

GUYANA 9 AUGUST -24 AUGUST 2021

Guyana had always been a country on my radar, from being located in the best mammal watching continent, to having a variety of primates I had never seen. A Covid cancelled trip to Indonesia meant I finally had the time to plan a trip there with my friend Sarah.

I used Wilderness Explorers based in Georgetown to organize my trip. I can not say enough good things about them. They helped put together an itinerary that would satisfy me for the primates I was looking for as well a birds for my friend Sarah. I usually try to organize a private guide when I travel. They were honest in telling me not to pay the extra costs for this as the lodges at that time would have few or no other guests. I appreciated their honesty. It turned out they were correct and we had each lodge entirely to ourselves guest wise.

I used the other trip reports on this site to help me decide where to go. The trip was broken down in the following areas -

1. Areas in and around the capital Georgetown
2. Iwokrama River Lodge
3. Atta Rainforest Lodge
4. Surama Eco-Lodge
5. Rewa Eco-Lodge
6. Karanambu Lodge
7. Day trip to see Kaieteur and Orinduik Falls

Day 1 - We had a late night flight on American Airlines to Georgetown. We stayed the night at the Cara Lodge. The lodge was originally built as a wooden colonial home in the 1840's then later turned into a hotel. I did not manage to see any mammals in or around the hotel despite checking around the hotel margins at night.

Day 2 - After having three hours of sleep, we woke up and meant our local guide Carlos in the lobby of the hotel, Carlos took us to a landing area on the Mahaica River which is about 1 hour from the capital. We had our own boat and traveled up and down a section of the river. We passed by three family groups of relaxed ,sleeping Guyana Red Howler Monkeys. The highlight however was a family group of noisy Giant River Otters that alarm called at our boat.



After the boat ride, Carlos took us to some mudflats along a sea wall close to the river. While Sarah was watching Scarlet Ibis, I watched two Small Asian Mongoose weaving in and out of the grassy areas. This species had been introduced to Guyana as it had to many islands in the Caribbean.

Our final stop was the Georgetown Botanical Gardens. When you first enter the gardens along the left is a area with several large ponds with West Indian Manatees. Supposedly they were brought there in 1885 so really can only be counted as semi-wild. They do cut areas of grass around the ponds to help supplement food to the

manatees. We saw six different individuals while we were there. Friendly tip, do not wear sandals like I did around the ponds. I think I still have the scars from all the chigger bites I received.



At the end of the day we went to the Wilderness office to talk about the remainder of the trip and what to expect. One thing we were told that they were unable to get us commercial plane tickets to fly into the wilderness area, so at no cost to us they hired a private Cessna to fly us in.

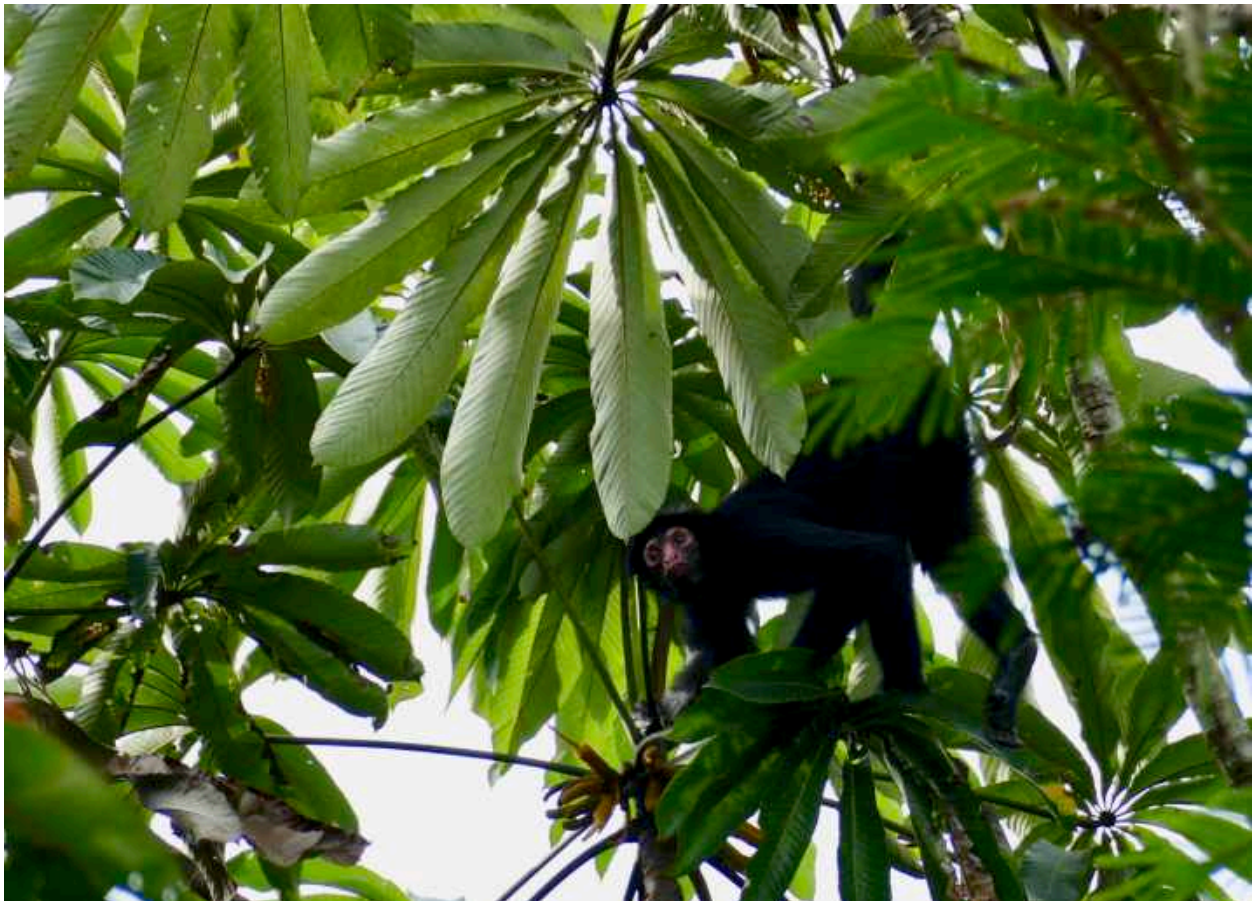
Day 3 - We were picked up in the morning to drive to the Eugene F. Correia International Airport. From there we met our private plane to fly to the Fair View Airstrip to transfer to the Iwokrama River Lodge. The lodge is in the the Iwokrama Rainforest, which is one of the last untouched tropical forests in the world. It was also established as a living laboratory for tropical forest management.

After reading reports about this lodge I did not mention wanting to go there to Wilderness Explorers. It was however put in a filler to help the flow of the rest of the trip. The place had pros and cons.

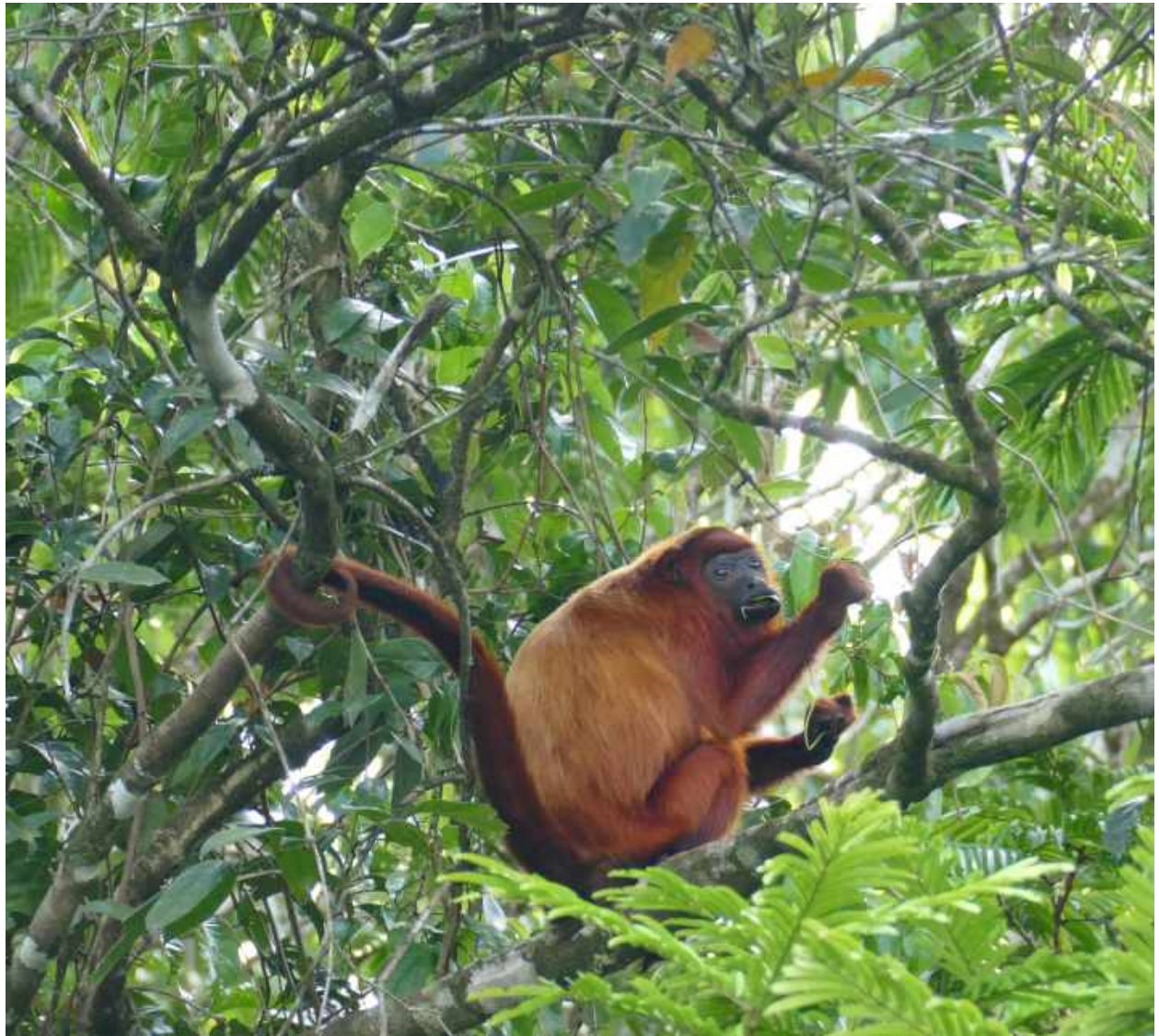
Pro - the room was beautiful and was right on the Essequibo River. It had the best hot water of the trip. Most of the mammals around this lodge were relaxed and not afraid of humans in general. This was not always the case at other places. When one of the guides (sadly not mine) found out I liked mammals, she set up a mist net to try to catch bats to look at.

Cons - they stuck us with a guide, whose name I will not mention, that maybe could identify maybe 20 percent of what we were looking at. Despite having more experienced guides available. She was fine at spotting, just not telling us what we were looking at. This mainly was with birds, as I could identify the primates. The restaurant area of lodge had a dorm like feeling with guides and students studying there blasting their televisions and radios. This made it lose the "wilderness feel" I like to experience at lodges even with basic accommodation.

Our guide had told us that morning she had found a family group of White Faced Saki monkey by the lodge near the entrance road. We decided to walk this area first, however saw no mammals. We then went on the Screaming Piha trail. We saw our first Guiana Spider monkey, a female with a small infant that starting screaming at us as soon as she saw us. A cecropia tree across from our room in the back of the lodge produced a lone relaxed Spider monkey that let me watch him for an extended period of time.



In the afternoon we went on a boat ride on the Essequibo River. We saw troops of Guyana Red Howler Monkeys, Brown Capuchin, Wedge- Capped Capuchin, and Guyana Squirrel Monkey. That evening I went with our guide to where they had set up the mist net. It definitely fell under the thought counts, as they were unable to catch any bats.





Day 4 - Our itinerary listed that we would be climbing Turtle Mountain in the morning. Anything with the words climbing and mountain usually does not fall into my “that was a fun day” category. We decided to skip that activity and instead to do a boat ride to Stanley Lake. We had more views of Spider Monkeys, Howlers and Weeper Capuchins.



After lunch we were driven to the Atta Rainforest Lodge, home of the Iwokrama Canopy Walkway. We were handed off to our next guide Delon Williams. Delon is in his twenties and very quiet. Delon is also probably the best spotter I have ever been around in all of my years of travel. He would identify animals to full species level without a scope that were pinpoint dots to me in the distance. He also was great at finding most things we wanted to see. At one point I made a comment that in all my years in South America tropical rainforests I had never seen a Screaming Piha, despite always hearing them. It was almost as if he was thinking “hold my beer”, as he then made it a point to show us one on our afternoon walk. The staff was also incredible and were on the look out for mammals for me. The food was also best of the trip. In the afternoon we went to the canopy walkway. We saw Red Rumped agouti along the path and Spider Monkeys. While on the second deck of the walkway, Delon became very excited as he spotted a Linneaus’s two-toed sloth sleeping in a tree next to the walkway.

Day 5 - We walked around the lodge and watched several Red- Rumped agoutis out in the open.



A walk produced more Howler Monkeys. Mid day ,while we were resting around the lodge, one of the staff came to get me to look at even more Howlers that were eating out in the open. In the afternoon Delon took us for a walk along the main road. We saw more Howler Monkeys and a Pale Throated Sloth eating in a Cecropia tree.

Day 6 - Our last morning at Atta. One of the things Jon Hall had commented on was that Atta was a good sport to look for White-Faced Saki Monkey. I had walked by myself several times along the entrance road with no luck. Delon had told me that the sightings were less and less, but agreed to walk some areas in the past that he had seen them. Sarah went back to the canopy walkway with his brother. To look for birds, while I went with Delon to look for the monkeys. Despite out best efforts we did not see any. Delon however told me that Surama was really the best place to see that primate. That afternoon we were picked up by Gary from Surama lodge. Gary was first taking us to Corkwood to go to the Cock of the Rock Trail to see the name sake bird.



Before the lek site there is a small covered rock area where we saw Flat-faced Fruit eating bats and Lesser Dog - Like bats

We also were chorused by a very loud Howler Monkey family on the way out. We then drove to the Surama lodge and along the way Gary told us about his community and the lodge. The villagers are from the Macushi tribe and the lodge is owned by the entire community. The Village council is the board of directors and decides how the profits from the lodge can benefit the community. There is also a wildlife club in the village. Gary is also a great guide and all around person. I told Gary I wanted to see a White - Faced Saki Monkey. He first took us for a village tour. In the village by the women's center is a small forest fragment that has a family group of the sakis. We walked around the area, and slightly into the fragment but were unable to locate them. Our driver later told us on the way back to the village at the end of the day the monkeys were out in the open on the forest edge. Gary then took us for a walk on one of the trails behind the lodge. After about 20 minutes we heard the sakis, and were able to locate the male peering down at us from some vines. After that we went back to the lodge for dinner. Sarah and I were sitting on a bench area when she decided to go back to the room. After she got back, I decided to go to the room to get my torch. When I got back to the room, I heard what I thought was the toilet running, so went about my business in the room. I turned my attention to the bathroom and saw a large frog on the wall. I went into the bathroom, took some pictures, then turned my attention to the toilet under me. What I did not expect was a water logged bat to be desperately trying to get out. Turns out the room houses Brazilian free tail bats in some





roofs. This individual had unfortunately fell into the toilet as it was exiting the roof. I had Gary bring me a stick to get him out of the toilet, then after drying him off we released him in an empty building roof.

I checked the next morning and did not see a bat body so hopefully it is doing well. That evening we did a night walk in a forest fragment behind the lodge, but did not see any mammals.

Day 7 - Gary took us on a boat trip along the Burro Burro River. We saw Proboscis bats hanging under a tree. On the walk back to the lodge, Gary spotted a male ,very obliging, White faced Saki Monkey out in the open.





After lunch Gary drove us to Kwatamang Landing for the next leg of the trip. Along the way right before the landing, Gary spotted a Giant Anteater walking in some grass next to the road.



We next met our next guide Kenneth and boat driver Adrian from Rewa Village. They took us on a three hour boat ride to the Rewa Eco-Longe. The lodge was created in 2005 to establish eco-tourism in the area. Along the way we saw Wedge-capped Capuchins, Squirrel Monkeys and more Howler Monkeys. When we got to the lodge a Red Rumped Agouti was out in the open. We had booked three nights at the lodge, thinking we would camp one night. However, the water levels were very high and finding a location to camp would be difficult. We then decided to spend each night in the more comfortable lodge.

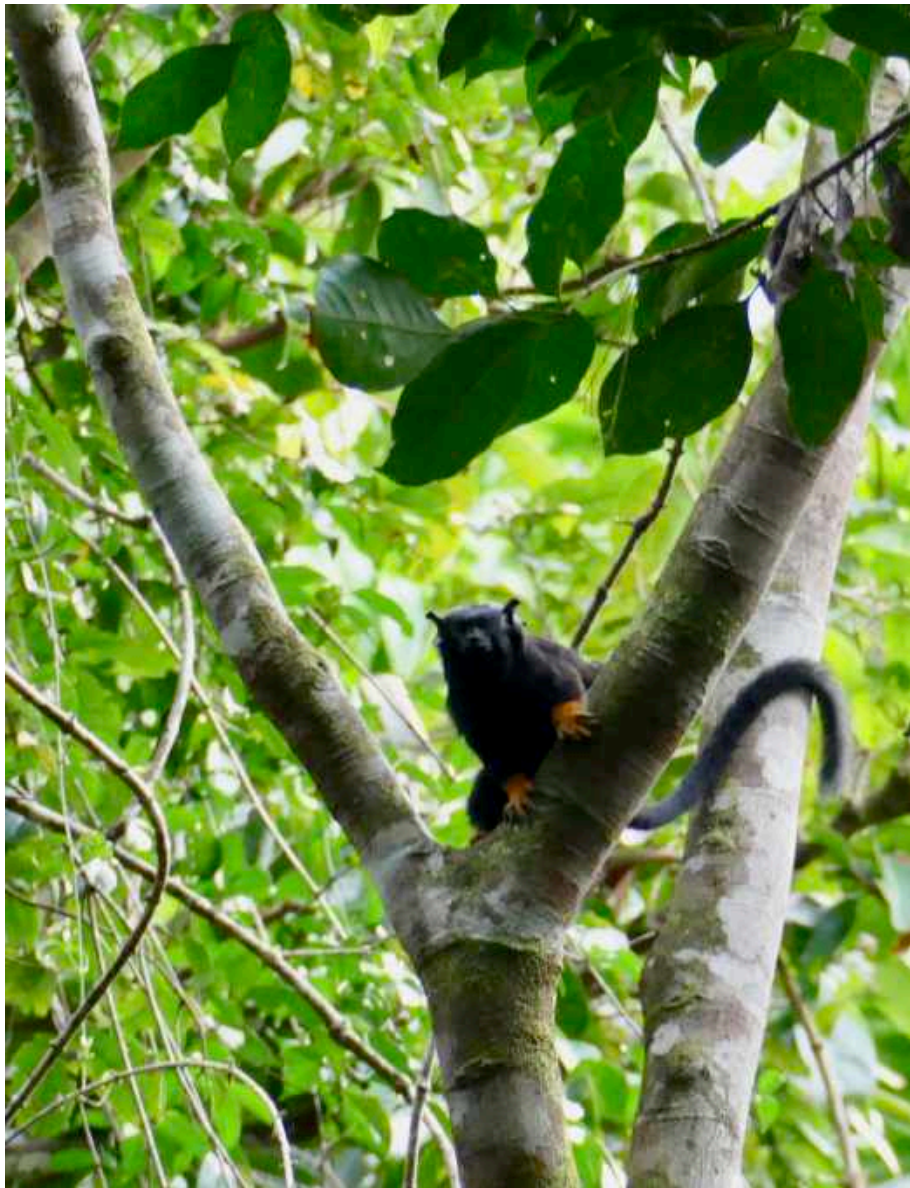


Day 8 - When I first met Kenneth I told him I wanted to see the Red- Handed tamarins that were in the area. Kenneth told me they were one of the easier primates to see as every morning, a large troop did a lap either near or around the lodge around 7:30 am. I positioned myself at 7:20 am on a bench near the restaurant. Sure enough, at 7:38 am, Kenneth spotted around 20 tamarins in the tree at the back off the lodge grounds.

We followed them for about 30 minutes, then ate breakfast. I told Kenneth my plan was to look at them each morning. After this we had breakfast and started the main part of our day. This involved boat rides up and down the Rewa and Rupununi rivers. Walking was difficult as most of the accessible banks of the river were still under water. If you are facing the lodge from the water, to the right of the lodge there are some palm trees. Each morning a family of Guianan Bearded Saki Monkeys were eating in the trees. These monkey were one of the most nervous, and every time they saw us even glancing their direction, they would start screaming and run off. The morning boat trip produced Brown Capuchins, more very nervous Bearded Sakis, Howlers and squirrel monkeys. The afternoon we saw two groups of Spider monkeys, and a male Howler Monkey out in the open.

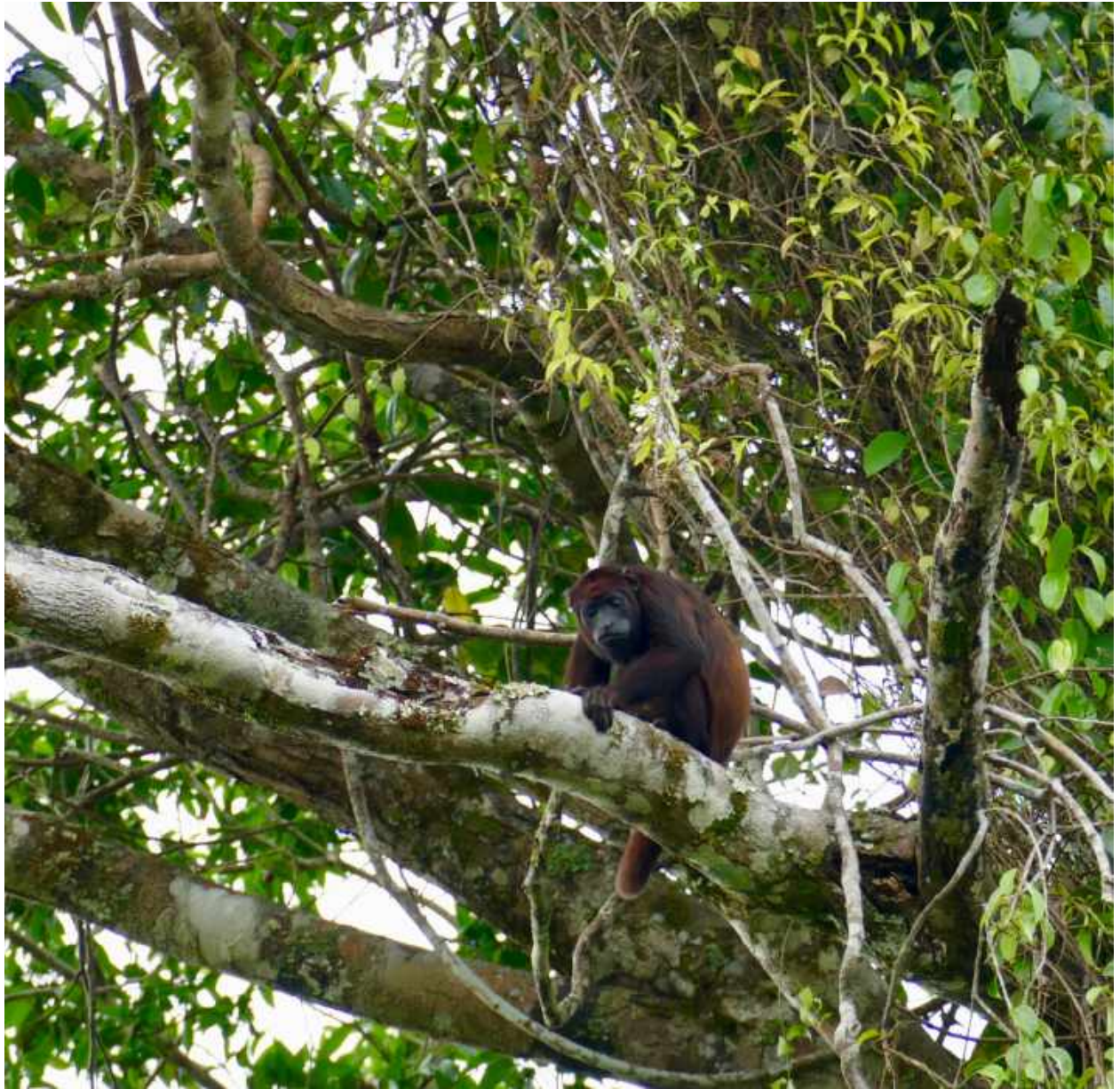


Day 9 - in the morning I watched the Red - Handed Tamarins again and was able to

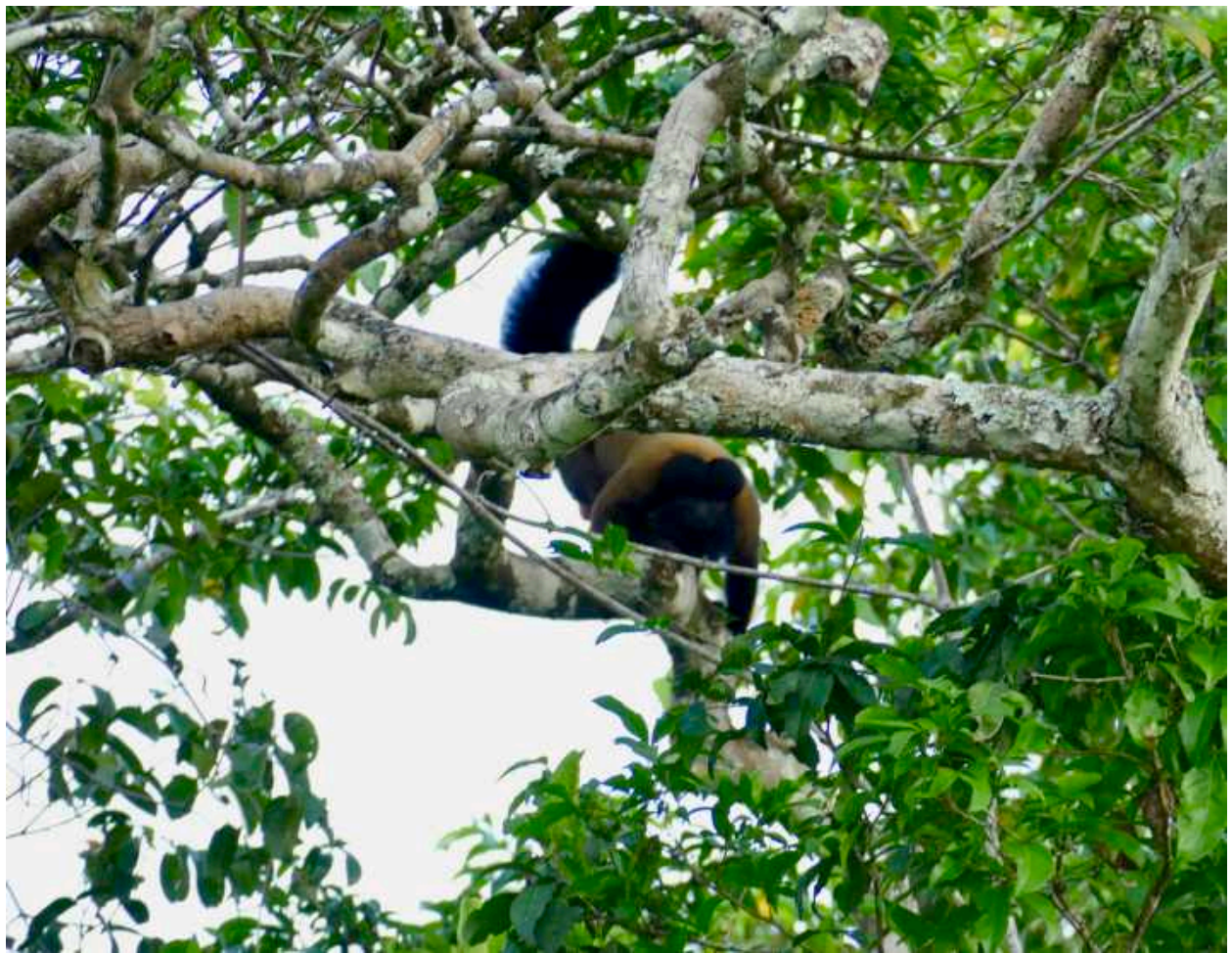




sneak up briefly on a younger saki monkey to get a record shot. The morning boat ride we saw Howler Monkeys, Spider Monkeys and Proboscis Bats. During our break time at lunch a very large troop of Squirrel Monkeys were in the trees outside our room. As soon as they saw me however, they started alarm calling and ran back into the forest. In the afternoon we saw saw more Guianan Bearded Saki Monkeys and a family group of Howler Monkeys with a dark complexion.



Day 10 - in the morning I had my final look at the tamarins on the road leading to the Rewa Village (most of which was under water). We took a two hour boat ride back to the Kwatanang Landing. Along the way we saw both Brown and Wedge Capped Capuchins as well as more Bearded Saki Monkeys.



From the landing we then drove to the Genip Landing for a boat trip along the Rupuni River to the Karanambu Lodge.

I can not recommend this lodge enough. The lodge became famous from the late Diane McTurk who was the leading expert on Giant Otters. The lodge is now run by her nephew Ed and his powerhouse of a wife Melanie. Sarah and I listened to amazing stories about things Diane did, and how the family is still helping raise orphan wildlife in the area. The lodge has a main house area, a kitchen, as well as several beautiful traditionally made brick cabins. Our cabin came with two Proboscis bats on a wall.





Hand down the nicest place we stayed. That evening we went to a pond area with Victoria Amazonica waterlilies. The plan was to relax in the boat, drink Diane Mcturks rum recipe (delicious) and watch the waterlilies bloom as it got darker. Maybe it was the rum, maybe it was the wonderful stories Melanie was telling us, but I have never enjoyed watching a plant in my life so much. For anyone who watches Dr. Who... it seemed that every time I would turn around for a millisecond , then turn back, the flower would open more. That night, rum filled, we went back to the room to rest.

Day 11 - the next morning we did one of the activities that Karanambu is know for. Cowboys are sent out on horseback in a large grassland area a 30 minute boat ride away from the lodge to look for Giant Anteaters. Once they are found, the location is radio to the guide. Along the boat ride portion of the trip we saw Squirrel Monkeys. We spent a few hours in the grassland area, and right when we were ready to give up a Giant Anteater was found. We drove to the location and walked on foot to where he was. The anteater was walking initially, until it saw us. It was the fastest I have ever seen a Giant Anteater run. In the afternoon we went to Crane lake to see a bird rookery. Along the way we startled a male Howler Monkey who almost jumped into the boat with us. On the way back to the lodge we saw more Squirrel monkeys. We did a walk around the mango trees by the lodge at night and saw Common Opossum and a Linneaus Mouse Opossum in the tree next to our room.



Day 12 - we left in the morning to first take a quick boat ride, then drive to Lethem to take a plane ride back to Georgetown. That night we spent the night at the Cara Lodge.

Day 13 - We did a free day at the Arrowpoint lodge to relax and swim in the Pokerero Creek. This was a group tour with five other people. The main guide saw a sloth on the way back during a boat ride, but refused to stop to look for it, despite everyone asking him to.

Day 14 - We did a small group tour (about 8 people) to see Kaieteur Falls. This involves a flight from Georgetown. The falls have a deep gorge of 741 feet, the world's largest drop waterfall. There are also Tank Bromeliads that house small Golden frogs that spend their entire life in the plant. We made a second stop to the less impressive Orinduik falls.





Day 15 - We did a city tour in the morning. This was followed by a market tour with a local chef who then made us lunch. In the afternoon to dusk we did a boat ride along the Demerara River.

Day 16 - home

A couple thoughts about my trip. For everything I did, as an overall experience I had a wonderful trip. We mixed wildlife watching with culture and some relaxation time. I would have spent one more night at Surama and Karanambu if I could do it again. As far as mammals go, I found many of them to be very shy in general. The Wedge Capped Capuchins for example would flee as a instant notice if they saw people. I never managed to photograph any of them, and only was able to get a quick video. I think the hunting pressure must have recently been high for many of them. While I had read August was a good time to go, most of the rivers were at flooded levels, so walking to try to see things like armadillos did not happen. Most of our guides agreed that the river levels were at a record high level for August. I also tried to spot light around all the lodges and saw little to no nocturnal mammals.

Species seen -

1. Guyanan Red Howler Monkey - *Alouatta macconnelli*
2. Giant Otter - *Pteronura bradiliensis*
3. Small Indian Mongoose - *Herpestes auropunctatus*
4. West Indian Manatee - *Trichechus manatus*
5. Guiana (Red-faced) Spider Monkey - *Ateles paniscus*
6. Brown Capuchin - *Sapajus apella*
7. Wedge -Capped (Weeper) Capuchin - *Cebus olivaceus*
8. Guianan Squirrel Monkey - *Saimiri sciureus*
9. Red -Rumped Agouti - *Dasyprocta leporina*
10. Linnaeus's Two-Toes Sloth - *Choloepus didactylus*
11. Pale Throated Sloth - *Bradypus tridactylus*
12. Flat- Faced fruit eating Bat - *Artibeus planirostris*
13. Lesser Dog - Like Bat - *Peropteryx macrotis*
14. White - Faced Saki Monkey - *Pithecia pithecia*
15. Brazilian Free-tailed Bat - *Tadarida brasiliensis*
16. Proboscis Bat - *Rhynchonycteris naso*
17. Giant Anteater - *Myrmecophaga tridactyla*
18. Red Handed Tamarin - *Saguinus midas*
19. Guianan Bearded Saki Monkey - *Chiropotes sagulatus*
20. Common Opossum - *Didelphis marsupialis*
21. Linnaeus Mouse Opossum - *Marmosa murina*