



India & Sri Lanka Convention Tour

13 days

Southern India and Sri Lanka invite you into a world of vibrant color, deep spirituality, and lush natural beauty—where ancient traditions meet tropical tranquility. Begin your journey in dynamic Delhi before flying south to Kochi, where spice-laden breezes and coastal charm welcome you to a slower, more immersive pace. Then, cross into Sri Lanka to explore the sacred cave temples of Dambulla, spot elephants in the wilds of Minneriya National Park, and wander the ancient ruins of Polonnaruwa. Continue on to Kandy, where fragrant spice plantations and rhythmic drumming fill the air, before concluding your adventure in the lively coastal capital of Colombo. As you travel on this Convention Tour, uncover how South India and Sri Lanka's layered histories, spiritual traditions, and stunning landscapes come together to form a universe of cultural multitudes—alongside fellow Group Coordinators and Go Ahead staff.



Your tour package includes

- 10 nights in handpicked hotels
- 10 breakfasts
- 8 lunches
- 7 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 liquor tasting
- 3 food tastings
- 1 cooking class
- 12 sightseeing tours
- 1 game drive
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 2 on-tour flights

Included highlights

- Convention Tour meeting
- Jama Masjid in Old Delhi
- Humayun's Tomb in New Delhi
- Sikh community kitchen
- Kathakali dance performance
- Mattancherry Palace
- Minneriya National Park game drive
- Traditional Paduru party
- Sri Lankan home-hosted dinner
- Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy
- Kandy street food tour
- Pilimathalawa village walk

Tour pace

You will walk for about 3 hours daily across moderately uneven terrain, including paved roads, dirt paths, cobblestone streets, and uneven temples, with some hills and stairs.

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Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Delhi today.

Delhi → 3 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Delhi

Welcome to India! After arriving in Delhi, make the short transfer to your hotel with your group. You'll touch down later in the evening, so use the rest of your day to settle into your room, grab a bite to eat at your hotel, catch up on sleep, and look forward to the rest of your journey.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Old Delhi

Included meals: breakfast, welcome dinner

Finish shaking off that jet lag during a leisurely morning spent in the comfort of your hotel. Then, meet up with your Tour Director and set out for Old Delhi. Built on the order of Shah Jahan, the fifth Mughal emperor, this walled city was dubbed Shahjahanabad upon its completion in 1648 and served as the capital of Mughal India for over 200 years. Wind through its narrow lanes, admiring the rows of colorful street vendors and the blend of Persian, Indian, and Turkish architecture, on a guided sightseeing tour.

- See the black marble pedestal and eternal flame of Raj Ghat, an enduring tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, built on the site of his cremation. Then, visit a nearby museum dedicated to the "Father of the Nation," filled with photographs and books documenting his life.
- Tour the exterior of Jama Masjid, the former imperial mosque of the Mughals. Immediately recognizable by its twin sandstone minarets and three onion-like domes, this immense marble structure is one of Delhi's most iconic sites. Enjoy a reverent moment with your thoughts as you take in its courtyard.
- Split into groups and get ready to crank up the volume—and speed—on a rickshaw ride through Chandni Chowk. Since opening in

the 17th century, this market has ballooned into one of the largest in India. Zip through the streets of the "Moonlight Square," feeling awed by the sights, smells, and sounds of this bustling bazaar.

Wrap up your first full day in India with an included welcome dinner, served with beer or wine at a local restaurant.

Please note: Women will be given robes to wear over their clothes at Jama Masjid.

Day 4: Convention Tour meeting, Humayun's Tomb & the Bangla Sahib temple

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Join your group for a Convention Tour meeting, a series of presentations and discussions designed with Group Coordinators' questions, experiences, and interests in mind.

- Begin with a keynote address by senior members of Go Ahead Tours staff, followed by an insider's view of the company and tours.
- Gather with Go Ahead staff and your fellow Group Coordinators to discuss tour planning and best practices for filling your trips.
- Get an overview of the many benefits available to you as a Go Ahead Tours Group Coordinator and learn about program updates, from new app features to added perks.
- Enjoy coffee, tea, mineral water, and an included lunch.

After walking, driving, and rickshaw-riding through India's history yesterday, spend your afternoon getting to know the country's present in New Delhi. Built over a span of 20 years and inaugurated as the country's capital in 1931, it contains some of the nation's most significant cultural sites. Check them out as you traverse the district with your Tour Director.

- Visit Humayun's Tomb. Rising from an urban green space, the red sandstone walls of this UNESCO World Heritage Site pay striking homage to the eponymous 16th-century Mughal ruler. Enter the mausoleum and explore this prime example of Islamic architecture.
- Enter one of the holiest places in the Sikh faith: Gurudwara Bangla Sahib. Originally a bungalow belonging to a local king, it grew

from a small shrine to a gurudwara, or temple, associated with the eighth Sikh Guru, Har Krishan. Its Sarovar, or lake, is said to have healing properties, further highlighting the temple's spiritual importance.

- Learn about the history and traditions of Sikhism. This organized religion is the fifth-largest and one of the youngest in the world. It emphasizes the concept of seva—selfless service—and adherents at Gurudwara Bangla Sahib put it into practice each day. You'll see it in action at the langar, or community kitchen, where free meals are served 24 hours a day.

Kochi → 2 nights

Day 5: Flight to Kochi & cooking class

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Today, fly to Kochi (also known by its former name, Cochin), a major port city on the southwest coast of India and a significant trading hub for centuries, attracting merchants and explorers from around the world. It blends modernity with tradition and hosts visitors hopping between ancient landmarks, colonial architecture, and local eateries, offering delectable seafood dishes.

Continue to your hotel in Kochi and get settled in. Later this evening, join a cooking demonstration and home-hosted dinner starring some of Kerala's specialties.

Day 6: Sightseeing tour of Kochi & Kathakali dance performance

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Choose to enjoy a free morning to relax or take part in a meditative, complimentary yoga lesson at your hotel early this morning. Then, discover why Kochi is considered the finest jewel in Kerala's crown on today's sightseeing tour.

- Begin at Fort Cochin—a seaside neighborhood whose name belies its serenity. Formerly the site of the first European fort on Indian soil, the district now houses some of the oldest colonial architecture in the country.
- Enter Mattancherry Palace—the "Dutch

palace” built by the Portuguese and adorned with priceless Kerala murals—before moving on to the Santa Cruz Basilica. One of nine basilicas in India, its eggshell walls and Gothic styling immediately catch the eye.

- Make a stop at the oldest European church in India: St. Francis. Built in 1503, St. Francis Church was once the final resting place of Vasco da Gama. From there, walk to the equally significant Paradesi Synagogue. This Orthodox congregation is the oldest active synagogue in the Commonwealth of Nations; you’ll find time-worn gravestones inscribed in Hebrew in its cemetery.
- Continue through the Old City and stroll through the fantastically fragrant Spice Market, navigating its stalls with help from your Tour Director before ending with an included lunch at a local restaurant, served with beer or wine.

Tonight, join your group for a spellbinding Kathakali performance. Blending dance, music, grand costumes, and intricate makeup, Kathakali recounts episodes from Indian epics and folklore using expressive gestures and movements called mudras.

Dambulla → 2 nights

Day 7: Flight to Colombo, transfer to Dambulla & Minneriya National Park game drive

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Leave India behind and fly to Sri Lanka today, known as Ceylon during the country’s time under Dutch and British occupation. When you land in Colombo, you’ll forge on to Dambulla, a quiet town and sacred pilgrimage site—your launchpad for exploring the surrounding sites of Sri Lanka’s exuberant landscape.

After an included lunch, hop aboard a 4x4 safari vehicle and set off into Minneriya National Park, where you’ll have a chance to encounter the famed Asian elephant and other wildlife during an afternoon game drive. The park’s extensive grasslands, wetlands, and scrub forests also provide a habitat for 160 species of birds. Tonight, enjoy an included dinner served with beer or wine.

Please note: In the event water levels are too high in Minneriya National Park, the game drive will be moved to a different national park.

Day 8: Sightseeing tour of Polonnaruwa & Paduru party

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner, liquor

tasting

Uncover the historical and cultural heart of Polonnaruwa, which served as Sri Lanka’s capital from the 11th to the 13th century and is renowned for its archaeological treasures.

You’ll have plenty of time to explore the highlights, like the Royal Palace complex, for an insight into the governance and lifestyle of ancient royalty, as well as the Gal Vihara rock temple. The latter, a masterpiece of Sinhalese artistry, features four colossal statues of Buddha carved into a single granite rock face.

Wrap up your time in Polonnaruwa with an included lunch and enjoy Sri Lankan hospitality with a traditional home-cooked meal.

Tonight, take in the rich musical culture of the country during a Paduru party, a village tradition in Sri Lanka. In Sinhalese, “paduru” refers to a canopy and during the Paduru party, a canopy adorned with colorful decorations, flowers, and traditional embellishments is erected. Enjoy a feast of authentic dishes and savor a sip of arrack—a spirit made from fermented and distilled coconut sap that is aged in wooden barrels for at least three years. The liquor is rare in North America but common (and popular!) in Sri Lanka and India.

Kandy → 3 nights

Day 9: Kandy via Dambulla cave temple, spice garden & home-hosted dinner

Included meals: breakfast, tasting, lunch, dinner

Start the day with a visit to Dambulla’s claim to fame, the Dambulla Cave Temple, also known as the Golden Temple of Dambulla—a series of five caves painstakingly decorated with Buddhist murals and more than 150 statues of Buddha. It’s a profound spiritual experience amidst timeworn surroundings.

- Uncover the caves’ more than 2,000-year legacy as you gaze upon artwork spanning several centuries, some as old as the first century B.C. Of its many eye-popping highlights is the colossal reclining Buddha statue, almost 50 feet in length.
- Learn the lore of the temple’s sacred water pot, said to never run dry or overflow despite a constant supply of water from a small natural spring.
- Breathe in a heady bouquet of cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, mace, and vanilla with a visit to a spice garden, where you’ll take a short walk with a local guide and learn how these popular spices are grown, processed, and used in everything from cooking to medicine.

Gather for an included lunch before continuing your journey to Kandy, a historic and cultural treasure with a large collection of ancient temples, architecture, vibrant markets, and a holy relic of Buddha.

In the evening, you’ll be welcomed into the home of a local who lives in the tranquil, hilly outskirts of Kandy. This special home-hosted dinner offers an authentic glimpse into the Kandyan lifestyle, complete with a delicious, freshly prepared meal.

Day 10: Sightseeing tour of Kandy & street food tour

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, tasting

Set off for a morning of sightseeing as you get to know the bustling city of Kandy. From its perch amidst rolling green hills, surrounded by serene lakes and rivers, Kandy’s landscape is an idyllic backdrop for exploration.

- Enjoy a scenic drive along Kandy Lake, an artificial body of water built in the early 1800s by Sri Wickrama Rajasinha, the last ruler of the Kingdom of Kandy. Swaying in the breeze, you’ll see a vast canopy of palm, nuga, sal, and Mara trees.
- Shop for artisanal batik textiles and peruse the sparkling selection of gems in Kandy’s Market Square, where tourists and locals alike converge over stalls replete with fresh produce, spices, and colorful clothing.
- Hop into a tuk-tuk—a nimble three-wheeler designed to zip through narrow lanes—and head to the famous Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, one of the most holy Buddhist sites in the world. Venerated as a symbolic representation of the Buddha, the tooth relic supposedly grants its holder a divine right of governance over the land.

This afternoon, take a scenic walk from the ancient Gadaladeniya Temple and wind through a peaceful village hamlet. Along the way, you’ll meet traditional brass artisans whose craft dates back to the Kandyan Kingdom, and pass through lush paddy fields and local temples. The walk concludes at a vibrant dancing school, where you’ll enjoy an introduction to Kandyan dancing and drumming before gathering for an included lunch.

As the day winds down, dive into Kandy’s rich street food scene with a local guide who knows all the best spots. Explore bustling markets, sample fresh ingredients, sip on natural juices, and discover the flavors locals love most with a local guide leading the way.

Day 11: Village walk & farewell dinner

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, farewell dinner

With its rich heritage and peaceful landscapes, the village of Pilimathalawa offers a serene window into Sri Lanka's cultural heart. Today, set out on a guided walk through this historic town to experience its artistry and rhythm firsthand.

- Begin beside the ancient Gadadeniya Temple, a striking example of medieval Sinhalese architecture, and set off through a quiet village hamlet nestled in the hills.
- Stop to meet brass artisans whose intricate sculptures reflect centuries-old techniques passed down from the Kingdom of Gampola.
- Continue through emerald-green paddy fields and past local temples, soaking in the sights and sounds of village life.
- End your walk at a local dancing school, where you'll get a lively introduction to Kandyan drumming and dance traditions.
- Wrap up the morning with an included lunch at a nearby restaurant, enjoying regional flavors in a relaxed, local setting.

Tonight, come together and celebrate your trip with your fellow Group Coordinators during a farewell dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Arrive Home

Day 13: Arrival at home

Arrive home today.

Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 12: Transfer to Colombo, city walk & departure

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Return to Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital city and thriving metropolis, where you'll make your way around the city on a walk through colonial history and contemporary skyscrapers.

- Kick things off with an included lunch before meandering through Galle Face Green, a recreational hotspot in the city that stretches along the shoreline.
- Step inside the formidable Neo-Baroque-style Old Parliament Building, turned exquisite treasury, before continuing through the Fort area—the walled part of Colombo originally built by the Portuguese.
- Stroll through the Fort down Chatham Street—lined by shops, salons, mosques, and eateries, and surrounded by Victorian- and Edwardian-style buildings.
- End in the Pettah neighborhood, home to the city's largest market, where you'll have a last chance to bargain for textiles or ceramics.

Head to the hotel, where you'll enjoy an included dinner served with beer or wine. Then, relax in a day room before transferring to the airport for your overnight flight home.