

# GUYANA

South America's best kept wildlife & birding secret



## a verdant, ancient land

Guyana is where the Guiana Shield, one of the world's four remaining large tracts of relatively undisturbed tropical rainforests, and the Amazon Basin meet in a breathtaking collision of nature. With verdant rainforest carpeting 80 percent of the country, and other habitats varying from exotic mangroves to wild coastal swamps, rugged Atlantic beaches, lofty mountain ranges and sprawling savannahs that conjure comparisons to eastern Africa, Guyana offers the chance to view remarkable wildlife against the backdrop of one of the world's most unspoiled natural wilderness areas.

Framed by Venezuela, Brazil, Suriname and the Atlantic Ocean, Guyana is a paradise for nature lovers. Besides the lure of millions of acres of pristine rainforest, South America's only English-speaking country offers a rich biodiversity, welcoming Amerindian communities, frontier villages and unassuming eco-lodges.

## the untamed realm of wildlife

Guyana's diverse habitats provide sanctuary for an impressive array of fauna, many of which are endangered elsewhere in the world. Research has identified a staggering number of species in Guyana, including 225 of mammals, 880 species of reptiles and amphibians, 6,500 of plants and 815 species of birds. Many believe hundreds, if not thousands, of species remain undiscovered.

Among Guyana's fantastic range of bird species are more than 70 Guiana Shield endemics and other specialities including the magnificent Harpy Eagle, fluorescent Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock, elusive Rufous-winged Ground-Cuckoo and endangered Red Siskin and Sun Parakeet. Professed birdwatcher or not, it's always thrilling to watch the abundance of showy avian icons such as parrots, macaws and toucans fly overhead in flashes of bright color against the emerald forest canopy.

Guyana's healthy mammal populations are regarded as exceptional, especially when compared with other Amazonian rainforests being ravaged by environmental degradation. Some of the world's largest species thrive here – Jaguar, Giant Anteater, Giant River Otter, Giant Armadillo, Black Caiman (alligator), Capybara (rodent), Arapaima (freshwater fish), Green Anaconda, Giant River Turtle – and odds are good that visitors will see at least a few while visiting Guyana.

The giants are impressive, but Guyana has many more species to enthrall wildlife enthusiasts. Other mammals include Manatee, Tapir, Puma, Ocelot, Jaguarundi, eight primate species and some 120 species of bats. The endless list of reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates includes multi-colored poison dart frogs, four species of nesting sea turtles, Matamata Turtle, the Bushmaster Snake and the Goliath Bird-eating Tarantula.

Guyana is also an exceptional place to see butterflies in a virgin natural habitat. The abundance of key Morpho, Papilionidae, Heliconiidae and Pieridae species found here has led to the building of a butterfly farm at an Amerindian village within the million-acre rainforest preserve of Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation.



# into the rainforest

Unpretentious is how to best describe a visit to Guyana. Accommodations in Guyana's interior are intimate lodges where meals are enjoyed with the families who run them. Amerindian guides unveil the mysteries of the forests through finely tuned eyes and ears, vast and practical knowledge and stories that mix the harrowing with the comical.

Visitors can stay within conservation areas like Iwokrama, lodging with scientists at the Field Station or in isolation at the 155m-long and 30m-high Canopy Walkway. Kaieteur National Park, home to Kaieteur Falls, the world's highest single-drop waterfall, has a basic lodge where guests can overnight in solitude while watching hundreds of swifts return to roost behind the falls.

In southern Guyana, Rock View Lodge offers a comfortable oasis nestled in the grassland savannahs. Further south, lodges along the Rupununi River include Karanambu Ranch, home of Diane McTurk's Giant River Otter rehabilitation program and an abundant population of *Victoria amazonica*, the giant Amazon water lily; Caiman House, where visitors can participate in Black Caiman research; and Dadanawa Ranch, a multi-textured cattle ranch where activities include rounding up cattle with cowboys and searching for anacondas and big cats.

To immerse yourself in local indigenous culture, stay at an Amerindian village involved in community tourism. The eco-lodge at Surama village is surrounded by lowland and highland forest, the stunning Rupununi Savannah and the meandering Burro Burro River.

Along the lower Essequibo River (South America's third-largest) is Baganara Island Resort, a mix of white sand beach and tangled forest, and Shanklands Rainforest Resort, which has an extensive series of nature trails running through its 145 acres of mostly virgin rainforest.

Guyana's rainforests and biodiversity exist in a raw, primordial state, and immersion in this remote land is akin to stepping back in time to an undiscovered bastion of nature, wildlife, preserved Amerindian cultures and an inspiring, unassuming way of life. Guyana offers a rare natural adventure, the awe of which can be life changing. Come and experience the magic of the rainforest in one of the earth's most remote, beautiful and wild places.



Monkey Frog (Foto Natura)



Red-backed Bearded Saki (C. Collins)



Kaieteur Falls (Foto Natura)



Hairy Caterpillar (Judy Karwacki)

Giant Otter (Foto Natura)