

Overview

- Sri Lanka has a **strong claim to be the best wildlife destination in the world**. No other country has its combination of endemic biodiversity, large mammals, marine mammals (especially Blue & Sperm Whales) and diverse landscapes in such a compact area with affordable and good tourism infrastructure.
- Sri Lanka is the **Best for Big Game Safaris outside Africa**.
- One of the **top whale watching** destinations in the world.
- It is **the Ultimate Island Safari**.



Marine Wildlife

Best in world

- Sri Lanka is best in world for Blue Whales. December to mid April from Mirissa. In Trincomalee, peak encounter rate is in March and April, but season extends to August.
- Sri Lanka is best in world for super-pods of Sperm Whales. Kalpitiya from December to April. Trincomalee from March to April.
- Sri Lanka is best in world for a chance of a Blue Whale and Sperm Whale on the same sailing. Mirissa and Trincomalee, seasons as above.



Other marine wildlife

- Super-pods of Spinner Dolphins off Kalpitiya. December to mid April.
- 3 species of marine turtle come ashore to nest, months vary by species.
- Species rich but visibility poor. West, South Coast and Kalpitiya from December to mid April. East Coast (e.g. Trincomalee), March to August.

Land Wildlife

Best in world

- The Elephant Gathering (Minneriya and Kaudulla) is the largest annually recurring concentration of wild elephants in the world. June to September, peaking in August.
- Sri Lanka is best in world for Leopard. Year-round in Yala and Wilpattu.
- Sri Lanka is best in world for Sloth Bear. Both Yala and Wilpattu are good especially during the Palu fruit season in June and July.
- Uda Walawe National Park is the only game park where elephant sightings are guaranteed on every game drive. Year-round.
- Sinharaja Bird Wave is the largest, longest studied and offers the best viewing of a bird wave. Year-round.



Other wildlife

- 33 Endemic birds. Year-round but rainforests drier during December to March.
- Dragonfly hot spot. Over half the species are endemic. Year-round.
- Night Safaris for lorises and other nocturnal mammals. Year-round, on private land and public roads.
- Staggering biodiversity. Year-round. Over half the native freshwater fish are endemic. 244 species of butterflies. Radiation of endemic tree frogs.
- 350 species of reptiles and amphibians. Sri Lanka is one of the best places to see large concentrations of Mugger Crocodiles. Seasonal, in dry season (August - September).

Sri Lanka's Big Five: Rank for viewing

Target Species	World	Asia
Blue Whale	1	1
Sperm Whale	Top 10	1
Asian Elephant	1	1
Leopard	1	1
Sloth Bear	1	1



The Three Es for Sri Lanka's Big Five

Target Species	The Three Es (Encounter Rate, Encounter Time and Encounter Zone)
Blue Whale	90% during season from Mirissa. December to mid April from Mirissa. In Trincomalee peak encounter rate in March and April, but season extends to August).
Sperm Whale	Provisionally, between 1 in 3 & 1 in 5 from Kalpitiya during February & March. Also seen from Kalpitiya and Mirissa. More data needed.
Asian Elephant	100% in Uda Walawe (year-round) and during The Gathering at Minneriya and Kaudulla (July to September).
Leopard	Year-round. 1 in 3 game drives in Yala. There are periods when it is 1 in 2. In Wilpattu, 1 in 4.
Sloth Bear	1 in 5 game drives in Yala. Improves to 1 in 3 during fruiting of Palu in June/July. Wilpattu may have a slightly better encounter rate.



Adapted from **Wild Sri Lanka** (published by John Beaufoy Publishing, UK), written and photographed by Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne. The author has played a lead role in the R&D of every major wildlife tourism product in Sri Lanka.

