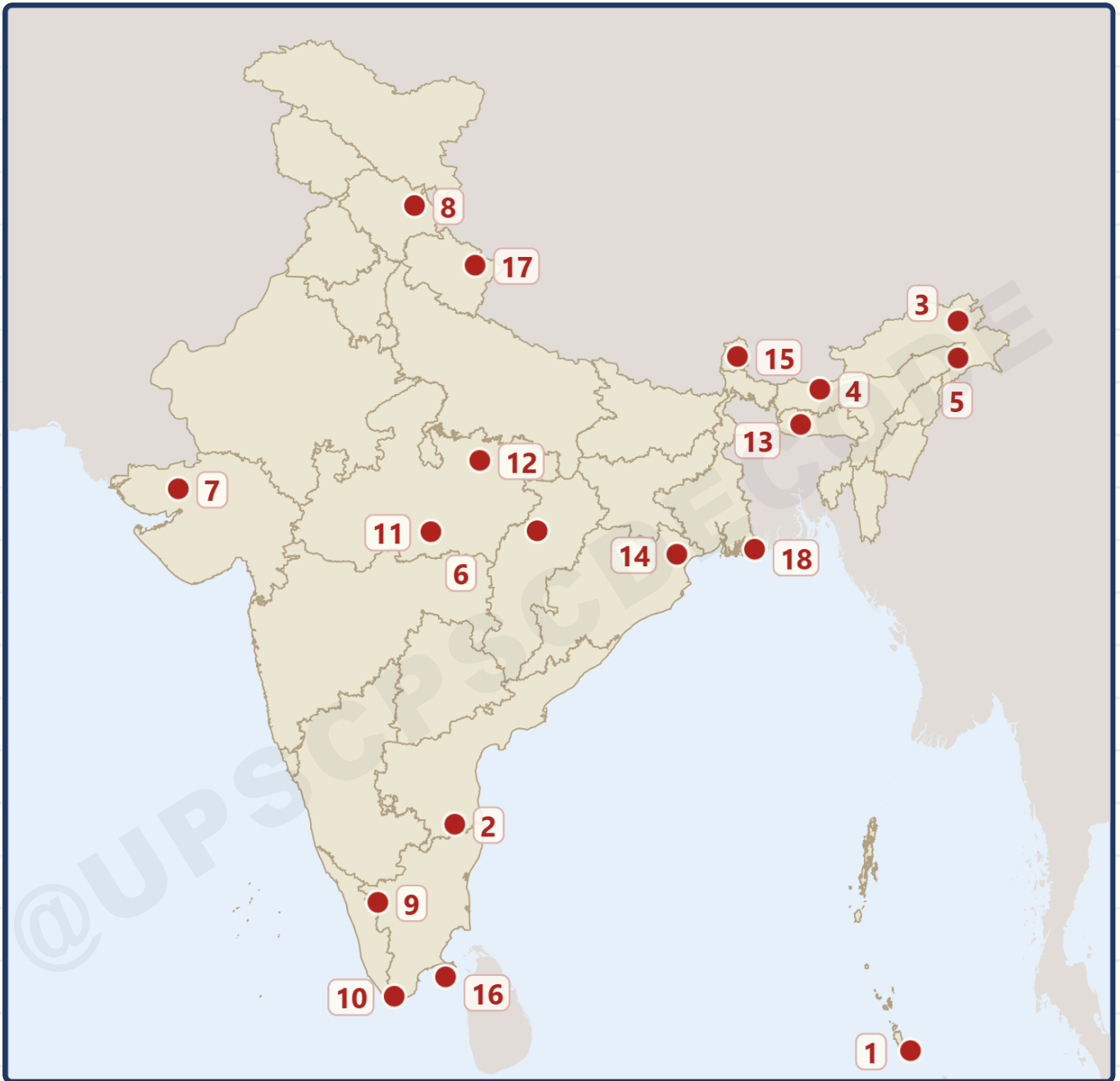


# Biosphere Reserves of India

State-wise · every biosphere reserve · key facts · UPSC PYQ tags



**UPSC PYQ** = asked in UPSC Prelims (years shown) · states in A-Z order · numbers on the map = numbers in the tables

# The basics first

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## What is a Biosphere Reserve UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB), 1971

- Protects nature AND the people who live in it: conservation + sustainable use
- Three zones: Core (no human activity) → Buffer (research, education) → Transition (people live and farm)
- Declared by the Government of India (MoEFCC) since 1986; there is no separate law for it
- India has 18 biosphere reserves

## On UNESCO's list (13) World Network of Biosphere Reserves

- Nilgiri 2000 · Gulf of Mannar 2001 · Sundarban 2001 · Nanda Devi 2004
- Nokrek 2009 · Pachmarhi 2009 · Similipal 2009 · Achanakmar-Amarkantak 2012
- Great Nicobar 2013 · Agasthyamala 2016 · Khangchendzonga 2018 · Panna 2020
- Cold Desert 2025: the newest, India's 13th

## Not on UNESCO's list (5) the usual trap

- Manas · Dibru-Saikhowa · Dehang-Debang · Kachchh · Seshachalam
- Being a biosphere reserve in India does not make it a UNESCO one

## Records first · largest · smallest · newest

- First: Nilgiri (1986), also the first on UNESCO's list (2000)
- Largest: Kachchh, Gujarat
- Smallest: Dibru-Saikhowa, Assam
- Newest declared: Panna (2011) · newest on UNESCO's list: Cold Desert (2025)

## Marine and coastal sea, delta and islands

- Gulf of Mannar: first marine biosphere reserve of South Asia
- Sundarban: mangrove delta
- Great Nicobar: island rainforest and coast

## Spread over 2+ states asked as "which states"

- Nilgiri: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka
- Agasthyamala: Kerala, Tamil Nadu
- Achanakmar-Amarkantak: Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh

## Andaman & Nicobar 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                   | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Great Nicobar</b><br>Great Nicobar Island · 1989 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2013</li><li>• Southernmost biosphere reserve; holds Campbell Bay and Galathea NPs</li><li>• Home of the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes</li><li>• Leatherback turtle, Nicobar megapode</li></ul> |

## Andhra Pradesh 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                               | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | <b>Seshachalam</b><br>Tirupati · Kadapa · 2010<br>UPSC PYQ 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not on UNESCO's World Network — a national biosphere reserve only</li><li>• Seshachalam hills of the Eastern Ghats (Tirumala)</li><li>• Red sanders: endemic, and the reason it is guarded</li><li>• Sri Venkateswara NP inside</li></ul> |

## Arunachal Pradesh 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                          | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | <b>Dehang-Debang</b><br>Upper Siang · Dibang Valley · 1998 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not on UNESCO's World Network — a national biosphere reserve only</li><li>• Holds Mouling NP and Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary</li><li>• Rises from tropical forest to alpine snow</li><li>• Takin, red panda</li></ul> |

## Assam 2 biosphere reserves

| # | Biosphere reserve                                            | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | <b>Manas</b><br>Chirang · Baksa, on the Bhutan border · 1989 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not on UNESCO's World Network — a national biosphere reserve only</li><li>• Core: Manas NP, a World Heritage Site, tiger reserve and elephant reserve</li><li>• Named after the Manas river</li><li>• Golden langur, pygmy hog, hispid hare, Bengal florican</li></ul> |

5 **Dibru-Saikhowa**  
Tinsukia · Dibrugarh · 1997

- Not on UNESCO's World Network — a national biosphere reserve only
- SMALLEST biosphere reserve of India
- South bank of the Brahmaputra; a river-island landscape
- Feral horses, white-winged wood duck

## Chhattisgarh 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                                    | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 | <b>Achanakmar-Amarkantak</b><br>Chhattisgarh · Madhya Pradesh · 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2012</li><li>• Maikal hills, where the Vindhya and Satpura ranges meet</li><li>• Amarkantak: source of the Narmada and the Son</li><li>• Achanakmar Tiger Reserve inside</li></ul> |

## Gujarat 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                                 | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 | <b>Kachchh</b><br>Kachchh · Rajkot · Surendranagar · Patan · 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not on UNESCO's World Network — a national biosphere reserve only</li><li>• LARGEST biosphere reserve of India</li><li>• Salt desert of the Rann; flamingo breeding grounds</li><li>• Indian wild ass (khur) of the Little Rann</li></ul> |

## Himachal Pradesh 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                   | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 | <b>Cold Desert</b><br>Lahaul-Spiti · Kinnaur · 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2025 — India's 13th</li><li>• India's first high-altitude cold-desert reserve on the UNESCO list</li><li>• Pin Valley NP, Kibber sanctuary, Chandratal</li><li>• Snow leopard, Siberian ibex</li></ul> |

## Karnataka 1 biosphere reserve

| # | Biosphere reserve                                                         | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 | <b>Nilgiri</b><br>Tamil Nadu · Kerala · Karnataka · 1986<br>UPSC PYQ 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India's FIRST biosphere reserve (1986)</li> <li>On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2000 — India's first</li> <li>Spread over three states: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka</li> <li>Holds Mudumalai, Wayanad, Bandipur, Nagarhole, Mukurthi and Silent Valley</li> </ul> |

## Kerala 2 biosphere reserves

| #  | Biosphere reserve                                                        | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9  | <b>Nilgiri</b><br>also here · see Karnataka                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 10 | <b>Agasthyamala</b><br>Kerala · Tamil Nadu · 2001<br>UPSC PYQ 2005, 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2016 — India's 10th</li> <li>Southern end of the Western Ghats, on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border</li> <li>Neyyar, Peppara, Shendurney sanctuaries + Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve</li> <li>Kani tribe; lion-tailed macaque</li> </ul> |

## Madhya Pradesh 3 biosphere reserves

| #  | Biosphere reserve                                                             | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | <b>Pachmarhi</b><br>Narmadapuram · Betul · Chhindwara · 1999<br>UPSC PYQ 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2009</li> <li>In the Satpura range: Satpura NP, Bori and Pachmarhi sanctuaries</li> <li>Dhupgarh: highest peak of the Satpura</li> <li>Indian giant squirrel</li> </ul> |
| 6  | <b>Achanakmar-Amarkantak</b><br>also here · see Chhattisgarh                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

12 **Panna**  
Panna · Chhatarpur · 2011

- On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2020 — India's 12th
- Ken river runs through it: the Ken-Betwa link project cuts into it
- Tigers were brought back (2009) after they had all been lost
- Panna diamond belt nearby

## Meghalaya 1 biosphere reserve

| #  | Biosphere reserve                  | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | <b>Nokrek</b><br>Garo Hills · 1988 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2009</li><li>• Nokrek Peak: highest point of the Garo Hills</li><li>• Wild orange Citrus indica: a national citrus gene sanctuary</li><li>• Hoolock gibbon, red panda</li></ul> |

## Odisha 1 biosphere reserve

| #  | Biosphere reserve                     | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 | <b>Similipal</b><br>Mayurbhanj · 1994 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2009</li><li>• Similipal Tiger Reserve: the only wild home of pseudo-melanistic ("black") tigers</li><li>• Barehipani and Joranda waterfalls</li><li>• Also an elephant reserve</li></ul> |

## Sikkim 1 biosphere reserve

| #  | Biosphere reserve                                                     | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15 | <b>Khangchendzonga</b><br>North & West Sikkim · 2000<br>UPSC PYQ 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2018 — India's 11th</li><li>• One of the highest ecosystems on Earth</li><li>• Its national park is India's first "mixed" World Heritage Site (2016)</li><li>• Red panda, snow leopard</li></ul> |

## Tamil Nadu 3 biosphere reserves

| #  | Biosphere reserve                                                             | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9  | <b>Nilgiri</b><br>also here · see Karnataka                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 16 | <b>Gulf of Mannar</b><br>Ramanathapuram · Thoothukudi · 1989<br>UPSC PYQ 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2001</li><li>• First MARINE biosphere reserve of South Asia</li><li>• 21 islands between India and Sri Lanka; coral reefs and seagrass</li><li>• Dugong (sea cow)</li></ul> |
| 10 | <b>Agasthyamala</b><br>also here · see Kerala                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Uttarakhand 1 biosphere reserve

| #  | Biosphere reserve                                                              | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17 | <b>Nanda Devi</b><br>Chamoli · Pithoragarh · Bageshwar · 1988<br>UPSC PYQ 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2004</li><li>• Core = Nanda Devi NP + Valley of Flowers NP (both a World Heritage Site)</li><li>• Snow leopard, Himalayan musk deer, Brahma Kamal</li><li>• Nanda Devi (7,816 m): highest peak wholly inside India</li></ul> |

## West Bengal 1 biosphere reserve

| #  | Biosphere reserve                                                     | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18 | <b>Sundarban</b><br>South & North 24 Parganas · 1989<br>UPSC PYQ 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On UNESCO's World Network (MAB) since 2001</li><li>• Largest mangrove forest in the world, in the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta (shared with Bangladesh)</li><li>• Royal Bengal tiger that swims; saltwater crocodile</li><li>• Also a World Heritage Site and a Ramsar site (2019)</li></ul> |