

# BESTWAY TOURS & SAFARIS

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**BESTWAY**  
TOURS & SAFARIS

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## SRI LANKA - Designed for Women Only

March 08-24, 2024

Be swept up in the magic of Sri Lanka and connect with other like-minded women travellers on this special edition journey. Our tailored adventure will show you the best of this island paradise, from the must-sees to the hidden gems. Connect deeply with both fellow travelers and locals with our special selection of authentic cultural activities, ranging from a visit with a local family in the less-travelled gem of Jaffna, to a special meditation session with a monk on stunning Mihintale mountain. Very limited spots are available, so don't miss out!



### Tour Summary

Day #	Destination	Overnight	Meals
1	Arrival Colombo / Transfer to Negombo	Overnight in Negombo	(B)
2	Morning Drive to Anuradhapura / Mihintale Rock Monastery	Overnight in Anuradhapura	(B, D)
3	Anuradhapura Ancient Kingdom / Leisure	Overnight in Anuradhapura	(B, D)
4	Drive to Jaffna en route Mannar / Evening at Leisure	Overnight in Jaffna	(B, D)

1

5	Experience Jaffna with Local Family	Overnight in Jaffna	(B, L, D)
6	Drive to Habarana / Minneriya Elephant Safari	Overnight in Habarana	(B, D)
7	Sigiriya Citadel / Polonnaruwa	Overnight in Habarana	(B, D)
8	Dambulla Cave Temple / Rathna Ella Village & Waterfall Hike / Traditional Lunch	Overnight in Mahiyanganaya	(B, L, D)
9	Sunrise Breakfast by the Lake / Drive to Kandy	Overnight in Kandy	(B, D)
10	Kandy Temple / Tea Factory Visit / Nuwaraeliya / Train Ride to Ella	Overnight in Ella	(B, D)
11	Pekoe Trail 16 / Afternoon at Leisure	Overnight in Ella	(B, D)
12	Ravana Waterfall / Buduruwagala / Evening Yala Safari	Overnight in Yala	(B, D)
13	Drive to Galle / Galle Fort	Overnight in Galle	(B)
14	Drive to Habaraduwa / Afternoon at Leisure	Overnight in Habaraduwa	(B, D)
15	Day at Leisure	Overnight in Habaraduwa	(B, D)
16	Drive to Colombo / Colombo City Tour	Overnight in Colombo	(B, D)
17	Transfer to the Airport		(B)

### Day 01: Friday, 08<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Arrival Colombo, Sri Lanka



Upon arrival at Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport you are welcomed by our team member and transferred to Negombo on the outskirts of Colombo. Hotel check-in time is 1400hrs. Colombo is the capital of Sri Lanka, known at one time also as Ceylon. Colombo (CMB) is ideally connected by many airlines, with the most popular being Emirates Airlines (EK- via Dubai), Etihad Airways (EY-via Abu Dhabi), Qatar Airways (QR-via Doha) and Sri Lankan (SL-via many European cities). If you need assistance with your international air, please contact us at

[bestway@bestway.com](mailto:bestway@bestway.com). At dinner time, we meet with our other tour participants.

Overnight: [Regal Reseau Hotel](#), Negombo (4\*+) (1 night) (B)

### Day 02: Saturday, 09<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Mihintale Monastic Complex (Drive 220 km)

After breakfast, we take a 200 km scenic drive to Anuradhapura, capital city of North Central Province and lying on the banks of the historic Malwathu Oya.

Afternoon we visit Mihintale an isolated mountain range towering above north central plateau near the ancient capital Anuradhapura. It is believed by Sri Lankans to be the birthplace of the Buddhist civilization of Sri Lanka. It is now a major pilgrimage site, and the site of several religious monuments and monastic complex for meditating monks.





According to ancient chronicles, missionary Mahinda (enlightened monk – son of the great Indian emperor, Ashoka) met Sri Lankan king Devanampiyatissa and his entourage in 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. while on an annual hunting trip. Mahinda preached Buddhism, impressing the king so much that he cleared the jungle, constructed rock shelters for Buddhist monks' adobes, and converted the place into Sri Lanka's first monastery. The location still functions as a pilgrimage center. Free time to participate in a short meditation session enjoying stunning views. We have a 2-night stay in this beautiful city.

Overnight: [Rajarata Hotel](#), Anuradhapura (3\*+) (2 nights) (B, D)

### Day 03: Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Anuradhapura Kingdom (Drive 20 km)



The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Anuradhapura, located in the north central plateau, was the first capital of Sri Lanka from 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD, and the center of the island's Buddhist civilization. It was undoubtedly the grandest city of ancient Sri Lanka.

A large number of ancient monuments built by successive kings who ruled the island over 14 centuries are found in Anuradhapura. The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is the sacred fig tree that stands here and is considered to be the closest authentic living link to Gautama Buddha. It is also the oldest human-planted tree in the world with a known planting date going back more than 2,200 years

The important monuments of Anuradhapura include Ruwanveli Seya (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), the Brazen Palace (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.), Samadhi Buddha statue (3<sup>rd</sup> century), Isurumuniya rock temple (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.) and Kuttam Pokuna, the twin ponds (6<sup>th</sup> century). We have a 2-night stay in this historical city.

(B, D)

### Day 04: Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 Anuradhapura/Mannar/Jaffna (Drive 300 km)

Morning drive to Jaffna, stopping at Mannar en route. Mannar was the most important trading port during Anuradhapura Kingdom. It was a vital trading hub of the ancient sea silk route, which spanned from China to Europe. Thiruketheeshwaram, a legendary Hindu temple, is located on the mainland of Mannar. Rama Sethu, the legendary bridge built by Hindu god Hanuman connecting India to Sri Lanka, is said to be here. Thalai Mannar, the tip of the Mannar peninsula, is the closest point between India and Sri Lanka. One can even see the lights of India on a clear day. Jaffna offers a lot to see both from a historical and cultural perspective, as well as beautiful scenery. We will stay here for 2 nights.



Overnight: [Fox Resort](#) (4\*) (2 nights) (B, D)

### Day 05: Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Experience Jaffna

As the center of Tamil culture, Jaffna has a very different feel compared to other parts of Sri Lanka. Jaffna was inhabited since the beginning of the modern history. Folklore has it that Jaffna was inhabited by people called Naaga, who has been expert sailors and traders. Later, by 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, south Indian Tamil people started arriving in Jaffna and settling there. They came as invaders, traders and



migrants seeking greener pastures. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the northern part of Sri Lanka, including Jaffna, had a significant Tamil presence.

Visit Hanuman temple, Kaduru Goda Buddhist temple, which is a rare ancient temple with Mahayana influence, Dambakolapatuna, where a sacred Bodhi tree was brought to Sri Lanka, Keeramalai, which are spring water ponds by the sea, Jaffna's Dutch Fort, and Point Pedro, the northern-most tip of Sri Lanka.

Afternoon, along with our guide, we stop at the local market to buy provisions before visiting a local family. Here, we will have the unique experience of learning how to cook local style with a Sri Lankan family. The menu is popular Jaffna crab curry with a nice dining experience conversing with family members. For those allergic to seafood, special arrangements can be made for a vegetarian option.



(B, L, D)

**Day 06: Wednesday, 13th March 2024, Jaffna/ Minneriya Park/Habarana/ (Drive 260 km)**



Another scenic drive to Minneriya via Habarana. Located between Habarana and Polonnaruwa, the Minneriya National Park is an ideal eco-tourism location in Sri Lanka. The park consists of mixed evergreen forest and scrub areas and is home to Sri Lanka's favourites such as sambar deer, leopards and elephants.

However, the central feature of the park is the ancient Minneriya Tank (built in 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD by King Mahasen). During the dry season, this tank is an incredible place to observe the elephants

who come to bath and graze on the grasses, as well as the huge flocks of birds (cormorants and painted storks to name a few) that come to fish in the shallow waters. We have a 2-night stay in Habarana. This town is a popular tourist destination for safari lovers, as it is the starting point for safaris in the nearby Habarana jungle and the Minneriya sanctuary.

Overnight: [Cinnamon Lodge](#), Habarana (4\*+) (2 nights) (B, D)

**Day 07: Thursday, 14th March 2024, Sigiriya Citadel & Polonnaruwa**

After breakfast a 20-minute drive and we are at Sigiriya, an ancient massive column of rock nearly 200 meters high located near the town of Dambulla. According to the ancient Sri Lankan chronicle the Culavamsa, this site was selected by King Kashyapa (477 – 495 CE) for his new capital. On a small plateau about halfway up the side of this rock, he built a gateway in the form of an enormous lion.



The name of this place is derived from "Sihāgiri" meaning, the Lion Rock. The capital and the royal palace were abandoned after the king's death. It was used as a Buddhist monastery until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Sigiriya is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the

best-preserved examples of ancient urban planning. It is the most visited historic site in Sri Lanka next to Kandy Temple of Tooth Relic. Afterwards, we drive to Polonnaruwa, the second most ancient of Sri Lanka's kingdoms. Polonnaruwa was first declared as the capital by King Vijayabahu I in 1070 AD. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

(B, D)

Day 08: Friday, 15th March 2024, Dambulla, Rathna Ella Village & Hike (Drive 120 km)



This region is well known for its arts and crafts and we will visit a few places where we will see the traditions that have been passed down through generations. Start with Dambulla, the largest and best-preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka. The rock tower here stands 160 m (520 ft.) over the surrounding plains. There are more than 80 documented caves in the area. Major attractions are spread over 5 caves, which contain statues and paintings. This paintings and statues are related to Lord Buddha and his life.

Rathna Ella is a small traditional village in the eastern slopes of the central mountains of Sri Lanka. Here, one can witness the daily life of villagers and their traditional industries. We will experience a collection of village activities before hiking to two waterfalls above the village.

**Pottery** There is no better teacher to learn the art of pottery making than with the local villagers in Mahiyanganaya. We will learn the secrets of the trade and make our own pottery souvenir to take home.



**Mat Viewing - Pan Paduru** which translates to “reed mat”, is a staple in every household in rural Sri Lanka. Each intricately designed mat is woven by hand for over a month, using reeds harvested from the local fields. Using the practices shared by the local villagers, we will try our hands at creating a reed mat of our own.



**Hike to Kaluwa Wetuna Ella.** We embark on a 2 km easy hike to witness the majestic Kaluwa Wetuna Ella waterfall. This 30-meter waterfall lies deep in the jungle and makes for a great hike that's loved by all nature enthusiasts.

**Rathna Ella Hike** – The final destination of our hike takes us through the lush forests of Mahiyangana to reach the Rathna Ella waterfall. The route is about 2.8 km long from Rathna Ella Village, but the destination is well worth the journey. The 101-meter high waterfall is a site not to miss.

**A swim at Rathna Ella** – Here one can enjoy a bath and swim in a natural pool created by the pure water pouring out of the pristine mountain forests above.

**Traditional Lunch at Rathna Ella Village** – Enjoy an authentic Sri Lankan lunch at the Rathna Ella village. The meals in store for you have been

5



created using recipes passed down from generations and made by the locals with a lot of love - which is probably why it tastes so delightful.

A traditional welcome drink from the village house "Gama Gedara"	
Two organic energy drinks	
02 liters of water per person	
A gift from the pottery-making village home	
A gift made out of reeds or "pan" from a village home that crafts reed mats	

After what will have been a very active day we drive to Mahiyanganaya.

Overnight: [Kevan's Casa](#), Mahiyanganaya (3\*+) (1 night) (B, L, D)

**Day 09: Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Sunrise at Sorabora Lake/Kandy (75 km)**



Another exciting day. Breakfast is enjoyed at Sorabora Lake, where we witness the dawn of a new day as the sun rises over the horizon. Listen to the birds chirping away as you breathe in the fresh morning air and enjoy the true beauty of nature. This spectacular moment in time takes place around 6 AM and is a sight not to be missed. Our activities will include:

**Traditional Lake fishing:** While at the lake, watch the local fishermen use a traditional form of fishing to trap the fish and bring it ashore. With many years of practice, the task is done with great skill and ease that it seems more like a form of art.

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**Sorabora Lake boat ride:** In keeping with our decision to promote responsible tourism and aid the local communities, we have partnered with a few locals to offer a scenic, hour-long boat tour across the 5.82 sq. km body of water known as Sorabora Lake. Enjoy breathtaking views of the blue waters and catch the moment when a diving bird plunges into the water for a fishy snack.



**Fish market at the edge of the lake:** After over 30 minutes of boating across the lake, we head towards the local fish market located at the edge of the lake. Watch as the locals come by to view the lake fish available, haggle over the price and head home with a fine catch.

**Breakfast at Sorabora Rock with Live Cooking:** When hunger pangs kick in, it's time for breakfast with a view. Head over to the top of the Sorabora Rock where our chef will await your arrival to cook a freshly prepared, delicious breakfast.

Afternoon, drive to Kandy via legendary 18 Bend Road where every bend changes the scenery of the below valley.

Overnight: [Grand Kandyan](#), Kandy (4\*+) (1 night) (B, D)

**Day 10: Sunday, 17th March 2024, Kandy Temple/Tea Factory/Train Ride to Ella (Drive 85 km & Train Ride 65 km)**

Kandy was the last kingdom of Sri Lanka. The city lies in the midst of hills in the Kandy plateau, surrounded by a mountain range. Kandy is well known as a religious city, and stunning temples can be found here.

Sri Dalada Maligawa, or the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, is a Buddhist temple in Kandy located in the royal palace complex which houses the relic of the tooth of the Buddha. Since ancient times, the relic has played an important role in local politics as it is believed that whoever holds the relic holds the governance of the country. Kandy was the last capital of the Sri Lankan kings and is a World Heritage Site.



Kandy is also known the world over for its tea estates. Watch the tea workers pick two leaves and a bud with deft hands (subject to availability). Then, visit a factory where the all-important conversion to “made” black tea happens. The machinery used is of very traditional British design, some as old as 100 years. The process is an artisanal one, unchanged for a century. The tour ends with a tasting of different grades of this great brew.

Afternoon, we drive to Nanuoya railway station to take the train to Ella, considered to be one of the most scenic train journeys in the world. This stretch of railroad runs through cloud-filled mountains, forests and valleys covered with tea plantations like green velvet. While the train chugs along, one can witness the wide vistas of Sri Lanka’s hill country. WE will enjoy every moment of the 2.5-hour train ride. After getting off at the Ella station, we drive to our hotel, where we will have a 2-night stay.



Overnight: [98 Acres Ella Resort](#) (4\*+) (2 nights) (B, D)

**Day 11: Monday, 18th March 2024, Pekoe Trail 16 (Drive & Hike)**



Ella draws travelers to Sri Lanka's highlands with its mountain forests, tea plantations, and relatively cool climate. Our day starts as we walk to Demodera. It is one of the shortest stages of The Pekoe Trail and one of the most popular ones.

Follow the train through the Ella Forest Reserve for approximately 2 km, at which point you will see the famous Nine Arches Bridge. The bridge is hauntingly beautiful and a major tourist attraction. Cross the bridge and walk on the railway line for 100 meters.

Then, you will see a small path to your right. The next 50 meters are the most strenuous part of today's



walk. The views of the Nine Arches Bridge from this point are fabulous. You would have now seen this marvel from east and west.

This exceptional Nine Arches Bridge is known as the bridge in the sky and is 80 feet high, and 300 feet long. The bridge was built out of stone, brick and cement. Enter the Demodara Tea Estate and walk upon a lovely tea trail. At the 4.5 km point, leave the main trail and take a second one to the left. Look back and one will see the Nine Arches Bridge again but this time much further away. Follow this track for half a kilometer until reaching a small Buddhist shrine. Along the way, one will pass by the modest home of a cheerful family and no doubt hear the 'maa' greeting of the family of goats they care for.



Once back on the main tea trail running through the Demodara estate, loop around this lovely estate for approximately 3 km. One will see a lovely lake on the left as you descend towards Demodara. Demodara railway station is known for its spiral rail line at this location, popularly known as the 'Demodara Loop'. The rail line passes under itself, going around the loop and emerging from a tunnel.

After the trail, drive back to the hotel. Afternoon at leisure.

(B, D)

Day 12: Tuesday, 19th March 2024, Ravana Waterfall /Buduruwagala /Yala Safari (Drive 145 km)



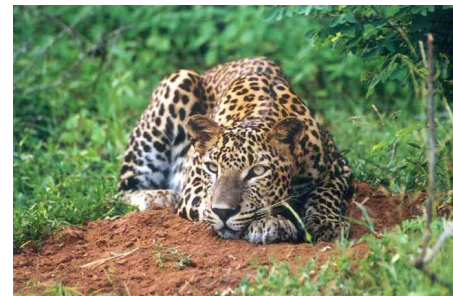
After breakfast, we bid adieu to Ella and visit the majestic Ravana Waterfall and Buduruwagala.

At ancient Buduruwagala Temple, we explore the complex, which consists of seven statues. The statues date back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The gigantic Buddha statue still bears traces of its original stucco robe and a long streak of orange suggests it was once brightly painted. Of the three statues, one is thought to be the Buddhist mythological figure of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

To the left of this white painted figure is a female figure in the thrice-bent posture, which is thought to be his consort Tara.

Continue on to Yala, Sri Lanka's most famous national park. Here, we'll enjoy a game drive with the chance to spot elephants, leopards, bears, crocodiles and wild boar.

It is said that Yala National Park has the world's highest concentration of leopard per square kilometer. Vegetation is primarily grassland and shrub jungle with patches of dense growth, while several salt and freshwater lagoons are a haven for a large variety of resident and migrant birds. After our game experience, we drive to our deluxe hotel.



Overnight: [Double Tree by Hilton Resort](#), Weerawila (5\*) (1 night) (B, D)



Day 13: Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Drive to Galle Dutch Fort (Drive 150 km)



Morning, we drive to Galle on a scenic coastal road with photo stops. Galle Fort, or the Dutch Fort, is a Portuguese fortress which was built in 1588 at the Bay of Galle on the southwestern coast of Sri Lanka. This fortress is completed with 14 bastions. It is still the best-preserved of a fortified city in Asia built by Europeans—a mix of European architectural styles and South Asian traditions.

UNESCO declared Galle Dutch Fort as a World Heritage Site in 1988 under the name of Old Town of Galle and its Fortifications. A lighthouse was installed on the Utrecht bastion, and a tower was erected for the jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1883. A Protestant church was also built in Baroque Style in 1775. The most prominent buildings in the fort complex were the Commandant's residence, the arsenal and the gun house.

Perfectly positioned in a melting pot of history, culture, food, and design, our accommodation for the night, The Merchant, is a feast for all your senses, from its contemporary design to its setting in the hip locale of Galle Fort.

The walk around Galle Fort is one you don't want to miss. Take a journey through the neighborhoods that surrounded the hotel and enjoy dinner at one of the small restaurants by the narrow streets (dinner not included).



Overnight: [Merchant, Galle Fort](#) (Colonial – 4\*) (1 night) (B)

Day 14: Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024, Galle /Habaraduwa (Drive 16 km)



A relaxed morning as we take a drive to see the interesting Martin Wickramasinghe Folklore Museum. This visit provides a glimpse into the past of Sri Lankan village life. It also includes the house where respected Sinhalese author Martin Wickramasinghe (1890–1976) was born. There is a good section on dance (including costumes and instruments), puppets, kolam (masked dance-drama) masks (including one of a very sunburnt British officer), kitchen utensils and carriages. Don't miss the kitchen goods, including the multipurpose 'mill stone' and the elephant

cart, which was used to transport heavy payloads. We then drive to our deluxe beach resort for a 2-night stay. Afternoon at leisure.

Overnight: [Thaala Bentota](#) (2 nights) (B, D)

Day 15: Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024, Day at Leisure

The Thaala Bentota is a luxury property located amidst a slew of enticing attractions and appeals. The Resort lets you craft lasting memories on your vacation! So, head out, explore and discover the true essence of tropical bliss. Day free at leisure.

(B, D)

## Day 16: Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024, Colombo City (Drive 160 km)

Mid-morning, drive to Colombo. Colombo is the commercial capital and largest city of Sri Lanka. It has a population of 5.6 million in the metropolitan area and 752,993 in the city proper. Colombo is a busy and vibrant place with a mixture of modern life and colonial architecture.



The name "Colombo", first introduced by the Portuguese in 1505, is believed to be derived from the classical Sinhalese name Kolon thota, meaning "port on the river Kelani".

In the evening, we take part in our farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Back to the hotel for a full night of rest until your departure transfer.

Overnight: [Cinnamon Lakeside](#), Colombo (4\*+) (1 night) (B, D)

## Day 17: Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024, Departure (Drive 35kms)

Breakfast at hotel. Late check out till 19:00 Hrs. Evening, we are transferred to airport for our flight home.  
(B)

 *Recommend adding India, Thailand or Dubai to the above tour*

### Tour Price (All prices on per person basis)

US\$ 3495 / CA\$ 4720 per person sharing room

US\$ 995 / CA\$ 1350 single room supplement

### Tour Price Includes

- Arrival & departure assistance at the airport by our representative
- All transfers and sightseeing in private air-conditioned vehicles with English speaking National Guide
- 16 nights' Accommodation in hotels as mentioned above or similar
- 33 Meals as mentioned (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Entrance fees to Mihintale, Anuradhapura, Minneriya NP, Sigiriya Citadel, Polonnaruwa Ancient City, Dambulla Cave Temple, Temple of Tooth Relic, Train Ride from Nanuoya to Ella, Tea Factory visit & Yala National Parks
- Visit & lunch with local family in Jaffna, traditional lunch at Rathna Ella Village & Sunrise Breakfast by the Lake
- Safari in Minneriya National Park, Boat Ride in Sora Bora Lake & Safaris in Yala National Park
- Waterfall Hike to Kaluwa Wetuna Ella, Rathna Ella & Pekoe Trail Stage 16 Hike
- Train Ride from Nanuoya (Nuwaraeliya) to Ella
- Two 500 ml water bottle per person per day during the tour



### Tour Price does not include

- Any airfares
- Visa fees (visas available online)
- Drinks during meals
- Tips/gratuities
- Perahera supplements

### Tour Size

This tour operates on a **minimum of 02** and a **maximum of 14** participants

### Notes

N/A