

Singalila National Park, Location, Physical Features, Flora & Fauna

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Singalila National Park is a **protected natural area** located in the **eastern Himalayas**, known for its **beautiful mountain landscapes, dense forests, and rich biodiversity**. The park is famous for its **scenic views of snow-covered peaks** and peaceful natural environment. It provides a **natural habitat for many plants and animals**, including some **rare and unique species**. Overall, it plays an important role in **wildlife conservation and maintaining ecological balance**, while also attracting **nature lovers, trekkers, and researchers**.

Singalila National Park

- **Singalila National Park** is a **high-altitude national park** located on the **Singalila Ridge in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal**, at an elevation of more than **7000 feet above sea level**. It is known as the **highest national park in West Bengal** and is famous for its **stunning views of the Himalayan mountain range**, stretching from **Nepal to Bhutan**.
- The park covers an area of about **78.60 sq. km** and was first declared a **Wildlife Sanctuary in 1986** and later upgraded to a **National Park in 1992**, ensuring better protection of its natural resources and wildlife.

It is widely known for its **beautiful landscapes**, including **rhododendron forests, alpine valleys, and mountain ridges**.

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Singalila National Park Location and Boundaries

- The park is situated in the **Eastern Himalayas** along the **Singalila Ridge**, which runs from **north to south** and acts as a natural boundary between **West Bengal and Nepal**. It is also bordered by **Sikkim in the north**, making it an important **transboundary ecological region**.
- The region has long been used as a **trekking route**, especially from **Manebhanjyang to Sandakphu and Phalut**, attracting trekkers from all over the country. The park's location offers **clear panoramic views of major Himalayan peaks**.

Singalila National Park Peaks and Physical Features

- The park includes the two highest peaks of West Bengal, **Sandakphu (3630 m)** and **Phalut (3600 m)**, both located within its boundaries and known for their **spectacular sunrise and sunset views over the Himalayas**.
- The terrain mainly consists of **mountain ridges, deep valleys, and forested slopes**, which create a **wide variety of natural habitats** for plants and animals.
- Important rivers like the **Rammam and Sirikhola** flow through the park, supporting its **ecosystem, vegetation, and wildlife**.
- Sandakphu is also known as the “**mountain of poisonous plants**” due to the presence of **Himalayan Cobra Lilies (Arisaema)** in the region.
- The variation in altitude and terrain leads to **different climatic conditions**, which further supports **rich biodiversity** and **unique ecosystems** within the park.

Singalila National Park History

- The history of the park dates back to the **British colonial period**, when the region was acquired from the **Sikkim Darbar in 1882** and declared a **reserve forest** under the **Indian Forest Act, 1878**.
- Over time, the area gained importance as a **trekking and expedition route**, especially for those heading towards **Mount Kanchenjunga**. In 1955, **Tenzing Norgay Sherpa** welcomed the first successful summit team of Kanchenjunga at **Sandakphu**, adding historical importance to the region.
- The park was officially opened for tourism after it became a **National Park in 1992**, and since then it has grown into a **major destination for trekking and eco-tourism**.

Singalila National Park Flora (Plant Diversity)

- Singalila National Park is rich in plant life, with forests dominated by **bamboo, oak, magnolia, and rhododendron**, especially at altitudes between **2000 and 3600 meters**. These forests create a **dense and colorful landscape** throughout the year.

- The park is famous for its **seasonal flowering**, with **rhododendrons blooming in spring**, while plants like **Primula, Geranium, Saxifraga, and orchids** bloom after the monsoon, adding to the region's beauty.
- The presence of **rare orchids and alpine vegetation** makes the park important for **botanical studies and conservation**.

Singalila National Park Fauna (Animal Diversity)

- The park is home to a variety of **wildlife species**, including rare and endangered animals such as the **Red Panda**, which is one of its main attractions. Other animals include **Himalayan Black Bear, Leopard, Clouded Leopard, and Serow**, which are important for maintaining the ecosystem.
- Smaller mammals like **Leopard Cat, Barking Deer, Pangolin, Wild Boar, Yellow-throated Marten, and Pika** are also found here, showing the park's **rich faunal diversity**.
- The area is also important for **birdlife**, with over **120 species of Himalayan and Indo-Burma birds**, and lies on the **migratory bird flyway**. Additionally, species like the **Himalayan Newt** are found near nearby lakes, making it ecologically significant.

Singalila National Park Ecological Importance

- The park plays an important role in conserving **high-altitude Himalayan ecosystems**, protecting both flora and fauna adapted to cold and mountainous conditions.
- Due to its location along international borders, it helps maintain **ecological connectivity between India, Nepal, and Sikkim**, allowing smooth wildlife movement across regions.
- Its undisturbed environment and diverse habitats make it a **key area for biodiversity conservation** and environmental stability in the Eastern Himalayas.
- The forests act as an important **carbon sink**, helping in reducing the effects of **climate change and global warming**.
- It supports **watershed protection**, as rivers like Rammam and Sirikhola originate here, helping maintain **water supply and soil conservation** in surrounding areas.
- The park also helps in preserving **rare and endemic species**, making it significant for **scientific research, ecological studies, and conservation planning**.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/singalila-national-park/>

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