

Touring Holidays in Sri Lanka

Expressions



Active family tour of Sri Lanka



www.expressionsholidays.co.uk
01392 441250

Active family tour of Sri Lanka

13 NIGHTS / 14 DAYS

Negombo • Sigiriya • Polonnaruwa
• Kandy • Yala • Galle • Bentota



Sri Lankan elephants

Families will love all that Sri Lanka has to offer. On this active family touring holiday, we have chosen hotels that are very welcoming to families whilst providing an authentic flavour of Sri Lanka. You experience all aspects of Sri Lanka: wildlife, culture, scenery, history and beaches.

ABOUT THIS TOUR

This tour takes you through the main cultural This 13-night touring holiday of Sri Lanka with a driver-guide is tailored for families who wish to have an authentic and immersive experience of all the country has to offer. You can spot elephants in the wild, mess about on the beach, visit a turtle hatchery or go on a whale-watching trip as well as visiting impressive cultural heritage sites. Many of the hotels we offer have family rooms or inter-connecting rooms. Additional activities can be arranged to tailor the day-by-day visits to your own interests. This holiday can be undertaken staying in a range of hotels. To make things simple initially we are giving a Luxury option and a Value option. Each combination is based on tried and tested hotels within given price ranges but any other hotels we feature in the respective regions can be included instead and of course, Luxury and Value hotels can be mixed.

PRICES

From £2,730 per person - value option
From £2,920 per person - luxury option

Based on double occupancy in hotels mentioned in the back of this document, with flights to and from Colombo, and private chauffeur-guide.

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return scheduled flights with Sri Lankan Airlines to Colombo in economy class
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in Negombo
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in Sigiriya
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in Kandy
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in Yala
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in Galle
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in Bentota
- Private English-speaking chauffeur-guide in an air-conditioned Japanese car throughout the itinerary
- Concierge service and Expressions Holidays regional helpful hints

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Visa
- Meals and drinks, unless specified
- Personal travel insurance
- Additional nights in any destination

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Negombo • Sigiriya • Polonnaruwa • Kandy • Yala • Galle • Bentota

Expressions

Day one: Arrive in Colombo and continue to Negombo

On arrival in Colombo, you will be met by your English-speaking chauffeur guide who will accompany you throughout your journey of Sri Lanka in an air-conditioned vehicle. Drive to Negombo, a town which is set amid lush groves of coconut palms, breathes the spirit of the sea and shows its interesting colonial past with many historical buildings. You will stay here for 1 night.

Day two: Negombo to Sigiriya

Today, depart for the Cultural Triangle (approximately 4 hours), a melting pot of heritage, culture and wildlife and home to a wealth of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Sri Lanka boasts a phenomenal eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, four of which are in the dry Central Province. Between them they tell a fascinating story of Sri Lanka's civilisation. You will stay in Sigiriya for 3 nights. En route, you will visit the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage, (approximately 1 hour from Kandy). Pinnawala is a government-run elephant orphanage, where abandoned or injured elephants are reared. They live in a large enclosed area and are herded to the river twice a day for bathing. There may be an element of a zoo about Pinnawala but it does offer the best chance to get close to these magnificent animals. The number of elephants has increased to more than 65 now, with more than 25 babies born as a result of the captive breeding programme.

Day three: Sigiriya and local village visit

This morning set off to climb the spectacular rock fortress of Sigiriya, with its rocky abode and water gardens. This World Heritage Site is one of the island's most awe-inspiring archaeological sites and a prime tourist attraction. It is also known as Lion Rock because of the huge lion that used to stand at the entrance to the Palace on the summit of the 600-foot high rock. On one of the stairways the only known ancient work of Sinhala secular painting survives in the form of frescoes of 21 life sized damsels still shining in their original colours. You can stroll through the ruins of palace and gardens down below and admire the rock without climbing up all the steps. However, to fully appreciate Sigiriya, you have to climb a series of steep, and sometimes narrow, steps taking you up one side of the rock to the summit. At the top you get majestic views of the surrounding jungle and you can walk around the foundations of the palace, replete with bathing pool. Part-way up the rock, you can divert to climb a spiral iron staircase to view the famous Sigiriya frescoes. Later this afternoon, you will be driven the short distance from Sigiriya



Sigiriya

is Hiriwaduna Village, where you will have the opportunity to meet and interact with the local villagers. You can help in some of their daily tasks, such as farming and cooking, or even be taken on a bullock cart ride through a banana plantation, tasting the ripe bananas along the way!

Day four: Polonnaruwa

After breakfast, leave for the world heritage site of Polonnaruwa via Habarana, Minneriya and Giritala (approximately 2 hours' drive). In the 12th Century AD, the mediaeval capital of Polonnaruwa was one of the great urban centres in South Asia. Today, the well-preserved ruins give you the chance to experience the grandeur of this period and marvel at the artistry of the island's early craftsmen. Highlights are the Royal Palace and Council Chamber, and the graceful Buddha statues at Gal Vihara, the pinnacle of Sri Lankan rock carving. The site also hosts many distinctly South Indian-style Hindu temples. Set amongst gently undulating woodland, the monkeys, giant lizards and birdlife in abundance, the historical site is visited using a combination of driving and on foot; or else hire a bike and cycle around (best visited early morning or late afternoon because this is the dry zone). On your return journey, as you pass through Minneriya, it is likely that you will see wild elephants, sometimes in large herds. This is the site of the 'Elephant Gathering' between July and October, where up to 300 elephants can be seen gathering around the tank in the late afternoon

Day five: Sigiriya to Kandy

After breakfast, head south towards Sri Lanka's hill country. En route, you will visit the beautiful cave temples of Dambulla, another World Heritage Site. Used as a refuge since the 1st Century BC, each cave is filled with murals depicting scenes from the Buddha's life and gilded statues of the Buddha in various poses. The temple is spiritual and mesmerising with no less than 150 Buddhist statues in the five caves. There are images of Buddhist deities all around and the fantastic frescos on the walls and ceilings portray the life of Buddha. This visit will include a 10-15 minute uphill climb on foot, but you are rewarded with the most fantastic views overlooking the plain. You will then continue on your journey to Kandy, which was the last capital of the Sinhalese kingdom and is today still an important cultural and spiritual centre. On the way pause to visit a famous spice garden and authentic arts and crafts centre. Explore this picturesque lake-side city with its wealth of antique and gemstone shops, a bustling market and numerous restaurants. You will stay in Kandy for 2 nights.

Day six: Kandy

FrHave day at your leisure to explore Kandy. This royal capital of the hill country is a UNESCO world heritage site, built beside a placid lake surrounded by hills. Thanks to these natural fortifications, the Kandyan kingdom held out against colonial invaders for centuries. It was the last stronghold of the Sinhalese Kings during the Portuguese, Dutch and British rule and finally ceded to

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Negombo • Sigiriya • Polonnaruwa • Kandy • Yala • Galle • Bentota

Expressions

the British in 1815 after an agreement. To the Buddhists of Sri Lanka and the World, Kandy is one of the most sacred sites as it is the home of the "Dalada Maligawa" - Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha. This tooth of the Lord Buddha is said to have been brought from India in the third century and there are three daily ceremonies of homage by white-robed pilgrims. In the evening, join the crowds to visit Kandy's famous Temple of the Tooth and enjoy a traditional Kandyan dance show. This is one of the most sacred sites for Buddhists, containing the tooth relic of Lord Buddha.

Day seven: Kandy to Yala

This morning enjoy more mountain scenery on the way to Ella Gap, where the mountains dramatically drop down to the plains of the south, continuing to the south-east coast of the island. This nature resort is located in ten acres of jungle bordering the entrance of Yala National Park and the Indian Ocean. A variety of wild animals are seen in the grounds, such as monkeys, wild boar and the occasional elephant. Yala is most famous for its leopards and has one of the highest densities of leopards in the world, offering the best chance to see them in the wild. This is a very dry terrain with little shade, bordered by a beautiful coastline and interspersed with watering holes. Daytime temperatures reach around 30c, so it is a dry heat with little rainfall. You will stay in Yala for 2 nights.

Day eight: Yala Safari

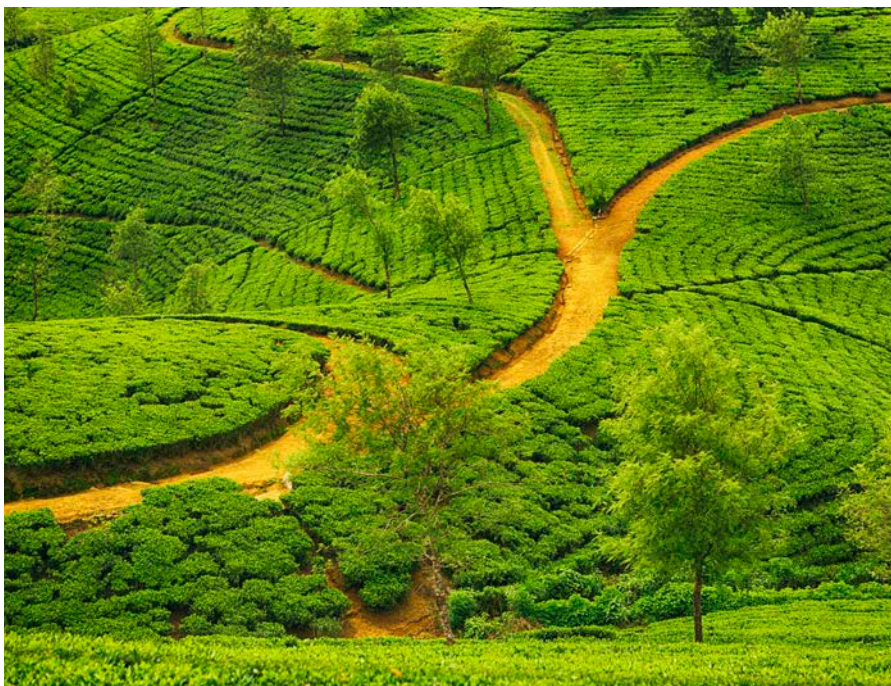
Begin early this morning for a wildlife safari by jeep. Elephants, sloth bear, sambhur and buffaloes are amongst the animals also seen in the park. You will see that Sri Lanka is blessed to have the opportunity to showcase a huge amount of fascinating wildlife, all of which you will experience during your safaris. Because of the high density of leopards in Yala, the lack of other carnivores means that the leopard is the top predator, so adults and cubs can be remarkably relaxed during the day. Young males in particular seem to have no fear of the jeep which can lead to some excellent photographic opportunities. On an afternoon safari, watch out for crocodiles basking in the evening sun.

Day nine: Yala to Galle

After breakfast, you will depart for Galle (approximately 3 to 4 hours). Visit the historic Galle Fort and Galle cricket stadium. There are myriad narrow streets to explore within the city walls and some lovely small shops selling crafts, jewellery and antiques. You will stay in Galle for 2 nights.

Day ten: Galle

During your day in Galle, there is time to take



Tea country

an optional guided tour of the Galle Fort but also to visit low country tea estates, take a river boat trip or visit the Kottawa and Hiyare Rainforests or Samakanda organic farm. A whale and dolphin watching trip can also be arranged from Mirissa (December to April).

Day eleven: Galle to Bentota

Drive north along the coast to spend three nights in a beach hotel in Bentota. Along the way, you will stop at Ambalangoda where wooden mask carvings are made and see the traditional methods of creating these masks and stop at the Kosgodia Turtle Hatchery.

Day twelve: Bentota

Bentota itself is best known for its long, picturesque stretches of sandy beach and whilst here. Boat trips on the river are increasingly popular; take a raft to enjoy the silence of the mangrove swamps.

Day thirteen: Bentota

On your third day in Bentota, you may wish to explore the town of Bentota itself, which straddles along the main road from Colombo to Galle and offers an insight into local life and customs. There is a modern shopping centre and a marketplace. There is also a handicraft centre on the roadside south of the town.

Day thirteen: Departure from Colombo

Transfer to the airport (approximately 1.5 hours) for your departure.

OPTIONAL

It is possible to add extra nights in the south of Sri Lanka, perhaps in Galle.

HOTEL LIST FOR THIS HOLIDAY

This holiday can be undertaken staying in a range of hotels. To make things simple initially we are giving a Luxury option and a Value option. Each combination is based on tried and tested hotels within given price ranges but any other hotels we feature in the respective regions can be included instead and of course, Luxury and Value hotels can be mixed.

Luxury option

Negombo: Jetwing Beach, Deluxe rooms on bed and breakfast.

Sigiriya: Aliya, Deluxe rooms on bed and breakfast.

Kandy: Mahaweli Reach, situated on the banks of the mighty Mahaweli River, this hotel was the first in the Hill capital to obtain a five-star rating. There is a relaxing Ayurvedic spa and regular evening features to keep you entertained. Deluxe rooms on bed and breakfast.

Yala: Jetwing Yala, set just on the outskirts of Yala National Park, this resort is a fantastic stay for those who want to experience Sri Lankan wildlife in proximity yet accompanied by safari guides. Take a dip in the huge outdoor swimming pool and relax in the scenic surroundings. Superior rooms on bed and

breakfast.

Galle: Galle Fort Hotel. This is a discreet luxury boutique hotel in the historic Dutch fort. Double rooms on bed and breakfast.

Bentota: Vivanta by Taj, overlooking the Indian Ocean with a long, palm-fringed beach, this hotel is a first-class resort offering an excellent range of facilities including four restaurants, swimming pool, fitness centre and nearby water sports centre. Superior charm rooms on bed and breakfast.

Value option

Negombo: Jetwing Beach, Deluxe rooms on bed and breakfast.

Habarana: Cinnamon Lodge, Superior rooms on half board.

Kandy: Amaya Hills, Superior rooms on bed and breakfast.

Yala: Jetwing Yala, Superior rooms on bed and breakfast.

Galle: Fort Printers, an 18th Century mansion, recently restored into a small boutique hotel in the heart of the historic Galle Fort. The mansion itself traces its origins to the Dutch period although Moslem traders and English colonialists, and spells as a printing house and a school, have also contributed to its unique character, Double rooms on bed and breakfast.

Bentota: Avani Bentota, Standard rooms on bed and breakfast.



Leopard

MAP OF ACTIVE FAMILY TOUR OF SRI LANKA

The map below illustrates the route outlined in this touring itinerary, with overnight stops and places of interest highlighted.



GENERAL INFORMATION

This touring holiday is one of several suggested holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want, including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay in one location too, perhaps at the end of the itinerary. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

The logo for Expressions Holidays, featuring the word "Expressions" in a white, elegant cursive font on a dark blue rectangular background.

OUR TOURS

Our touring holidays are for individuals travelling on their own or in their own family group. You do not join a group, but are escorted by your own private English-speaking chauffeur-guide.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of flights and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

Sri Lankan Airways operates daily flights to Colombo from London Heathrow. Most flights leave London in the afternoon or evening. Flight time is about 11 hours. There is economy and a business class cabin. In recent years, the business class cabins have been upgraded to fully reclining flat-beds. From Colombo you can also take the Sri Lankan air taxi to regional centres throughout the country. Sri Lankan Airways also operates flights to the Maldives via Colombo, making Sri Lanka and the Maldives a perfect two-centre combination.

TRAVEL WITHIN SRI LANKA

We include private transfers with all our holidays to Sri Lanka, and a personal chauffeur with all our touring holidays. Your English-speaking chauffeur-guide will meet you on arrival at Colombo airport, then accompany you on your journey around the island. All our holidays are for individuals, so you travel as your own party and do not join a group. It is also possible to hire a car in Sri Lanka, which can be arranged locally or in advance. A more popular option is to hire a car with driver for day trips or excursions, which, again, can be arranged by us in advance or by the hotel locally.

TOURING HOLIDAYS

A touring holiday of Sri Lanka is at the heart of what many of our clients want to experience from this fascinating country, and it is where we excel at using our personal knowledge and experience to tailor a holiday that is a perfect match for you. Stay in several different locations around Sri Lanka, allowing time to explore and relax in each. Combine a few nights on the beach with stays in the Kandy Hills, in the Cultural Triangle, on a high tea estate or in a national wildlife park, in Galle, Negombo, or Colombo. It makes sense to factor in a night or two in Colombo, Negombo, Wadduwa, or at the Wallawwa near the airport, at the beginning and/or end of your holiday to coincide with flight times.

REGIONS OF SRI LANKA

Roughly only half the size of England, yet packed with a whole continent's worth of temples, ruins, wildlife reserves, and luxury beach resorts, Sri Lanka is a beautiful, bite-sized slice of paradise offering a whole world of diverse escapes. Littered with elegant colonial hotels and enchanting boutique lodges, Sri Lanka also offers luxury at a relative snip. Young or old, family or couple, beach-bound or culture-vulture – a visit to Sri Lanka satisfies everyone. Formerly an Arab trading port, the commercial capital Colombo is a bustling, colourful town, with a fabulous bazaar, colonial churches, and craft markets. To the north of Colombo lies Negombo and the beaches of the west coast, whilst to the south Wadduwa is the start of a string of fabulous beaches running all the way down and around Sri Lanka's southwest coast, with a collection of intimate, exquisite beach resorts. Further southward lies historic Galle, a reminder of the Dutch presence on the island. Inviting as Sri Lanka's coastline is, however, the island's interior is worth the airfare alone, with forest parks sheltering leopards and wild Asian elephants, a verdant hill country carpeted in tea plantations with lovely boutique planter's house hotels, and no visitor to Sri Lanka should be allowed to miss the Cultural Triangle, boasting five UNESCO World Heritage Sites in an area no bigger than Kent. New to tourism is the north and north east of Sri Lanka, strewn with Hindu temples, colonial gems and long white beaches offering spectacular snorkelling.

THINGS TO SEE IN SRI LANKA

Cricket is a national sport, played on every dusty maidan and patch of grass from Jaffna to Galle. A real highlight of any trip to the south is Galle Fort, where you can wander round the ancient ramparts at sunset, watching cricket games below, or stroll along the narrow streets in search of antiques in tiny, friendly shops. Local festivals such as Vesak full moon in May and Poson full moon in July, as well as the famous Esala Festival in Kandy in July and August, when Buddha's tooth is taken out from the temple and paraded through the streets. Visiting national parks, sheltering an abundance of wildlife including leopards, elephants, bears and hundreds of species of birds. Buying tea, gems, jewellery, spices for a local bazaar. Fantastic spicy local cuisine, specialising in fish dishes, and delicious 'egg hoppers.' Tea-tasting in the hill country. Sigiriya Rock Fortress. The Cave temples of Dambulla. The medieval capital and ruins of Polonnaruwa. The sacred city of Anuradhapura. The west coast beaches flanked by palm trees, including Negombo, Beruwela, Bentota and Galle. The elephant orphanage at Pinnawela. The tea plantations near Nuwara Eliya, a region known locally as Little England. Ayurvedic massage. A warm welcome wherever you go.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, flight and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators).

Expressions Holidays
Lynx House, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5JL



HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441250

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process. A deposit is required to confirm the arrangements and this can be paid by debit or credit card over the phone. The level of the deposit will be confirmed at the point of booking and will depend on the ticketing deadlines involved in your booking.