

## Natural Planet

### Ep.8- Nature's Lost World's: The Venezuelan Plateau

In the wilderness of the deep jungle of South America stands a vast, majestic structure that very few people ever get to see. Parts of Venezuela used to stand almost a kilometre higher above sea level than it does today. Most of the sandstone that made it so tall has eroded away but in very few cases, reminders of this ancient time remain, standing a full 1000 metres above the landscape. They are the Tepui; in the native language- the Houses of the Gods.

The mountains themselves rise straight up out of the sea of trees. No slope to climb makes access almost impossible for humans. For those that have reached the top through climbing or helicopter have seen an almost alien landscape. The summit so often surrounded in cloud, is wind ravaged creating beautiful unnatural sculptures covered in mosses and insect eating plants. Underground rivers carve deep caves, some of which collapse creating great 300 metre wide holes in the middle of the vegetation, dropping into darkness and the unknown.

In terms of the nature that has reached these regions, it is unique. The tops of the Tepui are isolated from the ground, therefore evolving new species. Some species may only belong to the top of one set of mountains. The great sink holes are even more isolated, meaning there may be species that exist in only one cave, in one mountain, in the entire world.

The plants that can survive at the top of these are insect-eating; no normal plants have taken root considering there is very little soil to live in. This is a strange world where giant tarantulas hunt frogs and toads. The pebble toad escapes from being lunch by jumping off rocks, curling up into a ball and bouncing away.

This is a beautiful and strange world still highly unexplored and unknown in our twenty-first century where everything seems so accessible. This truly is one of nature's lost worlds.