ICFS CAMPUS · CERTIFICATE COURSE

Eco, Forest & Wildlife Tourism Programme

14-Day Field Itinerary · Sri Lanka

Katunayake → Negombo → Sinharaja → Horton Plains → Sigiriya / Habarana → Kandy → Katunayake

Academic leads: Prof. Sarath Kotagama · Prof. Vasanthuli Nage

Draft itinerary for planning · prepared 26 October 2026 · dates, venues and permits to be confirmed

Programme Overview

A 14-day residential field course that moves through four of Sri Lanka's contrasting ecosystems — coastal wetland, lowland rainforest, montane cloud forest and dry-zone forest — and closes with cultural immersion in the hill capital. Theory is taught in the field, next to the habitat it describes, and every base includes hands-on practice: birding, transects, night walks, safaris and community participation.

14 days	**13 nights**	**5 field bases**	**4 ecosystems**	**2 academic leads**

Route at a glance

Days	Base	Nights	Focus
1 – 3	**Negombo**	3	Orientation, forest & wildlife theory, Ceylon culture, wetlands, evening beach activity
4 – 6	**Sinharaja (Martin's Lodge)**	3	Rainforest ecology, birds, fauna, waterfalls, biodiversity sampling
7 – 8	**Nuwara Eliya**	2	Horton Plains National Park, World's End, cloud forest and montane grassland
9 – 12	**Sigiriya / Habarana (Aliya hotel)**	4	Dambulla, Hurulu and Minneriya safaris, dry-zone ecology, community culture
13 – 14	**Kandy → Katunayake**	1	Botanical gardens, cultural evening, certificate ceremony, departure

Learning aims

- Explain how Sri Lanka's biogeography and climate zones produce its exceptional endemism and biodiversity.
- Identify key bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian and plant groups in each habitat using field guides and basic survey methods.
- Describe forest structure, food webs and conservation pressures in rainforest, cloud forest and dry-zone ecosystems.
- Practise responsible wildlife-tourism conduct: guiding standards, safari etiquette, low-impact travel and community benefit.
- Connect natural heritage with Ceylon cultural heritage through direct engagement with host communities.

Academic leadership

Prof. Sarath Kotagama
Ornithology, wildlife ecology and conservation. Leads bird and wildlife sessions, including dawn bird walks at Sinharaja and the safari debriefs.

Prof. Vasanthuli Nage
Co-lead for the academic programme. Session focus (for example cultural heritage, ecology or community engagement) to be confirmed with the Professor.

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Times are indicative. Safari and park entries depend on permits, weather and wildlife conditions.

1 — **Arrival and orientation** · Negombo

- Meet at Katunayake (Bandaranaike International) Airport; transfer to Negombo (about 30 minutes).
- Check-in, welcome session, course briefing, introductions to Prof. Kotagama and Prof. Nage.
- Safety and conduct briefing: field rules, health, wildlife etiquette, leech and heat precautions.
- Evening: relaxed beach walk and sunset; welcome dinner.

2 — **Theory: forest, wildlife and wetlands** · Negombo

- Morning classroom: Sri Lanka's biogeography, climate zones and forest types; why the island is a biodiversity hotspot.
- Prof. Kotagama session: introduction to ornithology, wildlife ecology and conservation status of key species.
- Afternoon field practical: Negombo lagoon and Muthurajawela wetland (boat trip, mangroves, waterbirds).
- Evening beach activity: coastal ecology walk and guided shoreline observation.

3 — **Theory: Ceylon culture and heritage** · Negombo

- Morning: Ceylon culture session — history, traditions, cuisine and the fishing-community heritage of Negombo.
- Prof. Nage session and group discussion; link between culture, land use and conservation.
- Afternoon: heritage walk (Dutch fort area, fish market or church heritage) and field-journal workshop.
- Evening beach activity: group beach clean-up and reflection circle; pack for Sinharaja.

4 — **Journey via Ratnapura to Sinharaja** · Sinharaja

- Early departure Negombo → Ratnapura (gem-mining district; short stop) → Kudawa, Sinharaja. Travel about 5–6 hours.
- Check-in at Martin's Lodge; briefing on rainforest rules, guides and leech protection.
- Late afternoon: introductory walk near the forest edge; first bird and plant checklist.
- Evening: lecture on the Sinharaja rainforest (UNESCO World Heritage Site) and night soundscape.

5 — **Rainforest, birds and waterfalls** · Sinharaja

- Dawn bird walk with Prof. Kotagama: mixed-species flocks, endemics, calls and identification.
- Guided forest trek with the park guide: forest layers, canopy, understorey, streams and waterfalls.
- Afternoon: fauna session — mammals, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates; tracks and signs.
- Night walk (with guide): nocturnal frogs, reptiles and insects; quiet-observation practice.

6 — **Biodiversity assessment and ecosystem structure** · Sinharaja

- Field method practical: transect walk, simple plot sampling, leaf-litter and stream-side survey.
- Study of the full ecosystem: soil, water, plants, pollinators, predators, nutrient cycling and threats.
- Waterfall and stream visit; field-journal entries and data compilation.
- Evening group debrief: first species list and biodiversity summary.

7 — **Transfer to the hill country** · Nuwara Eliya

- Depart Sinharaja → Ratnapura/Belihuloya → Nuwara Eliya (hill-country road, about 6 hours with stops).
- Scenic stops through tea country; short talk on altitude, climate and vegetation zones.
- Check-in; evening briefing for Horton Plains (early start, weather, 9–10 km walking trail).
- Early night.

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Horton Plains and World's End · Nuwara Eliya

- Very early start for Horton Plains National Park: World's End, Baker's Falls and montane grassland trail loop.
- Study cloud forest ecology, endemic highland flora and fauna, and conservation management of the plateau.
- Afternoon: Victoria Park birding (migratory season) and tea-estate visit; discussion of land use and conservation.
- Evening: field-journal session and group reflection.

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Journey to Sigiriya / Habarana · Sigiriya

- Nuwara Eliya → Kandy → Dambulla → Sigiriya (long travel day, about 6–7 hours); lunch stop in Kandy region.
- Check-in at Aliya hotel; orientation on dry-zone ecology, tanks (wewa) and elephant ecology.
- Evening: short lecture and safari preparation; rest.

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Dambulla and Habarana wild safari · Sigiriya

- Morning: Dambulla Cave Temple and cultural heritage visit, with discussion of temple-and-tank landscapes.
- Afternoon: jeep safari at Hurulu Eco Park, Habarana — elephants, birds, dry-zone vegetation.
- Evening: safari debrief with Prof. Kotagama; species list update.

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Minneriya wild safari · Sigiriya

- Morning (free): optional early Sigiriya Rock climb, or classroom session on wildlife-tourism standards.
- Afternoon jeep safari at Minneriya (or Kaudulla, depending on elephant movement and conditions).
- Tank ecology, grassland and dry-zone forest; elephant behaviour, herd dynamics and human-elephant coexistence.
- Evening: group discussion on responsible safari management.

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Community culture and participation · Sigiriya

- Village visit near Sigiriya: farming, tank-based livelihoods, traditional cooking and crafts.
- Community participation: guided activities with the village (for example a traditional meal, farming or craft practice).
- Evening: cultural programme; seminar on community-based tourism and fair benefit-sharing.

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Kandy: heritage and closing ceremony · Kandy

- Depart Sigiriya → Matale/Kandy (about 3 hours); optional spice garden stop.
- Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya: plant taxonomy walk and tropical botany.
- Kandy cultural evening; farewell dinner; certificate ceremony; reflection and feedback.

14

Return to Katunayake · Kandy

- Check-out and transfer Kandy → Katunayake Airport (about 3.5–4 hours; allow a margin for traffic).
- Arrange departing flights late afternoon or later, or add a final night near the airport.
- Course completes; field journals and species lists submitted before departure.

Academic Framework and Assessment

Module	Content	Where
1. Biogeography and forests	Hotspot concept, climate zones, forest types of Sri Lanka	Negombo
2. Birds and wildlife ecology	Ornithology, survey basics, conservation status, endemics	Negombo, Sinharaja, Sigiriya
3. Rainforest ecosystems	Forest layers, food webs, amphibians, waterfalls, threats	Sinharaja
4. Montane and cloud forest	Altitude zonation, endemic highland species, plateau management	Horton Plains
5. Dry-zone ecology and safaris	Tanks, elephants, herd behaviour, human-wildlife coexistence	Habarana, Minneriya
6. Ceylon culture and community	Heritage, livelihoods, community-based tourism, benefit sharing	Negombo, Sigiriya, Kandy

Suggested assessment for the certificate

- Field journal kept daily (observations, sketches, species notes) — checked at the end of each base.
- Species checklist covering birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and plants recorded across all habitats.
- Sinharaja biodiversity transect report (group work, short written and oral presentation).
- Reflection paper on responsible wildlife tourism and community benefit (2–3 pages).
- Attendance and field participation across all sessions.

Logistics and Planning Notes

Transport and accommodation

- One group coach or van with an experienced driver for the whole route; local licensed jeeps for safaris.
- Long travel days: Day 4 (about 5–6 hours), Day 7 (about 6 hours), Day 9 (about 6–7 hours). Plan breaks and lunch stops.
- Hotel in Negombo to be selected. Martin's Lodge (Sinharaja) and Aliya hotel (Sigiriya) as requested. Nuwara Eliya and Kandy lodging to be selected.

Permits and bookings

- Sinharaja Forest Reserve, Horton Plains, Hurulu Eco Park and Minneriya/Kaudulla entries, plus compulsory guides and jeeps, should be booked in advance with the relevant authorities.
- Confirm current ticket rules and any plastic or waste restrictions inside parks before travel.
- Request written confirmation of any research or educational group permission if sampling methods are used.

Weather and seasonal notes

- Late October to November is an inter-monsoon period: afternoon thunderstorms are likely, especially in the wet zone (Sinharaja) and hills.
- Horton Plains is best visited at dawn; the World's End viewpoint can cloud over by mid-morning.
- Elephant gatherings at Minneriya vary through the year; Kaudulla is a standby option. Keep the safari plan flexible.

Health, safety and conduct

- Travel insurance and a basic first-aid kit for the group; a named medical contact for each region.
- Leech socks, closed shoes, insect repellent, rain jackets, sun protection, refillable water bottles and warm layers for Nuwara Eliya.

- Follow guides at all times, keep distance from wildlife, no feeding, no loud noise, no single-use plastic in forests.

Packing checklist

Field	Personal
Binoculars, field notebook, pen, waterproof bag, torch/headlamp, camera, power bank	Light cotton clothing, rain jacket, warm layer, hat, sturdy shoes, sandals, swimwear, modest clothing for temples

Items to confirm

- Course start date, group size and budget per participant.
- Spelling and academic focus of Prof. Vasanthuli Nage's sessions.
- Nuwara Eliya and Kandy accommodation; Negombo hotel.
- Whether Day 14 flights allow the Kandy → Katunayake transfer, or if an extra night near the airport is preferred.
- Community partner for Day 12 and the cultural programme in Kandy.