

Why book this trip?

Take an action-packed family adventure across this spiritual island. Search for leopard in Wilpattu National Park, stay overnight in a fixed tent safari camp; cycle the backroads to discover ancient Buddhist cities in ancient Polonnaruwa and raft the white waters of the Central Highlands. Blessed with sun soaked beaches and a breadth of fun activities, its little surprise that Sri Lanka is one of our most popular family holiday destinations.

- **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
- 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.

				
INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 8 Lunch: 1 Dinner: 2	TRIP STAFF Activity Guide(s) Driver(s) Local Guide(s) Safari Guide(s)	TRANSPORT 4WD Car On Foot	ACCOMMODATION 1 nights comfortable camping 5 nights comfortable hotel 1 nights premium hotel 1 nights comfortable lodge	TRIP PACE: Moderate

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Start trip in Negombo

Arrive in Negombo, the famous coastal town famous for its fishing industry and golden sands. This relaxing beach resort is a short distance from Sri Lanka's capital city, and is the perfect place to spot locals bringing in the day's catch and watch the sunset.

You will be met on arrival at Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB) by a local driver-guide, and taken to your hotel, approximately a 45 minute drive away. There are no activities planned today, so feel free to arrive in Colombo at any time. For those booking their own flights, you will just need to let us know your flight details no later than three weeks prior to departure, in order to be met on arrival.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day there is the option to head to the beach or make use of the hotel facilities which features a swimming pool and gardens overlooking the Indian Ocean.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel J (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Take a jeep safari in search of leopards in Wilpattu National Park, overnight tented camp

Travel north following the coastal road to Wilpattu National Park. Leave the car 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.

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)



Grade: Comfortable Camping



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 3 - Share a meal with locals in Habarana, travelling by canoe and tuk tuk; cycling tour of ancient Polonnaruwa

Heading inland, drive two hours to Habarana, the cultural hub of Sri Lanka. Tuk tuks are the transport of choice here, and you'll switch out your car for a tuk tuk ride to the community's vegetable garden. Walk around and help the villagers select a choice of homegrown vegetables, which will all go into preparing your traditional Sri Lankan lunch. Watch as delicious curries and fluffy rice are prepared and try out creating a traditional spicy sambar. After sharing the meal, there is a chance to take a serene canoe ride on the village lake. After sharing the meal and spending time in the village, continue onto Polonnaruwa, just under an hour's drive

This afternoon, 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. Drive on to Sigiriya for your overnight stay.



ACCOMMODATION:
Giritale Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 4 - Climb to the top of Sigiriya's dramatic Lion's Rock and explore Kandy's markets

It's an early transfer this morning to 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) there are some magnificent views of the surrounding countryside, as well as the remains of what is left of the palace of King Kassapa.

Leaving Sigiriya, drive to Kandy located just outside the city. Wander through the lush Royal Botanical Gardens, which boasts more than 4000 species of plants, including orchids, medicinal plants and palm trees. Join a local guide for a short walking tour of Kandy which will include visiting the town's narrow streets lined with old buildings and colourful and interesting markets.

You may wish to continue shopping at the Kandyan Art Association's workshops, which has plenty of brassware, batik, lacquer work and other craft items which make excellent souvenirs or presents. Buddhists from all over the world come to this delightful old highland town specifically to visit the Temple of the Tooth, the Dalada Maligawa. There is the option to visit the temple, should you wish.

Late afternoon, transfer to your hotel located 18km outside of Kandy overlooking the waters of Victoria reservoir, allowing easy access to Kandy without the hustle and bustle of the city centre. The hotel has beautiful gardens, an open air restaurant and swimming pool overlooking the reservoir.



ACCOMMODATION:

Mahaweli Reach Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Drive to Kitulgala, adventure capital of Sri Lanka. White water rafting and jungle walks. Stay in a jungle lodge

Drive to Kitulgala, a journey of around two 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 are the perfect combination of fun and excitement, as you spend the afternoon rafting down the river towards the eco lodge accommodation in the jungle outside Kitulgala.

The rafting covers a seven kilometre stretch of river, through eight rapids. It will usually take approximately one to two hours to cover the section but this depends on water levels. This evening there will be a chance to join an optional hike across the river and through the jungle to a hidden waterfall.

The 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, and 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:

Rafters Retreat (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Lodge



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 6 - Continue to the Indian Ocean town of Hikkaduwa, free afternoon on the beach and marine park

Wake up to the sounds of birds in the jungle. After breakfast head to the coast to Hikkaduwa. The hotel is located on the beach in Hikkaduwa, which is famous for its marine sanctuary, wide palm dotted beach and coral sanctuary. Turtles and other marine life are occasionally seen just off the beach.



ACCOMMODATION:
Coral Rock by Bansai (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Morning surf lesson in Hikkaduwa. Rest of the day free to enjoy the beach

The next day and a half is free to enjoy the laid back ambience and turquoise waters of Sri Lanka's southern coast. Rich in colonial history and golden beaches, the region offers us a wealth of options to enjoy some time here.

In the morning, take a surf lesson. Hikkaduwa is one of the premier surfing destinations in Sri Lanka. The two hour lesson can be tailored for beginners or more advanced surfers to make the most of your time on the Indian Ocean. Other activities include snorkelling trips and for those wanting pure relaxation there

are plenty of spots to enjoy an Ayurvedic massage. You could also pay a visit to the city of Galle and its historic colonial fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that remains one of the best preserved examples of colonial fortification in the world.



ACCOMMODATION:
Coral Rock by Bansai (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Free morning on the beach. Train journey from Hikkaduwa to Colombo, continue to Negombo

Enjoy a free morning on the beach. This afternoon, drive from Hikkaduwa to Negombo, passing fine views of the Indian Ocean as you make your way up the west coast. If seats are available, you have the option to travel by train instead, winding up the coast on a rail network that was introduced during British Colonial rule and has changed little since. Your driver-guide will help purchase tickets if you wish (and if they are available). If travelling by train, you'll descend at Colombo and be picked up for your short ride to Negombo for the final night in Sri Lanka.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel J (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Trip ends in Negombo

Your trip ends today, and you will be taken to the airport to meet your international flight. There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB) at any time - it's approximately 45 minutes from the hotel. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and 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	Plugs	Religion	Language
+6	3 Pin Round	Buddhism	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.

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 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

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

Local crew

In Sri Lanka, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided, and if you feel the service warrants it then it is useful to keep some small denomination notes for tipping and small purchases.

With that in mind, we have provided some guidelines below which are, of course, discretionary:

Driver-guide - \$4-£7 per family member per day

Local guides at sites - £2 per family member

Hospitality staff (porters, waiters etc) - £1

You may also encounter other people around Sri Lanka, such as the people who look after your footwear

at the entrance to temples, who may also benefit from a small tip of around £1.

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6.00	£9.00	£3.50	£1.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange	Where To Exchange
Sri Lankan Rupee.	US\$ and UK£ are equally good	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, Car, On Foot

Accommodation notes

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

The 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 with 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 your guide will endeavour to recommend local restaurants wherever possible but for many nights the hotel restaurants are the only option available.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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 citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

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

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.

All UK, EU, US, Australian, New Zealand and Canadian nationals can obtain an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for a fee of 35USD. To do so you must visit <http://www.eta.gov.lk> and 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.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply 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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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.

Ability to swim

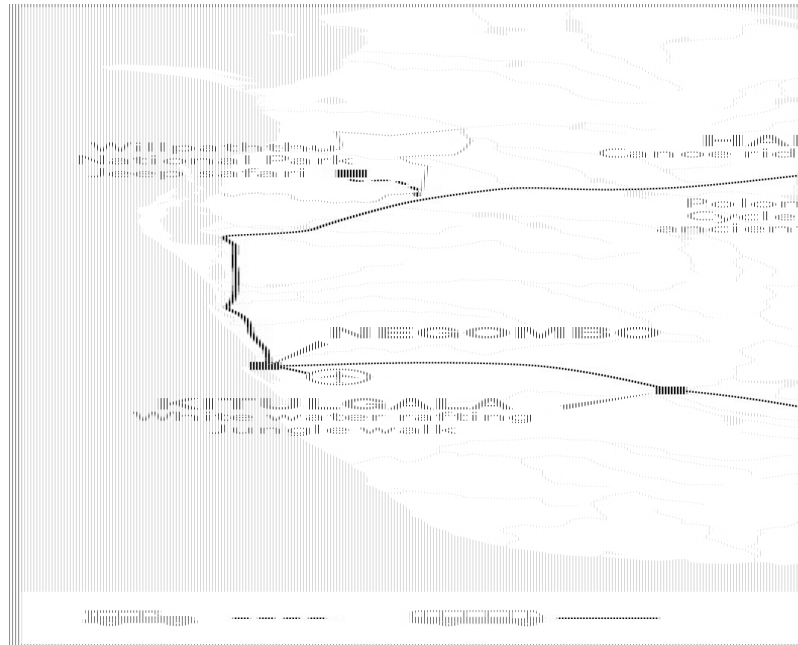
An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

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.

Additional Information



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, and 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 at Wilpattu National Park, in search of Asian elephant, leopard, sloth bear, spotted deer, buffalo, sambar and mongoose.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**