

JEWELS OF SRI LANKA

A luxury escorted tour discovering the wildlife
& wonders of Sri Lanka
15th to 30th January 2020



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Buddha statue at Polonnaruwa

Marco Polo described Sri Lanka as the finest island of its size in the world when he arrived there in 1265, while successive waves of Indian, Arab and European traders were seduced by reports of rare spices, precious stones and magnificent elephants. Although tiny in size compared to its neighbour India, Sri Lanka has a wealth of both ancient and natural sites which we will explore during this escorted tour including no less than five UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Galle, Kandy, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, and Dambulla. Over the course of two weeks we will take an in-depth look at this remarkable country with its diverse landscape of beautiful beaches, lush tea plantations, rolling hills and forests which are scattered with intricately carved stone monuments.



During our exploration we will learn about the country's cultural, colonial and religious history and visit some of its holiest temples and most scenic regions, most notably the verdant rolling hills of Ella. Sri Lanka is also a paradise for wildlife lovers and we have included three full days game viewing including both Yala National Park, which offers the greatest diversity of animal and birdlife in the country and, further south, the lesser-visited coastal wetland area of Bundala National Park with its flocks of flamingos and rich birdlife. In addition to the guided tours there will be some time at leisure to explore independently and our final days will be spent in the small coastal town of Koggala from where we will visit Galle, a wonderfully atmospheric city.

For our tour we have selected six very special hotels in some beautiful locations including the iconic Galle Face Hotel in the heart of Colombo, the charming Water Garden Hotel with the Sigiriya Rock as a backdrop, the eco-friendly 98 Acres Resort & Spa nestled within a tea estate and the luxurious Chena Huts close to the Yala National Park, ending with two nights at a luxury boutique beach resort on Sri Lanka's serene south coast, The Fortress Resort & Spa.

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Colombo, Sri Lanka. Fly by scheduled flight.

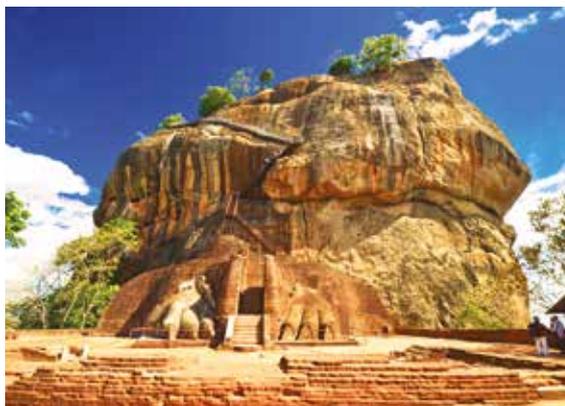
Day 2 Colombo. Arrive this morning and transfer to the Galle Face Hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is at leisure. (D)

Day 3 Colombo to Sigiriya. Following a leisurely breakfast enjoy a panoramic tour of Colombo, the largest city in Sri Lanka and known in the past as the gateway to the Orient. The tour will showcase some of Colombo's most famous landmarks and buildings. Afterwards we make our way towards Sigiriya arriving in the late afternoon. Check in to our hotel, the tranquil Water Garden Sigiriya for a four night stay. Settle in this evening and enjoy dinner at the hotel. (B, D)

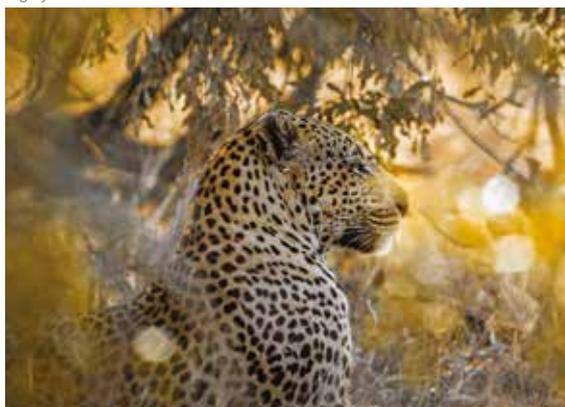
Day 4 Polonnaruwa. After breakfast we visit the ancient city of Polonnaruwa. This 5th century ancient city was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and is considered to be one of the best planned archaeological sites in the country. The entire landscape of the region is punctuated by high man-made reservoirs, the most famous of which is Parakrama Samudra or the Sea of Parakrama, built during King Parakramabahu's reign in 1164-1196 AD. The monuments in the ancient city are relatively well preserved and highlights are the Royal Palace complex, including the King's Palace and Audience Hall and the spectacular Gal Vihare complex of four massive images of the Buddha cut from a single slab of granite, a highlight of ancient Sri Lankan rock carving. Return to Sigiriya and enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening. (B, D)



Temple of the Tooth at Kandy



Sigiriya Lion Rock Fortress



Leopard, Yala National Park



Elephant and Water Buffalo, Yala National Park

Day 5 Dambulla & Habarana. This morning we visit the Dambulla Cave Temples. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is a vast cave complex that dates back to the 1st century BC when it was converted into a temple and it is still regarded as one of the most important Buddhist monasteries. As we explore the complex of five caves, admire the rock ceiling which is the largest collection of paintings in Sri Lanka within a cave temple and wander between the 150 Buddhist statues that stand so well preserved within the cave walls. Later we will visit a traditional village in Habarana, in the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka, where we will have the opportunity to interact with local villagers and experience daily life and the scenic views of Hiriwadunna Lake. Here we will enjoy a typical Sri Lanka lunch in the village. **(B, L, D)**

Day 6 Sigiriya. Easily the most iconic UNESCO World Heritage Site in Sri Lanka, Sigiriya Rock dramatically rises up out of the surrounding jungle, standing at nearly 200 metres tall. This incredible rock fortress was built by King Kashyapa I in the 5th century AD and served as a royal citadel for more than 18 years. Accompanied by a harem of women, King Kashyapa I spent his days in various sections of the citadel including the large bath pool which impressively lies atop this epic stone. We will arrive at the fortress in the morning and with every step we climb, marvel at its beauty in the sun, pausing occasionally during our ascent to admire the mirror wall, the great lion paws, and the famous Sigiriya frescoes. Legend states that King Kashyapa's harem threw themselves off the rock when he fell, but live forever in the form of frescoes found on the inner cave walls; there were as many as 500 but now only 19 remain. Once at the top, enjoy the unparalleled views of the natural jungle that surrounds you. Return to the hotel and enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. **(B, D)**

Day 7 Kandy. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast this morning before departing for the hill capital of Kandy, the last kingdom of Sri Lanka. En-route we visit Matale, a small town famed for its spice gardens, where you can smell, touch and taste the spices of the island that are known the world over and see how they are grown and processed. We will have lunch in the spice garden. Continue to the city of Kandy, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to the famed Temple of the Tooth. This iconic monument was built during the 16th century AD and is one of the most important temples for Buddhists as it houses the Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha and is one of the most revered sites in this cultural capital. Visit the Temple on arrival before checking in to the Cinnamon Citadel for a two night stay. **(B, L, D)**

Day 8 Kandy. This morning we visit the Royal Botanical Gardens. With 147 acres and over 4000 species of plants, it is the largest and most impressive botanical gardens in Sri Lanka. As we take a leisurely walk, admire the beautiful giant bamboo and double palm trees, both of which are imports to the island and many are over a century old, and the fine collection of orchids, for which the garden is famous. This afternoon we visit a local house in Kandy and enjoy a delicious high tea. **(B, D)**

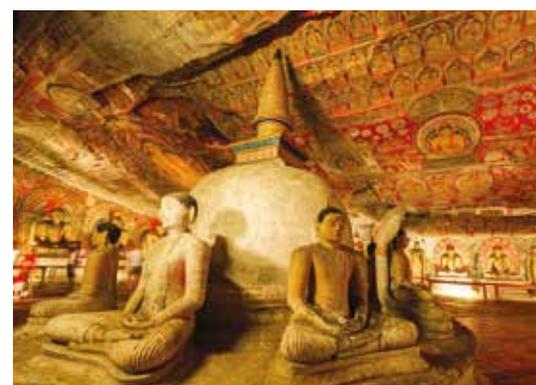
Day 9 Kandy to Ella. After breakfast this morning we make our way to the heart of Sri Lankan hill country for our two night stay at the 98 Acres Resort & Spa. The hotel is set in the heart of Sri Lankan hill country where acres of tea estates merge with beautiful old English architecture. The region is home of the famous Ceylon tea and the rolling mountains are a carpet of velvety green tea plantations, interspersed with gushing streams and tumbling



Tea picking, Ella



White-throated kingfisher, Bandara National Park



Buddha statues inside Dambulla Cave Temple



The lighthouse at Galle Fort

waterfalls. The salubrious climate and misty glens of the region make it a must on any Sri Lankan itinerary. As an alternative to our journey by road, we may board the train at Peradeniya Station and take a scenic train journey to Ella and then transfer by road to our hotel. This ride by local train is one of the most picturesque railway journeys in the world. We pass through lush green tea estates and mist covered mountains as we journey along the winding tracks. **(B, D)**. Please note that the Railway Authority will only issue tickets 10 days prior to our travel and we are only able to purchase them at that time. Due to limited seating, there is a possibility we may not be able to obtain tickets. Should this be the case we will travel by road. It is important to note that the train is air-conditioned but basic, however, the scenery en-route is magnificent.

Day 10 Ella. After breakfast take a tour of a tea plantation where we will be given a demonstration of how Ceylon tea is produced from the plucking stage through to the finished product. Enjoy a relaxing afternoon at leisure. **(B, D)**

Day 11 Yala. After breakfast we head towards Yala, an ideal base for exploring the Yala National Park. Also known as Ruhunu, Yala National Park was designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1900 and is now home to 44 varieties of mammal and 215 bird species. This vast region of arid scrub interspersed with pockets of dense forest and open patches of grassland hosts one of the highest densities of leopard in the world. Arrive in the late afternoon and check in to Chena Huts, our base for the next three nights. **(B, L, D)**

Day 12 Yala National Park. We depart early morning for a Jeep safari in Yala National Park, one of Sri Lanka's oldest and largest national parks. Known for the variety of its wildlife, we hope to see sloth bears, jackals, wild boar, elephants and the cunning Sri Lankan leopard, all of which can be found here. The park is known to have one of the highest density of leopards in a concentrated area. Return to the hotel for breakfast and enjoy some time at leisure before our second safari in the late afternoon. The best time to enter the park is in the early morning or late afternoon when the animals wake or resurface after taking cover from the midday sun. **(B, L, D)**

Day 13 Bundala National Park. This morning we explore Bundala National Park, a haven for birdwatchers and Sri Lanka's first declared Ramsar wetland. Located in the deep south of the island, the diversity of the park lies in its landscape, from dry thorny scrubland to sand dunes and salt marshes, to mangroves and lagoons. Take a jeep through the park and discover close to

200 species of bird as well as many species of butterfly and mammals. Return to the hotel to spend the remainder of the day at leisure. Alternatively take a final game drive in Yala National Park in the late afternoon. **(B, L, D)**

Day 14 Galle. Today we head towards Galle and arrive at our hotel in the coastal town of Koggala in the early afternoon. Check in to The Fortress Resort & Spa for a two night stay. In the late afternoon we embark on a walking tour of the impressive Galle Fortress. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the port where the Portuguese first landed in Sri Lanka in the 16th century and was then extensively fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. The city still retains the air of old Holland and is to this day maintained by the Dutch. Littered with high-end hotel properties, as well as bustling cafes, Galle Fort is a world of its own. **(B, D)**

Day 15 Koggala. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and spend the full day at leisure to enjoy the hotel's facilities, relax on the beach or independently explore the historic city of Galle which is only a short drive away. Alternatively, join an optional whale watching tour that will be offered locally. **(B, D)**

Day 16 Koggala to Colombo to London. Transfer to the airport for the return scheduled direct flight to London. Arrive this evening. **(B)**

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin	£5395
Single	£7995

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 14 nights hotel accommodation as described (or similar) • Meals as indicated (B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner) • Three Jeep Safaris at Yala National Park • One Jeep Safari at Bundala National Park • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • English speaking local guide • Tours as described • Gratuities • Entrance fees • Transfers • Airport taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance, visa, optional whale watching tour.

PLEASE NOTE: We have planned the itinerary to be less strenuous than most to the region, however, the tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and some long drives. Also, many of the sites are reached by uneven steps without handrails. To best enjoy your experiences in Sri Lanka, you should be in good physical condition.

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour of Sri Lanka we have selected some of the finest accommodation available and will be staying at the following properties:



South Lawn overlooking the sea



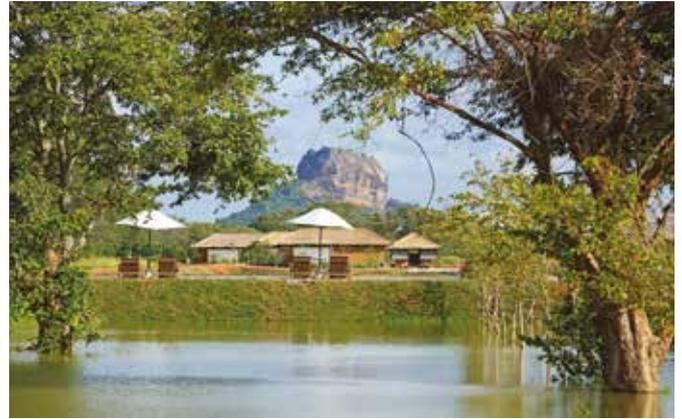
Superior Twin Room



Verandah Restaurant

Galle Face Hotel, Colombo – Overnight

Located on the seafront in the heart of Colombo, the Galle Face Hotel is an iconic landmark. Built in 1864, the hotel is rich in history and is a testimony to both Sri Lanka's colonial past and its independent present. All rooms and suites boast a nostalgic charm and a high level of comfort. They offer Wi-Fi, satellite LCD television, air conditioning, a safety deposit box, complimentary soft drink selection and various luxury amenities. The Verandah Restaurant is the perfect place to sit and enjoy views of the Indian Ocean whilst enjoying the local or international cuisine and, with a spa and long sea-facing outdoor swimming pool, the hotel makes the ideal first stop in Sri Lanka from which to rest and relax as well as explore Colombo's prominent sights.



Infinity Pool with stunning views of Sigiriya Rock



Deluxe Villa



Main Pavilion and Lounge

Water Garden Hotel, Sigiriya – Four nights

The Water Garden Hotel is a beautifully laid out, boutique hotel with stunning views of the ancient rock fortress of Sigiriya. The thoughtfully-landscaped grounds have been inspired by the water gardens of ancient fortresses, filled with pathways and mature trees, allowing you to enjoy the region's landscapes even when you have returned to the hotel. There are just 30 exceptionally appointed and spacious villas scattered throughout the gardens, all with luxurious interiors and in naturally beautiful settings. This wonderfully tranquil atmosphere extends to the main areas of the hotel where the iconic Sigiriya Rock sits as a backdrop to the hotel's infinity pool that overlooks the gardens. The main restaurant is traditional in style with high quality local produce offering local and international cuisine.



The hotel on the banks of the Mahaweli River

Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy – Two nights

Influenced by the old and inspired by the new, Cinnamon Citadel has fused chic design with the rich heritage of this ancient kingdom to breathe new life into the most stylish hotel in the hills of Sri Lanka. The Cinnamon Citadel is an ideal retreat for those seeking the treasures of this ancient city and desiring rest and relaxation in a peaceful setting. The 93 superior rooms, which measure 423 square feet are furnished to a high standard. The interiors take on a mix and match of heritage red, with mustards and crimson to highlight royalty and majesty for which Kandy is renowned. There is a restaurant, bar and café on-site and an outdoor swimming pool from where you can enjoy the breathtaking view of the Mahaweli River that flows along the periphery of the resort.



Lower Lounge and Pool



Deluxe Room



Outdoor Dining



Pool



Chalets set amongst a stunning landscape



Standard Room

98 Acres Resort & Spa, Ella – Two nights

Providing a distinctly Sri Lankan experience, 98 Acres is the perfect place to relax and unwind. This eco-friendly resort is nestled within a 98-acre colonial tea estate in the Ella Gap. The 28 rooms, decorated with dark wood furnishing and a furnished balcony, are set in two-storey thatched buildings that offer unbeatable views over the surrounding landscapes. Restaurant 98 offers a choice of Sri Lankan or international cuisine along with impeccable views and Bar 98 is the perfect setting to relax in the evening. The open-air venue has been constructed using reclaimed timber and railway sleepers, offering a unique rustic chic charm and breathtaking views of the Ella Gap and the Small Adam's Peak Mountain. Other on-site facilities include a gym, spa and swimming pool.



Spectacular views



Cabins set amongst the sand dunes



Master Bedroom



Cabin entrance and walkway



The colonial style Fortress Resort overlooking the Indian Ocean



Fortress Balcony Room



Local seafood delicacies

Chena Huts, Yala – Three nights

Chena Huts is situated among the dunes and trees at the ocean's edge, close to the border of Yala National Park. At this distinctive property, the 'huts' are in fact luxurious, detached, private pavilions offering fine views of the surrounding wilderness. The 14 cabins, each with private plunge pool, are positioned throughout the property and linked by wooden pathways. They are designed to harmonize with the jungle environment, the subtle interiors hint towards a safari theme. During your stay morning and evening drives will be offered, accompanied by a knowledgeable local ranger/guide. Between safaris, enjoy the time to relax, perhaps lounge by the outdoor pool or on the private beach or retreat to your cabin to soak up the sounds of nature. Guests may enjoy fine dining at the Basses Restaurant and cocktails at the poolside bar.

The Fortress Resort & Spa, Koggala – Two nights

The Fortress Resort & Spa echoes the city of Galle's charming architecture with immense gates, white-washed walls and an extensive courtyard. This luxurious getaway is set on the south coast of Sri Lanka near the beautiful historic city, an area blessed with paradise beaches and Dutch colonial architecture. The unique location of The Fortress means you are only a 30 minute drive from historic Galle whilst having the blissful beach of southern Sri Lanka at your feet. Every room is spacious and modern and comes with a private terrace or balcony. Relax by the pool and enjoy the views of the Indian Ocean beyond. With the choice of two restaurants and lounges offering a variety of quality food, local teas and cocktails, this is the perfect final stop and place to unwind.

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Itinerary and accommodation subject to change. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.

Cover image: The ancient Vatadage at Polonnaruwa - built to hold the relic of the tooth of Buddha