

SRI LANKA: WASGAMUWA ELEPHANT CONSERVATION

Help conserve the Elephants and other wildlife of Sri Lanka in Wasgamuwa National Park. Go back to basics in stunning rural Sri Lanka and play a part in the conservation and protection of the county's majestic giants while getting involved in the local community. A real gem of a project! The activities on this project are diverse - one moment you could be laying cameras to identify new leopard trails, and then next you could be staying overnight in a tree-house to watch for elephants.

Sri Lanka is a vibrant country, rich in its diversity of culture, race, language and religion. The island has an abundance of natural resources, fauna and flora, mountains, rivers and beautiful beaches. It is located at the crossroads where East meets West and is regarded as the gateway to South Asia. The hill country has gorgeous rolling hills and tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life and exotics like elephants and leopards. The people are friendly, food delicious and costs low! A stunning island filled with beaches and wild life sanctuaries like the Elephant Orphanage, ancient cities, hills, beaches... and most of all - incredible beauty!



WHAT DO YOU GET?

- An exciting, never-to-be-forgotten adventure into South East Asia and the Sri Lankan culture.
- The enormous satisfaction of helping disadvantaged children and seeing how your efforts are making a difference to them.
- New skills, more confidence, a greater understanding of a different culture, invaluable personal and professional development.
- An entry on your CV or résumé that will put you head and shoulders above most others in the job market.
- Experienced local staff with 24/7 back-up and support who'll meet you at the airport on your arrival - helps you **feel safe and never alone!**
- An in-depth Induction makes you **feel local straight away!**
- And best of all ... **an unforgettable experience!**

SUMMARY FACTFILE

Start Dates	All year round - You choose your start and finish dates.
Duration	Minimum stay 2 weeks up to 1 year, subject to visa restrictions.
Requirements	No qualifications needed, just a big heart and a desire to provide care and support
Price	From £995 /US\$1,495 for 2 weeks, ranging to £2,835 / US\$4,345 for 12 weeks. Full Price List
What's included	▶ Accommodation ▶ Food ▶ Meeting you at the Airport ▶ Transfer to your accommodation ▶ Full pre-departure support ▶ Local in-country team support and backup ▶ 24-hr emergency support ▶ Two free T-Shirts.
What's not included	Flights, Insurance, Costs of Visas (if a visa is required, but we'll provide necessary documents and assistance),
Who can do this Project?	All projects are open to all nationalities. You need to be aged between 17 and 70+

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW:

We work with the SLWCS, one of Sri Lanka's top Conservation Societies, right on the edge of Wasgamuwa National Park.

If you want to go back to the very basics, in a stunningly beautiful part of the world, helping local people and the local wildlife this project is perfect for you. You'll be doing work that is really valued and that makes a significant difference to people's lives.

The location is breathtaking with incredible scenery and wildlife set in the remote hinterland of the island, given the accolade, by natives, as the most beautiful place in Sri Lanka.



YOUR WORK

The work you can get involved in is diverse and fascinating. It also covers a broad range of elements and activities. You'll be conducting all the work yourself, but will of course have the supervision and guidance of either the project researcher or his assistant. The work might not only be vigorous but can also be mentally challenging, due to the warm and humid climatic conditions (especially in summer) but the work is also extremely satisfying and rewarding!

There can be a lot of physical activity involved in the project, you may be walking up to 10 kilometres a day and / or cycling up to 15 kilometres a day!

You'll also be monitoring the 'elealert' electric fence that the SLWCS has developed. This greatly reduces the human-elephant conflict in the area as it protects the locals farmland, which is their livelihood. The elephants are kept out by the electric fences and in turn, protected themselves (as they are not ruining the local populations livelihood, the locals have no reason to attack and hurt the elephants.)

The project has a broad scope and volunteers will be expected to help out in any of the research projects and operational needs summarized below to accomplish the objectives of the Society. Not all these activities will be available at one time – you'll likely be involved in several, or a selection, depending on the needs of the conservation society we work with.

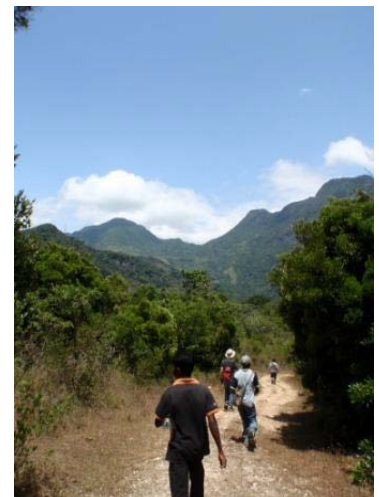
Below is a list of the current activities, but some of these can change depending on what is required at the you're there and on other factors , such as the weather:

Elephant Research

- Tank (where the elephants bathe) monitoring
- Trail transects (a hike to identify if elephants have been in the area) on trails that range from 5-10 kilometres on undulating to steep terrain.
- Road transects outside (buffer zone) of the national park.
- Park ID - identification of elephants within the park
- Fence monitoring:
 - SLWCS - Pussellayaya Fence
 - SLWCS - Weheragalagama fence
- Observations of elephants from tree hut and at tanks

Leopard Research

- **Leopard transect - Transects are** "lines" in the forest that scientist use to collect data on their study animal. To observe leopard sign, you will walk several trail **transects**, carefully noting and recording the presence of **pugmarks**, **scats**, and **scrapes**. While searching for leopard sign, you will also be recording data on elephants. While sounding very basic, monitoring transects is the first and most important step to investigating wildlife by more sophisticated methods.



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- **Leopard camera trapping.**
- **Camera checking.**

Socio-Economic and Agro/Social Forestry research.

- Village Headman (GND) Surveys
- HEC(Human-Elephant Conflict) and HLC(Human-Leopard Conflict) assessment surveys
- Project Orange Elephant – alternative crops project that is providing locals with oranges to farm as well as their usual crops. Elephants do not eat citrus fruits, so even if the farmland was destroyed by elephants the livelihood of the locals would not be ruined as they still have the oranges to sell.



Biodiversity Research

- General Biodiversity Surveys
- Butterfly Study
- Fish Study
- Avian Study
- Medicinal Plants

Farming & Agriculture:

- Data on farming operations (such as number of eggs produced, milk production, health issues, paddy/fruit production)



Operations and Basic Housekeeping

- Cleaning and maintenance of vehicles, bicycles and other equipment –this will be done by all staff and volunteers on a pre-arranged schedule.
- Clearing/Cleaning of field bases and equipment
- Packing/Storing and Stock taking of all equipment before departure of groups of volunteers/at least every two months.



GIS Research

- Identification of trails which predators/prey species use
- Biodiversity mapping
- HEC/HLC Mapping
- Analysis of GIS data from all other research projects

GOALS OF THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME IN WASGAMUWA

The aim of the conservation project is to "Save Elephants by Helping People". The Conservation Society that we work with are heavily committed to their cause and their pursuits include ecological research on elephants, remote camera trapping of leopards, community integrated human elephant/leopard conflict resolution, biodiversity mapping using surveying techniques and the use of GPS and GIS. They work in the local communities, both with the villagers and with the elephant and leopard population, to try to get everyone living in harmony! They're doing really amazing work up there – they're one of the biggest biodiversity and ecological conservation societies in Sri Lanka, and really have put their whole lives into the communities they work with.



You'll really get the chance to integrate into the local community too. As long as you're an outdoorsy sort of person (you'll be living in a very basic house and will occasionally riding to work on a bike!) you'll get on wonderfully here –

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it's a real break from hectic Western lifestyles, and you'll get to know the villagers and the local community really well. Every volunteer we've sent to Wasgamuwa has been shocked by the remoteness at first, and then grown to absolutely adore it, and everyone has been upset to leave!

On the project, you'll work with locals and the Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society doing things like tank monitoring, trail transects, road transects, elephant identification inside the national park and monitoring of the fences around some of the villages. You'll also spend some nights or afternoons in tree houses recording how many elephants pass, take part in leopard research and some data entry.

As with all Conservation projects, your work will depend on what is required at the time your project takes place. As with any Conservation project it is also governed by uncontrollable factors, such as the weather, seasonal habits of species and conservation priorities. From time to time the focus of projects is adjusted depending on the results achieved through the research, and therefore small adaptations in programme activities may take place. Visiting specialists and researchers often add value to existing programmes and your project will interact with other research activities when available. Please note that interactions with other researchers in the park is by invitation and does not automatically become part of your work duties.



LOCATION

Be prepared!! This area is very cut off from the rest of the island and extremely remote. The area is very quiet and serene and a real journey back to basics. The project is located about 7 hours north of central Colombo, in a very remote village which sits on the edge of the Wasgamuwa National Park. The communities' livelihood comes mostly from paddy farming. There are small shops located nearby that stock most things you will need. Getting around is not easy in this remote area and bicycles are essential as the main form of transport. Buses run from the region to Kandy, Dambulla and Colombo – taking approximately 5 to 9 hours. Buses run more frequently to Hettipola, which is the nearest town, located about 45 minutes away from the site. There are two 3-star hotels about 10-15 minutes bike ride away, one serving excellent Chinese food and the other having a nice pool and bar for some very welcome chilled drinks after a hot days work!



The villages where we work are next to the Wasgamuwa National Park (10 minutes drive) so there is a lot to do and see if you enjoy wildlife and the outdoors. The Maduru Oya National Park is also about an hour away by car. This park is renowned for its wild elephant population. The surrounding jungles and villages can be explored easily by foot or bike. Sri Lanka's longest river is about 20 minutes away and travelling a few kilometres down it in an inner-tube is safe and great fun - except during the rainy season!

Sigiriya, Polannaruwa, Nuwera Eliya, Dambulla and Kalkudah Beach are all about 3-4 hours bus ride away. To cool off, you can hire a van and go to the Knuckles Range which at 5000 feet is much cooler! It is about 70 minutes away with beautiful areas to hike and plenty of cool streams to bathe in. The temperature drops to a comfortable 20-28 degrees at this altitude.

The Field staff at the project will be able to help you plan any trips you want to take. They have a wealth of knowledge on the local area and Sri Lanka in general.

Generally though, this is a remote and basic area and the placement is suitable for those people who enjoy reading and solitude as there is nothing to do in the evenings. However, you will always be with at least one other Travellers volunteer so you will have company – and board games! You are also welcome to bring your own Laptop with you as the field house (where you will be staying) now has electricity and quite good wireless Internet connectivity so you can stay in contact with your friends and family.

REQUIREMENTS

You do not need any experience to take part in this project, you must just be enthusiastic about conservation and an elephant lover. You should also be willing to 'muck in' and be proactive – if you feel at a lose end, you should always talk to the field staff and ask if there are any other activities you can become involved in as they are always

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appreciative of the extra help – sometimes they feel that you will need a break, so if this is not the case be sure to tell them!

If you are qualified, this is also the perfect project for you, as you could consider doing independent research (please note this would be self funded) while you are at the field site. If this is of interest to you, please speak to your project coordinator.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD:

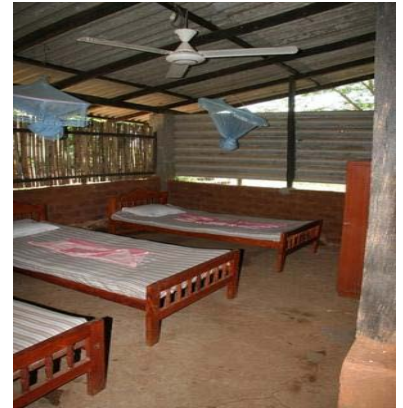
The Wasgamuwa house is very, very basic indeed! The makeup of the house is the first thing you notice. It is a house made of entirely eco-friendly material, due to the fact that it was built by a team of conscientious! This is quite a surprise the first time you see it however as you really do feel like you are in the wilderness! The house is very open to the outdoors, but don't worry the make up of the house is perfectly sufficient and keeps the house cool during the hot spells of the day and dry during the storm.

The house has five bedrooms, you may have your own room, but dependent on the number of volunteers you are likely to share with at least one other volunteer (of the same sex.) There are mosquito nets on each bed to keep out the bugs!

There is a fully functional bathroom, with a shower (cold water only), a sink and a western style toilet.

The accommodation has recently been modernised and there is now electricity, fans and wi-fi internet!

Your food will be freshly cooked by the house caretaker and his wife. Neither of them speak very much English but a smile goes a long way! They are both lovely and love looking after you! The food is basic but delicious! They make the curries milder than they would for themselves – but there is still a kick to them! There is also a shop about 5 minutes away from the field house, where you can stock up on snacks and cold drinks for your sugar fix! There is a fridge in the house, which can be used to store all your food.



VISAS:

Visas are required for Sri Lanka. We will liaise with you about your visa requirements, and make the visa process very easy.

FLIGHTS:

You have the option to arrange your own flights or we can assist you with your flight arrangements. If you would like us to do this for you, we will liaise with you regarding available flights and dates to suit you. All arrangements for your flight bookings/payments will be fulfilled by [Murray Rogers Travel Limited](#), ATOL No. 6856.

ON YOUR ARRIVAL:

When you arrive in Sri Lanka, you'll be met from the airport by our delightful Sri Lanka Managers, Roshan or Nirangela and their big welcoming smiles. They will take you to Ja-Ela (just down the road from the airport) where you will be introduced to the other Travellers volunteers. Everyone is always extremely friendly and very excited to see a new face. You will be looked after immediately and taken under the collective wing soon to be absorbed in stories of wonderful weekend trips and the all important Sinhalese vocabulary such as hari hundi (very good!)

Once you have recovered from your jetlag, you'll be collected by the staff of the Conservation Society and will begin the journey to Wasgamuwa. It depends on the weather conditions and traffic, but this journey will take between 6 and 9 hours. On your arrival at the house, you'll be introduced to all the staff and made to feel very welcome! There is plenty of support at the house - 24 hours a day with live in staff who will happily help you to understand and get around this new and exotic culture. Plus, you have the support and friendship of the other volunteers which makes adjusting very easy and fast – a little homesickness is normal for a few days however, especially as it's such a remote area, but trust us, it won't last longer than your first few days at the project!



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COSTS:

Please see the prices pages of our website [Full Price List](#). The price of this project is a reflection of the following costs:

- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Meeting you at the airport
- ✓ Local in-country team support and backup
- ✓ 24hr emergency helpline
- ✓ Full pre-departure support
- ✓ UK administration
- ✓ Marketing (brochures, website design and maintenance, attending careers fairs, advertising, website listings and presentations)
- ✓ Project Research/Site Inspection
- ✓ Staff Training/Equipment
- ✓ Donations to worthwhile projects

HOW YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

By joining a Travellers Program you enable us to keep donating money to worthwhile projects around the world; from clothing and feeding school children, building playgrounds or funding vital conservation research - your participation makes these donations possible.

For every volunteer, a donation is made by Travellers on your behalf into the **Bridge The Gap Foundation**. This Foundation was set up by us to donate directly to particularly worthwhile and necessary projects for children and animals around the world, and partners with other NGO's to raise match-funding for worthy projects.

COUNTRY PROFILE:

Sri Lanka is famous for its 1,600 km of unspoilt, golden beaches. It's a paradise Island shaped like a tear drop in the Indian Ocean. Formerly known as Ceylon and famous for its wonderful Tea, Sri Lanka is a vibrant country with an incredible history. It's a country of 18 million people; rich in its diversity of culture, race, language and religion.

The island has an abundance of natural resources, fauna and flora, mountains, rivers and beautiful beaches. It is located at the crossroads where East meets West and is regarded as the gateway to South Asia. The hill country has gorgeous rolling hills and tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life and exotics like elephants and leopards.



The people are friendly, food delicious and costs low! A stunning island filled with beaches and wild life sanctuaries like the Elephant Orphanage, ancient cities, hills, beaches - and most of all, it's incredible beauty.

THINGS TO DO IN: SRI LANKA

You will never be short of something to do in Sri Lanka - wherever you are based on your project you will be able to reach some of the most incredible beaches, cultural sites including ancient temples and cities, aromatic tea plantations and exhilarating waterfalls in the rolling hill country. The famous Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage is also a "must-see" on this paradise island.

In Sri Lanka, every sight, sound and smell will engulf you with new experiences. Take an early morning train ride from Colombo to Hikkaduwa and watch in awe as you travel past some of the most incredible scenery. Smiling children will wave at you from shanty towns lining the outskirts of Colombo, but these soon give way to views across paddy fields where buffalo and cows can be seen grazing. As your journey continues the train tracks begin to run parallel to the beach and you will be left mesmerised by the incredible sights in this friendly country.

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- Excellent support - second to none in the industry
- Accredited projects helps **appeal to future employers**
- Your own dedicated Project Co-ordinator to answer all questions prior to, during and after your **trip of a lifetime!**

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- Detailed information on your project and country and suggestions, safety guide, tips and checklists, via our *EXTRANET*, **available from anywhere, 24/7**.
- 24/7 emergency helpline for you and your family
- Free pick up from the nearest airport .

HOW TO BOOK:

Please complete a [booking form](#) online or you can send a postal booking from our free brochure. When we receive this, we'll telephone you to discuss the details and then start the exciting process of planning your trip!

We do hope you'll join us and are confident that you'll find this an incredible experience. Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions - we'll be happy to help you plan your exciting adventure!

You may also be interested in other courses with Travellers, or do other projects in Sri Lanka– please visit our [website](#) for details of all our projects. In fact you can choose from over 300 projects in 19 countries!

Make a Difference – Get Involved!



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