



7 of the best and most luxurious safari lodges in India and Sri Lanka

By James Jayasundera on Mar 22, 2016 in Accommodation, Adventure Travel, Asia, Camping, Hotels, India, Regions, Resorts, Speciality Travel, Sri Lanka - Read 23024 times

Few people realise that the Indian subcontinent contains some of the world's best wildlife destinations. From elephants to bears, leopards to tigers, and an array of exotic birds, a luxury safari to India or Sri Lanka is sure to excite even the most experienced of enthusiasts. Getting as close to nature as possible and staying in a luxury safari lodge or tented camp, is the ultimate way to make the most of your surroundings. Here are our suggestions for the best, and most luxurious, safari lodges in India and Sri Lanka:

Sher Bagh, Ranthambore National Park, North India

Step back in time to the 1920s, to the glamorous days of the royal safari hunting parties. [Sher Bagh](#) is camping at its most luxurious, and the camp's location next to Ranthambore means you have a good chance of glimpsing a glorious Bengal beauty in the wild. Large en-suite tents overlook immaculate verdant gardens, and each tent will shroud you in opulent white linen, modelled on the safari quarters preferred by the princes of the time. Everything about this safari camp is reminiscent of the colonial era; the old-style lanterns by the wooden beds, an antique writing desk complete with a tick list of animals to spot, the bathrooms with rainwater showers and elegant copper fittings, the open-air bar serving Bloody Marys before lunch and cigars afterwards. Although it is done in a slightly whimsical fashion, the camp is genuinely fabulous and a must visit.



Kumana Mobile Tented Camp, Kumana National Park, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is renowned for its boutique hotels and ravishing golden sand beaches, but few people realise that it has the best wildlife in Asia, home to Sri Lanka's Big Five (blue whale, sperm whale, leopard, elephant and sloth bear), and the little-known Kumana National Park is an idyll for wildlife enthusiasts and keen bird watchers. [Kumana Mobile Tented Camp](#) is our favourite hidden gem in Sri Lanka and offers the best wildlife experience anyone could wish for on the island. It is a simple yet brilliant mobile camp, and for close up wildlife encounters, with no crowds whatsoever, nothing beats it. But the best thing about this camp, is that you will be looked after by the best wildlife experts in the field, who know the park inside out and are great fun, charming and incredibly passionate about what they do. One of them is the former park warden who has worked and lived in the park for over forty years – it really couldn't get much better!



Banjaar Tola, Kanha National Park, Central India

Stretching out along the banks of the Banjaar River and overlooking Kanha National parks, lies **Banjaar Tola**. Kanha National Park is one of the first tiger reserves aimed at protecting tigers and their ecosystems, and with 750 square miles of pristine wilderness, it is one of the largest and best-maintained national parks in India. Here, guests are invited to stay at one of two elegant camps, each one comprising of nine luxurious tented suites, built of bamboo floors, canvas roofs and glass doors leading onto private decking with views of the river and the Indian jungle beyond. By day, explore the spectacular landscape of vast sal forests, flourishing green meadows and lush bamboo thickets, and by night listen to the sounds of the jungle which float across the river as you enjoy your evening meal in the midst of the sal forest, lit by hundreds of lanterns.



Aman-i-Khas, Ranthambore National Park, North India

Perched on the edge of the vast, rugged and weathered countryside of Ranthambore National Park, lies this exclusive haven of luxury. **Aman-i-Khas** recalls the lavish history of Maharajas' hunting parties, where each of the ten butler-serviced sleeping tents reflect a rich Mughal style with luxurious airy rooms, separated by white cotton drapes. Spend the days exploring the prime tiger-spotting territory amongst the sun-dappled brushwood forest, whilst in the evening gather around an outdoor communal fireplace to relax and talk about the day's animal sightings. The philosophy of the camp is to provide a natural, harmonious environment whilst retaining a luxurious ambiance. Your safari experience will have never been so chic.



Orange County Kabini, Kabini, South India

Set in the heartland of the Kadukuruba tribe of the Nagerhole forest, this picturesque resort is located on the edge of the River Kabini. Built in an authentic south Indian village style, all 30 exquisite huts emulate peace, tranquility and harmony, combining traditional craft with modern luxuries. The interiors subtly mimic the colours and textures of the surrounding landscape, from ethnic furniture to tribal patterned furnishings, the sum of the parts creating a harmonious whole. Kabini is famed for having the highest density of wildlife in South India – including tiger, leopard, elephant, wild dog, sambar deer, sloth bears, spotted deer and over 300 species of birds – so with an abundance of fauna to be seen on the game drives, the resort provides an unexplored and untouched wildlife experience. Orange County resorts are known for their understated integrity, care for the environment, the warmth and sincerity of staff and the quality of experiences they offer – particularly for nature lovers.



Chena Huts, Yala National Park, Sri Lanka

Tucked away deep in the Sri Lankan south, nestled amongst the dunes at the ocean's edge and on the western fringes of Yala National Park, lies the boutique [Chena Huts](#). So named after the rustic agricultural huts used by local farmers in Tissamaharama and the surrounding areas, but these "huts" are far from modest farming shelters. Better described as luxury pavilions, the fourteen detached huts are modern in design, each with a private plunge pool, and offer the finest views of the surrounding wilderness and seascape. The west of Yala National Park is one of the few places in Sri Lanka where it is relatively easy to see a leopard, either majestically strolling beside the track or lazily draped in the treetops. When you're not on the lookout for leopard, you can stroll down to the beach where you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of elephants cooling off in the surf or turtles laying their eggs by moonlight; it really is the very best of both worlds.



Samode Safari Lodge, Bandhavgarh National Park, Central India

Experience the wildest depths of the Indian jungle, in complete sustainable luxury at the glorious [Samode Safari Lodge](#), located on the fringes of Bandhavgarh National Park. Totally committed to eco-tourism, the lodge is solely built from natural and locally sourced materials, constructed using traditional handmade bricks and decorated with regional artworks. This wonderful property has pioneered in luxury wilderness tourism in India: the palatial private villas which create opulence in the most sustainable manner, the unique open-air bath court and the private verandas with breathtaking views of the surrounding wilds. But the reason why people travel to this remote part of India is, above all, for the rich and abundant wildlife in the nearby Bandhavgarh National Park, home to sloth bears, leopards, panthers, tigers and a staggering array of indigenous birds.



James Jayasundera is Founder and Managing Director of [Ampersand Travel](#).

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