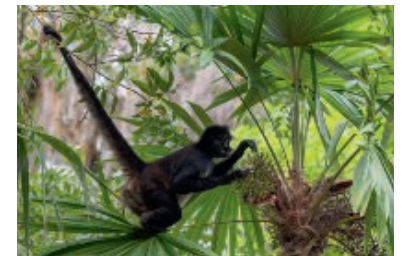




The top tool for the toucan

- A toucan's beak or bill usually comprises one third of its entire body. Made of keratin - the same protein hair and nails are made of - the beak has a hollow honeycomb structure inside, making it lightweight. It also has a serrated edge, perfect for when the toucan wants to peel fruit with amazing precision. Toucans regulate blood flow to their bill to help control their body temperature and are even known to use their beaks for balance when sleeping.



Superior swingers - The secret to why the spider monkey seems perfectly adapted for high life in the canopy is down to two aspects. The first is its tail, probably the most powerful tail of all animals, and capable of supporting the spider monkey's entire body. The underside of where the tail curls has no fur and resembles a palm, for extra grip. The other factor is the spider monkey's long, slender fingers which wrap securely around branches, and with no thumbs to get in the way.



Slow but super strong - Sloths have the lowest metabolic rate of any mammal and it takes them a month to digest a single leaf as it passes through its permanently full four-chambered stomach. But their stamina, grip, and strength are the envy of any climber. From the moment they are born, they can lift their whole body weight up with just one arm. Even with 30% less muscle mass than similar-sized animals, they are still three times stronger than the average human!

Tropics of the Exotic

The warm climate of the region creates a range of wildlife habitats: lowland rainforest, isolated beaches, mangrove swamps, waterfalls - each rich with life.

Slow and steady

The sandy beaches of the Caribbean with their gently lapping waves are the perfect ecosystem for its oldest inhabitants - sea turtles. Six of the seven known species are found in this region.

Optional snorkelling opportunities, perhaps within Belize's famed barrier reef, will give you a chance to scan for loggerhead, hawksbill and green turtles. If you're lucky, you might spot

the iconic leatherback turtle in the UNESCO marine sites in Bocas del Toro, a gorgeous archipelago off the coast of Panama.

Same habitat, opposite habits

A highlight of an optional hike in the forests here, such as the Arenal area in Costa Rica, is the chance of spotting two very different animals - monkeys and sloths. You'll hear howler monkeys before you see them - their calls can be heard as far as

three miles. Jumpy spider monkeys are usually nearby too as well as white-faced capuchins with their distinctive black caps.

Unlike their noisy, never-sit-still, treetop neighbours, sloths are silent and extremely slow-paced. You'll see them avoiding anything strenuous, hanging upside down in large-leaved trees, feeding or more likely, sleeping.