

# JIMMIE ANGEL HISTORICAL PROJECT

931 Hill Street #1 • Eureka, California 95501  
United States of America

EIN: 68-0372407

## **Local Residents Return From Expedition to Angel Falls**

The six local participants in a recent expedition to the world's tallest waterfall, Angel Falls in Canaima National Park, Venezuela have returned from their adventure. Early in 2012 the Eureka based Jimmie Angel Historic Project (JAHP), a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization, announced its unique fundraising event, a "Tribute to Jimmie Angel Expedition" to Auyántepeui and Angel Falls • Churún Vena • Salto Angel in Canaima National Park, State of Bolívar, Venezuela. A portion of each participant's registration fee was dedicated to the JAHP.



**Angel Falls • Churún Vena • Salto Angel, the world's tallest waterfall at 3,212 feet (790 meters).** Photo: Karen Angel, 2 July 2012

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The core group of fifteen expedition members included co-leaders Paul Stanley of Angel-Eco tours based in Caracas, Venezuela and Karen Angel of the JAHP in Eureka, California. The expedition supported the economy of the indigenous Pemón of Canaima National Park who provided two canoes (called *curiaras*) river crews, lodgings, cooks and food, and two expert guides Clemente Lambos and Arturo Berti.

In addition to Angel, the Humboldt County participants were Steve Allen of Eureka, Steve Davidson of Bayside, Larry and Kitch Eitzen of Freshwater, and Alan Mason of Eureka.



**Front row: Larry Eitzen, Kitch Eitzen, Karen Angel and Alan Mason, Back row: Steve Allen and Steve Davidson with Rio Churún and Angel Falls in the background.** Photo: Paul Stanley, 3 July 2012

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"I was thrilled with the number of people who registered for the expedition," remarked Angel, "with participants from the states of California, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Washington and two people from Auckland, New Zealand."

After arriving by air in Canaima National Park, the group spent a few days walking through savannahs and rainforests, swimming in beautiful box canyons with cascading waterfalls, and visiting with the indigenous Pemón in their villages. Alan Mason of Eureka reported "Flying over the tepuis to Canaima National Park to get to our first lodge in Uruyén village was like nothing I've experienced before."



**Karen Angel (center) with her cousins (l to r) Clementina, Santos, Crescenciano and Nered Ugarte.**

Photo: Paul Stanley, 1 July 2012

On their last afternoon before departing on their canoe voyage to Angel Falls, the group was hosted by four of Angel's Pemón cousins and their families in the village of Kamarata. Fruit, including home grown pineapples,

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and traditional corn cakes called *arepas* were served. "Arepas, are the ultimate comfort food," according to Larry Eitzen of Freshwater. Each guest was also presented with a fresh pineapple for their journey to Angel Falls.

Karen Angel, who is the niece of American aviator-explorer James "Jimmie" Crawford Angel (1899-1956) for whom Angel Falls, the world's tallest waterfall, is named, had met her cousins' father Jose Manuel (Angel) Ugarte on her first trip to Angel Falls in 1994. "He was adopted when he was about nine years old by Jimmie Angel and his wife Marie while they were living in Kamarata in 1939," commented Angel.

Angel visited again in 2002, but she was too late to see Jose Manuel who had died in 2001; during this trip she did meet two of his sons, Nered and Manuel "Santos" Ugarte. "This year, it was very special for me to meet four of my cousins and their families," remarked Angel.

"Traveling to Angel Falls was not just a fascinating and wonderful trip through one of the most beautiful places I have ever travelled, it was filled with historical significance for me travelling with Karen Angel and getting to meet her incredibly kind Pemón relatives," commented Steve Allen of Eureka.

Auyántepeui, the largest tepui (tabletop mountain) in the region dominates the landscape. "Auyantepeui is a beautiful, yet extremely rugged land," added Steve Davidson of Bayside. Angel Falls was accessed by navigating the Akanán, Carrao and Churun Rivers from the south side of Auyántepeui to the north side of the tepui in two *curiaras* (canoes) with Pemón crews. The *curiaras* were large, 35 to 40 feet long, with powerful outboard motors. "The rivers change with each rainfall so it takes the skill of a Pemón reading the water from the front of the *curiara* to give the hand signals to the motor operator at the back to slow down, speed up, or change course," explained Angel. "Sometimes when the rapids were quite rough, it was necessary for us to wait on shore while the crews manually maneuvered the *curiaras* through them," concluded Angel.

"Angel falls is not easy to get to, no freeway or roads nearby. After a day and one half canoe trip, it had better be good. It wasn't good, it was great," exclaimed Eitzen. Mason reminisced, "One could also look at Salto Angel for hours at a time without getting tired. It was like being in an entirely different beautiful world the entire time we were there."

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After leaving Angel Falls by *curiaras*, the group's Pemón crews navigated the Churún River to the Carrao River to arrive above Canaima Lagoon. The Carrao River forms into seven waterfalls that spill into Canaima Lagoon. One last adventure awaited the group, a walk behind Sapo Falls. "Walking behind a waterfall may not sound that scary, but when you have thousands of pounds of water cascading down on you to the point that you can't see in front of you, it can become one of the most intense exhilarating experiences of your life," exclaimed Mason.

According to official documents in the JAHP Archive, the waterfall was named Salto Angel (Angel Falls) in 1939 by the Venezuelan government in honor of American pilot-explorer James "Jimmie" Crawford Angel (1899-1956). Angel first saw the waterfall 18 November 1933 while flying solo in the Churún Canyon, also known as Devil's Canyon, in the heart of the vast tabletop mesa known as Auyántepeui or House of the Devil. He remarked in his pilot's log book, "*Found myself a waterfall.*" The world's tallest waterfall is fifteen times higher than Niagara Falls.



**Jimmie Angel's airplane El Rio Caroni on display at Ciudad Bolivar Airport.**

Photo: Karen Angel, 4 July 2012

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According to Karen Angel, the internationally recognized name for the waterfall is Angel Falls. The Jimmie Angel Historical Project also uses the name Churún Vená which is the name used by the indigenous Pemón who live in the Kamarata Valley at the base of Auyántepeui. Salto Angel is the Spanish name for the waterfall.

The next JAHP fundraising trip to Angel Falls with Karen Angel and Paul Stanley is scheduled for the summer of 2014. See the JAHP website [www.jimmieangel.org](http://www.jimmieangel.org) for information about the 2014 "Tribute to Jimmie Angel Expedition" to Auyántepeui and Angel Falls • Churún Vena • Salto Angel or contact Karen: [Archive@jimmieangel.org](mailto:Archive@jimmieangel.org), [kangel@humboldt1.com](mailto:kangel@humboldt1.com), 1 (707) 476-8764, or Paul: [stanley@angel-ecotours.com](mailto:stanley@angel-ecotours.com).

The JAHP was incorporated in California in 1996. Its mission is to foster research and to provide accurate information about Jimmie Angel, his colleagues and their era of exploration with an emphasis on Venezuelan exploration during the 1920s – 1940s. The organization is also interested in the conservation and preservation of Angel's airplane *El Rio Caroni* which is a Venezuelan national monument on display at the Ciudad Bolívar Airport, State of Bolívar, Venezuela.

The JAHP maintains an archive of photographs and documents for writers, filmmakers, journalists, museum curators, teachers and students. The JAHP has recently assisted with information and photographs for projects based in Canada, England, Japan, Latvia, Netherlands, and the USA.