

Chandoli National Park, Location, Wildlife, History, Geography

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Chandoli National Park is a **protected forest area** located in the state of **Maharashtra**. It is known for its **rich biodiversity**, **dense forests**, and **scenic natural landscapes**. The park provides a safe habitat for various species of **wildlife**, including **animals, birds, and plants**. It is also part of the **Western Ghats**, a region famous for its **ecological importance**.

Chandoli National Park

- **Chandoli National Park** is an important protected forest area located in the state of **Maharashtra**, spread across **Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur, and Ratnagiri districts**, making it geographically diverse and ecologically significant.
- It lies along the **Sahyadri Range (Western Ghats)**, which is a globally recognized **biodiversity** hotspot known for rich flora and fauna.
- The region was first declared a **Wildlife Sanctuary in 1985** and later upgraded to a **National Park in 2004**, reflecting its growing ecological importance.
- The park covers an area of **317.67 sq. km**, providing a large habitat for wildlife species.

- In **2007**, it became part of the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve** under the **Project Tiger initiative** by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.
- Due to its ecological value, the park is also recognized under the **UNESCO World Heritage framework** of the Western Ghats.

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Chandoli National Park Geography and Physical Features

- The park is located in the **northern Western Ghats** and is characterized by rugged terrain, including **flat-topped mountains**, dense forests, and deep valleys.
- A unique feature of the region is the presence of **lateritic plateaus called "Saddas"**, which are rocky surfaces with minimal vegetation.
- The elevation ranges between **589 meters to 1,044 meters above sea level**, contributing to varied climatic and ecological conditions.
- The **Warna River** is the main river flowing through the park, supported by several **small streams, water channels, and reservoirs**.
- Important water bodies like the **Vasant Sagar Reservoir** and natural water holes ensure year-round water availability for wildlife.
- The park is naturally protected by the **Sahyadri mountain ridges**, which act as a natural barrier and help preserve its **ecosystem**.

Chandoli National Park Climate

- Chandoli National Park experiences a **semi-arid climate**, with noticeable seasonal variations.
- The **average temperature** ranges between **19°C to 32°C**, making it moderate for most of the year.
- During **summer months (April-May)**, temperatures can rise above **42°C**, making conditions harsh.
- In **winter**, temperatures may fall below **10°C**, especially in higher altitudes.
- The park receives an **average annual rainfall of around 762 mm**, which supports forest growth and maintains water bodies.

Chandoli National Park History

- Historically, the region served as an **open jail during the rule of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, where **prisoners of war** were kept during military campaigns.
- It was also used as a **strategic and recreational location** by the Maratha rulers.
- The forts of **Prachitgad and Bhairavgad**, built during the Maratha period, are located within the park and hold historical significance.
- These forts were actively used during the reign of **Sambhaji Maharaj**, son of Shivaji Maharaj, especially for **observation and defense purposes**.
- Over time, the ecological importance of the area led to its protection and eventual designation as a **National Park**.

Chandoli National Park Flora (Vegetation)

- The park mainly consists of **moist deciduous forests**, which support a wide variety of plant species.
- It also includes patches of **dry evergreen vegetation**, adding to its ecological diversity.
- Important plant species include **ironwood trees** and other native forest vegetation.
- Grass species such as **Bluestem grass** and **Anjan grass** are commonly found and play a role in supporting herbivores.
- Unique **insectivorous plants like bladderworts** are also present, highlighting the ecological uniqueness of the park.
- The vegetation provides essential support for wildlife and contributes to maintaining the **ecosystem balance**.

Chandoli National Park Fauna (Wildlife)

- Chandoli National Park is rich in biodiversity, with over **22 species of mammals**, more than **120 species of birds**, and several **amphibians and reptiles**.
- Major wildlife species include **Tigers, Leopards, Panther cats, Gaur (Indian bison), and Sloth bears**, making it an important conservation area.
- Various species of deer such as **Sambar deer, Barking deer, and Mouse deer** are commonly found.
- The park is also home to a large number of **bird species (around 123)**, making it ideal for birdwatching.
- Recent **camera-based wildlife censuses** have shown a **rise in tiger population**, indicating successful conservation efforts.

Chandoli National Park Conservation Efforts

- Various **conservation programs** are being implemented by the **Forest Department, government agencies, and wildlife organizations**.
- The relocation of villages from the core area has reduced **human interference**, helping wildlife thrive.
- Continuous monitoring and protection have led to an **increase in wildlife populations**, especially big cats.
- These efforts aim to preserve the **biodiversity and ecological balance** of the park

Chandoli National Park Recent Developments

- Chandoli National Park is now fully included in the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve**, strengthening its conservation status under **Project Tiger**.
- The **Karadi-Bhogiv Hydroelectric Project** has been proposed near the **Warna River basin**, involving surrounding areas.
- Villages have been **rehabilitated outside the park**, ensuring minimal disturbance to wildlife habitats.
- These developments aim to balance **environmental conservation with regional development needs**.

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