SRI LANKA

DETAILED ITINERARY

Sep 15/26

Encounter the magic of Sri Lanka - the island nation formerly known as Ceylon that is once again open to visitors. Coastlines give way to a cool and rugged mountainous interior. Magnificent archaeological sites, ancient kingdoms and forests teeming with wildlife - Sri Lanka promises an adventure packed with diversity, wildlife and culture.

ElderTreks' adventure to Sri Lanka has been designed to highlight the natural and cultural wonders of this exotic island nation. Explore the national parks, archaeological sites, cascading waterfalls and lush tropical jungles. Search for leopards on game safaris and for blue, fin and orca whales off of the islands southern coast. Listen to the delightful sounds of the exotic birds along our nature walks. Sri Lanka's natural heritage is sure to impress. Our adventure also maximizes interaction with local people. Visit tea plantations, craft villages, spice markets and local schools. The people of Sri Lanka are welcoming, vibrant and eager to show you their way of life.

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

• 19 days • Maximum 16 travelers • Start and finish in Colombo, Sri Lanka • In 3 national Parks (including Yala), search for leopards, elephants, sloth bears, crocodiles, monkeys and a myriad of birds • Explore ancient capitals of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa • Explore Dambulla Cave Temple and Buddhist pilgrimage sites • Hike Horton Plains and Sigiriya citadel • Enjoy a whale watching excursion searching for blue whales • Explore the cultural capital of Kandy (UNESCO)

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Oct 25 - Nov 12, 2027	-	**$6995 USD**
Oct 23 - Nov 10, 2028	-	**$6995 USD**

Activity Level: **3**

Comfort Level: Some long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable hotels with private bathrooms.

Come a little closer - the air is fragrant with the scent of jasmine and temple flowers. Mysterious and exotic Sri Lanka awaits you!

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN COLOMBO, TRANSFER TO NEGOMBO

Welcome to Sri Lanka! Upon arrival at the airport in Colombo, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. There may be time to take a stroll around the surrounding area, which is nestled in lush tropical foliage. Tonight, you will meet the rest of the group and enjoy your first delicious dinner.

Overnight in Negombo.

DAY 2 BOAT RIDE ON NEGOMBO LAGOON, CITY TOUR OF NEGOMBO

This morning, we will savor the sights and sounds of life in Sri Lanka as we explore the idyllic Negombo Lagoon during a private and unique cruising experience on the smooth waters of one of Sri Lanka's largest coastal lagoons. Escape the hustle and bustle of Negombo town on an hour and half boat ride, showing you the fishing methods and conservation of the lagoon. We then continue to the local fish market by the sea, to see the fishermen selling fresh fish to the locals.

In the afternoon, we will explore the city of Negombo, which lies in the heart of Sri Lanka's fishing industry region. We will visit the Dutch Fort, Hindu Temple and St. Sebastian's Catholic Cathedral before dinner.

Overnight in Negombo.

Sigiriya Rock Fortress

DAY 3 TO HABARANA

Today we depart for Habarana, our homebase for the next 2 nights. We will stop for lunch enroute. After checking in to our comfortable accommodation, we can enjoy an optional village walk.

Overnight in Habarana.

DAY 4 MEDIEVAL CAPITAL OF POLONNARUWA, MINNERIYA NATIONAL PARK - JEEP SAFARI

After breakfast, we will travel to Polonnaruwa and visit the ancient city. Polonnaruwa, the 2nd capital city of Sri Lanka, was built in the 11th and 12th centuries AD and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here you can see the ruins of the Royal Palace and Gal Viharaya, where 4 splendid statues of the Buddha in 'Upright', 'Sedentary' and 'Recumbent' postures are carved out of rock. We will also see the Audience Hall, the Lotus Bath, the statue of King Parakramabahu, and the Parakrama Samudraya - a lake built by King Parakramabahu the Great. There are also monuments of famous places of worship such as the Shiva Temple, the Lankathilake, the Watadage, the Galpotha, the Kiri Vehera and the remains of a former Temple of the Tooth Relic. On the way back to our hotel we will have a chance to stop at a wood carving shop where you will see a variety of wood crafts available from local carvers.

Dambulla Cave Temple

In the afternoon, enjoy a safari to either Minneriya or Kawudulla National Parks, depending on migration patterns of the elephants. Keep an eye out for monkeys, deer, crocodiles and a great variety of birds. Minneriya National Park is popular as the world largest gathering place of wild Asian Elephants. If we are lucky, we may encounter a large herd of elephants.

Overnight in Habarana.

DAY 5 SIGIRIYA ROCK FORTRESS, TO ANURADHAPURA

After breakfast and while the weather is cooler, we will climb the Sigiriya Rock Fortress.

Sigiriya is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, built by King Kashyapa in 477-495 AD. The "Lion Rock" is a citadel of unusual beauty, rising 656 feet (200 meters) from the scrub jungle. The rock was the innermost stronghold of the 70-hectare fortified town. A moat, rampart, and extensive gardens, including the renowned water gardens, ring the base of the rock. One of the highlights during the climb is to see the world-renowned frescoes of the "Heavenly Maiden" of Sigiriya, which are in a sheltered pocket of the rock approached by a spiral stairway. These frescoes are painted in earth pigments on plaster.

After lunch, we depart for Anuradhapura, the first capital of Sri Lanka. In the late afternoon, enjoy the environment of our lovely accommodations.

Overnight in Anuradhapura.

DAY 6 ANCIENT CAPITAL OF ANURADHAPURA, WILPATTU NATIONAL PARK - JEEP SAFARI

The sacred city of Anuradhapura, founded in the 3rd century BC, is venerated as the capital city of Buddhism. The sacred Bo Tree, grown from a sapling of the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, is the oldest living tree in documented history. In its vicinity are the remains of the Brazen Palace, the towering Ruwanveliseya Dagaba, the Seated Samadhi Buddha, temples, palaces and parks, all of which bear testimony to a proud and imaginative people. A mere eight miles away is Mihintale, the cradle of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It is a mountain monastery connected with Arahat Mahinda, who brought Buddhism to the island in 247 BC.

In the afternoon, we visit Wilpattu National Park to search for a vast array of wildlife including elephants and leopards.

Overnight near Wilpattu National Park.

DAY 7 DAMBULLA CAVE TEMPLE (UNESCO), TO ELKADUWA

On our way to Elkaduwa we visit Dambulla Cave Temple, which is one of the most important sites of Buddhist pilgrimage. This temple was built by King Walagambahu in the 1st century B.C. and is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is easily the most impressive of Sri Lanka's many cave temples. The complex of five caves with over 21,528 sq. feet (2000 sq. meters) of painted walls and ceilings is the largest area of paintings found in the world. It contains over 150 images of the Buddha, of which the largest is the colossal figure of the Buddha carved out of rock and spanning 46 feet (14 meters).

We will enjoy a stop at a spice garden enroute to Elkaduwa. Here you can learn about medicinal plants and medicines and maybe even enjoy a foot massage.

Our afternoon ends in the peaceful setting amidst acres of tea and spice plantations, where you can relax by the pool or wander the beautiful grounds, rich with bird life and stunning vistas. This is our base hotel for our two hikes the next day.

Overnight in Elkaduwa.

Sigiriya Cave Paintings

DAY 8 SIMPSON TRAIL HIKE

This morning we head off on a hike along the Simpson Trail. The Simpson Forest is a small sub montane forest patch in the Hunnasgiriya Mountain Range that was named after a former planter. Our hike takes us through a tea plantation and habitat for the giant squirrel, the blue Mormon and tree nymph butterflies. We visit a local village along the way, and if school is in session we may also be able to meet some of the local children. We will have lunch at the ruins of the former Simpson house.

We finish up back at the hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure to rest your muscles with a massage or a soak in the pool. For those who do not want to do these hikes, the entire day is at leisure to enjoy the hotel grounds.

Please note: participation on these hikes is optional and the timing is flexible.

Overnight in Elkaduwa.

DAY 9 SACRED AND CULTURAL CENTER OF KANDY (UNESCO)

We say goodbye to the beautiful mountain views as we travel down to Kandy, which was the last capital of the Sri Lankan Kings and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site today. We will start our exploration with a walk around the town, visiting the local underground bazaars and craft centers. There will be plenty of opportunity on our walking tour to sample some of the local treats. We will visit a gem museum before lunch. In the afternoon, we will visit a batik factory to see how this amazing art form is made, followed by a lapidary factory to learn how gems are so important to this little town (anyone who prefers not to shop in the afternoon has the option of returning to the hotel after lunch). In the evening, we will enjoy a traditional dance/cultural show before dinner.

Overnight in Kandy.

DAY 10 THE TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH RELIC, TO NUWARA ELIYA HILL STATION

Before leaving Kandy, we visit The Temple of the Tooth Relic (Sri Dalada Maligawa), one of the most sacred

places of worship in the Buddhist world. Witness the local people praying and worshipping in this important temple, which houses Sri Lanka's most important Buddhist relic - a sacred tooth of the Buddha.

After our temple visit, we depart for Nuwara Eliya - the most famous hill station in Sri Lanka. Enroute you will see manicured tea plantations and picturesque waterfalls tumbling down hillsides as we travel through the center of Sri Lanka's tea industry.

Upon arrival in Nuwara Eliya, enjoy a short city tour ending with a cocktail at Gregory Lake.

Overnight in Nuwara Eliya.

DAY 11 HORTON PLAINS NATIONAL PARK

This morning we visit the cloud forests of Horton Plains National Park. It is an area of beautiful grasslands interspersed with patches of forest and unique high altitude vegetation. We trek along the escarpment to the famous World's End, where the plateau comes to a sudden end and makes a dramatic 2887 ft (880 meter) drop.

On a clear day, you can see in the distance a shimmering streak of water, which is the Indian Ocean more than 50 miles away. This is a longer hike today with some difficult terrain. For those who choose not to hike this wonderful trail you have the day free to relax and wander the small town and its markets. During our hike, we will have a guide, assistant and park ranger to assist with knowledge or even a helping hand.

In the evening we will see firsthand how a tea plantation works with a tour of a working tea factory and finishing with a tasting of the local product.

Overnight in Nuwara Eliya.

DAY 12 MOUNTAIN TRAIN TO ELLA

After breakfast, we proceed to the train station to take the local train to Ella. This is a wonderful way to see the countryside of rolling hills and gives us a chance to interact with the local people who take this train daily. Our bus will be waiting for us at the Ella train station to take us to the hotel for a relaxing evening.

The views from our hotel are impressive. This is the perfect place to relax and enjoy the scenery or to enjoy an excursion to 9 Arch Bridge and a hike to Mini Adam's Peak.

Overnight in Ella.

Aukana Buddha

DAY 13 YALA NATIONAL PARK - LEOPARD SAFARI

Today we drive down to the lowlands to Yala National Park enjoy spectacular scenery along the way. Upon arrival at our lodge, we have some free time to enjoy the pool and the animals that roam free through the lodge.

This evening we will enjoy an evening game drive in search for the famous leopard. Yala has one of the highest densities of leopards in the world and provides an excellent opportunity to view these animals in the wild.

Overnight just outside of Yala National Park.

DAY 14 YALA MORNING SAFARI, LEGEND OF KIRINDA, SRI LANKA'S SOUTHERN COAST

We have an early rise this morning as we enjoy another game drive in search of the leopard and other wildlife including the elephant, sloth bear, mugger crocodile, spotted deer, barking deer, wild boar, wild buffalo and mongoose.

After our safari, we drive west along Sri Lanka's stunning southern coast. Enroute, we stop at a Kirinda temple with a romantic legend that dates back 2,000 years.

Later, we depart for Ahangama, which is the starting point for our whale watching excursion early tomorrow morning.

Overnight in Ahangama.

DAY 15 WHALE WATCHING, STILT FISHERMEN

We have an early start this morning, as we board our boat and go in search of the incredible blue whales – the largest creatures on Earth. The southern coast of Sri Lanka is certainly one of the best places on our planet to see these majestic, massive and beautiful creatures. In addition to our search for the elusive blue whale, you should also be on the lookout for fin whales, sei whales, sperm whales, orcas (killer whales), dolphins, flying fish, turtles, manta rays and whale sharks, which swim in the waters off the south coast of Sri Lanka.

After our great whale excursion, we will return to our hotel, but first we will stop to see the stilt fisherman on the way. This is a traditional method of fishing that is unfortunately becoming obsolete, but is still fascinating to watch.

This afternoon, you can enjoy some free time to walk along the stunning coast, explore the village of Ahangama on your own or simply relax and enjoy swimming in the ocean or poolside.

Overnight in Ahangama.

DAY 16 TRAIN TO GALLE, GALLE FORT (UNESCO)

This morning we board a train for Galle, formerly the Port of Sri Lanka, with its historic Galle Fort.

On our way, we will hear first-hand how the tsunami in 2004 impacted this area and how it has now become a lush and beautiful place to live.

We disembark our train in Galle. Originally built by the Portuguese (1588) and later extended by the Dutch in 1663, this impressive UNESCO World Heritage Site covers an area of 90 acres and is made up of fortifications and historic buildings, as well as restaurants, cathedrals and shops.

Overnight in Galle.

DAY 17 TO COLOMBO

Today we travel further up the coast to Colombo, stopping to enjoy a leisurely visit to Kosgoda where we will visit a turtle hatchery which is being operated by the Wild Life Protection Society of Sri Lanka. Several species of turtles, including the endangered hawksbill, are protected here. The most vulnerable are the turtle eggs, which are left uncovered on beaches all around the coast. The goodwill of Kosgoda-area fishermen, who bring these eggs to the hatchery, has led to the hatching and releasing back to the ocean of over 100,000 young turtles since the hatchery opened a few years ago.

We will continue our drive to reach Colombo before dinner, and have a relaxing evening at our historic hotel overlooking the ocean in Sri Lanka's largest city.

Overnight in Colombo.

DAY 18 COLOMBO SITES

After breakfast, we will set out to visit the Colombo Museum. This will show us the full story of how Sri Lanka became the teardrop of India. Go back in time with the wonderful displays that show how the kings lived centuries ago.

In the afternoon, our tuk tyuks (local taxis) will be waiting to take us on a tour of the city. Colombo, like many capital cities in developing countries, is fast changing its face. Almost overnight, skyscrapers arose from where old buildings once stood. Yet in some parts, the old warm charm is retained and can be seen in the 100-year-old clock tower and several British built colonial buildings. We will traverse the cross streets of Petta to check out the local markets.

Tonight we will enjoy our farewell dinner.

Overnight in Colombo.

DAY 19 DEPART COLOMBO

The incredible sights and sounds of Sri Lanka are now ours to savor, as we bid a fond farewell to this exotic island nation. The day is free until transfer to the airport for your onward flight home.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE "EDUCATIONAL" TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, "educational". We visit museums, National Parks, and Reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of history, culture and nature. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to get to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most "educational" moments are spent sipping a cold drink in a street-market.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We have our own air-conditioned minivans or microbuses for road travel. We will also travel by boat and train. In Yala National Park we will have front seating open-sided safari jeeps.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We always stay in both hotels and lodges, where rooms have a private bath or shower.

7. WHAT ARE THE MEALS LIKE?

All meals are included, starting with dinner on day 1, and finishing with breakfast on departure day. Our breakfasts will be prepared at the guesthouse or hotel, other meals will be served in local restaurants where you can always find a full selection of vegetables, chicken, beef or seafood. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share.

8. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Sri Lanka has a tropical climate. The best times of the year to visit are the northern spring and fall which avoids the seasonal monsoons. The average temperature in Colombo is 77°F (25°C) and in Nuwara Eliya is 61°F (16°C). The coastal regions are generally warmer but still receive cool ocean breezes while the highlands are cooler.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit

10. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of $500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment in full of the land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the "Terms and Conditions" section of our brochure.

11. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TRIP?

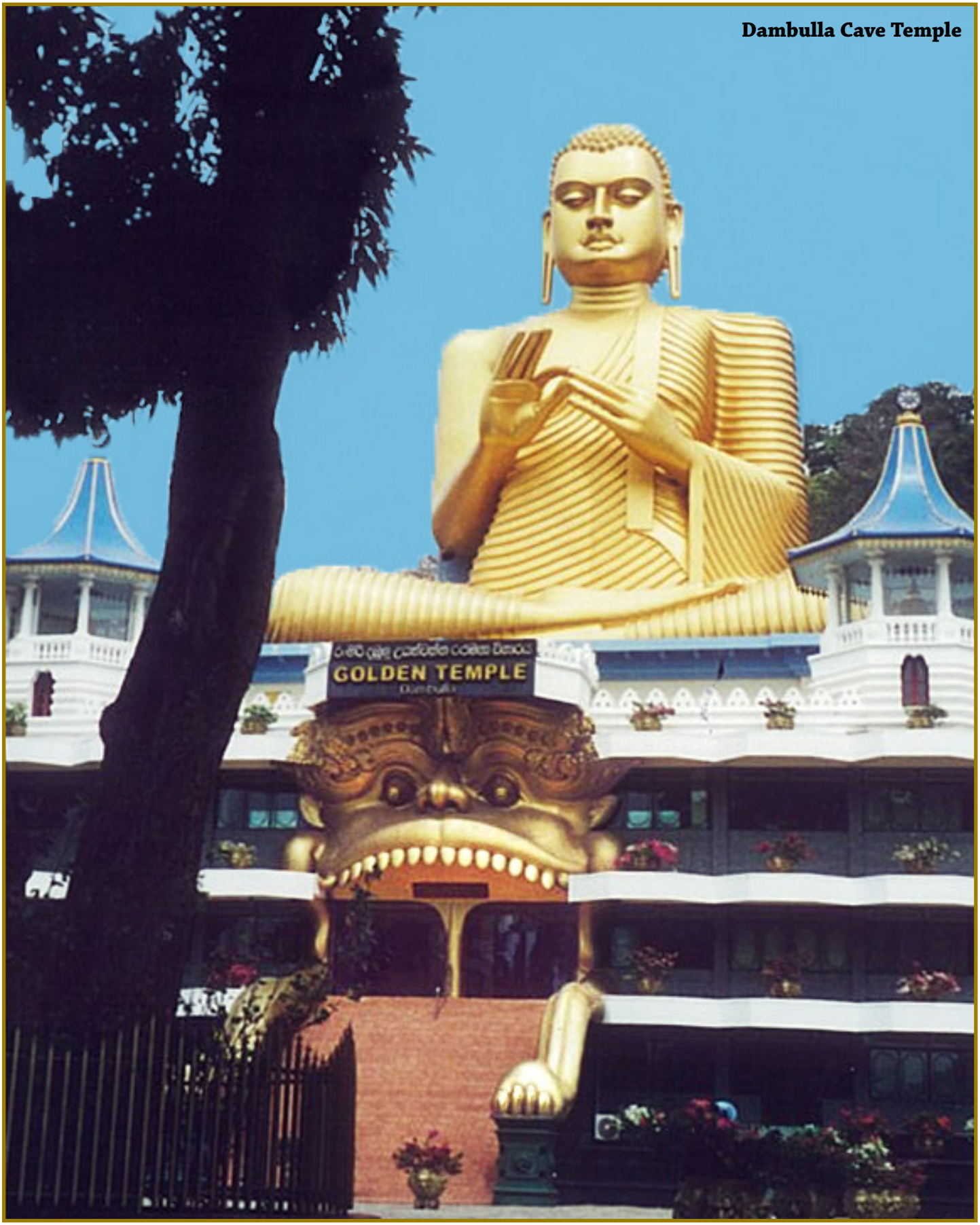
There is a detailed "What to Take" list in our Trip Kit which we will send to you after receiving your booking deposit for the trip.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries - not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please feel free to contact our office for additional information. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.



Dambulla Cave Temple