



Pearl of the Indian Ocean

(November to April departures)

Classic Tour | 16 Days | Moderate

Negombo – Anuradhapura – Sigiriya – Kandy – Nuwara Eliya – Udawalawe National Park – Mirissa – Bentota – Colombo

Join us on an exciting discovery of Sri Lanka, including beautiful beaches, ruins lost in the jungle, unique wildlife, tea plantations and stunning waterfalls. One of the highlights of this land is its gracious people and a rich abundance of surprises on offer.

- Climb the spectacular rock fortress of Sigiriya
- Visit Kandy's sacred temple
- Explore the tea plantations
- Safari with elephants
- Discover mouthwatering food
- Wander the historic city of Colombo



Pearl of the Indian Ocean tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All Meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Visa fees for UK and EU passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with ABTA, ATOL and IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, meals not stated in the itinerary, insurance of any kind, tipping and early check in or late checkout. These are all payable locally.

Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Sri Lanka on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Moderate Tours:

'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' is a moderate tour. This means that the itinerary requires a good level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- You may be required to get on and off various sizes of boats and safari vehicles throughout the tour

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Itinerary – Pearl of the Indian Ocean (November to April departures)

Days 1-2: Negombo

Fly to Colombo. Upon arrival, you will be met and together with any other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer approximately 45 minutes to Negombo for an overnight stay.



Destination Information

Negombo - Negombo was once an important commercial trade centre, well known for offering the best cinnamon in the world. Negombo was one of the first towns taken by the Portuguese, only to be captured by the Dutch in 1640 and then recaptured by the Portuguese some months later. The British eventually took control of the town in 1796.

Day 3: Wilpattu National Park

This morning drive approximately 3 hours to Wilpattu National Park where the abundance of wildlife has made its home around the many lakes. Enjoy an afternoon Jeep safari with the chance to spot elephants, sambar deer and even leopards. Continue to Anuradhapura for an overnight stay.



Destination Information

Wilpattu National Park – The area gets its name from 'Willus', meaning natural lakes which dominate the park. Apart from big cats and precious flora, the park is well known for a healthy population of elephants, sloth bear, spotted deer, mongoose and water buffalo.

Day 4: Anuradhapura – Sigiriya

Rise early and drive about an hour and a half to Ritigala Nature Reserve, where you will visit the Jungle Monastery and explore the ancient ruins. You will spend two hours here; sightseeing involves climbing uneven steps and ruins. Continue driving for approximately 1 hour to Sigiriya for a two-night stay and enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

Destination Information

Ritigala Nature Reserve and Monastery - Nestled among the Ritigala Strict Nature Reserve, it is a fascinating nature reserve that is home to many species of rare flora and fauna. Ritigala Jungle Monastery showcases a large Buddhist Monastery, dating from pre-Christian times. Abandoned between the 10th and 11th centuries, the Monastery was left to be swallowed by the jungle before it was discovered in the 19th century.

Sigiriya - The ancient city of Sigiriya lies at the 180 metre summit of the granite peak known as the 'Lion's Rock'. One of the most dramatic sites in Sri Lanka, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1982.

Day 5: Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa

Explore the Sigiriya rock fortress this morning, also known as Lion Rock. There are many steps, most with railings leading up to the top of the Rock Fortress so extra care is needed here. Please ensure you bring plenty of water with you today and you wear a hat for sun protection. The ascent involves a very steep climb, so those who are unfit may have some difficulty. Beware of local 'helpers' as they may charge a fee for their assistance. You will spend approximately 2 hours here climbing the Lion Rock and touring the surrounding gardens. Later, drive to UNESCO World Heritage listed site of Polonnaruwa and tour the ruins. There will be approximately 2 hours of easy sightseeing on foot while exploring the palace and temples - refer to the Appropriate Dress section below.



Destination Information

Rock Fortress - Built by King Kashyapa, the rock fortress is also known as the 'Lion Rock' because a massive lion carved out of the rock once sat at the entrance to the palace. Today only the lion's paws remain. On the summit are the foundations of the Royal Palace built for King Kashyapa, along with a pool, sunrise-facing throne constructed from solid rock and panoramic views of the town below.

Polonnaruwa - Polonnaruwa was the capital of Sri Lanka from the 11th to the 13th centuries and is a well-preserved city of stupas, frescoes and statues. Visit the ruins of the Royal Palace, Audience Hall and the Bathing Pool in the Royal Palace group, along with the Thivanka Image House, which possesses the best frescoes from the Polonnaruwa period.

Day 6: Dambulla Rock Temple

Depart Sigiriya this morning and drive approximately 45 minutes to view the Dambulla Rock Temple. The temple is made up of five decorated caves and has two main viewing areas consisting of approximately 800 steps. You will spend 1 and half hours sightseeing on foot with light climbing of steps involved. Continue to the town of Kandy, stopping to visit a spice garden in Matale, where there is easy sightseeing on foot. Drive a further hour to Kandy and check into your hotel.

Destination Information

Dambulla Rock Temple - Dating back to the 1st century BC, the famous Dambulla Rock Temple is made up of five caves that have been converted into shrine rooms containing around 150 Buddha statues and colourful frescoes. In the first cave you will see the 14m statue of Buddha cut out of the rock. At the Buddha's feet are Ananda, the most loyal disciple, as well as other seated Buddhas nearby. The second cave is the largest, also known as the Cave of the Great Kings, where there are 16 standing and 40 seated statues of Buddha. The frescoes on the ceiling depict scenes from Buddha's life and important events from the country's history. Inside the cave is a spring created from the drips from the ceiling, which is said to have healing powers and is used in sacred rituals.

Spice Garden - Sri Lanka is famous for its spices including cinnamon, cardamom and pepper creepers all of which are planted here.

Kandy - Kandy is situated 500m above sea level and is known for its culture and beauty. It is a sacred Buddhist city, famous for the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, Dalada Maligawa. Each year the tooth relic is honoured in Esala Perahera, a religious parade with elephants, drummers and dancers performing in the streets.

Day 7: Kandy

This morning take part in a cooking demonstration to learn about local dishes and traditional Sri Lankan food. This afternoon, explore the Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens and visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic. The temple can be very crowded during daily prayer services. Continue on to the remains of the Royal Palace, now the National Museum and visit a gem museum before a stroll through the local market. This evening watch a cultural dance show.



Destination Information

Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens - The largest botanical gardens in Sri Lanka. Here you will see a collection of ornamental plants used to produce spices.

Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic - The temple houses an important Buddhist Relic, a tooth of the Buddha. Stolen at his funeral, the tooth was smuggled into Sri Lanka hidden in the hair of a princess who fled from India. The relic of the tooth is kept in a two-storey shrine fronted by large elephant trunks.

Remains of the Royal Palace - Which is now the National Museum, the primary exhibits are in the Palle Vahala, the former Queens Palace, and consist of weapons, jewellery, tools and other artefacts.

Day 8: Kandy – Nuwara Eliya train ride

Say goodbye to Kandy as you drive to Peradeniya railway station and board a train to Nanu Oya. As the train is a day train, your seats will be in an air-conditioned chair car. The train carriages are shared, so at all times please be aware of your belongings. Continue by coach to Nuwara Eliya, stopping to visit a tea plantation and tea factory on route. Please note: your group luggage will be transported by a separate coach directly to Nuwara Eliya. Please pack anything you will need for today's touring in your daypack.



Destination Information

Nuwara Eliya - Situated at 2,000m above sea level, Nuwara Eliya is the main hill station of Sri Lanka and is known as 'Little England', as it resembles an English country town. It is considered to be an excellent location for tea production due to the cool climate, which creates tea with a unique flavour.

Tea Factory and Tea Plantation - During your visit you will observe the process of manufacturing tea, and learn how tea is graded. You will also have the opportunity to taste a cup of pure Ceylon tea.

Day 9: Nuwara Eliya

Early in the morning visit St Clair's Falls (located 27km from Nuwara Eliya). Here you can view the spectacular waterfall from the road or walk approximately 500m to a lookout point. Afterwards, tour a local tea plantation before returning to Nuwara Eliya. Today's sightseeing involves at least 2 hours on foot and walking over uneven ground.

Destination Information

St. Clair's Falls - One of the most unique waterfalls in all of Sri Lanka. Fondly known as the 'Little Niagara of Sri Lanka', St. Clairs Falls is created by two separate falls, Maha Ella (known as the Greater Fall) and Kuda Ella (known as the Lesser Fall).

Day 10: Udawalawe National Park

After breakfast depart Nuwara Eliya and drive approximately 5 hours to Udawalawe National Park. This afternoon take a jeep safari tour of the park for approximately 3 hours. Check into your hotel for the evening, located a five-minute drive from the entry gates of the National Park.



Destination Information

Udawalawe National Park - The 30,821 hectares dry zone game park is most famous for the many elephants that live there. During a visit, it is not unusual to see whole herds of adults and young elephants - feeding or bathing and playing in the water! In addition to this main attraction, the park is home to many water buffalo, water monitor lizards, sambar deer, monkeys and the occasional leopard, as well as being an exciting location for bird enthusiasts.

Day 11: Mirissa

Rise early and travel to the nearby Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home. Watch the early morning feedings of the elephants before continuing to the beach town of Mirissa, stopping to view the stilt fisherman at Weligama en route.



Destination Information

The Elephant Transit Home - The home cares for abandoned and orphaned baby elephants, providing them with food, shelter and medical care before they are released into the Udawalawe National Park.

Weligama - Stop to view the iconic stilt fishermen of Sri Lanka. A tradition kept alive by only 500 families, the fishermen balance 2m above the water on a cross bar tied to a vertical pole, planted underwater. With one hand they hold the stilt, and the other their fishing rod. A truly remarkable sight!

Day 12: Whale and dolphin watching

Enjoy an early morning whale and dolphin watching tour. Take this chance to spot the almighty Blue Whale and many other species before enjoying the afternoon free to explore this delightful beachside town.



Destination Information

Mirissa – A laid back beach town on Sri Lanka's south coast, Mirissa is known as one of the best places in the world to see Blue Whales as well as Sperm Whales, dolphins, turtles, and more.

Day 13: Galle

Drive to Galle to embark on walking tour consisting of 2 hours on foot. Visit such sites as Galle Fort, the lighthouse, the Dutch Museum and the Dutch Reformed Church. Continue to the beach town of Bentota for an overnight stay.



Destination Information

Galle Fort - Built by the Portuguese in 1588, it was fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. Covering 36 hectares, the fort contains an amazing number of buildings from over the years. Considered one of the best examples of a fortified city built by Europeans in Asia, it was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 1988.

Galle Lighthouse - Located in Galle Fort, the lighthouse is one of 14 left in Sri Lanka and is considered the oldest.

The Dutch Reformed Church - Originally founded in 1640, the present building dates from 1752 to 1755. The floor of the church is covered with granite tombstones and there is a small graveyard on the premises.

Bentota - Bentota is located on the southern tip of the Galle District and is famous for its 'toddy' production, an alcoholic beverage made out of coconut nectar.

Day 14: Bentota – Colombo

After breakfast, depart for Colombo. Upon arrival tour the Fort District and the surrounding areas and stroll through the Pettah Market. In the busy market area, please be careful with your belongings today. Sightseeing today involves a couple of hours on foot.

Destination Information

Colombo - The formal capital city and the business and commercial centre of Sri Lanka. Originally a small sea port, Colombo became prominent in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese. The Dutch later arrived in the 16th century but it wasn't until the British arrived in the late 18th Century that Colombo developed into a major city.

Fort District - Having been ruled by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, the Fort District is a treasure trove of grand old colonial architecture. Now the city's cosmopolitan central business district, the Fort District was the centre of both the British and the Dutch administrations of Sri Lanka. Many of the grand old buildings built during these times are dotted throughout the area and still in use as government buildings today.

Pettah Market - A colourful series of open-air markets and bazaars located in the Pettah district, selling everything from fruit, vegetables and fabrics to household goods.

Day 15: Colombo

Discover the vibrant city of Colombo further this morning. Visit a Hindu temple with elaborate stone carvings, the Dutch Church of Wolvendaal, Kelaniya Buddhist Temple, Dewatagaha Mosque and the Colombo and Natural History museums. End the day at the Davatagaja Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall where you will see a replica of Avukana Buddha and the Independence Memorial. Today touring will involve about 3 hours of easy sightseeing, there may also be some free time for last minute shopping.



Destination Information

Dutch Church of Wolvendaal - Built in 1749, the Dutch Church is one of the most important Dutch Colonial era buildings in Sri Lanka. The church is in the form of a cross, with walls 1.5m thick and the floor includes intricate tombstones to Dutch colonists.

Kelaniya Buddhist Temple - A major pilgrimage site for Buddhist devotees, who believe that the Lord Buddha visited this site on the 8th year of Enlightenment.

Dewatagaha Mosque - One of the oldest and most prominent mosques in Sri Lanka, the striking Dawatagaha Mosque plays an important role in the Muslim community.

Davatagaja Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall - Built in commemoration of the independence of Sri Lanka from British rule, the hall houses a replica of Avukana Buddha and the Independence Memorial.

Day 16: Depart Colombo

Any time before your flight is free to further explore the vibrant city of Colombo independently. Transfer to Bandaranaike Airport to board your onward flight home.

Pearl of the Indian Ocean Travel Information

Visas

A visa is required for entry into Sri Lanka. A standard visa processing service is included in your tour cost. You will need to complete the visa application form following the instructions on the visa help sheet. Once completed you will need to email or post the appropriate documents to our office in order for us to process your visa with the embassy. Once your visa has been approved we will send you a copy of the completed visa by email for you to print out and take with you when you travel to Sri Lanka. Any passports and visa applications that require an express service will incur an extra fee. Your passport must be valid for 6 months from your date of return from Sri Lanka, and should have at least 2 blank pages for your Sri Lanka visa.

In rare cases, you may be required to provide further information or documentation to the Sri Lankan embassy and/or be required to attend an interview at the embassy. If this is the case, we will notify you as soon as we have been advised.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Eating in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is home to a melting pot of cuisine. Throughout years of colonisation and influence from other countries and a history of spice trading, Sri Lankan has adapted its own distinct flavor. While travelling in Asia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our classic group tours, from dinner on the arrival day until breakfast on the day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

Dishes served in restaurants on our group tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based with meat mixed in, and a few will be meat-based. Our restaurants are well aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options. When eating meals on group tours, you will be seated around a circular table with other tour members. Dishes will be served in the traditional ‘family style’; meaning that various dishes will be laid out in the centre of the table. These dishes are intended to be shared amongst the group – there is always more than enough to feed everybody.

We recommend that when it comes to Sri Lankan food, you stay open-minded and try to be adventurous!

Accommodation

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort or Local Guide.

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between UK and Sri Lanka. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner city roads in Sri Lanka have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in Sri Lanka have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

Trains: This trip involves a day time train journey in AC class cars.

Development in Sri Lanka

Although Sri Lanka is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the UK. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort or Local Guides.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places that hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 29 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with Local Guides.

Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Sri Lanka is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout Sri Lanka – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces.

Climate

Please refer to our website or brochure for detailed temperature charts.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

Itinerary changes

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

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