

SOUTH RUPUNUNI: HER LAND AND HER PEOPLE

THIS IS AN EIGHT DAY* TOUR OF THE SOUTH RUPUNUNI THAT HIGHLIGHTS ITS SPECTACULAR NATURAL BEAUTY, WILDLIFE AND THE UNIQUE CULTURE OF THE WAPISHANA PEOPLE. BY TAKING THIS TOUR, YOU ARE CONTRIBUTING DIRECTLY TO VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL CONSERVATION.



DAY ONE

Pick up in Lethem and transport to the Macushi village of Shulinab for lunch and a visit to the women's group where you take part in weaving a cotton hammock. The cotton is grown in the family forest farms and spun by hand by the women. It is then painstakingly woven into beautiful hammocks.

After lunch, drive south to Saddle Mountain, a remote family ranch. In the evening take a sunset horse ride across the savannah followed by a cooling night swim under the stars in their beautiful natural lagoon.

Overnight with Joan Bell and Tommy Kenyon at Saddle Mountain Ranch.



DAY TWO

After breakfast, travel east and across the Rupununi River to Sand Creek for lunch. Learn how to shoot a bow and arrow[§], an everyday skill still used by villagers. Then, on to the particularly beautiful Wiapishana village of Rupunau. You will notice the traditionally built dwellings made of mud brick and palm leaf and how the layout differs from the Macushi village of Shulinab.

In the afternoon, tour the village and visit a cave where Jaguars are known to sleep. At cataracts on the river, take a fishing lesson with a local and learn some traditional techniques for catching fish. This includes practicing your bow and arrow skills, making cunning fish traps and the traditional use of poison trees.

Accommodation for the night is at Alan and Katie Harley's home in Rupunau.

[§]
*We can also organize to watch a cultural show at lunch time



DAY THREE

Early breakfast and a short drive takes you to some spectacular mountains. Here we will be joined by members of the South Rupununi Conservation Society who are researching the Red Siskins: a small, red endangered bird. You will be able to participate in their work and find out more about the bird and its habitat.

Have your picnic lunch and onwards to Shea Rock. This short climb will give you breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding savannahs and deep into the rainforest. You will learn more about the Wapishana culture from the stories, old rock paintings and burial place associated with the mountain.

On to Aishalton village where you will overnight at Burning Hills Guest House.

DAY FOUR

Early rise and a drive to the edge of the southern savannahs, where they meet the rainforest. Look up as you enter the 'bushmouth' where you have fantastic opportunities some great birding and perhaps monkeys and other forest animals.

For lunch we will return to Burning Hills in Aishalton and after some relaxation you will be joined by a local craftsperson and together make a basket out of the ite palm leaf. Then, we will head out into the savannah for some more birding and a visit to the famous petroglyph sites. These undeciphered carvings tell a history of up to 5000 years of human habitation.

Overnight at Burning Hills, Aishalton.

DAY FIVE

Take a walk up Makatau mountain for great early morning views. Then breakfast, and a drive north to Wichabai Ranch, right in the centre of the South Savannahs. There you will have lunch and in the afternoon take a walk and learn about 150 eventful years of ranching history. These are colourful stories of cowboys, bandits, rebels and revolutionaries!

There is also some great birding around the compound and nearby river edge. This is often best seen while drifting in a canoe. You will learn how to identify the tracks of the animals along the sandbanks: often we see tapir, deer, capybara or jaguar prints.

In the evening there is an opportunity for night canoeing or armadillo tracking- if you are feeling up for it after such an eventful day!

Overnight at **Wichabai Guest Cabins**.





DAY SIX

This morning, ford the Rupununi River to Dadanawa, a huge ranch which once covered the entire south Rupununi savannah. You will join the vaqueros as they work on the cattle in the corral, and learn how they lasso, brand and castrate the animals. If you are feeling brave, get on and ride a wild bull!

Have lunch in the old Staff House and take a ranch tour including the tannery and the infamous 'Dadanawa Stores'.

In the afternoon, canoe back to Wichabai, birding and looking for Giant River Otters and Howler Monkeys.

Overnight at at **Wichabai Guest Cabins**.



DAY SEVEN

Early in the morning, join the South Rupununi Conservation Society as they track Giant Anteaters as part of a research and conservation project. You will take part, setting camera traps, measuring tracks and scratch marks and hopefully finding and identifying individual anteaters. You can even name any new anteaters that are found.

After breakfast, you will join a family in Katoonarib village. Immerse yourself in their life as you work with them in their farm, then bring the cassava back to their home and spend the morning learning how to process this vital root. For lunch you will taste the fruits of your labour as you join the family in a traditional meal.

Back to Wichabai, take time to relax in your hammock or swim in the lake, or maybe enjoy a sunset horseride.

For your final night, enjoy yourself with cocktails and a big roast under the stars.

Overnight at **Wichabai**



DAY EIGHT

On your last morning, you will take a walk into a bush island farm, pick some fruit for your homeward journey and soak in some wonderful views.

Drive back to Lethem to continue your onward trip.





Difficulty Level: EASY

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

Comfort Level: MODERATE

(Staying in lodges which lack air conditioning. Some long drives.)

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND BOOKING THIS TOUR: defreitasduane@yahoo.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STAYING IN THE RUPUNUNI: www.wichabai.com