

Dear Parent/Carer

14 June 2017

I am delighted to be writing to you with details of a proposed educational trip to Sri Lanka during the Easter holidays, 2018. This trip is open to current Year 9 students (Year 10 from September) and initially is being offered to those students who have opted to take GCSE Philosophy and Ethics. The students decided that they would like to study Buddhism as their second faith so I contacted a tour company (Kiplin Tours) to enquire about a visit to Sri Lanka. The dates of the trip are from Saturday 24 March – Sunday 1 April 2018.

The opportunity to visit Sri Lanka will bring students into contact with different practices and beliefs of the Buddhist faith to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the belief system.

Obviously, this is a fantastic opportunity but I recognise that there is a considerable cost involved. I am aware that parents and carers have often planned and budgeted for school trips in advance and therefore, if we don't attract sufficient numbers then we will not be able to go ahead with the trip. The cost of the trip includes all accommodation, food, flights, coach to and from Heathrow. The cost will be approximately £1950-£2000 depending on the number of students going.

In order for us to proceed with the trip and confirm your child's place we need a deposit of £200 to be paid by Friday 30 June. If numbers are insufficient your deposit will be refunded. Just to make you aware, the balance will need to be paid in full by the first week of January 2018.

This is a giving students an opportunity to experience the culture behind the faith system of Buddhism however it is not a requirement of the course of Philosophy and Ethics to go on the trip.

It is a 9-day trip and details of the itinerary are attached. If there are any questions, please contact me at school.

Kind regards

Miss R Forbes

Head of RE

TRIP TO SRI LANKA. 24 MARCH-1 APRIL 2017. PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED SLIPS TO THE FINANCE OFFICE.

I would like my child Form to attend the trip to Sri Lanka. I enclose £200 cash/cheque (made payable to The Castle School)/I have paid online or by credit/debit card (either in person or over the phone)*. (*Please delete as applicable).

SignedDate.....

DAY 1 Depart from London for the flight to Colombo

You depart today on the overnight flight from London to Colombo.

DAY 2 Arrive Colombo—Anuradhapura

You arrive into Colombo this morning and are met by your guide and private transport. You then travel north by private coach to the Ceylonese political and religious capital and **holy city of Anuradhapura**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the central part of the Island. The city lies at the centre of the island's Buddhist civilisation and was undoubtedly the grandest city of ancient Sri Lanka. After the long flight and road journey, you check into your hotel on arrival with time to relax before dinner.

DAY 3 Anuradhapura, Aukana & Sasseruva

Today you can explore the ruins of the ancient holy city of **Anuradhapura**, one of South Asia's most evocative sights. The sprawling complex contains a rich collection of archaeological and architectural wonders including enormous stupas, ancient pools and crumbling temples. You should not miss Lovamahapaya, also known as the Brazen Palace which dates from the 2nd century BC with its 1600 stone columns each representing a Monk. You continue to explore the great statues of **Buddha in Aukana and Sasseruva**. The famed Aukana Buddha statue is hewn out of solid rock. Over 46 feet high, it stands on a fine lotus stone pedestal and the hand gesture signifies a blessing. Close by is another tall statue at Sasseruva. Dating back to the 2nd century BC, Sasseruva Raja Maha Vihara had nearly 100 caves where over 360 priests lived and attained enlightenment. The main attraction is the unique Buddha statue reclining in the main cave shrine. This afternoon you return to your hotel in Anuradhapura for dinner.

DAY 4 Polonnaruwa & Sigiriya

This morning you make the excursion to Polonnaruwa, the site of an ancient ruined city. **Polonnaruwa** has been used as a location for the recent Disney nature film *Monkey Kingdom*. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It rose to fame as the Sinhalese capital after the decline of Anuradhapura. The landscape is punctuated by ancient monuments which evidence the glory of Sri Lanka's past. Highlights include the Royal Palace complex and the spectacular Gal Vihare complex of four massive images of the Buddha cut from a single slab of granite. There are also examples of the Hindu influence including the **Temple of Shiva**. In the afternoon you transfer to your hotel in Sigiriya.

DAY 5 **Lions Rock**

In the morning you visit the **Lions Rock**, a spectacular rock fortress and one of Sri Lanka's major attractions. Built by King Kashyapa (477-495 AD), the Lions Rock is a citadel built on a granite rock which rises 200 metres above the surrounding jungle. On the top of the rock there are water gardens, cultivated fields and beautiful frescoes. The rock is ringed by a moat, ramparts, and extensive gardens. The world-renowned frescoes are approached by a spiral stairway are painted with natural pigments on plaster. The afternoon is free to relax by the swimming pool at your hotel.

DAY 6 **Dambulla & Kandy**

This morning you travel to the famous city of Kandy, the hill capital of the island where you visit the ancient cave temples in **Dambulla** and the garden of spices in Matale. Dambulla is a UNESCO World Heritage Site which dates back to the 1st century BC and is an amazing complex of caves containing over 150 images of the Buddha of which the largest is a colossal figure spanning 15 metres. Inscriptions from the 2nd Century BC can be found on the walls and the temple is the perfect place to view the evolution of ancient Sri Lankan art. You continue to **Kandy** and visit the much revered **Temple of the Tooth**, the most holy place of worship for Buddhists as it reputedly contains the sacred Tooth relic of Lord Buddha himself.

DAY 7 Kandy to Negombo

This morning you travel to **Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage** which is home to around 90 elephants. This is a great experience for students as you can get close to the elephants and watch them bathe in the river.

Continuing to **Colombo** you have a city tour including a visit to the St. Lucia's Cathedral, the Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka and the Red Mosque. St. Lucia's Cathedral is the seat of the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Colombo in Sri Lanka. It traces its origins to a small structure for worship built during Dutch occupation. St. Lucia's is considered the oldest and largest parish cathedral in Sri Lanka, while the colourful white and red candy striped Jami Ul Alfar Mosque can be found in Pettah, north of the Colombo Fort Railway station. Not to be missed is the Gangaramaya Temple, the most famous and iconic Buddhist place of worship in Colombo.

In the afternoon, you continue to **Negombo** and your beach side hotel, with time to relax and swim in the warm **Indian Ocean** waters.

DAY 8 Negombo & Departure

Today will be free to enjoy the **beach at Negombo**. Negombo boasts lovely golden sandy beaches, a recently restored old quarter and a charming old world fishing village atmosphere. In town there are the remnants of the Dutch Fort which was built in 1642, as well as some stunning old **Dutch houses** and fascinating **Portuguese churches**. You can take a visit to the morning fish market, the second largest in the country, to see the daily fish auction. In the afternoon or evening, you transfer to the airport for your homeward flight.

DAY 9 Arrive London

You arrive back in London today, typically in the morning or early afternoon.