

Wildlife Holiday in Sri Lanka



This 16-day (2 weeks) Tell Tale Travel **private tour** on the island of Sri Lanka includes exploring vast nature reserves for a chance to see wildlife, such as the leopard, in its natural habitat. You will see Sri Lanka's elephants in their various roles: working on plantations, in religious ceremonies at temples, as well as, of course, roaming in the wild. You will also visit a biosphere rainforest and botanical gardens, do some cultural sightseeing and get a unique insight into Sri Lanka.

As with all Tell Tale Travel trips, this is a soft adventure which means that you will get away from the tourist trail, but in more comfort than a typical adventure holiday. We also ensure our itineraries have a perfect balance, so you will have a blend of time with expert guides, time without unique network of local people and time on your own to explore or relax.



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Day 1 -Saturday

Overnight direct flight from London Heathrow (at approximately 9:30pm) to Colombo Katunayaka with Sri Lankan Airlines.

Day 2 – Sunday

Welcome to Sri Lanka! One of our drivers will meet you at the airport this afternoon - just look out for a sign with the Tell Tale Travel 'pink peacock' logo!

You will be driven down the winding west of the island to Bentota, which is south of Colombo. You will arrive at a small and charming colonial-style boutique hotel which will be your base for the first few days of your holiday. The hotel has beautiful well-tended gardens and resident birdlife includes a heron and a family of woodpeckers.



You'll have the late afternoon to settle in and enjoy the pool. Dinner in the pavilion.

Day 3 – Monday

This morning you can have a lie in and a leisurely breakfast to acclimatise.



A late start, but then you will be taken to nearby Galle, one of Sri Lanka's main towns, dating to the time of Portuguese and Dutch rule and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You will have a look at some of the historic buildings such as the church which holds local records dating back centuries, the museum and see the lighthouse before going for a sunset walk along the ramparts of the fort, a popular activity with the locals.

Then, you'll have a look around Galle's colourful market. We recommend having dinner at a local restaurant, if you enjoy seafood; this is one of the best places in Sri Lanka to enjoy the freshest of the day's catch.

Day 4 – Tuesday

This morning, you will be picked up and taken for a guided visit of a sanctuary for sea turtles. The sanctuary buys turtle eggs from local fishermen who find them, then lets the eggs hatch in safety before it rears the baby turtles until they can be safely be released into the sea. The sanctuary is also home to older turtles which are unable to live safely in the wild; some are over twenty years old.



You'll then be taken for a private boat trip along the river - as well as seeing the wildlife and birds along the water, you'll stop at an island to see a temple and visit a village to see how cinnamon is harvested and prepared. Cinnamon is native to Sri Lanka: while the trees were taken around the world by Portuguese traders to be grown in far-flung countries in South America, the cinnamon grown in Sri Lanka is still considered the best in the world and bought by those same countries.

Day 5 – Wednesday



A leisurely start and time to pack up. Then you'll be picked up by one of our wildlife guides (and a driver) who will be looking after you for the next few days. You will be driven a few hours to Sinharaja Rainforest, one of the most untouched areas of national beauty in Sri Lanka and the last virgin rainforest. Please note that your accommodation for the next two nights will be rustic but we feel it is worth the trade off for the rainforest location. The food is also delicious here.

Day 6 – Thursday

Day exploring Sinharaja. This rainforest, part of UNESCO's International Network of Biosphere Reserves, showcases a rainforest's fragile eco system and is home to much of the native flora and fauna. The forest's name means 'lion king' and it is thought that the last of the island's lions lived here before becoming extinct.

You'll have a guided nature walk under the gigantic trees. Although you would have to be extremely lucky to see a leopard in this particular forest due to the denseness of the vegetation, you may see monkeys, squirrels and perhaps a fishing cat. You'll certainly see a variety of tropical birds: Sinharaja is home to 95% of Sri Lanka's native birds such as Layard's Parakeet, *Psittacula calthropae* and the Ceylon Blue Magpie, *Cissa oronata*.



Sinharaja is also a great place for seeing orchids growing in the wild and colourful butterflies, including the rare Fivebar Swordtail, *Graphium antiphates ceylonicus*.

Day 7 – Friday

Time for your next adventure! You'll pack up this morning and then head towards Yala National Park. Sri Lanka's second national park, it is teeming with wildlife including elephants, and is considered one of the best places in the world to spot leopards in the wild.



On your way you will stop at another national park, Uda Walawe, where you will visit the Elephant Transit Home. This is an initiative by the government's conservation department to reintroduce abandoned baby elephants back into their natural habitat (this park is famous for its wild herds of elephants, some even contain up to 50 elephants). *Please note that you will be expected to observe the baby elephants from a distance.*

Then you will head on eastwards to Yala where you will arrive at a nice mini resort. Settle into your comfortable chalet and enjoy the pool.

Evening at leisure.

Day 8 - Saturday

A very early start this morning for a safari in Yala National Park with your wildlife guide in a 4WD.

Yala is a well-established and extensive national park of just under 1,300 sq km. It is considered to be the one of the best places in the world to spot wild leopards (although you will need to keep your eyes peeled and it is not guaranteed). You are likely to see some of the many elephants that live here. There are also many others types of wildlife here who are more easily found, including deer, sloth, crocodiles and over 100 species of birds.



Please note that the animals are wild here so you will have to stay in your jeep. You are able to walk around the beach that edges the park when you stop at midday to have a rest and some food while the animals are having their afternoon nap.

You will then spend the afternoon looking for animals as well. *You are also welcome to head back earlier if you wish.*

Evening at leisure.

Day 9 - Sunday

Another early morning start for another safari in Yala National Park. Depending on what you saw the previous day, and if you like birds, you could instead visit the nearby Bundala reserve, a wetland haven for birds.

You will have the afternoon free to nap or relax by the pool, then in the late afternoon you will be taken to the nearby town of Kataragama, probably the most important religious town in Sri Lanka for people of many faiths. It is one of the 16 places in Sri Lanka which Buddhist pilgrims visit and unusually there are also Hindhu and Islamic monuments/temples in the same area. You can walk along the river which people believe is sacred so you may see some of them bathing in it, and then you will be taken to watch (or take part if you wish) in the evening Buddhist 'puja' religious ceremony. You may also see some elephants as they play an important role in temples. ***Tell Tale Tip*** *We recommend having dinner at a restaurant in Kataragama if you've been eating at the resort.*

Day 10 - Monday



This morning, you will be driven a few hours to a nice town called Bandarawela in 'hill country'. You'll be staying in the hills just outside the town.

Hill country has considerably cooler weather to the rest of Sri Lanka, but this is the warmer end of it. On your way you will go through the famous Ella gap as well as pass the high Rawana waterfalls.

When you get to Bandarawela, you will arrive at a stunning home in a garden filled with tropical fruit trees including mango and avocado, as well as lots of English roses, and meet your hosts, a retired tea planter and his wife. Enjoy a welcome lunch, then settle into your room (with private

bathroom, of course) and spend the afternoon relaxing in the garden. **Tell Tale Tip** *Watch out for some of the visiting wildlife, including monkeys and porcupines!*

This evening, you'll have a home-cooked dinner with your hosts.

Day 11 - Tuesday

Today your hosts are going to take you to have a look at a tea plantation. As you're going with such an expert, you'll get an excellent insight into tea planting and production. **Tell Tale Tip** *This is a great place to buy high quality tea which makes an excellent souvenir and is lightweight to boot.*

You'll have the afternoon free to enjoy the garden, although if you would like to go off on your own to have a look around Bandarawela town, you can take a 'three wheeler' (same as a tuk tuk in Thailand) and be there in about 15 minutes.

Day 12 – Wednesday

Time to move on: this morning you be driven to the train station to take a train through the winding hill country. This particular section of rail track is regarded as the most scenic in the entire country.

In a few hours, you will arrive in Kandy, which was the heart of Sri Lanka's ancient kingdom and now the second largest city after the modern commercial centre of Colombo. You will be met at the station and driven to your next hosts, a schoolteacher, her husband and their daughter, who is in her late teens. Time to settle in and welcome delicious home-cooked dinner.

Day 13 – Thursday

A leisurely start before a guide picks you up to take you sightseeing in the town of Kandy.

You'll start at the beautiful lake and then visit the 'Temple of the Tooth', a temple overlooking the lake which houses one of the world's most important Buddhist relics, a tooth said to have belonged to the Lord Buddha. You'll also visit at Kandy's bustling market.



This evening you can have an informal cooking lesson with your hostess in how to make Sinhalese food (optional).

Day 14 – Friday



This morning you are saying goodbye to Kandy, but first you will visit Sri Lanka's famous Royal Peradeniya botanical gardens. The gardens were originally created in the 14th century by a Kandyan King and developed further in the 19th century during British times.

The 150-acre gardens are home to a scientific centre for conservation and ecology, as well as herbs, gigantic ferns, 300 types of orchids and over 10,000 fruit bats.

Then you will have a 2-hour drive (your destination is two thirds of the way between Kandy and

the airport). You'll arrive at a boutique hotel, a 1920s colonial mansion, set on a working plantation of coconut, pineapple and other fruit. You'll have some time to settle in and enjoy the beautiful pool before a delicious dinner.

Alternatively, you can visit Sri Lanka's famous Sigiriya Rock monument today. However, this will entail an earlier start, a longer journey and climbing many steps, so overall it would be fairly tiring.

Day 15 – Saturday

Day at leisure. One of the staff will be happy to show you around the plantation and the local village if you like or you can just relax by the pool for the whole day.

Dinner at the hotel.

Day 16 – Sunday

Time to say goodbye to Sri Lanka. An early morning drive to the airport for your late morning flight. You'll arrive back at Heathrow at approximately 8pm UK time (same day). *It is also possible to fly back the night beforehand, arriving at Heathrow at approximately 9am.*

This specially designed 16-day itinerary costs £1,500 per person based on two adults sharing a private tour plus flight costs from the UK (regional departures are possible) and includes accommodation, excursions/activities with guides, time with local people, transport and meals except as listed below. Please note that you will have some local expenses such as entrance fees as well as whatever you wish to spend on other items not included. We recommend overall spending money of approximately £300-400 per couple to include these, as well as light alcohol and shopping.

EXCLUDED:

Lunch: Days 3-5, 7-9, 12, 13-14

Dinner: Days 3-4, 7-9, 15

Personal travel insurance

Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, internet access and drinks (though some water and soft drinks may be included)

Expenses during free time

Entrance fees (some may be included; these will be specified on your final itinerary)

Tips for guides and drivers (discretionary)

Please note that your itinerary may change before you leave or on the ground (improvements or unforeseeable circumstances); we will endeavour to keep you informed.