

# EXPLORE!



**NEW!**

**Photographing Sri Lanka with Renato Granieri**  
12 days

Sri Lanka - Trip code SLP

## Photographing Sri Lanka with Renato Granieri

This trip is a great way to see and photograph the paradise island of Sri Lanka with professional photographer Renato Granieri - winner of the 2018 Nat Geo Traveller Photographer of the Year. Organised to maximise photo opportunities, Renato will be on hand to assist in getting the best images possible of this fabulously photogenic destination. Discover ancient cities, rock carvings and gilded temples, and capture Sri Lanka's rich Buddhist history and culture. Photograph spectacular tea plantations, wildlife-filled national parks and an idyllic tropical coastline, meeting friendly faces along the way.

### Trip highlights

- ★ **National Parks** - Visit Wilpattu and Udawlawe to photograph the wildlife including elephant, deer, birds and leopard
- ★ **Anuradhapura, Dambulla and Sigiriya** - Capture ancient ruins, painted cave temples and the dramatic 'Sky Fortress'
- ★ **Golden Valley of Tea** - Photograph the tea pickers, rolling hills and lush plantations
- ★ **Photography** - A unique chance to capture stunning images with advice and assistance from an expert

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

No accommodation rating  
No accommodation description

**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:****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 trip in Negombo

Our trip begins this afternoon in the coastal town of Negombo, famous for its fishing industry and golden sands. After a short briefing there will be time to head down to the beach and begin our photography straight away, capturing the setting sun.



**Accommodation: Beacon Beach Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Early morning visit to Negombo's fish market and drive to Wilpattu National Park

Early this morning we take a walk around Negombo's seafront fish market where the locals display and sell the seafood they've caught during the early hours. This gives us chance to experience the busy and industrious atmosphere and capture a scene of fishermen and stall holders as they go about the business of encouraging people to buy their catch.

Leaving Negombo we head north towards Wilpattu National Park. On the way we visit the 2nd century BC Ridi Viharaya Temple, also known as the Silver Temple. It is located on the spot where large deposits of silver were discovered and used to complete the one of the oldest stupas on the island, known as Ruwanwelisaya Stupa. There are caves around the temple, which used to house monks that had gained enlightenment, and the main temple itself is built in to the rock.

In the late afternoon we arrive at Wilpattu National Park and check in to our lodge. We are staying on the quieter side of the park where there are fewer visitors and animal sightings are more frequent. There is also less light pollution and so we will have the opportunity go out after dark to photograph the night sky. The lodge, located in a forested area by the side of a river, consists of

converted shipping containers and a couple of caravans. It maintains a strong conservation ethos and recycles discarded items - aside from the shipping-container rooms, much of the furniture is made from old oil drums and pallets.



**Accommodation: Backwaters Lodge** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 3 - Jeep safari to Kudirimale point and afternoon game drive in Wilpattu

We'll be out at first light travelling along the western boundary of the park to Kudirimale point where we'll have the opportunity for some coastal shots. The point is thought to be the spot where Prince Vijaya from India landed in the 6th century BC and founded the Sri Lankan nation. We'll make plenty of stops to photograph the animals that we encounter; the park is renowned for leopard, elephant and sambar deer as well as monkeys, crocodiles and a huge number of indigenous birds. The scenery is varied, consisting of dense jungle, marshland, scrub and almost 60 lakes, giving us some landscape photography opportunities as well as different backgrounds for our wildlife shots.

In the afternoon we take another safari to a different part of the park, seeking out the wildlife and scenery in the warm afternoon light before sunset.



**Accommodation: Backwaters Lodge** (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 4 - Drive through Wilpattu, visit Anuradhapura and the Sri Maha Bodhi tree

Another early start as we drive through Wilpattu to the far side of the park. We take our time and cover a wide area, photographing the wildlife and landscapes once more before exiting on the east side and continuing to Anuradhapura. The ancient capital of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. Its well-preserved ruins provide a glimpse of what life was like in the city's golden age from around 260BC. This is when the King and his people converted to Buddhism and a vast expansion of the city took place.

After lunch we pay a visit to the Sri Maha Bodhi tree. Planted in 288 BC, the tree is believed to have grown from a branch of the original Bodhi tree under which the Buddha gained enlightenment. An important pilgrimage location for Buddhists from all over the world, we are likely to see monks and pilgrims worshipping here and we'll stay around for the late afternoon light and sunset.



**Accommodation: Lakeside at Nuwarawewa** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Early morning climb of Mihintale Peak and drive to Sigiriya

This morning we travel to the mountain peak of Mihintale, the site of the momentous meeting between the monk Mahinda and King Devanampiyatissa which resulted in the introduction of Buddhism to the country. Reaching the summit involves climbing a flight of 1840 shallow stone steps, but the stunning view across the surrounding area is well worth the effort.

After lunch we explore Dambulla and its cave temples. Crammed with numerous Buddha images and a few sculptures of Hindu Gods, the most impressive of which is perhaps the huge reclining Buddha measuring 14m long. We are likely to see pilgrims coming to visit the site and a few saffron-clad monks.



**Accommodation: Gimanhala Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Climb Pidurangala to photograph Lion's Rock and travel to Kandy

A short drive this morning takes us to Sigiriya, the site of Lion's Rock - a 'sky fortress' dating to the 5th century and one of Sri Lanka's most impressive sights. Built in just seven years as a fortified palace to protect the merciless King Kassapa, it is considered one of the world's best-preserved examples of ancient urban planning. An early start ensures we beat the crowds and the heat of the day. We have the option to climb to the top of Lion's Rock itself, where a switchback series of steps and steel stairways ascend to the top and halfway up, tucked beneath a sheltering overhang of rock, we find the famous frescoes known as the Sigiriya Damsels, their colours still vibrant some 1500 years after they were painted. Or we can climb nearby Pidurangala, a great vantage point for photos of Lion's Rock. Pidurangala involves a short climb up steep steps to a 10th Century Royal Cave Temple and a large reclining Buddha. From here the summit is reached via a short walk along a rough path and the reward is a stunning vista of the surrounding countryside and a perfect view of Lion's Rock - great for photos of this iconic sight of Sri Lanka.

Leaving Sigiriya we head to the hill town of Kandy. Sitting on a plateau 500 metres above sea level, Kandy is, in climatic and cultural terms, a world apart from the lowland towns and villages. Serving as the capital of the last Sinhalese kingdom until falling to the British in 1815, it is a place of great cultural and spiritual importance for Sri Lankans.

We take a walk around the town, visiting the market area, and capturing day to day life. We also have the option to visit the Temple of the Tooth, known as the Dalada Maligawa. The jewelled shrine of the tooth, said to contain the Buddha's left canine, is kept in the upper floor of the temple and was brought from India 1,500 years ago.

In the evening, we have the opportunity to watch and photograph a performance by the Kandyan dancers, adorned in impressive costumes, their graceful dances are accompanied by a thundering drum beat.



**Accommodation: Mahaweli Reach Hotel** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Drive via Nuwara Eliya to Dickoya and Sri Lanka's Golden Valley of Tea

This morning we set off on a journey into the heart of the hill country. This magnificent region of Sri Lanka is an important tea growing area and plantations stretch over rolling hills for as far as the eye can see. The terrain means the area is littered with waterfalls and we stop at several along the way. The first is at Ramboda where the water crashes over 100 metres down the lush green hillside before continuing as the Panna Oya river. The Devon and St Clair falls, which we encounter later in our journey, are close to each other but quite different in nature. Devon falls are formed by a narrow band of water which reaches a rock pool half way before changing direction and continuing as the Kothmale Oya river, and St Claire falls are much wider, crashing and cascading over three rocky outcrops - great for slow shutter speed shots.

We also stop for a short time at Nuwara Eliya. Known as 'Little England', the town has red telephone boxes, Victorian colonial architecture and pretty rose gardens - legacies from its era as a retreat for homesick Brits. The cool climate provided a sanctuary to indulge in familiar pastimes, such as polo, golf and cricket.

Our stay this evening is at Dickoya, on the banks of the Castlereigh Reservoir. For those that want to take part, an overnight climb to the top of sacred Adam's Peak is rewarded by spectacular views from the top at sunrise. A depression at the top is said to be the Buddha's footprint and each year thousands make the climb as a pilgrimage, starting just after midnight to be in position at the top as the sun comes up. There is a stone staircase to follow and although it can be tough on the legs you can go at your own pace.



**Accommodation: The Farm Resort** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Spend a full day in the hills photographing the scenery and tea pickers

Today we spend the full day in the Golden Valley of Tea. We'll start early at Castlereigh Reservoir where we capture the lake and surrounding countryside in the morning light. We then travel in to the tea fields photographing the tea pickers as they go about their daily work in a way that has changed little in the last 150 years. Mostly descendants of Indian Tamils who were transported by the British to work in the plantations in the late 19th century, they often collect the tea in traditional wicker baskets or bags that are suspended by a strap around their foreheads, making great subjects for our photography.

We'll find a good spot for sunset and capture the reservoir and surrounding countryside once more in the golden light of dusk.



**Accommodation: The Farm Resort** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

## DAY 9 - Travel across the Peak Wilderness mountain range to Udawalawe

Our route today takes us through the tea fields and across the Peak Wilderness mountain range where we'll stop at several view points for photos of the plantations and scenery, continuing south to Udawalawe and our overnight location at the Athgira River Camp.

Udawalawe National Park is surrounded by mountains, and is a mix of rolling grasslands, teak plantations, rainforest and scrub. Renowned for its large herd of elephants, the park is one of the best places in Sri Lanka to see and photograph them. The Udawalawe elephant transit home cares for orphaned calves before they are old enough to be returned to the wild at around five years old. The young elephants are free to roam wherever they please but return to the centre for milk every three hours. We visit the transit home this afternoon to learn about the work they do and get some shots of the baby elephants.

Our overnight accommodation this evening at the Athgira River Camp is located on the outskirts of Udawalawe National Park. The camp has twin share tents, proper beds and en suite facilities, and is situated in a beautiful natural setting right next to the Rakwana River.



**Accommodation: Athgira River Camp** (or similar)



Standard Tented Camp



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 10 - Morning safari in Udawalawe and photograph the stilt fishermen at sunset

An early start will see us heading out in to Udawalawe National Park by Jeep. Aside from the large population of elephants, the park is also home to deer, wild boar, buffalo, jackal and leopard. The resident bird population is second to none, including a magnificent collection of birds of prey, chief among them the impressive white-bellied sea eagle. We'll make frequent stops when we sight animals to ensure we get some enviable wildlife shots.

After lunch we drive to Koggala, a small coastal town on the edge of a lagoon and one of the longest beaches in Sri Lanka. It is one of the best spots for photographing the famous stilt fishermen that perch on poles in the surf. A less common form of fishing since the 2004 tsunami, the local fishermen are happy to pose for photos even if they are not actually fishing at the time we visit. We'll be at the coast for sunset to capture one of the truly iconic images of the island.



**Accommodation: Koggala Beach Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Visit the Koggala coast and explore Galle

This morning we'll go out once more to photograph the stilt fishermen, this time in the golden light of early morning, and also the crashing surf, beach and palm trees.

In the afternoon, we travel to the neighbouring coastal town of Galle. An important trading centre since ancient times, the fortifications that can be seen today were built by the Portuguese and the Dutch over 400 years ago. The fort ramparts of this World Heritage Site protect the harbour and a myriad of fascinating old houses, churches and warehouses. Nowadays the town has a strong arts vibe, with foreign and local artists, writers, photographers, designers and poets drawing inspiration from the surroundings. Boutique shops and cafes around the town showcase their work. There is a lot to explore in the town and simply wandering its streets soaking up its unique atmosphere is a tremendous way to spend the afternoon, and is sure to provide some great subjects for our pictures.

An alternative to visiting Galle is to take a whale watching trip in search of humpback and blue whales, as well as dolphins that are often spotted in the waters nearby.



**Accommodation: Koggala Beach Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Trip ends in Colombo

After breakfast we drive to Colombo where our trip ends at the airport.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## Why book this trip

Planned to maximise photo opportunities, and travelling with professional award-winning photographer Renato Granieri for tips and advice on how to take great pictures, this trip is aimed at the keen amateur photographer who wishes to spend more time at a location than on standard trips. However, if you'd like to explore more you will also be accompanied by an experienced local Tour Leader who will help you get the most out of your visit.

# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 11  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 3



## Transport

Bus  
4WD  
On Foot



## Trip staff

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



## Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel  
1 nights premium hotel  
2 nights standard lodge  
1 nights standard tented camp

# 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 - Kandyan dancers performance £2.50

Koggala - Whale watching boat trip £60.00.

### Clothing



The climate in Sri Lanka is tropical with hot days by the coast and cooler temperatures in upland areas where lightweight rain-wear and warmer clothing may come in handy. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering your knees and shoulders and taking off your shoes and hats so long trousers are useful. You may like to wear socks for temple visits as the ground can get very hot and burn the soles of your feet.

## Footwear

Lightweight shoes and sandals.

## Luggage

20kg

## Equipment

A torch, good quality sunglasses, insect repellent and high factor sunscreen are all useful to have with you during this trip.

Photography equipment:

Camera - A DSLR or mirrorless camera is recommended to make the most of the photography opportunities on this trip

Lenses - A range of focal lengths from wide-angle (for landscapes, interiors and some street scenes) to telephoto (for wildlife) is ideal and a focal length suitable for portraits will also be useful (50mm - 85mm for example)

Tripod - Tripods are not allowed in all sites, although one will come in handy for some locations, slow shutter speed shots and low-light situations. A lightweight travel tripod is recommended.

Memory cards - It is a good idea to bring spare memory cards and consider bringing something to download your images on to in case you run out of memory space. While cards can be bought on the trip, they may not be available at all locations and the quality cannot be guaranteed.

Charger / spare battery - You will need to bring your charger and a spare battery may also come in handy.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore 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 £35.

## 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, On Foot

### 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: 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](http://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 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.

