



**REVATI VICTOR**  
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## FIND THE ELUSIVE SAFARI GROUND

Nagzira, Maharashtra

Nagzira is a relatively-little-known name even within the safari-frequenting circles of Central India. She sits like a gem, just waiting to be discovered, all 152 square kilometres of her. My obsession with wanting to drive away from the tiger-crazed crowds, to seek instead the elusive leopard, led me to discover this raw and lush hotspot of biodiversity that sits in the midst of arid Vidarbha – unspoilt by over-tourism and pollution. The leopards here have grown bold and brazen, since other big cat numbers are low. And that, for me, meant a chance to watch several of these gorgeous felines sashay unhurriedly down the dirt track or lap languidly at watering holes. I travelled close to the ground with Footloose Journeys who insisted we stay at the basic Forest Department Guesthouse inside the core zone – a decision that paid off when we bumped into a leopard behind the kitchen after dinner!

**GETTING THERE & STAY:** Nagzira is a three-hour drive east of Nagpur. In the absence of luxury safari lodges, the Forest Department Guesthouse within the core zone is a special treat.

**AMI BHAT**  
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## BE AWED AT THE GRAND CANYON OF INDIA

Gandikota, Andhra Pradesh

When whispers of a Grand Canyon in India reached my ears, a little research revealed that it was just a long drive from Bangalore. That's how I landed at Gandikota – only to discover that there was more to the place than just its mystical landform. The gorgeous canyon is home to an abandoned fort that gives it the name – 'gandi' means canyon and 'kota' translates to fort.

Two ancient temples with exquisite carvings and one mosque with its intricate minarets stand tall within its fortified walls.

Gandikota is a lovely place for adventure lovers and thrill seekers, too. One can choose to kayak along the River Pennar that cuts through the canyon, or head out for a hike along the rugged edges of the gorge. The clear night skies and the morning sunrise lure enthusiast campers visiting Gandikota.

**GETTING THERE & STAY:** Gandikota is 270km from Bangalore. The only stay option here is the **APTDC Hotel** located right next to the fort. You can even book a campsite through the hotel.

