

Achanakmar Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve

The Achanakmar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve extends across the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Its roots spread over 3835.51 sq. km, with a 551.55 sq. km. core zone. The Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve is adorned with ecological diversity and is India's least disturbed biogeographic region. The area was declared a biological reserve in 2005 and was recognised as a part of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2012.

It is named after Achanakmar forest village in Chhattisgarh, and Amarkantak, a holy place in Madhya Pradesh, famously known as "Teerthra". The Bio-reserve covers three districts: Anuppur and Dindori of Madhya Pradesh and Bilaspur of Chhattisgarh.

Achanakmar Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve - Geographical Features

- It covers the areas of the Deccan Plateau and Central Highlands.
- Around 68.1% of the bio-reserve lies in the Bilaspur district, while Anuppur and Dindori districts have 16.20% and 15.70% of shares respectively.
- The Maikal, Vindhya, and Satpura hill ranges lie in this bio-reserve, filling this landscape with hills, valleys, and plains.
- The Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve is one of the major watersheds of India.
- Amarkantak is known to be the origin of the Narmada River. The Johilla and Son rivers also originate from this bio-reserve, making it the source of three major river systems in India.
- Most of the reserve is covered with tropical deciduous forests.
- This reserve has diverse geology, from schists, and gneisses, to granite intrusions, sandstones, limestone, shales, bauxite and basaltic lava.
- The soil varies from red soil, alluvial soil, and black cotton soil, depending upon the topography of the region.

Flora of the Achanakmar Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve

The flora-related features of the biosphere reserve have been listed below;

- The flora and fauna of the bio-reserve are very rich because of the moist deciduous forests covering most of the region and low human interference.
- It has nearly 1498 plant species belonging to 799 plant families.
- It has around 105 species of medicinal plants, 33 of which are used for treatment by the rural people of the area. About 25 medical plant species are endangered.
- The fauna of this area comprises thallophyte, bryophyte, pteridophyte, gymnosperm, and angiosperm species, including 39 globally threatened floral species.

Fauna of the Achanakmar Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve

The fauna-related features of the biosphere reserve have been listed below;

- The bio-reserve is home to 327 species, including 256 genera of invertebrate and vertebrate fauna. It gives refuge to 67 threatened faunal species.
- The Achanakmar Sanctuary shelters 26 tigers, 46 panthers, 28 bears, 1936 Chital, 1369 sambhars, 376 barking deer, and 552 bison (Census 2004).
- Other animals found in the region are Spotted Deer, Panther, Wildcat, Blackbuck, Monkeys and Giant Squirrels.
- It has 170 bird species.

Residing in the lap of Central India, the Achanakar-Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve is rich in geographical and ecological diversity, making it home to several flora and fauna species. Excessive exploitation of natural resources, uncontrolled growth of weeds in water bodies and water pollution are major concerns in the area. These problems are being addressed to secure the region.

