

**Trip report Bolivia**  
*'A cat quest in Kaa Iya & Amboro'*  
18 – 25 July 2019



Dear reader,

Bolivia was last summer the next country to focus on finding *jaguarundi* as a new cat species for my world cat quest.

After our succesfull trip in 2017 in China *Andreas Jonsson* and I agreed to do another tour together. Cats are our passion and we try as best to make good pictures of them if we see them. I hope you'll enjoy this report. Feel free to commend or ask questions!

Note: I made a previous tour to Chile the same trip of which I reported separately.

At last always thanks again to [www.mammelwatching.com](http://www.mammelwatching.com) for presenting such worth full trip reports. It was of great use and guidance.

Best regards,

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## General information

### Preparation

I went by local bus from Arica Chile to Santa Cruz Bolivia. On my way out I flew to Santiago in Chile and from there via Paris to Holland.

For this tour we booked a 5-day tour via Nick McPhee <https://www.nicksadventuresbolivia.com/>

Nick didn't guide himself we had 'Saul' as guide and very friendly driver who has remarkable eyes to spot things behind the horizon. Also we had a nice woman who was our cook during the tour. All was organised very well. The day before the tour we had a lunch with Nick together and also Lennart (who I traveled with in Chilean part, he continued on his own in Bolivia and Peru). You don't see so many cat addicts together that often! 😊

After the tour I had a short one night visit to Amboro also arranged by Nick. In Santa Cruz we visited the botanical garden and Curiche La madre ourselves.

### Money

ATM's are easy especially next to the main square in Santa Cruz. Prices of food and overnight are quit good.

### Safety

I felt safe all the time and had no problems, but we didn't go to weird places. Taxi drivers are friendly. Further we were on a tour so with local people.

## Comments on the itinerary

### ***Santa Cruz: Botanical garden & Urbano de Preservación Ecológica Curichi La Madre Park (2 days)***

I stayed in Kalandire hotel close to the Plaza Central in Santa Cruz. A nice and well priced place with good wifi. From here we visited the Botanical garden twice. You can easily take a taxi yourself that brings you there (20 minutes) it is a cheap 'excursion'. The garden is far more big than I expected! The first part after the entrance looks indeed like a botanical garden, after some 500 meters or so the forest starts (still in park boundaries). Close to the entrance is also a lake in which I saw one alligator and some turtles. In the evening eagrets and snailkites fly in to rest in the trees. The forest part of the 'garden' is surprisingly big, almost 5 km deep, you can get lost on the trails! Just in the forest part there is an in my opinion rather scary to climb watch tower from where you have a nice view over the canopy. We walked most trails and found quite some mammals: **Brown-throated three-toed sloth, black howler monkeys, capuchin monkey, a probably red squirrel, a coati family, and an agouti** all in the forest part.

I also visited the other smaller botanical garden '*Curichi la Madre*' twice. Specially for the squirrel monkeys here. We saw: 4 **Sloths**, two times a group of **squirrel monkeys** and a few **White-eared titi monkeys** and some birds. The park is free to enter and some locals guide you around. Finally I had a visit to the Zoo and had a special look at the cats there.

### ***Kaa-lya National Park (5 days)***

From Santa Cruz we were picked up by the hotel and went to Kaa-lyaa. We were 5 in total: Andreas and me, the driver + guide and to my surprise a girl who seemed to be the cook in the tour. She did a very good job! Every meal was special and tasty 😊

It is about a 3-4 hours drive to San Jose the Chiquitos. This is a nice town with a big park/square next to a beautiful church. From here it is another hour and a half drive to the park entrance. Kaa Lya is indeed really far in the out-back... You have to drive for 80km through bushy thick forest and in the park itself this look doesn't change much. There is a sort of mountain range you cross first before you go down towards Kaa Lya. Also you have to pass several gates which the driver had keys to open. So no option to try this on your own.

I was surprised we did not see a single mammal on our whole drive to the ranger station where we stayed (some 30 km in the park and 80km outside stretch). So I got a feeling this could become a 'though' trip. In the end my conclusion is that it is not an area where you should go to expect a lot of mammals. The good thing though is we did see a lot of different and rare mammals including our main target **jaguarundi**. (We missed *puma* although we got fresh scat, but for me it was not a special target). Nightdrives were not very productive, sometimes no animal for two hours and 50km driving! In the end we spend 30+ plus hours spotlighting.

It also seemed also to depend on the (exceptional) weather conditions. We were not so lucky that during our visit a 'cold front' from the south of Patagonia passed the days we stayed in this region. In Santa Cruz temperatures dropped from 30C to 8C! Finally the place gets a nightmare in case it would start raining since the roads get a slippery mudtrail. We had one evening some rain and had to skip our drive. The next days it was luckily dry again. Wet periods are better to see peccaries which we also missed.

### ***Amboro National Park (1 one night)***

Since I had some extra days and not exactly planned it I asked Nick to arrange a tour to Amboro. Luckily this was possible but for one night only. In the end this was an excellent choice first of all because it is indeed a fantastic place with a beautiful view. There are nice walks and it is a pleasant stay in 'Los volcanos'. The drive to get there is for the last part a little adventure itself one of the steepest roads ever driven.

Don't expect to see many birds and mammals but do go out for a nightwalk! This is where I saw a Margay!! I made most short walks to see the military macaws. Also saw king vulture and condor. In the end saw here: **agouti, capuchin, paca, red squirrel** and a **margay** not bad at all!

## Trip itinerary & Places visited



## TRIPLIST MAMMALS IN RANDOM ORDER

**Gray brocket deer** - only 2 different sightings crossing the road in Kaa Lya in daytime, surprised how few seen.

**Brazilian tapir** - a trip bonus: a mother with a young hanging out on the road at midnight far into the Kaa Lya (the area behind gas pumpingstation). We saw them twice on two different nights in the same area. Another single animal on the way back to the 'gas station'.

**Jaguarundi** – the first mammal seen in Kaa Lya! Not far from the first rangerstation in the park on the first evening in dusk. Very happy to have the pressure of so soon (I missed all my new cat targets in Chile so this was quit a relief). A second animal crossing very quick at mid-day two days later. Finally I missed one that crossed the road, they go so fast you can miss them even if you try to focus in front of the car! The guide and driver told they usually see only this speed crossing (jaguarundi walk rather fast).

**Ocelot** – two single animals seen on the road. One was able to take a good photo. I also missed one or two because I just could not see any eyeshine while the guide and driver did.

**Jaguar** – one big male in the far end of the road in the Kaa Lya around midnight (the stretch after the gas pumpingstation). It jumped suddenly on the road crossed in the shrub but luckily came back to have a short look at us (the guide used a 'call').

**Margay** – In Amboro at 'Los Volcanos' I made a nightwalk around 21.00 on the main road to which you enter the area. I walked for about 1 km. On my way back, not far from the lodge itself, a Margay walked on the road slowly with it's very long tail stretched rather high above the ground (since the road was muddy and wet?) I remember that same high above ground tale from the clouded Leopard in Borneo I had seen there. Unlucky it went all to quick to get a picture... it left in the forest on the other side leaving me excited with this trip bonus! I didn't expected to see this cat in this tour so sometimes you fail and win in one trip.

**Pampas fox** – two seen in the stretch after the gas station at night, they seem to be more in this far area.

**Crab-eating fox** – some 12 different sightings here and there on the main road all in dark. This is the most common animal to see. We had nights with quit some sightings but also nights with none.

**Molinas hog-nosed Skunk** – another lucky one a single animal on the road. Walking of in the bush. We saw a second in the same area on another day. Not common according to the guide.

**Southern three-banded armadillo** – one on the final night in the last part of the drive in Kaa Lya running on the road. No other armadillos this trip.

**White-eared titi** – In curiche la Madre we saw a few animals in the back of the forest, they are shy.

**White-coated titi** - In Kaa lya we saw these at three moments. Very good spotting by the guide. Also we saw a group just close on the area of the first ranger station. They are shy.

**Brown-throated three-toed sloth** – We saw two in Botanical garden and four in Curiche la Madre. If you look around your eye will fall on them.

**Black-capped squirrel monkey** – two groups in Curiche la Madre, one of the nicest monkeys I have seen. Very quick and not so easy to photograph.

**Black howler monkey** – a male and female in a tree top down from the cliffs in Kaa Lya and a couple in the Botanical garden. We also heard them calling in the Botanical garden.

**White-fronted capuchin** – A male in Amboro on the way out of the valley. A few in the Botanical garden. They were all rather shy.

**Southern Amazon red squirrel** – One seen eating a nut in Amboro. In the Botanical garden another one squirrel not sure if this is the same?

**Another squirrel?** – in the Botanical garden

**Tuco tuco** – Also a not so common sighting according to the guide: an animal was running on the road in Kaa Lya in daytime to our surprise. It has big teeth!

**Kaa Lya mara** – two at night in Kaa-lya only seen briefly, normally you should see far more, but we didn't.

**Central American Agouti** – An animal in the Botanical garden and one in Amboro on a trail.

**Paca** – an animal during spotlighting in Amboro on the riverside close to the lodge.

**South American Coati** – A family in the far end of the Botanical garden, very shy.

**Bat Churi de Madre** – A bat seen under a big leaf (see photo)

**Bat Amboro** – some large bats next to the river under the rock overhang on the otherside of the waterfal.

**Mountain Cavy** – coming from Chile I saw at the altiplano at a busstop a mountain cavy sitting in the sun in a rocky place.

**Mouse** – Kaa Lya – an unidentified mouse (see photo)

**Bat** - Kaa Lya—an unidentified bat flying





**Squirrel in botanical garden**



**Amazon red squirrel in Amboro**





**Black howler male above and female with young beneath in Botanical Garden**







**Black howler pair in trees on the cliffs of Kaa Lya**



**Coati family in Botanical garden**





**Sloth in Botanical garden**



**Sloth in botanical Garden**





**Sloth in Curichi la Madre**





**Squirrel monkey curichi la Madre**



**A bat, unidentified curichi la Madre**



**Crab-eating fox Kaa Lya**



**Two crab-eating foxes Kaa Lya**





**Jaguarundi in Kaa Lya**



**Jaguar in Kaa Lya**





Chaco titi in Kaa Lya





**White fronted capuchin in Amboro**



**White-eared titi in curichi la Madre**





**Grey brocket deer in Kaa Lya**





Some bats in Amboror river cliffs



**Three banded armadillo in Kaa Lya**



**Some mouse in Kaa Lya**





Ocelot in Kaa Lya



Jaguara walking to the jeep in Kaa Lya



**Pampas fox in Kaa Lya**



**Tuco tuco in Kaa Lya**





Tapir in Kaa Lya







Molinas hog-nosed skunk in Kaa Lya

