

# Sri Lanka: Elephants, Temples, Spices & Forts 2027

31 DEC 2026 – 19 JAN 2027

Code: 22701

Tour Leaders **Em. Prof. Bernard Hoffert**

Fitness Level **🚩🚩🚩**

**Level 3 - Challenging**

Among our most physically demanding

Combining UNESCO World Heritage sites of Anuradhapura, Dambulla, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Kandy and Galle with a number of Sri Lanka's best wildlife sanctuaries including Wilpattu & Yala National Park.

## Overview

[Professor Bernard Hoffert](#), former World President of the International Association of Art-UNESCO (1992-95), leads this cultural tour of Sri Lanka.

Visit 6 Cultural UNESCO World Heritage Sites:

- Sacred City of Anuradhapura – established around a cutting from the 'tree of enlightenment', the Buddha's fig tree, this was the first ancient capital of Sri Lanka.
- Golden Dambulla Cave Temple – containing magnificent wall paintings and over 150 statues.
- Ancient City of Sigiriya – a spectacular rock fortress featuring the ancient remains of King Kassapa's palace from the 5th century AD.
- The Ancient City of Polonnaruwa – the grand, second capital of Sri Lanka established after the destruction of Anuradhapura in the 1st century.
- Sacred City of Kandy – capital of Sri Lanka's hill country and home to the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha.
- Old Town of Galle – this 16th-century Dutch fortified town has ramparts built to protect goods stored by the Dutch East India Company.

Visit 4 of Sri Lanka's best Wildlife National Parks:

- Wilpattu National Park – comprising a series of lakes – or *willus* – the park is considered the best for viewing the elusive sloth bear and for its population of leopards.
- Hurulu Eco Park – designated a biosphere reserve in 1977, the area is representative of Sri Lanka's dry-zone dry evergreen forests and is an important habitat for the Sri Lankan elephant.
- Udawalawe National Park – with extensive stretches of grassland as well as scrub jungle and riverine forest, this park is considered the best for viewing wild elephants. It is also the location of the Elephant Transit Home which cares for orphaned, abandoned and displaced elephants.
- Yala National Park – occupying a beautiful area of lowland dry scrub sitting on a long stretch of coastline, the park is famous for its large number of leopards, elephants and spotted deer.

Other highlights include:

- Explore the culture and propagation of Sri Lanka's famous tea at plantations, manufacturing facilities and museums.
- The National Museum in Colombo which features exhibits from Sri Lanka's UNESCO-listed sites as well as Rajasinha II's golden crown.
- Architecture by Geoffrey Bawa. Visit four masterpieces of one of Asia's greatest architects, Geoffrey Bawa, including the garden of his country estate and his lovely Colombo house.
- Maximum Group Size: 18 participants

A special feature of this tour is our stay at a number of heritage hotels including:

- [Grand Hotel Nuwara Eliya](#) – once the palatial residence of Sir Edward Barnes, former Governor of Sri Lanka.
- [Heritage Kandalama](#) – designed by Geoffrey Bawa.
- [Fort Bazaar](#) or [Galle Fort Hotel](#) – two charming hotels located inside the historic Fort of Galle.

Overnight Negombo (1 night) • Andarawewa, Anuradhapura (2 nights) • Thirappane, Anuradhapura (2 nights) • Dambulla (3 nights) • Kandy (3 nights) • Nuwara Eliya (1 night) • Udawalawe (1 night) • Yala (2

nights) • Galle (2 nights) • Colombo (2 nights)

## Leaders



### Em. Prof. Bernard Hoffert

Art historian & artist, former World President of the International Assoc. of Art - UNESCO, Assoc. Dean, Monash University. He has a long involvement with India & has published on Indian Architecture and lectured at the National Inst. of Design in Ahmedabad.

Bernard Hoffert is Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Art Design & Architecture at Monash University. He was formerly Associate Dean in the Faculty of Art and Design, with responsibility for the Faculty's Higher Degree by Research program and the Faculty's International and External profile. He headed five departments while at Monash including the art school. He was the World President of the International Association of Art-UNESCO (1992-95) and remains an Honorary President; he has been Honorary President of the Asia-Pacific Regional Council of the International Association of Art- UNESCO and has continued involvement with UNESCO through the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA). He has been a member of the Global Advisory Board of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Network, Columbia University since 2006 and a member of their Research Committee. He was Vice President of the Academic Board of Monash University (2008-2010). He has been on the review boards of several research publications and the executive committees of major art education organisations.

Bernard first joined ASA in 1981 and is ASA's second longest standing group leader/lecturer. He has led over 50 tours to Europe, North Africa and South Asia and has played a key role in the great success of Monash University's Centre in Prato, near Florence.

Bernard also has a long involvement with Indian and Sri Lankan art and philosophy and has travelled extensively from the Himalayas in the north to the southernmost tip of the subcontinent. He has led eight ASA tours to India including *Mughals, Rajputs & Villages: The Cultural Heritage of North India* (2008-2018), *South India Sojourn: from temple sculptures and spice gardens to classical dance and canal cruises* (2009, 2012), and *Ancient Kingdoms and Empires of Southern India* (2017). He wrote the section on India in the 1987 edition of *Art and Diversity* (Longman) and has exhibited his paintings and presented his poetry at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society Gallery in Delhi; his paintings are in several Indian collections. He has participated in art symposia and conferences in India and has lectured at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. His research has been published in the *Indian journal Design Plus* and his research on craft revival in India has been published by UNESCO and the Network of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. He contributed a chapter to the *Indian text, Design Education: Tradition and Modernity*. His articles have also been published in Sri Lanka and he has researched and published on Sri Lankan artists. He has a particular interest in Sri Lankan Buddhism and its development from Indian Buddhist philosophy and the art which it inspired. He is also interested in the impact of Hindu philosophy and art in Sri Lanka.



## Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in museum opening hours, flight schedules, etc. Meals included in the tour price are indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner. Bottled water is also included. All entrance fees and permits are included in the tour price.

### Negombo - 1 night

Day 1: Thursday 31 December, Colombo – Negombo

- Airport transfer for participants arriving on the ASA 'designated' flight

Our tour commences in seaside Negombo, just north of Colombo. Participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight are scheduled to arrive in Colombo in the late evening. Upon arrival we transfer by private coach to our hotel, located on the sunny northwestern coastline of Negombo. If you are not arriving on the ASA 'designated' flight you will be required to make your own way to the [Jetwing Blue Hotel](#), or you may wish to contact ASA to arrange a private transfer.

**Pre-tour stay in Negombo:** Overlooking Negombo Beach, the 5-star Jetwing Blue Hotel is the perfect venue to relax, enjoy the ocean views, and unwind after your flight from Australia. Please contact ASA if you wish to consider this option. (Overnight Jetwing Blue, Negombo)

### Andarawewa, Anuradhapura – 2 nights

Day 2: Friday 1 January, Negombo – Kurenegala – Yapahuwa – Anuradhapura

- Ancient Rock Fortress of Yapahuwa
- Physical Endurance: access to the Yapahuwa Fortress is via a series of steep staircases (we climb to

level 2 only)

Today we drive north to Anuradhapura. On the way we visit the region of Kurunegala, the Capital of North Western Province, which is an archaeological treasure-house, having been the seat of four medieval kingdoms of Sri Lanka between the mid-12th and 14th centuries. Sri Lankan Kings built handsome citadels at Panduwasnuwara, Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, and Kurunegala. Impressive remains of these citadels-fortresses, palaces, Buddhist temples, shrines, monasteries, hermitages, walls and moats stand alongside monuments from much earlier periods.

We shall visit Yapahuwa, the ancient fortress and capital built by King Buvanekabahu I in 1301. Yapahuwa is a rock rising to a height of ninety metres, at the base of which are two moats and ramparts. It has a particularly fine ornamental stairway leading to a number of fascinating remains. **Note: our visit will be limited to climbing the first 2 staircases.** We arrive in Anuradhapura in the evening. (Overnight Forest Rock Garden Resort, Anuradhapura) BLD

### Day 3: Saturday 2 January, Anuradhapura – Wilpattu National Park – Anuradhapura

- Anuradhapura, Ancient City of Panduk Anhaya (380 BC-1000 AD) – Part I
- **Physical Endurance:** Half day (4hrs) exploring the temples and palaces of Anuradhapura on foot.
- Wilpattu National Park: Half Day Jeep Safari (1500-1800hrs)

We spend this morning exploring the ancient city of Anuradhapura. This political and religious capital was constructed around a cutting from the 'tree of enlightenment', the Buddha's fig tree, brought to the site in the 3rd century BC by Sanghamitta, the founder of an order of Buddhist nuns. It flourished for 1300 years, until 993 AD. Hidden away in dense jungle for many years, this splendid site, with its palaces, monasteries and other monuments, is now accessible once again. Anuradhapura was founded in 437 BC by King Pandukabhaya. As early as the third century BC, its fame had spread to the Hellenic and Roman worlds and by the 1st century AD, its rulers had established trade and diplomatic relations with China. Foreign artefacts uncovered at the site document these links with the east and west. According to written records, in the 3rd century BC Mahinda brought the teachings of Buddha to Anuradhapura.

One hundred and nineteen Sinhalese kings ruled from this cultural and religious capital. Several magnificent *dagobas*, monasteries, temples, ponds, and irrigation tanks were constructed during these centuries, bearing testimony to a technically extremely advanced civilisation. According to historical chronicles such as the *Mahavamsa* – the Sinhala Buddhist document written by monks – the city used sophisticated urban planning techniques. Individual precincts were established for hunters and foreigners. There were hospitals and hostels, and separate cemeteries for high and low castes. The city's rise to power was built upon trade and advanced irrigation systems which allowed successful rice cultivation. At its peak the city was home to half a million inhabitants. Throughout its history, the Sinhalese rulers of Anuradhapura were regularly attacked by the Hindu Tamils, and for a number of short periods the Tamils were able to take power. It wasn't until the 10th century that the Tamils ruled for a sustained period. During the reign of Rajaraja the Great (AD 985-1018) of the Chola empire, Tamil forces finally sacked Anuradhapura, leaving the city in ruins and relocating the capital.

Anuradhapura is dominated by four great *dagobas* (also called stupas). The earliest *dagoba* built in Anuradhapura, and the oldest in Sri Lanka, is the Thuparama. It was built during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa (3rd century BC) to enshrine the Buddha's right collarbone – a gift from the Emperor Asoka. Originally the *dagoba* was much smaller but was extensively renovated and rebuilt over the centuries, most recently in 1862. The graceful monolithic pillars that surround it once supported a circular wooden roof. One of the most impressive of the *dagobas* in Anuradhapura is the Ruvanweli. Built by King

Dutugemunu who ruled the country in 2nd century BC, the structure now measures 55 metres in height, although originally it may have reached almost twice that height. The structure was originally supported by the so-called “Elephant Wall” – a ring of carved elephants, of which a few originals remain.

The largest of the *dagobas* on the site is the Jetavana. When it was constructed (by King Mahasena in the 3rd century AD), it reached a height of 120 metres, making it one of the highest buildings in the world at that time, and the tallest *dagoba* in the world. It stands on a large concrete base, whose foundations reach a depth of 12 metres. The Jetavana Dagoba was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The Abhayagiri Dagoba is the second largest monument of its kind in Sri Lanka. When it was constructed, the monument stood almost 110 metres high with a diameter of 95 metres; its height is now only 75 metres. The *dagoba* was both repaired and enlarged by later kings. Around the Abhayagiri Dagoba stood a monastery complex with a community of about 5000 monks. Its exterior is adorned with elephant reliefs and to the north of the building stands a stone slab with the imprint of what is believed to be the Buddha’s footprint. Inside, the *dagoba* houses a sacred tooth relic of the Buddha and Buddhist scriptures inscribed in gold.

The most sacred spot in Anuradhapura is the site of the Sri Maha Bodhi, or the sacred Bo tree. The right branch of the Bo tree under which Buddha gained enlightenment in North India was brought to Sri Lanka in the third century BC by Princess Sanghamitta, daughter of Emperor Asoka and sister of Mahinda. King Devanampiyatissa (250-210 BC) planted the branch in Anuradhapura and it has been venerated as a sacred site and pilgrimage destination ever since. It is the oldest historically documented tree in the world, and now stands upon a special platform, a *bodhigara*, encircled by a gold-plated railing.

Following lunch at the Sanctuary at Tissawewa we embark on an afternoon 4WD excursion to Wilpattu National Park, situated 30 kilometres west of Anuradhapura, in the dry lowlands of the island’s north-west. The park comprises a unique complex of over 50 *willus*, shallow natural lakes filled with rainwater surrounded by open grassy plains. Some 73% of the park is dense forest or scrub; the rest is more open habitat. The park’s diverse natural habitats provide for numerous species of animals including 31 mammals. The biggest draws in Wilpattu are leopards and sloth bears. There are also Asian elephants, spotted deer, barking deer, jackals, sambhur, mouse deer, wild pig, water buffalo and mugger crocodiles. It also boasts spectacular birdlife (especially from November-April), including eagles, owls, kites, plus various waders which thrive around the *willus*. Also roaming the grasslands are star tortoises; in the large *willus* live the pond turtle and the soft-shelled turtle. (Overnight Forest Rock Garden Resort, Anuradhapura) BLD

### Thirappane, Anuradhapura - 2 nights

Day 4: Sunday 3 January, Anuradhapura – Thirappane

- Anuradhapura, Ancient City – Part II
- **Physical Endurance:** Half day exploring Anuradhapura on foot.
- Afternoon at leisure at the Ulagalla Resort

This morning we return to the ancient city of Anuradhapura to visit the Loha Prasada (Brazen Palace) founded in the second century BC by King Dutugemunu (161-137 BC), only to burn down 15 years later. Originally the building had nine storeys, one thousand rooms and a roof of copper tiles. What remains are one thousand six hundred stone pillars, all in close proximity, which once supported the building.

Two other important monuments are the Samadhi Buddha and the Kuttam Pokuna. ‘Samadhi’ means ‘in a state of deep meditation’, and this image of the meditating Buddha is considered a masterpiece. It is the

work of an anonymous master-sculptor working in the 4th century AD. The Kuttam Pokuna, or 'Twin Ponds', are two beautiful ponds exemplifying both artistic and architectural achievements in the field of hydraulic engineering. Two flights of steps lead up to the ponds. Water that has been cleaned and purified several times eventually gushes into the ponds through a lion-headed spout.

We also visit the Isurumuniya Viharaya and Ranmasu Uyana. The Isurumuniya Viharaya, which is situated on a picturesque setting, high upon a rock, is famous for its rock cut sculptures which include the *Isurumuniya Lovers*, *Man and the Horse*, *Elephant Pond* and *The Royal Family*. Although currently disputed, early archaeologists identified the site as the ancient Issarasamana vihara monastery mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* – the historical chronicle of Sri Lanka written in the style of an epic poem in the Pali language.

The Ranmasu Uyana containing the ancient Magul Uyana (Royal Gardens) is considered a notable example of early Sri Lankan architecture. Inscriptions suggest that the water to the park was supplied by the Tissa Wewa (an artificial reservoir built in the 3rd century BC), which was then released to rice fields around the Isurumuni temple.

Around midday we travel to the Ulagalla Resort, where the afternoon is at leisure to enjoy the facilities of this ecological retreat. (Overnight Ulagalla Resort, Anuradhapura) BLD

#### Day 5: Monday 4 January, Thirippane – Mihintale – Thirippane

- Mihintale: Site of Origin of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (247 BC), including Kantaka Cetiya, Vejja Sala (Hospital) & Kaluidya Pokuna (Pond of Black Water)
- **Physical Endurance:** Mihintale consists of various shrines connected by a total of some 1,840 steps that ultimately lead to the summit. Our visit is limited to the first and second staircases.
- Afternoon at leisure at the Ulagalla Resort

This morning we visit Mihintale, located on one of the peaks of a mountainous range. It is here, in 247 BC, that Buddhism first developed in Sri Lanka. The message of Buddhism was brought to the Sinhalese King Devanampiya Tissa by Mahinda, son of the great Indian Buddhist Emperor Ashoka, who preached at Mihintale. Each year, Buddhists make an important pilgrimage to Mihintale. From the city's inception, a large number of steps were constructed to climb Mihintale's heights. King Devanampiyatissa is said to have constructed a *vihara* and 68 caves for the *bhikkhus* (male monks) to reside in. A number of Buddhist *viharas*, with all the dependent buildings characteristic of monasteries of that period, were built.

At the foot of the mountain are the ruins of a hospital and medical bath (stone canoe-like bath in which patients were immersed in medicinal oil). A stone inscription and urns belonging to the ancient period have been unearthed here. Between the hospital and the steps leading to the rock are the ruins of a large monastery. Gracing its floors are beautiful carvings and there are also stone balustrades and guard stones. The stairway to the summit has nearly 2,000 granite steps. At the end of the first set of steps is a small mountain peak upon which is situated the most famous Kantaka Cetiya (circular stupa). King Suratissa may have built this Stupa (1st century BC) which is decorated with wonderful carvings of dwarfs and elephants. The monks would have resided in the caves close to the stupa. A courtyard is situated at the end of the third flight of steps. To the left of the courtyard is the refectory. It has storerooms for food and a sophisticated early plumbing system to supply water. The rules and regulations for the administration of the monastery, including records of payments made to the service staff, are engraved on two stone slabs. In the



vicinity is a meeting hall for the monks; its roof is supported by 48 stone pillars. To the east of the refectory is another stupa. The Ambasthala Dagaba (stupa), where King Devanampiyatissa first met Arahant Mahinda, is situated close to the mountain peak, and is said to enshrine Mahinda's relics.

We shall spend ample time exploring Mihintale visiting the Vehha Sala (ancient hospital) and the Kantaka Ceitya. We also visit the Kaludiya Pokuna (Pond of Black Water), an artificial lake which supplied water to a monastery that stood here during the 10th or 11th centuries. Note: due to the precarious nature of the third staircase we will not be visiting the Aradhana Gala located on the summit of the hill.

Around midday we return to the Ulagalla Resort for another afternoon is at leisure. (Overnight Ulagalla Resort, Anuradhapura) BLD

### Dambulla - 3 nights

Day 6: Tuesday 5 January, Thirippane – Avukana – Halgamuwa – Dambulla

- Avukana Buddha Image
- Sasseruwa (Ras Vehera) Buddha Statue, Halgamuwa
- **Physical Endurance:** Access to Avukana involves 2 flights of steps; access to Sasseruwa involves climbing approximately 300 steps.
- Raj Maha Vihara Cave Temple Complex, Dambulla
- **Physical Endurance:** access to the five decorative caves at the Dambulla Temple Complex involves climbing approximately 800 steps.

This morning we drive from Anuradhapura to Dambulla via Avukana to see the massive statue of Buddha. This 13-metre-high statue carved out of solid granite was carved in the 5th century, during the reign of King Dathusena. On a rainy day, it is said, one can see droplets of water falling off the tip of the statue's nose hitting the ground exactly between the toes – a testament to the architectural accuracy of the sculptor.

Nearby, we also visit the colossal Ras Vehera (Sasseruwa) Buddha Statue, which may have been created by the same artist as the Avukana statue; it has similar draperies, but is unfinished, leading some scholars to believe that it was a trial piece for the more famous work. This huge statue, which adopts the *Abhaya Mudra* (raised hand) pose signifying freedom from fear, may have been created during the reign of King Mahasen (276-303 AD), who ruled from Anuradhapura. The Ras Vehara complex also includes an ancient Bo Tree, popularly thought to have been planted by King Devampiyathissa (250-210 BC), as well as two magnificent caves containing images and numerous monks' caves. One of the aforementioned 'image' caves, with a seated Buddha, is believed to have been created for King Walagamba (89-77 BC). The other cave contains a massive reclining Buddha statue.

This afternoon we visit one of Sri Lanka's most impressive sites. Dambulla temple complex, the best preserved ancient edifice in Sri Lanka, still functions as a religious centre. It is composed of five caves which have been transformed into shrines. The caves, created at the base of a 150 metre high rock during the Anuradhapura (1st century BC-993 AD) and Polonnaruwa (1073-1250) periods, are by far the most impressive of the many cave temples found in Sri Lanka. They originally formed the largest monastery in Sri Lanka created, it is thought, by King Walagambahu who, exiled from Anuradhapura, sought refuge here from South Indian invaders for 15 years. After reclaiming his capital, the king built the temple in thanksgiving.

We approach the caves along the gentle slope of the Dambulla Rock which is surrounded by jungle and offers broad panoramic views of the surrounding flat lands, including the rock fortress Sigiriya. As we climb,

we encounter families of friendly monkeys. The largest and most spectacular cave measures about 52 metres from east to west, and is 23 metres deep. It is seven metres tall at its highest point. Hindu deities are also represented here, as are the kings Valgamba and Nissankamalla, as well as Ananda, the Buddha's most devoted disciple. The shrine rooms contain a collection of 150 statues and fine paintings, whose compositions have been adapted to the shape of the rock walls. Both statues and paintings derive from many epochs of Sri Lankan history. The Buddha statues are in varying sizes and poses – the largest is 15 metres long. The ceiling of one cave is covered with over 1,500 paintings of Buddha. The first cave is called Devarajalena, or 'Cave of the Divine King.' This cave is dominated by the 14-metre statue of the Buddha, hewn from the rock. It has been repainted countless times in the course of its history, and probably received its last coat of paint in the 20th century. At the Buddha's feet is his favorite pupil, Ananda; at his head, Vishnu, who is said to have used his divine powers to create the caves. In the second and largest cave, in addition to 16 standing and 40 seated statues of Buddha are the gods Saman and Vishnu, which pilgrims often decorate with garlands. Also here are King Vattagamani, who honoured the monastery in the 1st century BC, and King Nissanka Malla, responsible in the 12th century for gilding 50 statues. This cave is accordingly called *Maharajalena* ('Cave of the Great Kings'). The third cave, the Maha Alut Vihara ('Great New Monastery'), acquired ceiling and wall paintings in the typical Kandy style during the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-1782). In addition to 50 Buddha statues, there is also a statue of the king. The 4th and 5th caves are smaller. They date from a later period and are not of such high quality. A small Vishnu Devale between these caves attracts many worshipers. (Overnight Heritage Kandalama, Dambulla) BLD

#### Day 7: Wednesday 6 January, Dambulla – Sigiriya – Hurulu – Dambulla

- Sigiriya City (5th century) and Rock Fortress
- **Physical Endurance:** the ascent to the Sigiriya Rock Fortress involves a very steep climb with approx. 1200 steps.
- Hurulu Eco Park: Afternoon Jeep Safari (1500-1800hrs)

This morning we visit the 5th-century Sigiriya City and Rock Fortress. Nothing in Sri Lanka captures the imagination like the fortress city of Sigiriya, perched atop a 200-metre-high granite rock that rises starkly above the flat central plains. It boasts astonishing frescoes of bare-breasted maidens painted 15 centuries ago, a wall covered in graffiti that is more than 1,000 years old and Asia's oldest surviving landscape garden. Sigiriya has a blood-stained history of intrigue to match its picturesque setting. It became the centre of the ancient Sinhalese Kingdom for 18 years in the late 5th century. Kasyapa, the son of King Dhatusena (by a wife of unequal birth) seized his father's throne in 477 AD because he feared that his younger half-brother Mogallan, born of the anointed queen, would inherit the throne. Kasyapa was convinced that his father was hiding a cache of treasure from him, and demanded that the king reveal where this wealth was hidden. Dhatusena took the young usurper to the bund of the Kalawewa, the greatest of his irrigation works, below which lived a venerable monk who had been his teacher and companion of many years. There, the old king pointed, was the sum of all his wealth. In a fit of pique, Kasyapa ordered the old man to be walled up alive and naked in his own tomb. Meanwhile, Mogallan survived an assassination attempt by his brother and fled to India to raise an army. Paranoia, arrogance and delusions of divinity drove Kasyapa to leave the traditional Sinhalese capital – Anuradhapura – and construct his palace on the peak of Sigiriya Rock, a perfect lookout which could be easily defended. Visitors to the palace entered via a stone stairway that took them into a great stone and brick lion's mouth and through its throat – hence Sigiriya's alternative name, 'Lion Rock'. Only the lion's massive paws remain today, but they indicate how gigantic the rest of the carving must have been. A new stairway has been attached to the side of the rock to allow access to the summit, enabling visitors to stroll around the ruins of the palace and enjoy its panoramic views. Two water tanks used for bathing and drinking still fill with rainwater, but in Kasyapa's day, a sophisticated pumping system was used to fill the tanks from a lake at the foot of the rock.

Sigiriya is approached from the west over a moat that encloses an elaborate water garden that runs up to the foot of the rock. A stone stairway takes visitors past caves and hollows where early Buddhist monks lived and worshipped, to a gallery half-way up the rock which is enclosed by a three-metre wall. Large sections of the so-called Mirror Wall are still intact, and it is here that graffiti artists inscribed messages, many of them more than 10 centuries old. Most of the ancient graffiti refer to the images of the Sigiriya Maidens. These are situated up a spiral staircase, about 14 metres above the Mirror Wall gallery, in a natural pocket in the rock which has been protected for centuries from the rain by an overhang. Nobody knows who painted these amazing frescoes, but the Maidens testify to a very advanced Sinhalese civilisation at a time when Europe was 'lost' in the Dark Ages.

In 495, Mogallan returned from India with an army of combined Chola and Sinhalese troops and Kasyapa descended from his impregnable stronghold to meet him in battle. At a crucial stage in the battle, it is said, Kasyapa's elephant balked at a hidden swamp and momentarily turned aside, leading his troops to believe that he was retreating. His army broke in confusion, leaving him defenceless. Flamboyant to the last, he drew his dagger, slashed his own throat, raised the blade high in the air and sheathed it again before falling down dead.

This afternoon we take a jeep safari to the Hurulu Eco Park which is located on the edge of the Hurulu Forest Reserve. Designated a biosphere reserve in 1977, the area is representative of Sri Lanka's dry-zone dry evergreen forests and is an important habitat for the Sri Lankan elephant. (Overnight Heritage Kandalama, Dambulla) BLD

#### Day 8: Thursday 7 January, Dambulla – Polonnaruwa – Dambulla

- Polonnaruwa City (11th-13th century), Irrigation System & Reservoir
- **Physical Endurance:** full day exploring the temples and palaces of Polonnaruwa on foot.
- Kandyan Dance Performance

We spend today visiting the well-preserved remains of the city of Polonnaruwa, capital of the Sinhalese kings from the 11th to the 13th century, the second capital of Sri Lanka after the destruction of Anuradhapura in 993. It comprises, besides Brahmanic monuments built by the Cholas, the monumental ruins of the fabulous garden-city created by Parakramabahu I in the 12th century.

Polonnaruwa is located in a dry region of Sri Lanka. Close to the Mahaveli river and to the east coast of the island, it has attracted settlers since Prehistory. Agriculture had developed here as early as the 4th century AD. The construction of irrigation works and the concomitant agricultural development created dense population clusters here, resulting in the emergence of new economic and political forces which changed the demographic pattern and the cultural landscape of the island. Polonnaruwa was also strategically important because it controlled access into Rohana and from Rohana into the northern plain, through the passes at Dastota and Magantota, along the Mahaveli river.

From the 6th century, Polonnaruwa became increasingly important. In this period, shrine rooms (an alternative residence for the Anuradhapura kings) and hospitals were constructed. The South Indian Chola Empire, which conquered the northern part of Sri Lanka in 1017, established its capital at Polonnaruwa and held sway over the Dry Zone regions for fifty-three years. After the Cholas were expelled, the Sinhala kings also selected Polonnaruwa as their capital, and it again flourished for nearly two centuries until 1215. The foreign invader Magha conquered Polonnaruwa in 1215 and with his atrocious rule the Sinhala nobility drifted to the South west and established kingdoms in places such as Dambadeniya and Yapahuwa.

Polonnaruwa was a fortified city, surrounded by three moats and four fortified walls. Its inner wall protected

the royal palaces. The architectural remains of these palaces and other establishments are very imposing and occupy a prominent position among the excavated ruins. Outside the royal precinct were religious establishments. The Tooth Relic and the Alms Bowl of the Buddha were almost always under the custody of the monarch and had by this time become a sort of national palladium, symbols for the legitimization of political authority. The Atadage, Watadage and Hatadage, three of the first and most imposing monuments of Polonnaruwa, were presumably designed as temples for enshrining the Tooth Relic. Large monasteries were also built around about. One remarkable feature is that Polonnaruwa's secular function was not so thoroughly and completely overshadowed by religious establishments as at other old cities like Anuradhapura. The city supported vast royal, administrative and military establishments. Its location in open plains, without natural defences, required the construction of great walls and moats. Polonnaruwa also maintained a substantial standing army so there was a concentration of military power in the city. Increased commercial activity also promoted growth. In order to cater to the needs of a large population, the city had large markets, fairs and bazaars. Various bazaars sold all kinds of commodities and there was an incessant traffic of elephants, horses and chariots in its streets. In order to facilitate foreign trade, the city accommodated foreign merchants and emissaries from foreign countries. We shall spend the day exploring this fascinating site.

This evening we attend a private dance performance to view the famous Kandyan dances, as well as up-country and devil dances. (Overnight Heritage Kandalama, Dambulla) BLD

### Kandy - 3 nights

Day 9: Friday 8 January, Kandalama – Kandy

- Aluvihare Temple, Matale
- **Physical Endurance:** access to the Aluvihare Temple caves is via a series of steep stone-carved steps (approx. 360 steps).
- Spice Gardens, Matale
- Botanical Garden Peradeniya

Today, we drive from Kandalama to Kandy. About three kilometres north of Matale lies the historic Aluvihare Temple. This sacred temple dates back to the reign of the great King Devanampiyatissa. After he embraced the doctrines of the Buddha Dhamma under the guidance of Arahat Maha Mahinda, the King built the first stupa – Thuparamaya – and planted the sacred Bo tree – Sri Maha Bodhiya – in Mahamewna Uyana, so that his subjects may pay homage. Thereafter, the king built many dagobas and planted Bo-trees in several parts of Sri Lanka to propagate Dhamma. This temple was the site for the writing of many sacred texts. Later, during waves of colonial rule, it became the site of many conflicts and was looted and destroyed many times. In recent times, it has been restored and has attained status as a centre of Buddhist learning and meditation.

While in Matale, we also visit the Spice Gardens which are among the best on the island. Here we will be introduced to different spices and shown how they are grown and processed. The gardens are a delightful place to stroll in fragrant greenery and learn about nutmeg, pepper vines, clove trees and curry, cinnamon and the precious cardamom, a relative of ginger. We also enjoy the full flavors of Sri Lankan spices over lunch.

We end our day with a visit to the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens located just outside Kandy. The original garden dates from 14th century reign of King Vikrama Bahu III. Peradeniya is well known for its huge variety of plants, especially those which produce the special spices of Sri Lanka. The spice garden includes the trees and plants used for traditional Ayurvedic medicine. The gardens' great lawns highlight huge tropical

trees and the greatest bamboo to be found in one place. The highlight of the garden is the Orchid House, containing more than 300 varieties of exquisite orchids. Mahaweli River – Sri Lanka’s longest – surrounds the garden. (Overnight Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy) BLD

#### Day 10: Saturday 9 January, Kandy: Three Temple Loop

- Three Temple Loop by *Tuk Tuks*: Gadaladeniya Temple, Lankathilaka Temple & Embekka Temple
- Lunch at the historic [Royal Bar & Hotel](#)
- Afternoon at leisure

Today we take *Tuk Tuks* (auto rickshaws) around three small mountain villages to visit three different temples: Gadaladeniya Temple, Lankathilaka Temple and the Embekka Temple. These monuments are not only of great significance to Sri Lankan Buddhism but also to South Indian sculptural tradition.

Ganesvarachari, a South Indian architect, built Gadaladeniya Vihara (1344) on a rock outcrop in the Dravidian architectural style combining Sinhalese architecture from the Polonnaruwa Kingdom (11th – 13th c.) with Indo-Chinese architectural elements. Nearby Lankathilaka Temple displays the same combinations of Polonnaruwa and Indo-Chinese elements.

Embekka Temple was built by King Vikramabahu III of the Gampola Era (1357-1374). It is dedicated to the worship of Mahasen, popularly known as *Kataragama deviyo* and a local deity, Devatha Bandara. This shrine consists of three sections, the Sanctum of Garagha, the *Digge* ('Dancing Hall') and the *Hevisi Mandapaya* ('Drummers' Hall'). The Drummers' Hall has splendid wood carvings, among some of the finest examples of Sinhalese art, on its ornate pillars; some of these pillars may have come from an earlier Royal Audience Hall at Gampola.

Following lunch at the historic Royal Bar & Hotel we return to the Cinnamon Wild for an afternoon at leisure. (Overnight Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy) BLD

#### Day 11: Sunday 10 January, Kandy – Hatane – Kandy

- Ceylon Tea Museum
- Old City of Kandy
- Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic

This morning we journey four kilometres south of Kandy to visit the Ceylon Tea Museum housed in the 1925 vintage Hantane Tea Factory. The museum, which was recently refurbished, contains good exhibits on tea pioneers James Taylor and Thomas Lipton, as well as old items of machinery once used in the refining of tea. A tea café occupies its entire fourth floor. Different varieties of teas grow in the landscaped grounds surrounding the museum.

Mid-morning we return to Kandy to visit the old royal city, nestled between green hills at an altitude of 500 metres. At its very centre lies a small artificial lake and the palace of the last Sinhalese king, which has become a temple and the holiest shrine in Sri Lanka.

Kandy is popularly known as Senkadagalapura. The patronage of the Sinhala kings enabled the Dinahala culture to flourish for more than two thousand five hundred years, until the occupation of Sri Lanka by the British in 1815. It is also the site of the Temple of the Tooth Relic (the sacred tooth of the Buddha), which is a famous pilgrimage site. Available historical records suggest that Senkadagalapura was established by the King Wickramabahu III (1357-1374). The present name, 'Kandy', is an anglicised version of *Kanda Uda Rata*

('the land of mountains') and originated in the colonial era.

The *Danta Dhatu* ('Tooth Relic of the Buddha') is one of the objects most revered by Buddhists throughout the world. It now lies in the *sancta sanctorum* of the Dalada Maligawa in Kandy enshrined in an embellished reliquary. The relic was brought to the island by chance during the 9th regnal year of King Keerthi Sri Meghavarna (371 AD), and thereafter was protected by kings who paid homage to it with unbound munificence. It also became the palladium of regal authority; no king could rule the country without possessing it.

This afternoon we explore this important shrine which is surrounded by a moat. Its inner sanctum is set on a high podium in a courtyard. This, and the buildings which flank the courtyard, are magnificently decorated with fine sculpture, rich inlay and painting. Nearby, we shall also visit the small museum which exhibits the dead Maligawa Tusker – Raja. He was one of the most celebrated elephants in Asia during his lifetime, and was world famous for his noble behavior. Raja participated at the annual Esala procession in Kandy for around 50 years and was the sacred casket bearer of the final Randoli perehera for 37 years, until he died at the age of 75.

Dalada Maligawa is preceded by a great esplanade outside the moat and is called *Mahamaluva* ('Great Terrace'), which served as a place of public assembly, when the king gave audience from the Pattirippuva (Octagon) above. (Overnight Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy) BLD

### Nuwara Eliya - 1 night

Day 12: Monday 11 January, Kandy – Glenoch – Nuwara Eliya

- Ramboda Pass
- Glenoch Tea Factory
- Walking tour of Nuwara Eliya

This morning we ascend into the central mountain region of Sri Lanka, which preserved its independence from both the Portuguese and the Dutch. The Ramboda Pass (2300 metres) is the highest altitude we reach on our tour. In the lower regions, we enter the area of tea plantations. You will find yourself in a rich, full-green panorama of thousands of tea bushes punctuated by white tea factories. Occasional rice fields and vegetable plantations or gardens appear near villages. We shall visit a tea factory to explore how famous Ceylon tea is hand-plucked and processed.

In the afternoon, we reach Sri Lanka's highest town, Nuwara Eliya, near the peak of Kikilimana (2240 metres). This little resort town, situated 2070 metres above sea level, lies on a small lake and is surrounded by mountains covered with tea bushes. The town has lovely gardens full of flowers and on its edges are vegetable plantations and flower fields.

Following a short orientation walk of the town, we dine together at the hotel's restaurant. (Overnight The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya) BLD

### Udawalawe - 1 night

Day 13: Tuesday 12 January, Nuwara Eliya – Udawalawe

- Udawalawe National Park: Afternoon Jeep Safari (1500-1800hrs)

This morning we depart Nuwara Eliya and journey approximately 150 kilometres south to Udawalawe

National Park, considered the best park in Sri Lanka for elephants. Sri Lankan elephants are the largest and darkest sub-species of Asian elephants, with patches of skin pigmentation on their ears, face, trunk and belly. There are believed to be up to 3000 living across the island, about 900 of which reside in Udawalawe National Park. The reserve, which covers 30,821 hectares and centres on a large reservoir, is also an important habitat for water birds. This afternoon we take a 3-hour jeep safari to view elephants and enjoy the stunning scenery – the dark hills of the Horton Plains form a dramatic backdrop to the open parkland. (Overnight Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort) BLD

## Yala - 2 nights

Day 14: Wednesday 13 January, Udawalawe – Tissamaherama – Yala

- Elephant Transit Home, Udawalawe National Park
- Kataragama Temple Complex, Tissamaherama
- Time at leisure

Supported by the Born Free Foundation, the primary objective of the Elephant Transit Home (Ath Athuru Sevana) is the rehabilitation of orphaned baby elephants and their release back into the wild, many into the Udawalawe National Park. We depart our resort early this morning, in time to view the feeding of the elephant calves which commences at 9.00am.

Next, we drive east to the small town of Tissamaherama and the Kataragama temple complex. Kataragama is Sri Lanka's second most sacred place of pilgrimage. It attracts Sri Lankan Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. The shrine stands in woodland on the banks of a holy river, the Menik Ganga ('River of Jewels'), surrounded by seven low, conical hills. To Buddhists, this forest sanctuary, known as *deviyange kale* ('God's own forest') is where Buddha planted a sapling of the sacred Bo tree of Anuradhapura, sanctifying the spot. To Hindus, Kataragama is the dwelling place of the Hindu war god Skanda. Both Hindu and Buddhist communities believe that the god of Kataragama has the power to intervene benevolently in their affairs, and thousands visit the shrine each year to appeal for divine aid. On arrival, pilgrims wash in the cleansing water of the Menik Ganga, crowding the riverbank. Each throws a coconut to the stony ground, hoping for it to split open, an auspicious omen. (Overnight Cinnamon Wild, Yala) BLD

Day 15: Thursday 14 January, Yala National Park

- Yala National Park: Morning Jeep Safari (0600-0900hrs)
- Time at leisure
- Yala National Park: Afternoon Jeep Safari (1500-1800hrs)

Today we make two excursions by jeep safari to explore Sri Lanka's vast Yala/Ruhuna National Park. Yala / Ruhuna National Park covers almost 1000 square kilometres of scrub jungle, open savanna, riverine woodland and a long coastline which curves around Sri Lanka's south east coast. Ruhuna is the best park in Sri Lanka for spotting mammals. Elephants get top billing. Other mammals include sloth bears, spotted deer, mouse deer, barking deer, samburs, grey langurs, toque monkeys, wild boar, and smaller species, including the stripe-necked and ruddy mongoose and jackals. Both marsh and estuarine crocodiles may be seen, and a day's birding can record as many as 100 species, among them such rarities as red-faced malkoha, great thick-knee, sirkeer malkoha, blue-faced malkoha and painted stork. You may see elephants, wild pigs, deer, monkeys and even the elusive pangolin drinking from the same pool, along with conspicuously colourful peacocks and jungle fowl. (Overnight Cinnamon Wild, Yala) BLD

## Galle - 2 nights

#### Day 16: Friday 15 January, Yala – Mulgirigala – Galle

- Pabala Vihara Rock Temple, Mulgirigala
- **Physical Endurance:** the ascent to the rock temples of Mulgirigala involves a very steep climb with approx. 500 steps.

This morning we drive around the south coast of Sri Lanka to Galle. We leave the coast for a time at Tangalle and drive north to Mulgirigala. Here, we visit a cave temple in a monolithic rock which contains reclining Buddha figures in smiling repose as well as standing and seated Buddha figures, surrounded by wall paintings depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha. The rock is crowned by a Buddhist shrine.

To the west of Tangalle, the coastal scenery changes from the more open landscapes of the dry zone of south eastern Sri Lanka to the lush green of the southwest. We continue westward and at Dondora pass reach the southernmost point of the island. For some time we drive past long, white, palm-fringed beaches until we reach the historic town of Galle. (Overnight Fort Bazaar or Galle Fort Hotel) BLD

#### Day 17: Saturday 16 January, Galle

- Old Town of Galle & Portuguese/Dutch Fort
- Sooriya Weaving

Early this morning we tour the old city of Galle, which has a well-preserved fort with powerful ramparts. When Lanka was ruled by the Sinhalese Kings, *Gaalla* or Galle, which takes its name from a place where bullock carts collected, was an important entrepot. Its importance derived from its strategic position at the convergence of trade routes from Egypt, Persia, Arabia, Eastern China, Malaysia and Singapore. Galle exported spices, pearls, and gems such as sapphires, rubies, cat's eye and semi-precious gems like tourmaline, amethysts, and moon stones. The people of Galle also sold exquisite curios made of tortoise shell, ebony, porcupine quills and elephants' tusks. Some of these items are still sold in the city bazaar. In 1505, the Portuguese Lorenzo De Almeida, son of the Viceroy of Goa, took the town and re-named it Santa Cruz. The Portuguese fortified the city and eventually came to control the whole coastal fringe of the island. The Portuguese cultural stamp in Sri Lanka is particularly strong in language, religion, education, administration, food, dress, music and drama. The surnames Pereira, Silva and Peiris and personal names like Peduru, Franciscu, Juvan, Singho, Don and Dona reflect the Portuguese presence. Baila music was first introduced here by the Portuguese. In 1640, the Dutch stormed the fortress. They incorporated the remains of the Portuguese fortification in an imposing new fort for the protection of the harbour. They planned a township inside the fort with a grided street pattern and built low roofed houses with massive walls and large doors and windows. They constructed an underground system of brick paved sewers, which was flushed by the action of the tides. They built a large church – The Dutch Reformed Church – which can be seen today. It was after 140 years of rule that the Dutch ceded the country to the British (1876). Galle reached the height of its development in the 18th, century before the arrival of the British. It is the best example of a fortified city built by Europeans in South and South-East Asia, showing the interaction between European architectural styles and South Asian traditions.

Galle has a fine, safe harbour – the mountain of Rumassala, called 'Buona Vista' by the British, and the promontory called Clossenberg jutting out into the sea at Magalle. Bouna Vista affords a magnificent view of the Galle harbour, the Fort and the surrounding area. According to legend, Rumassala is a chunk of the Himalayan mountain brought here by Hanuman, the monkey General of Rama. When Rama was at war with Rawana, the latter introduced a poisonous gas to the battlefield which caused Rama to faint and fall down. When Rama fell unconscious, Hanuman remembered that on the Himalayan mountain there grew a herb which was an efficacious remedy. Thither he forthwith flew but was unable to locate the herb. Impatiently,



he tore off a large slice of ground from the Himalayas, which he was sure contained the herb and flew with it post haste to Lanka. The herb was located and hastily administered to the sufferer who immediately revived. Thereafter the chunk of mountain was thrown away and the promontory it formed is now known as Rumassala, where a variety of medicinal plant is still believed to grow.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, we visit Sooriya Weaving, a handloom factory producing traditional cotton textiles. Here we may view the entire process of natural dyeing to weaving. This evening is at leisure; there are numerous restaurants within easy walking distance of your hotel. (Overnight Fort Bazaar or Galle Fort Hotel) BL

### Colombo - 2 nights

Day 18: Sunday 17 January, Galle – Bentota – Kosgoda – Colombo

- Gardens of the Lunuganga Estate, Bentota
- Kosgoda Sea Turtle Conservation Project (KSTCP), Kosgoda

We depart Galle this morning and drive northwards along the palm-fringed coast, passing well-known beach resorts at Hikkaduwa, Bentota, Beruwala, and Kalutara. There is lots to be seen along the way. There are 'toddy-tappers', young men who climb high into the trees to collect the sweet, milky sap of the coconut blossom.

Mid-morning, we visit the Lunuganga Estate, which was the country house of Sri Lanka's – and one of Asia's – most influential architects, Geoffrey Bawa (1919-2003). Established in the 1940s, the gardens have a large collection of exotic plants and trees.

Of the seven sea turtle species in the world, five (the green, leatherback, loggerhead, hawksbill, and olive ridley) nest in Sri Lanka. Nesting occurs throughout the year, but March to May is considered the nesting season, with a peak in April. This afternoon we visit the The Kosgoda Sea Turtle Conservation Project, a private NGO funded by the UN that is working to combine local income generation with conservation. The main aim of the project is to monitor local sea turtle activity and conserve the local nesting sites. One of its most important sections is its hatchery; collected and rescued eggs can hatch safely away from predators before being released into the sea. (Overnight Galle Face Hotel, Colombo) BLD

Day 19: Monday 18 January, Colombo

- Geoffrey Bawa's Colombo Residence "Number 11" (by special appointment)
- The National Museum
- Afternoon at leisure
- Farewell Dinner

By special appointment, this morning we visit Geoffrey Bawa's Colombo Residence 'Number 11', a so-called 'essay in architectural bricolage'. Its airy, white-walled interiors have an exquisite, refined simplicity. Geoffrey Bawa lived in Number 11 for forty years and it functioned as his town house at the times when he had not escaped to his favourite garden retreat – Lunuganga in Bentota.

We end our morning program with a visit to The National Museum. The first public museum to be established in Sri Lanka (1877), it is best known for its collection of antiquities and art works displaying the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. It includes the national treasures and artefacts from all parts of the island. A section of the first floor houses the Puppetry and Children's Museum. The museum also houses a library

with a collection of about 500,000 books, many of them very rare. It also holds more than 4000 ancient palm leaf manuscripts.

Following an afternoon at leisure, we enjoy a farewell meal at a local restaurant. (Overnight Galle Face Hotel, Colombo) BD

#### Day 20: Tuesday 19 January, Depart Colombo

- Colombo City Orientation Tor: Shri Ponnambalawaneswarama Kovil, Wolvendaal Church, Jami Ul Alfar Mosque, Pettah and the Gangaramaya Temple (incl. the Seema Malaka)
- Afternoon at leisure
- Evening airport transfer for participants departing the ASA 'designated' flight

This morning we explore the city by coach. Colombo, the commercial capital of Sri Lanka, has a population of over a million souls. Most of Colombo's colonial monuments, mainly from the British era, are located in the fort area in the very centre of the city. Nearby, Pettah is the city's busiest and most traditional bazaar, a hive of human activities and a treasury of architectural memories. Here, we visit the Wolvendaal Church, one of Sri Lanka's most important Dutch Colonial era buildings and one of the oldest Protestant churches still in use in the country.

Most Sri Lankan Hindu temples do not have the elaborate sculptures and solid black granite construction of their South Indian counterparts. The exception is the Sri Ponnambalawaneswarama Temple, which we shall visit, dedicated to Shiva, which is a peerless example of ancient Dravidian architecture.

We also view the Gangarayama Temple, an eclectic mix of Sri Lankan, Thai, Indian and Chinese architecture. The complex includes a library, museum and an extraordinary array of gilded gifts. A highlight is the Seema Malaka, which is situated in the Beira Lake. This beautiful temple, which is dedicated to rest and meditation rather than active worship, was originally constructed in the 19th century and later redesigned by Geoffrey Bawa in 1976.

The afternoon will be at leisure to enjoy the facilities of the hotel. In the early evening, participants departing on the ASA 'designated' flight will be transferred to the airport for their flight back to Australia. B

## Accommodation

Accommodation is in a range of 4 and 5-star hotels, many of them in heritage buildings and palaces. All rooms have en suite bathrooms; several hotels have swimming pools and provide foreign exchange and internet service. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

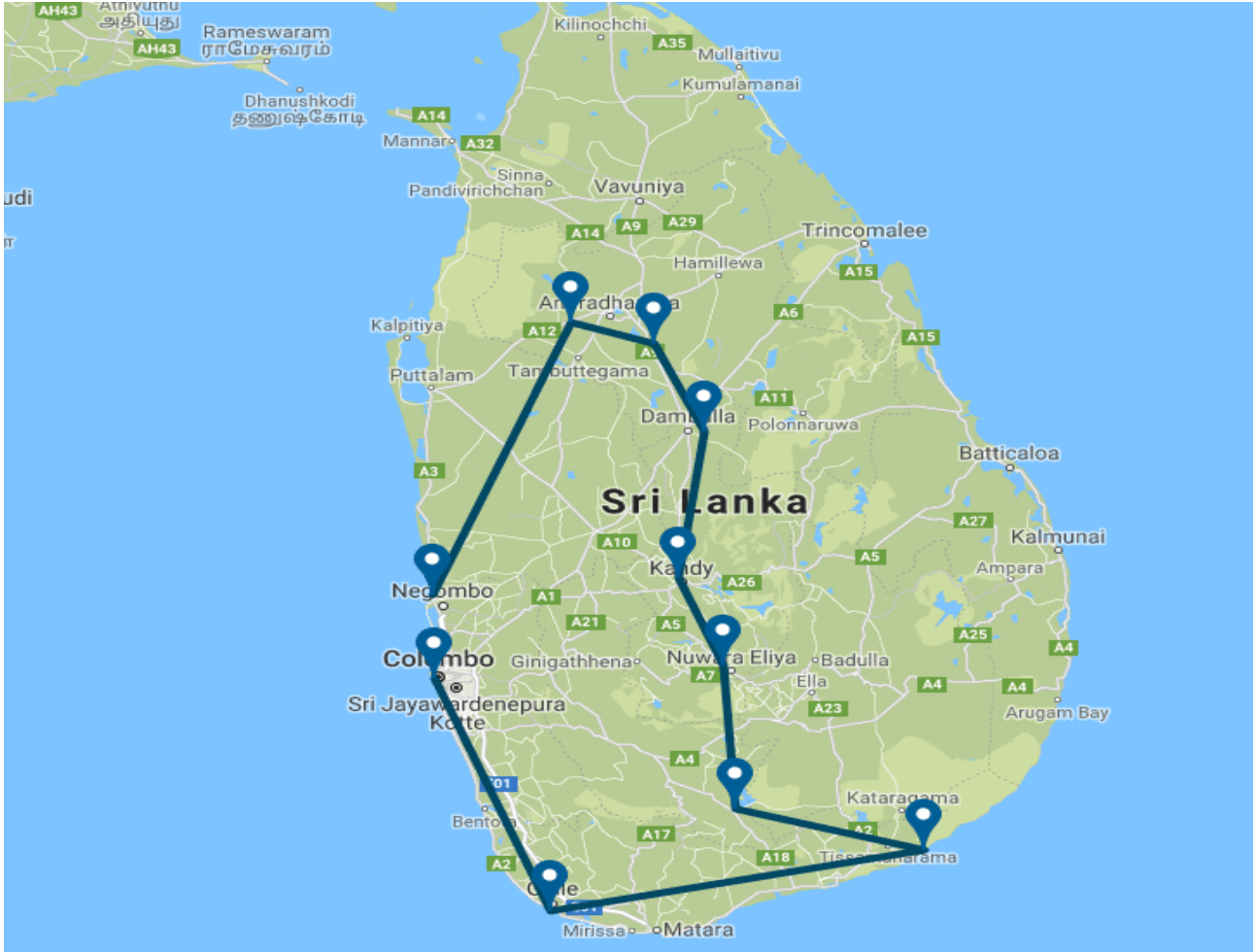
- Negombo (1 night): 5-star Jetwing Blue – a two-minute walk from the beach, all rooms feature a balcony with views over the ocean. [www.jetwinghotels.com](http://www.jetwinghotels.com)
- Andarawewa, Anuradhapura (2 nights): 4-star Forest Rock Garden Resort – a boutique hotel surrounded by 50 acres of wilderness. The design of this complex is inspired by temples, palaces and monasteries of ancient Anuradhapura. The restaurant serves traditional Sri Lankan and Western vegetarian cuisine. [www.forestrockgarden.lk](http://www.forestrockgarden.lk)
- Thirappane, Anuradhapura (2 nights): 5-star Ulagalla Resort – once a chieftain's mansion, Ulagalla features a 150-year-old mansion at its centre, with 20 private ecologically-built pool villas spread across 58 acres of lush greenery. [www.ugaescapes.com](http://www.ugaescapes.com)
- Dambulla (3 nights): 5-star Heritage Kandalama – designed by Geoffrey Bawa, this unique design hotel combines spectacular architecture with panoramic views of Sigiriya Rock Fortress across the horizon of Kandalama Lake. [www.heritagehotels.com](http://www.heritagehotels.com)
- Kandy (3 nights): 4-star Cinnamon Citadel – a modern hotel located by the Mahaweli River, 20 minutes drive from Kandy, offering views of the surrounding mountains. [www.cinnamonhotels.com](http://www.cinnamonhotels.com)
- Nuwara Eliya (1 night): 4-star The Grand Hotel – built in 1891, this was the palatial residence of the former Governor of Sri Lanka, Sir Edward Barnes. The Elizabethan-era manor house is surrounded by manicured lawns and tropical greenery. <https://thegrandhotelnuwaraeliya.com>
- Udawalawe (1 night): 4-star Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort – an eco-friendly resort located within a 10-minute drive from the famous Udawalawe National Park and 500m from the Elephant Transit Home. [udawalawesafari.com](http://udawalawesafari.com)
- Yala (2 nights): 4-star Cinnamon Wild Yala – a forest lodge resort located on the border of Yala National Park, offering accommodation in chalets with private balconies with views of the beach or jungle. [www.cinnamonhotels.com](http://www.cinnamonhotels.com)
- Galle (1 night): 5-star Fort Bazaar – a boutique hotel housed in a former 16-century merchant home. [www.teardrop-hotels.com](http://www.teardrop-hotels.com) and 5-star Galle Fort Hotel – a boutique hotel housed in a former 18th-century Dutch mansion and warehouse. [www.galleforhotel.com](http://www.galleforhotel.com) Note: in order to stay inside the historic Fort of Galle the group will be sub-divided between these two charming boutique hotels.
- Colombo (2 nights): 5-star Galle Face Hotel – built in 1864, this iconic and colonial-style hotel is a one-minute walk from the beach. [gallefacehotel.com](http://gallefacehotel.com)

Note: Hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.

### Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double (or twin) room for single occupancy throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

## Tour Map



## Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 31 March 2026

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only

AUD \$TBA Double (as single) Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 4- and 5-star hotels
- All meals, indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may only include tea, coffee and bottled water.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach; safaris to Wilpattu, Minneriya, Udawalawe, Yala and Bundala National Parks will be undertaken using Mitsubishi L-200 4WD or Toyota Hilux.
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Tour reference book
- Bottled water provided daily during site excursions
- Services of a Sri Lankan National Guide
- Entrance fees
- Tips for the coach driver, National guide and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Colombo, Colombo-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas as applicable



## Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level 

### Level 3 - Challenging

Among our most physically demanding

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to seven hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace; some days for at least 5-7km.
- negotiate challenging historic and archaeological sites many of which are large and unsheltered and spread over rocky and uneven terrain. For example, this includes the sites of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.
- climb multiple flights of stairs without duress. This represents the most challenging aspect of the tour. Sites include:
  - Yapahuwa Fortress via two steep staircases
  - Mihintale via two steep staircases
  - Avukana via 2 flights of steps
  - Sasseruwa with approx. 300 steps
  - Dambulla Temple Complex with approx. 800 steps
  - Sigiriya Rock Fortress with approx. 1200 steps
  - Aluvihare with approx. 360 steps
  - Mulkirigala Rock Temple with approx. 500 steps.
- cope with a demanding tour schedule which involves some longer days, regular early morning starts (a couple of safaris commence at 5.30am), and long distance coach travel over variable road conditions. This includes safaris by 4WD to Wilpattu, Udawalawe and Yala National Parks, and Hurulu Eco Parks.
- Cope with safaris which are generally of 3 hours duration; there are usually no toilets available during these excursions.

- tolerate cuisine which may be significantly different from your usual diet, and where catering for special dietary requirements may be limited. There is a risk of gastric ailments. Some hotels and restaurants only serve vegetarian meals. This applies to the Forest Rock Garden Resort, and for other hotels during public holidays.
- withstand varying climatic conditions such as humidity and heat.

### Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at [www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/](http://www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/)

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

It is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

### Weather in January

In January Sri Lanka enjoys long warm days and clear blue skies, making it one of the most popular months to visit the country. Colombo and the Cultural Triangle, generally receives minimal rainfall with average daily temperatures of 27° (Celsius). Kandy and the hills of the Tea Country are also at their finest as the weather warms up, taking an edge of those chilly mornings and cooler evenings. Kandy has lower daytime temperatures of 20°C on average.

### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan visa is an ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation). Participants will receive from ASA the relevant visa application forms prior to departure.

## Booking Conditions

### ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.



# Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TOUR DATES \_\_\_\_\_

## Booking before the tour price is available

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$800.00 per person applicable for International tours OR AUD\$300.00 per person applicable for Australian tours. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your full deposit is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

**OR**

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).

## Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr  Mrs  Ms  Miss  Dr  Other \_\_\_\_\_

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MIDDLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SURNAME \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

TEL. (AH) ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ TEL. (BH) ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ GENDER Male  Female

## Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like:  a twin-bedded room  a double-bedded room  a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling:  on my own  with a friend/family member Travel Companion \_\_\_\_\_

## Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish  poultry  red meat  dairy products

eggs  pork  nuts

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence  Postal Mail  Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour.

ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities *without assistance or support*:-

- walk & stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_





# Intention to Travel Payment

## Tour / Course Name

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Name of Traveller 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Traveller 2 \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate):  Cheque  Direct Debit (see below)  Credit Card (see below)

## International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

### By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

### Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

### Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ  
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic  
Swift Code ANZBAU3M  
BSB 013-423  
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. \_\_\_\_\_

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date Money Transferred  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my:  Mastercard  Visa  American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number  
\_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code (CVC) \_\_\_\_\_

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Name  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Billing Address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode  
\_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Country  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cardholders Signature  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## AUSTRALIANS STUDYING ABROAD

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