



VISITOR GUIDE · NEPAL'S FIRST NATIONAL PARK

Chitwan National Park

Heart of the Terai — home of the Bengal tiger, the one-horned rhinoceros, and the living culture of the Tharu people.

AREA

952.63 km²

ESTABLISHED

1973

BIRDS

500+



01 DISCOVER About the Park

One of the last undisturbed remnants of the Terai, at the foot of the Himalayas in south-central Nepal.

Chitwan National Park covers **952.63 km²** across the Chitwan, Nawalpur, Parsa and Makwanpur districts, ranging from about 100 m in the river valleys to 815 m in the Sivalik Hills. Established in 1973 as Nepal's first national park, it was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984 for its outstanding universal value.

The Narayani–Rapti river system forms its northern boundary. Together with the adjacent Parsa National Park and India's Valmiki National Park, Chitwan forms a 3,549 km² transboundary block — the Chitwan–Parsa–Valmiki Tiger Conservation Unit.



68

MAMMAL SPECIES

500+

BIRD SPECIES

~600

ONE-HORNED RHINOS

128

TIGERS (2022)

- **1973**
Park established
Created to save the rhino from extinction — Nepal's first national park.
- **1984**
UNESCO World Heritage Site
Inscribed for its outstanding natural value (Ref. 284).
- **2006**
Renamed
"Royal" dropped from the park's name.

02 WILDLIFE What You Might See

The alluvial floodplain is among the finest big-game habitat in Asia.



Bengal tiger · *Panthera tigris*

One-horned Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros unicornis

The park's flagship; recovered from 95 to ~600 animals.

VULNERABLE

Gharial

Gavialis gangeticus

Fish-eating river crocodile, bred and released at Kasara.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

Bengal Tiger

Panthera tigris

Around 128 counted in 2022; elusive but present.

ENDANGERED

Gaur, Sloth Bear & Deer

Bos gaurus · *Melursus ursinus*

Plus leopard, wild boar, langur and macaque across 68 species.

Sighting odds vary: deer and rhino are common on a jeep safari; crocodiles near-certain by canoe; tigers and leopards are rare and a matter of luck. Bring patience and binoculars.

03 EXPERIENCE Things to Do

Jeep Safari

Open 4WD drives along forest and grassland tracks toward Kasara. High chance of rhino and deer.

Birdwatching

500+ species; best at dawn in the grasslands and lakes, Oct–Mar.

Dugout Canoe

A dawn float down the Rapti past crocodiles, gharial and waterbirds.

Elephant Breeding Centre

See elephants and calves up close — without riding.

Guided Jungle Walk

At foot-speed with trained guides — atmospheric and immersive.

Tharu Cultural Show

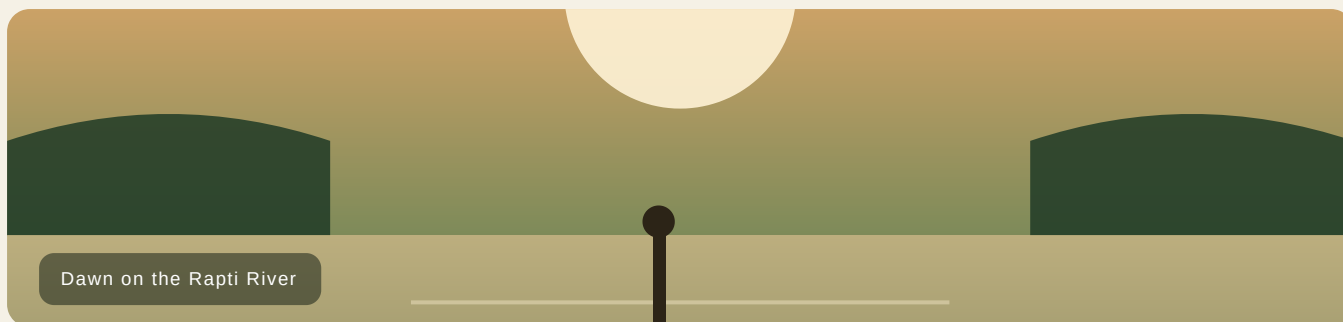
Community-run stick dance and songs in Sauraha.

On elephant rides: since 2022, welfare concerns have sharply reduced elephant-back safaris and they're no longer recommended. Choose jeep, canoe or walking safaris instead.

CULTURE

This is the land of the indigenous **Tharu people**, who have lived in the Terai for centuries. Their stick dance, cuisine, language and village homestays are among the great reasons to visit — and their displacement when the park was formed is part of its history. Travel with respect: choose community-run experiences.

04 PLAN YOUR TRIP Practical Guide



When to come

Oct–Dec: prime season, clear and cooling. **Jan–Mar:** good visibility, cool nights. **Jun–Sep:** monsoon — lush but wet, ~2,500 mm of rain.

Getting here

~120 km from Kathmandu (5–6 hrs by road) or fly to Bharatpur. Sauraha is the main gateway.

Packing checklist

- Neutral, muted clothing
- Long sleeves & trousers
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen & hat
- Binoculars
- Refillable water bottle
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Light layer for cool mornings

Itineraries

- **1 Day**
The Taster
Canoe, walk, elephants, cultural show.
- **2–3 Days**
The Classic
Add a full-day jeep safari & birding.
- **4–5 Days**
Immersive
Narayani boat trip & Tharu homestay.

Stay safe: this is genuine wildlife country. Always follow your guide, keep distance from rhinos, never get between an animal and water or its young, and be crocodile-aware near rivers.

05 REFERENCE Facts & Essentials

LOCATION	Inner Terai, south-central Nepal
MAIN GATEWAY	Sauraha (eastern); nearest airport Bharatpur
PARK HEADQUARTERS	Kasara
FROM KATHMANDU	~120 km (5–6 hours by road)
AREA	952.63 km ² + 766.1 km ² buffer zone
ELEVATION	~100 m (rivers) to 815 m (Churia Hills)
ESTABLISHED	1973 · World Heritage 1984 (Ref. 284)
GOVERNING BODY	Dept. of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation
ENTRY	Permits required — arrange via lodges or visitor centres

Entry fees, permit procedures and transport schedules change. Confirm current details with official sources or your accommodation before travelling. This guide is an educational resource, not an official government publication.

We acknowledge the Tharu people, the indigenous community of the Chitwan valley who have lived alongside this land for centuries, and whose displacement is part of the park's history. We honour their enduring connection to the Terai.

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CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK

Content adapted from Wikipedia (CC BY-SA), UNESCO World Heritage Centre & Nepal's DNPWC.
Travel detail is indicative — verify before travel.