

Guyana – A Timeless Paradise

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1/2** Fly Georgetown, stay Cara Lodge (2-nights)
-
- Days 3/12** Explore the pristine forests and open savannahs from ideally located lodges. (10-nights, 4 lodges).
-
- Day 13/14** Cara Lodge (2-nights)
-
- Day 15/16** Depart Georgetown/Land London
-

Departs

February and November

Focus

Birds, Mammals and a little Culture

Grading

A/B. A moderate level of fitness is required with a lot of time spent on foot in humid conditions.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GUY01) or brochure

Highlights

- Pristine rainforest holding a huge number and variety of bird species.
- Experience one of the world's last remaining untouched rainforests via chartered flights.
- Fly over the breathtaking Kaieteur Falls – five times the height of Niagara!
- Unique hospitality and welcomed like family at the different lodges.



Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, Harpy Eagle, Kaieteur Falls



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Introduction

Guyana lies at the point where the Caribbean meets South America on its North Atlantic seaboard, an almost unknown but incredible land of unspoiled natural beauty. It is known as 'the land of many waters' and is indeed a land of great rivers and waterfalls, and much, much more. A land of 83,000 square miles, of which over 80% consists of rainforest, much of which is still to be explored, where rivers are uncharted and mountains yet to be climbed.

English-speaking Guyana is truly a timeless paradise, a land of immense biodiversity, huge landscapes and unspoiled wonder, where more than 800 bird species, 225 species of mammals, 814 species of reptile and amphibian call home!

Jaguar still roam the vast forests and Giant River Otter, Black Caiman and Arapaima, the world's largest freshwater fish, still swim the rivers, iconic Harpy Eagle, Hoatzin and Guianan Cock-of-the-rock still found perched in the tropical foliage.

In this unspoiled wonder of the world, we'll search for Guyana's jewels such as the endangered Golden Rocket Frog, the outstanding Scarlet Ibis and dazzling Green-tailed Jacamar. Orchids and other flowering plants are still rich in Guyana, with new orchid species frequently being discovered here.

Join us on this holiday into breathtaking, untouched, Guyanese lands in search of beautiful flora and fauna, dwarfed by immense canopies and massive savannahs, by which visiting here as naturalist-tourists we play a vital role in their preservation.



Canopy Walk at Atta Rainforest Lodge

Itinerary

NB. 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

Fly London to Georgetown

We depart from London on a late morning, scheduled flight from London Gatwick to Georgetown, via a short touchdown in St Lucia. From here we will transfer to the city to the comfortable Cara Lodge, just an hour away.

Built in the 1840s and originally consisting of two houses, the hotel is one of the oldest wooden buildings in Georgetown. It has a long and romantic history associated with it and was the home of the first Lord Mayor of Georgetown. Over the years it has hosted many dignitaries including George V who stayed at the house in 1923 and planted the sapodilla tree in the front garden to mark the occasion! Dinner is at the groups own expense while at Cara Lodge. There is a restaurant on site.

Day 2

Georgetown

After a long travel day, this morning will be free to relax and get some extra rest. In the afternoon we will take a drive through the heart of the city to the Stabroek Market area. Here we will join the afternoon commuters using the old ferry stelling to board the river taxis which are used to cross the Demerara River. We will take a slow cruise along and across the Demerara River learning about the history of the famous buildings along the waterfront. We then continue to see the Demerara Harbour Bridge, once the longest floating bridge in the world at a total length of 1,851m long. We will cross under the bridge and tie up our boat near to the mangroves and as the sun sets over the river we will have a cold drink and some snacks and enjoy Scarlet Ibis, Snail Kites, and a range of herons and egrets as they settle into the mangroves to roost. Soon after the sun sets we return, enjoying the city and ship lights from the river. We will return then to Cara Lodge for dinner.



Scarlet Ibis

Day 3

Kaieteur Falls and on to Iwokrama River Lodge

After breakfast we transfer by bus to Eugene F. Correia airport, where Red-breasted Blackbird sing and Snail Kites patrol. We take off in our chartered aircraft over endless rainforest to the majestic and breathtaking Kaieteur Falls, with its sheer drop of 822 feet - five times the height of Niagara Falls! – unique ecosystems and where an eternal rainbow arches over the mist covered boulders of the gorge. There are no falls in the world with this magnitude of water and sheer drop. The falls were first seen by a European in 1870 and are situated in the heart of Guyana on the Potaro River, a tributary of the Essequibo. Amerindian legend of the Patamona tribe tells of the old chief Kai sacrificing himself over the falls to save his tribe. We shall land on the table top summit of a nearby tepuis and explore this amazing ecosystem, including the unique micro environment of the giant Tank Bromeliads, the largest in the world, in which the endemic tiny Golden Rocket Frog spends its entire life. We shall have time here to take in the incredible views of the falls and with luck, we shall



Kaieteur Falls

experience the splendour of a male Guianan Cock-of-the-rock in full display!

After two hours at the falls, we must continue our flight to Fair View village before transferring in 4x4s to the Iwokrama River Lodge.

The Iwokrama Rainforest is a vast wilderness of one

million acres. This protected area was established in 1996 as the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. Iwokrama is exceptional among conservation organizations because it joins with local people in every aspect of its work. From research to business, Iwokrama ensures local economic and social benefits from forest use and conservation. The Forest is in the homeland of the Makushi people, who have lived here and used the forest for thousands of years.

Having arrived at the lodge and settled in, we will be free to explore the trails with an Iwokrama guide, getting to grips with some of the more common species around the lodge. After dark, we'll set out on the river, in hope of finding one or another of its four species of caiman, and listen for nightbirds such as Spectacled Owl, White-winged Potoo, Rufous Potoo, Long-tailed Potoo, Zigzag Heron or Blackish Nightjar. Spotlighting may reveal a beautiful Boa constrictor, tree frogs and if we are extremely lucky even an Ocelot or Puma.

Accommodation Note: Accommodation is offered in eight spacious timber cabins with shingle roofs, en-suite bathroom facilities and veranda overlooking the river. Running water and flush toilets are standard, however water is not heated (and rarely desired in the tropical heat). Electricity is provided by a combination of solar and diesel generator systems, and wireless internet access is provided for free in the main building.

Day 4

Iwokrama River Lodge

Making an early start we will take to our boat on the Essequibo and circumnavigate Indian House Island giving us a chance for dawn song on the river including Marbled Wood-Quail, Band-rumped Swift, White-banded and Black-collared Swallows, and Guianan Streaked-Antwren before returning to the River Lodge for breakfast. After breakfast we shall bird along the extensive trail systems once more which allow good access into the forest.

Rainforest mammals, though never conspicuous, are well represented at Iwokrama and with luck



Green-tailed Jacamar (*Galbula galbula*)

we may encounter the impressive Black Spider Monkey, as well as a Banded Tamandua, Kinkajou, or even the elusive Jaguar. Seeing mammals is however very difficult in dense rainforest and time spent along the dirt road that leads to the lodge offers our best chance in the hope that something may walk out into the open. Iwokrama boasts an avifauna of over 450 species, including the full spectrum of neotropical families. Large macaws still thrive here and we should be treated to views of

Blue and Yellow, Red and Green and Scarlet Macaws.

Day 5

Atta Rainforest Lodge

Making the most of the cooler morning conditions, we will travel once more by boat for half an hour or so to the foot of Turtle Mountain, where we will explore the trail visiting Turtle ponds and climbing to an elevation of about 900 feet for a spectacular view of the forest canopy below.

The trail to Turtle Mountain winds its way through beautiful primary forest, the enormous trees towering above us. Screaming Pihas call loudly from their unseen perches, and with a little effort, we might locate one belting out its song, one of the true sounds of the rainforest.

Soon, we begin to ascend a steep incline, onwards and upwards we climb, frequently pausing to admire the wildlife and glorious flora. We will arrive at the forested summit of Turtle Mountain (975

ft asl) and make our way to an open viewpoint, from where the views out over the rainforest are stunning. It is so liberating to look over untouched rainforest that stretches as far as the eye can see. Here we may spot raptors soaring and Orange-breasted Falcon can be seen perched above the canopy on the lookout for prey.

This is the most strenuous of the walks that we undertake on this trip. Although often steep with uneven ground there are regular rest points to sit and take on water and an area to stop and enjoy the surroundings if anyone should feel a walk to the top is not possible for them. On the descent we will be looking for mixed feeding flocks of birds including species such as Wedge-billed and Amazon Barred Woodcreepers, Black-chinned Antbird and White-flanked Antwren.

For those that prefer you will be welcome to remain behind and relax at the lodge or come on the boat ride and part of the walk.



Views from Turtle Mountain

Following this activity and lunch we shall transfer to Atta lodge for dinner. The Iwokrama forest is rapidly gaining an international reputation for its healthy jaguar populations that seem not to be troubled by the appearance of curious humans. No promises, but some have been lucky,

including Naturetrek's 2019 group! A sighting such as this is unrivalled in that, unlike in the busier parts of the Amazon, you will undoubtedly have this incredibly special and moment to yourselves. This road is the only north – south access in Guyana and links the country to Brazil. Even so, traffic is only very occasional and interesting wildlife is often seen along the road such as Agouti, Tapir and Black Curassow though this will be down to luck and keeping a keen eye on the road ahead and behind! The journey concludes at Atta Lodge famous for its incredible Canopy Walkway.

Accommodation note: Atta Rainforest Lodge is 500 metres from the base of the Canopy Walkway, offering comfortable private-room accommodation with en-suite bathrooms, delicious home-cooked meals, and traditional Amerindian hospitality. The lodge is completely surrounded by tropical rainforest which offers a complete immersion in the rainforest experience. The main building is open sided with views across the gardens to the towering forest on all sides and houses the bar, dining area and kitchen.

Day 6 & 7

Atta Rainforest Lodge

For the next two mornings we shall enjoy dawn breaking from Atta's famous canopy walkway. This is an impressive series of suspension bridges and observation decks of up to 30 metres (98ft) in height and 154 metres (505ft) in length. The state-of-the-art construction allows trees to grow normally by using adjustable cables and braces throughout the support structure. The four observation decks enable visitors to view the mid and upper-level forest canopy and allow wildlife to remain relatively free from human intrusion.



Atta Rainforest Lodge

Painted Parakeet, Rufous-throated Sapphire, Guianan Puffbird, Green Aracari, Waved Woodpecker, Pygmy Antwren, Guianan Streaked-Antwren, Dusky Purplelet, Purple-breasted Cotinga, Guianan Toucanet, Pompadour Cotinga, Buff-cheeked Greenlet, Caica Parrots and a host of canopy specialists may come within our view. From this tree top vantage you can sometimes see Red Howler Monkeys and Black Spider Monkeys. The trails also have an interpretative walk with the trees named and you can learn about their varied medicinal and other uses in the Macushi culture. Deer and agouti are also regular visitors to the lodge. As dark falls on the Canopy Walkway, we will hope to see the White-winged Potoo.

Day 8

Surama

This morning we will welcome the dawn chorus from the tree-tops on the canopy walkway. After breakfast we will continue south along the road for a short time before exploring a special locality where Guianian Cock-of-the-rocks are known to display and nest. After a short walk through the rainforest we will reach huge boulders and rock outcrops on which the Cock-of-the-rock builds its nest. With patience and luck we will hope to see the stunning resident male bird on his territory.

We will then continue on to the Amerindian community at Surama. The village of Surama is situated in a small savannah, deep in the rainforest and surrounded by forest-clad hills. It was here that Charles Waterton passed through in 1812 in search of the secrets of the useful Wourali poison known as Curare. Waterton was so stunned by this spot that he wrote in his memoirs “The finest park that England boasts falls short of this delightful scene”. On our arrival, we will receive a warm welcome from the local people and will be shown to our simple but comfortable accommodation. After a rest, we have the option to begin exploring the surrounding habitats. With open areas of grassland meeting the rainforest the birding dynamic changes here. We will be able to scan across greater distances and observe birds moving across the open areas of the Rupununi savannah



Yellow-rumped Cacique (*Cacicus cela*)

between the forest. Grassland Sparrow, Wedge-tailed Grass Finch and Scaled Pigeon should all be seen around the lodge while Black Vultures and Yellow-headed Caracara panic the local Yellow-rumped Cacique colony.

Back to the village we might opt to rest and relax around the cabins, with the added option of an escorted tour of the village, visiting the local

school, medical centre and church along with some of the village houses. Others might prefer to continue birding the forest before dusk and our first night at Surama. The elegant and stunning Oncilla has been spotted close to Suruma Lodge recently!

Accommodation note: Basic but clean and comfortable. Each room at Surama has en-suite facilities; running water is not heated.

Day 9

Surama

From Surama we will visit a nearby Harpy Eagle nest assuming this is active. The nest itself is located in a huge emergent tree only a couple of miles from the village and if we are extremely fortunate, we may see one of the adult birds bringing a carcass to the nest to feed their chick.

The village here is set in five square miles of savannah which is ringed by the forest covered Pakaraima Mountains. Surama's inhabitants are mainly from the Macushi tribe and still



Grey-winged Trumpeter (*Psophia crepitans*)

observe many of the traditional practises of their forebears. This isolated and idyllic location offers an escape from the concrete jungle to a serene and peaceful existence with nature. The guides have lived their entire lives in the rainforest, and have an incredible understanding of nature and how to utilise its resources.

During our stay we shall take a walk out across the savannah and through the rainforest to the Burro Burro River. En route we may see both Black Curassow and Grey-winged Trumpeter before



Burro Burro River

our local guides paddle us quietly by canoe along the Burro Burro River. Here we should see a wealth of birds and there is a slim chance of encountering a Giant River Otter, Brazilian Tapir or a family group of Black Spider Monkeys.

At Surama and the surrounding area there are plenty of species to look for and during our stay and we will hope to encounter Red-

legged Tinamou, Painted Parakeet, Dusky Parrot, Lilac-tailed Parrotlet, Pale-throated Barbthroat, Rufous-throated Sapphire, Great and Paradise Jacamars, Guianan Puffbird, Black-spotted Barbet, Golden-spangled Piculet, Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper, Northern Slaty-Antshrike, Rufous-bellied, Spot-tailed and Todd's Antwrens, Dusky, White-browed, White-bellied, Ferruginous-

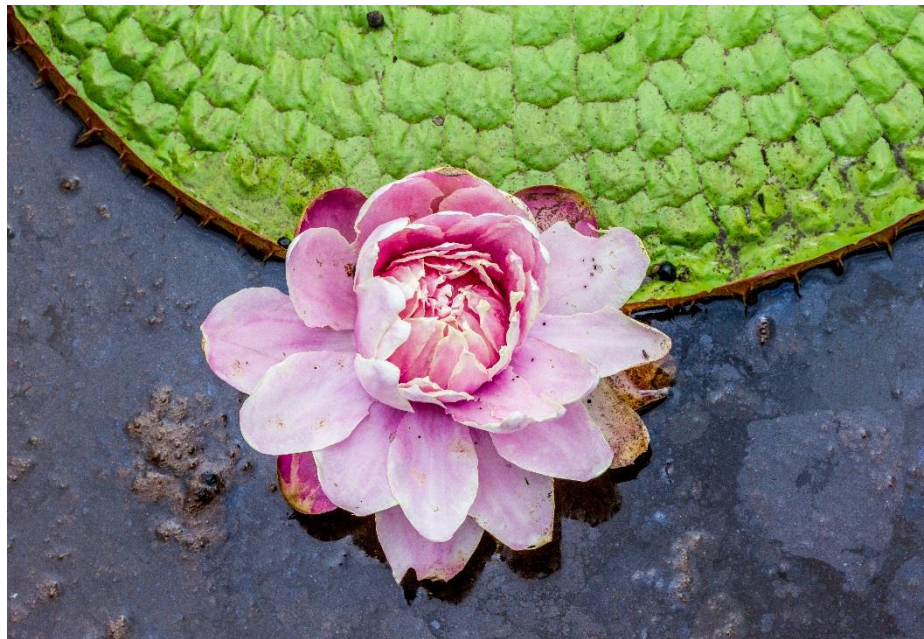
backed, Rufous-throated and Guianan Warbling Antbirds, Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant, Lemon-chested and Ashy-headed Greenlets and Finsch's Euphonia. We also plan to do some night birding and will hope to locate the recently split Northern Tawny-bellied Screech-Owl, as well as Tropical Screech-Owl, Lesser Nighthawk, White-tailed Nightjar and both Great and Common Potoo.

Day 10 - 12

Karanambu

Today we will depart from Surama travelling along the road through the savannah and foothills of the Pakaraima Mountains. Jabiru Stork and Toco Toucan are often seen along this stretch of road, as are Red Howler and Spider Monkey. From Ginep Landing we take a boat trip on the Rupununi River to Karanambu Lodge. Depending on the river level, this trip offers an excellent opportunity to look for Giant Otters as there are several family groups which live along this stretch of the Rupununi River.

There is a high density of Kingfishers, Egrets and Herons along this river and we will hope to see Ringed, Amazon, Green and Amazonian Pygmy



Victoria amazonica Water Lily, Guyana's national flower

Kingfishers while Green Ibis often walk the shoreline and flocks of Snowy Egrets are obvious.

Karanambu Lodge was home of the legendary Diane McTurk, widely known for her work in rehabilitating orphaned Giant River Otters to the wild. Sadly Diane passed away in December 2016. Thanks to Diane's incredible efforts the Giant River Otters are still present and doing well in Guyana and lodge owners and guides will be full of stories of the work that was done here to save them. Karanambu has a long history of visiting naturalists and Diane's father, Tiny McTurk, has welcomed David Attenborough among others. The Rupununi Savannahs are a vast land of far horizons and sun scorched plains, interrupted by patches of scrub and riparian woodland, swamps and lakes, together with a scattering of Amerindian villages and cattle ranches. The hospitality here, as it is at all lodges, feels unique in the way we will be welcomed as old friends in to their home. Here at Karanambu we will be sure to sample their delicious rum punch which is in plentiful supply and enjoy dinner with the owners and guides where we discuss the day's events!

During our three-night stay, we will explore the maze of lagoons along the Rupununi River with our



Giant Anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*)

hosts, in search of Giant River Otters, scanning the treetops for family parties of Red Howler Monkeys and the exposed riverbanks for Black Caiman. These wonderful quiet backwaters are also home to the legendary Arapaima, the largest of all scaled freshwater fish. We shall visit lakes and ponds encountering Jabiru, egrets, herons and other water birds, and blanketed by the

enormous pads of the *Victoria amazonica* water lily, Guyana's national flower. On one morning we make an early start to reach an area of rolling grasslands, which is home to a population of Giant Anteaters. With luck and help from the resident vacqueros we might locate one of these six-foot long animals excavating its breakfast from one of the red termite mounds that stud the savannah. A star bird that can often be seen near to Karanambu is the bizarre Capuchin bird. Our skilled local guides sometimes know of the territories of these canopy-dwelling birds. With their bald heads, hump-shouldered appearance and strange growling song an encounter really makes for an unforgettable experience if we are fortunate enough to locate them.

Accommodation note: Rooms at Karanambu are clean and comfortable but basic in nature. All rooms are en-suite. We do get reports of bats high in the rafters of the main building and also occasionally in rooms so if you have a phobia of bats this should be taken into consideration. It is a wonderful base with superb habitats all around.

Day 13

Georgetown

After an early morning excursion out into the savannah or a final boat ride from Karanambu we will transfer to the airstrip for our early afternoon flight back to Georgetown and Cara Lodge. We will arrive back at Cara lodge and have some time to relax here before having dinner.

Day 14

Boat tour & Botanical Gardens

Today we will take a boat out on the Mahaica river to see Guyana's national bird the Hoatzin, which is found in abundance along this river system. On the way back we will stop and go birding as opportunities arise before transferring back to Cara Lodge. In the afternoon we will travel to the Demerara River and if the tide is out, it will expose the mud flats which may host feeding Scarlet

Ibis, Little Blue and Tricolored herons, and several species of shorebirds while Magnificent may be seen wheeling overhead.

To finish the days' exciting itinerary we shall visit the extensive and beautiful Georgetown Botanical Gardens where, if we are lucky, we will have more views of the Blood-colored Woodpecker. This astonishingly colorful Veniliornis is found only in the Guianas and even there almost wholly limited to the



Hoatzin (*Ophisthocomus hoazin*)

narrow coastal plain. The gardens host Snail Kite, Gray Hawk, Pearl Kite, Carib Grackle and Red-bellied Macaw. Walking on the trails in the back of the gardens we may see Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Black-crested Antshrike, Silver-beaked Tanager, Buff-breasted Wren, Golden-spangled Piculet and Ashy-headed Greenlet. We will enjoy the varied and exciting birding here before returning to Cara Lodge for dinner.

Day 15

Georgetown & Fly London

After breakfast we transfer to the airport for our flight back to London.

Day 16

Land London

We will arrive back in London in the morning.

Tour Grading & Focus

This is an escorted natural history holiday suitable for most people with average fitness levels and mobility, although humid, hot and sometimes muddy conditions need to be contended with, together with occasional scrambles up river banks, biting insects and steep slopes. As expected for a high quality natural history holiday, there will be early starts needed to maximize our chances of viewing wildlife by being out at the most productive time of day. It must be remembered that all activities are optional and there is always the opportunity to stay and relax at the lodges and dip in and out of activities should you wish.

The focus of the tour is birds (mainly) and mammals, although we will look at and enjoy anything that we are lucky enough to encounter. We are sure to encounter a myriad of wild orchids and butterflies.

In most of South America, mammals are shy, retiring, present in low densities and largely crepuscular/nocturnal. As such, mammal-watching will comprise a small percentage of our time in

the field on this holiday. Time and effort will be dedicated to looking for Giant River Otters, Giant Anteaters and primates, as well as cats (previous Naturetrek groups have been blessed with Jaguar, Puma and Ocelot sightings in Guyana), but felines must be considered as a real bonus rather than a realistic target. If your main ambition is to see a Jaguar then you're best advised to head to the Pantanal in Brazil with us. Between sporadic but exciting encounters with mammals, the bulk of our time in Guyana will be spent birdwatching, as birds are the most conspicuous, best-studied and accessible of the fauna here. Those looking for a wildlife holiday in Guyana with little or no focus on birds should consider a tailor-made holiday with us – we'd be delighted to help with arrangements. Please do call us for further help and advice. In Guyana, you will be rewarded with pristine landscapes, genuine wilderness, a small number of exciting encounters with iconic mammals and a wealth of fabulous birds. This is a rare chance to visit the remote and largely untouched habitats of a beautiful South American country.

Please do not hesitate to talk to the Operations Manager, Tom Mabbett (Tom@naturetrek.co.uk or 01962 733051), if you have any additional questions regarding this holiday.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

As in any rainforest of the world, you should be prepared for rain at any stage, although hopefully not for long periods of time. Temperatures are likely to be warm to hot, and the air will be humid.

Please inspect the separate clothing list contained within the pre-departure information, of which a copy will be sent to you upon booking. Binoculars are of course essential for this holiday into the rainforests.

Luggage Allowance on Internal Charter Flights

Although standard international baggage regulations apply to transatlantic flights to Guyana, luggage allowance is however limited on the domestic charter flights you will be taking on the island.

On day 3 we charter a light aircraft to fly from Ogle Airstrip to Kaieteur and you will be affected by the limit in baggage here. Please remember though that unwanted/surplus baggage can be left behind in a secure lock-up at Cara Lodge in Georgetown. To give some idea of the procedure here, the plane we will use will depend on the group size and each plane has a specific payload (the maximum weight it can carry).

The plane we will use will either be the: Islander (9 Seater) – 1500lbs

Cessna Caravan (13 Seater) – 2500lbs

It isn't possible to give a specific luggage allowance in advance and a clearer estimation can be given nearer the time of departure. All passengers' body weight, inclusive of the local tour leader and pilot along with luggage, icebox, lunch and water must be within the payload above. Typically

luggage is between 14 -20kg and group members still find a way to take large cameras, telescopes and binoculars!

The flight back to Ogle at the end of the tour is a scheduled flight with a weight allowance being specific at 9kg/20lbs per person. We get around this by purchasing an extra seat weighing 190lbs, which is then split between group members to give ample luggage allowance.

What's Included

All accommodation and meals are included, except for the evening meals at Cara Lodge. Snacks, drinks and items of a personal nature are not included in the price of the tour.

Extending Your Holiday

With the British Airways service from London Gatwick, we will be touching down in St Lucia so flights can be adjusted if anyone wishes to add nights there. There is also the option to fly indirect via Barbados or Trinidad. This requires plane changes and two different carriers but could be done if you wish to visit these destinations. Please contact Operations Manager Tom Mabbett (Tom@naturetrek.co.uk or 01962 733051) for further information and/or make sure to stipulate any interest in a possible extension upon booking.

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 at the time of booking.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.



Guianan Cock-of-the-rock (*Rupicola rupicola*)