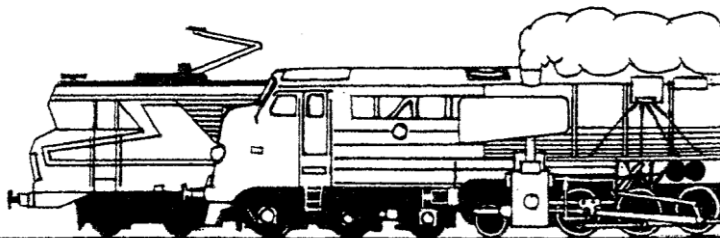




THE LOCOMOTIVE CLUB
OF GREAT BRITAIN
OVERSEAS TOURS



LCGB India Tour February / March 2027 organised by Darjeeling Tours for LCGB

Where the Rails End and the Sea Begins

There is a stretch of water between southern India and Ceylon that the railways once crossed without pause. A boat train ran down from Madras to the pier at Dhanushkodi; passengers stepped from carriage to steamer, crossed the Palk Strait, and boarded another train on the Ceylon side. It was called the Indo-Ceylon Express, and for the better part of a century it was possible to travel from Colombo to Kashmir without ever truly leaving the rails.

In 1964 a cyclone took Dhanushkodi and the boat train with it. The pier is gone. The line ends in sand. What remains is the sea, and the memory of a crossing.

THE GOLDEN ROCK WORKSHOPS — WHERE STEAM IS STILL BUILT

This February, we make that crossing again — not from Dhanushkodi, which the ocean has kept, but from Nagapattinam, further up the Coromandel Coast, where the ferry to Jaffna now runs.

Four hours across the Palk Strait, from Tamil Nadu to the northern tip of Sri Lanka: a link that was severed for decades and has only recently returned. Either side of that water lies the railway. In India: the newly converted broad-gauge climb to the cardamom hills, the Pamban Sea bridge, the Golden Rock workshops where steam locomotives are still built for Darjeeling and the Nilgiris. In Ceylon: the length and breadth of an island network — north from Jaffna, up into the tea country, through the Nine Arch Bridge to Ella, and finally to Ratmalana, where Victorian machinery still turns in the largest railway workshops in Asia. A railway is never only a railway. It is the argument a nation makes with its own geography, written in iron.

SOUTH INDIA & SRI LANKA BY RAIL

This is a journey for those who understand that. For explorers, for the curious, and for anyone who has ever stood on a platform and wondered where the line goes.

WHAT AWAITS Reasons to Travel

Cross the Palk Strait by sea. The Nagapattinam–Jaffna ferry — a link severed for decades, and only recently restored. The Pamban Bridge. India's first sea bridge, and still among the most extraordinary pieces of railway engineering on the subcontinent. Bodinayakanur. The newly converted broad-gauge line into India's cardamom capital, on rails almost no visitor has travelled. The Golden Rock Workshops. Where steam locomotives are still built — for Darjeeling, and for the Nilgiris. Take the controls. A session at the diesel locomotive simulator. The length and breadth of Ceylon by rail. From Jaffna in the north to Colombo in the south. The Ella Odyssey through the tea country. The Nine Arch Bridge, waterfalls falling into cloud, and the finest carriage window in Asia. Ratmalana Railway Workshops. Fifty-six acres. Victorian steam hammers still in daily use. A Beyer Peacock Garratt among the machinery. Nothing of this scale survives in Britain. Elephants at the river. Pinnawala, at bathing hour. South India — shaken, stirred, and served with a dash of adventure.

DAY ONE Monday 15 February Depart from your choice of UK airport with an overnight flight to Madurai via Chennai/Bengaluru.

DAY TWO Tuesday 16 February Arrival & the Temple of Meenakshi Arrive in the morning hours in Madurai. After collecting your bags, your Darjeeling Tours manager will welcome you and transfer you to the hotel for immediate check-in. Later in the day, a gentle tour visiting the famous Meenakshi Temple, one of the most visited Hindu temples of South India, dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi — a reincarnation of Goddess Parvati, wife of Lord Shiva. The entire temple complex offers a stunning picture, especially with all of its four gopurams. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY THREE Wednesday 17 February The Cardamom Line to Bodinayakanur After an early breakfast, we venture out to the newly converted broad-gauge line from Madurai to Bodinayakanur, just under a two-hour ride. This town is widely known as India's cardamom capital for its pedigree in cultivating that crop, and is also nicknamed 'South Kashmir' for its lush landscapes and pleasant weather. The journey offers a scenic, off-the-beaten ride where you will get plenty of cultural and local experience — a unique ride to an unexplored part of India. This was a metre gauge line up till 2010 or so. Hauled by a powerful 4,500 HP diesel WDP4B loco, these were designed by General Motors Electro-Motive

Division and built under licence by Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) in Varanasi. We will have a good couple of hours to explore this off-the-beaten town before we return to Madurai by our mini vans. Overnight in Madurai. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY FOUR Thursday 18 February Across the Pamban Bridge We transfer to Madurai Junction to take the service train ride to Rameswaram, crossing the spectacular Pamban Bridge — India's first sea bridge and one of the country's most iconic railway engineering marvels. A quick transfer to our hotel for wash and change, with a late afternoon visit to the famous Hindu pilgrim site of Ramanathaswamy Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva and dating back to the 12th century. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY FIVE Friday 19 February Photographing the Line We take a short ride across the Pamban Bridge to Pamban station, from where we'll spend good time photographing the up and down services to Rameswaram. Late afternoon service train to Tiruchirappalli. Dinner will be arranged on board for you as we arrive late in Tiruchirappalli for a quick transfer to your hotel MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY SIX Saturday 20 February The Rock Fort & the Golden Rock Workshops We begin the day with Trichy's iconic Rock Fort, a remarkable geological formation — among the oldest rock on earth — crowned with ancient temples that have inspired centuries of devotion. A masterpiece of Dravidian architecture. There is a climb of 437 steps, offering breath-taking panoramic views over Trichy, the Kaveri River, and the sacred island of Srirangam. Afternoon visit to the Golden Rock Workshops, where steam locomotives have recently been constructed for the famous Nilgiri Mountain Railway (Ooty) and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway — and then to the Diesel Driver Simulator. Please note: both visits are subject to permission by the competent Railway authority. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY SEVEN Sunday 21 February The Coastal Line to Karaikal We take a short and interesting service train ride to Karaikal. While it previously served as a dead end, a newly restored line westward marks the continuity of the line. But it's still a nice coastal line. Additionally, there is a dedicated one-kilometre freight-only extension connecting the railway line to Karaikal Port. We will have the opportunity to enjoy lunch at the Karaikal beachside before returning to Nagapattinam, where we will have a night's stay. · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY EIGHT Monday 22 February The Crossing — Nagapattinam to Jaffna THE PALK STRAIT — FOUR HOURS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES We will have a very early start to our day as we transfer to Nagapattinam Port before sunrise to board the ferry service to Kankesanthurai in Jaffna, the northern gateway to Sri Lanka. The approximately four-hour voyage takes you to Sri Lanka's northernmost part. Upon arrival at Kankesanthurai and completion of Sri Lankan immigration formalities, transfer to your beach resort near Jaffna for an evening at leisure. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

THE ISLAND BY RAIL Sri Lanka Railways: The Network Fifteen hundred kilometres of track, laid by the British from 1864 and worked much as it always was. The Main Line runs from Colombo Fort to Badulla — 290 km, and the celebrated one: out through Rambukkana, up the 1-in-44 incline, into the tea country at Nanu Oya, over the Nine Arch Bridge at Demodara. The Northern Line reaches Kankesanthurai, where we come ashore. Over the fortnight, we travel very nearly the length of it. Distances shown in kilometres from Colombo Fort · Sri Lanka Railways

DAY NINE Tuesday 23 February South from the North We venture on Sri Lankan Railways' first ride, right from the northernmost part, on the picturesque route south to the sacred city of Anuradhapura — or as far south as we can head — where we'll break our journey for an overnight stay. The Sri Lanka Railways network spans roughly 1,500 km of track and is organised into nine operating divisions, with the scenic Main Line (Colombo–Badulla, approximately 290 km) being the most celebrated: a hill-country run through Nanu Oya, Ella, and the tea estates around Nuwara Eliya. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY TEN Wednesday 24 February Into the Tea Country We continue further south-east to Kandy railway station for the service train to Nanu Oya, from where we transfer to a hill resort in Nuwara Eliya — where Sri Lanka decided it needed a little British countryside charm. Imagine the English countryside, but with more tea, more mist, and the occasional confused cow wandering across the road. It's a place where your morning coffee is replaced by a steaming cup of tea, a cosy jumper is an everyday essential, and every turn reveals rolling green hills, colonial-era bungalows, and postcard-worthy views. Your Instagram feed doesn't just improve — it gets an effortless upgrade. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY ELEVEN Thursday 25 February A Day Among the Estates We have some downtime. A free day, with a casual visit to one of the tea estates. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY TWELVE Friday 26 February The Ella Odyssey After breakfast at the resort, we board the vintage blue carriages, climbing out of Nanu Oya and drifting east through the high tea country: Ella, the Nine Arch Bridge, waterfalls falling into cloud. We'll alight at Ella to explore this mesmerising town — and linger a moment on the platform, because the definitive photograph of the blue train is not taken from within it, but from here, as it pulls away into the tea. Plenty of time to

explore the town on foot and enjoy a break at one of the cafés, before descending to Badulla on the afternoon service. From Badulla, continue by road to Kandy, arriving in the evening for two nights. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY THIRTEEN Saturday 27 February The Sacred Tooth, the Elephants, and the Incline Kandy is a UNESCO World Heritage City nestled amidst rolling hills. A guided visit to the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, one of the most revered Buddhist shrines in the world. The temple is believed to hold a tooth of Gautama Buddha, and has been a centre of pilgrimage and devotion for centuries. Further ahead is the world-famous Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage, established in 1975 as a sanctuary for orphaned, injured, and abandoned Asian elephants. Watch the elephants make their way to the nearby Maha Oya River for their traditional bathing session — one of the most memorable wildlife experiences in Sri Lanka. Finally, we pay our visit to Rambukkana railway station. A colonial-era station opened in 1867, Rambukkana marks the start of the steepest sustained incline on the network — 1 in 44, climbing 430 metres over 21 kilometres to Kadugannawa, through nine tunnels. This is the celebrated engineering feat of the Ceylon Government Railway, and Rambukkana is the threshold of it. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY FOURTEEN Sunday 28 February Kadugannawa & the National Rail Museum This morning we board the local service from Kandy to Kadugannawa to pay a visit to the humble National Rail Museum, where we get to see a Chief Engineer's Saloon; the first diesel locomotive of Sri Lanka, Class M2 — EMD/GM G12s, gifted by Canada in 1954; and, not to be missed, E1 No. 93, built in 1898 and the longest-serving steam locomotive on the island. We then continue our train ride with an afternoon departure to Colombo Fort station, arriving by late afternoon. Transfer to your Colombo hotel for overnight. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

DAY FIFTEEN Monday 01 March Ratmalana — Victorian Machinery, Still Turning A relaxed breakfast in the hotel before we proceed to visit Ratmalana Railway Workshop: 56 acres, more than 40 workshops, over 3,000 employees. The astonishing part is that much of the machinery is colonial-era and still in daily use — steam hammers, presses, overhead cranes. A British enthusiast will not have seen a working Victorian machine shop of this scale anywhere in Britain, because Britain scrapped its own. A chance to see C1a class Garratt No. 347 (Beyer Peacock, 1946), with its parts scattered across the works; D2 class No. 21 (R. Stephenson, 1914), serving as a stationary boiler; J1 class No. 220 (Hunslet, 1925); a steam crane under restoration; and the pattern library. We will then break into a colonial hotel by the workshop, overlooking the Indian Ocean, for a well-deserved drink. In the afternoon we will admire the magnificent Independence Memorial Hall and the busy streets of Pettah market, the old bazaar quarter of Colombo, taking in the Khan Clock Tower and the Red Mosque. Overnight in Colombo. Please note: the Ratmalana visit is subject to permission from Sri Lanka Railways HQ.

DAY SIXTEEN Tuesday 02 March Homeward After breakfast, we will transfer you to Colombo's international terminal for your afternoon direct flight to the UK — arriving in the evening hours.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION Galle, by the Sea

Tuesday 02 March The Coastal Line to Galle After breakfast in the Colombo hotel, transfer to Fort station, where we'll catch the late morning service for a two-hour-plus train ride to Galle. The rails run along the shoreline for the best part of two hours. Few railways in the world sit this close to the sea. You arrive at Galle Fort in the late afternoon light, with the ramparts waiting. Galle is a UNESCO World Heritage Site: Portuguese-built from 1588, transformed by Dutch engineers from 1640, then held by the British. It is the best-preserved colonial fortification in Asia — and, unusually, still a living town: people live inside the walls.

Take a leisurely walk to the Galle Lighthouse, the white tower at the fort's southern tip and the most photographed object within the walls; and then to Flag Rock Bastion, where the wall opens directly to the sea. This is the sunset spot, and it is not optional. We will dine at one of the renowned colonial-era hotels. MEALS · BREAKFAST, DINNER

Wednesday 03 March A Day by the Sea A free day by the beach, to explore on your own.

Thursday 04 March Homeward The day is free, with a late check-out from the hotel. We'll transfer you to Colombo airport for a late-night check-in for your overnight flight to the UK. Late check-out is at the hotel's discretion; a guaranteed late check-out is chargeable and can be arranged. Please let us know if you would like to extend your stay on the Galle coast. We would be glad to arrange it.

To Book, or to Enquire An escorted small-group departure. Places are limited. Several elements — the Golden Rock Workshops, the Diesel Driver Simulator, and the Ratmalana Railway Workshop — are subject to permissions granted by the railway authorities of India and Sri Lanka, for which we apply well in advance. Should you prefer to travel privately, or on your own dates, we would be glad to build the journey around you.

THE FARE from £4,260 per person on a twin-sharing basis. Single room supplement from £995

THE FARE INCLUDES — Accommodation throughout in boutique hotels — Breakfast and dinner daily — All rail travel across India and Sri Lanka — The Nagapattinam–Jaffna ferry crossing — All ground transportation and transfers — Escorted by a Darjeeling Tours manager

BOOKINGS – Use web page <https://form.jotform.com/242224317550044> **SPECIAL NOTE FOR LCGB MEMBERS!** Take the Dropdown box “LCGB” on the “How did you hear about us?*” question on the booking form and receive £100 discount! **TIPS & GRATUITIES** – We are suggestion a collection of £100 at the start of the tour which will cover this and ad-hoc lunches on the go.