

# TRACKS SAFARIS

WE GET YOU CLOSER



## 13 NIGHTS - DISCOVER SRI LANKA



### Highlights of the Itinerary:

- Climb the legendary rock citadel in Sigiriya
- A visit to the ancient city of Polonnaruwa
- Walk with pilgrims to the Temple of the sacred tooth relic in Kandy
- Scenic train ride to the hill country
- Park drives in Minneriya, Yala and Bundala National Parks
- Guided walk inside the vibrant Dutch Fort in Galle



## Day 1

On arrival into Colombo's Bandaranayake International Airport, Katunayake you are welcomed by Tracks Safaris representative and transferred to hotel in Colombo (approximately 1 hour drive). Check-in to Galle Face Hotel and spend the rest of the day at leisure. **You will spend two nights at Galle Face Hotel in a Superior Room and your stay is on bed and breakfast basis.**

### ***The Galle Face Hotel, Colombo***

*Sri Lanka's iconic historic hotel, the Galle Face Hotel is situated in the heart of Colombo along the seafront which faces the famous Galle Face Green. No visit to Sri Lanka is complete without staying at this elegant and historic award winning hotel. The hotel reflects the grandeur of a bygone era yet offering modern comfort for today's traveller. One of the oldest hotels east of the Suez, the Galle Face Hotel was established in 1864. Over the years, the hotel has housed royalty and celebrity. This is where old world charm meets modern luxurious hospitality.*

## Day 2

After breakfast at the hotel you will enjoy a tour of the buzzing city of Colombo with your guide. After your tour of Colombo, spend the rest of the day at leisure. Overnight stay at Galle Face Hotel, Colombo

### **City of Colombo**

*Colombo is an open and attractive city with a fascinating mix of 19th and 20th century colonial buildings, and more recent modern architecture. In the last few years, considerable renovation and restoration work has been undertaken in the capital. The Colombo Racecourse and Independence Square are such examples of recently renovated colonial architecture. Places to see in Colombo are the Gangaramaya Temple with its eclectic mix of Sri Lankan, Thai, Indian, and Chinese architecture, the serene Seema Malakaya temple located on the Beira Lake, the Independence Square which is a national monument built to commemorate the independence of Sri Lanka from British rule, the old Dutch Hospital in Colombo which was built during the period where Sri Lanka was under Dutch rule and the Galle Face Green, especially at night, when it comes to life with street hawkers and locals enjoying the kebabs and the sea breeze.*





### Day 3

After breakfast at Galle Face Hotel you will commence your journey through this amazing island with a drive to Habarana (approximately 3½ hours' drive). On arrival into Habarana check-in to Cinnamon Lodge for 3 nights.

#### **Cinnamon Lodge, Habarana**

*Cinnamon Lodge, is blessed with a tranquil and picturesque 27-acre wooded location next to a beautiful lake. The large gardens are filled with gigantic tropical trees and waterways that provide home to a variety of birds, grey monkeys and rock squirrels. Its architectural design was inspired by the remains of Ritigala which was- a monastery that dates back to the 6th Century. Tastefully designed two-storey chalets with verandas and balconies complete a feeling of comfort and relaxation with a local touch.*

Later in the afternoon, explore a local village in the Habarana area. Mode of transport on this visit will be either on bicycles or TUK TUKS (Sri Lankan name for three wheelers). You will explore the backroads of Habarana together with your host from the area. You can paddle, ride (on a TUK TUK) or walk through the small villages and see how the locals engage in their day-to-day activities. Enjoy a delicious snack at the end of the experience. Try out the famous local delicacy known as "Coconut Roti's" made out of freshly scraped coconut and wheat flour with a cup of Ceylon Tea! Go easy on the spicy sambal!

Afterwards return to your hotel and at leisure. **Spend three nights at Cinnamon Lodge in a Superior Room and your stay is on half board basis.**

### Day 4

After early breakfast this morning, drive to Sigiriya (approximately 20 minutes' drive). Arrive in Sigiriya and climb one of the island's most spectacular sight, the 5th century rock fortress of Sigiriya which is also an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## **Sigiriya Rock Fortress**

*Referred to as 'The Lion Rock' by locals, Sigiriya became the capital during the reign of King Kashyapa in the 5th century CE. After slaying his own father, King Datusena of Anuradhapura to take the throne and fearing a retaliatory attack from the rightful heir Moggallana who fled to neighbouring India, the new King constructed his royal palace on the summit of this 200-metre-high rock within a fortress for his own protection. Walk through the meticulously landscaped Royal Gardens and ascend towards the summit where only the ruins of the royal palace now remain. A visit to the fresco gallery with its ancient paintings of the King's maids in waiting and the Mirror Wall with ancient inscriptions that closely match the modern-day Sinhalese language should also not be missed. In 495 CE, Moggallana returned from his exile and defeated the King re-instating Anuradhapura as the capital. Sigiriya was then used as a Buddhist monastery until the 14th century prior to being mysteriously abandoned.*



Return to your hotel and spend the rest of the day at leisure. Overnight stay at Cinnamon Lodge, Habarana.

## **Day 5**

After breakfast proceed to explore the ancient city of Polonnaruwa (approximately 1 ½ hours' drive).

### **The Ancient City of Polonnaruwa:**

*Known as the second most ancient kingdom of Sri Lanka, Polonnaruwa contains the archaeological remains of ancient structures of governance, temples, and statues that reflect the great works of the former Kings of Sri Lanka. Polonnaruwa took its place in history after King Vijayabahu I defeated the invading Cholas and moved the capital from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa. While King Vijayabahu is credited with the creation of Polonnaruwa as the second ancient capital of Sri Lanka, real change came to Polonnaruwa during the golden reign of King Parakramabahu I. The King was instrumental in monumental changes and development from an agricultural perspective to Polonnaruwa where his royal decree was that not a single drop of rain should be wasted. New irrigation and waterways were constructed as well as the enormous man-made tank titled the Parakrama Samudraya that forms almost a ring around the city and functions both as a protective barrier as well as an enormous catchment area for the collection of rainwater to irrigate the agricultural land*



around the city of Polonnaruwa. It is said that the man-made tank is so vast that if you stood on one side of it, you would not be able to see the other side due to its enormity. Polonnaruwa is a UNESCO listed world heritage site.



Lunch will be at a local restaurant in Polonnaruwa - enjoy the delicious spread of local curries made by locals using traditional techniques. In the afternoon venture out on a Jeep Safari at Hurulu Forest Reserve / Minneriya / Kaudulla National Parks to see wild elephants. Overnight stay at Cinnamon Lodge, Habarana.

### **Minneriya / Kaudulla / Hurulu National Park Game Drive**

*Visit either Hurulu Eco Park, Minneriya or Kaudulla National Parks for a jeep safari to view herds of wild Asian Elephant at close-range. Your guide will be knowledgeable on where the elephants are encountered which is dependent on the rains. During the wet season, the herds disperse from Minneriya and Kaudulla, moving towards nearby Hurulu Eco Park and are scattered amongst the tall grasses and scrub jungle vegetation. A variety of birds found in the dry-zone including Indian Roller, Sri Lanka Jungle fowl, Indian Peafowl, Blue-tailed and Green Bee-eaters along with raptors such as Changeable Hawk Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Shikra may also be seen.*

### **Day 6**

After breakfast at Cinnamon Lodge, proceed to Kandy (approximately 3 hours' drive). On the way, visit the famous Dambulla Rock Cave Temple.

### **Dambulla Rock Cave Temple**

*Dambulla is famous for its rock paintings and is among the best-preserved monastic temple cave complexes in Sri Lanka. There are about 150 Buddha statues with over 2000 square metres of painted walls and ceilings within a complex of five separate caves, which also includes some Hindu deities. Dambulla's origins as a place of worship dates back to the reign of King Valagamba in the 1st century BC, who took refuge in these caves when driven out of Anuradhapura by Chola invaders. Once he regained the throne, the king had the interior of the caves transformed in to magnificent rock temples. More paintings and statues were added over time*

*by later kings. One of the most notable modifications was made by King Nissanka Malla, who had the caves' interiors gilded giving it the name 'Ran Giri' or 'Golden Rock' Temple*

Continue your journey to Kandy and check-in to Cinnamon Citadel. Later in the afternoon go on a city tour with your guide exploring the vibrant Kandy market, learn about the local vegetables, spices and other condiments that goes in to a local rice. At the end of the city tour, walk with local pilgrims to the famous Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy.

### **Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy**

*Cinnamon Citadel designed by Sri Lankan architect Channa Daswatte, taps on Kandy's ancient heritage blended with modern living. Enter through the gleaming white reception area surrounded with hand-woven, Kandyan Dumbara murals and views of the picturesque Mahaweli River. Days begin to the sound of birdsong and perhaps a warm mist rolling away from the river. Cinnamon Citadel offers luxurious accommodation - some of the best rooms that Kandy has to offer; traditional Sri Lankan cuisine with Kandyan flavours; and a peaceful riverside setting.*



### **Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic**

*Referred locally as the Sri Dalada Maligawa, the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is the most revered site in the country. The Temple was built in the 16th century AD and is located adjacent to the Royal Palace complex of the former Kingdom of Kandy and overlooks the expanses of the Kandy Lake. Housing the sacred tooth relic of the Lord Buddha, the building has held a significant role in local politics since ancient times, with a belief that whoever holds the relic has the right to govern the country. The sacred tooth was smuggled in to Sri Lanka from India by a princess in the 4th century AD and was initially kept in Anuradhapura and then moved across the country over time before being housed in Kandy. This sacred temple attracts thousands of white-clad pilgrims on a daily basis bearing lotus blossoms and frangipani for their offerings, which are known as pujas. Ensure that you dress appropriately, wearing clothes that cover your legs and shoulders and please do remove your shoes before entering the holy temple.*



**Spend one night at Cinnamon Citadel in a Superior Room and your stay is on half board basis**

### **Day 7**

Today after breakfast at Cinnamon Citadel, you will be transferred to the Kandy or Peradeniya railway station from where you will board a train to go on a scenic train journey to Nuwara Eliya through the beautiful hill country of Sri Lanka (approximately 3 ½ hour train ride).



This train ride to Nuwara Eliya is a wonderful way to see the rolling countryside from your compartment, as you climb into the hills and tea plantations. Sit back and enjoy the view as the train winds its way gradually up through Tea Estates and gain altitude. Train tickets and the seat class can only be confirmed 14 days prior to the train journey date. There can be possibilities for trains to be cancelled or delayed on the day of the train journey. In this situation you will be transferred by road.

On arrival at Nanu Oya railway station you will be met and continue your journey by road to Nuwara Eliya (approximately 30 minutes' drive). Arrive and check-in to Grand Hotel. **Spend two nights at The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya in a Deluxe Room and your stay is on Bed and Breakfast basis**

### **The Grand Hotel Nuwara Eliya**

*The Grand Old Dame of the hill country is a picturesque setting with manicured lawns, flowering hedges, crisply-attired waiters, billiard rooms, fire place, hard wood floors and heavy wooden panelling. Once the residence of Sir Edward Barns, a British Governor of Sri Lanka, this mansion was built a century ago and is a showpiece of traditional Victorian architecture. Whilst retaining its colonial charm and grandeur, the hotel offers all comforts of modernity, well-appointed bedrooms, a range of dining options, wellness studio and outdoor activities such as guided treks, cycling tours and bird watching.*



## Day 8

Today you will leave early morning with packed breakfast to Horton Palins (approximately 1 ½ hours' drive). Arrive at the park entrance and enjoy a nature walk through cloud forest and grasslands. ***Due to the condition of the road leading up to Horton Plains, you will be transferred from Nuwara Eliya to Horton Plains in Jeeps or mini vans.***

### Horton Plains National Park

*Horton Plains is Sri Lanka's highest elevated national park lying approximately 7,000 feet above sea level and comprises of cloud forests and open grassland. Make an early morning start with a packed breakfast to Horton Plains National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and take a guided walk along the nature trails to a viewpoint known as World's End with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. The hike up to the World's End viewpoint is about 4 km. On the walk back you can stop to see the impressive Baker's Falls in full flow. Sambar, Sri Lanka's largest species of deer, are encountered regularly in the plains close to the entrance while the shaggy coated Bear Monkey (Western race of the Purple-faced Leaf Monkey) is occasionally seen within the forested areas.*

On your way back to the hotel, visit a working tea estate and a factory in Nuwara Eliya.

### Tea plantation and factory visit

*Sri Lanka is one of the world's largest exporters of tea with a history dating back to 1867 when it was first introduced to the country. The hill country is abundant with many tea plantations and factories along its picturesque countryside, which provides the ideal climate for high grown tea. Estate tea pluckers can be seen deftly plucking tea which they fill into large baskets carried on their backs.*

*On the way, you will pass estate trucks, each embossed with their estate names, taking the freshly collected tea leaves to the factories for processing. Visiting a tea plantation and a factory is a rewarding experience as you get to learn more about the process of making tea as well as some interesting bits of history on its introduction to the country. During the visit, you could join a guided tea plucking experience where you will*



*wear the traditional attire of the tea pluckers which includes the basket that you will carry with you to pick tea. Then it's off to the tea plantation to watch the tea pluckers pick two leaves and a bud with deft hands where you will also get the chance to pick the tea yourself.*

Spend the rest of the day at leisure. **Overnight stay at Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya**

## **Day 9**

After breakfast at the hotel, enjoy a scenic drive through Sri Lanka's beautiful hill country to Ella (approximately 2 hours' drive). Once a simple hamlet in the hills and intertwined with legend has emerged as one of the most popular destinations in Sri Lanka for adventurous tourists. It is a small highland village set on the southern edge of the Uva province of Sri Lanka. Ella is blessed with some of the most stunning views one could find on the island.

This small town is used as a base for plenty of adventure expeditions to the surrounding countryside. This glorious landscape is best enjoyed on foot – go on gentle strolls through the extensive tea plantations, passing tea pluckers and local villages, or challenge yourself by climbing/hiking little Adam's peak, Lakegala mountain or Ella rock. The most challenging but rewarding hike in Ella is the climb of the majestic Ella Rock. It takes around a four-hours to hike up to the summit. With a handful of shops, hotels, guesthouses, and now coffee shops and restaurants this hidden sanctuary with the perfect climate is probably one of the best-kept secrets of the country.

On arrival in Ella you will enjoy a hike to the Mini Adams Peak, and also visit the Ravana falls. Mini Adam's Peak is Ella's most popular hike. The hill resembles Adam's Peak, the great mountain to the west and holy to four faiths. It is a short half hour climb to the top to capture panoramic views of an endless valley, tea plantations and waterfalls.

Afterwards, continue your journey to Yala (approximately 2 ½ hours' drive) and check-in to Cinnamon Wild.



### **Cinnamon Wild, Yala**

*Formerly known as Yala Village, Cinnamon Wild has a rustic chic, contemporary ambience that blends seamlessly with the surrounding wilderness, a commendable transformation achieved by Sri Lankan architect Channa Daswatte. The central feature is a meandering swimming pool with an expansive deck that spreads throughout linking the public spaces housed in several magnificent pavilions. Enter through the reception and lounge pavilion designed with cinnamon wood furniture, gigantic cinnamon stick ceiling lamps in the shape of bird's nests, and dramatic photographs of Yala's elusive leopards. Accommodation here is in luxurious Jungle and Beach chalets immersed in nature. Rise at dawn and head to the jungles of Yala national park famous for leopard, elephants, sloth bear and over 150 species of birds. Once back at the game lodge, cool off with a relaxing swim. There is much to do here by day including bird watching and nature treks. By nightfall, sink into a comfy sofa at the roof deck and star gaze with the calls of the wild all around.*

Rest of the day at leisure. **Spend two nights at Cinnamon Wild, Yala in a Jungle Chalet and your stay is on Half Board basis**



### **Day 10**

It is time to explore the wilderness in deep south, venture out on an early morning or an afternoon jeep safari at Yala National Park. We have included one game drive either in the early morning or afternoon in a private jeep. The morning game drives begin at around 0530 hours and afternoon game drive begins around 1430 hours, returning at sunset).

### **Yala National Park**

*Yala National Park is located in the southeast corner of Sri Lanka and is the most popular destination for wildlife viewing. Leopards are the star attraction at Yala and Block I is believed to have the highest concentration of these big cats in the world. Asian Elephant, Sloth Bear, Jackal, Sambar, Spotted Deer Buffalo, Wild boar and the Grey Langur are among the other larger mammals that may be seen. During the dry season, which spans from June to September, large concentrations of Mugger Crocodile can be seen in the dwindling waterholes.*



*Yala is also an excellent birding destination with close to 300 avian species recorded; Indian Peafowl and Sri Lanka Jungle fowl, Changeable Hawk Eagle, Painted Stork, Malabar-pied Hornbills, Chestnut, Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters are among the species seen regularly in Yala. The varied landscapes from lagoons, beaches to rocky outcrops immersed among the scrub jungle are also a treat to the eye as you search out the park's wildlife. Yala's varied habitats from rocky outcrops, riverine forests, scrub jungle and numerous waterholes make it an excellent destination for birders especially for dry-zone species with around 300 recorded species. At the waterholes and shallow lagoons, Painted Stork, Lesser Adjutant Stork, Asian Open bill, Indian Darter, Common Kingfisher are among a variety of water birds routinely seen. Yala is also one of the few locations where the critically endangered Black-necked Stork may be seen. Among the branches and scrub jungle vegetation, keep your eyes out for Blue-faced Malkoha, Green Bee-eater, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon and flocks of noisy Malabar-pied Hornbill. The strikingly beautiful Indian Peacock and the country's national bird, the Sri Lanka Jungle fowl are abundant here with the male peacocks routinely dancing and coming in to breeding plumage during the months of October to March in the wet season.*

Return to the hotel and overnight stay at Cinnamon Wild, Yala



### **Day 11**

Today, leave early morning from Yala with a packed breakfast to Weligama (approximately 2 ½ hours' drive). On the way visit Bundala and go on a game drive in Bundala National Park.

#### **Bundala National Park:**

*Bundala is Sri Lanka's first RAMSAR declared wetland comprising of brackish lagoons, saltpans and scrub jungle and is a popular destination for birders. Bundala is best visited in the winter months from December – February when migrants including Caspian Plover, Red-necked Phalarope, Terek Sandpiper, Northern Pintail, Garganey, Glossy Ibis maybe seen. A large number of water birds and resident dry-zone species such as Little Grebe, Watercock, Greater Thicknee and Yellow-Wattled Lapwing can be seen year-round at Bundala. Mugger Crocodiles and the larger and rarer Estuarine Crocodile may both be observed in Bundala*

*with larger concentrations seen in the drier months around June – September. Asian Elephant are also encountered here throughout the year in small numbers.*

Afterwards, continue the drive to Weligama, and check-in to Weligama Bay Marriott Resort & Spa.

#### **Weligama Bay Marriott Resort & Spa, Weligama:**

*Weligama Bay Marriott Resort and Spa is the first hotel in Sri Lanka of the globally renowned American hotel chain – Marriott International. The hotel offers luxurious accommodation in 198 rooms with views of the Weligama Bay across 11 floors. There are four restaurants and access to world-class facilities including a spa specializing in Thai treatments.*

Spend the rest of the day at leisure. **Spend three nights at Marriot Resort and Spa, Weligama in a Superior Ocean view and your stay is on Bed and Breakfast basis.**



#### **Day 12**

Enjoy your breakfast at the Marriott hotel and then drive to Galle (approximately 1 hour drive). On arrival into Galle, explore the backroads and observe the working village and the leisurely pace of life.

Start your adventure on a small boat, glide along the riverbanks across local settlements, cinnamon and rubber plantations. Travel through beautiful scenery and observe the daily life of rural villages. Learn about beautiful birds, reptiles and the low grown tea in this area from your host. From the boat ride, begin the next leg of your journey on the bike. Take a wonderful journey of 9 kilometres (can be shorter) through the region's heart and its lovely paddy fields. Your final visit would be to a traditional mud hut and the reward of a revitalising herbal tea, and your host will demonstrate how a local rice and curry is prepared. Enjoy the lunch prepared by your host. After a scrumptious lunch, enjoy a guided walk in Galle Fort. Overnight stay at Weligama Bay Marriott Resort & Spa, Weligama



**Dutch Fort Galle:**

*Set off on a guided walking tour of the Galle Fort, which was built by the Dutch in 1663. The 36-hectare (89 acre) Fort occupies most of the promontory that forms the older part of Galle and consists of an amazing collection of structures and cultures dating back through the centuries. Take a leisurely stroll along the Ramparts with its panoramic views at sunset. The once sleepy Galle Fort is now a vibrant and bustling area with a distinctively Mediterranean feel to it and is abuzz with activity. You can explore its narrow streets and laneways bustling with shops, boutiques, cafes, restaurants, comfortable guesthouses and tastefully designed boutique hotels.*

**Day 13**

Full day at leisure for independent activities and overnight stay at Marriott Resort and Spa, Weligama

**Day 14**

Transfer from Hotel to Bandaranaike International Airport for your flight home (approximately 3-hour drive).

**TRACKS SAFARIS – WE GET YOU CLOSER TO SRI LANKA!**

**TRACKS SAFARIS**  
WE GET YOU CLOSER

