

Wildlife Whispers

History of Bandipur National Park

One of the top ten national parks to visit in India for tiger sightings and breathtaking landscapes, Bandipur National Park remains vibrant and colorful throughout the year.

Nestled in the foothills of the Western Ghats and forming an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Bandipur stands as one of India's most magnificent wildlife destinations. Located in Karnataka, this protected reserve is a haven for nature lovers, wildlife enthusiasts, and adventure seekers looking to escape city life and immerse themselves in raw wilderness.

Bandipur is one of the most renowned biospheres in South India. It was formed by expanding the Venugopala Wildlife Park, which was set up in 1931 by the Maharajas of Mysore. Today, Bandipur National Park is one of India's most famous tiger reserves, spread across 880 sq. km.

Geographically, Bandipur lies in the Chamarajanagar district and shares its borders with some of the country's top wildlife reserves — Nagarhole Tiger Reserve (Karnataka) in the northwest, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Tamil Nadu) in the south, and the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) in the southwest. Together, they form the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, one of the last strongholds of the endangered Asiatic wild elephants.

The park is enriched with a wide variety of flora and fauna, consisting of dry deciduous forests, moist deciduous forests, and shrub lands. These diverse habitats support an exceptional range of wildlife species, making Bandipur a treasure trove of biodiversity.

Historically, the region once served as a hunting ground for the rulers of the Mysore kingdom. The initial Venugopala Wildlife Park covered just 90 sq. km. In 1973, under Project Tiger, the area was significantly expanded by adding about 800 sq. km, and the reserve was renamed Bandipur Tiger Reserve.

Flora and Fauna of Bandipur Tiger Reserve



The park features various biomes, including dry deciduous forests, moist deciduous forests, and shrublands. This broad range of habitats supports a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Bandipur is home to numerous valuable timber species such as teak, rosewood, sandalwood, and several varieties of bamboo. The forest also nurtures many notable flowering and fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, including Indian gooseberry (amla), kadam, and the vibrant golden shower tree.



Bandipur is home to a remarkable variety of wildlife, including several endangered species such as Indian elephants, gaurs, tigers, sloth bears, muggers, Indian rock pythons, four-horned antelopes, jackals and dholes. Visitors travelling along the public access roads can often spot chital, grey langurs, Indian giant squirrels, and herds of elephants grazing peacefully in the forest clearings.

Bandipur hosts over 200 species of birds, making it a paradise for birdwatchers. The Indian peafowl is the most commonly sighted bird in the region. Other frequently observed species include honey buzzards, red-headed vultures, Indian vultures, flower peckers, hoopoes, Indian rollers, brown fish owls, crested serpent eagles, changeable hawk-eagles, bee-eaters, and several species of kingfishers. During winter, ospreys are also a common sight around the water bodies.

The park has a rich reptilian diversity as well. Commonly seen species include the spectacled cobra, Indian rock python, vipers, rat snake, mugger crocodile, monitor lizard, Indian chameleon, Indian pond terrapin, agamid lizards, and the fascinating flying lizards that glide between tree trunks using their wing-like membranes.

A Forest Rich in Wildlife & Biodiversity

Spread across 874 sq. km, Bandipur National Park is a thriving haven of wildlife and lush greenery. The landscape is dominated by towering teak, sandalwood, rosewood, and bamboo forests, which create a perfect habitat for an extraordinary range of flora and fauna.

The park is home to more than 200 species of birds and an impressive diversity of animals, including:

- Asiatic Elephants
- Royal Bengal Tigers
- Leopards

- Spotted Deer & Sambar Deer
- Bonnet Macaques & Langurs
- Sloth Bears
- Vibrant butterflies and rich vegetation

Bandipur remains one of India's most treasured biodiversity hotspots, offering visitors a rare chance to witness wildlife in their natural surroundings.



Different Kinds of Safari at Bandipur:

Option 1: Exclusive Jeep Safari

An open Bolero that accommodates up to 6 passengers. Guests choosing this premium experience will be accompanied by an expert tiger tracker from Wild Trails, enhancing the chances of rare sightings. Pickup and drop from your accommodation can be arranged for added convenience.

Option 2: Shared Jeep Safari

This safari uses an open Gypsy that seats 6 passengers, shared with other tourists. Instead of a tiger tracker, a certified forest department guide will accompany the group. Pickup and drop from the accommodation is not included for this option.

Option 3: Canter Safari

A canter can carry around 20 tourists at a time. A trained forest department guide will accompany the group, but no tiger tracker is provided. Pickup and drop from the accommodation is not available.

Note:

Accommodation must be booked at Bandipur Safari Lodge to obtain the safari permit.

Safari Timings

- Morning Safari: Starts at 6:00 AM
 - Evening Safari: Starts at 3:00 PM
- Each safari lasts for approximately 3 hours, offering ample opportunities to spot wildlife.



Bandipur Recent Sightings

The restless energy of Bangalore gradually faded with every passing kilometer as our vehicle wound through the serene southern countryside. The city's concrete landscape gave way to lush greenery, hinting at the wilderness that awaited us.

Every sound the creaking of branches, the rustle of leaves suggested the presence of unseen creatures hidden deep within the forest. By evening, we found ourselves surrounded by ancient woods, where the tranquil symphony of nature offered the perfect escape from urban life.

Bandipur is an ideal outdoor learning destination for students of tourism, environmental science, and forestry to experience real-time wildlife management, eco-tourism practices, and biodiversity conservation.



For students of BA Tourism, visiting Bandipur offers practical exposure and helps in understanding wildlife tourism operations, customer handling during safaris, and the importance of sustainable tourism.

By
Department of Tourism