

## PATA Sweden FAM Trip to Doha and Sri Lanka, 19-26 April 2022

### **FAM report by Ida Gunnerlind, Winberg Travel**

I was very happy to be chosen to join on PATA's FAM trip with Qatar Airways to Sri Lanka, a country I had not yet visited but that had since a long time been on my bucket list.

Here follows my thoughts and take-aways from the trip, from some of the various hotels we saw, the suppliers on destination that looked after us and also the experiences throughout the time in Sri Lanka. As we also had a short stopover in Doha, Qatar, I have also of course included that in this report.

#### PRE-TRIP DOCUMENTATION

Ahead of the trip there were a few documents to arrange, especially so due to the Covid-situation, for both Qatar and Sri Lanka. For Doha, PCR test max 48 hours before departure, however the Ehteraz should be done max 3 days prior to departure. It was possible to get the Ehteraz approval without the PCR-test, and I then got a notification saying that I either needed to do antigen test on arrival or have PCR-test ready to show on arrival. There was also another form to fill out, which was not asked for.

I had some issues with the Sri Lanka insurance which was not accepting just any card type or browser. While Google browser on smartphone did not work for me, Google browser on laptop did, and it would also only accept visa rather than Mastercard, despite saying otherwise. Application for the Sri Lanka visa online was a quick process. No issues. The visa was approved in about one day.

In short, a few things to keep in mind and organize ahead of travel as is the situation to most countries at the moment but it all went smoothly for me. The trickiest part was having to upload passport copy in different formats (e.g. jpg instead of pdf) which some clients may struggle with, and need guidance.

#### QATAR AIRWAYS

For all 4 legs on QR flights I got to experience Business class onboard 3 different airplane types. Flat beds in all of the versions. The feature of on-demand a la carte, with crew coming around to take your order with a personal greeting, was a nice touch across QR's business class, as it made for a customized journey that could be tailored to each passenger's lifestyle and needs. Some of the meals were not available due to being highly popular or if not ordered immediately, as I did not do with the cheeseboard on my first flight so it was out when I wanted it.

The CPH-DOH (and return) was onboard Boeing's Dreamliner which was fitted with the new Q-Suite. These were updated with a sleek design and features like wireless smartphone charging spot; very appreciated not having to find the charging cable in my hand luggage! Seats were all facing forward and at a slight angle. The flat bed was not too long, however for me at 170 cm tall, this was sufficient and comfortable.

On the DOH-CMB leg, I experienced the perhaps more traditional 'pod' seating without door and therefore not as much privacy as the suites, albeit very comfortable.

The return of this leg CMB-DOH was onboard Airbus 350-900 which was fitted with the older Q-suite. These felt slightly roomier and a different configuration where some seats were backwards-facing and there was the option of the middle sets of 4 suites to be connected into either double beds (2+2) or a larger 4-suite room where meetings could take place, or indeed families could use this larger space for their comfort.



## DOHA, QATAR

We had a stopover in Doha of around 8 hours. Here I met up with the rest of the group who flew in from Arlanda. I was through immigration and security within minutes, although some of the group had longer wait and issues with some other group members' activating of Ehteras app to get the QR code. The main issue appeared to be receiving a text message (sms) with an activation code, as we were in a new country and networks had not all picked up yet – important for clients to have mobile phones that work abroad (not pay-as-you-go sim cards that can sometimes be restricted to only Sweden).

After meeting the representative from Discover Qatar, we got into the comfortable minivan for our city tour. Our guide was knowledgeable with a lighthearted yet informative way of presenting the destination, in a manner which made it easy to listen and understand. We arrived in the middle of the Ramadan, although by the time we left the airport the sun had set so we were not restricted with regards to eating or drinking (or even smoking for some fellow travellers).

Stops along the way was the countdown clock to FIFA world cup 2022, where we could see skyline of Doha, Katara mall where we saw a beautiful mosque designed by a woman and the La Fayette mall with many buildings of different architectural styles and even the luxury of outdoor air conditioning. We went to the Pearl for a short walkaround before finishing out tour in the Souq which was a great contrast to the more modern areas we had seen thus far.

We walked through the Souq and saw some falconry shops, the stables with the police horses and also some of the camels resting in the area. With minimal time we did a quick walkthrough of the local market, not quite enough to take in and experience the place but it was nonetheless nice to see the activity in the evening and the old buildings along with bustling local life. We had dinner at a rather touristy spot, near the market. The locals enjoyed the pleasant evening air in the outside dining spots, but very few of them in the restaurant we visited. This restaurant was catering for visitors with its overly decorated walls and even ceilings, mirrors and sparkling stones in many colours and patterns made it feel like Aladin's cave, the restaurant was an experience to enjoy while dining on hummus, salads and traditional kebabs with selection of rice dishes and fries. Food was of good quality but in line with the touristy feel of the place.

Doha was an interesting experience where the architecture was mixed with homage to different eras and cultures, here has been created a cultural experience where there only a couple of decades ago was desert. Many parts of Doha felt artificial, which is inevitable to a certain extent in a destination which has grown and developed so quickly, but the city provided plenty of choice for all types of travellers; from families to

couples, old and young, I believe Doha presents a comfortable and intriguing stopover for most clients, should they wish to break their journey.

We returned to Doha airport for a site visit, where we got to see the main lounge which was quite open and a little noisy, not too cozy for a relaxing and refreshing stopover but with all the facilities that could be expected. There were different restaurants and areas, for example for families, but I felt it lacked some of the warmth which would make paying money to access the lounge more worthwhile. We also saw the hotel at the terminal, stylish and comfortable and with facilities like a gym and pool. This is a good option to clients who have the budget (from around 300-400 USD per night) and a few hours layover, but do not wish to enter Qatar and visit Doha, or are only there for a few short hours overnight.



## SRI LANKA DMC's

### **JETWING**

Arriving to Colombo airport, after a swift immigration and security process, we were met on arrival and greeted with flower garlands by the DMC Jetwing. We each received a bag with some information about Jetwing, along with a refillable water bottle, as Jetwing holds sustainability as a very important value. We were told that each morning we could refill at each hotel before setting off for the day – as a point of feedback it would however also be good to have a water tap on the bus for refilling bottles on the go.

The bus we travelled with during Jetwing's program was very comfortable, spacious which allowed for each of us to have a set of 2 seats to ourselves, and for most part there was also wifi available on the bus. In some areas the wifi connection failed however I believe this was mostly due to coverage in the area.

The program was time pressured, and it felt as though it was planned for a full day of hotel site inspections without taking into consideration the long transfer times, or indeed how long a transfer would take. There were no margins if anything the program was far too tight to start with. With the expectation of Jetwing knowing Sri Lanka and that they should therefore have planned the trip to fit with timings etc. we were all suddenly instead feeling the stress of re-arrange the order of things and unfortunately skipping a lot of the hotel visits simply due to time pressure. Madeleine Askebrink was great in being firm with having to move on to the next stop and managed the pressured schedule well, although the program could have been gone over a little closer beforehand, this should also not have been presented in such a way from Jetwing as the experts which put Madeleine in a situation of having to move everyone along and manage time mainly.

Our guide Nalinda was knowledgeable, polite, and very hospitable, however it was at times a little difficult to follow his language for a non-native English speaker, in respect to the speed and flow as well as jumping between present, future and past tense. For example, during transfers, he was explaining about different excursions and extra activities we may want to undertake, and we did decide to visit a turtle sanctuary thanks to his suggestion, however as these were suggested on top of the very tight schedule (where main focus was on hotels) there was no time to consider how most of these excursions would ever fit in to the day. Therefore, a lot of the information was not taken in by the group, and as mentioned unfortunately a little hard to follow the explanations.

The program could perhaps have been planned with some of these activities included from the start, to allow us to see and sell the destination better, not only the hotels. To be offered additional excursions once already on a jam-packed trip where we have a program set in advance and absolutely no spare time, created stress and I was wondering whether the guide was trying to sell us tours to get kick-back or perhaps he was not in agreement with the company as to what we should experience, or if we were just being informed of possibly options for when we send clients there

The stressed program also led to time-pressured lunch stops. After experiencing how long time the lunch in Colombo took us, which created stress to get going as we had to get to the next stop, we were told by Madeleine on day 2 and 3 to only order main course so we could get going again quicker. However, this information did not reach the Jetwing team, whether there was a breakdown in communication or a misunderstanding, the Jetwing representatives did not seem to understand or pick up on the stress that the rest of the group was experiencing and ordered multiple courses which meant we all waited for them, and lunch ended up taking a long time anyway - this created a discord in the group.

We did overall have a good experience with Jetwing and got to see much of the country and a variety of hotels. On the final night with Jetwing, our guide Nalinda dressed in traditional wear for dinner, which was a nice touch to dress up and show us what that traditional clothing looked like.



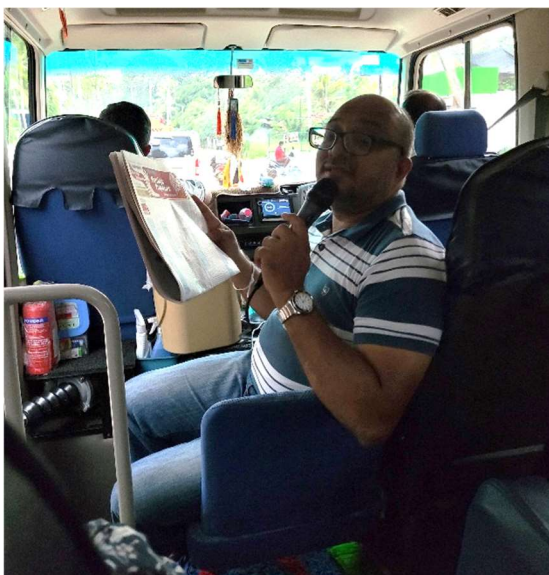
## AITKEN SPENCE

The second half of the trip was arranged by Aitken Spence. We were welcomed onto the bus and provided some bags with useful wet wipes to freshen up, hand sanitizers and the white sarong we would be using later in the itinerary, as well as of course a printed copy of the program and information about the DMC. The program, even on initial read-through before the trip, felt a lot more focused on experiences rather than squeezing in hotel visits, and it did allow for us to have more experiences of the country. The bus was tight between the seats which for a group of tall Scandinavians was not the most comfortably on long transfers. However, the bus was small and narrower (seat configuration was 1+2 instead of 2 seats either side of the aisle) we were able to access narrower roads and turn around quickly which felt secure and safe.

Richard, our guide, was excellent. He spoke with a steady and slow speed and short pauses, so it was easy to listen and follow. He was able to understand the group, what energy was on any given moment, and adjust his guiding accordingly, such as stopping a description of something or a story as he noticed we were all dozing off due to a busy schedule and a big lunch. Richard was engaging and for example on the train through the mountains to Kandy, he took lots of photos of us all with our own cameras, leaning out of a window a few rows back to get the best photo of us peeking out of the door. He also indulged us in reading out marriage proposal adverts to us from the Sunday newspaper, a fantastic fun insight into Sri Lankan life!

We also had with us Kapila, senior account manager for Scandinavia. We could feel the understanding he had for the Scandinavian traveller yet trying to challenge us to try local foods and experiences. Together, the team of Kapila and Richard made sure we had an excellent trip and without them we would not have experienced for instance the temple blessing, which was a special moment to take part of. Richard and Kapila were able to adjust in the program when they felt we were running short on time, to suggest and give us options to either carry on as planned or for example skip a hotel visit or make stops along the way, to give us the best experience of the country and not feel stressed.

We ended the trip with a drinks-reception hosted by Aitken Spence, as well as dinner and we were sent home with lovely gifts of Sri Lanka cinnamon and tea. Throughout the time with Aitken Spence, I felt relaxed and well taken care of, and as one of the larger DMC's I still felt we got a personalised experience and great service. The many small touches were greatly appreciated, we even received a small snack-pack before the train journey, with a drink, a fruit and some crackers – only a small gesture but much appreciated and an example of those little additions that makes Aitken Spence a great DMC.



## HOTELS INSPECTIONS

During the trip we made a number of hotel site inspections and saw a range of properties from around mid-range three star and up to luxury five-star, different types from beach hotels to more central, heritage and tea plantation properties to larger properties. A few of these stood out to me and are properties where I could look to send clients.

**Jetwing Sakoa** – peaceful property perched on a cliff by the sea. With lovely rooms, all either with a verandah or balcony, and a policy of only allowing children ages 12 and up, this property would be a great stop for a couple, or family with older children, looking for a relaxed and secluded, albeit not uber-luxurious, stay. Lovely restaurant, bar and pool with fantastic views, and a spa onsite, provides guests with ample opportunity to relax at the end of a busy trip or a day's sightseeing.

**Amangalla** – located in the Galle Fort area, I fell in love with this heritage property as it wonderfully paid homage to the history, featuring many items in the interior design throughout the property to always remind guests of the colonial past. At the same time, the property felt airy and modern, not lacking in any facilities. The outside yoga 'room' and spa area were particularly lovely, again feeling so fitting in the surroundings. A great option for primarily couples who want to include a stylish stay in the middle of a UNESCO heritage site and feel the history come to life.

**The Owl and Pussycat** – boutique hotel a few minutes' drive from Galle Fort. Colourful and eclectic interior done to perfection as it managed to instill peacefulness at the same time. No TV in the rooms, but a TV room where guests could relax, a beautiful pool and decking along with a bar in the courtyard area, facing out towards the sea. Great for a family, perhaps slightly older children, especially the two-bedroom suite we saw that also had a living room area, or a stylish couple who wants a fun stay with a difference.

**Amanwella** – along with Amangalla, part of the Aman-group of properties, and feeling serene and secluded with an air of high sophistication, very in tune with the Aman brand. This is a property guests come to for an escape, detox from everyday life, no need to leave the property for a few days but rather to just enjoy the facilities. Exquisite rooms, very private, stunning long pool and a beautiful beach area with a second restaurant, and room for morning yoga sessions. For the discerning client, I can see both couples and perhaps families with older children here, who want a hideaway stay not lacking in any finer touches yet being scaled back to a stylish simplicity full of luxury.

**Jetwing Yala** – located within 20-30 minutes of the national park entrance, perfect location before a morning game drive. This property features a long and beautiful pool, restaurant and bar areas overlooking the sand dunes down towards the ocean, and gorgeous rooms. Some room types had bathroom where the shower was open to the elements, a wonderful touch to put the guests right in the middle of nature. Fitting for most clients, including families, who want a comfortable hotel stay with all the creature comforts, before or after a safari experience.

**98 Acres** – Fantastic hotel in Ella, with the most indulging views over tea plantations hugging the surrounding hills and gorgeous suites decorated with for instance sides of crates for tea, linking back to the surrounding tea area closely. Even the most basic suite had impressive views and the atmosphere here was almost meditative as guests can enjoy the sounds of nature all around them, all the while plunging in the pool or enjoying a lovely cup of tea in the lounge area. I would recommend this mainly to couples, perhaps those who want to have an active day in Ella, exploring perhaps the ziplining on the property, or the many adventures further afield, then looking forward to a perfectly relaxed resort to recover in the afternoon and evening – here you truly feel part of the tea country that you came to see!

**Jetwing St Andrews** – a mid-range heritage property on the outskirts of Nuwara Eliya, this hotel had a cozy bar with open fireplaces, a nice terrace and beautiful gardens. Rooms in an old English design felt however a little dated but would nonetheless provide a pleasant stay for a mid-range budget traveller who still wants to experience some of the local history firsthand, with lots of the influence from the bygone British colonial era and the current links to the UK – right down to the Peaky Blinders inspired drinks on the cocktail list.

**Amaya Hills Hotel** – Perched atop of a hill overlooking Kandy and the surrounding green landscape, this hotel is a popular stop for honeymooners and couples with a lovely pool with a view, and rooms with a calm interior, lots of dark wood and local artwork. The rooms facing the view had a nice balcony, and guest in other rooms are able to enjoy the view from the bar area near the lobby.

**Ozo Kandy** – great location a short distance from the lake and around 5 minutes' walk to central Kandy. Rooms a little bit cozier in size and in dire need of updating but this hotel will turn into a Radisson during the summer so assessing mostly the location, this hotel has a perfect location for travellers who want to explore the local life on their own schedule. Rooftop pool and bar are absolute gems of this property, providing a lovely respite from the bustling city with sweeping views of the area.

**Mahaweli Reach** – located a short drive outside of Kandy, this stunning property with humble beginnings in a private home, has grown progressively over the years and today features over 100 rooms, but still manages to keep a small feel in that the different wings are set in lush gardens and a curiously shaped and beautiful pool. Set along the river with plenty of opportunity for romantic moments, this is a luxurious getaway for those who enjoy a high level of service, great food, and drinks. Rooms were spacious and stunning, the only feedback could be shower pressure and set up of the shower-tub combination.

**Amaya Lake Hotel** – located a short 20–30-minute drive from the Lions Rock, the property is set on a reservoir at the end of large green gardens. Guests stay in spacious and beautiful suites, most of the were separately dotted out and carefully placed on angles to each other to maximise privacy. Options both for couples and families, with couple of the suites being connected by a covered patio which is a good alternative for either two couples travelling together or a family with older kids. Higher end property, buffet dinner with many tasty local options to pick from. Pool area and bar/restaurant was a nice, relaxed setting, perfect to relax after morning climb to the top of Sigiriya! On arrival we were greeted with a traditional dance performance which was a fun way to welcome us to the hotel, great for groups to enjoy.

**Galle Face Hotel** – originally built as a Raffles hotel, this hotel exudes old time charm. Locks on guestroom doors were perhaps a little tricky, being set rather low and needing a couple of turns to open but felt original and in good condition.

## EXPERIENCES THROUGHOUT THE TRIP

**Turtle Sanctuary (bonus, not part of original program)** – Our guide suggested we make a stop at a turtle sanctuary to learn more about the many different types of turtles that live off Sri Lanka's coast and see how they look after sick turtles as well as the hatchery where they give baby turtles the best chance to start life safely before being released into the ocean. The visit started with seeing some fish tanks, and I was unsure about the space that was given to some sharks that they apparently kept for many years but in a very small tank, it made me feel a little uneasy.

However, the work they do on the turtles appears genuine and great to see. We had the opportunity to release some one-week-old baby turtles which was a lovely experience and one I had previously heard of before visiting Sri Lanka, so glad we got to do this. Such an experience is something many carry with them as the best from Sri Lanka and should perhaps have been included in the itinerary from the start.



**Galle Old Fort walking tour** – a UNESCO world heritage area, we had around one hour to walk around with our guide, and we were shown some of the important buildings, including the iconic lighthouse. A very well looked after area where I would recommend that all clients visit to see the history of the country. For those who have more of an interest, also possible to stay inside the walled old fort for a unique experience and being able to wander to a restaurant or bar at night. It was also interesting to hear of the tsunami 2004 which impacted hugely on Sri Lanka and where the fort was acting as a protective barrier, saving lives of those who lived within its walls.



**Stilt fishing** – this is the traditional way to fish in Sri Lanka, perched atop of a pole, sitting on a “crossbar” attached to it. Of course, when we arrived in the middle of the day (and perhaps also the location of the fishing) was not the ideal time of day that this happened naturally. So rather, when our bus pulled up, four men ran to the stilts and climbed up in order to pose for our photos. It was a completely staged setting but still nice to see how the traditional fishing happens in practice.

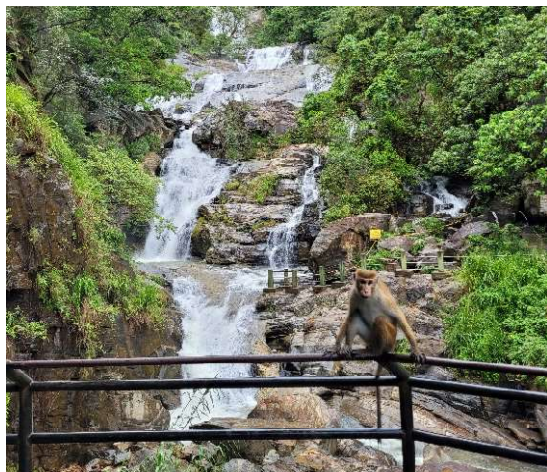


**Yala Safari Game Drive** – early morning around 5.30 am we started with coffee and tea in the hotel lobby and then we left our accommodation around 20 minutes from the national park entrance to enjoy a game drive. We had been told on the previous evening that we would take the bus to the entrance and there we would get in to the safari vehicles, but it was a pleasant surprise that the safari vehicles picked us up from the hotel (could have had some better communication here). Comfortable vehicles, but bumpy nonetheless given the roads of course, we were split in two groups and drove to the same areas as each other.

We spotted many animals such as water buffalo, crocodiles, elephants, mongoose, land monitors, birds like barbet and junglefowl, wild boar and spotted deer. Spot for some fresh fruits by a nice beach area. There was no toilet stop, as the facilities did not exist as far as we could tell, but this would have been an appreciated comfort break. Sadly, we saw no leopards, but on one occasion we saw paw prints close to our vehicle, indicating they were in the area at least!



**Ravana Falls** – short stop outside of Ella to see the beautiful waterfall and stretch out legs. There were some monkeys who came to greet us (i.e. look for food) while we took our photos. We also were treated to some snacks by our Jetwing tour guides, who purchased grilled corn-on-the-cob from the local stands along the road near the waterfall, that we could all enjoy once back on the bus.



**Train ride to Kandy** – a full morning enjoying a ride on the blue train which goes between Ella and Kandy. We travelled in air-conditioned 1<sup>st</sup> class. From Ella to Kandy the best view in general is on the left-hand side of the train in the direction of travel. We boarded at Nanu-Oya near Nuwara Eliya so did not see the entire stretch from Ella, however we still enjoyed gorgeous tea plantations and rolling hills wherever we looked. Once we arrived in Kandy, the final hour or so had felt rather slow, so I am happy that we did not spend longer on the train. It was a great experience to physically feel the difference in the altitude and the air change as we slowly made our way to lower altitudes; from cool morning air in the mountains to hot and almost pressing tropical heat in Kandy. At various stops, locals hopped onto the train to sell snacks and drinks; everything from strawberries to samosas and local snacks. I spent much of the journey looking out of the open doors, or sitting in the doorway, to see the passing landscape and feel the air. On lower levels the train started to speed up which made this less comfortable and enjoyable for perhaps the last hour of the ride. We had many iconic photo opportunities with our guide Richard arranging many amazing shots, and I also had some interactions with locals – a group of students from Colombo who had been in the mountains for a weekend break. They invited me to try some of their snacks, a deep fried and dangerously red coloured sweet by the name of Bundi. Seeing how much time was spent outside of my seat, I would say that 2<sup>nd</sup> class is definitely enough for most travellers who want to travel by the train, even if this is not an air-conditioned cabin. When we got off the train, we saw how fully packed 3<sup>rd</sup> class was, where the locals themselves travelled, who used the train more as a transportation rather than a sightseeing experience.





**Traditional Dance Performance, Kandy** – engaging performers and dancers, along with a detailed program describing each dance with some history and origin, made this one hour show an excellent immersive experience. Ended with fire walk and fire breathing outside. Would recommend to most clients, with interest in culture and children who can sit still for a slightly longer stretch of time. Lovely to see some of the dances which also features on the currency of Sri Lanka – now I have seen it live and can imagine the movements and importance to the people and culture of the country.



Image of note from <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/notes-coins/notes-and-coins/current-note-series>

**Kandy Sacred Tooth Temple** – an important Buddhist temple, with the knowledgeable guide Richard we were given a good amount of history and context without feeling too overwhelming, and explanations of the rituals going on around us. We arrived at time for flower ceremony which was special to witness. A must visit for any visitor to Kandy, as this is a pilgrimage that Buddhists in the country try to undertake twice a year, it is of significance to the culture.

**Visit to Kandy local market** – wonderful to see the local life and trading in this very clean and structured market. The different areas were well separated and areas that sold fresh meat and fish did not feel unsanitary in any way. The only downside was that we did not have longer time here to explore!



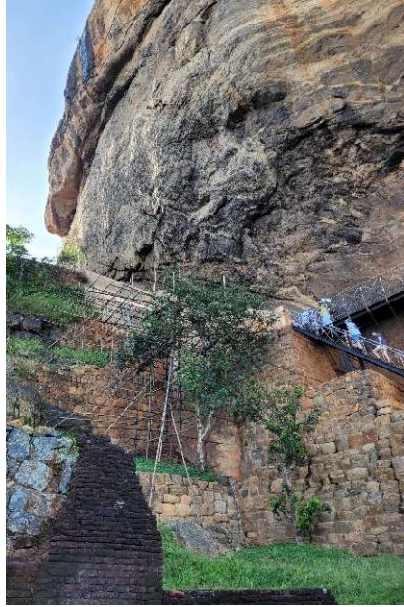
**Ayurvedic Spice Garden** – We had a tasty lunch before a guided tour around the gardens with exhibits of how certain foods were made, plants used and then a massage before time to shop for products. Brought the Ayurvedic concept to life and the massage certainly warmed most of us up for a shopping-spree. Would have been better to have the tour first then lunch, but that would not work with our timings, or at least to have more explanation if there were local spices used in the lunch dishes so we could later see where they originated from.

**Temple Blessing, local temple** – an experience that felt very unique and put us in much closer proximity to the local way of life, giving us an understanding of Buddhist practices. To get to take part of such an intimate religious experience, regardless of personal beliefs, was very special.

I loved seeing the temple where we received the blessing, and after the ceremony walk around the outside of the inner room, in the 'corridor' that ran around the innermost room, with colourful wall paintings and decorations because I had seen such structures in the temple ruins in Bagan in Burma, where the paintings were faded and crumbled. To connect the ancient and this temple, very much in use and looked after, was a special moment for me and made my own travel experience richer.

**Sigiriya Lion's Rock climb** – the final major experience of the trip was the climb up to Lion's Rock. We departed from the hotel around 06.30 to arrive in time for opening of Sigiriya at 7 am. The grounds with its ruins of reservoirs and pools were wonderfully created and I could easily have spent longer exploring here. There was an option for those not wanting to or able to walk up to the top of Lion's Rock, to enter the gardens and then depart out before the steepest climb, after perhaps 30-40 steps in total. A good option for perhaps a larger multi-generational family with different abilities.

The rock shaded us for most of the climb up, which was welcomed as it was a very strenuous walk or rather a climb. It took around 40 minutes to climb the many steps in total, and at the top were breathtaking views and ruins to explore. A must-do experience for clients who enjoy being active, but it did not require a top-level fitness by any means, just the ability to climb stairs and absolute must is to start as soon as they open in the morning. On the return there is a possibility to climb up more stairs to see rock paintings. My legs were not up for that challenge sadly, one for next time!



## IN CONCLUSION

This trip gave me such a fantastic experience to see many different sides of Sri Lanka, a hugely varied country with landscape from tropical golden beaches and national parks to cooler high country with tea plantations and a very rich history and culture. Travelling around is a must so for any client who wants to explore and see a lot in one trip this is an ideal location. Perhaps not for the very youngest children, but even so as long as they are little explorers then this country can of course be an enticing trip to what the appetite for future travel.

The current situation in Sri Lanka, with demonstrations, protests and difficult monetary situation with such effects as fuel shortage, was only ever to slightly visible to us in conversation with locals and that we could see the long lines at petrol stations. A country with a troubled past and even in nearer history having had events that some of my clients have mentioned makes them uneasy about a visit, my own impression of Sri Lanka is that it is a very peaceful country, very clean and orderly and a very hospitable people – I would not hesitate to recommend a trip to Sri Lanka to most of my clients.

The FAM trip was overall well organized, and Madeleine who represented PATA managed those more stressful moments and parts of the itinerary well, to ensure we all got the most out of the trip in a good balance between hotel site inspections and lots of experiences. Eunice who joined from Qatar was both professional and friendly and is a credit to the airline. Her input into the choice of destination is much appreciated as Sri Lanka is a wonderful country with such a wide variety of experiences and a hospitable people – I am truly grateful that I was selected to be part of this trip! Thank you!