

A close-up, low-angle shot of a tiger walking directly towards the camera. The tiger's orange fur with black stripes is the central focus. The background is a blurred, sunlit savanna landscape. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

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TIGER SAFARIS IN
INDIA



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INDIA — TIGER — CONSERVATION

TIGERS IN INDIA

About three quarters of the world's tigers reside in India, but with approximately 4,500 left in the wild, they remain among the most endangered mammals on the planet.

Disease, poaching, deforestation and human encroachment on habitats have all taken their toll on India's tiger population, which reached its lowest ebb in 2006, with just 1,400 remaining.

However, the last decade has seen a positive surge in both conservation efforts and tiger numbers resulting in an encouraging 6-percent increase annually to reach an estimated 3,167 individuals today.

Though remaining on the world's endangered list, India has been a success story in the focus on tiger conservation. The 2022 census of the tiger population showed fruits from the work of India's "Project Tiger" as well as many passionate conservationists, responsible tourism initiatives, and individuals.

This has recently been coupled with a reintroduction of the once prevalent cheetah to Central India's Kuno National Park, increasing the dedicated focus on conservation efforts for both big cats.

TIGER FACTS:

- The tiger is the largest of all the big cats. As sub-species, the Amur or Siberian is the largest, with the Bengal tiger second
- A male Bengal tiger can weigh up to 569 pounds (260kg) & reach 10 feet (3m) in length
- Due to this mass & the incredible power that comes with it, a single swipe from a paw can kill a full-grown man - even without the 4-inch (10cm) claws
- Tiger cubs are born blind, with only half of a litter surviving, adding to their endangerment
- With only a 50-percent success rate, tigers use their stealthy paws & incredible camouflage when hunting. They can even mimic some deer calls to lure prey

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CLASSIC TIGER SAFARIS

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WHAT TO EXPECT ON A TIGER SAFARI

Tigers are exceptionally elusive and tiger safaris are never guaranteed of a sighting, and this is exacerbated by the absence of tracking equipment. Despite this, we have diligently assessed guides, operators and destinations to offer you the best opportunity possible.

Each safari begins with an orientation and vehicle registration. This assures that each vehicle remains within their allotted zone, greatly reducing the number of drives in any one region. In Africa's national parks, vehicles are in contact with each other and will sometimes mass upon a particular sighting or event, greatly diminishing the visitor experience. This rarely, if ever, happens in India, giving you a wonderful sense of solitude and exclusivity.

The naturalist and driver listen intently in the early morning air to the bird calls and noises of the jungle. Moments of silence punctuated by the rustling of animals in trees and their calls. These tell-tale signs can often be the alert signals that there is a tiger present, and your guides are fluent in the language of the forest.

One can spend what feels like hours sitting and listening, but tigers aren't the only animals to see. Numerous bird species, several types of deer, monkeys, sloth bears and several smaller cat species can also be found. In these relatively unvisited habitats, nature is more at ease with human presence, and will pass remarkably close to your vehicle. Stillness and silence are always the key skills to adopt.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Seeing tigers is not guaranteed
- Guides are experts in reading signs, including tracks in the sand & the calls of startled animals
- They also know the best places to look, maximizing your chance of a sighting
- A tiger's territory can cover up to 20 square miles (52km²), so a tiger seen in one spot yesterday may be far away today
- Always be sure to take sunscreen, a hat, water & a shawl or sarong, though your guides can help you with these items
- Ideally take two camera lenses, a 70-200mm zoom and a shorter 18-55mm lens for scenery & close encounters

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BEST TIGER LOCATIONS

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PENCH NATIONAL PARK

Pench National Park is both lush and abundant. The little sister of neighboring Kanha Tiger Reserve, it is wonderfully picturesque, and with an estimated 65 tigers in residence, likelihood of a sighting is particularly high - though of course, never guaranteed.

KANHA TIGER RESERVE

Located in India's Central Highlands, Kanha is a more verdant destination, and the specifically-designated tiger reserve offers some of the highest success rates for tiger spotting. The reserve is also home to leopard, sloth bear, barasinga, four-horned antelope and wild dogs.

BHANDHAVGARH NATIONAL PARK

Though one of India's smallest national parks, Bandhavgarh is wonderfully abundant, with one of the highest densities of tiger populations in the world. This includes a number of stunning white tigers, along with numerous mammal and bird species.

RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

One of the largest of India's national parks, Ranthambore is scattered with ruins, forests and lakes, providing dramatic scenery through which to travel. It is also rather popular, and though we usually tend to avoid more frequented destinations, its proximity to Jaipur makes it highly convenient and accessible.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- It was in Pench National Park that Rudyard Kipling found inspiration for 'The Jungle Book'
- Kanha is a fairly isolated reserve, helping nature to flourish & reducing visitor numbers
- The white tigers of Bhandhavgarh aren't albino - they are a genetic subspecies
- Ranthambore has a diversity of life, including leopard, caracal, sloth bear, desert fox, crocodile & python

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