

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tipps

Our top 15 Insider Tips



INSIDER TIP Nostalgically stylish

Dutch Hospital in Colombo Fort is one of the trendiest locations on the island. The complex has a number of good restaurants, chic boutiques and pleasant cafés → p. 36

INSIDER TIP The elephant's meeting place

More than 150 wild elephants gather around the reservoir in the *Minneriya National Park* in July and August – the months with low rainfall → p. 83

INSIDER TIP A bit fishy

Hard on the nose, but a treat for your eyes: in Negombo one of the largest *fish markets* in the country (photo right) opens in the early hours of the morning → p. 43

INSIDER TIP Right on trend: wake-boarding

You can try out this exciting water sport in the area near the mouth of the *Ging Oya River* north of Negombo → p. 45

INSIDER TIP Dolphins ahoy!

Hundreds of dolphins frolic in the sea off the coast of the *Kalpitiya Peninsula*. If you are lucky, you might even see some whales (photo top) → p. 45

INSIDER TIP Learn to cook in the mountains

At *Ella Spice Garden* you can learn up close about the fascinating cuisine of Sri Lanka, and experience the abundance of its spices → p. 62

INSIDER TIP Where Alec Guinness got wet

The world-famous 'Bridge on the River Kwai', with Alec Guinness in the main role, was filmed on the *Kitulgala* in 1956. Now you can go rafting on the same river → p. 68

INSIDER TIP Made in Sri Lanka

The *Odel Luv SL* in the *Queens Hotel* on *Dalada Veediya* in Kandy has a great selection of chic dresses, fabulous accessories and colourful souvenirs from Sri Lanka → p. 66

INSIDER TIP Idyllic lakes

In the early morning and evening *Anuradhapura* captivates with its monuments and its atmospheric reservoirs – the *wewas* → p. 78

INSIDER TIP Cycle tour

You will have a wonderful time exploring the *ruins in Polonnaruwa* on a bicycle. Start in the northern section in the early morning and you will have the famous *Gal Vihara Buddhas* all to yourself → p. 84

INSIDER TIP A place to daydream

The enchanted monastery ruins in the idyllic landscape near *Medirigiriya* are seldom visited. One of the highlights: the round temple with its towering columns → p. 86

INSIDER TIP Culinary chill out on the shore

The *Boat Haus Café* on the beach at *Mount Lavinia* is an excellent choice for seafood and the perfect place to chill → p. 42

INSIDER TIP By rail to the east coast

The *train trip* through the mountainous highlands might be even more spectacular but there are also many lovely landscapes to admire en route between *Habarana* and *Trincomalee*. The train chugs for miles along the *Kaudulla National Park* → p. 93

INSIDER TIP As far as the eye can see

In the highlands you would be hard pressed to find anywhere else with such a spectacular view from your hotel room as you do in the relaxed mountain town of *Ella*. The *Zion View Guest House* has the perfect blend of views, comfortable living and *Sri Lankan hospitality* → p. 61

INSIDER TIP Colourful bird world

South of *Arugam Bay*, the *Kumana National Park*, with its wealth of birdlife in the lagoons and lakes, is a real hotspot for ornithologists. There are 255 different species including *grey pelicans* and *giant storks* → p. 91



BEST OF ...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● *Jungle feeling in the Cultural Triangle*

Buddhist monks used to live in the *Ritigala Strict Nature Reserve*. Today, the remains of their hermitage are surrounded by dense jungle. Enjoy the atmosphere while it is still free → p. 83

● *Enchanted temple*

The *Nalanda Gedige*, a more than 1000-year-old Buddhist sanctuary between Matale and Dambulla, has an idyllic location on the edge of a reservoir. You will not only be able to admire the landscape here but also spare your wallet: entrance is free (photo) → p. 82

● *Colourful world of the gods*

The *Sri Muthumariamman Thevasthanam* in Matale is one of the most important Hindu temples in the region. You can skip the entrance fee as the most interesting part of the holy place is the exterior where the figures on the facades seem to be straight out of a Hindu picture book → p. 68

● *Tea tasting*

In contrast to most of the other tea plantations, there is no charge for the guided tours and tea served at *Mackwoods* in Labookellie. Stock up on tasty teas and other souvenirs in their shop → p. 65

● *Glittering gems*

Amethysts, rubies and emeralds – the *Gem Bank & Gemmological Museum* has dozens of temptations in store for you – you will be delighted even if your jewellery box is already overflowing and it doesn't cost anything to have a look → p. 73

● *Grey giants at no cost*

If you want to see wild elephants in the national parks, you will have to dig deep into your pockets to pay the entrance fees. That is not the case in the *Lahugala-Kitulana National Park*. There, you will be able to admire the pachyderms free of charge from the A4 national road; they usually gather around the reservoirs → p. 91

● ● ● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of ...' tips

ONLY IN SRI LANKA

Unique experiences

● *Sri Lanka on the tip of your tongue*

The first culinary highlight of the day is a typical Sri Lankan breakfast. Especially tasty string hoppers – lacework of noodles made with rice flour – various curries and other delicacies are served in the Veranda Restaurant of the *Galle Face Hotel* in Colombo → p. 41

● *Lush tropical flair*

Experience the botanical diversity of this tropical island on a stroll through the *Peradeniya Botanical Gardens* near Kandy. More than 4000 different plant species and 10,000 giant trees flourish on the 153 acre complex (photo) → p. 69

● *Pilgrimage in airy heights*

At an altitude of 2243 m/7359 ft *Adam's Peak* may not be the highest mountain on Sri Lanka but it is the most sacred. Take your place in the endless stream of pilgrims to see the spectacular sunrise over the mountain landscape from the summit. However, to do this, you will have to leave the comfort of your bed just after midnight → p. 71

● *Elephant processions in the winter*

These take place every year at full moon in January in the *Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara*, a Buddhist place of pilgrimage in the east of Colombo, and around the *Gangaramaya Monastery* in the heart of the island's metropolis on the full moon night one month later → p. 38

● *A hike to the end of the world*

Your hike on *Horton Plains*, a high plateau that is a Unesco World Heritage Site, will take you through a unique landscape of rhododendron bushes and tree ferns and, if the weather is fine, you will have a wonderful view of the plain below from *World's End* → p. 72

● *Drummed to prayer*

Three times a day traditionally dressed drummers summon visitors to the one-hour ceremony in the famous *Temple of the Tooth* in Kandy and the faithful stream to the open shrine on the first floor to pay honour to the relic – one of Buddha's eye-teeth → p. 64



ONLY IN



DISCOVERY TOURS

1 SRI LANKA AT A GLANCE



START: ① Colombo
END: ② Negombo

20 days
Driving time
approx. 32 hours

Distance:
→ approx. 1800 km/1118 mi



COSTS: approx. 460,000 Sri Lankan rupees / 2 people (car hire approx. 145,000 Sri Lankan rupees, approx. 195,000 Sri Lankan rupees accommodation in a 4 or 5-star hotels, approx. 40,000 Sri Lankan rupees admission charges, approx. 80,000 Sri Lankan rupees meals)

WHAT TO PACK: Hiking boots, swimming things

This round tour will give you a comprehensive impression of the island's diversity. Not only will you get to know the west and south coasts with their popular beaches, but you will also visit the deep-green highlands and the cultural triangle, which is steeped in history. Thanks to the improved road conditions, you can now also travel easily to the east coast and the rarely-visited north.

Would you like to explore the places that are unique to this island? Then the Discovery Tours are just the thing for you – they include terrific tips for stops worth making, breathtaking places to visit, selected restaurants and fun activities. It's even easier with the Touring App: download the tour with map and route to your smartphone using the QR Code on pages 2/3 or from the website address in the footer below – and you'll never get lost again even when you're offline.



→ p. 2/3

The capital ① Colombo → p. 33 is the perfect place to start the three-week round trip of the island. Stroll through multicultural Pettah, and relax at the **Galle Face Hotel** with views of the ocean. You will continue to have the Indian Ocean in your sight on the next day, as you travel the **coast road heading south**. How about a night on the beach, perhaps at the chic **Vivanta By Taj Resort** at ② Bentota → p. 46? As you travel on, the highly historic fort of ③ Galle → p. 50 with its defence walls, lovely alleys and cafés is an absolute highlight.

DAY 1	① Colombo	📱 🌳 🏨
DAY 2	② Bentota	🚗
DAY 3	③ Galle	📱 🍵 🏨