

India – Tiger Marathon

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2	Nagpur, transfer Pench Tiger Reserve
Day 3/4	Pench Tiger Reserve
Day 5/7	Kanha Tiger Reserve
Day 8/10	Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve
Day 11/12	Panna Tiger Reserve
Day 13	Transfer Khajuraho; fly Delhi
Day 14	Fly London

Post-tour Ranthambore extension

Day 14/16	Ranthambore (National Park & Tiger Reserve)
Day 17	Delhi
Day 18	Fly London



From top: Tiger, Spotted Owlets and the Ken River



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk



Royal Bengal Tiger (female)



Royal Bengal Tiger (male) stretching



Leopard in Bandhavgarh



Dhole (Asiatic Wild Dog in Pench)



Royal Bengal Tiger during territorial stroll



Royal Bengal Tiger drinking water at Kanha

Dates & Costs

2026

Wed 11th – Tue 24th Nov 2026 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 28th Nov £1,495

2027

Wed 6th Jan – Tue 19th Jan 2027 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 23rd Jan £1,495

Wed 10th Feb – Tue 23rd Feb 2027 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 27th Feb £1,495

Wed 7th April – Tue 20th April 2027 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 24th April £1,495

Wed 10th – Tue 23rd Nov 2027 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 27th Nov £1,495

2028

Wed 5th – Tue 18th Jan 2028 £ 4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 22th Jan £1,495

Wed 9th – Tue 22nd Feb 2028 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 26th Feb £1,495

Wed 8th – Tue 21st Nov 2028 £4,195

Ranthambore extension: to Sat 25th Nov £1,495

Single room supplement

£895 (Extension: £295)

Grading

A (easy). This is a safari-style wildlife tour, with little walking

Focus

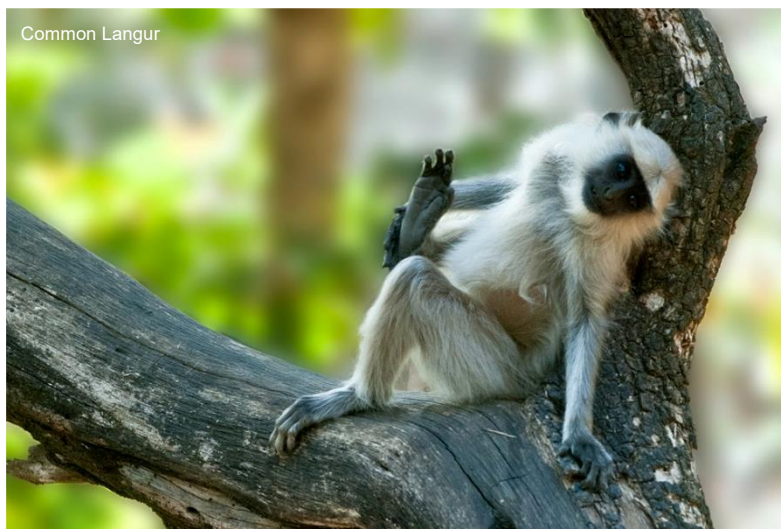
Tigers, other mammals and birds

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



© Siddhbaba Subadult in Tala Zone Bandhavgarh

Introduction



Common Langur

This is an exciting tour taking you straight into the heart of Tiger country on a 14-day safari that combines Pench, Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Panna, four of India's finest national parks and Tiger reserves, plus an optional extension to Ranthambore Tiger Reserve. We are taking the convenient British Airways flights to Delhi, followed by a connecting flight to Nagpur, the gateway to the tiger reserves of Central India. This itinerary allows wildlife enthusiasts to spend more time in the parks while largely avoiding sprawling cities and huge crowds.

We begin our tour in India with an arrival at Nagpur airport, following our international flight to Delhi and onward domestic connection. On arrival, we drive directly to Pench National Park, a journey of approximately two hours. During our 3-night stay here, we will enjoy five game drives into the park in search of its impressive mammals and birdlife.

Next, we traverse the scenic Mikal Hills as we transfer by road to Kanha (National Park and) Tiger Reserve where we will have further opportunities to watch Tigers during our daily excursions. Kanha Tiger Reserve encompasses nearly 2,000 square kilometres and is one of the largest reserves in Central India. It occupies a beautiful location on a plateau in the Maikal range of hills, and comprises a crescent of forested hills that embraces broad undulating grasslands dotted with clumps of bamboo and Sal forest; small pools, and a perennial lake, provide essential drinking holes for the animals. The reserve is famous for its Swamp Deer – for whose protection Kanha Tiger Reserve 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 big cat. Besides Tigers, we can also hope to observe plenty of Sambar, Spotted and Swamp Deer. We should also see Gaur, Wild Boar, Northern plains Langur, Golden Jackal, and with luck, Leopard and Dhole (Indian Wild Dog). The base from which we will undertake our twice-daily game drives into the Reserve will be the Tuli Tiger, close to the Khatiya gate. Here we will stay for three nights – ample time in which to see a wealth of wildlife in one of India's finest Tiger Reserves.

Our next destination is Bandhavgarh (National Park and) Tiger Reserve, which is situated amid the Vindhya Hills of Madhya Pradesh state and 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 binoculars at the ready! Formerly the hunting reserve of the



Naturetrek group birdwatching

Maharajas of Rewa, the area contains much evidence of its royal associations, the most spectacular being the ruins of a huge hilltop fort which dominate the centre of the Reserve. Visitors to Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve will experience a fine selection of wildlife and the chance of Tiger encounters.

Finally, we drive to Panna (National Park and) Tiger Reserve. The Reserve is situated in a stunning location by the Ken River and is a little off the general tourist map, which means we can enjoy its beauty and wildlife to the full in peaceful surroundings. There is plenty of wildlife to see here; in particular Panna Tiger Reserve offers superb bird life as well as excellent opportunities to see a variety of India's hoofed mammals. Until the last few years, the Reserve had been a Tiger success story. A 2022 official survey recorded an estimate of 64 Tigers in the Reserve. This Reserve is a very special place to see India's wildlife and, though sightings of Tigers are likely to be very slim, it still offers you the opportunity to see other rare birds and mammals. Here we will conclude our 'tiger holiday' with a 2-night stay at Tendu Leaf Jungle Resort or Naharbagh Panna – ample time in which to see a wealth of wildlife in India's finest Tiger Reserve.

We will fly to Delhi from the famous city of Khajuraho and from there we will return to London. However, if you wish to extend your stay we are offering a post-tour, 3-night stay in the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, one of India's most spectacular and best-known Tiger reserves.

Tiger sightings 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 and we have shown Tigers to over 5,000 of our clients! You should be aware, however, that although sightings remain good, poaching is reducing chances. It is therefore essential to appreciate that Tigers are very rare and very shy mammals and that, although you are likely to see one, you may not! If you enjoy birds, mammals and wild environments, and look upon a Tiger sighting as a bonus earned from spending a lengthy time in such an environment, please do join us!

Day 1

Wednesday

In Flight

We depart London at 11am on a British Airways scheduled flight to Nagpur, via Delhi



Tiger being closely watched by Sambar

Day 2

Thursday

Pench (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

Arriving in Nagpur at 9am, we will meet our driver and transferred north to Pench National Park. This is a pleasant 2-hour journey and, en route, we will see our first Indian birds: Black Kites, Laughing and Spotted Doves, Rose-ringed Parakeets, Little Swifts, 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 3-night stay. This lodge provides comfortable air-conditioned rooms and has a swimming pool. Then, if time permits, we will head out for a short birdwatching walk around the lodge.

Day 3

Friday

Pench (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

We will enjoy a morning and afternoon game drive in the Pench National Park. We will rise before dawn for tea/coffee and biscuits, and then we will head out for our first morning safari into the park – perhaps even experiencing our first Tiger encounter! The morning game drive through the park will be from sunrise until mid or late morning. We will then retire to our lodge for lunch and a siesta, then head back into the park at around 3pm to enjoy an evening game drive for the last three hours of the day.



Tuli Tiger Corridor Resort, Pench (Left & Right)



You may well have enjoyed watching the BBC's wonderful Sunday-evening series (April 2008) 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 all 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 Northern Plains Langurs are common here, as are Sambar, Spotted and Barking Deer. With luck we might

also see Dhole, or even a Leopard which are generally seen in the peripheral areas of the park where they are able more easily to avoid Tigers.

Day 4

Saturday

Pench Tiger Reserve

We will enjoy a morning and afternoon game drive in the Pench National Park.

Day 5 – 7

Sunday – Tuesday

Kanha (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

After our early morning game drive, we traverse the scenic Vindhya Hills as we transfer by road to Kanha Tiger Reserve where we will have further opportunities to look for Tigers during daily excursions.

There's a good variety of birds of prey here, 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. Sloth Bear and two of India's lowland antelopes – Chousingha and the beautiful Blackbuck – also occur and may be seen with patience and good fortune.



Our aim during our stay at Kanha will be to observe, enjoy and photograph the Reserve's many species of mammals and birds. Naturally, we will spend a great deal of time looking for Tigers, and with luck we may see and photograph this magnificent animal. Although Kanha is one of the very best reserves for Tiger sightings, and we shall be going at one of the best times of year, we cannot guarantee them!

Our daily programme will include both a morning and an evening jeep drive inside the Tiger Reserve. These are, of course, all optional. 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 game drives you do, the more you'll see! You are likely to see Tigers as well as most of the other wildlife we will encounter during the holiday on these game drives.

So, each morning we will aim to leave our lodge at around 5.45am, taking a picnic breakfast with us which we can eat at one of several designated stopping places, and we'll stay in the Tiger Reserve until midday, when it closes (during the hottest part of the



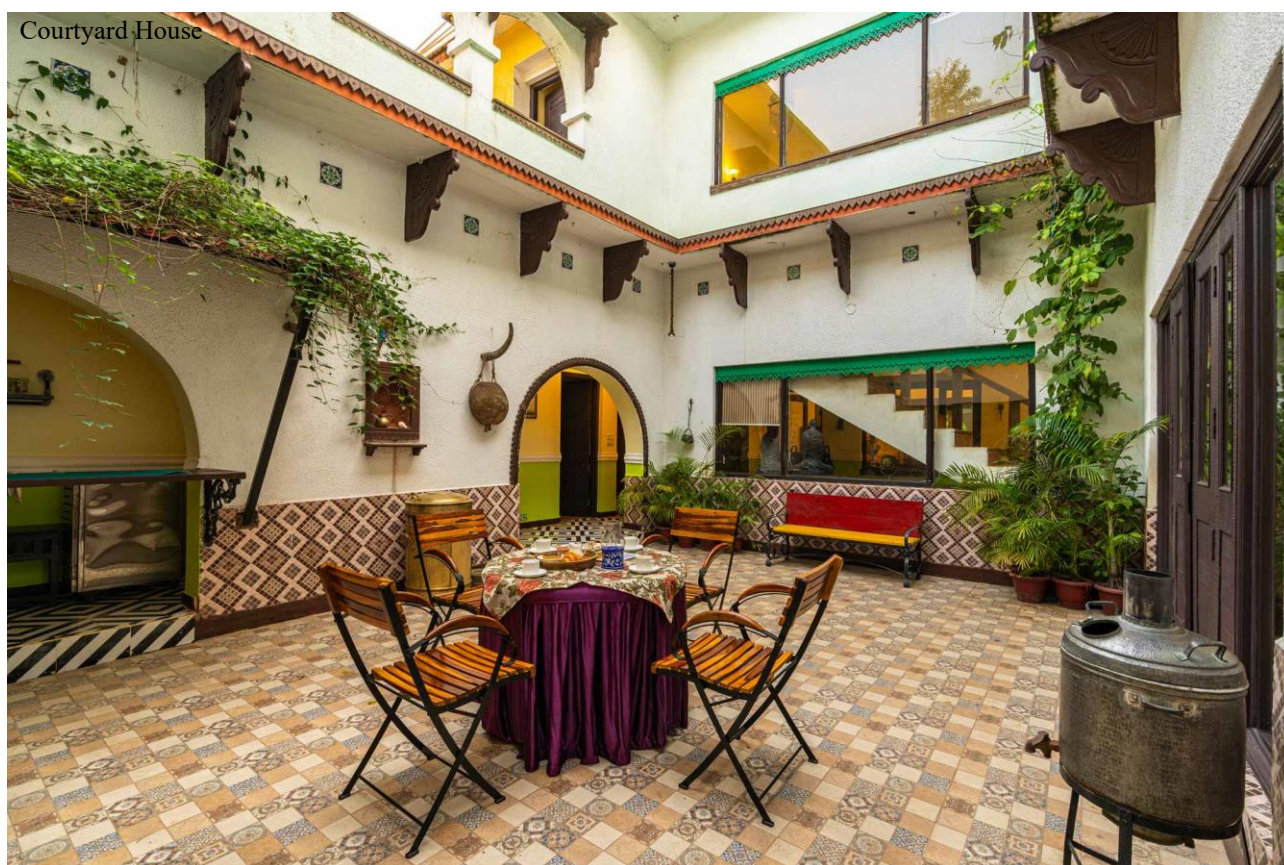
day). We will return to the Reserve when it opens again at 4pm and stay there until dusk, at around 6.30pm (NB From 1st November to 15th February the Reserve opens in the afternoon at 3pm and our stay will last until dusk at around 5.30pm) In the middle of the day, after lunch, there will be time to 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 being forbidden in all of India's 'Tiger Reserves for obvious reasons!

In our 'Tiger Marathon' tours we base ourselves for our 3-night stay in Kanha at Courtyard House or The Safari Lodge, Courtyard House Kanha is a comfortable nature retreat offering accommodation in well-appointed rooms with private facilities, set amidst beautifully landscaped gardens on the outskirts of Kanha National Park. The property provides a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere, complemented by attentive hospitality and modern amenities. It features a pleasant swimming pool and a delightful thatched al fresco dining area, where guests can enjoy meals in a tranquil natural setting.



Gaur and Spotted Deer



Day 8

Wednesday

Kanha to Bandhavgarh (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

Today after our early morning game drive, we will make a long afternoon drive to Bandhavgarh.

During our time at Bandhavgarh we will be staying for three nights at the Bandhav Vilas Lodge, situated within a fifteen-minute drive from Bandhavgarh National Park's main gate, 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. There are some nature trails to explore within the wooded grounds, plus good birdwatching opportunities.

Day 9 – 10

Thursday – Friday

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve

We take the first of five game drives in Bandhavgarh with the same routine of early morning and afternoon visits which will provide many opportunities for wildlife viewing.

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. The core of the Tiger Reserve is hilly, and is



Tiger Scanning in Bandhavgarh National Park

dominated by a long-deserted ancient fort, which rises 800m above the forest and sits at the top of an impressive plateau. It's a steep climb through dense vegetation to the top, but the rewards are breathtaking views from the ramparts, as well as ancient rock carvings among the ruins.

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. Our excursions in the Tiger Reserve will be by jeep, and we will, of course, be looking for Tigers in the Reserve.

As well as making early morning and afternoon excursions we will have periods of relaxation back at our lodge; these 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 Indian Paradise



Dhole (*Cuon alpinus*)

Flycatcher; over 250 bird 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 the 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. The Gaur population in Bandhavgarh

national park became locally extinct in 1998. However, in 2011, a reintroduction effort took place, where nineteen Gaur individuals (14 females and 5 males) from Kanha Tiger Reserve were translocated to Bandhavgarh. The program has been immensely successful, resulting in the flourishing of the Gaur population, which currently stands at over 200 individuals. A hunting pack of 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, Indian Fox, Jackal, Wolf, Jungle Cat or Indian Pangolin. 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 our stay here will doubtless provide many unforgettable encounters with the creatures that flourish within the protection of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve.

Day 11

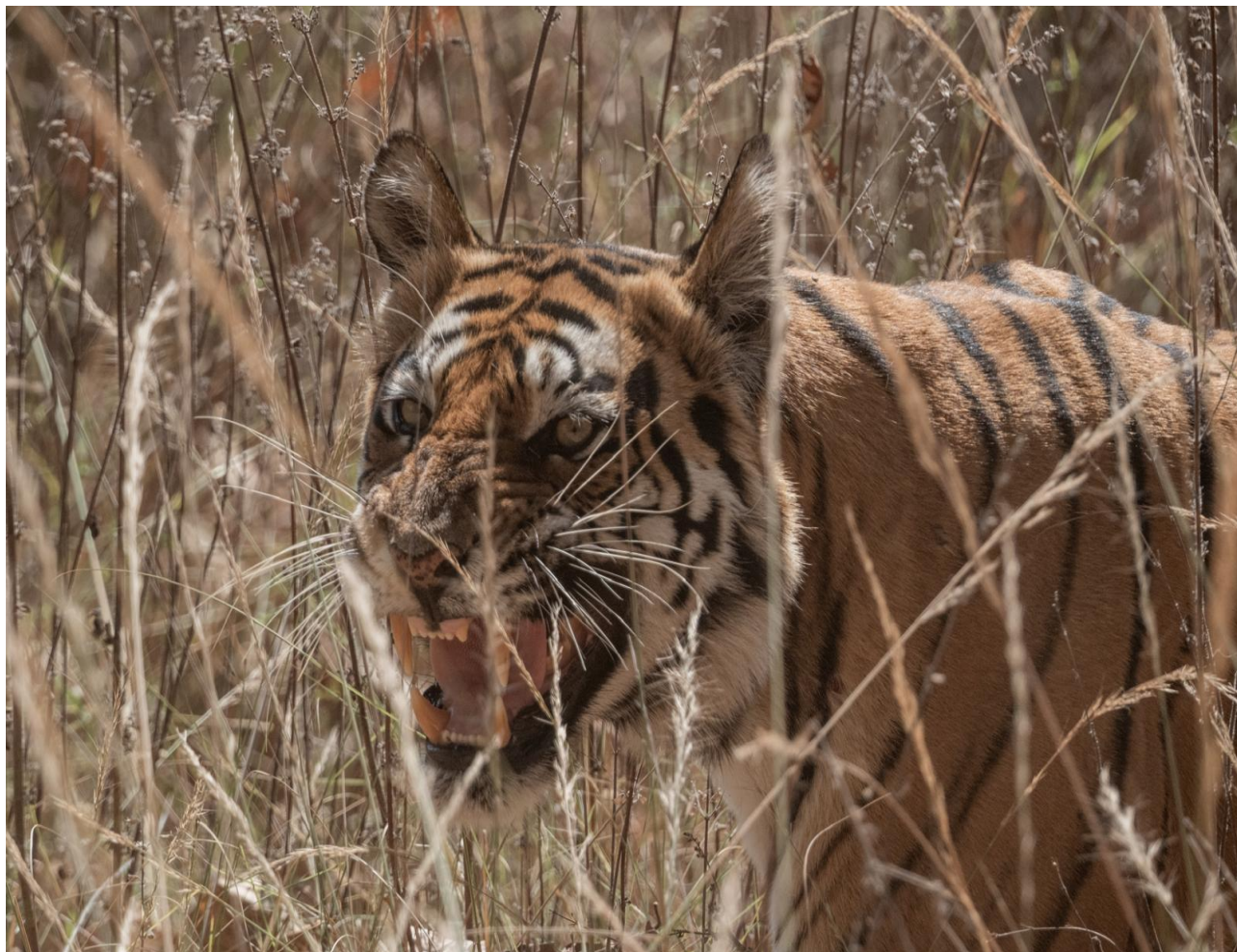
Saturday

Bandhavgarh to Panna (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

After a final morning's game drive in Bandhavgarh we will travel by road for about six hours to Panna Tiger Reserve. We will stay at the Tendu Leaf Jungle Resort or Naharbagh Panna, for two nights. The hotel has a stunning location and offers comfortable accommodation with private facilities. The staff are friendly and knowledgeable about the local culture, and there is an interesting variety of birdlife in the vicinity.

During our stay we'll be making twice-daily visits into Panna Tiger Reserve and our aim will be to observe, enjoy and photograph its many species of mammals and birds. Our explorations inside the Tiger Reserve will involve a mixture of early morning and afternoon jeep drives. Outside Panna Tiger Reserve we'll be able to enjoy the area's birdlife on foot. We'll aim to leave our lodge in the morning at about 5.30am, taking a picnic breakfast with us to eat at one of the designated stopping places. Then we'll stay in the Reserve for around five hours until it closes

during the hottest part of the day. Lunch will be eaten back at the lodge, after which there will be time for a siesta. We will return to the Reserve when it opens again at 3/4 pm and stay there for a three hours depending on the month of the year.



Day 12

Sunday

Panna Tiger Reserve

Today we will do morning and afternoon game drives inside the Reserve.

Panna Tiger Reserve encompasses 543 square kilometres of varied habitats and extends along the Ken River, which flows north to join the Yamuna River, a tributary of the mighty Ganges. The region, which is famous for its diamonds, is also home to some of the best wildlife species in India. A former hunting preserve of the Panna family, the Tiger Reserve comprises large tracts of riverine forest providing perfect cover for both predators and prey. There are Leopard and Wolf in the Reserve, though both species are elusive. Herds of Spotted Deer inhabit the Reserve, as well as Nilgai, Chinkara, Sambar and the shy Chousingha. Together, these species form the principal prey for the Tigers.

Over 200 species of birds have been identified in Panna Tiger Reserve and we are likely to encounter more than 100 species around the Reserve to augment our mammal observations. There is a good variety of birds of prey, including Black-shouldered Kite, Crested Serpent Eagle, White-eyed Buzzard, Shikra, and several species of vulture. In the forests Malabar Pied Hornbill, Black-headed Oriole, and a selection of flycatchers, babblers and warblers add yet more exciting possibilities for bird enthusiasts.

Day 13

Monday

Khajuraho to Delhi

In the morning there may be a boat ride in the morning. If so, these will be taken in small boats, which are low to the water, and offer a unique and very atmospheric way to watch wildlife. In particular we will be looking out for birds and crocodiles! This will depend entirely on whether time allows.

After breakfast, we will aim to do an orientation tour of this historic ancient temple city of Khajuraho. The magnificent, and it must be said erotic, carvings which adorn some of the magnificent temples are frequently depicted in India's tourist literature and attract thousands of tourists to the city. There are no finer examples of early Indian art and the lovely parkland setting for many of the buildings make this a cultural excursion that even hardened birders will not want to miss.

Afternoon, we will take our flight to Delhi. On reaching Delhi, we will spend our last night on the Indian subcontinent at a hotel close to the airport, such as the 5-star hotel, Roseate House or The Pride Plaza Aerocity for convenient access to the Delhi airport, (we cannot guarantee a periarticular hotels, but always endeavor to book one of a high standard not far from the airport). The hotel features an array of exceptional dining experiences, offering a selection of fine restaurants and elegant lounges. The Roseate New Delhi is renowned for its tranquil setting, contemporary luxury, and outstanding hospitality. Surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens and water features, it provides a peaceful retreat before a long flight.



Rhesus Macaques grooming

Day 14

Tuesday

London

This morning we will transfer to Delhi airport to catch our return flight to London which departs Delhi at 10:50am and, arrives back at London at 03:15pm (Flight timings subject to final confirmation nearer the time of departure.)

Ranthambhore 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 14

Tuesday

Drive to Ranthambore

This morning, we will travel by road to Ranthambore. The journey is for around five hours. On arrival, we will check in at Tiger Den Lodge where we will be based for our 3-night stay. 'Tiger Den' is a 4-star resort located in the lap of nature, amidst the Aravalli Hills of Ranthambore National Park (The resort offers elegant accommodation options consisting 38 Cottage Rooms. Each room is equipped with modern amenities and a



Tiger Den Ranthambore

swimming pool. The lodge offers stunning views of the surrounding hills and valleys! We will enjoy some birdwatching in and around the lodge in the afternoon.

Days 15 – 16

Wednesday – Thursday

Ranthambore (National Park &) Tiger Reserve

Ranthambore is considered by many to be one of India's most beautiful Tiger Reserves. Encircled by a series of high escarpments, the forests, lakes and dry scrub that make up the Reserve are dotted with old forts and temples, creating a wonderful atmosphere for both bird and mammal viewing. Ranthambore is perhaps most famous for being one of the original 'Project Tiger' reserves and until recently it provided one of the best opportunities anywhere in India of seeing a Tiger. With the recent escalation in poaching right across the subcontinent, there has been a decline in both numbers and sightings. Today Tiger sightings in the park are less frequent than a few years ago when encounters could be almost guaranteed, but if anti-poaching measures are successful it is likely that the population will quickly increase again as on previous occasions when numbers had been reduced in this way.



Ranthambore National Park Landscape

Each morning we will take a safari into the park between 6:30am and 10am (Oct, Feb and Mar) or 7.00am to 10.30am (Nov-Jan) or 6.00am to 9.30am (Apr-Jun), leaving after tea and biscuits, in order to gain our place in the entrance queue. We will return to the Reserve when it opens again at 2:00pm, 2.30 pm or 3:00pm, depending on

the season, and stay there until dusk, at around 6pm. These timings can change anytime without prior notice. In the middle of the day, after lunch, there will be time to rest or go on short birdwatching walks around the lodge.



Tiger viewing by jeep!

Whether or not you see Tiger on this holiday (and we have been lucky on this tour in the past), you cannot fail to be impressed by the sheer variety and number of other mammals and birds that make the Reserve their home. Northern Plains Langurs are abundant, as are both Spotted (Chital) and Sambar Deer; the latter often feed so far out into the lakes that only their heads show above the water. Nilgai are also fairly common and Barking Deer do occur, although they are somewhat harder to find. For the very fortunate there is also a chance of tracking down a Sloth

Bear or perhaps a Chinkara Antelope. Mugger Crocodiles are common in the lakes and Monitor Lizards are frequently seen around their shores. In addition to the mammals and reptiles, we will also see a wonderful diversity of birds. Flocks of Peafowl are on almost constant show, while on the lakes Cotton Pygmy Geese, Bronze-winged and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas are common. The surrounding woodland and grasslands hold such species as Black-rumped Flameback Woodpeckers, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Finch Lark (an Indian endemic), Painted Spurfowl, Jungle Bush Quail, Small Minivet and Stork-billed Kingfisher. In addition, there is an opportunity to find up to five species of Owl, including Brown Fish Owl, Dusky Eagle Owl and Collared Scops Owl. On each of our game drives we will be accompanied by local guides, whose expert knowledge of the Reserve is invaluable when tracking down some of the more elusive species.

From the lodge we will be able to take morning and evening drives into the Reserve in search of its many mammals and birds. In between these there is plenty of opportunity for birdwatching around the lodge. The surrounding deciduous woodland holds a variety of birds, including Rufous Treepie, Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker and Brown Rock Chat. During our final morning we may also visit a small open area close to the lodge used as a helicopter landing pad. This and the adjacent low hill holds a regular flock of Indian Coursers along with Yellow Wattled Lapwing, both Painted and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Eastern Pied Wheatear and Short-toed Lark.

Day 17

Friday

Delhi

After a final morning game drive, we will travel by road back to Delhi and on reaching Delhi, we will spend our last night on the Indian subcontinent at a hotel close to the airport, such as the 5-star hotel, This hotel features an array of exceptional dining experiences, offering a selection of fine restaurants and elegant lounges. The Roseate New Delhi is renowned for its tranquil setting, contemporary luxury, and outstanding hospitality. Surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens and water features, it provides a peaceful retreat before a long flight. If we do not

stay at The Roseate New Delhi, a hotel offering an equivalent standard of accommodation, facilities, and service will be used.

Roseate House



Day 18

Saturday

London

This morning we will transfer to Delhi airport to catch our return flight to London which departs Delhi at 10:50am and, arrives back at London at 03:15pm (Flight timings subject to final confirmation nearer the time of departure.)

Other extensions

If our scheduled post-tour Ranthambore extension isn't for you, we would be delighted to tailor a different holiday extension suited to your particular objectives and needs. You may wish to sample some of the cultural delights of India for example, or visit a different national park or Tiger reserve or would like to have an extra night in the beginning or end. In India, anything is possible; just call our India consultant, Rajan Jolly on 01962 73301 for expert advice.



Green Bee-eater

Grading

This is a safari-style mammal and birdwatching tour, based largely around morning and afternoon and evening game drives in open-top jeeps. The walking is limited to strolling around the grounds of the lodges we stay at, and the tour is graded A (easy).

Weather

During the winter months, especially 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, woollen 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.

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 30–40°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.

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

Food & Accommodation

These are all included in the price.

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). 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 (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. In Pench (except for some gates which comes under Maharashtra State boundary), Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Panna camera fees is included.

Clothing

A full list of items we suggest you 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 and very warm clothes for early mornings and evenings when it can be bitterly cold. Khaki and other 'bush' colours are recommended, since bright colours can often scare the animals. A wide-brimmed hat is essential for protection against heatstroke and sunburn.

Focus

Tigers, other mammals and birds.

Tour leaders

This tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders: Yusuf Rizvi, Swanand Deshpande, Shaan Subbaiah, Omkar Shelke, Ilyas Khan, Sneha Sundaram, Pranad Patil, Vedant Thite or Akshay Pacharne.

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.

National Park remain closed to public access on Wednesday afternoons

All National Parks in Madhya Pradesh are currently closed on Wednesday afternoons. This includes Pench, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Satpura and Panna Reserves. On the main tour, we will be traveling by road in the afternoon between Pench and Kanha Tiger Reserves on Wednesday. Thus the Wednesday afternoon closure does not affect our itinerary. Where the Wednesday park closure affects extensions we arrange alternative natural history activities either in the periphery of the National Parks or in nearby wildlife habitats.

Additionally, the Zone 1- 5 area of Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, remains closed on every Wednesday, and Zone 6 to 10 will remain closed on every Tuesday for an entire day.

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

Most National Parks prohibit single-use plastic water bottles. Guests are encouraged to carry reusable water bottles or sippers. Refillable, multi-use plastic bottles are permitted. For your convenience, the lodge will provide water bottles during safari excursions.

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.

Entry requirements

All UK passport holders and most other nationalities require a visa for India, which is obtainable in advance from your nearest embassy

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures, new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

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 Marathon 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!

Our past winter season of 'Tiger tourism' started badly due to the Indian courts' indecision over an interim ban on tourism to India's Tiger Reserves which lasted from July until October 2012. When the ban was finally lifted, as we'd always expected it to be, our Naturetrek clients visiting between October and January were able to enjoy the luxury of low tourist numbers in the reserves. By February however, the Tiger Reserves were busy again - although 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.

Tour Summary from a previous tour

The 'Tiger Marathon' tour itinerary took us through all four Tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh, and gave us the opportunity to experience the diverse habitats and wildlife within a single state. Brilliant sightings, amazing food and the company of people with similar interests enhanced the whole experience.

We had thrilling sightings, starting with a Tiger on the first drive, and then a Tiger on almost every other drive. Some sightings were close while others were at a distance. During the main tour we saw ten Tigers, with a further seven on the extension to Ranthambore. We also saw four Leopards, two Jungle Cats, two Asian Palm Civets and over 190 species of birds.

Tour Summary from a previous tour

Our group's final game-drive at Ranthambhore National Park proved arguably the best of the trip. While still en route to the 'safari zone', on the main road into the reserve, they came across the once-in-a-lifetime sight of a Leopard in the act of making a kill. A large Spotted Deer stag with a full set of antlers was crashing about in the bushes less than 50 feet from the road. When our group stopped to investigate, they discovered a Leopard clutching hard to the stag's throat and they witnessed the Leopard make its kill and drag the unfortunate deer into cover.

After that special encounter, they then came across a Tigress with three cubs of about 6 months old – they were all lying under cover and busy finishing off a kill. After staying to observe the Tigers for a bit, they then began to drive out of the reserve when they came across a Tiger and Tigress resting neck-deep in water in a lake. One couldn't ask for a better finale!

At Last A Tiger!

Pam Manfield travelled on our 'India - Tiger Marathon' holiday and submitted this entry to our writing competition.

Up at 5 am, a quick cup of tea and a biscuit and we are off on our first jeep trip in the hope of seeing a Tiger. We register at the park gate, pick up our park guide and set off as a large orange sun rises slowly over the trees. We jolt over rough tracks, past muddy pools where Sambar are wallowing, through teak forests with raucous Indian Grey Hornbills calling and the occasional iridescent blue flash as an Indian Roller flies past. We move out into grassy areas where delicately spotted deer with large, liquid brown eyes and wet noses watch us curiously. Wild Boar trot past in the distance and eagles soar overhead. Lots of wildlife - but no Tigers. We stop for breakfast: boiled eggs, sandwiches and tea, which taste so good in the cold morning air.

We carry on interspersing forest with grassland, seeing so many more birds and animals. We stop and question the guide of each jeep we pass. No one has seen a Tiger. There are large pugmarks in the dust on several tracks, but no sign of an animal. We return to the lodge for lunch and a rest.

In the afternoon, we return to the park: even more birds, lots more Spotted Deer, the excitement of a fast-moving mongoose dashing through the scrub. Plants, birds, animals, all are new and fascinating. We have resigned ourselves to not seeing a Tiger - and, faced with all these wonders, it doesn't seem to matter. Then, half-way down a quiet track our guide gestures to the driver to stop, puts his finger to his lips and points to a scrub patch about 20 yards away on the left.

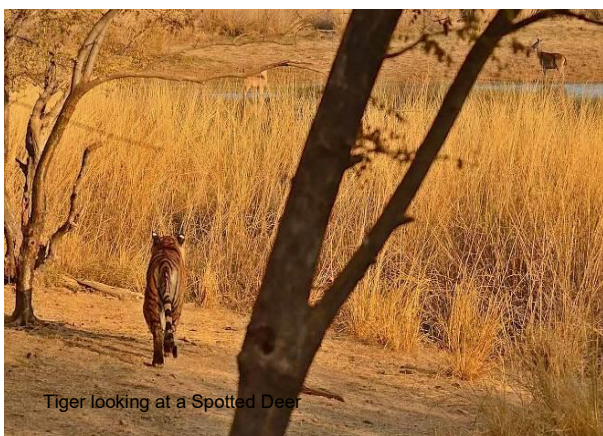
Partially screened by straggly lantana bushes, a large, orange and black-striped shape emerges. A huge male Tiger. He knows he is being watched, but walks slowly, majestically, parallel to the jeep and then crosses the track behind us. He moves effortlessly, taking huge strides with his giant paws. His colour is breathtaking, from his calm,

whiskered face to his upturned black-tipped tail. He moves quietly into the forest on the right and disappears in a few steps, giving us a last wonderful view of the brilliant white markings behind each ear.

I had not expected to be so overwhelmed with emotion at the sight of this animal. There are tears in my eyes and those of some of my companions in the jeep. Majestic is an over-used word, but not for Tigers. Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to see many wonderful wild animals close up: Lions, elephants, rhino and buffalo in Africa and Bison and Black Bears in the United States, but this Tiger is in a different class. He exudes power and beauty and the essence of wildness.



If we hadn't seen a Tiger, the trip would still have been an amazing experience. So many new birds and mammals, plus pythons and crocodiles, a tree cascading with orchids, and Gaur and cobras. I could go on and on. But, above all, we saw a wild Tiger in his own habitat, relatively close, and unworried by people. It reinforced my inability to understand how greedy people can want to kill a creature this majestic for the supposed medicinal properties of its bones. This holiday has convinced me even more of the need to fight to protect our rare wild creatures, so that future generations will be able to see an animal in its own habitat and not just in zoos.



Summary from a previous tour in February

The third Tiger Marathon trip of the season was a resounding success. The group collectively saw 26 different Tigers, four Leopards, three Wild Dogs, two Sloth Bears, and hundreds of bird species.

The main highlight of the trip is sure to be the hunting Tiger. A Tigress in Bandhavgarh was seen resting in the grass. All jeeps parked and waited patiently for her to wake up. After half an hour she got up and walked into the open grassland. As she walked, we could notice a difference. She was poised for a hunt. Her ears erected and

pointed forwards. Soon she disappeared in the grasses. Just a few minutes later a herd of deer was seen walking towards the Tigress, unaware of her presence. We patiently waited as we kept a close watch on her movements. The deer continued walking, getting closer to the danger. And that moment the Tigress leaped out of the grass and shot into a chase. A few metres of adrenaline-fueled run and mayhem and the Tigress emerged once again out of the grass with a deer fawn in her mouth. Words could not express the feeling that day. The group was clearly overwhelmed with excitement after witnessing nature's sheer power.

Pictures by :- Lucienne Martin, Louise Donovan, Andrew Farrow, Robert Farrow, Colin Rownes, Patricia Pearl, John Martin, Lu Martin, Anurag Yadav