

**18 DAYS (17 NIGHTS) BIRDING ITINERARY FOR
GOLDEN GATE BIRD ALLIANCE SRI LANKA TOUR LED BY
UPALI EKANAYAKE | 01ST TO 18TH MARCH 2024**

Day 1: 01/03/2024. ARRIVAL and Transfer to Hotel (in WAIKKAL)

Arrive at Bandaranaike International Airport, meet your local birding tour leader Upali Ekanayake and transfer to Ranweli Holiday Village, Waikkal.

After checking in, if time permits, spend the rest of the day birding around the hotel premises.

Bird species we are likely to see almost everywhere, every day, include [Large-billed Crow](#), [Spotted Dove](#), [Indian Pond Heron](#), [Red-vented Bulbul](#), [Yellow-billed Babbler](#), [Oriental Magpie Robin](#).

Target Species around Ranweli Holiday Village: [Black-crowned Night Heron](#), [Slaty-legged Crane](#), [Greater Coucal](#), [Asian Koel](#), [Pied Kingfisher](#).

Possible Mammal Species: [Ruddy Mongoose](#).

Dinner and overnight stay at Ranweli Holiday Village, Waikkal

Day 2: 02/03/2024. WAIKKAL to ANURADHAPURA

After early breakfast enjoy a two-hour birding cruise on the *Gin-Oya* River (with a bit of mangrove ecosystem). Observe Water Monitors (*Varanus salvator*) swimming lazily or sunbathing on a branch of a tree on the riverbank.

Target Species: [Yellow Bittern](#), [Indian Stone-curlew](#), [Lesser Sri Lanka Flameback](#), [Indian Pitta](#), [Forest Wagtail](#), [Loten's Sunbird](#).

Afterward proceed to Palm Garden Village. Check in to the hotel and have late lunch. Spend the afternoon birding in the hotel precinct and adjacent wetland or among the well-preserved ruins of an ancient Sri Lankan civilization in Anuradhapura (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the first capital of Sri Lanka, founded in 380 B.C.

Target Species: [Orange-breasted Green Pigeon](#), [Sri Lanka Green Pigeon](#), [Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill](#), [Malabar Pied Hornbill](#), [Ceylon Small Barbet](#), [Sri Lanka Woodshrike](#).

Possible Mammal species: [Toque Macaque](#), [Hanuman Langur](#).

L/D and accommodation at Palm Garden Village Hotel, Anuradhapura

Day 3: 03/03/2024. ANURADHAPURA

An early start carrying picnic breakfast and lunch to do a full day jeep safari in Wilpattu National Park which is famous for birds and other wildlife including the Sri Lanka Sri Lanka Leopard and if you are lucky the Sloth Bear.

Target Species: Lesser Adjutant, Crested Serpent Eagle, Sri Lanka Junglefowl, Great Thick-knee, Blue-faced Malkoha, Brown Fish-owl, Crested Treeswift, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Rufous Woodpecker, Greater Sri Lanka Flameback, White-naped Flameback.

Target Mammal species: Purple-faced Leaf Monkey, Jackal, Sloth Bear, Sri Lanka Leopard, Sambar Deer, Indian Muntjac.

B/L/D and accommodation at Palm Garden Village Hotel, Anuradhapura

Day 4: 04/03/2024. ANURADHAPURA to MANNAR ISLAND

After breakfast proceed to Mannar island birding along the way as we pass through several wetlands around including Giant's Tank Sanctuary, Vankalai Ramsar Wetland and two small ponds at Thallady.

Target Species: Western Reef Heron, Greater Flamingo, Spot-billed Duck, Black Kite, Grey Francolin, Grey Plover, Crab Plover, Pallas's Gull, Sri Lanka Baya Weaver, Brahminy Myna.

Possible Mammal species: Jackal, Feral Donkeys (*Equus asinus*), Feral Ponies (*Equus ferus caballus*).

L/D and accommodation at The Palmyrah House, Mannar

Day 5: 05/03/2024. MANNAR ISLAND

Early morning birding around the hotel grounds before breakfast.

After breakfast spend the morning exploring the Urumale and Adam's Bridge area. This area teems with waders, terns and gulls.

In the afternoon we explore Vankalai Ramsar Wetland again and the Poonaryn Road area.

Bird and Mammal species to look out for are same as yesterday.

B/L/D and accommodation at The Palmyrah House, Mannar

Day 6: 06/03/2024. MANNAR ISLAND to HABARANA

Early morning birding in the vicinity of the hotel before breakfast.

After breakfast proceed to Habarana, birding en route.

Spend the afternoon birding around the Habarana Tank.

Target Species in Habarana area: White-bellied Sea Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Coppersmith Barbet, Indian Pygmy Woodpecker, Indian Pitta, Large Cuckoo-Shrike, Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike, Orange-headed Thrush, Brown-capped Babbler, Thick-billed Flowerpecker..

Possible Mammal species: [Stripe-necked Mongoose](#), [Grizzled Giant Squirrel](#).

L/D and accommodation at The Other Corner, Habarana

Day 7: 07/03/2024. HABARANA

After early breakfast visit and explore the Sigiriya Sanctuary around the Sigiriya Rock Fortress (UNESCO World Heritage Site) for best part of the morning.

After lunch at our hotel do a jeep safari in Minneriya National Park.

Target Species [Indian Pygmy Woodpecker](#), [Sri Lanka Swallow](#), [Large Cuckoo-Shrike](#), [Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike](#), [Sri Lanka Wood Shrike](#).

Possible mammal species: [Purple-faced Leaf Monkey](#), [Jackal](#), [Sloth Bear](#), [Asian Elephant](#).

B/L/D and accommodation at The Other Corner, Habarana

Day 8: 08/03/2024. HABARANA to KANDY

After early breakfast proceed to Kandy birding en route,

Lunch on the way or in Peradeniya Royal Botanical Gardens.

After lunch explore the botanical garden.

Target Species: [Sri Lanka Hanging-parrot](#), [Alexandrine Parakeet](#), [Layard's Parakeet](#), [Yellow-fronted Barbet](#), [Asian Paradise Flycatcher](#).

Witness the huge roost of [Flying Foxes](#) inside the garden.

D and accommodation at Thilanka Hotel, Kandy

Day 9: 09/03/2024. KANDY to KITULGALA

Have early breakfast, visit Udawattakele Sanctuary for a couple of hours before setting off to Kitulgala.

Target Species in Udawattakele: [Sri Lanka Hanging-parrot](#), [Layard's Parakeet](#), [Yellow-fronted Barbet](#), [Spotted-winged thrush](#), [Sri Lanka Scimitar-babbler](#), [Lesser Hill-myna](#).

Afterward proceed to Kitulgala.

In the afternoon, Explore Kitulgala village area.

Species to look out for in Kitulgala: [Sri Lanka Hanging-parrot](#), [Layard's Parakeet](#), [Green-billed Coucal](#), [Lesser Yellownape](#), [Black-capped Bulbul](#), [Square-tailed Black Bulbul](#), [Dark-fronted Babbler](#), [Sri Lanka Rufous Babbler](#), [Legge's Flowerpecker](#), [Black-throated Munia](#), [Lesser Hill-myna](#).

L/D and accommodation at the Rest.House, Kitulgala

Day 10: 10/03/2024. KITULGALA

Full day birding in Kitulgala area.

Target Species: [Black Eagle](#), [Chestnut-backed Owlet](#), [Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher](#), [Sri Lanka Swallow](#), [Brown-capped Babbler](#).

B/L/D and accommodation at the Rest.House, Kitulgala

Day 11: 11/03/2024. KITULGALA to SINHARAJA

Early morning birding around the hotel grounds before breakfast.

After breakfast proceed to Sinharaja World Heritage Wilderness Area.

After late lunch at the lodge spend the afternoon birding around Sinharaja ticketing office.

Target Species: [Sri Lanka Junglefowl](#), [Spotted-winged thrush](#), [Brown-breasted Flycatcher](#), [Sri Lanka Rufous Babbler](#), [Sri Lanka Crested Drongo](#), [Sri Lanka Blue Magpie](#).

L/D and accommodation at The Blue Magpie Lodge, Sinharaja

Day 12: 12/03/2024. EXPLORE SINHARAJA

After early breakfast at the lodge full day birding in Sinharaja World Heritage Wilderness Area.

Target Species: [Sri Lanka Spurfowl](#), [Red-faced Malkoha](#), [Serendib Scops-owl](#), [Chestnut-backed Owlet](#), [Sri Lanka Scaly Thrush](#), [Brown-breasted Flycatcher](#), [Ashy-headed Laughingthrush](#), [Sri Lanka Scimitar-babbler](#), [White-faced Starling](#), [Sri Lanka Hill-myna](#), [Sri Lanka Crested Drongo](#), [Sri Lanka Blue Magpie](#).

Possible mammal species: [Purple-faced Leaf Monkey](#), [Stripe-necked Mongoose](#).

B/L/D and accommodation at The Blue Magpie Lodge, Sinharaja

Day 13: 13/03/2024. SINHARAJA to UDAWALAWA

Early morning birding in the periphery of Sinharaja before breakfast.

After breakfast proceed to Udawalawe.

Check in to the hotel, have lunch and do an afternoon safari in Udawalawe National Park.

Target Species [Lesser Adjutant](#), [Black-winged Kite](#), [White-bellied Sea-eagle](#), [Grey-headed Fish-eagle](#), [Crested Serpent-eagle](#), [Crested Hawk-eagle](#), [Sirkeer Malkoha](#), [Grey-bellied Cuckoo](#), [Yellow-crowned Woodpecker](#), [Blyth's Pipit](#), [Marshall's Iora](#), [Yellow-eyed Babbler](#), [Grey-breasted Prinia](#), [Ashy Prinia](#), [Jungle Prinia](#), [Plain Prinia](#), [Indian Silverbill](#), [Tricoloured Munia](#), [Baya Weaver](#) and [Brahminy Starling](#), [Rosy Starling](#).

Possible mammal species: [Jungle Cat](#), [Asian Elephant](#), [Spotted Deer](#), [Sambar](#), [Water Buffalo](#).

L/D and accommodation at Centauria Wild, Udawalawe

Day 14: 14/03/2024. UDAWALAWE to TISSAMAHARAMA

Have early breakfast and proceed to Tissamaharama birding en route.

After lunch at hotel explore Tissa wetlands in the afternoon.

Target Species: [Little Grebe](#), [Spot-billed Pelican](#), [Black-crowned Night Heron](#), [Yellow Bittern](#), [Chestnut Bittern](#), [Black Bittern](#), [Cotton Teal](#), [Watercock](#), [Purple Swamphen](#), [Pheasant-tailed Jacana](#), [Barn Owl](#), [Indian Scops-owl](#), [Brown Fish-owl](#), [Jungle Owlet](#), [White-naped Flameback](#), [Indian Reed Warbler](#), [Streaked Weaver](#), [Baya Weaver](#), [Ashy Woodswallow](#).

L/D and accommodation at Thaula Resort, Tissamaharama

Day 15: 15/03/2024. TISSAMAHARAMA

An early start carrying picnic breakfast to do a half day jeep safari in Yala National Park which is famous for birds and other wildlife including the Sri Lanka Sri Lanka Leopard.

Explore the lagoons between Yala N.P. and Tissa in the afternoon.

Target Species in Yala N.P.: [Oriental Darter](#), [Black-necked Stork](#), [Curlew Sandpiper](#), [Great Thick-knee](#), [Small Pratincole](#), [Ashy-crowned Finch Lark](#).

Possible mammal species: [Sloth Bear](#), [Sri Lanka Leopard](#), [Asian Elephant](#).

L/D and accommodation at Thaula Resort, Tissamaharama

Day 16: 16/03/2024. TISSAMAHARAMA to NUWARA ELIYA

An early start carrying picnic breakfast to do a short jeep safari in Bundala National Park, a Ramsar Site which is famous for birds.

Target Species: [Watercock](#), [Greater Painted-snipe](#), [Wood Sandpiper](#), [Terek Sandpiper](#), [Ruff](#), [Red-necked Phalarope](#), [Indian Stone-curlew](#), [Small Pratincole](#), [Brown-headed Gull](#), [Lesser Crested Tern](#), [Great Crested Tern](#), [Little Tern](#), [White-winged Tern](#), [Jerdon's Nightjar](#), [Indian Little Nightjar](#), [Ashy-crowned Finch-lark](#), [Oriental Skylark](#).

Possible mammal species: [Jackal](#), [Asian Elephant](#), [Sambar](#).

Afterward proceed to Nuwara Eliya having lunch on the way. Spend the afternoon exploring Victoria Park.

Target Species in Victoria Park: [Forest Wagtail](#), [Yellow-eared Bulbul](#), [Pied Thrush](#), [Kashmir Flycatcher](#), [Dusky Blue Flycatcher](#), [Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher](#), [Indian Blue Robin](#), [Sri Lanka White-eye](#).

Dinner and accommodation at Black Pool hotel, Nuwara Eliya

Day 17: 17/03/2024. Explore NUWARA ELIYA

A predawn start carrying picnic breakfast to reach Horton Place National Park at first light. Spend the morning hours exploring Horton Plains N.P. for highland endemics and other specialities.

Target Species: [Sri Lanka Wood Pigeon](#), [Hill Swallow](#), [Yellow-eared Bulbul](#), [Indian Blackbird](#), [Sri Lanka Whistling-thrush](#), [Kashmir Flycatcher](#), [Dusky Blue Flycatcher](#), [Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher](#), [Indian Blue Robin](#), [Pied Bushchat](#), [Sri Lanka Bush-warbler](#), [Velvet-fronted Nuthatch](#) and [Sri Lanka White-eye](#).

Possible mammal species: [Purple-faced Leaf Monkey](#), [Otter](#).

After lunch spend the afternoon exploring the Hakgala Botanical Gardens.

B/L/D and accommodation at Black Pool hotel, Nuwara Eliya

Day 18: 18/03/2024. DEPARTURE

After breakfast, depart Nuwara Eliya for Katunayake via Gampola, Peradeniya and Kandy. Have a short stop in Kandy for some souvenir shopping and lunch and then proceed to Katunayake Airport for departure in the evening.

End of Tour

TOUR LEADER:

Upali Ekanayake is the senior most Ornithological Tour Leader (Regd.No. N/TGL/775) in Sri Lanka. He has been leading bird tours for more than 30 years and is well known in the birding world. He is also a highly accomplished all-round naturalist. He was previously attached to the Zoology Department of the University of Peradeniya. He has undergone training in the U.K. in Terrestrial Ecology and Conservation with attachments at Aberdeen and Cambridge Universities, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (R.S.P.B.) and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (I.T.E.).

He is one of the local representatives of the Oriental Bird Club (O.B.C.). He is also a Life Member of the Ceylon Bird Club where he has served in the Executive Committee and the Rarities Committee for a number of years. Also he has Life Membership of the Wildlife and Nature Protection Society of Sri Lanka. A popular lecturer on Birds and was a Lecturer at the Tourism Training Centre of the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management from 2004 to 2006. He worked for the IUCN, The World Conservation Union in Sri Lanka for two years from 1994 as a National Consultant (Fauna) surveying the faunal diversity of all Sri Lankan forests which are more than 200 hectares in extent.

TOUR PRICES:

2 PAX US\$ 5431 per person

4 PAX US\$ 3924 per person
6 PAX US\$ 3498 per person
8 PAX US\$ 3239 per person

SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENT: US\$ 899 per person

PAYMENT CONDITIONS:

To register for this tour, first contact Eric Schroeder at travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org. A deposit of 20% of the total cost is required within a week of signing up for this trip to hold your spot.

The 80% balance of the total must be paid no later than 90 days before the first day of the tour. All payments to be paid to Golden Gate Bird Alliance.

Checks should be made out to “GGBA” and “Sri Lanka tour” should be written in the memo line. If you would like to use a credit card let us know and a link will be sent to you from the GGBA office. Checks can be mailed to:

Golden Gate Bird Alliance
2150 Allston Way UNIT 210, Berkeley, California 94704

PRICE INCLUSIONS:

- Hotel accommodation on double/twin sharing basis in the standard room category
- Travel by an air-conditioned vehicle with the service of a local ornithologist throughout the tour
- One airport arrival transfer and one airport departure transfer
- Meals with dinner, breakfast and lunch (starting from the dinner on the Day 01 and ending with the lunch on the Day 18)
- Entrance fees to all sightseeing, national parks, nature reserves, jeep hires and boat rides as mentioned in the program
- Safe drinking mineral water throughout the tour
- Guide fees, tips to all staff and driver/assistant

PRICE EXCLUSIONS:

- International airfares
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance (highly recommended)
- Airport tax or any kind of insurance cover
- Items of personal nature like alcoholic drinks, laundry, internet, telephone calls, etc
- Any other meals other than specified above
- Early check-in and late check-out
- Any other item/meal not specifically mentioned above as ‘INCLUDED’

- Cost of Visa fees
- Cost of any required vaccinations
- Cost of testing and medical expenses including Covid-19 disease
- Cost of lodging expenses in case of Covid-19 quarantine
- Any pre- or post-tour accommodations, meals, or other excursions

CANCELLATION & REFUND POLICY:

You may cancel your booking at any stage. Cancellation must be advised in writing to Eric Schroeder at travelprogram@goldengateaudubon.org by the 'lead name' (where possible) and takes effect on the day such notice is received by us.

- Cancellation within 90 days before the start of the tour: No charge
- Cancellation 30-45 days before the start of the tour: 50% cancellation charge
- No refunds can be made if you cancel less than 30 days before the start of the tour

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Visa application: http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/visainfo/center.jsp?locale=en_US
- The WHO recommends chickenpox, pneumonia and influenza. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended and required for travel. Check the CDC for current information.
- Suitable casual clothing for warm / windy / rainy weather conditions.
- Casual clothing suitable for water activities.
- Insect repellent and sun protection creams etc are highly recommended.
- Waterproof bag for camera equipment.
- Please do not carry unnecessary valuables.
- Hotel check in time: 14.00 hours and Hotel check out time: 11.00 hours.
- Long sleeves and hats will keep you protected from the sun.
- Warm, rain and windproof clothes are needed when traveling in the mountain areas, where the weather may change several times a day and the nights tend to get chilly. Cotton clothes are useful at any time of the year but you will need light woollens for the hills and waterproof clothing or an umbrella.
- Modest dress for women is advisable especially when visiting religious sites.
- Don't forget comfortable shoes, sandals or trainers and cotton socks.
- When trekking and climbing, go prepared with suitable gear.

PACE: Moderate. Birding is usually best in the morning, so fairly early starts can be expected. Jeeps are needed to get to Sinharaja; it's about an hour each way along a very rough, unpaved road. We will be using official jeeps to travel inside the parks of

Udawalawe, Yala and Bundala. These are good, comfortable game-viewing jeeps, but it is necessary to spend long periods inside them, since you are only permitted to get out of the vehicle in designated areas.

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY: Moderate. Much of the birding is along easy, wide open tracks or dirt roads. The highest point of the tour is about 7500 ft (2300 m).

CLIMATE: Warm to hot in the lowlands with daytime highs of about 91°F/33°C and nighttime lows of about 72°F/22°C. In the wet zone it is also quite humid. In the highlands, lows could be down to about 41°F/5°C. While this is the dry season for much of Sri Lanka, the Wet Zone can be wet year round, and so some rain can be expected.

ACCOMMODATION: Good to excellent. All of the hotels and lodges have private en-suite bathrooms, 24-hour electricity, air conditioning, and full-time hot water. Except for Sinharaja, all accommodations have wifi, though it is often slow. All hotels provide laundry service with the exception of Blue Magpie Lodge.

ELECTRICITY: For Sri Lanka there are two associated plug types, types D and G. Plug type D is the plug which has three round pins in a triangular pattern and plug type G is the plug which has three rectangular pins in a triangular pattern. Sri Lanka operates on a 230V supply voltage and 50Hz.

WHEN YOU ARE THERE:

Upset stomach

As most stomach upsets are due to the unsanitary preparation of food, it is useful to know what to watch out for. Under-cooked fish (especially shellfish) and meat (especially pork and mince) can be hazardous. Salads can be risky unless purified water has been used to wash the various vegetables. Fruit that has already been peeled should be avoided. Be careful of ice cream, in particular the varieties sold by street vendors and served at small restaurants.

Water

Tap water is not safe to drink, and boiling and filtering is sometimes done too hastily in some hotels and restaurants, so the best solution is to drink bottled water. There are now many brands available, mostly using spring water from the highlands of the island. Make sure that the bottle carries an SLS certification and that the seal is broken only in your presence. Beware of ice unless you are satisfied it has not been made from tap water.

Sunburn

Always remember to apply a sunscreen product with a sun protection factor. Even with sunscreen, your sunbathing should be limited in time (if applicable).

Heatstroke

Sometimes those who have spent too long in the sun suffer what is termed heatstroke, the most common form being caused by dehydration. This condition can occur if the body's heat-regulating mechanism becomes weakened and the body temperature rises to unsafe levels. The symptoms are a high temperature - yet a lack of sweat - a flushed skin, severe headache, and impaired coordination. In addition, the sufferer may become confused. If you think someone has heatstroke, take that person out of the sun, cover their body with a wet sheet or towel, and seek medical advice. To avoid heatstroke, take plenty of bottled water and thambilis (king coconuts) from itinerant sellers.

Prickly Heat

Prickly heat rash occurs when your sweat glands become clogged after being out in the heat for too long or from excessive perspiration. The rash appears as small red bumps or blisters on elbow creases, groin, upper chest or neck. To treat it, take a cold shower, clean the rash with mild soap, dry yourself, apply hydrocortisone cream, and if possible, a product that contains salicylic acid. Repeat every three hours.

RECOMMENDED FIELD GUIDES:

- Helm Field Guides: Birds of Sri Lanka – Deepal Warakagoda, Carol Inskipp, Tim Inskipp and Richard Grimmett; 2012.
- Oxford: A Field Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka – John Harrison. Second Edition 2011.
- A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka. – Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne. 2017.
- Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent – Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp & Tim Inskipp. 1999.

HOTELS WITH WEBSITES

Waikkal: Ranweli Holiday Village Resort (<https://ranweli.com/page/>)

Anuradhapura: Palm Garden Village Hotel (<https://www.palmgardenvillage.com/>)

Mannar: The Palmyrah House (<https://www.palmyrahhouse.com/>)

Habarana: The Other Corner Resort (<https://www.tocsrilanka.com/>)

Kandy: Thilanka Hotel (<https://www.thilankahotel.com/>)

Kitulgala: Kitulgala Rest House (<https://www.chcplc.com/brands/chc-resthouses/kithulgala/>)

Sinharaja: Blue Magpie Lodge (<http://www.bluemagpie.lk/>)

Udawalawe: Centauria Wild Hotel (<https://www.centauriawild.com/>)

Tissamaharama: Thaulle Resort (<http://thaulle.com/?lang=en>)

Nuwata Eliya: Blackpool Hotel (<https://www.blackpool.lk/>)