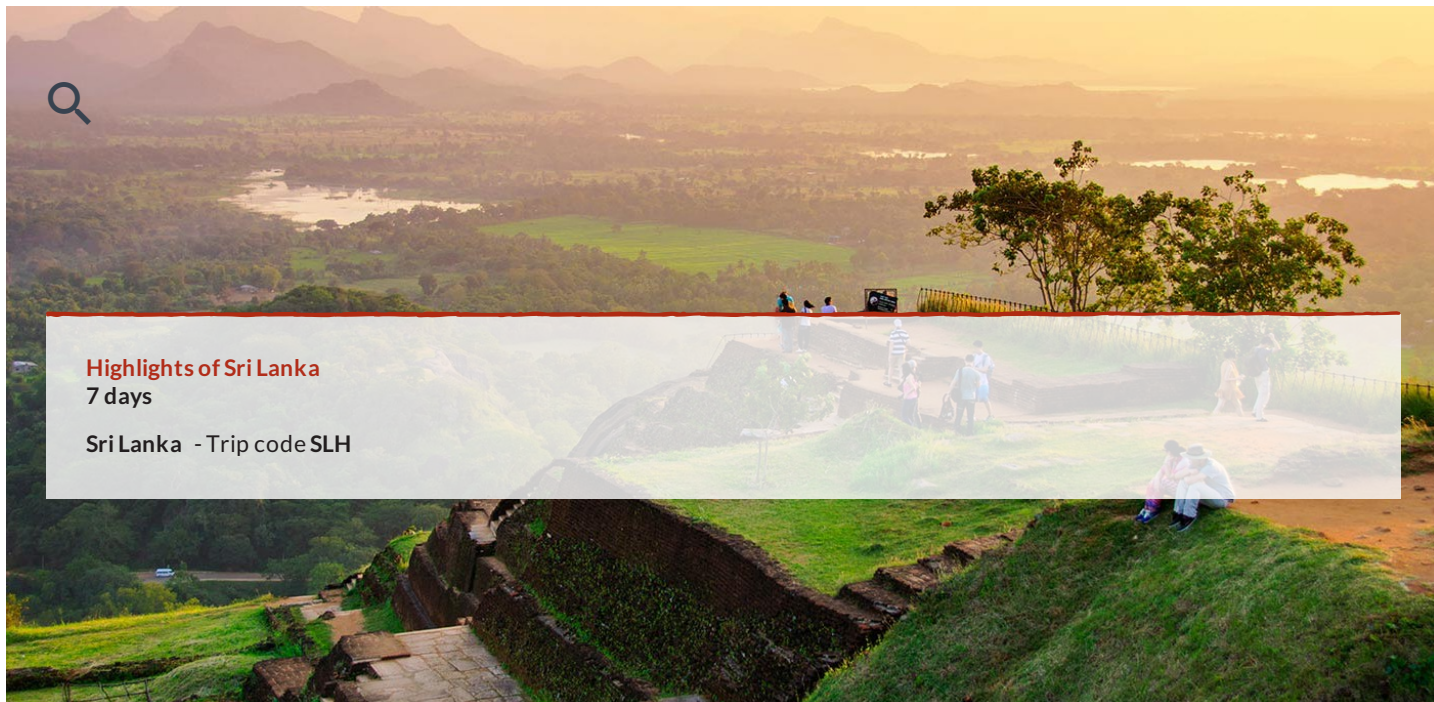


EXPLORE!



Highlights of Sri Lanka

7 days

Sri Lanka - Trip code SLH

Highlights of Sri Lanka

Join this one-week trip exploring Sri Lanka's highlights, searching for leopard and elephant in Wilpattu National Park and discovering the country's ancient Buddhist temples at Mihintale and Dambulla. We climb the spectacular Lion's Rock, travel through lush green tea plantations and stop in Kandy to visit the revered Temple of the Tooth before relaxing on the pristine sandy beaches of the west coast.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Wilpattu National Park** - Take a jeep safari to search for leopards, elephants and sambar deer
- ★ **Sigiriya** - View the colourful painted frescos on the climb up to King Kasyapa's ancient sky fortress set on the top of Lion's Rock, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- ★ **Dambulla** - Explore incredible painted cave temple and share a meal with a local family
- ★ **Kandy** - Option to explore the Temple of the Tooth
- ★ **Unawatuna** - Relax on the pristine beaches of the west coast or take an optional whale watching excursion

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 tour in Negombo

Our tour begins this afternoon in the coastal town of Negombo, famous for its fishing industry and golden sands. Our hotel is just a 15 minute drive north of the airport. From its beach location, we are likely to see fishing boats bring in the day's catch. We may also be treated to a stunning sunset over the ocean.



Accommodation: Catamaran Beach Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - In search of leopards in Wilpattu National Park

Leaving Negombo we travel north following the coastal road via the small towns of Chilaw and Putalam before reaching the entrance 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. We choose to visit this park, rather than Yala National Park further south because we believe it offers our customers a better experience. The same animals can be seen here as in Yala, however it is less crowded, making our visit more enjoyable and responsible. Leaving the park, we drive to nearby Anuradapura, where we will spend the night.



Accommodation: The Lakeside Nuwarawewa (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Explore cave temples and take lunch with the locals

We start this morning with a visit to the mountain peak of Mihintale. It is believed that this was the site of a momentous meeting between the monk Mahinda and King Devanampiyatissa, introducing Buddhism to the country. Exploring Mihintale involves climbing a flight of 1,840 shallow stone steps leading to the summit of the Missaka Mountain. There are excellent views from the top looking back to Anuradhapura. After the exertions we swap our bus for a bullock cart and make our way slowly through a small village on the outskirts of Habarana. After this rather relaxing ride we change seats again and use dugout canoe style boats - adapted with seats for a more comfortable ride! - to cross the short distance across the lake to Hiriwaduna 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 to Sigiriya, stopping on the way to visit Dambulla, where a great series of caves have been turned into temples dating from the 1st century BC. This World Heritage Site still attracts scores of worshippers. We will visit five separate caves, which contain a large number of Buddha images and sculptures of Hindu Gods.



Accommodation: Acme Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Climb Lion's Rock at sunrise. Drive to Kandy

An early start this morning as we plan to climb Sigiriya Rock ahead of the crowds and whilst it is cool. The ruins of this 5th century 'sky Fortress' are one of Sri Lanka's major attractions, a stupendous sight to behold and a feat of consummate engineering skill. Built in just seven years as a fortified palace to protect the reign of merciless King Kassapa, who had assassinated his father and deposed his brother, it is seen as one of the world's best preserved examples of ancient urban planning. Unfortunately for the king, despite its impregnable reputation, he was defeated here by his brother after a reign of just 18 years. A switchback series of steps and steel stairways ascend to the top. Halfway up, tucked beneath a sheltering overhang of rock, are the famous frescoes - the Sigiriya Damsels, their colours still glowing. Before our final ascent to the summit, we pass between a set of enormous lion paws carved out of the rock - all that remain of an ancient gateway that gave Sigiriya, the 'Lion Rock', its name. Once at the 200 meter summit, magnificent views can be enjoyed of the surrounding jungle and countryside. This afternoon, a two-hour drive takes us to Kandy. On arrival the time is free to explore this historic town. Perhaps visit the Temple of the Tooth, situated on the shore of the lake or take a short tuk tuk ride out to the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens which alongside beautiful displays of Sri Lanka's finest flowers is home to thousands of flying foxes.



Accommodation: Mahaweli Reach Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Learn about Sri Lanka's tea en route to Unawatuna

Leaving Kandy behind we stop at a tea factory to learn about the processes involved in Sri Lanka's largest export. Originally a tea bush was brought from China in 1842 to be planted at the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, it was 25 years later that James Taylor established Sri Lanka's first tea plantation, the Loolecondera Estate in Kandy. These days more than one million people in Sri Lanka are employed by the tea industry. After seeing the process of drying and grinding the leaves we sample some of the blends before leaving tea country and making our way back to the coast. Our destination is Unawatuna on the south west coast. The shallow waters and long, pristine beaches make it perfect for a spot of relaxing.



Accommodation: Calamander Unawatuna Beach Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Free time to explore Galle or whale watching (seasonal)

Today is left free to do as little or as much as you wish. A short tuk tuk ride can take you to visit the neighbouring pretty coastal town of Galle. An important trading centre since ancient times, the fortifications that can be seen today were built by the Portuguese and then the Dutch from the 16th to the 17th centuries. The fort ramparts of this World Heritage Site protect the harbour and a myriad of fascinating old houses, churches and warehouses. Today, the town has a strong arts vibe, with foreign and local artists, writers, photographers, designers and poets drawing inspiration from their surrounds. Boutique shops and cafes around the town showcase their work. There is plenty to explore in the town and enjoyment can be gained simply by wandering around its streets, soaking up its unique atmosphere. For those seeking pure relaxation, local Ayurvedic massages with natural, aromatic herbal oils are highly recommended. Alternatively, between the months of December and April, you might prefer to go on a whale watching trip in the hope of spotting humpback and blue whales.



Accommodation: Calamander Unawatuna Beach Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Tour ends at Colombo Airport

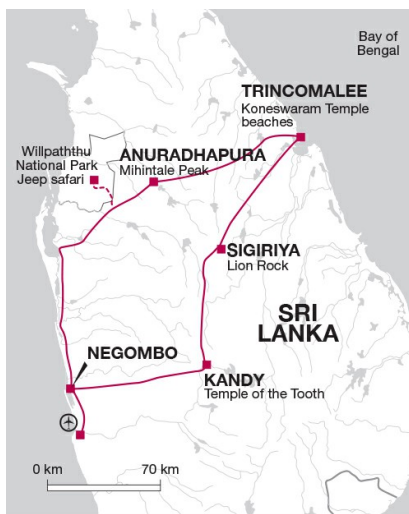
After breakfast this morning we follow the coastal road back to Colombo Airport where our tour ends.



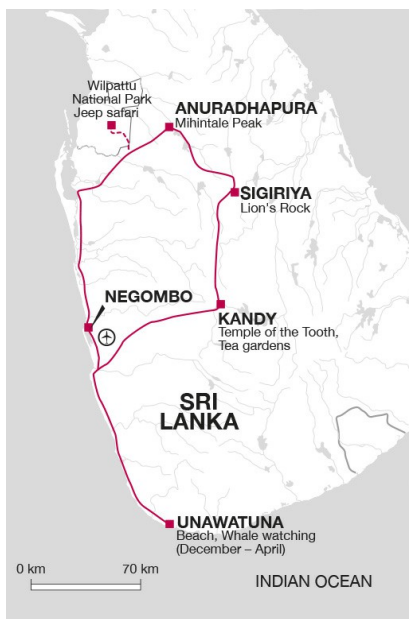
Meals Provided: Breakfast

Extend your trip

Why not extend your holiday with a few days on the beach at Unawatuna or week sailing around the Maldives on our Dhoni Cruise?



Highlights of Sri Lanka East Coast



Highlights of Sri Lanka West Coast

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 6
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
4WD



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Naturalist(s)



Accommodation

5 nights standard hotel
1 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.

Kandy - Cultural show - £5.00
Temple of the Tooth - £8.00
Botanical Gardens, Kandy - £8.00
Whale watching - £40.00

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.

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.

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 recognized 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 approximately £25.

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, 4WD

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.

Accommodation in Sri Lanka can be varied and on our trips we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water.

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 sambhar 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.

Food and drink

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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.

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.
