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Map-Based Series

GEOGRAPHY WITH VISUAL MAPS

Rivers, Borders & National Parks of India

Map-Based Questions & Facts, Fully Researched

10	7	15
MAJOR RIVERS	BORDERING NATIONS	NATIONAL PARKS

Rivers & Tributaries | International Borders | National Parks

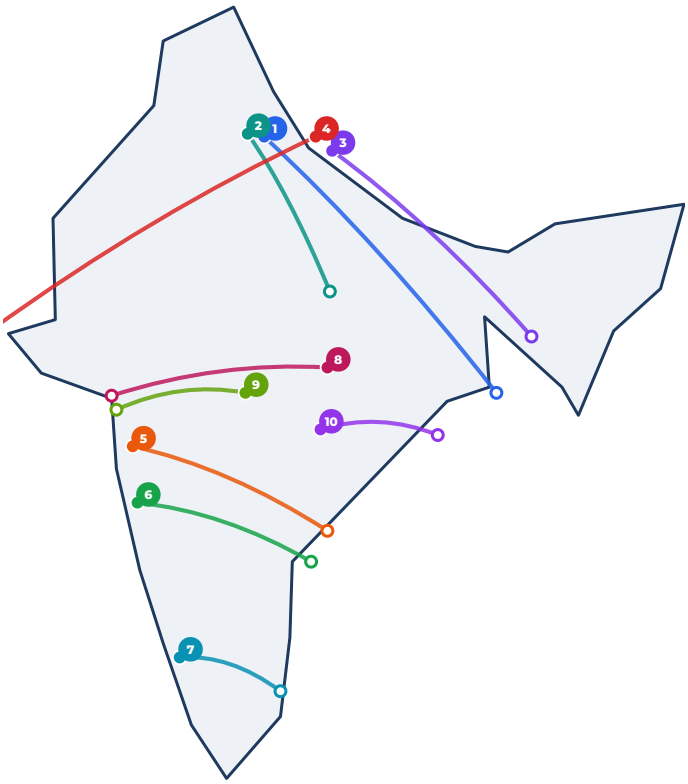
About the maps: These are simplified schematic study diagrams built to show relative locations clearly — not survey-precision cartography. Every factual claim (origins, lengths, states, border details) has been independently researched and verified.

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For SSC, Banking & All Government Exams 2026-27

Major Rivers of India

10 rivers — origins, mouths, tributaries, and the states they flow through



1 Ganga (Ganges) 2 Yamuna 3 Brahmaputra 4 Indus (Sindhu) 5 Godavari 6 Krishna 7 Kaveri (Cauvery) 8 Narmada 9 Tapi (Tapti) 10 Mahanadi

Numbered markers show each river's origin point; lines trace its approximate course to its mouth.

River-by-River Fact Sheet

1 Ganga (Ganges)

ORIGIN	Gangotri Glacier (Gaumukh), Uttarakhand
MOUTH	Bay of Bengal (as the Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta, Sundarbans)
LENGTH	~2,525 km (India's longest river within its own territory)
STATES	Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal
TRIBUTARIES	Yamuna, Ghaghara, Gandak, Kosi, Son (right/left bank tributaries)
KEY FACT	Considered India's most sacred river; forms one of the world's largest deltas (Sundarbans) with the Brahmaputra.

In Detail: The Ganga basin is India's largest river basin, covering roughly a quarter of the country's land area and supporting nearly half its population — making it one of the most densely populated river basins on Earth. Beyond its religious significance in Hinduism (where it is personified as the goddess Ganga), the river is the backbone of agriculture across the Indo-Gangetic Plain, one of the most fertile regions in the world. The Namami Gange Programme, launched in 2014, is the flagship government initiative for cleaning and rejuvenating the river, addressing decades of industrial and sewage pollution. The river's basin also hosts the Ganges river dolphin, India's National Aquatic Animal, which is critically endangered.

2 Yamuna

ORIGIN	Yamunotri Glacier, Uttarakhand
MOUTH	Confluence with the Ganga at Prayagraj (Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh
LENGTH	~1,376 km
STATES	Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh
TRIBUTARIES	Chambal, Betwa, Ken, Sind, Hindon
KEY FACT	The largest tributary of the Ganga; flows through the National Capital, Delhi.

In Detail: Despite carrying the sacred status of a major Himalayan river, the Yamuna is also one of India's most polluted rivers by the time it reaches and leaves Delhi, largely due to untreated sewage and industrial effluent discharged along its urban stretch. The river is central to Mughal-era history and architecture — the Taj Mahal in Agra and the Red Fort in Delhi were both built along its banks, in part because Mughal builders favoured riverside sites for their forts and mausoleums. The Yamuna Action Plan, one of India's earliest river-cleaning initiatives (starting in the 1990s), predates the more recent Namami Gange Programme for the Ganga.

3 Brahmaputra

ORIGIN	Angsi Glacier, Tibet (known as Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet)
MOUTH	Bay of Bengal (joins the Ganga delta in Bangladesh)
LENGTH	~2,900 km total length; ~918 km within India
STATES	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam
TRIBUTARIES	Dibang, Lohit, Subansiri, Teesta
KEY FACT	Known for devastating annual floods in Assam; one of the few major Indian rivers with a masculine name in tradition.

In Detail: The Brahmaputra is unusual among major world rivers for its braided channel pattern — it splits into multiple interweaving channels across a wide floodplain rather than flowing in one defined course, making it prone to shifting its path over time. It is also home to Majuli, the world's largest river island, located in Assam, which has lost significant land to erosion in recent decades. The river's massive annual floods, while destructive, also deposit fertile silt that sustains Assam's agriculture, particularly tea cultivation in the surrounding valleys. China's dam-building activity on the upper Yarlung Tsangpo (the river's name in Tibet) is a recurring point of strategic concern for India, given the river's importance to the northeastern states downstream.

4 Indus (Sindhu)

ORIGIN	Near Lake Mansarovar, Tibet
MOUTH	Arabian Sea (in Pakistan)
LENGTH	~3,180 km total; a relatively short stretch flows through India, mainly Ladakh
STATES	Ladakh
TRIBUTARIES	Zanskar (within India); Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej join further downstream
KEY FACT	Gave India its name; the Indus Valley Civilization flourished along its banks.

In Detail: Although only a short stretch of the Indus flows through Indian territory (mainly Ladakh), the river system as a whole — including its major tributaries Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej — is governed by the Indus Waters Treaty (1960) between India and Pakistan, one of the most durable water-sharing agreements in the world, brokered by the World Bank. Under the treaty, India has rights to the three 'Eastern Rivers' (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) while Pakistan retains primary rights to the three 'Western Rivers' (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab). The treaty has survived multiple wars between the two countries, though it has periodically come under political strain in recent years.

5 Godavari

ORIGIN	Trimbakeshwar, Nashik, Maharashtra
MOUTH	Bay of Bengal
LENGTH	~1,465 km — longest river entirely within Peninsular India
STATES	Maharashtra, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh
TRIBUTARIES	Purna, Manjira, Penganga, Wardha, Indravati, Sabari
KEY FACT	Called the 'Ganga of the South' (Dakshin Ganga); the largest Peninsular river by both length and basin area.

In Detail: The Godavari basin spans Maharashtra, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh, making it critical to irrigation and hydropower across central and southern India. The river hosts the Godavari Pushkaram, a major Hindu festival held once every 12 years that draws millions of pilgrims to its banks, echoing the scale of the Kumbh Mela on the Ganga. Its delta near the Bay of Bengal is one of the most fertile rice-growing regions in India, often called the 'Rice Bowl of Andhra Pradesh'. The river also passes through the scenic Papikondalu hills, a popular eco-tourism destination.

6 Krishna

ORIGIN	Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra
MOUTH	Bay of Bengal
LENGTH	~1,400 km
STATES	Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh
TRIBUTARIES	Tungabhadra, Bhima, Koyna, Ghataprabha
KEY FACT	The second-largest Peninsular river in terms of water inflow and river basin.

In Detail: The Krishna's basin has been the site of significant inter-state water disputes among Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, managed through mechanisms like the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal. The river's Nagarjuna Sagar Dam is one of the world's largest masonry dams, supporting extensive irrigation across the Telangana-Andhra Pradesh region. Its major tributary, the Tungabhadra, is itself significant enough to have its own dam and reservoir system supporting a large agricultural belt in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

7 Kaveri (Cauvery)

ORIGIN	Talakaveri, Kodagu (Coorg), Karnataka
MOUTH	Bay of Bengal
LENGTH	~800 km
STATES	Karnataka, Tamil Nadu
TRIBUTARIES	Hemavati, Kabini, Bhavani, Amaravati
KEY FACT	Site of the long-running Cauvery water-sharing dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

In Detail: The Cauvery water dispute is one of India's oldest and most politically sensitive inter-state river conflicts, dating back to agreements signed during British colonial rule in 1892 and 1924. The Supreme Court of India delivered a final verdict on water-sharing allocations in 2018, though tensions between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over releases during drought years continue to resurface periodically. The river is considered sacred in Tamil and Kannada culture, often referred to as 'Ponni' (the golden one) in Tamil literature, and its delta in Tamil Nadu is one of the most productive rice-growing regions in South India.

8 Narmada

ORIGIN	Amarkantak Plateau, Madhya Pradesh
MOUTH	Arabian Sea (Gulf of Khambhat)
LENGTH	~1,312 km
STATES	Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat
TRIBUTARIES	Tawa, Hiran, Barna
KEY FACT	The largest west-flowing river of Peninsular India, flowing through a rift valley between the Vindhya and Satpura ranges.

In Detail: Unlike most Peninsular rivers, the Narmada flows through a geological rift valley rather than a river-eroded valley, giving it a straighter course than the winding paths typical of east-flowing rivers like the Godavari or Krishna. The river is the site of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, one of independent India's largest and most controversial infrastructure projects, which sparked the decades-long Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) protesting displacement of local communities. The river is also considered highly sacred in Hinduism, with pilgrims traditionally undertaking the Narmada Parikrama, a circumambulation of the entire river on foot that can take months to complete.

9 Tapi (Tapti)

ORIGIN	Multai, Betul district, Madhya Pradesh
MOUTH	Arabian Sea (Gulf of Khambhat, near Surat)
LENGTH	~724 km
STATES	Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat
TRIBUTARIES	Purna, Girna, Panzara
KEY FACT	The second major west-flowing Peninsular river, running roughly parallel to the Narmada.

In Detail: The Tapi's short length and steep gradient compared to east-flowing Peninsular rivers means it drains quickly into the Arabian Sea rather than forming a wide delta, unlike the Godavari or Krishna. Its basin covers parts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra (particularly the Khandesh region, known for cotton cultivation), and Gujarat, where it passes through Surat before reaching the sea. Because the Tapi and Narmada both flow east-to-west through rift valleys, they are frequently paired together in exam questions testing knowledge of the exceptions to Peninsular India's general eastward drainage pattern.

10 Mahanadi

ORIGIN	Sihawa, Dhamtari district, Chhattisgarh
MOUTH	Bay of Bengal
LENGTH	~858 km
STATES	Chhattisgarh, Odisha
TRIBUTARIES	Seonath, Hasdeo, Ong, Tel
KEY FACT	Historically called the 'Sorrow of Odisha' for severe flooding, before the Hirakud Dam — one of the world's longest earthen dams — was built.

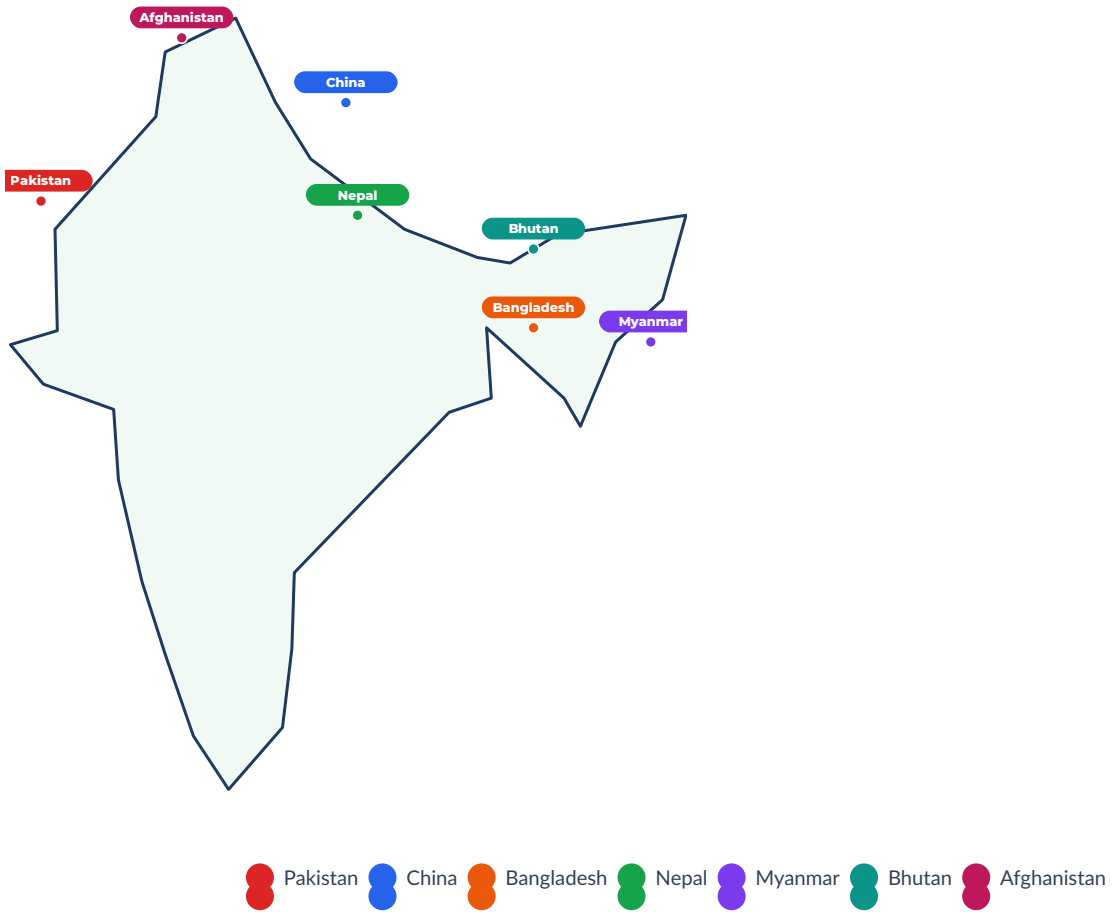
In Detail: The Hirakud Dam, completed in 1957, was one of independent India's first major multi-purpose river valley projects, built specifically to control the Mahanadi's historically devastating floods while also providing irrigation and hydropower. At approximately 26 km long, it remains one of the longest earthen dams in the world, and the reservoir it creates, Hirakud Reservoir, is among the largest artificial lakes in Asia. The river basin has more recently become a source of friction between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, particularly over upstream barrage construction affecting downstream water flow — a dispute with some parallels to the Cauvery conflict further south.

Quick Revision Notes

- West-flowing Peninsular rivers (Narmada, Tapi) are exceptions — most Peninsular rivers flow east into the Bay of Bengal due to the general eastward tilt of the Deccan Plateau.
- Himalayan rivers (Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, Indus) are perennial — fed by both monsoon rain and melting snow/glaciers — while most Peninsular rivers are seasonal and rain-fed.
- Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri are the three largest east-flowing Peninsular rivers, in that order by length.
- Both the Narmada (from Amarkantak) and Tapi (from Multai) originate in Madhya Pradesh and flow west into the Arabian Sea — a commonly tested pairing.

India's International Borders

7 land-bordering nations, plus key maritime neighbours



Pakistan China Bangladesh Nepal Myanmar Bhutan Afghanistan

Labels are placed near the general border region shared with each country.

Country-by-Country Border Fact Sheet

Pakistan

BORDER LENGTH	~3,323 km
BORDER NAME	Radcliffe Line
INDIAN STATES	Jammu & Kashmir (Ladakh), Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat
KEY FACT	Also includes the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu & Kashmir, a ceasefire line rather than a fully demarcated international border.

In Detail: The Radcliffe Line, drawn hastily in 1947 by British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe at the time of Partition, forms the bulk of the settled India-Pakistan border across Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. However, the situation in Jammu & Kashmir remains unresolved: the Line of Control (LoC), established after the 1947-48 war and further defined by the 1972 Simla Agreement, is a military ceasefire line rather than an internationally recognised border. Further north lies the Line of Actual Control in the Siachen Glacier area, the world's highest militarised zone, where Indian and Pakistani forces have faced off since the 1980s. The Sir Creek area in Gujarat, a marshy tidal estuary, also remains a source of ongoing maritime boundary disagreement between the two countries.

China

BORDER LENGTH	~3,488 km
BORDER NAME	McMahon Line in the east; western/middle sectors remain disputed
INDIAN STATES	Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh
KEY FACT	India's longest border with a single neighbour; large sections remain unresolved, referred to as the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

In Detail: The India-China border is conventionally divided into three sectors: the Western Sector (Ladakh, bordering Xinjiang and Tibet), the Middle Sector (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), and the Eastern Sector (Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, along the McMahon Line). China does not recognise the McMahon Line, drawn during the 1914 Simla Convention, and disputes India's control over most of Arunachal Pradesh, which it refers to as 'South Tibet'. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is not a mutually agreed, demarcated border but rather each side's own understanding of where its control ends, leading to periodic face-offs — most notably the 2020 Galwan Valley clash in Ladakh, the most serious military confrontation between the two countries in decades.

Bangladesh

BORDER LENGTH	~4,096 km
BORDER NAME	Radcliffe Line
INDIAN STATES	West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram
KEY FACT	India's longest international border with any single neighbouring country.

In Detail: The India-Bangladesh border was historically complicated by numerous enclaves — small pockets of one country's territory entirely surrounded by the other — a legacy of old Mughal-era land agreements. This was finally resolved through the Land Boundary Agreement of 2015, under which India and Bangladesh exchanged over 150 enclaves, allowing more than 50,000 residents to formally become citizens of the country actually surrounding them. The border is also notable for extensive fencing constructed by India to curb illegal migration and smuggling, making it one of the most heavily fenced borders in the world. The Sundarbans mangrove forest straddles this border, shared between West Bengal (India) and Khulna division (Bangladesh).

Nepal

BORDER LENGTH	~1,751 km
BORDER NAME	Open border — no passport/visa required for citizens of either country to cross
INDIAN STATES	Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim
KEY FACT	Governed by the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950), allowing free movement of people across the border.

In Detail: The open border with Nepal is one of the most unusual in the world for two sovereign nations — citizens of both countries can cross freely without passports or visas, live, and work in either country under the terms of the 1950 treaty. This has fostered deep cultural, economic, and even military ties, including a long tradition of Nepali Gorkha soldiers serving in the Indian Army. In recent years, the relationship has seen occasional strain over territorial claims, most notably the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura tri-junction area, which both India and Nepal claim, and which Nepal formally included in a revised national map in 2020.

Myanmar

BORDER LENGTH	~1,643 km
BORDER NAME	—
INDIAN STATES	Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram
KEY FACT	India's only land border shared with a Southeast Asian nation.

In Detail: The India-Myanmar border passes through some of India's most ethnically diverse and historically insurgency-affected states, and many communities — such as the Naga and Chin/Mizo peoples — have kinship ties that span both sides of the border. India has historically maintained a Free Movement Regime (FMR) allowing border residents to travel a short distance across without visas, though this policy has come under review and partial restriction in recent years amid security and migration concerns following unrest in Myanmar. The border also lies along India's 'Act East Policy' corridor, intended to boost connectivity and trade with Southeast Asia.

Bhutan

BORDER LENGTH	~699 km
BORDER NAME	—
INDIAN STATES	Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh
KEY FACT	The India-Bhutan border is largely peaceful, with close diplomatic and economic cooperation between the two nations.

In Detail: India and Bhutan maintain one of the closest bilateral relationships in South Asia, formalised through the India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty (originally 1949, revised in 2007), under which India plays a significant role in Bhutan's foreign policy coordination and economic development. India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and a major source of hydropower investment, with several joint hydroelectric projects on Bhutanese rivers exporting power back to India. The Doklam Plateau, at the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction, was the site of a tense 2017 military standoff between Indian and Chinese troops after China attempted to extend a road through territory claimed by Bhutan, an area India considers strategically vital.

Afghanistan

BORDER LENGTH	~106 km (a short, disputed stretch)
BORDER NAME	Adjoins Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK)
INDIAN STATES	Not directly administered — lies within POK, which India claims as its territory
KEY FACT	India does not administer this stretch in practice, since it falls within Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

In Detail: India's claimed border with Afghanistan exists only on paper in the sense that the actual adjoining territory — the Wakhan Corridor area near the Gilgit-Baltistan region — is administered by Pakistan as part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK), which India considers illegally occupied Indian territory. As a result, India and Afghanistan do not share a functionally administered border in practice, and there is no crossing point between the two countries. This is a frequently tested exam nuance: while India officially counts Afghanistan among its neighbours by territorial claim, the on-the-ground reality is that Pakistan's control of the intervening area means the two countries have no direct physical contact.

Maritime Neighbours

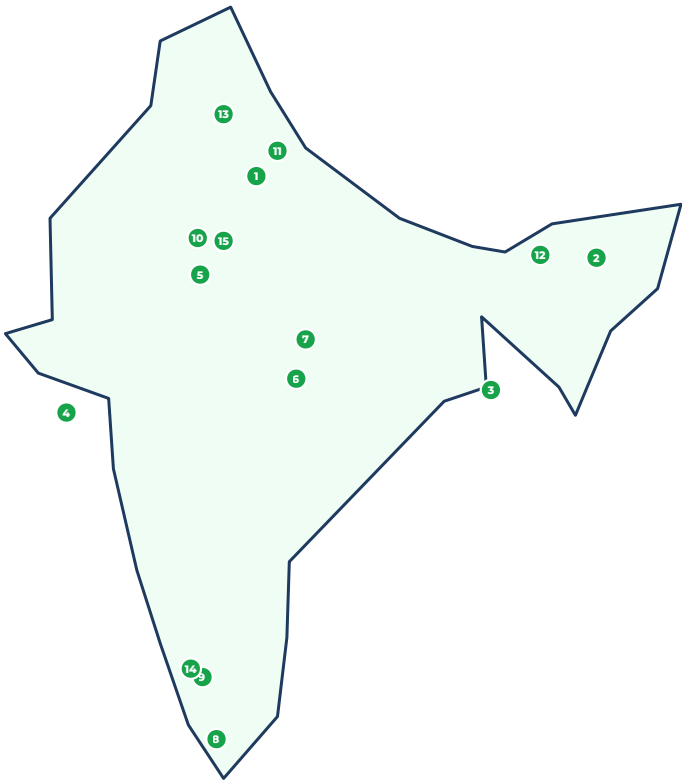
SRI LANKA	Separated by the Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar; closest point is between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula.
MALDIVES	Located to the southwest of the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea.
INDONESIA	Maritime boundary near the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
THAILAND	Maritime boundary near the Andaman Sea, close to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Quick Revision Notes

- India shares land borders with 7 countries: Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Afghanistan.
- India has maritime boundaries with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.
- West Bengal borders three countries — Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh — the only Indian state to do so.
- The 'Siliguri Corridor' (or 'Chicken's Neck'), a narrow strip of land in West Bengal (~22 km wide at its narrowest), connects India's northeastern states to the rest of the country, flanked by Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.
- Jammu & Kashmir/Ladakh is the only Indian region bordering both Pakistan and China.

Major National Parks of India

15 parks — states, establishment years, and signature species



1. Jim Corbett National Park
2. Kaziranga National Park
3. Sundarbans National Park
4. Gir National Park
5. Ranthambore National Park
6. Kanha National Park
7. Bandhavgarh National Park
8. Periyar National Park
9. Bandipur National Park
10. Sariska Tiger Reserve
11. Nanda Devi National Park
12. Manas National Park
13. Great Himalayan National Park
14. Nagarhole National Park
15. Keoladeo National Park

Numbered markers show each park's approximate location within its state.

Park-by-Park Fact Sheet

1 Jim Corbett National Park

STATE	Uttarakhand
ESTABLISHED	1936 (India's oldest national park)
FAMOUS FOR	Royal Bengal Tiger; first park to come under Project Tiger (1973)

In Detail: Originally established as Hailey National Park in 1936 under British colonial rule, it was renamed after Jim Corbett, a British-Indian hunter-turned-conservationist whose writings helped raise early awareness of tiger conservation. The park was the site chosen to launch Project Tiger in 1973, India's flagship tiger conservation programme, making it historically significant beyond its own tiger population. It spans varied terrain including riverine belts, marshy depressions, and dense forest, supporting not just tigers but elephants, leopards, and over 600 bird species, making it a major destination for wildlife tourism in North India.

2 Kaziranga National Park

STATE	Assam
ESTABLISHED	1974 (National Park status)
FAMOUS FOR	One-horned Indian Rhinoceros — home to over two-thirds of the world's population; UNESCO World Heritage Site

In Detail: Kaziranga's rhino conservation success is considered one of the great wildlife recovery stories globally — the population was reduced to just a handful of individuals in the early 1900s due to hunting, and has since recovered to over 2,000 individuals through decades of protection, anti-poaching efforts, and habitat management. The park's landscape of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense forest along the Brahmaputra floodplain is periodically inundated by seasonal flooding, which paradoxically helps maintain the grassland ecosystem the rhinos depend on. Kaziranga also holds the highest density of tigers among protected areas in the world, and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.

3 Sundarbans National Park

STATE	West Bengal
ESTABLISHED	1984
FAMOUS FOR	Royal Bengal Tiger, mangrove ecosystem; part of the world's largest mangrove forest, shared with Bangladesh

In Detail: The Sundarbans is the only mangrove forest in the world known to host a significant tiger population, and these tigers have adapted uniquely to a semi-aquatic lifestyle, swimming between islands and even preying differently than tigers elsewhere — they are also unusually prone to man-eating behaviour compared to tigers in other habitats, a phenomenon researchers attribute to the harsh, saline environment. The ecosystem acts as a critical natural barrier against cyclones and storm surges for the densely populated Bengal coast, though it is increasingly threatened by rising sea levels and climate change, which are shrinking the mangrove habitat. The forest is split between India and Bangladesh, with both countries' portions separately recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

4 Gir National Park

STATE	Gujarat
ESTABLISHED	1965
FAMOUS FOR	The only wild home of the Asiatic Lion in the world

In Detail: Asiatic lions once ranged across the Middle East and South Asia but were hunted to near-extinction by the early 20th century, surviving only in the Gir forest thanks to protection first offered by the Nawab of Junagadh and later continued by Indian conservation authorities. The population has grown from roughly a dozen individuals a century ago to several hundred today, though conservationists remain concerned about the risks of having the entire wild population concentrated in a single geographic area, vulnerable to disease outbreaks or natural disasters. Efforts to establish a second, separate population at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh have faced delays and political resistance from Gujarat, which has been reluctant to share what is considered a state conservation icon.

5 Ranthambore National Park

STATE	Rajasthan
ESTABLISHED	1980
FAMOUS FOR	Bengal Tiger; one of the best places in India to see tigers in the wild, set around a historic fort

In Detail: Ranthambore's combination of open, dry deciduous terrain and relatively high tiger density makes it one of the most reliable parks in India for daytime tiger sightings, unlike denser forests where tigers are harder to spot. The park is built around the 10th-century Ranthambore Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in its own right, giving the reserve a distinctive backdrop of ancient ruins, lakes, and banyan trees alongside its wildlife. It gained particular fame through a series of individually named, well-studied tigresses (such as Machli, one of the most photographed tigers in the world) whose life stories have been documented extensively by wildlife filmmakers and researchers.

6 Kanha National Park

STATE	Madhya Pradesh
ESTABLISHED	1955
FAMOUS FOR	Barasingha (swamp deer), saved from near-extinction here; inspired Kipling's 'The Jungle Book'

In Detail: The hard-ground Barasingha subspecies found in Kanha was reduced to fewer than 100 individuals by the 1970s due to habitat loss and hunting, and its recovery to a stable, self-sustaining population is considered one of India's significant single-species conservation successes, achieved through dedicated breeding enclosures and habitat restoration. Kanha's sal and bamboo forests, interspersed with meadows, are widely believed to have inspired Rudyard Kipling's setting for The Jungle Book, and the park has leaned into this association for tourism, including a designated 'Kipling Camp' area. It was also one of the original nine tiger reserves designated under Project Tiger in 1973.

7 Bandhavgarh National Park

STATE	Madhya Pradesh
ESTABLISHED	1968
FAMOUS FOR	One of India's highest densities of Bengal Tigers

In Detail: Bandhavgarh's compact core area combined with abundant prey base gives it one of the highest tiger densities per square kilometre of any reserve in India, making it a favoured destination for photographers seeking reliable sightings. The park is centred around the ancient Bandhavgarh Fort, believed to be over 2,000 years old and mentioned in the Hindu epic the Ramayana as a gift from Rama to his brother Lakshmana. Beyond tigers, the park's grasslands and sal forests support leopards, sloth bears, and numerous species of deer, and it is also known for its high concentration of vultures, an ecologically important but declining species group across India.

8 Periyar National Park

STATE	Kerala
ESTABLISHED	1982
FAMOUS FOR	Asiatic Elephants; built around the artificial Periyar Lake

In Detail: Periyar Lake was created in 1895 by the Mullaperiyar Dam, built by the British primarily for irrigation purposes, and the resulting reservoir later became the centrepiece of the wildlife sanctuary declared around it. The park is known for its distinctive boat safaris, which allow visitors to observe elephant herds, gaur (Indian bison), and other wildlife gathering at the water's edge, offering a different viewing experience from the jeep safaris typical of most Indian parks. Periyar was also one of the pioneering sites for India's 'Eco-Development' tourism model, employing former poachers as guides and guards — an approach that has been studied as a model for community-based conservation elsewhere in India.

9 Bandipur National Park

STATE	Karnataka
ESTABLISHED	1974
FAMOUS FOR	Part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve; significant tiger and elephant populations

In Detail: Bandipur forms part of a much larger, contiguous forest landscape spanning the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, connecting to neighbouring parks like Nagarhole, Mudumalai, and Wayanad across Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala — together forming one of the largest protected tiger and elephant habitats in Asia. This landscape connectivity is considered ecologically vital, as it allows wildlife populations, especially wide-ranging species like elephants, to move between reserves rather than being isolated in fragmented pockets. Bandipur was also one of the earliest parks to be designated a tiger reserve under Project Tiger in 1973.

10 Sariska Tiger Reserve

STATE	Rajasthan
ESTABLISHED	1955 (Sanctuary); Tiger Reserve since 1978
FAMOUS FOR	First reserve in the world to successfully relocate tigers to repopulate an area where the species had gone locally extinct

In Detail: Sariska made global conservation headlines for the wrong reasons in 2004-05, when it was revealed that its entire tiger population had been wiped out by poaching despite being an official tiger reserve, exposing serious gaps in India's wildlife protection enforcement at the time. In response, authorities undertook a pioneering tiger relocation programme starting in 2008, translocating tigers from Ranthambore to Sariska — the first time this had been attempted successfully anywhere in the world for a reserve where the species had gone completely extinct. The episode is frequently cited in Indian conservation policy discussions as a turning point that led to stricter anti-poaching protocols nationwide.

11 Nanda Devi National Park

STATE	Uttarakhand
ESTABLISHED	1982
FAMOUS FOR	UNESCO World Heritage Site; surrounds Nanda Devi peak, India's second-highest mountain

In Detail: The park surrounds Nanda Devi, at 7,816 metres India's second-highest peak after Kangchenjunga (and the highest peak located entirely within India, since Kangchenjunga sits on the Sikkim-Nepal border). Access to the core zone has been restricted to climbers and trekkers since 1983 due to environmental damage from earlier mountaineering expeditions, making it one of the most strictly protected high-altitude wilderness areas in India. It forms part of a larger UNESCO World Heritage complex together with the neighbouring Valley of Flowers National Park, renowned for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers. The area is also considered sacred in local Garhwali tradition, with Nanda Devi worshipped as a goddess.

12 Manas National Park

STATE	Assam
ESTABLISHED	1990
FAMOUS FOR	UNESCO World Heritage Site; tigers, rhinos, and the rare golden langur

In Detail: Manas was placed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger for over a decade (1992-2011) after a period of ethnic and political unrest in Assam led to significant poaching and habitat degradation, including the near-total loss of its rhino population. Following sustained conservation efforts, including rhino reintroduction from Kaziranga, the park was removed from the danger list in 2011, marking a notable conservation recovery story. It sits on the India-Bhutan border and forms a contiguous transboundary conservation landscape with Bhutan's Royal Manas National Park, and is one of the few places in the world where the endangered golden langur can be reliably seen.

13 Great Himalayan National Park

STATE	Himachal Pradesh
ESTABLISHED	1984
FAMOUS FOR	UNESCO World Heritage Site; snow leopard habitat and rich alpine biodiversity

In Detail: The park protects one of the last remaining undisturbed high-altitude ecosystems in the western Himalayas, spanning elevations from around 1,500 to over 6,000 metres, which creates a striking range of habitats from temperate forest to alpine meadow to permanent snowfields. It is a stronghold for the elusive snow leopard, alongside other high-altitude species like the Himalayan tahr and musk deer, and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014 in recognition of its exceptional, largely untouched biodiversity. Access to much of the park requires multi-day trekking, which has helped preserve its remote, low-tourism-impact character compared to more accessible parks elsewhere in India.

14 Nagarhole National Park

STATE	Karnataka
ESTABLISHED	1988
FAMOUS FOR	Part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve; a significant elephant corridor

In Detail: Nagarhole (also known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park) is contiguous with Bandipur to its south, together forming one of the most important elephant habitats in southern India, part of a landscape supporting one of the largest wild Asian elephant populations remaining anywhere in the world. Its network of streams and the Kabini reservoir, formed by a dam on a Kaveri tributary, attracts large congregations of wildlife during the dry season, making it a particularly popular destination for wildlife photography. The park has also been a site of ongoing debate over the balance between tribal community rights (particularly for indigenous groups like the Jenu Kuruba) and strict wildlife protection zoning.

15 Keoladeo National Park

STATE	Rajasthan
ESTABLISHED	1982
FAMOUS FOR	UNESCO World Heritage Site; one of India's most important bird sanctuaries, especially for migratory birds

In Detail: Keoladeo, also known as Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, was originally created as a royal duck-hunting reserve by the Maharajas of Bharatpur in the 19th century, and was only converted into a protected sanctuary and later a national park after hunting was banned in 1982. Its wetlands, sustained artificially through a canal system, attract hundreds of thousands of migratory waterbirds each winter from as far as Siberia and Central Asia, including historically the critically endangered Siberian Crane, though sightings of that species have not been recorded in recent years. The park's relatively small size combined with its extraordinary bird density made it one of the earliest Ramsar-designated wetlands in India and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.

Quick Revision Notes

- Jim Corbett National Park, established in 1936, is India's oldest national park and was the birthplace of Project Tiger in 1973.
- Gir National Park in Gujarat is the world's only wild habitat of the Asiatic Lion.
- Kaziranga in Assam hosts over two-thirds of the world's One-horned Rhinoceros population.
- Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tiger reserves of any Indian state and is often called the 'Tiger State' of India.
- Sundarbans, Manas, Nanda Devi, Great Himalayan, and Keoladeo National Parks are all UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

- Project Tiger was launched in 1973, starting with 9 reserves; India now has over 50 designated tiger reserves.
- Project Elephant was launched in 1992 to protect elephants, their habitats, and migration corridors.