

Colombia Primates
Justin and Linden
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golden-backed uakari, Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKApAvZFtrY>

I've been wanting to do a mammal trip in Colombia for a few years, but I couldn't find any travel companies or guides who knew anything about the areas with the species I desired to see. After doing a simple Google search and sending out several inquiries, I found Rob with Wild About Colombia (rob@wildaboutcolombia.com). He and his wife started the company (www.wildaboutcolombia.com) a couple of years ago and are really interested in developing mammal-focused itineraries. He's from the UK and has an extensive background in wildlife tourism, and she's a native Colombian with a background in conservation, particularly with whales. Rob guided our trip (my girlfriend and me). In addition to being great company, he was more than willing to invest long hours in the field to find all of our target species. He really understands the mentality of a mammal-watcher. I'm not going to name the places where we went because Rob has spent a lot of time and effort developing local contacts and scouting various areas. I will say, based on the results of our trip and my own experience with mammal-watching, that these places appear to be very reliable spots for the target species. Not only did we have views of all of

the targets, but the sightings were terrific. All animals were found in their wild habitats. The primary focus for this trip was primates, as Colombia boasts quite a few endemics or near-endemics, but Rob also has promising spots for spectacled bear and mountain tapir, both of which I had seen on a previous trip to Ecuador. I had also already seen white-bellied spider monkey in Ecuador, so we didn't go to the best location for that species. It sounds like it is relatively easy to find there, though. The trip was full of amazing wildlife encounters (honestly, one of my best trips), but the highlight for all three of us was seeing **golden-backed uakaris** (the Colombia version being a candidate for a split), as they were thought to be highly unlikely before the trip. In actuality, I think the forest where we found them is a reliable spot, since we had two separate sightings in one morning. They're an absolutely awesome monkey! I'll certainly never forget our sighting of **Colombian woolly monkeys** because that morning I was feeling very sick and had to drag myself up the mountain to find them. And the tamarins...I love tamarins! The **mottle-faced tamarin**, affectionately known as "el diablito" by locals, does in fact have a devil-like appearance, but in the most charming way possible. We found one big group that stuck around long enough for good pictures and videos. The site was discovered after talking to a young man who works at different fincas in the area, and the couple who hosted us at their property loved the idea of tourists coming to watch the "diablitos." It really wasn't too difficult to find the monkeys once we were at this site. The **silvery-brown bare-face tamarin** was another big target for the trip, and thanks to Rob's contacts, we had multiple sightings at very close range. I read a magazine article years ago about this tamarin, namely that it is endemic and endangered, and that's when my interest in organizing a trip to Colombia began. I finally made it there, and the trip exceeded my expectations by a long shot! In short, these were just a few highlights from the trip. We also saw the following primates, and saw them well: **Colombian black-handed titi** (*Chlorocebus medemi*...endemic), **Lucifer/yellow-handed titi** (*Chlorocebus lucifer*), **collared titi** (*Chlorocebus lugens*), **Caquetá titi** (endemic), **ornate titi** (endemic), **variegated spider monkey** (near-endemic), **common woolly monkey**, **saddleback tamarin**, **cotton-top tamarin** (endemic), **Brumback's night monkey** (endemic), **gray-handed night monkey** (near-endemic), **common squirrel monkey**, **white-fronted capuchin** (*Cebus albifrons albifrons*, *Cebus albifrons malitiosus*, and *Cebus albifrons versicolor* ((endangered endemic)) subspecies), **tufted capuchin**, **Venezuelan red howler**, and **pygmy marmoset**. That's a total of 20 species of primates! See pictures of the main targets that Rob took on our trip below. I've also included links for my videos on YouTube. Besides primates, we had great sightings of a giant anteater, a northern tamandua, two kinkajous, several black agoutis, several Central American agoutis, a crab-eating fox, a mouse opossum, and some unidentified rodents. As a side note, the Caquetá titi is not difficult to find because the remaining population, albeit very small, is trapped in tiny forest fragments, but the individuals we came across were super skittish. In my experience, titi monkeys that live in areas with a big human impact are generally quite habituated, so it was very strange to observe these monkeys being nervous and timid. Perhaps they were/are hunted? Lastly, the security situation in Colombia has improved a lot in recent years, and although we traveled to some remote places, at no point during our trip did we feel unsafe. Quite the opposite: every person we encountered was friendly, welcoming, and helpful.



Colombian woolly monkey (endemic), Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drBASWypVFk>



Caquetá titi (endemic), Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sJVMb871Sk>



mottle-faced tamarin, Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-lCyef8lEQ>



silvery-brown bare-face tamarin (endemic), Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6aV22040YI>



ornate titi (endemic), Image: Rob Smith
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Si_zj9wtic



Colombian black-handed titi (endemic), Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAngwTmnwQc>



common woolly monkey and Brumback's night monkeys (endemic), Images: Rob Smith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycsVIHSy210>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Is3ZZYddcpg>



variegated spider monkey (near-endemic), Image: Rob Smith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEk-9NEZZUk>



cotton-top tamarin, Image: Rob Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FHzyELBJA>



We explored some of Colombia's most beautiful regions – this shot was taken on the 'Colombian woolly monkey hike', Image: Rob Smith



The team – Linden, Justin and Rob