

ARAVALI SAFARI PARK : ENVIRONMENT

NEWS: *What is the Aravali safari park project?*

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Haryana government's plan to establish the world's largest safari park across 3,858 hectares in the Aravali regions of Gurugram and Nuh faces significant opposition due to potential ecological damage and legal issues with land use, as the area is protected under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980.

Aravali Safari Park Project Details The Haryana government has launched an ambitious initiative to create the world's largest safari park, the Aravali Safari Park. Spanning an extensive area of 3,858 hectares (approximately 10,000 acres), the park is planned across the districts of Gurugram and Nuh. The project is set to include a variety of attractions such as animal cages, guest houses, hotels, restaurants, an auditorium, an animal hospital, children's parks, botanical gardens, an aquarium, cable cars, a tunnel walk with exhibits, an open-air theatre, and multiple eateries.

WILL BE THE LARGEST SUCH PARK IN THE WORLD



Total area
10,000 acres
in Gurgaon and Nuh

VILLAGES INCLUDED

GURGAON SIDE:
Sakatpur, Gairatpur Bas, Shikohpur, Bhondsi, Ghamroj, Alipur, Tikli, Aqlimpur, Naurangpur, Bargujjar

NUH SIDE: Kota Khandewla, Gangani, Mohamadpur Ahir, Kharak, Jalalpur, Bhango, Chalka

To be developed in 3 phases

- Haryana aims to complete the first phase in two years
- Meeting to finalise tender will be held in a week

What the zoo-safari will include

- Large enclosures for big cats
- Zones for amphibians and herbivores
- Bird park and lake for migratory birds
- Nature trails for trekkers

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

- **Survey done:** The Central Zoo Authority has inspected the site and found it feasible for a zoo safari. Drone photography of the Gurgaon portion is complete. Demarcation and closure of the park area conducted
- **Private firms shortlisted:** Two companies have been shortlisted for designing, building and operating the state-of-the-art facility

Environmental and Legal Concerns The project, however, has sparked considerable controversy, primarily due to its ecological and legal implications:

- **Ecological Impact:** Environmental experts are concerned that the project, aimed at boosting tourism, could adversely affect the ecologically sensitive Aravali region. The expected increase in tourism could disrupt the natural aquifers beneath the Aravalis, which are crucial for addressing the water scarcity in Gurugram and Nuh districts.

- **Legal Challenges:** The designated area for the park falls under the category of "forest" land, protected by the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, which prohibits deforestation, land clearance, and construction activities.
- **State's Forest Cover:** Haryana's existing forest cover is critically low at 3.6%. Experts argue that the state should focus on rewilding its natural forests rather than pursuing large-scale safari projects that could further degrade the environment.
- **Conceptual Critique:** There is also a debate about the very nature of constructing an artificial park within a naturally rich habitat like the Aravallis. Critics argue that introducing artificial enclosures and zoo-like structures in such a setting undermines the conservation of natural wildlife habitats.

Aravali Range: Geographical and Ecological Significance

- **Geographical Profile:** The Aravali Range, one of the world's oldest mountain ranges dating back to the Proterozoic era, stretches approximately 670 kilometers from northeast to southwest. It begins near Delhi, extends through southern Haryana and Rajasthan, and terminates in Gujarat.
- **Subdivisions:** The range is categorized into two main sections: the Sambhar-Sirohi ranges and the Sambhar-Khetri ranges.
- **Hydrological Importance:** The Aravalis are crucial for hydrology, giving rise to several rivers including the Banas and Sahibi (tributaries of the Yamuna), the Luni (which flows into the Rann of Kutch), Sakhi, and Sabarmati.
- **Ecological Role:** Ecologically, the Aravalis play a vital role in preventing desertification, curbing the eastward spread of the Thar Desert into eastern Rajasthan. The fractured and weathered rocks of the range enhance its ability to act as an aquifer, facilitating the percolation and recharge of groundwater.
- **Natural Resources:** The Aravali Range is also endowed with valuable minerals like rock phosphate, lead-zinc-silver, talc, pyrophyllite, asbestos, among others.
- **Highest Peak:** Guru Shikhar, located on Mount Abu, stands as the highest peak of the Aravali range.



This comprehensive description highlights the complexities surrounding the Aravali Safari Park Project, underscoring the balance needed between developmental aspirations and environmental conservation in one of India's most ancient and ecologically significant mountain ranges.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/what-is-the-aravali-safari-park-project-explained/article69231346.ece#:~:text=As%20per%20the%20tender%20invited,open%20Dair%20theatre%20and%20eateries.>