

An aerial photograph of a massive tepui plateau, characterized by its flat top and sheer, vertical cliffs. Several waterfalls are visible cascading down the cliff faces. The plateau is surrounded by dense, lush green tropical rainforest. The sky is clear and blue.

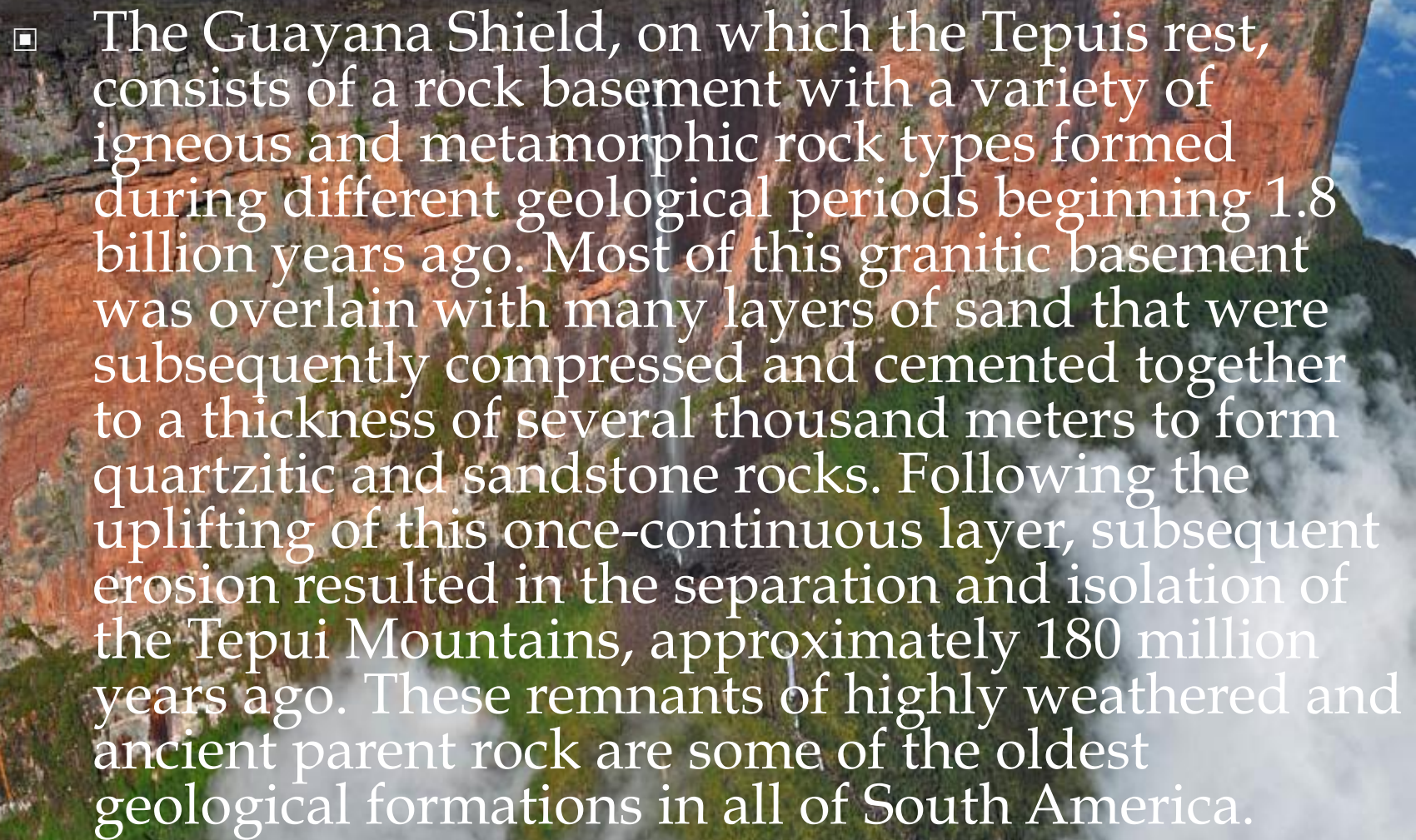
TEPUIS THE LOST WORLD

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Location and General Description

- ▣ These dramatic features in the landscape perforate an extensive matrix of highland savannas and rain forests across southern Venezuela mostly, with a few outliers in western Guyana, Suriname, and northern most Brazil. Hundreds of smaller sandstone mountains exist in the ecoregion as well.



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- The Guayana Shield, on which the Tepuis rest, consists of a rock basement with a variety of igneous and metamorphic rock types formed during different geological periods beginning 1.8 billion years ago. Most of this granitic basement was overlain with many layers of sand that were subsequently compressed and cemented together to a thickness of several thousand meters to form quartzitic and sandstone rocks. Following the uplifting of this once-continuous layer, subsequent erosion resulted in the separation and isolation of the Tepui Mountains, approximately 180 million years ago. These remnants of highly weathered and ancient parent rock are some of the oldest geological formations in all of South America.

Flora and fauna

- ▣ The plateau of the tepuis is completely isolated from the ground forest, making them ecological islands. The altitude causes them to have a different climate from the ground forest. The top presents cool temperatures with frequent rainfall, while the bases of the mountains have a tropical, warm and humid climate. The isolation has led to the presence of endemic flora and fauna through evolution over millennia of a different world of animal and plants, cut off from the rest of the world by the imposing rock walls. Some tepui sinkholes contain species that have evolved in these "islands within islands" that are unique to that sinkhole.

A few of the most notable of the 60 tepuis:

- ▣ Auyantepui
- ▣ Mount Roraima
- ▣ Matawi Tepui
- ▣ Autana Tepui
- ▣ Ptari-tepui
- ▣ Sarisariñama Tepui

- ▣ Auyantepui is the largest of the tepuis with a surface area of 700 km². Angel Falls, the highest waterfall in the world, drops from a cleft in the summit.

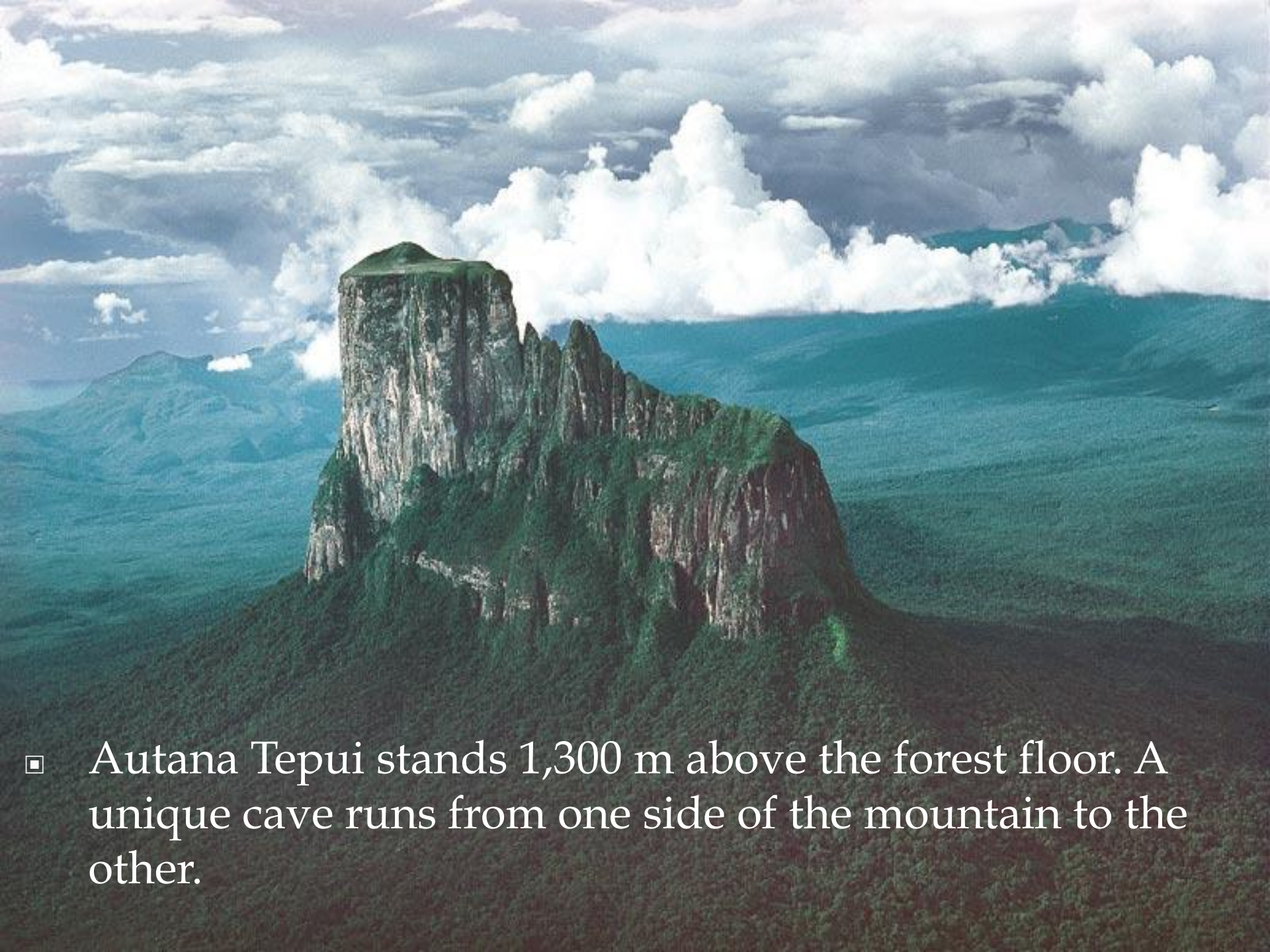




Mount Roraima, also known as Roraima Tepui. A report by the noted South American researcher Robert Schomburgk inspired the Scottish author Arthur Conan Doyle to write his novel *The Lost World* about the discovery of a living prehistoric world full of dinosaurs and primeval plants. The borders of Venezuela, Brazil, and Guyana meet on the top.

- Matawi Tepui, also known as Kukenán, because it is the source of the Kukenán River, is considered the "place of the dead" by the local Pemon Indians. Located next to Mount Roraima in Venezuela.





- ▣ Autana Tepui stands 1,300 m above the forest floor. A unique cave runs from one side of the mountain to the other.

- ▣ Ptari-tepui's sheer rock walls are so isolated, it is believed a high number of endemic plant and animal species could be found there.





- ▣ Sarisariñama Tepui, famous for its almost perfectly circular sinkholes which go straight down from the mountain top - the largest such sinkhole is 350 meters in diameter and depth (purportedly created by groundwater erosion). They harbor an ecosystem composed of unique plant and animal species at the bottom.

Thank you for your attention

