

# Sri Lanka

JEWEL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

LIMOSA HOLIDAYS | TOUR INFO PACK



*Dull-blue Flycatcher is one of more than 30 enticing endemic bird species to be seen in Sri Lanka © Brian Small, Limosa*

## **2019**      **Saturday 2nd - Friday 15th November (14 days)** **Small group tour with Robin Chittenden & local guide**

*With a new itinerary from 2018, our long-running tour to tropical Sri Lanka features an extra night at bird-rich Sinharaja Forest, plus three further accommodation upgrades and a marked reduction in time spent travelling around. We have good chances to see all of the island's 30+ endemic birds - from Sri Lanka Blue Magpie to Serendib Scops Owl - along with Malabar Trogon, Indian Pitta and Sri Lanka Frogmouth among a host of exquisite Southern India specialities and winter visitors to Sri Lanka, too. Mammal highlights regularly include Asian Elephant plus a good chance of Leopard - and this can be a great trip to see something of Sri Lanka's butterflies, with their wonderful English names!*

- Superb birding in tropical Asia, seeing over 200 species
- Sri Lanka Blue Magpie and Red-faced Malkoha among 30+ Sri Lankan endemics
- Southern India specialities include Sri Lanka Frogmouth and Malabar Trogon
- Seeking Indian Pitta, Pied Thrush and Kashmir Flycatcher in their winter quarters
- Asian Elephant, Leopard, Purple-faced Langur, Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel
- Exotic butterflies... Lesser Albatross, Chocolate Soldier, Lemon Pansy, Small Salmon Arab
- Small group tour - maximum 10 participants
- Expertly led by Limosa's Robin Chittenden and an experienced Sri Lankan bird guide

### **What's Included?**

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Expert English-speaking Sri Lankan ornithologist / naturalist guide
- Return flights - London Heathrow to Colombo, nonstop with SriLankan Airlines
- 12 nights accommodation in Sri Lanka, staying at comfortable hotels and lodges
- All main meals - with drinking water provided during the day
- Local travel by comfortable small bus, switching to 4WD vehicles where necessary
- All excursions, entry fees, additional local guides, tour based tips and taxes

LIMOSA HOLIDAYS, West End Farmhouse, Chapelfield, Stalham, Norfolk NR12 9EJ (UK)

TEL: +44 (0) 1692 580623 | 580624 • EMAIL: [info@limosaholidays.co.uk](mailto:info@limosaholidays.co.uk) • WEB: [limosaholidays.co.uk](http://limosaholidays.co.uk)

## Outline Itinerary

<b>Day 1:</b>	Fly London Heathrow-Colombo
<b>Days 2-3:</b>	Arrival in Colombo. Kithulgala Forest (2 nts)
<b>Days 4-6:</b>	Sinharaja Forest Reserve (3 nts)
<b>Day 7:</b>	Embilipitiya & Kalametiya Bird Sanctuary. Night Embilipitiya
<b>Day 8:</b>	Udawalawe National Park and Tissa 'tanks'. Tissa (3 nts)
<b>Days 9-10:</b>	Yala West and Bundala National Parks
<b>Days 11-12:</b>	Hill Country: Horton Plains and Victoria Park. Nuwara Eliya (2 nts)
<b>Day 13:</b>	Kithulgala and coast. Night Negombo
<b>Day 14:</b>	Fly Colombo-London Heathrow

## Tour Overview

It would be difficult to think of a more perfect destination for birdwatchers to escape the winter blues than the beautiful tropical island of Sri Lanka. For despite lying so close to the southern tip of India, this Indian Ocean paradise has been isolated from the rest of Asia for so long it has evolved more than 30 species of endemic birds.

We should see most - if not all of them - on this classic birdwatching tour to Sri Lanka: from the blue-backed Legge's Flowerpecker and comical Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot through to Sri Lanka Junglefowl and the gorgeous Sri Lanka Blue Magpie. And with the help of our team of expert local naturalists we will again hope to find the rare and recently described Serendib Scops Owl, tucked up at its daytime roost.

Sri Lanka's appeal runs much deeper than this however, for the one-time island of Ceylon also has many specialities shared only with Southern India. Among them such delights as the peculiar Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Malabar Trogon, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Loten's and Purple-rumped Sunbirds, and colourful Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters hawking over the riverbeds.

A visit to Sri Lanka is even more welcome during Europe's late autumn and winter months - not just so we can enjoy some unseasonable sunshine and warmth, but because this bewitching tropical island is then a winter retreat for large numbers of birds from further north in Asia. Here we may thrill to the likes of Pin-tailed Snipe, Blyth's Reed and Green Warblers, Kashmir Flycatcher, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Indian Pitta and the incredible Pied Thrush.

With our return to Yala National Park, we should also encounter some fine mammals: Asian Elephant, Leopard, Sri Lankan Giant Squirrel and even Sloth Bear are possible.

Horton Plain hosts the endemic indigo Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush and the range-restricted Hill Swallow. And this can be a wonderful trip for anyone wishing to see something of Sri Lanka's abundant and exotic butterflies, with their many appealing English names. There are 24 endemic species of butterfly on the island and we should encounter several of these - perhaps including impressive Sri Lanka Birdwing, Ceylon Rose and Ceylon Tree Nymph.

Sri Lanka is not only a very beautiful country, but its generally excellent tourist infrastructure allows travelling birdwatchers to explore prime habitats whilst, in the main, staying at good hotels. New for 2019, our itinerary includes an extra (third) night at remote Birds Paradise Lodge (Sinharaja), plus upgraded hotels in Tissa, Nuwara Eliya and at Wattala on the coast. And we'll enjoy a lunch at Surrey Bungalow, a working tea factory in the hills - where we have sometimes been lucky to find a roosting Brown Wood Owl.

Limosa has been running birding tours to Sri Lanka for 20 years now, with a trip that's not only designed to enhance your chances of seeing the island's endemic birds but a splendid cross-section of birds and other wildlife characteristic of this region of the Indian subcontinent, too.

Guide Robin Chittenden knows the island well, having led this trip for us in 2015, 2017 and

2018. And with upwards of 200 species to be expected on our tour, what could be better than spending a winter's fortnight in tropical Sri Lanka, getting to know the birdlife of one of the world's most enchanting islands?

## Daily Itinerary

### Day 1

#### FLY COLOMBO

Our birdwatching tour to Sri Lanka begins with a nonstop SriLankan Airlines flight overnight from London Heathrow to Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital.

### Days 2 - 3

#### COLOMBO TO KITHULGALA FOREST

We arrive in Colombo at lunchtime on Day 2, where our local guide and driver will be waiting to welcome us. The transfer east to our first hotel at Kithulgala will take around four hours, but along the way we are likely to spot a variety of the commoner birds of Sri Lanka's 'Wet Zone'. Species to watch out for include Shikra, Spotted Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Asian Koel, Brown-headed Barbet, Oriental Magpie Robin, Red-vented Bulbul, Common Iora and Black-hooded Oriole.

Kithulgala is located beside the Kelani River and is famed as the spot where *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was filmed. After settling in, we'll spend the remainder of the afternoon birding locally - either from the hotel viewpoint (where it's often possible to see 40-50 species in just a couple of hours) or going in search of our first Sri Lankan endemic, the handsome Chestnut-backed Owllet in nearby woodlands.

Next morning, having been ferried across the river, we have our first chance to try for one of Sri Lanka's most eagerly sought-after endemic birds: Serendib Scops Owl. First described as a species new to science as recently as 2004, this delightful little bird is still only known from around half-a-dozen sites and strictly nocturnal in its habits - so the chance to try and see one during daylight hours is a rare privilege indeed! Although we can't of course guarantee that the birds will be present every time, our local guides

have an excellent record in tracking this diminutive forest owl for us. (If we are unlucky with the owl here, then we have another chance to try again at our next stop, Sinharaja Forest - fingers crossed!)

Around the hotel grounds and along some of Kithulgala's quieter trails are several exciting endemics like Legge's Flowerpecker, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Orange-billed Babbler and Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill. As well as these unique residents, the area is rich in other bird life: Indian Swiftlets swirl overhead as we look for Crested Goshawk, Crested Treeswift and the shy but noisy Rufous Woodpecker. The sight of the recently split endemic Crimson-backed Flameback will surely take our breath away if one lands on a nearby trunk, while flowers in the gardens can hold many species of butterfly - Bluebottles, Nawabs and the lovely Crimson Rose are all names to conjure with!

Strident calls and whistles often herald the arrival of Sri Lanka Crested Drongos, which accompany mixed foraging parties. And as the afternoon cools and the exotic chorus of cicadas and tree-frogs begins, we'll watch for one of the island's rarest and shyest endemics: Green-billed Coucal. If we missed it before, we can try again for the local endemic Chestnut-backed Owllets.  
*Two nights Kithulgala Lodge*

### Day 4

#### RATNAPURA & SINHARAJA

Our hotel grounds and nearby gardens and farms are home to a wealth of exciting birds and we will have time to explore these before we bid farewell to Kithulgala. The still of dawn may be broken by the songs of Oriental Magpie-robin and Yellow-browed Bulbul, while fruiting and flowering trees can hold Legge's and Pale-billed Flowerpeckers, Purple-rumped and Loten's Sunbirds, Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot, Sri Lanka Green Pigeon, Brown-headed Barbet and many more. Winter visitors to watch for include numerous Green Warblers and with luck we could find our first Indian Pitta, perhaps calling loudly beneath a tree close to the hotel.

After breakfast, we leave Kithulgala and travel south towards our destination this evening - Sinharaja Forest Reserve.

We'll stop along the way at Ratnapura, taking lunch followed by a short walk in the grounds where we may be rewarded with White-browed Fantail, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater and rufous-chested Sri Lanka Swallows. Yellow-fronted Barbet, Indian Robin, Indian Paradise Flycatcher and White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias are also possible.

Refreshed, we complete our journey to Sinharaja, arriving there towards dusk for an extended three-nights stay at the remote Birds Paradise Hotel, which lies within an easy drive of the magnificent Sinharaja Forest Reserve - Sri Lanka's most important site for endemic birds. Rooms at the lodge are simply furnished but comfortable, and all have en suite bathroom.  
*Night Birds Paradise Hotel*

### Days 5 - 6 SINHARAJA FOREST

Sinharaja is home to more than half of Sri Lanka's endemic species of mammals and butterflies - and, remarkably, all but one of Sri Lanka's wonderful endemic birds! With its wildlife most active between daybreak and mid morning, an early start is essential to reach the higher level as the forest bursts into life - and another good reason why our lodge is such a great place to stay.

As the first rays of sunlight start to filter through the verdant canopy, they may reveal an obliging Sri Lanka Junglefowl foraging on the tangled forest floor. As we enter the forest, we'll be looking carefully for Green Imperial Pigeon or mixed feeding flocks that might hold Malabar Trogon, Yellow-fronted Barbet, Black-capped Bulbul, Sri Lankan Scimitar-babbler, Brown-capped Babbler, Ashy-headed Laughingthrush, White-faced Starling, Sri Lanka Hill Myna and the fabulous Sri Lanka Blue Magpie.

From time to time, we may be sidetracked by a myriad of colourful butterflies, including the stunning endemic Ceylon Tree Nymph, Sri Lanka Birdwing and Blue Mormon. Movements in the canopy high above might reveal the presence of a stunning Red-faced Malkoha - although not all movement may be from birds, but betray the presence of Grizzled Giant

Squirrels or the island's two endemic monkeys, Purple-faced Langur and Toque Macaque. After an exciting morning in the forest, we'll return to our lodge for a short siesta and/or some leisurely birding near the hotel grounds.

Lured by the irresistible appeal of Sinharaja's fabulous forest birding, our second full day here offers further opportunities to try for any 'Wet Zone' specialities we may have missed before. The notoriously elusive Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush and Sri Lanka Spurfowl will both be high on our 'most-wanted' lists, but we shall need to be in place just after dawn to have any real prospect of seeing either species. *Two further nights Birds Paradise Hotel*

### Day 7 EMBILIPITIYA & KALAMETIYA

It will be with some reluctance that we bid farewell this morning to Birds Paradise Hotel. Passing through neatly clothed hills of tea plantations, we journey out of Sri Lanka's 'Wet Zone' and drop down towards the island's 'Dry Zone', en route to the coastal lowlands. We'll make occasional roadside stops along the way - perhaps to enjoy the sight of an impressive Black Eagle soaring overhead or to watch as a cluster of Ashy Woodswallows gathers on a roadside wire.

We should arrive at our next destination, Embilipitiya, in time for lunch. Our hotel here overlooks a large man-made lake, one that's liberally sprinkled with Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns, and Little and Indian Cormorants; Spot-billed Pelicans float sedately by and Brahminy Kites soar on thermals.

After lunch and a break in our rooms, we'll take a 40-minute drive south to the coast to spend the cooler hours of the late afternoon exploring the Kalametiya Bird Sanctuary. Greater Crested, Lesser Crested and Caspian Terns patrol the shoreline, while on Kalametiya's lagoons we may find Yellow-wattled and Red-wattled Lapwings along with Indian Stone-curlew and Great Thick-knee, Blyth's and Paddyfield Pipits, Pied Kingfisher and Rose-ringed Parakeet. Reedbeds are the haunt of the diminutive Yellow Bittern and wintering waders could include Wood Sandpiper, Little Stint, Oriental

Pratincole, Pin-tailed Snipe, Pacific Golden Plover and Lesser Sand Plover. *Night Embilipitiya*

### Day 8

#### UDAWALAWE NATIONAL PARK & 'TISSA TANKS'

Our overnight stay at Embilipitiya will enable us to spend a full morning today exploring the dry savanna country of nearby Udawalawe National Park. Using 4WD vehicles, we will drive the tracks through the scrub jungle and grasslands, which are surprisingly rich in species variety.

One of the park's most conspicuous residents is the breathtaking Indian Peafowl, looking even more spectacular in its native haunts! But the likes of Crested (or Changeable) Hawk-eagle, Black-winged Kite and Malabar Pied Hornbill will also be demanding attention. Pallid and Montagu's Harriers are likely to be patrolling over the grasslands, where we'll receive a 'masterclass' in prinia identification with Grey-breasted, Ashy, Plain and Jungle all popping up to sing for us - in addition to that 'prinia impersonator', the curious Yellow-eyed Babbler.

Driving the tracks of the park, we may also discover that the strange 'moped-engine' sounds coming from the grasslands in fact originate from the pint-sized female Barred Buttonquail! Blyth's Pipits and Blyth's Reed Warblers winter here, a long way from their northern breeding grounds, but if its colour you crave then Coppersmith Barbet, Indian Roller, Plum-headed and Alexandrine Parakeets, Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, and Orange-breasted Green Pigeons should oblige.

Mammals are not to be ignored at Udawalawe and we shall have time to admire enormous Indian Elephants, while other possibilities include Jungle Cat, Golden Jackal, Chital, Wild Boar and Ruddy Mongoose. We then travel a short way (35 miles) east to reach our next hotel, at Tissamaharama - happily more often referred to simply as 'Tissa' - at the start of a three-night stay.

Tissa is renowned for the concentration of rich wildlife sites within close proximity, ranging from its extensive 'tanks' (manmade reservoirs)

to orchards and coconut palm plantations, each home to a unique group of species. After lunch and a brief siesta, we will make a five-minute drive for our first visit to one of these tanks, where we'll spend some time searching for Cotton Pygmy Goose and Lesser Whistling Duck, Grey-headed Fish and White-bellied Sea Eagles and the scarce White-naped Woodpecker. With luck, we will find the impressive Brown Fish Owl, too. *Night Tissa*

### Days 9 - 10

#### BUNDALA & RUHUNU - 'YALA' WEST - NATIONAL PARK

With Sri Lanka's troubled past behind it, we are once again able to visit wonderful Bundala National Park - Sri Lanka's first RAMSAR (wetland) site. We'll also visit Ruhunu National Park, which lies about an hour's drive from Tissa. Better known simply as 'Yala', Ruhunu forms a key part of Sri Lanka's oldest and most famous National Park.

Beginning at Bundala, we are in for a real treat this morning! Taking a picnic breakfast with us, we'll be able to make the most of our morning here, before the heat gets up. Although quite close to Tissa, it may in fact take quite some time to reach our destination for the access road bisects a wonderful wetland that's simply alive with birds - expect a plethora of herons, egrets, ibises, spoonbills and a multitude of waders!

Soon we'll be sifting through the large numbers of spindly-legged Marsh Sandpipers and other shorebirds at Bundala. Picking out Broad-billed Sandpipers amongst the throngs of Little Stints will keep us on our toes as we also strive to identify Greater Sand Plovers amidst the flocks of Kentish and Lesser Sand Plovers. If we're lucky, we should encounter several diminutive Little Pratincoles, roosting on the nearby bunds.

Up to eight species of tern roost on Bundala's extensive salt pans, ranging from the massive Caspian to the diminutive Little Tern. Here we can see both Greater Crested and Lesser Crested Terns standing side by side, and pick out winter-plumaged White-winged Black Terns amongst the more numerous Whiskered. The strange Great Thick-knee presents rather less of an identification challenge, however! Oriental

Skylarks, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-larks and the recently split Jerdon's Bush Lark also occur in the scrub, while the big Clamorous Reed Warbler proclaims itself loudly from the stands of tall Papyrus.

We'll save our visit to Yala West National Park for our final afternoon at Tissa – in part because it's not possible to bird on foot within the park, but also because this is an excellent time to seek Leopard, which are often to be found dozing and draped over a shady tree bough beneath the hot afternoon sun.

As we enter the park we can expect to see big Mugger Crocodiles, which frequent the riverbanks here. And as we explore the southern sector for Leopard, we should encounter plenty of Grey Langur, Sambar and Chital (or Spotted Deer), too.

Yala's birdlife is abundant with a fine mix of species to enjoy, from Indian Peafowl, Lesser Adjutant and Black-necked Stork through to Spot-billed Pelican and White-bellied Sea Eagle. Dry country birds include Pied and Grey-bellied Cuckoos, Small Minivet, the exceptionally 'spotty' Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and the minute Brown-capped Woodpecker, the recently-split Sri Lanka Woodshrike and both Blue-faced and Sirkeer Malkohas - the latter looking remarkably mongoose-like as it runs between the bushes!

Marshall's Iora, an Indian species only recently discovered in Sri Lanka, has latterly been found to be breeding in the park. We've been lucky to see this bird on several recent tours and will again hope to encounter this striking gem - although separating it from the more abundant Common Iora can be something of a challenge. As wildlife activity starts to wane towards dusk, we can try for Indian Nightjar. *Two further nights Tissa*

### Days 11 - 12

#### THE HILL COUNTRY: HORTON PLAINS & VICTORIA PARK

Leaving the heat of the coastal lowlands behind, we shall no doubt welcome the more 'English' climate of our next destination, Nuwara Eliya.

Birding as we go, we'll break our journey today with a stop for lunch at Surrey Bungalow, inside the Surrey Tea Estate. Here we also have the chance to see the workings of a tea factory in the hills - and to search for the impressive Brown Wood Owl, which though not always present, can sometimes be found roosting nearby.

After an enjoyable lunch, we continue on to Nuwara Eliya. Set at an elevation of nearly 2000m (6500ft), this famous old hill-station is the hub of Sri Lanka's tea estates. Extensive areas of superb montane forest still remain, holding hill-forest specialities such as Sri Lanka Woodpigeon, Hill Swallow, Sri Lanka White-eye, the extremely secretive Sri Lanka Bush Warbler, Black-throated Munia, Dull-blue Flycatcher, Indian Blue Robin and the shy Indian Blackbird. But we shall need to be out early next morning to have a chance of seeing what is regarded as the island's trickiest endemic, the rare Sri Lanka Whistling Thrush.

Nearby Horton Plains is a moorland plateau inhabited by Pied Bushchats and Paddyfield Pipits, where we can scan the forest slopes for Mountain Hawk Eagle or even a Black Eagle - the latter specialises in snatching Giant Squirrels from the woodland canopy!

We'll also pay a visit to Victoria Park, the haunt of many montane forest specialities and within easy walking distance of our base for these two nights, the very comfortable Araliya Green City Hotel. Birds to watch for within the park include the stunning Kashmir Flycatcher, Indian Pitta and Pied Thrush, all of which overwinter here, as well as Sri Lanka White-eye and the highland form of Purple-faced Langur - known locally as the 'Bear Monkey'. *Two nights Nuwara Eliya*

### Day 13

#### TO THE COAST, VIA KITHULGALA

We bid farewell to Nuwara Eliya this morning and head back west through the hill country towards the coast.

We will break our journey with a return visit to Kithulgala, where we began our birding on this tour. We shall pause to enjoy lunch here and have another opportunity to watch for endemic birds such as Legge's Flowerpecker, Yellow-

fronted Barbet and Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill in and around the productive environs of the hotel.

After lunch at Kithulgala, we complete our journey west to Wattala, enjoying a farewell dinner and overnight stay at a comfortable beachside hotel convenient for our return to Colombo Airport tomorrow. *Night Wattala*

#### Day 14

#### FLY COLOMBO TO LONDON

Following a leisurely breakfast at our hotel, we transfer to nearby Colombo Airport for farewells and check-in for our nonstop SriLankan Airlines flight home.

Evening arrival (same day) back at London Heathrow, where our birdwatching tour to Sri Lanka concludes.

## Trip Information

**Group Size** Max 10 participants & 2 leaders

**What to Expect** This is primarily a birding tour but we usually encounter a good variety of mammals, too - with good chances of seeing Asian Elephant, Leopard and occasionally even Sloth Bear. Our local guides are also keen lepidopterists and this can be a great trip to see something of Sri Lanka's exotic butterflies - with their wonderful English names! In common with all birdwatching and wildlife tours to the tropics, you should be prepared for early starts to get the best from key areas before the day heats up and bird activity starts to wane.

**Birds** 200-250 species

**Mammals** 15-25 species

**Butterflies** 20-30 species

**Accommodation** We use a mix of comfortable tourist hotels and lodges, our improved itinerary for 2019 now including an extra (3rd) night at Sinharaja Forest (Birds Paradise Hotel), plus upgraded accommodations at Tissa (Kithala Resort), Nuwara Eliya (Araliya Green City Hotel) and Wattala (Goldi Sand Hotel). Accommodation is more simple and remote - but right on the spot - for our three nights at Birds

Paradise Hotel, where rooms are comfortable but simply furnished. All rooms are en suite.

**Meals** All main meals are included in the tour price (and with drinking water also provided), commencing with dinner in Sri Lanka on Day 2 and concluding with breakfast at our hotel on Day 14. Food is good to excellent, featuring delicious Sri Lankan cuisine. Some breakfasts and some lunches will be picnics; dinners are usually taken at the hotels.

**Walking** Mostly easy, although the tropical heat can be tiring and the going can be moderate at times along forest trails in the hills. There will be options to try for nightjars and owls some evenings - bring a torch if you plan to participate in these! Sturdy waterproof walking shoes or boots, with stout soles and good grip required.

**Weather** Tropical climate. Although hot and humid (22-33C) in the lowlands, for much of our time here we will be in the shade of the forest. Temperatures are generally cooler and more pleasant early and late in the day. Averages cooler in the hills and mountains, typically 10-20C during the daytime, falling to below 10C at night – frost is a possibility at Horton Plains, before the sun warms the day! Rainfall occurs throughout the year and is likely at any season.

**Flights** Return flights London Heathrow to Colombo, nonstop with SriLankan Airlines.

**Ground Transport** By minicoach or minibus (appropriate to group size), switching to 4WD vehicle in some of the National Parks. The jeep ride from Birds Paradise Hotel, uphill to reach the park entrance at Sinharaja Forest is along a very bumpy track – you might like to bring a cushion!

**Insects** The usual tropical nuisances are present in Sri Lanka of course, so we recommend you bring some insect repellent with you:

*Mosquitoes:* Sri Lanka lies within the malarial region of Southern Asia. However, away from the north of the island - which we do **not** visit on our tour - NaTHNaC assess the current risk of malaria as very low in Sri Lanka. *See also Health & Vaccinations section, p11 below.*

*Leeches*: expect to encounter leeches in the forests of Sri Lanka's 'Wet Zone', where although harmless their presence can be distracting! We recommend that you bring with you a pair of 'leech socks', which will prevent leeches reaching the skin on your feet and lower legs. These are available from a number of outlets and can usually readily be found by searching online.

**Photos** Good to excellent photographic opportunities - birds, mammals, butterflies and scenery - especially in more open country; more difficult in forested areas due to low light levels.

## Tour Cost

**2019** (Nov): £3295 (inc flights from London, nonstop with Sri Lanka Airlines)

Land only cost: £2795

Deposit: £500

Single Supp: £495

### Cost includes

- Limosa Tour Leader
- English-speaking Sri Lankan bird guide
- Return flights London Heathrow-Colombo
- 12 nights accommodation in Sri Lanka
- All main meals (with drinking water provided)
- All local transport (inc 4WD in the parks)
- All excursions, entry fees, permits, tour based tips (inc. local drivers and guides) and taxes
- Map & Limosa checklist of birds

### Cost excludes

Insurance, ETA (visa) costs, drinks, airport meals/snacks & other items of a personal nature.

## About Your Guides

**Robin Chittenden** Robin is a principal Limosa guide who lives in Norfolk. He is an excellent ornithologist and all-round naturalist with a wide-ranging repertoire of tours - and has built an impressive following since leading his first tour for us fifteen years ago. Well known as a top wildlife photographer, Robin is photographic consultant for *British Birds* magazine and one of the wildlife photographers for Natural England.

When he's not busy guiding tours for us, he runs Birdline East Anglia, the regional information service for birdwatchers. His travels for Limosa have taken him everywhere from Iceland to Costa Rica and Gambia to the Indian subcontinent. Our November 2019 tour will be Robin's fourth visit to Sri Lanka and his sixth to the Indian subcontinent.

**Local guides** An experienced English-speaking **Sri Lankan bird guide/s** will accompany our tour as local leader throughout.

## What You Say

*"Once again our Limosa trip did not disappoint on any level "*

**R&JB, Sri Lanka tour**

*"Both leaders excellent. A very enjoyable visit to a beautiful country. Much effort made to ensure we saw the birds."*

**NS, Sri Lanka tour**

*"Very happy with my first long-haul birding tour. Many thanks."*

**JM, Sri Lanka tour**

## Financial Security

Limosa Holidays is a fully bonded Tour Operator and a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). We hold an ATOL (Air Tour Operators Licence) granted by the CAA, providing for your protection in the event of Limosa Holidays' insolvency. Our ATOL licence number is ATOL 2950.

For tours not including the cost of a flight from the UK or for holidays booked by you as 'Land Only', all payments made to us are fully bonded through the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT). Our ABTOT membership number is 5230. For details please see our brochure or website: <http://www.limosaholidays.co.uk/financial-protection>

## Limosa Loyalty Discount

We are proud of the number of loyal customers who travel regularly with us. As our way of saying 'thank you', we offer a **Frequent Travel Discount**. Under the scheme, everyone who takes four trips with us is entitled to claim a 5% discount on their 5th trip. <sup>\*1</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup> **Conditions:** *This offer applies to the basic tour cost only and excludes certain commission-based trips, extra costs such as additional flights or accommodation, private extensions and cancellations.* • *Discounts cannot be given in lieu of tour deposits or off the cost of single room supplements.* • **Please note discount must be requested at time of booking!**

## How To Book

Check availability on our website or with our office. We are happy to hold Provisional Reservations for up to 7 days. After this, we do require a Booking Form and deposit to confirm your place on tour. Any unconfirmed space will be released.

### Book Online, by Phone or by Post

You can book and pay the deposit simply and securely **Online** via our website, using the '**Book This Tour**' button on the relevant tour page or the **Booking** tab at the top of the page.

Telephone bookings must be confirmed in writing by completion of a Booking Form (there's one tucked inside every brochure or as a PDF download from our website), which can be mailed to us in the time honoured way.

Be sure to read our **Booking Conditions** and **General Information** (found at the back of our brochure, on our website or available from our office on request) prior to booking.

## When to Book

Early booking is advised since flights and accommodation are much more easily secured well in advance. To encourage early booking, we are pleased to offer an **Early Bird Discount** - see our current brochure or website for details.

All our tours are limited to small group sizes. So they can fill up quickly - sometimes even before our new brochure comes out! Single rooms in particular can often be in short supply and among the first to go, so do try to plan well ahead if you definitely require one of these.

**Last-minute Bookings:** We inevitably receive a few unexpected cancellations over the course of a season so it is always worth enquiring about vacancies on any tour - even for those departing in just a few weeks!

## Payments

**Deposit:** The amount of **booking deposit** per person is shown alongside every tour. We accept deposit payments by **electronic bank transfer** (please ask for our bank details), **UK debit card** and **cheque** (made payable to *Limosa Holidays* and drawn on a UK bank in GBPounds Sterling).

For payment of **booking deposits** only we also accept Visa and MasterCard credit cards.

**Balance:** Full payment of the **tour balance** is due not later than 12 weeks prior to departure (20 weeks in the case of certain tours such as cruises or those involving rail travel). We will send you an invoice before the balance is due.

We accept balance payments and any additional payments (*e.g.* interim flight deposits, flight upgrades, extra hotels etc) by **electronic bank transfer (BACS), UK debit card** or **cheque**.

**Payment by overseas customers** must be in GB Pounds Sterling and may be made by electronic transfer direct to our bank (*please ask for our bank details*).

We do **not** accept cheques on US Banks in US Dollars, or cheques in Euros or Eurocheques.

### Credit cards - please note:

(i) *We do **NOT** accept credit cards or overseas debit cards for balance payments (including any additional or interim payments) from customers living within the UK or European Economic Area (the EEA is the EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).*

(ii) For customers living in North America, Australia and all other areas outside of the UK and the European Economic Area we are able to accept payment by Visa and MasterCard credit cards or overseas debit card but with a charge of 2.5% of the transaction amount to help offset card company charges.

**Late Booking Payments:** In order for us to guarantee your airline seats, hotels etc., full payment is required at time of booking for all late bookings (i.e. bookings made within 12 weeks of departure).

## Other Things You Need To Know

### Passports & Visas

Passports should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry to Sri Lanka.

- A VISA (ETA) IS REQUIRED for this tour.

All travellers to Sri Lanka need to go online PRIOR TO TRAVEL to obtain an ETA (Electronic Travel Authority). A fee of US \$35 per person is payable online at the time. It's a straightforward process - go to: [www.eta.gov.lk](http://www.eta.gov.lk) (if you need help or advice, call our office and we'll do our best to assist you).

*Holders of non-UK passports should contact the nearest Sri Lankan embassy or consulate to check whether or not they require a visa. If a visa is required, you will need to apply locally. If the embassy or consulate requires you to provide a letter confirming that you are booked on an all-inclusive tour, please contact our office and we will be happy to provide one.*

### Health & Vaccinations

Visit your health professional at least 4 to 6 weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures. Country specific information and advice is published by the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC), visit: [travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-](http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-)

[information/](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx) and by NHS (Scotland), visit: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx>

Useful information and advice about healthcare abroad is also available at NHS Choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/Pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx>

**Compulsory vaccinations:** None (but note yellow fever certificate is required if arriving from infected areas.)

**Recommended immunisations:** polio, typhoid, tetanus and hepatitis A. Consult your doctor for up-to-date advice regarding diphtheria, hepatitis B, Japanese B encephalitis and TB, which may also be recommended in some circumstances.

**Malaria:** Away from the north of the island (which we do **not** visit on our tour), NaTHNaC assess the current risk of malaria as **very low** in Sri Lanka. However, please note that areas of risk can change so again you must consult your doctor for the latest advice.

The above information, together with that contained within our Travel Information sheets (sent to everyone who books), outlines health requirements for this tour. **Please note that these details are given for guidance only - and are only for certain diseases - and you must consult your doctor in good time prior to travel as to what immunisations (if any) are needed for your chosen holiday.**

For full and latest health information we urge everyone to consult The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) website prior to booking any overseas holiday. NaTHNaC is funded by the UK Government's Health Protection Agency and provides health information for both health professionals and travellers, with information compiled by its own clinical and scientific team. You can search for individual country requirements.

### Your Safety & Travel Advice

An unavoidable aspect of travelling abroad nowadays is the risk it may pose to your safety and security. The best current advice on such risks is provided by the UK Foreign &

Commonwealth Office (FCO). In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination we **strongly recommended** that you refer to the relevant FCO Travel Advice - both prior to booking and regularly before you travel.

It is standard Limosa policy for our office to send a copy of the relevant FCO Travel Advice about the tour to all participants along with their Final Letter (ca. 2-3 weeks prior to the trip).

‘**Travel Aware**’ - staying safe and healthy abroad - is a travel safety campaign run by the FCO, and another useful resource. Go to: <https://www.gov.uk/travelaware>

## Travel Insurance

Good travel insurance is **essential** before setting off on any overseas trip. In common with all responsible tour operators, **it is a condition of booking** that all clients are fully and adequately insured before travelling overseas with us.

Be aware that some destinations may require you to produce proof of comprehensive travel insurance (*e.g.* valid insurance certificate) at immigration on arrival in the country, so you should carry your documentation with you.

Your travel insurance should cover against cancellation, curtailment, missed departure, delay, personal accident, death, loss of baggage and valuables (see note below), personal liability and legal expenses. Most importantly, your insurance must cover you fully in respect of medical care and repatriation should you become too ill to continue with the tour, including the cost of emergency evacuation by helicopter or air ambulance should this be necessary. Note that passenger liability insurance covering the transportation that we hire, particularly in Third World countries, may be inadequate; it is therefore important that your insurance cover includes sufficient provision for your dependents in the event of an accident.

**We recommend that you obtain travel insurance as soon as possible after booking** your holiday to ensure you are protected right from the word go in the event of unexpected

cancellation prior to departure due to accident or illness. You must inform your insurers of any pre-existing medical conditions (including those of persons not necessarily travelling but upon whom your holiday may depend) that may require treatment during a period of overseas travel or might cause you to cancel the trip.

**Once you have arranged your insurance, please be sure to send us the following essential details:** name and contact details of your insurance provider, your policy number, expiry date and your insurers 24hr Emergency Assistance number.

## Important note about Travel Insurance

- Travel Insurance does **not** normally provide sufficient cover for valuable optical equipment, which is often best protected under your own household insurance policy. If in doubt ask your insurers for advice prior to travel.
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- Most travel insurance policies limit the amount of cover, typically up to a maximum tour cost of £5000 per person. If the tour you are booking exceeds this amount, additional cover can usually be provided upon payment of additional premium. **We recommend all travellers** check their individual policy limit to ensure the full cost of their holiday is covered.

**Arranging Your Insurance:** due to UK Government legislation, under Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations, we are not allowed to offer or recommend travel related insurance to customers. Premiums can vary widely according to your age, needs, health, choice of destination and other factors, while many people nowadays have Annual Travel Insurance cover. For these reasons, we leave you free to shop around and pick your own policy, one best suited to your own individual needs.

## General Information

### ***www.limosaholidays.co.uk***

Our website gives easy access to detailed tour itineraries (Tour Info Packs), trip reports, trip photos and the latest Limosa News.

### **Special Diets & Other Requests**

We pass on all such requests to the airlines, hotels and other suppliers, and do our best to ensure (but of course cannot guarantee) that your needs will be met. Please be sure to tell us about these (in as much detail as possible) at the time of booking, to allow good time to make the necessary arrangements.

### **Smoking**

Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. For the enjoyment and comfort of all, we ask that smokers refrain from smoking in proximity to the group and respect our NO SMOKING policy in the vehicle, at meal times and when watching wildlife.

### **Any Questions?**

If you have any questions at any time, you'll find our office staff friendly, efficient, approachable - and just a phone call away, eager to assist you in every way.

Our office is open 09.00-17.00 hrs Mon-Fri, and can also be reached by email. In the event we are unable to take your call, please leave a message on our answerphone (24 hrs) and our office will contact you as soon as we can.

***Thank you for your interest in our tours. We do hope that you will be able to join us - and we look forward to hearing from you again!***

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