

# BITTEN BY THE JUNGLE BUG!

## Sand flies, sweat bees, 80-metre-high trees.

Hell for most of us, yes, but all in a day's work for Charlotte Uhlenbroek. She moves as elegantly through the lounge of London's Savoy Hotel as she does through the Amazon jungle. But while she loves the adventure, she is also glad to be back in 'civilisation', at least for the moment.

She's just finished filming a TV series called *Jungle* – a gruelling 19-week job that involved her exploring the dense jungles of the Congo, the Amazon and Borneo. She says that it was fascinating, but daunting as well. So what was her most challenging experience? 'Definitely climbing an 80-metre-high tree in Borneo, when I'm scared of heights! It was petrifying! I had to keep going up and up, when a voice inside me was saying, "Down! Down!" I kept thinking the ropes were going to break and send me plummeting down below.'

And 'down below' was where the bugs were – clinging, stinging, sucking beasts. Apart from the usual mosquitoes, in the Amazon rainforest she was plagued by sand-fly bites. 'I've had some horrible bites but these really are the itchiest bites I've ever had. At one stage, I counted 70 bites on one arm,' she says. 'Just as annoying were the sweat bees in the Congo. They try to drink the sweat on your face and even the tears from your eyes. The most disgusting thing, though, was trying to pull the slimy leeches off your skin. The more I pulled, the more they stretched and the tighter their jaws clung to my leg. I kept shouting, "Get them off!" and the film crew kept saying, "Just a minute ... this makes a really good shot!"'

Charlotte's journey into the heart of the world's most significant rainforests was an inspiring experience. 'The rainforest really is like a city. Each tree is like an urban tower block with hundreds of residents. If you knock it down, you cause just as much disruption and damage as if those residents were human. The jungle is extraordinary because although it only covers about 6 percent of the world, it contains over 50 percent of all known animal and plant species, plus lots more that are unknown, too.'

Back in London, what has she been enjoying since her return to 'civilisation'? 'I've been having lots of nice, long showers,' she says. 'In the Congo, the possibility of using up our water supplies was always a worrying thought. And I find that when I've been in hot, uncomfortable conditions for a while, the things I look forward to more than anything else are being with my family and enjoying my favourite meal.'



Write in the space (T) – (F) – (NG)

Read the article again and write true (T), false (F) or not given (NG).

- 1 Charlotte looks and feels 'out of place' in the Savoy Hotel.
- 2 She had to climb tall trees without the use of ropes.
- 3 The mosquito bites she had were the worst bites she's ever had.
- 4 She cried because she couldn't stand the sweat bees on her face.
- 5 The film crew helped her to get the leeches off her leg.
- 6 She compares a tree with a tower block because there are so many living things in each tree.
- 7 The water she used in the Congo was usually dirty.
- 8 When she gets home, she loves doing the cooking for her family.