

Order: Xenarthra (Strange Joint)

Class: Mammalia (Animals with Milk Glands)

Subclass: Eutheria

Family: Megalonychidae

FACT SHEET

Range & Habitat: Central to South America, their habitat includes lowland and upland tropical forests.

- Sloths are similar in size to a small dog. Their fur often has a greenish tinge caused by blue-green algae, which may provide nutritional benefits through skin absorption, in addition to helping camouflage the animal.
- Sloths are **arboreal** mammals that feed on the leaves and fruits of trees using a large ruminant-like stomach and long intestinal tract.
- Sloths have a very **slow metabolic rate** and they can therefore survive on minimal food consumption.
- They descend the tree to defecate about once every week and urinate only when rain can mask their urine stream.
- They spend much of their time hanging upside down from branches, **sunbathing** and **resting** on branches and lianas. Although movement is slow, sloths do move about the forest and change trees every few days.
- Sloths use the sun to **thermoregulate** and their body temperature is the most variable of mammals.
- The most important sense for sloths is **smell**.
- Sloths are the **slowest mammals** on the planet.
- There are two species of sloths inhabiting the park: *Choloepus hoffmanni* and *Bradypus variegatus*

Two-toed Sloth (*Choleopus hoffmanni*)



Range: Nicaragua, Central America (Panama), Colombia, Venezuela, Guiana, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Bolivia.

Description: The two-toed sloth has a dark blond coat, with a dark brown face outlined by light blond fur. Two-toed sloths can be differentiated from three-toed sloths by difference in coat colour (three-toed being grey-coloured) and by the number of claws on the front paws. As hinted by the name, two-toed sloths have two long and curved claws. The two-toed sloth is visibly larger than the three-toed sloth.

Behavior: Two-toed sloths are herbivores, feeding mostly on leaves, and have a less specialized diet than three-toed sloths. They are nocturnal and so more active after sunset. They prefer trees covered in lianas and are usually found at mid to upper canopy heights.

Reproduction: Each year the female gives birth, most often upside down, to a single baby after a gestation period of approximately 11 1/2 months. Babies are born with claws and cling to their mother for about 7 months, and only become completely independent after 13 months.



Three-Toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*)



Range: The three-toed sloth inhabits tropical forests from southern Central America to north-eastern Argentina

Description: The arms of the three-toed sloth are visibly longer than that of the two-toed sloth. This species is generally smaller than the two-toed sloth and has a small tail. Adult males can be differentiated from females by a patch of shorter hair on their backs that is colored pale to bright yellow, with a dorsoventral black stripe through the center.

Behavior: the three-toed sloth is said to eat mainly the leaves of the *Cecropia* tree or lianas leaves but has been observed to feed on 96 different species of plants in certain locations in panama (BCI). This species can be active during the day as well as at night.

Reproduction: Pregnancy lasts 6 months and one young is born at a time



How do you locate a sloth?

-  Upon arrival, ask park rangers whether they have spotted any sloths on that day. If so, ask them to direct you to that location.
-  If you are on your own we recommend walking along the paths, paying special attention to large trees, such as Espave, with profuse foliage and/or lianas.
-  Once such a tree is detected, proceed to examine any branch, copse of trees, or branching points that appear to have suspicious shapes resembling a nest using binoculars.
-  If any fur is discerned, chances are a sloth has been successfully located. Continue observing, often time sunrays from above illuminate the hair and the wind blows through it as well.
-  To identify the species, analyzing the fur color is easiest, as the toes will most likely be hard to identify when the animal is curled up into a ball.
-  If the intention of the observer is to perceive movement, observation should be conducted at dusk or dawn especially in the case of the two-toed sloth. If going into the woods at night, a flashlight is recommended.

The Ideal Sloth Habitat



- Many lianas
- Large trees árboles grandes
- Many branches for resting
- Lots of leaves and shade
- high up in the canopyEspave
- Remember: There can be one than one in a tree.

Species of trees to look out for...

Cecropia species (Guarumo)
Anacardium excelsum (Espave)
Pseudobombax septenatum (Barrigon)
Luehea species (Guacimo)
Luehea seemannii (Guacimo colorado)
Cederla odorata (Cedro cebollo)
Apeiba species (Cortezo)
Ochroma pyramidale (Balso)
Spondias species (Jobo)

