TOUR CODE

LK1

ADVENTURESABROAD

SRI LANKA

'the Resplendent Isle'

8 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 ***Arrive in Colombo***

Arrival in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Upon arrival we transfer to a point outside the city, the exact location of which depends on the time of our incoming flights (some travellers may be coming from our tour of Southern India). We may overnight near the airport or down the road a bit so that we are well-placed for tomorrow's journey to Muthurajawela Nature Reserve.

Overnight near Colombo. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Colombo Area - Muthurajawela Nature Reserve - Anuradhapura***

This morning we make the 180 km (110 mile) drive to Anuradhapura, the first capital of Sri Lanka.

En route we take a boat ride through the Muthurajawela Nature Reserve. This protected area of wetland is thriving with bird life, with 126 resident species and 40 species which migrate here. The boat ride provides a view of Sri Lankan wetlands as never seen before. Imagine listening to the chorus of feathered creatures, watching the water lilies dancing on the tropical sun, monkeys swinging on treetops and crocodiles moving stealthily in water.

We continue to Anuradhapura, arriving in the afternoon.

Overnight near Anuradhapura. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Anuradhapura - Dambulla***

This morning we visit a selection of the most remarkable sights of Anuradhapura. As per written records Anuradhapura was made royal capital by the king Panduk Anhaya in 380 BC. It remained residence and royal capital for 119 successive Singhalese kings till the year AD 1000 when it was abandoned and the capital moved to Polonnaruwa. You will see some of the most famous as well as the tallest dagoba of Sri Lanka, remains from palaces, temples, monasteries, ceremonial baths and the temple of the holy Bo-tree. This tree was grown from a sapling of the very tree under which more than 2500 years ago the Buddha found enlightenment.

We continue to Dambulla and have a tour of its major attractions, which are spread over 5 caves containing statues and paintings. Since it's founding in the first century BC by King Valagamba, many improvements and additions have been carried out to the collection. Hindu statues are believed to be of the 12 century AD and the latest paintings are of the late 18-century. Dambulla is a unique and important historical site because of the amalgamation of material from many eras.

Overnight in Dambulla. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Dambulla - Polonnaruwa - Dambulla*

In the morning we drive to Polonnaruwa for a visit of the well-preserved remains of capital of the Singhalese kings from the 11th to the 13th century. We see the excavations: Temples, dagobas, the royal palace, the royal library. The most famous Singhalese king, Parakrama Bahu the Great (1153-1186), built in the environs of Polonnaruwa, an impressive irrigation system with many artificial tanks interconnected with irrigation channels.

Overnight in Dambulla. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Dambulla - Sigiriya - Kandy*

Taking advantage of cooler morning temperatures, we will have a tour of Sigiriya. The complex lies on the steep slopes and at the summit of a granite peak standing some 370 m (1,220 feet) high. This is the earliest surviving royal palace in Sri Lanka, with several chambers and meticulously planned water gardens, the earliest such gardens found in Asia. The Mirror Wall, which had been exposed to elements for over fifteen centuries, still carry some of the original sheen that has given it the name. This archaeological site, unparalleled in South Asia, has been declared a World Heritage Site.

We continue for a tour of a local spice garden. A local guide will most likely show us custard apples, jackfruit, cocoa, cardamom, pineapples, lemon grass, wild asparagus, nutmeg, curry leaves, cinnamon, ginger, vanilla plant, coco, aloe vera, etc. We continue our travel through the interior of the island, past paddy fields, palm groves and coconut plantations.

Our journey continues via a road that begins to ascend gradually. After 92 km / 58 miles (90 minutes), we arrive at the old royal city of Kandy, situated at 500 m (1,640 feet) above sea level and beautifully nestled between green hills. In its very centre lies a small artificial lake and palace of the last Singhalese king which has become a temple and the holiest shrine in Sri Lanka and where the tooth relic of the Lord Buddha is highly venerated.

On arrival we will drive around the lake and visit the National Museum. This evening we shall pay a visit to the Temple of the Holy Tooth followed by an opportunity to attend a dance performance (subject to availability) where we will see the famous Kandyan dance as well as up-country and devil dances.

Overnight in Kandy. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Kandy: Botanical Garden - Nuwara Eliya*

After breakfast we will visit the world-famous Botanical Garden at Peradeniya. The park dates back to 1371 under the reign of King Vikrama Bahu III when he held court here. The English put the cornerstone of the present garden in 1821. During the Second World War the garden served as the headquarters of Earl Mountbatten, the supreme commander of the allied forces in Southeast Asia who later became the last Viceroy of India. In the garden we find an immense variety of orchids, spice trees, palms, bushes, as well as tropical plants and flowers of all types.

We then travel 77 km (48 miles) to Nuwara Eliya. The road ascends steadily and shortly before reaching Nuwara Eliya, we will have climbed 1500 m (4,920 feet). You are now in the tea-country; wherever you look, you will see tea plantations, the rich full green of thousands and thousands of tea bushes. Occasionally you can see a few rice fields and near villages, vegetable plantations or gardens. En route we visit a tea factory and plantation.

We tour the resort town of Nuwara Eliya, situated at 2070 m (6,790 feet) above sea level, lies on a little lake and is surrounded by mountains covered over and over by tea bushes. The town itself was the favourite hill station of the

British who set it up to look like a misplaced British village. The charming, old, pink-brick post office, the English country house-like Hill Club with its hunting pictures, mounted hunting trophies and fish, the 18-hole golf course (said to be one of the finest in Asia), and even the well-stocked trout streams speak of the area's English past.

Overnight in Nuwara Eliya. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Nuwara Eliya - Colombo*

We have an early start for our drive back to Colombo to allow us time to have a panoramic tour of the city.

Colombo was probably known to Roman, Arab, and Chinese traders more than 2,000 years ago. Muslims settled there in the 8th century and controlled much of the trade between Sinhalese kingdoms and the outside world. The Portuguese arrived in the 16th century and built a fort to protect their spice trade. The Dutch captured the city in the 17th century. The British made the city the capital of their crown colony of Ceylon in 1802. The University of Sri Lanka, several colleges, an observatory, a national museum, and numerous churches, mosques, and Buddhist and Hindu temples are all located in and around Colombo; on the outskirts are two major Buddhist universities.

Overnight in Colombo. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Departure*

Departure from Colombo.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.