

Tour Itinerary covers key cultural places in Sri Lanka

Day 1: Arrival in Colombo - Transfer to Sigiriya

- **Arrival in Colombo:** Arrive at Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB), Colombo and the group to be welcomed by one of our guides.
- **Transfer to Sigiriya** by a luxury AC coach (Approx. 4 hours drive, 175 km) stop for a tea/coffee break on the way.
- Check-in to your hotel in Sigiriya.
- **Relax and enjoy the evening:** Enjoy a peaceful evening at your hotel or take a short guided walk around a local village to see the behaviour of traditional village people.



Overnight in Hotel Sigiriya Jungles

Experience world-class service at Sigiriya Jungles

Situated 5 km from Sigiriya Rock in Sigiriya, SIGIRIYA JUNGLES features 3 restaurants, 2 bars and free WiFi throughout the property. The resort has an outdoor pool, a spa and wellness centre and a fitness centre.

Day 2: Explore Sigiriya & Dambulla

- **Morning: Sigiriya Rock Fortress**

- Start early to visit **Sigiriya Rock Fortress**. Climb the iconic rock (about 1-1.5 hours) to see stunning frescoes, the mirror wall, and the ancient ruins at the top, along with breathtaking views.
- Visit the **Water Gardens** at the base of the rock.



Sigiriya Lion Rock is an ancient rock fortress known for its massive column of rock that reaches nearly 200 meters high. The site dates back to the reign of King Kasyapa (477-495 AD), who chose this site as his new capital. He decorated the walls with frescoes, and built an impressive palace right on top of the rock column, accessible only through the mouth of an enormous carved lion.

- **Afternoon: Dambulla Cave Temple**

- After lunch, drive to **Dambulla** (approx. 30 minutes from Sigiriya).
- Explore the **Dambulla Cave Temple**, a series of five caves with impressive Buddha statues and murals.



Located in central Sri Lanka, the Rangiri Dambulla Cave Temple is a living Buddhist site that is focused on a series of five cave shrines. Inhabited by forest-dwelling Buddhist monks since the 3rd century BCE, these natural caves have been transformed continuously throughout the historical period into one of the largest and most outstanding Buddhist complexes in the Southern and South Eastern Asian region, showcasing innovative approaches to interior layout and decoration.

The vast internal spaces of the cave shrines are not compartmentalized, but are spatially differentiated by a deliberate and subtle arrangement of polychrome sculpture of exceptional craftsmanship and decorated with brilliant compositions of mural paintings. This spatial hierarchy and purposive interior layout devoid of physical divisions lead the devotees systematically through the spaces from one ritual function to the next. The site is remarkable in the Buddhist world for its association with the continuous tradition of living Buddhist ritual practices and pilgrimage for more than two millennia.

- **Evening:** Return to Sigiriya for dinner and rest at the hotel and enjoy the cultural activities at the hotel.

Overnight in Hotel Sigiriya Jungles.

Day 3: Sigiriya to Polonnaruwa

- **Morning: Drive to Polonnaruwa** (Approx. 1.5-hour drive, 60 km)

Polonnaruwa was the second capital of Sri Lanka after the destruction of Anuradhapura in 993. It comprises, besides the Brahmanic monuments built by the Cholas, the monumental ruins of the fabulous garden-city created by Parakramabahu in the 12th century.

- **Explore Ancient Polonnaruwa**

- Visit the **Polonnaruwa Archaeological Site**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Key highlights include:

- **The Royal Palace and Pond.**



- **Gal Vihara:** A rock temple with large Buddha statues.



- **The Vatadage** (circular relic house) and **Lankatilaka Temple** and other key ruins



- **Parakrama Samudra:** A vast reservoir built by King Parakramabahu I.



- **Afternoon:** Enjoy a relaxing boat ride on **Parakrama Samudra** or explore more of the ruins.

Overnight in Polonnaruwa at Ekho Lake House

Situated in the heart of Polonnaruwa and overlooking the panoramic Parakrama Samudraya.



Day 4: Full Day in Polonnaruwa

- **Morning:** Visit the **Polonnaruwa Museum** to get deeper insights into the city's history.
- **Explore other sites:**
 - **The Royal Council Chamber** and the **Audience Hall** and other key sites.
- **Afternoon:** You can also visit **Sri Lanka's first irrigation system**, or take a bike ride around the ancient city to visit more ruins at your own pace.

Overnight in Polonnaruwa at Ekho Lake House

Day 5: Polonnaruwa to Habarana

- **Afternoon:** Go for a **Safari in Minneriya National Park** or **Kaudulla National Park** to witness herds of wild elephants and other wildlife. These two national parks have the largest elephant gathering in Asia certain times over 500 elephants (best time to visit is around late afternoon).

The Minneriya Tank was built by the great tank builder, King Mahasen (276–303) who ruled in Anuradhapura. This tank occupied 4670 acres and its strong 13-meter-tall dam running along a distance of 2 km held over 20 billion gallons of water. The water arrived from Amban River, the main tributary of Mahaveli River, 48 km away, along the Elahara canal built by King Vasabha (65–109) before his time.



- **Evening:** Return to your hotel in Habarana and relax.

Overnight in Habarana at Cinnamon Lodge



Day 6: Habarana

- **Morning:** Visit **Ritigala Forest Monastery**, a beautiful and remote ancient site hidden in the jungle, known for its unique stone structures and ruins.

Ritigala is a mountain in central part which is home to an ancient Buddhist Monastery. The ruins and rock inscriptions of the monastery date back to 1st century BCE. Ritigala mountain consists of four peaks which rise steeply from the surrounding plain. The mountain is 6.5 km in length, and divided into northern and southern blocks by Maha-Degala Gorge.

The climate at the summit is in sharp contrast to the climate at the foot; it is cooler in comparison to hot and dry climate of the region. The mist and cloud cover which cover the summit during the south-west monsoon results in high vapor condensation, in turn, turning the earth moist when the plains all around are in drought.

Legends abound on Ritigala. One of mysterious aspect is the belief of powerful medicinal herbs found near the crest. A herb called “Sansevi” is believed to have the power of conferring long life and curing all human pain. According to legend, all vegetation on Ritigala is protected by Yakkas, the guardian spirits of the mountain. The venerable Prof. Walpola Sri Rahula Maha Thera (1907–1997), a professor of History and Religions at Northwestern University, a Buddhist monk scholar, in his “History of Buddhism in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), says “the term “Yaksa” denotes superhuman beings worthy of respect. It is possible that it was applied, by an extension of meaning, also to some pre-Buddhistic tribe of human beings, aboriginal to Ceylon (Sri Lanka).



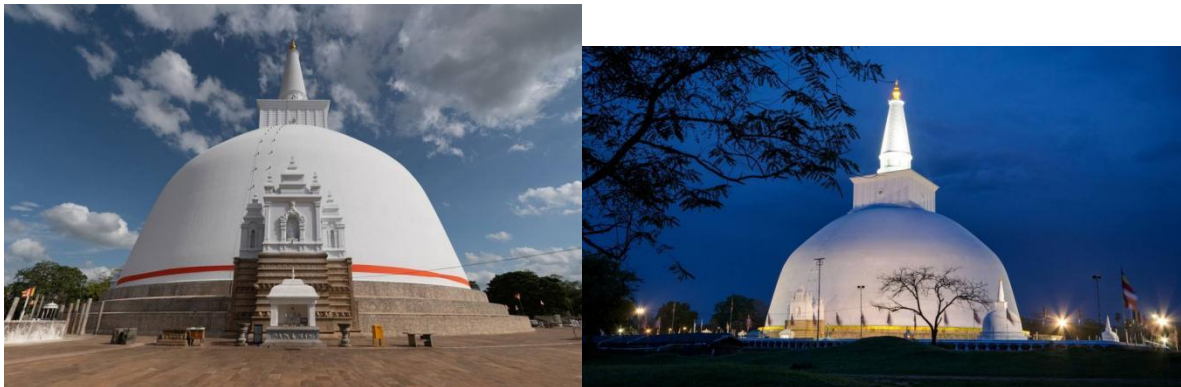
- **Afternoon:** Depart for **Anuradhapura** after an early lunch at the hotel(Approx. 1 hour drive, 59 km).
- **Check-in to your hotel** an relax for aprox 2 hrs.
- **Evening: Visit the Sacred City of Anuradhapura**
 - Visit **Sri Maha Bodhi Tree** (the sacred fig tree under which Lord Buddha attained enlightenment).

Sri Maha Bodhi Tree is a historical sacred bo tree (*Ficus religiosa*) in the Mahamewuna Garden in historical city of Anuradhapura. This is believed to be a tree grown from a cutting of the southern branch from the historical sacred bo tree, Sri Maha Bodhi, which was destroyed during the time of Emperor Ashoka the Great, at Buddha Gaya in India, under which Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) attained Enlightenment. In 236 BC, the Buddhist nun Sangamitta Maha Theri, a daughter of Indian Emperor Ashoka, brought the tree cutting to Sri Lanka during the reign of Sinhalese King Devanampiya Tissa. At more than 2,300 years old, it is the **oldest living human-planted tree in the world** with a known planting date.



- **Ruwanwelisaya Stupa:** One of the largest stupas in Sri Lanka.

The **Ruwanveli Maha Seya**, also known as the **Maha Thupa** (lit. 'the Great Thupa'), is a stupa (a hemispherical structure containing relics) in Anuradhapura. Two quarts or one Dona of the Buddha's relics are enshrined in the stupa, making it the largest collection of his relics anywhere. It was built by Sinhalese King Dutugemunu in 140 B.C., who became king of Sri Lanka after a war in which the Chola King Elāra (Ellalan) was defeated.



Overnight in Anuradhapura Uga Ulagalla



Day 7: Full Day in Anuradhapura

- **Morning:** Continue exploring Anuradhapura's sites:
 - **Isurumuniya Temple** and its famous rock carvings.

It was built by King Devanampiya Tissa (307 BC to 267 BC) who ruled in the ancient Sri Lankan capital of Anuradhapura. After 500 children of high-caste were ordained, Isurumuniya was built for them to reside.



- **Jetavanaramaya Stupa:** A colossal stupa and one of the tallest brick structures in the world.

Buddhist reliquary monument, located in the ruins of Jetavana monastery in the UNESCO world heritage city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. At 122 metres (400 ft), it was the world's tallest stupa, and the **third tallest structure in the world** (only behind the two great pyramids: Great Pyramid of Giza and Pyramid of Khafre) when it was built by King Mahasena of Anuradhapura (273–301). He initiated the construction of the stupa: following the destruction of the Mahaviharaya of Anuradhapura. His son Kithsirimevan completed the construction of the stupa, and it was renovated by Parakramabahu I of Polonnaruwa. A part of a belt tied by the Buddha is believed to be the relic that is enshrined here.



- **Abhayagiri Monastery and Thuparama** (one of the oldest stupas).

Abhayagiri Dagaba was established by King Valagamba during the period of his second reign, from 89 to 77 B.C.



- **Mirisavati Stupa** and **Kuttam Pokuna** (Twin Ponds).

King Dutugamunu (161 BC to 137 BC) built the **Mirisaveti Stupa** after defeating King Elara. The extent of this land is about 50 acres (20 ha). The king *Kasyapa I* and *Kasyapa V* renovated this, from time to time it was dilapidated.

Kuttam Pokuna (twin ponds or pools) are well preserved old bathing tanks or ponds in Sri Lanka. This pair of ponds was built by the Sinhalese in the ancient Anuradhapura Kingdom. They form part of the Abhayagiri vihāra complex and are an example of the works in the field of hydrological engineering, architecture and art of the ancient Sinhalese.



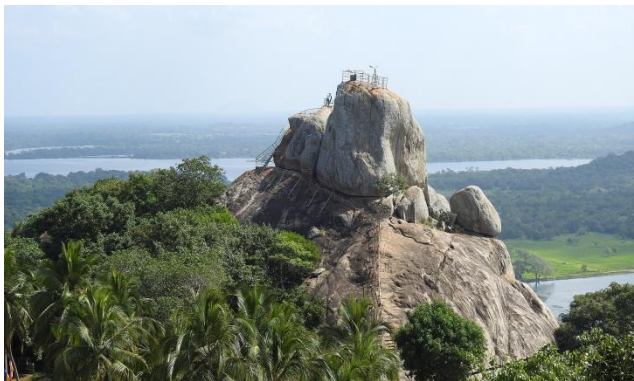
- **Afternoon:** Relax at your hotel or visit **Anuradhapura Museum** for further exploration.

Overnight in Anuradhapura

Day 8: Anuradhapura & Mihintale

- **Morning:** Drive to **Mihintale** (Approx. 30 minutes, 14 km from Anuradhapura).
 - Visit **Mihintale** – a mountain that is considered the birthplace of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Climb to the top to see the **Mihintale Rock** and the ancient Buddhist ruins.

Mihintale is a mountain peak near Anuradhapura. It is believed by Sri Lankans to be the site of a meeting between the Buddhist monk Mahinda and King Devanampiyatissa which inaugurated the presence of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It is now a pilgrimage site, and the site of several religious monuments and abandoned structures.



- **Afternoon:** Visit a village in remote Anuradhapura to experience the traditions.



Overnight in Anuradhapura

Day 9: Return to Colombo

- **Morning:** Transfer from Anuradhapura to Colombo (Approx. 4 hours drive, 200 km).
 - **Afternoon:** Depending on your flight time, you can do some last-minute shopping or sightseeing in Colombo.
 - **Departure:** Catch your flight from Colombo's international airport.
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Travel Tips:

- **Transport:** Private luxury bus depending on the number of pax will be used to travel between destinations.
- **Hotels:** All selected hotels are 5 star or similar with all facilities
- **Clothing:** Light, comfortable clothing for the day; carry a hat and sunscreen for protection against the sun.
- **Health:** Keep mosquito repellent and any necessary medications with you, especially for the rural areas.

This itinerary offers a blend of cultural exploration, natural beauty, and historical significance, allowing you to experience the rich heritage of Sri Lanka.