

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



**New! Sri Lanka: From Colombo & Kandy  
to the Wildlife of Yala**

**2025**

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

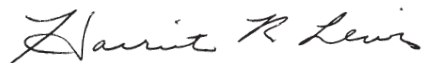
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Overseas Adventure Travel

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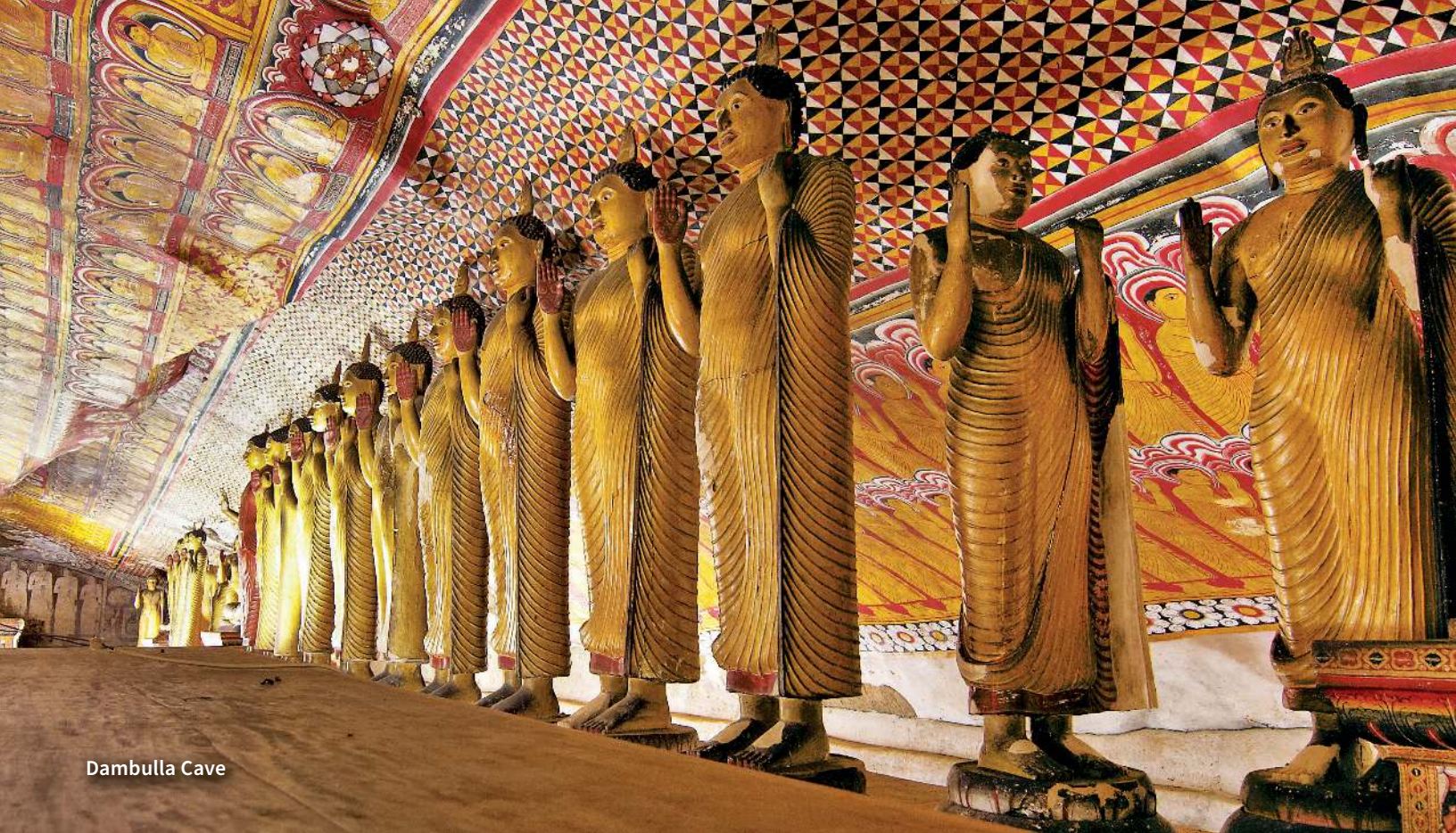
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Dambulla Cave

## New! Sri Lanka: From Colombo & Kandy to the Wildlife of Yala Small Group Adventure

**Sri Lanka:** Negombo, Habarana, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Yala National Park, Matara, Colombo

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**16 days starting from \$5,395**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/sri2025pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/sri2025pricing)

Sri Lanka is home to a range of landscapes, each more exotic than the next. Its predominantly Buddhist spirituality mingles with the remnants of its history in the spice trade. This tear-shaped island's natural bounty is a cornucopia of treasures, from the tea fields to the coconut plantations. Visit ancient sites like the rock fortress of Sigriya and Dambulla cave temple, set off on game-viewing drives in Yala National Park, get to know the Sri Lankan people where they live and work, and discover the warmth and hospitality that defines Sri Lankan culture. Explore the magical land that inspired Mark Twain to exclaim: "Dear me, it is beautiful. And most sumptuously tropical."

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 30 meals—14 breakfasts, 9 lunches, and 7 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 16 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

**Sri Lanka: From Colombo & Kandy to the Wildlife of Yala**



## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Negombo, Sri Lanka
2-3	Negombo
4-6	Habarana
7-8	Kandy
9	Nuwara Eliya
10-11	Yala National Park
12-14	Matara
15	Colombo
16	Return to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

**Pacing:** 7 locations in 16 days

**Physical Requirements:** Travel over some rugged paths, as well as bumpy, unpaved, dusty roads, both by bus and on foot. Several long overland drives of 5-6 hours with rest stops along the way. Sri Lanka has a tropical climate and daytime temperatures can rise to 100°F and above, with 80% humidity

**Flight time:** Travel time will be 21-31 hours

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/sri](http://www.oattravel.com/sri)

## SRI LANKA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest prices and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Meet with workers at a tea plantation in Nuwara Eliya and spend time with a family that paints hand-crafted masks in their home in the artisan village of Ambalangoda.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Visit a local village in Habarana and meet with a local farmer to engage in a **Controversial Topic** discussion about the conflict between humans and elephants in Sri Lanka.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

**Oman & Dubai: The Modern Face of Arabia**  
**PRE-TRIP:** 7 nights from **\$3,495**

**Malaysia & Singapore: A Beacon of Cultural Diversity**  
**POST-TRIP:** 7 nights from **\$2,995**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Muscat** before your pre-trip extension from **\$110** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Negombo** before your main adventure from **\$120** per room, per night

# Sri Lanka: From Colombo & Kandy to the Wildlife of Yala

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 7 nights in *Oman & Dubai: The Modern Face of Arabia*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in Muscat, Oman

**Day 3** Muscat • Discover Royal Opera House • Visit Sidab Women's Project

**Day 4** Overland to Nizwa • Explore Wahiba Sands

**Day 5** Nizwa • Visit Jabreen Castle • Experience Three-Village Walk

**Day 6** Fly to Khasab

**Day 7** Visit Khasab Fort • Private Dhow Dinner Cruise

**Day 8** Overland to Dubai, United Arab Emirates • Explore modern Dubai

**Day 9** Dubai • Discover Old Dubai • Visit Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding • Fly to Colombo, Sri Lanka

#### **Day 1** Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. for your flight to Negombo, Sri Lanka via Doha, Qatar.

#### **Day 2** Arrive in Colombo, Sri Lanka • Transfer to Negombo

- Accommodations: Jetwing Sea Hotel or similar

**Afternoon/Evening:** Today you'll arrive in Doha, Qatar, where you'll meet your connecting flight to Colombo, Sri Lanka and transfer to Negombo. Depending on your flight schedule, you'll arrive at your hotel in Negombo late on Day 2 or very early on Day 3. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel.

Here we'll be joined by travelers who arrived early in Negombo or took our optional *Oman & Dubai* pre-trip extension.

#### **Day 3** Negombo • Canal boat tour

- Destination: Negombo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Jetwing Sea Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** You'll have free time this morning to relax from your flight. Shortly before lunch, we'll gather with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing to go over our upcoming discoveries.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll enjoy an orientation drive around the charming coastal resort of Negombo. Flanked by a large lagoon and the sea, Negombo was ruled by the Dutch, Portuguese, and British during various periods of the colonial era, when it served as a vibrant trading port for the valuable spice trade. We'll stop at Negombo's fishing village, with its bustling open-air fish market where local fishermen aboard *oruvas* (outrigger canoes) bring in their daily catch. Then, we'll take a boat tour along Negombo's scenic canals. A legacy of Dutch rule, the canals were constructed to more easily transport spices from port to port.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining options.

**Evening:** Free to explore on your own or retire early to get ready for tomorrow's discoveries.

#### **Day 4 Overland to Habarana • Explore Sigiriya**

- Destination: Habarana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Habarana Village by Cinnamon or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll depart Negombo and make our way to Habarana, a small village known for its location at the crossroads of Sri Lanka's Cultural Triangle—an area of lush green hills that was once called "The King's Land" due to its history as the bastion of early Sinhalese civilization, which arrived from northern India in the 6th century B.C.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant en route to Habarana.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival at our hotel in Habarana, we'll have some free time to relax and settle in. Then, we'll gather together again

for a short drive to the ancient rock fortress of Sigiriya, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rising dramatically some 600 feet above the surrounding jungle, this monolith is visible from miles away. Dubbed "The Lion Rock" because bricks and stucco were originally added to form the shape of a giant lion, we'll see all that remains of this façade as we enter: two enormous clawed, feline feet flanking the 1,001 steps to the top. We'll have time to explore the terraced gardens of the fortress, as well as the lush Water Garden and the ancient Boulder Garden. And we'll climb the spiral staircase to see the Mirror Wall and colorful frescoes of the sensual Cloud Maidens, whose beauty inspired visitors from long ago to scribble graffiti on the polished lime wall.

**Dinner:** Enjoy a Welcome Dinner this evening in our hotel's restaurant.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

#### **Day 5 Habarana • Visit a local Sri Lankan village • Grand Circle Foundation visit: Local school visit**

- Destination: Habarana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Habarana Village by Cinnamon

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll enjoy an authentic glimpse of Sri Lankan culture when we experience everyday life in a local farming village. Our day begins with a visit to a local school (when in session) supported in part by **Grand Circle Foundation**. After meeting with a school representative to gain insights into Sri Lanka's educational system and spending some time with the students, we'll drive over to the main village. Here, we'll get to share stories

and conversations with the villagers about daily life and participate in a farming activity. Then, we'll be welcomed into a local home where we'll help to prepare a few traditional dishes that we'll enjoy for lunch.

**Lunch:** We'll sit down with some of the villagers for a community lunch.

**Afternoon:** After returning to our hotel, we'll have some free time to pursue independent discoveries.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish.

### **Day 6 Visit Dambulla Cave Temple • Optional Anuradhapura tour**

- Destination: Habarana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Habarana Village by Cinnamon or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll take a short drive to the nearby village of Dambulla. Here, we'll visit the Dambulla Cave Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the largest of Sri Lanka's cave temple complexes. Hewn from a massive rock towering more than 500 feet above the surrounding hills, the temple is made up of more than 80 caves and contains dozens of Buddha statues. We'll explore the caves and learn more about the role of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, before returning to our hotel in Habarana.

**Lunch:** At the hotel.

**Afternoon:** The remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries. Or, you may choose to join an optional tour to the ruins of ancient Anuradhapura, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Hidden in the dense jungle, this sprawling temple complex was Sri Lanka's

capital beginning in the fourth century B.C. The Sinhala kings would go on to rule from here for well over a thousand years. Then, in 993 AD, the city was destroyed by an invasion of southern India's Chola dynasty. Along with a wealth of ancient monuments and Buddhist temples, the site is home to the Sri Maha bodhiya, thought to be the oldest living tree in the world. Travelers on the optional tour will arrive back at the hotel in time for dinner.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Spend the remainder of the evening as you wish.

### **Day 7 Overland to Kandy • Visit Temple of the Tooth**

- Destination: Kandy
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Thilanka or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart Habarana and begin our drive to Kandy, a city encircled by mountains and the Mahaweli River. The last capital of the Sri Lankan kings, during the imperialist scramble of the 17th and 18th centuries, several European countries tried to add Kandy to their burgeoning empires. But neither the Portuguese, nor the Dutch, nor the British navy could break through Kandy's natural mountain fortress; after the Portuguese succeeded in their coastal conquests, Kandy became the last independent kingdom on the island and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We'll stop for lunch en route to Kandy.

**Lunch:** At an open-air kitchen run by local female chefs. While we enjoy traditional cooking, we'll meet some of these entrepreneurs and learn how they were able to grow their business with the help of the Sri Lankan government.



**Afternoon:** We should arrive at our hotel in Kandy by mid-afternoon. After some free time, we'll regroup for an orientation walk around the vicinity of your hotel with your Trip Experience Leader. Then, we'll take a short drive to Temple of the Tooth, nestled within the royal palace complex. Here lies what is said to be a sacred tooth of the Buddha, which has been revered throughout the ages as a good luck charm of sorts (it's believed that whoever holds the tooth holds the country in his hands as well, and ancient kings fought over it as they did over their land).

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

### **Day 8 Kandy • Visit Peradeniya Botanic Gardens • Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Kandy
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Thilanka or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast we'll drive out to the Peradeniya Botanic Gardens. Dating back to the 14th century, the sprawling gardens are home to some 4,000 species of plants, including more than 300 varieties of orchids—spread out over 150 acres of lush grounds. Along with the services of an expert local guide to help us identify the exotic plants and flowers, we can use buggy carts to visit the manicured gardens and palm-fringed paths. We'll also have about an hour of free time to explore on our own before returning to Kandy.

**Lunch:** On your own in Kandy's city center. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend some local dining options.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll return to our hotel, where you'll have the afternoon free to explore on your own.

**Dinner:** We'll split up into small groups and visit the homes of local Kandyan families for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. We'll have the opportunity to converse with our hosts and gain firsthand insights into Sri Lankan culture while enjoying authentic regional cuisine.

**Evening:** After returning to our hotel, you can spend the remainder of the evening as you wish.

### **Day 9 Overland to Nuwara Eliya • Visit a tea plantation**

- Destination: Nuwara Eliya
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Galway Heights Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart Kandy this morning and make our way to Nuwara Eliya. Along the way, we'll stop to visit to one of the many tea plantations that dot Sri Lanka's Hill Country. We'll learn about the tea-making process at the factory here, observe tea pluckers hard at work, and sample some of the estate's acclaimed tea in the café. After our visit, we'll continue our journey to Nuwara Eliya, with another stop for lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We should arrive at our hotel in Nuwara Eliya by mid-afternoon, and you'll have the rest of the day and evening free to relax or begin exploring on your own. Home to the coolest climate in Sri Lanka, Nuwara Eliya (which means "City of Light") was founded as a hill retreat by the British in the middle of the 19th century. Nicknamed "Little England,"

the town is filled with relics of British colonial era with tea plantations dotting the surrounding hills.

**Dinner:** On your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining recommendations.

**Evening:** Spend the evening any way you wish.

### **Day 10 Train to Bandarawela • Visit Ella • Yala National Park**

- Destination: Yala National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Jetwing Yala or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll check out of our hotel and drive to the station in Nanuoya, where we'll catch a train to Bandarawela. Then, we'll take a short drive to Ella, a charming hillside village surrounded by tiered tea plantations, waterfalls, and nature trails. You can visit the village shops and cafés or enjoy the sweeping scenery.

**Lunch:** On your own in Ella.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue our journey to Yala National Park. We'll arrive at our hotel situated at the edge of the park grounds in time for dinner.

**Dinner:** At our hotel's restaurant.

**Evening:** After our long travel day, you may wish to retire early so you'll be well rested for tomorrow's full day of discoveries.

### **Day 11 Yala National Park • Morning and afternoon game-viewing safaris**

- Destination: Yala National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Jetwing Yala or similar

**Early Morning:** After an early wake-up call, coffee and tea will be available at the lodge before we set off to begin a game-viewing safari in Yala National Park. Originally a hunting ground for the British during colonial rule, Yala covers close to 400 square miles along the island's southeast coast. Featuring grassy plains and forests, the park is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including herds of elephants, crocodiles, deer, monkeys, buffaloes, birds, sloth bears, and many more—and is considered one of the world's best wildlife parks for spotting leopards.

After this morning's game-viewing drive, we'll return to our hotel and a full breakfast will be available for interested travelers. You'll also have a little time to relax before lunch.

**Breakfast:** You can enjoy a full breakfast at the lodge after our early game-viewing drive.

**Morning:** You'll have time to relax at the lodge before lunch.

**Lunch:** A light lunch of sandwiches and salads will be available at the lodge's restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Our afternoon game-viewing drive will focus on a different area of the park. We'll see how many of Yala's 44 mammal, 47 reptile, and more than 200 bird species we can spot before returning to our lodge.

**Dinner:** At the lodge's restaurant.

**Evening:** You're free to enjoy the evening as you wish.

**Day 12 Overland to Matara • Visit Kirinda Temple • Controversial Topic: Sri Lanka’s human-elephant conflict • Optional sunset dinner cruise tour**

- Destination: Matara
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Amaloh by Jetwing or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** As we journey to Matara today, we’ll make a couple of stops along the way. First up is Kirinda, where we’ll visit an ancient Buddhist shrine. Set atop a rocky outcrop overlooking Sri Lanka’s southern coast, the temple is dedicated to Queen Viharamahadevi, who lived in the second century B.C. During our visit, you can participate in a 20-minute meditation session led by the resident monk if you wish. The hilltop temple was a place of refuge when the devastating tsunami struck these shores in 2004.

Next, we’ll visit one of the farms that surround the village of Tissa, where we’ll learn about the **Controversial Topic** of the human-elephant conflict in Sri Lanka. Many farmers in Sri Lanka’s southern region use a traditional cultivation method called “chena,” that involves clearing patches of jungle to raise crops. While appearing to contribute to deforestation, this centuries-old practice is actually more sustainable than other methods, with chena farmers rotating crops and only using each plot of land for a limited duration. Because these crops are so critical to sustaining the lives of their families, farmers sleep in modest structures called chena huts to protect them against invading animals—especially hungry elephants who often raid crops, trample the fields, and injure people. Sadly, Sri Lanka has the highest level of human-elephant

conflict in the world—altercations which result in about 70 human and 300 elephant deaths a year.

During our visit, a family member will provide us with a firsthand account of one of these elephant attacks over a cup of tea. Then, we’ll enjoy a short walk around the gardens and fields before continuing our journey to Matara.

**Lunch:** On your own in Matara. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide local dining suggestions.

**Afternoon:** You’ll have the remainder of the afternoon and evening on your own to relax at the hotel or do some independent exploring. Later, you may join an optional Sunset Dinner Cruise featuring a boat ride departing from Mirissa Harbour to watch the sun setting over the Indian Ocean and a delicious dinner by the beach.

**Dinner:** Travelers not on the optional tour will have dinner on their own.

**Evening:** On your own.

**Day 13 Matara • Visit artisan family in Ambalangoda**

- Destination: Matara
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Amaloh by Jetwing or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we’ll drive to Ambalangoda, a small coastal town renowned for its hand-crafted masks and traditional ‘devil dance’ performances. We’ll meet with one of these artisan families in their home to learn why these eerie and colorful masks play such an important role in Sri Lankan culture. We’ll also have an opportunity to paint one of our own hand-crafted masks during our visit.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Ambalangoda.

**Afternoon:** After returning to our hotel in Matara, the remainder of the day and evening is yours to relax or explore independently.

**Dinner:** On your own. You may want to check out the popular food markets in Matara or ask your Trip Experience Leader for other local dining options.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish.

### **Day 14 Explore Galle Fort • Farewell Dinner at a family farm**

- Destination: Matara
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Amaloh by Jetwing or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll explore Galle, an ancient fortified city that was the main port on the island for more than 200 years. Galle's heyday was in the 18th century during Dutch colonial rule, when it grew into a hotspot for spice traders traveling between Europe and Asia. However, when the British took control of Galle in 1796, they quickly turned their attention to Colombo for most of their commercial needs, leaving Galle to flourish as Sri Lanka's secondary port. Today, the city still handles some shipping and yachts, but has refined its reputation as the island's art mecca, with artists from around the world drawn to its rich contrast of Dutch colonial architecture and breezy tropical charm.

Our time there will begin with a walking tour of Galle Fort, built by the Dutch in 1663. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Galle Fort is the largest fortress in Asia built by Europeans (it covers 89-acres) and has been remarkably well-preserved over the centuries. A testament to the strength of the fortifications

became apparent after the devastating 2004 tsunami that killed about 40,000 Sri Lankans and left another 2.5 million displaced. While the town of Galle was one of the areas worst-hit by the tsunami, Galle Fort was relatively unscathed.

**Lunch:** On your own at Galle Fort. Your Trip Experience Leader will recommend lunch options.

**Afternoon:** After arriving back at our hotel, you'll have a few hours free time before we regroup for dinner.

**Dinner:** This evening we'll enjoy a special Farewell Dinner at a local sustainable farm whose owner builds traditional Sri Lankan furniture and also encourages young people to pursue farming as a way of life while adapting to modern farming methods.

**Evening:** You may want to retire to your room so you're well rested for tomorrow's transfer to Colombo.

### **Day 15 Overland to Colombo • Explore Colombo**

- Destination: Colombo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Cinnamon Grand Colombo Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll begin our transfer to Colombo. Upon arrival in Sri Lanka's bustling commercial capital, we'll visit Independence Square, home to a memorial built to commemorate Sri Lanka gaining independence from the British Empire in 1948.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Colombo.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue exploring Colombo after lunch. Once known as the "garden city of the East," today Colombo flourishes as

a cosmopolitan hub. In the north lies the Fort district, with its unusual combination of modern financial intuitions (like the World Trade Center) and colonial buildings, while the south is home to the fashionable and evocatively named Cinnamon Gardens neighborhood.

Our tour features a visit to Jami Ul-Alfar Masjid, or the Red Mosque, a true architectural wonder. Built in 1908 along the narrow streets of Pettah, one of the oldest parts of the city, the facade of the unusual mosque features swirling red-and-white patterns with pomegranate shaped domes. It is said to have been a landmark for sailors making their way to the port of Colombo.

After returning to the hotel, the remainder of the day is yours to relax or explore Colombo on your own.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will recommend some local dining options.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish.

### **Day 16 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Morning:** Depending on your flight schedule, you'll depart to the airport late on Day 15 or early this morning for your return flight home or to begin your post-trip extension to *Malaysia & Singapore*.

## **END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION**

### **7 nights in *Malaysia & Singapore: A Beacon of Cultural Diversity***

**Day 1** Arrive in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Day 2** Explore Kuala Lumpur

**Day 3** Kuala Lumpur • Visit Independence Square • Malaysian batik experience

**Day 4** Transfer to Malacca • Walking tour of Malacca

**Day 5** Explore Malacca

**Day 6** Transfer to Singapore

**Day 7** Explore Singapore

**Day 8** Return to the U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

**Please note:** *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

### **Ancient Ruins of Anuradhapura**

(Day 6 \$90 per person)

This optional tour departs after lunch to explore the evocative ruins of Anuradhapura, the first capital of the island established in the 4th century BC. Anuradhapura was the royal capital for 119 successive Sinhalese Kings over more than a thousand years. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the ruins include numerous ancient Buddhist temples, monasteries, and places of worship spread out over 15 square miles. A highlight of the site is the 2,200-year-old Sri Mahabodhi Tree, the oldest historically authenticated tree in the world. After our visit, we'll return to our hotel in Habarana in time for dinner.

### **Sunset Dinner Cruise**

(Day 12 \$195 per person)

This optional Sunset Dinner Cruise features a boat ride that departs from Mirissa Harbour. Then, we'll watch the sun as it sets over the Indian Ocean followed by dinner.

**Please Note:** *This optional tour requires a minimum of 6 travelers to operate.*

## PRE-TRIP

### *Oman & Dubai: The Modern Face of Arabia*

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 7 nights accommodation
- » 16 meals—7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 4 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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##### **Day 1 Depart U.S.**

Depart the U.S. for an overnight flight to Muscat, Oman.

##### **Day 2 Arrive in Muscat, Oman**

- Destination: Muscat
- Accommodations: Golden Tulip Muscat Hotel or similar

**Evening:** Depending on your flight schedule, you'll arrive at your hotel in Muscat, Oman, this evening or very early on Day 3. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel.

##### **Day 3 Muscat • Discover Royal Opera House • Visit Sidab Women's Project**

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Golden Tulip Muscat Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Begin the day with a Welcome Briefing by your Trip Experience Leader. Then, we'll enjoy a visit to the Royal Opera House. Conceptualized by His Majesty Sultan

Qaboos bin Said, the Arab peninsula's first opera house opened in 2011—and is one of the most beautiful and technically advanced opera venues in the world.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Muscat.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll drive over to the Sidab Women's Project, an organization that promotes women's empowerment and entrepreneurship in their community. After learning about the variety of activities and skills training that take place here that are helping transform the lives of local neighborhood women, we'll return to our hotel for a few hours of free time.

**Dinner:** On your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining options.

**Evening:** You're free to retire to your room or continue exploring.

## Day 4 Overland to Nizwa • Explore Wahiba Sands

- Destination: Nizwa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: IntercityHotel Nizwa or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart Muscat and drive to Nizwa this morning. Along the way, we'll stop to explore the Wahiba Sands, a vast desert of towering dunes. Some 3,000 of Oman's Bedouin tribes still live a traditional nomadic existence among the ever-shifting sands of the desert (the Arabic word "bedu" means "desert dweller."), and we'll stop to visit one of these Bedouin families during our time here.

**Lunch:** At a desert camp in the Wahiba Sands.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll drive to our hotel in Nizwa, where you'll have a few hours of free time.

**Dinner:** At our hotel's restaurant.

**Evening:** Enjoy the rest of the evening on your own.

## Day 5 Nizwa • Visit Jabreen Castle • Experience Three-Village Walk

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: IntercityHotel Nizwa or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Nizwa, one of the oldest cities in Oman, was the country's capital in the fifth and sixth centuries. We'll begin today's discoveries with a visit to Jabreen Castle. Set at the foot of the Jebel Akhdar mountains, Jabreen Castle was constructed during a time of peace in the 17th century as a palace and place of learning. A masterpiece of Islamic architecture, the castle

features high defensive walls with turreted towers that surround inner courtyards and arcaded halls adorned in rugs and cushions.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Jabal Akhdar.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll experience Oman's rich cultural heritage as we explore the archaeological ruins of three small villages, Al Aqr, Al Ayn, and Ash Shirayah, collectively known as the Three Villages Walk. Our journey will reveal scenic views of terraced farms fed by ancient *falaj* water irrigation systems that are responsible for the region's abundant produce, including pomegranates, pears, grapes, and onions. We'll also witness a number of abandoned dwellings and mosques in the region.

After returning to the hotel, you'll have a couple of hours of free time to rest or continue exploring.

**Dinner:** At the hotel's restaurant.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you please.

## Day 6 Fly to Khasab

- Destination: Khasab
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Atana Khasab Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Depart to the airport for our flight to Khasab.

**Lunch:** On your own. You may want to pick something up at the airport.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival in Khasab, we'll transfer to our hotel in time for dinner.

**Dinner:** At our hotel's restaurant.

**Evening:** You can begin exploring or rest up for tomorrow's full day of discoveries.



## Day 7 Visit Khasab Fort • Private Dhow Dinner Cruise

- Destination: Khasab
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Atana Khasab Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Khasab is situated at the tip of the Musandam Peninsula by the Strait of Hormuz, near the border with the United Arab Emirates. We'll begin our discoveries with a visit to Khasab Fort. Built by the Portuguese in the 17th century, the picturesque fortress with its massive central tower lies offers panoramic views of the sea and surrounding mountains. After our visit, we'll drive to Wadi Qadah, where you'll be surrounded by date palms and enjoy views of the soaring mountains and sparkling waters of the bay. Then, we'll continue to Tawi village, home to ancient rock petroglyphs depicting camels, ships, and more that are thought to be 2,000 years old.

**Lunch:** On your own in Khasab.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy a few hours to relax or perhaps to stroll through Khasab's Old Souk.

**Dinner:** This evening, we'll enjoy dinner while cruising aboard a *dhow*, the traditional wooden vessels that have been navigating the waters of the Arabian Peninsula for centuries.

**Evening:** Free to spend as you please.

## Day 8 Overland to Dubai, United Arab Emirates • Explore modern Dubai

- Destination: Dubai
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: DoubleTree by Hilton Dubai Al Jadaf or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive across the Musandam Peninsula over the border into the neighboring country of the United Arab Emirates, where our destination is Dubai. We'll arrive in time for lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Dubai.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll enjoy a panoramic drive through modern Dubai, witnessing iconic sites such as Palm Jumeirah, an artificially created island in the shape of a palm tree within a crescent, and Burj Khalifa—the tallest artificial structure in the world. Then, after checking in to our hotel, the remainder of the day and evening is yours.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Extension Leader can recommend some local dining options.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish.

## Day 9 Dubai • Discover Old Dubai • Visit Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding • Fly to Colombo, Sri Lanka

- Destination: Dubai
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Enjoy exploring a bit of Old Dubai this morning, including the last surviving section of the Old City Wall, the defenses that surrounded the original town of Bur Dubai. We'll also take a short *abra* (ferry) ride to the gold and spice market. Here, we'll see everything from traditional handcrafted lamps and rugs to dozens of eye-catchingly bright spices used in Middle Eastern cooking.

Then, we'll stop by the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU), an organization whose mission is the promote cultural awareness and an opportunity for us to learn about everyday life in the UAE.

**Lunch:** Enjoy a selection of traditional Emirati dishes during our visit to SMCCU.

**Afternoon:** We'll return to our hotel and check out, then head to the airport for our flight to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to begin the main trip.

## POST-TRIP

# Malaysia & Singapore: A Beacon of Cultural Diversity

## INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 7 nights accommodation
- » 13 meals—7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 10 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters

## POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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### Day 1 Arrive in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

- Destination: Kuala Lumpur
- Accommodations: Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur or similar

**Afternoon:** Arrive in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia this afternoon. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest some local dining options.

**Evening:** You may wish to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries.

### Day 2 Explore Kuala Lumpur

- Destination: Kuala Lumpur
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our city tour of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's vibrant capital, with a visit to the National Mosque of Malaysia. With a capacity of 15,000 worshippers, this enormous mosque is an important institution to resident

Muslims, who make up about 63% of the local population according to a recent census. As we explore, take note of the 240-foot-high minaret and 16-pointed, star-shaped roof that punctuate this magnificent structure.

Next, we'll continue on to the Islamic Arts Museum. This vast collection of more than 7,000 Islamic artifacts offers visitors a glimpse into the storied history and tradition of one of the world's most prominent religions.

After, we'll continue on to Kuala Lumpur's Central Market. From batik handicrafts, to antiques, and traditional delicacies, you'll have a chance to peruse the offerings of more than 350 local vendors. You may even witness craft-making demonstrations, or you might like to relax with a massage while you're here.

**Lunch:** At a restaurant in the Central Market.

**Afternoon:** You'll have the afternoon free to continue exploring the market, or perhaps you'd like to return to the hotel to rest.

**Dinner:** On your own. You might seek out *mee goreng mamak*, a traditional noodle dish consisting of beef or chicken, vegetables, eggs, soy sauce, and chili.

**Evening:** Free to explore on your own. Kuala Lumpur features a stunning skyline at night, and there are plenty of rooftop bars from which you can admire it.

### **Day 3 Kuala Lumpur • Visit Independence Square • Malaysian batik experience**

- Destination: Kuala Lumpur
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll walk to Independence Square, situated in front of the colonial-style Sultan Abdul Samad building. Formerly known as the Selangor Club Padang ("padang" meaning "field" in Malay), this area was once used as the cricket green of a local social club. It was also here that the Malaysian flag was raised for the first time on August 31, 1957. Today, Independence Square serves as a symbol of national pride and celebration. It also contains several historic buildings, including the Old City Hall of Kuala Lumpur.

Next, we'll visit the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Malaysia's vibrant craft traditions. Here, we'll learn about the creation of the textile art of Malaysian batik.

**Lunch:** On your own. There are plenty of vendors to choose from here in Chinatown. Depending on your preferences, your Trip Experience Leader is happy to direct you to a nearby restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Free to continue exploring Chinatown on your own, or perhaps you'll head back to the hotel and enjoy the on-site amenities before we gather as a group for dinner.

**Dinner:** We'll drive to the nearby Petronas Towers—perhaps the most iconic landmark in the city—for dinner with a stunning view of the city. From 1998–2004, the towers were the tallest high-rises in the world.

**Evening:** You may choose to explore independently, or rest after the day's activities.

### **Day 4 Transfer to Malacca • Walking tour of Malacca**

- Destination: Malacca
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Puri Melaka or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll say goodbye to Kuala Lumpur this morning and head toward Malacca, the capital of the coastal state of Malacca.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Malacca.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival, we'll check in to our hotel and have a few minutes to settle in before embarking on a short walking tour around the city. Our explorations will take us to the maroon-colored, colonial-style Dutch Square; the 16th-century, Portuguese fort of *A Famosa*; the ruins of the Church of Saint Paul; and more.

After our tour, you'll have the chance to explore independently or return to your hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide dining suggestions.

**Evening:** Free to explore on your own.

## Day 5 Explore Malacca

- Destination: Malacca
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Puri Melaka or similar

**Early Morning:** Begin a full day of exploring Malacca. First, we'll head to the city's old quarter, where we'll join a morning prayer service at a Hindu temple. After, we'll meet with a resident priest to learn about his religion that's practiced by nearly 2 million Malay people.

**Breakfast:** We'll head to a nearby restaurant after our visit to the temple.

**Morning:** We'll return to the hotel, and enjoy some time to freshen up and relax after our early morning discoveries. Then, we'll head out once again for a walking tour. Highlights of our tour include visits to Kuli Kampong, considered the old quarter of laborers, as well as the Baba Nyonya House Museum, which showcases the local history of ethnic Chinese-Malays. Later, we'll conclude our explorations on Jonker Street, a former Dutch settlement and perhaps the most lively area of the city. The remainder of the morning is free to explore on your own.

**Lunch:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide dining recommendations for Jonker Street or elsewhere.

**Afternoon:** After free time to explore for much of the afternoon, our group will reconvene for a cruise on the Malacca River. Once a vital trade route, the river boasts luxuriant scenery and a fascinating history.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide dining suggestions.

**Evening:** Free to explore independently.

## Day 6 Transfer to Singapore

- Destination: Singapore
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Grand Pacific or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our overland transfer to the Republic of Singapore, an island country and city-state.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant en route to Singapore.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue our drive to Singapore and go through customs. Upon entering the city, we'll check in to our hotel and have free time to settle in. If you care to explore independently, your Trip Experience Leader can provide activity suggestions.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free to rest after the long travel day or continue exploring on your own.

## Day 7 Explore Singapore

- Destination: Singapore
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Grand Pacific or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll spend the day exploring Singapore, first stopping to visit its magnificent Botanic Gardens. This 164-year-old tropical garden is the only tropical garden to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From orchids to gingers and even native fruits and vegetables, admire this lush sanctuary nestled in the heart of the city.

Next, we'll walk through Chinatown, where we'll have a chance to admire the 19th-century, colonial architecture and taste local delicacies.

Chinese Singaporeans constitute nearly 80% of the local population, making them the largest ethnic group in Singapore.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Chinatown.

**Afternoon:** We'll return to our hotel and enjoy free time to explore independently. Perhaps you'll walk through the shopping district along Orchard Road, or glean suggestions from your Trip Experience Leader.

Later this afternoon, our group will reconvene to visit perhaps the most iconic landmark in the city: Gardens by the Bay. Spanning nearly 250 acres, this expansive, award-winning nature park consists of three waterfront gardens: Bay South Garden, Bay East Garden and Bay Central Garden. All together, the gardens house more than 1.5 million plants that are native to every continent except Antarctica.

**Dinner:** On your own. Singapore is famous for its night markets, which offer a variety of delicacies every night. Perhaps you'll return to Chinatown, or maybe you'll explore Tekka Center, known as "Little India."

**Evening:** Free to explore. You might like to grab a night cap with fellow travelers, or rest in your room.

## **Day 8 Return to the U.S.**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your return flights back to the U.S.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking the main trip without any extensions, you will require 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Oman and Dubai:** You will need 2 additional blank passport pages, for a total of 4.
- **Post-trip extension to Singapore and Malaysia:** You will need 2 additional blank passport pages, for a total of 4.

## Visas Required

**We’ll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Sri Lanka : Visa required.** This visa must be obtained in advance. Sri Lanka will require an ETA visa (electronic travel authorization) that must be obtained before you leave home.
- **Oman (pre-trip extension): Visa required.** We recommended you obtain this in advance, but it is available onsite as well.

- **U.A.E. (pre-trip extension): Visa required.** We recommend you get this visa onsite. Currently the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) allows U.S. citizens to get a tourist visa free of charge on arrival in Dubai.
- **Singapore and Malaysia (post-trip extension):** No visa required.

### Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

### Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

### Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

### Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.



## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

#### **PACING**

- 7 locations in 16 days
- Multiple pre-dawn departures

#### **PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs or other mobility aids
- Must be able to withstand hot temperatures, including averages around and beyond 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Must be able to walk 2-3 miles unassisted each day and participate in 3-5 hours of daily physical activities, including scaling several steep steps without handrails and climbing 1,100 steps in Sigiriya
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

#### **CLIMATE**

- Daytime temperatures can rise to 100°F and beyond, with 80% humidity
- The rainy season is from June to October

#### **TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION**

- Travel over some rugged paths, as well as bumpy, unpaved, dusty roads, both by bus and on foot
- Travel through Sri Lanka via bus (no heat or toilet on board), train, boat, and game-viewing vehicles
- Several long overland drives of 5-6 hours

#### **FLIGHT INFORMATION**

- Travel time will be 21-31 hours

## ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- All accommodations are hotel-standard with a variety of amenities including Western-style toilet facilities
- Asian squat-style toilets must be used in some villages without other facilities

## CUISINE

- Meals will be based on the local cuisine, which features Sri Lankan spices; milder Western food is limited but available
- A variety of vegetarian options will be available

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

- We may see people living in poverty, which could be distressing for some travelers

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

### Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

### Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.

- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

*At time of writing, the State Department noted that for the U.A.E. there are restrictions on medications, especially anything with codeine, dextromethorphan (like Robitussin), psychotropic drugs like Prozac or Valium, or anything narcotic. Generally, you are allowed to bring a personal supply of these medications as long as you bring a prescription EXCEPT for narcotics, which require special documentation. If you have questions about a specific medication, check the list of controlled medications at [www.uaeinteract.com/travel/drug.asp](http://www.uaeinteract.com/travel/drug.asp) or contact the embassy.*

### Bringing Medications to Malaysia

At the time of writing, the State Department suggests bringing a doctor’s note for syringes, strong painkillers (like codeine), psychotropics, or sleeping pills as a reference for local authorities if any questions arise.

### Staying Healthy on Your Trip

#### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

#### Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## Water

- Tap water is not safe to drink.
- Bottled water or treated drinking water is readily available. We suggest bringing your own reusable water bottle from home to take advantage of any safe refills when available.
- Bottled drinks and juices, and hot drinks that have been boiled, are safe to drink.

## Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked fruit and other foods. Fruit that you peel yourself is usually safe.

## Electricity Supply

**A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays.** Travelers dependent on electricity supply for health reasons (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) may want to consider a different O.A.T. adventure.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as cash, an ATM card, and a credit card. ATMs will be available, but you may need to try a couple to find one that works.
- **Traveler’s checks are not accepted** in Sri Lanka, U.A.E, Oman, Singapore, and Malaysia.
- **Local currency is preferred** in Sri Lanka, U.A.E, Oman, Singapore, and Malaysia.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Sri Lanka:** Sri Lankan rupee (Rs)

**Oman:** Omani Rial (OMR)

**United Arab Emirates:** UAE Dirham (Dh)

**Malaysia:** Malaysian Ringgit (RM or MYR)

**Singapore:** Singapore dollar (SDG)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you’ll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1-\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

**Sri Lanka:** ATMs are common in large cities and more limited in smaller towns and villages. Some ATMs will not accept U.S. cards (we suggest that you confirm if your card will work in Sri Lanka with your bank). You will often find machines that are either out of order, or out of money, so you may need to try more than one machine. Your Trip Experience Leader will advise you on ATM availability and locations during the trip.

**Oman:** ATMs are readily available in cities and large towns but are more limited in small villages.

**United Arab Emirates:** ATMs are plentiful in Dubai.

### Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**Sri Lanka:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Sri Lanka for major purchases and in shops associated with the tourist trade but may not be accepted by smaller restaurants or shops.

**Oman:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Oman.

**United Arab Emirates:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted for major purchases and in shops associated with the tourist trade, but may not be accepted in smaller shops or restaurants.

### Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8-\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** Your Trip Experience Leader will tip waiters for included meals. If you are dining on your own remember that it is common to tip anywhere from 5%-10% in restaurants.
- **Taxi drivers:** If you are taking a taxi by yourself, keep in mind that tipping is not common practice, but many people simply let the driver keep the change by rounding up the fare to the next whole number.

*Please Note:* Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.



- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### **Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased**

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

### **Optional Tours**

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### **What You Need to Know**

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## **Communicating with Home from Abroad**

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

### **Cell Phones**

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

### **Calling Apps**

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### **Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers**

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Sri Lanka:** +94

**Malaysia:** +60

**Oman:** +968

**Singapore:** +65

**United Arab Emirates:** +971

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One check bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	<b>Varies by international airline.</b> The current industry standard is 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons.
Size Restrictions	Checked luggage should not exceed 59 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
<b>All extensions:</b> Same as the main trip.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

### Checked Luggage

One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.

### Carry-on Bag

You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.

### Locks

For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions

### Functional Tips

- **Weather conditions can vary more than you'd expect**, depending on location and season. (For example, rainfall can vary by as much as 8–12 inches from one month to the next.) We strongly recommend you check the average temperatures and rainfall for your departure month now for a ballpark estimate of what to expect. And then check the 10-day forecast a few days before you leave for more precise details.
- **If you like to hand-wash your clothes**, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.
- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. Keep in mind that it is common to remove your shoes in temples, so you'll want a pair you can take off/get back on easily.

### Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual.
- **Your dress should be somewhat conservative in order to be respectful of the local culture.** Sleeveless tops for ladies are acceptable in the larger cities, but are not appropriate in the small villages or temples. Very short shorts (on men or women) and short skirts are considered disrespectful, and will draw unwanted attention.

## Extension Packing Tips:

Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia are majority Muslim nations. You will be better received as a tourist if you dress modestly. This means:

- **Covered shoulders and no low-cut necklines.** Local men tend to wear collared shirts or polo shirts rather than T-shirts. For women consider a loose, billowy top that covers you from the sun. Or bring a large scarf or shawl that you can drape over your bare shoulders when needed.
- **Shorts or skirts to the knee or below.** Mid-calf or capri pants are a popular choice for women travelers. (It is perfectly acceptable for women to wear pants; you are not required to wear a skirt or a dress.) Just make sure to bring at least one pair of longer pants for hiking or camel riding.
- **Context matters.** Generally in places of worship or in someone's home it is better to cover up your shoulders and legs. When touring in large cities or enjoying outdoors activities, you can relax the rules a bit.
- **Women don't need to cover their hair**, except *perhaps* in a mosque, where it is considered a sign of respect. Each mosque has different rules, so if one requires it, your Trip Experience Leader will warn you beforehand. Mosques that require headscarves will have extras to lend or rent, so you don't need to bring one with you.

## Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

**And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

## Recommended Clothing (All Year)

- Shirts: A mixture of short- and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts. Sleeveless shirts are acceptable.
- Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose-fitting in a breathable fabric, like cotton or linen.
- Walking shorts: Shorts are generally acceptable, but in keeping with the more modest culture, please chose a longer cut (to the knee). Shorts are not allowed in mosques.

- For women—1 or 2 travel skirts: Our female Trip Experience Leaders suggest that a skirt and shirt is a great basic travel outfit. Shorts and pants are fine too, it is just that a skirt allows for air movement and is convenient when using the occasional squat toilet. Female travelers should also consider sports bras, especially for days with long overland transfers—the roads can be bumpy.
- Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking or running shoes. We suggest you bring at least one extra pair of socks to be used as “temple socks,” because wearing shoes of any type are not allowed inside temples.
- Light cotton or wool sweater: The air-conditioning in restaurants and on the bus can be cold.
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Underwear and sleepwear
- Optional: swimsuit, in case a hotel has a whirlpool or pool

### **For Fall and Winter (November–February)**

- A light sweater or jacket for evening.

### **Essential Items**

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lens
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Light folding umbrella, for rain and sun protection
- Moisturizer and chapstick
- Pocket-size tissues—some public restrooms will be out of toilet paper. (And out of soap, so maybe bring some hand sanitizer too.)

- Packets of moist towelettes. These are useful to clean your hands or to freshen up on a hot day.
- Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb. A flashlight is highly recommended by our Trip Experience Leaders as power outages are common.
- Electrical converter & plug adapter
- Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

### Medicines & First Aid Gear

- Your own prescription medicines
- Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Optional: Anti-malarial medication (discuss with your doctor)

### Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

### Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity in Sri Lanka, U.A.E., Oman, Singapore, and Malaysia is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the



owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

## Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

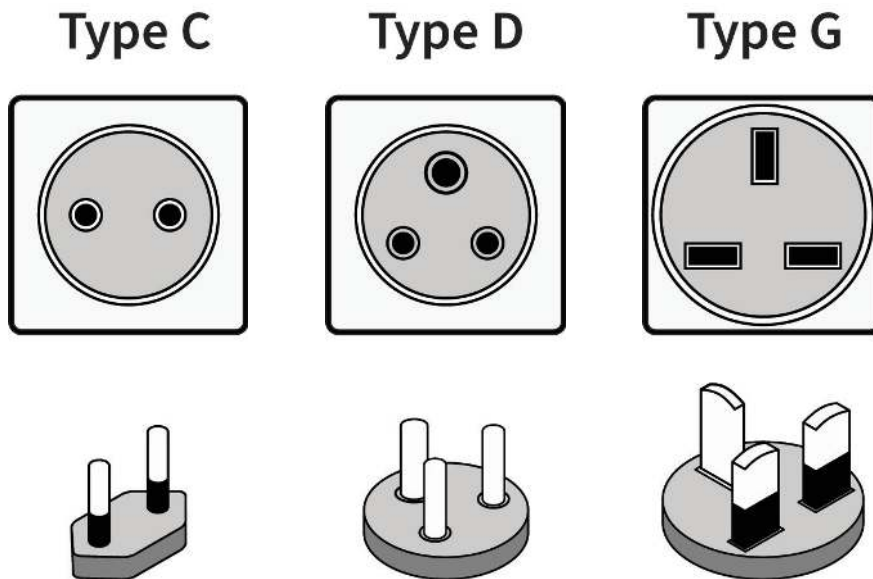
**Sri Lanka:** C or D

**Oman:** G

**United Arab Emirates:** G

**Malaysia:** C or G

Singapore: G



### Availability

**A constant electricity supply cannot be guaranteed during overnight stays.** In some places, the electricity may be supplied by a generator, and lighting may not be as bright as you are used to. Travelers dependent on electricity supply (as in the case of those with sleep apnea) should consider a different adventure or ensure their apparatus has back-up battery power.

## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka is tropical, with distinct dry and wet seasons. The seasons are slightly complicated by having two monsoons; one from April to July and one from October to December. In the area we visit, the driest months are January, February, and August.

**Dubai:** Dubai has a typical desert climate. During the day, temperatures range from hot in the winter (high 70s-high 80s) to very hot in the summer (high 90s-100+). At night, the temperatures drop sharply; usually it is at least 20 degrees cooler. The city gets very little rain—less than 4 inches each year.

**Oman:** Oman experiences a subtropical, dry desert climate, with high temperatures year-round. During the summer months, the temperatures can raise to over 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Summer also comes with monsoons (in the south) and dusty, dry winds called *shamal winds* (in the north). In the capital of Muscat, the average yearly rainfall is only 4 inches, primarily falling between December through April.

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	COLOMBO, SRI LANKA			DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
<b>JAN</b>	86 to 74	87 to 59	3.3	73 to 58	76 to 52	0.4
<b>FEB</b>	87 to 76	90 to 60	2.5	74 to 59	76 to 54	1.6
<b>MAR</b>	88 to 78	91 to 62	4.5	80 to 63	73 to 50	0.4
<b>APR</b>	88 to 79	91 to 67	10.0	88 to 69	67 to 46	0.4
<b>MAY</b>	87 to 80	87 to 72	13.2	97 to 76	59 to 41	0.4
<b>JUN</b>	86 to 80	86 to 73	7.5	100 to 80	66 to 46	0.4
<b>JUL</b>	85 to 80	85 to 72	5.1	103 to 85	65 to 49	0.4
<b>AUG</b>	85 to 79	85 to 72	3.8	103 to 86	66 to 49	0.4
<b>SEP</b>	85 to 79	87 to 72	6.2	100 to 81	72 to 50	0.4
<b>OCT</b>	85 to 78	91 to 72	13.9	93 to 74	74 to 50	0.4
<b>NOV</b>	85 to 77	93 to 70	12.1	86 to 67	75 to 50	0.4
<b>DEC</b>	86 to 76	91 to 64	6.0	77 to 61	78 to 53	0.8

MONTH	SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE			MUSCAT, OMAN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average Amount of Rainfall (Inches)
<b>JAN</b>	85 to 75	92 to 74	9.4	80 to 63	63	0.5
<b>FEB</b>	88 to 76	92 to 69	6.5	85 to 65	64	0.9
<b>MAR</b>	88 to 77	92 to 72	6.9	90 to 70	58	0.6
<b>APR</b>	89 to 77	93 to 74	6.5	98 to 77	45	0.7
<b>MAY</b>	88 to 78	92 to 76	6.7	110 to 85	42	0.3
<b>JUN</b>	88 to 78	90 to 72	6.4	112 to 88	49	0.1
<b>JUL</b>	87 to 78	90 to 73	5.9	110 to 87	60	0
<b>AUG</b>	87 to 78	89 to 73	6.7	105 to 84	67	0.1
<b>SEP</b>	87 to 76	92 to 75	6.4	105 to 82	63	0
<b>OCT</b>	87 to 77	92 to 73	7.5	97 to 77	55	0.1
<b>NOV</b>	87 to 76	92 to 77	9.8	90 to 70	60	0.3
<b>DEC</b>	85 to 75	93 to 80	10.6	85 to 66	65	0.5

## **ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE**

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### **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference**

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### **Sri Lankan Culture**

As an island nation in the Indian ocean, it is no surprise Sri Lanka's culture has a heavily influence from its two closest neighbors - India and Indonesia. The country's two ethnic majorities, Tamil and Sinhalese, as well as its two dominant religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, all came to Sri Lanka from the nearby India.

The vibrancy and diversity of Sri Lanka's culture is exemplified in its arts - the colorful festivals, the eye-catching architecture, the rhythmic dances, the delicious foods. Sri Lanka is attention grabbing from all areas of life, and the people are known for their generous hospitality, full of humility and appreciative of the simple pleasures in life.

### **Accommodations**

Our hotels are comfortable, but not luxurious. There can be occasional problems with electricity, hot water, and air conditioning. In restaurants, hotels, and at cultural sites, everything works according to a slower sense of time than what you are used to. It's best to wind down and adjust to the pace and philosophy.

### **Language Barrier**

You can have some great "conversations" with local people who do not speak English, even if you don't speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling.

Your attire is a key part of your non-verbal presentation. Your clothing should show a respect for local tradition. This means you should dress in a relatively modest style. Avoid revealing or tight-fitting outfits.

## Photography in Dubai

In Dubai, do not take photos of government buildings, bridges, airports, train stations, or oil pipelines. This could result in the confiscation of your camera or arrest. Also please be aware that many locals will not want their photo taken as it is against their religion. It is best to ask for permission before taking a close up or portrait.

## Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

## Sri Lankan Cuisine

Sri Lankan food features a lot of spices, with notable influences from South India, Indonesia, and the Netherlands, due to Sri Lanka's position on the oceanic silk road. Rice is served with most meals, as with many other Asian countries, with red rice being common. Sri Lanka cuisine is known for use of spices, especially its use of cinnamon, from the *cinnamomum verum* tree, a more delicate version on the cinnamon utilized by other South Asian countries. Dishes to try include:

- **Kiribath:** Also known as milk rice, *kiribath* is rice cooked in coconut milk until it's a porridge, eaten for breakfast or during special occasions. Commonly, *kiribath* is served with a relish of red onions and chiles, or *lunu miris*

- **Lamprais:** A Dutch-influence dish made by boiling rice in a stock with *fikkadels* (Dutch meatballs), mixed meat curry, aubergine curry, and *seeni sambol* (onion chili paste). This mixture is wrapped in a banana leaf and baked in an oven. This dish is for special occasions and large personal gatherings, as it is a rich and time-consuming dish.
- **Hoppers:** Also called *appam*, these are pancakes formed in a bowl shape, made with rice flour, coconut milk, and palm toddy. These can either be spicy or sweet, with eggs being a common addition.
- **Ambulthiyal:** A popular fish curry made with the local specialty, *goraka*, a sour fruit found in Indonesia.
- **Pittu:** A dessert of steamed or roasted rice flour mixed with grated coconut. This is formed into cylinders and cooked in bamboo.

## Omani Cuisine

Omani cuisine, due its location on the Arabian Peninsula, has heavy influences from Mediterranean, Persian, North African, and Indian cuisine. Many dishes are characterized by a blend of spices, herbs, and marinades, with chicken, lamb, and rice as common staples of a meal. Boarded by the Arabian Sea, seafood is also a common addition to a dish, with shark being a local delicacy. Dishes to try include:

- **Majboos:** Also known as *kabsa*, this is a rice dish with saffron and cardamom. The rice is cooked separately, then mixed with a spicy meat that was cooked with onions and garlic. This dish is often served at weddings or engagements.
- **Shuwa:** Commonly eaten during festive occasions, *shuwa* is a dish with meat (goat, camel, sheep, or cow) that has been marinated in a spicy date paste and roasted in a pit oven. The meat is flavored with spices (coriander, chili, cloves and cumin), then wrapped in sacks of dried date plam leaves, then cooked in the pit oven.
- **Mashuai:** A dish of spit-roasted kingfish, served with a side of lemon rice.
- **Mushaltat:** A flatbread stuffed with cheese, meat, honey, or vegetables.
- **Mishkak:** Similar to kebabs, *mishkak* is a popular Omani street food of meat cubes (beef, mutton, or chicken) that is skewered and grilled, marinated with an array of spices and served with tamarind chutney, chili sauce, or fresh salad.
- **Harees:** Similar to haleem, wheat and salt are boiled together in a pot for hours until the mixture is almost porridge-like. Meat and species (cinnamon, salt, and pepper) are added and the combination is cooked for another couple of hours.
- **Halwa:** A popular desert, *halwa* is a gelatinous treat made from cooking sugar, rose water, saffron, cardamom, and nuts instead a sticky paste. It is often paired with bitter Omani coffee.

## Emirati Cuisine

Emirati cuisine part of Eastern Arabia and as such, has similarities to the cuisines of its neighboring countries, Oman and Saudi Arabia, as well as the Middle East and parts of Asia. Dishes are usually simple, cooked in one pot, as stews, with saffron, cardamom, turmeric, and thyme as the spices of choice to add flavor. Easily grown vegetables like cucumbers and tomatoes, *loomi* (dried lemons), dates, and chicken or small fowl are common ingredients. Less commonly found is camel meat, served rarely, during special occasions. Dishes to try include:

- **Balaleat:** a breakfast dish made of vermicelli and eggs, seasoned with cardamom, cinnamon, saffron, and orange blooms and topped with pistachios.
- **Harees:** similar to haleem, wheat and salt are boiled together in a pot for hours until the mixture is almost porridge-like. Meat and spices (cinnamon, salt, and pepper) are added and the combination is cooked for another couple of hours.
- **Thareed:** a stew of meat (chicken, lamb, or goat) and vegetables served on top of *rigag* (thin flatbread)
- **Machboos:** Meat boiled in stock and spices. Once cooked through, the meat is removed, and the rice is boiled in the stock. Everything is then mixed with vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers, onions, etc. The mixture is all cooked together for another two hours.
- **Luqaimat:** A dessert dish of crunchy dumplings soaked either in honey or *dibbs* (date syrup)

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

### Crafts & Souvenirs

#### Sri Lanka

When shopping for souvenirs in Sri Lanka, keep an eye out for the country's beautiful gems (to export them you will need a certificate typically provided by the shop), saris (for women) or sarongs (for men), moonstone carvings, ceylon tea, ceylon cinnamon, raksha masks, hand-woven dumbara mats, cinnamon tree bowls, elephant art, and coconut shell kitchen utensils. They are all great gifts for yourself or a family member back home!



## Oman

While traveling through Oman, keep an eye out for these unique souvenirs: *khanjars* (traditional Omani daggers), Bahla pottery, *dishdasha* (a long robe worn by men) or *abaya* (a cloak worn by women), leather goods, hand-woven rugs, Omani dates, *masar* (Omani turbans), *kumma* caps, Frankincense burners, or silverware.

**Bargaining:** Bargaining is the norm in Oman, where anything sold by a street vendor and almost anything in a smaller shop has a flexible price. However, larger stores will have fixed prices.

## United Arab Emirates

While shopping in Dubai mostly centers on international luxury brands, other popular souvenirs include camel milk chocolate, Persian rugs, *oudh* (a fragrance oil from agarwood resin), *bakhoor* (an incense alternative of burnable agarwood chips), Arabic *attars* (planet-based perfume oil), pashmina shawls, gold jewelry, dates, Arabic coffee pot, spices, hookah or shisha pipes, lanterns, brass lamps, and Khanjar (traditional daggers). Most spices, carpets, and crafts items can be found at the older souks (open-air markets).

## Malaysia

Malaysia is known for textile crafts such as beaded slippers, items woven out of palm-like pandan leaves, songket weavings, and batik fabrics—where the design is created by using wax to block off sections of cloth during the dyeing process. Other staples include pewter goods, wood carvings, cucuk sanggul hairpins, and kites. Edible souvenirs like tea, coffee, and Dodol (a toffee-like candy) are also popular. Just beware the durian fruit, which is so stinky that some hotels won't allow it in their rooms—a durian flavored candy or cake (lempok durian) might be a better choice.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

**Sri Lanka:** If you purchase any gems while in Sri Lanka, you will need a certificate to export them (typically provided by the shop).

# DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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## Sri Lanka

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 25,332 square miles
- **Capital:** Colombo
- **Languages:** Sinhala is the official language; Tamil is also spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** Sinhalese 74.9%, Sri Lankan Tamil 11.2%, Sri Lankan Moors 9.2%, Indian Tamil 4.2%, other 0.5%
- **Location:** Sri Lanka lies in the Indian Ocean, southwest of the Bay of Bengal.
- **Geography:** The island consists mostly of flat-to-rolling coastal plains, with mountains rising only in the south-central part. Amongst these is the highest point Pidurutalagala, reaching 8,281 feet above sea level. Sri Lanka's coastline is 1,585 kilometers long. The coastline and adjacent waters support highly productive marine ecosystems such as fringing coral reefs, shallow beds of coastal and estuarine seagrasses.
- **Population:** 22,053,488
- **Religions:** Buddhist (official) 70.2%, Hindu 12.6%, Muslim 9.7%, Roman Catholic 6.1%, other Christian 1.3%, other 0.05%
- **Time Zone:** Sri Lanka is on Indian Standard Time and does not observe Daylight Saving Time. As a result, the time in Sri Lanka will either be 9.5 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Time (in summer) or 10.5 hours ahead (in winter).

## National Holidays: Sri Lanka

In addition to the holidays listed below, Sri Lanka celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Full Moon Days. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/15 Tamil Thai Pongal Day

02/04 National Day

Feb or March Mahasivarathri Day (moves each year; see note)

04/13 Sinhala and Tamil New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day

May or June Eid al-Fitr (moves each year)

Aug or Sept Eid al-Adha (moves each year)

Oct or Nov Deepavali (moves each year)

12/25 Christmas Day

## Sri Lanka: A Brief History

### Early History

The origins of Sri Lanka are often attributed to religious myth, but archaeologists believe the island was occupied by hunter-gathers when the Sinhalese—a northern Indian tribal people—first arrived in the sixth century BC. The Sinhalese first absorbed the hunter-gather tribes and then founded a kingdom named for its capital city, Anuradhapura. By the third century BC, the kingdom drew the attention of the king of India, Asoka, who sent emissaries to the court to promote Buddhism. According to some stories, the emissaries were a son and a daughter of Asoka himself. Whoever they were, the emissaries successfully converted the Sri Lankan king, and thus are credited with converting the entire kingdom to Buddhism.

By all accounts, the conversion of the King and the kingdom to Buddhism is one of the most significant events in Sri Lankan history. Buddhism pervades Sri Lankan culture, and as Sri Lanka was one of the first nations to convert—and one of the last nations to be influenced by outside forces—the Buddhism practiced here is considered the most pure form of Theravada (the first and simpler form of Buddhism).

For the next six centuries, the kingdom of Anuradhapura continued to thrive, grow, and expand its Buddhist practices. Sometime in the first century BC the monks of the Aluvihara monastery began in-depth writings on the Theravada teachings, which are still referenced today by Theravada schools throughout the world. And in 371 AD, a tooth of the Buddha was brought to Anuradhapura as a relic; today it is still housed in a temple in Kandy.

The main rivals to Anuradhapura were the Tamil rulers in South India, and this rivalry was to deeply mark Sri Lankan history for centuries. The Tamils, who were Hindu, would often conduct raids or all-out assaults on the capital in an attempt to seize control. After centuries of repeated conflict in which the capital city was sacked and destroyed more than once, Anuradhapura was abandoned some time in the 11th century in favor of a new capital, Polonnaruwa.

### The Middle Ages

The Kingdom of Polonnaruwa was a short-lived study of contrasts. Although it was the capital for only two hundred years or so, the kings of Polonnaruwa represent some of the strongest and weakest of Sri Lankan royal history. The kingdom began gloriously under King Vijayabahu I (ruled 1055–1110), who drove out the invaders from Chola (a Tamil dynasty from southern India). Later under King Parakramabahu I (ruled 1153–1186), the Sinhalese army did more than just defend against the Chola—they conquered Chola territory and even reached faraway Myanmar.

Not content to be a warring king only, King Parakramabahu was also known for his vast building projects, especially the many irrigation systems, canals, and reservoirs (known as tanks) needed to cultivate the country's paddy fields. The folk saying “not even a little water that comes from the rain must flow into the ocean without being made useful to man” is frequently attributed to him.

Unfortunately, the many conflicts and engineering projects left the kingdom financially depleted. The financial strain—combined with a series of weak kings ensnared in court intrigues—led to the decline of the Polonnaruwa Kingdom. As Polonnaruwa lost control of the island, the northern end turned to Jaffna, a commercial center in northern Sri Lanka.

Jaffna had very strong commercial and cultural connections to southern India, so it was the Indian Tamil culture that dominated. Thus began a Sinhalese–Tamil split between Jaffna (northern, Tamil speaking, Hindu) and Polonnaruwa (southern, Sinhalese, Buddhist). When Polonnaruwa was finally abandoned at the end of the 13th century, it split into two smaller, but related, kingdoms centered on the cities of Kandy and Kotte.

### **The Age of Colonization**

When the Portuguese first arrived in 1505, they hoped to make political use of the divisions between the three kingdoms (Jaffna, Kandy, and Kotte). They negotiated a treaty that favored the Sinhalese kingdoms (Kandy and Kotte) over the Tamil kingdom (Jaffna). Then they further enraged the Tamil rulers by trying to convert the populace from Hinduism to the Catholic faith.

In time, the Portuguese controlled large sections of the island and the lucrative spice trade with Europe. Only the kingdom of Kandy retained some independence, due to its secure location in the highlands.

When other European powers showed interest in the same trade, the local rulers tried to use the Europeans' rivalries to eject the Portuguese. Unfortunately, this only succeeded in changing one colonial power for another, as first the Dutch (in 1656) and then the British (in 1796) took over the island. In 1815, the kingdom of Kandy surrendered to the British, who established a plantation system to grow coffee, tea, and rubber. British rule exacerbated class divides between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, especially with the arrival of large numbers (some estimates state 850,000) indentured Tamil workers from India. It wasn't until after Indian independence in 1947 that Ceylon (the colonial name for Sri Lanka) gained its own independence in 1948.

### **Independence and Division**

After independence, the Sinhalese–Tamil divide came to the forefront of Sri Lankan politics. For example, with the British gone, there was a movement to quit using English as the official language and begin using Sinhala instead—a movement that would have left the Tamils, who

speak Tamil and not Sinhala, out in the cold. Both sides felt threatened; the Tamils by fear of being relegated to second-class citizens and the Sinhalese by fear that India might intervene on the Tamils' behalf. An early attempt by the Prime Minister SWRD Bandaranaike to create a federation between the two groups provoked his assassination in 1959.

The unrest continued and eventually led to a state of emergency being imposed on Tamil lands in the north in 1971. For many Tamils, this was viewed as an act of aggression akin to an occupation, hence the formation of opposition groups such as the "Tamil Tigers" (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE). The cycle of mistrust and revenge during the next couple of decades was not unlike the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and was largely confined to the northern, Tamil-controlled Jaffna peninsula. Efforts towards a successful cease-fire treaty were mixed, and eventually abandoned. Instead, the Sri Lankan government pledged to fight the LTTE forces that remained until they surrendered. With the final surrender of the LTTE in 2009, the peace process has begun.

## Oman

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 119,500 square miles
- **Capital:** Muscat
- **Government:** Absolute Monarchy
- **Languages:** Arabic is the official language; English is also spoken.
- **Location:** Oman is on the Arabian Peninsula, bordered by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, as well as the Persian Gulf.
- **Geography:** Oman consists mostly of gravel desert, with mountains to the north and the southeast.
- **Population:** 4,520,471 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Muslim 88.9%, Hindu 5.5%, Christian 3.6%, other and unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Oman is on Persian Gulf Standard Time and does not observe Daylight Saving Time. As a result, the time in Oman will either be 8 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Time (in summer) or 9 hours ahead (in winter).

## National Holidays: Oman

Oman celebrates a number of national holidays that follow the Islamic lunar calendar, such as the Prophet's Ascension and the Prophet's Birthday. As it is determined by a different calendar, the dates change each year.. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/11 Ascension Day

February Prophet Ascension Day (moves each year)

March or April Ramadan (moves each year)

June or July Eid al-Adha (moves each year)

11/19 National Day

## Oman: A Brief History

## United Arab Emirates

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 32,278 square miles
- **Capital:** Abu Dhabi
- **Languages:** Arabic (official), Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu
- **Ethnicity:** Emirati 19%, other Arab and Iranian 23%, South Asian 50%, other expatriates (includes Westerners and East Asians) 8%
- **Location:** Middle East, bordering the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, between Oman and Saudi Arabia
- **Geography:** Made up of seven districts known as emirates, the United Arab Emirates (or U.A.E.) is primarily desert or semi-desert, except along the coastline. On the Persian Gulf side of the coast are salt pans and few natural harbors, like the port at Abu Dhabi. On the Gulf of Oman side, the Western Al Hajar Mountains forma crescent between the coast and the inland desert sands.
- **Population:** 5,779,760
- **Religions:** Muslim (Islam; official) 76%, Christian 9%, other 15% (primarily Hindu and Buddhist; less than 5% of the population consists of Parsi, Baha'i, Druze, Sikh, Ahmadi, Ismaili, Dawoodi Bohra Muslim, and Jewish)
- **Time Zone:** UAE is on Gulf Standard Time and does not observe Daylight Saving Time. As a result, the time in UAE will either be 8 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Time (in summer) or 9 hours ahead (in winter).

## National Holidays: United Arab Emirates

In addition to the holidays listed below, United Arab Emirates celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Ramadan. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

May or June Eid al-Fitr (moves each year; see note)

July or Aug Arafat Hajj Day (moves each year)

July or Aug Feast of the Sacrifice (moves each year)

12/01 Commemoration Day

12/02 National Day

## United Arab Emirates: A Brief History

Proof of human habitation in the Arabian Peninsula is estimated to have started as early as the Paleolithic Age, with the Bedouin communities, who survived the area through fishing and gathering. Habitation progressed into the Bronze Age, around 5,000 to 3,100 BCE, with the Hafit period. Not much is known of the people who lived in the Arabian Peninsula, but archeological finds of stone arrows, axe heads, and beehive shaped burial tombs showcase a distinct culture developing.

From 2,600 to 2,000 BCE, the Umm al-Nar civilization reigned, with evidence of trade with Sumerian kingdoms and Indus Valley civilization. Following the Umm al-Nar civilization came the Wadi Suq civilization, dated from 2,000 to 1,300 BCE, which also showed evidence of trade. It is theorized that it was during this civilization, as their technology advanced, that animals were domesticated, allowing their settlements to move inland.

The civilization in the Arabian Peninsula continued to grow and develop, with little notable change until Islam arrived in 630 AD. As prophets brought the Prophet Muhammad's message throughout the Arabian Peninsula and the surrounding areas of South East Asia and Western Africa, trade routes followed. The solidification of trade routes across such a region attracted the attention of the Europeans, who pin-pointed the Arabian Peninsula as the perfect trade location, due to its position between Europe and the Far East (India and China in particular).

The Portuguese arrived first in 1498, after successfully travelling around the Cape of Good Hope. In 1515, the Portuguese had forcibly established control in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman and by 1560 had taken over most of the trading ports as well as the pepper and spice trade from the indigenous peoples.

In retaliation, the Ya'rubid dynasty, rulers of Oman from 1624 to 1724, rose up in 1633 and forced the Portuguese from Julfar, Dibba, Sohar, and Muscat by 1650. The removal of the Portuguese only opened the way for other European countries, as the Dutch and the British slipped in.

The Dutch built themselves up into a dominant navel power in thanks to their silk trade deal with Abbas I of Persia, also known as Abbas the Great, the 5<sup>th</sup> King of Iran. However, due to battle with the British and the French, by 1750, Dutch power in the region had dwindled.



Meanwhile, the British locked down on their trade in the Arabian Peninsula, interested in protecting their connection to India and keeping other European countries from interfering. This led them into conflict with Al Qawasim, an Arab dynasty with control over Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah, in the late 1700s and early 1800s. An attempt at peace was made between the British and Al Qawasim, only for the signed peace treaty to break down in 1815. It wasn't until after the British defeated the Qawasims and signed exclusive peace agreements with the individual emirates (or land owned by an Arab ruler called an emir) of the Arabian Peninsula that everything started looking up for the British. While the peace agreements didn't stop fighting between the tribes of the Trucial States (as the British had taken to calling the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula), the signed agreements made it so the Trucial States could not give land or have relations with other countries without the consent of the British. In return, the British would protect the Trucial States from outside interference.

This agreement remained for over a century, until 1968, when the British announced their withdrawal from the area by 1971 due to their domestic economic crisis and political pressure.

The rulers of six of the Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Quwain, Fujairah, and Ajman) came to an agreement and on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1971, the country known today as the United Arab Emirates was formed. The seventh Emirate, Ra's al-Khaimah, joined the union in February 1972. Ever since, the constitutional monarchy of United Arab Emirates has been a site of trade, travel, tourism, and finance, sitting high as with the seventh-highest GDP per capita thanks to their abundance of natural resources.

## Malaysia

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- Area: 126,895 square miles
- Capital: Kuala Lumpur
- Languages: Bahasa Malaysia is the official language, although English, Chinese, and Tamil are also spoken.
- Ethnicities: Malay 50.1%, Chinese 22.6%, indigenous 11.8%, Indian 6.7%, other 0.7%, non-citizens 8.2%
- Location: In Southeastern Asia, bordering Thailand, Vietnam, and the South China Sea; shares the island of Borneo with Brunei and Indonesia.
- Geography: Mainland Malaysia is on a peninsula that juts out from Thailand towards the Indonesian islands; it also includes part of the island of Borneo. The country is roughly the same size as New Mexico. The terrain is mostly coastal plains, rising into hills and tropical rain forests, with some mountains. The highest peaks are in the Crocker Range on Borneo Island.
- Population: 30,949,962

- Religions: Muslim (official) 61.3%, Buddhist 19.8%, Christian 9.2%, Hindu 6.3%, Chinese religions (Confucianism, Taoism, etc.) 1.3%, other or none 2.2%.
- Time zone: Malaysia is twelve hours ahead of U.S. EST. So when it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 6pm in Kuala Lumpur.

## National Holidays: Malaysia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Malaysia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day  
 02/01 Federal Territory Day  
 05/01 Labor Day  
 08/31 Malaysia's National Day  
 12/25 Christmas Day

## Historical Overview of Malaysia

### Early History

The earliest inhabitants of Malaysia were hunter-gathers, who in time, settled down into small communities that fished and farmed. By the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC, these communities had banded together as small kingdoms—there were perhaps as many as 30 kingdoms total on the Malay Peninsula. Because they were small, many of these kingdoms were strongly influenced by neighboring countries such as India, Cambodia, and China.

In the end, it was a neighboring country—specifically, Indonesia—that began to unite the smaller Malaysian kingdoms under the Srivijaya Empire, which first rose to prominence in the 7th century. This empire was based on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, but through naval prowess spread to other islands (Java, Borneo) and mainland Malaysia. Although not originally from Malaysia, the Srivijaya Empire are often cited by historians as the first centralized government on the peninsula, and are credited with spreading Buddhism and establishing trade routes across the Indian Ocean and China Sea.

Eventually, their power drew the attention of the Chola Empire in India, who is believed to have conquered parts of Western Malaysia in 1025 and 1026. Legend says the Chola founded a Hindu kingdom there known as Gangga Negara. Today very little is known about Gangga Negara, causing some researchers to describe it as a “lost kingdom”. In any case, the 11th century seems to have been a turning point for the Srivijaya Empire, which went into decline afterwards.

### Arrival of Islam & Rise of Malacca

Another factor in the decline of the Srivijaya Empire may have been the arrival of Islam starting in the 13th century. At first, the religion spread through contact with Arab and Indian traders, but soon it became popular with the local elite, who converted from Buddhism or Hinduism. But Islam's biggest boost in Malaysia was probably the conversion of King Paramenswra, who may have converted when he married an Islamic princess sometime in the late 1300s or early 1400s.

The king went on to found the port city of Malacca, where he declared Islam to be the state religion and took the title of sultan. He also set up formal diplomatic relations with the Ming emperor in China and re-opened trade routes that had declined under the last Srivijavas. Malacca flourished and grew to be such an important port that its fame spread to Asia, northern Africa, and Europe, causing the Portuguese writer Tome Pires to quip that “Whoever is lord of Malacca shall have his hands on the throat of Venice.” Today Malacca is seen as the originator of Malay culture—mixing local traditions with Indian, Chinese, and Islamic influences—and as setting the standards for literature, music, and language.

### **Colonia Era**

In some ways Malacca could be described as the “Camelot of Malaysia”—a golden era that was all too short. Founded in about 1400, the city was taken by the Portuguese on August 24, 1511. But instead of gaining control of Malacca’s wealth (as they had expected) the Portuguese found that by seizing the port they inadvertently disrupted the flow of trade, effectively diverting it into smaller ports along the Malay coast. Meanwhile, the last sultan of Malacca fled south and founded a new state which became the Sultanate of Johor.

For the next hundred years, Johor would challenge the Portuguese stronghold in Malacca, both on economic grounds and on religious ones (the Portuguese were actively converting locals to the Catholic Church while Johor remained Muslim). This changed with the arrival of the Dutch in the 1600s. As rivals to the Portuguese, they allied themselves with Johor, and in 1641 the combined Johor-Dutch forces took Malacca back from the Portuguese. In exchange for control of Malacca’s trade (which they mainly diverted to their own colony on Java), the Dutch helped the Johor sultan gain control over most of Malaysia.

This control was short-lived. After the assassination of Sultan Mahud in 1699, two different men—both claiming to be the sultan’s son—vied for power. In the resulting uncertainty, a group of immigrants from Indonesia called the Bugis seized power, installing a puppet ruler in Johor. During this time, Malaysia’s economy continued to boom from trade in tin, pepper, and gold. But in Europe, the Dutch were slowly being overtaken by the British as the main naval power—and that change eventually came to Malaysia too. By 1826 the British controlled Malacca, Penang, and Singapore which combined to form the Colony of the Straits. The British used this colony as a power base to extend their influence over the rest of the Malay Peninsula, although some regions like Johor retained a measure of independence.

### **The Modern Era**

The British influence remained the status quo for nearly 100 years. It wasn’t until the outbreak of World War II that another country challenged their power—Japan, who seized Malaysia in February 1942. Although the British did retake the country in 1945, many in the country favored independence over a return to colonial rule.

Initially the plan was to create an independent state with equal citizenship for all no matter their ethnicity (by this time Malaysia was a mix of locals, known as Malays, plus Indians and Chinese who had immigrated during the British Empire days). But many of the Malays wanted the government to be in their hands alone, causing a political split that largely ran along race lines.

The situation was further complicated by the rise of a Communist insurrection in 1948. From 1948 to 1960, Malaysia was in a state of emergency as different groups fought for control, with the British/Malay faction ultimately winning.

However, the racial divisions continued to be an issue for decades. Often policies favored the Malay majority over the Chinese and Indian populations, a trend known as “positive discrimination”. Today many of these policies are written into the Malaysian constitution (and questioning them is technically illegal) causing many to see race relations as the defining issue of modern Malaysia.

## Singapore

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 269 square miles
- **Capital:** Singapore
- **Languages:** Mandarin Chinese, English, Malay, and Tamil are all official languages.
- **Ethnicities:** Chinese 74.2%, Malay 13.3%, Indian 9.2%, other 3.3%
- **Location:** On islands at the southernmost tip of the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia, south of Malaysia and north of Indonesia.
- **Geography:** Although Singapore is technically spread across a collection of 63 islands, most of the city lies on the main island, Pulau Ujong. The city-state is relatively small (about the same as Washington D.C.), so most of the land has been developed, with very little natural geography remaining.
- **Population:** 5,781,728
- **Religions:** Buddhist 33.9%, Muslim 14.3%, Taoist 11.3%, Catholic 7.1%, Hindu 5.2%, other Christian 11%, other 0.7%, none 16.4%
- **Time zone:** Singapore is thirteen hours ahead of U.S. EST. So when it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 7pm in Singapore.

### National Holidays: Singapore

In addition to the holidays listed below, Singapore celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Lunar New Year and Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day  
05/01 Labor Day  
08/09 National Day  
12/25 Christmas Day

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### Sri Lanka

***Eight Years' Wanderings in Ceylon*** by Samuel White Baker (2021, Historical Narrative). Reissue of the vintage classic about colonial Sri Lanka, originally published in 1845.

***Island of a Thousand Mirrors*** by Nayomi Munaweera (2012, Fiction). Recounts the saga and tragedy of Sri Lanka's civil war from the point of view of two women on opposing sides.

***Tea Time with Terrorists: A Motorcycle Journey into the Heart of Sri Lanka's Civil War*** by Mark Stephen Meadows (2010, Society/History/Travel Narrative). Meadows traveled to the war zone to interview participants and witnesses on both sides in an attempt to better understand the conflict.

***Anil's Ghost*** by Michael Ondaatje (2000, Fiction). A lyrical story about a forensic scientist returning to her native Sri Lanka in the 1980s as part of a U.N. fact-finding mission.

***Cinnamon Gardens*** by Shyam Selvadurai (1998, Fiction). The novel explores what happens when personal desires clash with societal norms—specifically, a young teacher who is not certain she wants to marry and settle down, and her uncle, who is secretly gay. The same author also wrote *Funny Boy*, which is a coming-of-age novel set within an extended upper-middle-class family in Sri Lanka.

#### United Arab Emirates

***Temporary People*** by Deepak Unnikrishnan (2017, Fiction). Unnikrishnan explores magical realism in twenty-eight short stories on the lives of “guest workers” in the United Arab Emirates. Guest workers, or migrant workers, are peoples, usually from developing countries, with temporary work visas. In the United Arab Emirates, guest workers make up an estimated 80% of the population and 90% of the workforce. It wasn't until June 2017 that the United Arab Emirates adopted a bill to allow guest workers the same rights as domestic workers under the country's labor laws.

***Keepers of the Golden Shore: A History of the United Arab Emirates*** by Michael Quentin Morton (2016, History). Starting with the ancient days as desert tribes, *Keepers of the Golden Shore* highlights how the United Arab Emirates became one of the richest countries in the world.

***Dubai: Gilded Cages*** by Syed Ameer Ali (2010, Nonfiction). *Dubai: Gilded Cages* analyses the history of Dubai, from a solitary emirate to a global hub, deep diving into the socio-economic disparity for Western ex-patriots, native Emirates, and “guest workers”.

***The Sand Fish*** by Maha Gargash (2009, Fiction) The story of Noora, a young woman in an arranged marriage as she struggles with the cultural expectations set on her as a woman in the United Arab Emirates. Set in the 1950s, before the country was united, and written by an Emirati writer.

***City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*** by Jim Krane (2009, History). The rise of the city from a historical and economic viewpoint, focusing on the history from founding to the modern era, the accomplishments of the ruling leader of Dubai, and the cultural-economic differences.

## Malaysia

***The Garden of Evening Mists*** by Tan Twan Eng (2012, Fiction). A slow-paced story about Yun Ling and her relationship with a master gardener who agrees to help her create a memorial to her sister. Only one problem—the gardener is Japanese and Yun Ling’s sister died in a Japanese camp.

***Evening is the Whole Day*** by Preeta Samarasan (2008, Fiction). This debut novel follows six-year-old Aasha as she navigates the loss of people around her—including the mysterious dismissal of a family servant.

***The Harmony Silk Factory*** by Tash Aw (2005, Fiction). Set in World War II Malaysia the plot centers around the reputation of Johnny Lim, who neighbors think is a hero but whose son thinks he’s a crook.

***My Life as a Fake*** by Peter Carey (2003, Fiction). What happens if you make up a fake identity only to find that someone believes they are that person? This novel explores the idea in the context of a literary hoax gone sideways.

***The Rice Mother*** by Rani Manicka (2002, Fiction). This story is the sometimes-tragic, sometimes-hopeful saga of Lakshmi, who leaves Sri Lanka at 14 to marry an unknown man and becomes the matriarch of a sprawling family in 1930s and 1940s Malaysia.

## Singapore

The ***Auntie Lee*** series by Ovidia Yu (2013, Mysteries). Meet Aunty Lee, Singapore’s answer to Miss Marple or Jessica Fletcher.

***King Rat*** by James Clavell (1962, Historical Fiction). An English POW and a ruthless American corporeal struggle to survive in a World War II prison camp. The dramatic story is made even more harrowing and vivid by the author’s real-life experiences—he was held at this same camp in real life.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Sri Lanka

***Funny Boy*** (2020, Drama). Arjie Chelvaratnam struggles with his sexuality when he falls for a male school mate, in a country where his love is illegal, on the eve of the 1983 Sri Lankan civil war.

***White Van Stories*** (2015, Documentary). Indian filmmaker Leena Manimekalai follows seven women, from the east, south, and north provinces of Sri Lanka, as they seek justice for their loved ones, who went missing during the 1983 to 2009 civil war.

***Ceylon*** (2013, War Drama). This 2013 Indian war film follows a group of teenage orphans during the Sri Lankan civil war, fought from 1983 to 2009.

## United Arab Emirates

***Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*** (2015, Action/Adventure). A computer-animated movie about Bilal, a follower of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad. The movie follows Bilal from his childhood as a slave in Mecca to an inspirational hero, fighting for equality and inclusiveness. The story is based off of real events and follows multiple heroes from Arabian history. Due to the depictions of violence, while animated, this is movie is not recommended for children.

***From A to B*** (2015, Adventure/Comedy). Days before the birth of his first child, Omar reaches out to his childhood friends, Jay and Ramy, wanting to drive from Abu Dhabi to Beirut, in memory of their fourth friend, Hadi's twenty-fifth birthday. Along the way, the trio run into many obstacles as they traverse through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria.

***City of Life*** (2009, Drama/Romance). Follow the individual stories of a privileged young Arab man and his street-smart friend, an Indian taxi driver, and a Romanian flight attendant as they struggle through hardships and experience joy in the city of Dubai.

## Useful Websites

### Overseas Adventure Travel

[www.oattravel.com](http://www.oattravel.com)

### Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### Foreign Exchange Rates

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### ATM Locators

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### World Weather

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### Packing Tips

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### U.S. Customs & Border Protection

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### Transportation Security

#### Administration (TSA)

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### National Passport Information Center

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### Holidays Worldwide

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

### History & Culture

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Tripso**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App, Skype, or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

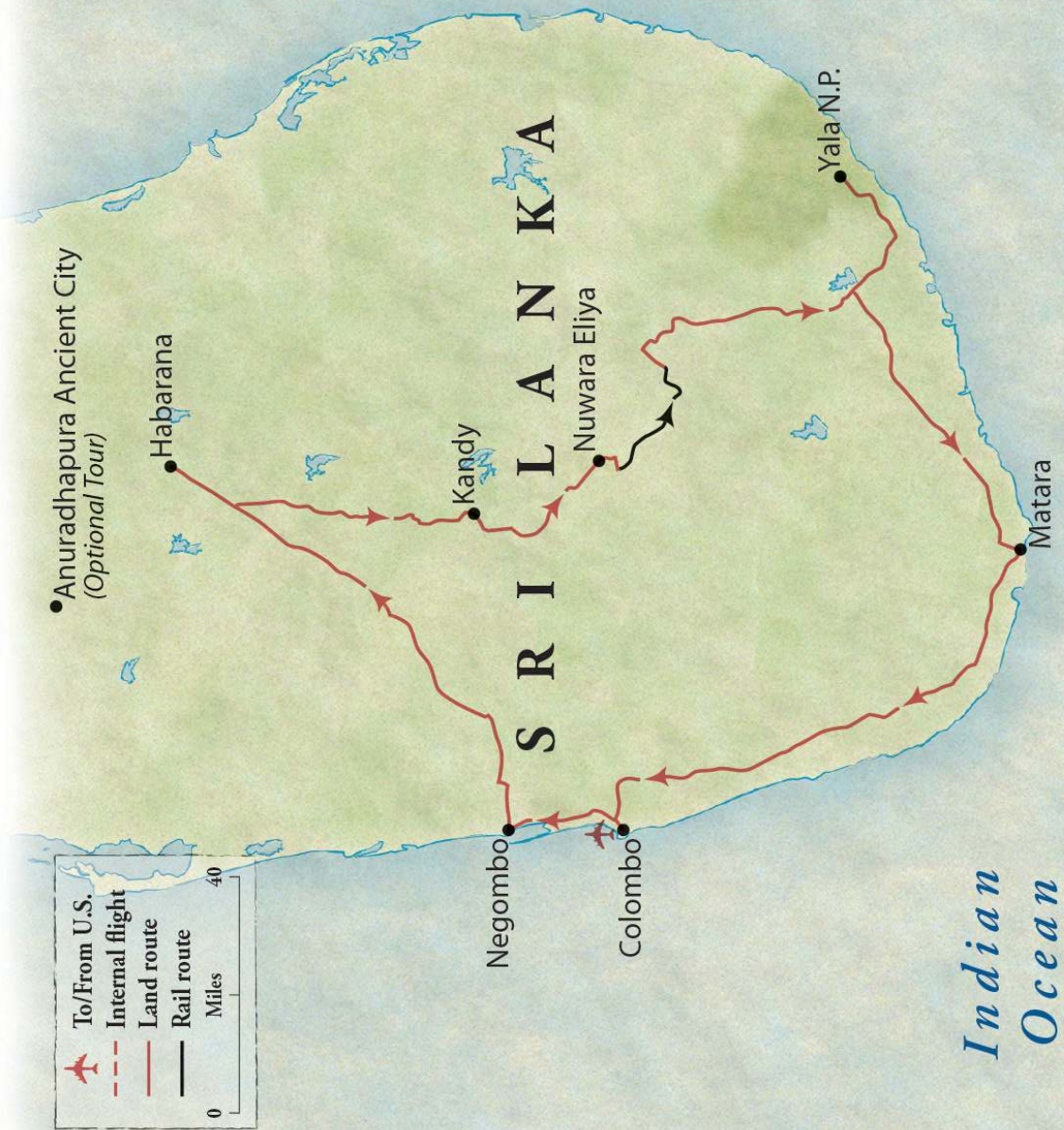
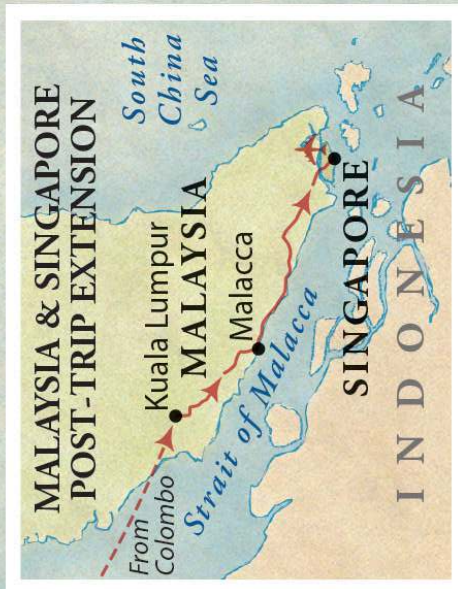
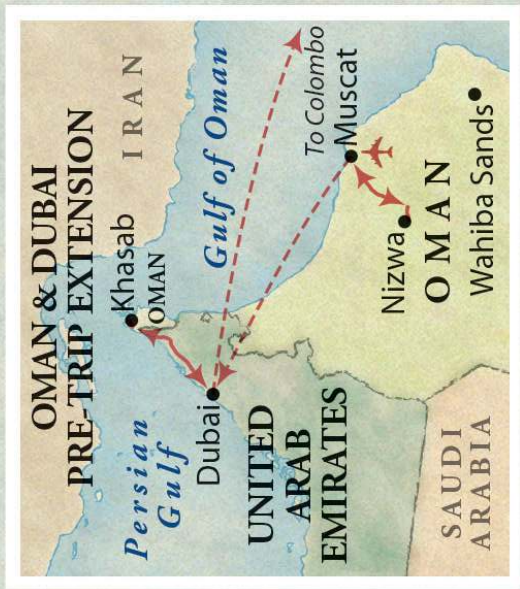
### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more





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from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler  
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23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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