



# CHRISTMAS IN SRI LANKA

2024 - Classic Tour | 17 Days | Physical Level 2

Colombo – Dambulla – Kandy - Nuwara Eliya – Yala - Hikkaduwa -  
Colombo

Marvel at magnificent temples, see the World Heritage Rock Fortress at Sigiriya, spend Christmas in a city that celebrates to the fullest, and New Years in the vibrant city of Colombo. You will also discover the fascinating caves at Dambulla and explore the ruined cities of Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura on this festive season tour.

- Climb the spectacular Sigiriya Rock Fortress
- Explore the ruins of Medieval Polonnaruwa
- Discover Udawattakele Rainforest at night
- Treat your taste buds on a Street Food tour in Colombo
- Try your hand at curd making
- Enjoy a canoe ride, and visit a spice garden

## TOUR MAP

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### CHRISTMAS IN SRI LANKA TOUR INCLUSIONS:

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- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All Meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

### CLASSIC TOURS:

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Our Classic tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Sri Lanka on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and Local Guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

## PHYSICAL LEVEL 2:

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All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights. 'Christmas in Sri Lanka' is rated 2 on the physical level scale. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches and boats, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time.
- Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps, often without handrails
- You will be required to get on and off various sizes of boats and rickshaws throughout the tour

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

## JOINING YOUR TOUR:

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The tour is 17 days in duration including an overnight international flight in one direction as this is the most likely flight option from New Zealand.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only', the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre and post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours. Please email your international flight times to [info@wendywutours.co.nz](mailto:info@wendywutours.co.nz) so we can arrange your transfers accordingly.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Colombo and end the tour on Day 16 also in Colombo. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

## ITINERARY CHANGES:

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It's our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### **Day 1-2: Arrive Colombo**

Meals: D

Welcome to Sri Lanka, the pearl of the Indian Ocean!

Fly overnight to Colombo. On arrival at the Bandaranaike International Airport, you will be met by your Chauffeur guide & transferred to your hotel in Colombo.

The transfer time will be approximately 1 hour to your hotel, where you will check-in. The rest of the day is at leisure.



### **Destination Information**

**Colombo** - The formal capital city and the business and commercial centre of Sri Lanka. Originally a small seaport, Colombo became prominent in the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese. The Dutch later arrived in the 16th century, but it wasn't until the British arrived in the late 18th century that Colombo developed into a major city.

### **Day 3: Travel to Dambulla**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast you will transfer approximately 3.5 hours to Dambulla.

Check in to the hotel and relax before heading to Sigiriya rock fortress late this afternoon.

### **Destination Information**

**Sigiriya** - A UNESCO World Heritage site, is the most exquisite example of ancient Sri Lankan art, architecture and landscaping. Built over 1,600 years ago, the now sinister-looking 600 ft. high black rock once appeared like a huge dazzling white cloud floating above the surrounding forests. Its sides were painted with beautiful frescoes of semi-naked nymphs. A massive gatehouse in the form of a lion guarded the entrance to the innermost sanctum of the city – the Sky Palace on top of the rock. It burst briefly into pre-eminence and was then abandoned and lay hidden in the forests for nearly 1,500 years.

### **Day 4: Hiriwaduna and Polonnaruwa**

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will be taken Hiriwaduna for a local village experience. Enjoy a catamaran ride on the lake, a tuk tuk trip to a local home to learn all about preparing an authentic Sri Lankan dish.

Next visit Polonnaruwa an ancient city, to hear the tales of how the king's court was laid out at the ancient city of Polonnaruwa.



This city is another important royal capital, with well-preserved 12th century ruins and the impressive stone culture recalls an inspired past.

Although nearly 1000 years old, the monuments are arranged in a reasonably compact garden setting and their development is easy to follow.

There will be approximately 2 hours of easy sightseeing on foot while exploring.

*Since this is a religious site – the footwear should be removed before entering. You could wear socks if you wish.*

### **Destination Information**

**Hiriwaduna Village** – A tiny rural village, located in Habarana, with a small community of approximately 2500 people, rich in culture and tradition, offering a wonderful look into a typical Sri Lankan village life.

**Polonnaruwa** - Polonnaruwa was the capital of Sri Lanka from the 11th to the 13th centuries and is a well-preserved city of stupas, frescoes and statues. Visit the ruins of the Royal Palace, Audience Hall and the Bathing Pool in the Royal Palace group, along with the Thivanka Image House, which possesses the best frescoes from the Polonnaruwa period. Also tour Gal Vihara, a magnificent group of rock temples consisting of four separate statues; a meditating Buddha, a smaller Buddha said to be visiting heaven, a standing Buddha and the reclining Buddha entering Nirvana, which is 14 metres long.

**Day 5: Anuradhapura**

Meals: B, L, D

Travel approximately 1 hour to Anuradhapura to explore the magnificent ancient city. Exploration of this ancient city involves approximately 4 hours on foot. Visit the Bo Tree before returning to Dambulla, where the remainder of the afternoon is free at leisure.



### **Destination Information**

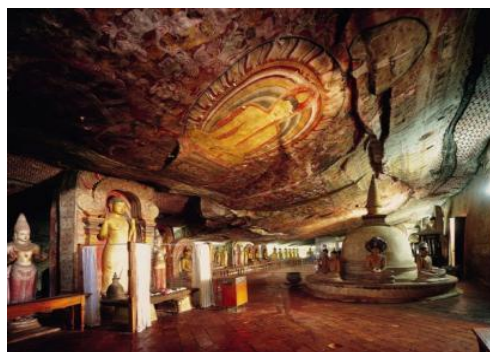
**Anuradhapura** - One of Sri Lanka's most ancient cities. The city's greatest treasures are its dagobas; domes enshrining sacred relics. The most notable is the Ruvanveliseya Dagoba, dating back to the 2nd century BC. Also visit the Jetavanaramaya, the largest dagoba in the world, and the Thuparamaya, said to contain the collarbone of Buddha, and the first dagoba built in Sri Lanka.

**Bo Tree** - The most renowned Buddhist relic is the sacred Bo Tree. It is said that Emperor Asoka's daughter brought to Anuradhapura a branch of this tree, under which Buddha is said to have gained enlightenment. Planted over 2,250 years ago, it is the oldest surviving historical tree in the world.

**Day 6: Travel Dambulla to Kandy**

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will depart for Kandy, travelling 2,5 hours and visiting the Dambulla Cave Temple on your way. This cave temple has the largest number of Buddha statues all housed in one place, including a colossal, 14-metre-long figure of the recumbent Buddha carved out of the rock. Dambulla Cave Temple is now one of the most popular religious cultural sites in Sri Lanka, attracting tourists from across the globe.



Thereafter you will visit a spice garden in Matale, where you are greeted with farm sourced fresh juice and taken on a guided walk to learn about the garden's collection of produce, from pepper to papaya, cocoa to coconut and mango to mahogany. This evening you visit the Temple of the Tooth Relic followed by an amazing cultural dance show.

*Light Coloured clothing with sleeves and trousers or skirts below the knee length are recommended. Since this is a religious site – shoes should be removed before entering. You could wear socks if you wish.*

**Destination Information**

**Dambulla Cave Temple** - First became significant when it was used as a refuge for King Valagambahu in 1st century BC. Concealed here by the local monks upon returning from exile to his throne at Anuradhapura, Valagambahu showed his gratitude by building a magnificent cave temple for them, which consists of a complex of Buddhist image houses. Its rock ceiling is one large sweep of colourful frescoes, some of which date back over 2,000 years, which depict Buddhist mythology, and the tales of the Buddha's previous births.

**The Sri Lankan garden** - Spread over 15 and a half acres towards the top of a mountain, boasting incredible views of the Aluvihare Mountains.

**Temple of the Tooth Relic** - A sacred tooth relic of the Lord Buddha was brought to Sri Lanka in 4th Century A.D. and has ever since been the symbol of sovereignty for the Sinhalese kings. Although the tooth relic cannot be seen within the temple, on the Esala full moon day of July/August each year, the sacred tooth relic, encased in a golden casket, is taken in procession through Kandy's streets for all to see.

**Day 7: Kandy**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast take a boat ride on Kandy Lake, giving you breathtaking views of the picturesque city, and from where you can observe a variety of bird species such as the Indian cormorants, wood storks and pelicans.

Enjoy a relaxing afternoon at your hotel before heading out this evening for a walk in Udawattekele rainforest.



**Day 8: Nuwara Eliya**

Meals: B, L, D

Today after breakfast you will be taken to Nuwara Eliya by train. This train journey is approximately 4 hours.

(It is important to note that there could be delays in the train timings, which is beyond our control. Should we not be able to obtain train tickets then this journey will be done by road.)

You will be transferred from the station and taken to the hotel in Nuwara Eliya, to check in relax for the rest of your day enjoying the hotel facilities before your Christmas Eve dinner.

**Destination Information**

**Nuwara Eliya** - Situated at 2,000m above sea level, Nuwara Eliya is the main hill station of Sri Lanka and is known as 'Little England', as it resembles an English country town. It is considered an excellent location for tea production due to the cool climate, which creates tea with a unique flavour.

**Day 9: Christmas in Nuwara Eliya**

Meals: B, L, D

Merry Christmas! After breakfast you will be taken for a tea plantation experience dressed in sarees (The attire worn by tea pluckers to pluck tea).

Your experience starts in the plantation itself with the tea pluckers, giving you the opportunity to learn how to pluck tea then visit the factory where ancient machines pre-dating the industrial revolution wither, roll and dry the tea, followed by learning how to taste different variety of tea.

There is normally a little time at the end of the tour for a tea tasting, either of one specific type of tea or occasionally of the various specialties of that factory. Much like a wine tasting, a traditional tea tasting would involve drinking tea (without milk), swilling it around the mouth to get the taste.

Return to the hotel and celebrate the festivities with a scrumptious Christmas day lunch.

Later, enjoy a fabulous High Tea at the Grand Hotel where you will relax in the splendour of their gardens.

**Day 10: Udawalawe**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast proceed to Yala, where on your way you will visit Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home and participate in the process of curd making. Journey time will be approximately 5 hours.

Though buffalo curd is a quintessential favourite in the Sri Lankan pantry, its arduous journey, from teat to table, is often unheeded. Witness the ins and outs of a dairy farm, where buffalo curd production is the chief livelihood of



most locals. Assist the farmers in leading the buffalos to graze or observe the milkmaids at work. Help yourself to a fresh sip of milk after trying your hand milking a buffalo. Lend a helping hand to the farmers to carry the pots of milk back to their houses and study how the curd is made the traditional way. Dust off this Sri Lankan traditional experience by finally relishing on a fresh pot of curd sweetened with treacle.

### Destination Information

**The Elephant Transit Home** - This home helps to care for injured elephants from all over Sri Lanka. Supported by the Born Free Foundation, the complex is a halfway house for orphaned elephants. After rehabilitation, the elephants are released back into the wild, many into the Uda Walawe National Park.

### **Day 11: Yala National Park**

Meals: B, L, D

Early morning, and later this afternoon, you will be taken for a jeep safari at Yala National Park, where you will embark on an adventure safari.



### Destination Information

**Yala National Park** - The largest National Park in Sri Lanka. It is located approximately 24km Northeast of Tissamaharama. Yala is the best location to sight and photograph the rare and remarkable leopards. Other highlights of Yala include the herd of wild elephants, bears, wild boars, buffalos, deer, crocodiles and many species of birds. The vegetation ranges from open parkland to dense jungle.

There is also an abundance of water supply for animals and birds ranging from waterholes, streams, small lakes to lagoons.

### **Day 12: Hikkaduwa**

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will travel the 3 hours to Hikkaduwa with a stop enroute to visit a cinnamon plantation.

Visit the peeling and oil extraction shed where local peelers gather to process cinnamon. Learn all about the uses and benefits of cinnamon and its grading. At the top, there is a breath-taking view, and the chance to try your hand with the tools of the trade in an Ambalama.



Continue your journey to **Hikkaduwa**, check into your hotel and relax for the rest of your day enjoying hotel facilities.



### Destination Information

**Hikkaduwa** – A seaside resort town in southwestern Sri Lanka. Popular for its beaches that are lined with restaurants and bars.

#### **Day 13: Galle Fort**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast you will be visiting Galle Fort, and the journey will take about 1 hour.

During the tour of Galle, you will have the opportunity to visit Galle Fort, Old Dutch Church and Walk along the Rampart.



### Destination Information

**Galle** - Recognised as the Southern Capital (116 km from Colombo) and is home to the popular Fort called "Santa Cruz", which is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The Fort which was initially built by the Portuguese in 1619 has been expanded and further developed by the Dutch and the British. Galle was the main seaport of Sri Lanka before Colombo and still handles shipping and cruising yachts to present.

**Galle Lighthouse** - Stunningly located on the edge of Galle Fort, the lighthouse is one of 14 left in Sri Lanka and is considered the oldest.

**The Dutch Reformed Church** - Originally founded in 1640, the present building dates from 1752 to 1755. The floor of the church is covered with granite tombstones and there is a small graveyard on the premises.

#### **Day 14: Kosgoda Turtle Sanctuary**

Meals: B, L, D

You are off to visit the Kosgoda Turtle Hatchery, which you will reach after approximately 1 hour transfer.

Visiting the turtle hatchery in Sri Lanka is one of the most recommended things to do. The small town of Kosgoda on the southern strip is famous for its turtle hatchery, the first turtle conservation centre established in Sri Lanka.

At the hatchery, fishermen are paid for rescuing the vulnerable eggs which they collect at night, along the sandy beach. Visitors can witness the exceptional sight of them hatching or even see tanks filled with new-born hatchlings. After being fed, the baby turtles are returned to the sea where they are released when they are 2-4 days old. Once placed on the beach, most baby sea turtles start moving towards the water, flapping their tiny flippers. Children in particular love to visit the hatchery and watch the turtles being released back into their natural habitat.



**Day 15: Travel to Colombo**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast and checking out of the hotel you travel the 2.5 hours to Colombo.

After check-in you have time to relax before the city tour, which includes a drive past the busy commercial areas, tree-lined residential Cinnamon Gardens. Visit the fort of the former British administrative centre, Sea Street – the Goldsmith’s quarters, the bazaar area, a Hindu Temple with elaborate stone carvings and Dutch Church of Wolfendhal dating back to 1749.



Enjoy a New Year's Eve dinner at the hotel.

**Days 16: Depart Colombo**

Meals: B,L,D

Today will be a day at leisure to further to relax and refresh or further explore the vibrant city of Colombo independently. Later, transfer to Bandaranaike Airport to board your onward flight home, arriving home the next day.

After dinner this evening, you will be transferred to the airport for your return flight to New Zealand as your flight is scheduled to depart very early the next morning. Your hotel room is available for use until your departure transfer.

## SRI LANKA TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

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Entry visas are required by all visitors to Sri Lanka and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

Please note, the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate, Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

Wendy Wu Tours does not accept responsibility for lost or undelivered items.

### INSURANCE:

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It is a condition of booking with us that you take out suitable travel insurance. You must provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24-hour emergency contact number when you book with us or as soon as possible thereafter. These details will be available to your national escort should they be required. Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

### EATING IN SRI LANKA:

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Sri Lanka is home to a melting pot of cuisine. Throughout years of colonisation and influence from other countries and a history of spice trading, Sri Lanka has cultivated its own distinct flavour. Meals as outlined in the itinerary (excluding drinks) are included in our tour. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

Dishes served in restaurants on our tours are varied. Some will be vegetable-based and some meat-based. Our restaurants are well aware of the western palate – there are plenty of non-spiced options. Dishes will usually be served either as a set menu with a few choices, or in a buffet style to allow you to sample many different options.

We recommend that when it comes to Sri Lankan food, you stay open-minded and try to be adventurous!

### ACCOMMODATION:

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Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Sri Lanka. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort or Local Guide.

### SOUVENIRS:

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We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places that hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

### TIPPING POLICY:

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Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Sri Lanka is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. To avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour, we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour

### LUGGAGE:

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All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 15kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### TRANSPORT:

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**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner-city roads in Sri Lanka have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner.

Roads in Sri Lanka have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

#### **APPROPRIATE DRESS:**

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We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour, we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

#### **CLIMBING STEPS:**

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Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

#### **GROUP SIZE:**

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The group size on our Classic Tours is on average 21 passengers, with a maximum group size of 28. You may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling. On our group tours we operate a seat-and-a-half policy, allowing you to travel in greater comfort.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 10 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

### VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

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We recommend that you contact either your GP or local Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safetravel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

### BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

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We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz) as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

### AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

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Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: Dec 2023