

Directions to and from AMBA Estate

AMBA Estate is perched right above the Ravana Ella waterfall and below Ella Rock, in the unspoilt valley of **Ambadandegama**. Good tarmac roads connect the estate to **Ella town**, **Bandarawela** and **Wellawaya** (each about 30 minutes drive). The nearest train station is Heel Oya (between Bandarawela and Ella).

These directions look complicated, but don't worry – we are just covering all the options! If you have access to any device, AMBA is shown correctly on GPS, Google Maps and MapsMe – so it is usually easiest just to follow your map app.

Getting to AMBA direct from Colombo or the Airport

We generally do not recommend coming straight to AMBA from the airport – it is a minimum 5-hour drive or 8-9 hours by train. If you do drive direct, then the fastest route is to follow the southern expressway (E01) all the way until it ends near Thanamalwila and then follow the detailed ***Directions via Wellawaya*** below. If you take the train, see the section below on ***Getting to and from AMBA by train***.

If you really want to come straight to AMBA from the airport, it is more pleasant to spend a night somewhere in the Kandy area, and then drive or take the train from there. The cheapest way to AMBA from the airport is to take a cab (try Pickme, the local Uber-like app) to Veyangoda (the nearest station on the upcountry rail-line) and then catch a train from there – but there are only 4 trains per day.

If you are feeling adventurous, you can take the bus. The 99 bus from Colombo to Badulla leaves the main Colombo bus station (“Bastian Mawatha”, next to Colombo Fort Station) at least once an hour. The day buses are crazy. The “luxury” night buses are much more comfortable and can be booked online at www.busbooking.lk. Just get off at Bandarawela and hire a tuktuk from there.

Getting to AMBA from Hill Country (Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Adam's Peak, etc.)

You can either drive or take the train. If you drive (4+ hours from Kandy, 4+ hours from Adam's Peak, 2 hours from Nuwara Eliya), follow the detailed ***Directions via Bandarawela*** below.

The train is slower (6 hours from Kandy, 4 hours from Hatton, 2.5 hours from Nuwara Eliya), but very scenic – highly recommended, but it is difficult to book tickets: see the section below on ***Getting to and from AMBA by train***.

Getting to AMBA from the South and East Coasts (Galle, Tangalle, Yala, Arugam Bay, etc.)

The only easy way to AMBA from either coast is to drive – there is no train. It takes about 3.5 hours from Galle, 3 hours from Arugam Bay, 2.5 hours from Tangalle or 2 hours from Yala. Follow the detailed ***Directions via Wellawaya*** below.

It is possible to reach AMBA from either coast by bus, but challenging – your best bet is to get any bus to Wellawaya, a major junction town at the base of the hills, and then hire a tuktuk from there (approx. Rs.4,500). If you find a bus all the way to Ella or Bandarawela, then ask the driver to drop you at Karandagolla (just 5km from Amba) and hire a tuktuk from there (approx. Rs.1,500).

Getting to AMBA from the Cultural Triangle (Sigiriya, Dambulla, Polonnaruwa, etc.)

You can drive to Kandy and then drive or take the train from there. But if you are coming straight from anywhere north of Kandy, it is much nicer to take the road around the eastern edge of the mountains, via Mahiyangana. This is much quicker than going via Kandy (4-5 hours, vs 7-8 hours), and the road is one of the nicest in all Sri Lanka – smooth, relatively straight, with little traffic, and you get gorgeous views of mountains, reservoirs and national parks along the way. You drive through Badulla to Ella town, and then follow the detailed ***Directions via Ella*** below.

Getting to and from AMBA by train

Taking the train for part of your journey to or from AMBA is a highlight for most of our guests. The railway has barely changed since the 19th century: it is incredibly slow and run-down, but very scenic and atmospheric. The most scenic part of the whole network is the section between Nanu Oya (the station for Nuwara Eliya) and Badulla (the end of the line beyond Amba).

The closest station to AMBA is Heel Oya – 2 stops after Bandarawela and 2 stops before Ella. If you are arriving by train, it is much better to get off at Heel Oya, rather than Ella – you will save 30 minutes travel-time (an extra 10 minutes on the train, and an extra 20 minutes backtracking to Amba); the tuktuk drivers at Heel Oya all know AMBA and are less pushy than in Ella. All the regular trains stop at Heel Oya. Just note that Heel Oya has a short platform – so if you are sitting at the back of the train, move to the first 5 carriages after Bandarawela, so you don't have a big jump getting off!

Booking seats on the railway is challenging: reserved seats only become available 30 days before the date, and they often sell out fast. Check out this site for all the best info:

<https://www.seat61.com/SriLanka.htm#Colombo%20-%20Kandy%20-%20Badulla>; and this section about booking tickets: <https://www.seat61.com/SriLanka.htm#How to buy tickets>

You should definitely book tickets ahead if you want seats: you can get unreserved tickets on the day, but there is a risk that you will be standing or sitting on the floor for much of the journey! We recommend:

- <https://seatreservation.railway.gov.lk/>: Sri Lankan Railways have finally opened their own online booking system. The site seems a bit random (e.g. if you search availability from Badulla to Hatton, it shows lots of options, but when you search for a shorter segment of the same journey on the same day, e.g. Ella to Nanu Oya, it shows no options); so be prepared to experiment with different combinations!
- <https://www.visitsrilankatours.co.uk/train-tickets-1.html>. They charge a premium, but we have recommended this site to many guests and received positive feedback.
- If you have access to a local mobile, you can reserve tickets using a Dialog or Mobitel phone. See: <https://www.dialog.lk/mobile-vas-dial-444-purchase-train-tickets>
<https://www.mobitel.lk/mticketing#tab-content-area-130>
- Many people ask which class to book: any is fine – 1st class is slightly more comfortable, but still not great; 2nd class tends to be more fun, since you get to meet more local families; and if neither 1st or 2nd is available, 3rd class is rather basic (wooden seats) but still ok.

When booking your tickets, some advice:

- You will likely only be able to book tickets from/to major stations (e.g. from Colombo or Kandy to Ella or Badulla), but don't worry even if you only want to travel for a shorter section (e.g. from Ohiya to Heel Oya): the tickets cost very little, and you can always get on and off the train anywhere after the ticket starting-point and before the ticket end-point
- Some trains do not stop in Kandy (on a separate spur from the mainline); if the booking-site says no tickets are available to/from Kandy, try to/from Peradeniya (the mainline junction near Kandy)
- The station closest to Nuwara Eliya is Nanu Oya; The station closest to Adam's Peak/Sri Pada is Hatton
- The station closest to World's End/Horton Plains is Ohiya

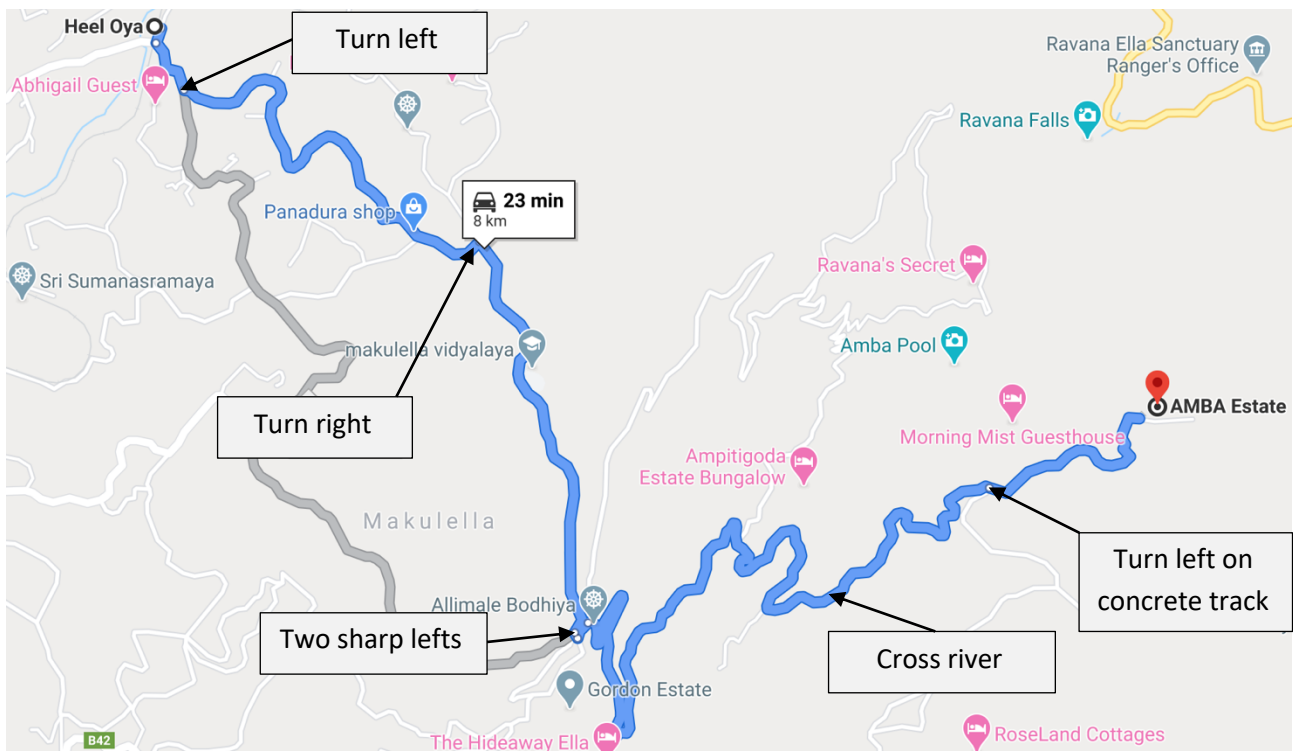
If you cannot book reserved tickets, some more advice:

- Turn up at your station 1 hour before the train; ideally get on the train 1 stop before busy stations (e.g. 1 stop before Kandy or Hatton or Nanu Oya) – the train will be full, but many people will get off at Kandy/Hatton/NanuOya; then you can grab an unreserved seat before all the new passengers get on!
- If you are touring with a car and driver, leave your luggage with the driver and tell him to meet you at your destination – then you don't have to worry about bags if the train is busy, and your driver will get to the destination before you (the train is that slow!).

Let us know if you would like us to book a local tuktuk or car to collect you from Heel Oya or Ella stations – so you don't need to worry about directions or fare. Local drivers are currently charging Rs.1,700 for a tuktuk or Rs.3,000 for a car from Heel Oya; and Rs.3,500 for a tuktuk or Rs.7,000 for a car from Ella.

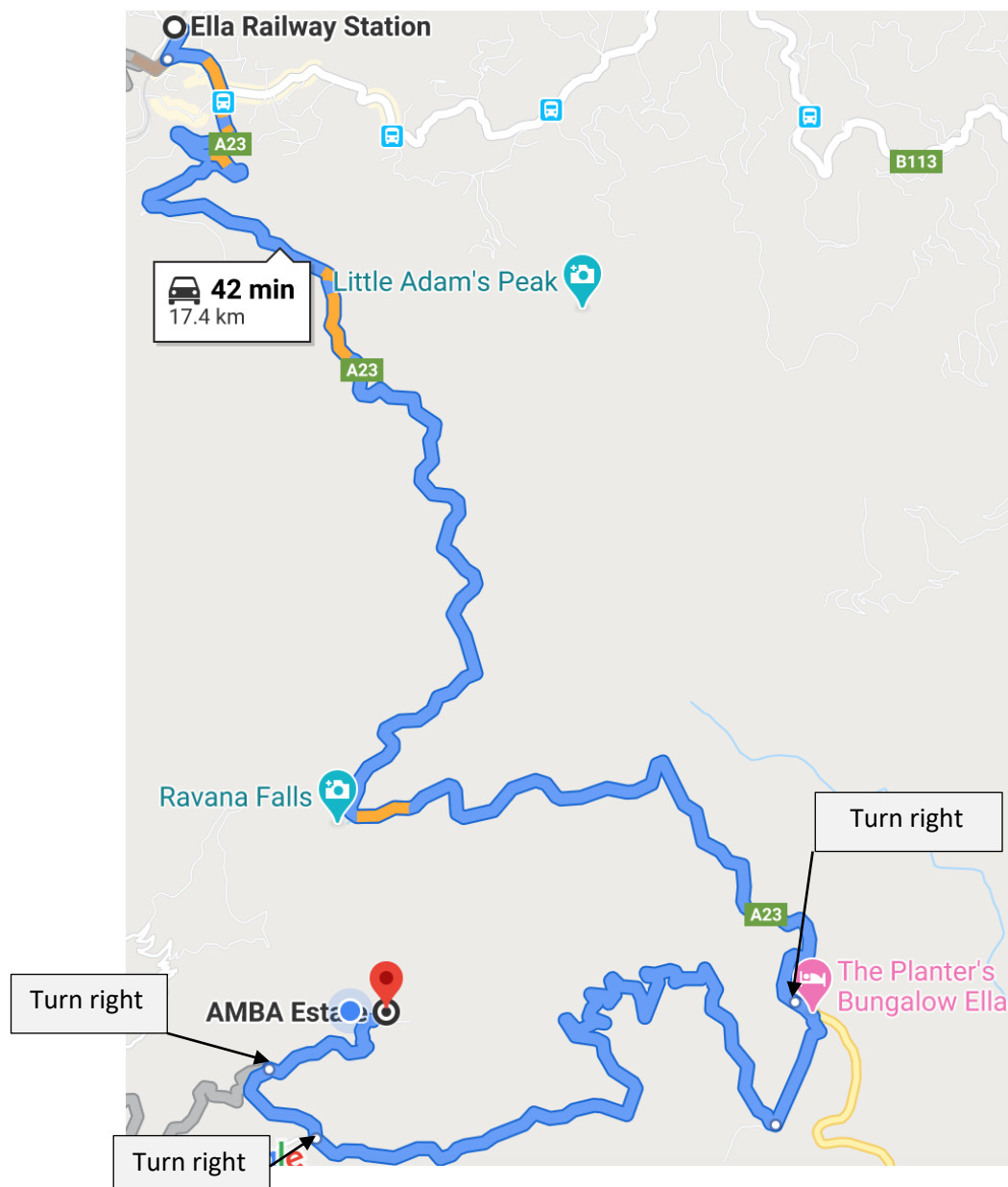
Detailed directions from Heel Oya Station to AMBA (approx. 8km, 20 minutes)

- From the station car-park, turn left across the railway-line
- Climb the hill for 200 meters and look for a small left-turn (next to shop) – you should see 2 or 3 signs saying Amba, Hideaway and Hideaway Trails
- Follow this windy road for 1.5km, then turn right on the first and only tarmac road to the right (again with 1 or 2 signs saying AMBA or Hideaway)
- Climb the hill for 2km through the eucalyptus forest
- At the big junction at the top of the hill (again with several signs saying AMBA or Hideaway), turn left and sharp left again (almost a U-turn), pass the Buddhist shrine and you enter AMBA Valley
- Follow this steep hair-pin road down into the valley for 3km, cross the river and continue for 1km
- Look for a brightly-painted bus-stop on the left. Turn left onto the small concrete track with more signs for Hideaway and AMBA. Go past Hideaway Trails on your left and continue for another 500 meters. You will then see a big yellow AMBA sign, and behind it AMBA Estate Factory and Farmhouse, with a green roof and yellow trim. Take the left-fork concrete track, and the parking area is just below the Farmhouse.



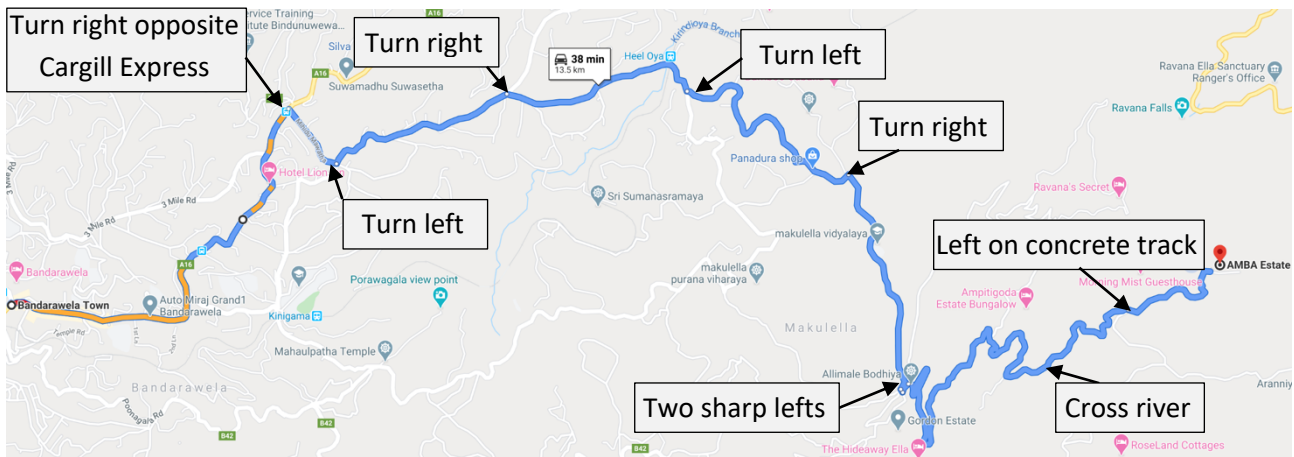
Detailed directions from Ella town to AMBA (approx. 17km, 40 minutes)

- From the centre of Ella, take the Wellawaya Road
- Drive past the base of the Ravana-Ella Waterfall
- Keep going for another 2km (just past the 18km marker) until you see a bus shelter on the right, and signs pointing up the hill to Ambadandegama, Planters Bungalow, Hideaway and AMBA (Note if you miss the turn off, you will get to Feelin' Good Resort and will have gone too far).
- Turn right up this small tarmac road. After 200 meters, go past the left-turn to Planters Bungalow, and keep winding up the mountain for about 4km
- At the top, you reach a T-junction. Turn right at the junction
- Go downhill for about 500 metres until you see a brightly-painted bus-stop. Just before this bus shelter turn right onto a concrete road with signs for Hideaway and AMBA
- Go past Hideaway Trails on your left and continue for another 500 meters. You will then see a big yellow AMBA sign, and behind it AMBA Estate Factory and Farmhouse, with a green roof and yellow trim. Take the left-fork concrete track, and the parking area is just below the Farmhouse.



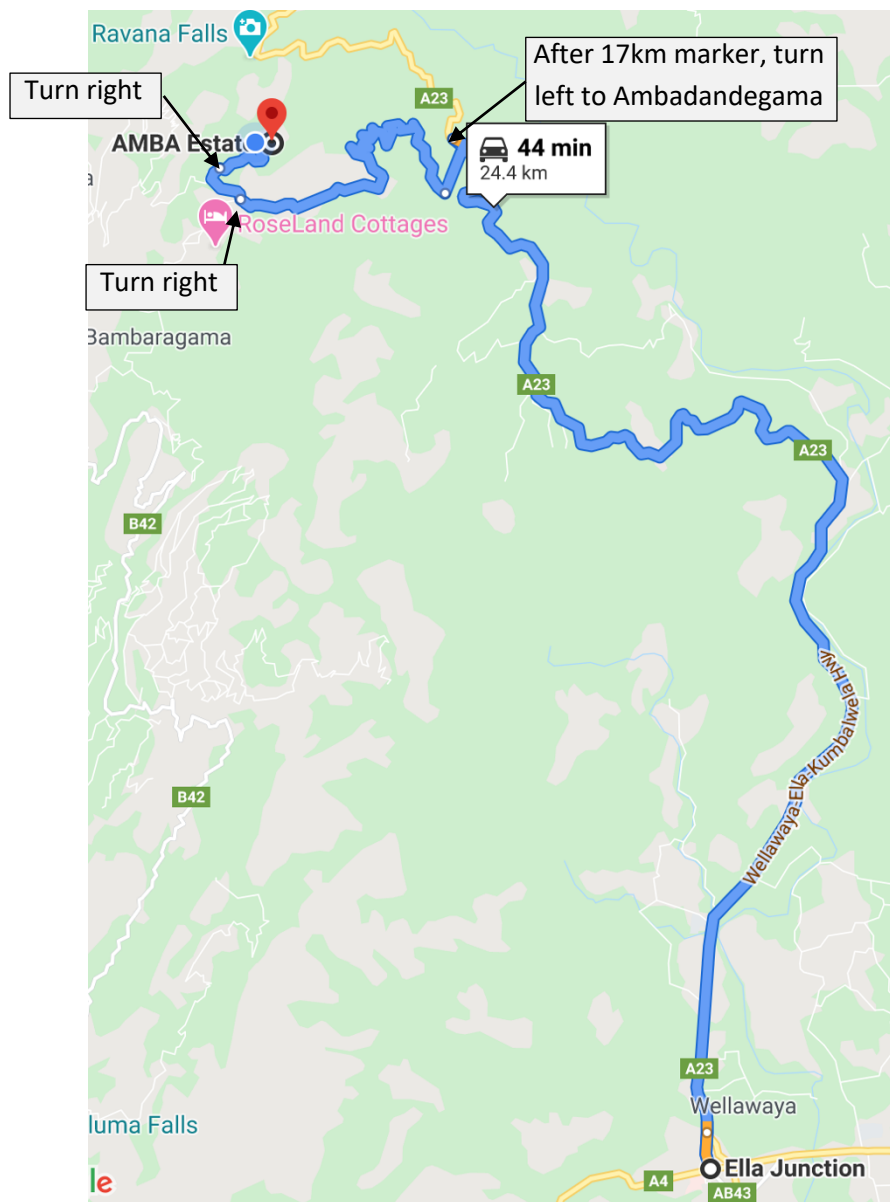
Detailed directions from Bandarawela to AMBA via Heel Oya (approx. 14km, 30 minutes)

- From the main roundabout in Bandarawela (where the roads from Colombo/Haputale and Nuwara Eliya/Welimada meet), take the main road to Badulla
- Drive through the centre of Bandarawela for approx. 2km
- After you pass the Hotel Lion Inn and the Hotel Malindee, keep your eyes open for a small tarmac road to the right (directly opposite a small Cargill Express supermarket). Turn right up this road
- At the T-junction at the top of the hill, turn left
- After approx. 1.5km, turn right to Heel Oya station (at a junction with a large Buddha shrine and signs for AMBA and Hideaway)
- After 1km, cross the railway track at Heel Oya station. Climb the hill for 200 meters and look for a small left-turn (next to shop) – you should see 2 or 3 signs saying AMBA and Hideaway
- Follow this windy road for 1.5km, then turn right on the first & only tarmac road to the right (again with 1 or 2 signs saying AMBA or Hideaway). Climb the hill for 2km through the eucalyptus forest
- At the big junction at the top of the hill (again with several signs saying AMBA or Hideaway), turn left and sharp left again (almost a U-turn), pass the Buddhist shrine and you enter AMBA Valley
- Follow this steep hair-pin road down into the valley for 3km, cross the river and continue for 1km
- Look for a brightly-painted bus-stop on the left. Turn left onto the small concrete track with more signs for Hideaway and AMBA. Go past Hideaway Trails on your left and continue for another 500 meters. You will then see a big yellow AMBA sign, and behind it AMBA Estate Factory and Farmhouse, with a green roof and yellow trim. Take the left-fork concrete track, and the parking area is just below the Farmhouse



Detailed directions from Wellawaya to AMBA (approx. 24km, 40 minutes)

- From the south coast or east coast, drive to Wellawaya (the main junction town at the base of the mountains). Take the road towards Ella and Kumbalwela
- Keep driving for 17km (past the Feelin' Good Resort). Just after the 17km marker, look out for a bus shelter on the left and a sharp left turn (with signs pointing up the hill to Ambadandegama, Planters Bungalow, Hideaway and AMBA). Note if you miss the turn off, you will get to the Ravana Ella waterfall and will have gone too far
- Turn left up this small tarmac road. After 200 meters, go past the left-turn to Planters Bungalow, and keep winding up the mountain for about 4km
- At the top, you reach a T-junction. Turn right at the junction
- Go downhill for about 500 metres until you see a brightly-painted bus-stop. Just before this bus shelter turn right onto a concrete road with signs for Hideaway and AMBA
- Go past Hideaway Trails on your left and continue for another 500 meters. You will then see a big yellow AMBA sign, and behind it AMBA Estate Factory and Farmhouse, with a green roof and yellow trim. Take the left-fork concrete track, and the parking area is just below the Farmhouse



Some general advice

1. KEEP CALM and don't let your driver freak you out!

- Many drivers, particularly from Colombo-based agencies, might give you the impression that AMBA is very remote and difficult to reach. This is not the case: as the crow flies, AMBA is just 8km from Ella town (one of the top 3 tourist destinations in Sri Lanka) and just 7km from the nearest railway station.
- The 3 roads that lead into Ambadandegama valley are all good tarmac roads – like everywhere in the tropics, there are some potholes, but nothing that even the smallest car cannot navigate.
- Many drivers in Sri Lanka are not accustomed to using GPS or following written directions – they prefer to stop every 50 meters and ask directions. This can be unnerving for guests, particularly when they arrive after dark. If possible, please use these directions and/or GPS, reassure your driver and be patient!

2. Don't worry that we are a "long way from Ella town" (a concern we hear from many guests before they arrive)

- The reason Ella is so popular is because of the hikes and views around Ella, and those are actually better from our valley – the 2 main sights, the Ravana Ella waterfall and Ella Rock are actually more accessible from AMBA than they are from the town; and Eagle Rock (the small hill on the farm) has bigger views and none of the crowds, compared to Mini Adam's Peak - Mini Adam's Peak is just a small hill which is popular because it is an easy walk from Ella town.
- Frankly 90% of our guests never leave the valley once they realise that they can do everything on foot from Amba. The only sight which you cannot reach on foot from the farm is 9 Arch Bridge, but it is easy to book a tuktuk to take you into town, if you want to see the bridge – or you get a yearning for a pizza or a backpacker bar!
- If you are touring with an agency driver/guide, it is best to ask them not to fill your days with unnecessary driving excursions. You will enjoy your time much more, seeing the sights on foot and not wasting time driving around.

3. Please call us, if you need any help on the way

- Please call **Sanka on 071 577 5709** or **Karuna on 077 044 9459**, if you need any help with directions, or if you need us to send a car or tuktuk to collect you from the station.
- Please also call if you are delayed and likely to arrive after 6pm, so the staff know to expect you. Everyone who works at AMBA comes from the village, so they may go home, if you arrive very late in the evening!
- Since guests rave about the food at Amba, we prepare dinner on the assumption that all guests will have dinner when they arrive. If you decide to stop for dinner on the way, PLEASE let us know, so we minimise waste!