



## Elephants and Beaches of Sri Lanka Honeymoon and Special Adventure



### **Factfile**

#### **Transfers**

Airport transfers upon arrival and departure.

#### **Fully Escorted**

By English-speaking driver/guide.

#### **Transport**

Air-conditioned deluxe vehicle and one day train.

#### **Activities**

Jeep safari in Uda Walawe National Park, extensive walking at sites.

#### **Accommodation**

12 nights boutique hotels and/or eco-lodges. For further details please see the itinerary below.

#### **Meals**

As per itinerary. B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner.

#### **Entrance Fees**

Included for all sites listed as a part of the itinerary.

*\*Please note that these itineraries can be tailored to suit your dates, duration and budget. Ask for more details on quotation.*

## **Itinerary**

### **DAY 1 – COLOMBO - WAIKKAL**

On arrival you are met and transferred by private vehicle and boat to your overnight accommodation at Ranweli Holiday Village. You will cross the river by boat to approach the reception of the hotel. Once you have checked in the rest of the day is free for you to relax and settle into your surroundings. **(D)**

Overnight at Ranweli Holiday Village, Waikkal – Sea View Bungalows.

### **Ranweli Holiday Village**

The magical Ranweli Holiday Village is an eco-friendly resort located on a private wetland estuary that teems with wonderful birdlife. Ranweli is home to individual bungalows that have been tastefully decorated using local, renewable resources and offer either beach or river views. The resort can only be reached by boat, which adds to the romantic notion of being stranded on a paradise island.

### **DAY 2 - WAIKKAL**

A full day to relax and enjoy the beach. **(BD)**

Overnight at Ranweli Holiday Village, Waikkal – Sea View Bungalows.

### **DAY 3 – WAIKKAL – ANURADHAPURA**

After breakfast you leave your hotel and head to the ancient city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka's first capital.

Here you visit many historical and archaeological sites of the city including Isurumuniya - the first temple to be built on the island- famous for its sculpture of "Lovers". In addition to this you will see the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree with an authenticated history of more than 2300 years; Ruwanveliseya, the largest stupa in the island and Jethawanaramaya and Abhayagiriya, which in their original form have been declared as equivalent in size to the Great Pyramids in Giza and have thus been declared as World Heritage Sites. You will also see the Twin Ponds, Thuparamaya (the first Stupa to be built in Sri Lanka enshrining the left collar bone of the Buddha) and the Samadhi Statue with its meditating posture.

Overnight stay and dinner at the Ulagalla Resort, Anuradhapura – Nikawewa Villa. **(B,D)**

### **Anuradhapura**

Anuradhapura was the capital of the Sinhalese people for 1000 years from the 4th century BC, despite frequent invasions from South India. Today it is the largest and most important ancient site in Sri Lanka, and there are a wealth of old palaces, temples, dagobas and Buddha statues to explore, covering a huge area. The most visited part is the sacred Bo tree which is said to have been planted from a sapling from the tree under which Buddha gained enlightenment. This was brought from India by Sangamitta, the daughter of the great Indian Emperor Ashoka who had sent his own son, Arahath Mahinda, to spread Buddhism in Sri Lanka; it is one of the most important pilgrimage places in the country.

### **Ulagalla Resort**

Nestled in a village in the ancient kingdom of Anuradhapura, Ulagalla Resort collides a previous era with the modern comforts of the present. Tucked away in the lush landscape by the Ulagalla Wewa, Ulagalla Resort is a historic mansion transformed into a modern haven. Combining tradition with technology, the resort embraces privacy, individuality, indulgence and satisfaction. Experience extravagance in this inimitable hotel located in the heart of the cultural triangle. Each luxurious chalet is equipped with a private plunge pool and delectable meals are served according to your schedule. Each of our chalets has a private butler assigned to it; the butler is there to assist you in anything you may need. Horseback riding, kayaking, archery, canoeing and elephant riding are some activities available at the hotel. Immerse yourself in culture, history and nature at this enchanting sanctuary.

Offering a panoramic view of the lush paddy fields and peaceful reservoirs that comprise Ulagalla Resort, the chalets are designed to make the most of their surroundings. Where comfort and technology have aesthetic overtones, each chalet is conveyed in elegance, good taste and state-of-the-art technology; each chalet comprises a living area, bedroom area, dressing area and private plunge pool. Immerse yourself in luxury as you slip into a bed fitted with soft sheets or a warm bath accompanied with complementary amenities. Thoughtfully decorated with impeccable taste and delicate grace, the refined elegance of each chalet will transport you to a different world. The chalets are meticulously placed across 58 acres of natural woodland to assure ultimate privacy and solitude.

#### **DAY 4 – ANURADHAPURA – SIGIRIYA**

Drive to Sigiriya, visiting the Avukana standing Buddha on the way. En route there is also the chance to walk amongst the fossilised forest at Namal Uyana and see the famous pink quartz mountain (one of the largest of its kind in existence) before arriving at Dambulla Cave Temple, considered the largest painted cave in the world.

Evening elephant ride through dry zone jungle\*.

Overnight at the Sigiriya Village Hotel, Superior Rooms. **(BD)**

#### **Dambulla**

The cave paintings and sculptures at Dambulla are a spectacular sight. Carved out of the rock, this extensive series of caves are covered from floor to ceiling with extraordinarily well-preserved frescoes depicting all kinds of Buddhist imagery. The complex is the largest of its kind in the world and the biggest cave is over 50m long. The caves have been places of worship for more than 2,000 years although the frescoes have been added at various times through the ages.

#### **Sigiriya Village Hotel**

Sigiriya Village Hotel is an exclusive jungle retreat that blends comfortably with nature, thus preserving the rich natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. Pathways along the edge of lotus-filled ponds lead to the dining area where you can enjoy your evening meal overlooking the magnificent Sigiriya Rock Fortress. Each cottage has been tastefully decorated and comes with a private verandah, the ideal place to relax with a drink as the sun goes down.

#### **DAY 5 – SIGIRIYA - GIRITALE**

After breakfast climb the Rock Fortress of Sigiriya. Continue on to Giritale and the tranquil Deer Park Hotel where you will stay at Angsana Cottages. **(BD)**

#### **Sigiriya**

Often referred to as a "sky fortress", the remains of the 5th century fortress of Sigiriya atop a 200m high rock outcrop is one of Sri Lanka's most extraordinary and impressive monuments. It is enormous and dominates the surrounding landscape so much that you can imagine why the King chose to consolidate and gather his forces here. At the bottom of Sigiriya there are traces of the extensive gardens and moat which used to surround the rock fortress. A precarious staircase leads up through the remains of an enormous lion statue (the paws remain, but sadly the original entrance through the lion's mouth is now left to the imagination alone) to the flat summit of the rock. In the 5th century a huge palace complex covered this summit. Now only the foundations remain, but the scale of the buildings and their spectacular location are impressive. As you ascend to the summit there are breathtaking views across the forest-covered plains and the walkway is decorated with vivid 1,500-year-old rock frescoes, much celebrated for the beauty of their female images.

#### **Deer Park Hotel**

This luxury eco-resort provides a contemporary, exotic retreat where the silence is broken only by the sound of cascading waterfalls and birdsong. You are sure to leave the Deer Park Hotel totally relaxed and calm, after luxuriating in the stunning surroundings and enjoying the hotel's famous Herbal Spa.

## **DAY 6 – GIRITALE – POLONNARUWA – KANDY**

After breakfast you leave for Polonnaruwa, the Medieval capital of Sri Lanka, where you will have a guided tour. After this you drive through the beautiful Knuckles Mountain Range toward Kandy, located in the heart of the island. En route enjoy a guided tour of a wood carving factory, a spice garden and a batik factory.

Your hotel in Kandy is the beautifully situated Mahaweli Reach Hotel on the banks of Sri Lanka's longest river, the Mahaweli. You stay in the Presidential Suite. **(BD)**

### **Polonnaruwa**

This ancient city is a delight to wander through. Although not as important historically as Anuradhapura, the remains are better preserved and there are some truly awe-inspiring monuments to be seen. Some of the most impressive are the massive carvings of Buddha which are hewn out of bare rock. It is not difficult to take a step back in time and imagine life as it must have been here almost a thousand years ago. The city itself was established when the Sinhalese moved their capital from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa in the early 12th century. Later in that century, the city experienced its heyday under the ruling of Parakramabahu. He went on a building spree, constructing the huge lake and the many large buildings and parks that you will see. You will visit many sites of archaeological and historical interest including the Great Statue, Quadrangle, Royal Palace, Vatadage, Hatadage, Siva Devalaya, Gal Viharaya, Alahana Pirivena Complex, Kumara and Lotus Ponds, Thuparamaya, Rankoth Vehera, Pabalu Vehera, Thiwanka Image House and the museum, some of which depict the influence that Hinduism had on the Buddhist Civilisation during that period of history.

### **Spice Garden**

Sri Lanka has a long history of producing spices but the climate requirements for producing them is actually quite restrictive and only a small area of the country offers ideal conditions. You will stop at a small roadside garden where a local specialist will guide you through the many and varied plants and their uses. Some like cinnamon, coffee, vanilla you may know, others and their ayurvedic uses, you may not.

### **Kandy**

While Kandy is the second largest city in the country after Colombo, and is the capital of the central hill regions, it is a peaceful and attractive place. There are plenty of scenic walks through the hills and forests that surround the town as well as along the lake that forms its centre. In the heart of town is the Temple of the Tooth (Dalada Maligawa), the most important shrine in the country, which houses a relic of a tooth of the Buddha taken from his funeral pyre in the 6th century BC. Each evening, the day's worship culminates when the casket containing the tooth relic is put on display to devotees who have travelled from all over the Buddhist world. Sri Lanka's most famous festival (the Esala Perahera) takes place in Kandy every July or August. Unfortunately the exact dates are not known more than a couple of months in advance as the most auspicious dates must be obtained from an astrologer. This is, however, one of the most amazing festivals to witness with thousands of dancers and performers and hundreds of elephants marching through the town.

### **Mahaweli Reach Hotel**

Perched on the Banks of the Great Mahaweli River, this hotel is thought of by some to be the best five star property in the Kandy region. Relax and enjoy the sumptuous yet unobtrusive surroundings of this beautiful and welcoming hotel. Let the friendly and efficient staff cater to your every need whether it be by the spacious pool or when using the hotel's wealth of facilities.

## **DAY 7 – KANDY**

Morning city tour of UNESCO World Heritage listed Kandy with the opportunity to visit the Upper Lake Drive and a gem museum. You also visit the Royal Botanical Gardens, one of the best of its kind in Asia with more than 5000 species of different varieties of flora which incidentally was the headquarters of Lord Louis Mountbatten – the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. In the evening watch a performance of traditional

Kandyan dancers and drummers including devotional fire walking, then visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha. (BD)

Overnight at the Mahaweli Reach Hotel, Presidential Suite. (BD)

### **DAY 8 – KANDY – ELLA**

After breakfast you will be transferred to the railway station. You will travel by train through breathtaking scenery covered in tea plantations, cascading waterfalls and endless greenery. You will be met and transferred to the Kirchhayn Bungalow. (BD)

(All efforts will be made to obtain reserved seats in advance in the last coach, the "Observation Saloon" but if not it will be in 2<sup>nd</sup> class unreserved compartments mixing with the cross section of the local community while your luggage will be in the vehicle following. If you prefer, you may also request at the time of booking to travel by car in the event that the Observation Saloon isn't available.)

Overnight stay and dinner at the Kirchhayn Bungalow, Bandarawela – any of the suites.

### **Kirchhayn Bungalow**

Kirchhayn Bungalow on Aislaby Estate and Farm is located in the "Uva" tea growing district. It is approximately 15 minutes away from the Bandarawela town centre. The Bungalow stands at an elevation of 1,400 metres. The climate is cooler than that in Colombo and areas down south and is typically cool mornings with warm and pleasant afternoons and crisp cool evenings. Carry a light sweater/ cardigan or shawl to use in the cool mornings and evenings. Day time temperatures range from 19-24°C and the evenings can drop down to 10°C and below.

In true colonial style, the informal living room that faces the garden is decorated aptly with comfortable rattan furniture that is perfect for a pre-dinner drink or just to relax. Immerse yourself in the clear rock swimming pool that is perfectly placed within the glorious gardens. The enchanting bedroom suites are adorned with wonderful antique furniture that introduces you to a vivid picture of colonial life.

### **DAY 9 – ELLA – UDA WALAWE - KALAWANA**

In the morning visit a tea plantation and factory of the renowned Ceylon Tea. Continue on via the Uda Walawe National Park to search for wild elephants by jeep with your own private tracker. You will also visit the elephant transit camp. Overnight at the unique Boulder Garden eco-hotel where you will stay in Hornsels Rooms. (BD)

### **Elephant Transit Camp**

The elephant transit camp rescues orphaned elephants that would be unable to survive in the wild. The camp provides care for the elephants and teaches them the skills that are required before they are released back into the wild.

### **Uda Walawe National Park**

In India many of the wildlife sanctuaries were once Maharajas' hunting grounds – a strange irony – but in Sri Lanka the situation was always very different due to the Buddhist belief in the sanctity of life. For thousands of years, Sri Lankan kings chose specific areas to be protected so that the wildlife could thrive in its original habitat. Uda Walawe wildlife reserve is 300km<sup>2</sup> and one of a number set up in the south of the island to protect the indigenous flora and fauna. Herds of wild elephant are often seen here and you will enjoy a jeep safari through the most beautiful part of the park.

### **Boulder Garden Eco-Hotel**

This remarkable hotel has been carefully designed to skilfully utilise a crop of gigantic black boulders and is ideally situated just minutes away from the entrance to Sinharaja rainforest. The rooms are comfortable and equipped with all that you need for a relaxing stay. A highlight of the hotel is the outdoor facilities, with an open-air restaurant which is overhung by a large boulder that transforms into a mini-waterfall when rain falls.

## **DAY 10 – KALAWANA**

A full free day to enjoy the exotic location of the Boulder Garden, and the surrounding countryside. **(BD)**

Overnight at the Boulder Garden - Hornsels Rooms.

## **DAY 11 – KALAWANA – BENTOTA**

After breakfast we leave and travel towards Bentota on the south west coast via Matugama. **(B,D)**

*(If you prefer, you have the opportunity to make many interesting stops on this route, such as Wevurukannala Temple, Veherahena – an underground temple complex, the UNESCO World Heritage listed Galle Dutch Fortress, the amazing stilt fishermen and a turtle hatchery. Please ask us for details if you would like to include this, or mention it on arrival to your driver.)*

Overnight at the Marina Bentota.

### **Bentota**

Bentota is one of Sri Lanka's most famous beach resorts, renowned for being home to some of Sri Lanka's best beaches. If you prefer to stay active rather than relax on a beach there are plenty of activities on offer including swimming, deep-sea fishing, diving, water skiing, wind surfing and boat rides through the mangroves, to name but a few options. The beaches are also home to the Giant Sea Turtles. Whilst here you can visit the hatchery at Kosgoda which has prepared protected beds of sand for the eggs, laid annually, and large tanks to view the young before they are returned to the sea.

### **Marina Bentota**

The Marina Bentota is positioned between the Indian Ocean and the lagoon of the Bentota River just before it enters the sea and is considered to be one of the most idyllic spots in the area. This small but luxurious hotel has large spacious rooms and a perfect view of the Bentota River and the Indian Ocean. Located on Paradise island, the Marina Bentota is the newest property on the beach. Spectacular sunsets are guaranteed on most days except during monsoon weather. The restaurant has views across the flowing river and the Indian Ocean, The water sports centre offers jet scooters, water skiing, wind surfing, kayaking, fishing and diving. Please note that water sports are seasonal and not available in monsoon weather.

## **DAY 12 – BENTOTA**

A full free day for you to relax on the beach. **(B,D)**

Overnight at the Marina Bentota.

## **DAY 13 – BENTOTA – COLOMBO AIRPORT**

Departure day. Transfer to the international airport for your flight home. **(B)**

### **\* NOTE:**

*The Elephant Ride on day 4 will pass through a jungle area, farmlands, a water way etc. On the return journey you may meet villagers who will be by the side of the road with bunches of ripe bananas. Naturally the elephants will be attracted to the scent of the bananas. Please be aware that if you would like to feed the bananas to the elephants each bunch will be sold at around 400 – 500 rupees which is about 4 -5 dollars.*

**This itinerary starts from £2405 per person.**

Prices will depend on date of travel, inclusions and exclusions. Please contact us for details.

