

Sri Lanka For Travellers: Lose the Guidebook Part II

Mary Pratt, Founder of [The Caviar Spoon](#), recently went on a tour of Sri Lanka. Read on for the second part of her two-series adventure, or read the first chapter [here](#).

“The traveller sees what he sees. The tourist sees what he has come to see.” – G.K. Chesterton

ELLA: An Indulgence of Senses with Tea, French-Sri Lankan Cuisine, and Hidden Waterfalls

Time Spent Here: 2 nights

Travel Time: 3.5 hours drive from Kandy, 138 km

Welcome to tea country! When you think about Sri Lanka and its teas, this is the beating heart of it all.



Transportation

They say that one of the best ways to get from Kandy to Ella is by train, purely for the stunning scenery. But the trick is to book early and pay for first class, otherwise you may find yourself in third class, standing on stiff legs for the full 6-hour journey. Or so I was told by one couple who had the misfortune of actually experiencing this!

About Ella

Ella is refreshingly laid-back and the travellers and tourists mesh together rather seamlessly. The landscape here seems unreal, with the countryside looking like it's been plucked straight out of a fantasy movie, replete with rolling hills, thick foliage, and tea plantations. It might be a small town, but Ella is still on everyone's radar as a must-visit destination in Sri Lanka. That also means there are a lot of recommended places to see but luckily, they won't feel overridden with tourists and are truly amazing experiences.



Where I Stayed

There is no shortage of peaceful retreats and guesthouses in the beautiful countryside of Sri Lanka. I stayed at a lovely guesthouse, with an incredibly accommodating host, that was conveniently located to a lot of the following sights and experiences.

Sri Lankan Sweet Spots: Arts & Culture

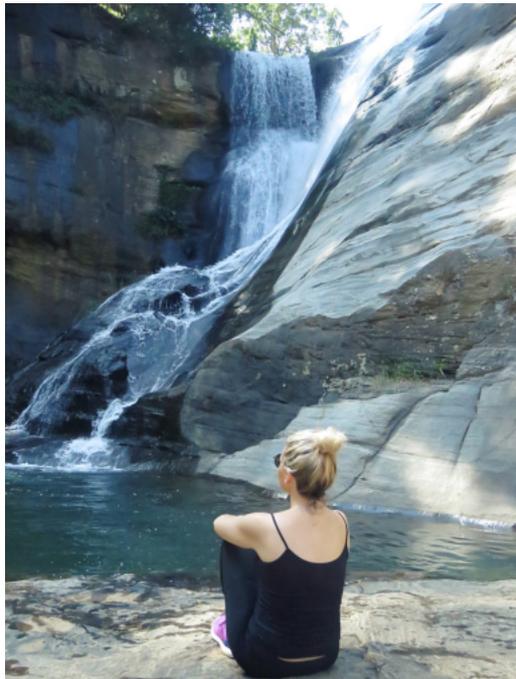
Ravana Waterfalls

I found myself (very gingerly) crossing a swinging wooden bridge, wondering what on earth I had gotten myself into. My answer came when on the other side, as I was greeted with the sight of glorious waterfalls. It's said that the cave behind these falls is where the ancient King Ravana hid the princess Sita after he kidnapped her.



It was worth crossing this bridge!

Take your swimming gear, perhaps even pack a picnic, and splash away the afternoon. The cool, crisp water will take your breath away for a second when you jump in but do it anyway. Trust me on this one.



Taking in the quiet beauty of Ravana Falls

Amba Estate

Located near the falls, this small organic working tea farm produces artisan teas (including those stocked by London's Fortnum & Mason), coffees, spices, and preserves. Take part in one of the tours and tastings offered here where you'll see firsthand just how much time and labour goes into producing high quality teas.



Taking a moment to chill at Amba Estate

This really was the best experience. It was nearly as exciting as learning about wine in South Africa, and that was truly epic! From learning about the history to seeing the leaves being hand-rolled, your beloved PG Tips will likely end up at the back of the cupboard when you taste the difference of handmade teas!



The faces behind some of the best tea you'll ever taste

French-Sri Lankan Cooking Class

A completely special treat, I had the chance to take part in a cooking class at the Morning Mist Guest House. Pat, the owner and French-Sri Lankan cook, was incredibly thorough and engaging as she taught us how to make some mouth-watering Tuna Moku. I'd say Pat would put most cooking shows to shame! She covered every detail, making sure we knew exactly how to master this dish, even at home. This is one of those experiences that you take away from your travels and can bring out again and again over the years.

Eagles Rock

Accessing this point is only available to guests of Amba Estate so if you do end up staying here, make sure you carve out some time to hike to this point. The view is breathtaking and since it's on private property, it's one of those spots that you won't see listed in the guidebooks. By the way, don't be surprised if you're accompanied by the property pooches, Baloo and Gus. These lovable furry guys love running around and pretending to be king of the world as they perch at the top of the cliff.



Check out the soaring views from Eagles Rock

Buduruwagala Temple

In Wellaya, just over an hour's drive from Ella, is an ancient Buddhist temple that dates back 1,000 years and has seven figures carved into a rock. The largest figure is Buddha in the centre, standing at 15 metres and the tallest on the island.



Seeing these carvings up close was incredible

Etiquette Tip: Please remember to always face the Buddhas out of respect for the religion, even when you're walking out of a temple. It's cringeworthy to see tourists with their backs to Buddha as the locals, too polite to say anything, wriggle in visible discomfort.

World's End

This is one of those touristy spots, but with a name like this, how do you not go check it out? If you have a fear of heights, try and swallow it, because this cliff, with a drop of about 1,200 metres, is a dizzying sight. Sadly, this area was once full of Sri Lankan dwarf elephants before us horrible Brits got rid of them! Definitely make time to visit this spot if you're in Ella.

Ella Rock

Another popular sightseeing option, this is great for backpackers and hiking enthusiasts. It's a moderate hike that averages 2 hours each way and the trail will take you along railroad tracks and up through the hills.



The railroad tracks through Ella

Adams Peak

For the true hikers and adventurers, this 2,243m mountain is a fantastic challenge. It's popular among tourist and locals and gets incredibly crowded during weekends and special holidays so check your calendar before climbing. Most people start climbing in the middle of night so they can catch the sunrise at the peak.