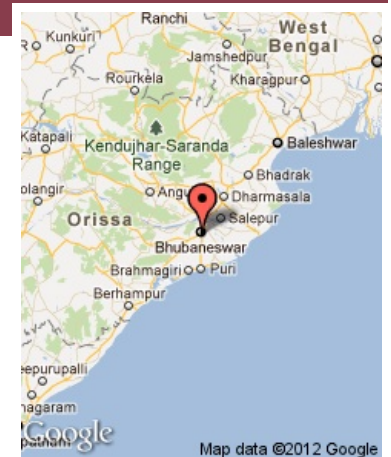


Nature & Wildlife Tour in Orissa



Highlights

Tangled mangroves, impenetrable jungles, sun-kissed lagoons and even the odd crocodile-infested river – Orissa is home to an extraordinary diversity of ecological habitats. Meet elephants, dolphins, flamingos and other residents on this magical wildlife tour!

The east Indian state of Orissa is among the least spoilt and most enigmatic in the subcontinent, boasting vast expanses of jungle and grasslands, an incredible diversity of flora and fauna and some of the oldest temples in India. There are mountains, lakes and mile upon mile of glorious coastline, not to mention the vibrant city of Bhubaneswar, with its 3,000 year history, and Puri, a beautiful and ancient coastal town. More intriguing though are the state's tribal cultures with an extraordinary diversity of independent customs and rituals. Inhabiting Orissa's remote hills and surviving today very much as they have for many millennia.

Starting in Bhubaneswar, with its countless medieval temples dotted along broad, tree-lined avenues, you'll delve deep into the mysterious mangrove forests of Bhitarkanika National Park, home to an awesome array of bird and animal life, including pythons and crocodiles! It's then on to the Satkosia Gorge, where you'll trek with locals on the trail of elephants, giant sambar deer and even the elusive tiger! (En route, you can pick up some jungle survival tips from your tribal companions.) Emerging out of the dark forest, it's time for a well-earned chill out on Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish lagoon and a haven for migratory birds and playful dolphins. Your final port of call is Puri, one of East India's oldest cities, with its lively night market and sweeping beaches. The trip concludes with a trip to Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where "the language of stone surpasses the language of man". A magical end to a magical trip!

Is it for me?

Jungle temples, mazy mangroves and serene natural habitats at their best; raw and pure. This trip's best suited to folk with a passion for nature and a taste for adventure, people who'll brush off the odd mozzie bite or grazed knee for the chance to spot monkeys at play or elephants on the move. You'll get most from this tour if you're not afraid to really interact with the environment and its inhabitants, and even to get messy in the process. For the chance to see some of the world's most charismatic creatures in their natural habitats, we think it's worth it!

Accommodation

For this trip you'll be based at a mixture of hotels (six nights), forest rest houses (four nights) and camps (one night). All are simple, clean and comfortable, and many are beautifully located, with jungle views, pretty gardens or lake views! Most food is included on this tour, but you should budget for around ten euros per day for other meals out.

This is a great chance to sample some of Orissa's fantastic cuisine, dishes like khechedi (rice and lentils with vegetables), luchi (deep fried bread) and the terrifically sweet rasgulla and chhenapodapitha. And thanks to its long coastline, Orissa serves up some excellent fresh seafood, from curried crabs to beach-barbequed fish.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Bhubaneswar
Bhubaneswar, the lively capital of Orissa since the ancient 'Kalinga' empire boasts settlement stretching back

Prices from

674 GBP (11 days) per person

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2000 years. Explore animated medieval temples and broad tree-lined avenues to unearth the spirit behind the city.

Days 2 - 3: Bhitarkanika National Park

Delve deep into the mysterious mangrove forests of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park, a unique ecosystem designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. You'll glide through the extensive network of creeks and rivers, then gaze at the diverse bird and wildlife. Keep your hands out of the water though - the saltwater crocodiles bite!

Day 4: Joranda

Join the saffron-clad Mahima Babas at their hilltop ashram, and take part in their evening rituals before enjoying a communal diner on palm leaf plates.

Days 5 - 6: Satkosia Gorge and Wildlife Sanctuary

Buckle up and enjoy the ride through pristine forest! You'll camp at the base of Satkosia Gorge where you'll enjoy awe-inspiring views as you trek through the jungle with locals identifying native flora and fauna. Keep your eyes peeled for elephants, sambar and the elusive tiger! You'll also meet the local indigenous community and learn first-hand forest survival tips.

Days 7 - 8: Chilika Lake

On these days you'll be staying on an elevated hillock overlooking Chilika Lake, Asia's largest estuarine lagoon and another Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. Unwinding on the tranquil waters, you'll spot rare migratory birds and playful dolphins. Take a stroll through the sleepy fishing villages, bask in the tropical sun and feast on fresh seafood. In the evening, you'll enjoy a spectacular sunset over the Bay of Bengal and camp under the stars.

Days 9 - 10: Puri

Soak up the traditional cultures of Puri, with its old city and, lively night market. You can even sample the local cheesecake! It's then on to the famous UNESCO World Heritage site at Konark. Conceived as a giant solar chariot, this is one of India's most sublime monuments.

Day 11: Depart Puri

You are free to depart or stay on and enjoy the relaxed ambience. Additional accommodation or a private air-conditioned vehicle to the airport can be arranged when you book.

Details

Getting there

Tours depart from the Hotel Royale in Bhunbaneshwar.

Price includes

Most meals (eight breakfasts, seven lunches, six dinners); accommodation; activities, all transport; guide.

When is best

Other departures can be arranged on request, please contact us for more information.

Typical Duration

11 days

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed