

eXtreme SPORT

TREE HIKING

BY LAURA DAILY

Think the coolest wildlife lives on the ground? Think again—then climb a tree! In forests all over the world, people are hiking in the treetops with help from canopy walkways, bridgelike trails made of metal or wood suspended high in the uppermost layer of the forest. Originally built for researchers studying wildlife in the treetops, tourists now pay to hike them to get a bird's-eye view of the forest. The money often helps pay for conservation efforts.

"About 40 percent of what lives on Earth lives in the treetops," says John Kelson of Greenheart Conservation Company, which builds canopy walkways. "These bridges between the trees show people where all the action is."

Some walkways can hang hundreds of feet in the air and stretch a quarter of a mile. The climb up can be made on steep stairs or on a gradually ascending walkway. You might see jaguars in Guyana, lemurs in Madagascar, or bald eagles in Montana.

Canopy creatures like to stay out of sight. So bring binoculars to scour the treetops. A bonus: Looking up will freak you out less than looking down!

Get Fit!

Hikers need strong legs. Try walking up and down a flight of stairs or a steep hill for five minutes without stopping. Repeat three to five times a day. For snacks on the trail, skip the candy bars and go for fresh fruit or high-energy munchies like nuts or granola.



PHILIPPINE EAGLE

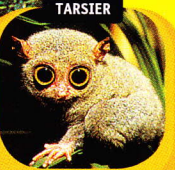


MACAQUE

This hiker may see exotic animals like these in the forests of the Philippine island of Mindanao. He'll use walkways that are a hundred feet in the air.



TOKAY GECKO



TARSIER