

Sri Lanka – Birding, wildlife & tea holiday

A 15 day mixed interest luxury holiday with Amila Salgado - **Birdwing Nature Holidays**



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie

Tea infusions

Castlereagh

Leopard cub

Itinerary in brief

Day 01 Arrival/Katunayake
Day 02 Elkaduwa /local birding
Day 03 Elkaduwa/local birding
Day 04 Kandy.
Day 05 Bogawantalawa
Day 06 Tea tour/leisure
Day 07 Local birding/leisure
Day 08 Udawalawe NP/Yala
Day 09 Yala/Bundala
Day 10 Yala/Tissamaharama
Day 11 Sinharaja
Day 12 Sinharaja
Day 13 Sinharaja
Day 14 Katunayake
Day 15 Departure.

Overnight stay

Taj Airport Garden Hotel (5 star transit hotel)
Hunas Falls Hotel (4 star nature hotel)
Hunas Falls Hotel
Hunas Falls Hotel
Ceylon Tea Trails (luxury tea bungalow)
Ceylon Tea Trails
Ceylon Tea Trails
Yala Village Hotel (luxury game lodge)
Yala Village Hotel
Yala Village Hotel
Boulder Garden Hotel (jungle boutique hotel)
Boulder Garden Hotel
Boulder Garden Hotel
Taj Airport Garden Hotel.

Introduction

The magical island of Sri Lanka was once described by Marco Polo as the finest island in the world. For many centuries the country has attracted many a traveller to its shores coming in search of its natural and cultural riches. Sitting south of the great Indian landmass in the shape of a pear, Sri Lanka has steadily soaked up natural and cultural influxes from it, over the time blending and refining them into uniqueness.

In this mixed-interest holiday we focus on the Sri Lanka's abundant birdlife & wildlife & its fabled 'Ceylon tea' in absolute comfort. A key feature of this holiday is its top of the range accommodation which comprise of 4-5 star hotels, a luxury tea bungalow built originally in the days of the Raj, a jungle boutique hotel & a top range game lodge. Therefore there is absolutely no compromising on the quality of accommodation, which is 1st class from the start to the end.



I count 19 years of birding experience in Sri Lanka and will be your birding guide and the first point of your contact for your tour. I will be with you throughout the tour looking into every aspect of the tour personally from the start to the end.

It is important to note that we cover all the key areas visited on conventional birding and wildlife holidays such as Sinharaja Yala, Udawalawe, Bundala, Tissamaharama and the hill zone. This means we will be covering a wide variety of habitat types such as steamy lowland rainforests, dry-country big game parks, misty cloud forests, dense monsoon forests, lily-covered inland reservoirs & coastal mudflats to name a few. Therefore there is absolutely no compromising on the quality of birding and wildlife viewing either which are central elements of this holiday.



Fresh fruits

Norwood pool

golf

Red-faced Malkoha

High quality of dining experiences complement excellent hotel stays and birding in this holiday with a fine mix of western and eastern delicacies from international buffets to fine dining. All hotels have a good choice of international wine/champaign to further enrich your dining experiences.

This holiday is ideal as family holidays for birders with non birding spouse/children joining in as it incorporates plenty of 'other things' to keep everybody happy. For example a visit to Temple of the sacred Tooth Relic housing the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha will be special for the culturally interested. Also if you do this holiday between July-August you will also be able to optionally witness the colourful Perahara pageant, the famous cultural extravaganza of the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. During our excursion to Kandy, if you prefer, a visit to Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage could be done to see close to 70 Elephants affected by Human-Elephant conflict being cared in captivity, which is particularly recommended if children are joining in. We will get a good insight to the Ceylon tea when we stay three nights in luxury tea bungalows of Ceylon Tea trails, which is sure to be a top highlight of this holiday.

All the accommodation used on this holiday offer excellent recreational facilities such as spas, pools/health centres to sample during non-birding breaks/when birders are away doing their thing. Also there will be good chances to see butterflies, dragonflies, botany and big game including Elephant, Leopard and Sloth Bear, which makes this even more suitable for people with broader interests. If all these do not sound as good enough compromises for non-birders, there will also be opportunity to optionally engage in golfing, cycling & even high intensity scrabble!

Only 5 accommodation options are used in this holiday to cover 14 nights & 15 days, which ensures longer stays in each location, thereby enabling everybody to enjoy an unrushed holiday. The slow pace of holiday also makes it ideal for birders with difficulty in walking /keeping up with large groups which at times move in break-neck speeds. Almost 90 % of our walks will be on flat and gently sloping terrain. Amila will carry his Kowa TSN 823 telescope during most birding walks & safaris to



scope the birds that stay long enough for better appreciation. This will be particularly helpful for those new to tropics and/or not wanting to lug one along personally.

This tour is recommended between July-August & Nov-April with the later period particularly being profitable for birders as northern winter migrants supplement the island's resident birds during this time ensuring good numbers. On the other hand, July-August present good chances to see Leopard at Yala and optionally to see the cultural extravaganza, the Perahara procession in Kandy. We are mostly likely to see 200 plus species of birds in July-August and 230 plus during Nov-April.



Green Garden Lizard

Taj Airport Garden

Indian Pitta

Southern Coucal

All accommodation used in this holiday are selected with a purpose. For example we use the luxurious Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake which is a five star transit hotel just 10 minutes from the airport on Day 01 to enable you to quickly rest and recuperate after a long flight. We are careful not to have long drives & visits to 'key sites' built-in on the first day as we understand the importance of giving you a good rest before everything. So there is absolutely no extensive driving on day 01 & the optional birding for this day is limited to the hotel gardens. Proximity to the airport is another key factor in our using the Taj Airport Garden Hotel again at the end before your departure to enable you to relax and refresh before your flight back. This is always better rather than boarding the plane straight from the jungle!

Detailed itinerary (Endemic birds are bold faced)

Day 01. After arriving in Bandaranaiyake International Airport in Katunayake -35 km north of Colombo the commercial capital in Sri Lanka, we will drive to Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake which is just 10 minutes from the airport to rest and recuperate after a long flight. Early dinner and a welcome briefing will end the first day.

Birding: For anybody not in a mood to rest, a walk in the hotel gardens will produce some of the commoner birds that we will encounter during the rest of the holiday such as Brown-headed Barbet, Black-headed Oriole, Common Tailorbird, Asian Koel, Purple-rumped & Loten's Sunbirds, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Southern Coucal, White-throated Kingfisher & Black-rumped Flameback. If this is not enough to settle your birding juices, a dusk vigil near a mangrove edged corner of the hotel gardens may produce Black Bittern, Black-crowned Night Heron & if lucky the elusive Slaty-legged Crake.

Overnight: Taj Airport Garden Hotel is a 5 star transit hotel situated just 10 minutes from the Bandaranaiyake International Airport and is our preferred retreat after a long flight. Standard rooms provide satellite television, safety lockers, e-mail and internet connections, 24 hour room service, a mini bar and in-house & laundry facilities. The hotel offers a 24 hour Coffee Shop, business centre &



2 restaurants which include a specialty Chinese one. The hotel gardens and a small wetland adjoining offers decent birding.

Day 02 After recharging the batteries & another brief exploration in the hotel gardens we will retreat to the cooler hills of Elkaduwa in the wet zone, the epicentre of endemics and reach our luxurious accommodation Hunas Falls Hotel for next three nights. We will arrive just after noon during the hottest time of the day so a dip in the hotel's temperature controlled pool may what you want to do next after ordering a bite. Late afternoon we will walk in the Simpson's Trail to look for a good mixture of mid elevational & hill birds including several sought-after specialties.



Chestnut-headed Bee-eater

Dawn Dropwing

fine dining

Chestnut-backed Owlet

Birding: Yellow-fronted Barbet, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Layard's Parakeet, Sri Lanka Scimitar Babbler, Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon, Dull blue Flycatcher, Sri Lanka White-eye, Sri Lanka Swallow, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, White-browed Fantail, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Southern Hill Myna, Blue-tailed Bee-Eater, Orange Minivet, Great Tit, Indian Blue Robin, Pied Thrush, Kashmir Flycatcher, Common Hawk Cuckoo (potential split), Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Hill Swallow & Plum-headed Parakeet.

Non birding highlights: Eurasian Otter, & butterflies including Tree Nymph, Sri Lanka Birdwing, Commander, Clipper & Blue Bottle. Dragonflies which include Dawn Dropwing, Asian Pintail & many Purple Skimmer.

Overnight: Hunas Falls Hotel, Elkaduwa lies 1,000m above sea level in the cooler hills of Elkaduwa just 24 kms from Kandy, the ancient hill capital. It is a popular getaway for honeymooners in Sri Lanka with its scenic settings & beautifully landscaped gardens vividly dotted with perennials adding to its romantic atmosphere. The hotel is named after a 300 ft tall waterfall that tumble gracefully below the hotel. The luxurious rooms come with bath/shower, satellite TV, telephone with IDD, mini bar, individual safety lockers, piped music/radio, tea/coffee making facilities & a private balcony /terrace. There is also a traditional Ayurvedha style health centre & a temperature controlled swimming pool to chill during non-birding breaks. The hotel also has a jogging track, a flood-lit tennis court, a mini golf course & offer bicycle on rent if you need to work off some pounds. The surrounding woods offer great wet zone birding – Amila was responsible for researching and naming most of the popular the nature trails around this hotel and has intimate knowledge of the area.

Day 03 Pre-birding walk around the hotel's lake trail to catch the early morning activity followed by a birding breakfast. Thereafter we will walk in the Shaheen Trail for raptors & scenery. Midday at leisure in the hotel. Late afternoon we will make a short excursion to a nearby forest patch for some 'high value targets'



Birding: **Chestnut-backed Owlet, Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Black-capped Bulbul, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Brown-breasted Flycatcher, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, Indian Scops Owl, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Lesser Yellownape, Ashy Woodswallow, White-backed Munia, Shaheen, Layard's Flycatcher, Indian Pitta, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Crested Serpent Eagle, White-bellied Sea Eagle & Ashy Prinia.**

Non birding highlights: Grey Flying Squirrel & Giant Squirrel & many other dragonflies and butterflies.

Overnight: Hunas Falls Hotel, Elkaduwa.



Yellow-eared Bulbul

Kandy perahara

Giant fig

high tea

Day 04 After an enjoyable birding breakfast, we will drive to Kandy (477m), the cultural-epicentre where age-old rituals continue at the Temple of the sacred Tooth Relic. Kandy is the second largest city & the last Sinhalese kingdom in Sri Lanka, which was ceded to the British in 1815. We will visit the above historic temple, which houses the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha and the Royal Botanical Gardens founded by the British in 1821. A visit to the Elephant Orphanage could also be done today at no extra cost to see close to 70 Elephants affected by Human-Elephant conflict being cared in captivity, which is recommended if children are joining the holiday. If visited during July-August you will be able to optionally witness the Kandy Perahara, a magnificent pageant involving many beautifully caparisoned Elephants & traditional drummers and dancers parading in the streets of Kandy in honour of the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. After exploring this historic city, we will return to our luxurious retreat of Hunas Falls Hotel.

Birding: We will seek for improved views of Common Hawk Cuckoo, Sri Lanka Small Barbet, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Southern Hill Myna, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Alexandrine Parakeet & Tickell's Blue Flycatcher in the botanical gardens.

Non-birding highlights: a vast day roost of Flying fox & botanical attractions including Giant Jawa Fig, Double coconut, Cannon-ball tree & orchid house, a historic Buddhist temple – one of the most important places of worship for the Buddhists. If visited, Elephants at the Pinnawela Elephant orphanage.

Day 05 After a yet another exciting morning's birding in the bird rich Simpson's trail, we will say good bye to the friendly staff of Hunas Falls Hotel and drive further up to another cooler retreat, Bogawantalawa to commence our 'tea leg of the holiday. The Ceylon Tea Trails, the luxurious tea Bungalow accommodation is our base for three nights. Afternoon chill by the pool & soaking in the scenery. After a fine cuppa, we will do some leisurely birding around the bungalow, which may hold a few surprises.



Birding: **Yellow-eared Bulbul, Crimson-backed Flameback, Sri Lanka Junglefowl**, Streak-throated Woodpecker, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-headed & Large Cuckooshrikes, Tawny-bellied, Dark-fronted & Yellow-eyed Babblers, Coppersmith Barbet, Oriental White-eye, Southern Coucal, Brown Shrike, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Forest & Grey Wagtails, Brown Wood Owl & Black-shouldered Kite.

Non-birding highlights: Common Garden & Green Garden Lizards, Butterflies which include Ceylon Tiger, Blue Bottle, Ceylon Treebrown & Blue Admiral. Dragonflies which include Indigo Dropwing, Shining Gossamawing & Black-tipped Demoiselle.

Overnight: Ceylon Tea Trails represents 4 classic colonial tea bungalows built originally for British tea estate managers in the days of the Raj in the golden valley of Ceylon tea at Bogawantalawa in the south-central Sri Lanka. These sprawling single storey houses sitting 4,000 ft above the sea-level have been restored into luxury tea bungalows by the owners of Dilmah, a brand synonymous with top quality Ceylon tea. The four bungalows are named after former British estate managers who lived in the bungalow-Summerville, Castlereagh, Tientsin & Norwood. Each maintains its individual character; Summerville with an air of a country cottage, lakeside Castlereagh with an eclectic style of its own, the high colonial Tienstin and the more modern Norwood; abounding with 60's character. Each bungalow consists of 4-6 rooms/suites categorized as Master Suites (except in Castlereagh), Garden Suites & Luxury Rooms and can be booked individually or collectively. Master suites have separate living rooms and private gardens (except Tientsin), Garden Suites have private gardens.



Castlereagh

Norwood

Castlereagh

Crimson-backed Flameback

All rooms have ensuite bathrooms with twin wash basins and a traditional bathtub with shower. Daytime temperatures are comfortable in the low 20's C and at night can drop to 10 C, hence the fireplaces in all bungalows. In keeping with the private bungalow atmosphere, everything is included in the rate at Ceylon tea trails, which include bed tea, cooked English or Sri Lankan breakfast, lunch (packed lunch if on excursion), afternoon cream tea, pre-dinner cocktails, 4 course dinner, house wines, name brand house spirits, beer, soft drinks, tea & coffee, laundry, calls within Sri Lanka, guided tea walks and other, bungalow amenities. Rates exclude premium liquor and international telephone calls. Since the bungalows are on working tea estates, we will see first hand how the world's finest tea is made: how tea is harvested by hand in the fields and processed in the nearby factories in a traditional manufacturing process unchanged for a century. Ceylon Tea Trails has made it into the elite group of top 130 new hotels for 2006 of Conde Nast Traveler magazine.

We will base ourselves either at Norwood Bungalow (1310 m) or Castereagh Bungalow (1227 m) both offering super luxury consistent with the Ceylon Tree Trails. Castlereagh offers spectacular views of the reservoir and rolling hills whereas Norwood sitting a bit higher and bordered by a small patch of regenerating forest and rolling hills offers rich pickings for birders. Anyway the final



decision is left to you! For details of other 2 bungalows and more details on Ceylon Tea Trails email info@birdwingnature.com.

Norwood Bungalow built 1890 rebuilt 1950, 5 rooms

Facilities: Swimming pool, summer house, croquet, library, garden dining, in room spa Treatments.
Hazel master suite: 62 sq.m, king size bed, separate living room, bath with rainshower, view of private garden and tea fields
Irvine garden suite 45 sq.m, king size bed, bath with rainshower, view to private garden
Andrews garden suite: 46 sq.m, king size bed, bath with rainshower, view to private garden
Fraser luxury room: 39 sq.m, twin beds, bath with rainshower, garden view
Jeffery luxury room: 31 sq.m, king size bed, bath with rainshower, garden view, direct access to verandah

Castlereagh Bungalow built 1925, 5 rooms

Facilities: Swimming pool, summer houses, croquet, library, garden dining, in room spa treatments. (Note no Master suites).
Baker garden suite: 45 sq.m, king size bed, bath with rainshower, view of tea fields & mountains, private verandah and private garden.
Alston garden suite: 46 sq.m, king size bed, bath with handheld & rainshower, view of tea fields, private verandah and private garden
Palmer garden suite: 36 sq.m king size bed, bath with handheld shower, view of tea fields and lake, private garden.
Jamieson luxury room: 40 sq.m, twin beds, bath with handheld & rainshower, view of lake/tea fields.
Tate luxury room: 41 sq.m, king size bed, bath with handheld shower, view of lake/tea fields.



Sri Lanka Junglefowl



fine dining



tea fields



Castlereagh

Day 06 After a fine birding breakfast we will take a guided tea tour to learn how your cup of tea ended up in your breakfast table. We will learn how tea took the centre stage in the country's economy through pioneering efforts by James Taylor as the most important export crop from a modest batch of 23 lbs initially exported in the 19th century up to the present day annual production levels of over 300 million kg of tea to take a global production share of 10 % and an export share of 20 %. We will see how 'two leaves and bud' are still hand picked by tea plucking ladies in the rolling tea gardens and get a good insight into the production process and tea culture in Sri Lanka.

Birding: today is the tea day!

Non-birding highlights: Exploring Ceylon tea – the country's green gold.

Overnight: Ceylon Tree Trails.



Day 07 Local birding & leisure at Ceylon Tea Trails.

A possible excursion that could be arranged at no extra cost today is to take a train journey from Hatton to Pattipola to visit Horton Plains National Park (2,100m), which is the highest plateau in Sri Lanka comprising of moss-covered cloud forests home to Gondwanaland relic flora and grasslands. It is the only national park in Sri Lanka where visitors are allowed to walk – one such walk to see ‘World’s end’ -an escarpment with a sheer drop of 870 metres being quite popular. As we may have bagged all but a couple of montane endemics and most of the other sought-after montane specialties, it will be a tough decision to make whether to abandon the luxuries of Ceylon Tea Trails in pursuit of these remaining targets. Again, the final decision is left to you!

Target species: If we take the excursion to Horton Plains: **Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush, Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Jerdon’s Baza, Zitting Cisticola, Pied Bushchat, Blyth’s Reed Warbler, newly spit Himalayan Buzzard & the potential splits Indian Blackbird and Black-throated Munia.**

Non-birding highlights: If we go on the excursion to Horton Plains - Sambar Deer (similar to Elk), Bear Monkey the montane race of the vegetarian Purple-faced Leaf Monkey of lowlands, Botany: Dwarf Bamboo, endemic variety of Rhododendron, Reptiles: Rhino-horned Lizard, Black-lipped Lizard & Dwarf Chameleon.

Overnight: Ceylon Tree Trails.



Malabar Pied Hornbill

Hanuman Langur

Asian Elephant

Pied Kingfisher

Day 08 We will make farewell to the friendly staff of Ceylon Tree Trails and drive down to the dry lowlands of Udawalawe National Park where a totally different avi-fauna await us. We will explore this excellent national park comprising of open grasslands interspersed with shrubs & trees in open-top safari jeeps. Thereafter we will proceed to our comfortable retreat, Yala Village Hotel for three nights. Late afternoon birding from the hotel’s roof top bar followed by a great buffet dinner with a good mix of western and eastern culinary delights.

Birding: **Sri Lanka Woodshrike, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Blue-faced & Sirkeer Malkohas, Green Bee-eater, White-rumped Shama, Brahminy Myna, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark, Black-headed Munia, Indian Silverbill, Common Hoopoe, Indian Roller, White-naped Woodpecker, Jungle & Grey-breasted Prinias, Painted Stork, Asian Openbill, Rosy Starling, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Great & Indian Cormorants, Blyth’s Pipit, ‘Grey-headed’ Yellow Wagtails, (maybe also White & Citrine Wagtails), Richard’s Blyth’s & Paddyfield Pipits, Pallid Harrier, Common Kestral, Crested Hawk Eagle & Grey-headed Fish Eagle.**

Non-birding highlights: Asian Elephants present in fairly decent numbers.



Overnight: Yala Village Hotel is bordered by the turquoise Indian Ocean & forested coastal plains and is our luxurious base to explore Yala. The hotel offers sixty one chalets spread over 10 acres of well wooded area with each featuring an animal design element in its interior décor. The air-conditioned chalets come with a spacious bathroom, a private verandah, satellite TV, well stocked mini bar, telephone/IDD, tea and coffee making facilities and hair dryer. The hotel also has facilities such as laundry, babysitting, safe deposits, souvenir shop and internet/email. The restaurant offers a good choice of eastern and western cuisine. The roof top bar & observation deck provide great views of the Indian Ocean and the surrounding well wooded landscape dotted by rock outcrops that are at times visited by Leopard for prime time viewing over cocktails.

Day 09. We will collect packed breakfast and explore the wilderness expanse of Yala National Park, Sri Lanka's premier national park for big game, which include Leopard, Sloth Bear & Elephant. After visiting some of the good hotspots for birding we will return to our hotel to spend the warm midday by the pool. Afternoon, we will drive to Bundala National Park for shorebirds. This is the first RAMSAR wetland in Sri Lanka and comprise of dry forests & mud flats teeming with many wetland associated birds. Thereafter we will return to our comfortable base Yala Village Hotel for a fabulous buffet dinner and to take the day's long list.



Leopard

Yala Village Hotel

Tissamaharama

Indian Scops Owl

Birding: We could easily top a day list in excess 100 species which come in the form of Black-necked Stork, Great and Indian Thick-knees, Jerdon's Bushlark, Little Minivet, Oriental Skylark, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Ashy Drongo, Curlew, Marsh, Wood & Green Sandpipers, (Amur Falcon-may be), Lesser & Greater Sand Plovers & Little-ringed Plovers, Western Reef Egret, Red-necked Phalarope, Indian Scops Owl, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Coot, Small Pratincole, Little Heron, Garganey, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveller, Caspian, White-winged, Whiskered, Common, Large-crested & Little-crested & Little Terns, Indian Cormorant, Brown-headed Gull and if lucky Greater Flamingo.

Non-birding highlights: Yala Block 1 comprising of 141 sq.km has close to 40 individual Leopards identified by their unique facial spot patterns, which represent the highest density of Leopards anywhere in the world. Also noteworthy are Spotted deer, Mugger Crocodile, Wild buffalo, Wild Boar, Hanuman Langur, Toque Macaque, Stripe-necked & Ruddy Mongooses & Jackal.

Day 10 Morning visit Yala National Park once more to fill any remaining dry zone gaps and return to the cozy comforts of our hotel as yesterday. Afternoon we will drive to explore a combination of wetlands at Tissamaharama for more water birds. Tissamaharama, which lies superimposed on the ancient provincial capital of 'Magama' with its stupa, inscriptions, and ancient man-made tanks dating back to 3rd century B.C. Some of these lily & reed covered tanks; evidence of a once thriving



hydraulic civilization are excellent for birding. Thereafter return to Yala Village Hotel to enjoy yet another fine buffet dinner.

Birding: Yellow and Black Bitterns, Purple Swamphen, Purple Heron, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Indian Reed Warbler & Spot-billed Pelican, White-naped Woodpecker. Brown Fish Owl, Jungle Owlet and Indian Scops Owl.

Non-birding highlights: More or less as yesterday.

Day 11. We will say good-bye to the dry lowlands and drive to Boulder Garden Hotel, Kalawana our boutique hotel accommodation for three nights to explore lowland endemics. Late afternoon we will drive to a wet forest patch to bag a 'high value target' - the newly discovered avian jewel Serendib Scops Owl, which was discovered only in 2001! Thereafter we will return to our luxurious retreat for a yet another fine dining experience.

Birding: **Spot-winged Thrush**, Sri Lanka Frogmouth & with luck, **Serendib Scops Owl**.



Plum Judy

Serendib's Scops Owl

Boulder Garden

Spot-winged Thrush

Overnight: Boulder Garden Hotel, Kalawana – This all-suite boutique hotel is just 30 minutes from the World Heritage Site reserve of Sinharaja, the premier endemic hotspot. As the name implies the hotel is set in a boulder-strewn landscape which comprise of large rock paved pathways, natural caves and fern covered moist boulders presenting a unique experience. There are 10 non-air-conditioned suites with all having private balconies facing the lush tropical greenery. All these come with fan, attached bathrooms, tea / coffee making facilities, TV & telephone. The hotel has an inviting swimming pool. Dining here is 1st class - consistent with all the hotels used in this holiday. The hotel's restaurant & bar under the shade of natural caves are sure to take you back to early stages of evolution!

Day 12-13 Saving the best for the last we will explore the magnificent lowland rainforest, Sinharaja over the next few days. Sinharaja represents the largest expanse of lowland rainforest in Sri Lanka and the premier site for endemics where a 'mixed-species bird flock' could yield an exciting array of birds. According to a flock study done since 1981 at this world heritage site reserve, 59 species of birds have so far been observed to occur in bird flocks which include many sought-after endemics. Orange-billed Babbler and Sri Lanka Crested Drongo constitute the two nuclear species of the flock being present in 92 & 89 % of the flocks studied so far. By now we should have bagged most of the endemics 33 plus endemics & should be able to concentrate only on the key Sinharaja targets.

Birding: **Red-faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush, Ashy-headed Laughing Thrush, White-faced Starling, Sri Lanka Myna, Legge's Flowerpecker, Orange-**



billed Babbler, Sri Lanka Crested Drongo, Green-billed Coucal, Spot-winged Thrush, Sri Lanka Spurfowl, Malabar Trogon, Square-tailed Black Bulbul & Chestnut-winged Crested Cuckoo. We will also look for 'Sri Lanka' Bay Owl in a day roost discovered in Jan 2007.

Non birding highlights: botany: Pitcher plant, Ant Plant, 45 m towering Dipterocarps & Shoreas, Bamboo orchid, primary & secondary rainforest. Dragonflies: Luzon & Red Skimmers & many rare rainforest forms, butterflies: Blue Mormon, Tree Nymph, Clipper, Cruiser, Plum Judy, Giant King Crow & Glad-eye Bushbrown. Lizards: Hump-nosed Lizard, Sri Lanka Whistling Lizard & Kangaroo Lizard. Mammals: 'Western' Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Giant Squirrel & Layard's Squirrel.

Day 14 After a lie-in and breakfast followed by more chilling by the pool, we will drive back to Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake our luxurious 5 star transit hotel. En route, we will pause at my residence at Bomiriya for a cuppa & to bag Brown Hawk Owl roosting in his garden, which would be our final 'tick'. My local patch contains 110 species including Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Black-Bittern & Pied Kingfisher. A final log & a fine farewell dinner at the hotel's specialty Chinese restaurant will mark the end of this exciting birding holiday.



Ant Plant

Brown Hawk Owl

Black-headed Basker

Amila

Birding: Brown Hawk Owl

Overnight/ Change rooms: Taj Airport Garden Hotel.

Non birding highlights: Bingy- My friendly bull dog & a couple of very bad cats.

Overnight/change rooms: Taj Airport Garden Hotel, Katunayake.

Day 15 Departure.

Tour Leader: Amila Salgado

Amila holds a record as the first birder from Colombo to visit Sinharaja rain forest in a tuktuk – an audacious feat achieved to bag the ultra-secretive Bay Owl in a daytime roost in Jan, 2007. He got hooked on birds in 1989 after a school project in St Peter's College, and made his first trip to Sinharaja the following year with a group of schoolmates, which earned him his first glimpses of the rare birding jewels & a host of birdie nicknames. He joined YZA, a local nature club, at an early age which was the beginning of the road to turn him into an all-round naturalist. Amila is a certified 'national-guide' under Sri Lanka Tourist Board. Before turning a full time naturalist guide, he was a Manager of a Wildlife tour company. He holds memberships in several local as well as overseas bird clubs and contributes articles to their ornithological publications. Apart from birding, Amila enjoys thrashing his clients at Scrabble.



For rates and details e-mail info@birdwingnature.com or phone 0094-777-591155

Website: www.birdwingnature.com

Amila's Birding & Wildlife Blog: [Gallicissa...a birder in an endemic hotspot](#)



'Sri Lanka' Bay Owl, in a day roost discovered in Jan 2007

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BIRDWING Nature Holidays

'Best value Birding and Natural History Holidays in Sri Lanka'