

Sri Lanka - Highlands and Wildlife

Tour Organiser: Neil Wheadon

Saturday 06th to Monday 22nd March 2027

Sri Lanka has a lot to offer. This tour concentrates on great cycling through the central highlands and the opportunity to visit 4 National Parks, an elephant orphanage and a mangrove lined river all included in the price. Back up bus and guide included.

Itinerary

Saturday 06th March 2027 Arrive in Sri Lanka

The meeting point will be at Bandaranaike International Airport near Negombo, which is the main International airport in Sri Lanka. We shall leave at 14:00 for the two and a half hour transfer to Kandy. Staying 2 nights.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Sunday 07th March 2027 Explore Kandy

A day to explore Kandy and acclimatise to Sri Lanka. Kandy is Sri Lanka's cultural capital and is set around a tranquil lake. Top highlights include the sacred Temple of the Tooth, a stroll around Kandy Lake, and exploring the towering Bahirawakanda Buddha Statue.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 08th March 2027 Transfer to Wasgamuwa, evening safari

After breakfast we transfer to Wasgamuwa, taking approximately 2 hours 30 minutes. At our destination, we will reassemble the bicycles and if time allows, go for a short ride to acclimatise ourselves to Sri Lanka. To finish the day we will take a safari into Wasgamuwa National Park, famed for it's elephant herds and quieter than other parks.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel

- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 09th March 2027 Cycle to Mahiyanganaya 40km

We cycle south along very quiet roads that mostly parallel one of the many irrigation canals in Sri Lanka. Through Hettipola, Hasalaka and Mahiyanganaya we finish at Mapakada.

- Route distance: 56.0km
- Route altitude gain: 477m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 10th March 2027 Cycle to Ella

The Central Highlands are a beautiful area in Sri Lanka. Ella is our destination. Much of the day is ascent, but the climbing is gradual

- Route distance: 74.0km
- Route altitude gain: 2037m
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 11th March 2027 Circular ride from Ella going east to Maymallyay

Ella has its charms. There is a mountain railway, a low peak to walk and a town to explore. An optional cycle ride is offered taking in extensive views and quiet roads.

- Route distance: 69.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1865m
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 12th March 2027 Cycle to Nuwari Eliya 63km

Today we head west, leaving Ella, passing tea plantations and distant views, to arrive at the large town of Bandarawela. At Welimada, we start a long steady climb to Nuwara Eliya, to arrive in a cool hill country town surrounded by tea plantations.

- Route distance: 59.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1874m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 13th March 2027 Circular Ride from Nuwari Eliya 63km

Nuwara Eliya is a misty hill-country town famous for its cool climate and emerald tea plantations. Heading north west we will descend to one of the few that are open to the public. Having visited, you have a few options. You can return the way you came to spend the afternoon exploring Nuwara Eliya or continue further down towards Kotmale reservoir.

At this point we will return via a delightful back road winding its way through other tea plantations to pass Dansinan Falls.

- Route distance: 67.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1844m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 14th March 2027 Cycle to Hapatale 50km

Leaving Nuwara Elya, we will take the long fast descent to Keppetipola, followed by a delightful quiet road traversing a valley full of rice fields and plantations. After Diyathalawa, we take a beautiful quiet road sounded by tea plantations to the railway town of Hapatale with fabulous southerley views where we will spend the night.

- Route distance: 62.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1097m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 15th March 2027 Cycle to Udawalawe.

We're on top of a hill at Hapatule, so much of the day is descent. Lovely views for the first 10km to the left and it is possible to see the sea on the south coast. Through Balagoda to continue to Udawalawe where we shall spend two nights.

- Route distance: 96.0km
- Route altitude gain: 946m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 16th March 2027 Elephant orphanage/evening safari

In the morning we will visit the elephant orphanage. Baby elephants are reared in groups with as little human contact as possible, until they are ready for release back into the wild. Watch as they enjoy their morning feed. In the late afternoon, we will take a half day jeep safari in Udawalawe National Park.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 17th March 2027 Cycle to Yala

Today we head towards Yala National Park, heading east towards Thanamalwila. Turning south east towards the park, we pass through Lunugamvehera before finishing on the outskirts of Mahasenpura where a swimming pool awaits.

- Route distance: 63.0km
- Route altitude gain: 259m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 18th March 2027 Explore the iconic Yala National Park

An early start signals a full day safari to Yala National Park. There is a multitude of wildlife in Sri Lanka's iconic park and if we are lucky, we may spot a leopard

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Friday 19th March 2027 Transfer to Bentota

A morning safari to Bundala National Park. Considerably quieter than Yala and famed for its birdlife, however there are other animals present including elephants and crocodiles. In the afternoon we will transfer to Bentota. The transfer will take about two and a half hours. If we have time we will stop at a turtle hatchery and/or the lovely city of Galle

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 20th March 2027 Wildlife and beaches

An early morning river boat safari along the mangrove backwaters of the Bentota River. In the afternoon enjoy the beach

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 21st March 2027 Transfer to airport

We transfer back to Bandaranaike International Airport, departing at 08:30. The journey utilises an expressway and should take approximately 2 hours

- No cycling
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: (B)

Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £1910



Payment Schedule

A deposit of £400 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £1510 per person to be paid by 1st December 2026

Price includes:

- Air Conditioned Coaster back up bus
- Bike transfer at the start and end of the tour (2 transfers)
- Wasgamuwa National Park Safari with 4 jeeps (half day)
- Udawalawe National Park Safari with 4 jeeps (half day)
- Yala National Park Safari with 4 jeeps (full day) including lunch
- Bundala national Park Safari with 4 jeeps (half day)
- Entrance to the Elephant transit home in Udawalawe
- River Boat safari in Bentota - 3 boats (half day)
- Water - 2 litres a day
- Single Supplement (if available) £500
- 15 Breakfasts
- 11 Dinners
- 15 nights accommodation on a twin shared basis
- Tips for guide and driver

Price does not include:

- Travel to Bandaranaike International Airport
- Travel from Bandaranaike International Airport
- Any other meals or refreshments, including drinks at the evening meals
- Lunches (Budget £2-£5)
- Entry fees not specified in the prospectus
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Any other personal expenses
- Tips for the guides on the safari trips (budget \$15 per safari)

Cancellations

Written Notice Received

Cancellation Charge

Before 1st December 2026

Deposit (£400)

Between 1st December and Departure

Total tour cost (£1910) 100%

The price of £1910 (land only) is based on a minimum number of 10 people taking part in the holiday and is calculated at a rate of 1 GBP = 445.139 LKR to £1 Sterling (based on exchange rates published <https://www.xe.com/currencycharts> on Monday 31st August



2026; please note Booking Conditions). If there are insufficient bookings by Tuesday 01st December 2026, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Holiday Information

Grade and area Covered by the Holiday

This holiday is classed as Moderately energetic/grade 5

From our base in Sri Lanka we will explore the central and southwesterly areas in a series of day rides through hilly to flat terrain. The central mountains of Sri Lanka are full of tea plantations

Travel and Communication

The tour starts and finishes at Bandaranaike International Airport which is the main international airport serving Sri Lanka.

Travel to the start and from the finish is not included in this holiday. It is important that you note that neither the Tour Organiser nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements, you should ensure that the tour is definately going ahead.

Should there be insufficient bookings or pandemic travel restrictions re-imposed, we reserve the right to cancel the tour at any time. It is therefore recommended that you book flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been told that the tour will go ahead. In the event of the tour being cancelled, we not be responsible for any losses incurred outside what you pay us.

Transfer to and from Bandaranaike International Airport is included in this holiday as is the transfer of your bicycle.

Accommodation

We are staying in a variety of accommodations. Reasonable quality locally-owned hotels and larger guesthouses will be used, two sharing double or twin rooms with air conditioning or ceiling fans and ensuite facilities, though these will seldom be up to western standards. There is a 4 star hotels in Nuwari Elya, an upscale resort hotel in Udawalawe and a resort hotel in Wasgamuwa. Swimming pools are available in these locations as well as Yala and Bentota. The lodge in Ella is a favourite due to its location, food and rural feel.



Meals, Health and Diet

Breakfast is provided in all the places we are staying. A typical breakfast is bread, eggs and fruit, typically bananas and mango. Places vary though and more may be offered at some places

Lunch can be a bakery item or sandwiches. We pass through some towns and these can be collected and added to the back up bus as required.

Dinners are usually curries, which are of excellent quality, many aren't overly spiced and there will be vegetarian options.

Biscuits, bread and fruit can usually be found, and there are many wayside restaurants with extraordinarily reasonable prices. Imported lager, wine or spirits will be available most evenings; prices tend to be similar to those in the UK. Cheaper options are locally-produced lager and spirits. Tea, coffee, soft drinks and freshly squeezed fruit juice are widely available. You are advised to drink only bottled water, and a free supply will be available on the back-up coach for use when cycling.

We will be travelling through rural areas and will stop at cafes/bakeries during the rides wherever possible but you should buy and carry sufficient food and drink for lunch in case of emergencies.

Check which meals are provided in the payment schedule and ensure you have access to sufficient monies to cover any meals you will need to buy.

Check you have informed the tour organiser of any dietary requirements in the booking form.

Please remember to pack any medications that you need to take regularly

Heath - please check the current foreign office advice for Sri Lanka

Cycles and Equipment

A lightweight mountain bike, hybrid, tandem or touring bike with a bottom gear of 27 inches or less and robust 28/32mm tyres is recommended. Mudguards are optional. Please ensure that your bike is in good working order, paying particular attention to the wheels, tyres and brakes bringing tools and spares for basic repairs and maintenance, including two inner tubes, a spare gear cable, split link and brake pads. Lights will be useful, as it gets dark at about 1830, and they are an added safety feature in misty or rainy conditions. Luggage will be carried in the back-up coach, but you will need to be able to carry spare clothing, camera, money and emergency food and spares on the bike. Bikes may be transferred in a open top lorry and, although we will try and oversee their safe packing, they may incur scrapes and scratches.

Ride and Rest Days

This holiday is for 16 days and has 7 rest days.





This is a moving on holiday staying at 9 different locations.

Most of the roads are minor used by rural and tourist traffic, but we will be using a few larger roads. These are not the same as the roads in the UK, dual carriageways are rare and will not be used, they are quieter and slower paced.

It is essential to get out on your bike and do some 80km rides before the tour starts.

There will be some steep descents and a few descents are very long, so you should be able to negotiate these safely.

Please note it may not always be possible to follow the itinerary exactly due to road works or weather etc, as things do not always go as planned. In these circumstances, you will be advised of alternative arrangements.

The organiser will not always be at the front of the group, but may be further back as circumstances require, so you will need to be aware of the route and the likely stopping places.

Over half of the holiday will be spent cycling, but there will be plenty of time for photo stops and to meet the friendly Sinhalese as they go about their daily lives. There may be one or two led groups if required or the group can meet up at key junctions and lunch stops. The back-up coach will leap-frog from back to front to make sure everyone is OK, has plenty of water and to arrange planned stops. It will have space to take some bikes and riders should anyone prefer not to cycle all or part of a day. The terrain is varied with long flat roads and long steep climbs in the central highlands. Road surfaces are usually reasonable, but there will be several rough sections and the occasional unsurfaced track. Traffic volumes will be low by Western standards but will increase around major settlements and tourist areas.

Weather, Clothing and Culture

Daytime temperatures remain fairly constant at about 26-30C, and it is usually very humid. Temperatures drop to a more pleasant 14-17C in the hill country, and it can be colder at night. The main variable is rainfall. This tour is planned for what has typically been the dry season with little or no rain. However, torrential downpours and longer wet periods have occurred in recent years. Wet and misty conditions are also possible in the hill region at any time of year. You are recommended to take clothes suitable for hot and humid tropical conditions, but also pack an extra warm layer for the cooler evenings and a lightweight waterproof in case it rains and for the long descents from the mountains. You will be required to cover your legs and shoulders when visiting temples. Long sleeved shirts and trousers are therefore useful and provide added protection from mosquitoes in the evenings. High factor sun cream and head protection against the sun is strongly recommended. We strongly recommend wearing a cycle helmet.



Maps and Guides

GPX files will be provided for GPS devices, and mapping of Sri Lanka for Garmins can be provided upon request. Maps by Nelles Verlag 1:450,000 and Berndtson & Berndtson 1:500,000 are useful, but the Rough Guide 1:500,000 map is probably the best. Various companies provide guidebooks, but the best choices would appear to be those produced by Rough Guide and Lonely Planet.

Travel Insurance and Vaccination

For UK nationals travelling abroad, travel insurance is essential. Our Booking Conditions stipulate that, for holidays outside the UK, travel insurance is mandatory. Bikexplore cannot accept responsibility for any costs that may be incurred due to insufficient insurance cover. Current Covid and influenza vaccinations are recommended for participants of 75 years of age and over and those deemed medically vulnerable. Before booking you should check the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice or on 0845 850 2829.

Passport, Visa and Monies

All nationalities must hold a passport with at least six months validity on the date of their return to their home country. A visa is required, please ensure you use the official government site (<https://eta.gov.lk/slvisa/>) which you will be responsible for obtaining on-line before departure. There are no compulsory health-related requirements for foreign visitors, although it is strongly recommended that you are vaccinated against Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Polio, Tetanus and Diphtheria. You should contact your doctor at least three months prior to travel to obtain these vaccinations and the latest advice to travellers.

The local currency is the Sri Lankan rupee. These can be bought in advance in the UK. The best currencies to take to exchange are dollars or pounds.

Tour Organiser Contact details

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This is my 22nd year organising cycling holidays, having visited Sri Lanka on 3 previous occasions. I enjoy cycle touring for the scenery and the cuisine rather than to get the miles in, and my style is to lead from the back armed with a guidebook and camera.