

## Dothalugala Nature Trail – Knuckles Range

**Trail Difficulty:** Easy | Moderate | Strenuous | Tough

**Trail Head:** Knuckles Conservation Centre (KCC) - Deanston

**Nearest Town:** Hunnasgiriya

**Nearest City:** Kandy

**Access to Trail head:**

Route to Knuckles Conservation Centre (KCC) - Deanston

Colombo -> Kandy[A1] -> Hunnasgiriya[A26] -> KCC (On Hunnasgiriya - Loolwatta Road)

Total distance from Colombo is 160km. Paved roads all the way from Colombo. Condition of the road stretch from Hunnasgiriya can vary from good to bad depending on the level of maintenance. Generally this stretch can be tackled by an ordinary car.

**Trail End:** Observation Point - Dothalugala

**Total Length:** 3.8 km

**Elevation Gain:** 250m (Elevation at Trail Head: 1134m | Elevation at Trail End: 1388m).

**Approximate time:** 2 - 3 hours

**Hiking Season:** Best months are February to September

**Permit Required:** YES. Permit can be obtained from Knuckles Conservation Centre.

Dothalugala is one of around 34 mountain peaks that make up the Knuckles range. This nature trail will take you to a significant height up on Dothalugala mountain to reach an observation point where the panoramic view of the southern parts of the Knuckles range can be enjoyed.

The first 2km of the trail, which for the most part is a rough jeep track, takes you from the KCC to the Deanston forest department dormitory and camp site located at the base of Dothalugala mountain. The trail then winds up along the mountain, through the dense forest, gaining elevation at a rapid rate.

Once you reach the observation point you can take a different route downhill to reach the Camp site making a full circle through the forest.

**0 to 2.1km:** From KCC (**Waypoint: DG01**) start walking along the Hunnasgiriya – Loolwatta road towards Loolwatta. In 400m you will find a jeep track on to your left going uphill along an abandoned tea field (**Waypoint: DG02**). Get on to this jeep track and continue to walk along the jeep track. This jeep track leads to the Deantone dormitory and Camp site.

As you walk along the jeep track you can enjoy the beautiful landscape of mountains and the villages scattered among those on to your right hand side. You will experience a mild but continuous ascend. As you walk about 400m along the jeep track it will move in to a forest patch blocking the panoramic view of the valley and the distant mountains (**Waypoint: DG04**). After a brief walk through the forest, the track will again come out. As you walk further you will be able to see few more peaks of Knuckles in the distance. You will also see villages like "Kobonila" in the foothills of the "Kobonilagala" mountain.

After you walk about 1.3km along the jeep track you will reach a fairly flat section of the trail. As you walk about 300m more, the jeep track will descend a bit, cross a small stream and move in to a forest patch where the Deanston forest department dormitory is located (**Waypoint: DG09**).

If you got a serious 4WD you can drive up to this point.

Passing the dormitory, walk along the foot path for about 50m more towards the camp site. You will reach an open area where four trails meet (**Waypoint: DG10**). There is a trail almost in front of you, slightly towards your left hand side which leads to Dothalugala. The trail immediately next to that, on the right hand side goes slightly down-hill which in fact is the continuation of the trail from Dothalugala. Technically you can take either one of them and return on the other. We recommend you to take the first trail (towards left, uphill) as the climb is more evenly spread without particularly hard sections. Also there is a third trail with a steep climb down towards a stream which is a short trail (less than 100m) to a small waterfall.

**2.1km to 3.8km:** As you start climbing on the first trail, you will quickly enter the dense forest that covers most part of the mountain. A steady climb will be experienced through the woods; frequently making "U" turns right and left as the trail quickly gains elevation along the mountain side.

Around 450m from **DG10**, the trail will cross a small stream (**Waypoint: DG14**). The steady climb will continue for about 100m more and then the trail will become more flat. You will also notice that the surrounding forest now mainly consist of Bamboo (**Waypoint: DG15**). Knuckles forest got its traditional name "Bata Dhandu Kele" or "bamboo forest" because of this vegetation pattern.

After a brief flat section of about 150m through the bamboo forest the trail will again start climbing up. In the next 450m or so you will pass a section of trail with sharp "U" turns while crossing a series of small streams (Most of them go completely dry during the dry season), until you reach a spot where there is an outlook towards your left with the trail continuing along some stone steps (**Waypoint: DG20**). You will find occasional descends, but the section of the trail up to this point in general is a steep ascend.

Passing **DG20**, as you walk about 50m more you will reach another opening (**Waypoint: DG21**). Passing this continue to climb through the forest. 200m from this point you will reach two more open areas next to each other (about 20m apart) (**Waypoint: DG22, DG23**). As you climb about 100m more, the climb will become less intense, 100m more through the forest the trail will become broader. Another 100m walk will take you to the Dothalugala Observation point where you can see the surrounding over the pigmy forest (**Waypoint: DG24**)

**Your Way back to DG10 (2km):** From the observation point, as you turn back towards the trail you climbed up on, you will find another trail on the left hand side to the trail you climbed up. Start climbing down along this trail. Unlike the trail you climbed up, this trail winds mostly through an abandoned tea field with less forest cover. This will give you an opportunity to enjoy the landscape unobstructed. You will also witness how forests slowly recover covering the old tea estate. You will also find several steep descends along this trail. This trail will take you back to waypoint **DG10**

**Tips, Notes & special remarks:**

- Make sure that you carry a water bottle. Most part of the trail can be quite dry during the dry month and water sources can become limited.
- The last reliable water source while climbing up is the stream close to the Deanston dormitory & Camp site.
- Drinking water from streams is safe.
- Last 1.8km of the trail is infected with leaches. Make sure that you either wear leach proof socks or carry a repellent.
- Weather in the Knuckles range is extremely unpredictable, thick mist can cover mountains in a matter of minutes. Be prepared for rain.

**Way Points**

	N: dd°mm.mmm'	E: dd° mm.mmm'	Elevation
DG01 (KCC)	7° 19.810'	80° 51.676'	1134 m
DG02	7° 19.966'	80° 51.675'	1137 m
DG03	7° 20.017'	80° 51.688'	1139 m
DG04	7° 20.102'	80° 51.601'	1130 m
DG05	7° 20.109'	80° 51.481'	1157 m
DG06	7° 20.194'	80° 51.371'	1179 m
DG07	7° 20.157'	80° 51.301'	1195 m
DG08	7° 20.281'	80° 51.098'	1213 m
DG09 (Deanston dormitory)	7° 20.289'	80° 51.065'	1196 m
DG10 (Camp Site Junction)	7° 20.315'	80° 51.061'	1208 m
DG11	7° 20.298'	80° 51.012'	1237 m
DG12	7° 20.244'	80° 51.034'	1220 m

DG13	7° 20.270'	80° 50.998'	1232 m
DG14	7° 20.267'	80° 50.937'	1245 m
DG15	7° 20.391'	80° 50.863'	1288 m
DG16	7° 20.370'	80° 50.813'	1286 m
DG17	7° 20.327'	80° 50.713'	1318 m
DG18	7° 20.363'	80° 50.685'	1321 m
DG19	7° 20.320'	80° 50.685'	1330 m
DG20	7° 20.320'	80° 50.738'	1370 m
DG21	7° 20.309'	80° 50.756'	1367 m
DG22	7° 20.280'	80° 50.752'	1364 m
DG23	7° 20.288'	80° 50.739'	1394 m
DG24 (Dothalugala Peak)	7° 20.345'	80° 50.560'	1388 m
DG25	7° 20.348'	80° 50.560'	1409 m
DG26	7° 20.373'	80° 50.587'	1398 m
DG27	7° 20.382'	80° 50.599'	1388 m
DG28	7° 20.376'	80° 50.625'	1369 m
DG29	7° 20.455'	80° 50.640'	1349 m
DG30	7° 20.487'	80° 50.669'	1337 m
DG31	7° 20.522'	80° 50.715'	1320 m
DG32	7° 20.472'	80° 50.696'	1295 m
DG33	7° 20.422'	80° 50.679'	1286 m
DG34	7° 20.398'	80° 50.729'	1274 m
DG35	7° 20.461'	80° 50.816'	1245 m
DG36	7° 20.482'	80° 50.860'	1186 m
DG37	7° 20.454'	80° 50.929'	1179 m
DG38	7° 20.359'	80° 50.977'	1189 m
DG39 (Camp Site Junction)	7° 20.318'	80° 51.060'	1200 m
Deanston Falls	7° 20.310'	80° 51.084'	1184 m