

Sri Lanka – Endemic Birds

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.	Day 9	Colombo.
Day 2/3	Kitulgala.	Day 10	Fly London.
Day 4/5	Nuwara Eliya.		
Day 6	Uda Walawe.		
Day 7/8	Sinharaja Forest.		

Blue Whales extension

Day 9/11	Koggala
Day 12	Colombo.
Day 13	Fly London.

Dates 2023

Saturday, 21st January – Monday, 30th January 2023 **Cost: £2,995**
Extension: Sunday 29th January – Thursday 2nd February 2023 **Cost: £795**

Saturday, 5th August – Monday, 14th August 2023 ** **Cost: £2,995**
Blue Whales extension is not available on our August departure

Saturday, 28th October – Monday, 6th November 2023 **Cost: £2,695**
Extension: Sunday 5th November – Thursday 9th November **Cost: £795**

Dates 2024

Saturday, 20th January – Monday, 29th January 2024 **Cost: £2,695**
Extension: Sunday 28th January – Thursday 1st February 2024 **Cost: £795**

Saturday, 3rd August – Monday, 12th August 2024 ** **Cost: £2,995**
Blue Whales extension is not available on our August departure



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Saturday, 26th October – Monday, 4th November 2024
Extension: Sunday 3rd November – Thursday 7th November

Cost: £2,695
Cost: £795

Cost from

From £2,695 (London/London); £2,195 (Colombo/Colombo)

£795 for Blue Whales extension (Not available on our August departure)

Single room supplement

£395 (Add: £195 for Blue Whales extension)

Grading

The tour is graded A/B with day walks only

Focus

Birds

How does the wildlife and community benefit from this tour?

The discovery of many endemic and rare species of birds on the island nearly 60 years ago led to some of the current birding hotspots to be declared as sanctuaries and protected areas. Due to the increasing interest generated by passionate birders, local communities in these places have made significant efforts to personally protect their surroundings so that birds and other wildlife can thrive. In our visits to Kitulgala and Sinharaja rainforest, we will witness the bond the locals have with nature; some wouldn't even extend their houses if it means disturbing the surroundings

A significant effort is made by young wildlife enthusiasts living in these villages, and they ensure that the habitat that these birds, mammals and reptiles live in are protected and taken care of for the future of the species, and viewing pleasure of wildlife lovers. By employing these talents during these tours, we directly contribute to their livelihood and protection of those habitats and species.

With the increasing interest in Whale watching around our waters, many Sri Lankans have now diverted their attention to studying marine biology and the feedback and recommendations coming from these new minds are helping to shape policies about the subject and learn more about these animals. The most recent outcome of this was to change the shipping lanes further into international waters, thereby decreasing the fatalities and injuries caused to whales due to collisions with vessels.

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Introduction

It is generally recognised that there are at least 34 bird species endemic to the tropical island of Sri Lanka* and the primary objective of this short tour is to provide the maximum opportunity to see most, if not all, of these. Although the itinerary is structured to concentrate on looking for the endemics, all the areas visited are rich in birds and newcomers to the avi-fauna of the Indian sub-continent will find plenty of new species among the island residents. In addition, Sri Lanka is an important wintering area for many passerines from the north of the continent and Himalayan species such as Pied Thrush, Kashmir Flycatcher and Indian Pitta should feature on the tour list, along with Blyth's Reed Warbler. The variety of species will be further enhanced during a brief visit to Uda Walawe National Park where we can expect to find a tremendous selection of waterbirds, raptors and other typical Dry Zone birds plus the resident herds of Indian Elephants, Spotted Deer and Sambar. There are few more agreeable alternatives to the misery of a British winter than a visit to Sri Lanka and with so many other superb habitats to visit on the island, participants on this tour may wish to consider extending their stay and perhaps travel to the Indian Ocean coastline of the south, where the wetlands are filled with a tempting variety of waterbirds and waders.

This is an intensive birdwatching tour and contains little opportunity for sightseeing. If you are interested in the wider natural history of Sri Lanka and elements of cultural sightseeing, our longer February tour may better suit your preferences. Please refer to our brochure or ask the office for further details.

- * Taxonomists disagree over the exact number and new D.N.A. research suggests that further species hitherto be regarded as sub-species should be considered as additional endemics.
- ** Please note that the bird list for an August tour will still contain the endemic species but winter visitors such as Kashmir Flycatcher, Indian Pitta etc will not be present.

Day 1

Saturday

In Flight

We depart London in the evening on a direct Sri Lankan Airlines scheduled flight to Colombo. We will be in-flight overnight. If you would prefer to fly on any other airline from London to Colombo, we can arrange this for you (availability permitting), though this is likely to involve extra cost. Call Rajan on 01962 733051 for details.

Day 2 – 3

Sunday – Monday

Kitulgala

We arrive at Colombo International Airport and will be met by a top Sri Lankan ornithologist who will be our escort throughout the tour. The airport is some distance north of the city of Colombo and a two hour drive is in prospect to reach our first destination, Kitulgala, where we stay for two nights. En route, as the journey takes us through belts of coastal palms, rice paddies and stretches of forest, the typical lowland birds of Sri Lanka will no doubt put in appearances by the roadside, species such as Common Myna, House Crow, Red-wattled Lapwing, Indian Pond

Heron, White-breasted Kingfisher and Indian Roller. This is a country where birds are still plentiful in all habitats and even a five minute leg stretch can add a score of species to the trip list!

Kitulgala is a delightful spot at the edge of the hill country, perhaps best known internationally as the place where the film 'Bridge on the River Kwai' was shot, and the event is commemorated by various photographs of the actors and film unit in the Rest House overlooking the river. Arriving from wintry Britain, the contrast in temperature and vegetation will be at once apparent. Sri Lanka is an amazingly verdant island and the tracts of thick riverine forest at Kitulgala harbour several of the endemic birds which comprise the main objectives of this tour. First to appear might be the tiny Legge's Flowerpecker, an attractive yellow and blue bird exploring the canopy of the forest giants for sources of nectar or fruit. Spot-winged Thrushes can be observed scratching at leaf litter in the undergrowth whilst Sri Lanka Junglefowl announce their presence by loud trumpeting calls, the brilliantly plumaged males swaggering along the edge of the forest with a confidence that suggests they would relish a confrontation with any rival unwise enough to cross their path. Next day in the morning to see some of the other specialities we will need to cross the river in one of the local canoes and investigate the moist forest on the opposite shore. Here we may find the elusive Green-billed Coucal, one of the islands most endangered bird with a penchant for bamboo thickets; the shy Spurfowl and perhaps a Chestnut-backed Owlet glaring at us from a branch. As dusk approaches the resident Frogmouth should begin calling and we should have little difficulty spotlighting this peculiar night-bird, half-way between a nightjar and a potoo!

Other endemic birds in the vicinity include the tiny Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, invariably seen hurtling across the forest at high speed uttering a distinctive, and frequently heard, call, the chunky Layard's Parakeet, and Yellow-fronted Barbet, one of four barbet species inhabiting the forests. We may also be fortunate and spotlight the recently discovered Serendip Scops Owl, an attractive little night bird first described for science just over a decade ago! The excellent birding is not confined to island endemics and we should find a good selection of both resident and migrant birds including such species as Black-rumped Flameback, Paradise Flycatcher, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Flame Minivet, Brown Shrike and perhaps one of the many Indian Pittas which spend the winter on Sri Lanka.

Day 4

Tuesday

Nuwara Eliya



Waterfall on the Horton Plains

We take a first look at the forest at Kitulgala before continuing higher into the hill country where yet more endemics await us. The scenery is spectacular and as the road winds higher, we pass picturesque waterfalls tumbling down hillsides and vantage points which afford views over a panorama of rugged hills stretching far into the distance. This is the home of the Sri Lanka tea industry and as we gain in altitude, neatly manicured tea estates become a familiar part of the landscape, acres of tea bushes extending over the hills on either side of the road.

Nuwara Eliya is the capital town of the hill country and a delightful place to stay for two nights. A golf course and race track are reminders of its popularity as a resort for the British during the days of the Raj and there are other resonances of a bygone era in the quaint Hill Club and the Victorian style of architecture. Stands of pines are a feature of the area and there is a distinctly cooler feel to the air, as might be expected at an altitude of 1,890 metres. After checking into our hotel we will drive into the town and visit Victoria Park, a small public garden very reminiscent of similar areas in many British towns. The birdlife is however startlingly different and despite the afternoon crowds, we can expect to see a number of interesting species including two more endemics, the handsome Yellow-eared Bulbul and Sri Lanka Hill White-Eye. An untidy little stream running through the park is usually frequented by a small flock of handsome Pied Thrushes, long distance migrants from the Himalayas, and it is often possible to find Indian Pitta and Indian Blue Robin in the same unsavoury ditch. Other birds which might be seen in this magical park include Common Sandpiper, Brown Shrike, Grey Wagtail, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Paradise Flycatcher and Kashmir Flycatcher, the last named another winterer from Northern India which is hard to see anywhere else in the sub-continent.



Yellow-eared Bulbul

Day 5

Wednesday

Nuwara Eliya

We spend today on Horton Plains, Sri Lanka's highest and most isolated plateau. Although only 28 kilometres from Nuwara Eliya, the road is in poor condition and the final ascent to the plateau involves some steep inclines. This is a fascinating place, a mixture of open grassy expanses and patches of forest, much of the latter festooned with epiphytes.



Rhinoceros-horned Lizard

The scenery is spectacular and on clear days it is possible to see the distant summit of Adam's Peak. At World's End, the plateau drops steeply to the plains over 1,000 metres below and this becomes a swirling cauldron of cloud as the day progresses. We should certainly hear, and hopefully see, the extremely handsome Purple-faced Leaf Monkey in the forests, a long-coated highland sub-species also known as the Bear Monkey. Tennant's Giant Squirrels also inhabit the trees, as do the smaller Dusky Squirrels and in the open plains we may see a distant herd of Sambar Deer. Pied Bush Chats are one of the more conspicuous bird inhabitants but other species to look for include

Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Black Eagle, Sri Lanka Woodpigeon, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka Orange-billed Babbler, Sri Lanka Dull Blue Flycatcher, Zitting Cisticola, Sri Lanka

Bush Warbler, Brown Shrike and Hill Swallow. The rare Arrenga or Whistling Thrush is another endemic found on Horton Plains but is extremely hard to find, although one particular pool is always worth checking in the hope that the resident male is in view. The Whistling Thrushes usually only visit the pool during the first half an hour of daylight so another early start would be desirable to maximise our chance of seeing this fine thrush. Although at first impression not a typical habitat for reptiles, Horton Plains boasts several rare endemic species such as the exotic Horned Lizard but none of these is easy to locate.

The weather is always an unpredictable factor affecting visits to Horton Plains but with five or six potential additions to the growing trip list of endemic birds, we will hope for a successful day in this most scenic of localities.

Day 6

Thursday

Uda Walawe

A long but interesting drive faces us as we leave Nuwara Eliya and gradually descend from the hills. The road follows a convoluted course southwards affording some wonderful scenic panoramas as we pass forested valleys dominated by high craggy peaks. En route we pause briefly at a small tea estate to look for birds in the wooded garden of the manager's house. The owners kindly permit birders to roam in their garden and among the attractions are a resident pair of Brown Wood Owls, Sri Lanka Woodpigeons and a selection of other species including Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, White-naped Woodpecker, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Flame Minivet, Oriental White-eye, Forest Wagtail, Hill Myna, and Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. It is a tranquil place to spend a few hours and as we sip a welcome cup of tea on the lawn we may spot other non-ornithological attractions such as the Giant Squirrels which build huge dreys in the tree tops, and impressive Blue Mormon butterflies gliding over the flower beds. Sri Lanka boasts a colourful selection of butterflies and their presence is a constant delight during all our excursions although it is only the larger species that can be easily identified amid such diversity.



Asian Elephants

Dropping down to the plains we complete the drive to the town of Uda Walawe where we stay overnight at the Centaura Wild on the shores of a large reservoir. If we have time to look around the shores of the reservoir we could find a number of new Dry Zone birds such as Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Spot-billed Pelican and Painted Stork.

Day 7

Friday

Uda Walawe

As a complete contrast to the forest birdwatching that predominates during the first few days of the tour we spend the morning exploring Uda Walawe National Park by jeep. This mixture of teak plantation, grassland, scrub jungle and wetlands will provide our best opportunity to see many birds with ranges restricted to the 'Dry Zone' of the island, a faunal region which is barely entered anywhere else on the tour. A morning's drive in the park will ensure plenty of additions to our list as we encounter a representative selection of residents which could include; Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Plum-headed Parakeet, Barred Button-Quail, Changeable Hawk Eagle, White-bellied Fishing Eagle,

Brown Fish Owl, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Sirkeer & Blue-faced Malkohas, Black-headed and White-throated Munias. Uda Walawe is also an excellent reserve for mammals, particularly famous for its population of several hundred elephants which make it one of the best places in Asia to observe these impressive creatures. An average visit should produce sightings of 40-50 animals and a close encounter with a nursery herd escorting tiny youngsters is a never to be forgotten highlight of any holiday. In many respects Uda Walawe is a smaller version of the well-known Yala Reserve in the south of the island, but somewhat more conveniently situated for this tour and a profitable diversion during the long drive from Nuwara Eliya to Sinharaja Forest.

From Uda Walawe we head south to our penultimate destination, the Blue Magpie Lodge superbly situated at the very edge of Sinharaja Forest Biosphere Reserve.

Day 8

Saturday

Sinharaja Forest

One of the highlights of the tour will be our excursion into Sinharaja Forest, the largest and most important lowland rain forest in Sri Lanka. Sinharaja is something of a stronghold for endemic birds and its importance was



Blue Magpie Lodge

acknowledged by recognition as a World Heritage Site in 1988. Old logging trails facilitate access into the primary forest and from these we will be looking for such species as Crested Goshawk, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Red-faced Malkoha, Green-billed Coucal, Malabar Trogon, Frogmouth, Brown-backed Needletail, Chestnut-backed Owlet, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Black-headed & Yellow-browed Bulbuls, Spot-winged Thrush, Scaly Thrush, Orange-billed Babbler, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, White-faced Starling, Hill Myna, Sri Lanka Myna, White-throated Flowerpecker and Black-throated

Munia. Inevitably we are unlikely to see all of these in a single visit but Sinharaja is one of those magical places that can suddenly be alive with birds following periods of relative quiet and even at midday it is possible to encounter one of the mixed species 'bird waves', which usually comprise Orange-billed Babblers in association with Ashy-headed Laughing-Thrushes, Crested Drongos, Malabar Trogons, Red-faced Malkohas, Blue Magpies and a miscellany of other species.

Everything about Sinharaja is special and the flora contains many species found nowhere else. Pretty Bamboo Orchids grow commonly beside the trails and many of the trees are adorned with epiphytes. A wonderful diversity of butterflies occur in the forest, including the spectacular Blue Mormon and Tree-Nymphs dancing like windblown paper through the high canopy. Lizards are plentiful and the residents include a



Blue Magpie

number of rare endemics. Although plenty of mammals inhabit Sinharaja, sightings are always a matter of luck but troupes of Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys are likely to reveal their presence by the fearsome roaring calls of the males.

Day 9

Katunayake (near the Colombo airport)

We return to Katunayake today but before leaving the Blue Magpie we will enjoy another morning of birding in the vicinity of the hotel where Green-billed Coucals are often easy to find at first light and other interesting residents include Spot-winged Thrush, Chestnut-backed Owlet, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher and Black-throated Munia.



Sunday

Eventually we can't postpone the moment no longer and will set off on the southern highway for a three hour drive north. Upon arrival in Katunayake, we will check into our 4-star The Gateway Airport Garden Hotel Colombo for some rest and a good night's sleep!

Day 10

Monday

London

We have a mid-morning transfer to Katunayake airport to catch our afternoon Sri Lankan direct flight to London. We are due to arrive in London by early evening.

Blue Whales extension (Not available on our August departure)

Cost: from £795

Single room supplement: £195

(The minimum number of people required to run this extension is five; however, we may decide to operate it with fewer people, at our discretion, with local guides.)

Introduction

The Great Whales are a source of wonder and fascination to land-based humans as we struggle to comprehend their alien, unfettered existence roaming the mysterious depths of the world's oceans. There is a seemingly insatiable desire to savour the experience of being close to these magnificent creatures and wherever feeding or breeding imperatives bring numbers of whales to congregate in a particular area there will invariably be local boatmen taking visitors to enjoy a few precious moments sharing the ocean with these leviathans. The largest of all the cetaceans, indeed the largest of all mammals, the Blue Whale, has always been something of an enigma, a true ocean wanderer living a pelagic lifestyle which rarely brings them with any predictability close to land. Gradually however, scientists are beginning to gain some understanding of the enormous migrations undertaken by Blue Whales and one discovery has been their regular appearances close to the south coast of Sri Lanka between November and early April. It is this annual event that we will be taking advantage of during this extension in a country that has long been a Naturetrek favourite.



Blue Whale

Day 9

Sunday

Koggala

Today we leave the group after lunch at Sinharaja and travel by road to our delightful Koggala Beach Hotel. Areas of the south-west coastline were devastated during the Tsunami but the Sri Lankans are resilient people and much



Spinner Dolphins

reconstruction has taken place since the tragedy in 2004. Fortunately the Koggala Beach Hotel was only partly destroyed from damage and this resort hotel will be our base for three nights of our extension tour. The drive from Sinharaja will probably take 3 hours and after settling in to our rooms a period of relaxation will no doubt be welcome and give us a chance to sample the resort amenities or perhaps simply sit on the sandy beach watching the waves breaking on the sand with binoculars ready in case a huge White-bellied Sea Eagle glides along overhead or terns begin fishing offshore. Sri

Lanka is a remarkably lush, verdant tropical island and trees surround the hotel offering further birdwatching opportunities which might perhaps be taken advantage of from the comfort of a lounge beside the swimming pool! Typical species of such forest edge include Magpie Robin, Yellow-billed Babbler, three species of sunbird, Koel, Coppersmith Barbet and Flameback Woodpecker. The garden bird list is sure to grow with each day spent at Mirissa.

Day 10

Monday

Mirissa



The Beach at Mirissa

Thirty minute drive from the hotel is the small fishing port of Mirissa and it is here that we board a whale-watching vessel for a four hour morning excursion in search of Blue Whales. The distance sailed will very much depend on whale sightings and sea conditions but we may go up to ten kilometers offshore although it is more likely that most observations will be much closer to land. The seas off Sri Lanka are rich in marine life but it is only comparatively recently that scientists have discovered the regular appearances of Blue Whales between November and early April. Up to a dozen or more of these enigmatic ocean wanderers may be lingering off the coast and we will rely on

our skipper's expertise to locate as many individuals as possible during each excursion. Despite their huge bulk, Blue Whales have a very small dorsal fin and are not always easy to find on the surface but they do have an extremely tall columnar blow and it is this 9 metre high plume of condensed water vapour that usually betrays the presence of a whale. Blue Whales also tend to display their huge curved tail flukes before each dive and this again is an indicator of where to look. The captain will take the boat as close as he can without causing disturbance to the whales and we will hope that by drifting with the current we can allow the creatures to approach alongside the vessel, hopefully near enough to be able to smell their distinctive pungent breath! We may have to content ourselves with longer distance views on this first outing but there will be more chances for close-ups on the following days. Whilst Blue Whales will be our principal quarry, many other cetacea occur in these waters and species observed during the 2011 season included; Bryde's, Sperm and Short-finned Pilot Whales, Bottlenosed Dolphins, Rissos's Dolphins and Spinner Dolphins, the latter sometimes in pods numbering several hundred animals. Birdlife is less plentiful at this time of year but possibilities include Flesh-footed and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Pomarine Skua, Crested, Bridled and White-winged Black Terns.

The sailing will last about 3-4 hours and on return to land we will retire for a leisurely lunch before enjoying the birding around the resort. There are no boat rides in the afternoon as outings are less productive and the sea can be rough, please note boat rides are weather dependent and can be cancelled without prior notice. At the end of our boat trip as we return to the Koggala Beach Hotel we will hope to be celebrating some memorable encounters with the largest creature on



Blue Whale and remoras

earth.

On one of the afternoon in Mirissa we will enjoy an excursion to Galle, which was a thriving port long before colonial times; on the southwest of the country, it attracted Arabs, Persians, Romans and Greeks on their way across the Indian Ocean. In 1505 the Portuguese attacked and settled the town, 135 years later conceding it to the Dutch, who built the famous fort. In 1796 the British took over and used the fort as their headquarters. Today, Galle Fort is the old part of the city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the best preserved colonial sea fortress in Asia. It is a cosy little town in its own right with narrow streets, churches, cloistered courtyards and shuttered mansions standing testament to their colonial past. Galle Fort has recently received a lot of investment from expatriates living in South East Asia and is now bristling with boutique hotels, art galleries, tiny shops, cafes and restaurants. There are several museums as well as the Dutch Reformed Church and the lively Arab Quarter. The entrances to Galle National Maritime Museum and Fort are not included and can be paid locally. At the time of writing there is no entrance fees to visit Galle Fort and £4 to visit Galle National Maritime Museum.



Fishing boats with Galle Fort behind

Day 11

Tuesday

Mirissa

Today in the morning we will repeat the whale-watching excursion from Mirissa and with the ever-changing ocean will hope for further Blue Whale sightings as well as appearances by other whales, dolphins and birds. In characteristic fashion, the dolphins often swim in the bow-wave of the vessel offering spectacular views as they do so. The huge pods of Spinner Dolphins are not a predictable phenomenon but if we are fortunate enough to witness one of these there will be plenty of employment for cameras as the seas become a turmoil of activity and scores, or even hundreds, of dolphins progress across the ocean in a loose assembly, leaping out of the water at great speed as they pursue their prey. Sea conditions in March and early April are usually calm allowing the best chances for observations and making whale 'spouts' visible over a long distance. Seas may however be a little rougher in November and December.



Koggala Beach Hotel



Indian Flying Foxes

After lunch at the hotel we will spend the cooler end of the afternoon birdwatching in the local areas where a wide range of species is possible including Red-wattled Lapwing and White-breasted Waterhen, Purple coot, terns and waterbirds as well as more forest inhabitants. Alternatively tour members may choose to relax or swim off the beach. Later in the day we can look for Indian Flying Foxes as the night settles and maybe witness enormous Indian Flying Foxes flapping off from their roost site to begin some nocturnal foraging. These huge, fruit-eating bats are widespread on the island but declining in numbers and colonies are always a welcome sight on our tours.

Day 12

Wednesday

Katunayake

Our plans today are somewhat flexible depending upon the success of the previous days. If necessary, a further whale-watching trip could be taken at extra cost but hopefully we will have achieved our marine objectives and can conclude our tour. Eventually we can postpone the moment no longer and will set off on the southern highway for a four hour drive north. Upon arrival in Katunayake, we will check into our 4-star The Gateway Airport Garden Hotel Colombo for some rest and a good night's sleep!

Day 13

Thursday

London

We have a mid-morning transfer to Katunayake airport to catch our afternoon Sri Lankan direct flight to London. We are due to arrive in London by early evening.

Grading

The tour is graded A/B with day walks only. Most of the walks are suitable for all ages and for all degrees of fitness, however the walking at Sinharaja and Horton Plains will be more strenuous.

Climate

Generally hot and sunny with temperatures in the low country ranging from 25°C to 35°C with high humidity, particularly in the Wet Zone. Temperatures decrease in the hills to a range of 10°C-16°C around Nuwara Eliya. Rain can occur at any time but is not usually prolonged outside the monsoon seasons although showers are an almost daily occurrence at Sinharaja.

Food & accommodation

We use standard tourist hotels/Rest Houses with private facilities throughout the tour. The Blue Magpie Lodge at Sinharaja is very simple but comfortable accommodation close to the forest. Rooms have private facilities but both plumbing and electricity can be erratic at this remote location!

Extra expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday: tips, and all items of a more personal nature such as drinks, laundry and souvenirs.

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) visa for Sri Lanka, which is obtainable in advance by filling the ETA form on <http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/>. We recommend that you contact your doctor for the latest up-to-the-minute advice on the relevant vaccinations needed for Sri Lanka. Updated information on vaccinations is also available on <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/>.

Mammal, bird & plant lists

Where available these are automatically provided on booking, and will gladly be sent to you before, if you wish for a more detailed preview.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Sri Lanka. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.fco.gov.uk/travel or telephone 0870 6060290 regularly prior to travel.

Flights

We use scheduled Sri Lankan Airlines direct flights for all our tours to Sri Lanka. All these flights depart from London Heathrow. If you wish to travel from Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen there will be an additional charge of around £295 and these flights will be with British Airways.

The sole disadvantage of Sri Lankan Airlines flights to Sri Lanka is that sometimes the service is slow and special requests for seats and meals are not easily available. If you would prefer to fly with Emirates or Qatar Airways, please note that these flights are not direct. If you wish to fly with Emirates or Qatar Airways, we will gladly arrange it for you, but please give us plenty of warning and you can expect to pay between £200 and £300 extra for these indirect flights. Due to a difference in arrival and departure times, you will also be expected to pay an extra £250 per person (minimum two people are required) for the additional transfer fees. These prices are only approximate and may vary according to availability and season. We will be pleased to approach the respective airline for you and offer a quote on request.

If you would prefer to travel in Business class (normally available at a supplement charge of around £2,995).

Please note that, your return flight might not connect with British Airways flights to regional airports, and you may require an extra night in London.

If you would like to travel from one of the above regional airports and/or fly in business class, please let us know at the time of booking so that we can make the necessary arrangements and obtain a competitive fare.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking. Please note that our Sri Lanka trips tend to book up a long time in advance. Please book as early as possible to avoid disappointment. Please note that as all our Bargain Selection tours are carefully costed on maximum group sizes to maximise value for money, it may be necessary to impose a small group surcharge of up to 10% on groups falling short of 5.

More possible extensions

The principal aim of the above tour itinerary is to try and find as many of the island endemic birds as possible but participants wishing to explore a little more of Sri Lanka's rich natural history may wish to extend their holiday and we will be glad to discuss the options available. Two more possible itineraries are detailed below:

Option One - History & Birds

Cost: £1,495 per person, twin share (based on a minimum of 4 participants)

Single room supplement: £395

- Day 10 Depart from Airport and drive north to Sigiriya for two nights. Afternoon climb Sigiriya Rock or bird-watch in surrounding forest
- Day 11 Second day in Sigiriya area with optional day excursion to Polonnaruwa.
- Day 12 Drive to Anuradhapura for two night stay - afternoon visit to ancient city.
- Day 13 Day at Anuradhapura and Mihintale.
- Day 14 Morning at Anuradhapura - later return to Colombo Airport Hotel.
- Day 15 Return flight to London.

Option Two - Southern Dry Zone

Cost: £1,495 per person, twin share (based on a minimum of 4 participants)

Single room supplement: £395

- Day 9 After visiting Bodhinagala Forest return to Ratnapura for one night.
- Day 10 Continue journey to Yala Safari Inn, birding en route.
- Day 11 Morning drive in Yala National Park - afternoon transfer to Tissamaharama.
- Day 12 Day visiting Tissamaharama & Deberawewa Tanks.
- Day 13 Bundala Reserve - overnight Tissamaharama

Day 14 Return to Colombo Airport Hotel.

Day 15 Return flight to London.

Highlights from August:

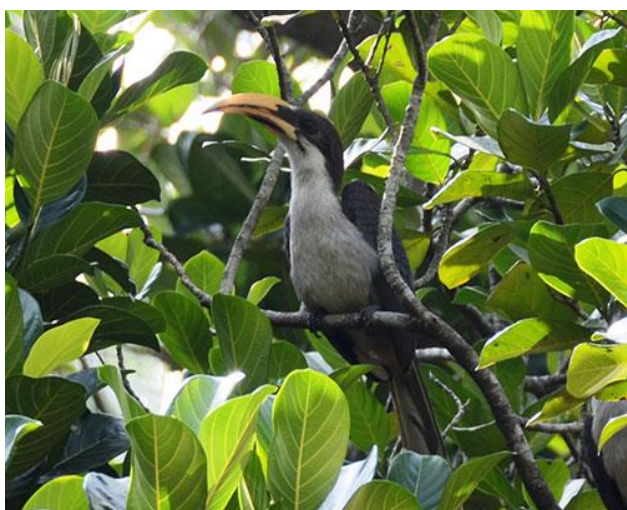
An impressive total of 31 of the 33 endemic birds of Sri Lanka were seen during this tour. We only missed Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon and Sri Lanka Spurfowl due to the unusual inclement weather. A rare and interesting sighting on the tour was to see Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush three metres above ground, breaking character from a ground dwelling bird, and we were there to witness it. Although the weather was not in our favour, we managed to spot a total of 152 species of birds along with 17 mammal species and 11 species of reptiles and amphibians, making the tour an all-round success.



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie



Green-billed Coucal



Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill



Chestnut-backed Owlet

Highlights from November:

An impressive total of 33 of the 34 endemic birds of Sri Lanka were seen during this tour. We only missed Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush due to the unusual inclement weather. We managed to spot a total of 196 species of birds along with 20 mammal species and 13 species of reptiles and amphibians, making the tour an all-round success.

Highlights from January:

A close view of the Serendib Scops Owl and a single tree with Crimson, Yellow-fronted and Brown-headed Barbets were special sightings for most of the group, along with all 33 endemics seen on the tour. Overall we saw 159 bird species, 13 species of mammal and 10 of reptiles and amphibians, making the tour an all-round success.



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie



Green-billed Coucal



Dull-blue Flycatcher



Orange-billed Babbler

Highlights from August:

Whilst we had some spectacular views of Chestnut-backed Owlet, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill and many more of the endemics, our target of all 34 endemic bird species was foiled because of heavy unexpected showers that occurred due to a depression in the Bay of Bengal, which played havoc in the southern state of India and Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, we had an overall count of 158 species of birds, 15 mammal species and 11 of reptiles and amphibians.

Highlights from November:

Despite the island-wide bad weather with torrential downpours, all 34 endemics were captured in our sight. An early sighting of Serendib Scops Owl in Kitulgala was a great view. Red-faced Malkoha showed well, often coming down from the canopy and feeding on caterpillars. The elusive Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush was sighted in two locations well in the open, both male and female. The Blue Magpie graced us with its presence as we entered the Sinharaja Rainforest, followed by some good sightings of Yellow-fronted Barbet. Overall, in trying weather we managed to rack up a total of 185 Bird species, 19 Mammal species and eight Reptile & other species.



Brown-capped Babbler



Red-faced Malkoha



Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon



Chestnut-backed Owlet