

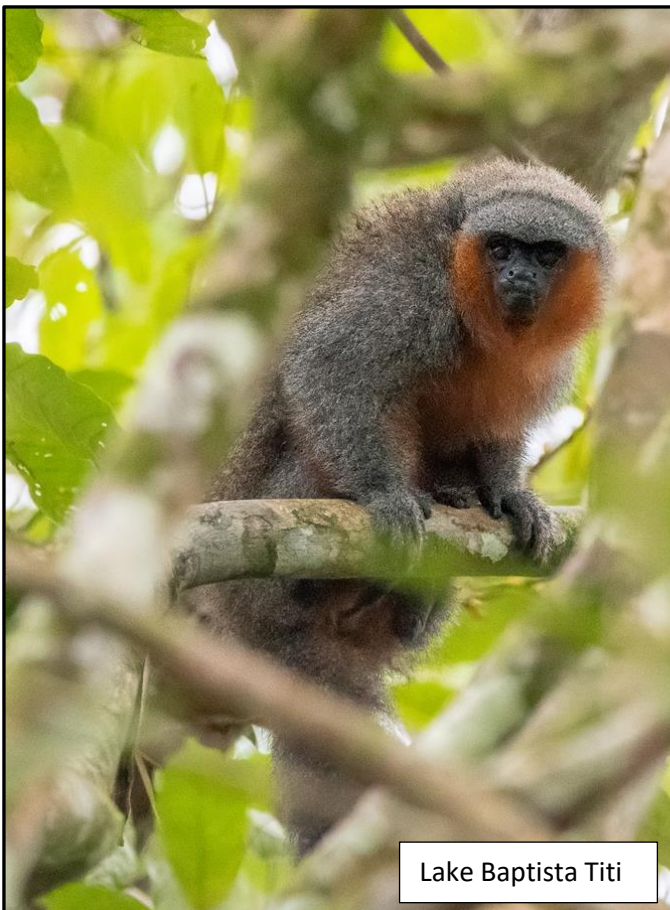
Many, many primates on the WildWings cruise Brazil (May 2024)

Alex Schouten and Jeannette den Hertog

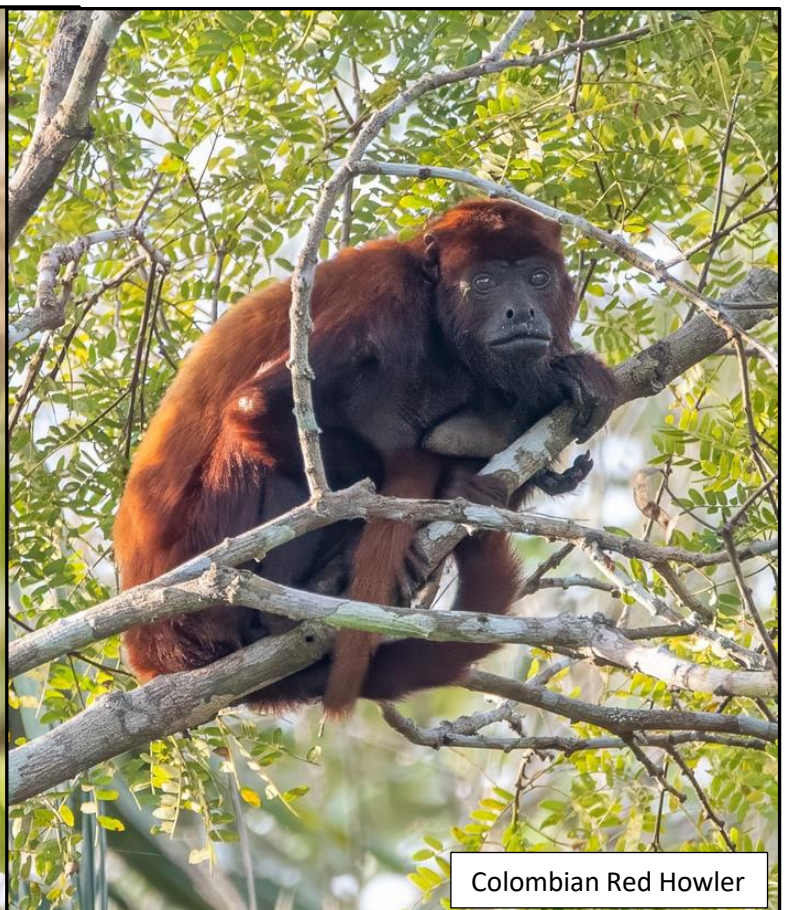
Normally we (Alex and Jeannette, an older couple from the Netherlands) organize the primate trips ourselves from start to finish. Occasionally we have some help from a local guide to look for the monkeys. But this trip is completely different. An advertisement on mammalwatching.com got us interested in the **WildWings trip 'Primates and Parrots'**. This is a 13-day cruise from Manaus to Santarem, located 600 km downstream (as the crow flies), with the goal on finding as many species of monkeys and parrots as possible. Although the trip is significantly more expensive than our usual travel budget, there was no hesitation whatsoever in booking this trip. Why? Because most of the primate species in this part of Brazil are (very) difficult to see on your own. The reason: well, there are hardly any roads, no normal public transport etc. in this part of Brazil. And... we don't speak a word of Portuguese. Furthermore, the big advantage of a cruise is that you sleep in the same comfortable cabin for the entire trip!

Although some other mammal species rather than primates were seen, this trip report will focus on primates. Primates are our love, we simply have less interest in other mammals. If you are interested in this primate cruise after reading this report, please note that it is only organized once every 2 years in the month of May. WildWings itself always writes a report of the trip, which is published on their website. That is why we do not make a very extensive report of the cruise here.

In addition to the cruise, we went looking for a few other primate species around Fortaleza, Manaus, Alter do Chaõ and Belem. Information about these areas is also included in this report. Not all pictures in this report are taken by ourselves. Friends of us (David Verhagen and Karin van Leeuwen) were also on board and David has better equipment and is a much better photographer. In short, some photos are his, some are Alex's.



Lake Baptista Titi



Colombian Red Howler

Fortaleza and surroundings

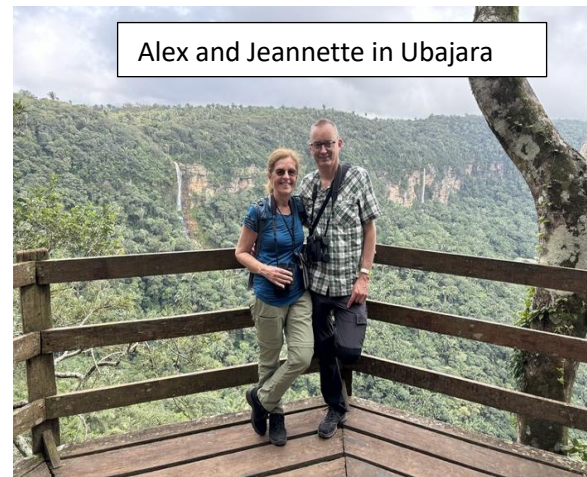
Most of the fellow travelers of the cruise flew from London to Sao Paulo and onwards to Manaus. We decided to take a 'shorter' route and flew from Amsterdam via Lisbon to Fortaleza in northeastern Brazil. The goal was to find 2 primate species in that region and also to get used to the Brazilian heat. After the flight we stayed 2 nights in Fortaleza. Common Marmosets should be easy to see in the Parque Estadual do Cocó but don't get there too late in the afternoon.

Marmosets often go to sleep early and we couldn't find them in the park any more between 4 and 6 pm, despite help from local people. The next morning we picked up our rental car in the city center (Movida, excellent company) and drove to Ubajara (located near the national park with the same name) in about 5.5 hours. We stayed 3 nights in Pousada Gruta, a wonderful place. The owner speaks English (rare in this non-touristic part of the country) and the temperature is nice (Ubajara is at an altitude of 800 meters). The next morning we walked from the Pousada to the national park (10 minutes) and luckily the only English speaking guide was available to take us into the forest. After half an hour of easy walking we saw our target species: the **Bearded Capuchin** (*Sapajus libidinosus*). This is a common monkey species with a wide distribution in central Brazil. It was a group of (young) capuchins who were on the move and after 10 minutes the forest was quiet again. This species use stones and an anvil to crack nuts. Unfortunately, according to the guide, they do not do this in the season we were there (May).

Other primate species are not present in the area around the visitor center. The guide told us it's not impossible to see the Maranhão Red-handed Howler near Mirante dos Guaribas in São Benedito, 25 km south of Ubajara. We decided to give it a chance on the way back to Fortaleza. On the top of the plateau we couldn't find any suitable habitat for the Howlers, so we decided to drive the CE-321 eastwards (down the plateau). The road is good, there is some good forest, but... parking the car is not easy. In a good piece of forest we decided that Jeannette would walk slowly down the road, while Alex looked for a parking spot for the car. When Alex parked the car somewhere, he walks back a few hundred meters to Jeannette, who had seen 2 **Maranhão Red-handed Howlers** (*Alouatta ululata*) a few minutes

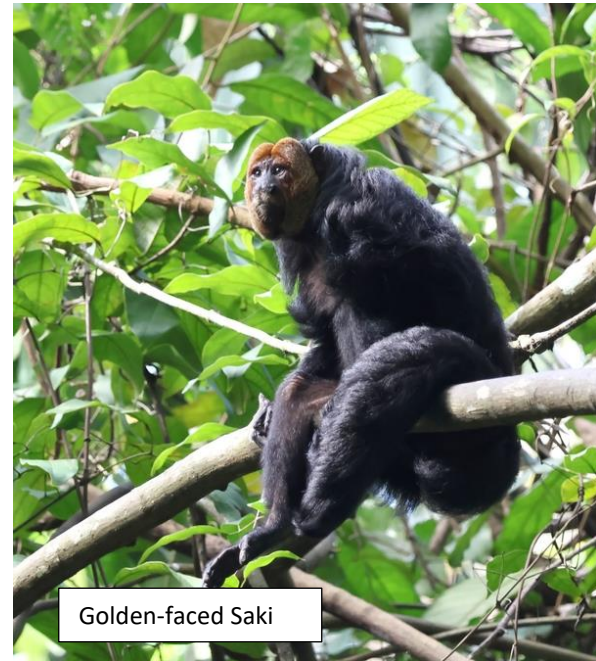
earlier! The animals were shy and quickly disappeared down the slope and out of sight. Afterwards we heard them 'howling' a few times, but the slope is too steep to go off the road into the forest as there are no paths or tracks. So... no Howler monkey for Alex as we just count sightings of primates and not 'heard only'. Although there have been no recent observations of the howler monkeys in this area on iNaturalist and observado, there are (at least) a few families present. Jeannette saw the howler monkeys at this location: 4°04'01.5"S 40°50'35.5"W.

We drove back to the coast and stayed a few nights in Cumbuco. The next morning we went to Parque Estadual Botânico do Ceará, west of Fortaleza. In the early morning we walked in the botanical garden for 1,5 hours, but couldn't find the common marmosets, which live in this place. When we walked back to the entrance building we heard the **Common Marmosets** (*Callithrix jacchus*) and a nice family was just behind the building. They were not shy and gave good opportunities for taking pictures.



Manaus (before the start of the Wildwings trip)

We decided to arrive in Manaus two days before the start of the Wildwings trip. Manaus is often called the gateway to the Amazon. That is true, but it feels as just another big city. More than 2 million people live there and the city is expanding every year, slowly swallowing the forest around the city. Before the official start of the monkey cruise, we searched in vain for primates in the area around the hotel that was booked by Wildwings (Tropical Executive). About 5 years ago it was still common to find primates around the hotel. One morning we went to the forest of the INPA (National Institute of Amazonian Research) with an Uber. **Golden-faced Sakis** (*Pithecia chrysocephala*) and **Guianan Squirrel Monkey** (*Saimiri sciureus*) live there, which are fed every day because this part of the forest is totally surrounded by the city of Manaus. The entrance of the park/forest is located on Av. Bem-Te-Vi and unfortunately it only opens at 9 am. We were there at 8 am and could already see the primates from outside the fence. Fortunately, after consultation, we were allowed to enter at 8:30 to view and photograph the monkeys. A nice place to visit, but the monkeys are not 100% wild.



Golden-faced Saki

Manaus (Wildwings)

After the rest of the tour group has arrived at the hotel, the first organized excursion is close to the hotel to look for Pied Tamarins. Although we do spot a sloth, we can't find the monkeys. But then again, there is construction going on all around us...

The next morning we leave before sunrise by bus to the MUSA tower in Reserva Florestal Adolpho Ducke. It's a short and easy walk from the entrance to the tower. We arrived just before sunrise at the top of the 42 m high watchtower. Many parrots flew over and fortunately we also saw 2 species of monkeys:

- In a few places **Guianan Red Howler Monkeys** (*Alouatta macconnelli*) are warming themselves in the morning sun.
- With the thermal scope a family of the critically endangered **Pied Tamarins** (*Saguinus bicolor*) is found, who had slept in a large tree crevice. Shortly after sunrise they start moving and a few minutes later they come out of the tree crevice and run over horizontal branches further into the forest. The distance to the tamarins was quite big and unfortunately, despite all the good cameras, no one from the group managed to take a picture of this beautiful species of monkey.



Distant views of Guianan Red Howlers

Wildwings cruise

We made the trip from Manaus to Santarem aboard the mv Iracema. This is a comfortable boat with 12 cabins (each with a private bathroom), a restaurant and a spacious upper deck with a canopy. In total there were 18 tourists, 3 guides (Regina Ribeiro, Chris Collins and Moyo) and 10 crew members. There are 3 motorized canoes (6 tourist per canoe) which can go into the smaller creeks and swamp forests. The trip can only be made in May because the water level of the rivers is at its highest after the rainy season. You can then easily sail through the swamp forests with the canoes. The canoe trips often last 2-3 hours and take place early in the morning (usually after breakfast) or late in the afternoon. During the day and the night the Iracema then sails to the next destination. Sometimes the distances to be covered are too long and sailing takes place all day and the primates and birds have to be spotted from the Iracema. In addition to the canoe trips, a few (easy) walks have also been made mainly to find marmosets. They are too small to be spotted from the boat. We also made 4 night canoe trips in search of rats, night monkeys, birds, bats, etc.



The trip was very well organized:

- The food was excellent, also for vegetarians;
- The cabins are equipped with airco and a private bathroom;
- The outside deck was very comfortable with a cover, chairs, a long table and cushions;
- It's possible to buy data for internet (via satellite) which worked fine;
- there was never a need to change a jerry can of fuel during the canoe trips because everything was well prepared and planned;
- the benches in the canoes have a backrest, very pleasant;
- the (local) guides were excellent (good knowledge, very good eyes, use of thermal scope and laser pen);

There is no point in giving a detailed schedule how we sailed. And there is no point in indicating in this report where we saw which primate species. The observations have been entered on observado.org by one of the travelers, with some observations being shielded because the species is vulnerable, for example.

A total of 31 species of primates were seen during the WildWings trip (including Manaus). That is a record for this trip, which was organized for the 3rd time. We missed 1 species because the Chestnut-bellied titi in question was so far away that identification was not possible for us. The table on the next page shows the total list of primates seen. For each species it is indicated how well or poor the species has been seen.

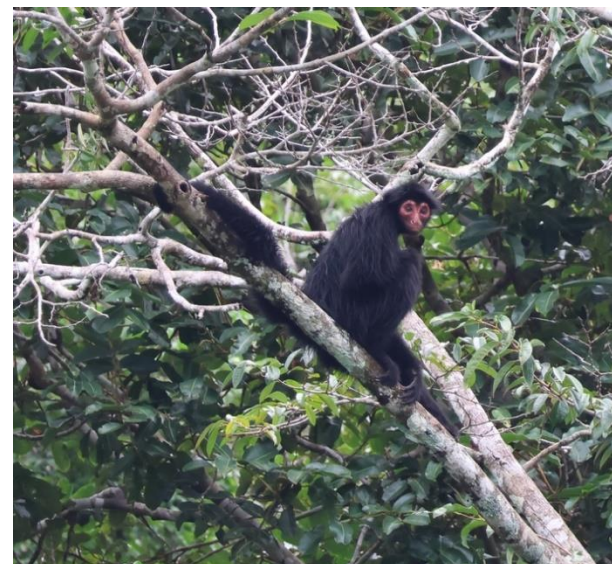


	English name	Latin Name	Remarks
1	Pied Tamarins	<i>Saguinus bicolor</i>	distance views from MUSA tower (Manaus)
2	Martin's Bare-faced Tamarin	<i>Saguinus martinsi</i>	Seen a few times, close to civilization
3	Midas Tamarin	<i>Saguinus Midas</i>	Short sightings along the Rio Paru Oeste
4	Golden-white Tassel-ear Marmoset	<i>Mico chrysoleucos</i>	Excellent views of 1 family in the swamp forest. Curious species.
5	Sateré Marmoset	<i>Mico saterei</i>	Good views of 1 family, close to a village
6	Maués Marmoset	<i>Mico maues</i>	Seen just a few seconds running away
7	Santarem Marmoset	<i>Mico humeralifer</i>	Prolonged view of 1 family, although a bit far
8	Humboldt's Squirrel Monkey	<i>Saimiri cassiquiarensis</i>	Seen very well close to ruins of the Hotel Aripuá Amazon Towers
9	Golden-backed Squirrel Monkey	<i>Saimiri ustus</i>	Seen regularly during the trip
10	Collins' Squirrel Monkey	<i>Saimiri collinsi</i>	1 group seen quite well
11	Guianan Squirrel Monkey	<i>Chiropotes sagulatus</i>	Only seen on the north bank of the Amazon
12	Black-capped Capuchin	<i>Sapajus apella</i>	Surprisingly seen just once, running on the ground on the first day
13	Spix's White-fronted Capuchin	<i>Cebus unicolor</i>	A big group crossed a swamp just before a tropical downpour
14	Humboldt's White-fronted Capuchin	<i>Cebus albifrons</i>	Seen very well close to ruins of the Hotel Aripuá Amazon Towers
15	Chestnut (Weeper) Capuchin	<i>Cebus castaneus</i>	Distance views, just able to ID the species
16	Spix's Night Monkey	<i>Aotus vociferans</i>	Seen during a night canoe trip. Good views.
17	Hoffmann's Titi Monkey	<i>Plecturocebus hoffmannsi</i>	Distance views of 1 family, hidden in vegetation. Head a few more times, impossible to locate
18	Chestnut-bellied Titi	<i>Plecturocebus caligatus</i>	Very distant views, too far for us to identify.
19	Lake Baptista Titi	<i>Plecturocebus baptista</i>	Excellent sighting of 1 small family
20	Red-bellied Titi	<i>Plecturocebus moloch</i>	Seen and heard a few times near Alter do Chaõ
21	White-faced Saki	<i>Pithecia pithecia</i>	Very short sighting along the Rio Paru Oeste
22	Golden-faced Saki	<i>Pithecia chrysocephala</i>	Seen well in Manaus and along Rio Trombetas
23	Gray's Bald-faced Saki	<i>Pithecia irrorata</i>	1 sighting from the Iracema on the Rio Maués
24	Red-nosed Bearded Saki	<i>Chiropotes albinasus</i>	1 sighting from the Iracema on the Rio Maués.
25	Guianan Bearded Saki	<i>Chiropotes sagulatus</i>	1 big group seen just before sunset
26	Black-faced Uacari	<i>Cacajao melanocephalus</i>	Very short and distance view
27	Guianan Red Howler	<i>Alouatta macconnelli</i>	Distant, but good views from MUSA Tower
28	Colombian Red Howler	<i>Alouatta seniculus</i>	A few good views upstream from Manaus
29	Amazon Black Howler	<i>Alouatta nigerrima</i>	Seen a few times during the trip
30	Spix's Red-handed Howler	<i>Alouatta discolor</i>	A few good sightings around Alter do Chaõ
31	Red-faced Black Spider Monkey	<i>Ateles paniscus</i>	Excellent views of a few animals warming up after heavy rains

Primate species missed

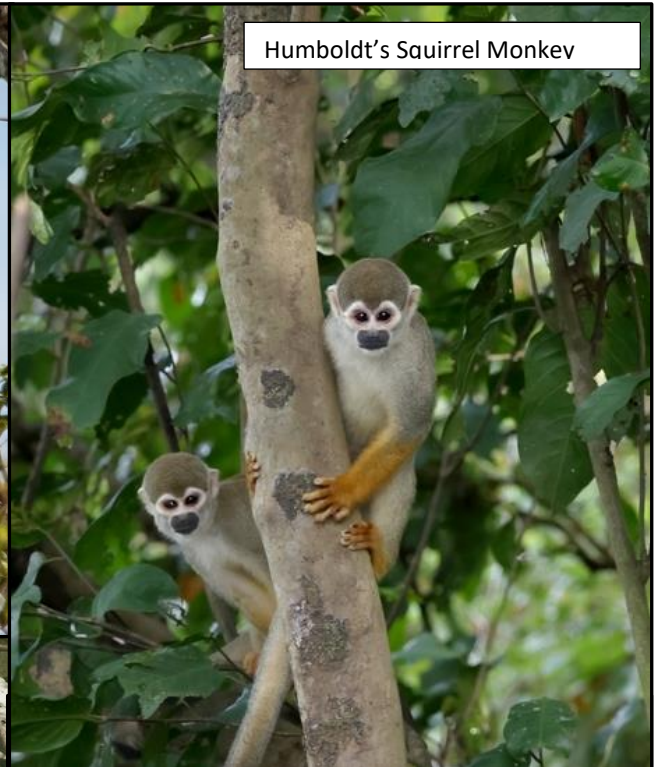
Apart from the Chestnut-bellied Titi, which was too far for us to identify, the Ashy (Black) Titi (*Plecturocebus cinerascens*) and the Silvery Marmoset (*Mico argentatus*) were not seen on this trip:

- The Ashy Titi lives in the same area as the Sateré Marmoset. We heard a family calling quite close, but were not allowed to get closer because we had to wait for some members of our group who were a bit behind. By the time everybody was there, the titis had stopped calling and were impossible to find.
- The Silvery Marmoset is a common species and normally easy to find around Alter do Chaõ. We tried from the canoes and by walking in the village, but couldn't find them during the Wildwings trip.





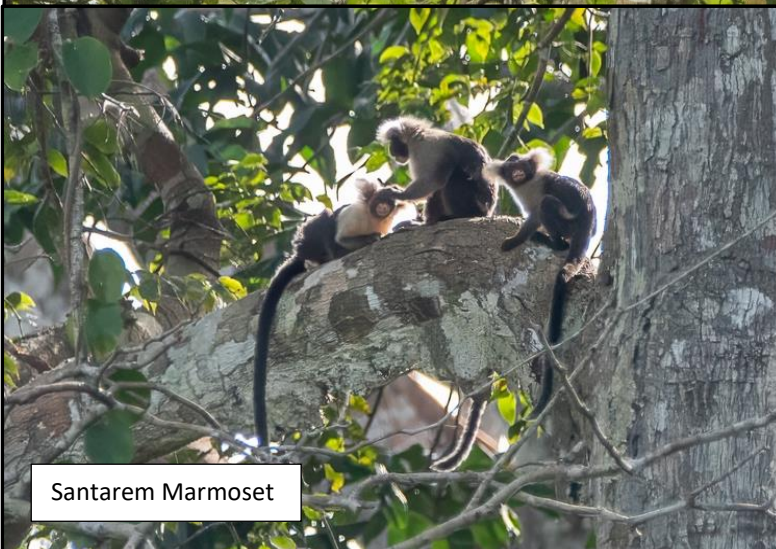
Gray's Bald (faced) Saki



Humboldt's Squirrel Monkey



Sateré Marmoset



Santarem Marmoset



Martin's Bare-faced Tamarin

Keep in mind that some species were seen just a few seconds, while other were seen for half an hour. Some species were close, other just visible with binoculars or a spotting scope. The goal of this trip is so seen as many primate species as possible, not to study their behaviour etc. Alo keep in mind that taking pictures from a boat or a canoe is not always easy....

Other mammals seen

We saw a few other mammal species during the Wildwings trip:

- Three-toed sloth and two-toed Sloth
- Giant Otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*)
- Kinkajou (*Potos flavus*)
- Black Toro (*Dactylomys dactylinus*)
- Brazilian Spiny Tree Rat (*Makalata didelphoides*)
- Amazon River Dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*)
- Tucuxi (*Sotalia fluviatilis*)

Some bat species were identified, but we refer to the trip report of Wildwings for further information.

Alter do Chaõ

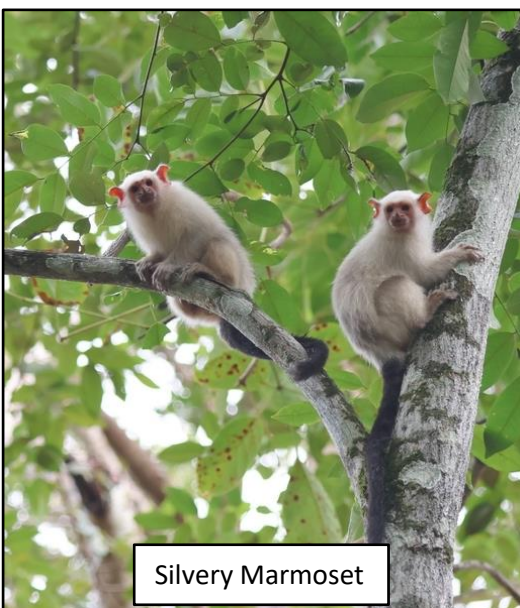
The primate cruise ended in Santarem, but in consultation with WildWings we disembarked at the end of the last afternoon in Alter do Chao, 30 km west of Santarem. We stayed there for another 4 nights to explore this green town. Most of the fellow travelers had to disembark the Iracema in the middle of the night to catch their flights to Europe and America, which would have resulted in a restless night for us. In short, it was fine for us to stay behind in Alter do Chao. In the rainy season this is a sleepy town on the southern bank of the Rio Tapajós, 30 km west of Santarem. In the dry season it's a busy town with white sand beaches, beach bars etc. Alter do Chaõ is a prime primate destination. The eastern part of the village is very green and 4 species of primate can be found:

- Red-bellied Titi (*Plecturocebus moloch*)
- Silvery Marmoset (*Mico Argentatus*)
- Spix's Red-handed Howler Monkey (*Alouatta discolor*)
- Golden-backed Squirrel Monkey (*Saimiri ustus*)

Each of these primates were seen or heard every day of our stay in Alter do Chaõ. But... only the eastern part of the town (in the area of the Beloalter Hotel) is forested enough for them. The Squirrel Monkeys sometimes visited the balcony of our cabana to see if any food was available. We have never been to a place where so many species of primate live harmoniously side by side with people. It is highly recommended to stay a few nights in this relaxed village, which even has a vegetarian restaurant (called Siriá Bistro Vegetariano e vegano). We realize that the atmosphere in the village may be different in high season.



Kinkajou



Silvery Marmoset



Red-bellied Titi



Golden-backed Squirrel Monkey

Belém

From Santarem we took a domestic flight to Belém, located about 130 km up the Pará River from the Atlantic Ocean. The climate over there is not nice: very, very hot and very, very humid. A few primate species are possible in this area, but for most of them there is no information where to find them. We spent 2 nights in Eco Hotel Fischer (good hotel, recommended) and went out on 1 day with Para Birding Tour (www.parabirdingtour.com) in search for the **Eastern Black-handed Tamarin** (*Saguinus ursulus*). Very friendly, affordable and good guides. Well, the tamarin was easy. After 5 minutes from the start of the walk (not far from their office) we heard the tamarins calling, although seeing these tiny primates in a dark forest with overcast weather was a bit more difficult. We had decent views of the tamarins, but unfortunately no decent pictures. Later in the morning it was too hot to be outside. At the end of the afternoon it was pouring with rain and so the afternoon session was cancelled. The next morning we made a walk in a forest not far from the hotel, but no primates were heard or seen.

The last night of the trip was spent in ReservAmazonForest Hotel in Belem. The bungalows are located in a piece of forest and every now and then a big group of **Collins' Squirrel Monkey** (*Saimiri collinsi*) pass by. According to Para Birding Tour these squirrel monkeys are purebred, in contrast to the 'famous' population in downtown Belem in Bosque Rodrigues Alves (Jardim Zoobotânico) which are hybrids.



Final thoughts

The cruise from Manaus to Santarem was a once in a lifetime opportunity to see many species of primates in this remote part of Brazil. The cruise was very well organized and the Iracema is a very comfortable ship. In the end 31 species of primates were seen during the cruise. **Outside Madagascar it's probably impossible to see so many species in such a short time (13 days).** We saw 5 extra species in the week before and after the cruise. Well, you don't be surprised: we had a **FANASTASTIC** trip!

If you would like to have some information about our trip, don't hesitate to get in contact with us: schouten.alex@outlook.com

