



# Knuckles Forest Reserve

Come Walk With Us...

A photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in dry, brown leaves and several large, dark, mossy rocks. The forest is dense with green foliage and thin tree trunks. A semi-transparent dark grey box is overlaid on the upper half of the image, containing white text.

# Explore The Untamed

The Knuckles Forest Reserve features 34 peaks ranging from 900m to 1900m. Of these peaks, there are five prominent high mountain peaks named after its striking resemblance to the knuckles of a clenched fist. Straddling both the dry and wet zones, this exquisite UNESCO world heritage site is home to a plethora of wildlife endemic to this region.

From winding mountain tracks through ancient bush-clad landscapes and wildlife reserves to casual strolls along the river and fertile rolling hills, the Knuckles Forest Reserve and surrounding region offers an array of excellent walking and hiking trails to suit all levels.

# Wild Glamping

A mountain refuge where actions speak louder than words

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Wild Glamping was conceived to create an immersive experience in the wild. This property was born with one thing in mind – its environment. Created with minimal impact to the environment taking into consideration the natural light, waterflow, fauna and flora, Wild Glamping is a luxury refuge that brings nature to your door step.

One of the property's key features is, the absence of electricity and network connectivity to help travellers disconnect from the outside world and get in touch with the natural rhythms of nature.

The presence of solar powered utilities and use of local produce wherever possible really shows our stance on using available resources and preserving the surrounding environment. The campsite entails 10 luxury tents, a common area for guests to enjoy panoramic views and a dining area where freshly prepared meals are served to guests.

The property was brought to life by Mr. Chandra Wickramasinghe – a visionary in his own right, with an intention to srilankanise a unique regional experience via Thema Collection.



“ The Knuckles Range is home to some of the best treks in Sri Lanka. The variation in terrain, vegetation and the spectacular views make it an ever changing experience for trekkers of all levels. Hidden Trails - Sri Lanka utilizes Wild Glamping as the base for all treks in the region. Guests can enjoy the comforts of a hotel in an environment where nature is at their doorstep. Guides used by Hidden Trails - Sri Lanka and Wild Glamping have been carefully selected and trained to ensure that every guest's safety and wellbeing is assured while sharing their vast knowledge about this unique landscape. This is an experience like no other and I highly recommend it to all those who want to immerse themselves in nature and disconnect from the hustle and bustle of city life. ”



**Stewart Kreltshheim**  
*International Trekking Guide*  
*Managing Director Hidden Trails - Sri Lanka*

# High Knuckles Trek

Positively Transforming



## Overview

A trekking expedition within the Knuckles Range where we traverse tea plantations and forests to summit the highest point of the knuckles range. It is a beautiful and challenging hike that takes you through different elevations exposing you to different flora and fauna unique to this region. It is well worth the effort.

 Distance : 23 km (approx)

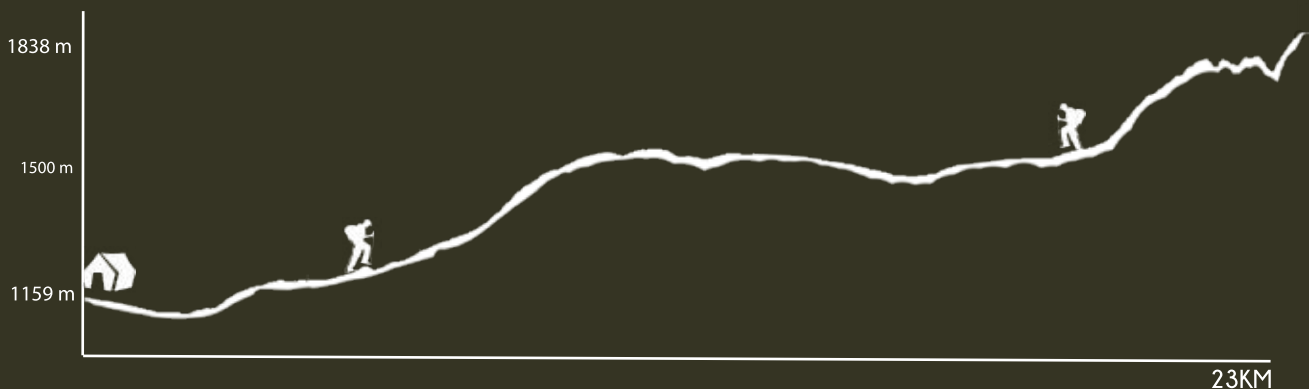
 Minimum Elevation : 1159m

 Duration : 8-9 hours




 Challenge : 

 Maximum Elevation : 1838m

 Recommended Start Time : 6:00am



## Things to Know

-  Time permitting, combinable with the Waterfall Trek
-  Time permitting, can be extended to see all four Knuckles Peaks
-  Possible to start or end trek from Gomara or Bambara Ella

# Waterfall Trek

## Hidden Escape



### Overview

Hidden away from the world's eye, somewhere in the depths of the Knuckles forest reserve, is a beautiful waterfall. Leave your luxury haven with the first rays of the sun and make your way through the terraced tea plantations before you enter the extravagance of the green forests of the Knuckles. Trek with your guide through the refreshing lush green forest enjoying the richness of the flora. A moderately challenging trail leads you to a waterfall humming in peaceful solitude, lost in the middle of rich verdure.

 Distance : 14 km (approx)

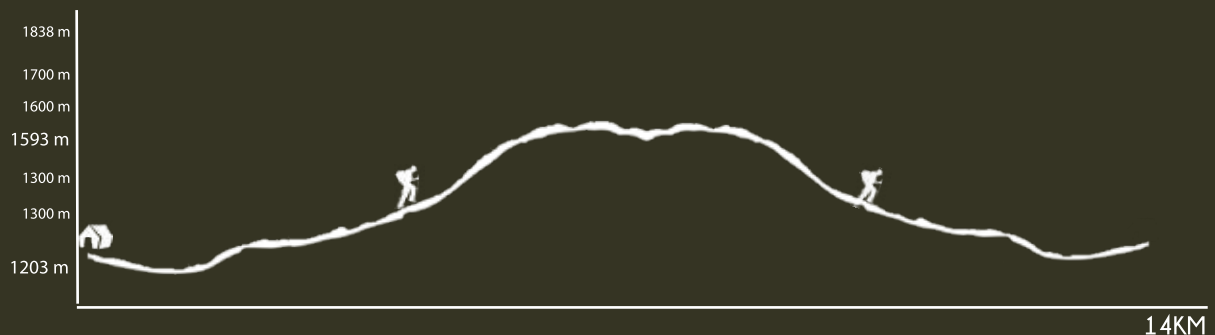
 Minimum Elevation : 1203m

 Duration : 5-7 hours



 Challenge : 

 Maximum Elevation : 1593m

 Recommended Start Time : 6:30am



### Things to Know

-  Time permitting, combinable with the High Knuckles Trek
-  Take a change of clothes in case the water entices you

# Heel Oya Trek

Discover Old World Charm



## Overview

Trod along a comfortable and gentle downhill trail that takes you to the rural village of “Heel Oya” at the foothills of the Knuckles which is still unscathed by mass tourism. Make your way through tea estates, pine forests, terraced paddy fields, waterways, misty hills and several viewpoints that is sure to revive the poet inside you.

Experience the authentic Sri Lankan lifestyle of locals, learn traditional paddy cultivation and farming methods while observing how certain spices are handmade. On your way back to the campsite, treat yourself with a refreshing dip in the cooling waterhole.

 Distance : 12 km (approx)

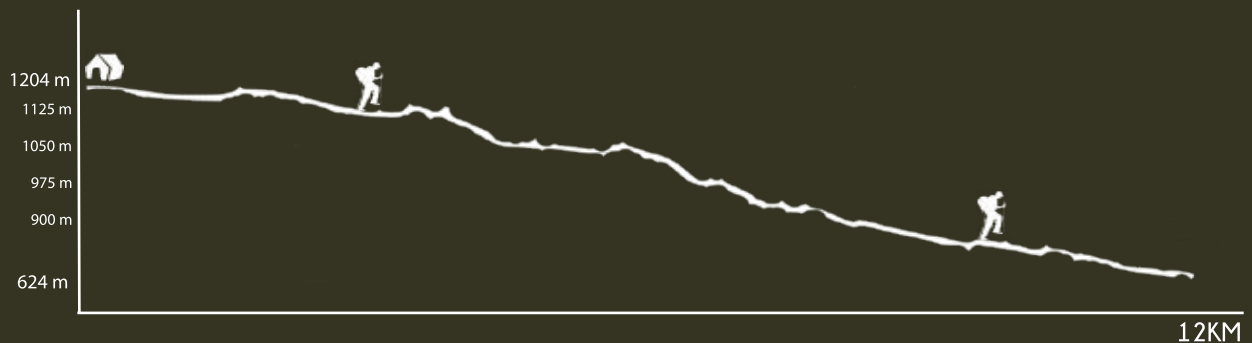
 Minimum Elevation : 624m

 Duration : 3-4 hours




 Challenge : 

 Maximum Elevation : 1204m

 Recommended Start Time : 7:30am



## Things to Know

-  The return journey is via jeep, the time is not included in the duration
-  Take a change of clothes in case the water entices you
-  Best combined with traditional village lunch and cooking demo

# Corbett's Gap Trek

A New Point of View



## Overview

One of the most memorable and magnificent view points in the mountain range is Corbett's Gap. It is named after the British surveyor Corbett who mapped the area. Corbett's gap features unique vegetation as it is in a rain shadow area and is referred to as "Attala Wettuwa".

 Distance : 11 km (approx)

 Minimum Elevation : 1159m

 Duration : 3-4 hours

 Challenge : 

 Maximum Elevation : 1366m

 Recommended Start Time : Anytime



## Things to Know

-  The trail is mostly in the shade and the hike is not affected by the mid-afternoon sun
-  Trek is mostly flat with a few hills



# Burnside

Explore Your Surroundings



## Overview

This excursion is a very picturesque walk through pine trees, tea plantations and eucalyptus trees ending up at a view point that looks onto a valley. Enjoy a blissful walk in pure and pristine nature feasting on the best awe-inspiring sights that nature has to offer.

 Distance : 7 km (approx)

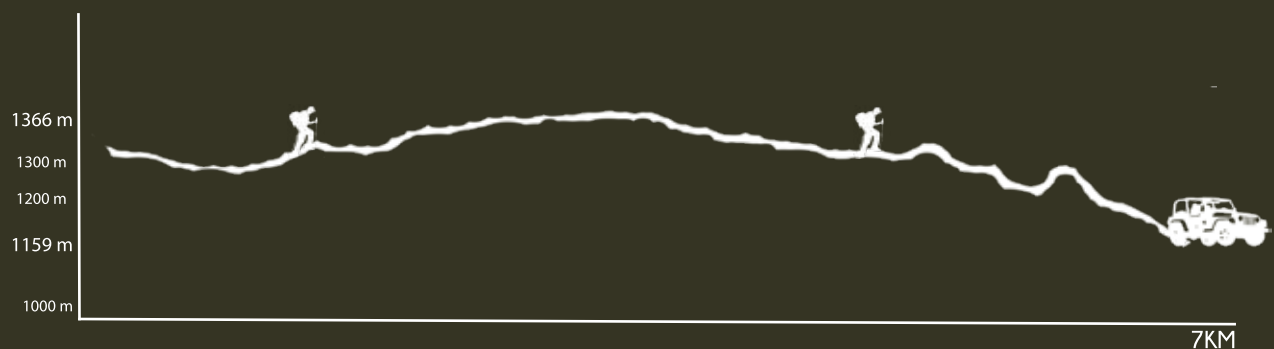
 Minimum Elevation : 1159m

 Duration : 2 hours




 Challenge : 

 Maximum Elevation : 1366m

 Recommended Start Time : Anytime



## Things to Know

-  The return journey is via jeep, the time is not included in the duration
-  We recommend taking a detour to visit the Burnside waterfall for a dip
-  Take a change of clothes in case the water entices you

# Nature & Bird Watching

## Endemic Discoveries

The Knuckles forest reserve is undoubtedly a paradise for ornithologists and bird-lovers. The mountain range has recorded 128 bird species of which 17 are endemic to the region. The Black eagle, Pale billed flower pecker, Yellow Fronted Barbet, Yellow eared bulbuls, Babblers and White Throated Kingfishers are birds that are frequently spotted.

If you are a bird lover and nature enthusiast, do not forget to take an evening stroll in search of these magnificent creatures. Take home with you, the memory of a cool breeze, mist covered hills and your contented spirit!



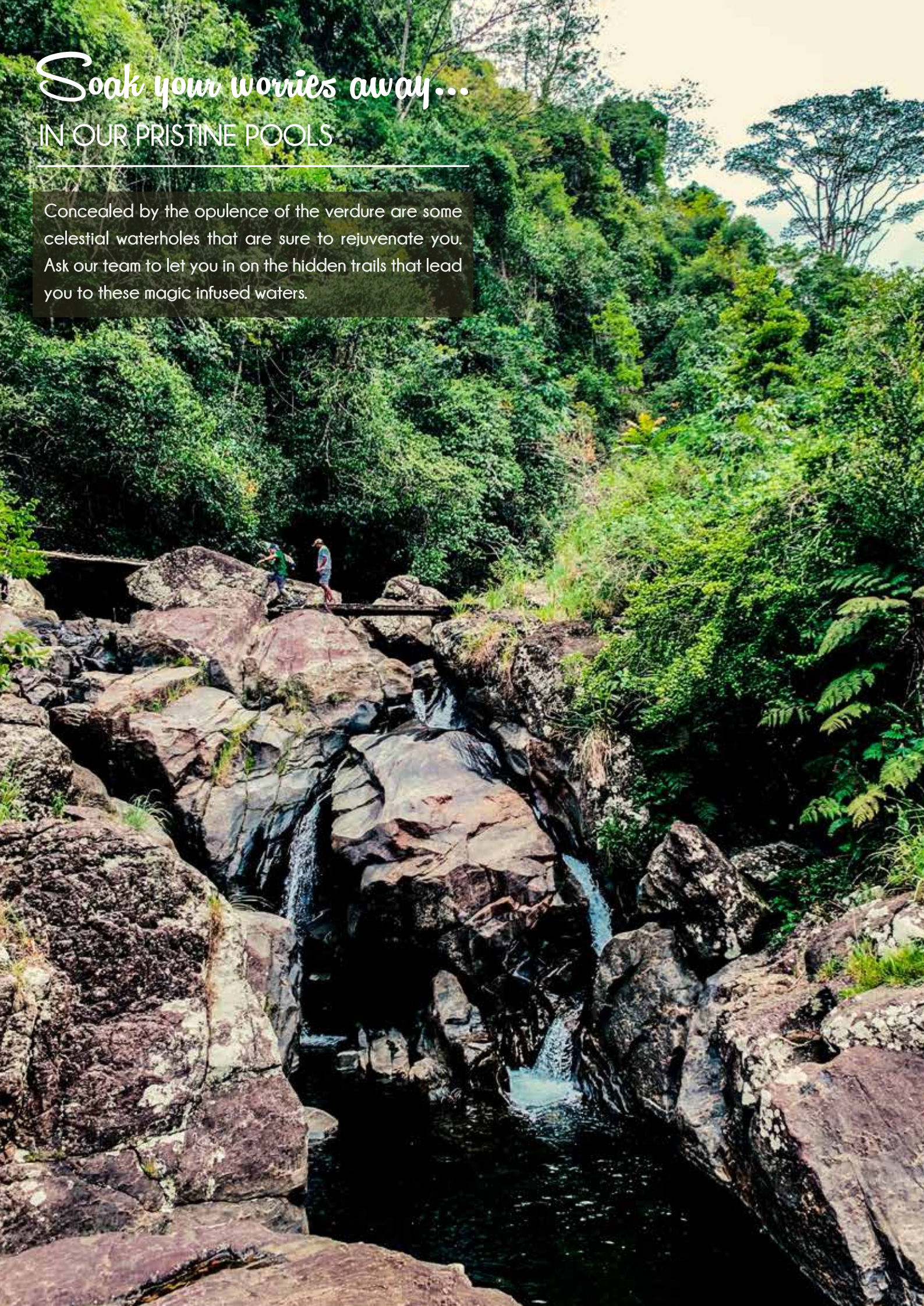
1. Sri Lankan Swallow 2. Black eagle 3. Pale billed flower pecker  
 4. Yellow Fronted Barbet 5. Sri Lanka hanging parrot 6. Sri Lankan White Eye  
 7. Crested serpent eagle 8. Yellow eared bulbuls 9. Babblers 10. White Throated Kingfisher 11. Dull blue flycatcher

*Soak your worries away...*

IN OUR PRISTINE POOLS

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Concealed by the opulence of the verdure are some celestial waterholes that are sure to rejuvenate you. Ask our team to let you in on the hidden trails that lead you to these magic infused waters.



# Discover a world of wonder...

The Knuckles Forest Reserve lies in central Sri Lanka, in the districts of Matale and Kandy. The range takes its name from a series of undulating folds and peaks in the west of the massif which resembles the knuckles of a clenched fist.

The Knuckles Range, locally known as 'Dumbara hills' meaning misty mountains, covers an area of approximately 21,000ha. The Knuckles massif is separated from the Central Highlands by a deeply incised valley referred to as the Dumbara Valley. It bears the superiority of 35 peaks above 900m of which 20 peaks are 1500m above sea level.



Figure 1: Sub Montane Rain Forest



Figure 3: Upper Montane Rain Forest



Figure 2: Riverine Forests

- The area above 1500m of the Knuckles Range was declared a Climatic Reserve in 1873
- The Knuckles Forest Reserve was declared a conservation forest in April 2000 and subsequently, a National Man and Biosphere
- The Knuckles Forest Reserve, the Peak Wilderness Forest region and Horton Plains (collectively called 'Central Highlands of Sri Lanka') was declared a Natural World Heritage Site in 2010

## Vegetation

The tropical 'lowland semi-evergreen vegetation' is seen in the valleys and harbours many large trees such as Milla, Mora, Welang and Badulla. The 'Upper Montane Rain Forests' (**Figure 1**) are found on the upper slopes, ridges and summits.



The upper reaches are described as 'cloud forests' rich in colourful orchids, ferns and moss. Filmy ferns are also common on the barks of trees and moist rock. Tropical sub-montane evergreen forests are found on the lower slopes of the hills.

Far drier slopes hold 'dry sub-montane evergreen rain forests' and luxuriant Riverine Forests (Figure 2) are found along the banks of rivers and streams.



Figure 4: Patana Grasslands

Savannas with isolated trees scattered over vast expanse of grasslands can be found on hilly slopes. Patana grasslands, (Figure 4) seen as a sea of closely grown grassy cover which are common on hills below 305m.

The unique grasslands called "Pitawala patana" has great aesthetic appeal. The grass cover is up to 10m tall in certain areas and grows over a gently sloping rock slab covered with a 10-15 cm soil layer.

Scrublands, occur around past human settlements with thorny or prickly shrubs that grow up to around two meters in height.

Pygmy forests (Figure 5) known as 'Kurugaskale' to locals are another interesting occurrence in the knuckles. Hundred-year-old trees with knotted, twisted trunks and branches rise up to only 1-2 m from the ground. Their barks are covered with lichens, mosses, orchids and ferns. Their height is believed to be a product of exposure to continuous and severe gale force winds.



Figure 5: Pigmy Forest

## Biodiversity

### Flora

A total of 1033 flowering plant species belonging to 141 families have been recorded from the Knuckles Forest Reserve of which 288 are woody plant species. 15% of the plant species are endemic to the region. One such endemic herb is 'Brachystelma lankana' that appears in the Patana grassland areas and is restricted to the Dumbara range. This small plant is locally known as 'Patan ala' or grassland yam because it has an edible fleshy tuber.

### Fauna

The Dumbara range provides shelter to 128 bird species, 20 amphibian species, 60 butterfly species, 17 mollusca species, 31 mammal species, 53 reptile species, and 15 fish species. Of the 128 bird species recorded from Dumbara Range, 17 are endemic. The Black Eagle is the largest bird while the Pale Billed Flower Pecker is the smallest. Other species like Yellow fronted barbets, White throated kingfishers, Yellow eared bulbuls, Babbler, and Dull blue flycatcher add cheerfulness to the forest environment.





Figure 6: Yellow Eared Bulbul



Figure 7: Pethiyagoda's Crestless Lizard

The Knuckles range is a great place to spot some lizard species endemic to Sri Lanka such as Pethiyagoda's Crestless Lizard (Figure 6), Leaf Nosed Lizard – male (Figure 7), Leaf Nosed Lizard – female (Figure 8) and the Knuckles Pygmy Lizard.



Figure 8: Leaf Nosed Lizard - Female



Figure 9: Leaf Nosed Lizard -Male

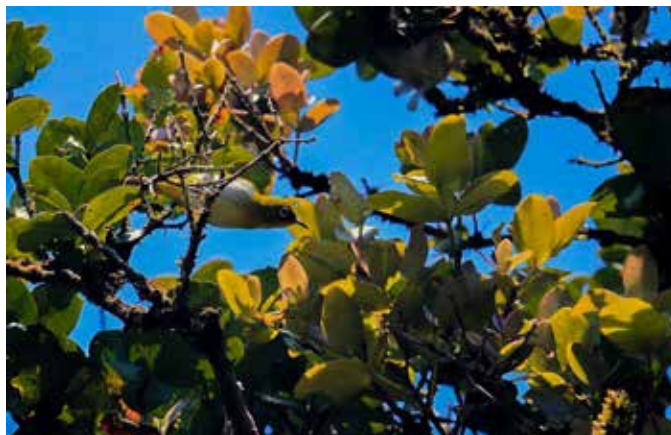


Figure 10: Ceylon white eye

The Dull Blue Flycatcher (Figure 10), Yellow eared bulbul (Figure 9) and Ceylon white eye (Figure 11) are two endemic birds that can be seen when you trek in the Knuckles Forest Reserve.



Figure 11: Dull blue flycatcher



“of all the paths you take in life make sure a few of them are dirt”

~ John Muir ~

# Leave No Trace

At Wild Glamping we are self-appointed guardians of this pristine nature reserve. We invite you to join forces with us by following a few simple steps:

## Staying on trail

Traveling on trail leaves room for wildlife and their homes. Shortcutting trails causes erosion. Don't worry about getting muddy! Step right through those puddles. Boots dry overnight but plants take years to recover.

## Trashing your trash

Please take out all trash — yours and others'. Even organic garbage such as orange peels, apple cores and food scraps, takes years to break down. Animals which feed on trash often die!

## Leaving it as you find it

Picking flowers, collecting rocks, or picking berries may not seem to be a big deal, but it means that others won't have a chance to enjoy them. Hundreds of people visit the Knuckles Reserve each year. If each person takes something, what will remain?

## Sharing our trails

We all enjoy the national parks in different ways. Pay attention, expect to encounter others and be courteous.



Wild Glamping  
KNUCKLES

*...forever wild*



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