



# Filming in Indian Forests

Forest and wildlife filming permissions in India, the authority chain, land classification, fees and the conservation rules that decide where a production can and cannot shoot.

## 1. Who Grants Permission

Forest filming is not a single-desk approval. The authority depends on the land's legal classification, and protected areas pull in central agencies on top of the state Forest Department. The Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) permits filming in protected areas, and the Film Facilitation Office (FFO) at [ffo.gov.in](http://ffo.gov.in) coordinates the application.

Level	Authority	Covers
Field / division	Range Officer, ACF, DFO (Deputy Conservator of Forests)	Reserved and Protected Forests; first point of application
State	Chief Wildlife Warden / PCCF (Wildlife); Principal Secretary (Forest)	National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries
Central, tiger reserves	NTCA, under MoEFCC	Tiger Reserves (buffer only)
Central, parks	MoEFCC Wildlife Division	National Parks clearance
Foreign crews	Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), then the above	Any public or commercial release

**Hard limit:** the core or critical tiger habitat of a Tiger Reserve is inviolate under Section 38V of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (as amended 2006). No film shooting is permitted there. Productions work the buffer zones and territorial forest divisions instead.

## 2. Land Classification and What It Controls

Identify the legal status of every location first. It decides the authority, the lead time and whether filming is allowed at all.

Classification	Status	Permission route
Reserved Forest (RF)	Highest protection under the Indian Forest Act	State Forest Dept (DFO / division)
Protected Forest (PF)	Protected, some local rights	State Forest Dept
Unclassed / village forest	Lighter restriction	Local forest division
Wildlife Sanctuary	Protected Area, WLPA 1972	Chief Wildlife Warden
National Park	Protected Area, WLPA 1972	Chief Wildlife Warden + MoEFCC
Tiger Reserve	Core inviolate; buffer regulated	NTCA + state (buffer only)
Conservation / Community Reserve	Protected Area	Chief Wildlife Warden
Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)	Up to 10km around parks/sanctuaries	Regulated activity, check notification

## 3. Pre-Production Forest Permit Checklist

- Classify every location (RF / PF / Sanctuary / National Park / Tiger Reserve / ESZ), which sets the authority track
- Confirm no location sits in core or critical tiger habitat (filming prohibited there)
- Application in the prescribed form to the jurisdictional Range Officer / ACF / DFO / Chief Wildlife Warden
- MoEFCC Wildlife Division clearance for National Parks; NTCA approval for Tiger Reserve buffer shoots
- MEA clearance for foreign crews where the film is for public broadcast or commercial release



<input type="checkbox"/>	Eco-Sensitive Zone check for any location within about 10km of a park or sanctuary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Separate DGCA Digital Sky drone permission; verify the area is not a no-fly zone for aerial work
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wildlife protocol plan: crew, vehicle and equipment caps, forest-staff escort, distance from fauna, daylight-only where required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fees, camera fee, vehicle entry and guide or escort charges confirmed against the division's current schedule
<input type="checkbox"/>	Security deposit lodged; indemnity, insurance, fire and waste-removal undertakings signed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved permit and IDs carried on site; forest-staff escort confirmed before the unit moves

#### 4. Fees and Cost Worksheet

Forest and park fees are set by each state Forest Department and individual park, and they vary widely, so budget against the jurisdiction's current schedule rather than a national figure. The cost lines that recur:

Cost line	Basis
Commercial filming fee	Per day, by park / division and production type (feature, OTT, documentary, ad)
Camera fee	Per camera per day
Vehicle entry	Per vehicle per day
Guide / escort charges	Mandatory forest-staff escort, per day
Security deposit	Refundable after wrap, no damage
Foreign-crew surcharge	Where applicable, plus MEA / MoEFCC processing

**Documentaries vs features:** wildlife documentaries are often treated more favourably than commercial features, but both follow the same authority chain. Build the multi-agency lead time (state Forest Dept, plus MoEFCC and NTCA for parks and tiger reserves) into the schedule from the start.

#### 5. Wildlife and Eco-Sensitive Compliance

Forest permits come with conservation conditions, and a breach can halt the shoot or bar future access. The non-negotiables:

<input type="checkbox"/>	No filming in core or critical tiger habitat, kept inviolate under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972
<input type="checkbox"/>	Respect Eco-Sensitive Zone restrictions on regulated activities around parks and sanctuaries
<input type="checkbox"/>	No off-road driving, no feeding or baiting, maintain the prescribed distance from wildlife
<input type="checkbox"/>	Crew, vehicle and equipment numbers capped to the permit; forest-staff escort at all times
<input type="checkbox"/>	No artificial lighting or sound that disturbs fauna; many parks are daylight-only
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drones only with DGCA Digital Sky clearance and park permission; most protected areas are no-fly
<input type="checkbox"/>	No plastic, no waste, no open fire; carry out all material and restore the site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Follow the Range Officer's instructions on access, timing and routes without exception

#### 6. Where Productions Actually Shoot

Because cores are off-limits, the practical filming grounds are buffer zones, reserve and territorial forest divisions, and forests outside Protected Areas, where the same Forest Department process applies but the conservation bar is lower. Plan a longer pre-production horizon than an urban shoot, and route the application through the FFO single window to keep the state and central tracks moving in parallel.