



PASSPORT TO...

EYE ON THE WORLD

St. James, Barbados

"One typical sultry, tropical day, I decided to cool off by taking a swim in the Caribbean Sea with my underwater camera. When I surfaced for air, I came face-to-face with three lovely schoolgirls eating fruit from the akee tree." —MARISSA ROTH

SHIP'S LOG

Shining Eyes in the Night

AS I WALK up the gangway, I hesitate before stepping across to the *Polaris*, Special Expeditions' 80-passenger ship that will take me a thousand miles down the Rio Solimões—the Amazon River. This, I think, is where the drum roll should be, here on the threshold of adventure, deep in the Amazon Basin. A crew of naturalists, including wildlife photographer Gerry Ellis, promise to steep us in the drama of the river.

In the days that follow, I am not disappointed. On our first outings, we find a three-toed sloth, paint our faces with the oily red seeds of the tropical lipstick plant, and spot pink dolphins. After dinner on the seventh day, it's announced that we'll make a night

outing in the ship's fleet of Zodiacs, small rubber landing craft we use daily to explore the river's tributaries. We'll take spotlights to help us look for shining eyes in the night.

Exhausted by the stimuli of this strange and wonderful river, it's all we can do to muster the energy, but Gerry's ahead of us, producing a bottle of 20-year-old Cockburn's tawny port. A round with paper cups and the bottle is empty, the 12 passengers fortified.

Almost immediately, we spot the red eyes of a caiman, close enough together to give courage to Cynthia. One of the staff naturalists, she tells us that if the eyes are far apart, the creature is too big to grab. Cynthia is quick, and in a moment we have a dripping, three-foot-long black caiman in our Zodiac.

