

EXPERIENCE RUPUNUNI: INDIGENOUS ROOTS

OVER 13 DAYS*, STEP INTO THE LIVES AND PRACTICE THE SKILLS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF THE RUPUNUNI:

RIDE WITH THE VAQUEROS OF THE SOUTHERN SAVANNAHS, WORK ALONGSIDE WAPISHANA FARMERS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE, THEN TRAVEL BY RIVER THROUGH RAINFORESTED MOUNTAINS AND LEARN HOW GENERATIONS HAVE USED THE FOREST AS THEIR HOME. IN THE NORTH RUPUNUNI, GET A GLIMPSE OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NEXT GENERATION OF MACUSHI.

YOUR TRIP WILL DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND GRASSROOTS CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN THE RUPUNUNI.



DAY ONE

Fly into Lethem and drive south to Wichabai Ranch. Settle into your newly built cabins overlooking the corral, lake and mountains.

Following a delicious lunch prepared using produce from Wichabai's farm, your hosts will give you an overview of the history of the area and introduce you to your guides.

Your first lesson is tracking, an essential survival skill: around the ranch are deer, tapir, giant anteaters and jaguars. Learn to identify and follow their tracks and set a motion-activated camera trap to 'capture' them.** Later in your trip you will watch the footage.

Overnight at Wichabai Ranch Guest Cabins.



DAY TWO

Wichabai is the base of the South Rupununi Conservation Society. This morning, join them in their Giant Anteater research and conservation by looking for giant anteaters, checking camera traps and recording tracks and other signs of the animals. You get the honour of naming any newly identified anteaters.

After breakfast, travel to the home of a Wapishana family. Immerse yourself in their life as you help them harvest produce from their farm. Spend the morning in the vital and ingenious task of processing cassava. Lunch is with the family, feasting on the produce of their farm and garden.



Tomorrow, you will be rounding up cattle with Dadanawa Ranch's vaqueros. Tonight, join them as they camp out in the savanna and prepare for tomorrow's ride. This is an experience you will never forget: under a canopy of stars, round the fire, the vaqueros love to share colourful stories of their pasts.

Overnight at a Vaquero sleeping spot (hammock camp)



DAY THREE

Rising at dawn, saddle up and ride with the vaqueros, rounding up cattle and driving them back to the ranch corral.

Back at Dadanawa Ranch, fabled to once have been the largest ranch in the world, watch the vaqueros work in the corral. You can try your hand at lassoing, branding and castrating, and perhaps even ride a wild bull!

Have lunch in the old timber Staff House, then do some leatherwork with the vaqueros as they fix their gear and make belts and knife sockets.

Overnight at Wichabai Ranch Guest Cabins



^s inexperienced or unenthusiastic riders can follow in the ranch vehicle or motorbike.

DAY FOUR

An early drive takes you to Rupunuu village. Nearby is Barawatau Mountain, covered in Petroglyphs. These undeciphered rock carvings tell a story of thousands of years of habitation.

In the village, join local craftswomen and learn to spin cotton and weave the traditional Wapishana hammock. The cotton is grown in the small family farms, and spun by hand using a simple spindle, then woven into the intricate and beautiful hammocks.

On your return to Wichabai, take a short climb for an unforgettable sunset view. We will come back slowly, shining flashlights for nocturnal mammals and birds.

Overnight at Wichabai Ranch Guest Cabins



DAY FIVE

You begin your journey through the mountains by driving to Sand Creek Village and walking to their Rainforest Camp. For the next few nights you will be sleeping in carefully made hammock camps in the rainforest. Here, many miles from any village, you can submerge yourself in nature.

At every opportunity you will experience how indigenous people have interacted with the forest for centuries and the methods people have used, and continue to use, to survive here.

Overnight Sand Creek Rainforest Camp (hammock camp)





DAY SIX AND SEVEN

In boats and canoes we will travel down to our home for the next two nights: our newly built wood and leaf house at a family forest farm on the river's edge. Here you will meet one of the last families to still be using their mountain farm. Deep in the forest, their only means of transport is their heavy dugout canoe, and they live off the bounty of the river and rainforest.

Spend the days exploring the rainforest around the camp, cutting new bush trails and visiting a Harpy Eagle nest. Canoe down into Crabwood creek; an area that is rarely travelled by locals or tourists and full of wildlife. Learn how to use the forest plants for medicines, food and tools. You can also see neotropical river otters, tapir and other animals not seen on the main river.

In the mornings and afternoons, drift downstream to listen to the birds, watch the monkeys and soak in the spirit of the forest.

2 nights at Camp Kumaran (hammock camp).



DAY EIGHT AND NINE

Break camp and head up into Mapari Creek, where there are options to sleep in a wilderness camp or a new lodge. The waterfalls here are beautiful and wonderful for swimming and fishing. We will walk to the top of the cataracts, take river drifts and explore the trails around the camp. All around are the tool sharpening made by those who used this area in centuries past.

You will learn some of the many traditional ways still commonly used to catch fish, including spearing, trapping and use of certain forest plants. At night, go hunting with bow and arrow.

2 nights at Mapari Lodge or Mapari Wilderness Camp



DAY TEN AND ELEVEN

Leave beautiful Mapari, and travel downstream into the North Rupununi, through river framed by gallery forest.

At Yupukari you will see first-hand the benefits that tourism and conservation can bring and find out more about the Macushi of the North Rupununi. You can also join a Black Caiman research trip – yes, that involves going out in the dead of night to catch wild black caiman!

Overnight at Caiman House





DAY TWELVE

Drive from Yupukari back to Lethem and catch your onward transport.

Difficulty Level: EASY

(Requires only a basic level of fitness and no technical expertise)

Comfort Level: BASIC-MODERATE

(Includes stays in lodges and sleeping in hammocks under tarpaulin camps)

*PARTS OF THIS TOUR CAN BE LENGTHENED OR SHORTENED TO SUIT YOU.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND BOOKINGS: defreitasduane@yahoo.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STAYING IN THE RUPUNUNI: WWW.WICHABAI.COM