

Sri Lanka GAT Convention

15 days

Verdant jungles and Buddhist temples are just the start of what you'll find when you join other Group Coordinators and Go Ahead Tours staff on this journey through Sri Lanka. The architecture in Colombo and Galle speaks to the island's colonial history, whereas the striking beauty of Sigiriya rock and the Polonnaruwa ruins represent its connection to native traditions. Travel from coast to countryside as you connect with your fellow travelers and learn more about this stunning country.

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for about 2.5 hours daily across uneven terrain, including paved roads, dirt paths, and stairs.

Group size

18–35

Sri Lanka GAT Convention

15 days

New York City, New York → 1 night

Day 1: Travel day

Fly to JFK airport and spend the night at a nearby hotel.

Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 2: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Colombo today.

Colombo → 2 nights

Day 3: Arrival in Colombo

Included meals: dinner

Welcome to Sri Lanka! Arrive this evening and transfer to your hotel. Then, enjoy a light dinner.

Day 4: Sightseeing tour of Colombo

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, welcome dinner

Start the day with a guided sightseeing tour of Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital city.

- Enter the Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara temple to learn about the island's connection to Buddhism
 - Pass by the Neo-Baroque style Old Parliament Building and the Town Hall, which includes architectural elements similar to those of the U.S. Capitol building
 - See Independence Memorial Hall and learn about how the country gained its independence from Britain in 1948
 - Visit the Temple of Sri Kailawasanathan Swami Devasthanam Kovil, the oldest Hindu temple on the island
 - Enjoy an included lunch at a local restaurant
 - Walk through the streets of Colombo and try traditional Sri Lankan food and drink
- Gather with your fellow travelers at a welcome dinner this evening.
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Sigiriya Region → 3 nights

Day 5: Sigiriya Region via Dambulla cave temple

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Make some stops as you travel inland to the Sigiriya region today.

- Meet up with a guide for a tour of the UNESCO-listed Dambulla cave temple
 - See the variety of paintings and statues representing the life of Buddha
 - Learn about the history of the caves, which date back to the first century B.C., and the prehistoric Sri Lankans who lived there
 - Enjoy an included lunch in Kurunegala
- Continue on to the Sigiriya region and sit down for an included dinner.

Day 6: Convention Tour meeting

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Join your group for the Convention Tour meeting, a series of presentations and discussions designed with Group Coordinators' questions, experiences, and interests in mind.

- Begin with a keynote address by senior members of Go Ahead Tours staff, followed by an insider's view of the company and tours
 - Discuss tour planning and recruiting best practices with Go Ahead Tours staff and your fellow Group Coordinators
 - Get an overview of the many benefits available to you as a Go Ahead Tours Group Coordinator and learn about new program updates
 - Enjoy coffee, tea, and an included lunch
- Tonight, take part in an optional yoga lesson or relax at the hotel.

Day 7: Sigiriya rock & Polonnaruwa

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Uncover the historical and cultural heart of the Sigiriya region today.

- Visit the UNESCO-listed Sigiriya rock, considered by the locals to be the Eighth Wonder of the World, and learn about its interesting history
- Choose to climb to the top of Sigiriya rock or admire the views from the base
- Head to a school to meet students and learn about the Sri Lankan education system
- Continue on to Polonnaruwa, another UNESCO-recognized site, and explore the ruins of the ancient city with your Tour Director
- Visit a farmer's house and sit down in the small clay hut to enjoy an included traditional lunch of rice and curry

Please note: You'll need to climb 1,200 steps on a steep incline with uneven terrain in order to reach the top of Sigiriya rock.

Kandy → 2 nights

Day 8: Kandy via Habarana & spice farm

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Spend some time learning more about the local way of life as you travel to Kandy.

- Stop in Habarana to visit a Buddhist monk and hear about the religion and the practice of meditation
 - Visit a private spice farm in the town of Matale and watch a short cooking demonstration to see how popular herbs and spices are used in Sri Lankan cuisine
 - Sit down for an included lunch
- Arrive in Kandy and meet up with a guide. You'll stroll along the ancient streets and learn about the former Kingdom of Kandy.

Day 9: Village walk, Suriyakantha Centre for Art & Culture, & Temple of the Tooth

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

This morning, embark on a walk through a village on the outskirts of Kandy.

- Start at the Buddhist Gadaladeniya Vihara temple
 - Meet local artisans who create brass sculptures
 - Walk through rice paddy fields and past religious temples
 - Stop by a dance school to learn about traditional Kandyan drumming and dancing, such as the cobra dance, mask dance, and Gini Sisila fire dance
 - Enjoy an included lunch of rice and curry
- Take a tour of the Suriyakantha Centre for Art & Culture led by Professor Jacques Soulie, a French national who has lived in Sri Lanka for over 40 years and cofounded the center.
- Learn about the traditional Dutch architecture of the former walawwa, a type of mansion that was given to native leaders by the colonial rulers
 - View the vast collection of books, Buddhist manuscripts, photographs, ancient furniture, and paintings
- Later, pay a visit to the Temple of the Tooth at sunset.
- Step inside the Buddhist temple and learn about the sacred site, which houses a relic of the tooth of the Buddha
 - See a *puja*, a traditional Buddhist ceremony, accompanied by music and drumming
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Nuwara Eliya → 1 night

Day 10: Train to Nuwara Eliya & tea plantation visit

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Board a train and travel to Nuwara Eliya. Known as one of the most beautiful train rides in the world, you'll admire the lush, rolling hills of the Sri Lankan countryside.

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

This afternoon, stop by one of the region's stunning, terraced tea plantations.

- Learn about Sri Lanka's history of tea production and discover how the country became one of the largest tea producers and exporters in the world
 - Sample some of the locally produced tea
- Sit down for an included dinner this evening.

Udawalawe National Park Region → 2 nights

Day 11: Transfer to Udawalawe National Park Region

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Travel to the Udawalawe National Park Region today. Then, sit down for an included dinner this evening.

Day 12: Udawalawe National Park game drive

Included meals: breakfast

Head out on a game drive through Udawalawe National Park early this morning.

- Stay on the lookout for Sri Lankan elephants, which are often seen roaming throughout the park
- Try to spot other local wildlife including Sri Lankan leopards, Sri Lankan sloth bears, water buffalo, and more

Galle Region → 1 night

Day 13: Transfer to Galle & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Travel to Galle and join a guide for a tour of the coastal, colonial city.

- Visit the UNESCO-recognized Galle Fort, which was built by Portuguese settlers in the 1500s and fortified by the Dutch in the 1600s
- Enjoy free time to eat lunch and explore the city
- Stop along the shores of Weligama to see fishermen partaking in the unique tradition of stilt fishing

Celebrate your trip at a farewell dinner this evening.

Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 14: Negombo via Kosgoda Turtle Hatchery & departure

As you head north towards Negombo, stop at the Kosgoda Turtle Hatchery. You'll learn about the five types of sea turtles that come to nest on the nearby beaches and discover how the organization works to protect them.

Then, relax in a dayroom in Negombo before transferring to the nearby airport in Colombo for your overnight flight home.

Flight Home

Day 15: Arrival at home

Arrive home today.