

Sri Lanka in Style

17 – 29 November 2015



Bird watching in Style



Orca (Killer Whale)



Stripe-necked Mongoose



Hindu Temple

Report compiled Saman Kumara Gamage & Saman Abeysinghe
Images Courtesy of Saman Kumara Gamage

Tour Participants: Saman Kumara Gamage, Saman Abeysinghe & 7 clients

Highlights

This tour yielded some fantastic sightings of wildlife both on land and sea. A very rare sighting of the Orca and a False Killer Whale in crystal clear waters, a close encounter with the sloth bear and a lazy Leopard perched on a distant tree topped the sightings while the cultural dance show and the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy Ceremony gave so much insight in to Sri Lanka's culture and history.

Day 1

Monday 16th November

The group departed from London on a flight to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka

Day 2

Tuesday 17th November

The group arrived at 1.05pm, and by 2.00pm we had left the airport and were heading towards Sigiriya. En-route we stopped to enjoy some fresh Banana and Pineapples with some biscuits and again at 4.45pm we stopped for tea in Kurunegala. Due to heavy construction on the road traffic was at a standstill in many areas but we somehow managed to reach the hotel by 7.30pm.

The group met for dinner at 8.00pm and after dinner we had a briefing about the program for the next day before going to bed.

Day 3

Wednesday 18th November

We started the day at 6.00am, and after breakfast we left the hotel to visit the Sigiriya rock. The morning was rather cool and comfortable with ideal conditions to climb the rock before getting too hot. We enjoyed the water garden and boulder garden before climbing the all the way to the summit of the rock palace. By 11.00am we were back down and encountered a Shaheen Falcon, Crocodile and Land Monitor. We were lucky to also see a Little Cormorant wrestling to swallow an Eel caught in its beak. After lunch in the hotel a few of the group visited the Polonnaruwa ancient ruins amidst heavy rains but still managed to visit the Vatadage, a circular structure that housed a statue of Lord Buddha and many other iconic ancient structures. The Gal Viharaya (Stone Temple) housed three different statues of Lord Buddha in different poses. The rest of the group relaxed in the hotel till 5.00pm and set out with Saman Kumara for some birding around the hotel premises. Indian Peafowl, White-breasted Water-hen, Asian Open-bill, Changeable Hawk Eagle were few of the birds we encountered during the walk.

The rest of the group arrived to the hotel at 6.30pm and at 8.00pm we sat down for dinner. During dinner a Collared Scops Owl decided to perch itself on a beam over us for almost 30 minutes.

After dinner we had a briefing about the program for the next day before going to bed.

Day 4

Thursday 19th November

We started the day with early breakfast and checked out of the hotel to reach the Dambulla Cave temple before the sun got hotter.

The Dambulla Cave temple complex was once a refuge for a Sri Lankan King who evaded Indian invaders in the 1st century BC. After visiting the cave temple we stopped at a spice garden restaurant for lunch and then proceeded to Kandy. We saw a few Buddhist and Hindu Temples on our way to the hotel.

By 4.20pm we went to view a cultural dance show which showcased ancient traditional dance forms from different areas of the island.

We later visited the Temple of the Tooth which is the last ancient Kingdom of Sri Lanka and houses the tooth of the Lord Buddha, a sacred symbol to all Buddhists the world over.

Dinner was at a restaurant which overlooked the whole Kandy City and we dined gazing at the beautiful view.

We reached our hotel at 9.30pm, and then finished the day's activity with a briefing about the following day's program.

Day 5

Friday 20th November

After breakfast we visited the Royal Botanical Gardens in Peradeniya and enjoyed the flora including the orchid gardens. Red-wattled Lapwing, Asian Koel, Sri Lanka Hill Myna and Oriental White Eye were also encountered here.

We returned to the hotel for lunch at 1.30pm and after that relaxed until 3.15pm where we took off to the Udawattakele sanctuary for birding. Black-naped Monarch, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Muntjac and Wild Boar were encountered here.

We returned to the hotel at 6.30pm and did the checklist at 7.00pm followed by dinner and after our evening briefing we retired to our rooms for the night.

Day 6

Saturday 21st November

After early breakfast we checked out of the hotel at 7.00am and proceeded to Nuwara Eliya hill country to the next hotel. We stopped en-route in Pussellawa for some birding where we encountered Great Tit, Long-billed Sunbird and White-bellied Drongo. We also stopped to view the Ramboda waterfalls and did a little birding where we encountered Yellow-fronted Barbet, Layard's Parakeet and Grey Wagtail.

Next we stopped at a working tea factory and had a short tour where we were shown how tea is made in Sri Lanka. We reached the Nuwara Eliya town by 12.00noon and headed to the Victoria Park where we encountered Scaly-breasted Munia, Common Sand Piper, Forest Wagtail and Common Tailor Bird.

After having lunch we reached the next hotel Tea Factory in Nuwara Eliya; a very unique hotel which used to be a working tea factory and still has the look and feel of it. At 5.00pm we did a little birding in the hotel gardens where we encountered Plain Prinia, Ashy Prinia, Bar-winged Flycatcher Strike and Yellow Eared Bulbul

We did our checklist at 7.00pm and had dinner at 7.30pm followed by next day's briefing.

Day 7

Sunday 22nd November

We started the day early as we set out to Horton Plains National Park with picnic breakfast. We encountered a Wild Boar on the road to the park and then saw Whistling Thrush just near the ticket counter. Purple Faced Leaf Monkey, Sambar Deer, Wild Buffalo, Torque Macaque, Indian Palm Squirrel, Dusky Squirrel, Dark-fronted Babbler, Pied-Bushchat, Paddyfield Pipit, Hill Swallow, Cattle Egret, Rock Dove, Grey Wagtail, Oriental Magpie Robin, Common Tailorbird, Zitting Zisticola, Sri Lanka White Eye, Oriental White Eye, Large Billed Crow, House Sparrow and Common Myna were also seen during the walk in the park.

We returned to the hotel at 1.30pm for lunch and then again at 5.00pm set out for some birding around the hotel. However due to the heavy mist, visibility was poor and we decided to get back to the hotel to relax.

We did the checklist at 7.00pm and had dinner at 7.30pm followed by the briefing about the next day.

Day 8

Monday 23rd November

After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and proceeded to Yala for our next 3 nights stay. En-route we stopped at the Surrey Estate where we encountered the Brown Wood Owl and a Giant Squirrel. We once again stopped to enjoy some Bananas and biscuits before visiting the Ella Rest house where we encountered Stripe-necked Mongoose, Black Eagle and a Woolly-necked Stork en-route from Ella to Tissamaharama.

After stopping for lunch in Tissamaharama we checked in to the Cinnamon Wild hotel at 4.00pm. Later in the evening we had a leisure walk around the hotel garden where we encountered Spot-billed Pelican, Darter, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret and Black-winged Stilt. A group of Grey Langurs also were seen jumping from branch to branch on trees around the garden.

Back at the hotel we did our checklists at 7.30pm followed by dinner and the next day's briefing.

Day 9

Tuesday 24th November

We left the hotel at 5.30am with picnic breakfast and reached the entrance to Yala National Park at 6.00am. We encounter Malabar Pied Horn Bill, Yellow Crowned Woodpecker, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, Painted Stork, Eurasian Spoon Bill, Brahminy Kite, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, Changeable Hawk Eagle, Sri Lanka Jungle Fowl, Barred Button Quail and Common Moor Hen amongst many other birds. Golden Jackal, Grey Langur, Ruddy Mongoose, Asian Elephant, Spotted Deer, Indian Hare and Sambar Deer were also seen.

We returned to the hotel at 11.00am and had lunch at 12.00am in the hotel. After relaxing in the hotel we set out again at 2.00pm for the evening safari session and returned to the hotel at 6.30pm.

Our usual nightly routine of checklists, dinner and briefing followed thereafter.

Day 10

Wednesday 25th November

Once again we leave the hotel with picnic breakfast for our second day of safari. We encounter Ruddy Turn Stone, Black-necked Stork and Baya Weaver and many of the mammals we encountered the previous day.

We returned to the hotel at 11.20am and had lunch at 01.00pm before once again heading out for the evening safari. The evening safari yielded sightings of a bear and a leopard along with Brahminy Starling, Little Grebe, Sri

Lanka Green Pigeon, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Indian Robin, Thick-billed Flower-pecker and Pale-billed Flower-pecker. After a very successful safari we returned to the hotel at 6.00pm and did the checklist at 7.00pm followed by dinner and the next day's briefing.

Day 11

Thursday 26th November

After early breakfast we left the hotel and proceeded to the southern coastal city of Galle. En route we stop at the Debarawewa tank where we encounter Pied Kingfisher, Purple Swamphen, Black-headed Munia, Plain Prinia, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Green Bee-eater and many other birds.

We had lunch in Galle in a restaurant and then checked in to the Lighthouse hotel at 4.20pm.

At the hotel our usual evening routine was followed before we retired to our rooms.

Day 12

Friday 27th November

We left the hotel at 5.45am with picnic breakfast and proceeded to the small coastal city of Mirissa for our whale watching excursion. Our boat left the pier at 7.00am and headed out to the ocean where we encounter Flying Fish, Green Turtle, False Killer Whale, Risso's Dolphins and Spinner Dolphins. We return to the hotel at 12.30pm for lunch and later relaxed in the hotel enjoying a swim. At 5.00pm we left to visit the Galle Fort and its old architecture. We stayed back in the fort and had dinner before returning to the hotel at 8.00pm and did the briefing for the next day.

Day 13

Saturday 28th November

Today we left the hotel at 5.45am and reached Mirissa port by 7.00am in time to board our whale watching boat. We once again encounter Flying Fish and Spinner Dolphins and a very rare sighting of a Killer Whale or Orca.

After lunch the group separated with two clients going towards Singharaja for their extension and the rest of the group proceeded to Katunayake for their last night's stay. We reached our next hotel at 5.30pm.

The group met at 7.00pm for dinner and after a briefing about the next day departure retired to their rooms for the night.

Day 14

Sunday 29th November

After breakfast we left for the Airport in time to catch our flight back to the UK.

Species Lists

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
2	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>
3	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
4	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
5	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
6	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
7	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
8	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
9	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
10	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
11	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
12	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
14	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
15	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
16	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
17	Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
18	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
19	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
20	Lesser Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
21	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
22	White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
23	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
24	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>
25	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
26	Changeable Hawk-Eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatu</i>
27	Sri Lanka Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix bicalcarata</i>
28	Sri Lanka Junglefowl	<i>Gallus lafayetii</i>
29	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
30	Barred Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>
31	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>
32	Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>
33	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
34	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
35	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
36	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
37	Great Thick-Knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>
38	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
39	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
40	Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
41	Little Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
42	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
43	Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>

44	Pin-tailed Snipe	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
45	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
46	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
47	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
48	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
49	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
50	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
51	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
52	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
53	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
54	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
55	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
56	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
57	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
58	Great Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
59	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
60	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
61	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
62	Sri Lanka Green Pigeon	<i>Treron pompadora</i>
63	Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>
64	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
65	Layard's Parakeet	<i>Psittacula calthropae</i>
66	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus beryllinus</i>
67	Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
68	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>
69	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
70	Red-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus</i>
71	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
72	Green-billed Coucal	<i>Centropus chlororhynchus</i>
73	Serendib Scops Owl	<i>Otus thilohoffmanni</i>
74	Collared Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
75	Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>
76	Sri Lanka Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
77	Grey Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>
78	Indian Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus unicolor</i>
79	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
80	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
81	House Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
82	Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
83	Malabar Trogon	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
84	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
85	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
86	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
87	Green Bee-Eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
88	Blue-tailed Bee-Eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
89	Chestnut-headed Bee-Eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
90	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>

91	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
92	Sri Lankan Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyroceros gingalensis</i>
93	Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoeros coronatus</i>
94	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
95	Yellow-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima flavifrons</i>
96	Crimson-fronted Barbet	<i>Megalaima rubricapillus</i>
97	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
98	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>
99	Lesser Goldenback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
100	Crmson-backed Goldenback	<i>Chrysocolaptes (lucidus) stricklandi</i>
101	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
102	Jerdon's Bushlark	<i>Mirafra affinis</i>
103	Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
104	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
105	Hill Swallow	<i>Hirundo(tahitica) domicola</i>
106	Sri Lanka Swallow	<i>Cecropis (daurica) hyperythra</i>
107	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
108	Forest Wagtail	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
109	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
110	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
111	Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
112	Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
113	Sri Lanka Wood-Shrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>
114	Black-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>
115	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
116	Yellow-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus penicillatus</i>
117	Yellow-browed Bulbul	<i>Acritillas indica</i>
118	Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
119	Indian Blackbird	<i>Turdus(merula) simillimus</i>
120	Spot-winged Thrush	<i>Zoothera spiloptera</i>
121	Sri Lanka Thrush	<i>Zoothera imbricata</i>
122	Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush	<i>Myophonus blighi</i>
123	Indian Blue Robin	<i>Luscinia brunnea</i>
124	Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
125	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>
126	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
127	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>
128	Brown-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa muttui</i>
129	Dull-blue Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias sordidus</i>
130	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
131	White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>
132	Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
133	Asian Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
134	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
135	Jungle Prinia	<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>
136	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
137	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>

138	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
139	Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
140	Sri Lankan Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus melanurus</i>
141	Orange-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides rufescens</i>
142	Yellow-billed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
143	Ashy-headed Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax cinereifrons</i>
144	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
145	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
146	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
147	Loten's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
148	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum agile</i>
149	White-throated Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum vincens</i>
150	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
151	Oriental White-Eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
152	Ceylon White-Eye	<i>Zosterops ceylonensis</i>
153	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
154	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
155	Sri Lanka Crested-Drongo	<i>Dicrurus(paradiseus) lophorinus</i>
156	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caeruleus</i>
157	Sri Lanka Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa ornata</i>
158	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
159	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
160	Lasser Hill Myna	<i>Gracula(religiosa) indica</i>
161	Sri Lanka Myna	<i>Gracula ptilogenys</i>
162	Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
163	White-faced Starling	<i>Sturnornis albofrontatus</i>
164	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
165	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
166	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
167	Indian Silverbill	<i>Euodice malabarica</i>
168	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
169	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
170	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>
171	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>

Mammals

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Toque Macaque	<i>Macaca sinica</i>
2	Grey Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
3	Purple-faced Leaf Monkey	<i>Presbytis vetulus</i>
4	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
5	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
6	Common Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
7	Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>
8	Stripe-necked Mongoose	<i>Herpestes vitticollis</i>
9	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
10	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>

11	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
12	Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjac</i>
13	Spotted Deer (Chital)	<i>Cervus axis</i>
14	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
15	Water Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>
16	Indian Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
17	Grizzled Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa macroura</i>
18	Dusky Squirrel	<i>Funambulus sublineatus</i>
19	Indian Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
20	Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantea</i>
21	Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>
22	Rissos Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>
23	False Killer Whale	<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>
24	Orca	<i>Orcinus orca</i>

Reptiles & Other

	Common name	Scientific name
1	Land Monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>
2	Common Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
3	Mugger Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>
4	Soft shelled Terapin	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>
5	Hard Shelled Terapin	<i>Melanochelys trijuga parkeri</i>
6	Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
7	Flying Fish	<i>Cheilopogon spilopterus</i>