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## GEEO ITINERARY

Sri Lanka 6/30/2025 w/UPenn

### **Day 1: Colombo Arrive in Colombo at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.**

Arrive at any time in Colombo, the capital and largest city of Sri Lanka. The airport is **Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB)**. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in South Asia at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jet lag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Colombo before the program begins. **Hotel Check-in and Welcome Meeting** Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another. **Joining Instructions** The airport in Colombo (Bandaranaike International Airport, also known as Colombo International Airport and Katunayake International Airport) is around 32 km north of the Colombo city center. If you have paid in advance for an arrival transfer, a G Adventures representative will be at the airport to meet you. Your arrival transfer will be arranged based on flight information provided to us. If you are advised of a flight schedule change within 48 hours of your scheduled arrival time, we will do our best to rearrange your arrival transfer however we cannot guarantee this. If your arrival transfer does not arrive within 30 minutes after you have exited the arrivals area please call this support number for our local G Adventures Transfer providers: Chaminda Paranavitana Tel.: (+94)112 308 308 | Ext.: 5917 | Mob.: (+94)77 5222 800 (+94) 70 585 3952 Tharanga Siriwardhana Mob: +94 77 642 4060 Worst case, you can take a taxi to your start point hotel. If you decide not book an arrival transfer through GEEO, please be aware that taxi drivers often overcharge. We recommend using the prepaid taxi service offered at the airport - you can make the arrangements at designated counters outside the baggage-claim area after passing through several bank counters. You will be able to change money into the local currency (Sri Lanka Rupee) at exchange counters open 24 hours at the airport. The Airport Taxi service, supervised by the Airport & Aviation Services, operates a counter in the arrival lobby and accept Sri Lanka Rupees. Please hire the vehicle from this counter & make the full payment. They will provide you an official receipt. Unfortunately scammers have set up similar services, so make sure the counter is operated by The Airport & Aviation Services. Your destination, the time of your arrival and the amount of luggage determine the rate, which you pay in advance at the counter. A person will escort you to the designated taxi. If the driver demands more rupees, politely refuse, if they have driven safely you may like to tip him around SLRS 100.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Nippon (or similar) \* *For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher.*

### **Day 2: Colombo/Negombo Enjoy a guided city tour of Colombo before heading to Negombo. Explore the stunning Portuguese and Dutch architecture during free time in the evening.**

Enjoy a guided city tour of Colombo, where you will visit the Pettah district and wind your way through a series of open-air bazaars and markets. The area is home to Jami Ul-Alfar Mosque, one of the oldest and most visited mosques in Colombo, and also hosts Kayman's Gate, Colombo Town Hall, and the Khan Clock Tower. Later in the day, drive to Negombo where you will have free time in the evening to explore the stunning Portuguese and Dutch architecture. **Approximate travel time:** 45 minutes by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Beacon Beach Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

### **Day 3: Negombo/Sigiriya Begin the day visiting the seaside and observe fisherman sorting through their haul. Board a boat to glide along the Dutch**

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**canal and get a closer look at the lives of the locals. Travel to the Dambulla province and visit the cave temple before watching the sun set over the lake.**

We will begin the day by taking a walking tour of a fishing village. Learn about the life of the locals while you head out to the sea to take in the action. Watch the fishermen bring their boats to shore, clean their nets, dry their catch, and sell the fish to waiting buyers. We will then board a boat and cruise calmly along the Dutch canal, one of many canals in the city that links estuaries and lagoons. Watch as Negombo's residents collect coconuts, and keep an eye out for the multitude of bird species in the area. Afterward, we depart Negombo and drive to the Dambulla province, where we will visit the Golden Cave Temple of Dambulla, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Dambulla cave temples are one of the most well-preserved temples and cave sites in Sri Lanka. See the Buddhist mural paintings that line the walls of the seventh-century caves as well as a collection of hundreds of statues of Buddha in different poses. We will then drive to a hotel near Sigiriya where we will spend the next two nights. In the evening, try to catch a beautiful sunset over the Kandalama Reservoir. **Approximate travel time:** 3 to 4.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** IORA Resort (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 4: Sigiriya Meet locals and share a meal in a nearby village. Enjoy a guided tour of the rock fortress of Sigiriya.**

Wander through a typical Sri Lankan village to learn more about its residents and their way of life. For lunch, enjoy some local cuisine prepared by the families of the town and get a chance to interact with the community. Later, will visit the Sigiriya Rock Fortress and be mesmerized by the ancient complex built over 1,500 years ago. The fortress grounds captivate every visitor with its well-planned gardens, caves, monasteries, and palaces adorned with beautiful wall motifs. Start at the water gardens and climb more than 1,200 steps to reach the top. Pass boulders and caves with frescoes to find the ruins of a palace on the flat surface of the old volcanic magma rock. The rock rests 1,213 ft above sea level with a shear drop on all sides. In the afternoon, opt to go for a tour of Polonnaruwa, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, where you can cycle through the ruins. **Accommodation:** IORA Resort (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

**Day 5: Sigiriya/Kandy Drive through the Knuckles Mountain Range and visit a spice plantation en route to Kandy. Stop for lunch at Sthree Craft Shop and Cafe. Take a guided visit to the famous Temple of the Tooth.**

While driving through the scenic Knuckles Mountain Range today, our first stop will be a visit to an herbal center of spices for an interactive session with students of Ayurveda. Learn all about the medicinal uses of various herbs used by the people of Sri Lanka in their massages and treatments. We will arrive in Kandy in the afternoon for an orientation walk of the city and area around Kandy Lake. We will have a delicious traditional Sri Lankan lunch prepared by Sthree Craft Shop and Café. This social enterprise offers opportunities for local women and youth living with disabilities, through handicraft and hospitality training. Enjoy a tour of the Temple of the Tooth, which houses an important relic: a tooth of Lord Buddha kept in a well-preserved golden casket. Learn about the importance of this site from local guides. In the evening, opt to attend an exciting Kandyan Cultural Dance. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Oak Ray Heritage Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

**Day 6: Kandy/Digana Enjoy a free morning in Kandy, and then travel to Digana. Learn to make Sri Lankan bread or sweets while helping out with dinner at a nature resort homestay.**

Enjoy a free morning in Kandy before traveling to Digana for a nature resort homestay. Upon arrival, we will get a crash course in local life with a village walk. Learn about some of the essential local industries like milk collection and dolomite mining. Meet with a local jeweler who creates handicrafts from copper sheets and precious stones, and then take home personally-crafted incense after a lesson in incense production by a local woman. She employs other women from the community to mix oils and resins in crafting perfectly scented incense. Lend a hand with the farm and learn to cook authentic Sri Lankan dishes. This project supports efforts for alternative income in Digana as well as improved access to food

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and water. Accommodations at the nature resort homestay are simple and authentic. Rooming will be in twin- and triple-share rooms. You will wake up in tranquility surrounded by palm trees. **Approximate travel time:** 1-1.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Oruthota Chalets (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

**Day 7: Digana/Nuwara Eliya Travel to Nuwara Eliya and explore a traditional tea plantation in the central highlands. Gain insight into the process of growing tea and its effect on the Ceylon region.**

Enjoy a free morning of exploration at Digana before transferring to Nuwara Eliya. The town of Nuwara Eliya produces the finest Orange Pekoe Ceylon tea and is inhabited mainly by tea planters and plantation workers. Pay a visit to one of the factories to learn all about tea production. The town, also known as 'Little England', offers a lot of options for visitors: Explore the nature trails, visit the plantations, or go horseback riding. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Jojo's (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 8: Nuwara Eliya/Ella Spend a free morning hiking in the Horton Plains Nature Reserve or strolling local markets. Later, hop on the local train and take the scenic route to Ella.**

Spend a free morning strolling local markets or hiking in the Horton Plains Nature Reserve. During the 6-mile trek, walk through the clouds to discover a majestic dropoff that provides amazing views over the plains into the sea. Later, we will hop on the local train and take the scenic route to Ella. There are amazing photo opportunities, but please don't hang out your body outside of the moving train unless you are a trained social media influencer with a significant life insurance policy. You will have some free time to explore Ella in the evening. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by local train **Accommodation:** Oak Ray Ella Gap Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 9: Ella Enjoy a free day in the charming town of Ella. Opt to tour the iconic Nine Arch Bridge, admire views of Ella Rock, or simply relax and wander around town.**

Enjoy a free day in the charming town of Ella. You can explore the provincial capital by visiting St Mark's Church, the Hindu Kataragama Devale, and Buddhist Muthiyagana Vihara. You can also head out to the iconic Nine Arch Bridge, which is made of stone and cement and is a viaduct connecting Ella and Demodara train stations. Don't look down—this 100-year-old bridge, also referred to as the "Nine Skies Bridge," is almost 3,100 feet above sea level. Train services still operate, so check the train schedule and be sure to catch a glimpse of the bridge in action! Another option is trekking to the picturesque Dunhinda Falls, located just outside the town of Badulla. **Accommodation:** Oak Ray Ella Gap Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 10: Ella/Yala National Park Opt to hike Little Adam's Peak during the morning. In the afternoon, travel to Yala National Park and enjoy a safari.**

This morning you can opt to hike to Little Adam's Peak. This 2-3 hour hike is fairly easy, and the path is marked by signs. In the afternoon, travel to Yala National Park. After settling in, head out on a safari and keep an eye out for leopards, elephants, jackals, sloth bears, sambars, spotted deer, crocodiles, and more than 200 bird species. Learn about the park's history and diverse wildlife. **Approximate travel time:** 2 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Big Game Camp Yala (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 11: Yala National Park to Mirissa Enjoy one more morning in Yala NP, and then bid farewell and travel south to idyllic Mirissa Beach.**

This morning, you will have the option to go on an additional safari (\$36 USD per person). Keep an eye

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out for leopards, elephants, jackals, sloth bears, sambars, spotted deer, crocodiles, and more than 200 bird species. Learn about its diverse wildlife and the history of the park. Later, we will travel south to Mirissa Beach, where we will stay for the next three nights. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Randiya Sea View Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 12: Galle Take a day trip to Galle to tour the colonial city and historic fort before returning to Mirissa.**

Today, we take a day trip to Galle and visit the Galle Fort, a 16th-century fort first built by the Portuguese and later occupied by the Dutch. The ramparts are still standing even after being battered by Mother Nature, including the devastating 2004 tsunami. Explore more of the beautiful capital, taking in the Dutch architecture and lively atmosphere. The Dutch Hospital shopping complex is a great place to scoop up some souvenirs. **Approximate travel time:** 1 hr by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Randiya Sea View Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 13: Mirissa Enjoy a free day in peaceful Mirissa. Opt to relax on the beach or take a surfing lesson.**

You have a full free day in Mirissa to relax on the beach, take a surfing lesson, rent a tuk-tuk, eat fresh seafood, or climb Coconut Tree Hill. **Accommodation:** Randiya Sea View Hotel (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

**Day 14: Mirissa Depart at any time. Your tour leader can help you arrange a transfer. Please note that it will take about 2.5 hours to get to Colombo from Mirissa.**

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Mirissa at any time. If you wish to extend your stay in Mirissa, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. The Colombo airport can be reached by private taxi or bus from Mirissa; your tour leader can help you arrange a transfer. Please note that it will take about 2.5 hours to get to Colombo from Mirissa. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book. **Meals included:** Breakfast

*\*Itinerary Disclaimer: While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.*