



## Pearl of the Indian Ocean Tour Dossier

### Classic Tour | 15 Days | Moderate

Join us on an exciting discovery of Sri Lanka, including beautiful beaches, ruins lost in the jungle, unique wildlife, tea plantations and stunning waterfalls. One of the highlights of this land is its gracious people and a rich abundance of surprises on offer.

#### Tour Highlights:

- **Negombo** - Coastal city on the west coast of Sri Lanka, known for busy fish markets and beautiful beaches
- **Sigiriya** - Spectacular rock fortress and UNESCO World Heritage listed site
- **Kandy** - Capital of Sri Lanka's hill country and is the home of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha
- **Nuwara Eliya** - 'Little England'; set amongst mountains, valleys and tea plantations
- **Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home** - Located inside the Udawalawe National Park, the Elephant Transit Home cares for orphaned, abandoned and displaced elephants, rehabilitates them and releases them into the National Park.
- **Ahungalla** - A small coastal town located in Galle District
- **Bentota** - Famous for watersports, world class hotels and traditional Ayurveda treatments.
- **Colombo** - Sri Lanka's commercial capital city and the country's political, economic and cultural centre



## Pearl of the Indian Ocean tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)
- Visa fees for Australian passport holders

*Personal expenditures e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary are at your own expense.*

## Classic Tours

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Sri Lanka on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escort or local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

## Moderate

'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' is a **moderate** tour. Moderate tours require a higher level of fitness and may include standard activities and longer periods of sightseeing. Easy walking, high altitude and overnight train journeys may feature. Anyone with a good level of fitness should be able to complete this itinerary.

Our National Escort and Local Guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

## Country Profile: Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a beautiful island, with a 2,500m-high mountainous range, stunning waterfalls, endless tropical beaches and national parks full of amazing wildlife. Explore ancient cities, temples, monuments and architecture that reveal evidence of the former presence of the British Raj.

## Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances, we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

- Please note that from 06 January 2017 to 06 April 2017 Colombo airport will be partially closed from 08:30 to 16:30 to allow for resurfacing of the runway. This means flights will only be allowed to arrive and depart outside of these hours, there may be long queues at immigration and airline check-in counters. In anticipation of the added wait time at the airport, check-in will commence 5 hours prior to departure and will close 90 mins prior to departure. All passengers must adhere to the new regulations.

## Joining Your Tour

The tour is 15 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the starting point. Join the tour on Day 1 in Negombo and end the tour on Day 14 in Colombo. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## Important Information Regarding Itinerary Changes and Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our Sri Lanka office on + 94 (0) 777 358 737 (24 hours) to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in Sri Lanka. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in Sri Lanka as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival times.

## Pearl of the Indian Ocean Itinerary

### DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO NEGOMBO VIA COLOMBO

Fly with Singapore Airlines to Colombo. Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to Negombo for an overnight stay. Your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours will meet you at the Bandaranaike Airport in the Arrivals Hall tonight. Together with any other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer (45 minutes) to your hotel and check-in.

*In the event of flight delays or changes to arrival times, please see the previous page for details as to what to do in this circumstance.*

**Please note:** For tours travelling from January to April, renovations to the runway at Colombo airport may cause longer than normal wait times at immigration upon arrival in Sri Lanka.

### **Destination Information**

**Negombo** - Negombo was once an important commercial trade centre, well known for offering the best cinnamon in the world. Negombo was one of the first towns taken by the Portuguese, only to be captured by the Dutch in 1640 and then recaptured by the Portuguese some months later. The British eventually took control of the town in 1796.

### DAY 2: NEGOMBO

This morning a tour introduction will either be held in the hotel or on the coach. There will not be food or drinks served at this meeting; it is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in Sri Lanka.

Tour the town of Negombo today. Begin at the beach, where you can view the fish auctions. Continue to the Dutch Fort where you will tour the surrounding area. Later visit a local Catholic Church. In the afternoon, take a boat

ride through the delta river where you will need to climb on and off a boat without handrails or assistance.

Sightseeing today involves 2 hours sightseeing on foot with light climbing of steps involved.

### **Destination Information**

**Fish Auctions** - Each day the fishermen of Negombo take out their oruvas (a type of sailing canoe). Watch the lively fish auctions, where you will have a chance to meet the local fishermen.

**Dutch Fort** - The original fort was built by the Portuguese and destroyed during the Dutch siege in 1644. The Dutch rebuilt a stronger fort on the ruins. The British, who used the stone to build a prison, demolished it in the late 19th century and today only ruins remain.

### DAY 3: NEGOMBO TO SIGIRIYA

Rise early and after breakfast drive 5 hours (220km) to Ritigala Nature Reserve, where you will visit the Jungle Monastery and explore the ancient ruins. You will spend two hours here; sightseeing involves climbing uneven steps and ruins. Continue to Sigiriya (50-minute drive) for a two-night stay and enjoy the afternoon free at leisure.

### **Destination Information**

**Ritigala Nature Reserve and Monastery** - Nestled among the Ritigala Strict Nature Reserve, it is a fascinating nature reserve that is home to many species of rare flora and fauna. Ritigala Jungle Monastery showcases a large Buddhist Monastery, dating from pre-Christian times. Abandoned between the 10th and 11th centuries, the Monastery was left to be swallowed by the jungle before it was discovered in the 19th century.

**Sigiriya** - The ancient city of Sigiriya lies at the 180m summit of the granite peak known as the 'Lion's Rock'. One of the most dramatic sites in Sri Lanka, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1982.

#### **DAY 4: SIGIRIYA – POLONNARUWA**

Explore the Sigiriya rock fortress this morning, also known as Lion Rock. There are many steps, most with railings leading up to the top of the Rock Fortress so extra care is needed here. Please ensure you bring plenty of water with you today and you wear a hat for sun protection. The ascent involves a very steep climb, so those who are unfit may have some difficulty. Beware of local 'helpers' as they may charge a fee for their assistance. You will spend approximately 2 hours here climbing the Lion Rock and touring the surrounding gardens.

Later, drive to UNESCO World Heritage listed site of Polonnaruwa and tour the ruins. There will be approximately 2 hours of easy sightseeing on foot while exploring the palace and temples - refer to **Appropriate Dress** section below. Return to Sigiriya.

#### **Destination Information**

**Rock Fortress** - Built by King Kashyapa, the rock fortress is also known as the 'Lion Rock' because a massive lion carved out of the rock once sat at the entrance to the palace. Today only the lion's paws remain. On the summit are the foundations of the Royal Palace built for King Kashyapa, along with a pool, sunrise-facing throne constructed from solid rock and panoramic views of the town below. You will also see the three distinct landscaped gardens; the Water Gardens, Boulder Gardens and Terrace Gardens.

**Polonnaruwa** - Polonnaruwa was the capital of Sri Lanka from the 11th to the 13th centuries and is a well-preserved city of stupas, frescoes and statues. Visit the ruins of the Royal Palace, Audience Hall and the Bathing Pool in the Royal Palace group, along with the Thivanka Image House, which possesses the best frescoes from the Polonnaruwa period. Also tour Gal Vihara, a magnificent group of rock temples consisting of four separate statues; a meditating Buddha, a smaller Buddha said to be visiting heaven, a standing Buddha and the reclining Buddha entering Nirvana, which is 14 metres long.

#### **DAY 5: SIGIRIYA TO KANDY**

Depart Sigiriya this morning and drive approximately 45 minutes to view the Dambulla Rock Temple. The temple is made up of five decorated caves and has two main viewing areas consisting of approximately 800 steps. You will spend

1.5 hours sightseeing on foot with light climbing of steps involved.

Continue 1.5 hours to the town of Kandy, stopping to visit a spice garden in Matale, where there is easy sightseeing on foot for approximately 1.5 hours. Drive a further hour to Kandy and check into your hotel.

#### **Destination Information**

**Dambulla Rock Temple** - Dating back to the 1st century BC, the famous Dambulla Rock Temple is made up of five caves that have been converted into shrine rooms containing around 150 Buddha statues and colourful frescoes. In the first cave you will see the 14m statue of Buddha cut out of the rock. At the Buddha's feet are Ananda, the most loyal disciple, as well as other seated Buddhas nearby.

The second cave is the largest, also known as the Cave of the Great Kings, where there are 16 standing and 40 seated statues of Buddha. The frescoes on the ceiling depict scenes from Buddha's life and important events from the country's history. Inside the cave is a spring created from the drips from the ceiling, which is said to have healing powers and is used in sacred rituals.

**Spice Garden** - Sri Lanka is famous for its spices, and today you will visit a spice garden where cinnamon, cardamom, pepper creepers and other spice trees are planted. Learn how spices are grown and processed before having lunch.

**Kandy** - Kandy is situated 500m above sea level and is known for its culture and beauty. It is a sacred Buddhist city, famous for the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, Dalada Maligawa. Each year the tooth relic is honoured in Esala Perahera, a religious parade with elephants, drummers and dancers performing in the streets.

#### **DAY 6: KANDY**

This morning explore the Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens. Later, tour the city of Kandy. Visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (where there are small amounts of steps and the temple can be very crowded during daily prayer services) before continuing to the remains of the Royal Palace, a gem museum and enjoy a stroll through a local market. This evening watch a cultural dance show.

#### **Physical Description**

**Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens** - The largest botanical gardens in Sri Lanka. Here you will see a collection of ornamental plants used to produce spices.

**Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic** - The temple houses an important Buddhist Relic, a tooth of the Buddha. Stolen at his funeral, the tooth was smuggled into Sri Lanka hidden in the hair of a princess who fled from India. The relic of the tooth is kept in a two-storey shrine fronted by large elephant trunks.

**Remains of the Royal Palace** - Which is now the National Museum, the primary exhibits are in the Palle Vahala, the former Queens Palace, and consist of weapons, jewellery, tools and other artefacts.

#### **DAY 7: KANDY TO NUWARA ELIYA**

Say goodbye to Kandy as you drive to Peradeniya railway station and board a train to Nanu Oya (train journey approximately 2 hours). Travel by coach to Nuwara Eliya, stopping to visit a tea plantation and tea factory on route.

Please note: your group luggage will be transported by a separate coach directly to Nuwara Eliya. Please pack all necessary medication and anything you will need for today's touring in your daypack.

**N.B: As our train is a day train, our seats will be in an AC Chair Car. More than likely you will not be able to purchase any food or drink on the train, so if you need snacks make sure to pre-purchase them before boarding. The train carriages are shared, so at all times please be aware of your belongings.**

#### **Destination Information**

**Nuwara Eliya** - Situated at 2,000m above sea level, Nuwara Eliya is the main hill station of Sri Lanka and is known as 'Little England', as it resembles an English country town. It is considered to be an excellent location for tea production due to the cool climate, which creates tea with a unique flavour.

**Tea Factory and Tea Plantation** - During your visit you will observe the process of manufacturing tea, and learn how tea is graded. You will also have the opportunity to taste a cup of pure Ceylon tea.

#### **DAY 8: NUWARA ELIYA – ST. CLAIR’S FALLS**

Early in the morning visit St Clair's Falls (located 27km from Nuwara Eliya). Here you can view the spectacular waterfall from the road or walk approximately 500m to a lookout point. Afterwards, tour a local tea plantation before returning to Nuwara Eliya.

Today's sightseeing involves 2 hours on foot and involves light climbing and walking over uneven ground.

#### **Destination Information**

**St. Clair's Falls** - One of the most unique waterfalls in all of Sri Lanka. Fondly known as the 'Little Niagara of Sri Lanka', St. Clair's Falls is created by two separate falls, Maha Ella (known as the Greater Fall) and Kuda Ella (known as the Lesser Fall). Access to the waterfall can be found by walking 500m through a tea plantation or we can have a photo opportunity from the road above.

#### **DAY 9: NUWARA ELIYA TO UDAWALAWE**

After breakfast depart Nuwara Eliya and drive approximately 5 hours (200km) to Udawalawe National Park. This afternoon take a jeep safari tour of the park (the safari will last approximately 3 hours). Check into your hotel for the evening, located a five-minute drive from the entry gates of the National Park.

#### **Destination Information**

**Udawalawe National Park** - Located approximately 200km southeast of Colombo city and is a major eco-tourism destination in Sri Lanka. The 30,821 hectares dry zone game park is most famous for the many elephants that live there (about 400 in total). During a visit, it is not unusual to see whole herds of adults and young elephants - feeding or bathing and playing in the water! In addition to this main attraction, the park is home to many water buffalo, water monitor lizards, sambar deer, monkeys and the occasional leopard, as well as being an exciting location for bird enthusiasts. A 4WD jeep safari is the only way to see all the wonders that this protected reserve has to offer.

#### **DAY 10: UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARK TO AHUNGALLA**

Rise early and travel to the nearby Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home. Participate in the early morning feedings of the elephants before continuing to Ahungalla (approximately 3 hours drive), stopping to view the stilt fisherman at Weligama en route.

#### **Destination Information**

**The Elephant Transit Home** - The home cares for abandoned and orphaned baby elephants, providing them with food, shelter and medical care before they are released into the Udawalawe National Park.

**Weligama** - Stop to view the iconic stilt fishermen of Sri Lanka. A tradition kept alive by only 500 families, the fishermen balances 2m above the water on a cross bar tied to a vertical pole, planted underwater. With one hand they hold the stilt, and the other their fishing rod. A truly remarkable sight!

**Ahungalla** - A small coastal town located in the Galle district, Ahungalla is the perfect spot to relax and admire the sandy beaches.

#### **DAY 11: AHUNGALLA TO BENTOTA VIA GALLE**

Drive to Galle to embark on walking tour consisting of 2 hours on foot. Visit such sites as Galle Fort, the lighthouse, the Dutch Museum and the Dutch Reformed Church. Learn the secrets of Sri Lankan cuisine during a cooking class before enjoying a walking tour of Galle. Continue to Bentota, visiting Kosgoda Turtle Hatchery en route.

##### **Destination Information**

**Galle Fort** - Built by the Portuguese in 1588, it was fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. Covering 36 hectares, the fort contains an amazing number of buildings from over the years. Considered one of the best examples of a fortified city built by Europeans in Asia, it was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 1988.

**Galle Lighthouse** - Located in Galle Fort, the lighthouse is one of 14 left in Sri Lanka and is considered the oldest.

**The Dutch Reformed Church** - Originally founded in 1640, the present building dates from 1752 to 1755. The floor of the church is covered with granite tombstones and there is a small graveyard on the premises.

**Cooking Class and Walking Tour** - The cooking course teaches you how to make some traditional Sri Lankan favourites, including pol (coconut) sambol and fish curry, all of which you get to sample throughout the lesson and eat at the end of the class. During this half-day afternoon tour you will also find out about spice tea's medicinal uses with the Storyteller of the Fort, and learn about a quaint Sri Lankan tradition - 'short eats' on bicycle-mounted cabinets.. Round off the evening with hot, freshly made 'pol roti' and experience the living history that makes this the most exciting fort in Asia.

**Bentota** - Bentota is located on the southern tip of the Galle District and is famous for its 'toddy' production, an alcoholic beverage made out of coconut nectar.

#### **DAY 12: BENTOTA – MADU GANGA WETLANDS**

After breakfast, depart for Balapitiya, a coastal town close to the Madu Ganga River and wetlands. Board a small-motorised boat to sail past traditional fishermen, farms and small cottages. You will need to climb on and off a boat without handrails or assistance and walk over uneven ground. You will also visit a cinnamon farm before returning

to shore. Sightseeing today involves 1.5 hours sightseeing on foot with light climbing of steps involved.

Drive back to the hotel, where you may wish to explore the beach or relax.

##### **Destination Information**

**Madu Ganga Wetlands** - Madu Ganga is considered to be Sri Lanka's second largest wetland, consisting of 23 islands including two main islands which are home to more than 215 families.

#### **DAY 13: BENTOTA TO COLOMBO**

Enjoy the morning at leisure before driving 1.5 hours (64km) to Colombo. Upon arrival tour the Fort District and the surrounding areas and stroll through the Pettah Market. In the busy market area please be careful with your belongings today. Sightseeing today involves 1 hour and 30 minutes on foot.

##### **Destination Information**

**Colombo** - The formal capital city and the business and commercial centre of Sri Lanka. Originally a small sea port, Colombo became prominent in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese. The Dutch later arrived in the 16th century but it wasn't until the British arrived in the late 18th Century that Colombo developed into a major city.

**Fort District** - Having been ruled by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, the Fort District is a treasure trove of grand old colonial architecture. Now the city's cosmopolitan central business district, the Fort District was the centre of both the British and the Dutch administrations of Sri Lanka. Many of the grand old buildings built during these times are dotted throughout the area and still in use as government buildings today.

**Pettah Market** - A colourful series of open-air markets and bazaars located in the Pettah district, selling everything from fruit, vegetables and fabrics to household goods.

#### **DAY 14: DEPART COLOMBO**

Discover the vibrant city of Colombo further this morning. Visit a Hindi temple with elaborate stone carvings, the Dutch Church of Wolvendaal, Kelaniya Buddhist Temple, Dewatagaha Mosque and the Colombo and Natural History museums. End the day at the Davatagaja Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall. In the afternoon, enjoy some free time for some last minute shopping. Touring today will involve about 3 hours of easy sightseeing.



After a later checkout and farewell dinner, you will be transferred to the airport to board your overnight flight to Australia.

**Please note:** For tours travelling from January to April, renovations to the runway at Colombo airport will mean that airline check-in will commence 5 hours prior to departure and close 90 minutes prior to departure – an earlier transfer to the airport will be required.

#### Destination Information

**Dutch Church of Wolvendaal** - Built in 1749, the Dutch Church is one of the most important Dutch Colonial era buildings in Sri Lanka. The church is in the form of a cross, with walls 1.5m thick and the floor includes intricate tombstones to Dutch colonists.

**Kelaniya Buddhist Temple** - A major pilgrimage site for Buddhist devotees, who believe that the Lord Buddha visited this site on the 8th year of Enlightenment.

**Dewatagaha Mosque** - One of the oldest and most prominent mosques in Sri Lanka, the striking Dawatagaha Mosque plays an important role in the Muslim community.

**Colombo and Natural History Museums** - Located closely together, the Colombo National Museum tells the story of ancient Sri Lanka, with collections including the regalia of Sri Lanka. The Natural History Museum displays the natural history of Sri Lanka.

**Dawatagaja Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall** - Built in commemoration of the independence of Sri Lanka from British rule, the hall houses a replica of Avukana Buddha and the Independence Memorial.

#### DAY 15: ARRIVE AUSTRALIA

Arrive home.

### PEARL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

#### Visas

Entry visas are required by all visitors to Sri Lanka and the Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa which is due 75 days prior to departure. Please be advised that your passport must have at least 6 months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

The Sri Lankan visa is an ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation), the price of which is included in your fully inclusive package (for Australian passports only) and is applied for online by Wendy Wu Tours. Once completed, Wendy Wu Tours will print this and include it with your final itinerary and documentation. You will need to keep the ETA with your passport and present to authorities upon entry into Sri Lanka.

If you have not purchased the fully inclusive package which includes the Sri Lankan ETA, you will need to apply for this and purchase it yourself

#### Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

#### Eating in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is home to a melting pot of cuisine. Throughout years of colonisation and influence from other countries and a history of spice trading, Sri Lankan has adapted its own distinct flavor. While travelling in Asia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive Pearl of the Indian Ocean group tour from the groups' arrival until the groups' day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in

Visit [wendywutours.com.au](http://wendywutours.com.au)

Call 1300 727 998 to speak to a Reservations Consultant

Dishes served in restaurants on our group tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based with meat mixed in, and a few will be meat-based. Our restaurants are well aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options.

When eating meals on group tours, you will be seated around a circular table with other tour members. Dishes will be served in the traditional ‘family style’; meaning that various dishes will be laid out in the centre of the table top. These dishes are intended to be shared amongst the group – there is always more than enough to feed everybody.

We recommend that when it comes to Sri Lankan food, you stay open-minded and try to be adventurous!

## Accommodation

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Sri Lanka. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met. Please note double bedding must be requested at the time of booking however cannot be guaranteed.

## Early Check-In/Late Check-Out

Early check-in is not included in our Sri Lankan group tours. If you wish to add early check-in to your booking, please contact our reservations department who can confirm additional pricing and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel. Late check-out is included in this group tour for passengers travelling on our fully inclusive package in the last hotel of stay.

## Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner city roads in Sri Lanka have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in Sri Lanka have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Sri Lanka and therefore people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

## Development in Sri Lanka

Although Sri Lanka is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety



barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guides.

## Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that demonstrate a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

## Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 29 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

## Tipping Policy

Tipping while on holiday is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry and Sri Lanka is no exception. To remove the uncertainty and stress of not knowing how much is appropriate to tip or to whom, Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy for our group tours where a nominated tipping amount is paid upon commencement of the programme by each tour member. This amount is stated in all group pricing, however it is not collected in your final payment received by Wendy Wu Tours.

This nominated tipping amount is to be given to your National Escort at the beginning of your tour, who will then distribute it amongst your main service providers – guides, drivers and attendants – on your behalf during the tour. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

The tipping amount is determined based on the total number of passengers travelling in the group. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the National Escort. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation, which is distributed 2 weeks prior to your tour's departure.

## Packing List and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).

## Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kgs and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 7kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### Exchanging Cash

It is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Colombo and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout Sri Lanka however, other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort/Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

### Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU\$250 per week should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

### Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout Sri Lanka – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

## Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.travelvax.com.au](http://www.travelvax.com.au).

## Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website

## After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

**Updated: 03 May 2017**