

India's Satpura National Park:

A Naturetrek Wildlife Festival

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Bhopal, via Delhi.
Day 3/8	Satpura National Park.
Day 9	Fly Delhi, via Bhopal.
Day 10	Fly London.

Pre-tour Snow Leopard extension

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2	Fly Leh, via Delhi.
Day 3	Leh
Day 4/6	Ulley
Day 7	Fly Delhi
Day 8	Join Group; fly Leh

Post-tour Bori extension

Day 9/12	Satpura National Park.
Day 13	Fly Mumbai, via Bhopal.
Day 14	Fly London.

Single room supplement

£895 (Extension: Snow Leopard £795 & Bori £795)

Focus

Leopards, Sloth Bears, Gaurs, Wild dogs, Tiger, other mammals, and birds

Pre-extension – Snow leopards and other Himalayan Wildlife

2024

Pre-tour extension to Ulley: from Thursday, 14th March

Cost: £2,495

Tuesday 20th March – Thursday 29th March 2024

Cost: £3,995

Post-tour extension to Bori: till Monday 2nd April

Cost: £1,795



From Top: Leopard, Satpura National Park, Sloth Bears and Snow Leopard

Supplement for deluxe 'tented rooms' (Only four 'tented rooms' available)

Cost: £195

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



Introduction

Our regular Wildlife Festivals have proved extremely popular. For this one, in March 2024, we are lucky enough to have been offered exclusive use of our favourite wildlife lodge in India, Reni Pani Jungle Lodge. From this luxurious base, situated in peaceful buffer zone forest, we will explore Satpura National Park — the most scenic and tranquil of central India's Tiger Reserves (and our favourite!) — and enjoy its fabulous variety of birds and mammals. This special holiday will follow a similar format to our forthcoming Wildlife Festival in the Italian Dolomites (which is fully booked), and other recent, highly successful, Naturetrek Wildlife Festivals in Spitsbergen (2006), Nepal (2011), Ecuador (2013), Antarctica (2016), the French Pyrenees (also 2016), India (2019). Central to the success of all these gatherings have been the same key components: the camaraderie of a group of like-minded enthusiasts; specially chosen accommodation which is friendly and welcoming; outstanding wildlife ... and a mouthwatering and varied programme of wildlife excursions laid on each day, each led by an expert Naturetrek leader or local naturalist-guide (or both), from which you can choose, to suit your particular tastes and interests, on a daily basis. Good food, a well-stocked bar, and an exchange of wildlife stories will complete each day's activities — the friendships forged as memorable as the wildlife seen. It is hardly surprising that the Naturetrek Wildlife Festival format has proved a popular one.



If you would like to extend your holiday, we are offering a wealth of options — amongst them a 4-day post-tour extension to Bori, where Tigers are habituated and more obliging than in tranquil Satpura plus a pre-tour 7-day Snow Leopard quest based in a warm and comfortable mountain guesthouse. A combination of two parks really will offer the best of India's wildlife!

Day 1

Wednesday, 20th March

In Flight

We depart London in the morning British airways BA 143 at 1100 hrs to Delhi, where duty-free shopping is amongst the best and cheapest in the world.

Day 2

Thursday, 21st March

Bhopal

We arrive in Delhi at 0115 hrs and connect on our own with the flight to Bhopal AI 435 at 05:55 hrs. We will arrive Bhopal at 07:25 hrs. We will meet our guide and enjoy the orientation tour of the city till our rooms are ready at the centrally located hotel, the 19th century Palace, Jehan Numa. It is nestled on the slopes of Shamla Hill, set in five acres of lush green lawns & splashes of colorful bougainvillea. It is a superb example of a medley of British Colonial, Italian



Jehan Numa Palace Hotel

Renaissance & Classical Greek Architecture. The gleaming white façade has boldness & simplicity of style that is striking & exudes an air of timeless graciousness. The Palace was built during the rule of Sultan Jehan Begum by her second son General Obaidullah Khan! Afternoon is kept free to relax and enjoy the hotel after a long flight. In the second half of the day, we will do a city sightseeing tour which will include Taj-Ul- Masjid, Moti Masjid, Upper Lake, Birla Temple & State Museum.

Day 3 – 8

Friday, 22nd March – Wednesday, 27th March

Satpura – Reni Pani Jungle Lodge

Today, after breakfast we will travel for three hours by road to the Satpura National Park. On the way, we will visit Bhimbetka caves. Bhimbetka Caves are an archaeological treasure and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These caves are renowned for their rock shelters, which provide a glimpse into the ancient history of human civilization. On arrival at Satpura we will check in the Reni Pani Jungle Lodge for six nights.



We will take exclusive occupancy of the lodge's 12 twin-bedded cottages and four deluxe 'tented rooms', and every day our party of 30-strong will be able to choose from a wide variety of morning and afternoon/evening excursions — each one expertly guided by naturalists from both our complement of expert Naturetrek leaders present as well as from Reni Pani's superb team of naturalist guides. Amongst them will be our friend, Aly Rashid, a passionate



Reni Pani Jungle Lodge

naturalist and conservationist from the local royal family who both built and owns Reni Pani and has had a lifelong association with Satpura. Excursions will include jeep safaris into thenational park, walking safaris inside the park,

boat trips on the waterways at its edge and local village visits. On one of the days, we will enjoy a full day excursion to Churna range of Satpura Tiger Reserve. It is here we are most likely to see the tigers and wild dogs. This is



mainly because Churna used to have a village till 2013, which has been voluntarily relocated, and wild herbivores have repopulated the area. Three female tigers with cubs are currently found here. We will also take wildlife walks and safaris amongst the 30 acres of forest, meadows, ravines and water holes that comprise the lodge's grounds, as well as in the wider forest expanses of the surrounding buffer zone. There will also be time to relax, to cool off in Reni Pani's delightful swimming pool, and enjoy alfresco dining beneath the stars and in the flickering oil lamps of the terrace.

We have chosen India on this occasion because in no other country do we have more experience. It was in India that our Managing Director, David Mills, spent many years prior to founding Naturetrek. Not surprisingly, it then became the very first destination to which we operated a Naturetrek wildlife holiday back in 1987. From that time on, we have sent more wildlife groups to India than to any other country, and we have run multiple tours there in every one of our 32 years since, more than any other wildlife tour operator. Finally, it was in India — in Kashmir, to be precise — that Rajan Jolly, our much-loved Naturetrek India specialist, was born, educated and first cut his teeth in the travel industry prior to spending his last 16 years with Naturetrek.

So, why Satpura? Well, it's our favourite central Indian National Park and Tiger Reserve. Yet, surprisingly, Tigers are difficult to see here... and that's why we love it! This fact means that, for starters, Satpura is not inundated with noisy Tiger-tourists. Far from it, just 12 jeeps are permitted to enter the park at a time. And while Satpura's Tigers are not habituated as they are in other parks, and therefore very difficult to see (though we have been successful this year on full-day game-drives), Satpura does offer a rich variety of other mammals. Nowhere else are Gaur (Asian Bison), Sloth Bear and the elusive Asian Wild Dog as easily seen. These species, together with Indian Giant Squirrel and Leopard (which is relatively common here) 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 and nocturnal Rusty-spotted Cat. The park's fine forests and wetlands also hold a diverse and colourful birdlife — Indian Skimmer, Bar headed Goose, Grey Junglefowl, 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 offering you a choice of walks, jeep safaris, boat trips and village visits. So, we do hope that, in March 2024, you will join us for this special 10-day Naturetrek Wildlife Festival in Satpura National Park. There is no doubt that the Rashid family, in whose wonderful wildlife lodge and palace hotel (the Jehan Numa Palace, Bhopal) we will be staying, will make us very welcome!

Please note: As just 17 jeeps are permitted to enter the park at a time, the jeep safaris will be pre-booked for everyone and we are unable to offer a choice as these cannot be changed.

Day 9

Thursday, 28th March

Satpura to Bhopal

We make our final visit to Satpura Tiger Reserve and hope to end our stay with some special sightings! After spending six memorable nights in Satpura we drive for three hours to Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. We may have some time for a light farwell meal in Bhopal before catching our return flight to London, via Delhi. Our flight will depart Bhopal at 21:45 hrs by 6E 2279. Arrive Delhi at 2355.

Day 10

Friday, 29th March

Fly London

Fly to London on British Airways BA 142 at 3:20am. We will arrive in London in the early morning at 08:05am.



Clockwise from top-left: Marsh Mugger Crocodile, Black Eagle, Dhole and Leopard Gecko

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

Snow Leopard pre-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 1

Thursday, 14th March

In flight

We depart London in the morning British airways BA 143 at 1100 hrs to Delhi, where duty-free shopping is amongst the best and cheapest in the world.

Day 2

Friday, 15th March

Leh

We arrive in Delhi at 0115 hrs and connect with your flight for Leh - AI - 445 at 06:30/08:10 hrs from the same terminal. On arrival, we will meet our driver and transferred to the hotel in Leh – The Grand Dragon Ladakh.

Established in the year 2007, The Grand Dragon Ladakh, one of the first 5-star hotels in Leh Ladakh, is owned and operated by the Abdu family from Leh, who have more than 40 years of experience welcoming visitors to the beautiful region. It is decorated magnificently with handmade paintings by Gulam Mustafa (First modern Artist of Ladakh) around every corner, and fixtures that are reminiscent of royalty.



Grand Dragon Ladakh

In the evening, we will pay a visit to Shanti Stupa and local market in Leh.

The Shanti Stupa, located in Leh, Ladakh, is a magnificent Buddhist structure that holds significant religious and cultural importance. Also known as the Peace Pagoda, it was built to promote peace and harmony in the region and commemorate 2500 years of Buddhism. The Shanti Stupa was inaugurated in 1991 by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso. It was a collaborative effort between the Japanese and Ladakhi Buddhists, with

support from the Indian government. The structure was designed by a Japanese monk, Bhikshu Gyomyo Nakamura, and constructed under the supervision of Kushok Bakula Rimpoche, a revered Ladakhi lama. Perched atop a hill in Chanspa, about 5 kilometers west of Leh, the Shanti Stupa offers breathtaking panoramic views of the city, the snow-capped Himalayan mountains, and the picturesque landscapes of Ladakh. The serene atmosphere and stunning vistas make it a popular tourist attraction.



Shanti Stupa

The local market in Leh, known as Leh Market or Main Bazaar, is famous for offering a wide range of traditional and local products that reflect the vibrant culture and heritage of Ladakh. Some of the key items for which the market is renowned include:

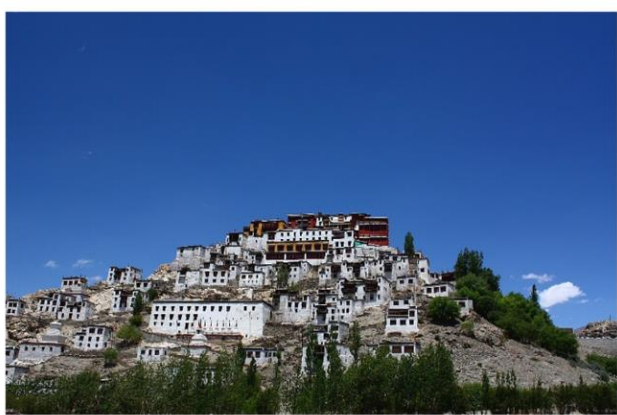
- **Pashmina Shawls:** Leh Market is an excellent place to purchase authentic Pashmina shawls made from fine Kashmiri wool. These shawls are known for their softness, warmth, and intricate designs.
- **Tibetan Handicrafts:** The market is filled with shops selling Tibetan handicrafts such as thangkas (Buddhist scroll paintings), prayer wheels, prayer flags, Tibetan jewelry, and carved wooden items. These handmade crafts make for unique souvenirs and gifts.
- **Woolen Clothing:** Leh's market offers a variety of woolen clothing to keep you warm in the cold climate. You can find locally made woolen caps, socks, gloves, and sweaters, often crafted with colorful designs and traditional patterns.
- **Buddhist Artifacts:** Leh is home to several monasteries, and the market caters to the spiritual needs of visitors. You can find Buddhist artifacts such as prayer beads (malas), singing bowls, Buddha statues, and other religious items.
- **Thangka Paintings:** Thangka paintings are intricate Buddhist artworks depicting various deities and spiritual figures. Leh Market offers a good selection of these religious paintings created by skilled local artists.
- **Ladakhi Jewelry:** The market is known for its unique Ladakhi jewelry made of silver and semi-precious stones. From earrings and necklaces to bracelets and rings, you can find beautiful pieces reflecting the traditional aesthetics of Ladakh.
- **Souvenirs and Clothing:** Leh Market is filled with shops selling a wide range of souvenirs, including T-shirts, keychains, fridge magnets, and postcards. You can also find traditional Ladakhi clothing like Gonchas (long woolen robes) and colorful Ladakhi hats.

Exploring the local market in Leh is a delightful experience, offering a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of Ladakh and providing an opportunity to take home unique and authentic treasures.

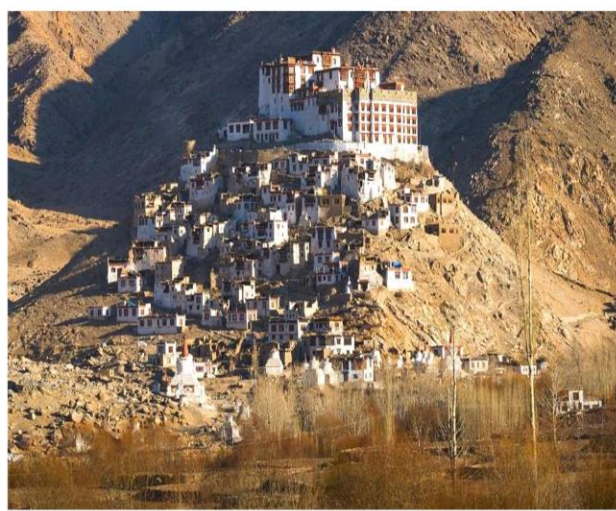
Day 3

Saturday, 16th March

Leh



Today, we will visit Shey, Thiksey and Hemis Monasteries. Leh, in the Ladakh region of India, is known for its rich Buddhist heritage and is home to numerous monasteries, also known as gompas. These are a few significant Buddhist monastery located near Leh in Ladakh, India. It holds historical, religious, and cultural importance in the region and attracts numerous visitors and pilgrims.



From top: Hemis, Thiksey and Shey Monasteries

Day 4 – 6

Sunday, 17th March – Tuesday, 19th March

Ulley

On day 4, we will drive to Ulley from Leh.

Ulley is a village located in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, India. It is known for being a habitat for the elusive and endangered snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*). Snow leopards are highly adapted to survive in the harsh mountainous regions of Central and South Asia, including parts of Ladakh.

Ulley and its surrounding areas, such as the Ulley Valley and the Hemis National Park, are considered prime snow leopard territory. These majestic creatures are known to roam the rugged mountains and high-altitude landscapes in search of prey, such as bharal (blue sheep), ibex, and marmots.

Snow leopards are crepuscular, which means they are most active at dawn and dusk. Our local spotters leave lodge at dawn. The vehicle drops them off at various points throughout the valleys. Trackers and spotters work all day, scanning for wildlife and looking for signs of life. If a snow leopard is spotted, we drive or walk to the closest vantage point, depending on the location of the spotter. The trackers make sure to keep a safe distance from the snow leopards and other wildlife. Spotters, trackers and the field team are always on the lookout for interesting birds and wildlife, as well as sharing information about local communities and their culture.

Day 7**Wednesday, 20th March**

Ulley – Leh – Delhi

Today we will say goodbye to our trekking team and catch a morning internal flight to Delhi, arriving there mid-afternoon at around 2:30pm. On arrival at Delhi airport, we will be transferred to the hotel Pullman in Aerocity, Delhi.

Day 8**Thursday, 21st March**

Delhi - Bhopal

We will transfer to the airport to join the group.

How fit do I need to be?

This extension is a mountain wildlife adventure. You need a high level of physical health, fitness and stamina for this tour.

How will the altitude affect me?

Altitude affects everyone differently, so we cannot tell you exactly how you will react. However, we can tell you that it is essential to acclimatise to the altitudes before setting off on trek and what symptoms to look out for. We will acclimatise to the altitude in Leh, which is situated at 3,500 metres. At these altitudes you can expect to find any physical exertion more tiring than normal. You may also find that your appetite is reduced. This is usual and Naturetrek staff will keep a close eye on you – to ensure you are eating enough and are fully fit. Symptoms associated with altitude sickness are more extreme and extensive than feeling a little tired or having a lowered appetite, and more information about this will be provided in your Pre-departure information.

Weather

It will be very cold. You are visiting one of the world's highest and most remote mountain ranges, where conditions are unpredictable – snow may fall at any time. For much of the winter the sun does shine in this region, to the north of the Himalayas, and at altitudes between 3,700 and 4,500 metres, we will expect sunny weather with a chill wind. Temperatures could drop as low as -15°C at night but are more typically between -5°C and -15°C. Heavy snow can of course fall at any time at this season. Conditions underfoot may be very difficult – icy, snowy and steep

Bori Wildlife Sanctuary post-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 9 – 12**Thursday, 28th March – Sunday, 31st March**

Bori – Bori Safari Lodge

We will enjoy another 4 nights at Bori Safari Lodge with daily wildlife excursions.

Bori Safari Lodge, tucked away in the lush and rustic setting of Dhapada village, is an enticing resort in Madhya Pradesh that provides the ideal escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Soak in the raw beauty of nature while staying at this village lodge nestled amidst a 7.5-acre farmland estate near the Bori Wildlife Sanctuary. The lodge is only a few kilometres from the Bori Wildlife Sanctuary's Park gate. The Bori Wildlife Sanctuary is one of Madhya Pradesh's most exciting emerging tiger landscapes, home to tigers, sloth bears, leopards, wild dogs, giant squirrels, and a variety of other Central Indian bird and animal species.

This destination is less explored away from the usual tourist attractions, and is a haven for nature lovers. It is owned by the same Rashid family of Jehan Numa group.

Day 13

Monday, 1st April

Bori to Bhopal

We make our final visit to Bori Wildlife Sanctuary and hope to end our stay with some special sightings! After spending another four memorable nights in Satpura we drive for three hours to Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. We may have some time for a light farwell meal in Bhopal before catching our return flight to London, via Delhi. Our flight will depart Bhopal at 21:45 hrs by 6E 2279. Arrive Delhi at 2355.



Indian Eagle-Owl



Indian Giant Squirrel



Bori Safari Lodge

Day 14

Tuesday, 2nd April

Fly London and arrive same day

Fly to London with British Airways BA 142 at 03:20 hrs. We will arrive in London in the morning at 08:05 hrs.

Grading

The main tour and post extension are a mammal and bird-watching tour, and accordingly the walking is graded A (easy). Unlike any other wildlife tour, the main tour focuses on a lengthy study of one National Park, and avoids the tiring travelling that is a necessary component of some more typical wildlife tours in India which journey to one park after another.

However, for pre-extension, it is Grade C/D – You must be accustomed to regular, very strenuous, hill treks and have a level of fitness compatible with trekking in mountainous terrain. Treks will cover rough, uneven, snowy ground at altitudes of up to 4,000 metres, where even gentle activity feels more tiring than usual.

Other extensions

If you don't fancy our scheduled extensions, 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.

Clothing

A separate clothing list will be sent to you on booking. Please inspect it thoroughly.

Food & Accommodation

All accommodation and meals are included in our price. A luxury, historic 'palace hotel' in Bhopal, and a fabulous wildlife lodge in Satpura. All rooms have private facilities. For the pre-tour extension, we stay at the Ulley Valley in a cosy mountain guesthouse. This accommodation offers eight twin rooms and two shared bathrooms. Hot water is provided in buckets for washing each morning and evening as most pipes are frozen at this time of year. Heating is switched off at night when hot water bottles are provided to ensure a cosy night's sleep, and the main living area, built in a traditional style, is heated by a warm central stove. This setting, and the friendly hospitality that goes with it, provides a comfortable alternative to camping in this remote area as we go in search of one of the world's rarest and most stunning big cats – a species that is still only beginning to reveal its secrets to Western observers.

Extra Expenses

Please note that we do not include the following in the cost of this holiday: meals in transit and long drives, all items of a more personal nature such as drinks, laundry, souvenirs, visa, insurance and tips for guides and drivers.

Weather

Between March the temperature in north and central India ranges from 10-20°C in the early morning to 20-35°C during the day, dropping to 10-20°C again at night. Rain showers are possible at any time but unlikely to be prolonged during the times of year (the main monsoon season is from July to September) we visit Central India.

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).

Flights

We use scheduled British Airways flights for this tour to India. Please note that there are no direct flights to Bhopal or Leh from UK.

If you would prefer to travel in Business class a supplement charge of **£3,495** will be added to your invoice. If you would prefer to travel from regional airports (will be subject to an additional charge of around **£295**), please let us know at the time of booking so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

Early Booking on Tiger Tours is essential!

New regulations, including a drastic reduction in the number of jeeps and visitors permitted to enter such popular reserves as Satpura 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.