

ALL ROADS LEAD TO CORBETT

Ranee Sahaney does the eco-friendly thing as she goes bird-watching, fishing and of course, tiger spotting at Corbett National Park

Welcome to the world of Jim Corbett. The famed hunter-turned-conservator's unique domain continues to throw up adrenalin-pumping highs for generations of wildlife enthusiasts long after he's gone. Photographers, writers, artists and filmmakers have long worked to capture the captivating world of India's oldest national park—yet even for them it's a subject that is a perennial adventure in itself.

Bounded by the Ramganga river and foothills of the Shivaliks, Corbett National Park is India's first national park with a total area of 13,019 sq km of which the Tiger Reserve (the core area) comprises 521 sq km. Tourists are only allowed to venture into about 100 km of the reserve through the Brijrani, Lohachaur, Halduparao and Jhirna gates.

Corbett's tigers, they say are not as tourist friendly as they are in Bandhavgarh and Kanha. But that has never stopped droves of jeeps hitting the jungle trails. But now there's a new buzz in the air for tiger spotting, with the stark revelations of poaching and subsequent depletion of India's tiger population finally starting to sink in. Indeed the need for responsible tourism is becoming a clarion call not just for tourists haunting the park grounds but even for those who run establishments near it.

The most exciting way to see Corbett's glorious striped denizens in their natural habitat is on elephant back. You'll be astounded by the soundless stealth of the loveable pachyderm as he picks his way through the forest, climbing steep inclines along ancient *pugdandis* with nary a rustle of leaves—terrain where even the fanciest SUVs fail to venture. Feel your hair stand on end as he sniffs the air with suspicion and your *mahout* crouches atop on the alert...

Angling Adventures

But eyeing the tiger is not all there is to Corbett — angling enthusiasts are fast discovering the delights of *mahaseer* (the tiger of the waters) chasing in the Ramganga River and the Kosi River at Corbett.

The Uttaranchal government has taken a unique step to protect and enhance the size and quantity of fish and riverine eco-system by issuing management rights to fishing associations to manage and patrol the Ramganga beats. A 24 km stretch of the river upstream is being maintained exclusively for sports fishing. The Ramganga offers an excellent variety of angling experiences for both the experienced and the novice angler. Eighty pound golden *mahaseers*, two hundred pound *goonch* and tantalising trout await those who enjoy battling with these feisty creatures.



A close-up of the majestic beast