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Tour Report
Nagarhole Photo Safari
11-20 March 2026

Dhole



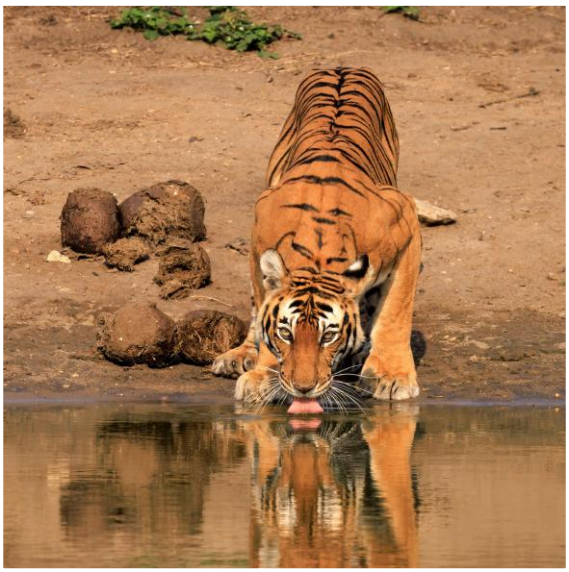
Asian elephant



Osprey



Bengal tiger



Compiled by Bret Charman

Saturday 11 April 2026

Day 1:
London to Bangalore

The group flight from London Heathrow was scheduled to leave at 2 pm, but it was delayed by half an hour or so, before taking off. We made up the time in the air, and otherwise enjoyed a smooth flight to Bangalore.

Sunday 12 April 2026

Day 2:
Bangalore to Kabini; Nagarhole National Park

Arriving in Bangalore a little earlier than scheduled, we were soon queuing in immigration, presenting our e-visas before continuing on to baggage reclaim. It was here that the majority of the group met, while waiting for their luggage to come out on the belt. It was also a good opportunity to grab some Indian Rupees before exiting through customs.

Once everyone had their luggage, we reconvened outside arrivals. Here, we were met by our local guide and naturalist, Sneeha. It was only a short walk to our comfortable minibus, before heading to the Taj hotel in Bangalore itself. With such an early arrival, before 5 am, we were going to have breakfast at the hotel, before heading on the road towards the city of Mysore and on to Bangalore.

Enjoying a very large offering at breakfast, we were soon well fuelled for our drive. Making good time on the way out of Bangalore, we were soon on the region's motorway network. Due to the awkward flight time, many of the group used the bus journey to catch up on a little sleep.

Arriving at Kabini River Lodge just before lunch, once we had completed check-in, we showed everyone to their rooms, agreeing to meet up for lunch just before 1.30 pm. Sneeha and I briefed the group on the rest of the day's plan, and what they could expect for the entirety of the stay at Kabini River Lodge. Having finished our first lunch as a group, there was a little time to get our things ready before meeting up for our afternoon safari at 2.45 pm. It was here that we met our expert driver for the week, Sadiq. With years of experience in the park, Sadiq's knowledge, combined with Sneeha's, would prove invaluable.

It was slightly overcast as we made our way towards the park entrance. Upon driving through the gates, we had to sign in and specify our camera specifications for the park's camera fees. We were then on our way, anticipating what this beautiful corner of Karnataka might deliver.

The forests of Nagarhole are primarily made up of teak trees, providing refuge to a staggering array of species. Bonnet macaque, grey langur, chital (spotted deer) and wild boar were the first mammals that revealed themselves to us. The canopy here is full of birdsong, and some of the first birds we encountered were streak-throated and white-bellied woodpeckers, a pair of black-rumped flameback, cinerous tit, racket-tailed drongo and red wattled lapwing.

As we approached a lake in the heart of the park, we came across the first elephants of the trip. This is another big draw in Nagarhole National Park, with a large population of elephants providing excellent sightings. It was as we moved around the lake, trying to get a better view of the herd of elephants, that we caught sight of a pack of dhole (Asiatic wild dog). Positioning the vehicle in the perfect position, we waited for the pack to make its way along the water's edge before coming through the trees and to where we were sat.

What unfolded next was fantastic, the perfect start to our time in Nagarhole. The three adult dogs came and lay down in front of the vehicle, and we watched as they bonded and nuzzled one another. Meanwhile, the pups watched the herd of elephants intently.



The dogs provided the group with some excellent photographic opportunities in perfect light.



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Two elephants came crashing through the undergrowth, trumpeting as they were obviously upset by something (we didn't realise at the time, but an elephant had died nearby and this could have been the cause). These elephants had the whole herd agitated, and they slowly made their way towards where the dogs were resting. The pack of dhole, meanwhile, were still enjoying one another's company.



It was then that the elephants got the scent of the wild dogs and they made a sudden surge towards them, trumpeting and grumbling as they moved. The action was difficult to do justice to with the camera. As the elephants charged, so the dhole scattered, heading for the thick vegetation for cover. However, probably to their surprise, the herd of elephants continued their pursuit. It ended up that the dogs were separated, with two pups missing and the adults whistling for them to return. We decided that it was probably a good time to leave them in peace and allow both the elephants and wild dogs to settle.

Continuing through the rich forests of Nagarhole, we came across a huge herd of chital, as well as a plethora of birds such as hoopoe, peafowl, white-throated and common kingfishers, shikra and Brahminy starling. Time was running out, and as we were at the furthest point from the park exit, it was time to make our way back. However, as is so often the way, we were temporarily distracted when we stumbled upon a male elephant spraying himself with cooling water.

Exiting the park just after 6 pm, Sadiq soon had us back at Kabini River Lodge, where we had a little time before dinner. We agreed to meet in the bar at 7 pm, with dinner at 7.30 pm. What a fabulous start to our time in Nagarhole. After dinner, we all retreated to our rooms for a very well-deserved rest, particularly with a lack of sleep on the flight from London.

Monday 13 April 2026

Day 3:
Safaris in Nagarhole National Park

Getting up before dawn, the group met in the dining area for morning tea and coffee, as well as a biscuit or two, at 5.30 am. Sneeha was there to meet us, and with water bottles filled, it was soon time to wander up to the vehicle. Leaving the lodge's grounds, it is around a 5-10 minute drive to the park gate. Upon our arrival, Sadiq signed us in, and we were assigned our zone. This would be the same each time we entered the park throughout the week. Zone B was our designated safari area today, and we set off excited as to what the morning might have in store for us.

There was a mist hanging over the forest, while the dawn chorus was reaching its peak. Peacocks galore, the odd grey junglefowl, as well as white-bellied and racket-tailed drongos were our first avian delights. Our first mammal was a wild boar, and it wasn't long before the sounds of chital alarm calls rang out from the surrounding forest. There was a predator on the prowl, but now came the waiting game.

It is often during these waits that we focus our photography interests on the colourful birdlife, with an Indian roller being particularly cooperative on this occasion. The chital alarms had now been replaced by langur alarms, so we knew there was something hidden within the depths of the forest.



The morning's mist was almost gone, lifting with the heat of the rising sun, but no predator emerged from the trees. Instead, we had to make do with the plethora of birdlife that was all around. Having all but given up, we started to drive back the way we had come when I spotted some movement by the road ahead. It was a leopard, but it was seemingly not in the mood to pose for our photographs, disappearing back into the trees from where the alarms had rung out earlier on. Perhaps that was it. We waited, but there was no sign of this spotted felid. Instead, we came across a tusker (a male elephant), with the huge pachyderm crossing the road in front of us. And so, we moved down to the bridge, only a few hundred yards from where we saw the leopard and waited.

We hoped that the leopard might come down to drink as the day warmed up. We sat enjoying the increasing warmth of the morning sun, watching the local birds come and go. Yellow-footed green pigeon and Tickell's blue flycatcher were notable highlights, but they were distant and not suited to memorable photographic opportunities.

Having ventured up and down the road, there suddenly was the leopard once again. It had re-emerged only a few yards from where we saw it earlier. This large male leopard walked out of the forest and crossed the road ahead of us, before following the treeline for a little way and then retreating into the forest once more. The light wasn't the best, but it was great to get some pictures of a leopard on our first morning in the park.



Once again, we followed the road along to the bridge which overlooked the pool of water. For a while, we could see the leopard as he walked confidently from the forest into a meadow. As he walked, chital alarms rang out all around, but he was seemingly on a mission. He disappeared, and the alarm calls fell away.

By the time we actually got back to the bridge, there were a few vehicles there and they were excited. However, it wasn't a leopard that they had seen; there was a tiger. Our vehicle moved into position, and we had the briefest view of a tiger as it disappeared into cover. Despite our best efforts, there was no way to get a better view and it was time to make our way out of the park and head back for breakfast at the lodge.

After such a busy morning, we retreated to our rooms after breakfast, meeting back up for lunch. It wasn't long before we were then meeting at the vehicle, with Sadiq whisking us back towards the national park. Having been assigned Zone A, we worked our way along the winding tracks into the heart of the forest. We spotted a sambar deer by the first small waterhole, but it didn't want to pose for us and so we continued to a waterhole where a tiger had been seen this morning. With the heat of the day in full force, now would be an ideal time for a tiger to find respite in the water. Instead, we found a troop of langurs resting in the shade of a tree.



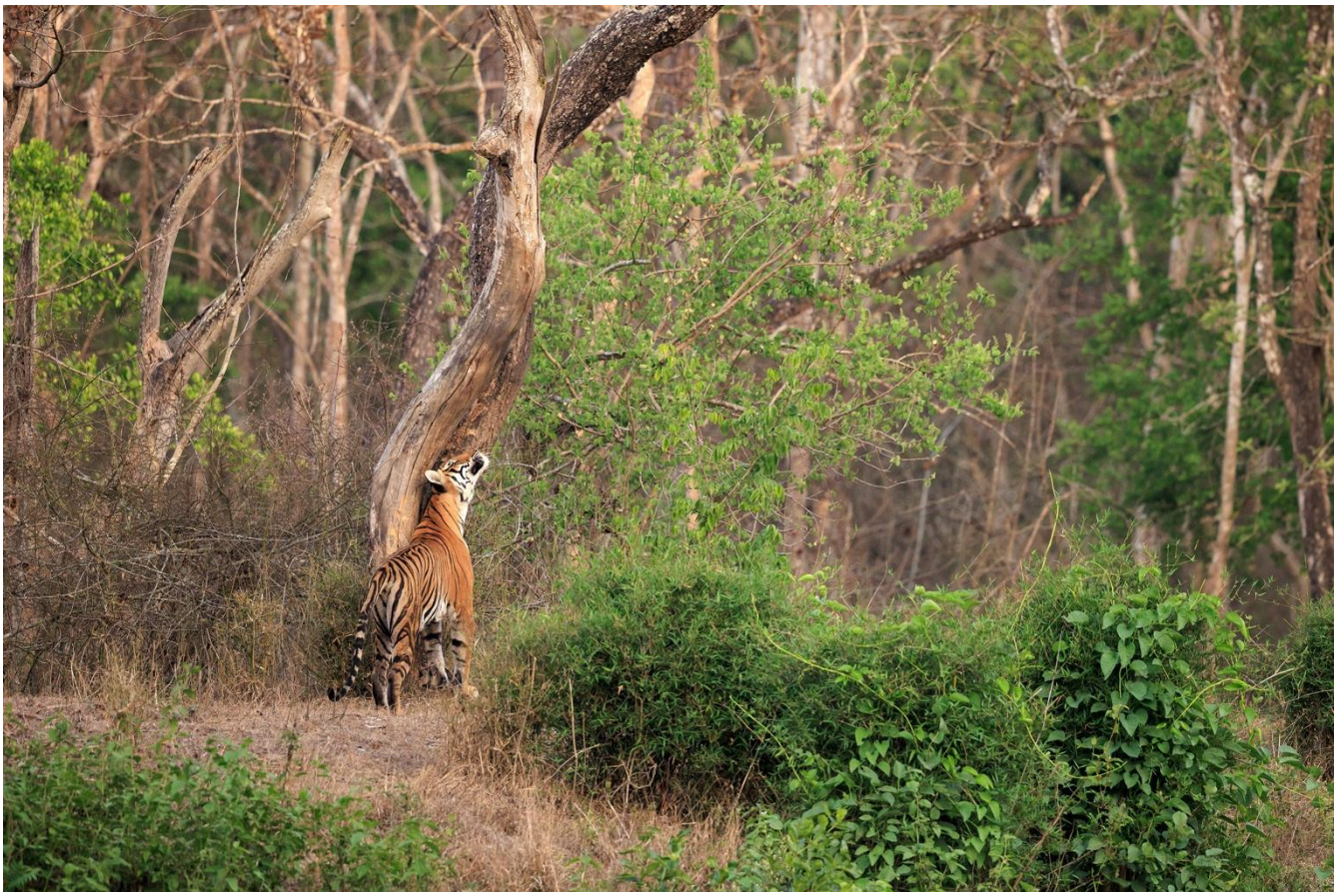
Working our way through the forest, we ended up at the same spot where we saw the dhole and elephants the night before, and this was when we first spotted the dead elephant in the water. However, the first standout photographic subject was a langur as it came down to a small waterhole to drink. It was at the same waterhole where we enjoyed watching a flock of Malabar starling washing and drinking at the water's edge.

Our focus was to try and get our first proper view of a tiger, and as the sun had dropped a little in the sky, but the heat was still lingering, there might be a chance to find a tiger coming down to the water to quench its thirst. With this in mind, Sadiq drove us down to the waterhole, and we intended to sit and wait, hoping to be rewarded for our patience.

Other vehicles were waiting at the waterhole, with one saying that they had seen the tigress lying down behind some vegetation behind the water. Despite our best efforts, we could see no part of her striped coat. We waited and waited. Waiting a little more, we had all but given up hope. Just as we were about to leave and head back toward the park gate, the tigress suddenly rose to her feet. There across the water from us was a beautiful tigress, walking nonchalantly without any concern.



It was wonderful to watch and photograph, as she wandered along the water's edge, before pausing at a tree and rubbing her head against it. Clearly scenting, she then walked past the tree, spraying her own mark, before moving on a little further and crashing back down again.



Once she had settled, a large male elephant could be seen walking through the forest behind her. What a great sighting of an incredibly beautiful cat. Poor Sadiq, we were running very late and had to make a dash for the park gate and back to the lodge.

Meeting up in the bar again at 7 pm, we were delighted with an excellent first full day in the park. With drinks in hand, we wandered down to the restaurant and enjoyed what is always a tasty meal at Kabini River Lodge. It was then time to head back to our rooms and catch up with some sleep.

Tuesday 14 April 2026

Day 4:
Nagarhole National Park

After our usual morning routine, we drove into the park, with Zone B assigned to us once again. The sounds of the langurs' whooping calls rang through the forest, while the birdlife was plentiful. We periodically paused to see whether any alarms were coming from species such as chital, langur and even giant squirrel (which so far had eluded us).

The large predators and herbivores were proving to be elusive this morning, except for the brief sighting of a male elephant. The standout sightings were of the plentiful peacocks, who were busy strutting their stuff trying to impress the peahens that were watching on. As we worked our way along what we had now named 'Peacock Alley', we stumbled across a herd of gaur, including a huge male. The world's largest bovids, the gaur provided us with some fantastic photographic opportunities, and it was amazing to see them at such close range.



It was a morning where the number of birds we saw was remarkable. A few highlights included blue-faced malkoha, crested serpent eagle, black-hooded oriole, small minivet and plum-headed parakeet. Searching high and low for any signs of a predator, in the end we had to call it a day and make our way towards the gate. Arriving back at the lodge, we were greeted by a troop of bonnet macaques, which can often be found around the grounds. These macaques can be quite cheeky, and you always need to make sure that they aren't being too curious.

Having enjoyed another hearty lunch, we met up at the vehicle at 2.45 pm, ready for our afternoon safari. Heading into the park and having been assigned Zone A, we worked our way along the forest tracks, checking the waterholes as we went. The tigress that has the territory around the old tombs was our primary focus. Once we were within her territory, we stopped and listened for the tell-tale sounds of chital alarm calls. The tigress seemed to be eluding us once more, and as we moved on, we suddenly realised she had already left the waterhole we hoped she might be visiting. There ahead of us was a tigress disappearing into the thick scrub, with a couple of vehicles in tow.

It seemed as if the moment had maybe passed, and our brief glimpse would be the best we would get. Sadiq had other ideas. He quickly moved the vehicle down the road. Using his expert local knowledge, he positioned us in a spot where he thought the tigress might appear from the thick vegetation and come out into the open. I'm sure, even in his wildest dreams, he couldn't have predicted what was about to happen.

Some chital alarms were coming from the forest, and we thought that perhaps she might be moving further inside, away from our position. Instead, these alarm calls seemed to force her to change her direction, and she suddenly appeared from the trees. She was walking straight towards us, with a slow pace and seemingly without a care in the world. The light was from behind, which made exposing our images a little challenging. It was a very special encounter as she kept on walking, right past our vehicle and moving on down the road. She disappeared into the vegetation once again, and we gambled that she would head down towards the old main road (in Zone B). Therefore, we repositioned ourselves at the border between the two zones, hoping she might make her way towards where we parked.



The proximity of her approach was really exceptional.



We spent a prolonged period of time waiting for the tigress to reappear, but it seemed as if she had other ideas. Despite our best efforts and everyone's patience, she didn't make another appearance and so with time getting away from us, we started to meander our way back to the gate. As is so often the way, we ended up being a little distracted by a one-tusked bull elephant drinking at the waterhole we hoped to find the tigress.



The group were able to capture some stunning images as the elephant seemingly enjoyed every moment it was spending in the water. Simultaneously, he was quenching his thirst, while also keeping cool in the heat of the afternoon. Despite hearing some chital alarm calls further up the road, there was no sign of any cat or dog for that matter, and so we made our way back to the lodge.

Having had the chance to freshen up and change for dinner, the group met in the bar for our own thirst-quenching drinks, before heading down to the restaurant for dinner once more.

Wednesday 15 April 2026

Day 5:
Nagarhole National Park

Waking to a cooler morning, our morning routine went smoothly. We entered the park and were assigned Zone B. Travelling along the old main road, we drove past a large group of wild boar as they gathered in a well-grazed meadow. There was also a charming group of langurs, including a mother and a youngster, in the trees by the track.

Continuing along the road, we stumbled upon a crested serpent eagle on a low branch. It was posing perfectly for us in the soft morning light, before swooping down and feeding on a tiny lizard by the roadside. Returning up to the trees, the eagle was suddenly under attack from a fantail. Despite the huge size difference, the diminutive fantail was relentless in its harassment, driving the eagle away.



It wasn't long before we came across another bird of prey, this time a Brahminy kite.



It was turning into a morning for raptor photography and although the kite didn't hang around, the take-off shots were fantastic. There was also a very cooperative white-bellied woodpecker, posing on a tree and providing the group with even more photographic opportunities.

Just as we finished photographing the woodpecker, we were told that there was a pack of dhole just down the road. We decided it was worth checking up on and drove in search of the canids. We got there just in time, as the pups and two adults were scent marking and preparing to move. It was just before the dogs moved off into the forest that we got our best photographs.



With the dogs now out of sight, we drove around to the zone's perimeter road, heading to one of the permanent waterholes. Sneeha and Sadiq were hoping that the dogs might be reappearing and coming to the water for a drink. All was quiet, except for the birds. Continuing up the road, we found the dhole once more resting along the fence line. They didn't stick around for long, moving out of the park and into the neighbouring fields.

Making the decision to leave the dogs in peace, we drove towards the park's second gate, on the old main road, and came across multiple white-bellied woodpeckers which posed perfectly on some nearby trees. Afterwards, we made our way to the park exit and headed back to the lodge for breakfast.

This afternoon, our safari would be a little different. Instead of exploring the park by vehicle, we would be heading out onto the waters of the Kabini backwaters, enjoying the wildlife on a boat cruise. This would likely allow us sightings of new species, with the birdlife a particular draw here. It wasn't too long before we came across our first osprey, as well as great cormorant, great egret, Brahminy kite, little cormorant and river tern.

It was, however, an osprey posing on a dead tree that was particularly obliging. This stunning bird was remarkably relaxed and we were able to make a close approach. We were able to photograph the osprey with relative ease, building up a wonderful set of imagery.



It was a wildlife cruise filled with some stunning birds, particularly birds favouring wetland habitats such as woolly-necked stork, Eurasian spoonbill, black-winged stilt, Asian openbill, oriental darter and red-naped ibis. Another osprey provided the best photography opportunities as we continued to cruise up the backwaters, while a backlit oriental darter provided a lovely, simplistic silhouette.





As we reached the furthest point we could navigate, we saw our first elephants, a large herd, but they were distant and tricky to photograph. There were also good views of a marsh mugger crocodile and a grey-headed fish eagle posing on another dead tree. At around 5 pm, the skipper turned the boat around, and we started to make our way back towards the lodge.

Turning into an inlet, the skipper moved us into position for what was an exceptional elephant encounter. There were so many elephants, it was actually surprisingly challenging to get standout imagery. Thanks to the skill of the skipper though, and a little patience, we were rewarded with some wonderful photographs as the herd moved about, grazing on the grassy plain.





Time was going by, and the light was starting to fade, so we were on the move again. Heading back to the lodge, the sun was setting over the backwaters, and we were treated to some exceptional photographs of the elephants walking across the open grassland.



Moments like this are very rare. The light, the wildlife and the landscape all coming together for the perfect moment. As we made our way back out of the park, we were presented with one last scene of a herd of elephants silhouetted by the last of the evening sun.

Thursday 16 April 2026

Day 6:
Nagarhole National Park

We awoke before dawn one more time, meeting for tea and coffee, before climbing aboard our safari vehicle

for another drive in the park. After passing through the park gate, with a slight mist in the air, we almost immediately came across a herd of chital, while gaur were resting on the forest edge. All the while, the sound of langurs rang out through the trees and the repetitive call of the Indian cuckoo was constant.

Having been assigned Zone B this morning, we worked our way along the old main road, hoping to bump into a sloth bear, or perhaps a big cat moving through the forest. It was quiet to start with, the forest's resident birdlife being the focus of our efforts while we continued our search for the star mammal species. The varied list of species was impressive, including long-tailed shrike, red-wattled lapwing, bronzed drongo, Indian golden oriole, greater coucal, pygmy woodpecker and common iora all seen.

We reached the bridge where we had caught sight of our first tiger a couple of days before, and heard that a sloth bear had gone to cross the road, before turning back into the forest. Sneeha and Sadiq decided it was worth waiting to see if the sloth bear might make another attempt to cross the road. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts and plenty of patience, time wasn't on our side and so we had to head towards the park gate. Just as we reached the junction with the main road, we heard intense langur alarm calls, followed by those of spotted deer and a giant squirrel. From the sound of the calls, it was likely that it was a leopard. Time really was getting away from us now, and we had to leave the park.

After breakfast, we got alerted by the boat skipper from the day before that he had seen a lone otter not too far from the lodge. The group were all keen to see if we could find it, and so we took an impromptu boat trip to see if we could find it. It wasn't too long before we caught a glimpse of an otter in the water ahead.



Once the boat was close enough, we were able to watch the smooth-coated otter as he moved back and forth along the shore, before it took to the water to take a closer look at us. Although the sun was now pretty high, and the light was a little harsh, we were rewarded with some great views and some photographic opportunities too. Returning to the lodge, there was time to catch up on a little rest before lunch, knowing we had another afternoon drive. Hopefully, this time we were to be rewarded with standout photography opportunities.

As we entered through the gate, we found out that we would be back in Zone A this afternoon. As we wound our way along the first track upon entering the zone, we were presented with our first views of langur, bonnet macaque and chital as per usual. There had been activity around the Tiger Tank waterhole, and so that was our first port of call. It was here we came across a family of elephants enjoying the water, before disappearing into the forest.

Carrying on, we headed to the next waterhole, where we found a troop of bonnet macaques playing in the water. With limited options for photography, we carried on up the hill and into the denser area of forest. Through the trees, we caught a glimpse of a large tusker moving slowly. It was a beautiful sight. Seeing such a large elephant in this thick forest is a sight you rarely get to see in India in the 21st Century.





It was only moments after this when we got the news that a large male tiger had been seen at Tiger Tank and so we immediately made our way over to see if we could find it.



There he was, a huge male tiger known as Ranna resting on the edge of the water. Not long after we got there, he climbed out of the water, lying down on the sandy shores of the waterhole. He rolled around, enjoying the cooling sand, before a reflection appeared in the water below, providing us with further photographic opportunities.



As the light started to fade, a light rain shower fell across the landscape and our time watching this magnificent tiger was coming to an end. The park was due to close, and it was time for us to head towards the park gate, but we soon got distracted by a herd of elephants and a ruddy mongoose. Then there was a changeable hawk eagle sitting high in a tree, screaming its call through the canopy. It was feeding on a kill, calling loudly to defend its prize.



What a fabulous way to end the day. Returning to the lodge, after a chance to freshen up, we joined up in the bar before heading down to dinner.

Friday 17 April 2026

Day 7:
Nagarhole National Park

This morning was particularly misty. Having registered at the park entrance, as per usual, we were driving along the main road when we spotted the pack of dhole (Asian wild dog). Due to the thick mist and low light levels, it wasn't the most rewarding photographic opportunity, but it was fabulous to watch them as they played, rested and spray marked.

Working our way along the road, we stumbled upon a gaur resting by the roadside, while there were fresh sloth bear tracks on the sandy surface. There were also fresh, large male tiger tracks on the road. Turning the vehicle around, we followed the tracks and kept our eyes open and listened for any potential alarm calls. There was no sign of the tiger, or the sloth bear for that matter.

Sadiq drove carefully. Always listening for any alarms and keeping his eyes peeled for any worthy sightings, meanwhile Sneeha was always alert too. Arriving at 'Peacock Alley', the track that follows the park boundary, we enjoyed seeing an impressive male peacock high in a tree.

However, there were a multitude of different birds that made an appearance this morning. We enjoyed views of species such as golden oriole, yellow-footed green pigeon, orange minivet, little cormorant, grey hornbill, oriental honey buzzard, white-bellied woodpecker and common hawk cuckoo. It was one particular species that provided us with the best photography. A pair of spotted owlets were roosting in a tree just a few metres from the track, allowing us clear views of one of the birds.





Despite our best efforts, it was another large predator-free morning, and we returned to the lodge for breakfast and some downtime, avoiding the heat of the day.

This afternoon, we headed into Zone A hoping that we might get another glimpse of a tiger. With that in mind, Sadiq meandered his way to Tiger Tank waterhole, where we hoped to see the resident female. We sat waiting for her for some time. As we sat there, a super cooperative giant squirrel posed in an open branch and provided us with some of our best views. We had to head off on a loop so that we weren't stationary for too long, working our way round the nearby tracks. Once we had covered enough ground, we drove back to the waterhole to see if the tigress might decide to show herself.

Within only a few moments of us pulling up and turning off the engine, the tigress appeared, coming down to drink. There, in perfect light (albeit at a distance), the tigress lapped at the water on the other side of the waterhole. To our disbelief, as this happened, a little cormorant swam straight towards the tiger.



It was amazing to watch the cormorant swim with no fear of this apex predator.



After the continued intrigue of the curious little cormorant swimming around in front of a fairly bemused tigress, she decided it was time to cool off and backed into the water. We were afforded excellent views as she took respite from the heat. It was at this moment that things took another twist. A herd of elephants showed up on the other side of the waterhole. To our amazement, the females and their young entered the water. So, there in front of us, we had a tiger and a herd of elephants using the water to cool down.

At the same time, a large male tusker decided to walk around the waterhole and approach the side where the tigress was resting. We expected her to flee, but to her credit she held her nerve and stayed put. Eventually, the tigress had enough, and she darted out of the water and stared at the elephants with what seemed to be disgust. With her tranquillity spoilt, the tigress moved back to her preferred resting spot behind the waterhole.

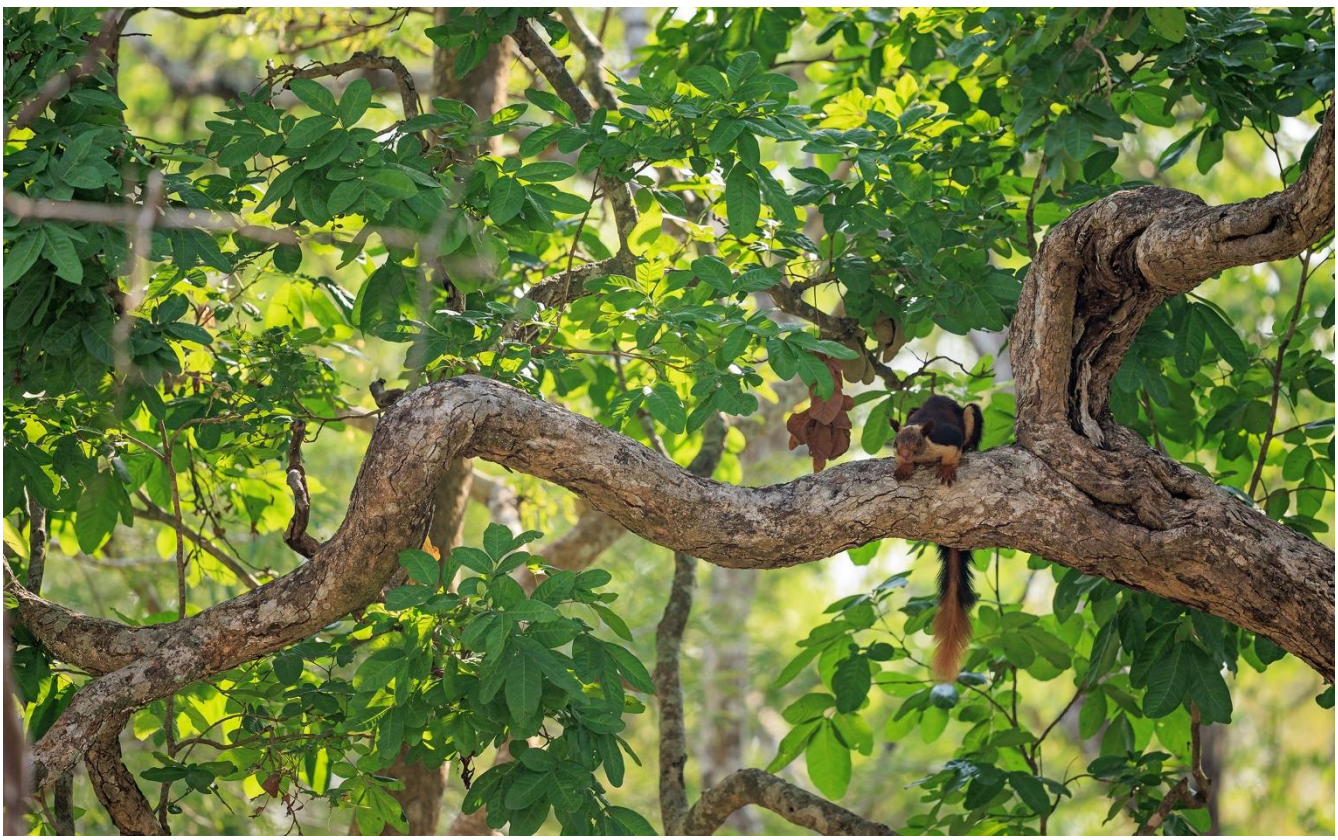
All the while, the tusker moved over to a patch of bamboo where it was happily feeding, and the herd climbed out of the water over near where the tigress had retreated. With the light fading and the tigress now out of sight, we headed up the rise and stumbled upon the tracks of another tiger. Moving around in search of this tiger, the forest was all quiet, and we thought we'd missed the chance. However, we found a vehicle that had the tiger walk out in front of them. Searching the area a little more, we tried our best to find the tiger. Despite our best efforts, there was no sign, and instead we had to make do with views of a scops owl in a tree.

Unfortunately, it was time to leave the park, and so we headed back to the lodge for our usual routine of visiting the bar and enjoying a delicious meal in the dining area.

Saturday 18 April 2026

Day 8:
Nagarhole National Park

There was less mist hanging in the air this morning as we headed into Zone B once again. Almost immediately after entering the park, we heard the calls of a giant squirrel. Stopping to see if we could find the cause of the calls, a crested serpent eagle flew through the canopy – a likely culprit.



Moving on through the forest, birds such as orange-headed thrush, little swift, black-rumped flameback, coppersmith barbet and Malabar pied hornbill were notable highlights. As we approached the far end of Zone B, over near the secondary gate, we enjoyed brief views of the Asian wild dogs once again. It was just after seeing the dogs that we had our best view of a white-throated kingfisher.



Moving on to the area of forest along the edge of the Kabini backwaters, we came out to the grassy edge of the waterway to see a distant tusker. Moving back up into the forest, we found an agitated herd of elephants. There was something wrong, with the elephants charging around, trumpeting and crashing through the undergrowth. One of the elephants clearly had an issue and it was uncomfortable with its bottom half. The elephant with the issue even started to throw large chunks of wood around. We ensured we kept our distance, as we didn't want to cause any further stress. It was then that the elephant came charging towards us and we had to make a speedy exit. Whatever the issue, we didn't want to exacerbate the situation.

It was time to head back for breakfast, winding our way along the forest trails until we reached the park gate. After a rest and a delicious lunch, we met back up at the vehicle for our afternoon safari in Zone A.

Having spent a couple of days focusing on the tigers around the waterhole, we headed in the opposite direction today. Exploring this quiet, beautiful area of forest, we hoped we might stumble upon our own exclusive tiger, or perhaps we might find a leopard draped over the branch of a tree. Instead of a big cat, we found a huge male gaur, while the bird song filled the trees all around. The mammal life was particularly elusive this morning, until we caught sight of a large elephant enjoying the vegetation and refreshing water of the rocky riverbed below. It was as we were watching the tusker that a sambar alarm blasted out from further downstream.

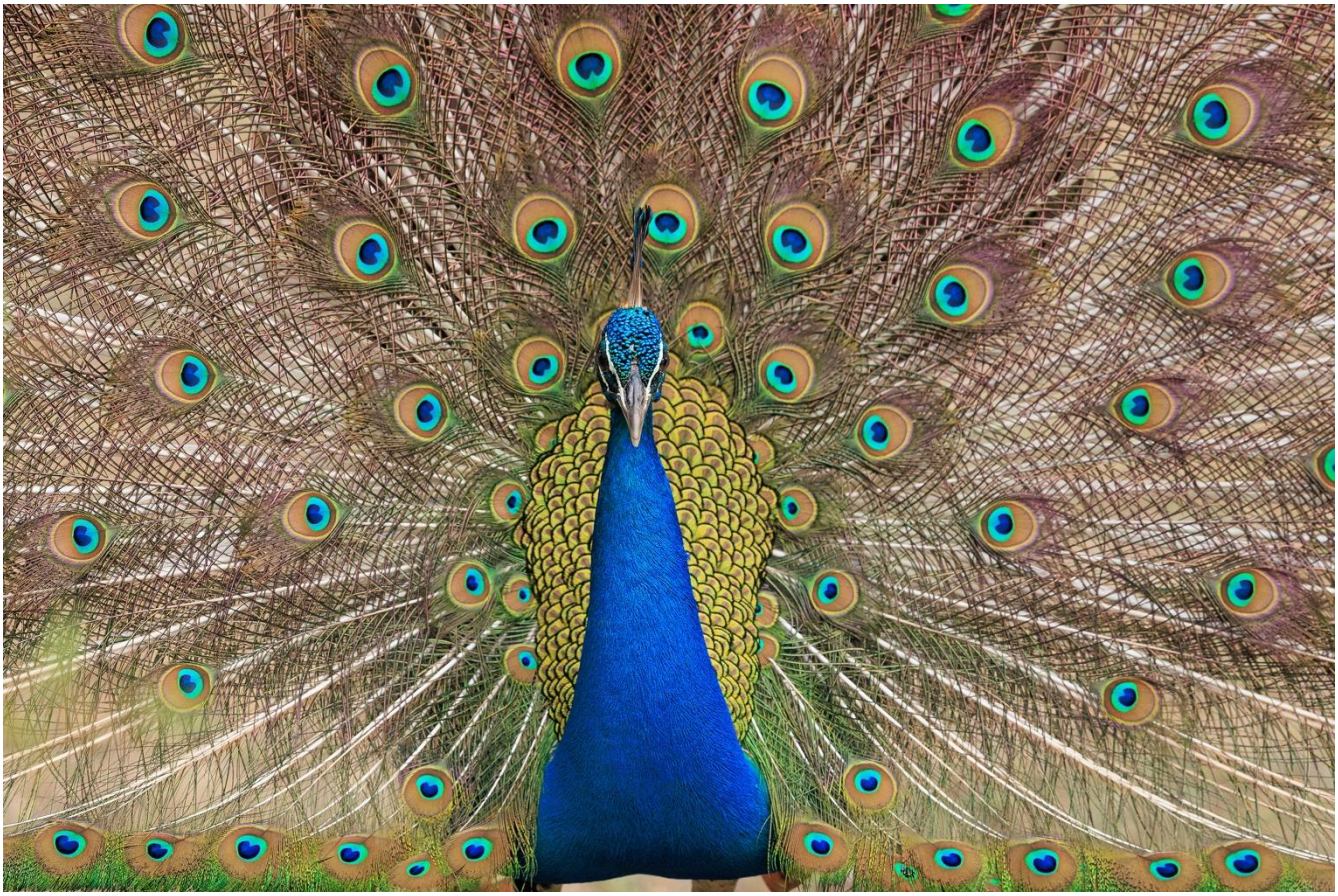
The sambar was not the only alarm. A giant squirrel was also alarming. It was almost certainly a big cat working its way along the river, but despite moving backwards and forwards, the felid eluded our concerted efforts to find it. Working our way up and down the riverbed, we looked high and low, but the alarm calls died away, and luck was not on our side.

Sunday 19 April 2026

Day 9:
Nagarhole National Park, drive to Bangalore

This was our final morning exploring Nagarhole National Park, and we set out bright and early with high hopes. We were exploring Zone A, and almost immediately Sadiq spotted fresh pug marks of a tiger. Spotted deer and langurs abounded all around, while white-throated kingfisher, scops owl and Indian roller provided a few avian delights.

Winding our way through the forest, passing the ruined temples (or tombs), we arrived at a waterhole which was slowly drying out. It was here we enjoyed an unexpected delight. A peacock was in full display, right by the track. Pulling over, Sadiq positioned us in the best spot to capture some striking images of this remarkable sight. These birds, despite being so familiar to us, are absolutely stunning, and the soft morning light illuminated the tail feathers with a peculiar mauve hue.



In all the years I have been visiting Indian national parks, I have never seen a peacock display with such incredible colour. Typically, you'd expect to see those iconic greens and blues in the tail feathers, but this was something very special. As you can see from the image above, it made for some exceptional photography opportunities. It wasn't just the peacock though that provided us with a photographic bonanza.

We were just about to move on from the waterhole when a Brahminy kite started flying around. Swooping and jinking through the air, a large-billed crow took offence to the kite's presence. Proceeding to mob the kite, we watched as a dogfight unfolded. The speed at which the birds dodged and weaved over the water, we did our best to capture the moment. Getting both birds in focus was nearly impossible. To get the necessary speed, we had to open up the apertures and therefore reducing the available depth of field.



As the dogfight petered out, the kite disappeared and we moved on to find a giant squirrel posing nicely.



Despite our best efforts, there were no sightings of any tigers this morning, and with the group heading back to Bangalore today, it was time to return to Kabini River Lodge for breakfast. There was a chance to freshen up and get the luggage ready before the group headed to the reception area to pay for the drinks bills and camera fees. It was here that I said goodbye to the group, with another group arriving the following morning.

They enjoyed a smooth journey back to Bangalore (via Mysore), checking into the Taj hotel for a final evening in India. With an early start the following day, there would be an early night for the group.

Monday 20 April 2026

Day 10:
Fly UK

After a very early start, the group were transferred to Bangalore airport for the British Airways flight back to the UK.

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Checklist for Nagarhole Photo Safari

	Common Name	*Scientific Name*	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
	BIRDS										
1	Grey francolin	*Ortygornis pondicerianus*						✓			
2	Grey jungle fowl	*Gallus sonneratii*			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Indian peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Indian spot-billed duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*				✓	✓	✓		✓	
5	Painted stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*					✓				
6	Asian openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*					✓				
7	Woolly-necked stork	*Ciconia episcopus*					✓	✓			
8	Black-headed ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*					✓				
9	Red-naped ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*					✓				
10	Eurasian spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*					✓				
11	Indian pond heron	*Ardeola grayii*			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Grey heron	*Ardea cinerea*					✓			✓	
13	Purple heron	*Ardea purpurea*					✓				
14	Cattle egret	*Bubulcus ibis*				✓	✓				
15	Great egret	*Ardea alba*					✓				
16	Intermediate egret	*Ardea intermedia*					✓				
17	Little egret	*Egretta garzetta*					✓	✓		✓	
18	Oriental darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*					✓			✓	
19	Little cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20	Indian cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*					✓			✓	
21	Great cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*					✓	✓			
22	Black kite	*Milvus migrans*		✓							
23	Brahminy kite	*Haliastur indus*						✓		✓	✓
24	Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*					✓			✓	
25	Grey-headed fish eagle	*Haliaeetus ichthyaetus*					✓			✓	
26	Oriental honey buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*							✓		

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27	Red-headed vulture	*Sarcogyps calvus*			✓						
28	Crested serpent eagle	*Spilornis cheela*		✓	✓	✓	✓				
29	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*		✓							
30	Changeable hawk eagle	*Nisaetus cirrhatus*								✓	
31	Red-wattled lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Wood sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*								✓	
33	Rock dove	*Columba livia*								✓	
34	Green imperial pigeon	*Ducula aenea*									✓
35	Spotted dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	Yellow-footed green pigeon	*Treron phonyceptaurus*			✓				✓		
37	Rose-ringed parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*							✓	✓	
38	Plum-headed parakeet	*Psittacula cyanocephala*				✓					
39	Malabar parakeet	*Psittacula columboides*			✓						
40	Common hawk cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*					✓			✓	
41	Sirkeer malkoha	*Taccocua leschenaultii*				✓					
42	Southern coucal	*Centropus sinensis*			✓	✓	✓	✓			
43	Indian scops owl	*Otus bakkamoena*							✓	✓	✓
44	Spotted owlet	*Athene brama*							✓		
45	Little swift	*Apus affinis*							✓	✓	
46	Common hoopoe	*Upupa epops*		✓			✓		✓	✓	
47	Indian roller	*Coracias benghalensis*			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
48	White-throated kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	Common kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*		✓							
50	Green bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*			✓				✓	✓	
51	Malabar grey hornbill	*Ocyceros griseus*				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
52	Malabar pied hornbill	*Anthracoceros coronatus*							✓		
53	White-cheeked barbet	*Psilopogon viridis*			✓						
54	Coppersmith barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*								✓	
55	Rufous woodpecker	*Micropternus brachyurus*					✓	✓			✓
56	White-bellied woodpecker	*Dryocopus javensis*		✓		✓	✓		✓		
57	Streak-throated woodpecker	*Picus xanthopygaeus*		✓	✓				✓		✓
58	Common goldenback	*Dinopium javanense*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Common iora	*Aegithina tiphia*						✓			
60	Small minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*				✓					
61	Orange minivet	*Pericrocotus flammeus*							✓		

62	Long-tailed shrike	*Lanius schach*			✓			✓			
63	Greater racket-tailed drongo	*Dicrurus paradiseus*		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
64	Ashy drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*						✓			
65	White-bellied drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*			✓	✓			✓		
66	Bronze drongo	*Dicrurus aeneus*					✓	✓			
67	Indian golden oriole	*Oriolus kundoo*						✓	✓		
68	Black-hooded oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*				✓					
69	White-browed fantail	*Rhipidura aureola*					✓				
70	Asian paradise flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*				✓					
71	Rufous treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*						✓			
72	Indian jungle crow	*Corvus culminatus*		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
73	House crow	*Corvus splendens*		✓						✓	
74	Great tit	*Parus major*		✓	✓						
75	Ashy wood swallow	*Artamus fuscus*								✓	
76	Red-whiskered bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*					✓				
77	Red-vented bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
78	Grey-breasted prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*			✓						
79	Tawny-bellied babbler	*Dumetia hyperythra*				✓					
80	Jungle babbler	*Turdoides striata*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Lesser hill myna	*Gracula indica*									✓
82	Jungle myna	*Acridotheres fuscus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Common myna	*Acridotheres tristis*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Brahminy starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*		✓			✓		✓		✓
85	Orange-headed thrush	*Geokichla citrina*							✓	✓	✓
86	Indian blackbird	*Turdus simillimus*								✓	
87	Oriental magpie robin	*Copsychus saularis*		✓	✓	✓			✓		
88	White-rumped shama	*Copsychus malabaricus*					✓			✓	✓
89	Asian brown flycatcher	*Muscicapa latirostris*			✓				✓		
90	Tickell's blue flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*			✓						
91	Golden-fronted leafbird	*Chloropsis aurifrons*					✓				
92	White-browed wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*					✓				
	MAMMALS										
1	Indian leopard	*Panthera pardus fusca*			✓						
2	Royal Bengal tiger	*Panthera tigris tigris*			✓	✓		✓	✓		

3	Asiatic wild dogs	*Cuon alpinus*		✓			✓		✓	✓	
4	Spotted deer	*Axis axis*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Sambar deer	*Rusa unicolor*		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
6	Gaur	*Bos gaurus*				✓			✓	✓	
7	Indian muntjac	*Muntiacus muntjak*				✓	✓				
8	Asian elephant	*Elephas maximus*		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
9	Wild boar	*Sus scrofa*		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Malabar giant squirrel	*Ratufa indica*		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Three striped palm squirrel	*Funambulus palmarum*		✓		✓		✓			✓
12	Indian Hare / Black naped hare	*Lepus nigricollis*				✓					
13	Ruddy mongoose	*Urva smithii*						✓			
14	Stripe-necked mongoose	*Herpestes vitticollis*				✓			✓		
15	Smooth coated otter	*Lutrogale perspicillata*						✓			
16	Northern plains gray langur	*Semnopithecus entellus*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Bonnet macaque	*Macaca radiata*		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	