

Quarterly Tours

Heritage sites at
Sithulpahuwa, Tissamaharama and
Moneragala



National Trust – Sri Lanka

05th & 06th April 2025

Prof. Nimal de Silva, President, National Trust - Sri Lanka, will lead the tour.

Trustee Prof. Enoka Corea, participating in the tour, have volunteered to assist Prof. de Silva with organizational aspects, where required.

Route

Colombo - Mattala - Kataragama – Sithulpahuwa - Tissamaharama - Wellawaya -Buduruwagala – Maligawila – Dambegoda – Mattala - Colombo

DAY 1 - 5TH APRIL

6.00am Departure from PGIAR
9.00am Breakfast and rest room stop at Namals Restaurant, Mattala
10.30am Situlpahuwa – Cave Monastery Complex
1.30pm Lunch at Tissamaharama
2.30pm Tissamaharama visit Yatala, Sandagiriseya, Manik Vehera
4.30pm Leave Tissamaharama via Wellawaya to Moneragala
7.00pm Arrive at hotel -Grand Pearl Resort, Monaragala

DAY 2 – 6 TH APRIL

6.30am Breakfast -Pack Bags before leaving for Breakfast
7.30am Leave Hotel after breakfast
8.30am Maligawila, standing statue of Buddha
Dambegoda, stone Maitreya Bodhisattva
10.30am Yudaganawa – Ancient Stupa
11.30am Head to Buttala for lunch
2.00pm Buduruwagala, Wellawaya
4.30pm Meegaha Jandura, Padikemgala Rajamaha Vihara
6.00pm Tea break, Namals Restaurant, Mattala
9.30pm Arrive at PGIAR

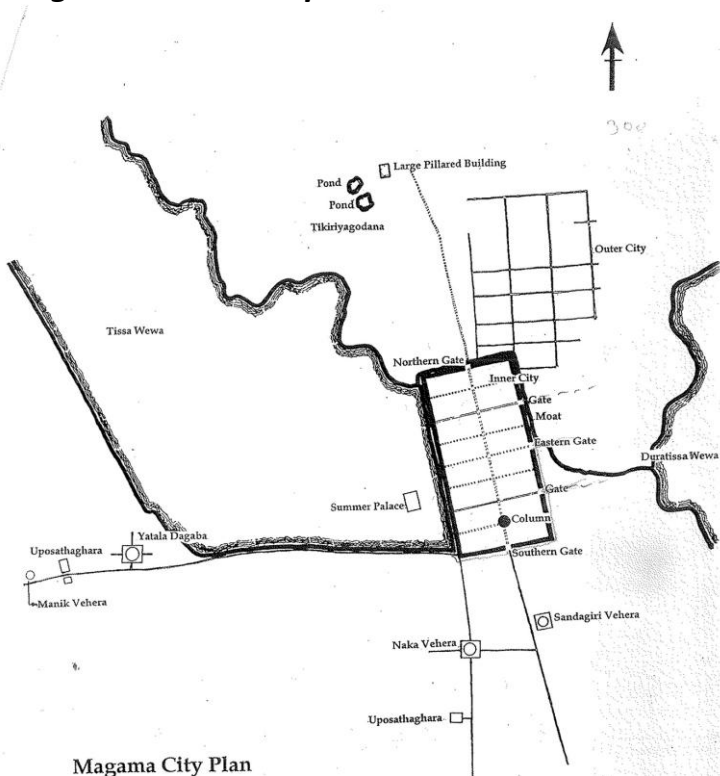
The itinerary planned may change depending on factors such as time and weather.

Credits: Photographs and the information-

Booklet- Quarterly Tours- National Trust- 2nd Sep. 2017

Booklet- Quarterly Tours- National Trust- 5th & 6th March 2016

Magama historic capital

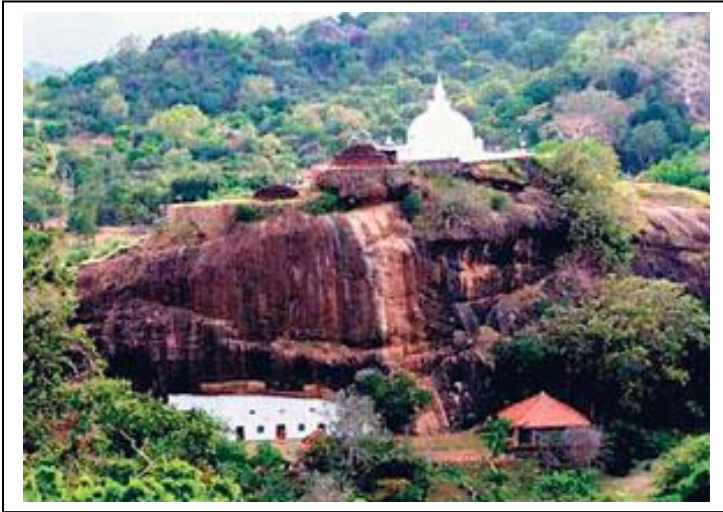


Magama City Plan

City of Magama was the capital of Ruhuna kingdom; a rectangular walled city with a moat around located on the boundary of Tissa wewa.

It has developed to a religious city establishing three main monasteries; Maha Vihara, Jetawana and Abhyagiriya sects. The first two were located on south of the rectangular city while Abhaygiri to the north following the same system found in Anuradhapura.

Thissamaharama Vihara, Sandagiriya and Manik vehera belong to Maha vihara. Yatala vihara and Ruhunu Dena vehera was of Jetavana sect. The remains of Abhyagiriya or the northern temple had been cleared for irrigation works and what is left at present are only some stone columns and a deep pond.



Situlpahuwa – Cave Monastery Complex

Situlpahuwa is an ancient cave monastery located in the Southern part of Sri Lanka, dating back to the 2nd century BCE. It is one of the most revered sites in Sri Lanka, offering a serene and spiritual environment. The complex is set amidst a forest and is known for its large cave system, which housed monks in the past.

Situlpahuwa has numerous rock inscriptions and beautiful views of the surrounding landscape, making it a popular destination for those interested in history and Buddhism.



Tissamaharama Raja Maha Vihara

Tissamaharama monastery was one of the major ancient Buddhist monasteries established during Anuradhapura period after the arrival of Arahant Mahinda Thero. It is believed that the site of Tissamaharama Raja Maha Vihara was consecrated by Buddha himself during his third visit to Sri Lanka. The Monastery was recognized as one of the important Buddhist educational centres in Southern part of the island during 3rd Century BC to 11th Century AD.

Tissamaharama Stupa, one of the largest stupas in the island is also located in the monastery complex. The stupa was built to commemorate lord Buddha's visit to the area, at the same place where Buddha spent time in meditation with 500 arahant Buddhist monks. According to Mahavamsa the frontal bone relic (Lalata Dhathu) was enshrined in Tissamaharama stupa as the main relic. However some believe that the frontal bone relic of Buddha was temporally enshrined in this stupa but later removed and was enshrined in the Seruvila Stupa.

According to great chronicle, the temple's history runs back to 2nd Century BC and then it was known as Silapassa Parivena. It is said to be built by King Kavantissa (186 – 161 BC) of Ruhuna. Later the temple complex was expanded and renovated during the reign of King Ilanaga during (38-44 AD). But some historians believe that the temple was originally built by King Mahanaga in the 3rd Century and developed into a major temple by King Kavantissa in the 2nd Century BC. King Voharakatissa (215-237 AD) in 3rd C AD and Prince Mahanaga in 560 AD, King Vijayabahu during 1055-1110 AD had also renovated the stupa. The temple had undergone some disturbances during Kalinga Magha in the 13th Century AD.



Yatala Vehera

Yatala dagoba / stupa was believed to be constructed by King Mahanaga during 3rd century BC on the ground where his queen has given a birth to his son. The stupa is now a completely restored one leaving a small gap to see the previous phases of construction. Large number of relic caskets were found enshrined in the stupa but it is unknown what was enshrined in this stupa.

Some believe that this would have been a much larger stupa due to the size of the granite pinnacle. This stupa is surrounded by probably the oldest Elephant wall (*Eth Pavura*) in the country.

There are large number of ruins of various image houses found in the surrounding. One image house contains a fairly large granite carved image of Buddha and another image house is reserved for a finely carved stone statue of *Awalokitheshwara* bodhisattva.



Manik Vehera Complex

Manik Vehera is not a very large stupa in size. It is believed that the stupa was constructed by King Dutugamunu although sometime it is attributed to King Mahanaga. The stupa was renovated to its original shape during British rule and new buildings were also added to the complex for religious activities. There are many ruins and evidences of stone pillared buildings around this stupa. This would have been a highly developed religious centre during ancient times. There is also a stone pillar which is believed to be used for tethering tusker “Kadol” during the period of Dutugamunu.



Maligawila Buddha Statue

Maligawaila Buddha statue was a restored giant standing Buddha statue carved out of a single piece of limestone rock.

The restoration was carried out to combine and erect the statue which was lying on the ground after turning into many pieces by treasure hunters and raiders. The restoration of 1980 brought back its glory. The statue is the tallest free standing Buddha statue in the ancient Sri Lanka of which the height is 14.5 meters approximately.

According to Chulavamsa, the making of this massive statue goes back to 7th century BC by a Prince named Aggabodhi who came from Ruhuna. It further mentions that he had constructed an image house. The ruins around the statue evidenced the existence of such a large image house giving shelter to this particular statue.



Dambegoda Bodhisattva Statue

There lies another interesting and attractive image of 9.8 meter tall, carved out of a single piece of rock about 500 meters away from the Buddha statue, depicting Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva also known as Maithri Natha Bodhisattva. This statue is popular among locals as Dambegoda statue. This is also a restored piece of art in 1990 joining many pieces scattered on the ground with undamaged face lying on the ground upside down due to the result of fall and later due to blasts by treasure hunters.

In vicinity of the Statue there is a pillar inscription protected by a recent shelter. This inscription is said to be placed by King Mahinda IV, (956-972 AD) in his tenth year of reign describing the services rendered by him for the development of Buddhism and also further inscribing some rules for the better administration of Buddhist sites.



Yudaganawa temple

Yudaganawa temple is situated near Buttala on the Wellawaya Road.

According to chronicles this is the place where two brothers known as Prince Gamini and Prince Tissa were to meet at the battle between them after the demise of their father the King. After being defeated, Prince Gamini was fleeing from the battlefield when Prince Tissa was blocked by the Mahasanga intervening to his chase.

The temple complex has the remains of a colossal stupa with a circumference of 317 meters built by king Parakaramabahu 1 in the 12th century. Until recent times this stupa was believed to be a Kota Vehera as it is seen with a small stupa (or earth mound) resting on top of the large podium formed by the main stupa. Recent research has revealed that it was a complete stupa locally popular as Kinkini Cetiya.



Buduruwagala

The name Buduruwagala means the “the rock with the statue of Buddha”. The rock itself is seen as a kneeling elephant and is situated 5 km away from Wellawaya towards Thanamalwila.

It is a Mahayana Buddhist monastery with more than 10 m. high statues of Buddha and Bodhisathva carved out of living rock. Standing figure of Sakyamuni Buddha in Abhaya mudra is in the middle. Bodhisathva Awalokitheshwara, Tara and Sugreva are on the left and Maithraya with a Vajrapani and May be Akosha Garba on the right.

The original lime plaster and colour pigments are still visible. Worshipping triad Buddha and two Bodhisattvas was a popular ritual found in Sinhala Buddhism.