

Sri Lanka - North to South

19th February 2022 - 9th March 2022

Recognised by Lonely Planet in 2012 as their top holiday destination, Sri Lanka certainly packs in a lot of interest for the cycle tourist. From the 2,500 year old ancient city relics on the rice growing plains of the 'Cultural Triangle' to the dramatic mountain scenery of the central Hill Country and the idyllic palm lined beaches along the southern coast, the island boasts a very diverse range of scenic and cultural delights. This variety of habitats also helps to explain the abundant and varied wildlife, with wild elephants and monkeys and an exotic range of brightly coloured birds, many of which are unique to the island.



Itinerary

Sat 19 Feb - Fly to Negombo

Fly in and transfer to hotel

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

Sun 20 Feb - Transfer to Jaffna

Transfer to Sri Lanka's most Northerly point

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

Mon 21 Feb - Jaffna to Port Pedro

Our first days cycling takes us to Sri Lanka's most Northerly point at Point Pedro. Setting out we pass out of the Northern districts of Jaffna passing cows and tuk tuks. Through open countryside before crossing the Thondaimanaru Estuary taking us to the northern shoreline. The beachside road is quiet, lined with boats and sandy beaches. We return to Jaffna by a different route.

- Route distance: 65.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 117.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tue 22 Feb - Jaffna to Mannar

- Route distance: 118.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 380.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wed 23 Feb - Mannar to Anuradhapura

We begin our day crossing the causeway back over to the mainland, heading for the city of Anuradhapura. 20 km south of Mannar, our route takes us past the 43 sq. km Giants Tank Sanctuary, where numerous varieties of water and wader birds are found. Our destination are the ruins of Anuradhapura, one of South Asia's most evocative sights. The sprawling complex contains a rich collection of archaeological and architectural wonders: enormous

dagobas (brick stupas), ancient pools and crumbling temples, built during Anuradhapura's thousand years of rule over Sri Lanka

- Route distance: 122.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 465.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Thur 24 Feb - Anuradhapura to Sigiriya

Setting out from Anuradhapura we head south towards another part of Sri Lanka's cultural centre. Passig through Talawa and then Eppawala, we gradually climb hreading for Dambulla, but not before passing one of the larger boddies of water that were built by the ancient Kings to catch every drop of water before it reached the sea and distribute it round the island. Having arrived at our hotel we will visit the cave temples at Dambulla. This UNESCO Heritage complex is home to 153 Buddha statues and murals that narrate tales of the temptation of Mara, the demon and Buddha's first sermon.

- Route distance: 106.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 409.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Fri 25 Feb - Sigiriya to Giritale

Today we leave Anuradhapura headed to the outskirts of Sigiriya. Our hotel is a short distance from the Golden Dambulla Cave Temple. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the largest and best-preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka with over 80 caves and has been a pilgrimage destination for the past 22 centuries. The main attractions are spread throughout five caves, which are intricately designed with carvings, statues and paintings depicting the life of Gautama Buddha. The complex is home to 153 Buddha statues and murals that narrate tales of the temptation of Mara, the demon and Buddha's first sermon.

- Route distance: 53.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 270.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sat 26 Feb - Round trip to Polonnaruwa

After the destruction of Anuradhapura in the 1st century, Polonnaruwa became the second capital of Sri Lanka. The remains include Brahminic constructions from the Cholas civilization as well as the garden city that was constructed on the site in the 12th century. Polonnaruwa is part of the Cultural Triangle, along with Anuradhapura and Sigiriya. There is so much to see here, but handily it's a great site to see by bike.

- Route distance: 32.0 km

- Route altitude gain: 168.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sun 27 Feb - Giritale to Mahiyanganaya

We have a long ride today as we begin our approach to Sri Lanka's mountains. We overnight in Mahiyanganaya a historic town and a very sacred place for Buddhists. It is said that Gautama Buddha visited the town in order to settle a dispute which had arisen between two tribes, this being his first ever visit to Sri Lanka.

- Route distance: 104.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 822.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Mon 28 Feb - Mahiyanganaya to Ella

A shorter 81 km today, but with 1600 m of ascent, this is our first day cycling in Sri Lanka's central mountain area. Ella, located at an altitude of 1041 m, seems to be everyone's favourite hill-country village. The area has a rich bio-diversity, dense with numerous varieties of flora and fauna. Ella is surrounded by hills covered with cloud forests and tea plantations. The town has a cooler climate than surrounding lowlands, due to its elevation.

- Route distance: 81.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1624.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tue 1 Mar - Ella to Nuwara Eliya

We continue riding in high mountains headed for Nuwara Eliya. Often referred to as 'Little England', this genteel highland community does have a rose-tinted, vaguely British-country-village feel to it, with its colonial-era bungalows, Tudor-style hotels, well-tended hedgerows and pretty gardens. Indeed, Nuwara Eliya was once the favoured cool-climate escape for the hard-working and hard-drinking English and Scottish pioneers of Sri Lanka's tea industry. Many private homes maintain their old English-style lawns and gardens.

- Route distance: 60.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1877.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wed 2 Mar - Circular Ride through tea plantations

A lovely sweeping descent will take you to Damro Labookellie Tea Centre situated at an elevation of 1500 m. There will be an opportunity to participate in a short tour of the

factory, before sampling a cup of tea. The ride back takes you past more tea estates through quiet hilly scenery

- Route distance: 62.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1715.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Thur 3 Mar

A rest day. Maybe a trip to Hortons Plains? Or explore Nuwara Eliya

- No cycling

Fri 4 Mar - Nuwara Elya to Hapatule

We leave Nuwara Eliya behind and after 4.5 km, begin our 13 km descent, hopefully the mists won't spoil the beautiful mountain views. Our route today takes us through areas of rich bio-diversity dense with numerous varieties of flora and fauna. The latter part of the day undulates through tea plantations. We overnight in Hapatule, situated at an elevation is 1431 m and is surrounded by hills covered with cloud forests. The town has a cooler climate than its surroundings, due to its elevation. The Hapatule pass allows views across the southern plains of Sri Lanka and the south-west boundary of Uva basin is marked by the Hapatule mountain ridges, which continue on to Horton Plains and Adam's Peak to the west. In 2010, CNN named Hapatule as one of Asia's most overlooked destinations. Our hotel overlooks the plains to the south. You can't quite see where we will end up tomorrow, but you will get a good sense of the initial whizz down, clouds permitting!

- Route distance: 62.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1101.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel with a view
- Meals: (B, D)

Sat 5 Mar - Hapatule to Udawalawa

An 8km descent to begin our day. Leaving the mountains behind us, there is a dramatic change in scenery and indeed temperature. We overnight on the outskirts of Uda Walawe National Park. The park has developed into one of Sri Lanka's most popular mainly thanks to its large and easily spotted population of elephants

- Route distance: 93.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 825.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sun 6 Mar - Udawalawe to Koggala

We will continue our route and cycle just over 80 km to reach the coast and the opportunity to once again dip our toes to celebrate completing our End to End and what will be the first glimpse of the Indian Ocean since leaving Mannar Island. Destination is Dondra Head Lighthouse, Sri Lanka's most southerly point.

- Route distance: 121.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1170.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Mon 7 Mar - Free Day to explore Galle

A well-deserved rest day today with plentiful options for those wishing to be a proper tourist for the day.

- No cycling

Tue 8 Mar - Transfer to Negombo

We transfer back to our hotel in Negombo and the task of packing up bikes for our return to the UK

- No cycling

Wed 9 Mar - Transfer to airport

- No cycling



Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £2000.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £200 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £1800 per person to be paid on or before 12th February 2022

Price includes:

- Coach transfer between Badaranaike International airport and hotel
- Coach to Jaffna
- Coach transfer from Galle to Negombo
- 18 nights hotel/guesthouse, half board, sharing rooms
- Back-up coach and baggage transfers between hotels

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from Bandaranaike International Airport, Sri Lanka
- Meals in transit
- Drinks with evening meals
- Lunches or refreshments at morning and afternoon stops
- Entry fees at any attractions visited (allow £150)
- Any other personal expenses
- Visa costs (\$35 at October 2018)
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge:

- Before 11th February 2022: £200 (10% of total cost)
- 12th February 2022 to departure: £2000 + any supplements

Holiday Information

Area Covered By The Holiday

- This new end-to-end tour of Sri Lanka travels from its northern tip to its most southerly point at Dondra Lighthouse. Leaving the Jaffna peninsula with its golden beaches and clear water, cycle through an ancient and fertile land of lakes. Pass through the 'cultural triangle' into the hill country, home to Sri Lanka's tea plantations and former colonial towns, then down to the coast to Sri Lanka's most southernly point. Cycle along quiet roads and waterway tracks, through bustling villages, climbing into the central hills along winding mountain roads.

Rides and Rest Days

- Most days 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.

Accommodation and Meals

- 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. Meals will be on a half-board basis, and vegetarian options will be available if indicated on the Booking Form. Lunches will be your own responsibility, though there are many wayside stops serving local food. Bottled water will be provided from the back-up coach. The staple diet in Sri Lanka is rice and curry, though there will be some opportunities to eat 'western' style food in the hotels. Lunch will be your responsibility, giving you the opportunity to choose when and where you want to stop, select your own food and sample traditional foods. Biscuits, bread and fruit can usually be found, and there are many wayside restaurants with extraordinarily reasonable prices. If you don't like curry, this probably isn't the tour for you, although Sri Lanka has a milder cuisine than India. 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.

Vehicle Support

- A back-up coach with local driver and English speaking guide will provide support each day. It will transfer luggage between hotels and will be used to transfer passengers with their bikes as required.

Travel

- Travel to and from Sri Lanka is to be arranged by yourselves. Additional information about flight options and the meeting time at Bandaranaike International airport will be circulated at time of booking. It is very important that you note that neither the Tour Leader 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 to meet the tour, you should ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation, or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled, we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

Group Information

- The maximum number of participants will be 18 excluding the Tour Leader.

Weather and Clothing

- 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, but only when on your bike.

Cycles & Equipment

- A lightweight mountain bike, hybrid 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, and bring tools and spares for basic repairs and maintenance. 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.

Maps & 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 & Advice

- 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. 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.

Passports, Visa & Health

- 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, 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.

Tour Leader Details

- This is my 19th year organising cycling holidays, having led tours from Norway to China.. 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.

Tour Leader Contact Details

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