

## Drink Rainforest-Sourced Cocktails Next to Monkeys at This Bar Worth Traveling For



Photo courtesy of Copal Tree Lodge Rum Bar

**BARS WORTH**  
*Traveling For*

There are rum bars and then there is *the* Rum Bar. It's a straightforward title for a temple of tipples and yet one that's not nearly as audacious as it seems. Seated in the lobby of the [Copal Tree Lodge](#) in the heart of the Southern Belizean rainforest, this bespoke jewel affords a singular cane-spirit-sipping experience.

Drinking in the jungle of Punta Gorda—subdued by the sound of howler monkeys and oh-so-many palm leaves bristling in the breeze—tends to leave a lasting impact on people. As does the infectious personality of the man making those drinks. He goes simply by Ducky (you know, like Cher or Madonna), and is every bit as iconic.

“I’ve been working on the property for 20 years, back when it was a simple fishing lodge,” Ducky recalls. In 2018, Copal relaunched as a luxury eco-resort with millions of dollars worth of low-impact refurbishments, complete with 16 suites suspended above a river

valley's edge. "I started as a dishwasher, but the kitchen wasn't for me. I began serving food and, well, I'm a cute fellow, so I started talking with the guests, and they loved me. Our GM decided I needed to be making them drinks, so when the bartender left, I took over. I'm still here today."



Photo courtesy of Copal Tree Lodge Rum Bar

Aiding Ducky in his efforts is an assortment of world class ingredients, most of which are sourced on-site: passionfruit, ginger, cacao, and citrus fruit, to name but a few. The property also houses its own organic rum distillery, [Copalli](#). Here, spirits are crafted from estate-grown, fresh-pressed cane, imbuing them with immediate terroir that has a slightly grassy, tropical top note. Ducky folds those flavors wondrously into his eponymous cocktail, which also happens to be the most popular drink on the menu.

"The Ducky Daiquiri is named after the unofficial prime minister of Punta Gorda: me," explains the ever-humble host. "A lot of daiquiris are made on the rocks, but a friend and I were playing with ingredients, and we decided to take out the ice and add a good pour of rum. We use seedless limes—the juice is better—and we take our time with the simple syrup, boiling it for about an hour. No rushing. Then we do a medium shake and strain it into a glass. It's a great [cocktail] with fresh ingredients all from the rainforest."



The sense of place is impossible to ignore on either side of the stick. Ducky is inspired by the cane fields he drives past on his way to and from work each day. As for his guests, they're often arriving at happy hour after a day of hiking through the thickets, kayaking on the Rio Grande (which meanders through the verdant valley some 300 feet below), or touring the adjacent distillery. The sunset sessions at the Rum Bar are so transcendent, in fact, that they attract far more than just guests of the resort.

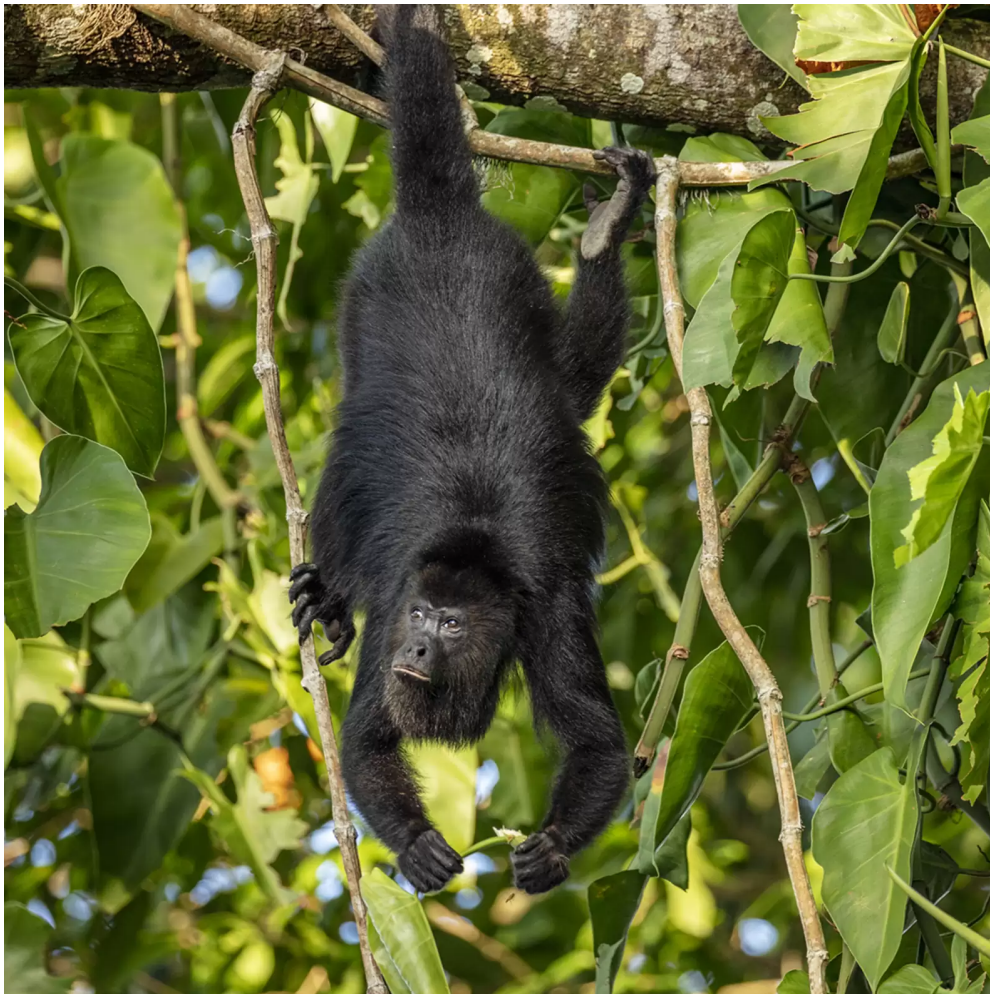


Photo courtesy of Copal Tree Lodge Rum Bar

"We get lots of locals of all shapes, sizes, and species," Ducky confirms. "You sit at the bar and the hummingbirds are fighting for their food. We occasionally have a few pythons that pay a visit—

although they are quite shy. One time, we had a howler monkey literally walk into our bar, all by himself. He just checked things out for about 15 or 20 minutes, admired the view, and then went on his way.”

Though, on any given evening, you’re far more likely to be joined by less hirsute locals. The bar has become a reliable hangout for the Punta Gorda community, particularly during the COVID shutdowns of 2020 and 2021, when the department of tourism promoted a Travel Local program. It’s a lively hub, with the energy of Ducky and his regulars amplified through the occasional addition of live Belizean music and dance.

“We may be rural and remote, but we have daily visitors and guests from all over the country,” says Copal Tree Lodge general manager Jim Scott. “Many come to learn about our rum and recipes, and then realize that they need to bring their friends and family back for dinner.”

The cuisine—like the beverage menu gracing the chalkboard—is built to bend with the whims of the season. Benefiting from acres of gardens, stables, coops, and orchards, Copal Tree is uniquely equipped to work with whatever nature provides. As for the liquid offerings, other favorites include Ducky’s refreshing Watermelon Smash as well as the slightly spicy Ginger Buck. When late summer approaches, the Dragon Fruit Mojito takes centerstage.



Photo courtesy of Copal Tree Lodge Rum Bar

It all feels like some sort of far-flung fantasyland, but the resort is surprisingly accessible for those willing to hop aboard a small prop-plane to get there. Rooms here start at under \$300 per night—an exceptional value for five-star amenities in a literal rainforest. If ever you should make the journey, expect Ducky to welcome you with a smile and a chilled elixir.

“It’s all about the vibe,” he says. “I just did a mixology class with two couples who didn’t know each other, and by the end of the class, they were four friends. We’re bringing people together one daiquiri at a time.”

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