

Sri Lankan Wildlife Journey



Tour Overview

Described as 'One of Asia's best wildlife destinations', Sri Lanka plays host to an amazing variety of fauna and flora, with some of the world's highest densities of leopards and elephants. In a wildlife tour of two weeks, you have the best potential of seeing and photographing five charismatic mammals – elephant, leopard, bear, sperm whale and blue whale, at a lower cost compared to Africa and India. A visit to the Sri Lankan jungles is to enter a whole new world where nature and time has stayed still...the topography and vegetation change from park to park, a boat safari on a huge man-made lake yields the exciting sight of swimming elephants!

This wildlife tour is interspersed with visits to cultural cities reflecting the glory of over 2500 year history, dating back to 3rd century B.C. when Sri Lanka was among the most advanced and developed nations of the pre-modern world and an important historical civilization in Asia. The bonus is the gloriously seductive seascape displaying golden beaches, blue green seas and spectacular sunsets.

Day 1 Negombo

Ayubowan! - may you be blessed with long life, with this beautiful traditional greeting, we are greeted by the Travel Lanka Journeys chauffeur guide on arrival at the Bandaranaike International Airport (Colombo) and taken to our hotel in Negombo.

Overnight Negombo

Standard stay: Catamaran Beach Resort or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Goldi Sands Hotel or similar 4* Hotel

Day 2 Negombo – Wilpattu National Park

After breakfast city tour. Negombo is a characteristic fishing town set amid lush groves of coconut palms, engulfed with the spirit of the sea. Quaint narrow streets, scrumptious seafood and dotted with ornate 16th century Roman Catholic churches, we visit the fish market – a cacophony of noise, plenty of atmosphere.

Morning we leave for Wilpattu. Enroute we enter Anuradhapura and do a cycle tour of Sri Lanka's first capital founded in 5th century B.C. a World Heritage Site. According to the ancient Sinhala chronicle Mahavamsa, it was a model of planning. It is also an example of the excellent hydraulic civilization which sprung-up in this arid land. Ancient reservoirs are a sight at sunset reflecting the religious serenity which pervades Rajarata – "King's Country" reigned by 90 kings. We visit the sacred Sri MahaBodhi – the world's oldest authenticated tree venerated by Buddhists, AbayagiriyaDagoba, IsurumuniyaViharaya and Ruwanweli MahaSeya – by far the most beautiful Dagoba, its white dome shining like a pearl. The Samadhi Buddha statue depicting the Buddha in a meditative pose, capture us by its sheer beauty of reflection.

Overnight Wilpattu

Standard stay: Rajarata Hotel or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Big Game Luxury Tented Camping or 3-4* Hotel

Day 3 Wilpattu National Park

Morning 06:00 – 09:00 and afternoon 03:00 – 06:00 Safari at Wilpattu. Sri Lanka's largest and oldest National Park covering 131693hectares. Boasting over 50 rain water filled natural lakes or 'villus' (from which it has got its name), surrounded by open grassy plains and delicate white sands amidst the dense scrub jungle, it is a visual treat even if you fail to encounter its king- the leopard.

The first sight as we enter is a white lotus filled lake and herds of spotted deer, barking deer, sambhur and mouse deer and although it is the dry zone, we notice its evergreen forest area as well. The water filled lakes are the haunt of water birds such as garganey, pin tail, whistling teal, white large egret, cattle egret and the purple heron, as well as endemic birds such as the Ceylon woodshrike and black-capped bulbul in riverine habitats. We were told from November to March, the park also plays host to numerous winter migrants. We spot a bear devouring 'Madan' berries in the adjacent grassland and saw baby spotted deer with their mothers.

Quite accidentally, we saw black and yellow spots appearing and disappearing on top of a huge palu tree. Taking a closer look, they were two young leopards! What a sight! They were staring at our cameras and giving us a beautiful showing, prancing on the branches, licking each other showing affection. May be they didn't want to come down as the grass was wet with dew.

Displaying a high bio diversity with varied atmospheric conditions, swamps, grasslands, monsoon forests and sandy valleys, it is a heaven for birds, animals, fish, butterflies, crocodiles and reptile as well. We spied a large herd of elephants close together feeding on young grass, resembling a bee-hive! While watching the scene, lo and behold, a huge tusker with milk white tusks 3 to 4 ft. long joined them... wild boar live freely in the park- we came across ten to fifteen offspring running behind their mother.

Wilpattu epitomizes the wondrous beauty of Sri Lanka and the richness of its fauna and flora in the wild. We feel we are in the most beautiful part of the world... without exaggeration!

Standard stay: Rajarata Hotel or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Big Game Camp or similar 4* Hotel

Day 4 Wilpattu – Wasgamuwa National Park

After early breakfast we leave for Wasgamuwa visiting Sigiriya Rock fortress enroute. A World Heritage Site (5th century AD) Sigiriya, is an impressive rock fortress and the royal citadel of a king for 18 years. Apart from the great rock fortress, the surroundings, just gets you... so green, so serene, and peaceful. Exciting climb to the summit to the site of the Sky Palace which commands a magnificent view of the royal water gardens, on par with the best of the ancient world. On the way up we encounter the famous Sigiriya frescoes, gazing at the graffiti written on the Mirror Wall, poems extolling their beauty!

Standard stay: Lavandis safari or similar

Premium stay: Farcry Resort or similar

Day 5 Wasgamuwa National Park

Morning 06:00 – 09:00 and afternoon 03:00 – 06:00 safari at Wasgamuwa. A 99% untouched National Park. The name Wasgamuwa has derived through the words “Walas Gamuwa”. “Walasa” is sloth bear and “Gamuwa” means a wood in Sinhala. Spanning over 36,900 hectares, bordered by the Mahaweli and Aban rivers, the vegetation is dense, tropical dry. Mixed evergreen forest predominates, characterized by tall trees: Weera, Palu, Wa, Ehala, Satin, Velang, Milla and Ebony used for furniture making and building purposes.

The main attractions are herds of elephants as befits the large forest area. Other wildlife includes purple faced langur monkeys, wild boar, sambhur and spotted deer, buffalo, although rarely sighted, it is also the habitat of leopard and sloth bear. Among the reptiles are water monitor, mugger crocodile, estuarine crocodile and python. Of the 143 species of birds reported endemic Red-faced Malkoha and Ceylon Jungle Fowl are a common sight in the park.

We saw various kinds of beautiful birds, mongoose, deer, crocodiles, and elephants- three small herds and three well grown elephants. Managed to click some awesome shots. The elephants were an absolute pleasure to observe!

Due to the density of the park and less tourists, we really felt nature enfolding us. It is truly a paradise for the nature lover.

Standard stay: Lavandis safari or similar

Premium stay: Farcry Resort or similar

Day 6 Wasgamuwa – Gal Oya National Park

After breakfast we begin our journey to Gal Oya National Park centered around the largest man-made lake in the island and its environs. We pass through typical little villages dotted with rice fields in the low-lying area. Broke journey to enjoy a cup of ginger tea in a wayside kiosk. Lying in the southeast beyond the island's central hills, the park was established in 1954 to protect the catchment area of the 'Senanayake Samudra'. It is the only Park which allows visitors to enjoy its beauty and wild life by boat and jeep. Most famous for swimming elephants, during March to July the delightful sight of elephant swimming from island to island within the great lake is common.

Rich in flora and fauna, about 45% of the park is covered by evergreen forest and a further 33% is taken up by savannah areas. The 25,900 hectare park has about 32 species of mammals including herds of elephants, leopard, sloth bear, wild boar, water buffalo, sambhur and deer. Approximately 150 of Sri Lanka 's 430 species of birds have been sighted here in the many small islands covered with forest and outcrops. By the time we reached Gal Oya our hearts were bursting with expectations!

Standard stay: Galoya Lodge or similar

Premium stay: Galoya Lodge or similar

Day 7 Gal Oya

At the break of dawn we leave for the Park, best time to see elephants on the lake. Such a beautiful place, spectacular scenery, no crowds, just miles of water and shoreline to explore... Our boat safari begins, disturbing the mirror perfect expanse of water. First to encounter was a lone elephants taking a lazy bath splashing water to glory! Another feeding on grass on the shore, made us believe that here elephants exist wild and free, swimming from island to island as if they owned this habitat.

Birds were everywhere, flying with abundance, gladdening our eyes with a display in perfect harmony, a cacophony of noise and splashes of colour. From the 'Bird Island' or Kurullu Dupatha you can observe many bird's nests even with eggs and fledglings. Partaking a light breakfast on a pristine island under a green canopy of leaves, trying to beat the intense heat although it was mid morning, we continued exploring the lake. The guide gave a cry and pointed to a great brown piece of wood which shifted so fast, before we could position our cameras- it was a crocodile at least 12ft. long who disappeared into the dense foliage.

It was a fantastic tour as we sighted deer, water buffalo, sambhur and many elephants and birds. However the exciting boat safari was the high point, being so close to wild life. Our ears filled with bird cries, pitched differently, and our vision filtering through sightings of birds and elephants, we would never have captured on foot or vehicle, we returned to the hotel well sated.

Standard stay: Galoya Lodge or similar

Premium stay: Galoya Lodge or similar

Day 8 Gal Oya – Ella

Morning we leave for Ella. What a change of scenery, now we are travelling to the salubrious high country passing un-surpassing scenery! We are ready to explore one of the most enchanting places in the island steeped in romantic legend. Ella is situated at an elevation of 1,041 metres above sea level. The area has a rich bio-diversity, dense with numerous varieties of flora, fauna and the beautiful Ravana Ella Falls. Surrounded by mist covered hills, cloud forests and tea gardens, the place is ideal for trekking.

Standard stay: The Hideaway Hotel or similar 2-3* Hotel / Guest House

Premium stay: Melheim Resort or similar 4* Hotel / Boutique Villa

Day 9 Ella – Yala

Morning we leave for Yala National Park, winding down from the high hills to the verdant plains with breathtaking views of the island's high country. We stop at the mesmerizing Ella Gap to observe the panoramic view of the surrounding area and Ravana Falls.

Standard stay: Chandrika Hotel or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Big Game Luxury Tented Camping

Day 10 Yala

An exciting day dawns. Morning 06:00 – 09:00 am and evening 15:00- 18:00 we are on safari. Yala covering 1297sqkm or 129,700 ha, the premier National Park and the most visited in Sri Lanka, displays varied eco systems. The terrain is beautiful, rocky boulders, scrub jungle, streams, water holes, lush green patches leading to the sandy beaches of East Coast. Boasts of a growing leopard population, and were lucky to spot not only one but two, one peeping behind a boulder and the other sunning to glory! It fact this is leopard country ! Probably the highest density of leopards in the world and largest leopards in Asia. They majestically prowl in Yala, feigning indifference to the passing jeeps. So, your chances of clicking a superb shot is assured, specially early morning and at dusk.

We saw herds of elephants and spotted deer, sambhur, bear and innumerable varieties of birds. Birdlife in the park is over 120 species, among them, peacock and the endemic Jungle Fowl, the National Bird of Sri Lanka. Between safari, cooling off in the river and a picnic lunch, it was altogether a very successful tour.

Standard stay: Chandrika Hotel or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Big Game Luxury Tented Camping

Day 11 Yala – Mirissa

Morning we leave for Mirissa passing beautiful west coastline scenery, the sea lapping the sand and swaying palms, larger towns and quaint fishing villages, men fishing on stilts making a pretty picture. We are on our way to another adventure, Whale Watching! Mirissa has emerged as popular centre for whale and dolphin watching.

Evening we relax on the beach.

Standard stay: Silan Mo or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Silan Mo or similar 3* Hotel

Day 12 Mirissa

Very early in the morning we embark on a whale and dolphin watching tour with much excitement. The crew and the boat were excellent. We were lucky to see whales and also dolphins. We saw them very close. At least 4 of them surfaced and flipped their fins as they dived back below the surface. A great breakfast and mid morning snacks and drinks were provided. An amazing experience!

Late afternoon we left to explore Galle, the 17th century Dutch fortified city, with a natural harbor exuding old-world charm especially, inside the Dutch fort – a UNESCO heritage site. We observed typical Dutch architecture in buildings and houses, some converted into plush boutique hotels. The horizon looks wondrous from the fort in the mellow twilight.

Standard stay: Silan Mo or similar 3* Hotel

Premium stay: Silan Mo or similar 3* Hotel

Day 13 Mirissa – Colombo – Departure

After breakfast leave for Colombo.
Afternoon city tour and shopping.

Day 14 Departure

Transfer from Colombo to Airport through the airport express way for departure flight home carrying wonderful memories...

NEXT – Planning your return trip to Sri Lanka.

Tour cost per person on Standard Accommodation option AU\$2,750.00

Tour cost per person on Premium Accommodation option AU\$3,185.00

TOUR INFO

DEPARTURE DATE

Any time

TRANSPORT

Air conditioned car / van with an English speaking chauffeur guide

PLACES OF VISIT

Negombo | Wilpattu National Park | Anuradhapura | Sigiriya | Wasgamuwa National Park | Gal Oya National Park | Ella | Yala | Mirissa | Galle | Colombo

INCLUSIONS

12 night accommodation sharing twin on half board basis (dinner and breakfast included as per itinerary)

Government tax and service charge

Entrance fees, jeep hire costs, trekker chargers etc at sites and locations as per itinerary

EXCLUSIONS

International airfare

Lunch & beverages

Expenses of a personal nature

Personal travel and medical insurance

Video camera and still camera permits at some locations

Departure airport tax

TERMS & CONDITIONS

All prices are quoted in AU\$ and are based on per person sharing double or twin room and subject to change without prior notice.