Vishni Destination Management

Re-defining Destination Management.

Wildlife Holidays in India!

TERRA PANTHERA

India, home to the largest variety of **Alpha predators**? Probably!

When wildlife enthusiasts and laypeople alike think of predators in India, their minds invariably visualise tigers. Rightly so. Indian tigers are graceful, nonchalant and hard to topple from the top of the food chain. But, India also happens to be home to other equally beguiling predators, such as panthers and leopards. Indeed, whereas tigers can mostly be found on the plains, panthers and leopards are a more versatile species. Indeed, a variant of the latter hunts unobstructed across India's high altitude terrain.

Tigers, leopards and panthers have learned to co-exist over millennia. Wary yet respectful of each other, aware that any brawl will be a fight to the finish for one and a Pyrrhic Victory for the other. One can't help but appreciate how apt the lyric " You can have anything you want, but you better not take it from me" (from *Welcome to the Jungle on the Appetite for Destruction* album) is to the hair-trigger relationship between tigers and leopards and panthers.

We hope this "mini-brochure" (focusing on panther and leopard habitats in north, eastern, south eastern, western and central India), dedicated to our occasionally overlooked - but no less deadly - felines piques your interest. Miaowwwww!

As ever, we're very proud of India's flora and fauna and it's both an honour and pleasure for us to be able to promote wildlife tourism in India.

Hunting High & Low

If you really want to challenge yourself in your search for a leopard then head straight for Hemis National Park (in Kashmir) or the Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal Pradesh (another alternative in Himachal Pradesh is the Pin Valley National Park), home of the snow leopard. Your endurance will be tested in the arid, unforgiving mountains, and you'll be right in the "kill zone", no doubt watched by him. Remember, you're the prey, he's the predator. Is your pulse racing already?

High Altitude Hunting Grounds to Alpine Forests

Whereas India's tiger population can be found only in certain geographic locations (central India, Rajasthan, and a sprinkling in Assam and Uttaranchal) and climates (hot and/or humid), the leopard population thrives in different climates and environments. The alpine forests of Singalila National Park on the edge of Darjeeling in West Bengal are home to the leopard while Khangchendzonga National Park (surrounded by her "Four Sentinels" - Khangchendzonga, Siniolchu, Lamo Angdang, and Pandim. Is there a more picturesque national park in all of Asia?) in neighbouring Sikkim is inhabited by both the snow leopard and clouded leopard.

Land Becomes Water...Water Becomes Land

Out east in Assam, as we get closer to the edge of India, the steamy marshes of Kaziranga are a long way from the mountains and foothills of the Himalayas but it is the very same Himalayas that nourish this corner of India; the Brahmaputra, originating in the Tibetan Himalayas, has sustained life along her banks long since long before man appeared in these parts. Kaziranga National Park is one of India's most diverse parks and a natural habitat of leopards.

Eastern Approaches

As we make our way down India's eastern seaboard, a brief stop at Simlipal National Park in Orissa might be in order. It is, after all, the third largest national park in India! But, it's so remote and comparatively rustic that you're going to spend a fair bit of time without seeing other visitors. It's just you, your guide and the animals!

Bone Dry

From sultry, tropical Orissa we scoot over to the other edge of India. Given how little rain Rajasthan sees, it's astonishing to see how much wildlife thrives there. Kumbhalgarh, however, has its own micro-climate and distinct topography and the lush foliage and the local national park provides more than and adequate home for leopards.

Sariska Wildlife Reserve and Ranthambore National Park, both in Rajasthan, also have leopard leaps.

Mane Attractions

The headline act at Gir National Park might well be the Asiatic Lions but the park is also home to leopards, proving that leopards can forage fearlessly in the domain of tigers and lions.

Mythical Forests

Madhya Pradesh, home to three of India's most famous national parks - Bhandavgarh, Pench and Kanha - is a land shrouded in huge tracts of jungles as it is in myths and legends. For example, although Bhandavgarh fort has existed for over 2,000 years, the history of its construction and inhabitants is more myth than fact, an atmospheric backdrop to ponder as you look out for leopards.

Low Key

Maharashtra's national parks and reserves (Melghat and Tadoba) aren't as frequented as those in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh (which is a good thing if you like low key and off-the-grid places) but eastern Maharashtra is just as verdant as parts of Madhya Pradesh, which means more leopard and panther sightings (especially in Tadoba for the latter).

City Slickers

Sanjay Gandhi National Park, bang in the middle of India's largest city, has got to be the most unusual national park in India! Whereas most national parks and reserves are far from urban centres, S.G.N.P. is surrounded by high-rises and suburbia and the usual sights and sounds of a megapolis! But, once you're in the Park, you'll feel as if you're in a different world altogether.

Being so close to the city, we suspect the leopards here are India's sassiest (and street-smart like most Bombayites!), unlike their country-bumpkin cousins in other parts of India!

Welcome to the Jungles!

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