

India - Tiger Direct!

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2 – 3	Nagpur, Pench Tiger Reserve
Day 4 – 7	Kanha Tiger Reserve
Day 8	Nagpur
Day 9	Return London

Pre-tour Tadoba extension

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2 – 5	Nagpur, Tadoba National Park
Day 6	Drive Pench (join Day 2, above)

Post-tour Satpura extension

Day 8 – 12	Satpura Tiger Reserve
Day 13	Nagpur
Day 14	Return London



Images from top: The Bengal Tiger, A troop of Northern Plains langurs and The Malabar Pied Hornbill



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Dates and costs

See next page for a complete list

Cost from

£3,195 (London/London)

From £1,495 for Tadoba pre-tour extension on all tours.

From £1,795 for Satpura post-tour extension on all tours.

Single room supplement

£595 (extension: £495 for Tadoba & £695 for Satpura)

Grading

A. This is a wildlife tour, which involves little walking.

Focus

Tigers, other mammals and birds.

Highlights

- The most popular tiger tour on the market today.
- 100% success rate with tiger sightings over 100 tours.
- Enjoy Kanha & Pench – two of India's top Tiger Reserves.
- Fly in and out of Nagpur, just a couple of hours from Pench.
- Mammals include Wild boar, Golden jackal, deer, antelope & monkeys.
- Indian leopard, Gaur, Dhole (Indian Wild dog) & Sloth bear all possible.
- Birdlife galore!
- Expertly escorted by Naturetrek naturalist.
- Top tip: extend tour with a stay in Tadoba & Satpura.



The Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*)

2027

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 7th January	Cost: £1,495
Monday 11th January — Tuesday 19th January 2027	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 24th January	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 11th February	Cost: £1,495
Monday 15th February — Tuesday 23rd February 2027	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 28th February	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 4th March	Cost: £1,495
Monday 8th March — Tuesday 16th March 2027	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 21st March	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 1st April	Cost: £1,495
Monday 5th April — Tuesday 13th April 2027	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 18th April	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 7th October	Cost: £1,495
Monday 11th October — Tuesday 19th October 2027	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 24th October	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 11th November	Cost: £1,495
Monday 15th November — Tuesday 23rd November 2027	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 28th November	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 16th December	Cost: £1,595
Monday 20th December — Tuesday 28th December 2027	Cost: £3,995
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 2nd January 2028	Cost: £1,895

£500 reduction if booked without flights, land-only trip (Nagpur/Nagpur).

2028

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 13th January	Cost: £1,495
Monday 17th January — Tuesday 25th January 2028	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 30th January	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 10th February	Cost: £1,495
Monday 14th February — Tuesday 22nd February 2028	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 27th February	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 16th March	Cost: £1,495
Monday 20th March — Tuesday 28th March 2028	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 2nd April	Cost: £1,795

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 13th April	Cost: £1,495
Monday 17th April — Tuesday 25th April 2028	Cost: £3,195

Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 30th April	Cost: £1,795
Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 19th October	Cost: £1,495
Monday 23rd October — Tuesday 31st October 2028	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 5th November	Cost: £1,795
Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 16th November	Cost: £1,495
Monday 20th November — Tuesday 28th November 2028	Cost: £3,195
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Sunday 3rd December	Cost: £1,795
Pre-tour extension to Tadoba: from Thursday 14th December	Cost: £1,595
Monday 18th December — Tuesday 26th December 2028	Cost: £3,995
Post-tour extension to Satpura: till Saturday 31st December	Cost: £1,895

£500 reduction if booked without flights, land-only trip (Nagpur/Nagpur).

Little cormorant (*Microcarbo niger*)



Sirkeer malkoha (*Taccocua leschenaultii*)



Indian Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica centralis*)



Green Bee Eater (*Merops orientalis*)



Great-Thick-knee (*Esacus recurvirostris*), Satpuda

Hard Ground Barasingha or Swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii branderi*)



The Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)



The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*)

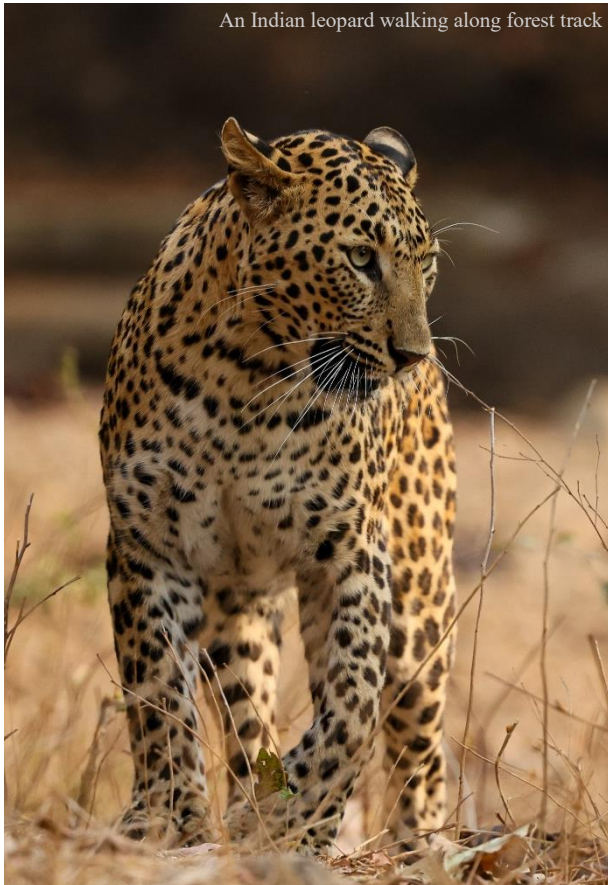


Introduction

This is an exciting tour taking you straight into the heart of tiger country on a 9-day safari that combines two of India's finest Tiger Reserves, Pench and Kanha, plus an optional extension to Tadoba National Park or Satpura National Park. It is, quite simply, the most convenient tiger tour yet! By taking the international flights with British Airways or Virgin Atlantic to Nagpur, via Delhi, we offer the wildlife enthusiast the utmost hospitality – a holiday to India that largely avoids sprawling cities, huge crowds, and long train journeys. Indeed, on this tour, more than on any other, we maximise the time spent in India's wonderful national parks and tiger reserves, and minimise the time spent travelling, particularly the time spent negotiating India's 'urban jungles'.



We begin our tour in India with morning arrival at Nagpur airport after a comfortable flight. From here we make the 3-hour drive north to Pench National Park, where we will have our first game drive. During our 2-night stay here we will have four game drives into the park in search of its mammals and birds.

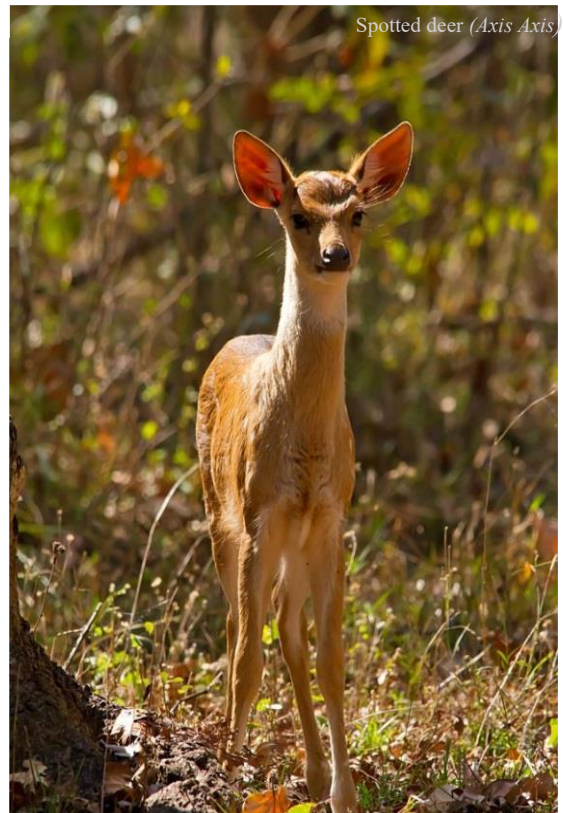


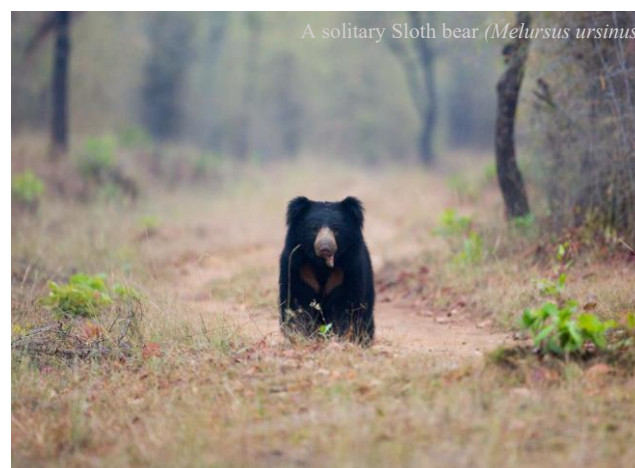
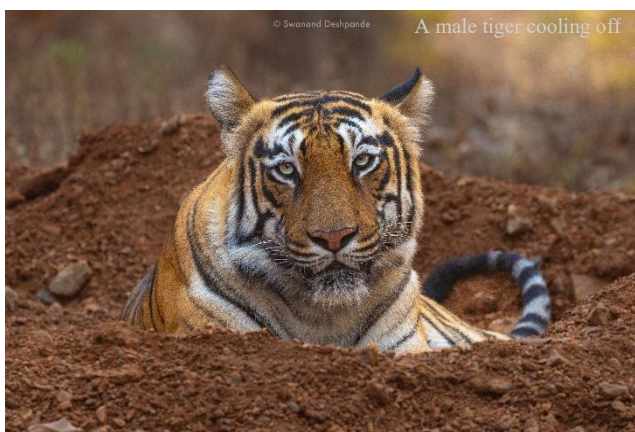
Next, we drive to Kanha National Park across the scenic Vindhya Hills. Kanha Tiger Reserve has an area of 751 square miles and is one of the largest reserves in India. It occupies a beautiful location on a plateau in the Maikal hills and comprises broad undulating grasslands dotted with clumps of bamboo and Sal forest. Small pools as well as a perennial lake provide essential drinking holes for wildlife. The reserve is famous for its Swamp deer – for whose protection Kanha National Park was first established in 1955. Since the launch of 'Project Tiger' in the early 1970s, Kanha has been one of the Project's key Tiger Reserves and, because its wide meadows are so suited to successful tiger-viewing, it is one of the best places in the world in which to search for this majestic cat. Besides tigers, we can also hope to observe plenty of Sambar, Spotted and Swamp deer. We should also see Gaur, Wild boar, Common langur, Golden jackal, and, with luck, Indian leopard and Dhole (Indian Wild dog). Our base for four nights is the splendid Kanha Jungle Lodge (or similar accommodation), situated close to the Mukki Gate, the quieter of the two park entrances.

Indian roller (*Coracias benghalensis*)

If you would prefer to extend your holiday after the main tour, we are offering a 4-night stay at Satpura Tiger Reserve, which we will explore from jeeps and boat. This is a unique and very special way to enjoy the reserve's wealth of birdlife (perhaps a Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle or Malabar Pied Hornbill) and offers a chance of encountering smaller mammals such as Indian Giant Squirrel, as well as many of the larger mammals that we'll also have seen in Pench and Kanha. We will also enjoy Pench's and Kanha's excellent variety of birds and mammals, which compensate amply if tigers prove hard to see. And tigers are, of course, not guaranteed. However, in the 25 years that Naturetrek has been operating tiger-watching tours to India, our groups have so far had a 100% success rate, successfully showing Tigers to over 5,000 of our clients. You should be aware, however, that although sightings remain good, poaching remains a problem in many reserves. Tigers are very rare and shy; therefore, a tiger sighting must be considered a bonus on any tour.

If you would like to extend your holiday, we offer a 5-day pre-tour extension which includes a 4-night stay at Tadoba-Andheri Tiger Reserve, situated in the Chandrapur District of Maharashtra (a 3-hour drive from Nagpur). Accommodation on this extension is at either the 'Svasara Jungle Lodge', or Waghoba Eco Lodge' both of which are set on the outskirts of the National Park and have private facilities.

Spotted deer (*Axis Axis*)The mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*)Indian spot-billed duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*)



Day 1

Monday

In flight

We depart London Heathrow on a scheduled British Airways or Virgin Atlantic flight to Nagpur, via Delhi.

Day 2

Tuesday

Nagpur – Pench National Park & Tiger Reserve

Arriving in Nagpur, we will meet our driver and will be transferred north to Pench National Park. This is a pleasant 3-hour journey and, en route, we will see our first Indian birds: Black kites, Laughing and Spotted doves, Rose-ringed parakeets, Green bee-eaters, Black drongos, and a variety of shrikes, mynas, bulbuls and babblers. We are also likely to see cheeky roadside Rhesus macaque monkeys, the first of many mammals on this tour.

On arrival at Pench, we will settle into the Tuli Tiger Corridor Resort for a 2-night stay. This lodge provides comfortable air-conditioned rooms and has a swimming pool. Then, after lunch, we will head out for our first afternoon safari into the park – perhaps even experiencing our first tiger encounter!



You may well have enjoyed watching the BBC's wonderful 2008 series on the tigers of Pench, entitled 'Tiger – Spy in the Jungle', narrated by Sir David Attenborough. Pench rose to prominence following its designation as Project Tiger's nineteenth Tiger Reserve in 1992 and today it protects 758 square kilometres of prime tiger habitat. It is situated amongst the southern reaches of the Satpura Hills, which lie in the Seoni and Chhindwara districts, the region which inspired Rudyard Kipling's 'Jungle Book'. The park spans the border of the states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra which is marked by the Pench River as it meanders from north to south through the reserve. During the dry season the river ceases to flow, forming pools which provide the primary watering holes for tigers and other wildlife. On the southern boundary of the park the Pench River has been dammed to generate hydro-electricity, and around the banks of this dam many waterbirds and mammals may be found, amongst them Golden Jackal and Nilgai. The terrain is rugged and the region's hills are cloaked in both southern moist deciduous forest and extensive dry, deciduous forest, dominated by Teak. Gaur, Wild boar and langur are common here, as are Sambar, Spotted and Barking deer. With luck we might also see dhole, or perhaps even a leopard.

Day 3

Wednesday

Pench National Park & Tiger Reserve

We will enjoy a full day in Pench National Park. Rising before dawn for tea, coffee and biscuits, we will then head out for our morning safari into the park! The morning game drive through the park will be from sunrise until mid- or late morning. We will then retire to our lodge for a lunch and a siesta, before heading back into the park at about 3pm to enjoy an evening game drive for the last three hours of the day. This afternoon, we will visit the Khursapar Gate, a core zone located on the Maharashtra side of Pench Tiger Reserve, just a 20-minute drive from our lodge. The landscape here is dominated by dry deciduous forest, with



patches of teak and bamboo, interspersed with open meadows and seasonal waterholes. Khursapar is known for its good visibility and relatively open terrain, making wildlife sightings more frequent. The area is home to Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, Dhole (Indian Wild dog), Sloth bear, a healthy population of Spotted and Sambar deer, and Indian gaur. Birdlife is also rich, with regular sightings of Crested Serpent eagles, Racket-tailed drongos, and Indian rollers.

Day 4 – 7

Thursday – Sunday

Kanha National Park & Tiger Reserve

Begin the day with an early morning game drive in Pench, we will drive across the scenic Vindhya Hills to Kanha National Park. Kanha Tiger Reserve encompasses 751 square miles of varied habitats, and is one of the largest reserves in India. It is a beautiful region, situated on a plateau in the Maikal Range, and is made up of a crescent



of hills (rising to nearly 1,000 metres) that embraces broad undulating grasslands speckled with clumps of bamboo and Sal forest. Mixed deciduous forest cloaks the hills and borders the meadows. Small pools and a perennial lake provide drinking holes for the animals year-round. The reserve is famous for its Swamp deer – it contains the only population of the hard-ground race in existence – for whose protection Kanha National Park was first established in 1955. Once, these deer roamed India in herds of many thousands. Today there are more than 1500 individuals left, though this represents a

good recovery since 1970 when just 70 individuals remained. However, since the launch of the initially successful Project Tiger in the early 70s, Kanha has been one of the Project's key Tiger Reserves and, because its wide meadows are so suited to successful tiger-viewing, it has become one of the best places in the world in which to search for tigers. Besides tigers, we can also hope to see plenty of Sambar, Muntjac, Spotted and Swamp deer, Rhesus monkeys and Common langurs. We should also see Indian gaur, Wild boar, Golden jackal, and with luck, Indian leopard and Dhole (Indian Wild dog).

Sloth bear and two of India's lowland antelopes – Chousingha (Four-horned antelope) and the beautiful Blackbuck – also occur in the park, though a sighting typically requires patience and good fortune.

We have a good chance of seeing up to 120 species of birds during our stay. There's a good variety of birds of prey in the park including Black-shouldered Kite, Crested Serpent Eagle, White-eyed Buzzard, Shikra, and a variety of vultures. Open country birds such as Painted Francolin, Indian Roller, Yellow- and Red-wattled Lapwings, and



a variety of woodpeckers, pigeons, larks, pipits, and drongos are common. In the forests, the elusive Malabar Pied Hornbill, Black-headed Oriole, and a selection of flycatchers, babblers and warblers may be found.

Our daily programme will include both a morning and an evening jeep drive inside the reserve. These are, of course, all optional – and there may be times when you'd prefer to relax back at the lodge and recharge your batteries – though it goes without saying that the more you do, the more you'll see! You are likely to see tigers as well as the bulk of the other wildlife you will encounter during the holiday on these game drives.

We will typically aim to leave our lodge each morning at about 5.45 am, taking a picnic breakfast with us. We will stay in the reserve until 11.30 am, when it closes during the hottest part of the day. We will return to the reserve when it re-opens at 4 pm and stay there until dusk, at about 6.30 pm. (NB. From 1st November to 15th February the reserve opens in the afternoon at 3 pm and our stay will last until dusk at about 5.30pm). In the middle of the day, after lunch, there will be time to rest or go on short birdwatching walks around the lodge. Outside the reserve we will be able to enjoy the area's birdlife on foot (walking is forbidden in all the Tiger Reserves of India, for obvious reasons!).



On most of our Tiger Direct! tours our accommodation for the four nights at Kanha will be at either Kanha Jungle Lodge or Tuli Tiger Resort, both of which are comfortable lodges offering twin-bedded stone cottages set amongst flower-filled gardens. All cottages have private facilities.



Important: Please note that mobile phones are NOT permitted inside the National Parks. This rule applies even if phones are used for photography or videography. Mobile phones may, of course, be used in and around your lodge.

Day 8

Monday

Nagpur

Enjoy one final morning in Kanha Tiger Reserve, with one last chance to venture into its enchanting forests and perhaps be rewarded with a memorable wildlife sighting. After lunch, bid farewell to Kanha and drive south towards Nagpur, approximately six hours away.

Here, we will transfer to the five-star Radisson Blu, where you can unwind and enjoy some well-deserved rest, a few hours of sleep, and a special farewell meal. This evening, come together for a memorable farewell dinner, the perfect opportunity to relax, raise a glass, and reflect on the highlights of your journey. From unforgettable wildlife encounters and unexpected sightings to the laughter, stories, and shared moments along the way, it is a wonderful chance to celebrate the adventure you have shared and savour one final evening together before bidding farewell to India.

Day 9

Tuesday

Fly London, via Mumbai

Early this morning, you will be transferred to the domestic airport for your flight to Mumbai, where you will connect with your onward British Airways or Virgin Atlantic flight to London Heathrow

Please note that the itinerary outlined 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. Any such changes will always be done to maximise the best use of time and weather conditions available.

Pre-tour extension to Tadoba National Park & Tiger Reserve

(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 1

Thursday

In Flight

We depart London Heathrow on a scheduled British Airways or Virgin Atlantic flight to Nagpur, via Delhi.

Day 2

Friday

Nagpur – Tadoba National Park & Tiger Reserve

Arriving in Nagpur, we will meet our driver and be transferred north to Tadoba National Park. En route we will see our first Indian birds, typically Black Kites, Laughing and Spotted Doves, Rose-ringed Parakeets, Little Swifts, Little Green Bee-eaters, Black Drongos, and a variety of shrikes, mynas, bulbuls and babblers. We are also likely to see cheeky roadside Rhesus Macaque monkeys, the first of many mammals on this tour. Please note that use of mobile phones is banned in Tadoba by the forest department.



On arrival at Tadoba, we will settle into our lodge for our 4-night stay. We will stay at 'Svasara Jungle Lodge' or 'Waghoba Eco Lodge' both of which are set on the outskirts of the National Park and have private facilities. The 12-roomed 'Svasara Jungle Lodge' has luxurious air-conditioned suites with elegant bathrooms, premium bedding, plenty of amenities (mini-fridge, coffee/tea maker, etc.), private outdoor verandah seating, and much more! Guests can enjoy sumptuous Indian (and other cuisines) meals in the privacy of their suites, or opt to eat in the restaurant or outdoor ethnic gazebo under a starlit night.

Day 3 – 5

Saturday – Monday

Tadoba National Park & Tiger Reserve

Tadoba-Andheri Tiger Reserve, situated in the Chandrapur District of Maharashtra, spans over 1728 square kilometres and incorporates both Tadoba National Park (which became Maharashtra's first national park in 1955) and Andhari Wildlife Sanctuary, and became one of India's 28 Project Tiger Reserves as recently as 1993. Its hills support a dense tropical dry deciduous forest, largely made up of Teak and bamboo, carved by the Andhari River. As many as 115 Tigers are reputed to live here, plus a great many other mammals including Indian leopard, Sloth bear, Indian gaur, Dhole, Jungle cat, Blue bull and Chousingha (Four-horned antelope), as well as a rich birdlife.

Our daily programme will include both a morning and an evening jeep drive inside the reserve. These are, of course, all optional – and there may be times when you'd prefer to relax back at the lodge and recharge your batteries – though it goes without saying that the more you do, the more you'll see!

Blue bull antelope or Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*)



Day 6

Tuesday

Pench National Park & Tiger Reserve

Today we'll have a last (early morning) birdwatching walk around the lodge before leaving for Pench National Park (a journey of approximately 5 hours) to join the group for the main tour. On arrival at Pench, we will settle into our lodge for a 2-night stay and meet rest of the party. Then, after lunch, we will head out for our afternoon safari into the park

Post-tour extension to Satpura National Park & Tiger Reserve

(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.)

A 6-day post-tour extension to the most scenic and peaceful of Central India's Tiger Reserves, the little-known Satpura National Park, in search of a classic selection of birds and mammals, including leopard, Sloth bear, Dhole, Indian gaur and Indian Giant squirrel.

Day 8

Monday

Satpura National Park & Tiger Reserve

Finishing our morning safari at Kanha Tiger Reserve, we will start our long journey by road to Satpura (we will take our packed lunches with us to eat en route). Although tiring, this is a fascinating journey. Driving through central India we will pass through a variety of villages and towns which provides us with a glimpse of the Indian culture and way of life. We should reach Satpura by dinner time. Our accommodation during our time in Satpura will be Reni Pani Jungle Lodge, Denwa Backwater Escape or Forsyth's Lodge, all of which are superb.



Denwa backwater escape



Reni Pani Jungle Lodge is an exquisitely designed conservation and wildlife-focused lodge located close to Satpura National Park and Tiger Reserve. The lodge has 12 twin-bedded cottages and four deluxe 'tented rooms', a cosy central meeting place called the Gol Ghar and a jungle pool. The lodge is spread over 30 acres of forest and provides an ideal base for nature lovers, with magnificent trees, a sprawling meadow, a seasonal nullah (riverbed), uneven yet beautiful topography and water holes that attract several species of birds and animals.



Reni Pani Jungle Lodge

While our time at Satpura, we will be taking morning game drives and in the afternoon wildlife viewing will be done by boat. On one of the days, we will be undertaking an afternoon game drive in the buffer area of the park.

Day 9 – 12

Tuesday – Friday

Satpura National Park

So, why Satpura? Well, it's our favourite central Indian National Park and Tiger Reserve. Yet, surprisingly, tigers are difficult to see here compared to other parks of Central India... and that's why we love it! This fact means that, for starters, Satpura is not inundated with tiger-tourists. Far from it, just between 15 and 19 jeeps are permitted to enter the park at a time. Satpura does offer a rich variety of other mammals. Nowhere else are Gaur (Asian bison) and Sloth bear as easily seen. These species, together with Indian Giant squirrel and Indian leopard make up Satpura's 'big five'. Additionally, Sambar, Chital, Nilgai, Blackbuck, Wild boar, Rhesus macaque, Common langur and Marsh Mugger crocodile may also be seen, and perhaps even the elusive Chousingha (Four-horned antelope) and nocturnal Rusty-spotted cat. The park's fine forests and wetlands also hold a diverse and colourful birdlife —Bar-headed goose, Grey Jungle fowl, Red and Painted spurfowl and a wealth of raptors, hornbills, babblers and bee-eaters being amongst the highlights.



Satpura is also central India's most scenic national park, with a fabulous landscape of hills, forests, rocky outcrops, gorges, wide waterways and little streams. Concealed within it lie the ruins of ancient temples and Stone Age rock paintings — tantalising testimony to the thousands of years of human occupation of these jungles. Best of all, and unlike any other Tiger Reserve in India, are the multiple ways in which we are able to explore Satpura. Thus, each day, we will be doing one jeep safari and a walks around the lodge or a boat trip (subject to water levels) plus will

also visit a Reni Pani village. So, we do hope that, you will join us for this special extension. There is no doubt that the wonderful team of Reni Pani Lodge, will make us very welcome! What's more, Satpura is easy to reach. Best of all, in this clean, peaceful and scenic part of rural India, just three luxury lodges service Satpura. They are amongst India's leading 'eco-lodges', and we stay in one of them for five nights. We are confident that you will love Satpura.

On Wednesday afternoons the national park is closed, for more details please see the end of this tour itinerary.

Day 13

Saturday

Satpura – Nagpur

We make our final visit to Satpura Tiger Reserve, hoping to end our stay with some truly special wildlife sightings.

After spending four memorable nights exploring this beautiful reserve, we begin our journey with a scenic six-hour drive to Nagpur.

Here, we will transfer to the five-star Radisson Blu, where you can unwind and enjoy some well-deserved rest, a few hours of sleep, and a special farewell meal. This evening, come together for a memorable farewell dinner, the perfect opportunity to relax, raise a glass, and reflect on the highlights of your journey. From unforgettable wildlife encounters and unexpected sightings to the laughter, stories, and shared moments along the way, it is a wonderful chance to celebrate the adventure you have shared and savour one final evening together before bidding farewell to India.

Day 14

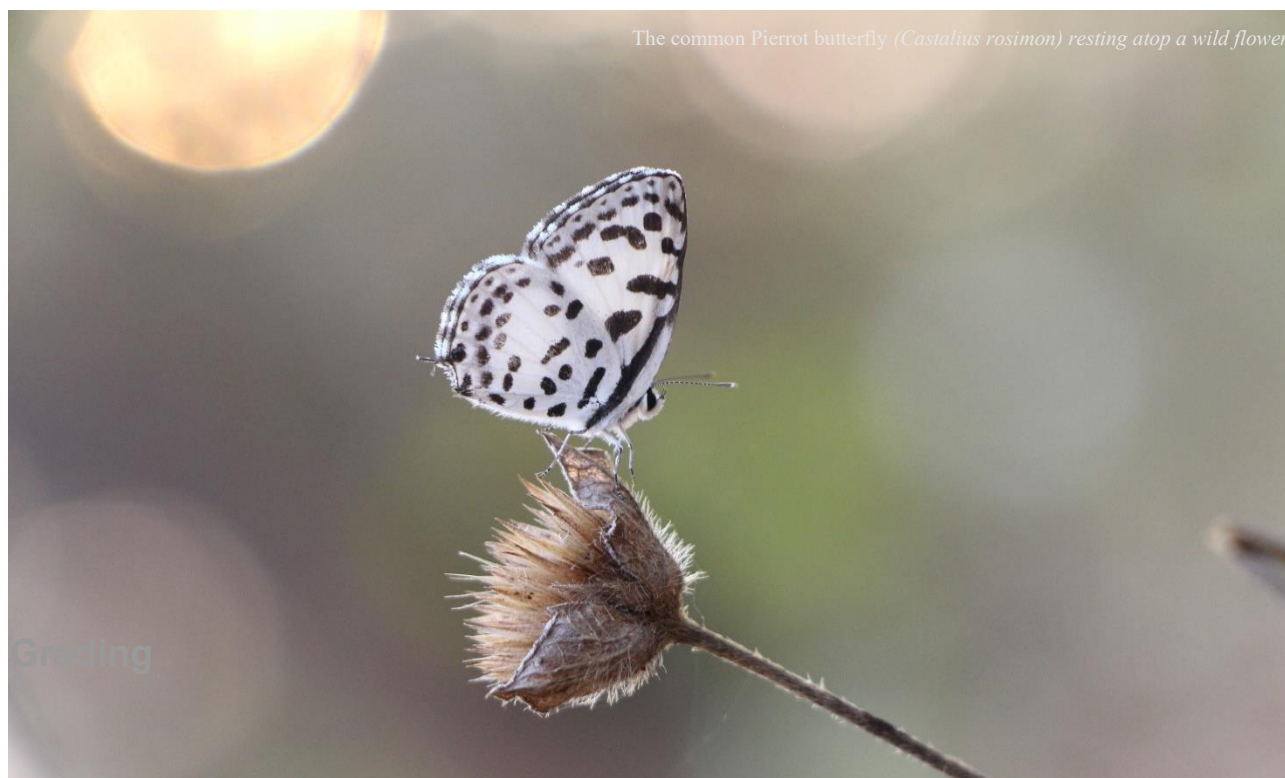
Sunday

Fly London, via Mumbai

Early this morning, you will be transferred to the domestic airport for your flight to Mumbai, where you will connect with your onward British Airways or Virgin Atlantic flight to London Heathrow

Other extensions

If you don't fancy our scheduled pre-tour Tadoba or Satpura extension, we would be delighted to tailor a holiday extension for you that is suited to your particular objectives and needs. You might wish to sample some of the cultural delights of India, for example, or even to visit another national park or Tiger Reserve or would like to have an extra night in the beginning or end. In India, anything is possible. Please call our India consultant, Rajan Jolly, on 01962 733015, for expert advice.



The common Pierrot butterfly (*Castalius rosimon*) resting atop a wild flower

This is a mammal and birdwatching tour, based largely around morning and afternoon/evening game drives (African safari-style) in open-top jeeps; accordingly, the walking is limited to strolling around the grounds of the lodges we stay at, and the tour is graded A (easy). On this holiday we focus on studies of two national parks (both amongst the best for tigers!) and minimise the tiring travelling that is a necessary component of so many wildlife tours of India which journey relentlessly to park after park.



Focus

Tigers, other mammals and birds. While tigers remain in focus, expert naturalist-led interpretation, access to diverse zones, time to observe animal interaction and behaviour and a deeper understanding of the landscape remain a powerful highlight.

Weather

The safari season reopens after the monsoon in October. The landscape is lush and green, with moderate to high humidity. Early mornings are mild and usually require only a few light layers. Daytime temperatures range between 25–30°C, and afternoons can feel warm due to humidity. Lightweight, breathable clothing is recommended, along with sun protection and good hydration.

During the winter months, from November to January, temperatures in central and northern India's national parks can drop sharply in the early mornings. Open-top safari jeeps expose you to cold headwinds on pre-dawn drives, and despite lodges often providing blankets, you'll need to bring your own warm, wind-proof layers. This includes a good jacket, woolen hat, gloves, and multiple layers to stay comfortable until sunrise. Once the sun is up and breakfast is served in the field, temperatures usually rise to a pleasant 15–25°C, making the rest of the day much more comfortable. Be prepared for the contrast between cold mornings and mild afternoons.

February mornings can still be cool, so a light jacket or fleece is advisable. As the day progresses, temperatures rise steadily, with daytime highs of 20–30°C. Light cotton clothing works well, and sun protection becomes increasingly important.

By March and into April, daytime temperatures begin to climb steadily, and the parks take on a drier, warmer feel. While early mornings can still be a bit cool, requiring a light fleece, the rest of the day will often be hot and sunny, especially from mid-morning onwards. Expect highs between 28–35°C, depending on location and month. You'll need light cotton clothing, sun hats, sunglasses, and high-SPF sun cream for protection. Hydration is essential, so carrying a large water bottle is recommended. While game viewing tends to be excellent as water sources shrink, dressing appropriately for the heat is key to a comfortable and rewarding safari experience.

Food & accommodation

The cost of all meals and accommodation is included in the price of this 2-centre holiday.

Inclusions / Exclusions

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

- International and domestic flights in economy class.
- Full board accommodation throughout (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner). On the main tour, on the pre-tour Tadoba extension and post-tour Satpura extension, we use comfortable tourist lodges with private facilities (as described in the text above).
- 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.
- Drinks (though most lodges in the national parks provide boiled drinking water or a bottle of water with their compliments).
- Meals during transit, unless specifically mentioned in the itinerary.
- 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 expenditure, such as souvenirs, laundry, and camera fees (please note that there are no camera fees in Tadoba, Pench, Kanha, or Satpura). Important: Mobile phones are not permitted inside National Parks. This restriction applies even if phones are intended for photography or videography. Mobile phones may, of course, be used in and around your lodge, as lodges are located outside the national park boundaries.

Flights

We use scheduled British Airways or Virgin Atlantic flights for this tour to India. Please note that there are no direct flights to Nagpur from UK and we fly via Delhi

If you would prefer to travel in Business class, the supplement charge is **from £3,995**, supplement charge for premium economy class starts **from £1,695**. If you would prefer to travel from regional airports (Manchester, Edinburgh or any other regional airport) may be possible and will be subject to an additional charge of **£295**, please let us know at the time of booking so that we can make the necessary arrangements. **If you are not happy with these flights, please contact Rajan as soon as you book the holiday, he will be happy to discuss alternative options with you.**

Clothing

A full list of our suggested items to take is included in the pre-departure information which will be sent to you on receipt of your booking. Take lightweight clothing for daytime wear; however, warm clothes will be needed for early mornings and evenings which can be very chilly. Khaki and other 'bush' colours are recommended, as bright colours can often scare the animals. A wide-brimmed hat is essential protection from heat-stroke and sunburn. Please inspect the separate clothing list, sent to you on booking, thoroughly.

Tour leaders

As this tour has about 7 to 8 departures in a year, each tour will be led by one or sometimes two of our experienced tour leaders: Yusuf Rizvi, Swanand Deshpande, Omkar Shelke, Sneha Sundaram, Akarsh Suresh, Akshay Pacharne, Rishin Basu Roy, Ilyas Khan, Vedant Thite, Rajveer Singh, Harish Sharma, Jesan T Das, Shaan Subbaiah or Pranad Patil.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to India. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/india> regularly prior to travel.

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for India, which is obtainable in advance from via the official Indian Government e-Visa portal <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/>

National Parks remain closed to public access

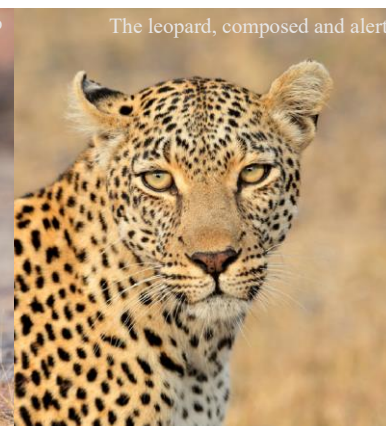
All National Parks in Madhya Pradesh are currently closed on Wednesday afternoons, this includes Pench, Kanha and Satpura Reserves. Thus, on Wednesday afternoons, we do a game drive from Khursapar, a zone falling in the state of Maharashtra. All National Parks in Maharashtra are currently closed on Tuesdays, for this tour, we are not in Tadoba on a Tuesday.



White-throated kingfisher
(*Halcyon smyrnensis*)



Sloth bear mother with cub



The leopard, composed and alert

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. Please note that our Tiger Direct! departures tend to book up a long time in advance. Please book as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

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!

Ongoing restrictions on the number of jeeps and visitors permitted to enter these highly sought-after reserves each day mean that availability of permits is extremely limited. As a result, guests booking closer to the travel dates often face non-availability or significantly higher costs especially for prime zones and peak days. 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.

Predators and twilight in Central India



Summary from our February tour

Just to let you know my wife and I had a fantastic holiday on the Tiger Direct. The group as a whole saw 21 different tigers and we saw 19 of these! In addition, a number of the sightings involved tigers lying on the road or lying in the water holes for at least 10 minutes. Great photo opportunities! Both DK and Yosuf were brilliant with their knowledge of wildlife and tracking and finding the tigers. The whole trip was very well organised and we enjoyed all aspects of the holiday. Well done to everyone who were involved in making this holiday so special.

India - Tiger Direct! (plus, extensions to Tadoba & Satpura).

Tiger Direct! by Robin Richards

The morning chill of Kanha National Park still clung in the air and, as the jeeps bounced along, we snuggled our necks deeper into our fleeces. We had seen a few Sambar deer amongst the trees and a small herd of Gaur, those hulking Indian bison with viciously curving horns, the shoulders of a quarterback, and incongruously pale, almost white legs. Each beast had their own Cattle Egret in attendance, like a pageboy, stalking along behind feeding off the insects stirred up by its great hooves.

Tiger hunting a Sambar deer in Tadoba



The jeeps crested a small rise and, ahead of us, pacing steadily down the track, surely the most evocative image of rural India, two elephants strolling in stately procession towards us. Their grey bulk filled the path, trunks swaying rhythmically as they walked with the mahouts, dressed in khaki shirts and pants sitting astride their necks. They stopped when they came abreast of the jeeps and there was a rapid exchange in Hindustani; we could only understand one word: 'Tiger!'

With a tap from the mahout's cane and a couple of gentle kicks from his bare feet, the giant pachyderms swung off the path and crashed upward through the brush, slotting in between the thickets of green and russet bamboo. Our guide turned around to us. 'They have seen tiger this morning. They will look on the hill above the path.'

It was as if someone had passed an electric charge through each of us. Tiger! We were going to see a tiger. The pre-breakfast chill was forgotten and we reached for our binoculars and cameras. Lens caps were removed; apertures, ISO values and shutter speeds were checked, adjusted and re-checked. Our preparations were interrupted by a shout from the hillside. Astride his elephant one of the mahouts pointed off to the right then he swung his mount around and headed back to the road. His job was done; spotting a tiger is one thing, flushing it quite another matter.

As the elephants moved away down the road the jeeps were maneuvered into good viewing positions and, more importantly, to leave a wide gap, perhaps 150 meters between, so the tiger could cross the road and not feel crowded. Then the waiting began.

There was silence in the jeeps except for the occasional creak of the suspension as one or another of us eased our cramping limbs. We watched the dense thickets of undergrowth with cameras at the ready like expectant paparazzi gathered at a red-carpet event. Like the press-pack we were also seeking celebrity, a celebrity of the Royal Bengal kind. We scanned the bushes and trees for the merest hint of movement. No angler ever watched his float as closely as we watched those bushes. We had no way of knowing whether or not the tiger would stroll down the hill and cross the road between our vehicles. Experienced nature watchers know how perverse wildlife can be. The tiger could just as easily head uphill, away from us and into deeper jungle. In the silence, dried leaves falling from the teak trees crashed to the ground sounding like thunder to us. Then we heard him, a deep throated roar from perhaps 50 yards away, spine-chilling, visceral. I felt the hair on my neck stand on end then he bounded out of the brush and onto the track: lithe and slim, an athlete with a magnificent head, fierce dark eyes and teeth like rapiers. Burning bright in the morning sun, muscles rippling under that gold and black coat; the fearful symmetry! Camera shutters rattled while, in two fluid strides, the tiger had crossed the road and disappeared into the bushes at the far side scarcely disturbing a leaf. Pandemonium broke out in the jeeps.

‘Did you see him?’

‘Amazing!’

‘Worth waiting for.’

‘Almost fell out of the truck.’

‘Did you get him?’

‘Couldn’t focus.’

Camera screens were studied. Photos passed around. Everyone’s faces, even those of our guides, were wreathed in smiles. Every encounter with a tiger is special. The jeeps bucked over the ruts kicking up dust and stones while we all held on; still, we couldn’t stop grinning. Next stop breakfast. Chapattis, boiled eggs and hot tea, tastes so wonderful after meeting with a tiger!

Love Song by Janet Baldey, travelled on this tour and was the winner of our writing competition

Some wildlife experiences are hard to beat and seeing a tiger in the wild for the first time is one of them! In this memorable piece, Janet describes the thrill of an encounter with a pair of amorous tigers in India’s beautiful Tadoba National Park.

Huddled in blankets against the pre-dawn chill and, still groggy from sleep, we swayed against each other as our jeep lurched along the rocky path leading deep into the heart of the jungle. Then, one hissed word cut through our torpor and tiredness vanished:

‘Tiger!’

The ‘Gypsy’ jolted to a stop, the engine cut and, in the sudden silence, our heads swung to the right, following the line of our eagle-eyed guide’s pointing finger. There, in a clearing beside the track, their vibrant colouring muted by the swirling early morning mist, was the outline of not just one, but two, adult tigers, one much larger than the other.

‘A mating pair,’ breathed our guide.

Not daring to speak, we sat as if turned to stone while the male tiger prowled around its mate. Lazily, she raised her head and looked at him and her tail twitched. They nuzzled briefly, then the male turned impatiently, circling his lady three times before slipping silently into the jungle. Still the Tigress lingered. ‘Was she rejecting him?’ we wondered. Then, it came. The sound we had travelled thousands of miles to hear: haunting and atonal, vibrating through the air, a wild tiger’s mating call: ‘AAARROOOM!’ Then again: ‘AAARROOOM!’ Its yearning intensity made us shiver. It obviously stirred the Tigress as well because, with one fluid movement, she rose to her feet and disappeared into the gloom leaving us, our eyes straining against the dim light, desperate for one last glimpse.

‘They will be together for about seven days before parting. And, yes, a litter of cubs is certain,’ we were told. It was then that somebody said: ‘Does anybody realise what day it is?’ Mouths opened as pennies dropped. Of course! It was February 14th, 2015. Our Indian friends weren’t aware of the day’s significance but, when it was explained, they were delighted and later the whole lodge at Tadoba buzzed with the news that our party had witnessed a mating pair of tigers on St Valentine’s Day and, what’s more, had been the first of only two jeeps on the scene.

This wasn’t our first sighting, and it wasn’t our last. Soon after arriving, we’d trundled around the jungle delighting in its sights and sounds. Groups of Spotted deer grazed on fruit that a group of hyperactive langur monkeys threw down to them from the trees, while Scarlet Minivets, Purple Sunbirds and parakeets fluttered from branch to branch like living jewels. From all around echoed the insistent piping of barbets, a family of birds that never seemed to tire; sad-eyed Sambar deer peered nervously from the shadows and groups of Wild Boar rooted in the earth. But, all the while, we were cushioning ourselves against the disappointment of not seeing a tiger, which all realised would be unlikely on our very first game-drive. We were wrong. On turning a corner Indrajit, our tour leader, leapt up, his face alive with excitement.

‘When you see a sight like this,’ he cried, ‘it means only one thing!’

Sure enough, lying half in and half out of a lake, a tawny-and-black striped shape basked in the late afternoon sun. It was unclear how long the Tigress had been sleeping but our guide thought it had been for some time. A bit of skillful manoeuvring on the part of our driver and we had a clear view. As we watched, she raised her head and yawned.

‘If she yawns five times, she’ll get up,’ we were told, but the Tigress had obviously not read the manual for, after the third yawn, she rose. From out of kohllined eyes, she cast a brief mouldering glance in our direction and padded leisurely up the slope towards us. Completely unfazed by her audience, she sauntered along the track leaving it only to mark her territory. At last, she tired of our attention and disappeared abruptly into the bush.

The other animals in the jungle were fascinating: immense Indian gaur, the largest cattle in the world, Wild boar, Sloth bear, Indian leopard, Dhole (Indian Wild dog), jackals and a plethora of birds, monkeys and deer, but it was tigers we had come to see and they didn't disappoint. We had seven sightings in all, each one unique and memorable.

What's more, seeing a tiger in the wild never palls, judging by the delighted grins and 'high fives' given by the local drivers when we had a particularly spectacular view. The thrill of seeing this charismatic big stripy cat is obviously addictive, and now we are hooked and can't wait to go back.

A young tigress Maya with her young one, Tadoba



Summary from a previous trip in November

In November, our group embarked on an extraordinary Tiger Direct tour, exploring the central Indian national parks of Pench, Kanha, Tadoba, and Satpura. The adventure began with a pre-tour extension to Tadoba National Park, Maharashtra's oldest and largest reserve, renowned for its tiger sightings. After a delightful breakfast in Nagpur, our group of seven introduced themselves and set off for Tadoba.

Tadoba is famous not only for its tigers, but also hosts a variety of wildlife, including Sloth bears, Indian leopards (including 'black panthers'), Wild dogs and more. During our game drives, we were privileged to witness a dominant male tiger, Chota Matkasur, lounging in a pond and later gracefully swimming across it. Another highlight was spotting 3 sub-adult cubs of a tigress named Babli. Our sightings extended beyond tigers, including Sloth bears, Indian leopards, Spotted and Sambar deer, Indian gaur, Golden jackals, and diverse fauna like scorpions, Rat snakes, and Fan-throated lizards. Tadoba's water bodies, such as Telia Lake and Pandarpauni Lakes, added to the charm with their rich birdlife and resident Marsh crocodiles.

Next, we journeyed to Pench National Park, the real-life inspiration for Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book." The diverse landscapes, from teak forests to open meadows, provided a habitat for Bengal tigers, Indian leopards, Wild

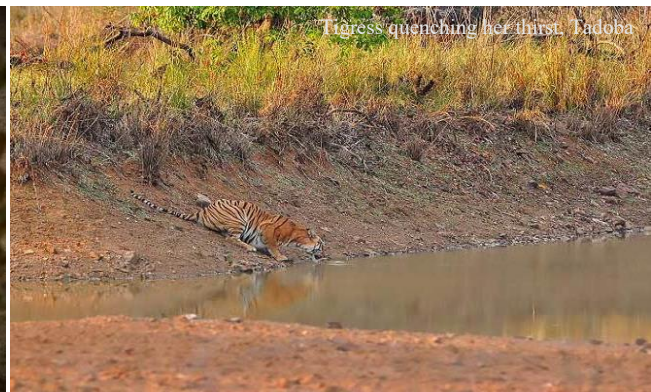
dogs, Indian Gaur, deer species, Golden jackal, Wild boar and more. Our scenic drive to Pench featured remarkable sightings, including an Indian leopard and more Wild dogs. Day 6 brought excitement as we witnessed a tigress being chased by an Indian gaur, and other tigress blocked the safari track during our evening drive and gave us a very good sighting for almost twenty minutes.

Memorable bird sightings and encounters with various mammals marked our final drive in Pench.

Transitioning to Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh, our exploration continued in a biodiverse sanctuary known for lush, evergreen Sal forests. Days 8 to 10 brought fantastic drives in the Kisli zone, showcasing diverse birdlife and exceptional tiger and leopard sightings. Conservation efforts, especially for the Swamp deer, highlighted Kanha's ecological significance.



Male, female & cub



Tigress quenching her thirst. Tadoba

On Day 11, our expedition concluded, with some members heading to Satpura for the post-extension tour and some returned back home with lots of memories from the trip.

Satpura National Park, named after the Satpura ranges, covers an area of 524 sq. kms. known for Sloth bear sightings due to its undulating terrain. Satpura also offers opportunities to spot tigers, leopards, Indian Giant squirrels, Indian gaur, wild boar, antelopes, Marsh crocodiles, and a myriad of birds.

Our game drives in Satpura provided memorable sightings of tigers, Sloth bears, Spotted and Sambar deer, Malabar Giant squirrels, Indian gaur, Nilgai (Blue bull), wild Boars, crocodiles, Golden jackals, and numerous local and migratory birds.

Throughout the tour, we were treated to thrilling wildlife encounters, picturesque landscapes, and delightful group gatherings for checklists and dinners, creating lasting memories of an unforgettable adventure.

Summary from a previous trip in March

It was a great trip with a total of 12 tigers, seven Indian leopards, five packs of Wild dogs, four Sloth bears, nearly 15 species of butterflies and hundreds of bird species. Summertime in Central Indian forests never disappoints.

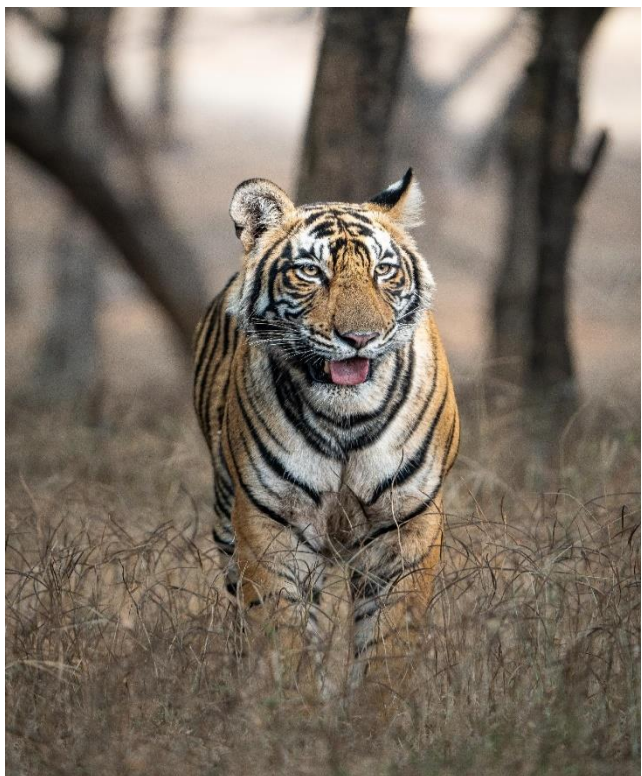
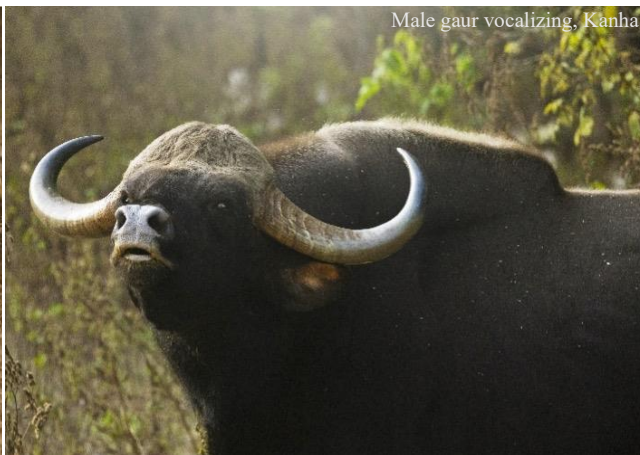
One of the highlights would definitely be a drama-fueled evening in Kanha when two male tigers were battling each other for two days over territory and mate. It was pouring heavily in Kanha and we had nearly lost hope of seeing anything. But that proved wrong as we heard deep growls inside the bamboo forest. We managed to see one of the male tigers, as he was licking his fresh wounds. He was well hidden inside the bamboo thickets. The

growls turned to roars, and we realized one of the tigers was coming closer. The new male tiger, unidentified by any of the guides or forest department staff had challenged the present dominant male. Eventually, he emerged out of the bamboo and crossed the road in front of us. What a sight!

Indian Golden jackal breaking its cover, Pench



Male gaur vocalizing, Kanha



A tiger marking its territory

