

Suri, the Chef and the Caiman: Julie Dawson

We met Katie on the Galapagos Islands and immediately loved her sense of fun and adventure, so when she invited us to visit her, we jumped at the chance. She was a volunteer teacher at a new hospitality school in the Amazon. All money earned went to locals or to purchase rainforest to save it from deforestation.

Little did we know of the adventures she and Freddie our guide, had planned. During the day we paddled canoes, waded through rivers, hiked the jungle, met villagers, and saw the most spectacular birds and animals. When Freddie suggested a night walk, we asked the key question we always ask ourselves in our travel life, 'Is it a life experience?' Of course, it was. Now if you think walking in the jungle during the day is scary, you should try it at night. Katie loved it and was delighted when Freddie scooped up a huge spider and placed it on her head like a fascinator. At this point I had serious doubts about the whole adventure, but Freddie cheered me up when he said that Chef would give us a BBQ cooking lesson when we got back. Yay!

Back at the resort we marinated freshly caught fish and wrapped them in banana leaves, before making a palm heart salad with salt and limes...yum. When Chef handed me more banana leaves, Freddie said, 'Unwrap them.'

'EEK!' they were full of fat, white, crawling worms.

'Yummy' says Freddie and popped one headfirst into his mouth!

'YUKO!'

Chef and Freddie giggled before tucking into the delicacies. Finally, they relented and speared the wriggling worms on skewers and placed them on the BBQ. 'Just like prawns', Freddie said.

I'm sure they were great, but after seeing them wriggling and squirming, it was a life experience I decided to forego!

In honour of our visit, or so he said, Freddie had ordered the wriggling horrors for dinner for the next two nights. We became very popular, as volunteers feasted on these rare delicacies. We did get our revenge though. Every evening, from the edge of the lake, a caiman's red eyes would gleam at us. So, on the final night I said to Freddie, 'Come out onto the balcony and see what I've found.' It took only one second before Freddie shot from the building. Strangely, he was afraid of only one creature - the caiman.