



Where to see big cats in the wild

Where to see lions, tigers, cheetahs, leopards and jaguars in the wild, all while holidaying in exceptional comfort

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There is no creature more thrilling to see in the wild than a big cat. Richard Madden speaks to five leading wildlife experts to find out what makes the lion, tiger, cheetah, leopard and jaguar so compelling to watch – and where best to see them

Lions

By Jonathan Scott, the zoologist, wildlife writer and photographer, and presenter of the BBC's Big Cat Diary

Lions are not just a symbol of Africa. For centuries flags have been emblazoned with them – the very flags that have led people into battle. And for good reason, as lions are the ultimate warriors. You only have to watch a



Lanterns are put in place at Sher Bagh

[Enlarge](#)

male lion sniffing the air and gazing out over its kingdom with its mane blowing in the wind to see it and feel it.

For my wife, Angie, the best thing about lions is that they're the only truly sociable big cats. If you find one in the wild, you'll probably find 10 or even 20 in the rest of the pride.

The Marsh pride, for example, in the Maasai Mara, which I have followed since 1977, is now made up of three different groups of females in different stages of their life. You can watch a pride of lions for hour after hour and never get bored. There's always something going on.

Where to stay: [Sanctuary Olonana](#), Kenya is a luxury tented camp on the banks of the Mara River and a superb place to see lions,

as are camps in the Okavango Delta and other camps in the Moremi Game Reserve.

An eight-day Kenyan safari, with three nights at Sanctuary Olonana, watching Mara lions, costs from £3,475 per person, through Abercrombie & Kent.

Tigers

By Belinda Wright is the director and founder of the Wildlife Protection Society of India, which focuses on anti-poaching.

For me, tigers are the most mesmerising of all the world's mammals. When



Interior of Zarafa camp's dhow suites

[Enlarge](#)

you see them out in the open they are outrageously patterned and coloured, almost flaming, but when they reach the jungle their camouflage is so good they simply vanish.

They are the largest of the big cats and the ultimate predators. To survive they need to be supremely fit as they can't depend on a pride, like lions, but are very solitary and secretive.

Half of the world's remaining tigers live in India (around 1,500). But they are very elusive creatures and the best places to see them are where they are most used to tourist vehicles, like Ranthambore National Park. For a more private viewing I would suggest the mangrove forests of Sunderbans Tiger Reserve in West Bengal or Bandhavgarh National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

Where to stay: [Oberoi Vanyavilas](#) or [Sher Bagh](#), both of which offer luxury tented accommodation and are on the borders of Ranthambore National Park.