

## New BBC Series to Put Spotlight on Guyana

The BBC's new natural history series, *Lost Land of the Jaguar*, airs on BBC1 for the first time 30th July (See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/proginfo/tv/wk31/unplaced.shtml>). Three, hour-long programmes document explorations made by an expert team of international naturalists and film makers as they journey north of the Amazon into the uncharted jungles of Guyana, where unspoilt, though unprotected, rainforest is home to hundreds and maybe thousands of species awaiting discovery by modern science.

Kirk Smock, author of Bradt Travel Guides' first edition *Guyana* comments on the BBC series: '*Camerawoman Justine Evans captured it beautifully saying, "Flying in to the base camp over hundreds of miles of untouched forest, a sight I had never witnessed before...You are struck with a real sense of hope in Guyana as there is a large, intact tropical paradise that can be saved. There are very few places left in the world that hold such a valuable resource."*

*Justine's words reminded me of what was a large motivating factor throughout the process of researching and writing the Bradt Travel Guide to Guyana. Time and again I was awestruck by the pristine beauty of the country's rainforests and savannas. As I say in my book's introduction, "during my travels in Guyana I felt as though I had stepped into something larger than the present, something that diminishes all that mankind has created in this world, both good and bad. It was nature, in a raw, unaltered, almost timeless state that made me feel insignificant. It was a welcome and humbling feeling."*

*I'm sure the entire crew involved in the BBC series experienced something similar during their time in Guyana, likely on a daily basis. I've also heard similar feedback from the adventurous few who choose to holiday in Guyana. Lost Land of the Jaguar wonderfully captures Guyana's flora, fauna and overall beauty, and I expect that it will generate much interest in the country from potential visitors, and hopefully increase Guyana's minimal tourism numbers.'*

Bradt's *Guyana* guidebook has been pictured held firmly in the grasp of Harrison Ford – no doubt with an eye to Indiana Jones's next adventure – and is being actively promoted by the country's President Bharrat Jagdeo. *Guyana* is the first English-language guide to this anomalous little-known English-speaking South American state, bordered by Brazil, Venezuela, Suriname and the Atlantic Ocean.

Eighty percent of the country remains covered by rainforest, supporting a wealth of natural history including 225 mammals, 880 reptiles and amphibians, 815 birds and over 6,500 plants – others undoubtedly await identification. With only 750,000 inhabitants populating roughly five percent of the country's 83,000 square miles, Guyana may not be short of space but it's certainly short of visitors. As author Kirk Smock identifies, 'Communities are told over and over again that they have all of the necessary components to create an ideal ecotourism destination. Lodges are built, trails are cut and guides are trained... The problem is that Guyana remains a virtual unknown. Villages can't depend on tourism without enough visitors.'

If you're looking for informed comment on a part of the world that is set to become one of this year's defining destinations for ecotourism, Kirk Smock author of Bradt's *Guyana*, the only dedicated English-language guide to the country, is available for telephone or email interview. Please contact the author on [kirksmock@gmail.com](mailto:kirksmock@gmail.com).

Originally from the United States, **Kirk Smock** is a freelance travel writer who has lived and worked in Guyana, and continues to work on the Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative. For more information on the guidebook, see <http://www.bradt-travelguides.com/details.asp?prodid=178>.