



As with every month of the year, the full moon day that falls on the month of August commemorates occurrences of Buddhist significance. This day named Esala Poya, signifies many events including the preaching of the Buddha's first sermon. (However according to the lunar calendar of this year Esala Poya falls a month ahead, in July). All over the island festivities are conducted in accordance and amongst them all the most revered and famous is the Kandy Esala Perahera - a rich and vibrant cultural celebration. Its origins date back to the 18th century during the time of the last reigning king of Sri Lanka, King Rajasinha of Kandy.

With months of preparation leading up to the public spectacle of colours, lights, dances and reverence the pageant extends through a period of 15 days. The procession is closely linked with the sacred Temple of the Tooth or "Dalada Maligawa" in Kandy. The Perahera brings together the honed skills of 1500 performers from all walks of life to form a tandem procession that draws throngs of crowds to witness the many facets of the celebration. Apart from the traditional dances of Sri Lanka, the pageant features whip crackers, fire eaters, fireball acrobats, flag bearers, musicians and drummers and up to 100 elephants and tuskers.

Some of the elephants bear officers of different rankings dressed in heavy and resplendent attire. The most significant segment of the procession is the richly adorned tusker bearing the casket with the entombed sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha, closely followed by the Diyawadana Nilame - the lay custodian of the Tooth Relic.

The main pageant consists of five processions - the Dalada procession and the four Devala (Hindu temple) processions dedicated to the deities Natha, Vishnu, Katharagama and Pattini. Of the 15 days, the first five days consist of internal Devala processions commencing August 15, 2010. This is followed by the Kumbal Perahera that takes to the streets for the next five days commencing August 20, 2010 and is a less colourful and sober pageant. The final five days of the pageant is the vibrant and colourful Randoli Perahera with the Maha Randoli Perahera on the 15th day. Finally a Day Pageant is conducted on the Esala Poya Day - August 25, 2010 when the Dalada and Devala procession returns the sacred Tooth Relic to the temple shrine. The four officials of the Devala led by the Diyawadana Nilame convey the message of the successful completion of the pageant to the President at his official residence in Kandy.

This elaborate pageant, with its many rituals and performances draws many locals and tourists alike. With the dawn of the peaceful era in the Island it is expected to draw far more in numbers this year. In order to accommodate and ensure greater comfort for spectators many improvements have been introduced with infrastructure developments, mobile toilets and the distribution of large numbers of bottled water as often spectators wish to remain in the coveted spots that they have secured to view the pageant. Those who wish to gain access to the Temple of the Tooth can now apply for tickets through the website which provides an informative introduction to the site and gives the visitor the option of entering the Temple through a touch screen installed at the entrance by entering their name and email address.

### **The Schedule of the Esala Perahera 2010**

#### **Kumbal Perahera**

Aug 15, 2010 1st Kumbal Perahera  
Aug 16, 2010 2nd Kumbal Perahera  
Aug 17, 2010 3rd Kumbal Perahera  
Aug 18, 2010 4th Kumbal Perahera  
Aug 19, 2010 5th Kumbal Perahera

#### **Randoli Perahera**

Aug 20, 2010 1st Randoli Perahera  
Aug 21, 2010 2nd Randoli Perahera  
Aug 22, 2010 3rd Randoli Perahera  
Aug 23, 2010 4th Randoli Perahera  
Aug 24, 2010 5th Randoli Perahera  
Aug 25, 2010 Day Perahera

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