

# EXPLORE!



## Secrets of Sri Lanka

14 days

Sri Lanka - Trip code DSL

## Secrets of Sri Lanka

Staying in stylish and comfortable hotels we travel to some of Sri Lanka's greatest sights. From spectacular ancient Buddhist monuments to lush hill-side tea plantations and fascinating historic cities, all with their own enchanting story. We visit the revered Temple of the Tooth in the central city of Kandy, search for elephant and leopard in Wilpattu National Park and relax by the idyllic Indian Ocean on the palm-fringed coast.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Dambulla** - Explore the painted caves of this temple complex
- ★ **Willpaththu** - Look out for leopard, elephants and birdlife on a jeep safari
- ★ **Polonnaruwa** - Visit the Royal Palace and dramatic sculptures of this ancient city
- ★ **Sigiriya** - Climb to the top of Lion Rock, stopping to see the painted maidens half way up
- ★ **Kandy** - Visit the Temple of the Tooth
- ★ **Galle** - Soak up the atmosphere in the historic fort
- ★ **Beruwala** - Time for relaxation on the beautiful coastline
- ★ **Premium accommodation** - High quality hotels

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Premium

Our premium accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

#### 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 tour in Negombo

Our tour begins this afternoon in the small fishing town of Negombo. Located just 15 minutes drive from Colombo Airport we can check in and recover from the flight.

#### Jetwing Blue

The Jetwing Blue hotel is a lovely beach front property, located within the resort town of Negombo. The hotel is bright, modern and stylish, offering beach front dining and a spa. Each room has either a balcony or terrace with ocean views and all have modern facilities.



**Accommodation: Jetwing Blue** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Travel to our campsite at Willpaththu National Park

Leaving the capital, our journey takes us northwards along the coast to the fishing port of Negombo. We will pause to visit a nearby

fishing village where the catch is made in traditional style large outrigger canoes, known locally as 'oruvas'. We may also see the toddy tappers climbing tall coconut trees and collecting sap from the flowers to make Arrack, a local whisky type spirit. Our destination is a campsite based on the outskirts of Willpaththu National Park. 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 spend two nights here in fixed tents with beds, all linen and towels provided. The campsite has shared bathroom facilities with flushing toilets.

### Mahoorra Tented Camp Wilpattu

Located on the edge of Wilpattu National Park, the Mahoorra Tented Camp offers a complete experience to your time in the area. The fixed tents have beds, mosquito nets, en suite facilities and outdoor living area. A fruit platter and umbrellas are also provided. In the evening guests can relax around the camp fire with with dinner and drinks.



**Accommodation: Mahoorra Tented Camp Wilpattu** (or similar)



Premium Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 3 - Take two game drives in search of leopards

Today we take two game drives in to Willpaththu National Park with a trained naturalist. Despite Wilpatu 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. The group will be split up in to jeeps and explore the park in the hope of spotting a leopard.



**Accommodation: Mahoorra Tented Camp Wilpattu** (or similar)



Premium Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 4 - Visit a giant Buddha and the cave temples at Dambulla

Leaving Willpaththu we pause to view the magnificent Standing Buddha of Aukana, which stands 12 meters high. Sculptured in the 5th century by a master craftsman, it is still relatively isolated in its jungle setting. We then drive to Dambulla, where a great series of caves have been turned into temples (dating from the 1st century BC). We will visit five separate caves, which contain a large number of Buddha images and a few sculptures of Hindu Gods. In one of the caves there is an incredible Reclining Buddha measuring 14m long! This World Heritage Site is visited by crowds of worshippers. We reach our resort in Dambulla in the late afternoon.

### Jetwing Lake

Jetwing Lake is set amid beautiful gardens, with rooms spaced out over the grounds and views of Kandalama Lake. There is a relaxed

and peaceful atmosphere and each room has its own private terrace. The comfortable rooms have contemporary furnishings with a taste of Sri Lanka in the design. There is a choice of restaurants and bars, a large pool with plenty of sunloungers and a spa.



**Accommodation: Jetwing Lake** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Climb Lion Rock and explore ancient Polonnaruwa

In the morning we drive to Sigiriya where we climb to the Sky Fortress. The ruins of this 5th century fortress 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 and steel stairways (sometimes steep and challenging) ascend to the top. Halfway up, tucked beneath a sheltering overhang of rock, are the famous frescoes - the Sigiriya Damsels, their colours still glowing. Magnificent views can be enjoyed from the summit of the rock palace. After lunch we explore the ancient city of Polonnaruwa, which reached its height of glory in the 12th century. The city still has many interesting and spectacular buildings and monuments. There is the Royal Palace Group with its Audience Hall, Bathing Pool and Quadrangle - a very compact collection of ruins. 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 the Buddha known as Galvihara. Here there are four colossal figures, all of which are hewn out of solid granite. Later in the afternoon we return to Dambulla.



**Accommodation: Jetwing Lake** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Drive to Kandy and visit the Temple of the Tooth

Lying in the mountains 112km northeast of Colombo, Kandy is, in climatic terms, a world apart due to its altitude of 500m above sea level. The town was captured by the British as late as 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. The costly jewelled shrine of the Holy Tooth (said to be 3.5cm long by 1cm thick and Buddha's left canine) is kept in the upper floor of the original building. This relic was brought from India 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 this ten-night festival of Perahera, the Tooth (or a model of the original) is borne along on a richly decorated elephant, surrounded by saffron-robed monks and Kandyan dancers. Kandyan dancers can also be seen performing every night at one or two locales around town. This afternoon's sightseeing includes attending the Temple of the Tooth Ceremony and a visit to the Peradeniya Botanical Garden.

### Mahaweli Reach Hotel

The Mahaweli Reach Hotel is a large yet elegant hotel located in a scenic location on the banks of the Mahaweli River. The hotel has

a range of facilities available including a swimming pool, gym, Ayurvedic spa and a host of dining options including dinner by the river. The rooms are spacious and modern with balconies overlooking the garden, pool or river. The restaurant serves wonderful Sri Lankan dishes.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Spend a free day exploring the relaxed town of Kandy

A full free day to continue your exploration of this charming mountain town or simply relax and enjoy the amenities at our hotel.



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



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Visit a tea factory en route to Nuwara Eliya

This morning we head off across the highlands, through green rolling hills covered in tea plantations, visiting a working tea factory en route to the hill station of Nuwara Eliya. After checking into our hotel we'll take a tour around this little town, known as Little England, famous for its lake, golf and race course and well manicured gardens.

### Grand Hotel

With award winning gardens the Grand Hotel offers plenty of space to relax whether that's in the restaurant or coffee shop overlooking the grounds or with a treatment in the spa. Formerly the residence of the Governor of Sri Lanka from 1830-1850, the hotel is built in a Tudor style, typical of Little England. Rooms are spacious with traditional decor and most offer views over the gardens.



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



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Take a walk on Horton Plains or relax in Nuwara Eliya

We head out this morning to Horton Plains, situated on Sri Lanka's highest plateau between altitudes of 2000m and 2300m. Traditionally named Mahaeliya, the park's main attraction is the thrilling escarpment known as World's End which offers stunning views across the tea plantations. We aim to trek to World's End in the morning when the air is clear and the views are best. Although the area is now devoid of elephants, we may be lucky enough to see other flora and fauna such as sambar deer. Returning to the hotel in the early afternoon, there is time to refresh and relax; maybe even a round of golf on the adjacent golf course!



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



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Drive to Galle and take a walking tour of the fort

Today we make our way to the coast and the pretty town of Galle. Although there is still evidence of damage from the 2004 tsunami all along this coastline, the international relief effort has put the area on a fast path to recovery; and the brand new infrastructure is allowing local communities to benefit from tourism once again. In the late afternoon we visit the old, walled town of Galle itself. Important as a trading port for the Portuguese since the 16th century when the fortress was constructed, it has undoubtedly been a trading centre since ancient times.

### Jetwing Lighthouse Hotel and Spa

Just a couple of kilometres from Galle, the Jetwing Lighthouse Hotel is a lovely property situated directly on the coast and designed by the iconic architect Geoffrey Bawa. The large hotel has a variety of dining options, including a romantic meal on the rocks right on the seafront. There is a spa, two good-sized pools, a gym and complementary Wi-Fi is available for all guests.



**Accommodation: Jetwing Lighthouse Hotel and Spa** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - A free morning in Galle before driving to Beruwala

Galle has a variety of activities and attractions to occupy your free time. You may choose to hire snorkelling equipment and explore

the corals or take a sea trip around the coast. Alternatively travel up river past small largely uninhabited islands. There is plenty to see particularly in the old fort area, which was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1988. Overlooking the sea, the fort ramparts protect the harbour, old houses, churches, warehouses and the Arab quarter. Between December and April there may be the opportunity to go on a whale watching trip from nearby Mirissa. In the late afternoon we drive up the coast to Beruwala.

### Eden Resort and Spa

Right on Beruwela beach, the Eden Resort and Spa is in a great location. All rooms have a balcony or terrace providing you with excellent views of the Indian Ocean and hotel gardens. The hotel has plenty of facilities to enjoy, including three restaurants, two bars, an outdoor pool and a spa.



**Accommodation: Eden Resort and Spa** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Relax on the pristine beaches of Beruwala

Today is left free to relax on the pristine beaches of the west coast. For those seeking pure relaxation, local Ayurvedic massages with natural, aromatic herbal oils are highly recommended.



**Accommodation: Eden Resort and Spa** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Free time to visit Colombo or take a river safari

Our final day is spent relaxing on the Indian Ocean coast. However, if you feel like exploring further we recommend a trip into Colombo by train for more sightseeing and shopping.



**Accommodation: Eden Resort and Spa** (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



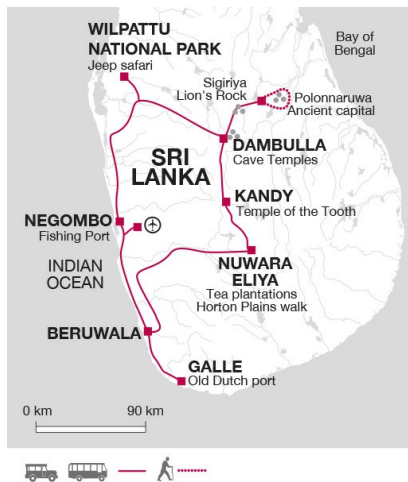
Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Tour ends at Colombo Airport

This morning we will travel back to Colombo where the tour ends at the airport.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Extend your trip

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

## Why book this trip

Staying in stylish and comfortable hotels we travel to some of Sri Lanka's greatest sights. From spectacular ancient Buddhist monuments to lush hill-side tea plantations and fascinating historic cities, all with their own enchanting story. We visit the revered Temple of the Tooth in the central city of Kandy, search for elephant and leopard in Wilpattu National Park and relax by the idyllic Indian Ocean on the palm-fringed coast.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 13  
Lunch: 1  
Dinner: 2



### Transport

Bus  
4WD



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Naturalist(s)



### Accommodation

2 nights premium camping  
11 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.

Whale Watching - US\$ 95.00pp (min 4 persons).

### Clothing

Select your clothes carefully, bearing in mind that the climate is tropical and that upland areas are cooler and more temperate. Lightweight rainwear is also essential, and warmer clothing for the highland walks and chilly night temperatures in the mountains. When visiting religious sites you will need to dress respectfully by covering you knees and shoulders as well as 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. You may consider taking some walkingshoes/boots for the visit to Hortons Plain.

### 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 is recommended for walks. There are leeches in the highlands and you may wish to consider bringing leech socks with you.

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

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

### Local crew

In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Although Explore pays most gratuities for the smooth operation of the tour, some local staff will still look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. 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

### 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.

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