

# Safari in Sri Lanka

9 days | Starts/Ends: Colombo



*Safari in Sri Lanka on this unique wildlife tour which takes in five of the beautiful Tear Drop Isle's best national parks - Wilpattu, Wasgamuwa, Gal Oya, Udawalawe and Yala. Go in search of herds of elephants, Sri Lankan Sloth Bears and elusive leopards, explore Dambulla's incredible cave temple, visit the Veddhas and more, in nine captivating days.*

## HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

### Trip Highlights

- Colombo - explore Sri Lanka's capital
- Dambulla Rock Temples - visit the largest, best-preserved cave-temple complex in Sri Lanka
- Udawalawe National Park - go in search of the nation's largest herds of Asian Elephants
- Yala National Park - game drive in Yala which is home to Sri Lanka's highest population density of leopards
- Wilpattu National Park - experience a tented safari in Sri Lanka's largest national park, which is renowned for its leopards
- Gal Oya National Park - Spot wildlife on a boat safari and a game drive in one of

island's best preserved and least visited national parks

- Galle - explore Galle Dutch Fortress
- Mahiyanganaya - visit the Veddhas, one of Sri Lanka's indigenous tribes

### What's Included

- 8 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 5 dinners
- 4 nights 4 - 5 star hotels, 3 nights lodges and 1 night safari camp
- Touring of Dambulla Rock Temple, Galle and Colombo
- Game drives in Wilpattu, Wasgamuwa, Gal Oya, Udawalawe and Yala National Parks
- Boat safari in Gal Oya
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 9
- Escorted by an English speaking national guide for group 6 or more (professional chauffeur guide for groups of 5 or less)
- All relevant transfers in private air-conditioned vehicles
- All national park entrance fees (USD\$350)
- Maximum group size: 12

### What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow \$3 - 6 USD per day per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1 : Colombo

Colombo - Negombo. Welcome to Sri Lanka! Upon arrival at Colombo airport you will be met and transferred to our start hotel in Negombo. After you have checked in the remainder of the day is at your leisure. This evening meet your guide and the rest of the group for a tour briefing. **Overnight - Negombo**

### Day 2 : Wilpattu NP



Negombo - Wilpattu. After breakfast we drive along Sri Lanka's picturesque coast to Wilpattu National Park. Located on the west coast of Sri Lanka, Wilpattu is Sri Lanka's largest national park, covering 1085 sq km and extending inland towards the ancient city of Anuradhapura. The lakes and dense woodland of Wilpattu are home to impressive variety of flora and fauna including sloth bears, spotted deer, wild pigs, crocodiles and

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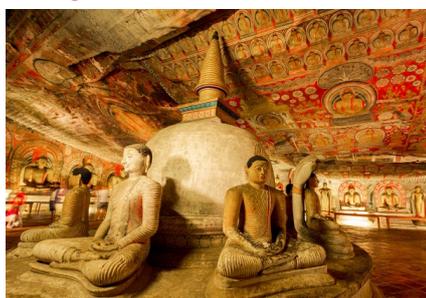
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leopards, Sri Lanka's top feline predator. This afternoon we go in search of wildlife on our first game drive, in a jeep. This evening we enjoy a tasty BBQ dinner at the camp, which is located close to the Southern boundary of Wilpattu National Park, on the boundary of a lake, surrounded by bush forest.

We spend the night in spacious tents with en suite facilities, proper beds, electricity and a mosquito net. **Overnight - Wilpattu (tented camp)** (B, L, D)

## Day 3 : Dambulla & Wasmamuwa NP



Wilpattu - Wasmamuwa. After breakfast we depart for Wasmamuwa, stopping en route to visit Sri Lanka's most impressive cave temples, the Dambulla Rock Temple. This stunning complex of 5 caves contains over 150 images of Buddha including an impressive 14 metre statue carved out of the cave rock. We continue on to Wasmamuwa to check into our hotel before enjoying an afternoon game drive in Wasmamuwa National Park.

The evergreen forest of Wasmamuwa, with its towering trees, is home to large herds of elephants. On our game drive we may also spot wild boar, buffalo, purple faced langur monkeys, spotted deer and crocodiles basking in the sun. Not to mention up to 143 species of birds. **Overnight - Wasmamuwa** (B, D)

## Day 4 : Visit the Veddhas

Wasmamuwa - Gal Oya. Today we travel on to Gal Oya, stopping en route in Mahiyanganaya, where we get the opportunity to visit the forest dwelling Veddhas, an indigenous people of Sri Lanka. We continue on to our lodge in Gal Oya National Park where the rest of the day is

free to spend at leisure. **Overnight - Gal Oya** (B, D)

## Day 5 : Gal Oya NP



Gal Oya is one of the best preserved and least visited national parks in Sri Lanka. It was established in 1954, primarily to protect the catchment area of the vast Senanayake Samudra Reservoir, which is the largest inland body of water in Sri Lanka. Rich in bio diversity and aquatic life, Gal Oya spans 25,000 hectares of dense evergreen forest, mountains, savannah and lake.

This morning we rise early for breakfast before embarking on a boat safari, which is the best way to spot Gal Oya's diverse wildlife, and if we're really lucky we might see the Asian elephant swimming in its natural habitat. We return to the hotel for lunch and to freshen up before an afternoon jeep safari. **Overnight - Gal Oya** (B, D)

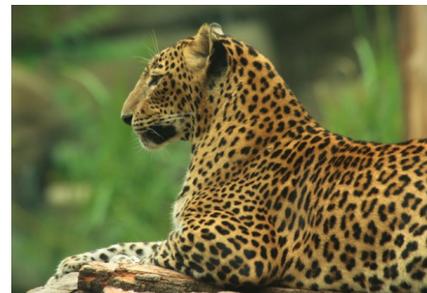
## Day 6 : Udawalawe NP



Gal Oya - Udawalawe. This morning we travel on to Udawalawe and check into our hotel before an afternoon jeep safari in Udawalawe National Park. The park is known for its large population of elephants, there are over 400 and herds of up to 50 are commonly sighted. As well as elephants we'll be on the look out for leopards, toque monkeys, grey langur, wild pig and sambar. Numerous bird species can

also be sighted including the white bellied sea eagle and crested serpent eagle. **Overnight - Udawalawe** (B)

## Day 7 : Yala NP



Udawalawe - Yala. Bidding farewell to Gal Oya we make our way to Yala National Park today. Checking into our hotel late morning, we enjoy an afternoon jeep safari in the park. Yala is the second largest national park in Sri Lanka and it has the highest concentration of leopards on the island. The park is also home to a large population of Asian elephants, sloth bears, golden palm civets, Sri Lankan krait and crocodiles, while the coastline around the park is visited by leatherback and loggerhead sea turtles. **Overnight - Yala** (B)

## Day 8 : Galle



Yala - Colombo. We travel back to Colombo today, stopping in Galle en route to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Listed Galle fortress. The fortress was first constructed by the Portuguese in 1588, then expanded and extensively fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. Arriving into Colombo late this afternoon we enjoy a short tour of the city and this evening we'll enjoy our last dinner together as a group. **Overnight - Colombo** (B, D)

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## Day 9 : Colombo

Our tour comes to an end after breakfast today, with a transfer to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

### HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

**Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.**

## Jetwing Blue Negombo

The Jetwing Blue is stylish beach hotel with excellent facilities and contemporary comforts. Rooms are spacious and tastefully decorated, with private balconies all of the modern amenities you would expect from a 5 star hotel. It boasts two superb outdoor pools, a fully equipped gym and a spa, offering personalised treatments. The two restaurants serve a wonderful range of tasty cuisine and guests can opt to dine at the ocean's edge while enjoying breathtaking views of the sea. The hotel is conveniently located on the beach front in Negombo, a popular coastal resort just north of Colombo and 20 minutes drive from the airport.



## Big Game Camp

Big Game Camp is ideally located for game drives within Wilpattu National Park. Guests are comfortably accommodated in spacious tents, with en suite facilities, raised beds, fresh bed linen, towels, a fan and electricity. Guests can go in search of the park's resident wildlife by day and spend evenings beside a camp fire, dining on delicious cuisine, surrounded by nature.



## FarCry Wasmamuwa

Set amidst the lush expanses of Wasmamuwa, between the majestic Knuckles mountain range and the Mahaweli River, FarCry is a haven for nature lovers, conveniently located 25km from Wasmamuwa National Park. This intimate lodge has 6 air-conditioned guest rooms, equipped with modern comforts. There's an outdoor pool, a restaurant, which serves a wonderful selection of local delights, and a bar offering a tasty selection of signature cocktails.



## Gal Oya Lodge

This unique eco lodge is spread across 20 acres of private forest, with 10 spacious and beautifully designed bungalows. Each bungalow has a private living room, bedroom with kind sized bed, and en suite bathroom with indoor and outdoor showers. Spectacular floor to ceiling windows and doors open onto a private veranda, to bring guests closer to nature. The cuisine at the lodge is locally sourced and lovingly prepared, with a choice of delicious Sri Lankan and Western dishes, and the outdoor pool is perfect for a refreshing dip after an exhilarating boat safari or game drive.



## Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort

Situated on 7 acres of land, the Grand Udawalawe Safari Resort is the only hotel of its class in the area. Rooms are spacious with beautiful hard wood flooring and artwork depicting the wildlife of Udawalawe. Food here is delicious and plentiful with an extensive breakfast menu. The outdoor pool is a great place to relax by and enjoy a refreshing splash in after a good day on safari. Well located just a few minutes drive from Udawalawe National Park.



## Jetwing Yala

Right next to Yala National Park, Jetwing Yala offers superb accommodation in a spectacular location. Guest rooms are beautifully decorated and all come with private balconies and contemporary en suites. The hotel also benefits from a stunning outdoor pool, a desirable beachside location and a number of excellent restaurants. Choose from elegant dining at the Dining Room or tapas at the Lounge. Perfectly located on the outskirts of Yala National Park.



## Fairway Colombo

Situated at the heart of Colombo, the Fairway Hotel is ideally located, close to the iconic World Trade Center and the popular Dutch Hospital complex. With 181 comfortable guest rooms, this modern hotel blends the latest technology with great design. Free high speed Wi-Fi access, motion sensor driven room temperature control, room access through your mobile phone are just a few of the technological conveniences offered. The hotel offers four restaurants, a nightclub, fitness centre and

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a fantastic rooftop terrace where guests can sip tasty cocktails and enjoy the superb city views.



## Yala National Park - possible closure Sep - Oct annually

Yala National Park, though more often only parts of the park close in September - October each year. Closure occurs when drought is experienced in the area and keeping areas off limits allows animals the maximum space to roam freely. It also gives the Department of Wildlife opportunity to fill temporary water holes and carry out other strategies to assist wildlife during this time.

In 2018, blocks 1 and 2 of the park closed from 01 Sep - 31 Oct 2018, whilst blocks 3, 4 and 5 remained open. We can only predict that the 2019 closure (or part park closure dates) will be similar.

## Guides & Groups

Our longest group tour in Sri Lanka is our Sri Lanka Northeast Explorer – 12 day tour. All other group tours that we offer are sectors of this larger tour. As such on your holiday you may have travellers join you part way through your tour or end their holiday when you continue on. You also may have a number of escorting guides throughout your tour, ie one guide escorting days 1-5 then another for the remainder of the holiday.

Whenever there is 6 persons or more on your holiday you will have a tour guide escorting/ travelling along with you. Your guide will conduct the sightseeing arrangements, or accompany you where the local law dictates that a local guide must conduct the sightseeing in this region. Where the group number is less than 6 persons you will travel from place to place with a driver and meet a local guide at each new destination that will conduct your sightseeing arrangements in this location.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### Visas

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of departure from Sri Lanka.

All nationalities require a visa to enter Sri Lanka. Your visa application must be submitted to the Ministry of Emigration and Immigration via the online ETA (Electronic Travel Authorisation) prior to departure.

To apply for your ETA visit [www.eta.gov.lk](http://www.eta.gov.lk)

This is a very simple process and requires no additional documents. You must fill in the required information and once the visa is approved, you will be notified with an ETA approval notice promptly. All passenger travelling to Sri Lanka will be required to make a payment of USD \$50 per person following the same ETA process.

The Visa issued will be a Double-Entry Tourists Visa applicable for 30 days from the date of arrival to Sri Lanka.

### Visa Fee Exemption:

The Government of Sri Lanka have introduced a visa fee exemption scheme for citizens of 48 countries, effective 1 August 2019 to 30th April 2020 when the Government will review the progress of the project and potentially continue to offer this for a further 6 months. For a full list of visa fee exempt countries please visit: <https://mailchi.mp/544266114c42/sri-lanka-visa-fee-exemption-for-selected-countries?e=a5522c85f4>

The Visa issued will be a Double-Entry Tourists Visa applicable for 30 days from the date of arrival to Sri Lanka.

### The Maldives

Nationals of the United Kingdom, the EEC, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA (if resident in the UK) currently do not require a visa in advance of entry to the Maldives if stay

is less than 30 days. Holders of RSA passports must obtain a visa for the Maldives prior to departure.

## Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Sri Lanka from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Tetanus, Polio, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Typhoid are strongly recommended. You are also advised to take anti-Malarial medication.

### Water

As tap water is not safe to drink in Sri Lanka, only drink bottled mineral water which is readily available in hotels, shops and restaurants. You should also avoid salads which may be washed in unhygienic water.

## Currency

The currency of Sri Lanka is the Sri Lankan Rupee.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars or other major currencies can be exchanged only in Sri Lanka, as the Rupee is presently exchangeable only in destination. The Rupee is non-exportable, so spend it all before you leave! There are plenty of money changers in Colombo, at the airport, in the street and at hotels. A growing number of ATMs in Colombo and Kandy accept foreign-issued cards. Credit cards are widely accepted for purchases. Visa and Mastercard withdrawals can be performed at banks.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

## Entrance Fees & Tip Kitty

Entrance fees are not included within the cost of our Group Tours and need to be paid locally in Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR). They will be collected on day 2 of your tour.

If travelling to India on our Delhi to Colombo tour, entrance fees for the India section of your tour will be collected in INR, then for the Sri Lankan section of your holiday in LKR.

Note: Entrance fees are included on our Safari in Sri Lanka tour.

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## TIPPING

Tipping is not a natural part of many Western cultures and many of us feel uncomfortable, or unsure about when or how much to tip. However in Sri Lanka tipping makes up a significant part of many people's wages so it's important that we get it right. For this reason we've developed a very simple system on our Group Tours to take all the hassle out of tipping.

With our 'tipping made easy' policy, a nominal pre-determined amount is collected from all group tour participants to cover tips en route. This then saves you the hassle of when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, local guides and other support staff through the tour. The tipping kitty amount is noted under 'Exclusions' on the first page of these Trip Notes.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The tipping kitty is to be paid in LKR and it will be collected on day 2 of your tour. If travelling to India on our Delhi to Colombo tour, tipping kitty for that section of your tour will be collected by your guide in India and payable in India Rupees (INR).

Our 'tipping made easy' doesn't include a tip for your group tour guide, where we suggest an amount of approx USD\$3 - 7 per day multiplied by the duration of your tour. Naturally though, the amount is up to you. The tip for your guide is an entirely personal gesture.

Note: We do not collect a tipping kitty on our Safari in Sri Lanka tour or on our Private Tours, where you can tip at your own discretion.

## Climate

Situated in the Indian Ocean, at the base of the Indian Sub-Continent and around 880km north of the equator, the island nation of Sri Lanka has a pleasant tropical climate and despite its two short monsoon seasons has no 'off-season' as such. The average temperature of the low lands ranges between 25 – 30 degrees C, with higher temperatures in April. The hill country is particularly popular at this time of the year where temperatures can be 5 to 8 degrees cooler during the day, yet rather chilly at night. The two monsoons are the southwest from May to July, affecting

south/west/central areas and the northeast from September to November, affecting north/east areas. Despite intermittent rain, the sun does shine and the days are warm, unlike the partnering of rain and cold weather in Europe.

## Time and Voltage

Sri Lanka is 5 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Sri Lanka does not observe daylight saving.

Standard voltage is 230 - 240V; 50Hz AC. Sockets are of the 3 round-pin variety, similar though not identical to European sockets. Use a power adaptor with a hairdryer or other appliances.

## What to Pack

- Suitcase or frameless backpack/rucksack if preferred
- Small day bag for your camera, water, sunglasses, i-Pod etc.
- Please see the heading 'Etiquette' for recommendations on what/what not to wear
- Personal first aid kit
- Sunglasses, hat, umbrella, money belt
- DEET - based industrial strength mosquito/ insect repellent
- High factor sunscreen and bathers/swim costume
- Anti-bacterial hand gel/wet wipes and flat pack toilet paper/tissues
- Universal adapter for your hairdryer, i-Pod or digicam
- Two spare passport photos and a photocopy of your passport in case of loss or theft
- Although film is available at similar prices to the UK or Australia, it is advisable to carry all you anticipate using from the UK, particularly if your camera uses the APS 'drop-load' film
- Spare camera batteries, especially if you possess a digital camera, which requires specialist high-power batteries
- Pack as light as possible to leave room for the souvenirs!

## Food and Drink

Sri Lanka offers a diversity of cuisine. The national dish is rice and curry (even for breakfast!). A typical Sri Lankan meal consists of a 'main' curry that could be fish or meat

with several side dishes including vegetables, chutneys and 'sambol'. Made of ground coconut, onion, chilli, dried fish and lime, sambol is fiendishly hot.

Excellent seafood can be found along the coast, including local crab, prawns and tuna. Local specialities include appa or hoppers which are small rice-batter pancakes eaten with palm treacle and yoghurt.

Roti stuffed with fresh chilli, onions and cooked eggs, griddled meats or fish are also popular. Kotu roti is chopped roti with onions, vegetables and meat.

Colonialism left an indelible stamp on the local cuisine. A popular Dutch-Portuguese dish is Lamprais (rice steeped in stock with a special curry), accompanied by frikkadels (meatballs), baked and served in banana leaves.

Sri Lanka grows some of the finest tea in the world for export. Your best chance for a good cuppa is in the hill country, where tea plantations and hotels serve the pick of the locally harvested crop.

## Trading Hours

- Generally 0930 – 1300hrs and 1400 – 1900hrs or later
- Shops are closed on Sunday. In tourist areas, shops are open from 1000 – 2200hrs, including Sunday
- Markets are open 0800 – 1830hrs Monday – Saturday (limited sections on Sun)
- Banks are open 0830 – 1230hrs and 1330 – 1700hrs Monday – Friday

## Shopping

Sri Lanka is excellent for gemstones especially sapphires, moon-stones and cats-eye. Other items to look out for include spices, wood carvings and other handicrafts, clothing of types, batik and hand-woven textiles, brassware, handmade lace from Galle and of course tea. Tea varies in quality, so if you're buying in bulk, ask for a tasting! If seeking modern local chic, Colombo offers a selection of department stores and stylish boutiques. Refrain from buying souvenirs made of coral (creation of this sort of tourist that contributes greatly to the destruction of Sri Lanka's reefs), ivory or the hides of endangered animals.

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**IMPORTANT:** Set your budget and don't be swayed, remember the caveat – 'Let the buyer beware'. Any purchases made whilst on holiday with us, irrespective of whether the store is recommended by us or other, are at your own discretion. Please make sure that you are completely happy with the product you are purchasing and the delivery arrangements (we would recommend you take away with you any purchases rather than rely on shipping services). On The Go cannot be held responsible or accountable for items bought in country or shipping arrangements. We will not become involved later in your holiday or once you return home should your purchase not live up to your expectations. Proceed with caution.

## Etiquette

Despite the inevitable ups and downs of travelling abroad, you will generally be shown great hospitality in Sri Lanka. In return, please demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the local customs. Sri Lanka is a conservative country; so care should be taken to dress respectfully in large cities and towns, for example when at markets or public places.

- Don't try to sneak into temples and mosques that forbid non-Hindus or non-Muslims
- Never touch a carving or statue of a deity within a temple
- Do not touch locals on the head or point the soles of your feet at a person, religious shrine or image of a deity. This is very disrespectful
- Take care to dress conservatively and ensure that limbs are covered when entering any place of religion. Please also ensure footwear and headwear is removed if entering any Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim place of worship
- Both ladies and gentlemen will need to dress conservatively and cover all shoulders and knees when visiting any sacred site in Sri Lanka including Dambulla, Kandy Temple of the Tooth, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura. Men and Women are not permitted to wear headgear or footwear at sacred sites in Sri Lanka - these must be removed prior to entry
- Ladies should avoid wearing 'clingy, tight or suggestive attire, and stick to cool, flowing

cottons in busy city areas and markets. T-shirts are fine!

- Beach attire is fine on beaches, in a resort or by a hotel pool and at tourist sites but ladies, avoid wearing bikini tops anywhere but on the beach or at the pool
- Nudity and topless bathing are prohibited. Heavy fines can be imposed
- Displays of intimacy are not considered suitable in public
- Ex-military style clothing should not be worn
- It is polite to ask permission before taking photos of people
- Use your right hand for giving, taking, eating or shaking hands as the left is considered to be unclean
- Don't be surprised if you are frequently the centre of attention when travelling around the country. Staring unabashedly is not a social taboo
- Do carry toilet paper with you (or adjust to the Sri Lankan habit of using water instead), but don't throw it down the toilet without first checking to see if there's a basket to put it in (narrow pipes clog easily)
- Don't be surprised to see men defecating or urinating in public when restrooms are not readily available. Women, in the same circumstance, tend to use cover of darkness and huddle in groups
- Mosques are open to non-Muslims but cannot be visited during prayer time, particularly noon on Friday
- Photography is prohibited in certain sections of sacred sites. Do not attempt to be photographed with Buddhist bhikkus (monks) or to pose for photos with statues of Buddha or other deities or paintings
- Do be open and friendly in conversations with locals. Sri Lankans can be quite talkative, asking strangers questions (about marital status, salary, etc.) that might be interpreted as overly personal in other cultures

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