

Sri Lanka & India

Draft Farm Study Tour 2018



Date	Activity	Overnight
<p>DAY 1 Sun, Jul 1</p>	<p>The tour departs various Australian capitals for Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. Currently, there are no direct flights from Australia to Sri Lanka – the best connections are via Singapore. Flight time, including the brief stopover in Singapore, is around 13 to 15 hours depending on the airline.</p> <p>You have the option to leave a day or two earlier to break this journey with a stopover in Singapore – or you could arrive in Sri Lanka a day or two ahead of the main group. Or acclimatise with a pre-tour visit to the magnificent Maldives.</p> <p>On arrival in Colombo (probably late night), we are met by our local guide and transferred to our beachside hotel.</p>	<p>Negombo, Sri Lanka Jetwings Hotel</p>
<p>DAY 2 Mon, Jul 2</p>	<p>A relaxed start to the day before we leave in the late morning and travel north towards the Sigiriya region. For centuries, spices have been one of Sri Lanka's most celebrated exports and are used for not only food but also medicines and cosmetics.</p> <p>Habarana is the the central point of Sri Lanka's cultural triangle - The area is awash with picturesque lakes and reservoirs providing some of the most breathtakingly beautiful scenery and habitat for Sri Lanka's incredible bio-diversity. Activities available include village and forest walks, bird and wildlife watching, Elephant Safari</p> <p>Nearby Sigiriya is home to the magnificent 'Lion Rock' fortress which stands majestically overlooking lush tropical jungle. This awe-inspiring UNESCO World Heritage Site is studded with beautiful green gardens, ponds, fountains, promenades and pavilions. Covering the pathway to the summit, is the 'mirror wall', a highly polished wall where the musings of the old visitors who fell in love with the beauty of the rock are recorded as the world famous Sigiriya Graffiti.</p> <p>Once you reach the summit, the spectacular panoramic vista spans into the distance as far as your eyes can see. It is a steep climb but well worth the effort.</p>	<p>Habarana Cinnamon Lodge</p>
<p>DAY 3 Tue, July 3</p>	<p>Our visit to a local farm this morning entails a bullock cart ride or a 15 minute canoe ride. We can walk through the farm and discuss different types of cultivation and crops with the farmer. At the farmer's house we will experience typical Sri Lankan countryside hospitality including a countryside Sri Lankan lunch.</p> <p>In the afternoon, visit nearby Minneriya National Park with its abundant flora and native wildlife, especially the Asian Elephant.</p> <p>Minneriya is home of the world famous Elephant Gathering. During the dry season (July through early November) hundreds of Asian elephants travel each year to the shores of an ancient reservoir in Minneriya built by a king more than 1700 years ago. This annual migration has been going on for centuries. As the water in the reservoir recedes, lush green grasses provide a feast for the hungry elephants.</p> <p>Between meals, the elephants head into the reservoir, spraying themselves with the shallow, muddy waters to create one of the world's biggest pool parties.</p>	<p>Habarana Cinnamon Lodge</p>
<p>DAY 4 Wed, Jul 4</p>	<p>We leave Habarana and head south, stopping at Dambulla to visit the Buddhist cave complex with its many painted walls and ceilings. We will then visit a spice farm and make other scenic stops before arriving into the historic city of Kandy in central Sri Lanka.</p> <p>Kandy is set on a plateau surrounded by mountains, which are home to tea plantations and biodiverse rainforest. At the city's heart is scenic Kandy Lake (Bogambara Lake). Kandy is famed for sacred Buddhist sites, including the Temple of the Tooth shrine.</p> <p>In the evening, enjoy a traditional Sri Lankan dance and cultural show.</p>	<p>Kandy Amaya Hill hotel (or similar)</p>

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DAY 5 Thu, Jul 5	<p>In the morning, visit the beautiful Royal Botanical gardens and a popular gem mining factory – with plenty of buying options for the blue and star sapphires for which Kandy is famous.</p> <p>We then continue through the picturesque highlands to the former hill station of Nuwara Eliya, famous for its Virgin White Tea – and one of the most expensive teas in the world. Following an ancient Chinese tea plucking ritual, the tea is plucked and made without being touched by humans.</p> <p>This evening we stay in one of Sri Lanka’s best hotels in one of its most scenic areas.</p>	Nuwara Eliya Heritage Tea factory hotel
DAY 6 Fri, Jul 6	<p>Time for some tea plucking this morning before leaving the highlands for the southern lowlands, with visits to sugarcane and other farms on the way. Lunch at a beautiful lake before we continue on to the wonderful city of Galle.</p>	Galle Tamarind Hill (or similar)
DAY 7 Sat, Jul 7	<p>Galle is an historic 17th century Dutch fort city and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Galle’s natural harbour has long been a hub of trade dating back to ancient times. The accidental arrival of the Portuguese mariner Lorenzo de Almeida in 1505 – when his fleet of ships steered off course following a storm at sea – changed the history of this island nation.</p> <p>The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch and then the British in 1796. With each occupation, Galle’s landscape changed and the cultural influences remained. Galle Fort covers nearly 400 hectares and is protected by 12 bastions and connecting ramparts. We enjoy a guided walking tour of the Fort before a free afternoon.</p>	Galle Tamarind Hill (or similar)
DAY 8 Sun, Jul 8	<p>This morning we drive along the coastal road to Colombo for a short city tour, lunch, then transfer to the airport for our direct (2.5 hr) flight to Mumbai (we used to know it as Bombay).</p> <p>Mumbai is an Arabian Sea port on India’s west coast. We are met at the airport and after transfer to our downtown hotel.</p>	Mumbai, India
DAY 9 Mon, Jul 9	<p>Guided sightseeing this morning including a visit to the Indian Cotton Exchange. The magic of Mumbai is not of any particular sights, but the unique atmosphere of the city itself.</p> <p>Our hotel is located near the waterfront, right at the ‘Gate of India’ and close to some of the city’s famous markets.</p> <p>The afternoon options include trips to ‘Bollywood’ or Elephanta Island before a free evening</p>	Mumbai
DAY 10 Tue, Jul 10	<p>Fly to Varanasi.</p>	Varanasi
DAY 11 Wed, Jul 11	<p>Flight to Agra. We inspect pulse and other crops and meet with local agronomists and researchers. This is one of the major regions for pulse and canola production in India.</p>	Agra
DAY 12 Thu, Jul 12	<p>Today we visit the fabulous Taj Mahal. The postcard pictures of Taj Mahal do not adequately convey the legend, the poetry and the romance of the most well preserved and architecturally beautiful tomb in the world. No-one who visits the Taj comes away disappointed.</p>	Agra
Day 13 Fri, Jul 13	<p>A three hour drive today to Jaipur – The Pink City. Jaipur was founded in 1727 and painted pink during the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1876. Every home is obliged by law to maintain this facade.</p> <p>We also travel via elephant to visit the Amber Fort. We also meet with local agriculture officials and visit local farms.</p>	Jaipur
Day 14 Sat, Jul 14	<p>More farm and cultural visits around Jaipur.</p>	Jaipur
Day 15 Sun, Jul 15	<p>This morning we board our charter coach and continue 2–3 hours north to Neemrana with farm and scenic stops along the way. Sited on a majestic plateau, Neemrana Fort-Palace covers 10 hectares with commanding views of the surrounding farmlands. Built in 1464, the Fort-Palace is among India’s oldest heritage resorts and has been restored and furnished with a mix of traditional Indian and colonial furniture.</p>	Neemrana
Day 16 Mon, Jul 16	<p>Today we travel north into the northern states of Haryana and Punjab – two of the major agricultural states in India.</p>	Punjab

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Day 17 Tue, Jul 17	<p>The Partition of India in 1947 was the division of British India and the creation of two independent dominions – India and Pakistan. The Dominion of India is today the Republic of India, and the Dominion of Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.</p> <p>The partition involved the division of two provinces – Bengal and the Punjab – based on district-wise Hindu or Muslim majorities.</p> <p>Punjab province was split into East and West Punjab. East Punjab (48% of the land-mass) became part of India, while West Punjab (52%) became part of Pakistan. The Punjab bore the brunt of the civil unrest following the end of the British Raj, with casualties estimated to be in the millions.</p> <p>The Punjab is considered to be one of the most fertile regions on Earth. Both East and West Punjab produce a relatively high proportion of India and Pakistan’s food output respectively. The region has been used for extensive wheat farming, in addition rice, cotton, sugarcane, fruit, and vegetables are grown.</p> <p>Both Indian and Pakistani Punjab are considered to have the best infrastructure of their respective countries. Indian Punjab has been estimated to be the second richest state in India and is called ‘the Granary’ or ‘Bread Basket’ of India.</p> <p>Over the next few days we have farm and scenic visits in the Ludhiana and Chandigarh areas of the Indian Punjab. We also visit the Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana and meet with researchers – some of whom having studied in Australia.</p>	Punjab
Day 18 Wed, Jul 18	<p>More farm and scenic visits in the Punjab. By evening, we will be at Kalka, at the foothills of the Himalayas.</p>	Kalka
Day 19 Thu, Jul 19	<p>Early morning departure on one of the world’s great train journeys – the Kalka to Shimla ‘Toy Train’. Famous for its 102 tunnels, 87 bridges and 900 curves, the 96 km track was built in 1903 so members of the British Raj could take their leave of the heat and ‘summer’ more comfortably in Shimla.</p> <p>The track winds through spectacular mountain scenery and farming villages.</p> <p>We arrive in Shimla in the early afternoon and enjoy a guided tour of this beautiful mountain retreat.</p>	Shimla
Day 20 Fri, Jul 20	<p>An early morning flight to New Delhi. We will have a guided tour of the city before checking in to our central hotel.</p>	New Delhi
Day 21 Sat, Jul 21	<p>The labyrinthine street bazaars of Old Delhi, and the temples and monuments give a glimpse of India’s chequered colonial past. From Old Delhi’s Red Fort and Jama Masjid mosque to New Delhi’s chic art galleries and nightclubs, Delhi is a profoundly Indian city. We have a free day to enjoy the sights and atmosphere of Delhi before our farewell dinner this evening.</p>	New Delhi
Day 22 Sun, Jul 22	<p>Free time today for some last minute shopping and sightseeing before we transfer to the airport for our evening (connecting) flights home to Australia.</p> <p>Plenty of options available for additional travel in Europe – or Asia – before heading home.</p>	

