

## Definitive Cultural Tour of Sri Lanka

From the little-known islands of the north to the southern city of Galle, this tour captures the essence of Sri Lanka and takes in seven of the country's eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



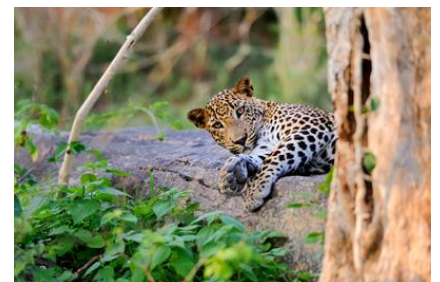
### Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

### Holiday overview

Style	Tour
Accommodation	Hotels
Grade	Tour
Duration	16 days from London to London
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Tour Leader Sri Lanka
Land only	Joining in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2024 Dates:

Sat 10 Feb - Sun 25 Feb

Sat 31 Aug - Sun 15 Sep

### Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

### No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

### Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

### Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

### Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

### Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

# Your guide

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The trip will be led by an experienced English-speaking local guide, selected on the basis of their experience, levels of spoken English and helpfulness. Like the culture from which they come they are all very welcoming and have a love of showing you their country. You will also have a driver with you.

Please note that if the group size is less than four people there will not be a separate leader and driver but you will have an experienced English-speaking driver/guide plus local guides for all walks and sightseeing where necessary.

## Your trip highlights

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- Explore the ancient cities, forts and temples of the Cultural Triangle
- Step off-the-beaten-track in the remote far north of Sri Lanka
- Look for leopards on safari in little-visited Wilpattu National Park
- Watch tea pickers at work on a tea plantation
- Discover the colonial heritage of atmospheric Galle
- Go on a whale watching trip for the chance to see giant Blue whales

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-3	Fly to Colombo. Drive to Ranweli. Forest walk or birdwatching boat tour. Drive to Wilpattu.
Days 4-5	Game drive in Wilpattu National Park. Tour of Anuradhapura and Mihintale. Drive to Jaffna.
Days 6-7	Explore Jaffna. Visit Nainativu Island. Return to Jaffna and tour fort.
Day 8	Drive to Trincomalee. Visit Fort Frederick.
Day 9	Whale watching or optional snorkelling (May - October departures). Explore temple ruins at Velgam Vihara
Day 10	Drive to Polonnaruwa. Visit ruined city.
Days 11-12	Climb Sigiriya. Drive to Kandy. Tea Plantation visit and Temple of the Tooth.
Days 13-14	Drive to Galle - guided tour. Whale watching (Nov - Apr departures).
Days 15-16	Drive to Colombo. City tour by bus. Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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For centuries the palm-fringed shores of Sri Lanka have attracted travellers, drawn to the islands' natural treasures and extensive cultural heritage. For a small island Sri Lanka has incredible diversity: idyllic white-sand beaches, mangrove lagoons, mysterious mist-swathed hill country and rainforest rich in wildlife. On this comprehensive tour you will see many of Sri Lanka's most significant cultural and natural sights including: the 'must see' ancient ruined cities of Mihintale, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the fascinating northern town of Jaffna, the rock fortress of Sigiriya and the remarkable cave temples in Dambulla. Moving south to the cooler southern heartlands, surrounded by tea plantations and mountains, you arrive at the cultural centre of Kandy and continuing further south to the coast, the tour concludes in the fascinating, fortified UNESCO town of Galle.

Heading north from Colombo at the start of your tour, you come first to Wilpattu National Park. Wilpattu means 'land of lakes' in Tamil and the park is one of the oldest and largest of all Sri Lanka's national parks; a vast expanse of wilderness which is home to over thirty species of mammal including sloth bear, elephant and water buffalo and, if you're really lucky, you might even spot a leopard on your jeep safari. Wilpattu lies off the main tourist trail in Sri Lanka, and the relatively low visitor numbers make for a more relaxed and peaceful safari experience.

From Willpattu you head north to Jaffna. Although the north is well and truly open for business, tourism in northern Sri Lanka is still in its infancy. Since 2009, the region has emerged from its long years of isolation and conflict into a settled peace and, as the locals focus on rebuilding, renewing and reviving the rich traditions of northern life, the ambience is far more relaxed than you might expect.

Repeatedly settled and invaded by Tamil migrants from southern India, the northern region has a unique character and culture which owes much to Hindu India as Buddhist Sri Lanka. The fascinating town of Jaffna has an absorbing blend of colonial charm and vibrant Tamil culture, and the Jaffna Peninsula and surrounding islands offer a string of remote temples to explore - Hindu and Buddhist alike - as well as beaches and more off-the-beaten-track charms. Here it is difficult to miss the profound Indian influence seen in the gradual switch from the singsong cadences of Sinhala to the quick-fire intonations of Tamil. In addition to the Tamil culture, Jaffna has also been shaped in true Sri Lankan fashion, by a wide cross-section of influences, including Muslim, Portuguese, Dutch, British and Sinhalese, with colourful temples set next to huge churches, and streets dotted with ancient Dutch and British residences.

After three nights in Jaffna you drive to Trincomalee on the east coast, as yet less visited than its southern coastal counterparts, and offering beautiful undeveloped beaches as well as wildlife and Buddhist and Hindu culture.

Leaving the north behind you head south into the cooler, cultural heartland of Sri Lanka, firstly visiting the ancient ruined city of Polonnaruwa where you will see the famous stone shrine known as Gal Vihara with its four Buddha statues, including a huge reclining Buddha. From here you continue to the impressive Lion Rock of Sigiriya, the caves at Dambulla and then on to Kandy where you will visit a tea plantation, the holy shrine known as the Temple of the Tooth and famed botanic gardens of Kandy. Your journey then continues to the south coast with time to stroll the atmospheric streets of Galle Fort before, finally your drive to Colombo and enjoy a tour of its key cultural sights.

For the complete Sri Lankan experience, you will also have an opportunity to go on a whale watching boat trip either on the east coast from Trincomalee, or on the south coast in Galle, depending on the season and weather permitting. On this boat trip you may be lucky enough to see giant Blue whales, Sperm whales, dolphins and other incredible marine life.



# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Fly London to Colombo

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Depart London by overnight flight for Colombo.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Colombo. Group transfer to Ranweli. Evening lagoon boat trip.

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You will be met on arrival in Colombo before making the short drive north to Waikkal. Just outside the village, and set between the sea, a lagoon and two rivers, lies the unique Ranweli Holiday Village. The final part of your journey to the hotel will be a short passenger ferry across the river. Once you have checked in you will be free to relax and enjoy the facilities of the hotel and their lovely grounds.

In the evening there will be a sunset boat trip around the lagoons.

**Overnight: Ranweli Holiday Village or Similar, Waikkal (Meals: D)**

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## Day 3: Guided forest walk - 2-3 hours or bird watching tour by boat - 3 hours. Drive to Wilpattu.

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This morning, you will either take a guided forest walk or a bird watching boat tour. This will depend upon the availability of the naturalist at Ranweli Hotel.

### Guided walk

You can take a two hour guided walk through the mangrove to learn more about the flora and fauna. There are a myriad of spices and plants whose uses will be explained to you by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide as you stroll around the gardens and along wooden walkways through the mangrove swamps. The area is home to 130 species of birds, some of which you may be able to spot, and nine species of amphibians including the water monitor lizard.

### Bird watching tour

The guided bird watching tour is nearly a three hour boat trip on river while watching various birds accompanied by a naturalist. The tour starts at 6.00am.

Later you will start your journey to the north of the country. This afternoon you drive to Wilpattu National Park area and your hotel for the night which is a short drive from the park itself. Once you have left the busy area around the coast the roads become quieter and there is much to see from the vehicle as you go along.

**Overnight: Palm Garden Village or Similar, Near Wilpattu (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 4: Early morning game drive. Tour of Anuradhapura.

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Early in the morning, whilst it is still cool, you will drive to the entrance gate of the park to board your safari vehicle and embark on a morning's game drive. Wilpattu is Sri Lanka's largest and oldest national park with an area of 130,000 hectares. It has only recently been reopened after several decades of closure due to the armed conflict in the country. There are relatively few visitors at the moment, especially compared to Yala in the south, meaning less vehicles and thus less crowding when a sighting occurs. The main draw are leopard and sloth bear sightings but there are also many other mammals, birds and reptiles to feast your eyes on. A unique feature of Wilpattu National Park is that the entire park is dotted with large sand rimmed natural lakes known as 'villus'. The villus collect rain water and tend to attract wildlife especially during the times of drought.



After the game drive you will return to your hotel for a late breakfast before setting off on the short drive to Anuradhapura and its ancient city. Established in the 4th century BC, Anuradhapura was Sri Lanka's first capital and remained so for many hundreds of years. After a turbulent period, the city was largely abandoned in the

late 10th century and over subsequent years its palaces and monasteries were reclaimed by thick jungle. Now a World Heritage Site, Anuradhapura once again enjoys both historic and religious status. The location of the city was originally determined by the planting of a cutting from the 'tree of enlightenment' (the famous fig tree of Buddha) and today the area is a major attraction for visiting Buddhists. This afternoon you will visit the principal sights including the Sacred City and of course the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree. After the tour you will return to your hotel for the night.

**Overnight: Palm Garden Village or Similar, Near Wilpattu (Meals: BLD)**

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#### **Day 5: Morning tour of Mihintale. Drive to Jaffna - 3-4 hours.**

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Just a few minutes' drive from Anuradhapura is the sacred mountain of Mihintale. It was here in 247 BC that Buddhism was first introduced to Sri Lanka - King Devanampiya Tissa was converted to the faith by the visiting son of the Indian Buddhist emperor Ashoka. This morning you'll take a walk to see some of the temples and shrines that adorn the slopes of the mountain. The summit is reached by a climb of around 1,840 stone steps and offers great views of the surrounding countryside. It is best to go early before it gets too hot for this climb, although a lot of it is shaded to some degree. Once at the site you are required to remove your shoes to walk around inside. This is on sand and rock and can be very hot underfoot if the sun is shining. It can be a good idea to wear socks to protect your feet for this visit.

After lunch you will drive north to Jaffna, a journey which takes around 3 - 4 hours. Jaffna is the biggest town in northern Sri Lanka and has a real Indian feel to it being closer to the Indian state of Tamil Nadu than Colombo. This is evident in its culture, with a predominance of Hindu temples and the sounds of Tamil being spoken, instead of Sinhala. From 1983 to 2009 the entire region was engulfed in the civil war, the impact of which is all too evident, with ruined homes, bombed churches, and buildings pockmarked by bullets. Around one in five of the city's structures suffered war damage. The city is surprisingly green and leafy, with attractive palm-shaded colonial-era suburbs and beautiful temples and churches. The centre however is busy with traffic congested streets, cyclists weaving around and cows block the roads. There is a local market place selling everything you might need and also historic buildings juxtaposed with new building work.

Depending on your arrival time you might take a walk around some of the quieter suburban streets around your hotel or venture into the centre to watch the world go by. Once home to many old British cars you can still see the occasional Austin A30, Morris Oxford, Morris Minor and Austin Cambridge in various states of repair on the streets of the town.

**Overnight: Thinnai Hotel or Similar, Jaffna (Meals: BLD)**

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#### **Day 6: Explore Jaffna town and peninsula.**

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After breakfast you will have a tour of the main sites of the town including the small archaeology museum, situated in an attractive old building and displaying a selection of statues and artefacts from the area. A few kilometres from the centre is the magnificent Nallur Kandaswamy Temple, Jaffna's most notable sight and the most impressive Hindu temple in the country, rivalling the great shrines of India. The complex is enclosed within red and white striped walls and there is a steady stream of visitors especially for the six daily pujas. As with most temples shoes must be left at the gate to the complex and men must remove their shirts to enter the temple itself. Further out of the town on the peninsula passing through rural scenery you come across the dagobas of Kantharodai in a very peaceful, rural setting. This curious archaeological site, dating back at least 2,000 years, consists of 56 (so far excavated) miniature dagobas crowded onto a small plot. No one can quite explain the exact purpose although the popular theory is that the dagobas contain the remains of some 60 Buddhist monks killed here.



Continuing to the north of the peninsula you will arrive at the Buddhist beachside temple of Dambakola Patuna. A serene and peaceful location housing a brilliant white temple, it is said to be the place where Theri Sangamitta is believed to have landed, bringing the sacred Bo tree Sapling to Sri Lanka. Returning to town you can explore the market area, old library, clock tower and perhaps stroll around the small park area by the causeway.

**Overnight: Thinnai Hotel or Similar, Jaffna (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 7: Trip to Nainativu Island. Return to Jaffna and visit fort.

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An early start is needed today to drive over the causeway out of Jaffna towards the islands straggling out into the waters of the Palk Strait. You will pass fishing nets and numerous wading birds in the shallow waters and the road, which starts with a good surface, soon deteriorates the further from Jaffna you get. Passing small villages, Hindu temples, cyclists and cows, ruined houses, boats and palm trees, Buddhist shrines, colourful buses and boys playing cricket on bits of scrub land you drive across the islands watching life going on.

After crossing another causeway you reach the island of Punkudutivu before arriving at the tiny, busy jetty where you will board a small public ferry for the short crossing to the island of Nainativu, home to two important religious shrines. The island itself is only about 4km long and barely a kilometre wide, but despite its diminutive size it is an important pilgrimage site for both Hindus and Buddhists. The crossing takes only 15-20 minutes and as you approach the island you will see the huge multi coloured Hindu temple - Naga Pooshani Ambal Kovil, sacred to the goddess Ambal and where new-born babies are brought to receive a blessing. A 10 minute walk along the coast from here is the Buddhist temple of Nagadeepa Vihara which marks the spot of the Buddha's second visit to Sri Lanka.



Both these temples receive many pilgrims especially on the 'poya' or full moon days when the island becomes very busy with visitors. You will visit both temples and take a walk to explore around the quiet streets of the island.

A return ferry will take you back to your waiting vehicle for the return drive back to Jaffna. In the early evening, as the temperatures drop and the sun sets, you will visit the old Dutch Fort situated by the coast. This is the largest Dutch fortress in Asia and was built on the same site as the former Portuguese stronghold. It is built in the characteristic star shape as favoured by the Dutch, the idea being that the pointed bastions offered greater protection against hostile cannon fire. Completed in 1792 it was surrendered to the British just four years later and after 200 years without action it was finally pressed into military service during the civil war. The once battered fort is now being restored and there is a small visitor display upon entering. You can wander around on the walls and enjoy the views of the Jaffna lagoon.

**Overnight: Thinnai Hotel or Similar, Jaffna (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 8: Drive to Trincomalee via Elephant Pass and Kilinochchi. Visit Fort Frederick.

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Departing Jaffna you will take the road heading east and after about an hour will cross over Elephant Pass, a place known for two major battles fought here in 1991 and 2000 during the civil war and where there is now a memorial to the war and its victors. Further along the road you come to Kilinochchi a small town which served as headquarters for the Tamil Tigers. The town was largely destroyed in 2008-9 during the fighting and siege and is now re-built leaving a huge ruined water tower as a reminder of the devastation brought about by war.

Continuing south the road takes you past a real mixture of images including lagoons, tropical vegetation, villages, ruined houses riddled with bullet holes, cycles and trucks laden with produce, children in spotless uniforms going to school, markets, multi coloured temples, small towns with shops lining the roads spilling their wares onto the pavements and many birds of all types and colours.

Trincomalee has been known since antiquity for its deep water harbour, one of the best in Asia, serving as the main port during the Anaradhapura and Polonnaruwan periods and later used by all the colonial powers. The town itself, which suffered during the war, has a largely Tamil population and a distinct Indian feel. On arrival you will be driven to your beach side hotel where you can take some time to settle in before an early evening excursion to Fort Frederick. The beaches here on the east coast, Nilaveli and Uppuveli, form a long strip of gorgeous sand with low level hotel development along them together with local fishermen going about their business hauling in their nets to inspect the daily catch. The further north you go from Trincomalee (or Trinco as it is known for short) the less development and the emptier the beaches. This coastline is still relatively unspoilt and a great place to relax for a few days.

As the day cools down you will drive the short distance into town and to the old Fort Frederick whose buildings spread across the narrow peninsula jutting out into the sea east of the town. It has a colourful history, originally built by the Portuguese, then captured by the Dutch, then the British, the French, back to the British, the Dutch and finally the British again! You can walk up through the Fort past military buildings and numerous

stalls selling various souvenirs, to Koneswaram Kovil, the large Hindu shrine dedicated to Shiva, situated at the end of the peninsula and where you can witness regular puja ceremonies. Next to the shrine is 'Lovers Leap' the highest point on Swami Rock, a towering cliff top view point where trees cling to the rocks adorned with prayer flags.

**Overnight: Nilaveli Beach Hotel or Chaaya Blue or Similar, Trincomalee (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 9: May to October - morning whale watching or optional snorkelling. November to April - time at leisure. Afternoon - walk to Velgam Vihara.**

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**For departures between May and October:**

In the morning you can join a whale watching excursion or take an optional boat trip to Pigeon Island for snorkelling (not included). Sri Lankan coastal waters are rich in nutrients and therefore sea life, as a result of the heavy inflow of river waters during the monsoon rains. Many of the waters lie on the migratory path of the whales and conditions are ideal for whale watching. As well as the giant blue whale and sperm whales, dolphins are also commonly seen. If these do not appeal then the morning is free to relax further at the hotel or on the beach.

**For November to April departures:**

The morning will be at leisure. A walk in the afternoon is a great opportunity for bird watching and you will spot numerous species along the way. There are many houses around here with plaques noting that they were re-built, post war, with various funds from NGOs. Arriving at the ancient Buddhist site of Velgam Vihara there is a small visitor centre with a short video about the site. Next to the centre you should find a tiny tea stall selling herbal tea and small bits of jaggery - a form of unrefined sugar from palm tree sap - which you can sample. The temple itself dates from the Anuradhapura period and has four entrances with ruined stupas and statues. It was abandoned when the capital moved from Anuradhapura in the 10th century and was lost into the jungle until it was re-discovered in the 18th century.

Nearby is a large lake (tank) which has much bird life, you can stroll around its shores along a shady path.

**Overnight: Nilaveli Beach Hotel or Chaaya Blue or Similar, Trincomalee (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 10: Drive to Polonnaruwa. Visit ancient ruined city. Walk in the countryside**

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Leaving the coast you will drive south to the old capital of Polonnaruwa which will take 2-3 hours. Polonnaruwa is the ruined 12th century capital of Sri Lanka, and beautifully set on the man-made Parakramabahu Samudra. Before exploring the ruins, you will visit the modern museum which gives an excellent insight into the history of the old city. The highpoint for many visitors to Polonnaruwa is the Gal Vihara (Stone Shrine). Four Buddha statues have been carved from the same huge slab of rock and originally were part of a monastery complex. The reclining Buddha is 14 metres long and supremely ethereal. It is one of the most famous sights in Sri Lanka. After lunch your leader will take you on a gentle countryside walk, a great opportunity to observe day to day life in rural Sri Lanka. The predominant activity here is Chaina cultivation



(slash & burn farming). This involves villagers cutting and then burning patches of jungle to create clearings for short-term cultivation of crops, such as rice and vegetables. Water is a precious resource here so farming operations are kept small scale with farmers typically only working two or three small plots at any one time. On your walk you will doubtless see numerous wooden tree-houses where villagers take it in turns to stay up at night keeping watch over their crops, lest they fall prey to wild elephants or other animals.

**Overnight: Deer Park Hotel Or Similar, Girithale (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 11: Early morning climb of Sigiriya. Visit Dambulla caves. Drive to Kandy - approximately 4 hours.**

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An early start is needed to climb the giant rock of Sigiriya before the heat and crowds become too much. The citadel at Sigiriya rose to importance in the 5th century AD when Prince Kassapa murdered his father, the King and built a castle on top of Sigiriya Rock in anticipation of the backlash against him. 500 years later the site was abandoned, and was largely forgotten until rediscovery by the British in 1828. The rock is a World Heritage site and is much visited by tourists. It is worth arriving at the site early to walk through the peaceful water gardens to the start of the climb up the main rock. The walkway up the rock is astonishing and the rock is



covered in notches and grooves cut for alternative routes to the top. From the summit the jungle extends seemingly endlessly in all directions.

This afternoon you will visit Dambulla, famous for its remarkable cave temples. The caves are a steep 15 minute climb up from the road and are cut out of a huge natural granite outcrop. It is thought that the caves may have been inhabited from prehistoric times, and now the five caves are full of beautiful statues and carvings. The rock offers magnificent views of the surrounding countryside across the plains.

You now drive to Kandy, the last bastion of independent Sri Lanka before it fell to the British in the 19th century. The city has distinctive Sinhalese culture and architecture.

**Overnight: Hotel Thilanka or Similar, Kandy (Meals: BLD)**

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### **Day 12: Visit a tea plantation and the Temple of the Tooth.**

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This morning you will drive up into the surrounding hills to visit a tea plantation. Tea estates dot the southern highland area, they were developed by the British in the early 19th century and became a big industry for Sri Lanka. You will be able to see how tea is produced and walk around the plantation to view the tea bushes and enjoy the beautiful scenery.

Returning to Kandy you will visit the much revered and very holy Buddhist shrine - The Temple of the Tooth. Said to have been brought to Sri Lanka over 2,000 years ago in the hair of a Princess, the tooth is the island's most important Buddhist relic housed in a temple dating from 1687, situated on the lakeside.

**Overnight: Hotel Thilanka or Similar, Kandy (Meals: BLD)**

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### **Day 13: Drive to Galle for a late afternoon tour of the town.**

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This morning you will drive to Galle (4-5 hours) which is Sri Lanka's best preserved town. The old colonial streets contained within the fort have been lovingly restored, many with their original street facing verandas and red tiled roofs and are interspersed with imposing churches and other colonial buildings. The fort ramparts are virtually complete and a stroll along them is a great way to see the town and get a sense of its size and position.

This fortified Portuguese/Dutch port is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular spot for visiting tourists. Within the old low rise, Dutch period villas you will find many shops, as well as cafes, bars, small hotels and guesthouses. You will doubtless be tempted to pick up some nice souvenirs or presents to take home.

**Overnight: Lady Hill Hotel or Similar, Galle (Meals: BLD)**

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### **Day 14: November to April - whale watching excursion. May to October - free time in Galle.**

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In recent years Sri Lanka has developed a reputation as one of the best places in the world to view both blue whales and sperm whales. The prime spots are offshore from Dondra Head or Mirissa, both of which are just a short drive from Galle. It will be an early start today to join a whale watching boat tour (on November to April departures). As well as the giant blue whale and sperm whales, dolphins are also commonly seen and you will hopefully enjoy several sightings of these impressive marine creatures. You will return to shore in time for lunch with the remainder of the day at leisure.

If you prefer not to head out to sea, the day is yours to relax and soak up the ambience in one of the lovely cafes or restaurants in town, do some shopping or explore further the old town buildings and museums.

On departures between May and October the whole day will be at leisure in Galle.

**Overnight: Lady Hill Hotel or Similar, Galle (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 15: Drive to Colombo. Guided tour.**

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Today you will drive into Colombo and have a guided tour by bus of the main sights. You will be staying at the city's most famous hotel - Galle Face. Situated on the oceanfront it is slightly quirky and has lots of character. In the afternoon you can stroll up the seafront promenade beside Galle Face Green where a small night market sets up, selling snacks and where you can watch the locals and tourists alike taking a turn.

**Overnight: Galle Face Regency Or Similar, Colombo (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 16: Group transfer to airport. Fly Colombo to London.**

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After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport, a drive of around an hour, for your flight home.  
**(Meals: B)**

## Our grading system

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Definitive Cultural Tour of Sri Lanka is graded as a Tour, as described below.

**Tours**

Tours may include any of the following activities: sightseeing, visiting local villages, exploring temples, game viewing, birdwatching, husky sledding, mountain flights, city tours and dramatic journeys by road, rail, or river. Occasionally there will be short, gentle walks so that you can properly explore the cultural sites you are visiting.

## What the price includes

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**Mountain Kingdoms** aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

### What's included:

- ✓ An English-speaking Sri Lankan leader
- ✓ All meals included from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 16
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation, full board, twin share basis
- ✓ Public ferry to Nainativu Island
- ✓ Whale watching boat excursion
- ✓ All transfers and road journeys by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Carbon offset for clients taking our flight inclusive option
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

### What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Sri Lankan airport departure taxes (where applicable)
- ✗ Tips
- ✗ Optional excursions - snorkelling (Day 9)

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit [For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>](https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign).

## Your accommodation

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We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



### **Ranweli Holiday Village or Similar, Waikkal**

Set on a small island and accessible by passenger ferry, this is a unique eco hotel with comfortable en suite bungalow rooms on the beach.



### **Palm Garden Village or Similar, Near Wilpattu**

Palm Garden Village. Lovely rooms, air conditioned and good amenities. The hotel is situated in a beautiful location by a lake, set in very attractive landscaped gardens, and has a pool.



### **Thinnai Hotel or Similar, Jaffna**

The Thinnai is a modern hotel built to resemble the distinctive 'Thinnai' homes of Jaffna which were traditionally built around a central court. It has an outdoor pool, garden and terrace whilst the rooms have air-conditioning, kettles and blu-ray players. The hotel prides itself on its green credentials - it uses produce from its own organic farm - and also on its tranquility.



### **Nilaveli Beach Hotel or Chaaya Blue or Similar, Trincomalee**

Situated right on the beach it has its own private gardens with swimming pool. The rooms are located around the grounds with walkways between them. There is an open air restaurant, and beach bar plus a more formal restaurant with a/c bar area.



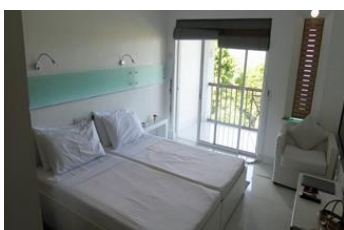
### **Deer Park Hotel or Similar, Girithale**

This hotel is located in lovely luxuriant gardens overlooking the lake with fish ponds and a swimming pool. There is a spa and ayurvedic centre plus a gym and squash court. The rooms all have private bathrooms, some with semi open air showers.



### **Hotel Thilanka or Similar, Kandy**

The Thilanka is nestled into the wooded hillside overlooking the city of Kandy. Rooms are spacious with modern facilities including mini fridges and coffee machines and all have balconies from where you can enjoy far reaching views across the lake and town of Kandy. The hotel has its own bar and restaurant as well as a fabulous infinity pool and terrace for some extra relaxation.



### **Lady Hill Hotel or Similar, Galle**

Situated just up the hill outside of Galle this hotel has magnificent views from its roof top restaurant and bar, which boasts to be the highest vantage point in Galle! The rooms are all modern, very comfortable and well equipped and there's a small swimming pool and spa.





### **Galle Face Regency or Similar, Colombo**

The Galle Face hotel is Sri Lanka's most historic hotel being built in 1864. It is situated on Colombo's seafront facing the Galle Face green. Rooms are comfortable and well-appointed. The hotel has a swimming pool and a spa.

## **Meal arrangements**

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All meals from dinner on day 2 to breakfast on day 16 (14 x breakfasts, 13 x lunches, 14 x dinners).

## **Flight arrangements**

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### **Flight inclusive from price**

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### **Flight upgrades and regional Airports**

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## **Further information**

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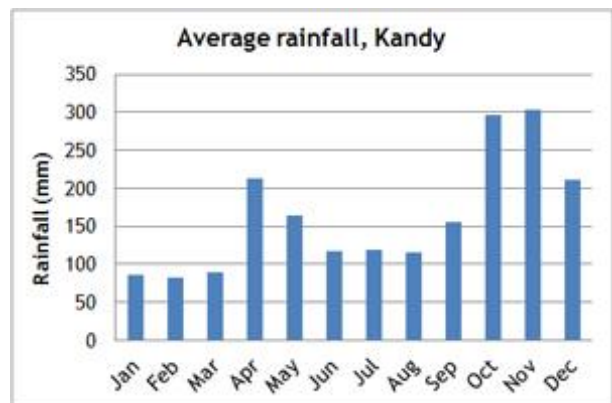
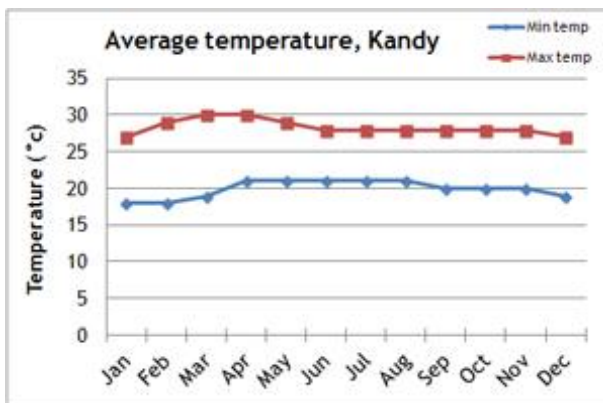
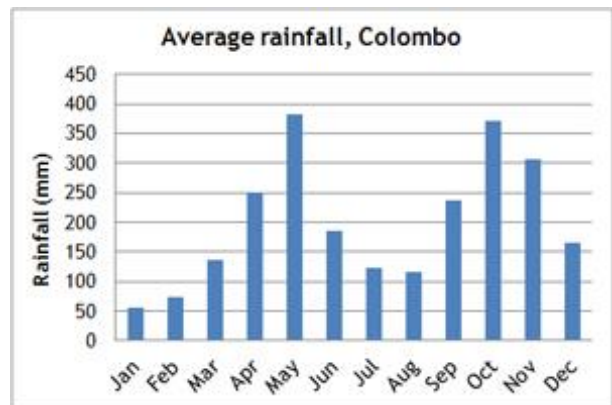
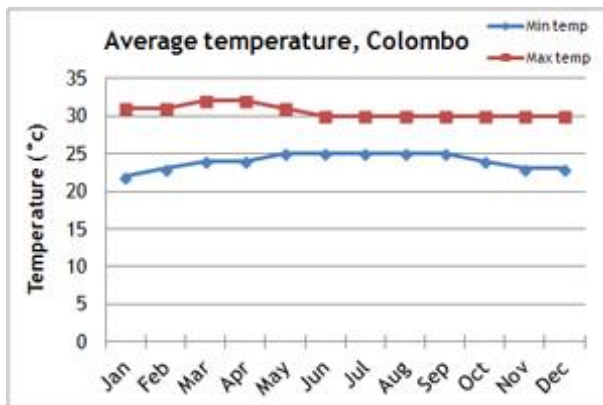
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## **The nature of adventure travel**

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Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

# Climate information



# Extensions

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## Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).



There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra nights at a hotel, relax at a beautiful beach resort, arrange a personal sightseeing tour or enjoy some other exciting activities such as a safari or birdwatching. In fact whatever's available, we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements.

We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.

## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- You will visit seven out of eight of Sri Lanka's UNESCO World Heritage sites.
- This tour explores, as yet, little-visited areas in the north of the island for a taste of life before mass tourism.
- In addition to seeing the main sights, you will also head off-the-beaten-track for a more authentic experience.
- You go on safari in Wilpattu National Park which is far less busy than the national parks in the south.
- We include a whale watching excursion.
- All meals are included in the price of your holiday.
- Our maximum group size for this holiday is 12 people. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects often associated with larger tour groups.
- We are an IATA credited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline or on alternative dates we would be happy to arrange this for you.
- Several members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have travelled in Sri Lanka. If you have any questions about this trip, please contact Seraphina Berry or April Palmer at the Mountain Kingdoms office.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and exciting activities.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.



## What our clients say

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*An absolutely brilliant cultural tour of Sri Lanka, it so very much exceeded our expectations and every single day of the tour was a delight including the days where we had very early morning starts for the wildlife safaris and whale watching expedition. The pace of the tour was perfect and it provided a thorough insight into the cultural life of the whole of Sri Lanka. We chose this tour as it was one of very few that include the north and east of the island and we are so very glad we did as tourism is very much in its infancy here....All hotels on tour were absolutely excellent providing high quality accommodation and wonderful food. This was our first trip with Mountain Kingdoms and it has been absolutely superb.*

*- Mr & Mrs P, Cheshire*



*Visiting the north of the island while it still has few tourists was a privilege and greatly interesting and enjoyable. It was an authentic experience and to be encouraged for anyone who is not afraid to go off the beaten track a bit.*

*- Ms N, Gloucestershire*



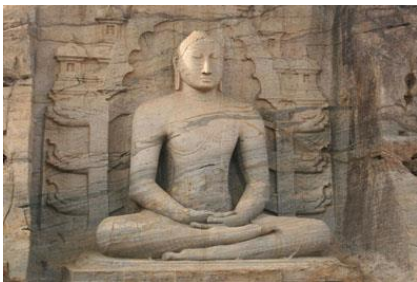
*Honestly, they never fail to amaze me with the amount of activities they can tie into one trip! Its hard to write all the amazing things that I experienced into one small review but all I can say if you're thinking about going to Sri Lanka this tour is for you! Hotels were stunning! One even had two floors to it!! Practically an apartment by my opinion! All the people in Sri Lanka are absolutely lovely and the amount of monuments and temples you will be able to see will amaze you! Nothing but gorgeous scenery and delicious smelling food! Only downside is I didn't bring enough bug spray! Couldn't recommend it enough either way!*

*-Mr M, Berkshire*



*An enjoyable group tour well worth the journey to reach Jaffna and the Palk Strait Islands in the far north, and Trincomalee on the east coast. There were some long drives to the central World Heritage sights and Galle. There was a nice mix of temples, wildlife and colonial experience. The hotels were excellent and up-market, but tended to be somewhat isolated from nearby towns and Sri Lankans.*

*-Mr B, Bristol*



*Great variety of places and experiences covered on the tour. From temples and ancient monuments to wildlife and snorkelling. Plenty of exercise too if wanted. Some steep climbs alongside the gentle walking. Lovely hotels - small and perfectly formed.*

*-PD, Glos*

*A varied itinerary covering over 2000 miles, exploring 7 of the 8 UNESCO World Heritage sites in Sri Lanka with five other like-minded travellers in the group. Food and hotels were almost all excellent, especially Lady Hill in Galle where the welcome and service were excellent. Our guide was informative and went out of his way to make sure all went smoothly. The highlights for me were the day spent visiting Sigiriya/Dambulla and the day on Nainativo exploring the Hindu Nagapooshani Amman Temple and the Buddhist shrine Nagadeepa Purana Viharaya.*

*-SES, Birmingham*

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

## **Complete financial security**

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

## **Genuine small group travel**

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

## **Loyalty Discount**

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

## **Comprehensive information**

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit [www.tourismdeclares.com](http://www.tourismdeclares.com)

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

### **Carbon Offsetting**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

### **Reducing Carbon Emissions**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.



