

ONEVAASĀ EXCURSIONS

Outdoor Learning Program

8 DAYS OF LEARNING IN TIGER LANDSCAPES

14 - 21 July 2026

For the cohort of Newton School of Technology



A NOTE BEFORE YOU PACK

Welcome to the field.

You are about to spend eight days inside one of central India's finest tiger landscapes. We mean inside, literally. You will wake to bird calls, walk damp Sal forest in the monsoon, listen to elders who have read this place for generations, and meet the people who run it for a living. We have planned the program with care, but the forest will keep its own counsel. The most important thing you can carry is curiosity and a willingness to be changed.

This booklet is a small companion. It tells you where you are going, what to expect, what to bring, and how to be a good guest in a place that is not yours. Read it slowly. Mark it up. Bring it with you.

You don't learn the forest by visiting it. You learn it by sitting in it long enough that it forgets you are there.

— Bipul Mayank, Founder, onevaasā

THE INVITATION

Why Achanakmar. Why now.

LOCATED IN Bilaspur & Mungeli, Chhattisgarh	DECLARED 39th Tiger Reserve, 2009
LANDSCAPE Sal forest · bamboo · riverine	NEIGHBOURS Kanha–Bandhavgarh corridor

Achanakmar Tiger Reserve sits in the Bilaspur–Mungeli districts of Chhattisgarh, in a corner of central India where forest, river and community still hold each other together. Declared India's 39th Tiger Reserve in 2009, it is part of the Achanakmar–Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve. Corridors of forest reach toward Kanha and Bandhavgarh, making this a stitch in one of the country's most important tiger landscapes. To its inside, a mosaic of Sal forest, bamboo, riverine patches, and small farming hamlets is held by Baiga and Gond communities whose lifeways predate the boundary lines of the reserve.

We chose Achanakmar because it is honest. It is not a manicured experience. It is a working landscape where conservation, livelihoods, governance, and ecology are negotiated every day. For a cohort that will go on to build technology, that complexity is the point. You cannot design for the natural world if you have not stood inside it.

THE EIGHT DAYS

A week, in your hands.

Here is the rhythm of the program at a glance. Plans flex around weather and field conditions; that is part of the practice.

1

Mon, 14 Jul · Arrival & Welcome

Pick-ups from Raipur and Bilaspur · orientation · first night sounds walk.

2

Tue, 15 Jul · Natural History of Indian Forests

Reading the Indian forest: from Champion & Seth to a single Sal leaf.

3

Wed, 16 Jul · Tiger Landscape Conservation

Buffer safari · Project Tiger module · camera traps & pugmark casting.

4

Thu, 17 Jul · Wildlife Tracking & Birding

Tracks, scat, scrapes, alarm calls · habitat-based birding · eBird night.

5

Fri, 18 Jul · Community Engagement

Baiga-Gond village immersion · elders' circle · cooking with the women's collective.

6

Sat, 19 Jul · Government & IWT

Field Director interaction · anti-poaching camp · illegal wildlife trade workshop.

7

Sun, 20 Jul · Leadership & Storytelling

Conservation leadership lab · documenting the field · open-mic projection.

8

Mon, 21 Jul · Reflection & Departure

Final dawn walk · closing circle · transfers back to Bilaspur and Raipur.

THE TEAM CHALLENGE

Through the week, students work in small teams on a live conservation challenge — using a Systems-Design approach to navigate the complex, real-world problems of protecting the wild.

THE APPROACH

Systems-Design Thinking.

Conservation problems are not single problems. A leopard in a village kitchen is a livelihood problem, a habitat problem, a policy problem, a story-telling problem — all at once. Reading them as one thing is what makes them tractable.

Across the program we use a Systems-Design lens — a way of mapping how the parts of a system (ecology, community, governance, economy, technology) push and pull on each other, so that an intervention in one part does not unravel three others.

THE TEAM CHALLENGE

Through the week, you and three teammates take on a live conservation challenge in Achanakmar. We hand you a real, ongoing question from the Forest Department or a community in the buffer — and ask you to move it from "first question" to a working answer by Day 7.

No slides. No safe theoretical case. You have eight days, four people, and a working landscape to think inside.

The way teams work

- Teams of four are formed on Day 1 with a deliberate mix of backgrounds and styles.
- Each team is assigned a real-world challenge owner — a forest officer, a community representative, or a researcher — available for two structured conversations across the week.
- A daily 30-minute team huddle is built into the rhythm, scaffolded by the program lead.
- On Day 7, every team presents — to the cohort, the mentors, and (when available) the challenge owner. The answer is not graded; the reasoning is.
- Teams take their solved challenge home as one of the most useful artefacts of the program — a real piece of work, not a class project.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

Ten ways to read a forest.

Every day weaves through several of these tracks. They are not isolated modules; they are threads that get pulled, dropped, and picked up again across the week. By Day 8, you will have spent time inside all ten.

Natural History of Indian Forests

A working introduction to India's forest typology, with an honest focus on central India's Sal-bamboo systems. You will learn to recognise the hand of climate, soil, and fire on a forest, and to name the species you see.

Tiger Landscape Conservation

How a single tiger needs hundreds of square kilometres, and why corridors matter. The history of Project Tiger from 1973, what a Tiger Reserve actually does, and how Achanakmar fits into the Kanha-Bandhavgarh landscape.

Tiger & Wildlife Tracking

Field craft. Tracks, scat, scrapes, kills, alarm calls, behaviour. You will learn what is left behind, what it means, and how to make a sober inference instead of a hopeful guess.

Birdwatching Exercises

A craft you can take everywhere for the rest of your life. Optics, field guides, eBird logging, and the discipline of slow looking. You will leave with your own first checklist of central Indian birds.

Community Engagement

A full day with Baiga and Gond hosts. Conversations with elders, time in kitchens, time with younger residents. You will encounter the forest as a home, not a backdrop, and rethink what "stakeholder" means.

Government Engagement

A morning with the Field Director and frontline forest staff. The bureaucratic, financial and political reality of running a tiger reserve. You will see what management actually looks like up close.

Illegal Wildlife Trade & Trafficking

A serious workshop on the trade in pangolins, tiger parts, freshwater turtles, and birds. How investigations work, how WCCB, TRAFFIC and WPSI operate, and where technology can make a difference.

Safaris & Forest Trails

Buffer-zone safaris and on-foot trails, with naturalists and Forest Department guides. Slow movement, shared silence, and the long patience that wildlife asks for.

Leadership Development

Practical, in-the-field. Facilitation, ethical decisions in real situations, team dynamics, and the difference between leading from the front and leading from beside. We use a real ATR challenge as the case.

Documenting & Storytelling

Photography, voice, and writing as field practice. Led by our documentary filmmaker. By the last evening you will have a single story of place — yours — to share with the cohort.

A SMALL GALLERY

The field, in pictures.

A small sampling of what eight days inside Achanakmar can hold. None of these are staged. All of them are from the work.

W I L D L I F E



BIG CATS

Leopards and tigers in central India's Sal forest.



RARE ANIMALS

Malabar Giant Squirrels — a forest-health indicator.



NIGHTLIFE

Spotted owlets on a vine — the forest after dark.

W O R K S H O P S



BIRDING

A Grey-headed Fish Eagle on the lake edge.



TRACKING

A fresh tiger pugmark on a trail — a hand for scale.



STORYTELLING

Documenting the field with naturalist mentors.

C O H O R T



FOREST TRAILS

On-foot through the buffer — slow movement, shared silence.



COMMUNITY

A walk with Baiga-Gond hosts at the forest edge.



NETWORK

Safari teams · peers, mentors and Forest staff.

THE RHYTHM

What a day in the field feels like.

Days move with the light. We rise early because the forest does. We rest in the heat of the afternoon because the forest does. The evenings are long, slow, and shared.

05:00 — Tea & dawn walk

You wake to bird calls and the kettle. Tea, layers on, journal in pocket. Then two to three hours in the field when the forest is most alive — phones away, eyes up, voices low.

08:30 — Breakfast at the long table

A real breakfast at last. The first stories of the morning are exchanged. Field journals come out.

10:00 — Module or team huddle

A structured session — natural history, tiger landscape, IWT, leadership, storytelling — or a 30-minute team huddle on the live conservation challenge.

13:00 — Lunch and the long afternoon

Lunch is large. The afternoon is for napping, journaling, reading, washing clothes, and sitting on the verandah while the rain comes in.

15:30 — Field exercise

A trail, a community visit, a tracking lab, a bird rotation. The afternoon is for hands.

19:00 — Dinner & circle

We eat together. Always. After dinner: a reflection circle, a documentary, or a Q&A around the fire. By 21:30, the camp is quiet.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Everything, from Raipur and back.

Once you reach Raipur or Bilaspur on the morning of 14 July, the program takes over and runs until your drop on 21 July. Everything between is included; what is not is listed plainly on the right.

IN THE PROGRAM FEE

- Twin-share base-camp stay, all 7 nights
- All meals — three a day, plus two tea breaks
- Filtered water and a reusable bottle
- All in-program transport, transfers and safaris
- Forest Department safari & education permits
- Naturalists, documentary filmmaker and community facilitator as mentors
- Field gear — binoculars, journals, plant press
- On-ground medical support
- Certificate of completion from onevaasā

NOT INCLUDED

- Travel to and from Raipur or Bilaspur
- Any pre- or post-program stays in Raipur or Bilaspur
- Personal expenses — laundry, calls, souvenirs
- Personal photography equipment
- Aerated beverages
- Medical expenses if any
- Expenses incurred due to reasons beyond the control of the organizers

Questions on inclusions? Write to hello@onevaasa.com

COSTS & REGISTRATION

The fee, and how to hold a seat.

PROGRAM FEE	GST (5%)	ALL-IN · PER STUDENT
₹25,000	+ ₹1,250	₹26,250

HOW TO REGISTER

1 Confirm your seat

Write to hello@onevaasa.com with your full name, university ID and an emergency contact.

3 Submit medical & consent forms

Allergies, medications, dietary needs, and parental consent where applicable.

2 Pay 50% to lock the seat

₹13,125 by 20 June 2026, via bank transfer or UPI — details shared on confirmation.

4 Pay the balance + GST

Final ₹13,125 by 5 July 2026, ten days before departure.

Cohort capped at 24 students. Seats are confirmed in the order payments are received.

WHAT YOU TAKE BACK

More than a certificate.

Every student leaves with a Certificate of Completion — and the things no certificate can hold: a systems-design lens for complex problems, the leadership and character that field life builds, and a real conservation challenge carried from first question to a working answer.

A systems-design lens

A way to untangle complex, interconnected, real-world problems.

Leadership & character

Built through early mornings, field decisions and working as a team.

A solved challenge

A conservation problem taken from question to a working answer with your team.

A naturalist's toolkit

A field journal and a first eBird checklist you keep adding to for life.

A network

Naturalists, community hosts, Forest staff and peers to keep learning from.

PRE-DEPARTURE

What to pack.

Achanakmar in July is wet, warm, and alive. Pack for rain, leeches, mud, mosquitoes, and damp evenings. Travel light; you do not need to look good. You need to be dry, comfortable, and ready to move at 5 AM.

CLOTHING

- Quick-dry trousers (2 pairs) — earth tones; no white, no bright colours.
- Long-sleeve shirts in earth tones (3).
- A warm fleece for early mornings.
- A proper rain jacket (not a poncho).
- Cotton socks (4–5 pairs); avoid synthetic.
- Loose change of clothes for the village day.
- A wide-brimmed hat or cap.

GEAR

- A 30–40L backpack as your daypack.
- Refillable water bottle (1L).
- Head-torch with spare batteries.
- A small folding umbrella.
- Lightweight binoculars if you own a pair.
- A small notebook + 2 reliable pens.
- Phone with a power bank (network is patchy).

FOOTWEAR

- Waterproof trekking shoes (broken in).
- Sturdy floaters / sandals for camp.
- Leech socks if you have them; we will issue if you do not.
- A spare pair of dry shoes for evenings.

PERSONAL

- Insect repellent (DEET-free preferred).
- Sunscreen (mineral preferred).
- Personal medication — name-labelled.
- A small first-aid pouch (we carry the main kit).
- Toiletries in a wet/dry pouch.
- A microfibre quick-dry towel.
- A copy of your ID + medical declaration.

LEAVE AT HOME

Bright clothing (white, red, yellow, neon), perfumes / strongly scented anything, anything you would be sad to lose, and any expectation that you will be online much.

GETTING THERE

Travel and arrival.

We rendezvous as a cohort at Raipur (air & rail) and Bilaspur (rail) on the morning of 14 July, and travel together by road to base camp. Both hubs are served — your university will share specific pick-up timings closer to departure.

ARRIVE BY Raipur by 11:00, 14 Jul	OR ARRIVE BY Bilaspur by 13:00, 14 Jul
DEPART BY Bilaspur 14:00 / Raipur 16:00, 21 Jul	TRANSFER Chartered van — ~4 hrs from Raipur, ~2 hrs from Bilaspur

If you are travelling on your own

If for any reason you are joining the cohort separately, write to the program office at least seven days in advance. Do not arrange your own transfer to base camp; we will route you through our team.

Connectivity

Mobile networks are patchy in and around the reserve. Tell your family to expect short, irregular check-ins. The program team carries a satellite messenger for emergencies and runs a daily check-in window with the onevaasā office at 20:00 IST.

A SMALL CODE

How to be a good guest.

You are a visitor in someone else's home — both the wildlife's, and the community's. The following is non-negotiable. We have written it short on purpose.

IN THE FOREST

Speak softly. Move slowly. Stay with your group. No flash photography. No sound-luring. Never feed an animal. Never leave the vehicle inside the reserve. Treat the buffer with the same respect as the core.

IN THE VILLAGE

Photographs of people require named consent every single time. No filming inside homes without invitation. Eat what is offered. Do not give cash or gifts directly — speak to the community facilitator. Respect that we are guests.

WITH EACH OTHER

The buddy system is non-negotiable. Look out for one another. Tell a mentor early if something is wrong, however small. We move at the pace of the slowest member; that is the practice.

WITH THE PLACE

Take nothing. Leave nothing. Photograph everything you would otherwise pick up. Use refillable water bottles only — single-use plastic does not enter camp.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Coming home well.

Your wellbeing is the program team's first priority. The following is what we ask, and what we provide.

Before you arrive

- Submit the medical declaration form (allergies, medications, dietary needs, emergency contacts) two weeks before departure.
- A general consultation with your physician is recommended; we are happy to send a brief to share with them.
- Routine immunisations should be up to date (tetanus in particular).
- Carry a 10-day buffer of any prescription medication you take.

What we carry

- A trained first-aider on staff every day, with a stocked field kit at camp and in every vehicle.
- A standby vehicle for medical evacuation, and a pre-identified hospital in Bilaspur.
- Group travel insurance for the duration of the program.
- A satellite messenger and daily 20:00 IST check-in with the onevaasā office.

What we ask of you

- Hydrate constantly. The monsoon hides how much you are sweating.
- Tell a mentor the moment something feels off — early small problems are easy to handle; late ones are not.
- Stay with your buddy. Always.
- Do not handle wildlife — ever. Photographing a snake from two metres away is fine; trying to identify it from one metre is not.

A SHORT READING LIST

To carry in.

A few things to read before you arrive. None of them are required, all of them will deepen what you see.

- A general field guide to Indian birds — Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp, or the Helm guide. Browse the central India plates.
 - "The Vanishing" — Perna Singh Bindra, on India's wildlife crisis and the human story behind the policy.
 - "Working for the Mantis" — selected essays of M. K. Ranjitsinh, on the founding decades of Indian wildlife conservation.
 - Articles in Sanctuary Asia and Mongabay India on Achanakmar specifically.
 - A short brief on the Forest Rights Act, 2006 — to understand the rights framework that shapes any community engagement in tiger reserves.
 - Any one paper on illegal wildlife trade in central India — TRAFFIC and WPSI publish good open-access material.
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STAY IN TOUCH

Questions, before you leave.

Send the smallest of questions. The program office reads everything.

ONEVAASĀ PROGRAMS OFFICE

Email: hello@onevaasa.com · Web: onevaasa.com/excursions

WhatsApp (program line, business hours IST): shared on confirmation.

See you in Achanakmar.