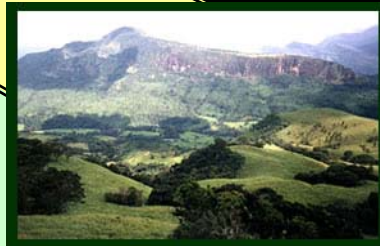


Escape To Paradise: Rain Forests, Waterfalls, Tea Plantation. Misty Mountains, Wild Life



Sinharaja Rain Forest Reserve:

Sinharaja is the only "World Heritage Site" Rain Forest in Sri Lanka, with a very high rate of bio-diversity. The vegetation is tropical wet evergreen forest and the area under the reserve is 11,187 hectares. Out of the 331 woody trees and lianas identified 192 (60%) are endemic to Sinharaja. Regarding Fauna 141 bird species recorded here and 24 are endemic (27 for the entire country), Butterflies 65 species (1 endemic), Fishes 10 (07 endemic), Amphibians 19 (08 endemic), Reptiles & Snakes 29 (14 endemic), and Mammals 40 (07 endemic). Sinharaja is the only relatively undisturbed rain forest of any considerable size and many of the plants are very rare and are represented by only one individual of its kind in a large area. Sinharaja can be reached from Colombo via Matugama (174 km) or Ratnapura (154 km) to Kalawana, Weddagala and up to Kudawa Base Camp. From Galle to Deniyaya and Mederpitiya (10 km) and from there to Pitadeniya Camp and enter the Reserve. The best period to visit is between December to early April and from August to September.

Tea Plantation:

Tea was first planted in Sri Lanka in 1824 at the Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, when a few plants were brought from China. More were introduced from Assam in 1839. In 1867, a Scottish Planter named **James Taylor** planted tea seedlings in an 8 hectares of forest land, in the **Loolkundura Estate**. In 1873, the tea export industry of Sri Lanka began with a modest 23 lbs. being shipped to London. Tea will grow only on rolling terrain and is classified by elevation into low grown, medium grown and high grown into 3 main groups. Today more than 200,000 hectares in highlands and other areas are under Tea and around 300 million Kilograms, with a 25% of world tea exports are done by Sri Lanka as the World's largest Tea exporter.

Adam's Peak:

This is most sacred mountain in Sri Lanka sacred to all four major religions-Buddhism, Hinduism, Muslims and Christians. Buddhists call the mountain Sri Pada ("the sacred footprint") and say it was visited by Gautama Buddha and placed His Footprint on top of the mountain. To Hindus, the peak Shiva Adipatham has the Shiva's footprint. Muslims insist it is the place where Adam first set foot on earth when he was expelled from the Garden of Eden. And Roman Catholics say the footprint impressed in the boulder at the summit is that of St. Thomas, the early Christian apostle who preached in South India. People of all religious groups ascend the mountain on pilgrimage from the Full moon Poya day in December till the Full Moon Poya Day in May when the pathway to the summit is lighted in the night and other facilities are provided.

Nuwara Eliya:

The 'Little England' of Sri Lanka, is set against beautiful backdrops of Mountains, Valleys, Waterfalls and Tea Plantations. It is supposed to be one of the coolest places in the Island, but it is really just like an English spring day, although the temperature does drop at night. All around Nuwara Eliya you will see evidence of the British influence, houses like country cottages or Queen Ann style mansions. The Victoria Park, in the middle of the town, is a lovely place for a stroll or a picnic and is also good for Birding as you get some rare birds in this Park. Seasons may be absent elsewhere in Sri Lanka, but here you can read them by the flowers, which bloom in the spring (march to May) and the fall (August and September). These are the "seasons" when low-country folk flock to Nuwara Eliya to escape the sea level heat and humidity.

Horton Plains National Park:

20 miles (32 km) from Nuwara Eliya via Ambewela and Pattipola, is the Horton Plains only **3160 hectares** in extent. Known to Sri Lankans as Mahaeliya, it became Horton Plains after Sir Robert Horton, British Governor from 1831- 1837. Horton Plains became a Nature Reserve in 1969 and upgraded as a National Park in 1988 due to its unique watershed and bio-diversity values. Its flora has high level of endemism. The hills are covered with diverse wet low evergreen forest with even large trees grown flattened to the ground on the higher windswept slopes. Horton Plains harbours 52 species of resident birds and 11 species of migrant birds. More than 2,000 to 3,000 Sambhur, Bear Monkey, Leopard, Barking Deer, Giant Squirrel, Fishing Cat, Wild Boar and Hares roam in the forests and grasslands but only seldom they could be seen other than the Sambhur in the evening and morning. For accommodation Ginihiriya Bungalow (Anderson Lodge) with 4 DBL rooms and 2 separate dormitories (Vana Nivahana) serve for groups. Two escarpments-"World's End" and "Little World's End" falling from the Horton Plains 1000 feet and 3000 feet respectively, to the land below and the Baker's Falls are places you should visit.

This is the only Park where visitors could walk on their own on the designated tracks.

