

COLOURS of SRI LANKA

THE GREAT ESCAPE

A well balanced holiday exploring the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka before relaxing on a Maldivian Island. Relaxing and rewarding, this two week holiday is ideal for those looking for a little winter sun.

Day 01 Depart London for Colombo with Sri Lankan Airlines.

Day 02 Arrive Colombo. You will be met on arrival in Colombo and transferred by road up into the interior of the island, to Kandy.

Kandy is the old capital of Ceylon and the seat of the last Singhalese kingdom. It is a charming city with the most important Buddhist temple in the country and is set around an ancient artificial lake amongst rolling hills that are covered by forests and tea plantations. Set in the mountainous area of the island, there are fantastic views over the city from some of the hotels. The Botanical gardens are fantastic with an excellent orchid house and a wide variety of plant species from all over the world. For keen gardeners I would recommend at least a morning to visit the gardens, possibly longer. There is also a local dance performance which is a little touristy but entertaining none the less.



Kandy is a great place to buy gemstones, although the prices are higher than in Ratnapura, further south. Sapphires of all colours, rubies, tourmalines and spinels can all be found here.

Day 02 - 04 **EARL'S REGENCY, KANDY – 2 NIGHTS.** Half Board included. Although not within walking distance from the main attractions, it offers a far superior level of service and comfort than any of the hotels in the centre. Large rooms with views over the river, an inviting pool, elegant bar and a clean and efficient restaurant all combine to give the customer a sophisticated experience.

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Day 03 You will have the opportunity to visit the Elephant Orphanage.

This is about an hours drive from Kandy and is a good chance for people to get up close and personal with a pachyderm. It is a good idea to go and have lunch by the river as after feeding, they are all brought down to bathe and to watch them from a vantage point with a cold drink is a pleasant experience.



In the evening, you will be taken to the Temple of the Tooth to see the blessing ceremony with all the fanfare, drums, trumpets and brightly coloured Monks performing their rituals.

You will also have the chance to visit the Botanical Gardens and to see a cultural show whilst in Kandy.

Day 04 You will be transferred into the Cultural Triangle. On the way, you will have the chance to visit spice gardens growing a variety of spices, such as cinnamon, pepper and nutmeg. These are the places to invest in top quality Ayurvedic remedies and oils, although they do not come cheap. It was for these spices that Sri Lanka was initially colonised by the Portuguese, Dutch and British. You will also go via the Dambulla Cave Temples.

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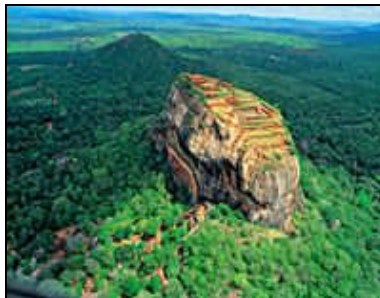
Day 04 - 07 **THE LODGE, HABARANA – 3 NIGHTS.** Half Board included.

This property has one of the best locations in the cultural triangle. Large, shady gardens surrounding a peaceful lake are interspersed with beautiful and elegantly designed chalets, with French windows and private terraces.



Day 05 - 06 Free to explore the Cultural Triangle.

Sigiriya is possibly the most impressive site in Sri Lanka. Situated on the top of a vast 200m granite rock lie the ruins of the legendary sky citadel (477 AD), which is famous for its frescoes of celestial maidens. Although it is a steep climb to the top the views and frescoes are definitely worth the effort.



Visit Minneriya Sanctuary by jeep (at about 15:30), which is a huge water tank of 300ha, built in the 4th century by King Mahasena. The region is home to wild elephant, which in the afternoon gather in huge herds on the shores of the lake to drink and bathe.

The Dambulla Cave Temples date back to the 1st century BC. They are sited on a gigantic granite outcrop, which towers more than 160m above the surrounding land. The insides of the caves are completely covered by ancient frescoes depicting religious and secular scenes and house hundreds of statues, many of which are carved out of the living rock and the largest of which is the 15m long dying Buddha.

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Polonnaruwa was the island's medieval capital between the 11th and 13th century. Built along side a large ancient artificial lake there are well-preserved ruins of palaces, bathing pools, stupas and exquisite rock sculptures of Buddha. Later visit the museum, which though small, is excellent.



Ritigala used to be the royal medicinal forest for the ancient cities in the area and was also the site for an important Buddhist monastic community which established itself in the area from the 3rd century BC. Today the visible remains are those of the monastic congregation, which practised meditation in total austerity, preferring the wild environment of the forests to the busy town. Rarely visited by tourists, this mystical place is incredibly beautiful and unspoilt, with shady forests filled with streams, pools, sculptural granite boulders and ancient elegant stone pathways, which wind through the forest to the ruins of the various meditation platforms. Ritigala can be visited at any time of the day since it is wonderfully cool and free of tourists.

Aukana, meaning 'Sun Eater', is the site of the island's largest and best preserved ancient statue of Buddha. Carved from rock in the 5th century AD, it stands 13 metres high. The statue is spectacular and the drive to reach it is very pretty, much of which is along the dykes of the ancient manmade lakes. Look out for the tame 'wild' boar, which is very friendly and enjoys receiving the attention of visitors!

Anuradhapura is Sri Lanka's most sacred town, dating back to the 6th century BC. It was made capital in 377 BC and remained an important centre of power until the 12th century AD. Most memorable are its gleaming white dagobas – large bell like structures, some of which are almost 60 metres high and which house Buddhist relics.

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However, Anuradhapura is best known for the Sri Maha Bodhi, which is the oldest documented tree in the world (2200 years). This was grown from a cutting of the Bo tree, under which Buddha achieved enlightenment.

Day 07 You will be met at the hotel and transferred back to Colombo. This is an interesting journey, travelling through rural areas and small villages. Each one specialises in a different local industry, such as cashew nuts, pineapples and reed weaving.

Colombo is a highly underrated city with a vibrant artistic community and some excellent galleries, shops and restaurants.



Day 07 - 08 **HILTON COLOMBO, COLOMBO – 1 NIGHT.** Breakfast included. Located in the heart of the city, this is a 5* hotel with helpful staff, good attention to detail and a choice of restaurant and facilities. The rooms are elegant and comfortable and have lovely views over either the ocean and lagoon or the harbour.

Day 08 You will be transferred to the airport in time to catch your flight to Male with Sri Lankan Airlines.

On arrival in Male, you will be directed to the jetty, where you will meet the seaplane that will take you to your island resort.

Day 08 - 14 **MIRIHI ISLAND RESORT, MALDIVES – 6 NIGHTS.** Half Board included. A small, picturesque island that is a short seaplane flight from the airport. The décor is simple yet elegant and there is a choice of dining. Guests have complimentary use of selected watersports facilities and the house reef is definitely worth exploring.

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Day 14 You will be transferred back to the airport in time to check in for your flight back to London, via Colombo, with Sri Lankan Airlines.

END OF OUR SERVICES

**PRICE: FROM £2427 PER PERSON SHARING
(SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY AND CHANGE)**

PRICE INCLUDES:

International flights with Sri Lankan Airlines in Economy class.
Special Welcome and Assistance at the airport in Colombo.
Seaplane transfers as per itinerary.
Transfers as per itinerary in a private, air-conditioned car, with the services of an English speaking chauffeur guide for the tour.
Hotel Accommodation on half board basis, except for the Hilton, which is on bed and breakfast basis.
Entrance to The temple of the Tooth, Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Ritigala and the Dambulla Cave Temples.
A Cultural Show in Kandy.
Jeep Service and tracker fees at Minneriya National Park.

PRICE EXCLUDES:

Meals and Services not detailed.
Airport tax upon departure
Items of a personal nature (Laundry, telephone calls, photographic permits, tips, medical bills, visa charges and travel insurance etc.)
Anything not included in the 'price includes' section.