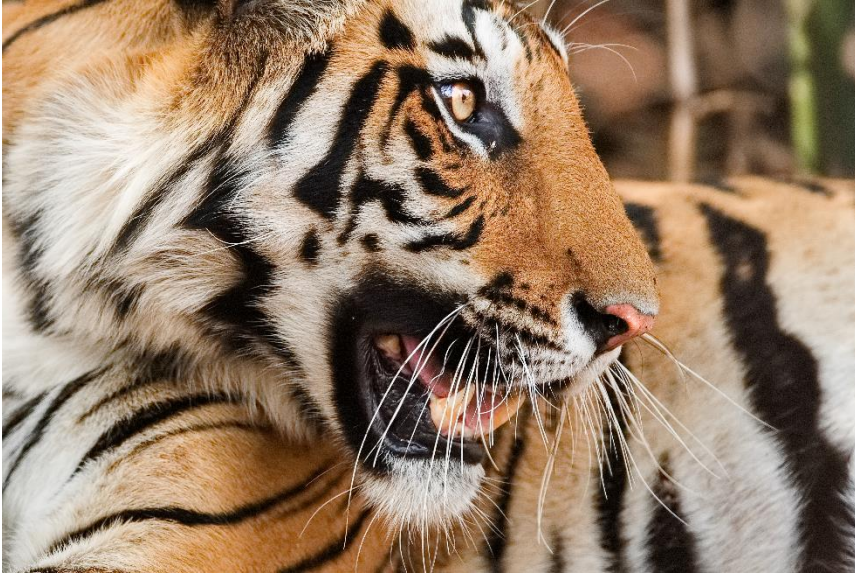




Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Bengal Tiger

The Ultimate Tiger Experience: India's Bandhavgarh, Kanha, and Pench National Parks

14 Nights/15 Days

This Ultimate Tiger Experience photo tour takes us to 3 of India's top "must visit" Tiger reserves and focuses on density of Tigers, diversity of settings, smaller crowds, and overall richness of other wildlife. These Parks are the center of wildlife tourism in India thanks of course to their high numbers of wild Bengal Tigers, but also for their abundance and diversity of other wildlife in addition to Tigers.

First, we visit Bandhavgarh on the slopes of the Vindhya mountain range, with its mesmerizing forest structure of dense, moist deciduous forest, marshy grasslands, dry grasslands, hill sides, perennial streams and numerous water bodies where wildlife abounds. With its high density of Tigers, sightings are relatively easy in such a diverse landscape. This park has established a reputation as one of the best places in India to observe Tigers, thus, making it one of the most favored destinations for wildlife photographers.

Next, we traverse the scenic Vindhya Hills towards Kanha (National Park) Tiger Reserve, first established in 1955, and where opportunities to observe and photograph Tigers on safari are very abundant.

Kanha Tiger Reserve is spread over nearly 2,000 square kilometers and is one of the largest Tiger reserves in India. The Park comprises forested hills that embrace broad, undulating grasslands dotted with clumps of bamboo and dense evergreen forest, with numerous small water bodies and streambeds that provide essential drinking holes for the animals.

Finally, we travel to Pench National Park which gained prominence following its designation as Project Tiger's 19th Tiger Reserve in 1992. Pench encompasses over 758 square kilometers of prime Tiger habitat and is situated amongst the southern reaches of the Satpura Hills. The terrain is rugged and the region's hills are cloaked in both moist deciduous forest and dry deciduous forest, dominated by Teak, with occasional patches of Bamboo. Pench is also well known for a BBC film titled: 'Tiger-Spy in the Jungle' which documented one of the Tiger families living at Pench.

With such a huge and magnificent diversity of wildlife, there is hardly a moment in these 3 parks that passes without amazing sightings and photography. This tour is a must do for people who enjoy being in the wild, and who wish to watch, experience and photograph wildlife -and especially big cats- in a pristine environment. There is also a lot to offer to Birdwatchers, or people interested in wildlife in general.



Bengal Tiger

Tour Overview

Day 1: Arrive Delhi (DEL), transfer to hotel
Day 2: Flight to Jabalpur (JLR), transfer to Bandhavgarh
Days 3, 4, 5: Bandhavgarh tiger and wildlife safaris
Day 6: Morning safari, transfer to Kanha
Days 7, 8, 9, 10: Kanha tiger and wildlife safaris
Day 11: Morning transfer to Pench, afternoon safari.
Days 12, 13: Pench tiger and wildlife safaris
Day 14: Morning tiger and wildlife safari, transfer to Nagpur airport and flights to Delhi
Day 15: International flights home from Delhi (DEL)

14 Nights/15 Days Itinerary:

Day 1, Arrive Delhi, transfer to hotel:

Arrive Delhi, meet our Tour Leader at the airport and then transfer to our hotel (20-40 mins drive). After the check in formalities and some rest, we'll meet later in the evening

to enjoy the welcome dinner, and overview of plans for the next day.

Meals: Dinner

Lodging at Taj Vivanta or similar

Day 2, Flight and transfer from Jabalpur to Bandhavgarh National Park:

After breakfast today, we'll proceed to the airport to board our flight to Jabalpur (Flight duration 1.5 hours). On arrival, drivers will be waiting for us, and we will transfer to Bandhavgarh National Park. The drive lasts about 3 hours, and the road traverses through beautiful countryside, villages and towns, offering us a good insight into Indian rural village culture and the bustling town life.

On arrival at the lodge, we'll have time for check in and relaxing before dinner and an overview of our plans for the next several days.

Our Lodge will consist of well laid out, large, air-conditioned cottages

and rooms situated on the fringes of the park. While breakfasts are packed for the park safaris, lunches and dinners are served in the common dining area (enclosed), in a buffet setup. Any dietary requests would be easily taken care of. The location of the property is between 5 and 20 minutes from the Park's 3 entry zones

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Tiger Den/Bandhav Vilas*

Day 3, 4, 5, Bandhavgarh National Park- Tiger and Wildlife safaris:

After an early morning wake up call, followed by hot refreshments, we'll depart on our first morning Tiger safari! The duration of morning and afternoon safaris is usually around 4 hours (depending on season) with a return to the lodge for lunch in between. To responsibly manage the number of jeeps in the park, and minimize human impact, the tourism area has been divided into 3 zones.

Zone 1 (Tala) is the closest to our lodge, then zone 2 (Magadhi) and zone 3 (Khitauli). All the zones have many routes which are allocated at the entrance of the park. Bandhavgarh has been a favorite among wildlife photographers and hence, it can get busy. The good news is that entry numbers are closely monitored and followed leading to fewer jeeps on individual routes.

We'll take full advantage of our time while on safaris, and focus on getting the best sightings of Tigers, Leopards, Sloth Bear and myriad other animals in the forest. This Tiger reserve is also very well known for its bird life, and offers a lot of migratory species.

Our breakfasts are served as picnic breakfast in the park at designated rest areas. During these 3+ days, we'll enjoy 7 safaris in Bandhavgarh, and the zones we visit will be selected as per the best sightings recorded at the booking time.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Tiger Den/Bandhav Vilas*

Day 6, Transfer to Kanha National Park:

After a final morning safari at Bandhavgarh, we'll check out from the lodge, and start our drive towards Kanha National Park. The journey follows another beautiful route in Central India, with the road passing through small villages to bustling towns, with crops being harvested and people working in the fields. The drive takes about 4.5 hours, and we'll enjoy our lunch along the way as we drive through these beautiful views. We'll arrive in time for dinner and relaxing before we turn in.

Our lodge for the next few days will be Kanha Jungle Camp, one of the most comfortable and reputable safari lodges at the Park. The cottages are well laid out, with A/C and plenty of privacy, and each has a deck with beautiful views of surrounding forest and active wildlife, birds and butterflies during the day. The laid-back atmosphere provides for a much-relaxed experience for guests. While the breakfasts are packed for our park safaris, lunches and dinners are served in the common dining area (open), in a buffet setup. The location of the property is between 10 and 20 minutes from the park entrances and is located on the edge of a village and in the buffer zone of the park.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Kanha Jungle
Camp/Chitvan*

Leopard





Barasingha

Day 7, 8, 9, 10, Kanha National Park- Tiger and Wildlife safaris:

One of the most beautiful Tiger reserves in India, Kanha is home to one of the most sizeable populations of wild Tigers in India along with a good diversity of other wildlife as well as landscapes. During the time we are here, we'll enjoy 8 safaris to maximize opportunities for Tiger sightings. Kanha is one of the largest Tiger reserves in the country, and is home to a large number of Tigers, Leopards, Sloth Bears, Gaur and even a population of Wild Dogs (Dhole). This Park is also the only known place with Barahsingha (Hard-ground Swamp Deer) which are commonly seen alongside the Spotted and Sambar Deer in the grasslands. Blackbucks have been reestablished here recently, and we are likely to see these striking antelope grazing in the open grasslands. The diversity of landscape also attracts a variety of bird life. The park is divided into 4

zones for tourism management purposes, but our entry gate will be the closest to the lodge, and we'll have access to any zones we have booked for. Here in Kanha the morning safari duration is about 4 hours while afternoon safari is for about 3 hours. While we will enjoy packed breakfast in the park, our lunches and dinners will be served at the lodge.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Kanha Jungle
Camp/Chitvan*

Day 11, AM transfer to Pench National Park:

Today after freshening up and breakfast, we'll pack our bags, and depart for our next destination, Pench National Park. The drive to Pench takes about 3.5 hours, and the road passes through towns and villages offering wonderful insight into the day to day lives of the people living in the region. On reaching Pench we'll check in to our lodge and after lunch, embark on our first afternoon Tiger safari here where sightings of Tigers, as well as Leopards, are a very high probability.

Our lodge at Pench will be Pench Jungle Camp with private, air-conditioned luxury tents with indoor bath and decks offering views of the forested garden areas within the property. The lodge has an in-house spa, which specializes in a selection of traditional Indian massages. While our breakfasts are packed for the park safaris, lunches and dinners are served in the common dining area

(enclosed), in a buffet setup. The location of the property is approximately 5-10 minutes from the park entrance and is safely located on the edge of a rural village.

Bird life is very rich here and the grounds are excellent for bird and butterfly photography.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Pench Jungle Camp or similar*

Day 12 and 13, Pench National Park- Tiger and Wildlife safaris:

During our time here at Pench, we'll enjoy a total of 6 Tiger safaris to further extend our opportunities for sightings. This park is very well known for its abundant Tigers sightings, and once hosted a famous BBC documentary film, "Tiger- Spy in the Jungle" which documented a family of Tigers, as the cubs were raised to adulthood. The park is also famous for large packs of Wild Dogs (Dhole) and Leopards, and is known for having the highest density of prey animals in central India! The park's open woodlands afford ample opportunities for observing Tigers and wildlife amidst great scenery with gorgeous backgrounds.

The entry gate used for accessing the park is close to our lodge, and the park uses this single entrance system for better management. There are no zones in Pench National Park and we will use an allotted route once inside. Upon leaving the park, we can choose from different exit points.

Here at Pench, the morning safari duration is about 4 hours while the afternoon safari is about 3 hours. We'll enjoy packed breakfasts in the park, and our lunches and dinners will be served at the lodge.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Pench Jungle Camp or similar*

Day 14, AM safari, transfer to Nagpur:

Today we'll have an early morning wake up and another morning Tiger safari, affording our final opportunity for Tiger sightings. After safari, we return to the lodge, freshen up, pack our bags, and after lunch, depart for Nagpur. On arrival at Nagpur, we'll check in to our flights to Delhi, arriving at our hotel in time for a late dinner and resting up before our international flights home the next day.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Taj Vivanta or similar*

Day 15, International flights home.

Notes on other wildlife:

Mammals:

All the parks we visit are prominent tiger reserves, offering some excellent views of the magnificent Big Cat, however in addition to Tigers, we can also expect to observe plenty of Sambar, Spotted and Swamp Deer (Swamp Deer is Exclusive to Kanha). Antelope species we might spot would be Nilgai/Blue Bull, Blackbuck, Chinkara, or the shy and elusive Four Horned Antelope. We should also see Gaur, Wild Boar, Common

Langur, Rhesus Macaques, Asiatic Jackal, Grey and Ruddy Mongoose, and with luck, Sloth Bear, Leopard and Dhole (Indian Wild Dog). We would also be lucky to spot an Indian Giant Flying Squirrel, mostly nocturnal species, but in summer, we have seen them during the day as well. Jungle Cats, Rusty Spotted Cat and Leopard Cat are encountered but uncommon. On our drives to and from the park, we might also be lucky to spot the Bengal Fox, or occasionally Indian Wolf! While in Bandhavgarh, we may even have chance encounter wild Indian Elephants.

Birds:

All the parks in this tour have huge diversity of birds, with as many as 350 species seen during different seasons, many of which are winter migrants. Resident species include Brown Fish Owl, Indian Scops Owl and the rare Oriental Scops Owl. Spotted and Jungle Owlet are common. Lesser Adjutant and Woolly Necked and Black Stork are common sightings as are White Throated, Pied and Stork Billed Kingfishers, Indian Grey Hornbill and sometimes a Malabar Pied Hornbill. Lesser Goldenback, White-naped, Yellow Crowned, Rufous, Streak-throated, and Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers can be heard and seen throughout the day, while the Coppersmith and Brown-headed Barbet are difficult to spot but possible in fruiting trees. Meanwhile, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Scarlett Minivets, Green Bee-eaters, Red Avadavats, Rose ringed, Alexandrine and Plum-headed Parakeet and Indian Rollers add a splash of color



Crested Hawk Eagle

to the forest! Commonly seen raptors include Crested Serpent Eagle, Crested Hawk Eagle, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Shikra, White-eyed Buzzard, and Vulture species like Long-billed, White-rumped and Red-headed. On the ground can be seen Red and Painted Spur-fowl along with Grey Francolins and Jungle Bush Quail, as well as Barred Button Quail.

Reptiles and Amphibians:

Among the reptiles and amphibians, Monitor Lizards and Garden lizards are quite common, while the venomous snakes include Spectacled Cobra, Russell's Viper, Common Krait, Bamboo and Red-tailed Pit Viper, mildly venomous Green Vine Snake. Non-venomous species include Common Rat Snake, and the biggest of them all the Indian Rock Python. Though sighting snakes is not common during the dry season we will experience, if we do see any, we will do our best to safely observe and if possible, photograph



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Travel insurance:

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.

Vehicles:

The jeeps used for safaris can accommodate 4 clients in two rows + driver and guide in the front row. As per our policy, we use 1 jeep for 3 clients + Tour Leader only. Per jeep, there will be 3 clients + TL + driver and guide. For those wanting a private vehicle or fewer guests in the vehicle, this can be arranged at additional cost.

Included in this itinerary:

All ground transfers, lodging as indicated, meals beginning with dinner on arrival day to breakfast on departure day, 7 safaris into Bandhavgarh, 8 safaris into Kanha, 6 safaris into Pench with all permits, guide and Gypsy hire charges, bottled water and snacks for transfers, English-speaking Naturalist Guide throughout.

Not Included:

India visa, international flights, food/drinks not mentioned, any extra, optional safaris, video/camera charges, tips, insurance, and other personal items such as alcoholic beverages, gift shop, laundry, etc. are not included.



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