

EXPLORE!



Active Sri Lanka!

14 days

Sri Lanka - Trip code ASL

Active Sri Lanka!

Join an active adventure across this spiritual island, cycling along backroads to discover ancient Buddhist cities, trekking through verdant mountains and rafting the white waters of the central highlands. We search for leopard in Wilpattu National Park, climb to the spectacular sky fortress at Sigiriya and, at the end of our journey, relax on the white sandy beaches of this tropical paradise known as Buddha's Island.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Sigiriya** - Climb up to the stunning cave temples at Dambulla and the mountain top fortress of King Kassapa
- ★ **Hiking and Biking** - Cycle through rural villages and hike across the striking landscapes of the Knuckles Mountains
- ★ **Kandy** - Visit vibrant markets and the unique Temple of the Tooth
- ★ **Rafting** - Tackle the Kelani River as we raft to our jungle chalet
- ★ **Adam's Peak** - Climb this sacred peak for sunrise views
- ★ **Willpaththu National Park** - Game drives in search of leopard
- ★ **Hikkaduwa** - Relax beside the golden beaches and turquoise waters on the south coast

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 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: Hotel J (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Morning cycle; jeep safari in Wilpattu National Park

Leaving after breakfast we drive to Giriulla this morning, from where we begin our morning's cycle ride along lush forested back roads to Padeniya. After stopping for lunch we have time to freshen up before swapping the bikes for jeeps and heading in to Wilpattu National Park. Despite the 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 will go on a jeep safari in the hope of spotting the elusive leopard. We choose to visit this park, rather than the more touristy 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. We camp on the outskirts of the park this evening. Total cycling distance 45kms.



Accommodation: Big Game Safari Camp Wilpattu (or similar)



Standard Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 3 - Explore Dambulla's painted caves en route to Sigiriya

Today we take to our bikes again and cycle towards Anaradhapura. We will then drive out to the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Dambulla, where a great series of caves hide an incredible collection of temples that date back to the 1st century BC. Containing a large number of Buddha images, as well as sculptures of Hindu Gods, the caves have become a huge pilgrimage site for countless worshippers, and this afternoon we will visit five separate caves, before proceeding to Sigiriya for the evening. Total cycling distance 50km.



Accommodation: Gimanhala Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Climb Lion Rock before cycling to Polonnaruwa

An early transfer this morning takes us to the imposing Lion Rock for the climb to the Sky Fortress. The ruins of this 5th century fortress (declared a World Heritage Site in 1982) are one of Sri Lanka's major attractions, a stupendous sight to behold and a feat of consummate engineering skill. A switchback series of steps 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 country, as well as the remains of what is left of the palace of King Kassapa. Returning to the base of the fortress, we then cycle to the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, following a series of relatively straight and flat back roads that provide us with a moderately easy journey that passes through patches of forest and rural villages. For those that wish it, there is the option to break up part of the 30 km journey to Polonnaruwa by travelling along sections of it by bus.



Accommodation: The Lake (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Search for elephants in Minneriya National Park

Polonnaruwa reached the height of its glory in the 12th century and the city is still blessed with a number of its ancient buildings and monuments. This morning we visit the ancient city by bicycle and on foot, taking in the spectacular ruins of its Royal Palace, with its Audience Hall, Bathing Pool and Quadrangle. Close by is the Circular Relic House, a curious round structure with a beautifully preserved 'moonstone' carved at the foot of a flight of steps. Another famous feature of the deserted city is the group of carved images of Buddha known as Galvihara, a collection of four colossal figures, all hewn out of solid granite. This afternoon we visit the nearby Minneriya National Park by jeep, home to spotted deer and significant herds of elephant, as well as huge populations of migratory birds.



Accommodation: The Lake (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Trek on the Knuckles Range. Drive to Kandy

This morning we drive to Giritale, travelling via Elahera and Pellegama, to a point where the crossover point between east and west Sri Lanka lies. Known as Riverstone Point, this region is home to the Knuckles Mountain Range and offers us a chance to break the journey with a short hike along a trail that runs through the ranges. Resembling a clenched fist (hence their unusual moniker), the mountains present a remarkable microcosm of the country, the striking landscapes and isolated cloud forests providing a haven for a rich diversity of flora and fauna. Our walk will take us around 3 hours, a soft to moderate trek that takes us through a landscape of incredible historic and natural importance. To the south and east lies the Mahaveli Valley, whilst the Matale Valley to the west encircles a collection of peaks that has no equal anywhere else in the country. Returning to our bus, we then complete the journey to Kandy, descending into the Matale Valley also known as the spice valley of Sri Lanka, to arrive at our hotel late this afternoon. A packed lunch will be provided today, to enjoy en route.



Accommodation: Mahaweli Reach Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 7 - Free day to explore Kandy

Lying in the mountains, to the northeast of Colombo, Kandy was captured by the British in 1815 and is known more for its cultural and spiritual importance rather than its history. Buddhists from all over the world come to this delightful old highland town specifically to visit the Temple of the Tooth, the Dalada Maligawa, where the costly jewelled shrine of the holy tooth (said to be Buddha's left canine and measuring in at an impressive 3.5 cm long by 1 cm thick) is kept. This relic was believed to have been brought from India some 1,500 years ago and every year, at the time of the August full moon, it is paraded round the town with great pomp and circumstance. During the ten night festival of Perahera, the tooth (or a replica) is borne along on a richly decorated elephant, surrounded by saffron-robed monks and Kandyan dancers. With a free day in the city, there will be an opportunity to visit

the temple today. Kandy itself is also a living monument to its traditional past. The last capital of the Sinhala Kings, it retains much of its old world charm and its streets are a wonderful eclectic mix of noise and bustle, making it an ideal venue for some personal exploration. You could also take a wander through the lush Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, located just outside the city, or perhaps explore something of the city's handicraft workshops, which have plenty of brassware, batik, lacquer work and other craft items to choose from. Kandyan dancers can also be seen performing every night at one or two locales around town, so those interested in some cultural interaction tonight might like to venture out and enjoy some traditional Sri Lankan dancing.



Accommodation: Mahaweli Reach Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Drive to Dalhousie, set at the base of Adam's Peak

This morning we drive to Dalhousie where we have the afternoon to relax. Shortly after midnight we join pilgrims in an ascent of Adam's Peak, known locally as Sri Pada. A depression at the top of the peak is said to be Buddha's footprint and each year thousands climb to the top for sunrise. There is a stone staircase which we follow right to the top, it can be tough on the legs but we can take our time and savour the experience. We reach the top in time for sunrise and views across the country.



Accommodation: Punsisi Rest Guest House (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 9 - Climb Adam's Peak for sunrise. Raft on the Kelani River

Our drive this morning takes us to Ginigathena, set amongst the fertile and lush western highlands. Set amidst a dramatic landscape of towering cliffs and wild water, the Kelani Ganga provides some of the best whitewater rafting in the country. The jungle around here were used as the back-drop for the 1957 film Bridge on the River Kwai and 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 7km section of the river through 8 rapids. It will usually take approximately 1.5hr hours to cover the section but this depends on water levels, in high water it can take just under a hour to cover the distance. Taking lunch en route, we should arrive at our overnight lodge late this afternoon and, after a chance to freshen up, if time allows this evening there will be a chance to join an optional trek across the river and through the jungle to a hidden waterfall.



Accommodation: Rafters Retreat (or similar)



Standard Lodge



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 10 - Morning trek before driving to our camp at Belihuloya

After breakfast we take a short trek through the forest to a nearby village. The route takes about three hours in total. We then drive to Belihuloya, via the small towns of Bogowantalawa and Balangoda, where we camp for the night.



Accommodation: Kinchigune Camp Site (or similar)



Standard Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 11 - Cycle through remote villages then drive to Hikkaduwa

We start this morning with a short bus transfer to Kinchigune where we take to our bikes. We follow quiet back roads and pass through small villages. The route takes us about three hours, depending on how many times we stop to chat to the villagers along the way. We meet up with our bus and then drive to the coastal resort of Hikkaduwa. Along the way we have the chance to stop at a Responsible Tourism Partnership project. The Dickwella Lace Centre is a locally run project that provides income and training for villagers who were badly affected by the 2004 tsunami.



Accommodation: Coral Rock by Bansai (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Free to relax on the beach or visit nearby Galle

The next two days are 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 the most of our time here. There are snorkelling trips available, Ayurvedic massages and the possibility to enjoy a whalewatching trip during the migrating season (December to April). 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)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Relax or take an optional whale watching excursion

Day free to continue exploring this area.



Accommodation: Coral Rock by Bansai (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



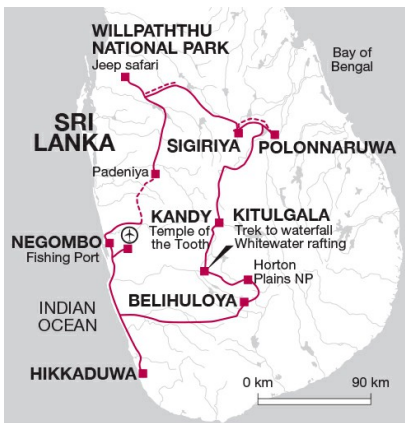
Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends at Colombo airport

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



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Horton Plain's Itinerary



Adam's Peak Itinerary

Extend your trip

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

Why book this trip

This tour is ideal if you are looking to combine Sri Lanka's cultural highlights with some active adventure. The rafting, cycling and walking are all fairly gentle and suitable for all levels of fitness and are a great way to get off the tourist trail.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 3



Transport

Bus
4WD
Bicycle
Boat



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Activity Guide(s)
Driver(s)



Accommodation

2 nights standard camping
1 nights simple guesthouse
7 nights standard hotel
2 nights premium 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.

Kandy - Botanical Gardens £4.50 Temple of the Tooth £6.00. Cultural Show - £5.00

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. You may also find cycling gloves, shorts or trousers useful. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering you knees and shoulder plus taking off your shoes and hats. You will need to bring long trousers, or buy a sarong locally. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Footwear

Comfortable trekking boots, shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Binoculars, head torch, insect repellent, sunglasses, sun cream, cycling helmet and a cycling water bottle. You may also wish to bring with you a gel saddle. Whilst in tea country there are leeches and you may wish to take leech socks.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

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 £40 for tipping. Your tour leader will account to you for any organised tipping.

Country Information

Sri Lanka

Food and drink

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

Lunch price

£6.00

Dinner price

£9.00

Beer price

£3.50

Water price

£1.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Sri Lankan Rupee.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

US\$ and UK£ are equally good

Where To Exchange

In most major towns.

ATM Availability

Yes, usually in major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

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

Travellers Cheques

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

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Bicycle, Boat

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.

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.

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 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.