



Environmental conservation project



Objective: The broader theme of this project is “*Save our Planet*” and to help fight the biggest challenge of our times – Climate Change. The goal is to conserve, protect and sustain our natural environment around us, as well as to bring about a change in the way our community thinks about, and acts upon, this important subject. The project covers a wide range of activities and initiatives that positively impact the health of our natural environment including, but not limited to, mangrove reforestation, organic farming, recycling education, coral restoration, beach and river cleanups, and building eco-friendly products that benefit the environment.

Background to this Program: We live in a time where the Earth is at its most vulnerable. Natural ecosystems have declined substantially resulting in loss of biodiversity, man-made pollution has reached unimaginable levels and climate change has become humanity’s greatest challenge. It is clear we need to change the way we interact with nature and change fast. In order to preserve the earth for future generations, we not only need to reduce the amount of harm that human activities have on the environment but also support the natural world as much as we can.

Just like the rest of the planet, here in Sri Lanka, our beautiful natural environment needs to be protected and preserved for future generations, as well as for the vast natural flora and fauna that have been native to us for centuries. Environmental conservation is a vast topic that covers multiple areas in different parts of the world. For this project, we have chosen to conduct a range of initiatives that, we believe, will have a lasting impact in addressing the key environmental issues that affect the natural ecosystems of our beloved island.

What our Participants do on the Project: Volunteers participate in a range of activities spread across 5 important initiatives as per below:

1) REFORESTATION

- a) **Mangrove Restoration** – Mangrove ecosystems are vitally important in sustaining marine environments. They protect coastlines, maintain water quality, control floods, offer breeding grounds for fish and other marine species, help in increasing the region's biodiversity, support rural livelihoods and fight climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide at a rate 3-5x than most forests. Protecting, preserving and growing their numbers is the need of the hour. This part of the project takes place in Koggala Lagoon, an important coastal waterbody in Galle District embellished with eight ecologically rich small islands. Volunteers will play a key role in assisting with the mangrove habitat restoration process in the area by helping plant new seeds in our nursery, nurture and monitor the growth of baby mangrove plants and assist in planting them in and around the islands on the lagoon when they are ready. Volunteers will also work closely with the local conservation team in doing a range of other tasks that are required to preserve and maintain the lagoon's ecosystem.

2) RECYCLING

- a) **Recycling Education** – Recycling is still in a nascent stage in Sri Lanka, although the concept is catching on as locals gain a better understanding of its environmental benefits. Plastic pollution, in particular, is becoming a major problem that needs to be addressed. This part of the project involves volunteers conducting educational presentation sessions to local communities, schools and businesses highlighting the environmental issues plaguing the region, particularly plastic pollution, and the importance of recycling as a way of life to combat these challenges. These sessions will be aided by our local staff who will help with preparation of presentation materials and language translations with the local community.
- b) **Building EcoBricks** – EcoBricks are a simple, low-tech solution to plastic pollution without the need for any machines, special skills or capital. They are single-use plastic bottles that have been cleaned out and packed tightly with other bits of single-use plastic to be reused as building blocks. This helps to extend the life of single-use plastic and avoid sending them straight to landfill, which helps in reducing plastic pollution. EcoBricks are very durable and don't break down, making it an ideal building material. In a developing country like Sri Lanka, they are used to construct walls, furniture and even

rural buildings. Volunteers will spend part of their project time building EcoBricks which will be used to build the boundary walls in our organic garden and also outdoor furniture. We also intend to donate large amounts of EcoBricks that we make to our neighbouring communities so they can derive similar benefits as well.

- c) **Up cycling Glass Bottles** – Instead of throwing away the used glass bottles, here we reuse them in different ways. For example, we create various beautiful decorations from glass bottles. That way we can use them to beautify our rooms and gift them to school children to promote the initiative locally. This is a good way to prevent glass, a non-easily degradable material, from entering the environment. Volunteers will spend part of their project time making different items with glass bottles which can be used as decorative items.

3) ORGANIC FARMING

- a) **Organic Farming** – Organic farming practices reduce pollution, conserve water, increase biodiversity, reduce soil erosion, increase soil fertility, and use less energy. Using organic fertilizers (e.g., compost, green manure, etc.) instead of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides is much better for the natural ecosystem and provides sustainability over the long term. This creates fresh and healthy foods – straight from farm/garden to table. Volunteers will spend part of their project time in our organic garden helping grow fresh fruits and vegetables in a sustainable and environmentally conscious manner. Typical tasks will include planting new seeds, maintaining the nursery, making organic compost, monitoring crop growth, building organic fences and other maintenance tasks as necessary.

4) MARINE CONSERVATION

- a) **Coral Reef Restoration** – This is the second eco-friendly product we build in this project. Coral reefs are often called the rainforests of the ocean, both due to the vast amount of species they harbour and to the high productivity they yield. Aside from the hundreds of species of coral, reefs support extraordinary biodiversity and are home to a multitude of different types of fish, invertebrates and sea mammals. Unfortunately, like many other places, coral reefs in Sri Lanka have dwindled in size recently due to the adverse effects of climate change and human activities. This part of the project involves building artificial coral reefs using durable and eco-friendly materials to mimic the effects of natural coral reefs. These are then placed in the shallow areas of the ocean where the natural reefs were once thriving. Over time, research has shown that these artificial reefs are generally able to provide a stable habitat for fishes and all the other plant and animal organisms that one would find on a natural reef, thereby restoring this lost marine ecosystem to a large extent.

5) ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UPS

- a) **Beach Cleaning** – Sri Lanka is home to some of the world's most pristine

beaches surrounded by the warm ecologically-rich waters of the Indian Ocean. Apart from providing humans with natural meditative beauty, beaches provide a host of environmental benefits including preserving our coastal and ocean ecosystem, acting as nesting sites for turtles and other species, providing vital feeding ground for birds and terrestrial wildlife, mitigating the damaging effects of climate change by protecting our coastlines from storms and strong waves, and more. Unfortunately, in recent years, increased human pollution, particularly plastic pollution, both on land and water, has contributed to unhealthier beaches in Sri Lanka and around the world, making the need for beach clean-ups an essential environmental need. Volunteers spend part of their project time doing beach clean-ups in groups carefully segregating plastic, glass and organic waste, which are then given to the local authorities for disposal or for recycling purposes. This project rotates around different beaches in and around the Galle and Unawatuna areas, thereby increasing the reach and scope of this initiative.

- b) **River Cleaning** – Being a tropical island, water cleanliness is just as important as land cleanliness for our ecosystem. The Gin Ganga River is an important 116 km long water body originating from the virgin Sinharaja Rainforest and flowing down through several villages towards Galle and into the Indian Ocean. Keeping the river clean benefits local neighbouring communities, the surrounding flora and fauna, and ultimately the ocean. This part of the project involves volunteers riding in canoes (2 per canoe) and cleaning smaller tributaries of the river of plastic and other waste products that threaten the immediate ecosystem. Life jackets, canoes, oars, scooping nets and waste collecting bags are provided. It requires teamwork and a sense of adventure, all done in a beautiful rural natural setting surrounded by paddy fields.
- c) **Reef Cleaning** – Reef cleanup refers to the efforts aimed at removing debris, plastic waste, and other pollutants from coral reef ecosystems. These cleanups are vital for preserving the health of reefs, which are under threat from pollution, overfishing, and climate change. By removing harmful materials, reef cleanups help protect marine biodiversity, maintain the reef's ecological balance, and promote sustainable practices for ocean conservation. Volunteers and divers often work together to collect trash, raise awareness, and support long-term reef restoration initiatives.
- d) **Forest Cleaning** – Forest cleaning involves the removal of litter, invasive species, and pollutants from forest ecosystems to maintain their health and biodiversity. These efforts help reduce environmental degradation, prevent wildfires caused by accumulated waste, and support the growth of native plants and wildlife. Forest cleaning activities are typically carried out by volunteers, who work together to preserve the natural beauty and ecological balance of forests, ensuring they remain vital resources for future generations.

6) Tree Planting Campaign

- a) **Tree Connect** - TreeConnect plants hope, strengthens ecological resilience, promotes environmental stewardship, grows life for a greener and a healthier earth to benefit all living beings to foster a sustainable future to come. TreeConnect 1.0 is an initiative that contemplates to plant 500+ native trees in

schools to create awareness and educate the young generation on the importance of planting and protecting trees.

The frequency of the above activities during any given week or month will depend on the local conditions on the ground at the time (for example, river cleaning may not be possible to do during the heavy monsoon season due to flooding or high tides). It will also depend on the needs/priorities of the various initiatives and activities at certain times of the year. In general, however, volunteers can expect to participate in a majority of these activities during their time on the project, if not all of them. We also expect this project to evolve over time with new activities and initiatives introduced which expand the general scope and reach of our environmental conservation efforts in our community.

Other Information:

Availability: All year round (no blackout dates)

Arrival & Departure Days: Saturdays

Project Workdays: Monday to Friday (weekends are free)

Age Requirement: Any participant 16 years or over can participate in this project (for participants aged 16 and 17 years, we will need parental/guardian consent if unaccompanied by an adult). This project is also suitable for families. Children aged 5 years and above can actively participate in the project with their parent(s) or guardian(s).

Project Capacity: Maximum of 12 participants at one time

Nearest Airport: Colombo Bandaranaike International Airport

Location of Project: Multiple locations in and around Galle District (e.g., Koggala Lagoon, Unawatuna, Baddegama, Dewata, Gin Ganga River, etc.)

Meals Provided: 3 freshly cooked meals every day (breakfast + lunch + dinner) (Monday to Sunday). The cooking style tends to be a **mix of both local authentic Sri Lankan** cuisine in the form of various curries (vegetarian and non-vegetarian), rice, coconut rotis, kottu, hoppers, etc, and western cuisine such as pastas, bread, wraps, spaghetti, etc. Fresh ingredients are purchased on a regular basis from local vendors and markets for the preparation of these meals. We also source fresh vegetables from our own organic garden from time to time. The emphasis is on cooking fresh, healthy, organic and delicious food so participants get to experience authentic Sri Lankan flavours along with all its nutritional goodness. With every meal we serve a minimum of one tropical fruit and a fresh salad mostly at lunches and dinners.

There are also **multiple local supermarkets** near us from where participants can buy food they like (e.g., nuts, avocados, packaged goods, etc.). We can also accommodate varied food requirements (e.g., vegetarians, vegans, specific allergies, etc.) if these requirements are mentioned to us beforehand.

The volunteer house is also located in close proximity to **several restaurants**, bars and cafes that offer high quality international cuisines (Italian, Asian, Mexican, Persian, etc) which give our participants additional options.

Support Provided: On arrival, a detailed orientation & training program is provided, including health and safety training, culture training and an area orientation tour around Galle. Our project coordinator provides project-specific training and guides volunteers on all project- related activities each day. Local transportation to and from the project is included every day. Every single activity, be it project-related or operational, is managed, guided and supported by our experienced local team.

Accommodation

All bedrooms are equipped with open cabinets for volunteers to store their clothes and toiletries. Mattresses, pillows and cotton bed sheets/pillowcases are provided. We also provide drying racks and extension cables for each room. All rooms can be key locked. Each participant is provided with a **safety locker** in which they can store their cash, passports, jewellery and other valuables. Wall fans and/or floor fans are provided in each room and all rooms are ventilated well with windows. Room **cleaning is done twice a week** including the bed linen change, while bathrooms and common areas are cleaned regularly.

Participants have access to **refrigerators** in all the common areas on each floor. **Wi-Fi** is available to each participant in the villa (20 GB per person per month).

Air-conditioning is also available in an additional cost. Participants can bring self-attached mosquito nets that fit bunk beds should they wish to.

Transportation

Daily project transfers for all participants are provided in a van. The van is a 14 seater modern vehicle equipped with the necessary safety and security standards, while the driver is an experienced chauffeur with expert knowledge of Sri Lankan roads and traffic conditions. However, for certain projects other transportation modes like company-owned tuk-tuks, locally contracted Tuk Tuks or buses are used. Our Operations team has a network of trusted and dependable tuk-tuk drivers that we have been working with for a longer period of time that meets our safety standards. Private transfers can be arranged upon requests of the participants at an additional cost.

Arrivals

Participants fly into the Colombo Bandaranaike International Airport (CMB) which is only a **2 hour drive** from the volunteer house.

The destined arrival date for our participants is **Saturday**.

The morning transfer covers the flights that arrive between 6:00-10:00 AM whereas the afternoon airport transfer covers the participant whose flights are arriving between 2:30-6:30 PM.

If a participant arrives outside of these time windows, then they can either wait longer in the airport to avail the shared transfer service or they have the option to book a private transfer for an additional fee.

Country Overview

Sri Lanka is home to some of the most beautiful sights in the world. Sandy beaches, lush green forests, over 100 beautiful rivers and clear waters populated by thriving marine ecosystem adds up to its beauty. These make Sri Lanka a special place for wildlife like elephants, leopards, sloth bears, deer, peacocks, small loris, wild boar and porcupines to live in.

The main religion in Sri Lanka is **Buddhism** (approximately 70% of the population). Buddhism does not advocate the belief in a God; instead expects the individual to seek truth within one's own experience.

Sri Lanka has a number of **languages** that are spoken in the country. The two official languages are **Sinhalese** (most prominent) and **Tamil**. **English** is also spoken widely, particularly in urban areas, and is prominently used in education, science and commercial purposes.

Weather

Being a tropical island, Sri Lanka has very little seasonal change in weather and is good to visit all year round. The temperature ranges from 15 to 30 degrees (Celsius) on average depending on the day and whether you are in the mountain regions or not. The weather in our vicinity (Galle) averages about 25 degrees Celsius throughout the year.

Electricity

In Sri Lanka the standard voltage is 230 V. The standard frequency is 50 Hz. The power sockets that are used are of type-G.

You can use your electric appliances in Sri Lanka, if the standard voltage in your country is in between 220V - 240V (as in the UK, Europe, Australia and most of Asia and Africa). Participants are advised to purchase an international plug adapter for convenience.



What to Bring:

Since this project involves a significant amount of field work in a tropical climate, we recommend participants to wear casual, light and comfortable clothing that suits the type of activities listed above. Clothing should be comfortable yet conservative – no excessive skin should be shown as locals tend to be on the conservative side being a majority Buddhist country. Quick-dry material (or wet suit) is recommended (but not mandatory) when in close contact with water (e.g., river cleaning on canoes). Footwear can be comfortable sneakers or sandals/flipflops. Sunscreen recommended since a lot of the work is outside. Light rain jacket recommended during the wet season (June-November). A light rain jacket is recommended during the wet season (June-November) and when we go to the school awareness program volunteers should be wearing long pants and a t - shirt that covers the knees & shoulders.

The most important thing to note is not to pack too much, as you are to live in a shared accommodation with limited storage space (helps to be fairly mobile), while leaving room to pick any clothing or souvenirs during your time in Sri Lanka. Along with your other travel essential, following are few of the important things required by participants over here;

- Passport /Visa
- Travel & Insurance documents
- Debit/Credit cards
- Towel
- Mosquito net
- Plug adapter (type G)
- Laptop (education projects)
- Sanitary products (tampons)
- Mosquito Repellent
- Sun Blocks
- Rain jackets
- Jeans / trousers (mandatory for education projects)
- Flipflops
- If any allergic medications
- Anti-Diarrhoea Medication
- Throat Lozenges
- Paracetamol
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-histamine

Money

The national currency of Sri Lanka is the Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR). You can only purchase Sri Lankan Rupees in Sri Lanka (not an International Currency). On arrival at Colombo Airport, it is best to change some money at various Bank ATMs or traditional money exchange centres (located in the Airport arrival lobby area).

It is essential that you notify your bank(s) in advance of the dates you will be in Sri Lanka to ensure access to your bank accounts and debit/credit cards while you are away.

You should carry a debit card to withdraw cash from the ATM and to take a credit card

just in case you lose your debit card or it is blocked. **Avoid carrying large amounts of cash** in public as ATMs are well located and easily accessible in and around Unawatuna and Galle.

Activities

Following are the activities presented by the local team that is available for all its participants:

- Movie nights (weekly)
- Yoga Class (weekly)
- Guided Bike Tour (monthly)
- Monthly BBQ Nights (monthly)
- Special Events like Christmas, Buddhist & Hindu New Year, Easter, Ramadhan Fast Breaking, New Year Day...

The following are popular daily/weekend excursions around the area (at an additional charge):

- Wildlife Safari
- Whale Watching
- Rainforest hiking at Sinharaja Forest Reserve (UNESCO World Heritage site)
- Surfing Lessons
- Galle Fort Walking Tour
- Tea Plantation Visit
- Local Cooking Class
- Gem Cutting Workshop visit
- Jaffna Tour
- Ella-Kandy Tour
- Handloom Factory visit
- Hindu Temple visit
- Upper Diyaluma Waterfall Hiking
- Arugambay / East Coast Tour