

Classic Journeys **ADVENTURE TRAVEL**

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Wild Wonders of Sri Lanka Whales, Dolphins, Leopards & Elephants



- ◆ FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITIES TO PHOTOGRAPH SRI LANKA'S AMAZING WILDLIFE
- ◆ WATCH WALES AND DOLPHINS LEAPING, SPINNING & FROLICKING
- ◆ SAFARIS IN YALA AND UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARKS
- ◆ SEARCH FOR ELEPHANTS, SLOTH BEAR, CROCODILE AND LEOPARD

For dates & prices please check our website

Classic Journeys have teamed up with the wildlife photography specialists, Wild Arena to offer this tour, specifically designed for wildlife enthusiasts and keen photographers. Peter Smart from Wild Arena will accompany you on this tour in Sri Lanka. Peter is a wildlife photographer, escorting wildlife tours to a variety of countries including Sri Lanka, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, India, Borneo, Spitsbergen, the Galapagos Islands and Brazil. You will have excellent photographic and game-viewing opportunities and also a highly enjoyable holiday!

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is one of the smallest but most biologically diverse countries in Asia. Indeed, the country is listed by Conservation International as one of the World's official biodiversity hotspots. Our exciting tour visits two contrasting wildlife areas of this beautiful country. Firstly we cruise the waters around the coastline which are now acknowledged to have one of the highest concentrations of dolphins and whales in the world. Blue Whales, the largest mammal on the planet, are seen regularly at the time we visit together with Killer, Humpback and Sperm Whales. Large schools of Spinner Dolphins are frequently seen as they cut through the brilliant blue sea - leaping, spinning and frolicking! The second half of our tour concentrates on two of the country's national parks - Yala and Udawalawe - which are excellent for Leopard and Asian Elephant, and a large variety of other animals and birds.

Whales & Dolphins

Our tour begins with an overnight flight to Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo. We then drive to a beach hotel in Dickwella on the southern coast of the island, giving us a chance to relax after our journey. For the next three mornings we drive to the harbour of Mirissa where we board our exclusively-chartered boat to search for dolphins and the mighty giants of the sea - Blue Whales, Sperm Whales and Orcas (killer whales) - either breaching the surface, offering tantalizing glimpses, or longer, lingering views. To stare into the eye of one of these mysterious, huge animals is to look back to the beginning of time! During the afternoons we can either relax or swim in the sea or enjoy an optional visit to the Kalamatiya bird sanctuary.

Yala & Udawalawe National Parks

After our final whale watching cruise we drive to Yala National Park where we will enjoy an afternoon game drive, followed by four more over the next couple of days. Yala is Sri Lanka's best known national park and has good populations of Asian Elephant, Leopard, Sloth Bear, Crocodile and Wild Boar. Recent studies have suggested that Yala has the world's highest density of Leopards. We then drive to Udawalawe National Park which has a good population of wild Asian Elephants. We will enjoy two game drives here and also visit the Elephant Transit Home which is a project established by the *Born Free Trust*. Baby elephants who are injured or orphaned in the wild are brought to the Transit Home where they are cared for and rehabilitated in a natural setting.

Colombo & Kalpitiya (Culture & Dolphins)

We then return to Colombo for one night and have the opportunity to explore the cultural aspects of this fascinating city before continuing north to the Kalpitiya peninsula. From our charming small hotel on the beach we will take boat trips on the next three mornings in search of Spinner Dolphins - we may see as many as 200 spinning and jumping out of the water around our boat! We may also see whales - Melon-headed Whales, Blue Whales, Minke Whales, Sperm Whales and Dwarf Sperm Whales are all seen in these waters at this time of year. During the afternoons we will visit Wilpattu National Park and the Anawilundawa Bird Sanctuary. Our final night is spent near Colombo before our flight home the following day.

Throughout the tour we will stay in comfortable hotel and lodge accommodation, often located by the beach. For our marine excursions we will join our local naturalist at the boat early each morning to maximise our chance of finding cetaceans and having the best light for photography. The type, size and numbers of boats we use will vary between locations but will be chosen to ensure there is sufficient room for photographers and their equipment. Similarly, in the national parks we will only have three clients per vehicle to enhance the photographic experience.

Your Guides

Peter Smart from Wild Arena will accompany you. Peter is a professional wildlife photographer, escorting wildlife tours to a variety of countries including Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, India, Spitsbergen, Borneo, Sri Lanka and the Galapagos Islands. Peter treats it as a genuine privilege to introduce people to the wildlife, landscapes and people of the countries he visits and his knowledge, organisational skills and sense of fun ensures that not only will you have excellent photographic and game-viewing opportunities but also a highly enjoyable holiday!

Sri Lanka is a wonderful country which offers fantastic opportunities to photograph wildlife on land and at sea. View our exciting itinerary and visit our tour photo gallery to see more amazing images from the islands. Please then contact us regarding any questions you may still have and to discuss possible extensions to this tour such as the Sinharaja Rain Forest reserve, cultural sites or simply relax on a tropical beach.

You are advised to make your reservation immediately once you have decided to join us, as places are strictly limited on this unique tour to the Wild Wonders of Sri Lanka: Whales, Dolphins, Leopards & Elephants.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart UK

Depart UK on flight to Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Day 2 – Arrive Colombo, transfer to Dikwella

Upon arrival leave for Dickwella, located approximately 225 km south of the airport on the southern coast of Sri Lanka. The drive will take approximately 06 hours.
Overnight Dickwella Resort, Dickwella. (D)

Day 3 – Whale Watching Excursion

Leave at 05:30 after an early breakfast for Mirissa. Arrive at the harbour by 07:00 hrs and be met by your naturalist guide and the boat crew. Set out across the azure sea with the clear and crisp early morning breeze to keep you cool.



The naturalist onboard will provide many incredible facts about local marine life making the expedition an intense 'Marine Nature Watch', experience. The captain will often stop and hail a passing fishing boat on its homeward journey after a long nights work, out at sea. The mood aboard the fishing boat is sombre or jubilant depending on the value of the day's catch. It's not unusual for the fishermen to offer a small portion of the catch to your vessel in a gesture of goodwill and to bring them more good luck in the future; this is specially so if they've had a particularly good catch! Meanwhile the fishermen will hopefully have first hand information on where and which whales were spotted that morning! The vessel is also fitted with radar and GPS which helps to increase our chances of success.

Continue sailing and hopefully we encounter the mighty giants of the sea, the Blue Whales, Sperm Whales, Killer Whales and several species of dolphins, between 20 – 40 nautical miles from the coast. Sightings of other species of whales and dolphins are not uncommon and will be a special treat. Return to the harbour to meet your vehicle and transfer to your hotel.
Overnight at Dickwella Resort, Dickwella. (BD)

Day 4 – Whale Watching Excursion

Leave at 05:30 after an early breakfast for Mirissa and another whale watching excursion. Arrive at the harbour by 07:00 hrs and be met by your naturalist guide and the boat crew. Set out across the azure sea with the clear and crisp early morning breeze to keep you cool.

In the afternoon make an optional visit to Kalamatiya bird sanctuary (approx. 1.5 hours drive away). Kalamatiya sanctuary is situated in the Hambantota district and falls into the dry zone. Major habitat types are lagoons, mangroves and scrublands. These lagoons support breeding colonies of pelicans, herons, egrets and open-billed stork and large wintering population of migratory ducks and shorebirds.

Overnight Dikwella Hotel, Dikwella. (BD)

Day 5 – AM Whale Watching Excursion. PM Yala National Park

Leave at 05:30 after an early breakfast for Mirissa and a third whale watching excursion.

Drive to Yala National Park located at the south-eastern tip of Sri Lanka. Take an afternoon Jeep Safari in Yala National Park.



Yala – Sri Lanka's best known national park is popular for Elephant, Leopard, Bear, Crocodile and Wild Boar. More than three times larger than Udawalawe at 97,800 hectares, this is the second largest of Sri Lanka's national parks. Its open undulating terrain made it famous for elephants for many years, but recently the park has also received much fame through publicity by National Geographic and the Discovery TV channels, which focused on a leopard research/conservation and identification project. Claims have subsequently been made that Yala National Park has the world's highest concentration of leopard per square kilometre. This park is primarily shrub jungle with several salt and fresh water lagoons. The areas popular with leopard are rock strewn hillocks with dense shrub in which the animals hide.

Afternoon jeep safari of Yala National Park. Overnight Yala Village Lodge, Yala. (BD)

Day 6 – Yala National Park

Morning and afternoon safaris in Yala National Park. Yala offers one of the best chances in Asia to see Leopards. Other large animals you may see include Elephant, Sloth Bear, Mugger Crocodile, Spotted Deer, Sambur, Barking Deer, Wild Boar, Wild Buffalo, Jackal, Grey Langur and Mongoose. Overnight Village Lodge, Yala. (BD)

Day 7 – Yala National Park

Morning and afternoon safaris in Yala National Park.
Overnight Village Lodge, Yala. (BD)

Day 8 – Udawalawe National Park

Leave after breakfast for Udawalawe National Park. Visit the Elephant Transit Home. This is an admirable initiative which is sponsored by the Born Free Trust. Baby elephants who are injured or orphaned in the wild are brought to the Transit Home where they are cared for and rehabilitated in a natural setting. Once the elephants are old enough and strong enough they are radio collared and released into the National Park in small groups. The first group to be released into the park successfully reproduced in the wild in 2008!

Afternoon Jeep Safari of Udawalawe National Park – prime Elephant time. Udawalawe National Park is an area of 31,800 hectares, which was declared a protected sanctuary with full national park status in 1972. The park area which falls within two provinces of Sri Lanka has an annual rainfall of 1,520 mm and an average temperature of 29.4 C. Surrounded by mountain ranges, the terrain of the park is a mixture of grassland and shrub jungle which of all Sri Lanka's wildlife reserves, best rivals the Savanna of Africa. Teak plantations, water holes and two important factors make this park special - the large Udawalawe Reservoir and the Walewe River, which ensure a supply of water for the fauna within. Internationally renowned for its large herd of elephants, the park is also known for several species of Deer, Wild Boar, the dangerous Wild Buffalo, Jackal and very rare sightings of Leopard. Overnight at Centauria Hotel, Embilipitiya. (BD)

Day 9 – Udawalawe National Park. Drive to Colombo

Leave after an early breakfast for a jeep safari of Udawalawe National Park – the morning safari is good for birdlife, particularly raptors. The patient may be rewarded with the savage and fleeting moment when an eagle swoops down to the lake and captures an unfortunate fish in its talons. Return to Colombo with the option to explore Sri Lanka's capital city. Overnight Mount Lavinia Hotel. (BD)

Day 10 – Colombo and Kapitiya

Enjoy a sight seeing tour of Colombo including visits to the commercial and bazaar areas, the old parliament and other important locations. Proceed to Kalpitiya. Overnight Dolphin Beach, Kalpitiya. (BD)

The Dolphin Beach is a beautiful resort where large safari style tented accommodation is provided directly on the beach of Kalpitiya. Stylish furnishings and en suite bathrooms enhance comfort and elegance. All the tents are carefully sited in a shady coconut grove and have spacious verandahs. Thatch roofs and palm frond screens provide further shade during the day.

Day 11 – Dolphin Watching Excursion & Wilpattu National Park

Leave after an early breakfast to board our dolphin watching vessels. We use 19 foot boats powered by outboard engines. Take a 2 – 3 hour boat excursion to see Spinner Dolphins. If you are lucky you may have a school of over 200 dolphins, spinning and jumping out of the water.

The ocean off the coast of Alankuda is often still, like a sheet of glass on calm days. The early morning light will provide perfect conditions to capture these flawless acrobats as they show off their tricks with an eternal grin, as if posing specially for you.



In the afternoon visit Wilpattu National Park.

Wilpattu National Park (Willu-pattu; Land of Lakes) is a park located on the island of Sri Lanka. The unique feature of this park is the existence of "Willus" (Natural lakes) - Natural, sand-rimmed water basins or depressions that fill with rainwater. Located in the Northwest coast lowland dry zone of Sri Lanka. The park is located 30km west Anuradhapura and located 26 km north of Puttalam (approximately 180 km north of Colombo). The park is 131, 693 hectares and ranges from 0 to 152 meters above sea level. Nearly sixty lakes (Willu) and tanks are found spread throughout Wilpattu. Wilpattu is one of the largest and oldest National Parks in Sri Lanka. Wilpattu is among the top national parks world renowned for its Leopard (*Panthera pardus kotiya*) population.

Overnight The Dolphin Beach, Kalpitiya. (BD)

Day 12 – Dolphin Watching Excursion & Anawilundawa Bird Sanctuary

Leave after an early breakfast to board our dolphin watching vessels.

In the afternoon visit the Anawilundawa Bird Sanctuary.

This is a wetland bird sanctuary located about 1 ½ hours away from Kalpitiya. The scenic landscape consists of different types of lilies and many migrant birds can be seen here during the season.

Overnight Dolphin Beach, Kalpitiya. (BD)

Day 13 – Dolphin Watching Excursion & drive to Katunayake

Leave after an early breakfast to board our dolphin watching vessels for a third dolphin watching excursion.

Proceed to a hotel located close to the airport.
Overnight Taj Airport Garden, Katunayake. (BD)

Day 14 – Depart Colombo

Transfer to the international airport for your departure flight. (B)

Meals Included: B = breakfast, D = dinner

The day-to-day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions, difficulty with transportation and politics can lead to enforced changes. Because of this it is not possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the planned itinerary. The tour escort leader will make any changes, which are necessary.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

If you would like Classic Journeys to book your international flights, please tick the flight inclusive package box on the booking form. Classic Journeys will then book your international flights and advise you of the actual cost.

Baggage Allowance: For hold luggage this is normally around 20kg and you should aim to keep to this weight. Classic Journeys is not responsible for any excess baggage charges incurred.

Land Only Clients: Land only clients who are making their own flight arrangements should meet up with the group at the hotel. We can arrange airport transfers if needed and will provide hotel contact details.

If you have booked on a land only basis and are making your own flight arrangements, you must check with the Classic Journeys office that your chosen holiday has reached the minimum numbers required and is **guaranteed to operate** before paying for your air tickets. We cannot be held liable, in cases where we cancel your trip, for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made.

PRICING

If you choose the Land Only plus international flights package Classic Journeys will book your international flight and advise you of the cost. The price of the tour will be the Land Price plus the cost of international flights on your chosen airline. With most airlines, flights have to be paid for on making the flight booking and we will require full payment for the air tickets in order to purchase the tickets. In this situation we advise paying for your air tickets as soon as possible as this normally secures the lowest fare.

Airfares and taxes are subject to change and if the fare has increased before the final flight balance has been paid and the ticket issued, the additional cost will be passed on and detailed on the invoice.

INCLUDED IN THE COST

Hotel accommodation on a twin share basis (unless single has been requested) for the nights listed in the itinerary
All meals as specified (breakfast and dinner included throughout)
Airport transfers if travelling with the group
All internal transport as the itinerary
Sightseeing tours where specified, including all entrance fees
All wildlife activities including National Parks fees as per the itinerary
Boat hire for Whale and Dolphin watching excursions.
Entry fees to all national parks including game drives in Udawalawe National Park and game drives at Yala National Park
All wildlife activities escorted by local naturalist guides
Tour leader

NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST

International flight from the UK
Airport taxes
Transfers for Land Only packages if travelling separate to the group.
Visa fees (if required)
Medical examination (if required) & vaccination costs
Personal expenditure, bar bills, laundry, telephone calls, etc
Porters, guides & other tips
Meals not specified
Personal clothing & equipment
Travel insurance
Optional trips
Charges incurred as a result of delays beyond Classic Journeys control
Anything not specified in the Cost Includes section

GROUP SIZE

Minimum 4, Maximum 10
This holiday will operate once the minimum group size has been reached.

TOUR GRADE

EASY CULTURAL & WILDLIFE TOURING: Most of this tour involves overland travel in comfortable vehicles. Early starts are normal for wildlife viewing. Jeep Safaris are on bumpy tracks; the sideways seating in some Jeeps can be a little uncomfortable. Road conditions are generally good on tarmac roads, there maybe occasional potholes.

A TYPICAL DAY

For wildlife excursions the best time to see wild animals are early mornings or late afternoons when the heat of the day subsides and the animal activity resumes.

For our marine excursions we will join our local naturalist at the boat early each morning to maximise our chance of finding cetaceans and having the best light for photography. The type, size and numbers of boats we use will vary between locations but will be chosen to ensure there is sufficient room for photographers and their equipment. Similarly, in the national parks we will only have three clients per vehicle to enhance the photographic experience.

We will travel on dirt tracks, which may be bumpy. When observing animals it is essential you are as quiet as possible (silence is best) in order not to disturb the animals. Please do not ask your driver to go off the permitted track or approach closer to an animal. The driver will get you as close as they are allowed or that the animal will tolerate without interfering with its normal behaviour. You will not be allowed out of the vehicles except at designated places, your guide will advise you accordingly.

When sightseeing we generally leave after breakfast. Some of the sightseeing involves easy walking although not always on paved level ground. There will be many photographic opportunities, although please respect local people and either ask permission or use a telephoto lens before taking their photograph. Remember many people do not like their photograph taken.

HEALTH & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

The pace is considered easier compared to trekking and should enable anyone in good health to participate. While there are no specific physical requirements, it is important that travellers are in good health, have a positive attitude, a sense of humour and a spirit of adventure. Tours can consist of early starts, some long days or climbing into vehicles. The transport provided is the best available for the area and type of terrain being visited but be prepared for some lengthy journeys, bumpy dirt roads or the occasional delay.

ACCOMMODATION

Throughout the majority of the tour we stay in comfortable hotels and safari style tented accommodation. Rooms have private facilities and services at all our hotels include restaurants, shops, postal and room service, security boxes and laundry services. Please note that sometimes the mentioned accommodation is fully booked in which case we will use similar standard accommodation.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS

If you are a single person booking this holiday you do not have to pay single supplements, if you are happy to share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single client of the same gender. However your booking is accepted only on the understanding that if no roommate is available then you accept a single supplement will be levied. Single supplements are payable if you specifically request to have a room to yourself. If you have requested single accommodation we will do our best to secure this although this may not always be possible.

FOOD

Breakfast and dinners included.

Most hotel and lodge restaurants usually provide vegetarian and non-vegetarian, continental, Sri Lankan and traditional cuisine. Please ask the staff if you have any specific request, especially regarding flavours and spices, as they will do their best to adjust menus accordingly and cater for your tastes.

WEATHER

Mostly hot, dry with long sunny days. Sri Lanka is a typically tropical country hot and humid with the occasional tropical storm occurring in the afternoons. The coolest, driest time in most of Sri Lanka is from November to March. There are two monsoons one from May to June when the southwest monsoon brings rain to the south, western coastal regions and the central hill country. The other is the northeast monsoon, which blows from October to January bringing rain to the north and east of the island. In the lowland regions there are high temperatures and humidity levels throughout the year, the coast benefits from pleasant afternoon sea breezes. In the interior it is largely mountainous and the climate is delightful for most of the year, not too hot during the day neither too cold at night.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

Casual clothing is the order of the day. Hard wearing, easy to wash travel clothes are ideal. You may wish to pack one set of slightly smarter clothes to wear at the hotels. Laundry service will be available at all the places we stay. Early morning can be cool until the sun is up especially on game drives and on the boats. A light windproof is recommended. During the day you will need a wide brimmed sun hat and sunglasses.

Special note: no bright colours in the field, please, including brightly coloured clothes, hats, gloves, etc. Although the birds and other wildlife are relatively approachable, muted colours are essential to improve our chances.

We provide a very comprehensive equipment list, including suggested camera equipment and tips for wildlife photography, in the country information dossier, which we send you on confirmation of booking.

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

You will require a passport valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry into Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan visas are issued free to British Nationals on arrival at the airport and are valid for 30 days. Other nationalities should check with the Sri Lanka embassy to see if a visa is required.

INSURANCE

Insurance is essential and is a condition of booking with Classic Journeys that you have adequate travel insurance cover. It is very important that you obtain insurance cover against the usual risks associated with travel, from the time of booking your holiday until the time you return home. Please ensure that your insurance provides adequate protection against the two major concerns: medical/repatriation expenses while abroad and cancellation/curtailment charges in the event that you, a travelling companion or a close relative fall ill either before or during the tour. For trekking holidays your travel insurance must contain evidence of satisfactory cover for repatriation and helicopter rescue.

Classic Journeys do not provide any advice on travel insurance. Classic Journeys is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd. who are Authorised and Regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Campbell Irvine is a specialist travel insurance broker. The comprehensive policy they issue provides 24-hour medical emergency assistance and covers altitude and all adventurous activities undertaken on our holidays. For single-trip policies, the insurance provides cover for both UK and worldwide residents at very competitive rates. In addition an annual policy is available to United Kingdom residents.

To obtain insurance cover visit the insurance section of the Classic Journeys website and follow the links to the Campbell Irvine Ltd. website. Alternatively contact the Classic Journeys office and we will send you details and an application form.

We require confirmation of your insurance, the policy number and 24-hour emergency telephone number whomever you take insurance with.

SUGGESTED READING

Sri Lanka: Lonely Planet
Sri Lanka Insight Compact Guide: Insight Guides
Sri Lanka The Bradt Travel Guide
Sri Lanka Phrasebook: Lonely Planet
Globetrotter Travel Map, Sri Lanka. New Holland Publishers
The Food of Sri Lanka: Bullis & Hutton
Field Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka: John Harrison

BOOKS & MAPS AVAILABLE FROM:

Stanfords, 12 Long Acre, London, WC2E 9LP 020 7836 1321
Cicerone at Booksource, 50 Cambuslang Road, Cambuslang, Glasgow, G32 8NB
Amazon, www.amazon.co.uk
Cordee, 3A De Montfort Street, Leicester. Tel: 0116 2543579
Wildsounds, Cross Street, Salthouse, Norfolk, NR25 7XH. (01263) 741100
Website: www.wildsounds.com
NHBS Ltd., 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN. (01803) 865913
Website: www.nhbs.com

If you have any questions or would like to know more about any aspect of this journey please do not hesitate to contact the Classic Journeys Office.