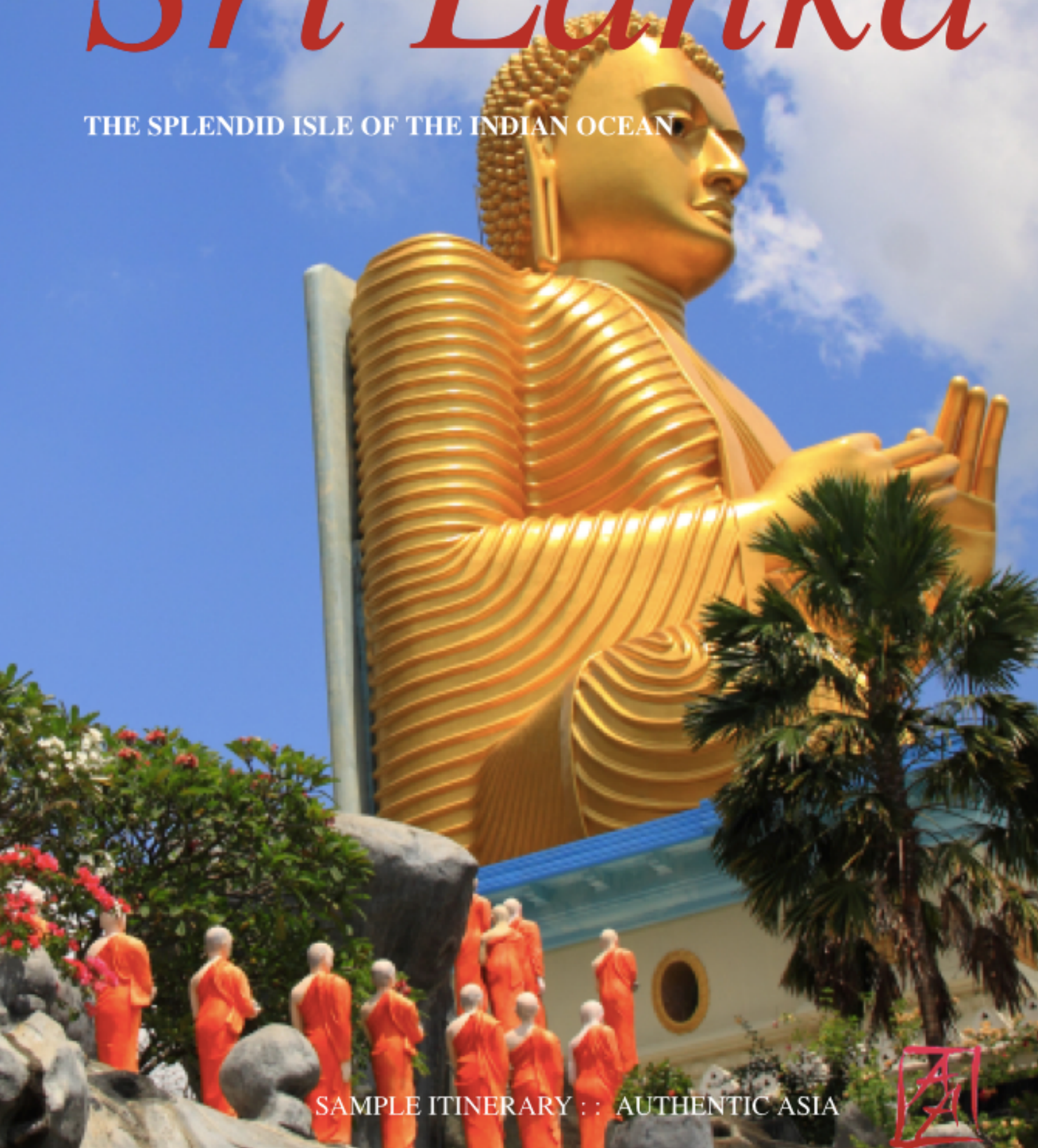


Sri Lanka

THE SPLENDID ISLE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN



SAMPLE ITINERARY :: AUTHENTIC ASIA



It is impossible not to feel a sense of longing and nostalgia when one contemplates the journeys of Marco Polo, who in 1292 sailed from a remote Chinese port via Sumatra to Sri Lanka, or Rudyard Kipling who made his way aboard a P&O ship from Adelaide to Sri Lanka and chronicled his travels in one of his many poems. How can we resist the calling of “wanderlust” when we hear names such as Serendib, Ceylon, Teardrop of India, Island of Dharma and, as Marco Polo called it, the “jade pendant in the Indian Ocean.”

Such must be a special place!

Day 1 | Colombo

Upon arrival in Colombo you will be met and transferred to your hotel. If you wish, we can arrange for the Silk Route Fast Track Service, which will give you access to priority immigration and customs service.

Accommodations will be at the Tintagel Hotel, a unique property situated in Colombo’s best neighborhood. The hotel is a heritage structure with only 10 rooms and was once the home of three political leaders.

Accommodations: Tintagel Hotel

Day 2 | Dambulla

Depart this morning on a tour of the city, which will include the historic Wolfendhal Church, the main residential area known as Cinnamon Gardens, and the newly refurbished racecourse grounds. The walking tour continues past the Lighthouse Clock Tower, down York Street past shops like Cargill’s and Miller’s, across Independence Square, and the Bawa Museum at No. 11 (the house of the legendary Sri Lankan architect Mr. Geoffrey Bawa). Finally arrive at the famous Dutch Hospital, a product of the Dutch occupation. It is believed to have been built in 1681, as recorded by the German Christopher Schweitzer. The hospital was built in close proximity to the harbor and was meant to serve the officers working for the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch Seafarers. In the early 1980s it became the home of the Colombo Fort Police Station. Finally in 2011 it was turned into a shopping and dining complex, however the original architecture has been preserved to date.

After lunch drive to Dambulla, into the heart of Sri Lanka’s ancient kingdoms. The drive will take about 3-1/2 hours. If you wish, you may stop en route at the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage center located on a private estate that belongs to a distinguished Sri Lankan family.

Upon arrival transfer to your hotel.

Accommodations: Amaya Resort or Heritance Kandalama Resort

Day 3 | Dambulla

Depart early this morning to one of the most astonishing sites in Sri Lanka, the 5th century Sigirya rock fortress, a massive monolith of red stone rising 600 feet from the green scrub jungle below. Fifteen centuries ago, this rock was the innermost stronghold of the 70 hectares fortified town and was crowned by the palace of the mad genius King Kasyapa. Though the palace no longer exists, the paws of the great lion, which guarded the entrance to the summit, are still intact, and a moat, rampart, and extensive gardens, including the renowned water gardens, ring the base of the rock. The world- renowned frescoes of the “Heavenly Maidens” of Sigiriya can be seen in a sheltered pocket of the rock approached by a spiral stairway. These frescoes are painted in earth pigments on plaster.



A pleasant drive through a forest reserve takes you to the medieval city of Polonnaruwa. A private picnic lunch will be arranged near a rice paddy field. Spend the afternoon exploring the 2nd capital city of Sri Lanka. In the 10th century, the Chola Kings of South India made Polonnaruwa their strategically superior capital after conquering Anuradhapura. It was recaptured in the 11th century by the Sinhalese king Vijayabahu and flourished under the 13th century when it fell once more into the hands of South Indian kings. Its Hindu and Buddhist archaeological treasures are awe-inspiring and exceedingly well preserved. Polonnaruwa is also where tank building reached its zenith and many of these impressive irrigation systems are still in use today.

Accommodations: Amaya Resort or Heritance Kandalama Resort

Day 4 | Dambulla

A morning excursion takes you to the ruins at Ritigala located deep inside the Ritigala Strict Nature Reserve. These sprawling, jungle-covered ruins of an extensive monastic cave complex sit on a 24-hectare site that is almost deserted. The broken stone structures, fallen carvings, and once-sacred caves lie on a small hill but nevertheless; it is a striking feature in the flat, dry landscape surrounding it.

In the afternoon visit one of the two national parks that surround this area. Depending on weather conditions, you will either see Minneriya Park, which has been an elephant sanctuary since 1938 or Kaudulla National Park, home to about 250 elephants. These important wetlands support rice paddy fields and, aside from the elephants, one can find many aquatic birds such as painted stocks and spot billed pelicans as well as leopards, sloth bears, sambar deer, and fishing cats. On some days you won't even need to enter the parks to see the elephants as they freely roam the countryside north of Sigiriya.

Accommodations: Amaya Resort or Heritance Kandalama Resort



Day 5 | Dambulla

Today's sightseeing includes visits to the 12-meter high standing Aukana Buddha and to Anuradhapura, one of South East Asia's most evocative sites.

According to legend, the magnificent Aukana Buddha was sculpted during the 5th century, though some sources date it to the 12th or 13th century. Aukana means sun eating. Therefore, the best time to see it, if you are willing to rise early and arrive at dawn, is when the first rays light up the finely carved features of the Buddha.

Anuradhapura was Sri Lanka's first capital founded in the 4th century B.C. Over 100 Sinhalese kings ruled here for over 1000 years. This ancient civilization is credited with inventing one of the earliest and most advanced irrigation systems in the world (a set of channels and reservoirs known as 'tanks'), enabling their society to flourish amidst the harsh aridity of their land. Set in rolling parklands, Anuradhapura is a complex of many fascinating monuments, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Accommodations: Amaya Resort or Heritance Kandalama Resort

*"Though we travel the world over to find the
beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it or we
find it not."*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Day 6 | Kandy

Leave the cultural triangle area behind and drive to Sri Lanka's most impressive cave temples. The Dambulla cave complex houses over 2000 square meters of painted walls and ceilings and over 150 images of the Buddha. The largest is a colossal figure of the Buddha carved out of rock spanning 14 meters. There are five separate caves, and for the energetic, a walk to the top (350 feet), offers an expansive view of the surrounding jungle and Sigiriya Rock in the distance. The largest cave dates from the 1st to 2nd century B.C. and is quite breathtaking. The paintings on the ceiling so closely follow the natural folds of the rock that the surface almost looks to be made out of cloth.

Continue on your drive to the wonderful hill station of Kandy, capital of the venerated 16th century Kandyan Kings. Kandy was the last capital of the Sri Lankan kings, who fiercely and successfully defended their kingdom against Portuguese and Dutch invaders for 300 years until it eventually fell to the British in 1815. Despite British rule, Kandy has maintained its position as the Sinhalese cultural epicenter and important spiritual pilgrimage site for the Buddhists. Many of the legends, traditions and folklore are still lovingly kept alive here. The entire town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Upon arrival transfer to your hotel.

Accommodations: Kandy Hotel.

Day 7 | Kandy

When you think of Sri Lanka, beaches and Buddhist temples come to mind but – Ceylon or Sri Lanka means tea. The island is the largest exporter of tea in the world; Ceylon Tea, as it will always be known.

The story began in 1867 at the Peredeniya Botanical Gardens outside of Kandy, where a Scottish coffee planter called James Taylor took some cuttings from the gardens' Assam tea bushes and planted them over 19 acres of the nearby Loolecoondera estate, where he worked. It was a prescient move, despite the misgivings of his employers. Two years later, a fungus destroyed the island's coffee plantations and brought about the rise of *camellia sinensis*. Those humble tea bushes, progenitors of Sri Lanka's wealth, still breathe in the Botanical Gardens amid far rarer and more glamorous specimens. It is a delightful place for a stroll, and offers an escape the crowds in Kandy. During the tour of the garden, Sri Lanka's well-known botanist, Mr. Palipana, will accompany you.

In the lush hills on the fringes of the city, the Ceylon Tea Museum opened its doors in November 2001. Converted from the former Hantane tea factory - a typical four-story building of corrugated iron with an interior of massive wooden beams - it houses all the strange paraphernalia of early tea manufacture, together with memorabilia of the tea pioneers. Nostalgia and British names abound: the first ever diesel engine by Ruston and Hornsby; the first tea roller of 1880, called "the Little Giant"; W&J Jackson's patent tea dryer and the first in Ceylon, known as "The Venetian" for its slatted appearance.

In the afternoon visit Kandy's most venerated place of Buddhist worship, the sacred Temple of the Tooth. Legend has it that the tooth was smuggled into Sri Lanka in the 4th century A.D. in the hair of a princess and brought to Anuradhapura. Fear of Indian marauders prompted the Sinhalese kings to move it to Kandy for safekeeping. Its temple, which also served as a royal palace, was constructed in the 1600s by the Kandyan kings. Sri Lankan Buddhists believe that they must make at least one spiritual pilgrimage here within their lifetime. We will arrange for a private showing of the relic.

If you are interested in contemporary Sri Lankan art, we recommend a visit to the country's most decorated painter – Rahju who is of Sri Lankan and Norwegian heritage. He lives much like a hermit in the mountainside outside of Kandy.

Accommodations: Kandy Hotel

*“The world is a book and those who do not travel
read only one page.”*

- St. Augustine

Day 8 | Hatton Tea Trails

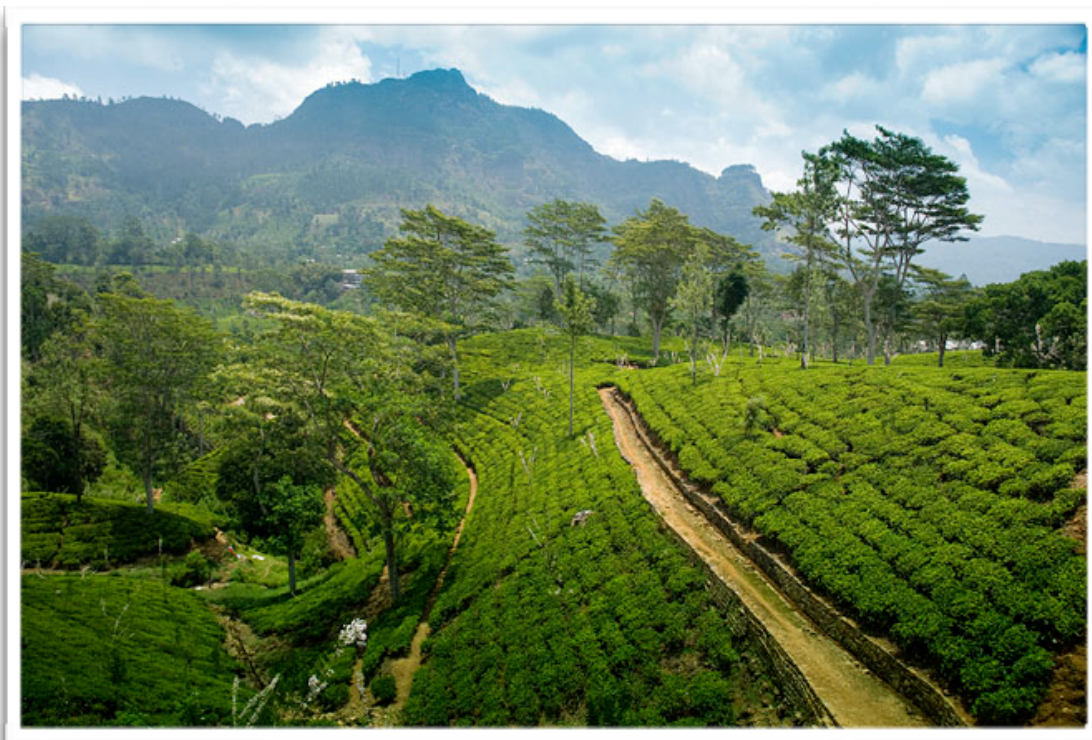
This morning depart by train to Bogwantalawa Valley, known as the Golden Valley of Tea and home to old Ceylon, replete with rolling green hills, plantation bungalows, high tea, and exquisite service.

Here in solitude, at an elevation of 4000 feet above sea level, lies Hatton Tea Trails, four colonial era tea planter's bungalows, infused with a new and decidedly splendid atmosphere. Each villa, built between 1890 and 1939, offers a taste of gracious living thanks to butler service and authentic period furnishing, accompanied by gourmet meals.

You will be absorbed into life on a working tea estate, whilst reveling in five- star luxury. The four bungalows offer the upscale traveller both traditional and modern comforts in a "non-hotel" atmosphere. Each bungalow has a manager, chef, butler, and support staff to welcome guests at a planter's home. Meals are based on fresh produce, cooked to order, and range from western fare to tea infused dishes and of course traditional Sri Lankan classics.

Scenic walking trails link the properties [which are from 5 to 15 km apart], offering views in all directions. During your time at Hatton Tea Trails you will have a chance to meet with Andrew Taylor, a descendant of the celebrated James Taylor.

Accommodations: Hatton Tea Trails



Day 9 | Hatton Tea Trails

If you feel up for it you can chose to visit one of the most famous and stunning sites in Sri Lanka known as World's End where the southern Horton Plains come suddenly to an end and drop almost straight down for 700 meters. It is a beautiful site BUT to guarantee the stunning views you have to get up very early so you reach the site by 6.00 a.m. You can go later in the morning but there is a chance the view will get fogged in. Also ... you cannot drive up to the site. You will have to walk. It is a flat walk but takes about 1 hour each way.

OR

Enjoy your private tour of the tea factory and plantation led by Mr. Andrew Taylor. The tea bushes, which are everywhere, are a kind of camellia which left to itself would grow into a 30-meter high evergreen with fragrant white flowers and shiny deep green leaves. Sri Lanka's economy is dependent on millions of them, carefully pruned and plucked and covering the hillsides interspersed with shade trees. Every year the nation's estates produce over 200 million kilograms of tea, nearly 95 percent of which is bound for export.

Depending on what activity you chose, you might want to have an afternoon at leisure or you can drive to Nuwara Eliya, an old British Hill station known as "Little England". The town was built entirely during the 19th century and its architecture mimics that of an English country town, with redbrick walls and country house Tudor half-timbering. We can arrange for a lunch at The Hill Club, an old Englishman's members club only.

Accommodations: Hatton Tea Trails

Day 10 | Galle

Overland journey to Galle (5 hours).

Galle - the capital of the southern province of Sri Lanka is acclaimed for its Dutch Fort, intricate Galle lace, ebony, woodcarvings, and polished gems. Persians, Arabs, Chinese, Malays, South Indians, Portuguese, Dutch, and English appear to have stamped their mark on Galle, deeming this historical and multi-cultured melting pot as one of the world's remaining historical treasures. Your time in Galle will be spent leisurely exploring within the crumbling fort walls of the Old City. The 16th century Galle Fort is a World Heritage Site. Spanning over 90 acres, it is Asia's best preserved and largest surviving fort built by European occupiers. It was originally constructed by the Portuguese in 1588 and extended to its present glory by the Dutch in 1663.

The best way to soak up the charm of the Old City and to get your bearings is by taking a stroll around the thick granite walls of the fort. This one-hour circuit is most enjoyable at sunrise

and sunset as the air is cool and the light is long and low. The real allure of the Old City is found by simply wandering through its warren of narrow alleys and side streets, replete with colonial homes with original archways and verandas, 18th century churches, mosques, museums, and impressive art galleries.

Accommodations: Dutch House.

Day 11 | Benota

Depart Galle in the morning for a boat trip on the Madu Ganga that will invigorate your senses and uplift your soul. The Madu River, situated in the Galle District is a fitting example of the intricate river channels, which decorate the country's coast. In the global context, the ecological importance of this site has garnered it the 'Ramsar Wetland' status in 2003 being the second largest wetland in Sri Lanka with a colossal 915 hectares with 23 islands inhabited by nearly 300 families. The main occupation of the locals is the production of cinnamon and prawn fishing.

Continue on towards Bentota and arrive at the Lunuganga Estate, which was the home of Sri Lanka's most renowned architect, Geoffrey Bawa. His fellow architect Ranjith Dayaratne described it as "bringing poetry to place". Bawa's approach to architecture was important not only for its originality but also for its influence on architecture in Sri Lanka and abroad. His work included the parliament house in Colombo and the Kandalama Hotel near Dambulla. Overnight on the estate.

Accommodations: Lunuganga Estate

Day 12 | Departure

Transfer to Colombo airport for departure in time for your departure flight.

End of services.

The above is a sample itinerary which covers the highlights and also takes you off the beaten path. We would be happy to discuss your individual travel preferences and amend the itinerary accordingly.

Pricing is dependent on your choice of accommodations, time of the year that you will be traveling, the final itinerary, and the number of people in your group.

Should you wish to discuss your individual travel plans to Sri Lanka please do feel free to reach to us via e-mail at info@authenticasia.net or by phone at 1. 888.586.9958.



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