



SRI LANKA: SECRETS OF THE SPICE ISLAND – A LIMITED EDITION SMALL GROUP JOURNEY (2024)

Sri Lanka is a world apart, a deeply spiritual place where Buddhist values and a rich cultural heritage are interwoven with enduring colonial influences. On this extraordinary journey, we peel back the layers of the beguiling island nation.

Limited Edition Small Group Journeys, Small Group Journeys



Indian Subcontinent, Sri Lanka



14 days from AU\$11,725 pp



18 Guests

Journey Overview

Sri Lanka is a world apart, a deeply spiritual place where Buddhist values and a rich cultural heritage are interwoven with enduring colonial influences. On this extraordinary journey, we peel back the layers of the beguiling island nation, and uncover its many treasures: a serene and gentle people, fragrant and flavoursome cuisine, fascinating ruins, and diverse terrain — from golden beaches and arid plains, to lush tea plantations and mist-covered mountains — everything suffused with a warm tropical glow, as will you be on your return from this exquisite destination.

Journey Highlights

- Explore World Heritage sites in the Cultural Triangle and climb the Sigiriya rock fortress
- Sit down to dinner with Oxford-educated Sri Lankan architect, historian and critic, Dr. Shanti Jayewardene
- Join the pilgrims for a nightly prayer ritual at the Sacred Temple of the Tooth, and enjoy VIP entry to the inner Shrine Room
- Admire the floral beauty of Kandy Botanical Gardens accompanied by acclaimed botanist Bandara Palipana
- Seek out elephants and endemic wildlife at Minneriya National Park
- Meander through Galle Fort with an archaeologist
- Stay in a number of specially selected boutique accommodations
- Learn the secrets of Ceylonese tea in the plantations of Sri Lanka’s famous tea country
- Typically features a small group size of 10–12 guests



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Colombo, Sri Lanka

Welcome to Sri Lanka, arriving in the charismatic capital of Colombo where you are met with a warm A&K welcome, fast tracked through arrivals and privately transferred to your boutique hotel. Colombo boasts a rich colonial heritage, and is a melting pot of religion and cultures with a wide array of Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques and churches reflecting the various beliefs. Enjoy the rest of your day at leisure.

Uga Residence

Day 2: Colombo | Seaside Colonial City

This morning, meet with your Resident Tour Director and fellow travellers for a tour briefing before exploring the island’s capital like a local — by tuk tuk. Weave your way through the city’s bustling bazaars and past landmark monuments before finishing at Galle Face Green, to soak up the Indian Ocean views.

Wander back to your hotel for a breather before meeting Colombo local, and passionate photographer, Mark Forbes, your escort on a captivating walk through the old town bringing the city’s multifaceted history to life. See the 17th century Dutch Hospital, Colombo Fort, charming colonial mansions and wind up at a speakeasy for arrack-themed cocktails.

Tonight, gather for a welcome dinner where a culinary curator introduces you to Sri Lankan home cooking.

Uga Residence | Meals: BD

Day 3: Colombo | Tropical Modernism

Before leaving the city, make a short stop at No.11 Bawa Residence, designed and built by the great Sri Lankan architect, Geoffrey Bawa in the 1960s. An essay in architectural bricolage, the house was built from four smaller bungalows that Bawa bought and combined over a period of years.

Continue your journey to the Cultural Triangle in the centre of the country where ancient World Heritage sites abound and your secluded island sanctuary accommodation awaits. Settle in before enjoying dinner accompanied by special guest Dr. Shanti Jayewardene, an Oxford-educated Sri Lankan architect, historian and critic. She will provide an incredible understanding of Sri Lanka's anthropology, architecture, history and politics in an accessible way.

Ulagalla Resort | Meals: BD

Day 4: Cultural Triangle | Design Your Day

Start the day with a visit the organic garden to pick fresh produce for use in a cooking demonstration at the resort's traditional hearth kitchen. Watch as your fresh ingredients are transformed into Sri Lankan delicacies which you'll savour over lunch. This afternoon, enjoy one of these Design Your Day activities:

- **Travel like a local on a village tuk tuk**. Enjoy an afternoon discovering the best the city has to offer, immersing yourself in the sights, sounds and day-to-day goings-on.
- **Take to the waters of the Wannemaduwa Tank** in a kayak to experience the breathtaking wildlife of the forest up close at a time when it's most active as the sun goes down.
- Under the guidance of a local, **learn how to craft, launch and fly a bamboo and paper kite** of classic Sri Lankan design.

Ulagalla Resort | Meals: BLD

Day 5: Cultural Triangle | Cradle of Buddhism

Discover a world of ancient ruins today in the Cultural Triangle. Start at one of southeast Asia's most impressive sites — Anuradhapura — the country's first ancient capital which dates from the 5th century BC. Marvel at giant stupas, a vast statue of Buddha and receive a blessing near the sacred Bodhi tree, the oldest recorded, planted in 236 BC. This afternoon climb up to the spot where Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka — at the summit of Mihintale — and admire the religious monuments and views.

Return to the hotel for time at leisure before enjoying a special barbecue dinner by the pool at the hotel.

Ulagalla Resort | Meals: BLD

Day 6: Cultural Triangle | Ancient Temples & Forts

Delve further into the Cultural Triangle at World Heritage listed Polonnaruwa, an interesting blend of Buddhist and Hindu archaeological monuments. Don't miss the famous Gal Viharaya or "Rock Temple", which comprises four colossal statues of Buddha cut into the stone.

This afternoon, visit Minneriya National Park for a game drive with a local tracker for a chance to see elephants and, if lucky, the purple-faced langur and toque macaque which are endemic to Sri Lanka. Afterwards, travel to your hotel and settle in with a group dinner at the in-house restaurant.

Water Garden / Meals: BLD

Day 7: Sigiriya | Ruined Fortified City

Rise early for an exhilarating hot air balloon ride over the surrounding landscape, glimpsing Sigiriya from above (additional cost, paid locally). Then, climb the steep stairs 200 metres up through the Lion Gate to the top of the imposing fifth century rock fortress admiring the water gardens, moats and ancient frescoes on the way. Soak up the unparalleled 360-degree views of the surrounding jungle and hills before returning to the hotel.

This afternoon, meet a farmer and his family to enjoy a home cooked Sri Lankan lunch, indulging in delicious traditional fare and savouring the locally grown ingredients.

Water Garden / Meals: BLD

Day 8: Dambulla | Buddhist Cave Temples

An early start to visit the extraordinary World Heritage listed Buddhist cave temples at Dambulla, with statues and murals dating back to the first century BC representing Sinhalese Buddhist art at its best. Continue south to Kandy, the country's cultural capital with sundowners and a traditional Kandyan cultural performance this evening with an opportunity to meet the dancers afterward.

Jetwing Kandy Gallery / Meals: BD

Day 9: Kandy | Temple of the Tooth

Join well known botanist Bandara Palipana at the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya for a guided walk through the extraordinary botanical collection, comprising over 4,000 plant species, including a priceless collection of 300 varieties of orchids.

Relax for the remainder of the day before a pooja ceremony this evening at the sacred Temple of the Tooth, the city's most famous landmark. Amid scents of lotus and jasmine, join monks and pilgrims who gather to make offerings to the Buddha. Afterwards, enjoy VIP entry to the inner "Shrine Room" where the sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha is kept.

Jetwing Kandy Gallery | Meals: B

Day 10: Nuwara Eliya | The World of Ceylon Tea

Travel through the misty highlands into hill country, past lush tea estates and scenic waterfalls. Lunch in Nuwara Eliya before an afternoon "Tea Experience". Visit tea plantations and a factory to learn from an expert about the journey from planting and plucking, to manufacturing, grading and processing, and finally a tasting. This evening indulge in a delicious tea-themed dinner at your luxurious hotel, a converted tea factory.

Heritage Tea Factory* | Meals: BLD

Day 11: Nuwara Eliya | Design Your Day

Today, choose your own adventure with Design Your Day activities:

- **Spot sambar deer, mammals, reptiles, as well as endemic monkeys and birds** , and take in the breathtaking view from World's End on a trek in Horton Plains National Park.
- **Take a scenic train ride through the heart of tea country** to the hill station of Ella, Considered one of the most beautiful railway journeys through the highlands of Sri Lanka.
- **Ramble through the tea fields on a plantation tour** led by a knowledgeable guide to gain an in-depth understanding of how tea is grown, plucked and the processed.

Heritage Tea Factory* | Meals: BD

Day 12: Galle | Colonial Walled City

Journey south to the colonial seaside city of Galle arriving in time to savour the sunset at the ramparts of the heritage listed Galle Fort. Dine in a local home for an evening of Sri Lankan family cuisine and warm hospitality.

Le Grand Galle | Meals: BLD

Day 13: Galle | Craft & Heritage Walk

Join local archaeologist and heritage expert, Tharanga, on an absorbing walking tour of the Galle Fort. Built by the Dutch in 1663, the fort is the largest remaining European fortress in Asia.

Refuel on refreshments at an old Dutch house and meet the family who have lived there for generations. Seek out local arts and crafts, textiles, jewellery, homewares and Sri Lankan delicacies as you wander the cobbled streets. In the afternoon meet traditional mask makers and admire the skill of their carving before trying your hand at this age-old craft. A farewell dinner is planned this evening at your hotel.

Le Grand Galle | Meals: BD

Day 14: Depart Colombo

Transfer to Colombo for your departure flight.

Meals: B

Journey Details

This journey contains some active elements.

Minimum age is 10 years.

First group event: welcome briefing at 9:00 a.m. on Day 2.

Last group event: farewell dinner at 7:30 p.m. on Day 13.

Departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 2 guests.

*Please note: Accommodation in Nuwara Eliya on days 10 and 11 for 1 September, 7 October and 8 November 2024 departures differs. Guests will overnight at the Grand Hotel Nuwara Eliya for these departures.

Included with every Limited Edition Small Group Journey

- All accommodation as detailed with private facilities
- Meals as specified in itinerary, including welcome and farewell dinners
- Internal flights as mentioned in itinerary
- Services of English speaking A&K Resident Tour Director
- Airport welcome
- Porterage
- Group transportation by private air-conditioned vehicle
- Bottled water during transfers and touring
- Wine & beer during lunches and dinners (selected by Resident Tour Director)
- All entrance fees
- Planning, handling, operational and communication charges
- All tipping

Customise this Journey

Talk to one of our expert Journey Designers or your travel agent about booking this tour as a private journey for your own small group with family or friends. Or, if you would prefer to travel privately, find out more about creating the perfect bespoke tailor-made journey based on this itinerary.

Map



Accommodation

Ulagalla Resort



Set within 58 acres of private grounds, Ulagalla Resort promises tranquillity, luxury and wilderness within easy reach of the many attractions of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle. Expect to see monkeys, peacocks and elephants roaming around the superb eco-friendly hotel, as you enjoy the open-air spa, ravishing dining and serene villas.

The chalets are all built from local materials to harmonise with their surroundings. Comfort is maximised with air-conditioning, four-poster king-sized beds, en suite bathrooms with shower, and a separate lounge with a TV and dining table. All rooms come with a private plunge pool, except for two which have an in-room Jacuzzi.

At the heart of the resort is a century-old manor house, once the most important noble seat of the region. Home to the lobby, restaurant and bar, the beautifully renovated building overlooks the large pool and gardens. The grounds feature an organic garden, manicured beds and lawn and reclaimed paddy fields, which border two reservoirs dotted with lotus flowers and kumbuk trees – the hotel provides each villa with bicycles making it easy to explore. There's also an open-air day spa, riding stables with resident horses, and an archery field.

Why we like it

- 20 chalets – all but two have private plunge pools
- Immersed in a private 58-acre estate
- Explore the grounds on bicycles, which are provided in each villa
- Restored century-old manor house houses the restaurant and bar
- Serene open-air spa, riding stables and outdoor pool

Water Garden Sigiriya



Surrounded by lakes, water streams and abundant flora sits Water Garden Sigiriya. This luxury hotel is situated 6 km away from the 2,000-year-old historic water garden on the Sigiriya Rock.

Water Garden Sigiriya feature 30 luxurious villas with exclusive private pools, secret gardens and offers a dedicated butler service. This watery wonderland has array of dining options and settings, with a master chef that prepares cuisine from around the world with a new twist on traditional local fare.

Indulge in the relaxing spa, the well-equipped fitness centre, or the many activities such as billiards, cycling and archery or a helicopter tour.

Le Grand Galle



Situated on a private promontory overlooking the Galle Fort, an iconic UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the breathtaking Indian Ocean lies the iconic Le Grand. The hotel's design is a contemporary ode to Sri Lanka while its facilities are ultra-modern, including spa and state-of-the-art gym.

Its lavish guest rooms are equipped with air conditioning, a flat-screen TV with cable channels, a coffee machine, a bidet, free toiletries and a desk. All rooms have a private bathroom with a hair dryer, whilst some rooms come with a balcony, and private plunge pool.

The daily breakfast offers continental, buffet and western options. The restaurant at the hotel specialises in seafood, international and local cuisine.

Dates & Pricing

Prices are in AUD, per person, based on double occupancy

Sep 1, 2024 - Sep 14, 2024

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$11,725 pp	AU\$3,215	AU\$0	Available

Oct 7, 2024 - Oct 20, 2024

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$11,725 pp	AU\$3,215	AU\$0	Available

Nov 8, 2024 - Nov 21, 2024

Price	Single Supplement	Internal Air (From)	Availability
AU\$11,725 pp	AU\$3,215	AU\$0	Available

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