



Living on the Wild Side

Debunking myths that safaris and luxury lodges are restricted to the African savannahs, we discover cocoons that are as opulent as any five-star property—wild revelations that are accentuated by the calming sounds of nature. Ensnared in the lush bounties of Madhya Pradesh, these abodes in the wilderness were designed for every arbiter of luxury to experience the primal pleasures of being immersed in nature at its most natural endures.

By Nupur Ashok Sarvaiya

Reni Pani Jungle Lodge, Satpura

Known to be India's national park state, Madhya Pradesh cajoles every nature-loving traveller and Satpura National Park occupies a significant part of India's Central Highlands. Spread over a colossal 524-sq.-km. across the belly of India, the park, set up in 1981, borrows its name from the Satpura Range of hills that huddle around its periphery. The rugged terrain of this central Indian forest ecosystem is home to tigers, leopards, spotted and sambar deer, nilgai (Asian antelopes), four-horned antelopes, chinkara (Indian gazelles), gaur (Indian bison), wild boars, wild dogs, sloth bears, foxes, porcupines, flying squirrels, mouse deer and the Indian giant squirrel.

Close to the National Park is the exquisite Reni Pani Jungle Lodge. A property with pristine beauty, unending views and a lodge frequented by hordes of wildlife, Reni Pani Jungle Lodge features 12 luxury cottages encompassing three distinct structural designs that are strewn across a varied landscape featuring grass lands, a seasonal nulla and a hearty tree cover that are all designed to match the surrounding it is set within. Each room enjoys a private deck for guests to savour the natural surroundings. Synonymous to its name, the property exuberant with Reni trees, allowing a great variety of animals, insects, reptiles and birds to flourish. The common amenities include the Gol Ghar—an unmatched central area comprising the lounge, library, and bar and dining. Infused with warm, refined elegance and impeccable service, dining at the lodge is ideal after hectic activities at the Satpura Jungle. The lodge manager, himself an avid birder captains a team of naturalists who constantly trained under his supervision. The lodge, spread over 30 acres of striking forest cover typical of the Satpuras, makes for a perfect setting for isolation and luxury.



Jehan Numa Retreat, Bhopal

The capital of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal holds history and heritage in its heart. Renowned as the City of Lakes, thanks to numerous natural and artificial lakes, Bhopal combines scenic beauty, and modern urban planning. Bhopal today presents a multi-faceted profile; the old city with its teeming market places and fine old mosques and palaces that still bear the aristocratic imprint of its former rulers. Equally impressive is the new city with its verdant, exquisitely laid out parks and gardens, broad avenues and streamlined modern edifices.

This vast and densely-populated city also boasts of some of the best accommodations for a getaway from the hustle and bustle of the city. Jehan Numa Retreat is one such perfect hideaway that combines nature with opulence of a five-star hotel. The latest offering from the coveted Jehan Numa hotels, Jehan Numa Retreat is just around the bend from the foothills of Shimla hills, Bhopal's elite residential locality and close to a thriving urban forest that is Van Vihar. Earthy and made of the earth, tree bound and shaded by trees, fed by a hearty farm and partly on a farm, Jehan Numa makes the essential connect with where it is and what it wishes to offer travelers, luxury and comfort in nature's embrace. The 28 cottages set in six clusters are elegant havens from where one can enjoy two to three days taken off from work or at the start of a long adventure into the wild lands of Central India. Enjoy the spa, relax in the pool or beside it and enjoy the beautifully presented meals 'Under the Jamun Tree' or inside the air-conditioned ambience of the Coriander Leaf, which also sports a hearty bar. Launch out on adventures or just aim to 'Retreat' Jehan Numa Retreat in Bhopal is perfectly accessible.

Jamtara Wilderness Camp, Pench

Famed for being the setting of Rudyard Kipling's enduring classic *The Jungle Book*, Pench National Reserve calls Madhya Pradesh, India its home. Dominated by forests, hills and valleys, the 757-sq.-km. park derives its name from the meandering Pench River and is one of India's richest, yet lesser-known parks. An archetypical teak jungle in Central India, it offers travelers some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities in the world.

Nestled in the heart of Pench, in Jamtara village is a hidden gem called Jamtara Wilderness Camp. A truly luxurious retreat set in the idyllic Northern part of the National Park well into Madhya Pradesh; Jamtara Wilderness Camp affords a multihued jungle paradise. A pristine landlocked wilderness, vast and untamed, the camp offers unparalleled nature viewing for an extremely varied safari experience.

This 12 luxury tented property, surrounded by tall Arjuna trees and an ancient Banyan rooted on a dry river bed, is spread across a colossal four acres of unfenced land with a seasonal river running through. Offering verdant views and overlooking the buffer zone area and farmlands, it sets the backdrop for a perfect jungle experience for nature lovers. It is the only lodge located near the National Park entrance, giving travellers an exclusive access to the park via Jamtara gate that is merely two minutes away from the camp, making exclusivity to one end of the park unrivalled. The tents are decorated in a colonial safari-style, which come complete with every luxury amenity as a standard kit such as en-suite bathrooms and private verandas. Jamtara Wilderness Camp also features a cozy library, an inviting pool and the gazebo that allows one to dine indoors or al fresco.

Along with the usual early morning and evening safari, the lodge offers guests a unique and exclusive experience of sleeping under the stars. In keeping its efforts to support



farmers, Jamtara Wilderness Camp offers an innovative concept of 'Machaan' night to guests, where a machaan on the farmer's land can be booked for a night under the stars, with majority of the revenue generated given back to the farmer. One also has an option to sleep on the patio with mosquito netting. RARE's latest lodge in Pench, Jamtara Wilderness Camp is the perfect getaway with unobtrusive luxury. ♦

