



Coates Wildlife Tours

Specialist in Nature Tours since 1986

Trip Dossier

15-Day Sri Lankan Wildlife, History & Culture Tour



Accommodated Small Group Tour - Max 12 passengers
Colombo - Colombo 12 - 26 March 2024

Itinerary Highlights:

- Historic Sigirya - an ancient rock fortress
- The historic town and ancient ruins of Polonnaruwa
- Experience the history, natural history and local culture of the city of Kandy
- Yala National Park - Sri Lanka's most famous national park is extremely rich in wildlife and home to many species such as leopards, elephants, bears, buffalo, jackal and wild boar
- Bundala National Park - Away from the crowds, Bundala is an excellent spot for birders and spotting wildlife such as crocs, wild boar, mongooses, monitor lizards, monkeys and elephants
- Sinharaja Rainforest - home to many endemic species and a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Whale watching from the coastal port of Mirissa

Sri Lanka is beautiful, boasting an abundance of exotic, natural riches. Ancient Buddhist traditions, teaching compassion for all living creatures, have paved the way for the country's long history of conservation. The island abounds with magnificent scenery and historic fortresses, temples and monasteries.

Join Saman Veediyabandara, one of Sri Lanka's leading birding/naturalist guides and Tom Grove, Managing Director from Coates Wildlife Tours, as they discover the natural history and fascinating culture and history of the island.

Sri Lanka's wildlife is varied, including 86 mammal species, 16 of which are endemic to the island. It's home to several wild elephant herds, leopards, sloth bears, mouse deer and numerous monkey species. The birdlife and butterflies are colourful and abundant. Enjoy some of Sri Lanka's best primate viewing among the ancient ruins of Polonnaruwa, where toque macaques, leaf monkeys and grey langurs are at close range. We will search for the elusive leopard in Yala National Park, home to the world's largest concentration of this exquisite cat and Asiatic buffalo, jackal, and wild boar. You will spend a day whale watching off the coast of Mirissa in search of Blue and Sperm Whales and pods of dolphins.

For those interested in botany, Sri Lanka is a land of plenty. The island features diverse habitats, including wet zone tropical forests and shrublands. Vegetation varies from almost treeless pantanas (plains) to dark rhododendron forests in the hills.



Itinerary

Day 1, 12 March Arrive Colombo - Sigiriya Area

Today you'll arrive at Colombo at around 1:00 am. You'll be met at the airport and transferred to the Tamarind Tree Hotel, close to the airport. After a rest and lunch, we will head north to the historic Sigiriya area.

Accommodation: Tamarind Tree Hotel / Hotel Sigiriya

BLD

Day 2, 13 March Sigiriya - Polonnaruwa - Sigiriya Area

This morning we'll visit Polonnaruwa to see ancient ruins. The city was built in the 11th century during an Indian invasion when Polonnaruwa became the next seat of rule. In its day, the city was fortified with three concentric walls; within these were beautiful parks and four carved rock Buddha statues. The ruins are now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Lunch is at a local Restaurant in Polonnaruwa.

After lunch, we will take a 3-hour jeep safari ride into Minneriva National Park.

The park provides critical habitat for Sri Lanka's two endemic monkeys, the purple-faced langur and the toque macaque. Large herbivorous mammals such as Asian Elephants, Sri Lankan sambar deer and Sri Lankan axis deer frequent the park. Rare and endangered species, such as the Sri Lankan leopard and Sri Lankan sloth bear, inhabit Minneriya. Accommodation: Hotel Sigiriya BLD

Day 3, 14 March **Sigiriya**

After breakfast, we'll visit the Rock Fortress of Sigiriya. Remains of this 70-hectare fortified town include a castle, fort, moat and extensive gardens. We will see the famous frescoes of the 'Heavenly Maidens of Sigiriya' on our rock ascent. This afternoon we will undertake a canoe trip looking for waterbirds before heading to a local village to see the traditional cooking methods used to produce some local foods.

Accommodation: Hotel Sigiriya

BLD

Day 4, 15 March **Sigiriya Area - Kandy**

As we leave Sigiriya, we'll visit the caves of Dambulla, which date back to the 1st century BC. They sheltered a king in exile, and when the king regained his throne, he built Dambulla, a magnificent rock temple consisting of five caves. The temple boasts over 2,000 square metres of painted walls. The temple ceilings are painted with intricate patterns of religious images following the contours of the rock, which includes many images of the Lord Buddha. We then proceed on to Kandy and check in to our hotel.

We'll enjoy a cultural Kandyan dance performance at the Kandy Arts Association Hall this evening. After the cultural show, we visit the Temple of the Tooth. The Temple of the Tooth contains the most sacred relic of Buddhism and the most precious symbol of Sinhalese pride, the tooth of the Buddha. Carried by the ancient Kings, the tooth is never seen, but puja veneration ceremonies are held at dawn and dusk every day.

Accommodation: Thilanka Hotel, Kandy

BLD

Day 5, 16 March **Kandy**

This morning we will visit the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya. This 147-acre garden is the largest in Sri Lanka, hosting a variety of plants and animals, including Flying Foxes and a giant Java fig tree, which covers 1,600 square metres.

After lunch, there will be time to visit Lake Kandy or shop and explore this historic town.

Accommodation: Thilanka Hotel, Kandy

BLD

Day 6, 17 March **Kandy - Nuwara Eliya**

Today we leave Kandy, enjoying the undulating scenery of Sri Lanka's famous tea plantations as we head to Nuwara Eliya, known as the 'city of lights'. Nuwara Eliya is the highest town in Sri Lanka (around 2000m above sea level), surrounded by lush tea plantations. Along the way, we'll visit a tea factory set against beautiful mountains, valleys and waterfalls. We will have time to visit Victoria Park and wander around the town this afternoon.

Accommodation: Araliya Red Hotel, Nuwara Eliya

BLD

Day 7, 18 March **Nuwara Eliya - Horton Plains - Nuwara Eliya**

Today we take a full-day excursion to Horton Plains National Park, Sri Lanka's highest and most isolated plateau. This fascinating place features open grassy expanses and patches of mountain forest. The plateau drops steeply to the plains over 2,000 metres below at World's End. We should undoubtedly hear and hopefully see the extremely handsome Purple-faced Leaf Monkey in the forest, and we will keep our eyes peeled for Dusky Squirrels. Birds to look for include the Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie and Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike.

Accommodation: Araliya Red Hotel, Nuwara Eliya

BLD

Day 8, 19 March **Nuwara Eliya - Tissamaharama**

We leave the high country behind this morning and head south towards the coast. After checking in to our accommodation and lunch, we will head to Bundala National Park, known for its birdlife, including Black-necked Storks, Spoonbills, Fish Eagles and Hawk Eagles. We also look for monkeys, crocodiles, deer and elephants. This afternoon, we will explore the park before returning to our accommodation.

Accommodation: Oak Ray Wild Hotel

BLD

Day 9, 20 March**Tissamaharama - Yala - Tissamaharama**

After a very early breakfast, we take a half-day excursion to Yala National Park to view some local flora and fauna. Yala National Park covers 1,297 square km, with ecosystems ranging from moist monsoon forests to white sandy beaches. It is home to many animals, including elephants, leopards, peacocks, bears, wild boars, spotted deer, buffalo, monkeys, and resident and migrant water birds. This afternoon will be spent exploring the wildlife found around the Tissa wetlands.

Accommodation: Oak Ray Wild Hotel

BLD

Day 10, 21 March**Tissamaharama - Lungamvehera National Park - Tissamaharama**

After a very early breakfast, we take a half-day excursion to Lungamvehera National Park, a small national park interconnected with Yala. As it is less well known, there are fewer tourists. It is possible to see leopards, crocodiles, elephants, various birdlife, deer, and some incredible scenery in the park.

Accommodation: Oak Ray Wild Hotel

BLD

Day 11, 22 March**Tissamaharama - Sinharaja**

This morning we travel to Sinharaja Rainforest, looking at the area's natural history as we travel. The rainforest was designated as a Biosphere Reserve in 1978 and was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988. At Sinharaja, 75% of the flora is endemic, and 30 of Sri Lanka's 33 endemic bird species can be found there, including the Red-faced Malkoha, Blue Magpie, Orange-billed Babbler and the White-faced Starling.

Accommodation: Blue Magpie Lodge, Sinharaja

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Day 12, 23 March**Sinharaja Rainforest**

Full-day birding and botanising in the Sinharaja rainforest and the surrounding area.

Accommodation: Blue Magpie Lodge, Sinharaja

BLD

Day 13, 24 March**Sinharaja - Galle - Mirissa**

After breakfast, we'll leave the Sinharaja rainforest and head to Galle, a coastal town that has grown around its historic Portuguese fort. We will have a few hours to explore the old fort area on foot and enjoy lunch. Mid-afternoon, we will continue our trip to Mirissa.

Accommodation: Paradise Beach Club, Mirissa.

BLD

Day 14, 25 March**Mirissa**

We'll head to Mirissa Harbour early this morning to start our whale-watching expedition. On a boat specifically designed for whale watching, we'll travel the seas off the south coast of Sri Lanka, known to be one of the best locations in the world, to see Blue Whales and Sperm Whales. Pods of dolphins are also regularly seen in these waters.

Accommodation: Paradise Beach Club, Mirissa

BLD

Day 15, 26 March**Mirissa - Colombo - Home**

This morning we'll leave the coast and head back to Colombo. After lunch, we'll take a tour of the city. We will have a farewell dinner in Colombo this evening at a 5-star hotel. After dinner, we will be transferred to the Colombo terminal for evening departures. This marks the end of your wonderful Sri Lankan experience.

BLD

NOTE: the above itinerary may be varied according to conditions and advice.

Tour Costs

Cost: AUD \$7,650.00 Per Person Twin Share

AUD \$1,285.00 Single Supplement

Departs: Colombo - Sri Lanka 12 March 2024

Finishes: Colombo - Sri Lanka 26 March 2024

Tour Payments

Deposit: At the time of booking, \$1,000.00 per person

Final Payment: Due on or before 12 January 2024

Max No. Of Participants: 12 passengers and a Coates Escort (see notes)

Notes:

- 1) An escort from Australia will only accompany a group with eight or more passengers. Only local Sri Lankan guides will be used for groups of less than eight passengers.
- 2) Flights between Australia and Sri Lanka are NOT included.
- 3) Prices are based on all known costs and current rates of exchange. Any significant changes beyond our control will be passed on to participants.

Included

- Land content as set out in the itinerary
- Whale watching cruise
- Meals as per itinerary: breakfast (B), lunch (L), dinner (D)
- Tips and gratuities during the tour
- Village Life experience
- Entrance fees to the elephant transfer station & the turtle rescue facility

Not Included

- Flights to and from Sri Lanka
- Travel insurance **(very strongly recommended)**
- Pre and post tour accommodation
- Travel visas
- All other private expenses
- Alcoholic or carbonated drinks unless stated

Tour Information

Coates Escort: Tom Grove

Sri Lankan Naturalist Leader: Mr. Saman Veediyabandara

With a background in wildlife conservation and management, he is a key member of many research teams working in the birding and wildlife field in Sri Lanka. He is also a highly accomplished all-around naturalist.

Accommodation:

Twin/double or share rooms with ensuite in hotels. If you would prefer a single room, a single supplement will apply.

Meals:

The itinerary includes all meals (B = breakfast, L = lunch and D = dinner). We can cater for special dietary requirements with prior notice. Please contact the office if you have special dietary needs, as a surcharge may apply.

Physical Requirements:

Easy to moderate.

Weather:

Our tour will be conducted towards the end of Sri Lanka's dry season. Colombo and the low-lying coastal regions have an average temperature of 27°C. At Kandy (altitude of 500m), the average temperature is 20°C, while Nuwara Eliya (at 1889m) has an average temperature of 16°C. The sea stays around 27°C all year.

Clothing:

A suggested list of items to bring on the tour will be included with our pre-departure information, which will be sent to you about one month before departure. However, comfortable casual clothing is recommended. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes or boots are essential.

For detailed **Terms and Conditions**, please visit the FAQ page on our website.



To make a booking or further information please contact

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