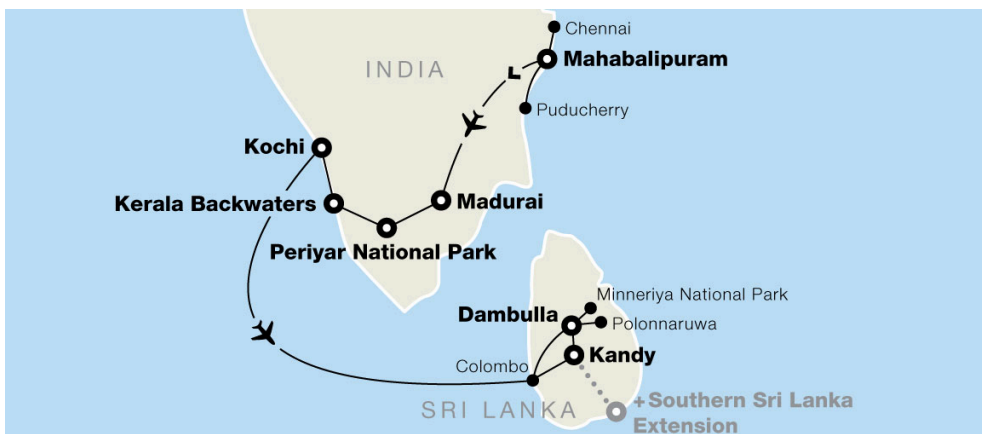




# South India & Sri Lanka: Game Drives, Temples & Tropical Coasts

16 days | 20 days with Southern Sri Lanka extension

On a tour of cultural multitudes, you'll breathe air tinged with tea and cinnamon, look up (way up) at technicolor temples, and slumber on a houseboat. South India and Sri Lanka contain an entire universe—one steeped in heritage and interspersed with abundant natural wonders and the thundering hoofbeats of Asian elephants. South India welcomes you to a galaxy of tropical experiences at a much more deliberate pace than its Northern counterpart. You'll weave through the French colonial je-ne-sais-quoi of Puducherry to the sacred city of Madurai, to the free-roaming wilderness of Periyar National Park and the meandering emerald-green backwaters of Kerala. Then, it's Sri Lanka's turn to dazzle you with Kandy's elaborate cave temples and nose-tickling spice plantations found throughout the island nation. Extend your trip to Southern Sri Lanka and after a scenic train ride through every shade of green on the Sri Lankan highlands, look for leopards on a game drive and learn about the roots of Ceylon cinnamon in its very birthplace.



## Your tour package includes

- 13 nights in handpicked hotels
- 13 breakfasts
- 7 lunches
- 8 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 liquor tasting
- 1 food tasting
- 1 cooking class
- 16 sightseeing tours
- 2 game drives
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 2 on-tour flights

## Included highlights

- Mahabalipuram's seaside monuments
- Madurai's technicolor temples
- Periyar spice and tea plantations
- Periyar National Park game drive
- Kerala Backwaters houseboat
- Minneriya National Park game drive
- Traditional Peduru party
- Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy

## Tour pace

You will walk for about 3 hours daily across moderately uneven terrain, including paved roads, dirt paths, cobblestone streets, and uneven temples, with some hills and stairs.

## Group size

12-22

# South India & Sri Lanka: Game Drives, Temples & Tropical Coasts

16 days | 20 days with Southern Sri Lanka extension

## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Chennai today.

## Mahabalipuram → 3 nights

### Day 2: Arrival in Chennai & transfer to Mahabalipuram

Welcome to India! After arriving in Chennai, transfer to your hotel in Mahabalipuram. You'll touch down later in the evening, so use the rest of your day to settle into your accommodations, catch up on rest, and get ready for the beginning of your journey.

### Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Mahabalipuram

*Included meals: breakfast, welcome dinner*

Enjoy a quiet morning, then set off on a guided tour through the coastal city of Mahabalipuram where temples from the Pallava dynasty stand, centuries later, against the orange sunsets on the Bay of Bengal. Get to know this port city, a former gateway of trade, and discover the famous Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram.

- Begin with a visit to the Shore Temple, constructed from blocks of granite and boasting all the hallmarks of Dravidian architecture: intricate carvings, ornate pillars, and elaborate sculptures of mythological figures. The temple's pyramidal structure rises above a sandy beach, casting an ethereal aura at sunrise and sunset.
- Continue to Pancha Rathas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its unique monolith rock-cut temples. These five rathas, or chariots, are carved from individual large pink granite boulders, and showcase the influence of various dynasties. Consider the exquisite artistry (and engineering prowess) of the design that's managed to survive salty winds and tsunamis for 1,400 years.
- View Arjuna's Penance, where you'll be greeted by an enormous bas-relief on this 43-foot-tall monument extolling stories from the epic of the Mahabharata. One of the

central motifs portrays Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, standing in penance to the Lord Shiva. Carved into the rock face, you'll spot vivid representations of gods and celestial beings.

- See the intriguing, gravity-defying Krishna's Butterball, a curiously shaped balanced boulder precariously perched on a sloping hillside. Legend has it that the rock was placed there by Lord Krishna, known for his love of butter—and mischievous nature.

Tonight, continue to get to know your Tour Director and fellow travelers during an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

### Day 4: Sightseeing tour of Puducherry

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch*

Puducherry was a French colonial settlement until 1954, and remnants of that heritage are evident in its architecture, cuisine, and cultural fusion. Enjoy a scenic drive to this small, seaside town where you'll find colorful colonial buildings, tree-lined boulevards, and spiritual havens on a walking and rickshaw ride tour with a serving of French flair.

- Pass through the French Quarter, also known as the White Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander through its winding streets lined with saffron-colored French colonial architecture, perhaps snacking on a baguette from one of the many bakeries.
- Stop by the experimental township of Auroville, founded in 1968 to promote human unity and sustainable living. At the center of Auroville is the Matrimandir, an iconic golden spherical structure surrounded by twelve petals.
- End your tour with a visit to the Tamil Quarter, known as the Heritage Town, and make your way through candy-colored building facades with traditional wooden doors and windows, temples, shrines, bazaars, and Promenade Beach.

Take a break this afternoon with an included lunch at a local restaurant before heading back to Mahabalipuram where you'll enjoy your free time. Our suggestion? Find a beachside cafe and indulge in right-off-the-boat seafood and thirst-

quenching coconut water. For a South Indian snack to tide you over, try dosas—savory crepes made from a fermented batter of rice and lentils cooked until they're crispy, golden brown, and ready to be dipped in chutney.

## Madurai → 1 night

### Day 5: Flight to Madurai, sightseeing tour & evening ceremonies

*Included meals: breakfast*

This morning, board a flight to Madurai, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, often referred to as the "Athens of the East." Standing since the fourth century B.C., Madurai is even mentioned in Greek and Roman texts. Upon arrival, set off on a sightseeing tour with your Tour Director and discover why the city is a renowned cultural hub and street food paradise.

- Enter the Thirumalai Nayakkar Palace, an architectural marvel built in the 17th century in the Indo-Saracenic style. Its detailed stucco work and magnificent 82-foot-tall pillars recall Italian, Portuguese, and Dutch influences, and although the palace was once four times larger than it stands today, it still thrives as one of the wonders of South India.
- Take your time to walk through the palace, which was designed as King Tirumala Nayaka's residence and is comprised of royal quarters, ponds, gardens, and an auditorium.
- Hop aboard a cycle rickshaw and head toward the rainbow-hued Meenakshi Amman Temple—an icon of Dravidian architecture and notable for its towering gopurams (gateway towers), carved pillars, and prismatic sculptures depicting deities and mythological tales.

Freshen up at your hotel before heading back into the city for the Sundown Ceremony, or Athazha Puja, at the Meenakshi Temple. Admire the evening ritual marking the closure of the temple for the day with the rest of the city by your side, and look on as priests perform arati—the waving of lighted lamps—to the deities. During the symbolic procession, icons adorned with exquisite attire and jewels are paraded around before the final arati, a fiery display of large oil lamps waved in circular motions, dispels any lingering darkness.

Please note: Non-Hindus may not enter the Temple's inner sanctum during the ceremony and will watch from the outside gallery.

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## Periyar National Park → 2 nights

### Day 6: Sightseeing tour of the Madurai Temples & transfer to Periyar National Park

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Return to Meenakshi Temple, where you'll be able to fully take in the grand scale of one of India's largest temple complexes in the light of day. This morning, you'll get a more in-depth overview of the temple—adorned by hundreds of vibrantly colored sculptures—and the story behind it, which reflects the matrilineal traditions of South India.

- Step inside the sprawling temple grounds and walk amongst the beautiful gardens, fountains, unique halls built over centuries, and the prayerful Golden Lotus Pond within.
- Learn how the temple site is believed to be where Lord Shiva took the form of Lord Somasundara and married Meenakshi, the reincarnation of the Goddess Parvati.
- Follow a perfumed trail of marigolds, roses, lotus, tuberose, and jasmine to Madurai's famous flower market. The vibrant blooms hold immense religious significance in Indian culture, and you'll spot devotees purchasing flower offerings.

After an included lunch at a local restaurant with your group, you'll make your way further inland this afternoon to Periyar National Park. Tucked into the Western Ghats of Kerala, this lush mountainside reserve is home to elephants, tigers, leopards, the Indian bison known as gaurs, and wild boar.

If that's not exciting enough, add a visit to a Kerala martial arts show where your eyes and heart will leap in sync with the intense practice of Kalaripayattu. Watch practitioners wave weapons like spears and the urumi—a sword with a deadly whip-like blade. Alternatively, use your free time this evening to rest up for tomorrow's nature walk.

Later tonight, gather for an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

+ Kerala Martial Arts Show

### Day 7: Spice plantation visit & Periyar nature walk

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting, lunch, dinner*

Embark on a sensory journey through the abundant spice plantations surrounding Periyar National Park, where the air is infused with the tantalizing aromas of cardamom, pepper,

cinnamon, and cloves. Verdant groves adorned with trees and vines, branches heavy with fragrant treasures, await you. During your visit to a spice plantation, you'll set off on a walk to learn the secrets of spice cultivation, from the delicate blossoms to the meticulously harvested bounty that make up the essence of India's culinary heritage.

After an included lunch at your hotel, you'll continue your adventure on foot during a nature walk through Periyar National Park with a naturalist guiding the way. The renowned wildlife sanctuary is one of the most popular destinations in Southern India, anchored by Periyar Lake—a prime spot for sambar deer viewing. Experience the park's biodiversity up close and keep your fingers crossed for the rarest of treats—a sighting of the Bengal tiger.

Return to the hotel to freshen up before joining your group for an included dinner this evening, served with your choice of beer or wine.

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## Kerala Backwaters → 1 night

### Day 8: Transfer to Alleppey

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Travel to Alleppey—gateway to the peaceful Kerala Backwaters—and board a houseboat for the day. As you motor along its lagoons and canals, you'll enjoy a lunch prepared by private chefs, then have a more intimate tour of Kerala's narrower waterways on a country boat.

Meander through canals, experiencing the tranquil rhythms of rural Kerala in close detail on the banks of the water, before returning to your houseboat and settling in for the evening. Take in the vistas slowly passing you by, then sit down for another freshly prepared feast. Retire for the night and let the rock of your craft lull you to sleep.

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## Kochi → 2 nights

### Day 9: Coir factory tour & Kathakali dance performance

*Included meals: breakfast*

Disembark your houseboat and transfer to Kochi (also known by its former name, Cochin), a major port city on the southwest coast of India and a significant trading hub for centuries, attracting merchants and explorers from around the world.

Today, it blends modernity with tradition and hosts visitors hopping between ancient landmarks, colonial architecture, and local eateries offering delectable seafood dishes. Along the way, stop to get a history lesson on

the industrial importance of coir, derived from the husks of coconuts and used in the making of eco-friendly ropes, mats, brushes, and other handicrafts. During a visit to a coir factory, you'll view the full process of turning the fibers into floor mats which are shipped worldwide and learn about coir's vital role in the local economy and Kochi's commitment to environmental conservation.

Continue to your hotel in Kochi and get settled in. Later this evening, join your group for a spellbinding Kathakali performance. Blending dance, music, grand costumes, and intricate makeup, Kathakali recounts episodes from Indian epics and folklore using expressive gestures and movements called mudras.

### Day 10: Sightseeing tour of Kochi & cooking demonstration

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Choose to enjoy a free morning to relax or take part in a meditative, complimentary yoga lesson at your hotel early this morning. Then, discover why Kochi is considered the finest jewel in Kerala's crown on today's sightseeing tour.

- Begin at Fort Cochin—a seaside neighborhood whose name belies its serenity. Formerly the site of the first European fort on Indian soil, the district now houses some of the oldest colonial architecture in the country.
- Enter Mattancherry Palace—the “Dutch palace” built by the Portuguese and adorned with priceless Kerala murals—before moving on to the Santa Cruz Basilica. One of nine basilicas in India, its eggshell walls and Gothic styling immediately catch the eye.
- Make a stop at the oldest European church in India: St. Francis. Built in 1503, St. Francis Church was once the final resting place of Vasco da Gama. From there, walk to the equally significant Paradesi Synagogue. This Orthodox congregation is the oldest active synagogue in the Commonwealth of Nations; you'll find time-worn gravestones inscribed in Hebrew in its cemetery.
- Continue through the Old City and stroll through the fantastically fragrant Spice Market, navigating its stalls with help from your Tour Director.

This evening, join a cooking demonstration and home-hosted dinner starring some of Kerala's specialties.

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## Dambulla → 2 nights

### Day 11: Flight to Colombo, transfer to

## Dambulla & Minneriya National Park game drive

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Leave India behind and fly to Sri Lanka today, known as Ceylon during the country's time under Dutch and British occupation. When you land in Colombo, you'll forge on to Dambulla, a quiet town and sacred pilgrimage site—your launchpad for exploring the surrounding sites of Sri Lanka's exuberant landscape.

After an included lunch, hop aboard a 4x4 safari vehicle and set off into Minneriya National Park, where you'll have a chance to encounter the famed Asian elephant and other wildlife during an afternoon game drive. The park's extensive grasslands, wetlands, and scrub forests also provide a habitat for 160 species of birds. During the dry season (June to October), you may even witness "The Gathering," when herds of hundreds of elephants congregate around the Minneriya Tank—a manmade reservoir the animals depend on for drinking water during the dryer months.

Tonight, enjoy an included dinner served with beer or wine.

*Please note: In the event water levels are too high in Minneriya National Park, the game drive will be moved to a different national park.*

## Day 12: Sightseeing tour of Polonnaruwa & Paduru party

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner, liquor tasting*

Uncover the historical and cultural heart of Polonnaruwa, which served as Sri Lanka's capital from the 11th to the 13th century and is renowned for its archaeological treasures.

You'll have plenty of time to explore the highlights like the Royal Palace complex for an insight into the governance and lifestyle of ancient royalty, as well as the Gal Vihara rock temple. The latter, a masterpiece of Sinhalese artistry, features four colossal statues of Buddha carved into a single granite rock face.

For lunch, enjoy Sri Lankan hospitality with a traditional home-cooked meal. If you're up for it, consider adding the optional hike to Sigiriya rock to your itinerary. The entrance to this UNESCO-listed fortress carved out of volcanic rock is guarded by two massive lion paws. Take in the view from its base or trek the 1,300 steps to the top for a panoramic view. Alternatively, you can visit Rankoth Vehera, the largest and most culturally significant stupa in Polonnaruwa. Tonight, take in the rich musical culture of the country during a Paduru party, a village tradition in Sri Lanka. In Sinhalese, "paduru" refers to a canopy and during the Paduru party, a canopy adorned with colorful decorations, flowers, and traditional embellishments is erected. Enjoy a

feast of authentic dishes and imbibe in a sip of arrack—a spirit made from fermented and distilled coconut sap that is aged in wooden barrels for at least three years. The liquor is rare in North America but common (and popular!) in Sri Lanka and India.

+ Sigiriya Rock Hike

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## Kandy → 2 nights

### Day 13: Kandy via Dambulla cave temple & spice garden

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting, lunch*

Start the day with a visit to Dambulla's claim to fame, the Dambulla Cave Temple, also known as the Golden Temple of Dambulla—a series of five caves painstakingly decorated with Buddhist murals and more than 150 statues of Buddha. It's a profound spiritual experience amidst timeworn surroundings.

- Uncover the caves' more than 2,000-year legacy as you gaze upon artwork spanning several centuries, some as old as the first century B.C. Of its many eye-popping highlights is the colossal reclining Buddha statue almost 50 feet in length.
- Learn the lore of the temple's sacred water pot, said to never run dry or overflow despite a constant supply of water from a small natural spring.
- Breathe in a heady bouquet of cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, mace, and vanilla with a visit to a spice garden, where you'll take a short walk with a local guide and learn how these popular spices are grown, processed, and used in everything from cooking to medicine.

Gather for an included lunch before continuing your journey to Kandy, a historic and cultural treasure with a large collection of ancient temples, architecture, vibrant markets, and a holy relic of Buddha. The rest of the day is yours to relax or explore the area on your own or better yet, find a restaurant serving kottu roti, a dish of chopped flatbread mixed with griddled vegetables, onions, and meat, egg, or fish.

### Day 14: Sightseeing tour of Kandy & farewell dinner

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Set off for a morning of sightseeing as you get to know the bustling city of Kandy. From its perch amidst rolling green hills, surrounded by serene lakes and rivers, Kandy's landscape is an idyllic backdrop for exploration.

- Enjoy a scenic drive along Kandy Lake, an

artificial body of water built in the early 1800s by Sri Wickrama Rajasingha, the last ruler of the kingdom of Kandy. Swaying in the breeze, you'll see a vast canopy of palm, nuga, sal, and Mara trees.

- Shop for artisanal batik textiles and peruse the sparkling selection of gems in Kandy's Market Square, where tourists and locals alike converge over stalls replete with fresh produce, spices, and colorful clothing.
- Hop into a tuk-tuk—a nimble three-wheeler designed to zip through narrow lanes—and head to the famous Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, one of the most holy Buddhist sites in the world. Venerated as a symbolic representation of the Buddha, the tooth relic supposedly grants its holder a divine right of governance over the land.

Add a home-hosted lunch to your itinerary and deepen your connection to Sri Lanka. Visit a local family and learn about what goes into a traditional meal before enjoying it with your hosts. Alternatively, take a walk and look for expertly carved wooden pillars, red-tiled roofs, and verandas adorned with flash designs—the classic elements of Kandyan architecture. Tonight, come together and celebrate your trip with your fellow travelers during a farewell dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine. + Sri Lanka Cooking Demonstration & Lunch

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## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 15: Transfer to Colombo, city walk & departure

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Return to Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital city and thriving metropolis, where you'll make your way around the city on a walk through colonial history and contemporary skyscrapers.

- Kick things off with an included lunch before meandering through Galle Face Green, a recreational hotspot in the city which stretches along the shoreline.
- Step inside the formidable Neo-Baroque style Old Parliament Building turned exquisite treasury before continuing through the Fort area—the walled part of Colombo originally built by the Portuguese.
- Stroll through the Fort down Chatham Street—lined by shops, salons, mosques, and eateries and surrounded by Victorian and Edwardian-style buildings.

- End in the Pettah neighborhood, home to the city's largest market, where you'll have a last chance to bargain for textiles or ceramics.

Head to the hotel where you'll enjoy an included dinner served with beer or wine. Then, relax in a day room before transferring to the airport for your overnight flight home or make room in your heart for an extension to Southern Sri Lanka and explore unique villages, surprisingly cool climates, and thriving cinnamon and tea farms.

*Please note: If you are traveling on the extension to southern Sri Lanka, you will not return to Colombo and will continue to Nuwara Eliya where you will spend the night.*

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## Arrive Home

### Day 16: Arrival at home

Arrive home today.

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## + Southern Sri Lanka extension

Take resplendent natural beauty, add a dollop of rich cultural heritage, sprinkle in some adventure, and finish with a spot of tea, and you get Southern Sri Lanka. Whether you're exploring the misty hills of Nuwara Eliya, embarking on a safari in Yala National Park, or unwinding by the Indian Ocean, you're in for an enticing time—including on what's possibly the prettiest train ride in the world. Tell us when you come back.

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## Nuwara Eliya → 1 night

### Day 15: Transfer to Nuwara Eliya & tea plantation visit

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting, lunch, dinner*  
Travel to Nuwara Eliya, and stop by one of the region's stunning, terraced tea plantations. After the crop was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 19th century, the area became the country's tea capital and Sri Lanka grew to be one of the world's largest exporters.

- Learn how raw tea leaves are harvested, dried, cut, rolled, and fermented—all before they get steeped in your cup.
- Sample tea varieties as you're guided through proper tasting techniques. Notice the mouthfeel—smooth and silky? Brisk and astringent? Floral or fruity?

After an included lunch at a local restaurant, join your Tour Director and get to know the city affectionately known as "Little England" for its British colonial architecture and chilly

temperatures. Surrounded by dramatic landscapes of mountains, valleys, waterfalls, and tea estates, you'll be sure to see the British influence on charming bungalows, public buildings, and hotels.

- Visit Seetha Amman Kovil, a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Rama's wife, whose tragic story is recounted in the epic poem, *Ramayana*. The temple holds significant cultural and religious importance for Hindus, particularly those of Sri Lankan Tamil descent.

Head to your hotel to freshen up. Then, gather with your group for an included dinner served with beer or wine.

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## Yala National Park Region → 2 nights

### Day 16: Train to Ella & transfer to the Yala National Park Region

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Board the train and travel to the resort village of Ella. Reputed as one of the most beautiful train journeys in the world, you'll roll through the riotous green hills of the Sri Lankan countryside. As you watch the landscape ebb in and out of view, enjoy an included boxed lunch aboard the train.

When you arrive in Ella, transfer by bus to your hotel in the Yala National Park region, home to Sri Lanka's most popular wildlife park and its most famous, if people-shy resident, the Sri Lankan leopard. Tonight, enjoy an included dinner with your group, served with your choice of beer or wine.

*Please note: If the trains are canceled due to inclement weather, you will transfer to Ella by bus.*

### Day 17: Yala National Park game drives

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Rise early and head out on a game drive through Yala National Park this morning. The country's most-visited, and second-largest national park weaves dense forests, grasslands, scrub jungles, lagoons, and coastal areas into a tapestry teeming with wildlife. As you travel through the park aboard your 4x4 safari vehicle, watch for the wild elephant herds that populate the area. They share space with the elusive leopard—and with one of the highest densities of that apex predator in the world, you just might see one on the hunt. There are also endangered crocodiles and dozens of species of birds, including the largest bird in Sri Lanka, the black-necked stork.

After a short break for an included lunch, you'll return to the park to continue your game drive and admire the park's conservation efforts that include habitat restoration, anti-poaching patrols, and sustainable tourism practices.

Tonight, freshen up back at the hotel, then enjoy an included dinner served with beer or wine.

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## Galle Region → 1 night

### Day 18: Galle via Ceylon cinnamon plantation

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Travel to Galle—a coastal, colonial city, stopping along the way to learn about how true cinnamon is harvested. After a pause for lunch, you'll join a guided walk through a Ceylon cinnamon plantation.

- Meet up with a local guide and traverse the plantation, learning about the historical significance of cinnamon. The spice was highly valued in ancient civilizations and continued to be a commodity during the height of the Spice Routes.
- See the full journey of cinnamon production from planting and harvesting, to drying and processing cinnamon bark. During the rainy season, the outer bark of the tree is carefully stripped away, revealing the precious inner bark. The inner bark is then peeled off in thin strips and laid to dry in the sun. As the strips dry, they naturally curl up to form the characteristic cinnamon quills.

Continue to Galle and enjoy a free afternoon to relax or unroll a beach towel on the soft sands of the Indian Ocean and enjoy its turquoise waters. Later tonight, sit down for an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

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## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 19: Transfer to Colombo, farewell lunch & departure

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell lunch*

Enjoy a free morning (a few more beach moments, perhaps?) before having lunch in the Galle Region. Then, return to Colombo where you can relax in a day room before traveling to the airport for your overnight flight home. If you have time and have a hankering for some last-minute shopping, head to the busy market stalls of Pettah for a memento from your trip.

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## Flight Home

**Day 20: Arrival at home**

Arrive home today.

## Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.\* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: [goaheadtours.com/LAK](http://goaheadtours.com/LAK) | 1-800-597-0350

### **Day 6: Kerala Martial Arts Show**

\$29/\$39\* (1.5 hours, departs in the evening)

Believe to be one of the oldest fighting systems in the world, the Indian martial art of Kalaripayattu, or Kalari, has existed for more than 3,000 years. Its techniques and traditions survived the British rule of the country—and during this evening excursion, you'll see them in action. Visit a local Kalari center and sit down for a cultural performance. Watch as experts combine unarmed combat with weapons like staffs, spears, maces, and the whip-like urumi sword, executing movements in sync with one another.

### **Day 12: Sigiriya Rock Hike**

\$65/\$75\* (3.5 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Visit the UNESCO-listed Sigiriya, an ancient rock fortress considered by locals to be the Eighth Wonder of the World. Learn how the site dates back to the 5th-century reign of King Kashyapa, who decided it would be his new capital. Carved from hard volcanic rock, the palace is only accessible via a winding stone staircase that begins at the Lion Gate, an entry framed by two massive lion paws. Choose to climb to the top of Sigiriya or admire the views from its base. Please note: In order to reach the top of Sigiriya, you must be comfortable climbing 1,270 stairs each way, traversing steep inclines and uneven terrain.

### **Day 14: Sri Lanka Cooking Demonstration & Lunch**

\$65/\$75\* (3 hours, departs in the morning, includes lunch)

Make your way to the hilly outskirts of Kandy and join a local family in their home. Get a tour of their gardens before taking turns to help your hosts cook a traditional Sri Lankan lunch. Then, head inside the house and sit down with the family to enjoy your feast while learning about Sri Lankan culture and traditions.

\*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at [goaheadtours.com/terms](http://goaheadtours.com/terms)