

TRACKS SAFARIS

WE GET YOU CLOSER



13 NIGHT ENDEMIC OF WESTERN GHATS

Bengaluru – Wayanad – Masinagudi – Kabini - Bengaluru



Image: Hump-nosed Pit Viper

Older than the Himalaya mountains, the mountain chain of the Western Ghats represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes. The site's high montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather pattern. Moderating the tropical climate of the region, the site presents one of the best examples of the monsoon system on the planet. It also has an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism and is recognized as one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity.

The forests of the site include some of the best representatives of non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests anywhere and are home to at least 325 globally threatened flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species.

This is the reason why in 2012 it, along with the adjoining Nilgiri Biosphere, was declared as UNESCO World Heritage Site. In this itinerary you explore the tail-end of the Western Ghats and Nilgiri Biosphere. The region is spread over the states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

In our adventure we shall be exploring Wayanad in Kerala, Masinagudi in Tamil Nadu and Kabini in Karnataka. We have planned this adventure so that you can get introduced to the rainforests in and around Wayanad, the Nilgiri and Shola hills of Tamil Nadu and the backwaters and deciduous forests of Kabini.



What we have tried to showcase in this program is the diversity of unique wildlife such as:

Mammals: Tiger, leopard (melanistic leopard as well), sloth bear, Asiatic elephant, gaur, bonnet macaques, Nilgiri langurs, slender loris, Nilgiri martens, ruddy mongoose, stripe-necked mongoose, Malabar giant squirrel and different types of civets to name a few.

Birds: Nilgiri Pipit, Nilgiri flycatcher, Nilgiri parakeet, Nilgiri laughingthrush, white-cheeked barbet, yellow-throated bulbul, Malabar barbet, Malabar hornbill and black & orange flycatcher to name a few.

Amphibians & Reptiles: King cobra, Malabar pit viper, Hump-nosed pit viper, Nilgiri keelback, a variety of tree frogs, gliding frogs and dancing frogs to name a few.



Image: Malabar Gliding Frog

DAY ONE

On arrival into Bengaluru you will be met by our representatives and depending on the time of arrival, you will transfer to the Taj Bengaluru next to the airport for breakfast before returning to catch your domestic flight to Kozhikode.

At Kozhikode your vehicle will be awaiting your arrival and you will transfer to Wayanad by road (a journey of 2 hours and 20 minutes). The remainder of the day has been kept at leisure to help you unwind after the long journey. Lunch will be at your lodge – Wayanad Wild.

Wayanad Wild: Situated in the heart of the rainforest, with rooms peeking out of the treetops and an infinity pool tipping over into foliage, Wayanad Wild brings you closer to nature.

While one can opt for a jeep safari, the wilderness offers the most exciting experiences when explored on foot. You can identify interesting plants and small animals on guided tours with a naturalist and if bird watching is your thing, the canopy offers up rare migratory birds for spotting.

The spacious rooms at Wayanad Wild are well-equipped with modern facilities and amenities. The balconies give you a stunning view of the tree lines further down the slope. Salvaged ship-wood and bamboo accessories lend a warm and earthy counterpoint to the light steel structures that are built without removing the trees on the sloped terrain; together defining the living experience here.

Wayanad Wild will offer you the opportunity to live in nature and to facilitate this, the clusters of rooms are set up on lush green hill slopes with cosy and well-appointed bedrooms.

The rooms have no air conditioning as the air here is cool all year round being at an altitude of 2,900 feet above sea level - even during the summer you will find a sweater welcome in the mornings and evenings.

Overnight will be at Wayanad Wild by CGH Earth hotels on a full board basis



DAYS TWO, THREE AND FOUR

These three days are going to be spend exploring Wayanad.

Wayanad Wild is a holiday experience located in the rainforests of the Western Ghats in Lakkidi, North Kerala. One of eight hot-spots of biodiversity in the world, the Ghats are home to an abundant variety of fauna as well as majestic trees, gurgling streams and outlandish rock formations. The hills of Wayanad are home to a great many species of birds both common and rare. It is a paradise for bird lovers and it is possible to see the blue-tinted Malabar parakeet, the orange minivet, the flame throated bulbul and the crested serpent eagle. Bird watching is an important part of any Wayanad holiday.



Key activities for this exploration are going to be:

Explore the wild: This is a guided tour of the property and its surrounding forests with a lodge naturalist. On this walk you could possibly spot Nilgiri Langur, the Malabar Giant Squirrel, Malabar Grey Hornbill, Yellow Browed Bulbul besides a wide range of other species endemic to the Western Ghats and a fabulous array of butterflies.

Night Expedition: This experience again takes place in and around the lodge, however, our focus now shifts to the more elusive nocturnal wildlife. Excellent for frogs, snakes, slender loris and civet.

Exploring the Sahyadri's: One of the two days spend hiking through the Sahyadri's which offer a magnificent view from the top that take your breath away. This walk takes you through unexplored wilderness and across aromatic coffee plantations to explore the many secrets of the mountains.

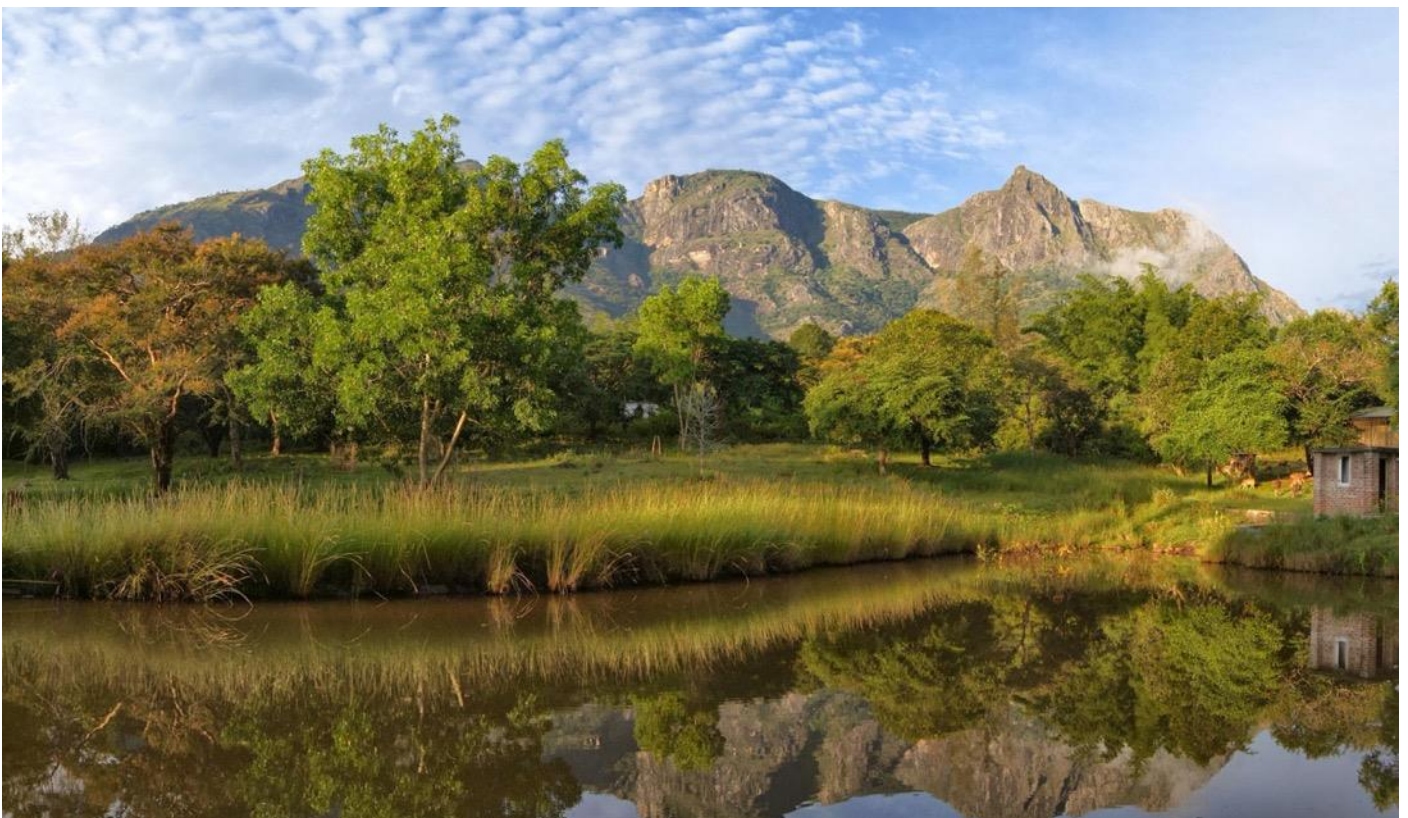
Overnight will be at Wayanad Wild on a full board basis

DAY FIVE

Having spent 4 days in the rainforests of Wayanad this morning after breakfast you make your way to Masinagudi in the Nilgiris. Your home in Masinagudi will be Jungle Hut – a family run property in the situated at the foothills of the picturesque Nilgiri Hills in the hamlet of Bokkapuram, near Masinagudi.

In 1986, after 25 years of working in the tea plantations, Joe and Hermie Mathias chose to settle down in the foothills of the Nilgiris - Jungle Hut was born as a quaint family-run homestay in the wilderness. Over the years, Jungle Hut has gently metamorphosed into the cozy resort that it is today, under the care of the next generation Mathias' - Anushri and Vikram.

This area constitutes the buffer area of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve which is home to a wealth of wildlife including the Bengal Tiger, Leopard (panther), Asian Elephants, Indian Gaur (Bison), Sloth Bear, Hyena, Wild Boar, Cheetal and many others. Jungle Hut and the surrounding areas are a hot spot for bird life so much so that we are referred to as a bird watchers paradise. They are 20Km from Bandipur Tiger Reserve and 35Km from Ooty.



Your journey to Masinagudi will take about 3.5 hours by road and you should arrive well in time for lunch. Later this afternoon spend the day doing short walks around the property looking for birds with the naturalist.

Overnight will be at Jungle Hut on a full board basis

DAY SIX

Today the first half of the day you spend bird watching around the Bokkapuram area. Hike to the hills following a perennial stream, amidst mixed evergreen forests and bamboo patches. The habitat is ideal for Woodpeckers, Minivets, Barbets and a number of species of Raptors. There is also a chance of seeing the mammals of the area.

This afternoon after an early lunch transfer by road to Bandipur Tiger Reserve and enjoy a game drive in Bandipur/Mudumalai National Park. Bandipur is a 40 minute drive from the lodge whereas entrance of Mudumalai is about 10 minutes away.

Overnight will be at Jungle Hut on a full board basis

DAY SEVEN

Spend the day watching birds in and around Masinagudi. Explore the forested tracts, looking for species like the Sun birds, Flowerpeckers, Nuthatches, Kingfishers, Swallows and Warblers. There is also a little farmland in the surrounding area that is home to Pipits, Larks, Lapwings and Robins. These areas can be explored on foot and can be surprisingly productive.

Overnight will be at Jungle Hut on a full board basis



DAY EIGHT

After a leisurely breakfast, drive to Kotagiri in the Nilgiri Hills. The journey passes through Ooty, a hill station. In Ooty, the Botanical Garden is a great place for watching some of the smaller woodland birds like the Flycatchers. We will also do a quick stop at Doddabetta, which is the second highest point in South India to explore the forest tracts and look for some migrant birds that use these forests during winter. We continue onwards to Kotagiri. Note – Kotagiri is about 2 hours from Jungle Hut.

Overnight will be at Fairview Mountain Villa on a full board basis

DAY NINE

The Highland Montane Shola forests are a great habitat for birds. Spend the day exploring the ancient Shola of Longwood, looking for the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Black and Orange Flycatcher, White-bellied Blue Robin and the Nilgiri Flycatcher. Post lunch, drive to the mid elevation moist deciduous forests around Kotagiri to look for the Grey headed Bulbul, Malabar Trogon, Orange Minivet and the Asian Fairy Bluebird.

Overnight will be at Fairview Mountain Villa on a full board basis

DAY TEN

This morning after an early breakfast check-out and transfer by road to Kabini. The journey to Kabini should take about 5 hours.

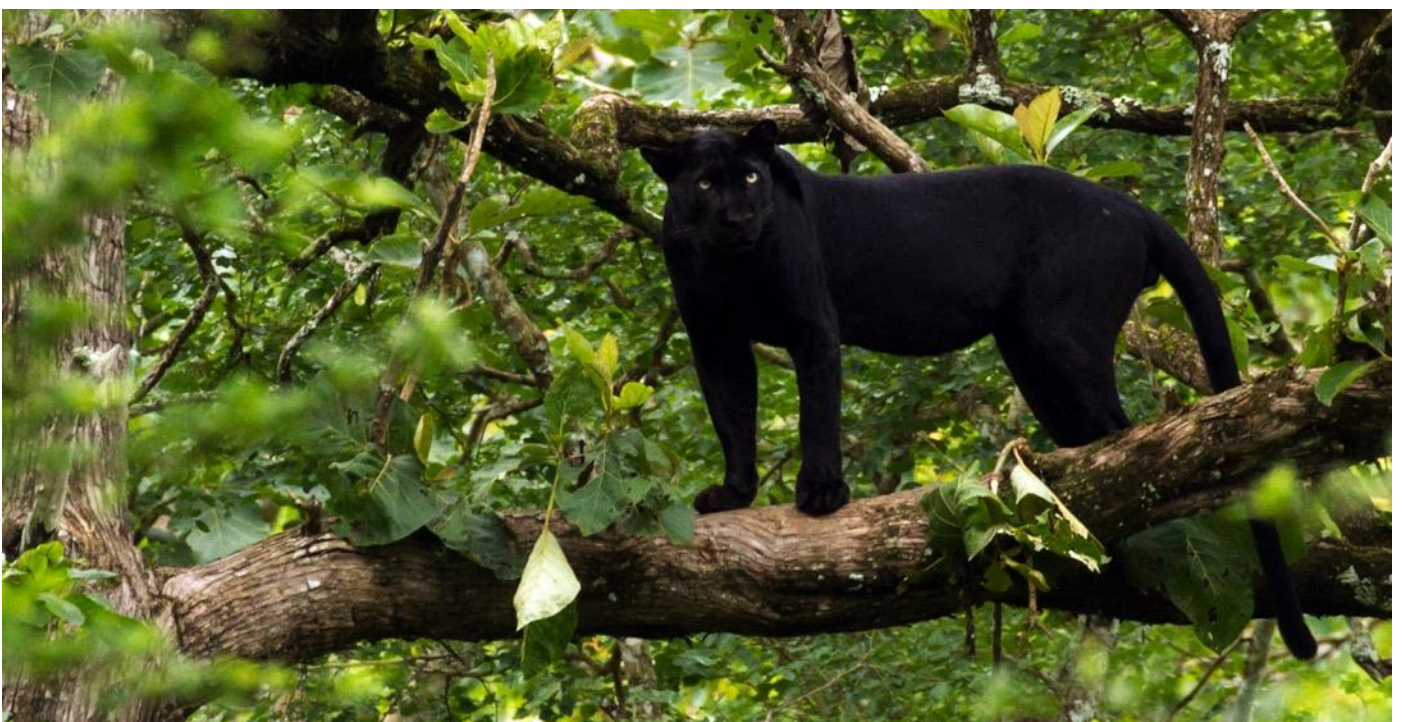
Nagarhole National Park, also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park, is a prominent tiger reserve in south India. The lifeline of Nagarhole as well as Bandipur tiger reserve is the river that divides the parks into two – Kabini. Due to the importance of this water body the park is often referred to as Kabini.

Kabini is known for excellent wildlife sightings of big mammals such as the Bengal tiger, Asiatic elephants, gaur (often called the Indian bison – it is the tallest bovine in the world), dhole (Asiatic wild dog), sloth bear, leopard to name a few. In the last few years, it has gained popularity because of a confident male melanistic leopard that is resident in part of the area open to tourists. The park also has excellent backwaters that can be explored by boat to get closer to crocodiles, birds and quite often one can find larger mammals by the riverbanks as well.

Important note: All safaris in the park are controlled by Jungle Lodges Property, in this case Kabini River Lodge. These use to be the hunting lodges of the Maharaja of Mysore. The lodge is government run and all safaris originate here. However, it is important to know that if you are not staying at Kabini River Lodge you do not get jeep safaris instead have to go in larger format buses. Thus, we always recommend staying here. Also, of importance is that fact that there are no exclusive safaris in Kabini.

You should arrive in time for lunch. At about 1500 you begin exploring Kabini. We recommend we change pace and begin with a boat safari that allows you to explore the river and backwaters.

Overnight will be at Kabini River Lodge on a full board basis



DAYS ELEVEN, TWELVE AND THIRTEEN

For the next three days we explore the park in jeeps. There are two safaris planned each day – one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. These will be shared jeep safaris.

The park is divided into two zones – Zone A and Zone B. Zone B has access to the river and thus we feel is better for birding. Zone A on the other hand is the region where the black panther is found. Nevertheless, tigers and leopards are found and often seen in both zones and each of them is just as exciting. The zones are allocated alternately so that all may get a chance to explore both sides of the forest.

Recommendation: Kabini River Lodge itself is home to some interesting wildlife species and we strongly recommend you explore the lodge grounds for the same. Some key species to seek here are – Southern Birdwing Butterfly (largest butterfly in India), the Blue Mormon butterfly is the second largest in the country and can also be found here, there is always a troop of Bonnet Macaques that can be interesting to observe and photograph, besides this the grounds are home to Mottled Wood Owl, Jumping Ants, Signature Spiders, Bark Geckos and more. You should not have any trouble keeping yourself busy seeking interesting species to see and photograph.

Overnight will be at Kabini River Lodge on a full board basis



DAY FOURTEEN

After the morning safari and breakfast (which is at the lodge each day), check-out and transfer back to Bengaluru. The journey to Bengaluru should take 5 hours by road.

Should you choose you can break journey at Mysuru for lunch before continuing onwards. We will take a day use room at Taj Bengaluru (which is based at the airport) for you to rest for a few hours before you transfer to the airport and catch your international flight back home.



TRACKS SAFARIS – WE GET YOU CLOSER TO INDIA!

TRACKS SAFARIS
WE GET YOU CLOSER

