

## Jaguar Tour Has Tracking Tracks

By: Ian Stalker

**Cancun-based Ecocolors is helping keep track of the regional jaguar population by having some of its truly cattier clients keep a watchful eye out for tracks.**

Ecocolors tours include the seven-day Jaguar Adventure, which features guided exploration of the sprawling Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, with Ecocolors' Kenneth Johnson noting that any information gathered on the jaguar presence in the area explored by trip participants is relayed to authorities, helping them determine how many of the large carnivores are roaming the area.

Jaguar numbers in the southern part of the Caribbean-fronting state of Quintana Roo are seen as healthy, but the cats have seen much of their traditional range in the Americas reduced, with development often encroaching on predators that are dependent on large hunting grounds.

"The tour is designed to get the most chances to see jaguars and that requires roughing it a bit and having much patience and good attitude," Johnson says of the efforts to seek out the stealthy cats in Quintana Roo, normally associated in tourist minds with gleaming Cancun resorts and long beaches. About half of those who go on the tour usually spot jaguars, and Johnson says it's virtually certain that all will see easily recognizable jaguar tracks left in earthy terrain by the cats as they

stalk mammals, birds and reptiles alike, all part of the varied jaguar diet.

Johnson acknowledges that those who do sight jaguars may be a little uneasy, recalling his own "mixture of fear and excitement" when he spotted one of the powerful, skillful

hunters. However, jaguars are wary of people, scampering off when they see or sense them, while those in the groups that spot one are rewarded by having seen what Johnson describes as the "largest mammal predator in the jungle, definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience."





Tour participants will both camp and stay in hotels, with Johnson cautioning that some roughing it is involved in a region that includes wetlands and forested areas.

The Jaguar Adventure Tour also includes snorkeling and visiting Maya archeological sites, but seeking cats that were revered by the ancient Maya remains its primary focus.

Johnson says that all of his company's tours are designed to provide environmental awareness and help bridge research, conservation and tourism, something he's convinced that the Jaguar Adventure Tour has done.

"People [who have gone on the tour] usually become jaguar-lovers for life," he states.

More information can be found at [www.ecotravelmexico.com](http://www.ecotravelmexico.com).