

Rainforest Diary

Monday 1st August

(temperature 27°C; humidity 55%; precipitation 0mm)

Well – that was a long journey! 8266km to be precise! The flight from London to Manaus (Brazil) took 17 long, dreary hours. We arrived at the hotel about an hour ago and Dad has allowed me to do this quick update before bed. I'm pretty exhausted after all that travelling, so I'm more than ready to go to sleep now. I wish I had more energy though, as Manaus looks like a pretty cool city to explore. Dad calls it 'the gateway to the Amazon rainforest' as it's the perfect place to begin our expedition. He is hoping to organise some transport tomorrow to take us into the heart of the rainforest. At 10 years old, dad was worried that I might be too young for a journey like this, so I'm really glad he changed his mind and let me tag along. I hope I don't get in his way too much.

Tuesday 2nd August

(temperature 29°C; humidity 70%; precipitation 0mm)

Did you know that the Amazon rainforest is the largest rainforest in the world? It's so big that the UK and Ireland can fit into it 17 times! After spending the day travelling through it, I can truly appreciate this fact.

We began the day sailing by ferry along the Rio Tapajós (a major tributary of the Amazon). The frequent roar of the howler monkeys was a constant reminder of how wild and potentially dangerous this place can be. We also spotted plenty of caiman (a member of the alligator family) sunning themselves on the banks of the river. I prayed that our boat wouldn't sink! Many, many kilometres later, we disembarked at the small town of Alter do Chão. This was where Dad had arranged to meet our guide, called Matheus. We spent a few hours collecting the supplies we needed for our journey before jumping into a muddy but sturdy looking off-roader, to be driven deeper into the rainforest.

Sadly, the lovely air-conditioned 4x4 has taken us as far as it can; the last leg of our journey needs to be done on foot. We have set up camp for the night and Dad is attempting to heat up some black bean and sausage stew on the camp fire. Currently, I'm lying unsteadily in a hammock, attempting to write this entry. The hammock will hopefully help me avoid the many snakes, spiders and insects that wander around the forest floor at night. I don't think I'm going to get much sleep tonight!

Wednesday 3rd August

(temperature 29°C; humidity 82%; precipitation 10mm)

Today has been tough! The humidity has been unbearable and we've been hit by two torrential rainstorms. Despite this, we've managed to walk over 15km through some pretty tough terrain. The heat and humidity have sapped my energy though; I'm tired, grubby and very sweaty. Nevertheless, the rainforest is a truly magnificent place. The trees are absolutely massive. They have smooth, straight trunks that shoot up for 100 feet or more, before branching out to create a thick canopy, high above the forest floor. Light levels in the forest can be very low at times, due to the thickness of the canopy. Matheus told me that in the places where the canopy is really thick, it can take ten minutes for the rain to reach the ground. However, it's thanks to these conditions that so many species thrive here. Apparently, there are over 2.5 million types of insect living here – I think I've been bitten by half of them!

I have no idea how Matheus did it but he managed to deliver us safely to our intended destination: the village of the Wajapi tribe. It was late when we arrived so we have been shown to a hut where we are to stay the night. I can't wait to explore the village in the morning and Dad is so excited about finally being able to unlock some of the secrets of this magical place.

Thursday 4th August
(temperature 28°C; humidity 72%; precipitation 5mm)

Today, I have discovered such a lot about the Wajapi people. They have lived in the Amazon rainforest for thousands of years and have developed a deep understanding of their environment. These people are completely self-sufficient. They grow their own crops and eat the edible plants that grow naturally around them. The river also acts as an important lifeline. They use it for drinking water, as a means of transport and as a place to hunt fish, turtles, capybara and caiman. I admit to being a little disappointed by the lack of poisoned darts being used for hunting. Guns now appear to be the weapon of choice. This remote village must have some links with the outside world.

Unfortunately, we have been told that loggers and developers are wanting to cut down vast numbers of trees in the area. They want to clear the forest so they can make way for grazing animals and crops. The tribe are concerned about the affect this will have on the indigenous plants and animals. Dad has promised to do all he can to help protect this area.

Dad spent many hours talking to a very important person: the shaman. The shaman has great knowledge of the local plants and animals and it's believed that he can even communicate with them. Dad is primarily here to discuss the shaman's knowledge of medicinal plants. Over time, this tribe have learnt how to utilise the healing properties of the plants growing naturally around them. Dad has always believed that the cure to many diseases and ailments can be found in the plants of the rainforest. Luckily, the shaman has allowed him to take some samples of the plants they use. I have my fingers crossed that these samples will help Dad find the answers he has been looking for.

Friday 5th August
(temperature 30°C; humidity 79%; precipitation 0mm)

Today has been hot and humid (as usual) but at least it hasn't rained! I spent a fun morning playing with some children who were a similar age to me. We had great fun trying to understand each other with the help of a bit of sign language and mime. Sadly, it was also time to go.

The trek back to the 4x4 didn't seem as bad this time. I must be getting used to these humid conditions. Although when Matheus turned on the air-conditioning, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Bliss! We've a long drive ahead of us now before reaching the town of Alter do Chão. Dad wants to spend the night there before sailing back to Manaus, ready to catch the flight home.

Even though I've found the rainforest incredibly tough at times, I'll never forget this once in a lifetime experience. I intend to keep this diary in a very safe place, so when I'm old and forgetful, I'll still be able to recall my days of adventure.

Rainforest Diary – Questions

Section A

Circle the correct answer.

The distance from London to Manaus is...

6822km

8266km

8262km

8622km

Their guide was called...

Martin

Mattie

Matthew

Matheus

On Wednesday 3rd August, the humidity was...

84%

88%

82%

28%

Dad spent a lot of time talking to the...

shaman

healer

witchdoctor

elder

Dad thought the cure for many diseases and ailments could be found in the...

animals

water

air

plants

Section B

Use the information in the text to decide whether these statements are true or false.

	True	False
Dad calls Manaus 'the gateway to the Amazon rainforest' as it's the perfect place to begin our expedition.		
The Amazon rainforest is so big that the UK and Ireland can fit into it 71 times!		
They spotted plenty of caiman (a member of the monkey family) sunning themselves on the banks of the river.		
The hammock will hopefully help the diarist avoid the many snakes, spiders and insects that wander around the forest floor.		
Loggers and developers are wanting to cut down vast numbers of trees in the area.		

Section C

These people are completely self-sufficient. They grow their own crops and eat the edible plants that grow naturally around them. The river also acts as an important lifeline. They use it for drinking water, as a means of transport and as a place to hunt fish, turtles, capybara and caiman. I admit to being a little disappointed by the lack of poisoned darts being used for hunting. Guns now appear to be the weapon of choice. This remote village must have some links with the outside world.

FIND and COPY a word in the text that means:

- to carry people from one place to another _____
- a mammal that looks like a giant guinea pig _____
- needing no outside help to satisfy needs _____
- a place located far from main centres of population
- pursue and kill for sport or food
- fit to be eaten

Rainforest Diary – Answers

Section A

Circle the correct answer.

The distance from London to Manaus is...

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8266km

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Dad spent a lot of time talking to the...

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Dad thought the cure for many diseases and ailments could be found in the...

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plants

Section B

Use the information in the text to decide whether these statements are true or false.

	True	False
Dad calls Manaus 'the gateway to the Amazon rainforest' as it's the perfect place to begin our expedition.	✓	
The Amazon rainforest is so big that the UK and Ireland can fit into it 71 times!		✓
They spotted plenty of caiman (a member of the monkey family) sunning themselves on the banks of the river.		✓
The hammock will hopefully help the diarist avoid the many snakes, spiders and insects that wander around the forest floor.	✓	
Loggers and developers are wanting to cut down vast numbers of trees in the area.	✓	

Section C

These people are completely **self-sufficient**. They grow their own crops and eat the **edible** plants that grow naturally around them. The river also acts as an important lifeline. They use it for drinking water; as a means of **transport** and as a place to **hunt** fish, turtles, **capybara** and caiman. I admit to being a little disappointed by the lack of **poisoned darts** being used for hunting. Guns now appear to be the weapon of choice. This **remote** village must have some links with the outside world.

FIND and COPY a word in the text that means:

- to carry people from one place to another **transport**

- a mammal that looks like a giant guinea pig **capybara**

- needing no outside help to satisfy needs **self-sufficient**

- a place located far from main centres of population **remote**

- pursue and kill for sport or food **hunt**

- fit to be eaten **edible**
