

Wattletree Garden Tours

Sri Lanka

Culture, Cuisine and Character

January 2025



**Join Brian Sams
& Wattletree Garden Tours
(07) 46 968033**

**Email: briansams@live.com.au
www.wattletreehorticulture.com.au**





Tour highlights

- Local expert guide
- Hotels with character all 2, 3 and 4 nights
- Kandy temples and gardens
- Galle's history and shopping
- Geoffrey Bawas garden
- Elephants in the wild via safari
- Scenic train journey
- Sri Lankan Cooking master class
- Local cuisine
- Dambulla Rock temple
- Wildlife boat cruise
- Time to enjoy

Brian Sams is a Toowoomba based horticulturist involved in running gardening workshops, consultation and leading garden based tours. Brian has been leading garden tours overseas and within Australia since 2006.

Why? He loves it!

DAY 1 Wednesday 15th January – Arrive in Colombo

Fly to Sri Lanka with flight details to be confirmed closer to departure but likely a late evening arrival. Upon arrival we will be met and transferred to our resort hotel. (meals in flight)

Heritage Negombo or similar – 2 nights

DAY 2 Thursday 16th January - Negombo area.

This morning will be a free morning to enjoy the resort and acclimatise. In the afternoon we will undertake a Negombo city tour. Negombo was established by the Dutch as a cinnamon hub but is now more famous for great beaches and diving. We will have a look at what the area has to offer before returning to the resort for a welcome to Sri Lanka dinner. (B, D)

DAY 3 – Friday 17th January Negombo - Kandalama

After breakfast we will venture inland towards Kandalama stopping en-route to visit the Dambulla Cave Temple. Dambulla dates to the 1st century B.C. and is one of the most famous icons now in Sri Lanka. The Dambulla Rock Temple houses some unique drawings in 5 magnificently constructed cave temples flanking the golden temple of Dambulla. Observe the exquisite cave paintings along the walls and 150 statues of Lord Buddha including a giant gold covered Buddha. We will then continue to Kandalama to another superb Heritage Hotel where we will have an included dinner. (B, D)

Heritage Kandalama or similar – 3 nights

DAY 4 – Saturday 18th January - Kandalama to Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa

Today we have a great day planned starting with a visit to Sigiriya to climb the rock fortress. The 5th century rock citadel of King Kasyapa and World Heritage Site is a real show of how advanced the technology was at that time. Step through the gigantic 'Lion Paws' - overlooking the symmetrical royal gardens below - to comprehend the splendor that once dominated this rock fortress. Surrounded by ramparts & moats the Lion Rock - resembling the mythological 'City of Gods' - is coated by frescoes that relate to Gupta style paintings found in Ajanta caves of India. We will have a traditional Sri Lankan lunch in a restaurant overlooking a paddy field. Next we will proceed to Polonnaruwa and commence a city tour and also visit Popham's Arboretum. Rising with the decline of Anuradhapura, the city of Polonnaruwa was the medieval capital of King Parakramabahu I and provides interesting proof of the advanced ancient culture, heritage and religious beliefs. Walk across the walls of the World Heritage Site - blessed by stupas, resting Buddha statues, irrigation canals and fantastically carved Hindu sculptures. This is quite a place. After a traditional Sri Lankan lunch overlooking some paddy fields we will visit the ancient city of Polonnaruwa with many important cultural relics. Later return to Kandalama (B, L)

DAY 5 – Sunday 19th January - Kandalama to Minneriya and return

This morning is free to enjoy the local area and resort. In the afternoon enjoy a safari at Minneriya National Park. Spreading over 8800 hectares, this is a sanctuary for elephants. Minneriya is home to herds of deer and ample birdlife, but its spotlight is really elephants – one of the largest gatherings anywhere in the world. We will be in smaller jeeps to watch for wildlife with trained guides. (B)

DAY 6 – Monday 20th January Kandalama to Kandy

Today we head south to Kandy stopping on the way to visit the Matale Spice Garden. The spice garden is a show garden of the most important spices in Sri Lanka and we will also get a demonstration on how some of these common and not so common plants are used in cooking, cosmetics and medicine. We will have lunch today in the Ranweli Spice Garden. We will then continue to Kandy for an orientation tour and visit the Temple of the Tooth relic (one of Lord Buddhas teeth is held in this temple – which you cannot actually see but the temple is quite special anyway). We will finish the day with a cultural show featuring traditional music & drumming. Dinner will be in our hotel. (B, L, D)

Earl's Regency Hotel or similar – 2 nights

DAY 7 – Tuesday 21st January - Kandy

Today we will start with a visit to the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage which is located about 50km from Kandy. We hope to be there in time to see them being led to the local river to bathe and feed before returning to the orphanage. This charitable organization has been caring for elephants mainly injured by land mines since 1975. A great chance to get up close to elephants ranging from very young to seniors. Today we will have lunch at The Kandyan Art Residency on the way back into Kandy. Later we will call into visit the Peradeniya Botanical Garden which was first developed as a pleasure garden under royalty and later harmonized by the British. The garden is 147 acres with many interesting trees including a giant Javan Fig tree and well established orchid house. (B, L)



DAY 8 – Wednesday 22nd January - Kandy to Nuwara Eliya

Today we take one of the most scenic rail journeys you could imagine when we board the train from nearby Peradeniya to Nanu Oya on the way to Nuwara Eliya. This area is famous for large areas of very photogenic tea plantations. Upon arrival we will visit a tea plantation and tea factory & will of course have a tea tasting. Later we will check in for 2 nights in a very special property that sits in the middle of Nuwara Eliya—the Jetwing St Andrews - 5 star hotel. Dinner is in the hotel. (B, D)

Hotel - Jetwing St Andrews or similar – 2 nights

DAY 9 – Thursday 23rd January Nuwara Eliya

This morning we will head to the Hakgala Botanical Garden. This garden has a lovely outlook over the valley and is what you might classify as a well maintained English style garden. You can walk the many paths that traverse the ridge or you may wish to pay for a ticket on the electric cart for an overview. Later we will head back to Nuwara Eliya for some free time to explore this small town or perhaps have a game of golf at the famous and scenic golf course (own expense). (B)

DAY 10 – Friday 24th January - Nuwara Eliya to Ahungalla

Today we leave the highlands to start our journey to Ahungalla. First though we will stop to see 2 waterfalls, St. Claire's Falls and Devon Falls. After time for a walk and photos we will then start the rather slow but scenic journey to the coast south of Colombo to check into our lovely beach resort hotel – another Geoffrey Bawa designed hotel. Dinner is in the hotel tonight. (B, D)

Heritage Ahungalla Resort or similar – 4 nights

DAY 11 – Saturday 25th January - Ahungalla

This morning we will visit a Turtle Hatchery. This part of the coast is home to large numbers of turtles and hatcheries that play their role in conservation. We will have the chance to see turtles from egg to youngsters ready to return to the ocean as well as retired older handicapped turtles being cared for in the hatchery. We will then have a boat ride at Balapitiya to see the local wildlife in amongst the mangroves, cinnamon plantation islands and an island temple. We will also see a 'fish pedicure center' – where you may opt to have your feet "cleaned" by fish. On completion we will return to the hotel for some free time. (B)

DAY 12 – Sunday 26th January - Ahungalla to Galle day visit

Today we will head to the seaside town of Galle to firstly witness the Stilt Fishermen in Weligama and then we will undertake a Galle City Tour. The Dutch spent many years in Galle as is evidenced by the classic Dutch architecture that fuses with the tropical setting to create a lovely atmosphere. We will visit the famous fort and other city landmarks with some free time for shopping. Lunch will be in the Rampant Restaurant in Galle. Later return to our resort hotel (B, L)

DAY 13 – Monday 27th January - Ahungalla.

Today is all about Geoffrey Bawa and his garden and architecture. Firstly we will head to his private estate Lunuganga and have a guided tour of his large English style garden. Geoffrey Bawa was one of Sri Lanka's most prolific and influential architects, the garden at the Lunuganga estate remained his first muse and experimental laboratory for new ideas. He continued to change and experiment with its spaces and structures throughout his life until his final illness in 1998. We also plan to have lunch in his estate. Later we will visit the Brief Garden which is not too far from Lunuganga. This garden is described as a barely controlled riot of a garden out of *The Jungle Book*, the grounds are a lovely place to get lost. The house, which used to be the home of Bevis Bawa, brother of renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa, has an eclectic range of artwork on display – from homoerotic sculptures to a wonderful mural of Sri Lankan life in the style of Marc Chagall. Return to the hotel on completion. (B, L)

DAY 14 – Tuesday 28th January - Ahungalla to Colombo

After check out we will drive to Colombo where we will have lunch in the rather iconic Colombo Cricket Club Café for a special luncheon. We will then check our bags into our hotel before an afternoon Colombo city walking tour to experience the amazing architecture the Dutch and English left behind, see the vision and love the English had for this land - all while learning and experiencing what being "Sri Lankan" is all about. We will visit the main city sights and public spaces. (B, L)

Cinnamon Lake Side Hotel or similar – 1.5 nights

DAY 15 – Wednesday 29th January - Colombo to home perhaps overnight in Singapore

This morning we will have a free morning for individual exploration and the chance to do some shopping. We have arranged a late check out so we can leave packing until later in the day. Meet just before lunch to go to a Sri Lankan cooking master class, visit a local food market and have lunch with home made "lime mind cooler". Later return to our hotel to freshen up and check out before we have our farewell dinner in the Lagoon Restaurant before heading to the airport for our overnight flight home. (B, L, D). Flight times tba.

DAY 16 – Thursday 30th January - Arrive home

Arrive home. (meals in flight)



Quality matters!

- ⇒ Superb, iconic hotels
- ⇒ Experienced tour guide and specialist Sri Lankan tour operator
- ⇒ Local dining experiences included to explore the culinary culture of each area
- ⇒ We will have enough time to experience each region
- ⇒ We always seem to have a wonderful, friendly & fun group to travel with!



Pricing Details

Land only tour price	\$4995
Air fare component (actual price available upon air booking)	\$1500 (approx.)
Tour deposit—deductible from final tour price	\$500
Single supplement - if you wish to twin share please let us know and we will put you in contact with others who are keen to share.	\$1500

Important dates

1. Deposit – Payable asap to secure a place as seats are limited, please complete booking form.
2. Final payment 60 days before departure

The tour prices includes:

- Beautiful hotel accommodation
- Internal exclusive coach travel and airfares
- All tipping for national guides, drivers and portage
- Entry to all sightseeing, national parks and gardens as detailed in itinerary
- Quality meals listed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner) - 27 in total
- English speaking guide and accompanied all the way with Australian garden guide – Brian Sams
- Taxes where appropriate (but subject to change based on prevailing rates)
- Airport transfers (for whole group only—other arrangements to be made as required)

The tour price excludes:

- All items not stated as included
- Visa
- Travel insurance—recommended for all travelers. Please discuss if you need help to organize.

Full terms and conditions are on the booking form.



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Wattletree Garden Tours
Brian Sams
Phone: (07) 46 968033
Mobile: 0415 707 312
briansams@live.com.au