

Brazil – South America’s ‘Big Five’!

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2	Arrive in São Paulo, fly to Cuiabá transfer to SouthWild Pantanal Lodge
Day 3 - 5	Jaguar ‘Flotel’
Day 6 - 7	Pousada Portal Paraíso
Day 8	Belo Horizonte
Day 9-12	Excursions from both SouthWild Wolf Valley & Cliff Camps
Day 13	Belo Horizonte
Day 14	Morning Birding before transfer to airport and fly London via São Paulo
Day 15	Arrive London.

Departs

July/August

Focus

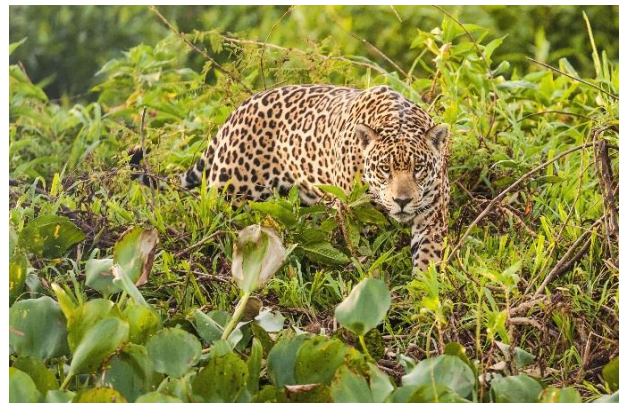
The ‘Big Five’: Maned Wolf, Giant Anteater, Brazilian Tapir, Jaguar and Giant River Otter; also other wildlife of the Pantanal and Cerrado, in particular its spectacular birdlife.

Grading

Grade A. A range of mostly gentle walks, vehicular safaris and boat rides. All the walks are on fairly flat terrain.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code BRA04) or brochure



Maned Wolf, Giant Otter, Jaguar



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Introduction

There is no doubt that big mammals occupy a special place in human affections. Large, predatory mammals such as three of the 'Big Five' mammals featured on his tour (Jaguar, Maned Wolf and Giant River Otter) are particular favourites, while the remaining two featured here, the Giant Anteater and the Brazilian Tapir, are so extraordinary looking and fascinating that they generate intense admiration among wildlife enthusiasts. Naturetrek offers a wide choice of 'big cat' tours. These



Jacare Caiman

include our unrivalled 'Just Tigers!' holidays, which have enabled many hundreds of participants to obtain close-up views of the mighty Tiger patrolling his forest domain in Northern India; Pumas in Chile, and our Just Jaguars! holiday in the Pantanal. In addition, Asian and African Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopard, and even the rare Clouded Leopard in Sabah, have all been appreciated by Naturetrek groups on other tours. By offering this pioneering tour, Naturetrek became the first travel company to include all five of the most iconic, striking and most elusive large mammals of tropical South America.

Commencing in the Southwest at the world famous Pantanal wetland, we go in search of our 'Big Five'. Notoriously shy and elusive, Jaguars are adept at concealment. However, in the Pantanal region of Brazil, Jaguar numbers are higher than anywhere else on the continent and the chance of encountering one greatly increases during the dry period between June and November. This is the season when the Pantanal waters are receding, concentrating both prey and predator into the disappearing wet areas, and it is the time when Jaguars are most easily located. Drawing on experience from our previous Pantanal holidays, and years of running our highly successful 'Just



South American Tapir

Jaguars!' tours, our 'Big Five' tour will also go in search of Jaguars, using radio-equipped boats and the most up-to-date methods. Resident mammals include three more of our 'Big Five' - the bizarre Giant Anteater, Brazilian Tapir and Giant River Otter, and we will make every effort to see this trio of iconic South American mammals. Fortunately for us, the same rivers along which we will search for Jaguars are also home to the world's best populations of Giant River Otters and we have a very high

chance of seeing this charismatic species during our time the Pantanal. In addition to our target species, the Pantanal boasts an impressive supporting cast of mammals, including Tayra, Marsh Deer and Crab-eating Fox. The Pantanal's exotic avifauna includes a fine selection of waterbirds and the gorgeous Hyacinth Macaw, one of the world's rarest parrots, and arguably the most attractive.

Our quest for the 'Big Five' concludes in the 1.7 million acre Parnaíba River Headwaters National Park, to the north of the capital, Brasília. Here, a population of Maned Wolves has become habituated to human presence and we will be hoping to see this elegant canid near our camp. With luck, we will enjoy close views of this beautiful canid and we'll also take time to enjoy the stunning surrounding scenery and some of the area's birdlife – especially the very photogenic Hyacinth Macaw.



Hyacinth Macaw

Based on the statistics of previous tours, we have very good chances of seeing our 'Big Five'. However, the shy and elusive nature of the animals we seek means that many encounters will inevitably be brief, and success can never be guaranteed.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart UK

We leave London Heathrow on a scheduled service flight to São Paulo, Brazil.

Days 2 Arrive São Paulo, fly Cuiabá, transfer SouthWild Pantanal Lodge

After arriving into Sao Paulo this morning we fly on to Cuiabá and then drive for approximately three to four hours into the Pantanal, to SouthWild Pantanal Lodge, where we'll be based for our first night.

The drive from Cuiabá Airport, is an experience in itself, and it will be our first introduction to the wildlife of the Pantanal region. The first town we'll come to on our drive is Poconé, which we'll reach after about an hour and a half's drive. With 25,000 inhabitants, Poconé is the main urban

development for the surrounding 5 million acres of the north Pantanal. Until we reach Poconé we will be travelling through different types of tropical dry forest - cerrado and cerradão. The south side of Poconé marks the route into the 'Pantanal proper'.



Ocelot

Now we will start to see the landscape change from dry forests and fields into the large flat floodplain of the Pantanal, and after driving a further 17km we will encounter the first of the famed 122 wooden bridges of the region. We'll also begin to see our first assemblage of Pantanal wildlife - Herons, Kingfishers, Caiman, and Capybaras.

SouthWild Pantanal Lodge is located 66 kilometres further south along the well-known 145 kilometre-long 'Transpantaneira', a raised dirt and gravel road. The lodge is famous for its excellent mammal-viewing and birding and has a private 2.5km driveway. The lodge is located in a private reserve and is ideally situated for wildlife watching along the Pixaim River. We will arrive and settle into our rooms and enjoy the abundant wildlife around the lodge grounds. Capybaras may be grazing the lawns, a tower overlooks a Jabiru Stork nest and Toco Toucans are just one of the many bird species frequently seen here. In the early evening we will have the opportunity to visit the Ocelot hide which is a short walk of around 300m from the lodge. Here we will wait and hopefully enjoy close views of this beautiful cat. We will enjoy dinner and then retire to our rooms.

Day 3-5

Transfer to and excursions from Jaguar 'Flotel'

We will leave SouthWild Pantanal Lodge early in the morning in our safari vehicle and drive to Porto Jofre at the end of the Transpantaneira Road. Before we leave, we will aim to have a short 60-minute boat ride along the Pixaim River which can be productive for species such as Agami Heron, all 5 of South America's kingfisher species (Amazon, Green, Green-and-Rufous and Pygmy) and sometimes Giant Otter too. We will soon though be back onto the fantastic Transpantaneira Road and making our way to the core Jaguar and Giant Otter zone. The slow drive of around 4-hours is a wildlife safari in itself, and we will be on the look-out for family groups of Black and Gold Howler Monkeys, Capybaras, South American Coatis and aggregations of large wading birds in pools along the side of the road. Stops will be regular for such a wealth of wildlife!

Upon reaching Porto Jofre, which lies on the north bank of the 170 metre wide Cuiabá River, we will board our radio-equipped Jaguar search boat and cruise upstream for 15km (about 30 to 45 minutes), and begin our search for Jaguars and Giant River Otters. Both species reach their global maxima here in the Pantanal, and they are most habituated in the 100km of river channels upstream from Porto Jofre. Our local guides ensure that they have the most up-to-date information about

Jaguars and Giant Otter sightings by communicating with others in the area in radio-equipped boats.

Our accommodation during our time in the heart of Jaguar country is in a unique floating hotel or 'Flotel' located on the Piquiri River. We will use the standard rooms on the Flotel. These rooms are smaller than the larger suites but are still equipped with air-conditioning and private bathrooms and hot showers. If you wanted to upgrade to a suite please let us now and subject to availability, this may be possible. The Flotel is operated as a Jaguar research and tourism base by our host here, Dr. Charles Munn. Charles worked as a senior field scientist in the Pantanal and the Amazon for the New York Zoological Society's international research division for many years. He is conducting research on the Jaguars here, and is compiling a photo record of Jaguar 'faces'. More than 85 different Jaguars have been seen and photographed since 2005 in the 100 kilometres of river channels that we actively use for our own Jaguar and Giant Otter search and observation! If a guest provides Charles' research team with a good facial image of a Jaguar that has not previously been photographed then he or she has naming rights!

The Flotel is the only accommodation in the centre of the 'Jaguar Zone' (which could also be called the 'Giant River Otter Zone', as these 100km of river channels are also the best place in the world to see this predator). The benefit of being based here in this zone is that both Jaguars and Otters have even been seen from the decks of the Flotel. Being based at the Flotel gives us a great advantage over staying in a distantly located lodge or camp, and places us truly in the middle of the action! The location offers us more private time alone amongst the fauna, before and after other boats arrive from far away, and we will also have the benefit of a comfortable base to return to during the day.



Agami Heron

We will spend three nights based at the Flotel, exploring by boat the most Jaguar-rich sections of the following three rivers: the Cuiabá, Piquiri, and the Three Brothers. We will make morning and afternoon excursions during our stay.

We will spend the late afternoons searching sandy banks, patches of dense tropical forest on the riverbank and rush-beds along the water's edge for the biggest predator in the Pantanal, Jaguars. These excursions will always be subject to possible changes following suggestions by local guides and depending on the appearances of other mammals in the area, such as the attractive Ocelot or the Brazilian Porcupine.

An adaptable and versatile predator, the Jaguar once occurred much more widely in South America, but conflict with man has reduced its range by 40%. Always unpredictable and secretive by nature, it is no easy task to find a Jaguar in the wild, even where the animal occurs at its highest global densities such as this. We have however never failed to find Jaguar when staying at the Flotel.

Searching for elusive and cautious mammals such as Jaguars and Giant Otters demands a high degree of patience and occasional discomfort, with periods spent in a small boat during which silence is essential to avoid frightening away the wildlife on the riverbank. If we do find a Jaguar, viewing time may be brief, but the effort entailed does ensure a tremendous elation and sense of privilege at finally sharing a few moments in the life of this wonderful animal.

Whilst looking for our quarry, and during our periods ashore, we will doubtless meet with a varied selection of birds and mammals. Capybara, Crab-eating Fox, Azara's Agouti and possibly Tapir may feature among the mammal sightings, whilst birds could include Maguari Stork, Magellanic Horned Owl, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Large-billed Tern, Hyacinth Macaw, King Vultures and a host of smaller passerines.

Day 6-7

Transfer to Pousada Portal Paraíso

After a morning boat excursion in search of both Jaguars and Giant River Otters, we will leave the Flotel and journey back to Porto Jofre and the Transpantaneira once more. We'll transfer to our safari vehicle and retrace our steps, driving back along the Transpantaneira for around 3 hours to reach Pousada Portal Paraíso Lodge.



Giant Anteater

Here we shall stay for two nights, and it is from here that we shall be targeting in particular the Giant Anteater. This small family run lodge is in the northern end of the Transpantaneira road and set within some excellent mixed habitat with trails to walk and an observation tower to find the abundant wildlife. In this area there is a lot of open grassland and ranch land as well as some wetland areas. We will take walks out into the surrounding area, scanning the open areas and also using our vehicle to try and find as much wildlife as possible with daily drives. As well as this area being excellent for the unique and bizarre Giant Anteater, we may also find Grey and Red Brocket Deer, Crab-eating Fox and Crab-eating Raccoon and maybe also Southern Tamandua. The birdlife is also varied with Greater Rea, Red-legged Seriema and White Woodpecker some of the specialties of this more open grassland habitat of the northern Transpantaneira.

While based at Portal Paraiso we may also drive short distances in the evening along the Transpantaneira to gain access to other marshes and bridges in search of fauna. We'll use our special open-sided safari vehicle for these drives and an hour-long night spotlighting drive on at least one night is also included as part of this holiday.

Our leader will have the very best, up to date information on recent Giant Anteater sightings and although they are often seen in the grounds at Portal Paraiso, we may need to drive a short distance to the grounds of a neighbouring lodge to achieve our goal and we will do all we can to succeed.

Day 8 Fly to Belo Horizonte to overnight

After enjoying morning activities around the lodge we will drive back to Cuiabá and fly to Belo Horizonte to overnight in a comfortable hotel near the airport before our flight the following day to begin our search for the largest canid of South America, the elegant Maned Wolf.

Days 9 Fly to Barreiras, transfer to SouthWild Wolf Camp

We will take a domestic flight today to Barreiras, an agricultural town in the western part of Bahia State. The Wolf 'Camps' (actually a series of roomy bungalows) are located a further four hours away by road.

Driving North into the 'cerrado' habitat of the 1.7 million acre Parnaíba River Headwaters National Park. The cerrado is a rich tropical savannah with a mosaic of habitats including forest, woodland, wetlands, and gallery forest. Here we will check in to our lodge, the SouthWild Wolf Camp, where we will be based for four nights.

Depending on the internal flight times, the drive from Barreiras to the camp will provide us with our first opportunities of seeing some of the inhabitants of the cerrado region; the last 13 kilometres of the drive takes us along a single, dirt-and-sand track leading into a private 2,500 acre wildlife reserve bordering the national park. As we drive, we will pass cerrado woodland and patches of 'caatinga' (scrubland) thorn forest, with some taller patches of 'cerradão' (dry forest) appearing in the last half-hour



Burrowing Owl

before we reach our base. The scenery during the last hour of the drive features views of stunning 1,000 feet tall, red sandstone cliffs, in which both Hyacinth and Red-and-Green Macaws nest.

Should we arrive before dusk, we will have our first opportunity to watch for Maned Wolf this evening! When they do appear, they may be very close - the distance between the guests and the

wolf is typically at a range of about 6 to 8 metres! Normally, one or two Maned Wolves appear near the camp between 30 minutes and an hour before sunset, in order to hunt for mice and forage for fruits in the vegetation that surrounds and includes the camp. They usually remain for 30-90 minutes in the vicinity of the camp before wandering off into the night to continue their hunting in the surrounding cerrado habitat.

Day 10 - 12 Fly to Barreiras, transfer to SouthWild Wolf Camp

We will spend the next three days enjoying this fantastic area and the wealth of wildlife that resides here. We will watch for Maned Wolf every evening and explore the area to find a range of other exciting species during the day with relaxed walks and 4x4 drives.

This is currently one of the only reliable places in the world to observe the beautiful Maned Wolf. In past years, we have had between 3 and 5 habituated wolves visiting the camp area to forage, but it is impossible to predict just how many wolves will appear. We will split our time between the Wolf Cliffs camp and the Wolf Valley Camp and it will largely depend on the recent sightings before our visit as to where we spend our time. We will be doing all we can to maximize our chances of success.



Maned Wolf. Taken on tour by participant Paul Wild

We will rise early one morning to observe the local Hyacinth Macaw group. Situated around a 5 minute drive from the Valley Camp, a purpose-built hide will allow us superb view of the macaws who appear each morning to forage for their favourite (rock-hard!) palm nuts. Keen photographers should have their cameras at the ready! We can also enjoy watching a host of songbird species here, attractive woodpecker species and even Tufted-Eared Marmosets (a small species of monkey characteristic of north-eastern Brazil) from the feeding stations at the main camp building and nearby surrounding trails.

Often we will enjoy some downtime and a siesta, with options for an afternoon excursion with everyone able to do the option they wish. You may choose to return and view the macaws back at their favourite feeding spot, or instead take an outing to 'Nutcracker Monkey Valley'! It will take around two hours to reach the valley by road, where upon arrival we would be met by a local guide and escorted to one of the world's two visible troops of Bearded Capuchins (*Sapajus libidinosus*) to observe their unique hammer-rock use at close range; this is the world's most complex tool use by a non-ape species. The monkeys select, bring from afar, and wield, special igneous rocks as hammers to crack palm nuts on softer, sandstone 'anvil' rocks. This surprising tool use was first

discovered and documented in National Geographic in 2001 by Dr. Charles Munn, a conservation biologist. The monkey's tool use behaviour is now being studied by a multi-national team of researchers in addition to having since being featured in numerous wildlife documentaries.



Nut-cracking Bearded Capuchin. Taken on tour by participant Allan Hopkins

There is a great deal of special wildlife here and we will explore this habitat, finding a range of birds and some other mammals too. Parakeets may include Peach-fronted, Yellow-chevroned, Blue-crowned and maybe even the endemic Jandaya Parakeet.

Brazilian endemics such as the brightly-coloured Campo Troupial and Red-cowled Cardinal or Hooded Gnateater may be found while tanagers may include Palm, Sayaca, Silver-beaked, White-rumped, Burnished-buff and

Scarlet-throated. As well as the wonderful Hyacinth Macaws we hope also to see Blue-and-yellow and Red-and-green Macaws here. Curl-crested and White-naped Jays may be enjoyed and hummingbirds such as Glittering-throated Emerald, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird and even Horned Sungem are other delights. Red-legged Seriema and Greater Rea may be found out in the open grasslands while overhead, King and Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures may be soaring. There is always something to enjoy here!

Just around the camps we may find such species as Spot-backed Puffbird, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Toco Toucans, Campo Flickers and Tropical Screech Owls while other mammals may include Crab-eating Fox, Gray Brocket Deer and Brazilian Free-tailed Bats. Everything will be enjoyed.

After our explorations, we will always end the day by getting back to one of the camps to watch once again for Maned Wolf.

Day 13

Fly from Barreiras to Belo Horizonte

Today we will leave the Wolf Camps, with time for a final exploration in the morning and depending on internal flight times, a relaxed drive with various stops back to the airport enjoying the plentiful wildlife of this area. It will typically be that we either have more time on the arrival day or the departure day depending on flights, and we will always be making best use of our time to find wildlife.

En route we pass a known site where there are semi-habituated Burrowing Owls – we will hope to observe and photograph one or two pairs of these diurnal and very photogenic owls!

We will then take a flight from Barreiras to Belo Horizonte and we will overnight close to the airport here.

Day 14 Parque Estadual Sumidouro, fly to Sao Paulo and on to London

Today we will not fly until the evening so we have time for some birding and wildlife watching at the Parque Estadual Sumidouro which is around 35 minutes from the airport. This 5000-acre state park has some excellent trails that we can explore and mix of habitats including open grassland and cerrado, gallery forest and rocky meadows. There is a wealth of birdlife here and some exciting mammals too. We will have most of the day to enjoy here before we need to check in for our flight and we can hope to see some species that are not possible to see in the Pantanal or around the Wolf Camps. Passerines such as White-browed Meadow Lark, Chestnut-capped Blackbird, Rufous-headed and Swallow Tanager and the striking Blue Dacnis are just a few species we may find.

We will make our way to the airport for our evening flight to Sao Paulo and overnight flight back to London after an incredibly wildlife rich holiday.

Day 15

Land London

We are scheduled to land back at London Heathrow mid-afternoon.

Tour Grading & Focus

This tour is graded 'A' and is composed of a range of gentle walks, vehicular safaris and boat rides. There are no long, strenuous walks although of course in hot weather, such excursions may seem more tiring than when taken in temperate climates.

Our main focus is to find and observe the 'Big Five' species of mammals named in this itinerary in the wild; however, these elusive mammals are often exceedingly hard to find and success cannot be guaranteed. With the aid of local expertise every effort will be made to locate these five target species, but even on the most favourable of days it is unlikely that the animals will be viewable for more than a fraction of the time spent searching in the field. At all times, including during the searches for these species, due attention will be paid to the wider natural history of the country; birdlife will be the most conspicuous and widespread of the area's fauna, so it is probable that a significant amount of time will be spent looking at birds.

Avid birdwatchers (birders) should note, however, that the principal focus of this holiday will be on finding and observing the 'Big Five' mammals: Jaguar, Giant Otter, Maned Wolf, Brazilian Tapir, and Giant Anteater, and that, whilst a good selection of birds is likely to be seen, this is not a designated 'birdwatching tour' as may be found elsewhere in the Naturetrek programme. The itinerary will not include detours to search for specific bird species if this might be detrimental to the main aims of

the holiday. Please do not hesitate to talk to the Operations Manager if you have any doubts about the suitability of this tour.

Weather

Generally hot (or very hot) and sunny with temperatures in the daily range of 25-35°C; however, much cooler conditions can prevail at times and sweaters, winter coats, raincoats and so on could be required, particularly during river trips.

Food & Accommodation included in the price

Accommodation in the Parnaíba River Headwaters National Park and in the Pantanal is in small but comfortable and well-situated tourist lodges.

Accommodation at the Wolf Camps is in double and twin rooms with private facilities; single rooms may be available on request for an additional supplement. The red-tile-roofed bungalows are roomy, clean and have private bathrooms. The shower water at both of the Wolf Camps may be either lukewarm or slightly cool; we advise taking showers at times of day when the sun has heated the water tanks to comfortable temperatures. Dining and lounging takes place under a very large roof with completely open sides, as there are no mosquitoes or other biting flies at these dry, sunny sites.

On the Flotel, we will use the Standard Flotel rooms but if you wish to use a larger suite, please let us know and we can check availability.

All food is included in the price of the tour, except snacks or meals eaten at airports/in transit.

Flights

As standard, international flights are booked with LATAM airlines, with internal flights will be with various Brazilian airlines depending on flight schedules. We are also able to offer international flights with British Airways, though please note that this does require an additional night in São



Jaguar

Paulo at the end of the tour. Should you be interested in flights with British Airways or in flight upgrades, please mention this at the time of booking.

Extra Nights Pre-Tour

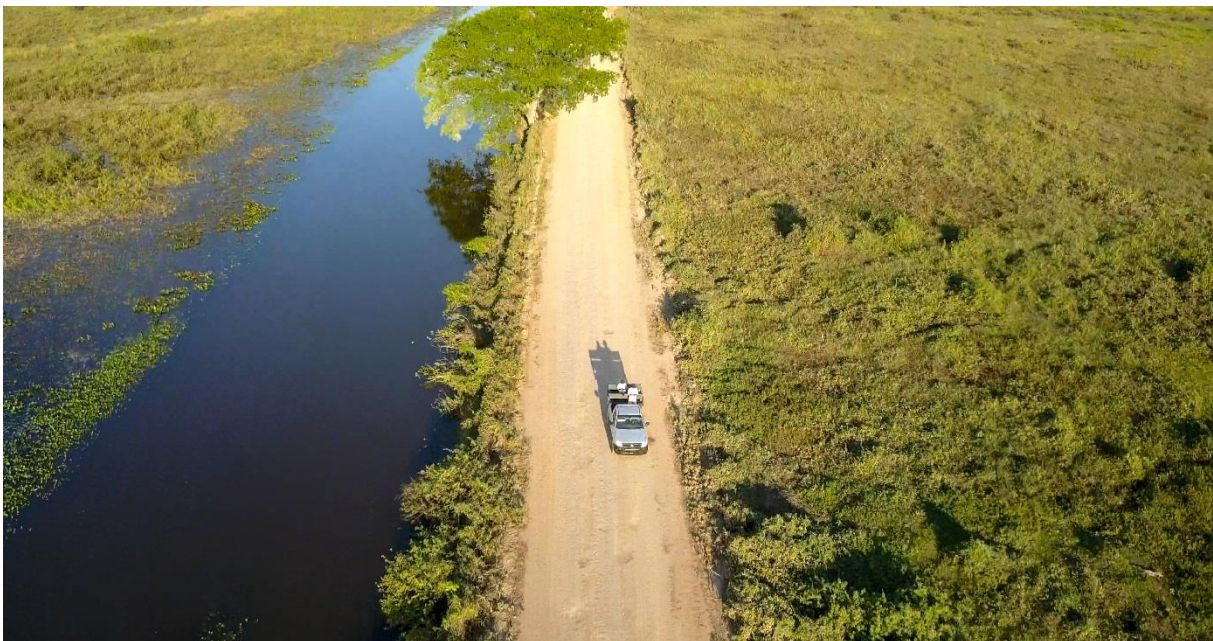
Should you want a more relaxed way to begin your holiday you can of course fly out early and we can book a hotel for you. You would fly to Cuiaba and spend the night there before meeting the rest of the group the following day. This will mean you will get a good night’s sleep before the main tour begins. Please let us know if would like to do this and we can provide more information and a price.

Extensions

Should you wish to spend longer in Brazil, you may choose add an extension either to the beginning or end of your main group tour. There a various options including the spectacular Iguazu Falls, Rio De Janeiro, Harpy Eagles of the Southern Amazon or Giant Anteaters around Bonito. We can also arrange extra nights along the Transpantaneira Road if you wish. On the main tour webpage under “tour downloads” there is more information on some of these popular extensions and should you wish to discuss these options the tour’s manager Tom Mabbett will be more than happy to help. Please email tom@naturetrek.co.uk or call 01962 733051.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.



Transpantaneira, Pantanal, Brazil