

On the Wildlife Trail: Heartland Culture & Safari

Madhya Pradesh – the “heart of India” – is known for its wildlife, which lives in its verdant forests, roams through the mighty mountain ranges, and nests on the shores of its meandering rivers. During this adventure, the focus is on Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Satpura National Parks, three of the area’s reserves.

The popular Bandhavgarh National Park has a particularly dense tiger population, and rugged Satpura National Park features a diverse array of mammals and birds such as leopards, sambars, and chitals. Kanha, Madhya Pradesh’s largest national park, has a vast expanse of grasslands and forest where tigers, jackals, and wild pigs can be spotted. For the best opportunities to see this wildlife in its natural habitat, we explore these parks in a variety of ways: waking before dawn for early-morning Jeep safaris, scouting from a boat, and keeping our eyes open as we walk nature paths.

In addition to tracking wildlife, the Wild Trail itinerary includes a visit to a local village. Watch cow dung patty cakes being made for fuel, visit kitchen gardens, observe work in the fields, marvel at the local temple, and spend time learning about and understanding how the indigenous communities here harmonize their lives with nature.

The trip, hosted by PUREQUEST ADVENTURES, is proud to have Prabhat Verma leading this tour. Prabhat brings with him his vast experience selling Wildlife Tourism in India. He is an expert in spotting and identifying the wildlife & birds as well as a passionate wildlife photographer.

- Private Jeep Safaris in Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Satpura National Parks
- Learn about local wildlife on nature walks and during evening discussions
- Witness daily life on a village walking tour
- Boat ride on the Denwa River running through Satpura National Park

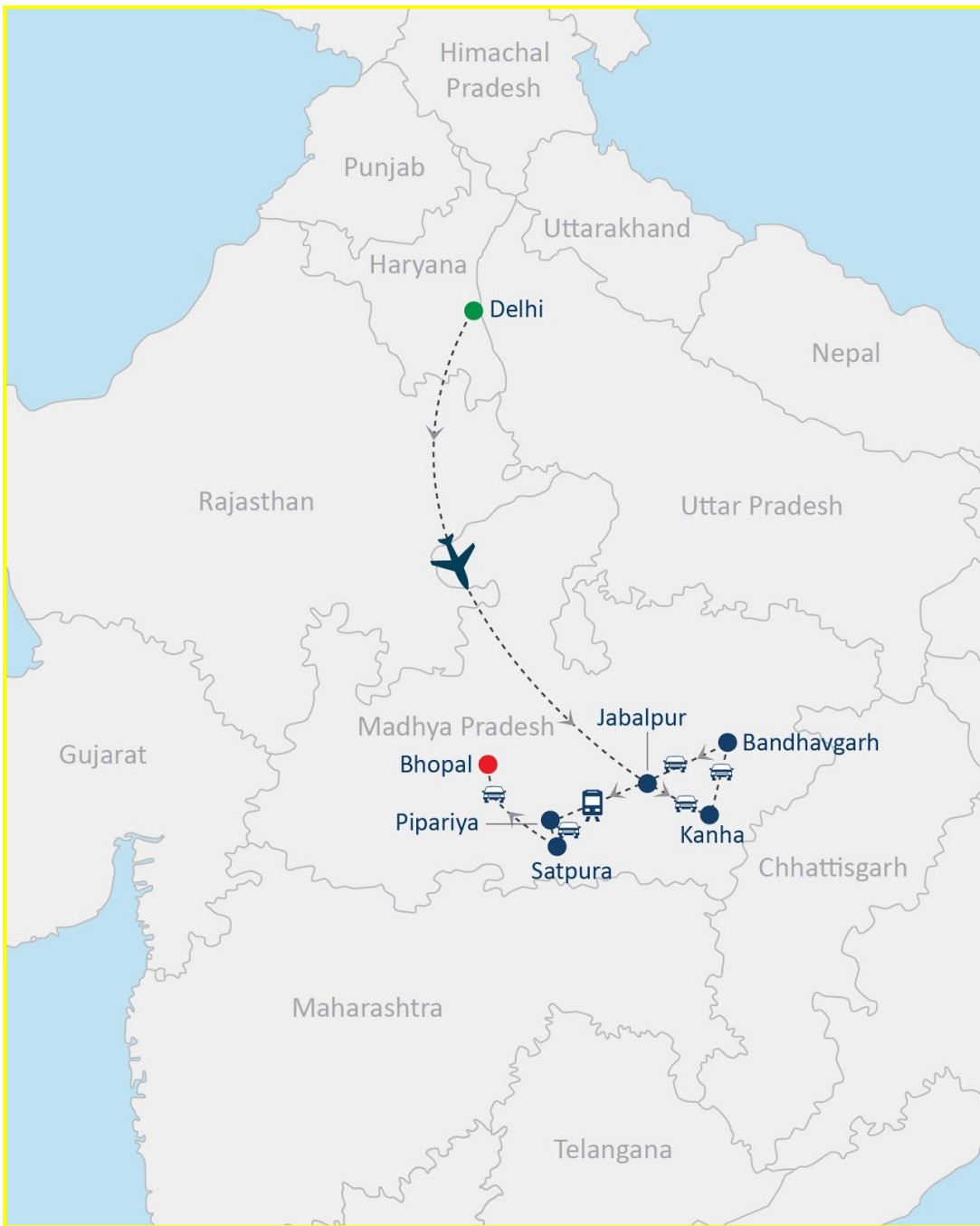
Route: Delhi – Raipur – Kanha – Bandhavgarh – Satpura – Bhopal

Flight Information:

November 26, 2018: Arrival to Indira Gandhi International Airport Delhi, India (DEL) anytime.

November 27, 2018: Fly Delhi (DEL) to Raipur, India (RPR) 6E 2757 (06:50/08:40 hrs)

December 6, 2018: Depart Bhopal anytime, or proceed with post-adventure itinerary, or your own independent arrangements.

**November 26, 2018: Arrive to Delhi, India**

Arrive anytime in New Delhi, where we reserved a comfortable airport hotel for you to rest and overcome jet lag. If time permits, we offer a brief orientation tour of the cities of Old & New Delhi.

Delhi is the world's largest democracy and, in many ways, is the essence of modern India, with its startling paradox of old and new, foreign and familiar. Its fascination lies in its mix of ancient monuments and the bustle and clamor of Old Delhi with Lutyens' imposing and magnificent New Delhi.

Now rushing headlong into the 21st century, Delhi is also a contemporary showcase of designer shopping, trendy bars, and restaurants. Take a guided orientation tour of New Delhi. Visit the Qutub Minar (the tallest minaret in the world made up of bricks and one of the finest Islamic structures ever raised in India) and Humayun's Tomb (the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent and the inspiration for several monuments including the Taj Mahal). Drive past India Gate, the Lutyens' buildings, and the President's Palace. Also visit Old Delhi – a living museum! Wander the lanes of the wedding alley and the silver street, and take a cycle rickshaw ride.

- Activity: An orientation tour of Delhi by car/coach (if flight arrival time allows)
- Duration: 3 hours
- Distance: 20-25 km
- Accommodation: Lemon tree or similar near the airport
- Meals included: None
- Transfer time: 10 mins from Delhi Airport to hotel

November 27, 2018: Delhi – Jabalpur - Kanha

We start very early and take a 90-minute flight to Raipur, the gateway to Kanha National Park. Drive for roughly 4.5 hours through rural countryside to arrive at the beautiful lodge that has been reserved for you for two nights.

At lunch, get oriented about the area and the lodge by a resident naturalist. Take an afternoon safari, which is our first foray into the dense forest. Kanha is renowned as being 'the best managed wildlife park in Asia and you are more than likely to have an excellent few days spotting wildlife here. Safaris into Kanha offer excellent opportunities for wildlife photography and bird watching, and it is considered one of the best places in the world to see wild tigers. Kanha National Park is one of India's largest parks, covering almost 2,000 kilometers of pristine Indian wilderness. Situated in the Maikal Hills of the Satpura range, Kanha boasts a spectacular landscape of vast sal tree forests interspersed with flourishing green meadows and beautiful stretches of lush bamboo growth. This national park is one of the first nine tiger reserves established with the initial launch of Project Tiger in 1973, aimed at protecting tigers and their ecosystems. It is prime tiger wilderness, and it remains Project Tiger's greatest success story.

Return to your lodge in the evening for cocktails and dinner, enjoyed during a slide show.

- Activity: Jeep safari in the jungle
- Duration: 3 hours
- Distance covered: 8-10 km
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- Transfer time: 90-minute flight (0650/0840 hrs) and a 4.5-hour drive to the lodge

November 28, 2018: In Kanha

An exciting day in Kanha, which begins with a morning jungle drive (our second safari) through the stunning sal forests and meadows looking for sloth bear, jackal, the rare hard ground barasingha (swamp deer), sambar, and, of course, Shere Khan – the famous Bengal tiger from Rudyard Kipling’s “Jungle Book.” Breakfast will be in the park during our safari break.

There are many success stories of wildlife conservation associated with Kanha Tiger Reserve, and most prominent among them is the revival of the population of hard ground barasingha. Kanha was declared a national park in 1955 and a tiger reserve in 1973. The mammal and bird diversity of the park is fabulous, with almost the entire faunal element of central India, including tigers, leopards, and wild dogs. There are five types of deer including the mouse deer (the smallest variety) and the gaur (the Indian bison), both of which are prey species for the carnivores. The beautiful mosaic of habitat of sal forest and savannah grasslands are ideal for survival of the big mammals, especially tigers. Two perennial rivers flowing through the reserve ensures a water supply is delivered to the wildlife and forest throughout the year.

Return to the lodge for lunch.

Later in the day, visit the Gond and Baiga tribes to learn about their lifestyles. Interact with the villagers and visit a tribal museum for an insight into their unique culture and art. Often displaying beautiful jewelry and tattoos, their smiles make us feel welcome. The ancient Baiga tribe is indigenous to central India. They live in the Mandla district, near Kanha National Park, in Madhya Pradesh. They still live as they have for centuries, in simple mud huts and no electricity, completely untouched by modern development. They cultivate and store their own rice, and brew potent toddy from the flowers of the sacred mahua tree. Throughout various phases of their life, Baiga women get tattoos on their head, arms, chest and legs, representing aspects of nature integral to the Baiga way of life. The Baigas still coexist with the Gonds. Artwork, which the Gonds have become well known for, has provided them with a lucrative source of income.

Dinner and overnight at the lodge.

- Activity: Jeep safari in the jungle and a walking tour
- Duration: 3.5 hours
- Distance covered: 8-10 km
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner

November 29, 2018: Kanha - Bandhavgarh

Wake up early to explore the wildlife of Kanha by Jeep – our third and final safari in Kanha. Most of the animals and birds are active during early morning and late evening so don’t miss the chance to be first in the queue for entry into the park. Though sightings of charismatic animals like tigers and leopards are a matter of luck, we don’t wanted to miss any chance.

Return to the lodge for brunch and set off for our second national park – Bandhavgarh National Park – which is an interesting five-hour drive.

Reach Bandhavgarh and receive an orientation tour of the lodge. Bandhavgarh National Park is one of the finest tiger reserves in Central India with the highest density of tigers in the world in its tourism zone. This famous tiger hunting area was once owned by the former Maharaja of Rewa. He handed it over to the government in 1968. Once it came under the control of the Forest Department, Bandhavgarh's fortune took a dramatic turn. It was declared a protected area, and the animal population began to flourish. The park has extensive sal forest, hills, valleys, rivers, marshes, and meadows, resulting in varied floral and faunal diversity. The forest is dominated by sal and bamboo. The park's vegetation is tropical moist deciduous, and there are dry mixed forests in the higher reaches of the hills.

All meals and overnight stay is at the lodge.

- Activity: Jeep safari in the jungle
- Duration: Approximately 3 hours
- Distance covered: 230 km
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- Transfer time: 5 hours to Bandhavgarh (approximately 230 km)

November 30, 2018: In Bandhavgarh National Park

Enjoy morning and afternoon safaris in Bandhavgarh National Park, the place where the famous white tigers of Rewa were discovered. The last known capture of a white tiger was in 1951, but Bandhavgarh is densely populated with other animal species and 242 species of birds too. This sprawling, 437 sq. km. protected reserve was once the preferred hunting ground of erstwhile Maharajas; it was declared a national park in 1968 and became Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger in 1993. The fauna includes typical Central Indian species. In addition to two critically endangered vulture species, the lesser adjutant and sarus crane are also found here.

- Activity: 2 Jeep safaris in the jungle
- Duration: 4 hours per safari
- Distance covered: 8-10 km per safari
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner

December 1, 2018: Bandhavgarh - Satpura

After breakfast we set out on foot and explore a bird trail with the lodge's in-house naturalist. The trail runs close to a tribal village, where we will spend an hour or so to see their way of life and art. After lunch, we leave for the final national park in our itinerary, Satpura National Park. The Denwa River flows through this unique park, offering an opportunity to explore the park by boat.

Drive 176 km (4 hours) to Jabalpur to connect for a short train ride (1610/1827 hrs) to Pipariya, the gateway to Satpura National Park. From here, it is only a 40 km journey (approximately 1 hour) to our lodge.

Train: Intercity Express

Departure from Jabalpur: @ 16:10 hrs

Arrival in Pipariya: @ 18:27 hrs

Nestled in beautiful forested hills, the Satpura Tiger Reserve is one of the most biodiverse areas of Central India. From the small insectivore plants to the Indian gaur and tiger, every flora and fauna typical to the Central Indian Highlands is found here. The reserve was formed after merging Satpura National Park, Bori Wildlife Sanctuary, and Pachmarhi Wildlife Sanctuary. This is also a part of the Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve, which covers almost 4927 sq. km.

- Activity: Birding and village walk
- Duration: 1.5 hours
- Distance covered: 2 km
- Accommodation: Lodge
- Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- Transfer time: 4-hour drive + 2-hour train ride + 1-hour drive

December 2, 2018: To Bhopal

We begin the morning canoeing on the river running parallel to the dense jungle, which offers a unique way to watch waterbirds like the Indian skimmer, grey heron, purple heron, river tern, and bar-headed geese. The national park's terrain is extremely rugged and consists of fascinating deep valleys, sandstone peaks, narrow gorges, rivulets, waterfalls, and thick dense green forest of sal, teak, and other medicinal herbs.

In the afternoon, we leave for Bhopal, the venue for AdventureNEXT India.

En route we make a brief stop at Bhimbetka, an UNESCO World Heritage Site. The site is known for cave paintings dating back approximately 30,000 years, which have a striking resemblance to the ones discovered in Kakadu National Park in Australia, the Kalahari Desert, Upper Palaeolithic Lascaux caves in France. There are about 243 rock shelters that were home to humans millennia ago, and rich flora and fauna throughout the site.

You will be dropped at your designated hotel on arrival in Bhopal.

Rating: (1) Relaxed/Social (i.e., Wildlife viewing, cultural touring, easy walks)

Weather:

December is characterized by mild temperatures, with daily highs from 13 °C (55.4 °F) to 27 °C (80.6 °F) over the course of the month, rarely exceeding 30 °C (86 °F) or dropping below 10 °C (50 °F). Please note, temperatures will be cooler inside the forests especially in the early morning and evenings.

Accommodations:

Lemon Tree, Aerocity Delhi

Kanha Earth Lodge, Kanha

King's Lodge, Bandavgarh

Bison Resort, Satpura

Included Services:

- 6 nights accommodation (single rooms throughout)
- Beverages (including beer or wine) during meals, activities and transfers as listed in itinerary

Not Included:

- International flights
- Drivers' and guides' tips
- Visa fees for entry to India
- Vaccines if needed
- Personal items such as laundry fees, souvenirs, etc
- Anything not already explicitly included in the itinerary

Packing List:

- Comfortable clothes: t-shirts, pants, sweater/jacket, shorts and raincoat (please avoid dark/bright colors - neutral colors are best for safari)
- We recommend that you bring at least one pant and one jacket if the weather changes and it gets cold (it can be cooler in the early morning and at night)
- Raincoat / windbreaker
- Fleece jacket/sweater
- Knit hat and gloves (for early mornings/evenings)
- Comfortable sneakers and walking shoes

- Swimsuit (optional)
- Slippers/sandals
- Polarized sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat
- Sunscreen with high SPF
- Do not forget to bring your plug adapter to charge your electronic devices
- Binoculars and a camera
- Headlamp
- Mosquito repellent/DEET
- Extra Cash/Credit Cards (please note, cash machines are limited, so please make sure you have enough cash. Some places may accept credit cards)
- Prescribed medication (including antihistamine) (please note, pharmacies may not be available in the remote locations of this itinerary.)
- Extra batteries
- Personal toiletries
- In addition, we highly recommend bringing a small backpack to use every day to carry your water bottle, sunscreen, snacks...

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