

Trip Dossier for Sri Lanka – Volunteer Holiday

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This is an exciting tour of Sri Lanka's main sites with the added dimension of being able to assist in schools and villages – a real insight into the lives of local people. A rewarding experience for those you help; and also for you and your children – a chance to make new friends too. No specific skills are required, but if you have a particular skill we can tailor the project to take advantage of that. You also have the chance to help in the Elephant Transit home, who could resist spending time up close to these wonderful animals? At the end of the trip you can combine relaxation at the beach with more volunteering locally. Please note you are expected to fund raise money before you travel and this money will be used to purchase items in Sri Lanka, paint, wood, nails etc required for your volunteering activities. By purchasing items locally in Sri Lanka this helps the locally economy too.

Please Note: since the publication of our 2010-2011 brochure for operational reasons we have changed the last beach hotel to one in Mirrissa.

Day 1 Fly to Colombo

Depart on an overnight flight from London to Colombo. **In flight**

Day 2 Transfer to Negombo - free time to relax or explore

On arrival at Colombo you will be met by your local guide and transferred to your hotel in Negombo, around 35 kilometres north of the capital but close to the international airport. Nothing is planned for the rest of the day so that you can relax after the flight, but you'll have an opportunity to go for a walk along the beach to explore. **Hotel 1 night, with swimming pool**

Day 3 Drive to Giritale - visit Dambulla Cave Temple en route

Today's drive (approx. 5 hours) takes you north-eastwards into the so-called Golden Triangle - an area defined by the former capitals of Kandy, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, in which are found the island's major historical and cultural monuments. Your route passes the ancient city of Kurunegala, picturesquely set against the backdrop of Aetha Gala (Elephant Rock) with a lake at its centre. The town is known for its rock formations that resemble animals: Aanda Gala (Eel Rock), Wanduragala (Monkey Rock), Ibbagala (Tortoise Rock) and Yaddessa Gala, which looks like a Kandyan dancer. Further on you stop to visit Dambulla Cave Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the spot where King Valagambahu sought refuge when driven from his capital, Anuradhapura, in the 1st century BC. When he regained the throne after 14 years of exile he ordered the building of a magnificent temple on the 150 metre high granite outcrop. A series of steep steps leads to the first cave, which contains a remarkable 14 metre long reclining Buddha, carved out of solid rock. All five caves are adorned with life-size statues of Buddha and Hindu deities, and their walls and ceilings richly decorated with frescos depicting great events in Buddha's life and key moments in Sinhalese history. It's still an important place of pilgrimage and attracts many visitors from all over the island who come to the modern giant gold Buddha - said to be the biggest in the world - that overlooks the car park. You'll then have an opportunity to do an elephant back safari (optional) near Habarana before continuing to Giritale - your base for the next couple of days.

Hotel 2 nights, with swimming pool (breakfast)

Day 4 Volunteer in a local school; PM Sigiriya - climb to the Rock Fortress (total driving time 4.5 hrs)

This morning we set off for a short drive (30 mins) to a Kosgahaheena Primary School in Gallewala. With money from your fundraising efforts, we will purchase locally items required for the volunteer projects. This may include paint, wood, nails, seeds etc. You can help with the on going improvements to the school buildings including decorating the school rooms, library, help making furniture, painting, help improve the play area, digging in the garden etc. Following a mornings work it is back to vehicle as we drive a further 2 hours to Sigiriya. Stopping en route for a picnic lunch (own expense).

Sigiriya is the 200 metre high, sheer-sided, flat-topped Lion Rock dominates the surrounding forested countryside. On crossing the moat you'll pass the water gardens en route to the Elephant Gate, where the climb starts in earnest. Steps lead upward through a gallery of well-preserved frescoes, past the highly reflective so-called Mirror Wall and Lion Terrace to the ruins of the Summer Palace on the summit. Here you will hear the tragic tale of King Kasyapa who, according to legend, was the illegitimate son of King Datusena. When in 473 AD Kasyapa overthrew his father, the queen and her son, the rightful heir Moggallana, fled to India, vowing revenge over the usurper. Fearing an invasion, Kasyapa built an impregnable fortress at Sigiriya, and sure enough eighteen years later Moggallana returned - with an army. Kasayapa rode out to battle on his elephant but, in trying to out-flank his half-brother, took a wrong turn - at which point he mistakenly thought he had been



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abandoned by his followers and committed suicide! This World Heritage Site is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the trip.

Day 5 Drive to Kandy; visit a spice garden, the Temple of the Tooth and cultural show (driving time 3hrs)

Sri Lanka is well known for the production of spices and today you'll stop to visit a spice garden in Matale (1.5 hr drive). Here you can see the plants that produce nearly all the common spices and learn about their culinary and medicinal uses, and have a chance to buy some. By late morning you'll arrive in Kandy (another 1.5 hr drive), a former capital and the country's second largest city.

Standing at the centre of the island, at the gateway to the lush central region of mountains and tea plantations, Kandy is today capital of only the Highlands. It nevertheless retains its status as the focal point of Sinhalese culture. The city is charmingly set around a lake in which, according to legend, one king kept his treasure - guarded by crocodiles! Its most famous attraction, however, is the Temple of the Tooth, whose origins lie in the sixteenth century - although most of what you see today dates only from the nineteenth. It was built as a sanctuary to house the holy relic of Buddha's tooth, which is kept in a locked silver casket behind gilt bars. Inside that casket in turn are another seven gold jewel-studded caskets - but the tooth itself is only shown on special occasions or to visiting dignitaries. After queuing with the crowds you enter barefoot (you'll have to wear a long skirt or trousers, or put a sarong on over shorts) but may have to put up with pushing and jostling from people who are desperate to see the sacred relic. At certain times of day, when pilgrims offer flowers to the accompaniment of beating drums and clouds of incense, it's easy to remember that this is a genuine place of worship, and not simply a tourist attraction. Much of the afternoon is free but later on you'll visit the home of a Kandyan dancer to learn about traditional Sinhalese dancing. This exhilarating art form involves dancers in lavishly decorated costumes performing acrobatic movements to pulsating drum rhythms. **Hotel with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 6 Train to Nuwara-Eliya (journey time 5hrs)

Time to catch the train! Our route continues southward (4 hrs) from Kandy through the beautiful lush hills of the highland region devoted to the cultivation of tea. This is not an express train and you should be prepared for a gentle ride through the hills with plenty of stops and the chance to chat with your fellow passengers as you make your way to Nanuoya. From shortly after Kandy, the landscape changes dramatically. The train rounds a bend, and suddenly the vast tracts of native forest are gone. In their place stand plantations of pine, tall and stately eucalyptus trees and Sri Lanka's best known export: tea. From this point on, the train line will rarely be out-of-sight of the dark green mottled patchwork of tea estates, spread across the hillsides like slightly worn felt. The train winds its way slowly up a valley, curving in and out as it follows the contours of the land. A chorus of shrieks greets each of the numerous tunnels. There are occasional views of huge waterfalls cascading down the hillsides, and the Tamil women who pick the tea make a colourful contrast to the all-pervasive green. The line climbs steadily to Hatton, then Nanu Oya, the station for the hill station of Nuwara Eliya. Adam's Peak, a sharply-pointed triangle, juts up dramatically to the south; this is the most famous mountain to climb in Sri Lanka, and it is also an important Buddhist pilgrimage site.

From Nanu Oya it is 30 minutes by road uphill to Nuwara Eliya (you'll probably need some help to pronounce it correctly!). Before arriving at your hotel you'll pause to visit the delightful Haggala Botanical Garden which is famed for its roses, although there's also a collection of wild orchids, a Japanese garden, an arboretum and a rock garden. The monkeys here are also quite tame! This former British hill station (1990 metres) is Sri Lanka's highest town; it can be surprisingly cool at this altitude and often quite wet - somewhat reminiscent of home! Traces of the colonial era are evident everywhere: the imposing architecture of the grand hotels, the golf course, the race course, the street names, the trout streams, the bungalows with well-kept lawns and flower gardens, and the nostalgic Hill Club. The reason for its prosperity was primarily the rail connection to Colombo that allows the intensively cultivated and highly productive market gardens to transport vegetables and flowers directly to the capital. The rest of the day is at leisure to relax and explore your new surroundings. **Hotel - 2 nights (breakfast)**

Day 7 Visit to a Green Tea Plantation

Today you'll visit a tea plantation and see a tea factory - complete with some antiquated machinery - where the leaves are processed after picking. The whole story of tea from bush to cuppa is fascinating - and it's thirsty work! Along with rubber and coconuts, tea is still a major contributor to the Sri Lankan economy - together they account for roughly 15% of foreign exchange earnings. There is also an optional visit to **Horton Plain??** in Nuwara Eliya.

Day 8 Drive to Udawalwa; visit to Ella Point and Ravana Ella Waterfall (5hrs)

Today is rather a long driving day as we set off this morning heading towards our second volunteer project located just outside Udawalwa. We'll stopping en route to visit Ella Point and Ravana Ella Waterfall. East of the



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ridge of the Central Highlands lie a series of picturesque hills; as this area is sheltered by the massif of the highlands, the climate is dry and sunny - in marked contrast to the cloudy lushness of the Highlands. As a result it's also considerably less populated and much less cultivated. Some two hours drive away, characterful Ella qualifies easily as Sri Lanka's most beautiful village - like Nuwara Eliya it's somewhat reminiscent of a old-world village in the English countryside. However its main claim to fame is its viewpoint - on a fine day the view past the towering Ella Rock and through the Ella Gap extends right down through tea plantations as far as the distant south coast. Not far away is the spectacular Rawana Ella Waterfall that tumbles 90 metres from a rocky ledge down the wall of the valley. From here you drive down from the hills to emerge onto the southern plain, which extends to the coast. This is essentially a rural area - the many sleepy villages live principally from rice cultivation, coconut farming and fishing - and an extremely traditional one. It is 3 hours drive to your hotel in Embilipitya- relax this afternoon. **Hotel for 2 nights, with swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 9 Volunteer work at the Elephant Transit Home

This morning we set off for the Elephant Transit Home, our second volunteer placement of the holiday. The elephant Transit Home is an orphanage, run by the Born Free Federation, they care for elephant calves with food, medication and love, until they are ready to be released back into the wild. Many of the elephants are fitted with radio collars so they can be monitored. Since the foundation of the Elephant Transit Home in 1995 around 70 animals have been cared for some still remain at the home but over 60 have been returned to the wild. The organization Born Free makes sure the orphans receive the milk, care and medical attention they need - the site has life-saving facilities and equipment such as a hospital and intensive care centre, and an elephant ambulance. The orphans are monitored with the help of radio collars once they have been returned to the wild. During your visit here you'll learn about the important work, you may be asked to help out with the day to day work at the elephant home, from mucking out to feeding the calves with large milk bottles. It is surprising how much they can eat and drink in a day! Return to Embilipitya for a free afternoon.

Day 10 Game Drive in Udawalwa National Park; PM Drive to Mirrissa

Located next to the massive Uda Walawe reservoir, this park is important for its elephants. With its mixture of scrubland and teak forest, it is home to approximately 500 elephants with herds of up to 50 of these majestic beasts. You'll set off this morning on an early game drive, taking your breakfast with you. If you are lucky you may spot a leopard as well as elephant, and almost certainly you'll see sambar, barking deer and water buffalo. Some of the monitor lizards here can reach up to six feet in length. For the bird lover you may see raptors such as a Crested Serpent Eagle or a Grey-headed Fishing Eagle.

This afternoon we stop at a local primary school, and you may be asked to help out with a lesson, teach the children a nursery song, learn the alphabet with pictures and song. You'll then head down to the coast and round the island's southern tip to your beach base. The total drive will be about 4 hours however we will stop along the way at Dickwella to see the blowhole here. Once you reach Mirrissa, unwind and relax. **Hotel (breakfast and dinner)**

Day 11 At leisure in Mirrissa

Today is at leisure in Mirrissa, for you to unwind and relax - there is a choice of activities on offer, the Blue Whale watching is excellent here in the winter - but it is up to you to decide if the beach and pool, or the Ayurveda and Yoga, are more than enough! Other options include cooking classes in the hotel or long day trips to Bundala Wildlife Sanctuary or Sinharaja Rainforest.

After the ravages caused by the tsunami, which displaced over 500,000 people in 13 out of 14 coastal districts, according to official figures, 90% of them from small-scale fishing communities, the coastline is much changed. Signs of economic recovery are evident as businesses spring up or re-establish themselves. Tourism plays a crucial role in regeneration by bringing in scarce foreign currency - so you're playing a part just by being here. **Beach hotel 3 nights, with swimming pool (breakfast and dinner)**

Days 12 & 13 Mirrissa

Over the next two days we can make arrangements for you to volunteer at a nearby village project. The volunteer work may range from painting school rooms or local community hall, building and irrigation work in the village, to assist with marking out football and volleyball pitches to teaching a few English words and songs. In the evening why not join in with the locals and play a game of football. Return to the hotel each evening.

Day 14 Fly to London (day flight)

Sadly, it is time to leave and an early morning departure from the south coast for the drive (4 hours) to Colombo international airport in time to check in for the early afternoon departure of your return flight to the UK.



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This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets. Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

These excursions, if available can be arranged through your tour leader (per person cost shown below).

Optional Extras

Habarana - elephant back ride	£20.00
Kandy – Peredeniya Botanical Gardens	£10.00
Embilipitiya – Boat ride	£10.00
Ahangama – Cycling trail to Koggala	£15.00
Ahangama – Visit to weekly market	£5.00
Ahangama – Walk to Elephant Mountain	£6.00

Please note these prices are a guideline only and are subject to change.

Climate Sri Lanka's climate is complex as there are two monsoons: the southwest monsoon (mid May-Oct) affects the southwest quarter of the island, and the northeast monsoon (Dec-Mar) affects the east coast. The best time to visit the west coast is from mid-October to mid April. In the central highlands it can rain at any time of year, but the wettest time of year is between May and October, while the southeast region sees little rain throughout the year. Due to Sri Lanka's proximity to the equator, temperatures remain constant year round, averaging high 27-29° C on the coast and around 20° C in Kandy. In higher areas nights can be chilly, even cold. Humidity is generally high everywhere, but particularly in the southwest.

Average monthly temperatures in Colombo

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	30	31	31	31	31	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
Min °C	22	22	23	24	26	25	25	25	25	24	23	22
Rainfall (mm)	89	69	147	231	371	224	135	109	160	348	315	147

Is this right for your family? Add a new dimension to your family holiday. An ideal taster for children planning to take a gap year – or for families who like to be hands on; or for those who just want to try something different. No skills are required – anyone can join in and make a contribution. Accommodation and transport is comfortable. The people of Sri Lanka are extremely friendly and will generally make you feel very welcome, but be prepared for occasional “culture shock”. Please note you are expected to fund raise money before you travel and this money will be used to purchase items in Sri Lanka, paint, wood, nails etc required for your volunteering activities. By purchasing items locally in Sri Lanka this helps the locally economy too.

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Accommodation The hotels used for this tour are of 3 star standard. All are modern, clean and comfortable and offer friendly service. All rooms have private facilities and are booked on a twin-share basis; most are air-conditioned. The indication of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

Food and Drink Included meals are indicated in the itinerary. The typical meal while out cycling is simple but adequate, and hygienically prepared; a vegetarian option is always available. For meals not included in the itinerary you should allow £5-£6 per person day to cover lunch and £7-£8 for dinner. It is possible to eat cheaply in Sri Lanka, but if you choose to eat in expensive restaurants you should allow a little more. Your local tour leader



will be on hand to make personal recommendations but in many cases it is best to eat in your hotel. We recommend you drink plenty of bottled water.

Currency The unit of currency is the Sri Lanka Rupee (SLR or Rs). At the time of writing UK £1= 183Rs and US\$1=114Rs. (Jan 2010). Sterling traveller's cheques and credit cards are accepted in banks, larger hotels and some souvenir shops however we increasingly recommend that you make use of the numerous ATMs. We recommend that you change money at the airport on arrival.

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. Please remember that tipping should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. As a guideline each traveller should allow £3-4 per day to cover the tips for the local staff. Tipping in restaurants is generally around 10% of the total bill.

Visas/Passports Entry visas are obtainable free of charge on arrival at Colombo airport for British nationals visiting for tourism for 30 days or less. Your passport should be valid for 6 months beyond your departure from Sri Lanka.

Language The official language in Sri Lanka is Sinhala and Tamil; however English is also widely spoken.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and cell phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Time GMT +5½ hours



Clothing & Equipment List for Sri Lanka Volunteer Holiday

Western clothing is acceptable everywhere, but outside beach resorts Sri Lankans tend to dress conservatively. We recommend comfortable lightweight casual cotton clothing in lowland areas, and medium-weight clothing and layers for the cooler hill country. Out of respect for local culture we recommend that - particularly in rural areas - you dress accordingly i.e. no tight-fitting clothing, low-cut or sleeveless tops, etc. Shorts are OK in main tourist areas, but they (and skirts) should reach at least to the knee. Everyone should be prepared to cover bare arms and legs when entering religious buildings, and take off their shoes. Up in the hills it can get surprisingly cold, so pack some warm and windproof clothing. A sun hat, sunglasses and high-factor sunscreen are all essential.

The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Trainers or Strong Sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Soft-sided bag 50-80 litres	
Windproof Jacket	1 lightweight - optional		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
T-Shirts	3 +		Sunglasses	
Long casual trousers	2 +		Personal First Aid Kit	
Short Trousers / shorts	2		Torch and Batteries	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Camera, Memory Card +Accessories	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Towel or Sarong	
Swim Wear	1			
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)			

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa			
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Toilet paper / tissues	
Cash Cards/Visa		Guide Book & map	
Insurance Documents		Sunscreen – lots of it	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Insect Repellent	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Alarm clock	

For details regarding hand luggage restrictions please visit www.baa.com