

Toco Trip 2017

My sisters Tam and Pat, together with our cousins Joy and Sophie, went with me on a road trip to Grand Riviere to go turtle watching.

We had a very scenic drive, in beautiful weather with Bob Marley tunes making us mellow. That is until we drove around a blind corner and a goat seemed to drop out of the sky in front of car. This was quite a shock to Pat who was driving. It had been on a hilly area and had jumped down into the road from a height.



Our cousin Neisha joined us for dinner at Le Grand Almandier before heading out to meet our guide to see the turtles. I had picked up our beach passes earlier that night, somehow getting lost on my way back to the hotel. I will not be getting into that.

Now I had attended a T&T Field Naturalists talk on leatherback turtles several months ago presented by a University of the West Indies lecturer and we were warned about the dangers of contamination on the beach from the river, the turtles and from their eggshells – the latter left salmonella in the sand. I advised against swimming in the river and suggested that everyone wash their hands thoroughly if they touched the turtles. Patti pooh poohed the river warning saying she had bathed in it many times, but I was adamant. It is ironic that I was so concerned for everyone else's health and I was the one who ultimately got hurt. I twisted my ankle on the uneven road leading to the beach and skidded straight onto the drain where black drain sludge got embedded in both my palms! Sophie checked me out and said my foot injury did not look serious and to elevate and ice it. So, I went back to our room and elevated my foot while I picked out the sludge from my hands with a needle sterilised with matches. But the turtles were calling so instead of staying in the room, I returned to the group limping onto the beach.

I continued limping like Quasimodo for weeks after that. When I finally saw my doctor, he confirmed Sophie's diagnosis that I had not broken or fractured my foot but, and I quote, "Jo-Ann you are now an aged crone and everything will take longer to heal". This brought to mind an image of the Weird Sisters from Macbeth, but I digress.

Toco Trip (2017) continued

While we witnessed the laying of the turtle eggs and in the darkness, there was a camera flash. Some people gasped as that was an absolute no-no. Later that night there was yet another flash photo so I bounded up to tourist, complete with lolling gait, and sternly told her we would have all liked to take photos but had refrained for the good of the turtles. She apologised saying it was unintended. Later when I told our group that I *had* to speak up because that tourist had taken two flash photos. That's when Pat confessed that the first flash was actually hers by accident...

The next day Tam and I met a fascinating couple who were subsequently featured in a newspaper article on Earth People. The wife disclosed that she was with her second husband, who had delivered all four of their children at home. She also said that they cook on a fireside and that she loves living without electricity. They seemed so serene and happy.

That day we took a leisurely drive back, diverting to the Toco Lighthouse where we took photos on the exposed scenic lookout. Patti was yelling at me to be careful walking near the edge – she is *such* a worry wart; I tell you I do not know where she gets that from...

On our way home, we stopped at Arthurs for lunch, a recommendation of Neisha. They were very apologetic because we came late, and the full set of choices was no longer available. There must have been at least 14 items still there, mind you. I savoured my first taste of salt fish cooked in coconut milk.