



Circle Sri Lanka - For Solo Travellers

Overview & Itinerary

Start	Negombo, Sri Lanka
Finish	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Destination	Sri Lanka
Style	Original
Theme	Explorer
Code	STHPSH
Validity	01 Jan 2019 to 31 Dec 2019



Is this trip right for you?

- This trip is for solo travellers only. If you're planning an adventure with a friend, family member or partner, we've got heaps of other trips you can travel on! If you're planning to travel on your own, with a group of other solo travellers, this trip might be just what you're looking for.
- Though its equatorial position means fairly constant year-round temperatures, the summer months in Sri Lanka are very hot with short, sharp monsoons in the south-west of the country. Be sure to use adequate sun protection and drink plenty of water.
- The jungle hike is approximately 6.5 hours, accommodation is a comfortable lodge. Its relatively flat but its around 12km each day hiking.

- If you have issues with heights, you may wish to sit out the climb of Lion Rock at Sigiriya. there are lots of rough, narrow steps and tight walkways.
- The drive from Bandarawela to Mirissa on day 11 is downhill, windy and slow. Motion sickness has been an issue for some travellers in the past.

Physical rating



Joining point

Rani Beach Resort
Lewis Place Beach Front, Negombo
Negombo
SRI LANKA
Phone: +94 312223106

Joining point description

The Rani Beach Resort has 34 rooms each with air-conditioning, TV, Wi-Fi, 24 hour room service and tea/coffee facilities. There is a fully licensed bar and restaurant.

Joining point instructions

We are happy to arrange an arrival transfer for you at an additional charge. Please ask your booking agent if you would like to add this service and provide your flight details.

Rani Beach Resort is located approximately 20 minutes drive from Bandaranaike International Airport. A taxi will cost about LKR900.

Problems and emergency contact information

For general enquiries or questions about your booking, please contact your agent or adventure specialist. For further contact details please use the following page:

For general contact details please use the following page: <http://www.intrepidtravel.com/ourtrips/contact/>

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local representative straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader/local partner may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction - if this is the case, please ask the leader to speak to their direct manager.

You may also choose to provide details in your online feedback, which we ask you to complete within 30 days of the end of your trip. But we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

Sri Lanka 24 Hour Emergency Contact: +94 (0)76 831 6000

Itinerary

Day 1: Negombo

Ayu-bowan! Welcome to Sri Lanka. Your adventure begins in the town of Negombo, located close to the international airport. You can arrive at any time on Day 1 as there are no activities planned until the important welcome meeting at 5.30 pm. Those arriving early can get into the spirit of seaside Sri Lanka by observing the local fishing craft and perhaps feasting on fresh seafood. The beautiful surrounding countryside is best explored on a bicycle, which you can rent with help from the hotel reception.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

Day 2: Anuradhapura

Leave Negombo after breakfast today. Your private vehicle takes you to ancient Anuradhapura via the small town of Chilaw (approximately 5 hours total travel time). Those keen on history and archaeology might like to visit one of the local museums in the afternoon. Mihintale, the sacred birthplace of Sri Lankan Buddhism, is a recommended optional activity. The price of this will depend on the number of people sharing the vehicle.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 3: Anuradhapura

A guided bicycle tour of the city will take place today depending on the weather. Among the ruins you'll see the sacred old Bo Tree, a spiritual reminder of the beginnings of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and the inspiration for Anuradhapura's great buildings. The ruins themselves are spread over quite an area, some in woodland settings and others appearing park-like with columns and ponds dotted about.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Anuradhapura - Bodhi Tree Temple
- Anuradhapura - Bike tour

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 4: Polonnaruwa

Take a local bus to Polonnaruwa (approximately 2.5 hours), the capital of the Indian Chola Dynasty after Anuradhapura was conquered in the late 10th century. These ruins are close together and generally in much better repair than those you have just seen. Cycling amid the remains of 1,000-year-old Polonnaruwa is once again the best way to get around. Once the heat of the day has eased you'll visit more palaces, temples and stupas. A likely highlight will be the massive stone Buddhas: 14-metre-high granite carvings of the iconic reclining

Buddha which represent the zenith of Sinhalese rock carving. You'll also visit the well laid-out museum, which has scale models of many of the buildings to show how they would have existed in their time.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Polonnaruwa - Bike Tour

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 5: Dambulla

Depart Polonnaruwa this morning and travel to Dambulla (approximately 2.5 hours). Explore the amazing Dambulla Cave Temples which are located high on a stone cliff face. Some 150 Buddha images adorn the five caves, with fascinating frescoes and paintings on the walls and roofs. In the afternoon, you may like to relax by the hotel pool or take an optional wildlife jeep safari to Minneriya, Kaudulla or Eco National Park where you might spot some wild elephants with a bit of luck. Which park is available to visit depends on the season, but both Minneriya and Kaudulla are within easy reach of Dambulla.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Dambulla - Cave Temples

Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

Special Information

There are numerous steps to get to the caves. You will need to remove your shoes and be dressed appropriately, with shoulders and legs covered, to enter.

Day 6: Sigiriya - Kandy

Early this morning, before the heat is too intense, head to Sigiriya (approximately 30 minutes). This ruined fortress is one of Sri Lanka's premier sights. Those who make it to the top are rewarded with astounding views. Make sure you are wearing sturdy footwear, as this is a very steep climb with some uneven slopes. Those unable to climb to the top can explore the gardens at the base of the rock and still get some fantastic shots of the fortress from below. Return to the hotel to freshen up before heading to Kandy (approximately 3 hours). On the way, there's the option of stopping at one of the region's wonderful spice gardens for lunch. In beautifully located Kandy, visit the Dalada Maligawa (aka Temple of the Tooth), Sri Lanka's most important Buddhist site, and mingle with the white-clad pilgrims who come here to worship. Time permitting, you'll have the option of visiting the National Museum or the world-class Botanical Gardens. Another great option is an early-evening performance of the famed Kandyan dancers, drummers and and fire-walkers.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Kandy - Temple of the Tooth
- Sigiriya - Lion Rock

Optional Activities

- Kandy - Botanical Gardens - LKR1200
- Kandy - Cultural performance - LKR1000

Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

Special Information

The visit to Lion Rock takes around 3.5 hrs. Start around 7am, reaching the lion paw around 8.30 am. On the way visit the water garden, boulder garden, Sigiriya Frescos and the mirror wall. After the Lion Paw its a steep climb with plenty of steps and walkways along the side of the rock. This part of the climb takes around 30 minutes. Those not wanting to go to the top can rest at the lion paw until the rest of the group return.

Day 7: Kandy

Today you will visit a nearby tea factory and take a guided tour to learn about the production of Sri Lanka's best-known beverage. Of course, you will also sample some of the delicious varieties while you're here. Your hotel in Kandy, located far from the noise and bustle of the city, is a great place to unwind with lovely views over the town.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 8: Bandarawela

Take a scenic train journey into the highlands and disembark at Bandarawela (approximately 7 hours). Once in Bandarawela you will visit a local home for a cooking demonstration to learn some secrets of traditional Sri Lankan cuisine. Enjoy the delicious meal afterwards.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Bandarawela - Cooking demonstration & local meal

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Dinner

Day 9: Haputale

Take a private bus to starting point for our walk today (approximately 30mins). This hike (approximately 4.5 hours) takes you through picturesque tea plantations and small Tamil villages. Lunch will be arranged at Tamil tea worker's house. Tonight's accommodation is in a comfortable local lodge.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Hill Country trek

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Special Information

The walks require good walking shoes, as the 'track' is often just rocks under shrubs, and if there has been rain it can get very muddy and slippery. You do need to be fit, because although the walk is not too demanding, it can be difficult walking on rough and unsteady ground. Our usual route is about 20 kilometres in total. If you don't feel you are able to complete these walks, you can take an option to either stay in Bandarawela for an extra night, or if you don't wish to complete the second day's walk your group leader will be able to organise a transport alternative. These options would be at your own expense.

Day 10: Kuda Oya

Take a local train to the starting point for our walk today. Set off for some more walking today (approximately 4.5 hours) to explore more of the beautiful surrounds of Sri Lanka's Hill Country. Enjoy this chance to meet the curious tea pickers along the way and stop for an included lunch in Bambarakanda. We will then proceed to Kuda Oya and spend the evening glamping at Gangadhara eco-lodge, located by a river in the jungle. Swim, fish and enjoy an included barbecue dinner around a bonfire.

Accommodation

- Permanent tented camp (with facilities) (1 night)

Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Day 11: Mirissa

Set off south for the coast, stopping at the Elephant Transit Home en route. At this special organisation you'll experience feeding time for baby orphaned elephants and learn more about their rehabilitation. Then drive further along the Sri Lankan south coast by private bus (approximately 4 hours) to the beach of Mirissa. This is your paradise for two days of relaxation, with your comfortable accommodation just metres from the water.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Udawalawa - Elephant Transit Home

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 12: Mirissa

Enjoy a day of beach splendour in Mirissa. The beach itself is a long curve of sand with lovely clear waters for swimming – a great spot to watch the sunset. Consider taking a bicycle ride or tuk-tuk to nearby Weligama, where colourful fishing boats bring fresh fish to sell along the shore. The local cottage industry of lace products is also well worth a look. From September to April there is an optional whale watching excursion. Please ask your leader as you'll need to book at least one day in advance.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 13: Galle

Head further down the coast. Arrive in Galle (approximately 1 hour), home to an impressive World Heritage-listed Dutch fort with extensive walls and many interesting old buildings. In the evening, enjoy a stroll around the historic fort and watch the sunset from the ramparts.

Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

Included Activities

- Galle - Walking tour

Meals Included

- Breakfast

Day 14: Colombo

Leaving Galle, we take a classic train ride, catching glimpses of the beautiful coastline before rolling into Colombo (approximately 3 hours). The train tickets from Galle to Colombo cannot be pre booked and therefore are not guaranteed. In the event that tickets are not available you will be transferred to Colombo by bus. After arriving in Colombo, you'll set off for a city walk via the bustling Petta Bazaar, Independence Square, Parliament, and past the National Museum, finishing with a shopping opportunity for a good cause at the Barefoot fairtrade store. Here you can find a collection of handicrafts from around the country and support small cottage industries. Tonight there's an optional final group dinner to celebrate your journey.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Included Activities

- Colombo - Walking tour

Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

Day 15: Colombo

Your trip comes to an end today, with no activities planned. Checkout time at the hotel is 12 noon.

Optional Activities

- Colombo - Eat, Eat, Repeat Urban Adventure - USD55
- Colombo - Colombo by Tuk Tuk Urban Adventure - USD55

Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

Finishing point

Z Max Fairway
No. 07, Hospital Street
Colombo 01
Colombo
SRI LANKA
Phone: +94 112153153

Finishing point description

A sophisticated, 'smart luxury hotel' situated in the heart of Colombo. All rooms come equipped with 40 inch LED TV with a choice of local and international channels, IP phones, safety box, mini fridge, hot beverage facility, writing desks, motion sensor Air conditioners, luxury fitted shower areas and hi-speed Wi-Fi internet connections. The hotel boasts a rooftop bar and restaurant, gym, 24 hour coffee shop. Located within walking distance to restaurants, shopping malls, banks, pubs and bars.

Itinerary disclaimer

Occasionally our itineraries are updated during the year to incorporate improvements stemming from past travellers' comments and our own research. The information given in this itinerary may be slightly different to that in the brochure. It's very important that you print and review a final copy of your Essential Trip Information a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans. If you have any queries, please contact your travel agent or our staff. We are here to help you! Please note that while we operate successful trips in this region throughout the year, some changes may occur in our itineraries due to inclement weather and common seasonal changes to timetables and transport routes. This can happen with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to the route. The order and timing of included activities in each location may also vary from time to time.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

A selection of optional activities are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This isn't an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide only. Prices are approximate and are for entrance only and don't include transport to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. All activities are subject to availability and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. Where activities are considered medium or high risk, we work with operators whose safety and credentials we have sighted and assessed. This means that it is possible that you may find the same activity cheaper with another operator on the ground, however we cannot vouch for the safety or quality of that operator. Activities not listed above have not been assessed by us and as such our staff and leaders are unable to assist you with booking these activities. The decision to partake in any activity not listed is at your own discretion and risk.

Feedback

After your travels, we want to hear from you! We rely on your feedback. We read it carefully. Feedback helps us understand what we are doing well and what we could be doing better. It allows us to make improvements for future travellers.

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/feedback/>

Essential Trip Information

Important notes

1. A single supplement is available on this trip and is valid for all nights of tour with the exception of nights 9 and 13.
2. In the wet season, we occasionally need to alter the length and itinerary of the Hill Country hike due to wet weather.
3. The Perahera Festival is a 10 day period of evening processions to honour the Sacred Tooth, which is enshrined at Kandy's Temple of the Tooth. Each night features thousands of performers, including dancers, drummers, and a parade of more than 50 decorated elephants. Due to Intrepid's stance on elephant cruelty we do not visit the Perahera Festival and cannot purchase tickets on your behalf.
4. Train tickets from Kandy to Bandarawela are in very high demand and tickets for the train from Galle to Colombo cannot be pre-booked. We always try our best to secure tickets, though on the rare occasion that we cannot you will be provided with a private bus to take you to your next destination.

Passport and visas

Visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. Entry requirements can change at any time, so it's important that you check for the latest information. Please visit the relevant consular website of the country or countries you're visiting for detailed and up-to-date visa information specific to your nationality. Your consultant will also be happy to point you in the right direction with acquiring visas. Visas can take several weeks to process, so familiarise yourself with any requirements as soon as you have booked your trip to allow for processing time.

SRI LANKA:

Foreign passport holders are required to obtain a visa prior to entry into Sri Lanka. This can be done on-line at the following website:

www.eta.gov.lk

Detailed information and application forms are provided here. The process is simple and the cost is US\$20 for most countries.

Medical and health information

All Intrepid travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully on this trip. When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assess your ability to cope with our style of travel. Please note that if, in the opinion of our group leader or local guide, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, Intrepid Travel reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information or for any necessary vaccinations and anti-malarial requirements before departure. We recommend that you carry a first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements (including a spare pair of glasses) as they may not easily be obtained at the locations on this trip. For legal reasons our leaders and guides are prohibited from administering any type of drugs including headache tablets and antibiotics. Please ensure that you are adequately prepared.

DENGUE FEVER:

Rare instances of dengue fever have been reported in this region. This virus is transmitted by mosquitoes. There is no vaccination against it, but there are preventative measures that you can take such as wearing long clothing, using repellent and being indoors particularly around dusk and dawn.

Food and dietary requirements

While travelling with us you'll experience the vast array of wonderful food available in the world. Your group leader will be able to suggest restaurants to try during your trip. On our camping trips we often cook the region's specialities so you don't miss out. To give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat, generally not all meals are included in the trip price. This also gives you more budgeting flexibility. As a rule our groups tend to eat together to enable you to taste a larger variety of dishes and enjoy each other's company. There's no obligation to do this though.

Sri Lanka has a good selection of vegetarian food from veg curry and rice (a Sri Lankan staple) to hoppers, veg rotti and an amazing array of fruit. There is a large south Indian population in Sri Lanka cooking great veg and pure veg south Indian cuisine.

For those who eat fish, Seafood is in abundance around coastal areas.

'Rice and curry' is the national dish of Sri Lanka and is found on almost every menu. This dish (changing from one restaurant to the next) is a array of small, spiced dishes made from vegetables, meat (commonly chicken) or fish, and served with pappadoms, chutneys and sambol.

Your tour leader will be able to direct you towards restaurants that are known to have better hygiene, especially in tourist areas where they are travelling with our groups regularly

Some tips that will help you stay well when eating in Sri Lanka (and around the world) include.

- Stick to restaurants and street stalls busy with locals - local families eating there are a good bet.
- Wash your hands before eating (most restaurants will have a hand basin or bathroom) or use a sanitising hand gel
- give yourself a few days to get used to local food, especially spicy food.
- if in doubt, stick to the veg meal
- avoid salads and peel fruit to avoid eating skin that may be washed in local water
- steer clear of ice unless in higher end restaurants
- drink more chai

Keep some space for the amazing variety of sweets on offer in Sri Lanka.

Accommodation

Guesthouse (1 night), Hotel (13 nights)

OCCASIONAL ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION

The style of accommodation indicated in the day-to-day itinerary is a guideline. On rare occasions, alternative arrangements may need to be made due to the lack of availability of rooms in our usual accommodation. A similar standard of accommodation will be used in these instances.

TWIN SHARE / MULTI SHARE BASIS

Accommodation on this trip is on a twin/multishare basis. Please note there may be times where facilities will be shared rather than ensuite and rare occasions when you share a room with passengers travelling on our different trips than your own.

CHECK-IN TIME

Throughout the trip we request that our hotels prepare rooms in time for our arrival, especially if we're arriving prior to normal check-in time. However this isn't always possible which means we won't be able to check-in immediately on arrival at some hotels. Instead, we can store our luggage and explore our new destination.

PRE/POST TRIP ACCOMMODATION

If you've purchased pre-trip or post-trip accommodation (if available), you may be required to change rooms from your trip accommodation for these extra nights.

AIR CONDITIONING:

Please note that not all hotels on this trip have air-conditioning. All hotels do have a fan.

Transport

Auto rickshaw, Bicycle, Private Bus, Public bus, Train

Money matters

The official currency of Sri Lanka is the Rupee (LKR).

There are now many ATM machines throughout Sri Lanka, which accept both Visa and MasterCard. Although this is a safe and convenient way to access money during your trip we do recommend that you carry some money as cash when ATMs can not be accessed. Some money should be taken as US dollars cash in case of emergencies.

A 'black market' for currency changing does exist in Sri Lanka, these are considered a danger and best avoided. Major credit cards are accepted in the larger shops and restaurants but only in the bigger cities. Some banks will allow cash advances against a credit card.

SPENDING MONEY:

When it comes to spending money on the trip, every traveller is a little different. You know your spending habits better than we do, so please budget a sensible amount for things like meals not included, drinks, shopping, optional activities and laundry. It's always better to bring a little more than you think you'll need. Also make sure you've read your trip details thoroughly so you know what's included in the trip price and what isn't. This should make budgeting a little easier. You'll find this info in the Inclusions section of your Essential Trip Information (that's this document).

CONTINGENCY FUNDS:

We try to plan for every eventuality, but there are still some things beyond our control. Please make sure you have access to an extra US\$500 for emergencies (e.g. severe weather, natural disasters, civil unrest) or other events that result in unavoidable changes to the itinerary (e.g. transport strikes or cancellations, airport closures). Sometimes these things necessitate last minute changes to enable our trips to continue to run, and as a result there may be some extra costs involved.

Suggested budget for meals not included - USD\$350

TIPPING

If you're happy with the services provided a tip - though not compulsory - is appropriate. While it may not be customary to you, it's of great significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels, inspires excellent service, and is an entrenched feature of the tourism industry across many Intrepid destinations. Although can be difficult to source we advise you to carry small notes of local currency each day to make tipping easier.

The following amounts are per person suggestions based on local considerations and feedback from our past travellers:

Restaurants: Local markets and basic restaurants - round your bill up to the nearest US\$1. More up-market restaurants we suggest 10% to 15% of your bill.

Local guides: Throughout your trip you may at times have a local guide in addition to your tour leader. We suggest US\$2-US\$3 per day for local guides.

Drivers: You may have a range of drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group, however we suggest \$5-\$6 for both bus and the staffs.

Your Tour Leader: You may also consider tipping your tour leader for outstanding service throughout your trip. The amount is entirely a personal preference, however as a guideline US\$5 - US\$6 per person, per day can be used. Of course you are free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality and the length of your trip. Remember, a tip is not compulsory and should only be given when you receive excellent service.

In total, we recommend you budget approx US\$10-US\$12 per day of your trip to cover tipping.

At your group meeting on Day 1, your tour leader will discuss with you the idea of running a group tipping kitty, whereby everybody contributes an equal amount and then your group leader pays the tips while keeping a running record of all monies spent (except restaurant tips). The record can be checked at any time and any

money remaining at the end of the tour returned to group members. This is often the easiest way to avoid the hassles of needing small change and knowing when and what is an appropriate amount to tip.

Please don't tip with coins, very small denomination notes, or dirty and ripped notes. This is regarded culturally as an insult.

Packing

What you need to bring will vary according to the trip style you have chosen, the countries you are visiting and when you are travelling. Generally speaking, we recommend you pack as lightly as possible and make sure that you are able to carry and lift your own luggage, and walk with it for short distances.

Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly. Smaller bags or backpacks with wheels are convenient although we recommend your bag has carry straps. A lockable bag or small padlock is useful.

You'll also need a day pack/bag to carry water, camera, and jacket etc. when you're exploring during the day and for your overnight hike into the tea plantations.

Below are some ideas and helpful tips on what you specifically need for this trip.

ESSENTIALS:

- Lightweight clothing. You will need to bring a mixture of lightweight clothing and warm layers. Long shirts and pants for protection against mosquitoes are useful. Clothes should be easy to wash and dry. Maybe bring a change of smart clothes for dinner in Colombo. Please also bring clothing that covers arms and pants/skirts that go past the knee for entry into local temples. For women, a light scarf is also a good idea for covering shoulders and arms when hot.
- Closed-in shoes will help to protect your feet from cuts and scratches when walking through cities as well as bush/grass-lands, and will also act as a barrier protection in rare cases against bites or stings.
- Sun protection - hat, sunscreen, sunglasses

RECOMMENDED:

- The Hill country of Sri Lanka can be cold, especially on the tea plantation hike. Please bring a light, warm waterproof jacket.
- Hiking boots, socks and light hiking clothing such as synthetic T shirt styles that wick away moisture
- Personal medical kit. A larger kit will be on hand with your leader, but we recommend you carry items such as mild pain killers, electrolytes, Band-Aids and insect repellent.
- Water bottle. We recommend at least a 1.5litre capacity. The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world.
- Camera / phone.

OPTIONAL:

- Ear plugs to guard against street noise, barking dogs and snorers.
- A good book, journal and music player.

LUGGAGE LIMIT:

Please keep your luggage to a minimum. One small soft-sided bag plus a day pack (no more than 15-20kgs in total per person) is essential. We recommend against bringing hard/externally framed suitcases as they are difficult to store and can damage equipment and other travellers' belongings. If your trip is beginning and ending at the same location, excess luggage can usually be stored at your arrival/departure hotel and can be collected after your trip.

VALUABLES:

Please try to avoid bringing unnecessary valuables, and use your hotel safe. It's also a good idea to purchase a money belt or pouch that is easily hidden. We strongly recommend that you photocopy all important documents e.g. air tickets, passport, vaccination certificate, etc. and keep the copies separate from the originals. While not valid, a photocopy makes it very much easier to obtain replacements if necessary.

BATTERIES/POWER:

Most of our trips have access to power to recharge batteries for phones and cameras every day. We recommend that you carry an extra battery for your camera and/or a small portable power bank.

MORE!

If you need some further tips for packing, you can always check out our ultimate packing list.

<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/packing-list>

Climate and seasonal information

Choosing when to travel to Sri Lanka can vary depending on the time of year and part of Sri Lanka you wish to travel to.

The south-western monsoon brings rain to the south-west of Sri Lanka between May and September, while the dry season in this region runs from December to March.

In the north and eastern coastal regions of the country, the weather is influenced by the north-eastern monsoon, which brings wind and rain between October and January, and dryer weather between May and September.

Group Leader

All Intrepid group trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. Intrepid endeavours to provide the services of an experienced leader however, due to the seasonality of travel, rare situations may arise where your leader is new to a particular region or training other group leaders.

Your leader will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the places visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. At Intrepid we aim to support local guides who have specialised knowledge of the regions we visit. If you were interested in delving deeper into the local culture at a specific site or location then your leader can recommend a local guide service in most of the main destinations of your trip.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure and ensure that your travel insurance covers you for all areas your itinerary covers. Please refer to our website's safety page for links to major travel advisories and updates on safety issues affecting our trip.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities, however during your trip you'll have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your Intrepid itinerary, and Intrepid makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time. Please also note that your Leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it's deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

For more details on the type of conditions and safety standards you can expect on your trip, please refer to Intrepid's operational safety policy on our website. We recommend that you take a moment to read through this information before travelling, and would appreciate any feedback on how well it's being implemented in the field:

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/contact-us/safety>

FIRE PRECAUTIONS:

Please be aware that local laws governing tourism facilities in this region differ from those in your home country and not all the accommodation which we use has a fire exit, fire extinguishers or smoke alarms.

TRAFFIC AND DRIVING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD:

Depending on where you come from please note that drivers in this part of the world may drive on the opposite side of the road from what you are used to. Look both ways before crossing any road. Traffic can be a little more chaotic than you might be used to at home. Be aware!

SEAT BELTS:

Please be aware that local laws governing transportation safety may differ from those in your home country and not all the transport which we use is able to provide seat belts.

PETTY THEFT AND PERSONAL SAFETY:

While travelling there is always the risk of pick-pocketing and petty theft, particularly in the more touristy cities. We recommend that you exercise caution when walking alone at night and encourage you to walk together and only on main, well-lit thoroughfares. Be particularly vigilant on public transport. Simple measures like carrying your day pack on your front, not hanging your bag over the back of your chair or on the floor and wearing a money belt will reduce any chance that your valuables should go missing.

BICYCLE HELMETS

Please note that helmets are not always provided for sightseeing on bicycles. If you wish you can bring along your own.

A couple of rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land, but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for Intrepid travellers. Intrepid's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter and in particular, the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure on their trip. We don't tolerate any form of violence (verbal or physical) or sexual harassment at Intrepid, either between passengers or involving our leaders, local operators or locals.

Sexual relationships (consensual or otherwise) between a leader and a passenger are unacceptable. If you ever feel another person is behaving inappropriately please inform us immediately by contacting the emergency contact number detailed in these trip notes.

Travelling on a group trip

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely a range of age groups too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part. Due to privacy reasons we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travellers booked on your trip prior to departure.

SINGLE TRAVELLERS:

Our group trips are designed for shared accommodation and don't involve a compulsory single supplement. Single travellers share with people of the same gender in accommodation ranging from twin to multishare. Some of our itineraries have accommodation booked on a mixed gender share basis and where applicable this will be specified in our Trip Notes. On a selection of our trips, you have the option to pay a single supplement to ensure that you have your own accommodation (where available). Please note that this only applies to accommodation during the tour - pre-trip and post-trip accommodation will be booked on a single room basis.

A single supplement is available on this trip, please ask your booking agent for more information. Please note that on the following nights the supplement is not available:

- Day 8 & 9 Bandarawela/Hill Country

- Day 13 Galle

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a trip, you won't be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader.

If you have credit card insurance your group leader will require details of the participating insurer/underwriter, the level of coverage, policy number and emergency contact number rather than the bank's name and credit card details. Please contact your bank for these details prior to arriving in-country.

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/insurance.php>

Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. Please visit our website for further details and suggestions on how you can be a responsible traveller.

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/ourtrips/rt/responsibletraveller>

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia, especially outside major cities. To respect this and for your own comfort, we strongly recommend modest clothing. This means clothing that covers your shoulders and knees. Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Asian climate. In many rural areas in Asia women will need to wear modest clothing even to swim. Singlets, tank tops and topless sun bathing are all unacceptable. When visiting religious sites men often need to wear long trousers and women a long skirt or sarong.

ELEPHANT PERFORMANCES & ELEPHANT RIDING:

While we respect each individual's decisions while travelling, Intrepid does not include elephant rides or unnatural performance activities on any itinerary, and we recommend you bypass these activities should they be offered to you during your stay. Professional wildlife conservation and animal welfare organisations, including the World Animal Protection (formerly the World Society for protection of Animals) advise that contrary to common belief, captive elephants remain wild animals and despite good intentions, unfortunately many venues are unable to provide the appropriate living conditions elephants require and this ultimately impacts their well-being. While there is some merit in the argument that the money that you pay for the activity goes towards keeping the elephants and their mahouts employed, we know that it also fuels demand for elephants to be captured in the wild or captive bred. We thank you for your support in improving the welfare of these majestic creatures. Further information is available on the below link:

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/au/elephants-welfare>

The Intrepid Foundation

Since Intrepid Travel commenced operating in 1989 we've been committed to giving something back to the communities we visit. One way has been through our support for local humanitarian, development and conservation projects. Many of our travellers want to contribute something too. Whilst it is often tempting to give hand-outs to those less fortunate, this has the potential to promote a culture of begging and dependency. Handouts are not a sustainable way for individuals or communities to live. That's why we established The Intrepid Foundation – to make it easier for travellers wishing to give back to communities in an effective and meaningful way.

The Intrepid Foundation is a not-for-profit fund offering a selection of excellent grassroots organisations which you can contribute to. All donations to The Intrepid Foundation will be matched by Intrepid Travel dollar for dollar (up to AU\$1,000 per donor and a total of AU\$400,000 for all donors in each financial year, excluding emergency

appeals). And every cent gets there as Intrepid Travel pays for all the administration costs. Donating is simple and secure. Please ask your leader for information on the projects we support through The Intrepid Foundation or go to our website:

<http://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/>