



# KANDY ESALA FESTIVAL CULTURAL PHOTO TOUR

PHOTOGRAPHY FOCUSED ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES





## ABOUT THE TOUR COMPANY

We specialize in arranging unique photography tours in Sri Lanka, offering both professional and beginner photographers the chance to capture stunning photos and videos of local people and their lifestyles. Our tours include both candid and arranged photoshoots with local people at sunrise, sunset, or under perfect lighting conditions. In our specially arranged photo sessions, photographers are given the freedom to move or direct the scene as they wish, creating a fantastic setup for capturing stunning photos and videos. We have also built strong, long term relationships with local people in most of the areas we travel, which allows us to arrange photography sessions smoothly and respectfully. In addition, we arrange model release documents, obtain drone permits hassle free, organize transportation and hotel bookings, allowing photographers to travel comfortably across Sri Lanka and focus fully on capturing photos and videos with ease.



## ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR GUIDE

Saman Weeratunga is a travel photographer and videographer based in Kandy, the heart of Sri Lanka. He has a strong passion for photography and videography. His creative journeys have taken him across amazing countries such as Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Kenya, the Czech Republic, Singapore, and Malaysia. He has excellent knowledge of the people of Sri Lanka and understands the right timing and locations for people photography. Saman will guide you while traveling around Sri Lanka to capture stunning photos and videos of local people and their daily lives. As his strong connections with local communities make access easy, people are welcoming and cooperative. They are happy to take part in photography sessions, allowing you to capture authentic moments with confidence. If you are a beginner photographer, he will help you learn basic camera settings and controls. Ultimately, you will truly enjoy traveling around Sri Lanka with him while capturing amazing photos and videos.



## THE ADVANTAGES OF TRAVELING WITH US

We arrange private photo sessions, giving photographers the freedom to move freely and direct the scene as they wish, creating the perfect setup for capturing stunning photos and videos.

We take photographers to hidden locations away from tourist spots, giving them complete freedom to capture their own images without disturbances or unwanted people in the frame, allowing for uninterrupted photography.

We have strong local connections built over years of photography tours. These relationships allow us to arrange special sunrise photo sessions at usually inaccessible locations. Speaking the local language and understanding the culture is an advantage, allowing us to communicate effectively, earn trust, and work directly for portrait photography in ways foreign guides cannot.



## THE ESSENTIAL CAMERA GEAR CHECKLIST

Camera body: DSLR Or mirrorless camera with versatile zoom lenses.

Drone: Great for aerial shots, as we handle all permits hassle free for flying.

Tripod: Essential for stability, especially in low light conditions or for long exposure shots.

Filters: Neutral density filters, polarizing filters, or graduated filters to control light and enhance your shots.

Portable lighting: Depending on your photography style, consider bringing portable lights or reflectors for added creativity.

Black background drop cloth: Ideal for close up portraits.



## THE HASSLE FREE DRONE CLEARANCE

We handle all the hassle of obtaining official clearance for drone flights in Sri Lanka. We understand the complexities of navigating regulations from multiple authorities, including the civil aviation authority, central cultural fund, and department of archaeology. Also, obtaining drone permissions for archaeological sites such as Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa can be particularly challenging due to strict regulations designed to preserve these historical treasures. We take the burden off your shoulders by managing all the paperwork and coordination, ensuring swift approval so you can fly your drone smoothly and hassle free during your travel period. Finally, it's not only for landscape aerial drone shots, you can also use your drone for aerial portraits, capturing unique views of stilt fishermen, tea pluckers, and Vedda indigenous people, creating unforgettable photography experiences.



## CHALLENGES IN PERAHERA PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography of the Kandy Esala Perahera procession is always dynamic and requires adaptability. Thousands of local people gather in the narrow streets of Kandy to watch the procession, so the scene is constantly changing, making photography an ever-moving challenge. The two photography sessions of the Kandy Esala Perahera will be conducted on the street, as it is very close to the procession and allows for eye-level photography. There is no proper seating on the street, so photography must be done while standing among the local crowd or sitting on the street for approximately 3–4 hours. You may need to arrive early and stay under the sun during the day to secure a good spot for eye-level photography without obstruction from local spectators. Please note that there are no proper toilet facilities on the street. We hope you are ready to embrace these dynamic conditions and capture amazing photographs of this beautiful, sacred procession, during this iconic cultural festival experience.



**TWENTY SEATER BUS**  
**FOR 05 - 15 PASSENGERS**

# PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR ITINERARY - 11 DAYS

## DAY 01

Arrival

Overnight Stay In Negombo

## DAY 02

Fishing Village In Negombo (Morning)

Traveling From Negombo To Kandy (4-Hour Drive)

Kandy Esala Perahera (Night)

Overnight Stay In Kandy

## DAY 03

Hotel Relaxation In Kandy

Kandy Esala Perahera (Night)

Overnight Stay In Kandy

## DAY 04

Traveling From Kandy To Minneriya (5-Hour Drive)

Jeep Safari At Minneriya National Park (Evening)

Overnight Stay In Sigiriya

## DAY 05

Ancient Rock Fortress In Sigiriya (Sunrise)

Dambulla Cave Temple In Dambulla (Afternoon)

Traveling From Sigiriya To Polonnaruwa (1-Hour Drive)

Lake Fishermen In Polonnaruwa (Sunset)

Overnight Stay In Polonnaruwa

## DAY 06

Ancient Ruins And Monks In Polonnaruwa (Sunrise)

Traveling From Polonnaruwa To Mahiyanganaya (3-Hour Drive)

Kottu Roti Maker In Mahiyanganaya (Night)

Overnight Stay In Mahiyanganaya

# PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR ITINERARY - 11 DAYS

## DAY 07

Sri Lanka's Indigenous Veddas' In Dambana (Morning)  
Traveling From Mahiyanganaya To Haputale (4-Hour Drive)  
Nine Arches Bridge In Ella (Evening)  
Overnight Stay In Haputale

## DAY 08

Tea Pluckers In Haputale (Sunrise)  
Tea Workers's Village In Haputale (Morning)  
A Tuk Tuk Ride Through Green Valley In Haputale (Morning)  
People With Mist On The Streets In Haputale (Evening)  
Overnight Stay In Haputale

## DAY 09

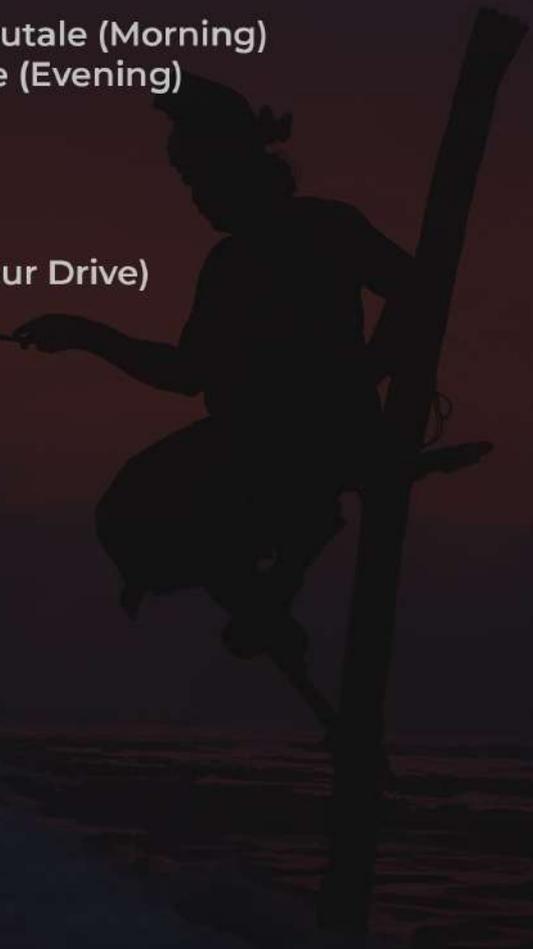
Traveling From Haputale To Weligama (5-Hour Drive)  
Beach Relaxation In Weligama  
Stilt Fishermen In Koggala (Sunset)  
Overnight Stay In Weligama

## DAY 10

Beach Relaxation In Weligama  
Stilt Fishermen In Koggala (Sunset)  
Overnight Stay In Weligama

## DAY 11

Departure





# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## **Kandy Esala Perahera Procession In Kandy**

This is one of Sri Lanka's most famous cultural festivals, held annually in the historic city of Kandy. It is conducted to honor the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha and to seek blessings for rain, prosperity, and peace. The festival takes place during the Esala full moon period and reflects centuries-old Buddhist traditions and royal rituals. The grand procession features beautifully decorated elephants, including the sacred casket carried on the lead elephant, along with traditional Kandyan dancers, drummers, whip crackers, fire dancers, and flag bearers. Torch bearers, musicians, and performers dressed in colorful traditional costumes add to the majestic atmosphere.



# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## Sri Lanka's Indigenous Veddas' In Dambana

The Vedda people are one of the oldest ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, known for their unique culture, hunting practices, and traditions dating back to before the 6th century BCE. Today, they live in regular houses and huts, with only a few still maintaining the traditional long hair, attire, and beards. This session is set up with a few Indigenous people for a photo session in their small hut and the surrounding area, which is away from the regular touristic Vedda village nearby, where no tourists are around. This is an organized photo session capturing the aboriginal appearance of the Veddas and their traditional culture.



# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## Stilt Fishermen In Koggala

Stilt fishing is a method unique to the island of Sri Lanka. Fishermen sit on a crossbar tied to a vertical pole driven into the sand a few meters offshore. This technique is mainly practiced during March to April when fish are abundant. This session is set up with a few stilt fishermen, selecting the best poles to sit against the sunrise or sunset to create a perfect silhouette, while also ensuring a steady position for long exposure photographs of the fishermen and the still water. This is an organized photo session capturing traditional fishermen in silhouette style and their fishing method at dusk or dawn with colorful sky lights.



# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## **Ancient Ruins And Monks In Polonnaruwa**

The Ancient City of Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka is a historic site that was once the capital of the country during the 11th to 13th centuries. It is known for its well preserved ruins, including palaces, temples, and statues. This session is set up with special permission from the Department of Archaeology to enter the ruins at sunrise, with no tourists allowed at this time, and includes featuring young Buddhist monks for the photo session. This is an organized photo session capturing ancient architecture of Sri Lanka, adding liveliness to the ruins by photographing young Buddhist monks in front of them.



# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## **Fishing Village In Negombo**

Negombo fishing village is a small, bustling coastal village with a lot of fishing activities in the morning. Each morning, the beach comes alive as fishermen return with their catches, which are then laid out for sorting, drying, or selling at the local fish market. Colorful boats dot the shoreline, and fishing nets are spread out to dry under the sun, adding to the village's charm. The market is especially lively, with locals haggling over a variety of fish. This is a candid photo session capturing the fishing village's vibrant atmosphere, focusing on the actions of fishermen and the emotions reflected in their close-up faces.



## PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

### Tea Pluckers On Tea Field In Dambethenna

The task of plucking tea is traditionally done by women, who expertly pluck by hand to ensure the highest quality of leaves. Hand plucking allows workers to select only the top two leaves and a bud from the tea plant. The work is physically demanding, as tea pluckers spend long hours in the fields, moving through rows of bushes. In Sri Lanka, pluckers gather 15 to 20 kilograms of tea leaves daily. This is a candid photo session capturing the portraits of tea pluckers in the tea fields, showcasing their colorful clothes and traditional tea plucking methods used to process Ceylon tea.



## PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

### Tea Workers' Village In Dambethenna

Sri Lankan tea workers are primarily Indian Tamils, brought by the British during the colonial period to work on plantations. Many of these workers were transported from southern India to meet the labor demands of the burgeoning tea industry, which became a major export commodity. Today, the descendants of these laborers continue to reside in tea plantation villages, often among the most economically deprived areas in the country. This is a candid photo session capturing close up portraits of the villagers, especially children, who live in very basic line houses that provide a colorful backdrop.



## PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

### Jeep Safari At Minneriya National Park In Minneriya (Half Day Safari)

Minneriya national park, where you'll witness the splendid sight of around 80 to 100 majestic Sri Lankan elephants gathering in grass fields and near the reservoir. As you traverse the park's landscapes, you'll encounter herds of elephants, often led by protective matriarchs, surrounded by playful calves who stick close to their mothers for guidance and safety. As evening falls, the elephants become more active, engaging in playful displays, trumpeting, and socializing with one another. This unique safari offers an unforgettable opportunity to observe these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat.



# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## **Dambulla Cave Temple In Dambulla**

The Dambulla Cave Temple is a historic Buddhist temple complex in Sri Lanka. The ancient temple dates back over 2,000 years and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its cultural and architectural significance. Located atop a large granite rock, it consists of five main caves filled with impressive statues, murals, and religious paintings. The statues include 153 Buddhas, four gods, and three of Sri Lanka's ancient kings, crafted in varying styles and sizes. These artworks depict Buddha's life, historical events, and religious stories, covering walls and ceilings with vibrant, detailed colors.



# PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

## **People With Mist On The Streets In Haputale**

The streets of Haputale in the evening are wrapped in a soft, drifting mist, creating a magical and mysterious atmosphere. Busy people walk along the lanes, their figures partially hidden in the fog, adding life and movement to the scene. The mist softens the lights and colors, turning ordinary street scenes into dramatic, almost cinematic views. Locals go about their evening routines, passing small shops, cafés, and homes, while the haze adds depth and texture to every corner. Street vendors call out softly as they pack up for the day, and the scent of fresh tea and street food lingers in the cool air, blending perfectly with surroundings.



# SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

## Ancient Rock Fortress In Sigiriya

The Ancient Rock Fortress in Sigiriya, Sri Lanka, is a remarkable historical site built on a massive granite rock. This fortress, also known as Lion Rock, dates back to the 5th century and was once a royal palace. It is famous for its impressive frescoes and large lion statue at the entrance. The site is also home to ancient inscriptions, mirror walls, and pathways that provide insight into the lives of those who once inhabited it. The top of the rock offers stunning views of the surrounding landscape, making it a unique architectural marvel. Sigiriya is also recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



## SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

### A Tuk Tuk Ride Through Green Valley In Haputale

The Tuk Tuk ride through the green valley in Haputale offers a unique experience with stunning natural beauty. The small, open vehicle provides an up close view of the surrounding landscapes, from mist covered mountains to neatly arranged tea plantations. As the Tuk Tuk winds through narrow roads, you feel a cool breeze, and with every turn, a picturesque scene is revealed. The gentle bouncing over uneven roads adds to the thrill, while the friendly driver shares stories about the area. The ride passes through tea workers' villages, where you observe daily routines and see school kids walking to school.



# SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

## Temple Of The Tooth Relic In Kandy

The temple of the tooth relic is one of Sri Lanka's most sacred Buddhist sites, housing a revered tooth relic of Lord Buddha. Built in the 16th century, the temple architecture showcases traditional Kandyan craftsmanship, with intricate wood carvings, golden canopies, and detailed paintings depicting Buddhist themes. The relic is enshrined in a golden casket within the inner sanctum and can be viewed only during special rituals. As a UNESCO world heritage site, the temple of the tooth relic attracts both pilgrims and tourists from around the world, offering a serene environment for worship, connection.



# SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

## Nine Arches Bridge In Ella

A short hike to the Nine Arches Bridge, which was constructed during the British colonial era around 1921 and stands as a testament to the ingenuity of Sri Lankan and British engineers. What makes this bridge truly remarkable is its unique construction built entirely of bricks, stones, and cement, with not a single piece of steel used. According to local folklore, during World War I, steel supplies were redirected to the war effort, compelling the engineers to use locally sourced materials to complete this architectural marvel.



## SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

### Beach Relaxation In Mirissa or Weligama Beach

Enjoy a calm and beautiful beach with soft golden sand and clear blue water stretching along the coast. Gentle waves and fresh sea air make this place perfect for relaxing and slowing down. Many restaurants are located right on the beach, offering fresh seafood, local dishes, and simple international meals prepared daily. You can swim in the warm ocean, sit in the sun, take a peaceful walk along the shore, or relax while watching the sunset over the sea. Tall palm trees, small fishing boats, and friendly local life add to the peaceful and natural beach atmosphere, making it an ideal place to unwind and enjoy coastal life.

# PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR COST - 11 DAYS

Total cost of the photography tour **US\$ 2,900** per person

## INCLUDES

Hotel Accommodation On A Room Only Basis At 3 Star Hotels  
Air Conditioned Private Transport  
Photography Guide Service Fee  
Entrance Fee For The Attractions  
Entrance Fee For National Park  
Safari Jeep Charges (Only 3 persons per jeep)  
Kandy Esala Perahera Travel Expenses  
Veddas People's Photo Session Fee  
Stilt Fishermen Photo Session Fee  
Tea Pluckers Photo Session Fee  
Villages Photo Session Fee  
Tuk Tuk Charges From Haputale To Dambethenna & Return

## EXCLUDES

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Beverages  
Air Tickets And Visa Charges  
Kandy Esala Perahera Seat Booking (If Required)  
Video Camera, Drone & Still Camera Permits (If Any)  
Model Release Document Fees (If Any)  
Tips & Other Similar Charges (If Any)

## FOODS AND BEVERAGE COST

Our tour cost does not include breakfast, lunch, dinner, beverages, or any other food. We will recommend good restaurants close to the visiting locations. Food costs are not included as they are variable, and we also prefer to give guests the freedom to choose meals according to their own preferences.

# HOTEL COST CLARIFICATION

The tour cost includes hotel accommodation on single room basis at 3-star hotels (rural areas 2-star hotels) If you share a room, tour cost will be reduced. Also, if you would like to stay in hotels higher than 3 stars, we can reduce the hotel cost from the tour cost, and you can book higher standard hotels yourself. However, please check with us before booking, as the hotels need to be close to our photography locations to ensure timely access for sunrise and sunset sessions. Staying in a hotel farther away may make it difficult to reach the locations on time.

## PAYMENT METHOD

**Advance Deposit:** To finalize the reservation, a deposit of USD 500 is required for each participant.

**Balance Payment 01:** Fifty percent (50%) of the balance from the full payment, required for each participant, should be settled within three (03) days after arrival.

**Balance Payment 02:** The rest of the balance payment for each participant should be settled within six (08) days after arrival.

**Refund:** If any photography session is canceled for any reason during the tour, the cost of entrance tickets or any expenses related to the photography session (except transport costs) will be refunded. This does not apply to tickets that have been purchased in advance (if any) Please note that advance deposits will not be refunded if you do not join the photography tour due to any personal reasons.

**Payment Medium:** Only cash is accepted in USD or EUR or GBP

# PHOTOGRAPHY FROM PAID CHAIRS

The two photography sessions of the Kandy Esala Perahera will be done on the street, as it is very close to the procession and allows eye-level photography. There is no proper seating on the street, and photography must be done while standing among the local crowd for approximately 3 or 4 hours. Paid chair seating areas are available above street level for viewing the Kandy Esala Perahera. However, for photography, these chairs are placed on elevated platforms, making it difficult to capture good portrait shots due to the high shooting angle. In addition, local spectators usually sit on the ground in front of these platforms, which increases the chance of people appearing in the frame and makes it difficult to obtain clean shots without spectators. If you still prefer to sit on these chairs and photograph the procession, we can arrange the seating for you. However, the cost of the chairs (approximately USD 100 per chair) must be paid directly by you. This cost is not included in the tour price.

## PHOTO SESSIONS AND TRAVEL TIME

We have scheduled one or two major photography sessions and haven't planned more within a single day due to travel time and the fatigue that follows a long drive. However, it's always possible to stop along the way to capture good photos, depending on the lighting conditions during the drive.

