



1 & 2. You can be one with nature at The Machan near Lonavala  
3. Jambulne has rich biodiversity, so you can spot butterflies, birds and frogs just outside your room



**STAY IN A MACHAN**

Some of the most picturesque and best wilderness experiences are to be had in Maharashtra. **Tadoba National Park** is Maharashtra's oldest national park. Together with the Andhari Wildlife Sanctuary, it forms the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. Located near Nagpur in the district of Chandrapur, it is said to have one of the healthiest populations of tigers in India, not to mention elusive leopards and panthers, hyenas, jackals, sambar, wild boar, Indian bison, flying squirrel and sloth bears along with over 100 species of birds. Open all year round, with May being the best time to spot tigers, the reserve has another, equally stirring side to it during the monsoon. While it is rare to spot tigers during this time, being a reserve that is not frequently visited by tourists as yet, it offers an undisturbed experience within an astonishingly beautiful forest, expansive valley and the Tadoba Lake. Another exciting experience here is to spend a night on a *machan*, if you are brave enough to do so. Two *machans* are located at Tadoba Lake and there are several others around the reserve at Panchadhara waterhole, Vasant Bhandara waterhole and Jamunbadi. Tiger Trails Jungle Lodge can arrange for you to spend the night in one. If it's calm and quiet in the midst of nature

that you crave, a stay at The Machan in **Jambulne** will do you good. Located around 17km south of Lonavala, this luxury eco-friendly resort set on 25 acres will have you blissfully cut off from the rest of the world. The lack of technology and connectivity is a boon here, giving you the time to spend the day discovering the guided treks and nature trails as well as exploring the nearby Koraigad and Lohagarh Forts and the Karla and Bhaja Caves (8am – 6pm; entry to the Bhaja Caves: ₹ 5). At night, gaze up from your private deck in wonder at the sheer beauty of a brilliantly-lit starry sky.

**WHERE TO STAY**

**Tiger Trails Jungle Lodge, Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve:** The best accommodation option around, the lodge has basic rooms with some pampering touches (00-91-9822930703; tigertrails.in, info@tigertrails.in; 19, Dandige Layout, Shankar Nagar; from ₹ 9,500 per person, including all meals and jeep safaris, park entrance fees extra).  
**The Machan, Jambulne:** The Canopy, Forest and Heritage Machans are hoisted some 30ft to 45ft above the forest floor to give you panoramic views. The Afternoon Nature Trail and Lunar Nature Trail (free) are must-dos (00-91-22-30635133; themachan.com, reservations@themachan.com; Jambulne, 8km short of Amby Valley, Lonavala; ₹ 10,000 onwards, with breakfast).



**GO RAFTING, KAYAKING AND ZIPLINING**

Adventure seekers with a love for water have a fantastic destination in Maharashtra to get their thrill fix at. Located on the banks of the Kundalika River, the scenic village of **Kolad** has it all. For a good splash, try white-water rafting, while kayaking is a great activity for those who want a more soothing experience. Thrill-seekers should also try their hand at ziplining across the river. There are fort treks and a jungle safari to the nearby Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, about 40km away, to be done, too. Kick your day off with a round of peaceful kayaking though it does require a certain amount of strength. You start off training in a tandem (two-seater) kayak, working in sync with the instructor, and then go on to a single-seater kayak where you can

enjoy being out on the water by yourself. Once you've had your fill, the rapids await. The great part about Kolad is that white-water rafting on the Kundalika River is possible all year round. The 14km stretch used for rafting consists of 10 rapids in different grades. After an initial training session, even non-swimmers can have a go at it. To satiate the adrenaline junkie in you, operators in the area have set up ziplining activities. Ziplining, or the flying fox, has you securely hooked on to a high-tension wire strung across the river and whizzing past above (and into) the water. When you're done with it all, head back to your eco-friendly riverfront campsite to enjoy the night. ▶

**MAKE IT HAPPEN**

**Wild River Adventures:** This is one of the companies that operates rafts on the Kundalika River (00-91-9421942730; indiarrafts.com; from ₹ 1,000 weekdays, ₹ 1,400 weekends for ages 15–60 years).

**EASY ADVENTURE MAHARASHTRA**

**Mercury Himalayan Explorations:** Another activity operator for rafting on the Kundalika River stretch from July to December (00-91-11-23340033; himalayandventure.com; from ₹ 1,000 weekdays and ₹ 1,400 weekends).

**WHERE TO STAY**

**Empower Activity Camps:** This is a sprawling campsite that offers adventure activities and stay options like AC cottages, Swiss tents and dormitories (00-91-2194-255105; empowercamp.com, info@empowercamp.com; from ₹ 2,100 per person dormitory, from ₹ 2,400 per person cottage/tent, meals and complimentary activities included).  
**Ecomantra-Rivertrails Camp:** An eco-friendly campsite situated on the banks of the river, which organises activities like nature trails, kayaking, rock-climbing and river crossing (00-91-22-61280100; ecomantra.com, support@ecomantra.com; Rivertrails Holiday package: ₹ 2,250 per person for a one-night, two-days package, includes stay, food and activities, minimum four persons required).

PHOTOGRAPHS: BEEMAH CHRISTIAN AND PRAO, MAHESH SALGAR

