ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Sri Lanka on a Shoestring

COUNTRY(IES)	Sri Lanka
TOUR TYPE	Shoestring
TRANSPORT	A/C minivan/minibus, public transport inc. trains
GROUP SIZE	Min: 4 | Max: 18
DURATION	13 days
STARTS	Colombo, Sri Lanka
ENDS	Colombo, Sri Lanka
MEALS	Breakfasts - 11, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 0

TOUR ROUTE MAP **13 Days**



ROUTE: **Colombo** (Start) → **Negombo** → **Sigiriya** → **Knuckles** → **Kandy** → **Hatton** → **Pekoe Trail Stage 15 Makulella Ella** → **Ella** → **Ahangama** → **Unawatuna Beach** → **Colombo** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Colombo, Negombo, & Dambulla, Sigiriya, Knuckles, Kandy, Kitulgala, Ella, Unawatuna, Galle

Itinerary

DAY 1 Welcome to Colombo. Colombo evening walking tour

Attend the scheduled pre-departure briefing in Colombo and receive useful information about the upcoming travel arrangements and activities. The remainder of the period allows you to become familiar with the capital's surroundings and evening atmosphere. With no major sightseeing attached, the focus remains on getting oriented, settling in and preparing for the next stage of travel through Sri Lanka.

ACTIVITIES

- **Pre in Departure Briefing – Colombo**
  Meet your Adventure Leader and fellow travellers for your tour briefing. Review the itinerary and get essential information before starting your Sri Lankan adventure.
- **Activity in Colombo Evening**
  Walk through Colombo's historic old town and learn about its cultural heritage. Enjoy the evening atmosphere as your guide introduces you to key landmarks and stories.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Colombo hostel	None

DAY 2 Negombo fish market, Sputnik volunteer centre and Dambulla Cave Temple complex

The journey begins with the fishing community of Negombo before travelling inland towards Kurunegala. A visit to a community-focused volunteer centre adds a social element to the day, followed by the onward journey to Dambulla. The cave temple complex then provides the final visit, introducing centuries of Buddhist religious art and one of Sri Lanka's significant cultural sites.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Negombo to Negombo Fish Market**
  Travel from your accommodation to the bustling Negombo Fish Market. The coastal route brings you straight into the heart of the local fishing community.
- **Explore Negombo Fish Market**
  Explore the lively Negombo fish market, witnessing fishermen auctioning their morning catch. Experience the coastal community's daily rhythms and traditions.
- **Drive from Negombo to Kurunegala**
  Travel inland from Negombo towards Kurunegala. Enjoy views of coconut plantations and lush countryside along the way.
- **Explore Sputnik Volunteer Centre in Kurunegala**
  Visit the Sputnik Volunteer Centre and observe youth programs, community engagement activities and volunteer initiatives. Meet staff and students involved in education, training and social development.
- **Drive from Kurunegala to Dambulla**
  Continue your journey from Kurunegala to the historic town of Dambulla. The road passes rural villages and scenic farmland.
- **Explore Dambulla Cave Temple Complex**
  Discover the Dambulla Cave Temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Admire centuries-old Buddhist murals and statues carved inside the cave temples.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Dambulla hostel	None

DAY 3 Sigiriya fortress hike. Optional cycling excursion to Polonnaruwa

Visit Sigiriya and ascend through the historic fortress complex to the summit, where the remains reveal both royal ambition and sophisticated ancient engineering. The climb passes landscaped and rock-cut features before opening onto wide views from above. Once the visit is complete, return to Dambulla and spend the remaining time at

leisure, giving you a chance to slow the pace after the climb.

ACTIVITIES

- **Hike the Sigiriya Rock Fortress**
  Climb the iconic Sigiriya Rock Fortress and explore its ancient ruins. Enjoy sweeping views from the summit and learn about its royal history.
- **Free Time in Dambulla**
  Use your free time to explore more of Dambulla at your own pace. Relax at your guesthouse or wander through the surrounding village areas.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Dambulla hostel	Breakfast

DAY 4 Hike the Manigala Trail in the Knuckles Mountain Range. Head to Kandy

Hike the Manigala Trail in the Knuckles Range and spend time among woodland paths, exposed viewpoints and highland scenery before continuing by road to Kandy. The walk provides the active focus of the day, while the later transfer introduces a substantial change from remote natural surroundings to a busy cultural centre. Arrival in Kandy completes the transition from wilderness exploration to the next stage of sightseeing.

ACTIVITIES

- **Hike the Manigala Trail – Knuckles Range**
  Hike the scenic Manigala Trail through the lush Knuckles Mountain Range. Enjoy panoramic viewpoints and diverse forest landscapes.
- **Drive from Dambulla to Kandy**
  Travel from Dambulla to Kandy through Sri Lanka's central highlands. Watch the scenery shift from rural plains to misty hill-country terrain.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kandy hostel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 5 Free morning in Kandy. Afternoon Kitulgala rainforest rafting

Spend the first part of the day at leisure in Kandy, then travel to Kitulgala through Sri Lanka’s central hill country. Once there, join the scheduled white-water rafting activity on the Kelani River. The change from free time in a cultural city to an active river outing provides considerable variety, while the surrounding rainforest scenery keeps the focus on the natural environment rather than additional sightseeing.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Kandy**
  Spend the morning exploring Kandy at your own pace. Visit local shops, walk by the lake, or relax in the hill-

country surroundings.

- **White Water Rafting in Kitulgala**
  Experience an exciting white water rafting adventure in the Kitulgala rainforest. Navigate rapids surrounded by lush jungle scenery.
- **Drive from Kandy to Kitulgala**
  Travel from Kandy to the rainforest town of Kitulgala. Enjoy scenic forest landscapes as you descend into the wet zone.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kitulgala hostel	Breakfast

DAY 6 Scenic train journey to Ella. Hike Little Adams Peak

The drive from Kitulgala reaches Hatton, where the train journey to Ella begins through Sri Lanka's tea-growing highlands. The railway crosses viaducts and passes misty valleys and plantations before reaching Ella. A hike to Little Adam's Peak follows on arrival, offering elevated views across the surrounding hills and completing a day centred on the scenery of the central highlands.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Scenic Train Journey – Hatton to Ella**
  Ride one of Sri Lanka's most scenic train routes through tea country. Pass forests, villages and sweeping landscapes on your way to Ella.
- **Hike the Little Adam's Peak – Ella**
  Follow a gentle trail to Little Adam's Peak for panoramic valley views. Enjoy the tea plantations and hill scenery surrounding Ella.
- **Drive from Kitulgala to Hatton Train Station**
  Transfer from Kitulgala to Hatton railway station to begin your hill-country train journey.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Ella hostel	Breakfast

DAY 7 Hike the 15th and 16th stages of the Pekoe Trail

After an approximately 30-minute transfer and packed breakfast, start near Makulella Buddhist Temple and follow Stage 15 through forest and tea country to Ella Rock before descending into town. Continue with Stage 16 through Ella Forest Reserve, passing Nine Arches Bridge and village roads near Newburgh and Demodara tea estates before reaching the Demodara Railway Loop. Spend the evening at leisure in Ella.

ACTIVITIES

- **Hike the Pekoe Trail – Stage 15**
  Hike Stage 15 of the Pekoe Trail through forests and tea plantations. Reach Ella Rock viewpoint for sweeping mountain vistas.
- **Hike the Pekoe Trail – Stage 16**
  Continue along Stage 16 past the Nine Arches Bridge and village paths. Walk through scenic estates and end at the Demodara Railway Loop.
- **Free Time in Ella**
  Relax in Ella after your hike and enjoy the town's cafés and hillside scenery. Explore at your own pace in the cool evening climate.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Ella hostel	Breakfast

DAY 8 Sri Lankan cooking class. Optional Yoga lesson

Join a cooking class in Ella and spend time preparing Sri Lankan dishes using regional ingredients and traditional techniques. Once the culinary session is complete, the remainder of the day is free. You can rest or explore the town independently, making the most of Ella’s cafés, viewpoints and mountain surroundings before continuing with the next stage of your journey through the highlands.

ACTIVITIES

- **Sri Lankan Cooking Class in Ella**
  Learn to prepare traditional Sri Lankan dishes using local spices and techniques. Enjoy tasting the flavours you create during this hands-on experience.
- **Free Time in Ella**
  Relax in Ella after your hike and enjoy the town's cafés and hillside scenery. Explore at your own pace in the cool evening climate.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Ella hostel	Breakfast

DAY 9 'Mini World' hike, Buduruvagala temple and jeep safari in Udawalawe NP

Begin with a walk to Mini World’s End near Ella, then visit the historic rock carvings at Buduruvagala before continuing towards Udawalawe. Once at the national park, explore by jeep and look for elephants, birdlife and other animals across the open plains and around the water. The combination of mountain scenery, archaeological heritage and safari activity creates a varied day as you move from the highlands into southern Sri Lanka.

ACTIVITIES

- **Hike the Mini World's End – Ella**
  Hike to Mini World's End for dramatic sunrise views and a steep cliff outlook. Enjoy panoramic scenery across Ella's valleys and ridges.
- **Explore Buduruvagala Ancient Temple**
  Discover the Buduruvagala rock temple featuring ancient carved Buddha statues. Learn about its spiritual significance and historic artistry.
- **Jeep Safari in Udawalawe National Park**
  Experience one of Sri Lanka's most reliable wildlife-viewing regions as you explore Udawalawe National Park on a jeep safari and look for elephants, birds and other wildlife.
- **Drive from Ella to Udawalawe**
  Travel from Ella to Udawalawe through changing forest and rural landscapes.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Udawalawe campsite	Breakfast

DAY 10 — Head to Handunugoda Tea Estate before unwinding on Unawatuna beach

The route from Udawalawe travels towards Sri Lanka's south coast with a visit to Handunugoda Tea Estate, where artisanal methods and coastal-grown teas provide an introduction to a distinctive part of the island's plantation industry. Continue to Unawatuna as inland greenery gradually gives way to ocean scenery, ending the journey beside the beaches of the southern coast.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Handunugoda Tea Estate**
  Tour a working tea estate and learn about Sri Lanka's tea production process. Taste fresh brews and explore plantation surroundings.
- **Drive from Udawalawe to Unawatuna**
  Continue from Udawalawe to Sri Lanka's southern coastline. Arrive in Unawatuna for a more relaxed beachside atmosphere.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Unawatuna hostel	Breakfast

DAY 11 — Surfing lesson. Afternoon traditional mask painting workshop

Spend part of the day on a surfing lesson before taking part in a mask-painting workshop focused on traditional local craft. The two activities provide different forms of participation, one active and coastal, the other cultural and creative. Once the organised sessions are complete, the remaining time is free, allowing you to rest or explore

Unawatuna independently at your own pace.

ACTIVITIES

- **Surfing Lesson in Unawatuna**
  Enjoy a beginner-friendly surf lesson on Unawatuna's scenic coastline. Learn basic techniques and ride the waves with instructor guidance.
- **Traditional Mask Painting Workshop in Unawatuna**
  Create a traditional Sri Lankan mask using local artistic methods. Learn about the cultural meanings and symbolism behind the designs.
- **Free Time in Unawatuna**
  Relax on the beach or explore Unawatuna's lively cafés and shops. Enjoy the slower pace of Sri Lanka's southern coast.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Unawatuna hostel	Breakfast

DAY 12 — Tuk-tuk to Galle to explore Galle Fort City

Take a tuk-tuk from Unawatuna to Galle Fort and spend time exploring its streets, ramparts and historic buildings. The fort provides the principal sightseeing focus and reflects the area’s long maritime and colonial history. After the visit, return to Unawatuna and spend the remaining time at leisure, with no further organised activities specified for the day.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Tuk-Tuk Ride – Unawatuna to Galle Fort City**
  Take a tuk-tuk ride to Galle Fort City, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Enjoy a scenic coastal drive before exploring the historic fort.
- **Explore Galle Fort City**
  Explore the ancient ramparts, lighthouse and streets of Galle Fort City. Discover its colonial architecture, boutiques and seaside viewpoints.
- **Free Time in Unawatuna**
  Relax on the beach or explore Unawatuna's lively cafés and shops. Enjoy the slower pace of Sri Lanka's southern coast.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Unawatuna hostel	Breakfast

DAY 13

Partake in a Pooja Blessing Ritual and return to Colombo where our tour ends

Begin with a temple pooja before travelling from Unawatuna to Colombo. The blessing provides a final cultural experience before the journey leaves the southern coast and heads into the capital region. Reaching Colombo marks the end of the trip and brings together a quiet ceremonial start with the practical return journey north to Sri Lanka’s largest city.

ACTIVITIES

- **Pooja Blessing Ritual in Sri Lanka Temple**
  Participate in a traditional pooja blessing ritual at a Buddhist temple. Experience local spirituality before concluding your journey.
- **Drive from Unawatuna to Colombo**
  Travel from Unawatuna back to Colombo to end your tour. Enjoy final views of the southern coastline and city landscapes.
- **Tour Ends in Colombo**
  The Sri Lanka on a Shoestring Tour concludes upon arrival in Colombo. Your adventure ends with memories of landscapes, culture and wildlife.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
N/A	Breakfast

INCLUDED

- All accommodation (including hostels and guesthouses)
- All transport whilst in Sri Lanka (excludes airport transfers)
- Evening walking tour of the old town of Colombo (Colombo)
- Negombo to visit the fish market (Negombo)
- Dambulla Cave Complex (Dambulla)
- Sigiriya Rock Fortress hike (Sigiriya)
- A glass Sri Lanka's favourite alcohol, Arrack (Dambulla)
- Hike along the scenic Manigala Trail (Knuckles)
- Sunset visit to Kandy Lake (Kandy)
- The Sputnik Centre (Kurunegala, Kandy)
- White Water rafting (Kitulgala)
- Train from Hatton to Ella (Ella)
- Ella Rock hike at sunrise (Ella)
- Visit Rawana Falls (Ella)
- Hike to Mini-worlds end at sunrise (Ella)
- Sri Lankan Cookery Class (Ella)
- Visit the Buduruvagala Ancient Temple (Ella to Udawalawe)
- Jeep safari into Udawalawe National Park (Udawalawe)
- Visit to Handunugoda Tea Estate (Handunugoda)
- Surf lesson (Unawatuna)
- Tuk-tuk ride to Galle, for Galle Fort City (Galle)
- Visit temple to meet a Buddhist priest and take part in a pooja (blessing ritual) (Unawatuna - Colombo)
- A bilingual, epic Adventure Leader throughout the entire trip
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

EXCLUDED

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Arrival & Departure Airport Transfers
- Any activities during free time in Sigiriya, Kandy, Ella, Unawatuna
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for driver and/or tour guide
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

Similar tours:

The following tours also feature this trip as part of an extended itinerary:

- **Temples & Tigers** - follows the same itinerary but includes an additional extension to see tigers in Ranthambore NP.
- **Best of India** - follows the same itinerary but includes an additional extension to explore tropical Kerala in the south of India
- **Taj to Varanasi** - follows the same itinerary but includes an additional extension to the holy city of Varanasi

Tour Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements , full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

No additional options available for this tour.

Important Notes

1 **Accommodation**

The accommodation used on the tour is a mix of simple stays in hostels (dorms) simple guesthouses and one night camping. Each have their own charm, and at the same time are safe, clean, and hygienic. All have good showers, internet, and some have washing machines. The price is based on same-sex shared rooms in these hostels and accommodations, All bedding is provided - you do not need ot bring a sleeping bag. Luggage is tagged and stored securely while we are out exploring during the day. The majority of other people staying in the hostels will be young people aged 18 to 35 and travelling on a budget. It's easy to make new friends and have fun meeting in the lounge areas. You can also upgrade to a private or twin room subject to availability at the time of booking. This may not extend to all the accommodation throughout the trip. Please contact us if you would like more information.

Additional nights are available on request in the hostels used at the start and finish of the tour - please contact us for prices and to book.

2 Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. On this tour, the majority of transportion is in private vehicles, however some sections may be operated using local public transport such as buses and trains.

What time are the driving durations?

Colombo – Negombo: 30 minutes

Negombo – Dambulla: 3.5 hours

Dambulla – Knuckles Mountain Range: 1.5 hours

Knuckles Mountain Range – Kandy: 2 hours

Kandy – Kitulgala: 2 hours

Kitulgala – Hatton – Ella: 1.5 hours by road, 3 hrs by train

Ella – Udawalawe: 1.5 hours

Udawalawe – Handunugoda: 2 hours

Handunugoda – Unawatuna: 30 mins

Unawatuna – Colombo: 2 hours

What is it like on public transport?

Throughout your time in Sri Lanka, you'll be using private transfers. However, transfer between Hatton to Ella will be completed by train.

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3 Transfers

Arrival and Departure airport transfers are not included in the cost of this tour, but can be added as additional options. Please check the options section of the tour page for further details.

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4 Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

This tour is accompanied by English speaking tour leaders. These all have the knowledge and passion to help make sure you have a great time in all the places visited during the tour. We may sometimes use more than one leader for different sections of the tour but often the same person will accompany you throghout. Where they do not travel with you between locations, they will help you board and see you off, and you'll be met on your arrival at the next destination.

Each tour leader is an expert in all things Sri Lanka. However, they are not licensed tour guides.

Specialist tour guides are available at many of the sites we visit along the way if you would like some more in depth information about particular sites.

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5 Group Size & Operation

The minimum number of travellers required for the tour to run is 4, with a maximum group size of 20.

This is an active, backpacking style tour, and there is a lot of walking and physical activity involved. We therefore set a minimum age of 16 and maximum age limit of 55. Children aged 15 or under may be accepted in some circumstances.

This tour is operated in conjunction with one of our tour operator partners specialising in this region so you may join with travellers booking through different companies and from different countries. This can make for some really interesting groups and new people to meet.

6 Meals

What kind of restaurants will we go to?

Your Adventure Leader will take you to small local cafes/shops serving Sri Lankan food.

I'm a vegetarian/have allergies – will I be able to get the right food?

Yes! Vegetarian food is a part of the Sri Lankan diet, and with so many food choices available, even individuals with allergies and/or special dietary needs can get food. Just tell your Adventure Leader and they can help you find something suitable. You will probably discover a new dish that you love!

7 Entrance Fees

The cost of entrance fees to the sites included on this tour are included in the tour price. If you decide to visit anything during your free time, the cost of these entrance fees are not included.

8 Dates & Prices

We run departures on our Indian tours throughout the year. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 4 travellers. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website (please check the website for up-to-date prices and special offers).

Private and tailor-made tours are available on any dates and may be adjusted to fit your personal requirements, available time and budget.

9 Tipping and Haggling

Haggling is a traditional necessity, so its wise not to pay too much regard to initial prices. Instead fix an items value in your mind then negotiate towards it unhurriedly and don't be afraid to simply walk away if the price isn't right. Once you have offered a price though, you should be prepared to pay it as you may cause offence if you then back out.

While an accepted part of the culture and customs in Sri Lanka, tipping is always optional, and the amounts paid should reflect excellent service. We are often asked for advice on common amounts, and for assistance with tipping. Some suggested guidelines are given below.

Restaurants and taxis: Local markets and basic restaurants - leave the loose change. More up-market restaurants we suggest 5% to 10% of your bill.

Local guides: Throughout your trip you may at times have a local guide in addition to your tour guide. We suggest USD 3-5 per person per day for local guides.

Drivers: You may have a range of private 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, for example if you don't have an extra accompanying guide. However USD 2-3 per person per day is generally appropriate if you have a guide and a driver. If they are a driver/guide, performing both functions, then USD 5-10 per person per day is appropriate.

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10 Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please contact us if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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11 Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.
We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see our website or booking conditions for more information.

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12 Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.
The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and

appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.

- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

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13 Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

https://x.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

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14 Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? World Nomads Travel Insurance offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency

evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

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15 Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current official government travel advice for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's 'Travel Aware' campaign which provides further useful and invaluable information.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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16 Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can’t fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon’s efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you’ll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

17 Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please contact us.

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18 Voltage

In Nepal, India and Sri Lanka, sockets are mainly two round pronged and 230 volts (Type C,D,M). In Bhutan a range of different sockets can be found, including two and three round pronged and three flat pronged (Type D,F,G).

Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard UK-European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are sometimes available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already but cannot be guaranteed.
If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

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19 Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

Sri Lanka: Additional vaccinations: Diptheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. Malaria map. Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an endemic country.

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are

visiting. In general though is generally considered low enough risk that anti-malarial tablets are not necessary for most travellers doing relatively short tours of Sri Lanka.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vacinnation may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this US CDC information about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

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20 Passports and Visas - Sri Lanka

Your passport expiry date must be at least 6 months after your time in Sri Lanka finishes. Do not bring a full or almost expired passport. You must also have a machine-readable passport or you may be denied entry. If you have an old-style manually issued passport you will need to replace this with a new machine-readable passport before you travel.

Most nationalities (including UK, USA, European, Australian, Canadian) will need to arrange their Sri Lankan tourist visa in advance. A new online e-visa system is available which makes the process more straightforward than before. You can make your application online here... Electronic Travel Authorization

Visa requirements for Sri Lanka can and do change regularly and we suggest that you arrange your Indian visa early and re-check your specific visa requirements prior to travel for any changes.
