

EXPLORE!



Cycle Sri Lanka

14 days

Sri Lanka - Trip code CSL

Cycle Sri Lanka

Completing a circular journey this trip takes in ancient temples and fortresses, cycling through tea plantations and across the scenic trails of the Knuckles Range. Leaving the coast behind we explore the ancient city of Polonnaruwa on two wheels before steadily climbing to wide plains. There is also the option to search for leopard in Yala National Park before making our way to the beach for a well-earned rest.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Cycle Backroads and tea plantations** - Ride through the rural villages and hill country of Sri Lanka's central highlands
- ★ **Sigiriya** - The stunning cave temples at Dambulla and the mountain top fortress of King Kassapa
- ★ **Polonnaruwa** - Explore the ancient city of Polonnaruwa by bike
- ★ **Kandy** - Lovely gardens and the unique Temple of the Tooth
- ★ **Unawatuna** - Relax beside the golden beaches and explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Galle fortress
- ★ **Nature and wildlife** - A chance to take game drives through Udawalawe and Yala National Parks

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

CYCLING GRADE:**Moderate**

Medium length rides suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. Mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour Negombo

Our adventure begins in Negombo, just a short drive from the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. After a chance to relax and freshen up we are introduced to our bikes, spend some time ensuring everybody is happy with the fit and making any necessary adjustments. Then, time permitting, we take our first ride in the late afternoon, exploring the coast of Negombo with its colourful fishing boats and relaxed people. A gentle introduction to Sri Lanka's beautiful landscapes, the ride covers some 10 kilometres before we head back to the hotel before dark.



Accommodation: Catamaran Beach Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Morning cycle ride. Afternoon visit Dambulla cave temple

Leaving after breakfast we drive (30mins) to Dankotuwa this morning, from where we begin our morning's cycle ride through small backroads, gravel or dirt roads (15km) and lovely forest to the outskirts of Kuliyaipitya. Please note that the road surface for today's ride is in a poor state of repair. Arriving in Kuliyaipitya, we then transfer by bus (2.5hrs) to Dambulla for a visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Site, breaking our journey with a lunch stop in Kurunegala. Dambulla has a great series of caves which hide an incredible collection of temples, Buddhist images and Hindu sculptures that date back to the 1st century BC. After our visit we continue by bus a very short distance to our hotel.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 38 kilometres (total 390 metres accumulated ascent and descent).



Accommodation: Gimanhala Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 3 - Climb Lion Rock, then cycle to Polonnaruwa

First thing this morning we cycle (24km) alongside lakes and canals to Sigiriya. We then leave the bikes as we climb the imposing 'Sky Fortress' of King Kassapa, whose 5th century ruins are one of the country's major archaeological attractions. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the fortress is accessed by way of a series of steep steps that take us past the famous frescoes of the 'Sigiriya Damsels'. Returning to the base of Lion Rock, we drive (45mins) to Minneriya where the second leg of today's ride commences. Back on our bikes we ride to the ancient city of Polonnaruwa. Our route follows a series of relatively straight and flat backroads through a landscape dotted with forests and villages, with around 10km on decent dirt road.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 50 kilometres (total 340 metres ascent and descent).



Accommodation: The Lake (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Pedal to Polonnaruwa archaeological site and village

Polonnaruwa reached the height of its glory in the 12th century and the city is still blessed with a number of ancient monuments, including the spectacular ruins of its Royal Palace and the Circular Relic House, a curious structure with a beautifully preserved 'moonstone' carved at the foot of a flight of steps. We spend this morning cycling around some of the area's major archaeological sites, before continuing on bike after lunch to explore the villages near Parakkrama Lake, one of the country's most impressive ancient reservoirs. Around 4km of today's route is on gravel or dirt roads.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 33 kilometres (total 210 metres ascent and descent).



Accommodation: The Lake (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Cycle and drive to Kandy, visit spice gardens en route

Today we cycle through the Knuckles Range and on to Kandy, one of Sri Lanka's cultural highlights. We begin our day's ride from our hotel and cycle alongside Parakrama Samudra reservoir - built by the Singhalese kings in the 12th century - always staying close to Wasgamuwa National Park. Our ride ends before we get to Pallegama and we get back in the vehicle to drive up into the Knuckles Mountain Range. These striking landscapes and isolated cloud forests provide a haven for a rich diversity of flora and fauna. After around an hour and a half we reach the highest point at Riverston pass. From here we descend for about another hour and half to Matale Spice Gardens where we plan to visit. Finally we drive (1hr) on to Kandy and our accommodation for the night.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 61 kilometres (total 600 metres ascent and 500 metres descent).



Accommodation: Mahaweli Reach Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 6 - Explore Kandy on foot

With no cycling planned for today we have some free time to enjoy one of the country's cultural gems. Lying in the mountains to the north-east of Colombo, Kandy is renowned as a centre of spiritual and cultural importance. The city is home to the famous 'Temple of the Tooth', whose jewelled shrine is believed to hold the left canine of the lord Buddha. It was also the last capital of the Sinhala Kings and still retains much of its old world charm; its wonderful mix of colour and vibrancy making it an ideal spot to explore at our own pace.

No cycling today.



Accommodation: Mahaweli Reach Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Into the beautiful highlands, colonial Nuwara Eliya and tea plantation visit

Leaving Kandy this morning we drive for around two hours through a picturesque landscape of rolling, verdant hills into Sri Lanka's central highlands. On our journey we will stop at a tea estate to learn about tea picking and processing and to see the impressive Ramboda Falls. Keen cyclists have the option to ride on good (albeit steep!) tarmac before reaching the tea estate and there is also the option to ride part or all of the final 18km section 900m up to our hotel in Nuwara Eliya. Following the tea factory visit we continue on foot through the tea plantations to a Tamil hamlet and will hopefully meet some families of tea pickers. Those not riding the optional sections will make the journey by bus. Nestling amongst the lush, cool hills, nearly 1,900 metres above sea level, Nuwara Eliya was once a summer retreat for the British and still retains a distinctly colonial feel that harks back to its 19th century origins.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 18 kilometres (optional) (total 900 metres ascent).



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Ride to Bambarakanda waterfall

In the morning we leave the hotel, cycling out through the highlands towards Badulla. Later changing direction to ride through the tea estates to Haputale on the southern, increasingly lush and tropical slopes of the mountain. Whilst the overall bias is on downhill, later in the day there are a few undulating and hillier sections as well. Later we can make a de-tour to visit the Bambarakanda Waterfall, the highest in Sri Lanka, before arriving at our hotel. This evening dinner is included.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 68 kilometres (total approx 970 metres ascent and 2200 metres descent).



Accommodation: Mountfield Cottage (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 9 - Cycle to Udawalawe National Park; optional safari

Today we cycle through the spectacular southern slopes of the highlands via Rajawaka and Palledbedda until reaching Highway 18 where our ride ends. We then drive (30mins) to the Elephant Transit home for the chance to see the feeding of baby elephants. Afterwards we either drive to our hotel in Embilipitiya with free time this afternoon to relax, or alternatively have an optional 4WD jeep safari in Udawalwe National Park. The park is famous for its large elephant herds and has many other game to look for, from

buffalo to sambar deer plus many bird species. This evening dinner is included.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 37 kilometres (total 420 metres ascent and 830 metres descent).



Accommodation: Centuria Lake Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 10 - Cycle country roads to Yala National Park; optional safari

Turning south-east this morning, our cycle route leads us to the pleasant town of Tissamaharama, once the capital of the Sinhalese Kingdom of Ruhuna. Lying close to the beautiful and abundant landscapes of Yala National Park, our afternoon arrival provides us with a chance to enjoy an optional game drive through the park. One of Sri Lanka's more popular reserves, Yala is home to a rich diversity of ecosystems and is blessed with an abundance of wildlife, including sea turtles, sloth bears, one of the world's highest concentrations of leopards and over 215 species of birds.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 49 kilometres (total 320 metres ascent and 370 metres descent).



Accommodation: Oak Ray Lake Resort Tissamaharama (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Ride along the coast through Bundala National Park

This morning we drive (30mins) to the coast and then cycle the first 23km section along the coast and Bundula National Park, giving us a good chance to spot crocodiles. We then get back in the vehicle and drive for around an hour to a point beyond Tangalla. From here we cycle again following back roads heading to the west. Our cycle ride ends in Matara where we get back on the bus again and drive (1hr) to the hotel in Unawatuna. Around 20kms of today's ride is on gravel or dirt roads.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 65 kilometres (total 600 metres ascent and descent).



Accommodation: Calamander Unawatuna Beach Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Cycle the coastal backroads and visit Galle

We take a short drive to Mirissa this morning and cycle from here through the backroads, with a possible option to visit an Ayurvedic snake doctor. The ride then finishes later at Weligama Bay where we plan to have lunch. From here we will return to our hotel in Unawatuna by train or bus, in time for an evening stroll in Galle.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 33 kilometres (total 380 metres ascent and descent).



Accommodation: Calamander Unawatuna Beach Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 13 - Day at leisure in Unawatuna

Today has been left free to enjoy the laid back ambience and turquoise waters of Sri Lanka's southern coast. Rich in biodiversity, colonial history and golden beaches, the area offers a wealth of options to make the most of our last day in the country. You could take a walk through the landscapes of the Rumas Sala Nature Reserve, or explore the coast on a relaxing boat trip. There are also snorkelling trips available, ayurvedic massages and even the possibility of enjoying a whale-watching trip during the migration season (December to April).

No cycling today.



Accommodation: Calamander Unawatuna Beach Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends at Colombo airport

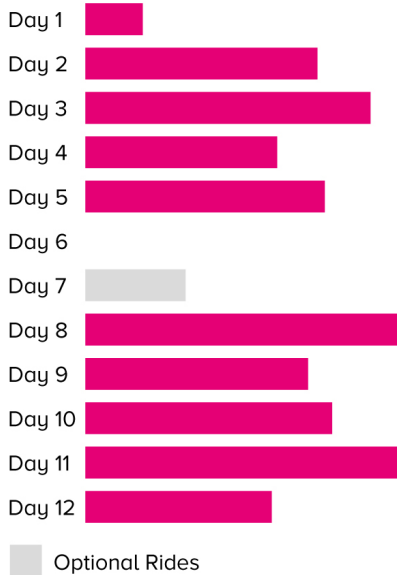
After breakfast we drive (2.5hrs) to Colombo airport where the tour ends.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

DAILY DISTANCE



General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 436 km over ten days (an average of 44 km per day) with a further optional 18 km available. The terrain is mostly flat however there are steeper sections around Nuwara Eliya in the highlands. About 15% of the entire route is on poor quality pot-holed roads or dirt roads. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as moderate.

Bike included

27 gear Stevens Galant hybrid bikes with front suspension

Bike information

Your included bike is a 27 gear Stevens Galant hybrid with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

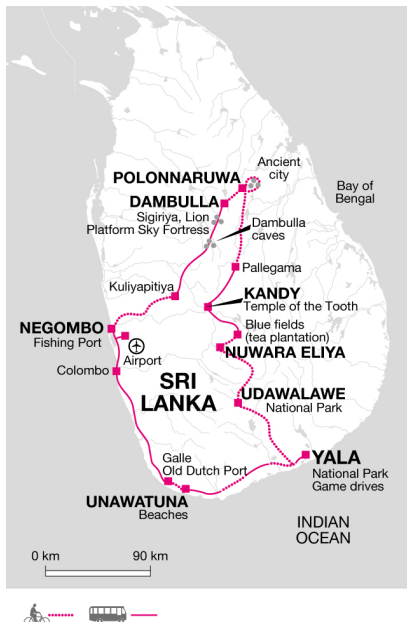
Moderate

Extend your trip

Why not extend your holiday with a few days on the beach at Unawatuna?

Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Lunch: 5
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus
Bicycle



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Cycle
guide
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

11 nights standard hotel
2 nights premium hotel

Trip information

Country information

Sri Lanka

Climate

Year round high temperatures in coastal regions: Colombo averages 27°C. It is much cooler in the hills with Kandy averaging 20°C and Nuwara Eliya down to 16°C. Springlike temperatures in the hill country, but chilly evenings. Two monsoon periods: Apr-Sep when rain is confined to the southwest; and Oct-Mar when it falls in the northeast.

Time difference to GMT

+6

Plugs

3 Pin Round

Religion

Buddhism

Language

Sinhala, Tamil

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Jeep safari in Udawalawe - approximately 40 USD per person

Optional game drive in Yala NP - approximately 40 USD per person

Clothing

In general pack for warm and hot weather. However, you must bring a warm sweater or jacket for cycling on cool days and for wearing during the evenings. We recommend you bring padded cycle shorts, cycle gloves and quick drying cycle shirts. In case of rain, waterproofs are essential. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering your knees and shoulders plus taking off your shoes and hats. You may like to wear socks for temple visits as the ground can get very hot and burn the soles of your feet. You will need to bring long trousers, or buy a sarong locally.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow GBP 40 for tipping.

Country Information

Sri Lanka

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£6.00

Dinner price

£9.00

Beer price

£3.50

Water price

£1.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Sri Lankan Rupee.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

US\$ and UK£ are equally good

Where To Exchange

In most major towns.

ATM Availability

Yes, usually in major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards can usually be used in most large shops and restaurants. Please note that Foreign Office advice warns about the problem of credit card fraud in Sri Lanka so please consider this when deciding if to pay by card while on tour.

Travellers Cheques

Are not easy to change and where they can be changed the exchange rates can be poor.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Bicycle

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Simple - These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

Accommodation in Sri Lanka is as varied as the country itself. On the Cycle Sri Lanka itinerary, we stay in a mix of hotels of varying standards. Most of these are decent 2 to 3 star hotels, but you may sometimes feel that a hotel is simpler than expected as the standard can vary from standards in the UK. So, it's best to approach each accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group.

Food and drink

Traditional Sri Lankan cuisine is excellent, and although it can be very spicy there are many dishes that feature cooling coconut milk or have a spicy sambar on the side to allow you to adjust the meal to your taste. There isn't a culture of eating out in Sri Lanka, most locals will eat at home, and as such there are very few restaurants around, and those that exist tend to be in hotels. As tourism develops a few independent restaurants are beginning to appear, mainly in Colombo but also in Kandy, Galle and in the coastal resorts. During the tour we will endeavour to eat out at local restaurants wherever possible but for many nights, at this point in time, the hotel restaurants are the only option available.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Sri Lanka: A visa is required by all nationalities. All customers, including those in transit must apply online for travel authorization, prior to departure.

You should visit <http://www.eta.gov.lk> to apply for the ETA (visa). It is strongly recommended that you print and bring a copy of the ETA approval notice with you.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully

protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

Sri Lanka

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A plus Polio and diptheria. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. We strongly recommend the wearing long sleeved shirts and the liberal application of insect repellents containing DEET as a precautionary measure to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. These precautions should be taken at all times as the mosquitoes are also active during daylight hours. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
