

HVS Monday Musings: Wildlife Tourism in India - The Roar Can Be Louder!

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India is known as a land sustaining immense diversity, not just in terms of its population, but also when it comes to other living beings. The country is home to 567 wildlife sanctuaries and 106 national parks, but we have yet to effectively market this niche tourism segment, especially to international tourists. For instance, due to the government's conservation efforts, **Project Tiger** achieved its goal of more than doubling the tiger population in the country, four years in advance – a milestone that should have been leveraged to attract more tourists to the country.

This niche tourism market is more evolved and developed in Africa, which has been able to effectively market "The Big 5" (Lions, Leopards, Black Rhinoceros, African Bush Elephants, and African Buffalo) compared to Indian Safaris. One of the main challenges that Indian wildlife tourism faces are inferior animal sightings due to various reasons like habitat degradation or lack of training of guides and drivers. In all other places, the visitors get what they asked for along with other enhanced facilities, but in India, even a tiger sighting in **Jim Corbett National Park** is not guaranteed. The transport options that are available in Africa are perhaps more wildlife friendly and they also allow tourists to stay inside the parks, whereas, in India, only Jim Corbett allows basic accommodation within the park.



Source: **Freepik**

Even outside of the parks, African hotels provide a more diverse range of options to choose from, like tents to 5-Star luxury rooms. They also keep coming up with innovative ways to enhance the guest's experience like **The Giraffe Manor**, which gives tourists the opportunity to feed and walk with rare Rothschild's giraffes. Meanwhile, **The Phuket Elephant Sanctuary** lets visitors play with the elephants, get rides, feed them, have some cooking classes for local dishes, etc. Small memoir shops are also popular in these areas. **The Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage** in Sri Lanka also holds small elephant shows, enabling the visitors to witness the beautiful communication between the animal caretakers and the animals. All of this adds to the tourism experience, which is perhaps a best practice that India can learn from. When you go to Africa on a Safari, you are going there for an experience, not merely to see animals. Nearly 1.8 million tourists arrived at the **Kruger National Park** in South

Summary

Indian wildlife Tourism is a promising and growing segment that can compete on the global stage with peers in Africa, Australia, and the US, by providing unique experiences to tourists and marketing it more effectively. Read on to know more.

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Africa every year before the pandemic, compared to just over 280,000 in Jim Corbett National Park in India! In fact, Jim Corbett, which was established as the country's premier wildlife park, is now better known as a wedding destination rather than a game park due to neglect and lack of focus!

Realizing the potential of this niche segment, the government has created wildlife tourism circuits and some hotel chains such as **Oberoi Hotels**, **IHCL**, and **ITC Hotels** have started providing unique experiences including the option of luxury tents at some of their properties near wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. Moreover, in India, we don't simply have national parks either, we have national parks with historic forts and ancient structures overlooking them. For instance, the **Ranthambore National Park** has a beautiful fort - a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** - overlooking it from a vantage point, which can provide tourists with the best of heritage as well as wildlife tourism experiences at the same place. Another way India can make the wildlife experience better is by opening up recreational camps in between the safari tracks. In these places, the visitors can relax, learn more about the area, and perhaps go for short walks as well, combining eco-tourism with wildlife tourism.

Indian wildlife tourism has great potential, but thorough research should be done before any development happens in these protected areas. We should create a discipline that allows animals in their natural habitats to remain undisturbed by tourists by developing an ecosystem of limited and well-controlled safaris. We must expand our options for promoting wildlife safaris across the country while ensuring that the natural habitat is not disrupted by large crowds. Additionally, given the current condition of Joshimath and the possibility of Nainital and Uttarkashi also facing the same fate, we have to ensure the sustainability of any development that takes place before we economize this nature's gift to us.

About **Mandeep S Lamba**



Mandeep S. Lamba, President – South Asia, oversees the HVS global hospitality practice for South Asia. He has spent over 30 years in the hospitality industry of which the last 19 have been in CEO positions. Having worked with leading International and domestic Hotel Companies such as IHG, Radisson & ITC Hotels, he also set up joint venture companies with Dawnay Day Group UK and Onyx Hospitality, Thailand to own and operate hotels in India giving him a broader exposure to the hospitality business.

An established industry leader, Mandeep has won several awards and recognitions in India and abroad for his accomplishments and contribution to the hospitality industry. He is a Certified Hospitality Administrator from the American Hotels Association (CHA), a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, UK (MRICS) and a member of the Tourism Council of CII (Northern India). His views are often solicited for television and print media as a spokesperson for the hospitality & tourism sector.

Prior to joining HVS in 2018, Mandeep was the Managing Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group for JLL.

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About **Dipti Mohan**



Dipti Mohan, Associate Vice President - Research with HVS South Asia, is a seasoned knowledge professional with extensive experience in research-based content creation. She has authored several 'point of view' documents such as thought leadership reports, expert opinion articles, white papers, and research reports across industries including hospitality, real estate, infrastructure, cement, and construction. Contact Dipti at [\[email protected\]](#)

About **Dhwani Gupta**



Dhwani Gupta, Associate - Research with HVS South Asia, studied literature for her undergraduate and believes that you can do anything with the right amount of research. After graduating, she pursued a course in Management and Liberal Arts which gave her a wider perspective of the world. As a result, the more difficult a topic is, the more fun she has writing it. Contact Dhwani at [\[email protected\]](#)