

Brazil – Amazon Wildlife Cruise

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Depart London
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- Day 2-4** Manaus and Rainforest exploration
-
- Day 5-8** 4-night cruise including Anavilhanas Archipelago National Park.
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- Day 9** Disembark, Opera House, stay Manaus.
-
- Day 10** Depart Manaus; fly London
-
- Day 11** Arrive London
-

Departs

June to August

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code BRA07) or brochure

Grading

A. Mainly motorised canoe safaris with some gentle walking

Focus

Birds, mammals, other wildlife and local culture.

Highlights

- Over 400 mammal species & 1,300 bird species occur in the Amazon!
- Explore the Anavilhanas Archipelago National Park in small motorised canoes
- Pink River Dolphins, Golden-faced Saki & Golden-backed Uakari possible.
- Night-time cruise to spotlight for nocturnal wildlife
- Impressive Rainforest Canopy Tower
- Visit "Teatro Amazonas" Opera House



From top: Squirrel Monkey, Blue and Yellow Macaws, Dorinha



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Introduction

The Amazon: The very name conjures up images of endless tropical wilderness and of lost worlds awaiting discovery by intrepid explorers. The Amazon basin is vast, covering an area as large as the lower 48 states of the USA, and, even today, 78% is still covered in lush rainforest.

A staggering 10% of all species known to science occur here, amongst them over 400 species of mammal and an incredible 1,300 bird species! To see any of this natural abundance is, however, an altogether different matter, and the unfortunate reality of many Amazon cruises is that very little wildlife is actually seen... until now, that is! Through a combination of field research and analysis of academic studies undertaken in the region, this cruise maximises our chances of encountering some of the Amazon's most prized fauna.



On this special tour we will spend the first three nights of the holiday in Manaus, followed by a four-night Amazon Cruise, followed by a final night back in Manaus.

We will first explore the Amazon Rainforest from Manaus, searching for an array of special birds, primates including Golden-faced Saki Monkeys and Pale-throated three-toed Sloth, with the help of a fantastic canopy tower and specific known locations. We will then depart Manaus and journey up the Rio Negro, exploring different tributaries and visiting one of Brazil's finest Amazonian National Parks; the Anavilhanas Archipelago. After our cruise we then have a final night back in Manaus which enables a visit to the famous "Teatro Amazonas" Opera House.

Itinerary

Please note that the following itinerary should be treated as a guide only, not an exact programme. Flexibility is the key to all wildlife cruises and our exact route and programme will depend on weather conditions, wildlife encounters, the experience of the tour leader and the advice of the ship's captain and crew.

Day 1

Depart London

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

Day 2

Arrive Manaus and Amazon Rainforest Visit

Following an early morning arrival into São Paulo, we will board a domestic onward flight to Manaus, arriving at around midday and we will then head for lunch together not far from the airport. Keen to make the most of our time here, we will then drive for around 25 minutes to walk the wide



trails of the 25,000-acre Brazilian government biological reserve, known as the Adolfo Ducke Forest Reserve. Sitting at the intersection of two major drainage areas, the Rio Negro and the Amazon River, this pristine reserve is incredibly biodiverse and protects hundreds of species of birds,

butterflies, unique flora, and special mammals including various primates such as Guyanan Red Howler Monkey and the critically endangered Pied Tamarin. This fully protected, unlogged, towering rainforest is the world's most extensive primary forest of any kind next to any large city. To explore here we will not only walk on trails, but we will also walk slowly up the ergonomic stairs of the spacious, 42-metre-tall canopy tower, savouring the views at all levels of the forest from the wrap-around platforms at different heights - from understory through mid-canopy, up to the canopy, and then jutting out above the top of the canopy itself. There are many species that we hope to see here and that live close to the tower, including the Guyanan Red Howler Monkey, arguably the most beautiful of all the world's 15 species of howlers, White-throated Toucans, Guianan Trogon, Scarlet, Red-and-Green and Blue-and-Yellow Macaws as well as a range of other raptors, barbets, aracaris, antbirds, antwrens, woodcreepers, woodpeckers, manakins, parrots and colourful tanagers and cotingas. Harpy Eagle is also found here but of course would take some luck in seeing. After enjoying this reserve we will then drive for around 25 minutes west to our hotel where we will settle into our rooms, enjoy dinner together and go over the exciting plans for the coming days. We overnight at the Ibis Hotel Manaus Airport.



NB. Staying at the Ibis Hotel Manaus Airport isn't the typical Naturetrek accommodation you may imagine. The Ibis Hotel near the airport works best due to being only a short drive to the 25,000-acre forest reserve we wish to visit and even closer to some very good forest birding near the hotel for pre-breakfast outings. Manaus is the biggest city in the entire Amazon and if we were to stay, for instance, south of the main Amazon River, or even near the Opera House, we would spend 2-4 extra hours each day stuck in traffic, just getting to and from the reserves we wish to explore.

Day 3

Adolfo Ducke Forest Reserve

Today we will have breakfast and once again drive the short distance to the Adolfo Ducke Forest Reserve of towering trees to walk the trails in search of monkey troops and mixed-species bird flocks as well as other birds of mature, tall Amazon rainforest. We will only have scratched the

surface yesterday and the mornings here can be particularly productive. Finding fruiting trees is often very rewarding and species such as Green and Black-necked Aracari and both Channel-billed and White-throated Toucan along with Guianan Toucanet are often found. Various macaw species along with Caica Parrot and Dusky Parrot may be seen flying over the canopy and tanagers may include Paradise, Spotted, and Fulvous-crested with Red-legged and Green Honeycreepers often also seen in the canopy. There have been over 300 bird species recorded here so the possibilities are vast and we will also enjoy the magnificent trees and flora.

It is also possible to see the Pied Tamarin here and whilst luck is needed, we do have a chance to see this iconic species, nicknamed the mascot of Manaus. This small primate is found only in a restricted area of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest with a tiny range. In the late morning, we will drive back to the hotel for lunch and then revisit the towering, species-rich forest from around 2:30 pm through to the late afternoon and possibly just past sunset. We will spend a productive time finding large macaws,



White-throated Toucan

notably Scarlet and Blue-and-Yellow Macaws, large toucans, and monkeys once again while taking our time to enjoy different levels of the canopy tower, which surely is the best observation tower in any tropical forest on Earth. The range of species possible here is huge and we will be enjoying everything we are lucky enough to find. We shall return to the hotel for dinner, a recap of the day, and bed.

Day 4 Rio Negro and Rainforest visits for primates and sloths

Today for those who wish, we will have a short early morning birding outing in a section of rainforest located less than a 10-minute drive from the hotel or we may visit an area of forest which holds the possibility to see Pied Tamarins. We will then return to the hotel by around 7.30am for a full breakfast and then drive for only around 15 minutes to a pier on an inlet of the Rio Negro. Here we shall take to the river and boat at a slow, “no-wake” speed for around 20 minutes, looking out for wildlife as we travel.

On disembarking, we will then walk for only around 50 metres into a small rainforest clearing with the aim of achieving close views of a troop of wild, free-ranging Woolly Monkeys. These range-restricted primates can often be seen swinging through the trees and regularly come very close here. This secluded, private forest site offers arguably the world’s best viewing of these powerful, velvety monkeys, which use their strong, prehensile tails as a fifth limb to move around the forest. An acrobatic monkey, this location offers a wonderful chance for close views and photographs, and we will be enjoying all the other wildlife here including the excellent bird life.

We will then head for a lunch buffet in the city before spending the afternoon on forest trails at the 60-acre “Science Forest” operated by INPA (National Institute of Amazonian Research). Named Bosque da Ciência, this relatively small tract of rainforest gives us a superb chance to see Pale-throated three-toed Sloth and Golden-faced Saki Monkeys at close quarters in the trees here with both being very difficult to see this well anywhere else. The sloth population does very well here as there is a general lack of predators and an abundance of their preferred food, in particular Cecropia trees. The Golden-faced Saki Monkeys are beautiful animals that have been shown to not only survive but thrive in these smaller forest areas close to the city. As we walk along the low-level, raised boardwalk we have an excellent chance to watch animals in the canopy above us. After a brilliant day exploring the forests and enjoying a wealth of birds and some special mammals, we will drive back to the hotel and enjoy dinner here, going over the day’s sightings and the plans for the exciting days ahead.

Day 5 Depart Manaus up the Rio Negro and explore the Ariaú River

Depending on our sightings and success so far, we may have another optional repeat of yesterday’s early morning birding visit to the forest just 10 minutes from the hotel, or we may travel to another forested area on the banks of the Rio Negro where Pied Tamarins can possibly be seen. There will be flexibility throughout to try and achieve the most varied sightings. We will then have a full breakfast and check out of the hotel to drive for around 20 minutes to board our



Spangled Cotinga

air-conditioned ship, the Dorinha, to start our 4-night Amazon Rainforest cruise. This cruise will cover the very best locations to not only immerse ourselves in the more remote habitats of the Amazon but also give us the best chance to actually see a special range of wildlife.

On leaving port, our ship will head upstream on the mighty Rio Negro, which in some locations is as much as 18 km wide, and we will enjoy lunch onboard as we cruise up this largest of all tributaries of the main Amazon River. Enjoying the wonderful scenery as we travel, we will then anchor near the mouth of the 70-metre-wide Ariaú River, and do a slow, late-afternoon motorised canoe outing, searching this river for Squirrel Monkeys, White-fronted Capuchin Monkeys, White Caimans, and a variety of river edge and forest birds.

After an exciting outing on the water, we will enjoy dinner on the ship followed by a 45-minute night spotlighting outing. As dusk approaches, flocks of Band-tailed Nighthawks emerge and descend on the river in search of flying insects, whilst Ladder-tailed Nightjars sally out from low bushes. High above, fast flying bat-like Short-tailed Nighthawks hunt and spotlighting may possibly reveal Spectacled, Crested and Black-banded Owl, Great and Common Potoo, and Brown-throated Sloth. It will then be off to sleep in the air-conditioned cabins of the Dorinha.

Day 6

Ariaú and Cuieiras River Exploration

Awakening to the sights and sounds of the Amazonian dawn, we will enjoy an early breakfast before venturing out in motorised canoes to explore the network of narrow river channels on the Ariaú River once more. In the early morning the forest will be alive with the sounds of Red Howler Monkeys and birds, such as the Screaming Piha, Crested and Green Oropendola and Long-billed



King Vulture

Woodcreeper. Whilst the vegetation is dense and the birding can be challenging, the water's edge offers easier pickings and we can hope to see Ringed, American Pygmy, Amazon and Green-and-Rufous Kingfishers, whilst Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns may be found. Riverside trees may hold Spangled Cotinga, Caica Parrot, Swallow-tailed Kite or Yellow-tufted Woodpecker and we will also keep a look out for primates, with Brown Bearded Saki and Brown Capuchin possible.

By around 8am we will return to the main vessel for a full breakfast of hot and cold items and more tea and coffee after an exciting morning on the river. We shall then weigh anchor and cruise for a mere four kilometres to the middle of a bay on the right-hand bank of the Rio Negro. Here we can hope to enjoy watching the wonderful Amazon Pink River Dolphins. The river itself, the life source for this region, holds an incredible variety of fish species that subsequently support a number of aquatic predators such as both Grey and Pink River Dolphins, Spectacled Caiman and Giant River Otters. This specific area is also home to several pods of habituated Pink River Dolphins that if encountered, will often swim in quite close, providing fantastic photographic opportunities.



Pink River Dolphin

We shall then board the ship once more, enjoy lunch, and then relax on the breezy top deck or inside the air-conditioned ship while we cruise 3 hours upstream to the Cuieiras River, a left-bank tributary of the Rio Negro.

Once here we will then enjoy a late-afternoon motorised canoe outing followed by a wildlife and birding walk on narrow trails in the forest. Given the immense, still poorly understood, diversity of birds, mammals, amphibians, insects, spiders, and plants of the Amazon forest, every forest walk unveils new secrets. We may see Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Squirrel Cuckoo and possibly Amazonian Umbrellabird. In the canopy above we can hope to see Orange-cheeked Parrot, Maroon-tailed Parakeet and the unusual looking Black-headed Parrot, whilst highlights of the understory include stunning Black-throated and Blue-crowned Trogons and Ivory-billed Aracari. Whilst exploring the

forest trails, we will hope for a chance encounter with a mixed-species feeding flock, comprising a fantastic array of antshrikes, antwrens, woodcreepers and spinetails. With luck a glorious sunset will follow, before we retreat to the Dorinha for sundowners and dinner.

Day 7

Anavilhanas Archipelago

Today we shall enjoy a short, 40-minute motorised canoe outing at sunrise on the Cuieiras River followed by a full breakfast back on board before we start to cruise through the labyrinth of black-water river channels that thread their way through the 400 forested islands of the Anavilhanas Archipelago. The Anavilhanas Archipelago is a complex maze of ribbon-like forested islands that crisscross the 18km-wide Rio Negro. Occupying an area of over 865,000 acres,



Anavilhanas National Park

which includes over 400 river islands, Anavilhanas is the world's largest freshwater archipelago and a haven for birdlife. As we cruise, we shall marvel at the spectacular, mirror effect that the black waters of the river create in reflecting the emerald green of the trees and vines along the banks of the narrow, forested islands that make up the archipelago. During this cruise through this complex of magical islands, we have a very good chance of seeing Blue-and-Yellow Macaws as well as quite a few Short-tailed Parrots and Festive Amazon Parrots, and of course, several species of swallows, herons, egrets, and terns. As we wend our way through the archipelago, we will stop at a traditional spot where it often is possible to see Wire-tailed Manakin lekking. These birds are strikingly stunning, and the male birds will perform an elaborate dance routine to impress the females. If we are lucky, we may be fortunate enough to see the males practice and perform their dance moves on their carefully chosen branches.

After lunch on the boat and a rest, we will enjoy an afternoon motorised canoe outing on the water channels of the Anavilhanas taking in this spectacular area. Squirrel and Red Howler Monkeys may be found, and with luck the rare Golden-Backed Uakari. The birding here can be challenging but there is a huge abundance of species and with perseverance we can hope to encounter a tantalising variety of species including several species of colourful macaw,



Wire-tailed Manakin

Great Jacamar, Guianan Toucanet and, with luck, a King Vulture, Swallow-winged Puffbird or Black Caracara may be perched on the riverine vegetation as Plumbeous Kite circles overhead and perhaps an Agami Heron may be seen in riverside vegetation. As sunset approaches, we will then

begin to cruise 2-3 hours downstream and across the mighty Rio Negro to prepare for tomorrow's adventures. We will enjoy dinner together once more on the ship.

Day 8 Anavilhanas Archipelago & Flooded Forest Canoeing

Today we will once again enjoy breakfast at dawn and then head out for a short motorised canoe transfer which will take us to a location on the edge of the flooded Amazon Rainforest. Here we will then move into small, hand-paddled 2-3-person wooden canoes, with a maximum of two group members in each canoe, each paddled by a local professional fisherman who sits in



the bow of these small dugout canoes. In these small canoes, our expert paddler will take us into the mysterious flooded forest in search of a number of monkey species in particular and we will keep sharp eyed for all wildlife. The most interesting species here is the rarely-seen Golden-Backed Uakari Monkey. You are very unlikely to meet anyone other than past Naturetrek guests who have seen this rare and beautiful monkey species, which we like to call "the most beautiful monkey you have never heard of"! This range-restricted species is one of 14 primate species of the area and this is the best location to try to find them. With a black face, golden shaggy coat and small, non-prehensile tail, they have specialised teeth to help them feed on fruit and nuts within hard shells. Whether we find them or not, this is sure to be a very exciting outing into a very little visited habitat.

The morning canoe outing in the splendour of the flooded forest should last around 2-2.5 hours, and we will return to the ship in the late morning before taking lunch. After a rest following lunch, we will then carry out a second hand-paddled canoe exploration of the flooded rainforest, where bird calls carry a long way as the sound bounces off the surface of the ubiquitous, still, black waters. We will again be searching for exciting birds



and primates and after another exciting exploration of this fascinating habitat, we will then be back onto the ship in time to enjoy sunset as we start cruising down the Rio Negro. We will enjoy a final dinner on the ship together as we continue to cruise for several hours until we reach an anchor spot very near the confluence of the Rio Negro and the powerful, turbid Solimões River.

Many people do not know that although all geographers agree that the “Rio Amazonas” (the Amazon River) begins at the confluence of the Marañón and Ucayali Rivers in northeastern Peru, as the Amazon River flows east and enters Brazil, the Brazilians rename it “Solimões”. This huge, muddy river, which is the product of many rivers flowing out of the tropical Andes of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, carries that little-known name in Brazil all the way to Manaus. Then, when the muddy, cooler-temperature Solimões joins the black, transparent, warmer Rio Negro at Manaus, the Brazilians then call that even wider river the “Rio Amazonas”, or “Amazon River”, and it retains that name for the subsequent 1,400 km until it reaches the Atlantic Ocean. We spend the night anchored near this, the world’s most famous and dramatic river confluence.

Day 9 Giant Water Lilies, Meeting of the Waters and Opera House

Early this morning, after some light breakfast, we shall disembark from the ship to enjoy birding and primate watching from two or all three of the 200-metre-long, elevated wooden walkways that lead from the riverbank to an isolated lake that features Giant Water Lilies. White-fronted Capuchin Monkeys, Squirrel Monkeys, trogons, and a host of understory birds are often seen within just a few metres of the walkways. We will then search for the strange and wonderful Hoatzins, which, for the uninitiated, are bizarre birds that look vaguely like “punk chickens”. This species is only found in forests of richer nutrients such as that growing next to the sediment-laden Solimões River. We will then board the ship once more to enjoy a full breakfast as we cruise to the world’s most extraordinary river confluence, the so-called “Meeting of the Waters”. Here we shall witness the phenomenon where two titan tributaries of the Amazon River, the light-coloured Rio Solimões and the darker Rio Negro, converge to form a remarkable bi-coloured stretch of water that flows for several miles before the waters mix to become one colour.



Taking in this spectacular sight, we shall have a final lunch on the ship together and then finally disembark for the last time next to historic downtown Manaus and near to the world-famous “Teatro Amazonas” Opera House. This afternoon, we shall have the opportunity to tour the opera house before driving north through the city to the Ibis Hotel for our final night. We shall enjoy a final dinner together at the hotel and re-cap our wonderful adventure.

Day 10

We shall today enjoy a final optional morning birding and wildlife finding outing within a short 10-minute drive of the hotel. After breakfast we will then check out of hotel, and depending on flight timings, enjoy an extensive farewell lunch before flying out of Manaus either to São Paulo and on to the UK, or on to Cuiabá to start an adventure in the Pantanal. This tour will tie in every year with one of the “Just Jaguars!” departures for those who wish to combine the two tours.

Day 11

Arrive London.

Tour grading and Focus

This tour is graded A, mainly consisting of motorised canoe outings. Not much walking is involved, but all walking will be gentle. This tour is suitable for those of all ages and degrees of fitness. The terrain may be rough underfoot at times and the climate will be hot and humid but excursions will be conducted at a slow pace. This is an escorted natural history holiday and we aim to see as much wildlife as we can. One of the main objectives will be to provide participants with observations of a range of fantastic amazonian birds and primates in particular as well as generally immersing ourselves in this environment and enjoying everything we are lucky enough to find. While we hope to find different monkey species and sloths in particular and we will of course always be on the lookout for mammals, even on the most favourable of days it is unlikely that animals will be viewable for more than a fraction of the time spent in the field. At all times, due attention will be paid to the wider natural history of the area and as the most conspicuous and widespread members of the fauna, a significant amount of time will be spent looking at birds. Please do not hesitate to talk to the Operations Manager if you have any doubts about the suitability of this tour.

Weather

The weather is likely to be hot and humid and there is a possibility of heavy rain at any time, but hopefully not to the extent that it will spoil your enjoyment!

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation is included in the holiday cost, starting with lunch on arrival and breakfast on the departure day. Accommodation for the 4-night cruise will be on board the ‘Dorinha’, a comfortable 24-berth river cruiser, which features 12 twin cabins, each with upper and lower berths, air conditioning and private facilities. As explained, while in Manaus will be staying at the Ibis Hotel Manaus Airport. As mentioned on page 3, this isn’t typical Naturetrek accommodation but in this case it provides the best location to access the areas we want and limits travel considerably. It has very complimentary reviews and enables us to fit in more wildlife watching around Manaus.

Vessel Description

Main deck: 8 air-conditioned cabins with private bathroom, bunk beds and reading lights. 6 cabins to the front and 2 to the back. Galley and entrance hall. Note that cabin 7 is used for staff.

2nd Deck: 4 air-conditioned cabins with private bathroom, bunk beds and reading lights. Bar, Restaurant, Conference room, Library, Wheelhouse.

Upper deck: Open for sunbathing, star gazing, wildlife watching and scenery observation. Barbecue area.

Technical Information

Capacity: 24 passengers

Hull: Wooden

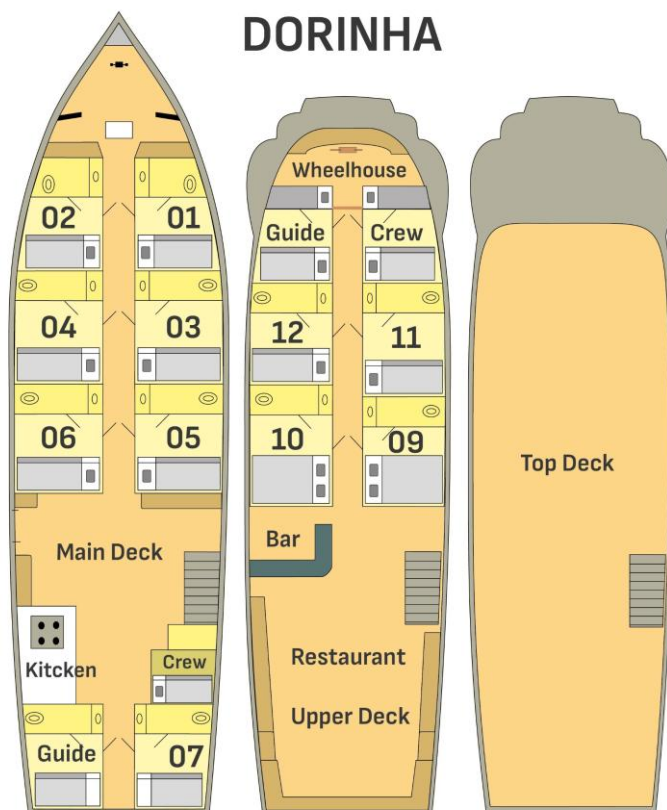
Propulsion: Single engine

Engine: MWM 250 HP

Length: 24,67 metres (80,94 feet)

Width: 6,10 metres (20,01 feet)

Cruise speed: 8 knots.





Pre-holiday

It is worth mentioning here that 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 Manaus 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 you 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 to add an extension either to the beginning or end of your main group tour. There are various options including the spectacular Iguazu Falls, Rio de Janeiro or birding the Atlantic Rainforest from São Paulo. This tour also links well with a "Just Jaguars" group tour to the Pantanal. 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 cost plus any room supplements if required. 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.

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