



Southern Amazon & Pantanal Tour

Tour Description

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL

The tour begins in Cuiaba. International flights to Sao Paulo are typically overnight, arriving in early morning. Several flights from Sao Paulo to Cuiaba are scheduled each day. We recommend the 2:55pm flight on Gol Airlines to allow for flight delays on the international flight. Tour begins in Cuiaba. Night at Hotal Fazenda Mato Grosso in Cuiaba.

DAY 2 - CHAPADA DOS GUIMARAES

Depart early for the 1½ hour drive to the arid canyon lands of Chapada dos Guimaraes. Upon arrival bird the arid cerrado (savanna) around the canyon rim. Notable birds likely there include *White-eared Puffbird*, *Chapada Flycatcher*, *Curl-crested Jay*, *White-banded Tanager*, *White-rumped Tanager*, *Coal-crested Finch*, and *Black-throated Saltator*. Also try for the difficult but possible *Collared Crescentchest*. The lovely *Horned Sungem* may be present if suitable plants are flowering. As it becomes hotter, bird the trail leading down the canyon and into gallery forest.

Possibilities there are quite different and include *Black-fronted Nunbird*, *Planalto Slaty-Antshrike*, *Band-tailed Manakin*, *Moustached Wren*, and *Saffron-billed Sparrow*. During the day soaring birds such as *King Vulture*, *Gray-headed Kite*, *Ornate Hawk-Eagle*, *Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle*, and *White Hawk*. A late afternoon visit to the cliffs above the waterfall are likely to reveal *Blue-winged Macaw* and *Red-and-green Macaw*. Night at Pousada do Parque.

DAY 3 - CHAPADA DOS GUIMARAES & TRANSFER

Early morning birding around lodge. Some nice forest trails on the lodge ground are habitat for *Brown Jacamar*, *Large-billed Antwren*, *Chapada Flycatcher*, and *Coal-crested Finch*. Transfer to Cuiaba for afternoon flight to Alta Floresta. En route stop as time permits in a palm grove to look for *Point-tailed Palmcreeper*. After arrival in Alta Floresta, boat transfer to Cristalino Lodge in southern Amazon basin. Birding from the boat on the way in is a first opportunity for birds such as the very uncommon and unobtrusive *Zigzag Heron* as well as *Green Ibis*, *Green Kingfisher*, and the like. Night at Cristalino Jungle Lodge.

DAYS 4-7 - SOUTHERN AMAZON

Four full days in the southern Amazon along the Rio Cristalino and its tributaries will be spent walking trails around the lodge and birding riverine habitats by boat. The superlatives about the Rio Cristalino drainage are never ending and never over-stated. The birding is simply beyond superb.

Birding by boat is easy and relaxing. Possibilities along shorelines in *varzea* (seasonally flooded) forest include *Red-throated Piping-Guan*, *Razor-billed Curassow*, *Bare-faced Curassow*, *Bronzy Jacamar*, *Glossy Antshrike*, *Bare-eyed Antbird*, *Black-spotted Bare-eye*, *White-chinned Woodcreeper*, *Amazonian Umbrellabird*, *Flame-crowned Manakin*, and mammals such as *Giant Otter* and various monkeys. The *Giant Otters* are mostly seen farther up river in an area where huge *Teak* trees abound.

Birding trails through *terra firma* (never flooded) forest near the lodge is more challenging but can be very rewarding. Most trails are flat and level though one steep trail up to rocky outcrops referred to as "serra" habitat is worth doing. Notable among the many possible species are *Amazonian Pygmy-Owl*, *Rufous-necked Puffbird*, *Rufous-capped Nunlet*, *Red-necked Woodpecker*, *White-eyed Antwren*, *Rufous-winged Antwren*, *Para Foliage-*

gleaner, Zimmer's Tody-Tyrant, Cinnamon-crested Spadebill, and White-crested Spadebill. Less likely are species such as *Dark-winged Trumpeter* and *Cryptic Forest-Falcon*. Some trails go through dense stands of bamboo where bamboo specialists such as *Amazonian Antshrike, Striated Antbird, Manu Antbird, Dusky-cheeked Foliage-gleaner, Large-headed Flatbill, Dusky-tailed Flatbill, and Rose-breasted Chat* can be found. Hiking the steeper trail up to the rocky outcrops may produce *Brown-banded Puffbird, Spotted Puffbird, Natterer's Slaty-Antshrike, White-fringed Antwren, Rufous Casiornis, Brown-crested Flycatcher, and White-browed Purple-tuft.* The rare *Fiery-tailed Aowlbill* is also likely to be seen in this habitat.

Some time will be spent atop the the two 160-foot canopy towers for better views of canopy specialists. Possibilities in the canopy include *Black-girdled Barbet, Lettered Aracari, Curl-crested Aracari, Red-necked Aracari, Gould's Toucanet, Ringed Woodpecker, Cream-colored Woodpecker,* the recently described *Kawall's Parrot, Red-fan Parrot, and Pompadour Cotinga.* Also possible are sightings of the locally rare *Black-necked Aracari* in early mornings especially. Sometimes a mixed flock passes through near the towers, giving canopy views of species such as *Bar-breasted Piculet, Yellow-throated Woodpecker, Tooth-billed Wren, Red-billed Pied Tanager, and Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak.* As the day heats up thermals bring out soaring raptors such as *Gray-headed Kite, Double-toothed Kite, White-browed Hawk,* and perhaps rarer species such as *Crested Eagle and Harpy Eagle,* best viewed from the towers.

DAY 8 - TRANSFER & PIUVAL AREA

Morning boat transfer back to Alta Floresta with some birding en route. Early afternoon flight to Cuiaba followed by land transfer to the start of the Pantanal Highway, referred to locally as the Transpantaneira. Night at Pousada Piuval.

DAY 9 - PIUVAL AREA

Full day birding this section of the Pantanal. The rivers, wetlands, flooded pastures, gallery forest, and open scrub are home to astonishing numbers of birds. On everyone's list of most wanted birds is the beautiful blue *Hyacinth Macaw,* seen in this area every day. The open cerrado is home to *Greater Rhea* and *Red-legged Seriema.* Other possibilities include *Southern Screamer, Maguari Stork, Jabiru, Planalto Slaty-Antshrike, Large-billed Antwren, Mato Grosso Antbird, Rufous Cacholote,*

White-lored Spinetail, the stunning *Helmeted Manakin*, and *Red-crested Cardinal*. At sunset *Nacunda Nighthawks* commonly appear. Night at Pousada Piuval.

DAY 10 - PIUVAL & PIXAIM RIVER

Morning birding an area near the lodge looking for *Long-tailed Ground-Dove*, *Yellow-collared Macaw*, *Chotoy Spinetail*, *Suiriri Flycatcher*, *Rusty-collared Seedeater*, and *Scarlet-headed Blackbird*. After lunch, drive farther into the Pantanal, birding en route. After arrival at the lodge along the Pixaim River, Afternoon boat trip along the Pixaim River where possibilities include *Blue-throated Piping-Guan*, *Boat-billed Heron*, *Black-collared Hawk*, *Sungrebe*, and the rare *Agami Heron*. Dusk brings out *Nacunda Nighthawks* and the more numerous *Band-tailed Nighthawks*. Night at SouthWild Jungle Lodge.

DAY 11 - PIXAIM RIVER AREA

Early morning will be spent birding dry forest near the lodge. The birding is easy along flat trails through open woodland. Possibilities include *Tataupa Tinamou*, *White-wedged Piculet*, *Golden-green Woodpecker*, *Pale-crested Woodpecker*, *Band-tailed Antbird*, *Red-billed Scythebill*, *Narrow-billed Woodcreeper*, *Fuscous Flycatcher*, *Rufous Casiornis*, *Ashy-headed Greenlet*, *Purplish Jay*, and *Masked Gnatcatcher*. Open brushland around the lodge offers additional species such as *Variable Oriole*, *Pileated Finch*, and *Orange-backed Troupial*. Feeders around the lodge attract *Chestnut-eared Aracari*, *Yellow-billed Cardinal*, *Silver-beaked Tanager*, *Grayish Saltator*, and *Grayish Baywing*. After lunch another boat trip along the Pixaim River. Night at SouthWild Jungle Lodge.

DAY 12 - TRANSPANTERIA & CUIABA RIVER

After breakfast drive south along the Transpantaneira with birding stops en route. Large numbers of caimans densely congregate around permanent pools as temporary ponds in the Pantanal dry up. Numerous water birds including herons, egrets, *Jabirus*, *Wood Storks*, four species of ibis, and five species of kingfishers along with raptors, parrots, and macaws are everywhere. Arrive at Porto Jofre, marking the end of the Transpantaneira, by lunch. Porto Jofre is a fishing town on the Cuiaba River, where we'll spend the next two nights. That afternoon we'll be cruising the river by motorboat looking for our main target species,

the *Jaguar*. Numerous boats are on the river searching for jaguars and are all in radio contact. When a *Jaguar* is spotted, everyone is alerted and descend upon the spot in hopes this magnificent mammal will still be there. Chances of seeing one or more of these magnificent animals during our stay are very high. Night at Pousada Porto Jofre.

DAY 13 - CUIABA RIVER

All day on the river searching for *Jaguars*. A decade ago *Jaguars* were wary and difficult to see. Now, with establishment of a state park and protective measures in place, *Jaguars* are less wary and seen almost daily along the river. During our forays birds along the river won't be ignored. *Pied Lapwing*, *Yellow-billed Tern*, and *Large-billed Tern* are common as are cormorants, *Anhingas*, and various kingfishers. Occasionally, *Bare-faced Curassows* and *Gray-necked Wood-Rails* appear along the riverbanks. Raptors such as *Black-collared Hawk*, *Crane Hawk*, *Savanna Hawk*, *Great Black Hawk*, and *Roadside Hawk* are also quite common. Mammals other than *Jaguars* are also present. *Capybaras* are very common, *Giant Otters* are common, *Brazilian Tapirs*, though rare, are possible, and three species of monkeys are regularly seen. Night at Pousada Porto Jofre.

DAY 14 - CUIABA RIVER & RIO CLARO

Morning will be spent back on the river if *Jaguars* have not yet been seen. Otherwise, leave after breakfast for the drive back up the Transpantaneira to the Rio Claro. After arrival at the lodge, the rest of the day will be spent birding around the lodge. Some night birding nearby may produce *Scissor-tailed Nightjar* and perhaps mammals such as *Crab-eating Fox*. Night at Rio Claro Lodge.

DAY 15 - RIO CLARO & CUIABA

Morning will be spent birding the lodge grounds. *Chestnut-bellied Guan* and *Razor-billed Curassow* often appear during early morning. Several species of parrots including the scarce *Black-hooded Parrot* are usually also present. Birding the wooded entrance road may produce *Undulated Tinamou*, *Pale-crested Woodpecker*, *Rufous-fronted Thornbird*, and *Planalto Woodcreeper*. After early lunch, transfer to Cuiaba for late afternoon flight back to Sao Paulo. Tour ends at the airport in Cuiaba. Most international flights from Sao Paulo depart late at night. If desired,

we can arrange for an overnight stay in Sao Paulo if your international flight is next morning.

DAY 16 - ARRIVE HOME

Overnight flights arrive in US.