

# Neora Valley National Park, Location, Flora, Fauna & Importance

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**Neora Valley National Park** is a **protected natural area** located in the **eastern Himalayas**, known for its **dense forests, scenic landscapes, and rich biodiversity**. The park is **largely untouched** and remains one of the **most pristine forest regions in India**. It provides a **natural habitat** for a **wide variety of plants and animals**, many of which are **rare and unique species**. Overall, it plays an **important role in wildlife conservation** and helps maintain **ecological balance**, while also attracting **nature lovers and researchers**.

## About Neora Valley National Park

- **Neora Valley National Park (NVNP)** is a **protected natural area** located in the **Darjeeling (Kalimpong) district of West Bengal, India**, and is widely recognized as one of the **richest biological zones in Northeast India** due to its **exceptional biodiversity and ecological value**.
- The park spreads over an area of about **88 sq. km** and was officially **declared a National Park in 1992** under the provisions of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, ensuring legal protection to its ecosystems.
- The park lies within the **Eastern Himalayas**, which is considered a global **biodiversity hotspot**, meaning it supports a **high number of rare, endemic, and threatened species**.

- One of the most important features of this park is that it remains **largely undisturbed and inaccessible**, which has helped preserve it as one of the **most pristine and untouched forest ecosystems in West Bengal**.
- **UNESCO Tentative Status**
  - Neora Valley National Park was included in the **UNESCO Tentative List** on **26 May 2009** under the **Natural Criteria**, which recognize areas of **exceptional natural beauty and significant biodiversity value**.
  - This recognition highlights the park's importance at the **global level** and emphasizes the need for its **continued protection and conservation**.

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## Neora Valley National Park Location

- The park is situated near **Lava town in the Himalayan foothills**, offering a **spectacular natural setting** with dense forests and mountainous terrain.
- Its **geographical position is highly significant** because it shares its **northern and northeastern boundaries with Sikkim and Bhutan**, making it part of a **transboundary conservation landscape**.
- It is ecologically connected to **Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Sikkim** and the **Toorsa Strict Reserve in Bhutan**, forming a **continuous habitat corridor for wildlife movement** across international boundaries.
- The **southern boundary of the park connects with the forests of Jalpaiguri district**, which further link to **Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary and Gorumara National Park**, enhancing its role in maintaining **landscape-level ecological connectivity**.
- The **highest point of the park is Rachela Pass**, which not only connects it with neighboring protected areas but also serves as an **important trekking route and ecological transition zone**.

## Neora Valley National Park Physical Features

- The park is characterized by a **unique and complex topography**, where **steep hills rise abruptly from the piedmont plains and gradually increase in elevation towards the north**, creating a variety of **micro-landforms and environmental conditions**.
- This complex terrain has developed due to **different geomorphic processes**, resulting in a **mosaic of ecological niches**.
- The **altitude of the park ranges from about 183 meters to 3200 meters**, which leads to significant **variation in climate, temperature, and vegetation types** across the region.
- Due to this altitudinal variation, the park includes important **biomes such as the Sino-Himalayan Subtropical Forest and Sino-Himalayan Temperate Forest**, each supporting distinct plant and animal communities.

## Neora Valley National Park Flora (Plant Diversity)

- The park is extremely rich in plant diversity, with around **680 species of angiosperms**, along with several species of **pteridophytes and gymnosperms**, indicating a **high level of botanical richness**.
- Approximately **20% of these species are considered rare or threatened**, which highlights the importance of the park in **plant conservation efforts**.
- Some of the notable rare and endangered plant species found in the park include **Taxus baccata, Betula utilis, and Balanophora species**, many of which are facing the threat of extinction due to habitat loss in other regions.
- The park is also known for its **medicinal plants**, such as **Swertia chirata and Aconitum species**, which are widely used in traditional medicine systems, making the area valuable for **ethnobotanical studies and pharmaceutical research**.

## Neora Valley National Park Fauna (Animal Diversity)

- Neora Valley National Park supports a **rich diversity of wildlife**, including several **rare, endangered, and charismatic species**, making it a key area for **wildlife conservation**. Among mammals, it is home to species such as the **Red Panda, Himalayan Black Bear, Tiger, Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Elephant, Gaur, and Dhole**, all of which play important roles in the ecosystem.
- The park also supports a variety of **herbivores**, including **Sambar, Barking Deer, Goral, and Serow**, which form an essential part of the **food chain and ecological balance**. Additionally, rare species like the **Indian Pangolin and Malayan Giant Squirrel** are also found here.
- In total, the park hosts around **31 species of mammals, 258 species of birds, and 276 species of insects**, reflecting its **exceptional faunal diversity**. The presence of species like the **Red Panda**, which is globally threatened, further increases the **conservation significance of the park**.

## Neora Valley National Park Ecological Importance

- The park is an integral part of the **Kanchenjunga Landscape**, which is a major **ecological and conservation region in the Himalayas**, known for its **unique combination of biodiversity and natural beauty**.
- It exhibits characteristics of multiple **biogeographic sub-regions**, including the **Himalayan Montane System, Indian Peninsular Sub-region, and Malayan Sub-region**, making it a **unique meeting point of different ecological zones**.
- Due to its **undisturbed nature and difficult accessibility**, the park provides a **safe habitat for many endangered species** and plays a crucial role in maintaining **ecological balance and environmental stability** in the region.

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