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A PEOPLE FOCUSED PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IN
SRI LANKA





ABOUT THE PHOTO TOUR

This photography tour in Sri Lanka is designed for both professional and beginner photographers who are passionate about capturing authentic human stories. The tour focuses on documenting local people, their traditions, and their everyday lifestyles, offering rich opportunities for both photography and videography. The experience includes a mix of candid moments and carefully arranged photoshoots, all conducted during the best natural lighting conditions such as sunrise, sunset, and soft morning or evening light. This ensures ideal conditions for creating visually striking images. Throughout the journey, photographers are introduced to a wide range of unique subjects, including the Vedda indigenous community, iconic stilt fishermen, tea pluckers in scenic plantations, monks walking among ancient ruins, traditional dancers, and rural village life. Each session is designed to give photographers full creative freedom to move, observe, and direct scenes, allowing for truly personal and compelling visual storytelling. Other essential arrangements are also handled seamlessly, including model release documentation, drone permits and transportation.



ABOUT THE PHOTO TOUR GUIDE

Saman Weeratunga is a travel photographer and videographer based in Kandy, the heart of Sri Lanka. He has a strong passion for photography and videography. His creative journeys have taken him across amazing countries such as Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Kenya, the Czech Republic, Singapore, and Malaysia. These experiences have given him valuable international knowledge and creative insight. He has excellent knowledge of the people of Sri Lanka and understands the right timing and locations for people photography. Saman will guide you while traveling around Sri Lanka to capture stunning photos and videos of local people and their daily lives. As his strong connections with local communities make access easy, people are welcoming and cooperative. They are happy to take part in photography sessions, allowing you to capture authentic moments with confidence. If you are a beginner photographer, he will help you learn basic camera settings and controls. He also teaches lighting techniques, composition, and creative approaches, ensuring a rewarding learning experience while traveling.



HASSLE FREE DRONE CLEARANCE

We handle all the hassle of obtaining official clearance for drone flights in Sri Lanka, making the entire process simple and stress free. Drone usage in Sri Lanka requires approvals from several authorities, and all communication is managed on behalf of clients. This includes the civil aviation authority, the central cultural fund, and the department of archaeology, each of which has its own set of rules and procedures that must be followed carefully. Obtaining drone permissions can be even more challenging when it comes to protected archaeological and heritage sites such as Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa. These locations are strictly regulated to preserve their cultural and historical value, so special approvals are required before any drone activity can take place. Understanding and managing these requirements can be time-consuming and complicated for visitors. That is why full responsibility is taken for the entire process, including preparing documents, submitting applications, and coordinating with relevant authorities. By handling everything from start to finish, the stress and confusion are removed, ensuring a smooth and well managed approval process.



TRAVEL AGENT COLLABORATION

The cost details provided in this itinerary cover only our service charges, giving full flexibility for partners or tour operators to add their own profit margin and offer the tour to their clients at a price that best suits their market. This structure is designed to make collaboration simple and transparent, while allowing complete control over final pricing. Payments can be collected directly from guests, with only the agreed service cost required to be transferred to us, ensuring a smooth and efficient financial process. Please note that the tour cost does not include hotel accommodation, which allows full freedom for partners to select and book hotels independently based on their clients' preferences. However, we are happy to provide suitable hotel recommendations based on budget, comfort level, and proximity to key photography locations to make planning easier. Similarly, meals and beverages are not included in the tour package, as dining preferences can vary widely among travelers. Guests are free to choose their own food options throughout the journey and make payments directly at restaurants, ensuring maximum flexibility and a personalized travel experience.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

STILT FISHERMEN IN HABARADUWA

This is an organized private photo session with a few stilt fishermen at sunrise or sunset, away from the tourist beach areas. Photographers can direct the fishermen as they wish and capture amazing photos under beautiful lighting conditions. Stilt fishermen are traditional Sri Lankan fishermen who balance on wooden poles planted in shallow coastal waters while fishing with simple rods. This unique and iconic practice, mainly seen along the southern coast, is a traditional method of fishing known as stilt fishing, where fishermen sit on crossbars fixed to wooden poles above the sea.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

BUDDHIST MONKS WITH RUINS IN POLONNARUWA

This is an organized private photo session with a few Buddhist monks brought from a nearby temple. The session is arranged with special permission from the department of archaeology to access the ruins at sunrise, when no tourists are allowed. Photographers can respectfully direct the monks as desired and capture stunning images under beautiful lighting conditions. The ancient city of Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka is a historic site that was once the capital of the country during the 11th to 13th centuries. It is known for its well preserved ruins, including palaces, temples, and statues.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

INDIGENOUS GROUP OF PEOPLE IN DAMBANA

This is an organized private photo session with a few indigenous people early in the morning at a remote area away from the main tourist village. Photographers can capture indigenous ritual dance performances, dancing around the fire, as well as close up portraits. The Vedda are the indigenous people of Sri Lanka, known for their deep connection to nature and their way of life. Traditionally living in forested areas, they follow customs, rituals, and hunting practices that have been passed down through generations. Today, their culture remains an important part of Sri Lanka's heritage.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

TEA PLUCKERS ON TEA FIELDS IN HAPUTALE

This is an organized private photo session with a few tea pluckers in the tea fields at sunrise, a time when they usually do not work. Photographers can direct the tea pluckers as they wish and capture amazing photos under beautiful lighting conditions. Sri Lankan tea pluckers are an essential part of the country's world famous tea industry, hand picking fresh tea leaves in the lush green hill country. Working across steep and scenic plantations, they skillfully select only the finest leaves, a practice that requires speed and precision. They are dressed in colorful clothing and carry on their backs.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

RURAL TEA ESTATE VILLAGERS IN HAPUTALE

This is a candid photo session walking around a rural village where photographers can capture amazing close up portraits of children and elderly people during their day to day activities in the village. Tea estate workers in Sri Lanka trace their origins to Indian Tamil laborers who were brought during the British colonial period in the 19th century. When the British established large coffee and later tea plantations in the central highlands, there was a shortage of local labor, so workers were recruited from South India, mainly Tamil Nadu for plantation work in Sri Lanka and beyond.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

PETTAH MARKET PORTERS IN COLOMBO

This is a candid photo session walking along a street in Sri Lanka's biggest and busiest marketplace, where constant activity unfolds as porters carry wholesale goods such as vegetables and spices. Photographers can capture striking close up portraits and the daily life of porters and traders in the street. Pettah market is a vibrant hub of narrow streets, each dedicated to different goods. Among them, 4th cross street Pettah stands out for its intense activity and wholesale trade, where porters carry heavy loads of vegetables, fruits, and other goods using handcarts and on their shoulders.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

DAMBULLA CAVE TEMPLE IN DAMBULLA

The Dambulla Cave Temple is one of Sri Lanka's remarkable historical and cultural sites, known for its ancient rock caves filled with Buddhist murals and statues. The complex features five main caves, each adorned with preserved murals covering the ceilings and walls, along with over a hundred Buddha statues in various poses. The site houses more than 150 statues, including reclining Buddha figures and finely detailed seated and standing statues, all arranged in a harmonious and atmospheric setting. Its elevated location offers stunning panoramic views of the countryside.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

PORUTHOTA FISHING VILLAGE IN NEGOMBO

This is a candid photo session walking along the coastline where a small fishing village is located, where fishermen practice small scale fishing. Photographers can capture striking close up portraits and daily morning activities of fishermen coming to shore in small boats, gathering fish from nets, and bringing the catch to sell at nearby fishing markets. Before sunrise, fishermen head out into the sea in small wooden boats, often powered by outboard engines or paddles, carrying nets, lines, and equipment. These fishing activities take place close to shore, targeting species such as sardine.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

TRADITIONAL DANCES IN POLONNARUWA

This is an organized private photo session with a few traditional dancers in the evening at sunset in an isolated area away from the main tourist areas of Polonnaruwa. Photographers can capture the traditional dancers performing dance as well as close up portraits. There are three main traditional dance styles in Sri Lanka: Kandyan, low country, and Sabaragamuwa. Kandyan dance from Kandy is the most famous, known for energetic movements and elaborate costumes. Low Country dance from the south is linked to healing rituals. Sabaragamuwa dance is graceful, combining both styles.



PHOTOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

BUDDHIST MONK EDUCATIONAL TEMPLE IN BANDARAWELA

This is an organized private photo session with a few young Buddhist monks at a Pirivena temple, where child monks stay to receive their education. Photographers can respectfully direct the monks as desired and capture stunning images of them in their colorful orange robes. Pirivena education in Sri Lanka is a Buddhist monastic education system where young Buddhist monks live and study at temple schools known as Pirivenas. These temples provide training in Buddhism, meditation, Pali and Sanskrit languages, and cultural traditions, philosophy while teaching academic subjects.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

SIGIRIYA ROCK FORTRESS IN SIGIRIYA

Sigiriya is an ancient rock fortress and palace complex in Sri Lanka dating back to the 5th century AD, built by King Kashyapa as his royal residence and stronghold after he seized the throne. It functioned as a royal palace and fortress, and later became a Buddhist monastery after the king's death. To reach the summit, visitors climb approximately 1,200 steps, passing through gardens and terraces. At the site, visitors can see fresco paintings, mirror wall graffiti, lion's paw entrance, summit palace ruins, ancient stairways, water gardens and panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

GIRAGAMA TEA FACTORY IN PILIMATHALAWA

Visiting a tea factory, visitors can learn the full tea manufacturing process, starting from freshly plucked green leaves brought from nearby plantations to the final graded product ready for export. The process typically includes withering, rolling, oxidation, drying, and sorting, with each stage carefully controlled to develop the tea's flavor and aroma. This guided tour is led by knowledgeable staff and is followed by a tea tasting session, where guests can sample freshly brewed Ceylon tea, and it is also possible to buy fresh, factory-made Ceylon tea directly from the factory outlet shop.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

SCENIC TRAIN JOURNEY FROM DEMODARA TO HAPUTALE

The train journey is a relatively short but scenic ride through Sri Lanka's hill country. Along the way, passengers can enjoy views of tea plantations, misty mountains, small villages, waterfalls, and forest-covered hills. The train passes through tunnels and over valleys, offering changing landscapes at every turn. A better way to enjoy the scenery is to sit by the window and relax, as it offers a view throughout the journey. Many foreign passengers prefer standing at the doors for photography and open air views, but it can be dangerous due to sudden tunnels, narrow sections.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

A TRAIN PASSING OVER THE NINE ARCHES BRIDGE IN ELLA

The bridge was built during the British colonial period entirely out of stone, brick, and cement, without the use of steel, and stands as a remarkable example of early railway engineering and local craftsmanship. The area around the bridge is popular with travelers who come to enjoy scenic walks along the railway tracks. One of the best experiences at the nine arch bridge is watching a train slowly pass over its nine elegant arches. As the train curves gently along the track, framed by thick greenery and rolling hills, it creates a perfect, postcard like moment with breathtaking views.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

TUK TUK RIDE THROUGH GREEN VALLEY IN HAPUTALE

This is an amazing journey in a vibrant three wheeler, where you can enjoy spectacular views of the mountains and tea fields. This small, open vehicle lets you truly see and feel the beautiful landscapes, from misty mountain peaks to endless green tea plantations. As the three wheeler winds its way through narrow village roads, you can breathe in the fresh mountain air, catch the aroma of freshly plucked tea leaves, and hear the gentle rhythm of daily village life around you. This kind of experience and fresh air is something you cannot enjoy when traveling by car or bus in comfort.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

HISTORIC GALLE DUTCH FORT IN GALLE

The fort was originally built by the Portuguese in 1588 to protect their trading interests along the southern coast. Later, in 1640, the Dutch captured Galle and extensively rebuilt and expanded the fort, strengthening its ramparts, gates, and bastions to create a powerful coastal defense system. The design of the fort reflects classic Dutch military architecture, carefully planned to withstand attacks from both land and sea. Today, the fort is a living heritage site where colonial buildings, old churches and narrow cobblestone streets still preserve its historic charm beautifully intact.



SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

PIDURANGALA ROCK IN SIGIRIYA

Pidurangala rock is one of the best viewpoints, offering a breathtaking panoramic view of Sigiriya rock fortress rising above the surrounding forests and plains. Pidurangala has deep historical and spiritual significance, once serving as an ancient Buddhist monastery where monks meditated in its caves. Today, it is a popular hiking spot with stunning sunrise and sunset views. The trail passes through forest paths and stone steps, ending near a large reclining Buddha statue. From the summit, visitors enjoy one of Sri Lanka's most iconic views, especially the perfect sight of Sigiriya rock.



THE ESSENTIAL CAMERA GEAR CHECKLIST

This tour takes you through a variety of unique locations and lighting conditions, offering diverse opportunities for both creative and documentary style photography. To help you get the most out of this photography experience, we recommend coming well prepared with a few essential tools that will support different shooting situations throughout the tour. We recommend bringing these essentials along with your camera body and versatile zoom lenses like standard, wide angle etc.

If you are interested in aerial photography, bringing a drone will be a great advantage. We take care of all necessary permits, so you can enjoy hassle free flying and focus fully on capturing unique perspectives from above.

A sturdy tripod is also an important part of your kit, especially for low light situations, sunrise and sunset shoots, or when you want to create long exposure images with stability and precision.

The filters such as neutral density, polarizing, or graduated filters will greatly help you manage light conditions and enhance the overall quality and mood of your photographs in different environments.

For more creative control, portable lighting equipment or reflectors can be very useful depending on your personal style, helping you shape light for portraits or add extra dimension to your images. Also a black background drop cloth is ideal for close up portrait photography, allowing you to isolate your subject and create powerful, clean, and professional looking compositions.

PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR ITINERARY - 10 DAYS

DAY 01

Poruthota Fishing Village In Negombo (Early Morning)
Pettah Market Porters In Colombo (Evening)
Overnight Stay In Negombo

DAY 02

Traveling From Negombo To Ahangama (3-Hour Drive)
Stilt Fishermen In Habaraduwa (Sunset)
Overnight Stay In Ahangama

DAY 03

Traveling From Ahangama To Galle (30-Min Drive)
Historic Galle Dutch Fort In Galle (Sunrise)
Stilt Fishermen In Habaraduwa (Sunset)
Overnight Stay In Ahangama

DAY 04

Traveling From Ahangama To Demodara (5-Hour Drive)
Scenic Train Journey From Demodara To Haputale (1-Hour Journey)
Overnight Stay In Haputale

DAY 05

Tea Pluckers On Tea Fields In Haputale (Sunrise)
Rural Tea Estate Villagers In Haputale (Early Morning)
Tuk Tuk Ride Through Green Valley In Haputale (Morning)
Buddhist Monk Educational Temple In Bandarawela (Evening)
Overnight Stay In Haputale



PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR ITINERARY - 10 DAYS

DAY 06

A Train Passing Over The Nine Arches Bridge In Ella (Morning)
Traveling From Ella To Mahiyanganaya (3-Hour Drive)
Overnight Stay In Mahiyanganaya

DAY 07

Indigenous Group Of People In Dambana (Early Morning)
Traveling From Mahiyanganaya To Polonnaruwa (2-Hour Drive)
Overnight Stay In Polonnaruwa

DAY 08

Buddhist Monks With Ruins In Polonnaruwa (Sunrise)
Traditional Dancers In Polonnaruwa (Sunset)
Overnight Stay In Polonnaruwa

DAY 09

Traveling From Polonnaruwa To Sigiriya (1-Hour Drive)
Sigiriya Rock Fortress In Sigiriya (Early Morning)
Pidurangala Rock In Sigiriya (Sunset)
Overnight Stay In Sigiriya

DAY 10

Dambulla Cave Temple In Dambulla (Morning)
Traveling From Dambulla To Kandy (3-Hour Drive)
Giragama Tea Factory In Pilimathalawa (Evening)
Overnight Stay In Kandy



PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR COST – 10 DAYS

COST PER PERSON

Total cost	US\$	800	per person (if there are	7+	participants)
Total cost	US\$	900	per person (if there are	7	participants)
Total cost	US\$	1,000	per person (if there are	6	participants)
Total cost	US\$	1,100	per person (if there are	5	participants)
Total cost	US\$	1,200	per person (if there are	4	participants)
Total cost	US\$	1,300	per person (if there are	3	participants)
Total cost	US\$	1,400	per person (if there are	2	participants)

INCLUDES

- Photography Guide Service Fee
- Air Conditioned Private Transport
- Entrance Fee For The Attractions
- Veddas Photo Session Fee
- Stilt Fishermen Photo Session Fee
- Traditional Dancers Session Fee
- Tea Pluckers Photo Session Fee
- Temple Donations For Monk Photo Sessions
- Villages Photo Session Fee
- Train Tickets From Demodara To Haputale
- Tuk Tuk Charges From Haputale To Dambethenna

EXCLUDES

- Hotel Accommodation
- Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Beverages
- Air Tickets And Visa Charges
- Model Release Document Fees (If Any)
- Drone Security Clearance (If Any)
- Video Camera And Still Camera Permits (If Any)
- Tips & Other Similar Charges (If Any)

FOODS AND BEVERAGE COST

Our tour cost does not include breakfast, lunch, dinner, beverages, or any other food. We will recommend good restaurants close to the visiting locations. Food costs are not included as they are variable, and we also prefer to give guests the freedom to choose meals according to their own preferences.

PAYMENT METHOD

ADVANCE DEPOSIT

To confirm your reservation, a deposit of **US\$ 200** is kindly required for each participant. This deposit secures your booking and ensures your place on the tour.

BALANCE PAYMENT 01

Fifty percent (50%) of the total tour cost for each participant is kindly requested to be settled within three (03) days after arrival.

BALANCE PAYMENT 02

The remaining balance payment for each participant is kindly requested to be settled within eight (08) days after arrival.

REFUND POLICY

If any photography session is canceled during the tour for any reason, the cost of entrance tickets or any related expenses (excluding transport costs) will be refunded. Please note that this does not apply to tickets that have been purchased in advance, if applicable. Kindly be advised that advance deposits are non refundable in the event that a participant is unable to join the photography tour due to personal reasons.

PAYMENT MEDIUM

Kindly note that payments are accepted in cash only, in USD / EUR / GBP

ARRANGED PHOTO SESSIONS

During the tour, we offer both candid photography sessions and specially arranged shoots. The individuals featured in the arranged sessions are not professional models, but real local people. We organize these sessions and compensate the participants, scheduling them during the best available light conditions to ensure optimal results. Photographers are given the freedom to work creatively, with the opportunity to guide and direct subjects as needed, making the most of the lighting and environment to achieve their desired shots.

PHOTO SESSIONS AND TRAVEL TIME

We have scheduled one or two major photography sessions per day and have not planned more within a single day due to travel time and the tiredness that can follow long drives. However, it is always possible to make stops along the way to capture good photographs, depending on the lighting conditions during the journey.

PASSPORT INFORMATION SUBMISSION

It is necessary to provide the passport details of photographers / travelers in order to obtain special permission from the archaeological department for the sunrise photography sessions. Passport details are also required when booking train tickets. Therefore, please submit an image of the bio page of your passport. Your passport information will be stored securely and will be permanently deleted once the tour has ended. This is required for smooth coordination and official approvals.

TIPS FOR SRI LANKA THAT MIGHT HELP

Flying drones is prohibited in national parks and metropolitan areas like Colombo, Kandy. Special permission is required from the civil aviation authority, department of archaeology, central cultural fund, and Sri Lanka police for flying drones at archaeological sites like Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Galle.

When visiting Buddhist or Hindu temples, cover your legs and shoulders, and remove your shoes and hats. Thick socks can help protect your feet from hot sand. Never pose with your back to Buddha statues when taking photos, as it is considered highly disrespectful in Sri Lankan culture. Always face the statue respectfully.

The tropical sun can be very strong, protect your skin and eyes by applying sunscreen, wearing a hat, and using sunglasses. In the hill country, temperatures can be cooler, so it's a good idea to bring a light jacket or sweater.

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted, but American Express may not be accepted everywhere. Small shops may not accept credit cards, so keep some Sri Lankan rupees on hand for small purchases and local restaurants. The standard voltage in Sri Lanka is 230 V with a frequency of 50 Hz. Plug types used are D and G, so you may need a plug adapter.

Sri Lanka has relatively few mosquitoes, mainly in the evenings, so use insect repellent and wearing light, long sleeved clothing is recommended for protection. Public restrooms may lack toilet paper or soap, so carry tissues and hand sanitizer.

Buy a SIM card at the airport for easy connectivity. Dialog and Mobitel offer the best coverage across the island. eSIMs are also available for purchase at the airport. Buying a local SIM or eSIM is recommended because hotel Wi-Fi is often very slow.

When traveling in rural areas, you may encounter many poor children who gather around you. Bringing small, inexpensive chocolates or sweets can make them very happy, as they love receiving something from foreigners. Stationery or educational materials are less practical, as there are often many children, but small packets of sweets are easy to distribute fairly among them.

