

SRI LANKA WILDLIFE & SCENIC PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR ITINERARY

This tour itinerary prepare with personal experience of Landscape and wild life photography. You will personal guided by photography guide who know the locations by heart and will take you ideal time of the day to each destinations to cover sunrise and sunset photographs. Also this is covering most famous and most visited national park of Srilanka “Yala” for leopard trails photographs too. Also hotel accommodations going to allocate in the ideal photography locations and wild life friendly areas.

Day 1

The tour will begin in the morning at Colombo Airport and transfer to Negombo – 30mins drive approximately. **Negombo** is a seaside town located very closer to Colombo International Airport where you could photograph fishermen, traditional fishing catamarans, Old Catholic churches and Portuguese and Dutch architecture.

From Negombo we will make the three and a half hour transfer to Habarana for a three nights stay.

En route, we will visit the **Dambulla Cave Temples**, where we will be able to see the famous rock paintings and rock temples. The temples are comprised of five caves, which have been converted into shrine rooms. Within these rooms a collection of over 100 statues of Buddha is housed , surrounded by the ornately decorated walls. This spectacular site is worth visiting not just for its historical significance, but also for the beautiful views of the surrounding countryside.

Our hotel is beautifully designed and located in close proximity to Minneriya National Park. The large and elegantly designed rooms spread across the attractive grounds. The hotel overlooks the **Habarana lake**, where one can walk around the nature trails to the edge of the lake and the tree houses, providing fantastic opportunities to photograph a wide range of bird species such as Purple Heron, Common and Pied Kingfishers, the impressive White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Brahminy Kite and, if we are lucky, the superb Brown Fish-Owl. Among the reptiles, water and land monitors (huge lizards) are plentiful. Large numbers of Toque Macaques and Tufted Grey Langurs are also seen around the property, allowing fantastic opportunities to photograph primate behaviour. Asian Palm Civet, Golden Palm Civet and Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel are some of the other mammals seen regularly around the hotel.

Day 2

This morning we visit the world famous **Sigiriya ‘Lion’ Rock**. The dramatic story of this iconic rock centres around Prince Kasyappa, the son of King Dhatusena (459 – 477 AD). Being the King’s son by a non-royal consort, Kasyappa executed his own father to gain the throne. The Crown Prince, Mogaliana, fled to India in fear of his life. In order to protect himself from future attacks from the rightful king, Kasyappa made Sigiriya his capital and built a palace on the summit of the rock, elevated at around 650 feet. He then proceeded to use his artistic genius to create a vision of heaven on earth, making landscaped gardens with water pools, fountains and terraces. The moat around the Sigiriya sanctuary is another excellent site for photographing the Tufted Grey Langur and Toque Macaques, which are plentiful in the area and are

the most photogenic of subjects. Over 150 species of birds have also been recorded here, and there is sure to be something of interest to point the cameras at, such as a Crested Hawk Eagle or a Greater Racket Tailed Drongo.

Climbing this incredible stand alone rock monolith can be a rewarding experience, but photographically it may or may not be worthwhile, depending on your personal opinion. Photographs of the rock paintings are no longer allowed, and in some places the stairways can be crowded, but the panorama at the top of the rock is impressive. For those in the group that wish to make the climb, we can arrange for a guided walk to the top.

After lunch, we will make an afternoon game drive in **Minneriya National Park**. From July to October, anywhere from 100 to 300 Asian Elephants gather on the receding tank (lake) beds here. The gathering of the Elephants at Minneriya is an extremely impressive wildlife spectacle. The gathering provides a fantastic opportunity to photograph elephants in many different situations, such as young elephants and calves at play, big males interacting with the herds in their search for potential mates whilst others are drinking, bathing and playing in the water.

The open areas around the lake are excellent for photographing raptors including Brahminy Kite, Grey-headed Fishing-Eagle and the majestic White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Toque Macaque, Tufted Grey Langur, Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel, Jackal and Chital (Spotted Deer) are some of the other mammals that we are likely to see and may be able to photograph.

This evening there will be an optional post dinner excursion around the Sigiriya area to search for nocturnal creatures including Golden Palm Civets, Grey Slender Lorises, Eurasian Otters and if we are immensely lucky, Fishing Cat. The photographic opportunities for many of these animals may vary, depending on the encounters we enjoy, however an opportunity to see some of these creatures in their wild environment is very special.

Day 3

This morning we will visit **Polonnaruwa**, the medieval capital of Sri Lanka and a UNESCO World Heritage Site to boot. Here we will visit the world famous rock-cut Buddha statues of Gal Vihara as well as the Parakrama Samudra ('Sea of Parakrama') a 2500-hectare man made reservoir (with a capacity of 134 million cubic metres) built by King Parakramabahu I (1153 –1186 AD). Here, we will encounter troops of Toque Macaques, that were famously featured in both the BBC's Temple Troop and David Attenborough's Life of Mammals. Here, we will be intrigued by the power play between the Toque Macaques and Tufted Grey Langurs. Troops of the attractive northern race of the endemic Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys can also be found in this area.

In the afternoon, we will make another safari to **Minneriya National Park** to once again enjoy photographing the 'gathering of elephants' and its other wildlife.

Day 4

Today will transfer to Kandy – 2 hours drive approximately. Kandy is the most venerated and visited city of Sri Lanka as it houses Lord Buddha's tooth relic in Kandy Royal Palace, now a temple. Kandy is known as the capital of hill country of Sri Lanka. On the way visit **Muthu Mariamman Hindu Temple** in Matale. Evening visit **Temple of Tooth relic** in Kandy during the sermon.

Day 5

Today we will be heading to **Nuwara Eliya town** to photograph British built bungalows, buildings in the town, tea estates, and a market followed by visit to a **tea plantation, factory and estate** to photograph tea plucking and producing experience.

Day 6

Early morning leaving to **Horton Plains** then 09 kms trekking to enjoy nature, Then we will get on board the **scenic train to Ella from Nanu Oya**. This is a very scenic train route where you could photograph the moving locomotive through tea plantation, villages and forests. The railway line was built by British's during their colonial days to transport tea harvest to Colombo Port. We will go to the **Nine Arches Bridge** to take some photographs when the train is passing the bridge.

Days 7 - 8

After breakfast leaving to Climb **Little Adam's Peak** to enjoy magnificent landscaping and take photograph of the sunrise. Then we will proceed to Yala, on the way stop at **Ravana Falls**. En route visit **Kataragama**, an important religious site for Buddhist's and Hindu's. Photograph various temples and shrines of various deities of Hindu culture.

Sun-downer in Yala Camp, enjoy gin and tonic or local arrack cocktail topped with Ginger Beer.

During our five full days at Yala, our primary focus will be morning and afternoon safaris into **Yala National Park**. Yala is undoubtedly Sri Lanka's most famous national park and the best in Sri Lanka for viewing a wide variety of animals. It is a wonderful place with a real diversity of habitats from scrub jungle and rocky outcrops, to lakes, brackish lagoons and riverine habitat.

Yala National Park (or Ruhuna National Park as it is sometimes known) is huge, but, as some parts of this park are very busy, it pays to go there with expert guides who know the quieter areas that offer great photographic opportunities. We can claim truly invaluable expertise in this respect. Go to Yala with Wild

Images and you are not going to experience the crowds day after day like so many visitors have to. It will make such a difference to your memories of Yala, never mind the wildlife photography opportunities!

Yala's star attraction, and one of the main reasons for our visit, is undoubtedly the Leopard. Yala West has one of the highest densities of Leopards in the world and is possibly the best place on earth to see and photograph this usually elusive species in the wild. Early mornings and late afternoons are usually the best times to find these spectacular cats: walking along the roads; lying on a rocky outcrop; having a drink in one of the many waterholes; resting with limbs dangling from a tree or simply just strolling through the jungle. Each encounter is different but every one a memorable event! Most years there are also one or two sets of cubs that at times perform for the cameras, providing photographers a great opportunity for photographing social and interactive behaviour of an animal which usually leads a solitary existence.

Asian Elephant can also be seen here, though in smaller numbers and smaller groups than at Minneriya. A highlight though is to photograph the large tuskers, of which there are around ten in the park. Unlike in Africa and in most parts of Asia only 7% of male elephants in Sri Lanka bear tusks!

Yala's third star attraction is the magnificent Sloth Bear, and there is usually an individual, or mother Sloth Bear with cubs, which is tolerant of vehicles. During our series of game drives we will have an excellent chance of connecting with this seldom seen creature. Indeed, in June and July, when the Palu Trees begin to bear ripe fruit, Sloth Bears can be seen regularly.

Other conspicuous wildlife regularly seen at Yala which we may be able to point the lenses at include the attractive Chital (or Spotted Deer), the large Sambar, Golden Jackal, Wild Boar, Tufted Grey Langur, Toque Macaque, Stripe-necked and Ruddy Mongooses and Black-naped Hare. Some pretty impressive reptiles are likely to crop up too, namely Marsh Crocodile and some rather large monitor lizards which look almost as dangerous as they scamper away noisily at high speed!

And then of course there are the birds. Yala has a very rich and varied avifauna, and over 300 species are known from the park. As we travel around on our morning and afternoon safaris we will no doubt have opportunities to photograph a good number of these, with possibilities including such charismatic species as Ceylon Junglefowl and Great Thick-knee, and we may get to see some of the dry zone specialities such as Sirkeer and Blue-faced Malkohas and Malabar Pied Hornbill at close quarters

In addition, during the 'down' time between our safari drives, for those not intent on resting, relaxing or working on their photos, there will be time to explore the environment around the hotels, where many avian surprises may lurk.

Day 9

Our final photography session will be at a lagoon near our hotel. Here we should be able to get very close to Spot-billed Pelicans, handsome Painted Storks and many other birds, as well as some rather approachable crocodiles. The wildlife that has been observed from the hotel premises is impressive and can include Wild Boar, Asian Elephant as well as buffalos and crocodiles that wallow in the nearby tank. Even Leopards and Sloth Bears are seen from time to time!

Day 10

This morning we will transfer to the south coastal area, Mirissa , Weligama & Galle .

Photograph the most famous photographic shot of Sri Lanka, **The Stilt Fishermen**. Age old traditional way of fishing by sitting on a pole fixed to the shallow bottom of the sea where the fisher men sit to make their daily catch. Then we visit Portuguese built Fortress in 1500's and it's ramparts. **Galle Fort** is now home for many Boutique hotels and this is an architectural masterpiece. You can see many coffee shops, roadside bars, cafes and antique shops.

From Galle we drive overland through the stunning Sri Lankan countryside to the **World Heritage listed forests of Sinharaja**. It will take over half a day to drive between Yala and Sinharaja, allowing for a few stops. We will arrive at our lodge near the edge of the reserve in time for dinner.

Day 11

We will arrange for an early breakfast at our lodge so we can arrive at the entrance to **Sinharaja** for when the gates open. The attractive park building at the entrance has a tiny water pool which is fed by a tiny cascade. It is worth checking this pool for smaller creatures like Damselflies, frogs, bamboo orchids and water lilies. Checkered Keelback snakes can also be found swimming freely between the lily pads or around the rocks at the bottom of the cascade.

Once the park has opened, we will cross a bridge over the river and start our gentle walk uphill searching for rainforest wildlife including butterflies, snakes, millipedes and birds. We will be looking for and listening out for two of Sinharaja's most iconic bird species – the Blue Magpie and Red-faced Malkoha but we will also be listening for 'bird waves' or mixed feeding flocks of birds in the canopy. If we chance upon one of these we may find Orange-billed Babblers, Crested Drongos and Malabar Trogons on top of the targeted Blue Magpies and Red-faced Malkohas. It is worth watching these feeding flocks for the large Grizzled Giant Squirrel which can sometimes be found feeding in the melee of birds.

On a quick check around your feet while you walk the trails of Sinharaja, you may spot curious Box Millipedes that roll up into a seed pod like ball if they feel threatened. Sinharaja is home to such an astonishing variety of wildlife, it is worth spending time here to photograph the butterflies, look for curious Kangaroo Lizards, check the vines for Green Vine Snake and Sri Lankan Green Pit Viper. On the path verges you might find the non-poisonous Giant Millipedes or a highly poisonous Black Scorpion!

Day 12

After another early start, we will do a slightly more strenuous walk uphill to an alternative entrance to the park. Mornings in **Sinharaja** can often be misty so we will be listening for the haunting calls of the park's Purple-faced Leaf Monkeys echoing from the forests. If we hear some calling from the trails we will try to

find and photograph them. While normally shy it is possible to have closer encounters with these beautiful monkeys if you remain quiet and you move slowly.

In contrast, the park's resident Toque Macaques can often be a bit more cheeky and it is worth stopping if you hear any movement in the branches and leaves as Toque Macaques may be running through the canopy above you.

Further into the forest, if you are very lucky our guide may find a very shy, difficult to spot Sri Lankan Frogmouth. These tiny birds can so easily be initially mistaken as dead leaves but a trained eye will spot them. You need to watch for a dead leaf that turns its head!

Day 13

On our final day, we will depart Sinharaja after breakfast we return to Kalutara for a Scenic Coastal Train, to **Colombo** , relax in the rest of the day and you can make a **late afternoon city tour**.

Day 14

After Breakfast at the hotel, you will be transfer to Airport for departure according to your flight time.