How to spend a week in Sri Lanka

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Graham Whillans wants an itinerary that includes tea plantations and a driving tour of the country

Richard Green

We are looking to visit Sri Lanka next year. Neither my wife, nor I, has been to the sub continent before, and we would rather like to have a car and driver and do a good tour of the country, hopefully see the tea plantations too. Can you suggest a suitable week-long good itinerary for us?

Graham Whillans, Wrexham
Sunday Times travel expert Richard Green responds: Sri Lanka is a wonderfully gentle country and in a week, you can enjoy a great variety of landscapes and experiences. Mind you, if you can stretch to it, a nice tonic after the sightseeing and driving is a few days at one of the country's fine beaches. I'd say your best route is a clockwise circle around the south and west of the island. Begin in Colombo, where all international flights arrive, then drive up past the Pinnawela elephant orphanage before spending, say three nights, near to Sigiriya - for the magnificent rock fortress there, the wondrous Buddhist caves at Dambulla, and the ancient city of stupas at Polonnaruwa. From here, drive to the lovely town of Kandy for a couple of nights; long enough to visit the sacred temple where a tooth of the Buddha is housed, enjoy the bustle of the historic colonial area markets, and join the locals in an evening stroll around the lakeside promenade. Head south from here and climb up through the delicately terraced hillsides of tea country, where it's easy to call in at a working plantation, before staying the night in the misty little hill station of Nuwara Eliya. If you can stay, choose to stay at the Tea Factory hotel, which is a brilliant conversion of an old processing plant. The outside is all corrugation and tin; while inside the rooms are super cosy with wooden floors, and tea making facilities. All of the good tailor made specialists will be able to help plan a tour; the cost will be mainly affected by the standard of hotels that you prefer. (Courtesy : Times Online)