

INDIA - TADоба AND CHAMBAL

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Matkasur, male Tiger, resting near our jeep

Tigers are seriously addictive! After three years I returned to India, and my main target was to see well and many times Tigers. I chose Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, maybe actually the best option for long and good encounters with the “Striped lady”. And added Chambal River for other wildlife.

A few tips about Tadoba: is the only Tiger Reserve of Central India where tourists are not constrained on a specific route. Only respect timings and entry/exit from the same gate. It’s better to stay near Kolara gate, with less vehicles and less people, and without the car rush for the best position typical of the very crowded Moharli gate. I stayed at Svasara lodge <http://svasararesorts.com/>, great place with extremely friendly and helpful people, very tasty food and skilled naturalists. My naturalist for 10 long days (19 game drives!) was Prasad Kumar Majumdar: I cannot recommend him enough!

In 19 game drives I saw **Tigers** 20 times, mostly long and close views, including actions like male and female courting, eating a Wild Boar and then a Spotted Deer, male “singing” for the female (yes, Tigers can sing!) with deep and loud growls, bathing, drinking, licking, marking territory and scratching a tree, a mother with two cubs crossing a meadow and a small lake in very intimate behavior. At the last day another Tiger appeared, unexpected, in my binoculars when I was

watching an Ibis! Apart from Tigers, I had a cracking view of a **Sloth Bear** digging a termite mound, **Wild Dogs (Dhole)** hunting Spotted Deers, 3 **Leopards** on a tree. And the ubiquitous herbivores: most notable a family of **Four-horned Antelopes**.

Tadoba hosts quite many tourists, but the good thing is that the vast majority is Indian, coming from the big cities with the family for the weekend or holidays. To see children enthusiastic for watching a Tiger, is as good as watching the Tiger itself, and it's the best insurance for saving the most beautiful cat of our Planet!



Maya, female, coming in the open

Chambal river is another great place. In two full days I was surprised to see **Common Palm Civets** in full daylight at the lodge. Then at the river and farmlands **Gharials**, a herd of **Blackbucks** with a rutting male strutting and catching females, **Indian Skimmers** “skimming”, **Golden Jackals**, and the magnificent **Sarus Cranes** dancing and reinforcing their lifelong pair bond. Best of all: a mother **Ganges River Dolphins** giving multiple (obviously brief) views in the quiet of the sunset. A few times I was able to see well the long snout. My lodge was Chambal river lodge, and I had another great naturalist: Bachchu Singh <http://www.chambalsafari.com/>.

The complete list:

1. HANUMAN LANGUR - Common in Tadoba National Park
2. RHESUS MACAQUE - A troop near the Taj Mahal in Agra
3. SAMBAR DEER - Common in Tadoba, his alarm call is the best “Tiger alert”!

4. SPOTTED DEER - Vast herds in Tadoba
5. INDIAN MUNTJAC - A shy but widespread deer of Tadoba
6. NILGAI - The common antelope of Indian farmlands
7. BLACKBUCK - A herd of 30 Blackbucks and other individuals in farmland near Chambal
8. FOUR-HORNED ANTELOPE - A single and a family of 3 in Tadoba
9. GAUR - This gentle and peaceful giant is a common sight in Tadoba
10. WILD BOAR - Easy to see in Tadoba
11. SLOTH BEAR - Seen 3 times in Tadoba, twice along the forest roads and a prolonged view of a bear digging a termite mound, aspirating termites like a vacuum!
12. GOLDEN JACKAL - Always seen near villages
13. WILD DOG (DHOLE) - A couple hunting Spotted Deers, seen two times. Where Tigers are common, Dholes are not!
14. TIGER - What a pleasure to see 20 times Tigers! I can't count how many hours I spent with a Tiger or more in my eyes! Saw them on 16 of 19 game drives, and heard in another one. Six different Tigers, and many interesting behaviors. Wonderful experience!



Maya, female, feasts on a Spotted Deer

15. LEOPARD - The “Leopard Tree”, hosting 3 different Leopards, is located in Tadoba!

16. COMMON PALM CIVET - Surprise of the trip: a couple of Palm Civets in daylight!
17. INDIAN GREY MONGOOSE - The Mongoose of farmlands and villages
18. RUDDY MONGOOSE - The Mongoose of forests and wild places. Seen many times, once snatching a piece of meat at a Deer killed by Tiger
19. INDIAN HARE - Common in Chambal area
20. THREE-STRIPED PALM SQUIRREL - Abundant in Tadoba, even at the lodge itself
21. FIVE-STRIPED PALM SQUIRREL - Replace the former species in Chambal area and lodge
22. INDIAN GERBIL - One crossed our road in Tadoba
23. INDIAN TREE SHREW - Seen 5 times in Tadoba
24. INDIAN FLYING FOX - Enormous! A roost of one hundred at Chambal lodge. Impressive to see them flying in the evening.
25. GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN - A lovely view of mother with young in the sunset at Chambal river. No sounds except the breath of this strange and critically endangered mammal.

Honorary mammals: Saurus Cranes (a lot in the dedicated Sanctuary near Chambal lodge), Indian Skimmers (7 in the Chambal river), Paradise Flycatchers (males of both morphs seen well in Tadoba), Brown Fish Owls (one or maybe two birds in Tadoba) and Gharials (a common but shy presence in Chambal river).



Sloth Bear, the "Anteater" of India



Common Palm Civet at Chambal lodge

At the end I saw really everything I wished. India is amazing: a such crowded country with such abundant and tame wildlife. Hope to come again!



A Dhole ready for the hunt



Blackbuck male, maybe the most beautiful Antelope



Well, the usual last day of a trip: turning from naturalist to silly tourist! 😊

Ps: Sorry for my bad English!