



Sri Lanka

Departs up to November 2018 & January to November 2019

Tour highlights

- Experience superb scenery, shimmering paddy fields, rubber and spice plantations, verdant tea estates, swaying coconut groves, and exotic wildlife
- Visit the Buddhist monastery of Dambulla and its incredible UNESCO-listed cave temples
- Guided tour of the Royal Palace and Citadel at Sigiriya Rock
- Visit Kandy and see the Temple of the Tooth
- Stay in the colonial hill-station of Nuwara Eliya
- Visit the Elephant Transit Home at Udawalawe National Park
- Enjoy a 4x4 safari in Yala National Park
- Spend three nights relaxing on one of Sri Lanka's idyllic beaches
- Return flights from the UK, plus all hotel transfers
- Hand-picked three and four-star accommodation, including all local taxes, with daily breakfast and dinner included
- Services of our experienced and insightful tour manager



India

January to November 2019

Tour highlights

• A wonderful tour of northern India's 'Golden Triangle'

Departs up to November 2018 &

- See the breathtaking Taj Mahal bathed in soft morning light
- Panoramic city tours of both Old and New Delhi
- Enjoy a guided tour of the 400-year-old deserted Moghul city of Fatehpur Sikri
- Driving safari in Ranthambore National Park
- Guided tour of the 'Pink City' of Jaipur
- Marvel at the extraordinary location and beauty of Amber Fort
- Stay in an original Rajasthani fort, converted into a stunning Heritage Hotel
- Return flights from the UK, plus all hotel transfers. Premium economy upgrades available at a supplement
- Hand-picked accommodation rated three to five stars, including all local taxes, with breakfast and seven meals included
- Services of our experienced and insightful tour manager

For a brochure or to book call **01283 245324** quoting Sunday Post or visit

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By Robin McKelvie

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very year, a raft of "must visit" destinations are flagged up by the travel press.

Sri Lanka has been high up on those lists for the last few years and after recently heading to this glorious Indian Ocean island nation, now know why.

Sri Lanka may lie adrift off the southern shores of India, but I realised instantly that it's very much its own country, a buzzing mix of the majority Sinhalese Buddhist population spiced up with Tamil and Muslim cultures.

Swirl in the lasting legacies of the country's colonial past under the Portuguese, the Dutch then finally British rule and it's quite a cocktail!

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Most visitors skip the commercial capital of Colombo but I recommend spending a day or two getting over the jet lag and exploring its mix of the ultra-modern and colonial past

A guided walking tour is the best way to discover Colombo, Alternatively, hotfoot it to the south, to a swathe of beaches.

A happy compromise between city and beach is the southern charmer of Galle, which was easily my favourite Sri Lankan city, with its old core rippling out across a rugged peninsula that is washed by the Indian Ocean on three flanks.

The British legacy is really strong here, as was my base, the palatial Amangalla, originally the New Oriental Hotel

Galle has its own beaches but you're better off heading just out of town to Dalawella Beach – the sort of puffy white sand charmer that makes travel writers and readers of a certain age think of Bounty Bar adverts. The sands here really are that brilliant white and the

ocean really is that clear. A coral reef protects a

lagoon so you can usually swim safely here and the water is bath temperature warm. It's best to watch out for rip tides and red flags. though, as this is still the ocean

Away from the beaches,

Tour of stunning island nation





another key draw is the country's national parks. Sri Lanka is serious about conservation and boasts over a dozen bountiful national parks.

My favourite is Yala. All of the parks boast their charms, but in Yala you have an excellent chance of seeing a

leopard along with spotted deer and hulking elephants. I can recommend my Yala base, Noel Rodrigo's Leopard

Safaris, as they really know what they are doing. Their drivers and guides

are experts and have a great record for tracking leopards.

We managed to catch the rare sight of a large female scooping her two cubs down from a tree and shepherding them across the track in front of us.

The authentic ultra-local Sri Lankan food and the large tented accommodation are both spot-on, too.

Pushing further inland from Yala, the hills start to rear up on an island that sweeps from the Indian Ocean all the way up to



FACT BOX

sightseeing. See indianodyssey.co.uk Doha, See aatarairways.com



▼ Robin explores the island by bike; right, a tea plantation.

scenic in the Hill Country. I recommend the winding iourney from Kandy to Hatton.

These uplands were jungle



until the British arrived and cut back swathes of indigenous vegetation to make way for Britain's favourite tipple – tea.

It's fascinating to see the scale of the industry here. with mile upon mile of land given over to tea cultivation, with the tea leaves still picked very much by hand. So far, we've looked at

areas where tourism is taking off, so there are lots of places to stay and eat that are used to British visitors. English is spoken widely

throughout Sri Lanka, too. If you want to pioneer a little. I heard great things from my excellent driver and guide Chaminda about the deserted beaches of the east coast and undeveloped northern region nearest India, around Jaffna, too.

Expect to see these areas on more lists of the best places to visit in the coming vears, as Sri Lanka becomes more and more popular.

As soon as you arrive here, you will instantly see what all the fuss is about.



TRAVEL

AMANGALLA

This luxury Galle escape sports lashings of history and a large, tree-shrouded pool. A hotel with serious colonial history

MINISTRY OF CRAB

One of the best seafood restaurants in Asia offers the Sri Lankan crabs that are normally spirited off for export.

EMPIRE CAFE

Just across from the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy, the most important Buddhist site in the country. Superb curry dishes in a colonial atmosphere.

WI_IΔYΔ

A beach club and relaxed restaurant that overlooks the striking white sands of this lovely beach just outside Galle.

CHURCH STREET SOCIAL

Recline on the veranda at the Fort Bazaar hotel in Galle as vou tuck into a tempting array of Sri Lankan dishes.

AMANGALLA

A hotel restaurant worth staying in for. A piano plays in the grand setting, while a mix of Sri Lankan dishes and international classics star on the temptina menu.