

Sri Lanka

Elephants, Eagles and Sperm Whales!



From elephants and leopards to hornbills, eagles, turtles, whales and dolphins, students will be face to face with animals and birds of all shapes and sizes in their natural environments during this fascinating 10-day biology field trip. Education is at the heart of this expedition as students learn the importance of the country's ecosystems and the measures being taken to preserve its wildlife. After getting up close to nature through trekking, safari tours and sanctuary visits, the expedition will conclude with a relaxing stay on the south coast with a chance to swim off the island's coral reef. An eye opening trip which will stay with students forever.



Recommended itinerary:

Culture shock rating: 
Physical rating: 

Day 1: Arrive Sri Lanka Upon arrival in Sri Lanka, we will transfer directly to our hotel. Depending on our time of arrival, there might be a chance to explore Colombo - Sri Lanka's vibrant capital. After an evening meal at our hotel, there will be the opportunity to listen to a fascinating lecture on natural history, delivered by a local expert.

Day 2: Colombo to Sinharaja (200 km / approx 4 hours) After breakfast, we will begin our journey to the Sinharaja Rainforest. After checking in to our hotel, we will get our first taste of our new tropical surroundings with a beautiful walk up to a nearby waterfall. We will also have the chance to learn about the local industries in the area, such the extraction of treacle from the fishtail palm tree. Our dinner and overnight stay will be at the Blue Magpie Hotel.

Day 3: Sinharaja Rain Forest The Sinharaja Forest Reserve is one of the least disturbed and biologically unique lowland rainforests now remaining in Sri Lanka; it is surrounded by 22 villages with a population of approximately 5000 people. Our day will start with a very early breakfast before embarking on a 12 km exploration into this unique forest. After a long but exhilarating day, we will return to our hotel where we will enjoy a well-deserved dinner.

Day 4: Sinharaja to Udawalawe (70km / 3 hours) After breakfast, we will head off to the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home - a sanctuary for up to 35 baby orphan elephants who have become separated from their mothers. The centre provides a home for these baby elephants, ensuring that they receive food and medical care and, when strong enough, they are released back into their natural environment. We will have the chance to watch the elephants' feeding hour, when the small elephants rush to drink milk and play with their mates - a beautiful and entertaining sight! We will then proceed to the Udawalawe Camp, on the edge of the national park, from where we will enjoy our first safari into the Udawalawe National Park.

Day 5: Udawalawe National Park The Udawalawe National Park is in the southern dry zone of Sri Lanka and spans approximately 31,000 hectares. It is not unusual to see herds gather to feed and bathe at the waterholes in the park. With approximately 400 elephants residing within the park's boundaries, it is an amazing and unforgettable experience to witness these elephants, both adults and young in their natural habitat.

The August 2011 census of Asian elephants in Sri Lanka stated that there were approximately 5800 of these animals living on the island's shores. In addition to the main attraction, the Park is home to many water buffalo, water monitor lizards, sambar deer, monkeys and the occasional leopard. It is also an exciting location for bird enthusiasts; an incredible variety of bird species inhabit the park and many others pass through on their migratory routes. A four wheel open-top safari is the best way to experience the natural wonders that this protected reserve has to offer.

Day 6: Udawalawa to Yala (80km / approx 2 hours) After breakfast, we will proceed to Yala National Park - the second largest national park in Sri Lanka, where we will meet local farmers who will talk to us about the Yala Leopard Project, and the issues surrounding the so called 'leopard/human conflict'. Unfortunately, this is a serious issue for the rural communities living on the outskirts of the National Park. A decrease in habitat and wild prey has caused an increase in the number of leopard attacks on domestic animals and cattle in nearby villages. The local population does not understand this big predator mainly due to these attacks on their cattle, and consequently, there have been a number of human attacks on leopards. This project is therefore about educating farmers, schoolchildren and local authorities with regards to the importance of leopards in ecosystems. The objective will be to develop the local economy and increase leopards' conservation efficiency.

In the evening, we will enjoy a safari out into the national park followed by dinner at our campsite.

Day 7: Yala We will start the day with a 'take-away' breakfast before embarking on a full day safari. Yala was designated a wildlife sanctuary in 1900 and is best known for its variety of wild animals; it is also important for the conservation of Sri Lankan elephants, Sri Lankan leopards and aquatic birds. On arrival in Yala, we will meet local farmers who will give us an understanding of the leopard situation in this area. We will look out for pugmarks (footprints) and other clues that leopards are ever present in this area.

We will then enjoy an evening visit to the Katharagama Shrine, where we will explore the connection between animals and Gods; a debate will also be encouraged amongst the group on faith virus science.

Day 8: Yala to Tangalle (100km / approx. 2.5 hours) After breakfast, we will make the 100km journey to Tangalle and upon arrival, we will check in to our hotel. After lunch, we will head to the ancient port of Galle, also known as being Sri Lanka's first international commerce and trade centre. Today Galle is the bustling provincial capital and administrative centre of the south. It is famous for its beautiful Unawatuna Bay, where the sea is protected by the reef, making swimming safe. We will enjoy a tour of the city, including the Galle Fort, which will be followed by a visit to the Turtle Conservation Project. We will then head back to our hotel in Tangalle, where we will enjoy dinner before resting for the evening.

Day 9: Tangalle to Mirissa to Tangalle (60km / approx 1.5 hours) We will enjoy our final day in Sri Lanka with a day of whale watching. The south coast of Sri Lanka is one of the very best places to see Blue Whales in the world, and Sri Lanka boasts the longest Blue Whale season. Sperm Whales are also present with pods. The whales are on their annual migratory route, travelling from the Horn of Africa up to the waters of the Arabian Sea, and can be seen from November to April in the waters around Sri Lanka. Other cetacean species that can be seen include the Bryde's Whale, Dwarf Sperm Whale, Spinner Dolphin, Striped Dolphin and the Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin. After this unforgettable experience, we will head back to the beach for swimming and relaxation before returning to our hotel in Tangalle.

Day 10: Return to UK We bid farewell to Sri Lanka as we head to the airport for our return flight to London.

Please note: It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides - he or she will want you to see their country in a good light.



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