

India's Wildlife - A Photography Tour

Naturetrek Tour Report

10 – 19 April 2014



Report & images compiled by Himanshu Rathore



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Tour leader: Himanshu Rathore

Participants: Linda Jones
Paul Marchant
Chris Millar
Alison Millar

Day 1

Thursday 10th April

I went to the airport to receive Linda, Alison and Chris who were all on the same flight - after greeting them at the airport I took them to the lavish Westin Hotel, where they checked in for a wash and change. Later on, Paul also arrived at the Westin. We all left for the railway station at 2.30pm sat in the café before boarding the train to Katni. We settled down, had a light dinner and then retired to bed.

Day 2

Friday 11th April

We reached Katni at 7 am and from there we left straight for Bandhavgarh and we reached the lodge by 9.30am. We quickly freshened up and had a hearty breakfast followed by some rest. After lunch, at 2.45 pm we left for our first game drive. I went with Paul and Linda and as we approached the rajbehra meadow we saw our first Tiger sitting next to the water, resting in a cool patch. It was a little in the distance but both Paul and Linda got a lot of pictures while the tiger sat down posing for almost an hour, before it finally decided to move - we saw it walk along the bushes and then it disappeared into the undergrowth. We saw a lot of birds and mammals on the rest of the drive. Chris and Alison had a good drive but were not lucky with the tiger. In the evening we met for the species list followed by dinner.

Day 3

Saturday 12th April

We started early in the morning leaving the lodge at 6.15am and at 6.30am we entered the jungle and drove around the tala zone looking for tracks and signs but no tiger, however we did get some great photo opportunities especially with Nightjars, there was one Nightjar with 2 chicks under it. We glimpsed a Sloth bear on the morning drive – a shame Chris could not get a picture but did see the bear quite well. In the evening it was Chris and Alison who got lucky and had a sighting of a tiger walking along on the road at Ghorademan.

Day 4

Sunday 13th April

We started at the usual time entering the jungle at 6.30am. Today we went to the Magdhi zone and it was another lucky day for Chris and Alison - as we entered the jungle we saw a Tiger entering the bamboo, so we waited for some time and then left to look for another one in the Sehra meadow area, we found a Tigress lying in the nulla (dry river bed) and spent the rest of the safari photographing her. In the evening I was with Paul and Linda and we went to the same Sehra area to look the Tigress who was now sitting on the far end of the grassland - we saw her for a few minutes after which she sat down. Meanwhile Chris and Alison had a sighting of a Tigress sitting in a water pond – they were particularly lucky today.

Day 5

Monday 14th April

The morning began at usual time and we went to the Tala zone, where we did some good photography including nice shots of the Lesser Adjutant Stork and some Macaque monkeys at a water hole called Bhandari jhiriya. The monkeys were coming down to drink and were very playful. In the evening I was with Linda and Paul, we drove around seeing a lot of deer and birds and, near Kinarva water hole we saw a Tiger...it was sitting deep inside the foliage but facing us so we did see its face and then it lay down again. It was good to see, but not great for any photography.

Day 6

Tuesday 15th April

The morning began early and today we went to the Khitauli zone. As usual I was with Chris and Alison on the morning safari and at one point I found fresh tiger pugmarks coming out of a water hole - the pugmarks went into a nulla which led to a cross junction road on the far side - we could hear some alarm calls from the middle patch of the jungle, so we rushed to that road and found pugmarks and then we found a huge male Tiger walking on the road! Chris got some quick shots before the tiger moved in and disappeared in the foliage before anyone else could reach there. So we left the place and headed ahead to look for more things, and around 500 metres from where we had seen the tiger we saw a Leopard! It crossed the road and then walked in the bamboo area. In the evening the jungle was very quiet but we saw some good birds like the Barred Buttonquail that Paul particularly enjoyed photographing.

Day 7

Wednesday 16th April

The morning started very early today as the park timings were changed and we entered the jungle at 6am, we were looking for pugmarks and alarm calls and soon we got the information that the other jeep with Paul and Linda saw a Sloth bear near Vanvai. We were close to that place so we waited anticipating to see the bear, but soon I heard some monkey alarm calls from the Ama nala camp area so instead we reached there and saw a massive dominant male Tiger called Bamera walking in an open patch. Both Alison and Chris were thrilled as the tiger came very close! For the evening I gave the option to visit a tribal village visit or a bird walk around the lodge area, and three guests opted for the village visit, so I took them to the Bijariya village, and after a couple hours at the village we came to Tala for some souvenir shopping. We got back to the lodge at dusk.

Day 8

Thursday 17th April

The day began early as we set off for the Khitauli zone but did not see anything new. I decided to stay with Paul and Linda as they had not been as lucky with tigers yet, so in the evening we went to the Magdhi zone where we covered a lot of ground and saw some fresh pugmarks in the Sher marg area but no tigers. In the evening we all sat together and enjoyed our last evening in Bandhavgarh.

Day 9

Friday 18th April

The day began at the usual time and it was our last safari. I took Linda, as Paul left because he had a train to catch for Satpura where he had another 5 days on safari. Chris and Alison were with Sanjay the lodge driver.

We tried our best to find a sighting for Linda, the weather conditions weren't very good and it rained a little but luck was not on our side, so we came back to the lodge where we had a relaxed afternoon. We left for Katni at 4pm, and we boarded the train and settled down for the journey to Agra.

Day 10

Saturday 19th April

We reached Agra and straight away went for breakfast at the lavish ITC Mughal hotel where we had a hearty breakfast. At 1 pm we went to Taj Mahal and spent a few hours there. After this we went for a lunch break at a restaurant. After finishing with lunch we went to the Agra fort. We left for Baby Taj well in time but apparently there was a traffic jam as a truck had over-turned so we got stuck in traffic...finally everyone decided that we would leave the Baby Taj. We went to Chris and Alison's hotel and dropped them there and then we left to look for a cyber café for Linda who wanted to book her flight seat. We went to a café where we had some coffee. We later went to the train station and reached Delhi at 11.15pm. From Delhi, guests caught their flights home at the end of the tour...

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