

Brazil – Birds & Mammals of the Amazon & Pantanal

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2/5	Arrive São Paulo, fly Alta Floresta via Cuiaba – SouthWild Amazon Lodge
Day 6/7	Fly to Cuiaba, Pouso Alegre
Day 8/10	Jaguar Flotel
Day 11/12	South Wild Pantanal Lodge
Day 13	Transfer Cuiaba for inbound flight
Day 14	Land London



Harpy Eagle, Toco Toucan, Jaguar

Introduction

Departs

May/June/September/October

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code BRA08) or brochure

Grading

A/B - Gentle walks and boat safaris

Focus

Birds and mammals

Highlights

- Visit an active Harpy Eagle nest
- Over 500 species of birds recorded at SouthWild Amazon Lodge and rare primates.
- Explore the incredible Pantanal and unrivalled Jaguar and Giant Otter views.
- Other mammals may include Ocelot, Tapir, Giant Anteater and many more.



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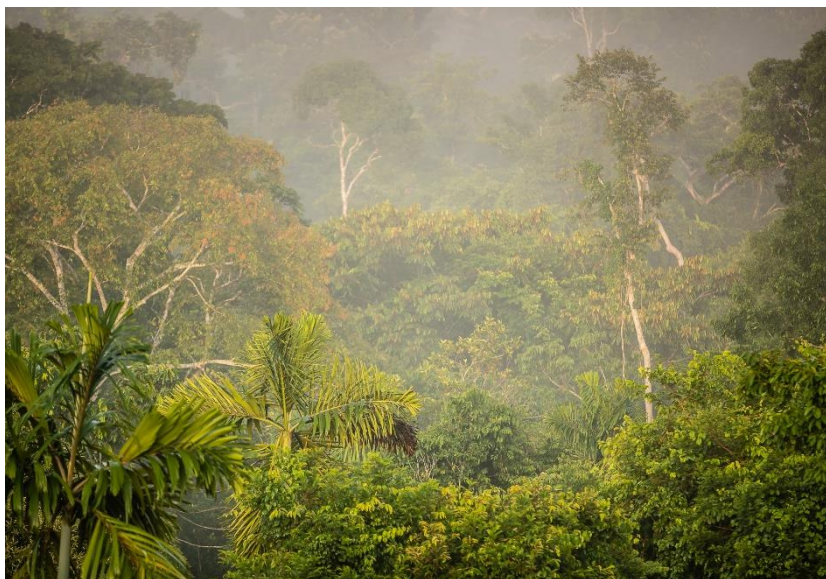
Introduction

Combining two of Brazil's most famous wildlife regions, the vast rainforest of the Amazon Basin and the open wetlands of the Pantanal, this unique 14-day bird and mammal watching tour offers the keen naturalist the chance to sample two very different ecosystems and encounter an enormous variety of species.

The Amazon Basin is a huge area; around twice the size of India and still to this day the majority of it (around 75%) is in standing forest, and around half of that standing forest is in protected areas.

As recently as January 2017 Harpy Eagle biologist Everton Miranda learned that a large chunk (around half the size of the UK) of the southern Amazon is blessed with an extensive network of trails, created by forest workers who criss-cross the forest but do not hunt at all.

These non-hunting informants have shown us previously-unknown concentrations of large, charismatic, animals that include such wonders as Harpy Eagles, Brazilian Tapirs, Scarlet, Blue-and-Gold, and Red-and-Green Macaws, and four particularly beautiful and elusive primates: Gray Woolly



Amazon Rainforest at Fazenda São Nicolau

Monkeys, Black-faced Spider Monkeys, Red Howler Monkeys and the endangered White-nosed Saki.

The area of SouthWild Amazon Lodge, formerly known as "Fazenda São Nicolau" is around 10,300 hectares, making it one of the largest properties in the entire county. Owned by the French government, this area is protected for eco tourists. A ferry along the Juruena River provides access and accommodation is currently at the park headquarters where we shall be staying in comfortable, en-suite, air-conditioned rooms.

The seasonally flooded plains of the Pantanal, the largest wetland in the world, attract an incredible number of birds and offer some of the finest birdwatching anywhere on the planet. Vast numbers of herons, storks, ibises and Limpkins throng the marshy areas, whilst raptors such as Great Black, Black-collared and Savanna Hawk watch on with intent. The gallery forests and scrub hold an array of tropical birds including antbirds, woodcreepers, toucans, tyrant flycatchers and colourful parrots, not least the magnificent Hyacinth Macaw a welcome and frequent sight throughout the Pantanal. On this tour we will spend time in the "Jaguar Zone" where mammals of the Pantanal include the icons; Jaguars, Giant River Otter, Capybara, Tapir and with luck Giant Anteater.

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 maximize best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Itinerary

Day 1

Depart London

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

Day 2- 5

SouthWild Amazon Lodge

Following an early morning arrival in São Paulo, we connect through to Cuiaba and on to Alta Floresta. Here you will be met in the arrivals hall by your expert local guide, before travelling to SouthWild Amazon Lodge where we will be staying for the next four nights. The journey from Alta Floresta will be by road for around 4 hours until we reach the banks of the beautiful Juruena River. From here we journey by ferry boat for around 30 minutes and finally a short drive then to the lodge. The itinerary will be flexible to enable us to secure the best sightings of the special wildlife of the area. With three full days to explore the environs of the lodge, we will cover a variety of habitats, including primary and secondary tropical forest, mixed savanna with granite outcrops, wetland and seasonally flooded forest, utilizing over 13 miles of trails and cruising the network of river channels by boat on the Juruena.

Harpy Eagles

The presence of the utterly magnificent Harpy Eagle gives an indicator of the biodiversity rich forest we will be in and we will of course be targeting great sightings of this legendary species using the latest information from local expert guides. To date an amazing 33 nests have been located throughout the state of Mato Grosso and we shall visit a nest site, giving us the very best chance to observe these amazing birds. A tower will be positioned to allow us to be at eye level of a nest site to achieve simply breath-taking views. We will have an extremely high chance to obtain wonderful views of a mature, young Harpy Eagle and depending on the stage of the nest within the nesting cycle, we can also hope to see an adult bird. Young Harpy Eagles stay around the nest for up to 12 months after fledging, with parent birds still bringing in prey items such as sloths and primates for their young and hence the reason why the young bird stays around its nest tree. Of course an adult bird bringing prey happens more infrequently as the young bird gets older but there is a still a chance of course of seeing an adult and a young, fully grown Harpy Eagle is certainly a spectacular bird! You can find more information about the towers and Harpy Eagle at the end of the itinerary. It will depend on the location of the nest in relation to the lodge as to how many times we shall visit it but during our time here we shall visit an active nest on at least one occasion.

Birding from SouthWild Amazon Lodge

SouthWild Amazon Lodge is located in a reserve of around 10,300 hectares previously referred to as Fazenda São Nicolau and it is a real mix of habitats, with some wonderful primary forest, long

standing secondary forest, areas which have been replanted with the ongoing conservation work, open grassland areas, lagoons and lakes. This means there is an incredible diversity of life here with ongoing studies revealing new species for the reserve with great frequency. Over 500 bird species have been recorded to date and we will take walks and drives in these different habitats to enjoy a special range of species. Blue-and-Yellow and Red-and-Green Macaws can be seen very well here



Blue-and-Yellow Macaws

and often provide excellent photographic opportunities with Red-bellied Macaw also found here in good numbers and Scarlet frequently seen. On almost all outings we have a great opportunity to view various macaw species as they have little fear of humans here. A range of amazons may also be found including Southern Mealy, Orange-winged and Kawai's. On the forest floor, Dark-winged Trumpeters may be seen moving in small flocks, being a very good sign of a healthy, little visited forest while the unmistakable call of the Screaming Piha will be with us as we work the forest trails. Some of the species we may find will include Black-tailed Trogon, Red-capped and Blue-crowned Manakin a range of tanagers including White-winged Shrike-Tanager, Flame-crested and Magpie Tanager with Blue Dacnis relatively common and the chance also of Jacamars with Rufous-tailed, Bronzy and Paradise all targets. The beautiful Pavonine Quetzal is regularly recorded here and a range of woodpeckers may include Yellow-tufted and Crimson-crested with raptors including Black Vultures, Black Caracara, and the incredibly smart Pearl Kite.

Both Collared and White-lipped Peccary frequent the forest and we will of course but on the lookout for any mammals as we walk quietly along the trails.

Around any pools and lagoons we may find Capped, Rufescent Tiger, and Striated Heron, Snowy Egret, Green Ibis and often Swallow-winged Puffbirds, Blue-black Grassquit and Smooth-billed Ani in the surrounding vegetation. Flocks of Red-bellied Macaws also roost at these lagoons and there is always the chance of mammals visiting to drink and bath with Tapir being seen regularly. Between the lagoons and the river we may find all five of South America's Kingfisher species being Amazon, Green, Green and Rufous, American Pygmy and Ringed.

Around the lodge headquarters and nearby more open areas we may see a whole host of species including Masked Tityra, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Bare-necked Fruitcrow the stunning Spangled Cotinga and a range of flycatchers, tyrannulets, antbirds and tanagers along with hummingbirds including Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Fork-tailed Woodnymph and Black-throated Mango. A colony of Caciques and Oropendulas is found in the lodge grounds with Yellow-and Red-rumped Cacique, Crested Oropendula and a few Green Oropendula present in the mixed breeding

colony. Tropical Screech Owls often roost in the tress around the lodge and our local guides may well know of a current roost site for the amazing Common Potoo.

Boat Excursions on the Juruena River

Boat trips on the Juruena River are beautiful and offer some excellent wildlife viewing opportunities.

In the riverside vegetation we may discover Red-throated Piping Guan, Swallow-winged Puffbirds or the unique Hoatzin, and as we head into the narrower channels we hope to find Sunbittern, White-throated Toucan or even a troupe of Black-capped Capuchin.

Neotropical and Giant Otter may be seen, peccaries often cross the channels and Jaguar is possible although rare here. The birdlife may include raptors such as Great Black Hawk, Bat Falcon and Plumbeous Harrier with riverside trees holding Band-tailed Antbird, The unique Umbrellabird and Striped Cuckoo to name just a few along with the iconic and bizarre Hoatzin.



Hoatzin

The undergrowth here may host some small stunning species such as Spotted Tody-flycatcher or Rufous-tailed Jacamar. The river brings such tranquillity and unique species that is sure to be a highlight of our time in the Southern Amazon.

Primates and other mammals

With the flexible itinerary we will attempt to find the special and endangered primates in the area and try to photograph them. Gray Woolly Monkey (*Lagothrix cana*) and the White-nosed Saki (*Chiropotes albinasus*) are two of the star species here. These two species, both sadly listed as endangered by the IUCN, are endemic to the central-southern Amazon. Thankfully their population is healthy here and the guides keep



Gray Woolly Monkey

up to date with where they are, what they are feeding on are how their populations are faring in

the reserve. They can often be seen together and visiting favoured feeding trees can produce very good views. Black-faced Black Spider Monkey (*Ateles chamek*) is another endangered primate here, also known as Peruvian Spider Monkey, this most agile of species can be seen swinging through the canopy if we are lucky. Other primates recorded here are Black-tailed Marmoset (*Mico melanurus*), Parus Red Howler Monkey (*Alouatta puruensis*), Brown Capuchin Monkey (*Sapajus apella*), Common Squirrel Monkey (*Saimiri sciureus*), Dusky Titi Monkey (*Callicebus moloch*) and Azara's Night Monkey (*Aotus azarae*) having all been seen here and possible.

Recently a large male Ocelot has been seen regularly coming close to the river bank and there is also a good chance of seeing Brazilian Tapir..

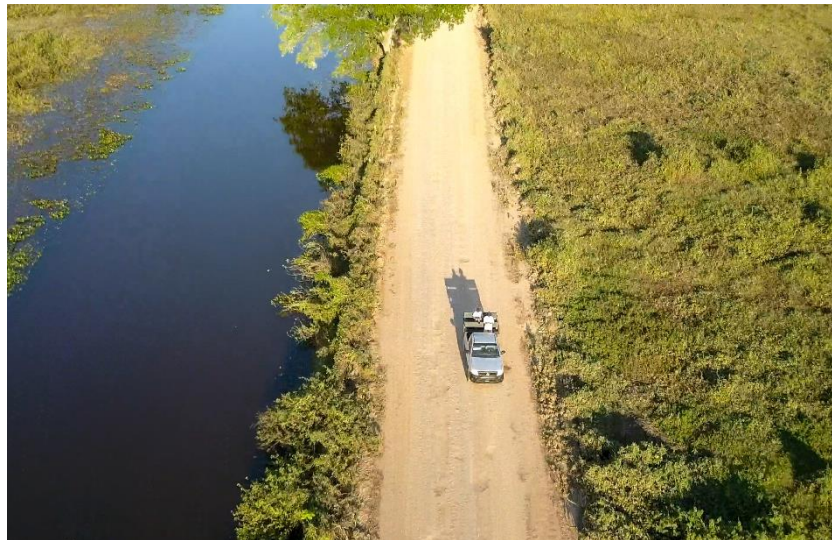
Night drives around the forest tracks may reveal a range of species with Tapir seen regularly, Tayra are in the area and Night Monkey also a possibility. It is sure to be an exciting stay.

Day 6 - 7

Pouso Alegre

With our wonderful stay in the Southern Amazon complete, today we will board a domestic flight to Cuiabá, the capital of Mato Grosso State and doorway to the Pantanal. From here we drive approximately 2 hours to our first Pantanal lodge at Pouso Alegre, where we stay for two nights. The drive from Cuiabá will introduce some of the inhabitants of the Pantanal region, with the last 7 km of the drive being the private, wildlife-rich driveway of our lodge, Pouso Alegre. As we drive, we will see a transitional forest grading from dry "Cerrado" to more wet woodland typical of southern Mato Grosso region, and the birdlife is both colourful and plentiful with representatives from some of the Neotropical families, such as toucans, tanagers and hummingbirds, that we will be seeing throughout the tour.

The drive from Cuiabá airport starts with driving 100km southwest on asphalt (for 70-75 minutes) to the town of Poconé. These 100 km run through different types of tropical dry forest that go by the name of "cerrado" and "cerradão". As we leave the south end of Poconé on our way into the Pantanal proper, we see the dry forests and fields drop slightly into the large flat floodplain of the



Transpantaneira Road

Pantanal proper, and the 122 bridges begin... After 17km we will encounter the first wooden bridges, often seeing the first assemblage of herons, caimans, and Capybara. Pouso Alegre's entrance gate is located 12km further south along the well-known 145-km-long "Transpantaneira" raised dirt and gravel road. The lodge is famous for its excellent mammal viewing and birding,

much of which one does along the lodge's private 7-km-long, raised driveway. Slow drives on this long entrance road often yield good views of species such as Red Brocket Deer, Bare-faced Curassows, Chestnut-bellied Guans, Brazilian Tapir, and even Giant Anteaters! On the first 29 km of the Transpantaneira, and on the last 500m before reaching the Pouso Alegre Lodge, you will also enjoy your first good views of hundreds of Jacaré Caiman as well as dozens of Capybaras. Other wildlife species often seen at Pouso Alegre include Azara's Agouti, Black-tailed Marmoset and Tamandua.

While based at Pouso Alegre, we may drive short distances in the evening on the Transpantaneira to gain access to other marshes and bridges in search of fauna. We use our open-sided, safari lorry for these drives on the long driveway, and we include a one-hour-long night spotlighting drive on each of the two nights at Pouso Alegre.

Day 8 - 10

Jaguar Flotel

Leaving Pouso Alegre we will travel to the end of the Transpantaneira and at Porto Jofre travel by boat to reach the Jaguar Flotel. We will spend three nights here, following a routine of morning and afternoon boat safaris exploring the most Jaguar-rich sections of the Cuiabá, Piquirí, and Three Brothers Rivers, returning back to the lodge in the middle of the day for lunch and some downtime. On each of the boat safaris, we will likely cover a great deal of ground, systematically checking the sandy banks, patches of dense gallery forest on the riverbank, and rush-beds along the water's edge in search of the biggest predator in the Pantanal. 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 that may also include the arboreal Brazilian Porcupine, the Brazilian Tapir and of course, families of Giant River Otters. Searching for these wary creatures may demand real patience, with long periods spent in our smaller spotting boat. The boat we shall use has six rows of two so our group of 12 maximum each has a side for optimal viewing. 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. More recently our groups have enjoyed some prolonged views, even including animals hunting along the raised river banks and swimming across the channels. Our chances are superb for encountering Jaguar and the Flotel provides us with the perfect base from which to explore.

Whilst looking for our quarry, and during our short periods ashore, we will doubtless meet with a varied selection of other mammals and birds; Capybara and Caiman, important prey species for Jaguars are frequently encountered along the rivers, whilst Crab-eating Fox, Azara's Agouti and possibly Tapir may also feature. Birds are likely to include Black Skimmers, both Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns, Maguari and Wood Storks and the delightful Pied and Collared Plover on open sand banks as well as many more. Blue-crowned Amazon, Lesser and Greater Kiskadee, Crane Hawk and Pale-legged Hornero are often seen in the riverside gallery forest and we will go on to enjoy a great variety of the areas incredible birdlife as we aim for the star mammals.

Our accommodation is a unique, floating hotel or "flotel" near the mouth of the Tres Irmaos River that is operated as a Jaguar research and tourism base. A photo dossier research on Jaguar faces

continues apace, as guests become, in effect, guest researchers here. With more than 85 different Jaguars having been seen and photographed in the surrounding area since 2005, the research provides a fascinating insight into the lives of these otherwise mysterious subjects and if a guest provides our team with a good face photo of a previously-unphotographed Jaguar, then he or she is granted the honour of naming rights!



Bare-faced Curassow

The flotel is the only permanent accommodation in the centre of the "Jaguar Zone", which could also be called "the Giant Otter Zone", as these 100-km of river channels are by far the best place in the world to see either of these otherwise shy and elusive top predators. Here we have a distinct advantage over more distantly-located lodges or camps, which start 15km's up river and require a lengthy and often unproductive 45 minute – 1 hour journey each way. With instant access to the most productive area for our target species, should we receive word of a sighting we can react very quickly and it also enables us to have a greater chance of having private sightings, before other boats arrive.

The flotel offers very comfortable accommodation. On this tour we will use the standard flotel rooms. They are not as large as the suites but still have private facilities and air conditioning.



Jaguar Flotel

Day 11 - 12

South Wild Pantanal lodge

After a wonderful time at the Flotel the time will come to retrace our steps along the wildlife-rich Transpantaneira Road to the South Wild Pantanal Lodge for our final two nights of the holiday.

Hyacinth Macaws are often found around Porto Jofre and we will aim for special views of this stunning species during our visit and travelling the Transpantaneira we will stop and start with Roseate Spoonbill, Black-bellied and White-faced Whistling Ducks and the localised Scarlet-headed Blackbird just some of the many species we can hope for on the journey. We will spend the next two full days undertaking a mix of safari drives, walks and boat rides with a superb range of species again possible. The lodge benefits from two wildlife observation towers: one in the riverine forest and the other next to a nest of thoroughly-habituated Jabiru Storks, allowing fantastic photographic opportunities. The riverine forest also holds several troops of very confiding Brown Capuchins, whilst the unmistakable call of the areas resident troop of Howler Monkeys is likely to become a familiar sound as dawn breaks.

The lodge's bird feeders are also regularly visited the world's largest toucan, the emblematic Toco Toucan, as well as a number of very colourful passerines, most notably the Orange-backed Troupial. The grounds here really are packed with birds which have become very used to people so provide superb close views and photographic opportunities.



Orange-backed Troupial

The marked trails in the gallery forest present a unique opportunity to see some of the more elusive forest birds and mammals, but you must walk slowly and silently to have the best results. Gallery or riverine forest is the most species-rich habitat type but represents only 2% of the entire Pantanal, and our lodge has good access to a network of trails that have not been grazed or invaded by cattle, ensuring that the understory is intact and proving refuge to a diverse range of species.

The Pixaim River is right next to the lodge, and boat safaris on this short stretch of river are likely to yield excellent views of Black-crowned Night Herons, Boat-billed Herons and with luck, the jewel of the Pantanal, the stunning Agami Heron, as well as all five of South America's Kingfishers, and many egrets and ibises.

Unusual amongst land based lodges in the North Pantanal, over the years South Wild Pantanal Lodge has enjoyed some fantastic sightings of Jaguars in the lodge grounds and along the Pixaim River. With only a small number of boats operating on this stretch of the river, if we are lucky enough to see a Jaguar in this area, it is likely to be a very exclusive sighting, but it should be noted such a sighting would be a fantastic bonus and should not be expected.

The area of the Pixaim River at our lodge also boasts two pairs of very habituated and photogenic Jabiru Storks, which will sometimes fly next to your boat – great for close-up photos of this huge bird in flight. Also very tame and photogenic are a series of Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers and

several hawks, notably Black-collared and Great Black Hawk – they are happy to take fresh fish off the surface of the water, making for spectacular photo opportunities.

Finally, the 1-hour spotlighting drive in our open sided safari truck, have the potential to reveal yet more wonders of the Pantanal, with the lodge grounds and roadside habitat along the Transpantaneira, providing excellent habitat for Ocelot, Brazilian Tapir and both Anteater species. With aid of the spotlight, we are also likely to pick up the incredible eye shine of the Great Potoo, alongside the eloquent Scissor-tailed Nightjar and the impressive Great Horned Owl.

An easy 200m walk from the lodge now leads to a hide designed specifically for viewing the beautiful Ocelot. Ocelot has always been here in good numbers and now with this hide it is likely that we shall enjoy close views of this normally secretive species.



Ocelot

Day 13

Inbound UK

Subject to flight times, we may have time for a short morning activity before we leave the lodge. We will then drive three hours to Cuiabá airport to catch our flight back to São Paulo, and our onward flight to UK in the evening.

Day 14

London

We are scheduled to arrive back in London in the mid-afternoon (timing subject to later confirmation).

Tour Focus and Grading

This tour will be focussing in particular on the birdlife and mammals of these two incredibly diverse areas. The Southern Amazon and the Pantanal. There will be more of a bird focus on this holiday than there is on our "Just Jaguars" tour for instance and every day we can expect to spend a significant amount of time finding and enjoying birds. We will however also be seeking the fantastic mammals of these areas and as the title of the holiday suggests it will be a joint focus. In the Amazon there will be a greater range of birds with mammals more difficult to find and observe, but we shall still target rare primates, Tapir and more and we have great success in finding them. In the Pantanal, mammals become more obvious and there will then be a slight shift in focus towards finding the special mammals here including of course the Jaguar, Giant River Otters and more. We will though be enjoying all the birds too and while finding birds, mammals are always being searched for! In short, you must expect a significant amount of time on this holiday to be spent birdwatching but you will also see a great range of mammals and great effort will be made to find them too.

Particularly in the Southern Amazon, you will need to appreciate that the neotropical mammals are largely shy and retiring, present in low densities and often crepuscular or nocturnal in nature. Although this tour spends time and effort in looking for exciting and iconic mammals including a range of rare and endangered primates, potential participants should be aware that mammals will be on view for only a small percentage of our time in the field. Anybody wishing for and expecting a safari-type experience full of animals should consider carefully whether this is the holiday for them. Time between mammal encounters will be spent largely birdwatching (alert to mammals at all times of course), as birds are the most conspicuous members of the local fauna. In the Pantanal, mammals do become more obvious, but even there, effort is required and when searching for mammals we will be enjoying the special birdlife here too.

This is a conventional wildlife holiday with a focus on birds, mammals and general natural history. No trekking or great hardship is involved (although conditions will be humid and hot with some forest walks on potentially slippery ground), and the holiday is generally suitable for those of all ages and degrees of fitness.

Please speak to the operations manager if you would like to talk more about the focus to make sure it is the right tour for you.

This tour is graded A/B, consisting of mostly gentle walks and boat safaris, though some walks may be slippery, with high heat and humidity. We would not likely cover more than 2-3 miles at a time and be out walking for a maximum of 2-3 hours.

Weather

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

Food & accommodation

Accommodation is based on twin-bedded rooms with private facilities, but single rooms are available on request and with a supplement.

At SouthWild Amazon Lodge the rooms are well appointed, clean and comfortable with air conditioning and en-suite bathrooms. The surrounding area offers a wonderful opportunity to observe and photograph some very rare and interesting species and it provides a superb way to experience the Southern Amazon with excellent intact forest to explore and a wonderful river.

Our three lodges in the Pantanal offer clean and comfortable rooms, all with air conditioning and en-suite bathrooms.



Room at SouthWild Amazon Lodge

All food is included on the holiday and it is possible to cater for a vegetarian diet at all locations.

Harpy tower

The 30m towers have easy to climb steps and a roomy platform at the top to view the nest. Harpy Eagles nest at height of 27m+ and therefore the viewing tower give an unrivalled view at eye level from the top of the tower.

Guiding

The holiday will be led by expert local naturalists.

Flights from London

As standard we will be using scheduled service flights operating out of London Heathrow direct to São Paulo overnight with LATAM Airlines. LATAM provide a good service and a schedule that fits our itinerary.

If you would prefer, it is possible to fly with British Airways and Virgin. Doing so will require staying an extra night on the final day and flying home a day later due to the flight timings. We can of course book this extra night for you as explained below.

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. This will mean you will get a good night's sleep before the main tour begins. This tour starts with an overnight flight to Sao Paulo, then a flight on to Cuiaba and then connecting straight on to the flight to Alta Floresta. You could fly a day early to reach Cuiaba, overnight there and then be more fresh before the onward flight the next day to the Amazon. Please let us know if you wish to do this.

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 or extra chances for Giant Anteater. 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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Many thanks to Naturetrek participant Allan Hopkins for the Harpy Eagle photo on the cover page.