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DISCOVER INDIA

MARCH-APRIL 2019 | ₹100



WHERE THE WORLD TRAVELS

WIN A STAY
at
**THE BEST EXOTIC
MARIGOLD HOTEL
CASTLE KANOTA
JAIPUR**

**A WINDOW TO TAJ
AGRA HOTELS**
*with the
BEST VIEWS*

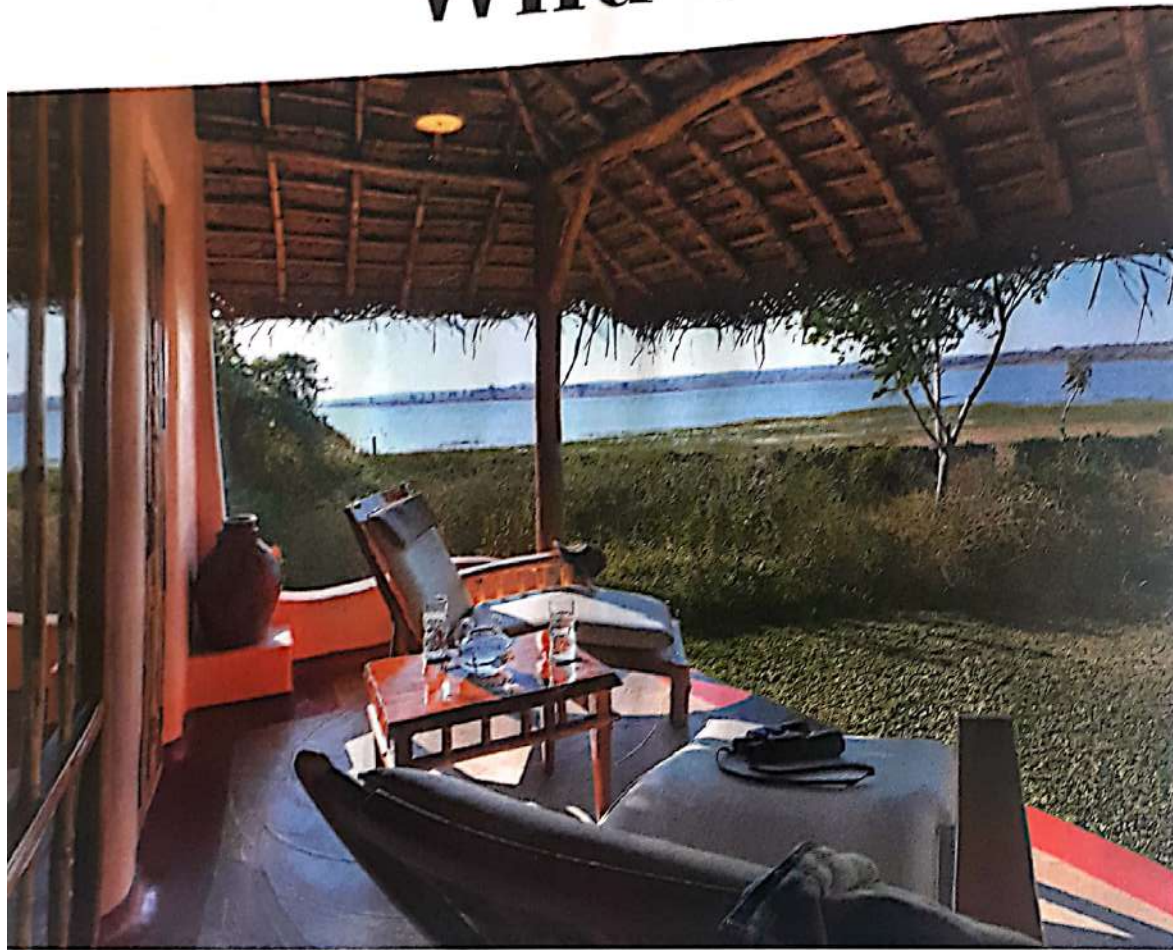
**HIDDEN GEMS
JOHAR VALLEY
BUNDI**

IN FRAMES
**THE BIG CATS OF
RANTHAMBORE**

25
ADVENTURES
in **India**
WORTH TRAVELLING FOR



Wild Wild COUNTY



Expect to rekindle romance, reconnect with nature, and discover a unique combination of wilderness and luxury with a stay at Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge in Kabini, Karnataka.

By **PARVATI MOHANAKRISHNAN**

Left: A Pool Reserve Hut at Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge. Below: The interiors of Pool Hut are done in earthy shades.

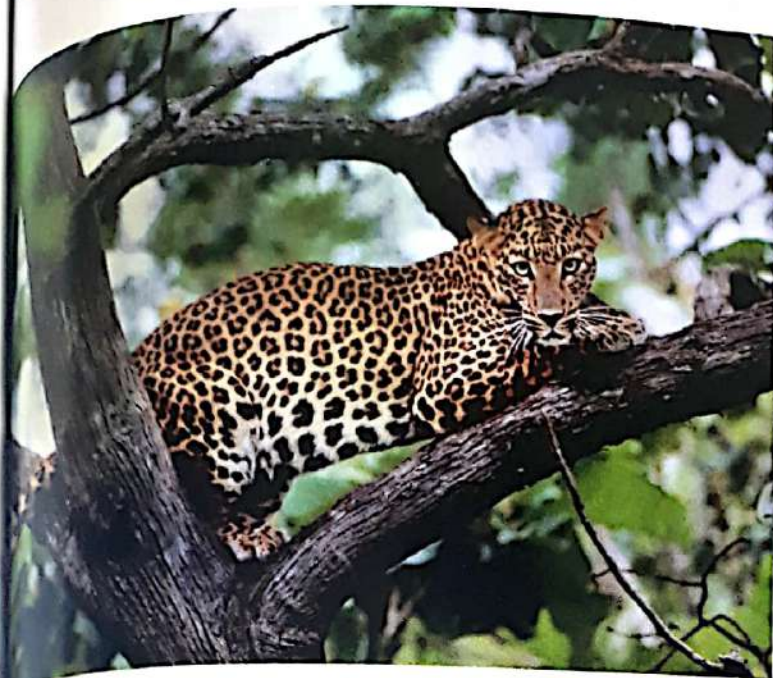
A MINISCULE STREAM of cold water manages to find its way under my raincoat as the jeep jolts in the middle of nowhere. A cloud of mystery hangs over us as the driver indicates that we should keep quiet; the cold breeze and incessant rain just intensify the suspense in the air. To my right, a peacock jumps on to the fallen trunk of a tree; a herd of deer appears out of nowhere; and a sudden chill envelopes the air, warning the forest of a predator at large. The peacock suddenly turns, and stares intensely at the bushes in the wilderness behind it. The deer follows suit. The forest stands still for a brief moment. And then it's back to business. The danger has passed, and sadly, for the hopeful bunch in the jeep, so has the opportunity to catch sight of one of the glorious big cats that the Bandipur National Park

(bandipurnationalpark.in) is so well known for. Later, we catch sight of two elephants protecting themselves from the rain, and some sambar deer. Shanmugam, the naturalist (and my self-appointed Tamil teacher), tells us we're lucky to have spotted anything at all as we head back to the lodge.

Set on the banks of River Kabini, Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge evokes romance through its indulgent setting. The raw melodies of a horn-and-vocal duo of Kadu Kabini musicians announce your arrival.

I arrived at the lodge a day ago. And even before I'd checked in to my room,





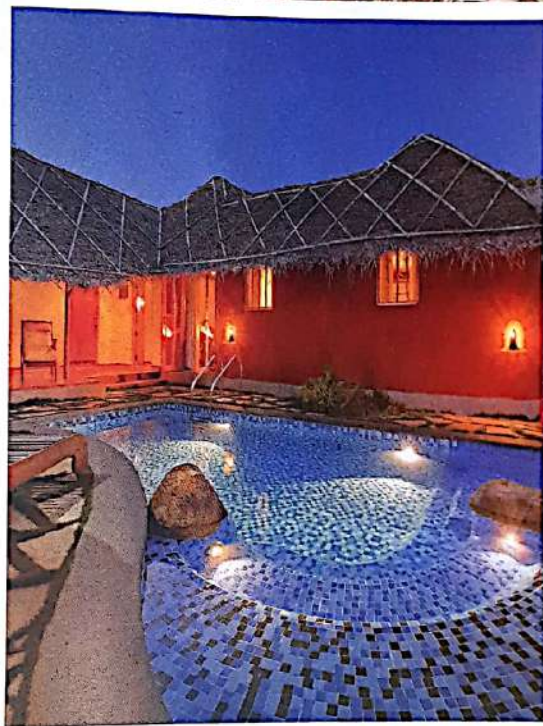
Clockwise, from above: Sign up for a safari through Bandipur National Park to spot the big cats; take a nature walk to discover local flora and fauna; huts with private pools are a major attraction at the lodge.

my demanding stomach insisted on lunch. So I perched myself down at a table overlooking the swelling river at the restaurant, Honey Comb.

A large meal of fish and local cuisine—rice and curry—followed, and sated, I made slow progress to my room.

The property is spread out over a large piece of land by the banks of the river. Accommodation is offered in a variety of huts—Pool Reserve, Pool, and Jacuzzi—each with its own verdant backyard.

A long walk down fauna-lined cobblestoned pathways brings me to my Pool Hut. I unlock the door to find myself in a beautiful suite, one wall of which is a picture window looking out at my private plunge pool—its turquoise beautifully complimenting the 50 shades of rain-washed green of the surroundings. I walk through a door to find myself in a lovely bedroom, done up in earth colours, and through another into the lavish bathroom, its bathtub overlooking the pool. Above me, a thatch roof—heralded by a variety of fire warning signs—offers cover from the elements. It is love at first sight! But I leave the hut after a quick change to make it in time for a boat safari. Later, bobbing up and down in a boat in the



middle of a seemingly boundless river, I fall in love again but this time, with the natural beauty around me—with a pair of hornbills who surprise me as I look into a thicket by the banks; with that natural force, which draws a sense of peace that I barely knew exists in me. I make my way to the main swimming pool, where in a thatched pavilion, my private yoga session awaits me. I start a *suryanamaskar* just as the rain starts falling again, its pitter-patter offering a soothing background score. A session at the spa, and a delicious dinner of grilled meats at Kuruba Grill follows. But at that moment, I am satiated. ▣

IDEAL FOR

Couples, families with kids, wildlife enthusiasts, photographers, and solo travellers who enjoy a mix of luxury and wilderness.

WHERE

Bheeramballi Village & Post, Kabini, H.D. Kote Taluk, Mysore Dist., Karnataka. Contact +91 82742-58481 (evolveback.com)

GETTING THERE

Regular flights operate between New Delhi and Bengaluru. The lodge is four-hours' drive from the airport.

TARIFF

Starts from ₹28,000/US\$ 393 per night.

WHEN

October to March

MUST SEE

Evenings see a variety of activities from wildlife storytelling sessions at the poolside bar and wildlife documentary screenings, to tribal song and dance performances. You can also take a coracle ride on the river, book a romantic Candle Light Cruise dinner, and go on a variety of nature walks.