

EXPLORE!

BIG 15 SALE

Family highlights of Sri Lanka
9 days

Sri Lanka - Trip code FSS

Family highlights of Sri Lanka

Join us on an action-packed family adventure across this spiritual island. We search for leopard in Wilpattu National Park, staying overnight in a tented safari camp; cycle the backroads to discover ancient Buddhist cities in ancient Polonnaruwa and raft the white waters of the Central Highlands topped off with time to relax on the white sandy beaches of this tropical paradise known as 'Buddha's Island'.

Blessed with sun soaked beaches, wonderful cultural sights and a breadth of fun activities, its little surprise that Sri Lanka is one of our most popular family holiday destinations. Fitting into just one week, this trip is ideal for either October or February half term, escaping the long winter nights or over one of the school holidays.

We offer an east and west coast version of this family holiday to benefit from the best weather conditions on each coast, staying on the east coast over the summer holidays and October half term and switching to the south west coast over Christmas, February and Easter.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Wildlife** - search for groups of Asian elephants, leopard, sloth bear, spotted deer, buffalo, sambar and mongoose.
- ★ **Beach time** - relax on the tropical beaches of the Indian Ocean and take a surfing lesson (west coast version only)
- ★ **Get active** - White water rafting on the Kelani River, ideal for beginners or intermediate rafters.
- ★ **Characterful accommodation** - stay in a tented safari camp and a jungle lodge in the forest.
- ★ **Polonnaruwa** - Explore this deserted ancient city on bikes and see the huge reclining Buddha.
- ★ **Sigiriya** - climb to the top of Lions Rock for incredible views.
- ★ **Cookery class** - take part in a cooking demonstration, enjoying a hearty lunch with a local family.

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.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

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 trip in Negombo

Our tour begins this afternoon in the small town of Negombo. Our hotel is set on the beach front offering the chance to watch small fishing boats come ashore and the sun setting over the ocean.



Accommodation: Beacon Beach Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Drive to Kitulgala, adventure capital of Sri Lanka. White water rafting and jungle walks. Stay in a jungle Camp.

Drive to Kitulgala, a journey of around three hours. Set amongst the fertile and lush western highlands with towering cliffs and wild water, the Kelani Ganga provides some of the best white water rafting in the country. The grade 2-3 rapids provide us with the perfect combination of scenery and excitement, as we spend raft down to our accommodation in Kitulgala.

We cover a seven kilometre section of the river through eight rapids. It will usually take approximately one to two hours to cover the section but this depends on water levels. We should arrive at our overnight lodge late this afternoon. This evening there will be a chance to join an optional trek across the river and through the jungle to a hidden waterfall.

Our night spent at Kitulgala is more basic with ten eco lodge tree houses roofed with palm leaves set two meters above ground level. Huts are open to the forest, providing a close to nature feeling, the sounds of the river running close by only adds to the feeling of being in the wilderness. All beds are fitted with mosquito nets.



Accommodation: Rafter's Retreat (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 3 - Visit a tea factory in Nuwara Eliya, continue to a colonial style hotel in Bandarawela

Walk up to the sounds of birds in the jungle. After breakfast head off across the highlands to the hill station of Nuwara Eliya. The area around Nuwara Eliya is the heart of the island's tea industry and we will visit one of the many estates to witness the production processes and sample the finished product.

The air is noticeably cooler as we enter a world of round green rolling hills covered in tea plantations. We continue our journey into the heart of the central highlands, arriving in the late afternoon at the bustling market town of Bandarawela where we stay in a delightful colonial style hotel with fine views of the neighbouring mountains.



Accommodation: Bandarawela Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Leisurely morning. Drive to Passikudah beach on the Indian Ocean

Enjoy a leisurely start to the day. We leave mid-morning, driving to the east coast resort on Passikudah beach.

The next day and a half is free to enjoy the laid back ambience and turquoise waters of Sri Lanka's east coast. Rich in colonial history and golden beaches, the region offers us a wealth of options to enjoy the most of our time here. Our hotel has a swimming pool and has easy access to the beach.



Accommodation: Marina Passikudah (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Free day to enjoy the beach.

Passikudah has one of the finest beaches on the east coast of the island. The protected reef runs the length of the way making it an ideal resort for snorkelling and the shallow waters enable wading out 50 meters from the shore. For active families, there is a wide choice of water sports on offer, alternatively sit back and relax on the golden sandy beach or take a dip in the hotel swimming pool.



Accommodation: Marina Passikudah (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Share a meal with locals in Habarana, travelling to the village by canoe and bullock cart; cycling tour of ancient Polonnaruwa.

Heading inland we drive two hours to Habarana, the cultural hub of Sri Lanka. Swapping our bus for a bullock cart, we make our way slowly through a small village on the outskirts of Habarana to a lake where we change seats again, this time into a dugout canoe - adapted with seats for a more comfortable ride. We cross the lake to Hiriwaduna, a small village where we are met by the villagers and treated to a traditional Sri Lankan lunch. We can watch as delicious curries and fluffy rice are prepared and try out creating a traditional spicy sambar. After sharing the meal and spending time in the village we make our way back to our bus and onto Polonnaruwa, just under an hour's drive.

This afternoon we visit the ancient city by bicycle and on foot, taking in the spectacular ruins of the Royal Palace and its Audience Hall, Bathing Pool and Quadrangle - a wonderfully compact collection of ruins. We stay overnight close to Polonnaruwa.



Accommodation: Acme Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Climb to the top of Sigiriya's dramatic Lion's Rock, take a jeep safari in search of leopards in Wilpattu National Park, overnight tented camp.

An early transfer this morning takes us to the start of our ascent up the imposing Lion Rock for the climb to the redoubtable Sky Fortress, soaring dramatically up from the flat central plains. The ruins of this 5th century World Heritage site fortress are one of Sri Lanka's major attractions. A switchback series of steps (sometimes very steep and somewhat precarious) ascends to the top and half-way up, tucked beneath a sheltering overhang of rock, are the famous Sigiriya Damsels. These frescoes, their ancient colours still glowing, once covered an area of some 140 metres in length and are the only ancient non-religious paintings to have survived into modern times. On arriving at the summit (200m) we are presented with some magnificent views of the surrounding countryside, as well as the remains of what is left of the palace of King Kassapa.

Leaving Sigiriya we drive to Wilpattu National Park. Here we will leave our bus and change to jeeps for an afternoon safari through the park hoping to spot Sri Lanka's most elusive resident, the leopard. Despite Wilpattu National Park's location in Sri Lanka's dry zone, it boasts nearly 60 lakes and is renowned for leopard, elephant and sambar deer sightings.

Tonight we stay in a large fixed tented camp located close to the Southern boundary, on the boundary of a lake surrounded by bush forest. Each tent is well appointed with raised beds and comfortable mattresses, there is plenty of space to move around; en-suite private bathrooms are located in adjoining individual tents. Pillows, bed linen, towels, a flashlight and an umbrella are also provided. In the evening guests are invited to retire to the campfire after dinner.



Accommodation: Big Game Safari Camp Wilpattu (or similar)



Standard Camping



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 8 - Morning game drive, continue to Negombo.

Rise early for a game drive in Wilpattu National Park and a further opportunity for wildlife viewing, returning to our camp for breakfast. We make the final part of our journey by bus, returning to the small town of Negombo for our final night in Sri Lanka. The afternoon is free to enjoy a dip in the Indian Ocean or relax by the pool.



Accommodation: Beacon Beach Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Trip ends in Negombo

After an early breakfast we take a short transfer to Colombo Airport where the tour ends.

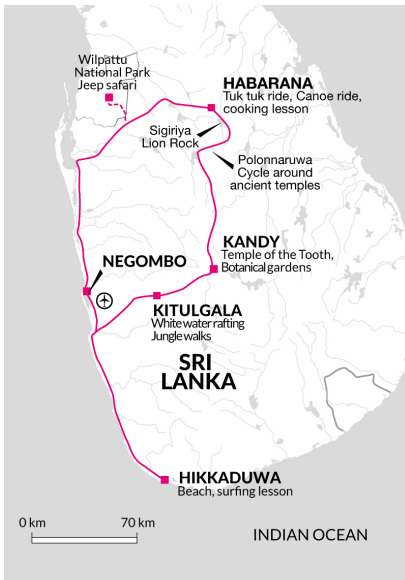


Meals Provided: Breakfast

Family information

Minimum age

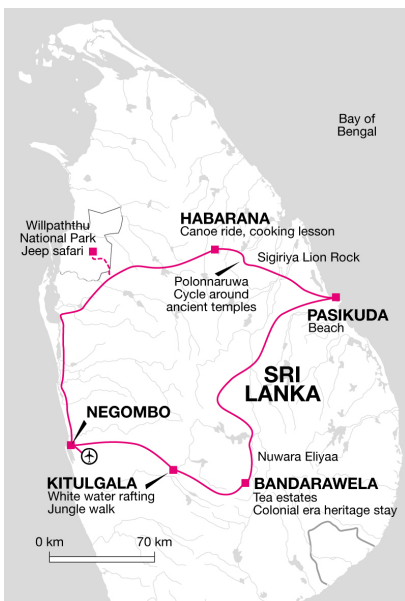
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Why book this trip

Sri Lanka is a compact country of amazing diversity, allowing families to explore the very best of the country in just nine days, enough time to fit into half term breaks or the main school holidays. It's an ideal destination for children of all ages with short travelling times and plenty of variety to keep the whole family entertained from white water rafting on the Kelani River to surf lessons on the Indian ocean (west coast version).

Visit the immense rock at Sigiriya that soars dramatically up from the flat central plains is the site of an impressive summit fortress, take the train up the west coast to the capital Colombo and spend a night under canvass as we visit Wilpattu National Park in search of Asian elephant, leopard, sloth bear, spotted deer, buffalo, sambar and mongoose.



What's included?



Included meals

- Breakfast: 8
- Dinner: 2



Transport

- 4WD
- Minibus
- On Foot
- Train



Trip staff

- Explore Tour Leader
- Local Guide(s)
- Safari Guide(s)



Accommodation

- 1 nights standard camping
- 6 nights standard hotel
- 1 nights standard lodge

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.

A selection of optional activities are listed below to help you budget for your Family adventure. Whilst the basic tour price you pay before you travel includes a great selection of highlights, we have also built in free time to allow you the flexibility to choose from a carefully selected range of additional excursions and activities or take time to relax, the choice is yours. At certain destinations along the way there may be several options to choose from and it may not be possible to fit all the activities in; your Explore Leader will be able to give advice on which are the most suitable for your family.

Day 4 - Kandy:

Cultural show - £5.00

Temple of the Tooth - £8.00

Clothing

Select your clothes carefully, bearing in mind that the climate is tropical and that upland areas are cooler and more temperate. Lightweight rainwear is also essential, and warmer clothing for the highland walks and chilly night temperatures in the mountains. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering you 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

Lightweight shoes and sandals. Be prepared to get footwear wet on the whitewater rafting and canoeing activities.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember, hotel porters are not always available, so don't

overload yourself.

Equipment

A water bottle and a torch. Whilst camping all bed linen is supplied on our overnight camp - there is no need to bring any extra equipment or sleeping bags. You may like to bring your own snorkel and mask for the nights on the coast. Bring a torch. Also high factor sun protection and a hat. We recommend Factor 30 plus for snorkelling as the water intensifies the sun's strength.

A waterproof bag will also be handy to store personal possessions for the white water rafting and canoeing activities.

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

In this region, tipping is a recognised part of life across the service industry. Local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided.

To assist with this your Explore Leader may organise a group tips kitty for included activities and meals, they will then account for kitty use throughout the tour.

For this we suggest £20-25 per family member.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

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

4WD, Minibus, On Foot, Train

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 - We have endeavoured to provide as much variety as possible on this family adventure holiday in Sri Lanka. 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.

In Wilpattu National Park we stay in tented camps located close to the Southern boundary, on the boundary of a lake surrounded by bush forest. Beds are raised and are fitted with comfortable mattresses; private bathrooms are en suite adjoining individual tents. Pillows, bed linen, towels, a flashlight and an umbrella are also provided. In the evening guests are invited to retire to the campfire after dinner.

Our one night spent at Kitulgala is more basic with ten eco lodge tree houses roofed with palm leaves set six feet above ground level. Huts are open to the forest, providing a close to nature feeling, the sounds of the river running close by only adds to the feeling of being in the wilderness.

Food:

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, a lentil based vegetable chowder 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. You'll have a chance to try home cooking on day 3 in Habarana when we have a cooking demonstration followed by lunch with a local family.

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 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: All foreign nationals who intend to visit Sri Lanka for a short stay of up to six months, including transit passengers, must apply for travel authorization online prior to travel to the country. To obtain an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) you must visit <http://www.eta.gov.lk> to apply for it prior to travel. It is strongly recommended that you print and bring a copy of the ETA

approval notice with you. The Sri Lankan authorities require that your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after departure from Sri Lanka.

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 diphtheria. 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.
