

India's Wildlife - A Photography Tour

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Delhi; overnight train to Katni.
Days 3/9	Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve.
Day 10	Final day in Bandhavgarh; overnight train to Agra.
Day 11	Full day sightseeing in Agra; train to Delhi in the evening.
Day 12	Return London.



Chambal & Bharatpur extension

Day 11	Evening transfer to Chambal.
Day 12	Chambal.
Day 13/14	Bharatpur.
Day 15	Delhi.
Day 16	Return London.



Dates and Cost

See next page for a complete list

Grading

A. This is a straightforward wildlife tour with no strenuous walking

Focus

Wildlife photography



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Dates**2026**

Wednesday 21st October - Sunday 1st November 2026 **Cost: £3,995**
Chambal & Bharatpur extension: Saturday 31st Oct – Thursday 5th Nov **£1,295**

2027

Wednesday 3rd March - Sunday 14th March 2027 **Cost: £3,995**
Chambal & Bharatpur extension: Saturday 13th – Thursday 18th March **£1,295**

Wednesday 13th October - Sunday 24th October 2027 **Cost: £3,995**
Chambal & Bharatpur extension: Saturday 23rd Oct – Thursday 28th Oct **£1,295**

2028

Wednesday 23rd February - Sunday 5th March 2028 **Cost: £3,995**
Chambal & Bharatpur extension: Saturday 4th – Thursday 9th March **£1,295**

Wednesday 18th October - Sunday 29th October 2028 **Cost: £3,995**
Chambal & Bharatpur extension: Saturday 28th Oct – Thursday 2nd Nov **£1,295**

Single room supplement

£795 (Add £395 for extension)



A sub adult female at a waterhole



Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*)



The bold Sukkhi Pattiya female



A Royal Bengal tiger on the safari track



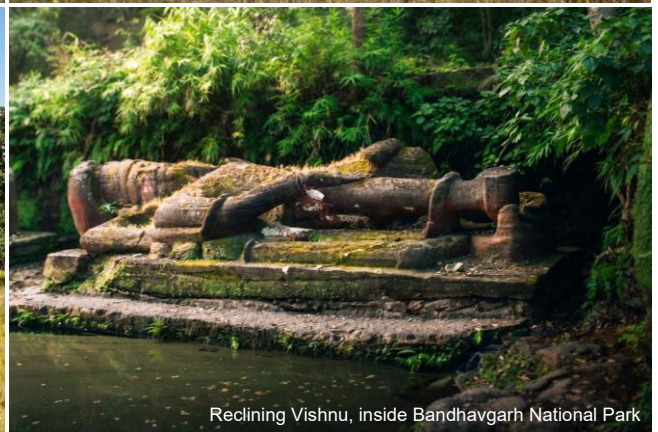
Peacock (*Pavo cristatus*)



Doe of a Sambar (*Rusa unicolor*)



Bandhavgarh fort, Bandhavgarh National Park



Reclining Vishnu, inside Bandhavgarh National Park

Introduction

Bandhavgarh National Park and Tiger Reserve, situated amid the airy Vindhya Hills of Madhya Pradesh, has established a reputation as one of the best places in India to observe Tigers. Although a relatively small reserve when first established in 1968, it was enlarged 20 years later to include adjacent tracts of Sal forest and this extension has proved very beneficial for the Tiger population. Estimates for 2022 suggest that the whole park area could have as many as 135 Tigers, so be sure to have your cameras at the ready! Formerly the hunting reserve of the Maharajas of Rewa, the area contains much evidence of its royal associations, most spectacular being the ruins of a huge hilltop fort which dominates the center of the Reserve. Bandhavgarh is somewhat isolated in the rural heart of India.

Day 1

Wednesday

Flight

We depart from London on direct British Airways scheduled flight to Delhi at 1855. We will be in flight overnight.

Day 2

Thursday

Train to Katni

We arrive in the morning and transfer to our hotel located close to the airport. Our freshen up rooms in Delhi for this holiday is at the comfortable hotel, usually Roseate House/Pride Plaza or similar for a convenient access to the Delhi airport, (only a few rooms will be booked for the whole group for a couple of hours). Whether you're looking for a quick bite while you're on the go or a comfortable setting in which to savour a meal, tantalizing options, are at hand.



In the late afternoon we will board our express train and begin the long, but interesting, journey towards central India. We will have air-conditioned sleepers on this journey. Before settling down for the night, there is plenty to see through the carriage windows as we leave the crowded city behind and steadily head towards our destination – the ever-changing scenes of rural India will unfold in front of us.

Although the great steam locomotives have now largely been replaced, travel by Indian Railways is still a remarkable experience. At each station the arrival of the express is followed by an incredible hubbub of noise and movement as vendors rush down the platform shouting the name of the product they are selling, porters stagger past carrying huge quantities of luggage on their heads, and oncoming passengers meet those trying to get off the train in a chaotic melee of bodies and suitcases.

Once peace has been restored and the journey is underway again, it is often possible to see a surprising variety of birds from the train, particularly when the track runs alongside areas of wetland or over a river bridge. Occasionally, mammals are disturbed – perhaps the most likely one being the ungainly Nilgai which often wander through cultivated land, browsing on the crops. As night falls, we will have completed almost a third of our journey and we will fall asleep with the exciting thought that within the next 24 hours we may have had our first encounter with the ‘striped gentleman’.

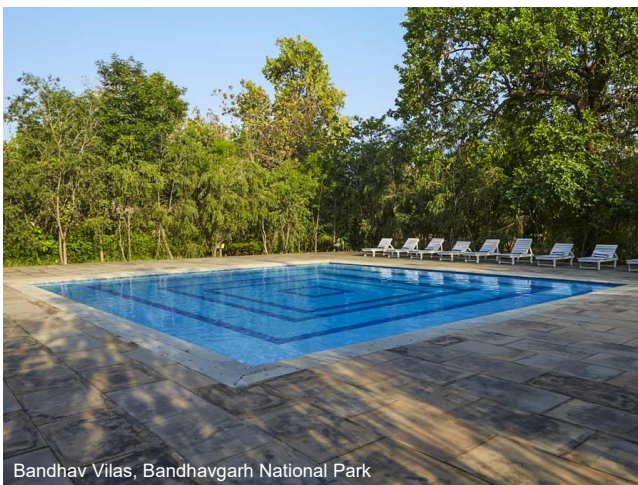
Day 3

Friday

Bandhavgarh (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

We are due to arrive at Katni early in the morning. It is then a 2-hour journey by road to our accommodation, which is situated close to Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. We will be staying at the Bandhav Vilas Lodge or similar, which is situated just fifteen-minute drive away from the Tala zone of the Tiger Reserve. The jungle lodge has been developed on the theme of an Indian village, offering spacious, comfortable individual cottages with en suite facilities. The spacious dining room serves mainly Indian food, though a choice is possible on request.

Once we have arrived, we'll have the rest of the morning free to relax or look for birds in the surrounding area. Later in the day we will take the first of 13 game drives in the Tiger Reserve, so beginning our routine of afternoon and early morning visits to the Reserve, which will provide many wonderful opportunities for wildlife viewing during our stay in Bandhavgarh.



Bandhav Vilas, Bandhavgarh National Park



Days 4 – 9

Saturday – Thursday

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve

In Bandhavgarh our daily routine will include early morning and afternoon visits to the Tiger Reserve and these will provide many opportunities for wildlife viewing. We'll be making a total of 13 game drives to the Tiger Reserve during our eight-day stay here.

The aim of this tour is to see and photograph a range of India's wildlife, including Tigers and a special focus will be given to photography. There are restrictions on the amount of time you can spend in any one location in Indian national parks and Tiger reserves. However, where possible we will stay longer than usual when there are good views

of target species, to ensure everyone has taken the shots they want. The tour leaders for this trip are experienced naturalist and wildlife photographers and they will be able to provide advice on getting the best shots and where to go to find the best views of a particular species. Of course, we can never guarantee this.

Sal forest predominates in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, giving way to tracts of mixed forest at higher elevations in the hills. To the north there are expanses of grassland and bamboo.

In a region as arid as this the presence of water attracts wildlife. Luckily, the Tiger Reserve contains pools and streams, which ensure that it is frequented by both game and predators. We will explore the Tiger Reserve mainly by following a network of jeep tracks that will lead us into the forested areas.

Tigers are elusive creatures and quick to vanish into cover, but a huge paw print in the dust or the alarm cries of deer or langurs often betray the presence of an animal. At moments like this it is essential that we are, as a group, both silent and patient. Our reward for this will hopefully be an unforgettable moment. When the king of the forest saunters into view with scarcely a glance at the human intruders, then walks in a deliberate manner across the track only to disappear again into the undergrowth, it is one of the most thrilling wildlife spectacles in the world.

As well as making early morning and afternoon excursions we will also have periods of relaxation back at our lodge, which are especially welcome during the midday heat. Although Tigers are the star attraction at Bandhavgarh, there is an impressive supporting cast of mammals and birds, the latter including species such as Grey-headed Fishing Eagle, Plum-headed Parakeet, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Asian Paradise Flycatcher; over 250 species have been recorded in the Reserve. Tour members with an interest in ornithology will value the time between game drives as an opportunity to explore some of the habitats close to our base.

There is no shortage of prey in the Reserve for both the Tigers and less frequently seen Leopards. The Spotted Deer, or Chital, is a favourite item on the Tiger menu and several thousand of these delightful deer inhabit the Reserve. Other species found here in varying abundance include Chinkara, Chousingha, Wild Boar, Sambar, Muntjac and Nilgai. There used to be herds of Asian Bison, or Gaur, in the Reserve. A hunting pack of Indian Wild Dogs, or Dhole, is seen occasionally. Mammal sightings always require a degree of luck, particularly when a species is essentially nocturnal or reclusive, but each outing in the Reserve provides a chance to meet one of its rarer inhabitants such as Sloth Bear, Jackal or Jungle Cat. Wild Boar are frequently heard as they root among the vegetation. Other animals present in larger numbers in the Reserve include several species of mongoose, Rhesus Macaque, Indian Hare and the delightful Palm Squirrel lively little animals that seem to be in a constant state of agitation. Common Langurs are also plentiful, sitting with an elevated view of the forest as they devour their favourite leaves. This gives them an excellent vantage point for spotting predators and they are often the first creatures to bark out warning of a Tiger below.

We are never short of wildlife to watch in this gem of a reserve and six full days (Morning & Afternoon Safaris) will doubtless provide many unforgettable encounters with the creatures that flourish within the protection of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve.

Day 10**Friday****Overnight Train to Agra**

We take our final game drive in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve this morning and, if we are lucky, we will end our stay with some more special sightings! Later in the day we drive to Katni Rail Station and board the overnight express to Agra. We'll have air-conditioned sleeper compartments for this journey.

Day 11**Saturday****Agra & Delhi**

We arrive in the fascinating Moghul city of Agra in the morning. After refreshing and having breakfast at a city hotel (where only a few rooms will be booked for the whole group for wash and change) we will head straight for Agra's most famous monument, the Taj Mahal. We will spend the whole morning enjoying the magnificent atmosphere of the Taj, its splendid gardens with their backdrop of the Yamuna River and the bird life within the grounds. Later, after tearing ourselves away from the magical Taj, we will visit I'timād-ud-Daulah (meaning 'baby Taj'), the mausoleum of Mirza Ghiyas Beg, the grandfather of Mumtaz Mahal, the lady of the Taj. This monument is as magnificent as the Taj Mahal itself and set in idyllic riverside gardens. Agra Fort, too, is a marvellous structure, with towering walls 20m high. By the time we are ready to take a train back to Delhi, we'll have had a wonderful cultural day.

Arriving in Delhi three hours later, we will be transferred straight to the airport to catch our return flight to London.

**Day 12****Sunday****London**

We depart Delhi in the early hours of the morning on a scheduled British Airways direct flight to London, arriving home at around 0730.

Chambal & Bharatpur Extension

(The minimum number of people required to run this extension is five; however, we may decide to operate it with fewer people, at our discretion, with local guides.)



Day 11 – 12**Saturday - Sunday****Chambal**

After spending today enjoying the historic monuments of Agra, we will travel by road for two hours to Chambal, where we will spend two nights at the Mela Kothi Chambal Safari Lodge, a simple but comfortable eco-lodge (with private facilities) ideally situated for two days exploration of the region. The National Chambal Sanctuary, on the Chambal River, is a refuge for the rare and endangered Gharial and the Ganges River Dolphin. The area is best explored on boats, and we will be taking a spectacular wildlife viewing boat trip on the calm and gentle Chambal River. The river Chambal is one of India's most beautiful and least polluted river systems. In 1979 a 400km stretch of the river was given 'protected area status' with the creation of the National Chambal Sanctuary, which spans 635 sq km and protects this pristine river ecosystem, complete with its varied flora, aquatic life and avifauna, among which is an interesting selection of rare and exotic species. These include the elusive and endangered Ganges River Dolphin, both Marsh Mugger and Gharial Crocodile, a variety of freshwater turtles, otters, and a great many species of fish. The riverside habitats of the Chambal also offer excellent birdwatching opportunities, and the chance to see species such as River Tern, the increasingly uncommon, Black-bellied Tern, Great Black-headed Gull, and the bizarre Indian Skimmer, often to be found resting on sandbars in mid-river. Other attractions include the beautiful Small Pratincole, the Greater Thick-knee and many other waterbirds, including Little and Great Cormorants, Grey Heron, Cattle Egret, Lesser Whistling Duck, Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Comb Duck, Spot-billed Duck, Red-crested Pochard, Osprey, Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, River and Red-wattled Lapwings, Common and Spotted Redshanks, Greenshank, Green, Wood and Common Sandpipers, and Little and Temminck's Stints. Other



Chambal Safari Lodge (left and centre) and birdwatching in the grounds (right)

species present in the area include Black Kite, Steppe Eagle, Indian Peafowl, Rose-ringed (or Ring-necked) Parakeet, Indian Roller, White-throated and Pied Kingfishers, Sand Lark, Plain Martin, Barn and Wire-tailed Swallows, White, Masked and White-browed Wagtails, Large Grey and Jungle Babblers, Common and Bank Mynas, Black Drongo and House Crow.

Days 13 – 14

Monday - Tuesday

Bharatpur

After spending two nights at Chambal, we will take one last boat ride in the Chambal River and will then drive to Bharatpur. Here we will be based for two nights in The Birder's Inn, situated just outside the Sanctuary. This small privately owned lodge offers 20 spacious rooms that overlook a garden populated with fruit trees that attract various garden birds. You have all the necessary modern comforts like air-conditioning, swimming pool, hot and cold running water, a multi-cuisine restaurant & grill that serves a delectable variety of dishes.

Keoladeo Ghana National Park at Bharatpur (otherwise known as Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary) is arguably the finest bird reserve in the world, and certainly the best known. Formerly a shooting preserve of the Rajput maharajahs of Bharatpur, it covers just 29 sq km but contains a remarkable diversity of habitats. The wetlands – marshes and flooded 'heels' – are contained within acacia-lined 'bunds', or embankments, and irrigated by a system of canals and sluices. Around them lie semi-arid grasslands and scrubland and some excellent broadleaved Kadam woodland. Over 350 species of birds have been recorded in the park and in just three days we are likely to see about 100 of them. Among these will be an unequalled array of wetland species, a great variety of vultures, eagles, hawks, falcons and owls, plus numerous small passerines. As well as birds, the park has an excellent variety of wild animals. Nilgai (or Blue Bull), Sambar and Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Asiatic Jackal and two species of mongoose are all common, and this is one of the few places in India where the rare Stripped Hyena may occasionally be seen. The Indian Rock Python is another highlight that is usually seen. We have two days to enjoy this exceptional feast of wildlife, and the superb photographic opportunities that it presents.

Day 15

Wednesday

Delhi

After a final half-day's birding at Bharatpur, it will be time to drive to Delhi (a 4-5 hour journey). Arriving in Delhi, we will check into our 5-star The Roseate House/ Pride plaza hotel for some rest and a good night's sleep!

Day 16

Thursday

London

We transfer to Delhi airport to catch a British Airways mid-morning flight to London. We are due to arrive in London by afternoon.

NB. Please note that the itinerary offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Grading

A (easy). This is a standard wildlife viewing tour with no strenuous walking.

Clothing

Detailed information about clothing will be sent at the time of booking. Please read carefully.

Weather

In October, the weather across Bandhavgarh, Agra, Bharatpur, and Chambal is pleasant and ideal for travel. Bandhavgarh sees temperatures ranging from 15°C to 30°C, with lush post-monsoon greenery enhancing the safari experience. Agra is warm but manageable, with daytime temperatures between 20°C and 35°C, making it a good time to explore its iconic monuments. Bharatpur offers comfortable weather between 18°C and 32°C, and the wetlands begin attracting early migratory birds. Chambal remains dry and clear, with temperatures between 20°C and 33°C—perfect for boat safaris and nature excursions along the river.

In March, the weather remains warm and dry across Bandhavgarh, Agra, Bharatpur, and Chambal, making it a good time to travel before the summer heat sets in. Bandhavgarh experiences temperatures between 18°C and 34°C, with increasingly dry vegetation improving visibility for wildlife sightings. Agra sees temperatures ranging from 20°C to 36°C pleasant in the mornings and evenings, though afternoons can feel warm. Bharatpur records temperatures between 20°C and 35°C, and while some migratory birds begin to leave, birding is still rewarding. Chambal stays comfortable with temperatures between 22°C and 35°C, offering ideal conditions for river safaris and outdoor exploration.

If you have any questions about weather, temperatures and packing, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Inclusions / Exclusions

The following costs are included in the price of the holiday:

- International flights in economy class.
- Full board accommodation throughout (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner) except for meals in Delhi.
- All transport and guiding.
- All wildlife excursions, park fees and reserve entry fees.

The following costs are **not** included and should be budgeted for:

- Online visa (currently US\$25-US\$40 plus the bank transaction charges of 2.5%).
- Drinks (though most lodges in the national parks provide boiled drinking water or a bottle of water with their compliments).
- Discretionary tipping (leaders and drivers). During the course of your holiday you will receive periodic assistance from a wide variety of enthusiastic, friendly and helpful local guides, jeep drivers, trackers, hotel porters, waiters and other local people. The tipping of these individuals will be handled by your tour leader(s) and its cost is included within the price of your holiday.
- Any other personal spending e.g. souvenirs, laundry, camera fees.

Photography Tour Leaders

This tour offers more of a focus on the needs of the photographer. The tour leaders for this holiday are all experienced naturalists and wildlife photographers and they will be on hand to provide photographic advice and help during throughout the trip. This tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders: Swanand Deshpande, Akarsh Suresh, Pranad Patil, Sneha Sundaram, Yusuf Rizvi, Vedant Tithe, Illyas Khan, or Shaan Subbaiah.

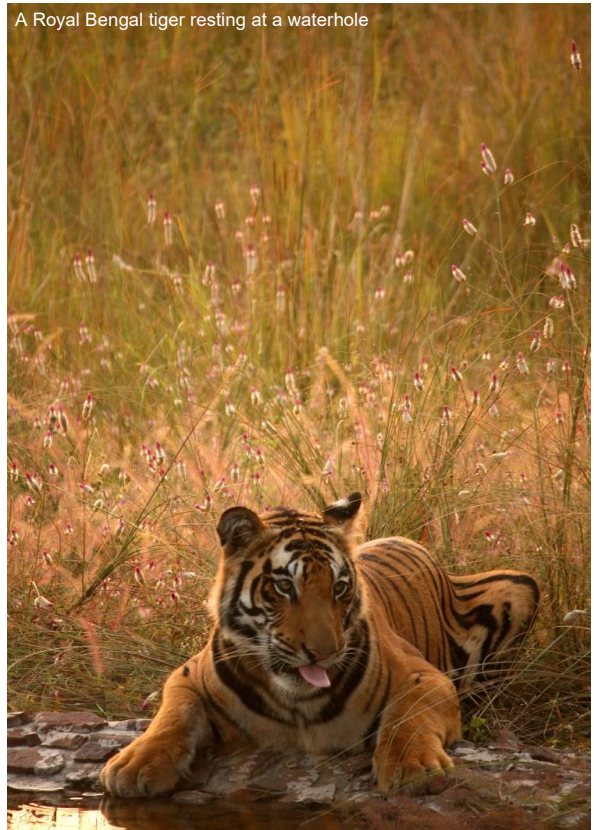
Flights

We use the direct scheduled service of British Airways for most of our tours to India from London Heathrow Terminal 5 because they offer an excellent all-round service (including connecting departures from most of the regional airport, though such departures from regional airports will be subject to an additional charge of around **£295**).

If you would prefer to travel World Travellers Plus (normally available at a supplement charge of around **£1,295**) or Business (normally available at a supplement charge of around **£3,995**) or if you would prefer to travel from regional airports, please let us know at the time of booking so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

Extensions

The tour may be extended by visits to other wildlife areas in India. Possibilities include Kanha or Ranthambhore Reserves to increase the chances of Tiger viewing, Bharatpur for the birdlife, or extending your time at Bandhavgarh. We will be glad to discuss options with you and provide quotations as required. The airfare is not affected by staying longer in India, so additional costs will only be for ground arrangements.



National Parks remain closed to public access on Wednesday afternoons

All National Parks in Madhya Pradesh are currently closed on Wednesday afternoons, this includes Bandhavgarh National Park. Thus, on Wednesday afternoons, we recommend taking guided walks around the lodge with your leader to observe and photograph birds. Participants may also choose to relax at the lodge or join the tour leader for a village walk.

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How to book your place!

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

A dominant male bengal tiger photographed on a patrol



Please provide us with your passport details (passport number, date of issue, date of expiry and your date of birth) at the time of booking. It is important to note that game safaris will be booked using the same passport details that you provide us at the time of booking, and it will not be possible to change these details once they have been booked. (If you renew your passport after booking, please also bring the old passport whose details you gave us at the time of booking as this will also be required).

Early Booking on Tiger Tours is essential!

The new regulations, including a drastic reduction in the number of jeeps and visitors permitted to enter such popular reserves as Bandhavgarh, Kanha and Pench each day, meant that those booking late could often not be accommodated. The simple fact is that the number of beds available at the lodges servicing each of these parks now far exceeds the tiny number of visitors permitted to enter each day. We cannot therefore emphasise strongly enough that early booking is essential. You really do need to book now if you are to secure a place on a tour that visits one of these Tiger Reserves next season.

Summary

Over several days of safaris across the Tala, Magdhi and Khitauli zones, the group enjoyed remarkable wildlife encounters. The forests were alive with Spotted Deer, Sambar, Gaur, Langurs and a rich variety of birds including Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Red-headed Vulture and Greater Racket-tailed Drongo. The highlight of the tour was the exceptional number of tiger sightings. Throughout the safari days the group recorded around 32 individual tiger sightings, including dominant males, females with cubs and several sub-adults. Memorable moments included a tigress walking straight towards the vehicles, a tiger swimming across a water body, and extended observations of the famous

Siddhibaba female and her cubs. Leopards, jackals, a civet and even a hunting attempt by a leopard added further excitement to the safaris.

Beyond wildlife, the group also enjoyed a village walk near the park, birdwatching opportunities and a lively tribal dance performance.

After the safari portion of the trip, the group travelled to Agra to visit the iconic Taj Mahal and the historic Agra Fort before returning to Delhi. The tour concluded with outstanding wildlife sightings, excellent photography opportunities and a rich cultural experience of India

