



SRI LANKA

January 5 - 21, 2027

Sri Lanka is literally teeming with birds, including some thirty-four rather fancy endemics; a mass of Indian subcontinent endemics; and some marvelous mammals, reptiles, and butterflies. Previous VENT tours to Sri Lanka have enjoyed such resounding success that we feel the time is ripe to again visit this birding mecca.

Although VENT's Sri Lanka tour will focus on the island specialties, we will also be treated to some of the most wonderful waterbird spectacles in Asia. Island specialties will include Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Sri Lanka Hanging-Parrot, the spectacular and very elusive Red-faced Malkoha, Green-billed Coucal, Yellow-fronted Barbet, the handsome Sri Lanka Blue-Magpie, Spot-winged Thrush, White-faced Starling, and Brown-capped and Orange-billed babbler.

As for the waterbird spectacle, Bundala and Yala National Parks and surrounding tanks, located in the far southeast, are considered by many to be among the best birding areas in Asia. More than one hundred species are regularly recorded during a morning's walk/drive, including five species of storks; thousands of Palearctic shorebirds, which feed along the drying edge of the tanks (man-made lakes); large numbers of local Spot-billed Pelican; and a host of "bush-birds" such as Sirkeer Malkoha and the uncommon Blue-faced Malkoha. We will also take time out to explore some of Sri Lanka's most important and "have to see" historical and cultural sites such as the extraordinary Lion Rock Fortress of Sigiriya.



This comprehensive tour will take us from the globally important rainforests of Sinharaja to the high, wind-swept, moss-covered Rhododendron forests of the Horton Plains and the aptly named "World's End." Sinharaja Forest is Sri Lanka's last major remaining area of tropical wet lowland forest and the single most

important site on the island. Here we will search for some of Sri Lanka's most elusive species including the Red-faced Malkoha, Serendib Scops Owl and the splendid Sri Lanka Frogmouth.

We then have three days in the southeast to explore Bundala and Yala National Parks and investigate the avian and mammalian riches of this fabulous area before ascending into the central mountains. From our attractive rest house at Nuwara Eliya, we will search mountain forests and botanical gardens for the surprisingly elusive Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush, Sri Lanka Bush-Warbler, and Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, before heading farther north to the ancient centers of Kandy and Sigirya where we will enjoy more birding amongst the stunningly beautiful ancient monuments of this fascinating country.

January 5-7, Days 1–3: Travel to Colombo, Sri Lanka

Participants will depart the USA on January 5 and arrive into Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport (airport code CMB) on January 7. Upon arrival in Colombo, you will be met by a representative of our ground operator who will provide transportation to the Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name. On January 7 at 6:30 p.m., we will meet in the hotel lobby for a trip welcome and orientation followed by dinner.

Travel notes: We recommend arriving in Colombo a day early January 6 to minimize the risk of flight misconnections or other travel delays, or simply to be well-rested for the start of our tour. Travel to Sri Lanka from the USA requires crossing the international dateline (essentially you 'lose' a day) Should you choose to arrive in Sri Lanka early, VENT will, upon request, be happy to assist with additional arrangements.

NIGHTS: January 5 /6: Aboard aircraft on route to Colombo

January 7: Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel, Colombo

January 8, Day 4: Drive to Hambanotota

This morning, we will make the long but fascinating drive down to the southeast of the island. We will make regular stops along the way on what will inevitably be a fascinating journey.

NIGHT: Jetwing Yala, Kirinda

January 9, Day 5: Bundala National Park

This is a superb area absolutely teeming with birds. So, this should be a very exciting day. One of the most important wetland areas in Asia, Sri Lanka's southwest "Dry Zone" is composed of a series of lagoons and salt pans separated from the Indian Ocean by a broad beach and fringing sand dunes. Some of the many species we may encounter include the endangered Spot-billed Pelican; Indian Cormorant; Little Cormorant; Black-crowned Night-Heron; Intermediate Egret; Painted Stork; Black-headed Ibis; Lesser Whistling-Duck; Booted Eagle; Great Thick-knee; Indian Thick-knee; Small and Oriental Pratincoles; Greater Sand, Tibetan Sand, Kentish, and Pacific Golden plovers; Marsh, Broad-billed, and Terek's sandpipers; Little and Temminck's stints; Brown-headed Gull; Caspian, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Little, and White-winged Black Terns; Orange-breasted Pigeon; Jacobin Cuckoo; Blue-faced Malkoha; Blue-tailed Bee-eater; Indian Pitta; Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark; Jerdon's Bushlark; Oriental Skylark; Paddyfield Pipit; and Brahminy Starling.

NIGHT: Jetwing Yala, Kirinda

January 10, Day 6: Final Morning in Bundala Area; Afternoon Drive to Yala National Park

After lunch we will drive east and north to our very attractive hotel, located right at the edge of the huge Yala National Park.

NIGHT: Cinnamon Wild Hotel, Yala

January 11, Day 7: Yala National Park

This reserve encompasses a large chunk of the southeast corner of Sri Lanka, including a magnificent mosaic of lowland habitats in a picturesque setting. This is an extremely rich area and we can expect to see large numbers of birds and mammals, many of which provide superb subjects for the photographers among us. It gets very hot during the middle of the day, so we will concentrate our efforts during the early

morning and late afternoon. It is quite possible to see over one hundred species of birds in a morning, in addition to herds of Asian Elephants; Sambar; and Spotted, Barking, and, perhaps, Greater Mouse deer. This is also a superb reserve in which to see the magnificent Leopard and we will make every effort to locate this impressive cat. The park's extensive marshes also support huge numbers of ducks, herons, egrets, cormorants, and bitterns. Four species of storks regularly occur here: Black-necked, Lesser Adjutant, Woolly-necked, and Painted as well as the globally threatened Spot-billed Pelican. This will also be our best opportunity to see the endemic Sri Lanka Junglefowl. Other birds we may encounter include Crested Serpent-Eagle, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Gray-headed Fish-Eagle, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Blue-faced Malkoha, Pied Kingfisher, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Sri Lankan Wood-Shrike, Indian Paradise-Flycatcher, Jungle Prinia and the more recently recognized Sri Lanka Shama.

NIGHT: Cinnamon Wild Hotel, Yala

January 12, Day 8: Drive to Udawalawe National Park

This morning, we will depart for Embilipitiya, which we will use as a base to visit the Udawalawe National Park. En route we will keep an eye out for a host of interesting waders and waterbirds which may be found on the many tanks that dot the countryside. Here we are sure to encounter wild Elephants as well as some dry country birds such as Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Barred Buttonquail, Sirkeer Malkoha, Jacobin Cuckoo, Tawny-bellied Babbler and Brahminy Starling.

NIGHT: Grand Udawalwe Safari Resort, Udawalawe

January 13, Day 9: Final Morning in Udawalawe; Afternoon Drive to Sinharaja Forest

After some final birding in Udawalawe we will make the longish drive to Sinharaja Forest where we will stay at a very attractive small hotel on the edge of this wonderful forest.

NIGHT: Blue Magpie Hotel, Sinharaja

January 14-15, Days 10–11: Sinharaja Forest

Sinharaja World Heritage Site is an outstanding tract of rainforest encompassing some 10,000 hectares which about 20 years ago, thanks to some herculean conservation efforts, was mostly saved from large-scale logging. Sinharaja is the last area of rainforest of any size left in Sri Lanka and today is a National Heritage Wilderness area under the administration of the Forest Department, as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We have two full days in which to explore these superb forests, which include more than 125 endemic species of trees as well as a large number of Sri Lanka's endemic birds, in addition to some of the nation's most exciting and elusive species.

We should be particularly alert to the presence of mixed species feeding flocks, which invariably include a large number of specialties. Birds we might see include Malayan Night-Heron (rare), Besra, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Sri Lankan Spurfowl (this handsome endemic is extremely elusive, but listen for it scratching on the forest floor), Sri Lanka Green-Pigeon, Sri Lankan Hanging-Parrot, Layard's Parakeet, Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, the splendid Chestnut-backed Owlet, Brown Boobook, Red-faced Malkoha (perhaps the most beautiful of all malkohas and one of the most sought-after of all Sri Lanka's endemic birds), Green-billed Coucal, Sri Lankan Frogmouth, Indian Swiftlet, Brown-backed Needletail, Malabar Trogon, Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher, Sri Lankan Gray and Malabar Pied hornbills, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Lesser Yellowthroat, Yellow-fronted and Crimson-fronted barbets, Square-tailed Black and Black-capped bulbuls, White-faced Starling, White-bellied Drongo, Sri Lankan and Southern Hill Mynas, Sri Lankan Blue-Magpie (a very striking looking and sounding endemic), Spot-winged Thrush, Sri Lankan Scimitar-Babbler, Dark-fronted and Yellow-billed Babblers, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, Large-billed Leaf and Green Warblers, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Legge's Flowerpecker, and Loten's Sunbird. With a bit of luck, we may also find the frustratingly elusive Sri Lankan Spurfowl and increasingly rare White-faced Starling. If we are extremely lucky, we may even come across the rare and poorly-known Sri Lanka Bay Owl (split from Oriental Bay), a species restricted to Sri Lanka and southern India. However, the main attraction in this forest is the cute and recently discovered Serendib Scops Owl which we have a good chance finding on a day roost in the jungle. Mammals are not conspicuous, but we should see troops of endemic, Purple-faced Langur moving through the canopy and we may also encounter the impressive Sri Lanka Giant Squirrel.

NIGHTS: Blue Magpie Hotel, Sinharaja

January 16, Day 12: Drive to Nuwara Eliya

As we climb steadily through the dramatic scenery of the Sri Lanka highlands we will bird *en route*, making a number of stops to look for any species we may have missed, such as the increasingly rare Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon, Brown Wood-Owl, and Streak-throated Woodpecker. We should arrive at our hotel in time for some late-afternoon birding. The delightfully cool, old colonial hill station of Nuwara Eliya is surrounded by beautiful mature forest and will be our base for the next two nights as we search for Sri Lanka's high elevation species, at about 6,700 feet elevation. During the afternoon we will visit centrally located Victoria Park, one of the best spots in Sri Lanka to see the superb Indian Pitta, Pied Thrush, the very attractive endemic Yellow-eared Bulbul, Kashmir Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye, Loten's Sunbird, and Indian Blue Robin. The immaculate Pied Thrush regularly forages on the lawns late in the afternoon after the daily crowds have wended their way home.

NIGHT: The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya

January 17, Days 13: Nuwara Eliya

Today we will enjoy another highlight of the tour—a full day trip of the Horton Plains National Park, in the heart of Sri Lanka's spectacular mountain ranges. A number of fascinating bird species are restricted to this montane area including Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Dull Blue Flycatcher and the much sought-after and most rarely seen endemic, Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush. However, we should at all times be prepared for rain as we have entered Sri Lanka's "Wet Zone," where damp mist and cloud often swirl back and forth across the surrounding crags.

Later in the day we will visit the Hakgala Botanical Gardens. Established in 1861, these gardens boast some impressive specimens of trees and shrubs, as well as a number of interesting birds. Species we may see include Besra Sparrowhawk, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Indian Swiftlet, Yellow-eared Bulbul, Sri Lanka Blue-Magpie (occasionally nests here), the rare Sri Lanka Wood-Pigeon, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Kashmir Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye, and Black-throated Munia.

NIGHT: The Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya

January 18, Day 14: Drive to Kandy

We will have a slightly more leisurely start today for our travel to the delightful city of Kandy, where we will visit the Royal Botanic Gardens at nearby Peradeniya. Some excellent birds can be seen in this pleasant setting including Alexandrine and Blossom-headed parakeets, Indian Cuckooshrike and Crimson-fronted Barbet. In the afternoon we will visit the legendary Temple of the Tooth, one of Buddhism's most important monuments.

NIGHT: Earl's Regency Hotel, Kandy

January 19, Day 15: Drive to Sigiriya

On our way to Sigiriya, we will stop at Udawatte Kelle Sanctuary, where we may encounter Yellow-fronted Barbets, the diminutive Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher, Brown-capped Babblers or Asian Emerald Dove. Arriving at Sigiriya in the afternoon will allow us time to enjoy yet more wonderful birding in a superb setting. This evening, we will make a special effort to track down Jerdon's Nightjar.

NIGHT: Hotel Sigiriya, Sigiriya

January 20, Day 16: Sigiriya; Return to Colombo

The town of Sigiriya is centered around the incredible Lion Rock Fortress built by Prince Kasyapa over 1,500 years ago. We will explore this truly amazing monument as well as bird the adjacent and equally ancient gardens and tanks. Some of the birds we will look out for include Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Blue Rock Thrush, and the simply gorgeous Orange-headed Thrush. This afternoon we will proceed back to Colombo where we will enjoy dinner and spend the night.

NIGHT: Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel, Colombo

January 21, Day 17: Departures for Home

Transfers to Bandaranaike International Airport (airport code CMB) will be provided for various morning or early afternoon departures.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Scott Baker with the assistance of a local guide.



Scott Baker's interest in wildlife began early on while growing up in the leafy, outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne which, although a highly urbanized environment, retained significant tracts of remnant natural woodland. It was here at the age of 11 that he got his first pair of binoculars and began what was to become a lifetime quest to identify all the birds in an ever-expanding neighborhood. By the age of 15 he was running weekly bird walks and talks and became a founding member of the very successful Yarran Dheran Junior Field Naturalists Club. In 1988 he was named the Nunawading Young Citizen of the Year in recognition of his contribution to natural history and conservation. Pursuing mutual interests in life science and fine art, Scott went on to hold various roles in business, education, and environmental consultancy. This has facilitated opportunities to explore the wild places and wildlife of Australia and beyond. In 30 plus years he has traveled extensively throughout the continent with a major focus on birds. He loves the rare and sometimes challenging, cryptic varieties but also shorebirds and seabirds, having spent many days at sea. To date he has recorded (and photographed) almost all of the regular and resident land birds and pelagic species likely in the country. Scott has a passion for wildlife, not just birds, and conducts studies and regular surveys for mammals, reptiles, and frogs. His fieldwork will often involve additional nocturnal spotlighting sessions, requiring late nights and early mornings to maximize the “tetrapod” options, when possible. Scott is a well-regarded member of the Australian birding community, a moderator on several birdwatching forums and rare bird committees, and, since 2017, has run birdwatching and nature tours within Australia and parts of southeast Asia. He currently resides in Victoria but frequently interstate or abroad.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: The fee for Sri Lanka is **\$9,865** per person in double occupancy or **\$11,450** for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 3 to dinner on Day 16, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, gratuities and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Colombo and return, airport

departure taxes, visa fees, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. At 180 days (July 9, 2026), VENT will collect a second deposit that brings the total deposit amount to 40% of the tour price. We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days, (September 7, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are not included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and not sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force**

Majeure” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE:

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption,

medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: <https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link: https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/.

Getting There & Required Travel Documents

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

PASSPORTS: A current passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure IS REQUIRED. Also, a return airline ticket and Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) are required for entry into Sri Lanka.

ELECTRONIC TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION (ETA): Your ETA can be obtained online through the Sri Lanka Department of Immigration and Emigration at www.eta.gov.lk. Once your ETA is approved and you arrive at the border, the immigration officer grants you a 30-day Short Visit Visa. In short: You submit an ETA online, and in return, you receive your Visa at the port of entry. It is important to indicate that your reason to visit is “natural history tourism” rather than specifically birdwatching. If you indicate “birdwatching,” they may think the expedition is scientific and require a business visa.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: For all VENT tours to Sri Lanka, bring lightweight long-sleeved shirts and pants in natural fabric such as cotton or cotton and man-made fiber blends, or even better the new loose-fitting nylon field shirts and pants that are produced in ideal colors, such as those by Columbia and ExOfficio. These offer protection against the sun and insects (very few), while remaining comfortable, cool and easy to launder. A warm sweater or jacket is essential for the cool dawns and evenings. People who feel the cold easily may require additional protection. Waterproof hiking boots/shoes or trail shoes with good lug soles are essential; lightweight sports sneakers are generally insufficient. Gators (optional) are helpful if trails are muddy. You may also want lightweight sandals or flipflops for use at the hotels. Thick socks help absorb perspiration and cushion one’s feet, especially when walking constantly on a hard surface. We recommend bringing a pair of leech socks for walks in Sinharaja Forest Reserve and other wet forest habitats. A sturdy rainproof jacket and pants are also recommended.

All clothing should be in DULL muted colors as this is less disturbing to birds and other wildlife. **PLEASE no bright colors and that includes pale khaki.** A wide-brimmed hat is also very important. Sunglasses can also be useful for reducing glare and keeping dust out of one’s eyes during rides in open vehicles.

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well-prepared:

- Snacks or energy bars
- Sunglasses
- Small umbrella (optional)flashlight or headlamp,
- reusable water bottle,
- a small daypack or Lightweight backpack (20–30 L),

- plastic bags to protect your equipment,
- handy wipes, paper tissues and industrial masks (very useful in dusty, sandy locations)
- Sunscreen (SPF 30+)
- Insect repellent (DEET or picaridin)
- Personal medications
- Antihistamine and pain reliever
- Hand sanitizer
- Electrolyte packets
- spare batteries & enough digital media
- Universal travel adapter (Sri Lanka commonly uses Type D, G, and M sockets)
- Power bank
- Phone charging cable
- Camera battery charger
- Extension cord or small power strip (useful in hotels with limited outlets)

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

NOTE: a second pair of binoculars in case of emergency is a good idea. The same advice applies to people who wear eyeglasses or contact lenses to protect against accident or theft.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE: The Sri Lanka weather is always a little hot or humid; in general, the climate will be rather pleasant. It is a little drier and hotter in and around Bundala and Yala National Parks and quite cool around dawn and dusk at higher altitudes around Nuwara Eliya and especially in Horton Plains National Park. It may even be cold for the first few hours around dawn on some of our early morning excursions. We may encounter some rain, but it is unlikely as January is the month with the least amount of rain throughout the year.

CURRENCY: The currency of Sri Lanka is the Sri Lankan Rupee. It is not possible to purchase Sri Lankan currency before arrival in Sri Lanka. All Sri Lankan Rupees should be re-converted upon leaving Sri Lanka. Foreign currency can be exchanged at various commercial banks and hotels. Banks may charge a 0.5% handling fee and a commission, which varies from bank to bank. The use and acceptance of MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, while American Express has limited acceptance. While visiting remote areas, it is advisable to arrange for an alternative mode of payment apart from your credit card.

INTERNET ACCESS: Expect Wi-Fi to be available at most lodges and hotels.

ELECTRICITY: The electric current in Sri Lanka is 230-240V, 50 cycles, alternating current. Since voltage tends to fluctuate quite often in Sri Lanka, it is safer to bring a stabilizer if you are going to be using sensitive electronic equipment. Two and three pin round plugs are widely used.

LANGUAGE: Sinhala (also called Sinhalese or Singhalese) is the mother tongue of the Sinhalese ethnic group, which is the largest in Sri Lanka.

TIME: 10½ hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

HEALTH AND SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

Although no vaccinations are required, as standard travel precautions you should be up to date with tetanus shots and current on your yellow fever protection, and strongly consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B. Malaria is present in some parts of the Indian sub-continent, including Sri Lanka. There have been some recent changes in recommendations for malaria prophylaxis. Mefloquine (Lariam) is recommended for chloroquine-resistant malaria as well as the newer Malarone which has fewer side effects. Both are available by prescription only and may not be suitable for those using cardio-vascular medication; consult your physician.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- Picaridin: A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.

- Herbal insect repellents: Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- Permanone® (Permethrin) is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.
- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

Sanitation is not ideal; however, it has improved radically during the time that VENT has been operating tours to Sri Lanka, largely as a result of greatly improved hygiene and the widespread availability of bottled, non-carbonated water. Participants are advised **NOT** to drink the water anywhere, even in the nicer hotels in the larger cities. Indian and Sri Lankan beer is excellent and tea and coffee and other bottled soft drinks are safe and widely available. Bottled water is also widely available, and this is perhaps one of the most important contributions to the reduction in sickness on tours to the Indian sub-continent.

Participants are advised **NOT** to eat uncooked or partially cooked meat or vegetables or food that has been cooling in the open, permitting flies to settle. Only eat fruit that you have peeled, preferably first washing the outside with clean water. **“BOIL IT, PEEL IT OR FORGET IT.”** Traveler’s diarrhea used to be a common complaint on trips to the Indian sub-continent. Fortunately, this increasingly is now

uncommon and usually only as a result of the incautious eating of some of India's wonderfully spicy food! A prescription of Lomotol, to take care of the symptoms, is useful to have along.

Insects are generally not a problem at the time of VENT tours to Sri Lanka; however, mosquitoes can be an occasional nuisance. We recommend carrying Cutter or similar insect repellent.

Leeches – Please note that leeches are commonly found in the wet rainforest environment of Sinharaja Forest Reserve, particularly after rainfall. While their bites may be startling, they are generally harmless and do not pose a significant health risk. Guests are encouraged to wear long pants, long socks, and sturdy closed-toe footwear; tucking pant legs into socks can provide additional protection. Leeches are a natural and important part of this unique rainforest ecosystem, and with simple precautions they rarely detract from the enjoyment of exploring one of Sri Lanka's premier wildlife destinations.

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

This is the most important book to have on this trip:

Warakagoda, Deepal, Grimmet, Richard, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp. *Birds of Sri Lanka*. Helm Identification Guides. Christopher Helm & A.C. Black. London. 2012. This book illustrates and documents in detail every species we are likely to encounter during our trip in Sri Lanka. It is completely focused on the avifauna of the small islands plus offers some excellent details on the best birding grounds of the country.

Other good guides to the birds of India include:

Kazmierczak, K. & B. van Perlo. *A Field Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Robertsbridge. Pica Press. 1999. This is a very nice alternative to the Rasmussen & Anderton 2005 or the Grimmet *etal* guide.

Rasmussen, P. C. & J. C. Anderton. 2005. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide. Vols. 1 and 2*. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Editions. Washington D.C. and Barcelona. If you want something more

detailed and comprehensive than the Grimmet *et al* book, then you should also obtain the Rasmussen book. This book also has a much more up to date taxonomy.

Grimmet, Richard, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp. *Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Helm Identification Guides. Christopher Helm & A.C. Black. London. 2002. This book illustrates and documents in detail every species we are likely to encounter on any tour to the Indian subcontinent. All participants are recommended to obtain a copy of this guide as it greatly supersedes all previous guides we have advocated for tours to this region. This excellent guide covers all the species of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Andaman Islands and Sri Lanka.

For general background books on Sri Lanka, we recommend:

Beebe, W. *Pheasant Jungles*. Reading. World Pheasant Association. 1994.

Bole, P.V. & Y. Vaghani. *Field Guide to the Common Trees of India*. Bombay. WWF India/OUP. 1986.

Daniel, J.C. *The Book of Indian Reptile and Amphibians*. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society, 2002.

Ellis, R. *Sri Lanka*. Bradt Travel Guides. 2011.

Gee, E.P. *The Wildlife of India*. London. Collins. 1964.

Gurung, K.K. and Raj Singh. *Field Guide to the Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent: Where to watch Mammals in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1996.

Harrison, J. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka*. OUP. 1999

Hawkins, R. E. *Encyclopedia of Indian Natural History*. Oxford University Press. 1987.

Kazmierczak, Krys and Raj Singh. *A Birdwatchers' Guide to India*. Bedfordshire, United Kingdom: Prion Ltd., 1998. This book describes a cross-section of birding sites covering all of India's regions and main habitats, and is very informative. It's a wonderful and fascinating book co-authored by Raj Singh, co-author of *Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent*, and owner of the company handling our ground arrangements in India, Assam, and Bhutan. Currently, it is not available in the USA;

however, it is available through Natural History Book Service, 2 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN U.K., phone 011-44-1803865913 or fax 011-44-1803865280.

McNeely, Jeffrey A. and Paul Spencer Wachtel. *Soul of the Tiger: Searching for Natural Answers in Southeast Asia*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. One of the most intriguing and beautifully written books on the complex relationships between man, his myriad beliefs and nature and the implications for conservation.

Menon, V. *A Field Guide to Indian Mammals*. DK Delhi. 2003. Undoubtedly the very finest field guide to the mammals of India.

Prater, S. H. *The Book of Indian Animals*. Oxford University Press, 1993. Try looking at www.abebooks.com.

Whittaker, R. and A. Captain. *Snakes of India. The Fields Guide*. Draco Books, Chennai, India. 2004.

Wijeyeratne, De Silva G. *Sri Lanka Wildlife*. Bradt Wildlife Guides. 2007.

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on June 5, 2026, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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