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"eco-tourism" In Guyana

by Barbara Khol

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President Desmond Hoyte's administration is pushing tourism, and particularly tours focused on natural beauty and resources. At the 1989 Commonwealth summit in Malaysia, Hoyte offered nearly 405,000 ha. of pristine tropical rainforest in central Guyana for scientists to study sustainable development. Nearly half the land area will be used for eco-tourism under the supervision of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Guyana lacks blue water and white sandy beaches, and thus must focus its tourism program on the vast and largely unhabited rainforest. The foreign-owned Forte Crest hotel, in a joint venture with a local entrepreneur, has invested US\$100,000 in developing a jungle resort 45 km. south of the city. At US\$50 per night, tourists have the option of an open-air boat cruise up the mud-brown Demerara River, an overnight camp in a thatch-roofed house built by the area's indigenous inhabitants, and nature walks in the nearby tropical rainforest. All big hotels have major expansion programs. The Forte Crest, formerly the Guyana Pegasus, recently spent US\$2 million adding 39 new rooms, and a general remodeling of the 150-room hotel. The Woodbine in downtown Georgetown is adding 40 rooms. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 10/25/91)

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