Wonders of Sri Lanka by Rail

16 Days | 2 - 17 February

Sri Lanka is a beautiful tropical island that has it all: endless beaches, World Heritage, wildlife, beautiful scenery and above all, a wonderful broad-gauge railway system still very much as originally built. We cover much of this system, partly on service trains and partly with our own private train through some amazing scenery, especially in the tea-growing areas of the island.

We also take in some of the country’s UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and nature reserves, all in the coolest and driest months of the year. Throughout this tour, we will have a local guide and crew, and our own private coach to take our luggage from hotel to hotel.

This year we offer both 10 and 14-day options. Your Tour Manager for this trip is David, who has led the Sri Lanka tour three times before. Should you have any queries please e-mail him on david@ptg.co.uk.

Day 1 Saturday 2 February
For those doing the full 16-day holiday, we will fly with Emirates via Dubai which gives us lunchtime departures from Gatwick, Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham. We all meet up in Dubai for our onward flight to Colombo. It is also possible to fly direct with Sri Lankan Airways leaving Heathrow at 21.15.

Day 2 Sunday 3 February (D)
We arrive at Colombo Airport where our coach will be waiting to take our luggage to the hotel, but we will travel into town by private train! Mount Lavinia station is right next to our hotel. As with most evening meals, dinner will be a buffet with a wide range of dishes to suit all tastes.

Day 3 Monday 4 February (B,D)
Ride a service train Colombo – Galle. This is a lovely ride through the palm-tree plantations south of Colombo, always with the sea on our right. City tour including Galle Fort. Galle was a Dutch trading station and is dominated by the picturesque fortress built by the Portuguese in the 16th century and extensively fortified by the Dutch to protect both themselves and their commercial interests. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1988.

Day 4 Tuesday 5 February (B,D)
We join a morning service train from Galle to Matara. From here we will visit the famous Star Fort and a snake conservation centre. Later we return to Galle to enjoy the excellent facilities at our hotel. Alternatively spend a relaxing day exploring the old and new parts of Galle.

Day 5 Wednesday 6 February (B,L,D)
Rail fan Option: Ride the public service train Galle – Moratuwa where the T1 railcar will meet us and take us into Ratmalana workshops by rail. The SLR’s main workshops are almost a Victorian time capsule, and it is a fascinating glimpse back in time. We return to Mount Lavinia Fort on the T1. Culture option: Travel back to Mount Lavinia by coach with a special stop at a Turtle Sanctuary. Join the rail group at Ratmalana. Picnic lunch served on board the T1.

Day 6 Thursday 7 February (B,D)
Rail fan Option: We will ride on the beautifully restored T1 railcar out of Colombo to Avisawela and on the return journey travel directly to Demagoda Running Shed where there is diesel maintenance as well as a collection of long withdrawn steam locos, and some narrow-gauge stock. We also visit the nearby Maradana running shed. Culture Option: 3-hour City Tour, taking in many of the area’s most important historic locations. Sighting highlights include the old parliament houses, Buddhist Temple, Town Hall, and the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall.

Note: Clients who start the tour here will leave the UK on Wednesday and will be met at the airport by the local guide and representatives of J F Tours and transferred to the hotel in Colombo by coach. Depending on the arrival time, there may be an option for an afternoon sightseeing tour of Colombo.

Day 7 Friday 8 February (B,L,D)
Colombo – Rambukkan – Nanu-Oya by Viceroy special train with the views of rice cultivation, coconut palms and charming villages. On leaving Rambukkan our train begins to climb the Kadugannawa Incline, where trains climb 1400 ft in 13 miles, often on a ledge of rock cut out of the hillside. We also visit the new railway museum in Kadugannawa. Coach from Nanu-Oya to the summer resort of Nuwara Eliya, a favourite sanctuary of the British and still with the atmosphere of a British colonial town including the Grand Hotel, Town Post Office and Hill Club. Optional visit to a tea factory.

Highlights
• Private charter train
• Private train from airport into town
• All dinners and some lunches
• Stunning scenery
• Wildlife
• Amazing welcoming and friendly people
Day 12 Wednesday 13 February (B,l,D)

preserved cave-temple complex in Sri Lanka. journey north to Dambulla, which is the largest and best properties of several spices. We continue our World Heritage Site by coach. Firstly, the spice garden, beautiful spice garden and a very important UNESCO Day 11 Tuesday 12 February (B,D)

tourist route. to explore this very typical small town, well off the usual locals and tourists. For rail fans, David will lead a trip on The hotel is next to Bogambara Lake, a popular walk for time after lunch to relax or explore the bustling town. day of Batticaloa through the vast plains in this part of the island, with a chance of seeing wild elephants. For track bashers not averse to an early rise, it may also be possible to take in the branch to Trincomalee.

Day 14 Friday 15 February (B,L,D) Culture option: The ruined city of Anuradhapura was the first capital of the ancient kingdom of Sri Lanka and spreads out over approximately 40 hectares filled with the ruins of huge stupas, monasteries, Buddha images and colossal man-made lakes and ponds. In the afternoon we will visit the Mihintale and Isurumuniya temples. Rail option: David will lead a trip by train on one of the two recently reopened lines to Jaffna and Kankesanthurai in the north of the island, or to Talaimannar Pier in the north-west.

Day 15 Saturday 16 February (B,l,D)

rail journey to the Polonnaruwa World Heritage Site by coach. Firstly, the spice garden, where a local guide shows us the garden and explains the properties of several spices. We continue our journey north to Dambulla, which is the largest and best preserved cave-temple complex in Sri Lanka.

Day 13 Thursday 14 February (B,L,D) Habarana – Mata – Anuradhapura. This morning we visit one of Sri Lanka’s best-known sites, Sigiriya, also known as the ‘palace in the sky’. atop the 200-metre-high solid rock, an ancient Sri Lankan King transformed the natural rock into a heavenly palace and part fortified town. Climb to the top to enjoy spectacular views and see the ancient rock paintings before joining our train to Mata Junction and Anuradhapura.

Day 10 Monday 11 February (B,D)

buildings around the sacred Temple of the Tooth Relic. outstanding Kandyan royal architecture found in the city was declared a World Heritage Site because of the altitude of over 1600 feet. Founded in the 14th century, it became the capital of the kingdom in 1592 and is located in a valley surrounded by forested hills. The Day 9 Sunday 10 February (B,l,D)

5'6" broad gauge main line anywhere in the world, then traverse the Demodara Nine Arch Bridge and the nearby Demodara spiral. Free time in Badulla to explore the town. Return by train and coach to Nuwara Eliya.

Day 8 Saturday 9 February (B,L,D) Nuwara Eliya – Badulla – Nuwara Eliya. We transfer to Nanu-Oya to catch our Viceroy special train to Badulla which climbs into the mountains to reach the summit at Pattipola at 6226 ft., which is the highest altitude achieved by a 6226 ft., which is the highest altitude achieved by a 6226 ft., which is the highest altitude achieved by a 5'6" broad gauge main line anywhere in the world, then traverse the Demodara Nine Arch Bridge and the nearby Demodara spiral. Free time in Badulla to explore the town. Return by train and coach to Nuwara Eliya.

Day 16 Sunday 17 February (B)

To Puttalam Station where our train is waiting to take us south to Negombo. Farewell Dinner at our hotel tonight. This is a relatively easy tour, however on some of the optional visits it is necessary to be able to climb a flight of stairs and walk over rough ground. Sigiriya and Mihintale have some very narrow steps and steep climbs.

UPDATE: Sri Lankan Railways are extending the line from Matara to Beliatta/Beliwatte and this will be included if it is necessary to be able to climb a flight of stairs and walk over rough ground. Sigiriya and Mihintale have some very narrow steps and steep climbs.

Day 7 Wednesday 6 February (B,l,D)

Flights
• Direct Sri Lankan flight from London or regional flights with Emirates via Dubai
• Flight upgrades available - prices on request

Prices (per person)
• 10-day Main Tour including return flights with Emirates: £3,850
• 10-day Main Tour joining in Colombo: £3,250
• 6-day pre-tour: £1,050

Options
• 10-day supplement for single use room: £695
• 6-day add-on supplement for single use room: £340
• Fly direct from Heathrow with Sri Lankan: POA

Deposit
• Travelling by air: £1,500
• Own travel: £750

Flights
• Direct Sri Lankan flight from London or regional flights with Emirates via Dubai
• Flight upgrades available - prices on request

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