaloes, birds and elephants. You'll stop at the ancient Minneriya Tank, which is a wonderful place to observe the elephants up close as they come to bathe; sometimes congregating in large herds of 100 to 150. The perfect end to this thrilling day is a group dinner, where you can share your highlights of the tour so far.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner. Hotel: Cinnamon Lodge.



Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage, Kandy

Day 7 Habarana to Kandy

Today you'll continue on to the scenic city of Kandy; but the journey is an adventure in itself. En route, you'll visit the Dambulla Rock Cave Temples; the largest cave temple complex in Sri Lanka. You'll be able to explore five well preserved caves, each containing ancient statues of Buddha, gods and kings, see intriguing artwork depicting great events and historic landmarks and uncover some of the Dambulla Caves' mysteries. Your journey then continues to the Batik Factory and Tropical Spice Garden, where you'll find out how to make a Sri Lankan curry the traditional way. Once you arrive in Kandy, the last stronghold of the Sinhalese kings, you'll check in before enjoying a visit to Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens. Started as a pleasure garden for the Kings of Gampola, these 150 acres are home to 5,000 species of trees, plants and creepers and incorporate a Spice Garden and Orchid House.

Meals: Breakfast. Hotel: Earl's Regency.

Day 8 Kandy

Your tour of Sri Lanka would not be complete without a visit to the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage, which was set up in 1975 to care for abandoned and wounded elephants. It has accomplished great things over the years, and the captive breeding programme has been a particular success, with more than 25 baby elephants born. This evening, you'll visit the premier Buddhist institution of Sri Lanka; the Temple of the Tooth, which is home to the tooth of Buddha; a sacred relic. You'll then attend a dance and music show to see more of the local culture and traditions brought vividly to life.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner. Hotel: Earl's Regency.

“We watched as the mahouts walked the baby elephants down to the river, leading them into the waters, bathing them and playing with them. We were transfixed. What a memory of an incredible country!”

Day 9 Kandy to Nuwara Eliya

A thrilling journey awaits today, as you travel by train from Kandy to the celebrated hill station at Nanu Oya, in a stunning mountain valley. En route, the views of beautiful green hillsides, rushing waterfalls and tea plantations are simply spectacular. You'll be collected from Nanu Oya station and driven up to Nuwara Eliya, 2,000 metres above sea level, where you'll stay in a glorious converted factory, perched on a hillside with views across lush tea plantations.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner. Hotel: Tea Factory Hotel.

Day 10 Nuwara Eliya

Today, you'll visit the Bluefield Tea Plantation and learn about the blending process. In the evening, you're invited to a special champagne reception at the wonderful Hakgala Botanical Gardens. Originally opened as an experimental plantation for the production of the malaria antidote quinine, the Botanical Gardens lie at the foot of Hakgala Rock's prominent peak, which towers dramatically overhead. Sipping champagne in such splendid surroundings and touring exquisite gardens abundant with roses and tree ferns, is a memorable way to spend the evening.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner. Hotel: Tea Factory Hotel.



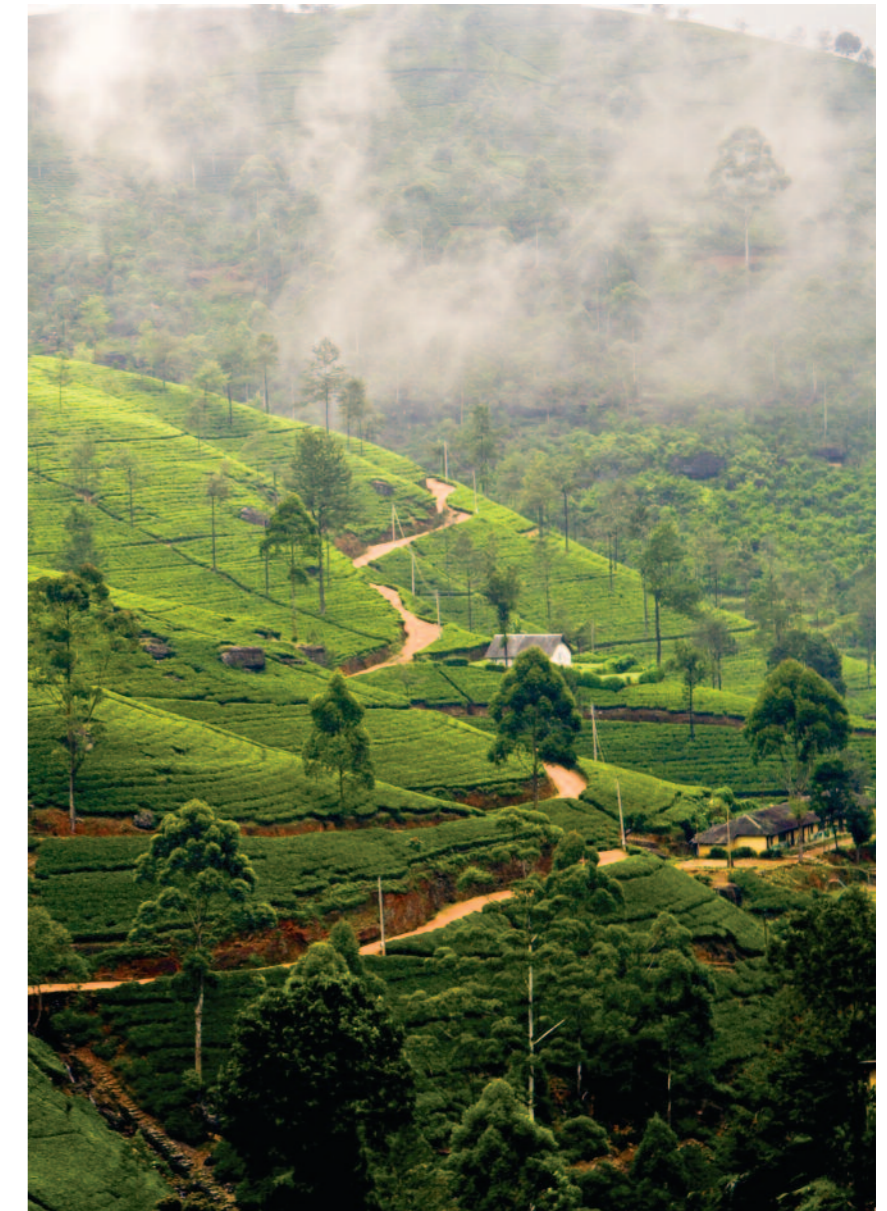
Day 11 Nuwara Eliya to Udawalawe

You'll get a taste of native Sri Lankan life today, as you head for Udawalawe, Sri Lanka's largest National Park, to stay at the luxurious Mahoora Tented Safari Camp. In the afternoon you'll take a game drive through the park to spot large herds of elephants as well as sambhur spotted deer, wild boar and buffalo. You'll be accompanied by a qualified naturalist guide who can tell you all about this stunning environment. Spending the night in the heart of the park makes you feel so much closer to nature. Listen out for elephants taking to the water and the nocturnal activity surrounding the camp. Your luxury tent is equipped with modern comforts and, tonight, you'll dine under the stars on fine cuisine prepared on-site by a senior chef.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner. Hotel: Mahoora Luxury Tented Safari Camp.



*Far left: Buddha, Dambulla Rock Cave Temples
Left: Sambhur spotted deer
Below: Nuwara tea plantations*





Day 12 Udawalawe to Galle

A second jeep safari awaits you early this morning before leaving the Park. Your journey continues to the turtle hatchery at Habaraduwa, en route to the charming town of Galle on the south-western tip of Sri Lanka. This walled city dates to the early 16th century and has a colourful history, having been inhabited by a succession of Europeans, from the Portuguese to the Dutch to the British.

Meals: Breakfast. Hotel: Lighthouse Hotel.

Day 13 Galle

You have a free morning to relax, discover Galle for yourself, or go on an optional whale watching excursion to Mirissa, which your Tour Manager will happily organise for you. The south coast of Sri Lanka is one of the very best places to spot blue whales, along with other cetacean species. This afternoon, we've organised a city tour, where you'll see the splendid fort, and discover the Dutch heritage reflected in many historical buildings. In the evening, we recommend you watch the sun set from the hotel's Cinnamon Room Restaurant over dinner. The views of the surf and the glorious sunsets are to be savoured.

Meals: Breakfast. Hotel: Lighthouse Hotel.

Day 14 Galle to Colombo

Make the most of a leisurely morning before a boat safari through the mangroves on the Madu River. You'll then travel to the beach south of Colombo for a special farewell dinner at the classical Mount Lavinia Hotel.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner. Hotel: Mount Lavinia.

Day 15 Arrive Heathrow

You'll transfer to the airport this morning and you'll land back at Heathrow later the same day, hopefully with a sense that you now know, understand and appreciate Sri Lankan life.

Meals: In-flight.

*Above: Fishing boats, Galle
Right: Turtle Hatchery, Habaraduwa*

Your tour hotels

For full details of all the hotels featured on this tour please see pages 52-57.

Any questions? Chat to your Personal Travel Advisor on **0161 491 7616** or visit www.jod.uk.com

Extend your holiday

After two weeks exploring Sri Lanka, we think you deserve a little time to relax and reflect on what can be a life-changing journey. So, we've arranged two tour extension options to the Maldives. You can either choose the island of Kurumba, or the island of Velassaru, which is one of the 'Small Luxury Hotels of the World'. Both are five star resorts, set on idyllic atolls, surrounded by lagoons and coral reefs with exceptional facilities, so you're spoilt for choice.

To find out more, turn to pages 48-51.

Departure dates & prices

The Very Best of Sri Lanka

2012	14 November	£3,075
2013	23 January	£3,425
2013	06 March	£3,425

Prices per person, based on double/twin share. Single supplement from £995.

Flight upgrades

For the ultimate experience, upgrade your flights. Simply ask your Personal Travel Advisor for prices when you call.

Your 15-day tour includes:

- A Journeys of Distinction Tour Manager on hand at all times
- Local guides, with an insider's knowledge, who give a true insight into the culture, history and lifestyle
- Return scheduled flights on Sri Lankan Airlines
- Invitation to the executive lounge at Heathrow
- Exceptional, hand-picked hotels
- 12 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 7 dinners
- City tours of Colombo and Kandy
- Excursions to Sigiriya Rock Fortress, Dambulla Cave Temples, Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage, Botanical Gardens, Temple of the Tooth, Bluefield Tea Factory
- Jeep Safari at Minneriya and Udawalawe National Parks
- Travel by luxury air-conditioned vehicle
- Luggage service throughout
- All local and state taxes
- Airport taxes including air passenger duty

Flying time

London to Colombo 10 hours 30 mins

Time difference

GMT +6 hours

Average monthly temperatures – Colombo

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
31°	31°	32°	32°	31°	30°	30°	30°	30°	30°	30°	30°

