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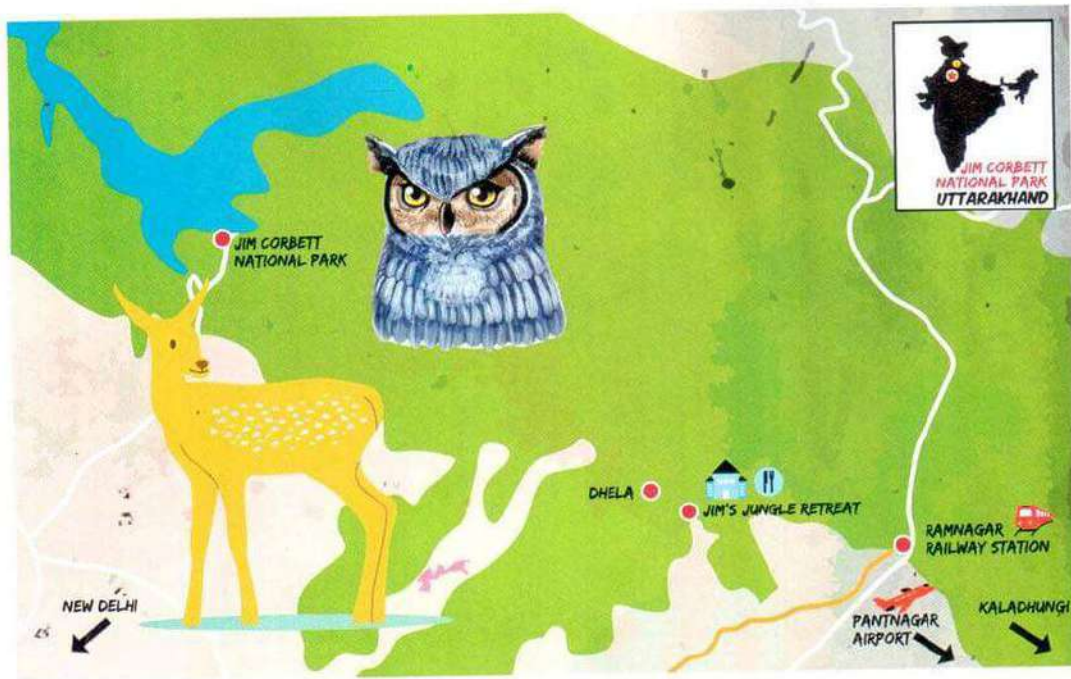


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EASY TRIPS ON THE PROWL IN JIM CORBETT NATIONAL PARK, UTTARAKHAND



FACT SHEET

GETTING THERE

Closest metro: New Delhi (270km)

Closest airport: Pantnagar (100km).

Air India flies from New Delhi to Pantnagar four times a week (return fares from ₹ 11,500). New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport has more airlines. The resort can arrange transfers (Pantnagar: from ₹ 4,500, New Delhi: ₹ 9,000 one way by AC Innova).

Closest railhead: Ramnagar (RMR; 16km).

The 15035 Sampark Kranti Express from Old Delhi is your best option and gets you there in approximately five hours (leaves Old Delhi Junction [DLI] 4pm, arrives RMR 8.40pm; ₹ 375 AC Chair Car). The resort

will arrange a pick-up (from ₹ 1,250 one-way by AC Innova). Return by the 25036 Ramnagar Delhi Link Express (leaves RMR 9.50am, arrives DLI 3.25pm; ₹ 375 AC Chair Car).

GETTING AROUND

The resort's jeeps cover your safari needs and the odd trip to Ramnagar. The best way around the neighbouring Dhela Village or through plantation forests in the park's buffer zone is on foot or on cycles provided by the resort. The property can arrange a car for farther-off excursions like a day-trip to Jim Corbett's home-turned-museum in Choti Haldwani, near Kaladhungi (from ₹ 7,500/jeep) or to Nainital (from ₹ 7,500/jeep).

WHERE TO STAY

Jim's Jungle Retreat: The resort's prime location on the park's south-east boundary and its luxury-meets-mindfulness ethos make for a soulful jungle sojourn (reservations: 00-91-11 43516376, 00-91-9899989508; www.jimsjungleretreat.com, reservations@jimsjungleretreat.com; Village Dhela, Ramnagar; from ₹ 13,500 with all meals; safaris from ₹ 5,500/ Gypsy with refreshments [good for groups of upto six]; jungle plan: from ₹ 18,000 with meals and one jungle safari).

WHERE TO EAT

The resort uses locally-sourced ingredients – most of them from its own kitchen garden – for its exceptional continental, Indian and Kumaoni

set menus. The house cakes, crumbles, cookies and pies are clear winners (breakfast: 8.30am – 10.30am, lunch: 12.30pm – 3pm; dinner: 7.30pm – 10pm; no room service). The newly-opened café is a high-ceilinged, sun-strobed lounge, which offers tasty small plates, baked goods, beverages, books, wi-fi and a boutique (11am – 7pm; from ₹ 380).

WHAT TO PACK

Clothes in earthy colours that blend with the surroundings and sturdy walking shoes for long forest and rocky riverbed hikes... You may need a light jacket or sweater for chilly dawn safaris.

SHOPPING

There's not much retail therapy to be had here save for a smattering

of souvenirs at the boutique shop inside the café (from ₹ 50). If you must shop, you could pick up postcards, packaged teas, the odd Raj-era curiosity or trinkets and toys made by local women.

CLEAN LOO GUIDE

Wait to get to popular highway pitstops for a decent loo.

SAFETY

The resort gets its share of wild interlopers, especially at night. At the orientation session, the staff will impress upon you the importance of neither engaging nor fleeing. Make sure to carry along a torch and wear closed shoes if you must leave your cottage at dawn or after nightfall.

MEDICAL AID

The resort has a first-aid kit and will assist in case of any emergencies. Brijesh Hospital in Ramnagar is a well-regarded, private facility (00-91-9761063002; National Highway 121, Jassaganja, Shivlalpur Khazanchi).

CHILD-FRIENDLINESS

The resort's bid to "catch them young" means there's plenty for kids to do here, from butterfly and termite walks and birding drives, to fishing at the resort's pond and watching animal documentaries. It will also tailor the menu for young guests.

GOOD TO KNOW

- * Safaris at Corbett are booked online by the lodges on a first come, first served basis. Only a certain number of vehicles are allowed into each of the five zones for the morning and evening sorties (www.corbettonline.uk.gov.in; Bijrani Zone: Oct 15 – Jun 29, Dhikala Zone: Nov 15 to Jun 15, Jhirna Zone: open year-round; entry: ₹ 200, day visit vehicle permit: ₹ 1,000).
- * Drives and hikes at dawn increase the likelihood of sightings, so prepare for some very early mornings.
- * If your intrigue with Kumaoni cuisine extends beyond just scarfing down the restaurant's excellent preparations, the staff is happy to arrange a cooking class so you can whip them up yourself back home (from ₹ 1,100/person).



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to normal. This is, after all, tiger country and the great cat's ghost is ubiquitous. Hear it in the shriek of the barking deer, the langur's frantic chatter, the flinch and bolt of skittish chital and in the breathless hush that falls over the most obnoxious

safari party. All the locals have a personal tiger potboiler and the more intrepid, shaky cellphone video proof, too.

Of course, there's a chance you might *not* spot the striped stealth master during your stay; the park's great size (520sqkm approximately) and dramatically varied topography (deciduous forests, riverine swathes, grasslands and marshlands) provide him ample cover – and Jim's Jungle Retreat, refreshingly, for a safari resort, doesn't pretend otherwise. There are no bombastic promises that you will see a tiger; only gentle reminders to look beyond.

To this end, enlist Manoj Sharma, the resort's grave senior naturalist, to lead

1. Its 550 species make this park a birder's dream

2. After a high-adrenaline jaunt in the jungle, wind down with a soak in the resort's pool

3. The mix of homegrown and locally-sourced ingredients makes for consistent happy meals at the resort

4. The park's varied topography ensures an eventful ride even as it provides

at least one of your jungle tours. His encyclopedic knowledge of the park and infectious love of birds turn what could have been a soulless scramble for the main attraction with some of the park's more by-rote naturalists into an intriguing keyhole-view of this world order. Once you return, exhausted, invigorated and just slightly uncertain about your place in the universe, make your way to the resort's new café for tea-time treats (from ₹ 250) and some rare wi-fi signal. Upload your latest epiphanies at top speed.

WORDS CHERYL-ANU COUTO
PHOTOGRAPHS HASHIM BADANI

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- 5. CORBETT NATIONAL PARK, Uttarakhand**
Return to a comfy colonial resort after meeting the residents of this legendary park