

John Collings

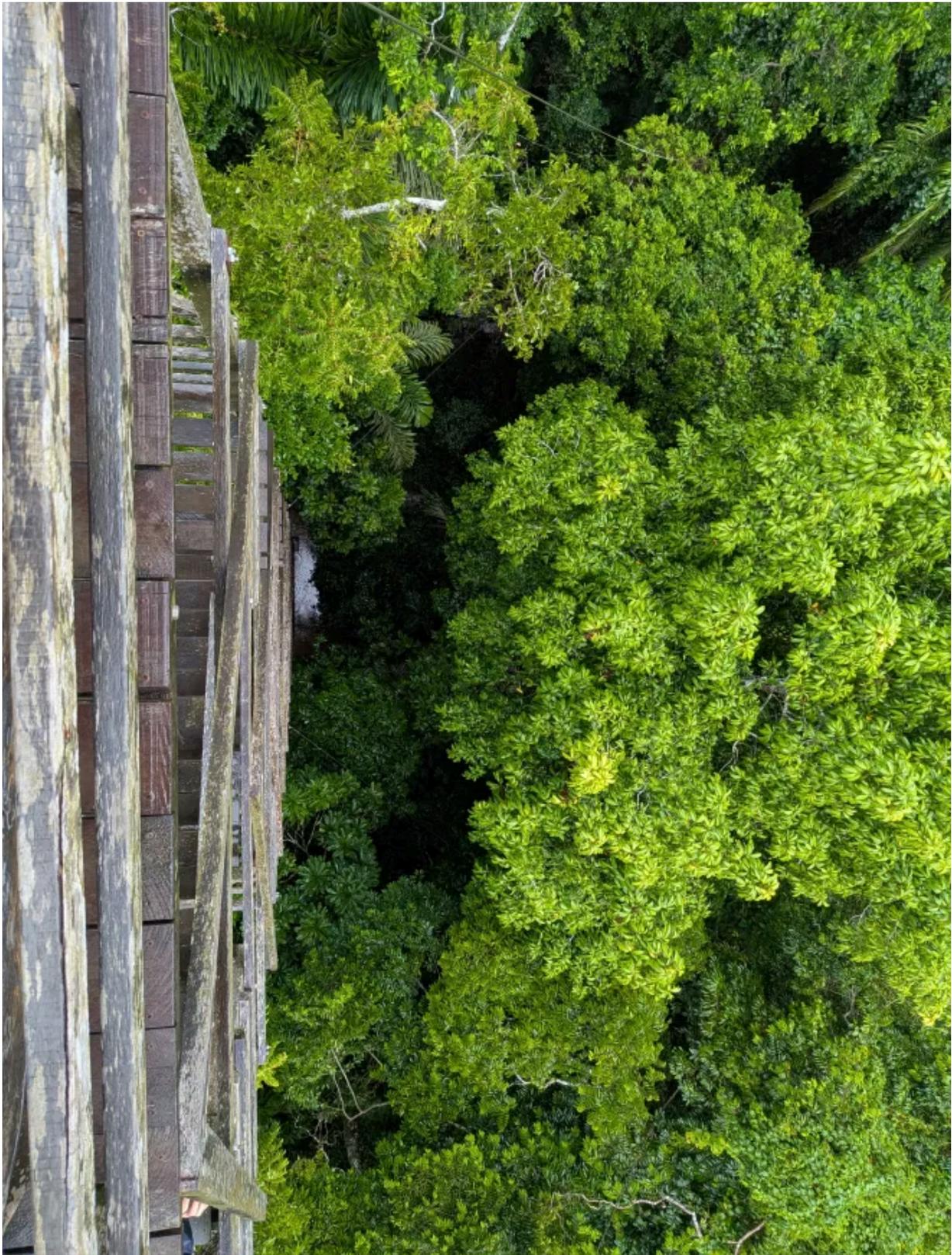
A novelist with a passion for reading and traveling shares his view of the world and his adventures.

Tag: Inkaterra resort

Above the Canopy



There is an all-inclusive resort close called Inkaterra to Porto Maldonado, Peru in the Amazon rain forest where they have many different activities to keep the guests busy. Each day is supplied with various hikes, boat rides or excursions that will take you to various parts of the rain forest to explore. My favorite excursion so far has been the canopy hike. It allows for a view of the forest that is hard to come by. You are allowed to raise yourself above the lower levels and get to look at it the same way that the monkeys and birds that wander through the forest get to see it.



It does take a little bit of a voyage to get to the towers that will take you above the canopy of the forest. The resort will load everybody on a boat and take them down the river to a short trail that will take you to the first tower. They will take you out there during the planned time whether it is sunny, rainy, or just murky out, so go out there making sure you are wearing the right clothes you will need to stay dry. I took the boat ride during a torrential downpour and was stuck in the front of the boat. Though I was wearing my best protective gear, I was still soaked to the bone by the time I arrived.



Still, being wet did not take away from the experience. I climbed up a tower built out of rust wood, a strong wood from the forest that looks like it is rotting away, but is actually super strong. The tower took us up forty meters to look down at the first canopy of the forest with six suspension bridges in-between the two towers that were connected to the bigger trees in the forest. The goal was to walk over the six bridges to get to the other side while looking down on the forest and hopefully catching sight of some of the birds and animals that live in this altitude of the trees.



Because of the rain, we were not able to find any animals, but it had cleared off enough for us to enjoy the view. They would only let one person walk across the bridge at a time which was probably a good thing because even with one person, it was rather bouncy. It also caused us to take a good amount of time for the whole group to get from one side to the other, but once things got started on the bridges, it did not feel like the wait took too long between the bridges.



I would not claim that those who are afraid of heights would have a problem with this excursion, but I did go with a couple of people that are not big fans of heights, and they never felt as if their lives were in danger. The bridges are a little bouncy, but you feel secure as you cross over them, and there are places to hold on to allowing you to feel as if nothing really bad could happen as you cross over. When all was said and done, it was a lot of fun, and if the place allowed for it to happen, I would easily go out there to experience it again. Maybe the next time I would be dry and get

to be able to see the animals come out of their hiding. Until then, I will just have to enjoy the next experience that life has planned for me.

📅 January 2, 2026 📁 Travel, Uncategorized ✎ adventure, Amazon rain forest, canopy hike, hiking, Inkaterra resort, nature, Peru, photography, Porto Maldonado, Travel 💬 Leave a comment

Making Chocolate

My favorite part of traveling around the world is falling into those unexpected experiences that treat me to a new way of looking at something that we take as commonplace. It is not uncommon for me to stand in a checkout line at the grocery store when I get a quick hankering for chocolate, so I scan the offering right in front of me, and quickly grab one of my favorites to throw on the pile. I don't think about the process it took to get to this place in the grocery store; I just think about how I can get into my stomach. But I recently got to experience the process that it took to make chocolate in the first place, and not from the perspective of a huge corporation making the treat, but from the way it was prepared for centuries beforehand.

In a hut in the middle of the Amazon rain forest, I stood before a bowl of cocoa beans that had been roasted in the sun. These beans come from a podlike fruit that can be found on trees in this part of the world. The pod is a distinct yellow when it is ready to harvest, and when the pod is opened up, the beans are white in a milky substance. It is the roasting process that turns them into the darker color that we know chocolate to eventually be.



The first process is taking off the husk from each of the beans. It is easier than I thought it would be, and there was only a couple of times when the bean turned into a powdery substance that would be used in making cocoa. It also left the tips of my fingers with a fine powdery substance that when licked made me feel like I was eating the cereal Cocoa Puffs.



When all of the beans' shells had been removed, we moved what was left over to a large flat stone, and used a larger rounded stone to grind the beans into a nice powder. It was a good start for what needed to happen, but the stone did not get the cocoa into a fine enough powder, so this is when we moved over to the next step.



We moved all the powder to a more powerful grinder. This one was harder to use as some the bigger chunks left over from the stone would get stuck in the grinder. Still, with a little bit of leverage, we were able to run all the powder through and turn it into a very fine substance. Still was not ready for consumption.



This is when you start adding the sugar and condensed milk to prepare it to the way you like it. I always wondered how certain chocolates had a spiciness or unique flavor and I am sure that this is the same time that other ingredients were added to achieve that desired effect. With the extra ingredients added, it went back to the fine grinder to get it back to that consistency needed for the final step.



This is when the aluminum foil was brought out, and the ground cocoa was spread out into it, and then nicely folded over to be brought to the refrigerator. After about fifteen minutes in the chilled environment, it becomes the type of chocolate that you might find in a grocery store, granted not the convenient one that you could find in a checkout aisle, but the more refined kind that can be found in the baking aisle of the store. The whole process helped me appreciate this worldwide delight even more, and I will never look at chocolate the same way again.



Until next time, look for those experiences that will help you see in the world in a new way.

📅 December 30, 2025 📁 Travel, Uncategorized ✍️ baking, Chocolate, cocoa, dessert, food, Inkaterra resort, making chocolate, Peru, Puerto Maldonado, recipes, Travel 💬 Leave a comment

Can You Spot the Animals?

The Amazon is teeming with life. In order to know that this is true, all you have to do is stand still and listen to the noises of the forest. You will hear various birds calling, frogs barking, and monkeys howling, but as soon as you try to look for them, they become elusive. Still, with a good eye, you can find them hidden amongst the fauna of the forest.

We went out into the wild on many occasions, and if it was not for our guide, I do not believe that we would have found all of the animals that we found. I was amazed at the way he was able to find not only the monkeys in the trees, but as the tiniest of bugs hiding on the branches, or the caiman lurking in the roots of a tree in the river. It gave me a new appreciation of what it meant to live in this part of the world. Here are some pictures I took of some of the animals that we found in our travels. See if you can find the animals in the pictures.



There is an otter staring at the camera while enjoying a breakfast of piranha.



What our guide often referred to as the stinky bird with a spiky haircut, but I don't think that is its technical name.



A small bird that is related to the owl.



A caiman, a smaller relative of the alligator, looking at us from the water as we passed by in a long canoe.



A row of bats getting their beauty sleep during the day so they could hunt at night.



A white heron trying not to look too conspicuous on a branch down a tributary.



A capuchin monkey looking down at us wondering why we are not taking the palm trees that make the rain forest highway.



A red howler monkey catching up with the rest of its crew.

Some of the animals were more obvious to see, but with help, I was able to find many more. Despite this, I am also sure that there were many more that were out there observing us that I never got to see. It just made going back out into the forest an adventure every time because I never knew what it was I was going to find.

Until next time, keep searching for those hidden gems that you know are out there waiting to be found.

 December 29, 2025  Travel  Amazon rain forest, animal life, bats, caiman, can you spot, capuchin, Inkaterra resort, nature, otter, Peru, photography, Red howler monkey, stinky bird, Travel, white heron, wildlife  Leave a comment

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