

Sri Lanka Safari, Tour & Trek

8 Days | Starts/Ends: Colombo



Release your wild side in Sri Lanka, with game drives in three of Sri Lanka's best national park - Yala, Udawalawe and Gal Oya. Go trekking in picturesque Horton Plains, visit tea plantations, Kandy's Temple of the Tooth and more on this unique 8 day tour.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Sinharaja Rainforest - go trekking in this UNESCO listed lowland forest
- 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
- 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
- Horton Plains, Sri Lanka's highest plateau - trek in the beautiful World's End Nature Reserve
- Colombo - explore Sri Lanka's capital
- Nuwara Eliya - visit a tea plantation and tea factory

- Kandy - watch a cultural performance and visit the sacred Temple of the Tooth

What's Included

- 7 nights standard / superior hotels and lodges
- 7 breakfasts
- Trek in Sinharaja Rainforest and Horton Plains
- Sightseeing in Colombo, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya tea plantation visit
- All transfers and transportation in private air conditioned vehicles and services of a chauffeur guide
- Airport arrival and departure transfers on days 1 and 8
- Morning and afternoon game drives in Udawalawe National Park and Yala National Park, in jeeps. A game drive and boat safari in Gal Oya National Park.

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Colombo to Kalutara

Colombo - Kalutara. Upon arrival at Colombo International Airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel in the coastal town

of Kalutara, just over 40km south of Colombo.

Overnight - Kalutara

Day 2 : Sinharaja Rainforest



Kalutara - Sinharaja - Udawalawe. After an early breakfast you'll depart for Kalawana, to enjoy a trek in the Sinharaja Rainforest. Designated a UNESCO Nature World Heritage Site, this area of Sri Lankan tropical lowland forest spans 8900 acres and found within its lush green canopy is an abundance of wildlife including leopard, monkeys, birds and butterflies. Due to the dense vegetation, it is not always easy to spot the rare animals whilst trekking but there is the possibility of seeing a good number of endemic bird species.

From Sinharaja Rainforest continue on to Udawalawe National Park for your first game drive. Udawalawe National Park covers 31,800 hectares and was declared a protected sanctuary with national park status in 1972. Surrounded by mountain ranges, the

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terrain of the park is a mixture of grassland (rivaling the savanna of Africa) and shrub jungle. Teak plantations, water holes and two important factors make the park special - the large Udawalawe Reservoir and the Walewe River, which ensure a supply of water for the fauna within. Internationally renowned for its large herds of elephants, the park is also known for several species of deer, wild boar, wild buffalo, jackal and the ever illusive leopard. **Overnight - Udawalawe National Park (B)**

Day 3 : Udawalawe & Yala NP



Udawalawe - Tissamaharama. Before breakfast go in search of wildlife on an early morning game drive at Udawalawe National Park. On return to the hotel enjoy breakfast before travelling on to the pretty lakeside town of Tissamaharama (Tissa), which is ideally located for excursions to nearby Yala.

This afternoon enjoy your first game drive in Yala, Sri Lanka's most famous national park, which is home to elephants, bears, crocodiles, wild boars and of course leopards. With 97,800 hectares of land, Yala is Sri Lanka's second largest national park (after Wilpattu). **Overnight - Tissamaharama (B)**

Day 4 : Yala & Gal Oya



Tissamaharama - Gal Oya. Before breakfast this morning head out on a second game drive

in Yala National Park. Its open undulating terrain made it famous for elephants for many years, but more recently the park has received TV fame from National Geographic and the Discovery Channel which focussed on leopard research, conservation and identification projects. The park is now thought to hold the highest concentration of leopards per square kilometre. Areas popular with the leopard are rock strewn hillocks with dense shrub in which the animals hide.

After breakfast continue your journey to Gal Oya. 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. During your time in Gal Oya you'll enjoy a game drive and a boat safari, hopefully spotting some of the park's large herds of elephant. **Overnight - Gal Oya (B)**

Day 5 : Nuwara Eliya



Gal Oya - Nuwara Eliya. It's another early start for a second game drive in Gal Oya before breakfast and travelling on to Nuwara Eliya. Often referred to as 'Little England', this genteel highland community has a vaguely British-country-village feel to it, with its colonial-era bungalows, Tudor-style hotels, well-tended hedgerows and pretty gardens. This afternoon we take a leisurely drive through Nuwara Eliya before returning to your hotel.

Overnight - Nuwara Eliya (B)

Day 6 : Horton Plains



Nuwara Eliya - Kandy. This morning with a packed breakfast we leave for an excursion to Horton Plains for a trek to World's End and the beautiful Baker's Falls which takes about 2 - 3 hours. Horton Plains is Sri Lanka's highest plateau, 7200 feet above sea level in the central mountain country. It's a very scenic region with an astounding variety of landscapes, from mountains to grasslands, marshes to trout streams. Sri Lanka's best teas are grown in the surrounding areas. There are spectacular views from 'World's End' where the plateau plunges a thousand feet in a straight sheer drop. This is excellent hiking country, with a cool climate, wonderful flora, colourful butterflies and many highland birds.

After your hike, travel on to Kandy, stopping enroute to visit a local tea plantation and learn all about the tea making process at the tea factory. The Hill Capital of Kandy was the last bastion of the Sinhala kings and is rich in history and culture. This evening visit the famous Temple of the Tooth Relic and enjoy a show featuring traditional Sri Lankan dance. **Overnight - Kandy (B)**

Day 7 : Colombo sightseeing



Kandy - Colombo. After breakfast travel back to Colombo, stopping to visit the Royal Botanical Garden at Peradeniya en route. Sri Lanka's largest city Colombo, is located on

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the west coast and draws together all the cultures, religions and influences of foreign lands, to create a fascinating blend of east and west, past and present. This afternoon take in the sights of capital on a guided tour, visiting the Fort area in the north of the city, famous for its government buildings and interesting shops, Independence Square, the stunning Gangarama Temple and more. Colombo has a great range of high quality restaurants serving tasty cuisine from around the world and wonderful shops to look around on your last night in Sri Lanka.

Overnight - Colombo (B)

Day 8 : Colombo



After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

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

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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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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