

COSTA RICAN HOLIDAY

Read the text about a holiday in Costa Rica. Six paragraphs have been removed from the article. Choose from paragraph A-G the one which fits each gap. Write the letter.

Not again. It's the third morning in succession we've been woken by howler monkeys. The noise invades your consciousness like some distant wind and builds into a sustained roar until you fling off the sheets and sit up, cursing. Awake, you can hear the throaty rasp. The volume is astonishing: this is reputedly the loudest voice on the planet yet it comes from an animal no larger than a cat.

(1) _____.

Later on that morning, strapped into harness and helmet and slightly regretting my immense breakfast, I find myself standing on a narrow platform overlooking the forested gorge. A steel cable arcs down through the trees to some invisible point on the other side. This seems the last chance to voice my fears, were it not for the fact that my nine-year-old daughter is already clipped on ahead of me. The last thing I see as she launches into the void is her grin.

(2) _____.

As I zigzag down from platform to platform I can relax enough to appreciate the gurgle of the river and the chorus of birdsong. There is even time to spot a troop of howler monkeys in the crown of a fig tree. By the time we swing off the final platform, fun has definitely conquered fear.

(3) _____.

"The control our climate," our guide Daniel Monge had told us on day one. He had showed us on our map how Costa Rica's peaks line up to form a barrier down the spine of the country. The eastern slopes, which fall away to the Caribbean, get most of the rainfall and are carpeted in lush tropical rainforest. The western Pacific slopes lie in the rain shadow so their forests are more arid.

(4) _____.

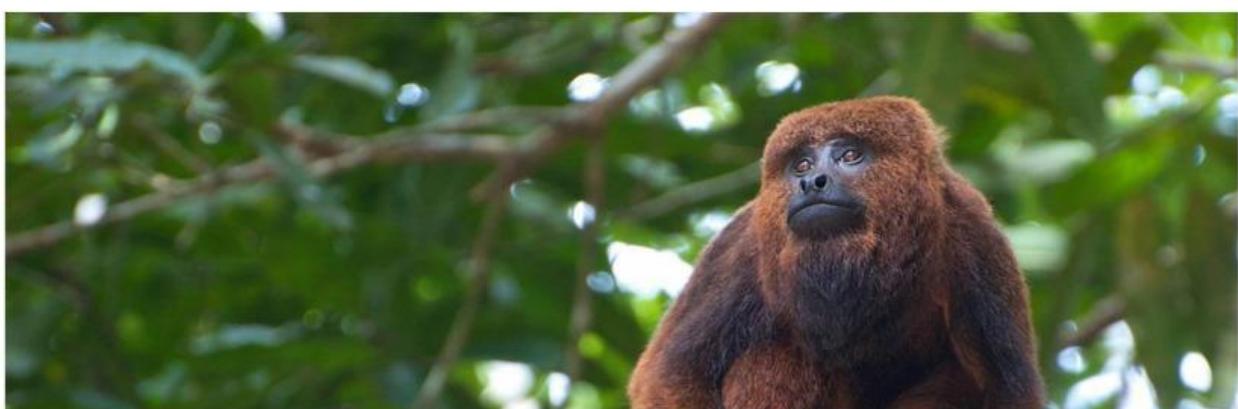
By afternoon, the skies had cleared, giving us picture-book views of Turriabla, the next volcano on our route. An ominous plume of smoke rose from the summit, and the lodge, our stop for the night, was directly below. "Don't worry," said Daniel, "it's been doing that for three years."

(5) _____.

From that experience to watching how sugar was made seemed a natural leap. We joined a group to watch as the estate's two oxen turned a huge mill wheel that crushed fresh cane to a sticky pulp. The children's eyes widened as the first fresh juice was boiled up into a slow-bubbling glop of golden molasses, then the raw sugar was spread, chopped and sifted.

(6) _____.

For our last two days, we descend from Rincon de la Vieja to our hotel in Playa Panama. It turns out to be perfect: the lush grounds, the huge pool, the lavish breakfast and the warm ocean just beyond. How better to wind down before the flight home? There's only one problem, and it comes at 5:03 am on our final morning: a thunderous wake-up call courtesy of the planet's noisiest primates. I pull my pillow over my ears.



A Our next stop was on neither of these, however, but in the misty highlands that divide them. You drive up a hairpin ascent to Costa Rica's highest active volcano. On a good day, you can see both coasts from here. We had no such luck, but the swirling mist allowed glimpses into the flooded crater.

B Still, an early start is no bad things. So far, we've needed every minute of daylight to get through our breathless itinerary, and our time at this guest house promises to be the most action-packed yet.

C That evening inspired by what we'd seen, we cooked our own Costa Rican meal. Our hosts provided ingredients and instructions, and then kept a discreet distance as we sliced, mashed, drizzled and seasoned to produce our best shot at a traditional supper.

D But you don't need a guide to find Costa Rica's wildlife. In fact, you don't even need to go looking for it. So exuberant is nature in this part of the world that wild creatures form an unavoidable backdrop to wherever else you might get up to.

E The next morning, with these anxieties having proved unfounded, we would further down through the coffee plantations in the sunshine to the estate of Tayutic. Here, my daughter helped to sort good macadamia nuts from bad as they rattled down the chute, then attempted to crush dried coffee beans in a stone mill.

F Admittedly, this would feel even more daunting if we hadn't done this already a few days ago, on the slopes of Arenal Volcano. Then, I found it terrifying, hurtling at unnatural speeds high above the canopy. Now I'm a little more confident.

G But before I can glory in my success, we're making our way to a hot springs resort, the penultimate stop on our two-week Costa Rican adventure tour. Like the other volcanoes we've seen in the country, the one near here belches sulphurous smoke.

