

Cycle Sri Lanka



Duration: 10 days

Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon, is an island renowned for its natural beauty and wildlife, fascinating culture and beautiful beaches. Our diverse, hilly route traverses the central highlands from west coast to south, linking cultural highlights and National Parks. This trip simply has everything!

From tropical lowlands, we ride through forested valleys and small villages up into the tea estates and cloud-forest of the Central Highlands, before descending to the southern plains and the coast. Barely a mile goes by without something to divert us - the ever-changing views, remote temples, friendly villages, roadside stalls selling fresh coconut, monkeys in the trees ... even the rare, unforgettable experience of cycling past elephants!

The cycling is challenging at times, but with wonderful hotels each night, an afternoon game drive in Udawalawe National Park and the promise of a beautiful beach at the end, there is plenty to reward your efforts!

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart London for Negombo

Day 2: Arrive Negombo

On arrival we transfer to our hotel and have time to freshen up and prepare our bikes for the start of our exciting cycle. Depending on flight schedules, there may be time to relax and enjoy the beach before dinner and a detailed trip briefing; we then get ready for a good night's sleep before the start of our challenge! Night hotel.

Day 3: Negombo – Algama – Kandy

After a good breakfast, we set off! This morning gives us a wonderful warm-up ride, getting us used to our surroundings and the heat as we pedal through lowland villages and plantations of rubber and palm, with some stretches of forest. Our route follows relatively flat back-roads which criss-cross between villages, and are a great introduction to everyday life in Sri Lanka; they are used by mopeds and tuk-tuks but very few larger vehicles. There are a few small climbs as we near our lunch-spot, in a more forested region. After lunch and an opportune waterfall stop, we transfer to the historic city of Kandy, our destination for the night. An ancient capital, Kandy is a beautiful city and home to the golden-roofed Temple of the Tooth, one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 52km; Drive approx 2.5 hours

Day 4: Kandy – Nuwara Eliya

We take a short drive (15 mins) to avoid the busy traffic, then head for Tea Country! Once on our bikes we ride the undulating roads that take us into the hills; we pass through small towns and green landscapes dotted with rice paddies, lush forest and waterfalls. The vegetation changes as we climb higher; this region is known for its cool, crisp climate, and was an appealing summer retreat to the British living here in the 19th Century. We start to see tea shrubs laid out in neat rows among the green forests and valleys surrounding us. A stiff but stunning climb takes us towards the small town of Walapane, where we have lunch and relax. The rest of the route to Nuwara Eliya is almost entirely uphill, and steep in sections, so we load up the bikes and enjoy a very scenic drive through more plantations and settlements of tea pickers; if time permits, we may stop for a brief visit to a tea factory en-route. Nuwara Eliya is set in a wooded basin below Sri Lanka's highest mountain peak; known as 'Little England' with its English-style lawns and colonial buildings, the town is a great place to wander before dinner. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 50km; drive 1.5 hours (35km)

Day 5: Nuwara Eliya – Bandarawela

After breakfast we set off again, with our first section mostly downhill. The temperatures should remain cool and comfortable – perfect for cycling. As we ride, we enjoy views of the surrounding green mountain slopes, waterfalls, and dense jungle. Passing through Hakgala Forest, we make our way to Kande Ella, the highest lake in Sri Lanka, and continue onwards to the hill station of Ambewela, renowned for its dairy farming and often referred to as 'Little New Zealand.' Cycling through green, rolling meadows lulls us into a false sense of security, before we are rudely awakened by a very steep 4km climb through teak and rhododendron forest to reach Horton Plains National Park. These high altitude grasslands are majestic to cycle through, with their atmospheric misty plains and cloud-forest; look out for sambar deer and other wildlife. From here, we begin our long, well-earned descent through the shady forest of Ohiya, dropping around 700m in elevation. We make our way to the busy market town of Bandarawela; an excellent end to an amazingly varied day of cycling. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 68km

Day 6: Bandarawela – Tissamaharama (Tissa)

After a good night's rest we set off, leaving the bustle of Bandarawela behind us. Our route today takes us on a gradual climb through tea plantations, before descending for around 20km until we reach Ella, a laid-back hill-

country village with picturesque viewpoints. Continuing our journey down to the flatter Southern Plains, the highlights keep on coming, as we pass teak, eucalyptus, and rubber plantations, and ride on compacted dirt tracks through miles of sugarcane rich with birdlife; look out for hornbills and wild peacocks. Emerging onto road again, we come to Yala National Park, known for its rich diversity of wildlife. Wild elephants roam this area and sometimes come to the road, so our overall cycling distance will be dependent on their presence. Our end point of today's ride is the lakeside town of Tissa. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 70 - 120km (with probable transfer to hotel)

Day 7: Tissa – Udawalawe

Today offers yet another contrast to the terrain and scenery, as we explore dry monsoon forests, interspersed with stretches of rice paddies and grasslands. The terrain is predominantly flat, so we can take in the long-stretching views, bird and animal life surrounding us. Look out for grey langurs in the trees! This area is also known for its curd, served chilled with palm treacle, which makes for a delicious and refreshing pit-stop. The final stretch leads us to our destination of Udawalawe National Park, with its reservoir on the Walawe River providing an important sanctuary for wildlife. The park is famous for its large elephant herds and has many other game, from buffalo to sambar deer, plus many bird species. Unless we are unlucky, we should be able to cycle alongside the wild elephants which come to the fence at the edge of the reserve. This afternoon there will be time for an optional game drive in the National Park. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 81km

Day 8: Udawalawe – Tangalle This morning, we're treated to a pleasant ride through small towns and villages, as we make our way on flat roads towards the coast. The rice paddies are soon replaced with fields of coconut palms, and the sea breeze will be a welcome refreshment. We're heading for the charming town of Tangalle, with its sweeping beaches. Our hotel for the night is beautifully located on the coast ... the perfect place to relax, and reflect on the past week. And if you haven't had enough wildlife-spotting, close by is a turtle reserve, and it is possible to arrange a night beach-trip to view them. Night hotel.

Cycle approx. 60km

Day 9: Free Day Tangalle

We have the day free to enjoy the beach, and meet up again for an evening to celebrate our big achievements. Night hotel.

(Lunch not included)

Day 10: Fly Negombo to London

We transfer to the airport for our international flight home.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All transport from London to Negombo return
- All meals except where specified, and accommodation
- Discover Adventure leaders; local guides/mechanics and cooks
- Vehicle support and backup equipment on the trip
- 21-speed Mountain bike (Trek/Giant or equivalent)
- Entrance to any sites visited as part of the itinerary

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and water bottle
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Tips for the local guides and support crew
- Airline taxes: we cap these so £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at the time of writing)
- Sri Lanka entry visa
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions



Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 19 Aug 2022, and the challenge is subject to change.