



# A *'WILD'* SOJOURN

Forests plush with wildlife and greenery provide all the inspiration you need, while cosy wildlife lodges spoil you with much-needed luxury



The thrill of being in a forest, the place we once called home, is unmatched by any other kind of holiday. Witnessing the harmony of flora and fauna in the wild leaves you changed forever. Luxury wildlife lodges ensure you don't miss creature comforts even in the wilderness, while also arranging unforgettable safari experiences ranging from jeep and elephant safaris to bush dinners and village tours.

**CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK, NEPAL**  
Famous for rhinoceros and the local Tharu community, Chitwan National Park may be the most beautiful forest you'll ever see. In the winters, dreamy white fog blankets the Rapti

and Narayani Rivers and obscures the tree tops and shrubbery. "We booked the trip to Chitwan because my wife and I are both big nature lovers and were excited to see the jungle and animals of this world famous park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Obviously, we were hoping to see the Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, which can only be reliably seen at Chitwan and a very few other places in the world and maybe some of the other exciting wildlife: tigers, gharial, elephants, monkeys, etc. Barahi Jungle Lodge is very romantic with incredible food, beautiful rooms and a spectacular terrace around the swimming pool where you can relax in the sun with cocktails after a jungle tour," says Dr. Barry Drees, Senior Partner, Trilogy Writing and Consulting.  
**Stay:** Barahi Jungle Lodge is close to the buffer zone and organises beautiful elephant, boat and walking safaris, along with dances in the night. Book a double cottage at ₹ 36,000 for two

nights.  
**Must-do:** Go for a walking safari in the riverside forest once the morning fog clears.

**KWANTU GAME RESERVE, SOUTH AFRICA**  
A scenic 85km drive from Port Elizabeth brings you to Kwantu Game Reserve, a 6000 hectare private reserve in South Africa's Eastern Cape province. "The most amazing part was the game drive in an open jeep with the tem-



perature at almost 10 degrees to watch the Big 5. It's super chilly in late evenings as well as early mornings which is the best time to catch a kill. Our guide was originally from Zimbabwe and had a fantastic eye for spotting rhinos,

giraffe, lions and a host of other animals. We also visited the rehabilitation centre which was very educational for us, especially seeing the Bengal Tiger," says Vaidehi Sugandhia, a marketing professional who travelled there with her husband.  
**Stay:** The game reserve doubles as a resort with spacious rooms, a jungle swimming pool, a touch farm and an herb garden. Honeymoon suites are just Rs 4000 per night.

**MUST-DO:** Witness a lion kill on an early morning safari and visit the elephant sanctuary.

**YALA NATIONAL PARK, SRI LANKA**  
Yala National Park is among the best known

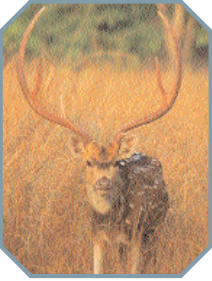
eco-tourism destinations in Sri Lanka. It is best known to have a leopard density that's higher than anywhere else on earth. Mithila Mehta, Senior Innovation Manager at United Spirits-DIAGEO honeymooned at Yala National Park with her husband in December 2015. "The highlight was our time at the National Park - we were fortunate to have several leopard sightings, including one where the leopard was seated right in the middle of the path which our van was approaching - talk about lucky! Another amazing moment was being surrounded by a herd of elephants as they went about their own business. Yala is a great destination because it gives you a taste of the great outdoors, but with great stay options very close to the National Park (we woke up to the sight of a Sambar Deer drinking water from our hotel swimming pool!) Visiting Yala added diversity to our honeymoon - a welcome change from the usual slew of beaches, cities and malls," she says.

**Stay:** Jetwing Yala is a four star beachfront resort that lets you enjoy the beach along with wildlife sightings during safaris. Rooms start at Rs 16000 per night.  
**Must-do:** Enjoy the magnificent sunsets either from your safari jeep or the comfort of your lodge.

**AMAZON RAIN-FOREST, SOUTH AMERICA**  
The Amazon Rainforest needs no introduction and offers a plethora of breath-taking sights and activities that promise an unforgettable honeymoon. When hiking into the jungle, find a skilled guide who will point out parrots, macaws, aquatic birds, tamarins, squirrel monkeys and troops of howler monkeys. Water-based sojourns are also a must do while at the Amazon Rainforest. You might spot freshwater dolphins swimming in the coffee-coloured waters of Rio Negro. Don't miss the waterfalls near the town of Presidente Figueiredo.  
**Stay:** Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica lodge, Peru is an eco-luxury lodge in the Tambopata National Reserve. Enjoy guided treks to a canopy walkway, Lake Sandoval and an indigenous farm during your stay here.  
**Must-do:** Go deep into the forest and navigate narrow tributaries on a two-night jungle cruise.

**KANHA AND BANDHAVGARH, INDIA**  
Located close to each other in Madhya Pradesh, India's forest state, Kanha and Bandhavgarh National Parks offer the best chances of

spotting a tiger. Deepthi Nair, Marketing Manager, Bisleri International, who travelled to these jungles with her husband says, "My husband Varun and I are both wildlife enthusiasts. Apart from five tiger sightings we also saw jackals, Indian Gaur, all the four deer (Spotted, Sambar, Barking and the gorgeous Barasingha), monitor lizards, peacocks, serpent eagles, vultures, robins, kingfishers, bulbuls and some really gorgeous colourful birds."  
**Stay:** Kanha Earth Lodge at Kanha is famous for its lush pool and forest-inspired interiors. Tree House Hideaway at Bandhavgarh offers an authentic experience of living in a tree house.  
**Must-do:** Pre-book a safari gypsy all for yourself and go for birding tours in the wee hours.



If you've never flirted with the forest, don't put it off any longer. As Manav Khanduja, Director, Pugdunde Safari says, "The forest is a visual delight of natural colours and relationships that coexist in harmony with a purpose. When you step out in the forest on two feet, you definitely see the jungle differently. It's the best way to get your adrenaline pumping." So get cracking and let untamed nature capture your mind and soul.

Ankita Shreeran