Craig travel

SRI LANKA
& Kerala Backwaters



October 28 - November 14, 2027 • 18 Days • 44 Meals

SMALL GROUP • LED BY DAVID & ROSLYN CRAIG

Book Early and Save $300 pp



PINNAWALA

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

UNESCO GEMS
Climb the 5th-century Sigiriya Rock Fortress, explore the Dambulla Cave Temples and Kandy, admire Polonnaruwa's 12th-century rock-carved Buddhas and visit the Temple of the Sacred Tooth.

LIFE ON KERALA BACKWATERS
Cruise for seven nights aboard MV Vaikundam past paddy fields and Kumarakom's bird sanctuary, meet toddy tappers, coir weavers, shell harvesters and farmers, and tour Chavara Bhavan, Saint Chavara's ancestral home.

UNIQUE CULINARY EXPERIENCES
Savour a home-hosted dinner with a Sri Lankan family, heirloom recipes with a Syrian Christian family on their reclaimed backwater island, and banana-leaf feasts aboard. Ride into a Sri Lankan village for a cooking demonstration with local women, wander a Matale spice garden and sample tea at a Giragama tea factory.

LIVING TRADITIONS
Experience Kathakali dance and Kalaripayattu martial arts, and watch bell metal casting and boat-building in Kerala. Admire Kandyan dancing, rhythmic drumming and fire-walking, see palm-leaf manuscripts inscribed at the Aluvihara Rock Temple and visit the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage.

Cover photo MV Vaikundam credit Far Horizon

SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCE
Limited to 16 members

OUR CRUISE SHIP

The MV Vaikundam, featured on the cover, is a boutique river vessel built in the traditional Kettuvallom style, offering an intimate way to explore Kerala's backwaters. Featuring just 9 air-conditioned, en-suite cabins for up to 18 guests (including journey leaders), the ship combines traditional teakwood craftsmanship with modern comforts. Guests enjoy an air-conditioned dining room and lounge, a 360-degree sun deck, fresh regional cuisine, and onboard lectures on Ayurveda and regional culture.

CT RATING: 3.5/5



Sri Lanka and Kerala (South India) offer magnificent scenery and rich cultural experiences, but both regions require an open mind to embrace their unique characteristics. Living standards can differ from those in Canada, traffic can be chaotic, and the itinerary includes travel days where facilities may be limited. The climb (if undertaken) up Sigiriya involves many steep steps, and temple visits require removing shoes and covering shoulders and knees. Aboard the MV Vaikundam, boarding, excursions and village walks will involve steps and uneven surfaces. We can expect weather that is both hot and humid. Meals may include spicy dishes. Members should be in good health, able to walk over rough surfaces and capable of managing their own luggage (if required).

Visit craigtravel.com/85 to learn more!

ITINERARY

OCT 28 | DEPART CANADA
We gather for our overnight flights to Sri Lanka.

OCT 29 | COLOMBO
Colombo greets us in the evening. Once a trading port for Arab, Portuguese, Dutch and British, the island's commercial capital is home to our lakeside hotel.
Cinnamon Lakeside - 1 night (D)

OCT 30 | PINNAWALA / DAMBULLA / HABARANA
At Pinnawala see the herd of orphan elephants being fed and bathed. The Dambulla Cave Temple (an UNESCO World Heritage, dating to the 1st century BC), consists of five caves adorned with murals and 150 Buddha statues.
Cinnamon Lodge - 2 nights (BLD)

OCT 31 | SIGIRIYA – POLONNARUWA
Climb Sigiriya Rock Fortress, to see the remains of the royal palace. Travel by tractor and canoe to a local village to see our lunch prepared by the local women. Explore Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka's medieval capital, renowned for the colossal rock-carved Buddha statues.(BLD)

NOV 1 | MATALE – KANDY
At Aluvihara Rock Temple, Buddhist scriptures were first written on palmyra. Learn about growing and harvesting spices and aromatic herbs. Continue to the misty mountains and tea plantations leading to Kandy, the last royal capital.
The Kandy Myst by Cinnamon - 2 nights (BLD)

NOV 2 | KANDY
Explore the Royal Botanic Gardens on the shores of Kandy Lake. Following a performance of traditional dances and fire-walking, visit the holiest shrine in Sri Lanka, the Temple of the Tooth Relic (with a tooth of the Lord Buddha). Share an authentic home hosted meal with a local family. (BLD)

NOV 3 | KANDY – COLOMBO
In Giragama, visit a traditional tea plantation before we return to Colombo to visit historic Fort district, the vibrant Pettah markets, the Red Mosque, and Cinnamon Gardens.
Cinnamon Lakeside - 1 night (BLD)

NOV 4 | COLOMBO – KOCHI
Our afternoon flight brings us to Kochi, in the palm covered state of Kerala. This historic port was shaped by centuries of Arab, Portuguese, Dutch, and British trade.
The Tower House - 2 nights (BD)

NOV 5 | KOCHI
A morning walk takes us through Fort Kochi and Mattancherry, with a visit to St. Francis Church and along the waterfront to view the iconic Chinese fishing nets. Enjoy a free afternoon to relax by the sea. (BLD)

NOV 6 | ALLEPPEY – KANJIPPADOM
Enter a different world of tranquil backwaters, quaint villages and towering palm trees. Settle in our floating home with a banana-leaf lunch as we begin our cruise. On a village walk, watch craftsmen build traditional wooden house boats crafted with coir, resin, and native timber.
MV Vaikundam - 7 nights (BLD)

NOV 7 | KARUMADI – PALLANA
In Karumadi, stroll by paddy fields marvelling at the beautiful countryside, the traditional homes with families at work and play. Back on board, an interactive lecture by a professional Ayurveda doctor introduces us to India's 5,000-year-old holistic healing traditions. (BLD)

NOV 8 | THOTTAPPALLY – CHANGANKARI
The coconut palm is the lifeblood of Kerala – in planting a new tree, we learn all about its importance. Worshiping snakes is an integral part of life in India - visit a temple/grove with female priests to experience their rituals. In a village devoted to metal work, master craftsmen create temple lamps, ornate locks, and sacred vessels. As evening falls, enjoy a relaxing stroll along the beach. (BLD)

NOV 9 | ARANMULA – CHAMPAKKULAM
In Aranmula, local families create a unique mirror, made without glass, that is highly reflective. The temple, dedicated to the Lord Krishna, is known for its unique rituals. Visit a private home for a special lunch. Visit historic St. Mary's Church (founded in AD 427) and its ancient Rock Cross. (BLD)

NOV 10 | KAINAKARY – KAVALAM
Visit the ancestral home of Saint Chavara, the first Indian saint who worked to improve the life of local men. Enjoy lunch and cruising enroute to Kavalam, watching for the tappers who use the sap from palm trees to make toddy, a local alcoholic drink. (BLD)

NOV 11 | KUMARAKOM – THANNEERMUKKOM
Small boats take us birdwatching in the tranquil wetlands of Kumarakom – including cuckoos, Siberian storks and many more. Visit the home of a Syrian Christian family to learn about their life and to enjoy a cooking demonstration and lunch. (BLD)

NOV 12 | CHENGANDA – VAIKOM
Fishing, farming and coir, made from coconut husks, are important industries in Kerala. The traditional dance, Kathakali, with its dramatic makeup and costumes is not to be missed. Ride in a tuk-tuk ride through the busy streets to an ancient Shiva temple. We return to the ship for a farewell dinner. (BLD)

NOV 13 | PALLIPPURAM – KOCHI
Experience the traditional Martial Art of Kerala with demonstrations and talks before we continue to our airport hotel for lunch and time to relax before the overnight journey back to Canada.
Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport - Day Use Room (BL)

NOV 14 | ARRIVE CANADA
We arrive in Toronto as our memorable journey through Sri Lanka and Kerala comes to an end.



B: BREAKFAST (15) L: LUNCH (14) D: DINNER (15)

DID YOU KNOW?

Fort Kochi's Chinese fishing nets have lined the waterfront for more than five centuries, becoming one of Kerala's most recognizable cultural landmarks. Each net can span roughly 20 metres and hang from a structure about 10 metres high, creating the striking silhouettes that define the waterfront.



KOCHI

CRAIG TRAVEL INCLUSIONS

- International flights, domestic Canadian flights and airport transfers with air-inclusive packages
- Domestic flights within the destination
- Carefully selected accommodation as listed, or similar
- All sightseeing and entrance fees as described
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Dedicated journey leader, national guides, and local specialists where applicable
- All gratuities, surcharges, fees, and taxes
- International eSIM to keep you connected
- Visa support ***and fees*** for Canadian passport holders
- Free insurance quote (contact us for details)

TOUR & AIR COST

Land Only	$9,195
Toronto	$11,295
Ottawa / Montreal	$11,385
Halifax / Winnipeg	$11,535
Calgary / Edmonton / Vancouver	$11,585
St. John's	$11,585
Saskatoon / Regina	$11,735
Victoria	$11,635
Single Supplement (on request)	***$3,695***

Deposit is $1,500 per person
Final payment is due June 23, 2027



YOUR JOURNEY LEADERS

David Craig, Chairman of Craig Travel, and Roslyn bring decades of travel experience as both leaders and tour operators. After attending the University of Toronto and York University, David travelled the world and lived in Australia before returning to Canada and Craig Travel. For almost fifty years, he has devoted his career to arranging and operating tours and cruises worldwide. Australian-born Roslyn has spent most of her life in the travel industry. Together, they have led tours and cruises to over 100 countries and all seven continents, and look forward to sharing this exciting journey with you.



GIRAGAMA

Visit craigtravel.com/85 to learn more!

Prices are in Canadian dollars per person. Land-only members join at the hotel in Colombo and leave at the hotel in Kochi. Airfares from other gateways are available on request. Tour price is based on sharing a twin-bedded room. Prices are based on a minimum of 15 members and on rates, taxes and fees effective October 2026 and are subject to change due to factors beyond our control. Group to be escorted with a minimum of 12 members. For full terms and conditions, visit our website: craigtravel.com/terms-conditions. Comprehensive travel insurance is strongly recommended. Canadian passport holders require a visa for India and an online ETA for Sri Lanka.

Contact us or visit our website to learn more and reserve your place.

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