

TRACKS SAFARIS

WE GET YOU CLOSER



**11 NIGHTS - SRI LANKA
BIRDING AND WILDLIFE**



- This itinerary has a combination of different wildlife aspects such as, birding, safaris in two national parks (Yala and Bundala), along with Whale watching in a private speed boat in Mirissa
- In addition to many birding experiences from the arrival on day 1 in Waikkala to Kitulgala on day 4, we have included an early morning trek to the Horton Plains National Park in Nuwara Eliya
- From Nuwara Eliya travel towards Yala - the deep South of Sri Lanka - for some wildlife. Kulu has just 6 air-conditioned tents and is located in the quieter end of the park with easy access to the second entrance of the Yala National Park known as Katagamuwa Entrance

- Drive to Sinharaja - the largest tract of natural rainforest in the country and recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sinharaja has a wide variety of endemic plant species some of which are only found in this region. Your accommodation will be at Rain Forest Eco Lodge - chalets are constructed using eco-friendly material with minimum disturbance to the natural habitat. Enjoy nature walks and bird-watching treks to the Sinharaja Rain Forest with easy access from the lodge
- Finally, you will be driven to Colombo for an overnight stay before your flight home.



DAY 1

On arrival into Colombo's Bandaranayake International Airport, Katunayake you will be welcomed by Tracks Safaris representatives and transferred to Waikkal (approximately 1 hour drive). Check-in to Wattura Resort and Spa.

Lunch at Wattura Resort and Spa and later in the afternoon, observe pelagic birds and shore birds around the property. A limited number of terns and gulls will be seen with White-bellied sea-eagles, and brahminy kites. **Spend 2 nights at Wattura Resort and Spa, Waikkal in a Suite on Half board basis**

Wattura Resort and Spa, Waikkal

Wattura Resort & Spa is a tranquil escape set on a seductive swathe of sand, tucked away between the Waikkal Beach and Gin Oya Estuary. The sublime architecture of this luxury boutique resort blends water elements throughout the property, creating an immersive water-themed experience.

DAY 2

Early morning and late afternoon boat ride at the Dutch canal off Waikkal through the mangroves to watch a variety of water birds

Explore the Gin Oya (river) and part of a 18th century Dutch canal lined with patches of mangrove (there are at least ten species in the area), riparian grasses, some old trees overhanging the water with nest holes, and patches of farmland. A variety of water birds including grey heron, purple heron, four species of kingfisher; white-throated kingfisher, common kingfisher, stork-billed and pied kingfisher, purple

swamphen, black bittern, yellow bittern, Indian pond heron, lesser cormorant, Indian darter are often seen. Migrant species seen here include rosy starling, blue-tailed bee-eater, barn swallows and the Indian paradise flycatcher. Endemics including the Ceylon swallow and the crimson-fronted barbet.

Overnight stay at Wattura Resort and Spa



DAY 3

After breakfast at Wattura Resort and Spa, leave for Kitulgala (approximately 3 hours' drive). There will be opportunistic birding spots enroute. Arrive in Kitulgala and check-in to Moksha Resort. Lunch at Moksha Resort. **Spend 2 nights at Moksha Resort, Kitulgala in a Deluxe Room on full board basis**

Moksha Resort, Kitulgala

True to the moniker Moksha, this luxurious boutique hotel - complete with 8 five-star class private rooms, restaurant, bar, pool, mini-badminton court and pool bar - is nestled in 5 acres of private woodlands to offer you a quiet and peaceful retreat. Moksha understands the positive impact nature has on one's health and wellbeing and have a carefully curated space where one can rest and recuperate, embraced by the gentle arms of Mother Nature.

Moksha is home to nature's wonders if you look close enough – From Crested Serpent Eagles, Brahminy Kites and Crested Hawk Eagles scouting their day's prey from the skies to Asian Giant Squirrels feeding their young with Jack Fruit growing around the property. From a host of endemic fish including the critically endangered Asoka Barbs that make our neighbouring "Liyan Oya" rivulet their home, to a host of rare trees such as the Ebony, Nedun, Kitul and Hora trees that make up our property, we are a delight for all nature lovers.

Afternoon birding at the Kelani Valley Forest Reserve (Access to the reserve is via a river crossing (on a dug-out canoe) for lowland endemics

The Kelani Valley Forest Reserve in Kitulgala was established to protect the watershed of the Kelani River and is home to many of Sri Lanka's endemic birds and amphibians. Access to the reserve is via a river crossing on a dug-out canoe. The endemics seen here include Sri Lanka hanging parrot, Layard's parakeet, green-billed coucal, chestnut-backed owlet, orange-billed babbler, spot-winged thrush and sub continental endemics such as the Malabar trogon and Sri Lanka frogmouth. It is also one of the few locations where the elusive Serendib scops owl may be seen.



DAY 4

Early morning and late afternoon birding around Kitulgala and the nearby Kelani valley forest reserve in search of lowland endemics. Target birds here include Sri Lanka hanging parrot, Layard's parakeet, green-billed coucal, chestnut-backed owlet, orange-billed babbler, spot-winged thrush and sub continental endemics such as the Malabar trogon and Sri Lanka frogmouth. It is also one of the few locations where the elusive Serendib scops owl may be seen.

Lunch and overnight stay at Moksha Resort, Kitulgala



DAY 5

After breakfast at Moksha Resort, leave for Nuwara Eliya (approximately 3 hours' drive). There will be opportunistic birding spots enroute. On arrival into Nuwara Eliya you will check-in to W15 Lake Gregory and lunch at the hotel.

In the afternoon enjoy birding in Victoria Park for highland species and endemics such as yellow-eared bulbul, Sri Lanka white-eye, velvet nuthatch, pied thrush. Migratory species such as Indian pita, Kashmir flycatcher and forest wagtail are also seen here during the winter months.

Spend 2 nights at W15 Lake Gregory, Nuwara Eliya in a Deluxe Garden view Room on Half board basis

W15 Lake Gregory, Nuwara Eliya

A luxury boutique bungalow in the hill country of Nuwara Eliya overlooking Victoria Lake, offering a sublime setting to experience relaxation and privacy immersed in luxurious surroundings and gardens.



DAY 6

Early morning at 05h30 make a pre-dawn start with a packed breakfast to visit Horton Plains National Park for primates, deer, highland bird species and endemics. (Approximately 1 hour drive).

(Note: Due to the condition of the road leading up to Horton Plains, you will be transferred from Nuwara Eliya to Horton Plains in Jeeps or mini vans.)

Arrive at the entrance of Horton Plains National Park and take a guided walk along the nature trails to a viewpoint known as World's End with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. On the walk back you can stop over to see the impressive Baker's fall in full flow.

Horton Plains National Park

Horton Plains is Sri Lanka's highest elevated national park lying approximately 2,200 m (7,000 ft) above sea level and comprises of cloud forests and open grassland. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and sambar; Sri Lanka's largest species of deer are encountered regularly in the plains close to the entrance while the shaggy coated bear monkey (the montane race of the purple-faced leaf monkey) is occasionally seen within the forested areas.

Birding in Horton Plains

A variety of wildlife including endemic rhino-horned and hump-nosed lizards, highland bird species including the Sri Lanka white-eye, dull-blue flycatcher and yellow-eared bulbul are found here and can be seen close to the entrance. Black eagles and Himalayan buzzards are also seen. Horton Plains is one of the few known locations where elusive highland endemics such as the 'arrenga' or Sri Lanka whistling thrush and Sri Lanka bush warbler can be observed.

Lunch at the W15 Lake Gregory and in the afternoon walking in Hakgala Botanical Gardens for endemic primates and highland species, including another chance for the Sri Lanka whistling thrush.

Hakgala Botanical Gardens

Hakgala botanical gardens was originally established for the purpose of cultivating Cinchona (quinine) in 1884. The name comes from a legend which says that Hanuman, god of the monkey, was sent to the Himalayas for a specific herb. He forgot what herb he wanted and decided to take a piece of the Himalayas back in his jaw, hoping that the herb will grow thereon. The gardens grow atop a mountain called Hakgala, which means "jaw rock". In the present day, thousands of flora varieties, including various orchids and roses, are planted here. With your naturalist guide you can look for wildlife such as coated shaggy bear' monkey and abundant highland avian endemics such as rufous-bellied eagle, pied thrush, large-billed leaf warbler, velvet-fronted nuthatch, various flycatchers, woodpecker's and the Sri Lanka wood pigeon.

Overnight stay at W15 Lake Gregory, Nuwara Eliya



DAY 7

After an early breakfast at W15 Lake Gregory, proceed on a long but scenic drive to Yala (approximately 4 ½ hours' drive). There will be opportunistic birding spots enroute – Garganey, lesser whistling-duck, pygmy goose, swamphens, moorhen, pheasant-tailed jacanas and kingfishers should be seen at roadside waterbodies. On arrival into Yala check in to Kulu Safari Camp in time for a late lunch.

In the afternoon enjoy a park drive traversing through the scrubby brush, vast grassland, and dense woodland and sparkling lakes.

Spend 2 nights at Kulu Safari Tented Camp, Yala in an A/C Tent and your stay is on All Inclusive Basis

Kulu Safari Tented Camp, Yala

Experience a unique alternative to standard hotel-based holidays. Sleep in customised tents with hot and cold showers and gourmet dining under the stars.

Located in exclusive surroundings on the edge of Yala National park the camp consists of 6 large air conditioned ensuite tents. Your all-inclusive package includes game drives, meals and beverages including local spirits, wine and beer.

Enjoy game drives in spacious and customised land cruisers which are modified to optimize both wildlife viewing and photography and are led by a team of experienced drivers and naturalists who are renowned for their deep understanding and knowledge of the Park and its diverse wildlife.



DAY 8

Early morning and late afternoon wildlife viewing and birding in Yala National Park in shared jeep. Overnight stay at Kulu Safari Tented Camp, Yala

Yala National Park

Yala National Park is located in the south-east corner of Sri Lanka and is the most popular destination for wildlife viewing. Leopards are the star attraction at Yala and Block I is believed to have one of the highest concentrations of these big cats in the world. Leopards however are elusive by nature and we recommend a minimum of three to four game drives to have the best opportunities for good encounters. Asian elephant, sloth bear, jackal, sambar, spotted deer, buffalo, wild boar and the grey langur are among the other larger mammals that may be seen.

Yala is also an excellent birding destination with close to 300 avian species recorded; Indian peafowl and Sri Lanka jungle fowl, changeable hawk eagle, painted stork, Malabar-pied hornbills, chestnut, green and blue-tailed bee-eaters are among the species seen regularly in Yala. The varied landscapes from lagoons, beaches to rocky outcrops immersed among the scrub jungle are a fascinating backdrop as you search out the park's wildlife.



DAY 9

Today, leave early morning with a packed breakfast for wildlife viewing from jeeps and birding for wetland species and winter migrants at the Bundala National Park (approximately 1 hour drive)

Bundala National Park.

Bundala is Sri Lanka's first RAMSAR declared wetland comprising of brackish lagoons, salt pans and scrub jungle and is a popular destination for birders. Bundala is best visited in the winter months from December – February when migrants including Caspian plover, red-necked phalarope, terek sandpiper, northern pintail, garganey, glossy ibis maybe seen. A large number of water birds and resident dry-zone species such as little grebe, watercock, greater thicknee and yellow-wattled lapwing can be seen year-round at Bundala. Mugger crocodiles and the larger and rarer estuarine crocodile may both be observed in Bundala with larger concentrations seen in the drier months around June – September. Asian elephant are also encountered here throughout the year in small numbers.

After exploring Bundala drive to Deniyaya - a small town located south of Sri Lanka - by the Sinharaja rainforest (approximately 2 ½ hour drive). Check in to The Rainforest Ecolodge and relax.

Spend 2 nights at Rain Forest Eco Lodge, Deniyaya in a Chalet on full board basis

The Rainforest Ecolodge, Deniyaya

The Rainforest Eco lodge has been designed to preserve and provide a sensational experience of the forest habitat and the lodge has environmentally friendly alfresco rooms, an observation deck, lounge and meeting room. The lodge thrives on a five-hundred-acre division of the Enselwatte Tea Estate bordering the South-eastern side of the Sinharaja Rainforest.

DAY 10

Early morning and afternoon birding in the Sinharaja Rainforest for lowland endemics and mixed species bird flocks. Overnight stay at Rain Forest Eco Lodge.

Sinharaja Rainforest

Sinharaja Rainforest is the largest tract of natural rainforest in the country and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and contains a wide variety of endemic plant species some of which are only found in this region. Sinharaja is a top birding location for endemic birding where 28 of Sri Lanka's 34 species have been recorded including the recently discovered Serendib Scops Owl and other rarities such as the Chestnut-backed Owlet, Sri Lanka Spurfowl and White-faced Starling. Flocks of Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, one of the most

sought-after endemics due to their bright blue and red plumage are often seen close to the research station on the Sinhagala walking trail.

The mixed species bird flocks found moving through the rainforest canopy within Sinharaja are believed to be the longest studied and largest in the world, which is popularly dubbed as the "Sinharaja Bird wave". An average of 35 - 50 individuals from over 14 species can often be encountered when sighting a bird wave, which includes endemics such as Green-billed Coucal, the striking Red-faced Malkoha and Crimson-backed Flameback on the middle and upper canopies while the Spot-winged Thrush and noisy flocks of Orange-billed Babblers can be seen foraging for insects at ground level.

Other species of fauna encountered during a rainforest walk include Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Giant Squirrel, Kangaroo Lizard, Hump-nosed Lizard and Sri Lanka Keelback.

DAY 11

Today, after breakfast at Rain Forest Eco Lodge, proceed on another long drive towards Colombo, the commercial capital of Sri Lanka (approximately 4 ½ hour drive). On arrival into Colombo check in to Tintagel, Colombo. **Spend 1 night at Tintagel, Colombo in Executive Suite on bed and breakfast basis**

Colombo:

Colombo is an open and attractive city with a fascinating mix of 19th and 20th century colonial buildings and more recent modern architecture. In the last few years, considerable renovation and restoration work has been undertaken in the capital. During your stay in Colombo, we suggest driving through and visiting the Galle Face Green, Ganga Raama Temple Viharamahadevi Park and Independence Square.



Tintagel Colombo

Located amidst the vibrant streets of Colombo, The Tintagel is a magnificently chic hotel those previously hosted political leaders and royalty. The hotel offers 10 individually designed suites. The Royal Suites are incredibly spacious and luxurious, featuring separate living rooms; the Superior Suites, adorned in light blue and off-white colours create a serene ambience, and offer an outdoor lounge area and private plunge pool;

the Executive Suites reveal high ceilings and beautiful textures and colours with lovely bathrooms. All three accommodation options feature a private lounge and balcony area. Delicious fare is served at the stylish Dining Room, a sophisticated restaurant serving an à la carte menu. The Private Dining Room serves delectable canapés and petit fours, and the Red Bar, exquisitely decorated with antique French baroque candle-stands and mirrors, is ideal for a nightcap and intimate chat. Numerous facilities at hotel ensure an impeccable stay, such as a well-equipped gym, a lap pool, a beautiful library to spend quiet moments pouring over books, and a fantastic spa for pampering treatments.

DAY 12

Transfer from Hotel to Bandaranaike International Airport for your departure flight home (approximately 1 hour drive).



TRACKS SAFARIS – WE GET YOU CLOSER TO SRI LANKA!

