

Earthbound Expeditions

# Bardia National Park Safari

4 days, from US$467 per person

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|---|---|---|
| Duration<br>**4 days** | Grade<br>**Easy** | Altitude<br>**220 m** |
| Start and end<br>**Kathmandu** | Best season<br>**Feb to Apr, Oct to Dec** | Accommodation<br>**Wildlife resort** |
| Meals<br>**Breakfast daily** | Group size<br>**Up to 15** | Getting there<br>**Fly to Nepalgunj** |

## Bardia National Park Safari Overview

Look for wild Bengal tigers, one-horned rhinos and wild elephants in the grasslands of Nepal's largest lowland national park.

### Tour overview

Bardia is Nepal's largest and least visited lowland national park, in the far west of the country on the Karnali river. It is roughly the same size as Chitwan but receives a small fraction of the visitors. This is the main reason to travel this far: the same species, much more space, and long periods when yours is the only vehicle.

### Bardia and Chitwan compared

Chitwan is five hours from Kathmandu by road and has more rhinos. Reaching Bardia requires a flight and a drive, but it has the highest tiger density in Nepal, fewer visitors and a wilder setting. If you have time for one lowland park and want an easy journey, choose Chitwan. If you are coming specifically to see a tiger, or you have been to Chitwan and found it busy, choose Bardia.

### Tiger sightings

Bardia offers the best chance of seeing a wild tiger in Nepal, but a sighting cannot be guaranteed. Across a season, tigers are seen on roughly one trip in three. Sightings are most frequent in the hot, dry months from March to May, when the grass is short and the animals come to water. You can reliably expect to see rhino, deer, langur, wild boar, crocodile and, on the Karnali, the Gangetic river dolphin.

## Key highlights of the Bardia National Park Safari

- Jeep & walking safaris
- Chance to sight the Royal Bengal tiger
- Tharu community & cultural evening
- Karnali river dolphin excursion

## Itinerary

| Day | Route | Hours | Distance | Altitude |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Fly to Nepalgunj, drive to the park, nature walk | 1 hr flying, 2.5 hrs driving | - | 220 m |
| 2 | Karnali river, then an afternoon safari | - | - | 220 m |
| 3 | Dawn birding, a Tharu village, fly to Kathmandu | 1 hr flying | - | 1,400 m |
| 4 | Departure, or carry on | - | - | - |

Day 1

### Fly from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj and drive to Bardia National Park

Fly from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj (about one hour), then transfer by road for about 2.5 hours to the resort, where you are given a welcome drink. After lunch, take a nature walk into the jungle. Dinner and overnight at the wildlife resort.

Altitude: 170 m  On foot: Short walks  Night: Resort, Bardia  Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Day 2

### Full day in Bardia National Park

Early tea or coffee at 6:30 AM and breakfast, then explore the jungle to see the Karnali River, its aquatic wildlife and birds. In the afternoon, take a jeep safari into the park to look for the one-horned rhinoceros, four species of deer, monkeys, wild boar and leopards. The day ends with a Nepali buffet dinner and a traditional folk dance.

Altitude: 170 m  On foot: Short walks  Night: Resort, Bardia  Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

### Bardia National Park to Nepalgunj and fly to Kathmandu

Tea or coffee at 6:00 AM, followed at 6:30 AM by a birdwatching walk in the park, which is home to hundreds of bird species. After breakfast, visit a Tharu village to learn about local culture and social life, then return to the resort and fly back to Kathmandu.

Altitude: 1,400 m  On foot: Short walks  Night: Hotel, Kathmandu  Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

### Departure

Breakfast in Kathmandu and a transfer to the airport for your onward flight. If you are joining a trek next, this is where we hand you over to the trekking team.

Altitude: 1,400 m  On foot: None, departure day  Night: No overnight  Meals: Breakfast

## What's included

- Airport transfers & ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits & national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

### Not included

- International flights
- Travel & rescue insurance
- Personal trekking gear
- Tips & personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

## Permits and other costs

| Permit | Fee | Issued by |
|---|---|---|
| Bardia National Park entry. SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000. Children under ten go free. | NPR 2,000 a day, about $15 | At the park gate, inside the trip price |

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|---|---|---|
| Licensed naturalist. Required to walk in the park. Bardia's guides make a jungle walk here a carefully managed activity. | Inside the trip price | - |
| Trekking permits. This trip does not include trekking, so no TIMS card is required. | Not required | - |

| Other cost | Amount | Note |
|---|---|---|
| Bardia National Park entry | $15 a day | NPR 2,000. SAARC nationals NPR 1,000 |
| Kathmandu to Nepalgunj flight, both ways | $220–290 | Not included in the published price, which is quoted with ground transport as the default |
| Nepalgunj to the park | $50–80 | Two and a half hours each way by road |
| Wildlife resort, full board | $70–120 a night | Two nights, with a naturalist and the activities included |
| Jeep safari | $30–45 | Half a day, included |
| Karnali river trip | $20–35 | Included, and the best chance of dolphin |
| Tharu village and cultural show | $10–15 | Included with the Nepali buffet |
| Tips, guide and driver | $40–60 | Per traveller, at the end |

## Packing list

### Clothing colours and luggage

Wear greens, browns and khaki in the park. On a walk in Bardia the aim is to avoid being noticed by wildlife, and bright colours and white are visible from a long way off. The Nepalgunj flight has a lower baggage allowance than your international ticket, and bags are weighed, so bring a soft bag rather than a large suitcase. Anything you do not need in the park can be stored free of charge at our Kathmandu office.

### On your head

- Sun hat with a brim
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm
- A warm hat for foggy winter mornings, December to February

### On your body

- Light long-sleeved shirts and long trousers in green, brown or khaki
- A fleece or light jacket for early mornings from November to February
- A light rain jacket from May onwards

### On your feet

- Closed walking shoes or light boots, quiet rather than stiff
- Socks that come above the ankle, against ticks and leeches
- Sandals for the lodge

### Bags

- A soft bag rather than a hard suitcase, for the small aircraft
- A daypack for water, camera and a layer

### Health

- Insect repellent with DEET
- Any medicine you take routinely, and a small first aid kit
- Rehydration salts for the hot months
- Ask your doctor about malaria tablets. The risk in the Terai is low but not zero

### Camera and binoculars

- Binoculars, which matter more than a camera for birds and for a tiger across a river
- A long lens if you have one
- Spare batteries and memory cards

### Water

- A refillable bottle, one litre or more
- Purification tablets as a backup

### Papers and money

- Passport and a photocopy, which you need for the domestic flight
- Travel insurance certificate
- Cash in small notes for tips and drinks. Bring it from Kathmandu or Nepalgunj; there is a cash machine in Thakurdwara, but it is not always working

## Accommodation

| Where | Nights | Type | Room | Bathroom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bardia, on the edge of the park | 2 | Wildlife resort | Double or twin, cottage style | Private, hot water |
| Kathmandu | 1 | Hotel | Double or twin | Private, hot water |

**Cooling**
A fan in every room. Some rooms have air conditioning; ask when you book if the heat matters to you.

**Hot shower**
In your room, solar or electric. Best in the afternoon on a cloudy day.

**Charging**
Sockets in the room. Nepal uses round two- and three-pin plugs, so bring an adapter.

**Wi-Fi**
In the main building, and slow. Enough for messages.

**Phone signal**
Ncell and NTC work at the lodge, but the signal is patchy. There is no reliable signal inside the park.

**Mosquitoes**
Nets over every bed. Repellent is still worth wearing at dusk.

**Water**
Filtered drinking water at the lodge for refilling your bottle.

**Laundry**
Available for a small charge, back the same day in dry weather.

## Meals

| Meal | Time | What it is like |
|---|---|---|
| Tea | 6:00 to 6:30 | Tea or coffee and biscuits before the first activity |
| Breakfast | 7:00 to 8:00 | Eggs, toast, porridge, fruit, Nepali and Indian dishes, tea or coffee. A packed breakfast on long mornings in the park |
| Lunch | 12:30 to 13:30 | Dal bhat, curries, vegetables, salad and fruit, at the lodge or packed for a full day out |
| Dinner | 19:00 to 20:30 | Nepali, Tharu and continental dishes, with a Nepali buffet on the cultural evening |

| Diet | How we manage it |
|---|---|
| Vegetarian | Easy. Most of the food the kitchen prepares is already vegetarian. |
| Vegan | Manageable with notice. Tell us when you book, because the lodge buys its food in Nepalgunj and plans ahead. |
| Gluten free | Rice, dal, curries and fruit are safe. Tell us in advance, as the kitchen cannot rule out cross-contamination. |
| Halal | Not certified. Vegetarian food is the practical option. |
| Allergies | Tell us at booking and remind the kitchen on arrival. The nearest large hospital is Nepalgunj Medical College at Kohalpur, on the road to Nepalgunj. |

## A typical day

| Time | What happens |
|---|---|
| 6:00 | Tea or coffee and biscuits |
| 6:30 | Out with your naturalist, on foot or by jeep, while it is cool and the animals are moving |
| 8:30 | Breakfast, at the lodge or packed in the park |

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| 10:00 | The Karnali river or a Tharu village, depending on the day |
| 12:30 | Lunch, then rest through the hottest part of the day |
| 15:00 | Afternoon safari, until the light goes |
| 18:00 | Back at the lodge |
| 19:00 | Dinner, with the Tharu cultural evening on one night |
| 21:00 | Bedtime. The next morning starts at 6:00 |

## Difficulty and preparation

**Difficulty 1 of 5**

Physically easy. The main challenge is the heat during the tiger season.

- Walks in the park are on flat ground, two to four hours, at the naturalist's pace and with long quiet stops.
- The jeep is several hours on rough, dusty tracks, sitting in an open vehicle.
- From March to May the afternoons are close to 40°C, and the activities are timed around it.
- Early starts every day. The first activity leaves around 6:30.
- Getting there is a flight to Nepalgunj and two and a half hours by road, each way.

### Getting ready

**4 weeks before: Walking practice**

No training is needed. If you do not walk much, a few walks of two to three hours on flat ground will make the walks in the park easier. Wear the shoes you will bring.

**Before you travel: Preparing for the heat**

If you are coming in April or May for the tiger season, the afternoons are close to 40°C. Drink more than you think you need, stay in the shade in the middle of the day, and do not plan anything strenuous for the evening you arrive.

## Weather by month

Typical conditions on this route in each month, including the months we do not run this trip.

| Month | Day, in the park | Night, at the lodge | Early morning, when you set out | Conditions | Note |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | 20°C | 7°C | 9°C | Good | Cool, with thick fog most mornings. Quiet, and comfortable once the fog lifts. |
| February | 25°C | 9°C | 11°C | Good | Warming up. The grass starts to be cut and the park opens out. |
| March | 31°C | 13°C | 15°C | Best | Hot afternoons, short grass, and the tiger season begins. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| April | 37°C | 19°C | 21°C | Best | Very hot, and the best chance of tiger, as animals come to water. |
| May | 38°C | 24°C | 25°C | Good | The hottest month, often near 40°C. Still a good month for tiger sightings if you can tolerate the heat. |
| June | 36°C | 26°C | 26°C | Hard | The monsoon arrives. The park usually closes to visitors from around mid-June. |
| July | 33°C | 26°C | 26°C | We do not run it | Monsoon. The park is closed to visitors and the Karnali is in flood. |
| August | 33°C | 26°C | 26°C | We do not run it | As in July, the park is closed to visitors. |
| September | 33°C | 24°C | 25°C | Hard | The park reopens around mid-month. Humid, green, and the grass is very tall. |
| October | 32°C | 19°C | 21°C | Good | Green and comfortable. Tall grass makes animals harder to see than in spring. |
| November | 28°C | 12°C | 14°C | Best | Warm days, cool nights, and the most comfortable month to be here. |
| December | 24°C | 8°C | 10°C | Good | Cool and often foggy in the mornings. Bring a warm layer for the jeep. |

Approximate averages from Department of Hydrology and Meteorology records for Nepalgunj and the Bardia area. Winter mornings are often foggy and feel colder than the figure, and in April and May the afternoon can go several degrees above it.

## Booking and payment

### How to book

Write to us or send a message on WhatsApp and tell us roughly when you would like to travel. You will receive a reply from a member of our team who has been on this trip. Nothing is payable at this stage, and there is no obligation until you pay a deposit.

### Deposit

A deposit of 30 per cent secures your dates, and the balance is paid when you arrive in Kathmandu, in cash or by card. At the same time, we ask for a copy of your passport, your insurance certificate and any dietary or medical information.

### Payment

You can pay by bank transfer, or by card through a secure link. Card payments carry the bank's fee of about 4 per cent, which we show you before you pay. The balance in Kathmandu can be paid in US dollars, pounds, euros or Nepali rupees.

### Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before departure, your deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. If you cancel within 30 days, the deposit is retained, because the permits, flights and crew have been booked by then. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, we refund everything you have paid.

### Private and group departures

For a party of five or more, private and group departures cost the same. A private departure runs on your dates at your pace and can be arranged for one person. A group departure runs on the dates in the table above. Most travellers book privately, at no extra cost.

### Late bookings

We need at least one week's notice, or two weeks in March and April. The limiting factor is the Nepalgunj flight rather than the resort: it is a small aircraft on a route with few seats, and it fills up during the tiger season.

## Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 6 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

**How hard is this trip?**

We grade it Easy. Rest days are built in to help you adjust, and a good level of everyday fitness is enough. Tell us about your experience when you enquire, and we will advise you on whether the trip is suitable.

**When is the best time to go?**

The best time to go is from autumn to spring (October to April), when the weather is most settled and the views are clearest. We also run the trip outside these months on request. Ask us and we will explain what to expect.

**How big are the groups?**

Groups are small. Many of our trips run for just one or two people, and we keep group sizes low so that the pace suits you and your guide has time for everyone. You can also book the whole trip privately.

**What do I need to pay to book?**

A 30% deposit, about $140 on this trip, secures your place, and the balance is due before you travel. You can change your dates free of charge up to 60 days before departure.

**Do I need permits, and are they included?**

Yes, permits are required, and they are included. We arrange all the national park fees and trekking permits for this route, and they are included in the price. You only need a valid passport and a Nepal entry visa, which you can get on arrival.

**Can you tailor the itinerary?**

Every itinerary can be adjusted to suit your dates, your pace and the time you have. If you would like extra rest days, a different starting point, or to add another region, let us know and we will plan the trip around your needs.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/bardia-national-park-safari