

When was Pugdundee Safaris set up?

Pugdundee is a Hindi word meaning a foot trail commonly used by humans and animals, used for beaten paths in the Indian jungles. Driven by the love of jungles, the company made an unplanned, humble beginning in 1986, with a small tented camp in Panna. Between 2007 and 2010, two more lodges were set up and in 2010 they were all brought together under the Pugdundee Safaris umbrella. It is run by a passionate team of wildlifers and hospitality professionals with a team of more than 300 people committed to providing an incredible wildlife experience.

Have you always been interested in wildlife?

Growing up in a small town in the countryside, I formed a lifelong attachment with nature. A chance visit to Jim Corbett national park in northern India at the age of 12 created lasting memories for me and left me with a desire to return. As I grew older, trips to jungles became more frequent and then a way of life.

What wildlife can visitors to India hope to spot?

A variety of deer, primates, smaller mammals and birds are easy to spot. Finding a tiger, leopard or sloth bear isn't easy but when you do see one it's very special. Central India is the best place, and if you have six to eight days of safari, you have a high chance of sighting them all.

Where is the best place and time to see a tiger?

Bandhavgarh and Kanha national parks are the best places to spot a



Khanduja has a lifelong affinity with nature

Manav Khanduja

founder, Pugdundee Safaris

tiger. Seeing one in a lush bamboo or sal tree forest with beautiful mountain backdrops is very special. October to March is great with amazing weather, while April to June is really hot but promises the best sightings, as there is limited undergrowth and the tigers tend to spend most of their time near their favourite water holes.

Why is spotting the Bengal tiger so special?

The tiger is the most charismatic species on earth: seeing one in the wild is unparalleled. Some guests have cried with joy.

Why is educating local people important in protecting the tiger?

The villagers are the true bastions of these forests, and we all have to be united for a sustainable tomorrow. To conserve our wild spaces, it's important that the locals are a part of the emerging economy and enter the mainstream. To achieve this, education is of utmost importance.

How do you source food for your remote lodges?

We are committed to a "farm-to-table" approach. Many of the vegetables and herbs are sourced from our organic farm and garden. Breakfast is usually alfresco in the park; lunch is Indian table d'hôte or chef's special of the day; while dinner is in an array of locations and is a relaxed meal - generally a mix of local, homegrown, Indian and continental cuisines.

IN THE FRAME

What kind of accommodation is available?

At all our lodges accommodation is in individual cottages or bungalows set in a natural forested area. All have ensuite bathrooms, air-conditioned rooms, luggage area and facilities for tea and coffee making. It's rustic yet luxurious, so guests can enjoy the forest with their creature comforts.



Do clients tend to package a safari with other highlights on an India itinerary?

First-time travellers to India usually combine Agra and Jaipur with their safari tour.

What is the most amazing wildlife sighting you have experienced?

We were on elephant-back in Panna and watching a leopard on top of a leafless ghost tree. As the tree was on a slope, we were at eye level with it. Then another leopard climbed the tree, they both fought and one stood up on its hind legs to gain advantage on the other. Finally, one left and went to sit under the tree. The entire jungle was full of their calls - it was an electrifying moment.

