

EXPLORING HILL COUNTRY & SAFARI WEEKEND TRIP

WEEKEND OVERVIEW

The Hill Country offers you a scenic experience like no other, with a mist-wrapped land carpeted with striking colourful scenery, breathtaking mountains, lush green tea plantations and cascading waterfalls – a world away from the humid coastal lowlands.

One of the main highlights of this action-packed weekend trip is to head out on an early morning safari in the renowned Udawala National Park. Sri Lanka has been voted the best safari destination outside of Africa, with elephants, monkeys, leopards, sloth bears, crocodiles and more roaming the parks.

As a group, we will explore everything this incredible region has to offer, including:

- Taking in the sights at the ancient fort in Galle
- Enjoying the laid-back atmosphere and surf scene in Mirissa
- Observing baby orphaned elephants at the ethical Elephant Transit Home
- Searching for elephants and other animals on safari in Udawala
- Relaxing and enjoying the night life in the tourist town of Ella
- Seeing a train pass over the famous Nine Arches Bridge
- Trekking up Little Adams Peak and enjoying the 360-degree views
- Learning about how tea is grown and produced on a guided tea factory tour
- Seeing many waterfalls

The structured weekend trip will ensure you see as much of Sri Lanka as possible. You will be transported by private minibus to maximise comfort and to keep transit times to a minimum.

A member of the TMR team will accompany you

throughout the trip and English-speaking guides will show you around all of the sites, so you get to fully appreciate their history and cultural significance.

The trips are open to all TMR volunteers with at least 5 people travelling – a guaranteed fantastic social experience.

Each weekend trip leaves on a Friday morning and returns on the Sunday evening, costing just **£195 / \$270 per person.**

The following are included within this fee:

- All transport by private mini-bus
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- All entrance fees

START DATES

We will be running the hill country weekend trip on the following dates:

12th January 2024 – 14th January 2024
9th February 2024 – 11th February 2024
8th March 2024 – 10th March 2024
12th April 2024 – 14th April 2024
10th May 2024 – 12th May 2024
7th June 2024 – 9th June 2024
12th July 2024 – 14th July 2024
9th August 2024 – 11th August 2024
13th September 2024 – 15th September 2024
11th October 2024 – 13th October 2024
8th November 2024 – 10th November 2024
13th December 2024 – 15th December 2024

10th January 2025 – 12th January 2025
7th February 2025 – 9th February 2025
7th March 2025 – 9th March 2025
11th April 2025 – 13th April 2025
9th May 2025 – 11th May 2025
13th June 2025 – 15th June 2025
11th July 2025 – 13th July 2025
8th August 2025 – 10th August 2025



12th September 2025 – 14th September 2025
10th October 2025 – 12th October 2025
7th November 2025 – 9th November 2025
12th December 2025 – 14th December 2025

We can add additional weekend trips if there is enough interest from volunteers. There is a minimum of 5 participants.

BOOKING YOUR PLACE

You can simply add this weekend trip when applying for any of our programmes in Sri Lanka under 'Optional Extras'.

If you have already signed up for one of our volunteer programmes in Sri Lanka and would like to add this weekend trip, you can simply request this within your My Trip account.

Places on our weekend trips are non-refundable and non-transferable between volunteers.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 – GALLE, MIRISSA & BABY ELEPHANTS

This action-packed long weekend will start by heading to the historic walled town of Galle – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You will an hour or two in the morning exploring this exotic old trading port that has ancient mosques, churches, grand mansions and of course the famous lighthouse. Wandering it's small lanes, you will pass many stylish cafes and quirky boutiques where you can spend time relaxing and shopping.

Once everyone is ready, we will make the short journey to the beach resort town of Mirissa. This picture-postcard beach is the perfect setting for some lunch and to climb on-top of Parrock Rock to enjoy the views.

The day is not over yet though! As we start to head inland, we will stop at the Elephant Transit

Home in Udawala. This is your chance to see anywhere up to 50 baby orphaned elephants being fed at this amazing facility – the one and only ethical sanctuary on the island!

The elephants are free to roam a large proportion of the national park and human contact is kept to an absolute minimum so they can be released to the wild once they become older.

After a busy day we will check into the nearby hotel. You will be able to enjoy a leisurely swim in the large swimming pool and more often than not, try your hand at some traditional dancing and singing with the hotel staff!

DAY 2 – SAFARI IN UDAWALA NATIONAL PARK, NINE ARCHES BRIDGE & ELLA

One of the highlights of the weekend is a morning safari in Udawala National Park. Famous for having a herd of around 250 elephants, the national park is one of the most visited in the whole country. There are also many other animals roaming around, including sambars, jackals, wild buffaloes, macaque monkeys and crocodiles. If you're lucky you may even see a rare leopard or sloth bear.

After hopefully seeing lots of animals, you will get the chance to catch up on some sleep as we drive north to Ella.

Time to see a different side of Sri Lanka that is the highest, wildest and seen as the most beautiful part – the southern hill country. As we drive along the winding roads and start to climb the hills we will make several stops to take in the amazing scenery and make sure you keep your eyes peeled for the monkeys!

When we first arrive into Ella, we will head to the famous Nine Arch Bridge and wait for a train



to cross. Located in the dense jungle surrounded by greenery, this spectacular feat of engineering spans 91 metres and provides some amazing pictures! The rest of the evening is free for you to enjoy everything Ella has to offer! With many restaurants and bars dotted along the main street, there are no shortage of places to visit. You can also relax with a traditional local massage!

DAY 3 – LITTLE ADAMS PEAK, TEA PLANTATION TOUR & WATERFALLS

After breakfast we'll take a trip to Little Adam's Peak, which is located just outside of Ella.

This relatively pleasant and not so strenuous 45 minute hike up to the summit rewards you with stunning views across the endless valleys and tea plantations – what a great way to start the day.

After spending a bit more time enjoying our surroundings in Ella, we will then head through the tea plantations that Sri Lanka is famous for.

On our way home, we will stop and have a tour around a tea factory. Here we will learn all about the process of making tea and even have the chance to sample some ourselves – the cake is additional though I'm afraid!

We will also get to witness some of Sri Lanka's most awe inspiring and enchanting waterfalls. Everyone can stop to take in the majestic views and, weather and safety conditions permitting, even go for a quick swim.

In the afternoon, we will make the drive back to Akurala.

ACCOMMODATION

Over the course of the weekend you will be staying in hotels or guesthouses. All of the accommodation will be basic but clean and comfortable and perfect for getting a good night's rest.

Rooms will be on a shared basis, with up to 4 volunteers staying in one room. Please note, from time to time some volunteers may be required to share a double bed depending on availability.

You will have all of the amenities you need such as western toilets, hot water and Wi-Fi – although this may be intermittent.

MEALS

You'll be provided with three meals per day throughout the weekend trip. Meals will generally be local Sri Lankan cuisine and served at either the guesthouse or a local restaurant.

Drinks are not provided and will need to be purchased at your own expense. A big bottle of water typically costs under 50p.

TRANSPORT

You will travel around Sri Lanka by private minibus. Depending on the group size, this may either be a large 27 seater bus or a smaller van that can seat 8.

A member of our local team will accompany you throughout the weekend trip and you will have English-speaking tour guides to take you around all of the sites.

If you want to take part on this amazing trip and the dates fall on your last weekend in Sri Lanka then you can still take part!



Please arrange your return flight from Sri Lanka for Monday to ensure you have sufficient time to get to the airport. The accommodation on your last night is not included but we can recommend several hotels either close to our accommodation or to the airport.

