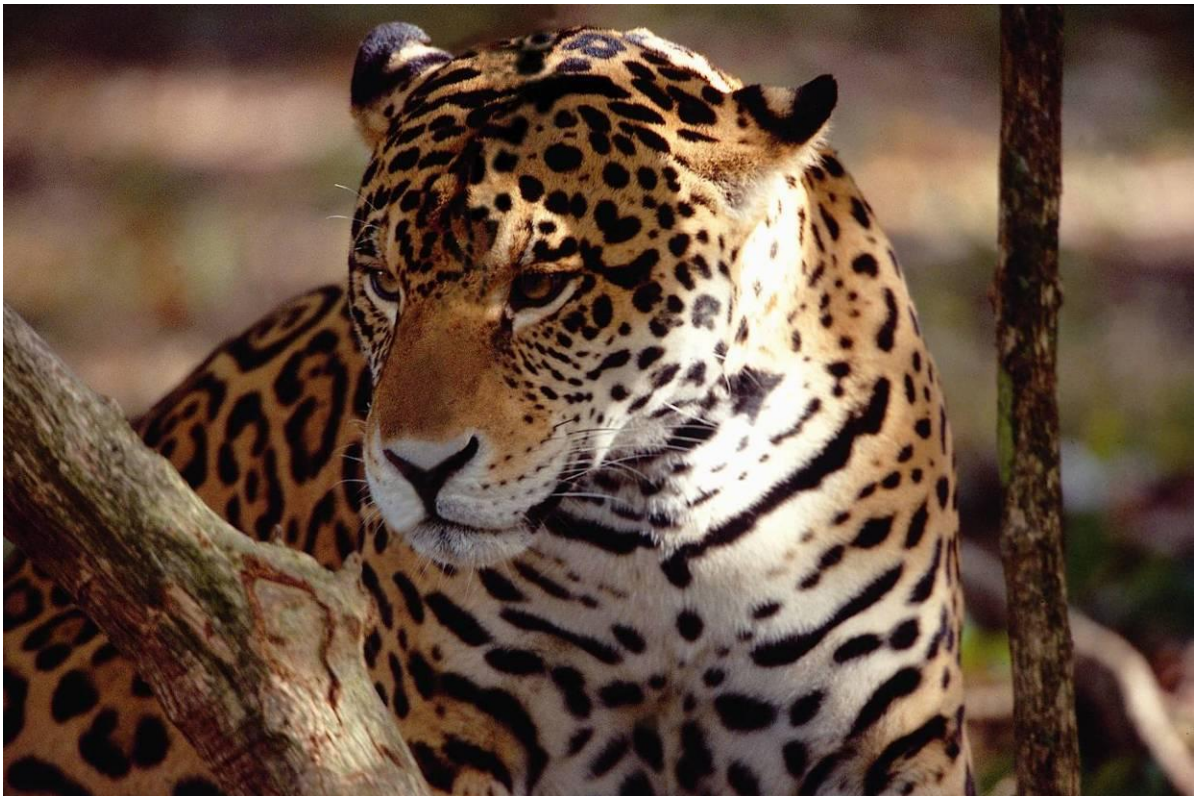


BRAZIL

Jaguars and Amazon Wildlife Tour

- Unique insight into the culture, conservation and wildlife of Brazil
- Best chance of seeing Jaguars on the continent
- Guided by naturalists, researchers and local landowners
- Small groups ensure a personal journey for maximum wildlife opportunities



Summary

Brazil has a richness of natural wonders unequalled on earth, yet most tourists only visit the Upper Amazon rather than the more interesting Amazon watershed. Furthermore the Pantanal, the largest wetlands in the world, located along the borders of Paraguay and Bolivia allows you to also see an extraordinary amount of wildlife and a richness of birdlife far greater and easier to see than in the Amazon. Here the cattle ranching culture is slowly giving way to small privately run conservation projects and protected areas. Accompanied by expert naturalist guides, this tour offers an in depth insight into both these wilderness wonderlands and the chance to see South America's most iconic animal, the elusive jaguar.

Overview



Combining two of Brazil's most spectacular natural wonderlands, the Amazon and the Pantanal with the Tablelands that divides the two, this tour is a fabulous combination of epic landscapes, untouched wilderness, extraordinary wildlife and pioneering conservation projects.



This 11 day tour starts off in the 'capital' of the Pantanal, Cuiaba, taking you into this massive swampland and its original cattle ranches filled with wildlife, today turned into large private conservancies and home to a long running Jaguar research projects. Here you are given a very real opportunity to see the often elusive jaguar, as well as a host of other species of bird life, mammals and reptiles.

You then continue by boat to your lodge in the heart of the Amazon watershed and explore the world's largest rainforest by boat, on foot and viewpoints in canopy towers.

Finally you travel to the incredible Chapada dos Guimaraes Tablelands with their extraordinary rock formations, where you can enjoy some hiking the Savannah in this remarkable landscape, visiting beautiful waterfalls along the way.

Itinerary



Day 1

Cuiaba

Upon arrival in Cuiaba you will be greeted and transferred to the Amazon Plaza Hotel, a comfortable hotel, with a pool, located only a few meters from the Central Square.

Cuiabá itself is considered the northern gateway to the Pantanal Wetlands and also the southernmost gateway to the Amazon. It is the capital of Mato Grosso and well known for being the hottest city in Brazil with annual temperature a sizzling 27°C (81°F). The city name comes from the Bororo native people, who still live in the area and translates as "place where we fish with spears." It was originally settled in the 18th century, when gold was found in the nearby rivers.



Overnight at the Amazon Plaza Hotel in a twin/double room on bed and breakfast basis

Days 2 – 5

Cuiaba / Pantanal

After breakfast you will start your adventure heading into the Pantanal and after driving approx 100km you reach Poconé, where you will then head off on to the Transpantaneira park-road, a dirt track through the forest that takes you to Puma Lodge, surrounded by some of the Pantanal's finest wildlife habitat. Recent sightings show approximately one-third of the visitors who stay for three or more days see a jaguar and whilst we can't promise that you will see a jaguar, you will be guided by experts who track the animals regularly and will offer you the best chance of spotting these elusive animals. However, smaller cats such as the ocelot, as well as tapir, giant anteater, peccary, howler monkey, caiman and hundreds of bird species, are regularly seen here.



The Pantanal area itself is one of nature's last frontiers, the world's largest animal reserve and home to more than 600 different species of birds and 230 varieties of fish. It is made up of a huge lowland plain, covered by lush vegetation and flowers that bloom during the rainy season (December-April). The main feature of the Pantanal are its many rivers and crystalline lakes given it was once a vast inland sea. Rare species of birds and other animals seek shelter along their shores and cluster around the diminishing pools during the dry season from May through to November.





The next 4 nights you will stay overnight at Jaguar Lodge in a twin/double room on a full board basis.

Day 6

Pantanal / Alta Floresta / Amazon

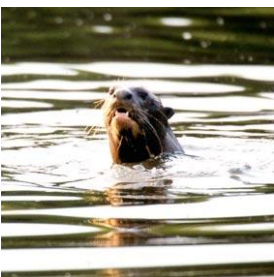
A very early start today as you head back to Cuiabá airport for your short domestic flight to the town of Alta Floresta. Upon arrival here, you will be greeted and transferred to your jeep that will take you onwards to your short boat journey direct to Cristalino Jungle Lodge. Once you have had sufficient time to settle into your accommodation, enjoy dinner, and a slide show of the local flora and fauna offering a taste of the area before you start exploring during the following days.



Cristalino Lodge itself is located on the banks of the Cristalino River in the Alta Floresta region of the Amazon Rainforest. The Lodge is internationally recognised as a prime area for bird watching and also for unforgettable Amazonian adventures including trekking and camping in the jungle, swimming in the pristine Cristalino river, canoeing and offering some of South America's most spectacular wildlife viewing.



There are 2 bungalows with 8 rooms, all with private bathrooms and hot water showers (solar heating), ceiling fans and screened windows. There is a thatch roof patio for outside dining as well as relaxing, a dining room and a small natural history library which is where the slide shows are held. There are additional room types if passengers want to upgrade.



Tourism is not the only function of Cristalino Lodge and one of their most important objectives is to preserve the rainforest and to contribute to conservation efforts in a part of the Amazon that is rapidly changing. With this in mind, they encourage and support certain scientific research projects in the area and their "Escola da Amazônia" holds regular workshops at the lodge. The mammals regularly found in forests near the lodge include Brazilian Tapir (usually seen along river banks), Capybara (the largest rodent in the world), anteaters, opossums, river otters, Giant Otters, brocket deer, agoutis, Tayra, Paca and a number of primates.

There is a remarkable diversity of monkey species in this region of Amazonia and those that occur around Cristalino Lodge itself include Night Monkey, Dusky Titi Monkey, Brown Capuchin, Red-handed Howler Monkey, White-whiskered Spider Monkey and the handsome and endemic Red-nosed Bearded Saki Monkey.



The next 3 nights you will stay overnight at the Cristalino Jungle Lodge in a twin/double room on a full board basis.

Day 7

Amazon

An early start this morning to observe the awakening of the forest from the nearby 50 meter-high canopy tower, allowing for some wonderful scenic shots. After returning for breakfast, take a motor boat up river to walk the famous Brazil Nut Trail, enjoying a break at the 'Limão' rapids. After dinner at the lodge this evening, you can head off to spot caiman from the floating deck or in a motor boat with your guide.



Day 8

Amazon

After breakfast, you can explore the 'Caja' Trail through the forest, allowing for a relaxed start to the day, with the option to go swimming in the nearby river. In the afternoon, you can take a motor boat up river, hiking the Sierra trail before enjoying the spectacular sunset.



Day 9

Alta Floresta/Chapada dos Guimaraes

After breakfast, you start your trip back to Alta Floresta for your short domestic flight to Cuiaba and upon arrival you will be transferred to Chapada dos Guimaraes just in time to admire the incredible sunset over the cliffs of these majestic Tablelands before going on to your lodge.



The Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park is geologically as old as the Andes formation, with the Tablelands at an average height of 760 meters, providing a source to all of the main rivers and waterways that run into the Pantanal itself. Its waterfalls, creeks, rock formations covered with Cerrado (Savannah-like) vegetation and exotic wildlife present this National Park with a prehistoric feel.



Solar do Ingles is a charming hotel set in the oldest residence of the Chapada dos Guimaraes. The hotel is very central, located just 2 blocks off the main square. Great care is taken with the decor; it has tasteful furnishings and is full of antiques. Each room is individually furnished in a homely fashion; some rooms are in the main building with additional rooms in an annex set in the garden. All rooms have private facilities and are within a short walk to the well cared for gardens and small pool.

The next two nights you will stay overnight at Solar do Ingles in a twin/double room on full board basis.

Day 10

Chapada dos Guimaraes

Today you will visit the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park having time to take in the stunning scenery that surrounds you, including crystal clear waterfalls where you can enjoy a refreshing swim.

Overnight at Solar do Ingles in a twin/double room on full board basis.

Day 11

Chapada dos Guimaraes / Cuiaba

After breakfast, visit to the Geodesy Panoramic View for one last look at the spectacular scenery before a transfer to Cuiaba airport for your onward journey.

Possible extensions:

There are a number of fun extensions you may wish to add on as part of your holiday.

Rio de Janeiro

As the Brazilians say, 'God made the world in six days. The seventh he devoted to Rio'. Nestled between the mountains and the sea, Rio is unsurpassed for its natural beauty but offers so much more. Its magnificent shoreline, with charming bays and beautiful beaches, is an important part of Rio social life and offers numerous outdoor activities from biking to surfing. In the mountains above Rio, you will find the Tijuca national forest, the largest natural urban park in the world.

The city's eight million inhabitants, known as 'Cariocas', are friendly, carefree

people who always seem to find time for the pleasures of good living.

Iguaçu Falls, Iguaçu National Park

The vast roaring cataracts of Iguaçu, or "big water," is the name given by the native peoples of this subtropical forest region. Located in the northeast corner of Argentina, near the borders of Paraguay and Brazil, Iguaçu National Park features a 2.7-km crescent-shaped front over which pour the waters of the mighty Iguaçu River.

The 49,200 hectares of the national park encompass subtropical wet forests, swathed with begonias, orchids, ferns and palms, the Iguazu Falls are home to 500 species of butterfly, as well as mammals such as red brocket deer, South American coatis, white-eared opossums and brown capuchins. Toucans, parrots, caciquies and great dusky swifts dodge the spray.

Beaches

Brazil's coastline is vast at over 3,000 km long with much of it made up of fantastic beaches. The beauty of Brazil is that there is a huge variety of beaches on offer, from the coastal resort towns of Buzios and Paraty near Rio to the long, sandy, palm fringed beaches of the Bahian coastline. There is a beach to suit all visitors to Brazil and we can organise a relaxing extension after your stay in the Pantanal and the Amazon.

Please ask us for details and costs of these extensions.

Dates

2012

Friday 17th – Monday 27th August 2012

Saturday 6th – Tuesday 16th October 2012

This tour can also be arranged on a tailor-made basis on dates that suit. Please contact us for further details and a cost.

Main tour

From Price

£2,995 per person in a twin/double sharing room.

Single supplement of £450

If you are happy to share accommodation with a fellow traveller of the same sex then you will not be charged a single supplement for your holiday. This is of course dependent on there being another same sex traveller on the trip who is also wanting to share. If we cannot find a partner with whom you can share then unfortunately we will be left with no choice but to pass on the single supplement, imposed by the properties we are using. We will endeavour to keep this supplement to a minimum.

Naturally should you wish to have a single room then this is possible by simply opting to pay the single supplement mentioned above

What's included

All local transport and excursions as detailed, return flights between Cuiaba and Alta Floresta, transfers, accommodation in twin/double rooms and board as described (drinks not included). All services and expertise with English speaking guides, with the best knowledge of the Pantanal & Amazon' s nature, equipped with binoculars, books and check-lists.

What's excluded

Return international flight from the UK, all other internal flights, airport taxes, visas, vaccination, travel insurance, gratuities, drinks and items of a personal nature, such as laundry.

Group size

This trip is based on a minimum number of 6 people travelling. Should the group size drop below that number, we will let you know well in advance to discuss your options.

Extras

Here are some suggestions of ways to enhance your trip even before you arrive; upgrade your flight from economy to premium economy or business class, upgrade your hotel room, prebook valet or airport parking, airport hotels and airport lounges. If you wish to take advantage of the reduced tour operator rates we are able to offer, please don't hesitate to contact us for further information.

Important

Vaccinations & Visas

All visitors must be in possession of a valid passport with at least six months left before expiry. UK, European and American passport holders do not require a visa. Vaccinations for Typhoid, Hepatitis, Tetanus and Polio are recommended. Please make sure that you have all the required original inoculation certificates with you to enter the relevant countries. Malaria is endemic in Brazil, expert advice is therefore essential. Please consult a medical practitioner or ring MASTA on 09068 224100.

Essential items that you will need

Sweatshirt for evening and early mornings, wide brimmed hats and sunscreens, binoculars and spotting scopes, light casual clothing in neutral colours, good walking shoes/light boots/sunglasses, anthisan & insect repellent.

Weather

Weather should be warm and sunny most days, but you can expect a light shower or two, or some haze. The main inundations of the Pantanal start in November and go on until March with very heavy rains and then slowly waters recede as the year progresses and the sun shines. In June the waters will be receding but will still be relatively plentiful, so activities are more often waterborne than in August/September, when more land based activities, walks and drives can take place in the Pantanal. In the Amazon both land based and water based viewing is undertaken.

Accommodation and food

The accommodation in this itinerary is chosen specifically because they are small privately owned and well managed establishments, very personal and you are assured of a warm welcome. They are comfortable with en suite facilities, but they are not luxurious. Food is generous, very healthy and very good, including their famous beef, which is treated like good French wine in this region. Vegetarian diets can be catered for easily.

Extensions

Extensions to other parts of Brazil and South America can be easily organised through our office. Please call our Brazil specialist Oliver Lever on 01285 643333 to discuss your options.

Our commitment

An unavoidable consequence of travel is the emission of carbon dioxide into the high atmosphere and while Steppes Discovery takes measures to reduce the carbon footprint of its holidays, regrettably it is not yet possible to make them carbon neutral. If you are able to, we suggest you consider offsetting the carbon emission of your long haul flight by using Rainforest Concern's Forest Credits scheme. Details can be found at www.forestcredits.org.uk



Rainforests have a central role to play in the slowing of climate change and yet we are removing forests from the planet at a faster rate than they can grow back. Rainforest Concern supports projects that look to preserve the forests that we have

Rather than replanting new ones, working to safeguard biodiversity and local communities and in so doing mitigate climate change.



In 2007 we celebrated 10 years of spectacular achievement as pioneers in the field of nature travel. We have raised significant funds in support of the world's leading wildlife and conservation agencies, researchers and experts, and increased awareness of travel and conservation through newsletters, lectures and consistent media coverage. Furthermore we have voluntarily spearheaded collective action campaigns such as Travel Operators for Tigers in South Asia.

Our travel partners, accommodation, service providers and ground agents are all carefully chosen to ensure their commitment to the environment, most being quality, family owned businesses – reflecting the unique character of the places, the abiding hospitality of its people and the remarkable spirit of its wilderness.

Come along and see for yourself. With us it won't cost the earth!

Want to discuss this trip?

Please call **Oliver Lever** on **01285 643333** for more details or to make a booking.



Oliver's passion for Latin America was born out of a round the world trip which allowed him to travel extensively through Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Peru experiencing the best that these spectacular countries have to offer. He has visited many of the highlights of Brazil in recent years, where he was truly captivated by the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, watched calving Southern Right Whales in Florianopolis and fished for piranhas in the Amazon jungle.

Oliver has recently returned from a fantastic trip to Brazil, focused on the fascinating Northern Pantanal and Southern Amazon regions which will be visited on the Jaguar & Amazon group trips. The variety of wildlife on offer in the Pantanal is quite astonishing with a huge array of bird species, mammals and reptiles viewed on a daily basis. He was lucky enough to spot a jaguar along the Piquiri River which has become one of his all time favourite travel moments!