

Unknown India – Tadoba & Satpura

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2/4	Nagpur – Tadoba National Park
Day 5/6	Pench National Park
Day 7/10	Satpura National Park
Day 11	Bhopal – Mumbai
Day 12	Fly London



Kanha National Park extension

Day 11/14	Kanha National Park
Day 15	Nagpur
Day 16	Fly London



From top: Sloth Bear, Satpura National Park and Tiger



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

Dates

2025

Wednesday 12th November — Sunday 23rd November 2025	Cost: £3,995
Kanha National Park extension to: Thursday 27th November 2025	Cost: £1,495

2026

Wednesday 4th February — Sunday 15th February 2026	Cost: £3,995
Kanha National Park extension to: Thursday 19th February 2026	Cost: £1,495

Wednesday 11th November — Sunday 22nd November 2026	Cost: £3,995
Kanha National Park extension to: Thursday 26th November 2026	Cost: £1,495

2027

Wednesday 3rd February — Sunday 14th February 2027	Cost: £3,995
Kanha National Park extension to: Thursday 18th February 2027	Cost: £1,495

Wednesday 10th November — Sunday 21st November 2027	Cost: £3,995
Kanha National Park extension to: Thursday 25th November 2027	Cost: £1,495

Single room supplement

From £995 (extension: From £495)

Grading

A.

Focus

Tigers, other mammals and birds

Food

All included in the price.

£500 reduction is booked a land only trip (Nagpur/Bhopal)



Tigress at Satpura



Leopardess at Satpura



Sloth Bear with cubs at Satpura



Tiger at Tadoba



Great-Thick-knee, Satpuda



Wild Dog, Pench

Introduction

A 12-day holiday in search of the birds and mammals of central India's once lesser known National Parks and Tiger Reserves – Tadoba, Pench and Satpura – plus an optional extension to Kanha National Park. These days, Tiger tourism in India is big business, and the numbers of overseas tourists visiting such well-known reserves as Bandhavgarh, Ranthambore and Kanha are unavoidably high. This exciting wildlife tour to central India, however, focuses on the once lesser-known national parks and Project Tiger 'Tiger Reserves', notably Satpura, that as yet attract very few overseas visitors. On this tour you will also benefit from the ease and

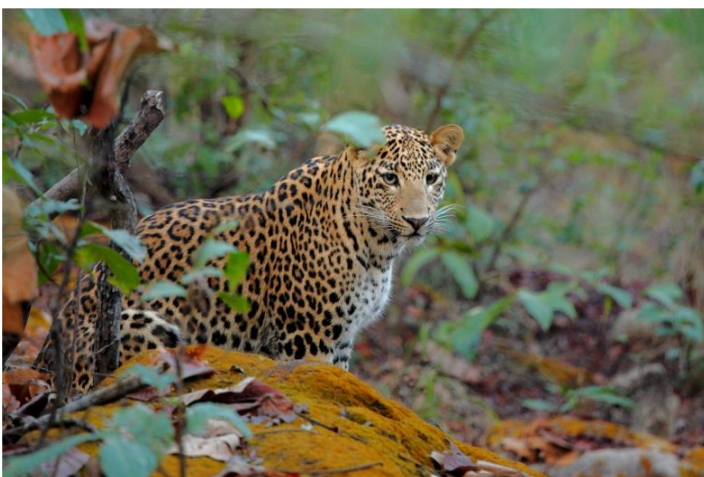


Sloth Bear

convenience of flying right into the heart of central India's 'Tiger country', as we use the scheduled service of Qatar Airways to Nagpur, via Doha, the capital of Madhya Pradesh (heartland of the Tiger). In so doing, we not only offer the wildlife enthusiast the utmost hospitality – a holiday to India that largely avoids sprawling cities, huge crowds, long train journeys, domestic flights, etc! – but we also minimise travelling times and maximise the time we may spend in these little-known reserves.

On our arrival in Nagpur we overnight in the city before taking a 3-hour drive to previously little-known Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, situated in the Chandrapur District of Maharashtra. The reserve, spanning over 625 square kilometres, 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 survive here, plus a great many other mammals such as Leopard, Sloth Bear, Gaur, Wild Dog, Jungle Cat and Chousingha (the Four-horned Antelope), not to mention a rich birdlife. The accommodation may not be luxury, but such tranquillity is priceless!

After three nights in Tadoba, a 4-hour drive brings us to Pench National Park. This previously little-known reserve



Leopard, Satpura

was the setting for the popular BBC TV series 'Tiger – Spy in the Jungle', narrated by Sir David Attenborough. Designated as Project Tiger's 19th Tiger Reserve in 1992, Pench today protects 758 square kilometres of prime Tiger habitat in 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 pools along the seasonal Pench River and a large dam provide the primary watering holes for Tigers and all other wildlife. Elsewhere the terrain is rugged and the region's



Dusk at Satpura National Park

hills are cloaked in both southern moist deciduous forest and extensive dry, deciduous forest, dominated by Teak. Gaur, Wild Boar and Grey Langurs are common here, as are Sambar, Spotted and Barking Deer. With luck we might also see Asiatic Jackal, Nilgai and Dhole, or even a Leopard.

Next we travel to Satpura Tiger Reserve, which we will not only explore by jeep and boat. This is by far the best way to enjoy a wealth of birdlife (perhaps a Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagle or Malabar Pied Hornbill) and offers a chance of

such smaller mammals such as Indian Giant Squirrel, as well as many of the larger mammals that we'll have seen in Tadoba and Pench.

After spending four memorable nights in Satpura we drive to Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, visiting the 10,000-year-old rock shelters of Bhimbetka en route. We have dinner in Bhopal before our return flight to London, via Mumbai and Doha. For those wishing to extend their stay in India, or wishing also to visit one of the mainstream Tiger Reserves, we recommend taking advantage of our optional extension to Kanha National Park, perhaps the best place in the world in which to see a Tiger, plus a wide range of other mammals and birds.

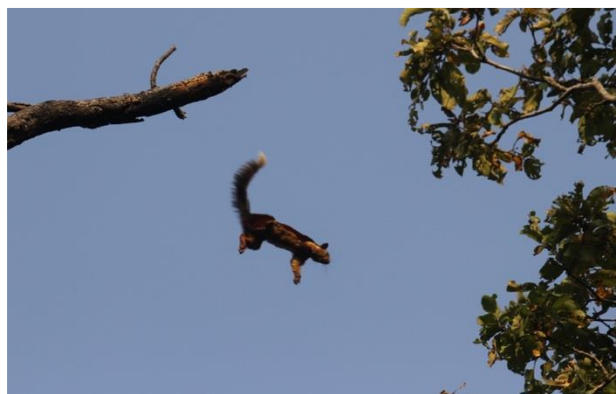
Tigers are, of course, not guaranteed. However, in the twenty years that Naturetrek have been operating Tiger-watching tours to India, our groups have so far had a 100% success rate, successfully showing Tigers to over 5,000 of our clients. You should be aware, however, that although sightings remain good, poaching 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 Heathrow at 8am on a Qatar Airways' scheduled flight to Nagpur, via Doha (where duty-free shopping is amongst the best and cheapest in the world).



Malabar (or Indian) Giant Squirrel

Day 2

Thursday

Nagpur

Arriving in Nagpur at 2.10am, we will meet our driver and transfer to our centrally located hotel, either the Radisson Blu or Tuli Imperial, for an overnight stay.

Later in the morning, we will be transferred north to Tadoba 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, 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 Tadoba, we will settle into our lodge for our 3-night stay. Then, after lunch and a siesta (or a stroll around the gardens to encounter the resident birds and mammals), we will head out for our first afternoon safari into the park – perhaps even experiencing our first Tiger encounter!

Day 3 – 4

Friday – Saturday

Tadoba National Park / Tiger Reserve

Tadoba-Andheri Tiger Reserve, situated in the Chandrapur District of Maharashtra, spans over 625 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 forty Tigers are reputed to survive here, plus a great many other mammals such as Leopard, Sloth Bear, Gaur, Wild Dog, Jungle Cat and Chousingha (the Four-horned Antelope), not to mention a rich birdlife.

We will stay at 'Svasara Jungle Lodge' or 'The Bamboo Forest Safari Lodge' both of which are set on the outskirts of the National Park and have private facilities. The twelve-roomed 'Svasara Jungle Lodge' has luxurious air-conditioned suites with elegant bathrooms, premium bedding, in-room amenities (mini-fridge, coffee/tea maker, etc.), private outdoor veranda seating, and much more! Guests can enjoy sumptuous local and other cuisines in the privacy of their suites, or have their meals in the restaurant or outdoor ethnic gazebo under a starlit night.



Day 5 – 6

Sunday – Monday

Pench National Park / Tiger Reserve

After our morning game drive and breakfast, we must reluctantly leave Tadoba behind today, making an early afternoon start to retrace our steps by air-conditioned cars or vans on the 5-hour drive to Pench National Park.

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 welcoming swimming pool. In the evening, after dinner and a siesta, we stroll around the gardens to encounter the resident birds and mammals.

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.



Asiatic Jackal

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 Asiatic Jackal and Nilgai. The terrain is rugged and the region's hills are cloaked in both southern moist deciduous forest and extensive dry,



Tiger Corridor Resort, Pench

deciduous forest, dominated by Teak. Gaur, Wild Boar and Common Langurs are common here, as are Sambar, Spotted and Barking Deer. With luck we might also see Dhole, or even a Leopard.

Day 7

Tuesday

Satpura National Park / Tiger Reserve



After our early morning game drive and early lunch, we traverse the scenic Vindhya Hills as we transfer by road for seven hours to Satpura National Park where we have further opportunities to watch Tigers during daily excursions.

On arrival at Satpura we will check at fabulous Reni Pani Jungle Lodge, Denwa Backwater Escape or Forsyth's Lodge.

Reni Pani Jungle Lodge is an exquisitely designed conservation and wildlife focused lodge located close to the Satpura National Park and Tiger Reserve. The lodge features 12 luxury cottages and 4 luxury tents encompassing 3 distinct structural designs, a cosy central meeting place called the Gol Ghar and a jungle pool located along its seasonal nullah. The lodge is spread over 30 acres of striking forest and features exactly what a nature lover would want, magnificent trees, a sprawling meadow, a seasonal nullah, uneven yet beautiful topography and water holes that attract several species of birds and animals.

Day 8 – 10

Wednesday – Friday

Satpura National Park / Tiger Reserve



Gaur

In the rugged heart of India lies one of the most spectacular and rewarding of tiger reserves, Satpura National Park. A haven for wildlife, thankfully it is little known and attracts relatively few visitors, having only a few tourist lodges. Yet it is one of the key players in the chain of central Indian Tiger Reserves designed to protect one of India's most extensive tiger landscapes. Satpura is, quite simply, classic tiger country. Here, open woodland, dense forest and grassy meadows rise from the shores of the Tawa reservoir in a series of hills, plateaux and sheer red sandstone cliffs to the Pachmarhi plateau and the peak of Dhoopgarh – the highest point of Central India. It is a stunningly beautiful landscape – gnarled, eroded and fissured, with plunging gorges, rushing streams, ruined temples, ancient cave art and stone-age rock paintings, plus a wealth of bio-diversity unmatched in central India. Indeed it is thought that the Satpura Hills once formed the montane corridor between the eastern Himalaya and the Western Ghats before the softer rock on either side of Pachmarhi eroded to leave an isolated 'highland island' supporting many species of plants

and animals that have long since disappeared elsewhere in central India. Indian Giant Squirrels and Indian Mouse-deer, for example, still occur, and the skies are often patrolled by Black Eagles and Mountain Hawk-eagles.



Leopard



Sloth Bear

With such a range of habitats and altitudes, Satpura offers a wealth of wildlife viewing that is amongst the best in India. Nowhere else are Gaur (the giant Asian bison), the much sought-after Sloth Bear and the elusive Asian Wild Dog so abundant and easily seen. These species, together with the beautiful Indian Giant Squirrel and the Leopard (which is relatively common here), make up Satpura's 'big five'. Sambar, Chital, Muntjac, Nilgai, Blackbuck, Wild Boar, Rhesus Macaques and Common Langurs, Marsh Mugger Crocodiles, and even the elusive Chousingha, may also be seen, while Indian Skimmer, Bar-headed Geese, Grey Junglef, both Red and Painted Spurfowl, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Blue-bearded Bee-eater and Tawny-bellied Babbler are amongst Satpura's avian specialties.



Indian Skimmers

There is so much more that is special about Satpura. Here you may explore the shores and inlets of Tawa reservoir by boat or canoe, paddled by local fishermen, in search of a rich spectacle of waterbirds and other wetland wildlife. With just 18 jeeps currently permitted to enter the park at any time, game drives in Satpura will be as rewarding and enjoyable as they get!

What's more, Satpura is easy to reach. It lies a 6-hour drive from Pench and just a 3-hour drive from the modern airport of Bhopal, and allows a visit to the fascinating 10,000-year-old rock shelters of Bhimbetka en route. Best of all, in this clean, peaceful and scenic part of rural India, just two luxury lodges service Satpura. They are amongst India's leading 'eco-lodges', and we stay in one of them. We are confident that you will love Satpura and, if you are really concerned that you may not see a Tiger here, we offer an optional extension to Kanha National Park, where the Tigers are rather more obliging!



Paintings at Bhimbetka

Day 11

Saturday

Bhopal – Mumbai

We make our final visit to Satpura Tiger Reserve and hope to end our stay with some special sightings! After spending four memorable nights in Satpura we drive for three hours to Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, visiting the 10,000-year-old rock shelters of Bhimbetka en route. We may have some time for a light farewell meal in Bhopal before catching our return flight to London, via Mumbai. Our flight will depart Bhopal at 9.30pm. Arrive Mumbai at 11:10pm.

Day 12

Sunday

Fly London

Fly to London at 4am, via Doha, with Qatar Airways. We will arrive in London Heathrow at 12.25pm.

Please note that the itinerary outlined above offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & 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.

Kanha National Park and Tiger Reserve extension

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

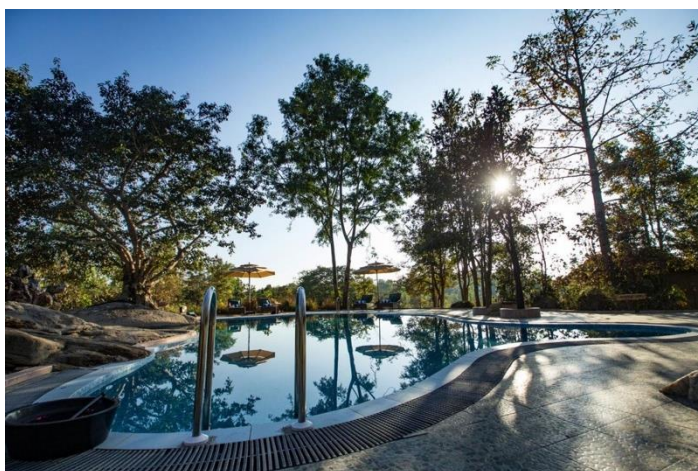
Day 11

Saturday

Kanha National Park / Tiger Reserve

After our morning game drive we must reluctantly leave Satpura behind today, making a late morning start to retrace our steps by cars for a full day travel by road straight from Satpura to Kanha. On route we will see traditional Indian villages and fields.

We base ourselves for four nights stay in Kanha at Singinawa or Kanha Jungle Lodge, a comfortable 'jungle lodge' offering accommodation in twin-bedded stone cottages, each with private facilities, set amongst flower-filled gardens. Singinawa has a pleasant swimming pool, a delightful dining area, and is situated amongst light forest.



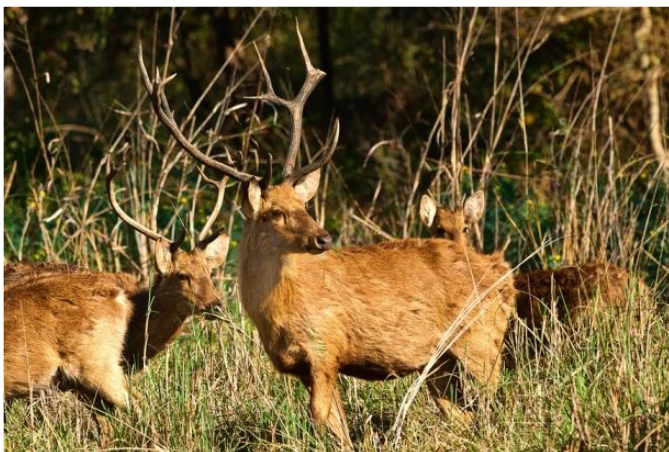
Day 12 – 14

Sunday – Tuesday

Kanha National Park / Tiger Reserve

Kanha Tiger Reserve encompasses 1,945 sq km and is one of the largest reserves in 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. There are small pools and a perennial lake, which provide essential drinking holes for the animals. The Reserve was first established in 1955 for the protection of Swamp Deer, for which it is famous. Once these deer roamed India in herds of many thousands. Today there are just 300 left, though this represents a good recovery since 1970 when just 70 individuals remained. 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 to search for them. Besides Tigers, we can also hope to observe plenty of Sambar, Spotted and Swamp Deer. We should also see Gaur, Wild Boar, Common Langur, Asiatic Jackal, and with luck Leopard and Dhole (Indian Wild Dog).

Around 120 species of birds are likely to be encountered around the Reserve during our stay, and these will be among the highlights of the tour. There is 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



Swamp Deer in Kanha



Tiger

be found. In particular, we shall keep a look out for the very rare Green Munia. Sloth Bear and two of India's lowland antelopes – Chousingha and the beautiful Blackbuck – also occur and can be seen with patience and good fortune.

During our stay at Kanha our aim 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 will

be going at one of the best times of year, we cannot guarantee them!



Our daily programme will include both morning and evening jeep drives inside the Tiger 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 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 you will encounter during the holiday on these game drives.

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 around 11.30am, when it closes (during the hottest part of the day). We will return to the Reserve when it opens again at 3 or 4pm, depending on the season, and stay there until dusk, at around 6.30pm (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.



Dhole

At some stage we will also visit the Kanha Museum, located inside the park, which contains fascinating, well-conceived exhibits relating to the entire ecosystem and its fauna and flora. Outside Kanha Tiger Reserve we will be able to enjoy the area's birdlife on foot, walking being forbidden in all the Tiger Reserves of India, for obvious reasons! You may even like to accompany your guide on some evenings for spotlighting forays around the lodge in search of owls, nightjars and other nocturnal mammals.

Day 15

Wednesday

Nagpur

We take our bird watching walk in the early morning around the lodge and hope to end our stay with some special rare bird species! Later in the morning, we must reluctantly leave Kanha behind, taking a long drive south to

Nagpur (a journey of approximately 6 hours). Here we will transfer to a 5-star hotel, Radisson Blue for some rest, enjoy our farewell meal and a few hours sleep!

Day 16

Thursday

Fly London, via Doha

We will be transferred to the airport at 1am for our Qatar Airways' flight to London. The flight leaves Nagpur at 4.20 am and arrives back in London Heathrow at 12.25pm, via Doha.

Other extensions

If you don't fancy our scheduled Kanha extension, we should 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. In India, anything is possible; just call our very own India consultant, Rajan Jolly, on 01962 73301, for expert advice.

Grading

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).

Weather

In January, Satpura, Tadoba, and Kanha national parks experience cold mornings, with temperatures often dropping to 3–5°C, especially in Kanha and Satpura. Safaris in open jeeps can feel extremely chilly due to windchill, so visitors need to wear heavy winter clothing, including thermals, windproof jackets, gloves, and woolen hats. As the sun rises, the weather becomes pleasant, reaching 15–25°C during the day, making it ideal for wildlife sightings.

In November, the parks are lush and green after the monsoon, with mild mornings (15–18°C) and warm days (28–32°C). While heavy layers aren't needed, light jackets are useful for early drives.

Food & accommodation

The cost of all meals and accommodation is included in the price of this 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 post-tour Kanha 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 (currently 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, Kanha and Satpura camera fees is included. The camera fees in Tadoba is around £3 per entry.

National Park remain closed to public access on Wednesday afternoons

The National Parks Authority for Madhya Pradesh has announced that all National Parks in the State will remain closed to public access on Wednesday afternoons until further notice. This order will affect Pench, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Satpura and Panna Reserves. Tadoba which is in Maharashtra is closed on Tuesday for full day. The inconvenience caused to Naturetrek tour participants is regretted but unfortunately there is nothing we can do to facilitate entry during these closures. On occasions when our tour itinerary would normally include entry to one of these reserves on a Wednesday afternoons we will arrange alternative natural history activities either around the periphery of the National Parks or in nearby wildlife habitats.

Flights

We use scheduled Qatar Airways flights for this tour to India. Please note that there are no direct flights to Nagpur or Bhopal from UK and we fly via Doha.

If you would prefer to travel in Business class, the supplement charge is **from £3,995**. If you would prefer to travel from regional airports (Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Gatwick 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.

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.

Focus

Tigers, other mammals and birds.

Tour leaders

This Tour will be lead by one of our expert leader : Swanand Deshpande, Anurag Yadav, Harish Sharma, Omkar Shelke, Rishin Basu Roy or Akarsh Suresh.

Early Booking on Tiger Tours is essential!

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

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 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).

Summary from our previous tour

‘Our “Unknown India – Tadoba & Satpura” tour provided an insight into some of the finest Tiger Reserves in central India,’ writes tour leader Kaustubh Mulay.

‘Firstly, we visited the dry deciduous and bamboo forests of Tadoba, where we took six safaris into the park and had some very interesting sightings of Tigers and Sloth Bear, as well as some great birding opportunities. From here, we drove through the countryside into Pench Tiger Reserve, where the open woods of the forests provided us with some superb Leopard and Jackal sightings, and we also had an opportunity to watch vultures for the first time on this tour.

Satpura was excellent, with the group enjoying some great Sloth Bear sightings. There were also really good birding opportunities, especially when we were exploring the backwaters by boat, which is an experience not to be missed! The diversity of landscapes in this area offers a wide variety of bird and mammal species. On the large lake we found hundreds of migratory waterfowl, while the farmlands and bamboo scrub forests attract a lot of grassland and dry habitat birds and mammals.

The lodges used for this tour are outstanding, both in terms of their location and their hospitality. Add to that the delicious food which was served for every meal, the stunning scenery and the diverse wildlife and you have all the ingredients for a memorable holiday in this largely under-visited part of India.’



Tiger hunting Sambar,
Tadoba

Summary from our previous tour

‘It was one of those lucky days which happen once in a while’, writes tour leader, Yusuf Rizvi. ‘During our night drive we had already had sightings of Sambar, Nilgai, Wild Boar and Muntjac, and we were on our way uphill to look for Indian Eagle-Owls. However, just as we reached our destination I spotted a male Leopard, so we quickly positioned our vehicle to enable viewing of this elusive cat. We watched him for a few minutes, before he vanished quickly into the undergrowth. We drove further to look for other nocturnal creatures and decided to check a waterhole near one of the camps. En route I spotted a few pairs of shining eyes but they disappeared within a fraction of seconds; I thought they could have been Leopards.

We then drove towards the waterhole where we met our other jeep, enjoying sightings of a few Wild Boar and Sambar. Suddenly, Cathy realised she had dropped her lens cap where we spotted the shiny pairs of eyes, so we turned around and drove quite a distance to look for it. On the way back we saw a female Leopard with two cubs, sitting on the road near the waterhole we had been to earlier. It was an awesome sight to see the mother Leopardess and the cubs together; the cubs were in a playful mood! As we reached the spot, the Leopards started walking on the road before slowly moving off into the grassland.

We decided to reverse and wait at the waterhole. Suddenly we heard a distress call at some distance. We drove quickly towards the meadow and saw Sambar giving distress calls. As we moved further on, we caught sight of the Leopards again. They were walking on the road once more, and the cubs were jumping on each other! It was an amazing, exclusive sighting for us and one we will never forget.’

Unknown India by Barbara Riddick

The advantage of unknown India is precisely what it says. At Tadoba we enter the park one morning from an even quieter gate than usual. There’s just one other truck (gypsy) with us. It pulls to a halt. Sitting horizontally on the orange sand track ahead of us is a Tigress. We’re so close it’s breathtaking. She sits quite undisturbed, yawns, stretches and shows her pink rasping tongue. This she now uses as she bends her ear with a huge boxing glove of a paw and washes thoroughly behind it. Grooming continues with the systematic intensity of our cat back home. After 15 minutes or so as if in slow motion she rises, saunters off the track and glides out of view through the bamboo thickets.

Our guide reckons she has a kill nearby and that after eating she’ll go to her usual water hole to drink. We track her journey with occasional distant glimpses of orange through the bamboo. Sure enough, she appears across the waterhole but now with blood on her paws which she studiously licks off before rolling over to show her white belly. We watch riveted as a rust-red white-spotted Chital with her fawn makes her unsuspecting way towards the water. The Tigress flattens herself and advances snake-belly style. The Chital suddenly freezes and stamps her right front hoof to tell the Tiger she’s seen her. Phew! The tension dissipates as the Tigress gives up her stalk and returns to repose.

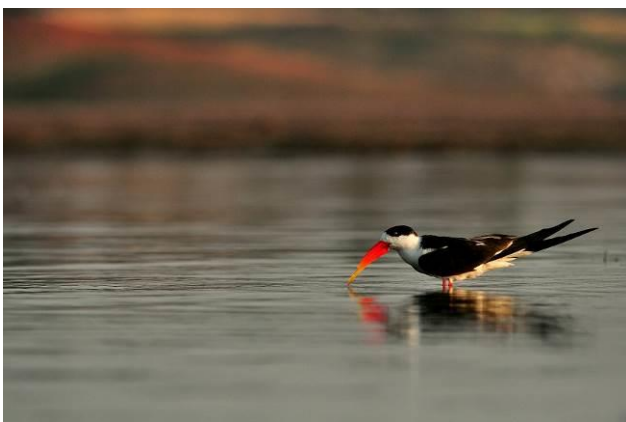
Another sunny afternoon our two ‘gypsies’ are on a quiet side road when we encounter an Indian Wild Dog (Dhole) sitting on a small sand mound beside the track. He’s an even more intense rust-red than the Chital with a smart black brush of a tail. He yawns and stays put, seemingly relaxed despite our proximity. After 10 minutes or so he yelps and whistles to the unseen pack to signal that it’s safe and they emerge one by one behind us: three adults and three cubs - a small splinter pack, says our guide. They play, sniff and zig-zag across the track before finally lolloping away.

When possible our gypsies travel together so we can share the enjoyment. One morning in Pench we're assigned to different routes. The other group encounters a pack of 14 Dhole playing, resting and grooming before streaking off after a Chital. By serendipity, coming from the other direction, we see the rusty blur of the dogs in pursuit and several minutes later come across the pack on the path, presumably after a failed hunt. Again they're lounging, socialising, mock-fighting, rolling over, scent-marking, there's so much activity it's hard to know which way to look.

Our last stop, Satpura, is the most remote of all. To reach the park in the black and red dawn light you have to take a small ferry across the river; sometimes only three trucks enter the park. Here the 'stripy one' is elusive but Sloth Bears abound. Our first sighting is of a large male ripping open termite mounds with long powerful raking claws. The bamboo thickets obscure him to start with but he works his way towards the road and emerges right by us and ambles along it. Over the next few days mothers with cubs (usually twins) are a regular sighting. The most special of all is a mother with two tiny cubs about 10 days old, our guide reckons - the youngest he's ever seen. These little black powder puffs ride on their mother's back and make forays on the ground, even scaling a few experimental metres up a sapling.

Another delight are the giant Malabar Squirrels; they're crimson, cream and russet, surely the most striking squirrels we've ever seen. This time of year they're feeding in trees with long runner bean-like pods. Early one morning we watch a pair hanging down grasping pods and munching away. At lunch time we pass the same tree and the squirrels are now lying flat out along horizontal branches, their tails and paws hanging down; they're clearly sleeping off their bean feast.

It's these close encounters over sustained periods of time that make the holiday so very special. By tracking and watching their behaviour with expert guides, ideally without alarming or harassing them, we all feel we have a depth of understanding and pleasure that goes far beyond a simple glance at an animal. By the end of the trip we can recognise the alarm calls of Sambar, Chital and langurs; we've been shown the footprints of Tigers, Leopards and Sloth Bears and tracked them with our guides; seen Tiger, porcupine, and Sloth Bear scratching posts and droppings. We have stupendous memories with photographs to preserve them for ever. Catch the peace, solitude and joy of unknown India while you can.



Indian Skimmer



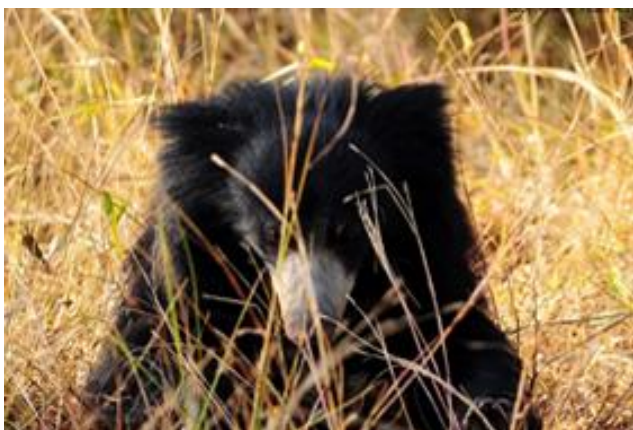
Indian Giant Squirrel



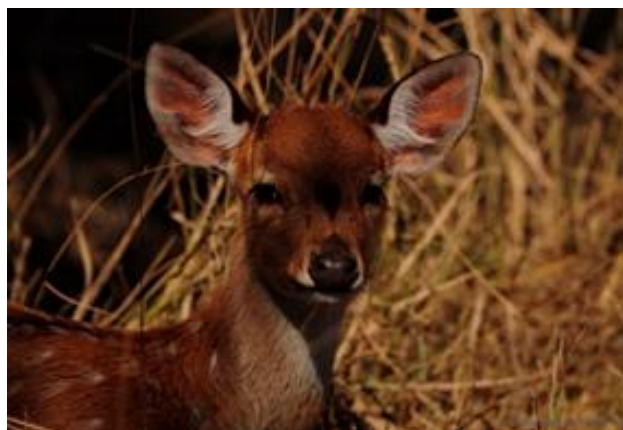
Royal Bengal Tiger



Leopardess



Sloth Bear



Spotted Deer