



**TRAVEL CLUB**  
*travel without judgement*

# **SRI LANKAN** *colonial circuit*

**15 DAYS | 14 NIGHTS**  
**DEPARTING 25 JAN 2018**



# HI THERE CLUBBERS!

We have now just completed our very first season for the G&T Travel Club and what a great season it was. The feedback we have received for both the India and Sri Lanka trips for 2017 confirmed without a doubt that it was a great success.

Our first four G&T Travel Club trips went incredibly well and as many of you know this was due to the wonderful people who travelled with us. Those of you who did travel with us know that we needed to run a second tour in both India and Sri Lanka due to the numbers interested and all four tours were lots of fun and adventure for all of us.

For those who did only one trip and would now like to do the other we would like to inform you first with priority of the 2018 dates. Because of our club nature we wish to extend this invitation to your family and friends as well.

## **THINGS JUST KEEP GETTING BETTER!**

Due to the amount of interest and feedback our trips in both India and Sri Lanka are a repeat of the 2017 itineraries. There are a few minor changes like additional inclusions, one hotel change and some 'tweaks' in our timings. We have also flipped the order of some of the amazing sites we visit to further improve the travelling experience. For those of you who have travelled with us already you can see how we do things a little different to the regular tour companies. For those of your family and friends who haven't they may be interested in reading what we see as our point of difference.

There are some good tour companies out there but they all tend to follow the same path and the same style. We are not re-inventing the wheel but feel that our 'product' has some distinct differences and personal touches.

G&T Travel Club trips will always have Gools and Thommo on each and every departure.



## HOW WE DIFFER

The following are some of the considerations we made while developing the trips.

*a* We wanted to develop an **interesting Itinerary** that will 'wow' you each day with great value inclusions that everyone would be interested in and none of those 'kitch' touristy things that just waste your time and patience. We will point out the different ways to enjoy your shopping and bargaining experiences. We will not take you to the Emporiums and Carpet sellers, but instead show you how these businesses work and show you how to get a good deal on your own. Our coach is often bigger than our group size requires so there can be spare seats to spread out.

We will offer you the freedom to do your own thing. In fact we will encourage you and help you to get the most out of your holiday by listening to what your personal needs are. You may want to go shopping for something special or want to head out on your own or in a smaller group.

*b* **Accommodation** choices are chosen for their great location, view, style, feel and facilities, not just to a Star Category or as suggested by the 'ground operators'. We use fantastic Castles, Royal Palaces, Colonial Residences and even an 'Eco Safari Camp', all hand-picked and researched personally by us! All the accommodation options include great breakfast spreads to start each day with both western and local foods available to suit your taste.

*c* You will have an **option to eat** out at some of our favourite great restaurants within close proximity to our accommodation. You can choose to join us and eat out or simply stay and eat in, it's up to you! Funnily enough some of the best restaurants are actually within our chosen accommodation anyway. We have also personally checked restaurant menus to make sure they can cater for most of the obvious dietary requirements. Because the majority of dinners are not included we make sure that we have a good variation between set menu, buffet and ordering from the menu with both western and local choices. The restaurants for our Special Farewell Dinners have both been chosen for the amazing food and the experience as well as something to remember.

*d* Having both **Gools and Thommo** along as hosts gives you something no one else can match. We will be with you the whole time looking after you personally. On top of that we will also have a National Tour Guide, a Driver and Assistant and Local City Guides throughout the tour. You are in a small group environment which is great but with so many support staff on hand you can create your own travel experience. You may have had a 'group tour' experience before where you felt rushed and dragged along by your guide. We make sure that everyone gets to walk at a comfortable pace and have time to have a good look at things along the way. If you are a keen photographer then you will have time to get the shot without losing the group. If you need to buy something while we are out and about then we can make this happen without making the group wait. In our opinion this is really important in a group environment.

*e* Most importantly we made sure we put together a **"Great Value"** product, not necessarily the cheapest but well worth the few extra dollars for an amazing experience! We have chosen our dates and itinerary for each country in regards to the best possible weather, the lesser crowds and special holiday dates.





On our tour we will focus on the amazing diversity that does make Sri Lanka 'The Wonder of Asia'! We begin in the modern city of Colombo before venturing north towards the cultural triangle. Here we find a treasure trove of ancient ruins and will visit Mihintale, the birthplace of Sri Lankan Buddhism. We will witness the life of the colonial tea plantations as we rise out of the plains into the rugged mountains. Experiencing a cooler climate we will learn about the pioneer's legacy that is now left in the architectural style of the homes and buildings. Leaving the largest population of Asian elephants behind we eventually descend to the coast to find the beautiful palm fringed beaches that are the epicentre of a thriving fishing and tourism industry. Here we explore the fortified old city of Galle still standing much like it did in its day. Come with us to see and feel what truly is 'The Wonder of Asia'!

## Day 1 ARRIVE COLOMBO

Welcome to **Sri Lanka!**

Make your way to our Colombo hotel and check in.

*(Arrival transfers available)*

The balance of the day is free for you to explore this cool city or simply enjoy a relaxing break after your flight!

**Note:** Tuk Tuk drivers and/or their touts may approach you outside of the hotel. Many suggest that they are employees of the hotel and will offer you sightseeing ideas. We will cover everything they offer and more tomorrow so please politely decline any offers they make.

**Meals Included:** None

**Overnight:** Cinnamon Red Hotel



## Day 2 COLOMBO SIGHTSEEING

After breakfast we will have a group meeting at 9:00 am to discuss the next exciting 14 days. Please arrive at this meeting ready to depart on our Colombo sightseeing tour.

**NB:** Today you will need to be dressed in the appropriate clothing for the temple/mosque. This includes long pants for men and long pants or long skirt for women and shoulders must be covered for both men and women. We remove our shoes to enter as well. **NB:** We will note where temple clothes are required throughout the itinerary.

**Tour highlights include:** Galle Face, Pettah Bazaar, Town Hall, Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo Museum, Independence Square, Jami Ul Alfar Jummu Mosque and the Gangarama Temple. We will have lunch during the sightseeing trip (at own expense)

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Cinnamon Red Hotel





# Day 3

## DRIVE FROM COLOMBO TO WILPATTU NATIONAL PARK

After an early breakfast we will leave the city behind and head up to Wilpattu National Park.

Wilpattu translates to 'Land of Lakes'. The unique feature of this park is the existence of "Willus" (Natural lakes) These natural sand-rimmed water basins or depressions simply fill with rainwater. Wilpattu is located in the Northwest coastal lowland dry zone of Sri Lanka. The park is located 30 km west Anuradhapura and located 26 km north of Puttalam (approximately 180 km north of Colombo). The park is 131, 693 hectares in size.

With nearly sixty lakes (Willus) and tanks spread throughout the park, Wilpattu is the largest and one of the oldest National Parks in Sri Lanka. Wilpattu is among the top national parks world-renowned for its elusive Leopard population.

A sighting cannot be guaranteed however we did see one on both tours thus far. The abundant birdlife, spotted deer and Sambhur (Sambar) deer will make the safari well worthwhile regardless. It is also possible to see Asian Elephants, Barking Deer, Wild Pig, Asiatic Buffalo, Mugger Crocodiles and Sloth Bears. Endemic birds in this riverine habitat include the Ceylon Jungle fowl, Brown-capped Babbler, Ceylon Wood Shrike and Black-capped Bulbul and many more.

Along the way we may spot a toddy tapper climbing a tall coconut tree to collect sap from the flowers, which is used to make Arrak - a local popular whisky type spirit or you may see local fisherman in the lakes as we head north out of Colombo.

We will also stop in a small village on the way for a simple lunch (at own expense).

Our Safari starts in the early afternoon. Please wear comfortable clothes and bring a hat, sunscreen, sunglasses and a bottle of water with you. Long sleeves are a good idea as the sides of the jeep are open and you may have some direct exposure to the sun. We return to camp just before dark and enjoy a fine dining experience under the night sky.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Overnight:** Big Game Camping (Safari Eco Camp) Wilpattu (This is a tented camp with basic ensuite bathroom facilities in a private jungle reserve)





## Day 4

### DRIVE WILPATTU TO ANURADHAPURA & ANCIENT CITY SIGHTSEEING

**NB:** Temple clothes are required today

After breakfast we take a short drive to the historical township of Anuradhapura.

We visit several of the sites within this vast and ancient city. Excavations on this site have revealed that there was human settlement here in 500 BC. However it was not until the 4th century BC, under King Pandukabhaya that Anuradhapura became the capital of Sri Lanka and began to gain fame and recognition. Among the many buildings & monuments still standing, view the brazen palace built in the 2nd century BC as a monk's residence, the Ruwanweli Seya originally built in the 2nd century and recently restored, the Thuparama dagoba, the oldest in the country and believed to enshrine the collarbone of Buddha.

After lunch (at own expense) we will visit Mihintale. Mihintale is a mountain peak near Anuradhapura, believed by Buddhists to be the site of meeting between the Buddhist monk Mahinda who arrived from India with Buddhism and King Devanampiyatissa which inaugurated the presence of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Now a pilgrimage site and the site of several religious monuments and abandoned structures.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** The Sanctuary at Tissawewa

## Day 5

### DRIVE ANURADHAPURA TO SIGIRIYA

After breakfast we will drive to Sigiriya and check into our hotel.

This afternoon we will enjoy a safari game drive in the nearby Minneriya or Kaudulla National Parks. These national parks, which border each other, are the largest known meeting place of Asian Elephants in the world!

Lucky visitors have reported spotting large herds near the lake. Whether we see 100 or just a few it is always great. The jeeps are African safari style generally so a long sleeve shirt with a collar is recommended to keep the sun off.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Hotel Sigiriya





This morning we will visit Sigiriya's Lion Rock. We depart prior to breakfast to get an early start to beat the heat and crowds.

Sigiriya contains the ruins of an ancient palace complex, built during the reign of King Kashyapa (477AD – 495 AD). It is one of the 7 world heritage sites in Sri Lanka and it is one of the most popular tourist attractions. There are likely to be crowds of enthusiastic travellers here but for good reason! The Sigiriya site consists of a 180m tall granite rock, whose sides are so steep that at some points the top overhangs the base. At the very top of the site we can wander amongst the ruins and enjoy the spectacular view.

The ruins of various chambers, stairways and pools can be seen here. There is a stone stairway leading from the base to the top of the mountain. Somebody told us that there were 1200 steps but we did not count them. Do not let the number of steps concern you too much. We have plenty of time to take them slowly! About half way to the top, there is a giant pair of lion paws which served as the entrance to the royal palace. Surrounding the palace complex are the ruins of an ancient garden consisting of two moats and various pools.

This activity is a little strenuous for those that wish to climb to the actual summit however the area around the base of the summit is a great alternative. It is an interesting place to relax and imagine what once existed here. There is definitely something for everyone whatever your fitness level and well worth the early start. Either Gools or Thommo can stay at the bottom of the complex with those who choose not to climb the rock at all. But most guests so far have at least made an effort to get half way and absolutely loved it.

After the Lion's Rock visit we will return to the hotel for a well earned leisurely breakfast.

**Optional Afternoon Activity:**

Sigiriya Village Tour: Here is a great opportunity to experience the daily life of the local village people. Enjoy a ride on a Tuk Tuk, a Bullock Cart ride and a Tank (lake) crossing in a boat, to get to a Chena where you learn about the local dry zone cultivation methods before viewing a cookery demonstration.

Participation price: approx. \$30.00 AUD per person (subject to confirmation and availability)

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Hotel Sigiriya



## Day 7

### DRIVE SIGIRIYA TO KANDY INCL SIGHTSEEING

**NB:** Temple clothes are required today.

After breakfast we will drive to Dambulla town and visit Dambulla Rock Cave Temple. Dambulla is a vast isolated rock mass 500 ft. high and a mile around the base, dating to the First Century BC. The caves of Dambulla sheltered the King Walagamba during his 14 years of exile from Anuradhapura, after gaining the throne he built the most magnificent of Rock Temples to be found on the Island. This temple is adorned with many statues and very old frescos with each individual cave so different to the next. After exploring the caves we will continue to Kandy, the Hill Capital of Sri Lanka. Fantastic colonial buildings can be found throughout this city. Kandy was built around a man-made lake and is home to the most sacred Buddhist temple on the Island, the 'temple of the sacred tooth relic' believed to house the tooth relic of Lord Buddha.

Upon arrival in Kandy we will head into the centre of town and take the opportunity to have a wander around. You can enjoy a relaxed lunch (at own expense) or walk around the compact and interesting shopping district or around the lake. We will then meet up at a designated point and proceed to our hotel. We will have time to freshen up before heading back across to the Sri Dalada Maligawa (the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) for our guided tour a little later in the afternoon.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Hotel Suisse



## Day 8

### DRIVE KANDY TO NUWARA ELIYA INCL SIGHTSEEING

After breakfast we will depart our hotel and visit the Peradeniya Royal Botanical Garden. The Royal Botanical Gardens in Peradeniya were conceived as the Queens Pleasure Garden in 1371, and Peradeniya became the residence of the king in the 18th century where royal visitors were entertained. The gardens are presently open to visitors and are extensive and very well kept. Many of our guest have commented that you do not need to be a plant lover to enjoy these beautiful gardens. We also have time to visit the orchid house.

We then continue on towards Nuwara Eliya, the 'Little England' of Sri Lanka. It is set against a beautiful backdrop of mountains, valleys, waterfalls and tea plantations. It can be one of the coolest places on the island, often just like an English spring day! The temperature does drop at night so a warm fleece may be required if venturing out after dark.

Stopping for lunch along the way (at own expense) we will then visit a tea factory to see the manufacturing process of world famous 'Ceylon Tea'. Tea was first planted in Sri Lanka in 1824, when a few plants were brought in from China. More were introduced from Assam, India in 1839. In 1867, a Scottish Planter named James Taylor planted tea seedlings on 8 hectares of forest land, in the Lookkandura Estate. In 1873, the tea export industry of Sri Lanka began with a modest 23 lb being shipped to London. Tea will grow only on rolling terrain and is classified into 3 main groups of elevation as low grown, medium grown and high grown. We will get a chance to see the plantations up close and may spot some tea pickers along the way. You will see evidence of the British influence all around Nuwara Eliya. Many homes and hotels are like country cottages or Queen Ann style mansions found across England.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** The Hill Club



## Day 9

### DRIVE TO NANU OYA THEN TRAIN TRIP TO ELLA

We will enjoy a relaxed breakfast this morning and a late checkout from The Hill Club. We then have some free time to explore the streets of this charming little town. Watch the traders go about their business while searching out the fruit and vegetable market then maybe stop for a snack at one of the many bakeries situated in the main street. Keep an eye out for the old post office as it stands boldly on the side of town. You may want to try a traditional Kottu Roti for lunch. You will hear this dish being prepared before you see it. It really is quite unique.

Mid-afternoon we will proceed to Nanu Oya railway station by coach to take the scenic train to Ella. The coach will continue to Ella by road along with our large luggage and anything you don't need on the train.

This train ride passes through spectacular countryside and many of our past guests have suggested that it was one of the highlights of their Sri Lankan trip *(Please ensure you have something warm to wear as it may be a little cool on the train.)*

DEP: Nanu Oya: 15.55 Hrs (current schedule)

ARR: Ella: 18.23 Hrs (approx.)

(Included: Afternoon Snack / Tea & Coffee on train)

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Heavens Edge Resort

## Day 10

### ELLA EXPERIENCE

We have time once again for a leisurely breakfast before heading down to Ella town. A little before lunch we will visit the 98 acres Resort. This resort is built on a working Tea Estate. It's an awesome place for a walk around the tea plantations and get some great photos. If you wish, you can take a short walk to view Ella Rock before climbing up Little Adams Peak. A great place to view the deep green valleys and the surrounding area.

We then walk back down to the restaurant for a superb lunch (included).

After lunch we will return to Heavens Edge Resort where the balance of the afternoon is free. You may wish to get dropped off in Ella town on the way back to our hotel if you wish to explore a little more.

We will head back into town that evening for an optional dinner at one of the little restaurants for those that are interested. The local food is great and varied and the many small restaurants have a great relaxed feel.

As we may break up into smaller groups for dinner, we can use a tuk tuk for the trip back to the hotel later in the evening. This will only cost a few dollars (LKR 200-300) per tuk tuk.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Lunch

**Overnight:** Heavens Edge Resort



## Day 11

### DRIVE ELLA TO UNAWATUNA

After breakfast we leave the mountains behind and proceed to the coastal town of Unawatuna. Along the way we will stop for a light lunch (own expense) and may come across some local village life.

We then head for Unawatuna where our hotel is right on the beach. Off the coast of Unawatuna, beneath the Indian Ocean lies a number of coral reefs, shipwrecks, and a great variety of fish and turtles. The turtles still wade onto the shore to lay their nests and eggs in some areas.

There are several beach restaurants scattered along the beach both left and right of our hotel. If you have been waiting for a seafood fix then you will be delighted at the choices.

Unawatuna is rich in its biodiversity. Over sixty species of endemic birds, including terns, egrets, herons, sandpipers and kingfishers, as well as rarer species such as the lesser whistling duck, the Asian palm swift, the white-breasted water hen, the Loten's sunbird and the black bittern have been sighted in the locality.

The afternoon is at leisure so free time to enjoy the beach or just relax.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Calamander Unawatuna Beach

## Day 12

### MADU GANGA BOAT SAFARI AND TURTLE HATCHERY

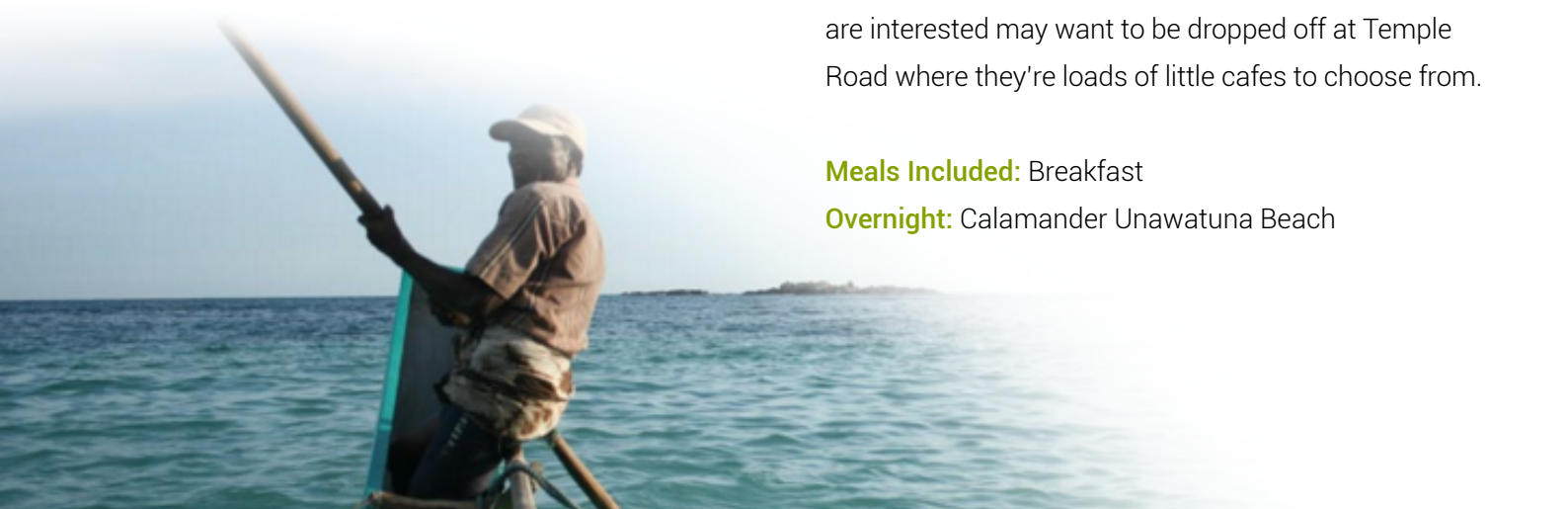
After breakfast we will depart for Madu Ganga Boat Safari (now included). The estuary of the Madu Ganga River is a complex coastal ecosystem of mangroves and islands. It may be one of the last remaining tracts of pristine mangrove forests in Sri Lanka. A boat trip is a wonderful way of seeing some of the hundreds of species of plants and animals. We may see monkeys eating fruit in the trees, a large water monitor gliding slowly through the water, and cormorants, egrets and kingfishers waiting patiently on the banks, eyeing the water for prey. There are around 64 islands in the river and lagoon, from a tiny speck housing a deserted shrine to one housing 250 families connected to the mainland with a very long footbridge.

Upon completion of the Boat Safari, we will re-board our coach for the short drive to one of the many turtle Hatcheries which are famous for their sea turtle conservation projects operated by the Wildlife Protection Society of Sri Lanka. Established in 1988 they protect Sri Lanka's turtle population from extinction. Since then they have released millions of baby turtles into the wild. The hatcheries pay fishermen for their eggs that they collect at night along the sandy beaches. Although October to April is the main laying season, some eggs (mostly green turtles) can be found throughout the year.

We will return to the hotel for late lunch, or those that are interested may want to be dropped off at Temple Road where they're loads of little cafes to choose from.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Calamander Unawatuna Beach





## Day 13 FREE DAY OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

This morning is free time to offer you the freedom to do your own thing. You can simply catch up on your dairy entries or grab a towel and head to the beach for a swim. You may want walk through to Temple Road to the shops. The choice is yours! If this is not your thing, then you can choose to participate in a number of optional activities. Here are just 2 of the many activities that are available. Note: Both these need to be booked at least a day in advance and are due to availability and weather conditions.

### Option 1: Whale Watching in Mirissa

Whale and dolphin watching in Mirissa is one of the most exciting water activities you can do in Sri Lanka during your holiday. Mirissa is the best place to start your whale and dolphin watching tour. In the warm Indian Ocean you may see Blue whales, Bryde's whales, Sperm whales, Fin whales, sometimes Killer whales, and Common dolphins, Bottlenose dolphins, Spinner dolphins, Risso's dolphins and striped dolphins. Sometimes you can see turtles and various fish species, for example Bluefin tuna and flying fish.

**Cost is approximately \$75.00 AUD per person**

### Option 2: Diving and Snorkeling

Besides swimming, the Unawatuna beach is also famous for snorkeling and surfing. The wrecks of sunken ships make the Unawatuna beach popular among scuba divers too. A boat ride of 20 to 30 minutes can take the diving enthusiasts to the locations of wreck dives.

**Cost starts at approximately \$100.00 AUD for Scuba Diving and Snorkeling varies depending on where you want to Snorkel.**

Both of the afore mentioned optional activities are conducted in the morning and return by lunchtime.

**We will depart a little after lunch for the Galle Fort and the Old Galle City Tour (now included).**

Sightseeing in Galle is fantastic as the compact old town is a living, walking museum. We will explore the fort walls before heading down into the narrow streets where you can choose to either visit the many museums IE: The Dutch Museum, or the National Maritime Museum or simply walk and explore the old Dutch Church or Post Office. Galle Fort area is also a great shopping district. You may just find that original piece of art you have been looking for in one of the many art galleries within the fort walls. Little cafes and interesting shops are scattered throughout so the choice is yours.

Some people may choose to stay on and enjoy dinner in Galle at one of the many great restaurants.

A cheap tuk tuk will get you back to the hotel easily enough (approx. \$5.00 AUD)

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

**Overnight:** Calamander Unawatuna Beach



## Day 14

### DRIVE UNAWATUNA BACK TO COLOMBO

Final night Special Farewell Dinner

After breakfast and a swim or walk on the beach we will say goodbye to the 'beach scene' and make our way back to Colombo. Upon arrival we will check back into the Cinnamon Red Hotel.

The balance of the afternoon is free time. You can use this opportunity for a final shopping trip or simply chill out on the rooftop at the pool and/or bar.

We will then freshen up and head out for our 'Special Farewell Dinner' at the famous Galle Face Hotel.

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and our 'Farewell Dinner'

**Overnight:** Cinnamon Red Hotel



## Day 15 DEPARTURE DAY

After breakfast there may be time to go shopping or have a quick swim before making your way to the Airport in time for your flight home.  
*(Departure Transfers are available)*

