

Travel » World Travel

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

See wildlife in their natural habitat on these nature preserves and guided tours

By Becca Hensley



While zoos give us a sense of the world beyond our borders, there's nothing like seeing wildlife in their true natural habitat. Get a real feel for your destination by observing its native inhabitants on their own terrain. Whether it's via nature preserves or guided tours, the animal kingdom welcomes you.

What: Tigers

Where: Ranthambore National Park, India

The bumpy, dusty roads and brushy landscape of Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan—India's most colourful state—are home to temples, monkeys and forts. But most people visit to gaze at the reserve's approximately 50 protected, free-roaming tigers. Once the royal hunting ground for the Maharajas of Jaipur, the park limits the number of visitors daily and has scheduled tour departure times. Make a reservation through a hotel such as the Oberoi Vanyavilas, which sits at the edge of the park. ranthamborenationalpark.com

What: Kiwi Birds

Where: New Zealand

The shy, semi-nocturnal kiwi bird is New Zealand's national symbol. But most residents of the island nation admit they've never set eyes on this endangered creature. To ensure a sighting, head to The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, a reserve and resort on the North Island's east shore. As a guest of the hotel, you'll accompany a guide through the brush to find kiwis, monitor their locations and observe the guide weigh and measure them. You can even pet them to feel their fur-like feathers. capekidnappers.com

What: Polar Bears

Where: Norway

Board a Lindblad National Geographic Expedition ship to cruise the shores of Norway above the Arctic Circle. You'll observe snow-white polar bears among the beauty and majesty of one of nature's most dramatic landscapes. On another tour, on Svalbard Island, in a Narnia-like setting, expedition leaders guide you on a safari to view these gargantuan creatures as they loll atop icebergs, swim in the frigid water and hunt their prey. expeditions.com

What: Tasmanian Devils

Where: Australia

An island off Australia's east coast, Tasmania has pastures, mountains, rugged shorelines and a population of

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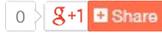
some of the world's most unique animals. Protected and beloved by the locals, they can be enjoyed and observed at sanctuaries such as Bonorong, which nurses injured creatures back to health before releasing them into their natural habitat. When you visit, stroke a fat wombat, bottle-feed a spiky echidna or dangle a bit of bloody bone above the endangered, forever famished Tasmanian devils as they engage in a feeding frenzy. bonorong.com.au

What: Desert Creatures

Where: Arizona

In the Sonoran Desert near Phoenix, the terrain unfurls like a magic carpet of otherworldly delights. Saguaro cacti, boulders and sunsets as colourful as fireworks define the landscape. From your stucco casita at The Boulders, a Waldorf Astoria resort, watch a jaw-dropping parade of species. Bobcats, coyotes, jackrabbits, lizards, herons, eagles and egrets wander the resort and its environs. Sign up for a moonlight bike tour, or the geology walks, for guided sightings. theboulders.com

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