



HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME

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Pre-arranged trips¹

While we have been averse to diluting the personalized service we provide at HPH in any way, increasingly our guests request that we set up “mini-tours” for them.

While we still make no claim to be either travel agents or tour organizers, based on requests already received from our guests, what follows are some suggestions for day trips from HPH, using a six-passenger single-air-conditioner van with a reliable and safe driver.

All meals, any entry, parking or other fees that might be incurred during such journeys are the responsibility of the guests.

There is no maximum mileage, the driver will meet the cost of his meals and, if an overnight stay is required, he will look after his own accommodation

What our guests have also often commented on over the past years is that they feel that they have **not** spent enough time exploring the pleasures of HPH and what it has to offer and we suggest that potential visitors take this factor into account when planning their sojourn with us. We suggest that you spend **at least one full day** at HPH, on the variety of Walking Trails of varying difficulty, enjoying the waters of the Soaking Pool, bird- and small-animal-watching, the sun set from Meditation Flat, observing whatever spice- and plantation-crop work is being conducted at the time of your visit and, perhaps, taking advantage of a conducted walk-about with Emil whose ancestral home and property HPH is.

Following the details of the suggested journeys you will find information about some of the “off-the-beaten-track” places that you might be interested in visiting. Check them out here or on the internet. You may be pleasantly surprised at how appealing you find them!

WE REGRET THAT BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED RESOURCES WE HAVE AT OUR DISPOSAL, NO LAST-MINUTE CHANGES TO SCHEDULES WILL BE POSSIBLE.

¹ The tours detailed below can be modified to substitute locations within the primary locality to which your vehicle will take you. Give us an indication of any particular interest and we'll try to fulfill your needs. **Remember, though, we make no claim to be professional tour organizers!**

TWO-DAY TRIPS

(Guests must make their own arrangements for accommodation)

Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, Dambulla

Day 1

After early breakfast at HPH, to Sigiriya. Visit museum, climb Sigiriya and view Pleasure Gardens on the summit. Then to Anuradhapura, the 2500-year old capital of Sri Lanka. Overnight in Anuradhapura, guests having made their own arrangements for accommodation.

Day 2

Complete visiting the ruins at Anuradhapura. Lunch at Anuradhapura or on the way back. Visit Dambulla Rock Temple. Back for dinner at HPH.

Cost \$120

Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla

Day 1

After early breakfast at HPH, to Sigiriya. Visit museum, climb Sigiriya and view Pleasure Gardens on the summit. Then to Polonnaruwa. Visit very impressive remains of Parakrama Bahu's great capital when Sri Lanka was "the granary of the east." Overnight at Polonnaruwa.

Day 2

Complete visiting the ruins at Polonnaruwa. Lunch at Polonnaruwa or on the return journey. Visit Dambulla Rock Temple. Back for dinner at HPH

Cost:\$120

Cultural Triangle

Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa & Dambulla²

Day 1

After early breakfast at HPH, to Sigiriya. Visit museum, climb Sigiriya and view Pleasure Gardens on the summit. Then to Anuradhapura, the 2500-year old capital of Sri Lanka. Travel to Polonnaruwa. (Overnight in Polonnaruwa or Anuradhapura.

Day 2

Visit the ruins at Polonnaruwa. Lunch at Polonnaruwa or on the way back. Visit Dambulla Rock Temple. Back for dinner at HPH.

Cost: 200

² Polonnaruwa could be visited before Anuradhapura, with the "overnight" being at either location

ONE-DAY TRIPS

Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa & Dambulla Rock Temple

After a very early breakfast, to Sigiriya. Visit museum, climb Sigiriya, viewing its world-famous frescoes & the Pleasure Gardens on the summit. On to Polonnaruwa and the ruins of the capital of King Parakrama Bahu who made Sri Lanka "the granary of the east." Return to HPH after visiting another World Heritage site, the Dambulla Rock Temple caves containing frescoes and statues that span two millennia of Sri Lankan history.

Cost: \$100

Sigiriya, Anuradhapura & Dambulla Rock Temple

After a very early breakfast, to Sigiriya. Visit museum, climb Sigiriya, viewing its world-famous frescoes & the Pleasure Gardens on the summit. On to Anuradhapura and the ruins of the capital of King Dutugemuna going back more than two thousand years, one of Sri Lanka's iconic monarchs and the first to unite it under one flag. Return to HPH after visiting another World Heritage site, the Dambulla Rock Temple caves, containing frescoes and statues that span two millennia of Sri Lankan history.

Cost: \$100

Sigiriya & Dambulla Rock Temple

After early breakfast at HPH, to Sigiriya, visit Museum, climb Sigiriya rock fortress, visit Dambulla Rock Temple and lunch on the way back to HPH for dinner

Cost: \$75

Polonnaruwa only

After early breakfast at HPH, to Polonnaruwa. Visit ruins and museum, lunch in Polonnaruwa and return to HPH for dinner.

Cost: \$100

Anuradhapura only

After early breakfast at HPH, to Anuradhapura. Visit ruins and museum, lunch in Anuradhapura and return to HPH for dinner.

Cost: \$100

Adam's Peak - Overnight - In Season Only (Full Moon of December to the Full Moon of April)

Leave for Adam's Peak, Sri Lanka's best known mountain peak with significance to all the world's major religions, arriving around 2 p.m., so that you reach the beginning of your ascent at about 5 p.m, to commence the 7+ -hour climb to reach the peak in time for the sunrise and the shadow of the mountain being cast on the lowlands to its west, an experience not to be missed! Walk back down and return to HPH for a possibly late lunch.

Cost \$140

Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, Kandy and Environs

After breakfast at HPH, to the internationally-renowned Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, lunch at its clean and centrally-located restaurant, and travel to Kandy which is a few kilometers away. Visit the Temple of the Tooth, the most venerated Buddhist shrine in the world, and, if you need to gift- or souvenir-shop, we suggest the Kandyan Arts and Crafts Centre near the Temple, a facility set up many years ago to encourage traditional artists and craftsmen and which continues to live up to that commitment. If you have an interest in how tea is manufactured, visit the Tea Museum which is but a few kilometers from the heart of town (closed on Mondays) and one of Mlesna's very pleasant tea shops on Dalada Veediya or in the Kandy City Centre, a very-nicely appointed shopping mall which also contains branches of Sri Lanka's two largest book-store chains. For a taste of the indigenous performing arts, wrap up your day in Kandy at one of the several (45-minute) performances in town before returning to HPH for dinner.

Cost: \$60

MORE ONE-DAY TRIPS

Tea, and temple tour

King Rajasinghe II (1635-1687) was on his way to repulse the Portuguese at Balana, in the Kadugannawa pass, when his palanquin broke as he passed the Dodanwela *devale*. He subsequently he donated his crown and jewels to the shrine in fulfillment of his vow to do so if he succeeded in defeating the enemy. Unfortunately, the story has a sad ending because, in the 21st century, the artifacts were stolen from the Museum to whose care they had been entrusted.

The idyllic surroundings of the Dodanwela shrine are, in and of themselves, worthy of a visit. Visitors walk through a magnificent grove of majestic *Mesua ferrea* (Ironwood, *Na*) - the national tree of Sri Lanka- past an ancient pillared travelers' rest (*Ambalama*) to the shrine which exudes peace and tranquility despite being well used by those paying their respects to it.

For a change of scene, your next stop will be a tea factory where the manager will be only too pleased to show you the various processes that make the production of “the cup that cheers” more an art than an industrial science!

Lunch en route and on to a trio of *devales*- Embekke, Gadaladeniya, and Lankatilleke – all primarily and justly famed for the beautiful carvings, either on the hardest of wood or granite, material of which these *devales* are constructed. These are a “must see” for anyone interested in Sri Lankan culture.

Cost: \$70

Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage/Millennium Elephant Foundation, Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens and UN Heritage City of Kandy

After breakfast at HPH, to Pinnawela elephant facilities (see “**Half day trips**” for details), then visit the justly-famous Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, lunch at its clean and centrally-located restaurant, and travel to Kandy which is a few kilometers away. Visit the Temple of the Tooth, the most venerated Buddhist shrine in the world, and, if gift- or souvenir-shopping, the Kandyan Arts and Crafts centre near the Temple. This facility was set up many years ago to assist in the marketing of what traditional artists and craftsmen produced and continues to live up to that commitment.

If you are interested in the beverage for which Sri Lanka is justly famous, visit the Tea Museum which is but a few kilometers from the heart of town (closed on Mondays) and one of Mlesna's very pleasant tea shops on Dalada Veediya or in the Kandy City Centre, a very attractive shopping mall which also contains branches of Sri Lanka's two largest book-store chains. For a taste of the indigenous performing arts, wrap up your day in Kandy at one of the several (45-minute) performances in town before returning to HPH.

Cost: \$70

Some “Off-the-beaten-track” half-day tours³

Monaragala Vihare Samadhi Buddha Statue & Ridi Vihare

This is one of the hidden gems of the HPH neighbourhood! A truly magnificent seated Buddha statue, very recently completed by South Indian artists who have carved out of the living rock the largest Samadhi Buddha statue anywhere in the world! This was a peaceful response by a simple village priest to the Taliban's destruction of the enormous, sandstone Bamiyan Buddhas of Afghanistan and is certainly worthy of a visit which can be combined with one to the Ridi Vihare, close to it, a temple of great significance to the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, renowned for the legend that it was silver from its site that enabled the completion of, perhaps, Sri Lanka's most ancient and venerated *dagoba*, the Ruvanweliseya in Anuradhapura.

Cost: \$50

³ Refer to more detailed descriptions later in this leaflet for additional information about these locations.

Ethugal Vihare, Selyn Handloom Workshop and Retail Outlet and Kurunegala Pola (Fair)

Ethugal Vihare (Elephant rock shrine) on the enormous granite boulder that dominates the skyline of one of the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka – Kurunegala - is about 20 Kms from HPH on the A10 Highway. A visit to the rock and the temple that is situated on it, coupled with a short side-trip to the Selyn (handloom) workshop and sales point a few miles down the Colombo highway could constitute a pleasant morning's trip from HPH. Selyn produces very high quality and tasteful handloom items for a variety of domestic and personal uses and both the handloom workshop and the retail sales unit are well worth a visit.

If on a Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday, a most interesting visit to the *Pola* (Fair) could be tied in to this day tour. The *Pola* is the modern equivalent of the traditional Sri Lankan village fair and maintains the integrity of what used to be and often still is an important weekly event in the life of Sri Lankans. You can buy “everything from soup to nuts” at this fair and, while the decibel level of the vendors is quite impressive, you will **not** be hassled by them while browsing!

Cost: \$50

N.B.

Ambient temperatures can be pretty high in Kurunegala and the surrounding countryside!

Panduwasnuwara, Karagahagedera Ambalama and Padeniya Temple

Visit the ruins of a one-time capital of Sri Lanka –Panduwasnuwara .

Continue on to the quite unique Karagahagedera Ambalama and visit Padeniya Temple the architecture, paintings and layout of which are quite unique in that they appear to encompass styles prevailing in Sri Lanka at various points of its history.

Cost: \$75

Yapahuwa and Padeniya Temple

Visit the ruins of a one-time capital of Sri Lanka –Yapahuwa – renowned for its magnificent flight of steps leading to the top of the huge rock on which the remains of several of its buildings as well a temple, still in use, are located.

Then visit Padeniya Temple, the architecture, paintings and layout of which are quite unique in that they appear to be in styles from many periods of Sri Lanka's history.

Cost: \$80

Dambadeniya, Karagahadedera Ambalama and Padeniya Temple

Visit the ruins of a one of the short-term capitals of Sri Lanka –Dambadeniya.

Continue on to the quite unique Karagahagedera *Ambalama*, and the Padeniya temple.

Cost: \$75

Nelligala Saama Chaitiya, Moneragala Samadhi Buddha and Ridivihare

If you opt for the “sunrise option” you’ll leave HPH at the crack of dawn, pick up a knowledgeable guide en route and proceed to Nelligala *Saama Chaitiya* to view the sunrise from the top of this unique, isolated, boulder-strewn hilltop. Simply put, there isn’t a place with as lovely a 360 degree view of the North Western province plain. In addition, this location has historical associations



67.5-foot tall *Samadhi Buddha* statue at Moneragala

with the ancient Sinhala kingdom of Valagambahu. When you’ve had your fill of this unique location, you’ll take the trail to the magnificent 67.5-foot *Samadhi Buddha* at Moneragala, carved out of the living granite in response to the Taliban’s destruction of the (sandstone) Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan, an act of vandalism, without equal in recent history. No brief description can do justice to this magnificent work of art and the granite pond at its foot carved, out of the **same** massive rock. It has to be seen to be believed.



Ridi Vihare

After you’ve been dazzled by this magnificent example of the rock-carvers’ art and skill, go on to *Ridi* (Silver) *Vihare* from whence, according to legend, came the silver from a vein in the mountain on which it is constructed that enabled King Dutugemunu to complete the largest *Dagoba* in Sri Lanka, at the end of a long and illustrious reign.

Ridi Vihare, with its peaceful, unpretentious atmosphere, is a gem. Once done here back to HPH for one of its famous lunches!

In the alternative, you could take an afternoon to reverse your route, visiting *Ridi Vihare* first, going on to see the unequalled *Samadhi Buddha* at Moneragala and ending by watching the glorious sunset from *Nelligala Saama Chaitiya*.



View to the North East from Nelligala *Saama Chaitiya*

Cost \$100

(includes services of knowledgeable guide)

Village Temple Visit

On a full moon night, visitors may choose to visit a neighbouring village temple and watch the religious observances performed by those who attend from neighbouring villages and which are typical at such a time.

Even outside the primary (full moon) day of worship, the simple rituals of village Buddhists would give someone foreign to Sri Lankan shores a sense of the tranquility and peace associated with the primary religion of the island.

Cost: \$ 30

DESCRIPTIONS OF SUGGESTED DESTINATIONS

The Karagahahedera & Panavitiya Ambalamas

Ambalamas are unique structures in Sri Lanka—they are resting places that offer free shelter and water for travelers. Typically they are open structures with a sloped tiled roof on columns of timber or masonry. The walls are short and wide so that one could sit on them. They were first built in the days when travel was by foot or bullock-cart and were necessary as safe resting places. It is also thought that *ambalamas* were meeting places for the local villagers but it seems that they attracted a cosmopolitan crowd as well. Ancient Sinhalese literature records the activities there—“some of them relate the stories of Rama and Sita. Some recite poetry in contest with each other. Amongst them are those who commit to memory songs of praise produced in honor of the reigning king. Foreigners coming from countries such as Cola, Pandya, Gujarat, Tulu country, Maharastra, Andhra and Vanga learn the teachings of the Buddha in Sinhalese and recite it. Some challenge each other in solving riddles.” (www.lankalibrary.com)

(Information from: Buddhist monastic architecture in Sri Lanka: the woodland shrines by A. Seneviratna & B. Polk. 1992)

Two famous *ambalamas* are found near Narammala: at Panavitiya and Karagahagedera.



Carved rafters of Panavitiya ambalama



Karagahagedera Ambalama

Panavitiya Ambalama

The Panavitiya *ambalama* is built entirely of timber. It has been renovated and restored by the Department of Archaeology and each wooden piece is intricately carved, including the rafters.

Karagahagedera Ambalama

is about 600 years old. It is delightfully located on a slab of rock sloping into verdant paddy fields and on the evening when we visited, a lovely breeze made it difficult for us to go home when the time arrived!

This building, apart from being truly enchanting is a testament to the skills of those carpenters of a time long past, with its massive interlocking beams and other features of construction that one doesn't encounter in modern times. No nails were used in the original construction and the photo below shows the massive single logs used.

The two *ambalamas* at Narammala are a comfortable day-excursion from HPH.

Yapahuwa: a Mediaeval Capital of Sri Lanka



The magnificent staircase

Yapahuwa has been described, accurately, in Wikipedia, as “one of the ephemeral capitals of Mediaeval Sri Lanka.” It served as the capital of the country from 1273 to 1284. It owes its existence to King Bhuvanekabahu—he moved the capital of Sri Lanka from Dambadeniya, taking the Sacred Tooth Relic with him, in order to secure a stronger base against the advancing Dravidian armies. This protective measure was successful until 1284 when a fresh invasion succeeded in over-running Yapahuwa and capturing the Tooth Relic.

The enormous granite staircase, still in an excellent state of preservation, is the showpiece of this one-time capital of Sri Lanka. The Yapahuwa lions (featured on the old 10-rupee notes) that flank the staircase show a Chinese influence. Other interesting sights include the remains of a stupa, a Bo-tree enclosure, a rock shelter (used by monks before and since Yapahuwa was Sri Lanka’s capital), several caves at the base with inscriptions, and other elements typical of a place of this nature. There are also the remains of fortifications



The Yapahuwa lion

meant to dissuade potential invaders

Also of interest is the Yapawwa Rajamaha Vihare built during the subsequent Kandyan Period of Sri Lanka’s history. There is also a small but interesting museum. All of this is set around and upon a huge rock typical of the topography of this area.

Yapahuwa is a comfortable day-excursion from HPH.

Panduwasnuwara: Ancient capital of Sri Lanka



Ruins of Royal Palace at Panduwasnuwara

Panduwasnuwara was established by King Parakramabahu in the 12th century as a temporary capital. The area encompasses 20 hectares with scattered ruins from that time. Archeological work is still ongoing. Some of the ruins can be seen on the north side of the main Chilaw-Wariyapola road. To see the rest, turn south into the road that runs by the museum but be sure to stop in there to see some items of interest.

A six meter wide moat with the ruins of a very wide fortified wall surrounds part of the site, which contains the remnants of a royal palace as well as religious structures. The royal palace consists of two interconnected areas with ponds and even an ancient toilet. Ruins of stupas, image houses, assembly halls and quarters for the Buddhist monks can also be seen.

If you follow the road to the back, there is a functioning temple. Outside of it is an old structure, a temple meeting place that has architectural features common to Chinese temples.

As well as the archeological sites, the area is home to several species of birds, butterflies and dragonflies. It is a peaceful place, little visited.

Nearby is Panda Wewa, which is believed to be the first ever irrigation reservoir established in Sri Lanka though it is no longer functional. Only the bund remains, with homesteads on both sides.

Panduwasnuwara is about one and one-half hours from HPH and affords a pleasant day trip into the plains of the ‘coconut triangle’. If we have an indication of interest in advance of a guest’s arrival, we could make the necessary arrangements for them to explore the ruins and nature of this little-known site

Dorabawila Vihare

This unique *vihare* (temple) is situated near Hettipola about an hour's drive from HPH.

The temple has been built on stilts—slender, rough-cut stone pilings. A narrow staircase leads to the building above—a square-shaped room with a cantilevered verandah all around it, lined with wooden railings and posts. The roof is heavily sloped and edged with wooden carvings that look like leaves with drip-tips. Brass birds are perched on the ridges of the roof. The temple also harbours ancient paintings and Buddha images and, according to Seneviratna & Polk has “the special characteristics of the Kandy period.”

(Information from: Buddhist monastic architecture in Sri Lanka: the woodland shrines by A. Seneviratna & B. Polk. 1992)

Dorabavila vihare

Padeniya Temple

A little known temple within an hour's drive of HPH is the Padeniya Temple. Though its history is not clear, it is a fascinating mixture of buildings and styles. One of the most impressive sights is the bo-tree—a massive tree of unknown age. Stones and bricks with cavities for oil lamps have been placed around its base, presumably to support the tree— “a rich confusion of roots, stones, fragments of masonry”. The tree is the object of ancient tree worship—banners and fresh flowers adorn it.

There are several interesting ancient buildings on the site and even the newer buildings have unique tiled roofs. The highlight is



The Bo-tree at Padeniya



The Pilimage (Image House)

the *Pilimage* or Image House with medieval, Chinese, Indian and Kandyan elements. Outside are 28 carved pillars; inside many more with an elaborate door to the inner shrine. It has not yet been declared as an archeological site but is expected to be.

Padeniya Temple is a comfortable half-day excursion from HPH and if we have an indication of interest in advance of a guest's arrival we could make the necessary arrangements for them to experience these unique buildings of cultural, religious and architectural interest.

Gadaladeniya Temple

Gadaladeniya Temple is a temple complex built on a rock outcrop during the reign of Bhuvanekabahu IV with the rock inscriptions by the monk Dharmakirti dating back to 1344 AB. The brick superstructure, with an octagonal base, resembles a *stupa*. Visitors are greeted by the figures of musicians & dancers at the entrance, while there is a moonstone at the entry to the shrine and two elephant-lion (*gajasinghe*) balustrades as well. Within the dragon arch (*Makara Thorana*) is the principal gilded image of Gautama Buddha. This is a replacement for the original destroyed by the Portuguese in the century following the establishment of the temple.



Column at Gadaladeniya temple



Example of wood carving from Embakke devale

Embakke Devale

This shrine is dedicated to God Skanda, the [Kataragama](#) deity, and is renowned for its unmatched collection of magnificent wood carvings, inclusive of the massive solid-wood pillars and the timber frame of its huge roof, making it truly unique among the ancient buildings of Sri Lanka. Every part of the shrine is adorned with beautiful wood carving and the residents of the adjacent village continue the centuries-old craft traditions in wood, silver, brass and bronze.

Lankatilaka Vihare

The inscriptions by King Bhuvanekabahu IV (1347 AD) & King Vickramabahu III (1351 AD) speak to the construction of this temple. The approach to it is along steps beautifully cut in the rock on which the temple sits. The visitor is greeted by a magnificent view of the surrounding country from the top. Legend has it that the temple owes its existence to a king who took a golden bowl floating on a reservoir nearby as a sign calling for the construction of this temple. The present building consists of only two of the original four stories with renovations, inclusive of those to the elegant roof, dating back to the mid-19th century.

Six shrines dedicated to the gods and goddesses Ganesh, Skanda, Vishnu, Pattini and the local divinities Maha Sumana Sama and Vibishina surround the *Budu-ge* (image house) which contains well-preserved frescoes from the Kandyan period on its walls and ceilings.



Figures at Lankatilleke Vihare

Aluvihare Monastery

Aluvihare Monastery comprises a number of caves among boulders & crags in the montane region about 8 Kms from the town of Matale, about 50 Kms from HPH in a picturesque valley about 8km north of Matale. The subjects depicted in the cave frescoes are of significant variety having one thing in common, their beauty. As in many locations of this kind, the contents of the caves are not confined to the murals but include statues.

Perhaps even more important and impressive is the work that is currently in progress and will be for a long time yet: the attempt to replace the Tripitakaya, written on page-like pieces of palm leaf, the script being “carved” into the dry leaf and an ink-like substance rubbed into the “grooves.” This immensely labour-intensive work was commenced to replace the original document(s) - a lifetime’s work by 500 Buddhist monks - destroyed by the British in 1848 in their efforts to subdue a rebellion against them that swept the country then. The first book in the trilogy was completed in 1982 and the work towards complete and final replacement continues as this is written.



Arankelle Monastery and Hospital



Meditation path (Pic. courtesy of Roger Humphreys)

This archaeological site is unique in that it is both a meditation site as well as a hospital dating back to the 6th century. Its delights can be enjoyed in a half day’s trip from HPH, being situated as it is a tad north of Kurunegala. While one can use a motor vehicle to get to the site, the walk through the sylvan setting is a delight in and of itself and, unless you are physically restricted from doing so, you are well-advised to traverse the path that winds, for a little less than two kilometres, around the beautiful wooded hill.

Not far from Kurunegala, Arankalle has many of the features and facilities one would expect of a facility of that kind, at that point of Sri Lanka’s history, to cater to the better-than-a- thousand monks who meditated there at any one time as well as the equipment one might expect would be needed for hundreds of patients looking to be healed there. What remains, much of it, are The moats and stone walls remain in a very good state of preservation: herbal baths, herb grinders made of granite are among the pieces of equipment still evident. As well, the facility had rooms for the sick, meditation halls for the monks and a surprisingly sophisticated sanitary system.

An adjunct of the complex is a small cluster of rock caves used for meditation and shelter.

Archaeological “digs” continue on the site, confirming the quality of craftsmanship and skill in the utilization of huge granite slabs for a variety of practical purposes: the construction of floors, walls and pedestals.

One of the attractions of Arankelle is that it is relatively-seldom visited and one doesn’t have to stand in line to appreciate its delights!