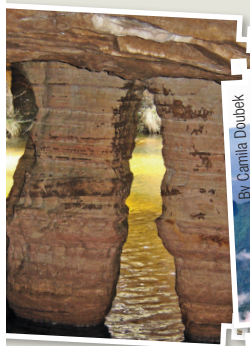


site is about 8 miles away at the foot of Roraima and represents the last opportunity for a shower in the dams.

The campsite is roughly 2.79 miles away from the plateau. The vegetation mutates along the way and these few miles are the most difficult, all uphill. "We start the climb through a gorgeous green high altitude forest, then we go to a rocky stretch with some waterfalls. When we reach the top, the weariness becomes fulfillment," says Luciana Pereira, who climbed *tepui* (local name for the formations) with her sister Mariana.

between Brazil, Venezuela and Guyana. *Vale dos Cristais* (Valley of Crystals), literally full of quartz crystals, is not far away. There are Jacuzzis with crystal-clear blue water, El Fosso (the Pit), and Maverick rock, the highest point of Roraima. There is also Lake Gladys, its name given in honor of a lake described in the book "The Lost World." Access to the lake is difficult and requires a few more days of camping.

Leaving Roraima, the same route is used to cement memories of a unique place. "We have the sensation of surpassing our emotional and



By Camilla Doubeak



Proa



By Roraima Adventures

Rosângela describes her arrival at the plateau as "surrounded by fog, in a supernatural and mysterious atmosphere, which cleared later on, exposing the blue and sunny sky."

Time spent with the Indians is of course a valuable cultural interchange. The Indians say that the top of Roraima is a sacred place, home of the God Macunaíma, which is why shouting is not allowed here. The camp is set up in a small cave with drinkable water and a panoramic view. "There is no comfort, but, in the eco-tourist's world, the suffering is good. It is always rewarding and fascinating," says Rosângela.

Most of the region's vegetation is endemic; it grew there because of natural isolation and includes orchids, bromeliad, brackens and carnivorous plants. Small rodents, birds, and a tiny frog incapable of jumping also inhabit *tepui*. Strange rocky formations challenge visitor imagination, and at dawn the foot of Roraima is covered with mist. It looks like an island in the sky, and the sensation only increases with the unbelievable silence.

Reaching the top is not the end of the journey. There are several attractions on the plateau: The Triple Mark for instance establishes the borders

physical limits. During the trip, I thought to myself, "What am I doing here? Tired, without infrastructure, no food, no decent shower, I mean, we reconsider our life. When I got to the top, I had a sensation of lightness and indescribable joy," explains Luciana.

For Rosângela, the interaction with nature was a unique experience. "The sensation is almost symbiotic; there is almost a fusion between the human being and the environment. It is impossible not to feel part of this nature, a piece in the puzzle." Rosângela climbed Roraima with her friend Helena Perin. "This experience enriched my existence and proved to me that, indeed, I am capable of great achievements. That is so true that the next adventures will be the base camp of Everest and *Pico da Neblina* (Neblina Peak)!"

In 1884, English botanist Everard Im Thurn discovered a route to the top of Roraima. In his notes, which inspired the author of Sherlock Holmes, he says: "*Roraima is characterized by an extraordinary number of plants, almost all with unusual beauty, with strange shape and maybe with both characteristics. (...)Roraima stands out in a really wonderful land, full of rare, beautiful and strange things.*" ■