

Khangchendzonga National Park

Located at the heart of the Himalayan range in northern India, the Khangchendzonga National Park includes a unique diversity of plains, valleys, lakes, glaciers and spectacular, snow-capped mountains covered with ancient forests, including one of the world's highest peaks, Mount Khangchendzonga.

It is located in the state of Sikkim and is a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) and a National Park cum Biosphere Reserve.

About the Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

The Khangchendzonga National Park forms the core area of the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve which was declared as India's first 'Mixed World Heritage Site' by UNESCO in 2016.

Some key features of the Khangchedzone National Park are as given below:

Name of National Park	Khangchedzone National Park
Located in	Sikkim
Area	178,400 ha additional buffer and transition zone of 114,712 ha
Altitude	Highest peak of property - 8,586 metres above sea level Lowest peak of property - 1,220 metres above sea level
Date of Establishment	Khangchendzonga National Park was designated by the Indian state government in 1977
Year of Inscription as World Heritage site	2016

History of Establishment

The timeline of events that happened through the establishment of Khangchendzonga National Park:

- **1955** - First successful ascent of Mt. Khangchendzonga
- **1977** - It was designated by the Government of India
- **1997** - It was extended by 1,784 km²
- **2000** - The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve was designated under the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme
- **2010** - Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project was initiated
- **2016** - The National Park was declared as a World Heritage site by UNESCO

Physical Features

- The property falls within the Himalaya global biodiversity hotspot and displays an unsurpassed range of sub-tropical to alpine ecosystems
- It **covers 25% of the state of Sikkim** and is one of India's most significant biodiversity concentrations
- The park **boasts 18 glaciers** including Zemu Glacier
- There are **73 glacial lakes** in the property including over 18 crystal clear and placid high altitude lakes
- The massif has five main ridges that run in different directions and contain multiple peaks that rise beyond 6,000 metres:
 - Mt. Siniolchu on the east ridge
 - Mt. Jannu on the west ridge
 - Mt. Kabru North on the south ridge
 - Twins on the north ridge
 - Pandim Peak on the southeast ridge
- The **Tholung Monastery**, one of the most sacred monasteries of Sikkim is situated inside the Khangchendzonga National Park. It is a World Heritage property

Biodiversity Features

- An impressive range of large mammals, including several apex predators can be found at this National Park
- The **six cat species** confirmed to have been found are:
 - Leopard
 - Clouded Leopard
 - Snow Leopard
 - Jungle Cat
 - Golden Cat
 - Leopard Cat
- Other animals that can be found include Jackal, Tibetan Wolf, large Indian Civet, Red Panda, Goral, Blue Sheep, Himalayan Tahr, Mainland Serow, two species of Musk Deer, two primates, four species of pika and several rodent species, including the parti-coloured Flying Squirrel
- It is **home to nearly half of India's bird diversity**, wild trees, orchids and rhododendrons and **one-third of the country's flowering plants**
- The property supports **1,580 species of vascular plants**, including 106 pteridophytes, 11 gymnosperms and 1,463 angiosperms
- **114 species of lichen** have been found in the National Park
- Sikkim is said to be particularly rich in the diversity of invertebrates. Approximately **650 species of butterfly** can be found in the state and a major part of them have been tracked in Khangchendzonga as well

Religious & Culture Heritage at Khangchendzonga

- **Mount Khangchendzonga represents the core sacred region of the Sikkimese** and syncretistic religious and cultural traditions
- **Dzonga, Sikkim's guardian deity** and the owner and protector of the land, resides on Mount Khangchendzonga
- the property's cultural value is the notion that the area, and particularly the mountain, are sacred for Buddhists through the **concept of 'beyul'** (hidden land)
- The **sacred Buddhist importance of the place begins in the 8th century with Guru Rinpoche's initiation of the Buddhist sanctity** of the region, and later appears in Buddhist scriptures such as the prophetic text known as the Lama Gongdu

