



GUYANA
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GUYANA BIRDING

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International Birding Tour Operators and Media Say Guyana’s Future Potential as a Worldwide Birding Destination is Positive



GEORGETOWN—Seven international birding tour operators and two media representatives from the UK recently returned from a birding product familiarization tour (FAM trip) throughout Guyana and provided feedback during a debriefing session held on November 25 at Cara Lodge. The FAM trip, which took place from November 17 through 26, was part of the birding tourism program that is a joint partnership between the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project.

After spending nine days birding throughout Guyana, including stops at Georgetown’s Botanical Gardens, Shanklands, Baganara, Arrowpoint, Kaieteur Falls, Surama Village, Iwokrama, Wowetta Village, Rock View Lodge, and Karanambu Ranch, the nine visitors sat down with tourism representatives and media to give their preliminary findings.

The entire group prepared feedback on the FAM trip, and Tim Earl, a guide for The Travelling Naturalist, presented the information during the debriefing session. The following quotes are his words, but reflect the thoughts and impressions of all nine participants.



Tim began by saying that, “Guyana has a fantastic wilderness and we’ve had a wonderful time here.” He continued saying that the group wanted to stress three main points, which all other comments will fall under: “Protect your wilderness; improve your accommodation and transport; and make sure that your prices are competitive.”

Tim then went on to say that all on the FAM trip believed that, “Guyana has the potential to develop a birdwatching and wildlife business. We’ve been to most parts of the world between us...and I can tell you that Guyana stands up well in comparison with other places.”

Advantages that Guyana has over its main competitors (named as Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Northern Brazil, and Suriname) is that Guyana is an English speaking country and is much easier to access in regards to flights and travel time, particularly for the North American and European market.

On the subject of birds, the group said that there are, “a lot of interesting birds here in Guyana. The list is only 800 but we were able to access those 800 species. We didn’t see them all but we saw a fair proportion of them (376 different species) in the ten days that we’ve been here, and that is a very high scorer. The birds you’ve got here are accessible.”

Tim also said that from the client’s point of view, birding in Guyana is great because, “we can get them to see some spectacular species. The Cock-of-the-Rock is up there with the great birds of the world, and you’ve got them here in Guyana in plenty. And we can get in to see them easily.”



Tim said that one of their favorite places for birding was Iwokrama, with one of the highlights being the canopy walkway. “Guyana,” he said, “has a fantastic canopy walk. The money that was invested there is miniscule for the resource that was built. But we thought that the accommodation there needed to be expanded upon and improved.”

Further on accommodation and service in Guyana, the group felt it was, “good; it’s not exemplary, but it’s good.” Tim continued by saying that it needs some improvement but quickly added that, “I would bring a group here tomorrow and not worry about them.”

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International Birding Tour Operators and Media Wowed by Guyana (page two)

In order to attract birders to a new country, and keep them coming, conservation issues must be made a high priority. “You need to find out how to allow people to see these birds without disturbing them.” The guides felt that Guyana must set up National Parks to protect the natural resources. “These [birds and wildlife] will move away or die out if you don’t protect them and if they go people will not come back here; they will not visit the country.”

Continuing on the importance of conservation, Tim said, “You’ve got great forests here in Guyana. Your wilderness areas are terrific, but you’ve got to look after them. And one of the major recommendations—and this is a government thing—is to set up National Parks.

“People visiting countries like to go to National Parks. They like to feel that the country they are visiting thinks enough about its habitat and environment to protect it. Guyana could do with some National Parks...they are big magnets. People respect governments that set up National Parks.”

Overall, all participants of the FAM trip were impressed with Guyana as a birding destination and every one of them said that their respective companies will begin offering tours to Guyana in 2008, with some looking at bringing smaller groups as early as 2007.

The group also spoke about the importance of good word of mouth when it comes to selling a new birding destination, and said that they would all be heading home with nothing but positive tales to tell. Several companies said they would feature Guyana as a destination on their website and in their newsletters, and many plan to give lectures on Guyana to their local naturalist and birding clubs.

The media representatives who were on the FAM trip will also be publishing articles in *Neotropical Birding* and *Birdwatch* magazines. The guides also said that they would be writing articles for other publications including widely read newspapers such as *The Guernsey Press*.

This FAM was the second of three trips that bring international birding tour operators and media to Guyana to sample the country’s birding experience. The final FAM trip will be in February 2007.

The FAM tour programs would not be possible if local tourism suppliers were not pledging their full support. For the this program, GTA-GTIS is grateful for the generous donations of accommodations and in-kind and reduced cost services from BWIA, Trans Guyana Airways, Cara Lodge, Grand Coastal Inn, Baganara, Shanklands, Arrowpoint, Surama, Iwokrama, Rock View Lodge, Karanambu, Community and Tourism Services (CATS), and Wilderness Explorers.

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