



**BIRDING TOUR SRI LANKA:  
GENERAL INFORMATION**



## General information to help you prepare for your trip to Sri Lanka with Birding Ecotours

### WHAT TO BRING

Please see our [general packing list](#) (that applies to all tours worldwide). Here we make a few additional comments to help you prepare specifically for Sri Lanka.

### PASSPORT

Your passport must be valid for a period of at least six months after the date of your arrival in Sri Lanka. Please make sure that there is at least one full empty page available in your passport. Please also bring a photocopy of your passport, to be kept in a different location from your passport, in case of loss.

### VISA

Travelers to Sri Lanka visiting for tourism purposes must obtain an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) prior to arrival in Sri Lanka. The ETA can be obtained online.

### TRAVEL INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that you purchase travel and trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against accidents, medical, illness, loss of valuables, luggage, etc., and travel interruptions or delays of all kinds.

General Global Assistance is one option: <https://www.generalitravelinsurance.com/>

### ELECTRICITY

Electricity in Sri Lanka is 230V. If you intend to recharge video batteries etc. in your hotel room you will need an international adapter [ITA Type G](#).

Note: If you are from North America or another location that does not have 220-240V electricity, then please check all equipment that you plan on charging to see if it is 110/120–220/240V compatible. If that is the case you only need an adaptor into which to plug the US/Canadian/etc. plugs. If your equipment is only listed as 110-120V you will need a converter to convert the electric current to 220-240V.

## HEALTH

Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control website section on Sri Lanka at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/sri-lanka>.

Malaria has been eliminated in Sri Lanka, and the World Health Organization declared Sri Lanka malaria-free in 2016. Doctors presently advise that anti-malarial drugs are not necessary.

Dengue fever, carried by the day-flying *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, does occur in Sri Lanka, but no vaccine is yet available. To prevent mosquito bites we recommend to wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, treat clothes with repellents like permethrin or use permethrin-treated clothing (such as Buzz Off), and use an EPA-registered mosquito repellent containing DEET.

If you are prone to seasickness you might want to consult a doctor to get medication to prevent this during the pelagic.

## WEATHER

Weather is generally mild to hot and sometimes humid. However, it gets chilly in the highlands and sometimes in the early mornings on jeep trips and on the pelagic. Layers are thus important, including warm outer layers such as fleeces. While we do our trips in the season of minimal rainfall, rain in Sri Lanka is always a possibility, so an umbrella and/or rain gear is always useful to have. While rain usually doesn't seriously interrupt our birding during these tours, we bird in rainforest, so anything can happen.

## LEECHES

Leeches are a real nuisance at a couple of sites during the tour. We provide you with leech socks, which help a lot. The guide will also advise you on when to wear these leech socks (for walks when leeches might be a problem you can opt out of them if you prefer!).

## PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS AND PACE

There are one or two long hikes during the trip. We take these slowly, but if you feel you're very unfit, you might want to speak to the guide about opting out of these. There is invariably great birding and photography around the lodges!

There are a couple of long, rough jeep rides. You can talk to the guide about when they occur. Dust can be a problem on one or two of the jeep rides, especially in Yala National Park. Yala is arguably the best place on the planet for Leopards, but largely because of this the park becomes crowded with jeeps, and it can get chaotic with traffic jams when a Leopard (or Sloth Bear if you're really lucky!) is sighted. We write this here to mentally prepare you for this.

## ACCOMMODATION

Hotels in Sri Lanka range from basic to good. We try to use slightly superior accommodation compared to most birding tour companies when possible, but in reality the choice is very limited. At Sinharaja, where we spend a full three nights, we do have to put up with one of the basic hotels (but the best available in the area, close to Sri Lanka's largest lowland rainforest). The hotel we usually stay in here has its best rooms right at the top, so one has to walk up a lot of steps between the restaurant and the rooms (unless you tell us you want a lower but not-as-good room). While Sri Lanka is famous for catering to birders and tourists, one still has to be philosophical, as hotels don't get all the details right. For example, one might find a virtually perfect hotel, except there will be nowhere to put one's soap in the shower except on the floor.

We stay at beach hotels once or twice and some hotels also have pools, so you might want to bring swimwear.

## FOOD

Most hotels and restaurants we use provide a choice between Western and Sri Lankan food. If you choose the latter, you can ask for spicy or mild. Avoid fresh salads, unpeeled fruits/vegetables and tap water (only drink bottled water), otherwise there is a risk of traveler's diarrhea. We provide unlimited bottled water in the vehicles, but if you purchase water at restaurants it costs more, so that is not included. You're welcome to take a water bottle or two from the car to the hotel room each night, though, although this is usually unnecessary as most hotels provide a couple of bottles of water in the room.

Occasionally, religious holidays will mean that you won't be able to buy alcohol for a night or two during the trip. But in general light beer (lager) is usually available, and many hotels also stock imported wines. "Soda" (sparkling mineral water) is very popular, and an excellent drink to try is "Elephant House Ginger Beer", EGB, which is a Sri Lankan classic. Sri Lankan (Ceylon) Tea is amazing. The coffee is not so good!

## SUN PROTECTION

As always, sun protection (e.g. a cap/hat, sunscreen, lip sun protection, sunglasses, etc.) is necessary.